

VER8-05

Quisling

A One-Round Dungeons & Dragons® Living Greyhawk™ Verbobonc Regional Adventure

Version 1.0

by Ron Lundeen

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Verbobonc is only as strong as its heroes, and only as wise as its leader. When the true power behind the throne is revealed by a prophetess in the Gnarley Forest, will the PCs survive to uncover the truth? Will the truth set the Viscounty free, or topple it into chaos? A one-round Verbobonc adventure for PCs level 2-14 (APLs 4-12).

Metaorganizational Focus: Gnarley Forest (any), Company of the Black Rose, Bondsmen of House Estival

Resources for this adventure [and the authors of those works] include *Complete Warrior* [Andy Collins, David Noonan, Ed Stark], *Magic Item Compendium* [Andy Collins et al.], *Monster Manual IV* [Gwendolyn F.M. Kestrel et al.], *Races of Destiny* [David Noonan, Eric Cagle, Aaron Rosenberg], *Savage Species* [David Eckelberry, Rich Redman and Jennifer Clarke Wilkes] and *Spell Compendium* [Matthew Sernett, Jeff Grubb and Mike McArtor].

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison.

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PLAYERS READ NO FARTHER

If you are planning on playing this adventure, stop reading now. The rest of the information in this adventure is for the DM only. If you read farther than this section, you'll know too much about its challenges, which kills the fun. Also, if you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, reading beyond this point makes you ineligible to do so.

PREPARING FOR PLAY

To get the most out of this adventure, you need copies of the following D&D rule books: *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*.

Throughout this adventure, text in ***bold italics*** provides player information for you to paraphrase or read aloud when appropriate. Information on nonplayer PCs (NPCs) and monsters appear in abbreviated form in the adventure text. Refer to Appendix 1 for full information on NPCs and monsters. For your convenience, Appendix 1 is split by APL.

Along with this adventure, you'll find a RPGA Session Tracking sheet. If you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, complete and turn in this sheet to your senior GM directly after play. You'll also

find a LIVING GREYHAWK Adventure Record (AR). You need one copy of this for each participating player.

LIVING GREYHAWK LEVELS OF PLAY

Because players bring their own PCs to LIVING GREYHAWK games, this adventure's challenges are proportionate to the modified average PC level of the PCs participating in the adventure. To determine this modified Average Party Level (APL) follow the steps below:

1. Determine the PC level for each of the PCs participating in the adventure.
2. If PCs bring animals that have been trained for combat (most likely dogs trained for war), other than those brought by virtue of a class ability (such as animal companions, familiars paladin's mounts) or the warhorse of a PC with the Mounted Combat feat, use the sidebar chart to determine the number of levels you add to the sum of step one. Add each PC's animals separately. A single PC may only bring four or fewer animals of this type, and animals with different CRs are added separately.

Mundane Animals Effect on APL		# of Animals			
		1	2	3	4
CR of Animal	1/4 & 1/6	0	0	0	1
	1/3 & 1/2	0	0	1	1
	1	1	1	2	3
	2	2	3	4	5
	3	3	4	5	6
	4	4	6	7	8
	5	5	7	8	9
	6	6	8	9	10
	7	7	9	10	11

3. Sum the results of step 1 and 2, and divide by the number of PCs playing in the adventure. Round to the nearest whole number.
4. If you are running a table of six PCs, add one to that average.

Throughout this adventure, APLs categorize the level of challenge the PCs face. APLs are given in even-numbered increments. If the APL of your group falls on an odd number, ask them before the adventure begins whether they would like to play a harder or easier adventure. Based on their choice, use either the higher or the lower adjacent APL.

APL also affects the amount of experience and gold a PC can gain at the end of the adventure. If a player PC is

three PC levels or more either higher or lower than the APL at which this adventure is being played, that PC receives only one-half of the experience points and gold for the adventure. This simulates the fact that either the PC was not challenged as much as normal or relied on help by higher-level PCs to reach the objectives.

Furthermore, a PC who is four or more levels higher than the highest APL supported by the adventure may not play the adventure.

LIVING GREYHAWK adventures are designed for APL 2 and higher. Four or five 1st-level PCs may find the challenge of an APL 2 adventure difficult. Suggest the following to these groups to help increase their chances of success:

1. Enlist a sixth player.
2. Advise PCs to buy riding dogs to help protect them and fight for them.

TIME UNITS AND UPKEEP

This is a standard one-round regional adventure, set in Verbobonc. ***As of September 1, 2007, there is no Time Unit cost to play the adventure portion of this module; however, standard Time Unit costs still apply to crafting, magic item creation, performing or other non-adventure related activities or penalties. The cost for Standard Upkeep is 12 gp for PCs whose home region is located in Verbobonc, or 24 gp for out-of-region PCs. Both Rich Upkeep and Luxury Upkeep cost 75 gp regardless of home region.***

PCs that fail to pay at least Standard Upkeep will retain temporary ability damage until the next adventure, must buy new spell component pouches and healer's kits, and may suffer other in-game penalties (or possibly gain in-game benefits) as may be detailed in this adventure.

A PC that does not pay for at least Standard Upkeep may also avoid the above-described penalties by living off the wild. If the PC possesses four or more ranks in the Survival skill and succeeds at a DC 20 Survival check, the PC will heal temporary ability damage as if he or she paid for Standard Upkeep, may refill spell component pouches and healer's kits, and may restock up to 20 arrows or bolts if the PC has at least four ranks in Craft (bowmaking). The player is allowed to Take 10 on this roll.

More information about Lifestyle and Upkeep can be found in the "Lifestyle and Upkeep" section of Chapter 3 of the *Living Greyhawk Campaign Sourcebook*.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

HALMADAR'S HISTORY

Halmaradar the Cruel was a warlord who rampaged throughout the Shield Lands from 420 CY to 455 CY. Halmaradar was particularly powerful because he managed to acquire both the Hand of Vecna and the Eye of Vecna. Halmaradar was betrayed by his own lieutenants, drugged, and buried alive in a tomb in the Kron Hills, near the gnomish town of Osnabrodt.

Halmaradar did not rest easy. The wickedness of the artifacts and his own cruelty sustained him in a quasi-living state. In 581 CY, Halmaradar escaped his tomb and hatched a plot to bring Verbobonc under his control. As he was now a servitor of Vecna, god of secrets, Halmaradar gave up his former ways of warlike conquest and embraced trickery and guile. Halmaradar remains a powerful fighter, but hatched a plan worthy of a devotee of the Whispered One. This plan centered around Castle Estival, and the well of power it conceals.

HOUSE ESTIVAL

Long before Verbobonc was an independent nation, the Estival family built a great castle on the edge of the misty Iron Wood. Until recently, this castle has stood empty, vacant from the time that the Estival's Keoish allies were driven from Verbobonc. The complete history of Castle Estival and House Estival is set forth in detail in Appendix 3.

The Estivals were rumored to be demon-worshippers, necromancers, and worse. Legends tell of a vast well of power beneath the castle, a well of power whose secrets are best kept from the eyes of mortal man. For nearly 250 years, Castle Estival sat vacant, looming over Verbobonc's heartland and shunned by the locals. Still, the well of power abused by House Estival in its evil reign remains. Castle Estival squats over a great pool of Oerthblood.

THE NATURE OF OERTHBLOOD

Deep beneath the Iron Wood is a source of great power: the Oerthblood – a magical substance said to have the power to shape reality itself. Oerthblood has been reputed to have been discovered deep in Castle Greyhawk, in the foundations of Tenser's tower, and in the Caldron of Night at the end of the Causeway of Fiends in the Great Kingdom. As revealed in VER8-03 *Darkness is Unbound*, Oerthblood also manifests beneath certain key locations in Verbobonc, including a reservoir of the substance beneath the quarry along the River Road and another reservoir in the Iron Wood, protected by the druid Hermann M. The greatest pool of the substance, however, lies beneath the dungeons of Castle Estival.

The power of Oerthblood has manifested itself in various ways. In recent times, its power was used by Breyin the Moonlord to reinforce the prison binding the ancient evil known only as the Great Dire Dark. While the Great Dire Dark was eventually released from its prison, it was defeated by heroes of Verbobonc (see VER4-03 *Glory's Warriors*). But the Oerthblood remains.

It is important to point out that Oerthblood is not, of itself, inherently destructive or evil. However, the blood tends to absorb nearby evil and spawn unnatural creations (such as in VER8-03 *Darkness is Unbound* and in this adventure).

After Halmadar exhumed himself from his tomb, his latent power sensed the presence of the Oerthblood beneath Castle Estival. He chose to impersonate a scion of that lost family in order to have a 'legitimate' reason to gain entry to the castle.

A vast network of dungeons extends beneath much of the Iron Wood. Many of these dungeons extend to beneath Castle Estival as well, and remain polluted with evil from the days House Estival occupied the castle.

HALMADAR'S PLOTS

In early 596 CY, Halmadar relied upon certain foreign agents of Vecna—forgers and scholars from Keoland—in order to prepare his disguise as Wellborn Estival, the last surviving member of House Estival. Halmadar, in the guise of the Keoish merchant Wellborn Estival, returned to Verbobonc to put his plans into motion.

First, "Estival" endeared himself to the populace by providing food during a particularly harsh winter that he was able, in part, to orchestrate (see VER6-01 *Discontent of Our Winter*). "Estival" also endeared himself to local adventurers with frequent and generous monetary stipends.

Then, "Estival" engineered his ascension to the throne of Verbobonc by kidnapping Viscount Langard and secreting him away in his distant underground lair (see VER8-02 *Crypt Things*), and setting the nobles of Verbobonc against each other with violent infighting (see VER7-03 *Mourning Glory*, VER7-05 *Lion and the Dragon*, and VER7-06 *Swan and the Crow*).

Most of the recent evils at work in the Viscounty of Verbobonc are Halmadar's doing. For example, the elven warchief Rygor was revealed to be his agent, fomenting violence in the Gnarley Forest (see VER6-04 *Sign of the Black Orchid*, VER6-05 *Reclamation* and VTF8-03 *A Mother's Love*).

Although nearly thwarted by the sudden popularity of the newly-emboldened Lord Ludovic Langmuir (see VER8-01 *Mediation*), "Estival's" payoffs to local adventurers won the day: the Velunan ambassador sent to appoint the successor to the missing Viscount Langard generally chose to endorse the high-paying Estival over Lord Langmuir.

His appointment as Viscount Estival has allowed Halmadar to play his hand more openly. Under the guise of a spy named "Masquerade", Halmadar subverted the Cult of Trithereon in Verbobonc City and engineered a mass assassination of many of Verbobonc's nobles (see VER18-01 *Investiture* and its aftermath). He has incorporated the lawful military of Verbobonc into his personal and increasingly ruthless house guard, the Bondsmen of House Estival. He ordered the complete destruction of the barge-town of Darkhapor, along with all of its men, women and children (see VER8-04 *Bred in*

the Bone). He has turned Verbobonc into a fascist state in his own vice-like grip.

Although this consolidation of power would be enough to satisfy most mortal warlords, Halmadar seeks one other step: he desires to become truly immortal, a proxy to his master Vecna. Halmadar will sacrifice all of Verbobonc to fuel his own ascension. Although thwarted by Magister Obble Har in an attempt to harness the power of the Skyroads, Halmadar has now turned to the power of Oerthblood to bathe the Viscounty of Verbobonc in blood and fire and see his own rise to limitless power.

HALMADAR'S FOES

Halmadar's successes have not gone entirely as planned. Certain heroes have managed to uncover bits of his plot, free Viscount Langard from his imprisonment, and establish a paramilitary resistance to the Bondsmen called the Company of the Black Rose. Some of Halmadar's agents—such as Rygor the elven warchief and Hodgi Pepperquill the gnome forger—have been dealt with (see VTF8-03 *A Mother's Love*). Adventurers managed to save Bishop Haufren from a vile death engineered by Halmadar and his allies (see VER8-02 *Crypt Things*). Many nobles were saved from Halmadar's assassination plots by quick-acting adventurers (see VER18-01 *Investiture* and its aftermath).

A few other significant players also have taken notice of Halmadar's activities:

- Viscount Langard is doing all he can to wrest control from Viscount Estival.
- Langard's close ally, the dryad Elespeth (see VER4-09 *Wicked Three*) is receiving prophetic premonitions to thwart Halmadar's plans.
- The powerful druid Hermann M, who seems himself protector of Verbobonc's Oerthblood, has learned that someone is tapping this ancient source of power.
- Magister Har of the Wrinkle Academy foiled Halmadar's plans to usurp the power of the Skyroads, although it cost Magister Har his life (see VER7-08 *Race the Spirit's Lightning*).

THE PROPHECY

Halmadar's rise was foretold by an ancient prophecy. Certain gods of magic (including the elven goddess Hanali Celanil and the elven god Corellon Larethian) have long foreseen that a mortal may attempt to extend Vecna's reach through a prophesied ritual.

The prophecy has been mistranslated twice in the past year: once accidentally and once intentionally. First, some of the background events of VER7-08 *Race the Spirit's Lightning* arise from the fact that Wee Jas considered only a fragment of this prophecy and, as a result, misinterpreted it as applicable to Magister Har as a proxy of Boccob rather than to Halmadar as a proxy of Vecna.

Second, the prophecy fragment that Rygor (an agent of Halmadar) gave to Shannus in order to mislead him substituted “in defeating the cruel and horrible dire dark” for the last line. This was intended to—and succeeded in—spurring Lord Shannus to war against his fellow nobles in VER7-03 *Mourning Glory* and thereafter.

The prophecy in its entirety reads as follows:

*I speak this prophecy to the three,
The Ruby, the Book, and the speaker of Lies
Skilled above all in the domain of his god,
A master and servant from Oerth will arise.*

*Beware! His darkness is unbound,
and few believe he has returned.
Through his lies his guile continues,
Seizing power that'd once been spurned.*

*Knowledge is the path to his ascension,
and magic will be the key to the door.
Death will greet him and embrace him,
secrets once seen will no longer obscure.*

*For when traders fall and traitors strike,
the humbled master will grasp his role.
Then the brave at heart must stem the striving,
and keep the master from his goal.*

*So look to those who choose adventure,
heralding both from near and far.
For these brave souls will be decisive,
in defeating Halmadar.*

The prophecy warns against the rise of Halmadar as a proxy of Vecna, and that adventurers will be needed to stop him. Stopping Halmadar directly is the thrust of VER8-06 *Noble Ambitions*, but the PCs are given the knowledge to do so in this adventure.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Introduction: The PCs receive a summons from Langard, the former Viscount of Verbobonc. He beseeches the PCs to meet him in the Wandering Minnow in the town of Eglath.

Encounter 1: A Bit More Complicated. When they arrive in the town of Eglath, the PCs find that Bondsmen of Estival have massacred the townsfolk and burned many of the buildings, including the Wandering Minnow. Dire warnings indicate that the town was eradicated on the orders of Viscount Estival for harboring traitors. Viscount Langard is nowhere to be found.

Encounter 2: The Masque of Vaswell. If the PCs investigate the mansion overlooking the town of Eglath, the home of Baronet Drenton Vaswell, they find that the lord has turned a blind eye to the Eglath massacre. In fact, he is hosting a grim masquerade party and would prefer

not to discuss the issue at all. Questioning Vaswell's servants reveals more details about the attack and provides the clue that Viscount Langard is likely still alive. The PCs may also be able to get information from Vaswell himself.

Encounter 3: The Smuggler. Whether they follow clues from the town, leads from Vaswell's servants, or use magic of their own, the PCs find Viscount Langard hiding in the Gnarley Forest. Before the group can get down to business, a group of Bondsmen discovers the site and demands the arrest of the PCs and Langard. The PCs may resolve this situation through combat or diplomacy.

Encounter 4: The Prophecy Again. The Bondsmen dealt with, Langard introduces the PCs to the dryad prophetess Elespeth. Elespeth explains the Prophecy in its entirety, and asks the PCs to investigate a site of powerful evil—and powerful hope—in the Iron Wood. Elespeth agrees to transport the PCs there.

Encounter 5: Down the Hatch. The PCs investigate the dungeons beneath the Iron Wood, guided by Elespeth's prophetic visions. Several traps for the unwary await them here.

Encounter 6: The Reservoir. At the end of the underground passages, under Castle Estival, is a vast reservoir of Oerthblood that has filled the dungeons of Castle Estival. The PCs encounter the fate of Obmi the Wicked, the Hammer of Iuz. He has been transformed into an amorphous ooze monstrosity, along with several other former dungeon denizens.

Encounter 7: The Things in the Basement. Making their way upward from the dungeons, the PCs find that the basement of Castle Estival is filled with vile machines of torture and experimentation on living subjects. Two creatures of Vecna called vitreous drinkers make their lair here. If the PCs investigate the basement of Castle Estival further, they discover several onyx gems (formerly in possession of Obmi) which contain souls of Obmi's victims. One of these souls—Lady Elinor Asbury, trapped since the events of VER6-06 *Ties That Bind*—can provide the PCs with some additional clues, including the fact that Halmadar is actually Lord Estival (if the PCs have not yet pieced this together).

Encounter 8: Mustering Out. When the PCs arrive at the upper level of Castle Estival, they encounter a massive number of Bondsmen ready to mobilize to Castle Greyfist in Verbobonc City. If the PCs make themselves known, they have a massive—and likely unwinnable—fight on their hands. If they are patient and stealthy, they may gain additional information.

Conclusion: The PCs know that Lord Estival is Halmadar the Cruel, and that he is undertaking some sort of ritual at Castle Greyfist. An assault on Castle Greyfist is imminent.

PREPARATION FOR PLAY

You should find out which of the PCs have played the following adventures:

- VER3-05 *Something's Rotten in Eglath* or VER7-06 *A Bitter Pill*. These PCs have been to Eglath before and have met Baronet Drenton Vaswell.
- VER4-09 *Wicked Three*. These PCs have met Elespeth the dryad prophetess in the past. Elespeth and the PCs recognize each other in Encounter 4.
- VER5-02 *Fallen Hero*. These PCs have seen Obmi the Wicked, the dwarven assassin, before.
- VER6-05 *Reclamation*. Note whether a PC is **Marked for Death**, as this doubles the upkeep cost for this adventure.
- VER7-08 *Race the Spirit's Lightning* or VER8-03 *Darkness is Unbound*. PCs who played these adventures likely know that a prophecy regarding the rise of a proxy of Vecna and the heroes' role in stopping it already, but their knowledge is incomplete until Encounter 4.
- VER8-02 *Crypt Things*. Note whether these PCs have the **Secret** that indicates that they freed Viscount Langard; if so, he is exceptionally grateful to them still.
- VER8-03 *Darkness Is Unbound*. These PCs are aware of the Oerthblood beneath the Viscounty. Note whether any of these PCs were **Exposed to Oerthblood**, as this is a factor in Encounter 6.
- VER8-04 *Bred in the Bone*. PCs that are **Wanted!** receive an additional missive from the Company of the Black Rose in the Introduction.

