



## The Barrow Mound of Gravemoor

The Highlands are aflame with the fires of rebellion! Barely submissive at the best of times, the restless clans have risen up in arms against the rule of good king Oldavin. What began a few years ago as local disturbances has flared into widespread revolt that saw Oldavin's rule over the Highlands, always superficial at any rate, crumble away like ancient masonry.

A Highland rebel named Richard Dirkloch has rallied hundreds of bandits, ne'er-do-wells, and restive humanoids to his banner and wages war on the forces of good king Oldavin. He promises booty and freedom from the constraints imposed by law and order, but Dirkloch intends to deliver only death to his followers. Indeed, such is his only goal, the initial step in an insidious plan that could destroy the kingdom of his mortal enemy and restore his beloved bride to life. As his plot reaches fruition, what began as a minor uprising becomes serious, *deadly serious*.

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# Advanced Adventures

## The Barrow Mound of Gravemoor

By Andrew Hind



An OSRIC™ module designed for  
4-6 adventurers of levels 5-7



**Expeditious Retreat Press**

# ADVANCED ADVENTURES MODULE #12

## The Barrow Mound of Gravemoor

by Andrew Hind

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 5-7



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## The Barrow Mound of Gravemoor

**Introduction:** A Highland rebel named Richard Dirkloch has rallied hundreds of bandits, ne'er-do-wells, and restive humanoids to his banner and wages war on the forces of good king Oldavin. He promises booty and freedom from the constraints imposed by law and order, but Dirkloch intends to deliver only death to his followers. Indeed, such is his only goal, the initial step in an insidious plan that could destroy the kingdom of his mortal enemy and restore his beloved bride to life. As his plot reaches fruition, what began as a minor uprising becomes serious, *deadly* serious.

**STOP! If you plan to participate in this adventure as a player, then stop reading here. Prior knowledge of this module's contents will only spoil your enjoyment of the game.**

**Notes for the Game Master:** The Barrow Mound of Gravemoor is an adventure designed for four to six characters of levels 5-7. It's set in a moor-like setting reminiscent of the Scottish Highlands, but in fact its limited scope makes it easy to adapt to any setting. All that's required in a frontier-region where one could reasonably believe a restive populace might exist. A healthy mix of character types is ideal, but because of the undead-intensive nature of the adventure paladins and clerics will be of particular use. Thieves as well will find their skills at a premium in the trap-filled burial mound.

**Background:** The Highlands are aflame with the fires of rebellion! Barely submissive at the best of times, the restless clans have risen up in arms against the rule of good king Oldavin. What began a few years ago as local disturbances has flared into widespread revolt that saw Oldavin's rule over the Highlands, always superficial at any rate, crumble away like ancient masonry.

At the center of the bloody revolt is Richard Dirkloch, a minor lord who first rose to prominence when he led his followers in a daring and successful nighttime assault on a sheriff's manor. This spontaneous act of violence was a response to the execution of his beloved Mauron for 'witchcraft and treasonous activity,' charges which most of Dirkloch's followers would grudgingly agree were not entirely ill-founded. Regardless, the murder of the king's official projected Dirkloch into the spotlight and laid the foundation of an immensely popular reputation. He quickly became the focus of the rebellion.

Dirkloch's seething anger against King Oldavin has fuelled the bloody conflict, leading to excesses of violence that would cause even the most hardened campaigner to shudder. Villages were pillaged and razed to the ground, and their innocent inhabitants slaughtered out of pure pleasure. The Borders are literally awash in blood.

The anger boiling like a foul brew within Richard Dirkloch's embittered soul is darker than anyone can imagine as it literally sustains him; what few realize is that the rebel leader is dead... or, at least, undead. Dirkloch actually perished in that first attack upon the Sheriff's stronghold, but his death was kept secret to sustain the momentum of the rebellion. He didn't rest within his tomb for long, however. Within a few days he had risen as a wight, too stubborn to die until King Oldavin has suffered as all-consuming a loss as he had.

The war has reached a critical moment. After several attempts to subjugate the Highlands ended in humiliating

failure, the aging King Oldavin took personal command of his army and led it into the unsettled region. The campaign has worn on his feeble health, but he is determined to see Dirkloch defeated once and for all, at whatever the cost. The clash of arms he sought occurred yesterday and lasting well into the night, culminated in the destruction of the Highland army and the flight of its leader. Now, in the grey light of dawn, all that remains is to separate the dead from the wounded and for someone---adventurers of great renown and daring---to capture Dirkloch before he can spark revolt anew for Oldavin's army is in tatters, wounded and tired.

In truth, Dirkloch believes he did not lose the war, even though his outnumbered spearmen were vanquished on the field of battle. He expects ultimate victory will be his thanks to an unholy alliance with the Demon Prince of Undeath and a powerful artifact at his disposal, the Midnight Opal.

Dirkloch has retreated to his barrow-fortress. This barrow was built upon the ruins of Castle Grimspire, an ancient fortress designed to contain the evils of an ancient, abyssal complex buried underground. The Midnight Opal, one of the gifts the Demon Prince of Undeath blessed unto his mortal worshippers, has rested peacefully within this long-forgotten dungeon for centuries, but was awakened from its slumber by the hatred and cruelty it sensed within Dirkloch. Here was an ideal candidate to wield its power, and the fiendish gem called out to him as nightmarish dreams of the future.

When at last Dirkloch found the Midnight Opal and discovered its secrets, he realized he commanded the means to regain his lost love, Mauron. He intends to use the Midnight Opal to create a vast legion of undead from the thousands who fell in the epic battle with King Oldavin, and to dedicate this unholy army to the Demon Prince of Undeath. The grateful deity will then, in appreciation, restore Dirkloch's woman to a semblance of life.

As a result, even now, as the battlefield is littered with the corpses of his fallen followers and he himself rides away from the scene of defeat, Dirkloch remains calm. Soon, he will crush his enemy and then celebrate in the arms of his resurrected beloved.

**Getting to the Battlefield:** The Barrow Mound of Gravemoor begins with the PCs already on the field of battle. There are several ways to get them to this point:

- 1) The characters may have answered the summons of King Oldavin as part of their feudal obligation. This works especially well for clerics, paladins, and fighters but it might also apply to other character types who owe fealty to the king.
- 2) Oldavin's forces have been decimated by successive campaigns against Dirkloch. He needs experienced hands to bolster his army, individuals of heroic reputation to reinforce the flagging morale of the common soldier. In short, he needs the PCs and offers to pay them handsomely---to the tune of 500gp apiece and perhaps title and land---if they serve him in this campaign.
- 3) Dirkloch's rebels have razed numerous villages, and one of them might have been the home town of a PC (perhaps even all of them?). For these individuals, the battle is very personal.

