

EB5



The Blight

Richard Pett's Crooked City

EB5: Children of the Harvest



Bill Webb



FROG GOD
GAMES

The Blight

Richard Pett's Crooked City

EB5: Children of the Harvest Credits

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The Blight

Richard Pett's Crooked City

EB5: Children of the Harvest

By Bill Webb



“...You’ve just entered the wrong side of town...”

The Children of the Harvest is a Fifth Edition adventure for a party of four to six 9th-level PCs. It serves as a companion adventure to Richard’s Pett’s *The Blight* and takes place in that twisted city as revealed in the campaign setting published by **Frog God Games**.

Introduction

The Blight is a dark place, and this is a dark tale. Children disappear all the time, especially those of the poor. The Harvester of Cribs, one of the city's strange local gods*, is blamed for many of these disappearances. Typically, these disappearances are random, isolated instances, and in many cases, the Harvester has nothing to do with it. This time, however, 36 children have disappeared from their homes on a single night, and many of them were not from houses of the poor. Not even the jaded folk of the City-State of Castorhage will stand for this (especially not a prominent Justice and a guild leader who have each lost a child in this most recent incident). Now is the time for a call to action.

This adventure is, at its heart, a race against time and a rescue mission. The biggest problem is that those who need to be rescued do not (in their current state) desire to be rescued. In fact, the children in question are possessed by evil spirits loyal to an ancient deity known as Chernobog and attack their benefactors without mercy. Liberal application of incapacitating spells will be required to prevent the children's deaths until the final area within the evil temple-caverns is reached. Significant difficulties arise should the characters decide to slay rather than incapacitate the children.

* See *The Blight: Richard Pett's Crooked City* by **Frog God Games** for details.

Warning!

This adventure contains mature themes that may not be suitable for some readers or players. Our purpose at **Frog God Games** is not to make tasteless products or violate the Pathfinder® Roleplaying Game Compatibility License that requires publishers to create products for the general public that would not be classified as "adult content," offensive, or inappropriate for minors. But we do intend to make thrilling adventures in the style of old-school game play that test the players' stalwartness and bring difficult and layered nuances to their game. Simulating and navigating the struggles of real life (and/or their fantasy equivalent) with exceptional powers and skills as characters while freeing players of the prospect of actual consequences is one of the great draws of roleplaying games, and we always strive to create that experience in our products.

Adventure Background

The presence of Between is a strange conundrum to those in the know among the elite academics and magical practitioners of Castorhage. What is it? Where is it? Why is it only accessed in the vicinity of Castorhage? Does it even exist elsewhere? What has caused such a curse to come to dwell upon an already so ill-starred community, or is its presence the reason for the foul luck? Such is a matter for the great scholars to ponder and theorize over. But whatever the reason, its presence and the unique forms of trouble it brings cannot be denied by those who live beneath its accursed shadow.

Whether it predates the existence of Between or is somehow connected to its presence, the legend of a primordial evil also shares space with the twisted land beyond the mirrors of Castorhage. Lost to the knowledge of modern civilization is the myth of a dark power hailing from the beginning of time who brought great evil to the young world of Boros until stopped by another primordial power. Some tales say this goddess was the evil's

mother, or perhaps grandmother, or only a concerned maternal deity who did not wish to see Creation damaged by its corruption. Whatever the case, the legends agree that this angry Goddess defeated the evil and condemned it to a prison where its corrupting influence would be contained and unable to affect the world in any major way. She did this, according to the tale, by sinking the evil in a primordial swamp from which it could not free itself. Why she imprisoned it rather than just destroying it outright, the legends do not presume to say.

Such is the myth today as those who even have such knowledge recall it. But there are some few who know even more of the matter, and those few include a Daanite *ddewin* (magician) from distant Ynys Cymragh and a foul lurking presence located within Castorhage itself — the god known as the Harvester of Cribs.

A Daanite *ddewin*, one Maregeth by name, found himself cast out from his *chylch* for secretly paying reverence to the forbidden god Crom Cruach, Dark Crom or Old Bloody Head. He made his obeisance to the Black God under the name Crom Dubh the Crippled God, as had been tried by some dark practitioners millennia before, but eventually the doings of Maregeth were discovered by his fellow *ddewiniaid* and he was lucky to make it across the Strait of Daan with his life. Maregeth wandered the mainland of Akados for 10 years seeking greater knowledge and power. In his studies of Crom Cruach/Crom Dubh, Maregeth had gained some inkling of a deeper truth in the history of the bloody god. He was convinced that if he could only dig further, he would receive some revelation that would raise him above the close-minded pettiness of his peers and show him the true path to power.

It was in this pursuit that Maregeth came at last to Castorhage and settled into the blighted city with its vast reservoir of corrupt and forbidden knowledge to focus on pursuing his studies. There among the oldest of grimoires in the shops of the most shadowed alleys, he discovered a name: Chernobog. He also encountered something else, something far darker and more powerful than himself; he encountered the Harvester of Cribs.

Even Maregeth is unsure how he survived his initial encounter with the god of the city. He has the vaguest recollection of invoking Chernobog's name and that somehow his own experience and knowledge of Crom Cruach became known to the Harvester. However it was achieved, the Harvester took notice and became interested, which undoubtedly saved the wizard's life and brought his search for Crom Cruach into a new phase.

With his own reserve of ancient knowledge carried from far Ynys Cymragh and the Harvester's godlike faculties and intimate understanding of the Blight, Maregeth came to understand that Chernobog and Crom Cruach were one and the same. The deity of the Old Way referred to as Old Bloody Head was somehow a whitewashed form of the much older and more vile being called Chernobog. Chernobog's existence had been largely erased from the memory of mortals, living on only in its much later incarnation of Crom Cruach, a feat that could only be achieved by a being of even greater power than one such as Chernobog, a being such as a primordial Goddess. Crom Cruach was Chernobog, and Chernobog was the ancient evil imprisoned at the beginning of time by the forgotten Goddess. And the Harvester knew where that primordial evil had been imprisoned ... in a swamp on what was once a remote island. A swamp that now lay just beyond the southern bounds of the foul city known commonly as the Blight.

Pooling their knowledge — the Harvester's understanding of the environs of Castorhage and Maregeth's lore of Chernobog/Crom Cruach — the living god and outcast *ddewin* reached an accord. The Harvester of Cribs longed to ascend beyond his petty godhood and achieve the true ranks of divinity, and Maregeth sought to free Chernobog and renew his power in the world now called Lloegyr, the Lost Lands. They believe that if Chernobog could be released from his eons-long imprisonment in the fens south of Toiltown known as the Sheep's Coe, then the primordial deity will once again take his place of prominence and power over the world, ushering a new age of darkness and elevating the Harvester as a true god



alongside it. That is the theory anyway, as put forth by an embittered, power-mad dark sorcerer and a godling best known for wearing a jester's outfit and abducting children. The veracity of their theory remains to be seen, but the consequences of its implementation are all too real for the folk of the Blight.

Maregeth believes that the souls of the innocent, if sacrificed in sufficient number, will bring about Chernobog's release. Using a taboo ritual learned among the ancient lore of Crom Cruach and powered by the semi-divinity of the Harvester, Maregeth has been corrupting children (the closest thing to "innocent" to be found in Castorhage) and causing them to transform into larvae. He is then destroying these corrupted souls in sacrifice to Chernobog to revive him in his prison and bring about his return to the mortal world.

The Harvester of Cribs has absconded with children from the slums and tenements of East Ending to fuel this ritual and has caused the creation of a new island in the Sheep's Coe, which Maregeth calls Bryn Duach, the Black Hill. The creation of this island and the temple complex excavated within it has attracted some of the more deviant and nihilistic minds of Castorhage to form a mad cult following dedicated to the newly rediscovered Chernobog. Now as the ritual reaches its crescendo and the stars come into alignment, the time has come for the final phase of the ritual requiring a mass sacrifice of three dozen souls. To this end, in one night the Harvester makes his rounds in the city and makes off with 36 children. Not as selective as he has been with past kidnappings, the Harvester's most recent abductions have attracted the attention of some of the powerful in the city and finally brought scrutiny down upon the activities of the new swamp cult. Adventurers have been sought, and rewards offered. For the first time, the plans of the god and the demagogue are in danger of discovery.

Adventure Summary

The PCs are hired to look into the recent disappearances of 36 children. Magical investigation into the matter has determined that the children have but 36 hours to live before all are forever lost. The party is able to track the perpetrator to the fens south of the city known as Sheep's Coe and there, in the depths of the swamp, discover that a new hill has recently

been raised from the surrounding waters. Within this hill are tunnels and caverns inhabited by a rising cult of Chernobog, as well as monstrous evidence that this ancient evil is once again threatening the world.

Confronting the cult, the PCs must best the wizard Maregeth and destroy his malignant magical cauldron in order to disrupt the ritual calling Chernobog back from his imprisonment. Eventually, the party discovers the great stone block that serves as the keystone to the prison created by the Goddess and there must face the wrath of the Harvester of Cribs himself, as the strange god personally manifests to stop them from thwarting his plans for ascension as a true god.

Beginning the Adventure

The adventure begins early one morning as tragedy grips the city. During the night, 36 children disappeared from their beds while sleeping in their homes. In truth, more than 36 children disappear most every night among the slums and alleys of Castorhage, but this night is different because two of the children are of the upper class — one, the great nephew of one of the city's Justices, and the other, the adopted daughter of an influential guild factor. The fact that the other 34 children disappeared at all was learned only as a byproduct of the initial investigation into the disappearance of the children from the two prominent families.

How the adventure begins depends upon the PCs' background and reputation within the city. If they're visitors to Castorhage, then they're likely to be rounded up along with numerous other suspects and given fairly rough treatment in the early stages of the investigation until it is determined that the culprit is no human agency, at which point the tone changes to pleas of aid from individuals of obvious skill and expertise. If the PCs are not new to the city and have established themselves with the authorities or created reputations as competent problem solvers, then their introduction into the events of the adventure are sure to be much smoother and more civil. In either case, the adventure truly begins as the aggrieved families bring them in to consult and make them privy to the results of the investigation so far.

Chapter One: The Harvester

Once the PCs are involved in the investigation, they are quickly brought up to speed on the information so far. The principal sources of the investigation are the disappearances of Zacari Woodcock, age 7, whose father is a minor streetclerk but also the nephew of Justice Burr, Lord Protector of the City, and the disappearance of Emelia Waldersham, age 9, youngest daughter of Marvis Waldersham, a high-ranking official of the Consortium of Tar, Bitumen, and Potash Calefactors. When both children disappeared last night from their upscale rooftop townhomes in the Sedgetown section of Toiltown (area **TT6** in *The Blight: Richard Pett's Crooked City*), the two neighbors both raised the hue and cry with the Watch. Though not well acquainted with one another, the two families quickly ascertained the similar nature of the children's disappearances. Assuming a connection, they pooled their resources — Normal Woodcock, his influential uncle, and Marvis Waldersham, the connections of his wealthy guild. Together they retained the services of a specialist in child abductions and ransom negotiations. His discoveries led the families to believe they would require someone with a greater assortment of abilities, which leads to the introduction of the player characters to the adventure.

The Investigation So Far

The PCs are initially brought to the townhouses of the Woodcock and Waldersham families in Sedgetown. Both are affluent and secure dwellings, and the Constables of the Watch and the hired private specialist thoroughly searched them. Both disappearances occurred sometime around 2 hours prime* during the previous night. Both children had been put to bed by their respective nannies between the hours of 8 and 9 non**. Both had seemed somewhat fidgety and were checked between 1 and 2 hours prime, and had been found sleeping but fitfully. When checked again after 2 prime, both were gone from their beds. Their rooms' doors and windows were intact with locks still engaged, and there were no signs of entry into the house. There were likewise no signs of violence in their rooms. In the case of young Zacari Woodcock, only the presence of a single leather slipper with the pattern of a lion beaded upon it remained, still warm from being worn when he was first discovered missing. If the PCs think to ask, Normal Woodcock allows them to hang onto the slipper as evidence. He states that the Watch's tracking dogs have already used it to gain Zack's scent, but lost it at the edge of the city.

If the children's parents hadn't been folks of means, the Watch likely would have just chalked it up as runaways, but the families were insistent and a quick message from Justice Burr put the entire parish precinct on notice. Clues have been sparse, and the Watch currently has no suspects. One important clue was discovered at each crime scene, however. Hidden in the blankets of each child's bed was found a small stone statuette, approximately 12 inches in height. In both cases, the families have sworn that nothing like that has even been in their homes before. The statuettes are currently being held at the parish Watch Station.

The abduction specialist in question, one **Salubrius MacKenzie** (LN male human Wiz6 [diviner]), is introduced to the PCs immediately by the concerned families. He appears the part of the sophisticated metropolitan, but a DC 14 Wis (Insight) check is able to discern that he is concealing something beneath his debonair façade. A DC 16 on the check reveals that it is fear. If questioned, he reveals that he made a cursory inspection of the crime scenes and then began casting divination spells. Almost immediately, he learned that the Woodcock and Waldersham children were not the only two to disappear in the dark hours of the previous night. In fact, a total of



THE BLIGHT: RICHARD PETT'S CROOKED CITY

and nannies (to no avail), and talk to Salubrius MacKenzie, parents Normal Woodcock and Marvis Waldersham beg the PCs to take the case. They each offer a 3,000 gp reward for the return of their child alive and guarantee the full cooperation of the Office of the Watch and any resources they can muster. Assuming the PCs take the case, little else is to be gained at the victims' homes. They can either cast their own divinations, proceed to the parish Watch Station to find out about the other victims, or head directly to the fens.

If the PCs use divination magic, they learn nothing more than what Salubrius MacKenzie knew, though if they failed to detect his hidden terror and question him, they can learn of the source of his misgivings as detailed above. A visit to the Watch Station is covered in the next section. Heading to the marsh is detailed in **Chapter 2**.

If the PCs are unfamiliar with the "gods" of Castorhage in general and the Harvester of Cribs specifically, a *Int* (Investigation) or *Int* (Religion) check can be made on the table below to recall the information of the appropriate DC and lower. Likewise, a *Cha* (Persuasion) check to gather information can be made to the same effect.

DC	Information
10	The Harvester of Cribs, commonly referred to simply as "The Harvester," is one of the "Gods of Castorhage."
12	The "Gods of Castorhage" actually live in the city. They are not generally true gods or divine <i>per se</i> , but rather living legends, although despite the arguments of the scholars of the Seminary and BookTown, people refer to them as gods. They are creatures of myth, of great power, and though they seldom reveal themselves to folk, they still wield incredible authority, influence, and fear over the Blight and its inhabitants.
15	The Harvester is terrible to look upon. He — if indeed he is a "he" or any gender for that matter — is about the size of a goblin or kobold, and wears a vaguely ludicrous clown's outfit. He carries a short wand, which he talks to ... and which talks back; mounted on the end of the wand is the head of a baby — a living, talking baby with a twisted grin and evil mind. It is said that the wand is what suggests to the Harvester his most depraved ideas and schemes.
18	The Harvester collects children. Though impossible to determine how many child disappearances in the city can be attributed to the Harvester — literally dozens occur each week — the best estimates of scholars who study such things are that the Harvester generally never collects more than one or two at a time and then only a few times a month at most.
20	Only a very few have any idea of what becomes of the children taken by the Harvester. All that is known is that they are never seen again. However, a few more dedicated (or deviant) researchers have gained some inkling: He takes some of the children away to a special place in Between in a nightmare land of fairytales and monsters. The others he eats, for he gets so hungry these days ...
22	The Harvester has never taken children in large numbers before. These disappearances are wholly unlike him and, if not for the evidence of divination magic pointing to him, his involvement in the current disappearances would be considered unlikely. The fact that he has deviated from his normal method seems to bode ill for the city.

* "Two hours prime" is 2 hours after midnight, or 2:00 AM, in **Lost Lands'** reckoning.

** Eight and 9 non are 8 and 9 hours past noon, respectively, or 8:00 PM and 9:00 PM.



36 children were taken from locations all around Toiltown but primarily from East Ending. They came from all social strata, principally typical urban laborer families from the city slums, with some homeless street dwellers and the two affluent children as well. MacKenzie was not able to determine the reason for the rash of near-simultaneous kidnappings, but was able to discern that they were all related and, even though scattered throughout a large portion of the city's poorest section, were somehow performed by the same perpetrator.

Most distressingly, the divinations revealed to him that the children were being lost at the rate of one per hour. The kidnappings occurred approximately 8 hours ago, and already 8 of the children were "gone." He doesn't know exactly what is meant by "gone" other than that whatever has happened to them, they are no longer recoverable. So far, neither Emelia nor Zacari are among those who are "gone," but there is no way of knowing which child will be next. In any case, time is of the essence before any more of the children are consigned to this unknown fate. The only additional information that his divinations provided was that the children were all taken somewhere in the fens south of Toiltown known as the Sheep's Coe for their reputation of disease and pestilence. That is an area beyond his expertise, and MacKenzie refuses to enter the fens. The Watch launched a halfhearted search of the trackless mire based on the diviner's hunch, but the chances of them discovering anything are between slim and none.

If MacKenzie is questioned about hiding something or the reason for his fear, he admits that the omens he read seem to indicate that the source of the disappearances was none other than one of the dreaded gods of the city, the Harvester of Cribs. If the PCs press further and succeed on a DC 19 *Cha* (Persuasion) or DC 16 *Cha* (Intimidation) check, Salubrius becomes visibly shaken and admits that there is something more. Though the Harvester is behind the disappearance of all these children (the number of which is quite outside its normal practices), the divinations hint that even the dread god is not the true genesis of the plot. Salubrius cannot say — and honestly doesn't want to know — but he fears something else is behind the Harvester's sudden increase in activity ... something much worse. He is unable to provide any further information.

Once the PCs have a chance to look around the homes of the missing children (no further clues can be discovered there), interview the families

Sedgetown Watch Station

At the Sedgetown Watch Station, the PCs find that **Parish Watch Commander Proctor Simp** (CG male human Ftr3) is an obsequious bureaucrat who sweats profusely and frequently mops his ruddy brow with a soiled handkerchief. He received a missive this morning personally signed by Justice Burr and can already imagine the noose tightening around his neck if the Justice's great nephew isn't recovered safely. He gladly allows the PCs to review the entire case file compiled so far, as little as it is. He also confirmed through parish commanders in other districts throughout Toiltown that 34 other children are missing, as predicted by MacKenzie. All were boys and girls between the ages of 5 and 9, each of whom disappeared at approximately the same time as the Woodcock and Waldersham children. There were no additional witnesses or clues. The Watch interviewed as many family members as possible this morning, and confirmed that the missing children were fussy and agitated around bedtime, as if bothered by something, though none of the parents ever identified a source. Likewise, statuettes similar to those discovered at the Sedgetown crime scenes were found in the blankets of each missing child. All 36 of the statuettes have been recovered and stored at the Sedgetown Watch Station if they PCs wish to examine them.

No other clues or commonalities could be found among the various missing children. If the PCs wish, they could travel to the different crime scenes and interview the different families, but doing so would take several hours, and time is of the essence based on what MacKenzie learned with his spells. The only other items of evidence the Watch possess are the statuettes found at each scene. Beyond that, the constables can direct the PCs to the area of their search at the edge of Sheep's Coe south of the city.

Graven Images of Stone

At each of the disappearance sites, a single clue was found. In all cases, this clue was a small, crude statuette tangled in the blankets of the missing child. The Watch recovered all 36 of these statuettes and secured them in the Sedgetown station's evidence locker. In some cases, the statuettes were recovered from pawnshops or petty thieves after they were taken for their material value. The PCs can have a look at them if they wish.

The 36 statuettes are all humanoid in shape and roughly 12 inches in height, and weigh about 15 pounds. The PCs immediately note that though they are similar in design, they are actually each a unique sculpt. Each depicts a slightly different, crudely carved stylistic bearded human in archaic warrior garb. Each has its arms crossed in front of it and bears one or more spiral symbols on its body. The spirals are located at different points on each statuette and appear to have no pattern to their locations. A DC 12 Int (Investigation) determines that all of the statuettes are created from a common type of local limestone and are all fairly recent work.

A DC 17 Int (Religion) check identifies the statuettes as idols associated with an ancient and obscure deity called Crom Cruach. The deity was associated with the religion of the Old Way, and once subject to widespread veneration by the primitive inhabitants throughout Akados before the coming of the Hyperboeans. Now, it is largely constrained to the worship of the Daanites on the distant island of Ynys Cymragh. A successful check identifies Crom Cruach as a cruel god of sacrifice who promised his followers wealth and prosperity in return for blood sacrifices. Outlawed by the druids of the Daanites, worship of Crom Cruach has largely died out among even that people, other than a resurgence under the auspices of an alleged hero-god called Crom Dubh that was subsequently suppressed several centuries ago. As far as modern religious scholarship is concerned, the forbidden worship of Crom Cruach died out generations ago with stone idols like those found here to exist only in infrequent troves of ancient treasures unearthed across the length and breadth of Akados.

If the Int (Religion) check exceeds DC 20, then the above information is learned, as well as a more obscure connection between the Old Way deity Crom Cruach and an even more ancient power called Chernobog



lost to the knowledge of mortals before even the earliest written records of humanity. Exactly who or what Chernobog was is unclear, but legend states that he was banished or imprisoned by some other deity referred to only as the Goddess. It is believed that Crom Cruach was a later incarnation of the worship of that older lost deity. If the Int (Religion) check exceeds DC 20, then it is further revealed that Chernobog was imprisoned in some primordial swamp, sunk within a perfect block of stone.

If the PCs work with the Watch and take on the case, Parish Watch Commander Simp offers them an additional reward of 100 gp for each child returned unharmed, as well as an additional 5,000 gp if the perpetrator or perpetrators are brought to justice, on top of those rewards offered by the Woodcock and Waldersham families.

Chernobog (Lost)

The Black God, Crom Cruach, Dark Crom, Crooked Crom, Crippled Crom, Old Bloody Head, Crom Dubh, God of Blood Sacrifice

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

Domains: Death, Nature, War

Symbol: A spiral, usually a tattoo

Garb: Bloodstained robes, furs, or hides with hair and beard styled into horns with dried blood

Favored Weapon: Greatclub

Form of Worship and Holidays: Blood sacrifices at solstices and equinoxes, at planting and at harvest, before and after hunts, at births and deaths, and on occasions when intercession is beseeched.