You should also find out whether any of the PCs are members of the following meta-organizations:

- Bondsmen of House Estival (pertinent in the Introduction)
- Company of the Black Rose (pertinent in the Introduction)
- Former members of the Church of Trithereon (which no longer exists; pertinent in the Introduction)
- Gnarley Meta-Organization (any) (pertinent in Encounter 1)
- The Family (pertinent in Encounter 2)
- Any follower of Olidammara (pertinent in Encounter 2)

Finally, you should request a card from each player with the PC's Fortitude, Reflex and Will saves, as well as their Listen, Spot, and Sense Motive modifiers. The only important elements of this card are the Will save and Listen modifiers, which are used in Encounter 5. If you are in the habit of using initiative cards, this is a good place for this information.

A NOTE TO THE DM: VILLAINS

For quite a while, we authors of the Verbobonc regional adventures have done our best to obscure who may be the "good guys" or the "bad guys" in our region.

That time is now past.

It is important that the true villains of the Verbobonc storyline (Viscount "Estival" and his Bondsmen) be portrayed as truly villainous. Although the PCs do not learn that Viscount Estival is actually Halmadar the Cruel until near the end of this adventure, it should be abundantly clear to them that Viscount Estival has become a tyrant, and his Bondsmen are ruthless and violent thugs that revel in the authority their evil liege provides them. We have tried to hint that this is the case in the past few months, but some DMs (and some players) have yet to take the hint.

Some players may still be playing Bondsmen of Estival, and a rare few may still think that Viscount Estival is a good and strong ruler of Verbobonc. Part of your job is to disabuse them of these notions. It should be clear, by the end of this adventure, that to side with Estival and the Bondsmen is to side with evil.

We've tried to do a lot of this for you in this adventure: the Bondsmen massacre innocent and hardworking townsfolk; Viscount Estival keeps evil monsters and stolen souls in his own castle. Let these villains be truly villainous, and don't sugar-coat or justify their actions. Nor should you let the PCs (particularly Bondsmen PCs) do the same. Furthermore, Bondsmen PCs are betrayed early in this adventure, and this betrayal should truly sting.

On the other hand, the good NPCs in this adventure are truly good. Viscount Langard is and has been the true leader of Verbobonc. Although a smuggler in his past, Langard is a noble and heroic leader. Elespeth the dryad loves him dearly; although in the grip of a prophecy she does not understand, she is fundamentally benevolent and should be portrayed as such.

INTRODUCTION

Each of the PCs receives a copy of **Player Handout 1: The Summons**.

PCs that are Bondsmen of House Estival (which includes former members of the Mounted Borderers or Gentlemen of the Watch that chose to be converted to Bondsmen of House Estival rather than muster out of their stations) also receive **Player Handout 2** in secret.

PCs that are **Wanted!** from VER8-04 *Bred in the Bone*, that were formerly members of the Church of Trithereon

meta-org, or that are members of the Company of the Black Rose also receive **Player Handout 3** in secret.

The PCs have all met each other on the River Road to Eglath from Verbobonc City and, finding a common destination, are traveling together. You should have the players introduce their PCs to each other at this time.

You can also give the players **DM Map 1**, which details the Viscounty of Verbobonc at the present time.

1: A BIT MORE COMPLICATED

In this Encounter, the PCs find that the town of Eglath has been occupied by the Bondsmen of House Estival, and learn that Langard is nowhere to be found. In fact, the attack was early, and Langard had not yet arrived for the rendezvous.

About Eglath (from *The Journal of the Wanderer*): The small, poor community of Eglath is near the manor of Lord Vaswell. Lord Vaswell shows very little interest in the generous and hardworking people of Eglath, who mostly keep to themselves. An alchemist named Dallerond is the elder of Eglath, and the townspeople look to him for guidance. Despite the callous treatment the people of Eglath receive from their lord, they are proud and happy to work for such an influential noble. The residents of Eglath are mostly human, but two halfling families live here, as well. One of them runs the local inn, named the Wandering Minnow.

What Happened Here: Several dozen Bondsmen of House Estival were dispatched to Eglath by Viscount Estival with orders to capture any half-elves (Estival did not name Langard's name in the order, fearing that Langard would be warned by traitorous elements within the Bondsmen), and destroy the town and its citizens. Estival had arranged this decree and, with perverse glee, forced Baronet Drenton Vaswell to witness the proclamation. The loyal Bondsmen destroyed the town and posted Viscount Estival's decree, but did not find any half-elves in the town. They returned to Viscount Estival to report their success; the enraged Viscount Estival is even now sending an elite team of Bondsmen to the site to capture Langard (they meet up with Langard and the PCs in Encounter 3).

When the PCs arrive in Eglath, read:

As you make your way northeast on the River Road, your first hints of the town of Eglath are plumes of greasy smoke on the horizon and a carrion smell on the wind.

As the PCs arrive closer (after making any preparations they would like), read:

The small town of Eglath is a ruin. All of the buildings have sustained fire damage and many of the

buildings have been burned to the ground. Hastily-erected gallows have been nailed to overturned wagons, and many townspeople hang for the carrion birds to pick at. A veritable army of ravens perch about the town in silent vigil. Several other bodies lie sprawled in the street, victims of violence. A neatly-printed sign has been tacked to a post just outside of town.

Give the PCs **Player Handout 4** if they examine the sign.

As the sign indicates, Viscount Estival has decreed that the town of Eglath was to be destroyed for potentially harboring Langard, whom Estival perceives as a traitor to his title and a threat to his rule. A similar purge of the town of Dark'hapor occurred at the end of VER8-04 *Bred in the Bone*, which the PCs may have witnessed or prevented.

Any investigation of the area reveals the following. Any successful check also reveals all the items from all lower DCs of that same skill check.

- **DC 10 Search or Survival:** Several dozen individuals were responsible for the slaughter of this town.
- **DC 12 Search or Survival:** The attackers came and left by the river; it's clear that two large ships pulled up, disgorged the attackers, and the attackers returned to the ships once their grim work was done.
- **DC 12 Spot:** There is a manor house set up on a hill a few minutes' walk outside of town. It was not touched by the marauders. A DC 15 Knowledge (local: VTF) or DC 10 Knowledge (nobility and royalty) reveals that this manor house belongs to Baronet Drenton Vaswell, the local lord. If either check exceeds a DC 20, then indicate that Baronet Drenton Vaswell is known to be an irresponsible playboy who doesn't care about the commoners on his lands. If either check exceeds a DC 30, indicate that Vaswell is rumored to be a follower of Olidammara.
- **DC 15 Search or Survival:** The people that performed this massacre killed many of the townspeople from behind or while they were in hiding, sparing no one they came across.
- **DC 15 Heal or DC 20 Search:** This attack occurred earlier today, but at least three or four hours ago.
- **DC 15 Knowledge (nature) or DC 25 Spot:** Many of the ravens perched around town are not natural creatures. They are incorporeal, shadowy versions of actual ravens. (In fact, they are spectral ravens of the vitreous drinkers in Encounter 7, but the PCs have no way to know this.) These birds are incorporeal creatures that do not attack or affect the material world in any way. They are AC 15 and have 5 hit points each. There are 16 ravens here (8 from each vitreous

drinker). See the Appendix 1 entry for vitreous drinkers for further information about these ravens, which are keeping an eye out for Langard and other noteworthy visitors (like the PCs).

- **DC 18 Search:** The PCs find the remains of the Wandering Minnow, which has mostly burned to the ground. A DC 30 Search or Survival check reveals that there was no one in the inn other than its halfling owners when the attack occurred. Unfortunately, the halfling family that owned the Wandering Minnow have their heads affixed to a longspire out in front of the ruin. If asked (via *Speak with Dead* or similar), they reveal that they expected Langard to meet some heroes later in the day, but the attack occurred before either Langard or the heroes ever arrived.
- **DC 20 Search:** Any valuables (such as coins, quality goods, or even fresh fruit and vegetables) were taken or destroyed by the marauders.
- **DC 23 Search:** One of the victims tore a tabard from one of the attackers. It is a Bondsmen of House Estival tabard.
- **DC 27 Search:** Some of the townspeople fled toward the nearby Gnarley Forest, but were shot with arrows before they could get far.
- **DC 30 Search or Survival:** A few of the townspeople survived the attack and made their way to the manor up on the hill.
- **DC 42 Survival:** The PC identifies the tracks of a lone elf or half-elf, skilled in woodcraft that examined the town after it was destroyed. This elf was particularly good at disguising his tracks. These are the tracks of Viscount Langard, and they can be followed back to his hunter's blind in Encounter 3.

Where To Next?

If the PCs speculate that Langard may be hiding in the area, you should inform members of a Gnarley Forest meta-org (and only members of such a meta-org) that they are familiar with a few hiding spots in the area. If the PCs elect to search out these hiding spots, they shortly discover the hunting blind where Langard is currently hiding; go right to Encounter 3.

Most parties, however, must investigate the manor house to pick up Langard's trail. Proceed to Encounter 2.

2: THE MASQUE OF VASWELL

If the PCs investigate the mansion overlooking the town of Eglath, read the following:

The manor house of Baronet Drenton Vaswell is an ornate affair overlooking the ruin of Eglath. Although recent improvements have been made to fortify the manor house, the doors and windows of the manor

house are open wide. A string quartet plays loudly within, not quite overshadowing the murmur of conversation. As strange as it seems on this grim day, it sounds like a party is in full swing.

In fact, the party is a masque. Even the servants are required to wear featureless black masks today.

Some of the incorporeal ravens also fly around the manor house, although they stay well out of reach of the PCs if possible. They are here to report on the comings and goings of Vaswell's gentlemen and ladies, not the PCs.

PCs approaching the manor are intercepted by a few of the House Vaswell guards, who also wear narrow black masks (like the Lone Ranger). They ask the PCs to state their business. The guards are clearly disturbed by the gruesome sight of the town and just avoid looking that way.

A few questions that the PCs may ask, and the Diplomacy or Bluff check required to learn them from the guards or servants, are as follows (on a failure, the PCs receive a warning to be on their way).

- The guards and servants are visibly afraid of Bondsmen of House Estival, if any are in the party. This provides a -10 penalty to all social interaction checks in this encounter. However, the guards and servants have heard of the Company of the Black Rose and think well of them; CBR members receive a +2 circumstance bonus on all social interaction checks in this encounter.
- **Why is there a party here? Can't you see that the entire town was just murdered?** DC 10: Yes, and this should rightly be a day of mourning. But Lord Vaswell called for a celebration instead, and commanded all of his nearby gentlemen and ladies to attend. Not any from the town, though: they're all dead.
- **Who attacked the town of Eglath?** DC 12: It was Bondsmen of House Estival. They attacked earlier today. There were dozens of them. They just butchered the townsfolk, even those trying to flee. They hung several of them, burned much of the town, and posted some signs. We don't know why, or what the signs say. We don't want to get close enough to look.
- **Did you participate in the attack?** DC 15: No, I would've been killed by the Bondsmen! Lord Vaswell instructed his servants and his guard to stay inside the manor. We weren't allowed to intervene. My friend Tomak spoke out against Lord Vaswell's orders and insisted that Lord Vaswell intervene—I think Tomak had a girlfriend in town. Lord Vaswell sighed and told Tomak he was released from House Vaswell's service. Tomak ran down to the town, but he was killed by the Bondsmen.

- **Are there any survivors here?** DC 20: Yes, a few made it safely to the manor house. We've done our best to give them masks and pretend that they were servants here all along. We don't know what Lord Vaswell would think about this, so we just haven't told him that we've done it.
- **Can I come into the party?** DC 20: I don't have any orders to keep anyone out, so I suppose so. I can let you in, but you'll need a mask or everyone will just ignore you. I can get you a simple one, if you'd like. **Note:** any PC attending the party may make a Gather Information check among the party guests, servants and guards inside the manor, which gets them all of the information on this list up to the total of their Gather Information check (that is, if the Gather Information check is an 18, they get the first three answers above).
- **Can I talk to Lord Vaswell?** DC 20: Only if he so desires. I don't have any orders to keep anyone out, so I can let you in. You'll need a mask or everyone will just ignore you. I can get you a simple one, if you'd like. **Note:** any PC attending the party may make a DC 20 Spot, Gather Information or Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check to identify the masked Lord Vaswell. If they approach him, go to **Talking with Vaswell**, below, to resolve this conversation.
- **Did Lord Vaswell know about the attack ahead of time?** DC 25: Yes, I think so. Lord Vaswell received a small group of people yesterday—probably Bondsmen. They didn't stay long, and I don't know what they talked about, although Lord Vaswell was visibly disturbed after they left. He immediately commissioned this party and told all of his servants and guards that they were not to leave the manor house under any circumstances for the next few days.
- **Is Langard here?** DC 30: If the PCs fail, the guard or servant shakes his head and says curiously, "Langard? The vanished Viscount? No, why would he be here?" A DC 20 Sense Motive shows that the person knows more than they are letting on. On a subsequent DC 30 Diplomacy or Bluff check, the guard/servant tells the PC that he/she had heard that Langard was free, and would be meeting some heroes at the Wandering Minnow in town. The attack happened well in advance of the meeting, so Langard had not arrived in town yet. Langard is likely still alive, somewhere nearby in the Gnarley Forest. If the servant or guard can be convinced of the PCs' good intentions to Langard (a separate DC 35 Diplomacy check, or DC 10 if **Player Handout 1** is presented), the servant finds out where Langard is hiding (by

asking around the other servants who knew him better) and tells the PCs of Langard's location in the Gnarley Forest. This allows the PCs to go to Encounter 3.

If the PCs gain admittance to the party, read the following:

The party in Baronet Vaswell's manor house is loud, but there is a distinctly uncomfortable undertone. People laugh a bit too loudly and conversations are pitched a bit too high. Although the windows and doors of the manor are thrown open to let in the light and air, the windows on the side of the manor house overlooking Eglath are all closed and shuttered, with heavy drapes drawn to further obscure the view of the dead town.

It seems that in addition to various well-to-do gentlemen, merchants and ladies—most from the nearby town of Taymouth—there are several servants and common folk here as well. All wear masks, from the simple to the elaborate. It as though Vaswell was more interested in packing his manor with people, rather than being discreet or careful regarding who was invited.

As a result of the sudden nature of the party and the eclectic mixture of the guests, the PCs do not seem out of place even in armor or sporting weapons. The only way they seem dramatically out of place is if they are not wearing some kind of mask.

If you'd like, you can describe how a few of the incorporeal ravens sit outside the manor house on fences or other high places, watching the goings-on inside. Use the eerie ravens to play up the strange nature of this macabre party.

Development: Talking to Vaswell. If the PCs are able to approach Baronet Vaswell (if they gain admittance to the masque, wear a mask, and succeed at the DC 20 Spot, Gather Information or Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check to identify the masked Lord Vaswell), then Vaswell makes himself available to talk to them for a few moments before being drawn away by other guests.

You can show the PCs the illustration of Baronet Vaswell in Appendix 4: Illustrations. Vaswell is also wearing a fashionable white mask with a delicate scale pattern.

The following points should guide conversations the PCs have with Baronet Vaswell:

- Vaswell knows most members of the Family, as well as most worshippers of Olidammara, on sight. Vaswell is more kindly—and tends to be more open—to such PCs.
- **Vaswell's Tortured Soul.** Vaswell is a tortured man; he is Neutral, but he is becoming increasingly uncomfortable with Viscount

Estival's draconian policies. Estival's destruction of Eglath is a blow to Vaswell, but Vaswell is a very practical man who realizes there is little he can do except to knuckle under to the Viscount.

- **Vaswell's Attitude About Eglath.** Although Vaswell thinks little of peasants under his rule, he took no joy in the destruction of Eglath. In fact, the destruction of the town disturbs him deeply.
- **Vaswell's Juvenile Response.** In order to smother his shame and depression, Vaswell has thrown himself into his parties and pretends to be unaffected by everything. He tends to chatter incessantly and irreverently about wines, sordid affairs, and similarly inane topics. Vaswell is likely to change subjects mid-sentence if he feels he may touch upon the recent events that torture him so. He is depressed, manic, and angsty.
- **Tell Us About Eglath:** Baronet Vaswell initially feigns ignorance about the destruction of Eglath. A DC 15 Sense Motive check reveals that he is uncomfortable with the topic and does not want to discuss it further. He so distraught over the slaughter of his people that he has retreated into a shell of parlor games and iced drinks.
- **No, We Insist. Tell Us About Eglath.** If the PCs press him, he admits that Viscount Estival came to him yesterday and demanded that he sign the order for the destruction of Eglath. Although Vaswell initially refused, Viscount Estival hinted that Vaswell may meet the fate of some of the other nobles (those assassinated in the events of *VERI8-or Investiture*) if he did not comply. Grudgingly, Vaswell signed the edict to destroy his town.
- **Why would Viscount Estival Want Eglath Destroyed?** Vaswell admits that he has been known to trade with the Gnarley elves, even against strict edicts to do so. Vaswell also hints that he has been known to provide aid to "a certain *persona non grata* making his home in the nearby woods."
- **Tell Us About Langard:** Vaswell is more forthcoming if asked about Langard directly. Vaswell in fact knows quite a bit about the deposed viscount—Vaswell is much more shrewd than he appears and his information network is surprisingly discreet. Vaswell knows that the Bondsmen were probably supposed to capture Langard, but they messed up the operation by showing up too early and attacking the town right away. Vaswell knows that Langard wasn't in town during the attack, and is likely gone to ground by now.
- **Did You Tell Estival About Langard?** Vaswell knew Langard was in the area yesterday when Viscount Estival paid him a visit. However, as

Estival didn't ask Vaswell directly about Langard, Vaswell didn't offer to tell him anything. Vaswell assumes that Estival already knew all about Langard's "secret" meeting, or he wouldn't have sent in the Bondsmen today.

- **Where is Langard Now?** Vaswell has a few guesses about where Langard might be, but suspects he's in an old hunter's blind a few miles into the Gnarley Forest (as it turns out, he's correct). Baronet Vaswell gives this information to the PCs if they ask, sighing "I don't see that it does anyone any good or harm in telling you. I don't see that anything can come from anything anymore."

Where To Next?

Once the PCs are done roleplaying at Vaswell's manor, they can return to Eglath (Encounter 1) or find Langard (Encounter 3).

3: THE SMUGGLER

This Encounter details the PC's discovery of Viscount Langard. Unfortunately, Bondsmen of House Estival have discovered the former Viscount as well.

Langard is currently hiding in the Gnarley Forest two miles from Eglath. He is currently encamped in a hunter's blind that he used in his smuggler days many years ago (before he became Viscount).

There are several ways for the PCs to reach this encounter. High-level parties may have magic (such as *locate creature* or *discern location*) that helps them locate Langard. The PCs may have also received directions from Vaswell's guards or servants in Encounter 2, or from Baronet Vaswell himself.

As the PCs travel through the Gnarley Forest, two of the incorporeal ravens attempt to follow them (one from each vitreous drinker). The PCs notice the ravens with a DC 25 Spot check or a DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check. Regardless of whether the PCs destroy the ravens, the Bondsmen of Estival have already located Langard with a *discern location* spell.