- 4) Rumors circulate that Dirkloch wields the legendary sword, Blackscar, and has accumulated a vast fortune in looted treasure. Materialistic PCs might simply be on the field of battle in the hopes of recovering these valuables for themselves.
- 5) The GM can forgo the entire battlefield concept of the adventure and use The Barrow Mound of Gravemoor as a more typical dungeon environment for exploration, finding some other reason for characters to have interest in the matter.

**Beginning the Adventure:** The adventure begins in the aftermath of a pitched battle between the forces of King Oldavin and the highland rebels of Richard Dirkloch. Dirkloch, has brought ruin to both his lands and those of the King. He and his forces have been brought to ground and defeated in what many assume to be a final, costly reckoning.

Though beaten, Dirkloch has escaped with his closest henchmen. King Oldavin sends the PCs after his mortal enemy, and the trail leads into the depths of the sinister Gravemoors. They must venture into these wetlands, from which few ever return, facing the hungry undead that dwell therein. Oldavin is willing to ransom the head of Dirkloch to the party for 2,000 gp if they seem reluctant to the adventure.

The PCs have little time to spare before setting off. Every moment wasted is another mile Dirkloch puts between himself and his pursuers. Characters can expect to be given any minor equipment they feel necessary, though more exotic wares might be cajoled out of the tight-fisted quartermasters, but only with the strongest of reasons. The mission is of enough significance that they will be loaned horses if they don't have their own mounts.

## THE GRAVEMOOR

The Gravemoor is a vast wetland of marshes interspersed by low hills and heath fields. The ground is sodden at the best of times, trees are stunted and skeletal, and a chilling ground fog often blankets the dismal terrain. All year round, even in summer, a numbing cold assails those who enter the Gravemoor. There are those who suggest the unnatural chill is actually the touch of death, seeping out from the numerous barrow mounds found within the depths of the oppressive wetlands.

Temperatures in the Gravemoor hover just above freezing for most of the year (for the sake of convenience, it's assumed that the adventure takes place during this season, rather than the harsher winter months). Unprotected characters must make a Constitution roll every hour or take 1-2 points of damage. Characters who wear appropriate clothes are safe from the cold and need not make Constitution rolls. If a character falls into the icy waters, he must make an immediate Constitution roll to resist the effects of the cold temperatures and must make a Constitution roll every 10 minutes for one hour or until dry.

The most unnerving feature of the wetlands is grave mist, a light mist that clings in the air for several miles around the barrow mound proper, reducing visibility to 100 feet. As it

approaches the ground, it coalesces into a ground fog about 1-foot deep. This ground fog reduces movement by 50%, and characters who try to move faster must make a Dexterity roll to avoid falling over a fallen tree branch, tripping on a rock, or stumbling over a patch of heath. The stench of rotting corpses and decay is strong here, a result of the foul necromancy that infuses the very mist. Each hour, a character in the mist must make a Constitution roll or suffer 1 point of Strength drain. Any character killed within the area affected by Grave Mist rises as a zombie within 2-8 turns. Strength damage recovers at a rate of 1 point per hour once the character is beyond the borders of Gravemoor.

**Wandering Monsters:** There is a 1-in-10 chance of an encounter per hour. If an encounter occurs, roll a d20 and consult the below lists containing a brief description of the wandering encounter.

1-5 - **Will-o-Wisp** (MV 180 ft; AC -8; HD 9; HP 50; AT 1 (2-16); Special: resistant to most spells): A will-o-wisp attempts to lure a character—ideally, a lone, isolated individual (a nighttime sentry or a scout)—away from the party and into a deep pool of water and muck. The water is chilled (see above) and the mud so miring that characters lose all Dexterity bonus to AC and must make a Strength roll to even move at half speed.

6-9 - **2-8 Human Zombies** (MV 60 ft; AC 8; HD 2; AT 1 (1-8); Special: Unaffected by sleep, charm, hold, and cold-based spells): A group of reavers killed during a raid wander eternally through the bog as zombies. Their willpower was strong enough to return them from the battlefield upon which they perished, but they can never complete the journey. They carry bags of loot over their shoulders filled with now-rotting sheep cuts and other spoiled foodstuffs, the prize from their final raid, and from a distance appear human enough. If the PCs draw too near, the zombies attack to defend their worthless booty.

10-12 - **1-3 Wights** (MV 120 ft; AC 5; HD 4+3; HP 22; AT 1 (1-4); Special: Silver or magic weapons to hit, energy drain 1 experience level per successful strike): Wights will patiently stalk a party, striking at an opportune moment when there are otherwise distracted. A particularly aware party may think they see a momentary shape within the mist which then quickly disappears.

13 - **Wraith** (MV 240 ft; AC 4; HD 5+3; HP 33; AT 1 (1-6) Special: Mental attack, silver or magic weapons to hit, silver weapons cause only half damage, no level drain): This wraith is a vengeful spirit, a victim of a murderous outlaw, who mistakes any human for his assailant. The wraith is unique in its methods of attack. It begins by assaulting the chosen victim's mind; the character must make a save vs. death to resist. If the victim fails, he stands paralyzed, imagining his arms and legs are bound. Onlookers see the unfortunate character jerk in pain and scream, as strips of skin suddenly and without apparent cause peel from the body. The victim suffers 2-8 points of damage and 1 point of permanent Charisma loss each round. While utilizing this attack the wraith defends itself poorly with a resulting AC of 8. Note: because of its unique methods of attack, this wraith lacks level draining.

14-15 - **Gray Ooze** (MV 10 ft; AC 8; HD 3+3; HP 20; AT 1 (2-16); Special: corrodes metal, immune to spells, impervious to fire or cold.): A gray ooze lies in ambush along a natural causeway between low lying bog areas filled with chilling waters and sucking mud. Prey simply stumble into it and are consumed.

16-18 - **2-7 Worgs** (MV 180 ft; AC 6; HD 3+3; AT 1 (2-8): A pack of worgs target the PCs as a potential meal. They attack until one of their number is killed, then retreat in search of easier prey.

