

# Maximum<sup>1e</sup>HP

The old school `zine for a new school world



Issue #002

The Everdark

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## In This Issue of The Everdark

[Introduction to the Everdark – Pg. 01](#)

[Everdark Elves – Pg. 02](#)

[Been There and Seen a Lot – Pg. 05](#)

(Tim Kask RPG Advice)

[Tenochtitlan – Pg. 06](#)

(Stephen Marsh)

[Magical Weapons & Gear – Pg. 14](#)

[New Spells – Pg. 19](#)

[Traps in the Everdark – Pg. 21](#)

[NPCs in the Everdark – Pg. 26](#)

[Troblins – Pg. 32](#)

(Chris Clark)

[Harpy Scorned – Pg. 34](#)

(John Larson)

[Thoughts from the Back Room – Pg. 42](#)

(Lloyd Metcalf)

[Maps of the Everdark – Pg. 44](#)

[Our Sponsors – Pg. 49](#)

A special thanks goes out to all the people who submitted potential content for this issue and all those who offered support.

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## Thank you for supporting Maximum HP

At Fail Squad Games, we offer rousing content for your tabletop roleplaying games, never hard and fast rules. What follows in this and upcoming issues of Maximum HP are articles, notes, tips, tricks, traps, and treasures for your 1E gaming table organized by theme with each issue. To keep the zines fresh and exciting, we have liberated ourselves from a production deadline to allow us to channel maximum creativity into each issue. Content will be nurtured, not rushed, and chosen as inspiration strikes or from where we see a need at our own tables.

The majority of these zines are intended for GMs, but players may also find much of the content interesting and, hopefully, inspiring. We do suggest that players not read the adventure sections if their GM intends to run adventures from the zine.

We intend to share the Fail Squad Games style with other old school gamers to enrich their gaming experience. The zine format will present small, easy to digest articles firmly rooted in the spirit of the older edition games. Although the content may be informal, we want the physical product and presentation to be the best we can deliver for the cost.

## Introduction to the Everdark

Welcome to issue #002 of Maximum HP! In this issue, we tackle the Everdark—the deepest, darkest piece of the world underground. Join us as we explore winding tunnels that go on for miles and miles and lead to entire cities, races, and civilizations that never see the light of day. What adventure lies deep in the bosom of the earth? Are your players ready to find out? If they've read all the books and modules, you'll need new material to keep things lively. We sincerely hope Maximum HP can help make your underground world a challenge and delight for your players.

In the Fail Squad Games' world of Artera, some subtle departures from published products may be apparent. In this introduction, we'll clear up a few things before moving on.

## The Everdark

Yes, we all understand that the places **UNDER** the ground in the **DARK** have an established nomenclature. Many of these are also not our right to use. Some names have been changed to protect the innocent; most GMs should be able to figure out what is being discussed.

Everdark Elves – We shan’t call them “drow” as the IP is up for debate, and we have altered their appearance and characteristics. In Artera, Everdark elves are albino for a few sensible reasons.

- 1) IP laws (just in case). Albino elves are physically different than the typical underground elves in previously published adventures, thus setting them apart.
- 2) In the natural world, fish, frogs, salamanders, and many other creatures that live and grow underground discard pigmentation early in the evolutionary process. Why not elves?
- 3) Monotony. It saves our adventures from more of the “same old” feel. This decision is mostly an aesthetic one, and GMs can disregard it, but perhaps the idea that even *some* elves in the Everdark are albino might add spice to your game world.

## Everdark Elves

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*

NO. APPEARING: 5–50

ARMOR CLASS: 4 (or by armor + Dex)

MOVE: 12”

HIT DICE: 2 (minimum)

% IN LAIR: 05%

TREASURE TYPE: *Individual N(x5), Q(x2)*

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 or 2

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *See below*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *See below*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 30%; *All saves at +2*

INTELLIGENCE: *High*

ALIGNMENT: *Lawful Evil*

SIZE: *M*

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Per individual*

Attack/Defense Modes: *Per individual*



It is thought that during a great global catastrophe, elves became divided and some of their cousins were cast off into the corners of existence. Wars raged among the mortals and survival was a daily uncertainty. Some of the elves took to the sea and embraced it, others fought in the sun to defend all that was good and right, but some grew bitter and weary with ages of war. These elves became known as the Everdark elves.

They turned their back on the ugliness of mortals and opted for the quiet comfort of the Everdark. For ages, they made their home in the long tunnels, sweeping underground chasms, and wild places. Generations would pass without ever seeing the sun, and here they made their home. Many of the Everdark elves still see surface dwellers as nothing more than beasts bent on senseless war devoid of finesse nuance.

Everdark elven society is most commonly matriarchal in nature. Women hold positions of power and rulership. They make powerful magic users and mighty clerics in service to gods of the Everdark. Everdark elves prefer strategy, quiet revenge, and political domination over open and ugly warfare. Female Everdark elves under 4 hd are almost never encountered.

Everdark elves carry the same immunities to sleep and charm as their long lost, above-ground cousins. They also enjoy similar bonuses with long swords, but only short bows. They have exceptional infravision to 15" and move among the shadows of the Everdark as surface elves do among the forests.

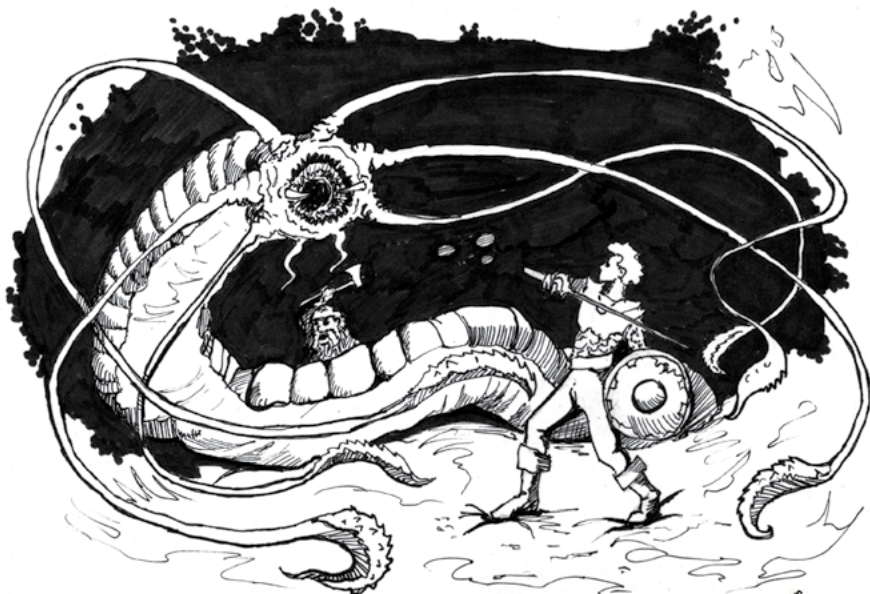
**Magic** – All Everdark elves have some sort of magical ability and aptitude. Children born without these gifts are immediately sacrificed when discovered. At the very least, all Everdark elves can cast 1–3 of the following spells innately once per day: *cantrip*, *comprehend languages*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*, *feather fall*, *mending*, *spider climb*, and *unseen servant*. More powerful elves of any class may have more spells as they rise in levels.

Everdark elves create powerful magical items tied to the darkness of the world. Extended exposure of these items to sunlight sees them dissipate into dust over the course of a few days. Their masterful

weapons and armor are highly sought and traded in black markets of the Everdark. A non-Everdark elf possessing them, however, is punishable by death. Typically, Everdark elves wear Everdark chainmail, which is soft, supple, and nearly silent. The typical suit has a +1 enchantment; more powerful members of the race are likely to have more powerful weapons and armor. A 4 hd Everdark elf would have a weapon and armor of +2, a 6 hd +3, and so on.

Everdark elves are albino and suffer -2 penalty to all actions in bright light. Extended exposure to sunlight causes them to burn easily and creates great continued discomfort. They gain a +2 bonus to Dexterity and Intelligence but suffer a -1 penalty to Constitution and Strength.

Organized cities of the Everdark elves are ruled by complex laws, sub-laws, and ordinances to maintain order. This isn't to say laws aren't broken, just not broken openly and frequently bent. Everdark cities control great amounts of wealth and power and, therefore, have abundant trade opportunities for those clever enough to learn the trade and societal laws. "Justice" for those who break the laws is swift and frequently deadly. Judgement and legal execution are left to the ruling house of the area in which the crimes are committed. Laws in each city are frequently geared to benefit the ruling house.



## Been There and Seen a Lot

*Tim Kask*

“Old school” (a term I despise) was all about “guidelines not rules” and thinking outside of the box.

I’d like to share just one example, of many, where this trait proved to be the difference between life and death.

This incident goes back a couple of years to an adventure I was running at a con. This was when I was still running prepared, written-out-in-advance adventures. On this occasion, I was using mid-level PC pre-gens and told the party (as a private test of my own) that they could each have one magic item that might be considered likely to have been acquired in their relatively short careers. I told them that anything foolish or extravagant, i.e., not something a 5th–7th level was likely to have obtained, would be disallowed and they would get NO magic item. Only one did not get the gist of my warning; I disallowed his Staff (it was either ...of Power or ...of the Magi). He carped about the “unfairness” and I told him that greed kills, at least in my worlds.

Another player asked for a Ring of Speak with Animals. I said sure, knowing that I had no animal “monsters” in the upcoming adventure. I also gave my standard “you’re ordinarily equipped as seasoned adventurers” speech and stated that if they were taking something unusual to just write it on their sheet before we started. He noted that he was taking a pound of hard, dry cheese and a bag of twenty mice. Can you see where this might go? I didn’t.

He sent those damned mice into every room and down every dark corridor ahead of himself and the party. There were no surprises for the party if you don’t count the time he lost three mice to a firetrap. He finished with 17 mice, a hell of a treasure haul won much more easily than I had anticipated, and one chastened DM. The box be damned.