The hunter's blind where Langard is encamped is very difficult to find. The PCs know the area, but only locate the blind itself with a DC 35 Spot check. When the PCs approach the area, whether or not they find the blind, read:

A thin, blond half-elf steps suddenly from a well-concealed spot in the brush. "Thank the gods you were clever enough to find me! That villainous Estival will pay for what he's done to the good people of Eglath. I have someone very important for you to meet, and a very important task for you to undertake."

Show the PCs the illustration of Viscount Langard in Appendix 4: Illustrations, and move right to the following event:

With sudden shouts, four people drop into your midst, all dressed in the tabards of Bondsmen of House Estival. Only one wears armor, a scarred woman with milky-white cataracts. The woman speaks: "You are under arrest, traitor, and the rest of you are under arrest for consorting with a traitor. Down on the ground, hands on your head, immediately."

To any Bondsmen of House Estival, she spits, "And you...you are a disgrace. Conniving with this lot. The Viscount himself warned us of your treachery, and personally ordered your arrest for treason. I hope that you, most of all, resist arrest." On a DC 10 Sense Motive, the PC Bondsman realizes that he has been betrayed by Viscount Estival.

The Bondsmen have arrived via a *wind walk* spell they received from an allied cleric. The spell was dismissed at a prearranged time while the Bondsmen were high above the Gnarley Forest (and out of sight of the PCs). The Bondsmen then used *potions of feather fall* to land. Since the Bondsmen only crash through the treeline above just before they land, the PCs are quite unlikely to notice the Bondsmen before they have landed.

Although the Bondsmen are more than happy to fight, discussion is still an option. The Bondsmen are not expecting Langard to be with such powerful resistance. However, they are very interested in catching Langard, a known traitor.

The PCs' options are generally one of three types:

Here's the Guy: Some parties may elect to give up Langard to the Bondsmen. If so, Langard tries to retreat to his blind, but is intercepted and grappled by the Bondsmen. Langard begs the PCs to help him, protesting that the tyranny of Estival must be stopped. This only enrages the Bondsmen, who do not suffer such language. They knock Langard unconscious, and one of the Bondsmen leaves with him. Once Langard is away, the remaining Bondsmen demand that the PCs surrender. They are also knocked unconscious and, assuming that they submit to this, are eventually executed (while still unconscious). As their remains are completely destroyed, the PCs are likely unrecoverable.

You Don't Want to Fight Us: The PCs may attempt to defuse the situation with the Bondsmen. Although Diplomacy is unlikely to work (the Bondsmen are Hostile, and must be made Friendly in order to agree to leave Langard with the PCs...for now), an Intimidate or Bluff (letting Langard go puts the Bondsmen "at significant risk") may succeed in getting the Bondsmen to back down. Bondsmen that back down insist that they do

report to the Viscount, a prospect that takes them at least a day of travel. By then, the PCs can be long gone from here.

Throw Down: If the PCs start a fight, cast any spell, or draw any weapon, go right to initiative.

All APLs

Viscount Langard, male human Rog4/Ari4/Rgr2: AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 deflection); hp 68; NG; Spot +12, Sense Motive +12. Langard ducks back into his hunter's blind if a fight breaks out, and the Bondsmen are unlikely to find it right away. The blind provides Langard with total cover.

APL 4 (EL 6)

Bondsman of House Estival: male human Monk 2/Fighter 2; hp 33; Appendix 1.

Bondsman Priestess: female human Cleric 5; hp 48, Appendix 1.

APL 6 (EL 8)

Bondsmen of House Estival (3): male human Monk 2/Fighter 2; hp 33 each; Appendix 1.

Bondsman Priestess: female human Cleric 5; hp 48, Appendix 1.

APL 8 (EL 10)

Bondsmen of House Estival (3): male human Monk 4/Fighter 2; hp 47 each; Appendix 1.

Bondsman Priestess: female human Cleric 5/Divine Oracle 2; hp 64, Appendix 1.

APL 10 (EL 12)

Bondsmen of House Estival (3): male human Monk 4/Fighter 4; hp 63 each; Appendix 1.

Bondsman Priestess: female human Cleric 6/Divine Oracle 3; hp 81, Appendix 1.

APL 12 (EL 14)

Bondsmen of House Estival (3): male human Monk 4/Fighter 4/Drunken Master 2; hp 87 each; Appendix 1.

Bondsman Priestess: female human Cleric 6/Divine Oracle 4/Contemplative of Vecna 1; hp 107, Appendix 1.

Tactics: At most APLs, the Bondsman Priestess has already cast several preparatory spells on herself and on the Bondsmen. The Bondsmen fight with their fists, using flurry of blows when possible. They can also use their Sun School feat along with their *anklet of translocation* to gain an extra attack. The Bondsman Priestess uses debilitating spells against the PCs, but uses her other abilities (such as *delay death* and the Destiny domain ability) to aid her companions. She liberally uses charges from her *ring of mystic healing* to heal her Bondsman companions.

Treasure: Defeat and loot the Bondsmen.

APL 4: Loot 162 gp; Magic 178 gp; *cloak of elemental protection* (2) (83 gp each), *potion of cure light wounds* (2) (4 gp each), *potion of mage armor* (4 gp); Total 343 gp.

APL 6: Loot 164 gp; Magic 360 gp; *cloak of elemental protection* (4) (83 gp each), *potion of cure light wounds* (4) (4 gp each), *potion of mage armor* (3) (4 gp each); Total 524 gp.

APL 8: Loot 26 gp; Magic 928 gp; *+1 full plate* (220 gp), *anklet of translocation* (3) (116 gp each), *cloak of elemental protection* (4) (83 gp each), *potion of cure light wounds* (4) (4 gp each), *potion of mage armor* (3) (4 gp each); Total 954 gp.

APL 10: Loot 26 gp; Magic 928 gp; *+1 full plate* (220 gp), *ring of mystic healing* (291 gp), *anklet of translocation* (3) (116 gp each), *cloak of elemental protection* (4) (83 gp each), *potion of cure light wounds* (4) (4 gp each), *potion of mage armor* (3) (4 gp each); Total 954 gp.

APL 12: Loot 28 gp; Magic 1,261 gp; *+1 full plate* (220 gp), *periapt of wisdom +2* (333 gp), *ring of mystic healing* (291 gp), *anklet of translocation* (3) (116 gp each), *cloak of elemental protection* (4) (83 gp each), *potion of cure light wounds* (4) (4 gp each), *potion of mage armor* (3) (4 gp each); Total 1,289 gp.

Development: Dealing with Survivors. If any of the Bondsmen survive this fight, Langard urges mercy. Rather than have them killed, he would prefer to see them left unconscious to recover on their own instead (although stripped of their worldly possessions and left tied up is entirely acceptable to him).

Where To Next?

Once the Bondsmen have been dealt with in one way or another, Langard thanks the PCs. Go to Encounter 4.

4: THE PROPHECY AGAIN

Once the PCs are free to discuss further with Langard, he explains to them the following while leading them through the Gnarley Forest:

"In my time in exile here in the Gnarley Forest, I've been able reconnect with some old friends. One of them is a dryad named Elespeth. She is innocent in the ways of the world, as are most fey creatures."

A DC 20 Sense Motive reveals that Langard has great affection for the dryad Elespeth. Note that PCs who have played VER4-09 *Wicked Three* have met Elespeth in the past. If these PCs have a "kissing history" with Elespeth, Langard knows about them; however, Elespeth's heart belongs to Langard, and Langard knows this. He does not bear any hard feelings to Elespeth's former paramours.

Langard continues:

"Elespeth is connected to the Viscounty in ways even I do not truly comprehend. In times of great need, she is...afflicted...with powers of prophecy. These

powers give her rhymes and show her visions that she does not understand and, frankly, scare her.

"A few weeks ago, Elespeth was overcome with a powerful prophecy. I was interested in overthrowing my rival, Viscount Estival, but Elespeth has latched on to an even more insidious evil. My captor, Halmadar the Cruel, devotee of Vecna, is working plots as yet unknown in the Viscounty. Elespeth has been stricken with a prophecy about how Halmadar is to be defeated. This prophecy is quite old, I understand, and incomplete parts of it are already known. Furthermore, Halmadar learned of this prophecy some time ago and has twisted it to serve his own ends. Elespeth has the true version of the prophecy, sent to her by whatever forces watch over the Viscounty in times of need.

"I'd like you to hear it, and decide if you would act upon it."

Langard answers any questions that the PCs have. He has heard the prophecy, but he doesn't remember it word-for-word and prefers that the PCs hear it from Elespeth directly. If asked about Viscount Estival, Langard sighs and says: *"Viscount Estival is a tyrant and an evil man; I hope someday soon that the good people of Verbobonc see him for the treacherous villain he is. But today, it seems, is not that day. It is Halmadar the Cruel that we ask you to hunt today. Perhaps the two villains are working together, and by confronting one, we can topple the other."*

This should make sense to the PCs, particularly as Halmadar is a devotee of Vecna, as is the Bondsman Priestess that just confronted the party.

Once the PCs and Langard arrive at a massive oak tree, Elespeth the dryad steps forth. Show the PCs the illustration of Elespeth in Appendix 4: Illustrations.

As the dryad steps forth from the tree, she starts speaking. The words falling from her mouth seem independent of the dryad's will, as though they have a life of their own and the dryad is merely the mouthpiece.

Give the PCs **Player Handout 5: The Prophecy**. Both Langard and Elespeth believe that the PCs are the adventurers indicated in the last stanza of the prophecy.

Once the prophecy has been spoken, Elespeth comes more to her senses. She can repeat the entire prophesy any time she is prompted with the first few words, "I speak..."

Elespeth is an innocent, naive fey creature. However, she understands the seriousness of the prophecy and the importance of finding heroes to agree to follow her

visions. Roleplay her as a simple child of the forest, an unwilling pawn of a prophecy more powerful than she is.

If the PCs agree to help, Elespeth says:

"My visions are jumbled, but I know that Halmadar is fueled by secrets the way secrets fuel a fire. There is an important place of secrets far from here, secrets that Halmadar wants to keep hidden. The way is secret, too, but I can start you on your way. The secrets must be uncovered, and brought to light, if you are willing."

Assuming the PCs agree, Elespeth explains:

"My visions show me that there is another great forest on the far side of this land. Langard calls it the Iron Wood, once an evil place but now free. I have the power to take you there, but I cannot stay long: to be so far from my tree makes me scared and sick. Please, hold my hands."

Elespeth has been given the ability to *transport via plants* twice (CL 20th) by the power of the prophecy (one trip out, and one trip back). She can take up to six passengers with her, but Large creatures count as two passengers. If there is space available, Langard also comes along. Otherwise, he gives Elespeth a hug, wishes the PCs good luck and asks them to return to him once they have uncovered the secret that Elespeth is guiding them to. He commends their bravery for venturing into the unknown on behalf of Verbobonc and asks that they report back to him what they find.

When the PCs accompany Elespeth, read:

The dryad concentrates and mouths a short praise to the land and its protectors. The stately trees of the Gnarley Forest are gone, replaced with another kind. The trees here are smaller, twisted and stout. A thin, warm mist blocks any vision past a few dozen yards, and sounds from within the mist echo eerily.

The PCs have arrived in the Iron Wood. Despite appearances, there is no danger here. There is a pit in the ground only a few yards away. When the PCs investigate it, go to Encounter 5.

5: DOWN THE HATCH

This long encounter details the PCs' explorations in the dungeons beneath the Iron Wood. Although these dungeons predate even the ancient Castle Estival, the eastern edge of the Iron Wood dungeons connects to the deeper dungeons of that dire castle. In fact, house Estival used large sections of the eastern Iron Wood dungeon and worked alongside its evil residents in the creation of dire aberrations and abominations.

The dungeons are a uniform 10 feet wide and tall, with solid flagstone construction. Wall sconces every 50 feet or so hold extinguished torches (once *continual flames*, but their magic was dismissed centuries ago). The dungeons are dark; the PCs must bring light sources with them. No one has used these passages for several decades. Dirt and dust lay thick on the floors and in cracks in the walls.

When the PCs arrive with Elespeth (and Langard, if present), read or paraphrase:

The yawning hole in the earth breathes out a faint decaying smell. Clearly made when a truly massive tree fell to its side, the hole descends about fifteen feet into the ground. At its bottom, it breaks into a corridor ten feet high, running roughly east to west.

PCs must figure out how to descend the 25 feet into the passageway below. Tell the players, if they ask, that the earth of the pit looks loose and the climb is therefore fairly difficult (compared to climbing into any other pit in the ground). A DC 20 Climb check is sufficient to negotiate the hole.

Before the PCs descend, Elespeth gives them one more piece of advice:

The dryad has a pained look on her face, strained to be so far from her home tree. "I have seen the way through the passages below, but it is a confusing jumble to me. They are dark and clouded with old evil. I know you must go east, toward the rising sun. From there, you must follow certain signs: follow the dead wolf, follow the angry rabbit, and run as far from the tree as you can. Then you must talk to the half-a-man, and ask him about the half-a-woman. I cannot explain any better than this. Perhaps you, more experienced in the ways of crypts and dungeons, will understand these signs better."

Neither Elespeth nor Langard (if present) accompany the PCs into the pit.

Elespeth's directions are confusing, but accurate. The dungeons are a veritable maze of corridors and rooms, branching off into various side passages. However, the passages nearest to Castle Estival have been marked with small runes to provide assistance in navigation. These marks still remain. They are written in an abbreviated form of Abyssal. Elespeth has seen the marks pointing the way to Castle Estival in her visions. Because Elespeth does not read Abyssal (or even recognize these marks as a language), she describes them as pictures instead.

The PCs are able to rest the night here unmolested if they would like, but Elespeth and Langard do not stay.

When the PCs descend into the dungeons, they should travel down the passage to the east. If they persist on going to the west, you are welcome to design an

extensive, elaborate dungeon filled with traps and monsters. But the proper way is to the east.

The PCs' travel through the dungeons is in three phases, as follows: the mark of the Dead Wolf, the mark of the Angry Rabbit, and the mark Far From the Tree.

Some helpful, but not strictly necessary, maps for this encounter are at **DM Maps 2**. The key danger of this encounter—the pit trap—is mapped on **DM Map 3** and described below.

A. The Dead Wolf

The eastern passage extends for over a mile. There are a few long-abandoned rooms off to either side of the passage from time to time, but they bear no marks and are not interesting or pertinent. The passage makes a few bends, but generally keeps to an eastward direction.

The past few hundred yards of the passage have been arrow-straight. Ahead of you, the passage opens into a room about forty feet square. Two passageways lead out of this room: one to the northeast, and one to the southeast.

This room has little in the way of interesting features, but the DM might want to draw it out on a battlemat in order to keep the players on their toes. On the wall near the each of the three exits from this room are small inscriptions. A DC 25 Search check is required to find each inscription. When the PCs find these inscriptions, ask whether any of them read Abyssal. Ask those that do to make a DC 10 Decipher Script or Intelligence check in order to puzzle out the meaning of the Abyssal “shorthand” of the inscriptions. Note that PCs succeeding at a DC 30 Decipher Script check, or PCs using magic to understand the inscriptions (such as comprehend languages) understand the inscriptions' meanings automatically.

Player Handout 6 shows the three wall inscriptions. Below the dotted line is the translation for each; you should fold back the page and not show the translations if the PCs are not able to decipher them.

The meanings of the inscriptions are in fact irrelevant. The northeast passage is the correct way to go; Elespeth thought that the markings there (which she saw in a vision) looked a little like a picture of a dead wolf. If the PCs leave this way, go on to the next part of the dungeon: skip to **The Angry Rabbit**, below.

If the PCs travel down the southeast passage to the kennels, they find that the passage turns to the south after a few hundred feet. The passage breaks up into a few dead-ends (long collapsed) and then two connected rooms with no other exits. Each of the rooms contains iron chains bolted to the wall at waist height, with a massive metal collar attached to the end of each chain. This is where house Estival bred several particularly

massive warhounds, whose spirits linger. When the PCs enter, read the following:

From the deeper darkness of this forgotten place, umbral forms of stout hounds charge at you from the walls.

PCs that succeed at a DC 25 Listen check hear a ghostly baying before the hounds materialize and may act in the surprise round along with the umbral hounds. Other PCs may not act in the surprise round.

APL 4 (EL 5)

Umbral Hounds (2): (as Shadows, but with a hound's shape): hp 19 each; *Monster Manual* page 123.

APL 6 (EL 7)

Umbral Hounds (4): (as Shadows, but with a hound's shape): hp 19 each; *Monster Manual* page 123.

APL 8 (EL 9)

Greater Umbral Hound: [as Greater Shadow, but with a hound's shape]: hp 58; *Monster Manual* page 123.

Umbral Hounds (3): [as Shadows, but with a hound's shape]: hp 19 each; *Monster Manual* page 123.

APL 10 (EL 11)

Greater Umbral Hounds (3): [as Greater Shadows, but with a hound's shape]: hp 58 each; *Monster Manual* page 123.

APL 12 (EL 13)

Advanced Greater Umbral Hounds (3): hp 110 each; Appendix 1.

Tactics: These umbral hounds seek only to drain the life of the living, and attack intruders until slain. They prefer flanking when possible, and make good use of their Elusive Target feat at higher APLs. The umbral hounds pursue intruders that flee.

Treasure: Nothing of value remains in this section of the dungeons.

As this combat is intended only for PCs that make the wrong choice at the intersection, the PCs receive neither experience nor treasure for defeating these umbral hounds. The PCs have to backtrack in order to take the correct passage.

B. The Angry Rabbit

The northeastern passage continues on for several hundred yards, sloping down all the while, before ending in another room, this one a massive chamber eighty feet square and thirty feet high. Piles of moldering wood are all that remain of several tables and chairs here. A spiky iron chandelier hangs from the ceiling on a sturdy iron chain.

There is a low exit in the eastern wall at ground level, and another exit in the eastern wall approximately 20 feet above the floor. The wooden stairway up to the higher exit is now only a jumble of rotted logs on the floor. Four alcoves line each of the north and south walls.

Again, the DM should feel free to draw out this room on a battlemat, but there are no dangers or items of interest here.

If the PCs successfully search (DC 25 Search checks), they can find other inscriptions by the three exits. It may be difficult to find the inscription on the higher exit, however, as there is no immediate way up to that exit from the ground. A DC 20 Climb check allows a PC to climb to the upper exit.

The inscriptions are found on **Player Handout 7**. The **lower exit** in the eastern wall is the “angry rabbit” and the correct exit from the room. The upper passage dead-ends after 90 feet at an impassable cave-in that is dangerous if touched.

All APLs

Falling Rubble Trap: CR 9; mechanical; location trigger; no reset; Atk +18 melee (1d6, stone blocks); multiple targets (all targets in a the 10 ft. by 10 ft. square in front of the cave-in); Search DC 24; Disable Device DC 26.

Once the PCs are on the right track down the “angry rabbit” passage, they can follow it for another hundred yards before encountering a devious trap long ago set by the designers of these passages.