19 - **Treasure cache with Wight** (SZ M; MV 120 ft; AC 5; HD 4+3; HP 20; AT 1 (1-4); Special: Silver or magic weapons to hit, energy drain 1 experience level per successful strike): Characters come upon a rock formation that juts up from the ground like a clawed hand, five pointed rocks shaped in a rough circle. Within the formation, propped up against one of the rocks, is a skeletal bandit garbed in tattered clothes, his sightless eyes looking at the rotting sack clutched in his lap. The sack holds 190gp, a large ruby worth 500gp, and a potion of healing. If anyone tries to take the treasure, the skeleton animates as a wight.

20 - **Adult White Dragon** (M 120 ft/300 ft flying; AC 3; HD 7; HP 35; AT 3 (1-4/1-4/2-16); Special: cone of cold breath weapon): An adult white dragon, Bitterchill, considers the Gravemoor his hunting grounds. It's a cowardly creature at heart, though and prefers to attack using breath weapon and swooping attacks. If reduced to less than half its hit points, Bitterchill quickly flies away to succor its wounds.

## THE GRAVEMOOR BARROW MOUND POOL

In the middle of the gravemoor, a single silhouette of a hill looms out from the grave mist. A burial mound forms a somber crown top the hill's otherwise barren peak. The sight is a forbidding one and the moss-draped structures seem to chill the very bones within. The presence of great, undefined evil is here buried within the barrow mound. The land around the hill is covered with water, given the impression that the hill is almost an island surrounded by still, dark waters and skeletal trees. It is a dark and forbidding a pool as ever seen by most adventurers.

Lurking within a pool of stagnant water is the wight, Richard Dirklloch. The dark waters provide almost total concealment. With the combination of mist and the shadowy water, Dirklloch will achieve surprise.

**Richard Dirklloch, Wight:** (MV 120 ft; AC 3; HD 8+3; HP 51; AT 1 (2-12+2 plus energy drain); Special: silver or magic weapons to hit, drain 1 level per hit, unaffected by sleep, charm, hold, or cold-based spells, turn as mummy. Possessions: **two-handed sword +2**, **chain mail +2**, dagger, key ring, 25gp)

Richard Dirklloch, is unique in that he may use melee weapons as a conduit for draining a victim's energy, allowing him to wield his trademark two-handed sword and still utilize this deadly ability. Unless he clearly obtains the upper hand and is convinced complete victory is near, Dirklloch fights only for a round or two before attempting

escape into the barrow mound. While confident in his abilities, there is little point in pressing his luck when he is so close to being reunited with his beloved. Why not let his minions complete the work for him? While he fights the PCs, Dirklloch alternately mocks their abilities and pines for the woman he so desperately misses. Players may come to see the two-sides of this twisted individual--the cruel, sadistic undead fiend and the noble, romantic lord.

When Dirklloch finally deigns to retreat, he dives back into the pool. With no need to breathe, he easily traverses the hundred or so yards distance and reappears in the pool in area 1 of the dungeons, eventually settling into room 6.

A well-hidden secret door is located near the base of the hill, obscured by a tangled mass of briars and thorns. Characters who have managed to follow Dirklloch's tracks all the way through the Gravemoors to the barrow have a 50% bonus to find the door. The door leads to area 7 in the dungeons below the burial mound.

## THE GRAVEMOOR BARROW MOUND

The barrow is unsettling to explore. It gives off a necrotic chill that cuts through clothes and gnaws away at the very soul. Breath mists before one's mouth, and hands grow blue and numb from the freezing temperatures. Despite being out of the elements, characters must continue to make Constitution rolls against the cold.

All non-healing necromantic spells cast within the barrow are more powerful, their numeric effects increased by 50%. Healing spells, on the other hand, have their numeric effects decreased by 50% as the shroud of draining energy that hangs over the locale dampens such life-giving magic. This terrible evil energy significantly bolsters the undead within the mound, and turning attempts are made as if the undead were two steps tougher. For example, within the mound, the wights are turned as if they were wraiths. This aura is palpable to any character capable of turning and they will instantly be aware of its effects.

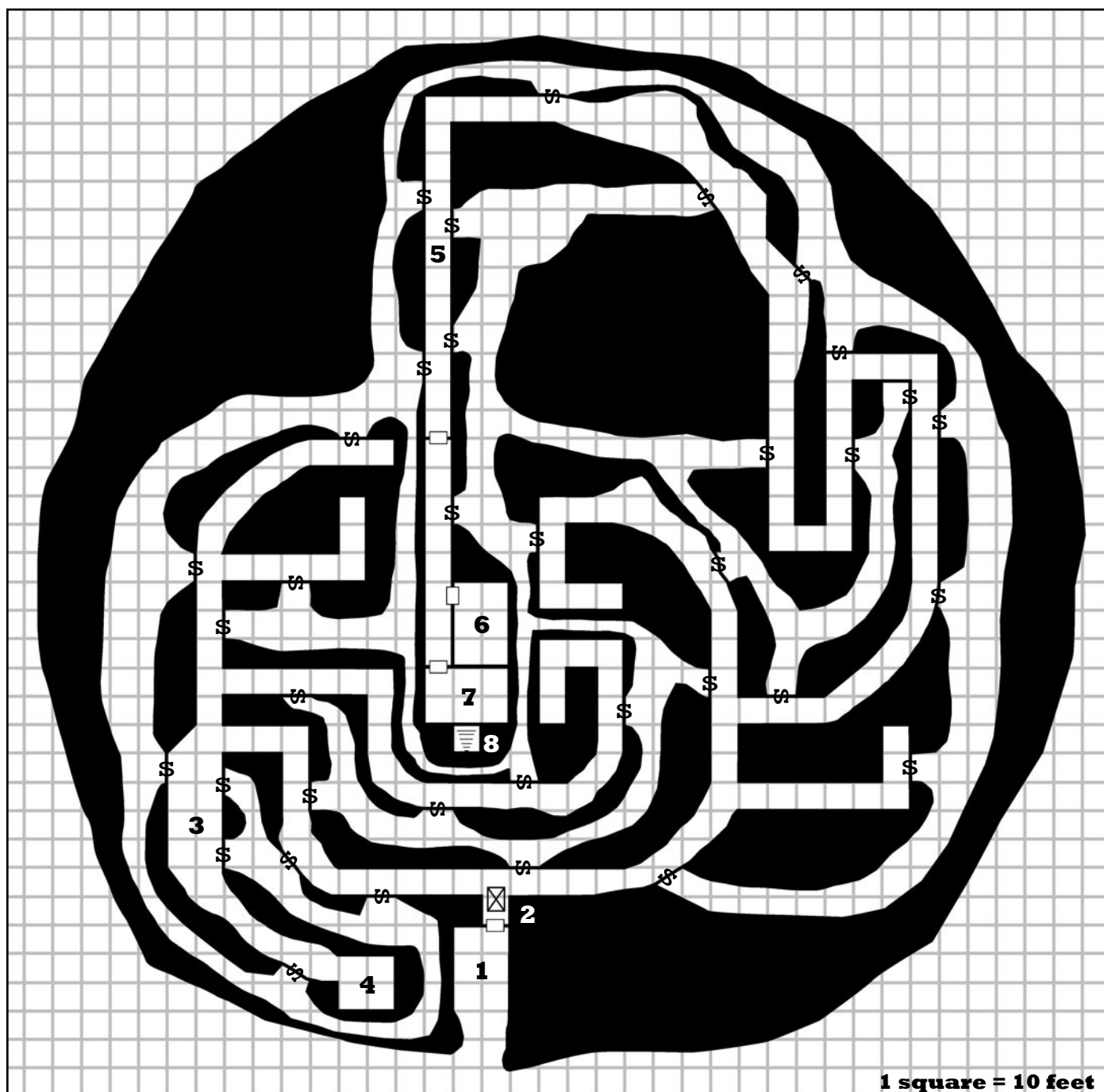
The walls, floors and ceiling are made of massive granite blocks. The ceilings are only 6-feet high and corridors only 5-feet wide, imposing a -2 penalty to to-hit rolls with anything save small-sized weapons. At the same time, the corridors are curved and feature sudden bends, which limit the effectiveness of missile weapons and ranged spells. These features are to the wights' advantage, allowing them to close quickly with enemies.

