

Shadows over
VATHAK

BRIDES OF THE
BLACK EARTH

5TH EDITION HORROR

An Adventure for 3rd Level Characters
in Shadows over Vathak Horror Roleplaying Game

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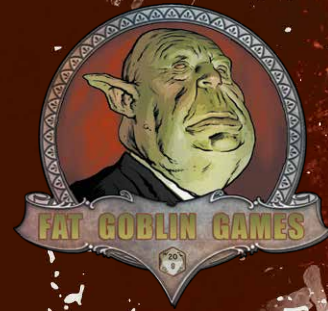
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Based in South Carolina, USA, Fat Goblin Games was founded in 2011 to create Pathfinder Roleplaying Game compatible products. With a focus on high-quality production values and providing a creative environment for our team of freelancers (The Fat Goblin Hoarde), Fat Goblin Games has quickly become a recognized force in the world of Third Party Publishers of not just the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game and 5th Edition Fantasy, but also supporting the vs. M Engine, our own Difference Engine, and TinyD6 games originally produced by Gallant Knight Games. With hundreds of support books, visual aids, campaign settings, and quality stock art, Fat Goblin Games continues to provide exciting content and fantastic worlds in which gamers can immerse themselves.

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Adventure Primer

Adventure Level: 3rd Level

Estimated Duration: 6-8 hours

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Two neighboring baronies of Grigoria have been in conflict for generations, sometimes even outright war, in a blood feud that long ago lost all meaning. That could be about to change however, as the current heads of both noble families have arranged a marriage between their heirs in order to bring a semblance of peace to the region. The heirs have met and fallen in love at first sight, but on the eve of the wedding's announcement, the bride-to-be has vanished.

Unbeknownst to the mother of the bride, her favorite minstrel has been in the pay of a local outlaw knight who has been eyeing the barony for himself. The knight's lover, a charismatic cultist of Ka'sogrotha, has invaded the bride-to-be's dreams with visions of the outlaw knight. The dreams culminated in the maid's obsession with the knight and decision to run off and meet him, spurred by the minstrel's urging her that the dreams must be a vision of the future.

The knight intends to marry the maid and, once the dust settles between the baronies over the broken marriage treaty, arrange accidents for whoever remains between him and rule of the barony itself, and then marry his lover and rule the land with her.

ADVENTURE LOCATION

The baronies in question are located on the southern edge of the Moldoveana Forest in Grigoria, called by many the "Dark Winter Wood." Once the site of a cataclysmic battle between the vindari and the native wild elves, it is today a dark and foreboding place. All who wander the woods, no matter how alone they may be, always feel as if they are being watched. Much of the ground is choked with briar, and the many trees cut down by vindari loggers have never been replenished with new growth.

If you are using this adventure in your own campaign setting, simply locate it in any kind of backwoods area, preferably with an existing dark and creepy or otherwise magical forest.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The adventure begins in the small town of Kingarten, on the southern outskirts of the Moldoveana Forest. The characters could have come to the town for any reason, whether they are just passing through, are locals, or are there on a different mission, and are there when Scene 1 occurs one morning.

SHADOWS OVER VATHAK

Welcome to the world of Shadows over Vathak, a realm of dwindling hope and despair. As players, your characters fight to survive in a land threatened with destruction by the rise of the ancient and evil Old Ones and their spawn. Your characters may represent points of light in the darkness or give in to wicked temptations. Most will fall somewhere in between — survivors struggling to eke out another day. Though the followers of the One True God speak of divine providence while battling the Old Ones, the sins of the Church often rival those of their enemies. In the world of Vathak, your character's perceptions of heroes and villains is a thin line drawn by their own personal morality and, of course, determined by the victor.

This adventure is set in the dark fantasy world of Vathak. As such there are references to the history, characters, and locations of that world. However, with a little bit of alteration, these adventures can be suited for any horror themed 5th edition game.

If you are new to Shadows over Vathak, make sure you join our [Patreon](#) and receive a free copy of the *Explorer's Guide to Vathak*.

RUNNING THIS ADVENTURE

To run this adventure, it is recommended that you have copies of the 5th Edition core rulebooks.

In this adventure you might come across spells, abilities, creatures, magic items, and other references to content from these corebooks. When this happens that item will appear in bold/red text, like this:

“The **goblins** are waiting to attack the caravan as it comes around the steep bend.”

If the content is new (such as monsters or equipment) and not included in one of the corebooks, we will make note of the source or include the item in an appendix to the adventure.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following are a collection of common abbreviations that might be used in this adventure.

AC	Armor Class	GP	Gold pieces
CE	Chaotic Evil	HP	Hit Points
CG	Chaotic Good	LE	Lawful Evil
CN	Chaotic Neutral	LG	Lawful Good
cp	Copper pieces	LN	Lawful Neutral
CR	Challenge Rating	N or TN	Neutral, or True Neutral
d%	Two d10s die one as the 10s the other as the 1s	NE	Neutral Evil
d10	A die of 10 sides	NG	Neutral Good
d12	A die of 12 sides	NPC	Non-Player Character
d20	A die of 20 sides	PC	Player Character
d4	A die of 4 sides	pp	Platinum pieces
d6	A die of 6 sides	sp	Silver Pieces
d8	A die of 8 sides	Stats	The statistical representation of a character
DC	Difficulty Class	XP	Experience Points
EL	Encounter Level		
EP	Electrum Pieces		
GM	Game Master		



SCENE 1: THE HERALD

The sun has just passed over the horizon when you hear a clear voice shouting: “Hear this, hear this! By proclamation of Lady Malysa Florin, ten days hence, it has been declared that her heir, the maiden Taelerys will be married to Lord Heltyn, the heir of house Tafneigh. As such, on that day it is expected that all citizens attend the ceremony, and the day has been declared a holiday.”

