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PAUL "WIGGY" WADE-WILLIAMS

HELLFROST

•ADVENTURE CODEX•

OFFICIAL SAVAGE WORLDS LICENSED PRODUCT

HELLFROST ADVENTURE CODEX 1

RASSILON THE NORTHERN CONTINENT

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Paul 'Wiggy' Wade-Williams

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LAIR OF THE VERMIN LORD

RANK • NOVICE

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WALLS
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LAIR OF THE VERMIN LORD

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LAIR OF THE VERMIN LORD

INTRODUCTION

This adventure is designed for a group of four Novice characters with no advancements. For parties with more members or advancements, the GM should increase the number of opponents accordingly. For this adventure we advise you to add two additional giant rats to each encounter for each Rank the party is above Novice. For instance, if a party of four Seasoned adventures encounters giant rats numbering one per hero, the characters must fight a total of six rats—one for each hero, plus an additional two because the party is Seasoned.

This adventure begins on the second Waescdaeg of Snaermonan, 499 IR. It is the middle of winter, and snow blankets the realm. As this adventure takes place in the Hearthlands, the snow is only a few inches deep except in the hills, where it already lies as deep as three feet.

The temperature outdoors remains a chilly 15° F (–1 Vigor penalty) during the day and 0° F at night (–2 Vigor penalty) for the duration of this tale. Hence, the characters will need furs and/or winter clothing to avoid suffering from the freezing weather. Inside the temple of Vali, the temperature is one level higher due to the lack of wind. See the *Savage Worlds* rulebook for the effects of cold weather and the *Hellfrost Players' Guide* for how the rules work in this setting.

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

PLOT OVERVIEW

The path of corruption is a well-trodden road. Many begin with small steps. Others run at full pace toward damnation, heedless of their actions and their consequences.

The plot revolves around the corruption of a rich farmer from Dalsetter, a small farming community in the northern Free Lands. Always eager to expand his wealth and make a name for himself, the farmer was easily prey for the church of Vali.

The winter grain stores from Dalsetter and other villages are transported to the mill at Dunross, where they are stored and guarded while awaiting grinding into flour. Bread is a staple part of the diet across the land of Rassilon, especially in winter.

A paladin of Vali, Gautrek, a shapeleaper, worshipping his aspect as lord of vermin, convinced the farmer he could make a fortune by withdrawing his flour early and storing it in his sheds in Dalsetter. An accident at Dunross would ensure the other villages' grain and flour were spoiled. Thus, the only source of flour over the remaining winter months would be the farmer's supply. He could, the paladin said, raise prices and make a small fortune, or he could sell the flour at normal rates and be hailed as the savior of the region. Which option he took was left to his personal choice.

The farmer, lured by the promise of higher profits rather than fame, duly removed his flour from Dunross, totally unaware of what was to follow. To ensure there was no chance of the other villages retrieving their flour stocks, the paladin arranged for rats to begin infesting the village. Using an ancient relic, he has called forth an army of rodents to devour the remaining stores.

What the farmer doesn't know is that the paladin plans to poison the flour. While many in the region will die of starvation, those who eat the bread made with the flour will die a horrible death. Naturally, the farmer will be blamed for this disaster. The church of Vali thus enjoys the spectacle of corruption and decay, all in one fell swoop. Of course, the presence of the heroes is an unexpected one in the paladin's plans.

The adventure breaks down into three parts. In part one, the heroes are hired by an innocent farmer-merchant to travel to Dunross and collect some flour destined for Dalsetter (the rich farmer isn't the only landowner in the village, though he is the largest). Arriving at Dunross, they quickly discover the place is overrun with rats. As they prepare to leave, the rat army invades, forcing them to flee.

In part two, the heroes visit Dalsetter, where they uncover both strands of the dastardly plot—the farmer's complicity and the paladin's poison. This is mainly a roleplaying section, though there is some combat. In the final part, the heroes travel to a temple of Vali, where they face the paladin and his rat legions. This is very much a combat-oriented chapter.

All being well, by the end of the adventure the heroes will have stopped an insidious plot which could have resulted in the deaths of hundreds or thousands of innocent citizens.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

D-10: A paladin of Vali, god of vermin and pestilence, corrupts a local merchant, promising wealth or fame in return for performing a simple act.

D-7: Caravans from Dalsetter arrive at Dunross and empty a warehouse. Large numbers of rats begin infesting Dunross hours later.

D-6: The mayor of Dunross sends a letter to the authorities in Aslov asking for assistance in combating the rat plague.

D-5: A caravan set for the Citadel leaves Dunross. It is attacked by vicious swarms of rats as it rests at a travel tower that night. The adventurers discover the aftermath on their journey to the mill.

D: The adventure begins.

D+1: The heroes encounter an orc ambush and a deserted tower.

D+2: After coming across a slain rider carrying a message from Dunross, the characters arrive at the mill. What happens from here on depends on the actions of the adventurers.

PART 1: DEATH IN DUNROSS

The heroes begin the adventure as strangers to each other, lured together by a promise of work and material rewards. Should this adventure be run after the heroes have already met, the GM must change the beginning accordingly.

The Four Sheaves isn't the best tavern in Rassilon, but it's warm, and the food is almost palatable. Two days ago, you answered a flyer nailed in the market square of Aslov, calling for men and women of stout heart seeking adventure. The notice said to meet here, a small tavern in a village a few miles north of Aslov.

On arriving, you found the table you were told to wait at was not empty. It seems others answered the call as well. There is no sign of the patron you were told to meet, so there seems little else to do but spend a few coins on food and drink.

Give the heroes a chance to introduce themselves. There's no need to rush this opening. Only when the heroes have finished introductions should you continue with the text below.

The tavern door opens and in steps a well-dressed man. The man takes off his cloak and shakes off the snow. He approaches your table without looking around, bows politely, and takes the last seat.

"My name is Rodgar ap-Annwn," he says after ordering another round of drinks, "a farmer from the village of Dalsetter. Thank you all for coming.

"In return for 50 gold scields apiece, I wish you to take a cart to the village of Dunross and collect a shipment of flour. The flour then needs to be taken to the baker in Dalsetter. It shouldn't take you more than a few days each way. I would go myself, but I'm forced to stay in Aslov due to other business. Take what I owe you for your services out of the money the baker pays you and drop the rest off at my house. The baker knows where I live. I'll collect it later.

"I know it's poor weather for traveling, but word has reached me the baker has run out of flour. A poor harvest and cold winter meant we were rather short of flour before the snows began. These are emergency supplies, vital if Dalsetter is going to survive the winter."

He reaches into his jacket and pulls out a scroll, which he places in front of you. "This is a map of the area, just in case." He then pulls out an envelope from his jacket. "This is a letter authorizing you to collect the flour for me. Just hand it over to the granary supervisor in Dunross."

Rodgar then explains that Dunross has a large mill, which serves the neighboring farming villages. Grain is transported to the village and stored in granaries before being ground into flour. This system gives the smaller villages in the surrounding area access to a mill without the expense of having to build and maintain their own.

Assuming the heroes accept the job, Rodgar shakes them by the hand and leaves. Outside the tavern is a covered wagon. Two surly-looking horses, nuzzling through the snow for grass, are tethered to the cart. Thick winter blankets are thrown over each horse. The wagon currently holds several bags of oats, enough to feed the horses for four days.

Ⓜ **Cart Horses (2):** See page 26.

WAGON

Acc/Top Speed: Half animal's Pace/Top Speed is animal's Pace + running die; Toughness: 10 (2); Crew: 1+10; Cost: 100 gs

GM INFORMATION: ASLOV

Aslov lies at the edge of the Jagged Peaks and is the first settlement of note south of Hellfrost Pass. It is also a town entering its twilight years.

The city has far exceeded its capacity to house refugees. Hundreds of desperate souls live outside in tents, surviving on charity and what little food they can scavenge from the surrounding countryside. The area has become known as Tent Town. The city gates are closed at night, but the city guard patrols the perimeter around the clock, for in Tent Town, a scrap of black bread or sliver of rancid meat is enough motive to commit murder.

Inside, the city is divided into the High Quarter, which houses the rich and powerful, as well as the merchants' warehouses, and the Old City, where the majority of folk live.

Whereas the High Quarter remains uncrowded (the citizens have refused to allow refugees to live there), the Old City is teeming with people, the majority of which are refugees fleeing their homes in the High Winterlands. The wealthy of Aslov never walk the Old City without armed guards.

Disease is a constant problem, as is the ever-increasing crime level. Murder rates have doubled, with citizens killing each other for a crust of bread, and theft has risen by many times as citizens rob each other to pawn goods so as to buy food. Dozens of citizens vanish each night. Many are simply murdered for their few possessions and their bodies dumped in the overworked sewers, but some are sacrificed by the growing number of cultists or, more sickeningly, become part of the food chain.

Despite being surrounded by good farmland, the shortening summers and influx of people has led to very low food supplies and starvation is a constant problem. Food riots have broken out several times, the last one having to be quashed with lethal force to restore order to the town.

A DANGEROUS ROAD

During the journey, the heroes have three encounters. These occur in the order they are presented below. The first occurs in the afternoon, the second in early evening, and the third in the morning on the second day of travel.

AMBUSH!

After a quick stop to eat lunch and rest the horses, you set off again. The snow underfoot is thin and crunchy, a brief flurry five days ago being the last snow to fall in the region. Yet the harsh winter is approaching, and soon the landscape will be blanketed in white. The road begins to climb towards the forbidding slopes of the Jagged Peaks, a region inhabited by all manner of fearsome beasts.

Check for Surprise. Those who pass the roll are quick enough to react as four orcs armed with bows pop up from behind nearby gorse bushes. The orcs are 15" from the right side of the wagon and have Light Cover from the bushes.

Monsters: The orcs are part of a small hunting party from the Jagged Peaks, out looking for meat and treasure. They have already killed one person and taken some horse flesh (see p. 9), but they seek more spoils. Although they don't consider the heroes edible, their horses certainly are. The orcs are also hopeful the wagon contains food or booty.

Ⓜ **Orc Warriors (1 per hero):** See page 26.

Tactics: On the first round, the orcs unleash arrows at the party. If the heroes don't move to attack, the orcs continue this tactic. To engage in melee, the orcs must throw down their bows and ready their shields, which are slung across their backs. This takes an action. Their short swords are thrust into the ground beside them and can be withdrawn easily (a free action).

Treasure: Once the orcs are dead, the heroes are free to search their corpses. Aside from a few coins spread among the bodies (2d10 gold scields worth), one of them has a well-made dagger, obviously not of orcish origin. Another is wearing heavy riding boots, which are obviously too small for him, as his feet poke out from cuts in the toes.

THE DESERTED TOWER

As the sun sets, the temperature begins to drop steadily, and the sky clears. The night looks like it is going to be very cold.

Ahead, you spy the distinctive silhouette of a travel tower, one of the refuges constructed by the Roadwardens who protect the trade routes and byways of the land. They are sparsely spaced off the main roads, so finding one is a boon. As well you know, for a small donation, travelers are welcome to stay at the towers overnight. Given how dangerous the lands have become, few honest folk shun the hospitality or refuse to donate a few coins to help maintain the towers.

As you approach, you see the tower may already be in use. Two snow-covered wagons stand outside. Strangely, there is no sign of any horses tethered to the hitching post, nor are there any guards. Looking up, you see no smoke from the chimney, either. As the tower comes into better view, you notice the door is wide open—unusual

even on bright, summer days and unheard of in deep winter.

The air is still and silent. No birdsong breaks the quiet dusk.

There are several clues to be found outside the tower.

The Ground: A hero making a Notice roll spots the ground around the hitching post is torn up, the thin layer of snow having settled unevenly. A few minutes brushing away the snow reveals the frozen mud has been trampled by several horses.

A Tracking roll is required to make any sense of the jumble. With success, the hero estimates there were four horses, and someone or something spooked them. Fresh grooves in the hitching post and snapped leather straps indicate the horses broke free, rather than being released. There are clear indications of horses galloping away to the west.

A successful Common Knowledge roll allows the hero to estimate the wagons arrived at least five days ago—that was the last time it snowed heavily.

Wagons: Once within 12", the heroes can see a crest imprinted onto the canvas covering of the wagon. It shows two crossed barley stalks over a letter "D." The dye is extremely faded, an obvious indication the coverings have been used for some time.

Any hero inspecting the rear of the wagons automatically notices the canvas covering is shredded. Within each are the shattered remains of around 20 barrels. There are no markings on the broken wood. A Notice roll reveals traces of white powder among the snow which has blown inside. Any hero can identify the substance as flour.

A character who examines the interiors notices the floor is heavily scratched. He cannot deduce what caused the scratches or when they were made.

INSIDE THE TOWER

The tower has just two rooms, one on each floor.

Downstairs: The room is a total mess. Snow has blown in through the open door, firewood lies scattered over the floor, and the crates of provisions left here by the Roadwardens are smashed, their contents gone. A successful Notice roll reveals faint traces of blood on the floor around the fire and on the staircase. With a raise, the hero notices tiny paw prints in the blood. Identifying the tracks requires a Tracking roll. With success, the hero deduces they were made by rats.

Any hero making a successful Common Knowledge roll can deduce the fire was in the process of being stacked when whatever fate befell the tower occurred.

Upstairs: The upstairs chamber is a scene of carnage. Four skeletons lie on the bare, stone floor, which is covered in frozen blood. Their weapons, short swords, lie on the floor beside them, smeared with blood.

A Notice roll from a hero studying the bones reveals hundreds of tiny bite marks. There is not a scrap of flesh left on the bones. Most of the skeleton's clothing is gone, apparently torn away, but one fragment shows the symbol of two barley stalks crossed over a "D."

Though the heroes may be wary of staying in the tower, it is a far safer option than risking camping outside. A heavy bar allows the front door to be locked from the inside and there are no windows—only narrow arrow slits. Should the heroes decide to sleep outdoors, the GM should feel free to have them attacked by a small band of orcs or perhaps a pack of hungry wolves. The temperature outside also drops to an uncomfortable –8 degrees F.

Spending the night in the tower results in no encounters, and the fire keeps the temperature comfortably warm.

A DEAD RIDER

Several hours later, the heroes pass through a small copse. Lying in the middle of the path is a riding horse, its body riddled with arrows. On investigating, the heroes quickly discover the rider lying in the scrub nearby, a single arrow in his back.

A Healing roll allows a hero to deduce the corpse is maybe three days old. The arrows are black-fletched and are man-killers. A successful Knowledge (Orcs) roll or a Common Knowledge roll at –2 reveals the arrows are of orc manufacture. With a raise on the Knowledge (Orcs) roll, the hero recognizes these as belonging to the Eye Piercer tribe, brutes renowned for their prowess with bows.

The horse is missing several large chunks of flesh. A successful Survival roll reveals the flesh has been hacked away rather than torn off by wolves or other predators. Whoever cut the meat was no skilled butcher.

Any hero searching the corpse of the rider automatically finds a crumpled letter. Give the players Player Handout #1. The letter is dated one week ago. The rider has no coins, jewelry, weapons, or indeed anything other than his clothes. He is even missing his boots.

DUNROSS

Following the branch from the road, you approach the village of Dunross in the early afternoon. Through the trees which line the hills you spy thin columns of smoke, too small for major fires, but too thick to be those of chimneys.

Rounding a bend in the road, you spy the village. An earth rampart topped by a stout fence protects the village, broken by a double gate. The gate is currently closed. A stream runs alongside the road leading to the village. Chunks of ice bobbing up and down indicate someone is keeping the stream running.

As you approach, a group of burly guards jump

down from barrels they were using as seats and call out for you to halt, leveling their crossbows to ensure you comply.

Should the heroes not stop the wagon, one of the guards fires a warning shot over their heads. If this doesn't elicit the intended result, they open fire on the heroes. Hopefully, the heroes comply with their wishes. Once the wagon stops, the leader of the band approaches the wagon.

"Turn back," he says in a gruff voice. "The village is under quarantine. No one can enter." He then turns his back on you and begins to walk back to his post.

The guard returns to the wagon if the heroes open dialogue. Depending on the heroes' comments, the guard can reveal the following information.

** "I don't care what your letter says. You still can't come in!"*

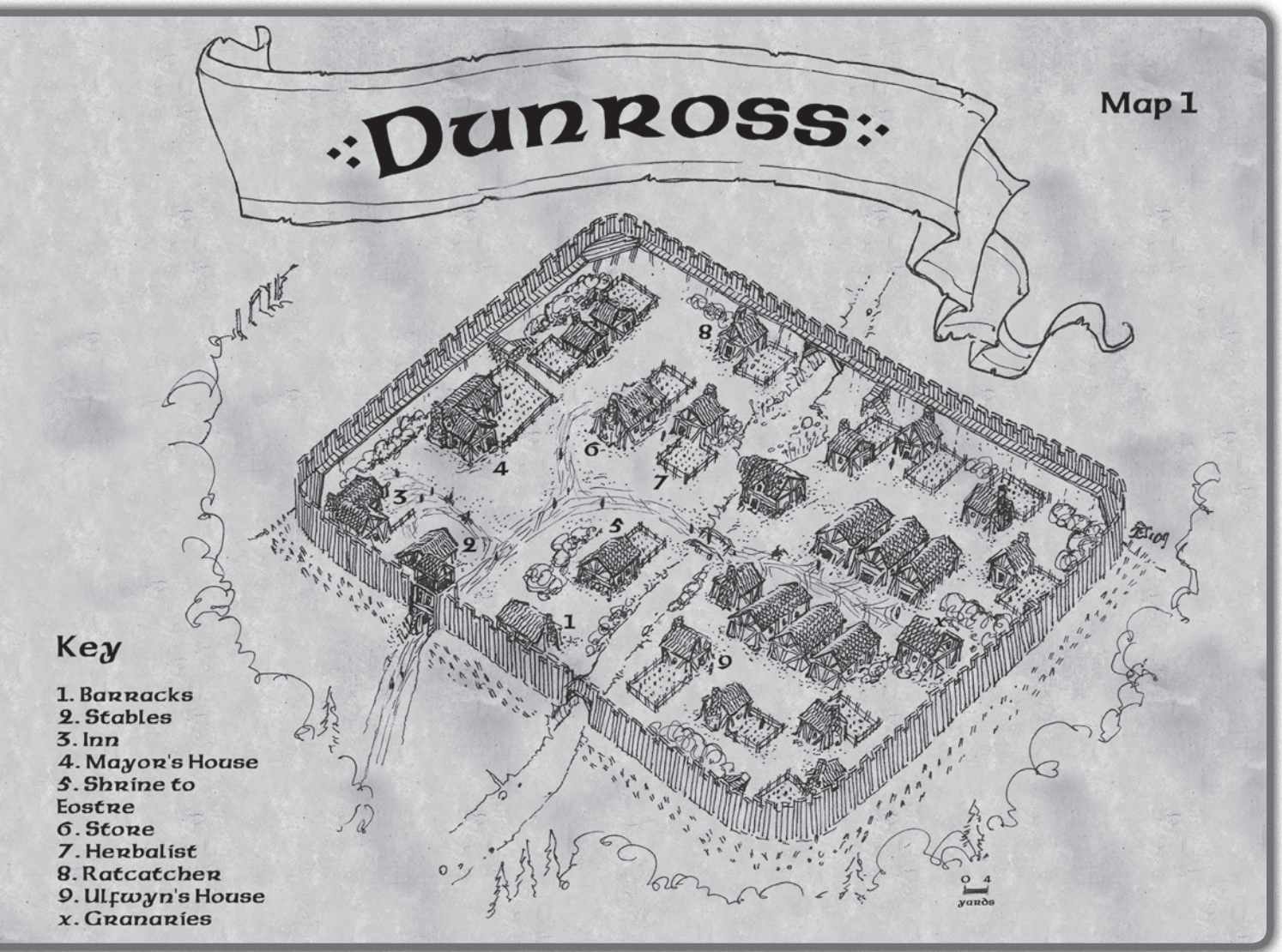
** "Dalsetter needs flour? Ha! All they'll get from us is dust and disease. Go on, get away from here before the rats bite you."*

** "Rats, that's what I mean. Hundreds of the blighters. They've eaten most of the supplies and are spreading pox among the citizens."*

** "Started appearing a week ago now: just a few at first, then more and more each day. We've tried everything to get rid of them, but nothing works. Little sods seem immune to poison and the rat-catcher is working overtime."*

** "Nosey aren't you? That's oil in those barrels. If it comes to the worst, we'll roll them into the village and burn the rats out!"*

The guard is an old, experienced soldier and cannot be Intimidated to allow the heroes entrance. However,



he can be Persuaded with a suitable story (preferably roleplayed) and a –4 penalty. Each 5 gold scields in bribes grants a +1 bonus to this roll, to a maximum of +4. Characters with Healing or herbalism skills or the *healing* spell give the speaker a +4 bonus so long as they can prove their skills—the village needs good healers. With success, the guard sighs heavily and orders the gates opened. He then waves the wagon through. On a failure, he refuses to open the gates.

Once inside, the heroes quickly learn the guard was not joking about the rats. They swarm around the ground like a black carpet, biting at legs, scratching at doors, and clambering up buildings. As the wagon moves forward, it is accompanied by squeals and crunches as the wheels crush rats beneath them. There is no sign of any cats (the rats ate them), and the only dogs are vicious terriers, snarling and snapping at scurrying rodents.

The black columns of smoke the heroes saw from afar are from dozens of bonfires fuelled by dead rats. Their acrid smoke drifts lazily into the clouding sky.

The heroes can certainly take the time to club a few rats if they so wish, but their efforts achieve very little. There are simply too many of them to handle. Even *burst* spells have little effect, as the rats are currently quite dispersed. Chances are a spellcaster will suffer the Siphoning before he can kill more than a few dozen.

Ⓜ **Town Watch (4):** See page 27.

IMPORTANT FOLK

Dunross has a few important folk the heroes may wish to talk with while they are here. None of the NPCs are interested in fighting the heroes, thus they are not given full stat blocks.

HEALER, FLORA GODWINSDOTTIR

Dunross has no priestess of Eira or Sister of Mercy, but there is an herbalist who doubles as a healer for basic injuries. She has no magical powers. Treat her as a Citizen (p. 26) but with Healing d6 and Knowledge (Herbalism) d6. She has no herbal remedies in stock.

"These rats will be the death of us all! They have eaten most of the flour already and their bite spreads disease. Every one is riddled with fleas as well. Fortunately, they don't spread disease!

"If you get bitten, the area around the bite swells up and goes numb. That's if you're lucky, anyway. In many folk their blood turns black, and when it reaches the brain, they develop a raging brain fever. Many have died, their body wracked with spasms and their bile as black as pitch.

"My stock of herbs has run out, and it's all I can do to clean the wounds and stop the sickness spreading."

MAYOR, UMBOLD AP-RUTGER

"It's a disaster! Everything edible is gone! Oh dear gods, what have we done to deserve this pestilence? And where are the soldiers from Aslov, eh? We sent a messenger to Aslov a week ago, but we have heard nothing! Nothing! They can't have forsaken us! I'm sorry, I'm sure your business here is important, but I have more pressing matters.

"What? Evacuate the village, in this weather? Are you insane? We have to protect the granaries! The outlying villages need these supplies! Anyway, we haven't any wagons to spare—the farmers bring their own wagons with them."

The mayor reacts with cries of anguish if shown the letter taken from the dead horseman and begins ranting about the lack of protection for caravans.

Treat the mayor as a Citizen (p. 26) but with Intimidation and Persuasion d6.

PRIESTESS OF EOSTRE, AGNES LEAFDOWN

"Disaster has befallen us! Eostre has judged us unworthy of her protection! I tried creating a wall of thorns across the bridge, but the rats swam the stream. My power to control beasts is of no use, for some foul summoner has brought forth these beasts with fell arts, and even my ability to create food cannot feed all the villagers. I fear the hand of dark gods is at work here!"

Treat Agnes as a Citizen (p. 26) but with the Arcane Background (Miracles) Edge and Faith d8. She knows the following spells: *barrier, beast friend, bolt*, and *feast* (see page 22).

RATCATCHER, GEB THREE-TOES

"Business has never been so good! Rats began coming in over a week ago now I 'spose. 'Course, we always had rats here, but never enough so me and Snapper couldn't handle 'em." He indicates a vicious looking one-eyed terrier at his heels."

"But these rats is vicious. Biting and snapping at goodly folk like they was something good to eat. Never seen so many rats at once, and I been doing this job nigh on 20 years now. If you fancy honest work, I can sign you up to the Guild. Good rates of pay—one silver per ten rats. Man could make a fortune in a day, if he survives the pox."

Treat Geb as a Citizen (p. 26) but with Shooting d8

and a sling (Range: 4/8/16, Damage Str+d4). Although only a terrier, Snapper uses the stats of a dog because of his ferociousness.

THE GRANARIES

The granaries are located on the east side of the village, across a stream. Each is marked with the symbol of one or more farming families from the neighboring villages. Rodgar's granary is marked X on the map of Dunross.

As the wagon trundles toward the granaries, a scruffy, hunchbacked man limps over to you and waves for you to stop. While he waits, he swats a few rats with a gnarled stick, a solid lump at one end.

"I'm Ulfwyn," he says, "Master of the Granaries. Do you have business here, good sirs?"

Ulfwyn carefully inspects the letter of introduction, glances repeatedly at the heroes, scratches his chin, and then nods.

"Right this way, sirs," he says, hopping onto the wagon. "That one there, number two. I must say, though, this is most unexpected. We weren't expecting anyone from Dalsetter again so soon. Still, it's the second time in recent days strange things have happened, so I shouldn't be surprised."

If questioned about his last statement, Ulfwyn nods several times before replying.

"A handful of hours 'fore the rats came, a train of wagons belonging to the owner of granary one arrived and loaded the entire contents. A masterful stroke of good fortune! The man must be very devout to receive such a blessing. I don't think he lost anything to the rats. At least some folks'll eat this winter."

The heroes can see the doors of Granary 1 (the one to the left of Rodgar's) carry a single merchant's mark, an apple tree with a sheaf of wheat beneath it. Ulfwyn has no idea who owns the granary or where they come from—he simply identifies goods by their mark and stores them in the correct granary. However, he does remember two important facts—the leader of the wagon train said his name was Otto Edmundsunu and he mentioned the village of Dalsetter.

The mystery merchant mark belongs to Penda Ranulfsunu, a well-known and respected farmer. In many ways, he is another victim of recent events. He is encountered in the next chapter.

Rodgar's granary has several merchant marks on it. Ulfwyn points to one showing a load of bread with a stalk of barley growing from it and identifies that as their patron's. Ulfwyn unlocks the doors to Rodgar's granary and shows the heroes inside.

Within are a stack of sacks, all showing signs of having been gnawed upon. The floor is littered with rat droppings, a few rat carcasses, and the contents of many sacks of flour. Of the 50 sacks in here, only 30 are fit for use. Loading the hefty sacks takes around an hour, allowing characters opposed to manual labor the chance to go and talk to the locals. As soon as the last sack is loaded, proceed with the section entitled **The Death of Dunross** (see below).

Should the heroes question Ulfwyn about the merchant's mark on the wagons at the trade tower, he points to the central southern granary.

"Two wagons came by about six days ago, now. Loaded sacks of flour onto the wagons and headed off. They'd lost a few to the rats, but things weren't so bad back then. I think they were heading to the Citadel. You know, that vast fortress in the Jagged Peaks where they store all the magic. They had the right paperwork and that's all I cared about."

GRANARY #1

Any hero investigating Granary #1 must make a Notice roll. With success, the hero detects no sign of rat activity around the building—no paw prints in the snow, scratches at the door, signs of digging beneath the walls, or droppings are evident. It is the only granary showing no sign of rats.

On a raise, he discovers strange markings carved on the doors and along the outer walls. Deciphering the runes requires a Knowledge (Arcana) or (Religion) roll. Followers of Eostre, goddess of nature, may use Common Knowledge, instead. With success, the hero knows the runes are wardings. Though they have no magical powers, they are often inscribed on warehouses and granaries in the hope Eostre, goddess of agriculture, is paying attention and keeps rats away.

Searching the other granaries reveals no such markings. However, there is clear indication that each granary once had similar glyphs—they have all been deliberately scratched out.

THE DEATH OF DUNROSS

Barely is the last sack loaded and secure when high-pitched screams echo across the village. Looking around, you spy a woman clutching her face with one hand and pointing at the western wall with the others.

At first you can see nothing but an eerie black mass, boiling over the fence. Then, with horror, you recognize the mass for what it truly is—a vast horde of rats! Another scream from the east, another wall of rats, gnashing, hissing, biting,

clawing. Among the swarm are other rats, each the size of a small pony, their yellow eyes glinting with malicious intent.

Panic sweeps the village in seconds, as the rats advance on the terrified locals. As you watch in horror, villagers are dragged to the ground under the weight of rats and viciously attacked. The scent of blood quickly fills the air, stirring the rats into further frenzy and spooking your horses.

There is absolutely *no* chance the heroes can save the village. There are effectively an infinite number of rats, both giant and swarms. All they can do is hope to escape and save a few souls. Should the heroes try to do anything other than escape, send a rat swarm against them. If the swarm is killed, send another and another until the heroes either get the message or are slain.

The cart begins 32" from the gate and moves at Pace 8. It cannot move any faster due to the panicking villagers in the way. Deal initiative cards as normal. This isn't a chase—it's a battle. The cart moves on the driver's action card and requires an action (but no Riding roll) to keep the wagon moving straight and control the panicking horses.

On the first round, 1d4 giant rats leap onto the back of the wagon and begin savaging the heroes. Each round thereafter until the cart is out of the village a further 1d2 giant rats attack the party. Each round of combat, both horses automatically take 2d4 damage on the rats' initiative card from the numerous rat swarms they must move through.

This can be negated for a single round if a hero destroys a swarm in front of the horses before the rats act in a round, or if the horses can be persuaded to make a Fighting roll and stomp a swarm into the snow and mud. Convincing the frightened horses to attack requires a Riding roll as an action from one of the characters. The horses can then attack on their next action. This procedure must be repeated each round.

If one horse is Shaken or killed, or both are Shaken in the same round, the cart slows to Pace 4. Should both be slain, the cart stops—it's time for the heroes to start running. Running heroes are attacked by a single swarm, which follows them until it is destroyed. At that point another swarm attacks. There is no end to the number of rat swarms available.

Heroes may take time out from killing rats to rescue people near the cart. Trying to save the entire village is foolish—saving a few souls is worthy of praise. Each round, 1d6 villagers are close enough to the cart to rescue. Aiding one requires a Strength roll as a Cooperative action (the villager assists the hero by trying to clamber on the wagon). Assisting two citizens still counts as a single action, but the hero suffers a –2 penalty to his Strength rolls as he can only use one arm per villager instead of both his arms. Those the heroes do not rescue by the end of the round are torn to pieces by rats.

The escape should be exciting and scary, but it should not be a massacre (unless the heroes elect to try and save the village).

OPTION

If the heroes have access to *burst*, they have an area effect spell and thus the potential to deal with a swarm. In this instance, on round three, instead of 1d3 giant rats, a single swarm attacks the cart. The rats pile onto the back of the cart and begin attacking the heroes. The sacks are flammable and have a chance of catching fire if a fire trapping is used.

Fortunately for the heroes, the guards outside were opening the gate for guard change when the rats attacked. This saves the heroes having to waste time opening the gate. Only one guard is left, surrounded by rats kept at bay by his burning torch. He realizes the village is lost and plans to ensure the rats never escape.

On the round the heroes reach the gate (with or without the cart), the guard is overpowered by the rats. As his dying action, he pushes over several barrels, whose contents flow rapidly into the village. He tosses the torch to the heroes and screams, *"Burn them! Burn them all!"* as the rats rip him to pieces. Throwing the torch into the oil automatically starts a raging fire. The fire quickly ignites the other barrels and spreads into the village. The squeals of burning rats and stench of burning flesh fill the air long into the night.

Should the heroes refuse to burn the village, perhaps fearful of killing innocents, a villager inside the walls spots the oil and ignites it. Whatever happens, Dunross must burn!

Ⓜ **Giant Rats (unlimited):** See page 27.
Ⓜ **Rat Swarm (unlimited):** See page 27.

PART 2: THE VILLAGE OF DALSETTER

Any rescued villagers thank the adventurers. They plan to march to Aslov and inform the ruler in person. They beg the characters to find out what caused the attack, so other villagers do not suffer a similar fate.

Whether or not the heroes escaped Dunross with the flour, Dalsetter should be their next destination. As well as being closer than Aslov, it was mentioned by Otto Edmundsunu, the mysterious visitor. Whether or not his visit just before the rats appeared is a coincidence is something the heroes must learn for themselves.

Heroes determined to return to Aslov should be allowed a Common Knowledge roll. With success, they know Dunross is outside of Aslov's jurisdiction and the city has problems of its own—such is the nature of life in the Free Lands. That aside, Dunross is dead and likely cannot be rebuilt under the snow's melt in spring. Vengeance, however, does not care about the weather.

GM INFORMATION: THE CITADEL

The Citadel serves as the headquarters of the Reliquary. Located on the slopes of the Jagged Peaks, the fortress appears as little more than a small castle of antiquated design. In truth, the fortress extends far beneath the mountain.

The upper castle contains mainly living quarters of the soldiers and servants, kitchens, and mundane stores. A visitor would not think it any different from a typical castle of old.

On the lower levels, reached only by hidden staircases, are libraries, laboratories, and vaults housing a plethora of magical relics. The deeper one goes, the more powerful the relics stored there become. Naturally, the guardians, both mundane and magical, also become more powerful.

Numerous glyphs, as well as more mundane traps, protect all of the vaults. In addition, members of the Guardians of the Arcane, the militant arm of the Reliquary, constantly patrol the corridors. It is believed that the vaults are thief proof, and certainly no thief has ever boasted of cracking the security. This isn't to say none have tried; only that none have succeeded (most do not survive the attempt).

Access to the vaults is strictly limited, and only senior Arcanologists have ready access. To protect these sages from would-be thieves, and ensure none get the idea of selling artifacts, a bodyguard of two to four Guardians always accompanies them.

THE CITADEL

The party may wish to visit the Citadel, which Ulfwyn mentioned in passing. It is common knowledge that the Citadel is home to an organization known as the Reliquary. Their sole purpose is to locate, seize, and store magic items, thus preventing them from being misused by misguided individuals. The organization has no charitable side and provides absolutely no assistance to the heroes. Indeed, if the heroes turn up at the Citadel (it takes three days to reach the fortress from Dunross), they are denied entrance and warned to leave or face dire consequences.

Heroes thinking of raiding the Citadel can make a Common Knowledge roll. With success, they have heard of the terrible traps, fearsome guards, and powerful magic which guard the vaults. In the centuries since the Reliquary was founded, no one has ever gained illegal access to their hoard and lived to tell of their exploits.

If the party is adamant about launching a break-in, it's quicker just to say their characters die a horrible death within minutes of entering and move on to another adventure or restart this one with new characters hired to investigate the rat problem—they have *absolutely zero* chance of success.

DALSETTER

Dalsetter is a small village enclosed behind a stout, wooden palisade, which is typical in these troubled times. The gates are open during daylight hours. The two guards on duty give the heroes only a cursory glance. At night, the number of guards outside the gates is doubled, the gates are barred from the inside, and two guards stand on duty behind the gate.

If asked, they provide directions to any location in the village the heroes may seek. These are likely to include the mayor (Agdi Skulisunu), the baker (Horsa), a healer (Eowyn Guthrunsdohtor), the house of the merchant who hired them, the merchant whose mark is the apple tree and wheat sheaf (Penda Ranulfsunu), a general store, and an inn (The Four Sheaves). All these locations are detailed individually below.

Important Note: For each whole day the characters remain in Dalsetter, Gautrek summons one additional rat swarm using the Idol of the Rat King (see page 25). He does not summon a swarm on the day the characters depart the village for his lair (although he may do so when the heroes finally get to meet him).

Ⓜ **Watch (2):** See page 27.

THE BAKER

A gangly youth wrapped in bulky furs runs up to the characters as they approach the bakery. He enquires as to whether they are escorting the flour shipment from Dunross. Should the heroes be on foot, the youth looks perplexed as to the lack of wagon. He then shows them to the back door of the bakery and calls for the baker.

Characters who successfully deliver the shipment of flour are handed 20 gold scields per sack by Horsa, the local baker. Out of this they are expected to take the 50 shields they are each owed and then deliver the rest to Rodgar's house. Horsa reminds the heroes of this, having received a message to that effect from the characters' patron yesterday.

Should they inform the baker the flour is ruined or has been eaten by rats, a deep frown crosses his face.

"That's worse than bad" the baker sighs. "No flour means no bread over winter. Folks are having a bad enough time as it is. This will cause us a lot of problems. Still, I'm sure you did your best, but I can't pay you for something you haven't delivered. If you're owed money, you'll have to take it up with Rodgar."

Ⓜ **Horsa the Baker:** Treat as a Citizen (page 26).

THE HEALER

Dalsetter's only healer is Eowyn Guthrunsdohtor, a wise woman trained in the art of herbal magic. While she

is unable to magically heal any injuries older than one hour, she can provide some relief through her herbal brews. With it being winter she has been unable to find many of the plants she requires, and so has only a small supply of dried ingredients to work from.

Eowyn has a small stock of dried herbs and can brew up a handful of remedies. The type of remedy, the quantity available, and the cost in gold scields per dose are shown below. Prices are non-negotiable. Eowyn won't sell her dried herbs to outsiders under any circumstances—she needs them to care for the locals over winter.

Remedy	Quantity	Cost
Antibacterial	3	25
Healing*	10	10
Regenerative	2	50
Restorative	2	35

** From these ten doses the heroes must decide the type of injury they want to balm to help cure (burns, cuts, etc.). Thus, the party could purchase eight for cuts and two for burns, or four cuts, four breakages, and two burns, or any other combination.*

Ⓜ **Eowyn Guthrunsdohtor:** Treat as a Citizen (page 26) but with Smarts d8, Knowledge (Alchemy) d8, and Survival d8.

THE MAYOR

The mayor of Dalsetter, Agdi Skulisunu, is a busy man. Getting to see him quickly requires both an Intimidation or Persuasion roll and a good reason. Mentioning the loss of Dunross certainly counts for the latter. If the hero mentions vast swarms of rats, his skill roll is made at +2. With success, the party is shown into the mayor's office. Failure means they must wait an hour.

Skulisunu listens to any tales of rats and the destruction of Dunross in total silence. Only when the heroes are finished does he speak.

"Dreadful, dreadful news," he says, shaking his head slowly. "The whole village destroyed, you say? Rats everywhere?" He pauses for a long moment. "I don't know what to do about it, really I don't. I can send a rider to Aslov to ask for assistance, but what good will that do the poor citizens of Dunross? At best they might send us some food to ensure we survive the coming winter. Still, I thank you for your bringing this terrible news to my attention. I shall, of course, order the watch to be more vigilant."

He instantly recognizes the apple tree and wheat sheaf merchant mark as that of Penda Ranulfsunu. Raising suspicions about Penda being involved in the activities at Dunross causes the mayor to defend his friend.

"Nonsense!" Agdi scoffs loudly. "I've known Penda and his family for years. The man is a major landowner in these parts and as honest as the day is long. What reason would he have for destroying Dunross, eh? His grain needs milling as much as the next. No, I think you are mistaken in your accusations. This meeting is over. Good day!"

One way to learn more about Penda without raising suspicion is not to mention any complicity in the crime, but instead simply to state that Penda had a warehouse in Dunross

Unless the mayor has terminated the meeting, he can arrange for some basic healing for the party as thanks for bringing him the terrible news. He sends them to see Eowyn Guthrunsdohtor, who cuts her prices in half. If the party has already visited her, the mayor does not offer a refund.

Ⓜ **Mayor Agdi Skulisunu:** Treat as a Citizen (page 26), but with Intimidation and Persuasion d8 and the Charismatic Edge (Charisma +2). He carries a short sword (Str+d6), more a sign of office than an offensive weapon.

THE FOUR SHEAVES

The Four Sheaves is a small inn of little renown. Much of its business comes in fall, when merchants and farmers heading to and from Dunross pass through the village.

The inn boasts a single private room, two twin rooms, and a sleeping area in the main bar. The bedrooms are poorly furnished, though each contains a fireplace and a stack of wood. Food and drink are palatable, though during winter there is little variety. Thanks to the flour shortage there is no bread. All the heroes can order is moldy cheese, dried meat, and weak vegetable broth, washed down with warm beer and thin wine (red or white).

Food/Drink	Cost (in silver)
Cheap meal	5
Beer, 4 pint pitcher	2
Wine, 1 pint pitcher	3
Accommodation	**Cost (in silver)**
Communal bar	2
Shared room	4
Private room	8
Bath	1
Stabling, with oats	5 per horse

GENERAL STORE

The general store, like many such businesses across Rassilon, suffers from supply problems in winter. The proprietor, Rudwulf Torvinsunu, keeps the basics in stock for local customers but cannot acquire much in the way of town or city goods or high-priced items (which are manufactured elsewhere) once the snow begins to settle.

Available goods are detailed below. The standard availability rules from the *Hellfrost Players' Guide* apply. Rudwulf charges outsiders 125% of the normal value in winter, though he can be haggled down. A successful Persuasion roll lowers the price to 110%, while a raise reduces it to the standard price. Prices can never drop

below this value. Note that Rudwulf's mark up is applied *after* any availability increase.

For instance, a metal flask sells for 10 gs and has an availability code of T. The base price in any village is automatically increased by 50%, giving a base price of 15 gs. Rudwulf's initial asking price is thus 125% of 15, or 18 gs & 8 ss (haggling could reduce this to either 16 gs & 5ss or 15 gs).

Category	Good Available
Armor	Any up to 100 gs*
Weapons	Any up to 100 gs*
Ammunition	Standard arrows, quarrels, and sling stones
Animals	Saddle
Clothing	Normal clothing and furs
Common Goods	Any up to 30 gs*
Unusual Goods	None
Food	Rations

** Costs are before Rudwulf's mark up but after any availability increase. For instance, a long spear is available as the base cost is 100 gs. Rudwulf offers it for sale for 125 gs, however. Conversely, a pot helm (Availability T) always costs 112 gs in a village and thus is not available.*

RODGAR'S HOUSE

Rodgar isn't back from his travels yet. His servant, Aelwic, is home, though, and it is he who greets the heroes. He informs them of his master's absence.

If any money is handed over, Aelwic takes it and writes a receipt as proof. He has no idea how much his master is owed, since he hasn't heard from him in a while, so the characters are free to rob their patron. Of course, Rodgar will eventually check with the baker, so any shortfall in his profits will be noted and acted upon.

Heroes who explain the situation in Dunross and the loss of the flour are told they had best inform the mayor quickly. Unfortunately, even with a letter from his master to show they were in his employ, Aelwic is not authorized to pay for any services. Should the flour have been lost, the best the characters can do is take up the matter with Rodgar when he returns.

Dalsetter is a law-abiding place. Attacking Aelwic or attempting to ransack the house to secure payment results in his crying loudly for help. A squad of guards arrives within 1d4 minutes and arrests the heroes.

The lawbreakers are disarmed (or attacked if they refuse to comply with the guards' orders) and thrown into jail. Here they remain until Rodgar returns (in 1d6 days). Rodgar won't press charges unless Aelwic has been murdered, but he also refuses to pay the characters for their services.

Ⓜ **Aelwic:** Treat as a Citizen (page 26).

Ⓜ **Watch (2 per hero):** See page 27.

PENDA RANULFSUNU'S HOUSE

Penda answers the door when the heroes come calling. He invites them in and offers a drink of hot broth, a common courtesy from the householder in these parts, as well the adventurers know. Because the line of questioning the heroes take could take many forms, Penda's information is given on the form of likely questions and the farmer's answers.

Q: Is your merchant mark an apple tree and wheat sheaf?

A: "Yes. My great-great-grandfather used the apple tree, but when the winter killed off his orchards he began planting grain and added the sheaf to our mark."

Q: Did you remove your flour from Dunross recently?

A: "Why yes! I had my flour removed about a week ago. Why do you ask? Are you looking to buy?"

Q: Why did you remove your flour?

A: "I saw no reason to pay warehouse costs in Dunross when I have spare sheds here. Moving the flour was purely a business decision."

A: Were you behind the rat attack?

Q: "What are you talking about? What rats?" (A successful Notice roll reveals Penda is truly surprised by talk of rats.)

Ⓜ **Penda Ranulfsunu:** Treat as a Citizen (page 26) but with Persuasion d6.

PENDA'S CONFESSION

After the heroes have explained the situation in Dunross, Penda replies as follows.

"In Eostre's name! Please tell me this is some sick joke? The entire village wiped out by hordes of rats? It's not possible! And you think I had something to do with that? How could I? How could I control so many rats? I'm not a wizard, I'm a farmer!" Penda pauses for a moment, his mouth open wide.

"No, no, it can't be! May Eostre be merciful! He never mentioned this would happen! He told me it would be an accident! This must be a coincidence. It must be a mistake!"

Pressing Penda for more information requires a successful Intimidation or Persuasion roll.

"A man approached me some ten days ago. He told me he could increase my profits or make me

famous. He said all I had to do was move my flour from Dunross as soon as possible. He said he could arrange an accident, have all the other flour ruined. My stock would then be worth a fortune.

"I know, I know, greed got the better of me, but I have enough flour to feed the villages, and those in settlements beyond. But I swear on the names of all the benevolent gods, I never knew what his plan was!" Penda then breaks down into uncontrollable fits of sobbing.

Penda, once he regains his composure, informs the heroes that he never saw the man before, nor has he seen him since. The stranger never gave a name, nor did he leave details of where he could be reached. Penda describes the man as tall, slim, with a trimmed black beard, and buckteeth.

If asked, Penda reveals his flour is kept in the sheds near his house. He leads the heroes there if asked.

Should the heroes not visit the sheds, they must decide what to do with Penda. It is not their place to determine guilt or innocence, so he should be handed over to the local authorities. Slaying Penda not only earns the entire party a –20 Glory penalty, but it also makes them murderers. They gain the Minor Wanted Hindrance in Dalsetter and the surrounding villages (about a 20 mile radius of the village). While Penda will confess his crime to the mayor, he never comes to trial—an assassin makes sure of that.

THE FLOUR SHEDS

As part of his plan, the paladin intends to poison the flour. That aspect of the plan is taking place now; a pair of orcs and a few giant rats having entered the flour sheds only moments before the heroes arrived in the village.

Don't worry if the heroes never visit the sheds—*Hellfrost* isn't a setting where the good guys always win. Unless discovered during the day, the orcs poison the flour and depart once night falls, leaving no trace they were ever present. Hundreds will die of poisoning, and many hundreds more of starvation, thanks to the chronic flour shortage.

The door to the flour sheds is locked. Penda, if present, uses his key but is surprised when the door refuses to open. Characters without Penda who pick the lock similarly find it won't budge. Having picked the lock, the orcs inside the flour sheds have placed sacks against the door. Battering the door open requires a Strength roll at –2 (up to two heroes can cooperate on this task). Success gains the characters Surprise, whereas a failed roll alerts the intruders and gives them time to prepare.

Terrain: There are three flour sheds, each measuring 5" to a side. They are attached together to form a single 15" long shed, with a sturdy door between each shed. These are currently open. The central line of squares along the sheds is clear terrain. The adjacent squares are partially covered in flour sacks and are treated as difficult ground. Squares against the sides of the sheds are stacked high with sacks and cannot be moved through. Note the sacks are laid carefully in overlapping fashion, making tipping them extremely difficult (Strength roll at –2 as an action).

The air in the shed is thick with floury dust, which is extremely flammable. Any fire-based (but not heat-based) offensive magic, such as *blast, bolt,* or *burst,* inflicts an additional d6 damage. Such spells also cause the dust to explode. Everyone in the sheds suffers 3d6 damage. This is in addition to damage caused by the spell. The roof and sides of the sheds shatter outward. Fortunately, the majority of flour survives the blast intact.

Monsters: The giant rats are in the first flour shed (the one the heroes enter), while the two orcs are in the rear. The orcs do not have weapons drawn if they are caught by surprise—rather, each holds a vial of poison. Several sacks have been poisoned already, though they are too few to cause any famine. Each set of villains receives their own action card.

Overcome with guilt at his actions and eager for revenge, Penda joins in the fight. Rather than give an Ally Sheet to a player (who might try to keep the merchant alive by having him avoid the engagement), the GM should control Penda's action. It makes no difference to the adventure if Penda lives or dies.

Ⓜ **Orc Warriors (2):** See page 26.

Ⓜ **Giant Rats (1 per hero):** See page 27.

Ⓜ **Penda Ranulfsunu:** Treat as a Citizen (page 26) but with Persuasion d6.

Treasure: The orcs are carrying 7 gs between them.

TRACKING THE VILLAIN

There are three ways to locate the villain's lair.

First, an orc who survived the heroes' onslaught may be interrogated. Questioners must be able to speak Orcish. A successful Intimidation roll at –2 causes the orc to reveal his master, whose name he doesn't know, is living in a ruined structure a day's march north. Any character making a Knowledge (Area: Freelands) roll at –2 knows of the structure—a ruined tower ravaged during the Blizzard War.

The orc also reveals his master's description—it matches what Penda gave the heroes (or Penda can confirm it if he hasn't yet been asked about his contact).

Alternately, Penda (if alive) can remember that the man who contacted him always rode away to the north. A Knowledge (Area: Freelands) roll as above allows a character to recall the crumbling ruin. Penda, a native of this region, makes a Common Knowledge to remember the ruin.

Characters who think to check the map Rodgar gave them automatically notice the tower drawn above Dalsetter. Even if the heroes don't have any information indicating it as a potential lair, it warrants further inspection as a possibility.

PART 3: LAIR OF THE VERMIN LORD

Armed with the location of Vali's temple, the heroes can now deal with the cause of the problem besetting the region.

Not every rat died in Dunross. Through his furry agents, the paladin of Vali has learned that someone survived the attack. Rats aren't great at describing bipedal sentient creatures (they all look the same to them), so the paladin doesn't know exactly who they are. Similarly, unless one of his minions from Dalsetter escapes, he has no idea the characters are on his tail.

GM NOTES

COMMON FEATURES

Unless otherwise indicated in the text below, all doors are wooden and unlocked. A locked door can be picked with Lockpicking or battered down (Toughness 8). Doors sealed by a horizontal bar have Toughness 10 and cannot be picked—they must be forced open with brute strength.

The chambers within the walls of the upper temple and the tower are 12' high. The ceiling in the upper stairwell chamber is 18' high. Cavern ceilings are 24' high, the corridors rise to only 7', and the main temple ceiling stands 36' above the floor.

All rooms and corridors are unlit unless they contain orcs or Gautrek. In these areas hang enough torches to provide good lighting conditions. Assume each room holds one torch per 4" of wall. If between one-third and one-half the total number of torches are extinguished the lighting in the room drops to Dim (–1). Removing between a half and all but one makes the lighting conditions Dark (–2). Extinguishing all the torches leaves the room Pitch Black (–4).

Areas containing furnishings or obstacles that fill all or part of a square, and which reasonably allow movement through, over, under, or past the obstacle, are considered difficult ground. For instance, a table filling a square is difficult ground as a hero can leap over it or duck underneath. However, a column or stalagmite filling an entire square allows no movement through its square.

Each orc is carrying 1d6 gs worth of coin and easily sellable goods.

ALARM!

For the most part the inhabitants exist in "time bubbles." That is, no matter what time of day the characters enter the temple the occupants are in the locations stated in the text. However, the defenders are neither deaf nor stupid. Should an alarm be raised or sounds of battle be heard, they react to the disturbance.

Rat swarms and giant rats become agitated. Those whose progress is not impeded (such as by a locked door) immediately rush off to investigate. The sentient defenders, such as the paladin of Vali and his orc bodyguard, move more cautiously, alerting comrades as they go.

Intelligent defenders know the layout of the temple and make best use of terrain to arrange an ambush for the uninvited guests. The priest uses his spells to augment any ambush, such as by casting *barrier* behind opponents to prevent them from fleeing his minions or to force them down a specific route.

During any counterattack the GM should play fair—he knows where the characters are, but the defenders do not. Unless specific instructions are received from a creature under attack, the defenders can, at best, navigate to the site of the battle by sound alone.

Likewise, the specific makeup of the party won't be known by the defenders until they encounter the heroes and see them in action. Thus, unless a spellcaster is viewed casting a spell, the defenders won't know he's a cleric or mage and won't be able to devise tactics to lessen the effects of his spells, such as splitting up to give area effect spells fewer targets.

REARMING

In the event the heroes are forced to retreat and launch a second (or third, or fourth) assault on the temple after a period of delay (say for healing), the defenders recover some of their losses. For each day that passes the paladin summons one rat swarm to aid him through a powerful relic (see **Idol of the Rat King** on page 25). On every fourth day (half a week) the temple gains one giant rat thanks to Vali's intervention. Once per week, an orc in the service of Vali arrives at the temple.

Gautrek, the paladin of Vali, has no access to healing magic. As such, he must recover his wounds through natural healing. The more wounds he has when the heroes return should alter his tactics. To begin with he is overconfident, preferring not to expend his minions unnecessarily. However, on subsequent visits the characters should find him more cautious with regard to his own life and more eager to launch a frontal assault on the invaders to prevent them from reaching him.

In the event the heroes are battered and bruised but the defenders are not, Gautrek orders giant rats and swarms to search the surrounding wilderness for the heroes. The strength of these attacks is left for the GM to determine, but the attacks always occur at night. The rats don't have the ability to see in the dark, but neither do the heroes, and a swarm has little need for sight.

Should Gautrek be slain, the magic binding the rats to him is dispelled. The creatures then revert to their natural state—giant rats attack the nearest non-rat foe, while the swarms disperse into the wilds. Unless the Rat

King (page 25) is also slain, an army of giant rats begins plaguing the lands in spring 500 IR.

THE UPPER TEMPLE

The temple of Vali is spread over two levels. The upper story is a ruined tower, which houses only a few guardians and serves as a lookout post. The true temple is located beneath the ground, in a warren of corridors and tunnels which once served as a temple to Ertha.

APPROACH

The outpost sits atop a low, flat hill. Small boulders and leafless bushes litter the lower slopes, allowing the characters to approach to within 100 yards (50") unseen. Beyond this, the debris thins to the point of being nonexistent within 40 yards (20") of the front gate.

Nighttime conditions for launching a raid are only slightly better than during the day—clear skies and a bright moon reduce the lighting to just Dim (+1 to Stealth rolls, –1 to rolls involving sight).

1) WATCHTOWER

At last the old building you seek comes into clear view. A squat stone tower, its top floor long since destroyed, rises some 20 feet above the hilltop. To the east of the tower's base extends the façade of a low structure, the cracked, stone wall, broken only by a pair of double gates. Rotten and shattered, they hang precariously in the entranceway.

The squat, square watchtower stands 25 feet high, though it once stood much taller. The top floor collapsed inward during the Blizzard War, leaving behind only a jagged pile of rubble. Gautrek ordered the orcs to clear the stairwell so they could watch over the approach to the outpost.

Monsters: Day or night, a lone orc sits amid the debris. Being so far from the trails which crisscross the landscape, the orcs are lax in their duties. Unless an orc or rat survived the battle in the flour sheds, the sentry is inactive when the characters approach.

Detecting him against the rubble requires a Notice roll at –2 at a distance of 100 yards, the first time the heroes catch a clear sight of the top of the tower. One Stealth roll (at +1 due to Light Cover) is required for the heroes to pick their way through the boulders and bushes to the point where the cover ends. A second roll is required to reach the base of the tower.

Should a Stealth roll be failed, the orc becomes active, perhaps hearing loose stones tumbling down the slopes or catching a glint of light on steel. A second failed Stealth roll causes him to scramble down from the tower (which takes three rounds) and alert his master (a further five rounds).

Ⓜ **Orc Warrior:** See page 26.

Tactics: As noted above, the orc has no interest in engaging in combat, not even with his bow. His orders are to alert his master, Gautrek, of any interlopers heading toward the ruin.

2) COURTYARD

Beyond the gates is an open courtyard. In the center stands a low, stone building. An archway, decorated with faded and despoiled glyphs, appears to be the only entranceway. East and west of the gates are stairs, leading up onto a walkway which follows three sides of the structure. Beneath the walkway, in the courtyard's outer walls, are a number of archways, perhaps leading to rooms within the outpost's thick walls.

The glyphs around the archway are extremely hard to read. A Knowledge (Arcana) roll made at –2 reveals they are tied to the element of earth. A Knowledge (Religion) roll made at –2 (no penalty for priests or paladins of Ertha) indicates they are archaic symbols of the goddess Ertha, little used since the Blizzard War.

Monsters: The courtyard is home to a swarm of rats and a number of giant rats. If the orc sentry has been alerted he whistles as he runs across the courtyard to the stairwell. This alerts the rats lurking within the walls that intruders are approaching.

If the sentry hasn't been alerted, any noise above a whisper allows each rat a Notice roll. With success, or should any hero approach within one square of one of the rat nests (see below), the rats pour out and attack. This in turn automatically alerts the orc to trouble below. It takes him three rounds to grab his gear and clamber down the stairs.

In either case, the swarm should emerge from the rat nest nearest the characters. Divide the giant rats as equally as possible between the other nests. In the event the giant rats number more than double the number of rat nests, the extra rats appear from nests nearest the party.

Ⓜ **Giant Rats (2 per hero):** See page 27.

Ⓜ **Rat Swarm (1):** See page 27.

Tactics: The rats aren't intelligent, but they are cunning. They wait as long a possible before attacking, hoping to catch intruders by surprise, or at least at a tactical disadvantage.

Being unintelligent, they have no concept of how to judge the character's individual strengths and weaknesses. As such, they attack the nearest character, using Gang Up if necessary. Should two or more characters present a valid target the rats go for the least armored.

3) RAT NESTS

Filthy straw and piles of rat droppings and gnawed bones litter the floor.

These narrow chambers, formerly storerooms, are used as nests by the rats. There is nothing of value in any of the chambers.

4) STAIRWELL

Behind and to each side of a circular stairwell descending into the bowels of the earth stand two statues. The left-hand one depicts a muscular woman clutching a large war hammer, though the head lies at the statue's feet. The other perhaps once displayed the same form, but it has been badly damaged, and is now lost above the waist.

Frost dwarves and any worshipper of Ertha instantly recognize the most intact statue as depicting the earth deity. Other characters recognize the god on a Common Knowledge roll. Elves, who tend not to worship Ertha, suffer a –2 penalty to this roll.

Treasure: Should the statue's head be replaced on its shoulders, the two parts immediately bond, leaving no trace of damage. A priest or paladin of Ertha who doesn't replace the statue's head is guilty of a minor sin.

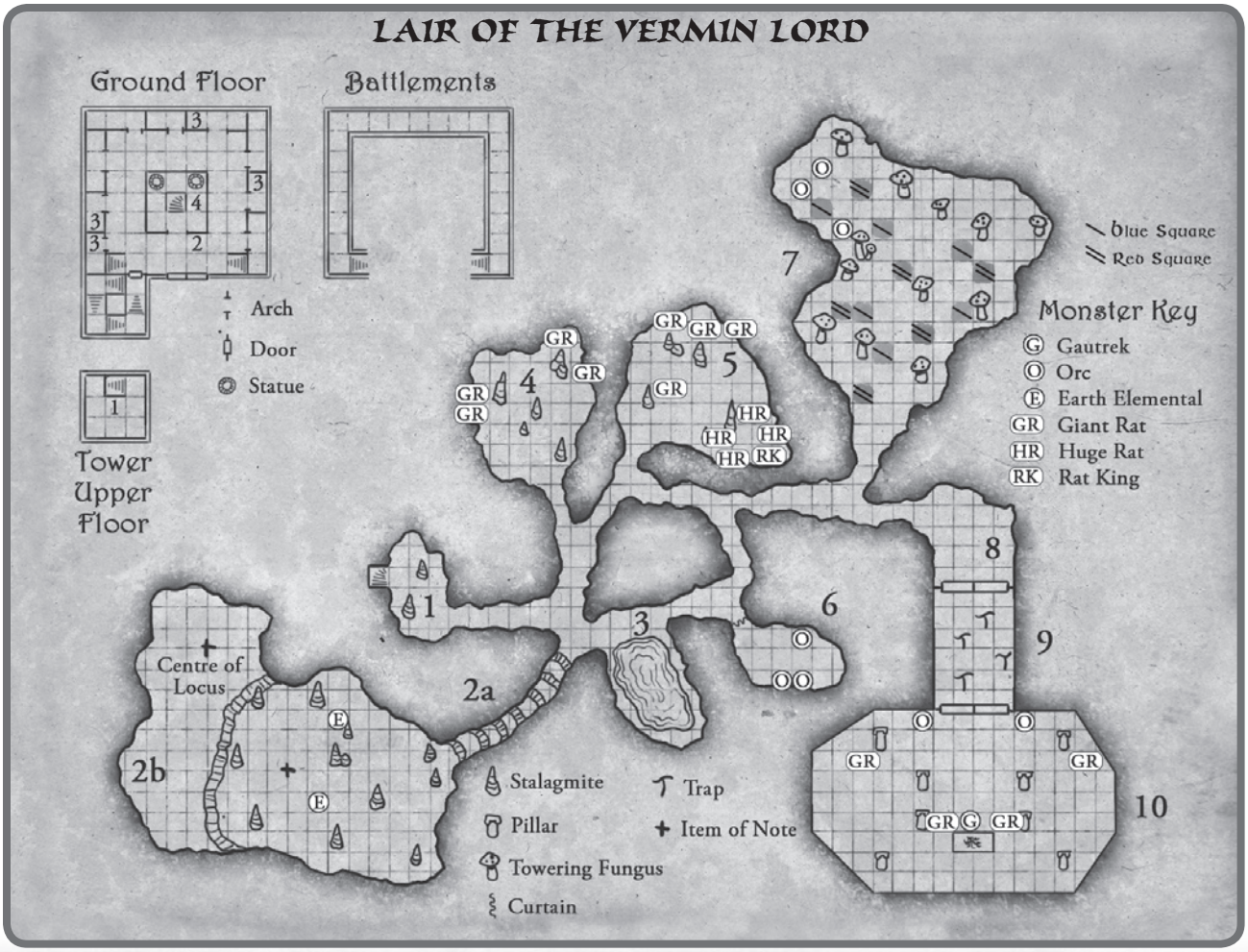
Ertha rewards a non-worshipper who performs this act (her worshippers are expected to do it). As the head touches the shoulders, the hero's skin hardens, though not to an extent it affects movement. This grants a +2 Armor bonus, does not stack with *armor*, cannot be dispelled, does not count toward Maintained spells if the recipient is a spellcaster, and lasts until the hero next sleeps.

THE LOWER TEMPLE

The lower temple was once sacred to Ertha. As is typical of her holy sites, the tunnels and chambers were largely left untouched. Even when new tunnels were excavated, they were sculpted to mold seamlessly with the natural rock. The only artificially smoothed chamber is the main temple.

1) ENTRANCE CHAMBER

The spiral stairs end in a small, natural cavern. The walls are slick with moisture. Faint echoes of rodents' squeaks can be heard from beyond the opening.



Unless the orc sentry raised the alarm, the chamber is deserted. If the alarm was raised, the giant rats from areas 4 and 5 are concealed in the corridor.

Tactics: If there are defenders present, they rush to attack as soon as the first character enters the room, using Gang Up to bring down the intruder.

2A) SLIPPERY SLOPE

The tunnel descends steeply. The slick rocks count as difficult terrain. In addition, any hero who runs and rolls a 1 on his running die slips and falls. He immediately slides 2d6" down the slope. If his slide is arrested by a solid object, such as a stalagmite, he suffers 1d6 damage per whole 5" of his movement.

2B) EARTH LOCUS

The constant clatter of rocks smashing together can be heard from the dark depths of this cavern.

The temple site was not chosen because it had a natural cave network the worshippers could exploit, but because of an unusual earth elemental locus (see below).

The Locus: The outer reach is surrounded by a continually swirling wall of small pebbles and dust, the inner reach by larger stones, and the core by even bigger chunks of rock. There is no danger entering the locus unless a character is an elementalist with the air trapping (even if he also has an earth trapping).

Should an elementalist with this trapping try, he must make an Elementalism roll when he crosses into the outer reach or suffer 1d6 damage. Entering the inner reach requires a roll at –1 to avoid 2d6 damage, and crossing the boundary of the core an Elementalism roll at –2 to avoid taking 3d6 damage.

The bonus for casting spells in the locus applies not only to earth elementalists, but also to clerics of Ertha. It was this effect which drew clerics to the site in ages past. Gautrek knows the locus exists, but it is of little use to him. When he gets a chance he intends to research how to destroy the locus in the hopes it will weaken Ertha.

Terrain: Treat moving up the slope to reach the raised area as difficult ground. The earth elementals (see below) are not hampered by the terrain, due to their earthy nature.

Monsters: As soon as any hero steps onto the raised area, two earth elementals rise from the floor in the positions marked on the map. When both are slain, their parts merge together, rising at the start of the next round as a large earth elemental. The large earth elemental begins at a point equidistant from the position the two smaller elementals occupied when they were slain. Once slain, the large earth elemental does not rise again.

None of the elementals chase characters beyond the confines of this chamber. They were bound here using a powerful ritual before the Blizzard War. When the temple was abandoned, their final orders were to guard the chamber from *all* intruders. They take their orders very literally.

If the *summon elemental* tablet from Area 4 is thrown into the locus' core, the spell activates. The elemental appears inside the core, forming from chunks of whirling stone, which are pulled together by some unseen force. The creature is under the command of the one who used the tablet, exactly as if he had activated the magic through conventional means. It does not merge with the other elementals, and will fight them if ordered.

Ⓜ **Earth Elemental (2):** See page 26.

Ⓜ **Large Earth Elemental (1):** See page 26.

Tactics: The earth elementals make use of their burrowing ability to avoid being attacked as much as possible. Initially, they burrow into the rock, move toward a foe, and then burst forth, fists flailing. Emerging from the rock doesn't allow a character with First Strike to get in a free attack unless he makes a Notice roll opposed by the creature's Stealth first.

If the characters are completely uninjured, have access to healing and offensive spells, or are Seasoned Rank or higher, the elementals use a special tactic. If Shaken, the elementals retreat 1" using the Defend maneuver and withdraw back into the cavern floor (burrowing is part of their movement, not a specific action). They remain in the rock until they have recovered from being Shaken. Once recovered, they must resurface in order to acquire targets. This applies even if none of the heroes has moved, as the elementals are essentially blind once inside the rock.

3) WATER CAVERN

A large pool of water dominates the center of the cavern, fed by a spring emerging from the rock face. A narrow, slick walkway surrounds the pool.

This 30' deep natural pool serves as the rat's water supply, bath, and toilet. Although the water appears relatively clear, only the deeper water is affected by the current of the underground river which flows from this cavern. The surface water harbors leptospirosis (also known in modern times as Weils disease). Anyone drinking the water without casting *elemental manipulation (water)* to purify it must make a Vigor roll. Failure results in infection.

After eight days (one week), during which time the character suffers flulike symptoms, the victim gains a level of Fatigue. Each four days thereafter he suffers an automatic level of Fatigue as he suffers liver damage, meningitis, and renal failure. This can lead to Death. *Healing* is only useful in the first ten minutes of infection. *Succor* and restorative herbal remedies can remove the Fatigue, but do not cure the disease—the hero remains infected and contagious.

While infected, the victim's own blood, urine, and other fluids can pass on the disease. Healers not wearing

BARRIER

We're only human, and it seems the changes to the *barrier* spell were accidentally left out of the *Hellfrost Players' Guide*. The required changes are noted below. Other rules for the spell are as per the *Savage Worlds* rulebook.

Duration: Maintained

A basic casting creates a 1" section of *barrier*. Additional sections can be created during a single casting, though it is harder to do so. For every two additional 1" sections or part thereof, the caster suffers a cumulative –1 penalty to his arcane skill roll. Each separate *casting* counts as a single spell for the purposes of Maintaining the power, regardless of the number of sections created.

For instance, Dave's hero wants to completely surround a foe with a *barrier*. This requires five sections in total (four walls and a roof), and thus incurs a –2 penalty. He Maintains this as a single spell.

gloves who treat an infected patient's wound must make a Vigor roll at +1 or contract the disease, as much others who come into contact with the infected character's bodily fluids.

Curing the disease beyond the 10 minutes allowed by *healing* requires either *greater healing* or lengthy use of herbal remedies. The herbal cure requires the patient to take a dose of antibacterial remedy every day for eight days. After this time he is allowed an unmodified Vigor roll. If successful, the disease is cured.

Monsters: Draw a card from the action deck the first time the characters enter this chamber. A black card indicates a number of giant rats are present.

Ⓜ **Giant Rats (1d4):** See page 27.

4) RAT NEST

The stench of rat urine is almost overpowering as you enter this chamber. Fragments of wood, long decayed, litter the floor, as do piles of broken stone tablets.

The chamber once served as the temple's library. Due to the moisture-laden air, the priests took to inscribing thin, stone tablets rather than using parchment. A character who reads Classical Anari or Earthtongue can discern scraps of text relating to temple records and finances, prayers, and such like.

Monsters: Four giant rats nestle here among scraps of rotten cloth and straw.

Ⓜ **Giant Rats (1 per hero):** See page 27.

Tactics: The rats concentrate on the nearest hero, using Gang Up tactics to bring him down as quickly as possible.

Treasure: Concealed beneath the straw are two small, clay tablets. They survived the destruction of the temple. Both are alchemical devices and function as scrolls.

The first holds the *summon earth elemental* spell (see page 26 for the elemental's stats) and the second a *sanctuary* spell (which if cast during this adventure takes the reader to Ertha's temple in the mining town of Crase, about 120 miles east of the party's current location). Activating the tablets requires the reader to speak Earthtongue, the preferred language of Ertha's cult. *Speak language* can decipher the enchanted tablets.

5) RAT KING'S LAIR

This cold, dank chamber reeks of vermin. From somewhere in the inky darkness can be heard the chittering of many rats.

This chamber is home to an abomination known as the Rat King and its bodyguards.

Monsters: Nestled in one corner is the Rat King, a monstrously bloated albino rat swathed in swarming rats. In fact, the rats crawling over and around him are permanently attached to him, their tails growing from his corpulent flesh. An unholy creature, created through Vali's corrupting influence, the Rat King is the source of Gautrek's giant rats, its own blood corrupting normal rats and mutating them. It is served by four giant rats of larger-than-average size and four standard giant rats.

The Rat King, four huge rats, and four giant rats are treated as separate groups for the purposes of action cards.

Ⓜ **Rat King:** See page 27.

Ⓜ **Huge Rats (1 per hero):** As giant rat (see page 27) except they are Size +0 (Toughness 5).

Ⓜ **Giant Rats (1 per hero):** See page 27.

Tactics: The giant rats immediately move in to attack intruders. The Rat King, who moves slowly, runs toward the heroes, accompanied by his huge rat guardians. Only when the Rat King's conjoined swarm is able to attack the characters do the huge rats enter combat. The King only enters melee in person when his swarm is dead. Until then, he maneuvers as necessary to keep as many characters as possible inside his swarm.

Treasure: Gautrek honors the Rat King as a living embodiment of Vali. In its corner of the cavern are hundreds of assorted bones, mostly animals but some from the civilized races. Scattered among the bones are coins and small gems, booty taken from Gautrek's victims. In total there are 500 gs in treasure. One item stands out—a gold ring on which are written words in Anari. This is an alchemical device and contains a single use of *speak language*. Once the spell is cast the words fade.

Anyone handling the loot without gloves risks contracting leptospirosis (see page 21). Even if the characters don't contract the disease, spending the loot without cleansing it first (washing it in hot water works) risks the heroes unwittingly aiding Vali by spreading the disease among the citizens of Rassilon.

6) ORC BARRACKS

A makeshift door formed of mangy hides blocks the entrance to this cavern. The stench of wood smoke and burnt meat barely conceals the distinctive smell of unwashed bodies and excrement. Low murmurings can be heard from within.

The murmurings are in Orcish, but no words can be discerned due to their low volume.

Monsters: Gautrek retains a bodyguard unit of nine orcs. One is always in the watchtower, two are at his side, and three harvest fungus from Area 7. The other trio is left to their own devices until their shift starts. Given the large numbers of rats in the complex, they prefer to remain in their quarters.

The orcs are members of the Eye Piercers, a tribe renowned for its ranged weapon prowess. While typically more loyal to Thrym or Dargar, orcs are prone to follow whoever provides them with sufficient booty and food. Right now, Gautrek satisfies their needs. The prospect of watching hundreds of humans fall sick is also too good an opportunity to pass up, especially since starving villagers are easy to slaughter.

Unless an alarm has been raised the orcs are cleaning weapons, dozing, eating, arguing, and such like. They are treated as inactive sentries. Characters who keep quiet while entering their barracks can easily catch them by Surprise.

Ⓜ **Orc Warriors (3):** See page 26.

Tactics: The orcs initially try to use their bows against intruders. When this proves impossible, they switch to melee weapons. Given chance, they will make as much noise as possible by screaming and shouting, hoping to attract the attention of nearby allies.

Treasure: The orcs sleep on rotting furs and stolen, heavily-soiled blankets. Being paranoid of their comrades robbing them, they don't keep any valuables here—what little wealth they possess they carry on their person at all times.

7) FUNGUS FARM

The floor of this dark, dank chamber is blanketed in fungi of red, yellow, green, and milky, white hues. Most stand only a few inches high, but some rise to the height of an adult human. A dull glow emanates from the rear of the cavern, though its source cannot be discerned.

The priests of Ertha survived primarily on a diet of fungus, cultivating large crops in this moist, dark cavern. Since their departure, other fungi, once weeded out by the priests' attendants, have proliferated. The light source is generated by a lantern.

Terrain: Areas containing towering mushrooms count as difficult ground. They provide cover to heroes standing behind them (Armor +2). Those containing ground-growing fungus are standard terrain. Damaging area effect spells like *blast* can clear away fungal growths in the affected area. Treat the fungus in any square as having a collective Toughness of 8. They otherwise act like a swarm for the purposes of damaging them.

Monsters: Three orcs are in here searching for edible fungus and also for fungi suitable for brewing poisons. They have learned through trial and error, and the deaths of a few comrades, which fungi are deadly, and avoid those areas.

Ⓜ **Orc Warriors (3):** See page 26.

Toxic Fungi: Areas marked red and blue on the map contain fungi which release dangerous spores. They do this if a character enters the space they occupy. These fungi grow among other types, and thus are not easily identifiable without a careful search. As such, they should not be indicated to the characters. Searching a single square for these growths takes an action and requires a Notice roll.

Blue: When a character enters a space filled with this fungus a choking cloud of spores erupt to fill a Medium Burst Template centered on the unfortunate hero. All within the template must make a Vigor roll or be Shaken. The spores hang in the air for three rounds. During this time, anyone entering or who begins their turn in the template must make a Vigor roll as above. This counts as a physical attack, and thus cumulative Shaken results cause a wound. Characters killed by this fungus and left here sprout fungal growths within a few days.

Red: Entering a square occupied by this fungus causes a Medium Burst Template of spores to shoot out. The spores are protective—inhaling them produces vivid hallucinations. Victims must make a Spirit roll at –1. Failure forces them to roll on the Fear Effects Table. The spores remain airborne until the end of the current round. During this time, anyone entering the template must roll to avoid their effect.

Treasure: A character who examines the fungi and makes a successful Knowledge (Alchemy) or Survival roll can identify one species of mushrooms suitable for brewing hydrating alchemical brews. A maximum of four doses can be picked, given suitable time. A raise identifies enough fungi of a rare variety ideal for creating a single batch of healing (regenerative) paste. The hydrating fungus provides no modifier when creating a brew, but the rare regenerative mushrooms grant a +3 bonus due to their rarity. They can be harvested and dried. Gathered in this way they act as standard dried herbs.

As well as identifying these medicinal plants, the searcher identifies several edible species which can be used to supplement the characters' diet (either eaten or infused with boiling water).

8) GATES OF ERTHA

Huge, stone doors bar the artificially worked corridor. Each is as wide as a man and twice as tall.

Ancient markings, defaced by hands unknown, are barely legible beneath a thin layer of lichen and scum.

The images and writing are recognizable by any frost dwarf or worshipper of Ertha as representing her cult. Other characters need to make a Knowledge (Religion) roll to deduce these facts. They are a mixture of welcome messages for those allied to the cult (written in Earthtongue) and threats of destruction for those who would seek to deface the temple beyond (scribed in Anari).

The doors were crafted with a degree of skill not seen since the Blizzard War. A gentle push causes them to swing silently open, revealing the corridor beyond. The doors at the opposite end of the corridor open just as easily.

9) CORRIDOR OF TRAPS

A long, worked corridor stretches ahead of you. The walls are formed of stones, laid together in an interlocking pattern. The floor comprises stone tiles engraved with the symbol of a hammer. In the center of the hammer's head are small indentations. Lying on one of the squares is a small, stone amulet shaped like the hammer symbol. Just inside the door are small niches in the walls.

The hammer is Ertha's holy symbol. Deducing this requires a Common Knowledge roll from non-worshippers. The fact is automatically known by frost dwarves and followers of the cult. The indentations once held precious stones, but these have long since been robbed. Their presence may cause a little paranoia among the characters.

The niches are about the size of a clenched fist and are located at mid-torso height on an average-sized human. They once held holy symbols, but are now empty.

Traps: In order to protect the temple, engineers installed cunningly-worked traps along the corridor. The traps are semi-magical, in that visitors openly displaying Ertha's holy symbol cannot set off the traps, though they can still suffer their effects if standing in the wrong place when one is activated.

Gautrek lost several orcs to the traps when he initially settled here before deducing how the mechanisms work. He carries a holy symbol of Ertha whenever he enters this corridor. Being of devious mind, he placed a holy symbol just behind a trap, hoping to lure any invaders to their deaths.

The traps make a great deal of noise. This alerts Gautrek and his minions to the heroes' presence outside the temple.

Detecting: Detecting a trap requires a Notice roll. Unless a character has Danger Sense, searching for traps requires an action. A single roll is made in a round, regardless of how far the hero moves. With success, he detects a trap adjacent to him. He may halt his movement (even a run), if he spots a trap (advisable if it's right in front of him).

Disarming: Disarming a detected trap requires a Lockpicking roll and takes a complete round (no other actions possible, including movement). On a critical failure, the trap activates. Check for Surprise.

Initiative: The traps activate with little warning to the unfortunate victim. Use the rules for Surprise. The traps have Agility d8 for the purposes of interrupting. A trap catching a character by Surprise also has the Drop (where applicable).

Attack: Standing on a trap causes the nearest section of wall to surge outward, powered by immense rams concealed in the walls. The ram extends as far as the activated trap's symbol on the map. All creatures in the ram's path are attacked with Fighting d10. This functions like Improved Sweep, except it works in a straight line rather than an arc. Damage on a successful hit is 2d8, and victims are knocked back 1" and fall prone.

For example, the first trap is located two squares from the north wall. When activated, the ram shoots out into those two squares.

10) TEMPLE OF VALI

As the door opens, you see before you a vast chamber of worked stone, supported by eight massive columns of deepest black stone. Each column depicts the goddess Ertha, her hands held aloft to support the ceiling some thirty or more feet above. Cracks, chips, and cuts show where someone has attempted to deface the images.

Ahead, in front of a huge altar, stands a rat-faced man clad completely in black. Two giant rats squat at his side like guard dogs. Atop the altar is a blood-red statue depicting a jumble of rats joined at the tail. Vile symbols, daubed in what can only be blood, adorn the walls and floor.

The temple to Ertha was once the centre of a small but thriving religious community. Originally despoiled centuries ago during the Blizzard War, Gautrek has further defaced it with vile symbols of Vali. Recognizing these rarely-seen devices requires a Knowledge (Religion) roll.

Magic: The temple contains a powerful warding which Gautrek has never discovered. If anyone casts a spell with an air, ice, or water trapping, an ancient warding activates. The entire temple suddenly shakes, as if struck by a massive earthquake. All characters except those whose patron deity is Ertha and elementalists who know earth magic must make an Agility roll at –2 or fall prone.

The earth elemental, if it has been summoned from the tablet in Area 4, is not only unaffected by the quaking ground, it gains a benny. This bonus, representing a divine boost to its power, is lost when it leaves the room.

The idol on the altar is a powerful relic of Vali (see the sidebar for more details). Gautrek has not used the idol today. He tries to summon its magic once the heroes arrive. See **Gautrek's Tactics** below for how the evil paladin reacts during combat.

Spellcasters invoking magic with an earth trapping gain +1 to their arcane skill rolls while inside the temple.

Monsters: Gautrek, two orc warriors, and a number of giant rats are present in the chamber when the characters enter. Unless the heroes activate the traps in Area 9, Gautrek and his cronies must check for Surprise. Roll for the paladin and the orcs individually, and use the Group Roll rules for the rats.

Ⓜ **Gautrek, Paladin of Vali:** See page 25.

Ⓜ **Orc Warriors (2):** See page 26.

Ⓜ **Giant Rats (2 per hero):** See page 27.

Tactics: The orcs and rats immediately rush to attack, blocking the way into the chamber as quickly as possible so as to contain the characters. In doing this, Gautrek's area effect spells can encompass a greater number of the characters.

Gautrek's standard tactics are as below. If the characters activated the traps, Gautrek has already cast *armor* with a standard success (+2 Armor) when they reach the temple. From round six onward, the paladin casts *disease* at each foe out of spite. If the tide turns against him, he casts *barrier* to completely surround himself (requiring five sections at a total –2 penalty if he's in the open), letting the gnawing rats weaken his foes for a while.

Round 1: Cast *armor* on himself.

Round 2: Activates the Idol of the Rat King.

Round 3: Casts *entangle* at any obvious spellcasters or the largest group of heroes if no spellcasters have been detected.

Round 4: Casts *barrier* (three segments) to form a straight line between self and largest group of foes.

Round 5: Casts *fear* at largest group of heroes.

AFTERMATH

The death of Gautrek and the Rat King ends their reign of corruption and death, though Vali has many such plots in operation across Rassilon. Some GMs might wish to have the cult of Vali target the characters in the future, as revenge for ruining a plot.

Calculate Glory as normal as per the *Hellfrost Players' Guide*. If the plot to poison the grain in the flour sheds was thwarted, grant each survivor a fixed +1 Glory regardless of the random roll—they've potentially saved a lot of people from starvation or poisoning, and there will be witnesses to their deed. If the grain was poisoned, they suffer a –3 Glory penalty—they were indirectly responsible for the humanitarian disaster which follows in the next few months.

Informing the cult of Ertha about the location of the former temple isn't worth any Glory rewards, but it makes the cult friendly to the party, at least in the short-term. Allow the party (not each character) a single use of the Connections Edge with regard to the cult. Once the favor is called in, the slate is wiped clean. See the free download on our website (www.tripleacegames.com) entitled **Favors** for more details.

THE IDOL OF THE RAT KING

Carved from blood-red marble, the idol takes the form of a mass of rats, joined together at the tail into a jumbled mass.

Only paladins or priests of Vali with the Disciple Edge can make use of the idol. To do so, they must touch it while recanting a prayer to Vali and make a Faith roll. Success activates the *summon beast* spell, summoning a rat swarm. The duration is permanent—the creatures stay and remain obedient until slain. It functions just once per day, whether the Faith roll is successful or not.

The power of the idol can be removed in one of two ways. First, it can be smashed. It has Toughness 12 and breaks when it takes a single wound.

Second, it can be *dispelled*. This is harder, as it has an arcane skill die of d12 and a Wild Die to resist such attempts. A single *dispel* attempt may be made per week, regardless of the source. Once broken or *dispelled*, all vermin summoned by its dark power are returned to wherever they were summoned from. In this adventure that is any and all remaining rat swarms.

Heroes who take the item to the Citadel (page 10) are rewarded with 500 gold scields to share as they desire. They aren't allowed in the Citadel proper to conduct their business, however, nor will the Reliquary haggle over the price. If the adventurers don't like the offer and leave, they should find themselves the victims of theft at some later stage.

BESTIARY

GAUTREK, PRIEST OF VALI

Gautrek isn't actually human—he's a leyparat, a form of hamhleypa ("ham-huh-lay-pa;" a Saxa term meaning "shape leaper"). Hamhleypas are intelligent animals which can assume a half-man, half-beast hybrid or fully human form.

Unlike lycanthropes, shape-leapers are not forced to assume their other forms on the full moon, nor does silver affect them (silver has no relation to the moon in Rassilon anyway). Their condition is hereditary and can-

not be transmitted by their bite or claws. Leyparats are giant rats in their animal form.

Gautrek spends much of his time in human form. His human guise takes the form of a tall, thin man with a neatly trimmed, goatee beard. He has slightly enlarged front teeth which touch his bottom lip, the only indication he may be more than he seems.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Climbing d8, Faith d10, Fighting d10, Guts d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Stealth d10, Survival d8, Tracking d6
Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (2)
Hindrances: Overconfident, Phobia (Major; cats)
Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Charismatic, Danger Sense, Disciple of Vali, Dodge, Fleet Footed, Level Headed
Powers: *armor* (rats clinging to body), *barrier* (wall of rats; adjacent characters suffer 2d4 damage as from a swarm), *beast friend* (vermin only), *charismatic aura, disease, entangle* (target smothered in rats), *fear*.
Gear: Chain shirt (+2), short sword (Str+d6), holy symbol of Vali
Special Abilities:
* **Bite:** Str+d4.
* **Direction Sense:** Leyparats usually live in sewers or slums. Maneuvering around these mazes has given them a good sense of direction. Leyparats never get lost, even in nonnative locales.
* **Immunity:** Leyparats are immune to poison and disease. Gautrek is also immune to attacks from rat swarms.
* **Infection:** Anyone bitten by a leyparat must make a Vigor roll or the wound becomes swollen and infected. The victim suffers a level of Fatigue, which is recovered with a successful Healing roll or after 24 hours. Cumulative infections can cause a victim to be Incapacitated, but cannot lead to Death.
* **Low Light Vision:** Leyparats ignore penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
* **King Rat:** Leyparats have a unique bond with common rats and can summon them. This requires an action and a Smarts roll at –2. If successful, 1d6 swarms of rats come from the surrounding wilds in 1d4 (urban environment) or 1d6+2 (rural) rounds.
* **Shapeleaper:** Leyparats can change between any of their forms as a normal action by making a Vigor roll at +2. With a normal success, they can't take any other actions that round, including movement. With a raise, they can take other actions as normal.

CART HORSE

The horses are named Thunder and Surefoot. Their names are on their blankets. Reliable but surly, the horses react poorly if their blankets are ever swapped or if they are not fed regularly, moving at half Pace until the matter is rectified. If beaten, they stop moving for an hour in protest.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d12+1, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d6, Notice d6
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 9
Special Abilities:
* **Kick:** Str.
* **Size +3:** Cart horses weigh between 1000 and 1200 pounds.

CITIZEN

The peoples of Rassilon are a varied lot, but the profile below is common for most.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d4, Guts d4, Knowledge (one Craft) d6, Notice d6
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5
Edges & Hindrances: —
Gear: Knife (Str+d4).

EARTH ELEMENTAL

Earth elementals manifest as five-foot tall, vaguely man-shaped collections of earth and stone. Though amazingly strong, they are also quite slow and ponderous.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d4, Stealth d6
Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11 (4)
Special Abilities:
* **Armor +4:** Rocky hide.
* **Bash:** Str+d6.
* **Burrowing (10"):** Earth elementals can meld into and out of the ground.
* **Elemental:** No additional damage from Called Shots; Fearless; immune to disease and poison.

EARTH ELEMENTAL, LARGE

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12+4, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d4, Stealth d4
Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 14 (4)
Special Abilities:
* **Armor +4:** Rocky hide.
* **Bash:** Str+d6.
* **Burrowing (10"):** Earth elementals can meld in and out of the ground.
* **Elemental:** No additional damage from Called Shots; Fearless; immune to disease and poison.
* **Large:** Attackers are +2 to attack rolls, due to the creature's size.
* **Size +3:** Stands 12' feet tall and weighs over 1,000 pounds.

ORC WARRIOR

These orcs are members of the Eye Piercer tribe and have sworn fealty to Vali. All of them carry bows, with which they are quite proficient. Orcs in Rassilon do not have Infravision.

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

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

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

Gear: Leather armor (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), short sword (Str+d6), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6)

Special Abilities:

* **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.

RAT, GIANT

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

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

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities:

* **Bite:** Str+d4.
* **Infection:** Anyone Shaken or wounded by a rat must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue from an infected bite. Cumulative bites can lead to Incapacitation, but never to Death. One Fatigue level is recovered every 24 hours or with a successful Healing roll.
* **Size –1:** Giants rats are the same size as dogs.

RAT KING

The rat king is a unique creature, a monstrous albino rat smoothed in a crawling mass of rats whose tails sprout from the beast's bloated body. Once per week, one of the rats is allowed to feed on the Rat King's blood. It then pulls its tail free and mutates into a giant rat.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d6, Spirit d12, Strength d10, Vigor d12

Skills: Climbing d10, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Stealth d4

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10

Special Abilities:

* **Bite:** Str+d6. While the accompanying swarm acts as normal, the Rat King may only attack one adjacent foe as per normal.
* **Conjoined Swarm:** The swarm surrounding is treated like a normal rat swarm (p. 27), except it moves at the Rat King's Pace, uses his action card while alive, and fills a Medium Burst Template. Damaging the swarm does no harm to the Rat King and vice versa. If the swarm is destroyed, the Rat King continues to act as normal, except it loses its Protection special ability. Should the Rat King be killed first, the swarm continues to function but it *cannot* move.
* **Fear:** Anyone who sees the Rat King must make a Guts roll. This requires the swarm to be dead or a hero to be in the swarm template in order to get a clear view.
* **Infection:** Anyone Shaken or wounded by the Rat King must make a Vigor roll at –2 or suffer a level of Fatigue as pustules immediately begin to form around the wounds. Cumulative bites can lead to Death. One Fatigue level is recovered every 24 hours or with a successful Healing roll.
* **Infravision:** Suffer no Darkness penalties against heat-producing targets.
* **Leadership Edges:** Any rats within 5" of the Rat King are +1 to recover from being Shaken and +1 to damage rolls for Fighting attacks.
* **Protection:** Attacks against the Rat King are made at –4 because of the heaving mass of rats covering its body. This provides 4 points of armor against area-effect attacks.
* **Size +2:** The Rat King is equivalent in size to a small horse.

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 recovered 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.

WATCH

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

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

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

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: —

Gear: Leather suit (+1), open helm (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry), short spear (Str+d6), crossbow (Range: 15/30/60, Damage 2d6, AP 2).

PLAYER HANDOUTS

PH #1: RIDER'S LETTER

My Lady,

A foul plague of rats has descended upon Dunross in a ceaseless tide! The vermin are devouring our flour stores, and I fear within a week we will have nothing left. Our soldiers are hard pressed to guard what provisions remain.

Disease is rife, and we have little hope of stemming the tide without aid. The village is now quarantined to prevent the pestilence from spreading.
We would save the supplies and abandon the village, but alas, we have few wagons. We had no idea the infestation would continue!

I beg you, for the love of our people, send soldiers, ratcatchers, and healers with all haste, lest we all be doomed to famine this winter!
Your loyal servant,

Mayor Umbold ap-Rutger

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The specter of famine stalks the northern Hearthlands.

With the snow already falling, the key to thwarting disaster is the village of Dunross, for here are stored the winter supplies of many surrounding villages. Fresh faced and eager, the heroes are hired by a local merchant to collect sacks of flour from Dunross and deliver them to a bakery.

But things are never that simple.

What begins as a routine journey quickly embroils the adventures in a deadly plot to inflict starvation and untold misery on the citizens of the northern Heartlands. Through the power of an unholy magical relic a dark swarm has been unleashed on Rassilion, a swarm which leaves only death and disease in its wake.

Can the heroes survive the terrible host about to cross their path? If they do, have they the courage and skill to end the reign of terror of a sinister, inhuman foe? All will be revealed!

Lair of the Vermin Lord is the first adventure for Triple Ace Games' epic fantasy setting, Hellfrost.

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Paul 'Wiggy' Wade-Williams

HELLFROST

RANK • NOVICE

THE DARK SEED

OFFICIAL SAVAGE WORLDS LICENSED PRODUCT

WALLS
07

THE DARK SEED

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THE DARK SEED

INTRODUCTION

This adventure is designed for a group of four Novice characters with two or three advancements. A selection of pre-generated Novice characters can be found at our website, **www.tripleacegames.com**.

For parties with more members or advancements, the GM should increase the number of opponents accordingly. For higher Rank parties, the GM should increase the number of the most common Extras in an encounter. For this adventure we advise you add one additional creature to each encounter for each Rank the party is above Novice. For instance, if a party of four Seasoned adventurers encounters sap zombies numbering one per hero, the characters must fight a total of five zombies—one for each hero, plus an additional one because the party is Seasoned.

This adventure should be run in spring or summer. See the *Savage Worlds* rulebook for the effects of cold weather and the *Hellfrost Players' Guide* for how the rules work in this setting.

Only vague geographic information is provided. So long as the adventure takes place in and around woodland, the GM has free choice over where he sets it. That said, he should avoid using the Frozen Forest as the backdrop—no human settlements exist nearby. GM's running it in the High Winterlands might wish to consider switching the villain from a hearth elf to a taiga elf. No other changes need be made.

Allies: Two of the encounters include allies. These will be controlled by the players at the appropriate time. The GM should create Ally Sheets for the villagers and lumberjacks in advance to speed up play.

GM BACKGROUND

Our story begins many thousands of years ago, in an age before the civilized races were created. When the world was first created, the only life forms on its surface were plants. This was a magical age, and many of the plants were sentient and animate. Some legends say skogsra, wood wights, and tree men were born of this age, but the veracity of these claims is impossible to verify. Then, for reasons known only to her, Eostre created herbivores.

Of the many species of sentient plants, there was one known as the Black Ones. Bitter, twisted, and malignant, they saw plants as the dominant species and felt betrayed at Eostre's creation of herbivores. Not knowing the mind of the goddess, they spent untold centuries rousing the plant world to rise up against the animals. Once sufficient oaths of allegiance had been gathered, they unleashed their might. A great and terrible war ravaged the land, as plants turned on beasts. Eostre watched passively.

Neither side really achieved victory. Plants slaughtered beasts, and beasts ate the plants in equal measure. Finally, both sides agreed a parley, much to the disgust of the militant Black Ones, who boycotted the conference. After much debate, it was agreed some of the herbivores would stop eating plants and would instead feed only on flesh. In this way, the number of herbivores was kept in check. For their part, the plants vowed to stop killing animals, save for those which were found in colossal numbers, like insects. Still Eostre did nothing but watch.

The Black Ones launched a short-lived campaign against the animals and other plants but were quickly defeated. While the herbivores could chew plants, the claws of the newly formed carnivores easily sliced through the thickest bark. With peace restored, emissaries from the plant and animal kingdoms approached Eostre, who had foreseen the war and the eventual good it would bring. They begged permission to exterminate the Black Ones to the last of their kind, for with their continued presence there could never be balance in the world.

Seeing that the plants and animals could live together in peace, Eostre granted permission for the last Black Ones to be hunted down. So it was the first species vanished from existence.

Out story now leaps forward through time to the present day. Melasion Leaftalker was, until recently, an ordinary druid, caring for the plants and animals of his woodland home, arguing with loggers about excessive foresting, and studying the natural order of the world. He had no fanatical beliefs, considering the actions of the Guardians of the Wild, a sect of druids and elves who detest the destructive force of urban civilization, to be counter-productive and provocative.

As he meditated one day at a stone circle, Melasion's mind was dominated by a powerful, irresistible force. Compelled to dig into the earth, the druid, his fingers torn and bleeding, unearthed a strange, black seed pod unlike anything known through his extensive knowledge of the plant kingdom. Such a pod has not been seen since before the Black Ones were made extinct, for it was one of their spore pods.

Without warning the seed pod cracked open. A snaking tendril darted out and pierced the druid's flesh. As he watched helplessly, thick, black sap began to pump into his veins. As the last ounce of sap left the pod, it withered and died. Melasion's internal organs began to wither almost instantly as the sap began to convert his body into plant matter. New energy coursed through his body.

With the energy came a new, dark purpose. No more would Melasion sit on the fulcrum between nature and expanding civilization—he would foster in a new world, a world in which all animal life would be extinguished.

THE VILLAGE OF FORESTGATE

No matter where you set this adventure, the heroes begin on the road. On the distant horizon is a dark, brooding forest. As the sun begins to head toward the western horizon, the party spies the welcoming sight of houses—a small village lies not a mile ahead. Like most settlements, it is protected by a ditch and bank. If you set this tale in the Winterlands, then the village also has a wooden fence for added security.

Walking past the first few houses, you notice a small group of people to one side. All but one is bent double, digging away at the soil. Nearby stands a wagon. Long bundles wrapped in white cloth are piled in the back. The upright figure turns, catches sight of you, and nods grimly. "Dig faster," you hear him say to his colleagues. "It'll be dark soon and we don't want wolves snooping around."

If approached, the man answers any questions the party may have. Example questions and answers are detailed below. He introduces himself as Lars Loksunu.

Q: What are you doing?

A: *"Burying corpses, eight of them to be precise." He gestures to the wagon.*

Q: What happened to them?

A: *"No idea, stranger. When we awoke this morning this cart and its contents were outside the ditch by the north gate. No sign of any horses, though. We summoned the priest from a nearby village right away. He blessed them and gave them departing prayers. Now we're burying them before the wolves catch the scent."*

Q: How were they killed?

A: *"Not quickly by the looks of them. Take a look if you're interested. But be quick—once these graves are dug we'll be rid of them. Their souls have gone, and what's left is worm food."*

Q: Any idea who they were?

A: *"Some folk reckon they were loggers. There are several lumber camps up by the forest. We don't have much to do with them, though. Wagons of provisions roll past us, and wagons of cut trees come back."*

Q: Can you tell us the way?

A: *"Not tonight. The road passes through some deep bogs and there'll be fog tonight. If you're thinking of heading to the camps I'd advise against it until sunrise. It's not wise to wander around these parts after dark."*

Q: Is there an inn here?

A: *"Over there, the Axeman's Hall. It isn't much, but it has beds and serves decent enough ale. There'll be a good crowd in tonight; everyone is talking about the corpses."*

Q: Who's in charge?

A: *"No one, really. We're tenants of Baron Peredur. His manor is a day's ride to the east. We sent a rider to inform him, but it'll be late tomorrow before we hear back. Likely he'll send some militia to ask questions and then drop the matter—the camps aren't on his lands."*

Checking just the head or arms reveals the corpses appear to have been beaten—their cold flesh is black and blue. Examination of the torso reveals yet more bruises, but also strange puncture wounds. The wounds are raised and tinged green. A Healing roll reveals they were made by a cylindrical object, not a spear or dagger thrust. There is no sign of any injuries typical of weapons, not of the teeth or claws of a wild beast. Pressing the puncture wounds causes a trickle of green, sticky fluid to well out of the hole. It is unidentifiable.

Heroes who investigate the north gate can make Tracking rolls. With success, they detect large paw prints amid the cart ruts and traffic of human feet. The tracks are noticeably deeper leading toward the village, and lighter as they head back toward the forest. The inbound tracks end at the point where the locals say the cart was found. On a raise, the tracker realizes whatever made the tracks walked on two feet as it approached the village and four when it left. A Survival or second Tracking roll reveals the prints were made by a bear, though it is impossible to tell what type.

Checking the back of the cart reveals scratch marks, as if some clawed beasts had its hands, or paws, on the wooden planks. The claw marks alone are not enough to identify whatever made them as a bear, but if the heroes have already discovered the paw prints they are additional confirmation.

MOVING ON

Some groups may be a little keen to move on to the logging camp once they learn of the corpses. Here the GM has two main choices.

First, he can simply skip the first encounter with the plant monsters and let the heroes visit the camp. Unfortunately, on their return they find Forestgate overrun. The tendril thing infected several villagers, which then added to the number of sap zombies. By dawn, every villager had been killed or infected. Over 60 sap zombies now patrol the streets. Should even one escape into the wilds, it could prove fatal—sooner or later a sap infection will create another tendril beast, or perhaps another Melasion.

Second, he can create a reason why they can't leave. Fog will rise, as the villager said, but instead of a light mist it could be truly dense fog. The heroes walk around in circles for a few hours and then arrive back in the village. Alternate suggestions might be strange noises in the mist—the party is likely only Novice characters, so any threat, especially one in Dark lighting, could spell disaster.

THE AXEMAN'S HALL

The Axeman's Hall is a single-story structure. It comprises a main drinking hall, a kitchen annex, two guest wings (all double rooms), and a separate stable block and brewing shed.

As Lars suspected, the inn is heaving—half the village must be crammed inside. The babble of voices is discussing only one thing—the mysterious appearance of the lumberjack's corpses. Working their way to the bar, the characters can order rooms (none are currently occupied) and drinks. Stew, bread, and cheese are available, but it takes half an hour to prepare. The innkeeper tells the heroes to find a table and wait for their order to be brought over.

None of the villagers knows any new information, but talking with them is a second chance to gather information the party missed earlier. Mentioning the bear prints brings a few rueful nods—the woods are crawling with them—but telling the locals a bear walked upright and pushed the wagon causes howls of laughter.

Once the characters have finished dealing with the locals, their food arrives. **Before** any of them can take a mouthful of soup, read the following text aloud. If no one eats, then read the text before the characters think about leaving the bar.

As you raise your spoon to your lips, a loud groan cuts through the noisy inn. Looking around, you see one of the villagers stagger back from his table, dropping his spoonful of stew onto the floor and clutching at his stomach. His back arches, bending him almost in double. A spray of dark red blood jets across the crowded bar, as two thick, slimy tentacles burst out from his ribcage. Smaller tendrils erupt from his flesh, dancing and writhing wildly about his tattered corpse.

The other villagers panic, rushing headlong toward the door, only to find it won't open. The innkeeper quickly flings open one of the doors to the east accommodation wing. Within seconds the bar is clear, leaving only you, a handful of villagers too stupid or drunk to leave, and the vile, writhing tendril thing.

Ask the players to place their characters on the tabletop first. They may begin by any of the tables marked "P." The tendril thing stands at the point marked "X" on the map, but this is only revealed after the characters are set up. Now deal the action cards.

At the start of the second round, the main door to the inn crashes open. Spilling in are the corpses of the lumberjacks. Their skin pulsates as if something is writhing inside them, and thick, green veins are clearly visible on their exposed flesh. Seeing the zombie horde, and knowing they were the lumberjacks, requires a Guts roll. The villagers make a group Guts roll.

There are a maximum of eight sap zombies, regardless of the party's strength or size. For higher Rank parties, subtract two allied villagers per Rank above Novice. For instance, a Veteran party has four fewer allies than a Novice one.

Terrain: The space containing the fireplace counts as difficult ground. Any creature actually stepping into the flames takes 2d6 damage and has a chance of catching fire. Pulling a burning brand from the fire is an action. As a weapon, it causes Str+d4 damage (unlike a flaming torch, the log itself is the weapon, not just the fire). Those struck have a chance of catching fire only if flammable.

Spaces occupied by the tables and chairs are difficult ground. Heroes can go under or over these obstacles, and the chairs don't fill the entire space. Characters who want props for tricks have access to cups, plates, bottles, cutlery, and whatever else the GM feels is appropriate for a small, country inn.

Monsters: None of the villagers are particularly skilled combatants. Most of the patrons run when the trouble starts, but a few have enough courage, or at least alcohol, in their veins to stand and fight.

- **Tendril Thing:** See page 48.
- **Animated Plants:** See page 47.
- **Sap Zombies (2 per hero):** See page 48.
- **Villagers (2 per hero):** See page 50.

Tactics: The villagers are under the control of the heroes and thus have no preset tactics. The tendril things remains stationary the entire fight, lashing out blindly with its tentacles. Once the sap zombies enter the fray, they move toward the nearest animal life form and engage in melee.

The animated plants (see page 47) remain out of play

until someone moves adjacent to any window or a door leading to the outside. They begin on Hold. Only the plants outside the window or door approached reveal themselves—the rest wait until prey is near.

Aftermath: There is nothing wrong with the soup. The tendril thing's host was one of the gravediggers. He nicked his hand while handling one of the corpses and a small amount of sap entered the wound. Rather than transform him into a sap zombie, it had a strange reaction and created the thing which later consumed him. The animated plants quickly wither and die, leaving only crumbling, dried stalks.

A QUIET NIGHT

The villagers are naturally scared witless by what just occurred. Armed with torches and shovels, they spend much of the night hacking down plants, shrubs, and small trees. The vegetation is gathered into a huge bonfire and doused with oil. The remains of the sap zombies and tendril thing are gingerly dragged out and added to the pile. Torches are then thrown onto the heap. Brilliant flames rise high into the night sky. A plume of thick, black smoke drifts lazily on the wind in the direction of the forest.

There are no more clues in the village. To progress, the characters need to visit the nearest logging camp.

THE LOGGING CAMP

Come morning, the villagers are only too keen to direct the party the way to the nearest logging camp. Everyone is of the opinion last night's trouble stemmed from the loggers' corpses, so it makes sense *someone* should investigate (just not the locals). The camp is 15 miles away. Assuming the party leaves shortly after dawn, it is early afternoon when they arrive on the outskirts of the forest.

The miles quickly disappear behind you. Each step takes you nearer the forest, a dark, brooding tangle of ancient trees and thick undergrowth. The air grows more oppressive as you draw nearer, and you get the uneasy feeling the forest is watching you.

Over another low rise and the logging camp comes into view. Protected by a sturdy-looking, wooden wall, you can just make out the tops of log cabins. The main gates are closed. No smoke drifts from the chimney holes, and there are no sounds of life.

Calling out elicits no response. The corpses buried in Forestgate were formerly lumberjacks. Melasion attacked the fort the night before, summoning an army of plant beings to rid the camp of all animal life. All of the foresters were slain in a short, brutal battle. While some rose immediately to join the druid's growing army, others infected by the strange sap were ordered to lay dormant. Melasion then instructed his sidekick, an intelligent bear by the name of Grimbjorn, to load the corpses onto a cart and take them to the nearest village. Here, the druid planned, they would arise at night and infect the villagers, thus swelling his ranks even further. If the characters are here, it is very likely that plan was thwarted.

The main gates are barred from the inside (Toughness 20 (3)). The characters can climb the eight-foot-high wall (no Climbing roll is required if the heroes concoct a sensible plan, like a human pyramid or using a grappling hook) or investigate for another entrance. Once inside, or if they investigate around the rear first, the party discovers something entered the camp before them.

The rear protective wall has a wide breech. The thick posts haven't shattered or been torn asunder, though. The posts, each taller than a man, are bent and buckled, as if some immense giant had twisted lengths of flimsy straw.

Closer inspection reveals no damage to the wood. Although the posts should have snapped, the fibers remain intact—the wood has warped to an extent beyond which stress fractures should have snapped them.

The camp comprises six small log cabins and a single long hut. None of the structures are locked. The small cabins show clear evidence of a disturbance—beds are turned over in some, tables and chairs scattered in others, and bloodstains mar the wooden surfaces. The long hall is the communal kitchen, dining, and storage area. It too has been trashed. There are no signs of any bodies.

Any character checking the ground in and around the camp may make a Tracking roll. A success indicates clear signs of a struggle in the mud—footprints, churned up areas, and blood splatters are everywhere. The hero deduces the attackers entered via the rend in the back wall and made their way through the camp unopposed. The defenders, it seems, were caught unawares, for most of their tracks are no further than a few yards from the various buildings. Aside from one set of animal prints (those of a bear), the other tracks are like nothing the tracker has seen before—they resemble drag marks and oversized, misshapen footprints, rather than clear boot impressions. The strange tracks originate in the forest and lead back in that direction. Finally, there are fresh wheel ruts in the mud and a single set of paw prints. A Survival or second Tracking roll identifies the prints as belonging to a bear.

A raise on the Tracking roll indicates the bear walked upright, picked up several heavy objects lying in the mud (these were the loggers' corpses), and carried them back to a wagon. At some point, the bear pushed the wagon out the rear of the compound and onto the main track. The only clear wagon tracks are fresh—it seems the wagon was already in the camp and had not been moved for several days.

A Notice roll made while inspecting any of the buildings reveals faint traces of sticky, green sap. On a raise, the character deduces the splatters are not drips, but resemble blood spray from a wound. A total of 137 gold scields can be scavenged from the lumberjacks' various personal effects.

Studying the tracks and checking the various buildings takes the best part of three hours. By then, the sun is beginning to sink in the west, and a mist is starting to rise.

MEETING THE NEIGHBORS

Before the party can think of departing, a band of lumberjacks from a neighboring camp arrives. Having heard of tales of numerous disappearances, and having received no word from this site for several days, they have come to investigate.

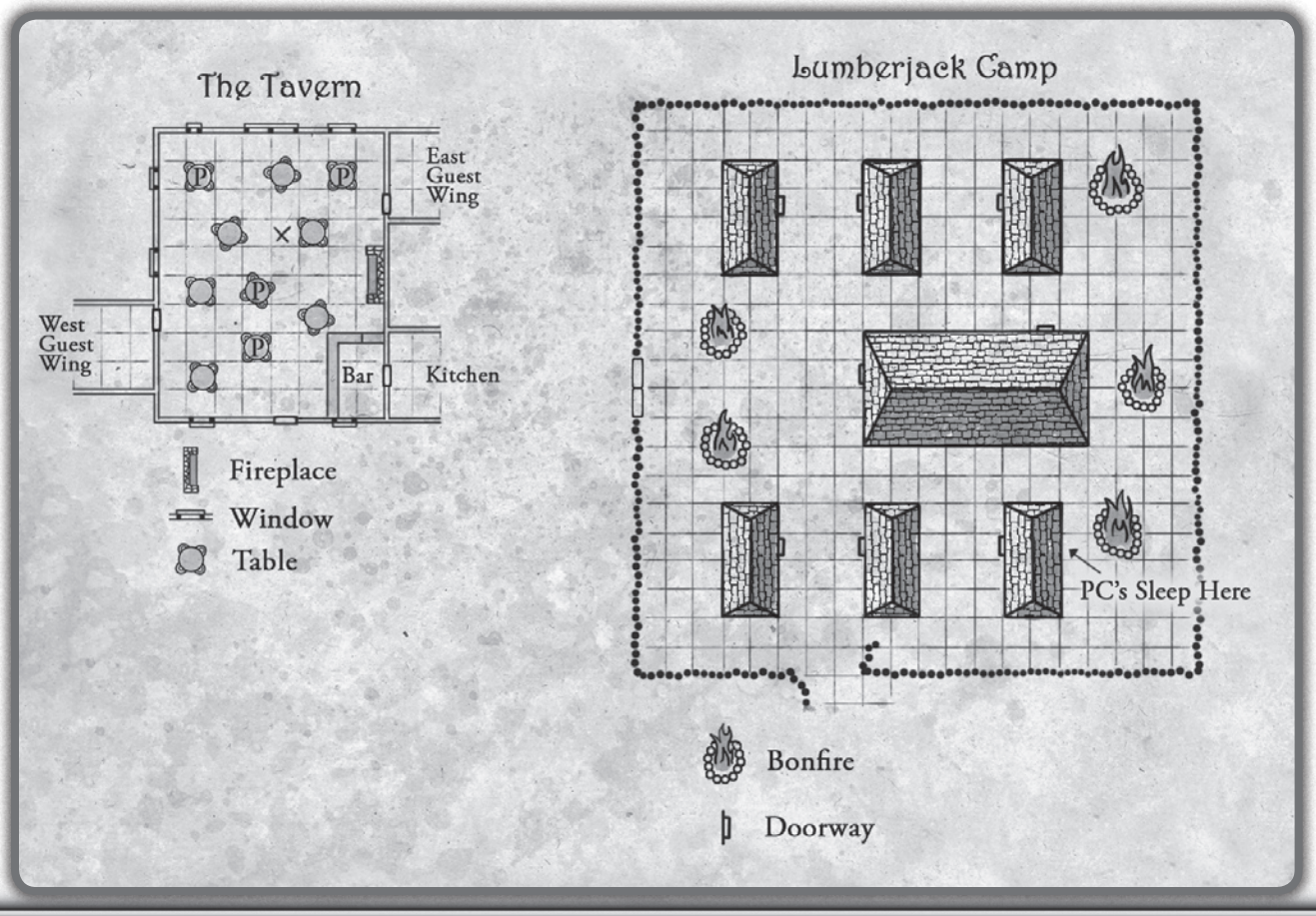
Rumors abound among the lumberjack community that an elf druid is behind the attacks, though no one has seen him clearly. The lumberjacks are immediately wary of the characters. If there is an elf in the party or anyone who could be mistaken for a druid (the loggers have a very stereotypical view of druids), the loggers advance menacingly, but can be talked out of violence. This requires a Persuasion roll at –2. Only one roll is allowed, but it may be Cooperative. If there is an elf who looks anything like a druid then the loggers immediately attack and cannot be reasoned with.

Should violence occur, a deep voice calls the lumberjacks to cease after three rounds. The loggers break from combat as a burly man enters the scene. Otherwise, a wide-set man with a full beard approaches the heroes and addresses them.

"Forgive the rude welcome," the man says. "There have been several…incidents recently and the men are on edge. I am Aelfric Haraldsunu, the supervisor of the neighboring camp to the east. Now, what are your names and where are the lumberjacks who live here?"

The lumberjacks are shocked to their core if told about the attack at Forestgate. They immediately clutch their axes tight and look nervously at the nearby forest. Once the party has finished speaking, Aelfric talks to them again.

"That is not a tale I wish to hear ever again," he says, shaking his shoulders as if to rid himself of the memory. "Whatever your quest, it is no time of day to be entering the forest. If we make good speed we can be back at our camp by nightfall. Despite what you see here, our camp is better than



spending a night in the open. We are forewarned now, and we will be ready for trouble. More needs to be said about the events of recent weeks, but not here, not now. Will you accept our hospitality?"

A brisk walk sees the characters at the second camp an hour before dusk. The layout is identical to the previous site. Aelfric immediately orders his men to light bonfires close to the palisade nearest the forest and to erect torches throughout the camp. Other men are then put to work as sentries. The supervisor then invites the characters into the main hall.

Seated around a roaring hearth, the heroes are given slices of roasted rabbit and boar, chunks of fresh bread, and flagons of ale. When they are nourished, Aelfric answers their questions. Likely questions and answers are detailed below.

Q: What can you tell of recent events?

A: *"Camps all along the forest edge have reported disappearances. Men would enter the woods, alone or in small groups, and never be seen again. There are several cabins deeper in the woods, which we use when we must, but all were deserted. Many of these men are skilled in the ways of foresters. They looked for tracks, but found nothing. Our colleagues simply vanished into thin air."*

Q: When did you last talk to anyone from the other camp?

A: *"A week, maybe ten days ago. They reported one man missing, so we went to help form a search party. Since then we have been busy with work. Our paymasters demand their quotas be met."*

Q: Who do you work for?

A: *"This camp is run by a consortium of merchants at the capital. Some of the others are the property of noblemen whose lands border the forest. A small few are independent—the lumberjacks work for themselves. They make more money, but the buyers are less regular—most of the owners have contracts with merchants. The independent camps are also smaller, so they harvest less wood."*

Q: Have none of the owners done anything to help?

A: *"One did. A patrol, maybe ten soldiers strong, visited our camp. They questioned us, bought fresh provisions, and set off into the forest. That was three days ago, and we have seen nothing of them since. Perhaps they exited by another route. Perhaps they didn't. Our masters have yet to answer the message we sent last week. Once the timber shipments dry up, they'll respond for sure."*

Q: Where are the other camps?

A: *"They surround the forest at various points. Ours and the one you visited are fairly close together, but our next closest neighbor is thirty miles away. Even for a healthy man, it is a four to five day round trip if he avoids the forest. Through the woods, one could make it there in a day. But we have heard nothing from any of our neighbors. Perhaps we waited too long to act. Had we visited our neighbors yesterday they might still be alive. Or maybe we would have died alongside them."*

Q: Who do you think is responsible?

A: *"No one knows for sure. There are rumors an elf druid has been seen spying on the camps from the edge of the forest, but talk is plentiful, especially in troubled times. We have seen nothing, except for a lone bear which wandered close to the camp on several occasions."*

Q: Can you describe the bear?

A: *"Big, brown, and bearlike. The strange thing was the way it looked at us, as if it was studying us. We drove it off each time. It must be three days since we saw it last. One of the men swears the creature walked upright."*

Q: Have you noticed anything different about the forest?

A: *"Strange you should ask. Until three weeks back, everything seemed fine, but then the woods took on a different air. It's hard to explain, but we felt, well, unwelcome, if that makes any sense. Everyone felt like they were being watched by unseen eyes. Glades were suddenly stifling and oppressive. Even the flowers seemed off, as if they resented our being there. I've worked in the forests all my life, and even ones infested with orcs and giants have never had an air like this one."*

Q: Are there are Elfhomes nearby?

A: *"Not here, no. Some claim there are deeper in the forest, but if there are elves around, they keep to themselves. It's just us and the animals around here."*

When the heroes are done questioning him, Aelfric shows them to an empty cabin. A small fire has warmed the room to a comfortable level, and a pot of simmering broth hangs over the glowing coals.

Any characters who want to take a stint on guard duty are welcome to join the lumberjacks. With Aelfric vouching for the party, the loggers are surly but friendly. Most have a passing interest in the party's recent exploits, and hearing tales of brave deeds gives them courage against the unseen threats lurking in the forest.

THE WOOD TURNS WILD

An hour after the sun sets, a mighty storm breaks over the area. Dark, boiling clouds gather with supernatural speed, rain falls like a waterfall, gale force winds threaten to tear trees up by their roots, and brilliant flashes of lightning illuminate the night as bright as day. The raging storm wakes any sleeping heroes.

Half an hour later, any heroes on sentry duty in the compound witness the following. Otherwise, the characters are alerted to the danger by shouts from the lumberjacks. Heroes not already outside join the battle at the start of the second round.

The palisade suddenly begins to shudder, as if shaken by some giant, invisible hand. Without warning the posts begin to gracefully twist, gently contorting and parting to create a wide breech. Lightning tears across the dark sky, momentarily highlighting a shambling horde of humanoids and plants advancing on the compound.

HERBALISM

A forest in spring or summer is an ideal time for herbalists. Unfortunately, this isn't the best forest to start picking plants. Due to Melasion's foul influence, many of the plants, roots, berries, and herbs have become toxic to animal life.

For each batch of plants picked, the GM must secretly draw a card from the action deck. A red card indicates the herbs are fresh and unsoiled. A black numbered card means they are tainted but the taint is detectable. A Knowledge (Alchemy) check reveals the toxin, but note the roll can only be made if the character *specifically* checks his haul. Only one roll per hero is permissible per batch. The taint cannot be detected if the card is a black Jack through Ace, however.

Instead of producing the desired effect, tainted herbs produce a low-grade poison. Any herbal remedy made using the plants, whether fresh or concocted later with dried ingredients, forces the victim to make a Vigor roll. The modifier applied to the herbal remedy for its expected type acts as a similar modifier to the Vigor roll. Thus, a poisoned regenerative herb gives a –4 penalty. A failed Vigor rolls causes a level of Fatigue for 24 hours. It is cured as a poison.

Ask the players to position their heroes before revealing where the breech occurs. The plant army begins 4" from the breech, outside the compound. The edge of the forest is 20" away.

Terrain: The storm is fierce—howling winds and lashing rain blast across the compound. The ground becomes extremely slippery. Any character who runs and rolls a "1" on his running die, slips and falls prone. These conditions inflict a –1 penalty to most actions due to slipping, difficulty hearing, and so on. The Game Master must decide if any actions are unaffected.

At the start of round one, all the torches in the compound are extinguished. At the start of round two, the bonfires (marked "F" on the map) are greatly diminished. For the remainder of the storm, each bonfire illuminates all adjacent squares as Dim lighting (–1) and all squares 1" away as Dark lighting (–2). Light from the windows illuminates the square directly in line with the window with Dim lighting (–1) and the next square in line as Dark lighting (–2). The lighting conditions are for attacks *into* an illuminated area. Beyond this, the lighting is Pitch Black (–4). Lanterns are unaffected, being shuttered against wind and rain.

Each round a Joker is drawn, a flash of lighting rips the sky asunder. For the entire round, visibility is as per normal daylight. If both Jokers turn up in the same round, the lightning lights up the scene for the next round, as well.

Monsters: Melasion's attack force is led by his bear companion, Grimbjorn. A small number of spore grenadiers act as artillery support for the main troops, a host of sap zombies. Melasion is watching the battle from deep in the forest, and plays no part in this encounter.

Ⓜ **Grimbjorn:** See page 47. Melasion has cast *armor* on his bear, increasing its Toughness to 12 (2).

Ⓜ **Spore Grenadier (1 per hero):** See page 48.

Ⓜ **Sap Zombies (3 per hero):** See page 48.

Ⓜ **Aelfric:** Aelfric is a Wild Card logger (see page 50) but has Strength d10. He carries a great axe (Str+d10, AP 1, 2-hands). His Parry is 4, due to his weapon.

Ⓜ **Loggers (2 per hero):** See page 50. Half have hand axes and half wield battle axes.

Tactics: Aelfric and the loggers are under the control of the players. The sap zombies lead the assault. They break ranks in a bid to infect as many humans as possible.

The spore grenadiers wait further back, firing their spore pods at the most opportune time. For instance, a choking or sticky pod is launched the round before the sap zombies engage with enemies, thus preventing the victims from withdrawing. An explosive pod is best used against a group of characters or to harm spellcasters. The rash pods are ideal for heavily armored heroes, likely the skilled fighters, as it reduces their effectiveness.

Grimbjorn the bear remains out of sight until the minions engage the defenders. His orders are to crush the stiffest resistance (likely the player characters) without overly endangering his life. As soon as he takes two wounds, he tries to flee into the night.

THE WOODLAND FEY

Once the furor has died down and the camp made secure again, the heroes can return to bed. At some time during the night, one character chosen at "random" (any hero with Curious is the ideal choice) hears scratching at their shuttered cabin window. The sound is rhythmic—two sets of three taps, then a long pause before it is repeated. Sooner or later someone will take a peak outside. When they do, read the following text aloud.

THE WOOD WIGHT

Sitting on the window ledge is a small creature, maybe a yard tall. Humanoid in form, its body appears to be made of twigs. The hand tapping at the window is long and spindly, with branchlike fingers. Large, round, jet black eyes peer curiously at you, betraying no emotion. The creature cocks its head to one side and smiles, revealing a row of pointed wooden teeth.

Any elf, druid, or cleric of Eostre Plantmother can make a Common Knowledge roll to recognize the crea-

ture. Earth elementalists, skalds, and clerics of Eostre Animalmother may also make the roll, but with a –2 penalty. Other heroes must make a Knowledge (Fey) roll to identify the beast. Success means the hero knows the little creature is a wood wight (literally "wood man"), a form of woodland-dwelling fey. Like many fey they are neither benevolent nor malicious by nature, but instead mimic the reactions of those they meet.

The wood wight has been sent by a leshij, a powerful form of woodland spirit. Using its fey powers, it learned of the characters' fight against the plant monsters in Forestgate and of the recent struggle at the logging camp. Although a leshij is part plant, it has no love for Melasion or his insane plan to rid the world of animals. As the old Anari saying goes, better the demon you know—humans may destroy forests, but they are a known quantity. The leshij wishes to speak with the heroes in secret.

Any threatening gestures or shouting causes the wight to scamper away into the darkness, only to return and resume its tapping a few minutes later—it's far more afraid of failing the leshij than it is of being killed by the characters. Sounding the alarm causes the wight to cast *boost Stealth* and vanish into the night. Only when the camp has settled down again does it return.

In the event it cannot make peaceful contact with the heroes at night, the wight watches from the woods. It tries to open dialogue if they enter the forest. Note that without its help, the heroes can't get very far—the best they can do, is blunder aimlessly around the vast forest.

When the characters show an interest in talking to the wood wight, it passes on its message. It first tries Fey, then Elven (both languages), and finally Saxa. It doesn't know any other languages.

> *The small creature bows low. In a hushed, child-like voice it says, "Come, follow. Into the forest we must go. The forest lord wishes to speak with you. Come, come, into the dark wood. I will guide you."*

The wood wight doesn't really understand non-fey and is puzzled if the heroes show reluctance to accompany it into the dark, foreboding forest in the middle of the night. If necessary, it adds only the following "comforting" woods—*"Forest lord wants to speak with you. Must not disobey forest lord or wood wight will be punished. Come, come, quite safe."*

Once it appears the party is getting dressed, it scurries out of the compound and waits by the tree line. When the characters have caught up, it slips quietly into the gloom.

FOLLOWING THE FEY

The creature has no name, at least not one non-fey would understand. It has no desire for small talk, nor will it reveal anything about where it is leading the party. It grins its toothy grin, stares at the party, mentions the forest lord, and gestures deeper into the forest. For a small creature, it moves with remarkable speed, leaping over fallen trees and darting through thick undergrowth without breaking step.

After two hours march, it suddenly stops and begins sniffing the air. Quick as lightning it overturns a rotting log and pulls out a large, black beetle. Licking its lips, it pops the struggling insect into its mouth and crunches down. A thin trickle of yellow goo runs from the corner of its mouth, and it crunches on its snack. Realizing its charges may also be hungry, it roots around in the undergrowth for a few moments. With a beaming smile it offers the party a selection of beetles, spiders, and worms. It merely shrugs if its offer is rejected and devours the lot in a single mouthful.

An hour later, the wood wight gestures for the party to halt. It takes a dozen steps forward, coughs, bows so low its head brushes the floor, and announces the "ones you seek are present." It then steps back, head still bowed. The wood wight turns to the party and gestures toward a small hollow. Inside are several empty waterskins and numerous animal bones.

Any elf, druid, or cleric of Eostre Plantmother can make a Common Knowledge roll to know what the pile represents. Earth elementalists, skalds, and clerics of Eostre Animalmother may also make the roll, but with a –2 penalty. Other heroes must make a Knowledge (Fey) roll. Success means the hero knows the pile represents offerings left to the woodland spirit. If everyone fails, the wood wight prompts the party to leave a token gift.

Not leaving a gift has no immediate effect on the adventure. However, later on, the wood wight is less inclined to aid those who thought themselves above supplicating the leshij.

THE FOREST LORD SPEAKS

> *Seated cross-legged atop a large boulder, is a strange blend of plant and animal. The creature is humanoid with bark-like skin, and hair and beard of living grass. A pair of straight horns adorns its crown, while its feet end in cloven hooves. A tail like that of a horse swishes casually against the cold stone. Its craggy face is ageless, but its eyes betray centuries of wisdom.*
>
> *"Greeting, mammals," it says in a deep, hollow voice. "Sit, you are quite safe in my sanctuary." It gestures to a number of stones, worn flat by untold ages of use. "I am a leshij, a fey warden of the forest. I know of you and your recent struggles, and this is why I summoned you here.*
>
> *"By the old laws I am forbidden from interfering in what is happening, but you are not. While I cannot give you direct aid, I can answer questions."*

Typical questions the heroes are likely to ask and the fey's response are detailed below.

IT'S NOT A FIGHTER

The GM should note the wood wight is *not* a combatant. It gladly uses its spells to aid the party if they have treated it kindly, but it avoids entering combat under any circumstance. Similarly, it refuses to act as point man when the party suspects an encounter. If continually pressed to join the fray or go ahead as an ambush detector, the wood wight takes offense and scurries away into the undergrowth.

Without the wood wight's aid, the journey time increases dramatically. The frequency of encounters drops to one per two days—remember to apply thirst and hunger penalties if the party runs out of food.

As noted elsewhere, any heroes who did not leave the leshij an offering are viewed poorly. The wood wight will *not* cast spells that directly benefit such heroes unless first convinced of their good nature. This requires a successful Persuasion roll. One roll per character is required, but the wood wight only listens to one such argument per day.

As such, the wood wight should either be entrusted to a player who won't abuse it or kept as a GM-controlled character.

Q: Do you have a name?

A: *"Names are power, and you are not yet ready to wield power. When you are ready, we will meet again and names will be exchanged."*

Q: What's happening in the forest?

A: *"An ancient evil from the dawn of time has awoken. Before animals rose from the ground, the world was inhabited only by plants. Eostre, in her infinite wisdom, saw fit to create animals which fed on plants and animals which ate animals. So the system of nature you know came to be.*

"But in those early days, distant days even to my kind, there were plants which refused to accept the new order. A terrible war ravaged the land, a war between plant and beast, a war which threatened total extinction of entire species. The worst of the plants were black, malevolent things who hated all things flesh. No name exists for them except Black Ones. We thought their kind long extinguished, but one slumbered unseen. Now it has awoken, and the first war begins anew."

Q: What were those things we fought?

A: *"Abominations, animals becoming plants. The sap of the Black Ones was a blight upon all animals. Each animal death brings new plant life. For every life your side loses, the enemy gains a life. There is no cure for its ills—only destruction of the host."*

Q: Who awakened these Black Ones?

A: *"My wood wights tell me of an elf druid, Melasion by name, who has become host to the last Black One. How he came to this state they will not speak. What he once was, he is no longer. We would talk often, and I came to know his heart. Once he was a force for balance. Now he is a plague, a powerful force for evil.*

"For now, my kind is safe, but soon his growing powers will affect even us. Every forest in Rassilon will become an enemy of animals. The grass beneath your feet, the flowers whose fragrance you smell, the crops you eat—all will become lethal to your kind."

Q: How do we stop this thing?

A: *"It is mortal. It can die. But be warned—its corpse must be consumed by fire, else a seed may live and begin the cycle again."*

Q: And killing it ends the war?

A: *"If only it were that easy. Killing the Black One ends the Black One. It no more ends the life of those it has created than the slaying of your parents would end your existence. Its minions may be vile creatures, but their powers are like a child to a frost giant compared to those of the master."*

Q: Why haven't you destroyed it?

A: *"There is more complexity to this universe than you will ever imagine. An ancient pact prohibits me from direct action. I can no more war against it than the gods can walk the surface of the world."*

Q: Where do we find this druid?

A: *"The wood wight will guide you through the forest as far as he dares. But be warned—the forest is your enemy. The moment you entered this wood, it knew you were here. You have no advantage here. It is waiting for you, and your journey will be difficult."*

Q: And if we don't help? (or "What's our reward?")

A: *"The choice is simple—either you fight or all animal life will be wiped from the surface of the world. Life shall be your reward."*

Once the questioning is over, the leshij gestures to several dense patches of moss. *"Rest now,"* he says. *"The forest is no place to wander at night. You will be quite safe here."*

INTO THE DARK WOOD

At first light, the wood wight (the fey responds to any polite name the heroes choose to give him) quickly gathers a few grubs and beetles to sustain him on the journey. The creature knows where it is going, but is unable to express this in terms the characters understand. It has no comprehension of human measurements nor of marking the passage of time. Rather, it identifies the correct trail by tiny, often ephemeral markers, such as a fallen log, the scent of certain flowers, the direction the bees fly, the sound of the wind, and such like.

For much of the journey, the wood wight takes the lead, following its invisible trail through the forest. Due to the lack of trails, the trip takes many days. Several times the wood wight stops, looks left and right, shrugs, and then speaks to the party. Things have changed in the forest and the fey isn't sure which way to go. So, it offers the party the choice. Asked what lies along either path, the wight replies, *"Danger all around. Either path is just as bad."*

At each junction, the party must make the decision whether to go left or right. The direction they choose may lead just to further walking or to an encounter. These are detailed below. There is one junction per day. The final scene of this adventure occurs on the morning of the third scene.

If the party is more experienced, the GM should make some adjustments. For Veteran parties, the first junction *always* leads to the encounter. Heroic parties always face the first two encounters, and Legendary parties all three.

Junction	Left	Right
1	Safe	Bridge over Troubled Water (see page 11)
2	Impaled Patrol (see page 12)	Safe
3	The Marsh	Safe

BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER

Cutting through the thick vegetation, you suddenly find yourselves on a rough trail. A high arched, stone bridge leads over a wide, fast-flowing stream, while looking the other direction, the trail is quickly lost in the forest. Dense patches of tall grass and reeds line the banks, while brambles and briars cover much of the forest floor. The wood wight points to the bridge. "That way," it grins.

The trail has been used by foresters, rangers, hunters, and loggers for generations. The bridge is a single arch and rises some seven feet above the water, allowing passage beneath down the center of the stream. A forest troll, corrupted by the mad druid, has taken up residence under the bridge.

Terrain: The stream is waist-deep and counts as difficult terrain. Slick stones line the bottom. Any hero who runs through the stream and rolls a "1" on his running die, slips and falls. Any hero who falls becomes soaked to the skin, ruining any scrolls and other such items not in waterproof containers.

The trees provide Cover (Heavy Armor +6) and block line of sight, as do the boulders. The undergrowth provides Cover but only blocks line of sight if a hero is crouched. Any attacks into the undergrowth, which miss because of the Cover modifier, are assumed to miss the target, the weapon having become entangled.

The patches highlighted on the map in light green are tangle vines. Any creature without the Plant special ability moving through the vegetation does so as difficult ground and cannot run. Elves, Disciples of Freo, and heroes under the effects of *wilderness step* treat the ground as difficult terrain, but they can run (this is still halved). Other areas highlighted as vegetation are considered forest difficult ground.

Monsters: Lurking at the point marked "T" on the map is a corrupted forest troll. It fell prey to one of Melasion's many plants. While it has undergone transformation into a plant-being, it retains its crude intellect. The troll is curled up, but is not asleep—it is waiting in ambush. Until it moves, it resembles a mossy stone.

The troll awakens and rears up to its full height when any character steps onto the bridge or when one enters the stream, whichever comes first. The character must make a Notice roll to avoid Surprise.

Ⓜ **Corrupted Forest Troll:** See page 47.

Higher Ranks: GMs may wish to increase the difficulty of this encounter for higher-Ranked parties. Seasoned or Veteran parties should face two trolls (both Extras), while Heroic or Legendary parties must defeat a Wild Card troll and an Extra troll. Both additional trolls begin under the southern end of the bridge.

Tactics: The troll moves so as to best use its Improved Sweep. It won't risk a free hit by bypassing enemies just to obtain a better position, though. Because the troll is now part plant, it is unaffected by the tangle vines.

Treasure: Stashed in a hollow beneath the southern end of the bridge is the troll's treasure haul. Coins and small pieces of jewelry amount to 218 gold scields.

Among the waterlogged, detritus and mangled gear is a backpack containing a healer's bag, flint and steel, and a bandolier containing three alchemical potions—*healing* (cures two wounds taken within the "golden hour"), *boost Spirit* (cast with a success), and *warrior's gift* (Improved Nerves of Steel).

KNOCKBACK

These rules are taken from the *Hellfrost Bestiary*.

The physical attacks of large creatures can knock over smaller foes. In order to cause knockback, the attacker must make a successful Fighting attack. The blow does not have to cause damage, however. The victim cannot avoid this—no human can hope to remain standing after being on the receiving end of a frost giant's colossal war axe.

An opponent who is knocked back into a relatively solid object (hay bales and glass windows, for instance, are not solid) is automatically Shaken. This is treated as a separate attack, and thus a foe Shaken by an attack who is then knocked back into a solid object, suffers the effects of successive Shaken results. Opponents may try to Soak any initial damage from the attack or spend bennies to remove the Shaken condition *before* the knockback is applied.

- If a creature is 2 or 3 Sizes larger than its opponent, the victim is knocked back 1" and falls prone.
- If a creature is 4 to 7 Sizes larger than its opponent, the victim is knocked flying 1d4" and falls prone.
- A creature 8 to 11 Sizes larger than its foe, causes knockback of 1d6" and sends foes prone.
- A creature 12 or more Sizes larger, knocks foes back 1d10" and sends them prone.

There is also a short sword in a leather scabbard. The weapon isn't magical, but it is finely worked and holds a keen edge. It causes an additional +1 damage (but no modifier to Fighting). Auld Saxa runes on the blade identify it as "Bonegnawer." A Knowledge (History) roll at –4 recalls a blade of that name once belonged to a powerful Saxa chieftain who died during the struggle to throw off the Anari yoke. How the weapon came to be here is a mystery.

THE LOST PATROL

An eerie silence descends over the forest. Ahead you can see a pile of leather-clad corpses lying in the trail. It is unlikely they died where they stood, for the bodies are jumbled one on top of the other. Eight short spears are thrust into the ground nearby.

The corpses are those of the patrol Aelfric mentioned to the party. Ill-equipped to battle Melasion's fell creations, the soldiers walked into a deadly trap and were slaughtered to the last. Infected as sap zombies, Melasion has put them to use as guardians along the trail leading to his lair.

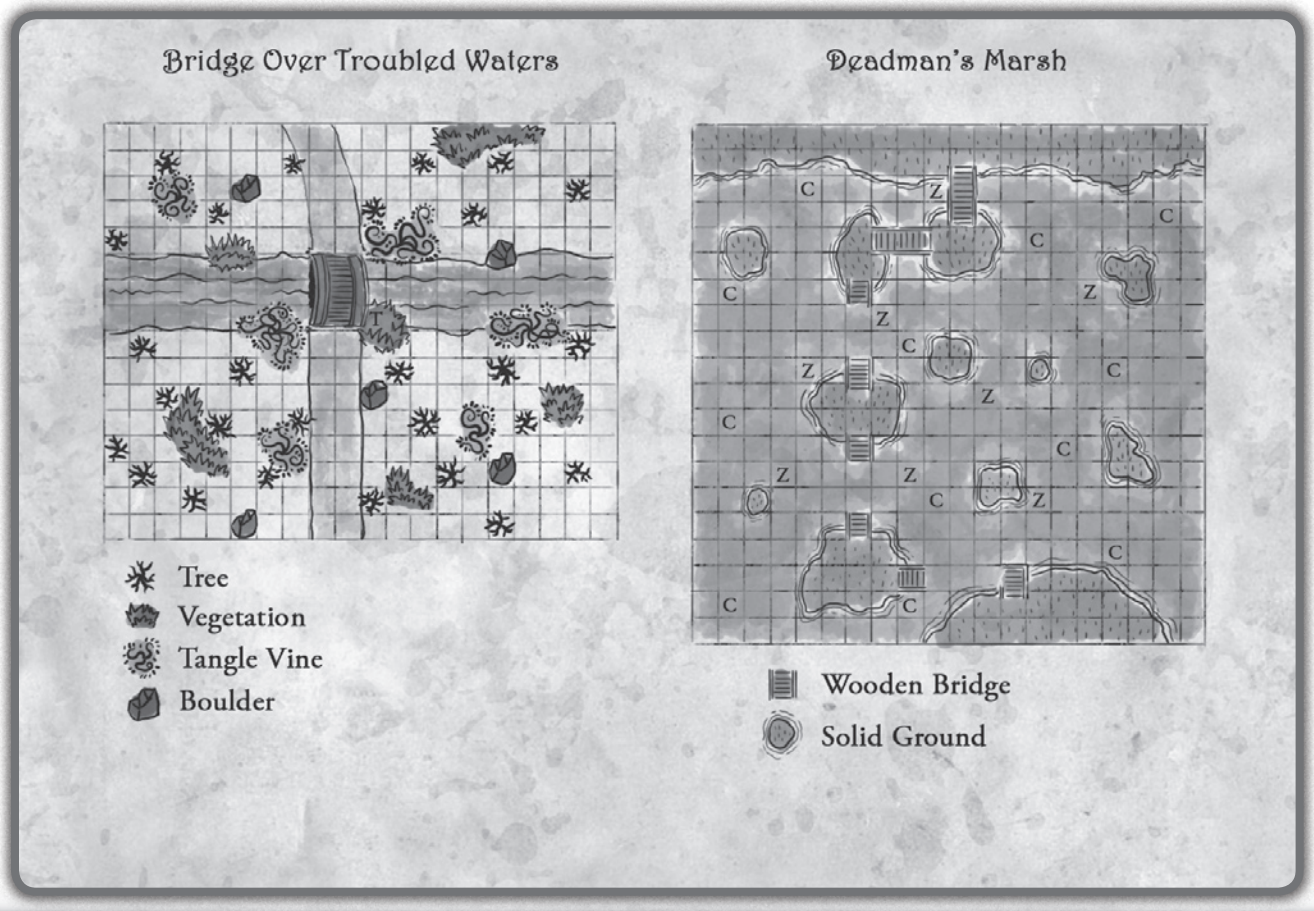
Terrain: This encounter uses the same map as **Bridge Over Troubled Water**. Remove the bridge and stream. Replace the boulders with thorndarts (see below). Position the sap zombies prone in the center of the trail, where the bridge should be. The party begins on the southern edge of the trail.

The trees provide Cover (Heavy Armor +6) and block line of sight. The undergrowth provides Cover but only blocks line of sight if a hero is crouched. Any attacks into the undergrowth which miss because of the Cover modifier are assumed to miss the target, the weapon having become entangled.

The patches highlighted on the map in light green are tangle vines. Any creature without the Plant special ability moving through the vegetation does so as difficult ground and cannot run. Elves, Disciples of Freo, and heroes under the effects of *wilderness step* treat the ground as difficult terrain, but they can run (this is still halved). Other areas highlighted as vegetation are considered forest difficult ground.

Some of the trees are semi-animate, being able to swing their branches around. On any round in which a hero within 2" of a tree draws a deuce as his first action card, the tree swipes at him. It attacks at the start of the round, before any other actions are taken. Roll d8 Fighting. With success, the victim takes 2d6 damage and is knocked back 1d4" directly away from the nearest tree. See the sidebar on page 11 for further details.

Monsters: The soldiers have been transformed into



sap zombies. A small number of thorndart bushes also grow in the area.

Ⓜ **Sap Zombies (2 per hero):** See page 48. These wear leather armor, giving them Toughness 8 (1).

Ⓜ **Thorndarts (1 per hero):** See page 48.

Tactics: The thorndarts launch repeated volleys of thorns at the nearest character—they don't attack the sap zombies (a result of Melasion's control over them). The sap zombies then rise to their feet and lurch toward the party.

DEADMAN'S MARSH

The trail ends abruptly at a wide stretch of dank, fetid marsh. Floating on the brackish water are two dozen or so bloated corpses. Thick sedge and reeds break the surface in great clumps. Several islands, each little more than an elevated outcropping of rock, lie between you and the far edge of the marsh. The remnants of a wooden causeway span part of the distance.

Terrain: The water is only knee deep (12–18"), but the bottom of the marsh is a deep layer of thick silt, tangled weeds, hidden logs, and other debris. Movement through the murky water counts as difficult ground. (Pedantic player alert: the marsh may be within a forest, but it is not forest terrain. Hence, elves' Forest Born racial ability does not apply.)

The wooden bridges are rotten. Each time a character moves across one, the GM should flip the top card of the action deck. A black numbered card indicates the character's foot has broken through. He treats leaving that square as difficult ground (he has to extract his foot). A black face card means the hero's leg has punched through the planks. His movement is immediately halted. Removing his foot requires a Strength roll as an action. Until this is done, the character cannot move and has a –1 penalty to attack rolls.

Monsters: Numerous corpses float in the water. Those marked "C" on the map are mundane corpses, left here by Melasion as a warning to intruders. Those marked "Z" are sap zombies, floating face down amid the weeds and sedges.

Ⓜ **Sap Zombies (2 per hero):** See page 48.

Tactics: The sap zombies remain lifeless until an animal moves within 3" of one. At this point, they all rise and wade toward the nearest target. The party members must make Notice rolls to avoid Surprise.

Treasure: Any hero willing to search the corpses finds 1d6 gs per mundane corpse.

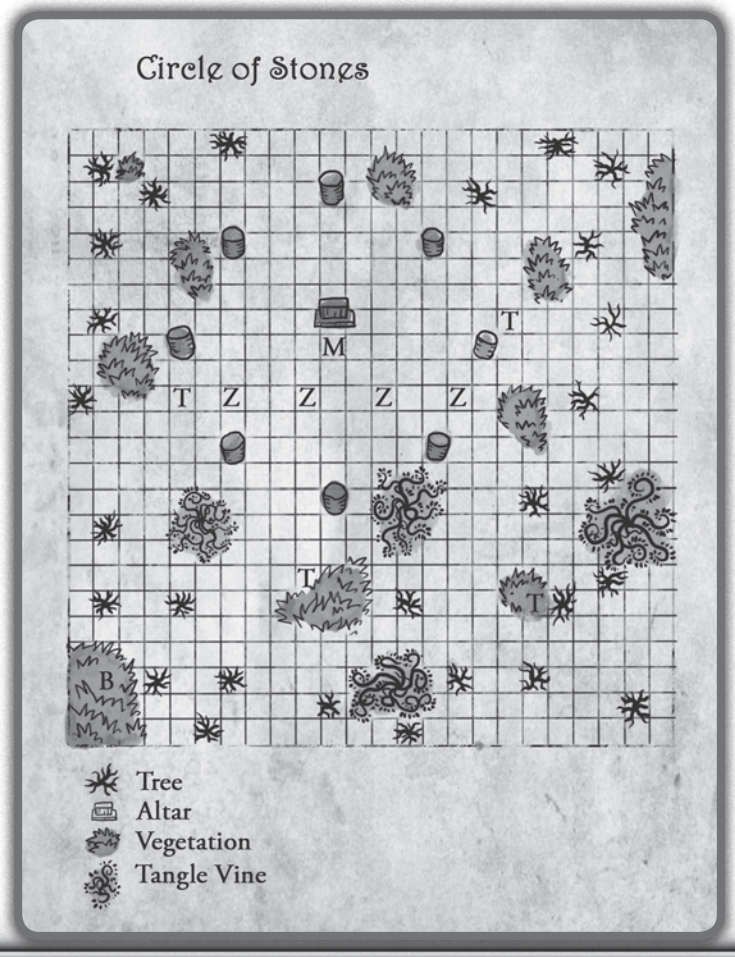
CIRCLE OF STONES

Hacking through the brambles, you find yourselves on the edge of a large glade. Patches of brambles and dense grasses are scattered here and there. Tall stones, ancient and weathered, form a wide ring. The air positively hums with magical energy.

Standing in the center of the circle, before an altar made of jumbled bones, fastened together by vines, is a tall elf. His wan skin is riddled with thick, green veins, and his hair replaced by slim, woody sprouts. Fastened to his body are bark plates, curved yet rough. In his hands he clutches a long antler staff.

"Ah, the animals have finally arrived," the elf smirks. "I am Melasion and you are unwelcome intruders in my kingdom. Wait, what is this, a wood wight? Do you not know, little fey, that you are fighting for the wrong side? Traitor!" the elf snarls, gesturing at the cowering wood wight. "Your fate is sealed for daring to defy me!"

With an insane glint in his eyes, the elf turns his attention back to you. "Your kind has devoured and destroyed the plant life of this world for far too long. Now the ancient order will be broken and paradise restored. All animals will be eradicated…starting with you!"



Druidism is an ancient art, formulated long before humans ever achieved sentience. Raised long ago, ages before the first human tribes formed villages, the glade is a powerful focus of natural magic—magic which affects plants and animals. It also has strong ties to the elemental realm of earth. Any druids, earth elementalists, and elves automatically sense the glade is a powerful focus for natural magic. A hero who casts *detect arcana* sees the standing stones glow, as well as Melasion's antler staff.

Terrain: Any druid, cleric of Eostre, or earth elementalist gains +1 to arcane skill rolls while within the glade. This is *in addition* to the +1 bonus druids already incur for being in a totally natural environment. Melasion's bonuses are already factored into his stat block.

If subjected to the Siphoning while inside the glade, druids and earth elementalists roll 3d6 if their arcane skill die is a 1 and take the *highest* two. On a critical failure, they roll 2d6 as normal.

The patches highlighted on the map in light green are tangle vines. Any creature without the Plant special ability moving through the vegetation does so as difficult ground and cannot run. Elves, Disciples of Freo, and heroes under the effects of *wilderness step* treat the ground as difficult terrain, but they can run (this is still halved). Other areas highlighted as vegetation are considered forest difficult ground.

The standing stones are 8' tall and have Toughness 12 (4; Heavy Armor). They provide Cover and block line of sight. Destroying all the standing stones breaks the ancient enchantment, and the glade loses its magical power. Transporting the stones to a new location also destroys the charm (and the new site does not gain the power).

Melasion's altar is 4' high and provides Cover (+3 Armor). Moving through the square it occupies is difficult ground.

Monsters: Melasion stands before the altar, facing the heroes—the forest plants alerted him to the characters' imminent arrival. Grimbjorn is hiding in the position marked "B" on the map. Growing around the site are several thorndart bushes (marked "T"). A number of sap zombies ("Z") are also present. For higher ranked parties, the GM should position any extra thorndarts and sap zombies within 3" of those already marked on the map.

Ⓜ **Melasion:** See page 46

Ⓜ **Grimbjorn the Bear:** See page 47. Any injuries Grimbjorn took during the attack on the lumberjacks' compound have been *healed* (remember, the druid was watching from the forest). Melasion has already cast *armor* on Grimbjorn, giving him Toughness 12(2). Remember, this gives him a –1 penalty for Maintaining a spell.

Ⓜ **Thorndart Bushes (1 per hero):** See page 48.

Ⓜ **Sap Zombies (1 per hero):** See page 48.

Tactics: Melasion starts by casting *sphere of might* on his person. Heroes who remain close together are targeted with *entangle* spells. Against those who separate, the druid casts *barrier*, positioning lengths of thorny hedges to keep the party divided (and thus easy targets for his minions). Melasion isn't stupid—his *barriers* will turn through right angles when required, so as to trap a hero in the corner and force the victim's potential allies to move further to provide aid.

When the party moves toward melee range, the druid cancels his *barrier* spells (a free action), thus removing the spellcasting penalties they incur. If given the opportunity, he casts *armor* on his person for added protection. Once forced into melee, he attacks with Wild Attacks against elves and druids, whom he considers sellouts, but uses regular attacks against other heroes.

The thorndarts fire volley after volley of sharp thorns at the nearest conscious character within range. They are a deadly foe, but the heroes can avoid them once they work out their maximum range. A well-placed *barrier* spell can stymie their ranged attacks, though the plants will try to blast the *barrier* apart.

Each sap zombie heads for a different hero and engages in melee. Once they have closed, Grimbjorn bursts from his hiding place and attacks the nearest hero, looking to use the Gang Up bonus to secure a bear hug.

This is the only fight in which the wood wight will use *healing* during combat, rushing to aid heroes who are taking a beating. He still avoids getting into actual combat, though.

Treasure: Melasion carries a relic to which he is attuned. His antler staff grants a +1 bonus to arcane skill rolls when affecting plants or using plants as a spell trapping. For instance, *entangle* with a "creeping vine" trapping gains the bonus, but using *beast friend* to summon an animal does not. Thus, it is likely beneficial only to druids, clerics of Eostre Plantmother, and certain earth elementalists.

AFTERMATH

With the death of Melasion, the major threat is ended. However, if the party missed any encounters, the GM may either have the party stumble into them on the return journey or have the surviving sap zombies start a second plague at some point in the future. He should devise a scenario for the latter. Glory is awarded as normal for successfully slaying the druid.

BESTIARY

MELASION

Melasion has been forever altered by the black seed. His wan skin is riddled with thick, green veins, his hair has been replaced by slim, woody sprouts; the nails have become bark, and his blood replaced with thick sap.

More plant than elf, the corrupted druid seeks only one thing—the total extermination of animal life.

Melasion's Druidism skill already includes the bonuses for being a druid in a natural realm, being within the druidic glade, and his magical antler staff.

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

Skills: Climbing d8, Druidism d10+3, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Healing d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Survival d8, Tracking d8

Charisma: –2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Hindrances: All Thumbs, Delusional (Major: plants will rules the world), Ugly, Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Agile, Arcane Background (Druidism), Beast Friend (bear companion), Command, Frenzy, Level Headed, Natural Realms, Woodsman

Gear: Bark plate (+2), antler staff (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands). The staff is also a relic. See **The Stone Circle** for full details.

Powers: *Armor* (bark skin), *bolt* (sharp wooden darts), *barrier* (thorny hedge), *entangle* (animated vines), *healing* (plants inject him with sap), *sphere of might* (thorny branches)

Special Abilities:

* **Forest Born:** Hearth elves suffer no penalties for difficult ground in forests.
* **Low Light Vision:** Elves ignore penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
* **Plant:** +2 recover from being Shaken, Called Shots do no extra damage, immune to piercing attacks, suffers no wound penalties.
* **Plant Sense:** Immune to Surprise and the Drop while there are plants within 48" of his location.
* **Tendril:** Str+d6, Reach 3. As an action, the druid can shoot out a single tendril. Anyone Incapacitated by the tendril automatically dies and returns as a sap zombie 1d4 hours later.

GRIMBJORN (BEAR COMPANION)

Grimbjorn was always smarter than the average bear. His loyalty to Melasion proved his undoing, for the crazed druid infected him with his deadly sap. Rather than fully transforming the bear, it has left him largely ursine. However, plant sap has replaced his blood and dissolved most of his internal organs.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8(A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12

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

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10

Special Abilities:

* **Bear Hug:** Bears don't 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.
* **Plant:** +2 recover from being Shaken, Called Shots do no extra damage, immune to piercing attacks, suffers no wound penalties.
* **Size +2:** These creatures can stand up to 8' tall and weigh over 1000 pounds.

ANIMATED PLANTS

The tendril thing has special powers over vegetation. The shrubs and grasses outside have mutated at lightning speed, becoming snaking tendrils. The plants are not a true creature, and thus are particularly hard to defeat.

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

Skills: Fighting d6

Pace: 0; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

* **Grapple:** The plants make a grapple attack against every character adjacent to a window or the front door. They suffer no multi action penalties for fighting multiple foes. Grappled foes are affected as if under the effects of an *entangle* spell, "cast" as if the plants' Fighting was an arcane skill. Victims take no damage—the plants only seek to hold animals.
* **Impossible to Kill:** So long as the tendril thing is still alive, it is impossible to kill the vegetation—it just grows back. However, inflicting a wound on the grasping vines causes that particular patch to retreat back through the opening until their next action card. Any characters held by the affected vines are released.
* **Mindless:** Unaffected by Tests of Will, Tricks, or arcane powers like *puppet*.
* **Plant:** +2 recover from being Shaken, Called Shots do no extra damage, immune to piercing attacks, immune to Tests of Will.

CORRUPTED FOREST TROLL

Forest trolls exist in great numbers in the Hearthlands, but sometimes inhabit taiga elves' forests, as well. They are usually of green skin and hair, with growths of moss on their limbs. This particular specimen is now part-plant and part-troll.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

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

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (1)

Gear: Spiked club (Str+d8).

Special Abilities:

* **Armor +1:** Rubbery hide.
* **Claws:** Str+d4.
* **Improved Sweep:** May attack all adjacent foes.
* **Plant:** +2 recover from being Shaken, Called Shots do no extra damage, immune to piercing attacks, immune to Tests of Will.
* **Regeneration (Fast):** Trolls make a natural Healing roll every round, even after death. They cannot heal wounds caused by fire or heat. This includes coldfire.

Decapitation (a Finishing Move) also prevents regeneration.

* **Size +2:** Trolls are tall, lanky creatures over 8' tall.

SAP ZOMBIE

Sap zombies aren't actually undead, though the human spirit no longer inhabits the body. The green sap in their veins is alive and capable of moving the corpse, albeit slowly and with jerky movements. Sap zombies are not capable of speech or intelligent thought, though they can emit a ghastly wail and possess rudimentary cunning.

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

Skills: Druidism d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6

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

Special Abilities:

* **Bite/Claws:** Str+d4. Anyone Incapacitated by a sap zombie has a 50% chance of dying and returning as a sap zombie 1d4 rounds later.
* **Limited Plant Control:** Sap zombies know the *entangle* power (unearthly wail trapping). They may work together using Cooperative rolls when invoking this power. Those aiding must use an action. They are immune to the Siphoning—their power does not stem from the threads of magical energy.
* **Plant:** +2 recover from being Shaken, Called Shots do no extra damage, immune to piercing attacks, immune to Tests of Will.
* **Semi Undead:** +2 Toughness.
* **Sticky Hands:** The hands of a sap zombie exude sticky resin. A zombie that hits with a raise has grappled his foe. The opponent may only attempt to escape on his action, which requires a raise on an opposed Strength roll.
* **Susceptibility (Fire):** Take +4 damage from fire attacks (but not heat).

SPORE GRENADIER

Spore grenadiers are mobile plants. Their base is a large, bulbous mass of roots, which the plant uses to shuffle around. Protruding from this is thick, waxy, hollow tube about a yard long. Inside the base of the tube are four spore sacs, which the plant can launch at targets.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8

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

Special Abilities:

* **Mindless:** Unaffected by Tests of Will, Tricks, or arcane powers like *puppet*.
* **Plant:** +2 recover from being Shaken, Called Shots do no extra damage, immune to piercing attacks, immune to Tests of Will.
* **Spore Pods:** A spore grenadier can shoot a spore pod as a single action. Range: 5/10/20. It has just one of each spore pod. All pods are subject to deviation as thrown weapons and explode in a Medium Burst Template. The pods are slow moving area effect weapons. Victims aware of the attack are allowed an Agility roll at –2 to avoid the effects.
  * **Choking:** Anyone under the template must make a Vigor roll or be Shaken.
  * **Explosive:** Anyone under the template suffers 2d6 damage as from an explosion.
  * **Itchy Rash:** Anyone under the template must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue for 24 hours. This can be removed earlier by applying an antihistamine herbal remedy.
  * **Sticky:** This acts as the *entangle* power. Roll a d8 "arcane skill."
* **Susceptibility (Fire):** Take +4 damage from fire attacks (but not heat).

TENDRIL THING

The tendril thing is not a thinking being in any sense of the word—it is simply a writhing mass of plantlike tentacles whose sole function is to kill animals and create new plant-based spawn to further the druid's maniacal goal.

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

Skills: Fighting d8

Pace: 0; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

* **Improved Sweep:** Each round, the creature's smaller, flailing tentacles attack every adjacent character with no penalty for Strength damage. These do not contain sap—Incapacitated victims do not rise as sap zombies.
* **Mindless:** Unaffected by Tests of Will, Tricks, or arcane powers like *puppet*.
* **Plant:** +2 recover from being Shaken, Called Shots do no extra damage, immune to piercing attacks, suffers no wound penalties.
* **Tendril:** Str+d6, Reach 3. The tendril thing makes two Fighting attacks each round with no penalty. Anyone Incapacitated by the tendril has a 50% chance of dying and returning as a sap zombie 1d4 rounds later.
* **Weakness (Flame):** The creature suffers a –2 penalty to Fighting rolls to attack characters holding a source of exposed flame, such as a torch of burning log from the fire.

THORNDART

Thorndarts are similar in appearance to large rose bushes, but are covered in 1" thorns. Their extensive roots protrude in a complex pattern for up to a dozen yards around the base. Any creature passing over the roots triggers the thorndart's attack. As slain prey decomposes, so the thorndart dines on the rotting meat and blood. Their usual prey consists of small animals but

they have been known to take down much larger prey with sustained attacks.

Hearth elves harvest the thorns to use as sewing needles, drill bits for boring wood or horn, and to close wounds before bandages can be applied.

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Notice d6, Shooting d6

Pace: —; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Special Abilities:

* **Armor +2:** Thorndarts are protected by thick, waxy skin.
* **Plant:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. Called Shots do no extra damage. Not subject to Tests of Will.
* **Thorns:** A thorndart can fire a volley of thorns each round. Range: 3/6/12, Damage: 2d6. Armor and shields protect as normal.

LESHIJ

Leshiji (less-idg-ee) are wood spirits. They inhabit all the forests of Rassilon, typically tending an area of 100 square miles. They are also known as "fathers of the wood wights," though in truth the role they perform is more like a supervisor, watching over and aiding a gang of wood wights within their domain. Wood wights call them "forest lords" out of respect for their powers.

As protectors of both forest and animals, their form is a blend of the two. Their usual form is that of a human-sized figure with bark-like skin, and hair and beard of living grass, but with a tail, hooves, and horns.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Spellcasting d12, Stealth d8, Survival d8, Swimming d8, Tracking d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Gear: Large club (Str+d8).

Special Abilities:

* **Alter Size:** An as action, a leshij can alter its size up or down. The creature makes a Smarts roll, with each success and raise indicating a one point change in Size. For every point of Size change, Strength and Toughness increase or decrease one step (above d12, Strength rises a single point—d12+1, d12+2, and so on). They gain the Large Monstrous Ability at Size +4, Huge at +8, and Gargantuan at +12.
* **Forest Born:** Leshiji never suffer difficult ground penalties in forests.
* **Powers:** Leshiji can use the following spells: *animate war tree* (song of awakening), *armor* (bark skin), *barrier* (wall of wood), *bladebreaker* (only works on axes), *confusion* (victim hears voices on the wind), *deflection* (branches intercept attacks), *disease* (wasting sickness), *healing* (plants and animals only), *entangle* (trees grab at targets), *fog cloud* (special: trees move to block out light), *growth/shrink* (song of changing), *nightmare* (victim dreams he is wandering through a dark, ever-changing forest), *refuge* (trees form a shelter), *summon elemental* (wood only).
* **Shapeshift:** Leshiji know the *shape change* power but can only assume the form of mundane plants and animals. They use Smarts as their arcane skill die.
* **Speak with Nature:** Leshiji can communicate with all mundane animals and plants.
* **Summon Beasts:** A leshij can summon forest creatures to him by singing. This requires an action and a Smarts roll at –2. If successful, 1d6+2 wolves or 1d4 bears come from the surrounding wilds in 1d6+2 rounds.

WOOD WIGHT

Although commonly used to describe a form of undead, the word "wight" is an old Saxa term for "man." Thus, wood wights are literally "wood men," which sums them up nicely. Saxa often use the term waldgeist, or wood spirit. These fey creatures stand 3–4' high, and have the appearance of small humans made of twigs. Their eyes are large, round, and totally black, their hands long and spindly, and their wooden teeth pointed (for eating beetles).

Wood wights are shy creatures, dedicated to tending the forests they call home. They are usually on good terms with other good-hearted forest dwellers, such as nykr, skogsra, tree men, elves, and most mundane animals. Each wood wight tends an area of about a square mile. When their homes are threatened, they resort to guerrilla tactics, hiding in the undergrowth and attacking with spells.

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

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d4, Guts d6, Knowledge (Herbalism) d10, Notice d6, Spellcasting d8, Stealth d4, Survival d4, Tracking d4

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5 (1)

Hindrances: —

Edges: Woodsman

Special Abilities:

* **Armor +1:** Bark.
* **Camouflage):** When a wood wight stands motionless in a forest it gains +4 to Stealth rolls.
* **Forest Born:** Wood wights suffer no penalties for difficult ground in forests.
* **Forest Folk:** Wood wights have Stealth, Survival, and Tracking at d8 in forests.
* **Low Light Vision:** No penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
* **Powers:** Wood wights know the following spell: *boost/lower Stealth, entangle* (vegetation comes alive), *healing* (animals only), *heat mask, knockdown* (nearby trees slap victims), *wilderness step* (forests only).
* **Size –1:** Wood wights are similar in size to young human children.

LUMBERJACK

The loggers lead a hard life, working long hours in often adverse conditions. They work hard and play harder. Living in small camps for much of the year, they tend to be insular and surly, though those who earn their trust are treated with friendship and respect.

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

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

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

Hindrances: —

Edges: Sweep

Languages: Anari, Saxa, Trader

Gear: Hand axe (Str+d6) or battle axe (Str+d8).

VILLAGER

These stats suffice for the general populace the heroes encounter in the adventure. GMs can change them from being faceless extras by adding a random personality trait.

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

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

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: —

Edges: —

Languages: Anari, Saxa, Trader

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4).

WALLS
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The Balance of Nature is Tipping!

Animal life was not always dominant in Rassilon. Eons ago, before the balance of nature was established, sentient plants were the superior life form. Among their number was a particularly vile species which sought the extermination of all animal life. Although long thought extinct, one of their seed pods has lain dormant, silently waiting for the right time to awaken and release its deadly contents. That time has finally come.

An elf druid, infected by the seed pod, plans to issue in a new era—a world of plant domination. To defeat him the heroes must first stand against his insidious creations, creatures part-animal and part-plant, and whose touch is deadly. But the heroes are not alone in their quest, for the fey have sensed the danger the druid presents to the natural order.

Can the heroes avoid becoming mutated plant beings long enough to track the druid to his lair? Are they strong enough to stand against the druid's corrupting power or will they end up with more than green fingers?

The Dark Seed is the second tale for Triple Ace Games' *Hellfrost* setting.

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Paul 'Wiggy' Wade-Williams

HELLFROST

PIRATES OF THE CRYSTALFLOW

RANK • NOVICE

OFFICIAL SAVAGE WORLDS LICENSED PRODUCT

PIRATES OF THE CRYSTALFLOW

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PIRATES OF THE CRYSTALFLOW

INTRODUCTION

This particular adventure is designed for a group of four Novice characters, though it can easily be adjusted to suit higher Ranked parties. Novice characters will find certain parts quite difficult if they get their tactics wrong, but they have the opportunity to retreat and acquire healing before heading back into the fray. A selection of pre-generated Novice characters can be found at our website, **www.tripleacegames.com**.

For higher Rank parties, the GM need simply increase the number of opponents accordingly. For this adventure we advise you add two bufom warriors or human guards *or* one bufom shaman (when appropriate) to an encounter for each Rank the party is above Novice. For instance, if a party of four Seasoned adventures encounters bufom warriors numbering one per hero, the characters must fight a total of six warriors—one for each hero, plus an additional two because the party is Seasoned. Alternately, the party may face four warriors and a shaman.

The adventure involves some investigation. Groups which prefer to immediately wade in and start killing may find themselves up against the local authorities on murder charges. They also won't discover the entire plot—some parts can only be reached by watching the villains for a time. While it's never wise to try to change a group's habits, it might be worth reminding hack-and-slash players that their heroes are not above the law.

The adventure is set in the Crystalflow Confederacy, a Hearthland realm comprising several towns and numerous cities along the banks of the Crystalflow River. The temperature is less important in this adventure than some others in the *Hellfrost* line. Still, the GM should still keep an eye on temperature and the characters' winter protection if he elects to set the tale in any season except summer. See the *Savage Worlds* rulebook for the effects of cold weather and the *Hellfrost Players' Guide* for how the rules work in this setting.

Bufom Overview: Bufomi (singular bufom; "boo-fom") are toad men, and are jokingly referred to as "toadies." They stand about the same height as a human child, are humanoid, but have glistening skin, webbed fingers and toes (three digits per limb), bulging eyes, and wide, toothless mouths. They live simple lives as hunter-gatherers. Bufomi are territorial creatures, and centuries of conflict with gatormen and lizardmen have made them quite aggressive to outsiders of all races.

Static Time: Although several parts of the adventure can only be discovered at night or take place in "two days," these encounters are static. No matter how much time the heroes waste, the encounters occur as listed in the adventure.

Generic Treasure: For ease, assume each bufom warrior and human guard carries 1d4 gs in assorted coins and easily sellable goods. Shamans carry 2d10 gs worth of loot. The main villains possess 1d10 x 10 gs of booty in the form of jewelry on their person. This treasure is in addition to their standard gear. No other monsters carry any mundane treasure. Magical treasure is detailed in the appropriate encounter section or stat block.

PLOT OVERVIEW

The Crystalflow Confederacy, whose territory follows the course of the Crystalflow River, exists because of one thing—trade. The Crystalflow is navigable for about half its length, with the seaport of Drakeport at one end and the merchant town of Bridgwater at the other. Beyond Bridgwater, the river rapidly narrows and shallows. Bridgwater is a major nexus for northern merchants, as the trade roads link it not only to surrounding lands but also the distant Winterlands. Similarly, Scathmoor, which lies halfway between the two main ports, is a hub for traffic in the eastern Hearthlands.

Between Scathmoor and Bridgwater the river flows northeast and then curves to the northwest around Gnatmarsh, a low-lying morass of quicksand, treacherous bog, fenlands, and rotting vegetation. (At this point the Lesser

Crystalflow, a non-navigable tributary, flows into the river on the opposite bank.) Over the last few months a number of barges have been discovered floating in this stretch of the river, devoid of crew and stripped of cargo. Pirates are not unusual along the Crystalflow, but their activities are usually confined to expensive cargoes. What makes these attacks so strange is the cargoes were all low value goods, such as pottery, textiles, and foodstuffs.

The raiders are not true pirates, but bufomi, a humanoid species of "toad men." The bufomi of Gnatmarsh have largely ignored the outside world for many centuries. On occasion a shaman has arisen with dreams of grandeur, but aside from a few cattle raids against the settlements bordering the marsh, their plans have come to naught.

Several months before the raids began, a shaman by the name of Kraakroa came to power. Soon after his ascension, an engro merchant, Oswald, strode boldly into their temple-home and demanded to see their leader. Such a move was not only audacious, but also reckless, for the bufomi are extremely territorial and brook no intruders.

Oswald had not come to stir up trouble, however, but to offer them a mutually beneficial pact. He would supply the bufomi with the details of trade barges passing Gnatmarsh, barges the warriors would raid. The bufomi could keep any humans they captured for whatever purpose they desired, while the merchant would be given the cargo. Suspecting a trick, Kraakroa asked for more—he demanded the merchant supply the tribe with armor and metal weapons. To his surprise, the merchant agreed, though he made a counter demand—the right to trade arms and armor for captives.

No fool, Kraakroa insisted on knowing why an engro would seek an alliance with the bufomi. Oswald was candid in his reply. He was, he said, a member of the Gray League, a consortium of merchants who sought mercantile supremacy of all Rassilon. The cargoes the warriors would take were all low value, but immediate wealth was not the merchant's aim. Rather, he would select only certain cargoes to be taken. These would all be common items, easy to resell but vital to the merchants who transported them. Instead of seeking a quick financial gain, Oswald's plan was to drive several competitors out of business, allowing him to buy up their warehouses and barges cheaply.

Of course, the wily merchant had not told the bufomi the entire story. His long-term plan was to use the bufomi as agents and then, at an appropriate time, "discover" their involvement in the piracy and arrange for a crusade to eradicate them. Even if a bufom was captured and interrogated, who would believe that a respectable merchant would stoop to dealing with barbaric toad men?

PLAYERS' INTRODUCTION

The adventure begins in Scathmoor, a small port on the Crystalflow River. As part of the back-story, the heroes have agreed to meet with a local merchant who has a job offer.

BRIDGWATER

Although a significant portion of the adventure is set in Bridgwater, no city map or detailed locations are provided. The town serves only as the backdrop for the first part of the tale. Should the heroes have need to visit an inn, store, or blacksmith, the GM should invent appropriate personalities and ambience as desired.

Bridgwater is a bustling mercantile city of just under 18,000 souls. Technically now one settlement, Bridgwater began as two rival villages on opposite sides of the Crystalflow. Locals still refer to East and West Bridgwater, despite the former villages merging some two centuries ago. A single bridge, the Bridge of Scales, crosses the Crystalflow. Made of stone and lined with shops and stalls, it marks the end of the navigable river.

The entire waterfront on both banks houses warehouses, merchant offices, and rowdy taverns. Although the waterfront is quieter at night, it is rarely deserted.

Judging by the cramped office, old furniture, and heaps of paperwork, your potential patron, a merchant by the name of Rodger ap-Margwin, is neither rich nor organized. The young merchant, who sits behind a battered desk, is scruffily dressed and shows signs of not having slept well for some time.

"Thank you for coming," he begins. "Over the last few months pirate attacks between here and Bridgwater—that's the port at the north end of the navigable stretch of the Crystalflow River—have increased. A dozen or more barges have been found without crew or cargo. No ransoms have been demanded, so the gods only know what fate befell the hapless crew. I'm not sure of how many merchants have been targeted, but there are at least three here in Scathmoor who have lost men and trade goods.

"None of us is particularly rich, but we've managed to gather some funds. What we're looking for is a discreet band to investigate the problem and put an end to it. Our preliminary investigations reveal that someone is profiting from our misfortune, a certain Oswald. He's a big shot in Bridgwater, a very rich and influential engro. We have our own agents in Bridgwater, of course, but their faces are too well known. If he is somehow involved, we need people he won't immediately recognize.

GUARDS, GUARDS!

Law-abiding heroes might be tempted at some point to try and involve the city watch in their investigations. Unfortunately, Oswald has far more wealth and influence than the party can hope to muster, regardless of their Rank. In addition to frequent bribes, his reputation alone is enough to quash investigations before they begin. The party will get no help from the authorities in this adventure.

"The deal is 1,000 gold scields each, payable on successful completion. If you somehow manage to return our cargoes, you'll be given 10% of the resale value to split as you like."

Rodger can't increase the cash reward, but he can be bartered as high as 25% of the profits on any retrieved cargo. Similarly, he won't pay any monies upfront.

If the party is interested, the merchant suggests they travel to Bridgwater on his next barge leaving Scathmoor. It departs in two days, enough time for the party to do any last minute shopping or prepare alchemical devices or herbal remedies. Since the barge won't be making any stops along the way, it should reach the town in about four days. Typically, barges only sail during daylight hours, mooring up at night to avoid the risk of running aground or being caught in an unseen eddy. Since the barge is heading upriver, it has a maximum speed of just 5 mph.

Rodger can provide little extra information about Oswald—he knows his merchant's mark is a sun dragon head. On the plus side, he adds, a well-known figure should be easy enough to track down once they reach Bridgwater. The only other information of note Rodger supplies, and then only if asked, is that all his stolen cargoes were fruit and vegetables.

The barge the heroes are due to catch will be carrying carrots, onions, and cabbages. These will be sold in Bridgwater to merchants from other realms.

QUESTIONS AROUND TOWN

Inquisitive heroes may wish to ask questions of Scathmoor's locals and of the crews of the merchant barges which dock here. After all, they may have picked up snippets of information. This requires a Streetwise roll and takes four hours. With success, the adventurers learn that every cargo stolen has been low value items, such as pottery, textiles, food, and the like. Shipments of ore, wine, and other expensive goods have been unmolested. On a raise, they are informed all the raids must have taken place along the west bank, as the Lesser Crystalflow enters the Crystalflow from the east and creates a dangerous and unpredictable current.

Heroes who ask why the latter fact is significant, or who make an appropriate Knowledge (Area) roll, are told that Gnatmarsh lies along the west bank. Numerous inlets and channels among the rotting vegetation and tall reeds provide ample hiding places for pirates.

THE RIVER JOURNEY

Two encounters occur during the trip to Bridgwater. Read or paraphrase the narrative text to the players.

Word of Caution: Toward evening on the first day, a barge heading down the river (from Bridgwater) hails the adventurers' barge.

"Ahoy!" the captain cries. "We've just come from Bridgwater. Another barge was found derelict just yesterday, up by Gnatmarsh. No crew or cargo aboard her, but there were signs of a violent struggle on deck. She's tangled in reeds, so she won't present a shipping hazard. We've already informed another barge a day ahead of you, and she's agreed to tow her to Bridgwater. Keep your eyes peeled!"

The owner, a minor merchant from Drakeport, which lies at the other end of the Crystalflow, knows no other details of interest.

First Sight of Gnatmarsh: On day three the captain steers the barge near to the west bank. Read or paraphrase the following text to the players.

The captain points over to the western bank and grunts, "Gnatmarsh. Make sure your weapons are ready." Casting your eyes to the bank you see a morass of rotting vegetation, tangled trees, tall reeds, small hillocks, and fetid marsh. The buzz of vast swarms of gnats, no doubt after which the marsh was named, is clearly audible.

From here on up to Bridgwater, any hero on duty must draw a card from the action deck each time he pulls a watch shift (the captain insists at least one hero a day does guard duty to ease the burden on his men. A black numbered card indicates biting gnats and midges plague him. He must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue from itchy bites. On a black face card, his Vigor roll is made at –2. Fatigue from the bites is removed after 24 hours or with the application of a single dose of antihistamine rubbed into the skin.

Characters with knowledge of herbalism can concoct an insect repellant. The captain stops each night, and agrees to let the heroes go ashore in the rowboat (towed behind the barge).

Insect Repellant (+1): Insects, whether swarms or giant insects, must make a Spirit roll if they wish to attack the user. The roll must be made before each attack. A single dose rubbed into the skin lasts for two hours. Because the gnat swarms don't have stat blocks, use of insect repellant works slightly differently during the trip to Bridgwater. A sentry using the herbal brew suffers an attack only if the card value is 2–4 or an Ace. Otherwise, the midges are just a buzzing annoyance.

ARRIVAL IN BRIDGWATER

At last the barge pulls into Bridgwater. West Bridgwater lies close to Gnatmarsh and seems at first impression to be the poorer half of the city—the buildings are less grand and more rundown than those on the east bank.

Both sides of the river are crowded with barges, busses, and smabyrdings. Great warehouses line the harbor side, each emblazoned with a merchant's mark on the large front doors. It doesn't take long to spot the stylized sun dragon head mentioned by your patron. It stands on the east bank. Merchants, laborers, hawkers, urchins, doxies, and customs officials crowd the wide street between the warehouses and the waterfront. Further back, you can make out the roofs of a few grand houses and temples.

Your captain hauls in the sail and steers the barge toward an empty berth. The crew immediately leaps ashore and tethers the barge.

"This is Bridgwater," he says with a sweep of his arms. "We'll be here for a few days taking care of business. If you're ready to leave when we are, we'll be glad to give you a lift back to Scathmoor."

INITIAL INVESTIGATIONS

Since the heroes are here to investigate a specific person, it makes sense they may wish to gather information on him quickly. A successful Streetwise roll and two hours spent asking questions reveals the whereabouts of the merchant's townhouse. They also discover he is an important citizen and has the ear of Baron Gallandros ap-Morgwen, Bridgwater's ruler. On a raise, the characters also learn he is frequently out of town. Unfortunately, no one they speak with knows whether or not he is currently at home.

THE DERELICT BARGE

The recently robbed barge mentioned by the other barge captain is moored on the western waterfront. Clearly emblazoned on the side is the owner's mark—a raised hand with the middle and ring finger folded down. Unless a hero happens to have a mercantile background there's no chance he has ever seen the symbol before. Merchants can make a Common Knowledge roll at –6 to recognize it as belonging to a minor merchant from Drakeport. A Streetwise roll made around the docks reveals the same information.

The barge has been checked over by the watch, but is still under guard. The lone sentry hasn't been given any specific orders, so he's charging one gold scield to curious individuals who want to see the "bloodstained site of the mysterious disappearance."

Dry bloodstains on the deck are clearly visible. There are similar stains in the main cabin. A hero making a Notice roll at –2 discovers a partial footprint in the blood near the bow. The print is from a bare foot, similar in size to that of a child or engro, but appears flatter and wider than the footprint of any of the civilized races. There is not enough of an impression to identify what creature made it.

The captain who towed the barge here can be found at a nearby tavern. For the price of a mug of good ale (1 ss) he tells what little he knows.

"Aye, I towed her back. A captain warned me about the derelict and asked me to bring her here for the authorities to check over. She was wedged against the bank, her rudder tangled in reeds when we got to her. We gave her a quick check, but there was nothing aboard save a few rats and the usual garb—provisions, crew's personal items, blankets. Judging by your faces that news to you, eh? I guess the city sold them on to cover berthing fees.

"Anyway, there was no crew or cargo, just some bloodstains. We freed her by cutting loose the rudder and then brought her back here. Once the authorities give me the nod I'll be collecting the salvage money, heading south again, and staying there until these damned pirates have been brought to justice."

THE MERCHANT'S HOUSE

Oswald's townhouse is located in an affluent part of town. While the majority of Bridgwater's houses are single story buildings constructed of stone and timber, the manses of the rich and powerful citizens are two stories and built entirely of stone. The city's older sections retain a village feel, with detached buildings surrounded by small allotments. The newer parts, which include the upper class districts, were constructed to limit the buildings' footprint and prevent wild expansion. Hence, the street on which Oswald's house stands comprises terraced houses with small, enclosed rear gardens.

Terrain: The street is 4" wide. At night, a lantern hangs on either side of the door. Whenever he goes away on business, Oswald casts *lock*. (Because the spell stays active until the lock is opened, the spell is not Maintained.) The front door has Toughness 14 and Lockpicking rolls are made at –2. See the *Hellfrost Player's Guide* for rules on illumination.

Monsters: A detachment of guards stand duty outside the house day and night, whether their master is home or not. Their orders are to prevent intruders, not harass

THE LAW

If a fight breaks out in a public area, the watch is quickly informed. A squad arrives 2d6 rounds after the skirmish begins. The watch officer demands everyone drop their weapons. Oswald's guards comply immediately, though they keep their shields raised in case the heroes aren't so compliant. If required, the watch engages the characters. A second watch patrol arrive 1d6 rounds after the first.

The officer in charge questions Oswald's men first, who give an accurate portrayal of events—the heroes tried to illegally gain entrance to the warehouse. A number of passersby corroborate their story. The characters are charged with public affray if no one was killed and fined 20 gold scields. Those who can't or won't pay are marched (or dragged if they need to be knocked senseless to get them to comply) to the nearest watch stationhouse, where they'll be spending the night unless the fine is paid. Anyone actually arrested, as opposed to merely fined, loses 2 Glory.

Should anyone have been killed, the charge is far more serious—murder. The characters are automatically arrested and hauled off to jail while the local magistrate is informed. Unless the characters wish to escape, in which case they'll have the authorities hunting them down throughout their time in Bridgwater (the GM should add at least one encounter with the watch to the adventure), they are brought in front of the magistrate in the morning and officially charged. They are remanded in custody for a week, after which the trial begins.

It's up to the GM how he wishes to handle the trial (assuming the characters hang around that long), but he shouldn't be lenient on the characters. They are coldblooded murderers and should face some form of justice for their unprovoked crimes. At best, mitigating circumstances might result in them being fined wergild. At worst, they'll be sentenced to death by hanging.

Escapees gain the Major Wanted Hindrance in Bridgwater and the Minor version elsewhere in the Crystalflow Confederacy. These are reduced one level after a month (so they won't be wanted outside Bridgwater after that time) and by another level after a further six months—Bridgwater has plenty of criminals and the authorities cant afford to waste resources hunting down the murderers of a few private guards.

Ⓜ **Watch Officer:** See page 79.
Ⓜ **City Watch (2 per hero):** See page 79.

visitors (who might be potential customers or clients settling debts). As such, the guards react only with mild curiosity if the characters openly approach the front door.

Adventurers knocking at the door receive no reply. The guards stare at them blankly. Only if they openly ask do the guards inform the party no one is home. They know Oswald left this morning on business and won't be back for a few days, but they have no idea where he has gone.

Ⓜ **Guards (1 per hero):** See page 79.
Ⓜ **Watch Officer:** See page 79.
Ⓜ **City Watch (4 per hero):** See page 79.

Tactics: In the event of an attack the guards huddle together and use the Defend maneuver. The city watch is never far away, and the guards know they only need hold their own for a minute or two before help arrives.

Treasure: Aside from a few coins, one of the guards has a key to the front door. Should it be used, the *lock* spell on the door is negated. The door henceforth has Toughness 12 and Lockpicking rolls suffer no penalty. The guards are under orders not to unlock the door except in an emergency.

Continuation: The street is quieter than the waterfront or market districts, but there is still considerable traffic. Any assault on the guards is reported to the watch by a passing citizen. A double strength patrol (money talks) arrives quickly on the scene. See the sidebar **The Law** for more details.

BREAKING AND ENTERING

Unless the characters somehow manage to kill the guards without causing a ruckus, there is little chance they will be able to enter the house from the front. At the rear is a small garden enclosed by an 8' wall (the wall is for privacy, not security). Once in the garden, it is a short walk to the back door.

The back door is locked with a *lock* spell. It has Toughness 12 and Lockpicking rolls are made at –2. The windows are easily broken, but without precautions, such as covering the panes in a cloak to muffle the sound, those inside the house have a chance of hearing the sound. Make a Notice roll for each group of occupants, with a –2 penalty per room away from the window. Success means the occupants investigate.

When Oswald is away he sets his ferocious hounds loose in the house (he doesn't trust his minions). The dogs pad through the rooms at random for the exercise. Before the heroes enter the house, draw as many cards from the action deck as there are dogs. Compare the card value to the key below—the value indicates which rooms the dogs are in when the intruders break in. A Joker indicates the dog is in the same room as another canine (GM's choice). Since the shrine door is locked, it has no associated card value. Similarly, Oswald has no wish for the dogs to enter the larder or storage room, so these doors are kept closed (but are not locked).

The dogs are inactive sentries, but any sounds within the house quickly make them active. Once active, any obvious sounds that someone is in Oswald's manse cause the dogs to investigate. They are trained not to bark.

When Oswald goes away for long periods, he puts his two servants, a cook and a butler, up in a local inn. It's

a little odd, but Oswald pays well and the servants don't begrudge him his eccentricities.

Ⓜ **Guard Dogs (1 per hero):** See page 79.

KEY

Room #	Card	Function
1	2	Entrance Hall
2	3	Waiting Room
3	4	Dining Room
4	5	Kitchen
5	—	Larder
6	6	Lounge
7	7	Study
8	8	Gallery
9	9	Guest Bedroom
10	10	Guest Bedroom
11	—	Shrine
12	Jack	Cook's Quarters
13	Queen	Butler's Quarters
14	—	Storage/Linen
15	King	Library
16	Ace	Master Bedroom

LIBRARY

Oswald's library is impressive for a private collection, numbering almost 50 tomes plus 100 or so pamphlets and scrolls (none of which are magical). Most are on business matters, but there are several volumes on military strategy, politics, history, and geography. All are written in Classical Anari.

Treasure: A strongbox sealed with *lock* (Toughness 16, Lockpicking –4) contains a blank piece of parchment. This is actually a relic. The parchment contains the *speak language* power (d8 arcane skill), but only affects written words. When placed on a piece of writing, the magic automatically activates. The original words are then transposed onto the blank sheet in a language the user understands. To end the spell, the parchment need only have a hand wiped over it, erasing the current text.

Investigation rolls made in the library are +2 regarding business and +1 for the other subjects. One of the volumes is a +2 tome of lore concerning Knowledge (Crystalflow Confederacy).

SHRINE

Like many rich merchants, Oswald is a follower of Var. As such, he retains a small shrine for private worship. What isn't widely known is that he is actually a priest of Var.

Terrain: The door to this room is *locked* (Toughness 12, Lockpicking –2). The furnishings comprise a table adorned with a set of solid gold scales. Two leather-bound books sit on a small shelf.

Treasure: On one side of the scales is a single gold shield and on the other a lightweight pouch (empty). Carved around the base is a psalm from the holy text of Var—"All men may profit in my grace" The entire object has a value of 300 gold scields.

The two tomes are ledgers. Like many priests, Oswald keeps a brief copy of all his mercantile dealing ready for his eventual death, so as to prove he faithfully followed Var's teachings in life.

One of the ledgers is an account of his charitable donations. It is written in Anari. Despite what folk say of him, he donates a lot of money to charity, though mostly anonymously. Too many open donations might give folk reason to assume he is a priest of the god of merchants, and he'd lose his advantage of using hidden magic in negotiations. Over the years, these donations amount to over 50,000 gold scields.

The other lists every business deal he has made in short format. Understanding the shorthand requires a Smarts roll at –2 and two hours of work. Success indicates Oswald is a very astute merchant, and a very rich one. It also reveals one important fact about a number of recent transactions. In recent months a lot of shipments have arrived by land. Coincidentally, these all occurred one to four days after a barge was robbed. It is not damning evidence, but it's enough to raise an eyebrow. Sadly, the ledgers do not detail the exact contents of any transaction.

STUDY

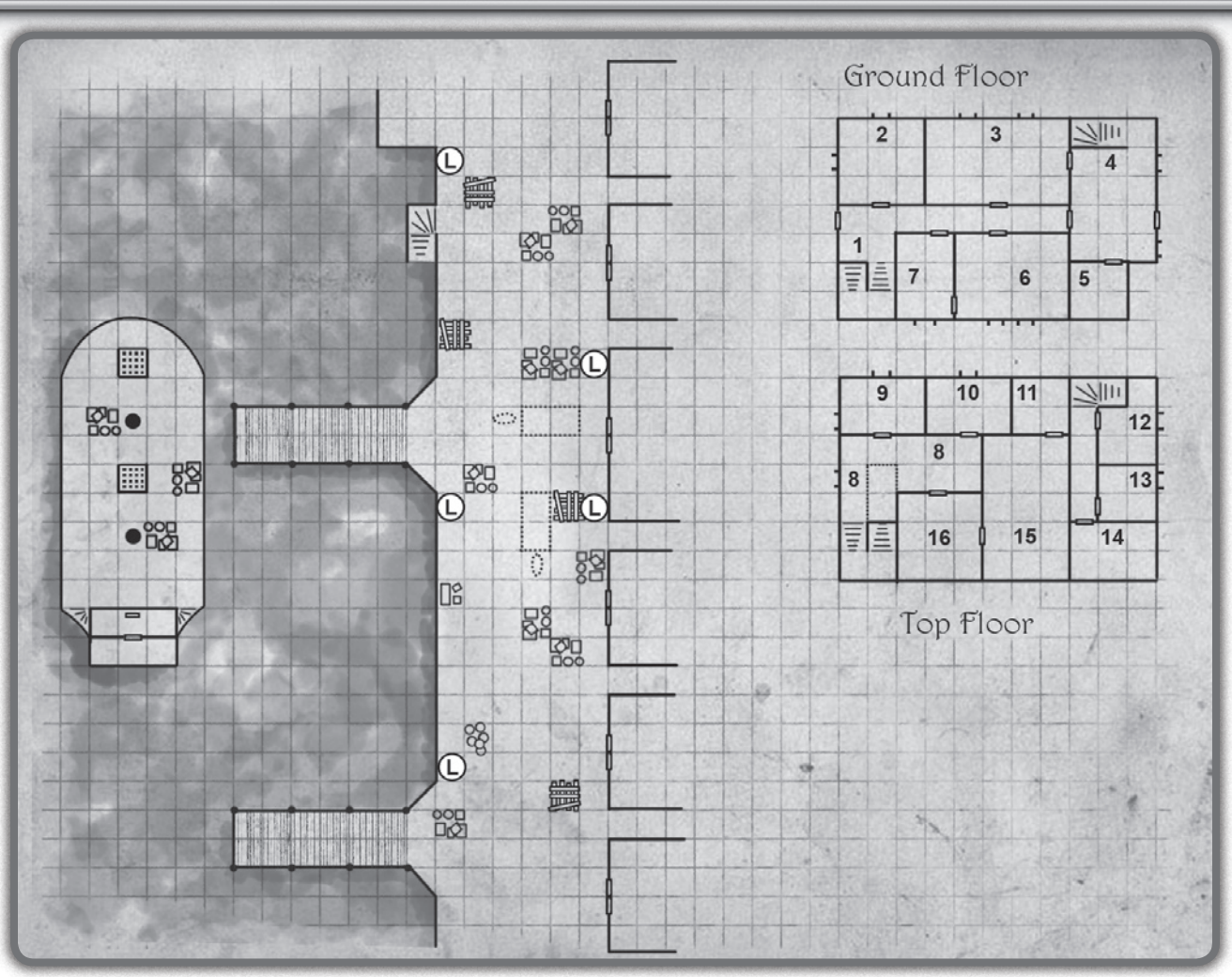
Oswald's study contains a large desk behind which is a plush armchair. Two uncomfortable looking chairs are in front of the desk. There is a small fireplace, which hasn't been lit for at least 24 hours (the ashes are cold), and an ornate engro-made rug lies on the floor. A shelf contains dozens of accounts ledgers. Unlike the ledger in the shrine, none make reference of any of the recent overland transactions.

Treasure: The top paper is a letter written in strange pictograms. Translation requires a hero to speak Lesardetongue or know *speak language*. Fortunately, Bridgwater has several scribal offices and temples which can help for a small (20 gold scields) donation. The letter gives a place and time for a meeting—the day after tomorrow at a spot some 30 miles down river. The missive makes mention of a shipment of arms and armor. It is unsigned.

OTHER ROOMS

The other rooms contain nothing of importance to the adventure. As such, no space is wasted describing them. The GM should add appropriate furnishings based on each room's function. For groups who value thievery, a total of 1d10 x 100 gold scields can be gained in stealing small objects, such as pieces of jewelry and pieces of art. Five times this can be made if the heroes really want to start stealing the furniture.

GM's will have noticed there is no mention of a strongbox full of Oswald's riches. The engro isn't stupid—he keeps his money at the well-guarded and magi-



cally protected temple of Var. Any attempted break-in should result in the characters at best being captured and at worst being killed.

A WATCHFUL EYE

This scene occurs whether the party stakes out Oswald's house before or after dealing with him at the secret meeting. Parties who watch the house, whether before or after breaking in, are rewarded after four hours. A large-set man with close-cropped hair, tattoos up both his bare arms, and a scar across his face approaches the manse. He speaks briefly with the guards, who can be seen shaking their heads and shrugging. After a few more exchanges, the stranger departs, looking angry. Spellcasters invoking *wandering senses* at the appropriate time and who speak Trader overhear the conversation (see below).

Stranger: "Is Oswald in? I have a meeting with him."

Guard: "I'm afraid not, sir. He left in a hurry earlier this morning. Won't be back for a few days, he said."

Stranger: "What? He knew we had a meeting."

Guard: "He never mentioned it to us, sir, but like I said, he left in a hurry. Probably had something to do with a letter he received last night. All very mysterious it was, sir."

Stranger: "I don't give a damn about any letter. Tell him to contact me the moment he gets back. I have an order that needs fulfilling before I can dispatch my cargo. Tell him it's urgent. I'm losing money every day having to feed them."

Guard: "Will do, sir!"

The guards don't know much of the man. They've seen him a few times before, but no names have been mentioned. Characters who enquire of the guards about the surly individual are told only he is a business partner of Oswald. Should the party mention any specifics of the

conversation, such as the mysterious letter, the guards become suspicious—after all, the heroes weren't in earshot. Persistent questioners are threatened with the city watch. The guards will summon the watch if the party fails to get the message and move on.

The man is a slave trader. Oswald sells suitable captives purchased from the bufomi to the man in return for hard cash.

Ⓜ **Slaver:** See page 77.

FOLLOWING THE SLAVER

Following the man through the crowded streets is not easy. He takes several unnecessary turns, doubles back, stops off at shops and taverns, and always tries to move through the most crowded places. He is also an experienced slaver, and is always on the lookout for trouble.

Assuming the characters are after information and not a fight, run this scene using a variation of the Mass Battles rules. The slaver begins with eight tokens (equal to his Stealth die). The party must nominate a lead character. His Notice or Tracking die (hero's choice) represents how many tokens the party receives.

Terrain: The slaver knows the alleys and backstreets extremely well. The characters have a –1 penalty to their "Battle" roll.

Characters in Mass Battles: Instead of attack rolls, party members except the leader make a Notice or Tracking roll. It's assumed the characters are trying to avoid being detected, so no Stealth rolls are required. No damage is inflicted on the heroes, but the Battle modifiers still apply in the next phase. Alternately, spellcasters may make an arcane skill roll if they possess spells useful to tailing someone, like *detect, invisibility,* or *wandering senses*. The GM has the final word on whether or a not a spell is useful in this circumstance. The arcane roll must be made each round, even if the spell is Maintained.

Battle Rolls: Each round, the slaver makes a Stealth roll and the lead hero a Notice or Tracking roll. This replaces the usual Battle roll. Tokens are lost as normal.

Morale: No Morale rolls are made.

Outcome: If the slaver is "defeated," the party successfully follows him to his lair. A defeated party loses the trail in the crowds. In order to locate his house, the party must make a Streetwise roll at –2. Each attempt takes two hours (the time is only really important if they intend to visit a location at night or know about the secret meeting).

Ⓜ **Slaver:** See page 77.

THE SLAVER'S DEN

Through tailing the slaver or dealing with the local underworld, the heroes eventually track the man to a rundown, single story house in West Bridgewater's Old Quarter. The windows are boarded up. Listening reveals sounds of someone moving about, but nothing specific.

Terrain: The house comprises just a single room. Furnishings include a bed, a table, two chairs, a large rug, and a fireplace (not lit). The interior measures 5" by 3". Concealed beneath the rug is a trapdoor. A sturdy bolt secures it in place.

Monsters: The only occupant is the slaver. Whenever the party enters, he is on his bed, awake and alert.

Ⓜ **Slaver:** See page 77.

Tactics: The slaver is a skilled combatant, but he knows when he is outnumbered. He attempts to close to melee and Sweep his foes aside. If given the opportunity, he bolts through the door and runs into the streets. He makes no attempt to call the watch, but instead flees. Run any subsequent pursuit using the Chase rules.

Continuation: A ladder leads from the trapdoor into the basement. Sitting shackled and gagged on the floor are five men. Once freed, they thank the party profusely. Questioning the prisoners is handled through possible questions posed by the party and the captives' answers, as detailed below.

Q: Who are you?

A: *"We're sailors, working the barges along the Crystalflow. Our barge was attacked a while back. I've lost track of time, but it can't be more than a few weeks in total."*

Q: Who attacked the barge?

A: *"Toad men, sir. All slimy with bulging eyes, they were. They came at us at night, out of the water. They outnumbered us three to one. We never stood a chance."*

Q: What did they do with you?

A: *"They made us empty the hold. When we were done they took us ashore and bound us. We marched into Gnatmarsh for maybe three days. Eventually we arrived at some sort of building. It was very old, covered in vegetation and crumbling. We were singled out, though I don't know why. The rest of us they threw into the mouth of this enormous statue of a toad. I've no idea what happened to them, but it can't have been good.*

"We were held outside for a few days before being dragged back through to the marsh again. We could see the lights of Bridgwater, so we knew we weren't far away. Then some men came. We're not really sure what happened after that, as we were blindfolded. We definitely moved to at least one other building before we came here, though. Somewhere near the docks—we could hear the sound of the traders outside."

Q: Could you lead us there again?

A: *"I'd be loathe to do so in person. I reckon I could describe the terrain easily enough, though. There were plenty of landmarks."*

Q: Did the slaver tell you anything?

A: *"Only that we were being sent east."*

The slaver, if taken alive, can also be made to talk. However, this requires an Intimidation roll opposed by his Spirit. Only one roll is allowed, though it can be made Cooperatively. With success, he admits he is a slave trader. The slaves he sells are sold on to other slavers and taken somewhere to the east, beyond the Thunor Range Mountains. This information could easily lead to an adventure of the GM's devising. Slaves are eventually

sold to Regent Orol Drakestaff, *de facto* ruler of the barony of Blackstone (see the *Hellfrost Gazetteer* for more information). Only on a raise does the slaver incriminate Oswald, and even then his business relationship with the engro only began a few months ago.

THE MERCHANT'S WAREHOUSE

As mentioned earlier, the warehouse is on the waterfront. The only entrance is the double door at the front, which faces the busy street. At the back is a narrow alley, which sits between the warehouses and the rear of rundown houses.

THE WAREHOUSE BY DAY

The sun dragon-marked warehouse is the largest in the line. Its paint is fresh and the wood well cared for, an indication of pride if not wealth. A small group of men clad in scale mail and clutching shields and spears stands attentively outside the closed main doors.

Characters who make a Notice roll at –2 realize the warehouse is well guarded. In addition to the obvious guards, two smaller groups of unarmored men are also keeping a discreet eye on the premises, though they're trying to act casual.

Terrain: The crates and wagons in the street can be crossed as difficult ground. These also provide Cover (Armor +2). The warehouse doors are Toughness 18 (4) and padlocked. Picking the padlock requires a Lockpicking roll at –1 or brute force (Toughness 10).

The circles on the map represent the area of light shed by lanterns. They are not lit during the day and thus can be ignored.

Monsters: The guards have strict orders to deny entrance to anyone not associated with the company, and they know all the employees. They can't be tricked or persuaded into granting the characters access. Intimidation causes them to cower, but they still refuse to open the doors. Instead, they threaten to alert the city watch and have the characters arrested. Heroes who try to barge past the guards are quickly engaged in melee by the door watch and the other guards positioned around the docks.

Ⓜ **Guards (1 per hero):** Treat as city watch (see page 79).

Ⓜ **Unarmored Guards (2 per hero):** Treat as city watch (see page 79) but their only gear is a short sword each (Str+d6). This gives them Parry and Toughness 5.

Tactics: The warehouse guards don't want to kill anyone—they're paid to protect the warehouse, not take lives. To that end, they maneuver to block the warehouse doors and use Defend. The other guards try to convince the characters to surrender. If that fails, they use the butt of their short swords to pummel the characters. Only if a guard is killed does either group employ lethal force.

Treasure: In the unlikely event the heroes manage to gain access, there is nothing amiss in the warehouse. All the goods, which include mundane items like pottery and textiles, furniture, barrels and crates of food stuffs, and such like, are marked with the merchant's symbol. A check of the small office (at the rear) locates a wad of cargo manifests, all signed and stamped as having passed through the city gates and with import duty paid in full.

A petty cash box in the office contains 24 gold scields, 159 silver scields, and an IOU for 12 gold scields from someone called Gerrick (a teamster). It can easily be forced (Toughness 8) or picked (Lockpicking at +1).

Continuation: Any assault on the guards is reported to the watch by a passing citizen. A watch patrol quickly arrives on the scene. See the sidebar **The Law** (page 6) for more details.

THE WAREHOUSE BY NIGHT

The following scene occurs on the first night the heroes visit the warehouse. Should they mess up in some manner, the scene is repeated every 1d4+4 days.

Flickering lanterns hang from poles along the street, casting a pale orange glow onto the cobbles and warehouse fronts. The sun dragon-marked warehouse is the largest in the line. Its paint is fresh and the wood well cared for, an indication of pride if not wealth. Outside, a group of men is busy loading crates marked with the same symbol as the door onto three wagons. Each man is lifting a single crate with relative ease. A squad of armed guards stands outside the warehouse doors, seemingly oblivious to the action taking place.

The guards have orders as above. If the heroes approach the teamsters, the guards move to intercept them, ordering them to be on their way or they'll call the watch. No city watch comes if a fight breaks out—they've been bribed to stay away from this district tonight. If the party elects to watch the men and discreetly follow them, proceed to **Follow Those Wagon** below.

Terrain: The crates and wagons in the street can be crossed as difficult ground. These also provide Cover (Armor +2). The warehouse doors are Toughness 18 (4) and padlocked. Picking the padlock requires a Lockpicking roll at –1 or brute force (Toughness 10).

Squares marked L on the map indicate areas illuminated by the street lanterns. Beside the guards are two normal lanterns. All have a standard 4" radius. A lantern hangs from each wagon. These are lit only when the crates are loaded. Within illuminated areas visibility is Dim (–1), a result of cheap oil and the lanterns hanging high up. At a distance up to double the radius, lighting is Dark (–2). Beyond this it is Pitch Black (–4).

Monsters: The four warehouse guards are active sentries. Distracted by their work, the teamsters are inactive sentries.

Ⓜ **Guards (1 per hero):** Treat as city watch (see page 79).

Ⓜ **Teamsters (2 per hero):** Treat as city watch (see page 79) but with leather armor (+1) and short swords (Str+d6). This gives them Parry 5 and Toughness 6 (1).

Tactics: The guards and teamsters know the watch has been bribed to keep away, so there will be reinforcements. To that end, the guards and teamsters attack with lethal force. The guards use Gang Up attacks out of training, the teamsters out of desperation and common sense. Should the party flee and leave anyone behind, the guards deliver a Finishing Move and chuck the corpse into the Crystalflow (after robbing the victim). Within a few minutes the body will have floated beyond the city limits.

Treasure: There are two dozen crates in total spread between three wagons. None are nailed shut. Each is completely empty aside from a handful of nails. On each wagon is a small hammer.

Continuation: Should a fight ensue and the heroes win, they are free to break into the warehouse. All the details you need are in the preceding section.

The party can question survivors. The guards don't know much of interest. They have standing orders to forbid entry to the warehouse to anyone not on the company payroll. The teamsters come by every now and then at night and cart off crates. The guards don't ask questions about their business—they're well paid and curiosity is not a trait their master appreciates.

The teamsters, on the other hand, know a lot more information. Given the characters have just butchered a number of their comrades they are only too willing to talk if given assurances they won't be murdered. Every now and then they receive orders to come to the warehouse at night, collect a pile of empty crates, and transport them out of the western gate.

Ten miles out of town, just inside Gnatmarsh, is a small, flat island. Here they always find other crates and official paperwork. These crates have a variety of different merchant marks. No one is ever guarding the crates, so the teamsters have no idea who drops them off. The contents of these crates are transferred to the empty crates and driven back into the city, whereupon they are inspected at the gate by customs agents. As far as the teamsters are concerned, Oswald is involved in some sort of tax scam, though they're not exactly sure how it works.

FOLLOW THOSE WAGONS

Less belligerent groups may decide to keep a discreet eye on the proceedings and follow the wagons. Once loaded, the wagons head across the Bridge of Scales, toward the western gate. The teamsters don't expect to be followed, so they count as inactive sentries. Have the party make a Cooperative Stealth roll. On a failure, the teamsters hear a noise or perhaps catch a glint of lantern light on steel and become active sentries. Any further attempts to follow them require an opposed Stealth roll (made individually) against their Notice.

The driver of the lead wagon tosses the watch a small pouch (a bribe) and they are let out into the countryside. Parties who were detected trailing the wagons are reported to the watch officer. He refuses to grant them exit from the city until dawn. Threats to have him arrested for corruption are met with an arrest for public disorder, which results in a 10 gold scield fine and a night in jail. Spending the night in jail means the heroes have blown their one chance to follow the wagons.

The alternative is to accept the officer's word, go away, and climb the city walls. This requires a Climbing roll at –2. Parties with rope can lower it down to give others an easier climb.

Undetected parties are refused exit from the city until dawn unless they pay a bribe (10 gold scields per hero). The watch officer never openly asks for a bribe, of course, but he drops unsubtle hints ("Care to make a donation to the watch officer's benevolent fund?"). Once the bribe is paid, the heroes can leave the city.

Outside the gates it is much easier to follow the wagons without being detected. Although the lighting is Pitch Black (–4), the wagons have lanterns, making them clearly visible from further back than the lanterns clearly illuminate. So long as the party makes sensible attempts at being silent, no Stealth rolls are required.

After eight miles (two hours march) the wagons enter Gnatmarsh. They stick to a narrow levee for a further two miles (another hour), and then stop at a small, flat island. With the teamsters distracted, the party can easily sneak to the edge of the island without the need for Stealth rolls.

Already on the island are a number of crates. Two teamsters begin to load the wagons while the others break open the crates already present. They

ENTERING THE WAREHOUSE

As is obvious in the text, the characters seemingly can't gain access to the warehouse without a fight. With only a single point of entrance, the party will have to resort to brawn or brains if their curiosity is to be satisfied.

The muscle method is covered in the main adventure text. Intelligent groups may devise a plan to lure the guards away, such as by Taunting them or launching a brief attack with only part of their number and then fleeing. With the doors unguarded, the other characters can then try to gain entry.

During the day, any attempt to break in might be reported to the watch. Draw a card. If it's black, the watch arrives to investigate within 2d6 minutes. At night, the watch doesn't make an appearance.

then begin transferring the contents to the crates they brought with them.

If the party doesn't interfere, the teamsters complete their transferring of contents, nail down the loaded crates, and load them back on the wagon. They then head back to Bridgwater. Assuming the characters keep tailing the wagons, the convoy reaches the gates just after dawn. The wagons enter the city, and the teamsters hand over cargo manifests. After being checked and the paperwork signed, the wagons drive to Oswald's warehouse, where the crates are unloaded.

Terrain: The island measures 12" across and is roughly circular. The levee is 2" wide and attaches to the eastern end of the island. Everything surrounding the island is swamp and is treated as difficult ground.

The wagons (3" long and 2" wide for game purposes) can be crossed as difficult ground. The crates are placed close together and fill a total of six 1" squares. Movement through these areas is difficult ground. Each wagon has a lantern on the front, which illuminates a 4" radius. See the *Hellfrost Player's Guide* for further information on lighting.

Monsters: The teamsters won't fight to protect the cargo, but they will fight for their lives, believing the characters to be bandits or pirates. Once half their number is slain, the remainder must make a Group Spirit roll. With success, they keep fighting. On a failure they drop their weapons and surrender. Should three-quarters be slain, make an individual Spirit roll at –2 for the survivors. A lone survivor rolls at –4.

Ⓜ **Teamsters (2 per hero):** Treat as city watch (see page 79) but with leather armor (+1) and short swords (Str+d6). This gives them Parry 5 and Toughness 6 (1).

Treasure: The contents of the crates are varied but mundane—pottery, fruit, vegetables, low quality beer, and so on. Nothing is of any great value. Each of the crates on the island has the same merchant mark—a raised hand with the middle and ring finger folded down.

Continuation: Should the teamsters be attacked and one captured, the information he passes on is exactly as detailed in the previous section.

ANOTHER STAKE OUT?

Should the party wish to stake out the island, they endure 1d4+4 days of deprivation, leeches, snakes, and gnat swarms before anything happens. Roll in advance but don't tell the party how long they must wait. Instead, tell them a day has passed and asked what they are doing. Repeat as often as necessary. For each day spent in the marsh the heroes must make a Vigor roll. With failure, they gain a level of Fatigue from various bites, minor infections, and deprivations. This can lead to Exhaustion, but never Incapacitation or Death.

Eventually, one misty dawn, something interesting occurs. A small group of bufom warriors leading two giant toads (to which are strapped several crates) arrives from the direction of the deeper Gnatmarsh.

Left alone, they smash up the old crates (assuming they're still here and have not been used for firewood) and unload the ones the toads are carrying. They then quickly depart into the marsh. Attempts to follow them prove futile—the party quickly loses them in the mire thanks to the creatures' ability to hop over quicksand and other obstacles that slow the heroes.

Terrain: If a fight occurs on the island, the terrain is as the previous section. The mist is thin. It counts as Dim (–1) lighting only at distances over 12". Otherwise, visibility is unimpaired.

Ⓜ **Bufomi Warriors (2 per hero):** See page 78.

Ⓜ **Giant Toad (1 per 2 heroes):** See page 79.

Tactics: The giant toads advance no closer than 3". They use their sticky tongues to grapple and engulf prey. Half the warriors begin by each hopping to within range and letting loose their Croak special ability. The remainder engages in combat after their comrades' croaking, leaping into the fray on the first round if circumstances allow.

The croakers use their leaping to reposition themselves so as to keep using their Croak while avoiding stunning their compatriots or the toads. Remember, they can't move and croak, so it's likely they croak every other round. For each warrior in melee who falls, a croaking bufom takes his place.

Continuation: Any prisoners taken after an attack can be interrogated only if the party speaks Lesardet-ongue (the obscure language of bufomi, lizardmen, and gatormen) or has access to *speak language*. The captive knows only a few basic facts and has little comprehension of what is actually going on.

"We rob floating trees. Swim out and climb onto them. We take sacrifices and those," he says, pointing to the crates. "We bring them here and leave. We get stabbing sticks and thick hides in return for some sacrifices. Swap them with human."

Asked who they work for, the prisoner replies, *"Kraakroa, the shaman."* The warriors don't know Oswald's name and all "humans" look alike to them (that is, ugly).

THE MEETING

No matter how quickly the heroes set off, they reach the meeting place after dark. Whether they came by land or river depends on the individual party's travel arrangements. Regardless, they begin 24" from the nearest NPC.

Moored against the east bank is a barge bearing Oswald's merchant mark. Flickering lanterns on the barge and the shore highlight a number of armed guards. The outlines of at least two carts are visible in the shadows. Faint slapping can be heard on the water, but the heavy cloud has con-

cealed the stars and moon, making it too dark to see the cause.

Oswald and the bufomi's leader, Kraakroa, are on the barge. Oswald's men are guarding the shore, while the bufom warriors are on the river. Neither group of warriors enjoys the company of the other, and this arrangement keeps them a good distance apart.

SOFTLY, SOFTLY

Violence is not the only option open to the characters. Although the guards and bufomi are active sentries, their cordon is not without gaps. A stealthy character could slip between the guards or quietly swim past the bufomi and eavesdrop on what is occurring in the barge. More experienced parties might have access to *invisibility* or *teleport*, though there are more guards present and few gaps in the perimeter.

If a hero peers through a porthole, read aloud the text below. Text within quotation marks is only understandable if the hero speaks Lesardetongue or is subject to a *speak language* spell. (Note that it is not possible to eavesdrop once the alarm is raised.)

Seated within the cramped cabin are two figures. The first is a male engro dressed in fine apparel. His hair is showing signs of graying, but he appears hale and hearty. The second creature is similar size, but most definitely not engro. Its pale, mottled green skin, bulbous eyes, flicking tongue, and wide, toothless grin are characteristic of an amphibian.

"Everything is going to plan," the engro assures his guest. "Soon your tribe will be rich beyond imagination."

The toad man's tongue flicks up and licks on of its eyeballs. "Excellent news, Master Oswald," it drawls. "When can I expect my next delivery of arms and armor? My power is growing, and other tribes are seeking alliances now."

Oswald nods. "That is good news, indeed." You're not sure he sounds entirely convinced. "It's waiting outside in the crates. I have included a special gift for your best warriors—steel long swords of the finest quality."

The toad creature bounces up and down excitedly. "Yes, yes," it croaks excitedly. "You do us proud. You have kept your end of the bargain and more. And what of the slaves we gave you?"

"They are sold, as promised. Due to my need to see you, the agent I have arranged has not yet made final contact. I expect him to attend me on my return."

"Good," grins the toad being. "You please me, Master Oswald. Come, let us drink to our success." A webbed hand snatches a crystal goblet from a nearby table.

CHARGE!

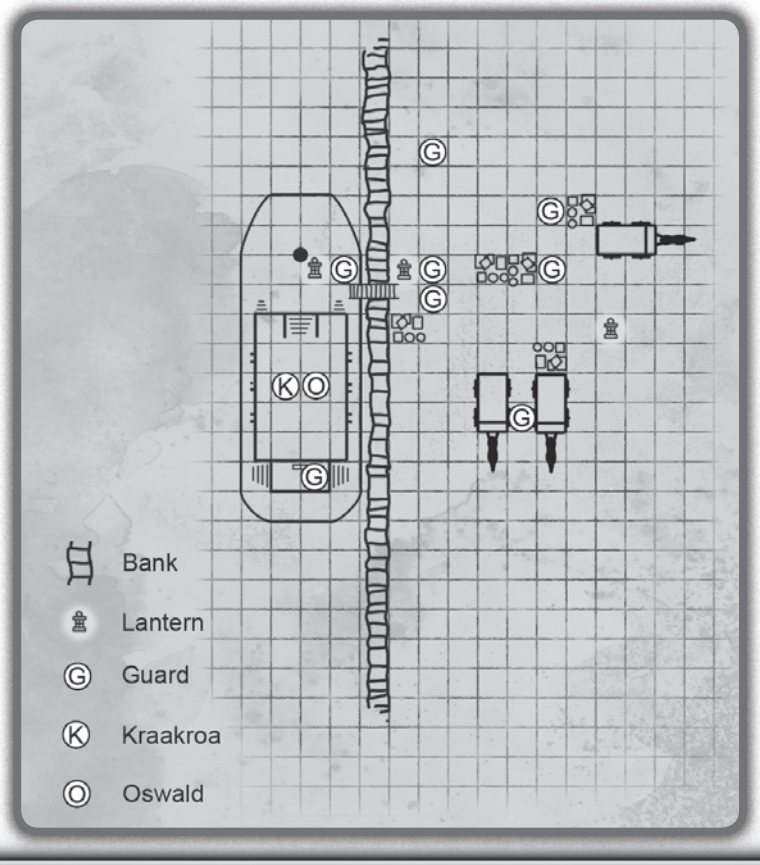
Terrain: The actual riverbank (highlighted as a slope on the map) is steep and slippery. Movement along it is treated as difficult ground. Any hero running along the bank who rolls a 1 on his running die slips and falls prone. Unless he makes an Agility roll at –2 (a free action), he slides into the cold, dark water, whereupon he is immediately Shaken by the chill. Heroes in the water must make a Climbing roll to clamber up the bank. The other option is to board the barge.

Squares containing crates can be traversed as difficult ground, as can those occupied by carts.

The squares marked "L" each contain a lantern attached to a short pole. These shed light in a 4" radius. See the *Hellfrost Player's Guide* for details. The ambient lighting is Pitch Black (–4).

The Barge: Movement across a space fully occupied by the gangplank is difficult ground.

The barge comprises the forward deck, the cabin, and



an elevated wheelhouse. The mast provides Light Cover (–1, +4 Armor) where appropriate, but does not impede movement. Moving past the cabin involves a character having to shuffle sideways and is difficult ground. The cabin protrudes just three feet above the deck (the other half is below decks). The wheelhouse floor is level with the cabin roof.

Monsters: The guards on the river bank are Oswald's men. Positions are shown for eight guards. For larger parties, do not position extra troops further out from the barge than those already indicated. The bufom warriors begin in the water, 8" from the shore and out of range of the light sources. All count as active sentries.

Ⓜ **Oswald:** See page 77.

Ⓜ **Kraakroa:** See page 77.

Ⓜ **Guards (2 per hero):** See page 79.

Ⓜ **Bufom Warriors (2 per hero):** See page 78.

Tactics: If a fight breaks out on the shore, the barge's occupants automatically hear the ruckus. On the second round, Kraakroa leaps off the barge and into the river, whereupon he swims to the west bank. Fearful the good times could come to an end unless he does something, he orders his warriors to aid Oswald's men. Kraakroa then dives beneath the water until he needs air.

The bufomi are in coracles (small, round boats). Two warriors occupy each boat. The craft moves 2" per round if one warrior paddles and 4" if both paddle. Once they reach the shore, they leap out (using their Leaping ability). If there are characters within range, they immediately try to engage them in melee. Otherwise, half the bufomi spend the next round Croaking, while the remainder leap into melee.

Oswald's guards react with lethal force. Those with crossbows have their spears stuck in the ground beside them. On the first round, they fire their crossbows at the nearest enemy. In the second round they drop their crossbows and snatch up their spears (an action). They then rush into melee.

Oswald joins in the fighting, but he makes no damaging attacks. He remains in the barge on the first round and downs his potion of *quickness*. On the next round, he moves to the deck, crouches behind the barge's railing (gaining Heavy Cover; –4) and casts *bladebreaker* at the closest hero within range of the spell. Unless threatened directly, he remains here, casting *confusion* on any enemy spellcasters in range and *bladebreaker* against warriors.