The Lure

This trap is designed to lure hasty heroes into a pit trap. Further along the passageway is a *permanent image* with no visual element: it is only a sound located in a section of the hallway ahead. The noise “loops” and repeats itself every 10 minutes or so.

Have all of the PCs make DC 15 Listen checks. To those that succeed, read:

Traveling from a long way down the passage, you hear a sound like soft sobbing.

Then, all of the PCs immediately hear the following:

From around a corner ahead, you hear the sound of running feet and deep, angry shouts. A few piteous cries of surprise from women and children rise up, as if discovered. With roars, the sounds of running feet are replaced with noise of clanging steel on stone.

You should have all the PCs roll for initiative and place their figures where indicated on **Map 2**. Only show them as much of the map as they see, but indicate that they

hear the noise from around the corner ahead. Anyone who succeeded on the Listen check by 10 or more also hears that the noises are coming from around one or two other corners past that.

This illusion is designed to lure hasty heroes into the pit trap marked on **DM Map 3**. The pit trap is easy to find (even non-rogues might find it), but only if it is looked for.

The Changing Illusion

At the end of the first round, the cries change to the noises of women and children screaming, and the sounds of swords carving through flesh. This sound continues for three more rounds.

At the end of the fourth round, the cries change to the noises of booted feet running away and deep-voiced cheers. These sounds continue for two more rounds.

At the end of the sixth round, the cries change to soft sobbing, which continue for another nine minutes or so, when the entire auditory illusion resets again.

Details of the Illusion

The illusion contains no intelligible speech. If the PCs ask about it, explain that the shouts are in no particular language, but are just shouts and cries.

Detecting the Illusion

If any players states that his or her PC is listening to the noise carefully, allow the player to make another Listen check. In fact, the player is making a Will save: looking at the PC's card you requested at the beginning of the adventure, deduct the listed Listen check from the PC's total and instead add the Will save modifier of the PC. If the total is more than 14 plus the APL (18 at APL 4, 20 at APL 6, 22 at APL 8, 24 at APL 10, and 26 at APL 12), then pass the player a note that the PC has detected that the sound is only an illusion. **Note that a PC must state that he or she is listening carefully to the noise in order to get any saving throw at all.**

Once the PCs have arrived at the point from which the illusion emanates, they automatically receive a Will save to detect that it is an illusion (otherwise, the PC believes that the sound must have some sort of invisible source).

The Pit Trap

PCs that touch the ground in the area marked on **DM Map 3** may fall into the pit trap. Note that the pit immediately closes, so PCs that fall into the pit trap out of sight of their companions may seem to have disappeared entirely when their companions round the corner. A PC in the pit crying out may be heard by his companions on successful Listen check (DC 20 plus 1 per 10 feet of distance; be sure to also include the depth of the pit!).

APL 4 (EL 5)

Pit Trap: CR 5; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset (immediate); DC 24 Reflex save avoids; 80 ft. deep (8d6, fall); pit spikes (Atk +10 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d4+5 plus poison each); poison spikes (black adder venom, DC 11 Fortitude save resists, 1d6 Con/1d6 Con); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 15.

APL 6 (EL 7)

Pit Trap: CR 7; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset (immediate); DC 24 Reflex save avoids; 80 ft. deep (8d6, fall); pit spikes (Atk +10 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d4+5 plus poison each); poison spikes (sassone leaf residue, DC 16 Fortitude save resists, 2d12 hp/1d6 Con); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 15.

APL 8 (EL 10)

Pit Trap: CR 10; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset (immediate); DC 24 Reflex save avoids; 100 ft. deep (10d6, fall); pit spikes (Atk +10 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d4+5 plus poison each); poison spikes (wyvern poison, DC 17 Fortitude save resists, 2d6 Con/2d6 Con); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 15.

APL 10 (EL 12)

Antimagic Pit Trap: CR 11; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset (immediate); DC 29 Reflex save avoids; 100 ft. deep (10d6, fall); pit spikes (Atk +10 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d4+5 plus poison each); poison spikes (wyvern poison, DC 17 Fortitude save resists, 2d6 Con/2d6 Con); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 15. **Note:** the bottom 20 feet of this pit contains a permanent *antimagic field*. This field negates any *feather fall* effect (a PC with *feather fall* falls only 20 feet, taking 2d6 falling damage and 1d4+2 damage from the pit spikes) and any magical immunity to poison (such as through the *heroes feast* spell). The field also makes getting PCs out of the pit a bit more tricky, as magical means of levitation or flight do not work in the pit, nor do magical light sources. The *antimagic field* can be separately disabled from within the pit with a DC 31 Disable Device check.

APL 12 (EL 14)

Antimagic Pit Trap: CR 11; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset (immediate); DC 29 Reflex save avoids; 80 ft. deep (8d6, fall); pit spikes (Atk +10 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d4+5 plus poison each); poison spikes (black lotus extract, DC 20 Fortitude save resists, 3d6 Con/3d6 Con); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 15. **Note:** the bottom 20 feet of this pit contains a permanent *antimagic field*. This field negates any *feather fall* effect (a PC with *feather fall* falls only 20 feet, taking 2d6 falling damage and 1d4+2 damage from the pit spikes) and any magical immunity to poison (such as through the *heroes feast* spell). The field also makes getting PCs out of the pit a bit more tricky, as magical means of levitation or flight do not work in the pit, nor do magical light sources. The *antimagic field* can be separately disabled from within the pit with a DC 31 Disable Device check.

Treasure!

The bottom of the pit contains the remains of a prior unfortunate victim. This deceased dwarven explorer carried a few valuable items, as follows:

Treasure: Search the bottom of the pit.

APL 4: Magic 500 gp; *globe of sunlight* (500 gp); Total 500 gp.

APL 6: Loot 537 gp; *globe of sunlight* (500 gp), *glitter stone* (37 gp); Total 537 gp.

APL 8: Magic 979 gp; *galeb duhr hammer* (442 gp), *globe of sunlight* (500 gp), *glitter stone* (37 gp); Total 979 gp.

APL 10: Magic 2145 gp; *gloves of the titan's grip* (1,166 gp), *galeb duhr hammer* (442 gp), *globe of sunlight* (500 gp), *glitter stone* (37 gp); Total 2145 gp.

APL 12: Magic 3,478 gp; *goggles of draconic vision* (1,333 gp), *gloves of the titan's grip* (1,166 gp), *galeb duhr hammer* (442 gp), *globe of sunlight* (500 gp), *glitter stone* (37 gp); Total 3,478 gp.

Once the PCs have bypassed this trap, the passageway winds on further eastward for a short distance. Go to **Far From the Tree**, below.

C. Far from the Tree

By now, you suspect you have traveled several miles eastward beneath the Iron Wood. The passageway again opens into a large room, this one a roughly circular room fifty feet across and twenty feet high. Several narrow pillars support the ceiling here, arranged in a circular pattern around the center of the room. In the room's center is an unmarked stone table.

Several exits lead out from the eastern half of this room.

Again, the DM should feel free to draw out this room on a battlemat, but there are no dangers or items of interest here. There are four exits opposite the one the PCs came in. Their marks, along with accompanying translations if the PCs can read them, are on **Player Handout 8**.

The correct exit is the northeast exit, as it is the farthest exit from the mark that looks most like a tree. Following the other exits leads to several abandoned rooms.

Assuming the PCs eventually learn that the northeast exit is the correct one, it takes them right to the dungeons beneath Castle Estival—or what is left of them. Go on to the next Encounter.

6: THE RESERVOIR

The passages underneath the Iron Wood connect to the expansive dungeons beneath Castle Estival. However, due to Halmadar's rituals drawing Oerthblood to the surface, the Castle Estival dungeons are almost entirely

flooded with Oerthblood. The PCs must skirt the edge of this underground lake of Oerthblood in order to access the basement of Castle Estival.

However, the reservoir of Oerthblood is occupied by one or more monsters made of amorphous blood. These blood-monsters take the form of hydras, and are anxious to attack any prey that comes near.

The dungeons were also the prison of Obmi the Wicked, a foe of Halmadar. Halmadar transferred Obmi here once he was elected Viscount. Although Halmadar expected that being entombed in Oerthblood would render the evil dwarf mindless and insane, Obmi possesses a reservoir of will that Halmadar did not expect. As a result, Obmi possesses enough intelligence to communicate with the PCs, and he provides them with what assistance he can. Elespeth knows that Obmi can provide this assistance, which is the basis of her cryptic hint, “ask the half-man about the half-woman.”

When the PCs arrive at this area, read the following:

Your travels have brought you to a section of underground passages that seems far newer than most of the dungeons beneath the Iron Wood. While those passages are ancient, these seem merely centuries old.

*The passage opens into a large, low underground cavern. Much of the cavern appears filled with a soupy reddish substance much like blood [PCs that have played VER8-03 *Darkness is Unbound* recognize the Oerthblood here]. Other exits peeking above the pooled blood indicate that this was once a larger dungeon complex, but it has been flooded with the lake of blood.*

A dry path skirts along the edge of the lake. At its far end, a set of stairs extend steeply up, lit by a glowing torch.

Note the layout of this battle on **DM Map 4**. Once the PCs reach the indicated location, or if they venture into the Oerthblood, the hydra(s) attack.

APL 4 (EL 7)

Gelatinous Six-Headed Hydra: hp 84; Appendix 1.

APL 6 (EL 9)

Gelatinous Six-Headed Hydras (2): hp 84 each; Appendix 1.

APL 8 (EL 10)

Gelatinous Six-Headed Hydras (3): hp 84 each; Appendix 1.

APLs 10 and 12 (EL 9)

Gelatinous Six-Headed Hydras (2): hp 84 each; Appendix 1. Note that the combats at these APLs are not

intended to be an appropriate challenge for the PCs; this combat should go by quickly.

Tactics: These monsters know little other than rushing at living creatures and tearing them apart with their many heads. They feel an instinctive connection to any PC that has the **Touched by Oerthblood** AR entry. They attack such targets in preference to all others, and receive a +2 circumstance bonus to hit and damage such PCs.

Treasure: These creatures have no treasure.

Development: Meeting Obmi. When the PCs have defeated the hydras, a gelatinous, man-like form rises up amid the Oerthblood. Read:

From the bloody pool, the gelatinous form of a dwarf rises up. Before it can utter more than a few gargling words, its gelatinous form loses coherency, and it splashes back into the goo. With effort, it raises itself into a man-like form again. “Enemies Halmadar are friends mine” it says, before splashing back into goop again.

Show the PCs the illustration of Obmi in Appendix 4: Illustrations. Many PCs in the region know of Obmi the Wicked, Hammer of Iuz, iron-bearded dwarven assassin. It is fairly common knowledge that he was captured years ago (during the *March of Giants* interactive) and imprisoned beneath Castle Greyfist by the forces of Viscount Langard. It should seem unusual to the PCs to find him here.

All APLs

Obmi the Wicked, Gelatinous Dwarf: hp 16; AL N; Int 4.

This repulsive, gelatinous creature is all that remains of Obmi the Wicked. Obmi was captured by the forces of good years ago, and he was imprisoned beneath Castle Greyfist by Viscount Langard. Obmi easily escaped imprisonment, but he used his imprisonment as a cover identity: he would slip out of the dungeons of Castle Greyfist and continue his murderous ways, retreating to the dungeons to avoid detection. None would guess that a prisoner of the Viscount was in fact on the loose. Obmi preferred to keep the souls of those that he killed, imprisoning them within onyx gems using a variant of the *trap the soul* spell, and keeping the gems in a “collection” maintained in a secret area in his cell beneath Castle Greyfist. Obmi slaked his murderous thirst without detection for several months, but he set his eyes on a much bigger prize: the assassination of Lady Elinor Asbury, wife of Lord Simon Milinous. The events of VER6-06 *Ties That Bind* outline Obmi’s successful attempt to trap Lady Asbury’s soul, which he kept with his other “prizes” right underneath Castle Greyfist.

When Halmadar came to power as Viscount Estival, he had new uses for the dungeons of Castle Greyfist. Obmi’s

ruse was discovered, as was his collection of soul gems. Obmi was transferred here to the dungeons of Castle Estival. His soul gems were taken as prizes by the vitreous drinkers in the dungeon, and Obmi himself was left to drown as the Oerthblood rose. Rather than drown, however, the tenacious Obmi held on to life, fueled by his hatred of Halmadar.

Now Obmi wants nothing more than to see Halmadar unmasked and destroyed, but he lacks the intellect or the cohesion to do much about it. Obmi's Intelligence has been reduced to 4, and he cannot keep a coherent form for more than one round at a time. Interrupt any conversation with Obmi with squelching noises to reflect his continual temporary devolution into goop.

Obmi knows the following, and relates it to the PCs, for so long as they are willing to put up with a conversation with him:

- Obmi was in prison beneath Castle Greyfist in Verbobonc City until a few months ago (the time when Wellborn Estival was made Viscount, but Obmi does not know this—PCs that succeed at a DC 15 Knowledge (local: VTF) or Knowledge (history) can make this connection).
- At that time, a man Obmi knew as Halmadar the Cruel removed him from the dungeons. Halmadar seemed to be in charge; the castle guards did as he said.
- Halmadar also took several “prizes” that Obmi had collected in prison.
- Obmi declares that these “prizes” are pretty black gems.
- The “prizes” have people in them. (Obmi cannot be more specific than this in his current state.)
- Obmi thought Halmadar was going to set him free. Halmadar didn't. He instead brought Obmi here, took away his “prizes,” and left him in the dungeons here.
- Soon thereafter, Halmadar made a big ritual to get power. The blood goo started to rise. Obmi shouted, but no one came. Obmi drowned.
- Obmi did not die, but became this gooey creature. Halmadar does not know that Obmi still lives.
- Obmi is very angry at Halmadar. Obmi wants Halmadar to die.
- Obmi wants to help the PCs, if they hate Halmadar. Obmi hates the PCs (particularly those PCs he met in the past), but he hates Halmadar more.
- Obmi knows that one of his “prizes” has a woman in it that is very smart and very powerful. The woman can help the PCs. This is

Obmi's response if the PCs ask about a “half-a-woman” from Elespeth's prophetic guidance.

- Obmi knows that his “prizes” are kept very close. He can feel them.
- Obmi wants the PCs to find his “prizes”, and find the woman in the “prizes” that can help them fight Halmadar.
- The “prizes” all look alike. The woman is in the one that glows brightest when you hold it.
- You can make the woman talk to you if you hold the “prize”.

Where To Next?

The PCs have little else to do here. Their only option is to ascend the stairs.

7: THE THINGS IN THE BASEMENT

Making their way upward from the dungeons, the PCs find themselves in basement of Castle Estival. The map for this level is provided on **DM Map 5**.

A. The Undercroft

When the PCs ascend the stairs into this area, read:

One could think that this room was made from the shadows themselves. The room looks to be some sort of noble crypt. The walls to the left and right are lined with burial alcoves, each occupied with one or two shadowy ravens who eye you impassively. Stone pillars buttress the room, lending foundation to the ceiling and obstruction to the eye. The movement of light causes shadows to sway eerily.

This room is occupied by two vitreous drinkers, although they are not immediately in sight of the PCs. They are near the exit to Area B when the PCs ascend the stairs here.

The vitreous drinkers likely immediately know the PCs are present, due to their spectral ravens here. They use their *wands of invisibility* in an effort to surprise the PCs.

When the vitreous drinkers appear, show the players the illustration in Appendix 4: Illustrations. Note in particular the drinkers' powerful gaze attack, which affects the PCs as soon as they can see the drinkers.

APLs 4 to 8 (EL special)

Advanced Vitreous Drinkers (2): hp 117 each; Appendix 1. **Tactics:** These creatures do not stay to fight the PCs. Each uses its tongue lash attack each round until it has successfully afflicted a PC with its Eye Drinking attack, and then uses a quickened *dimension door* to flee the area. The PCs do not earn XP for defeating these creatures at these APLs.

APL 10 (EL 12)

Advanced Vitreous Drinkers (2): hp 117 each; Appendix 1. **Tactics:** At this APL, only one of these two creatures stays behind to fight the PCs, hoping to defeat such powerful enemies of Halmadar and earn great favor. The other vitreous drinker only stays until it has used its tongue lash to successfully afflict a PC with its Eye Drinking attack, and then it uses a quickened *dimension door* to flee the area. The vitreous drinker that remains uses its spell-like abilities to best effect against the PCs, and only flees if reduced to less than 20 hit points.

APL 12 (EL 14)

Advanced Vitreous Drinkers (2): hp 117 each; Appendix 1. **Tactics:** At this APL, both of these creatures stay to fight the PCs, hoping to defeat such powerful enemies of Halmadar and earn great favor. The vitreous drinkers use their spell-like abilities to best effect against the PCs, and flee if reduced to less than 20 hit points.

Treasure: The vitreous drinkers keep several torture devices here, in order to more readily extract secrets. The drinkers also have a few personal treasures, as follows:

All APLs: Loot 0 gp; Magic 174 gp; *wand of invisibility (10 charges)* (2) (75 gp each), *wand of mage armor (10 charges)* (2) (12 gp each); Total 174 gp.

B. Cellar

When the PCs enter this area, read:

It is readily apparent that this is the larder for the castle above. Sacks, barrels, and foodstuffs lie here in neat rows.

There is nothing of interest in this room. It has recently been accessed in order to provide provisions for the pending march to Castle Greyfist (see Encounter 8).

C. The Cells

The door to this area has a small barred window in it, looking into a hall filled with similar doors.

This area appears to be some type of castle prison, as several cell doors can be seen.

The cell doors are all locked, requiring a DC 25 Open Locks to open. These cells do not contain any prisoners, but the southeast room does contain a wooden shelf with several dozen onyx gemstones scattered on the shelves. This is the remains of Obmi's collection of soul gems (see Encounter 6), which he collected with a modified version of *trap the soul*. Although each of the gems contains a soul, most are too attenuated to be able to communicate with the PCs. If the gems are destroyed, these captive souls are freed to go on to their ultimate reward.

Black Onyx soul gems: hardness 8, hp 15 each; Break DC 24; each detects as moderate necromancy magic.

One of the gems contains the strong soul of Lady Elinor Asbury, wife of Lord Simon Milinous. If the PCs handle this gem, it glows with a bright white light, and Lady Asbury speaks in the mind of the PC. She tells the PC, "I am Lady Elinor Asbury, wife of Lord Simon Milinous. I would speak to you, but I require a sacrifice of you in order to take material form." If the PC agrees, he or she immediately takes 2 points of Charisma damage. A ghostly image of Lady Asbury appears in the cell with the PCs.

"Glad I am at last to be able to impart all that I have learned. I see that you are intruders in this place, which means you are no friend to Viscount Estival. The Viscounty has been victim to a terrible duplicity. A deathless warlord named Halmadar the Cruel has ascended to the throne of Verbobonc in disguise. He came to this land in the guise of Wellborn Estival years ago, and has manipulated his way to the title of Viscount. He has evil designs which would destroy this land, and he must be stopped."