The herald will make his announcement several times before heading into the local inn, the Pig and Toadstool. An old friend of the innkeeper, the herald will have a seat at the bar and enjoy an ale before continuing with his duties. While there he engages in a whispered conversation with the innkeeper, from which the characters can make out the words “bride,” “not seen,” and “odd.”

Should the characters talk to the herald (who is named Jarwick) they find him a pleasant and talkative fellow with a few minutes to chat. He has worked for the family of the bride-to-be for over twenty years, and can provide the following information if asked by

the characters. Feel free to read aloud or paraphrase the italicised text for his responses below.

Question: “Who’s the lucky couple?”

Answer: *“Oh, you haven’t heard? Well, my proclamation of this should be obvious. It’s the heirs of this and the neighbouring barony. Those two noble houses have always been at odds, but it seems the head of the houses finally decided to bury the hatchet, and they’ve arranged for a marriage between their heirs, finally giving the region some peace. I tell you, they used to have wars between them, but at least those days are long gone.”*

Question: “How does the couple feel about an arranged marriage?”

Answer: *“Well, I don’t know the groom too well, but I’ve known the bride since she was a wee girl. And I know that to begin with she was none too happy about it. But when she met the lad, who’s quite a strapping and handsome fellow, she seemed to come around. They spent a lot of time together, but that was always supervised, and they haven’t seen each other for the last month. It’s tradition after all.”*

Question: “What’s this that’s odd or missing?”

Answer: “You shouldn’t have heard that.. I’m not sure I should tell you.” He looks meaningfully at his empty cup of ale. **Once the cup’s full, he continues:** “Mighty kind of you. Proclaiming is thirsty work. Well, the odd thing is, I haven’t seen the young lady for a couple of days. She never used to miss her morning ride, but the last time I saw her go out must be three days ago. And as far as I know, no one else has seen her. But every time I’ve hinted something to the family they’ve blown me off. Real strange, I tell ya.”

Question: “Anything else unusual?”

Answer: “Now that you mention it, there is something. The other night, must have been about three or four days ago, I woke up. And I could have sworn I heard someone crying. And I’ve heard crying every night since then, but I don’t know who it is. I mean, my wife keeps telling me I’m hearing things, but I’ve lived in that castle most of my life, and I’ve never heard anything like that before.”

Jarwick takes his leave and bids everyone a fond farewell before continuing in his duties. The innkeeper has only just learned any of this, though he has heard rumors of a wedding for a few weeks. He knows nothing else about the situation, but he can tell them a bit about the history of the noble houses and their conflicts.

SCENE 2: THE SUMMONS

A few hours later a messenger arrives with a letter for the characters. If none of them are present, it is left with the Innkeeper to hand over to them.

Mercenary Leader,

I hope this letter finds you and yours well and in need of gainful employment.

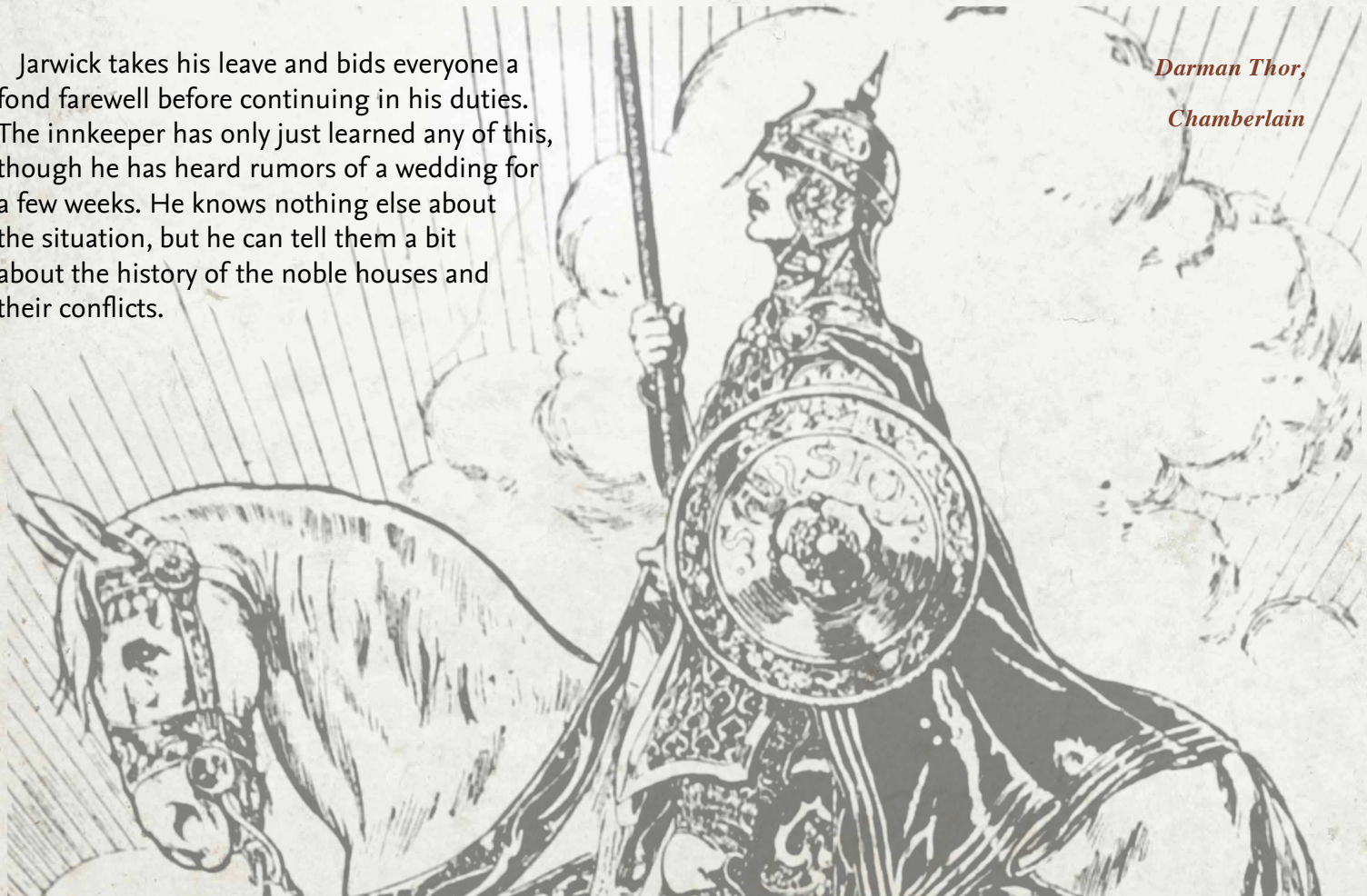
I am not accustomed to dealing with mercenaries, but these are extraordinary circumstances that require action, rather than complacency.