In melee, he sticks to the Defend maneuver and shouts at his attackers, in Trader, that he is on their side. Once wounded, he quaffs his *healing* potion.

Should the bufom warriors be slain, Oswald (if still alive) immediately calls for his remaining men to drop their weapons. See **Oswald's Lies** for what occurs next.

Treasure: Oswald carries four alchemical devices—a potion of *healing* (heals one wound), a potion of *quickness* (cast with a raise), and two potions of *speak language*.

OSWALD'S LIES

Whether he's taken alive or orders his men to surrender, Oswald has a contingency plan designed to rid him of the bufomi and have him cast as an innocent pawn. Naturally, he can reveal nothing if slain unless *grave speak* is cast on his remains.

The engro smiles triumphantly. "Sirs, a thousand thanks for your assistance in ridding me of these toad men. I am Oswald, a merchant of Bridgwater, and my tale is one of forced compliance in a terrible plot.

"Several months ago my nephew was kidnapped from his barge. At first I thought it was pirates, but then I received a letter asking me to come to Gnatmarsh. My nephew, you see, had convinced his captors, these foul creatures, that I was rich. Keeping him alive would be of great benefit to their tribe.

"Alas, that proved only too true. The creature's leader demanded I supply them with knowledge of which barges would have the most crew, for it seems they practice human sacrifice. He also insisted I gift them with weapons and armor. If I complied, my nephew would be kept safe, albeit as their prisoner. Should I fail them, he would be offered to their dark god. I kept my end of the bargain, though I never gave away the details of valuable cargoes or issued more than leather vests and spears.

"Your brave and noble deeds have saved me but, I fear, endangered my nephew, for the leader of the toad men was on this barge. He leapt overboard, cowardly creature that he is. I know where their lair is located, for they took me there to witness their barbaric rituals. I will pay you 3,000 gold scields for the safe rescue of my nephew and a further 2,000 gold scields if you enact due punishment on those terrible creatures."

Oswald is serious about the money, although he doesn't have a kidnapped nephew to rescue. Whether or not the characters believe him is up to them—the evidence could be viewed in favor or against his story. Should the party start quoting evidence against Oswald, the GM should turn it around in any logical way to incriminate the bufomi as the main villains. For instance, if Kraakroa is overheard to say, "Let us drink to our success," Oswald claims that meant the success of the bufomi's plans. Similarly, he insists that giving the bufomi long swords was part of a ploy to try and buy his nephew's freedom.

If pressed about the slaver, Oswald admits that was another part of the bufomi's demand. He used the money to purchase the arms and armaments they requested.

He is, naturally, extremely remorseful about his part in recent affairs.

Questioned about the ledgers in his shrine, he says that as a priest he is expected to record every business transaction, whether it is made willingly or not. To back up his claim of being a victim not an instigator, he makes mentions that his dealings are not recorded in his company accounts. This could just as easily be construed as trying to hide something, of course, but that's for the heroes to deduce.

INTO GNATMARSH

Two methods of reaching the bufomi lair, an ancient temple deep in Gnatmarsh, are presented above—through rescuing the captives held by the slaver or by questioning Oswald. In the event the party fails to acquire the information, their only option is blind luck.

The lair lies three days' journey into the mire, a treacherous morass of quicksand, thick reeds, and slimy water. Without exact directions the journey takes 1d4+2 days.

For each day, draw a card from the action deck. A black face card indicates an encounter with one of the denizens. Consult the table below. Shuffle the deck after each draw. No maps are provided for the random encounters. The GM should assume dry land is at a premium and that most of the terrain is difficult ground.

Card	Encounter
Jack	**Giant Toad (page 79).** The toad is hidden in dense undergrowth. The characters must roll to avoid Surprise. *Alternate: If the party is more experienced and you have the* Hellfrost Bestiary*, swap this for a marsh troll or marsh dragon.*
Queen	**Bufomi Patrol.** The party stumbles across a squad of 1d4+2 bufom warriors. If the card is a Club, the bufomi ambush the party—the heroes must roll to avoid Surprise. On a Spade, the characters spot the patrol far enough ahead to either avoid them or conduct an ambush. In the latter case, the heroes must succeed in a Stealth roll (can be made Cooperatively) to position themselves where they cannot be seen. With success, the bufomi stumble into the trap and must roll for Surprise. On a failure, the bufomi are allowed a Group Notice roll to spot the characters at a distance of 10".
King	**Quicksand.** See below. If the card is a Club, a bufomi patrol (see above) arrives at the start of the second round. They begin 12+2d6" from the nearest hero. Since this is a tactical encounter, assume the quicksand fills a Large Burst Template.
Ace	**Hostile Life**. Leeches, mosquitoes, or gnats plague the party. Every hero must make a Vigor roll or gain a level of Fatigue (maximum Exhausted). This is removed after 24 hours.

QUICKSAND

Allow the lead character a Notice roll at –2 to detect the hidden danger. Failure means he plunges in to his waist (neck for Small characters) and begins sinking.

Those stuck in the hazard sink completely in three rounds (one round for Small characters) unless extracted. They can make a Strength roll (–4) to pull themselves out. A success stops them sinking any further, and a raise pulls them out. On a critical failure, the character is sucked under and immediately begins drowning. Heroes aiding a sinking comrade need to make a Strength roll to drag the unfortunate being from the quicksand. On a critical failure they are pulled in and begin sinking, as well.

Once a character is under the surface he cannot extricate himself and must be dragged out by allies on the surface. In order to find the character, those searching for him must first make a Notice (–2) roll. Extricating a submerged character requires a Strength (–2) roll.

TEMPLE OF THE TOAD GOD

In the current era, the bufomi are a technologically backward race on par with man's cave-dwelling ancestors. But they were not always this way. Like the gatormen, the bufomi were once an advanced civilization. Never as progressive or dominant as the gatormen, they nonetheless left their mark on the ancient world in the form of great temples and cities carved of stone. Many of these have crumbled to dust, but here and there the remnants are largely intact.

One such site is a temple to K'kroakaa, the sole deity of the bufomi. It stands deep within Gnatmarsh, on a small island in a sea of black water and floating detritus. Fallen into ruin long before even the elves developed civilization, the temple nevertheless remains an important part of the local bufomi's religious observances.

REINFORCEMENTS

Although the bufomi aren't elite warriors by anyone's standards, they have strength of numbers on their side, not to mention three giant toads and a champion. As such, the party may be forced to retreat, heal up, and then launch another raid.

Once the intruders have "been repelled," Kraakroa sends word to neighboring tribes that he needs additional warriors for a large raid. When the reinforcements arrive, he promptly puts them to service guarding the lair. For each four days after an attack (the time it takes for a natural healing roll), the bufomi recoup 25% of their warrior losses (rounded *up*). They replace only one shaman every eight days. Their numbers never exceed those in the text.

THE UPPER TEMPLE

Standing atop a small island amid the brackish, stinking water and clinging reeds is a long, stone structure. Age has taken its toll on the stones, for several sections of wall have collapsed. Giant carvings, well-weathered, faded, and heavily stained, are carved into the brickwork. They represent toad men in various heroic poses. To the south stand three smaller buildings, each with pitched roof. In the west, flanking a cobbled pathway, which leads into the mire, stand five pairs of plinths. A bloated stone toad, its mouth open wide and tongue hanging to its feet, stands atop each one.

Terrain: The terrain surrounding the island is marsh. It counts as difficult ground.

The front half of the temple (everything west of the solid stone block in the center) has no roof—it was built as an open-air structure. The rear half has a flat, stone roof. External buildings have a pitched roof of cracked and missing slate tiles. The temple walls are 24' high, while those of the outer buildings are 12' tall.

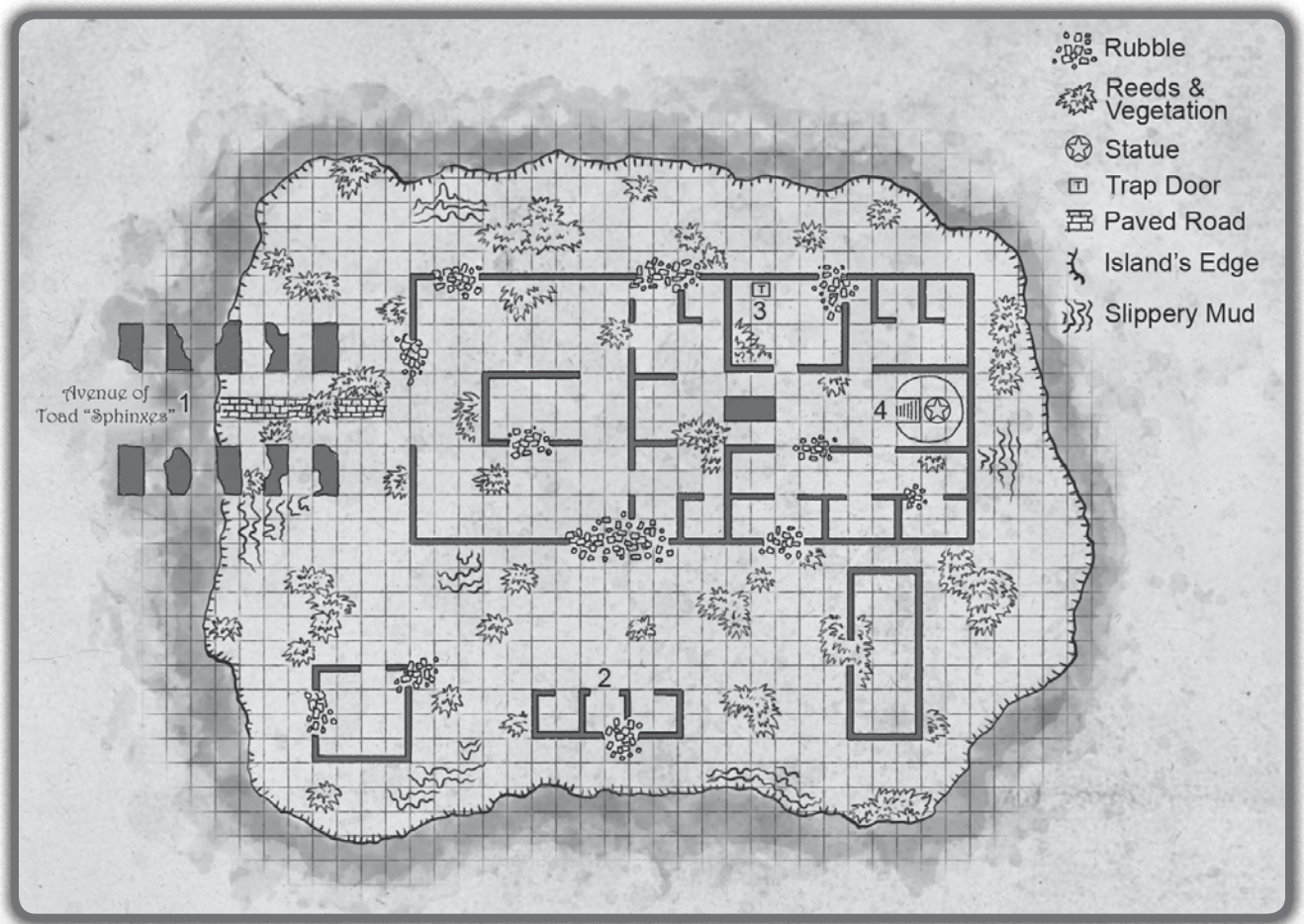
Treat areas of rubble or reeds on the island as difficult ground. The plinths along the western approach are impassable terrain. Squares indicated as muddy terrain are difficult ground. In addition, anyone who runs through these areas and rolls a 1 on his running die slips and falls. This applies even to Devotees of Freo.

Monsters: Wary of marsh trolls, crocodiles, lizardmen, and just about every other predator in the marsh, the bufomi maintain a constant watch in and around the temple. At any one time there are three patrols, each led by a shaman. Divide the bufomi into three equal groups. One patrol is assigned to protect the inner precinct, another the southern end of the island, and the third the approach along the old ceremonial pathway.

Ⓜ **Bufom Shaman (1 per 4 warriors):** See page 78.

Ⓜ **Bufom Warriors (3 per hero):** See page 78.

Tactics: Each patrol follows similar tactics. Unless caught by Surprise and quickly silenced, one of the warriors begins by Croaking. This not only has a chance of stunning intruders, but also summons the other patrols. The other warriors leap into combat. Depending on the range to the enemy, shamans cast either *entangle* or *knockdown* repeatedly. They always try to avoid the warriors, but won't take a multi action penalty in order to move to a more favorable position.



If other shamans have been alerted to the skirmish, the first casts *summon beast* once he sees the intruders. He summons the swarm as close to the characters as his position allows. The second invokes *summon herald*, which, despite its power, only brings forth a regular giant toad (K'kroakaa is an ancient but feeble deity, and has no true heralds).

1) AVENUE OF TOADS

Flanking the cracked remains of a paved road are two rows of plinths. Time and weather have taken their toll, for many of the plinths are missing large chunks of masonry. Atop each is the damaged image of a monstrous toad. At some point in history the water level of Gnatmarsh must have risen, for of the five pairs of statues, the two furthest from the temple are now partly submerged.

The statues represent K'kroakaa. It requires a Knowledge (Religion) roll at –6 to know this, however. Weathered pictograms on each plinth bare the same inscription in Lesardetongue—"The weak are food for the Bloated One."

2) GIANT TOAD STABLES

Each of these three chambers contains piles of dung. Some of it appears to be quite old, but there is fresher spoor scattered around.

Bufomi make use of giant toads both as guardians and as mounts. This particular tribe is no different, except it does not maintain a permanent stable. When giant toads are required for service, the bufomi summon them with horns. While they are being used, they are stabled in this building.

A Survival roll at –2 is required to identify the spoor. Characters whose background indicates knowledge of the marshes of Rassilon suffer no modifier. Success allows the investigator to correctly name the species. With a raise, he knows the last spoor was dropped only a few days ago.

3) TRAPDOOR

Faded pictograms are barely visible through the moss clinging to the walls. A section of the northeast corner has collapsed in antiquity, allowing thoroughfare to the outside. In the opposite corner, weeds and creepers are spreading across the floor. In the northwest floor is a wooden trapdoor.

The trapdoor is not locked or trapped. Opening it grants entrance to the lower level.

4) OFFERING PLACE

At the far end of this long, narrow chamber is a raised dais. A set of stone steps leads up into the gaping maw of a monstrous, bloated toad with a distended belly.

The statue serves as both altar and sacrificial area. Inside the maw is a slick, curving chute. The end of the chute is in the ceiling of area 4 on the lower level. Sacrifices are thrown into the maw (still alive) in a ceremonial feeding of K'kroakraa. Those who survive the impact don't last long.

While the chute is wide enough for any except an Obese hero to crawl into without much difficulty, it requires an Agility roll at –2 to avoid sliding to the bottom. With success, the hero braces himself against the walls. He can shimmy down the chute in a single round, but this consumes his entire Pace (and he cannot run). Being attached to an anchored rope prevents a curious hero from falling.

LOWER LEVEL

Although the bufomi make use of the temple in their alien rites, the tribe actually lives in a network of tunnels and chambers excavated in the dank soil below the stone edifice. Constant seepage means the headquarters is permanently damp and reeks of mold and decay.

COMMON FEATURES

Doors, except where noted, are wooden and have Toughness 10. Unless otherwise stated all doors are unlocked. Locked doors are barred, and thus Lockpicking is of no use. Doors barred on the same side as the heroes require two actions to open—one to remove the bar and one to open the door.

Corridors are crudely excavated and are supported by wooden beams placed every inch to prevent collapse. Each support beam has Toughness 10. Destroying a support beam causes a cave in. The collapse affects the square containing the support beam and all adjacent squares. Those trapped beneath suffer 3d6 damage. Clearing a 1" square takes an hour and requires a minimum of two people (one digging and one shoring the roof and walls).Chambers are lined in wood to prevent their collapse.

Ceilings are 12 feet high. Although bufomi are small creatures, they need the height for their leaps and to allow the giant toads they use as guardians to move around comfortably.

Only chambers containing sentient beings are illuminated. They are lit by reed torches. Assume each room holds one torch per 4" of wall. If between one-third and one-half the total number of torches are extinguished, the lighting in the room drops to Dim (–1). Removing between a half and all but one makes the lighting condi-

tions Dark (–2). Extinguishing all the torches leaves the room Pitch Black (–4).

Obstacles that fill part of a square, such as a table or small piles of rubble, impede movement. Treat movement through these squares as difficult ground. Where applicable, obstacles provide Cover.

1) SLIPPERY STAIRS

A flight of crudely worked wooden steps descend into the darkness below. A constant trickle of water, mud, and slime seeps down the steps.

The stairs are very slippery. They do not count as difficult ground, but any hero moving at faster than half Pace (rounded down) must make an Agility roll (–2 if running) or slip and tumble to the bottom, whereupon he is Shaken.

2) GUARD ROOM

If the bufomi hear non-bufomi voices, they quietly move into the eastern corridor, so as to ambush any intruders. Similarly, they plan an ambush if they see artificial lights above—the guards keep a mental track of whether any of their raiding or hunting parties have left the headquarters. Otherwise they are not particularly alert, there having been no trouble in recent weeks. Heroes who sneak down the stairs (requires a Stealth roll) can catch the guards by Surprise.

Terrain: During daylight hours this chamber is not lit.

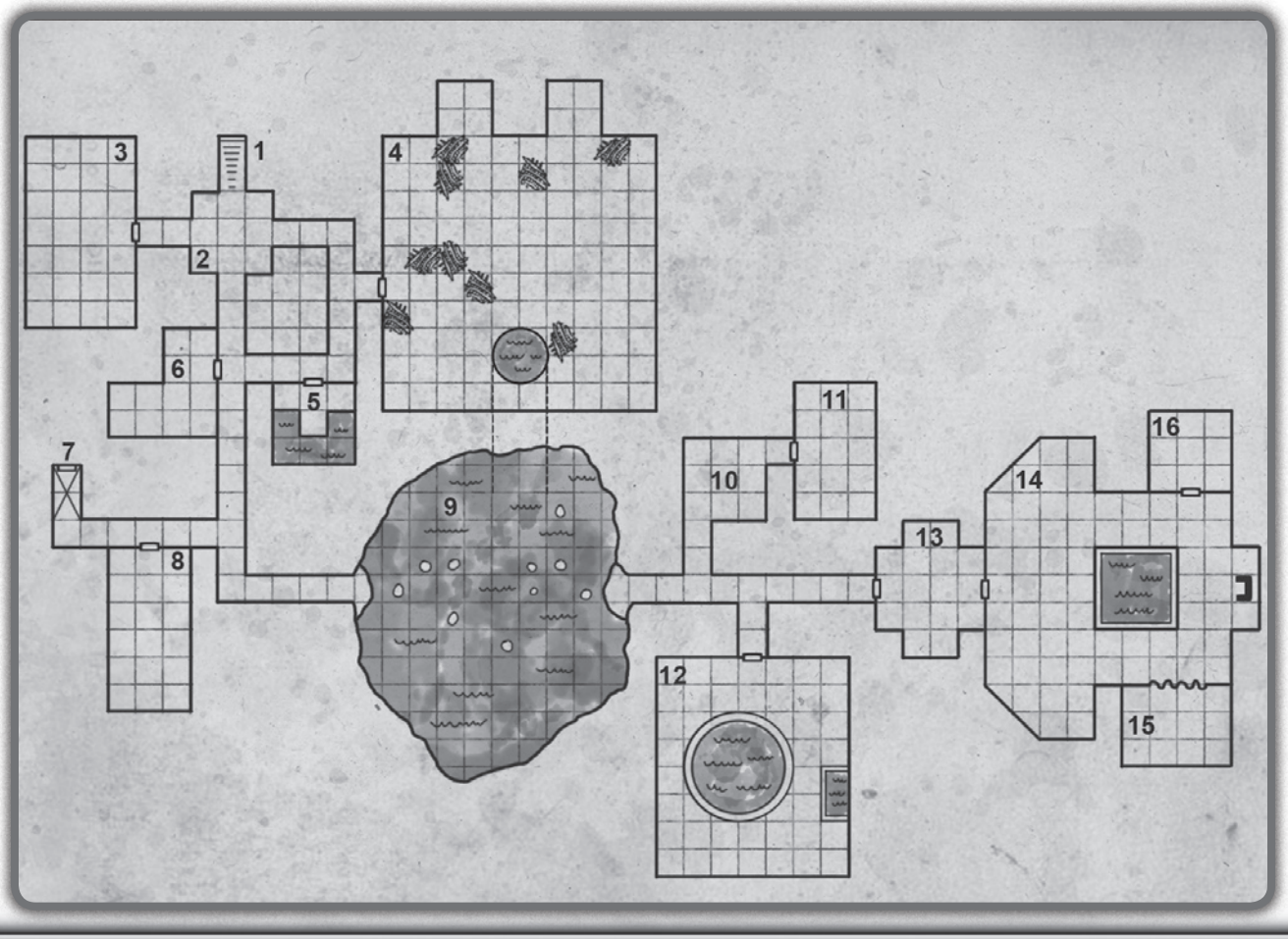
Monsters: Four warriors are on duty here at all times. The guards change every four hours, but the room is never left undefended.

Ⓜ **Bufom Warriors (1 per hero):** See page 78.

Tactics: Once combat begins, the nearest warrior to the party uses his Croak special ability to try and disorient as many intruders as possible. His comrades then leap over his head brandishing their spears. If hard pressed by competent aggressors, one tries to withdraw down the southern corridor (using the Defend maneuver if necessary) to the barracks in area 6 and summon reinforcements.

3) TREASURY

The stench of rotting vegetables and fruits which wafts from the room makes you gag. Stacked against the north walls are a dozen crates, while against the south stand five large barrels.



Not being entirely trustful of Oswald initially, Kraakroa kept back a small amount from each shipment his warriors plundered. Since bufomi don't eat vegetables and fruit, and because the latest shipments have all been sent straight to the apparently trustworthy Oswald, no one has been in here for several weeks. The soft fruits and vegetables have gone rotten. Four of the barrels contain ale brewed in neighboring Midmark, while the fifth is expensive Magocracy brandy. The barrel weighs 50 pounds but is worth 1,000 gold scields.

4) CHAMBER OF SACRIFICES

The door to this room is reinforced and barred from the outside. It has Toughness 16.

Piles of bones and partially digested scraps of clothing litter the floor. A round pool, maybe a dozen feet across, is the only feature. Set into the north wall are two large alcoves.

Victims fed to the statue of K'kroakraa end up here. Sometimes they are devoured by the occupants immediately. Other times they may have several hours in which to pound futilely on the door and contemplate their fate.

Terrain: Hatched areas on the maps are piles of bones. Treat them as difficult ground. The pool is 12' deep. At the bottom is a passage leading to area 9. The toads use this to reach the water, in which they bathe regularly to avoid their skin drying. The chute entrance is in the ceiling, 12 feet above the ground.

Monsters: Two giant toads live in this room. However, they are not always present, as they spend an equal amount of time in area 9. When the characters enter this room, draw two cards from the action deck, one for each toad. A red card indicates a toad is present in this chamber. If the room is empty, draw cards every hour to see if the toads make an appearance. Of course, if the party has already encountered the toads and killed them, then you should adjust the card count appropriately.

Ⓜ **Giant Toads (varies):** See page 79.

Tactics: The toads' preferred tactic is to stay away from their screaming meal and use their tongues to grapple it. Prey that moves adjacent is bitten, instead. If a toad is Shaken, it must make a Spirit roll. On a failure, it tries to flee through the pool. It stays submerged until it recovers from being Shaken.

Treasure: Some of the bones can be identified as belonging to engros. Several sets are new—definitely victims within the last few weeks.

5) SNACK POOL

An irregularly shaped pool of water dominates the southern half of this small room. The surface is continually in motion, and broken by small splashes and ripples.

Bufomi prefer their food live and they're not fussy eaters. Lacking teeth, they just swallow whatever fits in the mouth whole. The pool is filled with small lizards, frogs, and toads, and serves as a snack bar. Despite the similarities between the race and mundane amphibians, bufomi have the same approach to eating frogs and toads as humans do to other animals.

6) BARRACKS

Bundles of black reeds, many of them coated with thin slime, lie across the entire floor. Small bones are scattered among the matting. A number of toad men are crammed into the room. Some are asleep, but the others are already reaching for their weapons.

Except for the leader of a tribe, personal space is not a bufom trait. When the warriors in the two guardrooms finish their shift, those in here take their place. Those relieved of duty sleep on the matting their comrades just vacated.

Terrain: Filthy, mucus-covered reed matting lines the floor. Although rather icky, it does not impede movement. The bones are those of small lizards and amphibians.

Monsters: Half the guards are awake and alert, with their armor donned and weapons close to hand (but not in their hands). The remainder is either asleep or dozing. They still wear their armor, though.

Ⓜ **Bufomi Warriors (2 per hero):** See page 78.

Tactics: If the warriors have been alerted to an attack they are ready for action the second round after the alarm. Half their number head straight to the guardroom, while the others take the passage past the snack pool and sacrificial chamber, so as to attack the enemy on two fronts.

Otherwise, the active guards grab their weapons on the first round (an action) and engage in melee. Those who were slumbering must spend the first round waking. Depending on the situation, they then Croak or reach for their weapons.

7) TRAP

The door is a fake door and activates a trap if pushed. Despite being constructed millennia ago, the mechanism works as well today as it did when it was new. Part of this is because the bufomi regularly test it by using it as a garbage chute (with the proper safety precautions to avoid unnecessary deaths).

Trap: The mechanism is completely concealed behind the door, and thus cannot be detected. When the door is pushed, it activates a rod, which in turn sets a flywheel in motion. This causes the floor to swing down from the right, dropping any unfortunate victims into a 40' deep pit (4d6 damage). A character in the trapped space furthest from the door is allowed an Agility roll at –2 to leap back and avoid the fall. The one nearest the door has no

hope of avoiding his fate. The trapdoor closes after two rounds. Ingenious players should be able to come up with a way to rescue trapped comrades.

The pit is a natural cavern fed by a small stream. At the GM's discretion, this could lead to a series of subterranean caverns and tunnels in which lies further adventure. There is no way to reach the ceiling under the trapdoor short of using *fly* or *wall walker*.

8) EMPTY BARRACKS

Aside from being larger, this chamber is similar to area 6.

The bufomi who share this room were all on guard duty upstairs. Rather than grant the shamans their own quarters, an act of generosity which might tempt them to want more, Kraakroa has ordered they share sleeping space with the warriors. Should his power ever wane, he would be quick to disperse them to prevent them from fomenting open rebellion.

9) STEPPING STONES

The walls of this roughly circular chamber have never been worked. Dark water flecked with clumps of weeds laps at the narrow ledge on which you stand. The far side is nearly 60 feet away. A series of small, flat stones protrudes from the still surface. While they appear stable enough, the slime covering the surface looks slippery.

This natural pool is fed by a subterranean stream. The channel is only a few inches wide and the water is slow moving, both of which result in an exceptionally weak current and no surface disturbance. As well as serving as a source of drinking water, the bufomi regularly bathe here to keep their skin moist.

Terrain: The water is 6' deep. Characters wading through it (assuming they can still breathe) move at one-quarter their Pace (round down) and cannot run. Disturbing the water automatically alerts the giant toads and toad swarm in the depths.

The stepping-stones, which the bufomi use to cross the water, are two feet across and covered in slime. Any character standing on one who is Shaken or injured must make an Agility roll or fall into the water. Characters cannot get a run up once on the stones. Hence, heroes who wish to leap 2" between stones must make a Strength roll. Failure means the adventurer lands in the water.

Monsters: Two giant toads frequently visit this room. However, they are not always present, as they spend an equal amount of time in area 4. When the characters enter this room, draw two cards from the action deck, one for each toad. A red card indicates a toad is present in this chamber. If the room is empty, draw cards every hour to see if the toads make an appearance. Of course, if the party have already encountered the toads and killed them, then you should adjust the card count appropriately.

The giant toads, if present, are seated with only their eyes poking out. One sits above the tunnel through to area 4, while the other sits to the south of the easternmost stepping-stone. Detecting them requires a Notice roll at –2 as an action.

Lurking within the water is a toad swarm—the young of the giant toads. Though only the size of regular amphibians at this stage in their life, they are no less vicious than their parents. The swarm begins in the southern end of the chamber.

Ⓜ **Giant Toads (varies):** See page 79.

Ⓜ **Toad Swarm (varies):** See page 79.

Tactics: The toad swarm remains inactive until someone enters the water, at which point they move to attack. Note that the swarm can run while in the water. Area effect attacks cast from the surface cause half damage (round down) against the submerged swarm.

Unlike the swarm, the giant toads can target intruders on the stepping-stones. The toads wait until a hero reaches the halfway point before attacking with their long tongues. Against heroes in the water they can only use their bite attack.

10) GUARDROOM

Any shouts or splashes in area 9 echo through to this chamber, immediately warning the guards that someone is approaching. Since bufomi don't generally speak any language other than their own, the sentries quickly work out whether the noises are made by a clumsy warrior falling in the water or intruders.

Monsters: The warriors are stationed here to protect the valuable females in area 11. Knowing that failure to perform their duty would result in their being sacrificed to their deity, they are prepared to sell their lives dearly.

Ⓜ **Bufom Warriors (1 per hero):** See page 78.

Tactics: If alerted, the soldiers file into the corridor. When the party draws level, the characters must roll to avoid Surprise. The closest warrior Croaks at intruders once they are detected, but only once. The guards quickly form a defensive line. Warriors in the front rank use the Defend maneuver to prevent their line being overrun, while those behind them use Wild Attacks with their long spears.

11) HAREM

Fresh, brown reeds are neatly scattered on the floor, and small piles of bones are stacked carefully in one corner. A group of unarmed bufomi sit on the reeds, staring wide-mouthed as you enter.

Genetic mutations are extremely uncommon in bufomi, and hence a tribe doesn't require many females. However, possession of females not only increases the potential number of tadpoles each mating season, but it

is also a sign of status. Right now, Kraakroa's tribe only has a few females left. However, neighboring tribes, keen to appease the high priest and his armored warriors, have made approaches at supplying more breeding stock.

Monsters: Female bufomi are less aggressive than the males, and fight only in self-defense. The tribe treats its females extremely well, supplying them with fresh reeds each day and regular, fresh meals.

Bufom Females (1 per hero): Treat as warriors (see page 78) but with Fighting d4 (Parry 4), no gear, and without the Croak special ability. Their only attack is to slap foes, which inflicts Strength damage.

Tactics: Unless attacked, the females merely huddle in a corner and stare at intruders. Once assaulted, they react fiercely, slapping at their foes with reckless abandon (they use Wild Attacks).

12) SPAWNING POOL

In the center of this dank chamber is a circular pool. A low stone wall, only a foot high, runs around the edge. Crude runic symbols are carved into the limestone blocks. Toward the rear of the chamber is a smaller, square pool with a similar lip. A number of bufomi, all armed with long spears, are present. As one, their bulging eyes swivel toward you.

The symbols are Lesardespeech pictograms, the written language of bufomi, gatormen, and lizardmen. They represent phrases such as "sacred waters," "place of creation," and "future hope."

Bufomi lack all concept of familial ties. Their loyalty lies not with blood relatives, but with the shamans who rule their culture. Whereas male bufomi are divided into two castes—shamans and warriors—females are outside the caste system. Their sole purpose is the procreation of their race, and because of this they are deeply respected (though granted no authority over males).

During mating season, female bufomi lay hundreds of eggs in special spawning pools. The males of the tribe then do their bit to fertilize them. The eggs develop into tadpoles, which hatch in the same pool. Around 95% of the tadpoles hatched each year are devoured by their kin. The bufomi see this as natural selection and make no attempts to interfere in the process. Those who survive to grow into immature bufomi are carefully studied by the shamans of the tribe. Depending on the traits they exhibit, the infants are caste as shamans or warriors, and receive appropriate training. Bufomi society is harsh—infants who fail to make the grade are not demoted to a lower caste, but are instead sacrificed.

The second, smaller pool contains live frogs and toads. Bufomi feed these to their growing young.

Terrain: The two pools are four feet deep. Wading through them is difficult ground. They are also extremely slimy. Any hero who runs through a pool and rolls a 1 on his running die slips and falls.

Only area effect weapons are effective should the heroes wish to cleanse the spawning pool of its tadpoles. Collectively, the contents of each pool have Toughness 7. A single pint of oil poured into a pool inflicts 1d6 damage. Should multiple pints be poured at the same time, add the damage together (so two pints causes 2d6 damage, and so on).

Monsters: The spawning pools are the home of the next generation of tribe members and are well guarded. At any one time there will be one or two shamans and a cluster of warriors. The warriors are spaced around the edge of the chamber, while the shamans are adjacent to one of the pools. Viewing their duty as sacred, the warriors are prepared to lay down their lives to protect the current clutch of tadpoles.

Bufom Shaman (1 per 2 heroes): See page 78. These shamans have no *summon herald* spell.

Bufom Warrior (2 per hero): See page 78.

Tactics: The warriors share the same action card. The shamans should receive separate cards.

The first shaman begins by casting *entangle* on the heroes, aiming to affect as many as possible without endangering any warriors already in melee. He then leaps into melee.

The second uses *knockdown* with the same restriction. Once this is cast, he casts *beast friend* on the larder pool. He has a –1 penalty, as he is trying to call forth a Medium Burst Template-sized toad swarm. Only one swarm can be summoned from the pool.

The two warriors nearest the party use their Croak special ability, taking no other actions in the first round. Those further away leap into combat with their crude spears. Bufomi know they aren't the strongest or most martial race, and so prefer to Gang Up on opponents, targeting those they consider the greatest threat first. Typically this is whoever wears the heaviest armor, but they know spellcasters can wield destructive powers. Any mage or cleric casting a destructive spell, such as *blast* or *bolt*, is considered a serious threat and is duly pounced upon.

13) CHAMPION OF THE TRIBE

Shamans in bufomi society are, in theory, the top of the social ladder. While no warrior would deign to overthrow one of his own volition, every junior shaman is looking to increase his personal power. Coups are typically instigated with K'kroakraa's "blessing." The would-be usurper need only highlight a tribe's misfortune and point to the current ruler to begin a rapid cascade toward violence.

Although Kraakroa is currently very popular, he knows it wouldn't take much for his rivals to turn on him. To that end, the high priest has a fanatically loyal bodyguard in his service. Thoroughly indoctrinated, the champion would fall on his spear without hesitation if ordered.

Monsters: A lone bufomi, Kraakroa's bodyguard and the tribe's champion, sits in the western corner of the southern alcove. He can't be seen from the western door. He alone decides who gets to see the high priest. Day or

night, the champion is on duty—he's a very light sleeper, and counts as an active sentry even when dozing. He places the coin by the door to alert him to intruders.

Ⓜ **Bufom Champion:** See page 78.

Tactics: Given chance, the champion begins by Croaking. This not only has a chance of halting the attackers' advance, but it also alerts the occupants of room 14 that trouble is coming. The warriors in the throne room then move to aid him at the start of the next round.

If his opponents have already closed to melee by the time he reacts, he forgoes Croaking in favor of inflicting damage. Against a single foe he makes just a single attack. When faced with multiple opponents he uses Frenzy, dividing his attacks in a bid to cripple as many intruders as possible. No matter how many wounds he takes he will not flee—the longer he can hold up intruders, the more prepared his master will be to deal with them should he fall.

14) THE THRONE ROOM

The door swings open into a large, stone-lined chamber. Once it must have been a grand place, with crisp pictograms and finely detailed carvings of shamans lording it over the warriors. Time, however, cares little for artistic value, and the glory days are now long since distant memories. A square pool, the water level with the floor, sits in the center of the room. At the far end of the hall is a stone throne, carved to resemble a giant toad.

This chamber has been the seat of the tribe's power since time immemorial. Countless shamans have sat on the throne over the millennia, but until recently all ruled over a dwindling tribe. For the first time in centuries, other tribes are now visiting to pay homage and seek alliances. As well as being his audience chamber, the throne room is the last line of defense against intruders.

Terrain: The pool, which is used for bathing, is three feet deep. The water is flush with the floor. Wading through the water is treated as difficult ground.

The throne is made of stone and can be used as Cover (Armor +8). Moving through the square it occupies is difficult terrain. Carved to resemble the god K'kroakraa, the ruler actually sits inside the mouth. This is a constant reminder that not only does he serve because his deity allows, but also of his fate should he fail his people.

Monsters: Kraakroa is seated on the throne. The warriors stationed here are not part of the standard pool. Rather, they are kept separated at all times in order to ensure they are not swayed to act against the high priest. They sleep in the throne room. Half their number flanks the door, while the remainder stands beside the throne. The high priest's pet, a giant toad, begins in area 15. A small number of females are frolicking in the pool.

Ⓜ **Kraakroa:** See page 77.

Ⓜ **Giant Toad (1):** See page 79.

Ⓜ **Bufomi Warriors (1 per hero):** See page 78.

Bufomi Females (1 per 2 heroes): See page 78.

Tactics: If alerted to danger by his champion's Croaking, or the sounds of battle in the antechamber, the occupants have time to prepare. The warriors rush toward area 13 to aid the champion. The females rush to Kraakroa's private chambers.

Kraakroa spends the first round calling his pet giant toad and moving to hide behind his throne. Lacking any defensive spells, such as *armor*, the high priest waits until any attackers enter the room. He then invokes *stun* while simultaneously ordering his toad to attack. Next round he launches *entangle* in a Medium Burst Template. Given the giant toad's Strength, he isn't worried about catching it in the area of effect as it can quickly escape. On subsequent rounds he fires off three 2d6 damage *bolts* from his position of relative safety.

If given no time to react, the high priest calls to his toad, casts *entangle*, and moves behind the throne on the first round. His tactics are then as above. The warriors nearest the door immediately engage in melee. Those nearer the throne leap into combat.

When the high priest takes two wounds, he runs to his private chamber. Once inside he bars the door (Toughness 14) and heads to his potions (see area 16). He quaffs the potion of *healing* first. Next round, he invokes *wall walking* and climbs onto the ceiling. He then drops the *obscure* potion near the door. Should his foes enter, he knocks back his *speed* device and tries to flee to the marsh.

15) TOAD'S LAIR

Kraakroa's pet has been with him since it was a tadpole. One prisoner from each barge raided is reserved for the creature as a special treat. The high priest also feeds it warriors or shamans who fail him. Several small piles of bones dot the floor, but none impede movement.

16) KRAAKROA'S CHAMBER

A makeshift wooden cot lined with thick, clean reeds stands in the northeast corner. At the foot of the bed is a small, wooden chest. A rickety table formed from two logs and a moldy plank act as a table, while a shorter, wider log serves as a stool. A stack of dried frogs lies on the tables, along with two dozen clay jars.

As ruler of the tribe, Kraakroa is entitled to a private chamber. The jars contain berries which along with the frogs provide emergency rations (and a handy snack) should the temple be assaulted.

Treasure: In a small, unlocked chest is a potion of *healing* (cures one wound), a flask of green gas (*obscure*), and a mushroom which is a *speed* alchemical device. Also inside the chest is the priest's private fortune—827 gold scields in assorted small gems.

AFTERMATH

If the party accepted Oswald's commission to rescue his non-existent nephew, they obviously haven't found him. However, if they return any of the engro bones from the temple, Oswald, being the quick thinker, reacts with remorse over his "nephew's remains," identifying them by some small detail, such as the shape of the skull or an old fracture. He pays half the reward as token thanks and the full amount he owes them for defeating the bufomi.

To further prove his innocence, he hands over *all* the stolen cargo still in his warehouse. It amounts to 15,000 gs worth. He won't reimburse the merchants for the other cargo, claiming again that he had no choice and that all the proceeds went into equipping the bufomi with armor and weapons.

If handed over to the authorities, Oswald pleads the same case he put before the heroes. He is not charged with any crime and is in fact pitied for being forced into acting so dishonorably. Naturally, the crafty merchant puts on a public display of mourning, and makes several large donations as an act of contrition for his part in the whole affair.

Whether his story is believed or not, Oswald promptly abandons his piratical scheme. It quickly becomes apparent the threat to shipping is over. The heroes' patron duly pays them on their return to Scathmoor.

As for Oswald, parties who believed his fictitious tale will come to regret their charitable act. Oswald is extremely vengeful and blames the characters for foiling his plan. Although the party doesn't know it, each member now has the Major Enemy (Oswald of Bridgwater) Hindrance. The engro never acts in person against them, of course. He uses assassins hired through a chain of middlemen and untraceable, dead letter drops.

BESTIARY

OSWALD

Oswald (engros don't use surnames) was born and raised in Bridgwater, but he wasn't always a rich merchant. His father ran a small market stall, but Oswald had bigger ideas. He arranged for several competitors to go out of business, which in turn profited his father. Similar schemes saw the engro's wealth increase, as well as Oswald's reputation for hard-nosed business. Success followed success, and acquisition of competition followed hostile takeover. When his father died of disease, Oswald inherited a thriving mercantile empire.

Thoroughly greedy and ruthless, Oswald jumped at the chance to join the Gray League, a shadowy organization of merchants seeking complete trade domination of Rassilon (he made an ideal candidate). Since then his fortunes have waxed considerably. His latest scheme isn't about money, but about expansion of his empire and the accumulation of personal power—wealth will follow in due course. Oswald is also a priest of Var.

Oswald's Noble Edge represents his power and position within society, not a noble title. Within the confines of Bridgwater Oswald is widely known and greatly respected—he does not suffer Outsider penalties. Beyond the city limits he has zero Charisma.

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

Skills: Boating d6, Faith d8, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Riding d8, Stealth d6, Streetwise d10, Taunt d8

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Hindrances: Cautious, Greedy (Major), Mean, Outsider, Small, Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Alchemy, Arcane Background (Miracles), Charismatic, Concentration, Command, Connections (Gray League, merchants), Focus, Luck, Noble, Sneaky, Spirited, Very Rich

Gear: Chain vest (+2; torso only; weighs 10 lbs), short sword (Str+d6)

Alchemical Devices: Four alchemical devices (see page 14)

Powers: *Bladebreaker* (weapon snaps), *charismatic aura*, *confusion* (target acts drunk), *detect/conceal* (hears whispered voices), *lock/unlock* (conjures a magical key), *speak language*

SLAVER

A cruel and violent man, the burly Saxa slave trader goes by many names. Currently his alias is Harald Arisunu. He lacks compassion toward those he buys and sells, treating his wares little better than animals. In his eyes, the strong rule the weak. That goes for personal interactions as well as governmental systems. His slaves were weak, and thus deserve everything they get in life.

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Streetwise d8

Charisma: –2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (1)

Hindrances: Greedy (Minor), Mean, Vengeful (Minor)

Edges: Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Sweep

Gear: Leather vest (+1), mace (Str+d6), whip (Str+d4, Reach 1, can Disarm and grapple at Reach)

KRAAKROA

Self-appointed high priest of his tribe, Kraakroa has hailed his bargain with the engro merchant as a way to advance the tribe. Sentient sacrifices are regularly offered to his god, and the warriors are armed with proper weapons, not the usual crude spears the bufomi manufacture. Although highly intelligent, he has no idea the tribe has been set up for a fall. Perhaps the deal is too good to be

true, but Kraakroa has been temporarily blinded by the rewards and his subsequent rise in popularity.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Climbing d8, Faith d10, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Swimming d10
Pace: 5; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (1)
Hindrances: Arrogant, Obese, Vengeful (Major)
Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Combat Reflexes, Command, Concentration, Level Headed, Tough as Nails
Gear: Leather armor (+1), small shield (+1 Parry), spiked mace (Str+d6+1)
Special Abilities:
* **Croak:** If a bufom takes no other actions in a round, including moving, it can emit a deafening croak. Place the thin end of a Cone Template in front of the bufom. All creatures within the Template must make a Spirit roll or be Shaken.
* **Powers:** Kraakroa knows the following spells: *beast friend* (amphibians only), *bolt* (small, biting frogs), *boost/lower trait* (Stealth and Swimming), *entangle* (long, sticky tongue), *knockdown* (croak), *leaping, stun* (victims are covered in slime), *summon beast* (amphibians only), *summon herald* (a giant toad), *wall walker* (sticky feet)
* **Rotating Eyes:** The eyes of a bufom sit on top of their head, and can swivel to see behind them. They reduce Gang-Up bonuses against them by one.
* **Semi-Aquatic:** Bufomi can hold their breath for 5 minutes.
* **Size –1:** Bufomi stand 4' tall.

BUFOM

CHAMPION

Whereas most bufomi are small, the champion is a tall, muscled member of the species. His primary diet comprises young bufomi who fail to meet the grade for their chosen caste and the flesh of sacrifices.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Swimming d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (1)
Hindrances: Overconfident
Edges: Combat Reflexes, Command, Frenzy
Gear: Leather vest (+1; torso only), long spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands, see below)
Special Abilities:
* **Bound:** A bufom can leap 1d6+2" in a straight line to attack with +2 to its Fighting roll and +2 to damage.
* **Croak:** If a bufom takes no other actions in a round, including moving, it can emit a deafening croak. Place the thin end of a Cone Template in front of the bufom. All creatures within the Template must make a Spirit roll or be Shaken.
* **Rotating Eyes:** The eyes of a bufom sit on top of their head, and can swivel to see behind them. They reduce Gang-Up bonuses against them by one.
* **Semi-Aquatic:** Bufomi can hold their breath for 5 minutes.
* **Size +1:** The champion is a hulking brute.

SHAMAN

Shamans are the leaders of bufom society and worship K'kroakaa, the Bloated One, whose form is that of a monstrous toad with an immensely long tongue. The shamans' signature spell is *leaping*.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Climbing d6, Faith d8, Fighting d4, Guts d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Swimming d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5 (1)
Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles)
Gear: Leather vest (+1; torso only), long spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands, see below)
Special Abilities:
* **Croak:** If a bufom takes no other actions in a round, including moving, it can emit a deafening croak. Place the thin end of a Cone Template in front of the bufom. All creatures within the Template must make a Spirit roll or be Shaken.
* **Powers:** Shamans know the following spells: *beast friend* (amphibians only), *boost/lower trait* (Stealth and Swimming), *entangle* (long, sticky tongue), *knockdown* (croak), *leaping, summon herald* (a giant toad).
* **Rotating Eyes:** The eyes of a bufom sit on top of their head, and can swivel to see behind them. They reduce Gang-Up bonuses against them by one.
* **Semi-Aquatic:** Bufomi can hold their breath for 5 minutes.
* **Size –1:** Bufomi stand 4' tall.

WARRIOR

The warriors aren't particularly skilled or resilient, but they do have long spears. They allow those in the second rank to make melee attacks, but don't count toward Gang Up bonuses. This is a standard part of the warriors' tactics, and is not repeated in individual encounters.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Swimming d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5 (1)
Gear: Leather vest (+1; torso only), long spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands, see below)
Special Abilities:
* **Bound:** A bufom can leap 1d6+2" in a straight line to attack with +2 to its Fighting roll and +2 to damage.
* **Croak:** If a bufom takes no other actions in a round, including moving, it can emit a deafening croak. Place the thin end of a Cone Template in front of the bu-

fom. All creatures within the Template must make a Spirit roll or be Shaken.
* **Rotating Eyes:** The eyes of a bufom sit on top of their head, and can swivel to see behind them. They reduce Gang-Up bonuses against them by one.
* **Semi-Aquatic:** Bufomi can hold their breath for 5 minutes.
* **Size –1:** Bufomi stand 4' tall.

GUARD DOG

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d10, Stealth d8, Tracking d8
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 4
Special Abilities:
* **Bite:** Str+d4.
* **Fleet Footed:** Guard dogs roll a d10 when running instead of a d6.
* **Go for the Throat:** Guard dogs are trained to go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly armored location.
* **Size –1:** Guard dogs are relatively small.

TOAD, GIANT

These monstrous, bloated amphibians live in marshes, hibernating during the long winter months. Bufomi make use of them as guards in the same way other races use dogs.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 10
Special Abilities:
* **Bite:** Str+d6.
* **Engulf:** Giant toads can swallow prey as large as Size +1 whole. While engulfed, the target is at –4 to all Trait rolls and damage. He suffers 2d6 damage per round from powerful digestive juices. (Armor offers no protection, except through the *armor* spell.)
* **Large:** Attackers get +2 to attack rolls against the toad, due to its size.
* **Size +4:** Giants toads weigh over 2,000 pounds.
* **Tongue:** Reach 3. The tongue is coated in sticky saliva. If the toad scores a success on its Fighting roll it has grappled its prey. Unless the foe can escape before the toad's next action, it draws him into its mouth and the victim is Engulfed. On a raise, the victim is grappled and Engulfed in the same action.

TOAD, SWARM

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d10
Skills: Notice d6
Pace: 8; **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.
* **Mindless:** Unaffected by Tests of Will, Tricks, or arcane powers like *puppet*.
* **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. Jumping in water does not foil the swarm.

CITY WATCH

These are average city guardsmen. They are competent and brave, but not suicidal.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d4
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (2)
Hindrances: Loyal
Edges: —
Gear: Scale hauberk (+2), pot helm (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1). 50% are equipped with crossbows (Range: 15/30/60, Damage 2d6, AP 2)

(WC) WATCH CAPTAIN

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Riding d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d4
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 8 (2)
Hindrances: Loyal
Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Command, Frenzy
Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), pot helm (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry), long sword (Str+d8), dagger (Str+d4)

CITIZEN

Individuals the GM wants to expand into more fleshed out characters can have higher Traits or a few Edges and Hindrances. Don't forget to roll on the Ally Personalities table as well.
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, Saxa, Trader
Gear: Dagger (Str+d4)

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Pirates, Plunder & Adventure in the Icy Waters of the Crystalflow!

The Crystalflow River is the lifeblood of the Crystalflow Confederacy. Every day hundreds of ships and barges sail its turbulent waters, buying and selling cargoes along its length. But trade is slowing and the sailors are scared.

Several ships have been found devoid of crew and stripped bare of their valuable cargoes. Rumors are rife, but almost everyone points to pirates as the cause of the troubles.

The heroes are hired by a local merchant to investigate the situation. Their port of call is Bridgwater, a bustling merchant town at the northern end of the trade route. Only by careful investigation and strength of arms can the heroes hope to put an end to the pirates of the Crystalflow!

Pirates of the Crystalflow is the fourth adventure in the series of great exploits for the Hellfrost setting especially designed for the award winning *Savage Worlds* ruleset.

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Paul 'Wiggy' Wade-Williams

HELLFROST

THE EOSTRE FESTIVAL

RANK • NOVICE

OFFICIAL SAVAGE WORLDS LICENSED PRODUCT

THE EOSTRE FESTIVAL

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THE EOSTRE FESTIVAL

Unlike other *Hellfrost* adventures, this one lacks combat. It focuses not on exploring ancient trap-filled tombs or slaying nameless foes, but on a low-key yet important event in the lives of the citizens of Rassilon. Typically, events such as this are handled during the downtime between adventures, with rewards covered by the Glory bonuses for advancing a Rank, but this adventure fulfills a vital role in *Hellfrost*. It shows the characters a world beyond the tombs, the monsters, and the treasure, and introduces them to the people with whom they must interact in their daily lives; the people who, hopefully, will one day come to regard them as heroes.

Aside from some vague geographic notes, the adventure has been set up so that the GM can place it in any part of Rassilon where Saxa make their homes. Environmental conditions are entirely dependent on the chosen locale. The Saxa village does not feature on any official *Hellfrost* map, again to allow the GM freedom of choice as to the exact setting.

Since the story is set around a Spring festival to Eostre, it thus takes place in Eostremonan. Depending on the geographic region, the temperature can range from chilly to positively frigid. See the *Savage Worlds* rulebook for the effects of cold weather and the *Hellfrost Players' Guide* for how the rules work in this setting.

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

GM BACKGROUND

In many fantasy games the focus is purely on slaying monsters and taking their treasure. Such worlds are little more than large storehouses of adventuring sites ripe for plundering. *Hellfrost* is different. Yes, many of the adventures will involve combat against monsters, avoiding devious traps, thwarting vile plots, and the acquisition of wealth, for this is what drives many players, but it is also a world about people. The characters are not just war machines bred to slaughter—they are citizens of Rassilon and its many diverse cultures.

The story takes place during a one-week long festival to honor Eostre. The ceremony marks the start of spring and the better times ahead, and is a time for celebration and hope. Over the week, the characters will (hopefully) participate in a number of challenges. The adventure is not stage managed to ensure the heroes win—some individuals may be victorious, while others will suffer ignominious defeat. Such is life!

The tale is set in and around a small town ruled by a Saxa jarl, Cuthwulf. A Saxa character may be related to Cuthwulf by blood and be at the festival with his kin, or perhaps his clan may owe him allegiance and thus be in attendance at the ceremony. Since the festival doubles as a market, the characters may simply be in the vicinity looking for bargains or to resupply. Those of religious nature may be here to honor the gods. If this is the first ever *Hellfrost* adventure you play, perhaps recognition at the festival kick-starts the characters' adventuring career.

THERE'S NO PLOT?

This adventure focuses purely on the contest. In order to prevent it becoming a series of boring die rolls, the GM must don his roleplaying hat and work to his best ability to bring the festival alive. During the contests, NPC actions should be described in as much detail as the players will accept, with any predetermined results serving as guidelines as to how the action unfolds.

While the story revolves around the Eostre festival, there is an entire town to explore. However, nothing beyond a few names and places is detailed within the text, and no map is provided. As such, the player characters should be free to meet other people of interest as they wish. These incidental encounters are left for the GM to determine as they arise, but could become the start of new friendships or animosities.

The jarl is only one step down from the local king, and

thus a man of some wealth and power. This should be reflected in the town. Almost anyone the characters care to search for, in terms of general professions, is likely to be present, barring those found only in specialist centers or places which require a very large population. Although there are only two full temples (those to Eostre and Sigel), all the gods have a shrine and an attendant priest, though most of these are transient, erected solely for the festival. Similarly, while the Saxa favor skalds, other sorts of magicians may be present, attracted by the festival and market or making their home near the jarl's court.

Similarly, the GM can introduce subplots set during the contest. Several ideas are detailed below. One reason for not including a subplot is to allow the GM to reuse NPCs and tie the ritual into events in his particular campaign. Consider the festival a backdrop, onto which the GM can paint any story he wishes.

• **Abduction.** The festival has attracted many important persons, their families, and their followers to Nohaut. While the obvious targets are the most influential people, these are also the best guarded. Focus instead on lesser, but no less important, figures. The cult of Vali may kidnap a cleric of Eira, their natural enemy. An enemy lord may try to abduct the Eostre Maidens, around whom security is surprisingly light, to disrupt the ritual. Alternatively, go for the rule of numbers—the disappearance of a single peasant will not raise many eyebrows, but should a few go missing, questions will be asked.

• **Murder!** The oldest hook in the book is a murder. As a minor subplot, a murder might be quite mundane, perhaps the result of a family feud or a heated argument gone too far. Expanded into a more in-depth plot, the murder may be related to an assassination attempt against a powerful NPC, perhaps even Jarl Cuthwulf.

Of course, the murder may be incidental to the subplot. For instance, a cleric of Vali may have been trying to poison the drinks used in the Contest of Stamina when he was discovered by a court official. The cleric murdered the official, but had to hide (his sabotage unfulfilled) because of his victim's cries for help. Undeterred, the cleric will try to strike again. Can the heroes unravel the true mystery before all is too late?

• **Theft**. Big markets draw big crowds, and not all those attending are of lawful nature. As the old saying goes, "Where there are goods, there is greed." Of course, no petty theft is worthy of the heroes' investigations—that is what Thieftakers are employed for.

Whatever item has been stolen, it should be of great value. It might be a noblewoman's precious jewels, possibly ancestral items, or a relic from one of the temples. Likewise, the thief should be no ordinary criminal. A cultist to one of the dark gods, a renegade mage, or a sinful cleric stripped of his powers and out for revenge are all worthy antagonists.

RANDOM EVENTS

These events can be used during the festival to throw a few wrenches into the works. Have each character participating in the contests draw a card before each of the five main events. On a Club suit, check the table below.

Entries marked "*" may occur multiple times. The event may affect different heroes or the same character multiple times over the course of the adventure.

Entries marked "**" may occur multiple times, but the same hero may never be affected more than once. If he draws the event again, treat it as no event instead.

All other entries occur only once and should be crossed out when used. If one of these eliminated events occurs again, treat it as no event. GMs are free to invent their own events; either replacing used ones or replacing any listed below.

Card	Event
2–3	**Throw The Match*:** An NPC of means and influence (nobleman, rich merchant, or spellcaster works well) approaches the character just before he enters the contest and makes an offer. If the character throws the match and does not come in the top three, he will earn 500 gs. Should he refuse or fail to

TIMETABLE OF EVENTS

The Eostre festival takes place over one week, beginning on Waescdaeg and ending on Heafoddaeg of the following week. The adventure is broken down into a series of events (labeled E in the text), which occur in strict order. Between these events, the heroes are free to act as they wish.

Day	Events	Notes
Heafoddaeg	E0	Arrival in Nohaut
Waescdaeg	E1, E2, E3	Marks the start of the festival. On this day are held the introductory feast and blessing ritual.
Marketdaeg	E4, E5, E6	A grand market is held. The contestants have the day free.
Monandaeg	E7	The contest begins with the poetry competition.
Sunnandaeg	E8	The drinking competition.
Healfdaeg	E9	The physical challenge.
Milcdaeg	E10	The horsemanship challenge.
Endedaeg	E11, E12	The observation event is held. Also sees the closing of the market, the weddings of the fortunate competitors, and the final religious festival.

achieve this (perhaps due to lucky die rolls) he gains the Minor Enemy Hindrance.

4–6 **Trash Talk*:** Cissa the Berserk threatens the hero with grievous harm unless he lets the berserk win. Make an Intimidation Test of Wills. Because not every contest has the contestants in face-to-face opposition, the outcome works slightly differently. If the next contest does not allow Cissa to make a direct roll against the hero, the berserk may instead impose a single –2 penalty on one roll made by his victim. This roll must be nominated *before* dice are rolled. Otherwise, Cissa gains the +2 bonus to his next roll against the hero as normal.

7 **Sudden Snowfall*:** The weather turns foul and the heavens open, albeit briefly. During this bout, treat the lighting conditions as Dim. In addition, the ground becomes very slick, imposing a –1 penalty on any physical Trait roll. This has a direct impact only on the physical prowess, speed, and observation challenges.

8–9 **Cheating*:** The hero is approached before the next contest and offered the chance to cheat. See **Cheating Aplenty** on page 91 for details. The contestant's offer relates to the next contest only. So if the hero is about to enter the test of stamina, he is only offered the potion to stave off drunkenness.

10 **Betting Heavy*:** Someone of note has a lot of money resting on the character winning the next contest and mentions this to them as they approach the arena. He offers the hero an incentive to win—20% of his winnings (equates to 200 gs). A victorious character is duly rewarded and may have acquired a new friend.

Jack **A Smile and a Wink**:** The hero has an admirer who shows his or her affection with a smile and a wink. The character receives a boost to his confidence. He gains one benny, which can only be used during the forthcoming contest. Whether the admirer wants a romantic liaison or perhaps has some other motive for supporting the hero is left to the GM to determine.

Queen **I Love You**:** A spectator of whatever sex the hero favors declares undying affection. They keep calling out to the hero during the next contest, distracting him at inopportune moments. The GM receives 3 special bennies during the contest. He can use them to force a hero to reroll *any* die roll made by the hero during the contest. Obviously, it is wise to save these for when the character rolls extremely well. Excess bonus bennies are lost after the contest. A victorious hero is presented with the opportunity to engage in romantic activities with their admirer after the contest. This may be a one-night stand, lead to a long love affair, or possibly annoy the NPC's spouse, sibling, guardian, or bodyguard.

King **Delayed**:** Some issue causes the character to miss the first round of the next contest. His saddle may have been incorrectly fastened (or sabotaged), he is called away to attend a person of note (who may or may not know anything about the supposed meeting), his ale mug may have a hole in it and need replacing. In the test of speed and observation, the character starts one round behind his rivals, placing him at a disadvantage, but one he can recoup with a little luck. In the other challenges, he is penalized two places once the final order is decided.

Ace **Blessings & Curses*:** A priest (pick a religion) gives the hero a blessing on a red suited Ace or curses him on a black suited Ace. The blessing or curse is not magical, though it does affect the hero for good or ill. If blessed, he receives +1 to all rolls in the forthcoming contest. A curse imposes a –1 penalty.

HEAFODDAEG

The characters begin outside the town of Nohaut, which is ruled by Jarl Cuthwulf, a respected Saxa nobleman of strong morals and religious conviction. Over recent weeks, Cuthwulf's heralds have roamed nearby lands, telling of a grand market to take place on Waescdaeg of the third week of Eostremonan, after which will follow a religious festival. The heroes' reasons for attending the market are left up to them.

E0. ARRIVAL

The heroes arrive at Nohaut on Heafoddaeg, one day before the festivities begin. Standing atop a hill, they gaze down onto the town of Nohaut, blanketed by a thin layer of crisp snow which fell in the night.

Despite the snow and icy winds still haunting the lands, many others have answered the heralds' call, for Nohaut's population has overflowed into the grassy fields beyond the main fortifications. Within the main ditch and rampart, the dwellings are typical Saxa longhouses. A haze of smoke drifts lazily over the settlement, for there is little wind.

Outside, surrounded by a wooden palisade, lies a vast sea of tents. Even from your distant vantage point, the cries of hawkers and clerics, the screams of excited children, and the mooing, baaing, and

braying of livestock fill the air. A queue of visitors is lined up outside a gate into the palisade, awaiting acceptance into the tent town. A second enclosure, with a double palisade, stands empty on the far side of town.

Joining the back of the queue, it takes several hours for the heroes to reach the front. Every now and then a mounted huscarl rides up and down the line, shouting out for patience and that all will receive welcome in due course.

No one seems to know why Cuthwulf has arranged such a large market so early in the year, though rumors among the visitors are rife. Allow each character a Streetwise roll. With success, the hero learns the market is religious in nature, though Cuthwulf has never before called a market to honor Eostre . On a raise, the character discovers the market has been called to honor Eostre in a special festival. Grand prizes are on offer in some sort of extended competition. On a critical failure, the adventure hears that Cuthwulf is about to declare war on a neighbor and is seeking both divine assistance and swords for hire.

On finally arriving at the gate to the new palisade, a weary-looking herald flanked by dour-looking huscarls enquires to the characters' names and social status. All the heroes are greeted courteously, though with no fawning of groveling unless they somehow outrank the jarl. The characters are each asked whether they vow to obey the laws of hospitality. Those replying affirmatively are given a stamped brass disc bearing Cuthwulf's heraldic symbol—a wolf's head.

Anyone saying "no," even jokingly, is turned aside—the herald has a huge queue of folk to process and is in no mood for humor. The hero may rejoin the queue, at the back. By the time he is seen again night is falling.

"Keep this safe," says the herald. "This token shows you are duly welcomed to the festival by Jarl Cuthwulf. If you are asked to produce it by a representative of Cuthwulf and cannot do so immediately, you will be thrown out of Nohaut as a breaker of the peace and potential enemy of the realm."

Depending on their social rank, the characters are assigned different sleeping quarters.

Status	Assigned Sleeping Quarters
Noble*	A sleeping bench beside the hearth in a local noble's hall within the town proper. Each noble may take one other character with him, for nobles are expected to have a steward, herald, or huscarl at their side.
Cleric/Mage	Clerics of Eostre (either faction) and Sigel have sleeping space in the appropriate temple, which also lie within the main town. Other clerics and non-noble mages are assigned lodging with a local family, who treat the characters with great respect.
Merchant	Erect a tent in the palisade area reserved for merchants. Fine tents with a wooden cot, strongbox (empty), and table and two chairs can be rented for 1 gs per day if the hero does not own one.
Crafter	Erect a tent in the palisade area reserved for crafters. A good quality tent with a wooden cot and a strongbox (empty) can be rented for 5 ss per day if the hero does not own one.
Others	Erect a tent in the main communal area. A basic tent can be rented for 1 ss per day if the hero does not own one.
Frostborn**	Erect a tent at the back of the communal area, among the slaves and peasants. No tents are rented to such characters, for they are distrusted in Nohaut.

* Includes nobles of the Magocracy.

** Includes all hrimwisards who announce their status.

The heroes have little to do for the rest of the day, save erecting tents if they so need and meeting their hosts. As with other NPCs not central to the plot, no stats or descriptions are provided. Basic archetypes from the *Hellfrost Bestiary* and the Allies Personality Table should suffice. Unless a hero deliberately shuns company, he is invited to some sort of small feast held by others of his social class that night.

WAESCDAEG

Just before dawn, heralds traipse through the sludgy snow, for none fell last night, blowing horns and waking the town with cries of, *"All are to assemble at the base of Moot Hill at Second Gaet!"* (That's two hours after dawn.)

E1. AN ANNOUNCEMENT IS MADE

As the heroes make their way to Moot Hill (a tall, flat-topped hill which lies just outside the town's fortifications), they find themselves rubbing shoulders with thegns and haulds, crafters and merchants, peasants and huscarls. A general buzz of curiosity circulates amongst the crowd.

Once everyone is present, Cuthwulf and his council, bedecked in their finest furs and adorned with golden torcs and circlets, climb the hill and take their position. Silence slowly falls across the crowd as the nobles look down upon the populace. When all is silent, Cuthwulf addresses the audience.

"Loyal kinsmen, neighbors, and strangers, I bid you welcome to Nohaut in peace and friendship. My heralds, sworn to secrecy, have revealed nothing of the meaning of this gathering, but all of your questions will soon be answered, I can assure you.

"Spring is soon to be upon us once more, as Thrym is driven back by the merciful gods. The omens tell of a need for a festival to bless these lands, so let it be known that a festival to Eostre will take place beginning on Monandaeg.

"During the festival, five challenges will be issued. These shall be judged by the Eostre maidens, girls to be chosen from our own lands to represent Eostre. Any man or woman of good character, whether he is a freeman or noble, kinsman or stranger, may enter these challenges, so long as he be loyal to the gods of good grace. If you wish to attend, make your way to the temple of Eostre now and give your name to my heralds before nightfall.

"Those crafters and merchants among you are at leave to erect your stalls and prepare your goods, for tomorrow shall be the great market. Other guests may pass your time with dancing and singing in praise of the gods!"

As soon as the jarl stops talking, the air is filled with a multitude of conversations, with farmers promising to enter for their ancestors' sake, young women dreaming of being named Eostre Queen, and thegns talking of marrying good Saxa stock. Everyone is excited.

It's up to the characters if they wish to partake or not. Normally the NPCs' actions are predetermined, so the focus remains on the heroes. However, players of non-participating heroes can aid the GM during the contests by actually playing an NPC and making die rolls and speeches as appropriate. *In such cases, the predetermined text and results should not be used.*

Once at the temple, the characters are informed that each contest is scored, and that whoever accumulates the most points over the five tasks will be declared the winner. Hence, the more contests one enters, the greater one's chance of victory overall. The contests are to be of words, physical prowess, stamina, speed, and observation. No amount of bribery, threats, or pleas to aid a fellow cleric can get them to reveal more.

Contestants are warned that any use of magic will result in expulsion from the festival and may, at the temple of Eostre's discretion, be viewed as a religious crime. If found guilty, the offender could be fined a large sum of money or sold into slavery to till the fields of Nohaut.

The use of herbal remedies is considered cheating, not to a lesser extent than employing magic. Anyone found cheating by means of herbal brews is disqualified from the contest in which the brew was used and scores no points for that event.

E2. MEETING THE RIVALS

Later that night, as Sigel sinks west, Cuthwulf throws a huge feast in the double-palisade enclosure, to which everyone above the rank of slave is invited. There is no defined seating order beyond Cuthwulf's table, to which none of the characters are invited to attend. Venison, roast boar, and mutton are roasted over makeshift hearths, while great slabs of cheese and bread are handed out. Mead is reserved for nobles—others must settle for ale.

Part way through the revelry, before the serious drinking and dancing begins, Cuthwulf stands and addresses the crowd.

"Kith, kin, and guests," he roars over the dull murmurings pervading the crowd, "the contestants are named!" A cheer ripples through the audience. "At midnight, we shall begin the blessing ceremony!" As the crowd begins speculating on who the champions might be, servants place three intricately carved wooden chairs behind the jarl. Each is adorned with images of plants and animals.

Saxa characters and clerics of Eostre, who will have witnessed similar but not identical events in their youth, automatically know the blessing festival is a routine part of such a ceremony, and makes the gods aware of who is championing them. The contestants will also have a chance to meet each other, make boasts to the crowd, and to view the young ladies that stepped forward to be Eostre maidens. Other characters need to make a Knowledge (Folklore or Religion) roll to learn these facts.

Cuthwulf stands and calls for silence before making a short speech.

"The gods are pleased by your support for this festival and the omens are good! As is tradition, I will first call upon the contestants to stand before you. When all are assembled and known, the maidens will be brought out, so that all may see the Eostre maidens and the honor they bring their families.

"The challengers are known to my council and to the gods, now let them be known to you! Each must face a test of words, physical prowess, stamina, speed, and vigilance before they may claim their prize. Let the challengers be called!" With that Cuthwulf sits back down. His chief skald, identified as Regdi Wulfricsunu by a local sitting near you, steps forward to perform the calling.

Start the introductions by calling a hero and let him decide what to do when he reaches the front of the crowd. Traditionally this is the time to make boasts about prowess and the things you will do if chosen as victor. Each character must make a Persuasion roll (a skill some may lack). Modifiers can be awarded to the players for particularly good or poor speeches. Brief but meaningful words are better than a long-winded monologue.

Success earns the hero an extra benny and a raise two. These represent crowd support, and can be spent

only during the contests. The NPCs' brief speeches are detailed below, along with notes as to how the crowd reacts.

Sitting in one of the chairs is bad form, as these are reserved for the Eostre brides. Whilst doing so does not damage the ritual, it does cause loud fits of laughter from the crowd and the hero is likely to receive a rude, but popular, nickname, such as "the Maiden" or "Fool's Love". He suffers a –1 penalty to Charisma for the rest of the adventure. Intersperse the remainder of the heroes with the NPC contestants below until all are introduced.

Aldhelm: *"With Thunor's blessing I will bring glory to my ancestors."* The crowd responds to the local boy with wild applause. Aldhelm earns an additional two bennies, despite his few words.

Coelric ("celrick"): *"Poor of land, but strong of heart, I vow to win one of the maidens as my bride."* Polite claps and a few cheers are heard, for Coelric is poor but popular. He earns an extra benny.

Hussa ("hoo-sah"): *"Let it be known to all that if I win the contest outright I shall host a feast for all who support me!"* This earns wild cheers, although technically it is a form of bribery. Hussa earns an extra benny.

Penda: *"I have lands plentiful with crops and I swear to win myself a bride worthy of my status and position."* Penda is disliked locally, and the clapping is half-hearted. No extra bennies are earned.

Cissa ("kee-sah"): *"I am Cissa the berserk, chosen of Tiw and victorious in all that I do. No man is my equal and I bow only to the gods! I vow to win the stamina contest! Let no man stand before me!"* Cissa is met with a torrent of boos and jeers for his arrogance. He earns no extra bennies.

Once all of the contestants have been called, Cuthwulf stands again and calls upon Eostre to bless the contestants. The high priestess of the temple, a disciple of Eostre Plantmother, steps forward from her seat at the high table. She intones a prayer to her deity, calling on her favor for those who would champion her, and then slaps each contestant across the face with a holly branch, symbolically driving out any evil spirits.

After the blessing is concluded, Cuthwulf hands proceedings over to his skald again, who introduces the maidens to the contestants.

E3. THE EOSTRE MAIDENS UNVEILED

The Eostre festival is dedicated primarily to the goddess of the same name and welcomes back spring. It also once had an older meaning, being an ideal time for men and women to marry and begin procreation. As such, the call has also gone out to single women of the jarl's lands (who wish to be wed) to offer themselves to the winners, who will have proven their worth as good husbands. Three such women have stepped forward to accept possible husbands. Being Saxa, they are well protected by their fathers and brothers from those who may wish to sample the goods beforehand.

"The first of our maiden's fair is the Eostre Queen, chosen by the runes in front of the noble women and freemen's wives of my land. She is Cwenburh ("qwen-bur"), third daughter of Thegn Aethelred, loyal noble to Jarl Cuthwulf. Renowned for her skill at weaving, Cwenburh's breathtaking beauty is known to all in these lands. Dressed in green with a crown of early spring flowers, she is a sight to behold and a perfect representation of the beauty of spring." True enough, Cwenburh is stunningly beautiful. Many of the married men are receiving stern looks from their wives.

"The second, known as the Eostre Princess, is Gytha ("githa"), daughter of Theobald, a notable thegn. Dressed in yellow and carrying blue flowers, she represents the fertility of the living". Her costume contrasts with her shock of red hair. She scowls at the assembled populace, cursing at a few who demand to have a "closer look."

"Lastly, and known as the Eostre Maiden, is Eadhild ("aid-hilled"), second daughter of Oswulf, a huscarl of good ancestry. Dressed in brown, with a garland of flowers, she represents the fertility of the earth." The local women have done well to make her look pretty, for she can best be described as "homely," if one is being polite. A few cruel "oinks" circulate the crowd, much to Eadhild's obvious dismay.

"As all can see, there are but three maidens and only three husbands can be chosen. The contestants must battle for the right to win of these three blessed brides, and let the best men win!

"For ladies who wish to compete, or men who do not wish the great honor of marriage, Cuthwulf, most generous of lords, has arranged a prize of gold."

With the blessing and introductions complete, the feast continues with renewed vigor. Characters who signed up for the competitions find themselves the center of much attention and speculation. Heroes who want to pull out of the competition now suffer a –5 Glory penalty for dishonoring Jarl Cuthwulf and offending Eostre. Eventually, everyone tires and heads to their assigned sleeping quarters.

MARKETDAEG

The heroes have many duties this day, such as attending blessings and feasts, but they also have time enough to engage in shopping, gossip, and even a little cheating. The three events in this section may occur in any order the GM desires.

PRAISE TO VAR

At dawn, the merchants gather to perform a ceremony to honor Var. After consulting the previous night, Var's visiting priests have nominated one of their number to be acting high priest based on his previous year's profits. While there may be a cleric of Var among the heroes, his ledgers are not going to be a patch on those of a full-time trader. Hence, while the hero may participate in the ritual, he will not be appointed leader.

The high priest, Profiteer Thosa ap-Gobert, stands in front of the makeshift shrine to Var and reads out the names of all the clerics present. As the names are called, each one steps forward and nails a single gold scield to the base of the wooden shrine. This is then marked down in their ledgers. Thus, all the trading clerics begin by making a symbolic loss at the start of the week's trading.

Thieftakers meanwhile go around the stalls and offer the merchants protection. This service isn't free, but only merchants with a sizeable security force can afford not to take up the offer of Var's protection. Those willing to pay the fee (50 gs) have their canvas covering painted with Var's holy symbol as a warning to thieves.

With the dual rituals complete, the high priest blows a horn hung around the shrine. Not long afterwards, the center of Nohaut is abuzz with sellers and buyers, all clamoring for the best deals. At dawn, the horn is blown again and trading ends for the day. The horn is blown each dawn and dusk to signal the start and end of the trading day.

E4. THE MARKET

Marketdaeg has been set aside as a grand market day, while during the rest of the week the market is a regular one. Traders from across the region are in attendance, bringing with them many unusual goods.

As Nohaut is a town, all V and T Availability goods are available as standard throughout the week. On Marketdaeg, C Availability goods are also for sale in abundance. As the week progresses, the inventories dwindle via steady sales, and the merchants raise the prices to ensure their remaining stock fetches a healthy profit.

During Marketdaeg, City goods can be purchased at the basic prices listed in the *Hellfrost Player's Guide*—no markup is applied. For each day thereafter, the cost rises by +10%, to a maximum of +50% after five days (this is the standard price increase for C goods in a town).

E5. TIME TO KILL

There is time during the days for the characters to size up their competitors, learn more about the Eostre maidens, and discern the nature of the competitions. Heroes wishing to dig up some dirt must resort to Streetwise. Because the characters will not know whether the stories they hear are truthful or not, the GM should make the rolls in secret on the characters' behalf. These can be made individually or as Cooperative rolls.

Unfortunately, the competitors have limited time thanks to other duties required of them, not to mention entertaining the crowd of well-wishers they have drawn. As such, each competitor may make a total of two Streetwise rolls. Those not taking part in the contests may make a total of four rolls. Each roll must be focused on one specific rival, maiden, or contest—the heroes are unlikely to learn everything they want to know.

Information learned on a successful Streetwise roll is given below. Text in parentheses is false, and is revealed on a failure. Certain information, such as the raid mentioned under Coelric's entry, has no bearing on the adventure, but can be used by the GM to create new adventures.

RIVALS

Aldhelm: Squeaky clean, that one. No one has anything bad to say about him. He's poor, for sure, but very

popular. (He's a real charmer. Some folks, not me mind you, claim he's a secret follower of Vali).

Cissa: Be wary of this one. His temper is matched only by his deceitful nature. (Cissa acts big and tough, but he's a coward at heart).

Coelric: Coelric wants to do better with his lot in life and this may be his chance to prove himself to Cuthwulf, especially since Cuthwulf is planning a cattle raid soon. (Coelric has squandered his family fortune and is destitute. He's probably bribable.)

Hussa: He may be generous, but he'll do anything to win more glory for himself. (Hussa seeks glory at any cost. I saw him buying something from a peddler. Looked like some sort of potion.)

Penda: He may be rich, but only because his slaves do all the work. He hasn't got the energy to stand most of the time. (Penda has more than enough wealth to bribe the judges.)

MAIDENS

Cwenburh: Aye, she's a pretty one, but spoiled beyond belief and a poor housekeeper. She'd better be a good weaver because her husband will need to find the income from somewhere to support her. (She may be pretty on the surface, but apparently that's the effect of some sort of relic she wears. Underneath that fine exterior she's a shriveled old hag.)

Eadhild: Ugly as a cow's backside, but they say she has a way with the people. She runs her father's lands for him and they're prosperous enough. (Her father's lands are prosperous enough, but only because Eadhild follows an outlawed sect of Eostre that practices human sacrifice.)

Gytha: Don't let her looks deceive you, boy—she's a hellcat! It'll take a proper man to tame her heart. (Her father entered her into the competition as he can't wait to be rid of her and her violent temper. They say she's got berserk blood in her veins.)

CONTESTS

Observation: The finale is a hunt for birds' eggs, hidden in the wilds. (Nasty test, this one. You have to stand in an open field while archers fire blunt arrows at you. Last time this contest was held a man lost an eye!)

Physical Prowess: The huscarls have set up a course littered with obstacles, so as to test every aspect of physical endurance. (Sharpen your sword, boy, for you'll need it! And make sure you pay the healers well, for they'll be overworked this day!)

Speed: Four legs are better than one, so folk say. This is a test of your ability to ride a horse. It's a test of speed and skill. (Cuthwulf keeps a pack of vicious hunting dogs. You'll have meat tied to you and then given a head start. Now you know why it's a test of speed!)

Stamina: What better test of stamina for a warrior than drinking until you collapse! Look at it this way, the drink is free! (Ah, they used to call that the Test of Pain in my days. You have to run a gauntlet of commoners who swipe at you with sticks. They say nobles get special attention, if you know what I mean.)

Words: Being a Saxa isn't all about violence, y'know. The Unknowable One is the father of poetry and you'll need to compose a poem. (This is a test of words and quick-thinking. It's a riddle contest.)

E5. CHEATING APLENTY

Though the festival is religious in nature, the prizes (both the girls and the money), are attractive propositions. This, in turn, prompts more than a little cheating. During Marketdaeg, the heroes are visited in random order (starting with the player to your left and working clockwise is one method you could use) and offered certain perks in return for goods. Players should be offered these boons away from the other players—it is up to the players to decide if they want to share information.

Honest heroes may decide to turn in the person offering the service to Cuthwulf for punishment. The NPC is fined 50 gs and expelled immediately. This action earns the honest hero +1 Glory for his virtue, but it means any character coming after him cannot be offered that service. Unfortunately, all the NPCs were approached first, so their cheating is not hampered.

Observation: One of Cuthwulf's mead-hall servants offers to sell eggs in advance of the competition. Gold eggs cost 50 gs each and silver eggs 15 gs each. Acceptance gives the hero automatic points at the end of the great egg hunt. This offer is made to *every* contestant!

Physical Prowess: A seedy merchant has an herbal brew which will boost the heroes' strength. In game terms, it grants +1 to Climbing, Strength, and Swimming rolls. He asks the princely sum of 100 gs.

Speed: One of the stable hands offers an herbal salve which is to be rubbed into the horse's flesh before the event begins. It increases the stamina of the horse, granting +1 to Riding rolls made in the event. He charges 50 gs.

Stamina: An itinerant herbalist offers to sell a potion to stave off the effects of alcohol for 50 gs. Acceptance, and drinking it just before the competition starts, grants a +1 bonus to Vigor rolls for the purpose of remaining sober during the contest.

Words: A visiting skald offers to teach a special poem, praising both love and battle, for a mere 50 gs. Acceptance gives the hero +2 to his roll on the day of the contest.

CHEATING CONTESTANTS

Aldhelm plays it straight and does not resort to cheating.

Coelric buys two gold eggs and one silver egg.

Hussa opts to purchase just a single silver egg.

Penda, not the manliest of men, buys an herbal brew for the drinking contest, two silver eggs, a brew to boost his physical prowess, *and* a salve to help his horse.

Finally, Cissa purchases four gold eggs.

MONANDAEG

The poetry competition begins just before midday on the moot hill. A large crowd has gathered. Ale and food are available from the stores of the noblemen and from freeman of generous nature.

PRAISE TO THE UNKNOWABLE ONE

Poetry has long been used by the Saxa to praise heroes, ridicule foes, and honor the gods. The Unknowable One is the patron of poetry. After playing several rounds of stone–parchment–knife, the visiting clerics of the Unknowable One appoint a temporary spokesman. Given that Rank and experience play no part in this election, a player character cleric may be appointed high priest. Have the player play out a game of rock-paper-scissors with all the other players and the GM. If he wins the majority of games, he is appointed as the Unknowable One's high priest in Nohaut for the week.

A player character high priest may perform any rite he wishes, with little risk of offending his god. Otherwise, the elected spokesman is Eadgifu, an attractive female with a vocabulary that would shame a battle-hardened warrior. She recites a well-known poem in reverse, while her comrades silently dance around her, their hands clasped over their mouths.

Once this is done, Eadgifu lines up the other clergy and calls out loudly, proclaiming a poem shall be sung to honor all the nobles of Nohaut. As one, the assembled clergy line up, drop their pants, and fart loudly. Although there a few sour faces among the crowd of onlookers, most of them, Cuthwulf included, laugh heartily.

E7. CONTEST OF WORDS (POETRY)

All Saxa know something of the poetic art and the heroes get their chance to prove this in the competition. Each contestant is called in turn (arrange any order you want) to stand atop the hill and recite his poem to the crowd and the Eostre maidens. The judges, the three Eostre maidens, then award points as applicable.

Seeing as how the brides-to-be do the judging, there is naturally a certain element of charm that goes into their decision and the event is often seen as an opportunity to flirt outrageously and to show off any wealth a contestant may possess.

MECHANICS

Heroes may either role-play their hero reciting a poem first, in which case the GM can award bonuses (or penalties) to their total score, or simply make a Knowledge (Folklore) roll. The NPC contestants tell tales as detailed below. No die roll is made for them unless a player has control of one or more. Instead, the numbers in parentheses are their final scores (see below).

Aldhelm (11): Aldhelm composes a poem to honor the maidens fair and speaks about each of their strengths. Regardless of whether he is run by a player or remains an NPC, the crowd goes wild!

Cissa (2): Cissa tells a graphic tale of bloody but heroic battle, going into gory detail and scaring the young maidens.

Coelric (5): Coelric recites a simple poem about the jarl, but fails to impress many with his words of glory and bravery.

Hussa (9): Hussa tells of how Sigel won Eostre in a contest of love, wooing the maidens with his tale.

Penda (1): Penda suffers from a bad bout of nerves whilst retelling a tale of a hero fighting a dragon, and makes a complete mess of things. He is eventually booed from the hill by the crowd.

SCORING

To calculate a hero's score, add his Knowledge (Folklore) roll to his Charisma. Negative Charisma warrants as a negative modifier. Record the totals on a scrap of paper.

Once the competition is over, actual points are awarded. The character with the highest score receives a number of points equal to the total number of contestants. Second place takes one less point, and so on down to the last place contestant, who collects a single point for his efforts.

If die rolls are tied, those contestants score equal points. Others are marked down by one point. For instance, if there are a total of eight competitors, the marks would normally be scored from 8 (for the victor) down to 1 (for last place). However, a hero and Aldhelm both score 11 points. They share the top score of 8 points. Whoever comes next scores just six points, rather than seven, as there is no second place position.

SUNNANDAEG

The next competition takes place at the bottom of the moot hill, where a large table has been placed. The crowd, kept amused by numerous barrels of free ale, surrounds the event area ten deep and is already in a jovial mood when the contestants arrive. Cuthwulf, his nobles, and the Eostre maidens sit atop the hill, looking down on the event.

PRAISE TO EOSTRE (BOTH ASPECTS) AND GULLVEIG

Gullveig, a minor deity, is the Mead-Thane of the Gods, and attributed with having created mead. He is the patron deity of all brewers.

Once the crowd is assembled, the resident high priestess of Eostre walks up to each maiden, the local

brewers trailing behind her, bearing jugs of their finest. The cleric bows low before the Eostre Queen, Eostre Princess, and Eostre Maiden, for they are symbols of the goddess manifest on the mortal world. Each brewer then offers the maidens his jug, from which they take a small sip. Cuthwulf is then offered a drink. During this time, the priestess intones prayers to both aspects of Eostre, for bees are required for mead and plants for beer and wine.

Once this is done, the high priestess calls the names of each of the other greater gods. As their names are intoned, the brewers pour a measure of their jug onto the ground to sate the deity's thirst. Finally, the priestess blesses each cask from which the contestants will drink as well as each mug they will use.

E8. CONTEST OF STAMINA (DRINKING)

The contest is simply a case of drinking more than your rivals while staying conscious. To liven up the event, since watching grown men get drunk can be boring, various drinks have been produced from Cuthwulf's stores, and at the start of each round a spectator gets to nominate which drink everyone will quaff. Roll randomly on the table below. All contestants drink the same alcoholic beverage during that round.

To score the event, the GM needs a piece of paper with the names of the contestants, their Vigor die type, and several columns for the rounds that pass. Each round, he records the drink's plummeting Drunk value (see below). Because the type of drink downed each round is random, the GM will need to roll for each NPC in turn as the rounds take place.

MECHANICS

Unlike the modern world, the idea of a measure is virtually unknown. Most drinks are served in pint flagons, regardless of their alcoholic content. Each type of drink is given a points rating, as shown below. Every hero has a Drunk rating equal to 2 + half his Vigor die type. When a drink is quaffed, subtract the points from the Drunk value. Record this on the sheet provided on page 101.

A hero can keep drinking without effect so long as the Drunk value is positive. Once it reaches zero or lower, the character must make a Vigor roll with a penalty equal to his current Drunk rating (rounding down as normal).

Success: The hero remains sober.

Failure: The hero becomes drunk, but still remains in the competition. While drunk and conscious, the hero has +1 Toughness, but suffers a –1 penalty to all Agility and Smarts rolls, including linked skills.

Special Failure: If the hero rolls a 1 on his Vigor die, regardless of his Wild Die, he vomits and is out of the contest.

Critical Failure: The drinker passes out for 2d6 hours and is out of the contest.

The roll is repeated for each drink thereafter. If the penalty equals or exceeds the drinker's full positive Drunk rating, any failed roll automatically causes the hero to fall unconscious for 2d6 hours.

One point is recovered for each hour a hero goes without an alcoholic drink. Recovering drunks receive a –1 penalty to all Traits rolls upon waking until the Drunk rating rises back to zero.

ALCOHOL TABLE

d20	Drink	Points
1–2	Brandy	5
3–5	Wine	3
6–11	Mead	2
12–17	Strong ale	1
18–20	Weak ale	0.5

Example: *Gerwin the Stout has Vigor d8 and a Drunk rating of 6. He downs 6 pints of strong ale, leaving him with a zero Drunk rating. He passes his Vigor roll and is tipsy, but not inebriated. He then downs a small beer. This leaves him on –0.5, so the roll is made with no modifier. Gerwin manages to make the roll.*

He is then measured a pint of brandy. Gerwin finishes the drink, leaving him on –5.5. He fails his Vigor roll at –5 and launches into loud, drunken boasting. Gerwin forces down another brandy, leaving him at –10.5! Unsurprisingly he fails his Vigor roll spectacularly. Because the penalty is equal to or greater than his normal Drunk rating, Gerwin collapses for 2d6 hours.

Gerwin is out for 6 hours. When he awakens, his Drunk rating is still -4. Gerwin will be nursing a pounding headache for four hours.

CHEATING

Penda swills his herbal brew before the contest begins, granting him +1 to his Vigor rolls for the duration of the contest.

In any round in which brandy or wine are nominated as the drinks, Penda tries to cheat by spilling most of his drink down his front. Eagle-eyed heroes may make Notice rolls at –2. Calling in a judge results in Penda's immediate disqualification (he scores no points for this contest). Otherwise, Penda suffers only half the penalty from those drinks.

In round five, if still standing, Coelric, probably quiet drunk, vows that he will fight bravely if chosen by Cuthwulf to take part in his next overseas raid.

In round seven, Cissa, if still conscious, leans over to a randomly selected hero and threatens to kill him unless he throws the next round. Cissa is not joking and, given a chance in a future adventure, exacts his revenge on the hero unless he fakes passing out.

SCORING

The winner is the contestant who lasts the longest before being ruled ineligible to continue. He receives a number of points equal to the number of contestants.

Second place takes one less point, and so on down to the last place contestant, who collects a single point for his efforts.

If the number of rounds a contestant lasted is tied with another, those contestants score equal points. Others are marked down by one point. For instance, if there are a total of eight competitors, then the marks would normally be scored from 8 down to 1. However, a hero and Cissa both last ten rounds. They share the top score of 8 points. Whoever comes next scores just six points, rather than seven, as there is no second place position.

HEALFDAEG

Having sobered up after the previous contest, the characters are awakened early and led to the fields outside the town. Here, the huscarls have arranged an obstacle course!

PRAISE TO TIW

God of warriors, Tiw is also the chief deity of physical strength and stamina. The clerics of Tiw gathered in Nohaut have chosen their leader based on age and experience—this is not a Novice player character, though he is of course allowed to participate in the ritual. To qualify, a participant must possess a shield and a single-handed weapon. He is loaned a throwing axe for the duration of the ritual.

Led by the appointed leader, the clerics and any lay worshippers who wish to participate, line up. All have naked chests, on which are painted Tiw's holy symbol in animal blood or blue woad. The clergy take up positions in the front, with the other worshippers arrayed behind. A battle chant is then performed, with the clergy performing an intimidating cry and the laity banging their weapons against their shields in a steady rhythm. As the chant ends, the worshippers turn away from the crowd and hurl their axes at imaginary foes.

E9. TEST OF PHYSICAL PROWESS (OBSTACLE COURSE)

Saxa warriors pride themselves on more than just their ability to fight. Physical prowess (in all forms) is regarded as the sign of a "real man." In order to help prove their worth, the contestants must overcome a number of physical challenges. However, the contest is not just one of pure strength, but also of general stamina, for the course is spread out over several miles, and is thus a race, as well.

Cuthwulf's skald addresses the contestants and crowd once everyone is gathered.

"Ahead lies the physical test, a test designed by Cuthwulf's own huscarls!" A huge roar echoes through the crowd as the huscarls beat their spears on their shields in recognition of the praise. "Many different obstacles await the brave and noble contestants. Watch them sprint and ensure long distances, climb and balance, and lift and dodge! Cheer each along, for they are all worthy entrants!"

It is clear from the sideways glance the skald gives you that his personal feelings are different to his flowery words.

You are called to stand beside the skald. "When the horn blows," he says, "you may begin!"

The obstacle course comprises ten distinct stages. All contestants run the test in turn, thus prolonging the enjoyment for the crowd. To speed up play, though, you can either pair up a hero with an NPC and roll dice while the other players shout and jeer like the crowd, or just have everyone roll each stage simultaneously.

Each stage requires a Trait roll of some sort. Marks are awarded based on the outcome of the roll, as shown below. This simple system takes into account speed, flair, prowess, retries, and so on. Regardless of the outcome of each roll, contestants move to the next obstacle after the appropriate roll is made. Entrants may *not* aid each other through Cooperative rolls.

Result	**Points**
Raise	2
Success	1
Failure	0*
Critical Failure	–1**

** On stage 7 the hero must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue from Bumps and Bruises.*

*** The contestant must make an Agility roll or suffer a level of Fatigue from Bumps and Bruises.*

THE COURSE

Stage	**Feat**	**Trait Roll**
1	Sprint	Agility
2	Climb wooden scaffold	Climbing
3	Balance along narrow beam	Agility
4	Jump water-filled ditch	Strength
5	Long run between obstacles	Vigor
6	Swim across a pond	Swimming
7	Dodge blunt arrows	Agility
8	Long run between obstacles	Vigor
9	Lift a heavy log off the ground	Strength
10	Final sprint for home	Agility

CHEATING

Although there are stewards positioned around the course, cheating can still occur.

SCORING

Once the competition is over, actual points are

awarded. Tally up the individual points for each stage. The character with the highest score receives a number of points equal to the total number of contestants. Second place takes one less point, and so on down to the last place contestant, who collects a single point for his efforts. If die rolls are tied, those contestants score equal points. Others are marked down by one point.

MILCDAEG

Bruised and fatigued, the contestants are called to the jarl's stables shortly after dawn. Waiting for them are Cuthwulf, several huscarls, the skald, and the master of horses. Each contestant must now select a mount in preparation for the next event. Have each hero make a Riding roll while he examines the horses. On a raise, he selects a fine steed, which grants him +1 to Riding rolls. A critical failure means he chooses poorly, and the nag gives a –1 penalty due to its clumsiness, slowness, or general poor health.

PRAISE TO FREO

While Eostre Animalmother is patron of animals, horses are most commonly associated with Freo, god of travel. Freo's clergy in Nohaut run a simple race, without the aid of magic, to determine who shall lead their rituals. A non-contestant player character cleric of Freo may make an Agility roll. If he scores a raise, he wins the race and may conduct the ritual. Otherwise, victory goes to Bassa Cerdicsunu.

The horses chosen by the contestants are paraded in front of the cleric, who daubs a cartwheel on each one's flank in white paint. Each also has words whispered into their ears; blessings and protective prayers to help keep the beast safe during the race. Next, Bassa places his ear next to the horse's mouth. Whatever it utters is not in human speech, and thus is meant for Freo's ears only.

During this part of the ceremony, a cleric of the Unknowable One rides up to the contestants, a hobby horse between his legs. "Neighing and rearing," the Trickster asks Freo's cleric to help calm his horse. Although disgruntled at the interruption, Bassa knows better than to complain—better to go along than face further ridicule. As Bassa draws near, the hobbyhorse "bolts," and the Unknowable One's cleric sprints off, waving one arm wildly and crying out for someone brave to save him. A gang of screaming children gives chase, finally managing to capture the wayward hobbyhorse and bring it under control. The children are then rewarded with candied apples.

Once the commotion has ended, Bassa removes his boots and throws them to the crowd. That the boots come very close to hitting the Unknowable One's cleric cannot be accidental, can it?

E10. TEST OF SPEED (HORSEMANSHIP)

Horsemanship in combat is not a prized Saxa trait,

for traditionally they ride up to battle, not into battle. As such, this test is not one of cavalry skills but of the ability to control a galloping horse. This may come as a disappointment to any Anari warriors, for the Anari armies regularly use cavalry.

The contest is a simple race around the outside of the town. All the riders are racing together and against each other. The race is handled abstractly through a slightly modified version of the Chase rules.

Place counters on the table to form a square measuring six counters to a side. One of these should be of a different color, as it marks the start/finish line. Each contestant should have a miniature to help track his position. The heroes begin on the start token. To win, the rider must move around the square (in the same direction as the other riders) and finish back on the starting marker.

Riding rolls are made each round. A raise moves the contest by *three* markers, a success by *two*, and a failure by *one*. Note that this is different to the core Chase rules—since the race follows a finite track, it makes little

sense for a failure to result in no discernible movement, though a critical failure means the rider has fallen. He must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue from Bumps and Bruises. Next round he may remount, at a cost of –2 to his Riding roll.

Physical contact between contestants is prohibited, but the Force maneuver is permitted (running someone into a wall or fallen tree), as is Distract. Push may be used, as may Parallel and Hold Steady.

Action cards are dealt as normal during the race.

CHEATING

Penda pretends to groom his horse before the race, and makes great pains to be seen by the maidens caring for his animal. He is secretly applying the salve he purchased. This grants him +1 to Riding rolls.

Cissa surreptitiously tries to cheat during the race. Should he end up within one Range Increment of a fellow rider, he tries the Parallel maneuver at –2 penalty the following round (assuming the intended victim is still within range). With success, he draws level and swings a wild arm at his rival, incurring a –2 penalty to his Fighting roll for the multiple actions. If he rolls a 1 on his Fighting roll, he is spotted by a judge stationed on the palisade wall and ordered to drop out of the race. Otherwise, he gets away with the blatant foul. If a hero elects to copy the berserk, the same rules apply with regard to being spotted.

SCORING

Points are awarded in the order the riders cross the finish line, with the victor taking as many points as there are contestants, second place one point less, and so on down. Because of the use of cards to determine initiative, no two riders will ever cross the line simultaneously—someone will always be ahead or behind by a nose. No score sheet is required for this event as the outcome is straightforward—just mark the scores down on the master score sheet.

ENDEDAEG

At last, the final day of the contest draws near. Although many merchants have departed, the crowd remains strong. With just one event left, the crowd is beginning to speculate on who will be the eventual winners.

PRAISE TO RIGR

Rigr is a vigilant deity, and he dislikes his clergy wasting time performing rituals. In order to appease their god, the clergy of Rigr quickly make their way down the line of contestants, daubing stylized eyes on their foreheads in vegetable dye. Blessings are uttered for keen eyesight and the temptation to avoid distractions.

E11. CONTEST OF VIGILANCE (EGG HUNT)

Eggs are strongly associated with Eostre. They symbolize the awakening of spring after the hardness of winter, and as such are a symbol of rebirth. Many children hunt for normal or candied eggs hidden by their parents during Eostre festivals. Cuthwulf, however, has supplied wooden legs decorated with gold and silver leaf.

The egg hunt gives each contestant a chance to leap up the leaderboard by finding gold or silver eggs hidden in the lands around the town. The spectators may roam as they wish, and everyone knows they will try to aid their chosen champion in any way they can. Contestants are allowed to bring along up to three helpers, who may search for eggs, carry food or water, or drive away wild beasts. These should be present at the start of the race so all may see who is helping whom. It also presents a way of having other heroes involved if they are not contestants. Otherwise, assume normal citizens come to the aid of each hero. The helpers each have Notice d4 and aid through the Cooperative Rolls rule.

The hunt begins at the base of Moot Hill just before dawn on Endedaeg. The local nobles, the contestants, the maidens, and many bleary eyed freemen watch as the sun breaks the horizon. As it does, Cuthwulf speaks to the contestants.

> *"You have until the last rays of the sun have gone to return here with as many gold and silver eggs as you can find. These have been hidden in the wilderness within a twenty mile radius of this hill. Run like the wind and may Freo and Thunor be at your back and Rigr guide your eyes!"*

With that, the game is afoot and contestants begin running in all directions. Although the contest is broken down into ten phases, there are also five events that should be inserted to break up an endless die rolling session. You can either have the characters all run into the same encounters or split them between various heroes as you see fit.

MECHANICS

The event is broken down into ten one hour-long slots, during each of which every contestant must roll their Notice. Helpers are Extras with Notice d6 and no other skills of use. They aid through making Cooperative rolls. The heroes can work together (if they so wish) by traveling in a Group. However, each character can only make a single Notice roll in any hour. Thus, he can search for himself or aid a companion through Cooperative rolls, but not both.

Success gains the character a silver egg while a raise nets him a gold. Failure indicates an hour of fruitless searching. On a critical failure, the hero uncovers a real egg by mistake. Any contestant may forgo **two** Notice rolls to automatically locate a silver egg through a

systematic search, or **four** rolls to retrieve a gold egg. Although this method guarantees results, it offers less potential reward.

There are events that may distract the heroes from their goal. Some events are beneficial, some are not. Check with the actual event below for more details. It is up to the players whether they are traveling together or going separately. For each hour, deal each player character contestant a card—heroes who are not contestants but who are aiding a comrade do not receive a separate card. If a hero draws a Club *and* there is an event during that hour, then the character encounters it. Multiple heroes drawing a Club at the same time have the same encounter simultaneously. Note that the cards are only used to determine events—Jokers have no effect on play.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Hour 2) Young Maidens Fair: As the heroes run through a stretch of wood they spy a small group of maidens, dressed all in browns and greens, beckoning for them to join them in the woods. The maidens are clerics of Gersemi, a minor deity allied to Eira whose worshippers believe in free, consensual sex. They have also been using certain charms to enhance their beauty. As such, male heroes must make a Spirit roll to resist the lure.

Heroes who openly choose to spend time with them must roll their Vigor. Success allows the character to satisfy the maidens and still make a Notice roll this hour, though at –4. A raise allows a Notice roll at –2 and leaves the girls very happy. A failure means the character has "wasted" an hour. With a critical failure the character falls asleep. He cannot make a Notice roll for this hour or the next one!

Hour 4) A Friend in Need: As the heroes crest a small hill, they spy a body on the path in front of them. The sides are lightly wooded, but a successful Notice roll reveals no sign of ambush. Heroes checking the body discover it is Coelric, the poor thegn. On a successful Notice roll, the character discovers a broken tree stump nearby. It has blood on one end.

Coelric is still alive, as is evident from his rising and falling chest, but has suffered a head wound. To wake Coelric requires a successful Healing roll. Otherwise he remains unconscious. Though grateful to his rescuers, he cannot recall who hit him, but does remember seeing Cissa the berserker lurking nearby in a suspicious manner. Coleric then struggles to his feet, shakes his head, and, after checking his pouches, says *"He's taken all my eggs. Two gold and three silver! Sigel curse his bones! I can carry on now, thank you. When the culprit is caught and punished, I promise you a share of the weregild as thanks."*

Unscrupulous heroes may search Coelric's body for eggs—there are none. Whoever knocked him out has also taken his eggs!

Heroes who stopped to help Coelric suffer a –2 penalty to their Notice roll for this hour. Those who did not try to rob him gain +1 Glory.

Hour 5) Rough Justice: This event should occur after the previous one.

Further along the road, the heroes spy two people facing each other. One, a large man in a bearskin, is waving a sword at the other. Deducing who they are without approaching requires a Notice roll. Success reveals it is Cissa and Hussa. Should they approach openly and ask what is going on, both NPCs start speaking. Cissa warns the heroes to "Leave now or dine with Scaetha tonight!" whilst Hussa pleads "He's stolen all my eggs!" Neither offers any further explanation. The heroes have several options.

Pass by: Whatever the quarrel, it is not the heroes'. They may make a Notice roll without penalty.

One-on-One challenge to Cissa: Cissa, never one to turn down a fight, agrees, but will only fight one party and the duel ends when one participant surrenders. Naturally Cissa goes berserk if he can.

Jump Cissa en masse: A safer option, but also costing each hero a point of Glory.

Demand Cissa return the eggs: Requires an Intimidation roll opposed by Cissa's Spirit. Only one roll is allowed, though it may be a Cooperative roll.

When the fight is over, either Cissa or one or more heroes will likely be unconscious (or dead). Once again, there are multiple options available to the heroes, especially if Cissa is unconscious.

Search Cissa: Cissa has a grand total of six gold eggs and six silver eggs on his person.

Return eggs to Hussa: Hussa claims to have had two gold eggs and three silver on him when he was robbed. This sounds like a lot and heroes may wish to make Notice rolls at –2 to see if Hussa is lying. With success, the character believes the man is pulling a fast one. If questioned about this, Hussa admits that he only had one gold egg and three silver, but thought he deserved recompense (Hussa actually only had three silver eggs and he bought one of those).

Return eggs to Coelric: When the heroes eventually catch up with Coelric they may wish to return his eggs—two gold and three silver. Coelric is telling the truth, but he bought some before the event started.

Keep all Cissa's eggs: The heroes may wish to keep all the eggs. Hussa whines but is powerless to do anything about it.

Should all of the heroes be incapacitated or killed, Cissa moves on without robbing them. Hussa, however, waits until Cissa goes and then robs the heroes, taking one egg from each of them.

In truth, Hussa robbed Coelric, but Cissa saw him. Acting with a sense of honor not normally found in berserks, Cissa chased down Hussa and had just "persuaded" him to hand over the eggs when the heroes arrive. Hussa does not wish to admit to being a common thief, and pay weregild for wounding Coelric, and Cissa has no desire for the heroes to help him dispense justice.

Any interference in the argument gives the heroes a –4 penalty to their Notice rolls for this phase of the hunt.

SO WHO HAS ALL THE EGGS?

To make things a little easier on the GM, here is a list of how the contestants stand at the end of the hunt. This assumes that a) Cissa was defeated, and b) the heroes kept all the eggs. Make adjustments as necessary based on their generosity. The number in parentheses indicates their score for the event. GM's will have to adjudicate any other events that may affect these totals.

Aldhelm—ends with one gold and six silver eggs (9).
Coelric— recovers to find one gold and 4 silver eggs (7).
Hussa—manages to find two gold and three silver eggs (9).
Penda—has ten silver eggs (10).
Cissa—recovers to find one silver egg (1).

However, if the heroes do not interfere with Hussa and Cissa in any way, the final tally is as follows:

Aldhelm—ends with one gold and six silver eggs (9).
Coelric—recovers to find one gold and 4 silver eggs (7).
Hussa—manages to find two gold and three silver eggs (9).
Penda—has ten silver eggs (10).
Cissa—recovers six gold and six silver eggs (24).

Hour 8) Riddle Me This: This event is suitable for all the heroes, even if they are in different groups, and each should receive a different riddle, even if they are travelling together.

Nearing the end of the contest, the heroes come across an old man camped by the side of the road. He wears a large cloak and a wide-brimmed hat, which covers the left side of his face in shadow. A brace of rabbits cooks over a small fire. He bids the heroes to join him.

"You are contestants, are you not? I come from Cuthwulf, who offers the wise a boon if they can answer a simple riddle. If you fail, you must take the time to dine with me. Do you accept or wish to pass me by?"

Heroes choosing to pass may carry on and test Awareness with no penalty. Those who wish to stay are asked a riddle. Only contestants may answer a riddle and only one is asked per hero. Four riddles are listed below. Answering the riddle requires a successful Common Knowledge roll at –4, a Knowledge (Riddles) roll, or the player's ingenuity.

(1) "I wish I had what I had yesterday. Exhauster of men, retarder of words, yet originator of speech. What did I have?" [Answer: ale, wine, strong drink].

(2) "Who is the one who traverses hard paths he has trod before? He kisses very rapidly, has two mouths, and walks on metal alone." [Answer: hammer].

(3) "What is the huge one that passes over the earth, swallowing lakes and pools? He fears the wind, but he fears not man, and carries on hostilities against the sun." [Answer: fog].

(4) "I saw maidens like dust. Rocks were their bed. They were black in the sunshine, but the darker it grew the fairer they appeared." [Answer: embers in a hearth].

With success, the hero is rewarded with a golden egg. Heroes who fail to answer their riddle must remain with the stranger and eat, losing any chance of making Notice roll this phase. Refusal to do so after giving an oath incurs a –3 Glory penalty.

Hour 10) A Private Ceremony: With the village in plain sight, the heroes encounter a group of Saxa holding a private religious ceremony to Thunor. They offer the heroes a place in the ceremony, which they promise will not take long. Those who take up the offer make their Notice roll for this phase at –2, but earn Thunor's blessing. The next time the character falls, he suffers only half damage as a strong wind acts to cushion his fall (indoors or outdoors).

Followers of Thunor who refuse to participate automatically fail their Notice roll this hour. Others who decline may roll Notice as normal, for little time is wasted.

SCORING

Each gold egg returned is worth 3 points and each silver egg 1 point. Unlike the other competitions, the contestants are not sorted into ranking order and awarded points. Instead, the points are added directly to the overall scores. This competition can thus drastically change an entrant's fortunes in the overall standings.

THE WINNERS

Tally up each competitor's score for the three contests. Whoever scores the most points is the overall winner, the next highest point tally takes second place, and so on. Any of the NPCs who score in the top three claim a bride as their reward.

Whoever wins has the choice of receiving 2,000 gs in goods or jewelry or taking the Eostre Queen as his bride. He also gains +5 Glory.

Second place receives 1,000 gs *or* the hand of the Eostre Princess. He receives +3 Glory.

Third place claims 500 gs *or* the hand of the Eostre Maiden. He gains +2 Glory.

All other contestants earn 100 gs and +1 Glory due to a rise in reputation for helping honor Eostre.

E12. THE WEDDINGS

The final night is the grand ceremony to Eostre at which animals are sacrificed and their blood sprinkled on the soil, alcohol is drunk by the barrel load, couples get frisky, and prayers are offered to all the benevolent gods. There may be a fight between Coel-

ric and Cissa, or Cissa and one or more of the heroes. These can be as bloody as the individual GM wishes, but remember that they come before any court cases (see below).

Any wedding ceremonies are performed on top of Moot Hill and officiated by Cuthwulf in front of the assembled populace. Around him are the families of those involved, as well as his nobles and bodyguards. The ceremony itself is a typical Saxa affair and ends with Cuthwulf striking a hammer against an anvil three times, once for Sigel, once for Eira, and once for Eostre. As the third hammer blow sounds, the ceremony is concluded and the wedding pronounced official. Each marriage is for a three-year period.

Characters that chose to marry may discover their wife is not quite what they had hoped for.

Cwenburh is a spoiled rich kid and the last of Whitburh's daughters to wed. Whilst she is skilled at weaving and possessing of a beauty that rivals that of many faerie queens, she is also lazy, deceitful, and wanting of extravagant items, preferably of foreign origin. Every year, the poor sap who wins her as a bride must come up with gifts worth at least 1,000 gs or face her wrath. After three years without such a gift, she refuses to renew her marriage contract declaring her husband unsuitable.

Eadhild may only be a farmer's daughter, but she knows how to run a farm stead, making her an attractive bride from that point of view. She is not a showcase bride and her looks can really only be described as ugly, but she is loyal and possesses all the skills a good wife should have. Although she could be a master weaver, her duties running the farm have not allowed her to exploit her full potential.

Gytha wants to be treated as a man and to become a warrior. She is attractive (though prone to freckling in the summer months), and an excellent talker, but most often uses her voice to curse men who eye her up. Any man marrying her will have a fight on his hands trying to make her toe the line and perform women's work, though she is a competent housekeeper.

WEREGILD AND COMPLAINTS

Once the festival is over there may be a number of cases that need to be heard by Cuthwulf. Regardless of the heroes' actions, Coelric brings a case against Cissa, demanding weregild from the cowardly blow he received from Cissa during the egg hunt. Naturally Cissa maintains his innocence. Cuthwulf finds him guilty but Cissa and his kin refuse to pay the 3,200 gs penalty, thus initiating a blood feud (possibly a future adventure).

Cissa may in turn bring legal action against any heroes who attacked him. Before the case is heard, his brother, Athelwulf, also a berserk, approaches the heroes and threatens them with violence unless they plead guilty and hand over the appropriate weregild. Refusal leads to a feud with a powerful berserk family.

TAKING A WIFE

Women in *Hellfrost* are expected to stay at home. This in no way makes them little better than domestic servants or baby-making machines for the woman runs the household, and usually with a rod of iron. Thus, it is she who holds the keys to the coffers, not her husband. Many are the skald's stories of fierce warriors who quail before the authority of their wives!

STANDARD RULES

A hero with the Rich or Very Rich Edge has a source of income from somewhere. While the hero is away adventuring, he needs someone to look after his income—an ideal role for the new wife. A character who takes one of the maidens as a wife gains a boon or bane, depending on which girl he chose. These modifiers remain in place for the duration of the marriage.

Cwenburh: Lazy, deceitful, and prone to fritter away money (on herself), a character who marries Cwenburh gains a Very Attractive wife but loses half his annual income due to her incompetency and frivolous spending.

Eadhild: A skilled and frugal housekeeper, Eadhild graces her husband by increasing his income by 50% through hard work, shrewd bargaining, and diligence.

Gytha: This wild mare has no intention of being shackled to a homestead, regardless of its annual income. Instead of acting as steward she trains with the warriors. Income drops by 25%. She is Attractive but curses like a soldier (Minor Habit).

EXPANDED RULES

If you are using the optional Land Management system from the *Hellfrost Expansion* book, the maidens have the following relevant stats should they be appointed as seneschal:

Cwenburh: Stewardship d4 –2, Charisma +4. Cwenburh has an additional –2 penalty to her Stewardship rolls because she is lazy.

Eadhild: Stewardship d10, Charisma –2. Eadhild may reroll one Stewardship roll per year, as if she spent a benny.

Gytha: Stewardship d4, Charisma +1. If appointed as castellan, a role she would prefer, she has Knowledge (Battle) d6, Spirit d8, and the Command Edge.

BESTIARY

Only the competitors for *The Eostre Festival* are detailed here. In order to ensure there is some challenge to the heroes, all are Wild Cards. For other characters the party may encounter, consult the *Hellfrost Bestiary*.

ALDHELM THE FARMER

Aldhelm comes from a poor, but well-liked Nohaut family. Honest, upright, gentle, and kind, Aldhelm does not have a bad bone in his body. He has no delusions of grandeur upon entering the competition. He seeks only a wife and a chance to prove himself a worthy husband. He has aspirations of becoming a skald, but lacks the funds to travel in search of a suitable master from whom to learn the art. His Knowledge skills include his Scholar bonus.

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d8, Knowledge (Folklore) d8+2, Knowledge (Riddles) d8+2, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d4, Taunt d4, Swimming d4

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Heroic, Loyal

Edges: Charismatic, Scholar (Folklore & Riddles)

Languages: Auld Saxa, Saxa, Trader

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1).

CISSA THE BERSERK

A visitor from distant lands, Cissa is both all that is good about berserks and all that is wrong. He is loyal and brave and a skilled warrior, but he is also arrogant and overconfident, not to mention cruel, short-tempered, and bloodthirsty. His true reason for entering the competition is simply to prove he is the best at whatever he does. If he wins a wife, then that's all the better—someone to give him children and help secure his family line should not be overlooked.

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

Skills: Boating d8, Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Guts d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Riding d8, Taunt d8, Throwing d10, Swimming d8

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

Hindrances: Arrogant, Bloodthirsty, Heroic, Loyal, Mean, Overconfident, Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Berserk, Combat Reflexes, Improved Block, Improved Frenzy, Improved Sweep, War Cry

Languages: Battletongue, Saxa, Trader

Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), pot helm (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry), battle axe (Str+d8), two throwing axes (Range: 3/6/12, Damage Str+d6).

COELRIC THE POOR THEGN

Coelric is a poor thegn loyal to Jarl Cuthwulf. He inherited his lands from his father, but his skill lay in war, not managing crops and peasants. Away for many years on campaigns in Vestmark, his lands have suffered bad harvests and mismanagement. Recently returned to his ancestral stead, Coelric has discovered he is flat broke. Too proud to beg for assistance from his liege, he hopes to change his fortunes by winning the contest and receiving Eostre's blessing upon his farmland.

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Throwing d6, Swimming d6

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Hindrances: Loyal, Overconfident, Poverty

Edges: Command, Connection (Saxa nobles), Noble

Languages: Anari, Saxa, Trader

Gear: Chain shirt (+2), medium shield (+1 Parry), long sword (Str+d8).

HUSSA THE RICH THEGN

Another of Cuthwulf's thegns, Hussa is both a military man and an astute steward. His lands are prosperous (well, as prosperous as any can be), his peasants are content, his loyalty to Cuthwulf is absolute, and his borders are well defended against bandits and raiders. All he lacks is a good wife, something he intends to rectify via the contest.

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Guts d10, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Battle) d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Riding d8, Shooting d8, Throwing d10, Swimming d4

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Heroic, Loyal

Edges: Command, Connection (Nobles), Fervor, Hold the Line, Very Rich

Languages: Anari, Saxa, Trader

Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), medium shield (+1 Parry), long sword (Str+d8), fine jewelry, horse.

PENDA THE LANDOWNER

A rich landowner from a neighboring region, Penda is overweight and underworked. His body and coffers have grown fat on the labor of indentured servants, servants forced into his service by the very taxes he placed on them. Now, they work for free to repay their debts. He seeks a wife, but since he cannot attract one through courtship, he intends to win one in the contest. A poor excuse for a man, he has no compulsion about cheating.

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d4, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d6, Streetwise d6

Charisma: –2; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Greedy (Minor), Obese, Stubborn, Ugly (bloated body)

Edges: —

Languages: Saxa, Trader

Gear: Short sword (Str+d6), dagger (Str+d4).

SCORE SHEETS

These sheets are designed to help speed up play and organize the outcome of events. As noted in the adventure text, pre-determined scores for NPCs should be ignored if a player is controlling the NPC.

MASTER SCORE SHEET

Record the overall score awarded for individual contests on this sheet.

Contestant	Words	Stamina	Physical	Speed	Observation	Grand Total
Aldhelm						
Cissa						
Coelric						
Hussa						
Penda						
[Hero #1]						
[Hero #2]						
[Hero #3]						
[Hero #4]						
[Hero #5]						
[Hero #6]						

CONTEST OF WORDS

Contestant	Roll	Final Score
Aldhelm	11	
Cissa	2	
Coelric	5	
Hussa	9	
Penda	1	
[Hero #1]		
[Hero #2]		
[Hero #3]		
[Hero #4]		
[Hero #5]		
[Hero #6]		

CONTEST OF STAMINA

Contestant	Drunk Rating	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5	Round 6	Round 7	Round 8	Round 9	Round 10	Round 11	Round 12	Round 13	Round 14	Final Score
Aldhelm	5															
Cissa	7															
Coelric	6															
Hussa	7															
Penda	5															
[Hero #1]																
[Hero #2]																
[Hero #3]																
[Hero #4]																
[Hero #5]																
[Hero #6]																

CONTEST OF PHYSICAL PROWESS

Contestant	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6	Stage 7	Stage 8	Stage 9	Stage 10	Total	Final Score
Aldhelm												
Cissa												
Coelric												
Hussa												
Penda												
[Hero #1]												
[Hero #2]												
[Hero #3]												
[Hero #4]												
[Hero #5]												
[Hero #6]												

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Paul 'Wiggy' Wade-Williams

HELLFROST

THE LOST CITY OF PARAXUS

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OFFICIAL SAVAGE WORLDS LICENSED PRODUCT

THE LOST CITY OF PARAXUS

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THE LOST CITY OF PARAXUS

INTRODUCTION

This particular adventure is designed for a group of four Seasoned characters. No particular race or profession is required, though a healer, magical or mundane, will be useful. A selection of pre-generated Novice characters can be found at our website, **www.tripleacegames.com**.

For higher Rank parties, the GM need simply increase the number of opponents accordingly. For this adventure we advise you add two ice goblin warriors *or* one goblin wolf rider and wolf *or* one of the most common Extras in the encounter to each encounter in the surface part of Paraxus for each Rank the party is above Seasoned. For instance, in the Royal Palace there are a number of stone golems. A Veteran party would face one additional golem, while a Legendary group would encounter three more. If the party is particularly strong (if they possess several permanent relics, for example), you can change one Extra in each encounter to a Wild Card to represent a champion or superior individual.

If no Extras are present, such as in the catacomb library, the GM may elect to increase the Toughness of a Wild Card, either by increasing its Vigor die or Size, as he feels is appropriate.

The party should be somewhere in or close to Heligioland when the adventure begins. Nothing except a longer journey prevents them from starting anywhere in Rassilon, though. Whether the party begins in an inn, someone's house, a temple, or on the open road depends on the party's starting location. The paladin of Hoenir who wishes to hire them manages to locate them wherever they are—an advantage of worshipping the god of knowledge.

As always, the GM should pay attention to the season, the temperature, and the characters' winter clothing. See the *Savage Worlds* rulebook for the effects of cold weather and the *Hellfrost Players' Guide* for how it works in this setting.

Allies: The characters' NPC patron, Emeric ap-Thosa, should be written out onto an Ally Sheet and left for the players to control in combat. He has several useful talents vital to the mission, such as *speak language*. In the event the players decide to use him as sword fodder, the GM should point this out. In any event, the GM can assume control of Emeric at any stage to ensure he does the wisest thing. Note that Emeric counts as a hero for the purposes of entries which indicate monsters equaling "X per hero."

Generic Treasure: For ease, assume each goblin warrior and wolf rider is carrying 1d4 gs in assorted coins and easily sellable goods. Ogres carry 1d6 gs worth of loot. The goblin shaman possesses 1d10 x 10 gs worth of jewelry on his person. This treasure is in addition to their standard gear. No other monsters carry any mundane treasure. Magical treasure is detailed in the appropriate encounter sections.

PLAYERS' INTRODUCTION

A slim man in gray robes wearing a holy symbol around his neck approaches the party. A Common Knowledge roll reveals the symbol is that of Hoenir, god of knowledge. A raise indicates he is a paladin, a Seeker of Knowledge.

"Good morning," the man says, raising a hand in welcome. "I am Emeric ap-Thosa, a Seeker of Knowledge. I have need of assistance with a quest I am undertaking, and word reaches me that you may be suitable companions."

He continues if the characters seem keen to know more. Otherwise, he apologizes for wasting their time and heads on his way in search of other helpers. Characters who ask how Emeric came to find them receive a wry smile and a glance skyward.

"Long before the Blizzard War, before the rise of the Anari and the foundation of the Convocation, the lands north of Hellfrost Keep belonged to the Heligi culture. We don't know much about their culture, save they were ruled by sorcerer-kings and wielded magic beyond anything we can imagine today. That the Heligi Empire fell to ruin is fact, but the reasons why remain a mystery.

"Heligioland is dotted with ancient ruins, though few have been directly attributed to the Heligi. However, my studies lead me to believe that one known ruin is actually the ancient city of Paraxus, the Heligi's center of learning. Paraxus now lies in the Barony of Cul, in the Boarback Hills, close to Temujin Marsh.

"Treasure hunters and the Reliquary have long picked over the site, but my order recently discovered manuscripts which indicate the citizens managed to store certain treasures away in secret vaults before the city of Paraxus fell. As far as we can deduce, no one has yet found these vaults, and thus the treasure must be intact.

"I must stress that I am not talking about gold and gems, though such baubles may be present. No, I am speaking of knowledge, books and scrolls concerning ancient matters. We seek one specific volume above all, a supposed grand index of every tome the Heligi ever penned. With this in our possession, we will be able to seek out and recover other lost books of lore and wisdom.

"I am authorized to offer you 200 gold scields apiece. Payment upon successful delivery of the tome to the temple of Hoenir in Nara. Anything we discover, other than books and scrolls, is yours to keep, subject to the temple of Hoenir having first refusal to buy the treasure.

"I have arranged for basic provisions and gear, as well as three pack mules. All you need bring is your steel and your wits."

If the heroes accept his offer of employment, Emeric hands each character a tiny gem.

"These are alchemical devices," he says. "In the event anything happens to me during the quest, swallow one and you will be able to understand any language for a short while. If they are not used and I survive, I would ask that they be returned. They belong to my temple."

Emeric's supplies comprise two sets of climbing gear, four coils of hemp rope (each 10 yards long), 20 pounds of firewood, two flint and steel, a lantern, 10 pints of oil, two picks, two shovels, two four-person tents, and enough rations to last the party four weeks. Anything else the party thinks may be useful must be purchased with their own coin. Emeric's three mules are unnamed—Emeric isn't sentimental by nature and sees the mules as tools. Each alchemical gem contains *speak language*. It dissolves in the gut over the spell's hour-long duration.

Any hero making an appropriate Knowledge (Area) roll, such as the Low Winterlands (–2 penalty), Heligioland (–1), of Cul (+4), knows the Boarback Hills are the Baron of Cul's private game reserve. Any trespassers caught in the region carrying missile weapons are mutilated as common criminals. Emeric dismisses any worries with a cheery smile and, *"Well, I don't intend on getting caught."*

Emeric has pieced together a fragmentary map of the city of old, though it is incomplete. Five areas have been highlighted as potential sites of interest. The scholar is the first to admit that it is unlikely any of these areas still stand or remain easily recognizable. If the evidence from other Heligi settlements carries over to all their towns and cities, the city is likely to be little more than a pile of indistinguishable rubble. However, perseverance and hard work should see the party through.

Ⓜ **Emeric ap-Thosa:** See page 121.

Ⓜ **Mules (3):** See page 124.

THE JOURNEY TO PARAXUS

The GM may skip straight to the main action or insert encounters of his own design. One encounter is presented below. It introduces the heroes to a little of the ruthlessness which pervades parts of Rassilon, and presents them with a moral dilemma—to let justice take its course or to interfere because their laws are different.

Parties who begin some distance from Paraxus may even be sidetracked into other adventures before reaching their destination. Thus, the GM can run the introductory scene, run a completely different adventure, and then return to this tale if he so wishes. Note that any encounters are part of the adventure. Glory awards should not be awarded separately.

THE LOCAL LAW

While making their way through the Boarback Hills, the characters hear a loud voice begging for mercy. Read the following text if they investigate.

Atop a low hill devoid of vegetation are two groups of armed men. One group stands around a small figure huddled on the ground. The figure is on his knees withhis hands folded together as if pleading for mercy. The others, including what appears to be an officer, stand further back. Judging by his skin, the officer is a frostborn. His men appear to be a mixture of Anari and Saxa stock.

Some groups may wish to wade into combat without

bothering to find out what is transpiring. You can skip straight to the action if that happens. If the party calls out, the officer addresses them. Emeric is against any interference, urging the characters to let the laws of others run their course.

"This wretch," the officer snarls, gesturing to the cowering figure with his sword, "is a poacher. The laws of our land are widely-known to all, especially its citizenry. As decreed by our lord, the man is to lose two fingers to prevent further breech of the law. Be on your way now, travelers, lest you wish to suffer Baron Frostreaver's justice for interfering in the due process of our law."

There is no indication the poacher is armed. Mentioning this to the officer causes his anger to rise.

"He dropped that a mile back before trying to flee the righteous justice of Baron Frostreaver. This is your final warning. Leave now or you will be dealt the full penalty for obstructing law keepers in their work—death!"

The officer cannot be persuaded to let the wretch go unless subjected to *puppet*. Intimidation causes him to take a step back from the heroes, but he also orders his men to attack. Should the characters otherwise watch and wait to see what unfolds, the right hand of the poacher is uncurled by one of the soldiers and the index and middle fingers extended. A second soldier then draws a knife and quickly severs the fingers, a task he has obviously performed more than once. The soldiers then turn to depart, leaving the poacher crying and bleeding profusely.

Terrain: The battlefield is the flattened top of a large hill. No special terrain is present.

Monsters: The armed men are soldiers of Cul, mean souls no better than overgrown bullies. Their captive, a man by the name of Beortric, is a starving villager. He plays no part in the battle, refusing all pleas to assist the characters, but instead cowers on the ground. He has Parry 4 and Toughness 5.

When the characters approach, half the soldiers are surrounding the captive. The nearest is 12" from the adventurers. The officer and remaining soldiers are 6" further away (regardless of which direction the characters enter the scene).

Ⓜ **Officer of Cul (1):** See page 124. The officer is a frostborn.

Ⓜ **Soldier of Cul (4 + 1 per hero):** See page 124.

Tactics: The officer casts *armor* on his person during the first round of combat. Once his spell is active, he casts *smite* on his weapon. He then engages in melee as quickly as possible. His men quickly enter melee, using Gang Up tactics against obvious spellcasters and those in the heaviest armor. Emeric will not join the fight physically unless one character falls Incapacitated. Instead, he stays back and casts *confusion* to aid the heroes.

Continuation: Whether the soldiers are defeated or leave of their own accord after dispensing justice, the poacher (assuming the characters haven't slain him) remains on the hill. His wounds are serious, but not life threatening. A Healing roll (+1) quickly staunches the bleeding and he mumbles his thanks to the characters. If questioned about events, he replies as follows.

"I'm no poacher, my lords, honest I'm not. I was out gathering firewood when the soldiers spotted me. I ran for my life, for justice in these parts is harsh and swift, and lack of evidence is not seen as lack of guilt. I haven't eaten for two days and lacked the energy to run fast enough. That's when you arrived, good sirs."

Beortric lives in a small, ramshackle village several miles from the hill. He gratefully accepts any gifts of money or food from the party. Once the characters have finished with him, he departs, nursing his injured hand. Emeric is against accompanying him home as it takes the party out of their way.

RUINS OF PARAXUS

Although far from the center of the former Heligi homeland, Paraxus was once an important city. It served as both a center of learning for scholars, priests, and mages and as a retreat for those tired of the endless politics of the royal court. Amid the stone houses of the workers and scribes stood finely-sculpted marble edifices, temples, schools, and repositories of knowledge. Statues of the gods and kings lined the streets, a constant reminder that all mortals answered to two powers; one temporal and one divine.

Although it covered a square mile and housed a population numbering almost a thousand, the city lacked many of the industries required to make it self sufficient. What few industries it claimed were focused on the needs of the scholars. Thus, while there were parchment and vellum workshops, inkmakers, and metalworkers capable of making jewelry and ornate book clasps, there were no foundries or smithies. Even common crafters like potters were in short supply. Paraxus imported virtually everything it required to exist, the city being funded by educational fees and donations from wealthy patrons.

The inner city, once protected by a stout wall, was the home of the rich and learned, while the citizens huddled together in the undefended suburbs. When a great and unknown army swept down from the north, Paraxus' small garrison was ill-equipped to withstand the assault. Even the presence of many mages and priests could do nothing to stem the tide, and with the army ravaging the entire Heligi domain, no city could spare troops to aid in Paraxus' defense.

Seeking neither treasure nor captives, the invaders laid waste the city in a short-lived reign of destruction

and terror. Thousands of innocents were butchered mercilessly, their bodies left among the ruined buildings which once formed their proud city. Of the great treasures the city once housed, the great majority were destroyed, for no one save the warriors or the icy army left Paraxus alive. Treasure hunters scavenged the ruins over the intervening centuries, finding the occasional relic or stash of coins. These days, as far as anyone is concerned, Paraxus is simply another ruin, a reminder of the ancient times.

A band of ice goblins (led by a lone shaman) are currently rummaging through the surface ruins. They aren't after anything in particular, and their appearance is incidental to the characters' quest.

COMMON FEATURES

Unless otherwise indicated in the text below, all doors are wooden and unlocked. A locked door can be picked with Lockpicking or battered down (Toughness 8). Doors sealed by a horizontal bar have Toughness 10 and cannot be picked—they must be forced open with brute strength.

The corridors in the catacombs are 12' high, while the ceilings of the rooms are 18' high. Outside, weather conditions are clear enough during the day not to impair visibility. At night, the lighting is Dark (–2) due to a bright moon and clear sky. No indoor area is lit unless the text says otherwise.

Areas containing furnishings or obstacles that fill all or part of a square, and which reasonably allow movement through, over, under, or past, are considered difficult ground. For instance, a table filling a square is difficult ground as a hero can leap over it or duck underneath. However, a column filling an entire square allows no movement through it and blocks line of sight.

THE CITY RUINS

Not much remains of Paraxus above ground. A few buildings still stand, but none could be called intact. Much of the surface is a morass of rubble, toppled columns, and shattered stone. Some areas show evidence of having been cleared over centuries. Robbers, the Reliquary, and the curious have all played their part in the partial excavations.

As a result, it is extremely difficult for the characters to pinpoint Emeric's areas of possible interest and make their way through the choked streets. Much time is spent searching a likely area, only to find, beneath loose stones, evidence of occupation rather than scholarly pursuits. As a result, the characters may search a maximum of two of Emeric's highlighted locations per day. Emeric has numbered likely locations one through four. He has no idea what the buildings may be, for no map of the city had anything more than vague indications of their comparative architectural design.

1) THE ROYAL PALACE

One of the two huge stone doors to this room stands ajar. The other is smashed clean in half along its height, the ruined section lying nearby. Engraved on them are faded and weathered reliefs of sorcerers and warriors, along with ancient magical runes.

Within, the large, columned chamber is a scene of devastation. Towering pillars, as wide as a man is long, lie toppled like children's toys. Dense clumps of rubble clog the floor, a result of collapses in the ceiling and an upper balcony that runs around the room. In the center stand four statues. Each depicts a regal man in long robes, though all are damaged. Beyond these, a grand staircase, the marble steps cracked and pitted, rises to the second floor balcony.

Several skeletons, some obviously human, others likely goblin, lie on the floor, the dust of ages blanketing them.

Heroes who make a successful Knowledge (Arcana) roll identify a number of runes of protection and strengthening carved into the doors. On a raise, the character knows these would have been far more powerful than anything in use in the present.

As a residence of the royal family, the palace in Paraxus was used only rarely. Despite its huge construction cost and opulent interior, it was occupied only when a member of the royal family visited the city. At other times, only the staff lived within the magnificent structure. It dominated the center of Paraxus and towered over the other municipal structures, serving as a constant reminder to the inhabitants of the city that the king was all powerful.

The palace fared badly during the assault on the city, being the target of a focused attack. The majority of the structure was reduced to rubble. Only the grand ballroom survived the devastation, thanks to a number of mages who magically supported the walls and ceiling as the attackers unleashed doom on the other parts.

Centuries have passed and several portions of the ceiling have collapsed, forming large piles of debris. Aside from the ballroom, no other part of the palace is accessible. A Notice roll, made while investigating other potential routes, confirms this.

Terrain: Movement through spaces containing rubble or fallen columns counts as difficult ground. Toppled columns are three feet high and provide Cover (Armor +10). Upright columns are impassable terrain and block line of sight. None of the doors shown (except the main doors) lead anywhere—everything beyond is choked with rubble.

The balcony has a waist-high banister of marble arches along its length. Several sections of the balcony have collapsed onto the main floor. Any character wish-

ing to move between broken sections must jump or use magic.

Monsters: The statues are actually stone golems, ancient guardians whose programming is as strong today as when they were created. Unfortunately, time has taken its toll on them. Each has sustained some form of structural damage. The golems activate as one when a character moves past the columns nearest the main entrance. If the party has less than four members, then an appropriate number of golems are nonfunctional. For more party members or higher Rank, simply place extra golems near those indicated on the map.

Ⓜ **Stone Golems (1 per hero):** See page 123.

Tactics: The golems have limited intellect. Their sole tactic is to enter melee as quickly as possible and use their Double Slam ability on the intruders. Each has enough cunning to use Gang Up whenever possible.

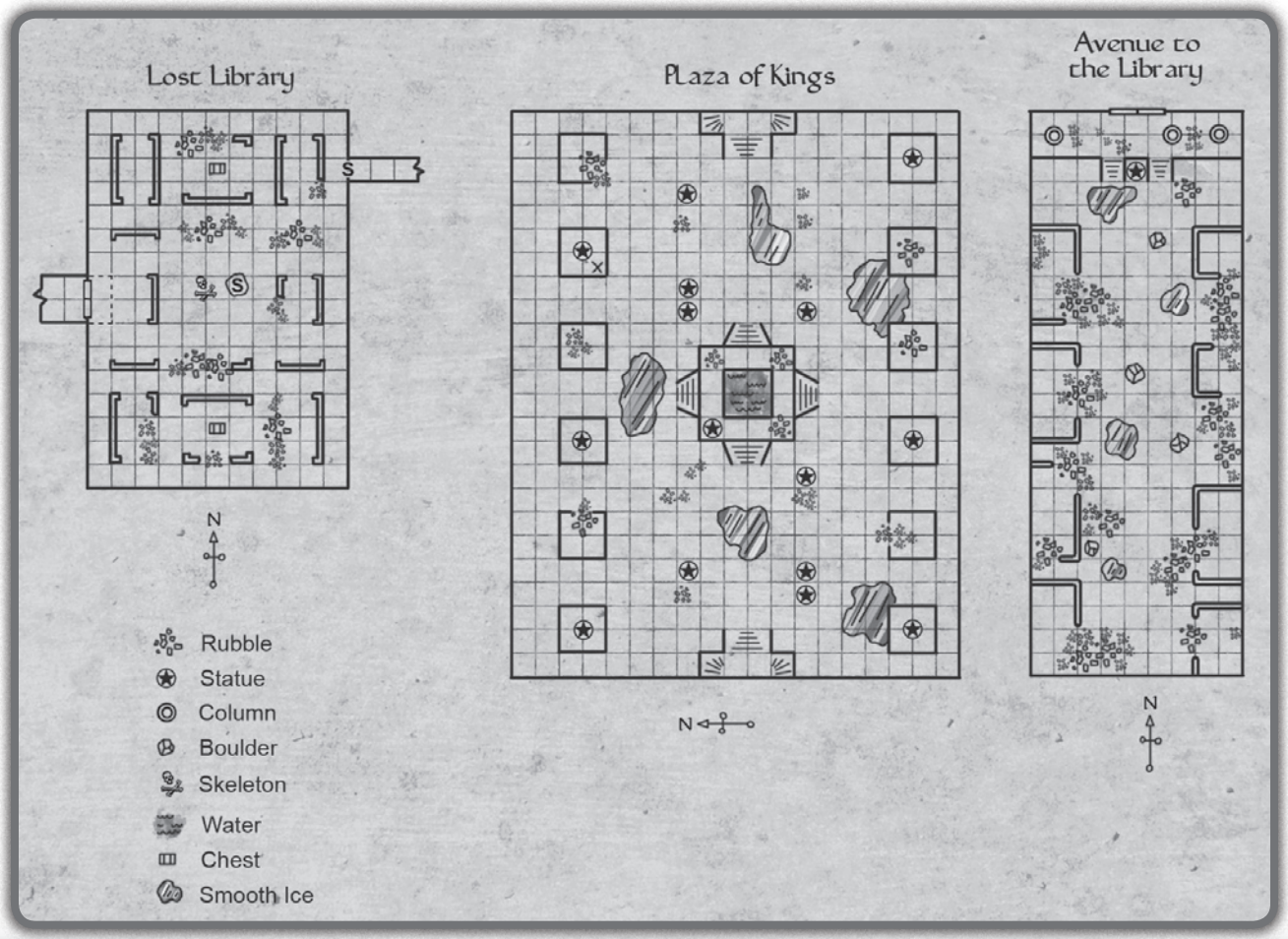
Although the golems can regenerate, they don't understand this game mechanic. As such, they don't automatically place themselves adjacent to any rubble or columns. However, they do understand that walking over rubble slows their progress. As GM you should ensure the golems take the shortest route toward the characters but only cross rubble or toppled columns when doing so would bring them into melee range that round.

2) AVENUE TO THE LIBRARY

Few walls remain standing, a sign of the complete devastation wrought on the ancient city. Crisp snow covers the ruins, perhaps nature's futile attempt to conceal the butchery which must have occurred here. Emeric suddenly stops and points down the street toward a ruined structure that must have once been an imposing edifice. The snow here has been heavily trampled, and recently as well.

Have the characters make a Tracking roll. With success, they can pick out small footprints among the slushy trails. On a raise, they locate tracks belonging to something much larger. Unless the characters have encountered ice goblins and ogres before in a previous adventure, it requires a Knowledge (Monsters) roll to identify the tracks.

Terrain: Although rubble covers much of the street, only where buildings have collapsed does it count as difficult ground. Where the rubble crosses the walls of buildings it represents a breach. Through these the heroes can gain access to the interiors of the structures. No



building has a roof or any furnishings. The walls stand between three and four feet high. Clambering over them requires 3" of movement.

Several frozen patches are clearly visible to the characters. These count as rough ice. Rough ice is treated as difficult ground for all movement. Anytime a character runs, a 1 on the running die means he has slipped and fallen at the point where his run began. Agility rolls involving other forms of movement (such as avoiding an area-effect attack or a Trick such as running up an ice wall) suffer a –2 penalty. If the Agility roll fails, the character falls and is Shaken. The icy puddles are treated as thin ice for purposes of melting them. Once melted, the areas turn to slush. Movement is no longer impaired.

The squares at the front of the library containing collapsed pillars count as difficult ground.

The doors to the library are no longer present—their existence on the map is simply an aid to the GM regarding their location. Inside is a small, cleared space, the work of numerous scavengers. Everything else is covered under several tons of unstable rubble.

Monsters: A party of ice goblins and their "tame" ogre are scavenging nearby. When the characters reach the halfway point of the avenue (somewhere near the central patch of ice), the ferocious warriors begins emerging from the rubble. Half the goblins appear from inside the library and half at the end of the street the characters entered. The ogre enters play only when a character sets foot on the raised porch to the library. This may occur after all the goblins are slain.

Ⓜ **Goblin Warriors (2 per hero):** See page 122.

Ⓜ **Ogre (1):** See page 124.

Tactics: The goblins are wise to the ways of magic and thus try to avoid bunching together, making themselves a juicy target for spellcasters. The warriors from the library run along the street, seeking to engage the characters in melee as quickly as possible, thus preventing missile and offensive spell use. The second band of goblins begins with bows drawn. They pepper the characters while moving forward at their regular Pace. Only when melee is inevitable do they drop their bows (a free action), draw their spears (an action), and attack. They draw and strike in the same round, suffering a multi action penalty.

The ogre, when it finally enters play, attacks the nearest character on the first round. Where possible it uses its Improved Sweep Edge, though it has the sense not to incur free attacks by Withdrawing from Combat to a better position unless its opponents are using Reach weapons and staying out of harm's way.

Treasure: During the fight with the ogre, the statue in front of the library should be smashed. This could incur as a result of a missed attack, the ogre's Improved Sweep, or by a character suffering Knockback (see sidebar) into the statue. As the legs and lower torso (all that remains of the statue) hit the ground, the characters spy a glint of metal beneath.

Circumstances may prevent this from occurring. A search of the library reveals nothing but rubble and ruin. Casting an appropriate *detect* spell outside the library, such as *detect arcana, detect traps,* or *detect secret doors*, highlights a small gap beneath the statue.

Clearing away the remaining debris, the characters discover a stone trapdoor embossed with Maerathril lettering. Once the fight has ended, Emeric casts *speak language* and studies the trapdoor. He also takes the opportunity to check for traps. Any character who states they are closely watching Emeric can make a Notice roll to realize this. After a few moments, Emeric stands up and speaks to the party.

"This is what we're seeking. According to the writing, there are vaults beneath this street. The hatchway isn't trapped, but it is warded. See those symbols? They represent numbers in the Heligi tongue. In order to gain access without causing a massive magical explosion we need to know the day a certain king died. There's no indication of his name, just that we was a patron of this library, which in turn was dedicated to Hoenir. We need to find a structure relating to the kings of old."

The trapdoor is immune to all forms of damage, mundane or magical. Any mage knows such magic has not been available since long before the Blizzard War ravaged Rassilon. Emeric suggests against trying random combinations, just in case the door is trapped.

Trap: A trap activates when an incorrect four digit

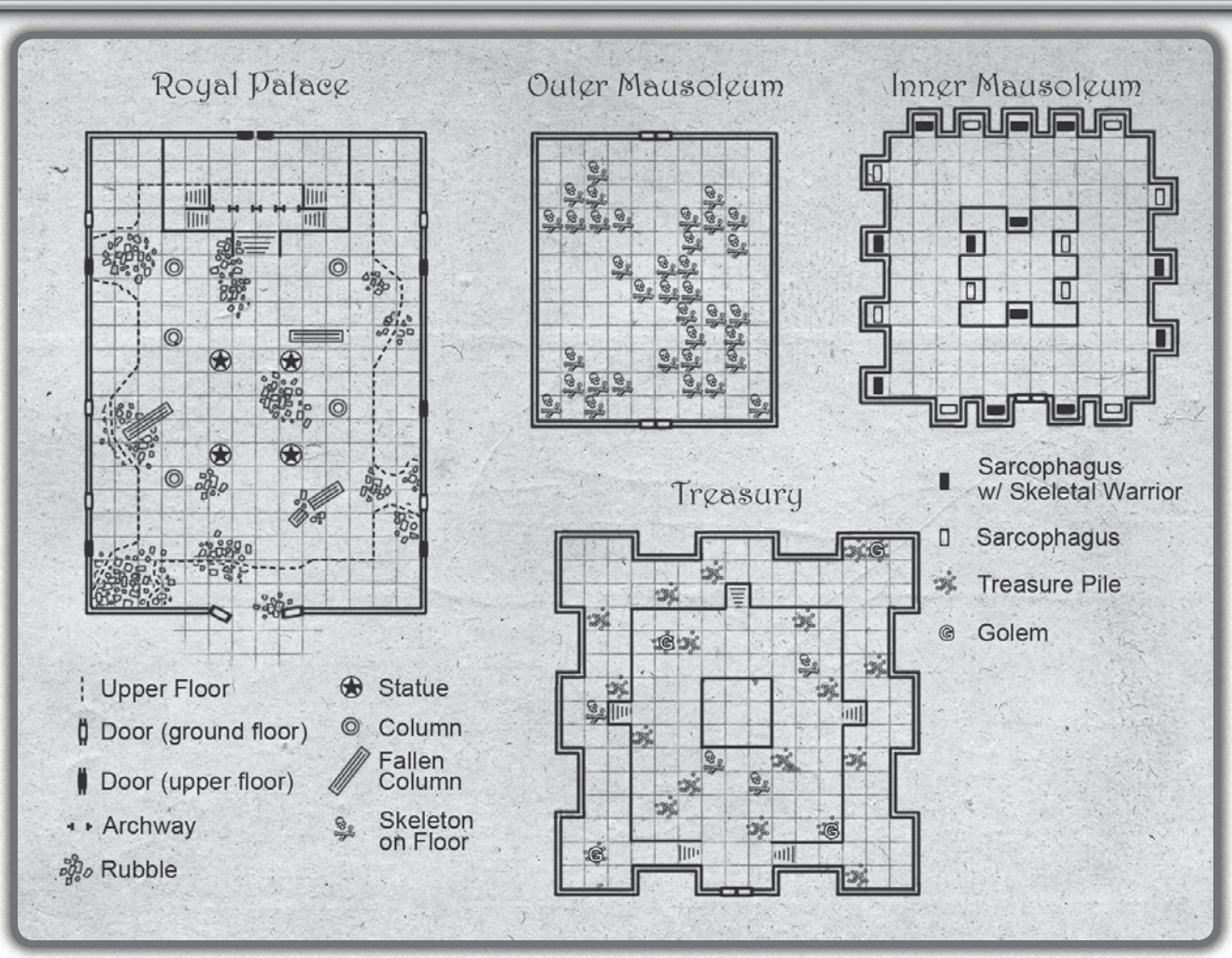
KNOCKBACK

These rules are taken from the *Hellfrost Bestiary*.

The physical attacks of large creatures can knock over smaller foes. In order to cause knockback, the attacker must make a successful Fighting attack. The blow does not have to cause damage, however. The victim cannot avoid this—no human can hope to remain standing after being on the receiving end of a frost giant's colossal war axe.

An opponent who is knocked back into a relatively solid object (hay bales and glass windows, for instance, are not solid) is automatically Shaken. This is treated as a separate attack, and thus a foe Shaken by an attack who is then knocked back into a solid object suffers the effects of successive Shaken results. Opponents may try to Soak any initial damage from the attack or spend bennies to remove the Shaken condition *before* the knockback is applied.

* If a creature is 2 or 3 Sizes larger than its opponent, the victim is knocked back 1" and falls prone.
* A creature 4 to 7 Sizes larger than its opponent sends the victim flying 1d4" and makes them prone.
* A creature 8 to 11 Sizes larger than its foe causes knockback of 1d6" and sends them prone.
* A creature 12 or more Sizes larger knocks foes back 1d10" and sends them prone.



code is entered. A surge of magical energy inflicts 3d6 damage. The energy travels up any object used to remotely punch the glyphs and also affects the user of a *telekinesis* spell. Unfortunately for the heroes, a touched glyph remains active until a total of four glyphs have been activated. Thus, by touching just one glyph (curious heroes beware!), the heroes must press three more to reset the lock. Although this may be a painful learning process, a single error at least demonstrates the heroes are searching for a four-digit number.

3) TEMPLE OF HOENIR

Through the doorway you see a central avenue leading through an arched wall to a second doorway. The huge stone doors are scoured with deep pockmarks and scratches, but the imagery of the god Hoenir is still evident. Beyond these you can just make out a large chamber.

One of the holiest sites in Paraxus, the temple of Hoenir suffered heavy damage during the attack. Virtually all the outer chambers and rooms were reduced to rubble, as was the top floor. This actually protected the inner library from collapse, though it did not escape unmarred. The entrance to the inner sanctum has been systematically cleared of debris by generations of scavengers.

The inner library was not the main temple, but it did house the city's most precious volumes. Ringing the sanctum is a walkway, accessed through any of the numerous arches. Scholars would walk here, discussing matters of interest with colleagues. Beyond this lie storage rooms, scriptoria, private reading rooms, and the like.

Terrain: Nonlinear outer walls indicate heavy areas of collapse and are impassable terrain. Areas of rubble are difficult ground. Where rubble crosses a wall, both line of sight and movement are possible between adjoining areas. Movement through spaces containing library stacks or the altar is difficult ground. The altar is cracked in half.

The stacks are made of stone. They are Toughness 10 and grant +4 Armor if used as Cover. A wound reduces a 1" section to rubble (difficult ground). The walls provide +8 Armor when used as Cover. No doors actually exist beyond the main doors to the inner sanctum (Armor +8)—all others are indicators of doorways.

Monsters: A large band of goblin warriors is digging

through the temple in search of buried treasure. They are spread throughout the entire temple (positions determined by the GM).

Ⓜ **Goblin Warriors (3 per hero):** See page 122.

Tactics: The goblins use missile weapons against distant targets, making use of doorways and cover as appropriate. Their typical plan is to shoot and then move into concealment to prevent enemy archers and spellcasters from targeting them.

4) PLAZA OF KINGS

Below lies a snow-covered, sunken plaza. Cracked and crumbled statues atop large, square plinths depict men in regal poses. Rows of smaller statues line the central walkway. Dominating the center is a huge dais. On top of this stands a lone statue, his former companions have been reduced to piles of stone by war or weather. An icy sheen glimmers in the center of the dais.

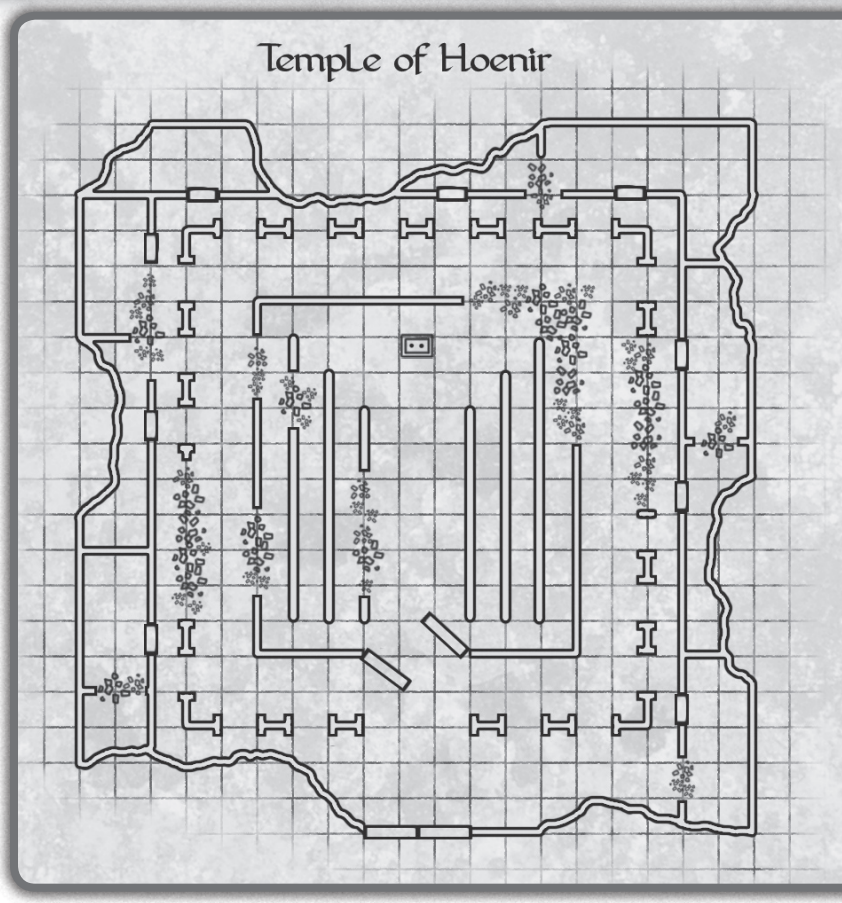
The square once served as a public park, as well as somewhere to venerate the spirits of the Heligian kings. Upon each of the plinths around the perimeter once stood a statue, depicting one of the great kings of the Heligi. Half of these were destroyed in the fall of Paraxus or have collapsed over time into piles of rubble. The others are badly damaged by trial and weathering. Written on the surface of the plinth facing the centre of the plaza is the king's name and his reign dates. The dates are in the ancient (and unknown) Heligi calendar, but the numbers are legible, and thus the correct order of their reigns can be deduced.

The statues along the centre of the plaza represent the various queens. They have no plaques giving their names or reigns. Each intact statue faces toward the center, and has its head bowed. The four statues on the dais represented the Heligi's principal gods; Eira (northeast corner), Hoenir (southeast), Hothar (southwest), and Maera (northwest). Only the statue of Maera still stands, but it is badly defaced. A Knowledge (Arcana or Religion) roll made as an action while adjacent is required to recognize her.

The king the characters seek is located in the northeast corner. His statue holds a book clutched in its right hand. His epitaph reads (after someone uses *speak language*) "King Alvoromax, Patron of Hoenir, 1704 East Rising to 1734 Southern Wind."

Terrain: The former ceremonial pool is frozen solid. There is no risk of falling through the ice. It counts as rough ice. Rough ice is treated as difficult ground for all movement. Anytime a character runs, a 1 on the running die means he has slipped and fallen at the point where his run began. Agility rolls involving other forms of movement (such as avoiding an area-effect attack or a Trick such as running up an ice wall) suffer a –2 penalty. If the Agility roll fails, the character falls and is Shaken.

Recent snow has settled on the plaza, concealing three large areas of smooth ice. Smooth ice counts as difficult terrain, and characters cannot run on it. Agility rolls involving other movement suffer a –4 penalty. If the roll fails, the character falls and is Shaken.



The icy puddles are treated as thin ice for purposes of melting them. Once melted, the areas turn to slush. Movement is no longer impaired. The frozen pool counts as very thick ice solely for melting purposes.

Monsters: As soon as all the heroes are in the plaza, a small force of goblins arrives on the scene, having been alerted by the earlier sounds of combat and their wolves' sense of smell. They emerge at the top of the eastern stairs. Deal each set of goblins their own action card. The wolves act on the goblin riders' action card, whether they have riders or not. Should all the riders be slain, any remaining wolves receive a separate action card.

Ⓜ **Goblin Shaman (1):** See page 122. The shaman carries an icicle, which contains a *summon ice elemental* spell. It is an alchemical device that does not melt in above-freezing temperatures, but can be broken by snapping it in half.

Ⓜ **Goblin Warriors (2 per hero):** See page 122.

Ⓜ **Goblin Riders (1 per hero):** See page 122.

Ⓜ **Wolf (1 per Goblin Rider):** See page 126.

Tactics: The goblin warriors immediately charge the characters, sticking behind statues and other obstructions to cover their advance. Once in melee, they Gang

Up on a single opponent until he is slain. The riders make use of their greater speed and head for the characters by the shortest route. Should any riders be slain, the wolves continue the assault. The wolves count as combat-trained mounts, and can thus attack on their rider's action card.

The shaman's preferred tactics are as follows. He alters his plans as necessary to allow for the characters' actions. He breaks his magic icicle, his only magic item, when he has taken two wounds or all his goblins are slain, whichever comes first.

Round 1: He runs toward the central raised platform, so as to close the range for spell use. He fires off a single 2d6 damage *bolt* as he runs, incurring a multi action penalty.

Round 2: He casts *obscure* as close to the characters as possible. He intends this to help conceal his minions' approach. He cancels this once the characters have bypassed its effect. Since his warriors have Infravision, he leaves it in place while the goblins attack (note that the wolves are affected by the spell, since they lack Infravision).

Round 3: Assuming the characters are in range, he casts *fear* to affect as many heroes as possible. If necessary, he moves up to his Pace and then casts, so as not to incur a multi action penalty.

Round 4: The shaman supports his troops with his *bolt* spell. If wounded, he casts three 2d6 *bolts*, hoping that one strikes true. Otherwise he sticks to single 2d8 damage castings (–1 to Spellcasting) to lessen the chance of Siphoning.

Treasure: A character investigating the plaque on the statue marked X on the map can make a Notice roll. With success, he discovers the plaque is loose. Removing it (an action) reveals a small space in which is stuffed a rotting leather pouch. Inside the pouch is 50 gs in ancient gold coins and two gems, each worth 30 gs.

Entering the Catacombs: Once the death date of the king is found, Emeric leads the party back to the library. He casts *speak language* again, and then begins pressing certain symbols. As he touches them, they glow blue-white. After checking the characters are ready, he touches the final symbol. All the symbols begin to glow with a brilliant light until finally they reach a radiance which makes looking at the trapdoor impossible. Suddenly the light vanishes. There is no sign of the trapdoor. Leading down into the darkness is a rusty ladder.

THE CATACOMBS

The catacombs, used to hide the city's salvageable treasures during the assault, were constructed decades earlier as an archive and storage place. Due to political problems, they were never used for their intended purpose, and thus remained available for hurried secretion of the city's valuables.

NAVIGATING THE CATACOMBS

The catacombs are a sprawling maze of corridors and rooms running beneath the city and extending over three layers. Most of the chambers are empty save for a few piles of stone loosened from the ceiling by the passage of time. There are also totally collapsed corridors which once lead to parts of the city's necropolis, partially collapsed corridors the heroes must clear to progress, dead ends where construction was never completed, and myriad empty rooms. As such, there is no overall map for the catacombs. Instead, the exploration is handled through card draws from the action deck.

For each hour of exploration, one member of the party must make a Smarts roll. This can be made as a Cooperative roll. This represents the time spent making crude maps, checking for secret passageways and traps, and marking their progress with arrows or other indicators.

The party may choose to move carefully or speedily. Careful exploration is slower but safer, as it means the party is actively checking for traps and hidden rooms. Rapid exploration gets the party around the catacombs quicker, but with a higher risk of setting off a trap. Hurried exploration adds +2 to the Smarts roll. As a Cooperative roll, only the lead hero gains the modifier.

Raise: Gives one card draw from the action deck but also indicates a valuable clue has been uncovered. Present the party with a token of some sort. When the heroes have accumulated 10 tokens, they automatically locate the lost library—the focus of their search—if the next Smarts roll is a success.

Success: The GM draws one card from the action deck.

Failure: The heroes wander around without discovering anything of interest.

Critical Failure: The party is lost. They do not draw a card. In addition, they lose a token. This can go negative, representing the party going in completely the wrong direction.

The cards represent the major finds uncovered by the characters. Do not shuffle the deck between draws—this occurs during combat encounters naturally. Each card from Ten through Ace can be encountered only once. Subsequent draws indicate empty chambers. The imprint (see page 11) may be encountered several times, as indicated in the encounter description.

DEUCE: TRAPS

The Heligi placed a number of magical traps in the catacombs to help protect their treasures. The card's suit determines the type of trap (see below).

All the traps are revealed by *detect arcana* (which reveals they are magical but not traps) or *detect traps* (which reveals they are traps but not magical). Detecting the glyph by mundane means requires an unmodified Notice roll from each character if they are proceeding carefully, or a Notice roll at –4 from the lead character

only if they are performing a reckless search during the hour. Success alerts the hero to the glyph's presence. A failure means the hero activates the trap.

The traps can be *dispelled* or *negated*. The traps cannot be disabled by mundane means. Each can be avoided by not entering the square containing them. Unlike modern *glyph* spells, each trap has unlimited activations.

A hero wishing to study the glyphs must make a Knowledge (Arcana) roll. A –2 penalty applies because the glyphs were created by arcane means unknown to modern spellcasters. One roll per character per glyph is allowed. With success, the character learns the basic nature of the trap's magical elements, as detailed in individual trap listings.

Where an arcane skill is required, such as for *dispel* attempts or to activate certain spells, the trap has d10 skill and a Wild Die.

Club) Glyph of Pain: The glyph summons forth a number of pain spirits, which manifest in the trapped squares and any adjacent ones.

Successful study: summoning and pain.

Ⓜ **Pain Spirit 1 per 2 heroes):** See page 125.

Diamond) Energy Web: When activated, *entangle* is cast on the trapped square. Victims are caught in a web of crackling magical energy. Each round the character remains trapped he suffers 2d8 magical damage. Characters assisting the trapped hero suffer 2d6 damage. This can be avoided by using *telekinesis* to help free the victim. If the spell fails to entrap a victim or he breaks free, the *entangle* ends.

Successful study: binding and death.

Heart) Blast: This spell activates a *blast* spell in a Medium Burst Template centered on the trapped square. Victims take 3d6 damage. No arcane skill roll is required.

Successful study: death and vicinity.

Spade) Fear: A *fear* spell activates on the trapped square, inducing horrific visions of torture in the minds of those in the template. Roll the trap's arcane skill die when it is triggered.

Successful study: fear.

THREE OR FOUR: COLLAPSED CEILING

The corridor is blocked by a wall of rubble, the result of an ancient cave-in.

The destruction wrought upon the city and the relentless passage of time resulted in several cave-ins. Many weeks of excavation would be required to clear the debris. Beyond lies only crushed corpses and broken relics of the city's necropolis.

FIVE: CISTERN

The catacombs contain large cisterns fed by underground springs and hidden aqueducts. Water still flows through the aqueducts, which were not damaged during the assault. As such, the water is potable.

SIX TO NINE: EMPTY CHAMBERS

All of these chambers are empty. The swiftness of the attack left the city's population unable to salvage more than a tiny amount of Paraxus' treasures.

TEN: GHOSTLY GUARDIAN

A ghostly figure suddenly emerges from the wall ahead of you. It points a finger toward you and speaks.

Unless a hero casts *speak language* or has one still active, Emeric invokes the spell and translates the figure's words. Read or paraphrase the following information, depending on who invokes the spell. In the event no one is available to cast, the characters can never understand the shade.

"It thinks we're Heligi," Emeric whispers. "It's cursing us for our hideous crimes and vows we will pay the ultimate price for our treachery."

Have each character make a Guts roll. Failure gives the character a –1 penalty on all Trait rolls until this encounter ends.

Any character making a Knowledge (Monster) roll realizes the figure isn't a shade or ghost, though he has no idea exactly what it is. A Knowledge (Arcana) roll at –2 reveals the entity is an imprint. Created using now forgotten magic, an imprint is an illusory representation of a person, complete with memories and personality. Scant references in texts the character has read indicate the creation of an imprint required the death of the person being imprinted, and thus the process was usually performed on those already near death. With a raise, the hero also knows imprints were supposedly used as teaching aids, as they allowed the wisdom of great sages and thinkers to be retained after their death.

Terrain: The encounter occurs in a corridor measuring 2" and many yards long.

Monster: The imprint, once a powerful mage, is quite insane and desires only revenge. Any attempts to correct the mistaken identity are fruitless.

Ⓜ **Imprint (1):** See page 123.

Tactics: The imprint's insanity causes it to cast its few remaining spells randomly at the nearest target. Roll a d4. On a result of 1 it casts a single 2d8 damage *bolt*; a 2 is *knockdown*, 3 *obscure*, and 4 *stun*.

On suffering a single wound the imprint sinks into the floor (it can pass through solid objects) and does not return unless this encounter card is drawn again. After taking three wounds, the imprint does not return and this card draw indicates an empty chamber. Instead, it makes its way to its soul jar (see page 123), troubling

the characters no more until they enter the Chamber of Souls.

JACK: OUTER MAUSOLEUM

Dozens of desiccated corpses clad in rotting rags lie on the floor of the chamber. A few shows signs of having been laid carefully, but many appear to have been hurriedly thrown here. Glints of gold, silver, and platinum indicate they were wealthy in life.

The rich and powerful citizens of Paraxus who died in the attack were hastily dragged into the catacombs, so as to prevent their corpses from being despoiled. The plan was to retrieve the bodies for proper burial after the attackers were driven back, but no one survived to accomplish this deed. The Heligi religion required all souls to be blessed before they could move to the afterlife. Current religious beliefs are that blessing the corpse helps in the final judgment, but it isn't required to send them to Scaetha's Hall.

Without appropriate last rites, the spirits of the dead became trapped in the makeshift mausoleum. Perversely, it was this which prevented the skeletons from rising as undead during Hela's madness—the skeletons were not soulless corpses.

Terrain: Movement through a space containing a skeleton is difficult ground.

Monsters: Once the chamber is entered by a living creature a mournful wailing begins to emanate from the corpses. Spirits of the dead begin to rise as ghostly forms. They do not attack physically. Instead they continually wail and moan, pleading for their corpses to be given death rites so they can rest in peace at last. The spirits are not interested in idle chatter and are only concerned with being sent to the afterlife. They don't care which deity's clerics perform the ritual.

Each round spent in the chamber, the characters must make a Spirit roll to resist the pleas of the dead. Failure results in the hero being compelled to take one set of bones with him and find a cleric to give the burial rites. Cumulative failures result in the hero desiring to carry extra skeletons. Each set of bones weighs 20 pounds. Any cleric who fails is compelled to give the spirit last rites.

Banishing the spirits is the only other way to get rid of them—they are immune to all other forms of attack. This requires overcoming each one's Spirit d8. With no god beseeched to claim them, the souls are dispatched to the Hall of Echoing Screams.

Characters who were compelled to act but who fail to meet their obligations within a month are haunted. The GM receives a special token each session for every spirit a particular hero failed to send on its way. Each can be used to force that player only to reroll a Trait roll, as if the haunted character had spent a benny. However, the victim keeps the *lowest* roll.

Example: *Thunval the Berserk is haunted by a single spirit, so the GM gains one token. He can only use this against Thunval's character. Thunvul takes two wounds from an attack and decides to Soak. He rolls a 9, and Soaks both wounds. However, the GM spends his token and forces a reroll. Unfortunately, Thunval scores a lousy three this time, and so Soaks neither of the wounds. The GM describes how the ghost materialized and blocked the hero's view of his attacker, thus preventing Thunval from avoiding the hefty strike. Thunval is free to spend another benny as normal to make a reroll.*

Treasure: There is jewelry totaling 2d4 x 100 gs divided among the corpses.

QUEEN: NECROPOLIS

The bas-relief on the stone doors is the first sign of decoration you have seen since you entered the catacombs. Rows of warriors are shown marching toward the center of the doors.

Large alcoves line the walls, each containing a stone sarcophagus. Flaking paint indicates they were once lavishly decorated. The chamber is not an open space. Rather, it has been carved to form a hollow square. The central area also contains alcoves and sarcophagi.

During the excavation of the catacombs the miners broke through into part of the city's necropolis. Rather than reseal the breech, they simply made it part of the new catacombs and carried on with their work. This particular chamber holds the bodies of Paraxus' military leaders, many of whom studied tactics and strategy at the city's War College.

Roughly half the coffins hold only dust and a few bones. These belong to the oldest interments, whose bodies had decayed before the rise of the undead.

Heligi tombs were designed to magically open when entered by the living, so the deceased could be viewed and honored. The round after the characters enter the room, every sarcophagus creaks open, releasing its undead occupants (and any trapped characters). Check for Surprise.

Terrain: Movement through a space containing a sarcophagus is difficult ground.

Monsters: The corpses in the sarcophagi were devoid of souls when the Hela unleashed the spirit host. A dozen found their way into the corpses and gave them unlife. Here they have remained, patiently waiting for someone to release them from their stone tombs.

Ⓜ **Skeletal Warrior (3 per hero):** See page 124.

Tactics: The skeletons retain enough intelligence to avoid bunching up (except when Ganging Up), thus making themselves a less attractive target to spellcasters. Their cunning allows them to use the wisest approach route to their foes. Typically this involves using the

central block as cover for as long as possible while they move into position.

Treasure: Jewelry from the various skeletons amounts to 1d4 x 100 gs in total. Four of the skeletons are carrying alchemical devices, which they are too dumb to use.

The first is a stone hammer of Tiw. When broken, it activates *boost Knowledge (Battle)* with a raise. The second is a miniature sword worn on an amulet. Thrust into the ground, it activates *sanctuary*, transporting the character to the nearest temple of Tiw. The third is a charm in the shape of Eira's holy symbol. Holding it to a wound activates *healing* cast with a raise. Finally, there is an axe-head pendant. When rubbed, it releases *weapon immunity (battle axe)* cast with a standard success.

KING: TREASURY

This irregularly shaped room is on two levels. Stone steps provide access to the higher level. In the center of the room is a colossal square pillar, measuring almost 20 feet across. Four skeletons in rusted armor lie on the floor. Each has a long sword rammed through its ribcage. By the position of their hands, the warriors committed suicide. Glittering piles of coins and jewelry have been formed into piles seemingly at random locations.

The city's treasury was originally stored in the vaults of the city's ruling council. During the attack, a hurried attempt was made to steal away as much of the contents as possible. Unfortunately, only a small portion was moved to safety before the main treasury was captured. Excavations over the centuries have removed most of what remained after the battle. Hence, the subterranean treasury contains only a relatively small hoard.

The skeletal warriors rise to attack the round after the heroes enter the room. They draw their swords from their ribcages as a free action. The coin golems form into whirlwinds at the start of the second round of combat. The skeletons share a single action card. All coin golems of the same template size share an action card.

Terrain: The upper platform is six feet above the main floor. Moving onto the upper area without using the stairs counts as an action and requires 4" of movement. Jumping off the raised area is treated as moving over difficult ground. The piles of treasure, which were scattered by the guards to prevent intruders heading for a single pile, are difficult ground.

Heroes who realize the golems are growing in size because of the treasure may decide to scatter it around. In order to do this they must end their movement on a treasure pile and spend an action kicking the coins around. The area no longer boosts a golem's Size when it passes over.

Monsters: Four skeletons lie on the floor. These were mortal guardians who elected to guard the treasure in the event the catacombs were breached. Rather than fight in life, they choose to commit suicide, but not before taking part in a ritual which bound their spirits to their corpses. Over the centuries their flesh has decayed leaving only bones. A further ward was placed on the chamber. A number of the piles of gold are actually coin golems.

Ⓜ **Coin Golems (1 per hero):** See page 122.

Ⓜ **Skeletal Warriors (1 per hero):** See page 124, but with Smarts d6 and Spirit d8.

Tactics: The skeletal warriors retain their tactical knowledge they had in life. They know spellcasters are the most serious threat and maneuver to attack them once identified. They are savvy enough to use Gang Up tactics in order to take down their enemies quicker. The skeletal warriors are not immune to the coin golems' attack. Whenever possible, the skeletons withdraw from melee using the Defend maneuver to avoid being smashed to pieces by the golems.

The coin golems move to attack the nearest intruder, but do so by passing over as many piles of treasure as possible so as to boost their Size. If an opponent is within range of their Pace, the golem must end their movement so the foe is within their template. That is, they cannot run around the treasury sucking up coins just to boost their Size before making an attack.

Treasure: Each pile of treasure equates to 400 gs worth of silver and gold coins and jewelry.

ACE: CHAMBER OF SOULS

Piled atop wooden tables are scores of crystal spheres, each about the size of a clenched fist. Within each globe swirls a pale white mist.

The Heligi were specialists in spirit magic. Many of their magical creations were both wondrous and beneficial, but one in particular, the imprint, was a foul blasphemy to the gods. Imprints were heralded as the ultimate learning tool, the captured memories and personality of an individual, kept alive, so to speak, so future generations could learn from the imprint's knowledge. Most Heligi citizens believed imprints were entirely magical, an illusory shadow, but the truth was far more disturbing. Through fell study, the mages had discovered a way of trapping souls within magical containers. Through dark magic, they compelled the soul to serve the living eternally, never allowing them to ascend into the afterlife.

During the sack of Paraxus, as many imprints as could be saved were stored here. Countless centuries have ticked by and the imprints have devolved into madness.

Any character who studies the smoky orbs may make a Knowledge (Arcana) or Knowledge (Religion) roll. With success, he realizes the imprint is not a true magical creation. Rather, it is an imprisoned soul! Such knowledge requires a Guts roll to avoid the effects of Fear. The penalty remains until all the spheres are destroyed or the hero leaves the vaults.

Terrain: Movement through spaces occupied by tables is difficult ground.

Monsters: The imprint (see page 123) is lurking inside one of the orbs. It summons its comrades to attack the heroes. They manifest as a maelstrom soul.

Ⓜ **Imprint (1):** See page 123. The imprint retains its wounds from any previous encounter with the characters.

Ⓜ **Maelstrom Soul (1):** See page 123.

Tactics: The imprint remains in its soul orb during the initial stages of the fight, allowing the maelstrom soul to wreak havoc on the intruders. The maelstrom soul has no tactics beyond trying to absorb souls. Like the imprint, it believes the characters are Heligi, and thus must be punished for their crimes. The imprint follows the same basic tactics are its previous encounter.

Terrain: There is no light in this chamber. The soul orbs are inanimate objects. Individually they are Toughness 4, but have +4 Armor against offensive magic, such as *blast*. An attack against individual orbs does nothing to the swarm. However, a hero can sweep through all the orbs in a 1" square with a standard Fighting roll. For each 4" section of orbs destroyed, the maelstrom soul takes a single wound. This cannot be Soaked. The imprint's orb is in the position labeled X on the map. It is indiscernible from the others. When smashed, the imprint is instantly and irrevocably destroyed.

Treasure: The soul orbs are valuable items, but so long as any remain intact, the maelstrom soul manifests.

JOKER

On a Joker, the GM draws two cards for the hour. Unless the characters opt to rest after a combat encounter, they have both encounters during the same hour. It is thus possible they must endure two fights within a single hour.

THE LOST LIBRARY

The passage the heroes are in ends in a set of double doors. These are not locked or trapped. Read the text below once the heroes enter the library.

Tall stacks crammed with tomes and scrolls indicate you have found the secret library! Collapsed stacks and scattered pages indicate the neglect of centuries. The air smells faintly of mold and rotting wood.

Surrounded and unable to escape during the final assault on the ancient city, the priests and scholars moved what volumes they could salvage to the secret vaults beneath the city, creating a makeshift library. Their hope was that they would survive the onslaught and be able to rebuild their home, but fate, and the unrelenting fury of the icy attackers, determined otherwise. For nearly five centuries the books have lain here, forgotten and decaying.

Lying in the center of the room is a skeleton. The library was sealed only shortly before the attack began. All but one of the priests responsible for setting up the library fled via the secret tunnel. During the assault, the secret tunnel collapsed, imprisoning the remaining priest. He suffered and agonizing death from thirst a few days later.

Terrain: There is no light in the library.

While much of the floor is coated in rotting pages and scrolls, it is easy to walk over. However, where the stacks have collapsed through rot and decay the wood and paper has formed a heap. Treat passing through these areas as difficult ground.

The stacks are 4 yards (2") high and are not secured to the floor. Moving through a square containing part of an upright stack is treated as difficult ground. Each 1" section of stack is treated as a separate object for the purposes of attacking it or shoving it over. Each 1" wide section has Toughness 6. If destroyed, that section collapses in the square it occupies, leaving behind a pile of debris. This is now treated as difficult ground.

Pushing over an upright section of stack requires a Strength roll at –2 as an action. With success, the stack falls in a direction chosen by the character. Each fallen stack covers an area 1" wide and 2" long. Those beneath must make an Agility roll to leap clear as a free action or suffer 2d6 damage. The area covered by the fallen stack is treated as difficult terrain.

After centuries of neglect the stacks are rotting away. All are missing panels or have large holes eaten through them by woodworm. As such, they provide only Heavy Cover (–4). Upright stacks provide +2 Armor.

Monsters: A spellemental, a unique creature, rises from a pile of books and loose pages (marked S on the map) one round after any living creature touches the squares immediately inside the doors (indicated on the map by a dotted line). It materializes near-silently—only a faint rustle of pages indicates its presence. Check for Surprise as normal. Danger Sense may be rolled as soon as the warded squares are touched. It does not reveal the source of the danger, only that something is wrong inside the library.

Ⓜ **Spellemental:** See page 125.

Ⓜ **Swarm of Books:** See page 125. This creature is not present when the party enters the library, but may be summoned by the spellemental.

Tactics: The spellemental has one aim—to destroy intruders. On the first round it tries to summon a swarm of books to molest its foes. After this, its tactics depend on the location of the enemy. For instance, foes packed closely together are targeted by *entangle*, whereas if they are distant and disparate it fires off *bolts*. Should they be in melee range, it casts *smite* and then engages in close quarter combat. *Boost trait* is typically used to increase its Vigor first, then Spellcasting, and finally Fighting.

Treasure: The great majority of tomes are written in Heligi, the language of the long-dead Heligi people who once inhabited this land. A few are penned in Black Tongue, Classical Anari, Selari, and Vindari. None of these

tomes are of much interest, being primarily concerned with history and politics. Assume each tome weighs 1 pound and is worth 20 gs (base price) to a cleric of Hoenir or a Lorekeeper. Due to the need for *speak language* to decipher them and their contents having no relation to current events, they are of little value to other collectors.

There are two chests in the library. Both are trapped.

Northern Chest: The chest is trapped. Inside the lid is an alchemical *blast* potion. When the lid is raised, the vial drops, exploding on impact for 2d6 damage in a Medium Burst Template. Detecting the trap requires a Notice roll at –1. Disarming the trap requires a Lockpicking roll. The trap activates when the lid is opened or if the Lockpicking roll is a critical failure.

Successfully disabling the trap allows the alchemical device to be removed and used later. Because of its nature, the usual range increments do not apply when activating the device. Instead, it must be thrown (Range: 3/6/12). Clever players may find other methods of activating it (such as using it in a makeshift trap and placing it behind a door so it explodes when the door opens onto it). The GM should reward any creative uses as he sees fit.

Inside is the tome the characters seek, a gold-encrusted volume of beaten silver pages. There are six tomes of learning in the chest. Unfortunately, the magical methodologies they describe are incoherent nonsense to modern mages. The Reliquary will pay 250 gs per book to keep them out of others' hands. Each tome weighs 2 pounds. All are written in Heligi.

Southern Chest: The southern chest contains a poison gas trap. Detecting the trap requires a Notice roll. Disarming it requires a Lockpicking roll. The trap activates when the lid is opened or if the Lockpicking roll is a critical failure. Everyone in a Medium Burst Template centered on the chest must make a Vigor roll or suffer an automatic wound.

Inside are several alchemical devices; the few which were not used or destroyed in the battle. The devices contain the following spells: *arcane resistance* (a copper ring), *detect arcana* (a crystal sphere full of strange gas), *dispel* (a wand; arcane skill d12+2, d10 Wild Die), and *refuge* (a model house; creates a stone hut). Where applicable, all have been created with a raise. Nestled among these is a relic, the former royal standard which once flew over the city.

It has been carefully folded into a triangle. Unfolding it reveals it is heavily bloodstained and burned. Holding the standard aloft (requires the use of one hand) grants the wielder the Command Edge. When it was obvious the city was doomed, the standard, which had been carried into battle by the city's marshal-at-arms, was hurriedly removed and hidden away.

AFTERMATH

Once the tome is located, Emeric declares his work done and begins planning the return journey. While he readily admits there may be other areas of the catacombs worth exploring, his orders are to locate, retrieve, and the deliver the index back to Nara. If the party wants to stay in the city and explore further, Emeric hurriedly scribbles them a promissory note for the amount they are owed before making his way out of the city and south beyond the Icebarrier Mountains. The promissory note can be redeemed only in Nara.

BESTIARY

EMERIC AP-THOSA, SEEKER OF HOENIR

Emeric is a reformed thief who suddenly found religion six years ago while attempting to steal a sacred text from the great temple of Hoenir in Nara. He never speaks about his sudden conversion to anyone except his high priest. These days, Emeric uses his thievish talents to aid his god, by searching out and recovering ancient knowledge before it is lost or destroyed.

A quiet and thoughtful man, Emeric rarely acts without a plan, a holdover from his days as a thief. He's happy to talk scholarly matters with enlightened individuals, but rarely engages in small talk or becomes sidetracked into trivial conversation. Emeric isn't rabidly devout, but he insists on obeying his faith's rules, and will celebrate his god's holy days by giving the heroes a history lesson each morning.

Non-conditional bonuses from the Scholar and Thief Edges are included in Emeric's skill list for GM convenience.

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

Skills: Climbing d8+2, Faith d8, Fighting d6, Guts d8, Knowledge (Folklore) d6, Knowledge (History) d8+2, Knowledge (Religion) d8+2, Lockpicking d8+2, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Survival d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Hindrances: Cautious, Curious, Loyal, Orders (Clergy of Hoenir)

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Connections (Clergy of Hoenir), Scholar (History & Religion), Thief

Powers: *arcane resistance, confusion, detect/conceal, farsight, light, speak language*

Languages: Anari, Classical Anari, Trader, Vindari

Gear: Leather suit (+1), small shield (+1 Parry), short sword (Str+d6), furs, winter clothing, lockpicks, 10 sheets of parchment, writing equipment

GOBLIN, ICE

Ice goblins have blue skin and hair. Unlike orcs, goblins are well adapted for living underground. They are not as well organized as orcs and rarely produce leaders of their own species. Tribes are usually ruled by a frost giant or a powerful orc chieftain.

SHAMAN

Goblin shamans serve as advisors to their chieftain. Their arcane talents give them a position of respect within the tribe. It is a rare shaman who does not honor Thrym, god of winter.

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Faith d8, Fighting d6, Guts d4, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Taunt d8, Throwing d6

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

Gear: Short spear (Str+d4, Reach 1).

Special Abilities:

* **Improved Snow Walker:** Treat ice and snow as normal terrain.
* **Infravision:** Goblins halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets (round down).
* **Powers:** Shamans typically know *bolt* (icicles), *fear* (howl), *obscure* (snow cloud), and *smite* (icicles form on weapon).
* **Size –1:** Goblins stand 3–4' tall.
* **Warm Blooded:** +2 to Vigor rolls to resist the effect of cold.

WARRIOR

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d4, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Taunt d6, Throwing d6

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

Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1).

Special Abilities:

* **Improved Snow Walker:** Treat ice and snow as normal terrain.
* **Infravision:** Goblins halve penalties for dark lighting against living targets (round down).
* **Size –1:** Goblins stand 3–4' tall.
* **Warm Blooded:** +2 to Vigor rolls to resist the effect of cold.

WOLF RIDER

Goblins ride standard wolves rather than dire wolves, the latter seeing most goblins as little more than a snack.

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d4, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Taunt d6, Throwing d6

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

Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage 2d6)

Special Abilities:

* **Improved Snow Walker:** Treat ice and snow as normal terrain.
* **Infravision:** Goblins halve penalties for dark lighting against living targets (round down).
* **Size –1:** Goblins stand 3–4' tall.
* **Warm Blooded:** +2 to Vigor rolls to resist the effect of cold.

Golems

Heligi sorcerers created golems by forcing souls stripped of their personality into an artificial body. Thus punishment was reserved for prisoners convicted of capital crimes. In the eyes of the Heligi, they would serve an eternal punishment as slaves to the living. None joined the Golem Uprising, perhaps due to their fell construction.

GOLEM, COIN

Coin golems take the form of a whirlwind of spinning coins. A pair of burning silver eyes peers through the whirling chaos of treasure. They fill a Small Burst Template and act as a swarm.

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

Skills: Notice d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

* **Collapse:** A slain coin golem collapses into a pile of coins. A coin golem which moves over the space in which another was slain gains half the deceased golem's Size, rounded down (half the coins are too scattered to have any effect). For instance, if a Size +3 golem is slain, the first coin golem to pass over its former space gains +1 Size.
* **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.
* **Growth:** When the center of a coin golem moves over a space containing coins it increases its Size by +1. Each increase in Size increase its Toughness by one point and its Strength by one die type (after a d12 it gains a single point—d12+1, d12+2, and so on) as it draws the coins into its body. The space occupied by the coins is now clear ground. A golem which grows to Size +4 gains the Large monstrous ability and fills a Medium Burst Template. One reaching Size +8 or higher is Huge and fills a Large Burst Template.
* **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor against damage-causing arcane powers and +4 on trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
* **Pummel:** Coin golems inflict dozens of hundreds of tiny pummeling attacks every round to their victims, hitting automatically and causing Str+d4 damage to everyone in the template. Damage is applied to the least armored location.
* **Swarm:** Parry +2. Because the swarm is composed of scores, hundreds, or thousands of coins, cutting and piercing weapons do no real damage. Area-effect

weapons work normally, and a character can swipe his hand through the coins to inflict his damage in Strength each round.

GOLEM, STONE

Stone golems are the traditional animated statue. As with most golems, they serve as guardians. Due to the effects of time and the ruin heaped upon Paraxus, each of these golems has a single physical flaw. The golems attack by spreading their arms wide with hands extended and slapping them together with tremendous force.

* The first is missing its lower right leg and is Lame (Pace 3, run die d4).
* The second has One Arm (its left one). It cannot use the Double Slam ability, although it keeps trying.
* The third has lost a goodly portion of its mass and has Toughness 8 (1) and is Size +0.
* The fourth golem is badly damaged. It has Pace 4, Strength d8, and Vigor d8 (Toughness 9 (2)).

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6
Pace: 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (2)
Special Abilities:

* **Armor +2:** Weathered stone body.
* **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
* **Double Slam:** Stone golems have the Two-Fisted Edge, but are not Ambidextrous. They always make two attacks against a single target. If both stone fists score a hit in the same round, the victim is stunned, regardless of whether he suffers any damage from the attacks. He is Shaken for 1d4 rounds. This is not cumulative with Shaken results caused by the initial attacks—it merely extends a Shaken result's duration or makes an unShaken target Shaken. The victim cannot attempt to unShake during this time. Suffering a hit while already Shaken causes a wound as normal *and* extends the Shaken duration by an additional 1d4 rounds.
* **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.
* **Regeneration (Fast):** The stone golems make a Vigor roll to heal wounds each round after being Incapacitated *only* if adjacent to rubble or a column. When they regenerate, stone and gravel is drawn toward them to patch up injuries. Moving the fallen golem away from a source of material before its Vigor roll prevents regeneration. However, they are of considerable weight.
* **Size +1:** Stone golems stand over 8' high and weigh 4,000 pounds.
* **Stone Fists:** Str+d4.

ICE ELEMENTAL

Ice elementals are humanoid-shaped lumps of ice, but have cold-blue eyes, a mouth that when opened looks like the centre of an active ice volcano, and cracked, icy skin of the deepest blue.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Shooting d8
Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (3)
Special Abilities:

* **Armor +3:** Icy hide.
* **Bash:** Str+d6.
* **Burrowing (6"):** Ice elementals can meld into and out of the ground so long as it is snow or ice.
* **Elemental:** No additional damage from Called Shots; Fearless; immune to disease and poison.
* **Ice Strike:** Ice elementals can spit a freezing blast of ice using the Cone Template. Characters within the Cone must beat the spirit's Shooting roll with Agility or suffer 2d10 damage.
* **Immunity (Cold):** Immune to background cold. Takes no damage from cold attacks.
* **Weakness (Fire):** Takes +4 damage from heat or fire.

IMPRINT

Imprints are a magical creation. They retain the physical form, memories, and personality they had in life, but they are ethereal shades. This particular imprint was a powerful mage in life, and thus retains its magical powers in death. It suffers from the Siphoning as much as any living caster.
Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d8
Skills: Notice d8, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d10
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6
Treasure: None
Special Abilities:

* **Arcane Resistance:** +2 Armor against damage-causing powers and +2 on trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
* **Ethereal:** Imprints are immaterial and can only be harmed by magical attacks.
* **Powers:** The imprint was an archmage in life, and thus suffers no penalties for being out of balance with the elements. It remembers only the following spells: *bolt* (fire dart), *knockdown* (rush of air), *obscure* (dense fog), *stun* (blast of water).
* **Regeneration:** Each time the imprint successfully resists a spell or Soaks all damage from an offensive spell, it automatically recovers one wound.
* **Weakness (Soul Jar):** Damage to the imprint's soul jar cannot be soaked, nor does it cause regeneration.

MAELSTROM SOUL

Maelstrom souls are formed when a group of sentient beings die together in some awful way. In this instance, the imprisonment of so many souls over dozens of centuries has created the entity. Driven by anger and despair, the souls of these unfortunates do not journey heavenward, but instead remain locked in the mortal realm, bonded together into a maelstrom soul.

A maelstrom soul resembles a swirling cloud of mist, in which can be seen screaming spectral faces and withered clutching hands. Their only emotions are dark—pain, anger, hatred, revenge. Their only desire is to consume other souls, thus stoking the fires of hatred with new victims.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d12, Strength d4, Vigor d8
Skills: Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Stealth d10
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 8
Special Abilities:
* **Ethereal:** Maelstrom souls are immaterial.
* **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
* **Flight:** Pace 12.
* **Immunity:** This particular maelstrom soul takes no damage from any attacks against the swarm. Only damage to the soul jars can harm the entity.
* **Soul Absorption:** The soul of any sentient creature sucked out by the maelstrom soul is absorbed into its mass. The maelstrom soul heals one wound for each soul absorbed.
* **Soul Drain:** After the creature has finished moving, any living being with a soul (not demons, constructs, fey, elementals, and the like) within the template must make a Spirit roll opposed by the maelstrom's Spirit. With failure, the victim loses one die from Spirit. Victims whose Spirit is reduced below a d4 have their soul sucked from them (see Soul Absorption). Lost dice recover at the rate of one die per week.
* **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison. No wound penalties.
* **Wail of the Damned:** As an action, the maelstrom can generate a fearful wail with an Intimidation roll. With success, victims must make a Guts roll, –2 with a raise. This affects all targets within 12" who can hear the wail.

MULE

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Guts d6, Notice d4
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 8
Special Abilities:
* **Fleet-Footed:** When a mule can be convinced to run, it rolls a d8 instead of a d6.
* **Kick:** Str.
* **Ornery:** Mules are contrary creatures. Characters must subtract 1 from their Riding rolls when riding them.
* **Size +2:** Mules are stocky creatures weighing up to 1000 pounds.

OGRE

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12
Skills: Guts d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Throwing d6
Pace: 7; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 12 (1)
Gear: Thick hides (+1), massive club (Str+d8).
Special Abilities
* **Infravision:** Ogres halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets.
* **Improved Sweep:** May attack all adjacent foes.
* **Size +3:** Most ogres are over 8' tall with potbellies and massive arms and legs.

SKELETAL WARRIOR

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Shooting d6
Pace: 7; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9 (2)
Gear: Corroded bronze breastplate (+2), bronze short sword (Str+d6), medium shield (+1 Parry).
Special Abilities:
* **Bony Claws:** Str+d4.
* **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
* **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.

SOLDIERS OF CUL

OFFICER

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8, Hrimwisardry d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Riding d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d6
Charisma: –4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 9 (3)
Hindrances: Heat Lethargy, Loyal, Mean, Outsider
Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Command, Frenzy, Frigid Form, Winter Soul
Gear: Corselet (+3), plate arms and legs (+3), open helm (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry), long sword (Str+d8), dagger (Str+d4).

SOLDIER

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d6
Charisma: –2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 8 (2)
Hindrances: Loyal, Mean
Edges: Combat Reflexes, Frenzy
Gear: Chain shirt (+2), open helm (+3), medium shield

(+1 Parry), long sword (Str+d8), dagger (Str+d4). Some are equipped with crossbows (Range: 15/30/60, Damage 2d6, AP 2).

SPELLEMENTAL

The spellemental is a unique entity. It was created over several years as pages of ruined spell books bound themselves together through a bizarre arcane happenstance. The creature resembles a humanoid made up of the pages and covers of spellbooks, and is surrounded by a swirling mass of parchment. The spellemental has no specific Arcane Background, but is subject to the Siphoning.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Spellcasting d10

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

Special Abilities:

* **Armor +4:** The spellemental is covered in hard book covers.
* **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; No additional damage from Called Shots; Immune to poison and disease.
* **Deflection:** The spellemental is constantly surrounded by a cloud of swirling paper. All attackers suffer a –2 penalty to attack rolls. This cannot be *dispelled* or *negated*.
* **Fearless:** Immune to Fear (with the exception of coldfire and fire) and Intimidation.
* **Fist:** Str+d4.
* **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor against damage-causing powers and +4 on trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
* **Regeneration:** The spellemental makes a Vigor roll each round as a free action. On a success, it heals a wound as it absorbs nearby books. On a raise, it heals two wounds. This continues even after "death." The fiend cannot heal damage caused by fire or coldfire. Scattering its pages or burying them has no effect—the magical energy forms a new spellemental from other tomes in the library and rises from its original position.
* **Spells:** The spellemental knows the following spells; *bolt* (heavy books), *boost trait* (no *lower*; absorbs knowledge from books), *dispel, entangle* (foes are smothered in paper), *smite* (heavy books form a huge clublike fist), and *speed*.
* **Swarm:** As an action, the spellemental can animate the books and scrolls in the library into a semi-intelligent swarm. Summoning the swarm requires a Spellcasting roll, with a –1 penalty per 1" the spellemental is from the nearest stack (the piles of debris do not act as a summonable source). This counts as a spell for the purposes of Siphoning, but cannot be *dispelled* or *negated*. A maximum of one swarm can be summoned per Rank of the party (so one at Novice, two if they are Seasoned, and so on).
* **Weakness (Coldfire/Fire):** The spellemental is afraid of fire. It subtracts 2 from Fighting rolls against a person carrying a burning torch or similar object (lanterns do not affect it). It takes +4 damage from coldfire and fire.

SPIRIT, PAIN

Heligi sorcerers were specialists in spirit magic, able to summon and bind not only elementals, but also an array of non-corporeal entities. One such entity is a pain spirit. These nasty spirits appear as a shadowy humanoid, its limbs and face contorted by intense pain. Possessed victims are subject to constant, dull pain. During times of stress, such as combat, the spirit delights in wracking their bodies with sudden feelings of agony, thus leaving their host near-paralyzed.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8

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

Special Abilities:

* **Ethereal:** Immune to nonmagical attacks. Can pass through solid objects.
* **Pain:** Possessed victims immediately suffer a –1 penalty to all Trait rolls. When the victim draws a deuce as his first action card in a round the spirit causes intense pain. The victim is automatically Shaken as if from a physical source. This occurs on the victim's actual action card. So a hero with Level Headed who draws a deuce first and then a Jack is Shaken on the latter. He may try to unShake as normal.
* **Possession:** Spirits attack by making a Touch Attack (+2 to Fighting). With success, the victim must make a Spirit roll opposed to that of the entity, –2 if the pain spirit's attack is a raise. A failure means the victim is possessed and suffers the penalties for the Pain special ability. Removing the spirit requires a *banish* spell to send it back to its own realm. Using *dispel* allows the pain spirit to roll its Spirit die to oppose the power. A successful casting forces the spirit from its host, but leaves it free to possess another victim.

SWARM OF BOOKS

Created by the spellemental, the swarm comprises dozens of heavy tomes. They move by flapping their covers like wings, and attack by launching themselves at victims. The swarm fills a Medium Burst Template.

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

Skills: Notice d6

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

Special Abilities:

* **Flight:** Pace 10.
* **Pummel:** The books pummel and smash their foes each round, hitting automatically, and causing 2d4 damage to everyone in the template. Damage is applied to the least armored location.
* **Mindless:** Unaffected by Tests of Will, Tricks, or ar-

cane powers like *puppet*.

* **Swarm:** Parry +2. Because the swarm is composed of dozens of books, cutting and piercing weapons do no real damage. Area-effect weapons work normally, and a character can inflict his damage in Strength each round by ripping apart books.

WOLF

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d10, Tracking d6
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4
Special Abilities:

* **Bite:** Str+d4.
* **Fleet Footed:** Wolves roll a d10 when running instead of a d6.
* **Go for the Throat:** Wolves instinctively go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly-armored location.
* **Size –1:** Wolves are relatively small.

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Paul 'Wiggy' Wade-Williams

HELLFROST

DESCENT INTO MADNESS

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OFFICIAL SAVAGE WORLDS LICENSED PRODUCT

DESCENT INTO MADNESS

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DESCENT INTO MADNESS

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

Generic Treasure: The crazy villagers each carry 1d6 gs worth of coin and cheap jewelry. Orc warriors have 2d6 gs worth of treasure, while the chieftain has 1d10 x 25 gs of loot on his person. This is in addition to gear presented in the stat block.

PLOT OVERVIEW

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CRAZY PEOPLE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AGATHA'S TALE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A SHORT WALK

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

CALL OF THE WILD

Squatting on their haunches around a fresh deer carcass is a number of naked men and women. Their hair is unkempt, their bodies unwashed, and their eyes filled with a bestial wildness. One raises his head and sniffs the air. Slowly, his head turns toward you. With a feral snarl he leaps to his feet and charges, his companions close behind.

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

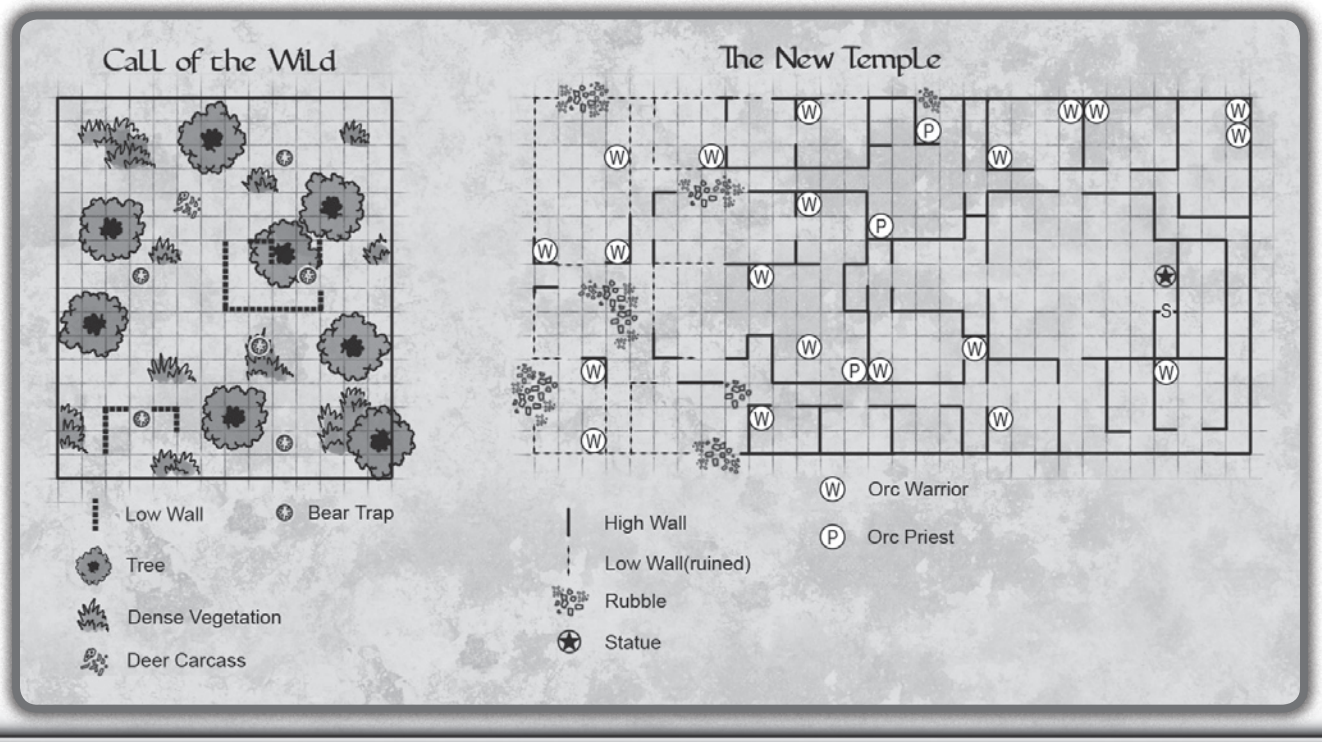
Terrain: Areas of dense vegetation are difficult ground. Tress can be used as Cover and provide +8 Armor. They are impassable terrain and block line of sight. The walls are only 3 feet high. Walls provide Cover (Armor +6), but only block line of sight to and from prone characters.

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

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

Ⓜ **Violent Lunatics (3 per hero):** See page 146.

Traps: The area is dotted with bear traps concealed



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

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

NOTHING TO SEE HERE

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

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

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

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

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

Another option is to use *dispel* or *negate arcana* on the villager. Either spell requires the hero to overcome the soulbound philosopher's Spirit (d12+1 plus Wild Die). With *dispel*, the villager does not become sane—he does, however, believe his current foes are slain by a powerful spell. For *negate arcana*, the madman sees it only as a ward—to him, the invisible monsters have only been repelled, and lurk outside the spell's area of effect. For higher Ranked parties, using *puppet* to convince him the monsters are gone is a workable solution. This is resisted by his Spirit d6.

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

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

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

AN AIR OF INSANITY

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

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

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

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

WHEN THE WIND BLOWS

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

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

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

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

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

THE VILLAGE OF FOOLS

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

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

The only sane person is a Sister of Mercy, an itinerant healer who happened to stumble across the hamlet after the madness began. She deduced the cause, but not the source, after having heard, and resisted, the insane laughter on the wind. When the characters enter the hamlet, she is trying to attend to the citizens, ensuring they don't hurt themselves and making sure they ingest real food and drink.

THE SISTER OF MERCY

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

Q: Who are you?

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

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

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

Q: Do you need any help?

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

Q: Are you hard of hearing?

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

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

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

Q: What do you know about the local area?

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

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

THE NEW TEMPLE

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

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

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

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

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

INSIDE THE TEMPLE

Given there are no furnishings, traps, or other items of interest in much of the temple, only two rooms have descriptions. The rest of the ruins are devoid of anything of value or interest, though the GM may choose to roll on the following table each time a new chamber is entered.

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

COMMON FEATURES & MONSTERS

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

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

INSANE TACTICS

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

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

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

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

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

*** This is a Test of Wills.*

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

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

Ⓜ **Orc Priests:** See page 147.

Ⓜ **Orc Warriors:** See page 147.

Ⓜ **Dire Wolves:** See page 147.

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

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

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

1) TEMPLE TO HOENIR

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

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

Terrain: Burning torches provide good lighting.

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

Ⓜ **Orc Chieftain:** See page 147.

Ⓜ **Orc Warriors (2 per hero):** See page 147.

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

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

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

2) SECRET CHAMBER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE PHILOSOPHER'S LAIR

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

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

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

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

If there was a temple here, its stones have long since been removed. As you climb the steep incline you spy numerous pits, each several feet deep. Finally, near the summit, you spy one that is deeper than the rest. A cursory inspection reveals a stone slab has been pulled aside to reveal a metal ladder descending into the darkness.

COMMON FEATURES

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

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

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

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

TRAPS

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

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

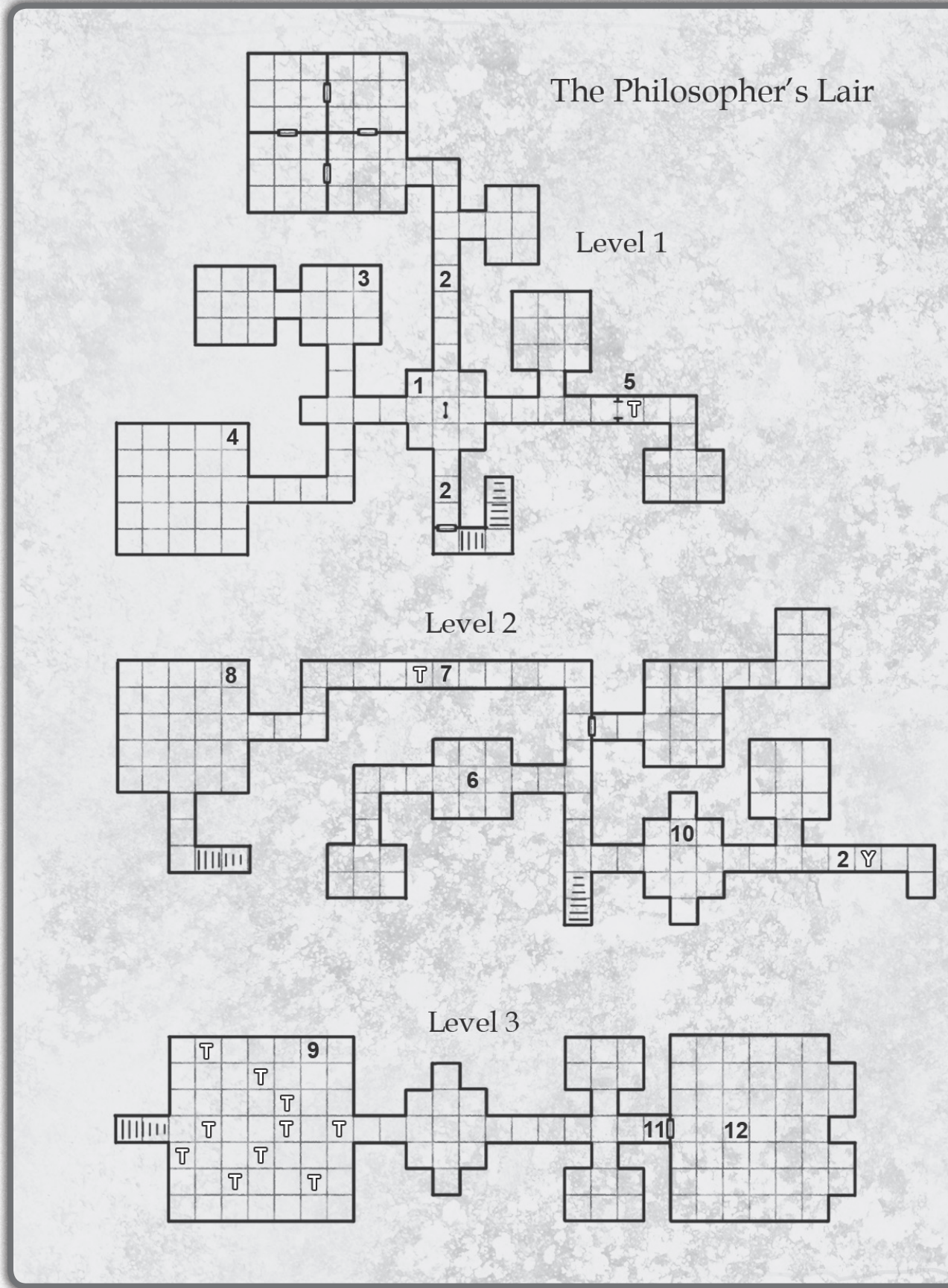
Disarming: Disarming a detected trap requires a Lockpicking roll and takes a complete round (no other actions are possible, including movement). On a critical failure, the trap activates and automatically affects the unfortunate hero. *Glyph* traps cannot be disarmed by mundane means, but they can be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

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

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

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

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


The Philosopher's Lair
Level 1
1
2
3
4
5
2
Level 2
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7
8
10
2
Level 3
9
11
12

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

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

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

WANDERING MONSTERS & RANDOM SOUNDS

Aside from those in its presence, the soulbound philosopher has created ten more manifested thoughts (see page 145). These roam the temple aimlessly in pairs, drifting as their whims take them. As such, they have no fixed locations. Another feature of the cleric's state of mind are the random sounds, audible echoes dragged up from the recesses of the philosopher's twisted mind.

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

WANDERING THOUGHTS

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

There are a total of 12 wandering manifested thoughts loose in the temple. Once they have been slain, no further "wandering monsters" occur. As noted under the dream evil's bestiary entry (page 145), encountering these visions may cause the soulbound philosopher to dispatch more of his vile thoughts.

Ⓜ **Manifested Thoughts (12 total):** See page 145.

THE SOUND OF MADNESS

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

Value	Sound
Deuce	Total and utter silence. Aside from noises the heroes make, such as breathing or rattling armor, there is absolute silence. There aren't even any echoes.
3	Someone calling out. It could be a voice screaming for help, shouting a warning, or perhaps calling a hero by name. The voice could be that of a stranger, or someone the heroes know.
4	Childish giggling.
5	The scurrying and squeaking of rats, lots and lots of rats.
6	A door slamming.
7	A droning chant.
8	Metal scraping on stone (like someone running a sword along a wall).
9	Sounds of battle.
10	Footsteps.
Jack	Shouted threats.
Queen	Something heavy being dragged across the floor.
King	Heavy, labored breathing.
Ace	A repetitive whisper, saying "Tell me the answer!" in a threatening tone.
Joker	Insane laughter. The heroes have to roll to avoid going temporarily mad.

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

Club: Somewhere ahead of the party and close by.
Diamond: Somewhere ahead of the party but distant.
Heart: Somewhere behind the party and close by.
Spade: Somewhere behind the party but distant.

ROOM KEY

1) ENTRANCE

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

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

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

2) A SLICE OF THE ACTION

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

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

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

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

3) SEEPAGE & SEWERAGE

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

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

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

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

(M) Violent Lunatics (2 per hero): See page 146, but armed with crude clubs (Str+d4). Each has the Berserk Edge, which activates when they are Shaken.

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

4) THE WRONG ANSWER

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

This is an illusion, a dream evil (see page 145). The imagery is a metaphor for the soulbound philosopher's failure to find the solution to the conundrum. The books represent its various lines of reasoning down through the ages.

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

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

Ⓜ **Dream Evil:** See page 145.

5) ROAD TO NOWHERE

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

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

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

6) FACE OF DEATH

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

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

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

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

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

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

7) THE LONG CORRIDOR

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

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

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

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

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

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

8) SCRIPTORIUM

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

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

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

Ⓜ **Dream Evil:** See page 145.

9) DARK ROOM

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

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

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

10) THE UNREACHABLE GOAL

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

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

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

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

Ⓜ **Dream Evil:** See page 145.

11) THE GREAT SEAL

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

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

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

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

12) THE PHILOSOPHER'S CHAMBER

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

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

Terrain: The slim pillars provide only Light Cover (–1). Moving through a square containing a pillar is treated as difficult ground.

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

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

Ⓜ **Soulbound Philosopher:** See page 145.

Ⓜ **Manifested Thoughts (2 per hero):** See page 145.

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

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

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

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

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

AFTERMATH

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

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

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

BESTIARY

SOULBOUND PHILOSOPHER

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

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

Skills: Notice d10, Spellcasting d10

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

Special Abilities:

* **Create Thoughts:** As an action, the philosopher can create new manifested thoughts. It makes a Spirit roll, summoning 1d2 thoughts with success and 1d4 with a raise. In addition to its thoughts already in existence (those encountered in the temple), it can create a maximum of 20 more manifested thoughts during the course of the adventure. It uses this power only in two circumstances—if a dream evil (see below) is encountered or if the party attacks it.
* **Defensive Thoughts:** Any manifested thought adjacent to the philosopher automatically intercepts incoming attacks. Any non-area effect attacks are made against the nearest evil thought, not the philosopher.
* **Focused Thoughts:** Immune to Fear, Smarts Tricks, Tests of Will, and any mind-affecting spells (such as *confusion* or *puppet*).
* **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor versus arcane powers, and +4 to rolls made to resist arcane effects.
* **Invulnerability:** Immune to all attacks except its Weakness.
* **Powers:** *Battle song* (drives foes mad—they attack the *nearest* creature; determine randomly if there are multiple viable targets), *confusion* (temporary insanity), *fear* (horrifying images), *lower Spirit* (temporary insanity), *puppet* (forces victim to stand motionless and contemplate the great conundrum).
* **These Thoughts Are Mine:** The philosopher is master of its own thoughts, even those manifested. Its manifested thoughts have +1 to recover from being Shaken, +1 Fighting damage, and +1 Toughness when within 5" of the philosopher.
* **Weakness (Logic):** The soulbound philosopher can only be slain by logical arguments. Instead of an attack roll, the character makes a Persuasion roll. A hero who states he is discussing the nature of truth gains a +2 bonus to his roll. This is opposed by the philosopher's Spirit die. Each success and raise inflicts a wound, just as if it were a physical blow. This form of attack can be Soaked using the creature's Spirit die.

MANIFESTED THOUGHT

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

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

Skills: Fighting d6

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

Special Abilities:

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

DREAM EVIL

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

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

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

When a dream evil interacts with the party in this manner, the soulbound philosopher becomes instantly aware of the characters' location. It uses its Create Thoughts ability (once per encounter with a dream evil) to summon manifested thoughts from its mind to attack the party.

VIOLENT LUNATIC

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7
Hindrances: Varies, but all suffer some form of Major Delusion
Edges: Combat Reflexes
Gear: Hands and teeth (Str).

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

ORC

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

CHIEFTAIN

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

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10 (2)
Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Command, Fervor, Hold the Line, Sweep
Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), pot helmet (+3), great axe (Str+d10, –1 Parry, 2 hands).
Alchemical Devices: 1. potion of *healing* (cures one wound), 2. gem of *armor* (cast with a success), 3. figurine with *bodyguard* (cast with a success), 4. potion of *teleport* (20" range)
Special Abilities:
* **Bite:** Str+d4
* **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.

PRIEST

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

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)
Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles)
Gear: Leather armor (+1), long spear (Str+d6, Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 hands), furs.
Special Abilities:
* **Bite:** Str+d4
* **Powers:** 1. *armor* (icy skin), 2. *bolt* (icicles), 3. *fear* (howl), 4. *obscure* (snow cloud), 5. *smite* (jagged icicles form on weapon), 6. *summon elemental* (ice).

WARRIOR

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6
Pace: 6; **Parry**: 6; **Toughness:** 8 (1)
Gear: Leather armor (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), short sword, axe, or mace (Str+d6).
Special Abilities:
* **Bite:** Str+d4
* **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.

WOLF, DIRE

Dire wolves are very large and feral wolves often used by orcs as attack dogs and by goblins as mounts. They may also be found roaming in packs in the deepest, darkest woods.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Tracking d6
Pace: 10; **Parry**: 6; **Toughness:** 6
Special Abilities
* **Bite:** Str+d6.
* **Go for the Throat:** Wolves instinctively go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly-armored location.
* **Fleet-Footed:** Dire wolves roll a d10 instead of a d6 when running.

ICE ELEMENTAL

They look similar to earth elementals, but have cold-blue eyes, a mouth that, when opened, looks like the centre of an active ice volcano, and cracked, icy skin of the deepest blue.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d6
Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (3)
Special Abilities:
* **Armor +3:** Icy hide.
* **Bash:** Str+d6.
* **Burrowing (6"):** Ice elementals can meld into and out of the ground so long as it is snow or ice.
* **Elemental:** No additional damage from Called Shots; Fearless; immune to disease and poison.
* **Ice Strike:** Ice elementals can spit a freezing blast of ice using the Cone Template. Characters within the Cone must beat the elemental's Shooting roll with Agility or suffer 2d10 damage.
* **Immunity (Cold):** Immune to background cold. Takes no damage from cold attacks.
* **Weakness (Fire):** Takes double damage from heat or fire.

HANDOUT #1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hoenir draws near, for the hour has come.

APPENDIX: TEMPLES OF EIRA

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

STAFF

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

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

HERBAL BREWS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MEDICAL EXPENSES

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

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

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

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

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

Long-Term Care: 20 gs per half-week. This covers food, drink, and basic medical supplies, such as bandages and medicine. This service grants a +1 bonus to natural Healing rolls. For an additional 25 gs, a cleric with Disciple of Eira Edge tends the patient, raising the bonus to +3 in total.

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

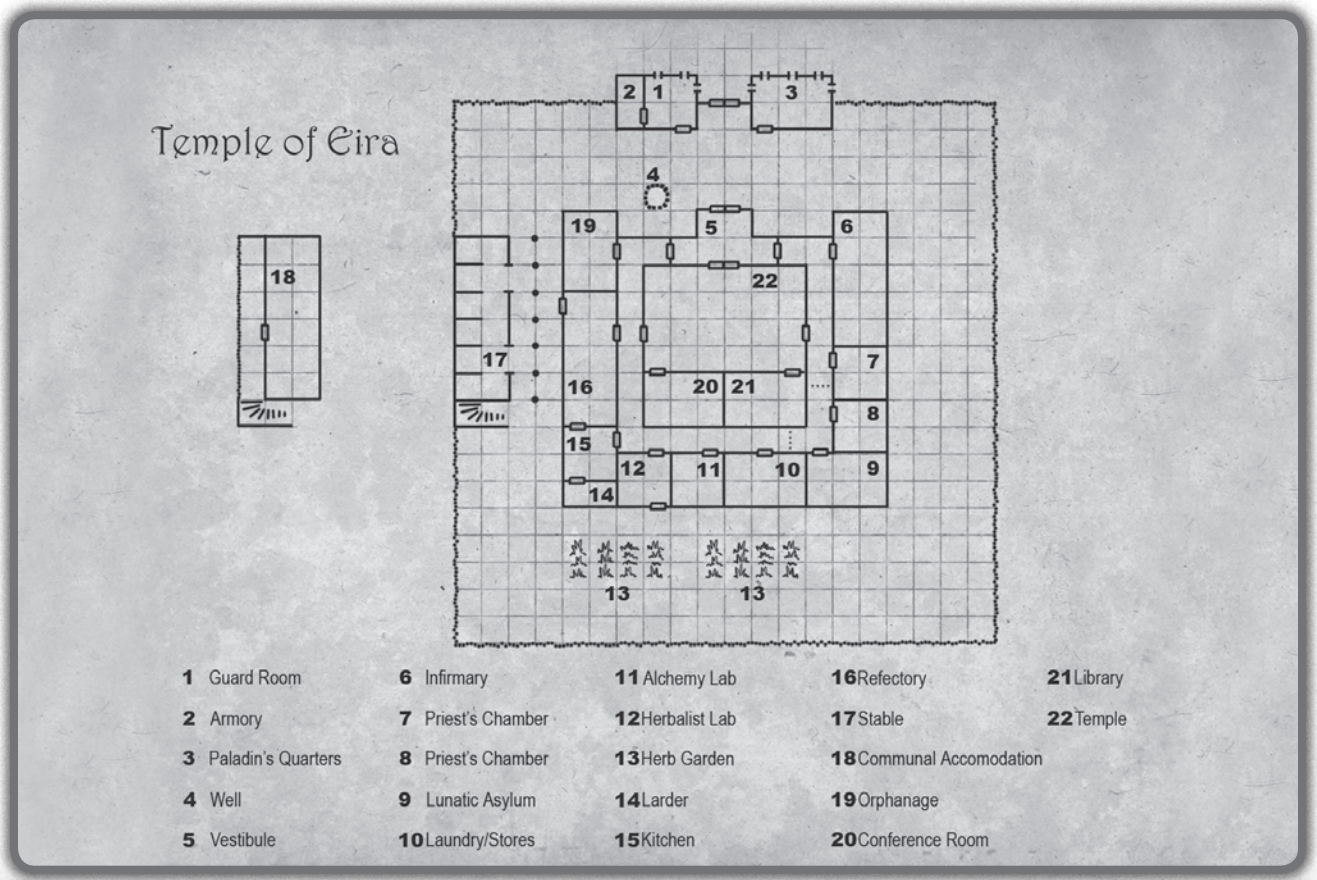
ROOM DESCRIPTIONS

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Stables: Typically there is one mount for every two paladins. Spare stables are used by visitors' and patients' mounts. The partition walls between stalls can be dismantled quickly, allowing for pygmy mammoths to be housed should the need arise.