# TENOCHTITLAN

Stephen R. Marsh

## FALLS THE SHADOW

Illustrated by Raven Evermoor



# Tenochtitlan – Falls the Shadow

*Stephen Marsh*

## Introduction

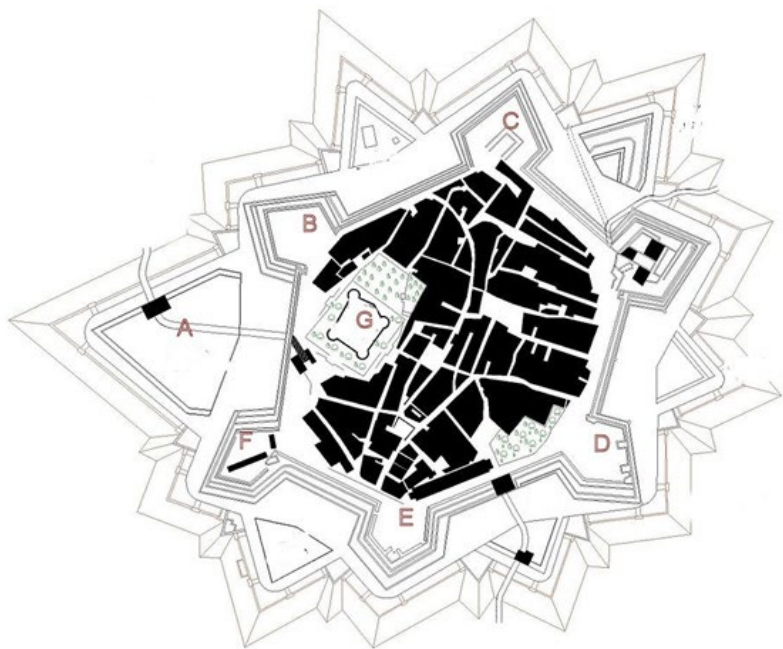
Tenochtitlan is a city that lies at the edge of the Everdark and is a gateway to the Plane of Shadow. At one time, Tenochtitlan slid sideways into the Plane of Shadow, though those who live there believed they were cast into hell, and they had a long struggle to return to the Prime Material Plane. Those in the city sought power to contend with the abominations they faced, and the path they took was deep into the Abyss.

Tenochtitlan is both strongly lawful and very evil. The city is ruled with an iron grip, but outside of the walls, there are no binding rules. Tenochtitlan is surrounded by enemies that its denizens harvest as fuel for the sorcery that provides the power that sustains the system, raiding both aboveground settlements and Everdark communities as opportunity presents.

The city is divided into several factions embroiled in deep alliances and rivalries. Each faction hunts the shadows that surround Tenochtitlan or forays to the surface world for one or more of the three parts of living creatures—blood, life energy/levels, and flesh/body. The balance is not perfect, but alliances work well as cooperating factions seek parts uncovered by their allies. Beyond just meals, the factions raid the Everdark elves and others for slaves, hostages, and sacrifices.

Everdark elves are at war with all the factions of Tenochtitlan though they are known to cooperate with individuals or groups when it furthers their cause.

## Map/Key



Racial and power groups are aligned with citadels on the key. Those in boldface form the five factions that created and preserved the shadow gate at the core of the city.

- A. Citadel of the Master.** He/she/it is the lord of the city and consumes everything. The Master is rumored to be a powerful vampire lich lord.
- B. Qumari of the Teeth:** Mermen, harrar (alligator men), and cannibalistic sahuagin who bonded with the Blood Shark. They can be driven into frenzies by drinking blood or eating the flesh of other sentients.
- C. Orcs of the Blood** (orcs who bonded with trolls). Orcs and iron trolls who are now abominations that drink blood for power.
- D. Humans of the Blight** (humans who bonded with undead). Undead that drain life energy for power. The mass of them are human wights, wraiths, specters, and vampires. The vampires among them also drink blood.

- E. The Worm Beneath** (humans and others who bonded with the Worm God). These consume the flesh for the worm within (an outsider). All of them are bonded to the Worm and some have worms dwelling within them.
- F. Ocēlōmeh** (humans and others who bonded with the Decay of the Jaguar). These were-jaguars consume flesh and drain life energy. The Decay is a realm or hell found in the negative energy planes.
- G. The Great Gate** – a gateway into the Plane of Shadow.

## Plot Hooks

1. An Everdark elf faction wants something delivered into the Plane of Shadows. Because of their ongoing war with the city, they cannot make the delivery themselves and have approached the characters to make the delivery for them.
2. A city faction has had a tower crystalize out of shadow in their part of the city. The faction would like to hire the party to investigate what is inside the tower, taking the risk and reaping possible rewards.
3. A faction wants some extra muscle for an ambush of another faction's team outside the city. Neither group can be trusted outside of whatever oaths they take.
4. There is something outside the city that a faction wants. It can't extend itself that far because of the war with the Everdark elves.
5. Surface dwellers want to use the city to stage attacks on Everdark elf-controlled targets.
6. Mind elders are striking a deal with the Worm that Walks.

## City Encounters

- 49% of random city encounters will be with the city guard which consists of iron golems led by 9th level fighters.
- 49% will be members of the faction that controls the area of the city the party is in.
- 1% will be other adventurers.
- 1% will be monsters other than Everdark elves.



## Factions of Tenochtitlan

All creatures of Tenochtitlan have infravision.

### Humans of the Blight (lawful evil)

All are immune to sleep, charm, hold, cold, paralysis, and poison. Raise dead spells will not destroy them. They take 2d4 damage from holy water. Those they drain rise as regular wights. They are not powerless in sunlight.

### Blighted Wights

AC 5; 5d8+5 hit points; Require silver or magic weapons to hit; Move 12"; Turned as if mummy; Dispel does 2d6 damage and turns instead of dispelling them. Int 12, Wis 10. One attack per round. Either touch (1d3 + drain one level) or sword (d8+2).

### Wraith T'snoet

AC 4; 6d8+12 hit points; silver weapons do half damage. Move 12"/24"; Turned as if spectre; Dispel does 3d6 damage and turns instead of dispelling. Int 14, Wis 11. One attack per round. Either touch (1d6 cold + drain one level) or sword (1d8+1d6 cold damage).

### Draugir Specter

Embodied and armored. AC 0, 9d8+9 hit points. Silver weapons do half damage, magic full. Move; 15"/15"; Turned if vampires; Dispel does 4d6 damage and turns instead of dispelling. Int 16, Wis 12. One attack per round. Touch for 1d8 cold and drain two life energy levels or by weapon type (usually long sword 1d8)+1d8 cold.

### Shadowed Vampires

AC 2, 12d8+12 hit points; Silver weapons do half damage; Move 12"/18"; A cleric is at 4 levels reduction in attempting to turn or dispel. They cannot be turned in shadow or darkness. Dispel does 4d6 damage and turns instead of dispelling. Attack for d6+4 per touch and drain two life levels or a gaze attack to enthrall one target (*charm person* spell). Otherwise as vampires per the manual. Turn to shadows instead of gaseous form, at will.

**Faction of the Teeth (lawful evil)****Harrar**

The harrar are alligator men who followed the Alligator God. When the great deluge came, instead of being turned amphibious by the Shark God, they sought him for power. Move 12"/14"; Each has four arms with claws (d3 each). They fight with spear and bite, only fighting with claws when disarmed. Scales are AC 5. Base 2d8+4 hit points. Chieftains have 4d8+8 hit points. Adherents of the Teeth of the Shark have 6d8+12 hit points. Abattoirs of the Blood have 8d6+16 hit points. Ajaws, which are harrar jarls, have 12d8+24 hit points. When berserk, double their hit point bonus (so base +8 instead of +4, a berserk ajaw +48 instead of +24). They can go berserk at will by drawing blood. Two attacks: one spear (d8) + half of their hit point bonus for damage. One bite for ¼ of their d8 in damage. (base is 1d4, an ajaw would do 3d8 with its bite).

**Mere**

These are mermen who turned to the Shark God in the time of shadows which let them walk like men. AC 6 (with shield); half d8+1 hit points; half 2d8+2 hit points; Move 12"/18" (land/water). Spear attack for d6+1, also throw javelins as they close to combat for d6 each. They are the foot soldiers and lesser followers of the teeth.

**Ratfolk**

These are one step below the mere. AC 8; d6+1 hit points; Hide in Shadows 85%; attack with bite for 1d3+1 or short sword for d6; Move 12"/16" in shadow.

**Faction of the Blood (lawful evil)****Orc Trolls**

Orcs who crossed themselves with dark trolls. AC 5; 3d6+3 hit points; regenerate 2 points per melee round; 6 points in shadow; Reduce all level draining by one level; Move 9"/12" in shadow or darkness. Attack for d8+1 with two-handed war hammers. They drink blood.

**Iron Trolls**

Shadow trolls who gained the gift of iron and mottled rust and iron in color. AC 3; 6d8+6 hit points; Regenerate 3 hit points per round; 6 in

shadow; Reduce level draining by two levels; Move 12"; Int 10, Wis 9. Attack: 2xclaws for d6+3 each claw, 2d6+2 bite. Neutral evil instead of lawful evil but accepted by their faction.

## **Worms that Walk (lawful evil)**

### **Worms that Walk as Men**

These are man-shaped giant worms, 6' tall. AC 8; 2d6+6 hit points; Move 9"/6" when burrowing; Attack for d3+1, but once a hit has occurred, the target is infested with worms who do d2 points every round until slain by cure disease or burning the wound out.

### **Priest of the Worm Within**

AC 6; 6d6+12 hit points; Move 9"/6" when burrowing. Cast spells as a 6<sup>th</sup> level cleric. Fight with shield and mace, hit for d6+1.

### **Walking Worms**

Humans infested with the worm within. They get to make each saving throw twice, taking the best result. If they fail a save, they only take ½ damage, and on spells that have half damage on a save, they take ¼. Level drains only do half effect on them, no effect if they save. AC 6; 9d6+18 hit points; Move 12"/3" when burrowing; Attack with sword and the effect "bite of the worm" for 1d8 and -1 point of Constitution per hit on the target. Bite of the worm is doubled in shadow plane areas.