Her Grace, the Baroness, commands you and your notable group of individuals to appear before her on a matter of the greatest urgency. She asks that you act with the utmost secrecy as even the merest rumor could spell disaster.

Please present yourselves to me, the Chamberlain of the Castle, at your earliest convenience and I will take you to a meeting with her grace.

Enclosed in this letter is a token that upon presenting it to the guards at the gate, will ensure that you’re taken to me immediately.

*Darman Thor,
Chamberlain*



THE CASTLE

The castle in front of you is not particularly large or lavish, but to the trained eye it is a true fortress. Parapets and murder holes abound and guards patrol the top of the walls. A large portcullis, flanked by two guards in yellow and red livery, leads into the main courtyard where a large set of double doors can be seen, flanked by another two guards. Flags carrying the livery of the baroness flap in the wind atop of each of the towers that make up the four corners of the castle.

The guards check the letter for authenticity and escort the characters up several flights of stairs into the northernmost tower, where Chamberlain Thor is waiting for them. A short meeting with the chamberlain, an elderly bespectacled man is all that is required. He asks for their names and requests that they follow him as he takes them to the baroness. Once there he announces their arrival and quietly takes his leave.

The room is richly appointed, and the two occupants are well dressed and suited to their surroundings. A large throne dominates the far end of the room, with a carved wooden dragon acting as a footrest for the noblewoman seated upon it, fanning herself. She is an elderly woman dressed in a rich, deep red dress with golden highlights. At her foot sits a minstrel with a crown of fresh flowers in his long hair. His pantaloons and dress bear the same red and yellow colors as the family's livery and his lute is worn though of good quality.

As the chamberlain leaves, she gestures to the minstrel who stops playing:

"Greetings and thank you for accepting our summons and getting here as quickly as you could. As you will have gathered, it is a delicate matter for which I require your services. As you may have heard, my daughter is getting married in a few days to a neighbouring baron's heir. But now? My daughter has vanished, and we do not know why. We suspect foul play, as she seemed to be infatuated with the young man that she was to marry. Hence our request."

At this point, observant characters will notice a wince briefly crossing the face of Perciwell the minstrel sitting at the feet of the baroness.

"We have left her chambers untouched, so that you can investigate them. I hope you have her back here quickly, before the wedding in a week's time, so that hostilities do not resume with our neighbours should they believe that we are backing out of the agreement."

If the characters have questions for the baroness, she can provide the following information.

Question: "Who was the last person to see her?"

Answer: "Her chambermaid. She's been questioned and the girl is at her wits end. She says Taelerys went to bed as normal, complaining about having slept badly the last few nights. After that the maid spent her night with her husband, who is one of the guards, and claims to have not seen or heard anything unusual."

Question: "Has anything unusual happened?"

Answer: "Not that I believe is related, but Jarwick, my herald, did talk about having heard crying during the night. Nobody else has heard anything though, and he's always had an overactive imagination."

Question: "Was she unhappy about the upcoming marriage?"

Answer: "To begin with, yes. But after she met the young man, she was delighted and referred to him as her 'Prince Charming.'"

Question: "Is there anyone who'd profit from the marriage falling through? Do you have any enemies?"

Answer: "We have our share of enemies, but none that would dare to work against us at this point. The marriage has the highest approval, and none of the nobles would dare risk displeasure with the church over this."

Question: "Did she leave anything behind? Is anything else missing?"

Answer: "Her horse and saddle are gone, so someone must have taken them as well. But now that you mention it, she used to keep a diary when she was younger. Perhaps she still does. That might be in her room."

Question: "What do we get out of it?"

Answer: "Do not worry. You will be richly rewarded.
How does 200 gold pieces sound for each of you?"