SISTERS OF MERCY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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MADNESS STALKS THE LAND

Insanity has struck the citizens of Rassilon!

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

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

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

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Paul 'Wiggy' Wade-Williams

HELLFROST

THE ICE FIEND & OTHER TALES

OFFICIAL SAVAGE WORLDS LICENSED PRODUCT

THE ICE FIEND & OTHER TALES

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THE ICE FIEND & OTHER TALES

These adventures are designed for a group of four Seasoned characters, but can be run with more advanced parties. Most encounters are based on a number of antagonists per hero, and thus automatically allow for increased party size.

For higher Ranked parties, add one additional Extra to an encounter for each party Rank above Seasoned. For instance, if an Heroic party of four characters faces two orc warriors per hero, the heroes encounter a total of 10 orcs (eight because of the party size and another two because the party is two steps above Seasoned).

Unless a scenario states otherwise, you can run these tales in any realm and at any time of year.

GM NOTES

This adventure can be set in any geographic region, but there **must** be snow on the ground. This generally requires the temperature to be below freezing. In *Hellfrost*, this need not mean it is winter—the High Winterlands rarely thaw, the Low Winterlands suffer snow for as much as 11 months a year, and the Hearthlands can expect snow for as much as four or five months.

The setting, as written, is a Saxa region, dominated by rural steads rather than a large population center. Exactly where this lies should be decided based on the needs of your campaign. The adventure starts with the heroes in a Saxa stead, though it provides no reason for their being here. Depending on your campaign, the characters may be visiting kinfolk or simply enjoying hospitality from a stranger.

The party will be spending periods outdoors, and thus the temperature is more important in this adventure than some others in the *Hellfrost* line. The GM should keep an eye on temperature and the characters' winter protection, as they may find themselves pulling a long guard shift at night, when the temperature is one category lower. See the *Savage Worlds* rulebook for the effects of cold weather and the *Hellfrost Players' Guide* for how the rules work in this setting.

THE MAN WHO CRIED MONSTER

On a misty morning, a loud banging on the door of the stead rudely awakens members of the household and their guests. Whilst the householder dresses, one of the servants opens the door and, after brief discussion with the visitor, invites him in. The visitor, a farmer, is visibly out of breath and his trousers are splattered with fresh mud. Once the stead owner is ready to receive him, the farmer approaches his seat. At this point the characters should make a Notice roll. Success reveals blood amongst the mud on the farmer's trousers and sleeve cuffs.

Still panting for breath, the visitor begins his tale. "I am Ethelbert, son of Ethelred, friend of your family for many years. I live on a small stead five miles from here, where my family raises sheep for market and for your table. Over the last two nights, we have had sheep killed by some horror, sheep that are due to lamb any day now.

"Such savagery, for both sheep and unborn lamb were mutilated and eaten in part. The beast was cunning, for no man has seen it work its evil, save my brother, Wigmund, who, on the night afore last, was mauled by the beast and has since fallen into a fever the likes of which we have never seen. No herb will cure him of his malady and we fear he will die. We are simple farmers, not warriors or wolf hunters. I beg you, come to the aid of our stead before all our sheep are slain. By the time we send word to the thegn all will be lost!"

Your host scratches his chin before replying.

"We have no warriors here among our people. I can think of no one to aid you, unless…" His voice trails off as he turns to face you. "What say you, guests? Will you aid my neighbor in his time of need?"

If the characters refuse, (or perhaps because they want to discuss it first) Ethelbert looks visibly upset, but goes without making a fuss, collecting his spear from the servant waiting by the door. He does not look back as he departs. Should the characters agree, Ethelbert is extremely happy and says, *"A feast fit for your lordships will be laid on at my humble stead ready for your arrival"* before he rushes off.

Ethelbert's stead lies at the edge of the local thegn's lands, bordering a small marsh and dense copse of trees, but can be reached in just under two hours at a brisk walk or one hour on horseback. The attacks have only taken place at night and this is likely to require the heroes to stop over at Ethelbert's for a day or two.

This is a perfect opportunity for a hero to boast that he will slay the wolf responsible. Such boasting is well respected by the Saxa as a whole.

INITIAL INVESTIGATIONS

There are two primary avenues of investigation open to the heroes at this juncture: They can either visit Ethelbert's stead and talk to his sick brother, Wigmund, or they can head further out and examine the remains of the sheep for themselves in order to form their own conclusions about what may be killing the livestock. This chapter assumes that Wigmund is the first stop.

On arriving at the house, the heroes are greeted by Ethelbert (who has been keeping an eye out for them) and given a warm welcome. He provides mead while they remove their cloaks and, when they are ready, he shows them to his brother's bed. Wigmund, a peasant in his early thirties, lies wrapped in furs, shivering uncontrollably and sweating profusely while his wife mops his brow with a damp cloth. A blood-stained bandage is wrapped around his left forearm. On seeing the heroes enter, Wigmund tries to rise, but drops back into his bed, visibly exhausted by the effort.

Heroes who ask Wigmund to explain what happened are told the following story. Any hero who doubts Wigmund's story after he finishes it may make a Notice roll. Wigmund is telling the truth.

"I was watching the sheep last night (cough-cough), for the beast that had been savaging them. A mist had rolled in and visibility was poor, though I have (cough) keen enough eyes. Around the darkest hour, I thought I saw something, a figure, human in outline (cough-cough) running towards the outer fields and I gave chase lest it be a raider.

"Barely twenty paces had I taken when a (cough-cough) claw of ice raked out from the mist and caught my arm. Such pain! I have never felt such pain, though I have fought with the warriors against orc raiders and taken wounds in battle. A sudden malady (cough- cough) came over me and I fainted. When I awoke, it was near dawn and I crawled to the stead (cough-cough), my body shaking as if Wotan himself were rousing me from sleep. Since then, I have had the fever, my lords. That is my tale and on Thunor's hammer I swear it to be true."

Any character trying to diagnose his illness should make a Healing roll. With success, the hero deduces the sickness is unnatural. A raise reveals that while Wigmund is displaying all the symptoms of fever, his body is ice cold. Whatever attacked him was no normal creature. Only a *greater healing* or a very potent herbal remedy (–4 plant rarity) can help Wigmund now. Unless a cure is found, he dies in three days.

THE INNER FIELDS

Although the stead is active and humans and animals regularly walk over the area where the sheep are penned, there are still clues to be found. In the small field just away from the main farm lie the remains of two sheep, savaged last night by the beast and left where they lay for Ethelbert and his family to discover. Surrounding the carcasses are numerous paw prints. Successfully deciphering them requires a Tracking roll. With a success, the characters detect only wolf and sheep prints. A raise reveals other prints, made by something with canine feet but seemingly bipedal in stance. Examining the corpses of the sheep clearly shows that a ferocious beast attacked them and that both were shortly due to lamb.

Further out, just beyond the outer boundary wall, are additional clues. Heroes investigating will need to make a Notice roll. Success reveals footprints, most likely a woman, or small man, made the previous night. A raise finds a woman's silver brooch in the snow. The footprints head towards the next farm and come from the direction of the previous farm. Nothing overly sinister since farmers often travel to each other's steads to trade news or surplus produce. A successful Common Knowledge roll quickly determines that the brooch is Saxa in origin.

NIGHT VIGIL

Eventually the heroes will undoubtedly call for a night watch to keep an eye on the sheep. None of the farmers at the stead volunteer whilst such brave figures as the heroes are present, and cries of cowardice against them are countered by taunts of "Why do our mighty heroes need the aid of simple farmers to defeat a single creature?" and

"This is why we summoned you!" The heroes will have to watch alone.

There are three possible events, each detailed separately below, and they may be encountered in any order. The suggested order is: "A Big Wolf", to make the heroes think they have dealt with the matter, "A Lone Figure", to bring up the possibility of a shapechanger, and then "The Creature Strikes". Of course, you should feel free to create additional red herrings or minor encounters (perhaps a pretty, unmarried girl brings mead and bread to one hero) to create as much atmosphere as you desire.

The characters automatically know there are no lycanthropes in Rassilon. However, there are shape-leapers, animals which can assume the form of men (and women) and monstrous hybrids.

Regardless of which event the heroes play through, each begins in the manner described below. Any adjustment for player ingenuity will have to be handled on an individual basis, but the creature is cunning and unlikely to fall for any trap they lay.

The sun has been down for many hours and the night has turned bitterly cold. Huddled in their cloaks, any heroes on watch can only look in dismay as a thick mist begins to rise from the ground, reducing visibility to fifty yards and making the cold air damp. Treat the visibility as Dark (–2). Hopefully the characters have lanterns or torches.

A BIG WOLF

Around midnight each hero should make a Notice roll at –2 (for the darkness). Success spots something moving carefully through the mist. With a raise, the character spies a large bipedal shape. The creature is a lone frost wolf, but a very hungry one. It attacks immediately, bounding out of the mist at full speed. If the party is Veteran Rank, add a second wolf. For Legendary heroes, add a total of two frost wolves.

The battlefield is a large field, broken up only by a few boulders. Deep snow covers the area, making it difficult ground.

Should the beast be brought down, the heroes may boast of their exploits (though killing a single wolf is not much to brag about). Ethelbert hosts a feast the following day and presents the heroes with small gifts worth 25 gs each as a token of his thanks. He also "allows" them to keep the wolf pelt as a trophy. Heroes who demand more reward lose a point of Glory.

If the heroes depart, believing their task completed, they will meet Ethelbert again the following morning as he hammers on the stead door once more. The beast is back and has killed five sheep in a single night! It seems the heroes were a little too lax in making sure all was well.

Ⓜ **Frost Wolf:** See page 8. The first frost wolf is a Wild Card alpha male.

A LONE FIGURE

Note: The encounter does not occur if the heroes have discovered the secret affair between Aethelswhith, daughter of Frealaf, and Wulfwig the Farmer.

Around two in the morning each hero should make a Notice roll. The darkness penalty applies, as the event they are trying to witness occurs outside the range of any light source they possess. With success, the character spots a humanoid figure in the mist. A raise means he detects a woman skulking at the edge of the farm.

Heroes who give any sign of having spotted the figure, such as shouting, pointing or moving towards her position, cause her to turn on her heels and flee into the gloom. Given that Wigmund saw a similar figure in the mist shortly before the beast attacked him, the characters may be reluctant to give chase.

Hunting down the figure is not easy, especially given her head start and the thick mist. Heroes wishing to give chase must make a Notice roll at –2 from every hero. Success means the heroes catch her trying to cross a frozen stream. A failure results in her escaping. On a critical failure, the character has become lost in the mist. A lost hero can easily find his way back by calling for his companions to shout so he can follow their voices.

There are two possible outcomes from this encounter. Each is dealt with below:

Catch The Woman: The woman is Aethelswhith, wife of Lyfing, and lives on Frealaf's stead. At first she says that she was "out looking for a lost sheep", but if

pressed harder she tells the same story as in *'Asking the Locals (The Silver Brooch)'* below, admitting her guilt as an adulterer. She vehemently denies being involved with the wolf, especially if the heroes suspect a shapechanger is abroad. For proof, she challenges them to question Wulfwig, her lover.

The Woman Escapes: The following morning, the mist will have cleared and heroes may search for the figure's footprints in the snow. A successful Tracking roll allows the party to follow the trail to Frealaf's stead. Any failure to track the woman leaves the encounter open to be used again at the GM's option.

THE BEAST STRIKES

Around three in the morning, each hero should make another Notice roll. This is opposed by the ice beast's Stealth. With success, the characters detect the approaching beast when it is 16" away. On a failure, they are allowed another Notice roll opposed by the creature's Stealth. Success means the heroes spot the beast when it is just 5" away. Those who fail whichever Notice roll signals the start of combat, are Surprised.

Out of the mist looms a huge creature, seemingly a frost wolf, but apparently made of ice and snow. It has malevolent, piercing blue eyes that seem to suck the heat from the characters' bones.

The battlefield is a large field, broken up only by a few boulders. Deep snow covers the area, making it difficult ground.

The heroes cannot harm the creature at this stage of the adventure without fire or heat magic, though they will not necessarily realize this immediately. Attacks by non-heat or fire sources can only ever inflict a Shaken result. However, the GM should secretly record damage as normal, even if the effects are not being applied. For instance, a sword inflicting 19 damage only Shakes the beast, but the GM would record one wound. The beast changes into a whirling snowstorm and departs if it takes one "wound" (real or hypothetical—the beast is testing the heroes' combat abilities) or manages to Incapacitate one hero. Tracking the beast is not possible. Similarly, organizing a hunt in the morning is pointless—there are no tracks.

Ⓜ **Ice Beast:** See page 9.

ASKING THE LOCALS

At some point the heroes are likely to begin questioning the occupants of neighboring farms, most likely to see how far the killings have spread and whether anything unusual has been seen in the mists. The hero who finds the silver brooch may also wish to determine who it belonged to and what they were doing in the area of Ethelbert's stead.

The two nearest steads are those of Hermund, about two miles west of Ethelbert's, and Frealaf, just under one mile to the east over the hills.

OTHER KILLINGS

The heroes are warmly welcomed at either farm. Neither has suffered any loss of sheep, though all have heard about poor Wigmund and the sheep slayings. Both stead owners have placed guards on their sheep as a precaution and are eager to see the matter resolved as quickly as possible.

IT'S DEADLY, YOU KNOW

Heroes who mention that the foe may be a shape-leaper receive plentiful blessings from the farmers, who are now reluctant to even venture out of their houses at night. Whilst at Frealaf's stead, they are approached by a rather fat farmer named Lyfing, who has information, he says, that might be useful to their quest. He proceeds to tell the heroes that he believes he knows the human identity of the shape-leaper.

> *"In the last few moons I've awoken at night to pass soil and found my wife absent or with fresh mud upon her feet. I questioned her about this and she said that she was checking the livestock. Of course, I believed her, she's a good, hard-working wife, but all this talk of shape-leapers and all brings doubt to my mind. Her nocturnal wanderings and the fact that she has never bore me children makes me think differently. Much as it pains me to say so, I suspect my wife, Aethelswhith, is the beast you seek!"*

Aethelswhith is innocent of being the monster, but is guilty of having an affair with a young farmer from another stead. Her tale, should she be approached over the matter, is covered below in *'The Silver Brooch'.*

THE SILVER BROOCH

Showing the brooch at Ethelbert's reveals no further information. None of the women has ever seen it before, nor can they recall ever seeing a visitor wearing one similar. Whilst the locals at the two neighboring steads tell a similar tale, there are clues to be found.

While asking around at Hermund's stead, one of the farmers begins to look very uncomfortable, allowing the heroes to make a Notice roll to realize he knows something he is not saying. The man, Wulfwig, has secretly being seeing a married woman at night and has no wish to be accused of adultery, for fear of his life. Assuming his suspicious behavior has been observed, the heroes are likely to want to question him further. Any threat against him will cause him to openly start crying and reveal what has been happening.

> *"(sob- sob) It was my brooch! I bought it for a*

woman whom I love deeply. She (sob-sob) is married (gasps from the crowd) to a lazy man who does not love her as I do. (sob) Her name is Aethelswhith, daughter of Frealaf, our neighbor (more gasps). I swear that she had nothing to do with the sheep attacks. The night of the killing (sob-sob) when Wigmund was bitten, she was coming to visit me in secret, as she has done for many moons (sob). I beg you (sob-sob), spare our lives!"

Adultery is a serious offense, worth at least a doubled wergild of 100 gs, but Wulfwig is still entitled to a fair trial. The heroes should travel to Frealaf's stead if they wish to question Aethelswhith on the matter.

When asking about the brooch at Frealaf's stead, a similar event occurs (use the same Notice roll as above), but this time the guilty-looking party is a woman, Aethelswhith, the married daughter of Frealaf. If openly accused of the crime, she pauses momentarily, looks at her husband, Lyfing, a rotund and lazy farmer, straightens her back, and says, in a loud and confident voice:

"Aye, it is true (gasps from the crowd). I have been lying with Wulfwig, who, though young, is still more of a man than my husband will ever be. My husband is too lazy and oft too drunk to bed with me, leaving me childless and with age advancing upon me. He has squandered my bride price of 50 gs (for my father is a poor man) on foreign goods and trinkets, which he does not lavish upon me but upon himself. My love for Wulfwig is now open and, though punishment I deserve, I ask for clemency and declare in front of witnesses that I wish to be released from my marriage bonds."

Lyfing steps forward, his face red with rage, and goes to strike his wife across the face. Unless stopped, she ends up sprawled on the floor, a trickle of blood from the corner of her mouth. Wiping it with the back of her hand, she spits at her husband, catching him on the leg, and vows, *"My father will hear of this dishonor! You forced me to look elsewhere for my pleasure and I will make you pay, in this world or the next!"* She then leaves (unless stopped by the heroes) to return to her father's stead, which lies some 30 miles away.

What began as a hunt-the-monster adventure has, for the moment, become a messy adultery and divorce case! Naturally, Aethelswhith also deserves to be punished but, once again, this is neither the time nor the place.

CONSULTING THE WICCA

Eventually, most likely after the monster attack on the heroes, they will realize that their foe is unnatural. Ethelbert suggests they consult with the local wise woman, Raedburh, a priestess of the Norns, who lives not far away. Raedburh is a renowned seer and her powers of prophecy are known throughout this region. Like many of her kind, she is advanced in years and slightly (though some may say completely) mad, dealing as she does with matters man was not meant to know.

Entering her hut is a test unto itself, as she is protected by powerful magics and does not suffer fools. Any hero wishing to gain entry must make a Spirit roll. Failure means he is too terrified to set foot inside, though he may listen from outside. Once inside, the heroes see Raedburh lying on her bed, muttering to herself. As they enter, she raises her head and speaks.

"So, the heroes of men seek the advice of an old woman. What ails thee that you risk visiting me in my own abode? Ah, you seek knowledge of the beast that kills sheep. I too have ears. I hear what the wind says and it speaks of death and sickness not of natural birth. Tell me your woes with honesty in your heart and on your tongue."

Once informed of the current situation at Ethelbert's stead and of any illnesses caused by the beast, she pulls a bag of bones from her robes and tosses the contents onto a sheepskin lying on the floor of her hut. Kneeling down beside them, she looks intently at them for several long minutes before raising her head and staring into the eye of the most important hero (socially).

"A weapon of power is needed to bring the beast to heel and no such weapon lies in this land. Yet the bones speak of a spear forged for Ulfgar, kept by a lord of a neighboring realm, under a banner of a black dog for long generations. Seek the spear, but use it wisely, for it has lead men to their death and will do so again."

Raedburh will gratefully accept any payment of 1 gs or over. Heroes trying to leave without offering a gift for services rendered receive a stern warning. *"Be generous as leaders of men, for there will be a time soon when you seek the generosity of others and if they look into your heart, they will refuse you."* Whether or not the prophecy has any weight is up to the needs of the individual campaign.

THE BLACK DOG BANNER

Heroes may know of the "banner of the black dog" themselves by making a Knowledge (Heraldry) roll if outsiders or a Common Knowledge roll if local to the region. Success reveals the black dog is the banner of Hauld Eossa, a neighboring noble. On a raise, the character also knows he is a devoutly religious man and claims all good deities as his patron. Should they fail, Ethelbert reveals Eossa's name if questioned on the black dog banner.

Once armed with the necessary information, the heroes are free to trek to Eossa's lands to seek the magical spear of which Raedburh spoke. Eossa's mead-hall

lies six days march or three days ride from Ethelbert's stead. The journey can be as eventful or uneventful as you desire, but the heroes should arrive without major wound.

THE COURT OF EOSSA

The heroes arrive at Eossa's mead-hall late in the evening, but are welcomed in by the steward as guests. Eossa sits at the head of his feasting table, an elderly man wrapped in a bear skin, to his right, his eldest son, Wiglaf, and behind him, mead jug in hand, his beautiful (Charisma +6; Charismatic and Very Attractive), and unmarried, daughter, Aelfwynn. His nobles and huscarls are gathered in front of him, feasting on boar, and drinking flagons of fine mead. The steward of the hall announces the heroes, in order of social seniority and all falls silent as Eossa bids the heroes to attend him.

Many of the warriors nod in polite recognition at heroes with a positive Glory as the characters move to the far end of the hall. Others stare silently; a few mutter something about "ill-bred wastrels," but they are in the minority. Presently the heroes stand before Eossa's chair. He bids them welcome to his lands.

"I am Eossa, son of Uxfrea, who raided lands far and wide, son of Cuthbert, who fought the orcs, son of Abo, who wrestled the great bear of Midmark, son of Beocca, who terrorized the White Sea, son of Ulfgar, who slew the fell frost giant of Ostmark, son of Hereward, who was smith to kings. Welcome to my mead-hall honored guests. Now, pray tell, what brings you here at such late hour?"

The heroes should begin by introducing themselves to Eossa and his nobles. Failing to do so costs them –1 Glory. Allow them to role-play their speech, using as much embellishment as they wish. Once they have told their story, which is not interrupted by noble or huscarl, Eossa speaks again, assuming they at least succeeded in impressing him.

"Such beasts are the enemies of my kin and your pleas are heard. On the morrow, we shall test you of your worthiness to carry the magical spear that slew the fell giant of Ostmark. The spear of Ulfgar has long been in my family and it is mine to give, or to withhold. For now, come sit before me as honored guests."

Several huscarls move over to allow the heroes seating space, and food and mead are brought to them. The rest of the night is spent discussing heroic endeavors with the lord's huscarls, all of whom are prone to bragging.

GAINING THE SPEAR

On the morrow, which is bright and sunny, Eossa, his nobles, and his huscarls gather in front of the mead-hall. Eossa, dressed in his finest clothes, speaks to the assembled mass of warriors.

"These guests come seeking the use of our sacred spear, that which Ulfgar used to slay the fell giant that Eafa, ancient prince of Ostmark would not fight. Though he speaks of his need to wield the spear of power, he must prove to Sigel and our ancestors that he is worthy to wield it against the beast that haunts the lands of our neighbors by being of my kinsman.

"If the spear is gifted to you, you must, upon defeating the beast, swear loyalty to me, forgoing any loyalty to your current lord. In return, I will make you a huscarl. What answer give you, before Sigel and your ancestors?"

Eossa is actually expecting the hero to refuse, for Ulfgar, the first wielder of the spear remained loyal to his lord even when faced with certain death. A hero who is unsure about what to do may make a Common Knowledge roll. With success, he knows that transferring his allegiance would mean his entire family having to uproot and move to Eossa's lands and swear loyalty to their new lord. It is a high price to pay for defeating one beast that eats only sheep.

Once the hero has made his decision, Eossa speaks again. The first paragraph should be used if the hero refuses Eossa's demand, and the second if he refuses with a *grand and noble* speech (roleplayed out) about the price of loyalty. Should the heroes fail the test, Eossa sends them packing. They suffer –2 Glory for being willing to forfeit their loyalties so easily. Killing the beast now requires the heroes to acquire heat or fire magic.

"You speak wisely, for loyalty to one's lord makes a man great. Poor in honor is he who changes allegiance over mere temporal power. Great Ulfgar, whose spear this is, accepted death before dishonoring his lord, though cowardly the lord may have been. To you I loan this spear, for a period not to exceed two months. Bring it honor, bring it glory, in the name of Sigel and my ancestors."

"You speak wisely, for loyalty to one's lord makes a man great. Poor in honor is he who changes allegiance over mere temporal power. Great Ulfgar, whose spear this is, accepted death before dishonoring his lord, though cowardly the lord may have been. You share many qualities with him. To you I gift this spear, to keep in your family until Tiw takes it back. Bring it honor, bring it glory, in the name of Sigel and both our ancestors"

THE SPEAR OF ULFGAR

The spear is 7 feet long with an iron tip. The tip is engraved with stylized images of the sun and is scalding hot to the touch in any temperature, though it cannot start fires.

The spear functions as a normal long spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, requires two hands) except against creatures with Immunity or Resistance to cold, coldfire, and ice. Against such foes, it grants +1 to Fighting rolls, inflicts bonus damage as if it was a source of heat/fire, *and* causes an extra d10 damage on a raise instead of a d6 as normal.

Being gifted the spear is worth +5 Glory, whilst being loaned the spear only +1 Glory. Remember, as a permanent magic item the character *must* spend a benny before he can wield its powers. Refusing or forgetting to return the spear after the loan period imposes a –10 Glory loss on the hero and makes enemies of Eossa, his household, and his kin. The character gains the Minor Enemy Hindrance and will never again be welcomed in Eossa's lands.

THE FINAL SHOWDOWN

With the spear in hand the heroes may now return to Ethelbert's to do battle with the creature. On arrival, a red-eyed Ethelbert informs them that eleven sheep have been slaughtered since they left, and (unless he was cured) Wigmund, his brother, died from the illness that afflicted him. The family is waiting until the beast is dead before they bury the corpse in the local graveyard.

Hopefully the heroes have worked out that the beast only attacks when the mist rises. Each night of watch, roll a single d20. On a result of 14 or lower, there is mist and the beast attacks. If there if no mist, the creature stays away—the heroes spend an uneventful night watching sheep.

When the beast does attack, it fights to the death—the power of the spear keeps it bound to the immediate vicinity. Should the hero wielding the spear be killed, another may pick it up as an action and carry on the fight. Note that while not every hero can harm the beast, they can aid compatriots who can by keeping the fiend distracted.

Once the creature is killed, the adventure is over. Ethelbert and his family rustle up 100 gs in coin and goods as thanks. Check for Glory as normal. On the off chance that the creature wins the fight by defeating all of the heroes, it will eventually be slain by a hero from distant lands, who returns the spear to Eossa afterward.

Ⓜ **Ice Beast:** See page 9.

BESTIARY

CITIZEN

Unless other stats are provided, the men of the various steads should use this common template. These men are members of the local fyrd and are considered fighting men, but they are not trained warriors. They are capable of driving away common wolves and maybe a nosy bear, but other foes are simply beyond their capability to handle.

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

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

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

Hindrances: —

Edges: —

Gear: Leather shirt (+1), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), medium shield (+1 Parry).

FROST WOLF

Frost wolves haunt frozen climes, roaming the tundra in small packs. Unlike regular wolves, frost wolves are bipedal and sentient, living in packs dominated by an alpha male (treat as a Wild Card if required). Their howl can, so skalds sing, freeze the blood of mortals.

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

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

Pace: 8; **Parry**: 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

* **Bite:** Str+d6.
* **Combat Reflexes:** +1 to recover from being Shaken.
* **Fleet Footed:** Frost wolves have a d10 running die.
* **Go for the Throat:** If a frost wolf gets a raise on its attack roll, it strikes its opponent's least armored location.
* **Howl:** A frost wolf can use its entire action to howl. When it does so, every enemy able to hear the chilling sound must make a Spirit roll or be Shaken.
* **Improved Frenzy:** Frost wolves can make 2 Fighting attacks each round at no penalty.
* **Low Light Vision:** Frost wolves ignore lighting penalties for anything less than Pitch Black conditions.
* **Quick:** Frost wolves can redraw any initiative card of 5 or less.
* **Resistance (Cold):** Immune to background cold. Half damage from cold and ice attacks.
* **Size +1:** Frost wolves stand 8' tall.
* **Snow Walker:** Treats rough ice as normal ground, smooth ice as rough ice, and every inch of movement in snow as 1.5" instead of 2".

THE ICE BEAST

The "ice beast" is a unique creature in modern Rassilon. Molded from the ice of the Hellfrost core and imbued with life by Thrym's ice breath, the "ice beasts" were frightful minions, immune to all but relics imbued with fire and heat. Even clerics of Kenaz could do little to thwart their killing sprees. When the battle turned, brave priests and paladins devoted their lives to hunting down and slaying all the "ice fiends" south of the Icewall. They missed one.

This particular specimen hid itself away from the world and went into hibernation after the War ended, sleeping away the centuries until it was needed again. That time has come.

Ten feet tall, of muscular build, and covered in dense layers of fat and fur, the ice beast is a powerful foe. Its sharp teeth and long claws can puncture armor and rend the flesh from a man's bones. Unhindered by snow and ice, it has a sizeable advantage over prey caught in the wilds when winter falls.

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

Skills: Climbing d10, Fighting d10, Guts d12, Intimidation d10, Notice d10, Stealth d10, Tracking d8, Swimming d8

Pace: 8; **Parry**: 7; **Toughness:** 11 (2)

Special Abilities:

* **Armor +2:** Covered in dense fur and fat.
* **Bite/Claws:** Str+d8.
* **Combat Reflexes:** +1 to recover from being Shaken.
* **Fleet Footed:** The ice beast has a d10 running die.
* **Go for the Throat:** If the ice beast gets a raise on its attack roll, it strikes its opponent's least armored location.
* **Howl:** The ice beast can howl as an action. When it does so, every enemy able to hear the chilling sound must make a Spirit roll or be Shaken.
* **Immunity (Cold):** Immune to background cold. No damage from cold and ice attacks.
* **Improved Frenzy:** The ice beast can make two Fighting attacks each round at no penalty.
* **Improved Snow Walker:** The ice beast treats all snow and ice as normal terrain.
* **Invulnerability:** Attacks not caused by a permanent relic imbued with fire or heat spells can cause a Shaken result, but never a wound.
* **Low Light Vision:** The ice beast ignores lighting penalties for anything less than Pitch Black conditions.
* **Poison:** Any character Shaken or wounded by the ice beast's natural weapons must make a Vigor roll. Failure means he has succumbed to venom that slowly freezes the character to death from within. The hero's Agility and Vigor drop a die, as do all linked skills. If either Agility or Vigor drops below a d4, the character freezes to death. Curing the poison requires a *healing* spell within 10 minutes. After this time, only *greater healing* or a rare herbal brew (–4 for plant rarity) can save the victim's life. Once cured, lost dice return at the rate of one per day.
* **Quick:** The ice beast redraws any initiative card of 5 or less.
* **Size +2:** The ice beast is 10' tall but powerfully built.

A BRIEF ENCOUNTER

This adventure details a small military engagement against an orc encampment, and serves as an introduction to the regular Mass Battles rules and alternate rules you will see used in future *Hellfrost* adventures. It can be dropped into any geographic region and at any time of year, making it easy for the GM to work into his campaign.

A CALL TO ARMS

Someone is hiring mercenaries for a one-week campaign against a small orc encampment. The exact details of who is hiring mercenaries are left to the GM to decide. It might be a nobleman seeking to rid his lands of vicious orc raiders, the clergy of Tiw are always eager for battle, and routinely hire mercenaries to bolster their numbers or perhaps a merchant or trading company has suffered losses to orc raiders and seeks to clear the road of their presence once and for all. Whoever it is, they should have the means and funds to hire troops for a short campaign.

The payment each character is offered is detailed below. The fee is non-negotiable—mercenaries are plentiful and the hirer can afford to wait a week or so for troops who will not haggle. Each character can fulfill only one basic troop type, regardless of how many categories they qualify for. In addition to their wages, the mercenaries may keep whatever treasure they loot from the orcs.

Gold Scields	Troops
Basic Troop Type	
15	Archer (covers any ranged weapons)
30	Infantryman
45	Cavalryman (with mount)
50	Mage, cleric, or Sister of Mercy
60	Mage or cleric with a damaging spell, such as *bolt* or *blast*
Bonuses	
+2	Per Combat and Leadership Edge the character has
+5	Bladedancer or Bludgeoner Edge
+10	Mage or cleric who knows *healing*
+15	Iron Guild Mercenary or Knight Hrafn Edge
+20	Gray Legionary Edge

ARRIVAL AT THE ENCAMPMENT

The orc encampment is located some thirty miles from the hirer's home. Scouts report a series of hide tents arranged behind a makeshift wooden palisade. The orcs are prepared for war, and have erected sharpened stakes to break up cavalry attacks and block infantry formations.

The attack is scheduled to take place in the early morning, but as the mercenaries approach, they discover that their presence has been detected. The orcs are arrayed along the perimeter of their camp and have been whipped into a battle frenzy. The mercenary commander (the hirer is not on the field of battle) draws his men up outside missile range and calls a meeting of his officers. Any character with Knowledge (Battle) d6 or higher is appointed as a unit commander and invited to attend the meeting.

An attending player character can make a Knowledge (Battle) roll. If there are multiple heroes at the meeting, each can make a separate roll. With success, the heroes gain a +1 modifier to their rolls at some point in the battle as the tactic is put into play. A raise earns a +2 bonus (this cannot be divided into two +1 bonuses). Whoever rolled the success gets to decide on which round the modifier is used. Encourage the player to come up with a brief description of his tactic.

Example: *Rob's hero has Knowledge (Battle) d8. He attends the planning meeting and rolls a success. On the third round of battle, when the tide looks to be turning against the mercenaries, Rob declares that the army's center feigns a retreat, luring the orcs after them. At a given point, the center "rallies" and charges the orcs, who are also peppered with arrows.*

THE BATTLE

Unlike the regular Mass Battles rules, this battle does not use commanders, Battle rolls, Morale, or tokens. Instead, it takes the form of scripted battle with a predetermined outcome. Scripted battles are a useful tool for when the GM wants to decide the outcome of the engagement in advance. For this battle, the initial raid must be successful. This opens up the second engagement, in which the characters form part of a rearguard.

For each combat round, the GM is provided with a small amount of text that sums up the main action. The number in parentheses is a modifier to the characters' Character in Mass Battles die roll for that round. This represents the larger strategic struggle, injuries to one side or the other, and use of tactics. As such, the bonuses to Knowledge (Battle) rolls gained from the Character Results table do not apply (there are no Battle rolls). However, damage applies as normal and the results should be recorded, as high rolls are still worth bonus Glory.

FORCES

The allied forces comprise a large number of infantry supported by missile troops and cavalry. The commander draws up his infantry in three companies with a detachment of cavalry on each flank. The missile troops are arranged behind the infantry. Spellcasters with offensive magic are dotted throughout the formation to provide maximum spell coverage.

The orc force is predominantly warriors backed up by two priests and a small number of archers. A minor chieftain commands their forces. Unbeknownst to the mercenaries, the orcs also have a squad of dire wolf riders lurking out of sight.

ROUNDS

Round	Event
1	The mercenaries begin their assault through the outer defenses but are immediately peppered with arrows and thrown weapons. Only ranged weapons and spells can be used during this round. A character without Shooting, Throwing, or an arcane skill (and an offensive spell) can make no attack roll this round. Instead, they must make an Agility roll as if rolling on the Characters in Mass Battles table. No Glory is earned for making the Agility roll (–2).
2	The mercenaries slam into the orc troops at a charge (+1).
3	The orc commander signals for his reserves. A small unit of orc cavalry mounted on dire wolves appears on the right flank and engages the mercenaries (–2).
4	The mercenaries rally from the dire wolf attack, using their cavalry to counterattack. Meanwhile, the infantry are locked in bloody hand-to-hand combat (+0).
5	The mercenary commander throws his reserves into the fray, breaking the orcs and causing a general rout (+2).

REWARDS

The mercenaries are victorious, though their losses (injured and dead) are significant—the orcs put up a good fight. The commander orders his men to loot what they can, torch the camp, and prepare to leave. Each character earns 2d10 gs in booty. In addition, for every raise a character scored on his Characters in Mass Battle roll he earns a further 1d10 gs. For instance, if Sven Brittle-Bones rolls a raise and then two raises, he earns a bonus 3d10 gs plunder.

Because the battle was a victory, the heroes all earn +1 Glory. The size of the engagement was just a few hundred men, earning them another point of Glory. Additional Glory bonuses for high die rolls apply as normal.

FORMING THE REARGUARD

As the mercenaries prepare to depart, a scout rides

into camp. The orcs are regrouping and are preparing for a counterattack. Concerned about the number of dead and injured, the commander orders the wounded to be evacuated as quickly as possible. He asks for volunteers to form a rearguard to protect the withdrawing troops and finish off the orcs. Do not worry if the characters fail to volunteer—the adventure continues with **The Restless Dead** and the heroes miss out on the chance for extra Glory.

COMMANDERS AND TOKENS

This engagement uses the standard Mass Battles rules. There is no predetermined outcome—either the characters will be victorious or their army will be routed or butchered. If the heroes lose, the onset of night forces the orcs to retreat, thus allowing the heroes a chance to escape the battlefield.

The characters' commander is a junior officer with more courage than strategic knowledge. His commander ability is limited, and he is of the opinion that an army should fight to the last man rather than sully its honor by routing. He has Knowledge (Battle) d6, Spirit d6, and the Death Before Dishonor Edge.

In the event a hero has the Knowledge (Battle) skill, the junior officer placed in charge of the rearguard is killed during round two, before the opposed Battle rolls are made. The hero is the only person left with the Knowledge (Battle) skill, and thus becomes the *de facto* leader of the mercenaries from that point onward. Should two or more heroes have the skill, the characters must decide who will lead them (one may have a higher die, but another could have more useful Leadership Edges).

The orc commander, meanwhile, is a cunning tactician. He has Knowledge (Battle) d8, Spirit d8, and the Cry Havoc Edge.

The allies have the larger force and thus have 10 tokens. The orcs are less numerous but are fearless warriors. They have 7 tokens. The fight takes place on open ground, providing neither side with terrain modifiers.

REWARDS

As a small engagement with dozens of men per side, it would normally warrant no Glory. However, because it is a rearguard and the heroes are risking their lives to protect injured comrades, they earn +1 Glory. Additional Glory awards for good die rolls and commanding the mercenary army are as per the *Hellfrost Players' Guide*.

THE RESTLESS DEAD

Whether the character won or lost the rearguard action, they are now able to make their way back to rejoin the rest of the mercenaries. Victory means an orderly retreat, while failure ends in a rout. The rearguard action took several hours and has left the party unable to reach their comrades before nightfall. That night, a fierce blizzard breaks across the region. The temperature drops by an additional level (as it is night the temperature is already one level lower than normal). Worse still, the characters become separated from the other rearguard survivors.

Struggling on through the storm, the heroes stumble across what appears to be a low cave. A successful Notice roll at –2 reveals it is not a cave—it is the entrance to an ancient burial chamber! Characters without the *refuge* spell now have a decision to make—do they risk freezing to death, or do they pluck up the courage to enter the cairn and risk an attack by the undead?

A hero who makes a Survival roll knows the blizzard is going to be lengthy and potentially fatal to heroes caught in the open. Opting to travel onward means the characters must each make six Vigor rolls, regardless of the temperature and normal rules for withstanding the cold—the storm is unnatural in origin and particularly fierce. These rolls should be adjusted as normal for temperature and winter clothing. Each failure causes a level of Fatigue, which can lead to Death.

Terrain: The cairn comprises a long, low tunnel (8" long) which opens into a high-ceilinged burial chamber (12" long by 8" wide). Movement through the tunnel requires the characters to crouch. They move at half Pace, but can run (half the total Pace after rolling the running die).

Monsters: Within the main chamber are a number of stone biers, upon which lie blackened, shriveled corpses. The number and type of monsters present varies with the party's Rank. For Novice and Seasoned characters, use one petty hagbui per two heroes. Veteran or Heroic parties should encounter one royal hagbui (an ancient king) and a petty hagbui (his wife). Legendary heroes get to face one royal barrow-dweller per two heroes. The undead rise once the first hero enters the chamber.

Ⓜ **Petty Hagbui:** See page 166.

Ⓜ **Royal Hagbui:** See page 166.

Treasure: Once the occupants have been defeated, the characters can set about looting their tomb. Jewelry on the corpses totals 300 gs.

One hagbui wears a small stone amulet around its neck. This is a minor permanent relic known as a *healer's amulet*. The wearer gains the Fast Healer Edge, but only if he wears the amulet for the four days leading up to his natural healing roll (a hero cannot borrow the amulet the day before a natural healing roll and benefit from its magic). A wearer who already has the Fast Healer Edge gains no benefit.

AFTERMATH

After dispatching the barrow dwellers or surviving the storm (which abates with the dawn), the characters quickly catch up with their comrades in arms. On return-

ing to the hirer's home, they are paid whatever is owed them. Calculate Glory for slaying the hagbui as normal. Any failure is put down to hallucinations caused by the freezing temperatures.

BESTIARY

Also known as grave wights, these undead are the corporeal remains of Saxa kings and heroes buried in ages past. Until Hela's treachery, they remained still in their graves, but when the gates of the Abyss were opened, foul spirits inhabited their corpses.

Their form is that of a mummified corpse, with tight, leathery skin drawn over taut, wasted muscles, and their eyes burn with a pale, cold light. Although a hagbui can speak, it only speaks Auld Saxa, and rarely bothers communicating with mortals unless they too are heroes or kings.

PETTY HAGBUI

A petty hagbui is the corpse of a minor noble or lesser hero. Their earthly remains are inhabited by fell spirits. Although buried with wealth, their tombs are not as rich as those of their masters are.

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

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

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11 (3)

Gear: Ancient bronze armor (+3), ancient bronze long sword (Str+d6).

Special Abilities:

* **Bony Claws:** Str+d4.
* **Bound:** A hagbui may not move further than 50" (100 yards) from its burial place.
* **Fear:** Anyone who sees a hagbui must make a Guts check.
* **Numbing Touch:** Any creature touched by a hagbui must make a Vigor roll. On a failure, the victim suffers a cumulative –1 penalty to Agility rolls and skills linked to Agility.
* **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
* **Weakness (Sunlight):** A hagbui is weakened by the sun. Each round in sunlight it must make a Vigor roll or become Exhausted.

ROYAL HAGBUI

These undead were once mortal rulers or great heroes. Although the spirit residing in their bones may not have been a noble in life, these undead retain their status in the eyes of others of their kind. Their tombs are brimming with treasure, and they intend to ensure it remains that way for eternity.

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

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

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

Gear: Ancient bronze armor (+3), ancient bronze 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 must make a Vigor roll. On a failure, the victim suffers a cumulative –1 penalty to Agility rolls and skills linked to Agility.
* **Powers:** A royal hagbui knows 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.

TAXATION TROUBLES

This adventure is intended as a way of getting the party from two points without resorting to a cut scene and yet without making a long journey a roleplaying chore. The trip is handled very abstractly, yet still requires the heroes' direct input. The GM should feel free to swap the animals mentioned for reindeer and goats if the adventure is set in the Winterlands.

The party is hired by a large village or small town to deliver the annual tribute of cattle and sheep to their noble overlord. One of the headman's agents is at the noble's stronghold and will pay the party on successful delivery of the livestock.

Assuming they agree, hand the players a total of 30 tokens—10 of one color (representing the cattle) and twenty of a different color (for the sheep). Each token represents a number of animals, not just a single beast. The exact numbers of animals is irrelevant, and tracking them would be an exercise in bookkeeping, not a gaming experience. Payment for the job is 100 gs per cow token and 25 gs per sheep token successfully delivered to the nobleman.

The tribute is due in 12 days, although the journey

should take only ten. For each day the heroes arrive ahead of schedule, a bonus of 100 gs is given. For each day late, 100 gs is deducted from the reward, to a minimum of zero. All rewards are for the party, not individual members.

PICKING THE BEASTS

Because the heroes will be responsible for overseeing the animals, the headman insists they choose the beasts. This requires a Common Knowledge roll from a single hero. Others may aid using the Cooperative Rolls rules. Clerics of Eostre Animalmother receive a +2 bonus, as do heroes whose background indicates they were herders (not farmers). Clerics of Ullr have a +1 bonus.

On a raise, they pick healthy and easily controlled animals. In each event below, when the animals are involved, the party has a +2 bonus. Success indicates fit specimens of easy temperament. On a failure, they pick animals that are unfit or prone to wandering off. Rolls involving them are made at –2. A critical failure means the party has inadvertently chosen stubborn or easily panicked animals. Rolls involving them are made at –4.

EVENTS

The journey lasts for ten days. For each day, draw a card from the action deck. A royal card (Jack through Ace) indicates an encounter has occurred. Draw a second card and check the results below. A Joker indicates two events occur that day. Draw two cards and check the results below.

The events are handled completely abstractly, and use a system loosely based on the Mass Battles rules. In each event, one hero must be nominated as the lead. The lead can be changed each event, as naturally the best character for the job should be placed in charge. It is his die roll that determines the overall outcome. His comrades aid through Trait rolls using the Cooperative rules. The only difference is a critical failure subtracts -1 from the lead's roll.

Note that some skills are more appropriate to a situation than others are. For this reason, several skills may be listed, some with no modifiers and others with penalties. It is up to the characters to decide what skills they are going to use.

Many encounters have a difficulty die associated with them—the higher the die, the more hazardous the encounter. The encounter die is compared to the lead hero's roll. For each success and raise over the hero's total, the party loses one sheep token. For every two whole sheep tokens lost in a single encounter, a cattle token is lost as well.

Example: *The lead hero rolls a modified 4, while the encounter die is a massive 15. That's two raises! A total of three sheep and one cattle token are lost.*

Pushing: With time against them, the heroes push the animals onwards at a faster pace. There is a risk of killing weaker animals, but it is either that or arrive late and suffer a reduced reward. This may be done only once—the time saved is made up over the entire journey.

The characters must make Cooperative Vigor rolls at –2 to push onward at a faster rate. With success, they manage to save half a day. This is not enough by itself to warrant a reduction in encounters or earn a bonus, but it might combine with other similar reductions in time. A raise means they manage to save an entire day. With failure, the speed results in the herds becoming separated due to stragglers. Half a day is lost. On a critical failure, an entire day is wasted hunting down strays or through exhaustion.

DEUCE: MOUNTED ORCS

An orc war band mounted on dire wolves spies the herd and launches an attack. The orcs are more interested in stealing cattle than slaughtering the party.

Like all encounters, this one is handled abstractly—placing hundreds of cows and sheep on the tabletop is just going to clutter the battlefield. A standard **Characters in Mass Battle** roll should be made for each round of combat, as there is risk of injury or death. The heroes gain +1 per Rank above Novice, but there are no tokens involved. The lead then makes his die roll, which does not have to be a Knowledge (Battle) roll (this is still only a small skirmish).

The orcs flee after three rounds of combat, driven off by the brave adventurers or content with their plunder.

Lead Hero Roll: Arcane skill, Knowledge (Battle), Fighting, Shooting, Throwing

Helpers: As above

Encounter Die: d8 + Wild Die (represents the orc commander's skill)

Results: Failure on the *lead* character's roll is handled as normal for this adventure. Losses represent animals stolen or slain in the skirmish. Individual heroes suffer injuries as per the **Characters in Mass Battle** table.

THREE: FEED US!

A column of refugees fleeing a battle, the hard winter, or just in search of a better life, clogs the road. The leaders ask the heroes to spare some animals, for the refugees are starving and their journey has many days to go. There is no die roll associated with this encounter.

For this event, a sheep token is worth one point and a cattle token four points. The refugees need a total of four days worth of food to survive the journey. Failure to help does not warrant a Glory penalty—the animals do not belong to the heroes, and the refugees accept that.

FOUR: HAND THEM OVER!

Nobles belong to a feudal chain, which runs from lowly knight to majestic king. A noble and his warband are patrolling the area in search of orc raiders or heading off to war, and they require feeding. The noble is a local and ranks one step higher than the nobleman to whom

the tribute is being delivered. He demands the heroes hand over four sheep tokens and two cattle tokens to feed his men.

Lead Hero Roll: Persuasion, Intimidation (–2), arcane skill (*puppet*)

Helpers: As above, except spells like *boost trait* and *charismatic aura* may be used to directly aid the lead hero.

Encounter Die: d8 + Wild Die

Results: With success, the noble accepts half his initial demand. On a raise, he is content with just a single sheep token. Two raises, and he moves on without taking more than a few beasts—not enough to equate to a token loss. On failure, the heroes are again ordered to hand over the stated amount. Refusal is met with threats of violence. The nobleman is a Wild Card noble. His warband comprises two huscarls and four mercenary infantry per hero, regardless of Rank.

FIVE OR SIX: HARD GOING

The ground becomes difficult. It may be steep hills, craggy slopes, a bog, or dense forest hampering movement.

Lead Hero Roll: Knowledge (Area), Notice (–1), Survival (–2)

Helpers: As above

Encounter Die: d6

Results: Success allows the heroes to lose only half a day's travel. A raise results in no delay. Failure causes an entire day to be lost as the party must round up stragglers, rescue animals from dangerous situations, administer veterinary assistance, or recover from fatigue.

SEVEN: STARTLED ANIMALS

Something startles the animals, causing them to stampede. This event could be triggered by thunder, a wolf's howl, a hunting horn from somewhere nearby, or a messenger thundering past at a gallop.

Lead Hero Roll: Smarts (–2), Notice, Tracking (–1), arcane skill (*beast friend*, *detect cattle* only)

Helpers: As above

Encounter Die: d8

Results: Success keeps the herd together without losing the heroes much time. Failure leads to a loss of animals. Searching for lost animals proves fruitless—predators have taken them.

EIGHT: GOING OUR WAY?

A party of travelers is heading the same way as the heroes. They suggest banding together for safety, and offer to help herd the cattle. If the party agrees, the travelers stay with the heroes for the next 1d4 days or until the herd reaches its final destination, whichever comes first. During the time together, the other wanderers roll a d6 to support any Cooperative roll.

NINE OR TEN: SHORTCUT

The trail branches off in two directions. Any hero making a suitable Knowledge (Area) roll knows the right-hand path is a shortcut, though it is treacherous. Remember, Knowledge (Area) rolls suffer penalties based on the scope of the character's knowledge—the greater the area covered, the larger the penalty when trying to recall local details such as this.

Lead Hero Roll: Knowledge (Area), Notice (–1), Survival (–2)

Helpers: As above

Encounter Die: d8

Results: Success means the heroes save a whole day, and thus have one less encounter. Failure leads to a loss of animals as normal due to falling off a cliff, drowning in a marsh, becoming lost, and so on.

JACK: THICK FOG

As the morning breaks, a mist begins to rise from the cold, damp ground. Within the hour, the mist is fully formed and visibility has been reduced to only a few dozen feet—there is a serious risk the herd will become separated in the mist. Sounds are muffled, visibility is poor, the damp air negates smells, and finding the dispersed animals presents a difficult task.

Lead Hero Roll: Smarts (–4), Notice (–2), Tracking (–2), arcane skill (*beast friend*, *detect cattle* only)

Helpers: As above

Encounter Die: d10

Results: Success keeps the herd together without losing the heroes much time. Failure leads to a loss of animals. Searching for lost animals proves fruitless—predators have taken them.

QUEEN: BLIZZARD/SEVERE STORM

Heroes caught in a blizzard or severe storm must make a Vigor roll at –2 every hour until they find shelter. A typical storm lasts 1d4+1 hours. Finding shelter is handled as below.

Lead Hero Roll: Knowledge (Area) (–2), Survival (–4). One roll may be made per hour.

Helpers: As above

Encounter Die: None

Results: For each hour the Survival roll is failed, one sheep token is lost as animals wander off, freeze to death, or are struck by lightning. Every two hours, a cattle token is discarded as well.

KING: RIVER

A fast flowing river blocks the party's progress. The normally crossable ford is now swollen with snowmelt or rain. The water is only waist deep, but it is running fast and strong. A character making a suitable Knowledge (Area) roll knows there is another crossing point, but it means adding a day to the journey (and another en-

counter). What the adventurer does not know is whether the second ford is also swollen. In fact, it too is a raging torrent.

Boating may only be used if the heroes accept a one-day delay. This accounts for building a strong raft and numerous trips ferrying small numbers of animals across.

Lead Hero Roll: Boating (–2), Strength (–4), Swimming

Helpers: As above

Encounter Die: d10

Results: With success, a handful of sheep and a cow or two are lost, but not enough to warrant forfeiting a token. Failure leads to loss of animals as normal. The poor beasts are swept away and dashed against rocks or they drown in the turbulent water.

ACE: WILD CATTLE

Cresting a steep hill, the heroes catch sight of apparently unguarded cattle grazing nearby. A successful Notice roll determines they are wild, and thus taking them is no crime.

If they have lost any cows, this is a good chance to increase their numbers, and if they have managed to avoid the loss of any beasts, (all praise Eostre Animalmother) they can increase the tribute, keep them as extra profit, or take them back to the village to help offset the high taxation.

Rounding up the cattle requires cooperation—a bunch of adventurers running individually around after cattle may catch one or two each at most, but the rest will scatter.

Lead Hero Roll: Hero's choice. For instance, one may use Agility (herding the cattle) or Smarts (herding the cattle with clever tactics or knowledge of herding techniques), while a warrior might favor Strength (wrestling cattle) or Vigor (for overall endurance). Throwing can be used if the party has rope, and Riding (for mounted characters) is handy for outrunning the cattle and herding them together. Heroes with direct access to any of the following spells may use their arcane skill: *barrier*, *beast friend*, *entangle*, *farsight*, *fly*, *speed*, and *summon beast*. Other spells are permissible only at the GM's discretion and must be directly useful in *catching* cows.

Helpers: As above

Encounter Die: d8

Results: Each success and raise the heroes score above the encounter die nets the party one cattle token, to a maximum of +4 tokens. There is no drawback for losing the contest.

For the purposes of balancing the tribute, one additional cattle token counts as four sheep tokens. The nobleman will begrudgingly accept more cattle than he asked for, so long as the overall value is the same.

AFTERMATH

The rewards for successfully completing this adventure are as per the introductory text. Glory is as per the table below. All awards are cumulative.

Glory	Earned For
+1	Giving any refugees 4 tokens worth of animals
+1	Per two tokens of excess cattle returned to the village (max +5 bonus)
–2	Tribute was late
+1	15+ tokens of sheep are delivered
+1	8+ tokens of cattle are delivered
+1	10+ tokens of cattle are delivered
–1	8 or fewer tokens of sheep are delivered
–1	For each token of cattle below 5 delivered

THE HAUNTED WOODS

Shortly after sunset while camping near a forest, the characters spy a pale, white light approaching their camp. As the light draws nearer, a figure becomes visible.

Seated on a jet-black horse is a knight. Clad in black chain mail, which glistens with an unearthly shine, the figure holds a midnight blue standard displaying a silvery spider web symbol in his right hand. Despite the breeze, the standard does not flutter. The mount halts some distance from you. The rider, his face concealed behind his visor, calls out in a hollow voice, referencing each of you by name.

"I am Morgwyn, knight of the Black Queen of the Midnight Court. My Queen requests assistance in a task and you have been chosen. May I approach your camp?"

A hero making a successful Knowledge (Fey) roll recognizes the title of the fey queen. Skalds may make a Common Knowledge roll at –2. She is an important member of the fey nobility, though often associated with the more negative side of the fey.

Asked how he knows the party's name, he simply replies, *"You are in my queen's lands. She knows all mortals who enter her domain."*

Assuming he is allowed to approach, the fey knight dismounts, sticks the banner into the ground, and walks closer. He removes his helmet, revealing a deathly pale visage of striking beauty. As he draws near, the characters realize his armor is not made of metal, but finely woven rings of black spider-web.

"Several months ago, by your record of keeping time, a creature entered the woods near the village of Dunskelly, a human settlement three leagues north of here. The woods are a favorite place for our kind to meet, and the presence of the beast was of concern.

"As is our way, a champion rode forth to slay the beast. Alas, our champion has not been seen since. The local animals report many strange deaths from an unknown source and plant life is withering. My Queen has determined that mortal agents are required to fulfill two tasks—to find the missing champion and to rid the forest of the beast.

"In return, my queen has promised rewards. First, no natural woodland beast shall harm you for a period of one year unless you first harm that beast. Second, through her power over winter she will lessen the snows within five leagues of a location you pick for a period of one winter. Third, each of you will receive a personal gift as a token of her esteem."

Sir Morgwyn's offer is genuine—the Black Queen is powerful enough to charm woodland beasts across Rassilon and dampen the effects of winter for a short while. The personal tokens, which are presented on completion of the quest, are rings made of spider-web. Not only do they grant a +1 bonus to Charisma when dealing with fey creatures of any type, but each contains a single use of *entangle*. This fires a web with an arcane skill of d12.

Once a deal is struck, the faerie knight remounts and departs. The pale light he exudes suddenly vanishes when he is 200 yards from the party. Any character trying to track the knight discovers the trail ends abruptly at the point where the light ceased.

Should the heroes attack the knight, their weapons and spells prove ineffectual. Morgwyn, protected by his powerful queen, fades away into the land of the fey and does not return. If the party heard his offer first and later go on to complete the adventure, they receive no reward for the insult of attacking the Queen's herald.

JOURNEY TO DUNSKELLY

During the journey to the village, the heroes encounter a merchant who peddles shoes and boots. He is missing his left ear, a result of a dispute with a noble over his daughter's chastity. If the characters mention Dunskelly, the merchant replies he has some information about the place. For a few silver scields, he tells the adventurers that a faerie monster is causing trouble in the woods just north of the village. Apparently, the faeries are playing a cruel joke, and are seeking to lure adventurers into a deadly trap. (This is false; the faerie offer is quite genuine).

THE VILLAGE OF DUNSKELLY

If the characters stop off at Dunskelly for any reason, they may decide to talk to some of the locals regarding the problems. Each hero who makes a successful Streetwise roll learns something of interest. Roll a d10 and consult the table below. A raise grants the character two rumors.

d10	Rumor
1	An evil faerie is living in the woods. A few local boys went in after drinking too much beer, but only one came back. He had an arrow in his arm and claimed a faerie had shot at them with superhuman speed and accuracy.
2	There is an area in the woods where no trees grow and animals drop dead if they enter it.
3	The woods are home to a faerie monster that has escaped captivity. The faeries sent a knight to capture it, but he never returned. I guess the monster is still out there.
4	A man of wood haunts the woods and drives away intruders, even animals and birds.
5	Somewhere deep in the woods lives a group of wizards who scare people away so they can practice their strange ways in peace.
6	Ever since the faerie knight entered the woods, the plants and animals have been dying. Some say that it is happening around a fixed point, but I reckon that it is a curse that is affecting the whole woods.
7	The trees in the woods are alive and attack people who travel in too deeply.
8	I don't think that there is anything wrong with the woods. I've been in there many times myself and I've never seen anything strange. People just have over-active imaginations and see what they want to see.
9	Many years ago, a wizard named Drennus entered the woods, claiming that he had the power to make wood come alive. He spent many seasons in the forest, sawing and hammering, working on his secret project. When he finished he came back to the village and told us he had to go back to his homeland to pick up some more materials. Strange thing was, he never did return. Some reckon that he left his project hidden in the woods.
10	The gods have sent a fearsome monster to punish us for our sins.

Aside from any information gleaned above, most of which is of dubious authenticity, the village of Dunskelly has nothing else to offer the party except a safe place to sleep at night. The inn, The Golden Lion, charges 15 silver scields per person per night, including a hot meal and a pitcher of ale. None of the villagers, regardless of the views on what is in the wood, will willingly enter the forest for any reward.

THE WOODS

The woods contain two problems for the party to deal with. The first is a basilisk, the monster the faerie champion was sent to destroy. The second is a wood golem, Drennus' Bowman, which was constructed (but not finished) here many years ago.

For each four hours of travel, have the party make a Survival roll at –2 as a Cooperative roll. With failure, they have a minor encounter (see below). Success indicates a major encounter. If the party runs out of rations, use the Survival rules to determine how much food they gain. Because of the basilisk's presence, there is a –2 penalty to the roll. Herbalists are free to gather herbs as they travel through the forest.

MINOR ENCOUNTERS

Roll a d10, consult the chart, and invent suitable descriptions.

d10	Encounter
1	**Rabbit:** The rabbit flees if approached closer than 12". An archer is allowed one shot to bag a spot of fresh meat. With a successful Shooting roll (made at 13") the party can eat rabbit for their next meal. On a failure, the startled rabbit bolts into the undergrowth.
2	**Unusual Herbs:** The presence of the fey has affected the woodland. Growing in a small circle is a single batch of herbs. If there is an herbalist in the party, he gets to decide which brew they are good for. The herbs grant no bonuses to transform into an herbal brew, but they remain fresh indefinitely. They are worth triple the usual price for dried herbs.
3	**Snare with Live Bait:** A trapper has set up a snare for the monster, using a young fawn. The heroes can ignore it, grab a free meal, or release it, as they so desire. No amount of patience is rewarded by the monster coming to investigate the bait.
4	**Empty Rotten Sack:** Dropped by a hunter several weeks ago.
5	**Old Log House:** Once used as a hunting lodge, the cabin has fallen into disrepair (though it is still a sound structure). Moss and vines cover the floor and walls both inside and out.
6	**Pit Trap:** Have the lead hero make a Notice roll. With a success, he spots the branches covering the pit and can avoid the trap. A failure causes him to fall through the leafy covering onto sharpened stakes below. He suffers 2d6+2 damage.
7	**Brightly Colored Flowers:** Regardless of the season, a small clump of flowers grows here. Their beauty is unearthly. If picked, they immediately wither and die.
8	**Fresh Deer Tracks:** A successful Tracking roll leads the party to a lone deer. The beast is nervous and it is impossible to get very close. See the **Rabbit** entry above for details.
9	**Fresh Carcass:** A fawn carcass lies on the track. It was killed only recently by a wild cat. The predator was scared off by the party's approach. Of course, the heroes may think the monster is lurking nearby.
10	**Special Herbs:** This is as per the **Unusual Herbs** entry above, except the herbs also grant a +2 bonus to Knowledge (Alchemy) rolls to turn the growths into herbal remedies.

MAJOR ENCOUNTERS

Some of the major encounters are important to the plot, while others are just mysterious locations the party can explore. Roll a d4 and consult the table below. Add a cumulative +1 to the d4 roll for each encounter after the first (so d4+1 on the second encounter, d4+2 on the third, and so on). This represents the party moving deeper into the forest.

d4	Encounter
1	Circle of Stones

2	The Pool
3	The Bridge
4	The Waterfall
5	Faerie Gateway
6	The Bowman's Domain
7+	The Zone of Death

CIRCLE OF STONES

In a small clearing stands a collection of standing stones. There are seven upright stones and three horizontal stones—the stones stand in a circle formation with three pairs of topped stones and a single stone. The single stone is engraved with peculiar markings that seem to make little sense.

Growing on the stones is a form of moss. A Knowledge (Alchemy) or Survival determines it is an unknown type. It is in fact faerie moss. This information can be gleaned only through an Investigation roll in a suitable library or by asking a woodland faerie. Added to an herbal remedy, it increases its potency. Herbal brews with a one-hour duration are instead increased to two hours. Any which allow a die roll, such as healing herbs or antibacterial herbs, have a +1 modifier to the appropriate Trait roll. There is enough moss for 1d4 herbal brews. Once the moss has been removed, it does not grow back.

THE POOL

A small, slow-flowing stream enters a tranquil pool. The water in the pool is quite clear and a few fish can be seen swimming around. Ducks can also be seen nesting near the water. The glade around the pool is remarkably peaceful and the undergrowth seems healthier than in other parts of the wood. Although there is nothing of special interest here, the heroes may decide to investigate the area.

THE BRIDGE

The trail crosses a wide, deep, fast-flowing river. A wooden bridge of weathered appearance but sound construction spans the water. Attached to the bridge is a wooden box with a small slot in the top. Carved into the box are words. Each reader sees the letters written in his native tongue. Illiterate heroes actually see pictograms. The words say, *"One silver scield toll per person."* The box radiates magic, but it is not a relic to which the adventurers can attune.

Party members who deposit money hear a small voice saying "thank you." Those who refuse to pay the toll get halfway across the bridge when it suddenly opens up and deposits them into the river below. They are quickly swept downstream and must start Swimming to avoid drowning. Flying heroes find their spell is automatically *dispelled* when they are halfway across the river.

The box has Toughness 10 and contains just 9 silver scields. Anyone who takes money from the box has his or her skin turned bright orange for a period of one month. This gives the thief a –2 Charisma penalty. A *dispel* casting against a d12 arcane die removes the taint, but only one *dispel* may be attempted each week.

The box and bridge were constructed by the fey. They do not need the money for any particular reason—the bridge is a test of honesty for those who would trespass in their woods.

THE WATERFALL

The heroes' route leads them into an area of forested hills. At this point, the river, which starts higher up in the hills, is already a fast-moving stream. It tumbles some five yards down a rocky escarpment before resuming its natural course. Behind the waterfall is a natural cave. Detecting it requires a Notice roll at –2. It is automatically discovered if anyone thinks to walk through the water. Unless the party takes suitable precautions, anyone entering the cave ends up soaked in icy water (see **Immersion** in the *Hellfrost Player's Guide*).

Behind the waterfall is a small cave measuring five yards across by eight yards deep by four yards high. It is a natural cavern, and has been used in the past by travelers as a shelter. Roughly in the middle of the cave are the remains of a fire (a Survival roll reveals the fire is wood ash with a little rabbit bone mixed in. It is roughly four months old).

Anyone who carefully searches the cave discovers, hidden under a rock pile, a small pouch full of dust, clenched in the hands of a skeleton. Simple investigation will reveal that the skeleton has serious cranial damage and several broken ribs. The cause of death seems to have been from a cave-in.

The skeleton is actually that of an earth elementalist who was in the area looking for a gateway into the faerie realm. Whilst staying in the cave he was ambushed by earth faeries and killed in a cave-in of their making.

The dust is a magical powder (an alchemical device). When sprinkled, it covers a Large Burst Template. Any hidden or secret locations within the area of effect are revealed in a glowing outline (a *detect secret doors* spell). There is enough dust for three uses.

FAERIE GATEWAY

Standing alone in the woods are two standing stones topped by a third stone to form a simple gateway. The two pillar stones are covered in typical Saxa-style knot work patterns but have no other markings. The stones form the boundary to the local faerie realm, a land that exists outside the physical world the party inhabits. It is within this land that the faerie who hired the party dwells. Many plants and trees in the surrounding area are covered in dead patches, which are slowly growing in size.

Walking through the gateway has no effect—only the fey or those they invite can use the portal for its intended means. It radiates magic.

THE BOWMAN'S DOMAIN

Within this area stands a wooden golem archer, a creation of the mage Drennus. The party begins 48" from the golem, which is concealed by moss and vines growing on its wooden body. Have the party make Notice rolls. Those who fail are Surprised. The archer gets the Drop until it is detected—the party knows they are under attack, but not from where. Because of this, and its unerring accuracy, the heroes will need to use trees and logs as cover to avoid being massacred.

Terrain: The area is thick with trees and dense ground vegetation. Detecting the bowman is not easy—it is made of wood and now covered with vines and moss. The penalties are –1 (1–12"), –2, (13–24"), and –4 (25–48"). It cannot be detected at greater distances, having blended in completely with the landscape.

Monsters: The only creature present is the bowman. It follows its last order to the letter—attack anyone who enters range who is not its master.

Ⓜ **Drennus' Bowman:** See page 174.

Tactics: The golem is incapable of movement, so it can never change position or make use of cover. It simply keeps firing at viable targets until it runs out of arrows. However, it does possess some intelligence. If presented with a target behind cover and a target in the open, it aims for the easier of the two.

THE ZONE OF DEATH

Within this area are obvious signs that something is very wrong within the woods. All of the plants and trees are black and decayed, and the area is dotted with dead animals and birds. Nothing within the area is alive. As the party progresses, they run the risk of being spotted by the basilisk.

Deal action cards and have the party make Notice rolls. As soon as someone rolls a 1, regardless of the Wild Die, they are detected by the basilisk. If the Wild Die indicates a success, the hero spies the beast at the same time. Either way, the character is subject to the monster's Death Gaze.

Terrain: The battlefield measure 24" square. The basilisk begins somewhere near the center, hiding beneath a bush. The party begins 12" away. Tall trees, each occupying a 1" square, can be used as Cover. There should be a minimum of 30 trees, placed at random.

Monster: The basilisk, an unnatural creation, has wandered Rassilon for countless years. It came to the forest seeking somewhere to spread its death and decay.

Ⓜ **Basilisk:** See page 173.

Tactics: The basilisk is a fearsome (and fearless) beast. It charges the nearest hero and engages in melee, biting at its foe while simultaneously relying on its Death Aura and Death Gaze.

Treasure: After slaying the beast, a search of the area turns up the corpse of the faerie knight. It has been reduced to a withered husk. All of its equipment is heavily corroded and of no value.

CONCLUSION

If the party kills the basilisk, then the faeries keep their part of the bargain and pay the heroes their reward (they automatically know when the beast is slain). Characters making Common Knowledge rolls know never to thank a faerie for their gifts, although praising the gifts is quite acceptable behavior.

The villagers of Dunskelly are also grateful to the adventurers for their help, although their reward is more likely to run to a free meal and some drinks at the tavern.

BESTIARY

No stats are provided for the citizens of Dunskelly or the faerie knight. The villagers are no match for an experienced adventuring party, and the fey knight simply disappears if attacked.

BASILISK

Created long ago by insane wizards, basilisks are said to have been formed from serpent eggs hatched by a cockerel. These vile creatures, which appear as crested serpents, are surprisingly small given their deadliness. A second species, known as the cockatrice, has the appearance of a cockerel but they possess a snake's tail and fangs. These abominations were supposedly brought into life from a cockerel's egg hatched by a snake. Fortunately, basilisks are incapable of mating, and there are very few left in the Hearthlands.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d12+2, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d10, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities:

* **Bite:** Str+d6.
* **Death Aura:** Anyone adjacent to a basilisk at the ends of its movement suffers 2d6 damage. This bypasses all armor except the *armor* spell.
* **Death Gaze:** Victims of the basilisk must meet its gaze to be affected by its deadly power. When making any attack, a hero selects a penalty to his attack roll and Pace (he is not watching where he is going). He must then make a Spirit roll using the same modifier as a bonus. With success, he avoids the creature's gaze. On a failure, he suffers an automatic wound. There is no limit to the number of characters the basilisk can affect each round with this deadly power.
* **Poison Blood:** A basilisk's blood is highly toxic. When it receives a wound, every adjacent creature must make an Agility roll as a free action to avoid the deadly spray. Those who fail take a wound.
* **Size –2:** Basilisks measure only 12" in length.
* **Small:** Opponents must subtract –2 from attack rolls against the basilisk due to its small size.

* **Toxic Trail:** Where a basilisk walks, plants wither and stones crack. Attempts to Track a basilisk are made at +4.
* **Weakness (weasel urine):** Spraying a basilisk with weasel urine forces it to make a Vigor roll or die instantly.

DRENNUS' BOWMAN

Drennus was an earth elementalist with a fascination for living wood. During his youth he discovered a volume on golem manufacturing, an art outlawed after the Golem Uprising. In secret, he studied the tome, eventually coming to the woods to build a working golem. Alas, he died in a cave-in (see the **Waterfall** above) before his work could be completed.

This construct takes the form of a life-sized wooden statue of a bowman. He is "dressed" in a dark green tunic and hose, and has a sword carved at his belt. He holds a longbow in his right hand and has an oversized quiver strapped to his back. He stands on a wooden plinth about six inches deep, and his limbs are obviously jointed. These can be moved even if he is not magically activated.

The golem is attached to a wooden plinth, which prevents it from walking. As dumb as others of its ilk and programmed to follow orders literally, the golem has stood here for many years, shooting at anyone who is not its master and who wanders within range of its bow.

The golem's construction allows it to rotate a full circle at the waist, though its legs never change facing. Without warning, the statue draws an arrow from the quiver and fires. The quiver still holds 24 arrows.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10
Skills: Notice d12, Shooting d12
Pace: —; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (2)
Gear: Long bow (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: Str+d6)
Special Abilities:

* **Armor +2:** Solid wood.
* **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
* **Deadly Archer:** The bowman has the Improved Double Shot, Marksman, and Mighty Shot Edges.
* **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.
* **Slam:** Str+d4.
* **Susceptibility (Fire):** Takes +4 damage from fire, but not from heat.

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Paul 'Wiggy' Wade-Williams

Hellfrost

The Fey Tower & The Deadly Glade

RANK • SEASONED

Official Savage Worlds Licensed Product

THE FEY TOWER & THE DEADLY GLADE

BY PAUL "WIGGY" WADE-WILLIAMS

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THE FEY TOWER

This adventure is designed for a group of four Seasoned characters, but can be run with more advanced parties.

Most encounters are based on a number of antagonists per hero, and thus automatically allow for increased party size. Scaling for higher Ranks is easily handled. For parties with more experience points, add two additional Extras to a detailed encounter for each Rank (or whole 20 XPs above 80). For instance, if a party of four Legendary characters faces one kreana warrior per hero, the heroes encounter a total of 10 warriors (four because of the party size and another six because the party is a Rank higher than the scenario minimum).

The temperature plays little part in this adventure, but the GM should keep an eye on the characters' winter protection as 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.

PLOT OVERVIEW

For the past five months the inhabitants of the coastal village of Gairloch have been plagued by giant crabs. These ravenous crustaceans raid on to the land and steal cattle, sheep, and the occasional passing human. The crabs have driven most of the fish away and the villagers now barely catch enough to survive. They have come to terms with their "curse," but still try to seek the help of those that travel through the region.

The crabs are being driven ashore by a group of mermaids who live in the area. This particular species of giant crab normally resides far from shore, where they hunt on the seafloor, but something has caused them to move nearer inland—into the area inhabited by the mermaids. The mermaids, fearing for their own safety, herded the crabs ashore, and the villagers inherited the problem of how to rid themselves of the voracious crabs.

The trouble that caused all this in the first place is a band of kreana, unruly water dwellers who live in deep, dark waters. They recently discovered a submerged tower, built by humans long ago, in the crabs' traditional feeding grounds. Seeking to investigate the tower's mysteries more thoroughly, they began ousting the crabs from their hunting grounds.

ENTER THE HEROES

This adventure should be set along the coast of the Narrows or Inner Sea, both areas where the kreana dwell. The village of Gairloch can be placed in Angmark, Chalcis, or in either the Magocratic realms of the Principality of Darovia or Dukedom of Haldir.

The party's reasons for being in the region should be sculpted to fit the GM's campaign. Perhaps the last adventure finished nearby and the heroes are simply making their way to the nearest settlement. To tie in with the adventure's beginning, the local noble may have sent messengers to deliver a small gift to an old man who has reached a milestone birthday. The GM may seed an earlier adventure with news of disappearances around Gairloch.

WELCOMING HOSTS

The characters are following a coastal path. Night is beginning to fall when the party spies a collection of houses further along the beach. On approaching, they spy a small fishing village with a few outlying farms. Small fishing boats have been pulled up onto the beach, their nets laid out beside them. Even from here, the smell of fish is apparent. Sounds of singing and laughter can be heard coming from one of the largest buildings, which is situated near the high tide line. No one can be seen moving within the settlement.

If the party enters the great hall, they see scores of men, women, and children sitting on log benches around a central hearth, which is blazing ferociously. Everyone seems to be enjoying themselves.

The party is quickly spotted. Three men approach them and ask their business in Gairloch. Any request for hospitality is met with a wide smile. One of the men, Aimon ap-Milon, the local headman, nods towards an elderly man seated near the hearth.

"That's Old Gar," he smiles. "The gods have been kind, for he has just reached his 70th year. Come, take a seat and warm yourselves; I'll get you some stew. Gar!" he shouts. "More guests come to wish you well!" Gar forms a toothless, senile grin and raises a tankard to you.

Like many rural settlements, Gairloch sees few strangers, and even fewer heroes. Eager to hear new stories, the locals are extremely friendly, plying the group with food (fish stew and bread) and alcohol. Paranoid characters may suspect the villagers are being too kind, for they are certainly laying on excessive hospitality. The villagers do have an ulterior motive—to befriend the adventurers so they will help drive away the crabs without asking for too much payment.

Around midnight the citizens begin to drift back to their homes. Befitting their status as honored guests, the characters are offered sleeping benches in the great hall. Several partygoers (worse the wear for drink) are already curled up by the fire, snoring loudly.

RUDE AWAKENING

A few hours after the party heads to bed, they are awoken by a loud scream from somewhere outside. The cry is cut short, and silence again fills the night.

The characters must act quickly if they wish to discover what is happening. It is very unlikely the heroes are sleeping in their armor (an uncomfortable experience at best). Set up the map as indicated and deal action cards. On the first round, the characters are still half-asleep and count as being Shaken. There are no torches in the great hall—they have all burned out—but a hero can grab a still burning brand from the fire as an action. It also takes an action to open the doors.

Terrain: The night sky is cloudy. Lighting is Dark (–2). Visibility is limited to 10".

The first 1" of water is shallow enough not to impede movement. At a distance of 2–4", the water becomes difficult ground. At 5-8" all movement is halved and the characters cannot run. Beyond this, the heroes must swim. The crab does not suffer these penalties. Once the crab moves more than 4" into the surf it gains Medium Cover (–2). After 8", it cannot be attacked unless the characters dive underwater.

Monster: A giant crab has wandered into the village in search of food. Failing to find any fish, it was about to head back into the water when a woman, under the effects of too much wine, went out for a breath of fresh air. The crab snatched her up in its claws and is rapidly scuttling toward the surf. The woman is unconscious, but bleeding heavily. The Innocent Bystander rules apply, possibly giving the characters pause to withhold missile fire.

Villagers awoken by the scream remain in their homes—they can guess the reason for the scream and have no wish to become a giant crab's next meal.

Ⓜ **Giant Crab (1):** See page 1968.

Tactics: The crab seeks only to escape with its meal. If the heroes use ranged weapons only, the crab ignores their presence and rushes toward the surf. Should a character engage the crab in melee, the beast attacks with its free claw, but continues to keep moving, Withdrawing from Combat if necessary.

Trying to rescue the woman requires a hero to be adjacent to the crab. He must make a grapple against the crab's Parry as normal—the crab waves the claw around to prevent anyone snatching its meal. With success, the hero must make a Strength roll opposed to the crab's Strength to pull the woman free.

Due to her grievous wounds, the woman dies at the start of the 4th round unless her injuries are stabilized with a Healing roll or *healing* spell.

Continuation: If the heroes fail to spot the crab before it vanishes underwater, the only clues to what occurred are a blood trail and a series of strange prints in the soft sand. Clerics of Neorthe and characters who have encountered giant crabs before, recognize the tracks automatically. Otherwise, the heroes are unable to identify the prints.

The woman is not the only casualty of the crab attack. Old Gar, half-senile and looking forward to meeting his ancestors, decided to take a midnight stroll, knowing full well he might end up as a crab's meal. His disappearance will not be detected until morning. If the adventurers suggest forming a search party, the villagers tell them not to bother, saying only that, "*they've got him as well*."

Aimon invites the characters to his home and tells them of the recent attacks.

"It began a few months ago now," he says grimly. "At first they stayed in the water. We knew something was wrong because the catches grew less and less. We prayed to Neorthe, but he sent no salvation. Then they started to come ashore, probably because they'd eaten a lot of the fish. They'll eat anything—fish, dogs, people. But maybe Neorthe has finally answered our prayers. I mean, it can't be coincidence you're here now, can it? We don't have much money to offer such noble heroes as yourselves, but you'll have our gratitude and a safe haven if you ever need it."

Should any hero go down onto the beach and search for clues, they find a fresh human leg washed up on shore. It shows signs of being ripped from the torso and of having being chewed slightly. Careful examination and a successful Common Knowledge roll reveals it came from a person of advanced age.

SECOND ASSAULT

Around noon the next day, the village again reverberates to another scream. On investigating, the characters see a group of women rushing up from the surf. Close behind them are a number of giant crabs!

Terrain: The first 1" of water is shallow enough not to impede movement. At a distance of 2–4", the water becomes difficult ground. At 5-8" all movement is halved and the characters cannot run. Beyond this, the heroes must swim. The crab does not suffer these penalties. The fishing boats impede movement, but they can be used for Cover, and provide +3 Armor.

Monsters: With the fish stocks diminished and the occasional snatched human barely a day's food for a single crab, the beasts have grown ravenous. Unable to return to their old hunting grounds, the crabs have no option but to attack the village in search of sustenance.

The women were repairing nets near the surf when the crabs emerged. They seek only to flee the scene. The other inhabitants flee to their homes, leaving the characters to deal with the situation.

Ⓜ **Giant Crabs (1 per hero):** See page 1968.

Ⓜ **Innocent Villagers (2 per hero):** See page 1968.

Tactics: The crabs initially rush toward the women. Only once a crab has been attacked, whether injured or not, does it switch its attention to the characters. The crabs are not interested in a prolonged raid, and lack the brains to coordinate such an assault. Instead, each tries to grapple with the nearest prey. If successful, they begin retreating toward the surf. Victims dragged more than 4" from the shore are submerged. Each round, they must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue as if from drowning.

Continuation: Investigating a giant crab reveals strange marks cut deep into its shell. A successful Knowledge (Arcana) roll or a Knowledge (Fey) roll at –2 reveals them to be closely related to faerie marks. These particular ones appear to be runes of banishing. A character making a Knowledge (Folklore) roll at –2 recalls a story about havmandr inhabiting the Narrows. Clerics of Neorthe and mariners have a +2 bonus to this roll. If the heroes fail to recognize the signs or know the legend, then a local fish wife passes on the information.

CONTACTING THE FEY

Once the party learns of the fey's involvement, they may try to contact them. Should they not, the crabs make further attacks as above each day—the crabs exist in great numbers, and chances are the characters will be dead long before they butcher their way through the aquatic menace. Eventually, the villagers will demand the characters make contact with the fey.

Three are three main ways the characters may contact the fey, who are actually havmandr. Characters making a successful Knowledge (Fey) roll know the inscribed stone method—the other methods should be fairly easy to work out, given knowledge of suitable spells. The GM will have to play it by ear if the party decides to use other methods.

Direct Meeting: Havmandr respond favorably to those who enter their watery realm and converse with them in their natural environment. Of course, this requires suitable *environmental protection* spells.

Aimon arranges for a fisherman to either lend the heroes his boat or row them out into deeper water if the characters do not have Boating. On diving into the water, the explorers are quickly met by a lone and inquisitive havmand. Roll on the Reaction Table. Add +2 if a cleric of Neorthe identifies himself, +2 if a hero speaks to her in Fey (the preferred language of havmandr), and +1 if an adventurer is a lay worshipper of Neorthe.

On a roll of Neutral or better, the havmand listens to the party's request. She promises she will inform her superiors at once of their desire to meet. She instructs the party to wait near the surf at Gairloch after sunset.

A Friendly roll causes her to approach the party. She offers them urchins and starfish from a seaweed bag carried over her back. Refusal to partake of the simple meal does not cause offense.

Friendly Beast: Havmandr speak the common language of sea creatures. A *beast friend* spell capable of charming a fish could be used to request a meeting.

Since the spell allows only one-way communication, the havmandr must reply using other methods. Six hours after the spell is invoked, a large piece of driftwood washes up on Gairloch beach. Written in the local language are the words, *"The surf at Gairloch come dark of tonight."*

Inscribed Stone: Havmandr can be contacted by scratching a message on a stone and throwing it in deep water. Traditionally, silver coins engraved with Neorthe's name should accompany the inscribed stone as an offering to the god of water. While Fey is the preferred language, havmandr generally speak the languages of neighboring air breathers, on whom they often spy.

As above, the fey send a piece of inscribed driftwood. Tied to the wood by lengths of seaweed cord are four silver scields, each crudely etched with the holy symbol of Thunor. A Knowledge (Fey) roll reveals the havmandr are honoring Thunor, in whose domain the characters dwell.

TALKING WITH THE MERMAIDS

An hour after sunset, loud splashing is heard in the water. Peering out into the dark surf, the characters catch sight of three havmandr bobbing on the surface. The havmandr draw to within 10 yards of the shore, but come no closer. Two of the havmandr are male and armed with coral spears. Between them is an elderly female. On no account will the havmandr leave the safety of the surf. Any attacks or threats cause them to dive into the water.

"Greetings, air breathers, and peace in the name of Neorthe. I am Yselda, an elder of my people. Whom do I address and why have you summoned us?"

Once introductions are complete and the giant crab problem explained, the characters can question Yselda. Likely questions and the mermaid's answers are given below.

Q: Why are you sending giant crabs to trouble Gairloch?

A: *"We are not the source of your problem. A thousand tides ago we noticed the crabs were leaving their normal hunting grounds in the deep waters where the tides start, and were beginning to move into our domain. Food is scarce enough for us and we could not cope with the crabs and their voracious appetites. In a bid to rid ourselves of them we drove them further towards the earth land. We did not know that they would become a danger to your waterless lives."*

Q: What caused the crab's migration?

A: *"We share the waters with the kreana, a vile race who worship a shark god. They are behind the migration."*

Q: Why are the kreana moving the crabs?

A: *"Far out to sea, in an area forbidden to us, stands a tower of stone, wrought by the hands of a powerful and cruel fey lord. It appeared in the waters many generations ago. We consider it an accursed place. The kreana wish to explore the tower and mine its secrets for use in their war against all air breathers, but it lay within the crab's hunting grounds. With the crab's now moved on, they are free to do as they wish."*

Q: Why don't you fight the kreana?

A: *"They are mighty warriors, skilled at the hunt, we are not. What is to be gained from senseless death?"*

Yselda will answer other questions, but the GM must determine her answers. She knows little of events outside of her domain and certainly knows nothing of life on land. On no accounts will she reveal where the havmandr live. Once the party has finished quizzing the havmand, Yselda speaks to them.

> *"A quandary has arisen, air breathers. If you do nothing, it is likely the kreana will eventually retreat from the tower, allowing the crabs to return. Your village will be safe again, but the kreana may gain new weapons to use against your kind. If you wish to prevent this, you must journey into our world and face the kreana, a task I would not wish on any enemies."*

Should the characters agree to investigate and not have access to suitable *environmental protection* spells, Yselda bids one, and only one, of the heroes to approach her. She hands over a seaweed box, proclaiming the characters will need the contents if they are to survive. She cautions the adventurers to use the contents wisely, for their powers are finite. Inside are enough alchemical *environmental protection* spells for two per hero. They take the form of large shells with a seaweed band attached. They are designed to be worn over the nose and mouth.

Regardless of whether the heroes need her assistance or not, she then provides directions to the area of sea directly above the submerged tower.

Once Aimon learns of the party's quest, he provides them with a large, sailed, fishing boat and a full crew. He calculates it will take three days to reach the spot the havmand indicated, assuming the weather remains good. Provisions and basic supplies, such as coils of rope and flasks of oil, are quickly gathered.

A STRANGE RACE

Two days out from Gairloch, the watchman spots several small objects heading directly toward the ship at great speed. The heroes are quickly informed. A few moments later, the objects come into clear view, and a strange sight they are. Three faeries of glowing countenance each ride in large shells pulled along by sea horses riding the surface of the water. Unless attacked, the fey slow their chariots, pull alongside, and hail the heroes in Fey. They switch to Anari if no one seems to understand them.

> *"Hail, strangers," one shouts. "I am Lord Waverider of the Seelie Court. I offer a challenge to you, if you be creatures of spirit and courage. Would you care to participate in a race across the ocean's surface?"*

Lord Waverider offers his own chariot to any hero who wishes to participate, for he will be the judge and therefore not be participating. The rules are simple enough—one mile out and one mile back. The sea horses know when to turn.

Have each member make a Knowledge (Fey) or Knowledge (Folklore) roll, With success, the hero recalls stories of such races, and how those who win are never seen again, taken by the faeries to serve them as charioteers. Lord Waverider scoffs at this if queried. If he wins, he asks only that the characters sail away from this area. Should one win, he promises riches, not kidnapping.

Up to two heroes may accept the challenge, and they will be racing against the remaining fey. Participating characters need to make Riding rolls, though there is a –2 penalty due to their lack of knowledge concerning how to steer the shell chariots and control the seahorses. The fey all have Riding d10.

For a simple solution, make just one die roll for each contestant. Whoever rolls the highest wins the race. In the event of a tie, roll again, with the high roller taking victory by a nose. An extended version can be run using the Chase rules. Lay out 10 markers to represent the course. Each marker equates to around 150 yards.

If the fey win, they demand the characters leave at best speed. Should they renege, the fey curse them—the next time the characters set sail, their ship *will* be attacked. A victorious hero is rewarded with 2,000 gs worth of alchemical devices of the GM's choice. These should be spells available to a cleric of Neorthe or a water elementalist. All spells have a water trapping, where appropriate.

THE RIGHT SPOT

On the morning of the third day, the fishermen report they are as close to the tower as they can be sure. The bottom of the tower lies 100 yards (50") down, a few minutes swimming, or sinking, when one has *environmental protection* to help one. To ensure a swift descent, the fishermen hand each character a heavy stone.

THE TOWER

Once on the seafloor, the characters spy their objective—a tall, slim tower standing upright atop a submerged mound. Where there should be a door, however, there is only a shimmering, silvery barrier. The tower lacks windows—only by passing through the strange portal can they enter.

Many centuries ago, before the Demongate Wars, the tower stood on the shores of the Mistlands. Its master, Vassmilus, an arkhwisard favoring the element of water, feared for his safety during the Wars, and sought a pact with a powerful fey lord with whom he had had prior dealings. Vassmilus, keen to depart as quickly as possible, asked for the fey to relocate his tower to an island in return for his service at some future date. A loosely worded pact is a plaything for the fey, and the noble took delight in warping Vassmilus' wishes.

The fey invoked potent magic and transported the tower to an island deep beneath the sea. Unfortunately for Vassmilus, he neglected to include himself in the teleportation. The luckless arkhwisard was left stranded in the Mistlands. The fey offered him a simple choice, perform his service now or try to outrun the slithering, crawling army of demons. Reluctantly, Vassmilus swore servitude, something he continues to carry out to this day.

When the fey moved the tower, the water rushed through, soaking everything. The noble quickly rectified the matter, and then undertook some major refurbishment. Instead of existing in the real world, the interior was transported into a pocket within the fey realm and expanded in size. The tower the heroes see is actually a hollow shell. "Inside" are chambers far larger than the outside dimensions would allow. Furthermore, there are no stairs. While many chambers are filled with air, some are completely full of water. While the characters' *environmental protection* spells are in place this is disorienting and distracting, but not deadly.

The fey noble lived in the tower for several centuries, before growing bored. Lacking interest in the mage's material goods, he left the tower with its contents intact. However, despite his departure he still considers the tower and its contents to be his property.

INTERNAL FEATURES

Many features are common throughout the workshop. For brevity, these features are detailed below.

Ceilings: Unless noted to the contrary, ceilings are 12 feet (2") high.

Doors: There are no normal doors inside the tower. Instead, each door was replaced by a shimmering wall of water, held in place by fey magic. These portals are a form of *teleport*, connected to each other via the elemental realm of water. When the fey noble was in the tower, he merely thought about his destination and upon passing through any portal would appear there. When he departed, the doors locked, allowing passage only to their last destination.

Nothing can be seen through the doors, which ripple like water. Touching one feels wet, yet nothing ever becomes damp. Moving through a door brings on a sudden sensation of drowning. The character must make a Guts roll each time or suffer the effects of Fear. Once a hero succeeds, he can overcome his instincts. Those suffering Fear have the penalty removed only when they succeed in a Guts roll after using a portal.

Each portal has two alphanumeric ratings, one written inside the room and one outside. When a character leaves a room by a door, he enters the next chamber by the door indicated on the outside of the door he left through. For example, a character exits the Entrance Hall through door 1A. He arrives in the Militia Barracks by door 3A. Should he turn straight around and walk out through door 3A, he does not return to his previous location—he actually travels to the Laboratory, entering via door 6A. Only by passing through every door will the party be able to explore the entire tower.

Should the party spilt up, the GM needs to keep a careful eye on their location—getting back together will not be an easy task!

Areas 2, 4, and 5 are symmetrical chambers—whichever door one enters through, the room looks identical. As such, the GM should not describe these chambers in terms of compass points—the characters lack this luxury. Unless they rearrange the room or mark objects to distinguish one side of the room from another, they simply have no way of knowing exactly which door they have walked through. To help the GM add to the confusion, it is suggested he draw these rooms out in advance of play and place them down in a random way each time they are entered. The GM should ensure he knows which doors are which, of course!

Floors: Unless otherwise stated, all floors are flagstone.

Furniture: Squares more than half-filled with furniture count as difficult ground. Heroes wishing to move under tables must crouch. In general, standing behind furniture provides Medium Cover (–2) and grants +2 Armor. Taller furniture, such as bookcases, blocks line of sight but provides a similar Armor bonus.

Stools and chairs are Toughness 6 (Blunt, Cutting) and tables are Toughness 12 (Blunt, Cutting) for the purposes of breaking.

Lighting: Unless otherwise stated, all rooms are unlit and thus lighting conditions are Pitch Dark (–4). The heroes will need to provide their own illumination if they wish to see.

Temperature: The temperature inside the tower is a constant 50° F (10° C).

THE KREANA

A short while before the characters arrive, several bands of kreana, led by a priest, entered the tower, searching for relics to use against the air breathers they despise. Each time the characters enter a room, draw a card from the action deck. If the card is a Jack through Ace, the heroes encounter some kreana. Check the card value against the table below.

A black suit means the kreana are already in the room and must make Notice rolls to avoid Surprise. A red suit means the kreana enter a few moments after the adventurers. In this case, the party must roll to avoid being Surprised.

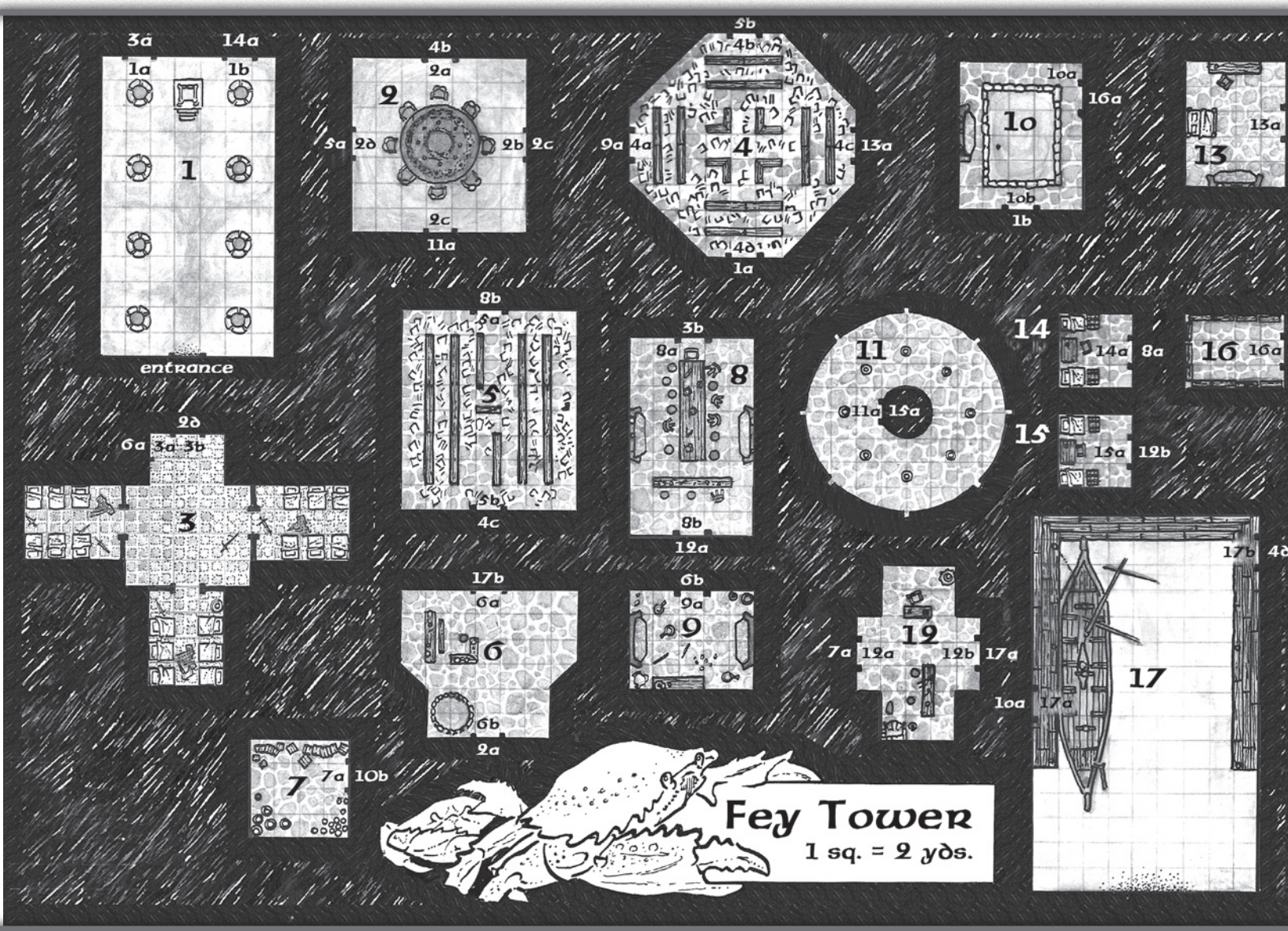
Card	Kreana Patrol
Jack	One warrior per 2 heroes
Queen	One warrior per hero
King	One priest, plus one warrior per 2 heroes
Ace	One priest, plus one warrior per hero

Ridding the tower of kreana requires the characters to slay three priests or 20 warriors, whichever comes first. The kreana are mystified by the strange layout of the tower. Currently they are more interested in mapping it than looting. Hence, the contents described in the room are exactly as described, no matter how long it takes the heroes to reach that chamber.

Ⓜ **Kreana Priest:** See page 1969.

Ⓜ **Kreana Warriors:** See page 1969.

LOCATIONS WITHIN THE TOWER



1) ENTRANCE HALL

The floor of this high-ceilinged chamber is made from a single piece of coral, worked to a smooth surface. The columns are also made of marble, and seem to grow from the floor into the ceiling. No joins can be seen on any of the columns.

At the far end of the chamber is a raised dais with several steps leading up to it. Upon the dais sits a coral throne bedecked in shells. The throne is in fact a powerful magical artifact of fey design and is discussed in more detail below. It cannot be removed from the tower.

The whole chamber is partially flooded and is three feet deep in water. The water cannot flow out of the portals until they are activated by someone stepping through them. At this point a few inches of water also pour through into the next chamber. The surface of the dais is above the water level.

Throne of the Inhospitable Host: The coral throne was literally grown from the chamber floor using powerful magic. The right-hand armrest has six shells. These can be depressed to produce magical effects. Pressing a button invokes spells as detailed below.

All spells are cast with a d12+2 arcane skill. Any variable factors based on a Trait use this value as well. Each spell can be used three times per day. Maintained spells last for one hour. If the person pressing a button does not verbally nominate a target, the spell aims for the nearest person in front of the throne, if applicable.

Button	Spell Effect
1	Three 2d8 *bolts* (they take the form of balls of solid water).
2	*Fatigue* (the victim's lungs fill with water).
3	*Obscure* (produces a cloud of ink, like that of a squid, just in front of the throne).
4	*Entangle* (strands of seaweed snake out to grasp the targets).
5	*Barrier* (forms a wall of water stretching across the entire hall, 2" in front of the throne).
6	Automatically *dispels* the effects of button 3, 4, or 5. The spell to be cancelled must be spoken aloud as the button is depressed.

2) COUNCIL CHAMBER

The council chamber is dominated by a large, circular table, around which are placed eight comfortable chairs. The chairs and table are badly rotten—reduce their Toughness by 4. Each chair takes the form of a four-tailed dolphin, with its flippers as armrests and its torso and head forming the backrest. The table is intricately carved with images of a sea serpent, stretching around the table to bite its own tail.

The floor is made of coral and is covered with a few feet of water. The water cannot flow out of the portals until they are activated by someone stepping through them. At this point a few inches of water also pour through into the next chamber.

Vassmilus used the chamber as a briefing room for his men-at-arms, and also as a meeting place for visiting guests and sea captains who delivered supplies. The room contains no ornamentation.

3) MILITIA BARRACKS

Vassmilus placed a great deal of weight on his personal security, and maintained a force of 18 soldiers. Unlike some other chambers, the floor here is made of plain sandstone.

The barrack chambers still contain some equipment, although time and the deluge has damaged most of it beyond repair. Pieces of armor, weapons, and items of clothing are all to be seen lying around. If the heroes spend 10 minutes searching the whole barracks complex they may find a few silver pieces. Those looking should make a Cooperative Notice roll. The final die value is the number of silver scields located.

4) ARCANE LIBRARY

Water damage during the initial flood ruined much of what was once an outstanding library. Although the water is now mainly dried, it once tore through the chamber, damaging the books on the lower stacks beyond repair. The floor is a messy slop of waterlogged papers. The books and scrolls on the upper shelves remain largely intact. All are written in Classical Anari. The Convocation will purchase the tomes of learning at the standard rate if offered them.

For each 30 minutes the characters spend rifling through the shelves, roll a d6 to see what they discover. Each volume can be found only once. A duplicate roll means the search uncovered nothing.

d6	Result
1	A tome of learning containing *barrier* (earth elementalism) and *environmental protection* (water elementalism). It is partially water-damaged—the Smarts roll to learn the spells is made at –2.
2	An alchemical scroll holding *water walk*.
3	An alchemical scroll holding *light*.
4	A tome of learning containing *energy immunity* (water elementalism).
5	A tome of learning containing *environmental protection* (water elementalism).
6	An alchemical scroll holding *healing* cast with a raise.

5) MUNDANE LIBRARY

Like the arcane library, Vassmilus' mundane collection suffered extensive damage. Many of the books are mundane works covering politics, geography, sailing, shipbuilding, history, and so on. A small few are more valuable.

For each 30 minutes the characters spend rifling through the shelves, roll a d4 to see what they discover. Each volume can be found only once. A duplicate roll

means the search uncovered nothing. Each of the special tomes is a tome of lore. As in the arcane library, the tomes are all penned in Classical Anari.

d4	Result
1	*A Bestiary of the Mighty Beasts Inhabiting the Oceans of the World:* This tome grants +2 to Knowledge (Monster) rolls, but only concerning aquatic beasts. It is covered in sharkskin.
2	*Collected Tales of the Fisher Folk:* Grants +1 to Knowledge (Folklore), but only concerning legends of the sea.
3	*Atlas of the Mistlands:* A rare tome, worth triple its regular price, this volume details the Mistlands before the mists fell. It grants +2 to Knowledge (Area) rolls concerning the Mistlands. A character who spends 2d6 months studying the tome (assuming 4 hours per day), automatically gains Knowledge (Area: The Mistlands) at d4. He cannot then use the book's bonus, however.
4	*The Secret Art of Manufacturing Potions:* Grants +1 to Knowledge (Alchemy) rolls, but only to elementalists and only when brewing potions.

6) LABORATORY

The deluge washed through the lab, destroying about a fourth of the valuable laboratory equipment. Despite the passage of centuries, it remains slightly damp. Aside from the usual benches, test tubes, retorts and the like used by alchemists, there is also a small pool, for use in testing water magics.

Thanks to its location in the fey realm, the pool is saturated with unusual magical energy—its magic cannot be detected by touch, unlike alchemical devices and relics, but it does register to *detect arcana*.

A water elemental lives in the pool, having taken up residence here when the fey lord moved in. It bursts out if the water is disturbed—check for Surprise.

If the water in the pool is mixed with existing potions, it dramatically increases the potency. Any potion created with a success is now treated as being cast with a raise. A character studying the pool for an hour may make a Knowledge (Arcana) roll to deduce this property. The water can be bottled, but it immediately loses its magical properties once removed from the fey realm. The heroes will discover this limitation only if the Knowledge (Arcana) roll was a raise, or through trial and error.

Although the laboratory is damaged, enough remains to outfit an alchemist's trunk. If such a collection is gathered and used to create potions, the Knowledge (Alchemy) roll is made at +1. Such a trunk could be sold for 500 gs.

Ⓜ **Water Elemental (1):** See page 1968.

7) STOREROOM

Crates, barrels, and casks are stacked against the walls. Although the chamber withstood the flood, the contents have spoiled. Anyone eating or drinking any of the contents must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue for the next 12 hours due to stomach cramps and nausea. The provisions provide no nutritional sustenance.

Lurking amid the crates and barrels is a hydros snake, a former pet of the fey lord. Since the noble departed, it has survived on the few fish which have blundered into the entrance hall and the few rats which survived the deluge. It is now starving. Any character disturbing the crates or barrels causes the snake to strike.

Ⓜ **Hydros Snake (1):** See page 1969.

8) DINING HALL

The dining hall has two large fireplaces, and two large oak tables arranged as a head table and a lower table. The deluge caused extreme disruption to this room, and the floor is awash with water to a height of four feet. There is also rusted cutlery, smashed dishes, and animal bones (pork leg bones, chicken carcasses, etc.). There is nothing of interest in the room.

9) KITCHEN

The deluge that swamped the dining hall also hit the kitchen, sweeping pots and pans onto the floor. Some tightly sealed jars of spices and herbs have survived untouched, and a cook may be able to make use of them in their own recipes.

10) BATHING POOL

Vassmilus was fastidious about personal hygiene. Once located on the high portions of the tower, the bathing pool survived the disaster rather well. A huge fireplace against one wall kept the room warm, but the water was actually heated by a magical pearl (a gift from the fey lord in a previous encounter) which was dropped in the water. The pearl is still in the pool, and the water is still warm.

Treasure: Sitting at the bottom of the pool is a magical pearl. The pearl is enchanted so that when dropped into water, it raises the temperature to a pleasing 100° F (37° C). The stone will actually function if dropped into any liquid that is comprised of more than 80% water. Once removed from the water, the magically-warmed liquid cools at a natural rate. The stone itself is never warm to the touch.

11) WATCHTOWER

This room was originally situated beneath the tower's spire and was open to the elements, the conical roof being supported on thin stone columns. After the tower was submerged, the fey noble enclosed the chamber with his magic and drained away the water, leaving it an unfurnished, undecorated circular room.

12) WORKSHOP

The workshop survived very well. The floor is almost

dry and the place is pretty much as it was when the tower was abandoned by the fey lord. The workshop contains a potter's wheel, a forge, and woodworking benches. A complete set of carpentry and blacksmith tools can be acquired if characters want to gather them.

Projects in progress shortly before Vassmilus was robbed of his tower were all concerned with boat repair—several oars stand in the woodworking area, and a rusting anchor lies near the anvil.

13) Master Bedchamber

What few belongings stand in Vassmilus' bedchamber are now heavily stained with black mold. A man of simple means, the arkhwisard had only a four-poster bed, a long table, and a few chests for personal storage in his room. His chests were removed and given to him when he entered servitude.

14 & 15) Guest Chambers

These rooms suffered little damage in the deluge. They contain finely carved wooden beds, tables, chests (empty, used by guests), and the like. While Vassmilus disliked entertaining fellow elementalists, he did grant sea captains (who brought him supplies) hospitality.

16) Armory

Standing in racks against the walls is a variety of melee weapons. All are corroded and rusted after centuries of neglect. If used in combat, a Fighting roll of 1, regardless of the Wild Die, means the weapon has broken beyond repair. If the Wild Die indicates a success, the weapon inflicts damage before breaking.

17) Boat Shed

This large, open chamber is flooded to a depth of six feet. Running around the top edge of the chamber, just above the waterline, is a rotting wooden catwalk. If a hero in combat on the catwalk draws a Club, he must make an Agility roll at –2 (as a free action) or his foot crashes through the wood and gets stuck. Freeing the limb requires an Agility roll as an action. Until it is freed, the character cannot move from that square.

The large doors that once lead to the sea have been replaced by the glimmering *teleport* spells. Like the front door in the tower, these lead out into the ocean, not to another room in the tower. Characters passing through the great doors appear 25" west of the main tower door.

Tied to the jetty is a knarr. Its mast has been snapped in two and the bottom has several large holes in it. Much of the wood has rotted from spending so much time submerged under the water. Anyone who exits the chamber by either smaller door takes two feet of water into the next chamber.

Aftermath

Once the kreana have been killed or driven away, the crabs can return to their natural feeding grounds, relieving pressure on both the havmandr and the villagers. The characters are free to keep whatever they find in the tower, though a cruel GM may have the owner return. Using his fey magic, he locates the heroes (seen as thieves) and sets out to recover his rightful possessions.

When the heroes return to Gairloch, the villagers hold a special beach-side feast consisting mainly of fish and crab, which the havmandr also attend (though they remain in the sea). The grateful havmandr gift the characters with pearl studded crowns made of coral, conch horns, dozens of oysters, and the like. Every hero receives the equivalent of 1,000 gold scields worth of goods, although selling it for that much could be hard given its unusual nature. The cult of Neorthe is the characters' best option.

Bestiary

Citizen

The citizens of Gairloch are primarily fishermen and their wives, though there are a number of farms inland which are technically part of the same settlement. Gairloch lacks a militia, leaving the citizens exposed to the dangers of the giant crabs.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d4, Guts d4, Knowledge (one Craft) d6, Notice d6
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4/5; **Toughness:** 5
Edges & Hindrances: —
Gear: Knife or club (Str+d4)

Crab, Giant

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Notice d8, Stealth d10, Swimming d8
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (3)
Special Abilities:
* **Armor +3:** Giant crabs have thick shells.
* **Claws:** Str+d6
* **Size +1:** These creatures weigh over 400 pounds.

Elemental, Water

Water spirits are frothing, man-shaped creatures of water or sea-foam.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7
Special Abilities:
* **Elemental:** No additional damage from Called Shots; Fearless; immune to disease and poison.

* **Invulnerability:** Water elementals are immune to all nonmagical attacks except fire. A torch or lantern causes them 1d6 damage but is instantly put out if it hits.
* **Seep:** Water elementals can squeeze through any porous gap as if it were difficult ground.
* **Slam:** Str+d6, nonlethal damage.
* **Waterspout:** Water spirits can project a torrent of rushing water in the shape of a Cone template. This automatically puts out any normal fires, or 1d6 ship fires. Creatures within the cone must make a Strength roll at –2 or be Shaken.

HAVMAND (MERMAID)

Mermaids (and men) vary in appearance from beautiful, young women to ugly hags with crooked teeth and seaweed-matted hair. Whatever their appearance, havmandr (hef-mander) are generally friendly to humans, especially those who swim to their underwater homes. Guests who bring them wine, their favorite drink, are especially honored. Havmand have also been known to thank fishermen who offer sacrifices by filling their nets with fish.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Riddles) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Stealth d8, Taunt d8
Charisma: +4 to –4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6
Gear: Dagger (Str+d4)
Special Abilities:
* **Aquatic:** Pace 8.
* **Riddles:** Havmand love riddles, and receive a +2 bonus to Knowledge (Riddles) rolls.

KREANA

Kreana (kree-an-uh) are a breed of "fish men." They are covered in gray or green scales, have tail fins, webbed hands and feet, and mouths filled with three rows of razor sharp teeth. They dwell amid sunken ruins or in sea caves off the coasts of Rassilon, in societies run by their priests. They detest all land dwelling creatures, and sometimes raid coastal settlements for "food."

PRIEST

Kreana pay homage to Carcharas, the Great Shark. Priests lead kreana society, and are fervent in their hatred of all air-breathers. Their favored spell is *smite*.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d8
Skills: Faith d10, Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Stealth d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (1)
Hindrances: Bloodthirsty
Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles)
Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1)
Special Abilities:
* **Aquatic:** Pace 10. Kreana can run while swimming.
* **Armor +1:** Scales.
* **Claws/Bite:** Str+d4.
* **Dehydration:** Kreana must immerse themselves in water (salt or fresh) at least one hour out of every 24. Those that do not are automatically Fatigued each day until they are Incapacitated. The day after that, they perish.
* **Powers:** Priests know the following spells: *beast friend* (sharks only), *bolt* (shark's teeth), *fatigue* (water in lungs), *healing, sanctuary, shape change* (sharks only), *smite* (bite only, increases size of teeth), and *stun* (blast of water).

WARRIOR

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)
Hindrances: Bloodthirsty
Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1)
Special Abilities:
* **Aquatic:** Pace 10. Kreana can run while swimming.
* **Armor +1:** Scales.
* **Claws/Bite:** Str+d4.
* **Dehydration:** Kreana must immerse themselves in salt water at least one hour out of every 24. Those that do not are automatically Fatigued each day until they are Incapacitated. The day after that, they perish.

SNAKE, HYDROS

The hydros serpent is especially vicious, fearlessly attacking prey many times its size. Covered in green and brown scales, a hydros lurks unseen in undergrowth for anything edible to pass by, whereupon it strikes suddenly. Its poison is rarely instantly fatal, but is normally very deadly.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d10, Stealth d10
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 4
Special Abilities:
* **Bite:** Strength.
* **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
* **Poison (–1):** The venom of the hydros snake causes its victims' body to rapidly swell. Anyone bitten, even if not Shaken or wounded, must make a Vigor (–1) roll. Failure causes the victim to swell up. His Pace drops by one point and his running die is lowered by a die type. When the running die type reaches zero, the victim can no longer run. This roll must be repeated at the start of each round, with failures further lowering Pace. Once Pace reaches zero, the bloated victim's skin ruptures violently, inflicting 2d10 damage.
* **Size –2:** Most venomous snakes are four to six feet in length, but only a few inches thick.
* **Small:** Anyone attacking a snake must subtract 2 from his attack rolls.

THE DEADLY GLADE

This adventure is designed for a group of four Seasoned characters, but can be run with more advanced parties.

Most encounters are based on a number of antagonists per hero, and thus automatically allow for increased party size. Scaling for higher Ranks is easily handled. For parties with more experience points, add one additional Extra to a detailed encounter for each Rank (or whole 20 XPs above 80) the party is above Seasoned. For instance, if a party of four Heroic characters faces one giant bee per hero, the heroes encounter a total of six bees (four because of the party size and another two because the party is a Rank higher than the scenario minimum).

The adventure is set in the Hearthlands and takes place in midsummer, but the GM should still keep an eye on the characters' winter protection. 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.

Allies: The GM will need to prepare ally sheets for Brude Golden-Lips, a cleric, the village militia, and a regular bee swarm. The text will inform the GM when to hand these to the players.

Monsters & Allies: When a foe is listed in the format "X per hero," the word "hero" refers only to Wild Cards, whether player characters or NPCs. It never includes Extras. Round down where necessary.

PLOT OVERVIEW

Many citizens of Rassilon nod sagely when told the cult of Vali's most insidious schemes are those of slow corruption, for what is more fearful than the slow poisoning of the soul by a hidden foe who dons the garb of friend or mentor? Yet there are a few who meet such comments with shakes of the head. No, they reply, that is not the worst. Worse still than honey-coated lies and hollow promises are the cult's overt schemes, the ones which cause misery and bring despair to hundreds or thousands of souls simultaneously. Corrupt a man and his family weep; kill a thousand and the gods weep.

One such overt plot is nearing fruition. Hidden away in the dark and leafy boughs of the Stone Forest, lies a hidden glade. Within this glade hangs the sickening stench of decay and pestilence. No brightly colored flowers grow here, as they do elsewhere; only plants of midnight-blue rise from the fertile soil. For a decade, one priest of Vali has toiled in this garden, feeding plants on the decaying corpses of disease victims, letting their pus and tainted, putrefying flesh feed his deadly blooms.

A great and terrible magic has been born within this garden of death, for the scent of these flowers is a lure to innocent bees. The black, sticky nectar, as equally polluted as the sap within the plants thick, fibrous stems, is a toxin to which the bees are irresistibly drawn. The fast-acting poison warps the bees, turning them from relatively docile creatures into voracious hunters, corrupting their stinging venom into a deadly fluid which harbors virulent and fast-acting diseases.

The pollen has a secondary effect, a gift from Vali—it allows the foul cleric to control the bees verbally, as if he had *beast friend* permanently activated.

The plan is as simple as it is bold—to create an army of killer bees which will be unleashed on the unsuspecting citizens of Rassilon. One sting might cause a rapid but painful death, four or five guarantee death. An army of men, no matter how skilled, might well boast it can slay that same number in an hour or two—an army of plague-bearing bees could perform the same task in minutes.

THE VILLAGE OF MEDETON-ON-STONE

The village of Medeton-on-Stone, usually referred to simply as Medeton, stands on the southern fringes of Spiderfell Wood. Like many Midmark settlements, it was founded after the Blizzard War, when the Anari all but gave up control of Midmark. At first it was a fairly

traditional agricultural village, growing cereal crops and vegetables, and raising livestock. Small quantities of ale and mead were brewed, enough to sate the locals' thirst, but not enough to export. Medeton would likely have remained yet another Midmark village, were it not for the visit of a merchant with a nose for fine drink.

Upon sampling the mead he immediately placed an order for a dozen casks, promising to return the next year for more. The merchant duly kept his word. Word of the excellent quality began to spread far and wide, reaching even to the noble courts of the central Marklands. Soon great caravans of merchants arrived seeking not just Medeton's mead, but also its ale, for the name of Medeton had become synonymous with quality brewing. Within a generation, half the industry in Medeton involved brewing mead and ale, and the fields of vegetables were replaced by acre after acre of hops, barley, and wheat.

Each year, on the anniversary of that merchant's visit, the village hosts All Drinks Day, a dual celebration to Gullveig (god of brewing and the most worshipped deity in Medeton), and the art of brewing. Brewers from far and wide attend, setting up stalls and supplying free drinks from dawn until dusk. So many brewers in one place attracts rich merchants, who get a chance to taste the latest brews and place bulk orders directly with the manufacturer.

Secret judges are appointed by the village council to mark each beverage and award it points based on several criteria. At noon, the best ales are awarded colored garlands of dried flowers. Competition is fierce, for the awarding of a garland attracts merchants, which leads to increased sales. With so much extra income at stake, many brewers invest sizeable sums in industrial espionage against their rivals. On the surface, they are friendly to each other, but the thin veneer of polite respect hides a seething sea of professional hostility.

Due to the steady drinks trade, Medeton is a wealthy village. Faced with the constant threat of orcs and bandits, the villagers invested in a deep ditch and sturdy stone wall to protect their thriving businesses. A permanent militia of 30 warriors, trained by paladins of Tiw at no small expense, watches over the settlement with steely eyes and grim determination. The wages are better than any neighboring community can offer, and the guards never want for alcohol. As a result, they are fanatically loyal to Medeton.

The village is run by a council of 10 citizens. Of these, eight are elected, their seats put up for reelection every five years. By tradition, five seats are always held by master brewers, two by farmers, and one by a citizen who is neither a brewer nor a farmer (though odds are he is related to one or the other). The remaining two seats are permanent positions, reserved for the resident priests of Gullveig and Var. The chairman is elected by the council members from among their number each time a new council is appointed. The current chair is Ale-Lord Brude Golden-Lips, a priest of Gullveig.

WELCOME TO MEDETON

When you arrived in the prosperous village of Medeton-on-Stone you expected to enjoy the alcoholic delights of All Drinks Day, a religious festival to honor Gullveig, the deity of brewing, and an economic opportunity for merchants to sample the various beverages produced by Medeton's master brewers. Such is the festival's renown that folk come from hundreds of miles away just for this one day. From dawn until dusk, every brewer and vintner in the neighborhood is offering free samples, and yet here you are, cooped up in a small room in the temple of Gullveig, awaiting the arrival of the local priest.

You're not quite sure how the messenger knew your names, but word travels fast in such lively gatherings. All you were told is the priest, Brude Golden-Lips, wanted to see you on a matter of grave importance.

At last the door opens, admitting a finely dressed man of middle years. He wipes his lips on his sleeve, though the tell-tale smear of golden liquid on his beard reveals he has been drinking mead. "My deepest apologies for the delay, my lords," he says warmly. "I was detained on a matter of importance. I am Ale-Lord Brude, priest of this temple and chairman of the town council."

Behind him enters a serving girl, clad in a woolen dress of black and yellow stripes. In her hand she holds a large tray, atop which are several mugs. She offers the tray to you. "Local mead," beams the man, "and a fine brew. Please, help yourselves. If you would prefer ale or wine, instead, that can be arranged." Once drinks are sorted the man dismisses the girl.

"To business," he sighs. "Each year on All Drinks Day we honor the bees that produce the honey for our mead in a special ritual. The celebrants gather around the hives, sing songs of thanks, shout to drive away evil spirits, and then leave offerings for the bees of honey-dipped bread. It's the most important part of the day's festivities.

"Earlier this morning, I went to inspect the hives, for as cleric of Gullveig such is my duties. To my alarm I discovered every hive was empty! This is a terrible omen, my lords, for without honey we can brew no mead, nor cultivate certain of our crops. I tried magic to summon new swarms, but my spells repeatedly failed. I thought all was lost, but then word reached me that a band of heroes had entered our small village.

"My lords," he says, leaning closer, "I beseech you to help save the ritual before all is lost. Our fortunes, indeed our very lives, depend on our alcohol trade. I do not ask a lot of you. All you need do is enter Spiderfell Wood and bring back a hive of wild bees. Once they are here, I am sure my magic will do the rest.

"In return, I offer you free drinks for your stay, not to exceed one week, and a cask of special heather-scented mead for each of you every year for the rest of your natural lives, to be gifted on this day. What say you?"

If the party accepts, Gullveig supplies directions to an area he knows bees inhabit. He urges the party to hurry, for the ritual must take place before dusk, and the morning already grows late. Questioned about why he cannot go, Brude explains that there are various rituals he must oversee during the day. These sacred duties prohibit him from undertaking the quest. If asked for advice on how to lure the bees back, Brude shrugs his shoulders and replies, "Steal their nest and the bees will follow. Just be prepared to run quickly!"

STEALING NESTS

The journey to the wild bee nests takes an hour at a casual walk. Sure enough, exactly where Brude said they would be, hang several nests. Strangely, all but one is completely devoid of bees. There are no clues as to the reason behind the bees' disappearance—the nests appear healthy and still contain wild honey.

There are two main methods for acquiring bees open to the party. Ingenious players should not be discouraged from concocting other viable plans. The first requires the use of *beast friend* with a trapping that allows bees. The nest counts as a Small swarm.

The second method is rather than more risky—the characters must steal the nest! How to handle bees is not a topic most folk of Rassilon know well. If the players suggest using smoke to make the bees docile, a Common Knowledge roll at –2 or a Knowledge (Folklore) roll must be made. With success, the characters know of this method. Otherwise, it is not an option open to them.

As soon as the party grabs the nest or employs a spell, successful or not, read or paraphrase the following text.

The air is abuzz with a loud droning. Swooping down from the clouds are a number of gigantic forms, bees with humanoid torsos! Each winged warrior is equipped with a long spear and glittering, honey-colored shield, and its torso is clad in glistening mail. From the rear of its abdomen hangs a deadly-looking stinger.

Terrain: No map is required for this fight. The GM need only liberally place standing trees along with a few fallen ones. The bee warriors begin 12" from the heroes at a height of 8".

The trees block line of sight but can be used for Cover. They provide +6 Heavy Armor. Treat movement over fallen trees as difficult ground.

Monsters: The bee warriors are servants of the Bee Queen, a powerful fey noble and servant of Eostre who has dominion over Rassilon's bees. The disappearance of the bees has not gone unnoticed in the fey realm. To protect the remaining hives, the Queen has dispatched squads of her loyal guards. Her orders were simple—protect the swarms at any cost. Only a handful of druids, and priests of Gullveig known to the Bee Queen personally, were exempted from retribution.

Ⓜ **Bee Warriors (2 per hero):** See page 1978.

Tactics: The bee warriors swoop to attack but do not land. Their spears give them a reach advantage, and they intend to use it. Each warrior remains airborne at a height of 1", within reach of their spears but safe from counterattacks by heroes with shorter weapons. If a bee warrior is Shaken, make an Agility roll. With success, it remains airborne. On a failure, it must land, unable to take off until it unShakes.

Continuation: Once half the bee warriors or half the party (whichever occurs first) is incapable of fighting by any means, the air is filled with a loud, fervent humming. No bee warrior reinforcements drop from the clouds. Instead, one of the warriors raises his hand and, in buzzing Trader, calls for the violence to stop.

"Cease hostilities, honey eaters," it drones. "Our great Queen has spoken. You may take the hive and go in peace. The bees within will not trouble you, and will accept Gullveig's offerings in place of your bees."

Unless the party wants to keep fighting, the bee warriors take to air without further words and depart. The characters can now return to Medeton with the hive.

BACK IN MEDETON

As the heroes near Medeton, Brude rushes out to greet them. He beams happily and performs a little dance if shown the hive.

"It occurred to me after you left that the bees might be rather aggressive. I used a ritual to communicate our intent to the Bee Queen, a fey noble who dwells hereabouts. I hope my pleas for clemency reached her in time and that you were not badly stung."

Brude listens to any tale of gigantic bee men and the sudden withdrawal. He ponders a moment, lost in thought, before continuing.

"I shall tell you more tonight over dinner. Time is passing now, though, and I must prepare the

hives for the ritual. One nest should be enough to appease Gullveig and the villagers. We'll worry about full repopulation tomorrow."

With that Gullveig takes the nest and scurries away toward the many hives of Medeton, calling on the heroes to go enjoy the free drinks until the ritual is ready to be carried out. Through magic, his apiarist talents, and a little faith, he manages to persuade the bees to take up their new residences.

The characters have two hours to spare. Medeton is hosting a great market. Equipment of Village and Town Availability can be purchased at prices listed in the *Hellfrost Player's Guide*. Any type of herbal remedy is available. Alchemical devices containing Novice or Seasoned spells can be purchased. All the alcohol the party wants is absolutely free, though filling up your waterskin is considered a breach of the spirit of the event. Such unruly behavior incurs a –2 Glory penalty.

As the sun slips west, loud horns blow. The crowd, drinks in hand, begins to make its way toward the hives. Once there, they form numerous concentric circles around the many hives. A ripple of excitement runs through the crowd, and hushed whispers of "the waggle dance!" can clearly be heard.

A comical but religiously important dance, the waggle dance is performed by followers of Gullveig on holy days. Participants bend their knees, stick their butts out, and walk around the hives, shaking their rears and buzzing loudly. This continues until each participant has walked around a hive three times in a clockwise direction. Any citizen asked will explain this to the heroes ahead of the dance commencing. Those who wish to avoid embarrassment may drop out, at the cost of 1 point of Glory for insulting Gullveig and the residents of Medeton, who have provided them with free drinks.

KILLER BEES

No sooner has the dance ended and Brude taken his place in the center of the hives to start the next part of the ceremony, when a cry goes up. Everyone begins to look north, toward Spiderfell Forest. Bearing down on the village is a huge black cloud, a cloud that moves against the wind, a cloud that buzzes. Panicked citizens begin to flee in all directions.

Terrain: The only terrain features are the 16 bee hives, arranged in four rows of four columns. Each is spaced 2" apart. Treat movement through a square containing a hive as difficult ground. The hives can be used for Cover, and provide +2 Armor. They have Toughness 8. The diseased bees begin 24" from the party.

Monsters: Plaguebearer Ansel, while still short of the full army he wants to ensure conquest, needs to test his creations before he advances to the next stage. Knowing that Medeton is not only the nearest settlement to his lair but is also hosting a celebration to Gullveig, to whom bees are sacred, the village makes an ideal, and ironic, target for his first test.

The normal bee swarm only participates if Brude invokes *beast friend* on the hives. It is up to whoever is controlling Brude to realize this tactic, though.

Unfortunately, Brude is about to encounter the downside to his faith. His faith prohibits the harming of bees or allowing bees to be harmed. That the attackers are mutated killer bees is neither here nor there in terms of canonical law. Brude has time to invoke one spell and one spell only before he commits, at minimum, a major sin by allowing the attackers to be harmed. If he has cast *beast friend*, the spell remains Maintained—the bees are informed of the plight by the Bee Queen (such is her power to communicate with bees anywhere in Rassilon), and continue the fight. Otherwise, the swarm remains in hiding.

Ⓜ **Diseased Giant Bees (2 per hero):** See page 197.

Ⓜ **Diseased Bee Swarms (1 per 2 heroes):** See page 197.

Ⓜ **Brude Golden-Lips:** See page 196.

Ⓜ **Village Militia (2 per hero):** See page 196.

Ⓜ **Normal Bee Swarm (1):** See page 197. The swarm will *not* harm the heroes or their allies, even if they are within the template.

Tactics: The attackers have no set tactics other than to kill as many people as possible. While the diseased giant bees are the most numerous foes, they are not the most deadly—the swarms move their full Pace each round, and each character they pass over suffers damage. Arranged poorly, the heroes may find themselves quickly overwhelmed by the vile swarms.

Continuation: Scores of innocent villagers and guests died in the attack. Their bodies, blackened by the rapid onset of plague (and leaking blood from every orifice) litter the village and are quickly covered. Leaving the militia to restore order and arrange for hasty cremations, Brude leads the characters to the temple of Gullveig for a private meeting.

"Such mockery, such blasphemy," Brude wails, reaching for the flask ever-present at his side and taking a huge gulp. "I have sinned to save my people. Oh, a black day indeed for Medeton and its residents." He shakes his head several times.

"Your services are required again, noble heroes," he says, snapping out of his dark mood. "You must travel into Spiderfell Wood and request audience with the Bee Queen. She alone must know what transpires, what unearthly force has summoned this dark and terrible curse. Beseech her to aid you in the name of Gullveig, for she gave ancient promise long ago she would. Then hunt down the perpetrator and deal unto him whatever form of justice you deem most fitting."

If the party demands more reward, Brude offers two casks of mead now and two more each year. He tries to avoid paying cash, but can be haggled to supplying the above and a one-time payment of 1,000 gs per hero for

their assistance. Negotiations over, he provides directions to a sacred spot in the wood, where the heroes must perform the waggle dance, moving anticlockwise this time.

Before the party leaves, Brude offers one last piece of advice.

"Do not let her form deceive you," he cautions. "The Bee Queen possesses more power than you can imagine. Her title is no self-styled flattery, either. She is a noble among her kind, and deserves that respect. Be mindful of your manners, or…well, just be mindful."

AUDIENCE WITH THE BEE QUEEN

The journey to the Bee Queen's glade is uneventful. If the party had an easy time in the previous encounter, the GM may wish to have them attacked by a few diseased giant bees—Ansel knows of the Bee Queen and has placed spies around her lair. Once in the glade, all the party needs to do is perform the waggle dance in the right direction and ask for audience.

A distant buzzing fills the air, drowning out all other sounds. The wind drops suddenly. The buzzing grows louder and louder, rising in pitch until it sets your teeth on edge. Stepping through the trees is a dark-skinned woman clad in a glittering cloak of black and yellow stripes, which shifts of its own accord as she gracefully glides toward you. Could this woman be the Bee Queen?

As she steps forward, a vast swarm of bees emerges from nearby boles. The swarm moves unbidden behind her, forming itself into a throne. Without glancing back, the figure sits, her cloak rearranging around her. Only now do you realize her cloak is made not of woven cloth, but of living bees.

The party may have been expecting some monstrously huge bee, but this seemingly innocent figure is the Bee Queen, a fey noble with powers beyond the ken of any mortal. She has no fear of attack, for with a mere thought she can vanish back to her own realm.

"Who summons me?" she asks, her soft voice emotionless, her words lacking all accent save for a barely detectable buzz. "Who dares invoke me? Explain yourselves or suffer my wrath, for I do not take trespass lightly, mortals."

This is the time for the heroes to explain the events that befell Medeton and to ask for assistance. Beseeching aid requires a Persuasion roll. This can be done as a Cooperative roll. Modifiers apply as below. Unless otherwise stated, these apply only to the lead hero's Persuasion roll.

Mod	Reason
+2	Mentioning the Queen's pact with Gullveig
+2	Showing the Queen a diseased bee
+4	Per cleric of Gullveig present
+2	Per cleric of Eostre Animalmother or lay follower of Gullveig present
+1	Per cleric of Eostre Plantmother or Thunor or lay follower of Eostre Animalmother present
+1 to +4	Good roleplaying*
–1 to –4	Rudeness, discourtesy, arrogance**

** The more courteous and verbose the roleplaying, the higher the modifier. However, the bonus is applied to the party as a whole, not to each character.*

*** Any insults or poor manners should be punished with a stiff penalty—the heroes were warned by Brude that they are dealing with an important noble. This penalty is applied per character, even if a hero was being polite. Thus, one rude adventurer will taint his peers.*

With any success, the Bee Queen recalls her pact with Gullveig and agrees to honor it. For each success and raise (no limit), the Bee Queen summons one bee warrior per hero to assist them in their quest. On a failure, she honors the pact to the minimum requirement, granting just one bee warrior per two heroes. A critical failure causes great insult—she renounces her pact with Gullveig, vowing bees shall never again produce honey fit for mortal consumption. Rectifying this *faux pas* will require another adventure.

Regardless of the outcome, she directs the party deeper into the forest. Even if direly insulted, she knows the mortals can serve some purpose with their soon-to-be deaths.

"Deep within this forest is a dark place. My spies cannot penetrate its depths, for those which pass beyond its boundary become lost to me, taken by another. It is within this place your destiny lies."

THE DEADLY GLADE

The march to the glade takes the better part of a day. As the party draws near, a foul stench of death and decay assails their noses. There is no doubt that what lies ahead is a dark place.

Terrain: The trees block line of sight, but can be used for Cover. They provide +6 Heavy Armor.

The areas of dense ground vegetation are considered difficult ground.

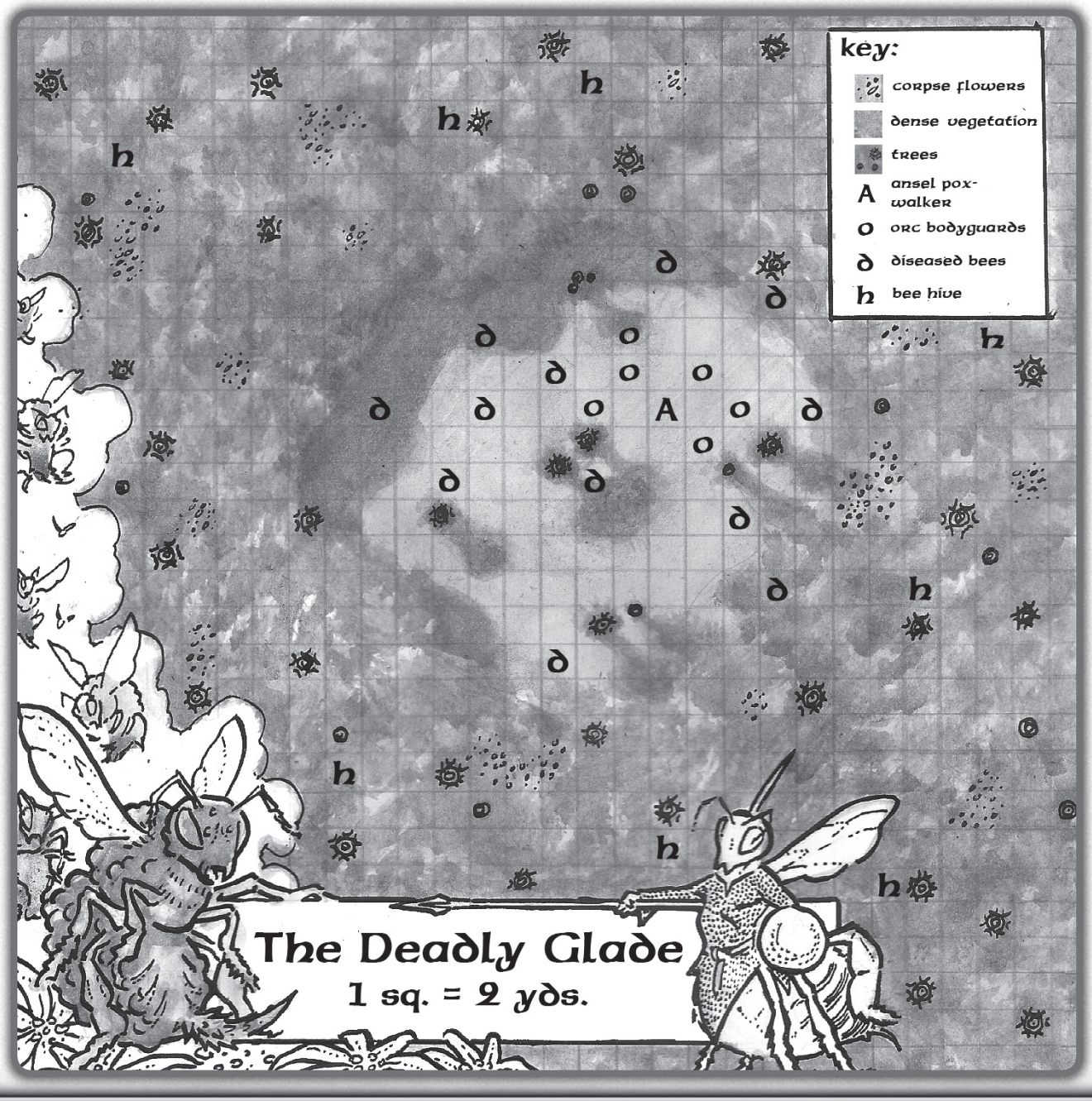
Concealed on the map are a number of hives (marked "H" on the map). Place one for each player character—ignore the other marked positions. A character moving within 3" of a hive may make a Notice roll as a free action to detect the hive. Once a hive has been spotted, place a token on the map to represent it. Each hive houses

a swarm of diseased bees. The bees begin on Hold. A swarm emerges only when a non-giant bee or swarm moves adjacent to their hive.

Stepping in a patch of corpse flowers releases a puff of pollen. The character must make an immediate Vigor roll or be Shaken (from a non-physical source). Any bee warriors on or adjacent to the pollen must make a Spirit roll. On a failure, they begin transforming into corrupted versions. They are treated as being Shaken for 1d6 rounds, during which time their Parry is reduced to 2, and may only try to unShake after the duration ends. When they finally unShake, they are diseased variants. They retain their normal stats, but their venom is transformed to that of other diseased bees. Furthermore, they switch sides, becoming allies of Ansel Pox-Weaver.

Monsters: Within the glade are Ansel Pox-Weaver, his orc bodyguards, and a number of diseased giant bees. Alerted to the heroes' presence by his spies (lone bees), Ansel is not taken by surprise. Unfortunately, his agents reported back only moments before the characters make their appearance—hence he has no spells prepared.

Brude Golden-Lips only joins the encounter if the party has failed to secure much support from the Bee Queen or is suffering badly. He should turn up at a dramatically appropriate moment. He has no spells at his disposal, having committed a major sin (and quite pos-



sibly a mortal sin). After much soul-searching during the adventurers' absence, he overcame his innate cowardice and struck out to join them, hoping to save his soul and redeem his status by partaking in the quest, which he sees as a religious crusade. Brude's arrival does not warrant the appearance of additional diseased giant bees.

Ⓜ **Ansel Pox-Weaver:** See page 197.

Ⓜ **Orc Bodyguards (1 per hero):** See page 197.

Ⓜ **Diseased Giant Bees (2 per hero):** See page 197.

Ⓜ **Diseased Bee Swarms (varies):** See page 197.

Ⓜ **Brude Golden-Lips:** See page 196.

Ⓜ **Bee Warriors:** See page 198. The number of warriors is determined by the audience with the Bee Queen.

Tactics: Ansel immediately orders his diseased giant bees to attack the intruders, while ordering his orcs to prepare their blanket-smothered hives. The orcs close the distance and unleash their hives on the second round, assuming a hero is within range.

Ansel's preferred tactics are listed below. Because it is impossible to foresee the heroes' tactics, this will be subject to change as required. For instance, if a hero manages to maneuver himself against a tree, he might use his *barrier* wand to hem the hero in. A spellcaster might be targeted by *obscure* to prevent him firing spells at the cleric.

Whenever the heroes are in melee range of Ansel, or look to be closing soon, he breaks off from the tactics below and invokes *aura*, adding a swarm of biting flies to his *armor*. Do not forget to include penalties for Maintained spells.

1st Round: Casts *armor*, coating himself in a swathe of bloated, blood-filled flies.

2nd Round: He moves within range and fires off *fear* at the toughest-looking hero. As always, appearances can be deceiving—a poor combatant in plate armor still looks like a mighty warrior. Spellcasters who have revealed themselves are also targets.

3rd Round Onward: Casts *stun*, using the above criteria. Should he fail, he uses his alchemical *stun* pebble on round 4.

Should he suffer two wounds, Ansel retreats. He tries to cast *sanctuary*. If the GM wants to bring Ansel back as a recurring villain, he first drops all his Maintained spells, thus lessening the penalties and giving himself a better chance of survival. If the GM does not care about Ansel's future, he keeps any Maintained spells in place to afford protection should his attempt fail.

BESTIARY

ALE-LORD BRUDE GOLDEN-LIPS

Born and raised in Medeton, Brude is the resident priest of Gullveig, chairman of the council, and a master brewer in his own right. Overall Brude has a good physique, though his stomach has begun to expand as middle age creeps closer. His brown hair and beard are flecked with gray, and more often than not, his beard is sticky with dribbled mead (his nickname stems from this frequent occurrence). While everyone in Medeton knows Brude is a coward, none know he is an alcoholic. Brude is not yet at the stage where he has to get drunk every day, but he does tend to overindulge.

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

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d6, Guts d4, Knowledge (Alchemy) d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d6, Knowledge (Craft: Brewing) d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Streetwise d6, Throwing d4

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Hindrances: Habit (Major: alcohol), Pacifist (Minor), Yellow

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Charismatic, Hedge Magic, Nerves of Steel

Languages: Anari, Saxa, Trader

Powers: *Beast friend* (bees only), *boost/lower trait* (Smarts, Vigor, Guts, Knowledge (Craft: Brewing) only), *feast* (alcohol only), *speak language*

Gear: Reinforced brewer's apron (+1), short sword (Str+d6), flask of mead, 4 x herbal healing remedies (bee stings)

VILLAGE MILITIA

Medeton's many breweries are a prime target for raiders and rivals alike. To safeguard the villager's main source of income, it maintains a permanent militia of well-trained warriors, paid for out of the trading profits.

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

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

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: Combat Reflexes

Languages: Anari, Saxa, Trader

Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), medium shield (+1 Parry), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), axe (Str+d6). One-fourth carry a single throwing axe (Range: 3/6/12, Damage: Str+d6) and one-fourth use bows (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6).

VILLAGER

Medeton's inhabitants are mainly farmers, though there are a small number of crafters and tradesmen. Unless a citizen has a unique stat block, use this one. Individuals the GM wishes to expand into more fleshed-out characters can have higher Traits or a few Edges and Hindrances. Do not forget to roll on the Ally Personalities table, as well.

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

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

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5/6 (1)
Hindrances: —
Edges: —
Languages: Anari, Saxa, Trader
Gear: Farming implement (Str+d4 if one-handed or Str+d6 if two-handed). Militia duty: leather (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), dagger (Str+d4)

PLAGUEBEARER ANSEL POX-WEAVER

Plaguebearer Ansel Pox-Weaver seeks nothing less than to spread disease, misery, chaos, and death, a noble ambition for one of Vali's foul clerics. Where others of his ilk are quick to rush into things (only to see their plans fail abysmally), Ansel is far more cautious and conspires for the long-term. 10 years of his life have been devoted to breeding plague flowers, and his plans are close to fruition. Soon his winged army will take to the skies, and shortly after, the citizens of Rassilon will fall to the ground… Never to rise again.

Ansel is a tall man with brown hair and a beard. Although a servant of Vali's disease aspect, his body has never been ravaged by pox. Thus, Ansel can walk where others of his kind dare not (for fear of being shunned or, worse, recognized as servants of Vali).
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d10
Skills: Faith d10, Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d6, Knowledge (Religion) d8, Notice d8, Throwing d8
Charisma: –2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8 (1)
Hindrances: Cautious, Mean
Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Command, Devotee of Vali, Level Headed
Languages: Anari, Hearth Elven, Orc, Trader
Powers: *Armor* (bloated flies), *aura* (biting flies), *disease*, *fatigue, fear, obscure* (bloated flies), *sanctuary*, *stun* (coughing fit)
Alchemical Devices: pebble of *stun* (must be thrown, produces choking vapors), *barrier* wand (produces a three-segment *barrier* within 8" made up of tangled vines)
Gear: Blessed robes (+1), mace (Str+d6), potion bottle labeled "healing" but containing black lung infected liquid - anyone drinking it must make a Vigor roll to avoid contracting the deadly disease
Special Abilities:
* **Plague Carrier:** Ansel is infected with red pox, though he exhibits no symptoms. Anyone who inflicts a wound on him in melee must make an Agility roll or be splashed with infected blood. Any hero so splashed must make a Vigor roll at –2 or contract red pox. See the *Hellfrost Bestiary* for details.

ORC BODYGUARD

Plaguebearer Ansel has enlisted the aid of a handful of orcs from the Thousand Sting tribe. Should his plan prove successful, Ansel intends to equip the tribe with his new weapon. Orcs are not particularly intelligent, and Ansel has persuaded them that the bees will not attack orcs.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6
Pace: 6; **Parry**: 6; **Toughness:** 8 (1)
Gear: Leather armor (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), short sword, axe, or mace (Str+d6), diseased bee's nest
Special Abilities:
* **Nest:** These orcs each carry a diseased bee's nest wrapped in heavy blankets. With a Throwing roll, the orc can unfurl the nest to Range 2/4/8. This deviates as an area effect attack. The round *after* the nest lands, a swarm of angry bees enters play
* **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.

BEE, DISEASED GIANT

Diseased giant bees lack the gold bands of their regular giant cousins. They are universally black, with large, pulsating pustules along their entire length. Their stinger is barbed and exudes continuous drops of dark, foul-smelling fluid. Victims of the bee's venom become infected with a fast-acting disease, which causes the body to erupt in black boils and the internal organs to liquefy.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d8, Stealth d4
Pace: 3; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4
Special Abilities:
* **Flight:** Pace 8.
* **Poison (+0):** Any creature Shaken or wounded by a sting attack must make a Vigor roll or receive an automatic wound. This is a separate injury for the purposes of Soaking.
* **Size –1:** Giant bees are 3' long.
* **Sting:** Str+d6, AP 1.

DISEASED BEES, SWARM

As with the giant bees, there are both mundane and diseased varieties. Diseased bee swarms are miniature versions of their giant kin. Unlike regular bee swarms, they are highly aggressive and very deadly. They carry the same venom as giant diseased bees.
Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d10
Skills: Notice d6
Pace: 10; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7
Special Abilities:
* **Mindless:** Unaffected by Tests of Will, Tricks, or arcane powers like *puppet*.
* **Poison (+0):** Any creature Shaken or wounded by a sting attack must make a Vigor roll or receive an au-

tomatic wound. This is a separate injury for the purposes of Soaking.

* **Split:** Bees only normally attack when provoked. This causes them to stay and fight even when a large number of the swarm has been destroyed. When a swarm is wounded, it splits into two smaller swarms. These are Small Burst Templates with a Toughness of 5. Small swarms cannot split.
* **Sting:** Swarms inflict hundreds of tiny stings every round to their victims, hitting automatically and causing 2d4 damage to everyone in the template. Damage is applied to the least armored location.
* **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. Bees are foiled by jumping into water.

BEE WARRIORS

Servants of the Bee Queen (a faerie noble with dominion over all bees in Rassilon), these hardened warriors have the abdomen, legs, and wings of a bee, but a humanoid torso. Their heads, however, are those of bees, not humans.

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

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

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: Combat Reflexes

Gear: Bee carapace chain shirt (+2), small shield of hardened beeswax (+1 Parry), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1)

Special Abilities:

* **Flight:** Pace 8.
* **Immunity:** Regular bees will never attack bee warriors, even if magically commanded to do so. The diseased bees, however, consider them fair game.
* **Poison (+0):** Any creature Shaken or wounded by a sting attack must make a Vigor roll or be paralyzed for 2d6 rounds.
* **Sting:** Str+d6, AP 1.

APPENDIX

GULLVEIG

Titles: Master Brewer, Mead-Thane of the Gods.

Aspects: Brewing.

Affiliations: Eostre (both aspects), Vali.

Symbol: A flagon.

Priesthood: Ale-Lords (priests); Mead-Lords (paladins).

Herald: None.

Holy Days: Clerics celebrate on any major feast day, when starting a new vat of brew, and when a brew is finished.

Duties: To brew ale and mead, to ferment wine.

Sins: (Minor) selling watered-down alcohol, producing tainted brews, getting drunk; (Major) allowing bees or beehives to be harmed; (Mortal) harming bees or beehives.

Signature Power: *Boost/lower trait* (Smarts, Vigor, Guts, Knowledge (Craft: Brewing) only).

Powers: *Beast friend* (bees only), *bolt, confusion, fatigue, feast* (alcohol only), *speak language, summon beast* (bees only)

Trappings: Gullveig's trappings relate to alcohol (*confusion* and *fatigue*) and bees.

Gullveig began as an obscure celestial spirit, a clumsy household servant in Eostre's heavenly hall, brewing ale and wine. While stirring a vat of honey, he accidentally upset a shelf of dried plants (yeast among them) and fruits, tipping the ingredients into the honey. Fearful he had ruined the vat, Gullveig hid, for the honey was destined for Tiw, who despite his fierce nature had a sweet tooth.

Eventually Tiw called for his honey and, upon sampling it, roared for Gullveig to be brought to him. The frightened servant was quickly found and dragged to Tiw's battle hall. Rather than cut Gullveig down on the spot for his mistake, Tiw praised the godling for his marvelous creation and demanded he make more, for this was a brew worthy of warriors. Eostre promoted Gullveig to master brewer, assuring his status as a minor god.

Gullveig's association with Vali is not one of choice. Although it was the Unknowable One who gave mortals the secret of brewing and fermentation, not Gullveig, it is Vali who encourages them to drink to excess. Alcohol also clouds the mind, making it easy to lead them astray.

Images of Gullveig always depict him holding a flagon. Often his beard is not hair, but a swarm of bees. Shrines stand in temples to Eostre in communities that keep bees, in breweries, vineyards, and in many shops selling alcohol.

Traditionally priests have brewed ale and fermented wine, while paladins have focused on mead. No firm ruling keeps this divide enforced, but tradition is a powerful force. Paladins are also more inclined to travel in search of new recipes and ingredients. Wine is big business in Aspiria, and most other brewers have secret recipes they wish to guard, so paladins of Gullveig are often employed to guard wineries and breweries, and to track down thieves. Skilled clerics can easily find employment as personal brewers to nobles and dignitaries, and the position is an honored one in most courts.

The lengthening winters are having a disastrous effect on honey production. Many clerics are leaving behind their regular duties to quest for a hardier species of bee. Many stories exist about "Hellfrost bees," but none have yet been found. Unless they are successful, within a generation or two, mead may be just a memory.

Drink is an important part of every culture. Nobles often hold festivals at which brewers from the local region compete. Prizes are awarded for strongest drink, most flavorsome brew, best color, and so on. While these events generally occur during the summer months, when the farmers are not needed in the fields and so can enjoy the festivities, each community has its own set days for hosting festivals. Regardless of the exact day, the local community refers to the festival as Gullveig's Day. Unfortunately, it often descends into drunken revelry, something clerics of the faith do not condone.

Character Guidelines: Clerics not only need a good Knowledge (Craft: Brewing) skill to make alcoholic brews, but also a good Vigor to avoid becoming drunk. As clerics regularly use herbs in their brews, many are skilled herbalists, and thus have the Hedge Magic Edge. Alchemy is a useful tool for brewers, as well, though their spells are almost always imbued into alcoholic drinks.

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The Deadly Glade — is hidden away in the dark and leafy boughs of the Stone Forest. No brightly colored flowers grow here, as they do elsewhere; only plants of midnight-blue. For a decade, one priest of Vali has been feeding the plants on the decaying corpses of disease victims, letting their pus and tainted, putrefying flesh feed his deadly blooms. These flowers attract bees which in turn are poisoned by the sticky nectar. The fast-acting poison warps the bees, turning them into voracious hunters. The plan is as simple as it is bold—to create an army of killer bees which will be unleashed on the unsuspecting citizens of Rassilon. Can this hideous plot be thwarted?

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SINS OF THE FATHER

INTRODUCTION

This adventure is designed for a group of four characters with between 60 and 75 XPs, but can be run with more advanced parties. Most encounters are based on a number of antagonists per hero, and thus automatically allow for increased party size.

As written, the main antagonists are spectral warriors. For Legendary parties and above, add one additional Extra to a detailed encounter for each whole 20 XPs above 60. For instance, if a party of four characters averaging 100 XPs faces one spectral warrior per hero, the heroes encounter a total of six spirits (four because of the party strength and another two because the party is 40 XPs higher than the scenario minimum).

This adventure takes place in the Hearthlands in midwinter. The temperature averages 15° F during the day and a bitter –5° F at night. The GM should keep an eye on the characters' winter protection. See the *Savage Worlds* rulebook for the effects of cold weather and the *Hellfrost Players' Guide* for how the rules work in this setting.

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

Important: One of the player handouts is a sheet of squares containing letters. Cut the squares out in advance of play and shuffle them around. Hand them out to the players only when instructed to do so in the text.

GM'S BACKGROUND

By –222 IR the Anari dominated the core Hearthlands from Alantaris Isle in the west to the borders of the Thunor Range in the east, and from the Icebarrier Mountains as far south as the edge of the Great Swamp. Everything within these borders was subject to the rule of the Emperor. Saxa culture, viewed as barbaric at best, was ruthlessly suppressed, though not even the might of the Anari army could completely extinguish it.

The imperial family was slain in the Blizzard War and much of the Hearthlands ravaged. With no central authority, many regional governors and military commanders declared themselves potentates of their territories. The once great Anari Empire fragmented, and the Saxa seized their chance to throw off the yoke of tyranny.

Minor rebellions had troubled the Empire since its founding, but this time the Saxa were coordinated and determined. Reinforced by the surviving Saxa cultures beyond the Thunor Range and Sigel Peaks, the Saxa unleashed bloody vengeance on their masters. Isolated by paranoia and refusal to aid their kinsfolk for fear of weakening their own lands, the Anari rulers could do nothing to stem the barbarian tide sweeping across the Hearthlands. Village by village, town by town, the Saxa reclaimed their lands.

By 150 IR the situation was nearing critical for the Anari who staunchly refused to acknowledge Saxa equality. Their armies had been repeatedly smashed and routed, and much of their territory was now in Saxa hands. Unlike the Anari, the Saxa did not seek to suppress the Anari. Those who agreed to live by Saxa rule were welcomed, though it would be generations before they would be trusted. Pressed on all sides, the Anari who would not bow retreated to what is now the southern Freelands to regroup.

In a final bid to bring the rebels to heel, the remaining Anari overlords finally pooled their resources. A great army, led by the Storm Dragon Company (a well-trained, hardened unit of fanatical soldiers), prepared to retake what had been lost.

Under the banner of the arrogant commander of the Storm Dragons, Count Cadmar ap-Valeray, the Anari marched to battle, driving east and south into the lands now called Royalmark. Time after time they encountered and drove back Saxa warbands with little loss. With each victory the Anari grew in confidence. With each step, they extended their supply lines and walked further into the Saxa's trap.

On the northern edge of what is now the Mounds of

Heroes Gone, the Saxa sprang their trap. Seemingly cornered in a narrow gorge, the Saxa drew up their lines. As anticipated, the Anari made straight for them, their cavalry charging ahead of the infantry to shatter the Saxa shield-wall. Knowing the Anari tactics, the Saxa had protected their front by digging small pits in the soil and covering them with a thin layer of grass. Right on cue, the charge was halted as horses collapsed, their legs snapping and their riders thrown or crushed. The Saxa charged before the dismounted horsemen could recover.

Finding their way blocked by a mass of dead and dying cavalry, the Anari infantry paused—a fatal mistake! Fierce Saxa warriors poured into the gorge behind the Anari and fell on them like rabid wolves. Of the 10,000 Anari who began the battle, a hundred lived to see the night fall, and all were members of the Storm Dragon Company. None surrendered, for exhaustion brought them to their knees, not Saxa blades. One hundred men survived, yet those who died on the red field that day were the fortunate ones.

The survivors, among them Count Cadmar, were shown little mercy. The Saxa commanders knew a single, decisive act now would crush the Anari resolve to continue the war. So it was that the Storm Dragons were tortured with hot irons and stones pressed into their flesh. Many cried for mercy, but their pleas fell on deaf ears.

The Saxa commander, Cenwalch Cerdicsunu, whom history remembers as Cenwalch White-Cloak, sent word to the Anari rulers in the west, promising them that no more Anari blood would be shed if they gave up their dreams of oppression and accepted the Saxa as equals. In the depths of winter in 160 IR, three months after the defeat of the last Anari army, the Anari governors sent their reply: The war was over.

The Storm Dragons were offered their freedom in return for swearing an oath to accept the cessation of hostilities. Despite having endured months of physical abuse, all refused. Knowing the prisoners would foment armed rebellion if released, Cenwalch had them all executed. True to his word, no Anari blood was spilled—the 50 men who survived the torture, including Count Cadmar, were decapitated with heated blades.

As the prisoners died, a comet surrounded by a dark, red halo blazed through the clear night sky. Some Saxa looked upon it as a good omen, marking the start of a new age. Others shuddered as the fiery, blood red orb blazed a silent trail through the heavens, for such celestial signs were rarely fortuitous.

Centuries later, the comet has returned to the skies of Rassilon and so have the tortured souls of the Storm Dragons.

THE VILLAGE OF REEDFOLDA

The inhabitants of Reedfolda believe the name comes from "reed field," a clear reference to the nearby swathes of tall reeds which line the banks of several slow-flowing, shallow rivers. The network of rivers flows lazily across Royalmark, following the line of the road to Moot Hill before they join with the turbulent waters of the upper Crystalflow.

In truth, the name has nothing to do with reeds. It is a corruption of "read," which means red in the Saxa language. Reedfolda sits on the edge of the Mounds of Heroes Gone, barely a mile from the site where the Anari army was massacred. Originally constructed as a fort, the village's purpose has altered over the centuries. Now it is a farming village, albeit a heavily defended one.

Reedfolda is surrounded by a circular wall measuring eight yards thick. The front is covered in four-yard high oak timbers, sharpened to a point at the top. The topmost yard forms a palisade, from behind which defenders can snipe at attackers. Behind the palisade is the wide fighting platform. Logs cover the flat surface, preventing the rains from turning the area into a quagmire. The interior facing of the rampart is covered in wooden planks to prevent the compacted earth from slipping. Whereas the exterior facing rises vertically, the interior slopes at just over 60 degrees. Numerous sets of wooden steps cut into the ramp provide access onto the fighting platform.

Built into the rampart are a number of stone-lined chambers. The width varies, but none are deeper than five yards. For the most part these are cattle sheds, though some serve as storerooms and as quarters for the thralls. Entrance to each chamber is through a heavy wooden door, each sturdy enough to keep cattle from escaping.

Although raiders are rare (the nearby mountains containing only a handful of small goblin tribes of cowardly nature), the village has never expanded beyond its impressive ramparts. To the south are the Mounds, to the west the foothills of the Hearth Range, and to the north and east are open fields and pastures.

Reedfolda's houses are typically Saxa. Constructed with two timber walls packed with earth for insulation, the houses are roofed with thatch from the nearby reed beds, rather than turf as is common elsewhere. Only the hall of the local noble, Thegn Egfrid Bercthunsunu, has shingle roofing.

Reedfolda boasts 30 houses in addition to workshops, temples, and the ale hall. An ale hall isn't quite the same as an inn. Although sleeping space is available for a nominal fee (typically 1 or 2 silver scields), an ale hall has no landlord. Rather, it is the communal hall, the hub of village life, where strangers who honor the laws of hospitality may rest for the night. While alcoholic drinks are commonly available free of charge (most communities at least brew their own beers and wines for personal consumption and to welcome guests), food is available only at the community's generosity. A central hearth is kept lit, and visitors are free to cook and consume provisions they have brought with them.

The village boasts two temples. The largest is dedicated to Eostre in both her aspects. The second honors Hothar. While Eostre's temple is the larger, it is the newer of the two. Hothar's temple was erected during the days when the village was a military camp as a symbol to mark

the end of hostilities against the Anari. It is still in use today—the thegn holds his court here. Shrines to Eira, Rigr, Tiw, and Thunor stand in the village square. All take the form of standing stones.

The current permanent population is 206. Of these, ten are the thegn's huscarls and 39 are thralls (21 male and 18 female). The general populace comprises 46 adult men, 43 adult women, and 68 children. Any citizen over the age of 14 is considered an adult in Saxa society.

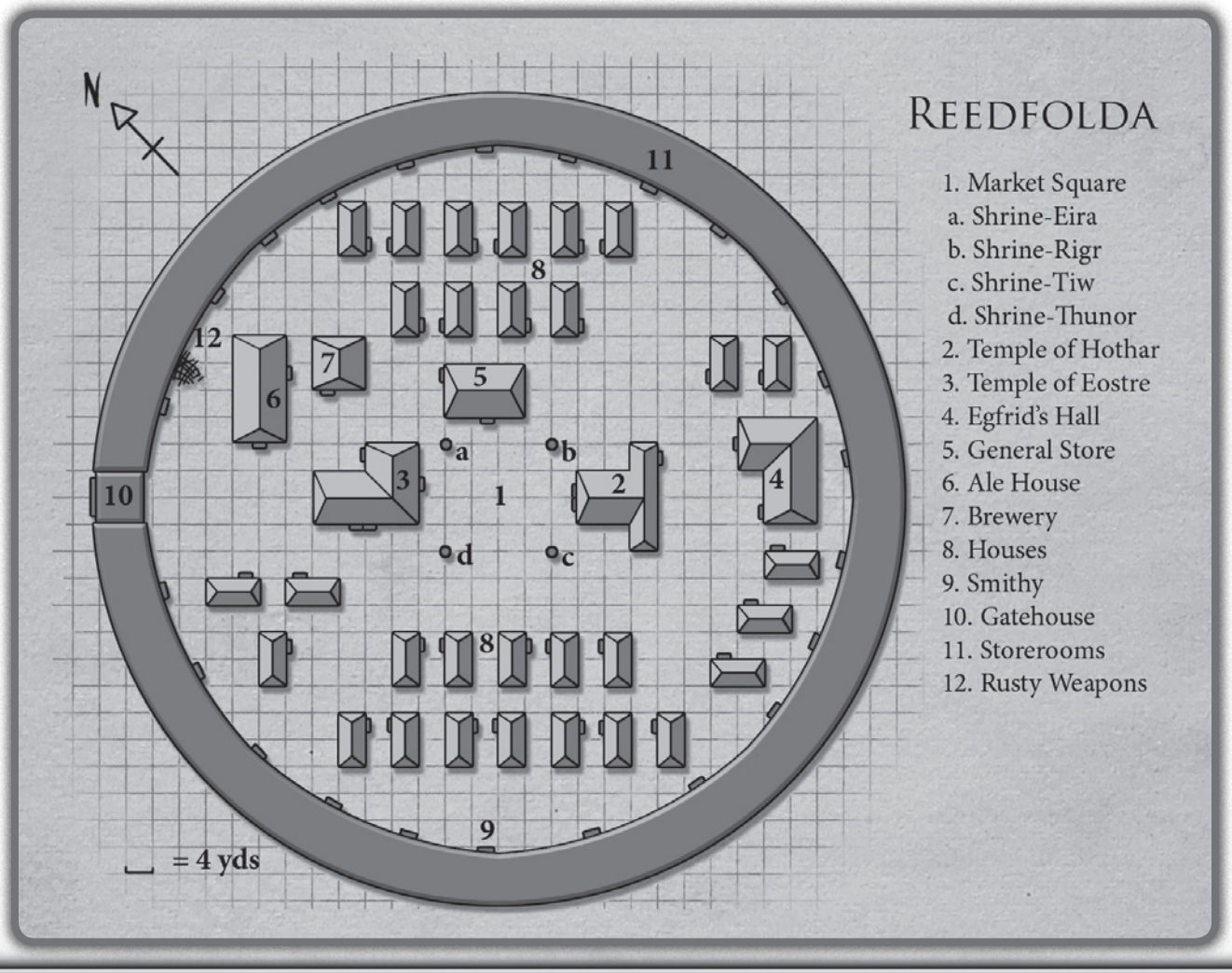
THRALLS

The citizens of Reedfolda maintain the ancient practice of keeping thralls (slaves), though they no longer raid to acquire them. Rather, most of the thralls are volunteers, displaced or destitute citizens who agree to servitude in return for a roof over their heads and hot meals. Although the slave trade is still active, the citizens of Reedfolda rarely acquire thralls in this manner—purchasing a slave only encourages the slavers to seek more captives.

In ancient days, thralls were treated little better than livestock, but in modern Reedfolda they have some basic rights. Thralls, although the lowest social caste, are treated as members of the community and are free to marry other thralls or free men and women. In the latter case, they are not automatically released from thralldom—the thegn must officially release them from service. This harbors back to olden times, but the tradition remains. Since most thralls freed in this manner are female, the process is akin to the custom of the father of the bride giving away his daughter. Thralls never come with dowries, though.

Similarly, a thrall may request permission to leave the village. This is normally granted without hesitation, though the thrall is forbidden from moving back to Reedfolda within three years unless they do so as someone who can provide for their own basic needs. That is, a thrall can't leave in the hope of finding a better life and then come back into thralldom because it didn't work out.

Only the thegn may free a thrall from service. Traditionally, a thrall is freed on a special day, such as the birth of a child in the thegn's family, on the ascension of a new thegn, to mark a truly auspicious event, and so on. Thralls in Reedfolda are never killed and buried



with their master on his death, though the custom is not unknown elsewhere.

PLAYERS' INTRODUCTION

The adventure begins with the characters walking toward Ravensburg, the capital of Royalmark and home to the High Cyning, from the south. They may simply be heading in that general direction seeking employment, or perhaps they are visiting kinfolk or carrying a message to a member of the court. Whatever the reason, they have travelled around the eastern border of the Mounds of Heroes Gone, being too wise to risk offending the spirits of the dead Saxa.

The snow-capped hills of the Mounds of Heroes Gone, the Saxa's ancestral burial site, are a constant presence on the western horizon. All of you have heard of the spirits that still walk the peaks by night, and discretion has caused you to take a lengthy detour. Behind you, the peaks of the Hearth Range are just visible through the falling snow.

As you trudge through the endless snow, you spy small, dark shapes wheeling in the sky—ravens, corpse scavengers.

Cresting a small hillock, you spy the reason for the ravens' presence. Four covered wagons stand axle deep in the snow. An additional two lie further away, tipped on their sides. Surrounding them are corpses, perhaps two dozen in number. They have been here at least a day, for snow lies heavily upon them. A dozen horses lie dead, still hitched to the wagons.

The corpses belong to villagers from an outlying settlement. With the fields frozen solid, they were headed to Ravensburg is search of work during the harsh winter. They had planned to spend the night at the nearest village—Reedfolda—but were ambushed by the ghosts of the Anari army. Although the comet is not yet fully visible in the night sky, it is close enough that a few spirits were awakened from their vengeful dreaming. Sensing the Saxa blood in the citizens, the ghosts fell on them, slaying almost the entire caravan.

After a few minutes inspecting the scene, the characters deduce several important facts:

* The corpses are frozen stiff, a clear indication they died many hours ago.
* The men were not only armed (nothing special there), but all had their weapons drawn when they died.
* The women and children are huddled together, as if sheltering from something.
* Not one corpse shows any sign of physical injury, though it is readily apparent to the seasoned adventurers that at least some died of fright.
* All the horses died of fright. (The horses pulling two overturned wagons bolted before collapsing, while the others died instantly).

A successful Tracking roll made at +1 (there has been recent snowfall obscuring the scene) reveals plenty of activity in and around the caravan, yet not a single track leading to or from the site of the massacre. Likewise, there are no arrows, broken shields, blood spatters, or other indications a fight took place.

The first wagon the characters inspect contains the sole survivor of the massacre—an Anari child. She is in shock, having witnessed the ferocious attack. She was spared not by an act of mercy, but because her Saxa blood is very weak (her great-great-grandparents had Saxa blood, but her more recent relatives were Anari stock) and she did not take up arms against the spectral warriors.

Coaxing her into saying anything requires a Persuasion roll at –2 or an Intimidation roll at –4. With success, the girl reveals her name is Becca ap-Madog. On a raise, she screams, *"The white men came with the dying sun!"*, and faints. No further information can be gained from her—recalling the memory of what she witnessed causes her to whimper and withdraw deeper into herself.

The girl wears a silver locket (10 gs) around her neck. Inside is a miniature portrait of a woman (her mother). Her frozen corpse lies outside the wagon. Clenched in her hand is a similar locket, containing an image of the frightened girl.

Treasure: Looters can acquire a dozen long spears, two dozen short spears, ten medium shields, three long swords, two battles axes, a dozen suits of leather armor, and 26 sets of furs. There is a total of 1,420 gold scields in coin and small pieces of jewelry. The contents of the wagons are typical wares a family on the move might carry, such as provisions, blankets, and so on. Assign a value of 2,000 gold scields. Assume characters who need to replace common gear with a value of less then 50 gold scields can find it in one of the wagons.

Aside from the mundane treasures there are several more useful items. Spread among the corpses are three Norn charms (unused), two potions of *healing* (each cures one wound), an arrow blessed with *aim* (the spell activates with a raise when the arrow is fired), a pouch of gray powder imbued with *gravespeak*, and a silver birch staff containing *sentry* (cast with a raise).

ONWARD

Continuing their journey north, Becca (assuming the characters haven't left the poor girl to freeze to death) begins whimpering loudly as the sun starts to set. She cannot be calmed so long as the party is in the wilderness. As night begins to fall over Rassilon, the heroes come across the village of Reedfolda. The many torches placed along the palisade and gatehouse are a welcome sight in the wintry wilderness.

The main gate is closed. Four huscarls man the gate-

house. As the heroes near, they are asked to identify themselves and their reasons for being on the road. Any reasonable answer warrants the gates being opened and the party welcomed inside. Passing through the fortified entrance, the party cannot but notice large letters carved into the gates. They read: "R-E-E-D-F-O-L-D-A." Make sure you spell the name for the players—this becomes important later.

A stable boy takes their horses and leads them to shelter within the rampart. If the party has mentioned the caravan, they are directed to the hall of Thegn Egfrid. Otherwise, the huscarls point them toward the ale house. Hopefully the party has the sense to mention the massacre.

EGFRID'S WELCOME

Thegn Egfrid listens to the party's story without displaying any emotion. These are hard times, and such tales are all too common. When the party finishes, Egfrid makes a proclamation.

"What fate befell the caravan I cannot say, though we lament the needless loss of any life. Until the snows clear, this child shall be taken into our homes and cared for. Then we will try to track her family. If we cannot, then the laws of our land require she be adopted and accepted as one of our own. I shall hear petitions only after the search has ended. In the morning, when the snows have lessened, we shall bury the dead with full rites."

"But now we must look to the present. We have among us honored heroes, whose names are known even in these parts. I welcome each of you to Reedfolda as friends, not guests. A grand feast shall be held in the ale hall to mark the occasion."

It isn't every day the village is graced by renowned heroes, and Egfrid intends to show his largesse to his people. Preparations will take several hours, during which time the party is free to explore the village. Aelfric, an elderly thrall in the service of the thegn, accompanies the heroes, answering any questions they may have.

Remember, no one knows the true origins of the village, and the story of the great battle was never fully recorded on Cenwalch's orders (*"We shall live in new times and fight new battles," he said. "This bloodshed was necessary, but we shall not retell its tale for the ears of those yet to come, nor revel in our victory."*)

Give the heroes the unlabelled map of the village and let them wander as they choose. Locales of interest are detailed below. The numbers match the key on the GM map of Reedfolda. Note that some information is only revealed once the ghostly Anari have made their first appearance. This is handled in the **Investigations** section. The GM should make up descriptions for other places the party might visit.

Ⓜ **Aelfric:** Treat as a Villager (see page 226).

1A–D) FOUR SHRINES

As well as temples to Eostre and Hothar, Reedfolda boasts four shrines. Each is dedicated to one of the more important Saxa gods, those being Eira, Rigr, Tiw, and Thunor. All four are standing stones, carved into long rectangles. Despite centuries of weathering, the masterful workmanship which carved the faces into towering representations of the gods is still visible. All four shrines stand 20 feet high.

Eira: Eira's shrine depicts four of her aspects. On the northern facing she holds an unraveled bandage (healer). To the east, a batch of herbs (herbalist). In the south, her hands clutch a barber's knife (medicine). And in the west, she cradles a dove (peacemaker). All sides show a young, comely maiden.

Rigr: The Watchman is depicted as a Saxa warrior on all four facings. His northern image has just the left eye open. To the east, he has both eyes shut tight (so as not to be blinded by Sigel each morning). To the south, his right eye is open. And both are closed on the western facing (so he can watch over Sigel during his nocturnal journey).

Thunor: Unlike the others, the northern face of Thunor's shrine is unworked stone. The other facings depict a Saxa male. His east facing image clutches a single lightning bolt, as does the one to the west. On the southern face he clutches two lightning bolts. In summer, warm winds blowing from the south clash with colder north winds, resulting in powerful thunderstorms.

Tiw: Like Rigr, Tiw is shown as a warrior. In his left hand he holds a round shield, whereas his right hand clutches a weapon. Each facing has a different weapon—long sword (north), battle axe (east), short spear (west), and mace (south). All represent typical Saxa weapons.

Any hero who worships the appropriate faith understands the symbolism behind the imagery automatically. Other heroes must make a single Knowledge (Religion) roll to deduce the meanings.

2) TEMPLE TO HOTHAR

The smaller temple is dedicated to Hothar, god of justice and truth. Cenwalch ordered its erection to symbolize not victory over the Anari, but the end of hostilities and a new beginning for his people. For the first time in many centuries, the Saxa would be governed by Saxa laws and a new system of order. Thegn Egfrid holds court here, rather than in his own hall.

Within the wooden walls are the main temple-cum-law court, a library housing a collection of law books and books of judgments passed by earlier thegns, a small scriptorium, and the living quarters of the lone Sword of Truth, Teobald ap-Angrot.

Ⓜ **Teobald ap-Angrot:** See page 226.

3) TEMPLE TO EOSTRE

The temple is divided internally into two distinct ar-

eas. The largest part, equating to roughly two-thirds the structure, is devoted to Eostre Plantmother. Here can be found the worship hall, a small library with books on agriculture and herbs, an herbalist laboratory, chambers and living areas for the priestess and her helpers, a basic infirmary, and such like. Carvings of flowers and agricultural plants adorn the door jambs and lintels; bunches of spring flowers waft their fragrant scent through the halls and chambers.

By comparison, the smaller section smells like an animal pen. Perhaps this is not surprising, for it serves as the village's veterinary practice. The interior is divided into stalls for animals, with a small herbalist laboratory stocking medicinal plants suitable only for animals, a storeroom, and a single wooden cot for the resident veterinarian.

There are enough dried herbs to make up four doses of any herbal remedy with a difficult modifier of +0 or higher. For other remedies, the priestess must harvest fresh plants. The temple also stocks six *healing* potions (cures one wound), two *healing* potions cast with a raise, and one balm of *greater healing* (cast with a success). The temple is loathe to sell these, but the priestess will use them freely to treat the heroes once they take on the quest of saving the village.

The only permanent cleric is Hlif Kolsdohtor, a Sower of Eostre. She is assisted by four young novitiates studying to become full clerics. None has taken their full holy vows, and thus they possess no arcane powers.

Ⓜ **Hlif Kolsdohtor:** See page 225.

Ⓜ **Novitiates (4):** Treat as Villager (see page 226). The novitiates are Aki Ormsunu, Vigdis Samsdohtor, Ragna Thordsdohtor, and Glum Four-Legs (he's older than the others and is training to be a Reaper. He also serves the community as the local veterinarian).

5) General Store

The village store keeps only items with a V availability rating in stock. A limited number of alchemical devices are available. For ease, the GM should assume he stocks a total of ten spell levels of devices (Novice equals 1 level, Seasoned 2 levels, and so on). However, no spell above Veteran and no more than five of any one spell is available. Thus, if the party wants five *healing* potions, then there are five in stock, leaving five Ranks of other spells.

The owner, Canute Hareksunu, is a fair man and charges standard prices. Through his contacts in Ravensburg he can acquire T and C availability items in 2d6+2 days (normally it takes 1d4+2 days, but the winter weather hampers trade).

Ⓜ **Canute Hareksunu:** Treat as a Villager (see page 226) but with Persuasion and Streetwise d8.

12) Rusty Weapons

Stacked in a pile against the inner palisade are a large number of rusted swords, axe heads, and maces, as well as fragments of chain and scale armor. Aelfric, or any other villager, can answer questions about the source of the unusual collection. Typical questions the heroes may pose, as well as stock answers, are presented below.

Q: Where did all this come from?

A: *"Farmers on the top fields are always plowing up old weapons and bit of armor. We dump them here because we don't know what else to do with them".*

Q: Has anything else been discovered?

A: *"Sometimes they dig up a piece of bone or a skull. We bury those up on the Mounds to avoid offending the dead."*

Q: Where are the top fields?

A: *"Before you get to the Mounds proper there's a wide valley. Rain from the hills trickles down and feeds the soil, so it's good growing land. Farmers started using the area when I was a boy in the service of the thegn's grandfather, and that's when they began uncovering this rubbish."*

Q: Can you show us the top fields?

A: *"Not until morning. It's not wise to wander close to the Mounds after dark. Restless spirits haunt the hills."*

Q: Why are the weapons stored here?

A: *"This rubbish is no use to anyone. It's too rusted, you see. I suppose a priest of Ertha might accept it as an offering, but I don't know much about such things. Anyway, at first, farmers brought bits back out of curiosity. They probably figured it was valuable. Plus leaving it in the field would just mean you uncovered it again later. So folk began dumping it here, and now its sort of a tradition."*

Q: Was there a battle near here at some point?

A: *"Not that anyone knows of, no."*

Signs and Portents

Aside from a single weapon, it is bad manners to wear armor and carry one's private arsenal to a feast, especially one held in one's honor. Ask the heroes how they wish to dress and what they wish to carry. Anyone wearing armor loses 1 Glory per point of protection. Thus, a chain hauberk warrants a two-point penalty. Carrying more than a dagger, which is used to eat with, and a single melee weapon, incurs a loss of 1 Glory per additional weapon.

As little or as much roleplaying as the GM wishes can occur at the start of this scene. Skalds in the party are invited to tell stories or sing for the amusement of the crowd, while clerics of a respected faith may be called upon to bless the village and its people. Other heroes may simply wish to talk with villagers sitting around them. No specific NPCs are sitting close. Instead, the GM should roll on the Allied Personalities table and use the result to create an interesting NPC.

For instance, a result of "Young" may indicate a youth who wishes to hear the party's tales of bravery and monsters, or a boastful young warrior who talks big but has obviously never witnessed the slaughter of a mass battle. An "Artistic" NPC may be a skald who wishes to honor a

party member with high Glory with a song, or perhaps she is just a crafter looking to sell something. An "Observant" character could be a follower of Rigr or just a villager who's a shrewd judge of character.

Hanging at the far end of the hall, behind the table reserved for the thegn and other important villagers, is a polar bear skin. It is quite apparent to the heroes that it holds a place of honor. Any villagers can reveal the following information if questioned:

"That is the very cloak worn by Cenwalch White-Cloak. He was the war leader who defeated the Anari and gave us back our ancestral lands. According to the stories, he stayed here, in this very hall in the days before he died and was buried in the Mounds. As he lay dying, he bequeathed his cloak to the villagers for their kindness and hospitality."

Every Saxa hero knows the name of Cenwalch and can make a Common Knowledge roll to recall more facts. Non-Saxa heroes, or Saxa who do not wish to use Common Knowledge for some reason, may make a Knowledge (Folklore or History) roll.

Critical Failure: Cenwalch was a mythological figure, an amalgamation of several real heroes rolled into a sort of super hero figure.

Failure (Saxa only): Cenwalch was a great Saxa hero dating to the time of the rebellion against the Anari, though the character cannot recall any specific details (non-Saxa learn nothing on a failure).

Success: Cenwalch was initially a military leader of little regard, but as his victories mounted, so more and more Saxa flocked to his banner. Legend says he commanded the Saxa army in the final victory, though where the battle took place is a mystery. He died some years after the Saxa earned their freedom, and was purportedly buried in the Mounds of Heroes Gone.

Raise: As above, plus Cenwalch was offered the position of High King after the Saxa was freed, but he turned it down. History recalls only four words of his refusal—"I am not worthy."

The cloak is not magical, though it is not without special powers in the right circumstances. It may be of great importance later in the adventure.

When the players have had enough roleplaying, proceed to the next section.

THE BLOODY BEAR

The welcome feast has lasted throughout the night and dawn is not many hours away. Skalds have entertained you with songs of valor, mead has flowed like water, and it seems the forests must have been cleared of boars to provide the copious quantities of meat.

A pretty serving girl, one of the village thralls, catches your eye and hurries across to refill your tankards. As she draws near, someone at the head table calls for her to serve them. The girl turns her head and nods to acknowledge their request. Her eyes suddenly widen. She stumbles and drops the mead jar, the amber contents spilling across the table. The jar shatters the same instant the girl screams. Her hand, shaking uncontrollably, points toward the head table.

The hall falls silent as everyone stares in the direction of her quivering arm. The cause of her fear is readily apparent—the polar bear hanging at the far end of the hall has turned blood red.

Detect arcana reveals the fur is magical, though the spell used defies investigation. Anyone who closely investigates, discovers the fur hasn't just changed color—it is sodden with fresh blood! This manifestation marks the full unleashing of the spectral horde. As the sun rises, all traces of the blood vanish (even samples the characters may have collected.) A second sign occurs just moments after the party finishes inspecting the fur.

SHATTERED STONE

The door to the ale hall crashes open. An icy wind howls across its length, guttering candles and lamps. A villager wrapped in furs stands in the door, his face ashen. "By the gods!" he cries. "Come quickly! There's something terrible in the sky!" Everyone in the hall grabs for their furs and rushes for the doors.

The next section of read-aloud text assumes the party is curious enough to follow the crowd.

The villager leads you across the village to the main square. Four tall stones carved to resemble Eira, Rigr, Thunor, and Tiw stand upright at the corners of the square. The man stands and gestures frantically into the night sky. "It is an ill portent," he wails. "Doom is come!"

Looking up, you see the clouds have finally blown over, revealing the twinkling lights of the firmament. Blazing through the sky like an open wound is a fiery star, a blood red halo surrounding its head. As if on cue, the villagers begin whispering prayers to the gods to protect them

Comets are not unknown in Rassilon. Both the clergy of Hoenir and the Lorekeepers have records of them in their dusty archives dating back many centuries, and skalds frequently mention them in tales. No one knows their true nature (astronomy is not yet a science in Rassilon). All citizens who honor the benevolent deities consider witnessing one a sign of ill-omen and impending

disaster. A hero making a Knowledge (Folklore or History) roll at –4 recalls hearing or reading of a blood red comet, though he cannot remember any specific details.

After making the roll, continue reading the text to the players.

The star flares brightly for a brief moment, casting a ruddy pall across the village. The crisp, white snow turns the color of old blood. A tremendous crack echoes across the village. Tiw's standing stone splits down the center, cleaving the image of the god in twain. Both pieces topple silently to the snow-covered ground. Thick blood oozes from the image's eyes and mouth, staining the snow.

The villagers are dumbstruck by the chain of events. They are too stunned to scream or panic. Egfrid is quick to take control before his people regain their senses.

"Fear not!" the thegn calls out. "We have among us heroes and friends!" Egfrid turns to face you. "Such matters are beyond me. What say you, friends? Will you help us?"

Whether the heroes realize it or not, Egfrid's request is difficult to turn down. He welcomed the heroes openly as friends and held a feast in their honor. To refuse has two consequences. First, it means the adventures aren't truly friends of Reedfolda. Second, it makes their host look a fool for naming them as friends. Allow the heroes a Common Knowledge roll to deduce these facts if the players don't reach the same conclusion.

Refusal warrants a 10 point Glory penalty for turning their backs on their friends. Acceptance earns the heroes a 2-point Glory reward—skalds love heroes who accept missions before learning of the true dangers.

Shortly after the heroes make their decision, a scream is heard from the palisade. Proceed to the next section.

THE SPECTERS ATTACK

Streaming through the village are shimmering, translucent blue-white warriors, their weapons aglow with unearthly light, their eyes burning pits of hatred and malice. Without breaking stride they cut down a villager where he stands, mouth agape in awe. Screams begin to emanate from all around as the ghostly horde bears down on you.

Important: While this scene serves to introduce the heroes to their enemies, it also highlights the ghostly warriors desire to kill Saxa. At some point, a spectral warrior *must* stare at a villager and then pass them by without harming them in full view of at least one player character.

Terrain: The buildings and intact shrines are impassable objects to the living and block line of sight. The shattered shrine of Tiw is difficult ground. The snow is not deep enough to hamper movement. The night sky is illuminated by the pale glow of the red comet and the flickering torches of the villagers, making the lighting Dim (–1).

Monsters: The attackers are spectral warriors, the ghosts of the Storm Dragon Company. Awoken from their unquiet sleep by the appearance of the comet, they are eager for revenge. Spilling out from their graves, they assault the first settlement in their path—Reedfolda.

The huscarls and villagers are those nearest the heroes when the attack occurs. The spectral warriors indicated below aren't the only ones storming the village, and fighting occurs throughout the settlement—the action focuses on the heroes, who are one small part of the larger melee. Thegn Egfrid takes command of several of his huscarls and leads a charge to help defend a group of helpless women and children, thus removing him from the immediate vicinity of the characters.

As the fight begins, the heroes and their allies should all be within the confines marked by the four shrines. Have the players position their characters and allies first—they are already present when the attack begins and do not have advanced warning as to its direction.

The spectral warriors begin 10" away from the nearest hero. Draw a card from the action deck to determine from which direction they attack. Clubs indicates the attack is from the north, Diamonds from the east, Hearts the south, and Spades the West. On a Joker replace one of the specters with a Wild Card lieutenant, one of Count Cadmar's officers. Draw a second card to determine where they begin. Repeat this procedure if a second Joker is drawn.

Ⓜ **Spectral Warriors (3 per hero):** See page 227.

Ⓜ **Spectral Lieutenant (1):** Treat as a spectral warrior (page 227), but he is a Wild Card. Add Knowledge (Battle) d8 and the Command and Tactician Edges.

Ⓜ **Veteran Huscarls (1 per hero):** See page 227.

Ⓜ **Villagers (3 per hero):** See page 226. Half carrydaggers. The other half are equipped with their militia gear.

Tactics: The spectral warriors have one aim—to slay mortals with Saxa blood without mercy. As such, the heroes are not treated as special targets unless they begin using heated weapons (see the spectral warriors' Weakness)—the ghosts attack the nearest Saxa-blooded foes or those who have attacked them (though they favor Saxa-blooded targets first).

The ghosts save their Death Mark power until threatened with a heated weapon (such as through *smite* or a Disciple of Kenaz's blade) or facing a Saxa player character. The nearest Anari wraith then singles out the target for special attention, while shouting out, *"We shall be avenged!"*

The spectral warriors continue their attack for *exactly* six rounds. At the end of the 6th round, a distant horn sounds, calling the Anari ghosts back to their resting places before the sun breaks the horizon. On their action card for the 7th round, the ghosts fade into nothingness. This does not count as Withdrawing from Combat.

Continuation: By the time the fight ends, over 20 villagers are dead (plus any who died under the players' control). The night is filled with lamentations and loud crying as the dead are carried to their homes in preparation for burial.

Thegn Egfrid approaches the characters and offers them 5,000 gold scields (collectively) to discover who the spectral warriors were, what relation they have to the other strange events and why they are targeting Reedfolda, and to put a permanent end to their activities.

If the heroes pick up on the spectral warrior which avoided slaying a villager, have them make Streetwise rolls to gather information from the survivors. This can be done Cooperatively, but not as individual rolls—that would just duplicate information. With success, they discover that particular villager has no Saxa blood in his or her veins. Similar stories of ghosts not attacking certain individuals quickly begin to filter back to the characters. In all cases there is a link—no Saxa blood later than grandparents.

HEALING

Hlif Kolsdohtor can provide healing if required, as can four non-Wild Card villagers with Healing d6. Since each Healing attempt takes ten minutes, each healer can make a maximum of six rolls. These rolls can be made to tend individual patients or Cooperatively to increase the chances of success. Because the wounds are neither cuts nor blunt trauma, standard healing balms are of no use.

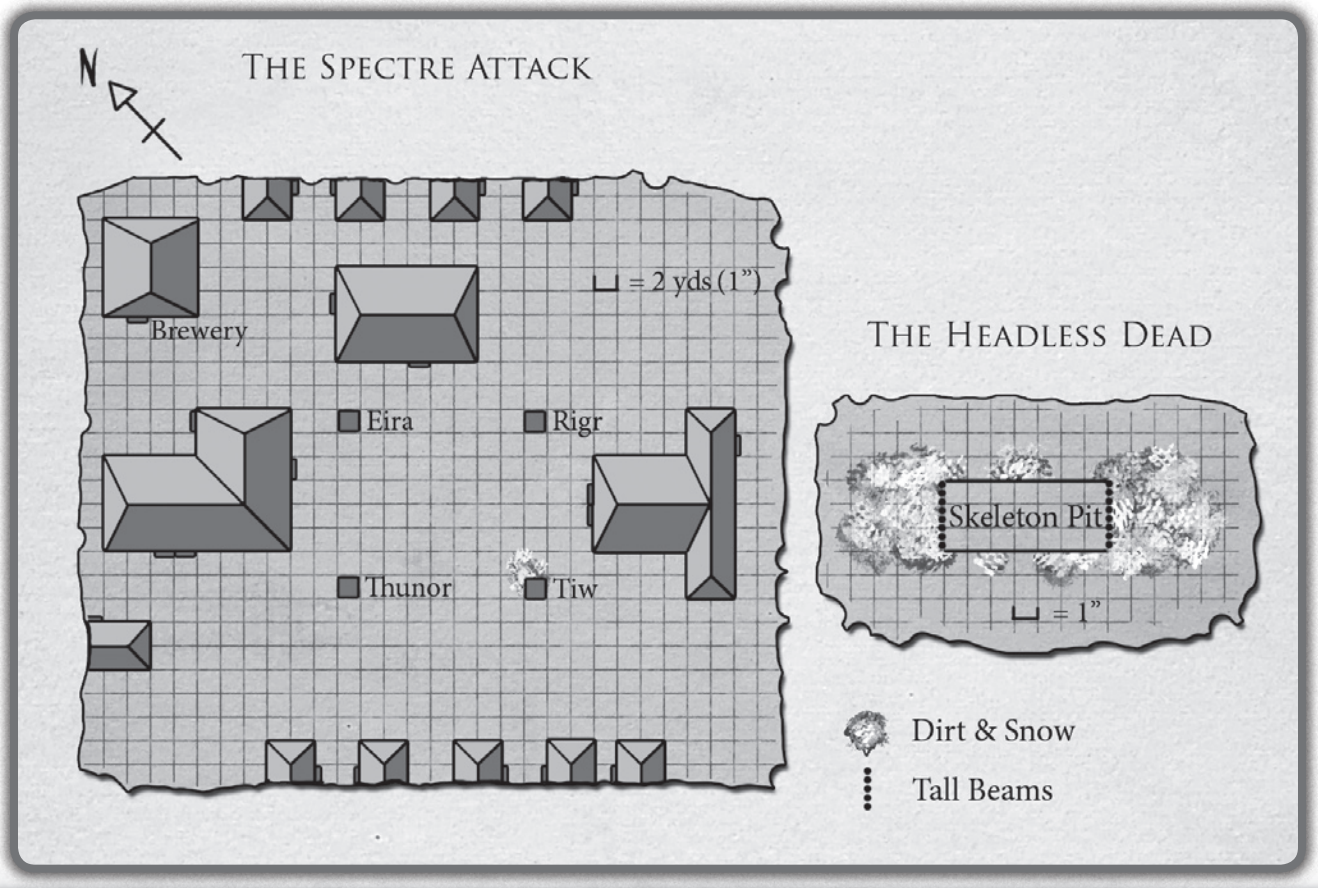
THE CRONE

As soon as the healing is completed, read aloud or paraphrase the following information:

The crowd falls silent and parts. Shuffling toward you is a crone, her weathered flesh wrinkled like tree bark. She moves slowly, as if the years she has lived weigh heavily on her shoulders. Many of the citizens look away, though whether this is out of respect or revulsion you cannot say. Even Thegn Egfrid lowers his gaze.

The crone finally comes to a halt not a yard from you. She looks you up and down with her piercing, bright green eyes, tutting quietly. "Heroes, you seek to be, eh?" she says in a voice that crackles like lightning. She reaches out with skeletal fingers and, by magic or sleight of hand, pulls a rune-inscribed stone from behind the ear of <insert random hero's name>. She studies it briefly, before concealing it in her robes.

"More than strength you will need if victory you wish. Search and find the truth. The truth shall be



your weapon. The dead can only be slain by the weapons which killed them. When you know the truth I shall speak more."

She turns to face Egfrid. "Tonight the people must gather in the ale house. There you shall be safe if the Norns deem it so. Light fires in the hearth and in your hearts." The crone stares directly into Egfrid's eyes. "Nothing can avoid its destiny."

With that she turns and begins hobbling away back through the crowd.

The crone (that's her only name) refuses to answer any questions or proffer advice at this time. Any attempt to physically manhandle her, even grabbing her arm to stop her slow progress, is met with a warning from Thegn Egfrid to unhand her immediately.

Blessed with the power of the *warding* enchantment, the crone intends to cast and maintain a number of spells to keep the ghostly Anari at bay. This allows the heroes to investigate the problem without having to keep a protective watch over the villagers. It also demonstrates that they aren't the only people in Rassilon with power.

Only if directly asked does Egfrid or a villager reveal who the crone is.

"She is a great priestess of the Norns. She has lived here since the time of my grandfather's grandfather and knows much but says little of sense. But maybe that is not so bad—too much knowledge can be a bad thing. Perhaps a man should not know his fate."

INVESTIGATIONS

Once the Anari specters have made their appearance, the adventure proper begins. Rather than being a totally linear tale, the heroes are now left to investigate the ghostly disturbance as they desire. Clues found in the village and the surrounding countryside will nudge them in the right direction. Each section of importance to the plot is detailed below.

Eventually, the heroes will uncover enough evidence to piece together the historical chain of events and discover the ghostly warriors' weakness. Only then will they be able to lay the ghosts to rest.

TIME MARCHES ON

Once the crone has departed, the time is 0500 hours. The heroes have not slept in 24 hours, which may cause a problem for some, especially since the GM should keep track of time until the final encounter. Don't worry about tracking exact minutes—you just need to know the approximate time. At this time of year, the sun rises at 0800 hours and sets at 1600 hours, with an hour of twilight either side.

Daylight is cloudy with sporadic snow fall, but lighting conditions remain good. During twilight, the lighting is Dim (–1). The comet provides Dark lighting (–2), though with a ruddy tint, during the hours of night.

Deorcmonan begins the night the heroes speak to the crone for the second time (see **The Crone Speaks**). From that point, the heroes have just four nights to parley with the spirits of the ancient Saxa *and* summon them to war. Parties who rest to heal wounds will find the conclusion is much more difficult without the support of the dead.

THE TEMPLE OF HOTHAR

The temple of Hothar contains a small library. The heroes may come here on a hunch, perhaps figuring the old structure holds a clue, or through asking if the village has a library or archive.

While many of the tomes are concerned with law, there are a few historical tracts. Unfortunately, none reveal anything about the village until 197 IR, when the first thegn began keeping written records regarding legal proceedings. It takes 1d4 hours to realize this, though.

A hero who spends more than two hours in the library browsing and cross-referencing discovers something very strange. On the spine of certain books is a single Auld Saxa rune (books in *Hellfrost* don't have any writing on the covers normally). There are thirteen different runes, and 25 runes in total.

If the heroes ask the resident cleric, he states the following.

"I had noticed them myself. I assumed they were scribal marks. None of the books containing the runes on the spine are originals, of course. The contents were copied and recopied over the centuries, but the covers were either reused or reproduced entirely faithful to the originals. When I took over the post, I was given strict orders to do the same, though no one seems to know why.

"I believe some 180 years ago there was a fire in the temple. While the covers survived, many of the inner pages were ruined. So it's very unlikely the marks in any way indicate the nature of the contents. An interesting enigma, but perhaps one better suited to a priest of Hoenir, eh?"

If the players start to write down the stray letters and begin trying to assemble them into meaningful words, hand them the tiles cut out from Handout #1. Remember to have shuffled the tiles first. The message isn't hard to decipher, but a little tactile fun for the players is much more rewarding than making a die roll. Translated, the coded message reads, *"The watcher sees the hidden truth."* "The watcher" refers to Rigr, the Watchman of the Gods. More specifically, it refers to the shrine in the village square.

LET'S ROB TOMBS!

The Mounds of Heroes Gone is littered with cairns, barrows, and sepulchers, many containing a fortune in grave goods. There is, however, good reason why the Mounds are not regularly plundered. As well as the presence of the Saxa ghosts, hagbui, draugr and other vile creatures haunt the lonely peaks and valleys in large numbers.

Ancient and powerful, each of these fiends should be a Wild Card at a minimum. Those already of Wild Card status should be granted higher trait die and more Combat Edges. Heroes who elect to go grave robbing should encounter some form of deadly creature. In return for risking their lives, they locate 1d10 x 500 gold scields per tomb looted.

Also, if the party robs any tombs *before* trying to enlist the aid of the Saxa heroes of old, they suffer a cumulative –1 modifier per tomb robbed. Plundering afterward causes five ghosts to refuse the summons per tomb robbed.

The GM may also use the plundering to create a new adventure. Perhaps a hagbui's tomb has been robbed. In doing so, the heroes inadvertently allow it to move beyond its normal range and thus hound them across Rassilon. A royal hagbui might even have the power to grant others their freedom of movement so long as they serve its cause.

SHRINE OF RIGR

As noted elsewhere, the standing stone depicts Rigr with his eyes in various states of openness. Since the coded message refers to "hidden truth," the heroes must investigate the aspect with its eyes closed tight (the eastern one).

Doing so requires a ladder. Examination reveals the eyes aren't actually part of the main carving. Rather, they are thin cover stones. Behind them are two red crystal lenses. These too can be removed. Behind them is a small recess, just large enough for a candle stub. The inside is lined with soot, which should give the heroes enough information about what to do next.

Placing a lighted candle in the recess and replacing the lens (but not the cover stones) causes a beam of red light to highlight a spot on the eastern palisade wall, some six yards off-center to true east. Removing the wooden planking and digging a few inches into the tightly packed dirt of the palisade uncovers a bone scroll case, sealed at both ends with wax. The scroll radiates magic to *detect arcana*, but not to the touch (see below).

When the scroll case is opened, it activates a *fear* spell contained in a *glyph* inside the scroll. The spell activates with a d12 arcane skill and a d10 Wild Die (Cenwalch wanted to protect his guilty secret).

Once the spell has worked its magic, and assuming someone in the party can read Auld Saxa, hand the players Handout #2 when they fish out the contents. Otherwise, they need to track down an NPC who reads the language before being given the translated contents.

The mention of "Readfolda" in the document is not a spelling mistake. If a hero who reads Saxa notices the discrepancy and questions the spelling, he should be told it means "red field."

All being well, the characters should now be keen to discover more about Cenwalch's final resting place.

CENWALCH'S CAIRN

Cenwalch is a hero surrounded in myth and hearsay. Like most heroes he is accorded deeds beyond those of mortal men. If the characters ask the villagers, they are told the general location of the tomb (no one has visited it in living memory). While no one will accompany the heroes into the Mounds, directions are freely given.

THE TOP FIELDS

If the characters have investigated the pile of rusty artifacts, they may wish to visit the source. The top fields mark the location of the final battle against the Anari. For generations the villagers shunned the site, but over time memories have faded and the reasons forgotten. Only in living memory have the farmers begun plowing the area. The fields are a mile from the village.

The fields sit in a low, broad valley at the northern extreme of the Mounds of Heroes Gone. Technically they are outside the Mounds, but few farmers risk staying here once the sun begins to set. The wintry weather has left the ground rock hard and covered in a layer of deep snow. Faint traces of the deep ridge and furrow lines left by plowing are visible through the snow.

Excavating at random is backbreaking work. Digging even a small pit (a yard a side and half that deep) takes four hours with two people on the job (double that if only one person is digging) and the odds on hitting a find are slim. The GM should draw a card from the action deck for each pit. A Joker indicates a rusted piece of metal or shard of bone has been uncovered.

More accurate sighting can be achieved through spells such as *detect metal* or even *detect bone*. Use of such an enchantment does not guarantee success (*detect* does not accurately pinpoint unseen objects), but it does allow the diggers to locate an artifact on any royal card (Jack through Ace) or Joker for each pit they excavate within the spell's area of effect.

Maintaining a suitable *detect* spell while moving around quickly reveals that the entire region is littered with metal and bone. The quantity is far too large for a normal burial site. Only if the players do not realize it for themselves should they be allowed a Common Knowledge roll to deduce this is the site of a fairly major battle.

THE MOUNDS OF HEROES GONE

Cenwalch's burial barrow lies in the hilly region

known as the Mounds of Heroes Gone. The Mounds, as they are usually known, are the ancestral burial grounds of the Saxa's great heroes and kings, and date back long before the formation of the Marklands. The oldest graves date back centuries before the Anari occupation. Cenwalch was the first great hero of the modern age to be interred here, though many of his closest followers were actually laid to rest here before his death.

Saxa, whether they are cremated or buried, are interred with grave goods. Despite the abundant wealth laying just beneath the surface, very few artifact hunters search here and those who do disturb the soil never do so again. It is claimed the spirits of the great heroes throw off their shrouds and walk among the Mounds on nights of the Deorcmonan.

These ghostly warriors do not appreciate being disturbed by mortals, and only those who are heroes in their own right can expect to visit the Mounds on the night of the new moon and live to tell the tale. Other Saxa shun the place at this time, content to let the ghostly heroes do whatever it is they do.

Many skalds claim the Mounds are haunted by hagbui and draugr, though their songs may be little more than attempts to dissuade tomb robbers from plundering the many graves. Few citizens have the guts to seek the truth. There are actually vile undead creatures stalking the Mounds—the physical remains of the oldest heroes who were animated during Hela's insanity and later by minions of the Liche-Priest. After dark, the Mounds are a deathtrap.

Cenwalch's barrow lies in a valley in the northern hills, and is the first major tomb encountered heading south from Reedfolda. The barrow is a mere four miles from the village.

THE APPROACH

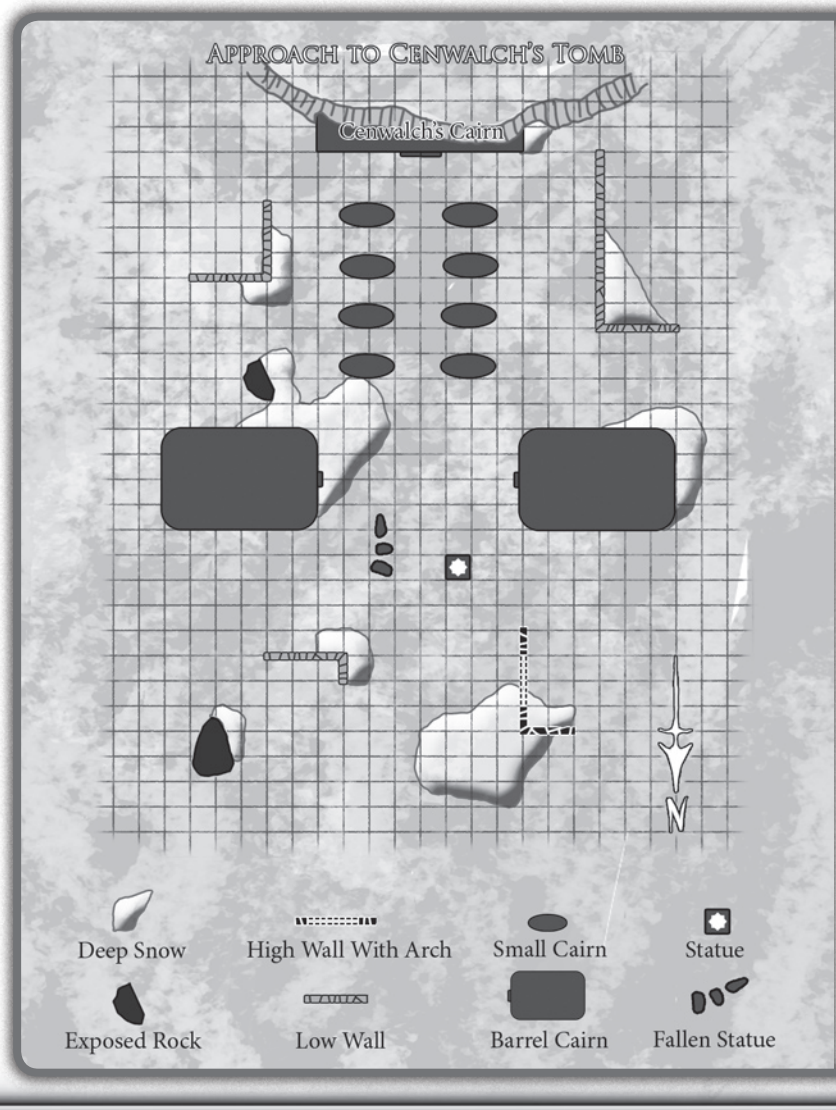
A low, light mist hugs the floor of the shallow valley through which you now walk. All around can be seen distinctive snow-covered bumps and mounds, each a cairn for a fallen Saxa hero or his most valued followers. Through the mist, a towering stone form can be seen up ahead. Although badly weathered, it clearly shows Tiw, god of war. Beyond, you can just make out two long, barrel-shaped hills, and further away a line of low, grass-covered mounds.

Cenwalch's tomb is part of a larger burial complex. The start of the tomb area is marked by two tall statues. One (which depicted Hothar, god of justice) toppled during a storm long ago. The other shows Tiw, god of war. Beyond this are two barrel cairns, so named because of their distinctive shape. Further on, four pairs of low cairns form a processional path leading to the stone doors of Cenwalch's final resting place. Remnants of stone walls dot the landscape. No one can remember whether these were erected before the area became a cemetery or are, in some way, linked to the cairns.

The snow blanketing the Mounds is crisp and virgin. No tracks, human or animal, mar its pristine surface. Thick icicles hang from shattered walls, and areas of exposed ice-encrusted rock gleam in the weak winter sun. Apart from the ever-present wind, the area is deathly silent.

Terrain: Low walls are an average of 3' high (0.5"). Crossing them is difficult ground. High walls stand between six and ten feet high (treat as 1" to 2"). They can only be scaled by Climbing. All walls provide Cover (+10 Armor). Areas of exposed rock are difficult ground, as is the fallen statue. The statue still standing is impassable terrain but can be used as Cover (+10 Armor).

Movement over the small cairns is difficult ground. Characters wishing to clamber the steep sides of the barrel cairns treat them as difficult ground, but they cannot run. Disciples of Freo ignore the difficult ground rule as normal, but they still cannot run up the tombs. Inside



each is a single stone-lined chamber measuring 4" long and 2" wide.

The rock face into which Cenwalch's cairn is cut is 3" (20') high and can only be scaled by Climbing. Opening the doors is detailed in the next section.

Light mist reduces visibility to Dim lighting (–1). The ground is covered in snow. Only where noted on the map has it drifted to a depth where it is difficult ground.

Monsters: Cenwalch's cairn is protected by a number of skeleton warriors. Unlike others of their ilk, these fleshless creatures were not created by necromancers. Each was a huscarl of Cenwalch who swore an oath to protect their master in life as well as in death. Their vow binds their spirits to the mortal realm with Tiw's blessing, for Cenwalch is cursed to remain tied to the mortal realm until the truth of his actions is known. Thus, like the Anari, they too are souls trapped by an oath of allegiance. Once their physical form is destroyed, however, their spirits are released from their earthly duties to take their rightful place in the Afterlife.

The skeletons attack as soon as a hero passes beyond the line formed by the statues. One skeleton warrior rises from each of the small cairns. The others emerge from the two long barrows, their numbers divided equally between the pair of tombs. The skeleton commander crawls out of the soil between the two statues during the second round of combat. This counts as 4" of his movement for the round.

Ⓜ **Skeleton Commander (1):** See page 228.

Ⓜ **Skeleton Huscarls (4 per hero):** See page 228.

Tactics: Warriors in life, the skeletons retain enough knowledge in death to use tactics. Once out of their tombs, they rush toward the intruders as quickly as possible to minimize the effects of ranged weapons and spells. Obvious spellcasters (such as those witnessed invoking magic), heroes with glowing magical effects in place, and those in heavy armor, are attacked first, since they likely represent the greatest threat.

Ideally, the skeletons Gang Up on these foes so as to be able to bring them down as quickly as possible. Other heroes aren't ignored—every hero is attacked by at least one skeleton warrior. Should the undead realize an intruder they took for a lesser threat proves otherwise, they alter position to engage that character in melee as quickly as possible. Unless the foe is already adjacent, they use the Defend maneuver to withdraw from combat and then head to the new target at best speed.

Treasure: While the skeletons possess nothing of any intrinsic value on their person, there is treasure in their tombs. Excavating each small cairns takes two hours and nets the tomb robber a meager 1d10 x 10 gs. The barrel cairns are open, and can thus be plundered with no effort. The left hand cairn contains 397 gs worth of treasure and the right hand one 602 gs. All the treasure takes the form of rings, armbands, torcs, brooches, and the like.

CENWALCH'S BARROW

Cenwalch was not buried in a simple barrow. Knowing that the truth of his final actions in the rebellion must be recorded yet never revealed, he arranged for his barrow to be turned into an elaborate complex, warded with traps and puzzles to keep out tomb raiders. No expense was spared to protect the secret.

The outer doors are made of stone, but are not locked or sealed in any way. This was done deliberately. Opening them requires only the effort of hard pushing. Slowly but surely, the great doors swing inward, the stone hinges grating after centuries of neglect and lack of use.

Note: While there are undead within Cenwalch's tomb opposed to the party, they do not count as supernatural *evil* creatures and are thus unaffected by the Champion and Holy Warrior Edges. Disciples of Scaetha may use the specific bonuses from their special Edge as normal, since it affects any undead.

COMMON FEATURES

There are no sources of light within the barrow. Every area is thus in Pitch Darkness (–4) unless the party supplies light.

Ceilings are a uniform 8' high in corridors and 12' (2") high in chambers unless otherwise stated. The walls, floors, and ceilings are of worked stone blocks, so well-crafted that no mortar is required to bond them.

TRAPS

Cenwalch instructed a number of traps to be built to protect his true resting place. All the generic rules you need to use the traps presented are explained here. Specific rules for each trap are presented in the text for the trap's location. Rules for randomly creating traps are presented in the *Hellfrost Bestiary*.

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

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

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

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

Format: Traps are presented in the following format:

Detect: +X; Disarm: +X; Avoid: +X; Fighting, Shooting, or Arcane; Range: x/y/z; Damage: xdy; any specific notes.

+X indicates a modifier to the appropriate roll. It may be positive, negative, or zero. The Avoid modifier applies to the Notice roll to avoid Surprise, or Agility roll to avoid interruption. In all cases, a negative modifier is bad for the hero.

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

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

1) FALSE BURIAL CHAMBER

The doors finally part to reveal a short corridor which opens into a large, square chamber. A great funeral bier, a dozen feet long, half that wide and four feet tall, dominates the center of the room. Atop lies a lone human-sized figure, its withered skin clinging tightly to its bones. The figure is clad in the remnants of once-fine clothes. Its bony hands are clutching the hilt of a great sword, whose haft lies across the cadaver's chest, the blade running down to its withered feet.

Dotted around the chamber are shattered wooden chests and smashed clay jars. A handful of broken spears and a rusty short sword lie discarded nearby. A few stray gold and silver coins, laying amid the debris, glint in the lantern light.

To deter robbers from careful investigation of his tomb Cenwalch arranged for the first chamber to look like it had already been plundered and thus contained nothing of value. In fact, no one has stepped foot inside since the great hero's death. The coins are real. They amount to a measly 37 silver and 22 gold scields.

Engraved above the skeleton's head in Auld Saxa are the words, *"Cenwalch Cerdicsunu, King in all but name."* At the foot of the bier is another inscription—*"Awaken not the sleeping bear."* The corpse does not belong to Cenwalch, but to one of his fallen comrades. Despite any worries the party may have, the corpse is not undead.

Careful inspection of the bier (or a Notice roll at –4 while casually inspecting the tomb) reveals the top slab is not cemented to the base. Similarly, tapping any part of the bier with something sturdy, like a sword hilt, reveals it to be hollow. A few minutes of strenuous effort removes or swivels the slab, revealing the bier to be a thin shell. A set of steep, rock-hewn steps at ground level leads down into inky, silent darkness.

The second step inside the bier is trapped with a concealed *blast glyph*. The step sinks down a few inches when more than 50 pounds is placed on it, activating the hidden *glyph*. Because the step is the trigger, the trap can be disarmed by conventional means, such as wedging it to prevent depression. Unless a hero specifically states he is avoiding that step, he triggers the trap. Those outside the bier take 6 points less damage due to the bier's Armor rating.

***Blast Glyph* Trap:** Detect: –1; Disarm: +1, *dispel* or *negate arcana*; Avoid: +1; Range: Medium Burst Template; Arcane d8 (for *negation* or *dispel* only), Damage: 3d6; trapping is an explosion.

2) HALL OF HEROES

Four great pillars, each as wide as a man with arms outstretched, support the stone ceiling. Opposite the entrance is a single doorway. Around the walls are deep alcoves. Within each stands an identical statue of a warrior, head bowed and hands clasped together as is in silent prayer.

The statues depict Cenwalch, though the heroes cannot deduce this at this stage—no images of the hero survive. Cenwalch ordered the statues to be carved to show him in prayer, atoning for his crimes.

Terrain: The four huge pillars are indestructible and block line of sight. Movement into a space occupied by a statue is difficult ground. Hiding behind a statue provides Cover (+6 Armor). Each statue is smashed if it takes more than 10 damage in a single blow.

Monsters: Four of the statues are in fact stone golems. Concealed beneath the ground, they were not summoned to war during the Golem Uprising and thus remain true to their original programming. All the golems animate as soon as a hero moves adjacent to one of their number.

Ⓜ **Stone Golems (1 per hero):** See page 228.

Tactics: The golems' rudimentary programming instructs them to destroy anything entering the chamber. First, however, they are ordered to step into the center of the chamber and activate the *glyph* trap (see below). The golems nearest the stairs then move to block the escape route. The constructs then pummel intruders with their stone fists. They pursue prowlers who escape deeper into the catacombs, but not those who flee up the stairs.

***Barrier Glyph* Trap:** Detect: +0; Disarm: *dispel* or *negate arcana* only; Avoid: +0; Range: one square; Arcane d10 (for *negation* or *dispel* only); electricity trapping (see below).

In the center of the hall is a *glyph*. Stepping on it causes a curtain of crackling lightning to block the far exit (indicated by the dotted line). The *barrier* has Toughness 10 as normal and prevents passage through the square as if it were a solid object. Attackers using metal melee weapons who make a successful Fighting attack against the *barrier* must make a Vigor roll or be knocked back 1" and fall prone. If their Vigor die is a 1, regardless of the Wild Die, they are Shaken as well. The *barrier* remains active for one hour.

Anyone standing in the affected square at the time of activation must make an Agility roll at –2 to dive clear or be thrown into an adjacent square and Shaken. Draw a card from the action deck. On a red card, the victim is knocked back into the room. A black cards means he is thrown into the corridor. With a Joker the victim gets to decide.

3) TRAP

Falling Block Trap: Detect: –1; Disarm: +1; Avoid: –1; Range: 1 square; Damage: 3d6; area then becomes difficult ground.

In the center of the T-junction is a pressure plate. Stepping on it causes a section of ceiling to drop onto the trapped square.

4) VAULT OF THE DAMNED

The dust of ages coats the flagstone floor. Arranged in the walls of this irregular shaped room are small panels, each two feet to a side. Ancient runes are inscribed on each one.

Behind each stone door is a small vault, just large enough to house a single human skeleton. The runes are Auld Saxa and list the name of the occupant and his profession. Most list "huscarl" for the latter, but a few say "commander."

Terrain: The vault doors are made of thin stone. They are Toughness 10.