## **The Kinich Ahau of the Ocēlōmeh faction. (neutral evil)**

### **Ixchel or Lesser Were-Jaguar (man-sized)**

AC 5; requires silver or magic to hit, takes double damage from silver; 4d6+3 hit points; Move 15"/18" in shadow; Climb Walls at 45%; Backstab attacks from behind with surprise for double damage; 2d4 bite.

### **Cotz or Were-Jaguar (large)**

AC 4; requires silver or magic to hit, takes double damage from silver; Immune to energy drain, charm, clerical magic tied to negative planes; 6d6+6 hit points; Take 1d4 damage from holy water; Move 12"/15" in shadow 2xClaw for 1d3+1; Bite for 2d6. Bite also drains one level of



life energy. Can be turned as a mummy, if dispel result occurs, it instead does 2d6+6 damage. Half damage if they are in shadow or darkness.

### **Iqi B'alam or Greater Shadowed Were-Jaguar (giant-sized)**

AC 2, requires silver or magic to hit, Immune to energy drain, charm, clerical magic tied to negative planes. Immune to charm, paralysis, poison, sleep, disease, cold. Take double damage from magical fire. 2d4 damage from holy water. 12d6 hit points. Regenerate 2 hit points per melee round if in shadow. 9"/12" in shadow. Can jump 9'. Claws twice for 1d6+1 and drain one level each or one bite for 3d6 and drain two levels.

Can be turned as a Vampire but cleric acts as if 6 levels below actual level on chart; if "dispel" result occurs, it does only 2d6+6 damage to them instead. Half damage if they are in shadow areas.

## **Magic Items of Tenochtitlan**

### **Channeled Warhammer**

*Value: 2200 xp, 20,000 gp*

+2 to hit, d10 damage, channels the wielder's connection to the energy planes. If intelligent, 90% are evil. If not intelligent, it is unaligned. A creature with a level drain touch drains levels using the weapon. A character who can turn/dispel undead channels that effect when striking with the weapon (even if already attempted to turn/dispel the group the target is in and have reached their maximum).

### **Binding Ring**

*Value: 1,000 xp, 5,000 gp*

Binds the wearer's lifeforce so that one less level is drained on a level draining attack (an attack that drains only one level does not drain at all).

## Magical Weapons & Gear

### The Gnomish Cutter

*Value: 750 xp, 4,500 gp (double to a gnomish jeweler or similar)*

To make this larger hand axe, the deep gnomes forged the essence of an earth elemental into star metal blades and balanced it with a jagged lapis lazuli hammerhead. It acts normally as a hand axe +1 or hammer +1 (if the reverse head is used). The true purpose of the item is to cut stone from gems or precious metal veins where precision is required, and pickaxes do too much damage. The blade carves through stone like one would expect an axe to carve through pine. Thus, the axe/hammer acts as a +3 weapon vs. stone-based creatures. While the axe would be a prize for any miner or jeweler, it is particularly precious and identifiable to gnomish workers as a rare master tool.



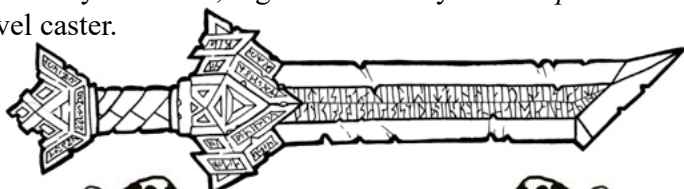
### The Crystal Dagger of Torthedir

*Value: 4,400 xp, 22,000 gp*

This dagger is comprised completely of a clear quartz-like crystal hardened deep underground. Runes and magic allow the crystal to be flexible enough to function as not just a weapon, but a truly wicked blade.

The Dagger of Torthedir is a +2 weapon, +3 vs. trolls and acts as a lesser blade of wounding. For every successful attack, the blade continues to draw blood, causing 1–2 points of damage for 2 additional rounds. Wounds from the blade cannot be regenerated.

The blade also stores life energy. For every 30 points of damage caused and drained by the blade, it gains the ability to cast *spider climb* as a fifth level caster.



## The Gutter Cutter

*Value: 500 xp, 3,200 gp*

This small hand axe was created specifically for hunting vermin in the Everdark. Rats and other vermin are frequently a problem for near-surface civilizations, and several guilds are devoted specifically to the task of pest extermination. This is a ceremonial gift bestowed to honored members of one such guild.

This small hand axe is normally a +1 weapon but acts as +2 vs. rodents and +3 vs. insects. The axe is designed specifically for diminutive wielders; hilt modification is required for medium-sized users.



## Darts of Silence

*Value: 140 xp, 420 gp*

These +2 darts are created to hold and release a spell of *silence* 10' *radius* on impact. The darts create the effect only one time, after which they are spent and remain magical darts +1. The silence nullifies any spell having an auditory or verbal component to the casting. The silence lasts for 2d4 rounds and is an area effect.

The darts are created by the Everdark elves which specialize in removing wizards from power.

## Gnomish Flash Bombs (non-magical)

Nothing is a bigger curse to creatures in a world of darkness than a blinding flash of light. Flash bombs are approximately 2"-diameter spheres made of air-dried clay and filled with a brightly burning gunpowder mixture. The clay is blended with bits of steel and flint intended to ignite the powder when the clay exterior is smashed or broken. Finding a way to stabilize the powder for everyday transport while igniting on impact has been problematic for the gnomish inventors. Flash bombs activate as intended about 70% of the time.

The flash is bright enough to blind a creature within 30' operating in total darkness for 1d6 rounds. If the attack is not by surprise, you may allow a saving throw vs. rod, staff, wand to avoid the effect.



## The Skeleton Key

*Mike Stewart*

*Value: 2,500 xp, 15,000 gp*

The Skeleton Key is an item made of solid bone, the creature of which it is made is unknown. It is carved in the shape of the traditional skeleton key, with a loop on the back and the 'teeth' of the key at its front. If the key is placed into the eye socket of a skull (of any creature) and turned clockwise one full rotation, the skull is animated. The entire skeleton, if available, will rise to be a traditional skeleton (see Monster Manual page 87). If only the skull is available, it will float in the air roughly at the height it would have been in life. The animated skeleton/skull is under the control of the key wielder and will perform tasks to the best of its ability.

If the key is put into the eye socket and rotated counterclockwise, then the skeleton is de-animated and will return to its former inert state. A number of skeletons equal to the wielder's level in hit dice can be animated with the key. Thus a 3<sup>rd</sup> level character could animate 3 humanoid skeletons. A dragon skeleton of 6 hit dice is only animated by a wielder who is at least 6<sup>th</sup> level of experience in their class.

A cleric wielding the skeleton key can use it to deactivate skeletons encountered, even if not animated by the skeleton key. This is treated as a Turn Undead, with the cleric rolling on the table as if they were three levels higher than their actual level. This only works on skeletons, not zombies or other forms of undead.

Skeleton keys are usually found being guarded by 2–8 skeletons, all of which were animated by the key itself. They were ordered to guard the key by its former owner, who no doubt perished at some prior date and thus never retrieved their artifact.

## Mighty Stalagmite

*Scott McKinley*

*Value: 500 xp, 3,000 gp*

This humble-looking magic item could easily be mistaken for a simple rock, but for its distinctive conical shape. When tossed on the ground

at the same time that a command word is uttered, this finger-sized stone instantly embeds itself and begins to grow rapidly and inexorably upward and outward. In one round, it grows to be a stalagmite up to 20' tall and 4' wide (at its base), stopping only when it reaches its maximum height or encounters another stone surface. Note, this means it will blow right through wooden ceilings and shove creatures and man-made objects aside. It can be used to support collapsing caverns, create cover, disrupt enemy positions, or even surmount walls. Once used, the mighty stalagmite's magic is expended, and its effects are permanent.

### Spider Grapple

*Scott McKinley*

*Value: 2,000 xp, 10,000 gp*

This appears to be an ornate grappling hook with eight black metal prongs that can be attached to a rope. But unlike a normal grappling hook, the spider grapple will automatically embed itself into any surface onto which it is thrown: a castle wall, a sheer ceiling, etc. The spider-like "legs" of the device spring to life and grab on as an arachnid. If attached to a creature, it does 1d6 points of damage. Further, the rope can be magically retracted or expanded upon the speaking of a command word. The silken rope can be any length from 1' to 100' and can lift up to 400 lbs.

### Supravision Goggles

*Scott McKinley*

*Value: 200 xp, 500 gp*

These highly-sought-after, thick-lensed goggles allow elves or other creatures of the Everdark to venture into the daylight visually unimpaired. They allow the wearer to see clearly but block the brightness that would normally confer sensory or combat difficulties. Unfortunately, the goggles also suppress any subterranean visual senses such as infravision while worn.

## Deep Gnome Sandals

*Scott McKinley*

*Value: 1,000 xp, 5,000 gp*

These rare shoes, only found in sizes fitting a gnome or halfling, combine intricate gnomish engineering and an array of esoteric dweomers. First, there is a small pocket of fluid visible on the side of these sandals that detect the slope upon which their wearer stands. The wearer can also climb up to a 30-degree incline without ever tiring or reducing movement rate. This fantastic footwear assists the wearer in walking or climbing safely. Any Dexterity checks or saving throws made as a result of uneven or slippery footing are made at +3. The sandals can, upon the use of a command word, unobtrusively increase the height of the wearer by up to three inches. This is perhaps their most valued asset among the deep gnome inventors that use them.

## The Silver Heart

*Daniel Fisher*

Comments for the DM: This is a McGuffin for sending your players to another dimension, realm, or any place you desire. This little device can quickly send a party into a dread realm or through a portal leading to a challenging, unfamiliar environment. The Silver Heart was created by a deep gnome named Frutlen Silvercleanser. It is a cursed, silver, clockwork heart the size of a human heart.