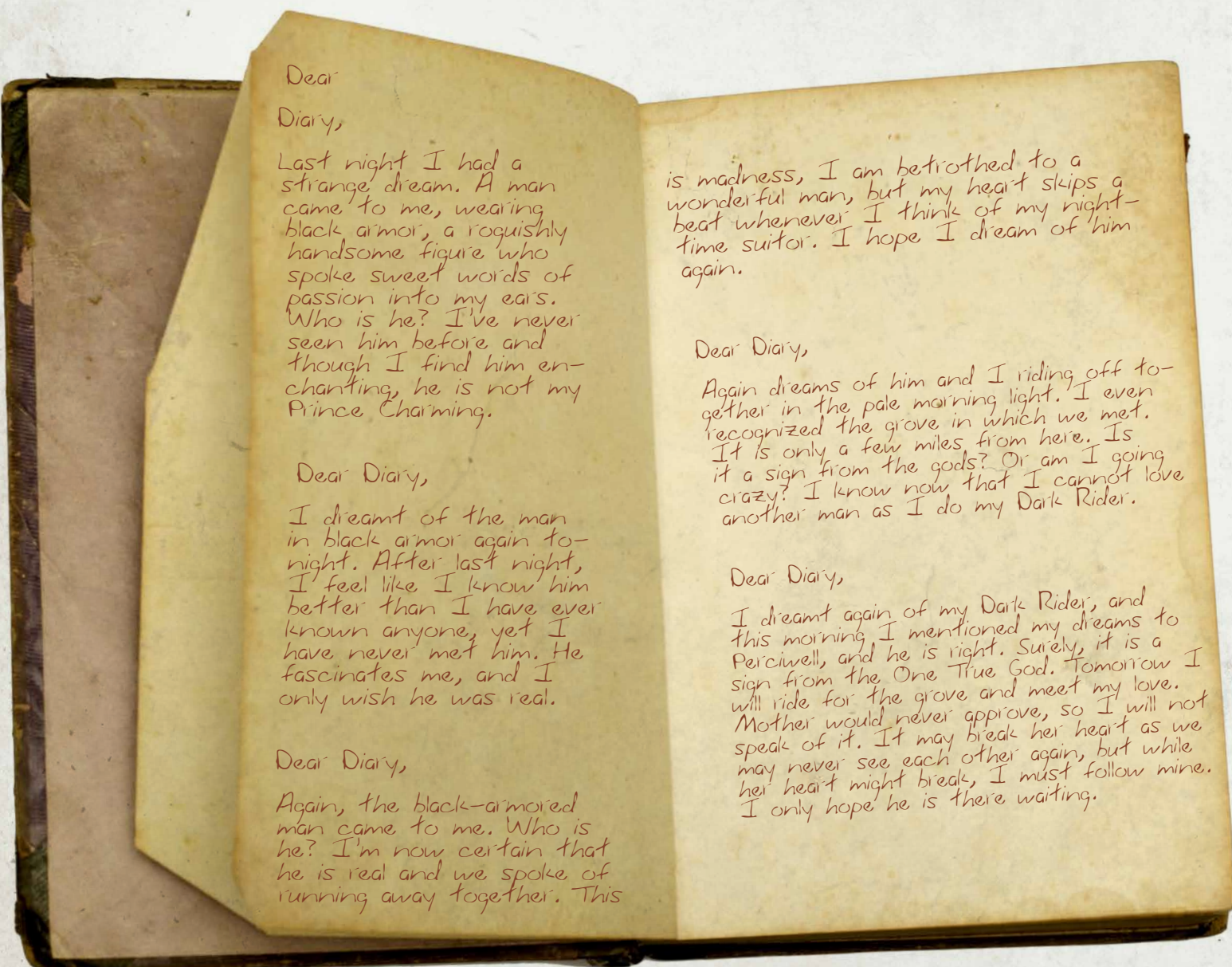
The baroness is not used to haggling, so is not open to negotiation. She does hint that the groom's family might be willing to add to that amount, once the marriage is completed.

THE BRIDE'S ROOM

The room is well appointed, though not as opulent as the rest of the castle. A large cupboard, chest, a four poster bed, a desk filled with drawers, and a chair fill the room. Red curtains cover the window. Two mostly burnt down candles sit in a candelabra on the desk.

Investigating her chambers yields nothing of interest, except when checking the desk. The desk is filled with papers, envelopes and writing utensils, and the third drawer has a secret compartment containing her diary. She wrote in the diary every day and filled it with details from her life, including her infatuation with her "Prince Charming." The last few entries stand out from the rest though. Below are the excerpts related to this adventure. Feel free to add more detail to her normal life.

The characters will likely wish to speak with Perciwell, the minstrel. They can either try to persuade him with a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check or they can threaten any sort of physical violence. He'll pretend to stand up to it, but the moment anyone applies even the slightest amount of physicality (as little as shaking



Dear

Diary,

Last night I had a strange dream. A man came to me, wearing black armor, a roguishly handsome figure who spoke sweet words of passion into my ears. Who is he? I've never seen him before and though I find him enchanting, he is not my Prince Charming.

Dear Diary,

I dreamt of the man in black armor again tonight. After last night, I feel like I know him better than I have ever known anyone, yet I have never met him. He fascinates me, and I only wish he was real.

Dear Diary,

Again, the black-armored man came to me. Who is he? I'm now certain that he is real and we spoke of running away together. This

is madness, I am betrothed to a wonderful man, but my heart skips a beat whenever I think of my nighttime suitor. I hope I dream of him again.