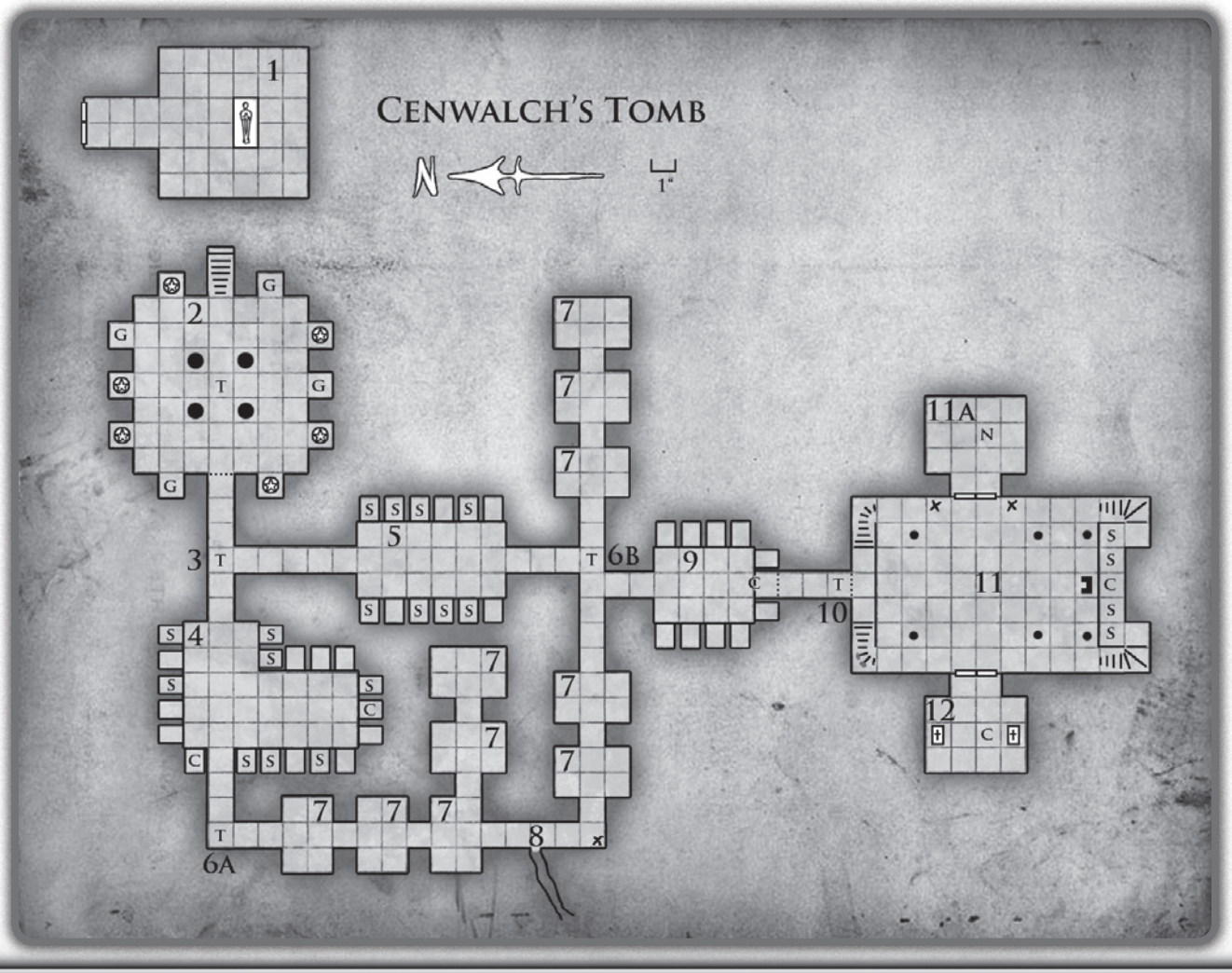
Monsters: A number of the vaults contain animated skeletons. Like the skeletal huscarls outside, those interred here chose to follow what path Fate had in store for Cenwalch. They have lain here for centuries, unable to pass on to the next life while their lord remains cursed.

Each vault can only accommodate one skeleton. Starting positions based on a party of four adventurers are detailed on the map. Any extras should be placed as the GM determines.

Ⓜ Skeleton Commander (1 per 2 heroes): See page 228. Neither are Wild Cards.

Ⓜ Skeleton Huscarls (2 per hero): See page 228.

Tactics: When the first party member enters the room, the animated dead burst from their vaults and attack. Crawling out from the vault is an action. The skeletons



are smart enough to single out spellcasters and warriors, so long as presented with ample evidence to make that decision (invoking magic and wearing heavy armor is evidence enough). The commanders hold back, using their leadership abilities to direct the troops in battle.

The restless dead hound intruders until either side is slain.

5) CHAMBER OF THE DEAD

Aside from the lack of commanders and its smaller size, this chamber is identical to the one above. All the basic notes apply here equally.

Ⓜ **Skeleton Huscarls (2 per hero):** See page 228.

6) TRAPS

***Bolt Glyph* Trap:** Detect: +0; Disarm: *dispel* or *negate arcana* only; Avoid: n/a; Range: 12/24/48; Arcane d10 (for attack roll and *negation* or *dispel*) and Wild Die; Damage: 2d6.

Stepping around the corner (6A) or into the corridor (6B) activates a *bolt glyph*. The spell activates one round *after* the trap is activated. Each trap is independent of the other, though the *bolts* come from the same source (marked X on the map). Each spell activates three *bolts*. The ones heading toward 6A take the form of balls of inky darkness, while those flying up the corridor toward 6B resemble throwing axes. The spells activate silently—the first the victim knows is when he is struck or the missiles impact around him.

Calculate the distance to the nearest target from the launch point and roll three arcane dice and a single Wild Die, applying range modifiers where required.

7) OFFERING HALLS

This small hall is empty. Large patches of black mildew stain the walls and small rivulets of water wind down the walls through cracks in the ceiling. The stench of mold fills your noses.

Initially these halls were to contain food and drink, as well as mundane gifts for the dead to use in the Afterlife. Cenwalch, however, issued a decree that no trappings were to be placed inside the tomb. He did not expect to enjoy eternity. Instead, all his worldly possessions (save for a few personal items) were distributed among the poor before his death. A rich man in life, the hero was buried as a virtual pauper.

8) NARROW TUNNEL

The worked face of the western wall is rent by a long, narrow crack.

Where the narrow tunnel leads has been left deliberately vague. GMs who want to expand the tomb can have the crawlspace leading to a neighboring crypt, for example. GMs who'd rather not add more danger can simply rule the crack is natural, the result of a small earth tremor in ages past, and actually goes nowhere. Alternately, GMs who think the party is having too easy a time can have it home to a swarm of rats (or other nasty creatures).

9) HEROES' VAULT

The dust of ages coats the flagstone floor. Arranged in the walls of this irregular shaped room are small panels, each two feet to a side. Ancient runes are inscribed on each one.

Aside from its smaller size, this chamber is identical to the ones in Areas 4 and 5. All the basic notes from those chambers apply here equally.

Terrain: If the middle tomb's front panel is smashed, the corridor beyond becomes readily apparent. In fact, the entire section of wall is a thin veneer, only a few inches thick (enough to prevent tapping the wall revealing its existence).

10) SHARP STICKS

Spear Trap: Detect: +0; Disarm: +0; Avoid: +0; Range: 3 squares; Fighting d8 and Wild Die; Damage: 2d8.

Activating the pressure plate at the point marked "T" causes spears to thrust out in all squares in the corridor between the dotted lines. Make a Fighting roll for each square individually. If the trap gets Surprise on the lead hero, it has the Drop on every victim. If the lead hero gets an action card, he is not Surprised (though may be interrupted). He has a chance to alert his comrades to the presence of a trap, thus negating the Drop.

11) CENWALCH'S GREAT HALL

Standing on a balcony, you gaze down onto a large hall. Thin columns of stone rise like needles to the ceiling 20' above the floor. On either side of the hall are huge wooden doors, shut tight to conceal whatever lies beyond. At the far end, barely visible in the light you carry, is a wooden chair, carved into the form of a dragon. Above, shrouded in darkness, is another balcony. If this room is a crypt, where is the corpse? If it is a noble's hall, where is the lord?

Originally intended to be a magnificent tomb, for over three hundred years this hall has been Cenwalch's home and prison. Here the great lord has sat and brooded over the final days of his mortal life.

Terrain: The ceiling in this chamber is 20' high.

The banister at the top of both raised platforms is three feet high. The thin wood provides +4 Armor to those using it as Cover.

The stone columns can be used as Cover and provide +8 Armor. They extend from floor to ceiling and block line of sight. Movement through a space occupied by a pillar or Cenwalch's chair is difficult ground.

The doors to areas 11A and 12 are not locked. Pushing them open takes an action for a creature of less than Size +2.

Monsters: Knelt down behind the banister on the far platform, above the chair, are five skeletons. Norgar, a cliff giant, begins in room 11A. Cenwalch is in area 12.

Ⓜ **Cenwalch Cerdicsunu:** See page 224.

Ⓜ **Norgar the Giant:** See page 227.

Ⓜ **Skeleton Commander (1):** See page 228. Initially armed with bows (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6).

Ⓜ **Skeleton Huscarls (1 per hero):** See page 228. These are initially armed with bows (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6).

Tactics: The skeletons remain hidden until spotted (a Notice roll at –2) or the party reaches the center of the room, whichever comes first. They then pepper the heroes with arrows, aiming at the most dangerous targets first (those with ranged weapons) and then at those rushing toward the stairs. Once the party is close to the stairs, those nearest the heroes drop their bows (a free action) and draw their melee weapons (an action). Those in the middle of the platform continue to support their comrades with bows.

At the start of the third round, Cenwalch's chief bodyguard (a brutish cliff giant bound to his liege in death like the huscarls) crashes through the door of 11A and enters the fray. He begins at point "N" on the map. His passage through the doors is a free action.

Anyone standing in the squares marked "X" when the great doors slam open must make an Agility roll at –2 or suffer d12+d6+3 damage as they are crushed between the door and the wall.

Immediately when Norgar takes three wounds or if someone opens the door to area 12, interrupt the fight and read the following text aloud.

The western doors crash open! Framed in the doorway is what was once a man. Withered, parchment skin clings to thick bones, and dark strands of lank hair falling from his scalp like torn cobwebs. Burning blue eyes flare briefly in the gloom. Light glints off a magnificently engraved breastplate displaying two bears wrestling.

"Who dares enter the great hall of Cenwalch Cerdicsunu unannounced?" the figure roars. "Speak or face judgment!"

If the heroes want a fight with Cenwalch, he happily obliges, showing the party no mercy. However, Cenwalch is an honorable man and strongly believes in justice. If the party gives any indication of wishing to parley, the chieftain orders his minions to cease hostilities (they go on Hold). Proceed to **Cenwalch's Tale** below.

In the event Cenwalch is reduced to three wounds, he throws down his sword and demands to be heard before he is slain. Go to **Cenwalch's Tale**, but read the optional beginning.

11A) NORGAR'S ROOM

Carved into the wall are extremely crude images of armed men fighting. Towering over them is a hulking giant, his long, heavy club scattering men like rag dolls. The images have the same look as those of a child or imbecile, lacking any detail or realistic approach to artistry.

This chamber is used by Norgar, Cenwalch's trusted bodyguard. Condemned by choice to lead the same undead life as his master, Norgar passes the time by recalling the great battle in which he took part and scratching his impressions of the conflicts onto the walls.

12) SHRINE

Two small shrines stand on opposite sides of the room. To the left is a shrine to Tiw, decorated with swords, axes, and shields. On the right, one to Hothar, god of justice and law.

In life, Cenwalch was a servant of Tiw. He never took holy vows, but he lived his life by the same moral code as the god's clergy. Following victory over the Anari, Cenwalch turned his back on war and bloodshed. He took an oath of allegiance to Hothar, becoming a devotee of the god of justice. In place of conquest he set to writing new, just laws for his liberated people to live under.

In death, Cenwalch instructed the artisans of the tomb to erect shrines to both deities. No fool, Cenwalch knew he would face stern judgment when his life expired, but he hoped to offset his sins with his good works in later life. Unfortunately, the gods punished him. Until the truth of what happened to the Anari became public knowledge, Cenwalch was doomed to wander his hall for eternity, neither dead nor alive.

CENWALCH'S TALE

Optional Beginning: Read this only if Cenwalch fought the heroes and surrendered. Proceed then straight to Cenwalch's confession below.

"Peace!" Cenwalch shouts, throwing his sword to the floor with a resounding clang. "If a second death I must die, let me first be heard so that the weight of my sins may be lifted from my soul. It is time for the truth to be revealed!"

Cenwalch is willing to let the heroes speak before he passes judgment on them for tomb robbing. This is their chance to learn the truth without further bloodshed. All they need to do is tell Cenwalch that Anari ghosts are plaguing the land and that it somehow relates to the end of the Saxa uprising. Cenwalch can work out the rest himself.

Cenwalch walks silently to his throne and slumps down into it. He tips his scrawny neck back, staring at the ceiling. Finally he faces you and speaks.

"For centuries I have wondered what I would do when this time came. Would I have the strength to speak the truth? Would I tarnish my name to free my soul from this torment? Or should I keep quiet and be damned until the god's withered to faint memories?

"The battle was a victory, a terrible, terrible victory. The fields ran red with Anari blood, and yet my people rejoiced, for they were free. I swore a holy oath that day that no more Anari blood would be spilled. Yet there were prisoners we could not release, for they were hardened soldiers and hated the Saxa beyond all else. While I strove for peace, my men tortured them mercilessly, for to release them would be to unleash a guerilla army.

"When the Anari finally agreed to our terms, I offered the captives freedom if they would swear to cease hostilities against my people. They refused to the last. My hand was forced. We had fought so long for peace, and now a handful of men were set to ruin everything. I kept my word, though. No Anari blood was spilled, though none walked away from this land.

"Go west of the village of Readfolda until you see a standing stone marked with Thunor's emblem." Cenwalch draws a short, notched, metal rod from inside his armor and tosses it to the ground before you. "Insert this into the top and turn it toward Sigel's rising," he continues. "All will become known. Tell the people the truth. Tell them of what their great hero did. Swear to me you will make it so."

If a suitable oath is made, Cenwalch unbuckles his breastplate and his sword and offers them to the heroes, insisting he needs them no longer. Once done, Cenwalch dismisses the heroes.

"I have no grave goods," Cenwalch smiles, "no treasure horde. My physical possessions you hold in your hands. All I have left to offer is truth. Once you know the truth, we shall both be rid of our problems. Do not fear my undead followers," he adds. "They shall not harm you on your way back to the land of the living."

Treasure: Both objects are relics. The breastplate is a *+1 plate corselet* and weighs half as much as a normal corselet. Cenwalch's sword is a *+1 long sword*, granting a +1 modifier to all Fighting and damage rolls made with the weapon. The first party member to attune to either relic gains +3 Glory (or +5 Glory if he takes both items).

THE HEADLESS DEAD

Reaching the burial site from Cenwalch's barrow involves a journey of six miles (it is four miles from the village). As indicated, the site is marked by a single standing stone some four feet in height atop a long, low mound. The stone's weathered faces are carved with a faded image. It requires a Notice roll at close range to discern that the faint outline represents a storm dragon. It's long, serpentine form circles around the menhir. Like many Saxa decorative carvings, it has no clearly defined beginning or end. In this instance, the dragon is biting its own tail (or perhaps regurgitating it) to form an ouroboros.

Thousands of similar stones dot Rassilon, especially the Hearthlands. Some are grave markers, but many others are monuments of old, former shrines long since abandoned, boundary markers for settlements, memorial stones to mark the site of great deeds, old way markers, and such like. Hence, the villagers have paid it little attention.

At the very top of the standing stone, beneath a layer of moss, is a circular hole descending the entire length of the stone. Placing the notched rod found in the tomb into the hole causes the ground to shudder and buckle.

The earth suddenly splits as immense wooden beams, cut to interlock like gigantic fingers, burst through the snow and soil. The great panels spread apart, scattering dirt and stones as the mound is torn asunder, until they stand vertical, each segment towering 20' above you.

Beneath lies a pit in which can be seen dozens of decapitated skeletons. In the middle is a low column, upon which rests a single grinning skull. Rusted helmets, armor, and weapons lie entangled with the jumbled bones and severed skulls.

The helmets of the corpses are decorated with a raised dragon, which runs along the crest. The head forms the nose guard, while the hinged wings form cheek protectors. The tail curls around itself at the back of the helmet, creating a neck guard. Lighting bolts engraved on the wings mark it as a storm dragon.

Heroes may make a Knowledge (Folklore) roll at –2 or a Knowledge (History) roll to see if they recognize the emblem. Anari and Saxa heroes receive a +1 bonus to

either roll. With success, the character knows the dead were members of the Storm Dragon Company, an elite Anari military unit of old and once bodyguards to the Anari Emperors. On a raise, the character knows the Company disappeared from history around 160 IR—roughly the same time the Saxa won their freedom.

While it is plainly obvious the victims were beheaded, it takes a Notice roll at –2 (or a hero specifically stating he is inspecting the severed spines) to realize the bone is fused as if by great heat. Cenwalch's confession should help the party deduce this is what he meant by "not spilling Anari blood" and by the crone's reference to "the weapons which killed them"—heated blades. If not, the GM has two choices—let them suffer for not working out the clues or allow a Common Knowledge roll to work it out.

The skull on the pedestal is that of Count Cadmar. It is of great importance later. Do not encourage the party to take it, though—they must figure that out for themselves based on it being situated on the pedestal. Smashing it has no effect.

Terrain: The map indicates only the terrain around the former barrow. Everything else is flat terrain with a light dusting of snow.

The pit is 4' deep (the wooden beams formed a barrel vault over the top). Movement through the corpses is difficult ground, as is the indicated debris fields. The two sections of upright beams are impassable terrain and block line of sight.

Monsters: Soul hunters, drawn to the area by the presence of the tormented and vengeful Anari ghosts, have happened upon the heroes and their grisly find. Each soul hunter begins with one benny plus an additional one per hero. The undead make their presence felt after the party has finished exploring the mass grave but before they depart.

Have the heroes place their characters on the map *before* placing the soul hunters. During daylight hours, the soul hunters are detected at 16" distance, having snuck up in silence. One attacks from the north and one from the south. If the attack occurs at night, they are placed at 10", having made use of the darkness.

Ⓜ **Soul Hunter (1 per 2 heroes):** See page 228.

Tactics: As soon as a soul hunter gets within 12" of the skeletons it animates the bones. Bodies and heads spring together, held in place by the soul fragment released by the hunter. At no point do they ever allow themselves to drop below two bennies through use of its Animate Dead power. Each time it gains a benny that increases its pool above two, a hunter animates another corpse. A total of 50 corpses can be animated in this manner.

THE CRONE SPEAKS

Only when the heroes have learned how the Anari were executed does the Norn priestess deign to speak with them further. If they do not seek her out, she is waiting for them when they next enter the village. However, she will only see them after dark, as the omen of the comet must be taken into consideration.

The crone uses runes carved into shards of bone (unidentifiable to the heroes due to their small size, but actually human) to reveal the future. GMs can use actual rune stones if they have them, roll dice to simulate the bones, or just use flavor text. Whatever method you use, the outcome is the same.

The clatter of the bones as they roll across the wooden floor sounds like thunder in the deathly silence. The crone hunches over them, peering intently at the angular markings, a long, skeletal index finger moving over each one in turn.

"The living will not stand against the dead alone and win. Seek the dead of old to stand by your side. A hero must summon the dead upon the hallowed ground when Maera closes her eye. Seek the bear that cannot roar. It will help you in your time of need. When you are ready, the head of your foe will summon him to fight."

The cryptic message first indicates that rousing the villagers will be to no avail—even knowing the specter's weakness, the villagers are not warriors. The "dead of old" are the Saxa heroes whose spirits reportedly haunt the Mounds of Heroes Gone on nights of the Deorcmonan ("when Maera closes her eye"). The first night of Deorcmonan is tonight. The "bear that cannot roar" is Cenwalch's cloak, which hangs in the ale house. Thegn Egfrid is happy to loan it to the heroes if it will help their quest. Finally, "the head of your foe" refers to Cadmar's skull, which the party is hopefully now carrying.

If the players have read the *Hellfrost Player's Guide* they should know Maera is goddess of the moon. The other clues have already been mentioned in the adventure in one way or another. However, if the party is having trouble understanding her veiled words allow them to make a Common Knowledge or Knowledge (Riddles) roll to decipher the meaning. The heroes now need to brave the Mounds of Heroes Gone at night.

Once the reading is done, the priestess offers to perform an augury. This makes use of her Disciple Edge and is more personal to the characters. Remember, the characters may be heroes, but Fate already favors them (that's what bennies are for). Accepting an augury is a risk, and sometimes it is better not to know the future.

If informed of the divination and its meaning, Egfrid volunteers the service of his huscarls and his own blade in the upcoming fight. Similarly, Sword of Truth Teobald offers his support.

SUMMONING THE DEAD

On the nights of Deorcmonan, which begins the same night as the heroes speak to the crone, the spirits of the Saxa heroes do indeed walk the Mounds of Heroes Gone.

Exactly why they should be allowed to return to the mortal realm on these nights has kept clerics engaged in discussion since the phenomenon was first recorded. No clerics of Scaetha have ever tried to cleanse the ghosts, though such holy warriors make sporadic raids into the Mounds to drive back the hagbui and draugr.

No specters are present when the heroes enter the Mounds. In order to rouse the spirits, a hero must call out and request their aid. When one does, read the players the following text.

As you begin speaking, the wind drops to a low, mournful drone. The white snow turns blood red, as the glowing orb in the night sky grows in intensity. Slowly, shapes begin to emerge from the darkness. Translucent forms of warriors clad in mail and kings in long robes form a circle, completely surrounding you. Their number seems endless, stretching away into the inky blackness of night's dark embrace.

None of the shades speak or otherwise interact with the heroes. They are impervious to all damage for the purposes of this scene.

Convincing the ghosts of the ancient Saxa to side with the heroes requires *one* hero to make a Persuasion roll. This cannot be done Cooperatively—those who require others to speak for them are not worthy of respect. Modifiers are listed below.

Mod	Reason
Heritage	
–4	Hero is an Anari
–2	Hero is a non-Saxa (but not an Anari)
Status	
+/–X	Subtract 50 from the hero's Glory, divide by ten, and round down
–2	Per character Rank below Heroic
+2	Hero is Legendary Rank
+1	Per Leadership Edge of the hero
+1	Hero is a priest of Hothar, Scaetha, Thunor, or Tiw*
+1	Hero is a warrior or a paladin of the above deities*
+2	Hero is a nobleman*
Miscellaneous	
+X	Player roleplays a speech (GM's discretion as to bonus awarded)
–1	Hero address the ghosts in a language not listed below
+1	Hero address the ghosts in Saxa
+2	Hero address the ghosts in Auld Saxa
+2	Mentioning the Storm Dragons by name
+4	Hero is wearing Cenwalch's fur cloak

** These modifiers stack. A nobleman paladin of Tiw, for instance, earns a +4 bonus.*

Each success and raise attracts the spirits of ten ancient heroes to the character's banner. There is *no* limit to the number of raises that can be achieved on this roll. Failure means the characters must defeat the Anari warriors alone—a near-suicidal notion, but the only option now left to them. In all seriousness, if the heroes screw this up they are in deep trouble. If ever there was a time for bennies, it is now.

Assuming the party scored at least a success, one of the spirits drifts toward the heroes.

A shade wearing a simple crown glides silently over the snow, leaving no trace of his passing. Its cloak billows silently around its withered form. The other shades watch on impassively, their pale, burning eyes tracking the crowned-figure's movement.

The crowned specter bows deeply. "I am Cuthwulf Halfdansunu, king of old," the figure says. "We have heard your plea and recognize a kindred soul. We will fight beside you if Maera is not looking." From within its robes it pulls forth a signal horn. "When the time is right, the horn will summon us."

A character reaching out for the horn discovers it is quite solid, although the shade is completely incorporeal. Exactly when the heroes decide to blow the horn is up to them—they know how to summon Cadmar and their Saxa allies. Ideally, of course, they should ensure they have heated weapons first.

AN OLD GRUDGE SETTLED

Exactly when and where this scene occurs is down to the heroes. Cadmar and his men can only be summoned at night, as can the Saxa ghosts, but they can be summoned in any location. Given the ghosts can pass through walls and spellcasters may wish to use area effect spells, outdoors is far better than indoors. In addition, the Saxa spirits cannot be summoned after Deorcmonan ends—if the party delays too long they must fight with only mortal allies. Additionally, the heroes should take the time to pre-heat their weapons if they want an easier fight.

Once Cadmar is called to battle, he and his legion appear 24" from the heroes. The Saxa appear the round *after* the horn is blown. They can be summoned anywhere within 48" of the heroes—it's the characters' call as to where their undead allies appear.

Monsters: There are a total of 50 Anari spectral warriors, not including Count Cadmar and less any actually slain in a previous encounter. The GM can run a huge skirmish using all the combatants, or he can adopt a more focused view (great if you don't have a large table or many miniatures available).

In the "miniature" version of the battle, the ghosts fight each other on roughly equal terms, leaving only those left over to face the heroes and their allies. For every ten Saxa ghosts on the heroes' side, subtract an equal number of

Anari (to a minimum of 10 Anari ghosts). Divide the Anari into groups equal in number to the number of heroes. This prevents all the spirits acting simultaneously, and gives the party a little more to worry about.

Egfrid brings all his huscarls with him. They number ten, less any slain earlier in the adventure. Teobald, the elderly paladin of Hothar, also joins the fight. Whether or not Cenwalch committed a fell act is irrelevant to him—the ghosts have no legal right troubling the villagers because of the sins of their fathers.

During the fight, the GM should take the time to briefly describe the Anari and Saxa ghosts fighting around the heroes. Don't get into long description—the focus should be firmly on the heroes, but the characters should be reminded every now and then that they are part of a larger engagement.

Ⓜ **Count Cadmar:** See page 226.
Ⓜ **Spectral Warriors (10+):** See page 227.
Ⓜ **Thegn Egfrid:** See page 224.
Ⓜ **Veteran Huscarls (varies):** See page 226.
Ⓜ **Teobald ap-Angrot:** See page 226.

Tactics: The Anari no longer care about Saxa blood—everyone on the heroes' side is deemed a mortal enemy by association with the ghostly army. The warriors engage the nearest target, though they pay special attention to spellcasters with area effect spells capable of harming them. The Anari cannot retreat even if they wanted to—the characters' possession of Cadmar's skull prevents him from leaving, and the count's men would never desert their leader.

Count Cadmar remains out of combat as long as possible, though he puts his Leadership abilities to the best use. If he dies, the oaths binding his men to the mortal realm are broken. The *instant* Cadmar is slain all the Anari ghosts vanish, never to be seen on Rassilon again. The fight is over. The remaining Saxa spirits turn to the heroes, bow deeply, and similarly fade (though they return to their graves). Finally, the red glow of the comet disappears, the celestial object vanishing with the last of the specters.

AFTERMATH

As the Saxa ghosts vanish, a new set of armored specters shimmers into view. Leading them is Cenwalch. No longer is his visage that of the undead, but of a hale and hearty hero. He salutes the heroes and bows. He and his men then fade into the darkness, free of their ancient curse now the truth is known.

Thegn Egfrid duly pays the party the promised sum and throws another feast. The thegn declares the party friends of Reedfolda for life, a great honor and one which earns every party member the Connections (Citizens of Reedfolda) Edge.

If the party tries to return the bearskin cloak, Egfrid suggests they take it back into Cenwalch's tomb and lay it upon his bones. Should the party reenter the crypt, they find Cenwalch's skeleton slumped in the chair in the great hall.

Award Glory as per the normal rules. Regardless of the amount earned, the heroes earn +2 Glory for freeing Cenwalch of his cursed existence.

As the party exits the village for the final time, read or paraphrase the following text:

After many farewells the open road beckons once more. As you approach the gates you spy a carpenter at work—he's altering the second "e" in the settlement name to an "a." Looking up, the carpenter nods politely. "Folk should know the truth," he calls out, "lest we repeat our mistakes again."

BESTIARY

CENWALCH CERDICSUNU

The great hero of the Saxa is a cursed man, not for butchering the Anari soldiers or executing the Storm Dragon Company, but because he concealed the truth of his actions after having taken a holy oath to serve Hothar, god of truth and justice. Cenwalch is condemned to wander his hall in limbo until the truth of his final actions in the rebellion is known to his people.

Despite being stuck in a rotting body for over three hundred years and cursed by the gods, Cenwalch holds no malice in his heart. His present circumstances are of his own making, not the actions of others. Indeed, much of the former fury and malice which filled his beating heart have been replaced with an inner calm and better understanding of the universe.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d12, Guts d10, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Battle) d12+2, Notice d8, Riding d10
Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 11; **Toughness:** 13 (4)
Hindrances: Code of Honor, Heroic, Loyal, vengeful (Minor)
Edges: Ambidextrous, Command, Fervor, Hold the Line, Improved Block, Improved Frenzy, Improved Level Headed, Improved Sweep, Noble, Tactician
Languages: Anari, Giant, Saxa, Trader
Gear: *+1 plate corselet* (+4), chain limbs (+2), open helm (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry), *+1 long sword* (Str+d8+1).
Special Abilities:

* **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison. Ignores wound penalties.

THEGN EGFRID BERCTHUNSUNU

Assuming a noble title is not always hereditary among

the Saxa. In many lands, all claimants must submit a petition to the higher authority, detailing their claim. When the old thegn died, Egfrid found himself challenged by his uncle, his younger brother, and a distant cousin.

Egfrid did not write a letter, but approached his feudal superior, Aethling Redwulf, in person and put forward his claim as first born of the old thegn. When asked what he would do for his people, Egfrid replied without hesitation—"I would work in the fields like a peasant if it meant our survival." Egfrid was awarded the title on the spot.

Since then, he has been good to his word, for despite his noble blood he often works long hours in the fields at harvest time to ensure the crops are gathered in time. He also helps around the village as required (he's a competent carpenter).

Literacy isn't high among rural Saxa, but as a nobleman Egfrid was well-schooled. Unfortunately, he suffers from severe dyslexia, and never grasped his letters. Still embarrassed by his condition, Egfrid plays the part of the pompous noble, too important to stoop to reading mundane missives.

The thegn is 44 years old. He has been married to Gertha Sigvatsdohtor for 25 years. They have four adult children, all of whom have left home for various reasons.

Unless expecting trouble, Thegn Egfrid caries only his long sword out of his regular gear.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Riding d8, Shooting d6, Streetwise d6, Throwing d8
Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6/7; **Toughness:** 6/8 (2)
Hindrances: Code of Honor, Illiterate, Loyal, Stubborn
Edges: Command, Noble, Sweep
Languages: Anari, Saxa, Trader
Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), closed helm (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry; see below), long sword (Str+d8; see below).
Alchemical Devices: Arm torc imbued with *weapon immunity (battle axes)* (cast with a success), signet ring containing three tiny diamonds, each imbued with *healing* (heals one wound per spell), shield imbued with *deflection* (cast with a raise), long sword of *smite* (cast with a success).

THE CRONE

If the old woman ever had a name it has long been forgotten. She takes no offense at being called "The Crone," for such is her lot in life. Well over 100 years old and still largely active despite her shriveled appearance and advanced years, the crone has resided in the village since she was a young girl. She has outlived six thegns and countless villagers in that time.

Given that all things must eventually die (and most long before the crone's advanced age), the villagers hold her in special reverence for her longevity (though they are also fearful of her), believing she is especially blessed by the Norns.

For the most part, she does nothing but rest and consult the runes for personal amusement. She has no material wants, for the villagers gift her with food and clothing at regular intervals. Egfrid, despite ruling for two decades, has only called on her services a handful of times.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d10, Spirit d12, Strength d4, Vigor d8
Skills: Faith d10, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Knowledge (Folklore) d10, Knowledge (Religion) d10, Knowledge (Riddles) d10, Notice d10, Taunt d8
Charisma: –2; **Pace:** 3; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 6
Hindrances: Elderly, Lame, Stubborn, Ugly (scarily old)
Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Disciple of the Norns, Improved Focus, Strong Willed
Languages: Auld Saxa, Black Tongue, Saxa, Trader
Powers: *confusion* (mental images), *deflection* (foresees blow), *dispel* (unweaves spell), *fortune's favored* (tweaks threads of fate), *precognition* (sees the threads of fate), *warding* (magical circle)
Gear: Bag of rune stones (for divination), four Norn charms worn on a necklace of bones and rune stones

HLIF KOLSDOHTOR

Hlif was born and raised in the village, though she studied her art in Ravensburg. On completing her studies she moved back to Reedfolda, whereupon she took up duties as understudy to the priest. When he retired, she was promoted to priestess of the temple. She married a farmer in her youth, but the marriage didn't work out. The only child of that union, a girl, married a man from a neighboring village. Mother and daughter maintain only sporadic contact.

Now in her late forties, Hlif's eyesight is beginning to fail. Around the villagers she remains too proud to accept help, but she plays on her weakness around strangers. This is partly to lull strangers into thinking she is helpless and partly a harmless joke to test their kindness.

As well as being a priestess, Hlif serves the village as healer and herbalist, concocting poultices and balms when her duties allow her time.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d6, Healing d8, Knowledge (Alchemy) d8, Knowledge (Religion) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d6, Streetwise d8, Survival d8, Taunt d8
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1)
Hindrances: Bad Eyes, Pacifist (Minor), Quirk (plays on her failing eyesight)
Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Hedge Magic
Languages: Anari, Fey, Saxa, Trader
Powers: *entangle* (animated plants), *healing* (prayers), *mend* (new wood grows), *wilderness step* (plants move aside)
Gear: Blessed robes (+1), sickle (Str+d4), holy symbol, healer's bag.

Alchemical Devices: Necklace imbued with *deflection* (cast with a raise).

TEOBALD AP-ANGROT

Teobald (an Anari) is an old man. In his youth he was an itinerant Sword of Justice, wandering between rural communities, advising noblemen on matters of law and overseeing court cases. He also served as a bounty hunter, tracking down criminals and ensuring justice was meted out fairly. In his later years he became more studious, eventually settling in Reedfolda because his legs decided it was time to halt his journey.

The then thegn, Egfrid's ailing father, hired Teobald to mentor his young son in the ways of law. When Egfrid became thegn he promoted Teobald to become the village's priest of Hothar, removing the incumbent cleric, who had sided with Egfrid's uncle during the claims to the noble title. Since that time he has served Egfrid as law speaker, advisor, scribe, and friend.

Though still a skilled warrior, Teobald's strength and stamina are failing him slowly. He rarely wears his armor or carries his sword, though he is prepared to stand and fight if called upon by his liege.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d6
Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Law) d10, Knowledge (Religion) d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Streetwise d8
Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8 (3)
Hindrances: Code of Honor, Elderly, Loyal, Vow (Major: never lie)
Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Charismatic, Frenzy, Sweep
Languages: Anari, Auld Saxa, Classical Anari, Saxa, Trader
Powers: *bladebreaker* ("hand of justice" snaps blade), *champion of the faith* (divine fury), *charismatic aura* (friendly demeanor), *detect/conceal* (guided by divine truth), *stun* (voice of truth)
Gear: Blessed armor (+3), great sword (Str+d10, –1 Parry, 2-hands), holy symbol.
Alchemical Devices: *Smite* rune engraved on great sword (cast with a success), ring containing *light*, holy symbol has a *detect truth* spell cast on it.

VETERAN HUSCARL

While every villager is expected to serve in the militia in times of need, the thegn maintains a squad of ten huscarls. They serve as his bodyguard and act as the village's first line of defense.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Riding d8, Taunt d8, Throwing d10
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 10; **Toughness:** 9 (2)
Hindrances: Loyal, Orders
Edges: Combat Reflexes, Frenzy, Improved Block, Shieldwall, War Cry
Languages: Saxa, Trader
Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), pot helm (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry), sword (Str+d8), three short spears (Str+d6, Reach 1), two throwing axes (Range: 3/6/12, Damage Str+d6).

VILLAGER

The inhabitants are mainly farmers, though there are a small number of crafters and merchants. Unless a citizen has a unique stat block, use this one. Individuals the GM wants to expand into more fleshed out characters can have higher Traits or a few Edges and Hindrances. Don't forget to roll on the Allied Personalities table as well.

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, Saxa (dominant language), Trader
Gear: Farming implements (Str+d4 if one-handed or Str+d6 if two-handed). Militia duty: leather (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), dagger (Str+d4)

COUNT CADMAR, SPECTRAL WARRIOR

Count Cadmar ap-Valeray was commander of the Storm Dragon Company in life and controls his soldiers even in death. Vain and arrogant, he saw Saxa as an inferior culture compared to the Anari, often comparing them to dogs. Frequently called upon to dispense the emperor's particular brand of justice, the Storm Dragons were responsible for many atrocities during the final days of Anari rule.

A skilled tactician, the emperor personally charged Cadmar to crush the Saxa uprising. Having defeated numerous rabble hordes before, the count confidently marched his men into a trap. Even his leadership abilities could not prevent the ferocious Saxa from destroying his army. Count Cadmar was captured along with his men and suffered their fate.

As he was marched to the execution site, the commander called on his men to swear a vow of vengeance. Forced to his knees by his captors, Cadmar cursed his executioners, promising them their ancestors would pay dearly. Cadmar is a man of his word.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Battle) d10, Notice d6, Stealth d12+2
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10 (3)
Hindrances: Arrogant, Loyal, Vengeful (Major)
Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Command, Fervor, Hold the Line, Level Headed, Tactician
Gear: Plate corselet (+3), full helm (+3), great sword

(Str+d10, –1 Parry, 2-hands).
Special Abilities:
* **Death Mark:** Once per encounter, a spectral warrior can mark one living target by gesturing at the opponent and making an opposed Spirit roll as an action. Failure uses up the spirit's death mark opportunity for the encounter. With success, the ghostly soldier has +1 to Fighting rolls against the victim for the rest of the encounter.
* **Fear:** Anyone seeing Cadmar make a Guts roll.
* **Immunity:** Suffer half damage from any source except their Weakness. A wound from a non-Weakness source does not truly slay the warrior—it simply dispels him until the next sunset.
* **Incorporeal:** Can pass through solid objects; ignores all difficult ground penalties; never leaves tracks. Their weapons ignore all armor except the *armor* spell and negate two points of Cover penalties from intervening obstacles.
* **Infravision:** Halves darkness penalties against heat-producing targets.
* **Near Fearless:** Immune to Fear. Can only be Intimidated by someone wielding a heated weapon (see Weakness).
* **Sense Saxa:** The ghosts can detect Saxa blood in the living stretching back to a grandparent (one-quarter Saxa blood).
* **Weakness (Heated Weapons):** A weapon heated in red hot coals for one minute inflicts normal damage for 10 rounds against the specter. After that, it has cooled to a point where it causes the spirit no damage. *Smite* with a fire or heat trapping cast on a weapon inflicts normal damage (including the spell's bonus), as does a disciple of Kenaz's flaming weapon.

SPECTRAL WARRIOR

The souls of the tortured and executed Anari soldiers have been trapped on Rassilon by their eternal hatred of the Saxa. Only now, with the comet back in the night sky, are they free to wreak bloody vengeance on the descendants of those who took their lives. Although their prime targets are those of Saxa blood, anyone who fights alongside a Saxa against them becomes a fair target.

The soldiers appear much as they did in the moments before their deaths, though with pale, blue-white, semi-translucent bodies. Their "flesh" displays clear evidence of barbaric torture and physical abuse, and some retain injuries taken in the bloody massacre that led to their capture. They are capable of speech, though they speak only Anari, and have no desire to make idle conversation. Against Saxa, their only communication is to issue dire threats.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d12+2
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (2)
Hindrances: Loyal, Vengeful (Major)
Edges: Combat Reflexes
Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), pot helm (+3), long spear (Str+d6, Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 hands) *or* long sword (Str+d8), battle axe (Str+d8) or short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1) and medium shield (+1 Parry).
Special Abilities:
* **Death Mark:** Once per encounter, a spectral warrior can mark one living target by gesturing at the opponent and making an opposed Spirit roll as an action. Failure uses up the spirit's death mark opportunity for the encounter. With success, the ghostly soldier has +1 to Fighting rolls against the victim for the rest of the encounter.
* **Immunity:** Suffer half damage from any source except their Weakness. A wound from a non-Weakness source does not truly slay the warrior—it simply dispels him until the next sunset.
* **Incorporeal:** Can pass through solid objects; ignores all difficult ground penalties; never leaves tracks. Their weapons ignore all armor except the *armor* spell and negate two points of Cover penalties from intervening obstacles.
* **Infravision:** Halves darkness penalties against heat-producing targets.
* **Near Fearless:** Immune to Fear. Can only be Intimidated by someone wielding a heated weapon (see Weakness).
* **Sense Saxa:** The ghosts can detect Saxa blood in the living stretching back to a grandparent (one-quarter Saxa blood).
* **Weakness (Heated Weapons):** A weapon heated in red hot coals for one minute inflicts normal damage for 10 rounds against the specter. After that, it has cooled to a point where it causes the spirit no damage. *Smite* with a fire or heat trapping cast on a weapon inflicts normal damage (including the spell's bonus), as does a disciple of Kenaz's flaming weapon.

NORGAR, CLIFF GIANT

Brutish oafs with minimal grasp of language, cliff giants are typical enemies to the civilized races. Norgar was conscripted by the Anari to fight the rebellious Saxa but had the good fortune to encounter Cenwalch on the field of battle. Impressed by the human's fighting prowess and leadership skills, Norgar did something totally unheard of among his kin—he opted to join the Saxa's righteous cause. To the end of his days he stood beside Cenwalch as his most trusted bodyguard, though skalds conveniently left him out of history. Like Cenwalch's huscarls, he swore a binding oath to remain beside his master in life and death, and paid the ultimate price.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d10
Skills: Climbing d10, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Swimming d8, Throwing d6, Tracking d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 12
Gear: Club (Str+d6), thrown boulder (Range: 5/10/20; Damage Str+d10).
Special Abilities:
* **Berserk:** As well as going berserk when Shaken or

wounded, cliff giants also go berserk if they are victims of a successful Smarts Trick.

* **Clueless:** –2 to Common Knowledge rolls.
* **Fearless:** Cliff giants are too stupid to be Intimidated or subjected to Fear.
* **Improved Sweep:** Cliff giants can attack all adjacent foes at no penalty.
* **Size +3:** Cliff giants average 12' in height.
* **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.

SKELETON

Unlike common skeletons, these undead troops retain more of their combat skills and are equipped with functional, if somewhat dilapidated, armaments.

COMMANDER

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Notice d4, Shooting d8
Pace: 7; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 10 (3)
Edges: Command, Level Headed, Tactician
Gear: Rusty plate corselet (+3), chain limbs (+2), closed helm (+2), battle axe (Str+d8), medium shield (+1 Parry)
Special Abilities:

* **Bony Claws:** Str+d4.
* **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
* **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison. Ignores wound penalties (Wild Cards only).

SKELETON HUSCARL

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d4. Shooting d8
Pace: 7; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9 (2)
Gear: Rusty chain hauberk (+2), open helm (+2), short sword, mace, or axe (Str+d6), medium shield (+1 Parry)
Special Abilities:

* **Bony Claws:** Str+d4.
* **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
* **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.

SOUL HUNTER

Soul hunters are a form of undead, created by vile necromancers through Hela-inspired visions. They serve one purpose—to steal souls from the living. These souls are then collected, corrupted, and used to empower skeletons, zombies, and other near-mindless undead.

These vile creatures resemble withered corpses, though their eyes glow brilliant blue. Fragments of souls they have stolen swirl around like corpse-candles, ephemeral balls of glowing lights of red, blue, and white.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d10, Stealth d10
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8
Special Abilities:

* **Animate Dead:** By spending a benny, a soul hunter can automatically create one skeleton or zombie within 12" as a free action. There must be a corpse present for this power to work. So long as there are corpses available, the soul hunter may spend as many bennies as it possesses in a single round. The undead come into play on the round after being animated.
* **Claws:** Str+d6.
* **Damnation:** A creature slain by a soul hunter does not go to Scaetha's hall. Instead, the soul is transported directly to Hela's dark realm.
* **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
* **Random Bennies:** Although NPC Wild Cards, soul hunters do not automatically begin with two bennies. Instead, they start with 1d6 bennies.
* **Sense Living:** A soul hunter can automatically detect living creatures within 24". They suffer no penalties for darkness or concealment and always count as alert sentries.
* **Soul Hunter:** Once per round (as a free action) a soul hunter can teleport up to 10" so long as its movement ends with it adjacent to a soul-possessing foe wounded or killed that round (constructs, demons, elementals, fey, and undead do not have souls). This circumvents First Strike and does not count as Withdrawing from Melee.
* **Soul Siphon:** For each wound a soul hunter inflicts on a target with a soul, it gains one benny. These bennies can be used only to Soak wounds or animate dead.
* **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. Called shots do no extra damage. Immune to poison and disease.

STONE GOLEM

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12
Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6
Pace: 5; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 13 (4)
Special Abilities:

* **Armor +4:** Magically hardened stone.
* **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:** Stone golems stand over 8' high and weigh 4,000 pounds.
* **Stone Fists:** Str+d6.

PLAYER HANDOUT #1

TH	E	W	A	T
C	H	E	R	S
E	E	S	TH	E
H	I	D	D	E
N	T	R	U	TH

PLAYER HANDOUT #2

THOUGH MY HEART BIDS ME NEVER TO WRITE THESE WORDS, MY NEW FAITH AS A SERVANT OF HOTHAR DEMANDS I AM HONEST BEFORE MY DEATH. HOWEVER, TRUTH NEED NOT ALWAYS BE FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION, AND THUS I HAVE FORBIDDEN MY MEN, THROUGH HOLY OATH, EVER TO SPEAK OF THESE EVENTS.

WITH THE END OF THE ANARI EMPEROR, MY PEOPLE HOPED FREEDOM WOULD COME, BUT WE WERE MISTAKEN. THE YOKE OF ANARI DOMINATION WEIGHED HEAVILY ON OUR SHOULDERS, AND SUCH WERE THEIR CRIMES AGAINST US THAT WE COULD NOT REMAIN BOWED ANY LONGER. WE TOOK UP ARMS, AS THE HISTORY OF ANYONE READING THIS UNDOUBTEDLY RECORDS.

WHAT I MUST SPEAK OF NOW IS THE END OF THE REBELLION, AN END WHICH, IF MY WORDS WERE FOLLOWED, HAS NEVER BEEN RECORDED ELSEWHERE. LET THE SKALDS SING THEIR SONGS AND SPIN A MYTH, BUT NEVER MUST THEY SING THIS ONE.

IN THE 158TH YEAR AFTER THE RISING OF THE GREAT ICEWALL, I, CENWALCH CERDICSUNU, LED MY PEOPLE IN THE FINAL BATTLE AGAINST THE ANARI OPPRESSORS. WE DID NOT WANT INNOCENT BLOOD ON OUR HANDS. THOSE ANARI WHO ACCEPTED OUR RIGHT TO FREEDOM WERE SPARED THE SWORD. ONLY THOSE WHO FOUGHT TO KEEP US BOWED WE DECLARED ENEMIES.

IN SPRING, WE LEARNED OF A GREAT ARMY, 10,000 STRONG, DESCENDING INTO THE LANDS WE HAD RECAPTURED. THE ANARI WERE DESPERATE, AND THIS WAS THEIR FINAL BLOW TO BRING US BACK TO HEEL. EACH TIME THEY ADVANCED, WE RETREATED. THE ANARI GREW IN CONFIDENCE WITH EACH "VICTORY," BUT THEIR SUPPLY AND COMMUNICATION LINES GREW STEADILY WEAKER. FOR TWO YEARS THEY PURSUED US.

AT LAST, THEY ENTERED THE VALLEY IN THE HILLS AND WALKED STRAIGHT INTO OUR TRAP. THE BLOODSHED WAS MAGNIFICENT AND APPALLING. THEY FELL LIKE SHEAVES OF WHEAT BENEATH OUR BLADES UNTIL, AT DUSK, BARELY ONE HUNDRED ANARI REMAINED IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING. THOSE WHO LAY DEAD, WE LEFT FOR THE RAVENS. DARGAR LATER WEPT IN FEAR OF OUR RAGE, FOR HIS BLOODY TEAR WAS SEEN IN THE NIGHT SKY.

WITH THEIR GREAT ARMY DESTROYED, THE ANARI FINALLY ACCEPTED OUR TERMS, FREEING OUR PEOPLE AND RELINQUISHING ALL CLAIMS TO OUR LANDS. WE HAD WON OUR LIBERATION, BUT AT A TERRIBLE PRICE. TO MARK OUR NEW LIFE I ORDERED MY FORT TO BE TURNED INTO A NEW SETTLEMENT, A PLACE I CALL READFOLDA.

OF THE PRISONERS WE TOOK, I SHALL SAY NOTHING. THAT SHAMEFUL EPISODE HAUNTS ME NOW IN MY LAST DAYS, AND I SHALL BE JUDGED, AND DAMNED ACCORDINGLY FOR WHAT I DID. MY DARKEST SECRET I SHALL TAKE TO THE GRAVE, SO ONLY THE GODS MAY SEE AT WHAT PRICE MY PEOPLE WON THEIR FREEDOM.

I PRAY NOW ONLY THAT MY MEMORY BE PRESERVED FOR THE GREATER GOOD I ACHIEVED, AND NOT THE MEANS BY WHICH I ACHIEVED IT.

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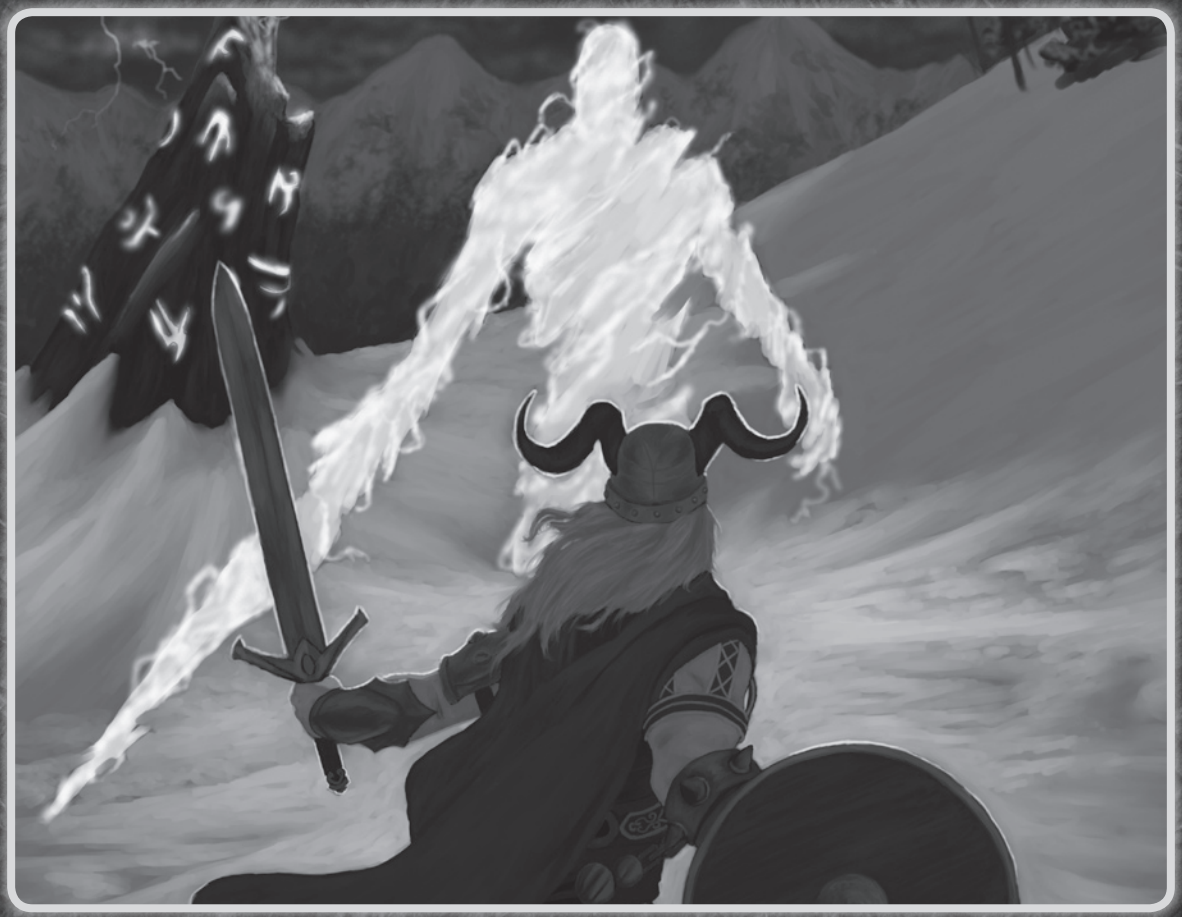
Paul 'Wiggy' Wade-Williams

HELLFROST

THE BLOOD OF GODHAMMER

RANK • HEROIC



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THE BLOOD OF GODHAMMER

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THE BLOOD OF GODHAMMER

INTRODUCTION

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

Add one additional enemy Extra to a detailed encounter for each Rank (or 20 XPs after Legendary) the party is above Heroic. For instance, if a party of four Legendary characters with 100 XPs faces one orc warrior per hero, the heroes encounter a total of six orcs (four because of the party strength and another two because the party is 40 XPs higher than the scenario minimum). If the party is particularly powerful, the GM may also increase the number of unnamed Wild Card opponents.

This adventure takes place in the northern Hearthlands in mid-winter. The GM should keep an eye on the characters' winter protection. See the *Savage Worlds* rulebook for the effects of cold weather and the *Hellfrost Player's Guide* for how the rules work in this setting.

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

PLOT OVERVIEW

The settlement of Wulfstead lies in northern Nordmark, in the foothills of the joining of the Icebarrier Mountains and the Thunor Range. Its ruler, Thegn Yngvi Wulfsunu, has always been lazy, incompetent, and self-indulgent. He taxes his peasants heavily to fund his lavish lifestyle, ignorant of their cries of starvation. Monies sent by the young king of Nordmark, Geirmund Kolsunu, to help fortify the settlement and strengthen its militia, have been spent on imported luxuries. The land has gone to rack and ruin; its fields are overgrown, and the local infrastructure is collapsing. He has also failed to honor his ancestors and has closed all the temples.

To make matters worse, orcs now plague the region and the thegn is doing nothing to stop them. Adding insult to injury in a time of crisis, Yngvi recently exiled his only son Orm (a tested warrior and military commander) for daring to suggest his father owed his people protection and the cyning, his loyalty.

Yngvi's problems were not entirely of his own making, though. Succession among the Saxa is not a clear-cut case of the eldest issue inheriting. Any person with blood ties to the ruler can make a legal claim of succession. What results is more a popularity contest than a trial of leadership qualities. Although Yngvi has only a single legitimate son, he also has an illegitimate child.

Thirty years ago, Yngvi had a brief and purely carnal relationship with a young, itinerant Norn priestess, Ursula Ingmarsdohtor. Yngvi quickly grew bored with the priestess, who, now spurned, moved on to pastures new. Nine months later, she gave birth to a son, Cuthwulf. At first, Ursula tried to have Yngvi recognize his offspring as a legitimate heir. Yngvi refused outright, half-jokingly claiming that he had sired a dozen bastards and all were worthless.

On discovering Yngvi was slipping into senility, Ursula reentered Wulfstead. Yngvi, who cared little for his former lover, no longer remembered her name or her face, but he did accept her as an advisor thanks to her status as a priestess of the Norns. Her son, Cuthwulf, by now a grown man and skilled warrior, appeared at Yngvi's door shortly afterward seeking employment as a huscarl.

Through herbal brews, false divinations, and insidious lies, Ursula slowly turned Yngvi against his legitimate son, whispering talk of treachery and usurpation. In his place, she has maneuvered Cuthwulf into becoming head of the army and Yngvi's right hand man.

Even the orc raids are yet another part of Ursula's plot. Through agents, she has offered to gift the orc chieftain with wealth once her son is in power and even provide the tribe safe haven. In the meantime, he need only let his warriors run free across the thegn's lands. Of course, Ursula has no intention of keeping her word—she's re-

lying on the orcs' lust for riches to blind them to any treachery.

Meanwhile, Orm duly left the stead, but not before publicly decrying his father for failing in his noble duties. Orm's huscarls followed him into exile, leaving the stead defended only by Yngvi's drunken and churlish warriors. Despite being an outlaw, and thus subject to execution if found within his father's lands, Orm has remained close by.

Orm and his small band of warriors has taken the battle to the orcs, striking at their raiding parties without mercy and then retreating back into the foothills before the thegn's men arrive on the scene. Many citizens in the outlying communities not only know of Orm's attacks, they provide the nobleman with food, shelter, and arms. Yngvi, through Ursula's machinations, has placed a sizeable bounty on Orm's head, yet no one has raised a hand against the outlaw. For every fell word spoken about Orm by his father, his exiled son's support grows, much to Ursula's fury.

After a few more months of poor leadership by Yngvi, and raids by the orc marauders, Ursula intends to lure both Orm and the orcs into a trap. Cuthwulf will duly slaughter both the outlaw and his orc comrades (evidence will be planted proving Orm was working with the orcs to bolster his popularity), and Yngvi will declare him as heir, thus strengthening his position for assuming control of the domain. Yngvi will then have a fatal seizure (of Ursula's making), leaving Orm in exile and thus unable by law to lay legitimate claim to his father's title.

However, the Norns have a differing view of the future. Blinded by her own lies and false oracles, Ursula has failed to spot other strands of fate about to merge with those of her, Cuthwulf, Orm, and Yngvi. Events unaccounted for in the priestess' plans are in motion.

GM's Note: One player character of the GM's choosing is directly related by blood (albeit distantly) to the noble NPCs in this adventure. Wherever you see the phrase "chosen player character," you should insert the hero's name.

Because it is impossible to determine in advance where every player character comes from, the exact location of the adventure should be altered to fit the individual campaign. Similarly, while the adventure assumes the hero is a Saxa, this can be changed as required. Thus, some GMs will have to do more work than others to make this adventure fit their campaign.

A successful conclusion to this adventure as written will result in one hero either being offered the Noble Edge at the rank of thegn, or gaining a second title if he already has the Edge. The GM is free to alter the reward to a fixed cash sum, instead, if he prefers not to hand out noble titles. A sum of 10,000 gs is a worthy reward.

PLAYER INTRODUCTION

For generations, the family of <chosen player character> has been engaged in a bitter blood feud with distant kin in northern Nordmark. Though geographical separation has prevented open bloodshed, a war of words has raged long and hard.

Centuries ago, according to family folklore, the two branches of the family shared a common ancestor, Skeid Godhammer. Legend has it that Godhammer, a renowned hero, wielded a magical hammer, named Stormhammer, gifted him by Thunor. No one is quite sure how, but the head of the weapon, which has demonstrated no magical abilities, ended up with <chosen player character's> branch of this family. The other branch of the family claimed it was rightfully theirs, and thus the feud began.

After much wrangling and negotiation, the High King finally passed judgment a few months back, declaring the hammer belonged to the Nordmark branch of the family. As such, someone was required to deliver the hammer's head in person. <Chosen player character> and his most trusted comrades have been tasked with ensuring the heirlooms are successfully delivered without incident.

Despite it being winter, Thegn Yngvi Wulfsunu, whose family was the aggrieved party, demanded the supposed relic be returned as soon as possible. Unwilling to start another feud, you have been forced to march through snow and storm to deliver the goods on time.

The heroes should now make die rolls to see what they know of Skeid Godhammer and Stormhammer.

SKEID GODHAMMER

Die Roll: The <chosen player character> can use Common Knowledge to recall facts about his distant and near-mythical ancestor. Others must use Knowledge (Folklore) or Knowledge (History).

Results: With success, the hero remembers that Skeid was a Lightningson, a paladin of Thunor. He lived in Nordmark, where he acquired a reputation for slaying cliff giants. On a raise, they recall Stormhammer was gifted him by Thunor upon Thunor's Anvil. A failure means the hero knows only the name, but nothing specific.

STORMHAMMER

Automatic: <chosen player character> has handled Stormhammer. Whenever he touches it, the runes glow very faintly. The same applies to any other heroes related to him by blood.

Die Roll: The <chosen player character> can use Common Knowledge to recall facts about the weapon. Others must use Knowledge (Arcana), Knowledge (Folklore), or Knowledge (History).

THUNOR AND MAERA

In days of yore, Sigel and Maera divided time into two halves. Mortals call these periods day and night. Sigel, arrogant and proud, shone like a brilliant beacon. Maera, more subtle and gentle, shone but pale in the dark sky, a celestial candle to Sigel's bonfire. But Niht, goddess of darkness, saw weakness in Maera's wan light and crept into the sky. Each time Sigel slept, the goddesses fought an endless battle over a monthly cycle, with one side first gaining the upper hand and then the other.

Alone in the darkness, Maera beseeched the other gods for help. Only Thunor answered her call. He struck his great hammer, Thunderstorm, upon a rock, creating a shower of sparks which flew into the heavens. And so the first stars, known to skalds as Thunor's sparks, were created. Now, even when Maera is swallowed by Niht, the stars light up the night sky, keeping the darkness from gaining total victory.

Results: Success reveals Stormhammer was reportedly a short-hafted weapon with an over-sized head. Stories about its powers vary. Some claim it could fire lightning bolts. Others tell that it had the power to subdue storm dragons, invoke storms, and even shatter the earth asunder. On a raise, the character knows the handle and head together gave the weapon its power. One without the other resulted in just a mundane hammer. Why and how the handle and head became separated is lost to history.

THUNOR'S ANVIL

Knowledge regarding the Anvil may only be recalled if a hero has learned of its existence. The Anvil is mentioned later on in the adventure, which allows the party to make this roll at that time if they haven't done so already. Should they fail, any of the locals know the basic facts (if asked). Orm can provide details of the winged creatures.

Die Roll: This requires a Knowledge (Folklore) roll at –2, or Knowledge (Religion) roll, or a suitable Knowledge (Area) roll. Having Knowledge (Nordmark) allows for a roll with no penalty, Knowledge (The Marklands or Eastern Rassilon) incurs a –2 penalty, while Knowledge (Rassilon) is worth a hefty –6 penalty. Heroes with Thunor as their patron deity have a +1 bonus. Clerics of Thunor may use Common Knowledge in place of the other skills.

Results: With success, the heroes know Thunor's Anvil is a rock formation located in the nearby foothills of the Thunor Range. The flat summit is considerably wider than the pillar of rock supporting it. It is a holy site to the god of storms. Regardless of the weather elsewhere, lightning continually strikes the summit. The flashes of light were once believed to be sparks from Thunor's hammer, hence the site became known as the Anvil. Roughhewn stairs spiral up the vertical sides and cut through the overhanging summit.

On a raise, they have heard stories of strange, winged beasts which prevent anyone from climbing to the summit. Some say they are storm dragons, while others insist they are something altogether different.

The GM should also read the sidebar entitled **Thunor and Maera** to the heroes if any Folklore or Religion rolls were successful.

NORDMARK

Die Roll: A suitable Knowledge (Area) roll is required. Anyone born in Nordmark automatically knows the information.

Results: Success allows the heroes to know Nordmark is ruled by King Geirmund Kolsunu, a young ruler who was forced to reclaim his lands in a brutal civil war. The war ended a little over a year ago. Nordmark is famed for its iron mines, the quality of its leather goods, and its fruit wines.

On a raise, the party recalls hearing that bandit activity along the Great Southern Road (part of the trade route linking distant Drakeport to the Winterlands) is on the rise, orcs are massing in the mountains to the north and east, and iron production is falling due to a spate of brutal slayings and mysterious disappearances.

AMBUSH AT THE BRIDGE

After many long weeks of arduous travel, you now near your goal. The stead you seek lies not five miles ahead. You now stand at a low bridge across the Whiteflow River, a bridge which marks the start of the thegn's domain. Remnants of stone walls, perhaps a settlement destroyed in Nordmark's recent civil war, protrude through the snow on both banks of the river. No flowing water can be seen, for the winter ice has already taken hold.

The river which lies in front of them is the Whiteflow. A major tributary of the Crystalflow, the Whiteflow cuts off the top quarter of northern Nordmark from the rest of the realm. When flowing, numerous rapids stir and froth the water, giving the river its name. A handful of fords span the river in the quieter stretches.

Because the party has been travelling over the snow for some time, they are assumed to be wearing skis or snowshoes (if available) when the scene begins.

The part of Stormhammer the heroes carry is just the weapon's head. Weighing in at 12 pounds, it is more akin to the head of a maul than a hammer. A recess in the base marks where a handle should go. Forged from sold iron, the head is engraved with a stylized lightning bolt on the top and sides. It displays absolutely no magical powers (for now).

Terrain: The sky is dark with snow clouds, resulting in Dim (–1) lighting.

Recent heavy snowfall has made all open ground difficult terrain.

River squares adjacent to the bank are thin ice (d6, Toughness 8). Other river squares are very thin ice (d4, Toughness 6). Anyone who falls through the ice is immersed in frigid water. The hero must make a Vigor roll each round or suffer a level of Fatigue. Winter clothing and furs provide only half their normal protection, rounded down.

Worse, the river is fast-flowing beneath the ice. A submerged hero must make a Swimming roll to remain in place or be swept 2d4" downstream each round. Once away from the hole he created, a swimmer is submerged and risks drowning—he must make a Swimming roll each round to avoid a level of Fatigue. A submerged character can try to break the ice above him as an action. Due to being submerged, his Fighting roll is made at –2 and his Strength die is treated as being one less (this affects the damage die of his weapon, as well).

Climbing out through a hole requires a Strength roll at –2 as an action. Even with success, the character may fall straight back through the ice unless he reaches the bank.

The broken walls are listed as low (about 3' high) and tall (about 8' high). They block line of sight as appropriate and can be used as Cover (+8 Armor). Crossing a low wall is difficult ground.

Monsters: An orc raiding party has set up a hidden camp around the bridge. Orm's plan was for the orcs to set up an open camp, which he and his men would then attack. To ensure the orc chieftain's complicity in a human plot was not discovered, the sub-chieftain leading the raiding party wasn't made aware of what fate had in store. Believing he was being ordered to raid any passing citizens, the devious orc commander ordered the bulk of his warriors to dig deep holes, cover them, and lie low inside. A recent snow flurry has concealed the orc's foxholes. The orcs have also trapped the bridge (see below).

Concealed in the round are a number of orc warriors, the commander, and a priest. Keeping a watch over the bridge from behind the ruins is a handful of orc scouts. The scouts have orders to signal an attack once suitable targets step onto the bridge or begin trying to cross the semi-frozen river.

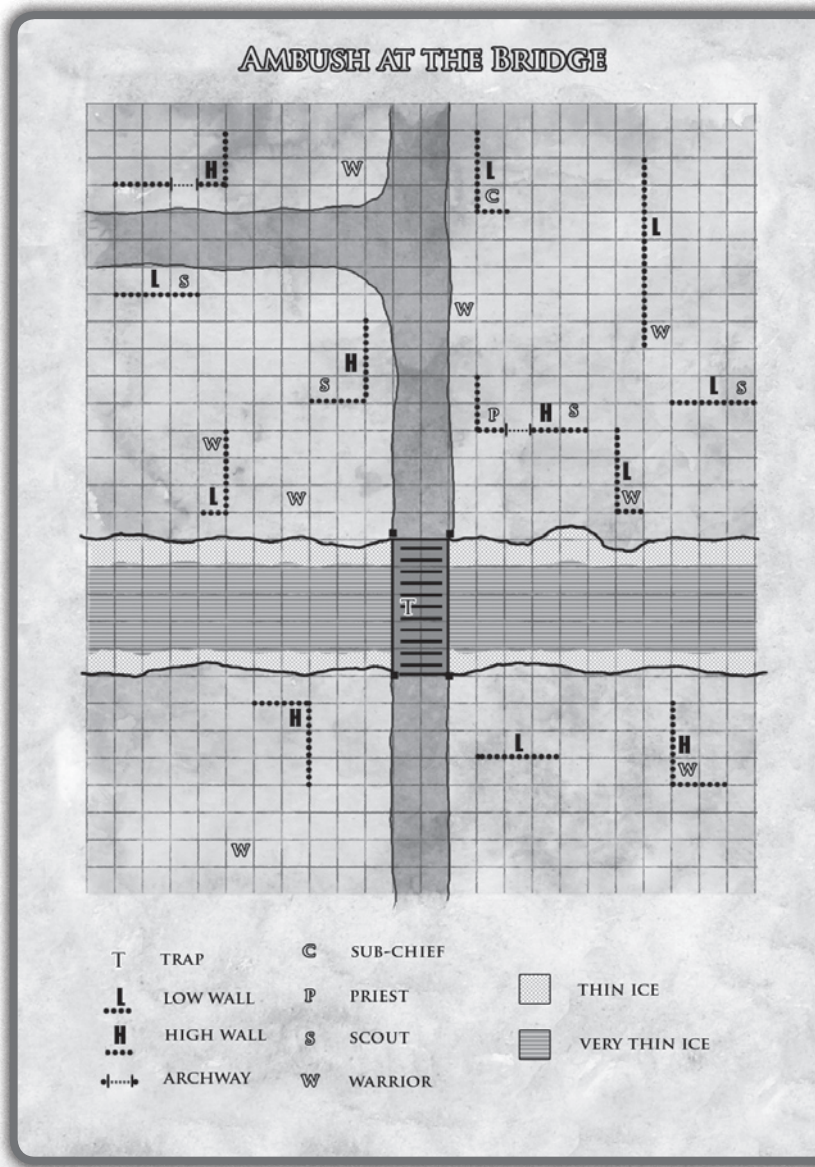
The scouts are all on the opposite bank to the heroes. They keep watch through small gaps in the walls behind which they hide. Trained to lie still for hours at a time and covered in the recent snow, they are extremely difficult to detect—the heroes may make Notice rolls at –6 (one roll per hero only). Success detects movement, but the character cannot identify the source. On a raise, the adventurer detects something humanoid. In both instances, only one scout is spotted. If multiple heroes succeed, then it's the same scout.

For parties with more than four players, the GM should add additional scouts and warriors as he sees fit. However, no warrior should be within 12" of the road on the near bank, or within 8" of the far bank if on the opposite side. With fewer players, the GM should remove orcs as he chooses.

Ⓜ **Orc Sub-Chief (1):** See page 259.
Ⓜ **Orc Priest of Thrym (1):** See page 259.
Ⓜ **Orc Scouts (1 per hero):** See page 259.
Ⓜ **Orc Warriors (2 per hero):** See page 260.
Ⓜ **Hauld Orm Yngvisunu:** See page 257.
Ⓜ **Orm's Huscarls (2 per hero):** See page 258.

Tactics: All the orcs begin on Hold. The scouts blow their signal horns once a party member steps onto the bridge or the semi-frozen river or if they come under attack. Check for Surprise.

The warriors concealed in pits must use an action to emerge into the open. They immediately begin firing arrows at the nearest target, incurring a multi-action penalty as normal. The scouts pop up from cover, fire, and



then duck out of sight again. Heroes wishing to attack them must either go on Hold, maneuver so they have a clear shot, or rapidly close to melee. On subsequent rounds, the archers try to move into cover and copy the scouts' technique. They run if necessary, but always fire their bows.

If attacked in melee, an archer will drop its bow (a free action), draw its melee weapon (an action), and attack (a second action). Orc warriors are expendable—their comrades will fire into melee if an adventurer is the nearest target.

The priest invokes *armor* on himself in the first round. Assuming this works, he then fires off single 2d8 damage *bolt* spells (–1 penalty) at visible targets, using cover afterward to prevent counterattacks. If the heroes close to within range, he drops a *fear* spell on them. Given the chance, he moves adjacent to his sub-chieftain and casts *smite* on him before his superior enters melee.

At the start of the fourth round, Orm and his huscarls appear on the scene. They begin at the far edge of the map, opposite to where the heroes began. Although surprised to witness the orcs engaged in combat, Orm quickly orders his men to attack. Orm and his huscarls are wearing their skis. Divide Orm and his huscarls among the players to control.

Prolonged Blast Glyph **Trap:** Detect: –2; Disarm: *dispel* or *negate arcana* only; Avoid: +1; Range: Medium Burst Template; Arcane d8 (for *negation* or *dispel* only), Damage: 3d6 coldfire trapping.

The orcs have placed a *prolonged blast* glyph in the center of the bridge, which activates if trod on. Its detect penalty is a result of the recent snow fall.

Treasure: A total of 2d100 gs can be scavenged from the orc corpses. If offered a portion for his assistance, Orm refuses, claiming the heroes did most of the work.

ORM'S STORY

Once the last orc is slain, the young nobleman approaches the heroes and praises them for their martial prowess. While his men honor any fallen comrades and decapitate the orcs (they leave heads on staves as a warning to other raiders), Orm invites the party to warm their hands around a hastily constructed fire and share his warriors' meager rations. If any are wounded, he offers them his *healing* potions. Orm asks the party their destination and their reasons for travelling in the depths of winter.

Should the party mention their quest, Orm is taken aback momentarily. He recovers his senses quickly. Read or paraphrase the text below. If they neglect to tell the whole story, Orm leaves out the part about being kin and begins simply by introducing himself.

"I apologize for my startled look. I am out of touch with the latest news," the nobleman says. "You and I are distant kin then, for I am Orm Yngvisunu, son of Thegn Yngvi Wulfsunu. If it is my father you seek, or just shelter for the night, then Wulfstead lies five miles to the east." He glances up at the brooding sky. "There will be no more snow tonight. You should make it by nightfall if you push hard. My men and I cannot accompany you."

Orm's last words are a deliberate provocation for the heroes to ask why not. The proud nobleman refuses to seek pity through blurting out his predicament, but he is honor bound by his personal code to answer questions about his plight.

"My father and I have fallen out. In my opinion, he has failed in his noble duty to defend our people and show his generosity. He taxes heavily and spends his fortune on food, drink, and foreign baubles. While our people starve, he feasts. He has also neglected our defenses. As you have seen, orcs brazenly wander our lands and harass our people. I urged him to change his ways, but my reward was exile. I apologize for speaking so harshly against my father when he is not here to defend himself, but I am sure you will hear his side of the story soon enough.

"So, kinsman, I welcome you to Wulfstead as an outlaw. A wolf's head I may be, yet my men and I will not skulk away into the shadows and live in ignominy. Despite the punishment we face, we fight against the orcs plaguing our lands. I break our most ancient laws, but only because my father will not act."

Heroes who speak Auld Saxa or Saxa know the term "wolf's head"—it refers to an outlaw who, like a wild animal, may be hunted down and slain on sight.

Orm turns down any offers from the heroes to speak to the thegn on his behalf, claiming that Yngvi will never recant his sentence of exile (Ursula will see to that). Should the party offer any supplies to aid his cause, he cautions them that aiding a known outlaw is a crime anywhere in the Marklands. Should they insist, he humbly accepts their gifts.

Before the party leaves, Orm presents them with one of his *voice on the wind* charms.

"Whether or not you believe my cause is just, we are kin and ties of blood bind us together. I am indebted to you for slaying the orcs. If you ever have need to contact me, use this. It will reach me anywhere in the holding of Wulfstead. I wish you well."

When the party is ready to leave, the nobleman provides accurate directions to his father's stead.

A SUDDEN STORM

With skies or snowshoes, the party could hope to

reach the village of Wulfstead in two to three hours. Unfortunately, a freezing rainstorm of seemingly supernatural origin rends the heavens shortly after they enter the lands of Wulfstead.

High overhead, dark clouds gather with alarming speed, racing against the wind from all directions to form a huge thunderhead. Icy droplets of freezing rain begin to pelt down like sling stones, stinging exposed flesh and freezing solid on impact. Darkness and sheets of rain swallow up the terrain, encasing you in inky, cold darkness except for brief interludes, when colossal flashes of lightning light up the sky as bright as day. Thunor, it seems, is in a foul mood today.

The heroes must make a Vigor roll at –2 every hour until they find shelter (Survival at –4, one roll per group per hour) or gain a level of Fatigue. The storm lasts four hours. From the moment the storm hits, the lighting conditions become Dark (and stay that way after it ends because night has fallen), further hampering their progress. Whether they stay put or attempt to push on through the storm, night has fallen before they reach the village.

Should the heroes examine Stormhammer during the storm, they notice the engraved lightning bolts glow a faint sky blue though the weapon still does not radiate magic.

WELCOME TO WULFSTEAD

The heroes spy the village of Wulfstead at half a mile thanks to torches burning on the wooden palisade. As they draw to within 50 yards, a gruff voice calls out from the gloom ahead—"*Halt, strangers, and state your business, for the hour is late and many dangers walk the lands.*"

If the party begins to mention Stormhammer, the voice shouts out, interrupting them—*"Silence! Guards, open the gates. Our lord is expecting these travelers."* With that, the wooden gates creak open. A lone man wrapped in furs against the cold night air and carrying a shield and battle axe, strides out to meet them.

"My apologies for the rude welcoming," he says. "I am Cuthwulf, herald to Thegn Yngvi Wulfsunu and head of his army. My lord is expecting you, but his people are not aware of your mission. My master wishes to surprise the citizens at a feast tonight. Until such time as the thegn sees fit, you are to mention nothing of Stormhammer to anyone except me.

"Quarters have been arranged and the sauna has been warmed. Once you have refreshed yourselves, my master would have you join him at table."

The party may have questions they wish to ask Cuthwulf while he escorts them to their quarters. Possible questions and the huscarl's answers are detailed below.

Q: We hear Thegn Yngvi has a son, Orm. What can you tell us about him?

A: *"He is an outlaw, guilty of plotting treachery against his father and duly banished from our lands. Some whisper that he is in league with orc raiders who trouble these lands. Any man who would plot to murder his father is capable of such evil."*

Q: We met him on the road. He saved our lives. Is that the work of an outlaw?

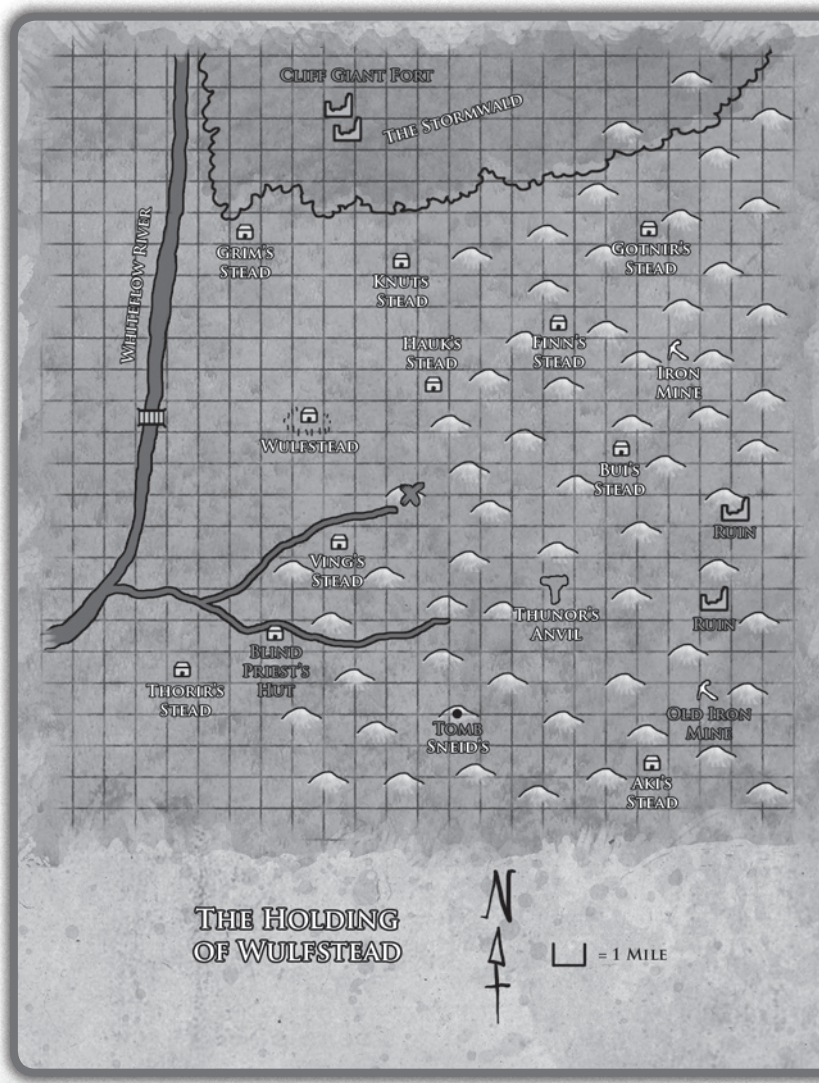
A *"Do not underestimate Orm. He has spun a lie that he is fighting the orcs to try and win support from the people. No doubt he told you how his father was to blame for his exile. You should have slain him and delivered his head to the thegn. Orm refuses to comply with his father's judgment and leave the holding. There is a reward of 5,000 gold scields."*

Q: And you haven't tried to claim it?

A: *"Orm can wait," Cuthwulf snarls. "My first duty is to protect the people from the orcs."*

Q: What is the thegn like?

A *"Lord Yngvi is old and suffers a brain malady, yet*



he remains proud and just, despite what others may tell you. He is determined to enjoy his last days in the mortal realm before he joins his ancestors. Likely we would all do the same if we knew the gods would soon be calling us to their side."

Q: What temples do you have here?

A: *"There are no temples in Wulfstead. When Orm was charged with treason it was found the priests were siding with him. They were banished and the temples closed. No doubt my lord has petitioned the king to send new, trustworthy priests. Until then, we make prayers in our own ways."*

Q: I'm related to the thegn, you know?

A: *"Really? You should be both honored and shamed. Honored to share blood with the thegn, but shamed by the acts of your kinsman, Orm." (Cuthwulf informs his mother of this fact as soon as he leaves the heroes.)*

The heroes reach their quarters, which are in Yngvi's hall, at the same time they finish their questioning. Only two rooms have been provided, each containing only enough beds to accommodate half the party. Though small, they are well-appointed, with furnishings and trappings from as far afield as the Magocracy and Angmark. Bowls of nuts and winter berries have been laid out on a small table, and there are several bottles of wine and a cask of beer. Cuthwulf tells the visitors to help themselves to refreshments.

Once they have dropped off their gear, Cuthwulf shows them the location of the sauna. Using the sauna removes any Fatigue from Bumps and Bruises or Cold.

When the party is ready, a serving boy visits their rooms and escorts them to the feasting hall. The boy, whose name is Thungard, politely reminds any guests who think they're marching into battle about the social mores regarding weapons and armor at a feast.

Aside from a single weapon, it is bad manners to wear armor and carry one's private arsenal to a feast, especially one held to secure peace between feuding families. Such garb insults one's host, for it implies the guest does not trust him to obey the laws of hospitality. Anyone wearing armor loses 1 Glory per point of protection. Thus, a chain hauberk warrants a two-point penalty. Carrying more than a dagger used to eat with, and a single melee weapon, incurs a loss of 1 Glory per additional weapon.

THE FEAST

As you approach a set of grand, wooden doors, two huscarls shove them open. A wave of warm air and raucous laughter fills the corridor from the feasting hall beyond. The guards follow you inside and close the doors behind them.

Three tables adorn the room. Two long tables run along the length, while a third crosses the chamber at the far end. Seated at the head table is an elderly man with gray hair and age-worn features. To his right sits Cuthwulf, the herald. On his left is a middle-aged woman with raven black hair and piercing green eyes.

Seated at the top of the rightmost long table is a group of burly men of little manners. Food and wine drip from their mouths as they make crude jokes and proud boasts, or grope passing serving girls. Nearer toward you, the people seem more refined. At a glance, you estimate there are some 100 guests at the table.

On seeing you, Cuthwulf stands, wiping his mouth on his sleeve.

"Ah, the last guests are here! Come, come, spaces have been reserved for you! Move over, you dogs," Cuthwulf snarls to the foul-mannered brutes. "Make way for Thegn Yngvi's guests!"

The serving boy quickly whispers to you. "My lords, the man in the center is Thegn Yngvi, your host. The man who just spoke is Cuthwulf, his herald. The woman is Ursula. She is the thegn's chief advisor and a priestess of the Norns."

The brutish diners are Thegn Yngvi's huscarls, all berserks and all thoroughly inebriated. They mutter and curse as they shuffle around to make room for the heroes. The party is interspersed as equally as possible on both sides of the table, with a berserk between each party member. None of the warriors show any indication of welcoming the guests.

If a hero attempts to introduce the party, the berserks immediately start laughing at him, mocking him as a lowly herald and perfumed messenger. Even if the heroes remain silent, the berserks turn their tongues on them and insults soon fly in regards to the characters' clothes, womanlike manners, foreign ways, and whatever else the GM can make fit the party. Make a Group Taunt roll. Each hero must roll his Smarts against the same total. Make a note of any heroes who failed the roll—the berserks' +2 bonus for their next action against the hero may come into play later in this scene. Note that if the need to use this bonus arises, only the first berserk to make a die roll against a given character gains the bonus.

Before the heroes can respond or the scene turns ugly, Cuthwulf stands. He slams his gold goblet down onto the table with a loud thud.

"Enough!" he orders. "These people are guests in this hall. Show them respect. Please, good folk, introduce yourselves to Thegn Yngvi and tell us something of your past deeds."

"Aye," adds one of the warriors, "tell us a story of how you picked flowers once and were pricked by a thorn!" His comrades burst into howls of laughter. Cuthwulf glares at them, and the noise

quickly dies down to muttered jibes at your expense.

The players have two choices here. First, they can resort to die rolling in order to recount their heroes' deeds. This requires a Persuasion roll. A failure is met by more mocking from the berserks, who accuse the hero of lying or becoming tongue-tied in such illustrious company. Second, they can roleplay a summary of past adventures. The berserks will still find *something* to mock.

Once the introductions are over, Thegn Yngvi greets his guests, albeit while dribbling and slurring his words. He then tells the assembled guests that the strangers have come bearing a great gift which will be revealed when the feast is over. Yngvi then orders the feasting to continue.

Further Feasting

As little or as much roleplaying as the GM wishes can occur for the rest of this scene. Skalds in the party are invited to tell stories or sing for the amusement of the crowd, while clerics of a respected faith may be called upon to bless the village and its people. Other heroes may simply wish to talk with citizens sitting elsewhere at the table. No named NPCs except those already mentioned are seated nearby. Instead, the GM should roll on the Allied Personalities table and use the result to create an interesting NPC.

For instance, a result of Young may indicate a youth who wishes to hear the party's tales of bravery and monsters, or a boastful young warrior who talks big but has obviously never witnessed the slaughter of a mass battle. An Artistic NPC may be a skald who wishes to honor a party member (with high Glory) with a song, or perhaps she is just a crafter looking to sell something. An Observant character could be a follower of Rigr or just a villager who is a shrewd judge of character.

Eventually the feast draws to a close. Cuthwulf then stands and asks the heroes to present Thegn Yngvi with their gift.

Ancestral Fury

As soon as Stormhammer is revealed, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

No sooner is Stormhammer revealed than the great doors to the feasting hall crash open with a loud bang. A blast of frigid air howls into the room, causing the many torches to flicker and die. Within seconds the room is bathed only in the orange glow of rapidly cooling embers from the hearths. The two guards rush to close the doors, but their victory is short lived. No sooner have the portals closed when they fly open once more, tossing the huscarls aside like shaves of wheat in a gale.

A spectral figure appears in the doorway, illuminated by a pale white-blue glow. Its features are drawn yet strong, those of a warrior, yet it is clear this is no mortal, for its eyes are burning pools of white fire. The figure strides across the room, oblivious to the screams and curses of the frightened guests. It stops before the head table and raises a finger toward Thegn Yngvi.

"I am Skeid Godhammer," it roars, "founder of your ancestral line. Too long have I watched your foolishness bring ruin to my kind, too long have I watched you dishonor your ancestors. And you deem yourself worthy to wield Stormhammer? Your rule is over, old man! You have failed in your obligations!"

The specter turns to face you. "Hand me the head of Stormhammer," it snarls, stretching out a withered hand.

If the heroes comply, Skeid nods respectfully. Should the characters refuse to part with the relic, Skeid uses a form of *puppet* to force them. His Spirit die (which he uses for his arcane skill) is d12+2, with a d10 Wild Die.

Skeid holds Stormhammer's head aloft. "Thunor," he shouts, "take back your gift until one is worthy to wield it!" Lightning begins to crackle around Stormhammer, flickering brilliantly in the dimmed room. Suddenly, the lightning flares, causing you to shield your eyes. When the light fades, Stormhammer has gone.

The specter turns slowly to survey the room. "I invoke the ancestral right of choosing as gifted us by Hothar in times of old! Whoever of my bloodline finds the handle of Stormhammer, makes it whole upon Thunor's Anvil, and returns it to this hall shall be my rightful heir and thegn of Wulfstead."

From somewhere a voice croaks, "He means Orm! Orm is coming back to lead us!" The specter whips its head around to face the speaker, who rapidly cowers under its frightful countenance. "Orm Yngvisunu has been exiled," the spirit hisses. "By the laws of our people his claim is forfeit. There are others here of my blood who are fit to rule as my ancestor. If none succeed, I shall lay these lands to waste and cleanse the world of my failed bloodline!"

With that, the spirit turns and glides back through the doors, which slam shut after it. The torches flicker back to life, filling the muted room with light and heat.

Ursula is quick to take advantage of the situation. During the furor following the spirit's departure, she doctors a pitcher of mead with herbs designed to induce

rapid sobriety. The contents are quickly delivered to the berserks who, much to their disgust, rapidly come to their senses. While that is taking place, Ursula gathers her divinatory rune stones and calls for silence.

THE FALSE ORACLE

"I sense trickery," Ursula cries, "an attempt to undermine our lord! I shall consult the Norns, who have always been kind to us." She gestures to the top table. Two of Yngvi's huscarls sweep the clutter of plates and goblets onto the floor to clear a space. Ursula throws a handful of carved bones onto the table. In the hushed room, their clatter sounds like rolling thunder. The seer hunches down over the bones, studying them carefully.

"Treachery!" she shrieks. "That was no spirit, but a foul illusion conjured by…them!" She points a finger directly at you. "This one," she says, pointing to <chosen player character>, "is in league with the outlaw, Orm. This is a plot to remove thegn Yngvi from power and put a usurper in his place! Seize them!"

The huscarls, now suddenly remarkably sober, draw their battle axes from their belts and move to surround you. The crowd begins to cry out. "These guests are not proven criminals!" "They have a right to fair trial!" "Show mercy, in the name of the gods!" "He is of Skied Godhammer's blood! He has a right to find the handle!"

Cuthwulf steps in front of the huscarls and raises his arms to halt their advance. "Drop your weapons now and you shall be given a fair trial at dawn. Resist and you will have proven yourselves guilty as charged and be dealt with accordingly. Your fate is in your hands."

Many roleplayers deem surrender to be some sort of failure, and thus the party's first thought may be toward a violent resolution. Have each member make a Common Knowledge roll. With success they should be reminded of the laws of hospitality which prohibit them from taking up arms against their host or his household (–5 Glory). The laws also provide them with legal protection, as they are under Yngvi's charge—if harm befalls them, the gods will punish Yngvi and his household.

Any violence would also result in weregild cases being brought against them, risk restarting the blood feud, and possibly end up with the heroes being branded outlaws. They are also outnumbered, poorly equipped, and Yngvi has other warriors (no doubt armed and armored) at his disposal.

If they still want to fight, then do not force them to surrender—sheer weight of numbers should eventually bring them to their knees, and leave them with crippling wound penalties.

If the party surrenders or is forced into submission, proceed to **A Night in Jail**. If violence occurs and the party refuses to surrender, they have to flee the village under constant attack. Should they manage to escape, move straight to **Wanderings**.

Ⓜ **Ursula Ingmarsdohtor:** See page 257.
Ⓜ **Cuthwulf Yngvisunu:** See page 257.
Ⓜ **Cuthwulf's Huscarls (3 per hero):** See page 257. They are armed only with battle axes. They have Toughness 6 and Parry 6.
Ⓜ **Cuthwulf's Huscarls (50):** See page 257. These arrive at the rate of 2d6 per round if a fight occurs. They are fully armed and armored.

A NIGHT IN JAIL

The party is stripped of all their belongings, save their clothes, and thrown into the jail, a windowless outbuilding far from the main hall. Magic has only just begun to fade from Rassilon, hence, the jail is fortified against offensive spells, such as *burst* and *blast*. The walls are Toughness 20 (10), and the reinforced door (Toughness 16 (4)) is barred from the outside. This prevents lockpicking attempts. The jail interior measures four yards to a side. A squad of ten of Cuthwulf's huscarls is stationed outside the jail.

AN UNEXPECTED FRIEND

Shortly before dawn, the door to the jail creaks open. Framed in the doorway is Cuthwulf. He enters the jail, quietly shutting the door behind him.

"Though it pains me deeply to say this, Thegn Yngvi's madness has finally claimed his mind," the herald whispers. "He has already decreed you all guilty. All attempts to change his mind have failed. When the sun rises, you will be given a show trial and then publicly beheaded for attempted treason.

"I do not believe you are here to cause trouble. The seer's heart is well intentioned, though her methods are questionable. She likely branded you treacherous to try to save the thegn. Personally, I fear the shade of Skied Godhammer may have been right—it is time for the thegn to step aside for one more fit to rule. You are of Godhammer's blood; you have a right to seek the hammer's handle and forge the weapon anew.

"Your equipment is outside, along with provisions for a few days. The guards on the gate are loyal to me and will let you pass. Whether you trust me or not, believe me when I say your fate is sealed if you remain in Wulfstead. All I ask in return is that my part in your escape remains untold. I act in the best interests of the people.

"Go now, quickly as possible. Find the blind priest. He knows the story of Stormhammer, I am certain."

The characters' equipment is lying outside the jail—nothing has been taken. Loaves of bread, slabs of cheese, and strips of dried meat, enough food for three days per hero, have been added to their packs, as have waterskins filled with weak wine. A bone scroll case contains a map of the holding. Give the players the basic copy of the Wulfstead map at this time (not the GM's version).

The guards placed to watch over the jail are all fast asleep in the snow. Cuthwulf says they were given drugged mead, for they are men fanatically loyal to the thegn. The gate guards silently open the postern gate, allowing the party to leave the village.

Cuthwulf's sudden assistance is not an act of kindness. Ursula has consulted the runes regarding the handle of Stormhammer, and learned that the quest will be arduous. Rather than endanger her son's life on the perilous venture, she decided it would be better to let the heroes takes all the risks. Once the handle has been found, the visitors will be eliminated and Cuthwulf will claim the relic and Yngvi's title. Thus, Ursula ordered Cuthwulf to play the part of an ally and ensure the characters escape the village before dawn.

When the jail guards (who were not in on the plan) recover their senses and alert the thegn to the escape, Ursula will be on hand to ensure they are branded guilty of sedition and sentenced to death *in absentia*. This gives Cuthwulf and the huscarls the legal right to slay them on sight.

WANDERINGS

The heroes can see for three miles on flat terrain. Standing in the hills, the distance increases to four miles if on high ground and just one mile while in the depressions. In the Stormwald, visibility is reduced to no more than 10 yards. The GM should keep a general track of the passage of time for the purposes of rest, hunger, exposure to the elements, and lighting conditions when the heroes reach one of the important sites. Remember, the ground is covered in snow and there are no roads once outside Wulfstead village.

There are eight hours of daylight with an hour of twilight either side. During twilight, visibility is Dim (–1). Unless the GM wishes otherwise, the weather is fair—sporadic snow and strong winds, but no blizzards or heavy falls—and the nights are clear and bright, giving Dark (–2) lighting conditions.

While the party has been tracking down the blind priest, Yngvi has ordered his huscarls to hunt down and kill the escapees. Cuthwulf and Ursula both tried to convince him otherwise, but for once, the old man's mind was made up. Small bands of mounted huscarls are scouring the land for the party.

WE'RE NOT ALONE

For each journey between two named locales on the map, the GM must draw a card from the action deck. If the party visits Vings Stead straight after leaving Wulfstead, for instance, the GM would draw one card. If they then travel to the priest's cave, he would draw another card. Shuffle the deck after each draw. A black face card indicates an encounter. Consult the table below.

In the event a fight occurs, the GM should set up the tabletop to represent the local terrain. The grasslands are relatively flat, with only a few low hills, while the hillier regions have lots of steep inclines, gullies, and crags.

Card	Encounter
Jack	**Villagers.** During daylight hours, the villagers are working in the fields or out hunting, as best fits the location. At night, they are returning from delivering supplies to Orm and his huscarls. Roll for their Reaction normally. If the party is searching for the priest, they can make a Streetwise roll at –2 if the villagers are Neutral or better.
Queen	**Mounted Huscarls:** See **Hunted** below for details.
King	**Huscarls:** See **Hunted** below for details.
Ace	**GM's Choice:** The heroes encounter someone unusual. This might be an NPC they met at the feast and conversed with, Orm and a band of his huscarls, an itinerant healer or skald, or perhaps a hero out to make his name. Unless the NPC is known to the party, roll for their Reaction normally. Even if openly hostile, the lone NPC will not attack a heavily armed party.

HUNTED

The huscarls and heroes can spot each other at the maximum range allowed for the terrain. At three miles or over, both parties make a Notice roll at –4. The penalty drops to –2 at two miles and –1 at one mile. The berserks make a Group Notice roll. If the party spies the huscarls and are not detected in return, then they can take appropriate steps to hide (simply lying prone is enough to avoid detection at these ranges). If the huscarls detect the party, they move to intercept. They do not have any spells that allow them to identify a band of distant figures, so their approach is routine.

Should the heroes wish to avoid the huscarls, use the Chase rules. Each Range Increment equates to one mile initially. Because this is a long distance Chase, Agility is not used. Instead, the participants must use Vigor or Riding, as applicable. If one side is mounted and the other on foot, the riders gain +2 to their Riding rolls. The huscarls make a single Group roll.

If the huscarls and heroes end up on the same Range Increment at the *end* of a round, then a distance change is made. The Range Increments now equate to 100 yards and the heroes begin three Range Increments ahead of

their pursuers. If the huscarls again end up on the same marker as the party at the end of a round, lay out the tabletop and conduct a battle. The huscarls begin just 12" from the heroes. They do not intend to take prisoners.

- **Mounted Huscarls (1 per hero):** See page 257.
- **Riding Horses (1 per hero):** See page 260.
- **Huscarls on Foot (2 per hero):** See page 257.

THE BLIND PRIEST

The blind priest's dwelling is not marked on the players' map. A recluse leading a hermitic lifestyle, the priest dwells in a small cave concealed in a gully along the banks of a stream. If the heroes stumble into the map square containing his home, they then may make a Notice roll at –2 to spot a very faint line of thin smoke rising from his chimney.

The quickest way to locate the hermit is to visit a stead and ask the occupants if they know of the priest. Due to his reclusive nature, this requires a Streetwise roll at –1. With success, the party is given accurate directions. The roll may be repeated, but only one roll per stead is permitted. Should the party fail every roll, then they automatically strike lucky at the last stead they visit.

Calling out before they approach the cave or knocking on the crude wooden door elicit the same response, a muffled call for the visitor to enter if he is willing to obey the laws of hospitality or to face death if he comes with malice in his heart.

The interior of the cave is dry and warm. A wooden cot covered in blankets and furs, a rickety table, a three-legged stool, and piles and piles of books and scrolls are the only furnishings. A small hearth in the center of the cave is lit, producing only dim light but welcome heat. A rabbit on a spit sizzles over the hot coals.

Seated at the table is an unkempt man perhaps in his sixties. His hair is long and gray, and his fingers gnarled and bent. A dirty strip of fabric is tied around his eyes.

"Sit down and warm your bones. When the rabbit is done, please help yourselves. It's fresh today. Now, you haven't come to visit an old man seeking shelter. Tell me what you want, leaving nothing out, or my advice will be limited. Come now, someone speak."

The man, who goes by the name of Sten Renviksunu, is a priest of Hoenir, god of knowledge. He only offers his name if directly asked. Blind but not deaf, the wily old goat has already cast a *detect truth* spell, which he Maintains throughout the heroes' visit. He'll question any lies, though he is not so rude as to accuse the speaker of falsehood directly. Remember, he can only detect lies—he has no special powers to detect omissions of fact.

Once he has been told the story, he agrees to help the heroes if he can. The priest knows all the information regarding Skeid Godhammer, Stormhammer, and Thunor's Anvil. These facts are detailed in the players' introduction (page 3). If the party answers "no" to the appropriate question in the narrative below, add in the missing information. Otherwise, there is no need to repeat everything the party has already learned.

"Ah, Skeid Godhammer! A name I haven't heard in a long, long time. You do know the common gossip about him, yes? Skeid Godhammer was a bear of a man, both in frame and temperament. He stood seven feet in his socks and was prone to violent fits of anger, just like the god he followed. Skeid was both holy man and warrior, advising when asked and killing when necessary.

"Back then, the land was troubled by many cliff giants. Skeid prayed to Thunor to help defeat them, and Thunor sought fit to bless his servant. In a dream, Skeid was instructed to go to the temple atop Thunor' Anvil. You know about the Anvil, I assume? Well, when he got to the summit, he found a magnificent hammer resting on the altar. This was Stormhammer, part of which you seek. Please tell me you have researched the basic details of this relic?

"Anyway, to cut a long story short, Skeid defeated the cliff giants in the Stormwald. That's the forest to the north. A beautiful and terrible place, they say. I have never seen it, for I was stricken blind before ever venturing there, but they say the trees are prone to lightning strikes and catch fire in glorious reds and oranges.

"The Anari had long since ceased to rule Nordmark in Godhammer's time, though they held grip on the other Saxa domains. Alas, Skeid never lived to see his people truly free, though his two sons did. One stayed in Nordmark, from whom Thegn Yngvi is descended, while the other son migrated west. He is the ancestor of your branch of the family.

"When the family split, a pact was made. Stormhammer would be sundered, with the Nordmark son keeping the handle and the migrating son, the head. Should either ever be in danger, the other would be sworn to come to his aid, bringing his half of the relic. From what I hear on the wind, family relations have been somewhat sour over the centuries. Still, you are here to put that right, eh?

"Now, the handle was kept in the thegn's hall, until one stormy night some 60 years ago, when

it vanished. I was only a lad back then, but I remember the theft caused quite an uproar. To be honest, the thegns have been poor rulers for many generations. Indeed, the thief left a note saying as much, though he promised the relic would never leave Nordmark and would be found when a true son of Skeid sought to claim it. I believe I have a copy of a riddle the thief left for those worthy to claim the handle.

"Have a rummage over there, in that pile of scrolls, will you? The case is storm dragon skin and marked with Thunor's symbol. Open it, open it. I can't remember the words now, so you'll have to read them."

Hand the party Player Handout #1 at this point. The writing is in Saxa. Sten is more than happy to answer other questions to the best of his ability and has no qualms about discussing his background. If a party member is a Lorekeeper or cleric of Hoenir, Sten asks the character if he will return in a year or two, collect his books, and deliver them to a temple of Hoenir for safekeeping.

THE RIDDLE SOLUTION

The meaning of the riddle is detailed below. All the information needed to decode the riddle has already been presented to the characters (whether they realize it or not) or should be quite logical with a little thought. If the players struggle (or do not wish to solve the problem themselves), each hero may make a Common Knowledge roll at –2 or a Knowledge (Riddles) roll for each line, to decipher its meaning.

The priest does not know the answers. What he does is provide exact locations once the heroes have nominated the sort of place they are looking for. For instance, if the adventurers work out that the second line refers to cliff giants and the Stormwald, then Sten confirms there is a ruined fort of unusual construction deep in the forest.

Line 1: The reference to lightning is a direct reference to Godhammer's status as a Lightningson. "Earth bound" and "spark it strikes no more" refer to his bones, which contain no spark of life. *Solution: Godhammer's tomb.*

Line 2: The "hammer which fell against the cliffs" relates to Godhammer's destruction of the cliff giants. The "candles green" are the trees of the Stormwald, which are frequently struck by lightning in summer and catch fire. *Solution: Some sort of ruin in the Stormwald.*

Line 3: "Thunder and lightning" refers to metalworking—the thunder of the hammer and the lightning sparks of hot metal being beaten. The "no heavenly source" is merely further information pointing to an earthly location. *Solution: A mine or smithy.*

There are actually two mines on the GM's map. The heroes seek the abandoned mine since it is now "silent." The workers not only extracted the ore, but it was also smelted and hammered into ingots for export and weapons.

Line 4: "The keys" are physical objects, which the party will find in each location. Without these, they cannot hope to complete their quest. "Cross to Wulfstead" does not mean physical travel there, as indicated by the word "mark." The party simply needs to connect Godhammer's tomb and the giant's fort with a line on the map, and then do the same for the old iron mine and Wulfstead. The intersection falls on the closest hill to Wulfstead, marked "X" on the map.

When assembled, the key fragments form the shape of a crow.

Ⓜ **Sten Renviksunu:** See page 258.

GODHAMMER'S BARROW

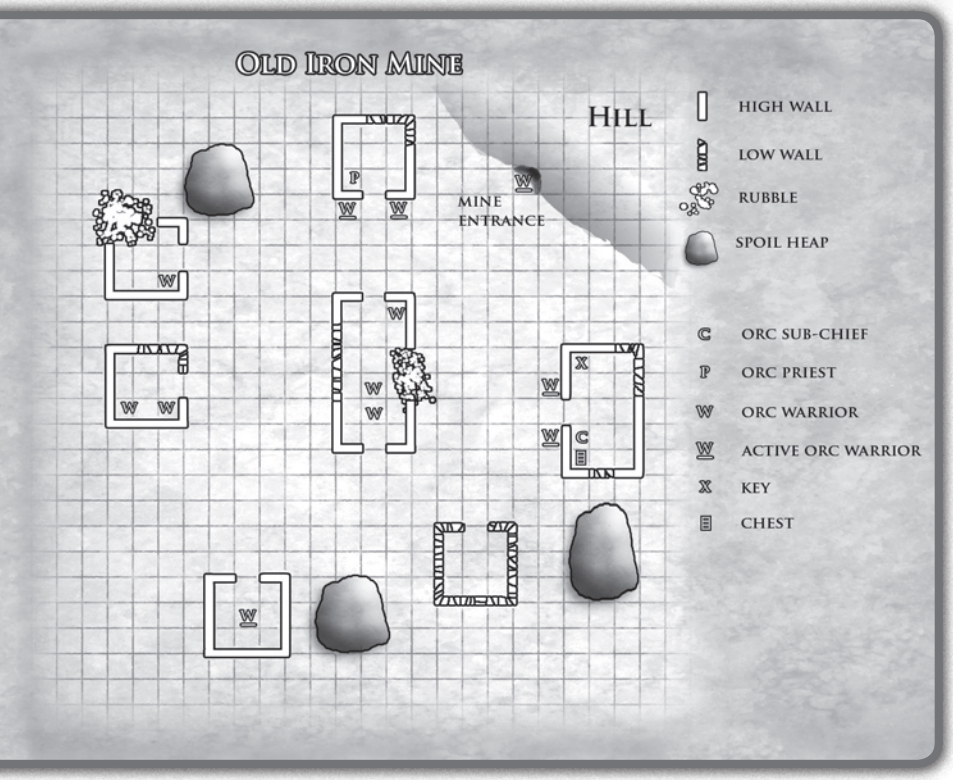
No one recalls when Skeid Godhammer died, and even the nature of his demise is subject to speculation and heated debate. The most popular theory is that he fell in battle against giants or orcs (or sometimes both). Other stories have him dying a "straw death" (dying of old age or sickness in his bed), being murdered by a jealous family member seeking ownership of Stormhammer, or being slain by a dragon. What no one disagrees with is that he ascended straight to Thunor's realm upon his death.

Godhammer's final resting place is traditionally believed to lie in the south of the holding, a little over three miles southwest of Thunor's Anvil. No one seems to have disturbed his bones, for peasants passing by have always reported the stone door to be intact. Of course, no one is totally sure the great hero actually lies entombed within—the engraving on the door shows only a stylized lightning bolt.

The dark shapes you have watched wheeling in the sky finally become clearly visible. High above a solitary grass mound, circle great murders of black and gray crows. The cacophony of cawing seems to have an almost thunderous ring to it. If this simple mound marks the tomb of a great hero then a glorious death is overstated. The only indication of the occupant's former life is a weathered engraving—a stylized crow clutching a lightning bolt in its talons.

Clerics and lay worshippers of Thunor may make a Common Knowledge roll at +2 to identify the birds. Other heroes must use Knowledge (Religion). With success, the hero knows only that they are storm crows, sacred birds and distinguishable from other crows by their unusual coloring. On a raise, he recalls they are typically viewed in large numbers only before a storm. He also knows they are reputedly capable of generating lightning along their wings.

Terrain: The barrow is the only feature. The dome-shaped, grass-covered hillock measures 18" across. Movement up or down the slope is difficult ground. The great stone door blocking the entrance requires a Strength –4



roll to open, except for the <chosen player character>, who may make an unmodified Strength roll.

Monsters: Godhammer's resting place is protected by Thunor, in the form of flocks of storm crows; Thunor's sacred bird and the emblem Godhammer used on his war banner. Guided by Godhammer's unseen hand, the storm crows swoop down to attack (Godhammer isn't going to make the quest easy). The crow swarms begin airborne at a height of 12".

Ⓜ **Storm Crow Swarm (1 per hero):** See page 260.

Tactics: The crows are smart enough to overlap their burst templates where possible. Because the swarm covers a large area, they can shift around quite easily without leaving melee. The storm crows do not venture into the tomb if the party seeks shelter inside. They take to the sky, only to return when the characters exit the barrow.

INSIDE THE BARROW

The interior comprises a short corridor, around the end of which are three stone-lined chambers. The north and west tombs each contain two funeral biers, upon which lie skeletons clad in rusted chainmail and holding corroded long swords. The western chamber is slightly shorter and holds just a single bier. Atop lies the skeleton of Skeid Godhammer, bedecked in tattered divine robes of midnight blue. Clasped tightly in his bony hands is a silver object.

Monsters: The various skeletons are mundane remains. Lurking within the decayed remains in the north and west chambers are anger spirits, the guardians of the tomb. They rise up, taking the form of translucent red berserks, if the silver object is removed from Godhammer's hands.

Ⓜ **Anger Spirits (1 per hero):** See page 258.

Tactics: The spirits are not lethal guardians designed to slay intruders. Rather, they are a form of curse, designed to make a tomb robber's life complicated. The spirits Gang Up on the nearest hero until one of them has successfully possessed him. The remainder then moves on to a fresh target. They follow intruders outside the tomb, though only to a distance of 50".

Treasure: The silver object is part of the key the heroes seek. It takes the form of a raven's head, body, and legs, weighs two pounds, and is a foot long and a half inch thick. Two notched slits are located in the body, just below the neck.

OLD IRON MINE

Half a dozen crumbling buildings and large spoil heaps are all that remains of the former mining community. Ever since you first spotted the ruins, you have been watching brawny figures moving around the site. Now you are close enough to identify them as orcs. Only five are visible—one outside the mine entrance and two pairs guarding ruined buildings—too small for a raiding party.

Most of Nordmark's iron reserves are located further south. Only one mine remains in operation in eastern Wulfstead. This site was abandoned twenty years ago, when the ore ran dry. Abandoned overnight, the buildings have been left to the elements. The mine stretches for a few hundred yards, but contains nothing of any interest.

Terrain: Any broken walls or areas of rubble count as difficult ground. Broken walls stand 3 feet high. Unless otherwise indicated, all remaining walls stand 12 feet high and block line of sight. The spoil heaps are difficult ground, as is movement up or down the hill.

Monsters: An orc raiding party has been using the abandoned mine as a temporary base. The sub-chieftain is charged with terrorizing the lands around Aki's Stead. The orcs are camped in the abandoned buildings—the sub-chieftain knows that bottlenecking his men in the mine would limit their capability to use their bows, and the confined space would make them too susceptible to area effect attacks, such as spells.

Ⓜ **Orc Sub-Chieftain (1):** See page 259. Carries the key to the treasure chest.

Ⓜ **Orc Priest of Ullr (1):** See page 259.

Ⓜ **Orc Warriors (3 per hero):** See page 260.

Tactics: Half the orcs are on sentry duty. These count as active sentries. The others are preparing for the next raid, sharpening swords, restringing bows, fletching arrows,

and so on. They are inactive sentries. When the alarm is raised, they automatically forfeit their action on the first round. On the second round, they grab their bows (an action) and move to investigate the disturbance.

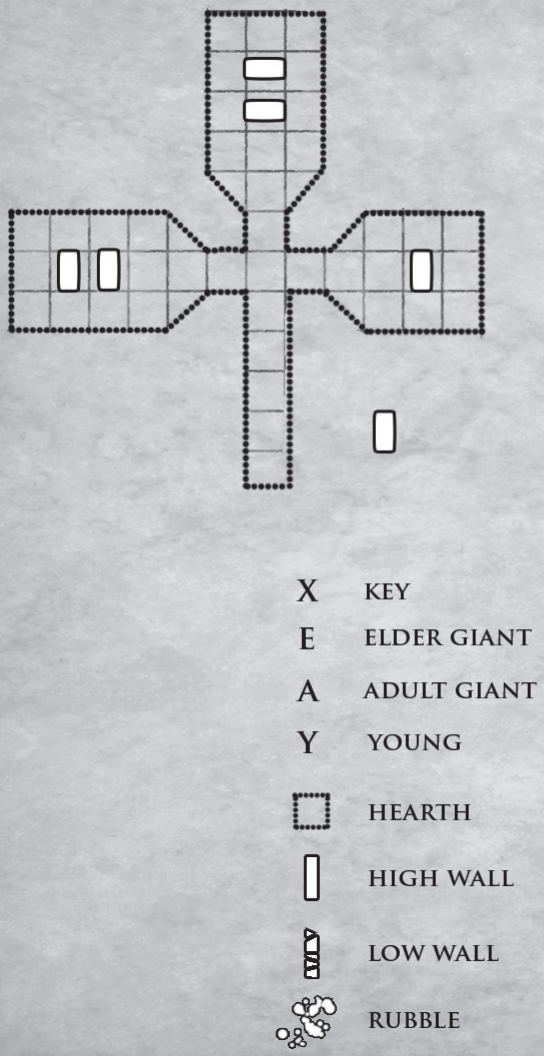
The warriors attack with their bows until forced into melee. They are skilled hunters, and make use of Cover whenever possible. Their preferred tactic is to hide behind an obstacle, expose themselves to danger only to fire, and then duck back into safety. When melee is unavoidable, they drop their bows (a free action), draw their melee weapons (an action), and attack (a second action).

The priest of Ullr begins by casting *aim* and then *boost Shooting*. He then invokes *silence* on an arrow, which he fires into the ground near the largest cluster of heroes. After this, he peppers the most dangerous looking hero with arrows. Like the warriors, he makes sensible use of Cover and tactics.

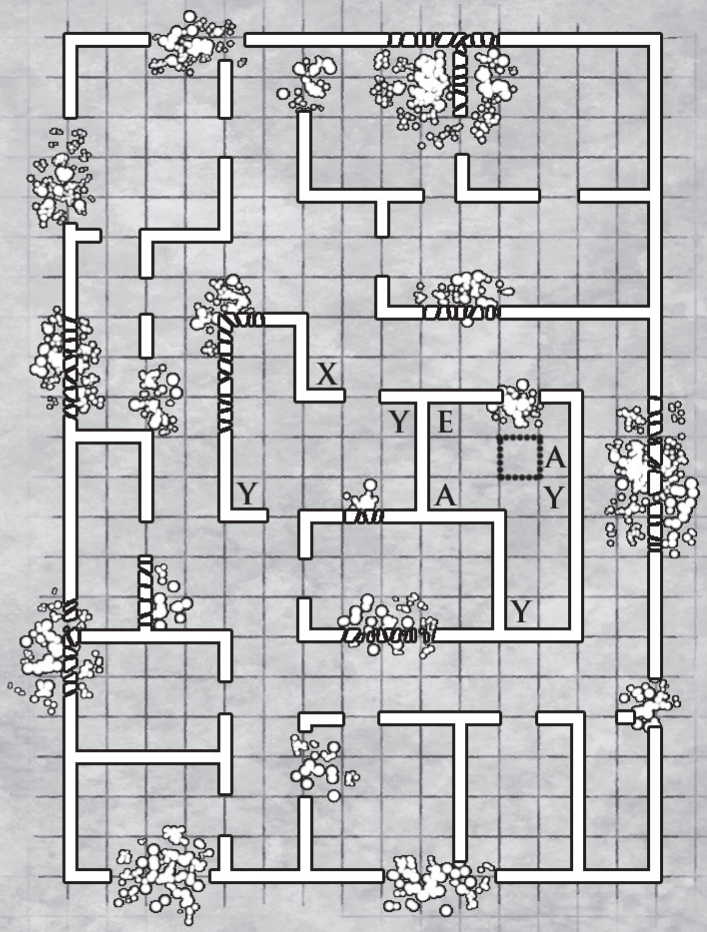
Treasure: The orc's treasure is stored in a locked chest (Toughness 8 or Lockpicking to open). Inside are 2,754 gs in coins and jewelry, two arrows imbued with *aim* (cast with a success, activates when fired), three potions of *healing* (cast with a success), a potion of *boost Shooting* (cast with a raise), and a long, thick arrow imbued with *blast* (fired from a regular bow; unleashes a volley of arrows, 2d6 damage in a Large Burst Template).

The key fragment is concealed behind a loose stone at the point marked "X" on the map. The stone is marked with a stylized crow clutching a lightning bolt in its talons. If the party has opted for a stealthy approach rather than an assault, locating it requires a Notice roll as an

Godhammer's Tomb



Ruined Cliff Giant Fort



KNOCKBACK

These rules are taken from the *Hellfrost Bestiary*.

The physical attacks of large creatures can knock over smaller foes. In order to cause knockback, the attacker must make a successful Fighting attack. The blow does not have to cause damage, however. The victim cannot avoid this—no human can hope to remain standing after being on the receiving end of a frost giant's colossal war axe.

An opponent who is knocked back into a relatively solid object (hay bales or glass windows, for instance, are not solid) is automatically Shaken. This is treated as a separate attack, and thus a foe Shaken by an attack who is then knocked back into a solid object, suffers the effects of successive Shaken results. Opponents may try to Soak any initial damage from the attack or spend bennies to remove the Shaken condition *before* the knockback is applied.

* If a creature is 2 or 3 Sizes larger than its opponent, the victim is knocked back 1" and falls prone.
* If a creature is 4 to 7 Sizes larger than its opponent, the victim is knocked flying 1d4" and falls prone.
* A creature 8 to 11 Sizes larger than its foe, causes knockback of 1d6" and sends foes prone.
* A creature 12 or more Sizes larger, knocks foes back 1d10" and sends them prone.

action. Any hero within 2" detects it with a success. Otherwise, just assume the party finds it after two hours.

This key fragment is a stylized bird's wing, about a foot long and a half inch thick. It weighs two pounds. The front edge of the wing is not smooth; it has a complex pattern of teeth just like a regular key. It fits into the body (found in Godhammer's tomb) on the left side.

RUINED CLIFF GIANT FORT

The journey through the Stormwald is uneventful unless the party is spoiling for a fight. In this case, the GM is free to have the party encounter a band of orc marauders.

The smell of wood smoke has assailed your nostrils for the last mile and has grown stronger as you head deeper into the forest. At last, you spy stone walls ahead through the leafless trees. Colossal blocks of masonry rise upward to a height of twenty feet. The workmanship is poor, certainly not that of a true mason. Some areas appear to have suffered damage, for the walls are no higher than a few feet and the ground around them is strewn with rubble. A column of thick smoke rises from somewhere in the ruins.

In the days shortly after the Anari withdrawal from Nordmark, there was something of a security vacuum. Before the Saxa could raise armies to defend their borders, orcs and cliff giants poured down from the mountains in search of plunder. Although most of the invaders were driven back, a cliff giant tribe had erected a fort within the Stormwald. They resisted all attempts to drive them out until Skeid Godhammer (and his army) came calling. After three days of bloody battle, the fort lay in ruins and the giants were slain to the last.

Terrain: Any broken walls or areas of rubble count as difficult ground. Broken walls stand 3 feet high. Unless otherwise indicated, all remaining walls stand 12 feet high and block line of sight.

Monsters: A family of cliff giants, driven out of the mountains by the marauding orcs, has taken up residence in the old fort. An elderly male leads the family. With him are his wife, some older children, and a number of youngsters. Aside from stealing a few sheep, they have largely ignored the inhabitants of Wulfstead.

Unmolested by the orcs (who are quite happy to attack steads), the giants have grown somewhat complacent with their lifestyle. Although awake no matter what time the heroes reach the ruin, they are inactive sentries and have posted no watch. The family is gathered around the fire eating fresh, uncooked venison. If one giant becomes an active sentry, he quickly alerts the rest of his family, who also become alert. If another noise is then heard, the family spreads out to check the ruin for possible intruders (which equates to more food in their minds).

The party need not attack the giants, though of course they don't know this. The key can be discovered through a stealthy, systematic search.

Ⓜ **Cliff Giant Elder (1):** Treat as a Wild Card adult (see page 24).

Ⓜ **Cliff Giant Adult (1 per 2 heroes):** See page 258.

Ⓜ **Cliff Giant Youngster (1 per hero):** See page 258.

Tactics: Cliff giant tactics break down into two distinct patterns—throw boulders at anything beyond arm's reach and swing your club wildly at anything close by. In game terms, the giants use their Throwing skill at distant targets, happily lobbing chunks of rock even if family members are engaged in melee against the same target. When forced into melee, the giants *always* use Sweep, even if another giant is in danger of being whacked. The one exception to this is the Wild Card elder—he has (just) enough brains to avoid clubbing his kin to death. He adjusts his position so they are out of danger.

Treasure: The giants are not rich, but they have a small stockpile of coins and jewelry taken from hapless travelers or slain orcs. The family fortune amounts to 1,545 gs.

The key fragment is concealed behind a loose stone at the point marked "X" on the map. The stone is marked with a stylized crow clutching a lightning bolt in its talons. If the party has opted for a stealthy approach rather than an assault, locating it requires a

Notice roll as an action. Any hero within 2" detects it with a success. Otherwise, just assume the party finds it after two hours.

Prying out the stone requires a Strength roll as an action, but it is noisy. Draw a card from the action deck for each attempt. A black suit means enough noise has been made to be heard by the giants. They automatically become active sentries if inactive, or they come to investigate if already active.

The key fragment is a stylized bird's wing, about a foot long and a half inch thick. It weighs two pounds. The front edge of the wing is not smooth; it has a complex pattern of teeth just like a regular key. It fits into the body (found in Godhammer's tomb) on the right side.

THE LIGHTNING STONE

The map is not accurate enough to provide a pinpoint location. For each hour spent scouring the hill, the party must make a Cooperative Notice roll. With success, they locate a flat stone almost completely grown over with grass. Carved into it is the same emblem as on Godhammer's tomb. Beneath the symbol is a slot. It takes the form of a cross, though the upright is considerably shorter than the arms are wide. The assembled key fits into the slot. Turning it clockwise causes the stone to rise slightly.

In a hollow beneath the stone, within clear sight of Wulfstead, lies Stormhammer's handle, an iron rod about a foot long covered in lightning runes. Now the party must climb Thunor's Anvil!

THUNOR'S ANVIL

Although not the highest peak in the area (it rises 120 yards vertically from the surrounding landscape), the Anvil's isolation and flat summit made for an ideal temple to Thunor. The site has been linked with the storm god for millennia. During the Anari occupation of Nordmark, the Anvil served as a beacon of resistance, reminding the oppressed Saxa that Thunor was watching over them and would protect those who remained true to their beliefs.

The steps which wind around the column of rock were hewn by earth elementals controlled by Anari priests and mages. When the steps reach the overhanging summit, they cut through the rock, circling as a short tunnel until they emerge on top of the Anvil. The Anari had planned on defiling the temple to prove their superiority, but when they reached the top they found nothing to defile—the summit was simply a flat plateau.

The site is considered so sacred that only clerics of Thunor are allowed on the summit. The holy men and women never use the steps—they *fly* to the temple. Many Saxa see the continuing existence of the steps as an affront to their deity, but the clerics are quick to point out that they serve as a reminder to the days of oppression, days which must never be forgotten or allowed to occur again.

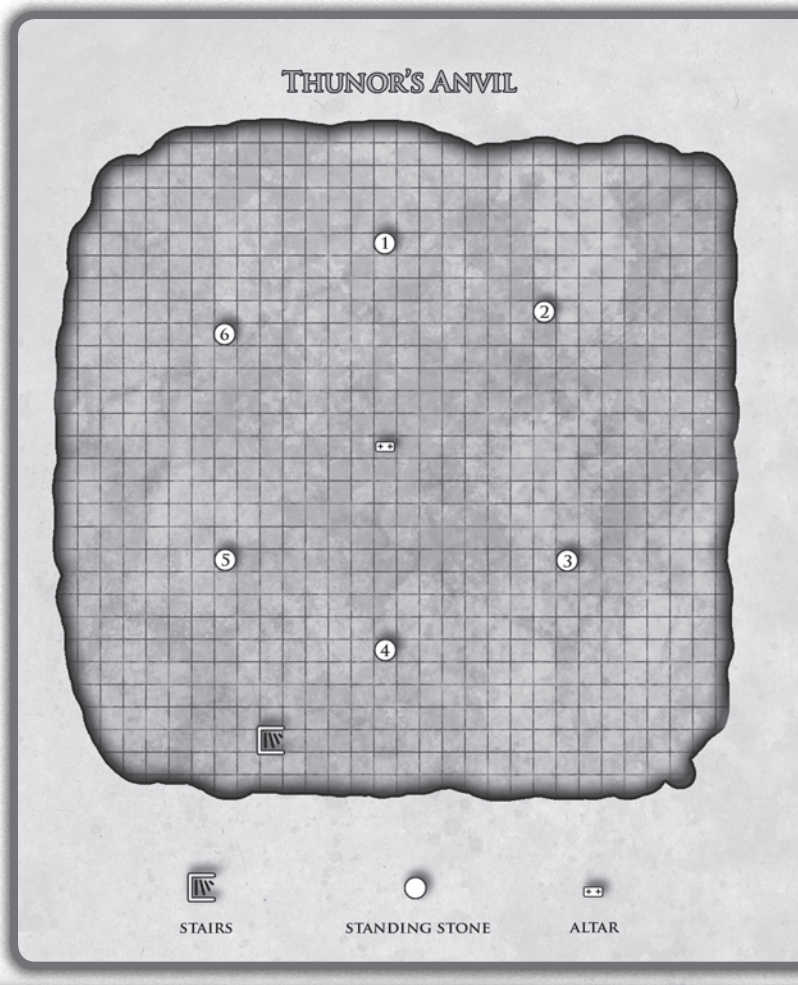
Even for the most faithful, a trip to the summit is an arduous undertaking. Winged beasts known as wyverns dwell in small caves dotted around the pillar of rock, unpredictable gale force winds tear across the summit, and lightning constantly strikes the standing stones. A good sense of balance and knowledge of *energy immunity (electricity)* is required for prolonged visits.

THE WINGED GUARDIANS

The narrow, slippery steps are deceptively tricky to navigate and rise steeply. Every gust of wind threatens to send you tumbling to the craggy ground far below. From high above, you hear a loud roar. Dark, winged shapes swoop down through the clouds.

There is no map for this encounter. The only available fighting space is a narrow, curving ledge. To facilitate miniatures, the ledge should be treated as being 1" wide and 20" long.

If you plan on drawing the ledge on the tabletop,



FALLING HEROES

Both scenes set at Thunor's Anvil involve a risk of falling. Traditionally, it is assumed a falling hero hits the ground the same round he falls, thus giving him no opportunity to save his life through magic. The optional rule below is intended to be cinematic rather than realistic.

GMs may rule that a falling hero moves 10" downward immediately on falling, and then a further 20" at the start of each round. Any spellcaster trying to invoke magic while hurtling to his death suffers a –2 penalty to his arcane skill roll, however.

mark the two ends 20". Mark a dot 3" to the right of center. Draw a curved line joining the three dots to get the curve of the rock face. The concave side of the ledge is a sheer cliff wall, which blocks line of sight, while on the other side is a sheer drop. For those who fancy modeling the stairs in three dimensions, they rise 6" over the 20" length.

Terrain: The steps are narrow and slick. Treat them as difficult ground. Any hero who runs and who rolls a 1 on his running die slips and falls (see below). Because of the restricted space and treacherous terrain, a hero who wishes to move through a space occupied by an ally must use an action. Furthermore, he may only move through one ally in a round.

Anyone who falls or suffers knockback must make an Agility roll at –2 as a free action to grab the edge of the steps. With success, he is hanging by his fingertips. Hauling himself back up onto the steps requires a Strength roll as an action. On a failed Agility roll, the hero falls 20" (40 yards) to the ground below. He suffers 10d6 damage from the impact.

Monsters: Nesting in caves in the rock face are several families of wyverns. Voracious hunters and extremely territorial, they attack anything which enters their domain. Note that only a wyvern's tail attack causes knockback (see sidebar). The wyverns begin 16" from the party.

Ⓜ **Wyverns (1 per hero):** See page 260.

Tactics: The wyverns immediately close to melee. Their tactics depend on how tough the GM wants the encounter to be. If the group prefers cinematic adventure, then they attack only with their bite and claws.

For a tougher and more realistic encounter, the wyverns use their tails to slap the characters, hoping to knock them off the ledge. Heroes who slip over but do not plummet are then subjected to grapple attacks. Once a grapple is initiated, the wyvern pulls away from the ledge on the same action (pace permitting), carrying its prey with it. It then proceeds to climb its full Pace each round while simultaneously biting. After three rounds, the wyvern releases its victim.

THE STORM TEMPLE

The steps emerge onto the flat summit of the Anvil. Fully exposed to the elements, you are immediately buffeted by strong winds. Lightning arcs through the heavy clouds, though even the tremendous energy being unleashed can do little to brighten the leaden sky. Six towering stones of black, rune-engraved rock form a circle around the center. In the middle sits a large, flat rock hewn from the same stone as the monoliths. Resting atop it is a large object—Stormhammer's head.

The Anari may have found nothing to mark the site as sacred, but these days six standing stones (known locally as Thunor's Splinters) grace the summit. The stones were not carved from the Anvil, for they are of black granite, rock found nowhere within 100 miles of the peak. No one knows who carried them to the summit or how they achieved such a feat, for each stone weighs many tons. Ask any local, though, and the answer is the same—Thunor placed them there after the liberation.

Terrain: Six standing stones are positioned at equal distances from a central altar. Worked and smoothed, the stones are black granite and etched with Auld Saxa runes honoring Thunor. The stones are 1" wide and 5" tall. The altar is a plinth of black granite measuring six feet long and four feet high. Both obstacles block line of sight and can be used for Cover. They are impervious to all damage. Movement over the altar is difficult ground.

Lighting conditions are Dim (–1) due to exceptional heavy cloud except in rounds where lightning affects play (see below). During these times, visibility is as per daylight.

Monsters: As soon as anyone steps into the circle formed by the standing stones, each monolith is struck by lightning. A number of strange creatures (humanoid yet made of living lightning) appear out of nowhere. These are storm elementals. Place one directly in front of each standing stone, facing toward the altar, and the rest adjacent to the altar.

The storm elementals see the party as enemies and thieves, even clerics of Thunor—Skied Godhammer may have given the quest to gain possession of Stormhammer, but Thunor didn't.

Ⓜ **Storm Elementals (2 per hero):** See page 260.

Tactics: Lacking any ranged powers, the storm elementals close to melee at the earliest opportunity. Through their natural form and electrical weapons, they have the power to knock foes back. They always step up to fallen foes and attempt to drive them back toward the edge of the summit, whereupon they seek to knock them over the edge. See below for how a hero can catch the ledge before he falls to his doom.

Once Stormhammer has been reformed, the storm elementals dissipate—Thunor allowing the relic to be made whole again is sign enough that the characters are worthy to wield it. However, the fight is not over. Proceed immediately to the section entitled **Treachery Revealed**.

Treasure: Stormhammer's head lies on the altar. If the handle is inserted into the socket (an action), a powerful bolt of lightning strikes the altar, fusing handle and head together, and bathing the holder in lightning. If the hero is a cleric of Thunor or a scion of Skeid Godhammer, he suffers no damage. A hero with Thunor as his patron suffers 2d6 damage. Other characters take 4d6 damage. See the sidebar entitled **Stormhammer** for details of the weapon's powers. A hero must attune himself to the weapon to be able to access its powers.

Special: A Club or Spade action card dealt to the storm elementals also brings into play special events. The storm elementals are immune to both effects.

Club: Lightning strikes the standing stones, which are numbered one through six on the map. The GM must roll 2d6, reading the dice separately.

If the dice show different results, a sheet of crackling lightning measuring 1" wide and 5" high arcs between the center of the standing stones indicated by the dice at the start of the round, before any other actions are taken. It remains in play until the end of the round. Any player character caught in the field suffers 2d6 damage with an electrical trapping (see *Hellfrost Player's Guide*). This counts as a magical attack, so Arcane Resistance protects normally. The hero is automatically knocked prone into an adjacent square of the GM's choosing outside of the field. A sheet of lightning is otherwise treated as a *barrier* spell, except it lasts only one round. Creatures immune to electrical attacks can walk through the lightning unimpaired.

If both dice come up the same value, the lightning radiates out from just one menhir rather than arcing between two stones. Place a Large Burst Template over the center of the indicated stone. Except for the one round duration, this functions as a *prolonged blast* spell, causing 2d6 damage with an electrical trapping.

Whether a line or a template, the lightning cannot be *dispelled* or *negated*.

Spade: A sudden gale force wind blows across the exposed summit. Roll a d8 to determine the direction the wind blows, as indicated on the map. Hence, if a four is rolled, the wind blows *toward* that side of the map. This occurs at the start of the round, before any actions are taken.

The heroes must make a Strength roll, adding their Size as a modifier. Failure causes the hero to move 1d4" in the direction of the wind and fall prone. A hero blown over the edge of the summit is allowed an Agility roll at –2 as a free action to grab hold of the edge. With success, he is hanging from the summit by his fingertips. Hauling himself back onto the summit requires a Strength roll as an action. On a failed Agility roll, the hero falls. He suffers 20d6 damage from the impact (a distance of 60", or 120 yards).

STORMHAMMER

Once reformed, the runes on Stormhammer glow brilliant white. Stormhammer has a d10 Faith skill and a Wild Die. The user may never substitute his own arcane skill, nor may he use any Power Edges relating to the relic's powers. Activating a spell requires a single action. Spells can be Maintained as long as the *user* fulfills all the regular requirements. Otherwise, these relics function exactly as per the spell.

Any character carrying the weapon is subject to the sin list as if he were a cleric of Thunor. If he sins, it's Stormhammer which loses its powers, though only with regard to that hero—it refuses to work for a sinner.

Powers:

* Str+d8 damage (clerics of Thunor or a scion of Skeid Godhammer ignore the minimum Strength rule), –1 Parry (over-sized head), requires one-hand, AP 2 v. rigid armor.
* +1 to Fighting and damage rolls. Against clerics of Thrym, grants +2 to Fighting and damage rolls.
* Holder becomes immune to electricity-based attacks.
* User can invoke *burst* with an electrical trapping.

TREACHERY REVEALED

"Put that down!" screams a female voice. Looking around, you see a squad of Cuthwulf's huscarls stepping onto the summit, axes ready and a bloodthirsty tinge to their eyes. There is no sign of any woman.

"Ah, your eyes are easily fooled," the voice cackles again. "I thank you for falling into my trap so perfectly," the voice croons, "but now your part in this drama is over. You may carry the blood of Skeid Godhammer in your veins, but so does Cuthwulf, my son, and the son of Thegn Yngvi. Once Stormhammer is his, he will replace the thegn as ruler.

"Oh, you're thinking Orm will perhaps oust him? I'm afraid Orm and his outlaw band have been lured into a trap as well. Right now they are crossing the snows to where they believe they will catch the orc chieftain unawares. And when they arrive, they will walk straight into an orc ambush. How do I know this? Because I control the orc tribe raiding these lands! But enough talk, before the sun sets, both you and Orm will be dead."

Through her divinations, Ursula deduced Stormhammer's handle had been located. Knowing the party would have to climb Thunor's Anvil at some point, the

seer reached the Anvil first with a band of huscarls. They hid in one of the deeper caves until they heard the party pass, and then, after a suitable delay, followed them to the summit, their footsteps concealed by the roar of the wind and the cracks of thunder.

Terrain: The features of the battlefield are as per the previous section. The wind and lightning remain in play.

Monsters: Ursula is Maintaining an *invisibility* spell on herself. The heroes are allowed to make a Notice roll at –4 before the first action cards are dealt to pinpoint the location of her voice. Those who fail cannot make another attempt unless Ursula reveals her presence to them, such as through spellcasting.

Should a hero who has detected her ever lose line of sight to Ursula, he no longer knows where she is—he must roll again to locate her. Ursula knows this is likely, so she will pass behind the standing stones at times to throw off her attackers.

Ⓜ **Ursula Ingmarsdohtor:** See page 257.

Ⓜ **Cuthwulf's Huscarls (2 per hero):** See page 257.

Tactics: The huscarls charge into the fray with wild abandon. Neither they nor Ursula know about the wind and lightning, so the GM should refrain from using his knowledge in the NPCs' tactics.

Ursula begins by using her *deflection* rune stone (an action). Next she invokes *quickness* on herself. Once invisible and quickened, she keeps moving to avoid area effect spells while simultaneously casting *entangle* spells. Once the close enough to the hero she deems the most dangerous, she makes a Touch Attack against him while casting a *jinx* spell (this incurs no multi action penalty if she is still under the effects of *quickness*) and then retreats out of range.

In theory she'll be Maintaining three spell after this. Ursula then beings using *bolt* spell while using one of the standing stones for cover.

Treasure: Each huscarl carries 1d10 x 10 gs worth of jewelry and coin in addition to their equipment. Ursula's treasure comprises any alchemical devices she has not used.

TO SAVE A KINSMAN

Unless the heroes have been frivolous, Orm has given the party a means to contact him—the *voice on the wind* charm. Of course, the spell will not tell the party where the hauld is located, but if they establish contact, Orm will know they are searching for him and reply. His reply is not encouraging—*"Surrounded by many orcs in old ruin five miles due east of Anvil. Any assistance appreciated, kinsman. Orm."*

Without this charm, the party has only one hope of finding the hauld before it is too late—approaching a peasant and asking if he knows the noble's whereabouts. This requires a Streetwise roll at –2. The roll may be reattempted, but each reroll requires the party to travel to a different stead, costing them valuable time. The consequences of the delays are dealt with below. Trying to summon aid is helpless—the peasants adore Orm, but they are not warriors. Visiting the thegn is futile, for he will not lift a finger to save his exiled son.

Eventually, the party should learn Orm's location and rush to the rescue. If they do not, Orm is slain, as are the orcs, and Cuthwulf is recognized as a champion of Wulfstead, albeit begrudgingly. One of Orm's huscarls will survive the fight. Though battered and bruised, he returns to Wulfstead, whereupon he publicly accuses the heroes of betraying Orm by failing to come to his rescue. The consequences of Orm's death and the accusation are for the GM to determine, but they should not be in the heroes' favor.

The clash of steel and the cries of the dead and dying assail your ears shortly before you begin finding dead huscarls, their bodies peppered with arrows and cruelly hacked apart. Ahead, you spy the ruins. Surrounding the low walls is a host of orcs, baying for blood in their fell and crude tongue. Encircled within the center you can just make out a fluttering standard displaying a long, wingless dragon.

This scene begins as a standard two-sided Mass Battle, with the heroes and Orm's band pitted against orcs. However, Cuthwulf and his berserk huscarls quickly join the fray and attack both sides. Because this is a three-way Mass Battle, it requires a few tweaks to the normal rules.

TOKENS & COMMANDERS

Orm: Orm's forces have 7 tokens if the heroes contacted Orm via the spell. For each Streetwise roll they made to learn his location, he loses one token due to the delay. Unless a hero wishes to take command, Orm is the commander. He has Spirit d8, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Cry Havoc, and Death Before Dishonor. If Orm retains command, let the heroes control him.

Orc Chieftain: The orcs have 8 tokens. The chieftain has Spirit d6, Knowledge (Battle) d10, and Cry Havoc.

Cuthwulf: When they arrive, Cuthwulf's army has 10 tokens (having suffered no losses). Cuthwulf has Spirit d8 and Knowledge (Battle) d8.

BATTLE MODIFIERS

Cuthwulf's men are trapped inside the ruins of the temple. However, the walls are low and the orcs have overrun much of the perimeter. As such, they count as only a slight advantage. The orcs and Cuthwulf have –1 to their Battle rolls when attacking Orm's forces.

Normally, the side with the most tokens gains a +1 bonus per token to Battle rolls. The heroes also have their individual attacks modified by the difference in tokens. In this three-way battle, that changes slightly, as detailed below.

* For the first round only, when there are just two sides, calculate the token bonus as normal. The heroes then suffer an additional –2 penalty, as they must penetrate the orc lines to link up with Cuthwulf.
* On rounds two and three, part of the orc army is distracted by Cuthwulf's men, who are advancing in a spear point formation (known to Saxa as the "boar's head") through their ranks. Treat the orc force has having two less tokens for the purposes of calculating modifiers only.
* Once round four begins, though, the party could well be fighting two foes of unequal strength (who are also fighting each other). In this instance, add half the orcs' tokens to half of Cuthwulf's tokens. The hero's army counts as having half its number of tokens. Round down in all cases. By halving before adding, the heroes gain a slight advantage when both rival armies have an odd number of tokens.

Example: *For instance, on round four, Orm's men have four tokens, the orcs have just 3 tokens left, and Cuthwulf retains 7. Orm's army counts as being just two tokens, as they must divide their forces. The orcs count as a single token, and Cuthwulf's berserks as three tokens. For modifier purposes, the heroes are outnumbered by two tokens. Had we added the tokens together and then halved, the heroes' would be facing five tokens worth of enemies instead of just four.*

BATTLE ROLLS

All commanders roll their Knowledge (Battle) skill as normal. However, some special rules are required to simulate the three-way struggle.

* On the first round, tokens are lost as normal.
* On the second and third round, any tokens slain by Cuthwulf are subtracted from the orcs only. This simulates the berserks charging through the lines to reach Orm. Similarly, Orm's army inflicts casualties only on the orcs.
* On each round thereafter, the number of tokens a side inflicts must be divided among all the enemy factions. If the orcs or Cuthwulf destroy an even number of tokens, they are divided equally between both enemy forces. So, if Orm's side inflicts two tokens of damage, both the orcs and Cuthwulf's men lose one token. If the number is odd, divide the tokens equally as above and then draw a card from the action deck to determine who suffers the remaining token. A black card means Orm suffers the loss. Otherwise, the other faction does.

The heroes must divide an even number of tokens they inflict equally between their enemies. If there is an odd token, then the characters get to decide who suffers the loss.

MORALE MODIFIERS

Orm and his men are completely surrounded by orcs and cannot retreat. Once the orcs are slain, Cuthwulf's men take their places. With no hope of escape, they are prepared to sell their lives dearly. The commander of Orm's army has +2 to his Spirit roll. Cuthwulf's men are berserk, and gain a +2 bonus for being effectively fearless.

ONE TOKEN LEFT

In the event Orm's army is reduced to a single token and has not won the day, the GM can continue play using the Mass Battle rules or he can switch to the tabletop and play out the desperate last stand. The tabletop notes are detailed below. If the last allied token is lost, then switch to the system below automatically. The only change is that there are no allied huscarls remaining in this instance.

Terrain: The temple is just a series of broken walls. Use the map from the first encounter, but remove the river, bridge, and trap. The broken walls are listed as low (about 3' high) and tall (about 8' high). They block line of sight as appropriate and can be used as Cover (+8 Armor). Crossing a low wall is difficult ground.

Monsters: The heroes' faction comprises the surviving characters, Orm (who has taken two wounds), and one huscarl per allied Wild Card.

If the orc army has four or more tokens left, it is led by the chieftain (with one wound) and supported by the priest (also with one wound). The number of warriors is equal to ten per token. If the orcs have fewer than four tokens remaining, then the chieftain has two wounds, the priest is slain, and there are five warriors per token.

If Cuthwulf's army has five or more tokens, then Cuthwulf (with one wound) and ten huscarls per token remain. Otherwise, Cuthwulf has two wounds and there are five warriors per token remaining.

By this stage, the battle has devolved into a series of individual struggles for survival. The set up, in order to be fair, is thus slightly more complex than normal. First, each player should secretly note the location of his characters and any Extras he controls on a scrap of paper. This should be done with no ambiguity. For instance, "the L-shaped, low wall, center right" rather than "by the low wall."

The GM should then place half the enemy forces around the map at random, ensuring they are in base contact with one opponent. This represents ongoing skirmishes. The remainder of the enemies should be placed at random. The party then places all their characters in accordance with their written instructions. If a player has lost his character early in the battle, he may assist the GM by controlling the orc army (in accordance with their tactics). As a reward for playing fairly, his new hero should be awarded the same XPs as the majority of his surviving comrades earn for this scenario.

Ⓜ **Hauld Orm Yngvisunu:** See page 257.
Ⓜ **Orm's Huscarls:** See page 258.
Ⓜ **Orc Chieftain:** See page 259.
Ⓜ **Orc Priest of Thrym:** See page 259.
Ⓜ **Orc Warriors:** See page 260.
Ⓜ **Cuthwulf Yngvisunu:** See page 257.

Cuthwulf's Huscarls: See page 257.

Tactics: To help ensure the fight remains a three-way skirmish, the enemy Extras attack the nearest enemy figure. Wild Cards may select their foes based on circumstances. Cuthwulf heads straight for Orm, though he will attack any orcs in his path on the way.

SPOILS OF WAR

Victory earns the party 1d10 x 200 gs from the orcs and Cuthwulf's men, in addition to any unused alchemical devices.

AFTERMATH

Once the orcs and Cuthwulf have been slain, the immediate threat to Wulfstead is over. Orm, if alive, refuses to lay any claim to Stormhammer if told of its existence. As far as he is concerned, he remains an outlaw until the new thegn says otherwise. No amount of cajoling can convince him otherwise.

Delivering Stormhammer to Yngvi's stead causes the ancestral specter to appear again, though this time with a less dramatic entrance. The spirit praises the hero and his comrades for restoring his honor. Skeid Godhammer is as good as his word. He invokes the ancient laws and declares Yngvi's reign of incompetency over. His title of thegn and governance of the holding is offered to the <chosen player character>. If the hero accepts the responsibility, he gains the Noble Edge if he does not have it already, but *not* the Rich Edge. A hero already with the Edge gains a second title. See **Ruined Lands** below for more details.

Orm holds no malice against the character if this occurs—he firmly believes a man's fate is woven at his birth, and what passes is what is meant to happen. He relinquishes his title, to which he no longer has claim. He and his huscarls offer their allegiance to the new thegn, so long as they are allowed to remain guardians of Wulfstead. This means they do *not* become Followers.

Some parties may decide they are not worthy of the honor, perhaps favoring Orm as the rightful heir. If Orm's name is proposed, Skeid refuses to accept him as thegn because he is an outlaw and exile. However, there is a way around this—a hero can accept Godhammer's offer, and then immediately abdicate in Orm's favor. Rather than be offended, Skeid Godhammer is pleased with the outcome—his hands were tied by the laws of the Saxa, but the character has circumvented those legally.

Of course, this leaves the character with no reward. However, Orm has amassed a small fortune through his raids against the orcs, and offers his kinsman 5,000 gold scields and allows him to keep Stormhammer.

Award Glory for completing the adventure as per normal. The Mass Battle is small. Award Glory modifiers for individual actions as normal. In order to qualify as the commander, a player character must have commanded the entire battle. The hero who accepts the title of thegn gains +3 Glory in addition to any other awards earned. Nominating Orm for the position, however, nets the hero +5 Glory for his honor and integrity.

RUINED LANDS

After years of neglect, Wulfstead is neither a wealthy nor a productive land. Monetary investment and rebuilding the morale of its citizens is required before the hero can make any decent income from his holding. As it stands, the land earns the hero a meager 1,000 gs per year after expenses. This is in addition to any income the character has from other sources.

Bringing the settlement back to full prosperity takes both time and money. A total of 10,000 gold scields is required to rebuild the infrastructure. One way to ensure this amount is received is for the new ruler to take only part, or none, of the annual 1,000 gs income, returning the remainder to the village.

No matter how quickly the money is made available, rebuilding takes a minimum of one year. Once the time and cash are spent, the hero gains the Rich Edge. If he has it already, he gains an additional 5,000 gs per year. Of course, he is now solely responsible for the welfare of the inhabitants and is expected to rule over them for a minimum of six months each year. Unless he does, the village will be subject to internal dissention, raids, and poor harvests—his annual income from the land halves due to poor leadership.

If the new thegn elects to appoint to steward (perhaps Orm) rather than rule directly, he makes only 3,500 gs per year once the village is rebuilt, but he does not have to be present at all—the settlement runs smoothly in his absence.

BESTIARY

THEGN YNGVI WULFSUNU

Lazy, greedy, incompetent, and impious—Thegn Yngvi is the epitome of every negative Saxa ideal. He only became thegn because of his late mother's manipulations. For over forty years he has let his lands slide into poverty to fund his "noble lifestyle." He swears only nominal allegiance to the King of Nordmark, steals royal funds, and spends much of his time indulging in feasts.

His Clueless Hindrance and low Smarts are a result of his senility and Ursula's herbal concoctions.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Riding d4, Streetwise d6

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Clueless, Elderly, Greedy (Minor), Stubborn

Edges: Noble
Languages: Saxa, Trader
Gear: Short sword (Str+d6), furs.

URSULA INGMARSDOHTOR

Although the priestess wants Cuthwulf to inherit his father's lands, Ursula actually wants nothing for herself—all that matters is her son. Ursula is highly manipulative—she never makes an open accusation when a sly insinuation will do.

She has misrepresented the present and future in her divinations on numerous occasions, but the Norns have chosen not to remove her powers. They are all too aware of Ursula's sin of hubris, a sin that has blinded her to the true future.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Faith d10, Fighting d4, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Alchemy) d10, Knowledge (Arcana) d10, Knowledge (Religion) d8, Notice d10, Persuasion d10, Streetwise d8, Survival d8, Taunt d8
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Stubborn, Vengeful (Major), Vow (major: see her son replace Yngvi)
Edges: Alchemy, Arcane Background (Miracles), Command, Concentration, Disciple of the Norns, Hedge Magic, Level Headed, Strong Willed
Languages: Auld Saxa, Saxa, Trader
Powers: *analyze foe* (reads threads of fate), *bolt* (withers flesh), *boost/lower trait, confusion* (flashing mental images), *deflection* (time slows around her, allowing her to dodge), *entangle* (victims wrapped in twine), *insight* (views threads of fate), *invisibility* (hides her life thread from others), *luck/jinx* (tweaks life threads), *precognition* (glimpses immediate future), *quickness* (alters flow of time around her)
Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), furs, rune stones.
Alchemical Devices: *healing* potion (cast with a raise), three *healing* potions (cast with a success), *deflection* rune stone (cast with a success), *analyze foe* rune stone (cast with a success).

CUTHWULF YNGVISUNU

Ursula's son by Yngvi, Cuthwulf currently uses the surname Ketilsunu. Cuthwulf hates his father for the way he treated his mother and for refusing to acknowledge his existence. While he would like nothing more than to kill the old man outright, he is prepared to follow his mother's orders and play the waiting game. Cuthwulf currently leads the thegn's huscarls, acts as his herald, and generally tries to make himself as indispensable as possible.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Knowledge (Heraldry) d8, Notice d6, Riding d8, Streetwise d6, Survival d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d8
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 9 (2)
Hindrances: Orders, Overconfident, Vengeful (Major)
Edges: Block, Command, Level Headed, Mighty Throw, War Cry
Languages: Auld Saxa, Saxa, Trader
Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), full helm (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry), battle axe (Str+d8), two throwing axes (Range: 3/6/12, Damage Str+d6), skis, winter clothing, furs.
Alchemical Devices: *precognition* rune stone (cast with a raise), *deflection* rune stone (cast with a success), *boost Fighting* rune stone (cast with a success).

CUTHWULF'S HUSCARLS

Whereas Orm's huscarls (see page 24) are honorable men, Cuthwulf's huscarls are churlish berserks who love strong drink, cursing, and fighting. Unfortunately, they are not simple bullies—they are bullies who know how to handle themselves in a fight.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Riding d6, Taunt d8, Throwing d8
Charisma: –2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (2)
Hindrances: Loyal, Mean, Orders, Vengeful (Major)
Edges: Berserk
Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), pot helm (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry), battle axe (Str+d8), two throwing axes (Range: 3/6/12, Damage Str+d6), skis, winter clothing, furs.

HAULD ORM YNGVISUNU

Hauld Orm is the opposite of his father. Whereas the thegn is lazy and incompetent, Orm is dynamic and talented. Popular with the people due to his drive, leadership, and desire to do right by them, Orm's loss was a heavy blow to the community. Orm is not happy with his current status, but he is too stubborn to contact his father. Instead, he focuses his energy on ridding the land of orcs and protecting the people.

Orm is a gentle soul by nature, but this should not be taken as a sign of weakness. That Orm cares for his people marks him as a true Saxa noble like the heroes and rulers of old. His notched blade is proof enough that he is willing to kill for what he believes is right.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Riding d8, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6, Survival d8, Throwing d8
Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 8 (2)
Hindrances: Code of Honor, Heroic, Loyal, Stubborn
Edges: Block, Command, Cry Havoc, Death Before Dishonor, Fervor, Noble, Tactician
Languages: Auld Saxa, Orc, Saxa, Trader
Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), medium shield (+1 Parry), long sword (Str+d8), two throwing axes (Range: 3/6/12,

Damage: Str+d6), winter clothing, furs, skis.
Alchemical Devices: Two *healing* potions (each cures one wound), oil of *smite* (cast with a raise), two feathers imbued with *voice on the wind* (200 mile range).

ORM'S HUSCARLS

Orm's huscarls are fanatically loyal to him and will lay down their lives to protect him. They have sworn no oaths of loyalty to Yngvi.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Riding d8, Taunt d6, Throwing d8
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 8 (2)
Hindrances: Loyal, Orders
Edges: Block, Shieldwall
Gear: Chain shirt (+2), pot helm (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry), battle axe (Str+d8), four throwing axes (Range: 3/6/12, Damage Str+d6), skis, winter clothing, furs.

STEN RENVIKSUNU

Sten was a gifted child with a flair for languages. His father was a merchant in Norvald, and dealt with folk from across Rassilon. Even without formal schooling, young Sten quickly picked up languages simply by listening to conversations and piecing together the syntax. When he was old enough, he applied to become a priest of Hoenir.

On earning his gray robes, Sten set out into the world to discover its wonders. Within two years he succumbed to a degenerative eye disease and went blind. Although unable to read, Sten never lost faith and became an oral historian, gathering folklore and stories from all those he met. A decade ago, Sten retired from active service to become a hermit. He had a carpenter construct a wooden frame of his design which would allow him to guide a quill over parchment and began his final act of devotion—recording the knowledge he had accumulated before his death.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Faith d10, Fighting d4, Guts d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d10, Knowledge (Folklore) d8, Knowledge (History) d10, Knowledge (Religion) d8, Notice d6, Streetwise d8
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Alertness (affects hearing, not sight), Blind, Elderly
Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Disciple of Hoenir, Scholar (Folklore and History)
Languages: Anari, Auld Saxa, Classical Anari, Engro, Hearth Elven, Saxa, Trader, Vindari
Powers: *boost/lower trait, detect/conceal* (hears sounds), *gravespeak* (goes into trance), *mind rider, precognition* (hunches), *silence, speak language, summon demon, voice on the wind, wandering senses* (not sight).
Gear: —
Alchemical Devices: *healing* potion (cast with a success), three small casks imbued with *feast* (opening one creates five pounds of food).

ANGER SPIRIT

Spirits are otherworldly beings. Many are tied to emotions, though not all. A pain spirit, for instance, can no more decide to become a healing spirit than a rock can decide to become a tree.

Spirits usually appear as semi-translucent wisps. Colors are gentle pastels for benevolent ones and dark red, black, or sickly green and yellow for malignant spirits. Spirits without a host are referred to as being disembodied. Those that have possessed someone are said to be embodied spirits. Many spirits are malign in nature; most likely because the evil gods enjoy causing suffering while the good deities prefer to let their worshippers endure hardship so as to strengthen their faith.

Regardless of their type, spirits share a standard basic stat block, though each spirit has its own individual special ability.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6
Special Abilities:
* **Anger:** Victims gain the Berserk Edge. Anger spirits do not tend to possess victims who already have the Edge. The victim also acquires the Mean Hindrance as a result of his angry outbursts and quick rages.
* **Ethereal:** Immune to non-magical attacks. Can pass through solid objects.
* **Possession:** Spirits attack by making a Touch Attack (+2 to Fighting). With success, the victim must make a Spirit roll opposed that of the entity, –2 if the spirit's attack is a raise. A failure means the victim is possessed and suffers the consequences of the spirit's Anger special ability. Removing the spirit requires a *banish* spell to send it back to its own realm. Using *dispel* allows the spirit to roll its Spirit die to oppose the power. A successful casting forces the spirit from its host, but leaves it free to possess another victim. For each additional attempt at *banish* or *dispel* within the same thirty-two day period, the spirit gains +1 to resist being expelled.

GIANT, CLIFF

Cliff giants (also known as hill or mountain giants) are the smallest and stupidest of the giant breeds, yet possess great strength. They wear crude furs and skins, stitched together with sinew, and carry clubs made from large branches. Despite their simplicity, they have extremely keen noses, and can track by scent alone.

ADULT

The elder uses these stats but is a Wild Card.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d10
Skills: Climbing d10, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Swimming d8, Throwing d6, Tracking d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10
Gear: Club (Str+d6), thrown boulder (Range: 5/10/20; Damage Str+d10).
Special Abilities:
* **Berserk:** As well as going berserk when Shaken or wounded, cliff giants go berserk if they are victims of a successful Smarts Trick.
* **Clueless:** –2 to Common Knowledge rolls.
* **Fearless:** Cliff giants are too stupid to be Intimidated or subjected to Fear.
* **Improved Sweep:** Cliff giants can attack all adjacent foes at no penalty.
* **Size +3:** Cliff giants average 12' in height.

YOUNGSTER

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10
Skills: Climbing d10, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Swimming d8, Throwing d6, Tracking d6
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8
Gear: Club (Str+d6), thrown boulder (Range: 5/10/20; Damage Str+d8).
Special Abilities:
* **Berserk:** As well as going berserk when Shaken or wounded, cliff giants go berserk if they are victims of a successful Smarts Trick.
* **Clueless:** –2 to Common Knowledge rolls.
* **Fearless:** Cliff giants are too stupid to be Intimidated or subjected to Fear.
* **Sweep:** Young cliff giants can attack all adjacent foes at –2 penalty.
* **Size +1:** The youngsters are barely 7' in height.

ORCS

Orcs belong to tribes, and each tribe has its own unique feel. In *Hellfrost*, this is represented by a Tribal Trait. All members of the tribe receive the same trait, be it an Edge, Hindrance, or a Special Ability, though not every tribe has to have a special edge over the heroes. The orcs in this adventure are all members of the Eye Piercers, a tribe renowned for its archery prowess.

CHIEFTAIN

The leader of an orc tribe is always the most deadly brute in the bunch. Chiefs gain their position through defeating their predecessor in mortal combat, and are always wary of potential rivals gaining too much power.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10
Skills: Boating d8, Fighting d12, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Battle) d10, Notice d6, Shooting d10, Stealth d6, Throwing d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 11 (3)
Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Command, Cry Havoc, Fervor, Hold the Line, Mighty Shot, Sweep
Gear: Plate corselet (+3), chain arms and legs (+2), pot helmet (+3), great axe (Str+d10, –1 Parry, 2 hands), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: Str+d6).
Special Abilities
* **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.

SUB-CHIEFTAIN

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Throwing d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (2)
Edges: Combat Reflexes, Command, Snow Walker, Sweep
Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), open helmet (+3), battle axe (Str+d8), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6), furs.
Special Abilities
* **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.

PRIEST

Orc priests typically wear fur cloaks and carry spears tipped with crudely carved Hellfrost dragon heads, albeit ones with razor sharp edges. Orc priests also drape themselves in fetishes, bones, and other occult trappings to appear more menacing to their foes. While they are usually the smallest members of a tribe, priests are among the most savage.

Priests of the Eye Piercers worship Thrym and Ullr, god of hunting and god of archery.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)
Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Snow Walker
Gear: Leather armor (+1), long spear (Str+d6, Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 hands), furs. The priest of Ullr has a bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6)
Special Abilities:
* **Powers (Thrym):** *armor* (icy skin), *bolt* (icicles), *fear* (howl), *obscure* (snow cloud), and *smite* (jagged icicles form on weapon).
* **Powers (Ullr):** *aim* (arrow swerves), *boost/lower trait* (Agility, Notice, Shooting, Survival, and Tracking only), *silence*, *voice on the wind* (animal delivers message).

SCOUT

Scouts are runts who show intelligence and cunning. Those who survive are trained in basic scouting and infiltration techniques.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6,

Vigor d6
Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d4, Guts d6, Intimidation d4, Notice d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d8, Survival d6, Tracking d8
Pace: 6; **Parry**: 5; **Toughness:** 5
Gear: Small shield (+1 Parry), short sword (Str+d6), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6).
Special Abilities:
* **Woodsman:** Scouts have +2 to Stealth, Survival, and Tracking rolls made in the wilderness.

WARRIOR

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Throwing d6
Pace: 6; **Parry**: 6; **Toughness:** 8 (1)
Gear: Leather armor (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), short sword, axe, or mace (Str+d6), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6), furs.
Special Abilities:
* **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.

RIDING HORSE

Riding horses are medium-sized animals that manage a good compromise between speed and carrying capacity.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d6, Notice d6
Pace: 10; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 8
Special Abilities:
* **Fleet Footed:** Horses roll a d10 when running instead of a d6.
* **Kick:** Str.
* **Size +2:** Riding horses weigh between 800 and 1000 pounds.

STORM CROW SWARM

Storm crows, also known as Thunor's crows and thunder crows, are identical in size to regular crows. They have gray bodies, and black wings, legs, and heads. Storm crows are more commonly seen before and during thunderstorms, where they wheel in the sky in great flocks. During such times, lightning crackles along their wings. A typical storm crow swarm fills a Medium Burst Template.
Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d10
Skills: Notice d6
Pace: —; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7
Special Abilities:
* **Electrical Surge:** On each round the swarm draws a Club for initiative, the birds become enveloped in crackling lightning. During such times the crows do not peck. Instead, any creature in the template suffers 2d6 damage with an electricity trapping (see the *Hellfrost Player's Guide*).
* **Flight:** Pace 12.
* **Immunity:** Storm crows are immune to any effects involving air and electricity, including magic.
* **Mindless:** Unaffected by Tests of Will, Tricks, or arcane powers like *puppet*.
* **Peck:** Storm crow swarms inflict hundreds of pecks every round to their victims, hitting automatically and causing 2d4 damage to everyone in the template. Damage is applied to the least armored location.
* **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. Swarms are usually foiled by jumping in water (unless they are aquatic pests).

STORM ELEMENTAL

Although listed with elementals by most sages, there is some doubt as to whether or not these creatures are truly elementals. If they are, they undoubtedly dwell in the Realm of Air. Clerics of Thunor argue they are servants of their god, and thus not actually elementals, which they believe that natural manifestations of the elemental realms.

Storm elementals are man-sized entities formed of crackling electricity. Their weapons are manifestations of lighting, and thus count as energy attacks rather than physical ones. They take the form of hand axes, maces, or short swords.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7
Special Abilities:
* **Charged Weapon:** Str+d6. Deals electrical damage.
* **Electric Shock:** Anyone who makes a successful Fighting attack against a storm elemental with a metal melee weapon must make a Vigor roll or be knocked back 1" and fall prone. If their Vigor die is a 1, regardless of the Wild Die, they are Shaken as well.
* **Elemental:** No additional damage from Called Shots; Fearless; immune to disease and poison.
* **Holy Warrior:** The storm elementals are not evil, and thus are not subject to this Edge by clerics of gods other than Thunor. Clerics of the storm god *may* use the Edge. This represents their god's power over his own creations, which the cleric can channel to ward off the elementals.
* **Immunity:** Storm elementals are immune to all air and electricity effects, including magic.
* **Quick:** Storm elementals redraw action cards of five or lower.

WYVERN

Wyverns are scaled, flying creatures, with some simi-

larities to dragons. Unlike dragons, wyverns have only two legs. While dragons evolved four limbs and wings, the forelimbs of the wyvern evolved into wings. Batlike in structure, the wings extend from a short bone, equivalent to a human forearm, with long, thin "fingers" supporting the wing membrane. Two claws attached to the wyverns' equivalent of a wrist are used when grappling large, aerial prey. When attacking smaller prey, wyverns use their powerful clawed feet or their mouths.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11 (2)

Special Abilities:

* **Armor +2:** Thick scales.
* **Bite/Claws:** Str+d8. A wyvern may not bite in the same round it uses its claws to attack.
* **Flight:** Pace 12.
* **Grapple:** Wyverns are capable of grappling creatures of up to Size +1 with their clawed feet. Wyverns bite grappled prey (inflicting Str+d8 damage with a +2 bonus to Fighting rolls) while carrying them airborne. Once at a suitable height, the prey is dropped to its death. In aerial combat or against larger ground-based prey, wyverns use their claws and feet to grapple foes. They gain +2 to grapple rolls against such foes.
* **Improved Dodge:** Wyverns are extremely maneuverable when airborne. While aloft, ranged attacks against them suffer a –2 penalty. They have +2 to Agility roll to avoid area effect attacks when allowed.
* **Size +3:** Wyverns are larger than horses.
* **Tail:** Strength, Reach 1. Wyverns use their tail to slap smaller creatures.

PLAYER HANDOUT #1

Where earth bound lightning lies, though
spark it strikes no more;
Where hammer fell gainst the cliffs beneath
the candles green;
Where thunder and lightning of no
heavenly source ring silent;
Take the keys and cross to Wulfstead to
mark the lightning stone.

$8.99 31055

Blood Is Thicker Than Water!

For generations, two families have been engaged in a bitter blood feud with distant kin in northern Nordmark over possession of a supposed relic, Stormhammer. Though geographical separation has prevented open bloodshed, a war of words has raged long and hard. By order of the High King a peace deal has finally been brokered.

All the heroes have to do is cross the land in winter and deliver the sacred head of Stormhammer to Nordmark. But the threads of fate woven long ago by the Norns are convoluted and nothing is quite as it seems.

Danger and mystery abound, especially for those who possess *The Blood of Godhammer!*

This adventure contains full color Figure Flats for all the NPCs and monsters.

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Paul 'Wiggy' Wade-Williams

HELLFROST

THE BLOOD TIDE

RANK • HEROIC

OFFICIAL SAVAGE WORLDS LICENSED PRODUCT

THE BLOOD TIDE

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THE BLOOD TIDE

INTRODUCTION

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

Scaling for higher Ranks is easily handled. For parties with more experience points, add two additional Extras to each detailed encounter for each Rank or whole 20 XPs the party is above Heroic. For instance, if a party of four Legendary characters with 80 XPs faces one kreana warrior per hero, the heroes encounter a total of six warriors (four because of the party size and another two because the party is a Rank higher than the scenario minimum).

This adventure takes place in northern Chalcis, just inside the Low Winterlands, though with minimal effort it can be transposed to any coastal realm. The story takes place during no set season, allowing the GM to use it as suits his or her campaign. See the *Savage Worlds* rulebook for the effects of cold weather and the *Hellfrost Players' Guide* for how the rules work in this setting.

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

Preparation: At the back of this adventure, you will find an inscribed golden disc. The three dotted lines indicate where you should carefully cut the disc into sections. At various times in the adventure, you will be instructed to hand the sections of the golden disc to the party. The party needs the completed disc before it can be used to advance the story.

Treasure: Each kreana priest carries 1d10 x 10 gs worth of treasure in the form of coral jewelry, colorful seashells strung on seaweed cord, and the like. Warriors carry only 1d10 gs each.

PLOT OVERVIEW

Literally hundreds of prophecies were made during the Blizzard War. Most were the ravings of madmen and desperate souls, though a small few were uttered by priests and paladins of the various gods. Lucky guesses and the vague use of words ensured that a few prophecies came true, but most never came to pass and were quickly forgotten or lost in the chaos after the War's end. One prophecy which failed to materialize was in regards to "The Blood Tide."

Written down in fragments by a priest of Neorthe, it told of the sea turning red with blood, a monstrous force which would drive the races from the oceans, and an unstoppable tide surging from the sea to devour those who dwelt on the coast. It told of other events which would signal the beginning of the prophecy, events which at the time made no sense. Now, over five centuries later, the pieces of the puzzle are finally falling into place.

In the cold depths of the Inner Sea, the shark-worshipping kreana are nearing the completion of a centuries old ritual. When finished, it will awaken a monstrous avatar of their voracious god, Carcharas. Left unchecked, the avatar will strip the ocean of life, unite the disparate tribes, and lead a crusade against the land-breathers.

All that stands between the kreana and victory is a small band of heroes.

OPTIONAL START

Do not use this scene if your players are likely to metagame knowledge their characters do not have.

This scene is completely optional and does not involve the player characters (though the players are active participants). It concerns the remaining occupants of a longship en route from Angmark to Chalcis and helps preview the threat facing the party. Do not tell the players anything about the scene in advance—the introductory text below will set the scene for them. Never refer to the kreana by name. Instead, describe them as fish-men with sharklike teeth and rough, dark-green skin.

Instead of their regular characters, each player controls three sailors (see page 292.). All of these characters are Extras. One of the sailors, chosen at random, is the captain and has the Command Edge. If a player should lose all his characters, he can simply grab a spare from another player.

No matter what they do, the characters *cannot* survive the encounter—the odds are so stacked against them that survival is impossible and any defensive plan futile. Since these are disposable characters, the GM should not hold back on Gang Up tactics, Wild Attacks, and offensive spells. The fight should be brutally short.

When you are ready to begin, read the following text:

It has been two days and nights of relentless attacks since you crossed the heart of the Inner Sea. Two days and nights of bloodshed and death. Each time they have come you have driven them back, but each time has left your crew reduced in number. It is maybe four more days to Chalcis, but one more attack, maybe two, and death will claim you all for sure. Every man has prayed to Neorthe for mercy, but the sea god appears not to be listening.

A lookout near the prow screams out, "They're back! To arms! To arms!" With final prayers the men grab their weapons and prepare to sell their lives dearly.

Monsters: The longship has been under attack for many hours by a large kreana raiding party. Several attacks have been driving back into the sea, but the tide is relentless. When the next attack begins, there is one kreana warrior for each Extra in the party. The kreana surface anywhere the GM wants within 6" of the ship.

As soon as the last sailor becomes Incapacitated, the scene ends. Do not proceed to the aftermath to check and see which Extras are still alive. Each time a warrior is killed, another takes his place at the start of the next round. On a red action card, the reinforcements appear 6" off the starboard side of the ship. A black card indicates they arrive off the port side. With a Joker, the reinforcements begin in any square adjacent to the ship. There is no limit to the number of kreana warriors.

Ⓜ **Sailors (3 per player):** See page 292.

Ⓜ **Kreana Priest (1 per 2 players):** See page 294.

Ⓜ **Kreana Warriors (unlimited):** See page 294.

Tactics: The kreana warriors have only one goal—storm the ship and slay everyone aboard. The priests remain in the water, where they are relatively safe. On the first round, one priest casts *stun* at the two largest groups of heroes, caring little if any kreana are caught in the blast template. On subsequent rounds, they invoke two 2d6 damage *bolt* spells at the nearest targets.

Driven by the looming Blood Tide prophecy, and the threat of becoming the avatar's first meal if they fail in their duty, the kreana fight to the death.

Terrain: Due to rowing chests (wooden chests which the crew uses to store personal belongings and sit on when rowing), blood-soaked timbers, corpses, and such, all movement on deck is difficult ground.

The gunwales are barely a foot above the surface of the water. Clambering onto the deck costs 2" of movement and uses an action.

The kreana benefit from Medium Cover while in the ocean. The sailors gain Medium Cover (–2) if a kreana attacks them while adjacent to the side of the ship. If the attack is further out, they gain only Light Cover (–1). Increase the cover one step if the sailor is crouching. This applies to all attacks, including spellcasting.

Any sailor who ends up in the ocean is instantly killed at the end of the round, savaged by sharks emerging from the depths and pierced by the spears of submerged kreana. Do not play out his death—just describe the thrashing and the blood-red water and move on.

BLOODY BEGINNINGS

The adventure proper can begin in any coastal settlement bordering the Inner Sea and the Narrows. In a bid to track down the overdue longship, Navigator Halldor has used his contacts within the priesthood of Neorthe to have posters placed the length and breadth of the coast. The adventure assumes the party is in the local market, but the exact location can easily be switched.

The stench of fish and the cries of hawkers assail your senses as you stroll around the busy market in search of bargains. Suddenly the crowd parts and a guard patrol, lead by a bear of a man, strides purposefully through toward a large post in the center of the market upon which are pinned various notices. The noise level in the market drops noticeably.

The sergeant, standing almost seven feet tall (and almost as wide at the shoulders), pulls a rolled up piece of parchment from his tunic and proceeds to unfurl it. He holds out his hand to one of his men, who dutifully hands him a single nail. The sergeant places the notice against the wooden post and, with the thumb and index finger of his left hand, holds the nail against it. With his right hand he makes a fist and strikes the nail twice, driving it straight into the post. The noise level drops even further.

"If you've got the stamina for travel, there is easy money to be made!" he barks loudly.

His work done, he and his men leave. The noise slowly returns to its former level and a few of the market patrons scurry over to the notice to read it.

The notice is written in Trader. Give the players Hand-

out #1 if they read the notice. Any of the patrons can point them to the local temple or shrine of Neorthe.

MORE INFORMATION

The local priest of Neorthe, Navigator Beldux of Alantaris, is extremely corpulent. When the party arrives at the temple or shrine, he is outside, supervising the carving of a figurehead for a longship. He greets the heroes warmly, more so if any of them are mariners or comrades-in-faith, and enquires as to their business. Once mention of the notice in the marketplace is made, he quickly ushers them inside, away from prying ears.

"The notice was sent to us by fast courier from Navigator Halldor, stationed in the Chalcian fishing village of Byhaven." He waddles to a map of the Inner Sea and stabs a stubby thumb at the Chalcian coast just below the Mistlands. "It's here, in the foothills of the Orcblood Hills. I'm afraid I don't know anything else about it.

"Anyway, I digress. Several weeks ago a longship left Leirvik in Angmark bound for Byhaven. It has failed to arrive. Several storms were reported in the Inner Sea, and it may have washed up on the Chalcian shore. Navigator Halldor is looking for interested parties to journey along the coastal road from Sacros to Byhaven and to keep an eye out for the longship.

"His instructions say the plank bearing the ship's name should be taken to Byhaven as proof of discovery, whereupon the reward will be handed over. To prevent fraud, Navigator Halldor never revealed to me the name of the vessel.

"If you're interested, I suggest you take passage to a fishing village halfway between Sacros and Byhaven. Plenty of folk from Sacros will undoubtedly have heard of the reward by now, but they will lack the courage to travel far along the coast. Anyway, there's no point going to Byhaven first and moving south along the coast—if you do find the ship you'll only have to double back."

How the party intends to reach the Chalcian coast is up to them. Merchant ships regularly depart from Angmark and the Magocracy for Sacros. Typical rates for passengers are 5 gs per 50 miles if they bring their own food or 15 gs per 50 miles if they require feeding. Many merchantmen take on temporary hands, waiving passenger fees in return for a fair share of pulling the oars.

DEATH IN THE SURF

The terrain between the eastern extremes of the High Moor and the Orcblood Hills is relatively flat and low-lying, dotted with treacherous patches of Black Marsh and grassy dunes. The coastal road in this region runs along firmer ground several miles inland, and provides no clear view of the Inner Sea. As the road nears the northern uplands, it curves around to hug the coast, undulating with the hills and following the cliff edge.

This scene takes place along the northern Chalcian coast, just before the coastal road hits the slopes of the Orcblood Hills.

The gods be praised! After a fruitless search lasting many days, during which time you have become mired in bogs and ravaged by bloodthirsty biting insects, you catch sight of a longship. She lies beyond the breakers, rising and falling gently in the swell. Her mast is gone and there is no sign of life.

Calling out elicits no response. A successful Tracking roll made along the nearby stretch of coast reveals no traces of footprints in the soft sand. Any hero familiar with the coastline or the Inner Sea knows that frequent storms hammer the coasts, and traces of passage would likely be swept away unless they were made in the last week (the date of the last major storm).

The coast slopes shallowly toward Angmark, and the water is a mere four feet deep where the ship lies. Once within a few yards the heroes see the ship's name—Vafud, which means Wanderer in Saxa. The first hero to peer into the interior must make a Guts roll to avoid feeling sick, for inside are the butchered remains of at least some of the crew.

A hardened adventurer, you know with a mere glance that no storm caused this carnage. The corpses are fiercely torn and bitten as if by some fierce beast, and many have stab wounds indicative of spear thrusts. The decking is awash with congealed blood and sea water.

A cleric of Neorthe, or any hero whose adventures or back-story indicates knowledge of sharks, can make a Common Knowledge roll. With success, they know the bite marks are akin to those of sharks. A Notice roll made while searching the ship reveals a small tooth, triangular and jagged, stuck in one of the sailors. Again, heroes with an understanding of the monsters of the deep may make a Common Knowledge roll to identify it as similar to a shark's tooth. Kreana are not well-known to surface dwellers, even to priests of Neorthe, though the latter may have heard rumors. On a successful Common Knowledge roll, the cleric recalls stories of aggressive fish-men that prey on ships.

Any relatively thorough search of the ship automatically reveals one oddity—one of the sailors has his finger wedged tight in a knothole in the upper decking. Pulling the hand causes a small section of the deck to pop free, revealing a cavity below. Tucked inside is a section of a solid gold disc. Give the party the section of the golden disc mentioning the name Godwin at this time (see

Handout #2). Hastily scratched on the back, in Saxa, are two words—Halldor and Byhaven.

Byhaven lies some two days march from the heroes' current location.

After the kreana attacked, they made a fateful error. Eager to return home and report success, they neglected to scuttle the longship. Instead, they left her to the elements, thinking the weather would sink her. Although battered by storms and her mast shattered, Vafud, perhaps protected by the hand of Neorthe, survived. She drifted idly in the current, slowly inching toward the Chalcian coast. She made landfall only a few hours before the heroes encountered her.

THE VILLAGE OF BYHAVEN

The next part of the adventure occurs in the small fishing village of Byhaven. The village is situated at the eastern edge of the Orcblood Hills, in an area of high cliffs and biting winds that blow from the Winterlands far to the north. The inland areas are mainly marsh and the only dry area is home to the coastal road that connects the northern fishing villages together.

Byhaven is currently home to 118 souls—38 adult males, 30 adult females and 50 children (clearly there isn't much to do in the winter months). The vast majority of the inhabitants work in the fishing industry as fishermen, boat builders, net and sail makers, or in preserving the fish once they have been caught. During the winter months, kelp is gathered and burned, the residue sold to merchants heading to Glassport where it is used in the glass making industry.

The technical head of the village is the priest of the local temple of Neorthe, Navigator Halldor. As the priest, it is his responsibility to pray to Neorthe for a good catch, and every morning he blesses the fishing boats as they head out to sea. He also handles contact with government officials and negotiates trade deals.

Although the village was raided in the distant past by pirates, there have been no attacks in living memory. The village does not maintain an active militia, though all men are expected to answer a call to arms. Its location between marsh and steep cliffs gives it a good deal of defense against raiders, whether they come on land or by sea.

The villagers are a little rustic but are genuinely friendly people. Despite, or perhaps because of, the hard life they lead, they enjoy nothing more than telling tall-stories, dancing, and drinking large quantities of ale.

ARRIVAL

The coastal road follows the cliff edge until it is within a few miles of Byhaven, when it suddenly veers inland. Lying along the coast is a lowland stretch of Black Marsh, several miles long and almost as deep. Beyond this, the ground rises steeply again to towering cliffs. The sleepy village lies in a valley between two promontories.

A tall wooden palisade blocks off the valley, providing protection against landward raiders. Having no permanent militia to guard the gate, the locals keep it barred. A rusty hand bell attached to a rope hangs from the gate post. When it is rung, one of the villagers opens a small hatch in the gate to see who has come calling. After brief questions to ensure the strangers are not bandits, the gates are opened.

Byhaven receives regular visits by merchants who come to buy smoked fish or burned kelp residue, but an armed party is a great rarity. By the time the party reaches the ale-house, most of the village's women and children have gathered to greet them with warm smiles. The only men visible are elderly—the younger men are at sea in their fishing boats, and will not return till nightfall.

The party is bombarded with questions about their reasons for visiting. When they can get a word in, they are likely to ask for the whereabouts of Halldor. The adventurers are directed toward a wooden structure standing in the bay—the temple of Neorthe. One of the old men, his skin weathered by constant exposure to the salt-laden winds and his teeth a distant memory, offers to row them out to the temple. A description of the temple is presented on page 11.

VISITING HALLDOR

As the rowboat reaches the platform on which the temple sits, the oarsman calls out to Halldor. A few moments later a distinguished man of advancing years, clad in sea-green robes, emerges from the temple to greet the party. Halldor welcomes the heroes to his home and asks their business. If the job offer notice, Vafud, or the gold disc is mentioned, he quickly thanks the old man for bringing the party to his attention and ushers the heroes inside. He leads the party into his office, enquiring on the way whether they would like stew and ale.

Once refreshments are brought, Halldor asks the party to tell their tale. He asks to see the ship's name plank as confirmation of their claim. Satisfied the party has located the ship, he hands over the reward.

If they mentioned the gold disc, he asks to see that as well, claiming that was the real reason he instigated the search. If no mention was made of the disc, Halldor enquires as to whether anything was found aboard the stricken vessel. He appears crestfallen if the party denies any knowledge of the gold disc. He mutters to himself about arranging for the fishermen to locate the vessel and search her thoroughly.

Once the party has spoken, Halldor tells them his reason for posting the notices.

"Many years ago, I came across a fragmentary text in a temple's archives. It told of the Blood Tide prophecy, though no details were mentioned. I have spent my entire life since that day researching this ancient prophecy.

"I still do not have all the pieces of the story, but I

have gleaned enough to be worried. The prophecy speaks of a great terror from the deep, which will rise and consume all the creatures in and on the ocean. A wave of blood and terror shall surge from the ocean and devour the coastal settlements. The exact details are still vague.

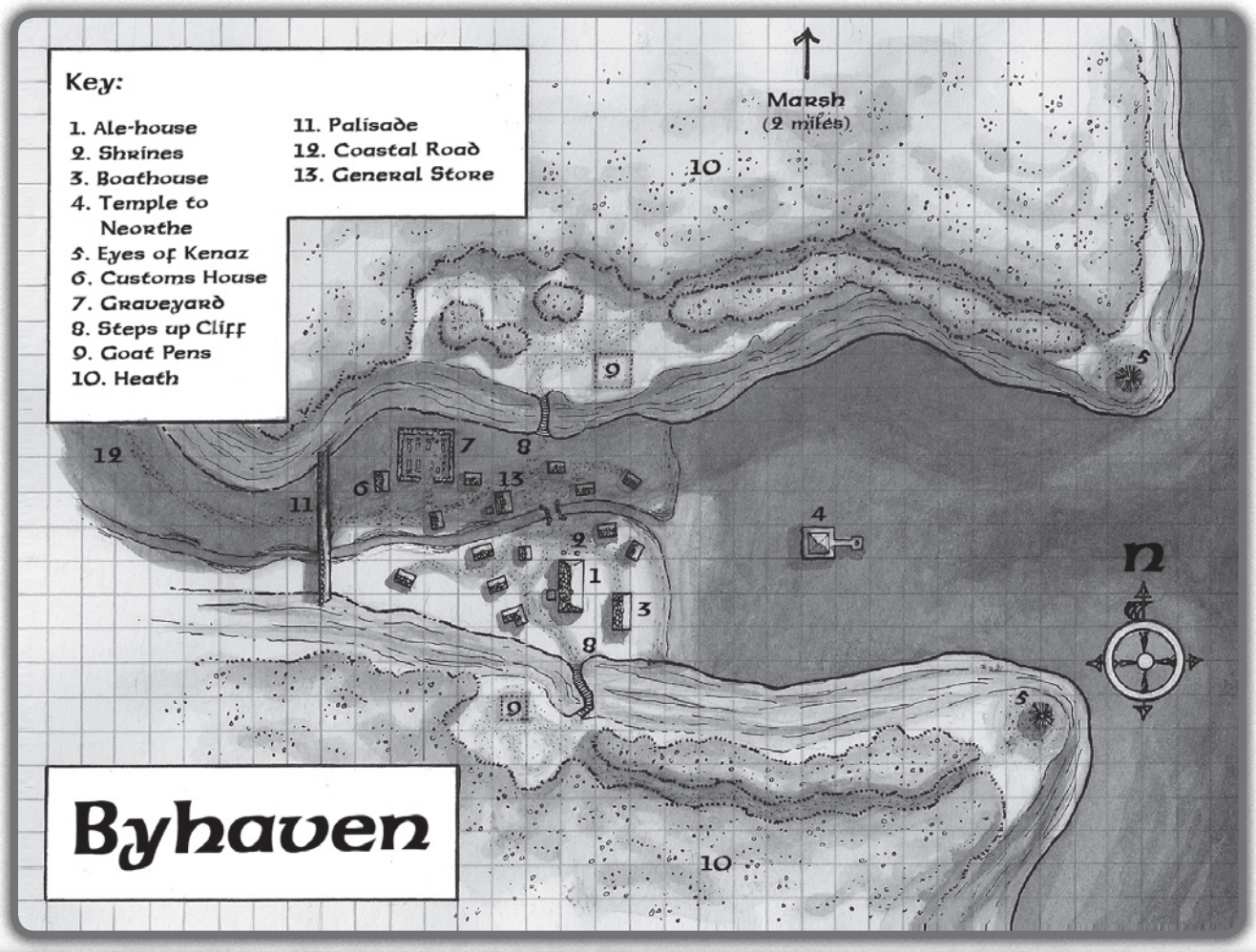
"All I can say for sure is that the time of the Blood Tide is soon. My research led me to uncover a fragment of a golden disc." He reaches within his robes and withdraws a section of the disc. "With what funds I had available, I hired agents to scour the lands in search of the other pieces. A month past I received word that a piece had been found and was to be dispatched to me from Angmark aboard the longship, Vafud. The ship never arrived and I feared it lost to the ocean.

"Byhaven, it seems, plays some important part in the tale, for it is written in scrolls that the third piece of the disc is located here. I have spent years researching the villagers' folklore and exploring hereabouts, but I have yet to find it. I believe it points the way to a relic vital to ending the Blood Tide, though I profess ignorance as to how it will help at this juncture.

"Perhaps new eyes and ears are called for. You have fulfilled your obligations and have been rewarded, but there is more at stake than a missing ship and a few dead sailors. What say you; will you search for the missing third piece of the disc and help thwart the Blood Tide? On Neorthe's name I am not rich, but what I have is yours if we are successful."

Halldor's piece of the gold disc begins with the words, "If my treasure…" Joined with the heroes' piece, the name Godwin Seacharmer becomes visible. Halldor says he has encountered the name before in his research.

"Godwin Seacharmer was a Navigator. He was born in 237 IR somewhere in the Magocracy. He learned of the Blood Tide prophecy and added to what little lore is known. Indeed, it is fragments of his surviving works that led me here. By all accounts he did something widely considered



RUMORS AND OPINIONS

None of the villagers know much about the Blood Tide prophecy or the smuggling activities, but they all have opinions about village life. 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. True information can also be reworded, but the basic facts should still be presented to the characters. For instance, instead of the creatures in rumor 6, perhaps the villager claims to have seen faeries or orcs.

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	"Don't go into the marsh at night. (T) I was heading back to port a few weeks ago in light fog when I saw a fire lantern guiding my way. (T) It wasn't like Kenaz's Eyes, though, but a cold, pale light. (F) It could only be witch-fire, faerie lights to lure me to my death on the rocks." (F)
3	"Aye, I've seen strange things in the waters around here. 'Twas barely a month back I saw a fish that looked like a man prowling up through the surf and kelp beds. (T) It saw me and scarpered back into the surf pretty quick, though." (T)
4	"Aye, Halldor has questioned me about Byhaven. I told him he needs to search the marsh, for there's many a strange thing in there." (T)
5	"Halldor's prophecy is a waste of time. (F) Priests are always making prophecies, and most never come true."
6	"Strange creatures live in the marsh. I was out walking my hound one night at dusk when I saw them, lurking near the road. Sickly green with bulbous eyes, they were." (T)
7	"I told Halldor there's a marker in the graveyard marked with a ship (T), but he said it was irrelevant to his quest. If you ask me, he's overlooked an obvious clue." (F) [GM: There is a marker with a ship on, but the grave holds nothing of interest.]
8	"I saw a ghost ship not a few weeks back, (F) prowling the sea along the shingle with black sails. (T). If you ask me, the Blood Tide prophecy has already come." (F). [GM: The villager saw the smugglers' ship at a distance.]
9	"Fishing has been poor recently. (T) Folk reckon something in the water is scaring away the fish. (T). [GM: The kreana's increased presence nearby, along with sharks, is driving the fish away.]
10	"Did you know Byhaven once had a nearby neighbor? My grandfather, bless his soul, told me a village one stood in the marsh (F; there was a fort in the marsh), but the locals offended Neorthe and he swept their homes into the sea." (F)
Jack	"I heard one of the young girls in the village gave birth to a havmand last year. (F) Folk tried to keep it quiet, but this is a small village and word travels. No one ever told Halldor." [GM: This is a generic red herring rumor that could just be plausible.]
Queen	"My grandfather told me a story of a stranger who came to Byhaven in the days of *his* grandfather. He was a cursed priest of Neorthe. (T) He was murdered by the villagers and buried at sea after all the fish in the area died. (F) Maybe this Blood Tide prophecy has something to do with him? (T)
King	"Prophecy, indeed! Halldor is mad, though no one has the guts to tell him. (F) Mark my words, it'll all come to naught, and you'd have wasted your lives on his fool's errand." (F)
Ace	"That exciseman is a regular stickler for the rules. I've seen him go out late in all weather with his lantern (T) looking for smugglers." (F)
Joker	The GM may either draw two cards or invent one completely fictitious but plausible rumor as a red herring.

anathema to my faith and traveled deep beneath the bowels of the earth.

"There he claims to have met the most ancient of races, though he neglects to give description or mention a name. He told the story of the Blood Tide prophecy to those he encountered, and was gifted with a relic able to help thwart the prophecy. Alas, no details survive on the nature of the relic. In return for the relic, Godwin had to swear never to go to sea again while he lived. It was a harsh price, but one he gladly paid.

"Knowing the prophecy was not yet due to pass,

but fearful the relic he had so hard sought could be lost in the intervening years, he hid it well. The golden disc, which was split in three parts either by Godwin or at some later date, provided the only clues to its whereabouts. Godwin vanished from the records in 289 IR."

While the temple has no guest quarters, Halldor invites the heroes back to dine with him later that evening and tell him their stories of adventure after the fishing boats have safely returned. In the meantime, he arranges for accommodation in the ale-house. Use the fixed scene **The Kreana Attack** when the party goes to dinner at the temple.

EXPLORING BYHAVEN

The heroes are now free to wander around the village and talk to folk as they see fit. Unless they do so, they will not gather enough clues to solve the mystery and thwart the Blood Tide prophecy. Give the heroes a copy of the village map—there are no secret places. The GM has free reign to create names for incidental villagers. Although predominantly Chalcian, there are some inhabitants with Aspirian and Saxa blood. Locales of specific interest are detailed below.

When dealing with the general populace, the GM should draw a card, consult the Rumors and Opinions table (page 7), and roleplay the villager's passing on of information. For ease, assume that talking to anyone takes an hour. Citizens do not just blurt out their rumors or opinions—there is the formality of having something to drink, routine small talk, and lesser options and grumbles before the actual information the person has to share is made available.

GMs should note the village plays little active role in the adventure. Full details are provided so the GM can make the village more realistic to the players (rather than just a dull backdrop) and to use as a template in his own adventures.

THE ALE-HOUSE

Byhaven does not have an inn, but it does possess an ale-house where visitors can sleep and dine. It is also the hub of village life, hosting regular dances and feasts. Every evening the ale-house is full of locals, swapping stories, gossiping, or just being sociable with friends and family. Singing sea shanties is a popular pastime amongst the locals, and merchants who stop by regularly have taken to calling the building the Sea Shanty tavern.

Flanking the doors of the ale-house are two carved wooden columns. The left-hand one depicts Thunor and the right-hand one Freo. Worn almost smooth by the wind and touch of thousands of hands, the shrines are not the center of any worship. Villagers passing through the columns or those about to set sail touch each one in homage to the gods and for luck.

Pengelly, a retired sea captain and affectionately known as Peg-Leg to the locals, runs the ale-house with his youngest son, Rupert, and his daughter-in-law, Gerda. Although he has a wooden leg, Pengelly can still handle himself in a fight, and when one breaks out, which can be frequent during the long winter months, he is often the first in. On one occasion he used his wooden leg as a weapon.

The ale-house is typical of ale-houses across the Hearthlands, being essentially a large communal hall warmed by a central hearth. Wide benches around the walls are stacked with furs and woolen blankets, and serve as sleeping platforms at night. The platforms have hinged lids, beneath which are storage areas for personal possessions. A fenced-off section is available for horses, though no hay or oats are available. Pengelly and his family have private quarters at the rear, adjacent to the storeroom.

No payment is required merely to sleep in the ale-house, and guests may cook their own food. Visitors who wish to sample Pengelly's excellent meals are charged a flat 2 silver scields per bowl. Although the menu of the tavern is not extensive, the food is well-presented and tastes wonderful. A large part of the menu involves, naturally enough, fish, although it is served breaded, boiled, fried, steamed or as a pie. Mutton and goats' cheese are also available as staples.

Vegetables are not common in the area, although Pengelly has a small, sheltered garden in which he grows hardy root crops. Grain and flour are expensive commodities, and the only bread the locals eat is laverbread, a gelatinous paste made from seaweed. Watching visitor's faces when they order bread and receive the green paste is a popular pastime for the locals. Pengelly is also an excellent brewer, and regularly has half a dozen different ales available at the price of 1 silver scield per mug.

At night, when the ale-house is crowded, investigations reveal more information. Draw three cards for the Rumors and Opinions Table.

Ⓜ **Pengelly:** See page 291.

Ⓜ **Rupert & Gerda:** Treat as citizens (see page 292.).

BOAT SHED

The long, wooden boat shed is where fishing boats are constructed and repaired. There is always one vessel in here being mended by the village shipwright and carpenter, Albar ap-Pepin. While Albar has the skills necessary to construct any longship, he lacks the raw materials to build anything larger than fishing boats (treat as rowboats). With enough wood, he could construct the party a ship, though only slowly—figure one month for each point of Toughness, including Armor.

Ⓜ **Albar ap-Pepin:** Treat as a citizen (see page 292.).

COTTAGES

All the cottages are single storey wooden buildings with slate roofs. Once white-washed to protect the wood

against the ravages of the salty spray and air, most are in dire need of repainting. Although Byhaven plays its role in the Aspirian glass industry, none of the windows are fitted with glass. Instead, stretched goat bladder is used to keep out the sea spray and winds. At night, wooden shutters are firmly locked into place. The inhabitants are insular but friendly, especially toward those who share their love of the sea or who are willing to share food not available in the small village.

Ⓜ **Citizens:** See page 292.

CUSTOMS HOUSE

Standing just outside the village is the customs and excise house. Being only a small village, far from the main trade routes and relatively free of trouble, the authorities have deemed it necessary for only one exciseman to be stationed at Byhaven. The current occupier of the house is, as far as the locals are concerned, Karl Gustavsunu. He is actually an impostor whose real name is Leif Ulfsunu.

For the last few months, Leif and his gang have been smuggling weapons into Chalcis from Angmark. The shingle beach bordering the marsh is an ideal landing ground, and the bog makes for an ideal place to stash the goods. Fortunately, the local customs official proved easily bribable. Every four months a cart arrives to collect the goods and pay the smugglers. Leif has no idea who is buying the weapons, and he doesn't much care.

The plan began to unravel a few weeks ago, when the customs man was suddenly transferred elsewhere. Leif learned Duke Howel was sending a new exciseman that one the smuggler's agents claimed was incorruptible. The smuggling operation had not been uncovered, and the transfer was routine. Leif murdered the new exciseman before he reached the village and assumed his identity. Whilst the rest of his band continues bringing in and storing the weapons, Leif is acting as the new exciseman.

The house is a single storey building but it is made of sturdy stone and the windows are barred. Contraband is normally removed from Byhaven every few months. A well-guarded wagon travels the coastal route, stopping at each settlement. Most of the contraband is simply items found washed up on the beach or caught in the fishermen's nets. Occasionally a merchant is caught trying to smuggle narcotics or other proscribed items into Chalcis, but Byhaven has not had any such problems in months.

During the day, the custom's house is open for business. At night, the exciseman is out in the marshes. He claims he is patrolling for smugglers, but in truth he is supervising the burial of weapons brought ashore. Over the last few weeks Karl has travelled the marshes extensively and found several solid islands.

If the adventurers come around asking questions, Karl reluctantly speaks with them. He has no wish to blow his cover and so remains polite but curt with his answers. He is also suspicious of the party's sudden arrival, and seeks to uncover their reasons for visiting Byhaven. He has heard of the Blood Tide prophecy from Halldor, but has no particular views on it. As he says, "The gods do as they please."

Adventurers who manage to make their way into the office may make a Notice roll. Those who succeed notice some open ledgers on the desk which list the confiscated contraband that lies within the warehouse. There should be roughly ten creates of various confiscated items and six barrels of wine from Angmark. Anyone looking in the warehouse discovers that it is empty—Karl has given the contents to his fellow smugglers.

If questioned about this discrepancy, Karl remarks the cargo was picked up only the day before the adventurers arrived but that he has not yet updated the ledgers. Adventurers who become aggressive or accusative find themselves threatened with arrest for being suspected smugglers. Adventurers who pass a Knowledge (Law) roll, or Common Knowledge roll if from Chalcis, know Karl is within his rights to detain suspected smugglers until they can be questioned by someone of higher authority. In this remote neck of the woods that could be several weeks.

Ⓜ **Karl Gustavsunu/Leif Ulfsunu:** See page 292.

GENERAL STORE

Dagobert runs the main store, while his wife of 30 years, Galswintha, operates a smokehouse attached to the store. Locals bring their fish here to be smoked in bulk for a nominal fee. Excess fish catches are sold to the store, smoked, and then exported. It is a small-scale operation, but such is the reputation of the smokehouse that the duke's court in distant Highmoor places regular orders. Heroes who order smoked fish find it the best they have ever tasted.

The store sells great quantities of rope to the locals for their fishing nets, but regularly stocks only a few other items. Dagobert can order in other goods, but deliveries take 1d4+2 weeks to arrive and cost 25% more than normal (after factoring in the standard price increases). Available goods are shown below by category.

Animals: None available.

Armor: Only leather is available, and it is priced as a Town item.

Clothing: Full range. Waterproof sealskins are also available for 50 gs per set.

Common Goods: Any Village item with a cost of 50 gs or lower if available.

Food: Dried rations are available at standard cost. The primary ingredient is preserved fish.

Unusual Goods: None available.

Weapons: Daggers and spears only.

Ⓜ **Dagobert & Galswintha:** Treat as citizens (page 292.). Dagobert has persuasion and Streetwise d6, while his wife has Knowledge (Craft: Smoking) d10.

GRAVEYARD

Many of Byhaven's residents are followers of Neorthe,

and are thus buried at sea, as is the faith's custom. Some, though, follow other gods, such as Freo and Thunor, and were interred on land or subjected to sky burials. A small, overgrown graveyard surrounded by a low, dry-stone wall lies on the outskirts of the village. Within are rotting log biers used for sky burials and tall marker stones, encrusted with hardy lichens and faded from the constant battering of the salt spray.

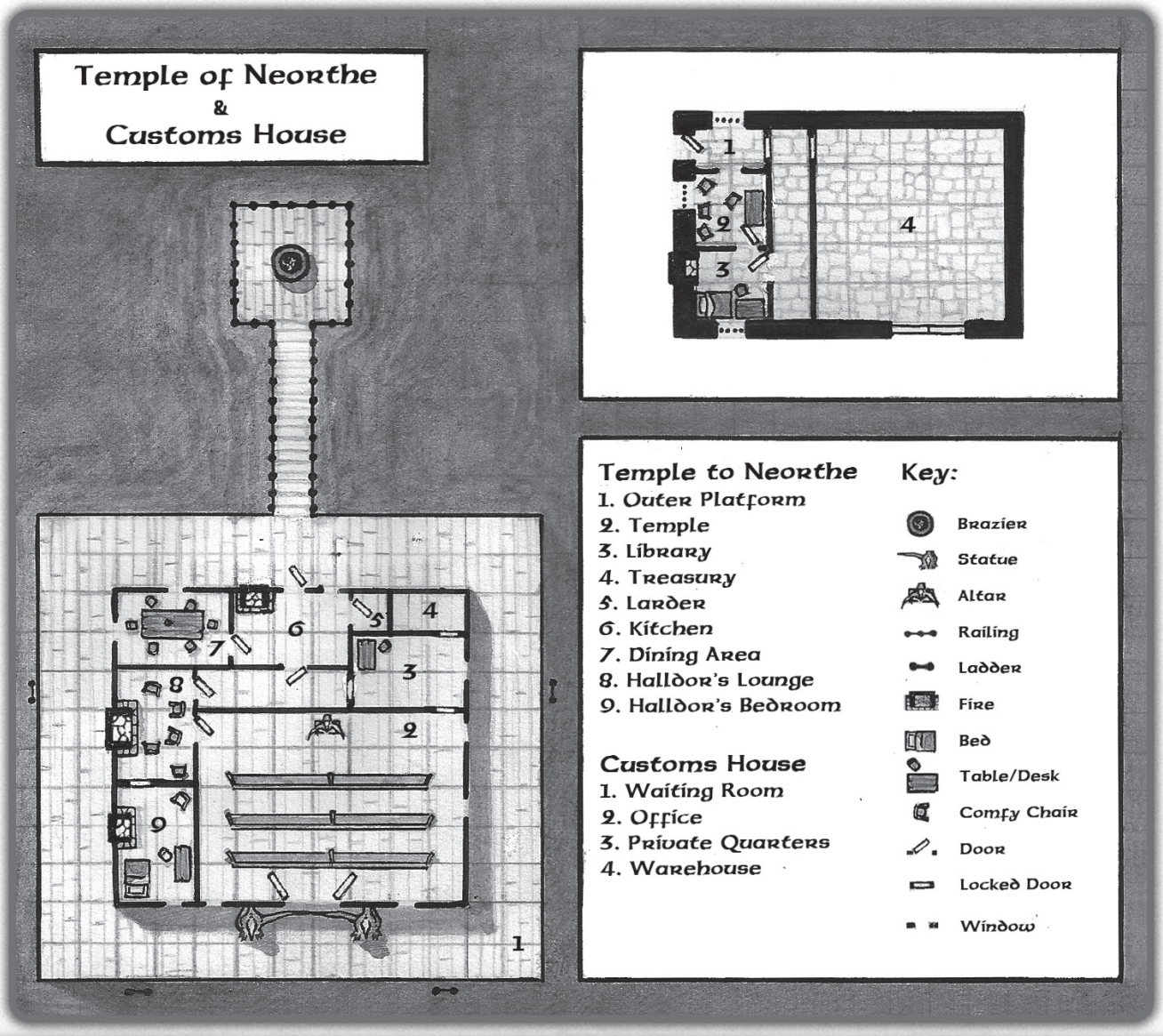
STORM BONFIRES

Although an insignificant settlement in terms of exports, Byhaven's natural harbor makes it important to traffic sailing the Inner Sea. During a storm, mariners in the region know they can find safe harbor and a warm welcome in the sleepy village. Storms are prevalent in the Inner Sea in both summer, when hot air blowing from the south strikes the cold air flowing down from the Sigil Peaks, and in winter, when the arctic northerly wind blows hardest. Like many, the inhabitants of Byhaven believe summer storms represent Thunor battling Thrym.

Located on the twin headlands either side of the bay are two huge bonfires made up of stacks of whale oil-soaked driftwood. When not in use they are covered in waterproof leather tarpaulins marked with Kenaz's holy symbol. At night or during bad weather, the bonfires are lit by one of the villagers.

By aiming their ship between the glowing braziers, which can be seen for many miles except in the thickest fog, a captain can guide his vessel to the safety of the bay. A third brazier, located on the temple of Neorthe (see page 11), helps the captains avoid colliding with the temple and provides further guidance into shore. The locals refer to the bonfires as Kenaz's Eyes.

Anyone caught tampering with the bonfires is subject to harsh punishment. By decree of Duke Howel, anyone



found guilty of the offense is lashed to a post in the bay at low tide to await death by drowning as the tide comes in. Their flesh is then left for the crabs that inhabit the cove.

TEMPLE OF NEORTHE

The temple to Neorthe is somewhat unusual in its design, even for temples to the sea god. Several generations ago, the temple stood on the shore. The then-priest, who had visited the Battlelands and witnessed firsthand the spectacular coral temple at Calivar, ordered the old temple torn down and its timbers used to build a new temple in the bay.

The new temple stands in the middle of the bay, some 30 yards from the shore. Raised on dozens of thick piles, the temple sits on a large wooden platform whose base almost touches the water. A set of wooden steps descend from the platform and into the water.

From the back of the platform a smaller causeway leads deeper out to sea. It slopes steadily upward. At the end is a second platform, six yards to a side and surrounded by wooden railings, and standing almost equal in height to the main temple roof. It is from here the priest blesses the fishing boats every morning as they head out to their catch and on their return to thank Neorthe for a safe trip. A large conch shell chained to the railing is blown during fog to help guide the boats toward the bay, while a bronze brazier, stained green with age and corrosion, is lit at night and in bad weather to help ships avoid hitting the low platform.

The temple is constructed from wood and is only a single storey high. The main doors are flanked by two statues carved from coral; both depict an albatross with one of its wings outstretched. The wings touch over the centre of the door and form a protective arch which the worshippers must pass through to enter the temple. The wooden doors that stand between the pillars are carved with the images of all manner of sea creatures, some of which have been extinct for eons. Both the doors and pillars are the property of the priest who raised the structure, and had them created at great personal expense.

The central worshipping area may come as a shock to adventurers used to more land-based structures. Much of the floor is covered in a wooden grille, beneath which the sea can be seen. Positioned atop the grille are carved wooden benches. Lighting for the hall is provided by seashells which have been converted into oil lamps.

The altar is a simple wooden affair, carved with relief images of dolphins and albatrosses. Atop the altar is a large, stuffed albatross with its wings spread and facing forward, as if enveloping a large object. The priest stands between the wings when giving his sermons. The albatross died of natural causes.

Treasury: The temple treasury holds 3,509 gs (after the heroes have been paid) and a number of alchemical devices. The latter are described below:

* Four pearls containing *environmental protection (water)* for each hero, plus two additional pearls. These allow the user to breathe, speak, and move using his normal Pace underwater. The pearls must be swallowed in order to activate them. After an hour they dissolve harmlessly in the user's stomach and the spell ends.

* Six sticks of coral into which are inscribed *light* spells. They are activated by striking the tip against a hard object.

* Three *healing* potions, each capable of curing one wound.

* One *voice on the wind* charm with a range of 200 miles cast into a conch.

Ⓜ **Navigator Halldor:** See page 291.

FIXED EVENTS

Two events occur during the party's stay in Byhaven. The first occurs when they dine with Halldor in the temple. The second occurs each night. Unless the party suspect Karl is up to something, his activities may well go unnoticed. Since Karl is incidental to the plot, nothing is lost if the smuggling is not discovered. Indeed, the situation is ripe for the GM to expand in an adventure of his own design.

KREANA ATTACK

It is considered bad form to wear armor to dinner, especially inside a temple. The party has not yet encountered any kreana, and should ideally refrain from wearing anything sturdier than leather armor. Halldor is not a friend, and so the carrying of weapons is acceptable, within sensible limits—a sword and dagger is fine, but trooping in armed for war is an affront to his hospitality.

Halldor serves the heroes a meal of fried fish, caught that very day, coated in herbed breadcrumbs on a bed of laverbread with a side of roasted turnips from Pengelly's garden. Over dinner, which is accompanied by several casks of local ale, Halldor quizzes the party on their adventuring deeds and also on their progress at hunting down the third piece of the golden disc. Once the meal ends, Halldor suggests they retreat to his study, where he keeps a bottle of Chalcian brandy (to stave off the cold).

Any heroes who wish to smoke are asked to step outside—the smell of pipeleaf gives Halldor a hacking cough. If a hero ventures outside, have him make a Notice roll at –1 (for the lighting). With success, he spies a number of creatures climbing out of the sea and onto the platform. Otherwise, Halldor suddenly leaps to his feet during the brandy sipping.

"Neorthe's beard!" the priest exclaims. "In my excitement at recovering the second part of the disc I've forgotten to dowse the brazier. If you'll excuse me, I shall be just a moment. Please, help yourself to the brandy."

Halldor has no complaints if one or two heroes insist on accompanying him, but he tries to talk the entire

party out of braving the bracing sea air, insisting they stay by the fire and enjoy the hospitality. Halldor is returning from the second platform when he spies the kreana sneaking onto the temple. He shouts out to alert the heroes, though over the wind and lapping waves it requires a Notice roll to hear his cries. Characters who fail do not get an action card until the round *after* the first hero succeeds.

Terrain: The platform on which the temple sits is slippery. Any creature that runs and rolls a 1 on its running die slips and falls prone. Should the battle move indoors, any square containing furniture counts as difficult ground.

The outside is lit only by light filtering through the windows, and counts as Dim (–1) lighting.

Monsters: The kreana, tipped off by a divination sent by Carcharas, intend to slaughter the priest and all those with him before they can interrupt the Blood Tide. Unfortunately, the ritual requires much of their attention and so only a small force can be spared for the attack. As yet unaware of the party's presence, they have judged their numbers more than enough to carry out the task.

Ⓜ **Halldor the Whale:** See page 291.

Ⓜ **Kreana Priest (1 per hero):** See page 294.

Ⓜ **Kreana Blood Rager (1 per 2 heroes):** See page 294.

Ⓜ **Kreana Warriors (3 per 2 heroes):** See page 294.

Tactics: The warriors' tactics are simple enough—kill anyone in their path. The priest uses *stun* if the heroes are grouped close together in the hope of disabling them long enough for the warriors to dispatch them. When it becomes apparent the adventurers are not simple villagers, it switches to single 2d8 damage *bolt* spells. His preferred targets are spellcasters, heavily-armed warriors, and then anyone else in range. Should he suffer a wound, he first tries to use *healing*. He then switches to firing three 2d6 damage *bolts* each round.

Halldor should be played by the GM during this encounter. It is important he survive the attack, and should thus be prepared to run away. He invokes triple 2d6 damage *bolt* spells from the start. Should a hero be injured, he tries to maneuver so as to be able to use *healing*.

KARL'S NOCTURNAL WANDERINGS

Although suspicious of the heroes, Karl has a shipment due in on the second night and he intends to meet it. Shortly after dark, he gathers up his lantern, wraps himself in a heavy cloak, and heads out along the shingle beach. Karl and his comrades have devised a complex system of signals. For instance, three long swings followed by three short swings means all is clear, whereas a slow swing from left to right and back again three times means abort the drop and try again tomorrow.

In order to prevent discovery, only Karl ever signals—he takes it on faith that his men are in the right place at the right time. Karl has designed the signals to be fairly innocuous, so if he is ever spied upon and confronted he can pass them off as normal movements of the lantern as he scours the sea for smugglers.

In order to follow Karl, each hero needs to make a Stealth roll opposed by Karl's Notice. If they are stupid enough to carry a lit source of illumination, Karl cannot fail to spot them.

Terrain: Karl has the only lantern at the start of the fight. This means he and the smugglers are highly visible to the party, making them prime targets for archers and spellcasters.

Monsters: Assuming they avoid detection, the party follows Karl onto the shingle beach. He gives the all clear signal, then goes about pretending to be searching for smugglers, using lantern movements his men know have specific meaning. A few minutes later, the party detects the sound of oars slapping against water, then a dull scraping as the keel of a knarr hits the shingle.

Unless the party interferes, Karl and a dozen of the men head into the bog with the crates, leaving the rest to guard the ship. Once in the bog, Karl's gang heads straight for the other crates they have concealed in past weeks. They spend two hours digging a hole, lowering in the crates, and refilling it. They then head back to the boat, whereupon the smugglers depart, leaving Karl to finish his "patrol."

Ⓜ **Karl Gustavsunu/Leif Ulfsunu:** See page 292.

Ⓜ **Smugglers (4 per hero):** Treat as sailors (see page 292.) except they have Fighting d6, Parry 5, and are armed with a mace, an axe, or a short sword (Str+d6).

Tactics: Karl and his gang know that the penalty for smuggling weapons into Chalcis is death. To that end, they fight to the end. The smugglers may not be skilled warriors, but they know enough to Gang Up on targets.

Karl's first action is to pull out his *oil of smite* and smear it onto his sword. He keeps the potion within easy reach, but this is still a total of two actions. He then attacks, favoring spellcasters over warriors and warriors over everyone else. If wounded, he drinks his *healing* potion. Should the fight go against him, Karl quaffs his *potion of speed* and flees. He will return for the stashed weapons, but not for several weeks.

Treasure: The smugglers are bringing ashore six slim crates of weapons. Each crate contains 2,100 gs (list price) worth of melee weapons and weighs an average of 60 pounds.

THE MARSH

To the south of Byhaven is an extensive area of marsh, simply known to the locals as "Black Marsh." It lies in a shallow depression, the Inner Sea kept at bay only by a wide bank of shingle. The basin has always been boggy, fed by rain runoff from the cliffs to the north and from small streams which trickle from further inland.

Local legends that tell of a settlement once being located here are not entirely correct. It is true there were structures in the marsh, but they were not part of a vil-

lage. Long ago, on a patch of solid ground, there stood a small stone fort, a refuge for the local villagers in times of war. Wooden causeways, which could be knocked down when invaders came calling, allowed easy access to the refuge. When the Anari conquered Chalcis the fort was largely demolished.

At all times of year, the area is a tangle of stunted trees, decaying shrubs and dank water. Sinkholes, said to be bottomless, have also been the death of one or two unwary travelers. The ground is treacherously boggy and its dark water is home to many creatures that find raw flesh a tasty meal, such as marsh worms and swarms of biting insects.

No local can act as a guide in the swamp, even if they wanted to, for the landscape is continually changing as islands of floating matter break apart and new ones form. There are areas of solid ground, small hills that are now low islands, but no accurate maps of the marsh exist.

The party can move at around one mile per hour, on average. For each four hours of travel, have the party make a Survival roll at –2 as a Cooperative roll. Success indicates a major encounter. With failure, they have a minor encounter. A critical failure means the party is lost. All bonuses accrued toward major encounters (see below) are lost, and the party must begin again.

MINOR ENCOUNTERS

Roll a d6, consult the chart, and invent suitable descriptions.

d6	Encounter
1	**Biting Insects:** A Medium Burst Template-sized swarm of biting insects plagues the heroes. See page 292. The terrain is difficult ground for the heroes.
2	**Quicksand:** Allow the lead character a Notice roll at –2 to detect the hidden danger. Failure means he plunges in up to his waist (neck for Small characters) and immediately begins sinking. Those stuck in the hazard sink completely in three rounds (one round for Small characters) unless extracted. They can make a Strength roll (–4) to pull themselves out. A success stops them sinking any further, and a raise pulls them out. On a critical failure, the character is sucked under and immediately begins drowning. Heroes aiding a sinking comrade need to make a Strength roll to drag the unfortunate being from the quicksand. On a critical failure they are pulled in and begin sinking, as well. Once a character is under the surface he cannot extricate himself and must be dragged out by allies on the surface. In order to find the character, those searching for him must first make a Notice (–2) roll. Extricating a submerged character requires a Strength (–2) roll.
3	**Special Herbs:** Many unusual plants grow in the marsh. One particular plant, noted for its waxy purple leaves, can be used as an insect repellant. Detecting it for what it is requires a Survival roll. It has a brewing modifier of +2. A dose rubbed into the skin lasts four eight hours. Treat rolls of 1 on this table as no event if at least half the party is using the herbal brew.
4	**Marsh Gas:** The adventurers have unwittingly entered an area where there is a high concentration of marsh gas. Every character may make a Notice roll at –1 to detect the smell of the gas amid the general stench of corruption. Draw a card from the action deck. A royal card (Jack through Ace) indicates a small pocket of gas has exploded. Every hero suffers 2d6 damage as from an area effect attack. If the party is not using naked flame, they must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue for four hours.
5	**Tangled Vegetation:** The party wanders into an area of dense vegetation where everything looks the same. The next Survival roll is made at –2.
6	**Dry Ground:** The party finds a small, sandy island which allows for a slightly elevated view of the marsh. The next Survival roll is made at +2.

MAJOR ENCOUNTERS

Some of the major encounters are important to the plot, while others are just mysterious locations the party can explore. Roll a d6 and consult the table below. Add a cumulative +1 to the d4 roll for each encounter after the first (so d4+1 on the second encounter, d4+2 on the third, and so on). This represents the party moving deeper into the bog.

If the party leaves the marsh and reenters later, the bonus to the major encounter roll is reduced by one (to a minimum of zero) for each day the party avoids the marsh. This represents the mobile islands of vegetation moving, altering the layout of the marsh and confusing the explorers.

d4	Encounter
1	Bufom Hunting Party
2	War Chests
3	Warning Marker
4	Karl's Grave
5	Lair of the Marsh Orm
6+	Ruins (Bufom Lair)

BUFOM HUNTING PARTY

A small tribe of bufomi lives in Black Marsh. Rarely short of food, and lacking numerical superiority, they never trouble the villagers of Byhaven. Lone travelers on the coastal road are sometimes snatched for sacrifices, but the tribe is careful to conceal its presence.

Terrain: The area comprises knee-deep water over a

layer of thick mud, and counts as difficult ground. The GM should place a few trees to provide Cover and break up the terrain. Patches of tall reeds can also be added for additional cover. If you have *Hellfrost Encounters Book 1*, you can use one of the marsh maps and terrain guides from that volume.

Monsters: With food easier to find at the edges of the marsh, the bufomi venture out periodically to snatch rabbits and other small game. One such party just happens to be in the same location as the heroes.