Typical Worshipers: Neolithic tribes (mostly extinct), some Daanite outlaws, occasional murderers and madmen

Chernobog is a primordial evil as old as the world of Lloegyr itself. It is unknown if he was one of the original progeny of the hateful primeval god known as The Father or if he simply existed concurrently with him — or even before perhaps. Whereas the bloody hands of The Father promoted the strength of the tribe and its leaders, the endless thirst of Chernobog existed for its own sake. A god of blood sacrifices, only the truly desperate or the truly crazed would call upon his favor, because it always came at the price of a brutal sacrifice. The more important the request, the dearer the source of the sacrifice required. Ancient cave paintings among the hills of Irkaina depict chieftains giving up their own children and wives to the hands of the blood-soaked altar in exchange for some great boon, and always depict a shadowy horned figure gazing down from above with its mouth open as if to feed.

Sacrifices to Chernobog were not only frequent and personal, but also spectacularly cruel. No jagged stone across the throat or

strangler's cord for the Black God's victims: Sacrifices to Chernobog were always killed by a blow to the head by a club or heavy stone and often required more than one strike to finish the still-conscious victim. This often resulted in not only a hideous display of anguish and thrashing, but also an inevitable spilling of blood and brain matter as the calvaria was finally compromised. So repugnant was the worship of Chernobog that tribes known to consort with the deity frequently faced genocidal attacks from their neighbors, though the god's interventions sometimes turned the tables on these and turned them merely into sources of more sacrifices for his blood-spattered altar stones. Eventually his machinations became too injurious to the survival of the early human tribes, and the god himself came under attack by the now largely forgotten primeval deity known as The Goddess. According to obscure myths, she was unable to outright destroy Chernobog, but was able to overcome him and imprison him for all eternity in a perfectly formed stone. Scholars debate exactly what that means, and the tales also differ as to whether this stone was then secreted into the heart of a mountain or sunk in a bottomless swamp. In any case, knowledge and worship of the god was largely forgotten for millennia.

Pockets of reverence emerged for the god under the new name of Crom Cruach during the time that the Ancient Folk occupied much of Akados. However, his bloody ways hadn't changed, and his worship was again largely suppressed by other tribes before being wholly wiped out with the ascension of the Hyperboreans. The ancient knowledge of the god proved tenacious and returned centuries later among the Daanite followers of the Old Way on the island of Ynys Cymragh in the form of a despotic tyrant-king calling himself Crom Dubh. An alliance of clans eventually brought down this bloodthirsty slaughterer of entire villages, but the outlawed worship of Old Bloody Head lingers on in some remote areas of the island with the name Crom Dubh now ascribed to the god himself.

Chapter Two: The Reaping

The investigation by the Watch and the hired diviner has brought their search to the edge of the fens south of Toiltown. Part of the overall swampland known as the Lych Fens that embraces the city's southern boundary and best known for its historic use in the disposal of mortal remains (usually surreptitiously), this particular region is known as Sheep's Coe.

In times past, it has been less boggy than other areas of the fen and was considered good grazing land for the massive flocks of sheep that are necessary to feed and clothe a city the size of Castorhage. However, some particular quality of the soil, the swamp waters themselves, or the all-too-frequent deposits of cadavers caused an unusually high incidence of a rotting disease that afflicts sheep and their woolen coats known among shepherds as coath (or "coe" for short). As a result of the ever-increasing frequency of this pestilence, the flocks were moved farther and farther afield until they reached their current folds and grazing lands many miles away from the city on other parts of the Isle of Lymossus. Fierce storms off the Fetid Sea in recent years have caused flooding that has yet to fully drain away, reducing the former grazing lands to tussocks of bog plants growing amid brackish pools of water that make overland travel virtually impossible.

Water depth within the pools and channels is 1d6+4 feet, and their bottoms are covered in several feet of muck that is considered a shallow bog for any water breathers that attempt to travel along the bottom.

Visibility in the water is less than 1 foot, providing total concealment to anything in the water against anything that is not a species native to the muddy channels. These creatures have all adapted means of navigation other than sight and can get around without impediment.

The fens are rife with wildlife and dangerous creatures alike, but for purposes of this adventure and the time constraints it has imposed, consider that most of the dangerous fauna has fled the area due to all the recent activity. If you prefer more combats, though, feel free to insert any encounters appropriate to a swampy setting that you wish.

The Kidnapper's Trail

The Watch's search centers on a stretch of land bordering the waters of the fen. Here, a fresh trail of many child-sized footprints was found leading from the edge of the city directly to the water's edge where searchers found signs of the beaching of a large skiff. It doesn't take the most experienced Watch inspectors to deduce that the kidnapped children were loaded onto the skiff and floated out into the swamp to disappear among its many miles of trackless waterways, pools, and plant growth. The investigation has stalled here, and MacKenzie's divinations have provided no further insight. The investigation lies in the hands of the PCs now.

If the PCs have access to powerful magic such as *find the path*, locating where the children are being held would be a relatively simple matter. However, the PCs should not be high enough level for a spell of that caliber, and such resources within the city will not be made available for such a low-profile crime. Even the great nephew of a Justice doesn't warrant that sort of expenditure — perhaps a Grand Justice, but certainly not a simple Justice.

As 9th-level characters, the PCs should have access to divination spells such as *commune*, *commune with nature*, *contact other plane*, *divination*, *scrying*, *speak with animals*, and *speak with plants*. Creative players can make use of these spells in multiple ways, but most boil down to one of two main options: seeking information about which way a boatload of children went or seeking information on likely places within the fens that a boatload of children could be taken. Divination spells will not provide any further information on the kidnappers themselves or the fates of the children, however. Likewise, creative use of magic such as *fly* or summon spells, or abilities that allow flight or shapechange, could be used to perform aerial reconnaissance to find their quarry.

Spells such as *locate object* (for the missing slipper of Zacari Woodcock's pair, for instance) or *locate creature* (on the children themselves) will not work because the children's location, roughly 3 miles from the edge of the swamp, is beyond the range of such spells. In addition, spells attempting to contact the children themselves (such as *sending* or *dream*) will not work because of the current mental state of the children. They simply will not respond to such contact attempts.

Finally, no mundane means of tracking is possible since the children were transported by water. A random search of the swamp by boat has only a cumulative 5% chance per hour of locating the island where the children were taken. The Watch have not proceeded more than a half mile into the fens by boat in their own halfhearted search (they have heard rumors of the Harvester's involvement and are in no mood to actually confront the quasi-deity), so they can provide no real guidance for the PCs' search. Nor will they accompany the PCs into the swamp. The best they can do is provide a large skiff that the PCs can use to pole along



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the swamp channels in search of the children. They otherwise wait at the swamp's edge for the party's return. If they PCs are gone for more than 36 hours, they give up their search and return to their Watch Stations. They have been informed of the rate at which the children are being lost as determined by MacKenzie's divinations and have no wish to prolong their risk of crossing the Harvester any longer than they have to.

Bryn Duach

The kidnapped children have been taken to an island approximately 3 miles into the fens through a maze of weed-choked, tree-wrapped, muddy channels. Though close to the city, the island is not expected as a location because it has actually only been recently raised from the waters of the swamp by the ritual of Maregeth and his followers. As a result, it does not appear on any of the scant maps that exist of the fens and is unknown to any potential local guides. The PCs are truly on their own in discovering the whereabouts of this place. However, once the island has been spotted or learned of through magic, its likelihood of being where the children were taken becomes immediately obvious. There just isn't any place else nearby that could serve as a destination nearly as well as the large and strangely out-of-place island.

The island itself is little more than a large, mud-covered hill emerging suddenly from the swamp waters ahead as the last screening growths of foliage are cleared. Its oozing, mud-covered slopes are punctuated by countless bits of rotten debris and look more like the muck at the bottom of a swamp rather than a landmass rising from a swamp. And indeed, a DC 14 Int (Nature) or Knowledge (geography) check can confirm that the hill only recently emerged from the depths of the swamp itself. By what process this recent rising occurred is not immediately evident, though a faint aura of transmutation magic still lingers over the whole of the island.

Upon arriving at the island, the PCs immediately spot a skiff pulled up on its muddy beach with a multitude of child-sized footprints leading into a copse of cypress trees growing at the base of the hill. The hill itself rises to a height of no more than 100 feet above the waterline. The island's dimensions cover roughly 700 feet by 900 feet total, with the slopes of the hill taking up most of the space. From here, the use of a spell such as *locate object* would likely be in range to lead them closer to their quarry if the PCs think to cast one. If Zack Woodcock's slipper is used for a locate object, it guides them to area 2 where it was lost.

Climbing the hill is muddy and exhausting work, though not particularly dangerous, as there are no cliffs or falling hazards. At its top can be found only bugs, swamp foliage, a few snakes, and a breathtakingly depressing view of the green and brown marshland that abuts the southern edge of the brown and grey expanse of the smog-choked city to the north.

Maregeth and his followers refer to the new island as Bryn Duach ("Black Hill" in the Daanite language of Ogham) and raised to serve as a temple and base of operations for their cult, but also because of its proximity to their entrapped god.

The Copse Corpse (Difficulty Easy)

The trees composing the copse at the base of the hill are cypress, and a DC 11 Int (Nature) confirms that, until recently, they had been growing in the shallow bog water of the fen before the ground they grow upon rose and became (somewhat) dry land. The copse covers an area roughly 60 feet wide by 20 feet deep, and the trail of children's footprints leads directly into its moss-obscured interior.

Shortly after entering the shade of these trees, the PCs catch sight of a human male — obviously a resident of one of the city's poorer areas by his manner of dress — huddled pitifully against the base of one of the tree trunks. The man seems to be extending his hand for alms while keeping his eyes deferentially downcast. He is completely motionless other than a slight swaying of his extended appendage. A closer look with a DC 15 Wis (Perception) checks while standing within 10 feet of the beggar reveals him to actually be a fairly recently deceased corpse — his skin only now beginning to show the mottle of decomposition — held erect by a number of thin strands of web dangling from the tree limbs above. His swaying



arm is caused by the slight motion of the tree limbs in the barest of breezes. At a distance of 5 feet, his condition is unmistakable, as is the putrid odor that only then becomes apparent from the overlying rotten smell of the fens. Why the corpse was left here or by whom is not readily apparent, but the trail of children's tracks passes right by the fragile marionette.

In truth, the corpse is an unfortunate Blighter who fell victim to Maregeth and his cronies. He was slain and thrown into the pool in area 3 as Maregeth's first **bog burgyn**. The ddewin then ordered the creature to take up station here and remain in place until intruders threatened or attempted to enter the cave at area 1. It has remained motionless here ever since, not even bothering to move when the spiders at 1 later came to investigate. It is only by some strange quirk of fate that the spiders' webbing has strung him up like a marionette, but they in no way inhibit his movement. As soon as any PC attacks, approaches within 5 feet, or tries to pass by toward area 1, the undead creature lurches to its feet and attacks.

Bog Burgyn: AC 14; HP 176 (16d8+48); Spd 20ft; Melee +7 (slam, 6d8+4 bludgeoning); Immunity lightning; Resistance bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons, cold, fire; Str +4, Dex -1, Con +3, Int -1, Wis +0, Cha +0; Senses darkvision 60ft, passive Perception 10; Traits cauldron connection (loses traits as it travels away from cauldron), regeneration (10 HP), unnatural fortitude (always created with maximum HP); AL NE; CR 7; XP 2,900. (Appendix)

The Caves of Bryn Duach

The hill of Bryn Duach is riddled with a system of limestone caves formed millions of years ago. They have been flooded for much of recorded history, but Maregeth's use of ritual magic pulled the entire complex up with the hill and made them more accessible in his attempts to reach his imprisoned god.

The tunnels have an average height of 8 feet, with larger caverns having a ceiling height of half of their widest dimension. Floors are rough and uneven, covered by a layer of sticky mud. All rooms and tunnels are considered difficult terrain unless otherwise stated. Maregeth and his cultists wear elevated wooden sandals (similar to Japanese geta) that allow them to move through the muck without penalty, though the ungainly sandals do cause them a -4 penalty on Stealth checks. PCs who don the sandals will not gain the same movement benefits without at least a couple of days of practice (the cult priests are unaffected because they have the Caves domain). In addition, the animals, undead, vermin, and outsiders located within the cave system are unaffected by the difficult terrain. However, the difficult terrain affects the possessed children (see area 7).

The walls of the caves are moist and dripping with mud from their recent submersion, making climbing difficult (Str [Athletics] check DC 17), and the ever-present smell of bog and decay permeates everything. Simple stone oil lamps with floating wicks hang from hooks driven into the center of each cavern provide the only lighting in the caves. They give off light as a torch and provide normal illumination in the central 20-foot area of a room, with dim light for 20

feet beyond that. If one of these lamps is broken or overturned, the oil ignites and behaves as a thrown flask of oil. The caverns are dark beyond this area, and the tunnels themselves have no illumination. The cultists and children carry bundles of reeds tied together as short-lived torches (15-minute duration) when they travel between the cavern rooms. Other inhabitants (including the cult priests with the Caves domain and Maregeth) do not require a light source. A bundle of a half-dozen or so of these crude torches — most half-used already — is stacked beside the exit of each cavern room and can be found with a DC 13 Wis (Perception) check or automatically by anyone actively looking for it.

Cave Occupants

Maregeth has a finite number of followers and servitor creatures present within the tunnels. Any losses to these numbers should be removed from the overall roster. Once all of a given type are slain or incapacitated, no further encounters with that type of creature occur whether by random encounter or in a keyed area encounter. The roster of Bryn Duach's occupants is:

- Maregeth (Area 5)
- Cwdcai (Area 9)
- 5 retch hounds (Areas 9 and 11)
- 3 cult priests (Areas 4 and 7)
- 6 cult elect (Areas 4 and 7)
- 10 cultists (Areas 4 and 7)
- 28 possessed children, minus the number of hours elapsed since the adventure began (Area 4)
- 5 bog burgyns*, 3 of them will not be encountered outside area 3 (Area 3)
 - * Does not include the bog burgyn at area 1

Random Encounters

The occupants of the cavern tunnels are not static in their location, but move throughout the cave system as they go about their cult duties. As a result, the cave complex is a hive of activity. A roll for a random encounter should be made whenever an unoccupied cavern is entered, whenever the party passes through a tunnel between different caverns, or whenever combat occurs that involves loud or explosive magic or goes on for more than 6 rounds, except for areas 1, 2, 3, 12, and 13; random encounters never occur in those areas. An encounter occurs on a roll of 1–2 on a d6. Roll 2d6 on the table below to determine the encounter. If the encounter calls for creatures or individuals on the roster who have all been slain or incapacitated, then they do not appear as a part of the encounter, though any other indicated creatures will.

Random Encounter Table

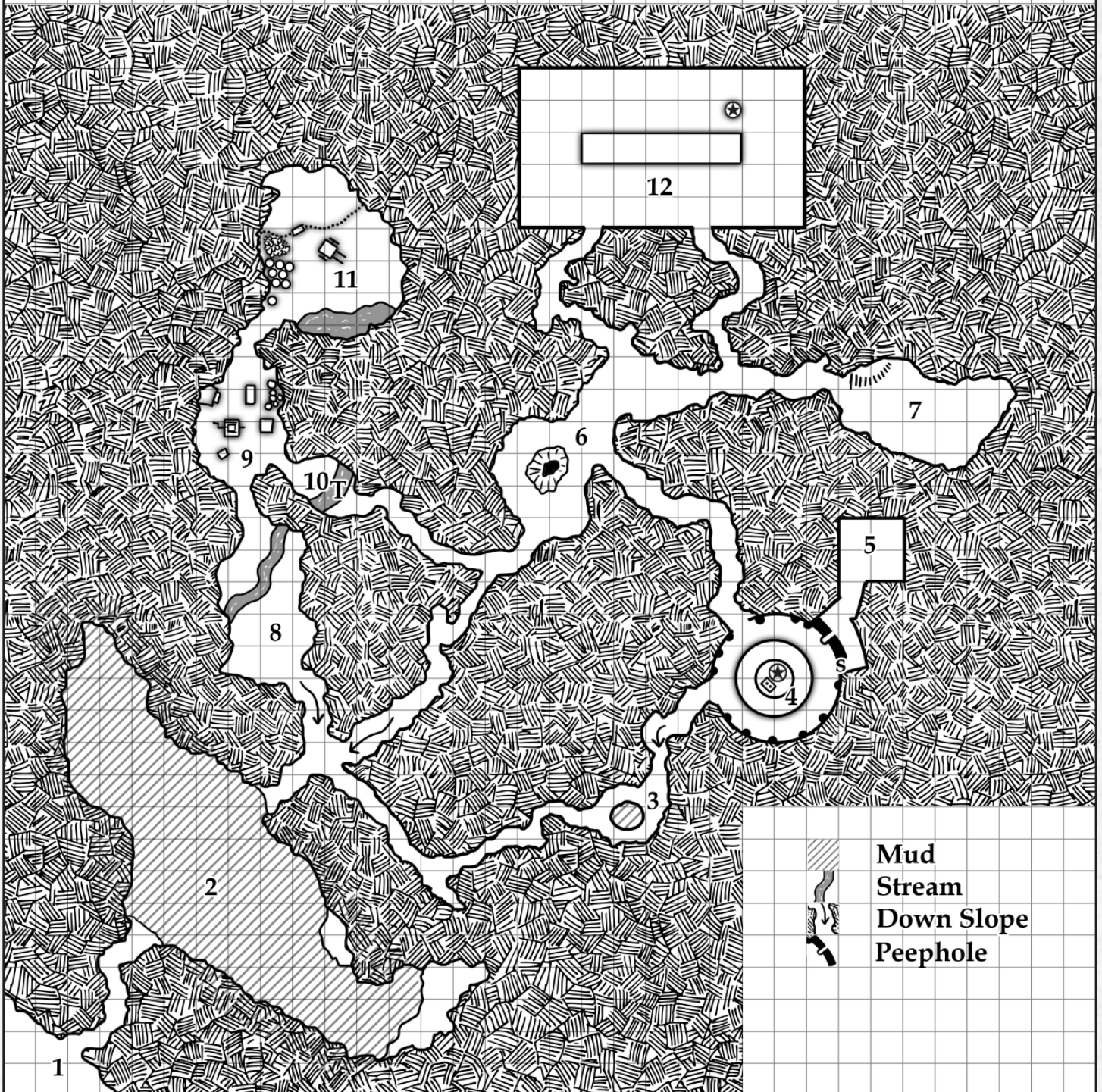
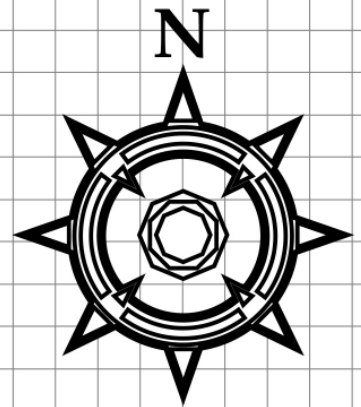
2d6	Encounter
2	Cult priest, cult elect, 1d6 cultists, and 1d3–1 possessed children*
3	1d3 cult elect and 1d8 cultists
4	Cwdcai and 1d3 retch hounds
5	Cult elect, 1d4 cultists, and 1d3 possessed children*
6	1d3 possessed children*
7	1d3 retch hounds
8	1d4 centipede swarms
9	Cultist
10	1d2 bog burgyns
11	1d4 cultists and 1d3–1 possessed children*
12	Maregeth, 1 cult priest, 1d3 cult elect, 1d6 cultists, and 1 possessed child* heading to area 4 for the ritual

* Encounters with possessed children have a cumulative 4% chance (for each) of being Zacari Woodcock or Emelia Waldersham.



The Caves of Bryn Duach

1 square - 20 feet



CHILDREN OF THE HARVEST

1. Cave Entrance (Difficulty Easy)

At the base of the hill where the cypress copse meets the slope is a cave opening draped with vines and tendrils of swamp plants so that it resembles some form of primeval mouth, with a tangled green moustache drooping over it. Large spider webs span the overgrown slope on the left side of the cave in which trapped several mundane birds wriggle and squawk.

Hidden in the foliage of the cypress grove near these webs are **6 giant black widows**, which have no interest in bothering the party unless they or their food are bothered first. Messing with the webs or poking around near them provokes an attack.

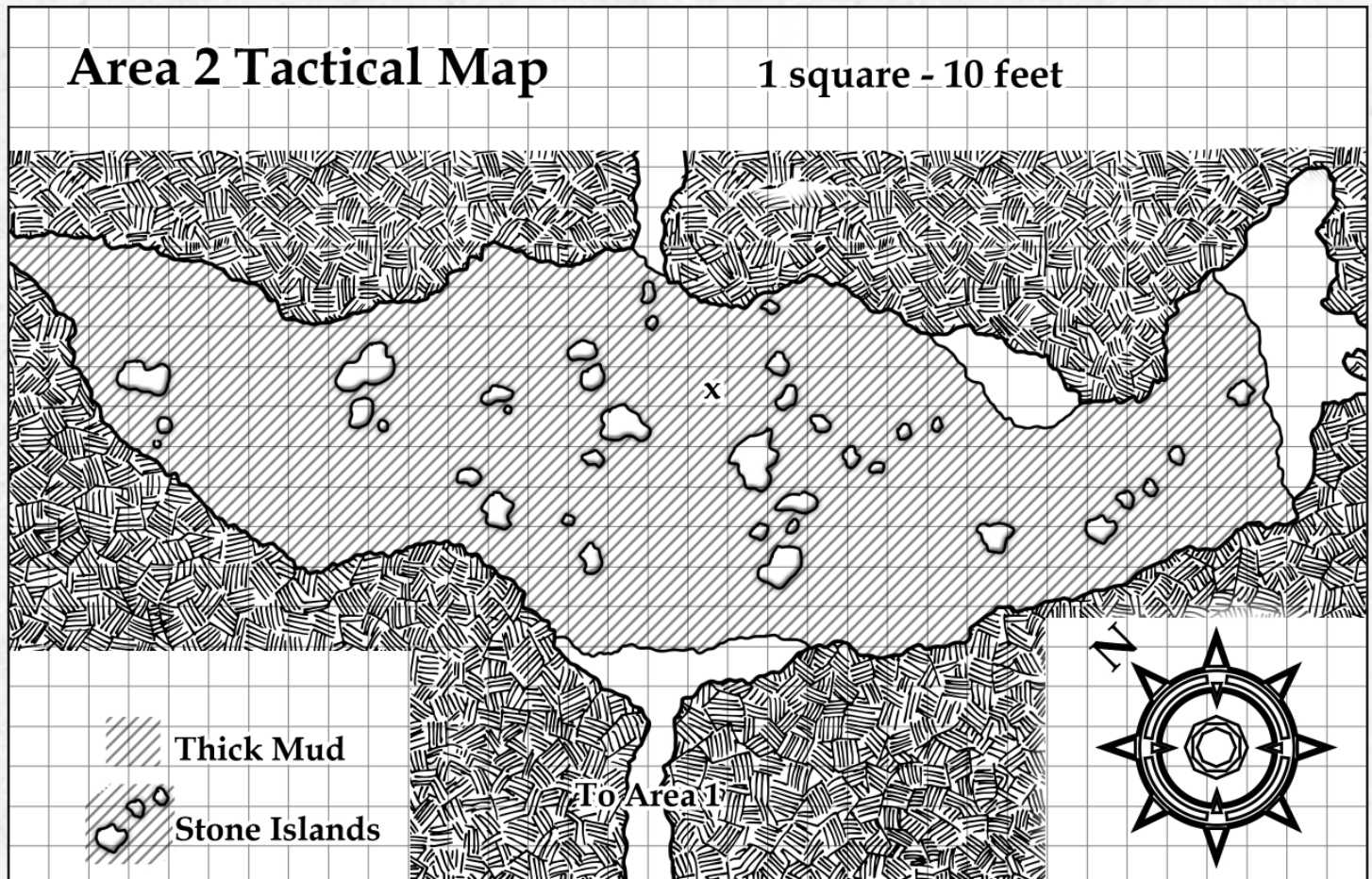
Giant Black Widow (6): AC 14; HP 26 (4d10+4); Spd 30ft, climb 30ft; **Melee** bite (+5, 1d8+3 piercing plus poison); **Ranged** Web (+5, recharge 5–6, 30/60ft, target restrained, DC 12 Str check to escape); **Str** +2, **Dex** +3, **Con** +1, **Int** –4, **Wis** +0, **Cha** –3; **Skills** Stealth +7; **Senses** blindsight 10ft, darkvision 60ft, passive Perception 10; **Traits** poison (2d6 poison plus DC 13 Con save or poisoned for 1d4 hours), spider climb (climb difficult surfaces without ability check), web sense (knows location of creatures in web), web walker (ignores web movement restrictions); **AL** U; **CR** 1; **XP** 200.