Dear Diary,

Again dreams of him and I riding off together in the pale morning light. I even recognized the grove in which we met. It is only a few miles from here. Is it a sign from the gods? Or am I going crazy? I know now that I cannot love another man as I do my Dark Rider.

Dear Diary,

I dreamt again of my Dark Rider, and this morning I mentioned my dreams to Perciwell, and he is right. Surely, it is a sign from the One True God. Tomorrow I will ride for the grove and meet my love. Mother would never approve, so I will not speak of it. It may break her heart as we may never see each other again, but while her heart might break, I must follow mine. I only hope he is there waiting.

him) he collapses into a loudly crying heap. It turns out he was the one that Jarwick heard crying. He can tell them the following about the situation.

Question: “Who is the Dark Rider?”

Answer: “He’s an outlaw called Reeve Adenot. A former knight, who was exiled for killing an opponent who’d surrendered in a duel. I don’t know where he hails from, but he wears that kill like a badge of honor!”

Question: “How did he invade her dreams?”

Answer: “I don’t know. I would guess it’s probably the witch he works with who helped him do it. All I know is that I was told to let them know when she went out. So I sent them a homing pigeon the night before she left, so he could be waiting for her. Otherwise he was going to hurt me! I never told anyone, because he threatened to kill me if I did!”

Question: “Do you know anything more about the witch?”

Answer: “No, I’ve never dealt with her. Only him. He caught me at one of the inns once while he was in disguise, and forced me to work for him after that.”

Question: “Has he got any allies? Do you know where he took her?”

Answer: “I know he leads a group of bandits. He probably took her back to them. As far as I know they live somewhere in the forest, but I don’t know where.”

Question: “Why are you crying at night?”

Answer: “I... it’s the guilt. I love and respect the baroness and her family. They’ve been so kind to me. And how have I repaid them? With betrayal! It is my fault that she left, and whatever happens because of it will pale in comparison to the price I must pay. May... may the One True God have mercy upon me.” After this he breaks down and sobs,

offering no more information to the characters. Wracked with guilt over his actions, if the characters make no effort to help him deal with it he will take his own life within the next few days.

Any local can tell the characters where to find the grove in question. It is a small clearing next to a pond about three miles northeast of the castle.



SCENE 3: THE GROVE

Travel through the Moldoveana Forest is difficult due to poor visibility, dense undergrowth, and the sense that the forest itself hates anyone who enters. Feel free to include some random encounters if you want to make the journey more interesting, but by the time the characters arrive in the grove, dusk will be fast approaching.

The grove provides a welcome break from the rest of the forest. The sense of foreboding that hangs over Moldoveana is lighter here, the shadows not quite as deep, the grasses less inclined to grasp and trip. The small pond is dark and still, almost like a mirror, and the trees that hang over it lack the menace of their ilk in other parts of the forest. In the center of the clearing is a small circle of stones, clearly used for a campfire and still filled with ash.

A DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation or Nature) check reveals that the ashes in the campfire are three days old, and that two sets of footprints, one armored, and two sets of hoofprints can be found in the grove. One set of hoofprints came from the direction of the castle, while the other came from the north. Both sets leave heading north.

While the grove is generally safer than the rest of the forest, it is not without its dangers. If the characters decide to camp here they will be awoken a few hours after midnight by a **dryad** named Correydalvae, who warns them of impending danger.

A heavenly voice suddenly pierces the night, crying a warning. "Awake! Awake! Danger approaches! The corrupt spirits of the forest have found you, and their servants arrive!"

Thanks to the dryad, the characters have one round to prepare themselves before they are attacked by two **awakened trees** and three **awakened shrubs**.

Correydalvae has become smitten with one of the characters (regardless of gender), either the character with the highest Charisma score, or the one who has shown the greatest affinity for music or animals since arriving at the grove. She will pay extra attention to this character whenever she interacts with the group, staying near them, looking at them even when talking to someone else, and so forth. If the characters

choose not to rest in the grove, she will follow them through the forest for the next few hours, giving her a chance to still warn them of the impending attack. Once the fight is over, she will appear to the characters and introduce herself.

A lithe, feminine figure appears as if from within a tree and smiles. Her hair is the color of dark autumn leaves, and her skin like that of a tree dried out with age. Her looks are akin to those of a woman mature but no less beautiful for her age. "My sincerest apologies for the ghastly events just now. This forest harbors many dark and hate-filled spirits, and there are those which brook no trespass by mortals. I am not like them, however, and I wish you no harm. My name is Correydalvae, and I would ask what brings you to my grove? It is long a space favored by lovers or those seeking mercy from the world, and I sense that your purpose lies in neither."

She is more than happy to speak with the characters, and can provide the following information. If asked why she didn't help out in the fight, she says simply that violence is not her way.

Question: "Have you seen a maiden or a knight here in the last few days?"

Answer: "I saw those two a few days ago. And while he seemed to be completely at his own senses, I can't say the same for her. There was something odd about the way she behaved towards him, almost as if the affection went one way only. I... have some experience of this, but she could not see it."

Question: "Do you know where they went?"

Answer: "They went north. Beyond that I'm not sure. But I may know someone who can help."

Question: "Who is this person?"

Answer: "He is an old friend. More than that once, but he has grown very old so now I look after him. He used to be a great wizard, and is still a font of knowledge. He lives at my vineyard which is not

too far away, and I can take you there if you wish. It isn't far, and is in the same direction as you are already going. Would you like to come to my vineyard, and sample my wine? Oh please say yes!"