Have the bufomi make a Group Notice roll and the heroes make a Cooperative Notice roll. If the bufomi win, they hear voices or splashing and set up an ambush, confident in their abilities to waylay a few humans daring to enter the marsh. A party victory means they hear the bufomi croaking away to each other, giving them opportunity to hide or arrange their own ambush. An equal result indicates the two parties come across each other simultaneously. In the latter case, combat starts at 12+d6".

For an ambush, have the losers set up their miniatures first. The victors are then set up in cover anywhere within 12". Check for Surprise as normal.

Ⓜ **Bufom Warrior (2 per hero):** See page 293.

Tactics: Half the bufomi begin by leaping into the range of their Croak ability, hoping to quickly stun the heroes. The other half attack by leaping and thrusting with their spears. Although initially brave, the bufomi are not used to being attacked, and morale quickly saps once losses are taken. When half the bufomi are slain, the rest make individual Spirit rolls. Those who succeed flee at their best speed. Those who pass stay the course. Once three-quarters of the hunting party is Incapacitated, the survivors automatically flee.

Continuation: If the party speaks Lesarde, or has access to *speak language*, they can interrogate any captives. This requires an Intimidation roll, with suitable bonuses applied for overt threats. With success, the creature reveals there is a lair deeper in the marsh containing "many bufomi" (it cannot count). Should the party actively head for this lair, all rolls on the major encounter table are made at +1.

WAR CHESTS

The party comes across a stable island. Heroes who pass a Notice roll at –2 realize the ground is freshly churned. Digging requires a total of two man-hours. Once the mud has been cleared, a large number of stout wooden chests can be found, resting on a tarred wooden platform.

Inside the chests are weapons and suits of chainmail. There is 32,000 gs worth (full cost value, not resale) of blades, axes, hammers, and maces, but no polearms except short spears, and ten chainmail hauberks in total. If the party decides to recover *all* the buried goods, assume for ease that every 250 gs of weapons weighs 8 pounds (approximately 1,000 pounds in total). Otherwise, they can pick and choose weapons up to the total value.

If the heroes uncover the chests and either do not rebury them or steal an entire chest, Karl (unless stopped by the party) discovers the trespass on the second night. Knowing that no one in the village ever ventures this deep into the marsh, he correctly concludes the party is responsible. Karl's retribution is left to the GM to devise.

Unfortunately for the heroes, a collection is due soon. Should the party leave the chests and plan to come back after completing the main adventure, they find they have all gone.

WARNING MARKER

On a patch of dry ground, someone, or something, has erected a wooden staff with a skull atop it. The skull is easily identified as that of a large rat. Adventurers who have a working knowledge of bufomi (GMs call) know the marker is a bufom tribe boundary marker used to stake out their territory. The next major encounter roll is made at an additional +1.

KARL'S GRAVE

When Leif Ulfsunu murdered Karl Gustavsunu, the exciseman, he dragged his body into the marsh and buried it. Although not weighted down with stones, Karl did slash the body to release the gases from decomposition that could bring the body to the surface. Unfortunately for Leif, local scavengers located the corpse and dragged it to the surface. Although missing several chunks of flesh and most of its limbs, the body can be recognized as that of a human. Around its neck is a small silver amulet worth 5 gs.

Adventurers who make a successful healing roll deduce the cause of death was a blow to the back of the head with a large sharp object, such as a sword, and that he probably died a few weeks ago. Clerics of Hothar who pass a Common Knowledge roll and other heroes who succeed at a Knowledge (Law) roll recognize the amulet as that of a Chalcian exciseman—Karl failed to spot its significance when he looted the body.

LAIR OF THE MARSH ORM

The characters have unwittingly entered the hunting ground of a marsh orm, a species of flightless drake renowned for their aggression and acidic breath. Have the heroes make Notice rolls to avoid surprise as the orm bursts out of the muck in search of its latest meal. The orm begins 2d6+4" from the lead hero.

Terrain: The area comprises knee-deep water over a layer of thick mud, and counts as difficult ground. The GM should place a few trees to provide Cover and break up the terrain. Patches of tall reeds can also be added for additional cover. If you have *Hellfrost Encounters Book 1*, you can use one of the marsh maps and terrain guides from that volume.

Monsters: There is only a single orm in the entire

marsh. Once slain, treat a second encounter a result of Ruins.

Ⓜ **Marsh Orm:** See page 294.

Tactics: Orms are slow moving creatures that favor ambushes over prolonged hunts. This one begins by slithering toward its prey and spraying foes within range with its powerful acid spit. The creature is not short of food (it likes bufomi flesh) and has no desire to die. Each time it is Shaken, make a Spirit roll. On a failure, the creature continues its assault, driven by its baser instincts. With success, it tries to flee. If the encounter is rolled again, draw a card from the action deck. A red card or Joker indicates the beast remembers the party and lets them pass unmolested. On a black card, it strikes once again.

RUINS

Standing on an area of higher solid ground, surrounded by filthy water, is a large mass of vegetation. Characters that make a successful Notice roll at a distance see the vegetation actually covers a ruined stone building. This discovery is automatic if the party investigates more closely. This is the remains of the old fort.

The roof has long since disappeared and the remaining walls only reach a height of three feet on average. The walls, though sturdy, are covered with moss and creepers, and no discernible features of note can be seen, even if the walls are scraped clean. In the center of the floor, roughly where the main room would have been, is a hole, from which emanates a sickly stench. The hole leads into a small cave network inhabited by a bufom tribe. The area is described in more detail below.

THE BUFOM LAIR

The bufom tribe inhabiting Black Marsh has lived here peacefully for many centuries. Lacking strength of numbers, the tribe is content to eke a basic living and honor its god as best it can. The bufomi snatch the occasional traveler for sacrifice, but leave the locals well alone out of fear of retribution.

The lair was originally part of the cellars of the fort, used to store grain and house refugees. The Anari partly filled the tunnels and chambers with mud to prevent them from being reused. When the bufomi moved in, they cleared the tunnels and set up home.

Only the temple is given any detail. The rest of the rooms need little description beyond "stone clad, damp, and a floor covered in crude reed mats." The number of bufomi and their type in each chamber are marked on the GM map. During the day, the bufomi are awake and count as active sentries if the party tries to sneak through the lair (there is one route to the temple containing no guards). At night, half the bufomi are asleep and the others count as inactive sentries. Sleeping bufomi are treated as Shaken on the round they awaken, recovering automatically at the start of the next round.

ANCIENT GUARDIANS

The tribe actually guards the third piece of the gold disc. Godwin Seacharmer knew well the hearts of men. With the date of the prophecy unknown, Godwin could not risk the disc being stolen, lost, or melted down in the intervening years. He had encountered bufomi before, and knew something of their simple, superstitious culture.

If he could convince them the disc was a gift from their god, its safety would be ensured. The Black Marsh was rarely explored by humans, and it was his desire to keep the final fragment close to Byhaven, for here would be found the enchanted conch.

Under the guise of a *shape change* charm, Godwin approached the tribe and persuaded them he was a prophet. The disc, he said, was a gift from K'kroakaa, entrusted into their care but to be given up freely when others came bearing two similar pieces. Over the centuries, the bufomi have continued to honor the disc, but have forgotten why they guard it. All that remains is a twisted memory—one day, intelligent mammals will come to steal it from them.

Unlike many "dungeons," where the monsters wait around in their rooms to be killed by the party, bufomi throughout the lair respond immediately to any sounds of combat. They rush by the fastest route to the temple, fearful that the ancient prophecy has come true and intruders are after the gold disc. This is not to be a slow, room-by-room dungeon crawl, but a frenzied large-scale skirmish—the heroes will need to think and act fast if they wish to avoid being surrounded and slain.

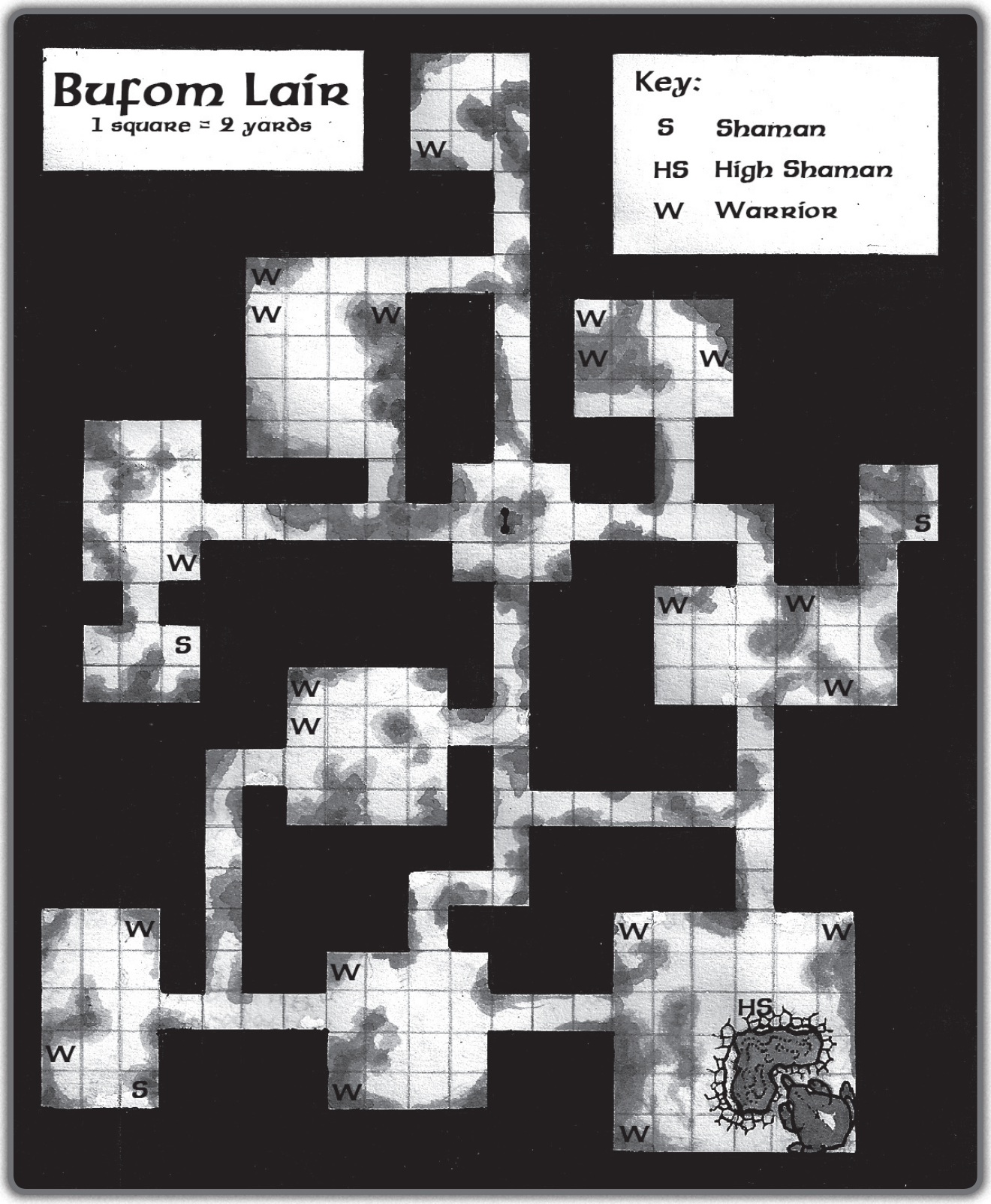
The bufomi should not be treated as simple sword-fodder, lining up to be slaughtered and prodding at the party with their spears. Their Croak special ability is a powerful tool, and they should use it regularly—the party is Heroic, so they should have developed some tactics by now for dealing with large numbers of foes in confined spaces. Similarly, the shamans should use *entangle* and *knockdown* to the best advantage of the warriors. They also have *summon herald* (which summons a giant toad), which should be employed if the party is close to reaching the temple.

Should the party actually enter the temple, the warriors become frantic—all their attacks are now Wild Attacks. If the adventurers manage to grab the gold disc, the warriors go Berserk (as per the Edge). Leaving the lair does not end the threat—if the disc is stolen, the bufomi give chase.

Lighting: The lair is illuminated by crude fish-oil lamps burning wicks of dried grass. The lighting counts as Dim (–1) throughout the entire lair.

Ⓜ **Bufomi Shamans:** See page 293. The High Shaman (marked HS on the map) is a Wild Card and possesses two Norn charms.

Ⓜ **Bufomi Warriors:** See page 293.


Bufom Lair
1 square = 2 yards
Key:
S Shaman
HS High Shaman
W Warrior
HS

TEMPLE OF K'KROAKAA

The largest room has been converted into a temple. At the far end stands a crude clay sculpture of a giant toad with a wide, open mouth. Its tongue lolls from its maw, reaching down to touch the flagstone floor. Slivers of gold can be seen on the creature's tongue, partially concealed behind a thin veneer of mud. In front of the statue is a pool, rudely excavated by digging up the flagstones and scooping away the mud beneath.

Terrain: The pool is only a few inches deep, but it is filled with thick mud, not water. Movement through the pool is difficult ground. Sacrifices to K'kroakaa are drowned in the pool before being eaten. The bones are then dumped in the marsh.

Treasure: Attached to the idol's tongue is the third part of the gold disc. Pulling it out of the sticky clay in which it has been embedded for decades (the idol is remade every few decades) requires a Strength roll as an action. Once retrieved, the party sees that a pearl of exquisite purity is fused to the inner part of the fragment. Give the party the final pieces of the disc at this time.

Several sacks of woven grass lie beside the statue. They contain 528 gs in coins, pieces of jewelry, and other small items taken from sacrifices.

THE COMPLETED DISC

When the three parts are joined, they lock together, revealing the complete message. The writing on the amulet is a cryptic message. The "coldest beacon" refers to the northerly storm beacon, the one nearest the Hellfrost. The holy day of Neorthe is Waescdaeg. Halldor knows this, as does any hero making a Knowledge (Religion) roll. Sea mist is a constant problem in Byhaven, but it never forms when the wind blows to the east. Hence, the message says that it must be used when fog is not present. The "milky eye" refers to the pearl, while the "pale lady" is a reference to Maera, in her guise of the moon. The "dying Hearth" is a direct reference to the sun, commonly known as Sigel's Hearth, as it sets.

Put more simply, the party must stand before the northerly beacon on Waescdaeg as the sun sets and the moon is in the sky, and hold the disc so the pearl is covering the moon.

The clues are designed to be solved quite easily once the disc is complete, especially if players have read the *Hellfrost Player's Guide* and remember the references to the sun and moon. If the party is having problems, allow Common Knowledge rolls.

Once the heroes follow the instructions on the disc, the last rays of the setting sun strike the pearl. A thin beam of pale pink light, a mix of sunlight and moonlight, radiates from the pearl and strikes the ocean some 200 yards offshore. The beam lasts for but a minute before the sun disappears below the horizon. This is enough time for the party to fix the spot the beam struck so as to be able to find it again.

Halldor, if present or informed of the discovery, suggests the party does not delay, but instead immediately strikes out for the spot in a rowboat. If Halldor is on the cliffs, he says he will meet the adventurers at the temple in twenty minutes. While the party arranges a rowboat, Halldor returns to the temple and collects some alchemical devices. If Halldor was NOT present, he is already in the temple gathering his devices.

When the party catches up, he hands each member a pearl. He also distributes a total of two sticks. These are all alchemical devices and are described on page 11. If the party asks for more pearls, Halldor replies, "I have limited stock and fear we may need them soon. Do not tarry!"

SEACHARMER'S BONES

On the seafloor, directly beneath where the light hit the water, lie the remains of a decaying longship. Godwin Seacharmer died in the village and was buried at sea in his ship (it was scuttled by the burial party). Rowing out to the spot from the temple takes ten minutes.

The sun has set, the water is deep, and no light pen-

UNDERWATER COMBAT PRIMER

Because of the *environmental protection* spells, underwater combat ignores pressure, temperature, and holding of breath. Characters move at their full Pace and can "run"—the Swimming skill is not required. However, there are a few minor changes to keep in mind.

* Acid, coldfire, fire, and heat spells do not function as effectively. All damage dice are reduced one die type (so 2d6 becomes 2d4, for example) and burst templates are reduced one step.
* Electrical and sound trappings increase the damage die one step (so 2d10 becomes 2d12, for example). Templates also increase one size, to a maximum of Large. *Bolt* spells affect a Small Burst Template underwater. Touching an electrical *barrier* requires a Vigor roll at –2 to avoid being knocked back.
* Ice trappings do not make an area slippery. Instead, they freeze an area of water into a solid sphere (Toughness 10). These quickly melt or float up and away.
* Movement can, if the GM wishes, be handled in three-dimensions. For any encounter there will be a baseline. In most instances this should be the ocean floor. Simply use dice or poker chips to mark the number of inches a creature is above the baseline.
* Ranged weapons or spells which launch a physical missile have their Range halved.

etrates more than a few feet below the surface. In order to find what they seek, the party needs to use one of the alchemical *light* sticks. If the party recorded the position of the beam, allow them to make a Common Knowledge roll. Success puts them fairly close, and it takes only ten minutes of underwater searching to find the longship. A raise puts them right on top, and only a few minutes are used. Failure means 1d3+1 x 10 minutes are wasted. The same applies if the party did not bother recording the spot. A critical failure means the party has just 12 minutes of *environmental protection* remaining when they find the wreck—enough for one Notice roll and 12 rounds of combat (see below).

Searching the seaweed covered wreck and the surrounding area requires a Notice roll at –2, and ten minutes time. This is handled using the Cooperative Roll rules. Failures may be repeated. With success, the party discovers an encrusted skeleton clutching in its bony hands a conch and a sealed scroll case.

Terrain: Visibility counts as Pitch Darkness (–4). Within the Large Burst Template (6" diameter) of a *light* spell, visibility is normal. Between 6" and 9", the lighting conditions are Dim (–1), and betwixt 9" and 12", they are Dark (–2). Beyond this nothing can be seen.

See the sidebar on underwater combat, as well.

Seacharmer's bones are blessed so long as they remain *in situ*. Any sea creatures seeking to move within 3" of the bones must make a Spirit roll or find themselves unable to advance, repelled by some invisible force. This roll is made each round. Note that the blessing does not stop the kreana using their spears if a foe within the protected area is within reach.

Monsters: After each Notice roll, draw a card from the action deck. A black royal card (Jack through Ace) indicates a kreana patrol has located the party and is moving to attack. Otherwise, the creatures automatically spot the party once the skeleton is discovered. Unless the party posted lookouts, check for Surprise as a great white shark (to which cling four kreana warriors) looms out of the darkness. The shark begins 12" away from the source of the party's illumination, the closest distance at which it becomes visible.

Ⓜ **Great White Shark (1 per 2 heroes):** See page 293.

Ⓜ **Kreana Warriors (1 per hero):** See page 294. The warriors are divided as equally as possible among the sharks.

Tactics: On the first round, the great whites swim toward the nearest creature, "running" if necessary, and attack. The kreana warriors remain holding onto the sharks' fins, riding them into battle. Once a shark is engaged, the warriors let go and conduct their own attacks. The warriors and sharks fight to the death.

THE TREASURE

Once back on dry land (or aboard their boat if they are keen) the heroes can examine their finds.

The scroll contains a single sheet of waterproofed vellum. Give the party Handout #3 at this time. Any mariners or clerics of Neorthe may make a Knowledge (Folklore) roll after reading the scroll. Characters that grew up in Angmark or eastern Chalcis may use Common Knowledge. Other heroes may make the roll with a –2 penalty. With success, the character has heard stories of a sickly green light which glows deep in the ocean around the point indicated in the scroll. Mariners consider it a cursed place and generally avoid sailing too close to the spot. If the heroes fail the roll, Halldor, using his Knowledge (the seas) skill informs them of this fact.

The conch is a relic and must be attuned before it can be used. Anyone attuning to the relic instantly knows it has two special powers. First, it can be used to summon killer whales. This may be done a total of three times, after which the power is lost. The whales appear 24" from the blower, one round after being summoned. They remain for a single encounter. Each use of the horn in this manner counts as an action.

Second, it can weaken the avatar of Carcharas. The avatar must be within 12". When the conch is blown (an action), the wielder makes a Vigor roll opposed by the avatar's Spirit. If the user beats the avatar's roll and scores a success, the creature's Heavy Armor and Hardy abilities are ignored until the start of the horn blower's next turn.

TRAVELING THE INNER SEA

Unless the party has a ship, Halldor musters up a *voice on the wind* charm from the temple treasury. He knows of several captains who regularly ply the waters, and prays that one is within range of the spell. Fortune is on the party's side, and two days later a busse rows into the harbor. Halldor speaks with the captain, who agrees to transport the heroes to the site of the sunken city. With tears in his eyes, Halldor hands the party the temple's alchemical devices except for one *environmental protection* pearl.

> *"I cannot accompany you on this quest," he smiles weakly. "After using the charm to call the captain I received a vision. My part in this endeavor is over, for Neorthe has shown me that if I go with you I shall not return. Forgive me, but I am not yet ready for death. I have accomplished much in my research into the Blood Tide prophecy, but there is much I have yet to do in life. This is your quest now. May Neorthe watch over you and guide you to success."*

It takes the better part of 16 hours to reach the site of the city. Diving down 100 fathoms (600 feet) and locating the outskirts of the city takes 10 minutes, leaving the party 50 minutes of *environmental protection* potion before they need to take a second dose. Surfacing again takes only a few minutes (the party is immune to the bends due to the potion).

THE KREANA CITY

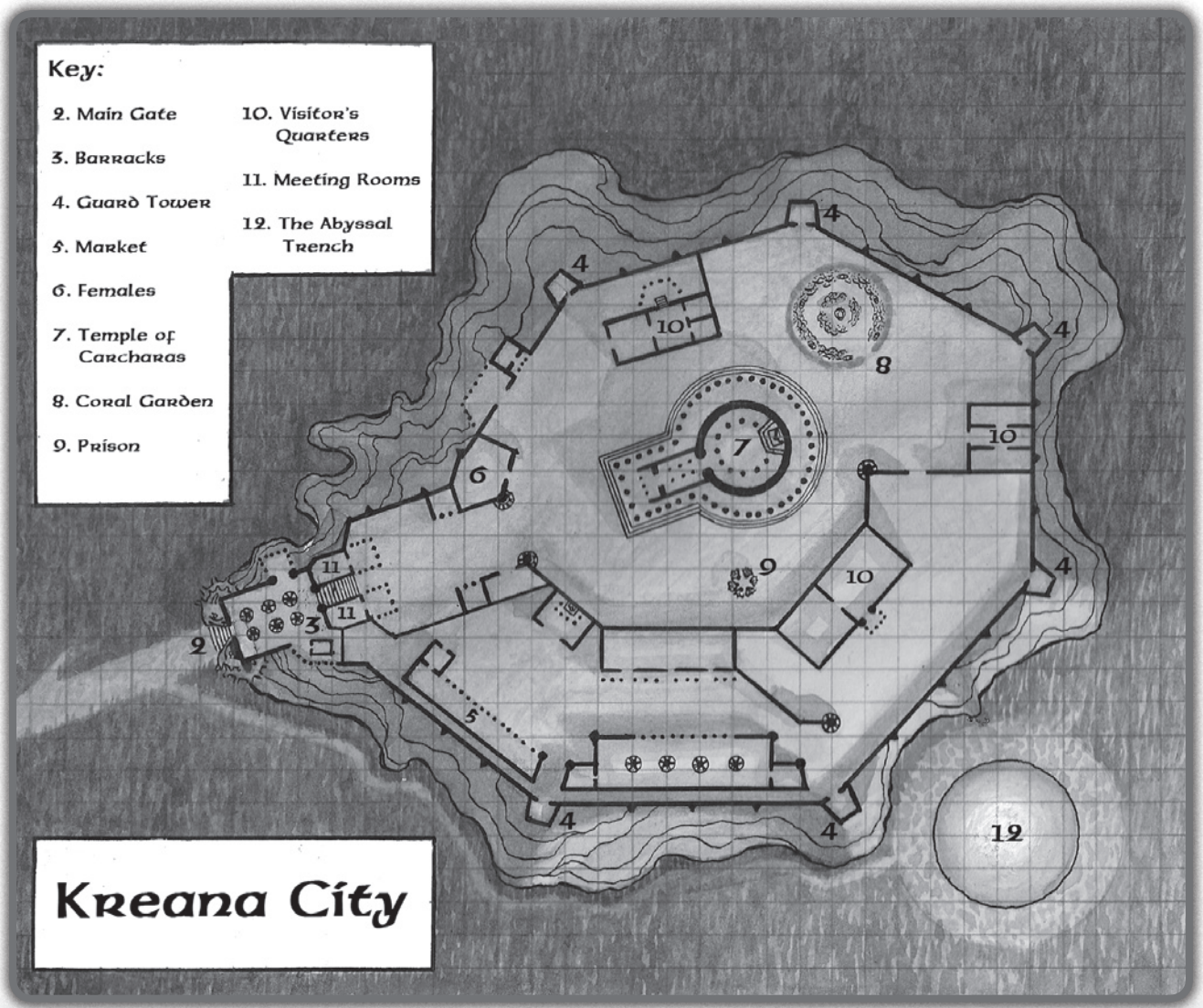
Eons ago, in what skalds call the Mythic Age, a great city stood on an island in the middle of the Inner Sea. Although skilled architects and technologically advanced, the city-dwellers were a cruel and barbaric people. Carcharas was their patron deity, and they honored him with human sacrifices. Over time, the inhabitants became more debauched, instigating cannibalism and raiding far and wide for captives as offerings to their deity.

The worshippers of Carcharas believed their god dwelt in the inner ocean, a watery realm deep below the surface of the world. Through ancient and powerful magic they bored a hole into this realm intent on summoning their god to the world of mortals as a true living deity. Affronted by this unholy act, the other races, backed perhaps by Neorthe, worked their own powerful magic.

The great and terrible city sank beneath the surface of the waters, though it suffered little structural damage. Carcharas sacrificed great personal power to warp large numbers of his followers into the kreana, changing them from air breathers into ferocious shark-men; for if they perished there would be none left to worship him and his very existence would be threatened. The newly created shark-men fled the city in fear of further retribution. The story of the disaster was told to subsequent generations, though the facts were slowly replaced by myth.

Many, many centuries later, the kreana moved back into the city, drawn to the abyssal trench they had created in their former lives. Alas, the gods had acted to seal the lowest depths with a magical ward, breaking the compact briefly to ensure Carcharas remained in his watery realm. The trench descends almost six miles into the crust and is inhabited by many strange aquatic creatures. At the very bottom is an arcane gateway, which connects to Carcharas's hellish domain.

Save for an honor guard and a few priests, the kreana



do not permanently inhabit the drowned city. It is a place of special religious importance, visited only when major ceremonies are called for or when the disparate tribes wish to meet in peace, for the kreana are forbidden from drawing the blood of their own kind here. All the largest tribes have sent emissaries to oversee the completion of the Blood Tide ritual.

Very Important: The Blood Tide ritual is *very* close to being completed. A total of ten more sacrifices are required. For each area of the city the heroes explore before reaching the summoning pit, one sacrifice is offered to the kreana's god. If the party dallies too long, the avatar will be summoned and fully under kreana control. It emerges from the summoning area, detects the earthly-stench of the heroes, and aims to make them its first meal.

Note that creatures slain in the summoning room during a fight count as sacrifices. However, if the tenth sacrifice is a victim of random violence, the avatar is wild and uncontrollable making it as much an enemy to the kreana as the heroes. Thus, while the party has no chance of stopping the ritual, they can twist the odds in their favor by being in the right place at the right time.

When ten creatures have been slain in the summoning chamber, the avatar is summoned. It takes *five rounds* to rise up from the depths. At the start of the 6th round, deal it an action card.

Tracking Time: There is no need to record every second the party spends underwater. Mark time in ten minute intervals (the time it takes for one Healing roll). The party has three hours of *environmental protection* per member—running out of air should only be an issue if the party is forced to spend long periods recovering from injury. Remember, it takes ten minutes to reach the surface!

Deus Ex Machina: If the party takes severe injuries *before* reaching the summoning site, Halldor arrives on the scene. After much soul searching he decided he could not allow the party to face the Blood Tide alone. He caught a ride with a friendly killer whale, using his *environmental protection* spells to breathe. Should his presence be required, Halldor *must* die before the adventure ends, preferably in a manner which aids the party (such as throwing himself in front of the avatar of Carcharas so a hero is not attacked). Exactly how the GM achieves this is left to his devious imagination.

COMMON FEATURES

Doors: The kreana are not big on doors. They use thick strands of knotted seaweed weighed down by stone to ensure privacy. Creatures who swim through one without taking an action to pull it aside must make an Agility roll (–2 if running) or become entangled. Freeing oneself requires an Agility or Strength roll as an action. While entangled, victims cannot move and all physical Traits suffer a –2 penalty.

Lighting: The area is bathed in sickly green light emanating from the abyssal trench. This counts as Dim (–1) lighting. Indoors, the kreana use luminescent coral for lighting. This is also Dim lighting.

General Terrain: Kreana are not big on furnishings. Sleeping mats are woven of seaweed for comfort, but tables and chairs are virtually unknown. Built as a temple to Carcharas, the entire site retains its shark motifs in columns, engravings, and shark-gray floor tiles. This information is not repeated in individual area descriptions.

Windows: None of the buildings have windows.

ROVING PATROLS

The fulfillment of the Blood Tide prophecy is a major event, and there are many dignitaries present. The kreana have stepped up security with the addition of roving patrols.

Each time the heroes move to a new numbered area, draw a card from the action deck. A Jack through Ace indicates a roving patrol is nearby. If the card is black, the heroes must roll to avoid Surprise as the patrol swims toward them out of the gloom. A red card means the party sees the patrol first and may take evasive action, such as darting behind nearby buildings.

On a Club or Diamond, the patrol comprises one blood rager and a small number of kreana warriors. A Heart or Spade indicates the patrol is a lone great white shark.

Ⓜ **Kreana Blood Rager (1):** See page 294.

Ⓜ **Kreana Warriors (1 per hero):** See page 294. These warriors carry crossbows (Range: 7/14/21 underwater, Damage: 2d6, AP 1) and have Shooting d8.

Ⓜ **Great White Shark (1):** See page 293.

GUIDE TO THE CITY

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Read the following aloud when the heroes are 100 yards from the ruined city:

A mass of seaweed, some of it rising nigh on 200 feet tall, stands cluttered around a steep hill, atop which stands a cluster of buildings of unusual architecture. Unlike the buildings of the stone-using Anari, these are supported by towering columns rather than solid walls. Everything is bathed in eerie green light, which seems to emanate from the southern side of the hill.

The green glow rises upward a great distance, but thanks to the hill does not illuminate the seabed on any side except the south. If the party heads straight into the city from above, they are *automatically* spotted by a roving patrol (see below). Draw a card and check the suit to determine what sort of patrol is encountered. After dealing with the patrol they must also make a Stealth roll to get within 5" of the surface. Any failure indicates a second patrol has spotted them.

The safest way (relatively speaking) to enter is to move away from the city, proceed through the mass of seaweed to the base of the cliffs, and then drift upward, hugging the walls for cover.

If the heroes move to investigate the glow, read the following:

South of the hill is a colossal hole. Brilliant green light radiates forth from its fathomless depths. A great number of kreana can be seen swimming around the hole, but from your angle the light conceals their numbers. A low undulating chant vibrates through the water, no doubt part of the Blood Tide summoning ritual.

1. TRAPS

Strewn around the perimeter of the ruins are beds of tall, tightly-packed seaweed. The seaweed forest stretches for many miles. It completely covers the lower part of the city, leaving only the religious district (built atop a towering, flat hill) visible. The kreana never venture deep into the forest, but instead patrol from overhead.

Dotted throughout the seaweed are numerous primitive, but effective traps. Heroes moving through the area must make a Notice roll each round. A –1 penalty applies if the creature is moving above half Pace and –2 if it is running. With failure, the creature blunders into a trap. Draw a card from the action deck. Note that characters following in the "footsteps" of the lead hero need not make Notice rolls—only the leader needs to roll.

Red Suit or Joker: Hanging between the seaweed are nets made of strong but thin fibers, and dotted with sharp coral hooks. An unwary creature swimming through the seaweed risks becoming entangled in a net. As it struggles, the hooks bite into its flesh and the net entwines tighter around its body and limbs.

The victim must make an Agility or Strength roll at –2 as an action to escape. For each failure, the penalty increases by an additional –2. After the third failure, the victim cannot escape without outside assistance. The escape modifier also affects all the victim's physical Trait rolls while he is ensnared. Each net has Toughness 8 and must be cut or ripped apart.

Black Suit: Hanging from strands of seaweed are the jaws bones of colossal sharks. The jaws are wedged open with thin sticks, keeping the jaws, which are wired with sinewy seaweed rope, apart. A hero who blunders into the trap dislodges the stick, which causes the jaws to snap shut.

Victims suffer 2d6 damage to a randomly determined limb and are pinned. Escape requires a Strength roll at –4 as an action. A trapped character may take other actions, but cannot move.

2. MAIN GATE

Two colossal, shell-encrusted pylons in the shapes of gigantic sharks, stand on either side of a wide, cracked road. A small number of kreana stand to attention in front of the pylons. One has a large conch tied around his waist.

Although the kreana live in a three-dimensional world, it is considered blasphemy to enter the precinct by any means except the main gate.

Monsters: The guards are permanently assigned to watching over the temple and have no tribal affiliation. Their task is to check the identity of visitors and keep out undesirable elements of kreana society.

Ⓜ **Kreana Warrior (1 per hero):** See page 294.

Tactics: Guards stationed at the gate are really an honor guard, for any attacker is unlikely to bother swimming up the processional way to enter via the main gate. That said, they are no less aggressive than any other kreana and are prepared to give their lives protecting the sanctuary of the Great Temple.

The conch-carrying guard attempts to blow the conch at the first sign of trouble. This requires an action. The conch produces a low, reverberating note which carries as far as the barracks (Area 3). Guards begin pouring out of the barracks two rounds after the conch is blown.

3. BARRACKS

Standing to the south of the main gate is a squat building with a single entrance.

This is the main barracks for the temple guards. As the room lacks most basic furnishings, the kreana sleep on mats of woven seaweed.

Monsters: Stationed inside is a double-sized squad of off-duty kreana. Day and night are subjective at these depths, where sunlight never penetrates, and time is normally marked by a series of conch blasts. With the ceremony in full swing, the guards are under strict orders to remain awake until it is completed.

Ⓜ **Kreana Warriors (2 per hero):** See page 294.

Tactics: The guards are most likely going to be roused by their comrades on the main gate signaling for help. They swim en masse toward the outer gate, spears at the ready. If they have a numerical advantage, they split into small groups and harass attackers as quickly as possible, thus reducing the threat of spells.

4. GUARD TOWERS

A tall, flat-topped tower abuts the outer wall. Positioned on the roof is a large ballista. A number of kreana stand around the weapon, their eyes scanning the water outside and above the hilltop.

Positioned at intervals around the perimeter wall are tall, flat-roofed guard towers. The interiors are bare and seldom used, for attackers are extremely unlikely to come marching up to the walls as they would on land. Instead, the guards spend their watch on the roof, keeping eyes peeled outward and upward for signs of attackers.

Terrain: Movement through the space occupied by a ballista is difficult ground.

Monsters: Stationed in each tower is a squad of crossbow-wielding guards. Each tower has a heavy ballista, modified to fire in any direction. The kreana have little to fear from other sentient aquatic species, but they are rightfully worried about zeuglodons and other large, aggressive carnivores. The ballistae can fire either coral bolts or large nets.

Ⓜ **Kreana Warriors (1 per hero):** See page 294. These warriors carry crossbows (Range: 7/14/21 underwater, Damage: 2d6, AP 1) and have Shooting d8.

Ⓜ **Heavy Ballista (1)**: Range: 25/50/100 underwater, Damage: 3d6+2, AP 4, HW, 2 actions to reload. As well as bolts, the ballistae can launch heavy weighted nets. The range is reduced to 12/24/48. The nets function as the *entangle* power, except Shooting replaces the arcane skill roll and range modifiers apply. The nets spread out after launching and affect a Large Burst Template (large enough to ensnare a single Huge creature).

Tactics: The ballistae are kept loaded with coral bolts. After launching its payload, the operator must decide which type of warhead to load. Against small creatures standing close together, the net is favored, as it can catch multiple targets. For larger creatures, or if intruders are dispersed, another coral bolt is loaded. The tower guards rarely swim more than 6" from the tower—being alone and in open water makes the kreana an easy target and robs him of Gang Up bonuses.

5. MARKET

On normal festival days this building is used as a market, where visitors can purchase food, weapons, trinkets, mementos of their visit, and alchemical devices. In that regard, the kreana are little different from the air breathers they so despise. This ritual is not a social gathering, and so the market is not open for business. Each booth entrance is covered by a seaweed curtain, affording the heroes privacy if they need somewhere to perform healing or hide out.

6. FEMALES

A small number of guards stand outside a colonnaded hall.

Housed inside are the personal harems of the visiting dignitaries. In kreana society, only the males belong to a tribe. Females have no tribal bonds and are, for the most part, apolitical. Yet they are not regarded as second-rate or inferior citizens. They are accorded special privileges, such as choosing with whom they mate.

Courtship rituals are lengthy and violent, for no female wishes to mate with a male she can subdue. Kreana do not mate for life—if a female wishes to switch to a new mate, that is entirely her prerogative. By law, her former partner may challenge the newcomer to a fight to the death. More than one female has used this law as a political weapon.

Heroes who have doubts about slaying female kreana will quickly find they are far from weak and helpless. Although not as skilled at warfare as the males of the species, they are no less vicious and of similar build. Their claws and teeth are just as sharp.

Monsters: A squad of guards flanks the columned entrance. They are under strict instructions on pain of death not to enter the building without a direct order from a priest.

Ⓜ **Kreana Warriors (1 per hero):** See page 294.

Ⓜ **Female Kreana (4 per hero):** As warriors (see page 294), except they have Fighting d4, Parry 4, and no gear.

Tactics: The guards will not venture more than 4" away from the entrance and cannot be lured further out by any means. Should the characters enter, the females act scared and weak. This is a ruse—if the heroes turn their backs on them for but a moment, the kreana attack as a group. Although unskilled combatants, weight of numbers could quickly turn the tide of the battle in their favor.

7. GREAT TEMPLE OF CARCHARAS

The largest building in the city, this colossal structure is surrounded by many thick columns carved to resemble sharks biting at the roof they support. For all its seeming importance, there are no guards visible.

While every kreana city has a temple and every smaller settlement a shrine, all kreana in the western ocean acknowledge this to be the location of *the* Great Temple to Carcharas. The high priest and his guards are apolitical, putting the greater good of the species before any individual tribe.

Inside, atop a coral altar, rests a huge set of jaws, taken from a megalodon's corpse long ago. The jaws are 12' wide and stand almost as high. Rows of saw-edged triangular teeth jut from the gaping maw.

Terrain: The pillars inside and out can be used for Cover and provide Heavy Armor +8.

Monsters: Inside the main temple are a priest and his elite blood rager guards. The priest is offering up valuables donated by the dignitaries to Carcharas to help ensure the avatar is benevolent to the kreana. Interrupting his activities has no direct effect on the summoning ritual, or the avatar's mood once it arrives.

Ⓜ **Kreana Priest (1):** See page 294.

Ⓜ **Kreana Blood Rager (1 per hero):** See page 294.

Tactics: For an air breather to step foot inside the Great Temple is a sacrilege no kreana can ignore. Driven to great rage by the heroes' presence, the blood ragers use Wild Attacks against the unholy intruders.

The priest begins by launching three 2d6 *bolts*, all aimed at the nearest target. If this fails to score a wound, he increases the damage to 2d8 the next round, and then 2d10 after that, if necessary. If the party closes the distance and remains grouped, he will use *stun* so as to aid the blood ragers. Once wounded, he casts *healing* on his next action card.

Treasure: Inside the altar are offerings left by the visiting dignitaries. The haul comprises many treasures from the air breathers' world, such as coins and jewels, as well as kreana valuables, like beautifully-patterned corals and shells. The total amount comes to 6,000 gold scields. Assume every 500 gold scields worth of loot weighs 10 pounds.

8. CORAL GARDEN

The coral garden was created as a place where priests could meditate in solitude and dignitaries could meet privately. Surrounded by a 10' high "wall" of dark green seaweed strands, the garden is adorned with coral sculptures and stacks of colored shells. By law, no weapons are permitted in the garden (though no kreana is ever unarmed thanks to its teeth and claws), and by tradition only kreana above warrior rank may enter unless the high priest has given them express permission. This includes priests, blood ragers, and other dignitaries.

9. PRISON

Attached to tall poles are conical nets, the bottoms weighted down with large stones. Through the netting you can just make out creatures, though their nature is concealed. A number of kreana guards are lazily swimming around the area, never taking their eyes off the northernmost nets.

The conical nets are actually prison cells. The northern nets are double thickness. By keeping prisoners in the open, the chances of them escaping and overpowering the guards without being detected are greatly reduced. It also allows passing kreana to taunt the captives.

Terrain: The nets are Toughness 8 and must be cut or ripped apart. The double-thickness nets require two separate damage rolls to equal or exceed their Toughness or a single wound to tear them asunder. The nets block line of sight and can be used for Cover (+2 Armor).

Monsters: The cells contain a number of prisoners, snatched in preparation for the sacrifice. There were more, but they have been dragged away and sacrificed in the ritual to summon the avatar. These "lucky" ones have been kept back as a welcoming meal for the avatar when it arrives.

Held here are a handful of havmandr and grindylows. Not sea creatures by nature, the grindylows were captured from marshes at great risk to the kreana and, because they are likely to fight back when they see their fate, especially prized—The Avatar of Carcharas appreciates futile struggle from his food as it increases his appetite. The havmand are too peaceful to try and escape, while the grindylows receive a sharp prod if they try to claw their way free.

Ⓜ **Kreana Warriors (3 per 2 heroes):** See page 294.

Ⓜ **Havmandr (2 per hero):** See page 293.

Ⓜ **Grindylows (1 per hero):** See page 293.

Tactics: The kreana tactics are simply to butcher any intruders. Spellcasters and those trying to free the captives, especially the grindylows, are their primary targets. After the first round ends, hand out Ally Sheets for the grindylows to the players. Naturally the fey cannot do much until they escape their nets, but they side with the heroes after that.

Continuation: Grindylows are Unseelie fey, making them treacherous, malevolent, and out for their own good. While they acknowledge the heroes' aid in freeing them, they do not say thank you (to a faerie, that is a binding contract that you owe someone a favor) or offer support in the heroes quest. Convincing them to provide further help requires a Persuasion roll at –2. This can be made as a Cooperative roll.

On a success, they remain unconvinced that the cause is in their best interests. On any combat round they draw a Club, they use only the Defend maneuver that round. With a raise, they act as the characters' desire.

By comparison, the havmand are extremely grateful and willing to offer support. They are not skilled fighters, and openly admit as much, but working together in small teams they can provide valuable Gang Up bonuses for the heroes. Assuming any survive the adventure, the havmandr offer a reward of 500 gs per survivor for freeing them. They will deliver this to a coastal location of the heroes' choice within one month of being released.

10. VISITORS' QUARTERS

Normally, visiting dignitaries travel with an entourage of warriors, priests, and court officials. They are housed in special quarters, richly appointed with coral and shells, woven tapestries of fine seaweed strands, and plump kelp bedding. Suspecting that one tribe might attempt to subvert the avatar to serving its own needs above those of the race as a whole, the high priest banned all but the dignitaries and their harem from coming within five miles of the city. Even if the nobles were to attempt a coup to gain control of the avatar, the temple guards could quickly crush the traitors.

With the dignitaries at the ritual, their quarters are currently empty. Since the only other inhabitants of the city are servants of the temple, and deemed incorruptible and not subject to base desires such as greed for material wealth, the chambers are unguarded.

Treasure: For each 10 minutes spent searching these

FAILURE

While some groups will fare better than others, this adventure is not an easy one—the kreana are tough opponents, and careless parties may quickly find themselves surrounded by large numbers of warriors.

Should the party be killed or flee after the avatar is awakened, they have failed in their quest. The avatar quickly makes it presence felt, attacking ships in and around the Inner Sea. This in turn reduces trade, which causes far-reaching economic problems. Unlike a herald, the avatar is not a summoned creature bound by having to Maintain a spell—it remains until slain.

Bolstered by its presence, the kreana also put aside their tribal differences and begin organized raids against coastal communities. The coastal regions of the western side of the continent become a dangerous place. Furthermore, once the beast is free in the ocean, tracking it down becomes a monumental task.

GMs should look upon the party's failure as a new opportunity to create more adventures based around the kreana raids and the avatar. Perhaps the heroes need to organize stiff defenses or muster a fleet to hunt down the avatar. The longer the menace is left unchecked, the worse the situation should become.

buildings, the party can acquire 1d100 x 2 gs in precious stones, coins, and other small treasures. After an hour all the valuables of any worth are gathered.

11. MEETING ROOMS

Until comparatively recently, kreana society was highly aggressive, and violence was viewed as the best means to settle disputes. With few natural predators, it came as a shock to the kreana to discover their numbers were dwindling. Breeding remained successful and the number of young fairly constant, but the frequent tribal wars fought over females and territory were having a disastrous effect on the species.

After consulting with the other priests, the high priest of Carcharas (who permanently resides at the temple) declared that violence must end before the species consumed itself in frenzied bloodshed. Violent hatred, he declared, should be reserved for air breathers and other aquatic species. To that end, one building in the precinct was converted into a series of meeting rooms, where rival tribes could sort out their differences without losing much-needed military strength.

None of the rooms are currently in use and thus provide a suitable place for the party to hide.

12. THE ABYSSAL TRENCH

Since their city was submerged and the former occupants altered, the kreana have sought to complete their task and unleash Carcharas. Now, more than a thousand years after the task was started, they are close to completion. This time the gods will not interfere, for their attention is diverted by the rise of the Hellfrost and the disappearances of Kenaz and Sigel. This time, mortals will have to win the battle unaided.

Monsters: Conducting the ritual is the high priest of the kreana. He is aided by a small number of lesser priests. Watching over the proceedings is a group of kreana dignitaries, nobles of the various tribes here to praise the living god and swear fealty to him. Protecting the site are blood ragers, the elite guards of the Great Temple and the only warriors allowed near the site.

In order to have any real hope of success, the party needs to call upon the killer whales (through the conch relic) *and* rescue the prisoners. Without both, the party is greatly outnumbered. This will be a big battle, but should be played out on the tabletop to create a memorable finale.

Ⓜ **Kreana High Priest (1):** See page 294.

Ⓜ **Kreana Priests (1 per hero):** See page 294.

Ⓜ **Kreana Dignitaries (2 per hero):** Treat as unarmed warriors (see page 294) but with the Command Edge.

Ⓜ **Kreana Blood Ragers (2 per hero):** See page 294.

Ⓜ **Avatar of Carcharas (1):** See page 292.

Ⓜ **Havmand Sacrifice:** See page 293. There are initially ten sacrifices present. For each other area of the temple site the heroes explored, one has been sacrificed. Once the battle begins any survivors side with the heroes. They are not bound—instead they were held by blood ragers. When the blood ragers moved toward the heroes, they released their prisoners, believing havmandr to be no threat.

Tactics: Once the heroes make their presence known, the blood ragers immediately move to attack. They use only Wild Attacks. Depending on the range and how close the attackers are together, the priests use *bolt* or *stun* spells. For the former, they launch three 2d6 *bolts* each round, concentrating on a single target. With *stun*, they care little for the fate of the blood rager engaged in melee—their aim is to weaken the heroes, making it easier for the avatar and their *bolt* spells to do their work.

Continuation: If the avatar is slain, all the kreana present are automatically Shaken (from a non-physical attack), stunned into inaction at the death of their living god. This momentary inaction gives the heroes a chance to press home the assault or make good their escape.

Once they recover, the blood ragers and priests continue the fight. The surviving dignitaries immediately flee, swimming back to their distant homes to spread word of the disaster. Scaled fingers are pointed, and the tribes quickly blame each other for hiring air breathers

to disrupt the ritual. Each tribe also vies to have one of its priests elevated to high priest status, breaking the ancient law that the high priest should be beyond politics. The resulting civil war keeps the kreana occupied for many months to come.

Even if every kreana in the Great Temple is slain, they will eventually recover and repopulate the site, though it may take several years to accomplish.

BESTIARY

NAVIGATOR HALLDOR THE WHALE

Halldor, a native of the Magocratic County of Wyse, was fascinated by the sea from the moment he first set eyes on it as a child. His father, a travelling peddler, did not often call at the coastal settlements and Rudolph was nearly ten before he saw the ocean. As soon as he was old enough, he left home to become a sailor.

Although he enjoyed the three years he spent at sea, he wanted to get closer to it, "to be at one with it," as he often tells people. That was when he turned to the priesthood of Neorthe.

Halldor dedicated himself to his priestly duties and was promoted several times. Even his fellow priests had to admit he had a special bond with the sea, for he had been shipwrecked three times in his career and had emerged without a scratch from every one.

While clearing out a musty temple archive, Halldor stumbled across an ancient scroll which mentioned, in passing, the Blood Tide prophecy. Halldor became obsessed with learning more, and duly sought permission to leave the temple and investigate further. Believing the vague mention of the prophecy to be nothing more than superstitious nonsense of a bygone age, his superiors refused. Halldor beseeched them passionately, claiming Neorthe had granted him a quest from which he could not turn aside. He could easier halt the tides than turn his back on this omen, he proclaimed.

Reluctantly, Halldor was released from his duties to follow up on the prophecy. In total he has devoted 20 years of life to unraveling the mystery, 20 years of arduous travel and long research, both of which have left his body frail. It was the prophecy which led him to Byhaven. For the past five years he has acted as village priest while continuing his research.

Halldor is both a man in his element, living as he does in the middle of nowhere with plenty of time to enjoy the open ocean and its majestic power, and a deeply troubled individual, for his research has indicated the Blood Tide is soon to occur. Despite the growing threat of the prophecy and the gnawing realization that time is not on his side, he is openly friendly towards those who respect the ocean and is always willing to take time out of his daily routine to chat. Although he sometimes finds his mundane duties tiring, he never complains. His nickname, "the whale," refers to his ability to hold his breath, not to his physical frame.

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

Skills: Boating d10, Climbing d6, Faith d10, Fighting d6, Guts d8, Healing d6, Investigation d10, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Knowledge (Area: the seas) d10, Knowledge (Folklore) d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Survival d6, Swimming d10

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Hindrances: Anemic, Lame (arthritis of the knees), Loyal

Edges: Alchemy, Arcane Background (Miracles), Disciple of Neorthe

Languages: Anari, Chalcian, Classical Anari, Trader

Powers: *Bolt, boost/lower trait* (Boating and Swimming only), *environmental protection* (water only), *healing*, *mend, water walk*

Gear: Blessed robes (+1), long spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1), holy symbol

PEG-LEG PENGELLY

Pengelly was born in Byhaven to a family of seamen, and the sea runs thick though his veins. He got his first trip at sea when he was eight, serving as a drummer marking time. When he turned 14, he signed on as a full member of the crew and began his long career aboard ship, visiting such lands as Angmark, the Magocracy, Vestmark, Midmark, and even the Al-Shirkuh desert realms to the south. When the captain retired some years later, Pengelly assumed his post. He proved a fair leader, willing to reward his men for work well done and punish them for infringement of the sea laws.

His career ended during a storm off Alantaris Isle. At the storm's height, the mast broke and fell to the deck, crushing one of his legs. The ship's carpenter was forced to remove it to save Pengelly's life, and on his return to Chalcis, Pengelly handed in his captaincy.

Pengelly could not purge the sea from his blood and for a while acted as a shipbuilder in Shapryr, but he was not happy. After much deliberation he returned home to live out his remaining years. Pengelly serves the community as a brewer and watches over the ale-house, attending to guests' needs and sorting out any troublemakers with a swift blow from the club he always has tucked into his belt.

Pengelly is a typical old sea dog, using colorful phrases that offend those with sensitive manners and telling tall tales to those eager to hear stories of foreign lands. He misses his days at sea, but has come to accept his fate. Strangers asking about his leg are told various fish stories, including losing it to an orc's axe, being bitten by a giant shark, leaving it as a gift for a mermaid, and losing it in a high stakes dice game. None are true, of course.

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

Skills: Boating d8, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Knowledge (Craft: Brewing) d8, Knowledge (Folklore)

d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Swimming d8, Taunt d6
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)
Hindrances: One Leg, Quirk (never tells a story the same way twice)
Edges: Block, Command, Quick
Languages: Chalcian, Saxa, Trader
Gear: Club (str+d4), wooden leg

KARL GUSTAVSUNU (AKA LEIF ULFSUNU)

Karl Gustavsunu, the exciseman assigned to the village of Byhaven, has a dark secret—he is not really Karl Gustavsunu! The man the locals believe to be Karl Gustavsunu is really a smuggler by the name of Leif Ulfsunu who murdered the real Karl Gustavsunu and assumed his identity.

Leif began life as a farmer's son in Angmark but soon realized life as a tiller of the earth was pretty dull. When he was thirteen, he came upon a traveler being sought by excisemen. Noticing the man had hastily dumped a pouch in the nearby bushes; Leif surreptitiously took the pouch and kept it safe until the excisemen had gone, whereupon he returned the pouch to the traveler. The traveler, the leader of a band of smugglers, was so impressed by Leif he offered him a job. Leif accepted without hesitation and he now runs his own gang.

Leif is dedicated to his job as a smuggler and will never betray his comrades. Although Leif has a very good Chalcian accent, when angry, his Saxa accent comes back.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Boating d8, Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Riding d6, Stealth d8, Taunt d8
Charisma: –2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (2)
Hindrances: Greedy (Minor), Mean, Vengeful (Major)
Edges: Combat Reflexes, Improved Frenzy, Level Headed, Strong Willed
Languages: Chalcian, Saxa, Trader
Alchemical Devices: *Potion of healing* (cures one wound), *potion of speed* (cast with a raise), *oil of smite* (cast with a raise), three short sticks imbued with *light*
Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), medium shield (+1 Parry), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), lantern

CITIZEN

The citizens of Byhaven work and live with the ocean. The men are fisherfolk, spending much of their time at sea, while the women mend nets, smoke fish, burn kelp, and raise children. All men are members of the militia.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d4, Guts d4, Knowledge (one Craft) d6, Notice d6
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4/5; **Toughness:** 5
Edges & Hindrances: —
Gear: Knife or club (Str+d4). If the militia is summoned, they are equipped with short spears (Str+d6, Reach 1) and small shields (+1 Parry)

SAILOR

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8
Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d4, Guts d6, Notice d6, Swimming d6
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4/5; **Toughness:** 6
Hindrances: Loyal
Edges: —
Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), 50% have a long spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands)

AVATAR OF CARCHARAS

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12+8, Vigor d12
Skills: Fighting d12, Intimidation d12+2, Notice d10, Stealth d6
Pace: —; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 16
Special Abilities:
* **Aquatic:** Pace 12.
* **Bite:** Str+d12, AP 4. Heavy Weapon.
* **Blood Frenzy:** Once there's a significant amount of blood in the water (usually one wound), the avatar goes into frenzy and adds +2 to its attacks and damage for the rest of the fight.
* **Chew:** The avatar does not roll a bonus 1d6 damage if it scores a raise on its Fighting roll against foes of Size +3 or smaller. Instead, it has taken them into its maw. Victims are at –4 to any physical rolls while inside the creature's mouth. Each round, the victim automatically takes Str+d12 damage. Until the victim is spat out, escapes (requires an opposed Strength roll), or slain (the remains are swallowed as a free action), the avatar cannot use its bite attack.
* **Fair Game:** If the ritual was successfully concluded (because the party took too long to reach the summoning chamber), the avatar does *not* have this ability. Otherwise, the avatar attacks the nearest creature, whether player character or kreana, each round.
* **Fear (–2):** Anyone seeing the avatar must make a Guts roll at –2. The kreana are immune to this effect.
* **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
* **Gargantuan:** Heavy Armor. Attacks against them by man-size creatures are made at +4.
* **Hardy:** Successive Shaken results to not cause a wound.
* **Size +8:** The avatar is over 60' long.

BITING INSECT SWARM

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.
* **Mindless:** Unaffected by Tests of Will, Tricks, or arcane powers like *puppet*.
* **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. This swarm is foiled by jumping in water.

BUFOM

WARRIOR

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Swimming d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 4
Gear: Crude long spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands, see below).
Special Abilities:
* **Bound:** A bufom can leap 1d6+2" in a straight line to attack with +2 to its Fighting roll and +2 to damage.
* **Croak:** If a bufom takes no other actions in a round, including moving, it can emit a deafening croak. Place the thin end of a Cone Template in front of the bufom. All creatures within the Template must make a Spirit roll or be Shaken.
* **Crude Spear:** If a bufom rolls a 1 on his Fighting die, he has damaged his spear. The spear's damage die is reduced one step. Below a d4, the spear has shattered, leaving the bufom holding a few bits of stick.
* **Rotating Eyes:** The eyes of a bufom sit on top of their head, and can swivel to see behind them. They reduce Gang-Up bonuses against them by one.
* **Semi-Aquatic:** Bufomi can hold their breath for 5 minutes.
* **Size –1:** Bufomi stand 4' tall.

SHAMAN

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Climbing d6, Faith d8, Fighting d4, Guts d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Swimming d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4
Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles)
Gear: Crude long spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands, see below).
Special Abilities:
* **Croak:** If a bufom takes no other actions in a round, including moving, it can emit a deafening croak. Place the thin end of a Cone Template in front of the bufom. All creatures within the Template must make a Spirit roll or be Shaken.
* **Crude Spear:** If a bufom rolls a 1 on his Fighting die, he has damaged his spear. The spear's damage die is reduced one step. Below a d4, the spear has shattered, leaving the bufom holding a few bits of stick.
* **Powers:** Shamans know the following spells: *beast friend* (amphibians only), *boost/lower trait* (Stealth and Swimming), *entangle* (long, sticky tongue), *knockdown* (croak), *leaping, summon herald* (a giant toad).
* **Rotating Eyes:** The eyes of a bufom sit on top of their head, and can swivel to see behind them. They reduce Gang-Up bonuses against them by one.
* **Semi-Aquatic:** Bufomi can hold their breath for 5 minutes.
* **Size –1:** Bufomi stand 4' tall.

GREAT WHITE SHARK

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+4, Vigor d12
Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8, Notice d12
Pace: —; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 12
Special Abilities:
* **Aquatic:** Pace 10.
* **Bite:** Str+d8.
* **Feeding Frenzy:** Once there's a significant amount of blood in the water (usually one wound), all the sharks present go into a feeding frenzy and add +2 to their attacks and damage for the rest of the fight.
* **Hardy:** A second Shaken result does not cause a wound.
* **Large:** Attackers add +2 to their attack rolls when attacking a great white, due to its large size.
* **Size +4:** Great whites can grow up to 25' in length.

GRINDYLOW

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6
Special Abilities:
* **Aquatic:** Pace 8.
* **Claws:** Str+d6, Reach 2.

HAVMAND (MERMAID)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Riddles) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Stealth d8, Taunt d8
Charisma: +4 to –4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6
Special Abilities:
* **Aquatic:** Pace 8.
* **Riddles:** Havmand love riddles, and receive a +2 bonus to Knowledge (Riddles) rolls.

KILLER WHALE (ORCA)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8(A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+4, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8, Notice d12
Pace: —; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 12
Special Abilities:
* **Bite:** Str+d6.
* **Large:** Attackers add +2 to their attack rolls when attacking orcas, due to their large size.
* **Semi-Aquatic:** Pace 10. Orcas can stay submerged for about 10 minutes.
* **Size +5:** Orcas can grow up to 30' in length.

KREANA

HIGH PRIEST

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d10 Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Faith d10, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Stealth d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)
Hindrances: Bloodthirsty
Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Combat Reflexes, Level Headed
Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1)
Special Abilities:
* **Aquatic:** Pace 10.
* **Armor +1:** Scales.
* **Claws/Bite:** Str+d4.
* **Dehydration:** Kreana must immerse themselves in water (salt or fresh) at least one hour out of every 24. Those who do not are automatically Fatigued each day until they are Incapacitated. The day after that, they perish.
* **Powers:** *armor* (hardened scales), *bolt* (shark's teeth), *fatigue* (water in lungs), *healing, shape change* (sharks only), *smite* (bite only, increases size of teeth), *stun* (blast of water).

PRIEST

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d10 Strength d6, Vigor d8
Skills: Faith d10, Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Stealth d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (1)
Hindrances: Bloodthirsty
Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles)
Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1)
Special Abilities:
* **Aquatic:** Pace 10.
* **Armor +1:** Scales.
* **Claws/Bite:** Str+d4.
* **Dehydration:** Kreana must immerse themselves in water (salt or fresh) at least one hour out of every 24. Those who do not are automatically Fatigued each day until they are Incapacitated. The day after that, they perish.
* **Powers:** *bolt* (shark's teeth), *fatigue* (water in lungs), *healing, shape change* (sharks only), *smite* (bite only, increases size of teeth), *stun* (blast of water).

BLOOD RAGER

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)
Hindrances: Bloodthirsty
Gear: Barbed short spear (Str+d6+2, Reach 1)
Special Abilities:
* **Aquatic:** Pace 10.
* **Armor +1:** Scales.
* **Blood Frenzy:** A blood rager automatically goes Berserk (as per the Edge) when it inflicts a wound. While berserk it makes two Fighting attacks per round at no penalty and has +2 to recover from being Shaken.
* **Claws/Bite:** Str+d4.
* **Dehydration:** Kreana must immerse themselves in water (salt or fresh) at least one hour out of every 24. Those who do not are automatically Fatigued each day until they are Incapacitated. The day after that, they perish.

WARRIOR

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)
Hindrances: Bloodthirsty
Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1)
Special Abilities:
* **Aquatic:** Pace 10.
* **Armor +1:** Scales.
* **Claws/Bite:** Str+d4.
* **Dehydration:** Kreana must immerse themselves in water (salt or fresh) at least one hour out of every 24. Those who do not are automatically Fatigued each day until they are Incapacitated. The day after that, they perish.

MARSH ORM

Orms are non-flying dragons with animal intelligence (rather than the more human-like sentience of true dragons). They are much more aggressive in direct combat than their distant cousins, however. Marsh orms vary in color from dark green to black, vomit powerful acids, and are rarely encountered outside the stinking swamps they call home.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d10, Strength d12+6, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d12, Intimidation d12, Notice d8
Pace: 4; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 17 (4)
Special Abilities:
* **Armor +4:** Scaly hide.
* **Breath Weapon:** Orms attack by spraying acid in a Cone Template. Every target within this cone may make an Agility roll at –2 to avoid the attack. The orm may not attack with its claws or bite in the same round it sprays acid. Damage is 3d6, AP 2.
* **Claws/Bite:** Str+d8.
* **Fear:** Orms are frightening creatures to behold.
* **Large:** Attackers add +2 to their attack rolls when attacking an orm, due to its large size.
* **Size +5:** Orms are over 20' long from snout to tail, and weigh in at over 3000 pounds.
* **Tail Lash:** An orm can sweep all opponents in its rear facing in a 3" long by 6" wide rectangle. This is a standard Fighting attack, and damage is d12+4.

TOAD, GIANT

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 10
Special Abilities:
* **Bite:** Str+d6.
* **Engulf:** Giant toads can swallow prey as large as Size +1 whole. While engulfed, the target is at –4 to all Trait rolls and damage. He suffers 2d6 damage per round from powerful digestive juices. (Armor offers no protection, except through the *armor* spell.)
* **Large:** Attackers are +2 to attack rolls against the toad, due to its size.
* **Size +4:** Giants toads weigh over 2,000 pounds.
* **Tongue:** Reach 3. The tongue is coated in sticky saliva. If the toad scores a success on its Fighting roll, it has grappled its prey. Unless the target can escape before the toad's next action, it is drawn into the toad's mouth and Engulfed. On a raise, the victim is grappled and Engulfed in the same action.

HANDOUT #1

LOOKOUTS WANTED

THE PRIESTHOOD OF NEORTHE SEEKS BRAVE SOULS WITH KEEN EYES

TO SCOUR THE COAST OF CHALCIS BETWIXT SACROS

AND THE BORDER WITH THE MISTLANDS

FOR A MISSING LONGSHIP

WHICH DEPARTED ANGMARK LONG SINCE.

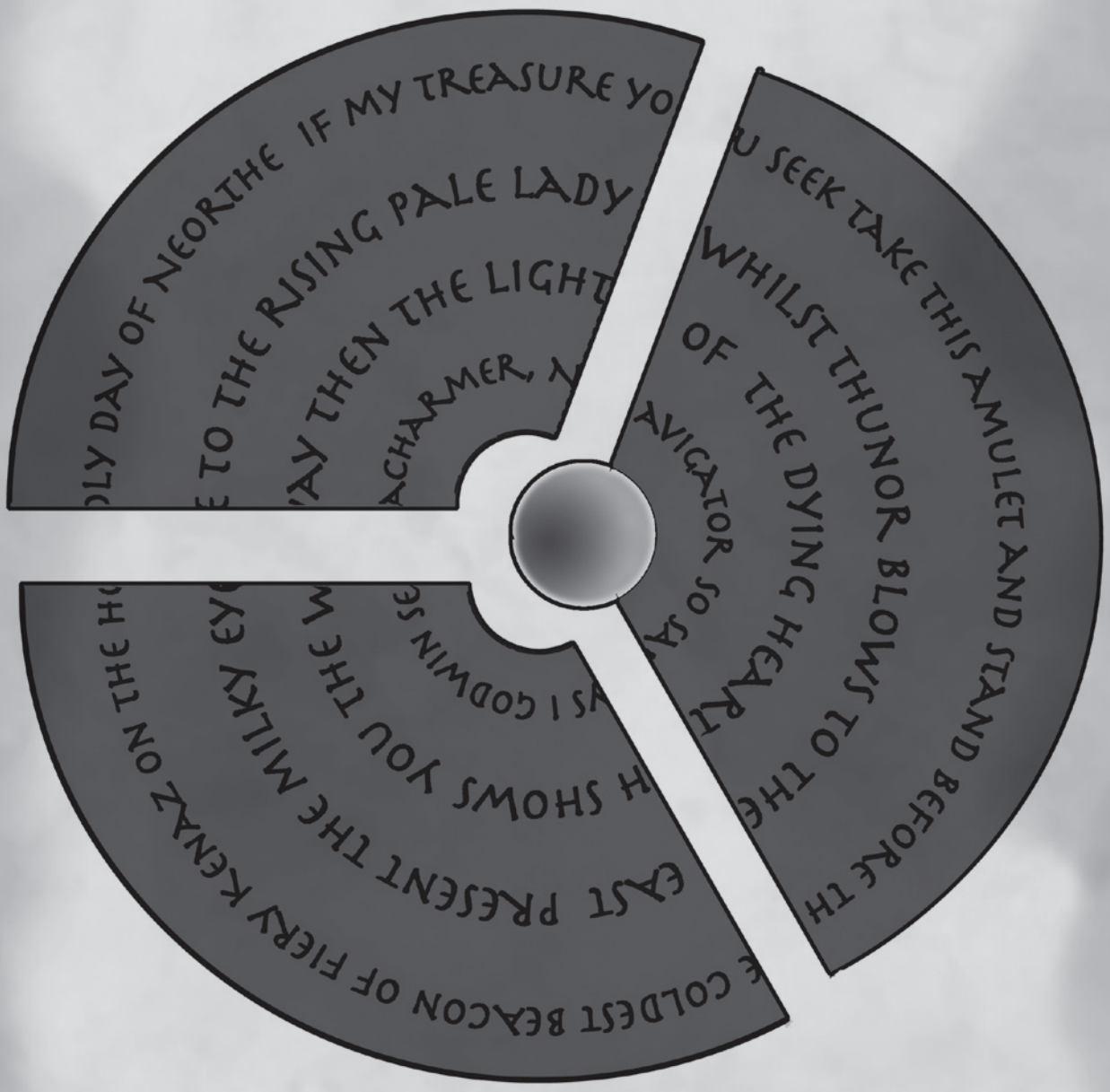
INTERESTED PARTIES SHOULD CONTACT THE LOCAL TEMPLE OR SHRINE

OF NEORTHE AND ASK FOR MORE DETAILS.

A REWARD OF 500 GOLD SCIELDS IS POSTED FOR

INFORMATION LEADING TO THE DISCOVERY OF THE LONGSHIP.

HANDOUT #2


DLY DAY OF NEORTHE IF MY TREASURE YO
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WHILST THUNOR BLOWS TO THE
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COLDEST BEACON OF FIERY KENAZ ON THE H
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AS I GODWIN SE

HANDOUT #3

My name is Godwin Seacharmer, Navigator and faithful son of Neorthe unto death and into the next world. Unless the gods seek to prolong my life unduly, I shall die in the year 289 IR in the village of Byhaven. If my bones you have found, you are either most fortunately blessed or you are searching for a way to stem the Blood Tide. Take heart, for your quest is at an end.

Take a map and draw a line from Byhaven to Leirvik and from Estvik to Sacros. One hundred fathoms from where the lines cross, beneath the storm-wracked sea, lay the ruins of a city long forgotten.

Herein dwell the monstrous race known as kreana, hateful of surface-dwellers for some ancient scorn. Here shall begin the Blood Tide. Here shall begin the scourge of the oceans.

Make haste, for divinations prior to my death revealed that mere days shall pass from the time my bones are found to when the seas run red with endless blood.

May the ferryman guide my soul unto Neorthe.

Godwin Seacharmer, Navigator

$9.99 31068

The Time of the Prophecy Nears!

Literally hundreds of prophecies were made during the Blizzard War.

One such prophecy was in regards to "The Blood Tide."

Written down in fragments by a priest of Neorthe, it told of the sea turning red with blood, a monstrous force which would drive the races from the oceans, and an unstoppable tide surging from the sea to devour those who dwelt on the coast. It told of other events which would signal the beginning of the prophecy, events which at the time made no sense. Now, over five centuries later, the pieces of the puzzle are finally falling into place.

All that stands between destruction and victory is a small band of heroes.

Triple Ace Games present *The Blood Tide*. A Hellfrost adventure for the award-winning Savage Worlds RPG.

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31072

Paul 'Wiggy' Wade-Williams

HELLFROST

TALES OF DARKNESS

RANK • HEROIC

OFFICIAL SAVAGE WORLDS LICENSED PRODUCT

TALES OF DARKNESS

BY PAUL "WIGGY" WADE-WILLIAMS

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THE DARK NIGHT

This adventure is designed for a group of four Heroic 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.

Scaling for higher Ranks is easily handled. For each additional 20 XPs the party is above Heroic, add two additional Extras of the most common type to each detailed encounter. For instance, if the text says the heroes face one skeleton warrior per hero, a Legendary (80 XP) party of four members would face six skeletons (four because of the party size plus two for being a Rank higher than Veteran).

The adventure can be set in the Hearthlands or Low Winterlands, but must be run while snow lies on the ground. 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.

GM'S BACKGROUND

Long, long ago, shortly before the Liche-Priest was imprisoned and the remnants of his once great army crushed, there lived a powerful priestess of Hela by the name of Helfrith Helasdohtor. Perhaps only second to the Liche-Priest in her devotion to the dark goddess, Helfrith terrorized the Hearthlands while her master held sway in what is now the Low Winterlands.

Helfrith was slain not long after the Liche-Priest fell, but whereas many of her comrades' corpses were burnt by the clergy of Scaetha, Helfrith's corpse was spirited away by her remaining servants and buried in secret. Hela was quick to claim Helfrith's soul when it reached Scaetha's Hall, for such was her right, and not even Scaetha could deny her this privilege.

Most followers of Hela are condemned to eternal existence as a skeleton or zombie, a near-mindless servitor, but Helfrith was one of the chosen elite, one of the few who had earned true immortality. Hela sent her priestess' soul back to the mortal world, into her own lifeless body. Yet Helfrith had no "unlife," for Hela knew the soldiers of her enemies were strong, and that to awaken Helfrith too soon would be a waste of resources. So Hela bound the cleric to sleep away the centuries until she was needed.

The sigils warding the Liche-Priest's tomb are weakening. When they fail, the great evil will once again be unleashed onto the unsuspecting world. In preparation for this second coming of darkness, Hela has stirred Helfrith from her dreamless sleep.

ENTER THE HEROES

The characters are staying with a stead owner by the name of Thegn Amundi Vagnsunu. Depending on the needs of the individual campaign, Thegn Amundi may be a hero's liege, an ally, a family friend or kinsman, or simply a stranger who knows of the mighty heroes and has invited them to his stead as honored guests. The party arrived at the nobleman's demesne the night before the adventure begins, and were greeted warmly.

A HUNTING WE WILL GO

The morning is cold and crisp. Fresh snow lies on the ground, but the sky is currently clear and visibility is good. Thegn Amundi has arranged a great feast in honor of his notable guests and to honor Ullr, his patron god. As befits your status as heroes, Amundi has invited you to participate in the hunt.

Saxa tradition is quite strict when it comes to hunting. Spears must be used against wild boar (though these may be long or short), and bows against rabbits and deer. Only leather armor may be worn—shields are not permitted. Magic may only be used by clerics of Ullr during the slaying of the prey beast, though it may also be employed to help track down suitable prey.

Characters lacking suitable weapons and armor are supplied from the thegn's armory. Adventurers who in-

sist on wearing other types of armor, or carrying other weapons, are ridiculed for their lack of knowledge and scorned for the insult they do their host. If they insist on breaking the rules of etiquette, they lose 3 Glory.

Once the heroes are suitably attired, the hunt begins. The hunters are divided into several small groups. Today, the characters are hunting together. Accompanying them are two local men, Wiglaf and Sigmar. As mere farmers, they are forbidden from actively hunting, so they are present only to supply local area knowledge and carry any animals the heroes take down.

There are eight hours of good light available. Thegn Amundi, ken to ensure no harm befalls his guests, orders that all hunters be back at the stead before Sigel rests for the night. The hunt is to take place in the local forest, Amundi's private hunting reserve. Snowshoes or skis, whichever the heroes prefer, are provided if necessary.

THE HUNT

A hunt comprises three steps, each of which must be accomplished in order:

The first step requires a Cooperative Survival roll to locate suitable prey. This involves hunting for spoor and animal trails, clear signs that animals are in the vicinity. It also serves to alert the hunters to any predators that may be nearby. With success, the characters may proceed to the next step. On a failure, they waste an hour but may make the Survival roll again.

The second step requires a Cooperative Tracking roll. Because of the recent snowfall, this roll is made at +2. Success means the party has located fresh tracks and may give chase. They come across their quarry in two hours. On a raise, they manage to track down their prey in just one hour. As before, a failed roll wastes an hour but allows a retry.

The GM should now draw a card from the action deck. On a Club, the characters are trailing a hare, rabbit, or similar small game animal. On a Diamond, they are hunting a small deer. A Heart puts them on the track of a large deer, such as a reindeer or moose. On a Spade, they are hunting a wild boar.

Step three brings the hunters into range of their prey. Each hunter who wishes to go for the kill must make a Stealth roll. Wiglaf and Sigmar stay well back, so as not to ruin the hunters' chances. They politely suggest anyone not skilled in moving quietly does the same, for prey animals are notoriously skittish and possess excellent senses. This is opposed by a single Notice roll from the prey. Check the results below.

* If the prey beats the roll of *any* hunter, it detects the party first and flees. The initial range is 30" and the animal gains Heavy Cover (–4) from the trees. Use the Chase rules as required if the party pursues.

* If the prey fails to beat any Stealth roll, the hunters creep undetected into killing range. Those who scored at least a 4 and beat the creature's Notice roll close to 20" and gain the Drop, but the creature has Medium Cover (–2). Those who beat the prey's roll with a raise close to 12" and gain the Drop and a clear shot.

Wounded rabbits and deer immediately flee, forcing the hunters to give chase. Use the regular Chase rules. The forest counts as Rough Obstacles. Characters not wearing suitable footwear, or lacking suitable Edges, suffer the effects of difficult ground in the snow.

THE FEAST

As the sun begins to dip, Wiglaf and Sigmar suggest the party returns home—Amundi's orders were quite specific, and as the heroes are the guests of honor at the feast that evening, it would shame their host if they were to return late. Once the game is delivered, Wiglaf and Sigmar say their farewells. They must return to their steads, but will see the heroes at the feast.

If the party caught plentiful game, Amundi and his court heap praise upon them for providing such a banquet when they are the guests. A handful of small game leads to polite taunting about the prowess of the great hunters, with good-natured comments such as "Rabbits must be tougher than giants in these parts!" and "At least they catered for the women and children!" bandied about at the heroes expense.

Within a few hours, the animals have been prepared and are roasting on spits over the great hearth. As befits their station, the characters are seated at the high table, along with Amundi, his wife (Hilda), and two visiting haulds (Aelfric Cadwallasunu and Olaf Pig-Nose) who owe allegiance to the heroes' host.

Should the characters search out Sigmar and Wiglaf, only Sigmar is present. If questioned about his companion, Sigmar replies that Wiglaf has a newborn child, and may be delayed.

The feast itself is inconsequential to the plot, though that does not mean the GM should ignore the opportunity for roleplaying. The GM should roll once on the Ally Personalities table for each character and run a small roleplaying interlude. Some examples are given below. In most cases the GM can simply choose how the NPC feels about the hero, but sometimes it is fun to use the Reaction table and ad lib as required:

Creative: The NPC is a skald and tells a story about the hero. Check on the Reaction table (the skald has +1 Charisma). On a result of Uncooperative or Hostile, his tale is offensive to the character. Perhaps it accuses him of cowardice, compares him to a less than popular folk hero, or otherwise besmirches his good name. The character loses 1 Glory from the ridicule. A Neutral result results in an honest, though hardly glorious song. A Friendly or Helpful result means the tale praises the adventurer, enhancing his reputation through slight exaggerations (but no lies). The characters gains +1 Glory.

Crude: An attractive but extremely crude NPC turns their attentions to a hero. It might a powerful berserker out to "woo" a female hero, or a young noblewoman with few social mores. Alternatively, the NPC may hit on another NPC who does not enjoy their advances. They

may call on the hero to help them. Or perhaps the crude soul simply begins singing embarrassing songs or telling rude jokes, thus ruining the jovial mood of the feast.

Cowardly: A boastful but cowardly NPC begins talking big about his exploits. If challenged, he quickly backs down, possibly resenting the hero in the process.

Experienced: A huscarl enquirers as to the hero's previous adventures. The NPC has some war stories of his own, though none compare to the character's exploits. Still, it is possible a friendship could develop.

Fearless: A huscarl, possibly a berserk, squares up to the character and claims his boasts are the words of a fool. If the hero backs down, the NPC continues to ridicule the character throughout the feast—the NPC is a bully at heart. If the character stands his ground, the NPC may either start a fight (not uncommon at Saxa feasts) or clap the hero on the back and declare him a friend for life.

After running two encounters, a huscarl enters the great hall, his heavy cloak covered in snow. He walks up to Amundi and whispers quietly in his ear. Amundi nods and whispers something back. Only if questioned as to what is occurring does Amundi inform the heroes.

"It is nothing to trouble you about," Amundi smiles. "The night has turned foul, for a blizzard has started. The huscarl, a captain in my guard, sought permission to light the braziers and increase the watch, for on such nights orcs prowl these lands."

Continue with the remaining NPC interludes. Shortly after the last one ends, the doors to the great hall crash open. The huscarl captain enters, ushering a woman before him. Amid cries and grumbles, he slams shut the doors on the wintry night and escorts the woman straight to Amundi, brushing aside curious guests who stand in his path.

"My lord," he says hurriedly. "This is Sexburh, daughter of Ine Cuthbertsunu, who owns the stead a few miles north."

Amundi nods sagely. "I know who she is. I knew her father well and knew her as a young girl. Now she has grown to a fine woman, and mother of a newborn named in my honor. What ails thee, Sexburh, that you travel to my hall on a foul night such as this?"Sexburh drops to one knee, but her gaze does not waiver from Amundi's. "My lord," she whispers hoarsely, choking back tears, "my husband, Wiglaf, has failed to return from the hunt you organized earlier. The weather has turned, and I fear for his safety."

Amundi rises quickly to his feet. "Who did Wiglaf aid this day?"

This is the heroes' cue to answer, for there is only one Wiglaf in the community. Last they saw of him, he was planning to return home after helping bring back the game. That was several hours ago. No one else has seen Wiglaf since.

Amundi immediately summons his huscarls and orders all able-bodied men to gather their cloaks, skis, and spears. As the men rush to comply, the women grab bundles of torches from storage places and light handfuls of them in the hearth.

"Thrym may well be roaring tonight," Amundi barks, "but Wiglaf is kith and kin to us, and we shall not desert him. Split up into small groups and comb the lands. You," he says pointing to a group of men, "leave from here along the route Wiglaf would have taken home. You," he gestures toward you, "take the north edge of the woods, along the ridge—Wiglaf may have detoured to collect firewood if he saw the storm brewing."

Other groups are similarly appointed search areas. Within minutes, everyone begins filing outside, torches flickering wildly in the strong winds.

The driving snow is blinding and the wind biting. The temperature is one level lower than the standard nighttime temperature for the geographic region. In addition, each character must make a Vigor roll at –2 as they ski up to the ridge.

THE MOUNDS

An hour into the search, the characters stumble up onto the north ridge. The blizzard has concealed any tracks. All that can be seen are the dark outlines of the trees and a series of high mounds. If the party heads into the trees have them make another Vigor roll at –2 after an hour of searching—they find nothing of significance.

On inspecting the mounds, however, the characters discover one of them is open, revealing a stone-lined passage. It also faces away from the wind, providing limited shelter from the gale. Lying in the snow outside is a stone slab engraved with Auld Saxa runes on what would have been the *inside* face. A Notice roll reveals that it fits the mound's opening and has been removed only recently—there is little accumulation on it, despite snow having fallen for many hours now. Calling into the dark passage elicits no response.

The writing on the slab reads, *"Helfrith Helasdohtor. She rests here in Hela's dark embrace until called upon to serve."* Any hero making a successful Knowledge (History) roll at –2, or Knowledge (Folklore) roll at –4 has heard of Helfrith. She was a powerful priestess of Hela, slain toward the end of the Liche-Priest's reign by paladins of Scaetha.

INSIDE THE MOUND

The mound is an old burial tomb. Like most barrows,

it is basically a barrel-shaped hill with a stone slab for a doorway. The interior takes the form of three chambers branching off from a small, circular chamber.

Left Chamber: This chamber contains a large stone slab bearing a skeleton. The skeleton obviously belonged to a very large person, perhaps nine feet tall in their woolen socks. A successful Common Knowledge roll deduces the bones are very old but do not belong to a human. A raise reveals they are those of an ogre. The skeleton has a ring on the middle finger of its left hand, which is worth 300 gs. Apart from a few very mangy furs, there is little else of interest here.

The ogre was Helfrith's faithful companion. He chose to be buried alongside her so she could animate him on her return.

Right Chamber: This chamber contains an old chest and some scroll cases. The old chest can be opened by one good hit with a weapon (Toughness 8) or with a Lockpicking roll at +1 (due to the archaic and simple lock). Inside are several necklaces, some rings, and a coronet. The whole lot is worth 1,750 gold scields but weighs 10 pounds. A Common Knowledge roll at –2 reveals this style of metalworking has not been used since the Blizzard War. The scrolls crumble to dust when opened, no matter how carefully the party is.

Top Chamber: The top chamber contains a stone slab with something lying upon it, hidden under a funeral shroud. Resting by it is a large suit of rotting leather armor, a worm-eaten 2-handed boar spear, a rusted broadsword, and a round shield emblazoned with a grinning skull. Unlike the other objects, the shield is in perfect condition. Lying at the base of the bier is Wiglaf. A quick check reveals his neck has been snapped.

The shield is a permanent relic. Anyone inspecting it sees it has Hela's holy symbol engraved on the inside. The relic allows anyone attuned to invoke *fear* with a d8 Faith skill. If the user has Hela as a patron deity, the casting roll is made at +2.

Anyone removing the funeral shroud sees the tomb's occupant—a draugr! Do not forget to ask for Guts checks.

> *Beneath the shroud lies the bloated body of what you assume was once a woman. Her skin looks badly bruised and is virtually black in color. Streaks of yellow fat show between some of the muscles. Lank strands of blonde hair cling to the scalp. Her nails are long and dirty and look quite sharp. Suddenly the woman's eyes open and a low moan emits from her shriveled lips. She begins to stir.*

Unless the party has encountered a draugr before, it takes a Knowledge (Folklore or appropriate Monsters) roll to identify the creature. If the heroes decide not to pull the shroud away, Helfrith awakens by herself before they leave her tomb.

Given the standard reaction of most characters to seeing a monster appear before them, a fight will break out at this point. Unfortunately, Helfrith cannot be harmed at this stage. The heroes' best plan is to run away across country and seek help.

CHASED BY THE DAMNED

When the group finally flees, run this scene as a Chase. Outside, the blizzard has eased, and it is now late into the night. The full moon and clear sky provides Dim lighting (–1).

Each round, the characters must make Agility rolls. Those without skis or snowshoes suffer a –2 penalty, in addition to any other modifiers, because of the deep, fresh-lying snow. Anyone who goes Out of Control suffers a further –2 penalty to their next Agility roll—do not roll on the Out of Control table.

Each Range Increment equates to 5". The party begins three Range Increments ahead of the draugr (who suffers no penalties from the snow) if they flee the instant she awakens, but just one Range Increment if they withdraw from a fight.

Note that the time interval between rolls is not 6 seconds—the Chase represents an hour of frantic skiing or running, not just a few minutes. Essentially, the rolls are snapshots in time, not a continuous sequence. For ease, the usual rules of actions that can be taken each "round" still apply—there is nothing the heroes can do to harm Helfrith, anyway.

Unlike other chases, this one uses fixed obstacles, representing the route. Lay out 14 markers. Mark the Range Increments of note (see below) with a different color marker to help you remember that something occurs at these points.

On any round Helfrith is within one Range Increment of a hero, she tries a Parallel maneuver at –2 as she tries to close to melee range. With success, she may make a single Fighting attack with a multi-action penalty.

Encounter 1 (7th marker): The characters reach a low fence. They have a choice–stop and climb over or try to jump the fence using a snow mound as a ramp.

Stopping is the safe option, but it costs time. The character's movement for the round ends immediately, regardless of how many Range Increments his Agility roll allowed him to move. Next round, he makes an Agility roll as normal. Success or raise, he moves just *one* position. Pushing grants additional distance as normal, but increases the risk of failure.

Jumping is faster but riskier. The hero makes an Agility roll (a free action) at –2 (those without winter footwear suffer that penalty on top). With success, the hero clears the fence. If his initial Agility roll allowed for more movement, then he keeps moving. For instance, a hero scored a raise on his initial Agility roll, allowing him two Range Increments of movement. After moving one Increment, he reaches the fence, which he elects to jump.

With success, he clears the fence and takes his second Range Increment of movement.

A failure means the hero pulled up short. On the next round, he may climb over or try a second jump. A critical failure means the hero slams into the fence and becomes entangled. It takes a Strength roll (as an action) to free himself. Until he does, he cannot progress further.

Helfrith runs through the fence (literally) without being slowed.

Encounter 2 (9th & 10th marker): On both these increments, the heroes are moving through a copse. A failed Agility roll means a hero slams into a tree and is automatically Shaken.

Encounter 4 (12th marker): The heroes spy a small fire in the near distance. All that separates them from apparent safety is a wide gorge half-filled with snow. Do they take the safe route or take to the air? Heroes without skis *must* take the safe route. Helfrith is similarly impaired, and so must use the slow route.

The safe route requires the hero to stop, clamber down the sides, and carefully ski over the gorge. This takes two rounds, during which they gain no distance. They may roll as normal on the third round after entering the gorge.

If they decide to jump over the gorge whilst skiing they must make a successful Agility roll at –2. If the roll fails, the skier fails to hit the right snowdrift and slams into the chasm's far wall for 2d6 damage. He must spend the next round climbing out. A critical failure causes a more severe impact for 3d6 damage.

FIRE IN THE NIGHT

With the gorge behind them, the characters can now see that the fire comes from the centre of a stone area some yards ahead. Reaching it requires the heroes to move onto the last marker. Only then can they clearly make out any details.

At one end of the stones is an altar of some kind made of stacked stones. A large ash tree, grimly decorated with decaying animal heads, stands nearby. By the fire, which burns in the center of the flagstone floor, is the figure of a man. He is moving his hands, but you cannot tell what he is doing. Strangely, there is no snow on the stones or the tree.

Helfrith stops at the edge of the stones and howls aggressively. She then slinks off into the night. The stones are sacred ground to Scaetha, and the man is a priest of Scaetha. The sanctified precinct is protected by a powerful *warding* spell, which keeps the draugr at bay. Once the characters are all within the paved area, the chase ends.

The man ignores any calls from the heroes, even if they mention the draugr hot on their tail. For each hero that steps on the stone floor, a misty figure manifests before them. It takes the form of a large man wearing a wolf skin cloak. The figure is semi-translucent, its face contorted into a terrible grimace. It reaches out to strike them with its large axe. The battle that ensues exists only within the target's mind (even though actual physical combat stats are used). Friends only perceive those being attacked shaking and sweating uncontrollably.

These are guardian spirits that are attempting to possess the party members. Each spirit attacks for four rounds (at which time the figure by the fire calls them off), or until it possesses a character. If the characters reach the temple ahead of the draugr but fail to enter, the draugr will eventually catch up and attack.

Ⓜ **Berserk Spirit (1 per hero):** See page 314.

THE PRIEST

Once four rounds have passed, the man releases the characters from combat by commanding the spirits to leave, but refuses to exorcise any spirits possessing characters. Indeed, he informs them the spirits now housed in their bodies may be of assistance later. He asks the party who they are and what they are doing on Scaetha's sacred ground. The priest, who identifies himself as Corneus One-Eye, listens to their story. Assuming they tell him of their plight, the priest replies:

The priest nods into the darkness. "That creature is a draugr, one of Hela's most vile servants, but it is no ordinary member of its fell kind, for in life it was Helfrith Helasdohtor, a powerful priestess, perhaps second only to the Liche-Priest himself. So powerful is she, that Hela has granted her special protection.

"Helfrith cannot be slain by standard methods. She must be called using a specific chant. I have consulted with Scaetha, and she has guided us. A half mile from this temple is the remains of a sacred area, once used by Hela's cultists. It was raided by clerics of my order in days past, but among their records may still lie the information you seek."

Given that the priest honors Scaetha, the heroes may enquire as to why he does not go and find the information himself.

"Much must be done before this night is over. The Norns have brought you here for a reason, and that reason is to locate the chant to summon the draugr. My role is to prepare the ritual battlefield so she may be defeated. If either of us fails in our appointed tasks, the whole of Rassilon may be endangered. Rest here by the fire if you require, but do not tarry long, for by dawn, the draugr will be beyond the range of the chant and all will be lost.

"Whatever you do," the cleric continues, "on no circumstances must you utter the chant until you

I tell you. Return with all haste to this temple, whereupon I shall advise you further."

Once the party prepares to leave, a large black raven lands on the shoulder of one hero who has shown bravery in the past. It need not be the best fighter in the group—often those who lack combat skills display more bravery by leaping into battle. The raven whispers into his ear (pass the information secretly by note): *"You are the chosen one."* It then flies away.

THE TEMPLE OF EVIL

Following the priest's directions, the party finds the entrance to a cave after a short hike. The door lintel is decorated with carved stone skulls and a giant serpent. Skull symbols are long associated with temples of both Hela and Scaetha, but the snake symbol is not one the party has seen before.

Entering, the characters find themselves in an old temple to the goddess Hela carved into the side of a hill. Even though the site has been abandoned for centuries, it still reeks of death. The temple is unlit. Unless otherwise stated, ceilings are 12' high.

1) GUARDROOM

This room contains some broken stools and other bits of wood that are no longer of use to anyone. Two broken spears can be found if someone searches through the debris.

Treasure: Hanging from a hook is an oil lamp that looks remarkably new. It was left here by a hunter who sought shelter in the cave. Scared by strange sounds from deeper in, he fled, leaving his lamp. It has consumed its oil reservoir.

2) STOREROOM

This room is an old storehouse containing a stack of broken barrels and crates.

Monsters: Living here amid the debris is a very large, very hungry pack of rats. The rats nest here because the chamber provides shelter. Food is scarce, and the swarm is ravenous.

Ⓜ **Rat Swarm:** See page 314.

Tactics: Each round, the rats maneuver to catch as many characters in the template as possible. Fuelled by their hunger, they fight to the death. If a character falls unconscious at any point, the rats mass on the body, ripping and tearing the flesh. This counts as a Finishing Move.

3) ROUGH CAVERN

Hundreds of human skulls are stacked in three pyramid-shaped piles around the room. These grisly trophies are the remains of ancient sacrifices, left here as a warning to those who seek to intrude on the temple, and to show devotion to Hela. The exact age of the pile is impossible to guess, but judging by the mildew, it has been many decades, if not longer.

TALKING ANIMALS

While Wood Wardens and a few fey can talk with mundane animals, most mortals have no way to communicate with beasts. Even *beast friend* grants no ability to understand a beast, though it allows the spellcaster to control its actions. Several versions of *voice on the wind* allow animals to act as messengers, though in this instance it does not grant any conversational ability beyond recalling the message.

A rare few animals, however, can converse with the sentient races in their own languages. Typically, these are messengers of the gods or powerful fey nobles, imbued with limited intellect and often for a short duration. A very rare few animals possess the permanent ability to speak and understand human terms. These are always servants of some greater power. Most talking animals, however, are not capable of holding detailed conversations and are generally used to pass on simple missives to specific people.

One must also remember that despite being gifted with the ability to talk, they remain animals in all other ways. A squirrel, for instance, understands about trees, nuts, predators, and many forest animals, but it is very unlikely to use human names and terms. An oak may simply be known as a "harvest source," while a wild cat may be a "clawed terror."

Encountering a talking animal, while extremely rare and likely to rouse much interest from the local populace, is not considered frightening. Many legends tell of heroes guided or aided by talking beasts. That said, few citizens will ever converse with an animal directly in their lifetime or even meet someone who has.

Most talking animals use the stats for Small Animals from the *Hellfrost Bestiary*.

4) HOLDING CELL

Chained up to the wall is the skeleton of a large man wearing chain mail armor (now rusted through) and wearing a broadsword with a silver edge to it. The skeleton is harmless.

Treasure: The sword appears strong, but shatters through old age if the user rolls a 1 on his Fighting die (regardless of Wild Die). If the Wild Die is a success, it shatters after delivering damage.

5) ACOLYTE'S BURIAL CRYPT

A resting place for the honored dead of Scaetha's clergy awaiting resurrection in eternal unlife, the chamber is filled with stone biers, many standing in alcoves. Upon each bier, lies a skeleton clad in rotting black robes adorned in silver thread with Hela's holy symbol.

Monsters: Helfrith's awakening has already brought dark spirits into the fleshless corpses. For now, the bones stay at rest, awaiting one of two conditions—Helfrith's orders or the close proximity of living creatures.

Ⓜ **Skeleton Warriors (2 per hero):** See page 314.

Tactics: As soon as a hero moves adjacent to a bier, *all* the skeletons attack. Clambering off the biers is an action. Possessed by the spirits of evil warriors, the skeletons retain some tactical sense. As such, they use Gang Up bonuses against those who appear the strongest foes (those in heavy armor are favored targets), and spellcasters (who are their greatest threat).

Treasure: One of the skeletons, chosen at random, has a scroll case dangling from its belt. The scroll is a special form of relic, though the wielder need not attune. It details how to understand the speech of the damned, and was once used as a teaching aid for those loyal to the cult.

A hero who studies the scroll for the next month (two months if the reader spends time adventuring) may make a Smarts roll. With success, he learns Black Tongue. Only one hero at a time may study the script. Once used, whether the Smarts roll is a success or failure, the scroll turns to dust.

6) PRIESTESS' BURIAL CHAMBER

This room is an old burial crypt for priestesses. Lying on a black marble slab in the centre of the room is the rotten body of a woman wearing rusted chainmail armor under her robes and carrying a round shield and a hand axe.

7) TEMPLE OF HELA

Adorned with skulls and images of death, this chamber was once the main temple to Hela. The door to this temple has a pair of eyes carved into it. Close inspection reveals they were once stained red (by human blood). Apart from a bloodstained altar and gruesome carvings on the floor depicting scenes of sacrifice there is nothing here of any interest.

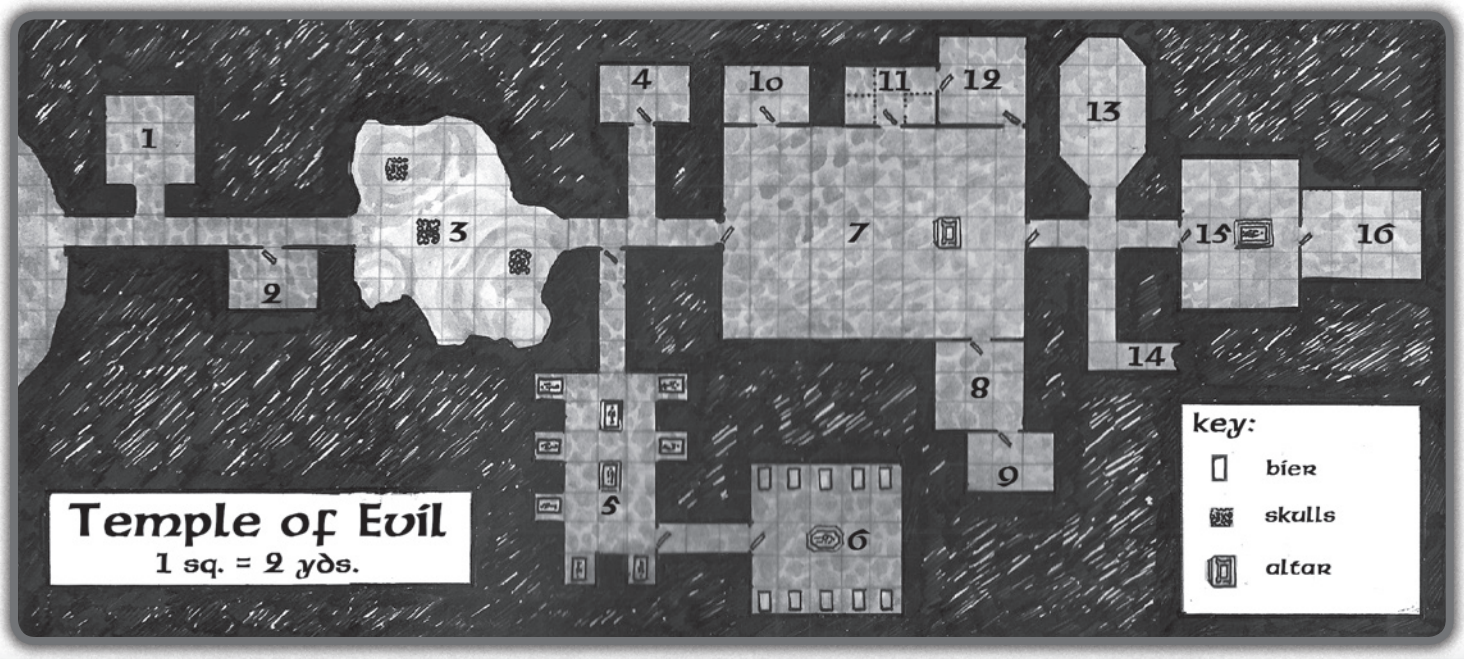
Monsters: Powerful spells were used in the consecration of this chamber and hundreds of victims sacrificed. The unfortunate souls selected and slain by the cult of Hela lie buried in great pits beneath the floor around the chamber.

After the party has been in here for one round, the undead guardians erupt through the floor. At the start of each subsequent round, 2d4 skeleton warriors crawl up from the charnel pits below. They appear in the squares adjacent to the altar. If all the spaces are filled, they emerge from the next free square. Leaving the temple prevents any more undead rising, but does not destroy those already summoned. There are a total of 100 skeletons in the pits of death.

Ⓜ **Skeleton Warriors (100):** See page 314.

Tactics: On the round a skeleton rises, it takes an action to claw its way from the pit. Once free, the skeletons immediately rush into combat, seeking to surround their foes and prevent their escape, thus allowing more of their kin to awaken. The undead warriors are not bound to the temple—if the party leaves, they follow.

8) PRIESTESS' BEDCHAMBER



Inside is a small wooden cot. Dismantling the cot reveals one of the legs is hollow.

Treasure: Contained inside the hollow bed leg are a scroll case and a small pendant. The scroll is written in Auld Saxa and details how to use blood in rituals. It acts as a tome of learning, allowing *any* spellcaster to learn the *sacrifice* power. The pendant is an alchemical device, imbued with *strength of the undead*. Invoking the spell grants the user the Undead Special Ability. A cleric of Sigel or Scaetha using this power has committed a minor sin.

9) TREASURY

All that remains is a lone chest. The rest of the treasure was either taken over the years or stolen by the occasional traveler who happened upon the temple and was brave enough to enter.

Treasure: The chest is unlocked. It contains 800 gold scields in old coins.

10) EMPTY CHAMBER

This room contains some old wooden stools placed around what was once a table.

11) SACRIFICES' PRISON

This was the old prison for those awaiting sacrifice. Inside are several cells with wooden bars. Within the cells are half a dozen normal skeletons. Nothing in here is dangerous or valuable.

12) TORTURE CHAMBER

A large, rusted brazier, two sets of leg irons, and some pokers lie scattered around the room. The ashes in the brazier are cold and there are bones mixed in with them. A successful Survival roll identifies the bone fragments as human.

Monsters: The spirits of the victims burnt in the brazier remain trapped here as grief spirits. If the party disturbs the ashes, the spirits rise up. They take the form they held in life, but their faces are wracked with anguish. Spectral tears constantly fall from their eyes. Each moan low the same words—*"Mourn us!"*

Ⓜ **Grief Spirits (1 per hero):** See page 314.

13) GRAIN STORE

This room contains 1d4 sealed crates of grain. Despite the age, some of the grain remains usable. A farmer would pay 200 gold scields for all four crates.

14) EXCAVATIONS

The former inhabitants began to dig out a new room, but quit before the work was completed. Spades and picks lie scattered around the floor. All of them are rotten and rusted, and quite useless.

15) ANCIENT CRYPT

This old crypt was here even before the temple existed. Inside is a marble slab. Lying atop the slab is a body, clad in plate armor of darkest night. A great sword rests along the length of its body.

Monsters: The armored corpse is a former paladin of Hela's cult. Helfrith's presence in the vicinity has awakened him as a black knight, one of Hela's most potent servants.

Ⓜ **Black Knight:** See page 313.

Tactics: The black knight begins by raising its visor and using Baleful Glare at the nearest character. Over the next few rounds, it tries to Summon Reinforcements. Whether this is successful or not, the undead knight uses its great sword. Against single adjacent foes, it uses Improved Frenzy. If there are two or more characters adjacent, it favors Sweep, even if there are other undead in its sword's arc.

Continuation: The far door is engraved with powerful curses. Any character who makes a Knowledge (Arcana) roll knows that it wards against those of non-evil disposition. Any hero who tries to cross the threshold by *any* means must make a Spirit roll. Modifiers are as below.

Mod	Reason
–1	Per 20 points of positive Glory
–2	Cleric of Sigel
–4	Cleric of Scaetha
+2	Cleric of Dargar, Hela, Niht, or Vali

With success, the hero may step into the chamber beyond, but only once—if he leaves and reenters, he must make the Spirit roll again. Failure causes an automatic wound. This can be Soaked. The injury can only heal naturally.

16) TEMPLE LIBRARY

Stored in niches lining the walls are hundreds of scrolls. Most are mundane and crumble to dust if touched. Several, however, can be read easily.

Treasure: Six of the scrolls are alchemical devices. The GM should determine the spells they contain. As a suggestion, three should contain Novice spells, two Seasoned, and one Veteran. The seventh scroll is the one the heroes seek. It contains the sacred chant to call a powerful draugr. Originally, it was meant to assist clerics of Hela in calling forth allies, but it can be used for any purpose.

DUEL TO THE DEATH

Once the party is in possession of the knowledge they seek, they can return to the temple of Scaetha. The priest has lit numerous bonfires around the edge of the precinct. After allowing the characters a short rest, the priest of Scaetha informs them of what they must do.

"By the ancient laws, one of you, your chosen champion, must challenge the draugr to holmganga, rit-

ual combat. Once she is summoned with the chant, I shall allow her entrance to the temple precinct, where the fight must take place. The champion may use no magic, for such would invalidate the ritual and leave her immune to harm. She must be slain on ground holy to Scaetha, or Hela will claim her soul and bring it back again.

"Unfortunately, the rules prohibit either party from being aided or standing within the battleground. Only the judge may do that, and I shall fulfill that role. The rest of you must remain outside the warding. Helfrith will no doubt have summoned allies by now and they will try to kill you. Whatever occurs inside the precinct, on no account must you enter while the challenger lives. Do not cast any spells at either combatant inside the precinct. I cannot warn you enough—if you break these rules, your champion will forfeit the challenge and all will be lost.

"Now, pick your champion and be quick, for dawn approaches. The rest of you, prepare your spells and weapons quickly."

Once the champion has been decided, the priest of Scaetha prays to his goddess. He daubs the head of the hero with runes of justice and endurance. If the hero to whom the raven talked is chosen as champion, he gains a one die bonus to Strength, Vigor, and Fighting until the contest ends. Recalculate Parry and Toughness accordingly. Note that this is a unique bonus brought about by special circumstances—it is should not be used in every duel against a draugr.

The priest releases any possessed characters of their infesting spirits before the *holmganga* takes place, though he allows the spirit to remain if the victim so wishes.

Once the champion has been chosen, and the chant uttered, the draugr arrives as if summoned, skulking out of the dark. She enters the temple area (Scaetha permits this, as it is the only way to destroy her) and prepares to fight. At the same time as Helfrith steps on to the flagstones, skeletal warriors step out of the darkness. Two fights thus happen simultaneously—the duel against the draugr and the other characters' battle against the skeletons.

By law, whoever initiated the holmganga (i.e. the hero) must receive the first blow, although he can parry or dodge. Deal initiative cards as normal. If the champion has a higher card than Helfrith on the first round, he must decide whether to go on Hold, so as to be able to strike back later in the round, or use the Defend or Full Defense maneuver. A character that elects to Hold cannot interrupt his foe. Once the first round is over, combat progresses as normal.

If the character wins the fight, the draugr fades away into nothingness with an anguished cry. If the draugr wins, the character is killed with a Finishing Move. Another may take his place as champion, but this comes at a heavy price. It takes an action for the character to speak the oath required to grant him this status. Furthermore, the second challenge allows Helfrith to heal **all** her wounds automatically—the new champion does not benefit from injuries his comrade inflicted on the undead.

If Helfrith wins by any means, the heroes have failed, leaving a powerful undead stalking the land.

Forfeiting: Should the champion or Helfrith step outside the precinct for any reason, they automatically lose the duel—knocking someone from the sacred area is a legal tactic.

Special: So long as the champion is alive, no one else can enter the arena, nor can spells penetrate its borders—spells are absorbed and the heroes bump into an impenetrable barrier. The priest of Scaetha will not fight against the draugr while a hero remains alive. Should the characters lose, the GM has two choices. First, the priest of Scaetha can defeat Helfrith and end the threat. Second, Helfrith kills the priest, leaving her available as a recurring villain to be defeated at a later time.

Terrain: The precinct measures 6" to a side and has a paved floor. No snow lies here. Outside the precinct, the ground is covered in fresh snow, and is difficult ground.

Lighting: Outside the precinct, the bonfires shed good light to a distance of 3" from the edge of the precinct. At double this distance, the lighting is Dim (–1). Beyond this, the lighting is Dark (–2). Lighting inside the precinct imparts no penalties.

Monsters: Initially there are two skeleton warriors for each hero outside the precinct. Each round, regardless of how many skeletons remain active, another one skeleton per hero joins the fray. The warrior skeletons always begin 10" from the characters. There is an unlimited number of undead. The instant the draugr is slain, the skeletons crumble to dust.

Ⓜ **Helfrith Helasdohtor:** See page 313.

Ⓜ **Skeletal Warriors:** See page 314.

AFTERMATH

Once the fight is over, the characters may return to the stead. There they find that they are being looked for, having not reported back. Wiglaf's body, if left behind by the heroes, was found and recovered. Each survivor earns a 500 gs reward, gifts from Thegn Amundi. The character who challenged the draugr to a *holmganga* automatically gains +5 Glory, in addition to any other Glory reward. This may be awarded posthumously.

A surviving champion also notices a strange rune on his skin that increases his Fighting skill by one die type (no maximum), but only when fighting undead. No magic known to mortals can remove this mark.

BESTIARY

VILLAGER

Use these stats for folk around the stead, such as Sig-

mar and Wiglaf. If the GM needs any specific archetypes, such as huscarls or nobles, use appropriate entries in the *Hellfrost Bestiary*.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d4, Guts d4, Knowledge (one Craft) d6, Notice d6, Stealth d4, Survival d4
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: —
Edges: —
Gear: Knife (Str+d4)

HELFRITH HELASDOHTOR (DRAUGR)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12+4, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d8
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9
Special Abilities:
* **Claws:** Str+d6.
* **Fear (–2):** Anyone seeing the blackened, decaying corpse must make a Guts roll at –2.
* **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
* **Grave Stench:** Helfrith carries with her the unmistakable smell of death—the air around her reeks of rotting corpses. Anyone who begins their turn adjacent, or who moves adjacent, must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue until they breathe clean air for five minutes.
* **Improved Snow Walker:** Ignores penalties for movement in snow and ice.
* **Invulnerability:** Helfrith can be Shaken by mundane weapons and magic, but can only take wounds from being challenged to a holmganga.
* **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison. No wound penalties.
* **Weakness (Special):** Helfrith must be summoned to a holmganga using a specific ritual. Until this occurs, she does not have this Weakness, and thus is immune to all damage.

BLACK KNIGHT

Clad in jet-black plate armor and armed with weapons swathed in necromantic energy, black knights are the elite troops of the undead hordes. They most often serve as unit commanders in undead armies, but can sometimes be found as bodyguards for powerful, evil wizards and priests. Beneath their armor is a mummified corpse with burning green eyes and elongated teeth. Black knights are also known as dark generals, fallen knights, and Hela's knights.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d12, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Battle) d10, Stealth d6
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 13 (3)
Edges: Combat Reflexes, Command, Fervor, Hold the Line, Improved Block, Improved Frenzy, Improved Sweep, Level Headed.
Special Abilities:
* **Arcane Resistance:** +2 Armor against damage-causing powers and +2 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
* **Armor +3:** Black plate armor and a full helm.
* **Baleful Glare:** As an action, a black knight may lift its visor and stare at one foe within 12" and line of sight. The target must make a Guts roll at –2.
* **Fear (–1):** Anyone who sees a black knight must make a Guts roll at –1.
* **Necromantic Weapons:** Great sword (Str+d10, –1 Parry, 2 hands). For each wound inflicted on a living foe with these weapons, the black knight heals one of its own wounds.
* **Size +1:** Black knights stand over 7' tall.
* **Summon Minions:** once per day, a black knight can make a Spirit roll to summon forth 1d6 skeleton warriors (p. 12) with a success or 2d6 with a raise. The minions appear within 6" of the knight on the fiend's next initiative card.
* **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. No wound penalties.

PREY ANIMALS

BOAR

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7
Special Abilities:
* **Berserk:** When a boar is Shaken, it automatically goes berserk. It gains +2 to all Fighting, damage, and Strength rolls as well as its Toughness, but Parry is reduced by 2.
* **Bite:** Str+d4.
* **Gore:** If a male boar can charge at least 6" before attacking, it adds +4 to damage.
* **Tusks:** Str+d4.

DEER

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d4, Notice d8
Pace: 12; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7
Special Abilities:
* **Alertness:** Deer get +2 to all Notice rolls.
* **Fleet Footed**: Deer roll a d10 running die.
* **Kick/Horns:** Str+d4.
* **Size +1:** Deer can weigh over 600 pounds.

DEER, SMALL

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d4, Notice d8
Pace: 12; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5
Special Abilities:
* **Alertness:** Deer get +2 to all Notice rolls.
* **Fleet Footed**: Deer roll a d10 running die.
* **Kick/Horns:** Str+d4.

SMALL ANIMAL

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d4, Notice d6
Pace: 4; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 3
Special Abilities:
* **Harmless:** When attacking creatures of Size –1 or greater, damage rolls from these creatures can Shake a foe, but never cause wounds. This includes inflicting successive Shaken results.
* **Size –2:** These creatures are small.
* **Small:** Attackers are –2 to attack rolls against these creatures because of their size.
* **Variant Breeds:** Use these abilities as examples when designing your own mundane creatures.
    * **Rabbit:** Bite Str, Alertness Edge.
    * **Squirrel:** Bite Str, Climbing d10.

RAT SWARM

This rat swarm fills a Large 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 recovered every 24 hours or with a successful Healing roll.
* **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.

SKELETON WARRIOR

Skeleton warriors are the reanimated bones of long-dead soldiers. Unlike common skeletons, these undead troops retain more of their combat skills and are equipped with functional, if somewhat old, armaments.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Shooting d6
Pace: 7; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9 (2)
Gear: Bronze breastplate (+2), bronze short sword (Str+d6), medium shield (+1 Parry).
Special Abilities:
* **Bony Claws:** Str+d4.
* **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
* **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.

SPIRIT

Spirits are otherworldly beings. Some sages argue they are leftover parts of creation, raw magic with a single purpose. Others tend to follow the line of thought of clerics, who say spirits are entities from the divine realms that either have been dispatched by the deity or have somehow found their own way into existence. One other train of thought suggests these spirits are spontaneously created by the collective will of the various races.

Regardless of their type, spirits share a standard basic stat block. Each spirit then has its own individual special ability.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6
Special Abilities:
* **Ethereal:** Immune to nonmagical attacks. Can pass through solid objects.
* **Possession:** Spirits attack by making a Touch Attack (+2 to Fighting). With success, the victim must make a Spirit roll opposed to that of the entity, –2 if the spirit's attack is a raise. A failure means the victim is possessed and suffers the penalties for the spirit's particular special ability. Removing the spirit requires a *banish* spell to send it back to its own realm. Using *dispel* allows the spirit to roll its Spirit die to oppose the power. A successful casting forces the spirit from its host, but leaves it free to possess another victim. For each additional attempt at *banish* or *dispel* within the same 32-day period, the spirit gains +1 to resist being expelled.
* **Berserk:** Victims gain the Berserk Edge. Anger spirits do not tend to possess victims who already have this Edge. The victim also acquires the Mean Hindrance as a result of his angry outbursts and quick rages.
* **Grief:** Victims are struck by deep melancholy and bouts of depression. Whenever they draw a Club for initiative, they suffer a –2 penalty to all Trait rolls until their next card is drawn. They also gain the Mean Hindrance, though this is a result of apathy rather than surliness.

THE DEMON OF DUNCALLAICH

This adventure is designed for a group of four Heroic 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.

Scaling for higher Ranks is easily handled. For each additional 20 XPs the party is above heroic, add two additional Extras of the most common type to each detailed encounter. For instance, if the text says the heroes face two bandits per hero, a Legendary (80 XP) party of four members would face ten bandits (eight for the party size plus two for being a Rank higher than Veteran).

The adventure is best set in the western Hearthlands, but Aspiria, Chalcis, Heligioland, the Cairn Lands, and the Barony of Trond (all former Anari conquered lands) are also suitable. A forest is required, but none of the major ones need be used. Given the large scale of the continental map and the small size of the forest, the adventure can be set almost anywhere. The tale is set during no particular season, giving the GM total freedom as to when he uses the adventure. 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.

GM'S BACKGROUND

In the year –407 IR, at the height of the Demongate Wars, the tide of battle began to turn against the dark legions. Clerics of Hela led the armies of light, for these were times before Hela's fall from grace, when she performed the role Scaetha does today. Step by step, blow by blow, the light cast out the shadow.

One of the more powerful demons, a creature by the name of Kithreth, lorded over a major Anari town, Balyeux (bal-yure). Here it ruled over its mortal subjects in mockery of the Anari Emperor. The army of Hela besieged Balyeux for long months. Finally, the walls were shattered and the battle to liberate the broken town began. While mortal soldiers locked sword with demonic legions, their leader, Roderick ap-Jaufre, a cleric of Hela, sundered the gates of Kethrith's palace and confronted the demon. In an epic struggle, Roderick defeated his mighty foe, though his spell to banish the fiend failed. Instead, the creature of darkness was bound into the soil of Balyeux.

Roderick ordered the town razed to its foundations. All citizens displaying the mark of Kithreth, a black snake tattoo, were executed without absolution, their souls condemned to the Abyss for their sins. The army moved on, and the name of Balyeux vanished from history.

Within a handful of generations, nature, perhaps seeking to hide the stain brought about by Kithreth, concealed the ruins beneath a new forest. When the war ended, several soldiers who had taken part in the battle of Balyeux returned to the region and settled. They knew Kithreth was fettered beneath the ground, and vowed that they and their descendants would stand watch over the site in case the demon ever escaped its bonds. The old Anari road to Balyeux ran straight and true, and still carried trade goods, and Duncallaich grew from a hamlet into a village.

During the Blizzard War, the citizens of Duncallaich fled. Generations passed before they returned home, and by then all knowledge of why the village was founded has been lost. Today it is just another village on an old Anari trade road; but the demon Kithreth still lies trapped, formulating its escape.

THE ROAD TO DUNCALLAICH

While traveling to their next destination the characters happen upon a small man hurrying down the road as if his life is in mortal peril. If approached in a peaceful manner, he breathlessly explains he is an itinerant herbalist, but is trying to get away from the village of Duncallaich and its evil spirits before nightfall.

If treated well or offered food and water, he says his name is Bertram ap-Duncan. He further explains that the woods near the village are home to evil spirits who entice travellers away from the safety of their campfires by whispering promises of power, wealth, and success. Those who listen to the ephemeral voices are never seen again. Each visitation is preceded by an eerie green light that comes from somewhere deep in the woods. He informs the heroes Duncallaich lies but a few hours travel from their current location.

If treated badly or approached in a hostile manner, the man tries to flee. Should he be captured, he wails about evil spirits, but no sense can be made of his crazed ramblings.

Ⓜ **Bertram ap-Duncan:** Treat as a Villager (see page 312) but with Healing d4 and Knowledge (Alchemy) d8. He has the Hedge Magic Edge.

BANDITS!

As the characters follow the trail towards Duncallaich, have them each make a Notice roll. Those who succeed spy the bushes up ahead moving slightly a split second before arrows are launched at them. Those who fail are Surprised.

Monsters: Lurking in bushes is a gang of bandits. They haunted the roads long before the events of the adventure began, but recently sold their souls to the demon lord in return for vague promises of power and wealth. They now seek not just to rob travelers, but also to take them prisoner so they can be sacrificed to their powerful master.

The bandits begin 20" ahead of the heroes.

Ⓜ **Bandit Leader (1):** See page 321.

Ⓜ **Bandits (2 per hero):** See page 321.

Tactics: Each bandit fires one arrow during the first round. On the second round, the bandits drop their bows (a free action), draw their melee weapons (an action), and charge the characters. They are used to working together and favor Gang Up tactics. The survivors try to retreat if more than half their number is slain.

Any that are badly wounded are slain by their comrades using a Finishing Move. Any Incapacitated, but not dead, suddenly begin to haemorrhage from their eyes and ears. They slump down dead before the party can interrogate them. *Gravespeak* fails, as the bandits have sold their souls to a demon lord, and such souls do not go to Scaetha's Hall.

Treasure: The bandits carry 1d10 x 50 gs between them in the form of coins and jewelry.

Continuation: If the heroes search the bandits, they discover each has a black snake tattooed on their necks.

ARRIVAL IN DUNCALLAICH

Hopefully curiosity leads the party to Duncallaich. Night is falling when they arrive and only a handful of people are on the streets, intent on getting to their houses before sunset. No one stops to talk to the heroes if hailed—any cries of welcome are met with fearful glances. If the heroes try to grab a passerby, the villager screams and shouts. After a few minutes, several armed men turn up and try to drive the characters away. The village militia is no match for the party, but a pointless fight at this juncture will not endear the villagers to the party, no matter how virtuous their intentions.

Most of the houses already have their door and windows shut tight. As the party passes, loud prayers to Scaetha can be heard from within. Regardless of promises, threats, or pleas, the villagers refuse to open their doors. Even the local temple to Scaetha is closed for the night, and the village has no regular priest. An itinerant priest comes by every two months to see to the villagers' spiritual needs. He is not due back for five weeks.

Duncallaich has a small inn, the Five Stones. If the party approaches the inn, discernible by the sign hanging outside—an Anari custom—they are admitted only after convincing the innkeeper that they are not evil spirits come to steal him away. This should not be too difficult as the innkeeper is a typical peasant, easily swayed by offers of money. Once inside, the heroes can order rooms. The inn has three rooms, each capable of holding two comfortably and three people in a pinch, and these are available for 10 sc per night, excluding food and drink. There are no other guests.

Ⓜ **Villagers:** See page 312.

Ⓜ **Militia (Watch) (2 per hero):** See page 322.

WE WANT INFORMATION

The innkeeper, Mortimer ap-Teargal, born to a Tuomi father and Anari mother, has lived in the village all his life and knows the legend of the haunted woods. If the characters buy food and drink he gladly relates it to them. Should the adventurers start eating their own food, or decline to buy any from him, he feigns ignorance about any strange events whilst hinting that he might be able to remember if certain conditions were met. Food will cost 2 ss per person, drink an extra silver scield. Once the formalities are out of the way, he begins his tale:

"My father told me this story, and his daddy told him, and so on for many a time now. It's said that hundreds of years ago an evil wizard came to these parts looking for people on which to perform his dark arts. Well, he took several young girls and boys afore the villagers rose up against him. Of course, they weren't very well trained and he killed an awful lot of them before they fled his fearsome presence.

"The village elders decided to hire some mercenaries to do away with the wizard. Now one of these here mercenaries was a holy man named Rodbry, see. He knew all about slaying fell wizards, so he

went into the woods alone to do battle. Oh, it was a fearsome sight they say, with lightning and fire flying all over the place. The battle raged on for ten days afore Rodbry imprisoned that evil wizard in the ground.

"You can still see his finger nails if you follow the trail into the woods. Stuck up from the ground they are, as if he's trying to claw 'is way out.

"Anyways, every couple of years or fifty, that evil wizard, he escapes for a few days and steals people away, just like he did all them years ago. This time, though, he guides folk to their doom with an evil green light that controls their minds. He's had a few recently, and that's the second time in my life that he's gone escaped.

"I reckon that he's gonna' escape for good soon and come get his revenge on us good folk."

The above tale is almost entirely false, having been retold and corrupted over the centuries. In reality, the evil wizard was Kithreth and Rodbry is Roderick.

Only the latter part bears any semblance of truth. Since his imprisonment, Kithreth has been trying to escape. Every now and then, a mortal is corrupted into weakening his bonds. This is when Kithreth can, for a short while, exert some control over the mortal realm and its inhabitants. Unfortunately, escaping, even for a moment, uses tremendous amounts of his energy, and he cannot try it too often. Regrettably, for the demon, most mortals are too stupid to conceal what they are doing and are soon caught by the authorities and executed. Recently, though, a cult of power-hungry diabolists has taken up the cause—they are on the verge of releasing him from his millennia old prison.

Any inhabitant of the village can recount the tale should the heroes somehow manage to befriend another villager.

BEWARE SHADOWS BEARING GIFTS

That night, the characters all suffer troubled dreams. The character the GM considers most easily corruptible (previous adventures should have revealed this by now) is visited in his dreams by a shadowy figure who promises great wealth if the character will release him from his prison.

Kithreth (for it is he who disturbs the character's sleep) claims to be a wizard by the name of Morgwych (morg-oo-ick). Many centuries ago, he says, he was falsely imprisoned here by an Unseelie faerie. The faerie demanded Morgwych's power but when he refused, his spirit was trapped between this world and the fey realm. Kithreth promises whatever the hero's subconscious reveals to be the best lure—magic, wealth, women, wine, all can be supplied. Promise *anything* you feel will get the hero's attention—Kithreth certainly has no intention of keeping his word once released.

All the sleeper has to do is travel to the stone circle in the woods and shed a little blood on the central slab. If questioned about this, for the dreamer can converse with "Morgwych," the visitor says the Unseelie fey knew folk of good nature would baulk at such a task, hence "Morgwych" has remained fettered for centuries.

As a sign of his good will, "Morgwych" promises to use some of what little energy remains to prove his claims. If the hero asks for material wealth, whether relics, alchemical devices, tomes of knowledge, or cash, "Morgwych" hands the dreamer the object. When the character awakens, he finds what he desires clutched in his hand. The GM should determine the powers of any magic objects, but should not make them too powerful. A player may ask for a *+5 sword of slaying anything it touches*, but a native of Rassilon would ask merely for a magic sword.

This object appears real and registers to *detect* spells as applicable. If the sleeper does not fulfill his part of the bargain within 24 hours, the object vanishes.

Unbeknownst to the character, if he makes the deal he gains a small tattoo on his inner right thigh in the shape of a black snake. Only if the character searches his body will this be noticed. Whether or not he fulfills his end of the bargain, the tattoo remains until Kithreth is slain. This could have severe repercussions for the unfortunate soul.

While the *players* may suspect this is an elaborate trap and try to avoid the deal, the *characters* are driven by their Hindrances, not metagaming knowledge. As such, heroes with the Curious and Greedy Hindrances should be encouraged to roleplay their Hindrances, regardless of the possible outcomes. As suggested in the core rules, characters who roleplay their flaws, especially when the situation puts them in danger, should be rewarded with a benny.

AN EERIE LIGHT

The adventurers are free to wander around Duncallaich (once the sun rises) as they wish. It has a general store stocking standard items for a village, but no crafters of interest (unless the heroes seek a pot or a horseshoe).

If they decide to remain in the village all day, an eerie green light is seen emanating from the woods as the sun begins to set. The locals, fearing for their lives, flee to their houses, shouting that the evil wizard is abroad. If they have not done so already, hopefully the characters are now curious enough to investigate the woods.

See the section entitled **The Stone Circle** for details on how the party travels through the forest. The light is bright enough to guide their way, negating any darkness modifiers.

The light swings back and forth, like a beacon swaying in the wind. When it highlights the characters, they feel their skin crawl. Deep, uncontrollable shudders go up and down their spines. There appears to be no other cause for this other than the light striking them. As the party steps into the clearing in which the stone circle lies, the light vanishes, plunging the heroes in darkness.

THE STONE CIRCLE

If the heroes venture into the wood, they find that unless they stay on a faint trail trampled through the undergrowth the going is quite tough. The trees are close together and thick brambles snag at their clothing and equipment. If the characters do not take the trail, they must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue from bumps and bruises.

Have the party make a Cooperative Vigor roll. With failure, it is night when they finally enter the stone circle. Success allows them to arrive at dusk and a raise brings them into the circle with two hours to go before sunset.

After many miles of hard marching, the adventurers enter an area of the woods where the trees show signs of blight—new growths are stunted and twisted, while old trees are decaying before their time. After another hundred yards or so, the party emerges into a clearing in which stands a small stone circle.

The circle consists of five standing stones, all of which are roughly three yards in height and a yard wide. In the center of the circle is a stone slab measuring six yards long by two yards wide. The standing stones have very worn engravings on the faces that face the centre slab, though they are illegible through weathering and the ceaseless passage of time. Invoking *detect arcana* reveals the standing stones to be magical.

There are also several small patches of burnt grass around the central slab. Characters making a Survival roll deduce they were probably made by torches being laid on the ground.

THE CIRCLE AT DUSK

As the sun begins to set, so the forest takes on a different form. This is a result of Kithreth's presence, which grows stronger at night. Regardless of the alertness of any sentries, it suddenly dawns on the party that the landscape has subtly changed—the forest is noticeably warped and twisted, all the trees and bushes showing signs of mutation and premature aging. Perceptive characters may realize that no birds or animals can be heard in this part of the woods. This requires a Notice roll at –2.

Any animals the party has with them shy away, refusing to stay in the clearing unless a successful Intimidation or Persuasion roll is made. If the roll fails, the animals go berserk and try to flee into the forest.

The stones also shift in appearance. The engravings facing the centre slab are not as worn now. A successful Knowledge (Arcana) roll at –2 reveals they are ancient warding runes. Touching the stones reveals faint traces of magic. These are the ancient bindings that hold the demon trapped.

In addition, faint scratches can be seen on the flat slab.

THE CIRCLE AT NIGHT

As the sun sets, have each hero make a Spirit roll. Arcane Resistance adds to the roll. Those who succeed hear a faint buzzing sound in their ears, which lasts only a few seconds. Those who fail hear a hissing, whispering voice in their heads saying, *"Help me! Release me from my prison!"* There is no obvious source for the sound to be coming from.

The carvings on the standing stones are now quite visible. The Knowledge (Arcana) roll is made with no modifier. If the party failed the roll earlier, it may be rerolled now the sigils are clearer. Anyone touching the stones must make a Spirit roll. With success, they feel their hair stand on end and a tingling running through their body. On a failure, they receive a powerful shock. This inflicts 2d6 damage and throws them back 1d4". Arcane Resistance protects against this.

The scratches on the flat slab are also more discernible now. A Knowledge (Arcana) roll at –2 reveals they are old symbols, associated with the worship of demons. Hanging from the stone are several strips of strange-looking skin. A Common Knowledge roll at –2 reveals they are snakeskin.

Characters touching the slab must make a Spirit roll. With failure, they see in their mind's eye a fleeting vision of a tall, silver-skinned man chained to a wall with iron shackles. He screams in torment as snakes bite his flesh. This last image is a false one generated by the demon to prompt people to release it.

A GIFT OF BLOOD

If a character spills any blood on the central slab (a single drop will do), the great stone shatters, rising up from the ground as if punched upward by something beneath the ground. Where it once lay is now a hole, with narrow stone steps leading down into warm, dazzlingly bright, silvery light.

Unless the characters spill blood and enter the light, they cannot hope to progress much further. After a few days of boredom they should, hopefully, decide to explore the only avenue of investigation left open to them.

LAND OF DARKNESS

The light is an illusion. Once all the heroes have descended the stairs (which seem to spiral down forever), they are plunged into total darkness which no light, magical or mundane, can penetrate. The heroes are unable to communicate with each other by any means.

After a few minutes, unseen things begin to brush against the characters' legs, strange words of hate are whispered into their ears, and the sense that something terrible is watching them is all-pervasive. Each hero must make a Guts check at this point. Those who fail roll on the Fear Table as normal.

After the Guts check is made, each character hears his comrades calling out to him. By following the voices,

the heroes are led to a silver door. Those who refuse to follow the sounds must make a second Guts roll. Again, once the roll is made voices are heard calling out. Until the character relents and approaches, the cycle of Guts checks and voices continues *ad infinitum*.

Opening the door reveals only brilliant light. Once a character steps through, he is held in limbo until all the others pass through the portal. Only when the entire party is through the door (or dead of heart failure) does the adventure continue.

A FAMILIAR FEELING

Once the entire party steps through the door, they find themselves in a busy tavern. Looking back out the door, they see a large town. The tavern patrons wear vaguely familiar-looking clothes, though the design is unusual. A successful Knowledge (History) roll reveals the garb is that once worn by Anari long before the Blizzard War.

After a short pause, a rotund man, obviously the innkeeper by his apron, asks the characters what they want to drink. He speaks only Classical Anari, as do all the inhabitants of the town. If answered in another language, the innkeeper snarls, "Barbarians, eh?" and points to the barrels of ale and wine lining the wall of the tavern. If questioned in Classical Anari, the innkeeper proudly announces the characters are in Balyeux. A Knowledge (History) roll at –4 allows the characters to know Balyeux was destroyed during the Demongate Wars.

Heroes who cannot speak Classical Anari suffer the Outsider Edge while in the city. Frost dwarves and taiga elves, who were spoken of only in legend before the Blizzard War, attract much attention, and very little of it is welcoming. When rolling on the Reaction table, roll just 1d6, instead of the 2d6 as normal. Every citizen has –2 Charisma, making a Hostile result very likely unless a hero is exceptionally charismatic.

THE TOWN

If the party leaves the inn, they find themselves in a large city with paved streets and throngs of people, none of whom look much like the locals of the region of Duncallaich. In the center of the town stands a colossal blackstone temple. Its vast columns are carved to resemble fanged snakes. Violence and crime is rife, part of daily life in Kithreth's alternate reality. The characters witness many beatings, stabbings, and acts of theft taking place. Soldiers patrol the streets, but they are oblivious to the acts of vandalism, death, and theft taking place.

The town is not actually real. Rather, it is a memory of Balyeux, invoked by Kithreth's powerful mind. The characters are, in essence, trapped in Kithreth's dream-like existence. Despite being a non-reality, it functions exactly as the material world.

The town itself works like a Mobius strip. If the heroes leave by the south gate, they immediately reenter through the north gate. The same applies to the east and west gates. Nothing actually exists beyond the city walls, although the characters can see mile after mile of fields and villas from a high vantage point. They do not really exist, and are mere phantasms. Magic or ranged weapons targeted outside of the walls *appear* to have the desired effect.

For the most part, the locals assume the characters are barbarians, and thus smelly, crude, stupid, illiterate, and ungodly. If the characters ask "suspicious" questions (such as Where are we? What is this place? Who's in charge?), the inhabitants instantly alert the town guard, who turn up within 2d4 rounds. The guards are dressed and equipped like images of the Anari of old, except that a blackened snake is emblazoned on their breastplates.

The guards do not tolerate violence or insolence, but will attempt to capture the heroes without killing too many of them. If the heroes resist, then the soldiers use as much force as they deem necessary. Should the heroes be winning, reinforcements turn up (reinforcements who are better skilled and can deal out a lot more damage). Eventually the adventurers will be overwhelmed, will have surrendered, or will be dead.

Should the party avoid contact with the locals and head straight for the temple, they are met by a squad of town guards on the steps outside. The captain salutes the party and invites them in to see "the Emperor." They are allowed to keep their weapons.

Ⓜ **Balyeux Watch Captain (1 per squad):** See page 322.

Ⓜ **Balyeux Watch (2 per hero):** See page 322.

Ⓜ **Balyeux Experienced Watch (2 per hero):** See page 322.

IMPRISONED

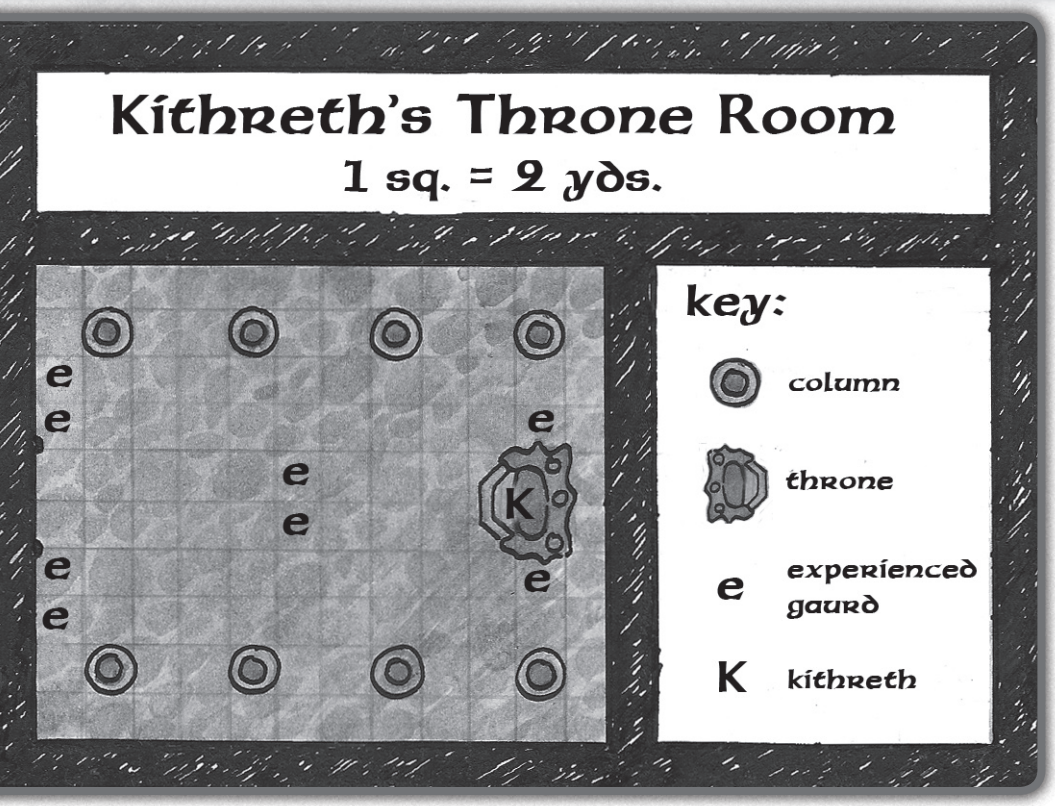
If the party is captured, they are stripped of all their gear, clapped in irons, and lead to a cell deep under the temple. Once safely incarcerated, the heroes are left to their own devices. Being part of Kithreth's dream world, the cell is escape-proof. Any escape plan is doomed to fail.

Of course, the party should not know this and should be allowed to form an escape plan. After several failures, a large squad of guards drags them from the cell to see "the Emperor." Their gear, all of it, is returned to them.

AN AUDIENCE WITH THE EMPEROR

The heroes are escorted through the temple to "the Emperor's" throne room. Vast braziers provide flickering, orange light. The shadows they cast give the impression that the serpents carved into the walls are writhing. At the far end of the long, pillared hall sits Kithreth, wearing a golden crown comprised on intertwined snakes.

Kithreth is a monstrous, nightmarish creature. His body is comprised of hundreds of long, black snakes. His vast head is that of a colossal, hooded serpent, with fangs as long as a short sword. Each of his long arms ends not in hands, but in five giant serpents, dripping venom from



their maws. His body slithers and writhes in anticipation as the adventurers approach.

As the party moves deeper into the room, the guards slam shut the great doors, which promptly vanish. A large gold door appears in the wall behind Kithreth. Engraved in its center is a coiled snake.

The demon waits for the heroes to approach his throne before he addresses them:

"Ah, mossst honored guestsss, welcome to my humble home," the serpentine creature hisses. "Thank you for being ssso graciouss asss to come on sssuch ssshort notice. I pray that you have found my hossspitality welcoming.

"I have been trapped here againssst my will for ten of your centuriesss. Ten centuriesss of eternal torment, but the dark timesss are coming again, and when the ssstorm cloudsss gather, the world will quake with fear at my name once more. The time drawsss near, and I will not tolerate interference from you, or any othersss of your pitifully weak kind.

"But, as I am a most merciful ruler and you have sssertain talentsss I could use in my new world, I offer you a choice; eternal ssservice to me, with all the rewardsss that entailsss, or a ssslow, painful death at my handsss. I will give you a ssshort while to decide." The snake-creature reclines back on its huge throne.

Should the characters try to bluff their way out by feigning loyalty, Kithreth demands they swear a sacred oath. They must renounce all other gods, vowing eternal loyalty to Kithreth alone. A guard carrying a small, black snake, then approaches the characters. He orders the characters to expose a section of flesh, whereupon the snake's head is pressed against the skin. As its fangs sink in, the snake vanishes, drawn into the hero's body.

Fools that they are, the characters have now sold their souls to Kithreth. Any clerics notice their powers have been stripped from them. In this life and the next, the characters are bound to Kithreth's service. Unless the GM fancies running a campaign where the heroes are all evil, it is suggested the characters now be retired.

The more likely ending is for the characters to attack. Kithreth, vain and arrogant, really was not expecting this. Trapped here for millennia, and imprisoned in an age when mortals readily sold their souls to preserve their pitiful existence, it has failed to understand that times have changed in the world of mortals.

Terrain: The ceiling is 5" (30 feet) high.

Tipping one of the large braziers requires a Strength roll at –2 as an action. With success, they spill burning oil in a Medium Template in any direction the character wishes. Place the template touching the edge of the square containing the brazier. Anything caught in the template takes 2d6 damage and has a chance of catching fire. The fire burns for the duration of the fight. Anyone stepping into the template suffers damage as above.

The columns block line of sight and impede movement. They have Toughness 14 and Heavy Armor. If Kithreth is adjacent to a pillar and rolls a 1 on his Fighting roll, regardless of his Wild Die, while making a slam, he has also struck a column. Roll damage. Should the column suffer a wound, place a Small Burst Template over the column. This area is now filled with rubble and counts as difficult ground.

Treat movement through the squares occupied by the throne as difficult ground.

The gold door is an illusion, a symbolic exit from the dream world, not an actual one. It cannot be opened by any means available to the characters.

Ⓜ **Kithreth:** See page 321.

Ⓜ **Balyeux Experienced Watch (2 per hero):** See page 322.

AFTERMATH

The instant Kithreth is slain; the false reality shatters in a blinding flash of light! The characters find themselves back in the stone circle. All wounds are translated to Fatigue levels, instead. This means heroes slain in the dream world remain dead in the mortal realm. The five

standing stones are sundered, their magic gone. Kithreth has been banished back to the Abyss, there to suffer the ignominy of not being able to influence the mortal world while his essence reforms. Victorious, the characters can return to Duncallaich and relate their tale.

Any hero who agreed to spill blood on the slab retains his tattoo. Removing this should be the focus of a later adventure of the GM's design.

BESTIARY

KITHRETH

Demon Prince of Snakes, the Crawling One, Kithreth has existed since the dawn of time and will quite possibly exist even after the universe ends, for demons are strange creatures, bound by few laws. During the Demongate Wars, Kithreth commanded a powerful army for his headquarters in Balyeux. His name was greatly feared across the land, but those days are gone, and today the name Kithreth exists only in a handful of texts in the forbidden libraries kept by Scaetha's clergy or in the hands of madmen.

Formerly a lesser prince of the Abyss, Kithreth's power has waned considerably since his imprisonment. The foe the heroes must face is a mere shadow of his former might.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d12, Notice d6, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d8
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 17 (2)/15 (2)
Special Abilities:

* **Armor +2:** Snake scales.
* **Bite:** Str+d8, plus poison.
* **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; +2 Toughness against non-magical attacks, except for star metal.
* **Fear (–2):** Anyone seeing the creature must make a Guts check at –2.
* **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 to Trait rolls to resist magic and +4 Armor against damage-causing arcane effects.
* **Large:** Attackers are +2 to attack rolls due to the creature's size.
* **Poison (–1):** Anyone Shaken or wounded by Kithreth's bite or snake fingers must make a Vigor roll at –1 or fall paralyzed for 2d6 rounds.
* **Powers:** *Armor* (thicker scales), *blast* (swarm of snakes), *bolt* (flying snakes), *deflection* (snakes deflect blows), *entangle* (foes wrapped in coils of giant serpent).
* **Quick:** Redraws initiative cards of five or lower.
* **Size +6:** Kithreth is 24' tall.
* **Slam:** If Kithreth elects to use a slam instead of his snake fingers, Knockback applies. These attacks are also heavy Weapons.
* **Snakes:** Once per round as a free action, Kithreth can cause a snake swarm to erupt from his body. This swarm begins adjacent to the demon. They do not attack Kithreth. He may produce up to five swarms per day.
* **Snake Fingers:** Str+d6, Reach 1, plus poison. The long, serpentine fingers on each hand may only strike a single target, but have +2 to Fighting rolls. This counts as a Gang Up bonus.
* **Viper Weapon:** Kithreth can cast *viper weapon* as a free action a number of times per day equal to its Spirit die type. This still requires a Spellcasting roll. Only one *viper weapon* may be cast each round.
* **Weakness (Star Metal):** Demons have lower Toughness against star metal weapons.

BANDIT

These bandits fell for the demon's lures, and are now bound to him. On death, their souls will not go to Scaetha's Hall for judgment, but will instead be condemned straight to the Abyss.

BANDIT LEADER

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Riding d8, Shooting d10, Stealth d8, Throwing d8
Charisma: –2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 8 (2)
Hindrances: Greedy (Major), Mean, Vengeful (Major)
Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Command, Strong Willed
Gear: Chain shirt (+2), battle axe (Str+d8), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6).

TYPICAL BANDIT

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6
Charisma: –2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1)
Hindrances: Greedy (Minor), Mean.
Edges: —
Gear: Leather armor (+1), typically short sword, mace, or axe (Str+d6), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6).

BALYEUX GUARDS

WATCH CAPTAIN

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Riding d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d4
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 9 (3)
Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Command, Frenzy
Gear: Plate armor (+3), pot helm (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry), long sword (Str+d8), dagger (Str+d4).

WATCH

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d4
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (3)
Hindrances: Loyal
Edges: —
Gear: Plate corselet (+3), pot helm (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1). Half are equipped with crossbows (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 2d6, AP 2).

EXPERIENCED WATCH

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d4
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 9 (3)
Hindrances: Loyal
Edges: Combat Reflexes, Frenzy
Gear: Plate corselet (+3), pot helm (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry), long sword (Str+d8), dagger (Str+d4). Half are equipped with crossbows (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 2d6, AP 2).

SNAKE SWARM

Snake swarms cover an area equal to a Medium Burst Template and attack everyone within every round. When it is Incapacitated, the swarm is effectively dispersed.
Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d10
Skills: Notice d6
Pace: 10; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7
Special Abilities:

* **Bite:** Snake swarms inflict hundreds of 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.
* **Mindless:** Unaffected by Tests of Will, Tricks, or arcane powers like *puppet*.
* **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.

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Paul 'Wiggy' Wade-Williams

HELLFROST

Against the Elements

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AGAINST THE ELEMENTS

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AGAINST THE ELEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

This adventure is designed for a group of four Veteran characters. For parties with more members or advancements, the GM should increase the number of opponents accordingly. For this adventure we advise you to add one additional Extra of the appropriate sort to each encounter for every Rank the party is above Veteran. For instance, if a party of four Heroic adventurers encounters undead elementalists numbering one per two heroes, the characters must fight a total of three mages—one for each pair of heroes, plus an additional one because the party is Heroic. If there are mixed elementals in the same encounter, the GM determines the type of any additional ones.

The adventure, which takes place in the Low Winterlands, should be set in later autumn, winter, or early spring, as there is snow on the ground. Much of this adventure takes place indoors, out of the bitterly cold wind. Except where noted in the text, the temperature is a constant 40º F below ground. See the *Savage Worlds* rulebook for the effects of cold weather and the *Hellfrost Players' Guide* for how the rules work in this setting.

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

BACKGROUND

For over a thousand years, the Convocation of Elementalists has strived to understand and control the seemingly limitless power of the elements. Across the lands, schools of elementalism were founded in a bid to encourage research into unlocking the greater mysteries of the four realms. Of these, only a handful survived the triple disasters of the Demongate War, the Liche-Priest's campaign of terror, and the Blizzard War.

Our story begins back before the black hordes (unleashed in the Demongate War) ravaged the land. In those distant days, when summers were warm and winters mild, elementalists constructed a school of learning in the eastern Bleak Hills, in what is now Heligioland. Four towers, one for each of the elements, stood upon the surface, while beneath the hills great caverns were worked by bound elementals. For a hundred years the school stood proud, its students and masters working tirelessly on their goals. Then came the Demongate War.

The armies of the Abyss marched across the face of Rassilon, laying waste to all they encountered. Great cities were razed to the ground, countless villages were erased in truly hellish battles, and an unknown number of souls were added to those of their ancestors. The elemental school came under attack in –378 IR. Battling valiantly, the mages summoned scores of elementals and wove spells that wrought destruction upon the infernal legions, yet their struggle was for naught. In the end, the black tide could not be stemmed, and the school was brought to ruin. The surviving elementalists were tortured in mind, body, and soul before being executed.

A generation later, Hela's insanity unleashed the spirits of the damned onto the mortal plane. Seeking whatever corpses they could find, the fell spirits entered the blackened corpses of the slain elementalists. Perhaps those souls sought out corpses who in life wielded powers similar to their own, or maybe there remained a vestige of elemental power in each of the fallen elementalists. Whatever the truth, the newly risen undead knew the power of elementalism.

The undead elementalists began new studies. In their madness, for no sane sorcerer would attempt such a feat, they worked to construct a living elemental god by combining the power of the four elements in unholy union to form a perfect being. Their feat would not be easy, but they had no need for nourishment or sleep. They heard the calling of the Liche-Priest, but they ignored his summons in favor of their own struggle. The Blizzard War raged across Rassilon, yet they did not cease their toil. Nigh on five more centuries evaporated into the mists of time, their passage unrecognized by the crazed elemen-

talists. And then, just a few decades ago, their studies, research, and tampering came to fruition.

Formed of the four elements, their living god was not divine, nor was it perfect. What should have been the living embodiment of elemental union was an insane abomination trapped in a constant state of elemental flux. The cultists, for that is what the undead had become, went back to their studies, desperate to find a solution to their god's predicament. How they reached their conclusion shall perhaps never be known, but finally they agreed a consensus—their god was hungry. Its sustenance, they agreed, could not be met by any magic they wielded, for their god craved only one thing—the flesh and souls of living elementalists!

And so they went out into the world for the first time in almost a millennia in search of prey. For several years they secretly combed the land, kidnapping lone elementalists and feeding them to their deity. Other beings fell into their grasp. These faired little better, for the elementalists were also working on other experiments—experiments to combine living flesh and elemental essence. A goodly number of their creations died during the unholy conversion process, but some survived and still roam the lower levels of the school.

Then, quite by chance, the hand of fate fell in their favor. The Convocation had dispatched an expedition to investigate the ruined school, whose true purpose had only just been rediscovered. Unsuspecting of the horror ahead, the elementalists entered the ruins in search of knowledge and relics. A month has passed and no word has been heard from the expedition. Fearing the worst, the Convocation has elected to send a second expedition to investigate the fate of the first, this time using hired swords rather than their brethren.

Urit Biscali, Arkhwisard of Eir and a member of the Four, volunteers to personally oversee the hiring process. Urit's task is not selfless, however. A secret collector of antiquities, Urit intends to hire a party who believe they are performing a personal, and well-paid, errand for him, not for the Four. Through their endeavors, Urit hopes to lay his hand on whatever relics his kinfolk left behind, and thus increase his personal powerbase.

THE EMISSARY OF THE FOUR

The adventure begins wherever the heroes happen to be at the time. By now their Glory should be such that folk have heard of their exploits across Rassilon. For convenience, this encounter begins in a tavern, a locale likely inhabited by the party at some stage between adventures, though the GM should alter the introductory text appropriately.

It seems a quiet night is out of the question. After retelling your exploits to the gathered patrons, you had hoped to enjoy your hot food and fine ale in peace. It seems the Norns have other plans, for a gentleman in flowing robes of white, touched with brown and blue, approaches your table. His short stature, dark hair, and weathered skin mark him as a Finnar.

Any elementalists in the party immediately recognize him as a fellow mage and one who has mastered three elements, though they have not met him personally. Other characters may make a Common Knowledge roll if they have encountered elementalists before or Knowledge (Arcana) if they have not.

The man bows low, then straightens. "Greetings," he says warmly. "My name is Maegister Arto Stenvall, an emissary from the Convocation of Elementalists. My master has need of your services and requests audience at your earliest convenience."

Maegister Stenvall is Urit Biscali's private secretary and fanatically loyal to his master. Under no circumstances will he name his patron. Possible questions the party may raise and Stenvall's answers are detailed below. The GM should use his responses as guidelines to answering other questions the party may pose. Stenvall remains polite at all times, calls the heroes lord and lady as required, and answers with as little factual information as possible.

Q: Who is your master?

A: *"A powerful and influential member of the Convocation who wishes to discuss matters privately."*

Q: Why has he sought us out?

A: *"Your reputations are widely known across this land. My master seeks only proven heroes to undertake an errand. The tales folk sing of your exploits mark you as such heroes."*

Q: Where is the meeting to take place?

A: *"My master bids that when you are ready you are to accompany me and follow my instructions to the letter. No harm shall befall you if you disobey, but it will make the meeting more complex otherwise."*

Q: How much he is paying?

A: *"Such things are not for a servant to know, my lord. My master will discuss such matters with you in person."*

Q: When do we leave?

A: *"At your earliest convenience. I have rooms in this inn. When you are ready, I shall be waiting."*

ACCEPTING THE OFFER

When the party is ready to meet Stenvall's mysterious patron, the mage tells them to collect all of their equipment, for their journey will not allow them to return here quickly. He then leads them into a quiet part of town and bids them to stand close to him. He then pulls a coin from a pouch beneath his robes.

ATTACKING STENVALL

Attacking Stenvall, defined as both physical attacks and the use of *any* magic against him, is not a good idea. Against physical attacks, Stenvall weathers the assault until his action card. He activates a *sanctuary* spell carried on a coin in his pocket and vanishes. The characters each lose 20 Glory for daring to attack an emissary of the Four in public and are voted as enemies of the Convocation at the next council meeting. The latter results in each hero gaining the Major Wanted (Elementalists) Hindrance and a bounty of 5,000 gs placed on their heads. The adventure, as written, is over.

The GM should devise other methods for luring the party into the school, but should remove all permanent artifacts from the adventure (the undead elementalists tried feeding these to their god before they latched onto using live elementalists).

Attempts to Intimidate the mage into revealing more, reveal nothing—Stenvall is far more afraid of Biscali than the heroes, regardless of their reputation. Stenvall politely cautions the characters to cease their attempts and either accept or decline his master's offer of employment.

Should a successful use of *puppet* be cast upon him, the mage reveals only that his master is Urit Biscali, Arkhwisard of Eir, and that he has a *sanctuary* spell to carry the party to his master's location.

Biscali is not stupid—arriving without Stenvall is a near death warrant. Urit pretends to brief them on a quest to locate a lost elemental relic, and then proceeds to offer them use of a *sanctuary* spell to take them nearer the destination. Biscali has a number of lackeys who set up temporary sanctuaries in remote places on his behalf. The characters are teleported to one in the middle of the Great Forest. Should they ever return, Biscali claims the Siphoning must have disrupted the spell.

"My master has enchanted this coin with the power of sanctuary*," Stenvall says, holding the coin up so you can see it clearly. "When I throw the coin into the air, the spell will activate, taking us all to my master's domicile. You may experience a moment of dizziness on arrival, but it passes quickly. Are you ready, my lords?"*

When the characters are ready, proceed with the following text:

Stenvall spins the coin into the air with a casual flick of his finger and thumb. As the coin sails upward a wall of spinning wind and cloud rises to follow its progress like a tornado forming from the earth. Everything is eerily quiet. Then the coin reaches its zenith and starts to tumble earthward, dragging the whirlwind with it.

Gone are the streets and buildings, replaced with an opulent reception room. An elderly man clad in white robes with red collar, blue cuffs, and brown hem stands before a roaring fireplace, his back to you. Without turning he says quietly, "Welcome to my home. I am Urit Biscali, Arkhwisard of Eir, and member of the ruling council of the Convocation of Elementalists."

THE ARKHWISARD

Biscali gestures toward comfortable armchairs arranged in a semi-circle in front of the fire and behind his current position. "Please, be seated and relax. Stenvall, please arrange whatever refreshments my guests desire, and then leave us."

Stenvall enquires to what food or drink the heroes wish, ensuring that the kitchen and cellar are well stocked. He then leaves the room, bowing to Biscali as he does. Once the door closes, Biscali turns to face the party.

The arkhwisard is an old man with white hair which seems to move of its own accord, as if a breeze you cannot feel was blowing across him. His face is wrinkled with the passage of time, yet his eyes burn with youthful vigor and unseen energy.

"I apologize for the secrecy involved in bringing you here. I trust Stenvall was polite? Lords, ladies, I have need of your services. I will answer questions in due course, but first I ask you to hear me out. Should you not wish to take up my offer, you will be reimbursed for your time and deposited almost anywhere in Rassilon you desire, with my apologies for wasting your valuable time.

"I will not bore you with a lengthy history, but let it be known that the Convocation once had far more centers of learning than it does today. One such school stood upon the Bleak Hills, in what is now eastern Heligioland. The school was sacked during the Demongate Wars and its occupants slain. With the rise of the Liche-Priest and the Blizzard War which followed his demise, many of our records were lost.

"Recently, a clerk brought to my attention an ancient tome, which spoke of the school. Until then we had assumed the ruin was a border fort and of little interest to our kind. Ignorance, as folk say, is bliss.

"I dispatched a small expedition of elementalists to investigate the ruins, with instructions to return any tomes or relics to the Convocation.

That was several months ago. No sign or sound has been seen or heard from them. I can only assume they have fallen to some vile creature or trap set by my illustrious forebears. I accept full responsibility for their fate, for they were keen yet inexperienced.

"I intend to rectify my mistake, at least in part, through your services. I wish you to go to the ruin and retrieve their remains. In addition, I ask you to complete their task, returning any relics, tomes, and other elemental items to my office, for placement in our archives. In return for this, each of you will receive 2,500 gold scields and whatever alchemical devices and mundane treasures you retrieve from the ruin. Of course, you will also have earned the thanks of the entire Convocation.

"So, you have heard my offer. Now I trust you have some questions?"

Possible questions asked by the party and Biscali's responses are detailed below. Biscali knows absolutely nothing of events since the school fell to wrack and ruin.

Q: How powerful was the previous expedition?

A: *"Not powerful enough, it seems. They were led by a Maegister, a proponent of three elemental arts. Accompanying him were four Prynciples, members skilled in one element. Four were sent, one of air, one of earth, one of fire, and one of water. In addition, two gentlemen skilled at exploring ruins to act as scouts and guides."*

Q: Where exactly is the school?

A: *"It stands some 70 miles northeast of Myre, close to the border with the Barony of Cul. The ruin is a well-known landmark in those parts."*

Heroes raised in Heligioland or Cul can make a Common Knowledge roll. Success means they know of the ruin, but only through stories or distant sightings from their travels along the roads that lead from Myre to Icewatch Fort and Cul. On a raise, the adventurer knows the school comprises four towers arranged around a central keep. It has largely been reduced to rubble. Characters with an appropriate Knowledge (Area) skill may make a roll to learn similar facts.

Q: What can you tell us of the layout?

A: *"Very little, I am afraid. We know there were four towers, one to each of the elements. This practice is retained today. It is likely there are lower levels, where the treasures of the school would have been housed. It is our hope that the sublevels have survived largely intact."*

Q: How do we get there?

A: *"Once I began to question as to whether the expedition had survived, I sent agents to Myre to set up a temporary sanctuary. Through use of the* sanctuary *spell you will be transported directly to Myre, which would make a suitable base for supplying your expedition. To ensure your safe return, I have learned from my previous error. Each of you will be given an alchemical device containing the* sanctuary *power. Whether your quest is successful or you need to withdraw rapidly, the devices will return you to my office immediately."*

Q: Why not use elementalists?

A: *"The loss of the expedition was a tragic mistake. I sent in scholars when I should have sent in warriors. The ruin has been abandoned by men for eight centuries. All manner of beasts could have made its stones their lair. Put more simply, my people are simply not up to the task."*

Q: What makes you think we'll survive any better?

A: *"Faith, hope, and knowledge of your exploits and heroic deeds."*

Once the questions are over, Biscali raises a hand and waves his fingers. A distant bell can be heard ringing. Moments later, Stenvall reenters the room. Behind him come several servants carrying the characters' food and drink. Biscali then excuses himself, telling the heroes he will give them time to dine and discuss his offer. When they are ready to give an answer, they are to ring a small silver bell on his desk.

Although the furnishings, sculptures, and paintings in the office are valuable, there is nothing easily portable of any value or interest (except the silver bell, which is worth 5 gs). Biscali's desk is ceremonial and holds no papers.

ACCEPTANCE AND REFUSAL

Biscali reappears a few minutes after the bell is rung. Parties who do not wish to undertake the expedition are offered magical transportation to any large town or city in the Hearthlands or Winterlands—the Convocation keeps a large number of temporary sanctuaries in place for its agents.

Should the party turn down the offer and then proceed to loot the ruins, Biscali eventually finds out through his many contacts and spies. Assume he does so after 1d4 months. He dispatches Stenvall to track the party down and demand any relics and tomes be handed over to the Convocation immediately. Refusal results in each character gaining the Major Wanted (Convocation) Hindrance and a 5,000 gs bounty on his head. Biscali also spreads word of the party's treachery. They suffer a –20 Glory penalty, for anyone who would double-cross the Convocation is undoubtedly as far from trustworthy as is possible.

Should they accept, Biscali tells them to prepare for immediate departure—time is of the essence as there may be survivors to rescue. He hands the party a collection of scrolls, each in a separate scroll case. There are three castings of the *elemental manipulation* spell for each of the four elements (air, earth, fire, water). The scrolls are all written in Trader. Biscali isn't sure how useful they'll be to the party, but he says many ancient elementalist traps can be disabled with these simple enchantments.

SUMMONING & BANISHING ELEMENTALS

The presence of the elemental lord makes the summoning of elementals extremely dangerous. Each round after an elemental is summoned, the GM must draw a card from the action deck. A black face card means the elemental has fallen under the command of the elemental lord and turns on the heroes. Control cannot be regained by the characters. The summoner's spell is cancelled (so he doesn't have to Maintain it—that is now being done by the elemental lord).

Attempts to *banish* an elemental within the lower levels suffer a –2 penalty so long as the elemental lord remains alive.

MYRE

Within the hour, the party is transported to the outskirts of Myre, where a young elementalist is waiting. She introduces herself as Aelwynn Ingvarsdohtor, a student of air. Aelwynn informs the party that rooms have been booked in their names in the Wanderer's Rest and a sum deposited to keep them in food and drink for two days. She is not staying at the inn—now the party has arrived she has business in distant Aslov.

Myre is a small town on the trade road between the Hearthlands, the Barony of Cul, and Heldalund. Any goods with a V or T availability can be purchased here at standard prices.

Every citizen knows of the ruins the party seek and accurate directions are easily come by. A few curious hunters have explored the ruins over the years and have even used them as a temporary shelter, but none has ever found anything of note. Also, Hearth Knight patrols are known make sporadic visits to ensure goblins and orcs do not take up residence. Since the elementalists vanished, no one has visited the site, nor do they have any intention of doing so until the next Hearth Knight patrol investigates the place for monsters. The next patrol heading that way isn't due for several weeks thanks to orc raids along the borders of Heligioland tying up resources.

The elementalist expedition stopped in Myre before embarking on its quest. No one in the town has seen any sign of them since they departed for the ruins. Many rumors abound as to their fate, and none make for pleasant hearing. The chances of seeing them alive are generally regarded as being only slightly better than nil. None of the mages left anything behind when they left, and their rooms have been used by dozens of travelling merchants in the intervening time.

THE JOURNEY TO THE SCHOOL

Three days of steady marching is enough to bring the party to the ruins. No creatures are encountered beyond wild game. The GM may wish to add in an encounter of his own devising, but the party should arrive uninjured and with any herbal and alchemical resources largely intact.

THE RUINED SCHOOL

The elementalist school filled two levels. The upper level, comprising four towers and a low keep, held living quarters, kitchens, and dining facilities for the students. That level has long since been reduced to rubble and picked clean of any valuables.

On the lower levels, which survive mostly intact, were the masters' quarters, library, laboratory, lecture hall, and other important rooms. Rather than being a single lower level, the vaults were constructed as four separate areas linked together by the central auditorium, in which all elementalists were welcome. Thus, each elemental branch had its own rooms inaccessible to those not skilled in the art.

COMMON FEATURES

Unless otherwise indicated in the text below, all doors are made of magically hardened wood (Toughness 14). Some doors have special magical locks (see below). All doors not indicated as having these locks are assumed to be unlocked. Smashing down a door creates a lot of noise, especially if not done quickly. Failure to break down a door in a single blow results in all residents in the same quarter coming to investigate in 1d6+1 rounds.

The lower chambers are uniformly 12' (2") high except for the elemental chamber (page 343) which is 36' (6") high.

All rooms and corridors are unlit unless they contain undead elementalists or the descriptive text for that area indicates a light source. Illuminated areas contain enough torches to provide good lighting conditions. Assume each room holds one torch per 4" of wall. If between one-third and one-half the total number of torches are extinguished, the lighting in the room drops to Dim (–1). Removing between half and all but one makes the lighting conditions Dark (–2). Extinguishing all the torches leaves the room Pitch Black (–4).

Areas containing furnishings or obstacles that fill all or part of a square and which reasonably allow movement through, over, under, or past are considered difficult ground. For instance, a table filling a square is difficult ground as a hero can leap over it or duck underneath. However, a column filling an entire square allows no movement through its space.

ELEMENTAL LOCKS

In days of old, elementalists were a more secretive bunch, and sought to shield their studies from those

who did not follow their chosen path. In order to protect their sanctums, they inscribed elemental sigils on doors, chests, and other important objects.

The four basic symbols are a triangle (fire), a square (earth), a circle (water), and a spiral (air). The symbols are also found in varying combinations, representing Elementalists with knowledge of multiple elements. In these cases, the symbols are placed one inside the other. The outer symbol is the elementalist's primary element, with the others inscribed in the order learned. For instance a square inside a circle inside a triangle indicates the mage studied fire, water, and earth in that order. In order to unlock this door, three *elemental manipulation* spells are required.

Bypassing these magical locks requires a casting of the appropriate *elemental manipulation* spell. However, the spell is only required when trying to open a door with a sigil on the side the character is facing. Doors which have locks are indicated on the . The symbol indicates on which side of the door the lock is situated. For instance, any person can enter the auditorium (page 341), but only an elementalist can leave, and then only by a door for which he can cast the appropriate *elemental manipulation*.

A successful casting unlocks the door. The lock remains inactive until the door is closed, at which point it automatically reactivates. Note that while the doors do not close themselves, an undead elementalist who finds an open sigil-engraved door will close it.

This system wasn't foolproof, for any literate sentient can use an alchemical *elemental manipulation* scroll, but mundane guards ensured strangers were routinely questioned. The security features, created using magic lost since the Blizzard War, are still in place today. The locks are impervious to *dispel* and *negate arcana*.

An elementalist recognizes the purpose of the sigils automatically. Other characters must make a Knowledge (Arcana) roll to determine their meaning.

UPPER LEVEL

The upper part of the school is a tumbled mass of weathered stone and aged timbers, testament to some cataclysmic struggle. The four towers, perhaps once 40 feet high, are now short stubs, their walls blown outward as if by an explosion. Nothing stirs among the ruins.

A casual search reveals two finds. First, nestled in an overhanging section of what was once the keep are the long-dead remains of a campfire. A Survival roll at –4 indicates the fire is several months old and has been protected from the elements by the masonry. A Tracking roll at –4 reveals signs of a struggle, but exactly how many individuals were involved and what they were is impossible to say. Second, the rubble at the base of each tower has been cleared away, revealing a blackened wooden door.

Upon each door is etched a single elemental sigil. A triangle adorns the northwest tower, a square on the northeast, a circle to the southeast, and a spiral on the southwest door. These are elemental locks. The sigil matches the elemental specialty of each tower's former students. When the school was in use, only students who knew the appropriate element could enter the towers and access the facilities on the level below. All the doors are closed, thus the sigils are active.

Behind each door is a spiral staircase descending into inky darkness. The stairwells spiral down for 50 feet.

LOWER LEVEL

Important: While within the lower level, use of the Elementalism arcane skill is not subject to the usual rules for the Siphoning. Instead, a roll of 1 on the Elementalism die leaves the caster Shaken (but his spell still activates if the Wild Die is a success). This applies to both heroes and NPCs equally.

The reason for the weakened Siphoning effect is the presence of the elemental vortices in Area 19. However, if an elemental vortex is destroyed, use of that element becomes subject to the standard Siphoning rules. Destroying the fire vortex, for instance, means fire spells cast using Elementalism are subject to the full Siphoning, but air, earth, and water are not.

All other spells, even those with an elemental trapping, are subject to the normal *Hellfrost* rules for backlash.

1) FILTHY POOL

A narrow ledge, slick with green algae, surrounds a pool of murky water. Not a ripple stirs on the surface of the pool. In the center of the opposite wall is a wooden door.

Students once used the pool to practice summoning and banishing water elementals, as well as for testing their *environmental protection* spells were properly cast. These days it is the dumping ground for the elementalist's failed experiments.

Terrain: The pool is only 10' deep, but the filthy water prevents the characters from seeing the bottom. The sides are sheer drops and the ledge around the room is slick with water and algae. Treat this as difficult ground.

Monsters: Lurking in the foul water is a number of flesh oozes, the results of failed attempts to cross mortal flesh with water elementals.

Ⓜ **Flesh Oozes (1 per hero):** See page 346.

Tactics: The oozes wait beneath the surface of water until the party either disturbs the water or one party member is halfway around the ledge before attacking. They then slither onto the ledge, using Gang Up tactics on a single character until one of their number has en-

RELICS WITH SPELLS

Relics containing a spell have an arcane skill, which *any* sentient creature capable of activating it may use as if it possessed the skill (so Wild Cards roll a Wild Die as normal). To use the device, the character needs to attune to it first. The caster may never use his arcane skill.

Activating the spell requires an action. Spells can be Maintained as long as the *user* fulfills all the regular requirements. Otherwise, these relics function exactly as per the spell.

For the items in this adventure, the user *and* object are both subject to the Siphoning (see the note on page 7)—loss of magical ability applies to the relic only, while physical affects plague only the wielder. Even if the wielder has an Arcane Background, the Siphoning doesn't affect him, since it is the relic which is drawing on magical energy.

veloped him. The remainder then goes in search of other prey. Unless the heroes are paying watchful attention to the pool, they must check for Surprise when the beasts emerge.

2) HOUSE OF HEALING

Three collapsed and worm-eaten beds stand against the west wall and two against the east wall. In the southeast corner stands a low wooden bench atop which stands a collection of dusty glass jars.

As healing falls under water elementalism, the school's infirmary was constructed here. Most water mages with a few years study under their belts could cast *healing*, and so the facilities were predominantly used by other students. The infirmary also housed a small herbalist laboratory, though all that remains are a few jars of dried herbs.

Treasure: The jars contain dried medicinal herbs. They remain useful to an herbalist even after several centuries. There are three doses of healing herbs for aiding burns and three for breakages. In addition, there is one dose of healing (regenerative) herbs, two purgatives, and two soporifics.

3) TEMPLE TO NEORTHE

The walls of this long chamber are painted with faded and cracked murals depicting ships, waterfalls, and sea creatures. Rows of rotten benches some scorched black by fire, run across the width of the room. To the north stands an altar of coral. Large chunks lie smashed on the floor, along with a silver jug squashed flat by some immense force.

While the majority of elementalists pray to Maera as goddess of magic, they also honor the elemental gods. During the battle for the school, a fire spell ignited the pews. It was quickly extinguished, but not before causing some damage. The altar was later defaced by the demonic attackers and the temple's holy symbol, the silver jug, crushed underfoot.

Treasure: The flattened silver jug weighs half a pound and is worth 20 gs to a silversmith. Any character who shakes it hears a rattling sound. Contained within is a black pearl, stashed for safety by an elementalist during the fight with the demons. This holds an alchemical *environmental protection (water)* spell.

4) POTION LABORATORY

Four benches stand against the walls around this room. Unusual apparatus, beakers, oil burners, retort stands, and potion bottles lie scattered haphazardly on the benches. Three skeletal figures clad in the tattered remains of robes are busying themselves at the desks.

While any student at the school could learn alchemy, the laboratory was constructed in the water element's domain (they having successfully argued that potions, the commonest form of alchemical device, were their territory)

Terrain: The benches can be tipped over to use as Cover with a Strength roll (as an action). They provide +3 Armor.

Monsters: Present are a former Maegister of Waeter and two of his students. The students are working at the bench to the left of the door, while the Maegister is working in the northeast corner.

Ⓜ **Undead Maegister of Waeter (1):** See page 347. The Maegister knows waeter (specialty), eir, and ertha spells. He wears leather boots with silver buckles shaped like cresting waves.

Ⓜ **Undead Elementalist (2):** See page 347. Both know only waeter spells.

Tactics: One of the elementalists tries to block the doorway while his companion angles *stun* spells just outside the door. When the mage guarding the door drops, the other takes his place.

The Maegister is paranoid, and instantly assumes the characters are rival elementalists here to steal his work. The fact they are living beings does not enter his warped mind. So long as his guards are standing, he spends each round randomly grabbing a potion flask from his desk and drinking its contents, so as not to allow them to fall into his "rivals'" hands. Roll a d10 to determine which potion he guzzles each round. Only one of each type exists—reroll used potions. If wounded, he casts *healing*,

and then continues quaffing potions. Any scuffle in the doorway provides the Maegister with Medium Cover.

Only once both his minions are dead does he turn his attention to the characters. He opens his assault with a *burst* spell, followed by three 2d8 damage *bolts* spread among the characters present (starting with those closest). If the heroes close to melee, he casts *deflection* as soon as possible (if he hasn't already drunk the potion). He tries to *teleport* to the auditorium when he has taken three wounds.

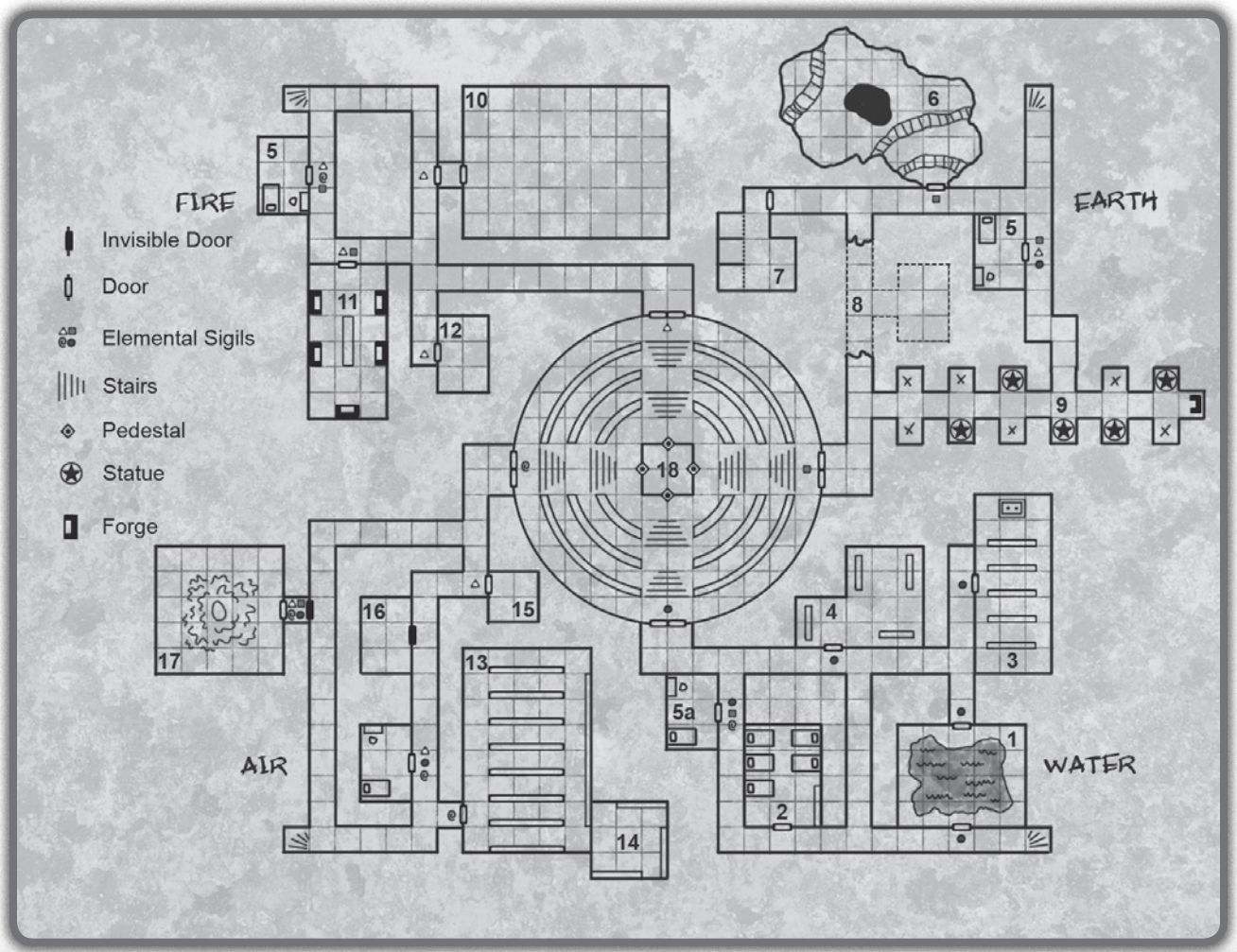
Once there, he spends a round explaining the situation to the elementalists present in the room (if not already slain). They then come searching for the characters while the Maegister of Waeter uses *healing* to recover his wounds. Once healed, he too joins the hunt. If the auditorium's occupants are already slain, he uses the time for *healing* spells before going off in search of the characters.

Treasure: The Maegister's boots are *boots of water walking* (d12 Elementalism die). He carries a seastone (a light, blue-green worth 290 gs) in his robes. This is one of the four elemental gems required to operate the teleport in the auditorium (page 341).

Gathered together, the laboratory equipment is equivalent to an alchemist's trunk. Due to wear and tear over centuries of use it has a base resale price of just 50 gs. A hero who thinks to collect the raw alchemical ingredients gains 1d6 x 50 gs worth. These can be resold at that price or used by a character to offset the cost of manufacturing his alchemical devices. Every 50 gs of ingredients weighs 1 pound.

The potions available in the laboratory are as below. Unless otherwise stated, they were created with a standard success.

d10	Potion
1	*Healing*
2	*Elemental Form (water)* (the mage can still quaff potions in this form.)
3	*Quickness*
4	*Succor* (cast with a raise)
5	*Farsight*
6	*Energy Immunity (fire)*
7	*Armor*
8	*Mend* (this is designed to be poured over a damaged vehicle and has no effect if consumed)
9	*Deflection* (cast with a raise)
10	*Heat Mask*



5) MAEGISTER'S CHAMBERS

This chamber contains a bed, a small desk, and a stool. The dust of centuries lies undisturbed and a heavy smell of mold and decay permeates the air.

Each head Maegister had private quarters-cum-study on this level, far away from the students (though they still had to go upstairs to eat and take a bath)—the other Maegisters lived on the top floor of the towers. To ensure the occupants were not disturbed, their chamber doors were inscribed with sigils for all the elements they knew.

Treasure: Lying on the desk of the Maegister of Waeter's quarters (5A on the map) is a single scroll case. Inside is a scroll with the *detect arcana* power written in Classical Anari. The Maegister of Waeter, who no longer needs to sleep and has not visited his chambers in centuries, has forgotten its existence. The other Maegister's chambers contain nothing of any value.

6) TEMPLE TO ERTHA

Stalactites hang from the ceiling and the walls are natural, but the sloping floor has clearly been worked by living hands. The floor slopes down toward the center of the chamber, where lies a large void.

Ertha is second only to Maera in terms of importance to most earth elementalists. During their excavation of the subterranean levels, the elementalists discovered a small natural cavern with a deep hole in the center. Determining this was an omen, they had a priest of Ertha consecrate the site so they could use it as a temple. They left the chamber largely in its natural state—only the floor has been worked smooth. Offerings to Ertha were thrown into the pit. In recent times, the crazed Maegister of Ertha has offered his goddess weapons and armor captured on raids. Unfortunately for the owners, they were still attached when the equipment was thrown into the abyss!

Terrain: The floor of the chamber is divided into a series of ledges. Crossing between different elevations is difficult ground. The hole in the center of the chasm is 200 feet deep. A character standing in a space partially occupied by the gaping void must make an Agility roll if Shaken or wounded, –2 if the attack was a raise. A failure results in him losing his balance and falling. Anyone plummeting into the hole suffers 10d6 when he hits the floor.

The hole leads into a huge cavern with numerous exits. These areas are left for the GM to expand in a future adventure if he so wishes. If he prefers not to present his party with distractions, there are no exits. A pile of rusting metal, coins, jumbled bones and decomposing corpses covers the cavern floor directly beneath the hole. These are the remains of sacrifices to Ertha, both ancient and recent.

Monsters: The Maegister of Ertha stands on the raised area at the rear of the chamber, calling upon Ertha to heed his prayers and make his creations whole. Kneeling before him, directly below his position, are a number of acolytes. The floor is clearly visible from the Maegister's position.

Ⓜ **Undead Maegister of Ertha (1):** See page 347. This elementalist knows ertha, fyr, and waeter spells, but refuses to use any not of the earth element. He wears a tiny amber ring in the shape of a coiled snake and carries a small, smooth stone in a pouch.

Ⓜ **Undead Elementalists (1 per hero):** See page 347. They know only ertha spells. Treat them as crouching when combat begins.

Tactics: All the elementalists attempt to cast *armor* as their first action. While the lesser elementalists then rush straight into the fray, the Maegister holds back and casts *elemental form* on his second turn. He then fires off an *entangle* spell in a Medium Burst Template (–1 penalty), aiming to entrap as many characters as possible. His next action is to cast *quake*, ensuring any foes still entangled are within the spell's area of effect.

Heroes who line up between him and the hole find themselves on the receiving end of his alchemical *knockdown* device. He uses his *viper weapon* device only if struck by an opponent in melee.

Attempting to push someone down the hole requires a Fighting attack. With success, the attacker then rolls his Strength (adding his Size) opposed by his rival's Strength (again with Size as a modifier). Success on this roll pushes the defender back 1" in a direction chosen by the attacker.

Treasure: The Maegister's amber snake ring is an alchemical *viper weapon* spell. In order to activate it, it must be touched against the target weapon. This requires a Fighting roll using the ring hand. His rounded stone contains an alchemical *knockdown* spell. When flicked toward a foe, the stone expands to become a huge boulder as it moves down the Cone Template, bowling over foes. He also carries an earthstone (a brown gemstone, worth 456 gs) in his pouch. This is one of the four elemental gems required to operate the teleport in the auditorium (page 341).

The treasure at the bottom of the hole amounts to 318 gs. Clerics of Ertha who steal the sacrificial offerings are guilty of a moderate sin. Failing to prevent comrades from taking the treasure is a minor sin.

7) CELLS

Along the west wall are three cells. From the center one protrudes a skeletally thin arm. A weak voice calls out, but the words are unintelligible. Opposite the cells stand a number of statues. None bear any defined features. Rather, they look like

unfinished sculptures—the basic humanoid form is there, but all the detail is lacking.

Aside from somewhere students were sent to calm down after an argument or fight, the cells were rarely used for their obvious purpose. They were private retreats, where mages could come to meditate in peace and practice their earth elementalism.

Terrain: The locks on the cells can be picked or smashed (Toughness 10). There is room to squeeze an arm through the bars, but the gap is too small for any creature larger than Size –2 to fit through.

Inside the middle cell are an emaciated Saxa and a decomposing male corpse. A Notice roll made from outside reveals parts of the corpse's flesh are missing. Checking the corpse more thoroughly requires the heroes to enter the cell. A few minutes investigation reveals bite marks inflicted by human teeth. A Healing roll reveals they were made post-mortem.

Monsters: The elementalists placed two stone golems here to oversee the prisoners. They took no part in the Golem War due to the proximity of a powerful source of elemental earth energy which blocked out the mysterious signal that triggered the conflict.

The golems remain motionless unless they are attacked or someone tries to open the gates without giving them the command phrase to stand down (the characters have no hope of discovering this). The golems do not respond to signs of combat elsewhere in this section of the lower school—their orders don't allow for that eventuality.

Ⓜ **Stone Golems (1 per 2 heroes):** See page 346.

Ⓜ **Prisoner (1):** The prisoner is the only survivor of the Convocation's expedition. Treat him as having all attributes at d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d4, Notice d8, and Stealth d8. He has two levels of Fatigue from hunger.

Tactics: The golems have no tactics beyond preventing anyone from freeing the prisoners through extreme physical force. They keep pounding at the same victim until he stops moving, regardless of whether that target is actually inflicting any harm on them.

Continuation: The prisoner is extremely emaciated and close to death. Once rescued, he tells the following tale. He has no wish to join the party and desires only to be freed so he can return home.

"My name is Argius ap-Bron," the man coughs. "I was hired as a guide to assist an expedition sent here on the orders of the Convocation of Elementalists. We arrived safely enough, though I couldn't say for sure how long ago that was. We searched the upper ruins and uncovered four doorways. By then it was late in the day, so we made camp. I don't know what happened, but we were all captured. At least me and my fellow scout were." He nods toward the corpse.

"We awoke in these cells. We've seen nothing of the other expedition members since that night. We'd been stripped of weapons, but they, whoever they are, left us our rations and waterskins. No one came to visit us or question us, or to give us food or water. My cellmate died within the week—the fool gobbled his rations too quick. My rations lasted several weeks before they ran dry. I've survived, but only by…by…by doing what I had to do. You understand, right? It was the only way I could stay alive!"

The elementalists were taken to the elemental heart and offered to the elemental lord as nourishment. Of no immediate use to the undead, the two guides were thrown in here. At some point (they're in no rush) the undead mages planned to use the pair in their experiments. Unfortunately, after centuries of unlife the mages have forgotten that living beings need food and water to survive and the two golems were programmed long ago to ignore anything said by the captives.

8) CAVE-IN

A section of the ceiling has collapsed, choking the corridor with lumps of masonry.

The corridor was deliberately collapsed during the demonic invasion by an earth elementalist, crushing a number of demons to pulp. The current occupants have no interest in clearing away the rubble. The characters can clear away two yards worth of debris for every four hours of work. This assumes a four-person work party. Increase the time by one hour for each person below this number involved in the task. There is nothing of interest amid the debris or in the rubble filled chamber aside from a few shards of bone.

9) CORRIDOR OF AGONY

Deep alcoves line both sides of this corridor. In some, stand ancient statues, their features chipped or cracked. Other statues appear much newer. Curiously, these ones carry wooden shields on their left arms and wield metal long swords in their right hands. One end opens into a T-junction, while at the other stands a stone throne.

All the alcoves once contained statues of the Maegisters who had died while in the employ of the school. Students would come here to reflect on their images in order to comprehend the sacrifice the Convocation might ask them to make. The throne at the far end was a favorite meditation spot for the Maegister of Ertha, who would gaze down the line of alcoves, wondering what successive generations might make of his deeds.

Many of the statues were badly damaged after the attack. When it became obvious the living statue experiment was only a partial success, the Maegister of Ertha

had his creations placed in the alcoves as trophies until he devised a cure.

Terrain: Entering a square containing a statue (as opposed to a living statue) is difficult ground, as is the space containing the throne.

Monsters: Half a dozen living statues stand amid the alcoves. They remain completely still, for the slightest movement causes them agonizing pain. While they appear like statues at first glance, their shields are wooden and their swords metal. Touching a statue's stone body has no effect, but moving a shield or sword sends pain coursing through every fiber of its being. This causes the living statue to enter a berserk state and attack the nearest character. The statue's frenzied screams trigger the other statues, which immediately join the fray. Check for Surprise.

Ⓜ **Living Statues (2 + 1 per hero):** See page 346.

Tactics: The enraged statues are extremely dangerous. Although they only ever target the nearest opponent (inadvertently using Gang Up tactics) their attacks are always Wild Attacks. While they are relatively easy to strike, foes who allow them to attack first find themselves on the end of a furious blow.

10) BLACKENED CHAMBER

Every surface in this large, empty chamber is scorched black as if by intense heat. Thick soot lines the floor. Dark flakes, disturbed by a breeze created by opening the door, drift lazily to the floor from the walls and ceiling.

This chamber was a practice room for fire elementalists. Here they could unleash fiery devastation against mannequins, summon and banish fire elementals, switch to elemental form, and attempt to resist scorching attacks without endangering the rest of the school.

Terrain: The outer door is emblazoned with the fire element sigil, but the inner door is not. A security feature designed to stop rogue fire elementals from escaping prevents the inner door from opening until the outer door is closed and vice versa. The inner door has Toughness 16.

Monsters: Decades of summoning fire elementals and centuries of exposure to the raw elemental energy crackling in the elemental heart have imbued the soot with a primitive and malign intelligence.

Ⓜ **Soot Elemental (1):** See page 346.

Tactics: The soot elemental waits until the door is opened and someone has entered before attacking. It then rises up as a dark cloud of soot. Check for Surprise. Its low intelligence prevents it from doing anything other than moving to envelope as many living foes as possible in its template.

Treasure: Any character pushing open the inner door realizes it is a relic. Unlike other relics, this one does not require attuning to use (though a hero still needs to attune to learn its power). The door is totally impervious to fire and heat and is magically toughened, but has no other special qualities. It weighs 150 pounds, making it difficult to extract.

11) FORGES

A wall of heat assaults you as the door opens. Five red-hot forges stand against the walls. Four are worked by black-skinned humans wearing only small loincloths. At the back of the room, clad in red robes is a withered figure, its hands locked behind its back. A long table covered in hammers, tongs, and other blacksmith's tools stands in the center of the room.

Mundane metalworking was considered a core study for those who sought to master earth and fire. The elementalists ran a cottage industry producing farming implements and weapons to help finance the school, and to give each elementalist a worthy mundane trade through which he could support himself after graduation.

The forge room also served as the temple to Kenaz, the mages' patron after Maera. The southern forge is covered in symbols of the god of hearths. While of interest to Kenaz's priests, it weighs several tons. Informing the cult as to its location earns the heroes a reward in the form of a favor. See the free download entitled **Favors**, available from our web site.

Terrain: Movement through a space occupied by the table or forges is difficult terrain. Being knocked into a forge causes 2d6 damage and the victim has a chance of catching fire. The table contains a number of hammers and tongs. These can be used as small improvised weapons in an emergency.

Monsters: The Maegister of Fyr stands at the back of the room, facing the door. He oversees a number of his creations, known as fireborns, which are working at the other forges.

Ⓜ **Maegister of Fyr (1):** See page 344. He knows fyr, ertha, and eir spells.

Ⓜ **Fireborns (1 per hero):** See page 345.

Tactics: The fireborns rush toward the nearest character, positioning themselves where possible to be able to attack and block the characters' progress toward the Maegister.

The Maegister casts *armor* (stone skin) on the first round. On the second round he invokes *elemental form*. Combined with his armor, his body has the appearance of a walking lava flow. He next activates *deflection*, which takes the form of heat shimmer. He then uses one of his alchemical devices and drops a *prolonged blast* on the doorway, knowing his minions are immune to its effect. Unless the party makes it through the *prolonged blast*, he saturates the area using his elemental form's flame strike ability on successive rounds. Once two heroes are adjacent to him, he activates his *aura* alchemical device and proceeds to swipe at them with his burning fists.

If hard-pressed (GMs call), he attempts to *teleport* into the center of his *prolonged blast* spell. From there he runs toward the auditorium to summon reinforcements. Assuming the auditorium's occupants aren't dead, he spends a round informing his comrades of what is occurring. While they rush to the rescue, he stays at the back and supports them through his spells. Should the auditorium be empty, he heads to the temple of Ertha to summon aid. He never asks the Maegister of Waeter for support. In the event all his allies are slain, he waits in the auditorium for the heroes to find him and then unleashes *burst* as they enter.

Treasure: The Maegister carries two alchemical devices. The first is a chunk of obsidian (volcanic glass) inside which burns a fire. When thrown, this activates *prolonged blast* (2d6 damage in a Medium Burst Template) with a fire trapping. His second device is a vial filled with naphtha. When opened or broken, the holder becomes enveloped in a fiery *aura*. The Maegister also owns a relic, a long sword which inflicts +2 damage against creatures that are immune or resistant to fire.

He also carries a small hearthstone (a deep gold gemstone) worth 619 gs. This is one of the four elemental gems required to operate the teleport in the auditorium (page 341).

12) STORAGE

A thick layer of dust covers a jumble of broken glass, lumps of sulfur, balls of pitch, goblets of naphtha, and other assorted chemicals.

Once used to store ingredients for use in alchemical potions with heat and fire trappings, the store room was badly damaged in the attack. Since then, the Maegister of Fyr has plundered what he could easily find for use in his experiments.

Treasure: An hour of careful searching and testing by a character with Knowledge (Alchemy) at d6 or higher accumulates ingredients worth 1d4 x 50 gs. Each 50 gs worth weighs a pound. These can be sold at the stated value or used by the characters to offset the cost of ingredients for their own alchemical creations. They can only be used in devices with heat or fire trappings.

13) LIBRARY

The tinkle of a bell above the door rings out as you enter. Inside are a number of thick, wooden stacks running across the room in orderly rows. Most show signs of burning and having been hewed. A few dust-covered books and scrolls still rest on the shelves, but the great majority of the stacks are bare.

Like the alchemical lab, the library was open to any student. The use of the water sigil was a minor security feature designed to prevent outsiders from gaining easy access. The library was deliberately torched by the elementalists when the demons broke through into the area, but the flames did not catch enough to destroy its entire contents. What few volumes remain are concerned with petty aspects of magic (not enough to count as tomes of lore) and mundane issues.

Terrain: Movement through a square occupied by one of the stacks is difficult ground. The stacks are Toughness 8 and provide +4 Armor if used as Cover. Causing a wound to a stack destroys a 1" segment. The square it occupies is henceforth treated as difficult ground. Flinging books at a foe makes a good Agility Trick. As a thrown object, they have range 2/4/8 and inflict Strength damage.

The secret door is activated by pulling a tome entitled *On the Construction of Secret Portals* (see below). A Notice roll made at –2 reveals the existence of this book, as does a *detect portal* spell (or an equivalent). Pulling the book from the shelf unlocks a section of the stacks, which swings inward.

Monsters: Two undead elementalists are in the northeast corner of the library, thumbing through the remaining books in search of a vague reference useful to their Maegister in his experiments.

Ⓜ **Undead Elementalist (2):** See page 347. Both know only eir spells.

Tactics: The elementalists hear the door open thanks to the bell. Paranoid the intruders are from a rival school trying to spy on their master's research, they take action immediately. They begin by quietly casting *deflection*. Once the spell is in place, they sneak along the east wall until they spot whoever has entered and then attack with their staves.

Treasure: *On the Construction of Secret Portals* is a tome of lore. It grants +2 to Notice rolls to detect secret and concealed doors. The Convocation is not interested in this volume. Biscali allows the characters to retain it.

14) SECRET LIBRARY

Three tables are jumbled high with leather-bound tomes and scroll cases.

While the outer library was open to all students and visitors, the elementalists kept their most treasured volumes (magical and mundane) in this hidden room. Security was not a major issue, as knowledge of the secret library was well known to the student body and the tomes were readily available to them. Its creation was more a safety feature to protect the books should a fire ever break out in the library.

Trap: In order to prevent fire, the air elementalists imbued the secret door with a powerful charm. Any heat-generating flame (so not *light* spells) is automatically extinguished when it passes the threshold. A *negate arcana* spell against d6 arcane skill temporarily disables the spell. Fire elementals or those in *elemental form*

NO TEMPLE TO THUNOR?

The schools of earth, fire and water each have a small temple to their respective elemental god. The air elementalist section of the lower school contains no such structure. This was done to avoid offending Thunor, whose temples are always constructed as open-air structures. Hence, the temple was founded atop the air elementalist's tower. For those of curious mind, the temple to Maera was constructed in the main keep.

Similarly, the cramped conditions of the lower levels were not conducive to invoking air spells such as *fly* and *teleport*. Students practiced much of their art above ground.

(fire) must make a Spirit roll at –2 to cross into the chamber.

The fire mage found a *glyph* scroll in here and used it to booby-trap his diary (see below). Any person opening the book without giving the correct command word activates the spell. It explodes as a 3d6 Medium Template *blast* with a fire trapping, destroying the book and automatically igniting the mundane tomes. Roll a d6 for each tome of learning, tome of lore, scroll, and the other diaries to see if they catch fire.

Once ignited, a book or scroll burns to the state of being useless in two rounds. Extinguishing a book by hand takes an action, but only one book per person can be dampened in this manner. Using appropriate water magic allows all books in the spell's area of effect to be extinguished, but ruins the contents.

Treasure: The secret library is a storehouse of valuable items. In theory, the non-alchemical devices belong to the Convocation and Biscali will insist on keeping them (assuming the party admits to their existence), but unless there is a representative present who forbids it, the characters are free to make use of these items. All the tomes and scrolls are written in Classical Anari.

Among the hundred or so mundane books (each of which weighs 2 lbs) which the Convocation would like returned, are four tomes of lore. These are entitled *The Register of Elementalism* (+4; applies only to matters involving the Convocation), *Secrets of the Four Spheres* (+4; applies only to the elemental realms), *A Study of Magical Sigils* (+2; Knowledge (Arcana)), and *The Alchemical Art* (+2; Knowledge (Alchemy)).

There are also four tomes of learning. Each applies to Elementalism of the appropriate element: *fly* (air), *bridge* (earth), *heat mask* (fire), and *storm* (water).

In addition, there are a number of scrolls: 2 x *bolt* (single bolt, 2d10 damage, air trapping), *lock/unlock* (magical key appears in the lock), *sphere of might* (fire), and *water walk* (reader becomes buoyant).

Finally, there are four untitled volumes. These are the diaries of the undead Maegisters, and each details their warped experiments to merge flesh and raw element. Reading each of these four volumes takes 2d6 hours. After finishing a volume, the reader must make a Guts roll or roll on the Fear Table at +2. Glancing inside one warrants a Guts roll to avoid the effects of Fear for the next hour, for the images are very graphic. Without the energy of the elemental heart, the experiments cannot be reproduced.

15) ROBBED TREASURY

The reinforced wooden door to this chamber hangs from its hinges, snapped in twain by some immense force in antiquity. Inside, fragments of wood and a handful of gold and silver coins lie scattered on the floor.

The room once served as a vault for students to store their personal monies. It was looted during the attack, though the attackers did leave behind small amounts in their haste to slaughter the elementalists.

Treasure: The coins amount to a paltry 97 gs.

16) TREASURY

Important: The door leading to this chamber is protected by a permanent *invisibility* spell, and thus can be detected only with *detect arcana*. Should all four gems in the elemental heart be destroyed, the spell fails, revealing the portal.

A dozen small chests, arranged in four groups of three, are stacked against the far wall. Centuries of dust lies undisturbed on the flagstone floor.

This was the school's main treasury. The chests are arranged by element. Each chest bears the nonmagical sigil of the respective element. The undead elementalists have long forgotten the chamber exists.

Terrain: The chests are locked with complex puzzle locks. Lockpicking rolls have a –2 penalty. Heroes can use Smarts at –4 to fathom the mechanism. A single failed roll causes the lock to jam, preventing all further attempts. Smashing the chests open is only slightly easier (Toughness 14).

Traps: Each chest contains a potent *dispel glyph*, continuously powered by the elemental vortices in the elemental heart (see page 342). Each chest rolls a d10 arcane die to *dispel* the effects of any spell cast at it. When the appropriate gem is destroyed, the *glyphs* fail.

Treasure: Each chest holds the equivalent of 500 gs in assorted coins, gems and pieces of jewelry.

17) HATCHERY

Important: The door leading to this chamber is protected by a permanent *invisibility* spell, and thus can be discovered only with *detect arcana*. Should all four

gems in the elemental heart be destroyed, the spell fails, revealing the portal.

A sphere of lightning crackles and hisses around a large ovoid object in the center of this otherwise empty room.

The egg is a storm dragon egg, found in an abandoned nest high in the Icebarrier Mountains shortly before the school was sacked. The arkhwisard who found it had plans to hatch the beast and then tame it, but died before he could discover a method of inducing its development.

Terrain: Any character passing through the lightning sphere suffers 2d6 damage and is knocked back 1". It also causes the lightning sprites (see below) to attack. Because the lightning is not a magical effect, it cannot be *dispelled* or *negated*. *Banish* works, but each casting affects only a single sprite.

Monsters: The lightning crackling around the egg isn't a trap. The entire web of electricity is made up of a number of lightning sprites, rare elemental beings summoned and bound to the chamber centuries ago. Their electrical energy keeps the embryo alive, but prevents growth. To all intents and purposes, the egg is in a state of suspended animation.

Ⓜ **Lightning Sprites (2 per hero):** See page 346.

Tactics: The lightning sprites, while small, pack a powerful punch. The sprites orders are to protect the egg. They divide their number equally among all characters in the room, gaining Gang Up bonuses where applicable. They do not follow any retreating characters out of the room, but will move to attack if targeted from a distance by magic.

Treasure: The dragon egg is worth 500 gs to the temple of Thunor—it isn't due to hatch for another 30 years.

18) AUDITORIUM

This large, circular chamber is arranged on three tiers. In each seating area are wooden benches arranged in a quarter circle. Stone stairs lead down between the benches to a slightly raised podium Standing upon the podium, in line with the four double-doors which lead into this chamber, are slender pedestals. Four withered corpses sit in the highest tier, while a lone figure in stained and rotten robes stands in the center of the pedestals.

The auditorium is built on three descending circular levels. The uppermost tier holds the most seats and was used by Prynciples, the most common students. The second tier was for Magi (the plural of Magus). The smallest seating section, on the lower tier, was reserved for Maegisters. The school had a single Arkhwisard. When not lecturing, he sat wherever he pleased. All other elementalists were required to sit together according to their specialty. This seating is to the right of the appropriate door as you look at the map (to the left of those entering).

Terrain: Ascending or descending through the tiers is difficult ground except via the stairs. The wooden benches are narrow and count as difficult ground. Furthermore, any hero who runs along them and rolls a 1 on his running die slips and falls prone. The benches are waist-high and grant +3 Armor to those using them as Cover.

The podium in the center is only a few inches off the floor. The pedestals are chest-high and slim. They do not hamper movement. Each has a small, circular depression on the top. See below for further details.

Monsters: Within the auditorium are four elementalist Prynciples, each knowing a single element. They are seated centrally in the top tier of the appropriate benches. The figure on the podium is the former Maegister of Eir.

Ⓜ **Undead Maegister of Eir (1):** See page 347. This elementalist knows eir, fyr, and waeter spells. He carries on him an origami hawk and a miniature silver hand (see treasure).

Ⓜ **Undead Elementalist (4):** See page 347.

Tactics: The Maegister begins by *teleporting* out of the auditorium to the nearest chamber within range. Once here, he takes the time to cast *deflection* before heading back to the auditorium. Once there, he lets loose with *blast* (fire), *bolt* (air), and *burst* (fire) spells, avoiding melee if possible. If wounded, he uses the nearest benches for cover and casts *healing*. Against heroes using obvious relics like wands, the Maegister employs his silver hand, using its arcane skill to try and Disarm the character.

Each of the other four elementalists uses different tactics. The eir specialist casts *deflection* and then enters melee with the nearest hero. The fyr mage also activates *deflection* as his first action, but then proceeds to use the benches as cover while unleashing *bolt* spells. The elementalist of earth begins by casting *armor* on himself. He then moves to his comrades in turn and bestows *armor* upon them. Only when cornered, or when all his compatriots have the *armor* spell active, does he enter melee. The water mage uses his *stun* spells to aid his allies, targeting as many characters as possible without catching his fellows in the burst template.

Treasure: The paper bird is an alchemical device containing *voice on the wind*. To activate it, the message is whispered to the bird, which is then thrown into the air, activating the spell. The silver hand is a relic containing the *telekinesis* spell with a d10 Elementalism die. When the spell is activated, the hand moves accordingly. If the user telekinetically grabs a foe, the hand forms a fist. If he throws his victim, the hand does a backhand wave as if batting away an object. Finally, he carries on his person a small windstone (a blue gemstone, worth 500 gs). This is one of the four elemental gems required to operate the teleport on the podium.

Pedestals & Podium: If the four gems found through-

out the level are placed in the correct depressions in the same combat round, they activate a powerful *teleport* spell, which takes the form of shimmering light enveloping the entire podium. The hearthstone goes on the pedestal nearest the door marked with the fire sigil, the earthstone the one nearest the earth door, the windstone near the air symbol door, and the seastone sits atop the pedestal down the stairs from the water door.

That the podium is magical is revealed to *detect arcana* spells. The heroes must work out the gems' purpose themselves. If they are having trouble, a successful Knowledge (Arcana) roll reveals something must be placed in the depressions to empower the spell, something related to the four elements.

A safety feature prohibits the teleport from transporting anyone while a gem remains on a pedestal (you need the gems to get back). Once the last gem is removed, the *teleport* remains active for a single round. Anything on the podium at this time is teleported to the elemental heart (Area 19), with one exception—the gems can only be teleported if there is a conscious, sentient creature on the podium. This is to stop anyone teleporting away the keys by accident.

Note that characters sent through the teleport as scouts have no way of returning unless they hold all the gems (or they can roll seven raises on single use of the *teleport* spell). Similarly, those in the auditorium have no way of reaching their comrades unless they have all the gems.

Do ***not*** run the encounter with the elemental lord if any characters go through the teleport without all the gems in their possession. Instead, ignore those party members and return to those in the auditorium (who have the gems). Keep track of passing time. When the others eventually decide to follow, the characters that went ahead must fight as many combat rounds as it took their comrades to come to their rescue.

If the scouts are carrying all the gems, then run the battle straight away. Any characters left in the auditorium can assist the GM by shuffling cards or rolling dice for the elemental lord (the GM should always control the lord's tactics and keep his full stats hidden from the players).

19) THE ELEMENTAL HEART

As the light fades you immediately become aware of the crackling of raw magical energy. In each corner of the room is a swirling elemental vortex—columns of fierce flames, smashing rocks, a whirlwind and an inverted whirlpool. Each column of energy rises from floor to ceiling, and glows with an eerie light. Through the vortices you can just make out something at the center of each, a pedestal perhaps. Outside each vortex are four columns, carved representations of colossal elementals of a type matching the nearest vortex. Each reaches upward, its outstretched arms supporting the high ceiling.

In the center of the room, near four corpses, is an ever-changing elemental form some 20 feet in height, flickering between forms seemingly at random. At first you think it another vortex, but then it laughs and begins moving!

Deal action cards. Do not check for Surprise—the heroes are very likely to be expecting trouble, and the elemental lord can see the elemental vortices being drained to form the teleport points so it knows that someone is coming. The characters begin in the indicated spaces on the map. Whoever used the fire gem appears on the square marked "F," the water gem on "W," and so on.

The chamber is located 300 yards (150") below the auditorium. A natural cave, it was discovered using *detect* and first investigated by brave air elementalists using *teleport* spells (after an earth elemental first created a series of smaller chambers within reach of the elementalists' spells). The elementalists enlarged and smoothed the chamber. Using powerful enchantments, they created the elemental vortices to help power their experiments and protect their home.

Terrain: The elemental vortices take the forms of a large column of fire, clashing rocks, turbulent water, and roaring winds respectively. Each vortex extends from the chamber floor to the ceiling, and thus cannot be avoided by flight.

Movement through a vortex is treated as difficult ground. Each time a character moves through or begins his turn in an elemental vortex he suffers 2d10 damage. Characters passing through the fire vortex have a chance of catching fire. Thus, a hero who moves through the vortex to the platform in the center and returns to the main chamber in the same round suffers the damage twice. *Teleporting* causes no harm. *Environmental protection* provides no protection against the magical vortices. *Energy immunity* does not provide full protection due to the power of the vortices. Instead, the mage takes half damage from the vortex matching the element of his spell. A character standing completely on the central square of each vortex is in the eye of the storm and takes no damage.

The vortices block clear line of sight. All attacks in, out of, or through the vortices suffer a –4 penalty. The vortices cannot be *dispelled* or *negated*.

On each dais is a thin, chest-high column (does not hamper movement), atop which sits a large gem—hearthstone for fire, windstone for air, earthstone for earth, and seastone for water. These have Toughness 10. Destroying a gem causes the vortex to immediately cease (never to return). The squares covered by the vortex are now clear terrain. Removing the gem from the center of the vortex has no effect. Destroying a vortex also removes that sigil from all elemental locks (this is where the locks draw their power). Hence, removing all four vortices disables every lock in the school. Finally, crushing the gem prevents the elemental lord from transforming into that element again. Simply treat a card suit for a destroyed gem as a Joker for the purposes of his flux. If all four gems are destroyed, so is the elemental lord.

Each column has Toughness 20 (4) and has Heavy Armor. They block movement and line of sight.

Concealed beneath the elemental lord's starting position is a low podium, identical to the one in the auditorium. The gems the heroes are carrying can be used to leave this chamber, but all four must be placed in the same round for the teleport to function.

The corpses are those of the missing junior elementalists. One was crushed to a pulp, another burned to a crisp, one suffocated, and the last one drowned. The Maegister who led the expedition is not here—he was vaporized.

Monsters: Only the elemental lord dwells here. He begins in the position shown on the map. Note that he fills four adjacent squares. In order to use his regeneration, all four squares must be inside a vortex.

Ⓜ **Insane Elemental Lord:** See page 344.

Tactics: As the elemental lord has no control over its form, its tactics vary from round to round. In air form, it favors his Wind Blast ability against tightly packed heroes. Against separated heroes, it uses its Push against the hero nearest a vortex in the hope of blowing him back into the maelstrom, and it fires a single 2d10 damage *bolt* at a second hero (incurring a multi action penalty).

Its earth form is less tactically minded. It moves toward the nearest character, running if necessary, and begins pummeling him with its huge fists. If it obviously cannot reach a character and enter melee, it runs toward the nearest one anyway and casts either *bolt* or *burst*, depending on how many characters it can catch in a cone template (multi action penalty).

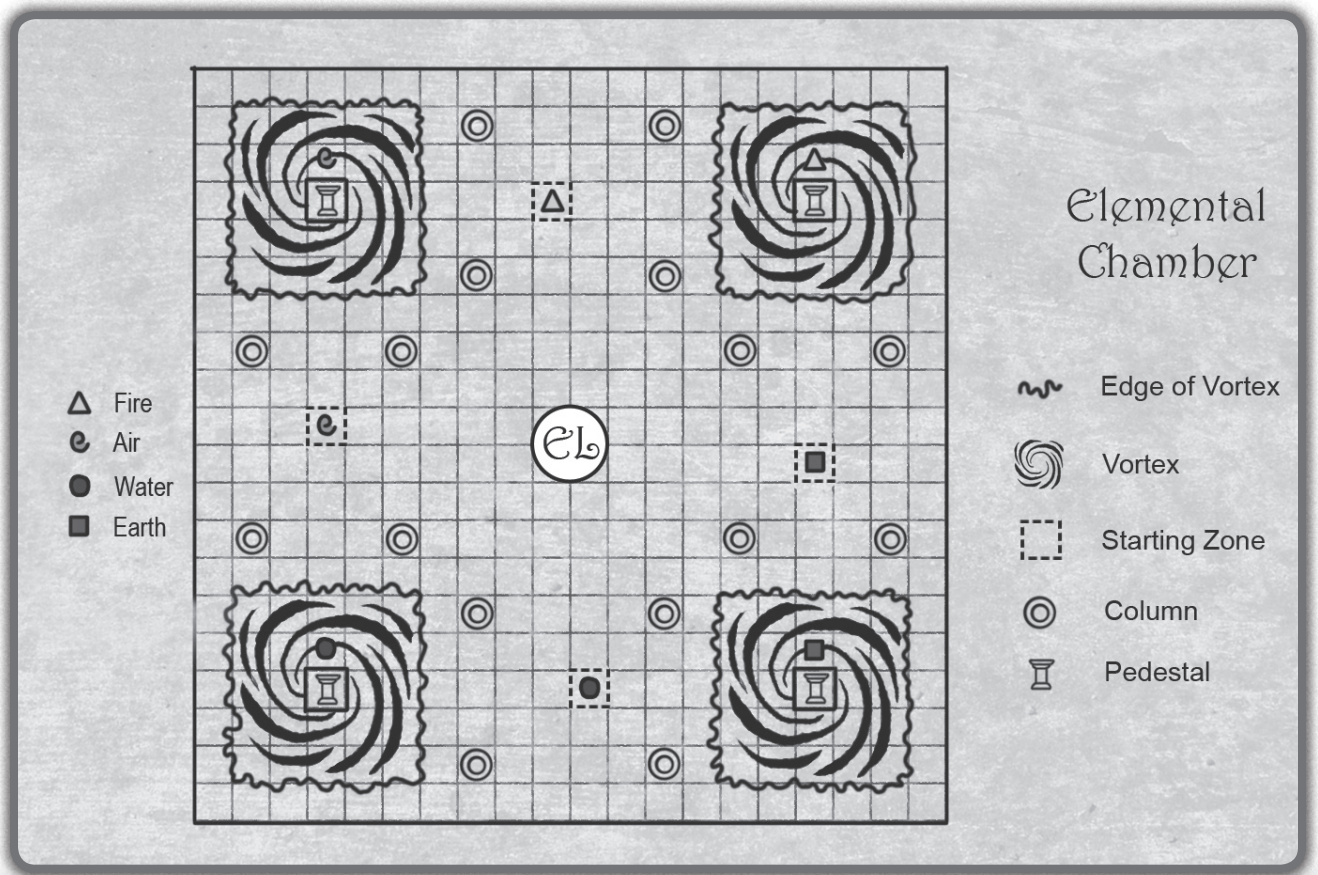
As a fire elemental it favors Flame Strike, regardless of how many characters are caught in its template. If there are adjacent targets, it attempts to strike one with its fiery fists *and* Flame Strike as many others as possible (multi action penalty).

When transformed into water, it follows the same tactics as for a fire elemental, exchanging Waterspout for Flame Strike.

Once it has taken a wound it forgoes any attempts to enter melee or close range on distant foes. Instead, it moves toward the appropriate energy vortex, using the Defend maneuver if necessary. If its form allows ranged attacks, then it endeavors to use its abilities at the most opportune time. Otherwise, it resorts to using *bolt*, incurring a multi action penalty for running as appropriate. Should the matching vortex have been disabled, it retains the tactics for its elemental form, instead.

AFTERMATH

Once the heroes have retrieved the relics and discovered the fate of the Convocation's expedition they can return back to Biscali's office. He asks to see *everything* the party discovered. He touches each object in turn to verify whether it is a relic or alchemical device. Biscali



has no interest in the alchemical devices. Once all the magical treasure is on display, Biscali casts *detect arcana* and carefully studies the heroes for any hidden objects. Heroes who object are told the spell is not cast out of lack of trust, but out of prudence—you don't get to be an arkhwisard without being naturally distrustful of others.

Once he has taken what he believes rightfully belongs to the Convocation, he thanks the party and offers them refreshment. While they dine, he hurriedly arranges for an expedition to return to the school and scour every inch of it just in case the heroes are trying to cheat him. Unfortunately this takes several days.

Once they are ready to depart, he pays them as promised and asks where they would like to be transported. Should the heroes wish to be sent anywhere within 100 miles of the school, Biscali assumes (rightly or wrongly) they have stashed relics there for future retrieval. The *sanctuary* spell he provides them with instead teleports them to the Convocation's school in Drakeport (a clerical error, should Biscali ever be confronted about this in the future).

BESTIARY

MAEGISTER ARTO STENVALL

Arto Stenvall, the son of a reindeer herder, discovered elementalism when he and his father stumbled across an elementalist lost and near-death on the icy hills his family once called home. After the mage was nursed back to health, he used a few spells to aid Stenvall's father with some chores. Stenvall immediately became fascinated and desired to learn more. Being poor, his father was only too pleased to apprentice the young lad to a wizard.

Stenvall studied long and hard, slowly rising through the ranks of the Convocation. Several years ago, he came to the attention of Urit Biscali, who hired him as his private secretary and instructed him in advanced air elementalism. Stenvall now serves as Biscali's emissary on official business. He knows Urit has a horde of relics, not to mention another dark secret, but Stenvall profits from his master's position. He has no intention of ever betraying him.

Listed trappings are his preferred spells. As a master of three elements, he can switch between trappings for spells common to all branches of elementalism.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d12, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d10

Skills: Elementalism d12, Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d10, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Alchemy) d10, Knowledge (Arcana) d12, Notice d10, Persuasion d10, Stealth d8, Streetwise d10, Throwing d8

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: Alchemy, Arcane Background (Elementalism: Air), Charismatic, Command, Connection (Convocation), Elemental Mastery (Earth and Fire), Improved Concentration, Improved Focus, Improved Level Headed, New Power, Spell Finesse (earth *bolt*, AP 2, Arcane), Strong Willed

Powers: *Armor* (stone skin), *banish* (air, earth, & fire elementals only), *bladebreaker* (invisible hands snap weapon), *blast* (fireball), *bolt* (stone fists pummel victim), *deflection* (wind), *elemental form* (air, earth, & fire), *elemental manipulation* (air, earth, fire), *entangle* (victims sink into the earth), *speak language* (air spirits translate words), *teleport* (vanishes in a whirlwind).

Gear: Staff (Str+d4, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2-hands)

Alchemical Devices: Alchemical coin (*sanctuary*), alchemical vial of grit (*armor* cast with raise), alchemical vial of air *deflection* cast with raise), two alchemical balls of sulfur (*blast*, 3d6 in Medium Burst Template)

THE ELEMENTAL LORD

Created using fell and eldritch elemental magic, the elemental lord was supposed to be a "super elemental," a combination of all the strengths of the elementals but with none of their weaknesses. Instead, the result was an insane abomination, whose form is in a state of constant, uncontrollable flux. Should the vortices be destroyed, only its *bolt* and *burst* powers are subject to the Siphoning.

Special Abilities:

* **Elemental:** No additional damage from Called Shots; Fearless; immune to disease and poison.
* **Elemental Flux:** Each round, the lord's action card determines its attributes and other special abilities. See below for these details. A Club means it possesses the attributes and abilities of an earth elemental. On a Diamond it becomes a water elemental. Hearts transform it into a fire elemental. With a Spade, it takes the form of an air elemental. Should it draw a Joker, it retains its current form.
* **Hard to Banish:** The elemental lord counts as four creatures for the purposing of *banish*. A successful *banish* prevents the elemental lord from assuming the form it was in when the spell was cast. It retains its last elemental form if the *banished* suit is drawn. Elementalists have a harder time using *banish*, as they must wait until the lord switches to an elemental form they know for their spell to have any chance of success. A fire-only mage, for instance, cannot *banish* the lord if it is in air, earth, or water form.
* **Hardy:** Successive Shaken results do not cause a wound.
* **Large:** Attackers are +2 to attack rolls due to its size.
* **Master:** The elemental lord rolls a d10 Wild Die when using Elementalism.
* **Powers:** The elemental lord can cast *bolt* and *burst*. Its trappings match its elemental form when a spell is invoked.
* **Regeneration:** The elemental lord *automatically*

heals one wound when it moves adjacent to an elemental field matching its current form.
* **Size +6:** The elemental lord towers 25' high.