2. What Lies Beneath (Difficulty Varies)

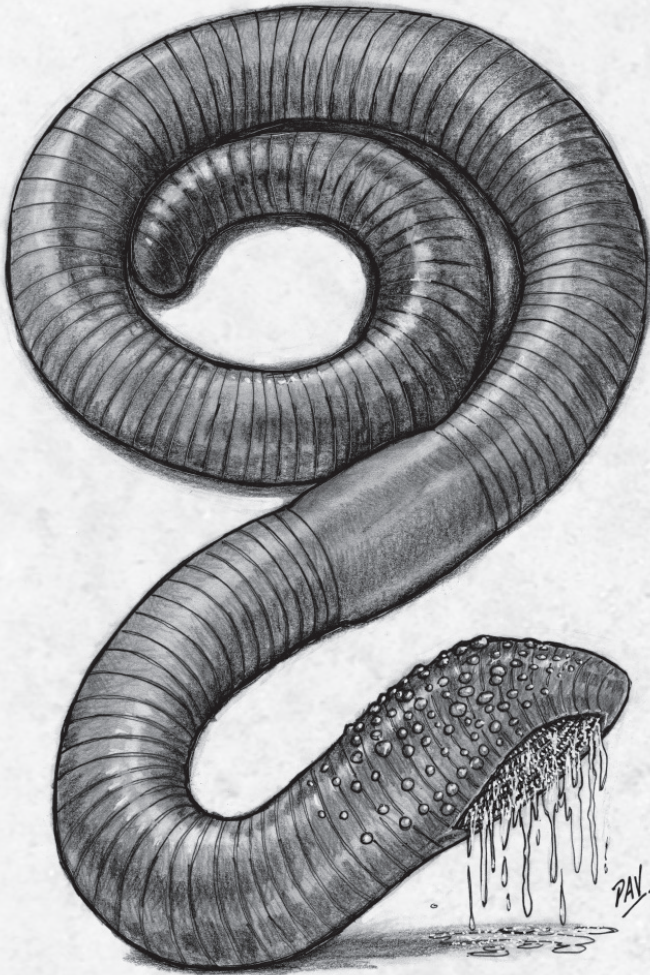
The walls of the cave are grey limestone oozing with moisture. The cave is very old, as attested by the large stalactites growing from the ceiling 40 feet overhead, but most have been broken off and blunted by some unknown force long ago. The floor is a different matter, though. It is almost entirely composed of a great mud pool of unknown depth that stretches from the cavern's entrance to the exit on the far side. At numerous places throughout the cavern, islands of stone break the surface of the mud and extend a foot or two above it. Like the stalactites above, these appear to be broken off and blunted stalagmites. Dozens of these flat-topped plateaus are spaced throughout the chamber, almost like steppingstones.

The floor of this chamber is composed of mud that ranges from 20 to 30 feet deep. This mud serves as the home for a colony of **7 mottled cave worms**. The great worms have lived here for many years. While the cavern was submerged, their movements broke off the tips of the many stalactites and stalagmites as they swam throughout the entire cave. Since the island has been raised, the worms are now confined to the depths of the mud itself where they burrow through the viscous stuff in search of their next meal.

The mud in the room is extremely thick and is treated as a shallow bog for movement purposes. Creatures eventually sink into its depths if they remain in place for a long period of time (an hour at least), but as long as they keep moving they can slog through it with some difficulty. It, of course, provides no hindrance to the movements of the worms who burrow through it with ease. It is not thick enough to hold tracks for more than an hour or two, however, so there is no trace of the children's passing.



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The secret to safely traversing this chamber is to fly over the mud, climb along the walls (Str [Athletics] check DC 17), or leap from stalagmite to stalagmite. The DC for an acrobatics check to leap between the stalagmites is equal to 2 x the distance jumped if the individual does not have at least 10 feet of space to get a running start. The placement of the various stalagmites is shown on the tactical map for this area. There are a few places where a successful jump is unlikely, and it will be necessary to walk in the mud at least partway between two of the stalagmite platforms. At those locations, the PCs risk attack by the worms (see “Tactics” below).

Mottled Cave Worm (7): AC 11; HP 195 (17d12+85); Spd 30ft, burrow 30ft, swim 30ft; **Melee** bite (+9, reach 10 ft., 6d12+5 bludgeoning plus poisoned [DC 12 Con save negates] for 1d6 rounds plus grapple); **SA** swallow whole (can swallow grappled target, swallowed target blinded and restrained, takes 5d6 acid damage/turn); **Str** +5, **Dex** -2, **Con** +5, **Int** -5, **Wis** -1, **Cha** -1; **Senses** blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9; **AL** U; **CR** 9; **XP** 5,000. (**Appendix**)

Tactics: For every round spent in the mud, a PC has a cumulative 50% chance of attracting the attention of 1d3 mottled cave worms. Determine the distance away from the PCs that the worms start by rolling 2d6 x 10 feet. Once a PC gains the attention of a worm or worms, they continue to pursue that individual until he is out of reach. As long as the PCs remain on the stalagmites, the worms beneath the mud remain unaware of them, as their blindsight does not extend above the mud. Once they acquire a target, though, they attack with abandon in their hunger. Even if the target gets back up on a stalagmite or climbs out one of the exits, the pursuing worm breaches the mud and continues to attack on land for 1 round in hopes of swallowing its prey before retreating back into the depths of the mud to avoid suffocation.

The occupants of the caverns are aware of the presence of the worms and avoid this cavern as much as possible. Whenever the cultists do have

to move through it, one of the cult elect casts a *silence* spell which masks their presence from the worms beneath the mud long enough to make it out of the chamber. The use of multiple *silence* spells was how they managed to move the entire group of children safely through the chamber earlier in the day.

Development: At the point marked X on the tactical map, a DC 15 Wis (Perception) check spots a small leather slipper with elaborate beadwork in the shape of a lion barely peaking above the surface of the mud. It is the twin of the one left in Zack Woodcock’s bedroom. It is too light to sink in the mud on its own, so it appears that it likely came off the foot of the boy when he was walking through mud as opposed to him having sunk himself. No bloodstains are on it, so his being eaten by a worm seems slightly less likely, too. A divination spell cast to determine his life or death confirms he is still alive somewhere in the cave complex.

3. Double, Double, Toil, and Trouble (Difficulty Hard)

A large pool of thick, boiling black mud occupies the center of this natural chamber. Streaks of crimson run through the muck like ribbons of fresh blood. A noxious steam rises from the brew in the mud pool, but there does not seem to be any heat from it, as this cave remains as cool as the other tunnels.

The bubbling stew at the center of the chamber is no mere mud pool; it is actually an artifact created by Maregeth called the *Cauldron of Chernobog* (see sidebox). Drawing inspiration from the Cauldron of Rebirth from the tales of the Old Way gods that he grew up with on Ynys Cymragh, Maregeth used the proximity of Chernobog’s presence to call forth this cauldron in a natural mud pool here in the caverns. He has begun using the pool to reanimate the bodies of folk of Castorhage that his cultists have murdered and has 3 **bog burgyns** standing guard in this room as a result.



New Artifact: Cauldron of Chernobog

This is not a true cauldron, but rather a foul mud pool infused with the power of the dark god Chernobog. As such, it is immobile and found only in locations where Chernobog's connection to the Material Plane is strong. The *Cauldron of Chernobog* appears to be a boiling pit of black mud constantly streaked crimson with the blood of the sacrifices frequently fed to it. The cauldron continually gives off a foul brume of noxious fumes, but it does not radiate any heat nor have any apparent heat source. Actually touching the boiling mud reveals that it is nearly freezing to the touch and deals 4d6 cold damage per round of exposure to any living creature that comes in contact with it. A living creature submerged in its freezing embrace is immediately subjected to a *disintegrate* spell (9th level, 19d6+40 damage, save DC 18) and is wholly consumed if slain (as the spell).

The *Cauldron of Chernobog* was either created in imitation of the legendary *Cauldron of Rebirth* of the Tuatha Dé Danann or vice versa; the followers of the Old Way and those who still revere Chernobog hotly contest the matter. The cauldron can be created with the proper ritual by a follower of Chernobog at some swampy location with a close connection to the god, though it is believed that no more than one *Cauldron of Chernobog* can exist at a time.

If the creator of the cauldron places the corpse of a humanoid within the cauldron, it rises under the next moon as a bog burgyn (see **Monster Appendix**) under the control of the cauldron's creator and is forever connected to the cauldron of its creation. A bog burgyn that travels more than 10 miles from the cauldron where it was created temporarily loses its connection until it returns within that range. A bog burgyn cannot be healed of any damage it receives through negative energy spells or abilities, but if it submerges in the cauldron for 1 minute, any lost hit points are restored.

The cauldron can support a number of active bog burgyns equal to the HD of the cauldron's creator. If a bog burgyn is destroyed,

a replacement can be made, but no more than the creator's number of HD can exist at any one time, including bog burgyns that have traveled beyond the 10-mile connection range.

The *Cauldron of Chernobog* is a foul artifact that manifests its presence even when not compelled by a user. Each day, there is a 25% chance that the cauldron spontaneously produces 1d3 centipede swarms from its vile muck. These behave as a normal swarm once they emerge and usually soon wander off in search of sustenance, but they do not attack followers of Chernobog.

Destroying the Cauldron: The *Cauldron of Chernobog* can be permanently destroyed if a living humanoid willing submerges himself in it with the intent to give up his life in order to destroy it. This act causes the sacrificial individual to immediately be affected by a *disintegrate* spell (no save) and if the humanoid is slain, the cauldron itself is instantly destroyed, its contents drying to dust and blowing away, leaving only a shallow stone basin in the ground.

The cauldron can be made temporarily quiescent (which still counts as destroying it in regards to any bog burgyns it has created) if the entire surface of its pool is covered in the consecrated blood of a willing sacrifice. This requires 100 points of damage to living creatures who willingly bleed themselves into the cauldron (this damage can be divided between multiple individuals), powered by the positive energy of a spell from good-aligned casters who are of at least 5th level. For every 5 points of damage the spells deal to the cauldron, the blood requirement is reduced by 1 point of Constitution. When the cauldron is suspended in this way, it becomes an ordinary mud pit but can be reactivated at any time by a follower of Chernobog with the blood sacrifice of at least 100 points of damage from unwilling victims. A reactivated cauldron does not automatically restore any destroyed bog burgyns; new ones have to be created as normal.

These creatures are under standing orders to remain on watch in this room and guard the cauldron from any intruders, and they will not leave their post for any reason. This is fortunate for PCs forced to flee from battle here, as the burgyns will not give chase.

Only Maregeth enters this chamber, and the bog burgyns attack any others who do so — even cultists or possessed children. Maregeth claims any bodies left here to create additional burgyns.

Bog Burgyn (3): AC 14; HP 176 (16d8+48); Spd 20ft; Melee +7 (slam, 6d8+4 bludgeoning); Immunity lightning; Resistance bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons, cold, fire; Str +4, Dex -1, Con +3, Int -1, Wis +0, Cha +0; Senses darkvision 60ft, passive Perception 10; Traits cauldron connection (loses traits as it travels away from cauldron), regeneration (10 HP), unnatural fortitude (always created with maximum HP); AL NE; CR 7; XP 2,900. (**Appendix**)

4. Forgotten Temple (Difficulty Varies)

This chamber lies under the effects of a *fear* spell (DC 16 Wis save) to any creature not of evil alignment.

This grand chamber is a partially worked cave, with natural formations along the walls creating a series of irregular engaged columns rising to a height of 20 feet. The cavern's ceiling then rises another 30 feet to a high dome, creating a strange half-egg shape to the whole. At the center of the chamber, in a

circular area where the floor is sunk a foot lower than at the room's edges, is a bloodstained altar made of a single 4-foot block of blue stone upon a low dais that dimly glows with a flickering blue light. Directly behind the altar stands a 12-foot stone statue crudely carved into the image of a bearded warrior with arms crossed and swirling spiral designs on his cheeks, arms, and shoulders. Spaced around the chamber are 12 smaller statues, each only about 2 feet high but carved in the same general style of the larger statue of the bearded warrior, with crossed arms and spiral engravings. Unlike the rest of this cave system, the stone floor of this chamber has been kept clean of mud and debris, except for dried and congealed blood that seeps from the altar into the natural cracks in the floor surrounding it.

This chamber is an ancient temple of Chernobog consecrated in primordial times before the rise of humans in the world when it was used by a race of reptilian humanoids. It was later flooded and lost beneath what was to become the Sheep's Coe, until Maregeth recently raised it. At the center of the chamber is an idol that, along with the smaller statuettes gathered around it, strongly resembles those found in the bedrooms of the kidnapped children. This statuary was all later additions added by Maregeth and his followers identifying Chernobog with his later incarnation as Crom Cruach.

The original centerpiece of the temple was the altar stone itself. This altar is a 4-foot-square single block of calcite. It bears a flat top with a slight concavity for holding sacrifices. Many natural cracks and fissures in the stone allow blood to drain through it and to the floor below. The semi-translucent calcite has niobium impurities that give it a blue colour, and a *continual flame* spell cast in a hollow at its center makes it glow with a flickering blue light equal in illumination to a torch.

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Hidden on the east side of the room between two of the natural columns is a secret door (DC 17 Wis (Perception) check) guarded by an *arcane lock* and *alarm* that leads to Maregeth's chamber (area 5). One of the columns bears a peephole that allows someone in the secret passage to observe this room, but the hole can be noticed only from this side with a DC 26 Wis (Perception) check.

Currently in this chamber preparing for the next ritual of transformation are **1 cult priest**, **2 cult elects**, **2d4 cultists**, and **1 possessed child**. The evil aura that causes the *fear* effect also aids the chamber's inhabitants, giving them a +2 to saves against spells cast by good creatures, +1 bonus to AC and a +1 bonus to attacks and damage (all included in the stat blocks below).

Cult Priest: AC 13; HP 57 (9d8); Spd 30ft; **Melee** +5 (greatclub, 1d8+2 bludgeoning); **SA** channel divinity (arcane abjuration DC 13 Wis, turn undead DC 13 Wis), destroy undead, spells (Wis +5, DC 13); **Str** +2, **Dex** +0, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +3; **Skills** Arcana +4, Insight +5, Religion +4; **Senses** passive Perception 14; **Traits** potent spellcasting, spell breaker **AL** CE; **CR** 6; **XP** 2,300.

Spells: 0 (at will)—*blade ward*, *chill touch*, *light*, *resistance*, *sacred flame*, *thaumaturgy*; 1st (4)—*command*, *detect magic*, *identify (D)*, *inflict wounds*, *mage armor (D)*, *magic missile*; 2nd (3)—*aid*, *blindness/deafness*, *blur (D)*, *see invisibility (D)*, *spiritual weapon*; 3rd (3)—*animate dead*, *bestow curse*, *counterspell (D)*, *dispel magic*, *magic circle (D)*; 4th (3)—*arcane eye*, *dimension door (D)*, *freedom of movement*, *guardian*

of faith, *polymorph (D)*; 5th (1)—*insect plague*, *teleportation circle (D)*

Equipment: chain shirt, greatclub, 3 vials unholy water, unholy symbol tattoo on face, ruby ring (300gp), 4d10+20gp

Cult Elect (2): AC 13; HP 33 (6d8+6) Spd 30ft; **Melee** dagger x2 (+4, 1d4+2 piercing); **Ranged** dagger (+4, 20ft/60ft, 1d4+2 piercing); **SA** multiattack (2 dagger), spells (DC 11, Wis +3); **Str** +0, **Dex** +2, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +2; **Skills** Deception +4, Persuasion +4, Religion +2; **Senses** passive Perception 10; **Traits** dark devotion (advantage vs being charmed or frightened); **AL** CN; **CR** 2; **XP** 450.

Spells (slots): 0 (at will)—*light*, *sacred flame*, *thaumaturgy*; 1st (4)—*command*, *inflict wounds*, *shield of faith*; 2nd (3)—*hold person*, *spiritual weapon*

Cultist (2d4): AC 12; HP 9 (2d8) Spd 30ft; **Melee** club (+2, 1d6 bludgeoning); **Ranged** heavy crossbow (+3, 100/400ft, 1d10+1 piercing); **Str** +0, **Dex** +1, **Con** +0, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0; **Skills** Deception +2, Religion +2; **Senses** passive Perception 10; **Traits** dark devotion (advantage on saves against being charmed or frightened); **AL** CN; **CR** 1/8; **XP** 25.

Equipment leather armor, club, heavy crossbow with 15 bolts, flint and steel, elevated wooden sandals*, pouch with 2d4+2 gp, 3d10+10 sp

* See **The Caves of Bryn Duach** above



Possessed Child

XP 700 (CR 3)

CE Small Humanoid

Init +2

DEFENSE

AC 13

HP 110 (20d6+40)

Resistance bludgeoning, piercing or slashing damage from nonmagical weapons, lightning**OFFENSE**

Speed 30ft

Melee +4 (sickle, 1d6+2 slashing plus 2d6 necrotic)**STATISTICS****Str** 12 (+2), **Dex** 16 (+3), **Con** 14 (+2),**Int** 10 (+0), **Wis** 10 (+0), **Cha** 11 (+0)**Languages** Abyssal, Common**Skills** Athletics +4, Perception +2**Senses** passive Perception 12**TRAITS**

Horns Once per day as a bonus action, a possessed child can will numerous horns to suddenly grow from his head and arms. He can use these to easily catch weapons and yank them away from opponents. As an action, the possessed child can make a normal attack roll and compare it to the opponent's Str save. On a success, the target must drop one object that the possessed child chooses. The horns can be activated or dismissed at will, but this ability can be used only once per day. The horns will disappear on their own after 1 hour if not dismissed in that time.

Possessed A possessed child is inhabited by a portion of the imprisoned deity Chernobog. Chernobog perceives only what the child perceives and is in constant telepathic communications with the child, imparting his thoughts and desires, regardless of language. Damage that harms the child does not harm Chernobog. If the possessed child dies, Chernobog's essence is returned to him unharmed.

Spell Vulnerability A possessed child subjected to a *dispel evil* spell must succeed on an DC 11 Wis save or lose all the modifications bestowed by the possession (reverting to a normal young human Commoner) for a number of rounds equal to the opponent's caster level as Chernobog's influence is temporarily suppressed.

A possessed child subjected to a *banishment* spell must succeed on a DC 13 Wis save or fall unconscious as Chernobog's influence is cast from his body. However, the child remains comatose and cannot be revived until the possession is fully removed as described in area 13.

Tactics: The priest and the elect take cover behind the altar and its idol while the cultists and possessed child assume a defensive line in front of it. The elect starts his attack with a *silence* spell cast at the stone idol nearest to any obvious spellcasters in the party but ensures that its effects do not reach him and the priest behind the altar while the child casts *haste* on his allies. He then casts *hold person* at party members who look like melee fighters. While he is doing this, the priest casts *flame strike* among the largest concentration of party members (with preferential focus on spellcasters or archers) and then *hold person* much like the elect. If anyone closes for melee, he casts *vampiric touch* while the elect switches to melee weapons to try to provide the priest cover for further spellcasting. Once the *flame strike* has been cast, the cultists and possessed child charge wildly into combat to try to keep the party members busy at a distance and allow their fellows to continue spellcasting from behind the altar.

The Possessed Children

Though the possessed children in this adventure are not overly threatening to a party of the PCs' level, they still remain one of the more difficult challenges to be faced. Through a ritual performed by the cult and led by Maregeth, each has been infused with a portion of the spirit of Chernobog. The result is similar to the demon-possessed template in the *Advanced Bestiary* by Green Ronin Publishing except that there is no actual demon in each one but rather just a small portion of Chernobog's influence.

The children are helpless against the powerful will of Chernobog and do everything they can to bring about the destruction of the PCs. Even with the temporary means of suppressing the possession as described in the stat block, they will never truly be free from the deity's influence as long as the black candles in area 13 remain lit. Until PCs extinguish those candles, the children remain implacable foes of the PCs and happily go to their own dooms when it is their turn to be sacrificed upon the altar stone.

Since the rescue of the children is the primary goal of the adventure for the party, the PCs cannot be successful without extinguishing the candles in area 13. So one of the major tasks they face is how to deal with the malevolent and possession-empowered children who are out to kill them without harming them at the same time. Killing or seriously injuring one of the children — even in self-defense — is an inherently evil act that causes not only legal repercussions in the city but also alignment repercussions with deities. Paladins beware! A better way to handle them is by striking to subdue with nonlethal damage or using spells that incapacitate rather than harm. As the GM, you should guide the PCs away from overtly harmful acts against the children while taking every advantage of the PCs' disadvantage (of course!).