The vineyard is another 10 miles or so north by northeast, deep within a section of the forest that the vindari have not yet explored. Correydalvae will lead them there, jumping from tree to tree using her Tree Stride ability. Characters following Correydalvae through the Moldoveana Forest travel 50% faster than normal as the plants give way at her request.

SCENE 4: THE VINEYARD

The vineyard is tucked away deep in the forest, a clearing of low vines along a small stream that trickles and burbles through it. But even here, the shadow of Moldoveana Forest renders the place bleaker than it should be. Well-tended yet sickly looking vines grow upon trellises and sport bunches of small, ice-blue grapes. Ancient stone benches, overrun with moss, stand near the stream, and a small, white-walled cottage squats in the middle of the vineyard, the shingles of the roof and the stones of the chimney in disarray. "Please," Correydalvae says, "make yourself comfortable by the stream while I fetch us some refreshments."

The characters have a few moments to look around the vineyard if they wish, though there is little of interest to find. Each of the trellises which hold the grapevines are in fact shrubs carefully grown into shape to support the other plants. Their branches are a dark brown color, and they sport no leaves themselves, but those on the grapevines are a sort of pale green. The stream is shallow but clear, the water close to freezing.

After a few moments, Correydalvae returns with a tray bearing a carved wooden goblet for her and each of the characters, as well as a crystal decanter containing a pale liquid with a blue tint. She pours wine for each of the players, handing them their goblet in turn, before making a toast to their health and good fortune. The wine itself is dry with a slight tart, not too sweet, and rather strong.

Unbeknownst to the characters, Correydalvae has laced the goblet of her intended lover with a love

potion. That character must make a DC14 Constitution save or fall madly in love with the dryad. On a successful save there is no effect, but on a failure the effect can only be reversed with magic. A character who has fallen in love with Correydalvae will fawn over her, swear their undying love, and the like. They will not believe that their beloved could have done anything wrong, and it will take some convincing to get them to leave her side for the sake of their quest. Correydalvae, assuming the character promises to return, will tell them to go and complete either quest, but return as soon as they are able. If the character resists the potion however, Correydalvae will make no further attempts to steal their heart, nor to keep them from leaving.

After everyone has had their wine, the dryad will lead the characters to her cottage.

The cottage contains but one room, and is lit only by the embers in the fireplace and seven candles atop a huge desk, pushed to the edge by the massive tome which rests there. Hunched over it, scribbling away with an ink pen, is an elderly man, his hair white and thinning, his left eye straining to see his own writing while his right is covered with a bandage. "Terrick, my dear," the dryad says, "I have brought some visitors who wish to speak with you." At this the old man looks up, squinting with his good eye and nodding at each of you in turn. "Yes, yes I have seen them in the fire," he says in a surprisingly firm voice. "Tell me, what brings you this deep into the forest?"

Terrick is well-versed in the lore and goings-on of the region, and has a special connection to the knight's lover. He can give the characters the following information.

Question: "What can you tell us about Reeve Adenot?"

Answer: "Not much I'm afraid. He was once a skilled and noble knight of the realm, but envy and greed took hold of him and one day, he killed a fellow knight in a duel. He coveted the man's lands and wife, and when it was discovered that he had murdered a fellow knight, he was exiled. He soon gathered a group

of bandits to his banner, and since then has been making a nuisance of himself wherever he shows up.”

Question: “Do you know anything of the witch that helps him?”

Answer: “Yes, I know that one, far better than I would like. Her name is Svige and she was once my apprentice and even lover. I was a vain man, beginning to suffer from the ravages of time. I enjoyed her attention and let my guard down. She betrayed me and stole my magical power, after sealing a pact with Ka’sogrotha, calling herself his ‘Bride of the Black Earth.’ Since then she has tormented me regularly after I narrowly escaped her grasp and took my knowledge, if not my right eye, with me. She has since

learned more than I taught her, and her ambition is limitless. She uses deception and seduction as her main tools, but the Worm has given her access to other powers as well, powers beyond what I have seen. Knowing her, she is likely the one behind all this, and has some dark scheme in the works.”

Question: “Does she have any weaknesses?”

Answer: “None that I know of, but her powers are tied to the Worm of the Black Earth. She will be at her strongest underground, so if you must fight her, pray do so in the light of day. But she is crafty and will not easily be tricked.”

Question: “Do you know where they are?”

Answer: “They live in a cave system deep underground, whose only access point to the surface is through an old hollow tree. There’s a small encampment around the tree now, where the bandits live. So I would guess they’ve taken your missing bride there.”

Question: “Do you know how deep the caves go? Or what they look like?”

Answer: “Happily no, for I have never been within. I daresay that few who have been ever come back out, lest they had leave from Svige herself.”

Svige has kept her old master’s eye all this time, and uses it periodically to spy on him. Because of this she is aware that he is talking about her to the players, and has sent some minions to deal with them. The characters feel a tremor in the earth, and two **ankhegs** erupt from the soil outside of the cottage and begin tearing up the vineyard. The attack can happen after the conversation or during it, whichever works better for the table, but so engrossed is she in the discussion that Correydalvae will not be able to warn the characters this time. Neither she nor Terrick will help out in the fight. Following the fight and the conversation with Terrick, Correydalvae will offer to guide the characters to the tree that marks Svige’s lair.



SCENE 5:

THE BANDIT CAMP

From a small hilltop overlooking the camp, it does not look like much. Several tents encircle a large, dead tree, and there is little activity. No guards stand at posts, and in fact the only movement seems to be two shabbily dressed men leading a man in dark plate armor, hand-in-hand with a maiden, towards the largest tent. A sturdy warhorse and a well-bred riding horse graze near one of the smaller tents.