AIR FORM

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d8
Skills: Elementalism d12+2, Fighting d10, Notice d8, Shooting d10, Stealth d6
Pace: —; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness**: 12
Special Abilities:
* **Ethereal:** Air elementals can maneuver through any non-solid surface. They can seep through the cracks in doors, bubble through water, and rush through sails.
* **Flight:** Pace 6. They may never "run."
* **Invulnerability:** Immune to all non-magical attacks.
* **Push:** The air elemental can push a single target 1d6" directly away from itself by directing a concentrated blast of air at the victim. The target may make a Strength roll, with each success and raise reducing the amount he's moved by 1".
* **Whirlwind:** As long as the air elemental does not move that turn it may attempt to pick up a foe. Make an opposed Strength check, and if the air elemental wins, its foe is pulled into the swirling maelstrom of its body. While trapped, the target is at –2 on all rolls including damage, to hit and Strength rolls to free himself. The air elemental cannot move as long as it wishes to keep foes trapped inside its form.
* **Wind Blast:** Air elementals can send directed blasts of air at foes using the Cone Template and a Shooting roll. Foes may make an opposed Agility roll to avoid the blast. The damage is 2d6 points of nonlethal damage.

EARTH FORM

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+5, Vigor d10
Skills: Elementalism d12+2, Fighting d10, Notice d8, Shooting d10, Stealth d6
Pace: 4; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 17 (4)
* **Armor +4:** Rocky hide.
* **Bash:** Str+d6.
* **Burrowing (10"):** Earth elementals can meld in and out of the ground.

FIRE FORM

Attributes: Agility d12+1, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8
Skills: Elementalism d12+2, Fighting d10, Notice d8, Shooting d10, Stealth d6
Pace: 6; **Parry**: 7; **Toughness:** 12
Special Abilities:
* **Fiery Touch:** Str+d6; chance of catching fire.
* **Flame Strike:** Fire elementals can project a searing blast of flame using the Cone Template. Characters within the cone must beat the spirit's Shooting roll with Agility or suffer 2d10 damage, plus the chance of catching fire.
* **Immunity (Fire):** Takes no damage from any source of heat or fire.
* **Invulnerability:** Fire elementals are immune to all non-magical attacks, but suffer 1d6 damage when doused in at least a gallon of water, +2 per additional gallon.
* **Weakness (Cold):** Takes double damage from cold, coldfire, or ice.

WATER FORM

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10
Skills: Elementalism d12+2, Fighting d10, Notice d8, Shooting d10, Stealth d6
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 13
Special Abilities:
* **Invulnerability:** Water elementals are immune to all non-magical attacks except fire. A torch or lantern causes them 1d6 damage but is instantly put out if it hits.
* **Seep:** Water elementals can squeeze through any porous gap as if it were Difficult Ground.
* **Slam:** Str+d6.
* **Waterspout:** Water spirits can project a torrent of rushing water in the shape of a Cone template. This automatically puts out any normal fires. Creatures within the cone must make a Strength roll at –2 or be Shaken.

EXPERIMENTS

The elementalist's experimentation into crossing living tissue with elementals produced a variety of weird and wondrous, yet thoroughly vile, monstrosities.

FIREBORN

The internal organs of these poor captives were replaced with raw elemental fire energy. Their skin is blackened and cracked, revealing thin lines of fire beneath. Their eyes are white-hot pits and when they open their mouths it is like looking into an active volcano. They can cause their hands to engulf in scorching flames at will.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6
Special Abilities:
* **Fiery Fists:** Str+d4. Anyone struck, whether injured or not, has a chance of catching fire.
* **Fragile:** The thin skin of a fireborn is all that holds back the raw elemental energy inside. If Shaken, the creature must make a Vigor roll or be engulfed in raw elemental fire energy and destroyed. Adjacent targets

take 2d6 damage with a fire trapping. This occurs automatically if the fireborn takes a wound.
* **Infravision:** Halves darkness penalties against heat producing targets.
* **Immunity (Fire):** Takes no damage from any source of fire or heat, magical or mundane.

FLESH OOZE

Not all of the elementalists' successful attempts at producing living-elemental crossbreeds worked to their satisfaction. One such successful failure is the flesh ooze, a cross between a living man and a water elemental. Stripped of its bones and imbued with elemental water energy, the result was a sloppy jumble of skin and muscle, mindless and unsuited to any purpose the elementals could imagine. As a result, they discarded them in the pool room (keeping them alive in case an elementalist found a use for them later).
Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d12, Strength d12, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8
Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6
Special Abilities:
* **Aquatic:** Pace 6.
* **Engulf:** An ooze attacks by making a grapple attack. On a success, it has engulfed its foe. Each round the grapple is maintained thereafter, the victim suffers a Fatigue level from suffocation. Victims reaching Death are absorbed.
* **Mindless:** Immune to Fear and Tests of Will.

LIVING STATUES

One of the more successful experiments involved combining earth elementals with human captives. The resultant form had tough skin and retained much of its intellect. Unfortunately, the transformation never completed successfully, leaving the living statues in agony whenever they move. This forces them into a frenzied rage. While their stony skin gives them the appearance of a statue, blood still courses through their veins.
Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10+2, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8+4, Notice d6, Stealth d6
Pace: 5; **Parry:** 3; **Toughness:** 8 (2)
Gear: Long sword (Str+d8+4), medium shield (+1 Parry)
Special Abilities:
* **Armor +2:** Stony skin.
* **Berserk:** The living statues automatically enter a berserk state when they begin moving. Modifiers to their abilities are already factored into their Traits.
* **Strong Willed:** Their berserk state gives them +2 to resist Tests of Will, but not to perform them.
* **Wild Attack:** The statues only ever attack with Wild Attacks. Modifiers are factored into the stat block.

GOLEM, STONE

Stone golems are the traditional animated statue. As with most golems, they serve as guardians.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6
Pace: 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11 (3)
Special Abilities:
* **Armor +3:** Stone body.
* **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:** Stone golems stand over 8' high and weigh 4,000 pounds.
* **Stone Fists:** Str+d6.

LIGHTNING SPRITE

Lightning sprites are a form of sub-elemental native to the Elemental Realm of Air. While they sometimes enter the mortal realm during powerful electrical storms, no living mage knows how to summon them through magic. Each has a wispy humanoid form made of white-blue lightning which alters shape seemingly at will. Piercing blue eyes and claws shaped of crackling energy are their only permanent features.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6
Pace: —; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 4
Special Abilities:
* **Elemental:** No additional damage from Called Shots; Fearless; immune to disease and poison; suffers no wound penalties.
* **Fly:** Pace 8.
* **Immunity:** Take no damage from spells with an electrical trapping.
* **Shock:** Lightning sprites need only make a Touch Attack (+2 to Fighting rolls) to deliver a powerful electrical shock. Victims take 2d6 damage and are knocked back 1". Metal armor provides no protection. Striking a sprite with a metal weapon causes 2d6 damage to the attacker and knocks him back 1", but deals normal damage to the creature.
* **Size –1:** Electrical sprites measure no larger than a small human child.

SOOT ELEMENTAL

The soot elemental is a unique creation brought into existence by the power of the elemental heart. It fills a Medium Burst Template.
Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d10
Skills: Notice d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7/11
Special Abilities:
* **Choke:** Anyone caught in the ash cloud or who begins their turn in the cloud must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue and be Shaken. Recovery is as per the rules for drowning.
* **Elemental:** No additional damage from Called Shots; Fearless; immune to disease and poison; suffers no wound penalties.
* **Immunity:** The ash cloud is only semi-solid. It has +4 Toughness against non-magical attacks.
* **Seep:** Soot elementals can squeeze through small gaps as if they were Difficult Ground. Unlike water elementals, they cannot travel through porous substances—there must be an actual hole through the obstacle (such as a keyhole).
* **Slam:** Str+d4.
* **Swarm:** Parry +2.

UNDEAD ELEMENTALISTS

Elementalists are mages who summon power through air, earth, fire, and water. The elemental temple was sacked during the Demongate Wars and the mages horribly tortured into insanity and then slain. When Hela went insane, the long-forgotten corpses rose as undead. Whatever fell spirits inhabited the wormy shells were able to rekindle the mages' elemental knowledge. It was then they began their experiments to create their super elemental through the combination of all four elements. Their attempts succeeded only in creating a monster as insane as its creators.

UNDEAD MAEGISTER

Each Maegister knows three elements. The specific encounter text lists the known elements for each undead mage. All share the same basic statistics, with only their available spells changing based on their elemental knowledge.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Elementalism d10, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d6
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7
Edges: Arcane Background (Elementalism), Concentration, Elemental Mastery, Focus
Gear: Staff (Str+d4, Parry +1, Reach 1, 2-hands).
Powers:
* **Eir:** *Bolt* (blast of air), *deflection* (wind), *elemental form* (air), *elemental manipulation* (air), *speak language* (air spirits translate words), *teleport* (vanishes in a whirlwind).
* **Ertha:** *Armor* (stone skin), *burrow* (earth parts), *elemental form* (earth), *elemental manipulation* (earth), *entangle* (victims sink into the earth), *quake.*
* **Fyr:** *Blast* (fireball), *bolt* (bolts of fire), *burst* (breathes fire), *deflection* (heat shimmer), e*lemental form* (fire), *elemental manipulation* (fire),
* **Waeter:** *Elemental form* (water), *elemental manipulation* (water), *healing* (healing potion flows from hands), *knockdown* (blast of water), *succor* (healing potion flows from hands), *stun* (choke on water).
Special Abilities:
* **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.

UNDEAD ELEMENTALIST

Each elementalist knows but a single element. The specific encounter text lists the known elements for each undead mage present.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Elementalism d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d6
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7
Gear: Staff (Str+d4, Parry +1, Reach 1, 2-hands).
Powers:
* **Eir:** *Deflection* (wind), *elemental manipulation* (air), *speak language* (air spirits translate words).
* **Ertha:** *Armor* (stone skin), *burrow* (earth parts), *elemental manipulation* (earth).
* **Fyr:** *Bolt* (fire bolts), *deflection* (heat shimmer), *elemental manipulation* (fire).
* **Waeter:** *Elemental manipulation* (water), *healing* (healing potion flows from hands), *stun* (choke on water).
Special Abilities:
* **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.

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UNCOVER THE POWER OF THE ANCIENTS!

Before the Blizzard War, the Convocation of Elementalists had many schools of magic. Many of the remote schools were destroyed during the conflict, the great secrets they held thought lost forever.

Recently one establishment has been rediscovered, one which the Convocation would like explored and looted. For five centuries the school has lain untouched by the outside world, but it has not been completely ignored. Something lurks in the heart of the ancient school, something powerful, something which hungers...

...and it is not alone!

Are the adventurers destined to survive their foray into the lost school of magic, or will they struggle to survive *Against the Elements?*

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Paul 'Wiggy' Wade-Williams

HELLFROST

RANK • VETERAN

WEB OF DECEIT

OFFICIAL SAVAGE WORLDS LICENSED PRODUCT

WEB OF DECEIT

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WEB OF DECEIT

INTRODUCTION

This adventure is designed for a group of four Veteran characters. Most encounters are based on a number of antagonists per hero, and thus automatically allow for increased party size. Scaling for higher Ranks is easily handled. For each additional Rank the party is above Veteran, add one additional Extra of the most common type to an encounter. For instance, if the text says the heroes face one spider cultist per hero, a Legendary party of four members would face six spider cultists (four for the party size plus two for being two Ranks higher than Veteran).

The adventure takes place in the Hearthlands but can be set at any time of year. Except where noted in the text, the temperature is a constant 40º F below ground. See the *Savage Worlds* rulebook for the effects of cold weather and the *Hellfrost Players' Guide* for how the rules work in this setting.

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

BACKGROUND

Situated only a few miles from Spiderfell Wood, Rushton is a self-sufficient farming community of little renown. With no river trade along the Woodrush, few folk ever have seen need to visit. Once known as Woodrushton (meaning "the enclosure on the Woodrush"), the name has slowly been shortened to its current form.

For the best part of two hundred years nothing of interest has occurred in Rushton. It has avoided raiders and bandits by dint of having nothing of value, the lack of livestock has not attracted wolves, and expansion has been minimal due to it being located off the beaten track. Even the giant spiders of nearby Spiderfell Wood have been nothing more than a sporadic nuisance. Most families can trace their ancestry back to the village's founding, though there are "newcomers" (families who have been there less than three generations). The most the farmers had to worry about in living memory was the nuances of Rassilon's weather.

But now a strange shadow has fallen over the village. Villagers have begun acting strangely, with neighbors seeming distant to their friends. Families began disappearing without notice for days at a time, only to reappear just as suddenly, though that has stopped of late. However, a small few families have literally vanished, leaving meals uneaten and their belongings and valuables abandoned in their deserted homes. Word of a sinister cult operating in the village is spreading, but with other problems besetting the land, few nobles have time to investigate. Truth be told, the culprit is actually an unearthly creature, part-human and part-spider.

For every civilized god there is at least one older, darker deity whose name is known only in vague legends or in stories designed to scare children into adopting good behavior. One such entity is Spidari (from whose name the word "spider" originates), a malevolent spider goddess.

According to many myths, her web binds the heavens, preventing the stars from falling to Rassilon and burning the world. Once, perhaps, she was benevolent, for skalds who know of her tell how she volunteered to support the heavens after the other gods failed in the task. Some even claim she was a child of Eostre, as are all the animalistic gods. Now, though, Spidari is a dark deity whose cult practices many fell rites, such as human sacrifice.

Dominating the central plains of Midmark is Spiderfell Wood, so named because of the number of giant spiders which haunt the boughs. Since the advent of the civilized races, Spiderfell Wood has been the site of a struggle between the races and the spiders, but that status quo is slowly changing, at least in one small area. The monsters that dwell there range in size from that of a man's clenched fist to horrendous fiends as large as a house. It is popularly believed that within the black heart of the wood there dwells a gargantuan "Spider-King," a

sentient, malevolent abomination that is part-man and part-spider.

Until recently, the spider king was a reality, but he had grown weak and senile, and had failed to conduct reprisal raids on those who entered the wood with the sole aim of slaying the giant spiders. On direct orders from her deity, the king's young daughter, Arachni, a priestess of the cult, killed and devoured her father. She assumed the joint mantle of Queen of Spiderfell Wood and High Priestess.

Whereas her father's venom was deadly, Arachni's poison enslaves weak minds. At first, the high priestess kidnapped inhabitants from Rushton and subjected them to her venom in her lair. All told, the process took the best part of a week. As the number of disappearances grew, folk became concerned. In a bid to alleviate the problem, Arachni started issuing her trusted cultists with vials of her toxin, thus allowing them to convert villagers in a single night. Those unfortunates who prove immune to her venom are hauled off to her lair at night to serve as food for her offspring or as sacrifices to Spidari. Once the entire village is under her control, Arachni plans to send the inhabitants out into the world to convert more innocents.

Getting the Heroes Involved

Exactly why the heroes are heading toward Rushton is left to the GM to fit into his campaign. They may simply be traveling through Midmark in search of a bed for the night and learn of the strange goings-on through rumors. In this version, the heroes stumble across the plot, rather than it being presented to them on a plate. Should they not talk to the locals during their stay (perhaps figuring the village is merely GM flavor text), a non-cultist takes them aside and asks if they are here to investigate the disappearances. Should they reply in the negative, the villager apologizes and tries to beat a hasty retreat.

Rumors of the strange activities in the village may have reached a powerful (and curious) personage or organization to which the heroes are indebted, so they were ordered to investigate. In an episodic game, the heroes may have heard stories of strange disappearances and have gone to investigate of their own volition.

Whatever method you choose, the heroes begin outside the main gates of Rushton, having spent all day on the road.

Investigations in Rushton

Give the heroes an unmarked copy of the village map. Note that not every location is important to the plot. Houses simply marked "Cn" on the GM's map belong to cultists. The "n" designates the total number of people in the house. Of these, 1d4 are typically adults (with typical cultist stats) while the rest are young children. "X" indicates a deserted house. The owners were kidnapped but resisted conversion and were slain.

The GM has free reign to create names for incidental villagers, even cultists. Although predominantly Saxa, there are also Anari families in the village. No houses are mapped. The GM should invent descriptions for a two or three room house as required.

Locales of specific interest to the adventure are detailed below. When dealing with the general populace, the GM should draw a card, consult the Rumors and Opinions table (page 4), and roleplay the villager's dispensing of information.

The GM should endeavor not to rush this section so as to get straight to the action. The heroes need information before they can progress, and the only way to do that is to conduct a thorough investigation in Rushton.

By the time the heroes are invited to investigate the mystery it is midday. Walking between locations in the village takes only a few minutes and need not be tallied. For ease, assume that talking to anyone beyond a simple hello takes an hour. Citizens don't just blurt out their rumors or opinions—there is the formality of having something to drink, routine small talk, and lesser options and grumbles before the actual information the person has to share is made available. Even cultists take the time to try and pass themselves off as normal citizens and act accordingly.

1) Main Gate

Rushton has a palisade, but it lacks a true gatehouse. Entrance to the village is via a pair of simple wooden gates. These are closed between dusk and dawn. Day or night, four militiamen are assigned to man the gates. Strangers are not questioned during daylight hours, but are subjected to vigorous interrogation at night as to their reasons for visiting.

The dayshift guards are regular militiamen. Thanks to the head of the militia being a cultist, those on watch at night are cultists as well. The guards are informed if anyone has been kidnapped from the village and invent cover stories claiming they saw the missing people leave.

Guards (4): All are Villagers equipped with militia gear (see page 372). Even at night, the cultists carry nothing that can identify them as converts.

2) Carl Thrandsunu's Cottage

The windows of this cottage are securely fastened, and no smoke rises from the chimney. The small garden situated out front is overgrown with weeds, and birds nest in the thatch.

Carl, his wife, and their four children used to live here. Carl was a farmer, one among many in the village, but was singled out by his neighbors for conversion a

RUMORS & OPINIONS

Draw a card from the action deck and consult the chart below whenever the heroes speak to a villager. Don't 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. If a location or personage is referenced, the speaker can provide directions to their abode.

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. True information can also be reworded, but the basic facts should still be presented to the characters.

Cultists *never* reveal true information. Either reword the entry into something believable but erroneous, or pick a rumor which is completely false.

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	"My grandfather told me something like this happened once before, back when he was a lad (F). He said it was a demon, a hate from the old times (F)."
3	"I blame Old Steinkel. Everyone knows he's mad (T). I reckon he's murdering those folk who've vanished (F). Everyone else is just scared, so of course they're acting all strange (F)."
4	"I heard strange noises coming from Carl Thrandsunu's place one night back along. Come morning, the whole family had gone. (T) The neighbors reckoned they'd gone to visit a sick relative, but why did they leave in the middle of the night without their personal belongings? (T)"
5	"The priestess of Eostre has been crankier than normal of late (T). I think she's taken to drink, personally (F)."
6	"Strange things have been happening (T). Take Halfdan the carpenter, for instance. He claims his wife has gone to visit relatives, but I saw her with bruises on her face not a month back (F). I reckon she's left him."
7	"Best only drink wine. There's something bad in the water (F)."
8	"An evil cult is operating in Rushton (T). And who are the likely ringleaders? I'll tell you who, the priestess and the ridder, that's who! (F)"
9	"Folk who vanish disappear at night, always at night (T). I've taken to using herbal

month ago. The cultists came at night, kidnapping the entire family. Sadly, they all proved immune to Arachni's venom and met a grisly end. Since their disappearance the cult has removed all their clothes and personal belongings, though they made the mistake of leaving them behind immediately after the attack.

The door is locked (Toughness 10) but can be picked. The kidnapping occurred weeks ago, and there is no evidence of foul play. Even all the food in the cupboards has gone. A thin layer of dust coats every exposed surface.

During any search of the house, the neighboring family, Gardi Finnsunu and his wife, Mavis ap-Garrion, come over to the house to investigate. Both are cultists. If questioned, the couple repeats a well-rehearsed lie.

> *"Carl got a message saying his mother was sick. She lives down in Aith. They had to leave immediately and asked us to look after the house until they returned. That's why we're here now. We saw you entering and came to check it wasn't thieves."*

The party may have learned Halfdan the carpenter's wife also "went to Aith." The couple merely shrug if this "coincidence" is mentioned, and reply, *"Aith is a big place. Lots of folk live there."*

Heroes with Knowledge (Area: Midmark) may make a roll. Knowledge of a wider area encompassing Midmark allows a roll, but at a penalty. For instance, Knowledge (Area: The Marklands) carries a –2 penalty, while knowledge of only Rassilon as a whole incurs a –6 penalty. With success, the hero recalls Aith has a population of almost 9,000 people. It is a major trading port downriver from Rushton.

If the party were led here by a rumor, they may ask about the family's possessions being left behind. Again, the couple has a lie already prepared.

> *"Yes, that's true enough. They left in rather a hurry. We packaged up the rest and sent it down with a visiting merchant. They left food behind but we took that away to stop rats getting at it."*

The couple then bid the party farewell. Within the hour, word has been passed to the ridder's aide that the party has been snooping around the house and asking questions.

3) CARPENTER

> *The distinctive sounds of sawing can be heard from a small outbuilding located to the side of the stone cottage.*

The village carpenter, wainwright, and cooper, Halfdan Eyjolfsunu, is a cultist. He and his wife, Katla Thjostolfsdohtor, were kidnapped at the same time. Halfdan succumbed to the spider queen's venom and became a

cultist, but his wife resisted. Her bones litter the spiders' lair. In order to conceal his wife's death, Halfdan tells folk she has gone to visit relatives in Aith (a large port town to the south).

While the village palisade is far from impregnable, it initially made life very difficult for cultists trying to smuggle out kidnapped villagers. To that end, Halfdan was converted and ordered to create a concealed door in the timbers. To help disguise his work, the carpenter ordered sections of the palisade to be replaced, claiming they were rotten and thus weak points in the village's defenses.

Heroes who casually stroll past the area of the palisade containing the secret door are allowed a Notice roll at –6 to spot the portal if within 3" of it—Halfdan did excellent work. Even a thorough examination requires a Notice roll at –2. The door is not hinged. Rather, an entire panel can be pushed out (as an action) to form a gap in the wall large enough for a crouching human (or giant spider) to pass through.

Should the portal be discovered and the carpenter confronted, Halfdan tries to pull his cultist ring from his pocket and consume the venom. Should he be prevented, or somehow survive the deadly toxin, he attacks the heroes with a carpenter's axe (Str+d4).

Ⓜ **Halfdan Eyjolfsunu:** Treat as a Typical Cultist (see page 374) with Knowledge (Craft: Carpentry) d8.

4) HERBALIST

A sign outside this house displays a bunch of herbs, the traditional sign for an herbalist. On three sides of the house are herb gardens. A mixture of scents (some fragrant and others more noxious) assail your noses. A young lad of perhaps 16 summers sits outside, sharpening a sickle. As you approach, he stands quickly and calls for his mother. Moments later a plump, middle-aged woman emerges from the cottage, wipes her hands on her apron and enquires as to your business.

The village herbalist is Meredith ap-Gwilam. Both she and her husband Ogden are converts, as is their only son, Rhodri. Meredith was converted early on, having been selected for her profession. She aided in abducting and initiating the rest of her family. Ogden and Rhodri are both farmers.

Meredith maintains a sizeable herb garden of common (+0) plants. Typically, there are enough herbs for 1d4 batches of any brew with a purpose modifier of –2 or better. The herbalist also keeps 2d4 doses of dried herbs of each of these types inside her house.

She makes herbal remedies only to order and uses fresh herbs while they are available. Her rates are 50 gold scields per dose, plus 10 gold scields for each negative purpose modifier. For instance, a restorative brew (–2 modifier) costs 70 gold scields. Fellow converts pay half these rates, though never in front of non-cultist customers. If questioned about discounts, she denies ever offering them—she has to make a living.

RUMORS & OPINIONS CONT...

brews to keep me awake. (T but irrelevant)."

10 "Times must be bad. I got served beer in a dirty glass at the Bough the other day. (T)"

Jack "The last harvests have been bad (T). It's a curse from Vali (F)."

Queen "Something sinister? No, I don't think so. Folk are just fed up and leaving (F). The ridder said so (T)."

King "Too many strangers in these parts for my liking! First that potter moves in to replace the one who upped and left, and then those merchants turned up (T). I preferred it when you knew everyone's face."

Ace "There's something bad around here, alright (T). Plenty of folk have spied a rider out near the fields, watching them (F)."

Joker The GM may either draw two cards or invent one completely fictitious but plausible rumor as a red herring.

If Meredith is informed by a fellow cultist that the heroes are investigating the cult, she deliberately taints any antitoxin brews she concocts for the party, rendering them ineffective. Naturally, if the party survives to confront her she is very apologetic, and even offers to brew a second batch (of equally useless potions).

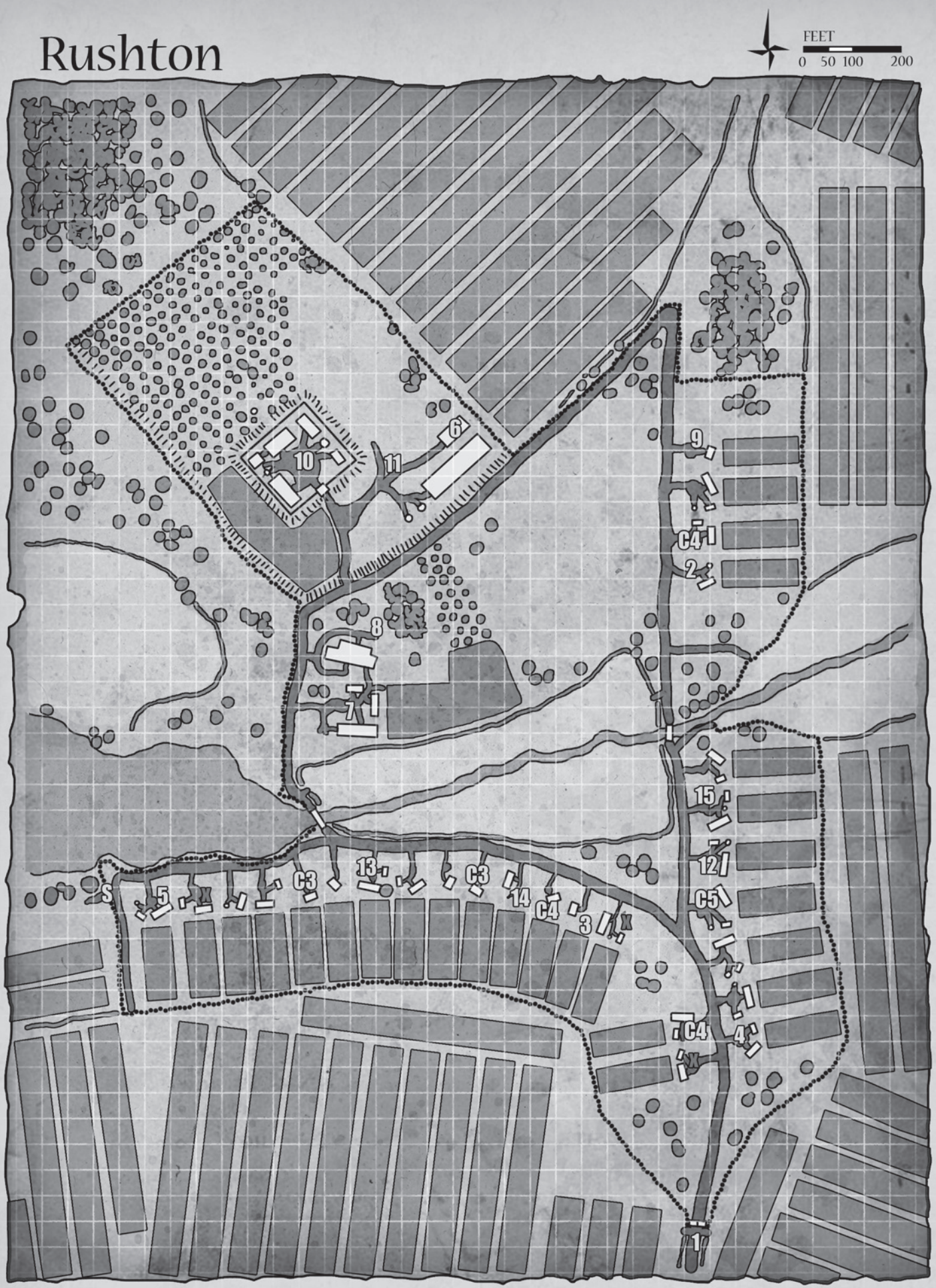
Special Brews: Arachni has provided Meredith with a special fungus, which the herbalist cultivates and turns into herbal brews. She grows these in her herb garden, concealed beneath leafy plants. Heroes walking past the plants won't detect them with a casual glance. A thorough search automatically reveals the presence of small, red puffballs with green dots.

This species does not grow *on* Rassilon. Unless a hero has the Knowledge (Area: Underearth) skill he cannot identify the fungi or speculate on what brews might be made from them. Those with the skill are allowed a roll to identify the effects of the puffball.

The spores of the puffball produce a powerful soporific effect. A thrown jar (Range: 3/6/12) explodes in a Small Burst Template. Anyone under the template must make a Vigor roll or fall into a deep sleep for 2d6 hours. A dose of smelling salts (treat as a stimulant IV herbal brew from the free download **Hedge Magic**) awakens a slumbering victim immediately, as does shaking someone vigorously (as an action). The converts use these in their abductions.

Meredith also brews a concoction made from tiny red spiders sent to her by Arachni. The resultant paste produces a weak version of the mind-control poison produced by the spider queen. By itself it is incapable of truly subverting anyone's will. However, converts are given a weekly dose, which serves to reinforce the toxin

Rushton



1 - Main Gate
2 - Carl Thrandsunu's Cottage
3 - Carpenter
4 - Herbalist
5 - Old Steinkel's Cottage
6 - Village Store
7 - The Golden Bough
8 - Temple of Eostre
9 - The New Pottery
10 - The Ridder's House
11 - Shrines
12 - Bakery
13 - Smithy
14 - Tailor
15 - Old Pottery
S - Secret panel in palisade

already in their system and keep them subjugated. Non-cultists who ingest a dose must make a Vigor roll or suffer a –2 penalty to Spirit rolls, rolls to resist Tests of Will, and rolls to resist mind-affecting spells such as *confusion* and *puppet,* for an hour.

Ⓜ **Meredith ap-Gwilam:** Treat as a Typical Cultist (see page 374) but with the Hedge Magic Edge and Knowledge (Alchemy) d10.

Ⓜ **Ogden ap-Culhain:** Treat as a Typical Cultist (see page 374).

Ⓜ **Rodri ap-Ogden:** Treat as a Typical Cultist (see page 374).

5) OLD STEINKEL'S COTTAGE

Whoever lives here hasn't raised a hand to perform routine maintenance in long years. Paint peels from the low fence, the thatch is almost bare, and the weeds have choked all the plants in what was once a large garden. Although the shutters are in place and the door shut, a faint wisp of smoke spirals up from the small chimney.

This rundown house is inhabited by Old Steinkel. A former mercenary, Steinkel retired to Rushton to spend his latter years in peace and quiet, and to pray for the souls of those he had slain during his campaigning years. For the first few years of his residence he was hired as head of the militia, though his duties were only to train the men. It quickly became apparent the old man was suffering senility, and his duties were gradually lessened until he was finally removed from office. Given a small pension, Steinkel spent his days sitting on his porch watching the world go by.

Bad dreams had troubled the man for years, and his mind was fragile. While on his porch late one night, he witnessed a giant spider sneaking into the village and cultists smuggling out a kidnapped victim. His mind snapped, driving Steinkel insane. Now he just sits in his house, muttering and murmuring to himself. Thanks to his mental state, the cult has ignored him thus far.

No one answers knocks at the door and the windows are shuttered tight. The door is not locked and opens easily. Day or night, when the party enters, Steinkel is sitting on the floor, dribbling thick, black drool. He has carved dozens of spirals into the floor and walls with his dagger. In his mind they are spider webs. On hearing the party, he looks up and mutters.

"Have you come for me? I saw them, I saw them. Black in the night, all legs and eyes." He raises a clenched gist to his mouth and stuffs something inside. "Scuttling, scuttling, scuttling," he continues chewing quickly, more black goo dripping from his chin. "They walked through the palisade like ghosts. Did you see them on the porch? I eat them so they go away."

Anyone asking Steinkel what he is eating is shown a handful of small, black spiders—common house spiders. Just to add emphasis, Steinkel opens his mouth wide, revealing a saliva-soaked wad of mashed up spiders.

The only way to get a more accurate description of what Steinkel saw is to use *puppet* and force him to relive the night he went mad. Steinkel begins whimpering loudly.

"I…I was sat on my porch after dark, listening to the birds singing. It came past me, scuttling on hairy legs, as large as a pony. It never saw me. It never saw me. Then…then…men came, carrying something." Steinkel wrinkles his brow, as if trying to remember, or perhaps forget. "It was a body, all wrapped up in a shroud. They went through…no…not through like ghosts…but through the palisade nonetheless. Then it came back, clicking and screeching, eyes and legs! EYES AND LEGS!"

Steinkel screams loudly and collapses into a comatose state. Nothing the party does can awaken him. The *puppet* spell is ended automatically at this point.

Note that Steinkel's earlier rant and the fact he is eating spiders should be enough of a clue for parties without *puppet*. Those with the spell learn more, but those lacking the charm are not left lacking useful information.

If a cultist ever discovers what Steinkel told the party, Arachni is quickly informed by the ridder's aide. Orders are issued to silence the old man. The night following the party's chat with Steinkel he is murdered in his bed. His own dagger thrust into his heart. The murder is disguised to look like suicide. Everyone in Rushton knew the old man was mad and, while many mourn his passing, no one is particularly surprised he took his own life in the end.

If the party is keeping a close watch on the old man, he is killed as soon as their attention is distracted—they can't watch him forever. Even if the cultists fail to commit the terrible act, Steinkel passes away after three days in a coma.

Ⓜ **Old Steinkel:** As a Villager (see page 372) with Spirit, Strength, and Vigor d4. He has Toughness 4.

6) VILLAGE STORE

A faded wooden sign proudly proclaims this establishment to be Ozzik's General Store. The door is ajar. From within you can hear a man shouting at someone called Aud to get off her chair and prepare his dinner. The woman's reply is muffled, but full of vehemence. A low chuckle follows soon after, followed by the man's voice ordering people back to work.

The village store is run by Fridgeir Leifsunu. His wife, Aud Lodinsdohtor, lives with him but has no part in

THE GOLDEN BOUGH PRICES

All costs are in silver scields.

Food/Drink	Cost
Breakfast (meat, cheese, bread)	2
Cheap meal (one course)	5
Good meal (two courses)	10
Excellent meal (three courses)	15
Anari brandy, per mug	12
Imported beer, 4-pint pitcher	8
Local beer, 4-pint pitcher	2
Mead, per mug	3
Imported wine, 1-pint pitcher*	10
Local wine, 1-pint pitcher*	3

Accommodation/Extras	Cost
Space in stables	free
Shared room (2-person)	3
Bath (no soap)	2
Laundry service (per person)	1
Stabling, with oats, per horse	5

*Beetroot, elderflower, nettle, potato, pumpkin or strawberry

running the establishment. The pair has an on-off relationship, switching between total adoration and intense hatred in the blink of an eye. They've been like this ever since they were married and their strange relationship is well-known to the locals.

Aiding the shopkeepers are two of his wife's nephews, Lars and Ozur. Ozur is a cultist, but his identical twin is not. The cultists plan to keep it this way as long as possible, giving Ozur a chance to pose as his brother and stir up trouble if necessary. Ozur also keeps an eye on the orders his uncle is placing. Anything unusual is reported to the ridder's aide.

Fridgeir is a skinflint by nature and seeks to squeeze as much profit as he can from every transaction. His small shop sells only gear with a V availability code. However, he never keeps primitive weapons, animals, or any unusual goods in stock. All prices are increased by 10% above those listed in the *Hellfrost Player's Guide*, rounded down to the nearest silver scield. For example, a pouch of pipeleaf (regular price 15 gs) would cost 16 gold and 5 silver scields here.

Unusual items or goods with T availability can be ordered from Aith, but take 2d4+4 days to order and ship. Fridgeir charges a premium on such goods. Increase costs by 75% (this includes the standard increase). City goods come from Hamna, Midmark's capital, and are ordered only by direct customer request. Delivery is within 3d6+4 days and goods are charged at an extortionate four times the regular price! Fridgeir insists on a 50% deposit before he will even place the order.

The store is the only place in town to sell equipment taken from slain cultists. When buying used goods, Fridgeir pays just 10%. A successful Persuasion roll opposed by the shopkeeper's Spirit increases the price to a maximum of 25%.

Fridgeir overhears a lot of conversations in the shop and has a knack for getting people to talk. He knows two rumors.

Ⓜ **Fridgeir Leifsunu:** Treat as a Villager (see page 372) but with Persuasion and Streetwise d6 and the Greedy (Minor) Hindrance.

Ⓜ **Lars Skaptisunu:** Treat as a Villager (see page 372).

Ⓜ **Ozur Skaptisunu:** Treat as a Typical Cultist (see page 374).

7) THE GOLDEN BOUGH

A sign depicting a golden tree branch hangs outside the entrance to this large, single-story building. Smoke drifts lazily from a trio of chimneys. The faint murmur of conversation can be heard from within. A small stable block stands nearby, as does an outhouse and a larger building.

Rushton's only inn is the Golden Bough. The Bough is run by an Anari couple, Ozzik and Helga, and four serving staff from the local populace (all unmarried girls in their late teens). Helga is the chief cook, while Ozzik handles everything up front. Everyone involved in running the inn is a cultist. During the day there are 2d6 patrons present; all cultists. Men represent three-quarters of the crowd. At night, the number of patrons doubles, though the mix between sexes falls to roughly equal. Half of these are cultists.

"The Bough," as it is more frequently known, is a well-appointed place. Despite Rushton being off the beaten track and rarely visited, the owners once took great pride in their establishment. Glasses were spotless, the fire always roaring, and the service friendly. Since the staff joined the cult, standards have slipped. Ozzik and Helga blame this on worry brought on by the strange events, though in truth it is because they are spending a lot of time in the basement, where a secret shrine has been erected (see below).

The large outbuilding is a brewery. Ozzik brews beer and ferments several different wines here. Even after his conversion, he is happy to give visitors free samples in the hope they like it enough to by several bottles worth. These days all his profits go to Arachni's coffers.

There are four guest rooms in the inn, all double-occupancy. One is currently occupied by two outsiders (see below). All the rooms have recently been modified. While villagers were told the work was a routine renovation, it was actually to install secret doors in the floors of the guest chambers so as to aid the cultists in kidnapping strangers. Visitors make ideal converts, as their sudden departure does not raise too many eyebrows. All guests are given two keys. One opens their bedroom door, while the other opens the guest door into the accommodation wing.

The two guests claim to be merchants exploring the possibility of creating a trade route linking the communities circling Spiderfell Wood. Both are, in fact, senior cultists, here to keep an eye on the village and oversee rituals.

Three of the guest rooms have secret trapdoors in the floors. These are barred from below. A secret passageway in the cellar allows cultists to climb ladders into the guest rooms and kidnap the occupants without having to open the bedroom doors. A secret door in the corridor leads to a makeshift shrine dedicated to Spidari. The cultists in the village worship here. The altar is carved to resemble a swarming mass of spiders.

Ⓜ **Ozzik ap-Matthiau:** Treat as a Typical Cultist (see page 374). Carries a dagger (Str+d4) for cutting bread and meat, and removing corks.

Ⓜ **Helga ap-Gwain:** Treat as a Typical Cultist (see page 374). Armed with a heavy rolling pin (Str+d4).

Ⓜ **Serving Staff (4):** Treat as Typical Cultists (see page 374). Each carries a concealed dagger (Str+d4).

Ⓜ **Thorbjorn:** Treat as a Wild Card Cultist Paladin (see page 373).

Ⓜ **Ivar:** Treat as an Elite Cultist (see page 374).

Ⓜ **Spider Swarm:** See page 375. Fills a Medium Burst Template.

Treasure: The special cultist gear owned by the staff is kept in two large chests in the basement. Both are locked (Toughness 10; Lockpicking –2). There is also a stash of 800 gs spread equally between the chests. The treasure is made up of coins, jewelry and other valuables taken from kidnapped victims whose conversion failed.

A third chest is trapped—it contains an egg sac. If the chest is opened by any means other than the key, the sac bursts, disgorging a swarm of hungry spiders. Also within the chest are several small vials. Three hold a sticky black fluid (Arachni's venom) while half a dozen others contain a powerful paralysis venom. Any foe Shaken or wounded by a weapon smeared with the venom must make a Vigor roll or be paralyzed for 2d6 hours. The venom is in very short supply, which prevents the cultists from using it in their kidnapping attempts.

Ozzik carries the only key to all three chests.

8) TEMPLE OF EOSTRE

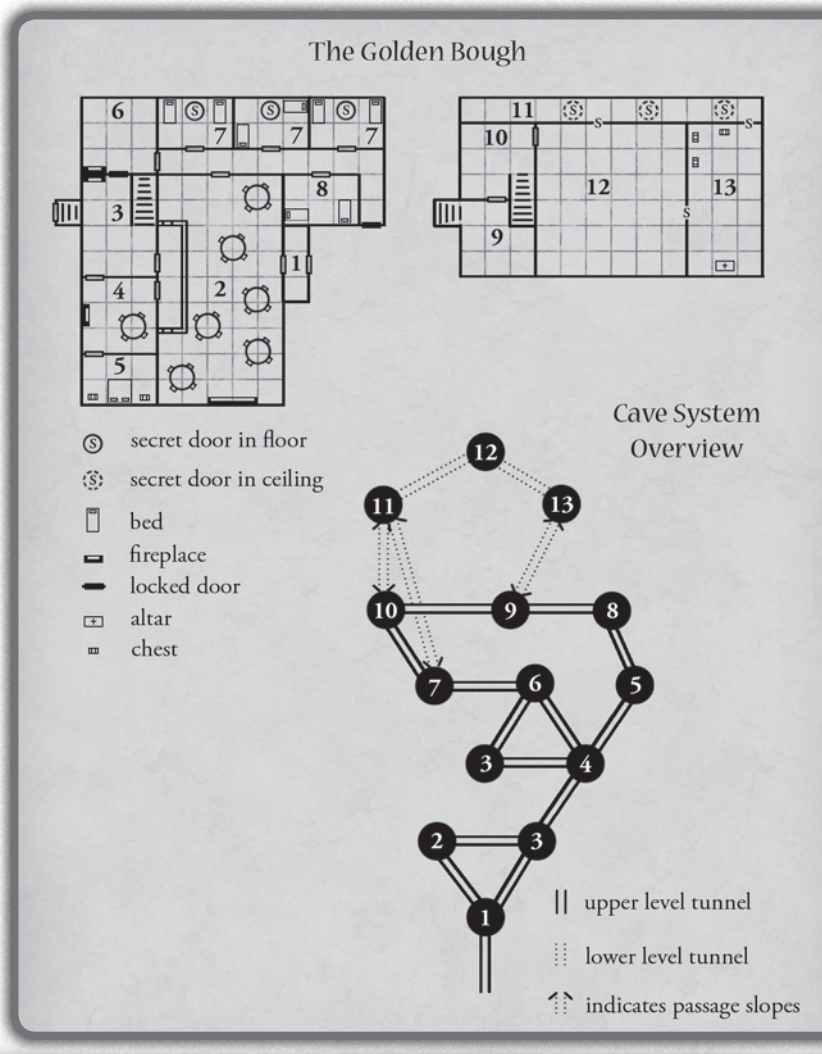
This large, imposing wooden structure is decorated with engravings of plants and animals. Carved into the impressive double doors is the holy symbol of Eostre, goddess of agriculture and patron of farmers. A sign on the door in Anari, Saxa, and Trader reads, "Closed until further notice."

Although a small village, Rushton is actually the most prosperous settlement in the region. The temple to Eostre supports all the outlying villages, though fewer and fewer worshippers visit since the strange disappearances began. Normally there are three junior priests, but these are visiting other communities in the parish and are not due back for some time.

THE GOLDEN BOUGH KEY

1. Entrance and Cloakroom
2. Main Bar
3. Kitchen
4. Owner's Living Room
5. Owner's Bedroom
6. Guests' Dining Room
7. Vacant Guest Rooms
8. Cultists' Room
9. Delivery Cellar
10. Food Storage
11. Secret Corridor
12. Main Cellar
13. Secret Shrine

With the mood in the village changing and having noticed a strange alteration in her acolytes' behavior, Freda has become paranoid. She never leaves the temple at night, survives on *feast* spells (she falsely believes the water supply is tainted), and has overdosed more than



KEY TO OTHER BUILDINGS

Rushton has several buildings which might, for one reason or another, be of interest to the heroes. Since these are largely incidental to the plot, no specific details are listed.

#	Purpose	Annotations/Notes
12	Bakery	C5
13	Smithy	C3; smith has no skill at forging armor or weapons except spears
14	Tailor	Caters for nobility (the ridder) and commoners alike
15	Old Pottery	House is deserted (family kidnapped and sacrificed)

once on Stimulant I herbal remedies in order to avoid sleeping. She is a key target for the cult, but the appearance of the heroes has halted their plans to abduct her.

Freda answers the door to the party only during daylight hours, and then through a small hatch in the door. Reluctant to open the doors to anyone at all, yet alone strangers, it requires a Persuasion roll at –4 to convince the paranoid priestess to allow admittance. A +2 bonus is awarded if there is a cleric of Eostre or druid in the party, and +1 for clerics of any other benevolent faith.

On a failure, Freda simply says the temple is closed due to sickness. She then closes the hatch, checks the door is barred (which thwarts *unlock* spells), and scurries back to her chambers. Hacking down the door is not a wise idea.

On a success, the cleric allows the party to enter the temple. She leads them to a small side room. No refreshments are offered. During any conversation, Freda reveals the following information. She does so as part of role-playing, not just by blurting out the facts.

* Things are wrong in the village. Harvests have been bad before, but people have never left in the middle of the night.

* Many of the regular templegoers have stopped coming to service. Freda can identify three families who were once devout who now no longer acknowledge her in public. All are converted cultists (chosen at random from the cultist houses).

* Ridder Theinwald is next to useless. He deals with the public only through his servant, Frederick. Freda believes the ridder may be the mastermind behind the disappearances, though she cannot say to what end.

* The cleric is convinced the water and/or food supplies are being drugged. They are not.

Ⓜ **Sower Freda Hapisdohtor:** See page 372.

9) THE NEW POTTERY

Positioned away from the main village, this small cottage seems well-tended. The roses growing in the garden are especially beautiful, and small birds sing sweet songs from the rafters.

On a successful Notice roll, the heroes discover small glyphs etched into the porch beams. Any druid recognizes the signs immediately as special sigils used to denote places of interest to practitioners of the art. Earth elementalists and clerics of Eostre, both of whom have reason to mix with druids on occasion, are allowed a Common Knowledge roll to see if they recognize the symbols.

The owner of the house is Joxa Lonerider, a druid from Wald (a town on the opposite side of Spiderfell Wood). Many druids dedicated to cleansing the forest of giant spiders dwell in Wald, and Joxa is one of their number. When word first began to spread of strange happenings in Rushton, Joxa came to investigate. He bought a derelict cottage on the edge of the village and passed himself off as a potter in search of a quiet place to live and earn a living. He then began covert surveillance. Over the months he has built up quite detailed knowledge of the cult and its activities.

Unless the heroes can demonstrate practical knowledge of druidism, earth elementalism, or nature magic, Joxa is aloof with the party. He sticks to his cover story of being a potter by trade and claims, not having lived in the village for long, that he has noticed nothing amiss.

Whether the party approach Joxa early on in their investigations or not, the druid begins secretly watching them, fearing at first that strangers in town might be more cultists. Publicly rooting out any of the cultists in the village or helping defend the settlement in the event of a spider attack earns his trust just as well. Once convinced the heroes and he are on the same side, Joxa will approach.

He invites the characters inside for nettle tea and cake. Once everyone is settled he tells his story.

"My name is Joxa Lonerider," the man begins. "I am a druid, one of a small circle who operates from the town of Wald. Many months ago I heard strange rumors of disappearances in Rushton and I came to investigate. I have quietly watched the goings-on here, taking note of any strange behavior. It is my belief that a sinister cult is operating in Rushton, a cult which has its true headquarters in Spiderfell Wood."

"A few weeks ago I followed a party carrying two bodies leaving the village by night. They left via the main gate, seemingly with the aid of the guards. For three days they journeyed into Spiderfell Wood, until at last they reached a dark cave. Being alone, I waited outside. After several hours the party returned, though without the bodies."

"It is my opinion that whatever lies at the heart of this mystery lives inside that cave. If you are willing to help, I will gladly take you as far as the cave entrance. I shall then return to Wald as quickly as possible and summon further reinforcements in case they are required."

Joxa is willing to give the party his antitoxins and *healing* potions if they accept the task.

Ⓜ **Joxa Lonerider:** See page 372.

10) THE RIDDER'S HOUSE

This grand house obviously belongs to someone important. Typical Saxa scroll work adorns the wooden panels, the windows have glass, and the garden is immaculately kept.

This is the house of Ridder Theinwald, Rushton's leader. Visitors first encounter Frederick, the ridder's chief servant. He enquires politely as to their business. Only if the party mentions the cult or the village's problems does he show them through to his master. Otherwise, he handles any problems they have.

Seated at a long oak table is an obese man. His dark beard and fine clothes are smeared with grease from the three roast chickens placed in front of him. The servant nods low. "Master," he says, "some strangers wish to see you about the…er…problems in Rushton." The portly man drops the chicken leg he was sucking and wobbles uneasily to his feet.

"Guests, eh? Frederick, arrange for more glasses immediately. Will you join me? I'm just having a snack before lunch."

Rather than a prepared speech, conversation with the ridder is handled through typical questions the party may pose and the noble's answers.

Q: What's happening in Rushton?

A: *"You mean the disappearances? It's very strange. Citizens just seem to be leaving without notice. Sometimes even their belongings are left behind. Others are changed, somehow, less friendly and open. But this talk I hear of a cult in the village sounds like nonsense to me. Times are hard. We're a small village with little wealth. Folk have likely just given up and gone elsewhere in search of a better life. Some return, yes, and they are somehow different, but that isn't unusual—folk who find the grass is no greener elsewhere get despondent with their lot in life."*

GM Note: This isn't truly the noble's opinion. Frederick has quietly been spinning the story to his master.

Q: When did this start?

A: *"Oh, about a year ago, I guess. The disappearances are very sporadic. It's not like we're losing a family a week. Like I said, it's just the recent poor harvests are getting to the populace. Things will likely pick up."*

Q: Have you done anything about it?

A: *"We're a long way from anywhere and of little importance in the grand scheme of things. I have at my disposal just the militia, and to be honest they're farmers, not investigators. We sent riders to our neighbors, but no one wanted to help. And there is little evidence anything is truly amiss."*

Q: Who do you think is behind the events?

A: *"Is there truly anyone behind these events? I think it's a mountain being made out of a molehill."*

Q: Are you offering a reward?

A: *"Well, um, if, and I mean if, there is anything going on, then yes, I'll pay you 2,000 gold scields. Not each, of course. I'm not made of money. Keep Frederick," he says nodding toward the servant, "informed of your progress and he'll report back to me. Having you meet with me too often might start tongues wagging. And, of course, you're not to disrupt village life. That could make things worse."*

GM Note: The ridder can be haggled up to 4,000 gs maximum.

What the ridder does not know is that his aide and chief counsel, Frederick, is a cultist. Frederick was kidnapped while on a routine errand to a neighboring village and was converted by Arachni. He serves as the *de facto* head of the cult in Rushton, collating reports and deciding on suitable targets for conversion. If the party do as the nobleman asks and keep Frederick informed of their progress, then Arachni quickly learns the information.

Ⓜ **Ridder Theinwald:** See page 371.

Ⓜ **Frederick he Servant:** See page 371.

11) SHRINES

Rushton boasts only one temple, but it honors the others gods through shrines. Standing around the market square are carved wooden pillars, each dedicated to one of Eira, Hothar, Kenaz, the Norns, Rigr, Sigel, Thunor, and Ullr. A large pillar standing in the center of the square honors Var, god of merchants.

No specific services are held at the shrines. Villagers are free to make their own prayers and offerings as they desire. Before planting and after harvest a temporary shrine to Vali, god of vermin, is erected. Small offerings of food are left at its base to appease the ever-hungry god and keep rats away from the fields and stores. No one in the village ever prays to the god, though.

THE CULT & THE HEROES

Once Arachni learns the heroes are investigating activities in Rushton she sends orders to halt regular kidnappings. Her attention is switched to bringing the party under her control. The night after the high priestess learns the party has begun investigating the cult she orders her cultists in the village to kidnap the heroes.

If the characters stay in the Golden Bough the cultists use the secret doors to gain access to their rooms. Divide the cultists as equally a possible between the various rooms. Several doses of Meredith's soporific spores are thrown in to each bedroom before the cult-

ists attack, as is a *silence* alchemical device (cast with a success) to negate sounds of combat or cries for help. Those asleep are left unharmed, while those unaffected by the spores are attacked. The cultists seek to employ nonlethal damage—Arachni wants slaves if possible, not corpses. Cultists with nets use them before wielding their maces. The attackers are cultists from outside the village, and thus cannot be easily identified.

Should the party reside elsewhere, a young, female cultist from the village is employed. She tries to lure the party to the secret door in the palisade, claiming to have seen suspicious activity near the fence. Once the party reaches the spot, the cultists attack from concealment with webs and soporific spores. The elite cultist carries the *silence* charm on his person, and thus tries to keep the party in the Medium Burst Template as long as possible. Don't check for Surprise—the party has been informed something is up, so they'll be prepared for trouble.

In both cases, the cultists try to commit suicide by imbibing the poison in their rings before they can be captured and interrogated. This requires an action. Typically, when the cultists' numbers are reduced to fewer than 50% they take the poison.

Kidnapped characters are dragged to the secret shrine in the Golden Bough and subjected to Arachni's venom. Those who succumb to the toxin are released with a suitable cover story of how they managed to escape the clutches of the cultists and lose them in the forest. Due to the venom, the hero has absolutely *no* idea about where he was taken or what truly occurred. Have the hero make his Vigor roll to resist the poison (see Arachni's stats on page 372), but don't tell him why.

If the player can be *fully trusted* to roleplay a convert with orders to act as normal, but hamper the party without drawing attention, then you can reveal how he must act. Otherwise, his orders are to act as natural, thus allowing the player to remain blissfully unaware he is a sleeper agent. His servitor state only comes into effect during the encounter with Arachni, when the hero switches sides at a time the GM deems most opportune (and he *must* switch sides at some point).

Characters that resist the venom are kept securely bound and gagged in the cellar for 2d4 days. After this time, they are removed to Arachni's lair. Here they are cocooned in thick webs (no hope of escape without outside help) to await their fate. Because the character is temporarily out of the game, the GM should employ the player as his aide. Let him run non-Wild Card monsters in combat for you, shuffle the cards, and so on. By helping the GM he can earn his full share of the XPs, despite his hero not taking part in a section of the adventure.

Ⓜ **Elite Cultist (1):** See page 374.

Ⓜ **Typical Cultists (2 per hero):** See page 374. Half carry a single dose of soporific spores (see page 374). None carry egg sacs. They are armed with clubs (Str+d4) as well as their spiked maces.

THE SPIDER QUEEN'S LAIR

Arachni's lair, and thus the cult's headquarters, is located in a network of natural caverns deep within the gloomy depths of Spiderfell Wood. From here she and her dark brood dwell, plotting the rise of the spider cult and the downfall of the civilized races.

A trip through Spiderfell Wood wouldn't be complete without an encounter with a giant spider or two. GMs should note the aim of this encounter is not to rob the party of alchemical devices or try to induce excessive spellcasting before they reach the caves—Arachni's lair is dangerous enough without deliberately weakening the party.

As such, these two encounters are optional. If the party is healthy and loaded with alchemical devices, then the odd wound or expenditure of an item won't hamper them much. Parties low on resources should not be made to play through these encounters unless the heroes are spoiling for a fight—then they get what they asked for!

ENCOUNTER #1: INNOCENT TRAVELERS?

As the first day draws to a close, the party smells wood smoke upon the wind. A few hundred yards ahead, they encounter a group of travelers resting by the side of the path. The strangers are warming themselves around a fire and are dressed in long traveling cloaks to ward off the night chill. Stashed behind a log are a long carpet and a small strong box.

The travelers are, in fact, cultists heading back to Arachni's lair with a prize—a kidnapped engro merchant. He's paralyzed in the rolled carpet (part of his goods). Not expecting to find outsiders in the woods, the cultists quickly prepare a cover story to explain away their presence in this unholy realm. They claim to be merchants on the hunt for a lost mule. If questioned about the carpet and strongbox, they say it dropped off the mule as it ran. Being valuable, they saw no reason to leave the items behind for thieves and bandits.

Heroes making a successful Tracking roll find no signs of a mule, or indeed any other large animal. The cultists feign distress and pretend they must have followed the wrong trail.

Figuring the party might make good converts, they offer to share their campfire, proclaiming there is safety in numbers. They have meager rations of stale bread and dried strips of meat along with some water, but they do not offer to share. Since they make a living by poisoning and kidnapping, they are reluctant to accept food or drink offered them.

If the party accepts the hospitality, the cultists try to learn all they can about them. They enquire about spellcasters and faiths, and question the heroes about any batles they have fought in order to size up their potential prey. In return, they say very little. They claim to be from Hamna and were traveling toward Aith, visiting villages

around the wood on the way. However, their knowledge of the route is very sketchy and any heroes asking about Hamna are met with only vague replies—none of the men have ever been within 100 miles of the town.

Terrain: The trees provide Cover to characters hiding behind them and block line of sight. Treat areas of vegetation as difficult ground. Lighting is Dark (–2) beneath the dark canopy except around the campfire. The light fills a 6" radius with good lighting. From 7 to 12" the lighting is Dim (–1).

Monsters: If they feel their "guests" are growing overly suspicious, they attack immediately. Otherwise, they play their role and wait until the party sleeps before commencing an attack.

Ⓜ **Cultist Paladin (1):** See page 373 but a Wild Card.

Ⓜ **Typical Cultists (2 per hero):** See page 374. Each carries a mace (Str+d6) on their cloak belt. This can be used to inflict nonlethal damage without incurring a penalty.

Ⓜ **Spider Swarm (2 maximum):** See page 375.

Tactics: The cultists are wearing their special gear concealed beneath their cloaks. Once combat begins, those with nets try to ensnare the most armored heroes and any they know to be spellcasters.

Initially, the cultists try to take the characters alive by battering them unconscious. Once half the cultists are slain, though, they switch to their spiked weapons and use the egg sacs. Typical of those faced with the choice of dying in combat or being consumed by giant spiders, the cultists fight to the bitter end—failure is not rewarded by a quick death.

The paladin makes use of his *entangle* and *fear* spells to ensnare and scare the party while avoiding his comrades. If pressed, he *summons* a giant blade spider (see page 374) to assist in the fight.

Treasure: The strongbox is locked. The lock can be smashed (Toughness 12) or picked (–2 to Lockpicking due to the locks complexity). Inside are 2,000 gold scields in coin.

Continuation: Wrapped in the long bundle is an engro merchant by the name of Tristram. He and his bodyguards were ambushed while making a routine trade visit to a village on the outskirts of the wood. The guards put up a stiff resistance and were slain, but Tristram was captured. The cultists plan to have him converted and, if successful, start a new branch of the cult in his home town, the bustling city of Drakeport. Tristram is paralyzed. He awakens with a successful Healing roll, the use of purgative herbs, or 2d6 hours of patience.

On awakening, the engro is naturally suspicious of the party, though showing him the dead cultists quickly calms his fears. He offers the party 500 gold scields if they tell him the way out of the forest and 2,000 gs if they actually escort him to civilization (Rushton is the nearest settlement). Both payments are taken from the cultists' booty, which is actually Tristram's personal coin. Agreeing to take him to Rushton earns the party both the gold and a Connection Edge.

Should the party decide to keep the gold and charge extra, the frustrated engro sets off on his own. Whether or not he ever clears the dark boughs is left to the GM to decide.

KNOCKBACK

These rules are taken from the *Hellfrost Bestiary*.

The physical attacks of large creatures can knock over smaller foes. In order to cause knockback, the attacker must make a successful Fighting attack. The blow does not have to cause damage, however. The victim cannot avoid this—no human can hope to remain standing after being on the receiving end of a frost giant's colossal war axe.

An opponent who is knocked back into a relatively solid object (hay bales and glass windows, for instance, are not solid) is automatically Shaken. This is treated as a separate attack, and thus a foe Shaken by an attack who is then knocked back into a solid object, suffers the effects of successive Shaken results. Opponents may try to Soak any initial damage from the attack or spend bennies to remove the Shaken condition *before* the knockback is applied.

- If a creature is 2 or 3 Sizes larger than its opponent, the victim is knocked back 1" and falls prone.
- If a creature is 4 to 7 Sizes larger than its opponent, the victim is knocked back 1d4" and falls prone.
- If a creature is 8 to 11 Sizes larger than its opponent, the victim is knocked back 1d6" and falls prone.
- If a creature is 12 or more Sizes larger than its opponent, the victim is knocked back 1d10" and falls prone.

ENCOUNTER #2: BIG SPIDERS

Sooner or later, the heroes reach an area of forest swathed in dense webs. No matter which route they take, they find their path blocked by webs. If they wish to proceed, the party must pass through them. The cultists are permitted through only because Arachni wills it, and the giant spiders have no wish to offend her in her role of high priestess.

Terrain: The webs run from the ground to the upper branches of the trees some 10" overhead. The only way past them is to fly or cut a gap.

Each 1" section has Toughness 8, but can only be severed by slashing weapons, such as swords, or fire/coldfire. A roll of 1 on a Fighting die (regardless of Wild Die) while cutting a web, indicates the attacker's melee weapon has stuck to the web. It requires a Strength roll as an action to free the weapon. While the webs burn, they are not flammable. Fire or coldfire spells scorch away an area equal to the spell's area of effect (assume a 1" square for *bolt*) but the fire does not spread.

A hero who walks or is knocked back into a web becomes entangled. He must make an Agility or Strength

RETREAT!

Should the party withdraw from the caverns without having killed Arachni, she realizes she seriously underestimated the heroes' resolve. Within a few hours she summons spiders and cultists from the surrounding woods and organizes a large raid on the village. Extermination of the humans is now her top priority (she can restart her cult later in a new settlement).

Unless the secret door in the palisade has been discovered and blocked, the spiders and cultists sneak through. Otherwise, they are forced to climb the palisade at that point. The fence is 2" high. Crossing it counts as part of the spider's regular movement. The cultists have consumed their potions of *wall walker* before reaching the palisade, and can thus scramble over as well.

Aiding the heroes in the defense of the village is the ridder and a number of villagers, men and women, all equipped as militia. With no orders for such an occasion, any cultists remaining in the village do not act to help or hinder either side.

Ⓜ **Cultist Priest (1):** See page 374, except the priest is a Wild Card.
Ⓜ **Elite Cultists (1 per hero):** See page 374.
Ⓜ **Typical Cultists (2 per hero):** See page 374.
Ⓜ **Leaping Spiders (1 per 2 heroes):** See page 374.
Ⓜ **Sword Spiders (2 per hero):** See page 374.
Ⓜ **Web Spiders (1 per 2 heroes):** See page 374.
Ⓜ **Ridder Haksuni** See page 371.
Ⓜ **Village Militia (4 per hero):** See page 372.

roll at –2 as an action to escape. Until he does, all physical actions are at –4.

The trees provide Cover to characters hiding behind them and block line of sight. Treat areas of vegetation as difficult ground.

Lighting is Dim (–1) beneath the dark canopy.

Monsters: The webs are home to an enormous blade spider and her young. The hairy fiends lurk high in the canopy, concealed by the dense foliage. Completely stationary and concealed by branches and leaves, they cannot be detected from the ground without the use of magic (such as *detect giant spiders*).

Ⓜ **Large Blade Spider (1):** As a blade spider (page 374), except this fiend is a Wild Card, has Size +4, the Large special ability, and Toughness 10.

Ⓜ **Blade Spiders (1 per hero):** See page 374.

Tactics: The spiders drop down from their positions and attack the party if any web is touched. Blade spiders are pack hunters and possess enough intelligence to Gang Up on foes. If the large spider is reduced to three wounds, she uses the Defend maneuver to retreat from combat and move vertically up a web.

CAVERNS OVERVIEW

Each cavern is connected by one or more natural tunnels, which twist and turn through the surrounding rock. The overview map is a guide to the overall layout and is not accurately scaled. The combat maps detail only the caverns where action occurs, not each individual section of tunnel, some of which run for hundreds of yards. Moving between two caverns involves walking over uneven floor and squeezing through tight spaces. It takes 1d6 x 10 minutes per tunnel traversed.

Should a wandering monster be encountered, assume a tunnel varies between one and two game inches wide and runs straight for no more than 2d6" before it bends.

Except for Arachni's lair (see page 20), the caverns are pitch black (–4). The only sounds are distant echoes—the drip of water, scuttling in the dark, small stones bouncing around, the occasional clicking of the mandibles of an unseen spider, and such. The sounds are distorted by distance and bouncing through multiple tunnels. This prevents the party from identifying the direction of the source.

WANDERING MONSTERS

While many of the inhabitants live in lairs and let prey come to them, others are more active. For each hour spent in the caves draw a card from the action deck. A royal card (Jack through Ace) indicates an encounter. On a Joker, the party encounters two creatures at once. Roll a d20 and consult the table below.

Since the spiders are quite stealthy and do not need light to hunt, it is very unlikely the party will ever be able to catch them unawares. Cultists, however, have to use torches to light their passage. Artificial sources of illumination can be detected at ten times the area they illuminate in a cavern and half that in a tunnel.

d20	Encounter
1–3	1d4 leaping spiders (see page 374).
4–6	1d4 blade spiders (see page 374).
7–10	1d6 typical cultists (page 374) led by an elite cultists (page 374).
11–14	1d6 typical cultists (page 374) led by a cultist paladin/priest (page 23).
15–17	1d4 paralysis spiders (see page 374)
18–19	1d2 poison spiders (see page 374).
20	Medium Burst Template venomous spider swarm (see page 25).

1) ENTRANCE CHAMBER

Water drips steadily down the walls of this cavern, forming pools in depressions in the uneven ground. Scorched patches of rock encircled by stones indicate where fires have been lit in the cave mouth in the past. What fate befell those who sought shelter in this of all caves? Tiny

spiders, red, black, and white, crawl across the rock in search of their next meal. At the far end, two narrow tunnels lead off into thick darkness.

The spiders are harmless and serve only to indicate to the heroes that they have reached the right spot. The fires are indeed campfires left by successive travelers seeking shelter in the caves. Many never left, and their bones lie deeper within the network of caves. A lucky few were never troubled by the spiders and left none the wiser to the horrors lurking in the darkness.

2) TANGLE OF WEBS

Tall columns, formed where stalagmites and stalactites have joined, dot the cavern. Stretched between them at seemingly random intervals are lattices of thick web. The desiccated corpses of rats and large insects hang lifelessly from the webs, dark specks upon the silky gray-white. Tangled toward the center of the thick webbing and scattered across the ground are larger, easily recognizable bones and skulls.

Heroes who look up realize the ceiling 8" above them is completely covered in webs. Dark shapes seem to move among the webs, though the character cannot be sure the movement isn't a trick of the light.

The shadows lurking in the webs are not all spiders—some are just tricks of light. In order to even have a chance at harming a spider the character must nominate one of the squares in which they lurk. Any attacks suffer a –4 Cover penalty. The webs provide the spider's with +2 Armor.

The larger bones are predominately those of goblins, humans, and elves. The spiders that dwell here have picked the bones clean of flesh.

Terrain: Each 1" section has Toughness 8, but can only be severed by slashing weapons, such as swords, or fire/coldfire. A roll of 1 on a Fighting die (regardless of Wild Die) while cutting a web, indicates the attacker's melee weapon has stuck to the web. It requires a Strength roll as an action to free the weapon. While the webs burn, they are not flammable. Fire or coldfire spells scorch away an area equal to the spell's area of effect (assume a 1" square for *bolt*) but the fire does not spread.

A hero who walks or is knocked back into a web becomes entangled. He must make an Agility or Strength roll at –2 as an action to escape. Until he does, all physical actions are at –4.

The columns provide Cover to characters hiding behind them and block line of sight.

Monsters: Lurking high in the ceiling is a number of web-shooting spiders. Sickly gray in color, they blend in with their webs. This cave is off the main track through to Arachni's lair, and the spiders are allowed to devour anything foolish enough to enter. Every few weeks, a squad of cultists scours the webs for anything of value carried by victims.

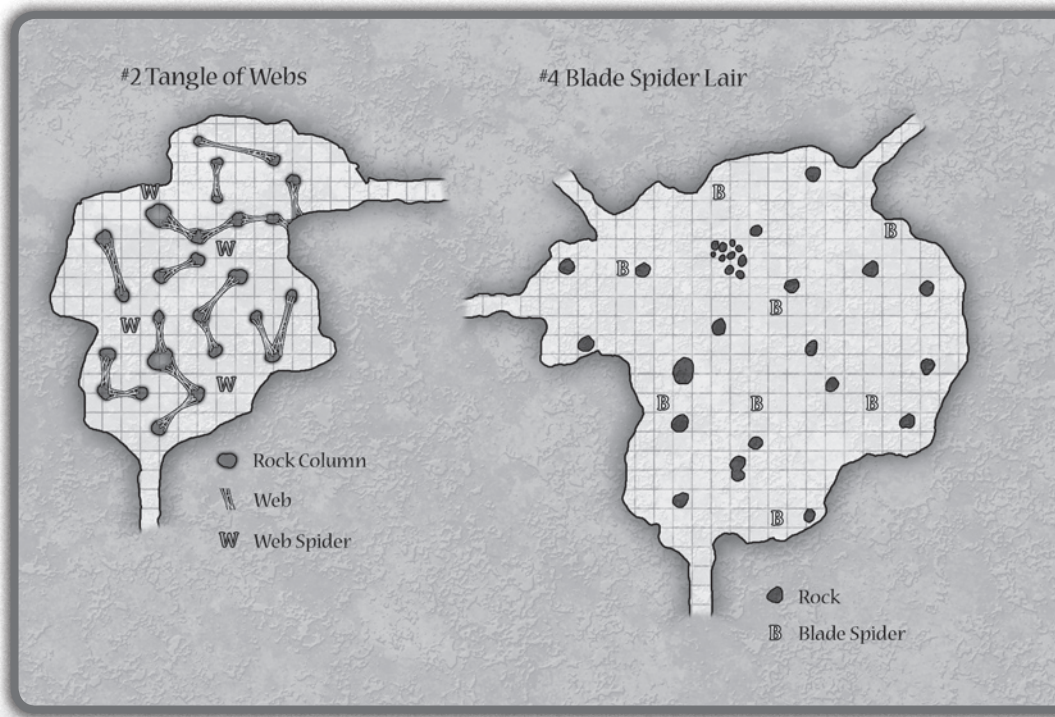
Ⓜ **Web Spider (1 per hero):** See page 374.

Tactics: Although alerted to the heroes' presence, the spiders remain dormant until a web is touched or the party reaches the spot marked X on the map. At this point they lower themselves from the ceiling at the indicated positions on strands of silk and attack. (The GM should create more starting points if the party comprises more than four heroes). Check for Surprise—the party may know an attack is coming, but not from where.

Quick thinking heroes who avoid Surprise may try to sever a spider's rappel line before the beast hits the floor. The strands are very small targets (–4 to attack rolls) and Toughness 6. A spider that loses its line falls 4" (20 feet for convenience). If the spider is adjacent to a web marked on the map, it is allowed an Agility roll at –2 to catch itself and break its fall. If the roll fails or no web is nearby the creature suffers falling damage as normal.

The spiders launch webs at the nearest targets. Only when a victim is ensnared do they close in to melee and begin biting.

Continuation: Should their prey flee, the spiders give chase. Given the tunnels do not allow for instant



movement between chambers, the action occurs in the narrow tunnels. The heroes suffer a –1 penalty to their Agility rolls. Once the party moves more than ten Range Increments ahead of the spiders, the beasts give up the hunt and return to their webs, though in different positions than before.

3) EMPTY CAVERNS

Many nooks and crannies line the walls of this cavern. Small pools of still water reflect your lanterns and cast flickering waves of light on the walls. A few white bones, long picked clean of skin and tissue, lie discarded.

There is nothing of interest to the party in this cavern, though it is a relatively safe place to rest up for a short while. Common Knowledge identifies the bones as a mixture of animal and humanoid. The bones are many months old.

4) BLADE SPIDER LAIR

Small black rocks and old skeletons lie on the ground of this large cavern. The walls are of dark stone, down which water trickles. High above, stalactites hang like gigantic spears.

As with other spider-infested caves, the cultists make regular checks for valuables carried by prey. To that effect, none of the skeletons have anything of value. Most have been here long enough for molds to begin growing on the bones.

Terrain: The black stones are only a few feet high and thus provide no Cover unless a hero is prone behind them (+4 Armor). They do not block line of sight, but passage through a square containing one is difficult ground.

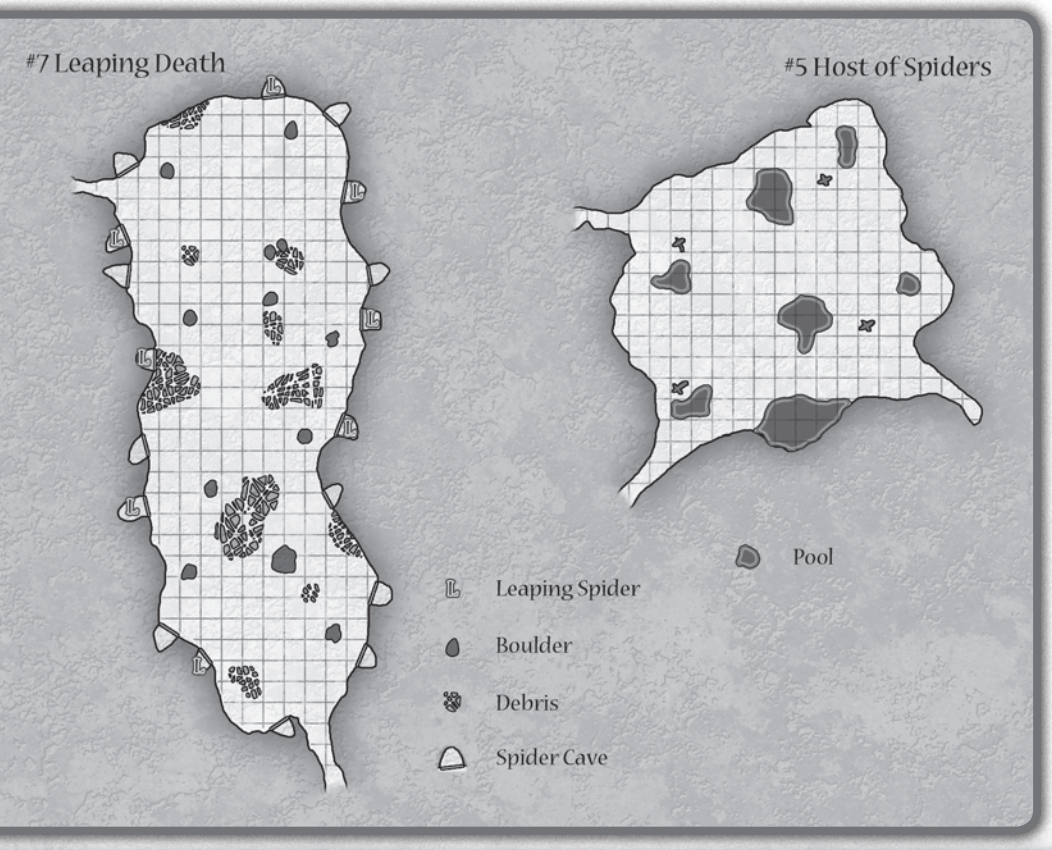
Monsters: All is not as it seems in this chamber! Several of the black "stones" are in fact dozing blade spiders. They sleep with their legs tucked underneath their bodies.

Ⓜ **Blade Spider (2 per hero):** See page 374.

Tactics: The spiders remain asleep unless one is prodded or a living creature moves adjacent. At that time the spider rises up with a terrible screech! Check for Surprise.

Blade spiders attack by rearing up on their hind legs and using their front legs to impale their prey. They hunt in packs and are smart enough to employ deliberate Gang Up tactics. While they have no concept of magic, they quickly switch targets to whoever is causing them the most damage, whether this be a mage wielding *blast* spells or the humanoid swinging a deadly weapon.

5) A HOST OF SPIDERS



Numerous puddles of dark, still water sit in depressions on the uneven floor. Between them stand tall stalagmites, glittering with moisture. Cracks and holes, as yet devoid of water, dot the floor.

The holes and cracks lead to a chamber directly beneath this one. Peering into the holes requires a hero to put his eye directly over a hole. Beneath can be seen a glittering, writhing, black carpet. A Notice roll is required to deduce the true nature of the carpet—a host of tiny spiders! The viewer must make a Guts roll to avoid Fear if he works this out.

Terrain: The small pools are deep enough to count as difficult ground except to the swarms, which are light enough to cross the surface unimpaired.

Monsters: The "carpet" comprises thousands of tiny but vicious spiders. They are in the lower cave and venture above only to hunt en masse.

Ⓜ **Venomous Spider Swarm, Small (1 per hero):** See page 374.

Tactics: A single swarm emerges

from each of the four points marked X on the map as soon as the party reaches the center of the cavern. The swarms try to converge as quickly as possible, attacking everything in their path. If two Small Burst Template swarms overlap, they form into a single Medium Burst Template Swarm, automatically. The addition of a third Small swarm forms a Large Burst Template swarm. If two Medium Burst Template swarms converge, or a fourth Small swarm joins with a Large swarm, then the resultant swarm fills a Large Burst Template and can take *two* wounds before it shrinks again.

6) AN UNWHOLESOME LARDER

Dozens of large bundles, each around six feet long, hang from thick strands attached to the ceiling. The bundles sway gently in the breeze, like grisly, silent wind chimes. Several are cut open, though the contents cannot be seen without closer inspection.

The bundles are corpses wrapped in cobwebs. These are the mortal remains of the unfortunate souls who resisted Arachni's venom or innocent travelers captured by spiders. The chamber is a larder, where corpses are stored until the spiders desire a wholesome snack.

None of the corpses have anything of value. The cultists routinely cut open fresh bundles containing travelers and loot the bodies for valuables.

Any heroes kidnapped by the cult and dragged into the lair are suspended here. They are kept paralyzed by concentrated doses of spider venom injected into their system at regular intervals, but can be revived with a successful Healing roll. Alternatively, they recover naturally in 2d4 hours.

7) LEAPING DEATH

The light from your lanterns fail to find the ceiling of this vast cavern. All up the walls, from ground level as far as you can see, are many cave mouths, each a dark, gaping hole in the rock. A series of bluffs lead upward toward the rear of the cavern. A waft of cool air, tainted by the faint stench of decay, blows from a pair of tunnel entrances in the north of the cavern.

Most of the caves go back only a few yards. A small few run much further, though eventually they all come to dead ends. Many are littered with bones, though, as with other caves, the cultists make periodic sweeps to retrieve items of value. Fortunately, their last search was several weeks ago.

Terrain: The walls of the cavern are almost vertical and have virtually no handholds. Naturally, this doesn't concern the spiders much. The boulders block line of sight and can be used for Cover (ignore the standard Armor rules—these things are big). The debris is difficult ground. The ceiling is 24" high.

Monsters: Lurking in some of the caverns are leaping spiders. Wary of living at ground level, where they might fall prey to other species of spiders or intruding predators, the spiders live only in the higher caves.

Ⓜ **Leaping Spiders (2 per hero):** See page 374.

Tactics: The trapdoor spiders recognize the cultists on sight (by their unique armor) and do not (generally) attack, however other intruders are fair game.

The spiders lurk in their caves, patiently waiting for their latest meal to come within range. As soon as a party member moves within 4" of an occupied cave, all the spiders leap out at the closest target. Check for Surprise.

The spiders marked on the map indicate vertical distance along the cavern, not the height of their lairs. The occupied caves are 1d8" above the ground. Roll for each spider and subtract this from the distance it leaps on the first round. For instance, if a cave is 6" above the ground the spider can leap no further than 2" horizontally from its lair.

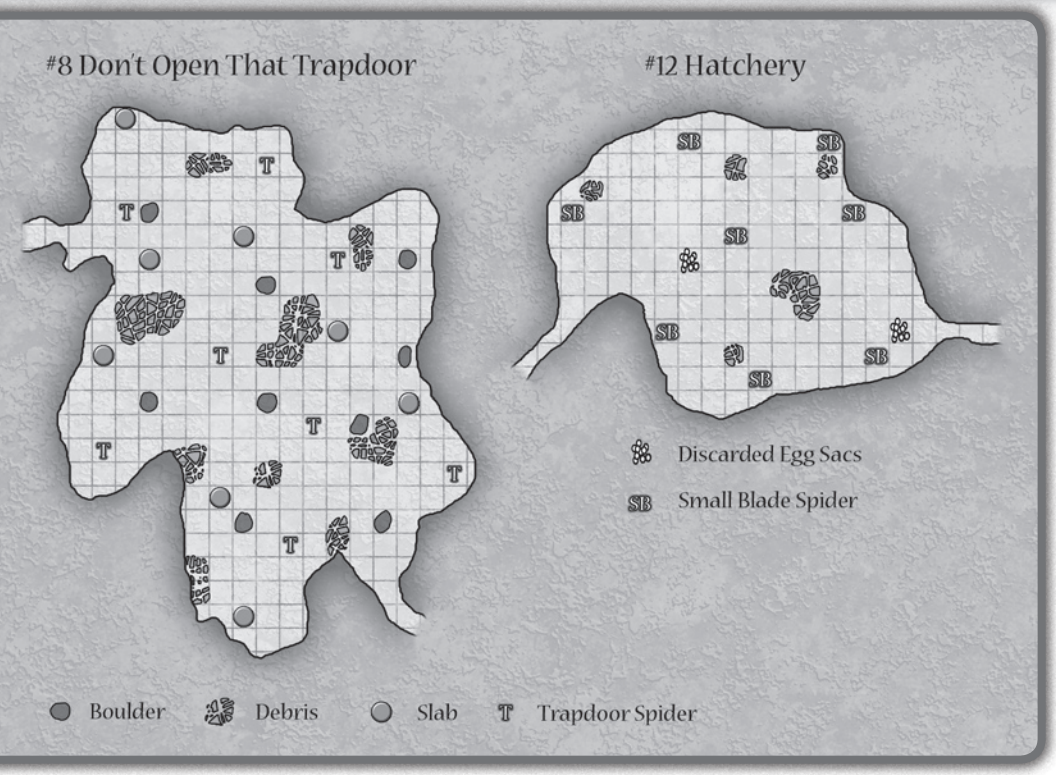
Treasure: The spiders' lairs are full of bones, many belonging to humanoid races. For each hour of searching the small caves, the party may make a Cooperative Notice roll. With success, they locate 1d10 x 10 gs worth of coins and jewelry. A maximum of 200 gs worth of treasure can be collected. On a raise, the party discovers a relic not yet found by the cultists or missed among the bones. Roll a d4 for each raise scored. Reroll duplicate results.

d4	Relic
1	*Small Gourd of Red Wine:* This is a *healing* potion. It heals two wounds when imbibed.
2	*Dried Frog Skin:* Counts as *leaping* cast with a success. To function, it must be eaten.
3	*Icy Cold Metal Flask:* Contained within is what appears to be an oily, icy slush. When poured over the body, an *aura* spell activates with a cold trapping.
4	*Vial of Oil Engraved with Tiw's Symbol:* Smeared on a weapon, the oil imbues it with *smite* cast with a success.

8) DON'T OPEN THAT TRAPDOOR!

The floor of this cavern is quite smooth, perhaps created eons ago by a quirk of nature or the passage of an ancient river. Large, flat stones dot the ground at irregular intervals. The air is thick with the smell of death, though the source is not obvious.

This cavern is greatly feared by the cultists and other species of spiders, for it is home to a number of trapdoor spiders. These stealthy predators attack anything they sense close to their homes, leaping out and biting first and then worrying about whether the potential meal is actually edible later.



Terrain: The boulders block line of sight and can be used for Cover (ignore the standard Armor rules—these things are big). The debris is difficult ground. The ceiling is 12" high.

The stone slabs are actually doors to the spider's lairs. The stones can be lifted with a successful Strength roll as an action. Because of the way they are placed, the spiders can shove them aside from within the burrow as a free action.

Monsters: Each spider has its own territory around its lair and tolerates nothing entering, save for their queen. Even the cultists are unable to pass through here safely, and thus they never use this cavern to reach deeper parts of the complex.

Ⓜ **Trapdoor Spiders (2 per hero):** See page 374.

Tactics: Trapdoor spiders are ambush predators. Rather than engage in prolonged melee they burst out from their hidden lairs when anything moves within 3", make a melee attack, and then retreat. The latter counts as Withdrawing from Melee only if the victim is not Surprised. All the spiders begin on Hold.

Treasure: With the cultists unable to search the nests, the trapdoor spiders have accumulated a few baubles from unwary victims who stumbled into the cavern. Each occupied nest contains 1d10 x 100 gs worth of assorted coins, jewelry, gems, and other easily sellable goods, plus 1d6 x 200 gs in the form of mundane equipment (nothing from the unusual items list). Unoccupied nests contain nothing of value.

For ease, assume the latter weighs 5 pounds per 200 gs worth. No specific lists are provided. The GM shouldn't worry about the specifics—treat the objects as miscellaneous goods, and assume anything within reason the party wants is there (such as replacement arrows or a chain hauberk, cost permitting).

The miscellaneous goods are valued at their *cost* price, not the resale value (which is typically a quarter to one-half the full value). For instance, if a cache comes to 400 gs, a hero might declare he has discovered a great sword. Should he come to sell it, however, he'll get 100 gs, or 200 gs if he's lucky.

In addition, the GM should draw a card from the action deck for each lair searched. On a royal card, the hero has discovered something of interest. Check the value and suit from the table below. Shuffle the deck after each draw.

Spell names indicate an alchemical device. Unless otherwise indicated, the spells were cast with a standard success. The exact nature of the enchanted object is left to the GM to describe.

9) TIGHT SQUEEZE

This small chamber has two exits. One is a large tunnel running roughly in an easterly direction.

Value/Suit	Club	Diamond	Heart	Spade
Jack	herbal remedy: healing	Healer's Bag	*succor*	*smite*
Queen	herbal remedy: antitoxin	Norn Charm	*healing*	*armor*
King	herbal remedy: numbing	Tome of Learning*	*healing* (raise)	*deflection*
Ace	herbal remedy: berserk	Tome of Lore +1**	*greater healing*	*aura*
Joker	The hero has unearthed a true relic! The object grants a +1 bonus to a single skill of the GM's choice. Weapons apply the bonus to attack *and* damage rolls. Examples include *thieves' picks* (Lockpicking), a *+1 weapon* (Fighting, Shooting, or Throwing), *magic rope* (Climbing), or *knight's spurs* (Riding).			

* The GM should determine the type using the table in the Hellfrost Player's Guide and then pick a single Novice spell from the appropriate spell list.

** On a subject of the GM's choosing.

The other is a narrow crawlspace that seems to descend deeper into the bowels of the earth.

The narrow tunnel leads directly to Arachni's lair, but is fraught with danger. It requires travelers to crawl on their bellies and in places is barely 6" (half a foot) high. Heroes wishing to take this treacherous route must make an Agility roll. Encumbrance penalties apply as normal.

In addition, each point of armor (ignoring any magical bonuses) gives a –1 penalty to the roll. For instance, wearing a chain hauberk (+2 Armor) incurs a –2 penalty. Using a dose of whale blubber grants a +1 bonus. Heroes with the Acrobat Edge are assumed to be naturally supple and gain the Edge's +2 bonus to their Agility roll. Furthermore, Obese characters and Brawny heroes who opted for a muscular physique, suffer a –2 penalty. Small adventurers gain a +1 bonus as it is easier for them to wriggle through. Creatures of Size +2 or larger cannot traverse the tunnel unless they are serpentine.

Traversing this tunnel takes 1d6 x 30 minutes. Failure means the hero gets stuck halfway down and cannot progress further. He must withdraw and use the larger tunnel. A critical failure means the spelunker has gotten wedged tight and can move neither forward nor backward. He must make a second Agility roll, with all the modifiers above. Each roll, whether successful or not, inflicts a level of Fatigue from Bumps and Bruises (to a maximum of Exhausted). One hero *behind* the stuck character may assist with a Cooperative roll using Strength to pull his comrade free.

Any sound in the tunnel echoes down to Arachni's lair, putting her and her minions on their guard for intruders. Heroes who get stuck or who have to withdraw are deemed to make enough noise to alert the spider queen.

Finally, any hero successfully making the journey to the far end must make a Vigor roll to avoid suffering a level of Fatigue from Bumps and Bruises.

There is one final problem heroes who use this route have to contend with if they have removed their armor—their journey takes them straight into Arachni's lair and they are unarmored!

10) REFRESHING WATER

The air in this chamber is cool, a refreshing change from the dank air of the other caves. A waterfall cascades down from high above, splashing into a crystal clear pool.

The water is extremely refreshing. Any hero who drinks a pint automatically recovers one level of Fatigue, regardless of the source. Unfortunately, it spoils quickly if removed; the effects last just a single day.

11) TRICK OF NATURE

A number of large storm lanterns hang from the ceiling, casting an orange glow around the entire cave. Halfway across, the ground is rent by a wide chasm.

The chasm, which is six yards (3") across, is in fact an optical illusion. Staring into the void, the heroes appear to see a vertical drop of some 100 feet. In fact, this is a reflection of a chimney in the ceiling cast into a perfectly still pool. The "chasm" is only a few inches deep. A hero throwing a stone into it quickly realizes its true nature. The storm lanterns are shuttered so as to avoid casting a direct reflection on the still water, and instead highlight the ceiling.

12) HATCHERY

Clinging to the walls is a great number of red, slimy sacs. Each pulsates gently, as if something stirs within. Suddenly a number of the sacs split open, disgorging mucus-covered spiders about the size of a dog. Newly hatched and hungry, the spiders scuttle toward their first meal—you!

This is the queen's hatchery. When she spawns an egg sac, the globular sac is carried here and fastened to the walls. Each sac contains hundreds of young, but only one will hatch, having eaten its siblings to ensure its survival.

Terrain: Old egg sacs lie on the floor. They remain slimy long after being discarded and count as difficult ground. In addition, any hero who runs across a patch and rolls a 1 on his running die slips and falls prone.

Monsters: The bloated egg sacs contain a host of young blade spiders. The vile creatures are hungry for fresh meat.

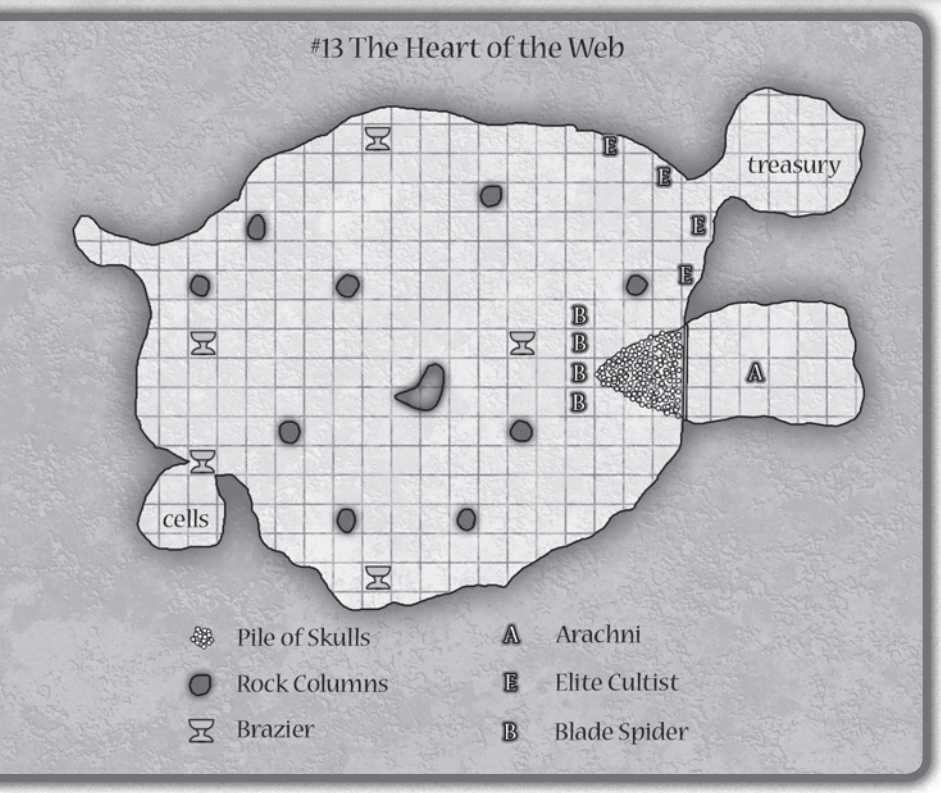
Ⓜ **Small Blade Spiders (2 per hero):** See page 374.

13) THE HEART OF THE WEB

The heroes can enter this room either through the narrow tunnel or via the hatchery. Remember, any heroes who opted to take the crawlspace and stripped off their armor do not have time to don it before the attack begins.

Four huge braziers illuminate this vaulted cavern. Immense columns of natural rock stretch up into the darkness. At the far end is a large cave entrance. A cascade of skulls spills out from the dark opening like a macabre, frozen waterfall. Scuttling around the base of the skulls are four giant spiders. Their bony forelimbs click on the stone as they move. Flanking the entrance to a smaller cave mouth are a handful of humans, each holding spiked mauls.

A female voice calls out from somewhere unseen. "We have visitors, my children," it purrs. "Show



them what happens to unwanted guests." With that, the spiders and cultists charge.

Arachni's lair consists of the central cavern and three smaller areas. The first smaller area is a makeshift prison, blocked by a huge stone. Within are four members of the same family kidnapped from a nearby stead. All are suffering malnutrition but are otherwise unharmed. The second chamber is Arachni's personal quarters. Bedecked in black silk cushions, it has little of value. Finally there is the treasury. The contents are detailed below.

Terrain: The braziers can be tipped over with a Strength roll as an action. The character places a Small Burst Template touching the square containing the brazier in any direction he chooses. Anything in the template suffers 2d10 damage and has a chance of catching fire.

The columns block line of sight and provide Cover (Armor +8). Movement through the pile of skulls is difficult ground.

Moving the giant boulder blocking the prison requires a Strength roll at –4 as an action. Up to four heroes may Cooperate on this task.

Monsters: This is the lair of Arachni, the spider queen, and her minions. The great queen lurks in the cave above the pile of skulls. Flanking the altar are the queen's bodyguards—four blade spiders of unusual size. Flanking the entrance from the hatchery cave are four elite cultists, their weapons drawn and ready for action.

Only if the heroes are having an easy time does the giant blade spider appear. The fight should be exciting and tense, a memorable occasion the survivors can justly boast of later, not a total massacre. It emerges from one of the side caves at a time the GM deems suitably dramatic.

Ⓜ **Arachni the Spider Queen:** See page 372.

Ⓜ **Giant Blade Spider (1 per hero):** As a regular blade spider (see page 374) except it is Size +8. It has the Huge special ability and Toughness 14.

Ⓜ **Blade Spider (1 per hero):** As a regular blade spider (see page 374) except they are Size +2. Each has Toughness 8.

Ⓜ **Elite Cultists (1 per hero):** See page 374.

Tactics: The blade spider and cultists immediately move to engage the heroes. While the spiders head for the nearest target, the cultists single out obvious spellcasters and heroes wearing heavy armor, since these are the most obvious threats to the queen.

Arachni's typical tactics are detailed below. However, the queen is intelligent and changes her plans to best suit the current situation. For instance, if a hero rushes into melee, the queen might respond with a Fighting attack using either her swords or stinger, casting *fear* in an attempt to drive off her assailant, or trying to catch the hero in a web.

Round 1: Arachni begins the combat by casting *quickness* on herself.

If the spider queen has converted a hero, she calls on him as a free action to turn on his comrades at the start of the fight. The hero is allowed a single Spirit roll opposed by the queen's Spirit to break free of his conditioning. Otherwise, he is her slave for the duration of the combat. Note that this is not the *puppet* spell, and thus cannot be *dispelled* or *negated* and does not count as a Maintained spell.

Round 2: Arachni leaps from her lair. Since this is the first time the heroes see her, they must make Guts rolls to avoid Terror. Read the descriptive text below aloud.

The abomination has the body of a large, six-legged spider and the torso, arms, and head of a female human. Her upper body is covered in glittering black scales. Two of her eyes are human, though four times normal the size. Six smaller black eyes circle her head. Pulsating red sacs grow from her spidery body. Dangling beneath her abdomen is a long, wickedly-sharp stinger.

If she lands within range, she casts a three-segment *barrier* positioned to be adjacent to as many heroes as possible. If the heroes move away from the *barrier* she drops the spell (a free action). Otherwise, she moves as close as possible and hatches an egg sac this round.

Round 3: Arachni unleashes an egg sac containing a venomous spider swarm and fires a web (incurring

a multi action penalty) at the nearest characters. The swarm scuttles toward the heroes.

Round 4: The queen leaps at the closest hero and attacks with both long swords.

Round 5 onward: Once engaged in melee, she alternates between her stinger and her long swords.

If wounded, she attempts to retreat using the Defend maneuver. Any surviving cultists or blade spiders move to position themselves between their queen and her attackers with the Defend maneuver. Arachni then hatches another egg sac. After this, the queen fires off a *fear* spell, followed by another three-segment *barrier*, this time between her and the heroes.

Treasure: The cult's treasury comprises 4,454 gs in coin and jewelry. It is stored in unlocked chests. Much of it was donated by cultists and giant spiders from throughout Spiderfell Wood. In addition, there are several valuable items. Each is detailed below.

* A tome of lore +2 concerning Knowledge (Area: Spiderfell Wood). The book is written in Classical Anari. This belonged to a druid who was trying to cleanse the forest of its spider infestation. Unfortunately, he was ambushed and slain by giant spiders.

* A *Short Sword of Spider Slaying*. This is a relic. The blade glows bright blue when within 12" of a giant spider. When wielded against giant spiders, it inflicts +1d8 damage on a raise instead of the usual +1d6. This also belonged to the druid. The druids in the town of Wald, on the northeast side of Spiderfell Wood, are engaged in a crusade against the giant spiders. They will pay 4,000 gs for this weapon.

* Ten doses of antitoxin.

* An alchemical wand imbued with a powerful *bolt* spell. It fires three 3d6 damage *bolts* with a fire trapping. It is engraved with the owner's name—Maegister Arklo. An elementalist who makes a successful Common Knowledge roll at –2 has heard the name before. Arklo was a fire elementalist of some renown, famed for his offensive spell casting abilities. He apparently died in an explosion a decade ago, though no remains were ever found.

* A book of instructions on how to build alchemical devices. It grants a +2 bonus to Knowledge (Alchemy) rolls, but only if the trapping for the spell is fire or heat. It too belonged to Maegister Arklo. The Convocation of Elementalists will pay 2,000 gs for the volume in cash or alchemical devices.

* Two potions of *healing* cast with a success and one created with a *raise*.

AFTERMATH

With Arachni's death, the spider cult is shattered, though not entirely destroyed. Unless Meredith the herbalist is stopped, she continues feeding the cultists in the village the fungal potions. Once the supply of potion is stopped, the cultists shake off the effects of the venom in a week. None can recall much except hazy nightmares and vague memories.

Spiderfell Wood becomes only slightly less dangerous, for there are still countless giant spiders and many willing converts to the cult at large. Within a few months a new high priest or priestess will emerge somewhere in the wood to continue the cult's goal. Still, a small victory has been earned, and for that the civilized races should be grateful.

BESTIARY

RIDDER THEINWALD HAKSUNU

Born and raised in Rushton, Ridder Theinwald is a country nobleman through and through. With his village never subjected to bandit or goblin raids, the ridder has largely lived as a country gent, though he possesses rudimentary combat skills. Much of his time is spent indulging in food and drink, and his weight has suffered terribly as a result.

Theinwald may not be in the upper echelons of Midmark's nobility, but he acts like he's a king, above mingling with the commoners. He makes public appearances only a few times a year, and then only at festivals where there is food and mead on offer, leaving the daily affairs to Frederick, his chief servant. However, he is obsequious to any nobles of higher rank in the party, offering them and their "servants" lodgings in his house.

So far Ridder Theinwald has not been targeted—were he to begin acting strangely, his behavior might drive the remaining villagers away, and that would hamper the spider queen's plans.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d6
Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 9 (2)
Hindrances: Clueless, Loyal, Obese
Edges: Noble
Languages: Anari, Saxa, Trader
Gear: Chain shirt (+2), medium shield (+1 Parry), battle axe (Str+d8), fine clothes

FREDERICK THE SERVANT

Frederick has served the ridder for many years. Although technically a servant, he serves as his master's chief counsel. He is naturally cautious and clear-headed, something the ridder values highly. Frederick is also the "face" of the household, dealing with routine village matters that don't require the noble's immediate attention. He is well-liked in the village. Although a cultist, Frederick's temperament has not changed much. He remains polite and attentive to his duties.

Frederick is not a fighter—he's a leader of men. Cor-

nered alone he is no match for the party, but if he is able to lead cultists against them, the party will find him a dangerous opponent.

Unlike the other cultists, Frederick owns no special gear. Should his rooms be searched, there is nothing to link him to the cult. His alchemical devices were bought and paid for by the ridder so as to allow speedy communication with neighboring villages in emergencies.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Healing d6, Knowledge (Heraldry) d8, Notice d10, Persuasion d8, Riding d8, Streetwise d10

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Anemic, Cautious, Loyal (the cult)

Edges: Charismatic, Command, fervor, Hold the Line, Level Headed

Languages: Anari, Orcish, Saxa, Trader

Gear: Leather shirt (+1), short sword (Str+d6)

Alchemical Devices: Four imbued scrolls with *voice on the wind* (100 miles range).

JOXA LONERIDER

Many citizens imagine all druids as wearing long robes and carrying staves. Joxa is a militant druid, sworn to rid Spiderfell Wood of the nightmarish inhabitants by any means. Part-woodsman, part-investigator, and part-warrior, Joxa has faced poisonous spiders on numerous occasions and lived to tell his tales.

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

Skills: Climbing d8, Druidism d8, Fighting d8, Guts d10, Healing d6, Intimidation d8, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Knowledge (Spiderfell Wood) d10, Notice d8, Stealth d8+2, Survival d8+2, Tracking d8+2

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Hindrances: Cautious, Code of Honor, Vow (Major: cleanse Spiderfell Wood)

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Combat Reflexes, Concentration, Sweep, Woodsman

Languages: Beastspeech, Fey, Saxa, Trader

Powers: *Armor* (bark skin), *bolt* (spectral stag's head), *healing* (use of herbs), *silence*, *smite* (sharpens weapon), *voice on the wind* (bird delivers the message), *wilderness step*

Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), medium shield (+1 Parry), long sword (Str+d8), three throwing spears (Range: 3/6/12, Str+d6), six doses of antitoxin.

Alchemical Devices: Four *healing* potions (each cures one wound), two pouches of salt imbued with *warding (spiders)* cast with a raise.

FREDA HAPISDOHTOR

Freda was born and raised in Hamna. Argumentative, and prone to temper tantrums, Freda was "promoted" to run the temple in Rushton because it was as far away as her superiors could send her at the time. A city girl, barely in her late teens, Freda never settled into country living. She also lacks the maturity to be head of a temple.

Always considered an outsider by the locals, she quickly managed to alienate almost the entire population. Only the ridder tolerates her petulant manner, and then only because she is technically the highest ranking cleric in Rushton and therefore one of his advisors.

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

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d4, Guts d4, Healing d8, Knowledge (Alchemy) d8, Knowledge (Religion) d8, Notice d8, Survival d8

Charisma: –1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Habit (Minor: argumentative), Stubborn, Vow (Major: vegan, never eats meat or dairy products)

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Hedge Magic

Languages: Anari, Saxa, Trader

Powers: *bolt* (thorns), *entangle* (magical vines), *environmental protection, feast* (no meat), *healing, sanctuary, wilderness step*

Gear: Mace (Str+d6), holy symbol

VILLAGER

Rushton's inhabitants are mainly farmers, though there are a small number of crafters. Unless a citizen has a unique stat block, use this one. Individuals the GM wants to expand into more fleshed out characters can have higher Traits or a few Edges and Hindrances. Don't forget to roll on the Ally Personalities table as well.

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, Saxa, Trader

Gear: Farming implement (Str+d4 if one-handed or Str+d6 if two-handed). Militia duty: leather (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), dagger (Str+d4)

ARACHNI, HIGH PRIESTESS

Whether this abomination was once fully human or not is unknown. If she was once a human, what terrible pact did she make to achieve her current form? The high priestess of the spider cult has the body of a large spider (though with just six legs) and the torso, arms, and head of a female human. Her upper body is covered in glittering black scales. Two of her eyes are human, though four times normal size. Six smaller black eyes circle her head, giving her all-round vision. Pulsating red sacs grow from her spidery body, each containing many hundreds of young spiders.

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

Skills: Faith d10, Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Shooting d10, Stealth d10
Charisma: –2; **Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 11 (2)
Hindrances: Arrogant, Quirk (refers to humanoids as flies), Ugly (she's part spider), Vengeful (Major)
Edges: Ambidextrous, Arcane Background (Miracles), Command, Fervor, Improved Level Headed, Two-Fisted
Gear: Two long swords (Str+d8)
Powers: *barrier* (wall of spiders; adjacent foes take 2d4 damage per round as per a swarm), *beast friend* (spiders only), *entangle* (webs), *fear* (imaginary spiders burst through victim's flesh), *quickness*, *summon beast* (spiders only)
Special Abilities:

* **Armor +2:** Tough skin.
* **Egg Sacs:** Once per round, as an action, Arachni can release a swarm of tiny red spiders from one of the egg sacs clinging to her spidery body. She has a total of four sacs (and replaces one per day). The swarm begins adjacent to her at the start of the next round.
* **Fear (–2):** Anyone seeing Arachni for the first time must make a Guts roll at –2.
* **Leaping:** Arachni can move her entire Pace as a leap, thus ignoring intervening difficult ground. She cannot run while in the air, but may run before and/or after a leap.
* **Size +2:** Arachni's torso is human-sized, but her lower half is that of a bloated spider.
* **Stinger:** Str+d8, AP 2. She may not use this attack in any round she uses one of her long swords. Anyone Shaken or wounded by the stinger must make a Spirit roll at –2 or be subjected to *puppet* for an entire week. This cannot be *dispelled* or *negated*, but it can be cured with speedy use of *healing*.
* **Wall Walker:** Arachni may move along any surface at her full Pace. She can also run without penalty, even when hanging upside down.
* **Webbing:** Arachni can cast webs from her thorax the size of Small Burst Templates. This is a Shooting roll with a range of 3/6/12. Anything in the web must cut or break their way free (Toughness 7). Webbed characters can still fight, but all physical actions are at –4.

SPIDER CULTIST

The spider goddess has many followers among the civilized races. Whether willing volunteers promised power in return for unquestioning servitude, or venom-addled converts, the cultists are fanatical in their praise.

The cultists' gear list assumes they are dressed for battle. Alchemical devices are carried at all times, though the ring is only worn openly around fellow cultists. Those operating in the village are armed as villagers unless the adventure text says otherwise. See the sidebar for notes on unusual gear.

PALADIN OR PRIEST

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Throwing d8
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)/9 (3)
Hindrances: Loyal
Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Command, Fanaticism, Level Headed
Powers: *barrier* (wall of spiders; adjacent foes take 2d4 damage per round as per a swarm), *beast friend* (spiders only), *entangle* (webs), *fear* (imaginary spiders burst through victim's flesh), *quickness*, *summon beast* (spiders only)*, *wall walker* (grows spider legs from torso)
Gear: Web armor (+1, +3 vs. piercing weapons), small web shield (+1 Parry), spiked mace (Str+d6+2), 1d4 egg sacs.
Alchemical Devices: Silk ball containing *entangle* (Thrown range 3/6/12), web wand imbued with *bolt* (three bolts, 2d6 damage each; uses Shooting), ring containing a single dose of poison (causes 3d6 damage to

SPIDER CULTIST GEAR

The spider cultists carry an array of gear not commonly available to player characters.
Egg Sacs: Each pulsating red sac contains a Small Burst Template swarm of non-venomous spiders. Range is 2/4/8.
Spiked Weapons: Except for the additional +2 damage these weapons are identical to standard types.
Web Armor: Woven from spider silk, the armor is especially good against piercing weapons, such as arrows, daggers, and spears. Against such weapons it grants +3 Armor, instead of the usual +1. It protects just the torso unless otherwise noted.
Web Nets: Range 2/4/8. When thrown, a web fills a single 1" square. The cultist's Throwing skill roll is opposed by the target's Agility. Success indicates partial restraint. The target suffers a –2 penalty to Pace and skills linked to Agility and Strength. A raise restrains the target fully. He cannot move or use any skills linked to Agility or Strength (Parry drops to 2, but attackers do not gain the Drop).
Each following round, an entangled target may make a Strength or Agility roll to break free. Other characters may also attempt to free the ensnared person by making a Strength roll at –2. The webs only affect a single Small or Medium opponent.
Once thrown, a web net cannot be retrieved.
Web Shields: The fronts of these shields are covered in sticky spider web. A Fighting roll of 1 (regardless of Wild Die) indicates the attacker's weapon has stuck to the shield. (A Wild Die success causes damage as normal, but the weapon is still stuck afterward). Pulling the weapon free requires a Strength roll as an action.

the drinker and ignores all armor).
** Only available to Wild Card priests.*

ELITE CULTIST

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d8
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 6 (1)/8 (3)
Hindrances: Loyal
Edges: Combat Reflexes, Improved Sweep
Gear: Web armor (+1, +3 vs. piercing weapons), spiked maul (Str+d8+2, –1 Parry, 2 hands).
Alchemical Devices: Potion of *wall walker*, ring containing a single dose of poison (causes 3d6 damage to the drinker and ignores all armor).

TYPICAL CULTIST

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Throwing d6
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 6 (1)/8 (3)
Hindrances: Loyal
Edges: —
Gear: Web armor (+1, +3 vs. piercing weapons), small web shield (+1 Parry), spiked mace (Str+d6+2). One in every four cultists carries a single egg sac. Half of the remaining cultists encountered carry a web net hanging from their belt.
Alchemical Devices: Potion of *wall walker*, ring containing a single dose of poison (causes 3d6 damage to the drinker and ignores all armor).

GIANT SPIDER

Giant spiders are typically of roughly equal size to an adult male human, including their legs. However, larger species are known. For each +2 Size, increase the Strength die by one step (above a d12 use d12+1, d12+2, and so on). Spiders of Size +4 are Large, while the monsters of Size +8 and higher are Huge.

All giant spiders share a basic stat block. Specific types of spider have unique special abilities. For instance, a spider listed in the text as a Sword Spider has the Sword ability in addition to Bite and Wall Walker. GMs may also wish to experiment with crossbreeds. A trapdoor spider with poison blades would make a deadly foe.
Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d10
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; T**oughness:** 6
Special Abilities:
* **Bite:** Str+d6.
* **Darkvision:** Hairs on the spiders' bodies allow them to sense movement up to 10" away. They ignore all penalties for dark lighting (or *invisibility*) within this distance.
* **Wall Walker:** A spider may move along any surface at its full Pace. It can also run without penalty, even when hanging upside down.

SPECIFIC TYPES

* **Blade:** Blade spiders are named for the sharp, bony tips on their front pair of legs. These inflict Str+d8 damage. Blades spiders may attack with both forelimbs in the same round, but suffer a –2 penalty to both Fighting rolls. They may not use a blade in any round they bite.
* **Leaping:** This species of giant spiders may move their base Pace while leaping, thus ignoring intervening difficult ground. They may run before and/or after a leap, but not during. Leaping spiders subtract their Pace when jumping down from heights.
* **Paralysis (–4):** Victims Shaken or wounded by a spider's bite must make a Vigor roll at –4 or be paralyzed for 2d6 rounds. Victims fall prone.
* **Poison (–2):** Victims Shaken or wounded by a spider's bite must make a Vigor roll at –2 or suffer an automatic wound. This counts as a separate attack for the purposes of Soaking.
* **Trapdoor:** Trapdoor spiders are ambush predators. They live in burrows with a concealed entrance. When prey passes within 3", they lunge to attack. When they attack from hiding, victims must make a Notice roll opposed by the spider's Stealth. If the creature wins, it gains +2 to attack and damage that round, +4 with a raise.
* **Web:** These spiders can cast webs from their thorax that are the size of Small Burst Templates. This is a Shooting roll with Range 3/6/12. Anything in the web must cut or break their way free (Toughness 7). Webbed characters can still fight, but all physical actions are at –4.

SMALL BLADE SPIDER

These spiders are newly hatched. They have lower attributes than their adult brethren and are not quite as deadly.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d10
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; T**oughness:** 4
Special Abilities:
* **Bite:** Str+d4.
* **Blade:** Str+d4 damage. Blade spiders may attack with both forelimbs in that same round, but suffer a –2 penalty to both Fighting rolls. They may not use a blade in any round they bite.
* **Darkvision:** Hairs on the spiders' bodies allow them to sense movement up to 10" away. They ignore all penalties for dark lighting (or *invisibility*) within this

distance.

* **Size –1:** These spiders are the same size as a dog.
* **Wall Walker:** A spider may move along any surface at its full Pace. It can also run without penalty, even when hanging upside down.

SPIDER SWARM

Spider swarms have variable Toughness based on their size, though they retain the d10 Vigor die. The Toughness entry represents Small, Medium, and Large Burst Template swarms respectively.

Note: Spider cultists are not immune to the effects of spider swarms. However, such swarms avoid unnecessarily catching cultists in their template. If a swarm can take an alternate route to a target and still attack that round it does so. Otherwise, it takes the shortest route—cultists can always be replaced.

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

Skills: Notice d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5/6/7

Special Abilities:

* **Binding Webs:** Spider swarms coat their victims in sticky webs. A non-spider creature that begins its turn in or enters the swarm's template has its base Pace and running die halved until a Strength roll is made as an action. Multiple exposures to the aura (while already under the effects) do not produce a cumulative effect.
* **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.
* **Mindless:** Unaffected by Tests of Will, Tricks, or arcane powers like *puppet*. *Beast friend* works as normal.
* **Poison:** Only swarms listed as Venomous in the adventure text have this ability. Anyone Shaken or wounded by a spider swarm must make a Vigor roll or be paralyzed for 1d6 rounds from the venom.
* **Resilient:** A spider swarm larger than a Small Burst Template which takes a wound is not automatically destroyed. Instead, it shrinks to the next smallest template size. A Small Burst Template swarm taking a wound is destroyed.
* **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. Spider swarms are foiled by jumping in water.

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Paul 'Wiggy' Wade-Williams

HELLFROST

DEATH IN THE MIRE

RANK • VETERAN

OFFICIAL SAVAGE WORLDS LICENSED PRODUCT

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 Dragonton, "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

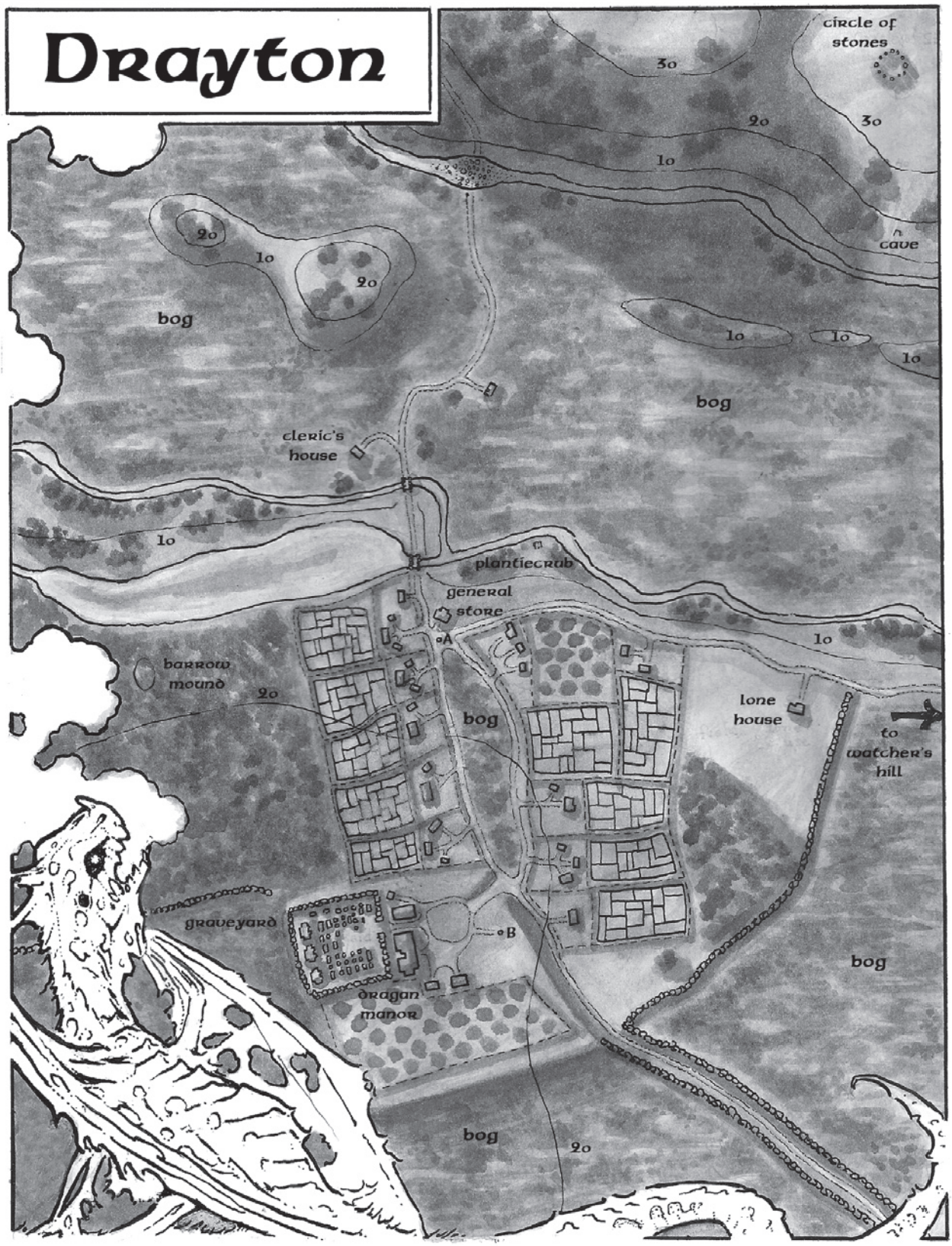
A weathered sign passed a mile back proclaimed the next settlement to be Drayton. Looking down from the ridge into a mist-filled valley, you guess the small collection of cottages must be the village bearing that name. Across from the village, on a patch of higher ground, stands a large manor house. 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-


Drayton
circle of stones
3o
2o
3o
1o
2o
1o
2o
cave
bog
1o
1o
1o
bog
cleric's house
1o
plantiecrub
general store
A
1o
barrow mound
2o
bog
lone house
to watcher's hill
graveyard
B
bog
dragan manor
bog
2o

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.

Ⓜ **Luther ap-Trebor:** Treat as Villager (see page 398).

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 Dragonton, 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.

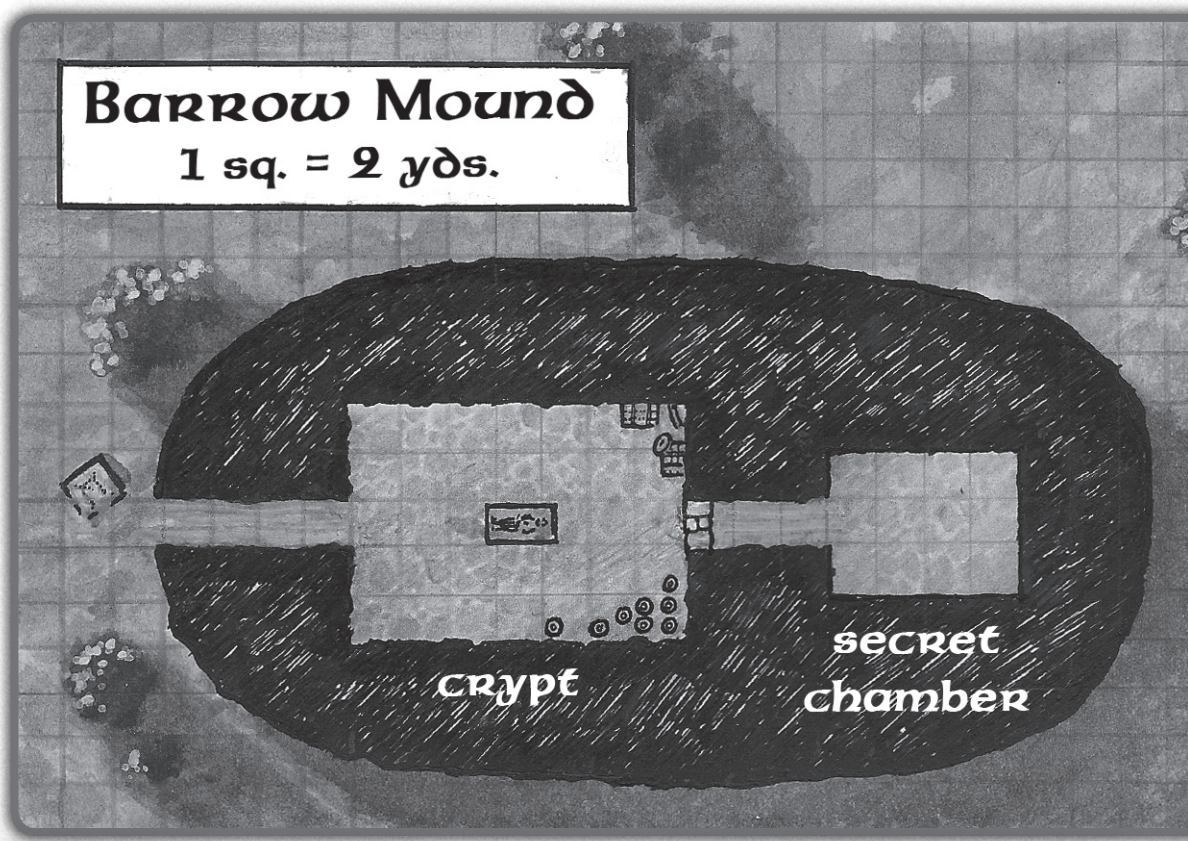
Ⓜ **Royal Hagbui (1):** See page 401.

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 Marshtown) 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

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 Eadhild 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 Eadhild and placed under Serin's control (though Eadhild 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 400.

Ⓜ **Plague Zombies (2 per hero):** See page 402.

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.

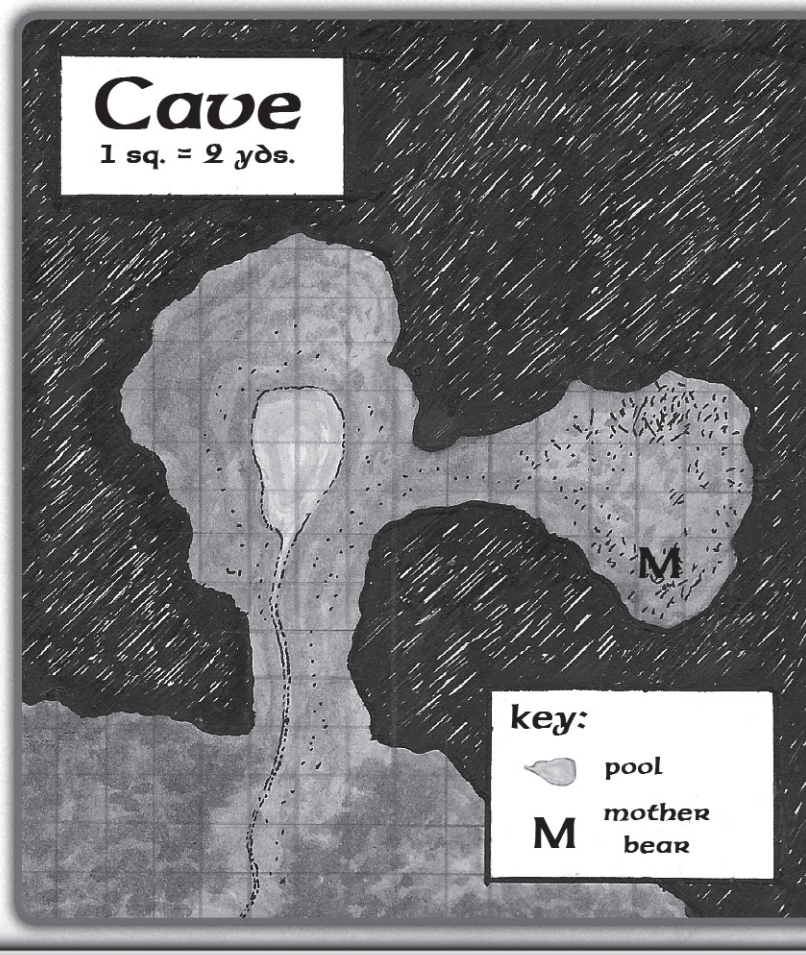
Monsters: Contrary to any reports the party may have heard, evil cultists or fell spirits do not occupy the cave. Rather, it is the lair of a female cave bear. Having a bad reputation, the cave and its vicinity are shunned by the villagers of Drayton, and thus no one has ever spied the beast.

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

LOSING A FIGHT

If the characters lose the fights against Serin or Eadhild, 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!



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

Ⓜ **Mother Cave Bear (1):** See page 400.

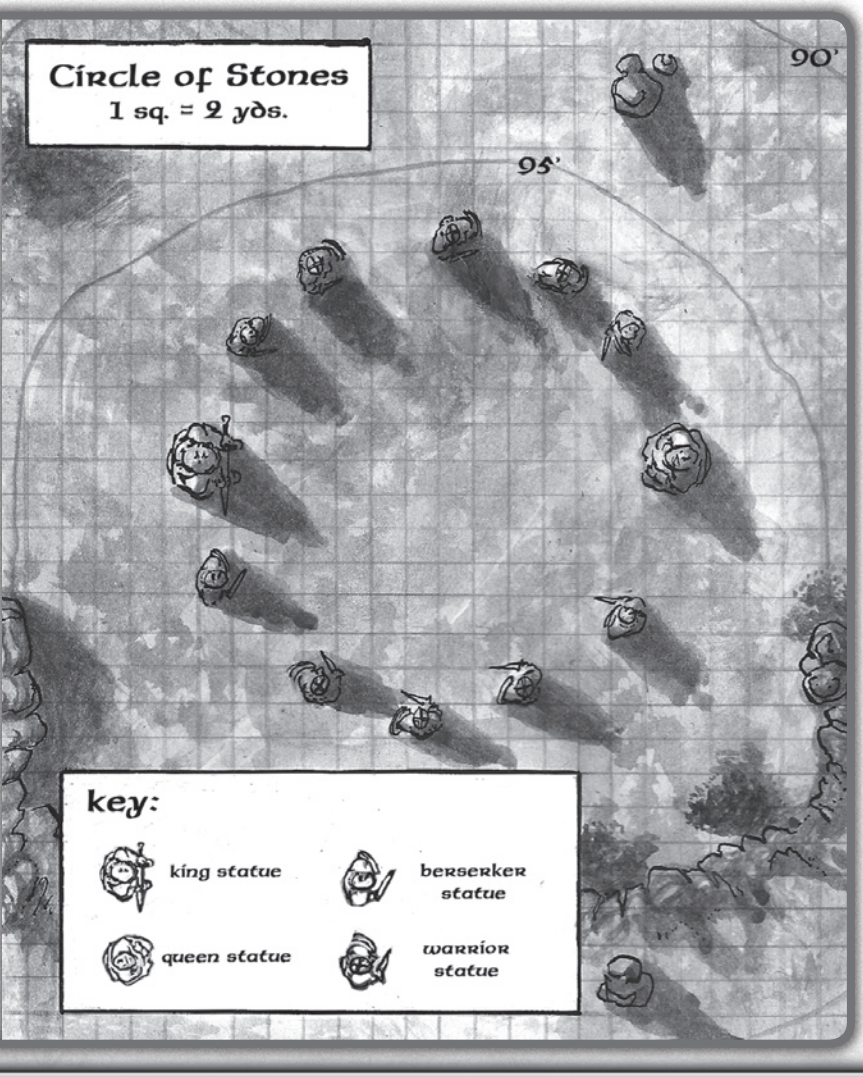
Ⓜ **Bear Cubs:** See page 400.

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 400. 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.

Ⓜ **Villagers:** See page 398.

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

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.

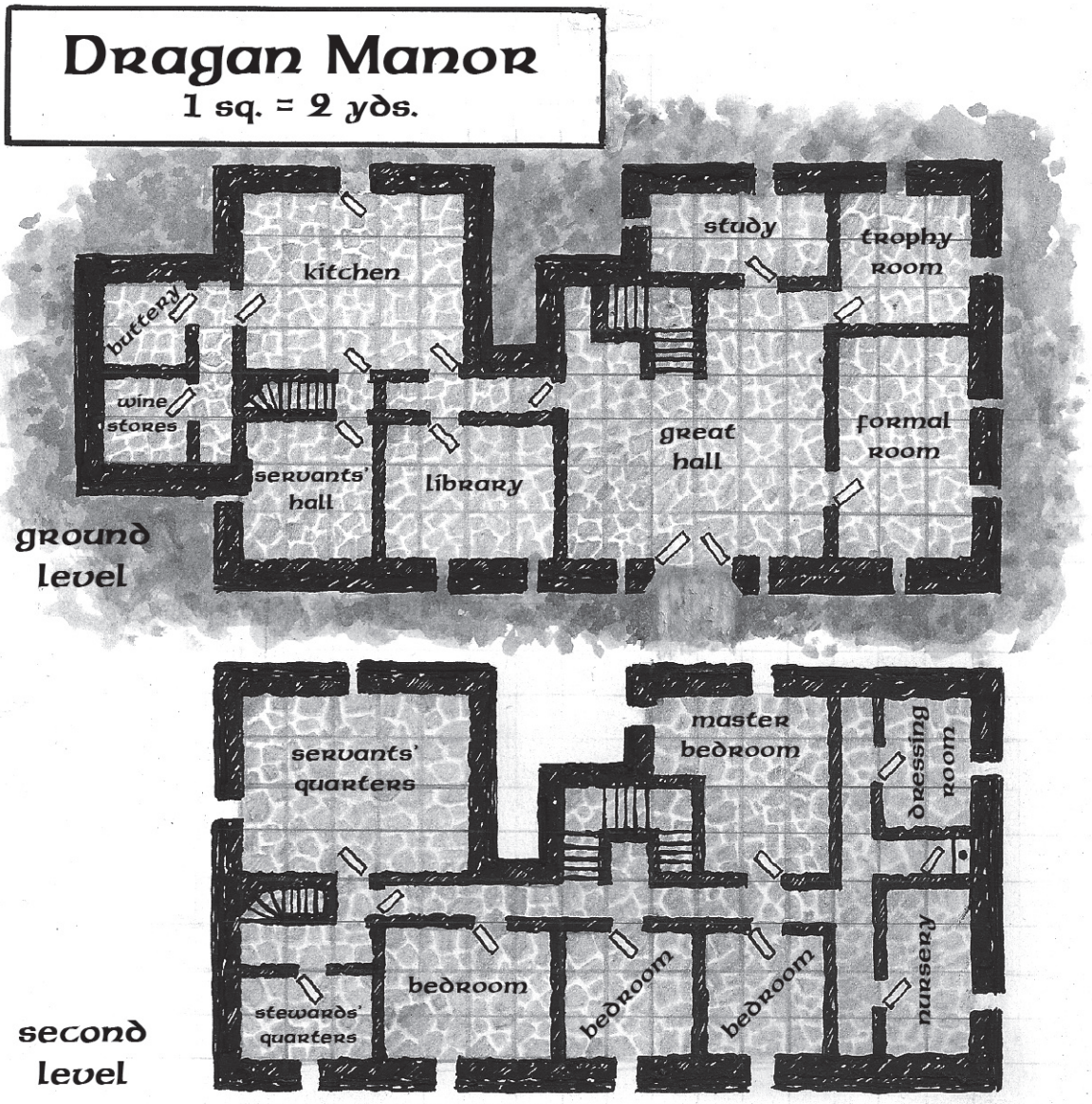
Ⓜ **Wraiths (1 per hero):** See page 402.

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 haphazardly 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, "*The bane of scales I hid, preserved by noble hands; under gaze of worried maiden; watched o'er by eternal guardians.*" This refers to Lanval's magic sword, which is hidden in the stone circle (see page 12).
2	An alchemical scroll of *energy immunity (acid)*. 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.

Mungo ap-Godbert: Treat as villager (see page 398).

Mathilda ap-Galbrith: Treat as villager (see page 398).

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 is 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 399.

Ⓜ **Diggers (1 per hero):** See page 399.

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

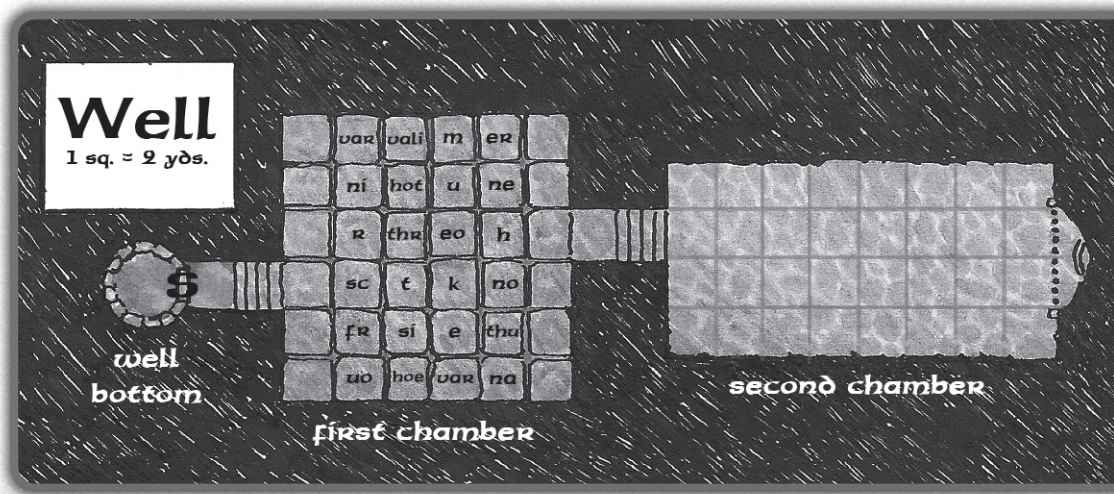
The well shaft is 6 feet across and 40 feet deep, though only 30 feet is filled with water. If the heroes have *environmental protection* spells allowing them to breathe underwater, they can enter the well with the water still present. If not, they are going to have to drain the well first.

This is a total volume of 848 cubit 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 refills 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 399.

Ⓜ **Plague Zombies (4 per hero):** See page 402.

Ⓜ **Villagers (3 per hero):** See page 398. 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.

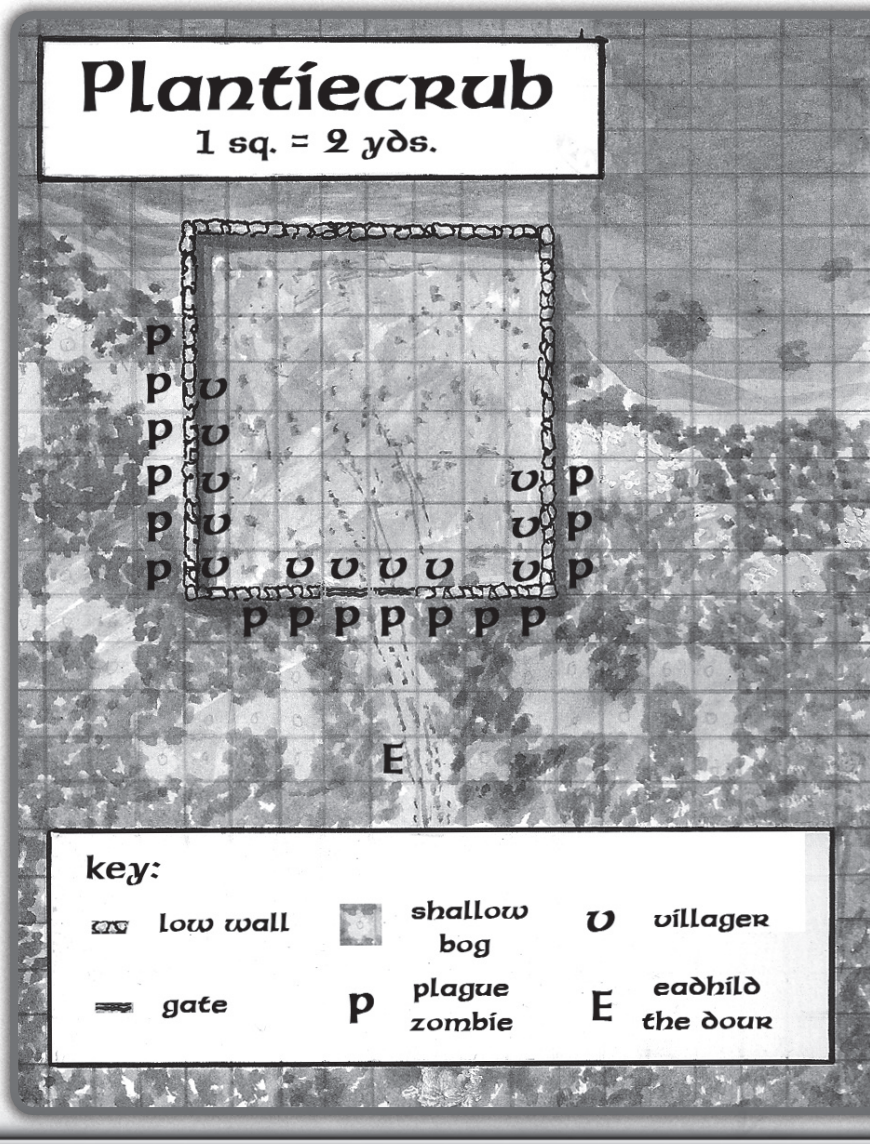
Three wounds: She first tries to cast *fear* to delay her foes. She then flees at best speed. As with Serin in the marsh, if Eadhild manages to escape the adventurers during this fight, she will *not* return in this adventure.

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



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 401.

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 are 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

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 Eadhild 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-Dragan, 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 recovered 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, Spellcasting 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.

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 breech 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.

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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 their 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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Paul 'Wiggy' Wade-Williams

HELLFROST

RANK • VETERAN

CLASH OF STEEL

OFFICIAL SAVAGE WORLDS LICENSED PRODUCT

CLASH OF STEEL

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CLASH OF STEEL

THE EASTERN MARCHES

Through Edges and Glory rewards, *Hellfrost* allows the heroes to become leaders of men. The playground for such characters is not the "dungeon" environment, but the open battlefield. They lead companies to death or glory beneath fluttering banners, not skulk in dark shadows searching moldy corpses for a few coins. Instead of standard tabletop adventures, this adventure pack contains three Mass Battles scenarios the GM can slip into his campaign.

While some geographic locations and seasons are mentioned, the GM should change these as necessary to suit his specific campaign. Veteran Rank was chosen because it is the first Rank where the true Mass Battle Edges such as *Cry Havoc* and *Death Before Dishonor* become available to the characters. Those who wish to be war captains and leaders of men have also had the chance to gather Followers through Glory awards.

Finally, there is an alternate set of rules for running very large-scale battles on the tabletop. Now the players can literally control the actions of their troops and watch the battle unfold before their eyes. More importantly, it allows characters to use many of their regular Edges and still play a crucial role in determining the outcome of the encounter.

RULE TWEAKS

Fortifications: Ignore the regular Mass Battles rules on fortifications. Each fortification now has a Siege Bonus. Instead of granting the attacking commander a penalty, it gives the defending commander a bonus to both his Knowledge (Battle) and Morale rolls.

Spirit Rolls: The current rules for Mass Battles lead to a rapid disintegration of armies. This may be semi-realistic (few armies ever fought to the last man), but it is not much fun at the gaming table, especially if you are on the receiving end. Two small rule changes have been applied to all these adventures:

First, the side with the *greater* number of tokens (after calculating losses for the round) never makes Morale rolls. It may suffer grievous losses, but being the numerically superior force keeps the men fighting. Second, a –1 penalty is imposed for each two tokens lost versus one token.

Example: *An orc army has the lesser number of tokens. On the first round, it loses one token. No Morale roll is required. On the next round, the orcs lose two tokens. Total losses are now three tokens, so a –1 penalty applies.*

GM'S INTRODUCTION

All is not well in the Eastern Marches of Aspiria. Thirty years ago, King Halgroth IV led a mighty crusade against the fell orcs. Over the course of three years, his army drove the orcs from the Eastern Marches and back into the Granite Mountains. The crusade was hailed as a great victory, and Halgroth was proclaimed "Hammer of the Orcs." Had he harried the retreating orcs into the mountains, such a title may have been more deserving, but Halgroth's cessation of hostilities gave him a Pyrrhic victory.

New villages sprang up in the fertile hills once despoiled by orcs. While a few nobles called for increased fortifications and aggressive patrols, their pleas fell on deaf ears. Although the crusade was within living memory, the Aspirians believed their victory was total, that the orc threat had been vanquished forever. Complacency was the watchword of the day.

Three decades without war has given the orcs the chance to rebuild their strength and gather allies. Halgroth IV's name is spoken among the orcs of the Granite Mountains only in curses and oaths of revenge made to their dark gods. A new tribal leader has arisen, a leader

with a solid grasp of strategy, a leader whose heart is filled with the insatiable desire for bloody and total revenge. His army is small in comparison to that of old, but he expects little resistance—three decades of peace has sapped the Aspirian's desire for war.

Among the few nobles warning against a resurgent orc threat is Baron Kyle Loxlyn, whose lands lie within the Eastern Marshes. Scouts have reported increased orc activity in the foothills of the mountains, and several small villages have been razed to the ground. He knows his meager forces cannot stand forever against the orc tide massing on his borders, but he hopes to bloody their noses just long enough for the king's army to ride to the rescue.

While he musters his army and implores the king, Halgroth V, to send reinforcements, Loxlyn has dispatched a small band of heroes to locate and infiltrate the orc lair. Information will be key to winning the coming conflict.

GATHERING INFORMATION

Read or paraphrase the following text to the players:

You are in the employ of Baron Loxlyn, whose lands lie within the Eastern Marches of Aspiria, an area of rolling hills, deep, wide valleys, and fertile farmland. For weeks, reports have been filtering back of orcs massing on his eastern borders. A man of intelligence and financial means, Loxlyn sent out heralds asking for adventurers of renown to perform a mission of grave importance. The lure of 1000 gold scields per person was enough to attract your attention.

It is now fall, and while the winter snows are still yet to come, the north wind already blows hard. The baron expects an invasion in the coming weeks, timed to coincide with the first snowfalls. Riders have been dispatched to all settlements, calling forth the militia to honor their vows and gather under his banner. While he organizes his army, he has sent you into the Granite Mountains to gather intelligence. Without knowledge of the orcs' strength, the baron cannot arrange his defenses.

For two weeks, you have climbed and hiked through the foreboding peaks. At last, you have reached your goal; an old border fort located along a rocky ledge. Somewhere within lies the information that could save the Eastern Marches and perhaps all of Aspiria. Somewhere within a fortress filled with bloodthirsty orcs, whose anger you dare not rile in case they bring forth their assault. Stealth will rule here, not skill at arms or strength of steel.

SCOUTING THE FORT

The initial phase of the adventure revolves around the party gathering intelligence on the orc plans. Rather than being the true start of the adventure, it is a backdrop to the main events to come. As such, instead of being played out on the tabletop, it is handled abstractly as a series of tasks the heroes must complete. Each task must be played in order, though it is not necessary to complete one task in order to move onto the next one—each task has notes on what happens based on the die rolls. The GM should enhance the die rolls with suitable descriptions.

GAINING ENTRANCE

Cooperative Stealth roll opposed by the orc sentries' d6 Group Notice roll. Heroes with a suitable spell, such as invisibility*, may use their arcane skill instead.*

With most of the orc warriors encamped elsewhere in preparation for the invasion, the entrance to the fort is only lightly guarded. Unfortunately, the orc commander is taking no chances, and the sentries are alert.

Success: The heroes manage to sneak past the sentries undetected. They gain +2 to their roll in the next stage.

Failure: The characters are spotted and attacked by the sentries. The action is handled abstractly using the Characters in Mass Battles rules. Each adventurer must make a single roll of Fighting, Shooting, Throwing, or, if suitable spells are available, an arcane skill roll, adding +1 for each Rank above Novice to account for various Edges. (At the listed Rank, they thus gain a +2 bonus.) Results are as per the **Characters in Mass Battles** table. Regardless of the individual results, the guards are defeated and the heroes can progress to the next stage.

However, the sounds of battle have alerted the fort's defenders. The roll in the next stage is made at an additional –2 penalty.

LOCATE IMPORTANT AREAS

Cooperative Notice roll at –2.

Now inside the fort, the heroes must locate the central command area, avoiding fights so as not to alert the base and bring down the wrath of the defenders.

Success: Through stealth and cunning the heroes maneuver through the fort undetected. They locate the commander's quarters.

Failure: The characters are spotted and attacked by sentries. The action is handled abstractly using the Characters in Mass Battles rules. Each adventurer must make a single Fighting, Shooting, Throwing, or, if suitable spells are available, arcane skill roll, adding +1 for each Rank above Novice to account for various Edges. (At the listed Rank, they thus gain a +2 bonus). Results are as per the Characters in Mass Battles table. Regardless of the individual results, the guards are defeated and the heroes can progress to the next stage.

I HAVE FOLLOWERS

If the characters have combatant Followers, it makes sense they will want to use them in battle. Here is a simple way a small number of Followers can be represented in a Mass Battle. This works well for up to 50 Followers. Beyond this, any additional Followers should be merged into the army as a whole.

First, divide the Followers into companies of five troops. Ideally, these should be of the same type and skill level.

Each round, the hero to whom the Followers owe allegiance must nominate whom the companies are supporting. This can be their master or any other player character, but it must be a party member. A hero with multiple companies may wish to loan some to his comrades, for instance, and retain some for his own protection.

During the Characters in Mass Battles phase, each company makes a Group Cooperative attack roll. Since Extras do not have a Rank, no bonuses are earned. The Group roll essentially includes that bonus. Under the Cooperative Roll rules, their result gives the character they are supporting a bonus to his Characters in Mass Battle roll.

For each wound taken by a company-supported hero, one company of Followers is eliminated from the battle. Of these, one is slain outright, two are Incapacitated, and two are alive but unable to provide assistance. Wounded Followers are dealt with after the battle ends, as normal. If the battle was lost, the Vigor roll made to determine if they are alive or dead is at –2.

Example: *Ulfgar has 10 huscarls loyal to him. These form two companies of five men. In the first round of battle, he loans one company to the party mage, Algarifix, and retains one as his personal bodyguard. Ulfgar rolls a raise in his Characters in Mass Battle roll and emerges unscathed. Algarifix, even with the company of huscarls at his side, rolls a failure. He suffers 4d6 damage and takes two wounds. His company of huscarls is hammered hard, and is out of the fight.*

ENTERING THE CHAMBER

Lockpicking (made by a single hero). A spellcaster with boost (Lockpicking) *may make one arcane skill roll.*

Distrustful of his underlings and mindful of intruders, the orc commander has placed many traps around his quarters.

Success: The traps are disabled and the doors unlocked, allowing the characters to progress to the next stage.

Failure: A number of traps are set off. Each hero suffers 3d6 damage.

GATHERING INFORMATION

Cooperative Investigation roll. Notice can be used, but at a –2 penalty. Any hero unable to read Orcish suffers a –2 penalty to his roll.

The characters have access to the orcs' battle plans. Stealing the plans would alert the commander to the intrusion, potentially forcing him to alter his plans. Such an act would mean the infiltration mission was for naught. As such, the characters must read and copy all relevant information. With time against them, they will only get a single opportunity.

Two Raises: The characters uncover detailed battle plans. The orc army comprises a total of 500 wolf riders, 4000 warriors, and 500 elite warriors, plus assorted priests and support troops. The orcs intend to attack on three fronts simultaneously. A strategic plan to attack the farming villages is uncovered. This attack force numbers 200 riders, 1000 warriors, and 100 elite warriors.

Raise: The characters learn only the makeup of the total orc army—500 wolf riders, 4000 warriors, and 500 elite warriors. The orcs intend to attack on three fronts simultaneously, but details of how the forces will be divided cannot be discerned.

Success: The heroes manage to discern only basic information. The orc force numbers several hundred wolf riders and elite warriors, and between three and five thousand warriors. The attack will occur on anywhere from one to three fronts, though no details are learned.

Failure: The adventurers discover only scant mention of some 3000 warriors and assorted other forces of indeterminate strength. How many fronts they may attack on is unknown.

Critical Failure: The characters discover nothing of any use.

SNEAKING OUT

Cooperative Stealth roll opposed by the orc sentries' d6 Group Notice roll. Heroes with a suitable spell, such as invisibility*, may use their arcane skill instead.*

Having gathered all the information they can, the heroes must now silently vacate the fort, leaving the orcs none the wiser to the intrusion.

Success: The heroes manage to sneak past the sentries undetected and escape back into the wilderness.

Failure: The characters are spotted and immediately attacked by the sentries. The action is handled abstractly using the Characters in Mass Battles rules. Each adventurer must make a single Fighting, Shooting, Throwing, or, if suitable spells are available, arcane skill roll, adding +1 for each Rank above Novice to account for various Edges. (At the listed Rank, they thus gain a +2 bonus.) Results are as per the Characters in Mass Battles table. Regardless of the individual results, the guards are defeated and the heroes may advance to the next stage.

THE WAR COUNCIL

Regardless of how well the intelligence gathering went, Baron Loxlyn summons his war council once the

party returns. Loxlyn chairs the council. Attending him are his main advisors: Sir Arlent Silver-Mane, an aging but still capable military commander and the baron's war marshal, Agatha Green-Hands, the high priestess of Eostre, and Lord Mayor Orlo Fitzbain, the governor of Loxyln's main town, along with several lesser members of the court. *One* of the party members is also asked to attend the council. Exactly who attends is up to the adventurers.

This section is purely one of roleplaying—there is no die rolling of any sort. The hero invited to attend is controlled by his player as normal, but the other players need to put away their character sheets for the moment, as each will be taking the role of one of the Baron's advisors. Basic information sheets are provided at the end of the adventure. Distribute the sheets for Sir Arlent, Sower Agatha, and Mayor Orlo randomly among the other players.

If you have more than four players, you can add additional lesser NPCs with their own agendas, use NPCs with no agendas, or let the players control their own characters. Suggested extra NPCs include the headmen of the farming villages, a priestess of Eira, the local senior guildmaster, and so on.

The GM takes the role of Baron Loxlyn. His role is one of mediator, to prevent disputes between his advisors getting out of hand. He must also agree with the decisions made by his council. Because the GM knows the deployment of the orc forces, Loxlyn offers *no* advice on where best to place troops—the future of the Eastern Marches lies firmly in the hands of the players.

There is no right or wrong solution to this section—in times of war, hard decisions must be made. At best, the council knows the strength of one orc regiment and its intended target. Leave one region too lightly defended and it will likely fall to the enemy with the loss of many innocent lives. Spread the forces too thin across all the regions likely to come under attack, and they may all be crushed or left unable to mount an effective counterattack.

Every NPC has certain desires, and he or she should argue to secure what he wishes. No troop numbers are given—what an NPC considers satisfactory is up to the player controlling him.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

Three important subjects must be discussed—which settlements are to be defended, how to divide the army up, and who shall lead them? Whatever information the characters gathered at the orc fort is the only hard facts the council has to go on when making its decisions.

WHERE TO DEFEND?

Three wide valleys lead into Loxlyn's lands. Only along these can the orcs move in any force, and thus any or all of them are likely routes of approach. At the end of the eastern valley lie Loxlyn's major farming villages, a collection of six settlements surrounded by rich farmland. The main town, Althorpe, is situated along the central valley. In the third valley stand a temple of Eira and its supporting village, known as Eiraham ("the hamlet of Eira"). Unfortunately, the terrain means that by the time outriders spy the orc columns it will be too late to maneuver the defensive companies. Thus, the decision must be taken now on which ones to defend and in what numbers.

HOW TO DIVIDE THE ARMY?

Baron Loxlyn's army comprises 300 mounted knights, 1000 heavy infantry, 400 archers, and 2000 militia. The council must decide where to place these forces and in what strength. For simplicity, each type of soldier must be grouped in multiples of 100 men.

Of course, not all warriors are equal in combat ability and resilience. To help the GM later on, each troop type is worth a number of points. This is detailed as below and is based on 100 men. Once the regiments are formed, list them in terms of total troop numbers *and* points.

Example: *A regiment comprises 100 knights (500 points), 300 heavy infantry (1200 points), 100 archers (400 points), and 700 militia (1400 points), a grand 1200 men totaling 3500 points.*

Troop	Points/100	Total Points Available
Knights	500	1500
Infantry	400	4000
Archers	400	1600
Militia	200	4000

WHO SHALL LEAD?

Loxlyn has only two commanders he trusts in battle. The first is himself, and the second is Sir Arlent, an old campaigning comrade and a proven leader of men. Loxlyn is a capable commander able to get the best from his men and unlikely to flee in the face of overwhelming odds. Sir Arlent is a defensive siege specialist. While not as skilled as his liege, he knows how to get the best out of fortifications.

Given there are likely to be three fielded regiments, Loxlyn asks the heroes to supply the third battlefield commander from their number.

THE DAY OF THREE BATTLES

Once the regiments are formed and the commanders allocated, the heroes must decide in which regiment they wish to serve. While they may wish to fight together, there is some wisdom in separating. Each player character has a chance of modifying their commander's Battle roll, and by dividing the party, they can assist each commander, thus increasing the odds of a successful outcome.

ADDING THE TABLETOP

Although this is a Mass Battle adventure, the GM can break out his miniatures and terrain and use the tabletop to represent pivotal moments in the battle. This system allows the heroes to access their full suite of powers and still affect the battle outcome.

Give each character a token of some description. At any time during the battle in which he is participating, the character may play the token to trigger an event. Only one token may be played per round, regardless of the number of characters involved. When a token is played, pick one of the following entries or roll a d4. Each can be used only once during the adventure. These events replace the regular Characters in Mass Battles roll for the round. The hero who played the token *must* participate while the other heroes have the option of using regular rolls and playing NPCs during the event.

The other advantage to using these events is that it allows *healing* magic to be employed. For ease, assume every battle turn presents one hour. Thus, the characters can heal wounds taken during the encounter, but not injuries suffered in earlier battle rounds.

Unless otherwise stated, the listed enemy has bodyguards equal to one elite orc warrior per player character, plus one orc warrior per two orc army tokens remaining. Each player character has the support of one infantryman (treat as Veteran Infantry Mercenaries). For each hero missing from the party (perhaps because they are involved in another battle), add two infantrymen. The players whose characters are absent should control these.

Characters with active Followers may involve them in the event. In this case, the numbers of the weakest enemy type should be increased by a similar amount to balance the encounter.

In all cases, success is achieved if the party slays the Wild Card before their side suffers 50% losses. Failure occurs if the characters do not achieve this goal, even if they eventually slay the Wild Card.

1) Apothecary: The orcs release their apothecaries to get injured warriors back on their feet. One such apothecary (a Wild Card) crosses paths with the heroes. *Success:* The orcs lose an automatic token as their wounded retire from battle. *Failure:* The orcs recover a token. This cannot occur if the orcs have full tokens, so do not use it before a token is lost.

2) Chieftain: An orc chieftain takes to the field. *Success:* The orcs must make an automatic Morale roll at the end of the round. If they must make a Morale roll due to losses, the roll is made at an additional –1. *Failure:* The orcs gain +2 to their Knowledge (Battle) roll.

3) Drummer: An orc drummer and his bodyguard take to the field to rouse the orc warriors into greater bloodshed. *Success:* The orcs suffer a –2 penalty to their Knowledge (Battle) roll this round because of confused orders. *Failure:* The rallied orcs gain +2 to their Knowledge (Battle) roll.

4) Priest: A priest is sent out to reign down magic. *Success:* The allied commander has +2 to Knowledge (Battle) this round. *Failure:* The allied commander has –2 to his Knowledge (Battle) roll.

In the world of *Hellfrost*, the three battles are fought simultaneously. Around the gaming table, the GM has two options for how he wishes to handle the events. If the party has stayed together, complete each battle in turn. Start with those battles involving only NPCs, as this keeps the players' action to last, thus reducing the odds their attention will waiver once their heroes' fight is out of the way. The allied commanders' dice should be rolled by the players.

If the party has divided their strength among multiple regiments, the GM should run one round of each battle (whether it includes the heroes or not) in turn. This keeps all the players actively participating with few pauses between die rolls.

While the orcs are sending their largest regiment against the town, the orc commander has elected to lead the assault on the temple of Eira. Figuring it to be a rallying point for any defenders, it being a temple of peace and healing, he intends to ensure it is crushed and its priestesses' heads impaled on stakes to shatter the morale of the Aspirian people. He has faith that his subordinate commanders have the skills and troops to take the other objectives.

IMPORTANT NOTES

The two NPC allied commanders are Baron Loxlyn and Sir Arlent. Their important stats are presented below. The players should have decided where each will be stationed and what men he has at his disposal.

Baron Loxlyn: Battle d8, Spirit d8, A Few Good Men and Death Before Dishonor.

Sir Arlent: Battle d6, Spirit d6, Siege Mentality.

Army Tokens: As noted above, every company of 100 men is worth a certain number of points. The strength and disposition of the orc armies is listed below, along with their total point value. Use these values, not the number of troops involved, to determine tokens for each side. A quick glance will reveal the allies are outnumbered. However, they have the luxury of defensive fortifications to aid them.

Siege Bonus: Whichever position Sir Arlent com-

mands gains +1 to its Siege Bonus thanks to his Siege Mentality Edge. He may also make a Knowledge (Battle) roll before the engagement begins. Success increases the Siege Bonus by another +1 (+2 with a raise).

BATTLE OF THE FARMS

Six farming settlements lie in this region of the Marches. While the citizens have not had time to move their granaries' contents to the main town, they have had the opportunity to transport everything to the largest village. Aside from this village, which is now full to bursting with refugees, the area is deserted. Fortunately, the largest village lies in the orcs' path and will be their first point of call. The basic defenses, a simple ditch, have been strengthened with a series of wooden stakes to break up cavalry charges, and a series of strategically placed earth ramparts have been topped with small palisades.

Orc Commander: Agrash the Unruly (Battle d6, Spirit d8, Cry Havoc)

Orc Army Size: 200 wolf riders, 1000 warriors, and 100 elite warriors. *Total points: 4400*

Siege Bonus: +1

BATTLE OF THE TOWNS

The main town is protected by a wooden wall and gatehouse, but lacks a ditch or moat. The citizens have taken the precaution of dampening the roofs with water to lessen the effects of fire. Barricades made of furniture, similarly wetted, have been strategically placed to funnel invading orcs into killing zones. The children are being sheltered in the temples, while the women are standing by, equipped with buckets of water and bandages.

Orc Commander: Ugrat the Foul (Battle d6, Spirit d8, Siege Breaker)

Orc Army Size: 2000 infantry, and 300 elite warriors. *Total points: 7200*

Siege Bonus: +2 (initial). Ugrat's Siege Breaker Edge lowers this to just +1. The orc commander may also make a Knowledge (Battle) roll before the engagement begins. Success lowers it by another point, two points on a raise. The Siege Bonus cannot drop below zero.

BATTLE OF THE TEMPLE

Surrounded by a wooden palisade, the temple is the best defensive position in the region. The small temple has taken in all the inhabitants of the local village and surrounding areas. Guided by the priests, the women and old men have gathered all the clothes, bedding and any other materials they could find and shredded them into bandages.

Orc Commander: Warlord Grishnâr Axe-Breaker (Battle d10, Spirit d8, Cry Havoc). Grishnâr is a Wild Card.

Orc Army Size: 200 wolf riders, 1000 warriors, and 100 elite warriors. *Total points: 4400*

Siege Bonus: +1

AFTERMATH

Three Allied Victories: The orc survivors hurriedly withdraw back to their lairs. Unfortunately for them, the king and his army arrive. Urged on by Baron Loxlyn's victorious soldiers, the king does not repeat his father's mistake, but drives onward, destroying the remnants of the invading forces. A massive victory is earned.

Two Allied Victories: Two of the three regions are held, but the third has been destroyed. By the time the survivors of the victorious battles are united, the orcs have retreated. The king arrives in time to hunt them down, but many escape. Although seriously weakened, the orcs have enough warriors to plague the lands again come next summer. A major victory has been earned.

One Allied Victory: The defenders have suffered badly. The ragtag army of survivors makes the decision to abandon Loxlyn's lands, escorting the surviving civilians to safety. After fighting off several raiding parties, they reach the safety of the king's army's camp. The king refuses to commit his forces against the orcs immediately, allowing them time to gather reinforcements and secure their supply lines. The Eastern Marches are lost, at least for a year or two.

No Allied Victories: The defense of the Eastern Marches is shattered! With no safe place to which to withdraw, the beleaguered citizens of the Marches attempt to retreat deeper into Aspiria. Harried all the way, the losses are high. Even the king's army is ambushed and forced to pull back to new lines beyond the Marches. The orc commander's victory lures other tribes to his banner. The threat to Aspiria has never been greater, and the lands will be a source of adventure for years to come.

BESTIARY

This is the only Mass Battle for which tabletop action is described. All necessary stat blocks are included below.

MERCENARY

VETERAN INFANTRY

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d10
Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d10, Stealth d6, Throwing d8
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9 (2)
Hindrances: Various
Edges: Combat Reflexes
Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), pot helm (+3), long sword or battle axe (Str+d8), medium shield (+1 Parry)

ORC

CHIEFTAIN

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10
Skills: Boating d8, Fighting d12, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Throwing d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 11 (3)
Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Command, Fervor, Hold the Line, Sweep
Gear: Plate corselet (+3), chain arms and legs (+2), pot helmet (+3), great axe (Str+d10, –1 Parry, 2 hands)
Special Abilities
* **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.

PRIEST

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)
Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles)
Gear: Leather armor (+1), long spear (Str+d6, Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 hands), furs
Special Abilities:
* **Powers:** Priests typically know *armor* (icy skin), *bolt* (icicles), *fear* (howl), *obscure* (snow cloud), *smite* (jagged icicles form on weapon), and *summon elemental* (ice or slush).

APOTHECARY

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Healing d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Alchemy) d8, Notice d6, 6 Stealth d6, Survival d6
Pace: 6; **Parry**: 5; **Toughness:** 7 (1)
Edges: Hedge Magic
Gear: Leather armor (+1), short sword, axe, or mace (Str+d6), 2d4 doses of herbal remedies (normally healing and stimulants)
Special Abilities:
* **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.

DRUMMER

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6
Pace: 6; **Parry**: 5; **Toughness:** 8 (1)
Gear: Leather armor (+1), drum beaters (Str+d6), war drum
Special Abilities:
* **Level Headed:** Drummers need to react quickly to changing battlefield conditions. They draw two action cards and use the best.
* **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.
* **War Drum:** As an action, the drummer can beat his drum to produce a special effect benefiting all orcs within 10" of the drummer. Only one beat can be used at a time. Once chosen, the same beat sounds until the drummer's next action card, when he may stop, continue with the same beat, or switch to a different beat. All benefits cease immediately if the beat ends early (such as in the event of the drummer's death).
  * **Charge:** Orcs who begin their turn within 10" gain +2 Pace and increase their running die by one step (typically to a d8).
  * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
  * **Fervor:** Inflict +1 damage with Fighting attacks.
  * **Frenzy:** Gain the Frenzy Edge (there is no benefit to orcs already possessing the Edge).
  * **Hold the Line:** Gain +1 Toughness.
  * **Rally:** +1 to Spirit rolls to recover from being Shaken.

WARRIOR

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6
Pace: 6; **Parry**: 6; **Toughness:** 8 (1)
Gear: Leather armor (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), short sword, axe, or mace (Str+d6)
Special Abilities:
* **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.

ELITE WARRIOR

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Throwing d8
Pace: 6; **Parry**: 7; **Toughness:** 9 (2)
Edges: Combat Reflexes
Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), pot helm (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry), long sword or battle axe (Str+d8)
Special Abilities:
* **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.

THE RESTLESS DEAD

Many reports filter along the trade roads regarding the Liche Lands of Old. Most common is the rumor that the undead are again abroad, perhaps in preparation for the reawakening of their hellish lord, the Liche-Priest. With the undead of the Withered Lands a far more active threat, the cult can spare few clergy to watch over the border of the Liche Lands. Just one major fort and seven watchtowers sit in Seithrby, outposts that must monitor hundreds of miles of border.

The characters are currently at that very fort. Clerics of Scaetha may have been ordered to attend, dragging their adventuring comrades with them. Perhaps the heroes were already in the vicinity, and talk of undead activity has lured them there. Those coming back from the northeast High Winterlands may simply have been staying over when strange reports began to filter in.

According to scouts, a host of undead is moving toward the cult's fort. Retreating into the fort is not an option—a siege benefits the undead, who need no sustenance and who are immune to the ravages of disease so common in siege camps. Instead, the senior paladin has decided battle will occur on the open plains. The plan is to construct a series of fortified lines, through which the undead will have to battle.

RAISING ALLIES

The fort's defenders are scant, barely 20 clerics and just 1000 mercenaries—many of whom have never faced the undead before and serve for love of money, not duty to the endless cause. Although the aethling of Seithrby owes the cult no allegiance, it is his lands that will suffer if the cult fails to hold the line. Unfortunately, Seithrby has a population of fewer than 20000. Even if every able-bodied man could be mustered, its army would equate to only three or four thousand frightened peasants and a few hundred huscarls. Still, that is all the cult can rely on.

The characters are asked to visit the aethling and his jarls in a bid to rally support. There are five centers of power in Seithrby—Murton, Ryhoepe, Seaton, Seithrby, and Wulfcestre. At each one, the heroes must make a Cooperative Persuasion roll. Modifiers and other important notes are shown below. All modifiers within a given settlement are cumulative. The GM can add in roleplaying scenes in each settlement, as he desires. Bonuses for good roleplaying (and penalties for bad) should be awarded where appropriate.

In all cases, the nobles of Seithrby accompany any troops—such is the Saxa way of leadership. Having so many nobles in such a small army could cause more than a few headaches. Each settlement has a specific battle event associated with it. The battle event applies if the noble's support is gained, no matter how many men he sends.

Murton: Thegn Analf is a Saxa noble in the style of his distant ancestors—courageous and ready for battle. With the community centered on livestock rather than farming, Murton and its supporting steads can spare men for war. The Persuasion roll has a +1 modifier.

Battle Event: Analf's impulsiveness gets the better of him and he orders a charge at some point during the battle. The allied commander has –2 to his Knowledge (Battle) roll. However, if the roll is a success, he removes an additional undead token.

Ryhoepe: Thegn Osric is a tried and tested warrior with a stout heart. The Persuasion roll has no modifier. Unfortunately, Osric is more interested in harming his cousin, the aethling, than truly assisting against the undead.

Battle Event: If his support is gained *and* Aethling Cuthwulf and his men are present, at some point in the battle the thegn orders his men to withdraw, leaving the aethling's contingent stranded. This gives the allied commander a –2 penalty to his Knowledge (Battle) roll for the round. If the allies lose a token that round, the aethling's men are cut down and the prince wounded. The allied army must make an immediate Morale roll.

Seaton: Thegn Whitburh is an old and skilled warrior, and loyal to his lord. Whitburh drops unsubtle hints about the sheep slaying (see the *Hellfrost Gazetteer*). If the party pledges to investigate, the Persuasion roll is made at +2.

Battle Event: Whitburh is happy to be a subordinate commander, but he offers advice. If the commander accepts, Whitburh makes a Cooperative Battle roll. He has Knowledge (Battle) d8 and is a Wild Card. Whitburh is wounded when the allies lose their fourth token, and can no longer advise the commander.

Seithrby: Aethling Cuthwulf is infatuated with the old tales of Saxa heroes, but lacks the drive and skill to become one himself. Being called upon to aid the clerics is both a clear sign of his rightful position as ruler of Seithrby and an opportunity to prove his worth to his ancestors.

If the heroes make a mistake in etiquette and do not visit Seithrby before recruiting aid from the thegns, Cuthwulf grows petulant at the insult to his station. The Persuasion roll has a –2 penalty.

Regardless of when he is visited, Cuthwulf demands to be made supreme commander, as befits his social position. Alas, his Knowledge (Battle) is just d4, his Spirit d6, and he has no useful Edges. Agreeing gives the heroes a +4 bonus to the Persuasion roll at Seithrby and +2 at every other settlement they visit thereafter, but places the army in mortal danger. Refusal gives a +1 bonus at Seithrby, but only so long as the aethling is made a regimental commander (no effect on the battle). Otherwise, there is a –2 penalty here.

Battle Event: Cuthwulf is an incompetent glory hound. Whether he is supreme commander or not, he acts the role, ignoring the orders of the true commander. Draw a card each round. On a black card, Cuthwulf shouts contradictory orders, confusing the men. The allied commander has –1 to his Knowledge (Battle) roll. Cuthwulf's presence, though, is a major Morale booster. Morale rolls are made at +1.

Wulfcestre: Eager to convince Cuthwulf that the lands of Wulfcestre are safe for bandits, Cenwalch quickly signs up soldiers. The Persuasion roll has a +2 modifier. Unfortunately, the current raids against the thegn's lands will only get worse if the allied army fares badly. Quelling these raids could be used as an adventure seed.

Battle Event: Cenwalch is a craven coward. If the allied commander has Cry Havoc, draw a card from the

USING EVENTS

This sidebar presents an optional way of using events in a Mass Battle, without the need to break out miniatures or terrain.

The GM can use one of two methods to determine when the events occur. First, give each character a token of some description. At any time during the battle in which he is participating, the character *must* play the token to trigger an event. Only one token may be played per round, regardless of the number of characters involved. When a token is played, pick one of the following entries or roll a d4. Each can be used only once during the adventure.

Second, each time three tokens are lost, regardless from which side, pick or roll for an event.

Success or failure is determined by the commander's Battle roll this round. Since the heroes provide modifiers to this, it is also largely dependant on their individual die rolls—the better they fight, the better the army does overall.

1) Awaken the Damned: The undead army is dangerously close to capturing an old battlefield where hundreds of corpses may be buried. If they do, they will be able to summon reinforcements. *Failure:* The undead capture the graveyard and raise a host of the damned. They gain two tokens. *Success:* The undead capture the graveyard but can only muster one additional token before being driven back. *Raise:* The undead advance is driven back and the graveyard is held.

2) Catapults of Doom: The undead drag their deadly and hellish catapults into range. *Failure:* The attack is driven back and the catapults remain intact. The undead retain their +2 modifier to Knowledge (Battle) rolls. *Success:* Half the catapults are destroyed before the attack is repelled. They have just +1 to the Knowledge (Battle) rolls. *Raise:* The catapults are destroyed, and the artillery modifier removed.

3) Sever the Head: The heroes have the opportunity to slay one the priests commanding the undead. *Failure:* The foray slays many undead, but the priest is unharmed. *Success:* The cleric is injured, forcing a subordinate to take over. The subordinate's Battle and Spirit dice are one lower than his superior's Traits. *Raise:* The headquarters is smashed and many priests slain. The new undead commander has Battle d4 and Spirit d6.

4) Rally the Troops: Wave after wave of decaying corpses have broken the morale of the left flank. Unless the heroes act quickly, the entire flank will collapse. *Failure:* The characters' activities are not enough to bolster morale. The commander must make an immediate Spirit roll at –2. If he fails, the allies lose a token as the men flee in panic. *Success:* As above, except the roll is unmodified. *Raise:* The troops not only rally, but they become fearless. All Morale rolls from here on are made at +1.

action deck. On a black Jack through Ace, Cenwalch's men refuse the order. The charge fails and the use of Cry Havoc is wasted.

In each settlement, the result of the Persuasion roll determines the number of troops recruited, as shown below.

Troops	Success	Raise	Two Raises
Huscarls	10	20	30
Militia	200	400	800

CALCULATING THE ARMY SIZE

The main army comprises 400 heavy mercenary infantry and 600 light mercenary infantry. Each heavy infantryman is worth 4 points and each light infantryman, 2 points. This gives a total of 4000 points. The assorted clerics and priests raise this to 4100 points.

Each huscarl the heroes recruit is worth 4 points and each militiaman 2 points. Tally up the troops and work out their points. Add this to the above total to calculate the full size of the allied army.

THE BATTLE OF RATTLING BONES

At dawn, on the second day after the heroes return from their recruitment mission, scouts report the undead host advancing toward the first line of fortifications. Divine Slayer Haakon Guthrunsunu, the head paladin at the fort, calls the men to arms. With fearful glances, a few religious signs, and much boasting about the number of heads they will take today, the soldiers rush to man the defenses. Banners are hoisted and war chants sung, more to rouse morale than to intimidate the relentless, remorseless enemy.

COMMANDERS

Allied Commander: Technically Divine Slayer Haakon Guthrunsunu (Battle d8, Spirit d8, Cry Havoc) commands the army. However, he does not plan to commit all his troops at once. Instead, he keeps archers one line back from the main battle. If a hero has suitable battle skills, he appoints him to command the frontline of the army. By the time the lines collapse (assuming they do) the troops are so used to the hero that Haakon leaves him in full command. He will assume control should the hero fall.

Undead Commander: Death Knight Kalarix Doombringer (Battle d8, Spirit d10, Cry Havoc)

Undead Forces: The undead army totals 8000 points of skeletons, zombies, and armored variants, plus a handful of (thankfully) rarer undead. To determine the tokens each side begins with, compare this to the allies' army point total.

Modifiers: The undead have hellish catapults, crafted from bones, launching balls of inky darkness that crackle with necromantic energy. These grant the undead a +2 bonus to their Knowledge (Battle) rolls.

Siege Bonus: The allies have a series of fortified

lines, each weaker than the one before. The plan is to hold them at the first line, only retreating to the next line back if it is overrun. The first line of defense has a +2 Siege Bonus, the second line +1, and the third line +0. However, heroes with the Siege Mentality Edge have the opportunity to improve each defensive line, bolstering the defenses and strengthening weak points. Without the Edge, the defenders will be sorely pressed to hold the lines.

When the allies lose two tokens, they retreat in orderly fashion to the second line, having lost the defenses to the advancing horde. Another two tokens pushes them to the third line. From here there will be no retreat until the bitter end and the army routs or is destroyed.

Morale: Being essentially mindless, the undead have +2 to Morale rolls. Although there are few clerics of Scaetha in the allied army, their presence gives the allies a +1 bonus.

AFTERMATH

If the undead win, they raze the fort and then withdraw back into the Liche Lands, not even bothering to harass the retreating allies. The attack was not the forerunner to an invasion, as thought, though it has achieved its purpose—the destruction of the cult of Scaetha's outpost. Free of the cult's watch, the undead begin to build up their strength, unopposed by their most-hated foes. It will be many years before the cult of Scaetha can rebuild the fort.

Should the allies win, the undead have lost a few easily replaceable troops and caused some misery to their enemies. Their defeat is a major victory for the cult of Scaetha, but an irrelevant blip in the undead's long-term plans.

RAIDS ON ORCMARK

The war against Orcmark has ground to a stalemate. In the north, the armies of the orcs and those of the men of Vestmark are separated by the River Elverun. Artillery barrages and small-scale raids are waged constantly but achieve little. In the east, the besieged city of Ostersund holds out against dire odds only by the bravery of its defenders. This adventure comprises two Mass Battles set in this war torn region of Rassilon.

Vestmark is a great adventuring opportunity for leaders of men, for it allows ample battlefield encounters, both as tabletop skirmish level and mass battles. Skilled commanders are valuable assets here and greatly prized. They are also a target for orc assassination squads.

SPECIAL RULES

The Mass Battles in this adventure comprise several stages, which the allies must complete in order to claim victory. Each stage details a small part of the battle, and together they form a logical progression of the unfolding engagement. Each stage details the enemy commander's Traits and Edges, the number of tokens the allies face, and the current objective.

Commander: It is unlikely Spirit rolls will be required, but Spirit is listed just in case. Enemy commanders with Cry Havoc always use it when the heroes first encounter the stage.

Tokens: Unlike other battles, the enemy's tokens are not representative of his entire force. Instead, they represent the military might arrayed against the allies in this stage of the battle.

In early stages, the allies are numerically superior and should have a relatively easy time, what with the bonuses gained from the difference in tokens. As the battle progresses, the allies' tokens will likely be reduced, increasing the threat arrayed against them. Do not run each stage until one side breaks or is destroyed—unless the enemy routs during that round of combat, the heroes'

combined results determine the course of action, as detailed below.

Objective: Each stage has a fixed objective. Completing the objective is determined by the allied commander's Battle roll this round. Since the heroes provide modifiers to this, it is also largely dependant on their individual die rolls—the better they fight, the better the army does overall. Note that the orcs can roll higher than the heroes' commander and still lose the stage.

Each objective lists the outcome dependant on failure and the degree of success. In some instances, the commander may be forced to repeat the stage. Other times he may be presented with a choice, or allowed to continue. Regardless of the victory level, tokens are lost as normal.

Should the allies retreat before completing the main objective, the battle is considered a defeat, no matter how many enemy tokens were destroyed.

Glory: Both battles involve a few hundred combatants, and thus warrant a +1 Glory reward.

Example: *Four heroes crossing the Elverun make their Characters in Mass Battle rolls. Together they provide their commander with a total bonus of +2. The commanders then make their Battle rolls. The allies score a raise, while the orcs get a success. The allied raise means the army powers across the river, raining death and destruction on the orcs. Stage 1 is completed, and during Stage 2, the orcs receive 1 less token. However, the orc commander scored a success, so the allies lose a token, leaving them with 9 tokens for the next stage.*

SILENCE THE CATAPULTS

Orc siege engineers have constructed a pair of ultra heavy catapults. Capable of throwing over half a ton of rocks at a time and to a range far greater than any previously known artillery, the weapons could spell doom for Vestmark. Each barrage forces the defenders to retreat further from the shores, thus opening a landing site for orc battle barges. Should the orcs gain a foothold, Vestmark's captains would be forced to transfer troops from other defensive positions, weakening the entire front.

Theodred Vulfgarsunu, Marshal of the Mark, is planning a large-scale assault against the orc artillery positions on the far bank. The assault is a gamble, and everyone knows it. Should the attack be successful, all that will be achieved is a return to the previous *status quo*. If it fails, valuable men will have sold their lives for nothing, weakening Vestmark's defenses.

Aware of the peril, Theodred has called for volunteers, both to participate in and lead the attack. This is the moment where the characters should volunteer for duty.

The allied army begins with 10 tokens.

1. CROSSING THE ELVERUN

In order to destroy the catapults, the allies must attempt a dangerous waterborne assault in barges. Archers emerge from their positions and fire volley after volley onto the far bank in an attempt to keep enemy archers from targeting the barges. The beat of drums keeps time as the warriors heave at the oars. The sky turns black with arrows in both directions, and great plumes of water erupt as orc artillery smashes into the river.

Orc Commander: Battle d6, Spirit d8

Orc Tokens: 7

Special Notes: The allies come under orc missile fire from the far bank. The characters may only use Boating (to help shorten the journey time), Shooting, Throwing, or arcane skills (if they have tactically useful ranged spells) this round. Attacking heroes (as opposed to ones using Boating) suffer the Unstable Platform penalty.

The orcs are behind fortifications, protecting them from return fire. Their commander adds +1 to his Knowledge (Battle) roll. Artillery fire from catapults situated along the bank smashes down onto the barges, giving the orc an additional +1 bonus.

Objective: Cross the river.

Failure: Progress is hampered by the fierce defenses. The allies' progress to Stage 2, but the orcs have had time to reinforce the lines and have an additional token.

Success: The landing progresses according to plan.

Raise: The crossing is swift and many orcs are slain by accurate fire. The orcs have one less token in the next stage.

2. STORMING THE BANK

As the barges strike the far bank, the allied warriors surge forward, swords and shields glinting in the sun, battle cries roaring from their snarled lips. Despite the advantage of fortifications, the orc commander orders his troops to charge. A host of fierce warriors emerges from their hiding places to drive the invaders back to the river. The orcs have forfeited the protection of their defenses and the catapults have ceased fire.

Orc Commander: Battle d8, Spirit d8, Cry Havoc

Orc Tokens: 6

Special Notes: The orc commander uses his Cry Havoc this round.

Objective: Clear the bank and advance inland.

Failure: The attack stalls on the bank. Unless the orcs rout, repeat this stage next round.

Success: The orcs are driven back, though in orderly fashion.

Raise: The allies surge through the orc lines, routing the enemy. They advance with courage in their hearts. In the next stage, the allied commander adds +1 to his Battle roll.

3. ORC FORTIFICATIONS

The allies storm through the shattered remains of the village the orcs were using as a forward base and advance on the main fortifications, behind which lie the catapults. The orc commander, either wiser or more cowardly, orders his troops to stay behind the palisades.

Orc Commander: Battle d8, Spirit d8

Orc Tokens: 6

Special Notes: The fortifications grant the orcs +2 to their Battle roll.

Objective: Breach the fortifications.

Failure: The attackers have not yet broken the defenses. Unless the orcs rout, repeat this stage next round.

Success: The walls are breached and the orcs scattered.

Raise: The orc line folds like a paper house and the allies surge through toward their objective. The catapult crews are caught off guard. In the next stage, the allied commander adds +1 to his Battle roll.

4. DESTROY THE CATAPULTS

Brandishing axes, the allies charge the catapults, intent on hacking them to pieces. The orc guards are second rate, little match for the ferocious humans. Unfortunately, the battle has attracted orc warriors from nearby camps. Unless the allies are quick, they may find themselves outnumbered and surrounded.

Orc Commander: Battle d6, Spirit d6

Orc Tokens: 4

Special Notes: If the allies score a success in this stage and choose to repeat it, then a second success destroys the remaining catapult.

Main Objective: Destroy the catapults.

Failure: The allies fail to destroy any of the catapults. Repeat this stage next round. Every time this stage is repeated, the orcs gain another token, to a maximum of 10.

Success: One of the catapults is smashed. If this is the first one destroyed, the allied commander may either order a withdrawal now and claim a draw or continue the assault in the hope of destroying the remaining siege engine.

Raise: Both catapults are smashed. The mission is complete! It is time to withdraw to the riverbank before more orc reinforcements arrive.

5. ORDERLY WITHDRAWAL

As the allies pull back to the barges under constant attack from orc warriors, friendly archers let fly volleys of arrows into the enemy ranks. A last desperate holding action is required to allow the bulk of the army to embark.

Orc Commander: Battle d8, Spirit d8 (Wild Card)

Orc Tokens: 4

Special Notes: None.

Objective: Return to the barges.

Failure: The allies are slow to mount the barges, forcing the rearguard to maintain its stance a little while longer. Repeat this round. Every time this stage is repeated, the orcs gain another token, to a maximum of 10.

Success: The allies successfully board and the barges set sail.

Raise: Desperate to claim some degree of success, the orc commander enters the fray, only to be cut down by the hero who scored the highest on his Characters in Mass Battle roll this round. Use the actual die roll to determine who claims the kill. That character earns +1 Glory.

AFTERMATH

If both catapults are destroyed, the allies claim a huge victory. The devastation on the far bank is not large enough to launch a full invasion of Orcmark, but it has allowed smaller raids a greater chance of success. More importantly, the allies can reuse their old positions nearer the riverbank.

One catapult destroyed results in a draw. The orcs pull the remaining artillery piece further back to prevent a second raid from destroying it, allowing the allies to retake a handful of their old forward positions.

Total failure to destroy the catapults is a disaster—many men have died for naught. Bolstered by their victory, the orcs step up bombardments. They may even plan an attack of their own to capture parts of the near-deserted riverbank.

RESUPPLYING OSTERSUND

Although the Queen of Midmark's fleet is not yet ready (see *Hellfrost Gazetteer*), heralds from Vestmark have successfully petitioned her to send a raiding party to help alleviate the pressure on Ostersund and deliver vital supplies. Her men, lacking the strength of numbers they were expecting when the mission was planned, demand strong leaders lead them into battle. Concerned her own commanders are not yet up to the task, she asks for renowned heroes to answer the call to arms. One such party is prepared to venture onto the orc infested seas to relieve the siege—the player characters.

The allied army begins with 10 tokens.

1. WAR GALLEYS

The orc navy, once considered a joke, now commands the seas between Midmark and Orcmark. Buoyed by recent successes, the orc navy is confident and bloodthirsty. Halfway across the bay, the small fleet is engaged by a number of orc war galleys. Volleys of arrows and spells are unleashed before the ships grapple and the men begin the grisly task of riding the sea of their foes in bloody combat.

Orc Commander: Battle d8, Spirit d8

Orc Tokens: 6

Special Notes: The allies have no choice but to engage in shipboard combat. The characters may only use Boating (to help arrange the fleet), Shooting, Throwing, or arcane skills (if they have tactically useful ranged

spells) this round. Attacking heroes (as opposed to ones using Boating) suffer the Unstable Platform penalty.

Objective: Cross Blackwater Bay.

Failure: The orc war galleys ram several ships, sinking one. The allies lose an extra token this round. This occurs even if the orcs roll a failure on their Battle roll.

Success: The orcs are routed, with several of their galleys put to flame.

Raise: The allies destroy a large part of the orc fleet. Not only have the allies helped clear a sea-lane, but also the men are in a jubilant mood. The commander's next Battle roll is made at +1.

2. OPPOSED LANDING

As part of the defenses, the forces of Ostersund seeded the harbor entrance with submerged sharpened stakes, thus denying the orcs the opportunity to land behind their lines. A thick mist, likely of supernatural origin, prevents the fleet from entering the harbor. Unwilling to remain at sea, where they are at the mercy of sea monsters and roving galleys, the commander has no choice but to land further along the shore and try to penetrate the orc lines.

Orc Commander: Battle d8, Spirit d8

Orc Tokens: 6

Special Notes: The allied commander may make a Battle roll before the stage begins. With success, his landing catches the defenders off guard. The orc tokens are reduced by one for the initial clash of armies. Should the allies be forced to repeat this stage, the token is returned as the orcs wake and take up arms.

Objective: Advance to the city.

Failure: The penetration is stopped by an orc shieldwall. Unless the orcs rout, repeat this stage next round.

Success: The allies crash through the lines, leaving the orcs behind.

Raise: The allies cut a wide swathe through the orc lines, causing widespread panic and confusion. The orcs believe they are under attack from two armies! The allies advance with courage in their hearts. In the next stage, the allied commander adds +1 to his Battle roll.

3. SCALE THE WALLS

Though under near-constant bombardment, the mighty city walls stand strong. Unwilling to risk opening the main gates, the defenders lower siege ladders to the allies. While the bulk of the army makes the climb, a rearguard must stand firm against an orc counterattack.

Orc Commander: Battle d6, Spirit d6

Orc Tokens: 6

Special Notes: None.

Objective: Hold the line while the men enter the city.

Failure: The orc attack forces the commander to pull troops back out of the city to support the rearguard. Unless the orcs rout, repeat this stage next round.

Success: The allies scale the walls, retrieve the ladders, and can breathe a sigh of relief.

Raise: The orc counterattack is driven back with great losses, allowing the allies easy passage into the city. The besieged defenders cheer wildly.

4. CHARGE!

Jarl Osni Ethelraed, commander of the garrison at Ostersund, praises the allies for their efforts. The jarl explains that their greatest nemesis is a skilled orc commander, whose encampment lies a mile to the west. The jarl proposes the allied commander and his men storm the camp and disrupt orc plans. To aid the battle weary force, the jarl provides reinforcements from among the defenders. He cannot spare many, in case the attack fails, but the allies gain one token (to a maximum of 10).

Orc Commander: Battle d8, Spirit d8, Cry Havoc (Wild Card)

Orc Tokens: 7

Special Notes: The orcs have the benefit of fortifications and have seeded the approach with deadly traps. The orc commander has +2 to his Battle roll.

Main Objective: Destroy the camp.

Failure: The allies fall foul of the traps and are driven back by concentrated missile fire. The commander may choose to withdraw now or continue the assault.

Success: The camp is razed, though many orcs survived the onslaught, including the enemy commander. Drummers had the opportunity to summon reinforcements, forcing the commander to signal a full withdrawal back to Ostersund.

Raise: The orc camp is smashed and the defenders thrown into disarray. The orc commander enters the fray, only to be cut down by the hero who scored the highest on his Characters in Mass Battle roll this round. Use the actual die roll to determine who claims the kill. That character earns +1 Glory.

5. ORDERLY WITHDRAWAL

With the camp torched, the allies must make their way back to the safety of the city before the orcs rally their forces and block the path. Packs of wolf riders, each mounted on a snarling dire wolf, are already thundering down on the retreating army.

Orc Commander: Battle d8, Spirit d6 (Wild Card)

Orc Tokens: 6

Special Notes: None.

Objective: Return to the city.

Failure: A company of wolf riders outflanks the allies while peppering them with arrows. Encircled, the allies must fight their way out. Repeat this stage.

Success: Although harried all the way, the allies manage to reach the city. Archers stationed high on the walls unleash a cloud of arrows, while Ostersund's few remaining catapults unleash a hail of rocks. The orcs wisely choose to retreat.

Raise: The orc counterattack is soundly beaten long before the allies get into range of the city's archers. With the enemy driven from the field in total disarray, the main gates are opened to welcome the triumphant heroes!

AFTERMATH

Slaying the main orc commander (Stage 4) earns the party a victory. Although the siege is far from lifted, it will take the orcs many weeks to appoint a new commander of his caliber, during which time the attacks will lessen considerably. Torching the camp but allowing the commander to escape is a hollow victory, but a victory nonetheless. Infuriated by the audacity of the humans, the general vows bloody revenge.

Their job done, the characters have the option of returning to Midmark along with the bodies of recently slain defenders (fallen soldiers are always buried in a Markland when possible) or remaining in the city and helping with its defense. The latter opens up the whole of Orcmark as a new ground for adventures. Players with Followers who want the excitement of leading them in battle and heroes looking for bloody, brutal combat as a way to earn Glory will find Orcmark an ideal playground. The bulk of the men who accompanied the heroes remain in Ostersund, boosting the defenders' strength.

NEW MASS BATTLE RULES

The Mass Battle rules for *Savage Worlds* work perfectly fine and can easily be used to cover battles from a few hundred souls to tens of thousands. Of course, they are designed to be abstract, which means there is an emphasis on GMs and players to fill in the blanks with their imagination and colorful descriptions. The following rules present alternative ways to play out Mass Battles.

MASS BATTLES IN MINIATURE

Note in advance that these rules are more akin to the regular combat rules, only with companies of troops replacing individual miniatures. Cards are used to represent individual units of men rather than individual troops or abstract tokens. The rules still allow the heroes to be in the thick of the fighting and make a difference to the outcome. This is especially true for those with Leadership Edges.

COMPANY SIZE

Because it is unlikely a Mass Battle will ever be a random encounter, the GM should know the total number of troops involved and their makeup. Regardless of the total army size, all troops are formed into companies. For most battles, the size of an individual company should be set at 200 troops. If you are running a really big battle, say with 10000 opponents a side, you can shift this up to 1000 or even 2000 per company. We suggest you avoid having more than twenty companies a side, as this slows the game down unnecessarily.

Of course, not all companies are equal in terms of ability. A company of 200 spearmen, for instance, is not equal in terms of the damage it can inflict or absorb compared to a company of 200 frost giants. To help balance things, we use something called the Combat Value (CV).

CALCULATING CV

Each company's CV is based on its Parry, Toughness, attack die, damage die, and suitable Edges or special abilities. To calculate the CV, add together the following numbers for a company:

* Parry score.
* Toughness score (including armor).
* Half best attack die (so a d10 would equal 5).
* Half best damage dice. If a creature has Strength above d12, add the extra points before halving. An ogre with Strength d12+3 and a d8 club, for example, treats as a total of 23, which is halved down to 11. Add +1 to the final value for each point of Armor Penetration.
* If the creature has an automatic damage effect, like the frost giants' aura, add in half the damage dice.
* Add two for each unique Edge or special ability that could have a direct impact in battle and is not already factored in elsewhere. For instance, an orc warrior has Size +1, but this is already included in its Toughness and so is not added separately. The same would apply to Block as it is factored into Parry. "Improved" versions of Edges count double.
* For cavalry on battle-trained mounts, add half the mount's Fighting die and damage (it can make separate attacks).
* Round the result to the nearest multiple of five. Check the tally against the table below and record the CV.

Score	CV
15	1
20	2
25	3
30	4
35	5
40	6
45	7
50	8 (and so on)

When the companies engage in battle, the company with the smaller CV suffers a –1 penalty to its attack rolls for each point difference in CV ratings. This artificial balance serves to reduce the odds that a lowly company of inferior troops will destroy a much stronger company without assistance. Failures to hit do not indicate total misses—blows are still landing and minor injuries may be inflicted, but not enough to weaken the company.

Example: *A company of basic spearmen totals 19 points (Parry 5, Toughness 5, attack 3, damage 6), which is rounded to 20. This gives CV 2. A company of frost giants has a massive 48 points (Parry 6, Toughness 14, at-*

CV AND TOKENS

The Combat Value system provides a quick way to help calculate tokens in the standard Mass Battles rules.

First, work out how many troops of each type an army has. Next, multiply the number of troops by the appropriate CV to calculate its "points" value. Repeat this until the entire army has been calculated. Use these final figures to adjudicate the number of tokens each side receives.

Example: *An army of 2000 orc warriors faces down 200 Hearth Knights of the Shield, 1500 spearmen (treat as militia), and 200 frost dwarf warriors. The orcs have 2000 x 3, or 6000 points of troops. The Shield Knights are worth 200 x 4 (800 points), the spearmen 1500 x 2 (3000), and the frost dwarves 200 x 5 (1000 points), for a grand total of 4800.*

The orc army has the larger force and receives 10 tokens. The allies have 80% of the orc army's strength, and so have 8 tokens.

tack 5, best damage 13, aura damage 6, Edges/abilities 4), or CV 8. If the companies were of equal numeric size, the spearmen would receive a –6 penalty when facing the superior frost giants.

REDUCING CV

A GM planning a battle in advance may wish to balance the forces a little better. For each fifth of the total troop numbers cut from a company, the CV drops by one point. No company can drop below four-fifths its starting strength.

Example: *If there were only 40 giants in the company, a four-fifths reduction in troop number, it would have a more modest CV 4. The spearmen still have a –2 disadvantage against the giants, but the companies are more balanced.*

PRECALCULATED CVS

This list includes the more common types of troops from the *Hellfrost Bestiary* likely to be involved in a Mass Battle. Armed with this, the GM can quickly build huge, balanced armies.

Troop Type	CV
Bandits	2
City/town watch	2
City/town watch, experienced	5
Elf rangers	3
Engro bludgeoners	3
Frost dwarf warriors	5
Frostreavers	5
Frost giants, greater	8
Frost giants, lesser	5
Goblin warriors	2
Goblin riders	2
Hearth Knights, Shield	4
Huscarls	4
Huscarls, veteran	7
Mercenaries, common, infantry	2
Mercenaries, common, archer	4
Mercenaries, common, cavalry	2
Mercenaries, common, skirmisher	2
Mercenaries, veteran, infantry	4
Mercenaries, veteran, archer	5
Mercenaries, veteran, cavalry + war horse	5
Mercenaries, veteran, skirmisher	4
Militia	2
Ogres	5
Orc, warriors	3
Orc, elite warriors	4
Orc, berserks	6
Orc, wolf riders + dire wolf mounts	5
Orc, runts	1
Sailors	2
Skeletons	3
Skeleton warriors	4
Vendahl warriors	4
Wolves	2
Wolves, dire	3
Zombies, armored	3
Zombies, unarmored	2

BODYGUARD COMPANIES

Some heroes will have Followers or household troops from a Resource, such as men-at-arms and huscarls. Typically, these will number somewhere between five and 20 strong, making their number too small to form a unique company. These bodyguards may be counted as part of a company of similar type, thus disappearing into the faceless masses of soldiers, or kept as the hero's personal bodyguard.

If treated as bodyguards, the hero gains +1 to his roll to aid his company (see page 4) for each whole 10 men in his bodyguard. The bodyguard *never* directly rolls dice during the combat. For each wound the player character suffers, he automatically loses one-quarter of his bodyguard. Of these, half are dead and the other half are incapacitated or routed. Either way, they are out of the fight. If a hero switches company (see below), his surviving bodyguard accompanies him automatically.

COMPANY CARD

Every individual type of company needs a specific company card to represent it on the tabletop. A 3" x 5" index card or something the size of a playing card will suffice for a company comprised of creatures of Size +3 or smaller. Large creatures should use a double-sized card, and companies of Huge creatures a triple-sized card. Player characters should be represented by a unique miniature or token and placed atop the company to which they belong.

While some companies are capable of melee and ranged attacks (and perhaps even magic as well), all troops within a company must be of the exact same type. Thus, you can get a company of heavy spearmen or heavy infantry equipped with long swords, but you cannot combine them. These cards act as both the tabletop playing piece and a record of all the information about the specific company.

Each company card should be titled with the troop type, the number of men in the unit, and its Combat Value. You also need to write down values for Attributes, Fighting die and weapon damage*, Riding die, Shooting and/or Throwing die, Range, and weapon damage*, Arcane skill die, Pace, Parry, Toughness, and any Edges or special abilities which are of use. Values can either be made up as needed, or taken from entries in an adventure or the *Hellfrost Bestiary*.

For cavalry companies riding war trained mounts, use the Parry and Toughness stats for the rider. Because the mount can fight separately, you must list its attack and damage dice.

For example, a company card for veteran huscarls would read:

Veteran Huscarls (200, CV 7)

Ag d8, **Sm** d6, **Sp** d10, **St** d10, **Vi** d10

Skills: Fighting d10 (Str+d8), Throwing d10 (3/6/12, Str+d6)

Pace 6, **Parry** 10, **Toughness** 9 (2)

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Frenzy, Improved Block, Shieldwall, War Cry

** Remember, all companies must be composed of the same troop type. There should only ever be one damage rating for each form of attack (Fighting, Shooting, and Throwing) even if the troops have multiple weapons.*

PCS ROLES

Player characters fill one of three roles within an army. Certain Leadership Edges (see page 426) are only of use if a hero fulfills a certain role, so positioning is very important.

Supreme Commander: One hero may be the Supreme Commander, the overall leader of the army. An army can only have a single supreme commander at any given time. The Supreme Commander is responsible for controlling all companies not containing a Wild Card Company Commander. In addition, certain Leadership Edges only work if a hero fills this role.

Company Commander: A hero may be a Company Commander. Multiple characters may be in the same company (and can use their own Leadership Edges to aid the troops), but only one can be titled Company Commander. The Company Commander's action card determines when the company acts. The Supreme Commander can also serve simultaneously as a Company Commander.

Soldier: Finally, a hero may be a common soldier. He can use his Leadership Edges to bolster the warriors, but he does not draw a separate action card for initiative.

INITIATIVE, TIME, AND DISTANCE

INITIATIVE

Each company containing a Wild Card Company Commander, whether player character or NPC, receives an action card. If the Company Commander has Level Headed or Improved Level Headed, his company receives extra cards as normal. It does not matter if multiple heroes in the same company have the Edge—only the Company Commander's Edge applies as he is giving the orders. Being Quick is of little use when you are trying to coordinate the movements of hundreds of soldiers, thus this Edge grants no benefits.

All other companies on a given side share the Supreme Commander's action card. Actual control of these companies on the tabletop may be shared among the players, but they all act at the same time.

Example: *Rob and Steve's player characters are each in command of a single company. Dave is the Supreme Commander. He has the Level Headed Edge, and is also commander of a single company. Allied with them are five other companies. The companies controlled by Rob and Steve each receive one action card. Dave draws two cards for his company and the remaining five companies to share.*

OUT OF COMMAND

Certain circumstances, such as fog, intervening terrain, bad light, magic, and so on may block the line of sight between a company and the Supreme Commander. Unless the company has a player character Company Commander, such units are deemed to be out of command. In order to issue an out of command company any orders, the Supreme Commander must succeed at a Knowledge (Battle) roll. With success, the company is brought back under control and may act as normal. This might be achieved by sending runners or riders, or using drums or horns to issue commands. On a failure, the company does not move or attack unless it is adjacent to an enemy company, in which case it attacks as normal.

TIME

Each round in combat normally represents six seconds. In these rules, it equates to anywhere from several minutes to an hour. Although this would normally allow for multiple attacks, it is assumed the companies are actually making multiple attacks and that die totals are indicative of overall performance rather than a single attack.

DISTANCE

All distances are measured in inches as normal and burst templates remain unchanged. All distances are measured to and from a company's center point.

MOVEMENT

These rules are intended to add a little tactile fun to mass battles and are not a simulation wargame. Thus, facing is irrelevant. However, for ease of movement and organization, all companies should be positioned square on, rather than at angles.

Areas of the battlefield marked as difficult ground, work as normal, in that movement through them costs double unless a company has an appropriate Edge to avoid the terrain penalty.

ATTACK AND DAMAGE

Each company has attack and damage dice, as well as Parry and Toughness just like a regular character. It may also have Edges (see below). Combat works exactly as normal for the tabletop—the only difference is that each company is treated as a single character. Thus, without certain Edges, a company makes one attack against one adjacent foe. Calculate attack rolls and damage exactly as normal.

CHARACTERS IN MASS COMBAT

These rules should also be used for important enemy commanders and Wild Cards.

Aiding the Men: Under these rules, a hero's individual fighting abilities are less important than those of the men he controls—the hero may be a great warrior, but if he is commanding a bunch of village militia with little training, even his prowess will have little direct impact.

As such, heroes do not make individual rolls for attacks. Instead, a hero adds to his company's attacks with a single Cooperative Arcane, Fighting, Shooting, or Throwing roll (his choice). Characters add +1 to their roll for each Rank above Novice to account for various abilities. The only Combat Maneuver an individual hero may use to aid his men is Wild Attack. The character may use the Defend maneuver, but if he does, he makes no Cooperative roll—he is intent on saving his own skin.

Backlash for spellcasters works as per normal for mass battles (see *Hellfrost Player's Guide*).

A raise or double raise on this roll still earns the character personal Glory as normal for a regular Mass Battle.

Taking Damage: When a character's company is attacked, compare the attack roll to the Parry of the hero and the company separately. The same applies to damage rolls.

Individual characters who suffer a Shaken result automatically unShake at the end of the round, as a hero has plentiful opportunities to throw off the effects. In the meantime, cumulative Shaken results from a physical attack apply as normal. Those with the Combat Reflexes Edge recover from being Shaken immediately after the attack (which caused the injury) is completed.

Example: *Steve's hero, Sven Bullroarer, has Parry 7 and Toughness 8. He is part of a company of spearmen (Parry 6, Toughness 5) being attacked by orc berserkers. The orcs' attack roll is 7, which overcomes both Sven's Parry and that of the company. The damage roll is 8. This is applied against the spearmen's Toughness and Sven's Toughness. Sven is Shaken by a blow. Sven will automatically unShake at the end of the round unless he has Combat Reflexes. Until then, though, a second Shaken result would result in a wound as normal.*

Switching Companies: A hero may switch to any allied company within 5" at any time as a free action, but may voluntarily undertake this action only once per round. However, if his company is destroyed, he may move to an allied company within range any number of times, though at a price (see above). Unless a hero in a broken company switches, he is considered part of the broken company and is deemed to be running for his life (see page 424).

If a hero's company is destroyed and he switches to a new company, the hero takes an automatic wound in addition to any other injuries suffered that round. If he cannot move to an allied company, he is automatically Incapacitated and left unconscious—a lone hero is largely ineffectual in terms of the greater battle and quickly overrun.

Switching does not allow a hero to perform a new set of actions, however. That is, if his former company has already attacked this round and the hero has aided them, switching to a company that has not yet acted does not allow a second roll by the character.

COMBAT MANEUVERS

The following combat maneuvers and rules may be used unmodified in a tabletop mass battle: Aim, Cover, Darkness, Defend, Finishing Move, Firing into Melee, Full Defense, Ranged Weapons in Close Combat, and Withdrawing from Close Combat.

The following combat maneuver may be used, but with a change from the regular rules.

Ganging Up: In these rules, Ganging Up against stronger companies is vital in helping to offset penalties caused by differences in CV. A company no longer provides a flat +1 bonus if Ganging Up. Instead, the bonus is equal to the difference in CV, with a minimum of +1.

Example: *A company of orc warriors (CV 3) is fighting a company of huscarls (CV 4). The orcs suffer an overall –1 penalty due to the difference in CVs. Aiding the orcs is a company of runts (CV 1) and a company of orc berserks (CV 6). The runts provide a +1 bonus, since their CV is lower than the huscarls. The berserks' CV is two points higher, so they provide a +2 bonus. When the warriors attack, their total modifier is now +2.*

Suppressive Fire: Instead of selecting targets, a unit capable of ranged combat may attempt to deny territory to an enemy by filling it with a hail of lethal missiles. The firing company may not move in the round it conducts Suppressive Fire. The company picks a spot within range, places a Medium Burst Template, and makes a Ranged attack roll as normal.

With success, any company already in (or any company that enters the template before the start of the fir-

ing company's next turn) must make a Spirit roll. If the company fails, it is Shaken. Companies that roll a natural 1 on their Spirit die (regardless of any Wild Die) are actually hit by the attack and suffer damage normally.

WOUNDS

Companies represent large numbers of troops and can sustain a lot of damage. Regardless of whether a company comprises Extra or Wild Cards, it can take 3 wounds before being destroyed, incapacitated, broken, or otherwise rendered incapable of continuing the fight. When a company takes its final wound, it is instantly removed from the battlefield. A company composed entirely of Wild Cards (a great rarity) also has a Wild Die and two bennies.

Shaken results that affect an entire company require a little imagination. A Shaken result could indicate the company is momentarily scattered, pushed back a short distance, stunned into action by an enemy assault, waiting for orders, momentarily winded due to the onslaught, and so on. It does not mean that everyone is standing around doing nothing, only that the company, as a cohesive whole, is incapable of any effective action—men are still fighting, but not enough to make any real difference.

MAGIC

When an entire company of spellcasters is fielded (a rarity), all spells work as normal, including those with an area effect. In all cases, the spellcasters are unleashing the same spells. Thus, while a company card can easily represent 200 men, a *blast* spell still affects a regular Medium Burst Template. In this instance, the spellcasters are positioning their attacks to encompass what, in a standard tabletop battle, equates to a much larger area. Similarly, any backlash is suffered by the company as a whole.

Individual heroes with spells cast magic solely through aiding their company.

MORALE

Being surrounded, facing overwhelming odds, and watching your comrades get hacked to death all affect a company's Morale. However, since this is not a wargame, Morale comes into play in only one of three circumstances. (Note: Fearless creatures never make Morale rolls).

TAKING DAMAGE

A company that is Shaken or suffers a wound must make an immediate Spirit roll. With failure, the company immediately falls back half its Pace toward its own side of the battlefield by the most direct route. This does not count as Withdrawing from Combat, but does trigger First Strike from adjacent enemy companies. At the start of the next round, the company rallies and may act as normal.

LEADER SLAIN

A company whose Company Commander is slain suffers a loss of Morale as above. Note that unnamed Company Commanders do not cause this effect—this is reserved for important commanders, such as named Wild Card NPCs and player characters.

WE ARE LOSING

When an army loses one-half of its starting companies, all the surviving companies must make a Spirit roll as above. When the army is reduced to one-quarter of its starting companies, the roll is made at –2.

BROKEN

If the Spirit roll is a 1 (regardless of any Wild Die), the company breaks. Attacks against a broken company are made at +2—the men are fleeing in disorder. A broken company may not make attacks and does not count to-

ward allied Gang Up bonuses. It must continue retreating at its maximum possible Pace (including running) until it reaches its edge of the battlefield. At this point, it is allowed another Spirit roll.

With success, the company rallies and may reenter play next round. It is no longer treated as being broken. On a failure, the company leaves the battlefield and does not return.

EDGES

Not all companies are equal. Even among companies with similar die types, special training plays a vital role. As such, companies may acquire Edges. Note that the *entire* company must have the Edge to take advantage of it in battle—a lone player character may have Sweep, but if his fellow men do not, then they cannot use the Edge.

Available non-Leadership Edges are detailed below. "Improved" versions are automatically included unless a note to the contrary is made. Unless otherwise stated, these Edges work as normal. Leadership Edges have their own section.

Normal Edges: Ambidextrous, Arcane Background, Arcane Resistance, Berserk, Bladedancer, Block, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Double Shot, Favored Foe, First Strike, Fleet-Footed, Frenzy, Giant Killer, Level Headed, Marksman, Mighty Shot, Mighty Throw, Nerves of Steel, Quick, Snow Walker, Sunder, Tough as Nails, Two-Fisted, Weapon Master (Master of Arms).

Racial Qualities: Racial Edges and Hindrances that might affect a battle, i.e., as a company of engros having Luck or elves and their Forest Born ability to negate difficult penalties in woodland, apply as normal.

Altered Edges: Edges that work differently or require clarification are detailed below.

Luck: The company has one benny.

Greater Luck: The company has one additional benny (granting it two in total).

Shieldwall: Shieldwall is a defensive formation. The company has +1 Parry.

Sweep: The company is trained to fight enemies on all sides. The company makes a Fighting attack roll against two adjacent enemy companies. Roll the Fighting die once and compare that total to the enemies' Parry values. Thus, some companies may be struck and others not. Damage is rolled separately for each enemy company.

Improved Sweep: As above, except the company may attack up to three adjacent enemy companies per round.

War Cry: Using War Cry replaces the company's attack, but it can be used only once per battle. One adjacent enemy company chosen by the attacking company must make a Spirit roll. A Wild Card player character aids with a Cooperative roll. With failure, the attacking company has +2 to its next roll against the enemy. On a critical failure, the enemy must retreat 3". If it cannot retreat, it is Shaken instead.

LEADERSHIP EDGES

Companies of troops may be brave, fearless, or highly trained, but even the most untrained rabble can become better fighters under the command of a skilled leader, and elite troops without a leader can misinterpret orders or become demoralized.

Listed below are the Leadership Edges that are of use in these alternate mass battle rules. While a few exceptional companies may have their own talented commanders, it is normally left to the player characters to provide the necessary leadership. After all, they are the focus of the game.

Edges designated as company types apply only to the allied company of which the hero is a member. He need not be the Company Commander. If the hero switches company during the battle, the new company gains the benefits of his leadership and his former company loses the benefit.

As normal, Leadership Edges are not cumulative from multiple commanders, though they can benefit from two different heroes with two different Edges. For instance, two leaders with Command still provide only a +1 bonus to recover from being Shaken. However, if one hero had Command and another within the same company had Fervor, the company would gain the benefits of both Edges.

A FEW GOOD MEN

Type: Company

Rule: The company hero gains one benny. This may only be spent to aid the company he belongs to at the time. The hero cannot use the benny on his own die rolls, even if aiding his company, or to Soak personal wounds.

COMMAND

Type: Company

Rule: The company has +1 to recover from being Shaken.

COMMAND PRESENCE

Type: Company

Rule: The commander may use company Edges as if he were also part of one adjacent allied company. The hero must nominate which adjacent allied unit he is commanding at the start of a round. He may change this company at the start of each round.

COORDINATED FIREPOWER

Type: Special

Rule: Instead of firing separately, all allied missile troops adjacent to the hero's company yet to act in the round, can fire as a single company on the hero's action. This counts as their entire action for the round. The hero nominates one enemy company within range of the most distant company's weapon. He then makes a Ranged attack roll for his company. Each additional adjacent allied

missile company firing at the same time adds a flat +2 to the attack roll. Damage is calculated as normal for the company, but adds +1d6 per raise (not just for the first raise).

A hero cannot use Double Shot or Giant Killer in conjunction with this Edge unless *all* allied companies firing with the hero have those Edges as well.

CRY HAVOC

Type: Supreme Commander
Rule: Once per battle, the hero may nominate one allied company anywhere on the battlefield. When it next moves, the company may "run" without incurring a multi action penalty.

DEATH BEFORE DISHONOR

Type: Supreme Commander/Company
Rule: All allied companies add +2 to Spirit rolls made for morale purposes. A Company Commander with this Edge grants only his company the bonus.

FANATICISM

Type: Company
Rule: The company adds +2 to its Guts rolls.

FERVOR

Type: Company
Rule: The company adds +1 to its Fighting damage rolls.

HOLD THE LINE

Type: Company
Rule: The company has +1 Toughness.

INSPIRE

Type: Company
Rule: The company has +2 to recover from being Shaken (this already includes the original +1 bonus from the Command Edge).

NATURAL LEADER

Type: Company
Rule: The entire company is assumed to be under the character's command.

TACTICIAN

Type: Special
Rule: At the beginning of a battle, before the GM deals initiative cards, the hero makes a Knowledge (Battle) roll. For each success and raise, he receives one initiative card. Deal these cards facedown—the players may look, but the GM may not. These are kept separate from regular initiative cards and are not placed back into the deck until used or the battle ends (whichever occurs first).

At the start of any round, the hero may give one or more of these extra cards to any allied company, which then uses it as their initiative card for the round in place of the one they were dealt.

Only one character per battle may use this Edge.

EXPERIENCE

Unless a player character has direct and permanent control over companies, you do not need to worry about tracking experience. Otherwise, roll a d6 for each company which survives the battle and remains in play (broken companies are *not* in play, even if they are still on the battlefield). On a result of 5+, the company gains an advance.

If the hero is the company's permanent master, then he should also have an Ally Sheet for his men detailing their full traits and abilities. Treat "typical" or watch companies as being Novice and "experienced" or "veteran" ones as being Seasoned for the purposes of taking Edges.

MASS BATTLES WITH CARDS

While it is fun to roll dice, it is just as fun to use the action deck to determine the outcome of a battle. These rules are intended to be used when there are no player characters present in the battle, but the outcome still affects them in some manner. One obvious situation is when their Resource is attacked while they are absent.

NUMBER OF CARDS

Note that while the base number of cards represents an army's size, various bonuses can result in the smaller army having a larger hand. This accounts for skill, training, the commander's battlefield prowess, and so on.

Base: Calculate the number of tokens the army would normally have and deal each side one card per two tokens.

Bonuses: An army earns one extra card for each Edge from A Few Good Men, Cry Havoc, and Death Before Dishonor that its commander possesses. Have each army commander make a Knowledge (Battle) roll. Success earns them an additional card, and a raise, two additional cards.

Resource Rules: If you are using the Resource rules from the *Rassilon Expansion*, some additional bonuses apply. In all cases, the bonuses apply only when defending the Resource from attack.

* *Temple to Dargar:* Defenders gain one extra card.
* *Shrine to the Norns:* If the yearly bonus die roll has

not been used, the commander may instead tempt fate. The defender must place his cards facedown on the table and shuffle them around. He then picks up to half his total number of cards at random and discards them. He is then dealt an equal number of replacement cards. This counts as the yearly reroll for this year.

* *Temple of Rigr:* Grants a +2 bonus to summon the army. This will in turn directly affect the commander's base cards as it determines the size of his army.
* *Temple of Scaetha:* Grants a bonus card if fighting undead.
* *Temple of Tiw:* Grants a +2 Knowledge (Battle) bonus to the roll above.

FIGHTING IT OUT

Playing out the battle could not be easier. The engagement is broken down into a number of rounds equal to six or the lowest hand of cards, whichever is smaller.

Each round, both sides place a card facedown on the table. Both the GM and players should then create a small narrative to describe the cut and thrust of the battle that round. The cards are then turned simultaneously. The highest value card wins. Jokers trump all other cards except Jokers. If the loser is a Wild Card, he may spend a benny at this point. This allows him to swap the card he played for one from his hand. However, he may not replace the card he played with a lower value one.

The winner takes both cards and places them to one side. If the values are equal, the round is indecisive and neither side wins the cards.

Whoever won the most hands at the end of the battle is victorious. In the event of a tie, keep fighting one round at a time until someone claims victory. If the smaller army has expended all its cards, then the larger army wins the day by default.

NPC CARDS

These cards represent major and minor players at Baron Loxlyn's court. Cut them out, glue them to an index card, and hand them out at the appropriate time. A spare card is included in the event the GM needs to create extra NPCs.

LORD MAYOR ORLO FITZBAIN

The Lord-Mayor is appointed by the ruling baron. As governor of the largest town, he is a senior advisor to the baron. Orlo has governed since the current baron assumed the title.

Goal: To protect the main town at all costs.

Arguments: The town cannot be evacuated in time. Thousands of lives are at stake if it falls. It is also the seat of industry and commerce—its loss would cripple the baron's lands for a generation.

The town has the strongest defences, making it the most likely target for the orcs' primary assault—they cannot afford to leave a heavily fortified town in their rear should they chose to advance.

Food can be imported from elsewhere if the farming villages fall to the orcs. The loss of lives will be mourned, but the land can be resettled and the crops regrown.

SIR ARLENT SILVER-MANE, KNIGHT OF ASPIRIA

An old campaigner who served Baron Loxlyn's father before swearing allegiance to the new baron, Sir Arlent has seen war firsthand and knows of its misery. He is a specialist in defensive warfare, with an in-depth knowledge of how best to use fortifications.

Goal: Protect the temple of Eira at all costs.