Non-evil characters who fail a save vs. magic desire it; they think it is either amazingly beautiful or an entrancing piece of craftsmanship they must investigate. The heart plants the seeds of greed and envy in player characters. Soon they seek to possess everything of value or clockwork in nature. If an evil character touches the heart, it initiates the mechanisms, and the item ticks and starts pumping. The pumping rapidly spews forth mists from another dimension or place and teleports those nearby (radius of effect variable depending on story requirements) to that location.

The heart may also be used as a heart for reanimating the dead.



Locations where the item can be found:

1. Long-dead vampire's crypt
2. Treasure room – usually on a pedestal
3. A cavern in the Everdark
4. Inside a flesh golem
5. Frutlen Silvercleanser's underground workshop

If you choose a cavern in the Everdark, it will be guarded by a golem sentry. It patrols the Everdark, killing any creature approaching the Silver Heart. The golem also acts as a guard of Frutlen's Workshop.

## New Spells

**Sol Shade** (Magic-user – Alteration)



Level: 3

Components: V, S, M

Range: Touch

Casting Time: 2 segments

Duration: 1 hour/level

Saving Throw: N/A

Area Effect: Creature touched

**Explanation/Description:** By means of this spell, casters can protect themselves and their gear from the deteriorating effects of the sun. Everdark elf weapon or armor deterioration, penalties in sunlight, even becoming sunburnt, are all suspended while the spell is in effect. Activating the spell interrupts infravision abilities for those protected. The material component of the spell is a bit of coal crushed between the caster's teeth.

**Thermal Veil** (Magic-user – Alteration)

Level: 2

Components: V, S, M

Range: Touch

Casting Time: 2 segments

Duration: 5 rounds/level

Saving Throw: N/A

Area Effect: Creature touched

**Explanation/Description:** By means of this spell, the caster creates an air pocket around their person that matches that of the surrounding environment. This effectively makes them invisible to infravision and heat-sensitive creatures. It does not make them invisible in regular light. Protected creatures still cast a shadow, give off scent, and leave tracks. Their heat radiation is simply masked. The material component of the spell is a dandelion seed, mushroom spores, or similar airborne “seed”.

**Myconid Kin** (Cleric or Druid – Alteration)

Level: 2

Components: V, S, M

Range: Touch

Casting Time: 1 round

Duration: 1 turn/2 levels

Saving Throw: N/A

Area Effect: Creature touched

**Explanation/Description:** This spell creates an essence of fungi around the caster that replicates the presence of a myconid creature. Surrounding fungi are not alarmed or activated by the presence of creatures under the protection of the spell. Molds, shriekers, and other fungi that react to the presence of living creatures ignore those protected by the spell. The spell does not protect against slimes and oozes.

Characters under the effect of the spell gain a +2 reaction bonus from any myconids they encounter.

Material components for the spell are a holy symbol and fresh gills of a flowering fungi.

## Traps in the Everdark

The Everdark is a dangerous place and it isn't always just monsters, Everdark elves, and spiders. The terrain can be treacherous.

Subterranean races leave behind traps, or mysterious magic can fool the senses. In this section we explore some possible pitfalls, pun intended, for your adventuring heroes.

### The Swirling Pool

In this cavern, an underground stream of waterfalls from above pour into a swirling pool of water. In the pool, coins, weapons, and armor can be seen, but the water is rapidly swirling in a vortex as if it were draining in the center.

The water is indeed draining out of the center of the pool. A **Bag of Devouring** is wedged among the rocks at the very bottom of the pool some 10' below and is propped open. Anyone entering the pool must make a saving throw vs. paralyze/poison/death (or similarly difficult Swim check) or be partially drawn into the open bag and suffer the consequences. (See Bag of Devouring, DMG).

As an added twist, a GM might assume the exit portal from the bag is in a cavern above that feeds the waterfall. So, inorganic material not consumed by the bag eventually cycles through the water until it settles in the pool where the bag is discovered.

### The Centi-pit

The floor of the cavern(s) turns into sharply tilted sections of slate. The moisture underground caused a light layer of algae and lichen to form on the rocks, making them treacherously slick. Slipping to the bottom of any of the rock sheets shouldn't seem overly dangerous.

What *does* make them dangerous are numerous large (or huge) centipedes moving and feeding among the moist crevasses at the base of these upturned rocks. The creatures are quite comfortable skittering across the rocks without penalty but prefer to live mostly at the base where food frequently falls. Any treasure or coin from previous victims is lodged among the cracks.



## Gnomish Gas

While this may sound like an intro to a hilarious piece, its results may be quite deadly. Deep gnomes are clever miners and darkly creative when it comes to devising traps and creating intricate technologies. The deep gnomes drill long, small holes, seeking to capture natural explosive gases. They then fit pipes to the holes and cap the lines. In this way, they can store compressed explosive gasses in heavy-duty reinforced barrels of various sizes. Most are of the one- to two-gallon sizes as larger storage containers can become unstable.

The deep gnomes have learned to use these gasses to focus burning fuel through regulator valves to cut, weld, or heat metals. Some use the barrels as deadly explosive devices that violently burst when thrown and introduced to spark or flame (up to 4d12 or more damage). Still, others incorporate the compressed gasses into intricate flaming traps to guard treasure or trap locks. Still, other, less nefarious gnomes have discovered the regulated gas makes a very convenient and consistent flame for cooking. Master deep gnome chefs are highly sought after among Everdark elf society. The gnomish chefs, however, often find Everdark elf society boring, and they prefer the moving lives of working folk. Thus, small mobile food carts may be found in some larger trade cities of the Everdark.

Gnomish gas is difficult to find and very dangerous to mine and bottle, but highly prized.

## Cave-ins

A tunnel or mine collapse most commonly happens in alvar, tsingy, and other limestone formations. Lava tubes and other denser stone tunnels tend to hold up better. As a GM you may rule for a save vs. death or breath weapon to avoid a collapse but being caught in the midst of one is almost always deadly.

While it's tempting to use this sort of trap frequently in the Everdark, it is almost expected. Find ways to spruce up a collapse to be more interesting and add it to your storyline instead of just killing or shaving off hit points. You can make almost any situation a new challenge and a gaming opportunity.

**The Glitter** – The ceiling of a cavern is clearly cracked and strained from lack of supports. However, some rough gemstones can be seen deep within the crack. Can they be removed without collapsing the entire area?

**The Elemental** – An earth elemental or boring creature bursts through the wall of the passage or room. The lack of support causes a thunderous “Crack” to echo through the dark as what stone slabs holding up the ceilings start to give way. Do you follow the boring creature or take a chance on escaping the collapsing room?

**Split the Party** – If your heroes are exploring the Everdark and some of the players have had to cancel, it may be time for a good collapse. One that only separates the party for a session and seals the absent players into a safety bubble while those present find a way to “save” their friends.

**Dwarven Know-how** – Dwarves know stones. They also know mining. If a tunnel or passage is prone to collapse, consider giving any dwarves in the party the same chance to notice “pinch points” in stones as elves would notice concealed or secret doors. This would be beyond their ability to detect unsafe passages. Recognizing one of these pinch points may create an opportunity for the players to collapse a tunnel on purpose with a few pickaxe or hammer falls.

## Poisons in the Dark

Everdark elf poison is frequently deadly. Many others are vague on effects. A collapse, a save or die, or save or damage situation may be a bit boring. Some poisons may be incorporated into traps to expose would be thieves through their newfound physical or mental attributes. Other times it may create a better story to dress up your poisons, fungi spores, or traps with a little unexpected punch.

**The Psychedelic** – The gas or poison from the trap is a psychedelic. The victim suffers from various hallucinations, feelings, or urges. They may become disoriented or distracted and unable to focus on the task at hand for 2d4 hours. Victims may also suffer nausea, vomiting, and dilated pupils.

**The Glow** – The trap or poison infects the victim with a delayed faerie fire effect. Those affected glow a soft green luminescence for 1d4 hours. This makes it nearly impossible for thieves to hide as they normally would (-65% penalty).

**Love Potion** – The victim radiates the pheromones of a giant ant colony invading new territory or a rival queen seeking breeding drones. Either way, it attracts the attention of a colony of giant ants within an hour. Giant ant encounters become more frequent with each passing hour until the threat is resolved or the pheromone masked with heavily scented oils or magical means.

**Feel the Burn** – The victim suffers a burning sensation that slowly spreads through the blood as if injected by fire ant venom.

- Round 1 – A dull burn or itch. Distracting, you know you are affected.
- Round 2 – The burn starts to spread, skin inflamed at injection site. Itching intensifies.
- Round 3 – Now the burn is painful and feels like acid in the veins. Must save vs. poison to focus on anything else.
- Round 4 – Very painful burning throughout a large portion of the body. Save vs. poison with a -3 penalty to do anything other than focus on the pain.
- Round 5 – Excruciating pain. Feels as if all veins are on fire. System Shock roll required to remain conscious.
- Effects remain for an additional 2d4 rounds and cause 1d3 hp damage per round.

**Odiferous Curse** – The agent affects your body chemistry in such a way that you radiate a stench that is somewhere between body odor, unwashed troll feet, and forgotten hard-boiled eggs. All creatures that hunt with scent can find you easily at double the normal range but may question their life choices in their pursuit. Those in close proximity find the odor offensive and distracting. Of note: Goblins, kobolds, and otyughs consider the scent sweet and enchanting.



**Bloat** – The poison creates an extremely uncomfortable bloat. The victim is stricken with uncontrollable gas and flatulence, but it doesn't relieve the pain of the constant reaction in their intestines. After 2 turns, the victim must make a save vs. poison or be unable to do anything but lie prone, belch, and flatulate in a desperate attempt to relieve their intestinal pain. Effects last for 4d4 turns.

## Darts and Blades

Dart and blade traps are common in Everdark places with intelligent races who wish to deter intruders. But what is worse than simply rolling a die and saying, "Oh you spring a dart trap. Take some damage."?

When planning out your traps, try to think like your villains who wish to protect their lives or treasures. Or even worse, try to think like your players! What traps might they set to protect their precious treasures?

**The Only Way Out** – Any place where there is only one obvious or "safe" way out is a good place for something wicked.

"You notice a small tunnel just big enough to crawl through to escape (insert whatever nasty thing adventurers may flee)."