Besides Reeve Adenot and Taelerys Florin, the only other occupants of the camp are Reeve's remaining lieutenants, both of whom are staunchly loyal and assume they have a lot to gain by going along with Reeve's plot. He did once lead a larger band of miscreants, but most have been transformed into servants of Svige or sacrificed to the Worm of the Black Earth. Treat the lieutenants as **thugs**, while Reeve is a **knight** with the following special ability:

Gift of the Worm. As a move action, Reeve can burrow up to 30 feet through nonmagical, unworked stone and earth. He does not disturb the material through which he moves.

Reeve is cocky and thinks he can win against anyone, and he will accept a challenge to a dual from a paladin or otherwise "gallant" character. He will cheat if he thinks he would otherwise lose, and under no circumstances will he allow the characters to live. He will fight to the death, but his lieutenants will run or surrender if he dies before them.

Taelerys is bewitched and considers Reeve her true love, and as such will not abandon him. She will not leave his side and, if he is slain, she will grab his fallen sword and try to attack the characters. In this case treat any attack she makes as an automatic miss, and otherwise treat her as a **commoner** if stats are needed for any reason.

It is up to the characters to determine what to do with Taelerys at this point. Correydalvae has remained

nearby, hoping to watch her beloved in battle, and she can be counted on to watch over the girl at their request, or even take her back to the vineyard. Reeve's death does not break the spell on Taelerys; only Svige can remove it (willingly or through her death). Correydalvae is able to inform the characters that the spell is not broken, and you can have her suggest that they deal with Svige first.

THE DUNGEON

UNDER THE OAK

After defeating Reeve and his remaining bandit followers, the characters can now venture underground to track down Svige and put an end to her evil machinations. If they decide to search the camp first, they find no treasure, but feel free to let them find rations, water, or basic armaments to replenish their supplies if needed.

Unless otherwise noted in room descriptions, assume the following about the dungeon. Tunnels are 5 feet wide with 8 foot ceilings. The walls are rough worked stone and earth, with heavy wooden supports built in. The squared rooms and halls on the map indicate that more care has been taken with these areas, but they are still unfinished. The floors are hard-packed earth covered with straw. All doors are made of wood, and while they are closed, none are locked. Each room contains at least one bracket for a torch, but these are currently empty.

AREA 1: DUNGEON ENTRANCE

Once a mighty oak, the tree is in rough shape even by the standards of the Moldoveana Forest. Its twisted branches look like claws, and it is clear that it has been burnt multiple times, but still it stands. The top of a rough ladder pokes out of a hole in the side of the trunk, large enough for an armored man to climb through, though the rest of the ladder is hidden by pitch black darkness. Eventually the ladder ends at a rough, hard-packed dirt floor, covered with straw. A single exit lies to the east, denoting a rough-hewn stone and dirt tunnel leading deeper into the dungeon.

There is nothing in this room, and any light brought into it will be visible to the creatures occupying Area 2. The tunnel connecting Areas 1 and 2 contains a spiked pit trap which has been concealed to blend into the floor. The cover of the pit is built from dark canvas and covered with straw. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check will alert a character to the fact that the area of the trap has seen no foot traffic, except for a foot and a half wide ledge along the southern wall. The pit is 20 feet deep, and the spikes deal 11 (2d10) piercing damage in addition to any falling damage. This is a simple trap which cannot be disarmed, but can easily be avoided.

AREA 2: GUARDROOM

This roughly triangular room leads to a tunnel leading south, and a wooden door leading east. Three empty torch brackets remain, one bent at an angle as if something had tried to pull it off the wall. The floor is littered with bits of wood, most no bigger than a finger, which might possibly have been furniture at some point.

This room contains four **shadows**, created by Svige from some of the bandits that once served Reeve. They have been set to the task of guarding the room and preventing trespass. The shadows will attack any living creatures that enter the dungeon, unless they present a specific sign allowing passage: any character who crosses their arms over their chest, like a corpse in a coffin, may pass unharmed. This is a lesser known gesture used by cultists of Ka'sogrotha among their own. A character with significant knowledge of such matters could know this information. The shadows will not enter Area 1, but will pursue characters deeper into the dungeon.

AREA 3: LABORATORY

This room is oblong in shape, and not much larger than the massive table that dominates the space. Two smoldering torches hang in brackets, one next to a door at the west end of the room, and the other next to a door on the southern side. The table is about waist high, built from heavy planks of wood, and is covered with various occult items, including a heavy, leather-bound tome and a polished skull with onyx

gems situated in the eye sockets. North of the table, near the eastern wall, is a large iron cauldron, under which a handful of charcoal glows. The cauldron contains a murky, greenish liquid. Viscous bubbles occasionally rise to the surface and pop, releasing a fetid stench.

The liquid is a concoction called Shadewine, an arcane poison that not only kills, but turns its victims into shadows like those in Area 2. The book contains a variety of occult information about the worship of Ka'sogrotha, including the creation of Shadewine, written in code. The skull is a *Skull of Dark Sights*, and allows Svige to view anything within the skull's line of sight.

Shadewine (Ingested). A creature that ingests this poison must become poisoned for 24 hours, and must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution save or suffer 3 (1d6) poison damage and 3 (1d6) necrotic damage each hour until the creature makes a successful save.. This damage cannot be healed until the creature makes a successful saving throw. If a creature dies as a result of ingesting Shadewine, they rise as a shadow the next night. Creatures that make their save notice that they cast no shadow for a week, after which it returns.