The PCs likely have many questions for Lady Asbury. The most likely of these questions, and Lady Asbury's answers, are as follows:

- **How did you get to be in this gem?** (PCs who played VER6-06 *Ties That Bind* already know the answer to this.) I was tricked by foul magic. Some evil enchanter ensorcelled a gift my husband was to give to me; when I accepted it, I was cast into this gem. I was in the collection of Obmi the Wicked, an enemy of the Viscounty, for many months.
- **How do you know all this?** Although my soul was bound to this gem, I found that I still possessed my senses; I could see and hear from the gem. I could also touch the minds of those nearby. It soon became clear to me that no one suspected this was the case. I overheard many things, many important things that may save the Viscounty in these dark days.
- **Tell us about Viscount Estival.** Estival is a false name from a long-dead house. To use the name is to give support to his lie. The Viscount of Verbobonc is now Halmadar the Cruel, servitor of Vecna, and he must not be allowed to reign.
- **How did Halmadar do this?** The extent of Halmadar's machinations is not clear to me; I know that he was able to insinuate himself into the nobility of Verbobonc with the aid of a master forger, and he used vast wealth to buy favor with other nobles and with the adventurers of Verbobonc, who spoke to his good name and arranged that he be appointed as Viscount.
- **What is Halmadar's plan?** Halmadar seeks to become closer to his god, Vecna. He hopes to gain godlike power. He almost succeeded last

year, but was foiled by Magister Har of the Wrinkle Academy and a few adventurers Magister Har had selected. Halmadar's plan now involves the sacrifice of the blood of his master's greatest enemy. It is to take place at the heart of Verbobonc sometime very soon, and it involves some sort of blood flowing beneath the ground. I do not know any more than this.

- **What should we do?** If you have any allies among the nobility, or anyone else that may be of service to the good of Verbobonc, you must summon their aid, tell them of Halmadar's plan, and make haste to Castle Greyfist to stop him.
- **Where is your body?** My husband has my body preserved in a shrine in our fair lands to the southeast of here. I can feel it, ready to accept my life force to return to it.
- **How do we get you back into your body?** You must destroy this gem, and my soul will be free to return to my body. But please, do not do so until I have answered all of the questions you have.

If the PCs are playing this adventure at Last Weekend in Verbobonc prior to the interactive VERI8-02 *Assault on Castle Greyfist*, you should be sure to have Lady Asbury include the following four comments in her conversation with the PCs:

- Halmadar is particularly concerned about an organization called the Company of the Black Rose—their attempts to arm and inform the populace have made them a thorn in Halmadar's side.
- Neither herself, nor Lord Milinous, nor Langard have the necessary preparations to assault Castle Greyfist. The PCs should seek out the Family and the Company of the Black Rose. These organizations have been doing their best to support the common man and lay up arms against tyranny in recent weeks.
- Most Bondsmen of House Estival are simply misguided, not outright evil. Mercy should be shown to the Bondsmen in the hopes that they can be shown the error of their ways and join the cause of right.
- Lady Asbury has heard Halmadar speak of Lord Willow Swan's return in the Viscounty's darkest hour. Halmadar seems to fear Lord Willow Swan's return.

If the PCs have no more questions, Lady Asbury begs them to destroy the gem so that her soul may return to her body and her husband (the PCs may know that Lord Milinous has become a sad shell of a man, pining for his lost wife). If they do so, they earn the **Reward of Lord Milinous** on the AR.

Lady Asbury also asks that the PCs destroy the other soul gems as well, in order to release those souls to their final

reward. The PCs may elect to keep the onyx gems instead, but keeping even one of the gems gives the PCs the **Soul Keeper** curse on the AR. Ask each PC that elects to keep a soul gem how many they intend to keep (minimum of 1, maximum of 10). A DC 15 Appraise check reveals that each gem is worth approximately 200 gp, and there are 45 gems available in total. These gems are not treasure in the typical sense, but provide extra treasure on the AR (in exchange for a dire curse).

D. Stairs up to Courtyard

When the PCs ascend the stairs here, proceed to Encounter 8.

8: MUSTERING OUT

If the PCs ascend to the ground floor of Castle Estival, they encounter a massive number of Bondsmen preparing to mobilize to Castle Greyfist in Verbobonc City. Read the following once the PCs ascend the stairs here:

Your advance up the stairs is concealed by several large boxes and the noise of many men. Peering out from behind the boxes, you see the courtyard of Castle Estival. There are a staggering number of Bondsmen here, all preparing weapons and readying themselves for a march. Several clerics, holy symbols of Vecna prominent, prepare the Bondsmen by casting spells and preparing magical feasts. A few mages—obvious by the fact that they are flying around above the courtyard—also make preparations.

One of the generals present calls many of the troops to order. "We're moving out, Bondsmen. Off to support the Master at Castle Greyfist in Verbobonc City, and we'd best be there by the morrow if the Master's plan is to be successful. Bondsmen, march!"

You should discourage the PCs from attacking such an obviously superior force of Bondsmen. The better response is to counter their march to Castle Greyfist in Verbobonc City itself (which is the subject of the Interactive, VERI8-02 *Assault on Castle Greyfist*). If they do attack despite your warnings, feel free to use Bondsmen and Priestess statistics from the APL 12 version of this adventure to drive the PCs away down the stairs.

The PCs are free to return to the dungeons from which they came, or wait the hour or so until the Bondsmen march, leaving Castle Estival virtually unguarded (and therefore easy to escape).

Reward PCs interested in obtaining information about the Bondsmen forces with troop numbers (several hundred), weaponry (primarily small hand-to-hand weapons) and support (several priests and mages). This information is of use to the resistance during the attempt

to storm Castle Greyfist in VERI8-02 *Assault on Castle Greyfist*.

CONCLUSION

This adventure is over when the PCs leave the basement of Castle Estival by whichever method they prefer. The PCs should have learned that Lord Wellborn Estival is Halmadar the Cruel, and that he is undertaking some sort of ritual at Castle Greyfist. An assault on Castle Greyfist is imminent.

As long as the PCs report their discovery to any interested party (including Langard), they receive a reward as follows:

APL 4: Coin 325 gp.

APL 6: Coin 450 gp.

APL 8: Coin 650 gp.

APL 10: Coin 1,150 gp.

APL 12: Coin 1,650 gp.

The trail you have set upon this day has unearthed the darkest secret in the Viscounty. The new Viscount Wellborn Estival, appointed by an emissary of Veluna and approved by the adventurers of the land, is none other than Halmadar the Cruel, warlord and servitor of Vecna. Halmadar's plans are as yet unclear, but you have the knowledge to stop him in his stronghold: Castle Greyfist itself.

The End

COMPLETING THE ADVENTURE RECORD

Here are the awards available on the Adventure Record and how they are awarded. Note that different PCs may receive different awards.

Touched by a Vitreous Drinker: Award this to PCs that failed the save against a vitreous drinker's Eye Drinking attack, so long as the vitreous drinker was able to escape (as killing the vitreous drinker eliminates the Eye Drinking penalty).

Reward of Simon Milinous: Award this to all PCs if Lady Asbury's soul gem is destroyed or returned to someone who would destroy it. If not, no PC earns this reward.

Soul Keeper: Award this to any PC that elected to keep any of the onyx gems. This award is based on the number of gems the PC elected to keep (minimum 1, maximum 10). You should confirm the number of onyx gems the PC kept before they see the AR, and fill in that number.

Secret: Award this to all PCs that learned that Viscount Wellborn Estival is actually Halmadar the Cruel.

EXPERIENCE POINT SUMMARY

To award experience for this adventure, add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Then assign the experience award. Award the total value (objectives plus roleplaying) to each PC.

3: The Smuggler

Defeat or talk down the Bondsmen of House Estival

APL 4	180 XP
APL 6	240 XP
APL 8	300 XP
APL 10	360 XP
APL 12	420 XP

5: Down the Hatch

Survive or bypass the pit trap

APL 4	150 XP
APL 6	210 XP
APL 8	300 XP
APL 10	360 XP
APL 12	420 XP

6: The Reservoir

Defeat the gelatinous hydra(s)

APL 4	210 XP
APL 6	270 XP
APL 8	300 XP
APL 10	0 XP
APL 12	0 XP

7: The Things in the Basement

Defeat or drive off the vitreous drinkers

APL 4	0 XP
APL 6	0 XP
APL 8	0 XP
APL 10	360 XP
APL 12	420 XP

Story Awards

PCs find Langard:

APL 4	45 XP
APL 6	60 XP
APL 8	75 XP
APL 10	90 XP
APL 12	105 XP

PCs speak to Lady Asbury's soul:

APL 4	45 XP
APL 6	60 XP
APL 8	75 XP
APL 10	90 XP
APL 12	105 XP

Discretionary roleplaying award

APL 4	45 XP
APL 6	60 XP

APL 8	75 XP
APL 10	90 XP
APL 12	105 XP

Total Possible Experience

APL 4	675 XP
APL 6	900 XP
APL 8	1,125 XP
APL 10	1,300 XP
APL 12	1,575 XP

TREASURE SUMMARY

During an adventure, PCs encounter treasure, usually finding it in the possession of their foes. Every encounter that features treasure has a "treasure" section within the encounter description, giving information about the loot, coins, and magic items that make up the encounter's treasure.

The loot total is the number of gold pieces each PC gains if the foes are plundered of all their earthly possessions. Looting the bodies takes at least 10 minutes per every 5 enemies, and if the PCs cannot take the time to loot the bodies, they do not gain this gold. If you feel it is reasonable that PCs can go back to loot the bodies, and those bodies are there (i.e., not carted off by dungeon scavengers, removed from the scene by the local watch, and so on), PCs may return to retrieve loot. If the PCs do not loot the body, the gold piece value for the loot is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

The coin total is the number of gold pieces each PC gains if they take the coin available. A normal adventuring party can usually gather this wealth in a round or so. If for some reason, they pass up this treasure, the coin total is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

Next, the magic items are listed. Magic item treasure is the hardest to adjudicate, because they are varied and because PCs may want to use them during the adventure. Many times PCs must cast *identify*, *analyze dweomer* or similar spell to determine what the item does and how to activate it. Other times they may attempt to use the item blindly. If the magic item is consumable (a potion, scroll, magic bolts, etc.) and the item is used before the end of the adventure, its total is subtracted from the adventure totals below.

Once you have subtracted the value for unclaimed treasure from each encounter add it up and that is the number of gold pieces a PCs total and coin value increase at the end of the adventure. Write the total in the GP Gained field of the adventure certificate.

Loot = Looted gear from enemy; Coin = Coin, Gems, Jewelry, and other valuables; Magic = Magic Items.

3: The Smuggler

Loot the Bondsmen of House Estival

APL 4: Loot 162 gp; Magic 178 gp; *cloak of elemental protection* (2) (83 gp each), *potion of cure light wounds* (2) (4 gp each), *potion of mage armor* (4 gp); Total 343 gp.

APL 6: Loot 164 gp; Magic 360 gp; *cloak of elemental protection* (4) (83 gp each), *potion of cure light wounds* (4) (4 gp each), *potion of mage armor* (3) (4 gp each); Total 524 gp.

APL 8: Loot 26 gp; Magic 928 gp; *+1 full plate* (220 gp), *anklet of translocation* (3) (116 gp each), *cloak of elemental protection* (4) (83 gp each), *potion of cure light wounds* (4) (4 gp each), *potion of mage armor* (3) (4 gp each); Total 954 gp.

APL 10: Loot 26 gp; Magic 1,219 gp; *+1 full plate* (220 gp), *ring of mystic healing* (291 gp), *anklet of translocation* (3) (116 gp each), *cloak of elemental protection* (4) (83 gp each), *potion of cure light wounds* (4) (4 gp each), *potion of mage armor* (3) (4 gp each); Total 1,245 gp.

APL 12: Loot 28 gp; Magic 1,552 gp; *+1 full plate* (220 gp), *periapt of wisdom +2* (333 gp), *ring of mystic healing* (291 gp), *anklet of translocation* (3) (116 gp each), *cloak of elemental protection* (4) (83 gp each), *potion of cure light wounds* (4) (4 gp each), *potion of mage armor* (3) (4 gp each); Total 1,580 gp.

5: Down the Hatch

Search the bottom of the pit.

APL 4: Magic 500 gp; *globe of sunlight* (500 gp); Total 500 gp.

APL 6: Loot 537 gp; *globe of sunlight* (500 gp), *glitter stone* (37 gp); Total 537 gp.

APL 8: Magic 979 gp; *galeb duhr hammer* (442 gp), *globe of sunlight* (500 gp), *glitter stone* (37 gp); Total 979 gp.

APL 10: Magic 2,145 gp; *gloves of the titan's grip* (1,166 gp), *galeb duhr hammer* (442 gp), *globe of sunlight* (500 gp), *glitter stone* (37 gp); Total 2,145 gp.

APL 12: Magic 3,478 gp; *goggles of draconic vision* (1,333 gp), *gloves of the titan's grip* (1,166 gp), *galeb duhr hammer* (442 gp), *globe of sunlight* (500 gp), *glitter stone* (37 gp); Total 3,478 gp.

7: The Things in the Basement

Loot the vitreous drinkers

All APLs: Loot 0 gp; Magic 174 gp; *wand of invisibility* (10 charges) (2) (75 gp each), *wand of mage armor* (10 charges) (2) (12 gp each); Total 174 gp.

Conclusion

Reward for their discovery:

APL 4: Coin 325 gp.

APL 6: Coin 450 gp.

APL 8: Coin 650 gp.

APL 10: Coin 1,150 gp.

APL 12: Coin 1,650 gp.

Treasure Cap

APL 4: 650 gp

APL 6: 900 gp

APL 8: 1,300 gp

APL 10: 2,300 gp

APL 12: 3,300 gp

Total Possible Treasure

APL 4: 1,242 gp

APL 6: 1,585 gp

APL 8: 2,757 gp

APL 10: 4,714 gp

APL 12: 6,882 gp

ADVENTURE RECORD ITEMS

Touched by a Vitreous Drinker: You have suffered the touch of an undead monstrosity. Milky cataracts cover your eyes. You cannot see more than 60 feet, and all melee and ranged attacks you make within this range have a 20% miss chance. This effect can be removed only with a *greater restoration* or a *miracle*, or by destruction of the drinker that stole your sight.

Reward of Lord Milinous: For restoring the soul of his wife, Lady Elinor Asbury, Lord Milinous provides you with access to one of the following weapon enhancements at half cost (all MIC): *blindsighted*, *chargebreaker*, *enervating*, *force*, *impact*, *impaling*, *knockback*, *revealing*, *shadowstrike* or *whirling*.

Soul Keeper: You have elected to keep ___ (number from 1 to 10) of the onyx gems which you know to contain the souls of victims of Obmi the Wicked. The souls have cursed you. Whenever you roll a natural 20, treat it as a natural 1 instead. This curse afflicts you until you have rolled a number of natural 20s equal to the number of onyx gems you have kept. Your DM may rule that frivolous rolls intended to extinguish this curse prematurely (such as repetitive Search rolls in a safe area) do not reduce this curse. There is no way to remove this curse short of a *miracle* spell. Add 200 gp to the "Items Sold" portion of this AR for each onyx gem which you have kept.

Secret: This PC has learned that Viscount Wellborn Estival is actually Halmadar the Cruel.

ITEM ACCESS

APL 4:

- *Cloak of elemental protection* (Adventure; *Magic Item Compendium*; 1,000 gp)
- *Globe of sunlight* (Adventure; *Magic Item Compendium*; 6,000 gp)
- *Wand of invisibility* (CL 3rd, 10 charges) (Adventure, DMG, 900 gp)
- *Wand of mage armor* (CL 1st, 10 charges) (Adventure, DMG, 150 gp)

APL 6 (APL 4 plus):

- *Glitter stone* (Adventure; *Magic Item Compendium*; 450 gp)

APL 8 (APL 4-6 plus):

- *Anklet of translocation* (Adventure; *Magic Item Compendium*; 1,400 gp)
- *Galeb duhr hammer* (Adventure; *Magic Item Compendium*; 5,312 gp)

APL 10 (APL 4-8 plus):

- *Gloves of the titan's grip* (Adventure; *Magic Item Compendium*; 14,000 gp)
- *Ring of mystic healing* (Adventure; *Magic Item Compendium*; 3,500 gp)

APL 12 (APL 4-10 plus):

- *Goggles of draconic vision* (Adventure; *Magic Item Compendium*; 16,000 gp)

APPENDIX I

ALL APLS

6: THE RESERVOIR

GELATINOUS SIX-HEADED HYDRA **CR 7**

N Huge Aberration

Init -1; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +4, Spot +5

Languages None

AC 13, touch 7, flat-footed 13

(-1 Dex, -2 size, +5 natural)

hp 84 (6 HD) **fast healing** 16

Immune polymorph, stunning, flanking

Fort +10, **Ref** +1, **Will** +2; additional +4 against mind-affecting effects, poison, sleep and paralysis

Speed 10 ft. (2 squares), swim 10 feet

Melee 6 bites +8 melee (1d10+3 plus 1d8 acid)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +17

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Atk Options Can attack with all heads even if moved or charged during the round; Combat Reflexes (a gelatinous hydra's Combat Reflexes feat allows it to use all its heads for attacks of opportunity)

Abilities Str 17, Dex 8, Con 26, Int 1, Wis 6, Cha 5

Feats Combat Reflexes, Iron Will, Toughness, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Hide -2, Listen +4, Spot +5, Swim +11

Possessions none

Hydra Heads (Ex) A gelatinous hydra can be killed by either severing all of its heads or by slaying its body. See page 155 of the *Monster Manual* for details.

Resilient (Ex) Gelatinous hydras have less defined shapes than the normal creatures they resemble. As a result, it is more difficult to score crippling or killing blows against them. A gelatinous hydra cannot be flanked, takes 1d6 less damage from a successful sneak attack, and takes only one-half of the additional damage dealt by a critical hit. none

Description *This beast resembles a great reptile with a veritable forest of heads on long slender, necks. However, the creature appears to consist of blood-like gelatinous goo, rather than flesh and bone.*

8: THE THINGS IN THE BASEMENT

ADVANCED VITREOUS DRINKER **CR 12**

NE Medium undead

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +23

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Infernal

AC 33, touch 19, flat-footed 28

(+5 Dex, +4 deflection, +10 natural, +4 *mage armor*)

hp 117 (18 HD) **DR** 10/good

SR 22

Resist +6 turn resistance

Immune mind-affecting effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability drain, ability damage, energy drain, fatigue, exhaustion, death by massive

damage, any effect requiring a Fortitude save (except those that work on objects)

Fort +10, **Ref** +16, **Will** +17

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee tongue lash +15/+10 (2d4+1 plus eye drinking)

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +10

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Atk Options eye drinking, horrific gaze

Combat Gear *wand of invisibility* (10 charges), *wand of mage armor* (10 charges)

Spell-like Abilities (CL 18th):

At will—*arcane eye*, *detect thoughts* (DC 16), *tongues*

3/day—*eyebite* (DC 22), *vampiric touch* (+14 touch)

1/day—*quicken dimension door*, *finger of death* (DC 21)

Abilities Str 12, Dex 20, Con —, Int 18, Wis 15, Cha 18

SQ spectral ravens, undead traits, unholy grace

Feats Ability Focus (eye drinking), Ability Focus (*eyebite*), Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*dimension door*), Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (tongue lash)

Skills Balance +7, Bluff +10, Concentration +21, Decipher Script +21, Diplomacy +17, Gather Information +19, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (local: VTF) +11, Knowledge (nature) +8, Knowledge (religion) +8, Knowledge (the planes) +8, Listen +2, Sense Motive +16, Spot +23, Use Magic Device +21 (+23 scrolls)

Possessions combat gear plus *cloak of charisma* +2, holy symbol of Vecna

Eye Drinking (Su) A vitreous drinker can use its lashing tongue to magically steal a creature's ability to see. This ability has no effect on creatures that lack sight. A creature struck by the drinker's tongue must succeed on a DC 25 Fortitude save. On a failed save, the creature's eyes become covered with thick, milky cataracts. The creature cannot see farther than 60 feet, and all melee and ranged attacks it makes within this range have a 20% miss chance. This effect can be removed only with a *greater restoration* or *miracle*, or by the destruction of the drinker that stole the victim's sight. The save DC is Charisma-based.