Seven feet into the crawlway, dastardly creatures have embedded razor-sharp, thin steel blades into the ceiling, walls, and floor of the crawlspace. The blades are nearly undetectable in the dark and are likely not to be seen until felt if one is fleeing. The blades cause 2d4 points of damage and also create a bloody mess that is easily tracked. It shreds backpacks, sacks, leather, cloth, and paper. Anyone spending a full 2 turns may dislodge the 30 blades.

## The Goo

The floor of the cavern or passageway appears to be smooth, polished, black stone. It radiates warmth and confuses infravision. Any object or creature remaining still on the floor for more than 2 rounds reveals that it is a sort of non-Newtonian liquid tar. The tar behaves like a solid when struck or interacted with quickly but reacts more like a liquid to less forceful motions. The tar is remarkably sticky and draws

victims in that do not make a saving throw vs. rod, staff, wand. Once stuck, struggling forcefully against the liquid makes it more difficult to navigate, moving slowly allows for easier movement, but faster sinking.

A deep pool may be deadly for players who do not react quickly. A shallow pool or passage makes a great ambush location as the heat masks infravision and slows down victims significantly.

## NPCs in the Everdark

Name <u>Bokglb</u>	Race <u>Bugbear</u>	Class <u>Thief</u>	Level <u>5</u>	Align <u>CE</u>										
General character appearance & notes														
STR 17	DEX 18	CON 15	INT 11	WIS 9	CHR 6	Hit Dice HP	10	13	Para/Poison	Petri/Poly	R,S,W	Breath	Spell	XP
									12	11	12	15	13	
									AC	HP		Move		
									1	23		9		
Weapon														
Dagger of throwing +3														
Short Sword														
Equipment / treasure / notes														
Infravision - 60 feet. When alone or with a group of similarly stealthy creatures, Bokglb gains a bonus on his chance to surprise his enemies. Bugbears inflict a -3 penalty on opponents' surprise checks. Backstab multiplier x 3.														
Dagger of Throwing +3, Hide of Blending +1 (Both appear in later editions, basic descriptions provided below)														

## Bokglb

Bokglb operates on the outskirts of Everdark civilization from a well-fortified cavern served by escaped kobold and goblin slaves in hopes of learning the thieving trade, or at least in hopes to get their hands on Bokglb's acquired loot.

He is a cruel and unpredictable leader who bullies his underlings. None of them care for the bugbear, and their existence is barely better than slavery to the Everdark elves. He pays well for services, however, and has connections in the cities that turn to gold.

### Dagger of Throwing

Appears to be a normal weapon but radiates strongly of magic when detected. The balance of this blade is perfect, such that when it is thrown by anyone, it demonstrates superb characteristics as a ranged weapon. The dagger may be hurled up to 180 feet. A successful hit when thrown inflicts twice normal dagger damage, plus the bonus provided by the blade.

### Armor of Blending

This armor appears to be a normal suit of magical armor. Upon command, the armor has the ability to change shape and form, assuming the appearance of a normal set of clothing. The armor retains all its properties (including weight) when disguised. Only a *true seeing* spell will reveal the true nature of the armor when disguised.

## Blibabubao

Mistress Blibabubao rules over a pond and surrounding area in the Everdark. The tribe of Glibnaboc offers a welcoming, but slimy and cool, haven for travelers. She insists all visitors remove and store weapons and armor while visiting. Frequently, she charges slightly inflated rates for healing and rest, but consistently considers her tribe's needs above all else and cares little for outsider demands.

Her tribe stores their communal treasure at the very deepest part of their pond, 50' below water surface: 5,000 sp, 2,678 gp, 750 pp, 10 gems, 4 jewels. Any magic weapons, armor, or other magic items are used to defend Glibnaboc.

See description on bullywugs for natural abilities, jumping, camouflage, etc.





## Blibabubao

Name Blibabubao Race Bullywug Class Fighter Level 5 Align N

General character appearance &amp; notes

STR	17	Hit	+1	Dark	+1	10	13	Para/Poison	Petri/Poly	R,S,W	Breath	Spell	XP
DEX	12	Rate		Mis				11	12	13	13	14	
CON	17	HP	+3	97	98			AC	HP		Move		
INT	12	Lang						3	36		9		
WIS	7	Save	-1										
CHR	8	Blind	3	-1									

Weapon	Adj	Spd	Range	Damage	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
2-handed Sword+axe		9		d10+1 / 2d8+1	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15

Equipment / treasure / notes

Blibabubao has a suit of **bronze platemail +1** she wears for special occasions, visitors, or if she knows battle may occur outside the pond. She always has a **Bag of Tricks** (Type 1-5) with her and will use it when not underwater.

## Mugheff Bonemarrow

Name Mugheff Bonemarrow Race 1/2 orc Class Fighter Level 5 Align NG

General character appearance &amp; notes

(See below)

STR	18/57	Hit	+2	Dark	+3	13	25	Para/Poison	Petri/Poly	R,S,W	Breath	Spell	XP
DEX	12	Rate		Mis				11	12	13	13	14	
CON	17	HP	+3	97	98			AC	HP		Move		
INT	9	Lang						4	44		12		
WIS	13	Save											
CHR	8	Blind	3	-1									

Weapon	Adj	Spd	Range	Damage	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
2-Handed Sword+1		9		d10+3/3d6+3	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Long Bow				d6	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16

Equipment / treasure / notes

Aside from his **2Hnd Sword +1**, composite plate armor, and standard gear, Mugheff cherishes his **Boots of the North** (Later editions, brief description below)

Mugheff is a ruffian between worlds. He is wanted in many of the Everdark elf cities for smuggling slaves to the surface or kinder civilizations. Usually, he does this for general hiring fees. Many of the liberated offer servitude and settle a repayment of gratitude on time. His size and renown with his giant blade are making it increasingly difficult to go unnoticed.



## Boots of the North

These boots provide the ability to travel across snow at a normal rate of movement, leaving no tracks. The boots also enable the wearer to travel at half normal movement rate across the slipperiest ice (horizontal surfaces only, not vertical or sharply slanted ones) without falling or slipping. Boots of the North warm the wearer so that even in temperature as low as -50 degrees F, they are comfortable with only scant clothing—a loin of cloth and cloak, for instance. If the wearer of the boots is fully dressed in cold-weather clothing, they may withstand temperatures as low as -100 degrees F.

# Biar Il'lothnar

Name Biar Il'lothnar Race Everdark Elf Class Magic user Level 9 Align LE

## General character appearance & notes

See notes on Everdark Elf abilities.

STR	13					7		4	Para/Poison	Petri/Poly	R,S,W	Breath	Spell	XP
DEX	18		+2		+2	-4			12	10	8	12	9	
CON	9													
INT	20		9		96	10	All		AC	HP		Move		
WIS	11								6	30		12		
CHR	12													

Weapon	Adj	Spd	Range	Damage	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Dart of Homing		2		D6+3	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Quarterstaff		4		D6	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18

## Equipment / treasure / notes

**Darts** +2 (5), **Dart of Homing** (Later edition see below).

Biar Il'lothnar studies diligently with purpose under a wicked Everdark elf matron. He presses his abilities to the very limit of his capabilities in a driven effort to seize power of the magical arts. Eventually, he intends to dominate his matron and rule the house Il'lothnar from his hidden place of power. He has many missions available for adventurers willing to compromise morals for gold. Most of those missions include returning wizardly spell books from the surface schools of magic.

## Homing Dart

These appear to be normal projectiles but are +3 magical weapons. If a dart hits the intended target, it magically returns to the thrower in the same round and can be reused. A dart inflicts a base 1d6 points of damage plus its magical bonus on a successful hit against any size creature (4–9 points total). A dart that misses its target loses its magical power. These weapons have twice the range of ordinary darts—20 yards short, 40 yards medium, 80 yards long.





## Troblins

(Chris Clark)

Troblins are troll-goblin half-bloods created with a troll father and a goblin mother. Goblins are not known for preferring troll partners, nor are trolls particularly attracted to goblins. A liaison of this nature, therefore, only occurs under the worst of circumstances. Troblins are quintessentially evil.



Although neither goblins nor trolls are known for their intellect, troblins are of at least average intelligence, and females are often gifted with extensive reasoning powers given their parentage. Many troblin women have command of simple spells in a diverse set of categories including druidic, unholy, and arcane. The source of this knowledge is unknown, but if captured (extremely rarely), they often refer to an unholy mother known to them as the Cumhacailleach, the giver of all knowledge of the power of the earth. No icons or description of this deity have ever been found.

Troblins are finesse fighters, often casting misleading spells or illusions and then attacking with precision weapons using stealth from a concealed position. They are very accurate in their strikes (base of +2 to hit with any weapon weighing less than 3 pounds) but have little strength, so prefer to outthink their opponents. Troblins prefer the spear, poleaxe, crossbow, blowgun, and poisoned darts to other weapons.

Primarily nocturnal creatures, troblins are stealthy and able to Hide in Shadows (when shadows are present) 90% of the time. In complete darkness, they are invisible 90% of the time. Troblins avoid sunlight at all costs as they are easily seen and penalized for operating in full sunlight as trolls.

Troblins are extremely hardy folk and are immune to disease. They gain +3 on all saving throws vs. poison and take only half damage from cold-based attacks and spells. They regenerate 2 hit points per round. Their agility and stealth provide them with a base armor class of 5, and they wear clothing that is a combination of leather and linked chains for protection and mobility. Most troblins encountered are therefore AC 2.

### Regeneration

The troblin regains 2 hit points at the start of its turn. Damage from acid and fire does not regenerate. Troblins that start their turns with less than 0 hit points do not regenerate.

### Spells

75% of the time troblins are able to cast 2 1st and 2nd level spells from one of the following schools of magic: arcane, unholy, illusion, or druidic. Each may be cast once per day.