The most unique structural feature of the barrow are its shifting walls (the locations of which are marked on the map), designed to confuse and disorient intruders. These walls shift 1-10 rounds after any living man-sized creature passes by, and remain shifted for 1-4 hours.

The barrows are unlit, unless otherwise noted. In fact, open flames flicker and smoke heavily within its confines, and the light shed is reduced by 50%. Shadows are consequently common and deep.

There are a total of seven wights inhabiting the barrow, so is important that the GM keeps a running tally of the number

## MAP OF THE BARROW MOUND



slain by the PCs. The wights engage in a series of hit and run attacks against the PCs, emerging suddenly from a secret door or slinking up behind the party, attempting to pick off enemies one at a time, ideally draining their life energy and turning them against their former comrades. Wights typically attack in pairs or groups of three, the labyrinth of passages allowing them to surround intruders and attack from various sides. They strike quickly, and just as quickly retreat. Include such ambushes at your own discretion, both as a means of keeping the players on their toes and of attriting their characters.

1 ENTRY HALL: Cobwebs hang from dust-covered columns in this entry hall. Cracked and faded ceiling frescoes demonstrate the decay of centuries. From the rim of the

domed ceiling, grinning lion-headed gargoyles squat motionlessly, while silent suits of armor stand in shallow alcoves along the walls, their faceplates covered by deep shadows.

Among the dozen hideous statues leering down from above hides a single living gargoyle that guards the tomb. This gargoyle is of a rare Highland variety with leonine features and the ability to emit a frightful roar that temporarily turns opponents to stone. It is also more loyal and dutiful than standard gargoyles (note it's LE alignment), finding meaning in its role as tomb guardian. A DC 25 Spot Check is required to distinguish the gargoyle from its mundane companions before it takes flight.

**Gargoyle:** (MV 90 ft/ 150 ft fly; AC 5; HD 4+4; HP 28; AT 4 (1-3/1-3/1-6/1-4); Special: +1 or better weapon to hit; petrifying roar (60 foot range, turns victims to stone for 1-4 rounds unless they make a save vs. petrification)

The gargoyle immediately attacks intruders, using its petrifying roar first and then diving into combat. It fights until reduced to 15 hit points. At this point, it retreats by the easiest route possible, either further into or out of the tomb depending upon which seems safest at the time.

- 2 PIT TRAP: Characters falling prey to this pit trap are dropped into a 40-foot deep shaft. The lid of the pit snaps back into place one round after it opens. An illusory floor and a permanent silence spell cover the bottom 10-feet of the pit. If the PCs above manage to reopen the pit, they see only a dark shaft with no apparent end in sight. The walls of the pit are almost perfectly sheer and very difficult to climb (-20% to climb walls ability).

A wight who accidentally fell into the pit lurks at the bottom and attacks characters that fall in unless they immediately surrender and offer to assist the wight out of its predicament.

**Wight:** (MV 120 ft; AC 5; HD 4+3; HP 21; AT 1 (1-4); Special: Silver or magic weapons to hit, energy drain (1 experience level per successful strike)

- 3 CATACOMB: Shallow niches line both sides of this corridor, and over the years the deceased members of the Dirklloch family were interred here. Each niche is about two feet high, six feet long, and three feet deep. They are stacked in columns of three, like tightly packed bunk-beds. The corpses within are wrapped in yellowed and ragged funerary shrouds, though bones and remnants of dried flesh can be glimpsed through the rotting fibers. If the niche is occupied, the name of the deceased is etched into the stone above.

Secret doors, just wide enough for a human to crawl through, can be found in the rear wall of several of the niches. Three wights slip through these and attack the PCs. The most powerful of the wights has a mask of skin stretched across his face and carries and assortment of grisly knives. In life he was a sadistic murderer, who skinned his victims and wore their flesh.

**Wights (3):** (MV 120 ft, AC 5; HD 4+3; HP 11, 20, 29, AT 1 (1-4); Special: Silver or magic weapons to hit, energy drain (1 experience level per successful strike)

All characters within the catacombs feel the effects of deathly cold necromantic energy. Each round a character remains within its confines she suffers 1 point of cold damage. Every turn a character must save against spells or become slowed for 5 rounds.

The Dirklloch family has traditionally been minor landholders with little in the way of ostentatious possessions, such as jewelry and the like, and the vast majority of the corpses have been buried only in their best clothes and nothing else. However, 4 corpses bear the following combined list of jewelry, one piece per corpse: a silver broach worth 90gp, a gold chain worth 150gp, a diamond pin worth 1,250gp, and platinum toe-ring worth 75gp. Searching all the corpses requires 4 turns.