The children, of course, are under no such compunction against harming the party members and attack with glee while saying obnoxious things such as, "join us; he wants you too!" and, "come to Chaos!" To make things just a little bit more awful, the cultists have provided these wretched children with Small sickles that they use to great effect in making terrible wounds on those they hit (especially with their profane attacks ability) while they go after the closest target with great relish and abandon. A truly black-hearted GM might rule that the children actively place themselves in harm's way of spells, monsters, physical hazards, etc., and actually force the PCs to rescue them, hacking at them with their little sickles all the while. But only a truly black-hearted GM...

Development: If the cult priest is reduced to fewer than 12 hp, he draws a dagger across his palm and spills his blood upon the altar and stone statue. In doing so, the last of his hit points are drained from his body as his blood is suddenly drawn forth in a torrent upon the altar. This auto-sacrifice acts as a summon spell, and 1 round later his body swells to immense proportions and rises as a **blood wight** and begins to viciously attack any party members that remain in the room. It also gains the benefit of the temple's magical effects (included in stat block). It will not leave the temple chamber and remains on guard here until slain or until 24 hours pass, at which point it falls to the floor, an ordinary corpse once again. If the altar is broken, the magical effects end and the blood wight (if present) collapses into a normal corpse once again.

Altar: AC 20; HP 60; **Immunity** cold, fire, lightning, poison, psychic; **Resistance** acid, thunder, weapon damage; **Break** DC 30 Str.

If a battle in here continues for 5 rounds, it alerts Maregeth in area 5. See that area's description for his tactics.

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5. Maregeth's Private Chamber (Difficulty Hard)

Blood Wight

XP 5,000 (CR 9)
NE Large Undead
Init +2

DEFENSE

AC 18

HP 187 (22d10+66)

Resistance bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons, fire

OFFENSE

Speed 30ft

Multiaction 2 claws

Melee +8 (claw, reach 10ft, 5d8+4 slashing)

STATISTICS

Str 18 (+4), **Dex** 15 (+2), **Con** 16 (+3),

Int 13 (+1), **Wis** 13 (+1), **Cha** 16 (+3)

Languages common

Skills Athletics +8, Intimidation +7, Perception +5, Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60ft, passive Perception 15

TRAITS

Regeneration A blood wight regains 5 hit points at the start of its turn. If the blood wight takes acid damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the blood wight's next turn. The blood wight dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Engulf A blood wight can try to wrap a Medium or smaller creature in its body as an action. If the wight wins a grapple check against the victim, it establishes a hold and claws its opponent with a +4 bonus on the attack roll. Attacks that hit an engulfing blood wight deal half their damage to the monster and half to the trapped victim. An engulfed victim must make a DC 10 Con save each round or lose 1d8 HP from drowning. The DC of this save increases by 2 each round the victim is engulfed. The victim can escape the grapple by succeeding on a Str (Athletics) or Dex (Acrobatics) check against the blood wight's Str (Athletics). A Large blood wight's body can engulf 1 Medium, 2 Small or 4 Tiny or smaller opponents.

The walls of this chamber and its entry passage are dry and glassy smooth as if melted from the surrounding rock rather than hewn or naturally formed like the rest of the caves. The chamber itself is furnished with a single bed with simple wool and linen bedding, a wooden table with two chairs and the remains of a recent meal of cheese and a crust of bread upon a pewter plate next to a clay wine jug, a low couch against one wall, a large desk next to wooden shelves holding several books and rolls of parchment, and a silk dressing screen. Three standing brass candelabra provide a dim illumination throughout.

This 40-foot-square chamber was created using multiple applications of the *disintegrate* spell and is the personal quarters of **Maregeth** the ddewin, leader of the cult of Chernobog. Behind the silk dressing screen are a porcelain chamber pot, several cloaks and robes hanging on metal hooks driven into the wall, and two broached casks (one common wine, one slightly musty water). Under the desk is a box of 300 tallow candles and flint and steel for the candelabra. Hidden beneath these candles (DC 14 Wis [Perception] check) are three long black tapers that have the smell of decay about them and have a faint lingering aura of evil if detected for, though their purpose is unclear (see area 12 for details).

The bookshelves hold several dozen volumes in the form of folios, bound books, and bundled parchment folios. Most are on mundane religious or historical topics, though they slant toward the dark, evil, and macabre. In addition, one book's spine is crafted from the vertebrae of a human infant, and the thin, delicate skin that covers it can only be that of a human child. This *Codex of Crom Cruach* is written in Ogham (the ancient language of the Daanite peoples) and has a strong aura of evil and a moderate aura of enchantment. Possession of his book is what allowed Maregeth to form his alliance with the Harvester of Cribbs in an effort to free Chernobog from his eons-long prison. See the sidebox for details of this book.

Built into the base of one of the shelves is a secret compartment (Wis [Perception] DC 19) containing a small magically-trapped chest. The contents of the chest are detailed under "Treasure" below.

Chest: AC 20; HP 30; **Immunity** cold, fire, lightning, poison, psychic; **Resistance** acid, thunder, weapon damage; **Break** DC 24 Str.

Fire Trap: Perception DC 16; **Disable** DC 12 Dexterity with thieves' tools

Effect On opening, 2d4+8 fire damage, DC 15 Dex save for half damage, multiple targets (5ft radius).

Maregeth wears a grey fur-lined cloak over a red robe and has a dark, greying beard. He is bald but covers it with a silver skullcap engraved with the image of a dragon breathing fire. The dragon's fire continues down his sallow face as a black tattoo that extends to his jaw line on each side. At 5' 8", Maregeth is slightly below average height for a Daanite, but his gaunt, almost-emaciated appearance and skull-like face beneath sunken pale blue eyes that almost glow with an inner intensity make him look far more intimidating. His voice is deep and mellifluous as is common for the poetic tones of the Daanites, but a harsh sound is faintly audible beneath his words and frequently comes forth in a hacking, dry cough. He is a man who does not look well and doesn't seem to notice or care.

Maregeth, Male Human Nec11: AC 14; HP 57 (11d6+11); Spd 30ft; **Melee** +6 (+2 *quarterstaff*, 1d6+2 bludgeoning [1 handed] or 1d8+2 bludgeoning [2 handed]); **Ranged** +8 (+1 *dagger*, 20ft/60ft, 1d4+4 piercing); **SA** spellcasting (Int +8, save DC 16); **Str** +0 (+1), **Dex** +3 (+4), **Con** +1 (+2), **Int** +4 (+9), **Wis** -1 (+4), **Cha** +2 (+3); **Skills** Arcana +8, Insight +4; **Senses** passive Perception 9; **Traits** arcane recovery (6 levels), grim harvest (1/round), injured to undeath, necro-



The Codex of Crom Cruach

Within the codex pages is the occult ritual* necessary to raise the dungeon of Chernobog from beneath its imprisoning swamp and then free him with the sacrifice of 36 innocents (read: children) who are first possessed by him to corrupt them and then transformed into larvae, thus permanently sacrificing their souls to the powers of chaos and evil in order to overcome the ancient locks holding Chernobog fast. The actual ritual is a long, multi-step process of which Maregeth is now reaching the final stages. Anyone examining this book for 10 minutes who is able to read Ogham (naturally, by magic, or with a DC 17 Int [Investigation] check) can understand the gist of it with a DC 12 Int (Arcana) or (Religion) check. If this check is made by a spellcaster of evil alignment, he is affected by a *geas* to complete this ritual. If the check is made by a spellcaster of non-evil alignment, he is affected by a *feblemind* spell (DC 15 Wis save). Inscribed in the final pages of the book are the spells *freedom of movement*, *gate*, and *wish* if an arcane caster wishes to try to learn them, as well as how to create the *Cauldron of Chernobog* (see sidebox above).

mancy savant; **AL** NE; **CR** 8; **XP** 3,900.

Spells: 0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *dancing lights*, *fire bolt*, *mage hand*, *message*; 1st—*alarm*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *ray of sickness*; 2nd—*crown of madness*, *darkvision*, *scorching ray*; 3rd—*clairvoyance*, *fireball*, *slow*; 4th—*black tentacles*, *dimension door*, *polymorph*; 5th—*cloudkill*, *dominate person*; 6th—*chain lightning*.

Equipment: +1 dagger, +2 quarterstaff, arcane scroll (programmed illusion), headband of intellect, horn of Valhalla (silver), potion of fire resistance, potion of greater healing x2, potion of invisibility, ring of protection, wand of polymorph, silver skullcap (55 gp), fox fur-lined cloak (70 gp), gold torc (150 gp), silver ring set with large cracked carnelian (270 gp), elevated wooden sandals*, spell component pouch, 63 gp, 7 pp
* See **The Caves of Bryn Duach** above

Tactics: Maregeth has already cast *mage armor* on himself before the PCs arrive. He recently gave himself *darkvision* and he has cast *alarm* on the secret door to his chamber to give him a silent mental alert if it is opened by anyone other than him. If a battle in area 4 occurs for 5 rounds, Maregeth becomes aware of the noise and casts *clairvoyance* to see what is going on in there. When he realizes an attack is occurring, he rushes to the peephole, arriving in 2 rounds. After that, he uses his scroll of *programmed illusion* to make himself appear from one of the side tunnels and casts *magic missile* from hiding at PCs when they are distracted. The image tries to stay out of melee combat and uses *chain lightning* and his *wand of polymorph* to keep the PCs at bay. Polymorphed PCs are changed into sheep or swine for later meal preparation by Cwdcai. If the possessed child is slain, Maregeth casts *cloudkill* into the room, followed by *black tentacles* if necessary.

If the PCs breach the secret door to area 5, Maregeth winds his *silver horn of Valhalla* to bring in **2d4+2 berserkers** to hold them off and retreats to his bedchamber to recover his potion stash in the desk drawer and the *Codex of Crom Cruach*. If the PCs appear to be making short work of the barbarians, he casts *fireball* to hold them off and *dimension door* to retreat to area 11 to hide. See that area for further details.

Berserkers (2d4+2): **AC** 13; **HP** 67 (9d8+27) **Spd** 30ft; **Melee** bite (+5, 1d4+3 piercing); **Str** +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +3, **Int** -1, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -1; **Senses** passive Perception 10; **Traits** reckless (1/turn can gain advantage on melee attacks, but all attacks on berserker have advantage); **AL** CN; **CR** 2; **XP** 450.

Treasure: The wood and silk folding dressing screen is 6 feet tall by 4 feet wide and is painted with idyllic scenes of green fields and shepherds with their flocks (75 gp). One of the hanging cloaks is made of blue linen

sewn with mystic symbols in silver thread (150gp). The pewter dinnerware and plates are battered and scratched from travel but still of some value (15 gp for the set). The 36 mundane books on the shelves are worth 3d6 gp each for their academic value. The shelves also hold a *manual of gainful exercise* that Maregeth has not had time to use yet. The drawer of the desk holds 3 *potions of extra healing*, a *potion of gaseous form*, a *potion of speed*, and a *potion of invulnerability*, and serve as Maregeth's emergency stash if he feels he needs to flee the caves. Contained within the trapped chest are 620 gp, 2,200 sp, 65 pp, an ornate lead cross set with 16 amethysts stolen from a Daanite church of Thyr (worth 150 gp per gem or 3,500 gp intact), a leather pouch containing 3 polished finger-bones (religious relics taken from condemned past apostates of Crom Dubh, worthless except to a follower of Chernobog), and 2 spinels (100 gp each).

6. Larvae Pit (Difficulty varies)

The center of this irregularly shaped cavern is occupied by a pit or well. Darkness hides the depths of the shaft, but a foul, slurping, gurgling noise issues from within, and the stench rising from it is as from the Unholy Pit itself.

A light source presented to the pit reveals it to be only 15 feet deep, its sides sheer stone and streaked with filth and a film of repugnant slime. However, the bottom of the pit holds its true horror. Wallowing in the filth are a number of fat, 3-foot-long, pale, maggot-like creatures feeding upon the effluvia in which they writhe with hideous sucking and slurping sounds. Most horrifying of all, however, are the heads of the great maggot-worms, for they bear the distorted-but-still-recognizable heads of human children.

The occupants of the pit are larvae and are the malformed souls of the kidnapped children already sacrificed for Chernobog's release. The number of larvae in the pit depends upon how long the PCs have taken to reach here. When the adventure begins, **8 larvae** are in the pit, but for each hour that passes, an additional possessed child has been sacrificed in the ritual in area 4, his blood spilled upon the altar, his body fed to the kitchen hounds, and his innocent soul warped and confined to this disgusting aberrant form. The Woodcock and Waldersham children are not yet among them unless the PCs have taken more than 30 hours to arrive here. In that case, there is a 50% chance each hour that one of them is added.

When the larvae first spy the PCs, they make an incoherent clamour that calls for an immediate check for random encounters. They have no memory of their mortal lives or ability to communicate, and simply seek to feed upon whatever sources of filth come within reach. Unless a PC enters the pit, the larvae are helpless to affect them. Slaying these larvae releases the children from their torment as Abyssal souls destined to be devoured by a resurgent Chernobog, but it does not free their souls from torment in the Abyss. The only way to truly rescue the children already transformed into larvae is through *resurrection* or similar powerful magic to return them to life.

Larva: **AC** 9; **HP** 9 (2d8); **Spd** 20ft; **Melee** Bite (+1, 1d4-1 piercing); **Str** -1, **Dex** -1, **Con** +0, **Int** -2, **Wis** 0, **Cha** -4; **Senses** passive Perception 10; **AL** NE; **CR** 0; **XP** 10.

7. Dormitory (Difficulty varies)

This cavern smells strongly of feces and urine, and even a quick look reveals that it is a pit of despair. Loose clothing and soiled blankets lay in piles amid the muck of the floor, and gnawed bones and scraps of food lie scattered about. It looks as though dozens of folks live in this absolute squalor, almost as if it was the den of a pack of ghouls. There are no other exits from the cavern, and a few bats hang from or flit about the ceiling 20 feet above, disturbed by the lights. Three beds, slightly less filthy than the rest of the cave, stand above the stinking floor on a low shelf of stone right at the cave entrance.

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This cavern serves as the abode of the cult members and their possessed children guests. Usually, a **cult priest**, **2 cult elect**, **2d6 cultists**, and **4d6 possessed children** are here unless the PCs have already encountered and dealt with them elsewhere in the cave system.

Cult Priest: AC 14; HP 57 (9d8); Spd 30ft; **Melee** +6 (Rod of the Viper, 1d6+3 bludgeoning); **SA** channel divinity (touch of death, turn undead DC 13 Wis), destroy undead, divine strike (1d8 necrotic), spells (Wis +5, DC 13); **Str** +2, **Dex** +0, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +3; **Skills** Arcana +4, Insight +5, Religion +4; **Senses** passive Perception 14; **Traits** inescapable destruction, reaper (*chill touch*), **AL** CE; **CR** 6; **XP** 2,300.

Spells: 0 (at will)—*blade ward, chill touch, light, resistance, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*; 1st (4)—*command, detect magic, false life (D), inflict wounds, ray of sickness (D), shield of faith*; 2nd (3)—*aid, blindness/deafness (D), hold person, ray of enfeeblement (D), spiritual weapon*; 3rd (3)—*animate dead (D), dispel magic, magic circle, spirit guardians, vampiric touch (D)*; 4th (3)—*arcane eye, banishment, blight (D), death ward (D), freedom of movement*; 5th (1)—*antilife shell (D), cloudkill (D), flame strike*

Equipment: +1 chain shirt, rod of the viper, 3 vials unholy water, unholy symbol tattoo on face, 4d10+20gp

Cult Elect (2): AC 13; HP 33 (6d8+6) Spd 30ft; **Melee** dagger x2 (+4, 1d4+2 piercing); **Ranged** dagger (+4, 20ft/60ft, 1d4+2 piercing); **SA** multiattack (2 dagger), spells (DC 11, Wis +3); **Str** +0, **Dex** +2, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +2; **Skills** Deception +4, Persuasion +4, Religion +2; **Senses** passive Perception 10; **Traits** dark devotion (advantage vs being charmed or frightened); **AL** CN; **CR** 2; **XP** 450.

Spells (slots): 0 (at will)—*light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*; 1st (4)—*command, inflict wounds, shield of faith*; 2nd (3)—*hold person, spiritual weapon*

Cultist (2d4): AC 12; HP 9 (2d8) Spd 30ft; **Melee** club (+2, 1d6 bludgeoning); **Ranged** heavy crossbow (+3, 100/400ft, 1d10+1 piercing); **Str** +0, **Dex** +1, **Con** +0, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0; **Skills** Deception +2, Religion +2; **Senses** passive Perception 10; **Traits** dark devotion (advantage on saves against being charmed or frightened); **AL** CN; **CR** 1/8; **XP** 25.

Equipment leather armor, club, heavy crossbow with 15 bolts, flint and steel, pouch with 2d4+2 gp, 3d10+10 sp

POSSESSED CHILDREN (4d6)

XP 700

hp 110 (See Area 4)

CR 3

Tactics: The priests and elect attack in similar fashion to those detailed in area 4, retreating to the rear portion of the cave to use spells to keep the PCs at bay while the cultists and children engage in melee. The priests and elect won't hesitate to use the possessed children as human shields while they cast their spells at invaders. If forced into melee, the cult priest activates his *rod of the viper* to use in battle. The cavern's inhabitants are all fanatical and fight to the death.

8. Abattoir (Difficulty Medium)

The overpowering smell of decomposition coming from this cavern is evident from 40 feet away.

This long, low cavern is interrupted midway along its length by a narrow stream that enters through the north wall and exits to the south. The waters of the stream are as black as night, though whether that is from the darkness of the cave or some property of the water itself is unclear. The ceiling ranges from 10 to 15 feet high in this cavern, and the air is alive with buzzing gnats, biting flies, and other vermin. Cave beetles scuttle across the floor among gatherings of maggots. The reason for this infestation is immediately obvious.

The floor of the north part of the cavern is dark and slick with blood that drains into the stream, no doubt lending to its hue. The source of the blood is a number of meat hooks suspended from chains anchored in the rock of the ceiling. Many of the meat hooks are occupied by the dressed and draining carcasses of slaughtered beasts, mainly sheep and pigs by the look of them.

The stench of this place is almost overwhelming. Anyone entering must make a DC 13 Con save or become sickened for as long as they remain within the chamber and for 1d4 rounds thereafter. If the save is failed by 4 or more, the victim is nauseated instead of sickened for the duration of the effect. The stream ranges from 1–2 feet deep and has a gravel bottom, so it is not treacherous to cross, but it is thoroughly fouled by the contents of the room. Anyone daring to drink of it must make a DC 17 Con save or contract filth fever.

A total of 10 carcasses hang in here: 7 sheep and 3 swine. They have all been slaughtered and hung here to age a bit by Cwdcai (area 9) before he uses them in one of his meals. If *detect magic* is cast in this chamber, 3 of the carcasses bear an aura of transmutation (2 sheep and 1 pig). If a *dispel magic* successfully overcomes the source of this aura (DC 13) or a *true seeing* or similar magic is used, it is revealed that these 3 are actually polymorphed human carcasses that have nonetheless been gutted and flayed along with the others. These unfortunates are shepherds and pig keepers captured by cultists while they went about rustling from the local flocks. Those brought here but not immediately needed by Maregeth to create more bog burgyns were instead transformed into livestock and given to Cwdcai. The disgusting cook cares little for the source of his meat, and happily brought these here for slaughter.

The western side of the room near where the stream exits contains piles of offal and other inedible bits of the slaughtered beasts. There is a greater concentration of feeding vermin here, and if the PCs approach within 10 feet, they disturb **8 centipede swarms** currently feeding upon the refuse. Any noise of battle here alerts Cwdcai in area 9 and allows him time to prepare for intruders.

Swarm of Centipedes (8): AC 12; HP 22 (5d8); Spd 20ft, climb 20ft; **Melee** bites (+3, 4d4 piercing, or 5 (2d4) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.) **Immune** charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned; **Resist** non-magic weapon damage; **Str** -4, **Dex** +1, **Con** +0, **Int** -5, **Wis** -2, **Cha** -5; **Senses** blindsight (10ft), passive Perception 8; **Traits** poison (creature reduced to 0 HP is stable but poisoned and paralyzed for 1 hr), swarm (can occupy another creature's space, move through Tiny opening, can't regain HP or gain temp HP); **AL** U; **CR** 1/2; **XP** 100.

New Magic Item

Rod of the Viper

Weapon (mace) rare

This rod strikes as a +1 mace. Once per day, upon the wielder's command, the head of the rod becomes that of an actual serpent for 10 minutes. During this period, any successful strike with the rod deals its usual damage and also poisons the creature hit. This poison deals 1d3 points of Poison damage per round for 6 rounds. Poisoned creatures can make a DC 13 Con save each round to negate the damage and end the affliction. Multiple hits extend the duration by 3 rounds and increase the DC by 2 for each hit. The rod only functions if its possessor is evil.

9. Cwdcai the Monster (Difficulty Deadly)

The aroma of warm, fresh-baked bread makes a disconcerting counterpoint to the odor of freshly spilled bowels, all with a smoky reek as an undercurrent. The ceiling of this cavern is almost pyramidal, rising to a point 30 feet overhead. Cooking implements, barrels, jars and tables clutter the cave itself. A fire pit with a spitted pig roasting over it is near the center of the room, and nearby is a large oven crudely fashioned from mortared stones. Resting atop this stone oven is a stone platter of freshly baked crusty rolls set out to cool. Buckets of fresh turnips, leeks and carrots rest on tables on the opposite side of the room.

This kitchen is the domain of the cult's cook, **Cwdcai**, a Daanite, half-ogre barbarian called "the Monster" by his fellows for his ungodly appetites and predilections. None enters here except on direct orders from Maregeth, and even the cult leader is hesitant to venture into this chamber by himself. However, for whatever atrocities Cwdcai commits in his small kingdom, the food he serves the cult is filling and palatable if one doesn't examine what is being eaten too closely. Resting in the warmth beside the oven are **2 retch hounds** that rise and fight if battle is joined with Cwdcai.

Currently stocking the kitchen are 6 large casks of cheap ale (20 gallons each), 2 large jars (5 gallons each) of cooking oil, a barrel of vinegar (contaminated with dirt, oil and blood), and a mop and filthy bucket. Anyone attempting *detect magic* notes an aura of moderate transmutation on the spitted pig (it was originally a human eel trapper who worked the surrounding fens before running afoul of the cult).