A creature who has its sight stolen has a -4 penalty on Will saves made to resist the vitreous drinker's abilities and any of its spell-like abilities. The victim cannot avert its eyes to avoid the drinker's horrific gaze (see below).

A vitreous drinker can see through the eyes of a creature whose eyes it drinks, using the victim's full, normal sight. It does not suffer the restrictions and penalties imposed on a victim of eye drinking. The range and duration of this ability have no limit, though the drinker can view through only one victim's eyes at a time. A drinker uses its own Spot skill to view

details through the victim's eyes and benefits from its darkvision.

Horrific Gaze (Su) A vitreous drinker's disgusting visage revolts even the strongest soul. A drinker has a gaze attack with a range of 60 feet that causes a creature to be nauseated for 1 round. A successful DC 23 Fortitude save negates this effect, but a creature must attempt another save each round it remains within range of the gaze. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Spectral Ravens (Su) A vitreous drinker is accompanied at all times by spectral ravens that serve the drinker unconditionally. The drinker shares a powerful symbiotic link with the spectral ravens. It is constantly aware of what they see and hear and can direct them as a free action. The ravens are incorporeal, and a vitreous drinker can control them as long as they remain on the same plane as the drinker. The ravens are not creatures, but rather objects spawned by the drinker. Each raven has 5 hit points and AC 15. Otherwise, treat them as unattended, Tiny objects. A vitreous drinker is accompanied by up to twenty-four ravens, and if any are destroyed, the creature can restore them at a rate of one per day.

The ravens have a fly speed of 100 feet and perfect maneuverability. They cannot take independent action, nor can they do anything to physically affect the world around them. They exist solely to observe.

Unholy Grace (Su) A vitreous drinker adds its Charisma modifier as a bonus on its saving throws and as a deflection bonus to its AC. Included above.

Description *This hunched, shambling figure might be able to pass for human except for the bulging, wet eyes that cover every inch of its skin and the long, repulsively prehensile tongue that lolls from its gaping mouth. Several translucent, shadowy ravens circle the creature's head, their beaks open in silent cries.*

3: THE SMUGGLER

BONDSMAN OF HOUSE ESTIVAL CR 4

Male human Monk 2/Fighter 2

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +5; **Senses** Listen +6, Spot +6

Languages Common

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 15

(+1 Dex, +1 Wis, +4 *mage armor*)

hp 33 (4 HD)

Fort +8, **Ref** +4, **Will** +6; evasion

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee unarmed strike +7(1d6+3) or unarmed strike +5/+5 (1d6+3)

Ranged javelin +4 (1d6+3)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +6

Atk Options stunning fist 2/day (Fort DC 12)

Combat Gear *cloak of elemental protection*, *potion of cure light wounds*, *potion of mage armor*

Abilities Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

Feats Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Stunning Fist, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike)

Skills Balance +8, Diplomacy +1, Jump +9, Listen +6, Sense Motive +6, Spot +6, Tumble +9

Possessions combat gear plus javelins (2), manacles, signal whistle, uniform of a Bondsman of House Estival

BONDSMAN PRIESTESS CR 4

Female human Cleric of Vecna 5

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3; sight is limited to 60 ft.

Languages Common, Draconic

AC 22, touch 13, flat-footed 21

(+1 Dex, +8 armor, +1 shield, +2 deflection)

hp 48 (5 HD)

Fort +6, **Ref** +2, **Will** +7; +2 to saves from good opponents

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); 30 ft. (6 squares) with Divine Vigor

Melee light mace +2 (1d6-1), 20% miss chance

Ranged heavy crossbow +4 (1d10), 20% miss chance

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +2

Atk Options rebuke undead 2/day

Combat Gear *cloak of elemental protection**, *potion of cure light wounds*

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 5th):

3rd—*bestow curse* (DC 16), *cure serious wounds*, *delay death**

2nd—*calm emotions* (DC 16), *cure moderate wounds*, *enthrall*** (DC 15), *sound burst* (DC 15)

1st—*command*** (DC 15), *cure light wounds*, *protection from good*, *sanctuary* (DC 14), *shield of faith*

0—*detect magic*, *detect poison*, *guidance*, *light*, *mending*

** Domain spell. Domains: Destiny (As an immediate action, grant an ally within 30 feet a reroll 1/day), Tyranny (add 1 to the DC of all compulsion spells, included above)

Pre-Cast Spells *shield of faith* (included in statistics), *protection from good* (included in statistics), Divine Vigor (included in statistics)

Abilities Str 8, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 10

Feats Divine Vigor*, Skill Focus (Concentration), Skill Focus (Knowledge: Religion)

Skills Concentration +13, Heal +11, Knowledge (religion) +12, Spellcraft +9

Possessions combat gear plus light mace, heavy crossbow, masterwork full plate, masterwork light steel shield, spell component pouch (2), manacles, signal whistle, uniform of a Bondsman of House Estival, holy symbol of Vecna

Afflicted by a Vitreous Drinker (Su) The Bondsman Priestess has been afflicted by the eye drinking ability of a vitreous drinker (see the stats in below). The Bondsman Priestess' eyes are covered with thick, milky cataracts. She cannot see farther than 60 feet, and all melee and ranged attacks she makes within this range have a 20% miss chance. This effect can be removed only with a *greater restoration* or *miracle*, or by the destruction of the drinker that stole the victim's sight. The CR of the Bondsman Priestess has been reduced by 1 to account for this debilitating condition.

* see Appendix 2: New Rules Items

3: THE SMUGGLER

BONDSMAN OF HOUSE ESTIVAL CR 6

Male human Monk 4/Fighter 2

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +5; **Senses** Listen +8, Spot +8

Languages Common

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 15

(+1 Dex, +1 Wis, +4 *mage armor*)

hp 47 (6 HD)

Fort +9, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7 (+9 enchantment); evasion

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee unarmed strike +9 (2d6+3) or unarmed strike +7/+7 (2d6+3)

Ranged javelin +6 (1d6+3)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +8

Atk Options stunning fist 4/day (Fort DC 13)

Combat Gear *cloak of elemental protection**, *potion of cure light wounds*, *potion of mage armor*, *anklet of translocation**

Abilities Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

SQ Ki strike (magic), slow fall 20 ft.

Feats Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Stunning Fist, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike)

Skills Balance +10, Diplomacy +1, Jump +13, Listen +8, Sense Motive +8, Spot +8, Tumble +11

Possessions combat gear plus javelins (2), manacles, signal whistle, uniform of a Bondsman of House Estival

* see Appendix 2: New Rules Items

BONDSMAN PRIESTESS CR 6

Female human Cleric of Vecna 5/Divine Oracle 2

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3; sight is limited to 60 ft.

Languages Common, Draconic

AC 24, touch 14, flat-footed 23

(+1 Dex, +9 armor, +1 shield, +3 deflection)

hp 64 (7 HD)

Fort +6, **Ref** +4, **Will** +10; +2 to saves from good opponents; prescient sense (as evasion, but armor is not a limiting factor)

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); 30 ft. (6 squares) with Divine Vigor

Melee light mace +3 (1d6-1), 20% miss chance

Ranged heavy crossbow +5 (1d10), 20% miss chance

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +3; *freedom of movement*

Atk Options rebuke undead 2/day

Combat Gear *cloak of elemental protection**, *potion of cure light wounds*

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 7th):

4th—*fear*** (DC 17), ~~*freedom of movement*~~

3rd—*bestow curse* (DC 16), *cure serious wounds*, *delay death**, *prayer*

2nd—*calm emotions* (DC 16), *cure moderate wounds*, *enthrall*** (DC 15), *sound burst* (DC 15), *spiritual weapon* (+7 to hit, 1d8+2/19-20 damage)

1st—*bless*, *command*** (DC 15), *cure light wounds*, ~~*protection from good*~~, *sanctuary* (DC 14), ~~*shield of faith*~~

0—*cure minor wounds*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *guidance*, *light*, *mending*

** Domain spell. Domains: Destiny (As an immediate action, grant an ally within 30 feet a reroll 1/day), Oracle (cast divination spells at +2 caster level), Tyranny (add 1 to the DC of all compulsion spells, included above)

Pre-Cast Spells *shield of faith* (included in statistics), *protection from good* (included in statistics), *freedom of movement*, Divine Vigor (included in statistics)

Abilities Str 8, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 10

SQ prescient sense, scry bonus (+1 sacred bonus on the DC of all scrying spells), trap sense +1

Feats Divine Vigor*, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Concentration), Skill Focus (Knowledge: Religion)

Skills Concentration +15, Heal +13, Knowledge (religion) +14, Spellcraft +11

Possessions combat gear plus light mace, heavy crossbow, +1 *full plate*, masterwork light steel shield, spell component pouch (2), manacles, signal whistle, uniform of a Bondsman of House Estival, holy symbol of Vecna

Afflicted by a Vitreous Drinker (Su) The Bondsman Priestess has been afflicted by the eye drinking ability of a vitreous drinker (see the stats in below). The Bondsman Priestess' eyes are covered with thick, milky cataracts. She cannot see farther than 60 feet, and all melee and ranged attacks she makes within this range have a 20% miss chance. This effect can be removed only with a *greater restoration* or *miracle*, or by the destruction of the drinker that stole the victim's sight. The CR of the Bondsman Priestess has been reduced by 1 to account for this debilitating condition.

* see Appendix 2: New Rules Items

3: THE SMUGGLER

BONDSMAN OF HOUSE ESTIVAL CR 8

Male human Monk 4/Fighter 4

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +6; **Senses** Listen +8, Spot +8

Languages Common

AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 18

(+2 Dex, +1 Wis, +4 *mage armor*, +3 deflection)

hp 63 (8 HD)

Fort +10, **Ref** +6, **Will** +6 (+8 enchantment); evasion

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee unarmed strike +14 (2d6+8) or unarmed strike +14/+14/+9 (2d6+8)

Ranged javelin +11 (1d6+6)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +10

Atk Options stunning fist 4/day (Fort DC 13)

Combat Gear *cloak of elemental protection**, *potion of cure light wounds*, *potion of mage armor*, *anklet of translocation**

Pre-Cast Spells *righteous wrath of the faithful* (included in statistics above), *mass shield of faith** (included in statistics above)

Abilities Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

SQ Ki strike (magic), slow fall 20 ft.

Feats Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack, Improved Unarmed Strike, Stunning Fist, Sun School*, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike), Weapon Specialization (unarmed strike)

Skills Balance +10, Diplomacy +1, Jump +13, Listen +8, Sense Motive +8, Spot +8, Tumble +13

Possessions combat gear plus javelins (2), manacles, signal whistle, uniform of a Bondsman of House Estival

* see Appendix 2: New Rules Items

BONDSMAN PRIESTESS CR 8

Female human Cleric of Vecna 6/Divine Oracle 3

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4; sight is limited to 60 ft.

Languages Common, Draconic

AC 26, touch 14, flat-footed 25

(+1 Dex, +9 armor, +3 shield, +3 deflection)

hp 81 (9 HD)

Fort +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +13; +2 to saves from good opponents; prescient sense (as evasion, but armor is not a limiting factor)

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); 30 ft. (6 squares) with Divine Vigor

Melee light mace +7/+7 (1d6+2), 20% miss chance

Ranged heavy crossbow +9 (1d10+3), 20% miss chance

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +4; *freedom of movement*

Atk Options rebuke undead 2/day

Combat Gear *cloak of elemental protection**, *potion of cure light wounds*, *ring of mystic healing**

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 9th):

5th—*greater command*** (DC 20), ~~*righteous wrath of the faithful**~~

4th—*cure critical wounds*, *fear*** (DC 18), ~~*freedom of movement*~~, ~~*mass shield of faith**~~

3rd—*bestow curse* (DC 17), *cure serious wounds*, *delay death**, ~~*magic vestments*~~, *prayer*

2nd—*calm emotions* (DC 17), *cure moderate wounds* (2), *enthrall*** (DC 16), *sound burst* (DC 16), *spiritual weapon* (+9 to hit, 1d8+3/19-20 damage)

1st—*bles, command*** (DC 16), *cure light wounds*, (2), ~~*protection from good*~~, *sanctuary* (DC 15)

0—*cure minor wounds*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *guidance*, *light*, *mending*

** Domain spell. Domains: Destiny (As an immediate action, grant an ally within 30 feet a reroll 1/day), Oracle (cast divination spells at +2 caster level), Tyranny (add 1 to the DC of all compulsion spells, included above)

Pre-Cast Spells *mass shield of faith** (included in statistics), *protection from good* (included in statistics), *righteous wrath of the faithful* (on all allies, included in statistics above), *magic vestments* (on light steel shield, included in statistics above), *freedom of movement*, Divine Vigor* (included in statistics)

Abilities Str 8, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 18, Cha 10

SQ divination enhancement (roll twice for divination spells), prescient sense, scry bonus (+1 sacred bonus on the DC of all scrying spells), trap sense +1

Feats Divine Vigor*, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Concentration), Skill Focus (Knowledge: Religion)

Skills Concentration +17, Heal +15, Knowledge (religion) +16, Spellcraft +13

Possessions combat gear plus light mace, heavy crossbow, +1 *full plate*, masterwork light steel shield with *magic vestments*, spell component pouch (2), manacles, signal whistle, uniform of a Bondsman of House Estival, holy symbol of Vecna

Afflicted by a Vitreous Drinker (Su) The Bondsman Priestess has been afflicted by the eye drinking ability of a vitreous drinker (see the stats in below). The Bondsman Priestess' eyes are covered with thick, milky cataracts. She cannot see farther than 60 feet, and all melee and ranged attacks she makes within this range have a 20% miss chance. This effect can be removed only with a *greater restoration* or *miracle*, or by the destruction of the drinker that stole the victim's sight. The CR of the Bondsman Priestess has been reduced by 1 to account for this debilitating condition.

* see Appendix 2: New Rules Items

3: THE SMUGGLER

BONDSMAN OF HOUSE ESTIVAL CR 10

Male human Monk 4/Fighter 4/Drunken Master 2

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +6; **Senses** Listen +8, Spot +8

Languages Common

AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 18

(+2 Dex, +1 Wis, +4 *mage armor*, +3 deflection)

hp 87 (10 HD)

Immune fear, poison

Fort +13, **Ref** +9, **Will** +7 (+9 enchantment); evasion; +2 to saves from good opponents

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee unarmed strike +16 (2d6+9) or improvised weapon +11/+11/+6 (2d6+9+1d4) or unarmed strike +16/+16/+11 (2d6+9)

Ranged javelin +12 (1d6+7)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +12; *freedom of movement*

Atk Options stunning fist 4/day (Fort DC 13), drink like a demon, stagger

Combat Gear *cloak of elemental protection**, *potion of cure light wounds*, *potion of mage armor*, *anklet of translocation**, two flasks of brandy

Pre-Cast Spells *mass shield of faith** (included in statistics), *protection from good* (included in statistics), *righteous wrath of the faithful* (included in statistics above), *heroes' feast*, *freedom of movement*

Abilities Str 18, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

SQ Ki strike (magic), slow fall 20 ft.

Feats Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack, Improved Unarmed Strike, Stunning Fist, Sun School*, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike), Weapon Specialization (unarmed strike)

Skills Balance +10, Diplomacy +1, Jump +13, Listen +8, Sense Motive +8, Spot +8, Tumble +13

Possessions combat gear plus *gauntlets of ogre power*, javelins (2), manacles, signal whistle, uniform of a Bondsman of House Estival

Drink Like a Demon (Ex) A drunken master's body handles alcohol differently from other people. He can drink a large tankard of ale, a bottle of wine, or a corresponding amount of stronger alcohol as a move action. Every bottle or tankard he consumes during combat reduces his wisdom and intelligence by 2 points each, but increases his Strength or Constitution (PC's choice) by 2 points. A drunken master may benefit from a number of drinks equal to his class level. The duration of both the penalty and the bonus is a number equal to the PC's drunken master level +3

Improvised Weapons (Ex) While bottles and tankards are a drunken master's preferred improvised weapons, he can use furniture, farm implements, or nearly anything else at hand to attack his foes. A drunken master's improvised weapons deals as much damage as his unarmed

strike plus an extra 1d4 points. Most improvised weapons deal bludgeoning damage, although some (a broken glass bottle, for example) would deal piercing or slashing damage. When a drunken master rolls a natural 1 on an attack roll while using an improvised weapon, that weapon breaks apart and becomes useless

Stagger (Ex) By tripping, stumbling, and staggering a drunken master of 2nd level or higher can make a charge attack that surprises his opponents. This ability has two beneficial aspects: First, the charge need not be in a straight line, even though the PC can still move up to twice his speed. Second, if a drunken master makes a DC 15 tumble check before beginning a charge, his movement through threatened squares provokes no attacks of opportunity.

* see Appendix 2: New Rules Items

BONDSMAN PRIESTESS CR 10

Female human Cleric of Vecna 6/Divine Oracle 4/Contemplative of Vecna 1

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +5; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4; sight is limited to 60 ft.