- 4 FALSE TOMB: This is a false tomb, designed to confuse or destroy the unwary. The air in this circular chamber reeks of decay and ruin, and dust hangs heavily in the air. A stone coffin sits on a low pedestal in the center of the room, surrounded by candles whose flames dance erratically in the thin air. The coffin lid is unadorned with imagery of any kind. The name of the deceased, the birth and the death dates, are all marked only by question marks. The coffin radiates strong necromantic magic, however, and any living creature that touches it must make save against death or vanish, along with all carried and worn possessions. At that moment, the effigy of the lost PC appears on the coffin lid. His name appears in the stone, and the birth and death dates are filled out appropriately. The character has become trapped within the coffin lid!

The entrapped character immediately begins holding his breath. If he runs out of air before he is rescued, his body is unrecoverable by anything short of a wish. A character can hold his breath in the stone for 1 round per point of Constitution.

The only means to free the character is through magic. Any of the following spells will immediately free the trapped character: command (disgorge! or some such), dimension door, dispel magic, passwall, phase door, protection from evil, stone shape, teleport, or transmute rock to mud.

- 5 AMBUSH CORRIDOR: This long, narrow corridor reaches out before the characters presenting a door opposite. Positioned on either side of the door is an altar etched in runes, perhaps white once but now stained a sickly yellow. Resting on the floor in the middle of the hallway is a plain silver candleholder, the feeble light cast by its slim candle forming dancing shadows along the walls.

Players will likely be suspicious of the candle, and well they should be. The candle itself is harmless, but it was placed there to draw attention while any remaining wights spring from secret doors in a deadly ambush. This is their last stand and will fight to the death, knowing that to allow the characters to intrude upon the tomb beyond is to risk the wrath of Dirklloch.

**Wights (3):** (MV 120 ft, AC 5; HD 4+3; HP 19, 23 26, AT 1 (1-4); Special: Silver or magic weapons to hit, energy drain (1 experience level per successful strike)

- 6 FUNERARY CHAPEL: This small chamber is lit by a pair of flickering torches. Contoured stone benches are built into the walls and a pile of earth intermixed with jumbled bones, including several grinning skulls, lie in an untidy heap on the floor. There is a sickly smell to the room, one of death mingled with herbs and incense.

This chamber was originally a holy chapel, a room which served as a place of quiet meditation and honoring the dead. Now it's a blasphemy, a holy shrine to dark gods. Dirklloch still comes here to commune with his beloved, but now uses unsanctioned and unholy means to do so. Aiding him is a glaistig (a highlands version of the satyr) cleric named Ach na Creig, a priestess of few morals and a dark heart.

The two torches illuminating the chamber are ever-burning torches. They cannot be stuffed out or dimmed and generate no heat. A small alcove on the east wall was once a place for offerings and the site of an altar. Now, it serves as Ach na Creig's resting spot, consisting of a straw pile and sack with various herbs and incenses.

There are two threats here. First, there is Ach na Creig herself, half goat and half woman, with yellow hair and blue-gray clothing.

**Ach na Creig, Glaistig:** (MV 180 ft; Neutral Evil; AC 5; HD 8; HP 43; AT 1 (2-7+1); Special: 50% magic resistance, surprised only on a 1, 90% chance of blending into foliage. Possessions: Mace of dark focus (see new magic items), potion of cure light wounds, potion of gaseous form, wand of animate dead (6 charges - animates 10 zombies or skeletons under complete control of the wielder per charge and such is considered an evil act). Spells (cast as as 5<sup>th</sup>-level cleric):

Level 1: protection from good, cause fear, cause light wounds

Level 2: silence 15 ft radius, hold person (x2)

Level 3: cause blindness

Ach na Creig is a devious enemy, one who would rather slit a sleeping throat or poison food than confront someone face on in hand-to-hand combat. She realizes that the PCs will initially have their guard up when encountering her, so attempts to lull them into a false sense of security with an eye towards attacking them later. If the PCs dispatch of the barrow golem (see new monsters) she will claim to be the captive of the wights and of Dirckock, kept prisoner in this chamber by the barrow golem for some unknown purpose. She claims that she is too afraid to attempt escape, and was promised a brutal death if she was caught attempting to do so. Ach na Creig keeps up the charade as long as possible, striking only at the most opportune moment.

Ideally, she'll have the opportunity to prepare for the coming fight. She'd prefer to use her spells and perhaps use her wand of animate dead to raise undead thralls. If a battle goes badly for her, she uses her potion of gaseous form to escape. Ach na Creig is privy to Dirckloch's deepest thoughts and feelings, so if she is captured and forced to speak she can provide PCs with all the information contained within the background section.

The second, and more immediate, threat is the pile of earth, bones and skulls located in the middle of the chamber, which is actually a barrow golem. The barrow golem is single-minded and relentless. It rises up and attacks as soon as PCs enter the room and doesn't rest again until they are dead.

**Barrow Golem:** (MV 60 ft; AC 3; HP 40; AT 2 (2-12, 2-12); Special: grave rot, engulf, strength sap)

- 7 REAL TOMB: This chamber has a vaulted ceiling that peaks at a height of 25-feet at the centre of the room. In the center of the room is a stone crypt atop a low dais, the effigy that of a young and well-attired woman. Writing etched into the crypt's sides undoubtedly cover the details the woman's life. In front of the crypt is a small pool lined with dark green marble.

This is the tomb of Dirckloch's wife, Mauron. The writing on the crypt summarizes her brief life, focusing on her deep, passionate relationship with Richard and the abiding nature of their love. It concludes by saying she was murdered by agents of King Oldavin as a means of getting to her husband.

The pool is magical in nature, containing emotions and memories of the deceased. Anyone who looks into the water and makes a Wisdom roll sees random scenes from Mauron's life played out. Many include Richard and show a tender, noble side of this hardened warrior-turned undead fiend. They also show Mauron to be truly a foul witch, and not an innocent as some would have people believe.

If a character who looks into the pool fails his Wisdom roll by more than five, Mauron's spirit takes control of him. Mauron is now quite insane, as being trapped within the pool has broken her mind, and she will immediately attack the nearest character to the best of her newly-acquired abilities. Mauron will maintain her hold over the character for 2-8 rounds before losing control and returning to the pool.

- 8 SECRET DOOR: A well-hidden secret door leads to a spiral staircase that drops 60 feet to area 1 in the dungeons below. The stairs are cloaked in magical darkness. The stairs are well used, and no dust has gathered on their surface. The walls are adorned with arcane sigils.