Cwdcai does not appreciate intruders interrupting his culinary creations, and typically tries to add them to the dish. He is forbidden from harming the children, but has spiced more than one meal with an errant cultist. He wears a shaggy bearskin coat dyed dark blue and stained with grease, dried blood, and offal. He is as bald as an egg, and upon the extremely wide crown of his head he wears a recently slaughtered sheep's head, held in place by a leather chin strap that runs from the base of the sheep's jaw to tie beneath his own acne-scarred double chin. The head's eyes are shriveled and shrunken within their sockets, and its short wool is matted with blood and swarming with lice to create a truly disturbing tableau.

Cwdcai the Monster, Enlarged and Enraged

XP 8400 (CR 12)

CE Huge Giant (half-ogre)

Init +1

DEFENSE

AC 16

HP 168 (4d10+12d12+60)

Save Str +9, Con +9

Immunity charmed, frightened

Resistance bludgeoning, piercing, slashing*, fire

OFFENSE

Speed 40ft

Multiattack 2 *berserker's greataxe*

Melee +10 (*berserker's greataxe*, 2d12+6 slashing or 2d12+1d4+9 slashing*)

STATISTICS

Str 21 (+5), Dex 13 (+1), Con 20 (+5),

Int 5 (-3), Wis 11 (+0), Cha 6 (-2)

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +9, Intimidation +2

Senses darkvision 60ft, passive Perception 10

TRAITS

Brutal Critical Cwdcai can roll one additional weapon

damage die when determining the extra damage for a critical hit with a melee attack.

Danger Sense Cwdcai has advantage on Dexterity saving throws against effects that he can see, such as traps and spells. To gain this benefit, he cannot be blinded, deafened, or incapacitated.

Feral Instinct Cwdcai has advantage on initiative rolls. Additionally, if he is surprised at the beginning of combat and isn't incapacitated, he can act normally on his first turn, but only if he enters rage before doing anything else on that turn.

Frenzy Cwdcai can go into a frenzy when he rages. For the duration of his rage he can make a single melee weapon attack as a bonus action on each turn after this one. When his rage ends, he suffers one level of exhaustion.

Intimidating Presence. As an action Cwdcai can choose one creature within 30ft. If the creature can see or hear him, it must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw (DC 10) or be frightened of Cwdcai until the end of Cwdcai's next turn. Cwdcai can use his action to extend the duration of this effect on the frightened creature until the end of his next turn. This effect ends if the creature ends its turn out of line of sight or more than 60ft away from Cwdcai.

Mindless Rage Cwdcai can't be charmed or frightened while raging. If he was charmed or frightened when he entered rage, the effect is suspended for the duration of the rage.

Rage Cwdcai can enter a rage as a bonus action, gaining the following benefits:

- Advantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws
- +3 bonus damage on melee attacks.
- Resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.
- Rage lasts for 1 minute. It ends early if Cwdcai is knocked unconscious or if his turn ends and he hasn't attacked a hostile creature since his last turn or taken damage since then. You can also end your rage on your turn as a bonus action. Cwdcai can rage 5 times per day and must finish a long rest before he can rage again.

Reckless Attack. When making his first attack on his turn, Cwdcai can choose to attack recklessly, gaining advantage on melee weapon attack rolls using Strength during this turn, but attack rolls against him have advantage until his next turn.

Unarmored Defense. While you are not wearing any armor, Cwdcai's Armor Class equals 16.

*While Enraged and Enlarged

Equipment *berserker's greataxe*, *ring of fire resistance*, 2 doses dark reaver powder; heavy iron skillet (as heavy steel shield), belt pouch with silver-plated chicken head (7 gp), 23 gp, bloodstone (100 gp)

Retch Hound (2): AC 12; HP 104 (16d8 + 32); Spd 40ft; **Melee** +4 (bite, 6d6+2 piercing, target must make DC 11 Str save or be knocked prone); **SA** breath weapon (recharge 5–6, 10ft cone, 3d6 acid plus target poisoned for 1d4 rounds, DC 11 Dex save for half and not poisoned); **Str** +2, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** -3, **Wis** +1, **Cha** -3; **Skills** Perception +3, Survival +3; **Senses** darkvision 60ft, passive Perception 13; **Traits** scent (advantage on Perception checks when tracking by scent); **AL** NE; **CR** 3; **XP** 700. (**Appendix**)

Tactics: Cwdcai is currently present, presiding over the preparations of the next meal. If he has not been alerted by noises in areas **8** or **10**, Cwdcai can be surprised as he checks on the batch of crusty rolls still in the oven. If alerted by the sounds of battle, then is bent over a large iron skillet resting on a griddle set over the edge of the fire pit. He feigns not to notice the PCs and has a readied action to fling the sizzling contents of the skillet

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at the first person to come within 10 feet. This is a ranged touch attack with a 10-foot increment and does 4d6 points of fire damage to the victim from the scalding grease for 3 rounds and requires a DC 12 Dex save to avoid being blinded for 2d4 rounds. Because the damage comes from the hot grease, the victim cannot end the burning early by using water or some other substance to try to smother the burn (though a spell with the cold descriptor ends it in that round). On his next turn, Cwdcai uses his unbound rage and grows to Huge size (by virtue of the cow he cooked for dinner the previous day).

As the battle progresses, Cwdcai attempts to keep the fire pit between himself and the bulk of the party and tries to isolate spellcasters (whom he despises) with physical attacks. If opportunity allows, he tries to bull rush opponents into the fire pit (4d6 points of fire damage per round that someone remains in the pit and DC 12 Dex save to avoid catching fire). If reduced below half his hit points, Cwdcai ceases raging and attempts to crawl into the massive oven. This is a full-round action and provokes attacks of opportunity from anyone threatening. Once inside the oven, however, Cwdcai has total cover and concealment from anyone not also entering the oven. Conditions inside the oven are cramped for a Medium creature, and any inside are considered to be squeezing. No more than 2 Medium or Small creatures can be inside the oven at once. Anyone inside the oven or making attacks through the open oven door takes 8d6 points of fire damage per round (Cwdcai relies on his ring to protect him). Inventive PCs might choose to tear down the mortared walls of the oven to get at Cwdcai (**AC** 20; **HP** 30; **Immunity** cold, fire, lightning, poison, psychic; **Resistance** acid, thunder, weapon damage; **Break** DC 24 Str). If this is done, Cwdcai no longer has any cover, and fire damage to anyone within the oven's spaces is reduced to 2d6 points of damage per round from its hot surfaces.

Treasure: Once Cwdcai has been dealt with, the room can be properly searched. Located on the various tables and shelves are 15 bottles of quality wine (10 gp each), several dozen jars of expensive spices, salt cellars, and pepper grinders (worth 1,000 gp total but weighs 100 lbs. altogether), a *decanter of endless water*, and a collection of fine kitchen knives of excellent craftsmanship that are masterwork artisan's tools for Profession (cook) worth 55 gp for the set.

10. Treacherous Crossing (Difficulty Medium)

The tunnel widens here where a flowing stream crosses it. The water is fairly clear and appears to be only a foot or two deep, with a layer of rough gravel along the bottom.

The water is fairly fresh, coming from a spring underground rather than the swamp outside, and flows through a small opening in the wall into area 8. Though the water and streambed are ultimately harmless, they are likely to make the PCs suspicious. The true danger here exists from the **swinging scythe trap** concealed in the stone ceiling above the stream and rigged to swing down at anyone who tries to cross.

SWINGING SCYTHE TRAP

Perception DC 15; **Disable** DC 15 Dexterity with thieves' tools

Effect Melee +12, 2d8+4 slashing plus 2d6 acid.

In addition, the scythe blade is coated in black pudding that slides onto anyone it hits (or that drops to the ground amid the party if the scythe blade misses). The cultists are aware of the ooze and occasionally send one of the livestock to the stream to keep the creature fed and from wandering the tunnels. Noises of battle here alert Cwdcai in area 9.

Black Pudding: **AC** 7; **HP** 85 (10d10+30); **Spd** 20ft, climb 20ft;

Melee pseudopod (+5, 1d6+3 bludgeoning plus 4d8 acid); **SA** split (splits into 2 puddings if hit with lightning or slashing, each with 1/2 original HP); **Immune** acid, cold, lightning, slashing, blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone; **Str** +3, **Dex** -3, **Con** +3,

Int -5, **Wis** -2, **Cha** -5; **Senses** blindsight 60ft (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8; **Traits** amorphous (can move through 1in. openings), corrosive form (causes 1d8 acid damage to creatures that touch or hit with melee attack, nonmagical weapons corroded on hit with -1 cumulative penalty, can eat through 2in of wood or metal in 1 round), spider climb (climb difficult surfaces without ability check); **AL** U; **CR** 4; **XP** 1100.

11. Sheep and Swine (Difficulty Medium)

This cavern has no light source of its own.

This large cave is filled with the stench of a barnyard, and the noisy bleats and grunts of livestock. A herd of sheep and pigs has been fenced into a wooden enclosure crudely constructed across the north end of the room. That end of the cavern rises higher than the rest so that the floor below the enclosure is slick with the runoff from the animals' droppings and feed. This offal collects in a shallow pool at the cavern's south end. Stacked against the nearest wall of the chamber are a number of large barrels and burlap bags that appear to hold grain based on the spillage around it over which rats and other vermin scurry. Beside this, next to the enclosure's gate, is a large pile of rough roots, tubers, and assorted kitchen scraps apparently used as slop for the pigs. Near the enclosure is a dung cart and shovel, half full of the animals' wastes.

This cavern holds the herd of 22 sheep and 12 pigs stolen by the cultists from surrounding farms and flocks. A *detect magic* spell reveals that 6 of these animals (2 sheep and 4 pigs) bear an aura of moderate transmutation and are, indeed, more victims of Maregeth's cruel capriciousness, having been polymorphed into farm animals and given to Cwdcai as foodstuffs. The pool at the southern end of the cavern is rapidly developing a strong strain of filth fever (DC 15 Con save) for anyone that drinks of it. The animals have so far proven resistant to the disease, but it will probably not be long before disease sweeps through the ranks of the cult from ingesting tainted meat. Currently splashing about in the filthy pool are 3 **retch hounds** of Cwdcai's pack.

Retch Hound (3): **AC** 12; **HP** 104 (16d8 + 32); **Spd** 40ft;

Melee +4 (bite, 6d6+2 piercing, target must make DC 11 Str save or be knocked prone); **SA** breath weapon (recharge 5-6, 10ft cone, 3d6 acid plus target poisoned for 1d4 rounds, DC 11 Dex save for half and not poisoned); **Str** +2, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** -3, **Wis** +1, **Cha** -3; **Skills** Perception +3, Survival +3; **Senses** darkvision 60ft, passive Perception 13; **Traits** scent (advantage on Perception checks when tracking by scent); **AL** NE; **CR** 3; **XP** 700. (**Appendix**)

Development: If the enchantment over the polymorphed animals is broken (CL 11th), they return to their natural forms. None of them has any equipment beyond their own ragged clothing unless otherwise noted.

Dondra (CN female human Commoner), a local doxie from East Ending charmed and lured into the fen by the cult. (pig)

Etis (LE male human Ftr4), a mercenary of the Barbed Lance company who was found passed out drunk on the street in East Ending. (pig)

Olevad Ordurian (LN male human Clr3, Mother Grace), the holy prelate was accosted by thugs in the streets of Toiltown and sold to cultists for 30 sp. His wooden holy symbol still hangs at his breast, and he still has the following spells prepared: 1st—*cure wounds*, *protection from evil*; 2nd—*lesser restoration*. (pig)



Meri Tuckweather (N female halfling Rog4) spotted some of the cultists entering the fens a few days ago and followed them out of curiosity. She was surprised by Maregeth and polymorphed before she had a chance to run. She still wears masterwork leather armor, and carries a *+1 short sword*, 2 silver daggers, a set of masterwork thieves' tools, and wears a very nice red velvet hat with a bent plume (25 gp). (pig)

Puc (NG male human Commoner), a local shepherd's boy captured by the cult during a sheep raid. (sheep)

Nabru (LN male human Commoner; Str 18), a shepherd and skilled carpenter. Nabru is very strong and was waylaid while investigating sounds in his sheepfold during the night. (sheep, a notably large one)

If rescued, all of the former barnyard animals are quite grateful, and all but Puc and Nabru offer their services to the PCs as henchmen or hirelings at half normal rates. There is otherwise no real reward any of them can give (they own little enough as it is), but the PCs should be awarded 1,000 XP for each of the prisoners that they transform back into their natural forms and deliver safely from the swamp. If ordered to by the PCs, all but Puc and Nabru guard the skiff and any other boats at the edge of the island until they return. Puc and Nabru start trying to pick their own way home through the mire (whether they make it home safely or not, the PCs still receive XP for their rescue). If the other four are ordered to accompany the party within the tunnels, they likewise do so if given something to fight with, but the PCs will not receive XP for any who are killed in this fashion.

12. Chamber of the Prison (Difficulty varies)

This chamber is completely unlike any of the others seen among these caves. Rather than the rough cavern walls you are accustomed to, this room has smooth, even walls constructed of close-fitting, dry-stacked masonry, and its ceiling is a corbelled arch rising 40 feet overhead. The walls, floor, and ceiling bear the stains of past immersion but have since been scrubbed clean of any of the mud and filth found elsewhere,

and the chamber itself is dry. Dominating the room is a massive block of crimson-flecked, black marble, shot through with veins of purple and silvery quartz, 100 feet long, 20 feet wide, and 20 feet high. It appears to be a single, seamless piece and glows eerily with an inner, dark violet light that seems to draw in light rather than provide illumination. This half-light pulses with some unguessed rhythm and seems to cause dancing shadows to flit within the reddish-black stone.

The massive block is the "perfect stone" of legend used by The Goddess to imprison Chernobog in time immemorial. Though its appearance is marble, it is actually formed of no stone known to mortals as can be ascertained with a DC 15 Int (History), Int (Investigation) or Int (Nature) check. The half-light given off by the block bathes the entire chamber in dim radiance regardless of any light sources that are brought in, providing 20% concealment against anyone who does not have darkvision or some other way to see through the gloom. The entire block of stone has an overwhelming aura of abjuration if detected for, but does not detect as evil.

A quick search of the chamber reveals that a strange statue stands on the far side holding a parchment scroll. The statue is extremely lifelike and depicts a bedraggled man in worn and ragged wizard's robes. The roll of parchment in his hand is actual parchment upon which a strange charcoal rubbing of some writing has been made. The writing's characters seem nonsensical to anyone who attempts to read them, even with use of Linguistics. While the parchment itself is not magical, the statue itself bears a moderate aura of transmutation.

The statue is **Abryllcus**, a ddewin of Maregeth's original chylch. When Maregeth was cast out for his research into the forbidden, Abryllcus followed him, becoming the first and most devout convert to his cult of Chernobog. Abryllcus assisted Maregeth in finding this location to intone the ritual of *Free Old Bloody Head* so he could begin releasing the imprisoned Chernobog. When this chamber was discovered, Abryllcus took a charcoal rubbing of the inscription atop the stone block and showed it to Maregeth. Maregeth had been seeking to eliminate his increasingly unstable follower, and he chose that moment to cast *flesh to stone* on him, finding it amusing for Abryllcus to continue to serve as a holder for

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the sacred message from Chernobog. If the enchantment over Abyrllcus is broken, upon returning to flesh he is found to be wholly insane and incoherent from his ordeal. He no longer possesses any spellcasting ability and acts erratically, as if under a permanent *confusion* spell. If the PCs wish to restore his sanity, it is up to the GM to determine if it is possible and how the fallen ddewin reacts, as it lies beyond the scope of this adventure.

Abyrllcus: AC 12; HP 9 (2d8) Spd 30ft; **Melee** club (+2, 1d6 bludgeoning); **Str** +0, **Dex** +1, **Con** +0, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0; **Skills** Deception +2, Religion +2; **Senses** passive Perception 10; **Traits** dark devotion (advantage on saves against being charmed or frightened); **AL** CN; **CR** 1/8; **XP** 25.
Equipment leather armor, club.

The writing on the charcoal rubbing is in a virtually unknown language called Foundation, a written interpretation of the Language Eternal, the words of the gods. A DC 17 Int (Religion) can identify Foundation as the legendary source of writing passed down to mortals by Yenomesh the God of Glyphs in the days before the rise of mythical Phoromycaea. It cannot be read or interpreted by any mundane means that the characters possess. However, as the root source of such magical languages as Azhar*, Loquatia Arcana**, Necromonus*, and Draconic, the writing can be interpreted with a simple *read magic* spell. However, even that process isn't so simple. If *read magic* is cast upon the parchment, provide the players with the **Player Handout** to show what is revealed. As the phrase was etched from inside the stone (see below), its letters are reversed, requiring a mirror to reveal their true message as:

“While you live,
we cannot part,
I must live lifelong inside you,
locked within your beating
heart.”

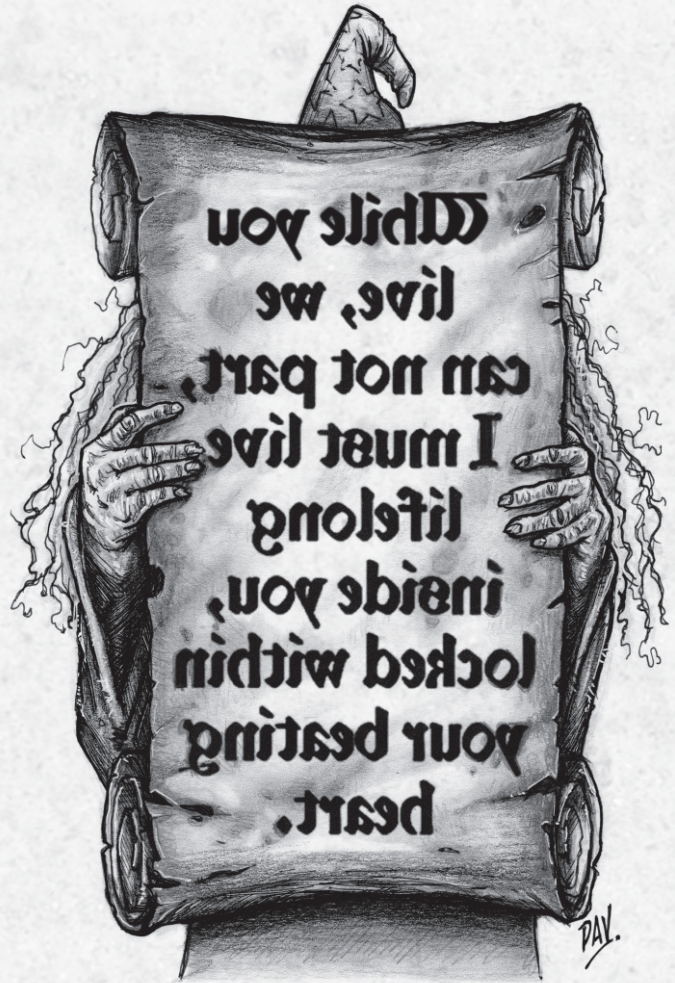
No other items of interest are within the chamber other than the statue and the great block. Any divinations made to determine the appropriate course of action are automatically successful and indicate that the only way to save the children is by entering the stone block and breaking the power of the ritual from within. Attempts to peer within the block with magic automatically fail, and it proves to be invulnerable to any means of damaging that the PCs may possess. Even a *disintegrate* spell leaves it unharmed. Attempts to bash a way into the block attracts every other sentient occupant of the caves, with a random encounter (see table) arriving every 1d2 rounds until all are accounted for.

Climbing up the great block of stone's smooth sides is difficult (Str [Athletics] DC 30), but magical means can provide much easier access. Examining its upper surface with a DC 15 Wis (Perception) check locates the Foundation inscription from which the rubbing was made incised in the center of the block. As before, even with a *read magic* it still provides only the mirror image translation. The letters inscribed in the stone are 2 inches deep and bear no mark of chisel, almost as if their appearance was by some natural formation. In fact, they were formed by the will of the entrapped Chernobog through immense expenditure of his godlike power to cause the stone to be absorbed within in this particular pattern. This is also why the Foundation letters were written in reverse.

If **Maregeth** survived an initial confrontation with the PCs, then he may have used *dimension door* to flee to this chamber to prepare an appropriate reception to defend this holy fane. If so, he tries to gather what nearby cult members and possessed children he can to lie in ambush behind the great block while he lurks invisibly atop it watching for the PCs to enter by one of the two tunnels. He casts *see invisibility* if he hears anyone coming to prevent them from sneaking up on him.

MAREGETH CR 8
XP 3,900
hp 57 (See Area 5)

Tactics: The fallen ddewin is fanatically devout and uses all resources he has available to bring about the destruction of the PCs, including draining his staff completely of charges if necessary. He favors using



disintegrate spells as much as possible against spellcasters, and *slow* on fighters. If forced into melee atop the block, Maregeth uses *polymorph* to assume the form of a triceratops, a creature he learned about through communion with the primeval essence of Chernobog. Despite being a fanatic, Maregeth is also a mastermind villain and survivor, having lived for the last several decades on the run from his own people and anyone who may have guessed his true purpose. If reduced to 20 hit points, there is a cumulative 33% chance each round that he realizes his cause is lost and chooses to flee instead. If so, he transforms back into human form and *teleports* to the outskirts of Castorhage and attempts to blend with the poor and downtrodden of that population while he quietly begins to plan again for his next attempt to free his master Chernobog.

Maregeth, Triceratops Form: AC 17; HP 190 (20d12+60); Spd 50ft; **Melee** gore (+10, 6d8+6 piercing), stomp (+10, 5d10+6 bludgeoning); **SA** trampling charge (after 20ft straight move and gore hit, target must make DC 16 Str save or be knocked prone); **Str** +6, **Dex** -1, **Con** +3, **Int** -4, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -3; **Senses** passive Perception 10; **AL** NE; **CR** 8; **XP** 3900.

Development: The key to gaining entrance to the prison block is in the riddle Chernobog provided. The answer is *blood*, which the God of Blood Sacrifice found particularly appropriate and was able to provide a covert clue for without being thwarted by the proscriptions set up on his prison by The Goddess. However, just knowing the answer to the riddle is insufficient, as anyone thinking about the true aspects of Chernobog might conclude; the means of solving the riddle is with blood itself. To whit, the blood of living creatures must be used to fill the deep grooves that form the letters of the inscription. To completely fill the inscription requires blood sufficient to cause 36 points of damage. This can be contributed by any number of donors (at a minimum of 1 point of damage apiece), but if it is divided among various individuals, Chernobog is displeased and each

CHILDREN OF THE HARVEST

donor discovers that his or her maximum HP has been reduced by 8. This reduction continues until the victim takes a long rest.