Languages Common, Draconic

AC 26, touch 14, flat-footed 26

(+1 Dex, +9 armor, +3 shield, +3 deflection); uncanny dodge

hp 107 (11 HD)

Immune disease, fear, poison

Fort +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +16; +2 to saves from good opponents; prescient sense (as evasion, but armor is not a limiting factor)

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); 30 ft. (6 squares) with Divine Vigor

Melee light mace +8/+8/+3 (1d6+2), 20% miss chance

Ranged heavy crossbow +10 (1d10+3), 20% miss chance

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +5; *freedom of movement*

Atk Options rebuke undead 2/day, Madness domain (add +5 to any Wisdom-based skill check or Will save 1/day)

Combat Gear *cloak of elemental protection*, *potion of cure light wounds*, *ring of mystic healing*

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 11th):

6th—~~heroes' feast~~, *warp destiny**

5th—*greater command*** (DC 21), *mass cure light wounds*, ~~*mass shield of faith**~~, ~~*righteous wrath of the faithful**~~

4th—*confusion*** (DC 20), ~~*freedom of movement*~~ (4)

3rd—*bestow curse* (DC 18), *cure serious wounds*, (2), *delay death**, ~~*magic vestments*~~, *prayer*

2nd—*calm emotions* (DC 18), *cure moderate wounds* (2), *enthrall*** (DC 17), *sound burst* (DC 17), *spiritual weapon* (+11/+5 to hit, 1d8+3/19-20 damage)

1st—*bless, command*** (DC 17), *cure light wounds, protection from good* (4), *sanctuary* (DC 16)
0—*cure minor wounds, detect magic, detect poison, guidance, light, mending*

** Domain spell. Domains: Destiny (As an immediate action, grant an ally within 30 feet a reroll 1/day), Madness (act with clarity of madness 1/day), Oracle (cast divination spells at +2 caster level), Tyranny (add 1 to the DC of all compulsion spells, included above)

Pre-Cast Spells *mass shield of faith** (included in statistics), *protection from good* (included in statistics), *righteous wrath of the faithful* (on all allies, included in statistics above), *magic vestments* (on light steel shield, included in statistics above), *heroes' feast, freedom of movement, Divine Vigor* (included in statistics)

Abilities Str 8, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 20, Cha 10

SQ divination enhancement (roll twice for divination spells), prescient sense, scry bonus (+1 sacred bonus on the DC of all scrying spells), trap sense +1

Feats Divine Vigor*, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Concentration), Skill Focus (Knowledge: Religion)

Skills Concentration +19, Heal +16, Knowledge (religion) +18, Spellcraft +15**Possessions** combat gear plus light mace, heavy crossbow, +1 *full plate*, masterwork light steel shield with *magic vestments, periapt of wisdom* +2, spell component pouch (2), manacles, signal whistle, uniform of a Bondsman of House Estival, holy symbol of Vecna

Afflicted by a Vitreous Drinker (Su) The Bondsman Priestess has been afflicted by the eye drinking ability of a vitreous drinker (see the stats in below). The Bondsman Priestess' eyes are covered with thick, milky cataracts. She cannot see farther than 60 feet, and all melee and ranged attacks she makes within this range have a 20% miss chance. This effect can be removed only with a *greater restoration* or *miracle*, or by the destruction of the drinker that stole the victim's sight. The CR of the Bondsman Priestess has been reduced by 1 to account for this debilitating condition.

* see Appendix 2: New Rules Items

5: DOWN THE HATCH

ADVANCED GREATER UMBRAL HOUND CR 10
NE Medium undead (Incorporeal)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +17, Spot +17

Languages None

AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 12
(+3 Dex, +2 deflection)

hp 110 (17 HD)

Immune mind-affecting effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability drain, ability damage, energy drain, fatigue, exhaustion, death by massive damage, any effect requiring a

Fortitude save (except those that work on objects), tripping, grappling, falling

Fort +5, **Ref** +8, **Will** +11

Speed fly 40 ft. (8 squares) (good)

Melee incorporeal touch +11 melee (1d8 times 1.5 Strength damage)

Base Atk +9; **Grp** —

Atk Options Spring Attack, Elusive Target

Abilities Str —, Dex 16, Con —, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 15

Feats Alertness, Dodge, Elusive Target*, Empowered Ability Damage*, Mobility, Spring Attack

Skills Hide +14 (+18 in shadowy areas, +10 in brightly lit areas), Listen +17, Search +6, Spot +17

Possessions none

Strength Damage (Su) The touch of a greater umbral hound deals 1d8 points of Strength damage to a living foe (multiplied by 1.5 due to the greater umbral hound's Empowered Ability Damage feat). A creature reduced to Strength 0 by a greater umbral hound dies. This is a negative energy effect.

Create Spawn (Su) Any animal reduced to Strength 0 by a greater umbral hound becomes a greater umbral hound (use statistics for a greater shadow) under the control of its killer within 1d4 rounds.

* see Appendix 2: New Rules Items

APPENDIX 2: NEW RULES ITEMS

FEATS

Divine Vigor

You can channel energy to increase your speed and durability.

Prerequisite: Turn or rebuke undead ability.

Benefit: As a standard action, spend one of your turn or rebuke undead attempts to increase your base speed by 10 feet and gain +2 temporary hit points per PC level. These effects last a number of minutes equal to your Charisma modifier.

Source: *Complete Warrior*

Elusive Target [Tactical]

Trying to land a blow against you can be a maddening experience.

Prerequisites: Dodge, Mobility, base attack bonus +6.

Benefit: The Elusive Target feat enables the use of three tactical maneuvers:

Negate Power Attack: To use this maneuver, you must designate a specific foe to be affected by your Dodge feat. If that foe uses the Power Attack feat against you, the foe gains no bonus on the damage roll but still takes the corresponding penalty on the attack roll.

Diverting Defense: To use this maneuver, you must be flanked and you must designate one of the flanking attackers to be affected by your Dodge feat. The first attack of the round from the designated attacker automatically misses you and may strike the other flanking foe instead; the attacking creature makes an attack roll normally, and its ally is considered flat-footed. If the designated attacker is making a full attack against you, its second and subsequent attacks function normally.

Cause Overreach: To use this maneuver, you must provoke an attack of opportunity from a foe by moving out of a threatened square. If the foe misses you, you can make a free trip attempt against this foe, and the foe does not get a chance to trip you if your attempt fails.

Source: *Complete Warrior*

Empowered Ability Damage [Monstrous]

Your ability damage (or ability drain) special attack is more potent than normal.

Prerequisites: Cha 11, undead type, incorporeal subtype, supernatural ability to drain or damage an ability score.

Benefit: All variable, numeric effects of an empowered ability damage or ability drain special attack are increased by 50%. For example, an allip with this feat drains 1-1/2 times the normal amount of Wisdom (roll 1d4 and multiply the result by 1-1/2).

Source: *Libris Mortis*

Sun School [Tactical]

You have learned a number of esoteric martial arts techniques inspired by the sun.

Prerequisites: Flurry of blows ability, base attack bonus +4.

Benefit: The Sun School feat enables the use of three tactical maneuvers.

Inexorable Progress of Dawn: To use this maneuver, you must hit the same foe with the first two unarmed attacks from a flurry of blows. If you do, your foe must move back 5 feet, and you may move 5 feet forward if you wish. This movement does not provoke an attack of opportunity for either PC.

Blinding Sun of Noon: To use this maneuver, you must successfully stun the same foe with an unarmed attack two rounds in a row. In addition to being stunned, that enemy is confused for 1d4 rounds thereafter.

Flash of Sunset: To use this maneuver, you must move adjacent to a foe instantly, as with a dimension door spell or the monk's abundant step class feature. If you do so, you can immediately make a single attack at your highest attack bonus against that foe.

Source: *Complete Warrior*

MAGIC ITEMS

Anklet of Translocation

An *anklet of translocation* allows you to make short dimensional hops. When it is activated (as a swift action), you can instantly teleport (with no chance of error) up to 10 feet. The new space must be within line of sight and line of effect.

You can't use the anklet to move into a space occupied by another creature, nor can you teleport into a solid object; if you attempt to do so, the anklet's activation is wasted. You can bring along objects weighing up to your maximum load, but you can't bring another creature with you.

An *anklet of translocation* functions two times per day.

Moderate (DC 18) conjuration; CL 7th; Craft Wondrous Item, *dimension door*; Price 1,400 gp; Weight —.

Source: *Magic Item Compendium*

Cloak of Elemental Protection

When you activate a *cloak of elemental protection* (as an immediate action), you gain resistance 10 against a single energy type of your choice (acid, cold, electricity, fire or sonic). This protection lasts until the start of your next turn.

A *cloak of elemental protection* functions once per day. You must wear a *cloak of elemental protection* for 24 hours before you can access its abilities. If it is taken off, it becomes inactive until worn for an additional 24 hours.

Faint (DC 16) abjuration; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *resist energy*; Price 1,000 gp; Weight 1 lb.

Source: *Magic Item Compendium*

Galeb Duhr Hammer

A *galeb duhr hammer* acts as a +1 warhammer. In addition, if you have the stonecunning racial ability, the hammer gains an extra ability. Whenever you score a critical hit with a *galeb duhr hammer* against a creature standing on the ground, the surface your target is standing on attempts to hold the creature in place. For 5 rounds, the victim's speed falls to 5 feet and it takes a -2 penalty on attack rolls and to AC.

Moderate (DC 20) transmutation; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *stone shape*; Price 5,312 gp; Weight 15 lbs.

Source: *Magic Item Compendium*

Glitter Stone

A *glitter stone* renders hidden creatures visible. The stone must be thrown (range increment 10 feet) or hurled from a sling (using that weapon's normal range increment) as a ranged touch attack. When the stone strikes its target or a hard surface, it deals no damage, but explodes in a 10-foot-radius burst of glittering shards. All invisible creatures in the area become coated in glittery dust, making them visible for 3 rounds. Any coated creature takes a -40 penalty on Hide checks for the duration of the effect.

Faint (DC 16) conjuration; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *glitterdust*; Price 450 gp; Weight 15 lbs.

Source: *Magic Item Compendium*

Globe of Sunlight

You can hurl a *globe of sunlight* up to 50 feet. When it arrives at the end of its trajectory, it detonates as a *sunburst* spell (Reflex DC 22 partial), except that the radius of the burst is only 40 feet. Once activated, the globe is expended and cannot be used again.

Strong (DC 22) evocation; CL 15th; Craft Wondrous Item, *sunburst*; Price 6,000 gp; Weight 1 lb.

Source: *Magic Item Compendium*

Gloves of the Titan's Grip

While wearing these gloves, you gain a +8 enhancement bonus on grapple checks. These gloves automatically activate when you enter a grapple, and the effect lasts for 7 rounds.

This ability functions three times per day.

Moderate (DC 19) transmutation; CL 9th; Craft Wondrous Item, *bull's strength*; Price 14,000 gp; Weight 2 lbs.

Source: *Magic Item Compendium*

Goggles of Draconic Vision

Goggles of draconic vision grant you a +5 bonus on Spot checks, low-light vision, and darkvision out to 60 feet. In addition, while wearing them, you cannot be blinded by the cloud a hovering dragon creates

(though the cloud still provides concealment for all within it). These are continuous effects and require no activation.

Once per day, you can activate the goggles (a standard action) to grant you blindsense out to 30 feet for 1 minute.

Moderate (DC 19) transmutation; CL 9th; Craft Wondrous Item, *dragonsight*; Price 16,000 gp; Weight 1 lb.

Source: *Magic Item Compendium*

Ring of Mystic Healing

A *ring of mystic healing* provides a boost to your healing spells. When casting *cure* spells, you gain a +1 competence bonus to your caster level. This is a continuous effect and requires no activation.

In addition, this ring has 3 charges, which are renewed each day at dawn. Spending 1 or more charges (as an swift action) grants a bonus to the damage healed by the next *cure* spell you cast before the end of your next turn.

1 charge: +2d6 points of healing.

2 charges: +3d6 points of healing.

3 charges: +4d6 points of healing.

Faint (DC 17) conjuration; CL 5th; Forge Ring, *cure serious wounds*; Price 3,500 gp; Weight —.

Source: *Magic Item Compendium*

SPELLS

Delay Death

Necromancy

Level: Cleric 4, Destiny 3

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 immediate action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One creature

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

You gesture toward your ally and call upon the power of your beliefs. A soft, golden glow appears on your companion's chest, around his heart.

The subject of this powerful spell is unable to die from hit point damage. While under the protection of this spell, the normal limit of -9 hit points before a PC dies is extended without limit. A condition or spell that destroys enough of the subject's body so as to not allow *raise dead* to work, such as a *disintegrate* effect, still kills the creature, as does death brought about by ability score damage, level drain, or a death effect.

The spell does not prevent the subject from entering the dying state by dropping to -1 hit points. It merely prevents death as a result of hit point loss.

If the subject has fewer than -9 hit points when the spell's duration expires, then it dies instantly.

Source: *Spell Compendium*

Righteous Wrath of the Faithful

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]

Level: Cleric 5
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: 30 ft.
Target: Allies within a 30-ft.-radius burst centered on you
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

Source: *Races of Destiny*

When you cast this spell, you fire your allies and companions with a divine madness or fury, greatly enhancing their combat ability.

Allies gain one additional melee attack each round, at their highest attack bonus, when making a full attack. (This additional attack is not cumulative with other effects that grant extra attacks, such as the *haste* spell.) They also gain a +3 morale bonus on melee attack rolls and damage rolls. (This bonus on melee attack rolls does stack with the bonus provided by *haste*.)

Source: *Spell Compendium*

Shield of Faith, Mass

Abjuration

Level: Cleric 4
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Targets: One creature/level, no two of which are more than 30 feet apart

You hold your arms aloft and implore the powers you venerate. Your comrades are bathed in silver light, and over their heads appears the symbol of your god, showing the deity's protection.

This spell functions like *shield of faith* (PH 278), except that it affects multiple allies at a distance.

Source: *Spell Compendium*

Warp Destiny

Transmutation

Level: Destiny 6
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 immediate action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: Instantaneous

You reshape your personal fate to potentially avoid some tragic action, but the ripples caused in your destiny have unpleasant side effects for a brief period. After learning the result of a saving throw that you have rolled, you may cast this spell to reroll the save, but with an insight bonus equal to your caster level (maximum +20). Alternatively, if you are struck in combat you can apply the insight bonus to your AC against the attack (even if flat-footed); if your new AC exceeds the attack roll, the attack misses you.

Casting this spell has a side effect: until the start of your next turn, you take a –4 penalty on all saving throws and to your AC.

APPENDIX 3: HISTORY OF CASTLE ESTIVAL AND HOUSE ESTIVAL

From VER6-03 *Castle Estival*

Castle Estival derives its name from the family Estival, primary financial backers of its construction. Oeridian emigrants fleeing the west some time before the common year calendar, they settled the area of the eastern Iron Wood. The majority of the native residents were humans of Flannish descent, though it was not uncommon to see dwarves or gnomes looking to trade. Recognizing the fertile land and bounty of fauna, the Estivals decided to make a permanent settlement and offered to protect the locals in exchange for work. Most of the area was plagued with roving orc and goblin tribes. Eventually the Flan natives were weaned off of their hunting and gathering practices and became tenant farmers. This arrangement was beneficial for both, as it created prosperity. Many of the people living near the hills and in the Iron Wood perceived the lands as a safe haven from the lawlessness that ran amok. Now the southern populace had no immediate need to seek protection in Verbobonc City.

By CY 115, Verbobonc was formally incorporated into Veluna and the kingdom of Ferrond. At that time, many of the families with substantial holdings were given a chance to swear loyalty to their new rulers. In return, their holdings and power would be legitimized. This also made the family bloodlines anointed as noble and blessed by the Raoan church. All told, six families swore allegiance, Estival being one of them. The ruling family of Verbobonc City, house Rêvepaix, was crowned the ruling family of the new Viscounty. This caused considerable tension, though nothing appeared to come of it at the time.

Castle Estival has been a part of Verbobonc's landscape for as long as most can remember. Built in CY 150, the castle was part of a defensive agreement between Veluna and Furyondy. The majority of the money used to erect it came from the coffers of the Estivals, who enjoyed unprecedented wealth, above and beyond all of the other nobility combined. Naturally, whispers soon began circulating about their fortune and how they acquired it. As time went on, other questions were posed as mysterious circumstances and disappearances involving their lands came to light. By CY 200, small farming communities reported being victimized by black-garbed warriors intent on taking their children. Those that resisted found themselves on the wrong side of a sword. The rest grieved the loss of the children and begged the church of Rao to intercede. The Raoans negotiated with the nobles to put an end to the bloodshed. This resulted in houses Estival and Rhynehurst collaborating in an investigation of the foul deeds. After two weeks, success was to be had, as

Lord Estival and his troops came across the perpetrators in the Iron Wood. In capturing them, it was learned that they were lycanthropes, diseased exiles of the viscounty. They were given a trial at which they proclaimed their innocence. Lord Estival presided over their fate as his captain of the guard announced the charges and evidence. The local citizens, victims of the attacks, raged from the gallery. They wanted someone to pay for the crime. After two days, Lord Estival found all the lycanthropes guilty and sentenced them to death by hanging, then their souls purged by fire. The populace was happy as the attacks had finally stopped and many could now rest easily knowing that their children were safe. Unbeknownst to many, villages to the far east were reporting disappearances of children in the middle of the night. Many of the local men attributed these disappearances to animals in the night and very few questioned this. Very few except a fledgling church dedicated to St. Cuthbert. These devout clerics believed that something far sinister was occurring – especially considering that something similar had happened to the west.

In CY 350, Keoland invaders started what would eventually become known as the Short War. Keoish occupation stretched far into Verbobonc. Many nobles were initially shocked with the speed and audacity of the Keoish army. No one expected them to take up siege of the viscounty. That is, until it was realized that house Estival had put its full support behind Keoland. Word spread that house Estival was promised rule of the viscounty upon Keoland's complete and unilateral victory in Verbobonc. House Estival troops fought side by side with those of their Keoish allies. For ten years Keoland had a foothold in the viscounty, controlling much of the southwest. Using Castle Estival as a military headquarters, they were able to keep Veluna from supporting the war effort. But by the end of CY 359, Keoland's power began to wane. The long occupation, as well as the extended fighting with Veluna, ultimately made it unfeasible to continue the war. The Keoish ambassador met with representatives of Furyondy, Veluna and Verbobonc. Through negotiations and promises, it was agreed that Keoland would unilaterally pull out of both Veluna and Verbobonc. While many other stipulations were made by Veluna, only one was made by Viscount Fullgrum of house Rêvepaix; no one was to tell the Estivals that the war was over. This little point was agreed upon by all parties. So when the day came for Keoish withdrawal weeks later, the Keoish general informed Lord Estival that he had information that the Verbobonc Standing Army was attempting a spearhead from the south. He said he would take the whole of the Keoish army and

meet them there to wipe them out once and for all. Lord Estival did not see through the ruse, as it was something he wanted to believe: that this was the day that he would rule Verbobonc. But what a surprise he had when a day later the Standing Army marched on Castle Estival. Over the course of a week, all the other nobles laid siege to the traitorous house. On the seventh night the forces of the viscounty went over the walls. Borderers took control of the gatehouse and lifted the castle's main gate. With torches and weapons, a wave of bodies rushed into the castle. Their expectation of fighting common soldiers was quickly quashed as they did battle with a host of strange creatures. Plant animals came to life and swallowed men whole. Disgusting jellies and oozes littered the corridors. The losses and damage were heavy for the Viscount's army, but in the end they soundly won the day. In the aftermath both Lord and Lady Estival were found, though not alive. Having decided that their fate was sealed, they choose to drink poison and enter the embrace of their dark god.