## THE BARROW MOUND DUNGEON

Before the PCs stands a 30-foot tall mound of snow. The barrow has been built upon the ruins of Castle Grimspire, a long-ruined fortress designed to contain an evil slumbering within a forgotten dungeon complex. The lords of Castle Grimspire added to this complex with catacombs for the dead and rooms to serve as a place of refuge in time of siege. This varied history has left a unique legacy on the dungeons that still can be felt today, even after it has been adopted by Richard Dirckloch as a lair.

1. SPRING CHAMBER: The air in this chamber is damp and cool. A small rectangular pool, measuring about 5-feet wide and 20-feet long, stands in the center of the room and holds clear water. A raised stone border a few inches wide and a foot tall rims the pool. The reflective blue surface hides the pool's depth. The pool is connected to an underground river that empties into a nearby loch. In centuries past, when a castle stood on this site, the pool provided the garrison with an endless supply of water. The dungeon's inhabitants have no such needs, but the pool does provide a means by which the wights can secretly enter and leave (it emerges at the pool at the base of the hill).
2. CORRUPTED SHRINE: A 5-foot tall statue of a beautiful woman in flowing robes stands in the middle of this chamber. In one hand she wields a sword, while in the other a gentle dove rests contently. The statue is made of smooth marble but its surface seems to have been stained with blood, transforming something peaceful into malevolence. A pair of skeletons wearing the tattered fragments of monks' robes lies at the feet of the statue.



This chamber was once a consecrated shrine to Saint Caithness, the patron saint of the Highlands. Dirklloch felt betrayed by his deity and blamed her for the loss of his bride. In a fit of rage, he slew two monks of Saint Caithness and used their fresh blood to vandalize her holy image.

Two shadows lurk within the darkness, the tortured remains of the murdered monks. They've remained ever since, finding the seething hatred that permeates the ruins familiar and comforting somehow. If possible the shadows attempt to flank the party, attacking from two sides at once. When killed, they emit a wail that sounds like the dying wind as they dissipate into nothingness. PCs who show deference to Saint Caithness (perhaps by kneeling in her presence) are spared attack.

**Shadows (2):** (MV 120 ft; AC 7; HD 3+3; HP 12, 17; AT 1 (2-5); Special: +1 or better weapon to hit, each touch drains 1 point of Strength, 90% undetectable among shadows or darkness, unaffected by sleep, charm, of hold spells.)

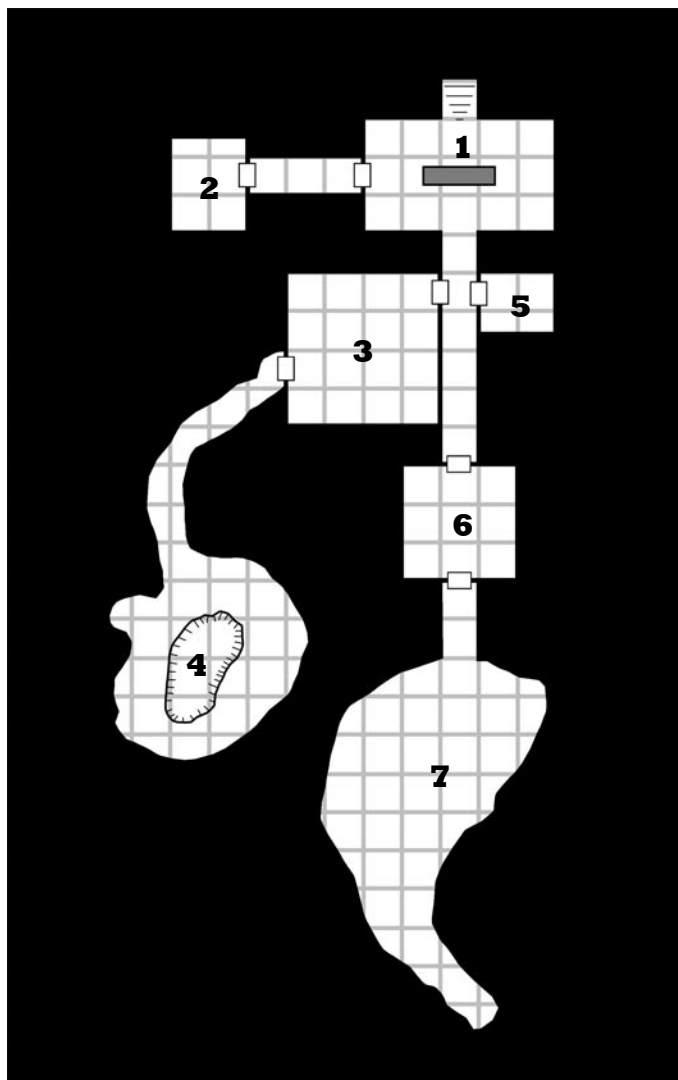
Restoring the statue to its former condition will bring the favor of Saint Caithness. Cleansing the statue involves the casting of a remove curse and thoroughly washing it with 10 flasks of holy water. Characters involved earn 2,000 experience points and gain the benefit of a bless spell for a one month's duration.

3. **THE NECROMANCER'S LABORATORY:** The door between the room and the main hallway is etched with pulsating black runes. These runes prevent any undead from touching the door or moving between the hallway and the room. Any living creature attempting to touch the door must save against spells or find themselves unable to touch the strange barrier. Passing through again requires a similar save. Living creatures can be dragged through the opening, but suffer 2-12 points of damage in the process.

This 40 foot square chamber holds several large work areas laden with tomes, beakers, burners, flasks, pots, etc. Substances of various colors and consistencies boil, bubble and ooze within an equally varied array of containers. Compared to the rest of this complex, this room seems to be remarkably tidy and mostly dust free. Severed zombie hands roam around the room sweeping, dusting, tidying up the room as well as mixing, shaking and stirring the various concoctions scattered around the room.

This room was once the laboratory of a necromancer and demonologist named Shadar the Death Mistress, who originally built these horror-tainted catacombs as her demesne. Though she is long since deceased, her former minions continue to perform alchemical experiments aimed at unlocking the secrets of immortality. The severed zombie hands have been instructed to mix, stir, clean and perform sundry other tasks, endlessly and mindlessly carrying out Shadar's final commands before her mysterious disappearance. They continue to perform these duties until someone other than their master enters the room, at which time all 18 hands attack.