Once the requisite blood has been placed in the inscription, one final challenge to entry remains. If at least one of the blood donors was not a true follower of Chernobog, the evil god senses it through the taste of the blood and sends a guardian **arcanoloth** to destroy the defilers of his temple. The fiend appears atop the block and immediately attacks anyone present, fighting until destroyed. An easy way for the PCs to avoid this is if they have the foresight to use one or more of any live cult members they have captured to provide at least a portion of the necessary blood sacrifice. Once the fiend has been dealt with or avoided with an appropriate believer sacrifice, a 10-foot-by-10-foot magical portal opens in the center of the block's top surface directly where the inscription was. It is visible to everyone in the room and remains open for 2 hours. After 1 hour, it noticeably begins to close at a rate of 1 foot every 6 minutes so that after 30 more minutes Large creatures have to squeeze to get through, and after 45 minutes Medium and Small creatures have to squeeze. After 50 minutes, DC 13 Dex saves are necessary by Medium and Small creatures to avoid becoming trapped inside.

Arcanoloth: AC 17; HP 104 (16d8+32); Spd 30ft, fly 30ft; **Melee** claws (+7, 2d4+3 slashing); **SA** spellcasting (Int +9, save DC 17), teleport (60ft); **Immune** acid, poison, charmed, poisoned; **Resist** cold, fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons; **Str** +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +2, **Int** +5, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +3; **Skills** Arcana +13, Deception +9, Insight +9, Perception +7; **Senses** truesight 120ft, passive Perception 17; **Traits** magic resistance (advantage on saves against spells and magical effects), magic weapons (weapon attacks are magical); **AL** NE; **CR** 12; **XP** 8400.

Spells (slots): 0 (at will) — *fire bolt, mage hand, minor illusion, prestidigitation*; 1st (4)—*detect magic, identify, shield*; 2nd (3)—*detect thoughts, mirror image, phantasmal force, suggestion*; 3rd (3)—*counterspell, fear, fireball*; 4th (3)—*banishment, dimension door*; 5th (2)—*contact other plane, hold monster*; 6th (1)—*chain lightning*; 7th (1)—*finger of death*.

13. Wholly of Unholies (Difficulty Deadly)

The interior of the great block is composed of the same smooth unidentifiable stone as the exterior. The walls are 3 feet thick and appear to be slightly translucent, giving vague impressions of movement and light in the chamber outside but without providing any detail. Set at the far western end of the block's interior chamber are three large golden candelabras, each set with multiple candles of black wax, though not all appear to have been lit. Inlaid in silver into the floor in the exact center of the chamber — directly beneath the magical portal — is a circle inscribed with unknown runes and symbols. Its center is filled with a great twisting spiral that begins at the outer edge and disappears into an impossibly fine point in the middle. The silver inlaid grooves of this circle run with thick, fresh blood. From the darkness at the far eastern end of the chamber comes the unsettling sound of a small child giggling.

This interior chamber serves not as the prison of Chernobog but as the anteroom that accesses the prison of Chernobog. The silver inlaid circle on the floor bears his symbol and serves as the final doorway to where he has long been imprisoned. It radiates both overwhelming evil and overwhelming abjuration and necromancy. The fresh blood in the circle was provided in the sacrifice made to enter this chamber from above. The circle's power has caused it to spread across the entire smooth floor of the chamber to create a bloody, slippery surface.

Anyone standing on the floor in the chamber and fighting or attempting to move at greater than half speed must make a DC 12 Dex (Acrobatics)

check to maintain his balance. A failed check by less than 5 means that the individual is unable to move from the square he stands in. A check failed by 5 or more means that he slips and falls prone in the square where he stood. Anyone falling onto the bloody floor or otherwise touching it with bare skin discovers that it is supernaturally cold. Touching it with exposed skin (such as walking barefoot) deals 1d3 points of cold damage per round. Falling onto the floor deals 3d3 points of cold damage per round that the victim remains prone. This cold is generated by an infusion of negative energy, so ordinary cold resistance does not prevent its effects, though other effects such as those from a *death ward* spell does. The room's current occupant (see below) is immune to this effect.

Like area 12, the lighting in this chamber is dim and provides concealment against those without darkvision. However, since the dimming effect is focused on the exterior chamber rather than the interior, magical light sources of 3rd level or higher, such as a *daylight* spell or a *continual flame* cast by a cleric, function normally. As long as such a light source is present within this chamber, its illumination seeps through the veins of the block's exterior and removes the dimming effect in area 12 as well.

Each of the 3 candelabras at the western end holds 12 black candles (similar to those that might have been discovered in area 5). The number of lit candles depends on how long the PCs have taken to reach Bryn Duach. One candle is lit for each of the possessed children that has undergone the ritual in area 4 and been transformed into a larvae in area 6. Destroying the larvae has no effect on them, because their innocence has already been stolen to fuel the foul candlelight. When all 36 candles are lit, the silver-inlaid circle becomes an open portal leading directly to Chernobog's prison, releasing the ancient deity upon an unsuspecting world. The only way to extinguish the candles is by destroying the **silver-inlaid circle** that infuses this chamber with its power.

Silver-Inlaid Circle: AC 18; HP 120; **Perception** DC 18; **Immunity** cold, lightning, poison, psychic; **Resistance** thunder, weapon damage; **Break** DC 30 Str



Concluding the Adventure

Unfortunately for the PCs, the silver-inlaid circle is not the only challenge they must face in this chamber, for currently it also serves as the temporary quarters of Maregeth's erstwhile ally, **The Harvester of Cribs**. As given away by the child's giggle when the PCs first gain access to this chamber, the Harvester lurks in the total darkness that encompasses the easternmost 20 feet as a result of his *darkness* spell. He observes the PCs curiously for 2 rounds after they gain access to the room unless he is attacked first. Even attacks upon the silver-inlaid circle do not draw his immediate ire as his almost childlike inquisitiveness and chaotic nature hold sway over his actions.

The Harvester of Cribs: AC 18; HP 225 (30d6 + 120); Spd 35ft; **Melee** +10 (Harvester's Wand, 1d6+5 bludgeoning), +8 (bite, 2d6+3 piercing), +8 (claw, 2d4+3 slashing); **Immunity** acid, fire, poison damage; charmed, frightened, poisoned; **Resistance** bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons, cold; **SA** cunning action, multiattack (1 bite, 2 claws or 1 bite, 1 claw and Harvester's Wand), spells (Cha +10, save DC 18); **Str** +3, **Dex** +5 (+10), **Con** +4 (+9), **Int** +4, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +5; **Skills** Acrobatics +10, Athletics +8, Deception +10, Intimidation +10, Perception +6, Stealth +10; **Senses** darkvision 120ft, passive Perception 16; **Traits** dislocated (under effect of permanent *blur*), evasion, magic resistance (advantage on saves vs spells and magic effects), uncanny dodge; **AL** CE; **CR** 13; **XP** 10,000. (**Appendix**)

Spell-like Abilities: constant—*blur*; at will—*alter self*, *darkness*, *fog cloud*, *pass without trace*, *silence*, *spider climb*, *suggestion*; 3/day—*detect thoughts*, *dimension door*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*; 2/day—*charm person*, *feather fall*; 1/day—*dominate person*, *mass suggestion*.

Equipment: *Harvester's Wand*.

Tactics: In battle, the Harvester is far more of a deadly sneak than martial opponent. As stated, he attempts to observe the PCs for 2 rounds before attacking, and uses the time stalking them to increase the damage of his wand. He prefers to focus on humans and to attack from some form of concealment. He always uses his wand's bite attack ability initially in order to take advantage of the many stacking forms of damage he can inflict, including sneak attack, precision damage from stalking, bane damage, bleed, and the Vital Strike multiplier of the wand. If the wand successfully bites an opponent, he foregoes any further attempts at doing so until it properly digests its meal. He always tries to avoid a stand-up fight, using his dissolving strike to attack and escape again. He makes liberal use of *darkness* spells, etc., to give him concealment to which he can retreat. He does not make use of his wand's shriek ability, at least initially, because he prefers that all of his opponents stay to "play" for as long as possible. Only if reduced below 50 hp does he use the shriek to try to thin out the crowd a little bit and allow him to linger longer over a choice few.

Development: If the Harvester is reduced below 20 hp or if the silver-inlaid circle is destroyed, he quickly loses interest in Maregeth's master plan to free Chernobog and decides his old manner of existence was just fine. If this occurs, he'll try to use *dimension door* to leave the stone block and the entire cave complex and never look back. His loyalty to Maregeth's vision was always whimsical at best, and he sees no reason to go down fighting for a being that makes a waste of perfectly good kidnapped children. Unless the PCs have done something particularly egregious to incur his wrath during the battle, he dismisses the whole affair as an entertaining lark and quickly forgets about it in the pursuit of his usual agenda.

Treasure: The golden candelabras are worth 2,000 gp each, and the silver inlay in the floor, if recovered after the circle is destroyed, is worth 500 gp in total.

If the silver-inlaid circle in area 13 is destroyed, Maregeth's ritual is ruined; the candles can be extinguished to prevent Chernobog's escape attempt, and the deity's possession of any surviving children is ended. Those children immediately stop whatever they're doing and revert to acting as children of their age, crying or hiding as they try to figure out where they are and why. They have no recollection of their kidnapping at the hands of the Harvester or their possession by Chernobog afterward and simply want to go home as soon as possible. Children already transformed into larvae cannot be saved unfortunately unless the PCs have resurrection magic at their disposal.

Once Maregeth falls or abandons the caves, any remaining cult members quickly flee and try to escape into the surrounding fens. The success of pursuing PCs is left up to the GM. In any case, the cult of Chernobog in the Sheep's Coe is destroyed for now and their grand ritual disrupted. Within an hour, the hill begins to sink back into the fen, flooding the caves once again. Within 24 hours, there is no trace that it was ever there. Even attempts to dive beneath the waters of the bog will be unable to find any trace as the latent wards of The Goddess relocate the prison she crafted to the depths of some other swamp in the **Lost Lands** in hopes of continuing to hold Chernobog for all eternity.

The PCs are rewarded for any rescued children returned to their parents as agreed upon at the beginning of the adventure. In addition, the PCs should receive 1,000 XP for each kidnapped child brought back alive from the caves of Bryn Duach. This applies as well to any children saved from being larvae through *resurrection* spells or the like.

The Watch take in the PCs and question them as to what occurred within the depths of the fen. Any reports of the cult turning children into larvae are met with horrified incredulity, though the PCs will not be held responsible for their demise. However, if tales of the PCs slaying or seriously harming any possessed children are discovered, the party possibly finds itself in serious trouble with the Watch depending, of course, on who the children, or — more importantly — who their parents, are. Fortunately, none of the children has any recollection of the events, so unless any other witnesses bring it up, the Watch will not be suspicious or look into the possibility.

Though Chernobog's freedom has been thwarted, it is obvious that the "lost" god still possesses some amount of influence over the mortal world through the existence of the heretical cults of Crom Cruach and Crom Dubh. These have both been outlawed for centuries at least, but clearly some followers still exist on the fringes of society, and Maregeth's research, if it becomes known, has connected them to their much older and more powerful roots. If Maregeth escaped, the PCs may wish to hunt him down and prevent him from making another attempt at releasing such a dangerous being upon the world, or they may just wish to hunt down any surviving cult members if any escaped after Maregeth's death.

Finally, it is entirely possible that the PCs have slain one of the infamous Gods of Castorhage in their showdown with the Harvester of Cribs. This is quite an accomplishment in and of itself. While it will not greatly change the risks faced by the children of Castorhage (the Harvester is not actually responsible for the vast number of child disappearances in the city), it may bring the PCs to the attention of some of the powerful and mighty of both the Blight and Between, including such personages as the Royal Family or even Demoriel herself. The ramifications of any of this are left to the GM, but they could become a springboard to launch an all-new kind of campaign in the Blight — one that takes place within the cloistered halls of the Capitol rather than down in the grimy streets below, for instance.

And then there is the small matter of a certain baby-headed wand that the PCs might find in their possession. Who knows what kind of troubles could arise as this sentient artifact works to create a new Harvester of Cribs from one of the PCs themselves? The imagination is truly staggered.

Monster Appendix

Between Subtype

A creature with this subtype is infused with the weirdness of Between and is shaped and changed by its environment and experiences. Some Between creatures are bizarre versions of existing creatures (such as gargoyles and wyverns), while others are new creatures that don't have a non-Between equivalent (such as caul cuckoos and hymes).

If you need (or just want) more Between creatures beyond those presented in the *Tome of Blighted Creatures* and Blight adventures, you can create them three ways.

1. Apply a Between simple template to an existing monster stat block. This is quick and simple, and is perfectly adequate for most encounters.
2. Convert an existing creature to the Between subtype using the guidelines presented here. This involves more effort and is better suited to major foes, such as creatures that command groups of lesser, Between minions (which can be converted quickly with the simple templates).
3. Create a wholly new Between creature from scratch, following the guidelines below. This is ideal for a powerful villain or recurring foe.

Converting an Existing Creature

Most Between creatures have the following abilities. (These are already included in the Between creature stat blocks presented in this book). Between creatures are highly varied, however, so it's not a hard-and-fast rule that every Between creature must have these traits or can't have others.

Between Age (BA): Many of a creature's statistics improve with the length of its exposure to Between. Because a Between creature can't die of old age, even normally short-lived creatures can become quite powerful through centuries of exposure. These increases are divided into five age categories, according to how long the creature has been exposed to Between: larval, naiadic (15+ years), adult (50+ years), elder (150+ years), and ancient (600+ years). At each age category, a Between creature gains the following cumulative benefits:

- +1 to its Dex score;
- +1 to one other ability score besides Dex;
- +1 Hit Die (added to its hit points, + its Con modifier, as usual)
- one feat (if feats are being used in your campaign) or proficiency in one type of saving throw.

Senses: A larval creature gains darkvision (30 feet) if it doesn't already have darkvision. The range increases to 60 feet at naiadic age and to 120 feet at adult. An elder creature gains blindsense (30 feet), and an ancient Between creature has blindsight (60 feet).

Damage Resistance: A naiadic creature gains resistance to damage from nonmagical weapons. An adult creature gains resistance to cold, force, and poison damage. An elder creature gains resistance to acid, fire, and lightning damage. An ancient creature gains resistance to necrotic, psychic, and thunder damage. All of these gains are cumulative, so an ancient Between creature has resistance to all but radiant damage and bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from magical weapons.

Magic Resistance: An adult Between creature has Magic Resistance (1/day, when it fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead). This increases to 2/day for ancient creatures.

Intelligence: If an animal's Intelligence score is increased above 2, it gains the ability to understand and speak Deep Speech.

Additional Abilities: Between creatures can have abilities that reflect their habitat, history, environment, and supernatural nature. Adding one such ability per age category is a good benchmark, but it's not a hard-and-fast rule. These abilities can be adapted from other monsters, drawn from spell-like abilities, or can be new abilities you create. These abilities

should be thematically appropriate to the Between and to the creature's origin. Two new abilities that are especially suited to Between creatures are Dislocated and Distorted.

• **Dislocated:** The creature's form is made up of its memories, which shift and change. The creature is continually under the effect of a *blur spell* (attacks against it are made with tactical disadvantage unless the attacker has blindsight, truesight, or an equivalent). The creature can suppress or reactivate this ability at will as a bonus action.

• **Distorted:** A distorted creature's internal anatomy varies from individual to individual and seldom makes any biological sense. Critical hits against the creature do a flat +1 damage but don't roll damage dice twice.

Challenge: After making all these changes, the creature's CR should be reevaluated from scratch. As a simpler alternative, just increase the creature's CR by +1 per Between age category. This will be close enough in most cases, unless the creature gained especially powerful attacks.

Create a New Creature

Creating a new Between creature is no different from creating any other creature, as described in the GM's rulebook. It's easiest if you start by choosing its age category and proceed from there, but do what you're most comfortable with.

Between Creature Simple Templates

Although all life in Between is unique, some creatures (wolves, for example) are common to the normal world and Between. The following simple templates can be used to turn any creature that does not have the Between subtype into a Between creature. A creature given one of these templates counts as a Between creature for the purposes of spells, abilities, and magical items but it does not gain the Between subtype or the many benefits of having the Between subtype — it gains only those benefits specifically described in the simple template.

Larval Between

1. Increase Str and Dex by +1.
2. Increase hit points by 1 Hit Die + Con modifier.
3. Gains darkvision 30 feet if it doesn't already have darkvision.
4. Gains resistance to damage from nonmagical weapons.
5. Gains Dislocated trait (attacks against it have tactical disadvantage unless the attacker has blindsight, truesight, or their equivalent).
6. Increase CR by +1.

Naiadic Between

1. Increase Str and Con by +1, Dex by +2.
2. Increase hit points by 2 Hit Dice + (Con modifier × 2).
3. Gains darkvision 60 feet if it doesn't already have darkvision.
4. Gains resistance to damage from nonmagical weapons.
5. Gains Dislocated trait (attacks against it have tactical disadvantage unless the attacker has blindsight, truesight, or their equivalent).
6. Gains proficiency in Dex saving throws.
7. Increase speed by +10 feet.
8. Increase CR by +2.

Adult Between

1. Increase Dex by +3; increase Str, Con, and Int by +1 each.
2. Increase hit points by 3 Hit Dice + (Con modifier × 3).
3. Gains darkvision 120 feet.
4. Gains resistance to cold, force, and poison damage, and to damage from nonmagical weapons.

THE BLIGHT: RICHARD PETT'S CROOKED CITY

5. Gains Dislocated trait (attacks against it have tactical disadvantage unless the attacker has blindsight, truesight, or their equivalent).
6. Gains proficiency in Dex and Con saving throws.
7. Gains Innate Spellcasting (save DC 15): 1/day each—*invisibility* (self only, duration 1 minute), *spider climb*.
8. Gains Magic Resistance (1/day, when it fails a saving throw, it can succeed instead).
9. Increase speed by +10 feet.
10. Increase CR by +3.

Elder Between

1. Increase Dex by +4; increase Int by +2; increase Str and Con by 1 each.
2. Increase hit points by 4 Hit Dice + (Con modifier ×4).
3. Gains darkvision 120 feet and blindsight 30 feet.
4. Gains resistance to acid, cold, fire, force, lightning, and poison damage, and to damage from nonmagical weapons.
5. Gains Dislocated trait (attacks against it have tactical disadvantage unless the attacker has blindsight, truesight, or their equivalent).
6. Gains proficiency in Dex, Con, and Wis saving throws.
7. Gains Innate Spellcasting (save DC 16): 3/day each—*invisibility* (self only, duration 1 minute), *spider climb*; 1/day each—*blink*, *mirror image*.
8. Gains Magic Resistance (1/day, when it fails a saving throw, it can succeed instead).
9. Increase speed by +20 feet.
10. Increase CR by +4.

Ancient Between

1. Increase Dex by +5; increase Int by +3; increase Str and Con by 1 each.
2. Increase hit points by 5 Hit Dice + (Con modifier ×5).
3. Gains darkvision 120 feet and blindsight 60 feet.
4. Gains resistance to all damage except radiant and bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons.
5. Gains Dislocated trait (attacks against it have tactical disadvantage unless the attacker has blindsight, truesight, or their equivalent).
6. Gains proficiency in all saving throws.
7. Gains Innate Spellcasting (save DC 17): 3/day each—*invisibility* (self only, duration 1 minute), *spider climb*; 1/day each—*blink*, *dimension door*.
8. Gains Magic Resistance (2/day, when it fails a saving throw, it can succeed instead).
9. Increase speed by +20 feet.
10. Increase CR by +5.



Blood Wight

Blood Wight

XP 5,000 (CR 9)
NE Large Undead
Init +2

DEFENSE

AC 18
HP 187 (22d10+66)
Resistance bludgeoning, piercing
and slashing damage from
nonmagical weapons, fire

OFFENSE

Speed 30ft
Multiattack 2 claws
Melee +8 (claw, reach 10ft, 5d8+4
slashing)

STATISTICS

Str 18 (+4), Dex 15 (+2), Con 16
(+3),
Int 13 (+1), Wis 13 (+1), Cha 16
(+3)

Languages common

Skills Athletics +8, Intimidation
+7, Perception +5, Stealth
+6

Senses darkvision 60ft,
passive Perception 15

TRAITS

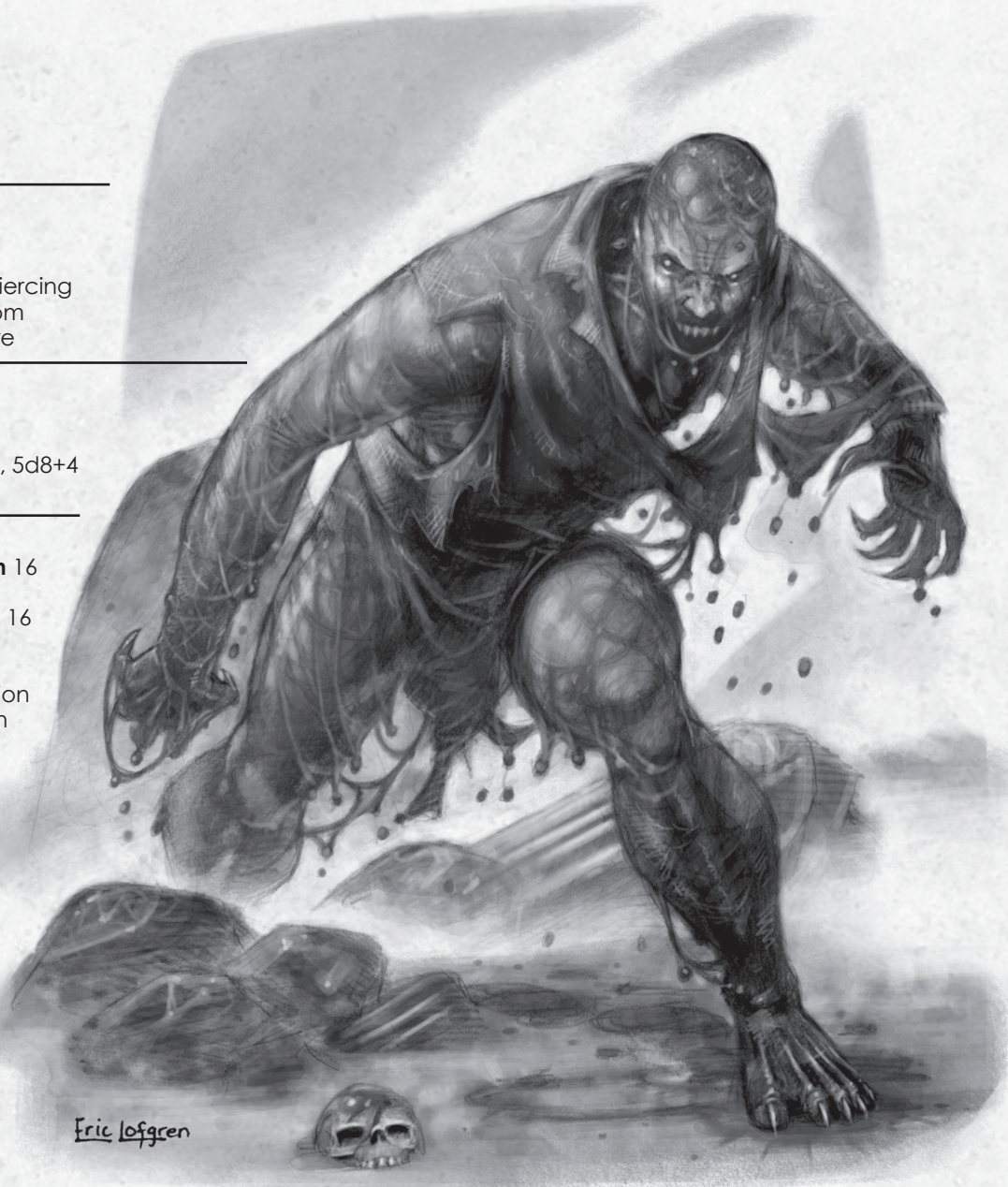
Regeneration A blood wight regains 5 hit points at the start of its turn. If the blood wight takes acid damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the blood wight's next turn. The blood wight dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Engulf A blood wight can try to wrap a Medium or smaller creature in its body as an action. If the wight wins a grapple check against the victim, it establishes a hold and claws its opponent with a +4 bonus on the attack roll. Attacks that hit an engulfing blood wight deal half their damage to the monster and half to the trapped victim. An engulfed victim must make a DC 10 Con save each round or lose 1d8 HP from drowning. The DC of this save increases by 2 each round the victim is engulfed. The victim can escape the grapple by succeeding on a Str (Athletics) or Dex (Acrobatics) check against the blood wight's Str (Athletics). A Large blood wight's body can engulf 1 Medium, 2 Small or 4 Tiny or smaller opponents

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, pair



When a living creature bleeds to death on unholy ground, its corpse sometimes returns to life as a blood wight. Evil priests of Orcus, Jubilex, Lucifer and various other demon princes and devil lords often hold dark rituals where they bleed a living creature to death in order to create a blood wight. Blood wights generally detest living creatures, but if created by a clerical or necromantic ritual, the created blood wight will not harm its creator (unless attacked first). Blood wights are solitary creatures though occasionally more than one of these creatures is encountered (particularly when they have been created by an evil cleric or necromancer).