Arguments: Should the battle be lost, holding the temple would at least allow the many casualties to be tended, and it would serve as a rallying point for a second defensive action.

Furthermore, he has already received word that the priestesses, while willing to supply healers to each regiment, will not abandon their temple or the outlying village to the orcs. Unless the temple is heavily defended, the priestesses will be massacred.

HIGH PRIESTESS SOWER AGATHA GREEN-HANDS

Sower Agatha is the high priestess of Eostre in the Eastern Marches. As well as being an advisor to the baron, she is a religious figurehead, and a hands-on farmer, commanding a large estate in her cult's name.

Goal: Protect the farming villages at all costs.

Arguments: The harvest is barely gathered, and there is no time to transport the crops to the granaries in the main town before the invasion begins. If the villages fall, the entire harvest will be lost. With winter only weeks away, famine will strike, making any victory a moot point.

Allowing the orcs to capture the granaries means their supply lines will be extended. With such stores, they could easily extend their attacks further into Aspiria.

All the menfolk have been called to the militia, leaving the settlements near defenseless. Think of the women and children!

$7.50 31076

LET SLIP THE DOGS OF WAR!

Through Edges and Glory rewards, *Hellfrost* allows the heroes to become leaders of men. The playground for such characters is not the "dungeon" environment, but the open battlefield. They lead companies to death or glory beneath fluttering banners, not skulk in dark shadows searching moldy corpses for a few coins. The call to arms has been issued, but are you ready to engage in the Clash of Steel?

Instead of standard tabletop adventures, this adventure pack contains four Mass Battles scenarios. Although designed as standalone events, the GM can easily work them into an existing campaign. Also included is an alternate set of rules for running very large-scale battles on the tabletop. Now the players can literally control the actions of their troops and watch the battle unfold before their eyes. More importantly, it allows characters to use many of their regular Edges and still play a crucial role in determining the outcome of the encounter.

Hellfrost™ is an epic fantasy setting for the award winning *Savage Worlds*™ roleplaying game.

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Paul 'Wiggy' Wade-Williams

HELLFROST

SHADOW OF DARKNESS

RANK • NOVICE

SAGA OF THE FROST GIANTS - PART 1

OFFICIAL SAVAGE WORLDS LICENSED PRODUCT

SHADOW OF DARKNESS

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SHADOW OF DARKNESS

INTRODUCTION

This particular adventure is designed for a group of four Seasoned characters. No particular race or profession is required, though a healer, magical or mundane, will be useful. A selection of pre-generated Novice characters can be found at our website, **www.tripleacegames.com**.

For higher Rank parties, the GM need simply increase the number of opponents accordingly. For this adventure we advise you add one extra orc warrior *or* two ice goblin warriors *or* one goblin wolf rider and wolf to an encounter for each Rank the party is above Novice. For instance, if a party of four Seasoned adventures encounters goblins numbering one per hero, the characters must fight a total of six goblins—one for each hero, plus an additional two goblins because the party is Seasoned. Alternately, the party may face four goblins and an orc warrior.

As written, the adventure occurs in early spring. Temperatures in the Low Winterlands remain below freezing, and snow lies on the ground. As always, the GM should pay attention to the season, the temperature, and the characters' winter clothing. See the *Savage Worlds* rulebook for the effects of cold weather and the *Hellfrost Players' Guide* for how it works in this setting.

Allies: The characters are destined to fight alongside a number of frost dwarf warriors and their lord, as well as the occupants of a Saxa stead. The GM should fill out Ally Sheets for these characters before starting the adventure. During fights, the GM should let the players control these NPCs. Hand out the Ally Sheets at the appropriate time. Ulfwald, the heroes' patron, and his men remain under GM control due to their limited combat skill (so players can't use them as sword fodder).

Generic Treasure: For ease, assume each goblin warrior and wolf rider is carrying 1d4 gs in assorted coins and easily sellable goods. Orc warriors carry 1d6 gs worth of loot. The goblin shamans possess 1d10 x 10 gs of booty each, primarily in the form of jewelry on their person. This treasure is in addition to their standard gear. No other monsters carry any mundane treasure. Magical treasure is detailed in the appropriate encounter sections.

Mini-Campaign: This adventure can be played as part of a mini-campaign in which the heroes slowly unravel a frost giant jarl's plans to dominate the Hearthlands. The other adventures in the series are *The Siege of Watchgap Fort* (Seasoned), *The Heart of Winter* (Veteran), and *The Frost Giant's Hold* (Heroic). This adventure and *The Siege* are best played back-to-back, but this is not required to enjoy the mini-campaign.

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

The adventure begins in Keep, a small village on the Hearthlands side of Hellfrost Keep. The characters might be waiting to join a caravan heading north in Helgioland, seeking safety in numbers. Alternately, they may have just finished an adventure and are stopping over on the journey back to the relative warmth and civility of the Hearthlands. Once through Hellfrost Keep, the entire adventure takes place in the Low Winterlands.

The first part of this adventure involves an introductory scene and then an overland voyage. The main journey is handled through a short series of preplanned encounters, rather than detailed day-by-day, settlement-by-settlement. There are several steads and small villages along the trade road, but Ulfwald doesn't trouble the inhabitants for lodgings. He replenishes the food stores regularly, though, and acquires new mules within a day if any are slain.

GUARDS NEEDED

While resting up in one of Keep's numerous taverns, a stocky man wrapped in furs approaches the heroes.

The man bows his head politely. "Word reaches me that you are fighting men. If this is so, I'm looking for guards to help escort a caravan to the steads south of Watchgap Fort. The pay is good, if you've got the stomach for harsh weather and goblin raiders."

If the characters seem willing to hear more, the man introduces himself as Ulfwald Deep-Pockets, a merchant from Nordmark. He orders bowls of stew, a loaf of bread, and pitchers of good quality ale for everyone before continuing.

"There are a number of steads in the foothills of the Icebarrier Mountains," the merchant mumbles through a mouth of bread and stew. "They're farmers and herders trying to eke a living, away from the interference of greedy nobles, but good, honest folk nonetheless.

"The settlers will be low on essential supplies, but since winter has ended, the trade routes are open again. That's where I come in. I have a caravan of four wagons carrying grain and household goods I need guarding. With the thaw coming fast goblins and orcs will be stirring again. They know about the caravans and will undoubtedly plan a raid at some point.

"I've spoken to the Hearth Knights here at the castle, but they've got plans to preempt the goblins and launch early spring raids on known strongholds. Some of my men are handy with a spear, but none are true warriors. And that's where you come in.

"I'll pay each of you 100 gs when we reach our destination. Any of you who are priests of Var or Iron Guild mercenaries get double wages, but I'll need confirmation of your status with the guild house or temple first. Food on the journey is thrown in free, as is use of a tent, if you don't mind sharing. I'm departing at first light on the morrow. If you're not outside the inn, I'll take it you don't want the work."

In addition to the monetary reward, Ulfwald has a number of alchemical *healing* potions equal to twice the party strength and two *healing* potions cast with a raise. These function exactly as per the *healing* spell, and thus must be consumed within the "golden hour." Acceptance of his offer results in him handing these to the heroes when they join the caravan, a sign of Ulfwald's good will. Any not used may be kept afterward.

Ulfwald's proposed route is to follow the western road until Watchgap Fort, then head south to the foothills of the Icebarrier Mountains. The caravan is small and can cover 15-20 miles a day along the road, though it can barely manage half that once the final leg of the journey begins. The merchant estimates the journey should take 25 days each way, though the heroes are free to leave once the steads have been restocked.

Ⓜ **Ulfwald:** See page 452.
Ⓜ **Waggoners (2 per wagon):** See page 452.
Ⓜ **Mules (2 per wagon):** See page 453.

WAGON

Acc/Top Speed: Half animal's Pace/Top Speed is animal's Pace + running die; **Toughness:** 10 (2); **Crew:** 1+10; **Cost:** 100 gs

ENCOUNTERS

Except for the first encounter, which takes place in Keep, the following encounters occur during the journey. They are best used in the order written, as they take place along the route Ulfwald proposes to travel. The "DX" notation indicates the number of days into the journey the encounter occurs. Natural healing is possible during the intervening days.

(DO) ANOTHER WAGON

First light may have come to the rest of the world, but the high walls of the pass leave the village of Keep shrouded in twilight. Stepping outside the inn you discover not four caravans, as Ulfwald said, but five. The last wagon in the line is covered in furs rather than canvas. Dwarven banners hang from the sides. Standing around it are six dwarves, their axes held low but ready for use. Your patron stands a short distance away, seemingly locked in bitter argument with an older dwarf warrior.

Ulfwald and the warrior are speaking Dwarven. Heroes who understand the language learn they are discussing terms for the dwarves joining the caravan. Ulfwald is trying to get the dwarves to act as additional guards, but the warrior is stubbornly refusing, insisting they will only fight to save their master (who is inside the dwarven wagon and thus out of sight). If no one in the party speaks Dwarven, Ulfwald spots the party and informs them of the problem.

The dwarven warrior, Vestri Hammerglow, begins as Uncooperative to the characters, unless the one who speaks to him speaks his language, in which case he is Neutral. Convincing him that having his comrades aid the caravan would be of mutual benefit requires his reaction to be improved to Friendly. A Persuasion roll improves his reaction one level, while a raise improves it by two levels (to a maximum of Friendly). Offering to pay the dwarves gives a –2 penalty—they are noble guards, not sellswords. A frost dwarf who negotiates with him warrants a +2 bonus, as he is more comfortable dealing with his own kind.

Successfully convincing Vestri results in him disappearing into the back of the dwarf-guarded wagon. He emerges several minutes later and swears the warriors will aid the defense of the caravan as required. Should the party fail to appease him, Vestri says the warriors will help the others if it does not inconvenience the dwarves.

Any attempt to try and peek into the dwarven wagon is met with snarls from the warriors. Failure to step back starts a fight with no warning. After two rounds, a deep voice calls from the wagon (in Dwarven) and orders the dwarves to lower their weapons. Unless the characters push the matter further, the fight is over. A second attempt leads to the dwarf in the caravan, an important nobleman, entering the fray.

Ⓜ **Hauld Austri Giantbane:** See page 452.

Ⓜ **Frost Dwarf Warriors (7):** See page 453.

DURING THE TRIP

Throughout the first day of travel the dwarves are solemn and silent, trudging tirelessly along in their heavy armor without complaint. The warriors' lord, a noble by the name of Austri Giantbane, remains in the wagon except at night and when violence occurs. That night, the dwarves halt the wagon away from the others.

Austri joins them for a meal around their campfire. Any frost dwarf player character is invited to dine with them. They quiz the hero on his background and his traveling companions. Austri is well versed in his people's culture and history, and knows many dwarven noble families. If the character happens to be of noble birth, Austri recalls a small fact about the hero's family.

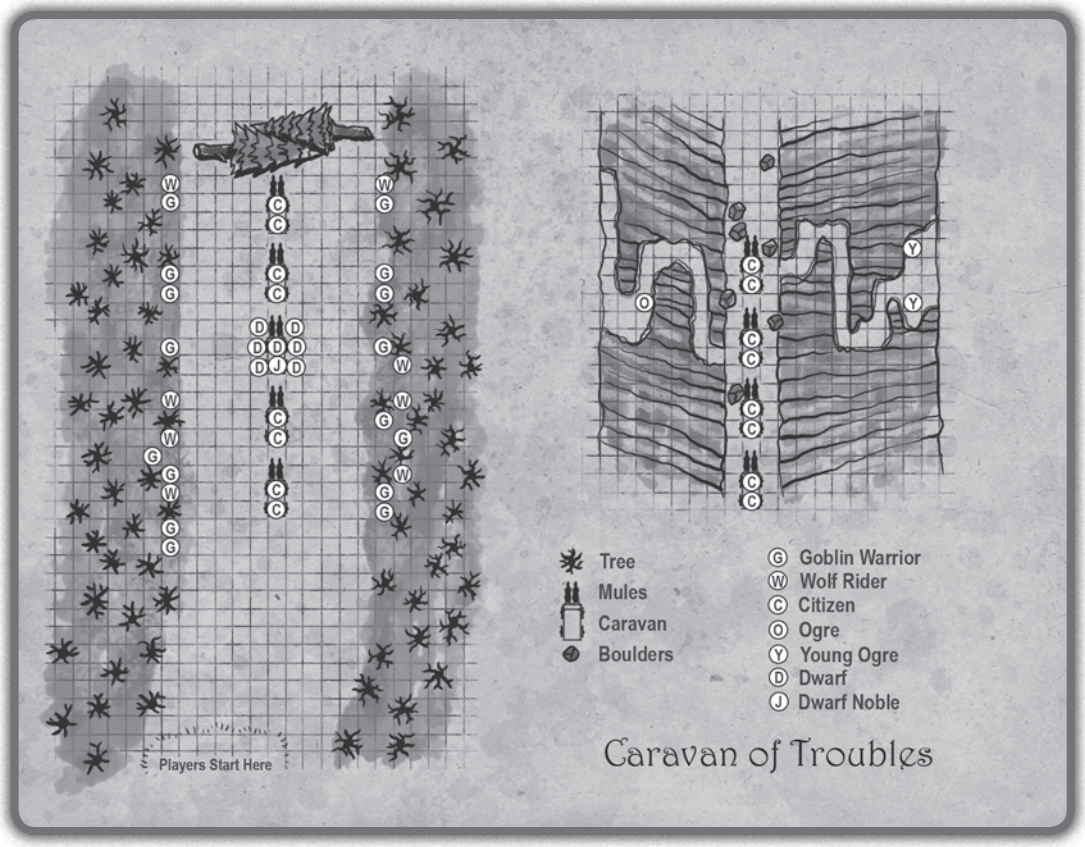
Any skalds in the party are invited to recall tales for the lord's pleasure, but only if they recount dwarven tales. This requires a Knowledge (Folklore) roll. There is a +2 bonus for speaking Dwarven. Success results in the nobleman praising the character. On a raise, Austri pulls a gold ring from one of his fingers and gives it to the skald as a gift. The skald gains +1 Glory at the end of the adventure (make a note so you don't forget).

Other heroes who try to join the dwarves are politely asked to leave, for they have not been invited into the noble's presence. Again, the dwarves have no hesitation at taking up arms against persistent interlopers.

The dwarves remain with the caravan until Day 20. At this point the main caravan reaches Watchgap Fort, a Hearth Knight motte-and-bailey fortress situated atop a low hill. Here the dwarves and the caravan part company.

(D9) CARAVAN OF TROUBLES

The characters' journey takes them through a small stretch of southern Drakewood. Ulfwald orders the heroes to be extra vigilant. The dwarven warriors, who are naturally wary of forests due to the excellent opportunity



they provide ambushers, draw their axes and stick close to their lord's wagon.

Have the party make Notice rolls as two trees suddenly crash to the ground in front of the lead wagon. Those who fail are Surprised. Deal action cards.

The trees crash down across the trail, blocking the caravan's progress. The goblins know the wagons don't carry anything of value. They aren't here to plunder, but to cause terror among the mercantile community and weaken trust in the Hearth Knights. As such, they are aiming to inflict as much damage as possible.

Terrain: The forest counts as difficult ground up to a height of 60 feet. The trees are Toughness 18 (8) and provide Cover. Aerial flyers above the treetops have Heavy Cover (–4), but so do any ground targets. Due to their thickness, the trees provide +8 Armor. The fallen trees are too heavy to move during the combat. Movement through them is treated as difficult terrain. They provide Light Cover (–1, +8 Armor) to a character standing behind the trunk and Medium Cover (–2, +4 Armor) to a hero standing in or behind the branches.

The wagons are low slung. Only a crawling character can pass through spaces they occupy. Spaces containing mules are treated as difficult ground. Each wagon is empty, save for enough rations and supplies to see the citizens to the end of their journey. Standing and fighting from the wagon provides Medium Cover (–2, Armor +3) against adjacent goblins, but only Light Cover (–1, Armor +3) against missiles. Crouching down increases the Cover rating one step.

Monsters: Ranged against the characters is a goblin force of warriors and mounted wolf riders. The wolves act on the goblin riders' action card, whether they have riders or not. Should all the riders be slain, any remaining wolves receive a separate action card.

- Ⓜ **Goblin Warriors (4 per hero):** See page 453.
- Ⓜ **Goblin Riders (2 per hero):** See page 453.
- Ⓜ **Wolves (2 per Goblin Rider):** See page 454.
- Ⓜ **Hauld Austri Giantbane:** See page 452.
- Ⓜ **Frost Dwarf Warriors (7):** See page 453.
- Ⓜ **Ulfwald Deep-Pockets:** See page 452.
- Ⓜ **Waggoners (8):** See page 452.
- Ⓜ **Mules (10):** See page 453.

Tactics: On the first round, the goblin warriors fire their bows at the citizens on the wagons. The wolf riders rush forward and savage the mules. Once the party has revealed its presence, the warriors switch their attention and launch arrows. The goblins use the trees as cover, stepping out, firing, and retreating back into cover. They switch to melee weapons only when the characters close the range to pose a sufficient threat. The wolf riders, meanwhile, turn their attention to the characters. They run as necessary to close to melee range. Once melee ensues, the warriors and wolf riders use Gang Up tactics to bring the characters down.

Ulfwald and his men stay as close to the caravans and mules as possible, trusting in the dwarves and heroes to keep the goblins at bay.

Continuation: Heroes who slay at least three goblins or wolves earn the dwarves' respect. Hauld Austri orders his wagon to be parked with the others from hereon and invites those characters who proved themselves as warriors to dine with him that night. With heavy heart, Austri answers any questions about his homeland and his reasons for traveling (see page 4). In return, he asks the heroes to tell him of their homes and families.

(D12) HEARTH KNIGHT PATROL

The day is misty, reducing visibility to just a few hundred yards. Ahead you spy a lone rider wrapped in large furs, sat atop an armored horse. He raises his lance, from which hangs a three-colored banner, marked with a stylized sun symbol. You've seen it before on your journey through the Hellfrost Pass—it's the symbol of the Shield Knights, the lowest order of the Hearth Knights. The rider calls out, his voice a faint whisper on the biting wind. "Hail and well met! Stop your travels, for my master will wish to speak with you!"

A few moments later, eight other riders appear through the mist. The patrol's leader, Shield Sergeant Tameric ap-Rodgar out of Watchgap Fort, cordially asks the party what business takes them so far from the beaten track before spring. While he does so, his men silently take up defensive positions, constantly scanning the horizon for signs of trouble. Sir Tameric listens intently to any tales of goblin raiders before making comment.

"Aye," the Hearth Knight replies, nodding thoughtfully, "these are troubling times, indeed. Winter is fading fast, yet goblins and orcs are both abroad, and in large numbers. They've become emboldened, striking deeper into the Low Winterlands than normal, even for deep winter. Our patrols are stretched thin as it is. Still," he smiles, "with Sigel's blessing we'll drive them back into their holes for another year once the ground thaws a little."

Sir Tameric spends several minutes in hushed conversation with Austri. Characters who understand Dwarven overhear their discussing Austri's visit to Watchgap Fort. He is trying to arrange a meeting with the fort's commanding officer. Tameric apologizes that his current mission won't take him to the fort before the caravan, and thus he can do nothing to secure an audience.

If the party mentions their destination, Sir Tameric speaks further.

"Be warned, your destination lies far beyond the reach of our current patrols. If you are attacked, there will be no hope of rescue. Still, I shall inform my commanders of your quest and ask that our patrols keep an eye out for your return. You'll find isolated steads along your route. The Saxa settlers are good folk, and will provide hospitality if you

are honest and open with them. Now we must be away before nightfall. Good luck!"

With that, the Knights mount up and head off into the wintry wasteland. They have no spare provisions or equipment—patrols travel light and fast, and travelers ill-prepared to survive the winter are a valuable drain on scant resources. At best, the Knights pray to Sigel for the characters' souls.

(D17) DEFEND THE STEAD

During the lunch stop, Ulfwald summons the characters to his wagon.

"We're going to be passing close to the southern edge of the Greenpot Hills soon. I've friends a few miles off the trade road, and we'll be stopping with them tonight. I reckon we can afford to lose a day for real food and a warm bed. Since Hauld Austri and his men like you, would you pass the word to them? I can't see it being any of their concern—dwarves understand hospitality as well as any."

Hauld Austri and his warriors are actually relived to be able to spend a night with a solid roof over their heads, and thank the heroes for the news.

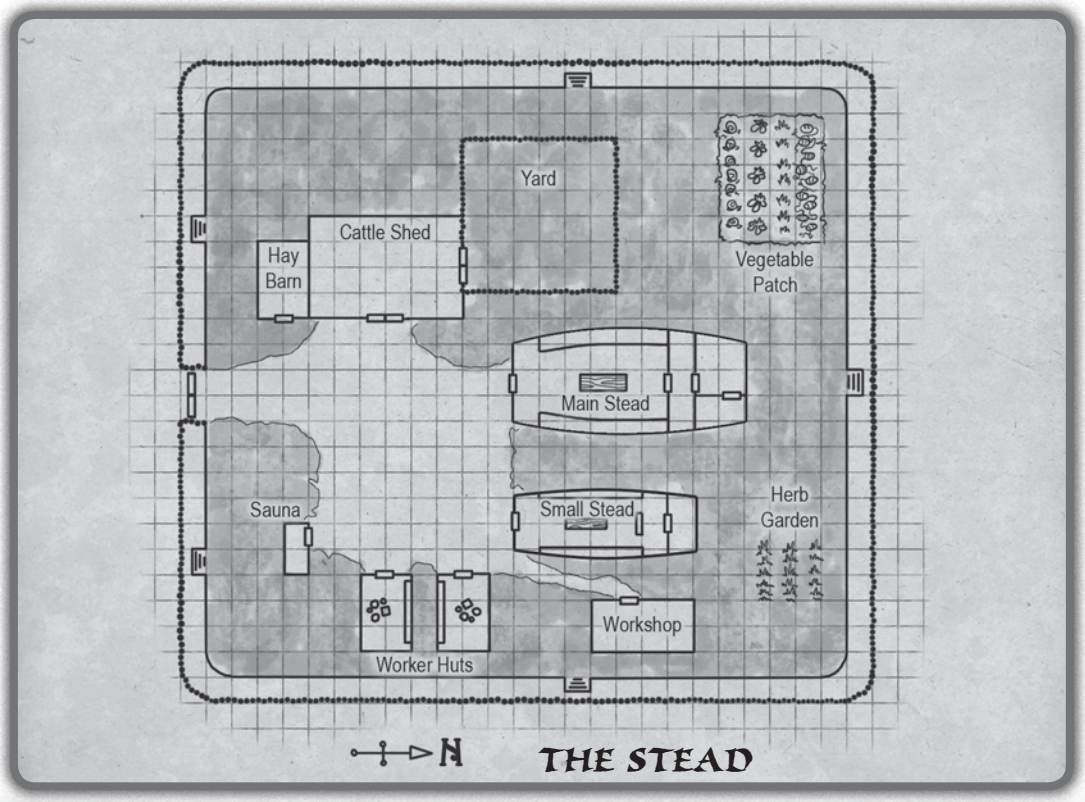
As dusk falls, the caravan approaches a farmstead. A low earth bank topped with a palisade provides protection against any escaping cattle. Smoke drifts lazily from chimney holes, and the lowing of cows reverberates through the still air. As the wagons pull into the yard in front of the main stead, a middle-aged man, wrapped in furs, steps through the door. He smiles widely and spreads his arms. Ulfwald quickly hurries to him. The two men hug and slap each other on the back. "Let me introduce you to everyone," Ulfwald beams.

Ulfwald introduces Hauld Austri and his men first, then the heroes. His waggoners have stayed here before several times and need no introduction. Ulfwald then introduces Oswine Hamasunu, the stead owner since his father, Hama, retired several years back. Oswine greets everyone warmly, bowing low to any nobles.

"Will you honor us, lord," he says to Austri, "by sitting on the high seat?" Austri nods once, then replies, "Aye, I accept your hospitality and greet you as my host. My warriors and I hereby bind ourselves to you by the ancient laws of hospitality." Vestri then steps forward and presents Oswine with a small chest. "A gift," Austri continues, "for our generous host."

A similar offer is made to any player character nobles. Point the players to the hospitality notes in the *Hellfrost Players' Guide* if they need any help with what they should do. Austri is giving a gift because he is a nobleman with wealth to share, not because he has to.

Oswine then leads his guests inside, where it is con-



siderably warmer. The farm laborers and waggoners move the wagons and mules into the cattle shed. The cattle are temporarily moved out into the yard. Once the chores are done, Oswine introduces his entire family and those of the farm laborers, who are also invited to the feast. Before the festivities begin, Oswine's youngest sons, Beorn and Coenwine, are sent outside to keep watch, along with the waggoners. It's a thankless task, but a necessary one.

A wild boar, slaughtered only that morning, is spit roasted over the fire, along with a goodly number of chickens. Hot broth and fresh herb bread are served, as is a seemingly endless quantity of wine and ale. Austri, Ulfwald, and any noble heroes are offered mead.

Oswine toasts his guests' health. He then apologizes for not having a skald present to entertain his hosts. Any player character skald can step forward at this point. If none are present, Austri recounts a few dwarven tales (in Saxa) of mighty heroes and fell giants, followed by Ulfwald's comical tale about a pair of stubborn mules. Let the players roleplay their characters' interactions with the NPCs as they wish—don't feel the need to rush this part of the adventure.

Finally the feast draws to a close. The guards come in from the cold and are replaced by four dwarves, Aelflaf (Oswine's eldest son) and Grim the laborer. Austri and any noble characters are offered sleeping berths nearest the hearth. After ensuring their guests are comfortable, Hama, Oswine, and Hygd retire to the rear of the stead for the night.

Stead Facilities: The stead is surrounded by a four-foot-high earth embankment, with a flattened top covered in wooden planks. A pair of double gates is the only point of entry. The outer edge of the bank is protected by a yard-high wall, constructed of wooden posts, their tops cut to sharp points. Standing on the rampart gives Medium Cover (–2) and provides +8 Armor against goblin missile attacks from outside the perimeter. Only the ogre can reach high enough to engage characters on the embankment in melee (the defenders still have Medium Cover). Scaling the palisade from outside requires a Climbing roll.

Wooden steps placed along the inside edge provide access to the fighting platform. Moving onto the platform without using these is treated as difficult ground.

The larger section of Oswine's stead is the communal hall for the owner's family. Fur-covered, wooden sleeping benches line both walls, while a short bench at the far end provides seating for the owner and his wife. Movement through spaces containing these benches is difficult terrain. Dominating the central floor space is the fire pit, which provides heat for cooking and warmth. Moving through spaces containing the pit is treated as difficult ground. It is constantly lit. Any hero stepping into the pit suffers 1d10 damage and has a chance of catching fire. At the rear, behind a wooden door, is the owner's private area. A small shrine near the front door honors Sigel, Kenaz, Tiw, and Eostre.

The smaller stead belongs to Torvald, Oswine's brother. Apart from its reduced size, it has an almost identical layout to the main hall, lacking only the second bedroom to the rear.

Two families, unrelated to the owner by blood, work on the farm. Their houses are much smaller, having just one room. Sleeping benches are placed only against one wall, and the fire pit is considerably smaller than those in the steads.

The cattle shed houses the stead's cattle during bad weather. It currently contains 20 cows. Attached to one side of this is the hay barn. On the opposite side is yard protected by a low, stone wall. Crossing the wall is difficult ground. The workshop has tools for carpentry, herbalism, and pottery, but no metalworking. Finally there is the sauna. This is not in use when the characters arrive, but only takes an hour to reach temperature. All these buildings have bars on the outside securing the doors.

Finally, there is a vegetable patch and an herb garden. The vegetable patch contains root vegetables and beans. There are herbs enough for four batches each of anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial, healing (cuts), healing (breakages), numbing, purgative, and stimulant I concoctions. These are available for purchase at 5 gs per dose, though heroes wounded in defense of the stead are not charged if herbs are used to help heal them. All are rarity +0. Since they are growing together, a character can pick one batch in 15 minutes.

RAIDERS IN THE NIGHT

Caution: This battle involves a lot of allies and monsters and might take some time to play out. It could also be extremely deadly if the heroes misuse their resources or do not employ sensible tactics.

At three o'clock in the morning, the front door to Oswine's stead crashes open. A blast of frigid air howls through the hall. Aelflaf stands in the doorway and bellows, *"Goblins! Awake! Awake!"* Each character and ally begins Shaken due to having been roused suddenly from their sleep. The rules for donning armor apply. All NPCs not on duty forgo armor (those on duty have their armor on). Weapons are close to hand and can be grabbed as an action.

The characters are honor bound by the laws of hospitality to assist Oswine and his family in fighting off the goblins. Failure to play an active part in the fight ("I was donning my armor!" is not a valid excuse) costs the hero –20 Glory for breaking the laws of hospitality, insulting his host, and acting like a coward.

The four dwarves on duty are divided equally along the east and west ramparts. Grim is outside Jormunrek's house (the one nearest the workshop). Jormunrek is inside his house. Hama and Oswine begin in the rear of Oswine's stead. Botbald, Ealdnoth, Anred, Beorn, Coenwine, Austri, the dwarven warriors not on duty, and the heroes are in the great hall. Aelflaf stands in Oswine's stead's doorway. Torvald is in the rear of his stead, while Cuthred is in its main hall. Oswine also has four Saxa war hounds. These are asleep in the great hall of the main stead.

Two goblins per character are standing 12" from the

PERSONALITIES

This sidebar lists all 32 occupants, their ages, and relationships to each other. It serves as an example of how a typical small stead is organized.

(N) is the age of the person, (Nm) indicates a male child, (Nf) a female child, and (NW) means the character fights during the battle scene. Indentations are to help identify relationships within the family.

Hama Wodsunu (68W): Eldest member of the stead. Retired.
- **Oswine Hamasunu (49W):** Hama's eldest son. He runs the stead now.
- **Hygd Heremodsdohtor (46):** Oswine's wife (Healing d8, Knowledge (Alchemy) d8).
  - **Aelflaf Oswinesunu (27W):** Oswine's eldest son.
  - **Edlaed Heahstansdohtor (24):** Aelfalf's wife (Healing d6).
    - **Oshelm (9m), Beorhtgeat (7m), Answith (3f):** Aelflaf and Edlaed's young children.
  - **Botbald Oswinesunu (24W):** Oswine's second son.
  - **Godhild Wiggifsdohtor (25):** Botbald's wife (Healing d4).
    - **Cynered (6f), Hereburh (4f), Cuthhild (1f):** Botbald and Godhild's three young daughters.
  - **Eorgyth Oswinesdohtor (21):** Oswine's eldest daughter; apparently barren (Knowledge (Alchemy) d6).
  - **Ealdnoth Ealdsunu (22W):** Oswine's only son-in-law.
  - **Anred Oswinesunu (19W):** Oswine's third son; unmarried but courting a lass from a neighboring stead.
  - **Kata Oswinesdohtor (18):** Oswine's second daughter: unmarried and not courting (Attractive Edge).
  - **Beorn Oswinesunu (17W):** Oswine's fourth son (Ugly Hindrance). A simpleton (Smarts and Spirit d4).
  - **Coenwine Oswinesunu (15W):** Oswine's fifth son (Charismatic Edge).
- **Torvald Hamasunu (44W):** Hama's second son; Oswine's brother.
- **Ealhred Leofwinesunu (32):** Torvald's second wife (Healing d6).
  - **Cuthred Torvaldsunu (27W):** Torvald's eldest son.
  - **Aelflaed Gripirsdohtor (26):** Cuthred's wife.
    - **Kata (10f):** Cuthred and Aelflaed's child.
  - **Odd Torvaldsunu (12):** Torvald's second son (by his second wife)

The following families are farm laborers. They have no blood ties to Hama's family.

Jormunrek Ulfsunu (23W): Farm laborer.
Ragnhild Yngvisdohtor (23): Jorunrek's wife.
- **Hogni (8m):** Jormunrek and Ragnhild's son.

Grim Nerisunu (21W): Farm laborer
Olvor Rodstaffsdohtor (18): Grim's wife.
- **Freydis (2f), Swanhild (1f):** Grim and Olvor's children.

west wall, firing arrows at the dwarves, and a similar number are assaulting the east wall. Meanwhile, the ogre, shaman, and remaining warriors are 12" from the main gate.

Terrain: In addition to the terrain notes above, the lighting is Dark (–2). Visibility is limited to 10" unless a character has Low Light Vision or Infravision. Aelflaf and Grim carry lanterns. The goblins suffer half penalties for poor lighting, due to their Infravision, unless attacking a character within a light source template.

Monsters: A goblin shaman and a large band of warriors are assaulting the stead. As with the forest raiders, they want to cause destruction rather than acquire plunder. Accompanying them is a large ogre.

Ⓜ **Goblin Shaman (1):** See page 453.

Ⓜ **Ogre (1):** See page 454. This ogre is a Wild Card.

Ⓜ **Goblin Warriors (8 per hero):** See page 453.

Ⓜ **Hauld Austri Giantbane:** See page 452. (Toughness 7)

Ⓜ **Frost Dwarf Warriors (?):** See page 453. The number of dwarves depends on how many survived the previous battle. (Toughness 6 if not on duty)

Ⓜ **Ulfwald Deep-Pockets:** See page 452.

Ⓜ **Waggoners (?):** See page 452. The number of waggoners depends on how many survived the previous battle. (Toughness 5)

Ⓜ **Stead Men (12):** Treat as waggoners (see page 452). Oswine is a Wild Card. (Toughness 5 except for Aelflaf and Grim)

Ⓜ **War Dogs (1 per hero):** See page 454.

Tactics: The archers keep the defenders pinned down and distracted while the third force assaults the gates (Toughness 14 (4)). Unless a hero climbs the southern rampart or hears the ogre smashing at the gate, the characters have no idea the gate is being attacked. The GM should not place the ogre, shaman, and warriors in the detachment on the tabletop until someone actually spots them.

Once the main gates are open, the attackers surge through and disperse so as to avoid being caught by spells. The archers run around to the gate, drawing their melee weapons as they do so. Once inside, the goblins attack the nearest characters. The ogre is cunning enough not to risk using Sweep while there are goblins adjacent.

The shaman's first action after reaching the gates is to cast *smite* on the ogre. He then casts *obscure* on the main gates. This doesn't affect the ogre's ability to smash them,

as they are inanimate and he can feel where they are. It does, however, provide the goblins cover from archers on the ramparts. As soon as the shaman is inside the yard he uses *fear* on the largest group of defenders within range. He then proceeds to fire off single 2d6 damage *bolts* at the nearest defender. Should events turn against him, he uses *obscure* to cover his tracks and flees.

Some heroes may think to release the cows in a stampede. Oswine, should he hear of this, demands the characters leave the cows alone. Cows are expensive (100 gs each) and the stead can ill afford to have any slaughtered needlessly. Even if Oswine doesn't stop them, the heroes should make a Common Knowledge roll to realize the seriousness of their plan. Going ahead anyway costs them –3 Glory for breaking the laws of hospitality.

(D23) OGRE ALLEY

This encounter takes place in the foothills of the Icebarrier Mountains, barely a dozen miles from the caravan's destination. The ground is heavily undulating. Ulfwald has no choice but to follow the bottom of a long, narrow, dry valley, thus saving the mules the arduous task from having to ascend and descend the steep slopes repeatedly. His route also keeps the party out of sight of bandits or goblins.

The valley has narrowed to a mere 20' across. The floor is littered with boulders, possibly the result of landslides down the steep, loosely covered slopes.

Have every party member make a Notice roll to avoid Surprise. With success, the character hears small stones tumbling down the valley walls. Moments later, huge boulders begin crashing and bouncing down the slopes. Characters who avoided Surprise may make an Agility roll to avoid being struck. Those who failed may make the roll, but with a –2 penalty. Dodge does not apply to heroes caught by Surprise. A failed Agility roll results in the character taking 2d8 damage, being knocked back 1", and falling prone.

Terrain: The valley floor is dotted with large boulders. Movement through spaces occupied by a boulder is difficult ground. The valley sides are steep and covered in loose stones and pebbles. Climbing rolls must be made to ascend the slope. Success moves the character 1", while a raise allows 2" of movement. Failure causes the hero to spend the round scrabbling around, trying to find a decent grip. He makes no progress. A critical failure causes the character to slide down 1d3". Movement along the winding path is difficult terrain but requires no Climbing roll.

Coming down, a character can elect to slide down the steep slope on his butt. He moves his regular Pace, cannot run, and must make an Agility roll each round to avoid gaining a level of Fatigue from bumps and bruises. The ogres are hiding behind rocky outcrops, which grant them Medium Cover (–2) when standing.

Monsters: The valley is actually home to an ogre, his mate, and their children. Typically they dine on deer and rabbits, but today it looks like there is man flesh on the menu

- Ⓜ **Ogre (2):** See page 454.
- Ⓜ **Young Ogres (1 per 2 heroes):** See page 454.
- Ⓜ **Ulfwald Deep-Pockets:** See page 452.
- Ⓜ **Waggoners (8):** See page 452.
- Ⓜ **Mules (10):** See page 453.

Tactics: The ogres are keen to avoid melee combat until their victims have taken a beating. As such, they remain in their starting positions and pelt the party with rocks. These have range 5/10/20 and inflict Str+d4 damage. The ogres aren't intelligent to human standards, but they are cunning. Their tactic is to throw a rock and then duck down behind cover, thus shielding them from missile fire. This grants them total cover, and requires a character to be on Hold to target one with a ranged weapon or spell.

Only when half the party is dead or unconscious will they descend. Should the adult ogres be killed, the youngsters turn and flee into the wilderness. If the youngsters are slain, the adult ogres fly into a berserk rage. They immediately try to close to melee range. All their blows are Wild Attacks.

Treasure: The ogre male carries only a small amount of treasure (17 gs) on his person. This takes the form of a silver brooch.

KNOCKBACK

These rules are taken from the *Hellfrost Bestiary*.

The physical attacks of large creatures can knock over smaller foes. In order to cause knockback, the attacker must make a successful Fighting attack. The blow does not have to cause damage, however. The victim cannot avoid this—no human can hope to remain standing after being on the receiving end of a frost giant's colossal war axe.

An opponent who is knocked back into a relatively solid object (hay bales and glass windows, for instance, are not solid) is automatically Shaken. This is treated as a separate attack, and thus a foe Shaken by an attack, who is then knocked back into a solid object, suffers the effects of successive Shaken results. Opponents may try to Soak any initial damage from the attack or spend bennies to remove the Shaken condition *before* the knockback is applied. If:

- A creature is 2 or 3 Sizes larger than its opponent, the victim is knocked back 1" and falls prone.
- A creature is 4 to 7 Sizes larger than its opponent send the victim flying 1d4" and made prone.
- A creature 8 to 11 Sizes larger than its foe causes knockback of 1d6" and sends foes prone.
- A creature 12 or more Sizes larger knocks foes back 1d10" and sends them prone.

A successful Tracking roll leads the party to the ogres' cave. Stashed in here are a further 100 gs in coins and small, easily tradable goods. In addition, there is an alchemical scroll with *heat mask* (the ogre cannot read, though he knows the scroll is magical), two packets of dried herbs for brewing a purgative herbal brew, an empty jar of purgative herbal brew (the ogres ate this), three doses of dried herbs for stimulant III, and a healer's bag. The freshly gnawed bones of the healer lie nearby, along with a silver symbol (worth 3 gs) which identifies the remains as those of a Sister of Mercy.

(D26) SMOKE ON THE HORIZON

Nearing their destination, the party spies a faint pall of smoke drifting up from the distant hills. A successful Survival roll indicates there's too much smoke for a campfire, and a forest fire is impossible in the current weather conditions. Ulfwald, if necessary, suggests the party go investigate, claiming, *"Aye, that's close to where one of the steads lies."*

Standing atop a low hill, a mile or so from the source of the smoke, the characters spy the ruins of a large Saxa stead. The main houses and barns have been torched, leaving only blackened, stone walls. Several of the outbuildings appear intact. A successful Notice roll reveals movement. On a raise, the heroes spy humans moving around the scene.

On approaching the stead, a bear of a man, well over six feet tall and of muscular build, steps forward to confront them. He carries a battle-axe in his left hand. Any character making a Fighting roll can deduce the man is not naturally left-handed. His right arm hangs limply by his side. His attitude begins as Uncooperative. A Persuasion roll (or good roleplaying) increases his attitude to Neutral. A raise makes him Friendly. Offers of food and medical aid each grant the characters a +1 bonus. Offering explanations as to why a heavily armed party is in the wilds is worth a further +1. A further +1 bonus is applied if any character is a serving Hearth Knight.

Once the man is at least Neutral he introduces himself as Bjorn Arnesunu, a retired warrior. Following the rules of hospitality, he asks his guests their names, and then invites them into a shed to share some bread and soup. He then explains how the stead came to be burned.

"They came the night before yesterday, out of the snow. Three other men and I were returning from a hunting trip when we saw fire. By the time we arrived, the stead was already ablaze. Goblins they were, mounted on wolves. I don't know how many there were, but I slew four by my own hand, and twice that many at least fell to others. A wolf ripped my arm good and proper, or I swear by Tiw's axe I'd have cleaved more.

"We lost nine people to their spears and wolves, men, women, and children. That smoke you saw was a funeral pyre. Worse, though, the dogs took captives. Two men, both good workers and my kinfolk. We'd heard from our hunters who passed through of other raids, other people taken, but we thought ourselves safe. For the love of the gods, I beseech you to track down the goblins and rescue our kinsfolk. We have little to offer but our thanks and prayers to the gods in your honor."

Refusal to assist the settlers not only ends the adventure, it also incurs a –3 Glory penalty. They intend to leave the region soon for more civilized lands, and will make mention of the uncharitable characters who refused them aid in their most desperate time of need.

Assuming they accept Bjorn's request, Uflwald then speaks to the party.

"We have come a long way together, but now our paths must diverge. I shall visit the other steads at best speed and pass word of this attack and then return to Watchgap Fort. The Hearth Knights must be informed of the raids before others suffer a similar fate. Here," he says, "throwing you clinking bags, "you've earned your wages fair and true. I shall make prayers to Var for your safety."

GOBLIN OUTPOST

The goblin outpost lies thirty miles northwest of the stead. Knowing the Hearth Knights cannot patrol this far in large numbers, and safe in the knowledge there are other allied goblin and orc outposts nearby, the raiders made no attempts to conceal their tracks. No Tracking roll is required to follow the trail, despite recent light snow flurries. The tracks eventually end at an old fort, perhaps once part of the Heligi Empire.

The goblins and their orc commander are servants of a frost giant jarl. The giant's initial plans are to rid the borders of settlers and then turn his attention on Heligioland, striking east toward Hellfrost Keep.

Note: Despite being manned predominantly by goblins, the fortress could be a death trap for unwary or incautious parties. Goblins are not the toughest opponents, but weight of numbers can bring the toughest foe to his knees, eventually. There is plenty of opportunity for combat, but parties wishing to minimize injury and spell use, not to mention using up temporary magic items, are best served by employing stealth and engaging in combat only when absolutely necessary.

GM NOTES

COMMON FEATURES

Unless otherwise indicated in the text below, all doors are wooden and unlocked. A locked door can be picked with Lockpicking or battered down (Toughness 8). Doors

sealed by a horizontal bar have Toughness 10 and cannot be picked—they must be forced open with brute strength.

The ceilings within the fortress are a uniform 2" high.

All rooms and corridors are unlit unless they contain orcs or the description says otherwise. In these areas hang enough torches to provide good lighting conditions. Assume each room holds one torch per 4" of wall. If between one-third and one-half the total number of torches are extinguished, the lighting in the room drops to Dim (–1). Removing between a half and all but one makes the lighting conditions Dark (–2). Extinguishing all the torches leaves the room Pitch Black (–4).

Areas containing furnishings or obstacles that fill all or part of a square, and which reasonably allow movement through, over, under, or past the obstacle, are considered difficult ground. For instance, a table filling a square is difficult ground, as a hero can leap over it or duck underneath.

The temperature in each room is determined as below. The maximum temperature is equal to the Hearthlands in summer. In order to qualify as having a fire, the fire must be lit.

Room with arrow slits and no fire: 1 level higher than outdoors.

Room with no arrow slits or fire: 2 levels higher than outdoors.

Room with arrow slits and fire: 3 level higher than outdoors.

Room with no arrow slits and with fire: 4 levels higher than outdoors.

For example, if the average temperature during the adventure at night is –15° F, or the same level as the High Winterlands winter temperature, then the kitchen (page 13), which has no arrow slits but does have a lit fire, has a temperature in the 53° to 69° range, making it exceptionally warm. By comparison, the goblin barracks in the lower fort (page 12) would be only one level higher, since there are arrow slits through which heat can escape and no fire.

So long as the goblins remain indoors in any room during the night, they never need to make Vigor rolls for the cold. Unless a character runs around without a cloak and shirt, the raid is likely to be over long before Vigor rolls are called for.

NOISE TRAVELS

In general, sounds of combat carry through only to adjacent rooms. Screams, shouts, explosions, and such like carry further. In general, any such noises generated outside the keep can be heard by all rooms adjoining the courtyard. Within the keep, these noises are confined to the floor on which they were made. Of course, if doors are open, the sound will logically travel further. The GM should determine who has a chance of hearing any disturbance based on the exact events during play.

ALARM!

The goblins, being far from civilized lands, are lax, but not stupid. If intruders are detected, an alarm is raised. Alarms are raised verbally (in Orcish). All orcs hearing the hue and cry head toward the sound of the alarm at a run, drawing weapons as they do so. During a fight in the courtyard, alerted goblins on the keep's upper floor rush to Area 18, from where they fire down onto the attackers.

The goblins know the layout of the fort well, though they have not detected any of the secret doors. If intruders cannot be found (such as if they have killed any opponents and fled), the goblins begin a systematic search of the fort, starting with the nearest rooms.

THE GOBLIN FORT

APPROACH

Ahead lies a stone structure, perhaps once a temple or fortress. Two stone towers flank the main gates, while further back you spy the outline of a tall keep. Whoever built the structure, obviously never intended it as a totally defensive structure, for it sits in a low gully, rather than atop one of the nearby hills.

Nighttime conditions for launching a raid appear near perfect, with heavy clouds blanketing the sky. Unfortunately, the goblins have Infravision, which negates any advantage the heroes might think they possess.

Approaching the outer gates directly requires a Stealth roll from the characters. A failure makes the sentries active, and leaves the heroes 12" from the gate, sheltering behind a rocky outcropping. The goblins remain alert for ten minutes, and then go back to being inactive. If the characters approach from the rear they can reach the wall without need for a Stealth roll—no sentries overlook the rear of the keep. So long as they keep to the walls and remain silent, they can reach the corner near either tower, without need for a Stealth roll. Edging around the tower to the gates requires a Stealth roll. This is made at +2 if the characters are cautious and quiet (so only a critical failure makes the sentries in the watchtowers active).

Searching the outer wall in the region of the stables (page 15) allows a Notice roll at –2. With success, the characters discern the faint outline of a door in the wall. Pressing on it causes it to swing open into the stables. Unfortunately, the stables are occupied!

1) WATCHTOWERS

The two towers stand 18' high (3"). Inside, there is an arrow slit facing away from the gates on the bottom floor. The first level is a small landing, with arrow slits facing toward the outer gates and the approach to the fort. The top is flat and protected by battlements. A narrow corridor links the two towers. Arrow slits allow fire on enemies approaching the fortress. In the floor are two small, wooden hatches, which conceal murder holes.

Attackers trying to attack through the arrow slots have –6 to attack rolls, including spells. Guards on top of the tower have Medium Cover while standing. The walls are +10 Heavy Armor, preventing most weapons from piercing them.

The outer gates are Toughness 10 (Toughness 12 if barred). Unless an alarm is raised, the gates are closed but not locked. This applies even at night—the orc commander arrogantly believes the fort is safe from attackers out here in the wilderness.

Monsters: Two goblins are stationed in each tower. One stands on the landing, scanning the approach road. The second orc is atop the tower. He divides his time scanning forward and to the side opposite the gates. All sentries are inactive when the characters arrive, regardless of the time of day.

Ⓜ **Ice Goblins (4):** See page 453.

Tactics: If alerted to the heroes' presence, the goblins in the western tower shout down to the barracks below to raise the alarm. The sentries remain in place so long as attackers are outside the fort, using their bows to harry them. Once the inner gates are breached, they rush down the steps into the courtyard to join the fray.

2) KILLING ZONE

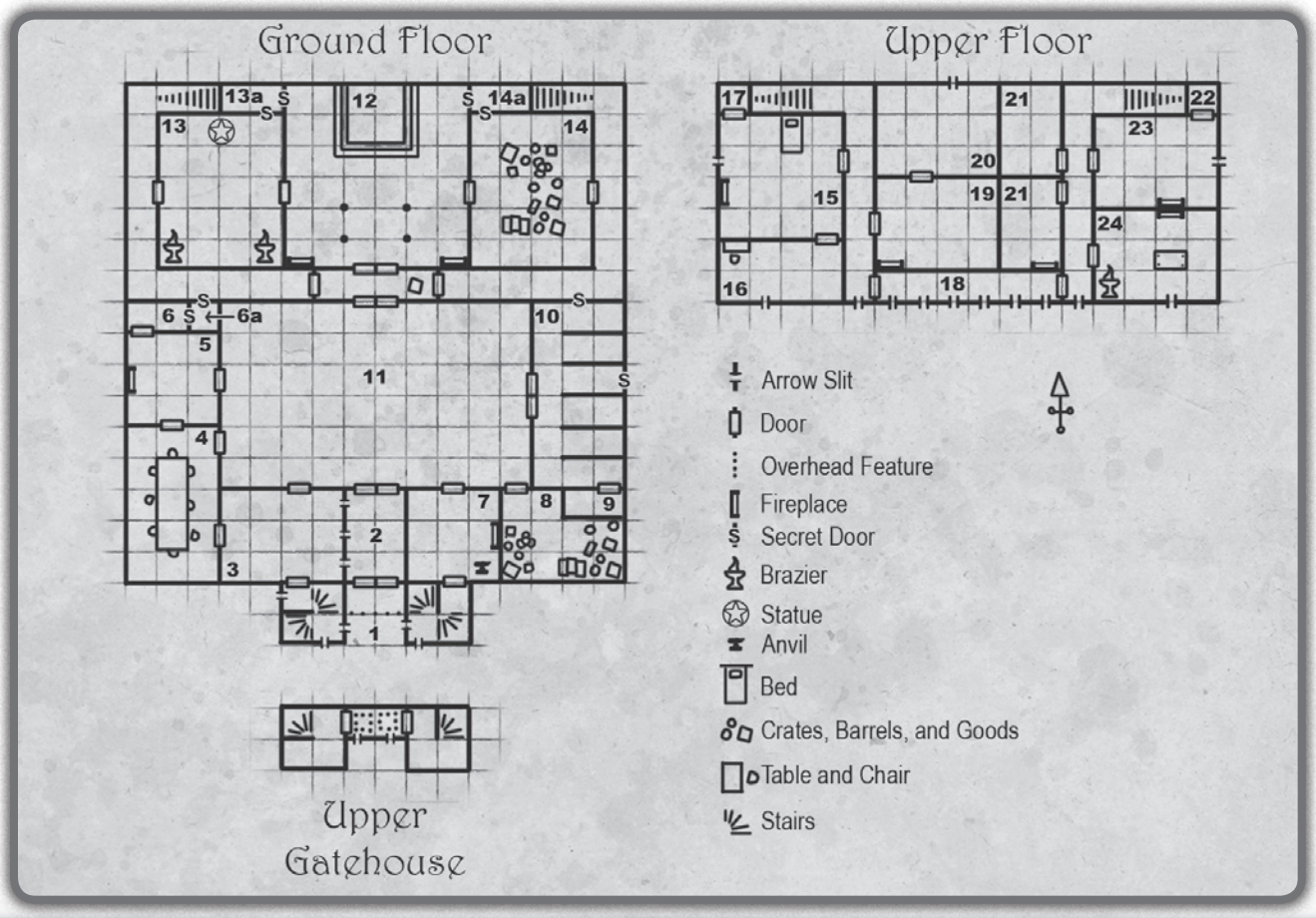
The area between the two sets of gates is a killing zone, designed to stop intruders in their tracks. Guards in the barracks are able to launch missiles through the arrow slits in their quarters, while the inner gates have small hatches which can only be opened from the inside for the same purpose.

If the alarm has been raised by the orcs in the towers, the inner doors are closed and barred (Toughness 12). Three goblins from the barracks fire arrows through the slits, while the rest pick at the heroes through the slits in the gates. A stealthier approach allows the characters to peek in through the arrow slits and see the guards in the barracks. Their voices can be clearly heard, though the topics are typical goblin fare (complaints about the food and their orc overlord).

3) GOBLIN BARRACKS

This description assumes the heroes' first view of the barracks is through the arrow slits. Adjust the description of the doors as necessary if they actually enter the room.

Filthy furs, gnawed bones, and other detritus litter the floor of this chamber. A number of small, blue-skinned creatures sit around, talking quietly. Others are asleep amid the filth, snoring quietly. Three wooden doors, one in the south wall, another in the north, and one to the west, are visible.



The barracks are home to a large number of goblins. Two shifts operate, one during the day and one at night. Hence, the barracks are always occupied. If the characters loot the goblins' weapons, they find one short spear and bow more than there are goblins present.

Monsters: Of the goblins present, half are awake and active, though not expecting trouble unless an alarm is raised. The remainder is resting or asleep. They require one complete round to awaken. On the second round, they suffer a –1 penalty to all Trait rolls. After this, they are wide awake and unimpaired.

Ⓜ **Goblin Warriors (1 per hero):** See page 453.

Ⓜ **Goblin Riders (1 per hero):** See page 453.

Tactics: During a general alarm in which the attackers have not breached the outer defenses, two of the warriors grab their bows and man the arrow slits. The other warriors take up their missile weapons, rush into the courtyard, and attack through the arrow slits in the inner gates. The wolf riders make for the stables (Area 10) and ready their mounts. They don't bother saddling the wolves and so suffer a –1 penalty to all Riding rolls. The penalty also applies to attack rolls when mounted.

If the gates have been breached, or if attackers enter the barracks, the warriors rush to block the door. Ignoring their wolves, the riders take up arms and head out into the courtyard or dining hall (whichever the attackers didn't use), so as to catch the intruders from behind. The guards from the sentry tower abutting the barracks rush to help as well.

4) DINING HALL

A large wooden table formed of planks of wood atop wide logs sits in the center of the room. Surrounding it are small, wooden stools. Remains of meals litter the table and the floor. The stench of stale food and spilled ale clearly indicates the diners are not fussy eaters.

The bones on the table are from small animals. A Common Knowledge or Survival roll (heroes' choice) identifies them as belonging to rats, rabbits, and small birds. There are no bowls, plates, or cutlery present—goblins don't tend to bother with the niceties of dining.

If the characters have not yet entered the kitchen, they can smell something cooking from the north door. Similarly, sounds of snoring and quiet conversation are heard from the lower door in the east wall, if the barracks have not been cleared of goblins.

Terrain: The spaces occupied by the table count as difficult ground. Any hero passing through these spaces must declare if he is going under or over the table. The stools present no hindrance to movement unless they are piled into a single square. Fighting across the tables requires a Reach weapon, and gives the defender Medium Cover (–2). Fighting from under table provides Medium Cover (-2) to the defender, whose legs are visible, and also to the attacker, who must be crouched or prone. The tables have Armor +6 for purposes of ramming a weapon down through them.

5) KITCHEN

A wall of heat washes over you as the door opens. Against the west wall is a roaring fire. A small cauldron, blackened from frequent use, hangs over the fire. A lone goblin, clad in a leather apron is vigorously stirring the stew with a huge wooden ladle. Smears of discarded animal skin and feathers line the floor.

The stew is perfectly edible, though overcooked. A sip of the stock allows the character to make a Common Knowledge or Survival roll to identify the ingredients—rabbit, rat, and small birds, with a hint of grit and dirt. The skins and feathers are from the cook's butchery of the game. Unlike humans, goblins eat the intestine of every animal they catch.

Terrain: The space containing the fireplace counts as difficult ground. Any creature actually stepping into the flames takes 2d6 damage and has a chance of catching fire.

Tipping over the cauldron on the fire requires a Strength roll as an action. With success the contents spill in a direction chosen by the character. The liquid fills an area 1" wide and 2" long. Treat squares covered by the stew as difficult ground.

Monsters: A lone goblin wearing a sturdy leather apron and carrying a large ladle is present when the characters enter.

Ⓜ **Goblin Warrior (1):** See page 453. The goblin's apron provides +1 Armor (Toughness 5(1)), but only covers his torso. The ladle inflicts Str+d4 damage. He has no other weapons available.

Tactics: The goblin's first tactic is to spill the contents of the cauldron onto the floor (see above) in the direction of the characters. He spends only a single action attempting this, and then bolts for whichever door the heroes didn't enter by, screaming out as he does. Being alone and poorly armed, he fights only if he has no choice.

6) STORES

Skinned rabbits and plucked birds are crudely nailed to the wooden beams of this small room. A haunch of beef, several loaves of bread, and a leather bag sit atop a small cask and a larger barrel.

The goblins aren't picky eaters. Anything they can catch goes into the pot, though their typical fare is small animals and birds. In addition to the hanging meat, there are six loaves of moldy, unleavened bread, a large haunch of salted beef (with slices missing), a bag of salt, a small keg of Anari brandy (two measures left), and a barrel of weak ale (24 pints equivalent). These goods are loot

from plundered caravans. Much of this is destined for the orc chieftain's table, though the cook is not beyond stealing to feed his belly.

The secret door, as yet undiscovered by the goblins, is activated by pressing a loose stone near the floor. Detecting the hidden portal requires a character to make a Notice roll at –2 during a deliberate search of the wall.

6A) SECRET ROOM

This small room beyond once served the fort's owners as a "priest hole." It also doubled as a way of secretly moving troops around the complex during an attack. The other secret door in the alcove is obvious from the inside, as it has a handle. It leads into the western corridor inside the keep.

From inside the corridor, whose walls are covered in black mold, the door is nearly invisible. It requires a deliberate search and a Notice roll at –4 to detect. This penalty drops to –2 and allows a Notice roll by any passing creature if the door is opened, as a faint outline becomes visible in the mold.

7) SMITHY

Day and night, distinctive sounds of hammering can be heard from this chamber by anyone in areas 2, 9, and 11, as well as the eastern watchtower.

A blazing fireplace dominates the eastern wall of this room. A human clad only in long trousers is pumping a set of bellows, while beside him another prisoner pounds a lump of molten metal with a hammer. A lone orc leans against the west wall, snarling threats and insults. In the south wall is a wooden door.

Formerly a barracks, the orc sub-chief in charge of the fort has decided to make use of the fireplace and turn the room into a makeshift smithy. With no ready access to good metal, the sub-chief has ordered his captives to mix any metals together and work them into spear tips and arrow heads, to keep the goblins supplied. He has no concerns that the workmanship is poor—keeping his minions armed is his first priority.

Terrain: The space containing the fireplace counts as difficult ground. Any creature actually stepping into the flames takes 2d6 damage and has a chance of catching fire. The space containing the anvil is difficult ground. Flicking hot coals at the orc is a possible Agility Trick.

Monsters: Two human slaves work here, one pumping the bellows and one hammering spearheads on a large anvil. An orc overseer leans against the western wall. His weapon is drawn, and is being used to emphasize threats about what will happen to the humans if they don't meet their quota.

Ⓜ **Orc Warrior (1):** See page 454.

Ⓜ **Captives (2):** As waggoner (see page 452). Both are unarmed.

Tactics: The captives are not trained fighters and are unarmed. During any fight, they try to avoid becoming collateral damage.

Treasure: A stack of spear points lies in a small wooden box in the northwest corner. They are inferior quality items. Attached to a shaft, they give a –1 penalty to Fighting and damage rolls. Stacked near the fireplace are lumps of metal and broken weapons. They have little resale value (20 gs) and collectively weigh 10 pounds.

Aftermath: The humans, if alive when the battle ends, are grateful to the characters. Both are farmers, kidnapped from the stead the heroes visited earlier. They have no wish to fight, but happily provide information about the interior of the keep.

They have visited the great hall (area 12), know the route of the eastern corridor in the lower keep (but not details of the council chamber in area 14), and can describe the eastern corridor on the upper floor. They know the prisoners are kept in adjoining rooms (area 21), that there is a torture chamber in area 24 (though they have never been inside), and that a goblin occupies area 23 (they believe he is a military commander). They further reveal there are ten other prisoners locked upstairs, all from different steads.

Their shift is not due to end for several hours. Knowing they have no chance of escape, and that few goblins ever visit the smithy, they are prepared to remain here and continue making hammering sounds to fool any passersby. They urge the characters not to forget them during their escape.

8) STOREROOM

Crates, barrels, animal carcasses, and an assortment of miscellaneous goods have been piled up against the walls.

After a raid on a caravan or settlement, the goblins return any booty to the fort. The orc sub-chief sends the majority of useful goods back to his chieftain, but is allowed to retain items for his troops to use. Typically these are low value objects or goods ill-fitted for large hands.

Terrain: The door is kept locked. Only the sub-chief has a key. Movement through spaces containing stored goods is treated as difficult ground.

Treasure: The following items are stored here: 10 sets of normal clothing, two sets of furs, two backpacks, one bedroll, four blankets, three dozen candles, one game set (fox and hounds, three pieces missing), a healer's bag, nine flasks of oil, two pouches of pipeleaf, 30 yards of hemp rope in a single spliced coil, a bar of soap, and three waterskins (empty; the orcs drank the contents). The orc sub-chief allows his troops to use what they need, subject to his approval.

There are also 35 sacks of grain, three barrels of good, red wine, a cask of strong, grain alcohol, a cask of mead, two barrels of smoked fish, and three complete wild boar carcasses. These were all recently plundered. A caravan is due in a week to take the goods to the orcs' main lair.

9) TACK ROOM

Five small saddles have been unceremoniously dumped on the floor of this small room.

The tack room is used to store the wolves' saddles. While too cramped to allow sleeping, the room can accommodate the party sitting, providing them with a temporary resting area for healing and such like.

Treasure: Five crude saddles and harnesses are piled in a corner. They weigh 8 pounds each and fetch a measly 5 gs apiece.

10) WOLF STABLES

The doors to the stables are barred from the outside. Hence, it is easy for the characters to enter from the courtyard, but difficult to escape from here if they entered via the secret door. Smashing down the door allows the goblins on the lower level a Notice roll (roll per room, not for each goblin) to detect the ruckus. Removing the bar will attract the attention of a goblin after 1d6 minutes. He raises the alarm if he spies dead or missing wolves.

This long chamber smells of wet fur. Wooden stalls, the material near collapse with age and full of worm eaten gaps, separate the room into six compartments. Five wolves, saliva dripping from their mouths, leap into view!

The wolves howl and growl loudly during a fight. However, unless the heroes make any unusual noises (such as shouting or detonating explosive spells), the only response from outside is a lone, goblin rider, banging on the door a few moments later and calling for the wolves to shut up.

Terrain: The stalls are constructed from rotting wooden planks and stand four feet high. They provide only Light Cover (–1) against adjacent attackers, and have Armor +1. They are Toughness 5, and each successful attack to smash them affects a 1" length. There is too little debris to form difficult ground.

The secret doors are cunningly worked. Detecting them requires a Notice roll and a deliberate search. Both were installed as emergency exists long ago. The goblins do not know of their existence.

Monsters: Five wolves are housed in this chamber. Ferocious and ill-tempered, they attack anyone but one of the goblin riders.

Ⓜ **Wolves (5):** See page 454.

Tactics: The wolves act as a pack, using Gang Up tactics to bring down the most heavily armored foes first. This goes against normal wolf tactics, which is to cull the weak, and is a result of their upbringing and training.

11) COURTYARD

The inner courtyard is exposed to the elements. A frozen morass of dirty snow lies across the ground. Numerous trails of trampled snow crisscross the yard, indicating the fort is most definitely occupied.

The frozen trails predominantly go from the barracks (area 30) to the stables (area 10) and keep. A thinner trail crosses from the smithy (area 7) to the keep. A successful Tracking roll made while investigating the courtyards reveals wolf prints outside the stable doors. The footprints from the smithy are larger than those of the goblins, but the tracks are too blurred to reveal the source. A raise reveals there are around half a dozen distinct sets of wolf prints.

Terrain: Constant movement through the courtyard by the fort's occupants has resulted in slushy snow. This has frozen to form a vast area of rough ice. This is treated as difficult ground for all movement. Anytime a character runs, a 1 on the running die means he has slipped and fallen at the point where his run began. Agility rolls involving other forms of movement (such as avoiding an area-effect attack or a Trick such as running up an ice wall) suffer a –2 penalty. If the Agility roll fails, the character falls and is Shaken. The ice on the walls is treated as thin ice for purposes of melting it. Once melted, the flagstones beneath are revealed. Movement is no longer impaired.

12) GREAT HALL

This room is only occupied during the day. At night, the chief is in his quarters (area 15), and his bodyguards are on duty outside his chamber door. Alter the description as necessary.

A large throne, carved from a block of ice, sits on a raised dais at the far end of this chamber. Slumped in the throne is a burly orc, a large battleaxe resting on his knees. Hanging on the far wall are two large banners. Each displays the same symbol—a gauntlet-clad hand, clutching a coldfire rune of ice.

Flickering, orange light emanates from a pair of fires in the southern corners. Four slender pillars of cracked and chipped stone stand in the center of the room. Either side of the main entrance is two orc warriors.

Despite two roaring fires, the temperature in here is only two levels higher than outdoors. This is due to the presence of the icewood braziers in the adjoining room.

Terrain: The space containing the fireplace counts as difficult ground. Any creature actually stepping into the flames takes 2d6 damage and has a chance of catching fire. Moving onto the dais is treated as difficult ground, as is moving through a square adjacent to a pillar.

The pillars are Toughness 14 (6) and have Heavy Armor. Should they collapse, they fill all four squares surrounding them with rubble and inflict 2d6 damage on any creature in those areas. This is difficult ground.

Detecting either secret door requires a Notice roll and a deliberate search.

Monsters: The fort's ruler, an orc chieftain, lounges in the throne. Never knowing when he will be called upon to undertake a mission, his weapon rests across his lap. His two bodyguards stand on either side of the main doors, weapons drawn and ready for use.

Ⓜ Orc Sub-Chief (1): See page 454. The sub-chief has several alchemical devices on his person (see below). He carries keys for the council chamber (area 14), the stores (area 8), his quarters (area 15), and his office (area 16).

Ⓜ Orc Warriors (2): See page 454.

Tactics: The sub-chief's first action during any attack is to down his *invisibility* potion. While many orcs might consider this cowardly, he sees it as a prudent move. Since he must shout orders for his Command Edge to work, attackers are allowed a Notice roll at –4 to detect his presence on any round he uses this ability. Normally Command applies every round, but the chief doesn't want to give away his position if possible. Each "use" of Command lasts until the sub-chief's next action card.

The GM must determine at the start of each round whether he is using Command or not. Generally this is determined by the action cards and the state of his bodyguards. If they are Shaken *and* he acts before them and didn't use Command last round, he barks orders to them. Once the sub-chief realizes the characters know where he is, he uses Command every round, since not doing so gives him no benefit.

He then rushes to join his guards, who immediately engage intruders, using his Sweep Edge to target as many foes as possible. He swigs his *healing* potions as required, but cannot attack while doing so. If reduced to three wounds, or if Incapacitated and still capable of action, he stamps on his *sanctuary* talisman.

Treasure: The sub-chief carries several alchemical devices. He has two potions of *healing*, made from goblin blood. Each heals one wound taken in the last hour, upon being imbibed. The other is an *invisibility* potion. His final item is a small, glass talisman, carved in the shape of a Hellfrost dragon's head, imbued with the *sanctuary* spell. When crushed, it immediately teleports the user (and only the user) to the fortress of the orc's master, a hulking chieftain, more ogre than orc. Any character who uses the device during the adventure *will* be caught and killed before his comrades can find him. This device is worth double its usual resale value to the Hearth Knights.

13) SHRINE

A blast of frigid air sucks the breath from your lungs. Blue-white light glitters off frozen walls and flooring from twin braziers, illuminating a towering, crudely shaped ice statue of a hulking goblin. Before the statue, dressed in dark blue robes, stands a lone goblin, his arms held aloft in praise. Two other goblins wielding spears stand at attention between the braziers.

The two braziers each contain a pound of burning icewood. As a result, the temperature in this chamber is equal to that in the open air. The statue represents Thrym, though a Knowledge (Religion) roll is required to deduce this. His typical form is that of a Hellfrost dragon, but the shaman is trying to bolster his status by having had the statue carved to look like a goblin.

Terrain: The floor, walls, and ceiling are covered in a layer of smooth ice. This is treated as difficult ground for all movement. Anytime a character runs, a 1 on the running die means he has slipped and fallen at the point where his run began. Agility rolls involving other forms of movement (such as avoiding an area-effect attack or a Trick such as running up an ice wall) suffer a –4 penalty. If the Agility roll fails, the character falls and is Shaken. The ice on the walls is treated as thin ice for purposes of melting it. Once melted, the flagstones beneath are revealed. Movement is no longer impaired.

The braziers can be tipped over with a Strength roll (as an action) in a direction of the character's choice. The contents spill out to fill an area 1" wide and 2" long. Any character standing in the path must make an Agility roll at –2 or suffer 2d6 damage and have a chance of catching fire. The damage is coldfire based.

Due to the ice coating the walls, the secret door is extremely hard to detect. It requires a deliberate search of the area and a Notice roll at –4. Chipping away or melting the ice reduces the penalty to –2, but still requires an active investigation.

The statue is carved from a solid block of ice. It stands eight feet tall and weighs several hundred pounds. It has Toughness 14 (2). Pushing it over requires a Strength roll at –2 as an action. It falls into an adjacent square of the character's choice, inflicting 2d6+2 damage on anyone unfortunate enough to be standing there at the time.

Monsters: A goblin shaman and his two bodyguards are present. The shaman stands before the statue, offering praise to his deity. The guards stand at attention between the two braziers.

Ⓜ Goblin Shaman (1): See page 453. The shaman has a number of alchemical devices, as detailed below.

Ⓜ Elite Goblin Warriors (2): As page 453 except they wear leather armor (Toughness 5 (1)) and have Fighting d8 (Parry 6). They do not carry bows.

Tactics: The shaman begins by throwing his *stun* alchemical device at the heroes, aiming to shock as many as possible while avoiding his personal guards. Next round, he drops a *fear* spell on the largest group of heroes, again trying to avoid targeting his minions. His tactics from then on are to fire three 2d6 damage *bolts* at any obvious mage or cleric. If none are identified, he aims all three at the least armored intruder in the hope he scores a lucky hit against a spellcaster. If he takes two or more wounds, he uses his *entangle* device and moves toward the door to the great hall. By this stage his guards are likely dead. Even if not, he no longer cares for them,

and so uses his device at the minimum range to avoid targeting himself. Opening the door requires an action, so he only does this the following round, so as not to incur multi action penalties.

His two guards rush to attack intruders, seeking to put themselves between their master and harm. Rather than attacking individual targets, they Gang Up on the same one.

Treasure: The goblin shaman carries several alchemical devices on his person. He has a small icicle, which when thrown (using Throwing) creates a 2d8 coldfire *bolt*. The spell retains its usual range brackets—the act of throwing it activates the magic. Two small spheres of ice are *stun* bombs. These are also activated using throwing, and have a range of 3/6/12. When they explode, they create a freezing blast of wind. Finally, he carries a frozen spider web. This holds a Medium Burst Template *entangle* spell, must be thrown, and has range brackets of 3/6/12. It coats those within the target area in ice, freezing their joints.

Stacked in the northwest corner is a further six pounds of icewood.

13A) SECRET ROOM

This small room once allowed the fort's ruler to move between the great hall and the neighboring chamber unseen. The current occupants have yet to learn of its existence. From inside, both secret doors are clearly visible. There is also a pair of small stone plugs at the eye level of a typical adult human in each door. Removing these allows someone inside to watch proceedings in the great hall and shrine. If the characters enter this chamber via the great hall without having melted the ice in the shrine, they can see nothing except a foggy white wall.

14) COUNCIL CHAMBER

A large, U-shaped table dominates this unadorned room. Piles of papers lie haphazardly on the surface. Torches are hanging in corroded wall sconces, but none are lit.

The orc sub-chief is using this room as his tactical headquarters. From here he plans his attacks on the caravans and settlements in the region.

Terrain: Both doors to this chamber are locked. Only the orc sub-chief (see page 454) has the key. The large, U-shaped table is actually three separate tables—a long table (1" by 3") and two smaller tables. The spaces occupied by the table count as difficult ground. Any hero passing through these spaces must declare if he is going under or over the table. Fighting across the tables requires a Reach weapon, and gives the defender Medium Cover (–2). Fighting from under table provides Medium Cover (-2) to the defender, whose legs are visible, and also to the attacker, who must be crouched or prone. The tables have Armor +6 for purposes of ramming a weapon down through them.

Treasure: Atop the table are numerous papers and maps, written in Giant and Orcish. A cursory glance by someone fluent in the language indicates they are military orders and seem to indicate a major invasion is being planned. Unfortunately, the details are extremely sketchy, giving no indication as to where and when the attack will occur. Mention is made of goblins, orcs, dire wolves, and ogres, though. Other papers show written orders to attack caravans and remote settlements in order to instill fear in the local populace.

14A) SECRET ROOM

This small room once allowed the fort's ruler to move between the great hall and the neighboring chamber unseen. The current occupants have yet to learn of its existence. From inside, both secret doors are clearly visible. There is also a pair of small, stone plugs at the eye level of a typical adult human in each door. Removing these allows someone inside to watch proceedings in the great hall and council chamber.

15) ORC CHIEFTAIN'S CHAMBER

This room is occupied only at night. The sub-chief, ever prepared to receive orders to launch an attack, sleeps in his armor and keeps his weapon to hand. Paranoid that one of his underlings will try to assassinate him, he has learned to sleep very lightly. He counts as an active sentry while dozing. His two bodyguards are on duty outside the chamber. They count as active sentries. Alter the description as necessary.

A small wooden cot, covered in furs, and a fireplace are the only furnishings in what is a large room. The fire is lit, bathing the room in a dull, orange glow.

This is the sub-chief's private quarters, and the door is kept locked, day and night (he has the only key). A typical warrior, he has little interest in showy trappings of status. More prudently, were his superiors ever to discover an opulent lifestyle, he would be removed from service and replaced with someone more focused on the task at hand. His one luxury is a good quality, sleeping fur, though by human standards it is heavily stained and stinks of unwashed orc.

Terrain: The space containing the bed is difficult ground. The space containing the fireplace counts as difficult ground. Any creature actually stepping into the flames takes 2d6 damage and has a chance of catching fire. The fire is kept lit day and night. If the characters aren't using any light sources, the room has Dim Lighting (–1).

Monsters: See page 454 for details of the sub-chief and his bodyguard, as well as their standard tactics. They follow the same tactical procedure if attacked in this room, with one exception—the sub-chief must unlock the door before he can enter the corridor. He always

stands behind the door as it opens, so as not to present an easy target to would-be assassins.

Treasure: If the orc sub-chief is present, his treasure is as per the description for area 12.

16) OFFICE

A single desk is the only furnishing in this narrow room. Several candle stubs are stuck to the desk's cracked surface. A flint and steel rest near the tallest stub.

This room serves as the sub-chief's private office. From here he communicates with his master, receiving orders and passing on progress reports. No other creature, not even his bodyguards, is allowed in this room on penalty of death.

Terrain: The door to this room is locked. Only the orc sub-chief (area 12) has a key. Movement through the space containing the desk is treated as difficult ground.

Treasure: Lying on the table is a small mirror. The surface is not glass, but polished ice. Similarly, the frame is made of deep, blue ice, rather than metal. Engraved in Giant around the edge are the words, "Master, hear my voice." If these words are repeated by the character holding the mirror, the icy surface shimmers briefly and seems to melt away, revealing the clear image of a frost giant jarl! The giant speaks in a gruff voice, demanding to know (in Giant) who the characters are and what they want. Short of smashing the mirror (Toughness 6) there is no way for the characters to end the communication (servants don't hang up on their masters). Placing the mirror in a backpack muffles the sound. The giant eventually ends the call, though not before sending scouts from his mountain lair to investigate the disturbance at the fort. They won't arrive in time to take part in the adventure.

The mirror is a *scrying mirror*, an ancient relic granted the frost giant jarl by Thrym. There are several slave *mirrors* (such as this one), but only one master *mirror*, into which the others link. They allow the frost giant, who holds the master *mirror*, to receive reports from his distant minions and to pass on orders. The Reliquary would be extremely interested in these objects, as would the Hearth Knights (though for different reasons). Either organization pays 2,000 gs for the intact slave *mirror*.

Stashed in a small casket beneath the desk is 2,852 gs, booty captured in the goblins' raids. The casket is not locked.

17) GARDEROBE

This is a toilet. The stone seat has a small hole in the center. Waste material runs to the outside of the wall, where it unceremoniously plummets to the ground below.

18) CORRIDOR

This long corridor links the eastern and western portions of the upper keep. Due to the numerous arrow slits, the temperature in here is the same as outdoors. As such, it is never patrolled unless the fort is under attack. In this instance, the orcs and goblins in the upper keep rush here so as to be able to attack enemies in the courtyard.

19) UPPER ORC BARRACKS

Bundles of furs and blankets are bunched up on the floor to form six distinct sleeping areas. A roaring fire provides both warmth and light. Two hulking orcs are seated on piles of blankets.

The sub-chief's bodyguards occupy this chamber. Two are kept busy at his side, a third oversees the smithy, and one mans the torture chamber. The guards work 16 hours a day in rotating shifts. Unlike the goblins, who are comfortable in the cold, the orcs' preferred temperature range is similar to humans. As such, the fire is kept lit, day and night.

Terrain: The space containing the fireplace counts as difficult ground. Any creature actually stepping into the flames takes 2d6 damage and has a chance of catching fire.

Monsters: The two orcs present are off-duty but are only resting their eyes (their master calls on them at odd times to ensure they are in a constant state of readiness).

Ⓜ **Orc Warriors (2):** See page 454.

Tactics: The orcs immediately close to melee range against intruders, while calling out for the goblins in the adjacent room. Once the goblins arrive, the orcs withdraw using the Defend maneuver and allow the goblins to take up the fight in their place. The orcs then grab their bows (an action) and fire over the heads of the goblins.

20) UPPER GOBLIN BARRACKS

Aside from four goblins asleep on the stone floor, this chamber is bare. A cold wind whistles through the arrow slit, and the temperature is noticeably colder than the previous room.

The upper keep barracks are for the shaman's bodyguards. The shaman considers it an honor his guards are allowed to occupy this room. In truth, their positioning serves the orc sub-chief better. First, he has additional guards nearby in the event of an attack (either by outsiders or his own bodyguards). Second, the position of the room means the guards and shaman are separated, thus lessening the chance of treachery.

Monsters: Four goblins are curled up asleep on the floor. They sleep in their armor and keep their spears by their sides.

Ⓜ **Elite Goblin Warriors (2):** As page 453 except they wear leather armor (Toughness 5 (1)) and have Fighting d8 (Parry 6). They do not carry bows.

Tactics: Typically, the goblins rush to aid the orcs in the adjacent chamber when called for. It takes them one

round to awaken and another to grab their arms. They enter play at the start of the third round. Should the orcs be killed quickly and silently, the heroes can catch the sleeping goblins by Surprise. Roll for each goblin individually. Those who succeed on their Notice roll act on the same action card.

Regardless of whether they are aiding the orcs or fighting in this room, their tactics are the same—to Gang Up on the nearest foe and stab him to death. They only attack individual foes if circumstances force them.

21) PRISONERS

Huddled in this bare chamber is a small group of humans. All are bedraggled and unwashed. Although wrapped in blankets, they shiver uncontrollably with cold.

During a search of the keep the defenders will only check the doors are locked. If they are, they don't bother investigating inside, believing the prisoners too cowardly and weak to attempt an escape. That intruders might hide among the prisoners does not cross their minds. The southern room is slightly warmer, due to heat from the fire in the great hall, rising up the chimney.

Monsters: Held within each of these identical rooms are five prisoners. All wear only a minimum amount of clothing and none wear shoes. This gives a –2 penalty to Vigor rolls to resist the effects of cold weather. The orcs feed them only starvation rations, most have been tortured, and the blankets barely keep out the old. As a result, all the prisoners here are Fatigued. Until they are given a hot meal and warm clothes, the prisoners cannot recover this Fatigue.

Two of the prisoners are trained militia (Fighting d6, Parry 5) and will take up arms if asked. However, they are freezing and thus not as effective as when in good health. Unless the characters are planning to make their escape quickly, they volunteer to stay with the other captives and protect them (assuming they are given weapons).

Ⓜ **Captives (10):** As waggoners (see page 452). There are five prisoners in each room (three men, one woman, and a youth). All are unarmed.

Terrain: The fireplace in the southern room is never lit. Movement through its space is difficult ground.

22) GARDEROBE

This is a toilet. The stone seat has a small hole in the centre. Waste material runs to the outside of the wall, where it unceremoniously plummets to the ground below.

Treasure: The shaman has stuffed a leather pouch inside the hole. The pouch contains 25 gs in coin and two gems, worth 30 gs and 100 gs respectively. He confiscated these from his troops during a raid, and has yet to inform the orc sub-chief of their existence. He is careful to remove the pouch before using the facility for its intended purposes.

23) GOBLIN SHAMAN'S CHAMBER

A single sleeping fur lies in the southeast corner of this room. A thin layer of ice coats the floor and walls. Small lumps of ice and snow dot the room, each a crudely formed, humanoid shape. A fireplace stands against the southern wall, but it radiates no heat. Two goblins are advancing toward you, spears raised in preparation to strike.

This room is the private domain of the goblin shaman. Unlike the orc sub-chief, who keeps his quarters locked, the shaman was ordered to keep his door open at all times. After several "forgetful incidents" (in which the shaman was deliberately seeing how far the orc would go), the sub-chief ordered the lock smashed.

The small, ice sculptures are crude representations of the orc sub-chief, the shaman, and Thrym, though it takes a Common Knowledge roll to realize this (and only after the sub-chief and shaman have been encountered). Perhaps as an act of petty rebellion, the shaman's figure is larger than that of the sub-chief.

Terrain: The space containing the fireplace counts as difficult ground. Happy in the cold, the shaman never lights the fire unless he wishes to dispose of something flammable. The ice is too thin to present a hazard to movement.

Monsters: The shaman has a total of eight loyal guards. Of these, two are constantly at his side, four are off duty, and two are stationed here to guard his private chambers.

Ⓜ **Elite Goblin Warriors (2):** As page 453 except they wear leather armor (Toughness 5 (1)) and have Fighting d8 (Parry 6). They do not carry bows.

Tactics: The eastern upper keep has no other guards. Hence, the goblins know that in the event of trouble they are unlikely to receive reinforcements. They initially try to prevent intruders from entering by taking up fighting positions in the doorway. Should this fail, they both rush to the garderobe. Once inside, they throw themselves against the door in the futile hope it will keep attackers at bay. The garderobe door has no lock. Forcing the door open requires a Strength roll opposed by the goblin's Cooperative Strength roll. Forced to fight in the crowded space, the creatures suffer a –1 penalty to all physical Trait rolls.

24) TORTURE CHAMBER

A crude table, to which leather straps are attached, sits in the center of the room. Blood stains, both dried and fresh, cover the table surface and the surrounding flagstones. A lone orc squats beside a roaring fire, turning red hot pokers in preparation for their use on weak flesh.

This makeshift torture chamber contains a low table. The orcs have nailed leather straps to the table in order to keep their victims from moving around. The only instruments of torture the orcs have to hand are some rusty

daggers and a few lengths of metal they heat in the fire. The sub-chief knows the prisoners are peasants and will have no useful information, but he has to allow his warriors some pleasures in life. So long as no one dies, the warriors are free to abuse the prisoners as they see fit.

Terrain: The space containing the fireplace counts as difficult ground. Any creature actually stepping into the flames takes 2d6 damage and has a chance of catching fire. Several pokers protrude from the glowing coals. Grabbing one is an action. These inflict Str+d6 damage and count as a heat attack for the purposes of any special immunity or resistance. Targets struck have a 1-in-6 chance of catching fire, only if they are extremely flammable or are wearing something like a cloak, which might wrap around the molten tip.

Moving over the low table is difficult ground. Unless a character crawls, he is forced to clamber over the surface.

Monsters: The shaman has a total of eight loyal guards. Of these, two are constantly at his side, four are off duty, and two are stationed here to guard his private chambers.

Ⓜ **Orc Warrior (1):** As page 454.

Tactics: Unlike the cowardly goblins next door, the orc isn't afraid to tackle a heavily armed party, singlehanded. He snatches up a hot poker and throws himself into battle with aplomb, screaming out battle chants and vile curses.

AFTERMATH

Once the prisoners are freed, the characters can return to the stead and reunite the families. The citizens have nothing of value to offer the characters, but promise to spread the word about their heroic deed. This grants a +1 bonus to the adventurers' Glory roll (which can be made once they reach Watchgap Fort). With their homes burned and goblins and orcs openly prowling the land, the settlers have decided it is time to head back east to more settled lands. They ask the heroes to provide an escort as far as Watchgap Fort.

BESTIARY

ULFWALD DEEP-POCKETS

Ulfwald has been a trader all his life, taking over the family business when his father retired due to ill health. Honest, friendly, and loyal to his friends, Ulfwald's caravan travels the trade road from Nordmark to Heligioland each year in spring and summer, and operates in the Hearthlands in autumn and winter.

Ulfwald may be a Wild Card, but he is not a warrior. He avoids combat except when his wagons are under direct attack.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d6, Knowledge (Heligioland) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d10, Riding d6, Streetwise d8
Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6
Hindrances: Code of Honor (honest merchant), Loyal
Edges: Charismatic, Connections (Merchants)
Languages: Anari, Dwarven, Saxa, Trader
Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), short spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, 2-hands)

WAGGONER

The waggoners are all Saxa from Nordmark. Though competent with the spear, they are not trained fighters. Whenever the caravan comes under attack, their orders are to stick close to the mules and wagons and defend them.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d4, Notice d6, Repair d6, Riding d6, Throwing d4
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)
Hindrances: Loyal
Edges: —
Languages: Saxa, Trader
Gear: Leather suit (+1), dagger (Str+d4), short spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, 2-hands)

FROST DWARF

HAULD AUSTRI GIANTBANE

Hauld Austri's kin are nobles of Karad Marn. For the last sixty years, they have dedicated their lives to recapturing their city from the orcs. Austri has, much to his disgust, been sent south with a small detachment of bodyguards to enlist aid in their crusade. So far he has met with little interest. He is currently heading back north, along the trade road that runs alongside Frostwater and White Lake, in a final bid to drum up support.

Dour and taciturn, he has little love for humans and their greedy ways. As with all dwarven nobles, he is a man of action who leads from the front.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d10
Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Guts d10, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Stealth d6, Throwing d8
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 10 (3)
Hindrances: Arrogant, Insular, Loyal, Slow, Stubborn
Edges: Berserk, Combat Reflexes, Command, Connections (Dwarf nobles), Favored Foe (giants), Improved Frenzy, Improved Sweep, Noble, Tough, Snow Walker
Languages: Dwarven, Giant, Orcish, Trader
Gear: Plate corselet (+3), chain limbs (+2), open helm (+3), battle axe (Str+d8), medium shield (+1 Parry), two throwing axes (Range: 3/6/12, Damage: Str+d6), one Norn charm.
Special Abilities:

* **Mountain Born:** Dwarves suffer no penalties for difficult ground in mountains or hills.
* **Heat Lethargy:** Frost dwarves have –1 to all trait rolls in temperatures over 70 degrees.
* **Low Light Vision:** Dwarves ignore penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
* **Winter Soul:** Frost dwarves have +2 to Vigor saves to resist the effects of cold and +2 Armor to resist ice or cold attacks.

WARRIOR

The warriors are Austri's huscarls, his personal bodyguards. Any hero attempting to approach their lord without permission, quickly finds himself facing a snarling dwarf who cares little about social etiquette or human social ranks. The warriors understand Finnar and Saxa, but speak only Dwarven to the characters until they prove themselves as fellow warriors.

The warriors are named Andvari, Dori, Ginnar, Lit, Nothri, Onar, and Vestri (the eldest).

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d8
Charisma: –2; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (2)
Hindrances: Insular, Loyal, Slow
Edges: Combat Reflexes, Frenzy, Sweep, Tough, Snow Walker
Gear: Chain mail (+2), open helm (+3), battle axe (Str+d8), medium shield (+1 Parry), two throwing axes (Range: 3/6/12, Damage: Str+d6).
Special Abilities:
* **Mountain Born:** Dwarves suffer no penalties for difficult ground in mountains or hills.
* **Heat Lethargy:** Frost dwarves have –1 to all trait rolls in temperatures over 70 degrees.
* **Low Light Vision:** Dwarves ignore penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
* **Winter Soul:** Frost dwarves have +2 to Vigor saves to resist the effects of cold and +2 Armor to resist ice or cold attacks.

GOBLIN, ICE

Ice goblins have blue skin and hair. Unlike orcs, goblins are well-adapted for living underground. They are not as well organized as orcs and rarely produce leaders of their own species. Tribes are usually ruled by a frost giant or a powerful orc chieftain.

SHAMAN

Goblin shamans serve as advisors to their chieftain. Their arcane talents give them a position of respect within the tribe. It is a rare shaman who does not honor Thrym, god of winter.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6
Skills: Climbing d6, Faith d8, Fighting d6, Guts d4, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Taunt d8, Throwing d6
Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4
Gear: Short spear (Str+d4).
Special Abilities:
* **Improved Snow Walker:** Treat ice and snow as normal terrain.
* **Infravision:** Goblins halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets (round down).
* **Powers:** Shamans typically know *bolt* (icicles), *fear* (howl), *obscure* (snow cloud), and *smite* (icicles form on weapon).
* **Size –1:** Goblins stand 3–4' tall.
* **Warm Blooded:** +2 to Vigor rolls to resist the effect of cold.

WARRIOR

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d4, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Taunt d6, Throwing d6
Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4
Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1).
Special Abilities:
* **Improved Snow Walker:** Treat ice and snow as normal terrain.
* **Infravision:** Goblins halve penalties for dark lighting against living targets (round down).
* **Size –1:** Goblins stand 3–4' tall.
* **Warm Blooded:** +2 to Vigor rolls to resist the effect of cold.

WOLF RIDER

Goblins ride standard wolves rather than dire wolves, the latter seeing most goblins as little more than a snack.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d4, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Taunt d6, Throwing d6
Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4
Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage 2d6)
Special Abilities:
* **Improved Snow Walker:** Treat ice and snow as normal terrain.
* **Infravision:** Goblins halve penalties for dark lighting against living targets (round down).
* **Size –1:** Goblins stand 3–4' tall.
* **Warm Blooded:** +2 to Vigor rolls to resist the effect of cold.

MULE

Mules are a cross between a donkey and a horse, and are usually used to haul heavy goods or pull wagons. Although not as fast as horses, they are ideal for carrying loads through hilly terrain.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Guts d6, Notice d4
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 8
Special Abilities:
* **Fleet-Footed:** When a mule can be convinced to run, it rolls a d8 instead of a d6.
* **Kick:** Str.
* **Ornery:** Mules are contrary creatures. Characters must subtract 1 from their Riding rolls when riding them.
* **Size +2:** Mules are stocky creatures weighing up to 1000 pounds.

OGRE

Ogres are some kin to orcs and lesser giants. They are often taken in by orc clans as champions.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12
Skills: Guts d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Throwing d6
Pace: 7; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 12 (1)
Gear: Thick hides (+1), massive club (Str+d8).
Special Abilities
* **Infravision:** Ogres halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets.
* **Improved Sweep:** May attack all adjacent foes.
* **Size +3:** Most ogres are over 8' tall with potbellies and massive arms and legs.

OGRE, YOUNG

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d8
Skills: Guts d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Throwing d6
Pace: 7; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (1)
Gear: Thick hides (+1), club (Str+d6).
Special Abilities
* **Infravision:** Ogres halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets.
* **Improved Sweep:** May attack all adjacent foes.
* **Size +1:** These ogres stand 6' tall with potbellies and massive arms and legs.

ORCS

The orcs are all members of the Sons of Thrym tribe, a tribe normally found further north.

ORC SUB-CHIEFTAIN

The orc sub-chieftain is overlord of a small, goblin tribe. A cruel and sadistic master, he rules through fear and violence. He dislikes having to watch over the lowly goblins, but at least he gets to reap the benefits of their efforts, without lifting a finger.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Throwing d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9 (2)
Edges: Combat Reflexes, Command, Snow Walker, Sweep
Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), open helmet (+3), battle axe (Str+d8), furs.
Special Abilities
* **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.

ORC WARRIOR

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6
Pace: 6; **Parry**: 6; **Toughness:** 8 (1)
Hindrances: —
Edges: Snow Walker
Gear: Leather armor (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), short sword, axe, or mace (Str+d6), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6), 12 arrows, furs.
Treasure: Meager, per 3 warriors.
Special Abilities:
* **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.

WAR DOG

Despite their name, the Saxa also use these large, vicious dogs to track and kill wild boar.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d10, Stealth d8, Tracking d8
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 4
Special Abilities:
* **Bite:** Str+d4.
* **Fleet Footed:** War dogs roll a d10 when running instead of a d6.
* **Go for the Throat:** War dogs are trained to go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly-armored location.
* **Size –1:** War dogs are relatively small.

WOLF

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d10, Tracking d6
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4
Special Abilities:
* **Bite:** Str+d4.
* **Fleet Footed:** Wolves roll a d10 when running instead of a d6.
* **Go for the Throat:** Wolves instinctively go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly-armored location.
* **Size –1:** Wolves are relatively small.

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Something Stirs In The Icebarrier Mountains

Joining a caravan as guards is a way to earn good money and see the world, though it is not without its risks. Having signed up as guards, the heroes are about to take part in a journey from the relative safety of the lands around Hellfrost Keep, home of the Hearth Knights, to the distant Saxa steads nestled in the forlorn Icebarrier Mountains.

Together the characters and the small band of heavily-armed frost dwarves travelling with the caravan must weather goblin attacks, for the fell creatures have stirred early this year and seem keen to make their presence felt. It becomes clear the goblins are not acting alone.

Something more powerful is behind their attacks, something with grander plans than a few raids. *Shadow of Darkness* can be played as a standalone adventure or as part one of a four-part mini-campaign arc.

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HELLFROST

THE SIEGE OF WATCHGAP FORT

SAGA OF THE FROST GIANTS - PART 2

OFFICIAL SAVAGE WORLDS LICENSED PRODUCT

THE SIEGE OF WATCHGAP FORT

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SIEGE OF WATCHGAP FORT

INTRODUCTION

This adventure is designed for a group of four characters with between 20 and 25 XPs, but can be run with more advanced parties. Most encounters are based on a number of antagonists per hero, and thus automatically allow for increased party size. Where a scene uses a Wild Card villain, add one additional villain for every two Wild Card player characters above four.

As written, the main antagonists are goblins, wolves, and ogres. Add on additional Extra of each type in an encounter for each Rank the party is above Seasoned. For instance, a Heroic party facing an encounter listed as six goblin warriors, two goblin riders and two wolves would face one extra of each monster.

If you're running this adventure after the release of the *Hellfrost Bestiary*, you can make the challenges tougher. For Veteran and Heroic parties, swap these to orcs, dire wolves, and cliff giants respectively, and lower the number of foes per hero by one (to a minimum of one). For instance, if the text says the heroes face three goblins per hero and a goblin shaman, a Veteran or Heroic party would face two orcs per hero and an orc priest. With Legendary groups, exchange the monsters without lowering their number.

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

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

Allies: The heroes will not be fighting alone. Standing beside them at various times is a Wild Card dwarven noble, his bodyguards, and a number of Hearth Knights. The GM should write up Ally Sheets for these before play begins. Each scene lists the number and type of allies aiding the characters during the scene. Each Wild Card NPC counts as a hero for the purposes of encounters which state "X foes per hero." Those NPCs not being controlled by the players during a particular scene are busy elsewhere.

Dead Heroes: If a character dies, his player does not get to roll up a new one unless he plays a Hearth Knight (in which case he is one of the fort's defenders) or a frost dwarf warrior (in which instance he works for Hauld Austri).

Otherwise, he must take a Shield Knight and promote him to Wild Card status. The Hearth Knight gains no advancements, just three bennies, wound levels, and a Wild Die. At the end of the *adventure*, the player makes a new character. (If he wants to continue playing the Hearth Knight he must recreate him from scratch as a player character.) The player carries over any Experience Points his temporary hero earned, but does not earn any Glory. Experience Points reward the player for participating—the Glory system rewards his character for doing brave deeds. Since his new character wasn't at the fort, he doesn't reap the Glory benefits.

Should every player character die in the same combat scene, the adventure is over—see **Aftermath** (page 18) for details.

IMPORTANT GM NOTES

This adventure details a small, three-day siege. Rather than using the Mass Battle rules, the conflict is played out on the tabletop over a number of scenes. Each scene effectively relates to one Mass Battle combat round. As such, the characters will be involved in near-continuous, bloody combat. Heroes who have invested in Leadership Edges will have a real chance to shine.

Despite being primarily a combat adventure there is room for roleplaying. In this case, it is interaction between party members and their allies. Groups who intersperse roleplaying into the action will enjoy the ad-

venture more than those who think of it as just a tactical wargame.

The action focuses squarely on the heroes' endeavors, in much the way the *The Lord of the Rings* movies focused on the principal characters. Sometimes the party will be aided by Extras and sometimes they won't. NPCs not involved in the action "on camera" aren't sitting around idly—they are fighting their own battles.

The adventure is bloody, brutal, and unrelenting. Careful use of spells, good tactics, such as using available Cover, the Defend maneuver, and arranging allies to make use of Gang Up bonuses, and a healthy dose of respect for the enemy should see the heroes through with few casualties. The GM should mention this to the players once the siege begins. The heroes are not totally without assistance—healers work in the fort and herbal remedies are handed out. Still, these are finite resources—heroes who continually pick up multiple wounds are likely to carry at least some of them across multiple scenes.

All this said, an adventure such as this can never be balanced for every party. A group of warriors and spellcasters with offensive spells, especially area effect ones, will undoubtedly cope much easier than a band of thieves and minstrels with little useful combat magic. As such, the individual GM must adjust enemy numbers up or down as required to make the adventure fun and dangerous, but avoiding a complete massacre. Victory should be hard earned, but it shouldn't be impossible.

Scenes: The adventure is broken down into two basic types of scene—combat and healing. Combat scenes are detailed in the main body of the adventure and should be played in order. Healing scenes occur at the end of each battle sequence and are handled through the sidebar on page 9.

Should a character wish to avoid a combat scene for any reason (being badly wounded is the most likely), the player still gets to control his share of the Extras, thus ensuring he is not left out of the game. If no Extras are present, the GM can assign him a number of enemy troops to control. Such heroes are taking prudent and sensible steps, but their actions should result in a reduced Glory award—you don't earn Glory for sitting around while your comrades fight.

GM Omnipotence: As GM, you will be privy to any plans the party concocts, such as hiding troops in buildings or keeping troops in reserve in the second compound ready to spring out at a moment's notice. The goblins do not know these plans. You should always remember to play fair—the adventure is hard enough without the heroes' best laid plans being ruined by metagaming from the GM.

Bennies: Because the adventure lasts a number of days and is combat intensive, the heroes should each receive one benny at the start of each new day, regardless of how many sessions the adventure lasts. As always, the GM should reward good roleplaying with bennies.

Hauld Austri: The adventure is written with Hauld Austri having seven huscarls at his disposal. If you've run *Wrath of the Goblins*, the number of huscarls should be adjusted to match those who survived—Austri has not received reinforcements.

HEARTH KNIGHT FORT OCCUPANTS

When at full strength, a Hearth Knight fort contains 100 Hearth Knights, 19 support staff, and one Sister of Mercy. The Knights are broken down into their respective orders, ranks, and responsibilities as shown below.

Sword Commander (1): Fort's commanding officer
Sword Captain (1): Second in command
Sword Knight (3): Watch commanders
Shield Commander (3): Watch commander's aides
Shield Captain (4): Squadron leaders (each commands 22 men)
Shield Sergeant (8): Patrol leaders (each commands 8 men)
Shield Knights (80): Common soldier

Watchgap Fort is not currently at full operational capacity. Early raids against known goblin and orc nests, as well as routine patrols, have diminished the number of Knights. At present, the Sword Captain is the highest ranking officer. Also present are one Sword Knight, one Shield Commander, two Shield Captains, four Shield Sergeants, and 40 Shield Knights—a total of 49 Knights.

INTRODUCTION

The adventure can be run as a continuation of *Wrath of the Goblins* or as a standalone adventure. Introductory notes are presented for each eventuality.

OPTIONAL BEGINNING: WRONG PLACE, WRONG TIME

If the party has not completed *Wrath of the Goblins* the GM needs to have a reason for them to be in the fort. The heroes might have been adventuring nearby and have called in to avoid bad weather (or even see old friends), they might be delivering much-needed supplies from Hellfrost Keep, or a large number of goblins may have forced them to seek sanctuary. If there is a Hearth Knight in the party, he may have been ordered to deliver a message before continuing his other duties (i.e. adventuring).

If you can't think of a good reason, place the burden of responsibility in the players' hands. Ask them to come up with a reason why their characters are in a small fort on the western edge of Heligioland.

Beren greets the characters at the gate and offers them food in the kitchen. A runner then turns up and

calls the Knight Sergeant away. He has a worried look on his face.

The characters encounter Austri and his huscarls, but the dwarves ignore them. Until a hero has killed three goblins in a single combat scene the dwarves treat the characters as *persona non grata*. Adventurers who prove their skill in battle quickly find the dwarves are friendly, seeing in the heroes fellow warriors. Boasts of battle prowess mean nothing to them—any man can talk of killing. Austri is currently in the region trying to drum up support for an attack against Karad Marn, his orc-occupied home far to the north.

Pick up the story at **To Arms!** (page 6).

THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES

Use this opening scene if the characters have just completed *Wrath of the Goblins*. The introduction assumes the characters have agreed to escort the Saxa settlers to Watchgap Fort.

Late snow flurries have dogged your trip to Watchgap Fort, but thankfully the temperature has not posed any significant problems. At last the tall, stone tower becomes visible against the cold, grey sky, though it is still some miles away. Fluttering from the tower is a long white, blue, and black banner, the banner of the Hearth Knights.

With sanctuary now in sight your vigor is renewed. The miles quickly pass. As you draw close, two mounted Hearth Knights gallop from the fort toward your party.

The Knights, Shield Sergeant Beren and Shield Knight Guillaume, rein in their horses a dozen yards from the party. Beren hails the heroes and asks them their business. Assuming the party tells him of the attack on the steads and their raid on the fort, Beren pulls a signal horn from his belt and gives three short blasts. Within minutes, a large force of Knights arrives.

"You," Sir Beren says, indicating the party, "come ahead with me. My commander will want to hear your story. You others," he says to the Saxa you have been protecting, "will be escorted into the fort at your own pace. There you will be given warm beds and hot food. You are free to stay until we can arrange escort to Hellfrost Keep." With that, he gestures for you to follow him back to the fort.

During the short walk Beren speaks again to the heroes.

"The Norns have been cruel," he says humorlessly. "Half our number is either out on patrol or engaged in an offensive to the east. We don't have enough men to escort those people anywhere right now. If what you say is true, the roads won't be safe until our strength is at full and we can drive the goblins back to their holes."

As you draw near to the fort the gates open. Crossing a short wooden causeway, you enter the lower compound. Several thatched buildings stand inside. Further ahead rises the tall, conical mound. A wooden staircase climbs the steep sides to a second palisade fence. Beyond this rises the stone tower."

TELLING THE STORY

Once inside the fort, Sir Beren dismounts. A junior Knight, barely old enough to grow a beard, leads the mount away. Beren indicates toward the tower and begins walking at a brisk pace. If asked, he tells the heroes what each building's function is.

The gates leading to the tower open before the party reaches them, allowing speedy access to the main fortification. Beren walks straight in and heads up the staircase. He stops on the top floor, bangs twice on a stout wooden door, and enters. He beckons the party to follow.

Seated behind a desk is a gray-haired man, his rugged face broken by an ugly scar running from his right temple down to the corner of his mouth. He glances up as you enter.

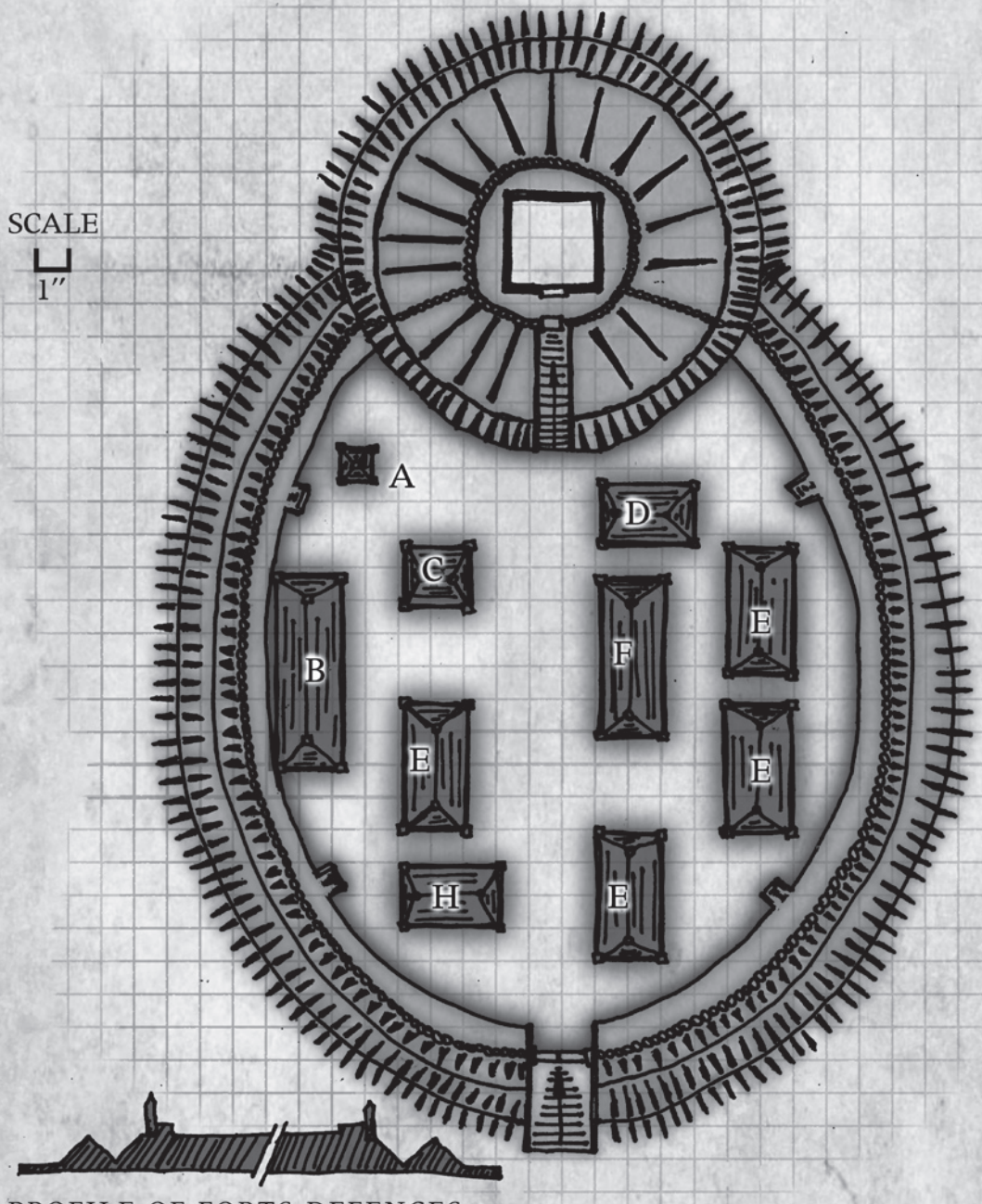
"Captain," Beren says, "a party of settlers and their escorts has entered the fort. Goblins have raided the steads and burned many to the ground. These people claim to have raided a goblin fort." Beren then turns to face you. "This is Sword Captain Beotor (bay-oh-tor), acting commander of the fort. Tell him what you told me."

Beotor listens to the party's story, occasionally taking notes on a scrap of parchment. He only asks questions to prompt the players to recall any facts they may have forgotten—as a veteran warrior he's curious about the goblins' strength, any battle plans the characters may have discovered, whether there was indication the goblins were up to more than just raiding, and such like. He isn't omnipotent, of course, so he won't know about the prisoners or the presence of an orc sub-chieftain, for instance, unless told.

Once the adventurers are finished, Beotor thanks them for the information and dismisses them. He orders Beren to find them lodgings and ensure they have something to eat. As the party leaves the office, Beotor orders his subordinate to assemble the watch commanders and squadron leaders immediately.

The heroes are led back into the main compound and shown into the kitchen. Beren orders them not to leave the kitchen until he returns. He then runs over to the barracks. Should they ask about Beotor's scar, Sir Beren chuckles loudly.

WATCHGAP FORT



PROFILE OF FORTS DEFENCES

A - SMITHY
B - STABLES
C - HAY
D - KITCHEN
E - BARRACKS
F - CIVILIAN QUARTERS

"Looking for a tale of heroism against overwhelming odds, or maybe an encounter with some dire Hellfrost beast? You won't find it there, lad. That scar wasn't from battle. Sword Captain Beotor's late wife, Tiw bless her bones, was a Hearth Knight as well. That's how they met. She did that to his face, in a fashion. He came home drunk one night too often so she punched him. Beotor went down like a ton of bricks and landed on his axe. Cleaved his skull almost in twain, it did. But she did have a powerful right hook," he laughs, rubbing his jaw.

The party now has two hours to relax, concoct alchemical devices or herbal remedies, or just grab a bowl of stew and catch some sleep.

While they're dining, the kitchen door crashes open and a party of hungry dwarves enters—stomping in are Hauld Austri and his huscarls. Austri explains he was delayed due to a short illness, but plans to leave in the morning. He asks what the characters have been up to since they departed. When they're finished he suddenly lifts his head and sniffs deeply.

"Smells like trouble on the wind," he says gravely. "I have a feeling we will be fighting together again before a day has passed."

TO ARMS!

Two hours after the heroes arrive, a series of horn blasts reverberates through the fort. If curiosity doesn't get the characters to take a look then Beren returns and tells them to get outside—with their armor and armaments. Mustered outside is the current military compliment of the fort. Sword Captain Beotor stands before them.

"Hearth Knights," he shouts, "we are about to do battle. Scouts returning from a patrol have reported a large number of goblins approaching the fort. This is not a raiding party, men, but an attack force. We are heavily outnumbered, so we will not be engaging on the open field."

He glances at the sky. "By dusk I want all the civilians moved up to the tower along with our food reserves, bedding, and anything you won't need when the fighting starts, tactical scenarios drawn up by the various unit commanders, and buckets filled with water. Take the horses into the tower. Butcher the rest—we'll need the food."

"Sister Gwyneth," Beotor says, his voice noticeably quieter, "would you and the orderlies please set up an emergency first aid center on the ground floor for the walking wounded. More serious patients should be moved upstairs once they're stabilized. I want those capable of fighting back on their feet as quickly as possible—we'll all pray for the dead and dying. Commandeer any civilians with even basic healing skills to assist you." Glancing round, you see a red-haired woman in a white woolen dress nod her head.

"Hauld Austri…" Beotor begins. The dwarven nobleman raises a gauntlet-clad hand. "You have no need to ask, Sword Captain," the gruff noble interrupts. "My huscarls and I will fight to the death alongside your warriors." Beotor nods his head. "You have my thanks, sir." The captain then turns to face you.

"As for you lot, you have two choices—you can stand with my men and fight, or you can sit this out in the tower. I cannot and will not force you to take up arms, but you should realize that the goblins will not show mercy because you choose not to fight. If you want a third option, you can make for the open road. I'll wager a 100 gold scields you're dead by morning.

"That's it, men. Your commanders will brief you on your combat station. My Tiw guide our swords!"

The characters are put to work helping remove combustible materials and unnecessary baggage to the tower. Heroes with Leadership Edge or Knowledge (Battle) skill aren't invited to attend the planning. However, Beotor does clap them hard on the back—*"Good, good," he grins. "We'll soon find a place for you on the front line."*

The goblin army is the vanguard of a frost giant jarl's army. The fort, though small, is manned by experienced warriors, and the jarl knows this. Skirting around the outpost or leaving a small force to besiege it could prove disastrous. Thus, before his main army can march east into Heligioland unopposed, he must destroy Watchgap Fort.

CAN WE BUILD TRAPS?

Enterprising characters may want to rig traps. Beotor forbids any work outside the compound—the goblins will have clear line of sight. He has no objection to the placement of traps inside the walls, so long as all his men are informed of their position and the path to the tower is not blocked in any way.

One obvious manner of creating traps is to use the *glyph* spell. Unfortunately that's a Veteran spell, and thus unlikely to be available to the heroes. Alchemical devices, such as *blast* spells contained in fragile containers that detonate if stepped on, can be made if the hero has the time and resources.

Creating mundane traps takes precious time. By the time the heroes have finished their other duties it is dusk. The next scene begins shortly after dawn. For

convenience, that's ten hours away. Heroes who intend to stay up all night should be hit with the rules for sleep deprivation. A few sample traps are detailed below. The entry lists the skill required to construct the trap and the effect. All traps cover a 1" square. Each roll takes one hour and requires just a single character. Cooperative rolls may be made to ensure timely construction.

Convincing Beotor to lend men to aid in the task requires a Persuasion roll. With success, the heroes gain one Hearth Knight per party member. A raise allows two Knights per hero.

Shallow Pit: Strength; anyone entering the square must make an Agility roll (–2 if running) or fall prone.

Shallow Spiked Pit: Strength –2; anyone entering the square must make an Agility roll (–2 if running) or be Shaken as the spikes pierce their feet.

Stakes: Strength. Success fills a 1" square and a raise two squares. The stakes aren't so much a trap as a means of breaking up a charge. Movement through them is difficult terrain.

SCENE 2: DAWN RAID (DAY 1; 0800)

The heroes are woken shortly after dawn by the blaring of signal horns. The fort is a hive of activity, the few defenders rushing to positions along the perimeter wall. The characters are assigned stations along the west wall. Surrounding the fort at a distance of 200 yards is a ring of goblin warriors. Banners bearing a gauntlet-clad hand clutching a coldfire rune of ice flap in the wind. Behind the goblins lurk a number of brutish ogres. Some of the younger Hearth Knights begin to falter, the color draining from their faces, their hands visibly shaking, silent prayers forming on their lips.

Sword Captain Beotor, clad in his armor and carrying the Hearth Knight's banner in his hand, addresses the defenders.

"Defenders of Watchgap Fort, hear me!" Beotor cries. "If you have not noticed, we are surrounded." A ripple of nervous laughter echoes across the otherwise silent compound.

"We do not know the minds of our foes, but it is likely they seek to drive east into Heligioland. We are all that stands in their way. The enemy cannot leave this fort standing, for they know we would strike at their rear. They cannot leave behind a token force to besiege us, for they know we are superior.

"We are a thorn in their side, and they will try everything in their power to destroy us. Let them. Let them! A rider was dispatched on our fastest steed last night to warn others. For every hour we hold this fort, our comrades and allies to the east gather strength." Beotor slowly circles round, his gaze catching the eyes of each and every one of you.

FORTIFICATIONS

The fort is surrounded by an outer earth bank, a ditch, and then a second bank atop which sits the palisade. Movement up or down the outer defensive bank and ditch, except via the causeway, is treated as difficult ground.

The conical mound rises at an acute angle to a height of 60 feet. Except via the wooden steps, it is impossible to ascend without Climbing rolls. Movement on the steps is difficult ground due to their steep incline.

The main compound walls comprise an earth bank topped with a palisade. A fighting platform runs along the inside. Defenders standing on the platform have Medium Cover (–2, +6 Armor) against attacks made from the opposite side. Each 1" section has Toughness 25 (10) and counts as Heavy Armor. Scaling the bank and palisade requires a Climbing roll. The banks and walls are each 1" high, a total of 12 feet.

Each 1" of the stone tower has Toughness 20 (10) and counts as Heavy Armor.

The two gates are Toughness 20 (6) but are not Heavy Armor.

The watchtower stands 3" above the hilltop. It can be reached only by ladder, which is treated as difficult ground. A hero cannot run up the ladder. The watchtower provides Medium Cover (–2) to those inside and provides +6 Armor. It has Toughness 14 (6).

Each 1" of the buildings has Toughness 12 (4) but is not Heavy Armor.

Only bludgeoning and slashing weapons can be used against the fortifications—you cannot stab a 1" wide hole through a wall or gate.

"Many of us will die before this battle ends, but our deaths will not be in vain. For every life we lose, a hundred, a thousand, citizens will be saved. This is the oath you swore—to protect the Hearthlands at the risk of your own lives. The time has come for you to fulfill that oath! We will not, we cannot, lose this fort.

"If your arm falters, pray to Tiw, for he will strengthen it. If your heart quails, pray to Kenaz, for he will fill it with divine fury. If your arrows fall short, pray to Ullr, for he will guide them. You do not stand alone, for we are all brothers-in-arms. And when you face the enemy at close quarters, as will happen, remember this—we are not mercenaries fighting for money, nor are we are huscarls fighting to protect a nobleman. We are Hearth Knights!"

A loud roar and the rhythmic clattering of swords on shields sounds through the fort.

Any characters who *immediately* cheer are rewarded

with a benny—those who delay and follow their comrades' lead do not.

Beotor waits until his men fall silent. "Take your positions, speak your prayers." He glances skyward. "Sigel's Hearth is rising. The first attack will come soon. Be ready."

HERBAL REMEDIES

Aside from herbal brews designed to aid Healing rolls, the apothecary at the fort has ingredients for a small number of other remedies. Sister Gwyneth and the orderlies tour the fort, handing out herbal potions, balms, and ointments. These, combined with similar remedies handed to the fort's other occupants, drain the fort's non-healing ingredients. That is, once these remedies are used up there are no replacements.

Healing (Regenerative): One per hero.
Numbing: Two per hero.
Restorative: Two per hero.
Stimulant I: Two per hero.
Stimulant IV: Three per hero. (See the free download **Hedge Magic** for details.)
Stimulant VI: One per hero. (See the free download **Hedge Magic** for details.)

PROBING ATTACK

Despite possessing numerical superiority, the goblins do not plan to start by launching a mass assault. The goblin commanders have no idea of the defenders' strength and they know Hearth Knights are skilled warriors. Time is on the goblins' side, the defenders aren't going anywhere, and they are in no rush to achieve results. To that end, the goblins begin with a series of probing attacks in a bid to gauge an idea of the enemy's strengths and weaknesses.

Badly outnumbered, the Hearth Knights cannot hope to protect the entire perimeter in strength. Sword Captain Beotor passes orders that the defenders are to remain in position for as long as possible before going to the aid of comrades—any gap in the line would be otherwise open to exploitation.

The characters are assigned a 12" long segment of the west wall to defend. Exactly where they stand is left for them to decide. Unless they lack ranged attacks, it is unlikely the heroes will suffer serious injury during this first assault. The goblins are at a severe disadvantage, what with having to run across open ground, and their archers are operating at extreme range, so they incur large penalties.

GM's should note that both the warriors' initial charge and the missile fire launched by goblin archers is handled abstractly.

Charge: At the blast of a horn the goblin warriors charge forward. The horde acts on a single action card. Unless the heroes have access to longbows or *blast*, the goblins don't enter range until they are 48" away. Should longer range weapons, such as longbows or the *blast* spell, be available to the defenders, the goblins can be attacked at 96". At either range, the delay gives the characters time to prepare spells and snipe at a few warriors to help reduce the odds a little.

For convenience, we assume the goblins are running at a uniform 8" per round until they get within 24". Once the goblins are within 24", place their figures on the tabletop and calculate ranges using a ruler or tape measure as normal. This allows for the characters to snipe at any target, not just the closest one. Roll a single running die for all the goblins once they are on the tabletop.

The sidebar lists the exact distance the goblin warriors are from the palisade at the start of each round (i.e. before their action) until the goblins get within 24". This allows the heroes to quickly find the range modifiers for their ranged attacks for any given round. For ease we're assuming the heroes always target the closest goblin.

Do not bother making Spirit rolls for Shaken goblins until they are on the tabletop. Use markers of some sort to tally up Shaken results. When you have two, discard the tokens and eliminate one warrior.

Round	48"	96"
1	48	96
2	40	88
3	32	80
4	24	72
5	—	64
6	—	56
7	—	48
8	—	40
9	—	32
10	—	24

Once the goblins hit the bottom of the defenses they begin climbing. Play out the fight using the regular rules.

As noted in the sidebar on page 7, scaling the wall requires a Climbing roll. The goblins can reach the top in a single round. Clambering over the top and dropping down onto the fighting platform from the top of the palisade counts as an action. The goblins typically don't try this on the round they are climbing, but instead carry it over to the next round and suffer the multi-action penalty to their first Fighting roll.

Archers: As the warriors surge forward, a second line steps up behind them and draws bows. They take up position 48" from the palisade at the start of round three (or round nine if the defenders have long-range firepower). They continue firing until the first warriors reach the bottom of the palisade.

Rather than rolling handfuls of dice, the missile fire is handled abstractly. Each round, the archers (collectively) place two Medium Burst Templates over their targets. Roll a Group Shooting roll for each template, applying range and cover modifiers. Until the warriors appear on

the tabletop (at 24" distance), a missed roll means the arrows fell short, went too high, or slammed into the palisade—they have no effect on the game. However, once the goblins are within 24" you should use the area effect weapon deviation rules. Any character under the template's final resting place suffers 2d6 damage. Shields protect as normal.

For the purposes of returning fire, the goblins are treated as a Wild Card with Toughness 10. Only area-effect weapons can reduce their numbers enough to have any effect on their rate of fire. The archers suffer wounds, but they do not incur wound penalties. Instead, refer to the chart below as they suffer wounds.

Wounds	Effect
1	The attack for one template no longer uses a Wild Die (i.e. it only rolls its Shooting die).
2	The second template loses its Wild Die.
3	Only a single Medium Burst Template is fired each round. This uses only the goblins' Shooting die.
4	Archers' morale fails and they break. All missile fire against the west wall ceases immediately.

Retreat: The attack lasts ten rounds from the moment the warriors hit the palisade. At the end of the tenth round, the retreat signal is sounded regardless of the warriors' progress. The archers remain firing until the end of round 13, however, so as to cover their comrades' withdrawal. Once the goblins have withdrawn beyond missile range the heroes can seek medical attention.

Ⓜ **Goblin Warriors (4 per hero):** See page 20.

Ⓜ **Shield Knights (1 per hero):** See page 20. Only half of these (rounded down) have bows.

SCENE 3: THE COMPOUND BREECHED (DAY 1; 1300)

Throughout the rest of the morning, the characters are assigned to patrol the walls. Faint sounds of hammering and sawing drift on the wind from the small woodland to the west. Hearth Knights patrolling alongside the heroes mumble about siege ladders and battering rams. Beotor forbids anyone from leaving the fort to investigate—*"We'll know what they're up to soon enough," he frowns. "Get back to your stations and stay alert."*

In the early afternoon the goblins launch another attack, this time in greater strength. Like before, the warriors are supported by archers. The goblin warriors carry one scaling ladder per hero. Each is 3" long and requires four goblins to carry. If a goblin carrying a ladder is slain, one of his comrades immediately takes his position. Should the total number of goblins reduce any ladder to fewer than four bearers, the warriors leave it behind.

Apart from the differences made by the ladders, run this scene exactly as the previous battle.

Three rounds after the first goblins scale the walls, a horn sounds. Sword Captain Beotor can be heard shouting over the din of battle. Proceed to **The Gate** below.

Terrain: When they reach the outer bank, the goblins

BETWEEN SCENES HEALING

There are a limited number of healers in the fort and the characters are not the only ones who will be injured during the siege. Do not bother about tracking injuries for any NPCs. Whether a given Extra is Incapacitated, walking wounded, or dead is irrelevant to the plot—characters receive fixed allies, and that's all that matters.

The available healers are:

Sister Gwyneth (Sister of Mercy): Healing d8+3 (includes Sister of Mercy Edge and use of herbal remedies), healer's bag.

Horvald and Hengist (orderlies): Healing d6+1 (includes use of herbal remedies), healer's bag.

HEALING HERBS

The amount of healing (specific injury) remedies available to the healers is virtually unlimited, as they keep a good stock of herbs in the fort and are continuously brewing while the heroes are fighting. However, a player character medic (anyone with Healing d4+) is given just 10 doses of healing (specific) herbal remedies. The character can decide the type of injury the balms aid as he uses them. Whether he uses them to aid his fellow characters or on rolls to aid Extras is up to him.

RECEIVING AID

Should the characters seek out an NPC healer between fights, they have to join the queue and wait their turn. For ease, and because the fort is small, assume the first Healing roll is made the moment the "golden hour" starts. That's 60 minutes, remember, and each Healing roll takes 10 minutes.

Each healer makes a maximum of three Healing rolls. How these are divided among the characters is up to the party. Horvald and/or Hengist can also assist the Sister of Mercy or each other through the Cooperative Rolls rule, but each assist counts as one of their three Healing rolls. The remainder of their time is spent aiding NPCs.

A hero may try to force an extra Healing roll from one of the healers. This requires an Intimidation roll. Success gives one hero an extra Healing roll from an orderly. On a raise, he forces the service of the Sister of Mercy (unaided) *or* by both orderlies (as a Cooperative Roll). Only one roll per hero per healing session is allowed.

If the Intimidation roll is a success, the character making the roll loses 2 Glory for his behavior. The GM must also draw a single card from the action deck as well. A black numbered card indicates an Extra died from his wounds because the attention paid to the hero diverted medical attention. A black

face card indicates two Extras died. These casualties are subtracted from the number of allies the characters receive in all future encounters during the siege.

HELPING THE WOUNDED

In addition to receiving wounds, the characters can also act as medics to aid NPCs. This system is designed to be quick, and covers both multiple rolls on critical patients and tending minor injuries.

Each character with Healing d4 or higher or who knows hedge magic is allowed one roll (his choice as to which skill) during the golden hour. Hedge magic rolls involve making remedies from the fort's stock of dried ingredients, not applying them. For each 10 minutes the character spends doing other activities, such as receiving healing, he suffers a cumulative –1 penalty.

Success aids several Extras back to full health. This has no immediate effect on the battle, but a kindly (but not glorious) deed has been performed. A raise increases the number of Extras the characters receive in future encounters during the siege by one. Cumulative raises stack over multiple healing periods. So the first raise gives them one Extra, the next raise increases this to two Extras, and so on.

Magic is quicker to employ, but there is still the matter of diagnosing injuries, suffering setbacks, and such like. To prevent lots of die rolling, a single arcane skill roll is made. This represents the character's overall successes for the golden hour, not an individual patient. Results are as above.

Tending fellow player character injuries with magic or mundane healing should be rolled in full.

plant the bottom end of their ladder into the ground and tip it onto the top of the palisade. Next round, they can scurry up the ladder. This is treated as difficult ground, but the goblins run. Once at the top, they seek to spread out as quickly as possible to allow their comrades a chance to scale after them.

Pushing a ladder off the wall is not easy—the ladders are not vertical and so more leverage is required. A hero who makes a Strength roll at –2 as an action topples a ladder. He suffers a further –2 penalty if he is adjacent to the ladder but not directly in front of it. Any goblins on the top 1" of the ladder suffer 2d6 damage when it hits the ground. All others on the ladder take just 1d6 damage. It requires two goblins, each taking an action, to pick up a fallen ladder and lean it against the wall.

Tactics: Once the shaman is within 16" of the nearest hero he casts *fear*, aiming the template to catch the largest number of defenders. He cannot see over or through the palisade, so must position the center of the template over the wall. He repeats this until the warriors are close to the palisade, at which point he risks scaring his own troops. He then walks to within 12" of the nearest hero (player character or NPC) and casts single 2d6 damage *bolt* spells at him until he drops. Because he is actively targeting an individual, rather than an area, he suffers a –2 penalty for the defender having Minimum Cover.

Ⓜ **Goblin Shaman (1):** See page 20.

Ⓜ **Goblin Warriors (6 per hero):** See page 20.

Ⓜ **Shield Knights (1 per hero):** See page 20. Only half of these (rounded down) have bows.

THE GATE

"They've breeched the southeast wall in force!" Beotor roars. "Protect the gate! Leave your posts and protect the gate or we are all lost!"

Assuming the heroes comply, cut straight to the gate without bothering to calculate how long it takes the characters to get there. Like any good movie the focus is on the important action, not the time spent getting to the action. Moving to the gate in this fashion doesn't count as Withdrawing from Combat.

Here they are joined by Hauld Austri, his huscarls, and two Hearth Knights per hero (in addition to any surviving allies from the initial part of the scene). Remember, Hauld Austri is a Wild Card and so increases the number of Hearth Knights accordingly. Facing them down are six goblin warriors per hero, one ogre, and a shaman. The goblins begin 8" away from the heroes and surround them on three sides. The characters and their allies must begin within 6" of the gates.

If the heroes don't move to reinforce the gate immediately, the goblins slowly begin to overpower the defenders. For each round the characters delay, one huscarl *and* two Hearth Knights are slain. For every two huscarls slain, Austri takes one wound. As above, if the heroes state their intention to move toward the gate at any time, they cross the compound in the blink of an eye, appearing 8" from the nearest goblin at the start of what is effectively the next round of combat—the defenders held their own during the time it took the adventurers to sprint the distance.

When the last Hearth Knight drops, Austri is automatically knocked unconscious. It is now too late for the characters to secure the gates. The goblins open the gates on the next round, allowing reinforcements to surge through.

The number of goblin warriors fighting the characters increases by two per hero. These are joined by one goblin wolf rider and his wolf mount for each hero. These begin inside the compound but no closer than 8" from the nearest hero or ally. The arrival of so many reinforcements is likely to be hard on the heroes. Don't give in to the temptation to provide the party extra help—their inaction has endangered the fort and they are paying the price.

Ⓜ **Ogre (1):** See page 21.

Ⓜ **Goblin Shaman (1):** See page 20.

Ⓜ **Goblin Warriors (4 per hero):** See page 20.
Ⓜ **Goblin Wolf Rider (1 per hero):** See page 21.
Ⓜ **Wolf (1 per hero):** See page 21.
Ⓜ **Shield Knights (2 per hero):** See page 20. Only half of these (rounded down) have bows.
Ⓜ **Hauld Austri:** See page 19.
Ⓜ **Frost Dwarf Huscarls (7):** See page 19.

SCENE 4: ASSAULT ON THE GATE (DAY 1; 1530)

As the sun begins to sink, a small number of goblin archers let loose a volley of arrows. Have each hero make a Common Knowledge roll. With success, they know the archers are outside the effective range of their bows—the arrows will fall short.

Sure enough, the arrows don't make the fort, landing instead 24" from the palisade. However, as each one lands, a localized snowstorm erupts, blanketing the immediate area. The goblins have a limited number of *obscure* alchemical devices, which they have just launched. Under cover of the spells, the archers rush forward. Once inside the spell's area of effect, they release continuous volleys of arrows tipped with burning icewood. The first the heroes see of this are blue-white flaming streaks arcing out from the snow storms.

The goblins aren't aiming for the fort's occupants. Many of the flaming arrows slam into the mud, extinguishing on impact. A small few find flesh and bone of an unlucky defender. Some find their true target—the wooden walls of the palisade and the thatched roofs of the buildings in the main compound! Within seconds the coldfire arrows ignite the wood and thatch, producing blue flames and thick smoke. Sword Captain Beotor immediately orders all hands to extinguish the flames. Men begin rushing from their posts to combat the fires before they grow out of control.

Have each hero make a Notice roll at –2 (due to the distraction and the smoke). With success, they spy a small group of Hearth Knights suddenly vault over the palisade by the main gate. If the characters don't go to investigate, Shield Sergeant Beren rushes over to them.

> *"The goblins are attacking the main gate with a battering ram. Everyone else is busy with the fires or defending the palisade. Get over to the main gate now and stop them breaking through!" A small group of Hearth Knights rushes to your side, expecting you to lead them into battle.*

Peering over the walls, the characters see a number of goblin warriors surrounding a large, hide-covered frame. The frame is butted against the main gates, which are being subjected to rhythmic thumping by whatever is concealed beneath the hides. Lying about the gate are the bodies of four Hearth Knights, peppered with arrows and sporting vicious slashes and cuts. They are all dead.

The heavy hides are thoroughly soaked with water and cannot be ignited, even by supernatural flame. They provide full protection (+8 Armor) from attacks made against the top and sides to whatever is concealed within. Only the rear and front are exposed. In order to stand a chance at saving the gate, the heroes are going to have to go over the walls!

If the heroes leap the wall, Hauld Austri and his surviving huscarls join them at the start of round two. Otherwise, he appears as indicated in the text below.

Terrain: The hide covering is 2" wide and 3" long. It is open at both ends. Moving along the hill side except on the path is difficult ground.

Monsters: Initially there are two goblin warriors per hero. These are all within 5" of the hide framework.

Ⓜ **Ogre:** See page 21, but it is a Wild Card.
Ⓜ **Goblin Warriors (2 per hero):** See page 20. The number of warriors is the initial number present. More arrive as the battle progresses (see tactics below). Note that since Austri does not arrive until round two, he does not count toward the initial number of goblins present. His presence increases the strength of the reinforcements.
Ⓜ **Hauld Austri:** See page 19.
Ⓜ **Frost Dwarf Huscarls (7):** See page 19. Reduce the huscarls' number to allow for casualties taken during the previous scene.
Ⓜ **Shield Knight (1 per hero):** See page 20. These enter the scene only if the gates are smashed (see below).

Tactics: Should the heroes attack from behind the safety of the palisade, the goblins retreat inside the

KNOCKBACK

These rules are taken from the *Hellfrost Bestiary*.
The physical attacks of large creatures can knock over smaller foes. In order to cause knockback, the attacker must make a successful Fighting attack. The blow does not have to cause damage, however. The victim cannot avoid this—no human can hope to remain standing after being on the receiving end of a frost giant's colossal war axe.
Any opponent who is knocked back into a relatively solid object (hay bales and glass windows, for instance, are not solid) is automatically Shaken. This is treated as a separate attack, and thus a foe Shaken by an attack who is then knocked back into a solid object suffers the effects of successive Shaken results. Opponents may try to Soak any initial damage from the attack or spend bennies to remove the Shaken condition *before* the knockback is applied.
• If a creature is 2 or 3 Sizes larger than its opponent, the victim is knocked back 1" and falls prone.
• A creature is 4 to 7 Sizes larger than its opponent send the victim flying 1d4" and made prone.
• A creature 8 to 11 Sizes larger than its foe causes knockback of 1d6" and sends foes prone.
• A creature 12 or more Sizes larger knocks foes back 1d10" and sends them prone.

ogre's protective covering. As soon as the characters appear outside the compound, the goblins rush them. Their role is to protect the ogre (the same applies to any reinforcements). The goblins move to Gang Up on enemies fighting the ogre, even if this means they must Withdraw from Combat.

The ogre only switches to attacking the characters if one of them enters his protective siege tower or uses a ranged attack against him. Until then, he keeps battering away at the gate. His immediate tactics is then to use Improved Sweep, regardless of whether or not he strikes any goblins.

At the start of round two, the round Austri and the huscarls appear, another two goblin warriors per hero arrive. These have diverted from other attacks along the east wall. They begin 8" from the nearest hero or dwarf. Similar reinforcements arrive at the start of every third round thereafter (round five, eight, and so on) until the ogre is dead. There are effectively an unlimited number of goblins—only by dispatching the ogre can the character stem the tide of goblins.

Once the ogre is slain, the remaining goblins must make a Group Spirit roll. They have +2 if they outnumber the heroes and –2 if they don't. With success, they fight to the death. On a failure, they immediately turn and flee at their fastest Pace.

Gate Broken: The ogre needs to inflict 20 damage to smash the gates. He rolls d12+d8+3 (plus Wild Die). Once he achieves this, the gates are broken open and the goblins can surge through.

Should the gate be smashed, the goblins along the entire eastern wall immediately charge toward the opening. If the party remained inside, they are suddenly faced with the ogre and the goblins entering the compound. Two goblins per hero then arrive at the start of *every* round thereafter for the next five rounds. They begin 8" from the gate.

Austri and his huscarls, if not already present, arrive the round after the gate was smashed. They begin 8" away from the nearest enemy. Whether the heroes are inside or outside the compound, one Hearth Knight per hero arrives at the start of each round starting the second round after the gates were sundered. They also enter the fray 8" from any foe.

At the start of the 8th round after the gates were smashed enough Hearth Knights arrive to scare off the remaining goblins. They turn and flee as fast as their legs will carry them. Should the ogre still be alive, he fights to the bitter end, being too dumb to retreat.

FIRE DAMAGE

While the heroes were busy protecting the gate the coldfires swept through the buildings and incinerated part of the outer palisade. Remove the main barracks, the kitchen, and the stables. All that remains are short, blackened timbers. These don't impede movement.

Several sections of the palisade have burnt down. Hearth Knights are already beginning to repair the damage, watched over by comrades with bows. By dusk the damage is largely repaired. It isn't as sturdy as the original defenses and is a definite weak point, but it is the best the exhausted men can do.

DESTROYING THE BRIDGE

Once the fires are dampened, Beotor orders the outer causeway destroyed. Volleys of arrows are launched at the goblins to keep them at bay while axes are employed to cut the causeway's supports. Within the hour the defenders are isolated, trapped inside Watchgap Fort.

SCENE 5: UNUSUAL RAIN (DAY 1; 1700)

Late that afternoon the heroes are back on watch duty. Have them each make a Notice roll. There is a –2 penalty due to the low sun in the west. Those who succeed spot a volley of rocks flying through the air from the direction of the woods!

The goblins, with the aid of orc siege engineers and ogres, have constructed a pair of catapults. Even with the orcs' skill at operating artillery, the catapults are firing at the extremes of long range. Place two Medium Burst Templates 8" due west of the fort and roll for deviation as normal. Any hero who saw the incoming rocks may make an Agility roll at –2 to leap out of harm's way if the template ends over his position. Those who failed get no such opportunity.

Repeat the process four more times. All the heroes see the subsequent rocks flying through the air, and so can take evasive action. The orcs then realize they have constructed the catapults too far from the fort to be truly effective. It takes an hour to move them, by which time the sun is close to setting.

After the short bombardment, Sword Captain Beotor approaches the heroes.

"Those damn goblins have erected at least two catapults in the woods about 500 yards due west of here. Their early volleys were out of range, but you can bet your last arrow they'll move them closer during the night, ready to hit us hard in the morning. We need a small force of volunteers," he says, looking directly into your eyes, "to sneak out and destroy them before they bring the palisade down. We also need whoever is operating them killed—they obviously have some degree of skill. Kill them and the goblins might not be able to construct any more."

Assuming the characters agree to act as a strike team, Beotor continues:

"The goblins have excellent night vision. I've managed to rustle up a handful of heat mask *salves from the stores. They'll only give you an hour's grace, but it's the best we can do. I suggest you*

head out half an hour before dawn, locate the catapults, and sit tight. Once the sun is up the goblins lose their advantage. If you time your attack right, the sun will rise directly into their eyes. It might give you the edge you need.

"Hauld Austri has volunteered his huscarls. We can't afford to send too many men in case the goblins launch a surprise attack. They're unlikely to try anything serious before dawn, though—they might be able to register heat, but they're blind at spotting traps in the dark. Get some sleep, now. You'll need the rest."

The Sword Captain lurches forward suddenly, but catches himself before he falls. He removes his hand from his hip—it is stained with fresh blood.

Beotor is bleeding heavily from an arrow wound in his side. He refused medical attention in favor of his men, believing his wound was not serious. It's too late for healing except *greater healing*, the golden hour having passed. Two Hearth Knights rush to his side and carry him to the tower to rest.

HEADS' UP

As dusk falls (Dim lighting, –1), goblins archers rush to within 24" and begin launching volleys of arrows with large, bulbous heads. Many of these unwieldy missiles fall short, but several land in the compound. With horror, the defenders gaze upon the severed heads of humans, male and female; no doubt settlers whose steads were ravaged by the advancing horde. Fear begins to grow in the defenders' hearts. Unless the characters act quickly, the Hearth Knights and frost dwarves suffer demoralization.

What the men need right now is a rousing speech. With Beotor in the tower, this duty falls to the party. This requires an Intimidation or Persuasion roll (player's choice) at –4. Only one hero may make the roll, though others can add suitable encouragement through Cooperative Rolls. Any Cooperative rolls must use the same skill as the lead character. Bonuses should be applied if a player actually roleplays an inspiring speech—the better his roleplaying, the higher the bonus. The lead hero also gains +1 for each Leadership Edge he possesses—even if the player isn't a leader of men, his character might be.

Success fills the hearts of the men with righteous fury, countering their dread. A failure leaves the men dejected and frightened. During the next day, all the heroes' allies suffer a –1 penalty to Trait rolls.

SCENE 6: SILENCE THE CATAPULTS (DAY 2; 0700)

Escaping from the fort and entering the woods requires no die rolls if the heroes have used the *heat mask* salves. Otherwise, they must make Stealth rolls opposed by a Group Notice roll from the goblins. The goblins don't attack if they spot the characters. Instead, they deduce the party's likely destination. Increase the number of goblins at the artillery position from three per hero to five per hero (they were warned).

As the characters get close to the artillery, they hear horns blaring from the direction of the fort and raucous shouts. Have each hero make a Common Knowledge roll. Those who succeed realize the Hearth Knights are trying to distract the goblins and provide some noise to cover the heroes' approach.

The heroes can get to within 6 yards (12") of the front of the earth mound without the need for Stealth rolls so long as they state they are being quiet, don't talk above a whisper in character, *and* have used the *heat mask* devices. Otherwise, getting this close requires a Stealth roll opposed by the sentries' Group Notice roll. Any goblins who hear a noise immediately raise the alarm, which rouses the tents' occupants—they are ready for battle at the start of the second round.

Once the heroes are in place, give them as much time as required to formulate a plan. They should not feel pressured into making a frontal assault—in this scene they have the advantage of being able to plan, not just react.

Whether the characters wait for dawn and conduct a raid or attempt to sneak into the camp while their *heat mask* salves are still active is up to them. Use the regular Stealth rules for sneaking up on sentries. The catapults are in a clearing—the 12" the characters are in front of the camp is the edge of the tree line.

Lighting: The lighting is poor (–2) when the heroes reach the artillery site. For the next half an hour the sky gradually lightens (–1). If the characters wait until the sun breaks the horizon, Sigel favors the heroes. The sun's brilliant light washes over the artillery position. The characters have two rounds of Surprise as the enemy squints into the blinding sun.

Terrain: By the time the characters reach the catapults they have been moved into new firing positions. A low earth wall has been erected by the ogres around the front and sides of the catapults. A small cluster of tents serves as the goblins' temporary home. Two huge piles of boulders and chunks of tree trunks sit near the catapults—ammunition for tomorrow's salvoes.

The earth bank isn't particularly high, though it does provide Medium Cover (–2) to crouching characters. Using the mound as cover grants +6 Armor. Crossing it is treated as difficult ground. The tents are flimsy (Toughness 5, Armor +1) but are tall enough to block line of sight. The ammunition piles are difficult ground. They are also unstable—for each inch of movement when crossing one, the character must roll his Agility. On a failure, he slips and falls prone.

Monsters: The two catapult crews each comprise one orc siege engineer, one ogre (the loader), and four goblins who operate the crank mechanism. These are awake but in their tents and thus not visible when the characters reach the launch site. They count as inactive

sentries. Other goblin warriors are stationed around the perimeter as guards (and as reserve crew in case an ogre gets cranky and kills one of the artillerist goblins). They are active sentries.

Ⓜ **Goblin Warriors (8 + 2 per hero):** See page 20.

Ⓜ **Ogres (2):** See page 21.

Ⓜ **Orc Siege Engineers (2):** See page 21.

Ⓜ **Catapults (2):** Range: 75/150/300*, Damage: 3d10, Crew: 6, AP 12*, 4 actions to reload, Medium Burst Template; Heavy Weapon, Toughness 16 (4)

Ⓜ **Frost Dwarf Huscarls (7):** See page 19. Reduce the huscarls' number to allow for casualties taken during the previous scenes.

** Includes Siege Expert modifier.*

Tactics: The goblins, depending on their location, favor either ranged fire or swarm tactics. The latter involves positioning themselves to make use of Gang-Up bonuses. The two ogres are eager for battle and immediately wade into the fray. They don't particularly care about their goblin allies—if an ogre is adjacent to a hero, he *will* use Improved Sweep.

The two orc engineers consider their skins too important to risk in battle. They remain away from the main fighting, watching to see who emerges victorious. When it becomes obvious the characters are on the verge of victory, they turn and flee toward the main goblin lines. Conduct attempts to catch them using the Chase rules.

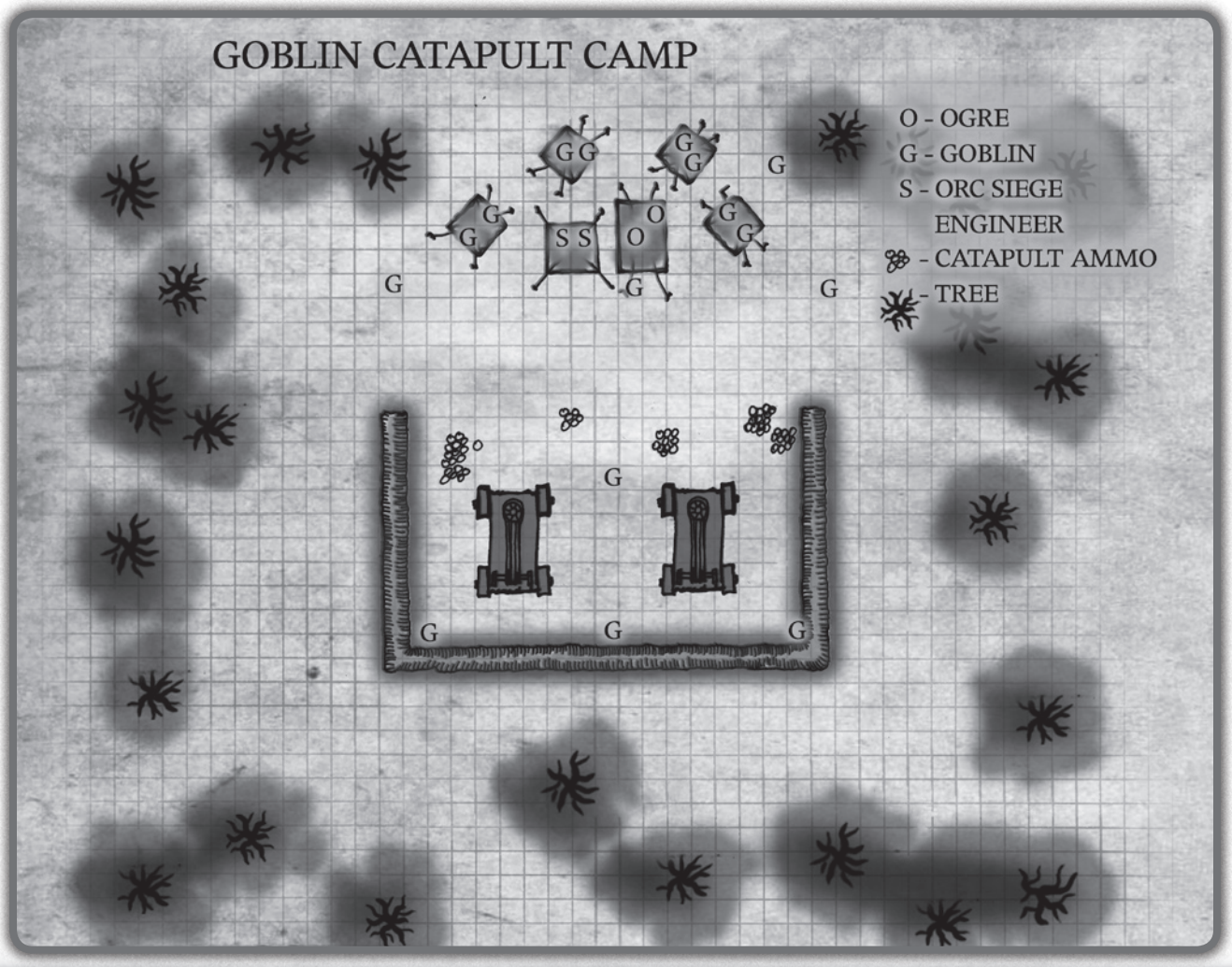
REDUCED HEALING

Because it takes time to avoid patrols drawn to the sound of fighting and return to the fort, the amount of healing available after this scene is reduced. The medics have just two Healing rolls each to share among the heroes. A third roll is permitted through Intimidation.

TACTICS

When the characters' wounds are bandaged, Beotor invites them and Hauld Austri to his office to discuss the situation. The Sword Captain's face is pale and his movements slow as a result of his previous injury. With a grim face, he details the defenders' situation.

"Things look grim," he confesses. "We've taken too many casualties and the men are exhausted. De-



stroying the catapults has bought us a little time, but the goblins will soon regroup and come again. We don't have enough men to hold the perimeter in strength. I'm taking all the bows from the sentries in the main compound and giving them to the civilians. They'll man the second palisade, keeping out of sight until the goblins approach. That should catch them by surprise."

(He points to the hero who has shown the most leadership initiative so far.) "I'm placing you in charge of calling the archers. When you feel the time is right, signal them to begin firing.

"The main compound is lost, but I won't give it up without a fight. Rather than defending the palisade, we're going to let the goblins enter and then counterattack from hiding. It's a risky strategy, but it's our best hope of weakening them. Hide the men in what buildings are left or have them play dead in the open. We'll garb some civilians in the armor and helms of fallen Knights to make it look like we've fallen back to the second line of defense.

"When the goblins enter the compound, you'll signal the attack. That should catch them by surprise. Fight as long as you can, then withdraw to the upper palisade—we'll keep the gates closed until you approach. Good luck."

SCENE 7: THE OUTER COMPOUND (DAY 2; 1500)

Hauld Austri, his remaining huscarls, and a small group of Hearth Knights take up positions near the main gate. A contingent of Hearth Knights takes the east wall. The characters are assigned the area along the west wall.

The goblins attack as expected, laying down siege ladders to create temporary causeways over the outer ditch. En masse, they begin to pour over the walls. Place the goblins on the tabletop, and then ask the players to place their characters. This way, the heroes have the advantage of being able to see where the goblins are and the GM cannot use information the goblins don't possess. On the first round of combat, the goblins are automatically surprised.

At the start of round three, the goblins' secret weapon leaps over the palisade—orc berserkers! These ferocious warriors charge the nearest character with reckless abandon.

The archers hidden behind the upper palisade fire as a group, not as individuals. They have Shooting d6 and roll a Wild Die. They begin on Hold (Agility d6), but thereafter draw an action card as normal. Each round, the hero nominated by Beotor gets to place a single Medium Burst Template on the battlefield. This doesn't scatter if the attack roll fails—the arrows are assumed too widely dispersed to have any effect. Any creature under the template suffers 2d6 damage.

The fight continues until all the attackers are slain or the heroes are defeated, whichever comes first. Move *immediately* to the next scene when the former occurs.

- **Orc Berserker (1 per hero):** See page 21.
- **Goblin Warriors (4 per hero):** See page 20.
- **Goblin Rider (1 per hero):** See page 21.
- **Wolf (1 per hero):** See page 21.
- **Shield Knights (3 per hero):** See page 20.

SCENE 8: A NOBLE DEATH (DAY 2; 1503)

Assuming the former, the war-weary heroes spy the Hearth Knights protecting the eastern wall break and run for the tower—huge numbers of goblins are beginning to pour over the defenses. Toward the gate, Hauld Austri and his men have been surrounded. Before the characters can act, Austri is struck a mighty blow to the head by a hulking ogre. The dwarf nobleman drops to the ground.

The huscarls (or Hearth Knights) refuse to retreat without their lord's corpse. With no avenue of escape, they prepare to sell their lives deeply. This is the cue for the characters to race to the rescue. If they race to the dwarves' aid, the Hearth Knights who were protecting the eastern wall see them and rally—they form a line protecting the causeway to the tower. A Knight shouts over to the characters—"*Rescue the dwarves! We'll hold them here as long as we can!"*

The survivors and the fallen Austri are completely surrounded. The ogre stands adjacent to the noble's body. The heroes arrive on the scene 8" from the nearest enemy figure. Run the fight as normal. The huscarls are enraged at their lord's death. Treat them as being under the effects of the Berserk Edge. This does not apply if the huscarls have been replaced by Hearth Knights.

The scene can successfully end one of two ways. First, the attackers can be slaughtered. Although other goblins are rushing into the compound, the characters have enough time to gather up the dwarf and retreat to the tower. The remaining Hearth Knights cover their withdrawal and the archers pepper the goblins with arrows. Second, the characters can pick up Austri during the fight and run. Picking up the corpse is an action. Any hero carrying the body moves at half Pace (if he runs, calculate his full Pace for the round then halve it, rounding down). Whoever holds the body cannot use his hands.

Austri is technically dead. He is allowed a final speech, but this is cinematic license. Healing, magical or mundane, cannot revive the dwarf.

Should the characters elect to leave the dwarves to their fate, they each lose 10 Glory immediately for their ignominious deed. Worse, the Hearth Knights shun them as cowards. No Leadership Edges possessed by any character who avoided the rescue work on the Hearth Knights for the remainder of the adventure.

- **Ogre (1):** See page 21.

Ⓜ **Goblin Warriors (2 per hero):** See page 20.

Ⓜ **Frost Dwarf Huscarls (7):** See page 19. Reduce the huscarls' number to allow for casualties taken during the previous scenes. In the event all have been slain earlier, replace them with one Shield Knight per hero.

Ⓜ **Shield Knights:** See page 20. These are the survivors from the previous scene (if any).

AUSTRI'S LAST BREATH

Once back in the tower it becomes clear Austri's time in the mortal realm is at an end. Before he passes over to the next life, his eyes flutter open.

The nobleman smiles weakly. "Who would have thought the other races could be so brave," he coughs, blood flecking his matted beard. "I thank you for not leaving me to the goblins. Too many of my kin have met their fate, and I would wish it on no being.

"From this day forth let it be known that you are Dwarf-friends. Come closer." He whispers to each you a single word in the Dwarven tongue. "Speak this to any dwarf you meet. My people are bound to you by the ancient laws of our kind, and will honor your deeds this day." His shattered body is wracked by sudden violent coughing.

"I hear Tiw and my ancestors calling. It is time to go and take my seat at their table. Farewell, my friends." With that his eyes close, never again to open.

Being declared a Dwarf-friend grants the heroes a +1 bonus to Charisma when dealing with frost dwarves. In addition, if the Dwarven word Austri whispered is spoken aloud, frost dwarves instinctively know the characters are Dwarf-friends. Unless exceptional circumstances apply, the minimum result on the Reaction Table for any frost dwarf will be neutral. Note that this benefit applies to the heroes who took part in the rescue. Replacement characters do not gain this reward, even if they are taught the Dwarven honor-word.

Knowing the fort may fall, any surviving huscarls insist Austri's body be cremated. Should they be dead, one of the Hearth Knights makes the suggestion. Beotor grants them permission to light the signal beacon atop the tower and place Austri's body on the flames. The fire burns brightly throughout the night. The surviving huscarls sing ancient Dwarven dirges, honoring their ancestors and promising vengeance against all foul creatures. Frost dwarf heroes know these old songs—they are invited to join the mourning.

SCENE 9: AN EYE FOR AN EYE (DAY 2; 2300)

While the characters are grabbing a meal of barley porridge, a sentry rushes into the tower. He calls for Beotor, who climbs down from the funeral pyre to see what the commotion is.

"Sire," the Knight pants, "an orc lord has entered the lower compound. By the way the goblins defer to him, he might be one of their generals. I think the end has come, sir! He plans our doom!"

Beotor's eyes light up. "No, this isn't the end, not yet. But I think Tiw has sent us a blessing in disguise. Goblins are notoriously cowardly. They favor strength of numbers and ambushes. If we can kill that chieftain we just might demoralize them enough to force them out of the compound. A single, courageous act now could win us back what we have lost this day."

Few of the Hearth Knights look keen to venture out of the tower. Beotor glances around the room, shaking his head.

"Your comrades lie out there!" he says quietly, gesturing toward the door. "They lie on the field of battle, surrounded by goblins. Right now, those blue-skinned creatures are robbing them of their arms and armor, and preparing their flesh for a feast. Would you want your flesh devoured, your corpse defiled in unspeakable ways?

"If you will not fight for victory, fight so we may bury our comrades, our friends, with the honor they deserve."

Beotor's plan is as simple as it is audacious. The remaining defenders will rush down the slope into the main compound and immediately divide into three groups. The largest group, led by the heroes, will make for the orc chieftain. The other groups will engage the goblins, sowing confusion into their ranks and preventing them from reaching the warlord.

Knowing any charge would be thwarted before the heroes reached the bottom of the steps, Beotor draws forth a vial of silver liquid.

"This is an alchemical device," he says, shaking the vial. "When smashed, it summons forth a thick mist. It does not cover much of an area, but it should give us a chance to reach the compound. I was saving it for a suitable time. I guess this is the moment the Norns had in mind. If any spellcasters know how to produce a similar effect, let them be known to me now."

The vial contains *obscure*. Beotor's plan is to attach the vial to an arrow and launch it into the compound to conceal the area immediately in front of the bailey's causeway. Beotor encourages any spellcasters who know

blast, *fear*, *obscure*, or *stun* to use their spells to clear a path at the bottom of the steps.

Once everyone is ready, Beotor orders the civilians to man the palisade and fire flaming arrows into the remaining buildings. Light rain has dampened the thatch, but that suits the plan better—they quickly begin producing thick smoke. Once the buildings are alight, the *obscure* potion is launched, and it detonates close to the causeway. With that, the defenders surge from the tower.

DEATH AND GLORY!

The heroes emerge from the cloud 12" from the orc chieftain and 8" from the nearest goblins. The party and their allies have Surprise on the first round—the goblins don't suspect a suicide charge into the compound, and they're busy fighting fires. Run the fight as normal.

As soon as the orc chieftain is slain, the surviving goblins rout and scamper over the walls. Many are cut down, their corpses hewn by vengeful Hearth Knights and huscarls.

A loud cheer echoes through the night. Beotor quickly brings the men to order. "A brave and noble victory, but we are not safe yet. Half of you to the palisade now! The death of the chieftain and the light from the funeral pyre should keep the goblins at bay, but we must be vigilant. The rest of you, carry your fallen comrades to the tower. Switch positions every hour—none of us will sleep tonight."

- **Orc Chieftain:** See page 21.
- **Goblin Warriors (3 per hero):** See page 20.
- **Goblin Riders (1 per hero):** See page 21.
- **Wolves (1 per hero):** See page 21.
- **Hearth Knights (2 per hero):** See page 20.
- **Huscarls (7):** See page 19. Reduce the huscarls' number to allow for casualties taken during the previous scenes.

SCENE 10: LAST MAN STANDING (DAY 3; 0700)

Heroes who survived this far have undoubtedly been through hell. Now is their final moment of glory, their final chance to deal death to the enemies of the civilized races. Just before dawn, a shout from a sentry goes out—the entire goblin army has encircled the palisade and is preparing for a final assault.

Sword Captain Beotor quietly gathers the remaining defenders. "We have come a long way together these last few days," he smiles. "Because of what you have suffered, because of the men we have lost, I will not honey coat my words or make the situation sound anything than what it is.

"The goblins have taken the fort once, and they will soon be back, forcing us once more into the tower. If we don't die of thirst, we'll likely be burned alive or crushed once they construct new catapults. We are doomed, but we need not die like old men.

"The Norns wove the skein of our lives when we were born and, it seems, the fates have decreed we would die together. But not in here, not within these walls. I for one will not die without a sword in my hand.

"When I face Scaetha's judgment, I want to be able to tell her I died fighting, I died serving the peoples of Rassilon, I died fulfilling the oath I took when I became a Hearth Knight. There is no such thing as a good death, but we can at least have honorable and meaningful deaths.

"Who will join me in one last charge, in dispatching more fell goblins before we ourselves make our final journey? Who will take the battle to the enemy?"

Without hesitation the Hearth Knights begin to reply—"Aye!" "I'm with you!" "I shall honor my oath!" Not one refuses, not one refuses the call, despite knowing only certain death awaits. It's up to the characters to decide if they want to go out in a blaze of glory or suffer an ignoble death by being burned alive in the tower in the near future.

Beotor suggests every man make his peace with his patron deity. Once everyone is ready, the captain dons his helmet and draws his sword. He signals a knight to withdraw the bar on the gate. *"Charge!" he roars, rushing out in the dim light of the rising sun.*

The goblins and their allies should be placed no closer than 4" to the far end of the main causeway—the remainder are at the outside the fort. The sudden charge of the remaining defenders catches them off guard—they are caught by Surprise on the first round of combat. Run the fight as normal.

At the start of each round after the first, another 2d6 goblin warriors enters the battle (roll each round). They begin 12" from the nearest character on the outside of the fort. The battle rages for exactly ten rounds.

At the start of the 11th round, several deep, booming horns are heard blowing. Startled, the goblins look around to see a host of cavalry thundering across the hills—Hearth Knight reinforcements have arrived, along with a veritable army of conscripted militia. Panicked, the goblins immediately turn and flee, only to be cut down where they stand by the cavalry. The siege of Watchgap Fort is finally over.

- **Goblin Shaman (1):** See page 20.
- **Goblin Warriors (6 per hero):** See page 20.
- **Goblin Rider (2 per hero):** See page 21.
- **Wolves (2 per hero):** See page 21.
- **Ogre (1 per 2 heroes):** See page 21.

Ⓜ **Sword Captain Beotor:** As Sword Knight (p. 20) except he is a Wild Card. He has taken two wounds.

Ⓜ **Shield Knights (15):** See page 20.

Ⓜ **Frost Dwarf Huscarls (7):** See page 19. Reduce the huscarls' number to allow for casualties taken during the previous scenes.

Ⓜ **Civilians (30):** See page 20. Every civilian joins the charge. For ease they all use the same stat block.

AFTERMATH

The commander of the reinforcements, a Lance Knight by the name of Ulric Graymane, orders priestesses of Eira accompanying the army to tend to the injured. Assume any wounds taken by the characters in the last scene are healed.

"I am sorry we could not get here sooner," he says, surveying the battlefield. "We learned the goblins were planning a major offensive. We'd already left Hellfrost Keep, gathering spearmen as we rode. We sent riders, but they obviously did not arrive, for your orders were to abandon the fort and join us in preparation for a mass battle. When we saw no sign of you on the road we feared the worst—the smoke on the horizon and stench of death on the wind as we neared seemed to confirm those fears.

"I have no doubt skalds will sing of this battle for generations to come. You can all be rightly proud of your achievements. Rest now; we will gather the dead and give them proper burials. Then we shall rebuild what has been destroyed. You have won a victory, a major victory, but the war never ends."

GLORY

Since the adventure is broken down into full combat scenes, Glory is awarded as for a standard adventure, not a Mass Battle. Note that although no individual scene has the heroes outnumbered ten-to-one, the structure of the adventure in focusing squarely on the heroes' battles still means they were facing those odds overall. Hence, the heroes receive a +4 bonus to their Persuasion roll.

In addition to whatever Glory the heroes earn from their storytelling the survivors receive +2 Glory for taking part in the siege and +1 Glory for winning. Saving Austri (despite his death) earns a further +1 Glory. A character with Leadership Edges will undoubtedly have used them at some point. He earns an extra +1 Glory. Any hero who showed exceptional leadership skills, with or without having any Leadership Edges, should be awarded +1 Glory.

Additionally, the party receives one favor from the Hearth Knights for every party member who started the battle (see the free download entitled **Favors**, available at **www.tripleacegames.com**). Round fractions up.

THEY ALL DIED

Should all the characters die in the same combat scene, the GM has two choices. First, he can stop the adventure, let the players build new characters, and then have them turn up in Scene 10 to aid in the liberation of the fort. Run a small combat against some goblin warriors and wolf riders.

Second, he can rule the fort falls to the goblins and reinforcements were never on their way. With no Hearth Knight presence behind their lines, the goblins, quickly joined by orcs, ogres, and giants, storm east into Heligioland. Don't think of this as a failure—the heroes' deaths have created the focus for an entire campaign.

OPTIONAL ENDING

As written, the adventure ends once the siege is broken. With Watchgap Fort successfully defended and now reinforced and the element of surprise lost, the frost giant jarl has no choice but to abandon his plans of conquest. However, if the party is largely unscathed and is still eager to bathe in blood, the GM can use this optional ending.

The frost giant jarl has stepped up his invasion plans. Barely a half-day's ride from the fort a great column of goblins, orcs, wolves, dire wolves, ogres, and cliff giants is advancing on Heligioland. Advanced scouts have already alerted the Hearth Knights to the army's presence. The Lance Knight Ulric intends to strike first, before the army can enter Heligioland and split into separate columns. This will be no siege, but a lightning attack designed to shatter the enemy's resolve in one blow.

Conduct the fight using the Mass Battle rules. All the necessary details are given below.

COMMANDERS & TOKENS

Allies: Sir Ulric, a Wild Card, leads the allied army. He has Knowledge (Battle) d10, Spirit d10, and the Cry Havoc Edge. If a player character has better command talents, Sir Ulric is content to let him lead the army—Sir Ulric wants victory, not glory, and if a better commander is available he happily defers authority.

Enemy: The jarl's forces are commanded by a cruel orc chieftain. The chieftain is also a Wild Card. He has Knowledge (Battle) d8, Spirit d10, and the Cry Havoc and Death Before Dishonor Edges.

Tokens: The jarl's army is far superior in terms of number but not in the quality of its troops. Sir Ulric also has the A Few Good Men Edge, which is already factored in. The enemy begins with ten tokens and the Hearth Knight force with just five tokens.

MODIFIERS

Tokens: Calculate as normal.

Artillery: The orcs and goblins possess siege weapons, but are unable to deploy them before the battle commences. Neither side gains any modifiers.

Terrain: The Hearth Knights know the local landscape well. Sir Ulric places his forces behind a line of low hills. This gives the orc commander a –1 penalty to his Knowledge (Battle) rolls for the first round (see Battle Plan below).

Morale Modifiers: The Hearth Knight army can retreat, but are loathe to do so as this would leave eastern Heligioland open to assault. As such, they receive +1 to Morale rolls. Caught by surprise, the enemy suffers a –1 penalty to its Morale roll on the first round of battle.

Battle Plan: Sir Ulric's plan is to strike hard and fast with his cavalry and then follow up with infantry while the enemy is still in column formation. On the first round, the Hearth Knights gains +2 to their Knowledge (Battle) rolls. This is reduced to +1 on the second round. By the third round, the goblins and orcs have reacted, negating the modifier.

Sir Ulric invites any heroes with Knowledge (Battle) to help formulate the strategy. During the battle, each hero with the skill may make a Cooperative roll during the Battle Roll Phase to assist Sir Ulric (or whoever is appointed commander). The characters may pool their tactics and assist the same roll if they desire, but each character only gets one roll during the entire engagement. This represents their tactical input into the plan being used.

While the Lance Knight understands all the characters fought like heroes during the siege, he is not prepared to risk his meager forces by having inexperienced adventurers provide battle advice. As such, the roll may not be attempted unskilled.

Characters in Mass Battles: During the first round, the enemy column presents a small front and limits how many of their troops can engage. Ignore the difference in tokens on the first round only—the heroes have a +1 bonus to their attack rolls.

REWARDS

Award Glory for the adventure as detailed above for completing the main adventure, and then factor in the Mass Battle Glory for this scene as normal.

With a Hearth Knight victory, the enemy force is broken—the threat to Heligioland is over (for now). An enemy victory leaves Heligioland exposed. It will be many months before a second army can be raised to engage the raiders, during which time they loot and burn their way across the countryside.

A loss shouldn't be seen as a total failure or the end of the GM's campaign. Rather, it gives the GM a source of future adventures based around the invasion. Perhaps the characters are asked to drum up support from the various settlements. Maybe they are employed by the Hearth Knights to conduct commando raids against enemy commanders or supply trains. In the worst case scenario they might be required to help evacuate settlements in the advancing army's path.

BESTIARY

FROST DWARF

HAULD AUSTRI GIANTBANE

Hauld Austri's kin are nobles of Karad Marn. For the last sixty years they have dedicated their lives to recapturing their city from the orcs. Austri has, much to his disgust, been sent south with a small detachment of bodyguards to enlist aid in their crusade. So far he has met with little interest. He is currently resting up in the fort before heading back north along the trade road that runs alongside Frostwater and White Lake in a final bid to drum up support.

Dour and taciturn, he has little love for humans and their greedy ways. As with all dwarven nobles, he is a man of action who leads from the front.

If Austri didn't use his Norn charm in *Wrath of the Goblins* he still carries it. Similarly, if you never played that adventure, then the noble has one charm added to his gear.

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Guts d10, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Stealth d6, Throwing d8

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 10 (3)

Hindrances: Arrogant, Insular, Loyal, Slow, Stubborn

Edges: Berserk, Combat Reflexes, Command, Connections (Dwarf nobles), Favored Foe (giants), Improved Frenzy, Improved Sweep, Noble, Tough, Snow Walker

Languages: Dwarven, Giant, Orcish, Trader

Gear: Plate corselet (+3), chain limbs (+2), open helm (+3), battle axe (Str+d8), medium shield (+1 Parry), two throwing axes (Range: 3/6/12, Damage: Str+d6).

Special Abilities:

* **Mountain Born:** Dwarves suffer no penalties for difficult ground in mountains or hills.
* **Heat Lethargy:** Frost dwarves have –1 to all trait rolls in temperatures over 70 degrees.
* **Low Light Vision:** Dwarves ignore penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
* **Winter Soul:** Frost dwarves have +2 to Vigor saves to resist the effects of cold and +2 Armor to resist ice or cold attacks.

WARRIOR

The warriors are Austri's huscarls, his personal bodyguards. Any hero attempting to approach their

lord without permission quickly finds himself facing a snarling dwarf who cares little about social etiquette or human social ranks. The warriors understand Finnar and Saxa, but speak only Dwarven to the characters until they prove themselves as fellow warriors (such may have occurred in *Wrath of the Goblins*). The warriors are named Andvari, Dori, Ginnar, Lit, Nothri, Onar, and Vestri (the eldest).

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d8

Charisma: –2; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Hindrances: Insular, Loyal, Slow

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Frenzy, Sweep, Tough, Snow Walker

Gear: Chain mail (+2), open helm (+3), battle axe (Str+d8), medium shield (+1 Parry), two throwing axes (Range: 3/6/12, Damage: Str+d6).

Special Abilities:

* **Mountain Born:** Dwarves suffer no penalties for difficult ground in mountains or hills.
* **Heat Lethargy:** Frost dwarves have –1 to all trait rolls in temperatures over 70 degrees.
* **Low Light Vision:** Dwarves ignore penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
* **Winter Soul:** Frost dwarves have +2 to Vigor saves to resist the effects of cold and +2 Armor to resist ice or cold attacks.

HEARTH KNIGHTS

SWORD KNIGHT

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

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

Charisma: +1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 10; **Toughness:** 10 (3)

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Heroic, Loyal, Orders

Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Command, Connection (Hearth Knights), Fervor, Frenzy, Hearth Knight, Improved Snow Walker, Level Headed, Nerves of Steel, Sweep, Woodsman

Gear: Corselet (+3), chain arms and legs (+2), closed helm (+3), long sword (Str+d8), large shield (+2 Parry), winter clothing and furs.

SHIELD KNIGHT

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

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

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Heroic, Loyal, Orders

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Connection (Hearth Knights), Hearth Knight, Snow Walker

Gear: Chain vest (+2), closed helm (+3), long sword (Str+d8), medium shield (+1 Parry), winter clothing. 50% have bows (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6).

CIVILIANS

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; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: —

Edges: —

Languages: Anari, Saxa, Trader

Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), dagger (Str+d4).

ICE GOBLINS

Ice goblins, originally hailing from the far north, have grown in strength in the Winterlands as the decades and centuries have ticked by. Although they possess Infravision, ice goblins are not nocturnal by nature.

SHAMAN

Goblin shamans serve as advisors to their chieftain. Their arcane talents give them a position of respect within the tribe. It is a rare shaman who does not honor Thrym, god of winter.

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Faith d8, Fighting d6, Guts d4, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Taunt d8, Throwing d6

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

Gear: Short spear (Str+d4, Reach 1).

Special Abilities:

* **Improved Snow Walker:** Treat ice and snow as normal terrain.
* **Infravision:** Goblins halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets (round down).
* **Powers:** Shamans typically know *bolt* (icicles), *fear* (howl), *obscure* (snow cloud), and *smite* (icicles form on weapon).
* **Size –1:** Goblins stand 3–4' tall.
* **Warm Blooded:** +2 to Vigor rolls to resist the effect of cold.

WARRIOR

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

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d4, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Taunt d6, Throwing d6

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

Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1).

Special Abilities:

* **Improved Snow Walker:** Treat ice and snow as normal terrain.
* **Infravision:** Goblins halve penalties for dark lighting against living targets (round down).
* **Size –1:** Goblins stand 3–4' tall.
* **Warm Blooded:** +2 to Vigor rolls to resist the effect of cold.

WOLF RIDER

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d4, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Taunt d6, Throwing d6
Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4
Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage 2d6)
Special Abilities:
* **Improved Snow Walker:** Treat ice and snow as normal terrain.
* **Infravision:** Goblins halve penalties for dark lighting against living targets (round down).
* **Size –1:** Goblins stand 3–4' tall.
* **Warm Blooded:** +2 to Vigor rolls to resist the effect of cold.

OGRE

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12
Skills: Guts d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Throwing d6
Pace: 7; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 12 (1)
Gear: Thick hides (+1), massive club (Str+d8).
Special Abilities
* **Infravision:** Ogres halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets.
* **Improved Sweep:** May attack all adjacent foes.
* **Size +3:** Most ogres are over 8' tall with potbellies and massive arms and legs.

ORC

CHIEFTAIN

The leader of an orc tribe is always the most deadly brute in the bunch. Chiefs gain their position through defeating their predecessor in mortal combat, and are already wary of potential rivals gaining too much power.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10
Skills: Boating d8, Fighting d12, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Throwing d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 11 (3)
Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Command, Fervor, Hold the Line, Sweep
Gear: Plate corselet (+3), chain arms and legs (+2), pot helmet (+3), great axe (Str+d10, –1 Parry, 2 hands).
Special Abilities
* **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.

BERSERK

Berserks are in a state of constant frenzy, and are usually kept chained until needed.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d10+2, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d8+2, Intimidation d10, Notice d6
Pace: 6; **Parry**: 3; **Toughness:** 11 (1)
Edges: Improved Frenzy, Sweep
Gear: Leather armor (+1), great axe (Str+d10+2, AP 1, –1 Parry).
Special Abilities:
* **Berserk:** These orcs begin any encounter already berserk, as per the Edge. Their stat block reflects these changes. Wild Card berserks ignore wound penalties.
* **Fearless:** Berserks are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
* **Hardy:** Multiple Shaken results never cause a wound.
* **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.

SIEGE ENGINEER

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Siege Artillery) d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8 (1)
Gear: Leather armor (+1), short sword (Str+d6).
Special Abilities:
* **Siege Expert:** Siege engineers increase the range of siege weapons they operate by 50%, and add +2 to any AP rating.
* **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.

WOLF

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d10, Tracking d6
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4
Special Abilities:
* **Bite:** Str+d4.
* **Fleet Footed:** Wolves roll a d10 when running instead of a d6.
* **Go for the Throat:** Wolves instinctively go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly-armored location.
* **Size –1:** Wolves are relatively small.

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War Has Come to Watchgap Fort!

With night falling, the strong walls of Watchgap Fort offer sanctuary, somewhere to sleep in peace and eat a hot meal. Or so you thought, for no sooner have the heroes settled down when an alarm is raised -- a goblin army is besieging Watchgap Fort!

This adventure simulates a mass battle on the tabletop. Spread over several days, each scene is the equivalent of a Mass Battle combat round, giving the heroes first hand of experience of the battlefield.

Victory will be determined not by spoils or bodycounts, but by survival. Those who stand and fight this dark day will have their reputations assured, but should the heroes fall the gateway is open to the rest of Heligioland, and perhaps even the Hearthlands.

Will you answer the call to arms, or will your courage fail you when it is most needed?

This adventure can be played as a continuation of Shadow of Darkness or as a standalone adventure.

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Paul 'Wiggy' Wade-Williams

HELLFROST

THE HEART OF WINTER

SAGA OF THE FROST GIANTS - PART 3

OFFICIAL SAVAGE WORLDS LICENSED PRODUCT

THE HEART OF WINTER

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THE HEART OF WINTER

INTRODUCTION

This adventure is designed for a group of four Veteran characters, but can be run with more advanced or larger parties. It can be played as a standalone adventure, or as the third part of a quartet which began with *Shadow of Darkness* and *The Siege of Watchgap Fort*.

Most encounters are based on a number of antagonists per hero, and thus automatically allow for increased party size. Scaling for higher Ranks is easily handled. For each additional Rank the party is above Veteran, add one additional Extra of the most common sort to an encounter. For instance, if the text says the heroes face one cultist per hero, a Legendary party of four members would face six cultists. You might also want to add a second Wild Card frostborn priest of Thrym if the heroes are particularly powerful. As always, an adventure is designed to be fun for the players—it needs to be challenging for their characters, not suicidal.

The adventure takes place in mid Sowanmonan and is set in the Hearthlands. As the adventure unfolds, so the temperature will lower dramatically. As such, the GM should pay attention to the characters' winter clothing. See the *Savage Worlds* rulebook for the effects of cold weather and the *Hellfrost Player's Guide* for how the rules work in this setting.

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

Treasure: Each cultist has mundane treasure worth 2d6 gs. Ice goblins carry just 1d6 gs.

PLOT BACKGROUND

Five centuries ago a terrible host of ice trolls, frost giants, ice goblins, Hellfrost dragons, and other foul creatures swept out of the north, ravaging everything in their path. Once through Hellfrost Pass, the northern hoard divided its forces. One force punched due south, into what is now Midmark. At the base of the Tower Hills the Saxa drew up their battle lines, aided by their cousins in Sutmark, Ostmark, and Veermark. Here they stood, here they died, and here they won.

The engagement did not mark the beginning of the end of the Blizzard War, though it was a pivotal battle, for it halted the Hellfrost army's advance south and freed the Saxa to march north and join up with their embattled allies. Skalds sing of the mighty battle, of how the blood of the Saxa melted the ice and snow, of how heroes were made and broken. What they do not sing about is "The Heart of Winter."

Before the Blizzard War began, Thrym gave each of his generals a sliver of his frozen heart. Relics of truly awesome power, these fell devices were intended to shroud the Hearthlands in perpetual winter. Fortunately for the civilized races, few were ever employed, and those that saw use were quickly hunted down and smashed by the clerics of Kenaz and Sigel.

The army that strove to conquer Midmark carried a sliver of Thrym's heart, known as the Heart of Winter. After capturing the Tower Hills they excavated a great chamber far beneath the ground in which to house the artifact. From here, they hoped, it would cast a white shroud over the southern lands. Before it could be activated, the Saxa triumphed in battle. Unknown to the Saxa and forgotten by the defeated Hellfrost army, the Heart of Winter has lain undisturbed for almost five hundred years, dormant but still eager to fulfill its purpose.

Cultists of Thrym uncovered ancient documents in the far north referring to the Heart of Winter. Through diligent research, torture, and fortune they identified its location and secretly began digging. Less than twenty miles from the nearest settlements, the enemies of civilization labored long and hard. After many long months, they located their prize.

With the artifact uncovered, they prayed to Thrym for guidance. The winter god responded. Through visions, he ordered a frost giant jarl to send a frost giant priest to complete the activation ceremony. As the adventure be-

gins, the terrible ritual is mere hours from completion. It may be spring in the Hearthlands, but winter is coming.

THE VILLAGE OF TORTON

The village of Torton ("Thunor's Enclosure") sits on the road between Hamna and the Crystalflow Confederacy town of Scathmoor. Before the Anari stamped their dominance on what is now Midmark, Torton was known as Aithton ("Aith's Enclosure"), after the local jarl who founded the site. It began as a small farming stead of little importance.

Although the citizens were farmers, they honored Thunor over Eostre, praying to him for ample rain and warm winds during the summer months, and beseeched him to hold off the winter storms until after harvest. To show their dedication, they carved a huge stylized storm dragon into the chalk hill overlooking their village. Worship at the dragon, which also served as Thunor's temple, attracted a powerful air spirit, which took up residence within the carving. Offerings were made to appease it, but the citizens did not treat it as a god. In their eyes, it was simply a messenger of Thunor.

After Midmark was conquered, the Anari developed Scathmoor as a trading center. Under the rule of Anari overlords, Aithton (the name was retained) grew in prosperity thanks to its location along the new trade road.

Then, during the Blizzard War, Aithton was leveled. Time obliterated what little ruins remained. Grass covered the chalk dragon, erasing it from the physical landscape. The passage of years (and the Saxa'a burning desire to overthrow the Anari) erased its existence from memory. Scant folk tales spoke of a white dragon on a hillside, but no one could tell of its exact location.

The lands now known as Midmark finally threw off the yoke of Anari repression in 119 IR. The Saxa once again began to reclaim the land. Around 135 IR, a priest of Thunor (some legends say he was a paladin) travelling from Hamna to Scathmoor witnessed lightning dancing across the hillside. Oral traditions claim the lightning took the form of a miniature storm dragon, though there is no corroborating written testimony. Taking it as a sign from his deity, the priest began scraping away the grass and soil. Whether fate or divine intervention guided his hands is not recorded, but the priest uncovered part of the dragon's wings—carved centuries ago in the shape of lightning bolts.

Within the month the priest had revealed the entire dragon. He immediately declared it a miraculous sign from Thunor and consecrated the site as a temple. Thunor's pleasure at this act was quickly made evident, for the valley beneath the hill enjoyed warm summers thanks to the south wind and ample rainfall. The uncovering of the dragon and consecration of the site also reawakened the dormant air spirit, which once again became revered by the valley's inhabitants.

Within a few years, a tiny farming community had grown up around the dragon. Named Torton, in honor of Thunor, the village slowly grew in size and prosperity as the years passed by and trade routes reopened. The formation of the Crystalflow Confederacy, and the increased traffic along the trade road linking distant Ostmark to the rest of Rassilon, was a major boost to Torton's economy. And so, for the better part of four centuries, the villagers have worshipped Thunor and enjoyed favorable seasons.

Torton is unusual in that it is not protected by a palisade or ditch. The air spirit watches over the valley and its inhabitants, and Torton's sizeable militia (and the fury of its clerics) is an added deterrent to raiders. Torton is currently home to 358 inhabitants (including those at the outlying farms).

THE CHALK DRAGON

Known to the locals as Stormbrother, the air spirit inhabiting the dragon is fully sentient. A devoted minion of Thunor, it bestows certain benefits upon those who appease it and worship Thunor. Although it plays no significant part in this adventure, its powers are detailed below for possible future use and to give GMs an example for creating their own guardian spirits.

* Stormbrother hears every sound in the valley it watches over (Notice d12 + Wild Die if listening for specific noises). This extends from hilltop to hilltop across the valley (about half a mile), and a mile in either direction along the valley floor. It has no interest in the petty politics and intrigues of mortals, though it is not beyond eavesdropping just to pass the time.
* Stormbrother alerts the villagers to impending trouble by communicating with the village priest using an innate power similar to *voice on the wind*.
* Stormbrother can bestow *fly* on mortals. However, it only does this on holy days to Thunor, thus allowing the villagers to take to the air and worship Thunor.
* It can cast *bolt* (lightning), *knockdown* (strong wind), and *whirlwind* when called upon by the village's priest of Thunor.

These spells are cast with a d12 arcane die and Wild Die, suffer no range modifiers, and can affect targets anywhere within 500 yards and line of sight of the chalk dragon's eye. However, power comes at a price. A terrible storm sweeps through the region a few days after the spirit's help is requested, a reminder that Thunor is both benevolent and cruel, and should never be taken for granted.

ARRIVAL IN TORTON

The adventure assumes the heroes are travelling through Midmark, one of the major Saxa realms of Ras-

silon. The GM is free to transpose the adventure to any realm, altering names as necessary, but ideally the region should have Thunor as one of its major deities. The party's reasons for being on the open road are left to the GM to work into his current campaign.

The endless rolling hills covered in heather and gorse are becoming monotonous. For the last few days, the only signs of life have been herds of goats and sheep, evidence of steads somewhere in the landscape, but now, something else has caught your eye. Up ahead, above the Tower Hills, small, dark objects are circling and wheeling in the sky.

The objects are too distant to be discerned clearly without the aid of magic. Use of *farsight* reveals the objects are predominantly kites fluttering high in the wind. However, darting among them are several flying people. Some wear robes of varying shades of blue, while others appear dressed as peasants. All are smiling widely and apparently shouting, though the spell does not allow the caster to discern their words and the flyers constant motion stymies attempts at lipreading. Without this spell, the party must reach their own conclusions as to the nature of the objects.

Assuming the objects arouse the party's interest and they move toward them, they eventually get close enough to identify the flying objects for what they are. A tall hill blocks the adventurers' view of who is flying the kites, though, forcing them to venture onward to discover their identity.

As you near the brow of the hill you hear a series of long whistles and musical notes drifting tunelessly on the wind. Stepping onto the crest, you cast your eyes down on a large village of thatched and wood buildings. Brightly colored banners and wind socks attached to long poles wave and dance in the steady breeze, which, this time of year, blows from the south, bringing warm air to the Hearthlands and staving off the frigid, northerly wind. A windmill stands nearby, its vanes turning in steady motion.

Clustered in the center of the village are more long poles. Attached to the top are brass dragon heads with open maws. Blue banners flutter behind the heads, like the body of a great dragon gliding through the sky. Young children are rotating the poles, ensuring the dragon mouths are always facing into the wind. As the wind rises and falls, so the bronze heads produce different musical tones.

A large group of people are standing at the base of a steep hill, away from the houses. Many of them are controlling the kites which swoop above the village. Nearby, children are giggling and laughing as an air elemental lifts them up and down and spins them around, though only a few feet off the ground.

Dominating the slope of the hill facing the village is a colossal chalk figure; a stylized dragon with lighting bolts for wings.

Elsewhere in the village there are obvious signs a market is taking

place. Brightly colored stalls are arranged in lines down the main street, villagers are roasting pigs or boars over hot coals, and a skald can be seen entertaining a small audience. By his sweeping gestures, whatever tale he retells has to do with the wind.

Any followers of Thunor immediately recognize what is taking place. Other heroes must make a Knowledge (Religion) roll to understand the events they are witnessing. The citizens are honoring Thunor, praying for warm winds and plentiful rain to benefit their crops during the short summer months. The kites are prayer kites, carrying messages to the god. The chalk carving is likely the local temple; the dragon a representation of a storm dragon, one of Thunor's major symbols.

FLY A KITE

Whether the party stands and watches or makes its way down the slope toward the village, one of the flyers swoops down. He comes to a halt a few yards ahead of them, still hovering in the air.

"Greetings, strangers," he calls. "Welcome to Torton. I am Unroch ap-Adalbert, Thunderson of Thunor. If you come in friendship then pray, join our celebrations. But be warned if deceit or violence is in your heart, for great Thunor, lord of the sky, watches down on our festivities." With that, he takes back to the sky, his blue robes fluttering loudly.

All Saxa heroes know Torton literally means "Thunor's enclosure" in the local Saxa dialect. In this case, it relates to the valley between the hill the heroes crossed and the one bearing the dragon figure.

On nearing the village, a comely young maiden of barely sixteen summers approaches the group, a cheerful grin on her freckled face. By her height she is Saxa, but her dark hair points to Anari blood. Clutched in her hands are a bundle of strings, to which are attached a dozen or more kites.

"Ignore Thunderson Unroch," she sighs. "He gave the caution about Thunor watching over us, right? Here," she says, pulling a kite string from her hand and offering it to you, "have a kite. Just write a prayer on it, come join the others, and launch it into the air. The wind will carry your words to Thunor."

The girl, Anbeth Wigmundsdohtor, refuses any offers of money for the kites. She hands one to any character who wants one. Then she leads them through the village toward the kite flyers. During the short trip she is happy to answer any questions the party may have. Likely questions and Anbeth's answers are detailed below.

Q: What is going on in the village?

A: *"Summer is coming! Every year we honor Thunor so he will send us warm winds and rain for the crops. We hold a market and invite our neighbors to use our temple."*

Q: Shouldn't there be a storm?

A: *"Usually, yes, but Unroch said the omens were good for this day, storm or no storm."*

Q: Where is the temple?

A: *"Over there—the chalk storm dragon. Thunor hates being confined, so we honor him outside."*

Q: How long does the festival last?

A: *"Three days. One day for the south wind, one for the east, and one for the west. We don't honor the north wind. Unroch says that empowers Thrym, not Thunor. This is the first day, so you've arrived in time to see the whole festival."*

Q: What it is chalk dragon for?

A: *"That's really old. The skalds say it was carved before the Anari stole our lands and forced us into slavery. When our people returned to their ancestral lands, the dragon was lost beneath the turf. A priest of Thunor was walking through the valley when he saw lightning dancing across the hill. He dug down and uncovered part of the dragon's wings. After he uncovered the whole thing he had it consecrated as a temple and founded the village. Thunderson Unroch claims the priest was one of his ancestors, but no one takes that claim seriously.*

"But it's not just a carving; a spirit lives in it. We call it Stormbrother. That's how we can fly." She gestures to the flyers high above. "We make offerings, and if the spirit is pleased it uses its powerful magic to lift us up on the winds. I've never done it, though. My father says I should be married with babies before I risk my neck."

Q: Who are your parents?

A: *"Ah, you mean am I of mixed blood? Don't worry, I get that a lot from our rural neighbors. You'd think we still hated the Anari or something. My father is a Saxa farmer, Wigmund Aelfredsunu. My mother, Thunor guard her soul, was the daughter of an Anari merchant from Drakeport. Father met her at one of these festivals. Eventually her father and my father's father reached an agreement and allowed them to marry. She died of black lung when I was seven."*

Q: Who runs the village?

A: *"That depends on who you ask. Technically, it's Ridder Coenmund, but Thunderson Unroch likes to think he's in charge because he can talk to Stormbrother and he leads the militia. They get on well enough most of the time."*

Q: A cleric of Thunor leads the militia?

A: *"That's what I said. It goes back to the village's founding. From what I know of Thunor, he doesn't like tyrants. Not that Ridder Coenmund is a tyrant, but his not having control of the militia prevents him from being able to unjustly enforce his will on us. My father says it's a political balancing act—Coenmund can never obtain full control, and Unroch cannot pass laws. I guess they need each other for the village to run smoothly."*

Q: Is there an inn?

A: *"Aye, the Four Winds. People are always staying there, so it must be nice."*

AIR SPELLS

All spells cast by clerics of Thunor, eir elementalists, or those which use an air trapping are cast at +2. This bonus won't last much longer, though. Any hero who wants to use *fly* to join the celebrations may do so. The locals cheer and clap as he takes to the skies. The kites are averaging forty feet above the ground, the flyers between thirty and one hundred feet. Ask the character how high he wants to fly in whole tens of feet.

THE DEAD WIND

Once the characters are ready they can release their kites into the air. Letting go of the string or having the kite fall to the ground is a bad omen. Having the strings ripped from your hands by the power of the wind is an especially good omen. Deal a card from the action deck to each hero who flies a prayer kite with a prayer inscribed. Heroes whose patron is Thunor get an extra card and pick the best, while Thundersons and Lightningsons draw two extra cards and pick the best.

A black deuce means the kite falls straight to the ground or the hero lets it slip through his fingers. The unfortunate hero immediately loses a benny. A Joker indicates the kite is whipped away by a sudden gust of wind. That hero earns a bonus benny immediately. He also gets an extra benny at the start of each session it takes to play through the adventure. This is an omen from Thunor, as the heroes soon learn.

Whether or not the characters launched kites, read the following text aloud:

A startled cry from above causes everyone present to look skyward. The flyers, every single one of them, are plummeting to the ground like stones, along with the kites and all the birds in the sky. The air elemental lifting the children vanishes, causing the youngsters to tumble to the ground. The windmill stops, the fluttering banners drop, and the dragon-head whistles cease. Even the clouds are frozen in the sky.

Important Note: From this point on, the following spells *automatically fail* when invoked: all spells cast by clerics of Thunor or eir elementalists, all spells which involve an air or wind trapping, and all spells which somehow involve the air and creatures of the air, regardless of trapping (such as *fly* and *storm*). Any spells matching these that are currently being maintained are automatically disrupted (no roll is allowed to avoid this occurrence). Other spells function as normal. Devotees of Thunor also lose the benefits of the Edge.

The caster doesn't risk the Siphoning if he's a mage—air-related spells have absolutely no magical power in them. Similarly, clerics don't risk offending their deity because the prayers never reach them.

SAVING THE FALLERS

Excluding any heroes who took to the sky, there are six villagers airborne. The falling citizens hit the ground in three rounds. It's up to the heroes if they want to try to save them. Any character who used *fly* to join the aerial celebrations takes damage at the end of the third round based on how high they said they were flying.

Any reasonable attempt to save a faller should have a chance of working, but without time to prepare adequately and because the flyers are dropping in different places it is pretty much impossible for the heroes to catch them all.

Assuming none are saved, the injuries are two deaths, three Incapacitated with multiple fractures and internal bleeding (including Thunderson Unroch), and one with a bad knock on the head and extensive bruising. Any fallers the heroes stop from slamming into the ground reduce fatalities first, then those Incapacitated. So, if two are saved then no one dies. Healers and herbalists immediately tend to the injured. The characters may assist as well. (Several of the children suffer bruises and cuts, but nothing worse).

Ⓜ **Thunderson Unroch:** See page 507.

Ⓜ **Falling Villagers (5):** See page 508.

THERE'S NO AIR

Once the fallers are on the ground, safe or otherwise, the heroes should realize that the wind dropping naturally might have affected the kites, but not the flyers, who were all held aloft with divine magic, and certainly not the birds. Eerily, there isn't a breath of wind to be felt. The effect covers a 100 mile radius, centered near the village, though unless the heroes have some means of rapid communication with folk in other parts of Rassilon they won't know this. Each day, the effect increases in radius by ten miles.

Heroes who succeed at a Vigor roll realize their breathing is unduly labored, as if it is suddenly harder to draw in air. Those who fail assume they are momentarily out of breath following the panicked rescue of the flyers. Until the adventure concludes, any character dealt a deuce in combat as his first action card in a round, must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue from shortness of breath. This can lead to Incapacitation, but not Death. One level of Fatigue is recovered with five minutes rest.

A Healing roll at –2 or a Survival roll indicates most of the birds escaped their ordeal without injury. However, none of them can take to the air, despite furiously flapping their wings. Any thrown skyward simply drop back to the earth.

On a successful Survival roll, the characters deduce that the wind hasn't simply dropped—it has completely ceased to exist. The air is unnaturally still—fanning a

cloak or similar object produces no breeze. Furthermore, they know that without the warming southerly wind, the temperature is likely to drop sharply over the next few days. With the crops planted, too many frosts this early in the year would lead to famine come fall and winter.

Clerics of Thunor trying to invoke spells realize, to their horror, that all access to their deity has been severed. Likewise, eir elementalists cannot draw energy from the elemental realm.

A Knowledge (Arcana) roll allows the hero to know these events are beyond any known magic. *Dispel* affects but a single target, and neither that nor *negate arcana* would affect the birds, cause shortness of breath, or kill the wind.

Lanterns, candles, torches, campfires, and so on burn only languidly due to the lack of wind. Reduce the radius of non-magical light sources by half. Bullseye lanterns illuminate an area 1" wide and 5" long. Normal campfires raise the temperature by just one level in a Medium Burst Template, instead of the usual two levels in a Large Burst Template. Double the amount of firewood is required to reach the normal levels of heat.

Absolutely no amount of die rolling reveals the nature of the problems besetting the village—no event such as this has ever been recorded and thus there is nothing to compare it with. Don't correct the heroes if they come up with possible causes—supposition is all they have right now.

Hopefully the heroes are intrigued enough to stay around and investigate the situation.

COENMUND'S PLIGHT

The furor quickly dies down, leaving the villagers totally stunned. None can truly comprehend what has just happened and what it means for their village. Rumors begin to spread like wildfire. Thunderson Unroch, once he regains consciousness, descends rapidly into morose babbling—he is quickly led away to his house to recuperate.

Ridder Coenmund, the secular leader of the village, quickly orders the villagers back to work, promising them the festival will continue as soon as the wind rises again. Few look convinced that is going to be any time soon. The noble then leads the heroes to one side.

"Strangers," he says, "I am Ridder Coenmund Ragnarsunu, headman of the village. Strange things are afoot in the valley, as I am sure you have noticed. The wind has not only dropped, but the air is unearthly still. Even the birds cannot fly.

"I am a leader of men and deal in earthly matters. This is beyond my comprehension. Thunderson Unroch's physical wounds will soon be healed, but I sense his mood will be ill and his mind disturbed. Until such time as he comes to terms with what happened, he is dangerous—the villagers accept his every word as truth, and we cannot afford hysteria or panic.

"So, I need men of sound mind unconnected with the village to help me discover what is happening.

On acceptance, Coenmund promises the characters 5,000 gold scields, to be divided between them. As an added incentive, if appropriate, he promises to put in a good word with Anbeth's father. Asked how he knows about any romantic interest, he smiles coyly and says, *"Words carry on the wind in a village this size."*

In addition, a successful end to the mission earns the party a number of favors with the village as a whole equal to the number of party members who began the quest. See the free download entitled **Favors** at **www.tripleacegames.com** for more information. Failure to save the crops, even if the giant was slain, earns the party half the number of favors (rounded down)—they tried, and that deserves some recognition.

Should the heroes refuse to help, Coenmund plays his trump card. It's not something he wants to do, but circumstances leave him little choice.

"You are guests in our village, welcomed as friends. Governed by the laws of hospitality, you are honor-bound to aid your host in times of crisis. That time has come, and I, as ruler of the village, invoke the ancient law and hereby order you to assist us!"

A second refusal is a serious breech of hospitality. As well as the usual penalties (see the *Hellfrost Players' Guide*), Coenmund spreads word of the adventurers' snub up and down the trade road. A –10 Glory penalty is immediately applied to every hero. Should the heroes see sense and accept, Coenmund offers no reward. The laws of hospitality place the burden of unrewarded aid on the guests.

FARMING 101

Different crops are grown throughout the year in Rassilon, though cereals, such as wheat and barley, grow only through the short summer months. Other crops are defined as cool or warm.

Cool crops require a soil temperature of 45° F to germinate, and include beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, onions, peas, potatoes, radishes, spinach, sprouts, and turnips. Warm crops germinate at 55° F. These crops consist of beans, cantaloupe, cucumbers, eggplant, peppers, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, sweet corn, and squashes.

Cool crops can thus be found in the Hearthlands and Low Winterlands, while warm crops grow only in the Hearthlands.

RUMORS AND OPINIONS

None of the villagers know 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. Don't 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 gods taking folk in rumor 7, perhaps the villager blames orcs or wolves. 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 blame Thunderson Unroch. He's always forbade us from honoring the north wind. (T) I reckon Thunor has finally taken offense and this is divine punishment." (F)
3	"My father always said we Saxa had gone soft. We need to go back to the days of human sacrifice. That always appeased the gods when they were angry." (F)
4	"There's a lot of strange folk in town, begging your pardon. Sauson the innkeeper said one of them keeps wandering off into the Tower Hills for days on end." (T)
5	"I don't know why everyone is so worried. Why has no one spoken to the Norn priestess about this?"
6	"Bad shrooms! That herbalist has poisoned us with some of those hallucinogenic mushrooms. None of this is real. You mark my words." (F)
7	"I heard from a friend that folk from other villages have gone missing. (T) He reckoned they were all devout folk, taken by the gods before the end of days comes." (F)
8	"Can't say as I can harbor a guess at the cause, but I know it means trouble. (T, but irrelevant) If this keeps up, I reckon we'll all suffocate in a few more days." (F)
9	"I reckon Edwin had it right. He said he felt something wrong in the Tower Hills a few weeks back. And he should know, man's a fine hunter. Great instincts he has, great instincts." (T)

INVESTIGATIONS

The heroes are now free to wander around the village and talk to folk as they see fit. Unless they do so, they won't 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 for reference. The GM has free reign to create names for incidental villagers. Although predominantly Saxa, there are Anari in the village and a handful of engros.

Locales of specific interest are detailed below. When dealing with the general populace, the GM should draw a card, consult the Rumors and Opinions table, and roleplay the villager's passing on of information.

TIME CHECK

By the time the heroes are invited to investigate the mystery it is midday. Because the temperature drops as the adventure progresses, 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 don't just blurt out their rumor or opinion—there is the formality of having something to drink, routine small talk, and lesser options and grumbles before the actual information the person has to share is made available.

The sun sets at 8 o'clock in the evening and rises at 7 o'clock in the morning.

TEMPERATURE DROP

For the first day the temperature is normal for spring in the Hearthlands. On the first night, the temperature drops *two* levels. As day two dawns, frost covers the ground. The temperature is now equivalent to a Hearthland winter. It stays at this level until the heroes discover the cause of the dead wind. On the fourth morning after the adventure begins (day five) the frost has killed the village's hardy crops. While there is still time for some planting, the harvest will be poor this year. No snow falls within the affected area, as the clouds are stationary. However, thick frost coats every exposed surface.

Ideally, the party will spend one or two days in the village questioning the locals. They will then venture into the Tower Hills, taking an entire day to reach their destination (this could take longer, based on the party's Overland Pace). The next day is spent continuing the journey and defeating the villains. With any luck, they'll complete the adventure in time to save the crops.

FOUR WINDS INN

The area around the inn is dotted with tents. These

belong to the visiting merchants. One tent contains a shrine to Var, god of merchants, and is serving as a makeshift temple. No cleric is present—he left after blessing the shrine.

The Four Winds Inn is unusual in that it has four doors leading into the establishment, one facing each of the cardinal points. For reasons no one can fathom, the owner, Sauson ap-Burcan, keeps the south and north doors firmly bolted. When questioned about this, his answer is always the same—*"That's how it's always been and how it always will be."*

There's no dark secret here. Sauson's father inherited the inn from his father, and he his father before him, and so on back for nigh on seven generations. The original builder, who wasn't actually a relative of the family, constructed four doors, one for each of the four winds. When Sauson's family took over the running, they bolted two of the doors simply because folk kept leaving them open. Over time this has been forgotten, and now it's just a family tradition.

Sauson lives with his wife, Irene, his son, Valeray, who runs the kitchen, and his twin daughters, Carelia and Edith, who help as serving maids. During busy times (like the festival), Sauson hires two locals, Dragan and Jules to help his daughters. Though all four are of similar age, Dragan and Jules keep their eyes off Sauson's daughters—they've been belted several times in the past for "--eying up what you can't afford."

The innkeeper greets his patrons with a friendly smile, but he's always alert for troublemakers. He keeps a large club (Str+d6) under the bar in case of emergencies. Patrons who dally with his daughters are liable to find a dose of purgative added to their beer or broth (he keeps several doses just for this eventuality). Irene, a talented singer, entertains guests with songs and poems, but only after 7 p.m. Carelia and Edith both love their father dearly, but they are now 16 years old, old enough in Saxa culture to marry and start a family of their own. Carelia is plain but outrageously flirtatious; whereas Edith is a stunning beauty (Charisma +4) but extremely shy.

During the day there are 4d6 patrons present. Men represent three-quarters of the crowd. At night, the number of patrons doubles, though the mix between sexes falls to roughly equal.

Characters looking for rooms can find space in the communal bar or they can hire the last remaining double room. Six guests are staying in the inn over the festival. Sauson, a notorious gossip, is happy to reveal what he knows about his guests, so long as the heroes are drinking. In addition to these facts, he also knows two rumors/opinions.

* *"There's a skald staying in one of our private rooms. Goes by the name Olvir. Likeable enough fellow, and good at his job, but rather too fond of his own voice. Arrived yesterday for the festival, but spent the night entertaining Ridder Coenmund and Thunderson Unroch up at the lord's stead."*

* *"A couple from Hamna arrived early this morning. They're in one of the double rooms. I think their names are Horsa and Liaze. Just married, they said, and visiting to get a blessing from Thunor. Strange, but I haven't seen them since the disturbance."* (Horsa, a Saxa, and Liaze, an Anari, are indeed newly weds. That's the reason they haven't been seen. They are currently in their room).

* *"There's an engro trader by the name of Odbert. He's over in that corner, smoking some pipeleaf with a few locals. Odbert comes by every few months, sells silverware, no questions asked, and goes on his way."* (Odbert is a silversmith, but likes to maintain an air of mystery. He travels between Drakeport and Hamna regularly.)

* *"A white-haired lassie booked a private room about a month back, now. We hardly see her. Always out and about in the Tower Hills she is, often for days at a time. She's one of them Lorekeepers, looking for hidden knowledge. Speaks Trader fluently, but with a strange accent. Says her name is Angarad. Very private, she is; only comes down for meals when she's in. Haven't seen her since breakfast this morning."* (Angarad is actually a Hearth Knight on a mission. She is currently in her room. See below for details. If asked, Sauson says she has a gray and green cloak. He doesn't volunteer this information otherwise.)

* *"Last of all we have Aescric. Not sure what he does for a living. He arrived this morning and said he was*

RUMORS AND OPINIONS CONT.

10	"Thrym has killed Thunor. There'll be no wind save for Thrym's breath from now until the end of time. We should switch faiths, before it's too late." (F)
Jack	"Those old towers out in the hills contain more than just faded memories. (T) Some idiot has probably awakened a barrow dweller, and now it's cursed us." (F)
Queen	"I was speaking to Sauson the innkeeper this morning about nothing in particular. He said he had someone arrive this morning who's planning on leaving tomorrow. (T) I find that a bit of a coincidence, don't you?" (F)
King	"Want to hear something funny, to lighten the mood? Oeric, he runs the local store, bought in a batch of potions to help folk fly! Who needs them now, eh? He must be spitting feathers, the old miser." (T)
Ace	"Skalds say this entire area is bathed in the blood of Saxa who died in the Blizzard War (T, but irrelevant). We haven't honored them properly. This trouble is being caused by their angry ghosts." (F)
Joker	The GM may either draw two cards or invent one completely fictitious but plausible rumor as a red herring.

heading out tomorrow. He hasn't left his room since he arrived." (Aescric is a paladin of Freo. He carries an important message for the queen of Midmark, and has royal seals to prove it. He is headed for Nordmark.)

Save for Angarad, none of the guests are of importance to the adventure. As strangers, they haven't been here long enough to form an opinion or learn any rumors. They corroborate Sauson's version of them or set the record straight where the innkeeper erred, but have little else to add.

Ⓜ **Olvir the Skald:** See page 508.

Ⓜ **Angarad Deocilunon:** See page 508.

Ⓜ **Aesric the Paladin:** As villager (page 508) except he has Faith d8, Arcane Background (Miracles), Fleet Footed, and four spells of the GM's choice from his god's list.

Ⓜ **Other Guests (3):** Use villager stats (page 508).

THE WHITE LADY

Angarad returned to her room after the debacle at the festival to take notes and plot a course of action. She comes down for meals at breakfast (8 am, but already passed today), lunch (around noon), and dinner (6 pm). If the heroes have left instructions for someone to tell them when she enters the inn, Carelia finds the heroes. She demands a kiss from the hero with the highest Charisma or Glory before passing on the message. Her father soon learns of this and takes "preventative action" with the character's next drink or meal.

If the characters are present when she enters or leaves, have them make Notice rolls at –2. Seasoned warriors or clerics of Tiw receive a +2 bonus. With success, the hero can tell she doesn't walk like a scholar. It's hard to detect, but she keeps an eye on the patrons as she moves between tables. A raise reveals she is someone who has seen battle—her stance, her musculature, and her gaze are all indicative of a warrior.

Angarad is posing as a Lorekeeper. She has told the story so many times in recent months she is starting to believe it herself. Only magic, such as *detect lie*, can reveal the falsehood, and even then a raise is required (success reveals only that she *may* be lying). Questioned about her reasons for being in Torton for an extended period or her visits to the Tower Hills, she replies:

"I'm a Lorekeeper. The Tower Hills are littered with old ruins and very few have been thoroughly explored. I'm slowly searching them in the hopes of finding hidden chambers that may contain lost tomes. While I'm searching the local area it makes more sense to stay at the inn than go camping. Given the choice between a soft bed and hot food and the damp grass and dried rations, which would you take?"

Questioned on her combat skills, Angarad says simply that she was not always a Lorekeeper. She does not elaborate (no one else has detected her warrior traits, so she has no cover story planned).

Angarad is actually a Hearth Knight on a secret mission. If pressed further as to why she is in the village, or if she comes to trust the heroes for aiding Torton, she reveals her story. See **The Hearth Knight** below for details. Otherwise, she sticks to her claim that she is a Lorekeeper.

If at any time the party announces its intentions to go exploring in the Tower Hills, Angarad approaches the heroes and volunteers to help. She tells her story about being a Lorekeeper in search of potential caches of lost knowledge, and claims there is safety in numbers. She is happy to prove her combat abilities in a mock duel if the heroes doubt her abilities. Parties who go without Angarad soon find her tailing them through the Tower Hills. With any luck, Angarad will end up accompanying the party (she has many useful talents). Create an Ally Sheet for her and give it to the players.

THE HEARTH KNIGHT

"All right, I'm not a Lorekeeper," she admits. "I'm a Sword Captain serving with the Hearth Knights in Hellfrost Keep. I've been sent here on a secret mission and I've been tracking a frost giant through the Marklands. Seeing one this far south is unheard of, even more so with the weather warming, so I knew he had an agenda.

"I've stayed one step behind him for several months, watching to see where he ended up and for what purpose. I lost him in the Tower Hills, but I know he's still there. And now the winds in this valley suddenly die. I don't know how, but I'm sure his presence this close to Torton is connected to recent events. If I can find him, I might be able to put a stop to this and restore normality before the freezing temperatures ruin the crops. So, since our goals are likely connected, what say we join forces and head into the Tower Hills and hunt the giant down?"

Angarad accepts any offers of help, but admits she has no idea where to start looking. The Tower Hills contain dozens of old ruins, caves, and hidden valleys. She's checked all the locales within ten miles of the village, but hasn't turned up anything useful.

Previous Adventures: If any of the heroes fought in *The Siege of Watchgap Fort* then Angarad knows of them and can recount some of their deeds. She reveals the following information.

"There's a very strong chance the frost giant I've been trailing was sent here on the orders of the same giant whose forces besieged Watchgap Fort, and whose goblins and orcs were raiding the steads in southeast Heligioland."

Ⓜ **Sword Captain Angarad Deocilunon:** See page 508.

GENERAL STORE

Torton's general store is run by Oeric Pandsunu and his brawnier, mute assistant, Hlothere. A consummate businessman, Oeric's motto is, *"You never know who'll come in next or what they'll want."*

To that end, he keeps his store well-stocked. The only things he never sells are weapons (he has a deal with the local smith), anything to do with herbalism (another deal, this time with the herbalist), animals, and food (except for rations). Any other item with a V (Village) availability can be purchased (even pygmy mammoth leather barding) at 10% above the usual rate. T (Town) items with a value of 30 gs or less can be purchased at a 75% mark up (including the usual 50% increase detailed in the *Hellfrost Players' Guide*).

He can order in C (City) availability items or buy them from passing merchants, though customers have to wait 2d4+2 days and pay three times the usual cost (again, including the standard markup).

He keeps a small stock of alchemical devices. Only the spell names are given here—the GM should add his own descriptions as he feels. Prices are per potion.

* *2 x aim* (125 gs). He keeps these in stock for Edwin the hunter (see page 11) who is slowly losing his eyesight. He charges Edwin only his cost price and Edwin gives him game in return.

* *1 x confusion* (250 gs): Oeric keeps this behind the counter, hidden from view. It is part of his store security, but he's the sort of man who'd sell his mother.

* *2 x healing* (110 gs). Each cures a single wound taken within the "golden hour."

* *4 x voice on the wind* (150 gs). Always handy for merchants who want to communicate with contacts in Scathmoor and alert them to their imminent arrival.

When the heroes enter the store, Oeric has a face like a thundercloud, while Hlothere is silently chuckling while stacking the shelves. Questioned on the reason for his sour face, Oeric dumps a dozen bottles on the table.

"I'm ruined!" he scowls, thumping the counter. "Ruined! Look, look!" He waves a bottle in your face, but his frantic motion makes it impossible to read the label. "I bought in two dozen flying potions and now they're totally useless! Var is going to note this in his ledger for sure! Oh, what an afterlife I'm doomed to endure!"

Oeric planned to sell the potions for 500 gs apiece to rich visitors. That's the standard 300 gs for a Veteran spell, plus a hefty increase because the items were going to be hot sellers. Oeric bought them for 300 gs each (his alchemist friend charged extra because he knew why Oeric wanted them). Oeric accepts any offer over 300 gs initially, though he does so only after bitterly complaining that he paid more for them. He will drop as low as 200 gs, but only if the heroes buy the lot. Oeric doesn't accept promissory notes—it's hard cash or nothing.

INN PRICES

All costs are in silver scields.

Food/Drink	Cost
Breakfast (porridge, cheese, bread)	1
Cheap meal (one course)	5
Good meal (two courses)	10
Excellent meal (three courses)	15
Anari brandy, per mug	9
Imported beer, 4-pint pitcher	6
Local beer, 4-pint pitcher	2
Mead, per mug	2
Local wine, 1-pint pitcher*	3
Accommodation/Extras	**Cost**
Space in stables	1
Bar common room	2
Shared room (2-person)	4
Private room	8
Bath (no soap)	2
Laundry service (per person)	1
Stabling, with oats, per horse	5

* Carrot, elderflower, nettle, potato, strawberry, or turnip

A lot of people pass through Oeric's shop and he picks up gossip. He knows two random rumors/opinions.

Ⓜ **Oeric:** Use Villager stats. See page 508.

Ⓜ **Hlothere:** Use Villager stats, but add Brawny and Strength d10.

HUNTER

Edwin Bjornsunu is a hunter by trade. He keeps the village shop stocked with rabbit, game birds, venison, and wild boar. The skins he usually sells on, via Oeric the storekeeper (see page 11). Edwin had a strange encounter in the Tower Hills a few weeks ago. While he's told some of the story, he has never revealed the whole truth.

Edwin is hospitable when the heroes call on him. He offers them soup and bread, and a mug of weak ale. Before they can ask about what he saw, Edwin starts talking.

"Save your breath; I know why you're here." Edwin takes a seat by the fire, spreading the embers with a poker before adding another log. "It was a few weeks ago now, maybe a month. I was in the Tower Hills hunting rabbits as normal when a fog rose. Nothing unusual about that this time of year, what with the warm wind hitting the cold air.

"Anyways, I got lost trying to find my way home. First time ever, would you believe? Next things I know is it's cold, really cold. There was snow and everything, but only in the air, not on the ground.

I peered into the gloom and…and…look, I know it sounds stupid, but I swear on Ullr's bowstring I saw a giant pair of legs walking past. Well, I turned and ran as fast as these tired legs would carry me. Fog lifted after a mile or so, and that was the end of that day's hunting."

Edwin can't recall any details about the legs, except he only came up to the knee. Edwin's poor eyesight (see below) combined with the fright of seeing the legs has fogged his memory—the hunter was actually on his knees at the time the legs passed by. The pair of enormous legs belonged to the frost giant sent here to oversee the final stages of the ritual. He used *fog cloud* to hide his passage through the hills.

A character who succeeds in a Notice roll at –2 realizes Edwin is badly shortsighted. Questioned about this, the hunter admits his eyesight isn't what it used to be. He claims to be taking special medicine, but is evasive as to its nature. Only if the characters threaten to reveal his condition to the village does he reveal the nature of his medicine—magic potions containing the *aim* spell. He buys them from Oeric, the only man who knows the truth.

Ⓜ **Edwin Bjornsunu:** Treat as a villager (page 508) but add Shooting d6, Stealth d6, the Woodsman Edge, and Bad Eyes Hindrance.

HERBALIST

The herbalist is an aged engro by the name of Elisa. Widowed a decade ago, and her children long since left home, she has devoted her remaining years to the study and practice of herbalism. Outside her tiny cottage, which is bedecked with flowers (until the first freeze comes), is a small herb garden.

Elisa invites the characters into her cramped home and offers them freshly-baked chicken and mushroom pies. If questioned about the mushrooms, she looks puzzled, and says they are from her garden. If asked about hallucinogenic mushrooms, she laughs and says:

"Oh, I do pick them occasionally, but only for personal use. I'd never poison a customer, either deliberately or in error. Thunderson Unroch sometimes buys a bag to help his meditations, but I keep my source a closely guarded secret. I thought someone had stumbled across them just last week. Gave me the fright of my life, it did, and that isn't good at my age.

"I was out...well, gathering mushrooms, when I saw someone walking by. At first, I thought perhaps some village lad had followed me in order to learn where they grow, but it wasn't any local. Not sure who it was, they were wearing a gray and green cloak you see, due to the rain. Judging by their direction, they were heading back to the village, anyway. Likely a traveler passing through on the scenic route."

She has the following herbal brews for sale: *2 x anti-inflammatory, 4 x antihistamine, 10 x breakages (blunt), 3 x numbing, 2 x restorative, 2 x soporific,* and *3 x stimulant I*. These are available for sale for 35 gs a dose. For ease, assume all are good for another four days. She has dried herbs (not for sale) enough to brew any herbal remedy. For those listed above, she has as many doses as she has completed remedies. For other herbs she has just a single dose.

Ⓜ **Elisa:** Treat as a villager (page 508) but add Knowledge (Alchemy) d8 and the Hedge Magic Edge. Add the engro racial abilities.