### Troblin

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*

NO. APPEARING: *2d4*

ARMOR CLASS: *2*

MOVE: *9"*

HIT DICE: *3d8+2*

% IN LAIR: *25%*

TREASURE TYPE: *J,K,L,M +5% any magic*

NO. OF ATTACKS: *1*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *d6+1(bite) or by weapon*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *+2 to all attacks with light weapons*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Poison resistant (+3 to saves), ½ damage from cold, Regeneration, 90% invisible in complete darkness.*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Nil*

INTELLIGENCE: *Low to average*

ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic Evil*

SIZE: *S 4'-5' tall*

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

Attack/Defense Modes: *Nil*

*Note: No evidence has yet surfaced supporting the rumors of a troblin necromancer.*



# Harpy Scorned

*(John Larson)* John is a Warrant Officer in the US Army and an RPG enthusiast. Harpy Scorned is an excerpt from his forthcoming adventure “Between Silk and Sand” from Old Gator Games.

**Goblin note:** This adventure begins outside, then leads to the Everdark. While not fully embedded in the Everdark, I felt it was worth adding in for issue #002.



**Harpy Scorned** is a single encounter adventure designed to be integrated into existing fantasy campaigns and serves as a primer for adventures in the Everdark. Harpy Scorned introduces a dangerous new foe, the harrow, and an Everdark elf artifact. A well-balanced party of 4–6 PCs between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> level will find the adventure suitably challenging. Unless specifically noted, use your favorite resource for creature descriptions, statistics, and tactics as well as for treasure value and the magical properties of found items.

## Adventure Background:

In an attempt to increase his power, influence, and station in his Everdark elf clan, D’Craw-uth escaped to the surface world with the Genesis Phylactery. This rare religious artifact was used by the priestesses of his clan during new moon ceremonies to promote strong bloodlines and ensure fertility.

While ascending through a narrow passage, D’Craw-uth emerged into a large cavern where he was ambushed by flying horrors. Before he could retreat into the darkness, the elf succumbed to the unearthly maiden’s call of Ghuuda, the leader of a small flight of barren harpy exiles. After several days of torture and with no opportunities for escape, D’Craw-uth attempted to buy his freedom by promising the harpies he would use the divine magic of his artifact to help the harpies regain their fertility. Ghuuda agreed, and on a moonless night, D’Craw-uth summoned the evil magic of the artifact and enabled the unholy seeds of Everdark elf creation to take hold. Three months later, all six of the harpies hatched a harrow—a monstrous cross between harpy and Everdark elf.

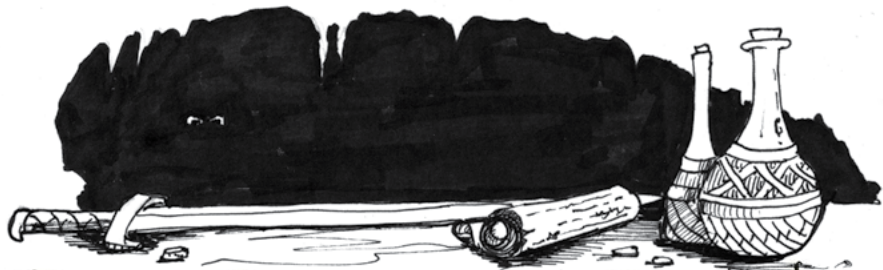
The offspring of Everdark elf magic grew in size and cunning and D’Craw-uth began to cultivate their innate abilities. Seeing an opportunity to escape and return to his Everdark homeland with formidable allies, D’Craw-uth earned the loyalty of his “daughters” by promising them additional magical power and access to hunting grounds rich with prey. He convinced the harrows to betray the harpies and bring him his weapons and armor. Together they attacked and killed the harpies before retreating underground. But one survived.

## Character Hooks:

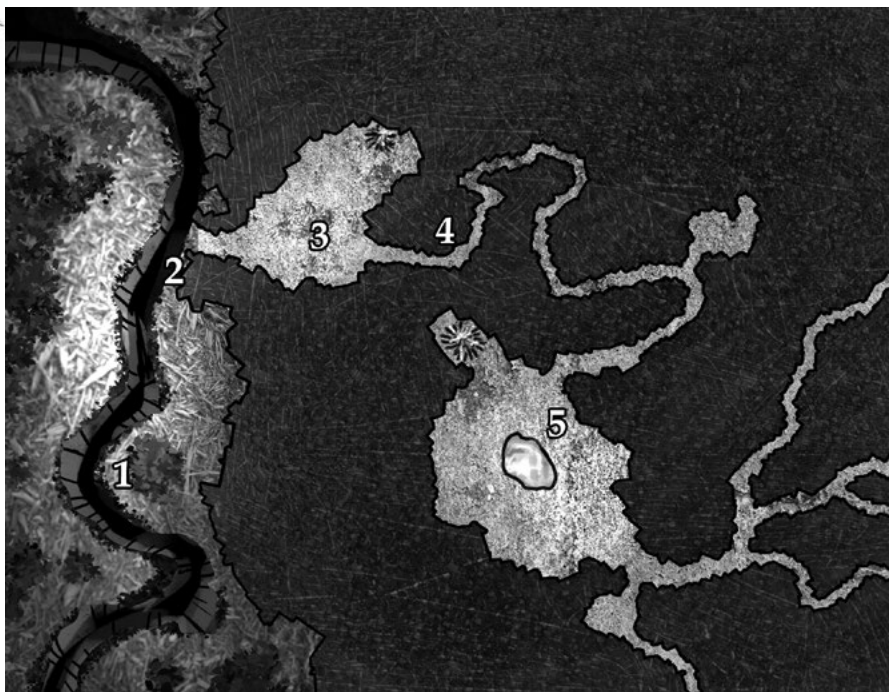
Ghuuda narrowly escaped the matricide and is set on revenge. She considered herself to be “mated” to D’Craw-uth and considered their chick together born out of mutual attraction for each other. She is enraged at the betrayal and wants to kill D’Craw-uth. The GM might have to create an intermediary between the harpy and the PCs to facilitate a cooperative truce such as an itinerant druid interested in maintaining the balance of nature, a wizard looking to study the harrows and their creation, an Everdark elf emissary seeking to capture D’Craw-uth and recovered the stolen artifact, or a local nobleman charged with keeping his subjects from being killed off by strange winged beasts. The GM should be prepared to relay certain elements from the Adventure Background section to help put the PCs on the path to neutralize D’Craw-uth and recover the Genesis Phylactery.

## Running the Adventure:

The PCs don’t need to accept help from Ghuuda for them to succeed in defeating D’Craw-uth and the harrow, but her desire for vengeance is so complete that she offers to act as a guide and fight alongside the PCs through the entirety of the adventure. If the PCs do not agree to help Ghuuda, but still attempt to defeat the Everdark elf and the harrows, she will fly some distance behind the party, follow them into the Everdark, and attack D’Craw-uth on sight. If the PCs attack or otherwise try to prevent Ghuuda from following them, she will attempt to charm members of the party with her song and compel them to help her. If that fails, Ghuuda will retreat and the PCs will have earned themselves a vicious and vindictive enemy.





**Keyed Locations:****Area 1. Slot Canyon**

The ravine is more than three miles of wandering rock and sand carved by wind, occasional heavy rain, and flash floods. While largely navigable by foot, the canyon is generally no wider than 10 feet, narrowing down to just 5 feet in many places. Walking along the canyon is not considered difficult terrain for the purposes of calculating movement rates, but it is too narrow for traditional pack animals to traverse. The walls of the ravine reach more than 100 feet high and are topped with rocky outcroppings and impassable hoodoos. The winding, maze-like nature of the ravine and frequent overhangs hinder vision and limit line of sight to no more than 30 feet. A small stream of cool, clear water trickles along the otherwise dry canyon floor.

**GM Notes:** If Ghuuda accompanies the PCs, she will lead them directly to the location of the roost. She will occasionally fly ahead, always

encouraging the party to hurry. The ravine was part of the harpy hunting grounds and is devoid of wild animals, but not without hazards. Rockfalls, landslides, falls, and flashfloods are not uncommon and may be used by the GM to add an element of danger as necessary.

## Area 2. Entrance to the Harpy Lair

The roost can be accessed by a nearly vertical climb of 30 feet. The ledge leading into the cave opening is 20 feet long and 5 feet wide. The top edge of the cliff is another 70 feet above the ledge. The sandstone is scratched and scored by the gouging talons of the harpies.

GM Notes: Ghuuda can help the party ascend the cliff face by holding a rope or gripping smaller PCs in her talons and flying them to the ledge.

## Area 3. Harpy Lair

The large natural cavern is irregularly shaped but generally 50 feet wide and just over 75 feet deep. The height of the cave reaches no more than 20 feet near the center and is only 5 feet high closer to the edges. The interior is dotted with shallow, water-filled depressions and small, stony formations. The cave smells of filth and decay from the piles of animal bones, dung, debris, and the grisly remnants of five harpies scattered randomly throughout the cavern. There is a large collection of sticks, feathers, broken shells, and dried mud in the northeast corner of the cave which is clearly a nest. In the southeast corner, a pile of rubble partially blocks a narrow passage leading down into the darkness.

### GM Notes

If the PCs explore the room, they will discover humanoid skeletons among the animal remains and 200 loose coins of various denominations. As soon as one of the PCs disturbs the area near the nest, three giant centipedes erupt from inside and attack the nearest party member. Inside the nest is an exceptionally well-crafted quarterstaff, two vials of Everdark elf poison, and a slender, silver ring threaded onto a leather thong. There is nothing else of significant value in the cavern, but there might be a market for the harpy feathers, shell fragments, or glands from the centipedes if the PCs choose to collect

them. GMs should feel free to use their favorite resource for statistics on the giant centipede, the quarterstaff, and the silver ring.

#### Area 4. Descent into the Everdark

The narrow opening in the southeast corner of the cave leads down into the earth. The tunnel is passable so long as the party travels in single file, but taller PCs will have to occasionally crouch, and all but the smallest will have to crawl in certain sections. Ghuuda is unable to fly through the passage and ambles along in staggering hops. The floor is uneven and pockmarked with tiny puddles, but footing is generally sound. Some areas are wider than others, but some are so narrow that PCs will have to squeeze through. There are no sources of natural light or ventilation. After 1,000 feet of twists and turns, the tunnel opens into a large cavern.