A blood wight stands 8 to 10 feet tall and weighs 400 to 550 pounds. It appears much as it did in life but its body constantly weeps and oozes blood, even leaving footprints as it moves across the ground. Blood wights that could speak in life retain the knowledge of all languages they knew, but for the most part blood wights do not communicate either with others of their kind or with living creatures (including their creator).

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THE BLIGHT: RICHARD PETT'S CROOKED CITY

Bog Burgyn

The dripping, mud-stained corpse of a man stands slack-jawed before you, its eyes blank and glazed over. Without a sound, it begins trudging relentlessly forward, raising hardened fists blackened by decay.

Bog Burgyn

XP 2900 (CR 7)

NE Medium Undead

Init -1

DEFENSE

AC 14

HP 176 (16d8+48)

Immunity lightning

Resistance bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons, cold, fire

OFFENSE

Speed 20ft

Multiaction 2 slams

Melee +7 (slam, 6d8+4 bludgeoning)

STATISTICS

Str 18 (+4), Dex 8 (-1), Con 16 (+3),

Int 8 (-1), Wis 10 (+0), Cha 10 (+0)

Senses darkvision 60ft, passive Perception 10

TRAITS

Cauldron Connection: Bog burgyns possess a strong connection to the Cauldron of Chernobog where they were created; it is the source of both their unlife and their extreme ruggedness. A bog burgyn never willingly goes more than 1 mile from its cauldron unless ordered to do so by its creator. If it travels more than 1 mile from its cauldron the bog burgyn loses its lightning immunity, and at 2 miles it loses its regeneration ability. If a bog burgyn travels 10 miles from its cauldron, its immunities, damage resistance and regeneration are entirely gone. It also begins to lose hit points at the rate of 1 per week until it eventually collapses into a heap of decay. As a bog burgyn draws closer to its cauldron, it regains its hit points and defensive abilities at the same rate they were lost. If the cauldron is destroyed, all bog burgyns within 10 miles that were created by it are instantly and permanently slain.

Regeneration: The Bog Burgyn regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. If the Bog Burgyn takes acid or fire damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the Bog Burgyn's next turn. The Bog Burgyn dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Unnatural Fortitude: Bog burgyns are infused with the direct essence of the god Chernobog and are always created with maximum hit points.

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, pair, or troop (3-16)

Bog burgyns are wholly unnatural creations of the followers of the foul primordial deity Chernobog. They are formed in a powerful, enchanted mud pool called the *Cauldron of Chernobog* from the corpses of humanoids dumped into its boiling depths as the proper incantation is recited over it. Literally named for a discarded carcass, they appear to be mud-stained, sometimes waterlogged

corpses animated by a relentless drive and are often in physically bad shape with gaping injuries or poorly reattached limbs, though these injuries do not impede their effectiveness in any way. Frequently, their mouths and eyes are sewn shut to symbolically silence the spirit of the deceased before the god and his servants. Whether this truly has an effect on the departed spirit or not, the resulting undead creation is entirely loyal to its creator and obeys his commands unquestioningly, even if resulting in its own destruction.

Bog burgyns are forever connected to the cauldron where they were created and will not willingly travel more than a mile from it unless ordered to do so by their creator. Beyond a mile from the source of their unlife, and they begin to lose their connection to it and the near invulnerability that it affords until at 10 miles they have lost all of the resistances granted by it. Whether within range of the cauldron or not, any true damage that the bog burgyn sustains that it is not able to regenerate cannot be healed by any means except by submerging itself in the cauldron for 1 minute after which all such damage is removed.

If the cauldron is destroyed, all bog burgyns created by it that are within 10 miles instantly fall, returned to the death from which they were called. Bog burgyns farther afield are not destroyed but can never regain the resistances granted by the cauldron and usually begin to decay and deteriorate rapidly until finally collapsing back into death within the year.



CHILDREN OF THE HARVEST

2/day each: charm person, feather fall
1/day each: dominate person, mass suggestion

Harvester of Cribs

The creature is small and not so terrible to look upon. Its features are ugly, resembling a goblin or perhaps a kobold, but somehow worse than either. It wears a vaguely ludicrous clown's outfit complete with fool's cap and bell-toed slippers, and it holds a crude rod crafted from what appears to be an old broomstick topped by a doll's head. But the moving jaw and smiling face of the doll's head seem too fleshy and real to be a toy, and the bell's on the little beast's shoes seem to jingle only when he wants them to, as he pads silently toward you, an altogether terrifying grin on his misshapen face.

Harvester of Cribs

XP 10,000 (CR 13)
CE Small Humanoid
Init +5

DEFENSE

AC 18
HP 225 (30d6 + 120)
Save Dex +10, Con +9
Immunity acid, fire, poison damage; charmed, frightened, poisoned
Resistance bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons, cold

OFFENSE

Speed 35ft
Multiattack The Harvester of Cribs makes 3 attacks — 1 bite and 2 claws or 1 bite, 1 claw and 1 attack with its Harvester's Wand.
Melee +10 (Harvester's Wand, 1d6+5 bludgeoning*), +8 (bite, 2d6+3 piercing), +8 (claw, 2d4+3 slashing)

STATISTICS

Str 16 (+3), Dex 20 (+5), Con 18 (+4),
Int 18 (+4), Wis 12 (+1), Cha 20 (+5)
Languages Common, Draconic, Goblin, Sylvan
Skills Acrobatics +10, Athletics +8, Deception +10, Intimidation +10, Perception +6, Stealth +10
Senses darkvision 120ft, passive Perception 16

TRAITS

Cunning Action The Harvester can take a Bonus Action on each of its turns in Combat. This action can be used only to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Dislocated The Harvester is continually under the effect of a *blur* spell (attacks against it are made with tactical disadvantage unless the attacker has blindsight, truesight, or an equivalent). It can suppress or reactivate this ability at will as a bonus action.

Evasion When you are subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dex save to take only half damage, the Harvester instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Magic Resistance The Harvester receives advantage on all saves against spells and magical effects.

Uncanny Dodge When an attacker that it can see hits the Harvester with an attack, it can use its reaction to halve the attack's damage.

Innate Spellcasting The harvester of cribs's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 18). The harvester of cribs can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *alter self*, *darkness*, *fog cloud*, *pass without trace*, *silence*, *spider climb*, *suggestion*

3/day each: *detect thoughts*, *dimension door*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Between)

Organization solitary

*Inflicts 2d6+5 damage when used for its intended purpose (see sidebox)

Many are the so-called "gods" of Castorhage, but few are as dreaded by the ordinary folk of the city as the Harvester of Cribs. Often mistaken for a goblin, kobold, or even exceptionally ugly gnome or halfling when momentarily glimpsed, no one who comes under his attentions makes that mistake for long. The Harvester (as he is often called) is a rogue, a thief in the night. But he comes not looking to rob and take the worldly treasures of his victims; rather, he seeks a prize much more precious: the children. The Harvester enters the homes of the citizens of Castorhage at night and absconds with their children, like a deformed pied piper with far more sinister appetites. He makes no distinction between the upper class and the low born in his nocturnal jaunts, taking whomever he fancies regardless of any guards or precautions put in place. His only compunction seems to be limiting himself to victims between the ages of infancy and somewhere around 8 or 9 years of age; children any older than that seem to be too much on the cusp of adolescence to pique his interest. He prefers human children but does not seek them out exclusively.

When the Harvester strikes, there is rarely any trace of the crime or any sign of who did it or how it was done — the child in question is simply



New Minor Artifact: *Harvester's Wand*

HARVESTER'S WAND

Aura strong necromancy, moderate conjuration, divination, and evocation; **CL** 16th

Slot none; **Weight** 4 lb.

AL CE; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft.

Int 15, **Wis** 6, **Cha** 18, **Ego** 20

Languages Aklo, Common

DESCRIPTION

The *Harvester's Wand* appears to be a sawed-off broom handle topped by the animated head of a screaming, giggling, talking baby. It functions in battle as a +2 mace that deals 1d6+2 points of bludgeoning damage and possesses a malign intelligence of its own. Its purpose is to kidnap children to take back to Between, and when used for that purpose the weapon's damage die is rolled twice and added together before adding damage bonuses for Strength, other special abilities, sneak attacks, etc. Due to the Harvester's inherent nature, he is always considered to be using the *Harvester's Wand* for that purpose when he makes an attack with it.

On a successful melee attack when used for its special purpose, the wielder can choose to forego any iterative attacks for that round and instead have the wand's baby head take a bite out of the victim. This attack is automatically successful and deals 6d6+6 points of damage plus 1d6 bleeding damage that recurs each turn until treated with a successful DC 12 Wis (Medicine) check. However, after this attack is made, the wand cannot do so again for 1d3 rounds as the baby's head portion chews and swallows its meal. In addition, in any round that the wand's baby head is not using its bite attack or chewing from a previous bite attack, it can emit a terrifying shriek as a swift action. This shriek causes fear as a *fear* spell to anyone other than the wielder within 60 feet (DC 12 Wis save).

A creature that has successfully saved cannot be affected again by the shriek for 24 hours. Using this power is usually done by the wielder but can be instigated by the baby's head itself, and it has been known to do so of its own volition from time to time.

The wand is a hideous caricature of a human child/sentient ventriloquist dummy/comedic sidekick and often giggles and titters to itself in a most disturbing manner. It is unknown whether the Harvester originally found the wand or constructed it himself from the first child he ever took, but in any case, it makes the perfect companion and occasional foil for the demented creature. If the wand is somehow taken by another owner, its first priority will be to get itself back into the hands of the Harvester of Cribs, and the Harvester can always unerringly locate the wand. If the Harvester has been killed, the wand does everything in its power to bend its new owner to its will and create a new Harvester of Cribs to pick up where the old one left off.

DESTRUCTION

The wand is an essential part of the Harvester of Cribs himself, and as long as he lives, it cannot be destroyed. If the Harvester of Cribs has been killed, then the *Harvester's Wand* can be destroyed by carrying it to the fairy land in Between where many of the Harvester's victims are kept and then using it to slaughter every one of the kidnapped children that are still there. If this action is taken, the wand laughs with glee during the bloodletting only to let out a pouty sigh as the last child falls and it realizes its own actions have brought about its destruction. Its head then transforms into an ordinary kewpie doll, and it permanently loses all its magical properties, and it permanently loses all its magical properties.

^{UE} See *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Equipment*

gone from his bed in the morning. Other pets, nannies, or guards may still be asleep in the room when the disappearance is discovered. Even other children sleeping in the same bed are likely unaware until they wake the next morning, for the Harvester rarely takes more than one child at a time and has never taken more than three at once in the centuries that he has haunted the folk of the Blight, and then only once in the Taking of the Triplets of Grace Hammy in 1416. The folk of the Blight are fortunate indeed that the Harvester hunts so infrequently, no more than two or three nights in any given month usually, because there has proven to be little that can be done to stop him. Disappearances of children in the city occur much more frequently due to a variety of different hazards, and usually the only clue that it was the work of the Harvester is that there are no clues at all — no signs that the nursery was broken into or of a struggle by any taken children. On the few occasions when servants, watchdogs, or even guards are awake and might accidentally stumble upon the crime, their broken and battered corpses lying in pools of cooling blood on the nursery floor are usually the only real clues to be found.

No one knows the actual origin of the Harvester of Cribs. He is a creature of Between, but why he preys upon the children of Castorhage so compulsively is a mystery. He apparently knows the locations of most, or perhaps all, of the mirror-portals that provide access between the city and its dark, shadowy reflection and may even have his own means of traveling back and forth as yet undiscovered. As for the children he takes, their fate remains entirely unknown to those they have left behind. No trace of any of them has ever been discovered by anyone in all the years that the takings have occurred.

In fact, the Harvester collects most of the children he takes and carries them to his own realm in Between — a nightmare land of fairy tales and monsters where the children are simultaneously tormented by their living nightmares and delighted by their living dreams. Many of the children fall victim to the predators that stalk this nightmare realm, and more than of a few of them go on to become ... something more — which is perhaps somehow the ultimate goal for the Harvester's doings, if a capricious creature such as him can be said to have anything like a true goal. It is true, however, that not all of his victims even make it to his nightmare realm. Many instead find themselves devoured as his next meal, and the number of these seems to be rising. Most of the children he takes, however, do make it to Between alive and there linger for long years in the Harvester's realm, never aging or otherwise feeling the effects of time, for the Harvester truly does cherish them as a collection for the most part.

If some brave and powerful souls were ever to be able to locate this hidden realm, it would even be possible to free the many captive children that remain and return them to the city of their birth. But even then, most of them would find that the homes as they remembered them have moved on — mothers and fathers long dead, homes sold to strangers or fallen into ruin — and that they have no true home after all. This and the trauma of their ordeal that will likely plague their nightmares until their dying day are perhaps the cruelest fate that the Harvester has decreed for them. Additionally, if the Harvester was to survive such a bold raid on his home, there is no telling what depths of vengeance or depravity he might go to in order to get them back.

CHILDREN OF THE HARVEST

Mottled Cave Worm

This disgusting creature resembles a massive earthworm with gray hide bearing irregular white spots and a dripping fanged maw at one end surrounded by what appear to be dozens of gaping pores.

Mottled Cave Worm

XP 5,000 (CR 9)
Unaligned Huge Beast
Init -2

DEFENSE

AC 11
HP 195 (17d12+85)

OFFENSE

Speed 30ft, burrow 30ft, swim 30ft

Multiattack

Melee bite (+9, reach 10 ft., 6d12+5 bludgeoning plus poisoned (DC 12 Con save negates) for 1d6 rounds plus grapple.

STATISTICS

Str 20 (+5), **Dex** 6 (-2), **Con** 20 (+5),
Int 1 (-5), **Wis** 8 (-1), **Cha** 8 (-1)

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft.,
passive Perception 9

TRAITS

Grapple If a creature is hit by the mottled cave worm's bite attack, it is grappled (escape DC 15). Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the mottled cave worm can't bite another target.

Swallow Whole As a bonus action, a mottled cave worm can swallow a grappled creature, ending the grapple. While swallowed, the creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the mottled cave worm, and it takes 8d6 acid damage at the start of each of the mottled cave worm's turns.

If the mottled cave worm takes 20 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, the Mottled Cave Worm must succeed on a DC 15 Con save at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which fall prone in a space within 10ft of the worm. If the mottled cave worm dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 30ft of movement, exiting prone.

ECOLOGY

Environment underground

Organization solitary, pair, or colony (3-12)

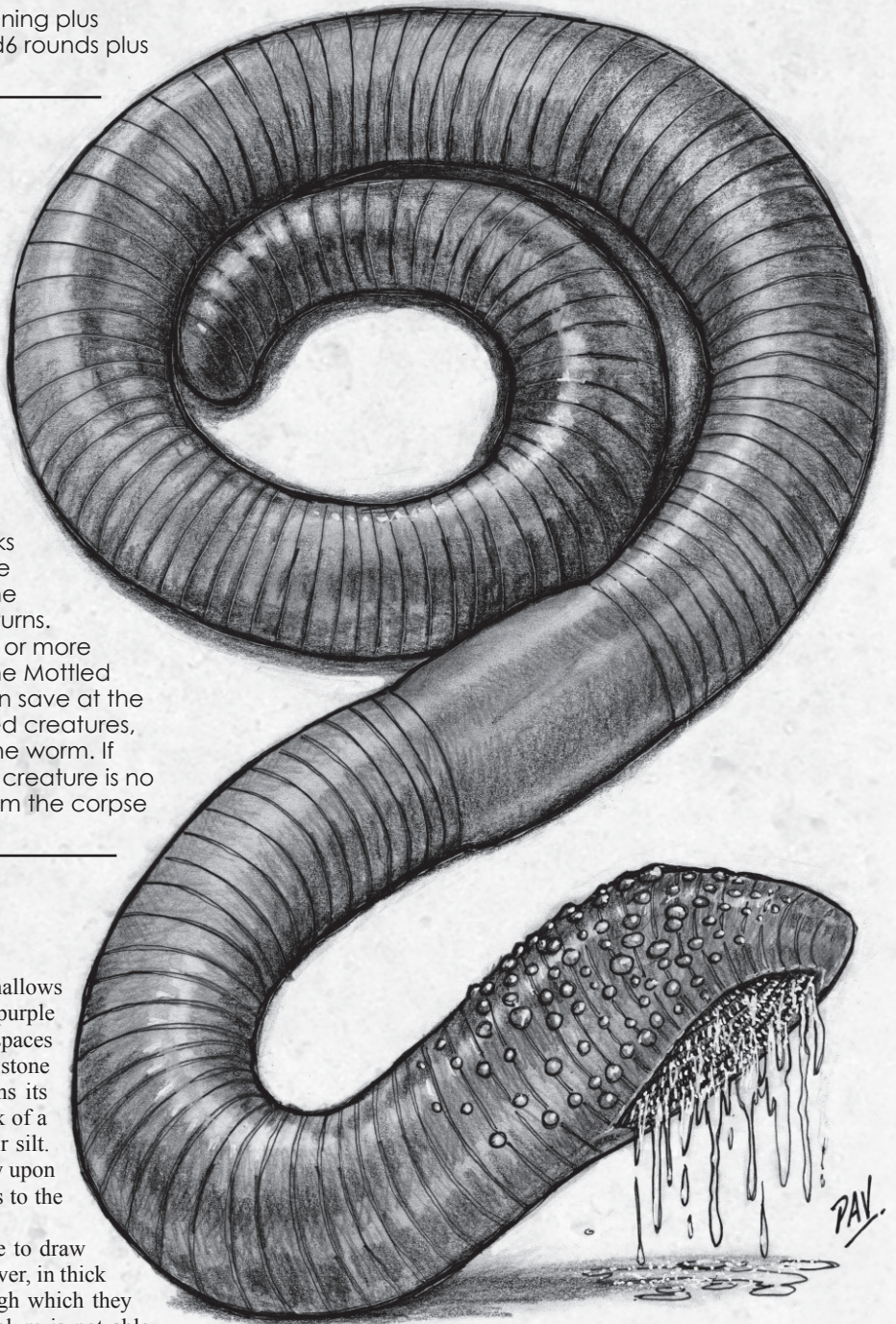
Like the mottled worm that resides in the ocean shallows of the world, the mottled cave worm is a species of purple worm that takes to the waters of subterranean spaces rather than burrowing its own tunnels through solid stone like its larger cousin. The mottled cave worm retains its burrowing ability, but this applies instead to the muck of a subterranean sea floor or in thick expanses of mud or silt. From these locations of concealment, it is able to prey upon other aquatic life that passes by, completely oblivious to the danger that lies just beneath the surface.

Like mottled worms, mottled cave worms are able to draw air from water that is drawn into their coelums. However, in thick mud they can actually draw air from the mud through which they burrow. Unlike mottled worms, the cave worm's coelum is not able

to store air for use outside of their watery or muddy lairs, so they do not ever travel onto dry land if they can help. If a mottled cave worm somehow becomes trapped on dry land, it begins drowning immediately as its oxygen reserve is quickly spent.

Mottled cave worms have dozens of pore-like openings around their maw that serve as sensory organs. These provide them with darkvision, but in environments of thick mud where vision is useless they provide blindsight as well to allow it to pinpoint prey and attempt to swallow it in one quick bite. Their blindsight does not function in air or through stone, so when their prey is out of the mud they cannot see it and must wait for it to re-enter to be able to get a fix on its location again. In mud, their sensory pores can be thwarted by a *silence* spell rendering them effectively blind, though such an act usually causes them to surface to rely on their darkvision instead.

Like mottled worms, mottled cave worms often dwell in colonies within one particular pool or mud cavern, but rather than build tubular dwellings they typically coil up beneath a lair of silt and wait for prey to come by.