The Church of Saint Cuthbert would not have any of that. Having grown in power over the course of almost 200 years, they expected the Estivals to pay for not only their treachery to the Viscounty, but for their past misdeeds as well. Both were brought back to life and were put on trial. The church had witnesses attest the evil actions of house Estival; torture, murder, bizarre human experiments, cannibalism and consorting with demons. They were found guilty and sentenced to be drawn, quartered and burned. With the last of the current line of Estivals gone, the status of their lands and holdings was questioned. The Viscount decided to award the majority of lands to the nobles who suffered the greatest during the Keoish occupation, as well as those that gave the most assistance in fighting it. Of these, Rhynehurst endured the most hardship, and so the Viscount awarded the majority of the holdings to his house. But when the subject of the stewardship of Castle Estival itself came up, the church of St. Cuthbert, silent through out the proceedings, had something to say. They gave an impassioned speech about evil and the places that evil flourishes. Castle Estival could never be cleaned, at least not so soon after the events that have gone on. They beseeched the Viscount to award the castle to the church, so that they may protect the people from it. The Viscount relented, and so Castle Estival technically became a holding of the church of St. Cuthbert who protected it from intruders for almost 250 years.

* * * *

The reappearance of Wellborn Estival, a scion of a noble family long thought vanished, surprised many. However, Wellborn Estival seemed to possess all of the requisite papers of his station, and there was little Viscount Langard and the Church of St. Cuthbert could do but ennoble Wellborn Estival and grant him

his family's lands, including the long-abandoned Castle Estival. The new Lord Estival seemed a generous and kind man, determined to extinguish the dark reputation of his family.

How a scion of a family dead for 250 could exist, none asked with sufficient vigor...

APPENDIX 4: ILLUSTRATIONS

Baronet Drenton Vaswell



Viscount Langard



Elespeth the Dryad



Obmi, the Hammer of Iuz



Vitreous Drinker



PLAYER HANDOUT 1: THE SUMMONS

This sealed message was delivered to you by courier.

My Friend-

Greetings in these dark times. I have a wise ally that offers a desperate hope for uncovering the extensive plots of that villain Halmadar. I need your help, and the help of others that make their coin by working good deeds; the reason for this will soon enough become clear.

Please meet me at the Wandering Minnow in the town of Eglath on the River Road on the 14th of Wealsun. Please be discreet; I have many enemies and I do not as yet wish to make my presence public.

With gratitude,

Langard

PLAYER HANDOUT 2: A MISSIVE FROM THE BONDSMEN

This sealed message was delivered to you by junior Bondsman of House Estival.

Soldier-

There are many traitors and spies to My Illustrious Majesty, Viscount Wellborn Estival. Not the least of these is the former Viscount, whose criminal background and poor leadership led the Viscounty to the perilous situation it festers in today (although, under My leadership, you must agree that things are certainly improving).

We have word that this traitor Langard is seeking heroes and adventurers for some unknown purpose, and he may be contacting you. You should be mindful that conspiring with a traitor is itself treason, but capture of a traitor is an honorable pursuit.

In this second year of my Reign,

Viscount Wellborn Estival

PLAYER HANDOUT 3: A MISSIVE FROM THE COMPANY OF THE BLACK ROSE

This sealed message was delivered to you by courier, along with a small package containing hair dyes, a heavy cloak, and a false nose.

Greetings, Adventurer:

It is good to know that true heroes are active in Verbobonc in this time of oppression and evil. Please find enclosed a few items to aid your travel through the Viscounty undetected by the forces of the tyrant Estival.

Resistance intelligence indicates that the deposed Langard, the rightful ruler of Verbobonc, may attempt to contact you. We encourage you to provide any aid to Langard that you can, particularly as pertains to toppling the evil Estival (may the devils take his soul).

For the People,

General Kvelsulf



PLAYER HANDOUT 4: THE EGLATH SIGN

This neatly printed sign is affixed to a post near the town of Eglath.

Let It Be Known:

For Concealing and Assisting a Known Traitor, the Town of Eglath is forthwith Destroyed and its citizenry Executed on this day, the 14th of Wealsun, 598 CY. Attempts to settle or reclaim this land shall be considered Treason.

Let all who would harbor Traitors to the Viscounty be warned.

**By Decree of Wellborn Estival,
Viscount of Verbobonc**

Witnessed by Drenton, Baronet of Vaswell

PLAYER HANDOUT 5: THE PROPHECY

The Prophecy of Halmadar the Cruel, as provided in its entirety by Elespeth the Dryad, is as follows:

*I speak this prophecy to the three,
The Ruby, the Book, and the speaker of Lies
Skilled above all in the domain of his god,
A master and servant from Oerth will arise.*

*Beware! His darkness is unbound,
and few believe he has returned.
Through his lies his guile continues,
Seizing power that'd once been spurned.*

*Knowledge is the path to his ascension,
and magic will be the key to the door.
Death will greet him and embrace him,
secrets once seen will no longer obscure.*

*For when traders fall and traitors strike,
the humbled master will grasp his role.
Then the brave at heart must stem the striving,
and keep the master from his goal.*

*So look to those who choose adventure,
heralding both from near and far.
For these brave souls will be decisive,
in defeating Halmadar.*

West Exit:
(your entrance)



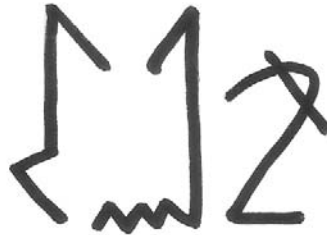
Exit

PLAYER HANDOUT 7: THREE MORE MARKS

Upper Exit:



Lower Exit:



West Exit:
(your entrance)



translations:

To Torture Chambers

To Cells and Labs

Exit

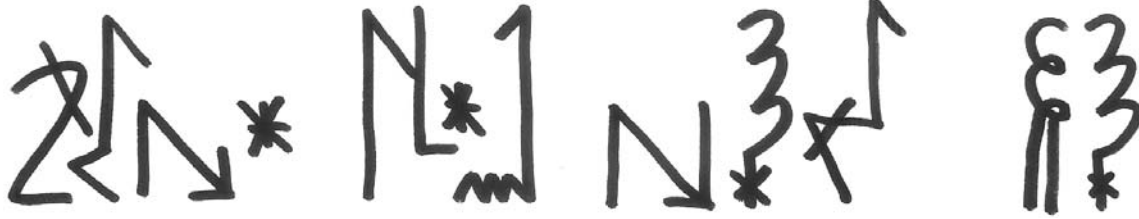
PLAYER HANDOUT 8: FOUR MARKS

Northeast Exit:

East-Northeast Exit:

East-Southeast Exit:

Southeast Exit:



translations:

To Castle Dungeons

To Slave Cells

To Experimental Subject Cells

To Labs

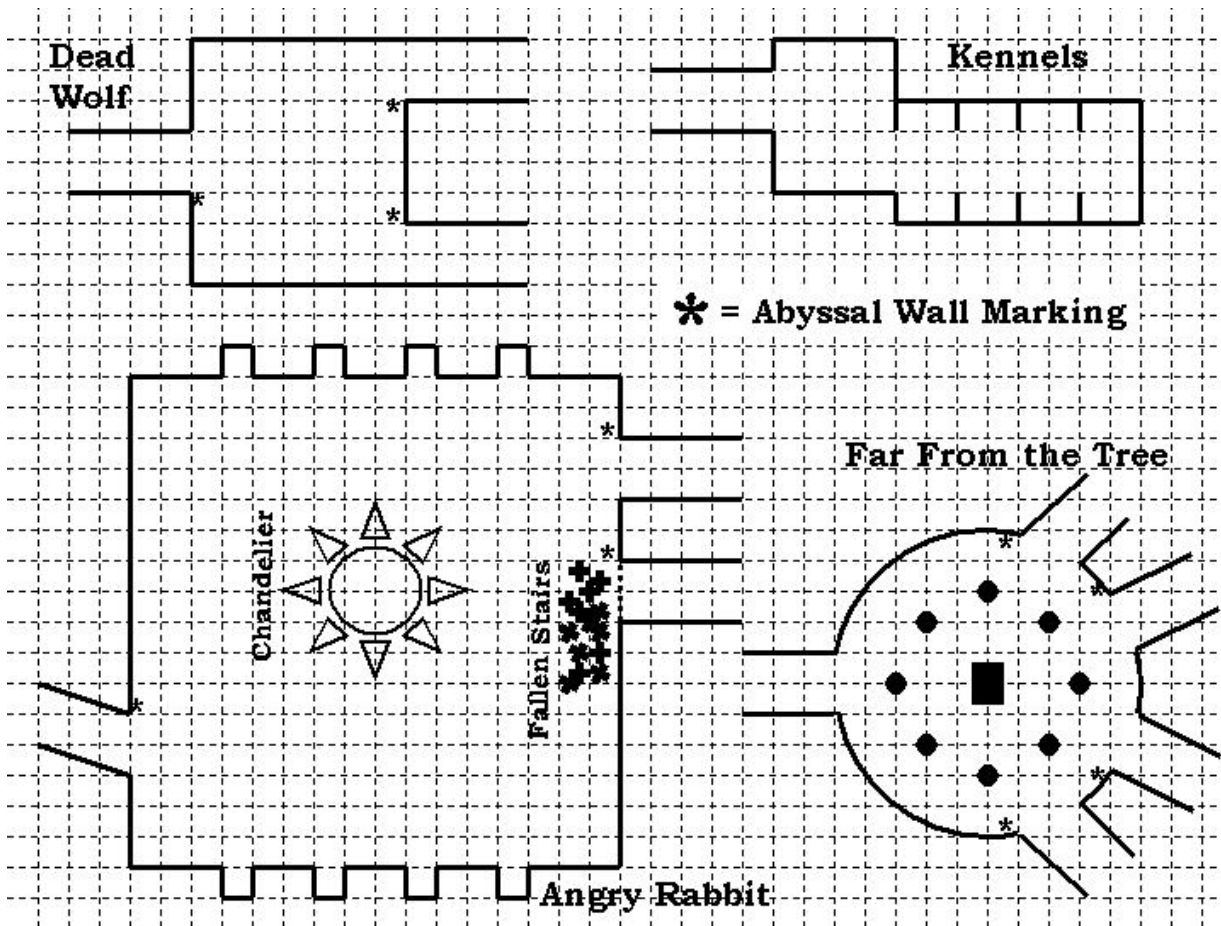
DM MAP 1

This is an overland map of the Viscounty of Verbobonc.



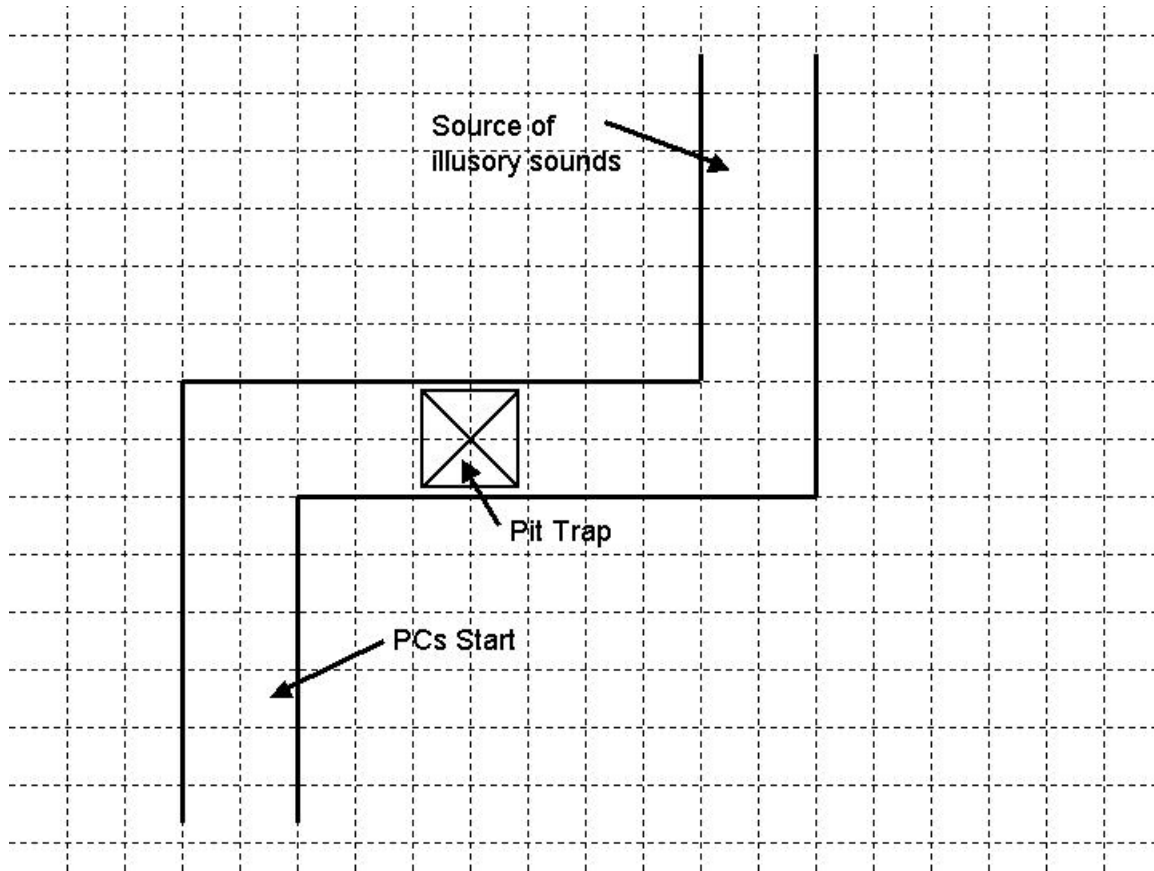
DM MAPS 2

Here are some helpful maps for use as the PCs explore the dungeons in Encounter 5.



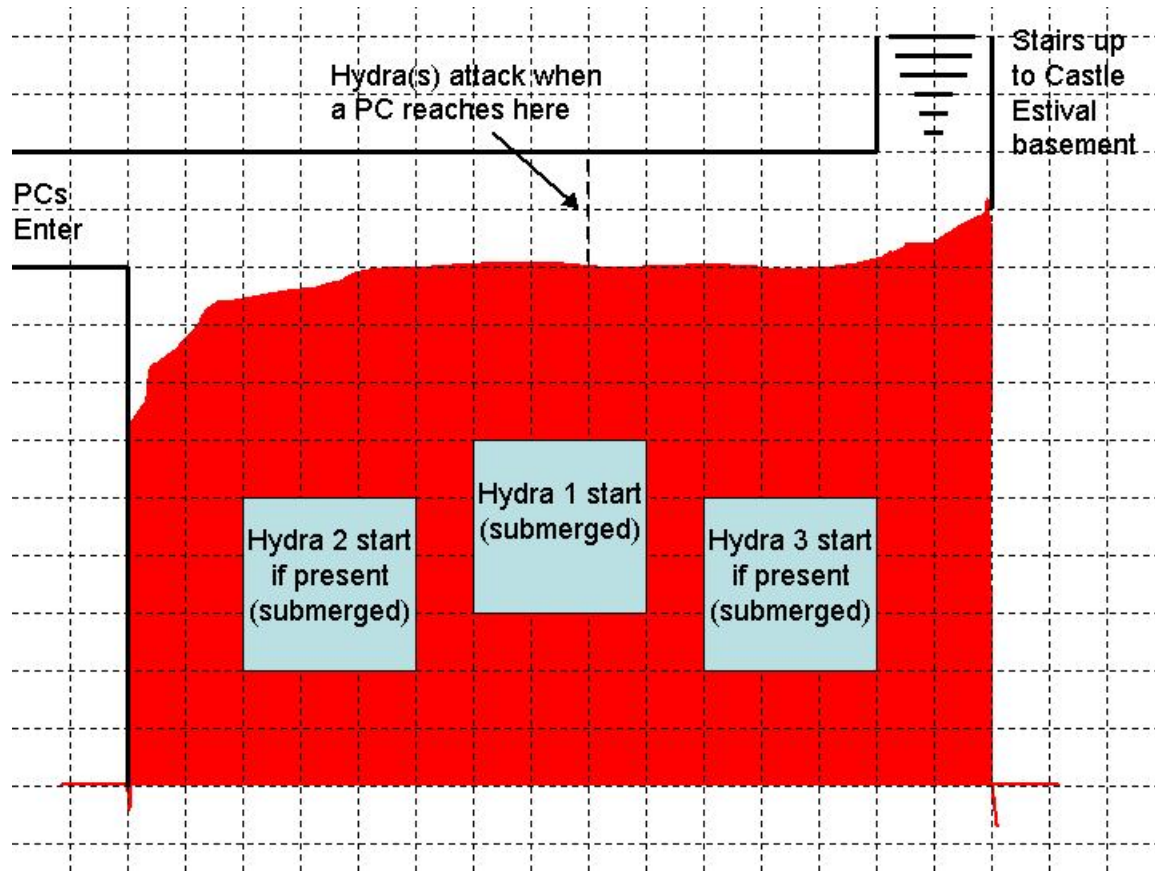
DM MAP 3

This map is used for the pit trap in Encounter 5.



DM MAP 4

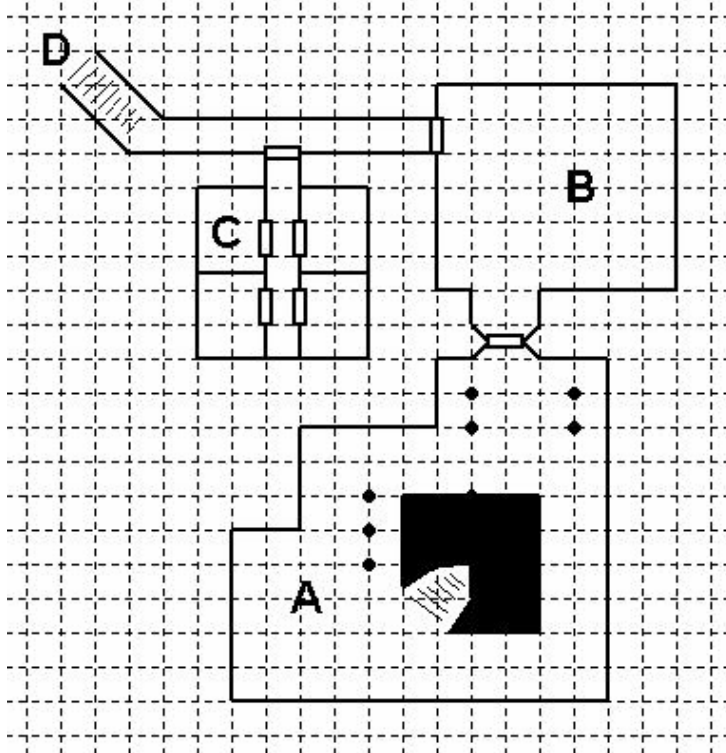
This map shows the layout of the dungeons beneath Castle Estival that are flooded with Oerthblood for use in Encounter 6. One to three gelatinous hydras (based on APL) lurk just under the surface and attack if the Oerthblood is disturbed or when the players reach the indicated point on the map.



DM MAP 5

This map shows the layout of the basement of Castle Estival for use in Encounter 7 and the entrance to the courtyard, for use in Encounter 8.

Basement



First Floor