**GM Notes:** While there are no planned encounters or treasure to be found during the descent, the GM could present additional centipedes or introduce giant spiders to increase the challenge.

#### Area 5. D'Craw-uth's Fast

The large, natural cavern is 50 feet wide and more than 100 feet long with a roughly circular pool in the center. The ceiling is wet, and drops of clear water sprinkle down like a gentle rain. It is at least 30 feet high in most places, soaring to 50 feet in the area directly over the pool. The pool is clear and slopes gently to a depth of more than 8 feet. Even though the water is clean, the bottom of the pool is covered in a thick layer of muddy silt. The remains of several giant spiders are scattered around the cavern. In the northwest corner is what appears to be a nest made with sticks and webs. Two egg-shaped spheres covered in thin webs are in the center of the nest. At the southern end of the cavern is an entrance to a low tunnel tangled with thick webs.

**GM Notes:** As soon as the majority of the party enters the cavern, D'Craw-uth blankets the northern portion in magical darkness and fires poisoned hand crossbow bolts at the party from the shadows. The six harrows are waiting on the south side of the pool and attempt to lure the PCs through the darkness and into the water in hopes they will drown.



If the PCs are traveling with Ghuuda as a guide, she will first try to seduce D'Craw-uth with her siren song and, if that fails, attack him with her talons. If forced to face the PCs directly, D'Craw-uth will drop his crossbows and fight with two finely crafted rapiers. The harrows will attack on the wing with poisoned talons and claws. If the PCs manage to kill half of the harrows or if D'Craw-uth is reduced to less than half of his hit points, they will all try to escape through the tunnel to the south. If D'Craw-uth is killed, the harrows will fight to the death.

## Conclusion

Whether D'Craw-uth and the harrows escape or are killed, the PCs can conduct a thorough search of the cavern when the battle is over. The two eggs in the nest are slightly translucent, and a careful inspection indicates that the monsters inside have wings, humanoid torsos, and 8 spindly legs as if D'Craw-uth was trying to create another hybrid monster. The only treasures of note are two hand crossbows and 40 bolts coated with a paralytic poison. If the PCs spend an hour searching the pool, they will find a small metal shield (+2) buried in the mud. If D'Craw-uth escapes, he will have taken his valuables with him, but if he is killed, the PCs will also be able to recover a shirt of dark mail, two rapiers, a ring with an obsidian stone worth 30 gp, a vial of Everdark elf poison, and the Genesis Phylactery.

**Future Adventures:** There is a maze of tunnels leading down at various grades to the subterranean world of the Everdark, allowing the GM to build on existing campaign resources and the PCs to continue their adventures.



## Harrow

FREQUENCY: Unique (*Very rare*)

NO. APPEARING: 6

ARMOR CLASS: 7

MOVE: 6"/15"

HIT DICE: 4+4

% IN LAIR: 100%

TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*

NO. OF ATTACKS: 3

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d4/1d4/1d6

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Sing to charm*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Immune to poison*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 90% to *sleep and charm*

INTELLIGENCE: *Average*

ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic Evil*

SIZE: *M*

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

Attack/Defense Modes: *Nil*

LEVEL/EXPERIENCE 5/155+4/hp

This creature is born of evil magic—a cross between harpy and Everdark elf. Unlike the harpy, harrows are quite beautiful, with pale skin, black hair, fine features, and lithe bodies. Their eyes are dark red or black and allow the harrow to see at a distance of 60 feet even in magical darkness. The feathery wings are fully functional and harrows can fly at the same rate as their harpy kin. Harrows retain the harpy's captivating song and touch charm attack along with the Everdark elf resistances and innate magical abilities. Once per day, the harrow can use the following spell-like abilities as per the spell of the same name: *darkness*, *faerie fire*, and *dancing lights*. Harrows can also attack on the wing with two sharp talons and a melee weapon, hand crossbow, or a clawed hand. In 50% of the attacks, the harrow will have coated her talons, claws, or weapons in a strong paralytic poison (save vs. poison or be paralyzed for 1d4 rounds).

# Thoughts from the Back Room

*Lloyd Metcalf – Opinions and Ramblings*

When it comes to dark elves and 1E, it's quite clear that they weren't initially intended to be a playable race. In fact, E.G.G. seemed to discourage non-human and non-good alignment a lot in the books. Every table has homebrew rules, however, and it inevitably comes up that dark elves could be playable. The race starts to show up as possible in 2E, then certainly in later editions.

I love the books about the ranger as much as anyone, you know the ones I mean. Let's all do our GMs a favor and not choose a ranger who dual-wields scimitars and has a giant black feline companion. Instead, consider playing a more modest and unique character at your table.

Below are just a few possible suggestions for Everdark or dark elf characters that aren't a dual-sword-wielding ranger.

- An Everdark elf woman, perhaps thief or warrior class, who operates in the city as the initial contact point to an "underground railroad" that sets escapees on the road to the surface or a free deep gnome city.
- An Everdark druid (You'll need to work with your GM) that specializes in fungi, molds, and Everdark nature.
- A smooth-tongued illusionist who has mastered disguise and numbers. They excel at trade, bargaining, and negotiation. They work between house factions among the Everdark elves and as a tradesperson with other Everdark races.
- A guardsman (fighter/thief) who is desperately in need of coin to pay off a gambling debt. He always tries to extort visitors to his assigned post.

Many GMs simply refused dark elves for a long time because we knew what the forthcoming character was as soon as we said "yes" to the race. It's my suggestion to fight the temptation to min/max your character and consider what is ultimately playable with your group of friends. What



is the character that makes the best story, which is YOUR story? Not Bob's story, who wrote a great one by the way.

### Running Games in the Everdark

Dark elves need not be superpowered, high-level adventurers. As a GM, you may decide they simply have similar attributes to high elves. In the "Manual of Monsters," they are listed the same as elves (1+1 HD) but noted to be weak fighters. As a race, many players expect you as GM to fall into stride with the abilities dark elves find in 2E, 3E, and later editions, along with those in the books about the ranger (Again, you know the ones I mean). Indeed, there is an entire box set dedicated to the cities similar to the ones found in the Everdark, "Menzo-something Salvatorish...". I suggest simply pulling dark elves to a place of being simply, Everdark elves. Perhaps on their rise to power, they find the blessings of wicked goddesses to gain their powers.

Adventures in the Everdark also need not be all high-level, deadly forays. Many 1E and 2E players never get to "See" the Everdark because it is feared as much as a Tomb of Horrors. There are plenty of everyday citizens in the Everdark cities who have no access to Boots of Levitation, +3 swords, and deadly poisons. Yes, a lot of espionage, dangerous politics, and deadly creatures are out there, but a city needs its standard citizenry to get by. There are still rats in the cellar, fetch-quests, caravans that need to be guarded, and more. It's almost cheating, since political powers, interactions, and settings are in finite areas, meaning wherever you put a wall.

It's worth a try to venture into the Everdark and adventure underground for a number of extended sessions. If at any time the table seems to be growing tired of the foray, there can always be a tunnel to the surface.

Good adventuring, and always check for traps!

~ Lloyd Metcalf

# Maps

The following notes are starting points to get ideas flowing for the maps included. Feel free to change, alter, develop whatever stories you need for your game table. The maps included are not labeled, keeping them player-friendly.

## The Everdark Elf House

This relatively humble, four-room abode was awarded to the captain of the guard in service to the third house of the Everdark elven city. It is built within a column overlooking the city entrance. The backroom, his main sleeping quarters, is heavily trapped with magical wards and deadly poison as it protects his personal treasure and possessions.

## The Lost Temple

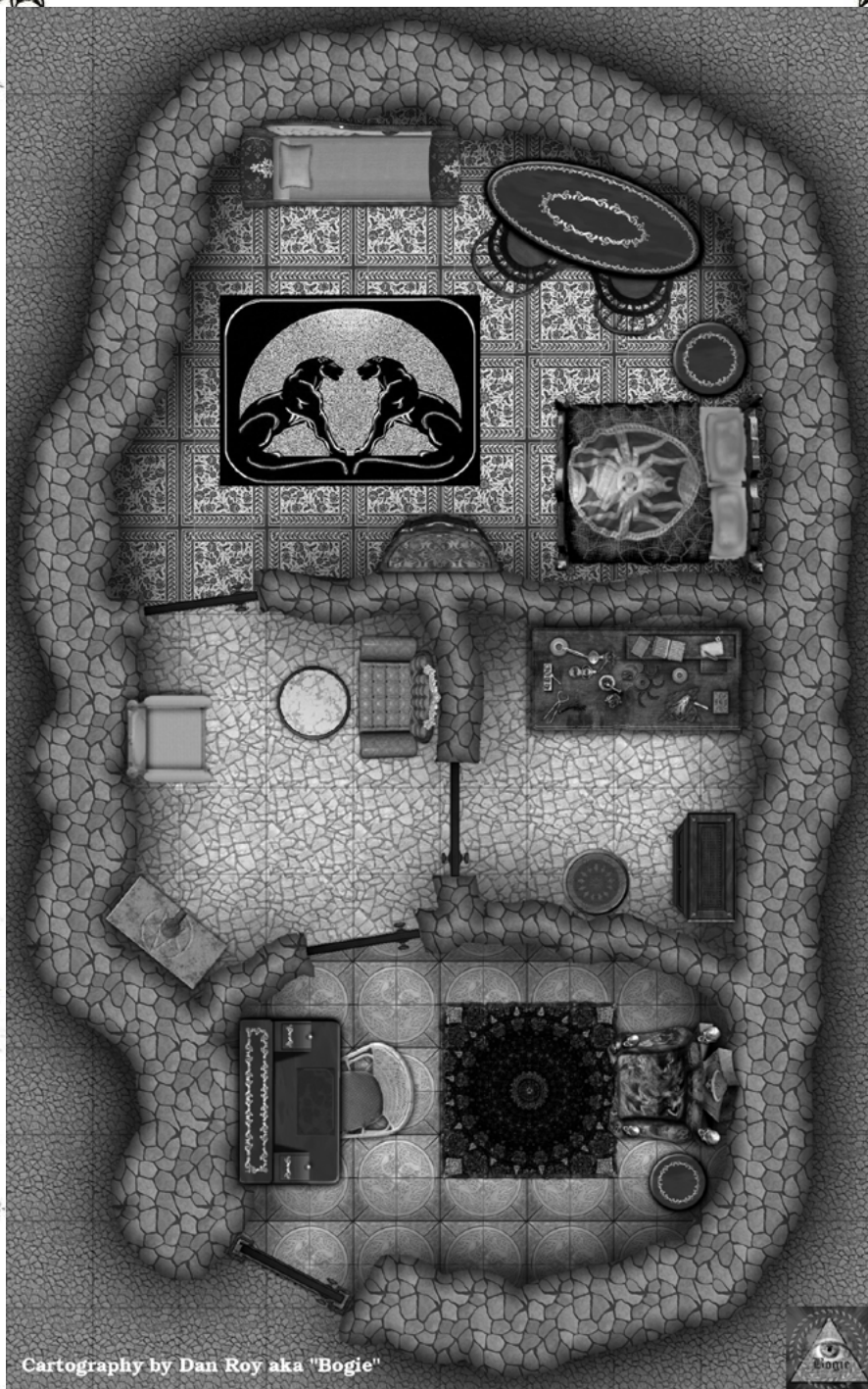
This was a temple complex built by deep dwarves hundreds of years ago. For some mysterious reason, the walls and surfaces of the entire place have grown over with a thick, jagged coat of halite (rock salt) and sandstone.