Retch Hound

Retch Hound

XP 700 (CR 3)
NE Medium Beast
Init +2

DEFENSE

AC 12
HP 104 (16d8 + 32)

OFFENSE

Speed 40ft
Melee +4 (bite, 6d6+2 piercing, target must make DC 11 Str save or be knocked prone)

STATISTICS

Str 14 (+2), **Dex** 15 (+2), **Con** 15 (+2),
Int 5 (-3), **Wis** 12 (+1), **Cha** 4 (-3)
Skills Perception +3
Senses darkvision 60ft, passive Perception 13

TRAITS

Breath Weapon (Recharge 5–6, 10ft cone, 3d6 acid plus target poisoned for 1d4 rounds, DC 11 Dex save for half and not poisoned)
Scent +4 bonus to Perception when tracking by scent.

ECOLOGY

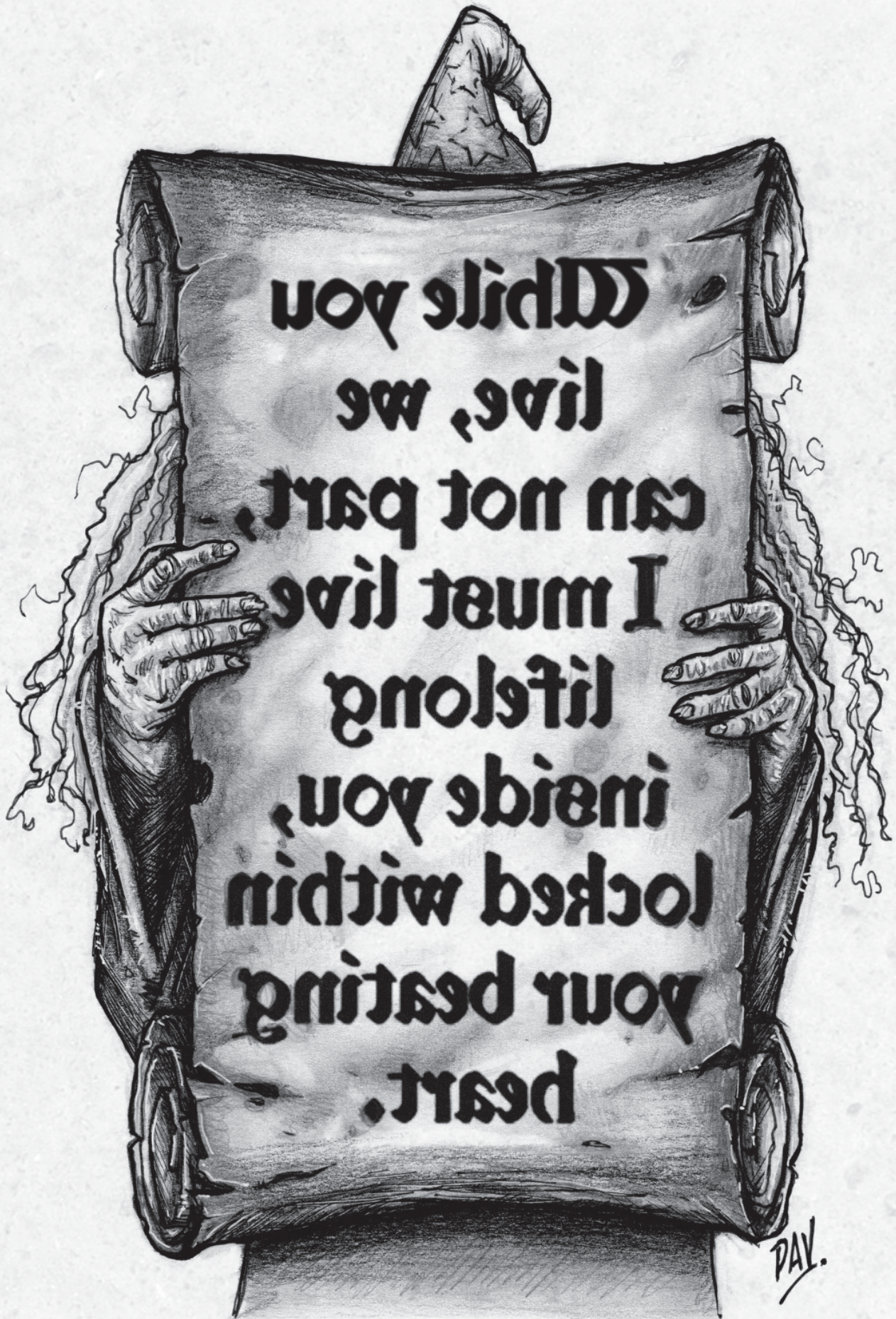
Environment temperate forests and marshes
Organization solitary, pair or pack (3–6)

Retch hounds are large, yellowish, sickly-looking hounds, about the size of war dogs. They are highly aggressive and powerfully built carnivores that love the taste of human flesh and bones. Their appearance lends to the façade of a sickly dog, which sometimes works to the retch hound's advantage when hunting its prey.

Retch hounds are often found in the service of powerful fighters and warriors, who use the dogs to guard prisoners, lead hunting expeditions, and perform other such services. A retch hound is only as loyal to its master as it has to be to insure its own survival. While the dog won't necessarily seek escape at the earliest possible time, it often turns on its master at some point. Retch hounds raised in captivity are often more loyal to their masters than those captured in the wild. A typical retch hound stands 4 to 4 1/2 feet tall at the shoulder and weighs about 150 pounds.

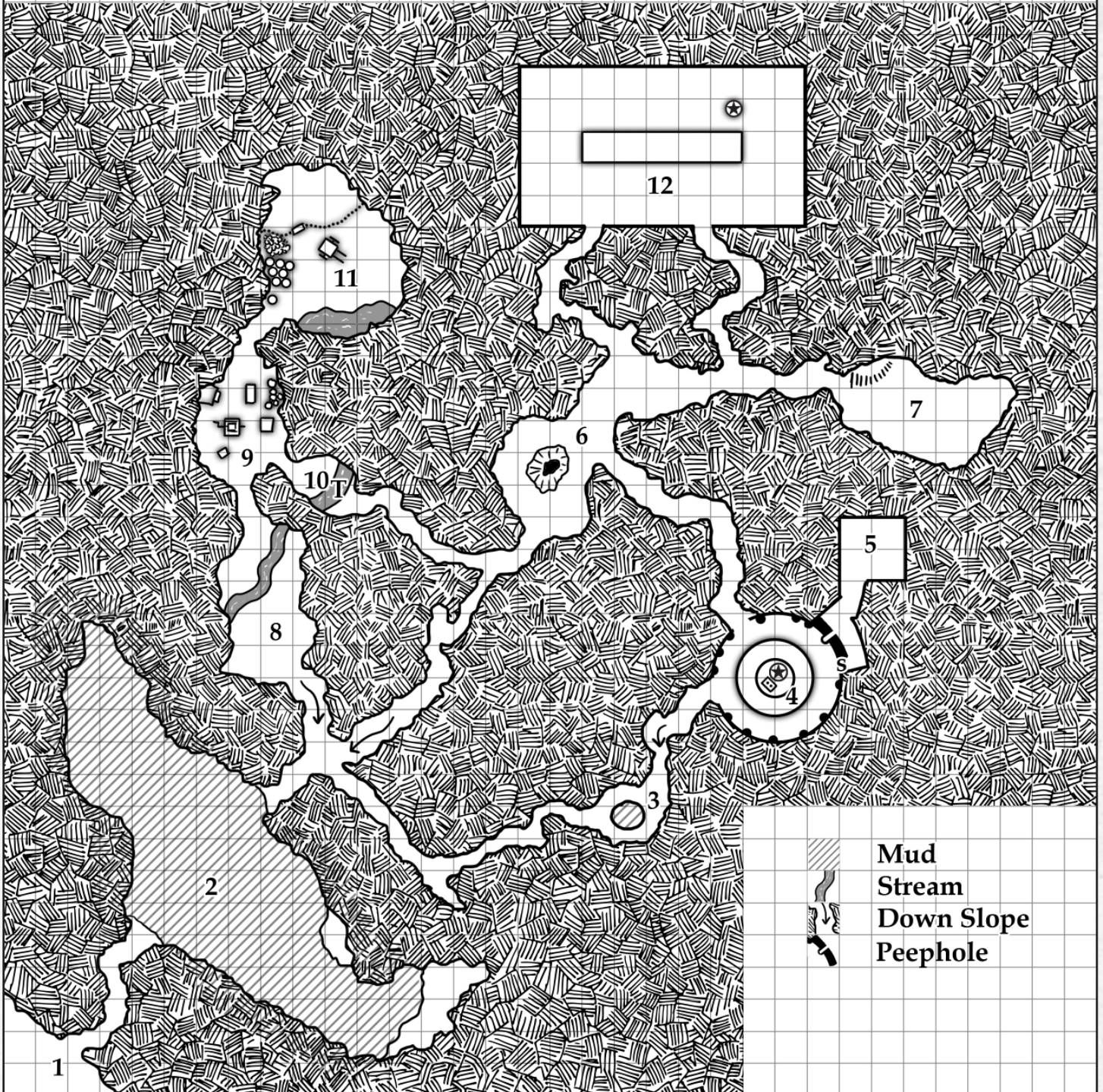
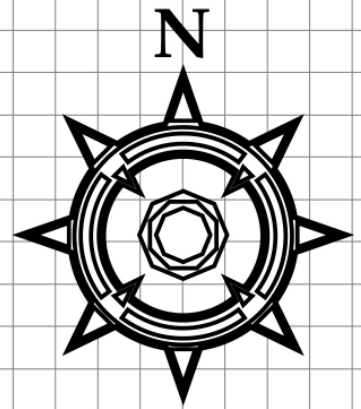
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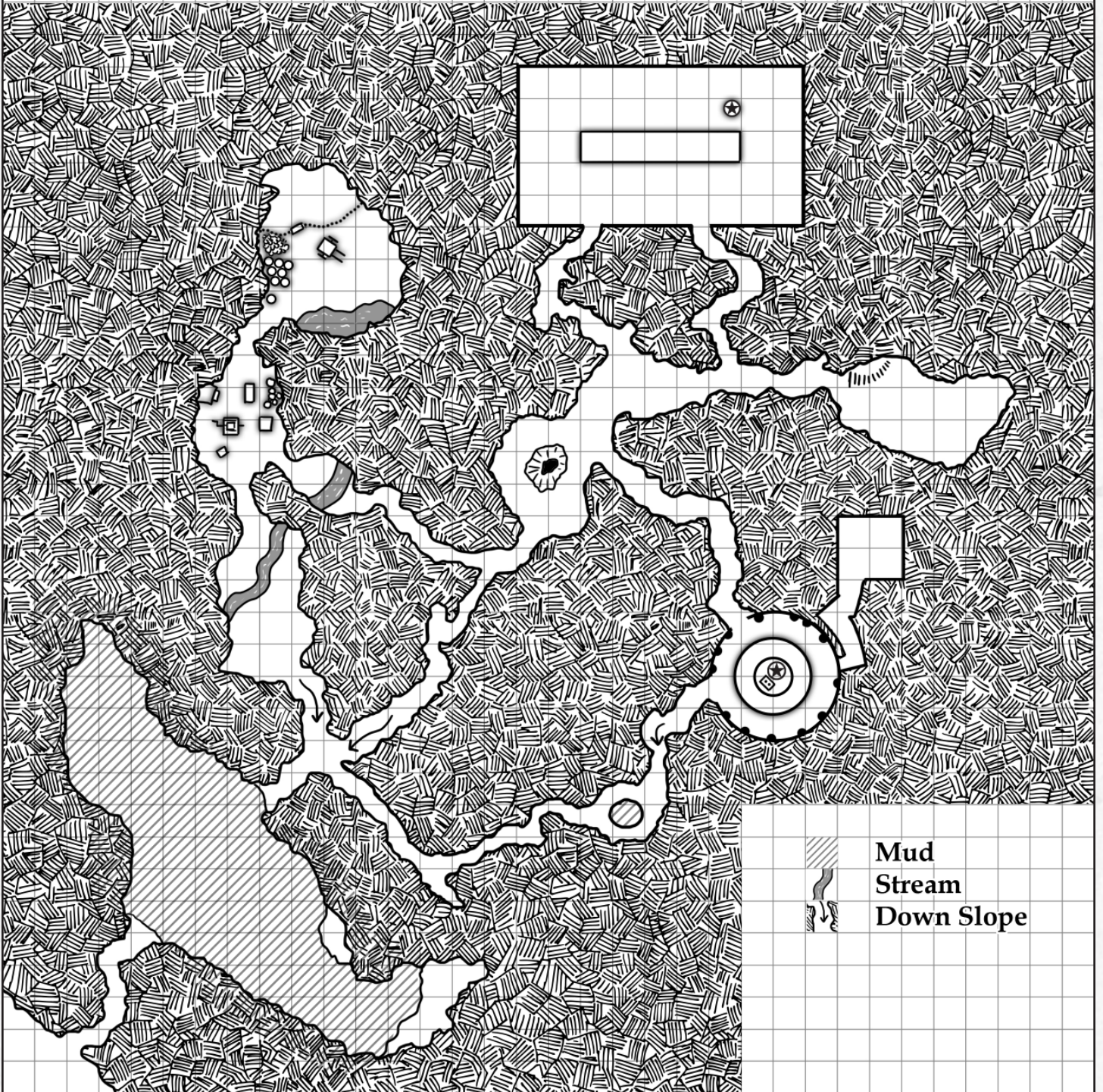
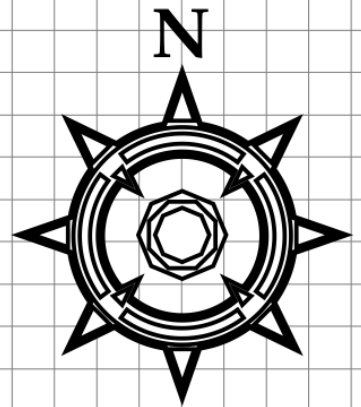
The Caves of Bryn Duach

1 square - 20 feet

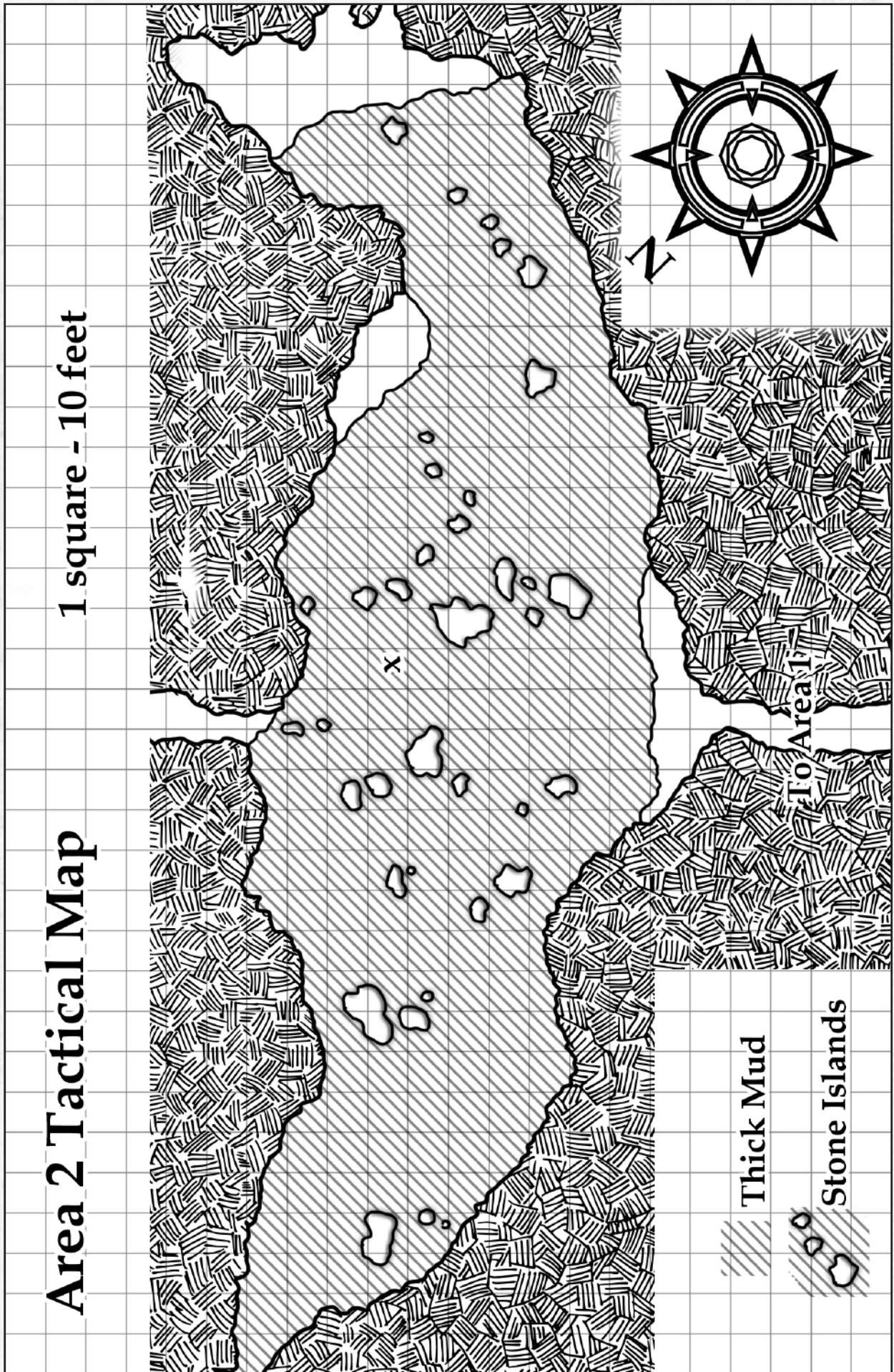


The Caves of Bryn Duach

1 square - 20 feet

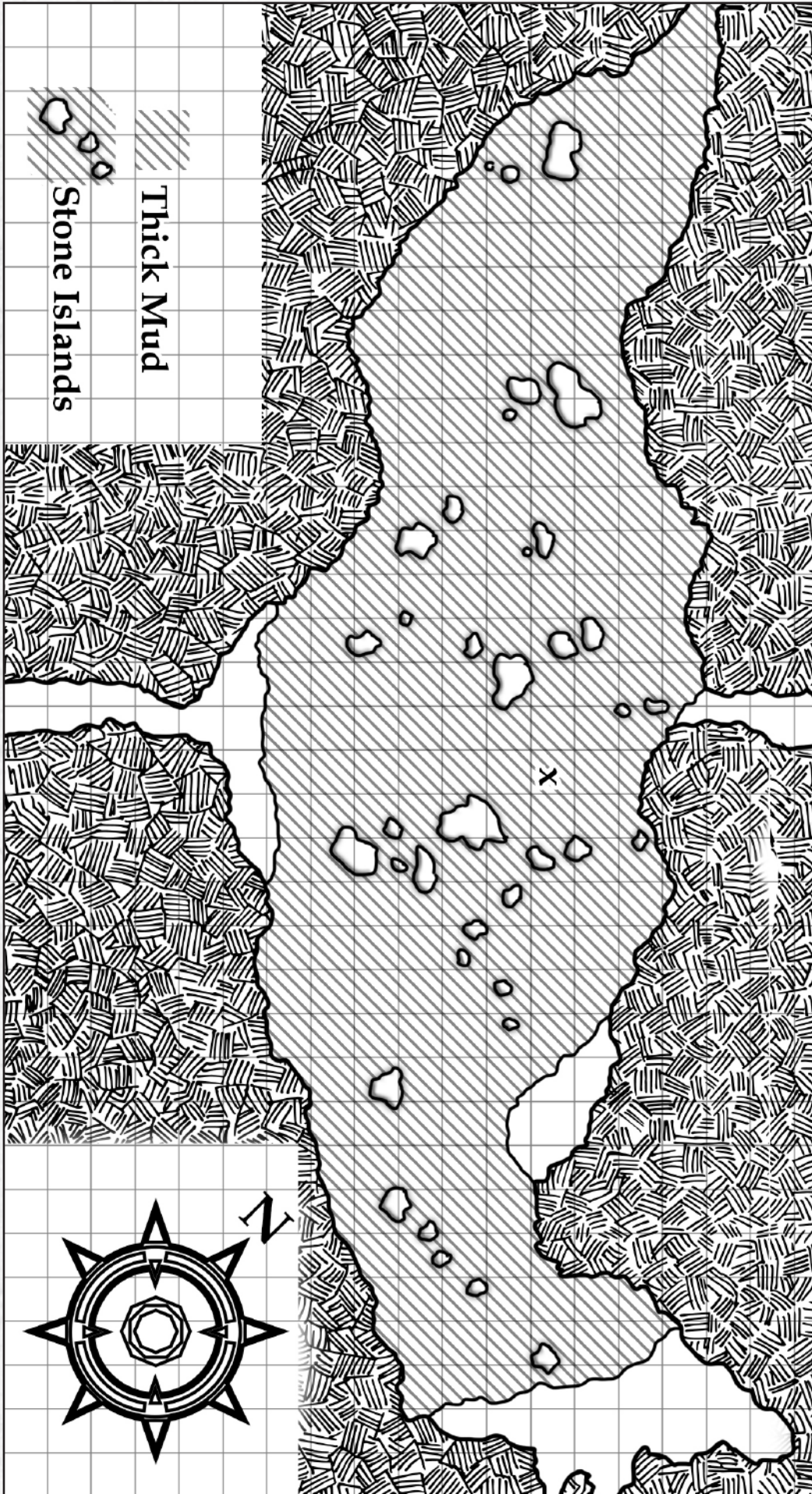


 Mud
 Stream
 Down Slope



Area 2 Tactical Map

1 square - 10 feet



THE BLIGHT: RICHARD PETT'S CROOKED CITY

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The Blight

Richard Pett's Crooked City

EB5: Children of the Harvest

The Blight is a dark place. Children disappear all the time, especially those of the poor. The Harvester of Cribs, one of the city's strange local gods, is blamed for many of these disappearances. Typically, these disappearances are random, isolated instances, and in many cases, the Harvester has nothing to do with it all, merely being a convenient explanation or alibi for some other nefarious activity.

This time, however, 36 children have disappeared from their homes—all in a single night—and many of them were not from the houses of the poor. Not even the jaded folk of the City-State of Castorhage will stand for this (especially not a prominent Justice and a guild leader who have each lost a child in this rash of disappearance). Now is the time for a call to action. Now is the time for heroes.

The Children of the Harvest is a stand-alone adventure set in **The Blight** for 4–6 9th-level characters.



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