## MAP OF THE BARROW DUNGEONS



**Crawling Hands (18):** (MV 60 ft; AC 9; HD 1-4 hit points; HP 2; AT 1 (1-2))

The alchemical equipment is valued at 5,000gp and within a secret compartment in one of the tomes is a copy of one of Shadar's traveling spell-books containing the following spells: **animate dead, contact other plane, dismissal, ensnarement**. The laboratory equipment is of the highest quality and reduces the duration of potion creation by 25%.

4. **DEVIL'S HOLE:** A foul wind smelling of brimstone assails the nose as the door to this chamber swings open. The floor in this chamber has collapsed, falling into a shaft that drops into darkness. Dripping spider webs, many as wide as a spear shaft, cloak the sides of the sinkhole. The webs descend into the depths of the earth, creating a lattice work of horror.

This shaft leads down at least 200-feet. Whether it ends there, extends directly into the abyss, twists into a cave network inhabited by long-forgotten horrors, or delves down into the deeper dark itself is entirely up to the GM to decide and is beyond the scope of this adventure.

The guardian of this place is a vrock. The hulking demon lurks behind the shroud of webs on the side of the shaft 20-feet down. The vrock is patient in its ambush. It waits until PCs begin to descend the webbing or investigate the pit before springing to attack. After flying up the pit, it attacks the most heavily armored characters first, recognizing in them the most potent foes. One of its tactics is to bowl enemies off the edge of the pit and into the ensnaring webs below. It fights to the death and is bound to the area by the magics of Shadar. If these magics were somehow broken the demon would be very gracious and offer its service for a year to its liberators.

**Vrock** (1): (MV 120 ft, 180 ft flying; AC 0; HD 8; HP 41; AT 5 (1-4, 1-4, 1-8, 1-8, 1-6)); Special: darkness 50 feet radius, detect invisible objects, telekinesis.)

5. **PRISON:** This door is locked. The key is held by Dirkloch. This small chamber is furnished by a small glass table, a mildew-stained plush chair that stands by its side, and a mat of reeds used as bedding. Three women, hair wild and stringy, skin stretched tightly over bone, poorly attempt hiding behind the chair at any sound at the door. Their names are Iona, Glamis, and Margawse and each has only 1hp.

Dirkloch has become addicted to the rush of mortality that comes with sapping vitality from a mortal, and when the victim is a beautiful woman the sensation is almost erotic. He therefore issues standing orders that all comely women should be brought to him alive, to be imprisoned here as his personal playthings. He toys with them, slowly draining their life away. Their misery and torment only ends when he bores of their charms and kills them.

As soon as the women come to realize the PCs mean them no harm, they begin to cry tears of joy, almost hysterical in their exuberance at being rescued. Once they've calmed down, the women will share all knowledge they have, which admittedly isn't much. They can direct the PCs to Dirkloch's private sanctum, since this is where they are taken when he feels amorous. Rescuing these women and returning them to their families will be worth 10gp each in reward.

This room was once a scrying chamber. Anyone who sits in the chair and focuses their will upon the table can see and hear distant images in the table's surface. This functions much like a crystal ball, but doesn't focus on individuals only upon locations. Dirkloch hasn't discovered the nature of the table and chair, and so has made no attempt to use them for his own purposes. The women have not discovered this ability either, but a detect magic spell will indicate something unusual is present. If the chair and table are moved from this room, they lose their magical ability.

6. **DIRKLOCH'S LAIR:** This room is cast in the orange light that radiates from the fireplace. The walls are covered with shelves of books, interrupted here and there by curios from distant lands. The walnut paneling that covers the cold stone walls fairly glows, and the flickering light from the fireplace dances upon the intricate pattern of the rug that lies upon the floor. Everything about the room is refined, save for the muddy foot prints that lead to

the overstuffed reading chair in which sprawls Richard Dirkloch, absently fingering an 8-inch diameter, lustrous black opal resting on a pedestal at his side.

An observant character may notice tears glistening in his lifeless eyes, but he rises quickly from his chair, drawing his two-handed sword with a menacing flourish

Dirkloch may use melee weapons as a conduit for draining a victim's energy, allowing him to wield his trademark sword and still utilize this deadly ability. Also, while within his lair, Dirkloch may tap into the negative energy of the barrow itself and unleash it in the form of icy cold bolts of necromantic power. This ability can be used four times per day, dealing 2-12 points of damage and draining two point of Strength that return in 2-8 hours.

**Richard Dirkloch, Wight:** (MV 120 ft; AC 3; HD 8+3; HP 51; AT 1 (2-12+2 plus energy drain); Special: silver or magic weapons to hit, drain 1 level per hit, unaffected by sleep, charm, hold, or cold-based spells, turn as mummy. Possessions: two-handed sword +2, chain mail +2, dagger, key ring, 25gp)

Dirkloch is a vicious and accomplished combatant. He begins combat by using his cold bolts on the most imposing-looking character and then throws himself into melee. Dirkloch will not flee, even if threatened with destruction, unless he is able to take the Midnight Opal with him because the artifact represents his last best hope to be re-united with his love. He would rather be slain than live without her.

Unless Dirkloch is handily defeating the PCs, after two rounds of battle he summons zombie reinforcements from small closet separated from the main room via a concealed wooden panel.

**Zombies** (6): (MV 60 ft; AC 8; HD 2; HP 12; AT 1 (1-8); Special: Unaffected by sleep, charm, hold, and cold-based spells.)

The books in the room cover a variety of topics, ranging from history to theology. They represent a sizable fortune as well, and could be sold for as much as 2,000gp. The curios might be worth an additional 500gp. Of course, the greatest treasure here is the Midnight Opal, an artifact of considerable worth.

7. **STABLES:** The walls of this natural cavern glisten with a mucous-like sheen that pools in small puddles on the floor. Stalactites hang from the ceiling in thick patches, but the stalagmites that once groped up from the ground have been chiseled away to make a level surface. Three large, shaggy coated ponies with hides as black as pitch are securely tied in these stables. Nearby lies a pile of saddles, harness and tack.

This area was once a natural cave that opened upon the base of the hill. Shadar the Death Mistress, the necromancer and demonologist who created the dungeon, blocked the opening with a secret door and used it as a stable. Dirkloch uses it in the same capacity today. The door is locked, but Dirkloch carries a key and another hangs along the wall under a thin layer of mucous-like secretion. The moisture on the walls is

unsettling but otherwise harmless, a byproduct of the foul magic infusing the complex.