MARKET

Traders have come from far and wide for the three-day festival. In order to accommodate them, Ridder Coenmund has ordered stalls be erected along the length of the main street. Brightly colored canvases cover wooden tables stacked high with wares. The morning's events have placed a damper on the festive mood. Few citizens are willing to spend money at the market with an uncertain future ahead. The main customers are inhabitants of neighboring villages, who have yet to discover their lands too have been affected.

Any items with V availability can be found here. Goods with a T availability have a 50% chance of being available. Roll once per item—failure indicates no traders are selling that particular piece of equipment. C availability items have a 10% chance of being found. There are no alchemical devices or Special availability items for sale. Prices follow the rules in the *Hellfrost Players' Guide*.

Wandering around the market, the characters hear two opinions/rumors.

NORN PRIESTESS

The Norn priestess, Sexburh Eadbaldsdohtor, lives in a small cottage on the outskirts of town. She's a constructive member of the local community, being responsible for brewing most of the wine sold in the inn, but chooses to live close to her orchards and small vegetable patch.

Contrary to the stereotypical image of Norn priestesses being aged crones, Sexburh is in her early thirties, though neither attractive nor ugly. She's also very welcoming of strangers. Her favorite trick is to invite guests into her modest cottage with the words, *"I have soup ready. I knew you were coming."* She actually keeps a pot of soup on the simmer all day, but people seem to expect mysterious things of those who honor the Norns.

Sexburh does not listen to gossip and she refrains from spreading rumors. However, she does offer a simple reading of the rune stones, a popular divination method among the Saxa. She consents to use her Disciple Edge, but does not offer to read the party's fortunes.

Sexburh sits cross-legged on the floor and pulls a small leather pouch from her belt. She holds it above her head, murmurs a prayer, shakes the

pouch, and then tips the contents onto the floor. Slowly she leans forward, her eyes darting between the rune-marked stones. "Find the child of winter who is not," she says quietly after minutes of silence. "Then you will know the way." She begins to gather up the stones, but stops. "Wait, there is more. Winter must be slain from its summit." She pauses momentarily. "That is it. There is no more to be seen."

Sexburh can reveal no more. She does not offer an interpretation of the reading—those who seek the Norns' wisdom must unravel their own threads in life.

Ⓜ **Sexburh Eadbaldsdohtor:** Use the villager stats (page 508), but add Arcane Background (Miracles), Faith d8, Knowledge (Craft: Winemaking) d10, and the Disciple of the Norns Edge. She knows four spells of the GM's choice off her god's list.

STORMBROTHER

The air spirit does not respond to any offerings or prayers, nor can Unroch communicate with it. If asked, Unroch admits he can sense its presence, but it is greatly diminished and languid. The magic affecting the region has caused the spirit to enter a state of deep torpor. Without the wind, it cannot use any of its powers.

THUNDERSON UNROCH

Unroch suffered several broken bones and a crisis of faith when he fell. Healers (possibly the heroes) mended most of his breakages, but his mind is still unhinged and his flesh several shades of black and blue. In a state of total despondency, Unroch answers questions, but has absolutely no interest in helping to solve the mystery. No die roll can snap him out of his despair (see **Event #1** below).

Unroch does not answer any knocks at his door. However, the door is not bolted and prevents no obstacle to characters who want to step inside. The priest is lying on his bed, staring at the ceiling. His holy symbol, a silver storm dragon head, lies discarded on his bedroom floor. Because Unroch is sullen, he has no prepared narrative for the heroes. Instead, they must delve for answers by asking the right questions.

The GM should ignore questions not covered below or, at best, provide vague answers. Unroch is completely uninterested in anything, and should be role-played in a deadpan, monotonous voice.

Q: Can you tell us what happened?

A: *"Thunor has deserted us. He has stripped me of my powers and taken away our protection against the north wind."*

Q: Why don't you allow the north wind to be honored?

A: *"No man of sense would ask that question. The north wind is Thrym's wind. It deserves no worship."*

Q: We think we know what happened. Will you help us?

A: *"There is no point. Thunor is gone. We are doomed."*

Q: Have you tried communicating with Stormbrother?

A: *"He still lives, but he does not answer me. He is Thunor's, and Thunor has gone."*

Q: There are other gods. Couldn't you switch faiths? (someone might ask)

A: *"Such heresy. Is it any wonder the world is imperiled with such irreverence?"*

EVENTS

The GM should use the following events during the heroes' investigations in the village. They can be run in any order. Each has brief notes as to where the scene occurs, but the *when* is left to the GM.

#1: UNROCH'S MOMENT OF MADNESS

Thunderson Unroch's despair at losing his connection to his beloved god has driven him into a deep, black pit of hopelessness. Feeling he has nothing left to lose, Unroch climbs to the very top of the windmill. His booming voice carries across the village.

"Thunor!" Unroch roars, his deep voice echoing off the hills. "Thunor! Hear me! I have served you faithfully my whole life! Thunor, when I jump from this lofty perch I shall die unless you catch me. Is this what you want? Is this my life's purpose? Send me a sign, oh lord of thunder!"

Within moments the villagers begin rushing to the base of the windmill. Some citizens beseech Unroch to come down and end his foolishness. Others encourage him to jump, convinced the lack of wind is a test of their faith. Most simply stand silent, gazing up at Unroch, their thoughts private. Within a few minutes Coenmund arrives to investigate the disturbance.

"That," he says, lifting his chin to indicate Unroch, "is a man suffering a deep crisis of faith. All the signs indicate Thunor won't catch him, not today at least. What I do not know," he frowns, "is whether trying to save him is the right course of action. Any man who challenges the gods to answer his prayers is asking for trouble. Still, if he jumps and dies, it will only add to the villagers' grief and sense of foreboding."

Talking Unroch down requires a Persuasion roll at –4. Bonuses should be awarded for good role-playing, such as cautioning Unroch against making demands of Thunor, reminding him of his duty to the villagers, and such like. This takes 1d2 hours of talking back and forth. A success causes Unroch to see sense. He safely descends the windmill, though remains sullen and withdrawn. On a raise, Unroch turns his crisis into a positive, believing

Thunor is testing him and that, if he shows resilience and keeps strong faith, all will be better soon. He goes from depression into mania.

Failure doesn't mean Unroch jumps. Rather, he prevaricates, glancing nervously skyward and then at the ground. A second roll Persuasion is allowed, this time at –2 (and another 1d2 hours). Unroch tests his god on a critical failure of the first Persuasion roll or any failure on the second attempt to talk him down.

The roof of the windmill is 75 feet above the valley floor. Unroch suffers 8d6 damage for hitting the ground. Remember, his Disciple of Thunor Edge is now functioning, so he takes the rolled damage. Precautions such as stretching out a large blanket or sheet can be used to help break Unroch's fall. Attempts to stand beneath Unroch and catch him result in both Unroch *and* his would-be savior suffering 6d6 damage.

Once Unroch is down, the villagers trudge back to work in silence, each wondering what the future holds.

Ⓜ **Thunderson Unroch:** See page 507.

#2: KILL THE SKALD

Sooner or later, the characters will enter Torton's sole inn. They might be lodging there or searching for a specific individual. As they draw near, read the following text aloud.

The door to the inn crashes open with a loud bang. A clay drinking mug sails through the air, narrowly missing the lanky man ducking out through the door. Without looking up he starts to run. Moments later a large group of villagers, red-faced and murderous looks in their eyes, come charging from the inn. Many are holding farming implements in an aggressive manner.

The tall man is Olvir the skald. Unless the heroes have already encountered him they don't know his identity. He has no intention of stopping for a chat just now. As the villagers pour out from the inn, one of them grabs the nearest character by the arm. *"He did it!" the man shouts, pointing after the fleeing form. "He made the winds die!"*

Olvir, a follower of the Unknowable One, had a little too much to drink. Pestered by the locals to sing a heart-lifting song to ease their sullen mood, Olvir's tongue moved before his alcohol-sodden brain could engage. Though not a cleric, he tries to obey the Unknowable One's tenets, and he taunted the villagers. *"Wouldn't it be funny," he slurred, "if all this was a trick by the Unknowable One. I mean, you lot are constantly relying on Thunor to survive. Maybe you need to learn to stand on your own two feet and take responsibility for what happens to your crops."*

Drunk or not, Olvir crossed the line from a taunt into what the similarly drunken villagers saw as an open admission of guilt. Anger overrode common sense, for Olvir is a skald and thus cannot also be a priest of the Trickster. The bard might have been able to defuse the situation, but before he could gather his thoughts someone threw a mug of ale at him. The crowd turned ugly and reached for their farming tools, intent on taking justice into their own hands.

Hopefully the characters realize the villagers intend to skewer Olvir and decide to put a stop to it. Guilty or not, the man is entitled to a trial. Assuming the heroes wish to intervene, run this scene as a chase.

The Range Increment is 5". Olvir and the heroes act independently and thus draw their own action cards. The villagers act as a mob, sharing one action card and using a Group Agility roll. Olvir starts three Range Increments ahead of the mob, which starts two Range Increments ahead of the heroes.

In order to try and calm the mob, a hero must interpose himself between Olvir and the villagers and succeed in a Persuasion roll at –4. A bonus may be applied if a good speech is role-played. Only one Persuasion roll may be made per round, though any adventurers in the right place can assist through a Cooperative roll. With success, the chase is put on hold and the mob becomes Neutral—they don't lower their weapons, but they aren't prepared to tackle the well-armed heroes just yet. A failure means the mob turns on the heroes. The chase ends and a regular melee begins.

Should the mob and Olvir end up on the same Range Increment, the skald suffers 2d6 damage per round from a flurry of fists and awkwardly aimed blows with farming instruments. No Fighting roll is required.

If the mob is calmed, Ridder Coenmund arrives on the scene with his two huscarls. He immediately demands to know what is going on. The villagers voice their grievance with Olvir. Coenmund then turns to the characters and asks for their side of the story.

Should a melee take place, run it as normal for three rounds. The characters, while endangered by the peasants, should have the sense to avoid a blood bath—these are angry, scared yokels, not bloodthirsty orcs or bandits. Coenmund and his huscarls arrive at the end of round three, after all other actions are taken. The nobleman bellows for the villagers to lower their weapons, which they do. Unless a hero takes a free swing, in which case he is assaulted by the militia, the fight is now over. Weregild claims may be made by both sides if lethal injuries were taken. Coenmund, once he assumes control of the situation, mitigates losses by cancelling like for like claims.

However the fight ends, Olvir stops running. He slinks back and uses the characters as a human shield.

Panting for breath and ruddy-faced, Olvir tells his side of the story. He swears he didn't admit to being responsible for the wind dying, though he admits he made unsuitable comments given the circumstances. He further swears he has nothing to do with what is happening and has no information to share. Coenmund scratches his beard for a moment.

"This man," Coenmund says, gesturing at Olvir, "is a guest in our village. It seems he spoke unwisely.

Perhaps he did insult his hosts, but he meant no malice. Whatever is happening is beyond the work of one man. Shun him if you wish, but anyone who lays a hand on him will be punished to the fullest extent of the High King's laws. Do I make myself clear?" The villagers nod, but few look satisfied with how things have ended.

Coenmund then turns to you. "Thank you," he says without a smile. "My people are rightfully scared and angry. Dark times are upon us and scapegoats are being sought. You," he says to the skald, "are to stay at my stead until this is sorted. Do you hear me?" he calls to the villagers. "This man is now under my personal protection. If it is found he is involved somehow he will be punished, but by the law, not a mob.

"Go now," he gestures to the crowd, "get back to your jobs." Olvir smiles his thanks to you and follows Coenmund back to his stead.

Ⓜ **Ridder Coenmund:** See page 507.
Ⓜ **Huscarls (2):** See page 507.
Ⓜ **Olvir the Skald:** See page 508.
Ⓜ **Villagers (20):** See page 508.

#3: IT'S NOT JUST TORTON

Erland Kolsunu, a young lad from the neighboring village of Erkel's Stead, comes running into Torton. Exhausted, the red-faced youth collapses to his knees in front of the heroes.

"Sirs," he pants, clutching his sides as he tries to draw breath, "terrible news! The winds…have stopped in our village. Birds have fallen…from the sky, the clouds do not move, and people are finding it hard…hard to breathe. Please sirs, you must inform the lord of this at once."

The youth's face turns from red to white in an instant when informed the dead winds also affect Torton. He stares blankly for a few moments and then rises to his feet.

"Thunor's hammer," he mutters quietly. "It's everywhere. All of Rassilon must be affected." He glances skyward. "We're all going to die, aren't we?" he asks. "Starvation and cold will kill us all as surely as a giant's axe. May the gods take pity on us."

Erland's village is one of those from where citizens have gone missing. The lad only mentions this if specifically asked.

"How did you know, sir? Yes, two men have vanished in the last month. Old Egbert vanished while off hunting in the Tower Hills. He was poor sighted, though, and the hills are treacherous. And last week Ranulf disappeared. He wasn't much older than me. Said he was going to explore one of the old towers. We all told him not to, what with the ghosts and all, but he went all the same. The men of our village looked for them both, but they never found any bodies. Wolves probably took them."

THE TOWER HILLS

Sooner or later the heroes are going to enter the Tower Hills. They might be following up Edwin the hunter's story of a giant pair of legs, searching there out of sheer desperation, or seeking the frost giant with Angarad.

Sandwiched by the Crystalflow and Lesser Crystalflow, the Tower Hills are the most northerly point of Midmark. The hills are named from the ancient watchtowers which stand on the highest peaks, a legacy of older times, when men were less trusting of their neighbors. Crumbling through neglect and weathered by the wind and rain, the towers are used today by hunters and trappers, not to mention bandits and orcs. One of these towers is now inhabited by the frost giant and the cult of Thrym.

The Tower Hills cover thousands of square miles and there are countless towers upon them in various states of disrepair. Heroes who venture out on the first day are not allowed to make any rolls to locate their tower—it is miles away from Torton and there are no clues indicating it is occupied.

Starting on day two, when the frost first forms, the presence of the frost giant and the magical artifact used to kill the wind begin to have an effect on the surrounding landscape. The party may make a Notice roll at –4 (only one roll is permitted, but it may be Cooperative). With success, they spy a distant hill whose peak is actually covered in thick ice. Strangely, higher peaks are frost-covered, but not to the same extent. On day three the Notice roll may be made with no penalty—the effect has spread.

REACHING THE TOWER

The tower being used by Thrym's cult lies 20 miles north of Torton. Because time is a factor in this adventure, use the Overland Pace table from the *Hellfrost Players' Guide*. The rugged terrain counts as difficult ground and there is no trail. Hence, the party moves a number of miles every two hours equal to half the Pace of the slowest party member. Due to the lack of wind there is no weather.

Assuming the slowest Pace is 5 (a dwarf or Obese hero), it takes the party 16 hours with no rest breaks. A lame hero (Pace 4) extends the journey to 20 hours. A hero with Pace 3 would require a total of 27 hours to make the journey. On the off chance every hero has Pace 6, the trip can be accomplished in a little over 13 hours.

However, these times assume the party is traveling during daylight. At night the lighting is Dim (minimal cloud cover and a bright moon), which slow the adventurers further.

THRYM'S TOWER

The Tower Hills are dotted with numerous watchtowers and small outposts. Some were simple round towers used as lookout posts or housing signal beacons. Others, like this one, were more fortified. Built to a standard pattern, each had a square gatehouse tower protecting a walled courtyard. Within the courtyard stood wooden buildings—barracks for soldiers, workshops, and so on. Many were later expanded with subterranean levels, providing further protection for the occupants and additional storage space.

Most of the tower-forts were actually places of refuge rather than permanently garrisoned fortifications. When the surrounding lands were attacked, local citizens would rush here with their flocks.

POLITICAL DIVISIONS

Although the cult of Thrym found the Heart of Winter, their position has been superseded by Svadalfari, the frost giant priest, and his ice goblin warriors. The cult's leader, a frostborn priest of Thrym, despises the giant, but is currently helpless to do anything. The cultists and ice goblins have a frosty relationship (pardon the pun) and violence between the factions is only held at bay by mutual fear of Svadalfari and his huscarls.

Once the winter brought on by the relic begins to take hold properly, Svadalfari intends to purge the complex of the cultists. Although the frostborn priest doesn't realize this, he has sent word to other cultists to come to the tower. Once he has enough manpower, he intends to murder Svadalfari, slaughter the goblins, and take control of the relic.

With both sides seeking to remove the other, cooperation is virtually nonexistent beyond token gestures. Should the cultists ever enter combat alongside the goblins, Gang Up bonuses generated by the different factions should be *avoided* unless absolutely necessary. That is, if there is a goblin attacking one hero and none attacking another standing further away, the cultists always go for the second adventurer first.

The two factions wear different symbols as well, further emphasizing their fractured nature. The cultists wear the standard symbol of Thrym on their tunics and shields. The goblins, frostborn huscarls, and Svadalfari display the symbol of their frost giant jarl master—a gauntlet-clad hand clutching a coldfire rune of ice.

REORGANIZATION

If the heroes launch an abortive raid on the cult's headquarters, Svadalfari, the frost giant priest, takes steps to bolster the defenses. All the cultists in the lower level (areas 1, 3, 4, and 5) are ordered to man the surface level, while the goblins are put on high alert. The frost giant hopes a second attack on the tower will cull some of the cultists, thus saving him the effort.

Parties which delay subsequent forays into the tower, perhaps because they need natural healing, find the defenders have been reinforced when they return. For each whole week the party doesn't make an attack on the tower, one-quarter of the ice goblin casualties (rounded down) are replenished. Cultist losses are not replenished. As an added "bonus," the GM may wish to have a few orcs or perhaps an ogre take up residence in their place. Svadalfari, his huscarls, and his pet polar bears are never replaced.

COMMON FEATURES

Doors, except where noted, are wooden and have Toughness 10. Unless otherwise stated all doors are unlocked. Locked doors are barred, and thus Lockpicking is of no use. Doors barred on the same side as the heroes require two actions to open—one to remove the bar and one to open the door.

The aura of the Heart of Winter has coated the floors in a thick layer of ice. All the floors in the old, Saxa section of the tower's dungeon are paved with flagstones. These count as smooth ice (see the *Hellfrost Player's Guide*). Floors in areas excavated by the cultists are less worked—they are treated as rough ice. Ice also covers the walls and ceilings.

Ceilings are 12 feet high, except for those in the frost giant's lair and the Heart of Winter's resting place. These have been extended to 20 feet to accommodate the priest.

Only chambers containing sentient beings are illuminated. Hateful of fire, the cultists use torches made of icewood. These provide illumination as per regular torches, but burn cold rather than hot and with a blue-white flame. Due to their construction, each is good for four hours constant use.

Obstacles that fill part of a square, such as a table or small piles of rubble, impede movement. Treat movement through these squares as difficult ground. Where applicable, obstacles provide Cover.

The temperature in the dungeon level is equal to that in the outer Hellfrost (–4 Vigor penalty).

UPPER LEVEL

Read the following text when the party is an hour's walk from the tower.

On the next hilltop stand the remains of a once-imposing gatehouse. Its walls remain erect after centuries of exposure to the elements, a testament to the builders' skill. A tall wall, broken in places, topped by battlements, extends from either side of the tower.

The tower-fort is a crumbling ruin of a bygone age. Old before the Blizzard War, it, like many others, was near destroyed when the Saxa engaged the Hellfrost army in battle. All that remains are partial walls, a section of the gatehouse, and the remnants of stone buildings (erected by the Hellfrost army) that once stood in the courtyard. The ice goblins have performed some rudimentary repairs, but not enough to attract unwanted attention.

The heroes do not have to approach from the front of the gatehouse. A few minutes extra walking allows the group to approach from any side they wish.

If the party does not make any attempts at a stealthy approach, the goblins on sentry duty automatically spot the characters in time to prepare their defenses. All the ice goblins crouch down behind the nearest wall, so as not to be seen by any anyone peering into the fort. They are counted as being on Hold.

A stealthy approach requires a single Cooperative Stealth roll from the party opposed by separate Notice rolls from each of the two sentries. Success allows the party to get within 10" of the walls unseen. Failure gives the goblins a chance to prepare an ambush as above. Depending on where the characters decide to enter the fort, the sentries may be allowed another Notice roll to detect them.

Heroes looking for signs of activity from the front of the fort must make a Notice roll at –6. Viewing from the side gives a –4 penalty. Seen from the rear, the characters can make Notice rolls with no modifier—the rear of the gatehouse has collapsed, allowing a clear view inside. Unless they are using *farsight*, Notice rolls to spot the sentries can only be made once the party is within 100 yards. A second roll may be made only when the party moves within 10 yards.

Terrain: Movement over rubble and across the low walls in the courtyard is treated as difficult ground. The low walls stand only two to three feet high, and provide just Light Cover (–1). The stairs in the gatehouse are very steep and count as difficult ground. The arrow slits provide Very Heavy Cover (–6).

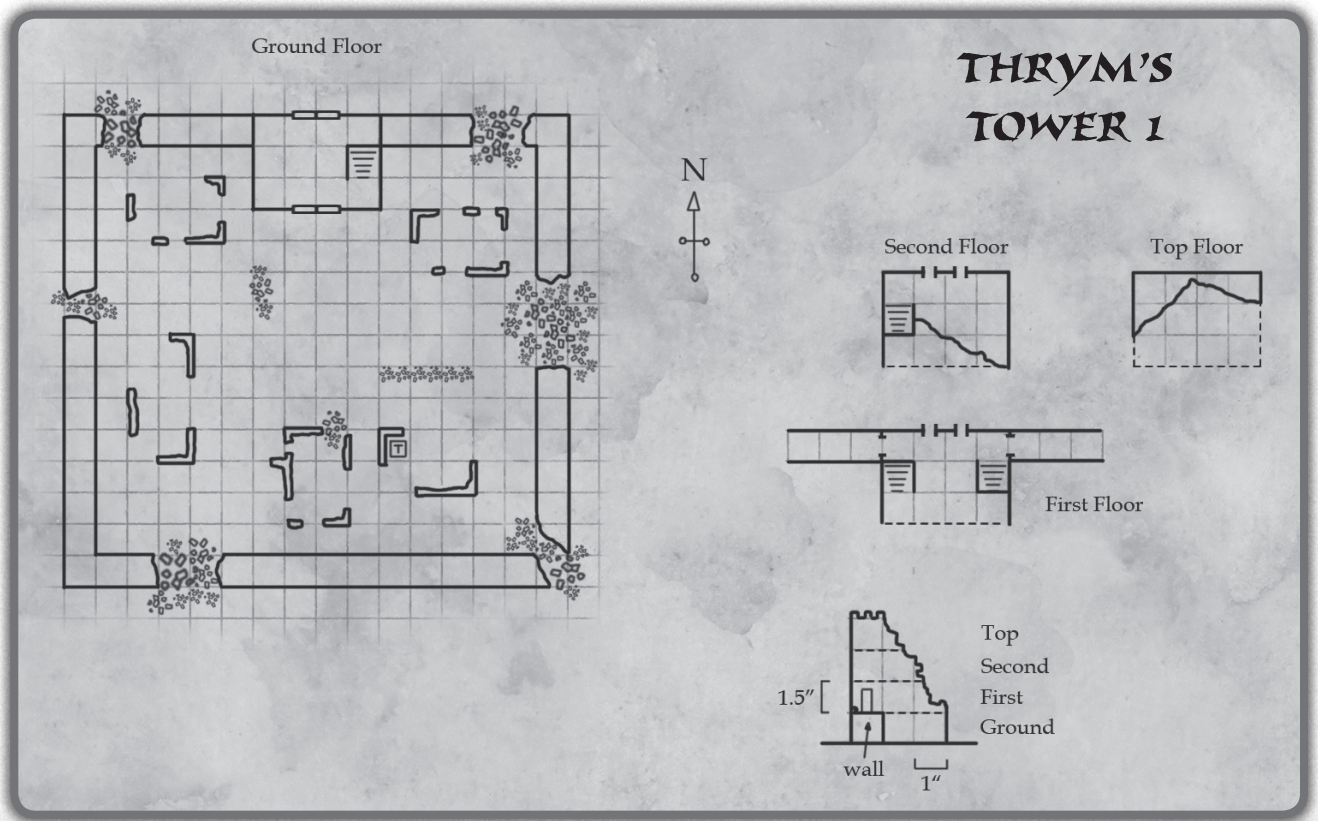
The trapdoor to the lower complex is covered with a false layer of turf. Four man-hours of careful searching automatically reveal its location. It is not locked. The trapdoor opens upward, revealing a set of spiral stairs. These lead to area 1.

Monsters: Svadalfari has ordered a detachment of his ice goblin warriors to man the fort day and night. During the day, the goblins actually on watch duty count as active sentries. At night they are inactive.

One goblin is stationed on the first floor of the tower and another on the second floor. They divide their time between scanning the main approach to the gatehouse (by peering through the arrow slits) and standing at the rear of the floor and peering to the side and rear. The others are spread out around the interior.

(M) Cultists (2 per hero): See page 510.

Tactics: If alerted, the goblins string their bows and prepare to ambush the intruders. No attacks are made until the party is within the courtyard. Those outside fire from a crouching position behind the low walls. This



gives them Medium Cover (–2). The sentries gain Light Cover (–1) due to the height advantage and some bits of rubble.

Once the attackers begin to spread out and engage in melee, those nearest drop their bows (free action), grab their spears (an action), and attack. The sentries remain in the tower and pepper the attackers with arrows. Only when the heroes enter the tower do they reach for their spears.

Under no circumstances do the goblins ever try to retreat through the trapdoor. Svadalfari made it very clear to them that they are to act as a band of goblin raiders using the fort as temporary refuge. In the event they must retreat, the arrogant giant commanded they flee into the hills, then sneak back later to catch any intruders still present, by surprise.

LOWER LEVEL

1) ENTRANCE

The trapdoor lifts to reveal a set of ice-covered, spiral, stone steps. From below, flickering blue-white light can be seen.

Remember, from this point on the floors are covered in ice, the temperature is far lower, and corridors and unoccupied rooms are in total darkness.

Unless the party makes a Stealth roll to descend the stairs (don't prompt them), the sentries on duty below are alerted to the presence of someone entering the lower complex. If the characters speak loudly, have the guards make a Notice roll. With success, they know the intruders aren't ice goblins. One immediately rushes off to alert his comrades in area 3. By the time the characters enter the room he has already had one round of movement.

Terrain: The ice-covered steps count as difficult ground. A pair of coldfire torches hangs from wall sconces, bathing the room in flickering, blue-white light.

Monsters: Even with the ice goblins stationed upstairs, two cultists are on duty here at all times. They don't really need to be here—their priest ordered them to perform watch duty only to remind the goblins that they, the cult of Thrym, located the Heart of Winter.

Ⓜ **Cultists (1 per 2 heroes):** See page 510.

Tactics: Once the cultists realize the persons descending the stairs aren't their allies, one rushes off to alert his comrades in area 3. His companion remains behind in a desperate bid to delay the intruders' advance into the complex for as long as possible. Rather than attacking, he moves to block the exit and uses the Defend maneuver to thwart his enemies.

Continuation: The running sentry has boot spikes and so treats the floor as rough ice. Because he is running, he still risks slipping and falling. Once he reaches the cultists' barracks (see page 18) he bangs on the door and raises the alarm. This takes an action. The cultists in the barracks require one complete round to grab their weapons. See the notes on area 3 for more details.

2) EMPTY ROOM

The door to this chamber has not been opened since the ritual was completed. Although unbarred, it has frozen over. Opening it requires a Strength roll at –2.

Glittering frost sparkles from every surface in this empty chamber. Judging by the frozen door and the lack of marks on the floor, no one has entered this room recently.

The room has been set aside for barrack space for expected orc reinforcements. No one inhabiting the complex ever comes here. If the heroes find someway of making the door look like it hasn't been opened (the ice cracks away when the door is opened) then no will enter, even if the complex is being searched for intruders. It can thus serve as a temporary refuge, somewhere to perform healing, warm up with a small fire, or cast spells. Suitable spells for covering the door in ice could include *elemental manipulation (water)*, as well as pretty much any spell with a cold or ice trapping. Don't stymie the heroes unnecessarily—reward imaginative ideas.

3) CULTIST BARRACKS

Four wooden cots covered in mangy, frost-coated furs stand against each wall. A number of men, some in armor, turn to stare as you enter.

Originally barracked in the southern end of the complex, the cultists were forced to relocate by Svadalfari once the goblins arrived. They have now taken up residence as far away as possible from the ice goblins. With space at a premium, the cultists operate a "hot bed" system—as one cultist wakes to go on duty, another coming off watch takes his bed.

Terrain: The wooden cots are only a foot off the ground and thus provide no Cover. Tipping one onto its side requires a Strength roll as an action. It then provides Cover (Armor +2) to those behind it.

Monsters: Half the cultists, rounded down, are relaxing on their beds or sleeping. They are not wearing armor. The remaining cultists are armored and alert.

Ⓜ **Cultists (2 + 1 per hero):** See page 510.

Tactics: Cultists not in armor don't waste time donning it if the alarm is raised. Dozing cultists take no actions on the first round of combat other than waking and grabbing their weapons, which they keep close at hand.

Attacked in their barracks, the cultists, having no means of retreat, fight to the bitter end.

Should they come to the rescue of their comrades in the guard room (area 1), they plan to hold the crossroad rather than fight in the cramped guard chamber.

Two cultists move 2" up the northern passage and two 2" down the southern one. The others wait 1" back from the crossroad along the eastern corridor. Those in the north and south should *not* be placed on the tabletop—they cannot be seen as the heroes advance toward the crossroad. Their plan is to lure the attackers down the corridor toward the barracks, thus allowing those in the north and south to flank them (and gain a +2 Gang Up bonus).

4) KITCHEN

A wall of heat slams into you as the door opens. No frost coats the surfaces in here. Standing before a roaring fire (above which hangs a blackened cauldron) are two men in armor. Their weapons hang from their belts.

The ice goblins may be willing to eat raw, frozen flesh, but the cultists require hot, cooked food to survive. Svadalfari considers this a sign of weakness and a lack of devotion to Thrym, but he allows the cultists to use fire to cook their meals. In his eyes, it is further proof the cult is unworthy to survive for much longer. The goblins mock the cultists for their "human" ways, but there is little the cultists can do except taunt them back about being the frost giant's lapdogs.

Terrain: The heat of the fire, which is constantly stoked, combined with the door being kept closed, prevents build up of frost. Away from the hearth, the temperature is equivalent to spring in the Hearthlands. There is no ice on the floor.

The space containing the fireplace counts as difficult ground. Any creature actually stepping into the flames takes 2d6 damage and has a chance of catching alight. A bundle of firewood is located next to the fire. There is enough to keep the fire blazing for another eight hours.

Tipping over the cauldron hanging above the fire requires a Strength roll as an action. With success the contents (rabbit stew) spill in a direction chosen by the character. The liquid fills an area 1" wide and 2" long. Treat squares covered by the stew as difficult ground.

Toppling a table to use as a makeshift barricade requires a Strength roll as an action. The tables provide +4 Armor when used in this manner. The cooks' winter clothing lies discarded on the table nearest the door.

Monsters: Two cultists are assigned to the kitchen to ensure a supply of cooked food is always available. The roaring fire combined with the clatter of pans, not to mention the closed door, blocks out all but the loudest noises of combat.

Ⓜ **Cultists (2):** See page 510.

Tactics: The cultists have their weapons hanging from their belts. It takes an action to ready them. They then attack with unbridled ferocity, knowing that it is very likely their comrades in the barracks are already dead and they are trapped in the kitchen.

5) TEMPLE TO THRYM

Your exposed skin begins to freeze as a blast of unbelievably frigid air hits you like a solid wall. Thick ice coats the surfaces of this large chamber. Slim pillars rise to the roof, though their size seems decorative rather than structural. Flickering blue-white flames crackle and hiss from three rime-coated, iron braziers. A group of figures wrapped in heavy winter clothing stands before an icy altar, atop which sits a statuette of a rearing Hellfrost dragon.

Being loyal cultists, Thrym's human followers have erected a makeshift temple to their god in the largest room. Svadalfari considers their attempts pathetic, for in his eyes Thrym can be worshipped anywhere, but he allows the cultists to maintain what he considers their charade. He even gave them a stash of icewood to burn in the braziers, though his motives were not entirely selfless—Svadalfari hopes that the lower temperature will kill off a few of the more fanatical cultists, the ones who like to "prove" their devotion through constant prayer.

The priest of Thrym allows the ice goblins to use "his" temple, but not when he is conducting ceremonies for the cultists. Despite the bone-numbing cold, the priest spends as much time in here as his body can handle.

Terrain: The altar is a hastily constructed pile of stones topped with a roughly hewn slab. Like everything else in the room, it is covered in thick ice. The pillars are slim, more decorative than structural. They do not impede movement. Heroes gain Light Cover (–1) while standing behind a pillar.

The braziers contain burning icewood. The temperature in here is equivalent to the Hellfrost core at night (–6 Vigor modifier). The braziers can be tipped over with a Strength roll (as an action) in a direction of the character's choice. The contents spill out to fill at area 1" wide and 2" long. Any character standing in the path must make an Agility roll at –2 or suffer 2d6 damage and have a chance of catching fire. The damage is coldfire based.

Detecting the secret door requires an active search and a Notice roll at –2. Should the door be opened for any reason, it becomes clearly visible.

Monsters: Angered by Svadalfari's recent actions, the priest of Thrym and several cultists are in the temple plotting the giant's downfall. The priest stands before the altar facing the main entrance, while the cultists are arranged in a semi-circle before him.

Ⓜ **Frostborn Priest of Thrym (1):** See page 509.

Ⓜ **Cultists (1 + 1 per hero):** See page 510.

Tactics: The priest's first action is to cast *deflection* to ward off ranged attacks. On the next round, he invokes *entangle* in a Medium Burst Template, taking care not to catch any cultists in the area of effect (if possible). While the cultists hack at the intruders, the priest next invokes *smite* (using his Faith) on the battleaxe in his right hand.

If the party is in melee with him, he proceeds to use his battle axes. Otherwise, he takes the opportunity to invoke *armor* before engaging in melee. He'll use *dispel* as required against obvious spells, such as glowing *armor* and the like.

When he reaches two wounds, the priest switches to the Defend maneuver and tries to reach the secret door. He has used it several times, so knows where it is. Once inside, he bars the door and rushes for the chest and its *healing* potions.

The cultists are loyal to the priest. They willingly lay down their lives to defend him. If any get the chance to tip a brazier onto the adventurers, they will do so.

Treasure: Atop the altar is a quartz carving of a Hellfrost dragon. Although not especially valuable based on its material, the workmanship is exquisite. It is worth 200 gold scields but weights 10 pounds. The priest carries a small silver key (which opens the chest in area 7) and a large iron key (which opens the door to area 8).

6) CORRIDOR OF STATUES

Deep alcoves line this short corridor. Before each alcove is a short flight of descending stairs. At the far end of the passage is a door. Cracks in the ice indicate it has been opened recently.

The statues are covered in ice, preventing any detail beyond their humanoid form from being discerned. Chipping away the ice reveals stone images of ancient Saxa chieftains and warriors. The cultists have defaced each one by gouging crude images of Thyrm's holy symbol into them. None of the statues is magical, though experienced heroes may be expecting an ambush.

Terrain: The cult has not discovered the secret door hidden behind the statue, nor the one at the opposite end. Due to the icy coating on the walls, detecting either door requires an active search and a Notice roll at –2. The door behind the statue is activated by turning the statue's head to the right. The door at the far end is opened by pressing one of the stones at the base of the door. Both doors have handles on the inside, allowing those in the secret passage to get out.

Opening either door causes the ice coating the wall to fall away. This leaves a very visible outline. However, the door behind the statue is partially concealed. A passerby is allowed a Notice roll at –2 as a free action to spot it. The door opposite area 8 is automatically detected by any creature happening by.

7) PRIEST'S QUARTERS

A small cot covered in furs, a rickety table and a three-legged stool, and a small, wooden chest adorn this otherwise uninteresting room.

Terrain: The secret door is known to the priest. On the temple side, the effect of the braziers quickly recoats the walls in ice, concealing its presence. When the priest has used the door, he casts *entangle* on it, covering it in a layer of ice. Due to the sub-freezing temperature in the complex, it quickly merges with the rest of the ice covered walls. However, a faint outline is still visible. Each hero entering the room is allowed a Notice roll at –2 as a free action to detect it. A deliberate search requires an unmodified Notice roll.

Trap: The chest is both locked and trapped. Picking the lock requires a Lockpicking roll at –1. It has Toughness 8. Most locks open counterclockwise. However, this chest can be opened either direction. Opening it clockwise disarms the trap inside, whereas turning the key or lockpick clockwise, or smashing the lock, activates a trap when the lid is lifted. Do not ask the characters which way they are turning the key or picks—unless they specifically say they are going against the norm they use the standard counterclockwise motion. Because the trap is fully contained within the chest, no Notice roll can be made to detect it.

A *glyph* inside the lid activates, casting *sphere of might (coldfire)* on the chest. Damage from the spell is d10+d8, and victims have a chance of catching fire. The chest is not affected by the spell, as the *sphere* forms around it.

Treasure: The chest is a minor relic. Anything placed inside is subjected to a permanent *environmental protection (cold)* spell. A character does not have to attune to this relic to use its power. The stout chest weighs 20 pounds and can hold 30 pounds worth of goods. Such a device is easily worth 2,000 gold scields to the Hearth Knights.

The chest contains a number of alchemical devices: three potions of *healing* (each cures one wound), a salve of *environmental protection (cold)*, two sling stones (each a single 2d6 damage *bolt*), a scroll of *sanctuary* (takes the reader to the nearest temple of Thrym, which happens to be next door—the priest carries this with him when forced to leave the tower), and a slim birch wand containing *banish*. Also inside are 827 gold scields worth of coins, gems, and jewelry.

8) STOREROOM

The door to this room is locked (with a key). The frostborn priest (area 5) has the only key.

Virtually every inch of this room is stacked floor to ceiling with tools, crates, barrels, haunches of frozen meat, and other assorted goods.

The cult stores its mundane equipment in here. In theory, the cultists are meant to give the ice goblins free access, but since Svadalfari activated the Heart of Winter, the frostborn priest has kept the door locked. Now, if the goblins want anything, including food, they must beg for permission.

Treasure: The storeroom is used to hold mundane

goods as well as foodstuffs. All the food is frozen solid, as are barrels of ale. There are enough provisions to last 300 man-days. The cult's miscellaneous goods amount to 60 icewood torches, 100 pounds of icewood, eight crowbars, 15 shovels, ten pickaxes, five hammers, a set of carpenter's tools, and eight coils of rope. The icewood torches and logs ignite when the Heart of Winter is destroyed (see page 23), destroying everything in the room.

Scattered among the provisions is the equipment taken from the villagers the cult captured. There are two long spears, three short spears, a bow with 20 arrows, a short sword, four daggers, one suit of leather armor, and two sets of furs. A leather pouch, discarded by the captors, contains 37 gold scields.

9) ICE GOBLIN BARRACKS

A jumble of tattered blankets and furs, interspersed with small bones and scraps of frozen meat, cover much of the floor. Small blue-skinned creatures lie or sit on the bedding.

When Svadalfari arrived at the site, he immediately took a dislike to the human cultists. He sent two of his huscarls into the Thunor Range with orders to bring back ice goblin warriors. Fearful of offending a frost giant priest, the local tribes quickly mustered a small force. At first, the goblins lorded it over the human cultists, for Svadalfari treated them much better (not that he was particularly kind to them).

Recently though, the situation has changed— Svadalfari has sealed himself near the Heart of Winter with a handful of goblins. The frost giant has begun feeding goblins who offend him to his pets, and without his presence the cultists are growing more belligerent in their dealings with the goblins.

The goblins have four key duties—watch over the tower for signs of approaching trouble, patrol and forage in the surrounding hills, watch over the Heart of Winter, and keep an eye on the human cultists.

Monsters: Half the goblins, rounded down, are asleep. They require one complete round to awaken and prepare for battle. The other half is already awake and alert.

(M) Ice Goblin Warrior (2 per hero): See page 510.

Tactics: The goblins favor swarm tactics, surrounding one foe and stabbing him repeatedly. They also try to maneuver to garner Gang Up bonuses, though they won't endanger themselves in the process by running past enemies in their path. Given half a chance they break for the door in the vain hope of alerting the cultists to their plight.

10) CELLS

This long, rectangular room has several doors made of rusting iron bars along the walls. There is a faint smell of bodily waste and a tangible air of fear.

Formerly used by the tower's builders to hold captives, the cells are now used by the cult. Only one cell is occupied, though unless the characters call out friendly greetings or poke around inside, the captive remains hidden.

Terrain: The locks are frozen solid. Unless heated first, all Lockpicking attempts are made at –4. However, the intense cold has made the metal brittle. The locks have Toughness 6.

The secret door at the back of the westernmost cell was installed by the ice goblins. It opens into a short tunnel, which eventually emerges close to Svadalfari's lair. The frost giant ordered this constructed as an escape route. Heavy beams allow either door to be sealed from the inside. The secret door in the cell is barred (Toughness 14), but the one at the other end is not. Detecting the door requires only a glance into the cell and a Notice roll—the goblins are not masterful engineers.

Monsters: Huddled in the cell marked X on the map is a lone engro by the name of Bert Pennywhistle. He lies beneath a pile of blankets and furs. A tinkerer by trade, he was taking a shortcut through the Tower Hills from Yorvik to Scathmoor when he was captured. Svadalfari is keeping him alive only so he can throw him to his polar bears (area 11) when they tire of goblin flesh.

Ⓜ **Bert Pennydrake:** Use the villager stats (page xx) but add the engro racial traits.

Continuation: Bert tells his rescuers there were four other captives in the cells when he was dragged in. He doesn't know their names, but says there were three Saxa and a hearth elf. They were taken away a day or so ago (he's losing track of time) and he hasn't seen them since. He refuses to get involved in any combat. He promises to pay the heroes 100 gs if they free him. Of course, he doesn't have the money on him—but he can raise it through family and friends within a month. Despite the engros' reputation for dishonesty, Bert is good to his word.

11) SLEEPING BEARS

The door to this chamber has not been opened since the ritual was completed. Although not barred, it has frozen over. Opening it requires a Strength roll at –2. Success or failure immediately alerts the polar bears inside. A crude symbol has been carved onto the door—a gauntlet-clad hand clutching a coldfire rune of ice. Heroes who have played through *Shadow of Darkness* and/or *The Siege of Watchgap Fort* recognize this immediately.

The door crashes inward revealing an ice-covered, rectangular chamber. A crude hole has been gouged in the opposite wall. Some sort of tunnel leads away to the west. To your left is a low wall

of stone blocks and rubble. In the center of the room is a large circle of pink ice. ROAAAR!

Locating the Heart of Winter required the cultists to tunnel through part of the old Saxa complex. While much of the rubble was removed, many large stones were left behind. Svadalfari ordered the goblins to move some of these into the newly hewn passage and to use others to create a crude wall near the door—a "nest" for his beloved pets (see Monsters and Tactics below).

Terrain: The rubble piles in the east slope down from the wall. The separate pile is stacked three feet high. Crossing it counts as difficult ground. This provides Cover.

Stashed behind the rubble wall are the cracked bones of three goblins. The bears eat their meal in the center of the floor, hence the pink ice. They have not been fed today.

Monsters: Now that the Heart of Winter is complete, Svadalfari has forbidden the cultists from viewing it. His huscarls are loyal unto death and the goblins live in terror of him, but the cultists are an unknown element. The frost giant knows the civilized races are manipulative and power hungry and, despite his magic, any one of them could slip a knife into his throat while he slept.

To ensure the cultists stay where they belong, Svadalfari has ordered two polar bears, his companions Gullintani ("Golden-teeth") and Vindsvalr ("Wind-chill"), to watch over this room. They have orders to attack any non-goblins or huscarls (they know the latter by sight and smell) on sight. Both are a little cranky at being kept indoors, but Svadalfari ensures they receive a fresh goblin each day as a meal.

Vindsvalr is resting partway down the corridor running to the Heart of Winter. Gullintani is lightly dozing in the southeast corner, behind the pile of rubble.

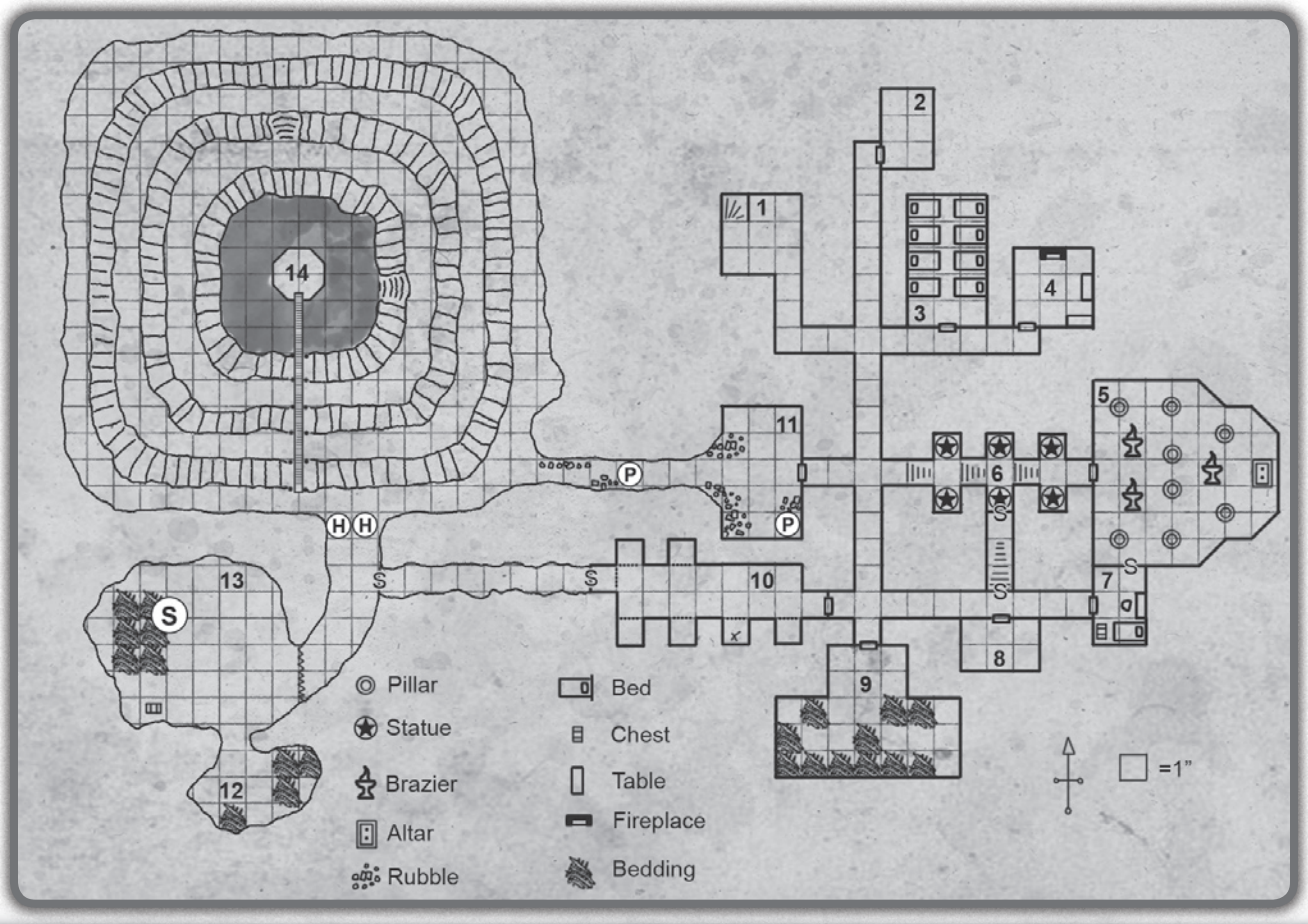
Due to their loyalty to Svadalfari, *beast friend* spells work slightly different on the polar bears. They are allowed a Spirit roll to resist. This is opposed by the caster's arcane skill roll.

Ⓜ **Polar Bears (2):** See page 510.

Tactics: Alerted to any intruders, Gullintani immediately rears up and crashes through the low wall, while Vindsvalr charges down the corridor toward the intruders. Check for Surprise. Both bears attempt to swipe at their foes and take advantage of any "bear hugs" by savaging their captive mercilessly.

12) HUSCARLS' BARRACKS

Blankets and furs lie scattered around the floor. Wooden bowls hold the frozen remnants of a recent meal.



It is virtually impossible for the party to catch the huscarls in this chamber by Surprise. If not alerted by a disturbance in area 14, any attacks on their master in area 13 quickly rouses them from their light sleep.

Monsters: Svadalfari brought four huscarls with him from the Giant's Throne. Two are stationed outside the tunnel leading to his lair, while two are in the barracks in case their master has need of their services. After years of service to the giant, the huscarls have learned to sleep lightly.

Ⓜ **Frostborn Huscarls (2):** See page 509.

Tactics: Used to discomfort, the huscarls sleep in their armor and keep their weapons close at hand. Being light sleepers, they rouse, fully ready for battle, as an action.

The huscarls have very clear tactics—slaughter everyone who isn't on their side. They work as a pair, using Gang Up bonuses to gain advantage over foes. If Svadalfari is in danger, they immediately target whoever looks like the most serious threat. Spellcasters invoking fire magic are always top of their list.

13) SVADALFARI'S LAIR

A large pile of furs and blankets has been arranged near the western wall. A wooden chest stands at the end of the bedding. Carved into the walls are strange glyphs.

On arriving at the cult's headquarters, Svadalfari ordered the goblins to create two additional chambers; one for him and one for his huscarls. Except for his huscarls, no one is permitted to enter without permission on penalty of death. Until the Heart of Winter's magic has had time to take full effect (a few more days by the giant's reckoning) he remains in his chambers. He has no idea what is happening elsewhere in the complex, nor does he particularly care.

Terrain: Covering the doorway are several heavy blankets. They are attached to the ceiling by long nails. Svadalfari has little need for creature comforts. His bed is a jumble of furs and blankets—arranged for comfort rather than warmth. The only other item of note is a wooden chest banded with iron straps.

The glyphs are Giant runes. Any one who can understand the language knows they are prayers to Thrym, oaths of loyalty to the winter god, and threats against the civilized races.

The secret door in the passage outside leads to the cells (area 10). Detecting the door, which is coated in ice, requires a Notice roll as an action. The door opens with little effort, though this does cause the ice to crack away from the seams. See area 10 for more information.

Monsters: This room is the private lair of Svadalfari. Unless the characters have silenced the guards in area 14 or snuck quietly through the secret door leading from area 10, it is very unlikely the party will catch the frost giant at home.

Ⓜ **Svadalfari:** See page 509.

Tactics: Should Svadalfari be caught in his lair, he begins by casting *armor*. He then tries to lure multiple foes into surrounding him, allowing him to cast *sphere of might* and catch his enemies in the spell's area of effect. Next he engages the nearest foes in melee, using his Improved Sweep, while bellowing for his minions in area 14 to come to his aid. Unless the characters have managed to silence them already without alerting the frost giant, the party is liable to find itself attacked on two fronts and all escape routes cut off.

Treasure: The chest is locked (Toughness 12, Lockpicking –2) but not trapped. Inside are 3,000 gold scields worth of small diamonds, a star metal battle axe (little more than a hatchet to the frost giant), and three potions of *healing* (each curing one wound).

14) THE HEART OF WINTER

The tunnel opens into a large chamber bathed in harsh, blue-white light. Standing in the center of the room, its top some six feet above the surface of the floor on which you stand, is a gigantic column of glowing white crystal, emblazoned with fell runes of glacial blue. Between the entrance and the crystal, the floor slopes away steeply in three tiers. Ice-covered steps descend the treacherous slopes to the lower levels. Stretching between the upper tier and the top of the crystal is a thin, ice-coated bridge, its span supported by wooden beams. It slopes gently uphill as it stretches across the chamber. At the very bottom, the crystal us surrounded by a pool of blue-white flame.

The cultists quickly located the top of the Heart of Winter. Through visions, Thrym ordered them to uncover the entire object, for only when it was fully exposed could it be activated. Early attempts were made to dig straight down, but the rock faces collapsed, burying several cultists. Eventually, the decision was taken to dig around the relic, creating a series of tiers to prevent further accidents. Svadalfari personally oversaw the final stages, including the construction of the bridge.

Terrain: The stairs are covered in smooth ice. Rough ice covers the rest of the three tiers. Downward movement between tiers except by the stairs counts as difficult ground. In addition, the hero must make an Agility roll (+2 for wearing boot spikes, –2 if he runs) or slip, fall, and slide to the next lowest tier. Upward movement requires a Climbing roll. Only one tier per round may be crossed unless the stairs are used.

The lowest level has been transformed into coldfire slush by the power of the awakened relic. Any hero entering the slush suffers 2d10 coldfire damage and has a chance of catching fire. The slush is knee-deep and counts as difficult ground.

The bridge is only a few feet across and is covered in thin ice. Any hero who falls or who is Shaken or wounded by a physical attack while on the bridge must

make an Agility roll (with the –4 penalty for smooth ice) or tumble off the bridge to the floor immediately below. For ease, falling onto the second tier down inflicts 2d6 damage and the third tier, 3d6 damage. Landing in the slush at the bottom of the pit causes just 2d6 falling damage, but the victim then takes damage from the coldfire. Svadalfari cannot cross the bridge.

Each 1" section of the bridge has Toughness 8. The supporting beams are each Toughness 12. Destroying a pair of beams automatically causes the bridge to collapse. The collapse extends halfway toward the next pair of supports.

The relic's glow, combined with the coldfire flickering in the pool, provides normal lighting conditions.

The Heart of Winter: The Heart of Winter is a multi-faceted pillar of clear crystal. It stands 24 feet high, measures 12 feet across, and blocks line of sight. Its flat top counts as smooth ice. Attempts to climb the sides require a Climbing roll at –4.

Supernaturally tough, the relic has Toughness 14, the Improved Arcane Resistance Edge, is immune to cold, coldfire, and ice attacks, and can sustain three wounds. It takes double damage from heat or fire attacks. However, magical glyphs protect it from *all* harm delivered against its side facings. Only the top of the column is unprotected. Because the pillar is higher than the top tier, ranged attacks cannot target the top.

The instant it takes a fourth wound, it shatters, releasing a wave of brilliant white coldfire, which roars through the lower level. Every creature in the lower level suffers 2d10 coldfire damage and has a chance of catching fire.

Monsters: Two of the frost giant's huscarls guard the tunnel entrance leading to their master's lair. A number of ice goblins are patrolling the tiers. Space these out around the circumference of the room and across all three tiers.

Ⓜ **Svadalfari:** See page 509.

Ⓜ **Frostborn Huscarls (2):** See page 509.

Ⓜ **Ice Goblin Warriors (3 per hero):** See page 510.

Tactics: Both the huscarls cast *smite* during the first round of combat. They then move toward the heroes at their Pace, bellowing at the top of their lungs to alert Svadalfari. If time allows, they cast *armor* as well. Otherwise, they engage the characters in melee.

The goblins are initially carrying their spears, so it takes an action to switch to their ranged weapons. Ice goblins within 9" of the characters attack using their thrusting spears, seeking Gang Up bonuses where possible. Those further away fire their bows (don't forget the Innocent Bystander rule).

Any disturbance alerts Svadalfari (assuming he is still alive) and the huscarls from area 12 enter. While the giant prepares for battle (see below), the huscarls rush to aid their comrades.

The frost giant spends the first round casting *armor* and moving his Pace toward the chamber. Once he enters the cavern he casts *prolonged blast* (3d6 damage, Medium Burst Template) on the top of the Heart of Winter—he knows it won't damage the relic. In doing so, he inadvertently reveals the top surface must be important in some way (let the players work this out for themselves). Now Maintaining two spells, the frost giant priest tries to cast *entangle* on the largest group of heroes. He doesn't care if any of his own troops are caught in the spell. The giant then tries to enter melee, using his great axe to sweep aside his foes.

Should his Maintained spell be disrupted by any means, Svadalfari casts *prolonged burst* atop the relic again, and then casts *sphere of might* on himself. Again, he then begins hacking the heroes to death.

Svadalfari stops fighting to activate his *energy immunity* alchemical devices the round after he takes damage from a heat or fire spell. When wounded, he drinks a potion of *healing*.

Once he has taken two wounds (after using both potions), or if he sees player characters on the bridge, the frost giant switches tactics. He begins attacking the nearest bridge supports in an attempt to prevent the characters from reaching the Heart of Winter's unprotected top. The giant knows how important the Heart of Winter is to Thrym's plan for global conquest—he fights to the death.

Treasure: Atop the Heart of Winter are four skeletons, sacrificial victims to Thrym. The bones are those of the villagers who went missing. Their flesh was devoured by coldfire during the ritual to awaken the relic. Among the bones is a permanent relic, a stylized flame made of iron. This grants the wearer a +1 bonus to resist the effects of cold temperatures (but does nothing against damaging attacks). The cultists assumed this was a holy symbol of Kenaz, but never touched it. They allowed the victim to carry it to his death, seeing in his demise by coldfire a cruel irony. Svadalfari carries his magical great axe, *Hearth-Killer*.

AFTERMATH

Once the Heart of Winter is shattered, the winds begin to blow again. Magic is restored, the birds take to the air, Stormbrother awakens, and everyone can breathe normally. The temperature quickly rises back to normal levels. The jubilant citizens of Torton praise the heroes and hold a huge feast in their honor. Thunderson Unroch undertakes a month of severe penance for doubting Thunor, during which time he voluntarily refrains from using magic.

If the Heart of Winter hasn't been destroyed then it likely means the party is dead. Winter reigns over the Tower Hills and the surrounding lands, growing steadily worse each day. As the winter spreads so the winds die. The cult of Thrym reinforces its headquarters with renegade hrimwisards and frostborn, orcs, and ice goblins (and perhaps even ice trolls or frost giant warriors).

Invigorated, the cult begins raiding the surrounding Hearthlands. Their activities threaten trade along the Crystalflow, which in turn affects Ostmark and Veermark. Ridding Midmark of the cult should be an adventure for Heroic Rank parties.

BESTIARY

THUNDERSON UNROCH AP-ADALBERT

Unroch is an Anari, descended from the ancient conquerors of Midmark. He openly claims his ancestors were benevolent to the Saxa they lorded over and insists several of his forefathers aided the Saxa in their revolt after the Blizzard War. He was born in Tingwall (in Vestmark), and came to Torton on pilgrimage as a young cleric. According to the priest, he was invited to stay by Stormbrother, who told him it was his destiny to serve Thunor at this sacred site. Whether that is true or not, Unroch has been here for over 20 years. He became high priest six years ago, when his predecessor died of old age.

Unroch is also head of the militia, a tradition which dates back to Torton's founding. Except when leading the militia, which is rarely, Unroch carries only his mace. He always wears his robes. His helmet is typical of those worn by Saxa warriors, having a detachable eyes and nose protector.

Unroch's Noble Edge does not bestow a title. It represents his position in the village as high priest of Thunor and head of the militia, as well as his obligations to serve the villagers.

Note that none of Unroch's spells function once the adventure proper begins. They are included for completeness.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Faith d10, Fighting d8, Healing d6, Intimidation d8, Persuasion d6, Streetwise d6, Survival d6
Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)
Hindrances: Loyal, Overconfident
Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Command, Devotee of Thunor, Fanaticism, Fervor, Focus, Noble, Quick, Sweep
Languages: Anari, Auld Saxa, Saxa
Powers: *Beast friend* (whistles), *bolt* (lightning), *becalm* (sings to the wind), *deflection* (swirling winds), *fly* (accompanied by rustling robes), *leaping* (glides on wind), *summon elemental* (whistles), *voice on the wind* (whispers into the wind)
Gear: Blessed robes (+1), full helmet (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry), mace (Str+d6)
Alchemical Devices: *Arcane resistance, gift of battle* (Hold the Line), and *whirlwind* (all worked into his holy symbol)

RIDDER COENMUND RAGNARSUNU

Ridder Coenmund, born the second son of the previous ridder, was expected to join the priesthood. Instead, he became a mercenary, honing his skills on the field of battle. He was forced back to Torton twenty-five years ago, after his father and older brother succumbed to plague that swept the region. With some degree of reluctance, Coenmund accepted his late father's title and settled down.

Now in his early fifties, Coenmund favors diplomacy over violence (though violence remains a valid option when words alone will not do). Married with two sons, both of whom are serving as mercenaries in the war against the orcs in Vestmark, Coenmund is beginning to feel his age. Slightly portly, a combination of his advancing years, lack of exercise, and a fondness for mead, Coenmund is starting to wonder whether the Norns' fate for him is to die in bed, rather than on the field of battle as he always hoped.

Coenmund only wears his armor, helm, and shield during times of attack.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Riding d8, Shooting d4, Streetwise d6, Survival d6, Throwing d8
Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6/8(2)
Hindrances: Cautious, Loyal
Languages: Anari, Saxa, Trader
Edges: Combat Reflexes, Command, First Strike, Noble, Shieldwall, Sweep
Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), full helm (+3), long sword (Str+d8), dagger (Str+d4)
Alchemical Devices: Silvered tooth (*charismatic aura*), golden armlet (contains *healing* (cast with a raise) and *warrior's gift* (Improved Frenzy))

HUSCARL

Ridder Coenmund, as befits his position, has two huscarls in his employ—Aelfneth and Ulfnir. Both live in his stead. In fact, they hardly ever leave his side. Protective and obedient, the villagers jokingly refer to them collectively as "Coenmund's hounds."

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Riding d8, Taunt d6, Throwing d8
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 8 (2)
Hindrances: Loyal, Orders
Edges: Block, Shieldwall
Languages: Saxa, Trader
Gear: Chain shirt (+2), pot helm (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry), long sword (Str+d8), three short spears (Range: 3/6/12, Damage: Str+d6, Reach 1), two throwing axes (Range: 3/6/12, Damage: Str+d6).
Alchemical Devices: Each owns one half of a gold scield (*boost Vigor*; one die)

OLVIR THE SKALD

Olvir is a practitioner of song magic, but he isn't an adventurer. He uses his talent to entertain people, causing slight breezes, whispering words to an audience member, creating flickering shadows, and so on, to enhance his tales. A native of Hamna, capital of Midmark, Olvir is visiting Torton for the festival. Generally regarded as someone easy to get along with, his mouth has a habit of speaking before his brain engages. More than once Olvir has had to talk his way out of a situation caused by his big mouth.

Olvir's skaldic bonuses to Knowledge skills are included in the stats below for GM convenience.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Knowledge (Folklore) d8+1, Knowledge (History) d6+1, Knowledge (Riddles) d8+1, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Riding d6, Song Magic d8, Streetwise d8, Survival d4

Charisma: +1; **Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Big Mouth

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Common Bond, Dodge, Fleet Footed

Languages: Anari, Auld Saxa, Saxa, Trader

Powers: *Beast friend, boost/lower trait, charismatic aura, elemental manipulation (all), speak language, summon beast, voice on the wind, wilderness step*. All his spells use song trappings.

Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), dagger (Str+d4)

SWORD CAPTAIN ANGARAD DEOCILUNON

Sword Captain Angarad Deocilunon is a Hearth Knight out of Hellfrost Keep. Born to a Tuomi warlord of the Battlelands, Angarad become enamored with the ideals of the Hearth Knights, as told by the local bards. As soon as she was old enough, she trekked west, crossing thousands of miles of monster-infested lands. After checking her story, the Hearth Knights signed her up at once. Since then she has risen through the ranks of the Hearth Knights. She has entered the Hellfrost, but refuses to speak of what she witnessed. All she ever says is, "Sane men stay south of the Icewall."

Among her people she was known as Angarad the White due to her naturally shock-white hair, blue eyes, and pale skin, features often supposed by Tuomi to indicate frost giant blood somewhere in the ancestral line. Indeed, she bears all the physical traits of a frostborn, though she is of human stock. Still, her physical features cause her to hide her hair whenever among strangers. Among non-Hearth Knights she is distant and reclusive, traits which have not endeared her to the citizens of Torton.

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Hrimwisardry d6, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Notice d6, Riding d10, Stealth d8, Survival d8, Taunt d8, Tracking d8

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

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Heroic, Loyal, Orders

Edges: Attractive, Block, Combat Reflexes, Command, (Hearth Knights), Favored Foe (Frost Giants), Fervor, Frenzy, Hearth Knight, Improved Snow Walker, Level Headed, Nerves of Steel, Sweep, Woodsman

Languages: Giant, Trader, Tuomi

Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), closed helm (+3), long sword (Str+d8), medium shield (+1 Parry), winter clothing, furs, two Norn charms.

Alchemical Devices: Scrap of fur (*environmental protection from cold*), crystal Hellfrost dragon head (*energy immunity from coldfire* cast with a success), small ruby (*heat mask*), two potions of *healing* (each cures one wound), dried berry (*feast*—creates five pounds of food when planted).

VILLAGE MILITIA

While every male between 15 and 50 is a member of the militia and is called up in times of need, Torton maintains a permanent twenty-man garrison. Generally, five militiamen are on patrol in the village during the day and fifteen at night. Unlike most militias, Torton's permanent warriors are well-versed in the Saxa shield wall formation.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (one Craft) d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

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

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: Shieldwall

Languages: Anari, Saxa, Trader

Gear: Leather (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), axe (Str+d6). One-quarter carry a single throwing axe (Range: 3/6/12, Damage: Str+d6) and one-quarter use bows (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6).

VILLAGER

Torton's inhabitants are mainly farmers, though there are a small number of crafters and merchants. Unless a citizen has a unique stat block, use this one. Individuals the GM wants to expand into more fleshed-out characters, such as Anbeth (if a hero decides for a romantic liaison), can have higher Traits or a few Edges and Hindrances. Anbeth, for example, might be Attractive. Don't forget to roll on the Ally Personalities table as well.

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, Saxa, Trader
Gear: Farming implement (Str+d4 if one-handed or Str+d6 if two-handed). Militia duty: leather (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), dagger (Str+d4)

SVADALFARI, FROST GIANT PRIEST

Frost giants, also called hrimthursar (rime giants) or frost lords, are the most common and most powerful species of giant known. They live in high mountains, always above the snow line, or in the frozen reaches of the world. In these remote and frigid realms they construct vast stone forts, from where they rule over orcs and goblins as veritable gods. Their skin is glacial blue, their hair as white as snow, and their eyes as black as the darkest night.

A priest of Thrym, Svadalfari has journeyed from the Giant's Throne, a major frost giant domain, to oversee the final stages of Thrym's plans to freeze the Hearthlands. Dour, violent, hard-hearted, and fanatical, Svadalfari intends to let nothing stand in the way of his god's vision of the future.

Svadalfari lost his left eye a decade ago to a Hearth Knight's lance. The Knight paid the ultimate price, but Svadalfari still hates their organization. In combat, he singles out any Hearth Knights in the party for special attention.

Due to his size, the frost giant treats all 1" wide terrain as difficult ground.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12+3, Vigor d8
Skills: Climbing d8, Faith d10, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Knowledge (Religion) d6, Notice d6, Throwing d8
Charisma: –4; **Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 14 (3)
Hindrances: Habit (Minor; kills underlings who fail him), Mean, One Eye, Vengeful (Major)
Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Combat Reflexes, Concentration, Command, Devotee of Thrym, Improved Sweep, Level Headed, Snow Walker
Languages: Frosttongue, Giant, Orc, Trader
Gear: Plate corselet (+3), chain limb (+3), full helm (+3), magic great axe (Str+d10, –1 Parry, AP 1, carried in one hand, +1 to Fighting and damage rolls against fyr elementalists and clerics of Kenaz or Sigel).
Alchemical Devices: Two potions of *healing* (each cures one wound), charm of *energy immunity* from fire (cast with a success).
Special Abilities:

* **Devotee of Thrym:** Frost giant devotees draw cold from their own aura. They have a minimum bonus of +2 to Faith rolls, but use a higher bonus only when the ambient temperature permits. Frost giant priests know the following spells: *armor* (icy skin), *bolt* (coldfire), *entangle* (freezes foe), *prolonged blast* (coldfire), *sphere of might* (coldfire), *storm* (blizzard), *stun* (blast of frigid air).
* **Icy Aura:** Frost giants radiate deadly cold. At the end of movement, all adjacent foes suffer 2d6 damage.
* **Infravision:** Halve darkness penalties against heat-producing targets.
* **Large:** Attackers gain +2 to attack rolls against frost giants, due to their size.
* **Resistance (Cold):** Immune to background cold. Half damage from cold, coldfire, and ice attacks.
* **Sacrificial Lambs:** Svadalfari doesn't give a damn about his lackeys. If an opponent strikes the giant with a successful melee attack, the priest shoves one of his adjacent Extras in the way to take the blow. This is a free action. The damage is dealt against the minion, instead. He can do this once per round, and must decide to use it before damage is rolled.
* **Size +5:** Frost giants are over 18' tall.
* **Susceptibility (Fire):** Takes +4 damage from heat or fire.

FROSTBORN HUSCARL

The frostborn huscarls are Svadalfari's fanatical bodyguards.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Hrimwisardry d8, Notice d6, Riding d8, Taunt d6, Throwing d8
Charisma: –6; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 8 (2)
Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Heat Lethargy, Loyal, Orders, Outsider
Edges: Block, Frigid Form, Improved Snow Walker, Winter Soul
Languages: Frosttongue, Giant, Trader
Powers: *armor* (icy skin), *environmental protection* (against cold only), *smite* (icicles grow from hands or a held weapon), *speed* (ice-shod feet)
Gear: Chain shirt (+2), pot helm (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry), battle axe (Str+d8), two throwing axes (Range: 3/6/12, Damage: Str+d6), winter clothing, furs.
Special Abilities:

* **Fanatics:** The huscarls automatically go berserk (as the Edge) if they witness Svadalfari take a wound.

FROSTBORN PRIEST OF THRYM

The priest was instrumental in discovering the Heart of Winter. He truly believed he had been chosen by Thrym to lead the Hearthlands into eternal winter, and expected to conduct the ceremony to awaken the relic. Much to his annoyance he found himself subservient to Svadalfari. To add insult to injury, he is now barred from seeing the Heart of Winter. Given time, the priest might have staged a rebellion against the frost giant and his minions.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Faith d8, Guts d10, Intimidation d8,

Hrimwisardry d6, Notice d6
Charisma: –6; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (2)
Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Heat Lethargy, Loyal, Outsider, Overconfident, Vengeful (Major)
Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Command, Devotee of Thrym, Frenzy, Frigid Form, Improved Snow Walker, Two-Fisted, Winter Soul
Languages: Frosttongue, Giant, Saxa, Trader
Miraculous Powers: *beast friend*, *bolt* (coldfire), *deflection* (snow flurry), *dispel*, *entangle* (victim freezes), *fear* (vision of Hellfrost dragon), *smite* (coldfire swathed weapon)
Hrimwisardry Powers: *armor* (icy skin), *environmental protection* (against cold only), *smite* (icicles grow from hands or a held weapon), *speed* (ice-shod feet)
Gear: Chain shirt (+2), two battle axes (Str+d8).

CULTIST

Were Thrym ever get to get his way, the world would be completely covered in ice and snow. Although this would likely mean the end of the civilized races, Thrym has cultists among these races. Most are insane, driven mad by the Hellfrost wind or encounters with Hellfrost beasts. A large number are frostborn. They have Hrimwisardry d8 and the frostborn racial abilities.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)
Hindrances: Loyal
Edges: Warm Blooded
Languages: Anari or Saxa, Trader
Gear: Leather armor (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), mace, short sword, or axe (Str+d6), boot spikes (Str+d4), winter clothing

ICE GOBLIN WARRIOR

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d4, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d10, Taunt d6, Throwing d6
Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4
Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6).
Special Abilities:
* **Improved Snow Walker:** Treat ice and snow as normal terrain.
* **Infravision:** Goblins halve penalties for dark lighting against living targets (round down).
* **Size –1:** Goblins stand 3–4' tall.
* **Warm Blooded:** +2 to Vigor rolls to resist the effect of cold.

POLAR BEAR

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12
Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d10, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Swimming d8, Tracking d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11 (1)
Special Abilities:
* **Armor +1:** Thick fur and fat.
* **Bear Hug:** Bears don't 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 and attacks at +2 until the foe is freed. The opponent may only attempt to escape the "hug" on his action, which requires a raise on an opposed Strength roll.
* **Claws:** Str+d6.
* **Resistance (Cold):** Immune to background cold. Half damage from cold and ice attacks.
* **Size +2:** These creatures stand up to 9' tall and weigh over 1200 pounds each.
* **Snow Walker:** Treats rough ice as normal terrain, smooth ice as rough ice, and every inch of movement in snow as 1.5" instead of 2".

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The Death of Summer Looms!

Summer draws near, and the village of Torton is preparing for its annual festival in honor of Thunor. It is a time of celebration and happiness, and the heroes are welcome guests. But hidden away from the warmth, a creature of terrible cold plots and plans the destruction of the world. Through the awesome power of the winter god, Thrym, the servant of evil plans to bring about the Fimbulvintr. Should it succeed, the Hearthlands will be punged into perpetual winter.

The cry goes out for heroes! Are the characters ready to face their greatest threat? Is their destiny to destroy the Heart of Winter or die trying?

Containing a mix of social interaction and combat, this adventure can be run standalone or as the third part of the Saga of the Frost Giants.

The Heart of Winter is a fantasy adventure for the unique Hellfrost setting for the award-winning *Savage Worlds RPG* system.

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HELLFROST

THE FROST GIANT'S HOLD

SAGA OF THE FROST GIANTS - PART 4

OFFICIAL SAVAGE WORLDS LICENSED PRODUCT

THE FROST GIANT'S HOLD

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THE FROST GIANT'S HOLD

INTRODUCTION

This adventure can be played as a standalone adventure, or as the final part of a quartet which includes *Shadow of Darkness (N3), The Siege of Watchgap Fort (S1)*, and *The Heart of Winter (V1)*.

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

Scaling for higher Ranks is easily handled. For parties with more experience points, add two orc warrior Extras or one *lesser* frost giant Extra to a detailed encounter for each whole 20 XPs the party is above Legendary. For instance, if a party of four Legendary characters with 100 XPs faces one orc warrior per hero, the heroes encounter a total of six warriors (four because of the party size and another two because the party is 20 XPs higher than the scenario minimum).

This adventure is set on the shores of White Lake, in the Low Winterlands. As written, the early stages of the tale take place in a small village on the Heligioland coast, somewhere along the coastal trade road between Watchgap Fort and Seithrby. GMs are welcome to transpose the village to another part of White Lake coast, or even move it onto the shores of Frostwater Lake.

The temperature plays an important role in this adventure. As such, the GM should pay careful attention to the heroes' winter clothing. See the *Savage Worlds* rulebook for the effects of cold weather and the *Hellfrost Players' Guide* for how the rules work in this setting.

Treasure: Each orc warrior carries 1d10 gs worth of coins. Frost giant warriors carry 1d10 x 10gs of treasure. Other monsters have their treasure detailed in the text or in their stat blocks.

Allies: The GM should make Ally Sheets for Sir Gontran, Padraig, and the villagers in advance of play. In the frost giant jarl's lair, when a creature is listed as "X per hero," the term "hero" also includes any allied Wild Card NPCs. Treat each four allied Extras as a Wild Card for this purpose only.

GM'S BACKGROUND

At the dawn of time, there lived only giants. These were not the same as the giants which roam Rassilon today, but monstrous, quasi-elemental beings possessed of fearsome powers. Of the various species, two were mortal enemies, locked in seemingly endless warfare. In the far north of the world lived the frost giants, while in the south dwelt the fire giants. Their battles shook the heavens for eons.

Rallying their forces, they fought one last battle, the battle to decide the fate of the world. The result was a stalemate. The vast energies called forth by both sides cancelled each other, creating a temperate zone that neither side found comfortable. Sorely beaten and on the edge of extinction, so great were their losses, the giants withdrew to the nether reaches of the world. In their place, the gods created new races—dwarves, elves, engro, and humans.

Jarl Hrimwulf, the frost giant jarl at the center of the *Saga of the Frost Giants*, is no ordinary frost giant chief. Hrimwulf is one of the last of the original frost giants. From his lair at the top of the world, in the land of perpetual ice that existed long before the rise of the Icewall, Hrimwulf watched impotently as the survivors of his race grew weak by mating with the new race—humans—which produced lesser beings devoid of many of their original powers, the frost giants that roam Rassilon today.

When Thrym instigated the Blizzard War, Hrimwulf rallied his forces behind the ice god's banner. At last, it seemed, the time had come to complete the conquest of the world, destroy the lesser races, and finally, after so many eons, crush the fire giants, but it was not to be, for the forces of the Hellfrost armies were defeated

by strength of steel, will, and fire magic. Territory had been gained, for sure, but the conquest was far from complete.

Hrimwulf, now located in a new palace in the Hellfrost, ranted and raved for hundreds of years. Then, just a century ago, Thrym, never one for obeying the rules, visited the jarl in his dreams and gave him knowledge of how to pull part of the god's domain through to the mundane world.

Hrimwulf chose White Lake (a location far from prying eyes and easily defensible should the lesser races grow arrogant enough to challenge his rule) as the location for the nexus, and set to work immediately. After a century of complex rituals, the jarl's task was complete.

A towering iceberg fortress rose from the island overnight. To conceal it, a permanent blizzard encircled the island. Inside an ice cavern, a glittering portal of magical energy appeared out of thin air. Through this permanent link to the Hellfrost, frost giants, and elementals stepped, each creature swearing total obedience to Hrimwulf. At the very pinnacle of the iceberg, unreachable except by flight, Thrym conjured a lens of translucent ice, a focus for his divine power. Through this, Hrimwulf could summon terrible blizzards and call down Thrym's breath, an icy wind that could send the temperature plummeting well below freezing in a matter of seconds.

Messengers were sent to local orc tribes, carrying promises of wealth in return for loyal service. Warriors, eager for plunder and carnage, flocked to the jarl's banner. Equipped with an army and the awesome power of the Hellfrost, Hrimwulf now intends to complete his revenge by utterly destroying Rassilon.

So far, his plans have been thwarted. His orc and goblin allies summoned from the Giant's Throne failed to destroy Heligioland, and his plan to awaken the Heart of Winter was similarly terminated thanks to the intervention of a small band of heroes. Undeterred, Hrimwulf continues with his plan of global conquest.

SETTING UP THE ADVENTURE

Whether you run this as a standalone adventure or the conclusion of the *Saga of the Frost Giants* quartet, the GM needs to do a little preparation. Hrimwulf has been steadily summoning energy through the portal since his iceberg lair was completed. This has affected the weather across Rassilon. The last winter was particularly hard, and the snows are reluctant to thaw.

During the lead up to and throughout this adventure, treat the temperature on the lands below the Icewall as one level colder. For instance, if you set this adventure in summer, the Low Winterlands suffer temperatures equivalent to spring and fall. Whereas the temperature should be above freezing, it remains bitterly cold. Even in the Hearthlands, the temperature is cold, delaying the planting of new crops, forcing harvest to come early, before the crops have reached full yield, and threatening the survival of many communities.

If you are playing through the full *Saga*, this temperature drop begins after the heroes complete *The Heart of Winter*. In any episodic game, where the passage of seasons may be more fluid, the GM can just describe the constant chill as part of the backdrop to the adventure.

CHARACTER HOOKS

The GM needs to determine exactly why the characters are on the western fringe of Heligioland. In a campaign, their arrival in the right place at the right time can easily be arranged by the GM.

Caravan Guards: The road between Watchgap Fort and Seithrby is well travelled by merchants, for many small villages on the shores of White Lake sell preserved fish and buy crops shipped up from the south. While it is unlikely the heroes are trading, they might be acting as caravan guards, perhaps just earning some extra coin as they travel north toward another possible adventure.

Curiosity: Several attacks have occurred along the shores of White Lake. Perhaps the party has heard tale of recent raids along the shores and seeks to investigate in the hope of finding a clue to the lair of the frost giant plaguing Rassilon.

Messengers: The trade road forms an important part of Heligioland's communications network. Maybe the heroes are en route with messages from the Hearth Knights to northern outposts, such as those in Seithrby and the Shattered Moor.

Patrolling: Those known to have aided the Hearth Knights in the past might be employed to patrol the trade route, for the colder temperatures bring their own dangers in the form of frost giants and ice goblin raiders, and the Hearth Knights are sore pressed to be everywhere they are needed in strength.

WHITBY

Whitby, a contraction of White Bay, is a settlement of 200 souls. Situated on the southeast shore of White Lake, just off the Watchgap Fort to Seithrby, the community is populated by Anari and Saxa in roughly equal proportion. Of these, 30 are elderly (too old for militia duty or fishing), 61 are men, 54 are women, and 55 are children (aged 13 or younger).

While the villagers grow family plots of hardy roots and vegetables, the staple diet is comprised of fish caught in the lake. What the locals do not eat, they preserve in salt and sell to passing merchants. As a single community, the catch is not enough to warrant special visits by merchants, but as one of many such villages dotted along the road, the collective harvests make the trip worthwhile. Fish from the village is usually sold at Seithrby to the north, and from there makes its way north and east along other trade roads. Supplies needed by the good folk of Whitby arrive with merchants travelling along the opposite route.

Whitby is protected from landward attack by a ditch and palisade. With the men away fishing, sometimes for days at a time, the locals decided women could join the

militia. At present, the militia strength stands at 44 members, 16 of whom are women. While their menfolk are home, they rarely perform guard duty, but once the fishing boats leave they don their armor, grab their spears, and take to the walls. The militia is led by Gontran ap-Padern, a retired Hearth Knight who settled here many years ago. Despite no longer being a serving member, the locals insist on calling him Sir Gontran.

Whitby has traditionally been home to just six families, four Saxa and two Anari. Marriage between the neighbors is strictly prohibited. Unfortunately, many men who venture off to find wives never return, lured away by the promise of better fortunes inland. As a result, the population is steadily decreasing in size and aging. The heads of the six families, all senior citizens, along with Gontran ap-Padern, form the village council.

No temple stands in Whitby. Neorthe has a small shrine on the shore, close to where the fishing boats are beached. The other deities are not represented, though as normal lip service is paid as required.

A SILENT GREETING

The heroes are traveling along the trade road toward Whitby when the adventure begins. Up ahead, they spy a man and boy, both clad in thick winter furs. The young lad carries a brace of rabbits tethered to a stick over his shoulder, while the man is armed with sword and shield. As the party nears, the youth calls out in a high-pitched voice.

"Ho, strangers! I am Gontran ap-Padern, militia captain of Whitby, upon which you now draw near. Speak now, are you friend or foe?"

Assuming the party responds they are friends, the pair walks over to greet them, the youth standing back while the man sheathes his sword and extends his hand in welcome. The man is Gontran, a retired hearth Knight left mute by an orc blade. The lad is Padraig, an orphan whom Gontran has adopted. Padraig titles himself "the Squire."

Padraig answers any questions the heroes ask, though there is a momentary delay while his master talks to him in his own sign language. Likely questions and Gontran's answers are listed below:

Q: Who is the boy?

A: *"Sir Gontran says, his name is Padraig, an orphan I adopted after his parents drowned in an accident. He is in his twelfth summer, soon to be a man in his own right, and able to chose his own path in light." Padraig smiles proudly, pats Gontran on the back and says, "I'm going to be a Hearth Knight!"*

Q: Why won't you speak to us directly?

A: *Gontran draws back his cloak to reveal an ugly, jagged scar across his throat. "Sir Gontran says, orcs took my voice four years back. Padraig now speaks for me. I have taught him a sign language I developed, which allows us to communicate fluently. My hearing is unimpaired, though, so please do not shout."*

Q: What are you doing here?

A: *"Sir Gontran says, hunting for rabbits and patrolling. There have been many attacks on nearby communities. What brings you along this road, for you are neither Hearth Knights nor merchants, and few others have need to travel this way?"*

Q: Are you a knight?

A: *"Sir Gontran says, I <u>was</u> a Hearth Knight, a Sword-Captain. When the orc blade cut my throat, I could no longer serve as a commander of men, so I retired from my position. I settled in Whitby, where the locals welcomed me. Now I serve as the commander of their militia. Padraig, despite being told to the contrary, insists on using my former title, but I make no claims to it."*

Once the questioning is over, Gontran invites the heroes to Whitby, promising them a hot meal and a space to sleep if they desire it. He becomes insistent if there are any Hearth Knights in the party, for he wishes to catch up on the latest news. Should the party refuse, Gontran lets them go on their way. The adventure now needs to be modified, but not abandoned. Eventually, the heroes will need to rest for the night, and as the sun sets, so they spy another village. The events that follow, while requiring some rewording to account for Gontran's absence, can be used to continue the tale.

Gontran ap-Padern: See page 544.

Padraig the Squire: See page 544.

FOOD AND SHELTER

After several miles, you catch sight of a palisade encircling a small village. Smoke drifts from chimneys and there are signs of activity on the beach where fishing boats are being hauled onto the shingle. "Sir Gontran says, this is Whitby," says Padraig, "our home."

You walk down the trail to the main gates, which surprisingly are guarded by women. Sir Gontran smiles broadly and gestures to his squire. "Sir Gontran says, the men are often away for many days fishing, so the women volunteer to do militia duties. Unusual, yes, but we live in unusual times. Come, they won't bite."

Gontran and Padraig lead you to a large, thatched hall. Padraig runs ahead and throws open the doors, shouting loudly, "Sir Gontran has returned, and he brings guests. Prepare stew and ale for them!" Gontran gestures for you to enter.

This is Whitby's alehouse, a communal hall used to house visitors and the center of village life. A roaring hearth provides plentiful heat and light for the dozen or so villagers in here when the party enters. Young children

are sent to collect the heroes' cloaks, which are placed in a neat pile on one of the many sleeping benches lining the walls. Bowls of hot fish stew in which sit chunks of crusty bread and mugs of warm ale are thrust into the characters' hands.

With merchant caravans slowed by the unseasonal weather, the inhabitants are desperate for news. Gontran, despite being retired for a year, knows of the events detailed in *The Siege of Watchgap Fort* and *The Heart of Winter*. He praises the heroes if their involvement becomes known to him. The villagers are suitably awe-inspired as well, and insist on calling the heroes "My lord" and "My lady" from here on.

Any skalds are politely asked to entertain the crowd, which quickly swells from a handful to 50 citizens, all eager to see the strangers and hear their news.

During the meal, Gontran informs the heroes of the following facts. As always, Padraig does the talking. Once the conversation ends, proceed immediately to the next chapter.

* *"Sir Gontran says, there was an attack on Eadwulf's Stead, a settlement a day's ride north of here, only last month. It once held a population of around 75 souls, but there were no survivors. Thrym aided the attackers, for snow had covered the ground, concealing any tracks. Since then we have increased our watches."*
* *"Sir Gontran says, strange things are happening. Some of the fishermen reported a blizzard deep into White Lake a few months back. When they returned to the same spot, the blizzard was still raging. It is an omen, and a fell one, I wager."*
* *"Sir Gontran says, the weather is as bad here as elsewhere. Sigel remains blanketed by cloud and Kenaz fails to warm the land. Summer brought no respite, and the temperature has remained below freezing for too long. We eat few crops, but elsewhere the ground must be hard as stone. I remember reading an ancient text, written long before the Hearth Knights were formed, which told that this is how the Blizzard War began."*

A SUDDEN FREEZE

The door to the alehouse crashes open with a loud bang. Staggering, coated in frost is a young man, one of the militia judging by his garb. "Everything is freezing solid!" he hisses through wildly chattering teeth. He steps forward, but stops suddenly and completely, as if petrified.

Ice rapidly creeps over his flesh, freezing it solid in seconds. The interior of the roof and walls of the alehouse become coated with a thickening layer of crackling ice and an icy wind, a wind far colder than anything you have ever experienced before, howls through the open door. Inch by inch, the ice creeps into the hall. Frightened by this sudden freeze, the villagers begin backing toward the hearth.

A cry causes you to spin. An elderly woman gestures to the fire, screaming, "The fire is dying! We are doomed without it!"

Hrimwulf has activated the ice lens atop the iceberg, focusing it in the direction of the village. Fed by cold air from the deepest, most frigid depths of Thrym's divine realm, the temperature in the vicinity has plummeted to –200° F (–129° C) in a split second. At these temperatures, winter clothing is of little use as the Vigor penalty is –12! Unless they act quickly, the heroes and the villagers will be frozen solid in a few short minutes.

The sudden freeze does not last long (although it is long enough to kill everything in the area of effect), and the heroes can take action to keep the alehouse warm. The logical way is to heap logs, furniture and other fuel into the hearth to keep the fire from dying.

The contest lasts *exactly* six rounds. After this, the cold snap ends and the temperature quickly returns to normal. During the contest, the GM should describe the action, not the die rolls. For example, if the heroes manage to boost the fire he might describe the pile of logs and furniture heaped onto the coals, crackling flames licking high into the air, and the ice melting back. If the fire starts to lessen, then he can describe the flames dying back, the frost forming on every surface, and the foggy breath of the tired villagers.

Place three tokens on the tabletop. If you have them, red poker chips are ideal. These represent the state of the fire as the cold snap begins.

The heroes and the villagers act through a single Cooperative roll. One hero must be elected as lead character while everyone else is a helper. The Trait used should be left up to the players and common sense. For instance, Strength could be used to stoke the fire with wood, while Smarts might indicate the character taking the time to select materials that will catch quickly and burn hot while stopping others from throwing on furs (which do not burn particularly well) or damp items. Arcane skills could be used to fan the flames or add heat to the coals. Those with social skills might favor Intimidation to bully the villagers into working harder, or Persuasion to organize a bucket brigade to pass on flammable material in an orderly and timely fashion. Throwing is not as useful as it sounds—there are a hundred people all trying to get near the fire. If a hero really wants to use Throwing, his roll suffers a –6 penalty because of the obstructions. Since the villagers are acting as a Group, they roll a d6 for their Trait and a d6 Wild Die.

A successful Cooperative roll adds one token, and a raise two tokens. More than one raise has no effect. This represents the fire burning hot and keeping the cold at bay. A critical failure causes the fire to lose one token—the wrong items may be tossed in, smothering the flames, or general chaos means little flammable material made it to the fire.

GOING OUTSIDE

Unless a character is a hrimwisard or possesses *environmental protection* from cold, stepping outside is suicidal, for he is exposed to the full unearthly freeze.

The penalty to Vigor rolls is a massive –12. If the modifier is not raised to –6 or above through winter protection, the roll must be made every single round. Even the hardiest hero risks death in less than 30 seconds.

The cold then rolls a d12 and a d10 Wild Die. One token is removed if the cold scores a success and two if it gets a raise. Again, more than one raise is ignored.

So long as there is at least one fire token remaining, the room is comfortably warm and the cold is arrested. If all the fire tokens are removed before the six rounds end, the fire goes out and cannot be relit even with magic. In a heartbeat, the temperature plunges to deep below freezing as the ashes go cold and frost begins to form on everything. The Vigor penalty (and that to invoke heat and fire magic) is –10! Conversely, hrimwisards have a massive +10 bonus to Hrimwisardry rolls. Unless the Vigor modifier can be raised to –6 or better, all Wild Cards present must make a Vigor roll for each round remaining.

Do not roll for the villagers. Instead, use the abstract chart below to determine how they fare. Find the number of rounds remaining and read across. The numbers are how many of the 100 people in the alehouse are suffering what level of Fatigue. Realistically, every Extra would fail the Vigor roll. However, the heroes at least tried to save them, so that should be rewarded with some leniency.

Rounds	Dead	Incapacitated	Exhausted	Fatigued
1	—	—	—	50
2	—	—	50	25
3	—	50	25	25
4	50	25	25	—

Of the 100 villagers not in the alehouse, 25 are dead, 25 Incapacitated, 25 Exhausted, and 25 Fatigued.

One level of Fatigue is recovered every 30 minutes if suitable warmth and shelter are provided. Unfortunately, the characters only have one hour before the next problem assails the village.

AFTERMATH

All the buildings are covered in a thick layer of ice, as is the ground. Barrels of water are frozen solid, clothing hung out to dry in the pale sun is as stiff as steel, and many animals, livestock and pets, lie rigid upon the ice-covered ground.

Although the air has warmed considerably, the ice will not melt until the temperature rises above freezing, possibly making it months before the memory of the freeze can be forgotten. The waters of White Lake are frozen completely solid to a distance of 20 yards from shore.

Regardless of how well the party did, there are casualties elsewhere in Whitby. Lamentations and cries of anguish fill the cold air as the extent of the deaths becomes apparent. Curses are uttered against Thrym, women demand to know why Kenaz failed to save them, and men vow revenge, though they know not on whom to vent their anger. The villagers set to work caring for their dead. With the earth now hard as stone, funeral pyres are hurriedly constructed from what little wood remains.

The heroes have one hour before the next encounter occurs. During this time, they may do as they wish. Due to the sudden drop in temperature, there are no herbs of any variety within a mile of Whitby.

LANDING PARTY

An hour after the freeze ends, a cry goes up from one of the lookouts—something is moving on the lake! Nearby militia members rush to gather up their weapons and shields, calling out for others to do the same.

While the heroes may well be armored and carrying their weapons, it is unlikely they are carrying all their adventuring gear. Be strict but fair in what the characters are likely carrying when the alarm is raised—if an adventurer has always kept his alchemical devices handy, then there's no reason to assume any different now.

Hrimwulf's standard tactic when assaulting the coastal settlements is to dispatch a raiding fleet, timing the ice lens attack to end just before the vessels reach the edge of the area of effect. Anyone who survives the terrible cold is swiftly executed. When the raiding party departs, the leader, a frost giant, activates an alchemical *storm* device to cover any tracks.

Terrain: The ground around Whitby and the lake out to 10" from the shore is rough ice. Rough ice is treated as difficult ground for all movement. Anytime a character runs, a 1 on the running die means he has slipped and fallen at the point where his run began. Agility rolls involving other forms of movement (such as avoiding an area-effect attack or a Trick such as running up an ice wall) suffer a –2 penalty. If the Agility roll fails, the character falls and is Shaken.

The canoes afford all the occupants (except the frost giant) Medium Cover (–2).

Monsters: The raiding party comprises four canoes crafted from black ice. Each has Toughness 12 (4) and has Heavy Armor. These are labeled A through D on the map. Canoe A holds the frost giant leader, Járnsaxa, and half the elite orc warriors. Canoe C contains the orc drummer and the remaining elite warriors. The orc warriors are divided equally among canoes B and D.

Gontran and Padraig join the defenders in protecting the village. Hand out Ally Sheets among the players. Give Gontran to the player with the weakest physical combat character.

Each player should position himself and his allies anywhere he wishes on the map.

Ⓜ **Járnsaxa, Greater Frost Giant (1):** See page 546. Carries an alchemical *storm* device created with a raise.

Ⓜ **Orc Drummer (1):** See page 548.
Ⓜ **Orc Warriors (3 per hero):** See page 548.
Ⓜ **Orc Elite Warriors (2 per hero):** See page 548.
Ⓜ **Sir Gontran ap-Padern:** See page 544.
Ⓜ **Padraig the Squire:** See page 544.
Ⓜ **Villagers (2 per hero):** See page 545. Increase the numbers available by an additional one per hero for each 20 who survive the alehouse, to a maximum of four per hero. None of these villagers are Fatigued. All wear their militia gear.

Tactics: The canoes begin as indicated on the map. Deal action cards for each canoe at this stage. During the first round, the canoes move adjacent to the solid lake ice. During that time the occupants do nothing but keep their heads down and row.

On the second round, the attackers clamber out of the canoes and rush ashore. Deal separate action cards for each troop type from here on in. All the attackers either have the Snow Walker Edge or wear boot spikes, so they move unimpeded on the rough ice.

The attackers have one aim—to destroy everyone in Whitby. To that end, they use Gang Up bonuses against the nearest foes so as to be able to take them down as quickly as possible. If their targets prove to be superior combatants, such as the heroes are likely to be, they combine Gang Up tactics with Wild Attacks. The attackers fight to the death—no one who fails Hrimwulf survives the debriefing.

The orc drummer's beat is whatever is most appropriate when his action card comes up. For instance, if the defenders are some distance away he beats Charge. Should a lot of orcs in his vicinity be Shaken, he uses Rally. If the orcs are in melee, he will use Fervor or Frenzy

The odds are stacked against the heroes, however, the GM should not pull any punches—the characters are Legendary Rank, likely have four or five Glory rewards, probably some Leadership Edges, and they should have developed tried and tested tactics by this stage in their adventuring careers.

Continuation: Once the engagement is over, Gontran (assuming he survives) immediately ensures the survivors are put to work looking after the wounded. He asks, through Padraig, to speak to the characters in private. He takes them to an empty house—the alehouse being used as a makeshift infirmary.

"Sir Gontran says, now the truth is known at last. Wherever these fiends came from it is within a day's travel, for those canoes are for short distances only, perhaps 30 miles at the most. The only shore within that range is this side of the lake, and the presence of frost giants in and around the Greenpot Hills would have been noticed by now. That leaves only one option…"

Let the characters end the sentence. Gontran provided them with enough details early on to make the deduction that the attackers came from somewhere on the lake, most likely behind the seemingly permanent blizzard.

Should Gontran be dead, it is left to the adventurers to work out that they need to set sail onto the lake in search of the attackers' lair. If they are truly stuck, a villager can reveal the information above.

Once the adventurers plan to set out onto the lake, Gontran organizes supplies. As well as provisions, he can rustle up extra winter clothing, furs, rope, and other common supplies. What Whitby lacks are the more useful items—alchemical devices and herbal remedies. The raiders' canoes are available to the heroes. Each canoe can hold a maximum of eight adult humans. Gontran and Padraig both volunteer to accompany the party.

Gontran dismisses any plans to send messengers to the Hearth Knights to summon reinforcements and attack in numbers. It would take at least a week to gather sufficient strength, and the fate that almost befell Whitby could be unleashed again at any moment. Any delay could condemn hundreds of innocents to death. Should the ex-Hearth Knight have died in the assault, you can allow the heroes to make Common Knowledge rolls to determine this for themselves.

Should the party insist on waiting for reinforcements, a squad of one Sword Knight and seven Shield Knights arrive a week later. In that time, several hundred more people have been slain by the power of the deadly lens. The heroes are directly responsible for their deaths. Surviving villagers from Whitby will tell others of the heroes' lack of swift action, costing every party member a 20-point Glory penalty.

BOATING ON THE LAKE

Hrimwulf's island is located 25 miles northwest of Whitby, in the icy waters of White Lake. If the characters set sail immediately in the direction of the blizzard detected by the sailors, they can reach the blizzard wall an hour before sunset.

THE BLIZZARD WALL

A few miles ahead, the horizon merges with the cloudy sky. This must be the sea blizzard of which Gontran spoke. Whatever you seek must lie beyond the wall of wind and snow.

The blizzard forms a dome around Hrimwulf's island to a distance of three miles in every direction, concealing it from view and forming the first line of defense. Once the heroes enter the blizzard, visibility is reduced to only a few yards. Snow and ice, driven by gale force winds, sting exposed flesh.

In order to pass through the blizzard, the characters must make a Cooperative Boating roll per canoe. Each roll covers an hour's travel. It requires two successful rolls to cross through the barrier.

Those passing through the blizzard must make a Vigor

roll at –2 every hour or gain a level of Fatigue. There is no hope of using *refuge* in the small canoes, but *environmental protection* protects as normal. Otherwise, there is little the characters can do but weather the storm. Fatigue is recovered as per the rules for Cold.

JOURNEYING ON FOOT

A mighty crack reverberates through the canoe as it comes to a sudden, juddering halt. The lake is frozen solid as far as the eye can see! From here on you're going to have to progress on foot.

Once the heroes pack their gear and set out, read or paraphrase the following:

The howling wind and blinding snow has ended, but in its place is an intensely cold wind that penetrates your winter clothing and flesh like an icy dagger. Stretching out ahead is a plain of rough ice, the surface rippled and furrowed as if the lake, waves and all, instantly froze.

The characters now face a three-mile walk over rough ice in frigid temperatures. On this side of the barrier, the temperature is the same as the Hellfrost core. Visibility is Dim (–1) during the day and Pitch Black (–4) at night, Sigel's Hearth is concealed behind the permanent blizzard barrier. Unfortunately, the wind is so strong that no fire can be lit. Anyone thus suffering Fatigue from the blizzard wall will remain Fatigued until some sort of sturdy shelter is erected.

ROAMING GUARDIANS

Hrimwulf allows powerful elementals to freely roam the frozen sea. They are under orders to attack anything moving on the ice except polar bears, other cold-based elementals, orcs, and frost giants. Draw a card from the action deck. A black suit means the heroes encounter ice shell elementals. On a red card, they are ambushed by a small pack of black ice elementals. A Joker means the characters strike lucky and avoid the sentries.

Terrain: The ground is rough ice. Rough ice is treated as difficult ground for all movement. Anytime a character runs, a 1 on the running die means he has slipped and fallen at the point where his run began. Agility rolls involving other forms of movement (such as avoiding an area-effect attack or a Trick such as running up an ice wall) suffer a –2 penalty. If the Agility roll fails, the character falls and is Shaken.

Monsters: The elementals do not roam the surface, as this would make them visible to intruders. Instead, they use their Burrowing ability to move unseen through the yard's thick ice. Only when they sense prey moving above do they make their presence known.

Ⓜ **Black Ice Elemental (1 per 2 heroes):** See page 545.

Ⓜ **Ice Shell Elemental (1 per 3 heroes):** See page 546.

Tactics: Both types of elemental begin by bursting up through the ice. When they erupt from the ground, victims must make a Notice roll opposed by the creature's Stealth. Those who fail are Surprised. Otherwise, the heroes are dealt a card, but act after the elementals—only a Joker allows a character to react quickly enough. If the creature wins, it gains +2 to attack and damage that round, +4 with a raise.

Black ice elementals favor their Coldfire Strike against bunched targets and their powerful fists against lone opponents. The elementals are not stupid—if they face superior odds or a foe that proves resilient to their attacks, they use their Burrowing to slide into the ice, remerging elsewhere to attack a weaker target. They need not reemerge immediately—they will stay concealed for as long as necessary to reach a new victim.

An ice shell elemental uses its Coldfire Strike until it is wounded. It then Burrows into the ice, remerging adjacent to the nearest foe. It then attacks with its fist, ensuring it ends it movement still adjacent, so as to make use of its leaking coldfire core. Since Burrowing is used in place of the creature's base Pace, ice shell elementals will sink into the ice if they fail to unShake, remaining there until they successfully recover. They then use Burrowing to strike back.

Continuation: A mile from the frost giant's lair, the iceberg proper becomes visible as a glittering object against the grey clouds of the blizzard barrier filling the horizon. At a range of a quarter mile, the true nature of the object and its fortification becomes readily apparent. The party also spies a host of shapes on the ice. Use of *farsight* reveals them to be rows of naked figures.

THE FLESH FOREST

Once within a hundred yards of these shapes, their nature becomes all too apparent. Standing rigid on the ice are scores, maybe hundreds of naked corpses, the flesh of their faces, fingers, and toes blackened by frost, the rest of their skin deep blue and their wide, open eyes milky white. The corpses are mainly human, but there are taiga elves, frost dwarves, and engros among their number. The grisly forest of frozen flesh blocks the way to the path leading up to the fortress.

Terrain: The ground is rough ice, which is treated as difficult ground for all movement. Anytime a character runs, a 1 on the running die means he has slipped and fallen at the point where his run began. Agility rolls involving other forms of movement (such as avoiding an area-effect attack or a Trick such as running up an ice wall) suffer a –2 penalty. If the Agility roll fails, the character falls and is Shaken.

Monsters: Hrimwulf's raids have brought back hundreds of prisoners. After being tortured, sometimes to garner information and sometimes purely for fun, the captives are stripped naked, tethered to posts, and left to freeze to death. Once the last ounce of warmth leaves the

corpse, the fell magic drawn into the world by the crystal lens atop the iceberg imbues the corpse with unlife.

Ⓜ **Hellfrost Zombies (3 per hero):** See page 547.

Tactics: The zombies begin tethered to their posts but are not treated as being on Hold. They awaken one round after the heroes approach within 3", emitting a ghastly scream as they do so.

Although tethered, they are capable of using their arms to claw the trespassers. The ropes holding the corpses to the posts are frozen to the point of being brittle. At the end of their actions, Hellfrost zombies may make a Strength roll as a free action. With success, it breaks free of its hitching, allowing it to move next round.

THE FROST GIANT'S HOLD

Hrimwulf's lair takes the form of a fortress of black ice built into the side of the iceberg. The iceberg rises almost 1,000 feet into the air. The outer surface is not smooth, and there are plenty of handholds.

INTERNAL FEATURES

Many features are common throughout the fortress. For brevity, these features are detailed below:

Ceilings: Unless noted to the contrary, ceilings are 30 feet (5") high.

Doors: Unless otherwise stated, all doors are designed for giants. They are made of wood, stand 18 feet high, and have a quarter-inch gap at the bottom. All doors open into a room from a corridor or larger room.

These doors have Toughness 14 (Blunt, Cutting) for the purposes of breaking them down. Doors used for Cover grant +6 Armor. Locked doors (indicated in the text) can be opened with an unmodified Lockpicking roll unless the text description of the room says otherwise.

Doors, Secret: Detecting a secret door requires an active Notice roll at –4, unless otherwise stated. Once a door has been detected, it can be found again without subsequent Notice rolls.

Floors: Unless otherwise stated, all floors are coated in rough ice. Anytime a character runs, a 1 on the running die means he has slipped and fallen at the point where his run began. Agility rolls involving other forms of movement (such as avoiding an area-effect attack or a Trick such as running up an ice wall) suffer a –2 penalty. If the Agility roll fails, the character falls and is Shaken.

Furniture: Squares more than half filled with furniture count as difficult ground. Heroes wishing to move under tables must crouch. In general, standing behind furniture provides Medium Cover (–2) and grants +2 Armor (+4 Armor for giant-sized furniture). Taller furniture, such as bookcases, blocks line of sight but provides a similar Armor bonus.

Stools and chairs are Toughness 6 (Blunt, Cutting) and tables are Toughness 12 (Blunt, Cutting) for the purposes of breaking. Add +3 to these values for giant-sized furniture.

Stairs: The various stairs are built for giants. Creatures of Size +2 or lower treat them as difficult ground and cannot run on the stairs.

Temperature: Regardless of the time of day, the temperature inside the fortress remains constant at the same level as the Hellfrost core (–5 Vigor penalty) unless otherwise stated. An extended investigation of the fortress is likely to prove very uncomfortable for the heroes.

Walls: Interior walls are made of black ice. They are +10 Heavy Armor for the purposes of breaching.

GUARD SHIFTS

There are two sets of guards—lesser frost giants and orc warriors. For ease, the orcs changed guards moments before the heroes arrived while the giants traded places four hours ago. This gives the heroes eight hours to explore before the next guard change is due.

Giants: The lesser frost giants housed in Areas 8 and 17 share duties guarding the stairwell in Area 11 and the guardroom in area T7. They operate on a 12-hour rotating shift pattern.

Orcs: The orcs from the lower barracks (Area 9) are responsible for protecting Areas 1, 4, and 5. Those from the upper barracks (Area 16) man the battlements in Areas 16 and 29. They operate on an eight-hour shift pattern.

VARIABLE OCCUPIED ROOMS

The occupants of the ice fortress are not static creatures. Because of their shift patterns, certain rooms are occupied or unoccupied at different times of the day. Before beginning the adventure, the GM should determine where the various occupants are positioned. A summary of possible locations is provided below. The text is repeated in the main adventure text as well.

Area 8 (Lower Lesser Giant Barracks): During the day, the giants are in Areas 11 and T9. Roll a d6 at night. On a 1-2, the giants are in their room and are asleep, a 3-4 means they are in this room but awake, and a 5-6 indicates they are in the giant's mess (Area 21).

Area 9 (Lower Orc Barracks): When the adventure begins, half the orcs are on duty in Areas 1, 4, and 5. The remainder is divided between the orc mess (Area 16) and their barracks.

Area 16 (Greater Frost Giant Barracks): Half the giants who live here are currently manning the guard posts in Areas 14 and 29. Three of the remainder are in here at night and two are in Hrimwulf's throne room (Area 30). During the day, one of the three giants is in the smithy.

Area 17 (Upper Lesser Giant Barracks): During the day, the giants are in their barracks. At night, they trade places with the giant sentries in Areas 11 and T9.

Areas 28 (Temple) and T9 (Alchemical Laboratory): A frost giant priest alternates between these rooms. Roll a d6 when the adventurers arrive at the fortress. On

1-3, the priest is in the temple and on 4-6, he is in the alchemical laboratory.

WANDERING MONSTERS

As well as guards moving to and from their duty stations, other inhabitants have a tendency to wander around at random intervals. For each 30 minutes spent exploring, draw a card from the action deck and check the table below. As noted below, these wandering encounters present not just a physical challenge—they may quickly stumble across signs of the heroes' bloody passage through the fortress.

Note that if the creatures in the source room have already been slain, ignore the random encounter—no encounter occurs.

Card	Result
Black Jack	1d4+2 ice goblin slaves bearing plates of food leave the kitchen (Area 12) and head toward the frost giants' mess (Area 21).
Red Jack	1d4 ice goblin slaves leave the kitchen (Area 12) and head toward the orc giants' mess (Area 15). They carry wooden trays and are out collecting scraps of food to throw back into the stew pot.
Black Queen	1d4 orcs from the lower barracks (Area 9) wander up to the orc mess hall (Area 15) to grab a bite to eat. They remain here until their shift begins.
Red Queen	1d4 orcs in the mess hall (Area 15) finish their meal and head back to their barracks on the lower level (Area 9).
Black King	A lone greater frost giant decides to bully some orcs. He leaves the barracks (Area 20) and proceeds to the lower orc barracks (Area 9), where he remains for an hour.
Red King	A lone greater frost giant leaves the barracks (Area 20) and proceeds to Hrimwulf's throne room. He remains there for 20 minutes before returning.
Black Ace	A black ice elemental is on a routine patrol, having burrowed in through the side of the iceberg. The heroes hear it approaching and have time to hide.
Red Ace	The frost giant priest moves from his current location (either Area 28 or T9) to the other room. He remains there until this encounter is rolled again or eight hours pass, whichever comes first, before returning to the previous chamber.

RAISING THE ALARM

Parties who expect to hack-and-slash their way through the fortress without thinking about the bloody mess they leave behind may quickly find they have underestimated their opponents.

The occupants of the fortress, while not exactly geniuses, are not completely stupid. When the opportunity allows, they *always* try to shout for help or dispatch one of their number to raise an alarm (except where noted in the text). Similarly, if a "wandering monster" discovers bloodstains or intruders it will raise an alarm.

Should guards be discovered missing from their posts without obvious signs of battle, have the creature make a Smarts roll. With success, it raises the alarm. On a failure, it assumes the guards either are on an errand or have gone to perform ablutions and it carries on with its business without bothering to alert anyone.

Once an alarm is raised, it spreads quickly throughout the entire fortress. All soldiers not on duty are roused and a room-by-room search of the fortress begins. Which inhabitants search which rooms must be determined by the GM. For the next 24 hours, all sentries count as alert.

REINFORCEMENTS

The Hellfrost portal provides Hrimwulf with a steady source of reinforcements. A slain unique, named foe (typically a Wild Card, but not always) is *never* replaced when killed, nor is a new named foe of the same sort dispatched to serve the jarl. Extras slain by the characters are replaced, albeit slowly.

If the party attacks the fortress and then retreats for any reason, an area cleared of monsters remains clear for 24 hours. On the second day, Hrimwulf calls forth reinforcements of the same monster type equal to one-half the original number of occupants. By the third day, the area is fully repopulated. If the portal is destroyed, Hrimwulf can summon no further reinforcements.

THE APPROACH

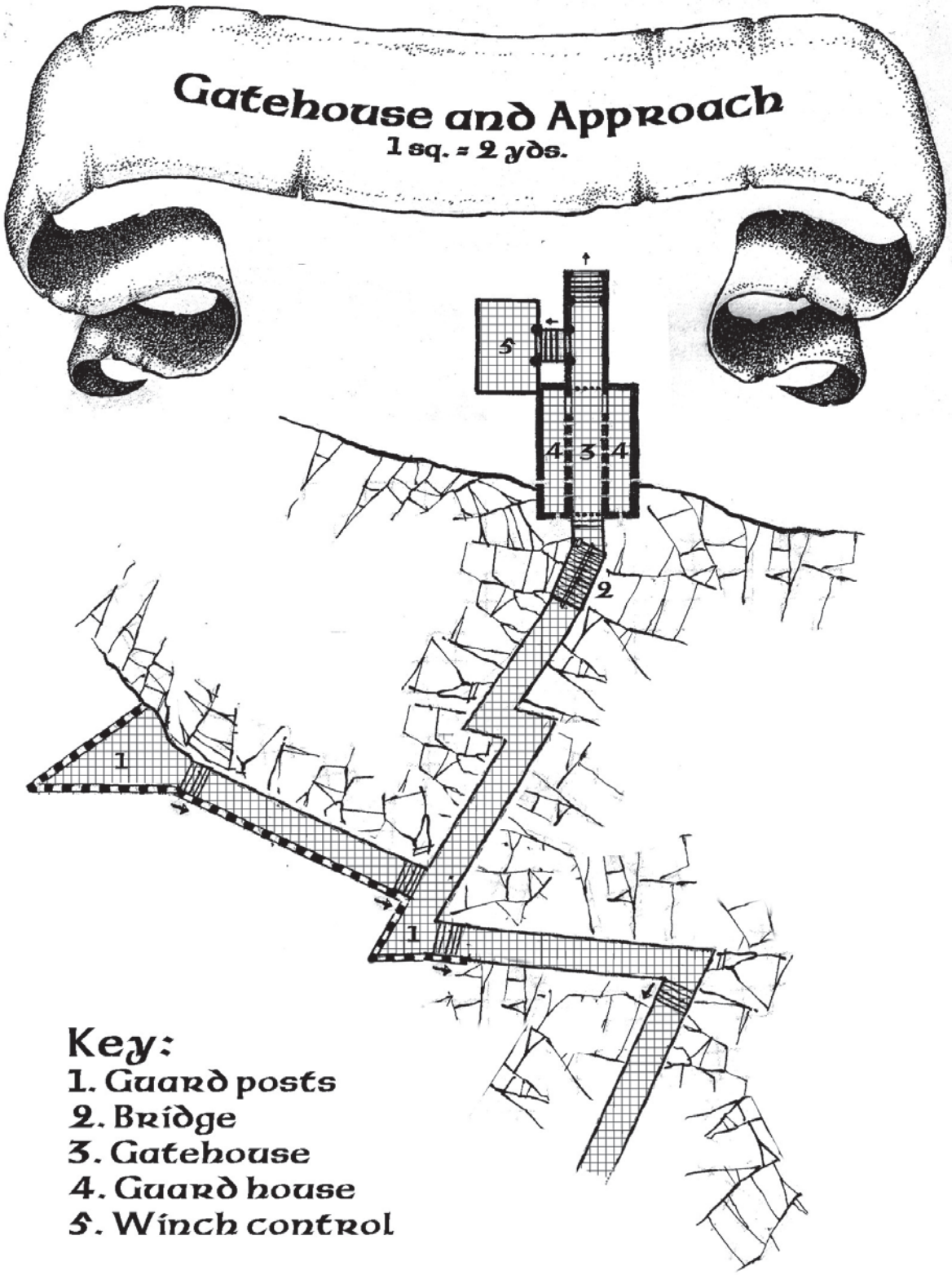
Unless the heroes fancy climbing or can fly, the only way into the fortress is via the steep, winding path that cuts up the side of the iceberg. Being the only natural approach, it is guarded around the clock, though not in any strength.

The approach and gatehouse are well defended, albeit only by orcs. Parties who prefer to fight before they think may end up expending valuable resources and suffering grievous wounds before they step a foot inside the fortress proper. With planning, stealth, and a little luck, the adventurers should be able to neutralize the sentries with minimal losses.

1. GUARD POSTS

Two guard posts, little more than enlarged platforms protected by crenellations, watch over the approach road. At night, the guard posts are clearly visible, illuminated by flickering flames from oil-filled braziers.

Illumination: Visibility is Dim (–1) during the day and Pitch Black (–4) at night. At night, the orc sentries that patrol this part of the fortress light small whale oil


Gatehouse and Approach
1 sq. = 2 yds.
5
4
3
4
2
1
1
1
Key:
1. Guard posts
2. Bridge
3. Gatehouse
4. Guard house
5. Winch control

braziers, for both light and warmth. The braziers provide illumination in an area 4" across.

Battlements: Orcs standing behind the battlements have Medium Cover (–2).

Path: The path is covered in rough ice. Rough ice is treated as difficult ground for all movement. Anytime a character runs, a 1 on the running die means he has slipped and fallen at the point where his run began. Agility rolls involving other forms of movement (such as avoiding an area-effect attack or a Trick such as running up an ice wall) suffer a –2 penalty. If the Agility roll fails, the character falls and is Shaken.

Monsters: During daylight hours, such as they are inside the blizzard wall, the orc sentries stationed outside the main fortress are Active guards, diligently patrolling and keeping their eyes peeled for intruders. They do not expect to be attacked, and their diligence is more to avoid the wrath of a frost giant should one happen to perform a spot inspection.

At night, when the frost giants prefer to stay indoors, the sentries huddle down below the battlements to avoid the biting wind and curse their misfortune at not being more tolerant of the freezing conditions. They are Inactive sentries once the sun sets.

Ⓜ **Orc Warriors (6):** See page 548. Three orcs are stationed at each of the guard posts. In addition to their regular gear they are equipped with long bows (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 2d6) and a dozen arrows apiece.

Tactics: The orcs' preferred tactic is to pin down approaching foes with their bows while one of their number rushes over the drawbridge to raise the alarm. Fortunately for the adventurers, the guards inside the entrance believe the attack is a drill, and so do not alert the frost giants. Should the enemy continue to push forward, the orcs retreat into the fortress while peppering them with arrows. In the event their escape route is cut off, they drop their bows, draw their melee weapons, and rush to attack.

Continuation: Should the party launch a raid and retreat for any reason, the carnage they undoubtedly leave behind will eventually be noticed. For the next 72 hours, a greater frost giant is stationed in each guard post along with the orcs.

GATEHOUSE

2. BRIDGE

A wooden bridge, slick with ice, spans a deep gorge. On the far side is a geared mechanism. Beyond lies a gatehouse.

The bridge is the last obstacle before entering the fortress. Although ice-covered, it is in very good condition. It is sturdy enough to support the weight of multiple frost giants.

Bridge: The bridge is coated in smooth ice. Smooth ice counts as difficult terrain. Characters cannot run on it. Agility rolls involving other movement suffer a –4 penalty. If the roll fails, the character falls and is Shaken. A hero adjacent to the edge of the bridge who falls must make an Agility roll or tumble into the gorge.

Gears: The gear mechanism allows the heavy bridge to swing to the west, preventing intruders from crossing into the fortress. The operator must make a Strength roll as an action. Success rotates the bridge 1" to the west and a raise 2". A maximum of two operators may cooperate on this task.

Gorge: The gorge is narrow but deep. Anyone falling in plummets 100 feet (10d6 damage).

3. GATEHOUSE

The jagged teeth of a raised portcullis hang ominously over the entrance to a short tunnel. At the far end is a second portcullis, this one lowered and blocking access to the tunnel beyond. Short, vertical slits mar the walls of the intervening tunnel. Orange light shines through the slits, while thin beams of light descend from the ceiling.

The gatehouse is heavily fortified and, were it not for the laxness of the sentries, would be a formidable barrier. The ceiling has a number of murder holes which allow defenders in Area 7 to aid in the defense of the gatehouse should a general alarm be raised.

Illumination: During the day, the corridor is lit by shafts of light from the murder holes in the ceiling and torchlight filtering through the arrow slits from the guardrooms (Area 4). The lighting is Dim (–1). At night, torches are lit at each end of the tunnel, providing good lighting.

Portcullises: Each portcullis is 18 feet high. The portcullises are so heavy that not even frost giants can lift them. Should the heroes try to blast their way through, treat them as having Toughness 14 (Heavy Armor). Attacking through a portcullis requires a thrusting or missile weapon. Targets on the other side receive Medium Cover (–2).

The outer portcullis is always kept raised. Should the fortress come under attack, this enables the orc guards to rush out and swing the bridge to prevent anyone crossing. Once the guards are safely back inside the castle, the portcullis is lowered. Standing orders are for the inner portcullis to be kept down at all times. In order for the inner gate to be raised, one of the guards must shout down to the orcs in the winch control room (Area 5).

4. GUARDROOMS

The guardrooms are little more than long corridors. Small braziers containing hot coals provide minimal relief against the arctic blast howling through the open gatehouse.

Each of the gatehouse's guardrooms is identical.

Arrow Slits: Cut into each wall facing the corridor is a number of arrow slits. Attacks made through a slit into the guardrooms suffer a –4 penalty. A prone figure adjacent to one of the walls cannot be attacked from the nearest guardroom. Those in the opposite guardroom may attack as normal, however.

Because the orcs are not manning the arrow slits and they muffle sound, heroes taking the Last Step, roll at +2. If an intruder goes undetected, he may continue moving through the corridor by making successful opposed rolls of Stealth vs. Notice. The +2 bonus applies in this circumstance.

Doors: The doors into the guardrooms are 8 feet high. They are barred from the inside (standard procedure), giving them Toughness 12. They cannot be opened by Lockpicking.

Illumination: Torches mounted on the wall provide Dim lighting (–1). Stored at the far end of each guardroom are two dozen spare torches.

Temperature: If the door to the guardroom is closed, the temperature modifier is a bearable –3 thanks to the brazier.

Monsters: Three orc warriors man each guardroom. Although standing orders are for the guards to be constantly vigilant and ready for immediate defense of the fortress, the orcs are bored stiff and spend much of their time gambling while seated on the floor. Treat them as Inactive sentries.

Ⓜ **Orc Warrior (3 per room):** See page 548. In addition to their regular gear, each orc carries a crossbow (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 2d6, AP 1, 1 action to reload).

Tactics: Once the orcs detect intruders, it takes them an action to grab their crossbows and a second action to cock them ready for firing. Each guardroom is dealt a separate action card. So long as the intruders remain in the corridor, the sentries pepper them with crossbow bolts. Should the door to a guardroom be broken down, the nearest orc, when his turn allows, drops his crossbow (a free action) and draws his melee weapon.

5. WINCH CONTROL

Two orcs lean casually against the far wall, their weapons dangling from their belts while they warm their hands over a small brazier. Protruding from the north and south walls are large winches. Great lengths of chain rise up into small hole in the ceiling.

The winch control on the north wall affects the inner portcullis in Area 3 and the southern mechanism the outer portcullis.

Doors: The door into the winch room is 8 feet high. It is closed, but not locked. Should the occupants of this room be alerted to danger, one of them drops the outer portcullis while the other bars the door. Once barred, the door has Toughness 12 and cannot be opened with Lockpicking.

Illumination: Four torches provide good lighting. A dozen spare torches are stashed in one corner.

Temperature: A small brazier keeps the temperature modifier at –3 if the door is closed.

Winch Mechanism: One character cranking the ratchet can raise a portcullis 3 feet per action spent cranking the mechanism. Two characters raise it 6 feet per action. A simple lever releases the ratchet—the respective portcullis slams into place with a loud clank on the same action the lever is pulled. Because the outer portcullis is raised, the ratchet on the southern winch mechanism is locked.

Monsters: A pair of orcs mans the winch control room around the clock, responding to commands from the gatehouse to raise and lower the portcullises. The orcs keep the door closed to keep out the draft, forcing anyone in the guardrooms to shout loudly to be heard.

There are no passwords or code-phrases, but the orcs only answer to requests in Giant or Orcish. If they hear commands in other tongues, one quietly sneaks to the top of the stairs and peers into the gatehouse. Should intruders be detected, he sprints up the stairs, shouting at the top of his lungs.

Ⓜ **Orc Warrior (2):** See page 548.

Tactics: The orcs draw their weapons (an action) and attack anyone entering who is not giant or orc. They have no escape route, and fight recklessly, employing Wild Attacks in a bid to hack down as many intruders as possible before their own deaths.

LEVEL ONE

The first level of the fortress proper is devoted entirely to barracks and basic supplies.

6. ENTRY HALL

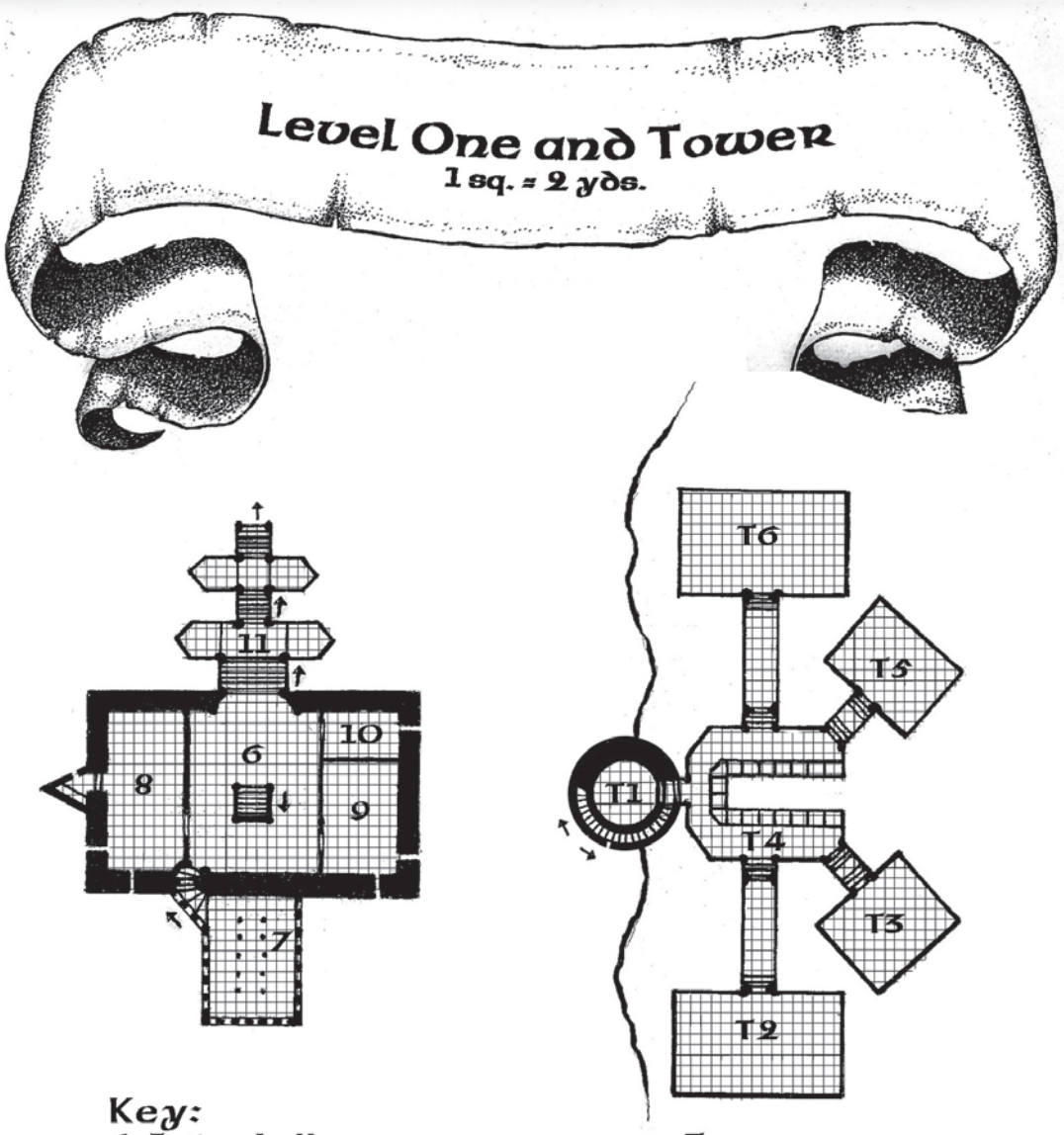
The stairs emerge into a large chamber. To the north rise a set of stairs, while five doors, two to the west, one south, and two to the east break up the otherwise plain walls. The chamber is lit in a bluish glow by flickering torches.

The frost giant sentries in Area 11 are stupid and lazy (treat as Inactive sentries), but not deaf. Should the heroes create a loud disturbance, they *will* investigate in strength.

Illumination: Bright light from icewood torches positioned on the walls.

7. BATTLEMENTS

The howling wind as you open the door indicates you're about to step outside. A short flight



of stairs leads onto an open terrace warded by crenellations. Nestled in the northeast corner are four colossal braziers.

The battlements provide a commanding view over the landscape.

Braziers: The braziers are filled with semi-frozen whale oil mixed with lumps of icewood charcoal. Igniting them with a torch or similar sized source of flame takes two complete rounds. A fire spell ignites them instantly, but only if it inflicts 10+ points of damage.

The braziers are designed for two giants to carry. A minimum of two heroes is required to move them, and then a Strength roll at –2 is needed. With success, the carriers may move at half Pace. A raise allows them to move at their full Pace. In neither instance can the bear-

ers run. Giants lifting the braziers can move their full Pace (but cannot run) without need for a Strength roll.

Tipping a brazier requires a Strength roll at –2. With success, the contents spill out into a Large Burst Template positioned as the tipper desires. If the contents are lit, anyone who is caught in, moves through, or begins within the template suffers 2d10 fire damage and has a chance of catching fire. The oil burns for five rounds if tipped indoors and three rounds outdoors.

Crenellations: Provide Medium Cover (–2) to anyone standing behind them.

Illumination: Ambient outdoor lighting conditions apply.

Murder Holes: The murder holes are one foot wide at the lowest point and three feet wide at the top. During a full-frontal assault, the giants from Area 11 pour boiling whale oil onto the attackers, while orc reinforcements summoned from upstairs fire crossbow bolts. Anyone firing down through the murder holes attacks at –2 due to the limited field of view.

Continuation: If an alarm is raised, the orcs in Area 16 rush to the armory (Area 10), grab crossbows, and take up positions on the battlements. The giants from either Area 8 or Area 15 (as appropriate) arrive shortly afterward and begin lighting the braziers.

8. LOWER LESSER FROST GIANT BARRACKS

This room contains six huge beds covered in mangy furs, and a rickety table stands in the middle of the room. Dirty wooden plates, gigantic mugs, and long bones with all the flesh gnawed off, adorn the table. A huge bucket sits beneath the table.

This is one of two barracks inhabited by brutish lesser frost giants.

Illumination: Icewood torches sit in wall sconces. If the occupants are asleep or the room is unoccupied, the torches are extinguished and the room is Pitch Dark (–4). Otherwise, the room has good lighting.

Bucket: The bucket is half-full of bodily waste (solid and liquid). It weighs 30 pounds. Should it be tipped over (an action), the contents spill into a Medium Burst Template positioned by the carrier. Anyone entering the template must make an Agility roll or slip and fall prone. After three rounds, the contents freeze solid and no longer present an obstacle.

Privy: This room was originally intended for greater frost giant inhabitants, but they did not like the idea of being so close to the entrance. The lesser giants currently stationed here rarely bother using the privy—its function being confusing to their dull intellect. Better a bucket that can easily be dumped out a window.

Monsters: This room is home to four lesser frost giants. During daylight hours, the giants are on duty in Area 11 and T9. At night, the GM should roll a d6. On a 1-2, the giants are asleep in their room, a 3-4 means they are in this room, but awake, and a 5-6 indicates they are in the giant's mess (Area 21). Sleeping giants are treated as Shaken once awakened. They sleep with their clubs propped up beside their beds.

Ⓜ Lesser Frost Giants (6): See page 547.

Tactics: If alerted to danger, the giants snatch up their clubs (once fully awake) and lumber to attack. Although relatively stupid, they have just enough tactical sense not to use their Improved Sweep while other giants are in range.

9. LOWER ORC BARRACKS

A dozen beds stand against the walls of this room, each covered in brown or black furs. A low table and six chairs sit in the center of the room. Small braziers provide minimal heating.

This is one of two barracks set aside for orcs serving Jarl Hrimwulf.

Illumination: Torches line the walls. If the orcs are asleep, the torches are extinguished and the room is Pitch Dark (–4); otherwise there is good lighting.

Bedding: The bedding is filthy and flea-ridden. Any hero sleeping in one of the beds is automatically infested with fleas. While aggressive, orc fleas find human blood not to their taste. For the next 1d4 hours, the hero has a –1 penalty to all Trait rolls due to constant, intense itching.

Braziers: Small charcoal braziers keep the temperature slightly warmer than the rest of the fortress. The Vigor penalty is –3.

Monsters: This chamber houses 28 orcs operating a hot bed system. When the adventure begins, half the orcs are on duty in Areas 1, 4, and 5, one-quarter is in the orc mess (Area 15), and one quarter is in here. Roll a d6. On a 1-3, the orcs are asleep while a 4-6 means they are awake. Sleeping orcs are treated as Shaken once awakened.

Ⓜ Orc Warrior (7): See page 548. Sleeping orcs are not wearing their armor (Toughness 7).

Tactics: The orcs may be unintelligent, but they are veterans of many raids. With the only exit blocked by the attackers, they attack ferociously and remorselessly, utilizing Wild Attacks and Gang Up tactics.

10. ARMORY

Racks of weapons and armor stands litter the room, sacks and furs lie haphazardly on the floor, while on a small shelf sit several ceramic flasks.

The armory door is never locked. This armory is used by the orcs and frost giants stationed on this level.

Illumination: The room is unlit and Pitch Dark (–4).

Treasure: The contents include: a dozen suits of leath-

er armor, ten spiked clubs (giant sized), 16 short spears, eight maces, ten short swords, nine axes, 20 crossbows, six short bows, 200 crossbow bolts, 400 arrows, 20 spare sleeping furs, 100 torches, 150 icewood torches, 25 pints of oil, four large sacks of charcoal (50 pounds apiece), two tinderboxes, and a set of carpentry tools.

11. STAIRWELL

Flickering torches illuminate stairs ascending to the next level.

From the floor level of Area 6, the platforms are invisible. The alcoves are just about visible, but their nature is not apparent—they might just as easily be side passages.

Illumination: Icewood torches provide adequate lighting.

Monsters: A squad of lesser frost giants is stationed here at all times. They count as Inactive sentries. The confines of the stairs are no place for the adventurers to engage the giants. If the party detects the giants, they can use the beasts' gross stupidity to lure them into Area 6. Naturally, they only respond to voices speaking Giant or Orcish.

Ⓜ **Lesser Frost Giants (4):** See page 547.

Tactics: If attacked on the stairs, the giants in the lower alcoves step forward and use Improved Sweep. One of those in the upper alcoves descends the stairs and does the same. The remaining giant immediately runs upstairs to raise the alarm.

However, should noise be detected anywhere on the lower part of the level, the giants' curiosity overcomes their orders and all four head down the stairs to investigate. Should intruders be detected, they are so caught up in the moment that they forget about sending one of their number upstairs to raise an alarm. They use Improved Sweep, positioning themselves to avoid their comrades.

LEVEL TWO

The second level of the fortress contains the main living areas for the inhabitants. Note that Jarl Hrimwulf, as a true frost giant, has no need to sleep—such weaknesses are for lesser beings.

12. KITCHEN

The smell of sizzling fat, overcooked meat, and oily smoke hangs heavy in the air. Blue-skinned goblins wrapped in furs hustle around, stirring pots hanging over icewood fires, basting meat, and loading bowls and dishes. Their master, an ogre, watches impassively while the servants perform their daily chores.

Giants and orcs all need to eat. While both species prefers cooked food, the giants do not do hot food—their food is cooked over icewood fires, meaning that while it is cooked it is cold. The unfortunate orcs, who have no stomach for such fare, are reduced to warming their food over braziers in the mess, out of the sight of the giants who mock them for their "human" ways. The current meals include two cauldrons of whale meat stew while extra blubber and a dwarf roast over an open fire (a delicacy among giants).

Fireplaces: Four immense fires burn icewood day and night. Anyone entering a fireplace (only really likely if subjected to knockback) suffers 2d10 coldfire damage and has a chance of catching fire.

Illumination: The fireplaces provide good lighting.

Monsters: The kitchens operate 24 hours a day. Watching over the many slaves (all ice goblins) who produce the meals is a fearsome ogre. The ogre is wrapped in thick furs and winter clothing to stave off the cold emitted by the roaring icewood fires.

Ⓜ **Ogre (1):** See page 547. While on duty, the ogre carries a huge cleaver (Str+d8). Its spiked club is leaning in the southwest corner. It also carries a key to Areas 19 and 24.

Ⓜ **Ice Goblin Slaves (2 per hero):** Treat as goblin warriors (page 547) except they have no equipment besides furs and winter clothing.

Tactics: The ogre always uses Improved Sweep, caring nothing for the slaves it lords over—they are easily replaceable and Hrimwulf expects them to be worked to death anyway. While the ogre is alive, the goblins snatch up knives and cleavers (Str+d4) and employ Gang-Up tactics against the heroes, trying to keep well away from their overlord's deadly swings. While they know death will come from over work, it is a far quicker death than what Hrimwulf would make them suffer should treachery be suspected.

Once the ogre is slain, any remaining goblins drop their weapons and fall to their knees, begging for mercy. Given half a chance one will try to bolt for the door and raise the alarm.

13. WAR ROOM

A vast table littered with maps and papers dominates the room. There are no chairs or stools.

It is from here that Jarl Hrimwulf plans his attacks on the civilized races. The maps and papers are written in both Giant and Orcish. Several detail the area immediately west and north of Watchgap Fort, the White Lake, and parts of Heligioland. A large map of Watchgap Fort and its surroundings is marked with military formations and orders. Someone has written a curse over these, proclaiming goblins lack married parents and engage in sexual pleasure with all manner of animate and inanimate objects. Among the letters are missives from the Giant's Throne promising aid in activating the Heart of Winter.

Illumination: The room is Pitch Dark (–4). There are unlit icewood torches mounted on the walls.

Treasure: The maps, while worth little in terms of gold, detail the location of several orc and goblin strong-

holds in the Icewall Mountains and Giant's Throne. Equipped with these, the Hearth Knights could carry out preemptive raids with surgical precision instead of patrolling in the hope of locating a concealed lair.

14. BATTLEMENTS

An icy blast sucks the heat from your bodies as you step into the frigid outdoors.

The battlements provide a good view of the approach road to the fortress. Fortunately for the adventurers, the sentries are not paying much attention to what is going on beneath them.

Illumination: Visibility is Dim (–1) during the day and Pitch Black (–4) at night.

Battlements: Giants standing behind the battlements have Light Cover (–1).

Monsters: Each of the three guard posts holds a single, very bored and frustrated greater frost giant. This is not their usual station. Normally orcs from area 16 perform the watch duty, but they were participating in the raid on Whitby. Until they return (sic), the giants are forced to take over their duties.

Ⓜ Greater Frost Giants (3): See page. Each sentry post holds six boulders.

Tactics: If time permits, the nearest giant scoops up a boulder and hurls it at the heroes before snatching up his axe and entering melee. This is spread over two rounds, as grabbing and throwing a boulder incurs a multiple action penalty. Simultaneously he calls out to his allies elsewhere on the battlements. Where possible, the giants use Improved Sweep, but they will not endanger their colleagues. When circumstances do not allow this, they use Frenzy and if a foe proves difficult to hit, they switch to making single attacks.

15. ORC MESS

Half a dozen orcs are busily shoveling food into their faces.

Because of the guard patterns, the orc mess is occupied much of the day and night. Once the diners have finished devouring their rations, they spend the rest of the time boasting, reestablishing the pecking order, cursing about the frost giants, and planning future raids.

Doors: Both doors are human-sized and have Toughness 10.

Illumination: Torches provide good lighting.

Temperature: Several small charcoal braziers provide basic heating, keeping the temperature modifier at –3 so long as the doors remain closed.

Monsters: Seven orcs barracked in Area 9 are grabbing a hot meal after finishing their shift and bemoaning how they had the misfortune not to be selected for raiding Whitby and being able to commit acts of wanton destruction. Their weapons are on the table or hanging from their belts.

Orc Warriors (7): See page 548.

Tactics: Four of the orcs immediately grab their weapons (an action) and attack. The remaining three head out through whichever door the heroes did not enter by and attempt to encircle the attackers. Once the orcs' number has been halved, those left employ Wild Attacks. Keen to prove their worth to their giant overlords, they do not bother summoning reinforcements.

16. UPPER ORC BARRACKS

A dozen beds stand against the walls of this room, each covered in brown or black furs. A low table and six chairs sit in the center of the room. Small braziers stand in the corners, but they are unlit.

This is one of two barracks set aside for orcs serving Jarl Hrimwulf. The warriors who live here died in the Whitby raid and will not be replaced for several days. Until an alarm is raised, the heroes can rest up here if they remain quiet—orcs occupy the adjacent mess hall.

Doors: Both doors are human-sized and have Toughness 10.

Illumination: Pitch Dark (–4).

Temperature: Because the braziers are unlit, the temperature modifier is –5.

17. UPPER LESSER GIANT BARRACKS

There are six huge beds here covered in mangy furs, while a rickety table stands in the middle of the room. Dirty wooden plates, gigantic mugs, and long bones, all the flesh gnawed off, adorn the table.

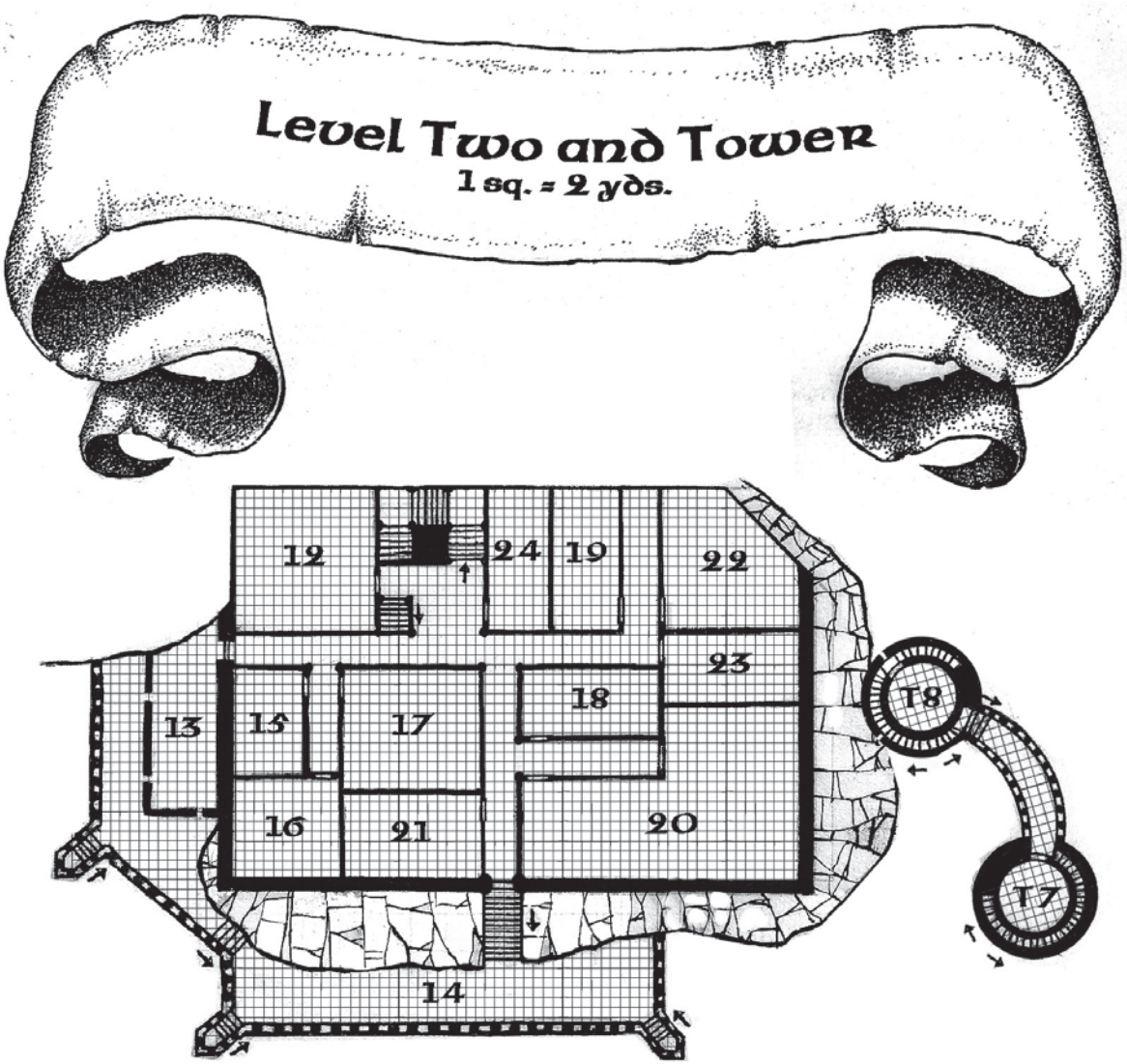
This is one of two barracks area inhabited by brutish lesser frost giants.

Illumination: Icewood torches sit in wall sconces. If the occupants are asleep or the room is unoccupied, the torches are extinguished and the room is Pitch Black (–4). Otherwise, the room has good lighting.

Monsters: This room is home to six lesser frost giants. During the hours of darkness, the giants are on duty in Areas 11 and T9. During the day, the GM should roll a d6. On a 1-3, the giants are asleep in the room while a 4-6 means they are in this room, but awake. Sleeping giants are treated as Shaken once awakened. They sleep with their clubs propped up beside their beds.

Ⓜ Lesser Frost Giants (6): See page 547.

Tactics: If alerted to danger, the giants snatch up their clubs (once fully awake) and lumber to attack. Although relatively stupid, they have just enough tactical sense not to use their Improved Sweep while other giants are in



Key:
12. Kitchen
13. War room
14. Battlements
15. Orc mess
16. Upper orc barracks
17. Upper lesser giant barracks
18. Armory
19. Stores
20. Greater frost giant barracks
21. Giant mess
22. Smithy
23. Library
24. Slave quarters

Tower:
T7. Guard room
T8. Scrying chamber

range. They shout wildly, hoping to alert the orcs in the mess hall.

18. ARMORY

Wooden racks placed against the wall bristle with deadly weapons. Dense bundles of arrows and crossbow bolts rest on a stout table.

The armory door is never locked. This armory is used by the orcs and frost giants stationed on this level.

Illumination: The room is unlit and Pitch Dark (–4).

Treasure: The contents include eleven suits of orc-sized leather armor, two orc-sized chain hauberks, nine giant-sized chain hauberks, ten spiked clubs (giant sized), seven great axes (for the giants), 15 long spears, 16 short spears, six maces, 14 short swords, seven axes, 18 crossbows, nine short bows, eight long bows, 500 crossbow bolts, and 800 arrows.

19. STORES

This appears to be a well-stocked storeroom.

The stores door is locked. The ogre in the kitchen (Area 12) has the key.

Illumination: The room is unlit and Pitch Dark (–4).

Treasure: Stashed in here are 40 spare sleeping furs, 200 torches, 4000 icewood torches, 200 pints of oil, twenty large sacks of charcoal (50 pound apiece), fifty large sacks of icewood charcoal (50 pounds apiece), 900 feet of rope (broken down into 30 feet coils), 20 waterskins (empty), eight tinderboxes, 40 wooden stakes, 10 shovels and pickaxes, and numerous empty sacks.

20. GREATER FROST GIANT BARRACKS

Ten frost giant-sized beds stand against the walls. In the middle of the room is a large table surrounded by sturdy high-backed chairs.

These barracks house the ten greater frost giants currently serving Hrimwulf directly. They function as both raiding party commanders and huscarls.

Illumination: Well-lit by icewood torches.

Monsters: During the day, two giants are in here resting. At night, the frost giant from the smithy (Area 22) joins them. With their greater stamina, the giants need very little sleep compared to lesser races.

Ⓜ **Greater Frost Giants (2 or 3):** See page 546.

Tactics: In typical frost giant fashion the brutes look to close the range as quickly as impossible so as to inflict damage through their icy aura and deadly axes.

21. GIANT'S MESS

A large, long table surrounded by stools stands in the center of the room. No other furnishings break the monotony of the plain walls.

The room is used solely by the frost giants. Orcs always knock and call out before entering, even during searches, giving the heroes the chance to hide or bluff their way out of trouble.

Illumination: Icewood torches burn here at all times of the day, providing good lighting.

Monsters: The dining hall is unoccupied during the day. At night, there is a chance the lesser frost giants from Area 8 are in here eating their evening meal.

Ⓜ **Lesser Frost Giants (6):** See page 547.

Tactics: Giants attacked in this room have no way out except through the heroes. Those in the front use Improved Sweep combined with Wild Attacks. In their frenzy to escape, they forget to watch out for their comrades and thus become a threat to friend and foe alike.

22. SMITHY

Three gigantic glowing forges stand against the walls, while in the center of the room are several workbenches cluttered with tools and partially finished weapons. An anvil, obviously designed for use by a giant, squats close to each forge.

The iceberg's isolated position makes it difficult to resupply. Getting giant-sized weapons is relatively easy given the existence of the Hellfrost portal, but rearming the orcs is trickier. Knowing that if weapons ran low his enemies (and current allies) might try to usurp him, Hrimwulf had a smithy installed in the fortress.

Illumination: During the day, the smithy is lit by icewood torches. At night, the only glow is from the icewood forges. Treat this as Dark lighting (–2).

Forges: Any hero knocked back into a square containing a forge has a 50% chance of landing *on* the glowing coals. This causes 2d6 damage and the victim has a chance of catching fire. Otherwise he slams into the side of the forge and suffers damage as normal.

Monsters: During the day, a frost giant is working in the forge, hammering away making swords and axes while ice goblin slaves fashion arrowheads and tips for crossbow bolts. At night, only the goblins are present, chained to the forges. They get little sleep, for if the forges go out the goblins pay a heavy price.

Ⓜ **Greater Frost Giant (1):** See page 546.

Ⓜ **Ice Goblin Slaves (2 per hero):** Treat as goblin warriors (page 547) except they have no equipment besides furs and winter clothing.

Tactics: The giant, like all his kin, is keen to enter melee with intruders so he can deal out death with his sweeping great axe and icy aura. The goblins snatch up

half-finished weapons and join in on the giant's side. Due to their chains, they can move a maximum of 6" from the forges.

If disturbed at night, the goblins feign servitude. As soon as the characters have left the room, the goblins begin banging on anything that will make a loud noise in a bid to alert nearby giants or orcs.

23. LIBRARY

Wooden stacks, their shelves bending with the weight of hundreds, maybe thousands, of manuscripts line every inch of the walls.

Frost giants in general are not renowned for their interest in literacy. Even priests and hrimwisards place little value in wiggly lines. Hrimwulf, on the other hand, understands the value of the written word as a source of information on his enemies. To that end, he has spent many centuries gathering literature from across Rassilon. Sometimes he used force, but other times he acted through layers of agents, none aware for whom they were purchasing the texts.

The room holds thousands of volumes covering every topic imaginable and in every known tongue (and some that are now lost). A goodly portion of the manuscripts date back not just to before the Blizzard War but long before the Anari rose to power. The GM can use these records as the basis for adventures or to introduce any new powers he has devised.

Door: The door is locked. Only Hrimwulf and his priest (see Areas 28 and T9) have a key.

Illumination: There are torches, but none are lit. The room is Pitch Black (–4).

Treasure: Cataloguing the full library would take years of work. Even scanning the titles takes many hours. Any attempts to find a valuable book require a Cooperative Notice roll at –2 and an hour of work. With success, the party finds an old manuscript dating back 500 + (1d10 x 100) years. For each century above 500, the tome is worth 500 gs to the Lorekeepers or the temple of Hoenir. Advertized correctly, it could even start a bidding war. Each tome weighs 5 pounds.

With a raise, the party finds one of Hrimwulf's special books. These are detailed below. All are bound in seal hide with whalebone clasps. They are ice cold to the touch and cannot be handled for more than an hour without wearing gloves.

The Art of Winter, by Frigidarius: Frigidarius was a hrimwisard who specialized extensively in offensive ice and cold magics. The book is quite lengthy in its descriptions and deals only with the creation of ice and cold-based effects. It is rumored to be part of a collection of similar works for different techniques. The book is written in Classical Anari.

The volume is not a tome of learning. Rather, it is a manuscript for enhancing one's art, an extremely rare item. Any hrimwisard using the book (requires one hand) to cast *blast, bolt, burst,* or *prolonged burst* gains a +1 bonus to his Hrimwisardry roll. The book weighs 2 pounds. To a hrimwisard, it is worth at least 10,000 gs.

Legends of the Fimbulvintr, by Gunnar Halfdansunu: Gunnar Halfdansunu was a Saxa scald who lived during the Blizzard War. A brilliant poet and storyteller in his youth, as his years began to fail him he dedicated his remaining time to recording all the tales concerning the Fimbulvintr; the age of endless cold before the end of the world. How much of it is actual fact is yet to be seen. The book is written in Auld Saxa.

The book counts as a tome of lore, granting +1 to Knowledge (Giants) and +2 to Knowledge rolls involving the Fimbulvintr. It weighs 3 pounds.

A Guide to Survival in Northern Lands, by Ravenia Blackhair: Ravenia was struck with the wanderlust. She travelled the northern most parts of Rassilon quite extensively but found that the cold was often unbearable and that she never knew how long she could withstand it before she needed to find warmth. In order to make her life easier, she wrote a detailed guide on how to survive in the winter wastes. The book is written in Ravenia's native Saxa.

It serves as a tome of lore, but does not affect a Knowledge skill. Instead, it grants +3 to Survival rolls, but only when the temperature is below freezing. It weighs three pounds.

24. SLAVE QUARTERS

Aside from a layer of filthy straw, this room lacks any furniture. A lone icewood torch casts pale light over a crowd of skinny ice goblins who huddle together in the far corner.

While Hrimwulf employs many orcs, he uses them as soldiers. Slaves come in the form of ice goblins and are expendable resources in the eyes of the frost giants (and handy snacks). Rather than waste his valuable resources raiding for slaves, Hrimwulf demands his frost giant and orc allies send him goblins on a regular basis to replace the frequent losses. When not working, they are kept penned in this room.

Door: The door is locked (Toughness 14). The ogre in the kitchen (Area 12) has the only key.

Illumination: The room is lit by just a single icewood torch, providing Dark (–2) lighting.

Monsters: The room is occupied by a handful of ice goblins. Without someone to lead them, the goblins are unwilling to attack armed parties. However, despite their life of servitude they have no desire to ally with the adventurers. Should the heroes simply leave them to their own devices after opening the door, the goblins wait until the intruders have left the immediate vicinity and scurry off to alert the nearest giants. Such an act is

not one of loyalty, but a way to try to extend their lives and perhaps even earn their freedom.

Ⓜ **Ice Goblin Slaves (2 per hero):** Treat as goblin warriors (page 547) except they have no equipment besides furs and winter clothing.

LEVEL THREE

The fortress' third level is reserved for ambassadors and the worship of Thrym.

25. LOWER AMBASSADORIAL QUARTERS

The stench of filth quickly assaults your nostrils. Scattered around the chamber are a dozen or so blue-skinned creatures—ice goblins! One of them spies your approach but, instead of screeching an alarm, he raises his hands in a gesture of peace and hisses quietly in broken Trader, "No fight! No fight! We seek alliance. No bad goblins!"

Hrimwulf maintains two suites for ambassadors. Those he considers major allies worthy of courting are housed in the more splendid rooms in the castle. Lesser allies, such as orcs and goblins, who can be bullied into an alliance, are kept within the fortress, virtual prisoners of the frost giant jarl.

The current occupants, a band of goblins, have been kept here for a month without access to proper sanitation. Given the occupants are goblins, and thus lacking in basic hygiene anyway, the room stinks of stale urine and filth.

Furniture: The chamber contains a dozen orc-sized wooden cots with straw mattresses and sleeping furs, a large table covered in gnawed animal bones and filthy bowls, a dozen wooden chairs, a bucket (the toilet), and six chests.

Monsters: The ambassadorial quarters are currently home to Snarg, an ice goblin shaman, and his bodyguard detail. Unfortunately for Snarg, his presence here is not voluntarily.

The Watchgap Fort debacle, in which a handful of Hearth Knights and travelers defeated a goblin and orc army, and subsequent Hearth Knight reprisals, stymied Hrimwulf's plans to conquer the eastern Low Winterlands. His emissaries went among the shattered goblin tribes to find someone with a semblance of authority. Snarg, misled by his rivals that Hrimwulf was searching for worthy allies, volunteered himself as the greatest goblin leader in the district. Only when Snarg reached the ice fortress was he told that he was being held responsible for the failed military campaign. He now regrets boasting that he was instrumental in planning the Watchgap Fort attack, especially since no members of his tribe were actually involved.

Snarg and his cohorts have been kept waiting for a month now. The goblins are in a constant state of terror, fearing that Hrimwulf's delay in questioning them is because he is devising some hideous form of torture. In truth, the frost giant jarl has simply forgotten about the goblins.

The greater frost giant stationed nearby has orders to prevent any goblin leaving the ambassadorial quarters. While the goblins have the strength to overpower a lone giant, they know they would be unlikely to escape the fortress with their lives. The arrival of the heroes, though, prompts Snarg to undertake a sudden and audacious move—he plans to use the tribute he brought for Hrimwulf to make an alliance.

Assuming the party delays, Snarg sidles over to them and suggests they work together.

The party may wish to question Snarg. Typical questions and the shaman's answers are provided below:

Q: Why should we trust you?

A: *"Me Snarg, Me no bad goblin. Me and warriors forced into service. We from Hellfrost. We want go home and ignore humans. Humans not enemies by choice."*

Q: How do you intend to leave the island?

A: *"We skilled. We make canoes from ice and sail to shore. Then head north to homeland."*

Q: What's the deal?

A: *"You help us kill giant overlord." Snarg gestures to the giant's sleeping area. "You then take us to entrance. We leave. Never return."*

Q: What's in it for us?

A: *"We have coin hidden from giants. Coin yours to take. Coin no use to us in Hellfrost."*

While trusting a goblin may be a hard thing to do, the adventurers might reason it is better to work with them rather than waste valuable resources combating them. Snarg may be a treacherous little weasel, but his urge to go home is overwhelming. Moreover, unbeknownst to him, the party has left some canoes he and his band can borrow.

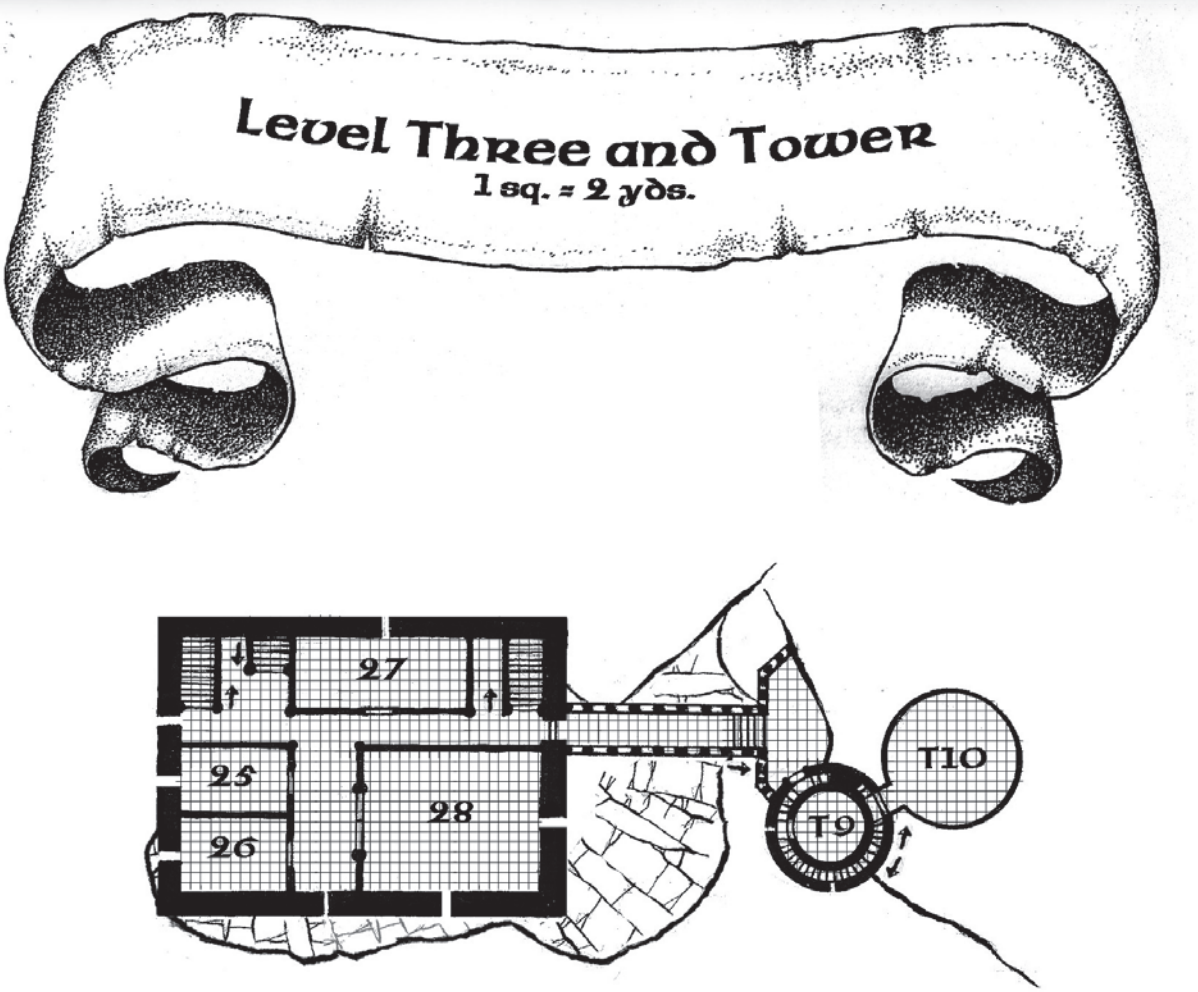
Ⓜ **Snarg, Ice Goblin Shaman (1):** See page 547. Snarg is a Wild Card.

Ⓜ **Ice Goblin Warriors (3):** See page 547.

Tactics: Should a fight break out between the goblins and the adventurers, the warriors use Gang Up tactics on the toughest looking heroes. Snarg unleashes a *fear* spell in the first round, targeting as many characters as he can. He then switches to *bolt*, firing two 2d6 *bolts* per round. His preference is to disable spellcasters first and then armored thugs, though he will freely adapt to the constantly changing tactical situation.

Any sounds of battle alert the frost giant, who enters the fray the round after combat begins. Caring little for the goblins, he wades into melee as quickly as possible. If he can position himself to attack multiple heroes, he uses Improved Sweep. Otherwise, he uses Frenzy against lone opponents.

Treasure: Believing that Hrimwulf wanted an alliance and was about to promote him to chief shaman of the region, Snarg brought with him several chests of treasure. These are still in the ambassadorial quarters, as the gob-



Key:

25 Lower ambassadorial quarters
26. Unoccupied ambassadorial suite
27. Greater ambassadorial suite
28. Temple of Thrym

Tower:

T9. Alchemical laboratory
T10. Frozen

lins have had no chance to present them to Hrimwulf. The silver and gold amounts to a king's ransom!

Continuation: Should a deal be brokered, Snarg and his warriors gather their meager possessions and prepare to leave. If the journey back to the entrance involves no combat, the goblins are well behaved. However, if any of the fortress's inhabitants are encountered and a fight ensues, the goblins do *not* join in. In the event the heroes appear to be losing, the goblins turn on their former allies. Figuring the game is up, Snarg intends to prove his worth to Hrimwulf, and hopefully have his life spared, by helping defeat the intruders.

26. UNOCCUPIED AMBASSADORIAL SUITE

This room is outfitted as per Area 25, but due to not

having been occupied for several weeks, it is in good condition.

Illumination: Pitch dark (–4).

27. GREATER AMBASSADORIAL SUITE

Flickering icewood torches cast dancing shadows around the well-appointed room. Two huge beds covered with white furs rest against the far wall. A small wooden chest sits on the bed furthest from the door. Hanging on the wall above the beds is a tapestry depicting frost giants warring against fire giants. At the foot of each bed is a large, wooden chest. Seated around a table are two enormous frost giants.

Hrimwulf maintains two suites for ambassadors. Those he considers major allies worthy of courting are housed in the more splendid rooms within the fortress.

Furniture: The furnishings comprise two huge beds covered in clean and aired giant polar bear furs, a small icewood table (small by giant standards), two enormous chairs carved from icewood, two large chests and one smaller chest (see below).

Monsters: Baugi and Nal, greater frost giants and ambassadors from the Giant's Throne, are quartered here. Jarl Hrimwulf may be a true frost giant, but Kaldr the Wicked is not easily intimidated and any deals with him must be earned through diplomacy rather than threats. Hrimwulf considers Kaldr nothing more than an upstart, especially since he took the title "king," but he controls a sizeable army of giants and orcs.

After the failure at Watchgap Fort and the botched attempt to awaken the Heart of Winter, Hrimwulf has asked Kaldr to send ambassadors in order to formulate a new plan of attack. Having witnessed the power of the ice lens assault on Whitby, the pair is debating whether or not to accept Hrimwulf's latest treaty.

Ⓜ **Baugi, Frost Giant Priest:** See page 546. Baugi also carries a single *healing potion* (removes one wound).

Ⓜ **Nal, Greater Frost Giant:** See page 546.

Tactics: Baugi begins by casting *armor* on Nal. If necessary, Nal goes on Hold until after Baugi invokes his spell. Assuming the spell is a success, Baugi Maintains it until Nal is defeated. Whether the spell works or fails, Nal then rushes into melee, using Improved Sweep whenever possible. Combined with his Icy Aura, he makes a fearsome opponent.

Baugi is not stupid, and uses his spells to the best of his ability. His preferred tactics are presented below, but he changes them as required. For example, should any adventurers enter melee with him or start using ranged weapons against him, Baugi casts *armor* on his person. He then tries to cast *sphere of might* to inflict extra damage on his attackers.

Round 2: Baugi next tries to cast *entangle*, aiming to miss Nal and ensnare as many heroes as possible.

Round 3: Baugi casts *summon elemental* in the hope of bringing forth a coldfire elemental.

Round 4: All being well, Baugi now has two spells currently Maintained. If the party is nicely bunched, he uses *stun* to weaken them for Nal. Against spread out parties, he uses *bolt*, firing double 2d6 *bolts* to give him the best chance of a successful casting.

Treasure: Baugi wears 400 gs worth of jewelry, while Nal carries 80 gs worth. The priest also has an ivory key, which unlocks the small chest (see below). The giant polar bear furs are worth 300 gs apiece but weigh 15 pounds each. The icewood table and chairs, if hacked apart, amounts to 250 pounds of valuable icewood.

The tapestry is worth 2,000 gs and weighs 50 pounds.

The two large chests contain Baugi and Nal's spare clothes. They might fetch 200 gs each from a tailor, but they weigh 15 pounds a set.

The small chest is locked (Lockpicking –2, Toughness 10). Within is 5,000 gs worth of coin and a *+1 long sword* wrapped in oiled leather. The sword is a permanent relic, a trophy taken from a Lance Knight who strayed too far into the Hellfrost and gifted to Jarl Hrimwulf. It is freshly engraved with the Giant runes for "toothpick."

Continuation: Slaying the frost giant ambassadors strains the relationship between Hrimwulf and Kaldr to the point of ending their alliance, at least in the short-term.

28. TEMPLE OF THRYM

A gigantic Hellfrost dragon's head, its mouth flickering blue-white, looms out of the rear wall, but this is not a true dragon, rather a statue carved with attention to detail from deep blue ice. Shadows play over the icy floor, which is carved to resemble small dragon scales.

As a true frost giant, Hrimwulf is closer to Thrym than the lesser frost giant species who roam the icy wastes today. He has few reasons to visit the temple, since his god communicates directly through dreams and visions. However, Hrimwulf's minions need a place of worship, and so the temple was constructed.

The glow from the head is actually from burning icewood charcoal—not only does this give the illusion the dragon is about to unleash a gout of coldfire at those who would trespass on holy ground, it also provides minimal lighting for the room.

Illumination: The burning icewood charcoal provides Dark lighting conditions (–2).

Floor: The floor is not constructed from ice carved to resemble dragon scales but actual Hellfrost dragon scales. Its non-slippery nature is revealed as soon as someone walks across it. The scales can be pried free with a Strength roll as an action. Each scale weighs 10 pounds. An armorer can turn the scale into a medium shield with a day's work. This provides an additional +2

Armor against coldfire attacks, such as Hellfrost dragon's breath.

Idol: The dragon's head idol is magically imbued by Thrym. No heat or fire magic can be cast in its presence, and any currently active spells are struck by a *dispel* with a d10 arcane skill at the start of each round (before any other actions occur). Conversely, spells with a coldfire, cold, or ice trapping are cast at +2. This applies to divine and arcane spells. This bonus is in addition to any modifiers for the low temperature.

The idol has Toughness 16 for the purposes of breaking it. Anyone striking it with a melee weapon must make a Vigor roll at –2 or lose the use of the limb for 1d6 hours. If the weapon was two-handed then both limbs are affected equally. This effect can be removed with a *healing* spell. A spell used in such a manner cures no wounds—it merely removes the bone-chilling numbness.

Monsters: The only creature that might possibly be encountered here is a frost giant priest. However, he divides his time between the temple, where he also sleeps on the floor, and the alchemical laboratory (Area T9). If present here, he is praying to his mighty god.

Ⓜ **Frost Giant Priest (1):** See page 546. He has the Alchemy Edge and Knowledge (Alchemy) d8.

Tactics: The frost giant priest begins by invoking *armor*. Whether this succeeds or not, he then casts *summon elemental*, drawing forth a coldfire elemental. Ideally, he interposes the elemental between himself and his attackers. Should this not be possible, he places it where it can deal the most damage with its coldfire stream. Given a chance, the priest next casts *sphere of might*, but he tries this only once due to possible Maintenance penalties. He then attacks with his axe, sweeping and slashing his enemies aside.

If he drops any of his spells and can sweep away adjacent foes to give himself breathing room, he tries to recast *sphere of might* and *armor* in that order before recommencing his attack.

Treasure: Cut into the dragon's neck, and shadowed from the icewood charcoal glow, is a small niche. Resting in the nook is a bloodstone (dark red with green flecks) cut to absolute perfection. As a gemstone, it is worth 2,000 gs. The gem is actually an enchanted stone but does not register as a relic. Anyone who caries the stone for a half-week adds +1 to their natural Healing roll at the end of that period.

Anyone who carefully checks the dragon's head may make a Notice roll to realize the eyes are not made of ice but are actually diamonds. Each is worth 2,500 gs. Only the priest and Hrimwulf know the eyes are gems, and other giants lack the guts to risk defiling an idol of their deity, so no traps protect the stones.

LEVEL FOUR

The final level is dominated by Jarl Hrimwulf's great hall.

29. BATTLEMENTS

The stairs lead onto a wide, open platform. To the north rises the craggy side of the iceberg, while the other sides are protected by crenellations. In the center, seemingly flowing from the iceberg, is an enormous structure, its roof shingled with what appear to be sun dragon scales engraved with Thrym's holy symbol.

The battlements provide a good view of the approach road to the fortress. Fortunately, for the adventurers, the sentries are not paying much attention to what is going on beneath them.

Illumination: Visibility is Dim (–1) during the day and Pitch Black (–4) at night.

Battlements: Giants standing behind the battlements have Light Cover (–1).

Monsters: Each of the three guard posts holds a single, very bored, and frustrated greater frost giant. This is not their usual station. Normally orcs from area 16 perform the watch duty, but they were participating in the raid on Whitby. Until they return (sic), the giants are forced to take over their duties.

Ⓜ **Greater Frost Giants (2):** See page 546. Each sentry post holds six boulders.

Tactics: If time permits, the nearest giant scoops up a boulder and hurls it at the heroes before snatching up his axe and entering melee. This is spread over two rounds, as grabbing and throwing a boulder incurs a multiple action penalty. Simultaneously he calls out to his allies elsewhere on the battlements. Where possible, the giants use Improved Sweep, but they will not endanger their colleagues. When circumstances do not allow this, they use Frenzy and if a foe proves difficult to hit, they switch to making single attacks.

30. THRONE ROOM

Read or paraphrase the following to the players *before* they enter:

Two great doors sized to allow frost giants easy access, bar your way. Carved in bas-relief are Hellfrost dragons, reigning coldfire down upon sun dragons. Peering down from the top of the door are two Hellfrost dragon heads, their eyes twinkling in the light. Engraved (at eye level for a tall human) in Orcish on the left hand door are the words: "Push here." Just below are two carved palms, fingers spread.

The doors literally weigh several tons and can only be easily opened by giants. However, since Hrimwulf accepts orc ambassadors the left hand door was weighted so as to be opened if pushed in the exact spot—the opener must press his hands against the palm prints.

Experienced adventurers may suspect a trap and there is one, but it does not work as the heroes may suspect. Applying pressure to any part of the door at a height of

ten feet or lower, except on the palm prints, causes the dragons to unleash streams of coldfire down onto the steps. The entire area in front of the doors between the top and bottom steps is affected. Victims suffer 2d10 damage twice and have two chances of catching fire. This is an area-effect weapon, so only total body armor applies (such as an *armor* spell).

The trap was not installed to thwart would-be assassins. Hrimwulf constructed it to punish orcs who could not follow the most basic instructions!

Once inside, you may read the following text to the players:

The door swings open to reveal a magnificent throne room. Three pillars carved to resemble frost giants rise from the smooth floor, their arms spread wide and their shoulders pressed against the ceiling as if preventing it from collapsing. Between them are vast fire pits, their flames burning blue-white coldfire. On either side are great benches wrought from solid ice. At the far end, on a raised dais, is a magnificent throne carved to resemble a crouching Hellfrost dragon.

Seated here is the largest frost giant you have ever seen. Yet this is clearly no ordinary frost giant, for its body is made of living ice and its eyes burn a deep red. Seated nearby are two smaller frost giants, their muscular forms appearing as waifs next to that of their seated lord.

Illumination: The great fire pits provide good lighting.

Columns: The columns block line of sight. They provide +10 Heavy Armor if used for Cover.

Fire Pits: Any hero entering a fire pit takes 2d10 coldfire damage and has a chance of catching fire.

Monsters: The monstrous figure on the throne is Jarl Hrimwulf. He spends much of his time here, brooding over recent failures and waiting for the buildup of magical energy needed to start freezing Rassilon. The two giants, regular members of their species, are providing intelligence reports on recent raids they commanded.

Ⓜ **Jarl Hrimwulf:** See page 545.

Ⓜ **Greater Frost Giants (2):** See page 546.

Tactics: Hrimwulf signals for his minions to attack while he casts *armor* on his person. For now he is content to sit back and watch, studying his opponents' powers and abilities. After casting his spell successfully, he goes on Hold. Should anyone dare approach he casts *stun*, *entangle*, or *sluggish reflexes*. The spell cast depends on how many heroes are advancing and their powers. Anyone visibly acting quickly (through Level Headed) is hit by *sluggish reflexes*, while spellcasters are hit by *stun* or *entangle*.

If he takes a wound from ranged weapons, Hrimwulf downs his *healing* potion (an action). He then snatches up his enormous spear and charges into melee. Otherwise, he enters the fray only after his minions are dead.

Once he has taken three wounds, he activates his *teleport* scroll, moving as far as possible toward the Hellfrost portal. Should he make it to the portal, he steps through. He will return to plague Rassilon again, but not for some time.

THE TOWER

The tower has four floors. However, it can only be entered via the bridge on Level 4 of the main fortress. The numbering starts from the lowest level and works up.

T1. JAILOR'S ROOM

Three stinking straw mattress lie on the floor of this room amid discarded bones and other detritus.

As well as his orc and frost giant warriors, Jarl Hrimwulf employs a small number of ogres to keep an eye on the prisoners and slaves.

Illumination: Torches provide ample lighting if the occupant is awake. Otherwise, the room is Pitch Dark (–4).

Temperature: The brazier keeps the temperature modifier at –3 if the door is closed.

Monsters: The jailor shares his room with two other ogres. One ogre is always on duty in the kitchen, while the other rests here. Roll a d6. On a 1-3, the occupant is in bed asleep. If disturbed, the ogre is treated as being Shaken. A 4-6 means it is awake.

Ⓜ **Ogre (1):** See page 547.

Tactics: The ogre attacks using Improved Sweep if multiple opponents present themselves and single strikes otherwise. It will maneuver to a position where Improved Sweep is usable, but not if that risks Withdrawing from Melee.

T2. TREASURY

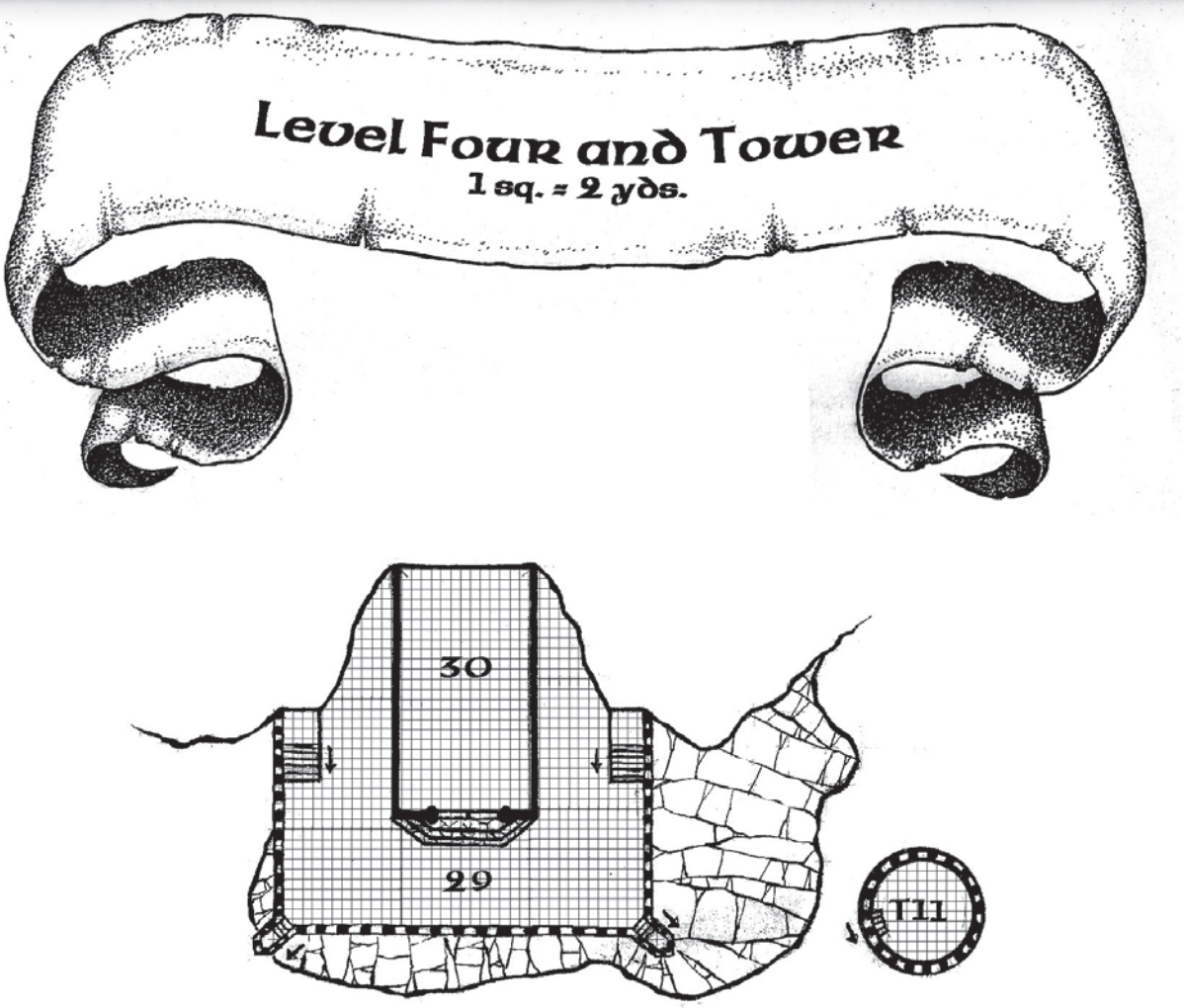
Six large chests and a dozen or so smaller strongboxes occupy the lower part of the room. Cluttered among them are numerous statues, tapestries, and other works of art.

Hrimwulf's treasury is partly made up of his personal wealth (though much of that remains hidden in the Hellfrost core), partly from goods plundered during raids, and partly from tributes sent by orc and frost giant tribes.

Door: The door to his chamber is locked. Only Jarl Hrimwulf has the key. The door is reinforced with metal bands and has Toughness 18.

Treasure: The various artworks amount to a total of 25,000 gs. However, they are cumbersome and heavy. For convenience, every 50 gs worth of plunder weighs one pound (500 lbs in total).

Each of the six large chests contains a king's ransom in gold and silver. A dozen small boxes each contain d10 x 100 gs in booty. The final small chest holds twenty Ranks



Key:
29. Battlements
30. Throne room

Tower:
T11. Viewing platform

worth of spell scrolls. A Novice spell uses one Rank, a Seasoned spell two Ranks, and so on. The GM should determine the spells.

T3. THE TORTURE CHAMBER

The pale orange glow from a brazier casts shadows over a den of pain and misery - a torture chamber. At the far end, a bloated ogre turns the winch on a rack, laughing deeply as his victim, a taiga elf, howls in agony.

The ogre jailor's playroom is filled with various implements of torture—racks, small metal cages suspended from the ceiling by sturdy chains, iron maidens, thumbscrews, knee splitters, wickedly sharp probes, and irons. The whole room reeks of sweat, urine, and utter terror.

Illumination: The only light is Dim (–1) illumination from the red-hot coals in the brazier.

Brazier: Tipping the brazier requires a Strength roll as an action. The hot coals spill out into a Medium Burst Template positioned wherever the tipper desires. Any creature under the template suffers 2d6 damage. Entering or beginning a turn in the template automatically inflicts 2d6 damage, though leg armor applies as normal. After three rounds, the coals cool enough to be harmless.

Hot Irons: A number of irons protrude from the

brazier. These inflict Str+d6 damage. Although red hot, it requires steady contact to ignite anything, short of flammable liquids or bone-dry straw. After ten rounds exposed to the freezing air the irons cool enough to inflict only Str+d4 and no longer have a chance of igniting substances.

Temperature: The brazier keeps the temperature modifier at –3 if the door is closed.

Monsters: The ogre jailor is currently "questioning" prisoners. The ogre is morbidly obese. A wicked scar runs from his forehead, down across his milky-white left eye and across his cheek to his neck. The rest of his hideous face is pitted with pox scars.

Of the prisoners, one is tied to the rack, which the ogre is operating, one is in an iron maiden, though the spiked door is open, and two others are held in suspended cages awaiting their turn. All four begin screaming loudly for help as soon as the door opens, eliminating any surprise the party hoped to gain through stealth.

Ⓜ **Ogre Jailor:** See page 547.

Ⓜ **Prisoners (1 per hero):** Treat as having d4 in all Traits, Parry 4 (Unarmed Defender rules apply), and Toughness 4.

Tactics: Snarling with delight at the thought of having a few more interesting creatures to play with, the ogre snatches up his whip from his belt (an action), moves to the extent of its range, and lashes out at all targets within range. He cannot use his whip against adjacent foes, though he can use the butt as a club (Str+d4), so he maneuvers to keep opponents at range.

If the ogre happens to pass the open iron maiden, he kicks the door closed (an action) with a vile grin, instantly killing the occupant.

T4. CELL BLOCK

As your lanterns illuminate this dark chamber, gaunt faces peer out from beneath a mass of mangy furs and blankets. A mixture of fear and hatred mars the faces of Saxa, Anari, frost dwarves, and taiga elves.

Hrimwulf's raids have netted him many prisoners. He has no real need of information thanks to his scrying chamber (see page 28) and other agents, so the prisoners are given to his ogre jailor to play with as he desires. Once the jailor is bored with them, the prisoners are hauled outside to become part of the frozen forest. Those who die under his questioning are dragged to the frozen larder (see page 544).

Door: The door is kept locked at all times (Toughness 16). The ogre jailor has the key.

Illumination: The room is Pitch Dark (–4).

Monsters: Huddled beneath blankets and furs are wretched prisoners captured in a recent raid, half-starved and freezing cold. They are a mixture of Saxa, Anari, frost dwarves, and taiga elves. All are farmers, merchants, or other non-combatants. They are split as equally as possible between the sexes.

Ⓜ **Prisoners (5 per hero):** Treat as having d4 in all Traits, Parry 4 (Unarmed Defender rules apply), and Toughness 4.

Continuation: The prisoners are keen to vacate the fortress as quickly as possible, but have no desire to fight for their freedom. They were led straight through the fortress to the cells and know nothing of the contents of any room except the torture chamber, where a few have been questioned as a prelude to a full interrogation later. If the party has not yet searched the torture chamber, the prisoners state that a handful of their comrades were recently dragged off by their jailor - a brutish, one-eyed ogre.

T5. KENNELS

The stench of wet fur and animal feces assaults your nostrils as you open the door. The floor is covered in thick, dirty straw. From the back of the room, multiple pairs of alert yellow eyes swivel in your direction!

Illumination: The chamber is Pitch Dark (–4).

Monsters: Hrimwulf keeps a number of vicious Fenris wolves as pets. The creatures fear only two things—Hrimwulf and the ogre jailor's whip (not the ogre itself). Anything else, including greater frost giants, is considered fair prey.

A character armed with the jailor's whip who cracks it while making a successful Intimidation roll (opposed by the wolves' Group Spirit) causes the beasts to back down. They slink back into the far corner, whimpering. Should the heroes push the attack, either in melee or with ranged weapons, the wolves' instincts for survival override their fear of the whip—the tactic will not work once the beasts are enraged.

Ⓜ **Fenris Wolves (2 per hero):** See page 548.

Tactics: As soon as the door is open, the wolves sense the party is neither the whip-wielding jailor nor their master. Two of the wolves emit bloodcurdling howls, while the rest charge to attack. Being pack animals, the wolves use Gang-Up tactics.

T6. HELLFROST PORTAL

At the far end of this chamber is an archway formed by four intertwining Hellfrost dragons carved from a strange, white metal. From each of their gaping maws (all of which point into the archway) erupts a beam of blue energy. The beams combine in the center of the archway, filling it with swirling, nebulous light that illuminates the entire chamber.

This is the Hellfrost portal, Hrimwulf's gateway to

the Hellfrost core. The portal is the work of Thrym, not mortal artificers, and it radiates powerful magic. Anyone using *detect arcana* must make a successful Spirit roll at –2 or be Shaken for 2d6 rounds.

Nothing can be seen through the portal—it is a door, not a mirror. The portal is permanently active in one direction only—creatures can pass through from the fortress merely by stepping through the shimmering energy field. Unfortunately for the heroes, the energy is intensely cold. Creatures not immune to cold suffer 3d10 damage, with armor protecting only if it covers the entire body (such as the *armor* spell). Should the heroes pass through and survive, they find themselves on a vast plateau of endless ice. Guarding the portal are a **dozen** greater frost giants (see page 546 for stats).

Returning is not so simple—it requires an activation word known only to Hrimwulf. This enables the jarl to return to the Hellfrost at any time but prevents his enemies (or any passing creatures) from blundering through into his domain unannounced. Heroes with a curious streak may well find themselves lost in the Hellfrost core. GMs should be prepared to expand the adventure as required should this occur.

Door: The door to his chamber is locked. Only Jarl Hrimwulf has the key. The door is reinforced with metal bands and has Toughness 18.

Illumination: The glow from the portal provides good lighting.

Monsters: The metal from which the portal is constructed is actually a minute sliver from one of Thrym's fingernails. As such, it is impervious to non-magical damage. Magical attacks using coldfire, cold, or ice trappings inflict no damage, but heat and fire trappings inflict double damage as normal. The portal has Toughness 24 and can take four wounds before being destroyed.

The dragon heads arranged around the portal are animate and respond if the portal is targeted by any form of attack, whether it inflicts damage or not. Using *detect arcana* to study the portal is not considered an attack.

Each head draws a separate action card. Their only weapon is a stream of coldfire (2d10 damage in the Cone Template), which they activate using a d10 and a d6 Wild Die. For each wound the portal suffers, one head, chosen at random, is rendered useless. The remaining heads do not incur wound penalties.

Destroying the portal has three effects: First, it cuts off Thrym's reinforcements, second, it disables the scrying device (see page 28) and renders the ice lens inoperable, and third, it dissipates the magic used to create the iceberg! The iceberg begins to sink into the cold waters of White Lake at the rate of 2 yards (1") per minute. Given it is 900 feet high, the tip disappears after 150 minutes. Unfortunately, the fortress is not as high as that!

T7. GUARDROOM

Two stools and a simple table are the only furnishings in this room. Lighting is provided by icewood torches.

Unless an alarm has been raised, the guards are inside the tower. If intruders have been detected the guards are atop the tower, armed with boulders.

Roof: Stored on the roof are a dozen large boulders. Because the bridge lies below the tower, the boulders can be heaved at anyone trying to sneak into the fortress. The distance is Long Range (–4).

Illumination: A pair of icewood torches provides adequate lighting.

Monsters: A pair of lesser frost giants mans the guard post. In theory, they are supposed to be atop the tower on constant lookout, but they spend much of their time indoors gossiping and playing stupid games, like "how hard can you punch me?"

Every hour or so one giant begrudgingly climbs the staircase to the top of the tower and shouts insults down at the orcs, just to prove someone is on duty. The orcs have taken to ignoring the giant, so no response is required. Most times the giant does not even bother looking for the orcs—he just shouts and returns to the guardroom.

Unless the party is having a very easy time, the giant will not notice any orc bodies or blood stains in and around Area 1. Should the GM want to up the ante, one of the giants can spot any mess left by the characters and raise the alarm. At night, the darkness prevents this possibility anyway, though if the heroes extinguish the orc's braziers the alarm will instantly be raised within the hour—the giants have been beaten in the past for failing to spot that the orcs had nodded off and let their braziers go out (though the orcs suffered a far worse fate).

Ⓜ **Lesser Frost Giants (2):** See page 547.

Tactics: Like all their kin, the frost giants favor Improved Sweep whenever possible.

Continuation: The remote guardroom presents an ideal hiding place for the heroes, especially if they speak Giant. At guard shift, a clever hero can shout out to the approaching relief watch (in Giant, naturally) and tell them the current guards are doing an extra shift. This requires a Persuasion versus Smarts roll to work. Even during a search of the fortress, the trick might work if the searchers are particularly stupid (and most of them are).

T8. SCRYING CHAMBER

The far wall of this chamber is adorned with a colossal tapestry depicting a map of Rassilon. Suspended over the map by thin silver wires is an iron ring, some two feet in diameter. Positioned facing the map is a high-backed chair that appears to be gilded in silver!

The map, lens, and chair are part of a scrying device through which Hrimwulf spies on all of Rassilon. From here, he wrought the deadly freeze on Whitby. Since his forces have yet to be defeated in combat, he did not watch the latest raid, the on in which the heroes defeated

the raiding party. The apparatus ties into the lens atop the iceberg. If that has been destroyed, then the scrying device no longer functions.

Door: The room is locked and only Hrimwulf has the key.

Illumination: When occupied, the room is lit by icewood torches. Otherwise, it is Pitch Black (–4).

Map: The map is identical to the one in the back of the *Hellfrost Gazetteer*. If you own the canvas map of Rassilon, this is an ideal time to unroll it.

Iron Ring: The iron ring hanging in front of the map holds a wafer thin sheet of crystal of such purity that it is practically invisible to the naked eye. It is magically hardened to Toughness 10. A thin beam of light protrudes from the crystal's center onto the map. It is currently shining on the region around Whitby.

Chair: The chair is made of solid silver (20,000 gs worth, but it weighs a ton) and is engraved with arcane runes. Deciphering these requires a Knowledge (Arcana) roll *and* knowledge of the Giant language (or a use of *speak language*). With success, the hero learns they are runes of scrying, movement, and cold. On the very end of the armrests, roughly where a giant's palms would set, are two huge crystals. These fit snuggly into the arms and can be rotated. The right hand crystal moves freely in all directions, while the left hand one only rolls forward or backward.

To activate the scrying device, the crystal on the chair's right armrest must be depressed once. When this is done, the crystal lens flares into life, displaying a real-time image of the world beneath its current position on the map (currently Whitby, as noted above), as if viewed from high above the ground. The area it shows is around 10 miles across, and thus lacks detail.

By rotating the right hand crystal, the beam of light moves across the map in the appropriate direction and causes the image to change. The viewer gets the impression he is flying above the world at unimaginable speeds. The faster the crystal is moved, the faster the beam moves. Pushing the left hand crystal forward zooms in on the image, allowing a closer view. Pulling it backward zooms out again. Through this, the image can be magnified enough to see an area around 20 yards across or view an area some 50 miles across. The magic cannot penetrate solid objects (and the resolution is not fine enough to navigate down a chimney).

Switching the device off requires the right hand crystal to be depressed again. Pressing both crystals simultaneously unleashes Thrym's breath, plunging the temperature in the area being viewed to well below freezing. Fortunately, only Hrimwulf can activate this power and its use is currently very limited.

The apparatus draws its power from Thrym's icy realm. Should the portal to the Hellfrost be destroyed, the magic in the equipment is lost *forever*.

Warning: Should a hero turn the device toward the Hellfrost, a vision of Thrym, a truly monstrous Hellfrost dragon dozens of miles long and oozing primordial power that tears at the very essence of the heroes (even through the remote viewer), fills the lens. Each character witnessing the sight of a true god must make a Guts roll at –20 (yes, that is minus twenty). Anyone failing, which is likely to be everybody, automatically suffers a heart attack as described on the Fear Table!

T9. ALCHEMICAL LABORATORY

Tables around the edges of this circular room are crowded with alchemical apparatus and small, bubbling cauldrons. Arranged on the shelves are dozens of strange objects and potion flasks.

Hrimwulf is a great believer in being prepared and having the right tools for the job. To that end, he ordered his priest to begin creating a range of alchemical devices, especially *storm* ones. Being able to withstand the cold, *storm* devices allow his hardier troops to maneuver unseen and aid in covering their tracks. Cheap to produce yet beyond the ken of many of his allies, alchemical devices also make useful bribes and rewards. Combined with the other duties, the priest has yet to create as many alchemical devices as his master desires.

Door: The door to this chamber is locked unless the room is occupied. Lockpicking rolls are made at –2.

Illumination: If the room is occupied, icewood torches provide good lighting. Otherwise, the room is Pitch Black (–4).

Monsters: The only creature that will possibly be encountered here is a frost giant priest. However, he divides his time between the temple (Area 28), where he also sleeps on the floor, and the alchemical laboratory. If present here, he is creating a new alchemical device.

Ⓜ **Frost Giant Priest (1):** See page 546. He has the Alchemy Edge and Knowledge (Alchemy) d8.

Tactics: The frost giant priest begins by invoking *armor*. Whether this succeeds or not, he then casts *summon elemental*, drawing forth a coldfire elemental. Ideally, he interposes the elemental between himself and his attackers. Should this not be possible, he places it where it can deal the most damage with its coldfire stream. Given a chance, the priest next casts *sphere of might*, but he tries this only once due to possible Maintenance penalties. He then attacks with his axe, sweeping and slashing his enemies aside.

If he drops any of his spells and can sweep away adjacent foes to give himself breathing room, he tries to recast *sphere of might* and *armor* in that order before recommencing his attack.

If defeat looks likely, the giant starts destroying the alchemical devices. Each round he automatically destroys 1d6 devices, determined randomly from those below, by sweeping through them with his axe.

Treasure: The alchemical apparatus, if collected, equates to three alchemical trunks worth. It weighs the same amount, as well. In addition, the following alchemical devices are stored here on shelves.

* Seven *storm wands* cast with a success (break to use) and a dozen created with a *raise*. All these devices

LIGHT RELIEF

Hellfrost is intended as a serious setting, but even the darkest game needs some light relief every now and then. If the heroes manage to work out how the scrying device operates and they use it to spy on their homes, reward the *first* player to shout, "I can see my house from here!" with a benny. Anyone else who tries the same stunt should be penalized by losing a benny—it's only funny once.

create blizzards.

* Six *healing potions* created with a success. These were plundered from cultists of Kenaz and have a warming glow trapping.
* Three vials of *oil of smite* cast with a success. All have a coldfire trapping.
* One *crystal of summon black ice elemental*.
* Three *frozen teardrops of blast* with a coldfire trapping.
* Two *potions of fly* cast with a raise.

T10. FROZEN LARDER

Great slabs of gray meat hang from hooks embedded in the icy ceiling.

The larder is used to store meat brought back by hunting or raiding parties. Among the meats are slabs of whale, entire seals, and reindeer, plus a handful of humans and a single taiga elf. The whale, seal, and reindeer carcasses are perfectly edible. (So are the other meats, though such an act befits only a worshipper of Dargar.)

Illumination: The larder is Pitch Black (–4).

T11. VIEWING PLATFORM

The top of the tower provides a commanding view over the surrounding icy wastes.

Hrimwulf comes here to pray (he prefers being outdoors), give commands to Hellfrost dragons who answer his call to arms, and think through problems. When in a particularly bad mood he throws ice goblins off the top to vent his frustration. The surrounding crags to the east are littered with their broken bodies.

THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

At the very tip of the iceberg, some 900 feet above the surface of the lake, is a gigantic ice lens. It is mounted in an inverted U-shaped holder of black ice, which protrudes from the very tip of the spike, and can rotate in any direction. The crystal, an actual fragment of ice from divine Thrym's realm, has Toughness 30 but takes double damage from fire and heat spells.

BESTIARY

GONTRAN AP-PADERN

Gontran ap-Padern served with distinction as a Sword Knight for many years, rising through the ranks to achieve the position of Sword Captain. Four years ago, an orc blade slashed his throat. Though Gontran survived, he lost the ability to speak. Unable to lead his men, Gontran was kept on in an administrative role, but his heart simply was not in it. He quit the organization and drifted around for a year until he arrived in Whitby. Never one to shirk hard work, he decided to settle there. Gontran remains on good terms with the Hearth Knights, who he aids as best he can when a patrol passes, and the locals insist on calling him "Sir Gontran."

Gontran has developed a rudimentary sign language. The citizens of Whitby know enough to understand Gontran, but only his "squire," Padraig is truly fluent.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10
Skills: Boating d8, Fighting d8, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Notice d6, Riding d10, Survival d8, Tracking d8
Charisma: +1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 9 (2)
Hindrances: Code of Honor, Heroic, Loyal
Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Command, Connections (Hearth Knights), Frenzy, Hearth Knight, Improved Snow Walker, Level Headed, Sweep, Woodsman
Languages: Anari, Frosttongue, Trader
Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), closed helm (+3), long sword (Str+d8), medium shield (+1 Parry), winter clothing and furs.

PADRAIG THE SQUIRE

Orphaned three years ago when his parents drowned after their fishing boat capsized in a sudden squall, Padraig was declared a ward of the council. Passed from family to family, Padraig was a neglected youth. When Gontran settled in Whitby, he adopted the boy after only a month, determined to teach him integrity and honor. Padraig, now a self-styled squire, has learned well. While not a skilled warrior, he would be willing to walk into the Hellfrost to save, or avenge, Gontran.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Boating d8, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d8, Survival d4, Taunt d6, Tracking d4, Swimming d4
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1)
Hindrances: Clueless, Code of Honor, Loyal, Young
Edges: Luck, Snow Walker
Languages: Anari, Trader
Gear: Leather armor (+1), short sword (Str+d6), small shield (+1 Parry), winter clothing and furs.

VILLAGER

Whitby's inhabitants are focused around the fishing industry. Though there is a resident boat builder-cum-carpenter, there are no other crafters. Unless a citizen has a unique stat block, use this one. Individuals the GM wants to expand into more fleshed-out characters can have higher Traits or a few Edges and Hindrances. Anbeth, for example, might be Attractive. Do not forget to roll on the Ally Personalities table as well.

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, Saxa, Trader

Gear: Knife or hand axe (Str+d4). Militia duty: leather (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), dagger (Str+d4)

JARL HRIMWULF THE GRIM

A colossal creature of living blue ice, Hrimwulf is one of the last remaining true frost giants. He sports a long beard of white hair and has burning red eyes. Hrimwulf has the power of hrimwisardry, something of a rarity among the more common frost giants. The jarl has no understanding of mercy and tolerates no failure among his minions. Similarly, he respects nothing and no one except Thrym.

Hrimwulf has been devoted to Thrym's cause since before humans walked the world. Despite a few setbacks, he firmly believes he is on the verge of bringing about the Fimbulvintr. All he needs is the portal open for a little while longer and he can unleash the full ferocity of the Hellfrost core on Rassilon.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12+6, Vigor d12

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Hrimwisardry d12+1, Intimidation d12, Notice d6, Throwing d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 16 (2)

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Delusional (Major; he can bring on the Fimbulvintr), Mean, Overconfident

Edges: Alchemy, Arcane Background (Hrimwisardry), Block, Combat Reflexes, Command, Fervor, Hellfreeze, Improved Snow Walker, Improved Sweep, Level Headed

Gear: Colossal spear (Str+2d6, +1 Parry, 2-hands; Heavy Weapon, weighs 30 pounds)

Alchemical Devices: Three potions of *healing* (each removes one wound), scroll of *teleport* (20" range—he knows every room in his lair), amulet of *luck*, icicle of *obscure* (creates a snow flurry)

Special Abilities:

* **Armor +2:** Body made of ice.
* **Elemental Friend:** No cold-based elemental will attack Hrimwulf. If he succeeds at a Spirit roll opposed by the elemental's Spirit, the elemental becomes subservient to his wishes. This requires an action. An elemental summoned by a hero is no longer Maintaining the spell, but neither is Hrimwulf—the elemental stays and serves of its own volition.
* **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
* **Icy Aura:** Frost giants radiate deadly cold. At the end of movement, all adjacent foes suffer 2d6 damage.
* **Immunity (Cold):** Immune to background cold. No damage from cold, coldfire, and ice attacks.
* **Infravision:** Halve darkness penalties against heat-producing targets.
* **Large:** Attackers gain +2 to attack rolls against the jarl, due to his size.
* **Powers:** *Armor* (black ice), *bladebreaker* (weapon freezes and snaps), *bolt* (icicles), *dispel* (magical threads are wrapped in ice), *entangle* (freezes foe), *sluggish reflexes* (coats foes in ice), *storm* (blizzard), *stun* (icy blast).
* **Size +6:** Hrimwulf stands 24' tall.
* **Weakness (Fire):** Takes double damage from heat or fire.

ELEMENTAL

BLACK ICE ELEMENTAL

Aside from being formed of black ice, these elementals appear identical to regular ice elementals until they breathe a gout of flaming coldfire. They can be summoned only in the Hellfrost.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+5, Vigor d10

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

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 12 (5)

Special Abilities:

* **Armor +5:** Black ice body.
* **Bash:** Str+d6.
* **Burrowing (6"):** Black ice elementals can meld into and out of the ground so long as it is snow or ice.
* **Coldfire Strike:** Black ice elementals can spit a burning blast of coldfire using the Cone Template. Characters within the Cone must beat the spirit's Shooting roll with Agility or suffer 2d10 damage and risk catching fire.
* **Elemental:** No additional damage from Called Shots; Fearless; immune to disease and poison.
* **Immunity (Cold):** Immune to background cold. Takes no damage from cold attacks.
* **Weakness (Fire):** Takes double damage from heat or fire.
* **Weakness (Temperature):** Black ice elementals must make a Vigor roll each hour in temperatures above freezing or suffer a wound.

COLDFIRE ELEMENTAL

Attributes: Agility d12+1, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d6
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5
Special Abilities:
* **Coldfire Strike:** Coldfire elementals can project a blast of coldfire using the Cone Template. Characters within the cone must beat the elemental's Shooting roll with Agility or suffer 2d10 damage, plus the chance of catching fire.
* **Coldfire Touch:** Str+d6; chance of catching fire.
* **Elemental:** No additional damage from Called Shots; Fearless; immune to disease and poison.
* **Immunity (Cold):** Coldfire elementals are immune to background cold. They take no damage from cold attacks.
* **Invulnerability:** Coldfire Elementals are immune to all nonmagical attacks, but suffer 1d6 damage when doused in at least a gallon of water, +2 per additional gallon.
* **Weakness (Fire):** Takes double damage from heat or fire.

ICE SHELL ELEMENTAL

An ice shell elemental looks like a regular ice elemental at first glance. Closer inspection reveals swirling coldfire burning within its frozen form. As the creature takes damage, so the coldfire gushes through the cracks and cuts, enveloping the elemental in a fiery, cold aura and scorching anything foolish enough to stand too close.
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+3, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d6
Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (3)
Special Abilities:
* **Armor +3:** Icy body.
* **Bash:** Str+d6.
* **Burrowing (6"):** Ice shell elementals can meld into and out of the ground so long as it is snow or ice.
* **Coldfire Aura:** A wounded ice shell elemental inflicts 1d6 coldfire damage on all adjacent opponents at the end of its movement for the round for each wound it has suffered. An elemental that has taken two wounds, for example, has a 2d6 damage aura.
* **Coldfire Explosion:** An ice shell elemental that is Incapacitated automatically explodes, filling a Large Burst Template and inflicting 2d10 coldfire damage to everything beneath the template. The elemental is destroyed in the explosion.
* **Coldfire Strike:** Ice shell elementals can spit a blast of coldfire using the Cone Template. Characters within the Cone must beat the spirit's Shooting roll with Agility or suffer 2d10 damage and have a chance of catching fire.
* **Elemental:** No additional damage from Called Shots; Fearless; immune to disease and poison.
* **Immunity (Cold):** Immune to background cold. Takes no damage from cold attacks.
* **Weakness (Fire):** Takes double damage from heat or fire.

GIANT, FROST

PRIEST

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12+3, Vigor d8
Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Faith d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Knowledge (Religion) d6, Notice d6, Throwing d8
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 13 (2)
Gear: Chain shirt (+2), great axe (Str+d10, –1 Parry, AP 1, carried in one hand), thrown rock (Range: 4/8/16, Damage: Str+d10).
Special Abilities:
* **Devotee of Thrym:** Frost giant devotees use the hrimwisard modifiers for cold temperatures. Frost giant priests know: *armor* (icy skin), *bolt* (coldfire), *entangle* (freezes foe), *sphere of might* (coldfire), *storm* (blizzard), *stun* (blast of frigid air), *summon elemental* (coldfire, ice, or slush).
* **Icy Aura:** Frost giants radiate deadly cold. At the end of movement, all adjacent foes suffer 2d6 damage.
* **Improved Sweep:** Frost giants can attack all adjacent foes at no penalty.
* **Infravision:** Halve darkness penalties against heat-producing targets.
* **Large:** Attackers gain +2 to attack rolls against frost giants, due to their size.
* **Resistance (Cold):** Immune to background cold. Half damage from cold, coldfire, and ice attacks.
* **Size +5:** Frost giants are over 18' tall.
* **Snow Walker:** Treats rough ice as normal ground, smooth ice as rough ice, and every inch of movement in snow as 1.5" instead of 2".
* **Susceptibility (Fire):** Takes +4 damage from heat or fire.

GREATER

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+4, Vigor d10
Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Throwing d8
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 14 (2)
Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), huge great axe (Str+d10, –1 Parry, AP 1)
Special Abilities:
* **Frenzy:** May make two Fighting attacks at –2 each round.
* **Icy Aura:** Frost giants radiate deadly cold. At the end of movement, all adjacent foes suffer 2d6 damage.
* **Improved Sweep:** Frost giants can attack all adjacent foes at no penalty.
* **Infravision:** Halve darkness penalties against heat-producing targets.
* **Large:** Attackers gain +2 to attack rolls against frost giants, due to their size.
* **Resistance (Cold):** Immune to background cold.

Half damage from cold, coldfire, and ice attacks.
* **Size +5:** Frost giants are over 18' tall.
* **Snow Walker:** Treats rough ice as normal ground, smooth ice as rough ice, and every inch of movement in snow as 1.5" instead of 2".
* **Susceptibility (Fire):** Takes +4 damage from heat or fire.

LESSER

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10
Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Notice d6, Throwing d8
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11
Gear: Spiked club (Str+d8)
Special Abilities:
* **Clueless:** –2 to Common Knowledge rolls.
* **Improved Sweep:** Lesser frost giants can attack all adjacent foes with no attack penalty.
* **Infravision:** Halve darkness penalties against heat producing targets.
* **Large:** Attackers gain +2 to attack rolls against frost giants due to their size.
* **Resistance (Cold):** Immune to background cold. Half damage from cold, coldfire, and ice attacks.
* **Size +4:** Lesser frost giants are 15' tall.
* **Snow Walker:** Treats rough ice as normal ground, smooth ice as rough ice, and every inch of movement in snow as 1.5" instead of 2".
* **Susceptibility (Fire):** Takes +4 damage from heat or fire.

HELLFROST 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.
* **Fearless:** Zombies are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
* **Resistance (Cold):** Immune to background cold. Half damage from cold and ice attacks.
* **Susceptibility (Fire):** Takes +4 damage from heat or fire.
* **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots (except the head). Immune to disease and poison.
* **Weakness (Head):** Called Shots to a zombie's head work as normal.

ICE GOBLIN

SHAMAN

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Climbing d6, Faith d8, Fighting d6, Guts d4, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Taunt d8, Throwing d6
Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4
Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), furs, winter clothing.
Special Abilities:
* **Improved Snow Walker:** Treat ice and snow as normal terrain.
* **Infravision:** Goblins halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets (round down).
* **Powers:** Shamans typically know *bolt* (icicles), *fear* (howl), *obscure* (snow cloud), and *smite* (icicles form on weapon).
* **Size –1:** Goblins stand 3–4' tall.
* **Warm Blooded:** +2 to Vigor rolls to resist the effect of cold.

WARRIOR

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d4, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Taunt d6, Throwing d6
Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4
Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), furs, winter clothing.
Special Abilities:
* **Improved Snow Walker:** Treat ice and snow as normal terrain.
* **Infravision:** Goblins halve penalties for dark lighting against living targets (round down).
* **Size –1:** Goblins stand 3–4' tall.
* **Warm Blooded:** +2 to Vigor rolls to resist the effect of cold.

OGRE

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12
Skills: Guts d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Throwing d6
Pace: 7; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11 (1)
Gear: Thick hides (+1), massive club (Str+d8)
Special Abilities:
* **Infravision:** Ogres halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets.
* **Improved Sweep:** May attack all adjacent foes.
* **Size +2:** Most ogres are over 8' tall with potbellies and massive arms and legs.

OGRE JAILOR

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12
Skills: Guts d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d4, Throwing d6
Charisma: –2, **Pace:** 7; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11 (1)

Hindrances: One Eye, Ugly
Edges: Command
Gear: Thick hides (+1), massive whip (see below).
Special Abilities:
* **Infravision:** Ogres halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets.
* **Improved Frenzy:** May make two Fighting attacks at no penalty.
* **Massive Whip:** Str+d6+1, Reach 2. The end of the whip is tipped with dozens of sharp barbs. Anyone Shaken or wounded by the whip must make a Vigor roll or be Shaken for 1d6 rounds. Recovery is only possible after this time or if a benny is spent.
* **Size +2:** Most ogres are over 8' tall with potbellies and massive arms and legs.

ORC

The orcs can be of any tribe the GM wishes. While it is suggested you pick one the party has has run ins with before, picking a new tribe means the characters get to see other tribal abilities in action.

DRUMMER

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6
Pace: 6; **Parry**: 5; **Toughness:** 8 (1)
Gear: Leather armor (+1), drum beaters (Str+d6), war drum, boot spikes (Str+d4), furs, winter clothing
Special Abilities:
* **Level Headed:** Drummers need to react quickly to changing battlefield conditions. They draw two action cards and use the best.
* **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.
* **War Drum:** As an action, the drummer can beat his drum to produce a special effect benefiting all orcs within 10" of the drummer. Only one beat can be used at a time. Once chosen, the same beat sounds until the drummer's next action card, when he may stop, continue with the same beat, or switch to a different beat. All benefits cease immediately if the beat ends early (such as in the event of the drummer's death).
* **Charge:** Orcs who begin their turn within 10" gain +2 Pace and increase their running die by one step (typically to a d8).
* **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
* **Fervor:** Inflict +1 damage with Fighting attacks.
* **Frenzy:** Gain the Frenzy Edge (there is no benefit to orcs already possessing the Edge).
* **Hold the Line:** Gain +1 Toughness.
* **Rally:** +1 to Spirit rolls to recover from being Shaken.

WARRIOR

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6
Pace: 6; **Parry**: 6; **Toughness:** 8 (1)
Gear: Leather armor (+1), medium shield (+1 Parry), short sword, axe, or mace (Str+d6), boot spikes (Str+d4), furs, winter clothing
Special Abilities:
* **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.

ELITE WARRIOR

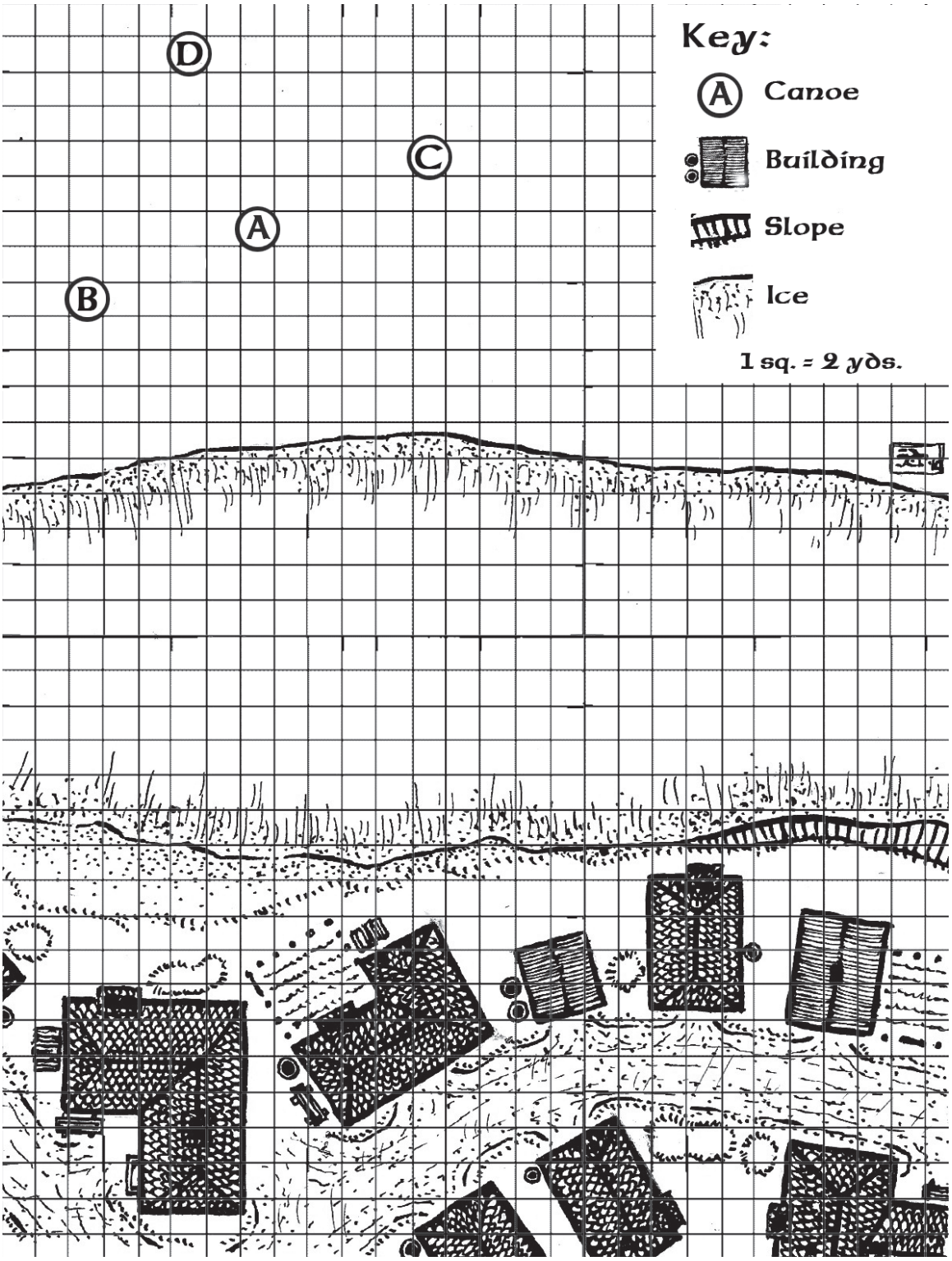
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Throwing d8
Pace: 6; **Parry**: 7; **Toughness:** 9 (2)
Edges: Combat Reflexes
Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), pot helm (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry), long sword or battle axe (Str+d8), boot spikes (Str+d4), furs, winter clothing
Special Abilities:
* **Size +1:** Orcs are slightly larger than humans.

WOLF, FENRIS

There are many species of wolf in Rassilon. Some, like mundane wolves, are a threat to armed heroes only when natural prey is scarce. Others, such as dire and dread wolves, are more openly aggressive. Among the most feared are Fenris wolves, monstrous beasts with powerful, oversized jaws and teeth capable of slicing through steel armor.

Fenris wolves are the result of breeding between Dargar's pet wolf, Fenric, and mundane wolves. Although the Compact prohibits the gods from direct interference in mortal affairs, no mention was made of their animal companions. While creatures of flesh and bone, Fenris wolves nonetheless possess all the unbridled ferocity of their sire. They think nothing of attacking even a heavily armed party of veteran warriors.
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d10, Tracking d6
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7
Special Abilities:
* **Bite:** Str+d8, AP 2.
* **Fleet Footed:** Fenris wolves roll a d10 when running instead of a d6.
* **Go for the Throat:** Fenris wolves instinctively go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly armored location.
* **Howl:** A Fenris wolf can use its entire action to howl. When it does so, every enemy able to hear the chilling sound must make a Spirit roll or be Shaken.
* **Size +1:** Fenris wolves stand 6' at the shoulder.

MAP OF WHITBY



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