What remains are wandering wights who only vaguely recall their lives as deep dwarves and a large family of fire beetles that feed on minerals and bore through the stone and salt. The beetles create small 4' tunnels that wind aimlessly through the earth.

## Everdark City

This could be a deep gnome, Everdark elf, or other dark-dwelling city. The only way through the Everdark here is to pass directly through the center of the city. To go back and avoid the city could take weeks if you survive and don't lose your way.

A huge castle dominates the city as a ruling house across the river. Three other factions jostle for power and control, but all eyes are on the center roads watching for travelers and opportunity.

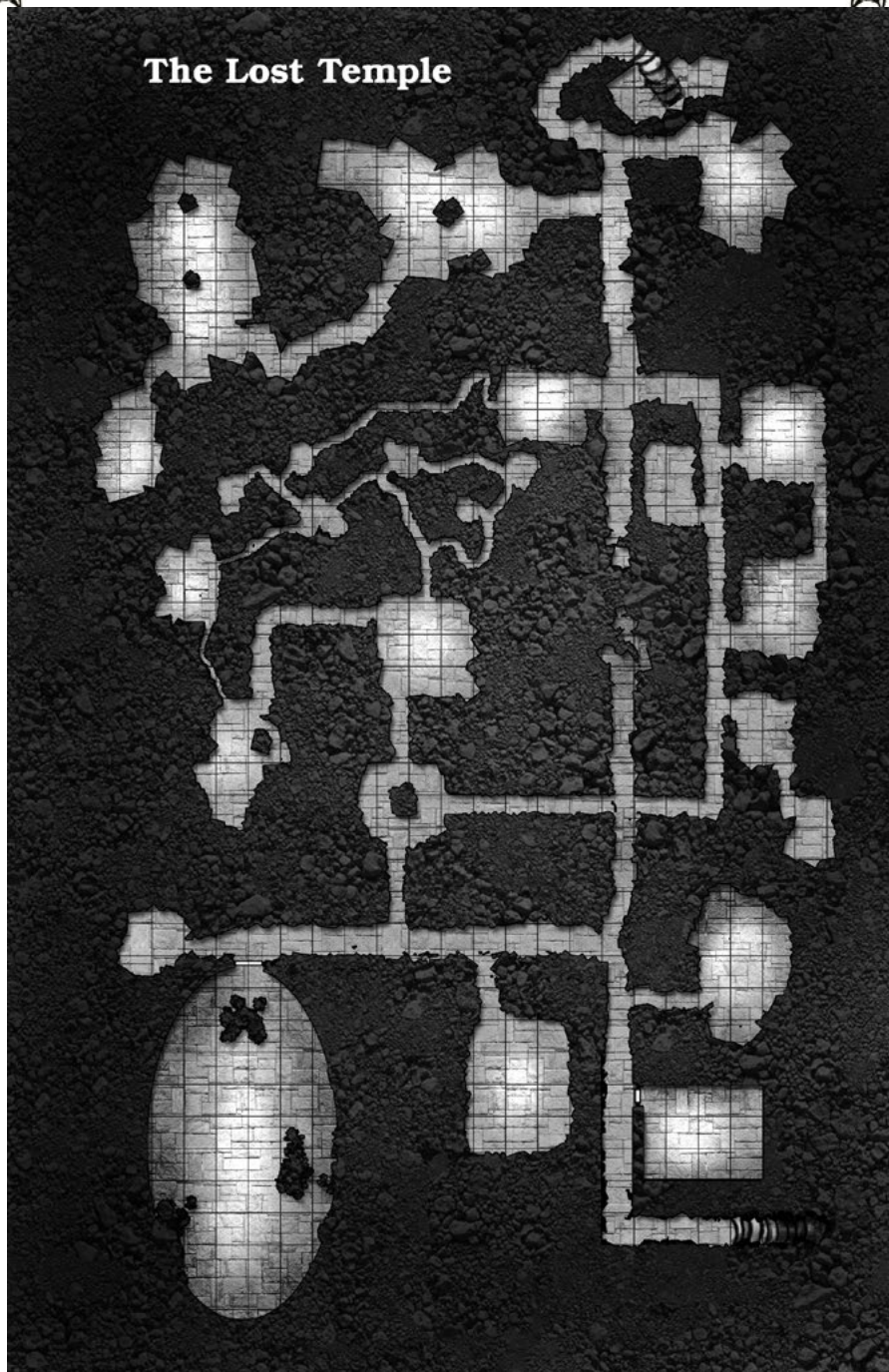


Cartography by Dan Roy aka "Bogie"





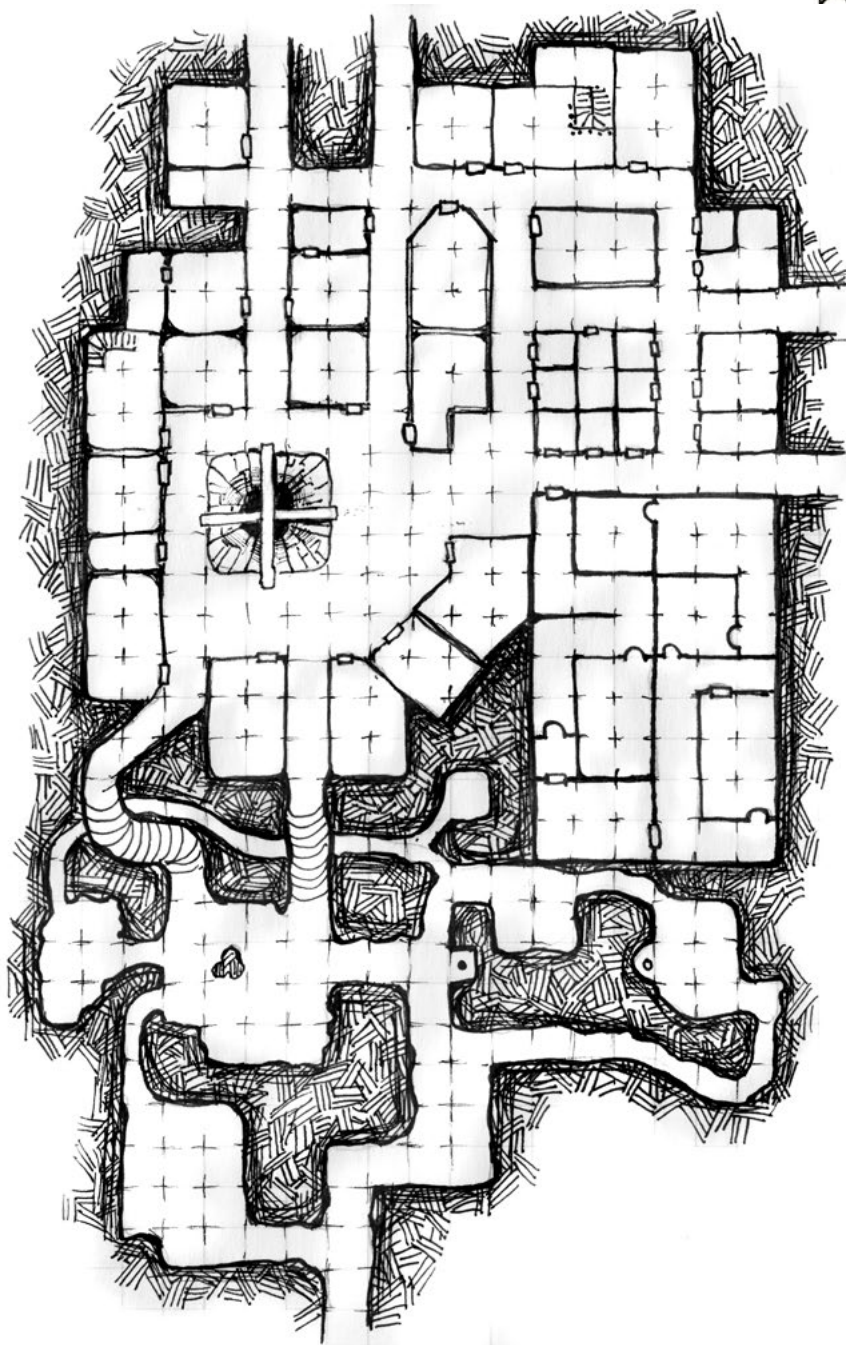
## The Lost Temple



# Everdark City









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