Two of the horses are normal, sure-footed and hardy mounts favored by highlanders. They pose no threat to the PCs. The final horse, however, is Dirkloch's personal mount, a nightmare he calls Cadaver. Rangers or druids who make an Intelligence roll can distinguish the beast from the mundane horses. If possible, Cadaver attacks when opponents have their guards down. He'll act inconspicuous, mirroring the behavior of the ponies in an attempt to lull the characters into a false sense of security. When the moment to strike comes, however, he throws aside all pretenses and attacks with his full, infernal might.

**Cadaver, Nightmare:** (MV 150 ft/360 ft flying; AC -4; HD 6+6; HP 42; AT 3 (2-8, 4-10, 4-10); Special: breath smoke that blinds and chokes victims (-2 to hit and damage rolls), can become ethereal at will.)



*General information:* Almost all barrow golems are found in the darkened depths of ancient burial mounds, where they serve as guardians of the dead. They are a product of barbarian culture and are rarely seen in more civilized environs, though some urbane necromancers have learned the secrets of their construction and have constructed their own to patrol graveyards or defend fell lairs.

Any creature hit by a barrow golem has a 10% chance per wound inflicted of contacting grave rot, a terrible curse/disease combination. Characters afflicted by grave rot lose 1 point of Constitution per week until they die. Any healing spell cast on an afflicted character has no effect. To eliminate grave rot, the curse must first be broken with a remove curse allowing healing magic to work upon the character. After the curse is broken, the grave rot can be cured as any normal disease. An afflicted creature that dies of grave rot rises as a zombie within 1-4 days.

If a barrow golem successfully hits with both attacks, it engulfs the victim with its mass. While engulfed, there is a chance the opponent will begin to drown. An engulfed character must make a Constitution roll to successfully hold his breath before being engulfed. Engulfed characters find their Strength sapped away. Each round, the character must make a save vs. death or lose 1 point of Strength. For each point of Strength drained, the golem gains 4 temporary hit points. Strength lost through this drain returns in 2-8 turns. While engulfed, the character cannot attack the barrow golem or cast a spell. The engulfed creature can break his way to freedom with a successful open doors roll. The barrow golem can engulf one medium-sized or two small opponents at a time.

Barrow golems spend much of their time in a loose mound of soil, rotting flesh, and bone. Changing into or out of this shape takes a round, during which the creature's AC is lowered to 8. In this shape, the barrow golem detects as magical, but otherwise appears as just a normal pile of grave refuse.

Barrow golems are immune to charm, sleep, or hold magics. They are also immune to poison.

*Physical description:* Barrow golems are vaguely humanoid in shape, composed of grave soil that reeks of wet earth and rotting corpses. Bits of bone and even full skulls

## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure is not truly over until the PCs defeat Dirkloch, either killing him once and for all or returning with him to Oldavin's court to receive the king's justice. If the PCs succeed at this task, they'll be feted as heroes and lavished with honors. As reward for their services, they might receive estates left vacant by nobles who have fallen in the war (at the GMs discretion), and have certainly have earned the thanks of the kindly king. The rewards of success might have long-standing repercussions for the campaign, seeing the characters slowly dragged into the murky world of courtly politics or being called upon to once again defend the kingdom from some new threat. Perhaps the PCs are tasked with serving as Sheriffs over the newly re-conquered but still restless Highlands.

If Dirkloch survives the adventure with the Midnight Opal, he will continue with his plans to raise an undead army. Should he succeed, Oldavin will face a renewed and far more horrifying war, and the services of the PCs will once again be called upon.

## APPENDIX ONE: NEW MONSTERS

### BARROW GOLEM

SIZE: Large  
MOVE: 60 ft.  
ARMOR CLASS: 3  
HIT DICE: 40 hit points  
ATTACKS: 2  
DAMAGE: 2-12, 2-12  
SPECIAL ATTACKS: See below  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: None  
MAGIC RESISTANCE: None  
RARITY: Very Rare  
NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1  
LAIR PROBABILITY: 100%  
TREASURE: 2 jewelry, 1 magic item  
INTELLIGENCE: None  
ALIGNMENT: Neutral Evil  
Level/X.P.: 7 / 1,850

protrude from its body. They are hulking figures with crudely shaped limbs that stand 10-feet tall and weigh about 600 pounds. Their faces are shaped like skulls, with two orbs of red energy burning in deep eye sockets.

Barrow golems are primitively created golems and thus lack several of the strengths of the more refined varieties. They are made by collecting grave refuse into a mold, inserting a piece of jewelry worth no less than 1,000gp along with a single magical item (no potions or scrolls). A magic ritual is then performed by a cleric of no less than 10th level using the following spells: *animate dead*, *exorcise*, *protection from good*, and *quest*. This process costs 500 gp per hit point of the barrow golem.

## APPENDIX TWO: NEW MAGIC ITEMS

**Mace of Dark Focus:** The ball of this weapon is rusted and covered in grave earth, and yet the flanges remain solid. The handle is crafted from a leg bone of some undetermined creature, with parchment-like skin still stretching over its surface. A metal wires have been woven through the leg bone, giving the weapon a torturous aura.

In addition to being a +1 footman's mace, the mace adds two levels to any evil cleric's turning attempts while adding +2 damage to cause wounds spells cast by the wielder.

**Experience Point Value:** 500 **G.P. Value:** 2,500

**Midnight Opal:** The Midnight Opal was created over a thousand years ago by the Demon Prince of Undeath and then sent to the Material Plane for his followers to discover and use. The Midnight Opal is a lustrous black opal approximately 8 inches in diameter. Anyone who peers into its surface sees a swirling vortex of shadows within that eventually coalesce into hideous faces that leer back at the viewer. The air surrounding the gemstone feels chill, and shadows in the vicinity seem to shift as if alive. The Opal provides 3 different abilities:

Four times per day, the artifact allows its wielder to turn undead as a 14th level evil cleric. Any non-evil user is drained a life level through the use of this ability.

Once per year, the possessor of the Midnight Opal can raise all the dead on a single battlefield as zombies and assume control of their meager wills. The corpses must be relatively fresh, so this ability must be activated within a week of the battle and there must be at least 100 corpses. This ability has a range of ten miles.

Once per year, the artifact can resurrect a person dead up to 5,000 years. The resurrected person gains an experience level in the process. This power can only be used on the 7<sup>th</sup> day after the second power above has been used.

The Midnight Opal is intelligent (Int 19) and lawful evil. It can communicate through telepathy only, and speaks every language. **G.P. Value:** 75,000

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