SKULL OF DARK SIGHTS

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

This polished human skull has been set with onyx gems where it once held eyes. After attuning to the item, its owner may see through its onyx eyes as if they were their own, albeit with black and white vision. Despite being black and white, the vision is that of the attuned creature, and does not grant darkvision or any other special senses. Any living creature which touches the skull activates it, allowing the attuned creature to see through it. This effect lasts for ten minutes. Alternatively, the attuned creature may choose to activate the skull as a free action. Vision granted by the skull replaces anything seen with the attuned creature's natural eyes, making them effectively blind to their surroundings, but they can end this effect with a free action.

AREA 4: PRIVY

This small room contains a wooden bench with a hole in it, underneath which sits a very full and very pungent bucket. A washbasin containing cold, dirty water stands next to the door on a simple, tall table with three legs. A single empty torch bracket hangs above the bench.

There is nothing of interest within the room.

AREA 5: KITCHEN

The smell of recent cooking permeates this room while the fireplace is burning low in the south-east corner, near a door in the eastern wall. Piles of dishes are heaped on tables along the west and south walls. In the middle of the room is a large table with seven chairs arrayed around it. A low snoring emanates from underneath the kitchen table, where a dirty blanket covers a small figure.

The sleeping figure in question is K'gig, a ghost who serves Svige as her chef, and a talented one at that. Though evil, K'gig is not aggressive, and dreams about one day opening his own tavern in order to serve a wider clientele. He is sworn to Svige's service, but he doesn't like her (she doesn't truly appreciate his work) and will not try to stop the characters unless ordered to by Svige herself. If they agree to spare him, he is willing to tell them the basic layout of the rest of the dungeon, as well as give them some idea of Svige's abilities. He doesn't know of her plans or the details of guards or other monsters, as he keeps to the kitchen and pantry (Area 6). He will defend himself if attacked.

AREA 6: PANTRY

This room is very cool, almost freezing. Carcasses of various types hang from meat hooks in the ceiling. The area appears to be mostly clean, but the carcasses dangle gently as if stirred by some breeze. As they move, some of the carcasses seem almost alive, and some of them are definitely humanoid in nature.

K'gig cleans the room every day by licking up the blood. The room is kept cold by a winter spirit that was captured early on by Svige, but which has been weakened far too much to do anything more menacing than cooling a room, moving the hanging corpses, and moaning loudly. It will attempt to scare the characters out of the pantry for its own amusement.

Any turn attempt that can affect elementals will automatically destroy the winter spirit. When destroyed the characters will hear a happy sigh escaping the spirit, and the room will immediately start warming up to the ambient temperature of the area surrounding it. At this point the meat will also start decaying so all foodstuff in here will go bad over the next few days.

AREA 7: BEDCHAMBER

This area is only accessible by a secret door in the long tunnel leading from Area 3 to Area 10. The door, like the pit trap between Area 1 and Area 2, is made of canvas, but it has been painted and caked in dirt so that it looks like the rest of the walls in the tunnel. A character can notice it on a DC 15 passive Wisdom (Perception) roll, or on a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check if they are actively looking for it.

This room is dimly lit, by the embers of a fireplace in the north-east corner. Arrayed around the room are a number of candles that are somewhat burned down from use, but none of which are currently lit. Dominating the room is a large four poster bed, a desk and chair by the east wall completes the look of the room. The only other door is part of a wooden partition in the southern wall.

This is Svige's bedchamber where she and Reeve spent their time together. The room is only ever dimly lit, and the candles themselves are a trap. Lighting the room beyond its current state, such as entering with a torch or stoking the fire, summons an **earth elemental** within one round. The elemental will enter the room from the solid eastern wall and attack any creatures that are not Svige or Reeve.

Treasure. Svige and her lover kept their personal treasure in a small chest under the bed. The chest contains a silvered dagger, golden necklace worth 75 gp and a purse containing 50 sp and 20 cp. The only other thing there is Svige's personal diary, describing her seduction of Terrick, conversion to the worship of the Ka'sogrotha, her plot against the barony. Feel free to include any other hooks you may wish with the characters to find. The book itself has no monetary value, but would be valuable to certain orders within the Church of the One True God, such as the God's Blades or the Sparrows, or conversely, to other cultists of the Worm of the Black Earth.

AREA 8: BATHROOM

The room contains a latrine and a large copper bathtub. The bathtub appears to glow with its own soft light and is filled with clean steaming water. Two small statues at the foot of the bathtub are shaped in the form of a snowflake and a flame.

The bathtub starts glowing whenever a living being immerses their body in the water, glowing to the equivalent of a torch, bathing the room in a warm atmosphere. The water itself is currently very hot, but the temperature can be adjusted by touching the statues at the foot of the bathtub. The longer one holds the statues the warmer or colder it will get respectively, until reaching frozen or boiling levels. Only a creature immersed in the bathtub can change the temperature of the water in this manner. The bathwater is automatically cleaned and refilled after use. The latrine automatically cleans any waste placed in it. Either of these items could be removed from the dungeon, with great care and difficulty in the case of the bathtub, but the details of such an operation are left to the GM to decide.

AREA 9: THE WAR ROOM

This room is brightly lit, with a map spread across a large table in the center of the room. A fireplace burns in the northeast corner. On the walls around the room hang dirty banners carrying the crest of a noble house, though they are tattered and burnt in some places.

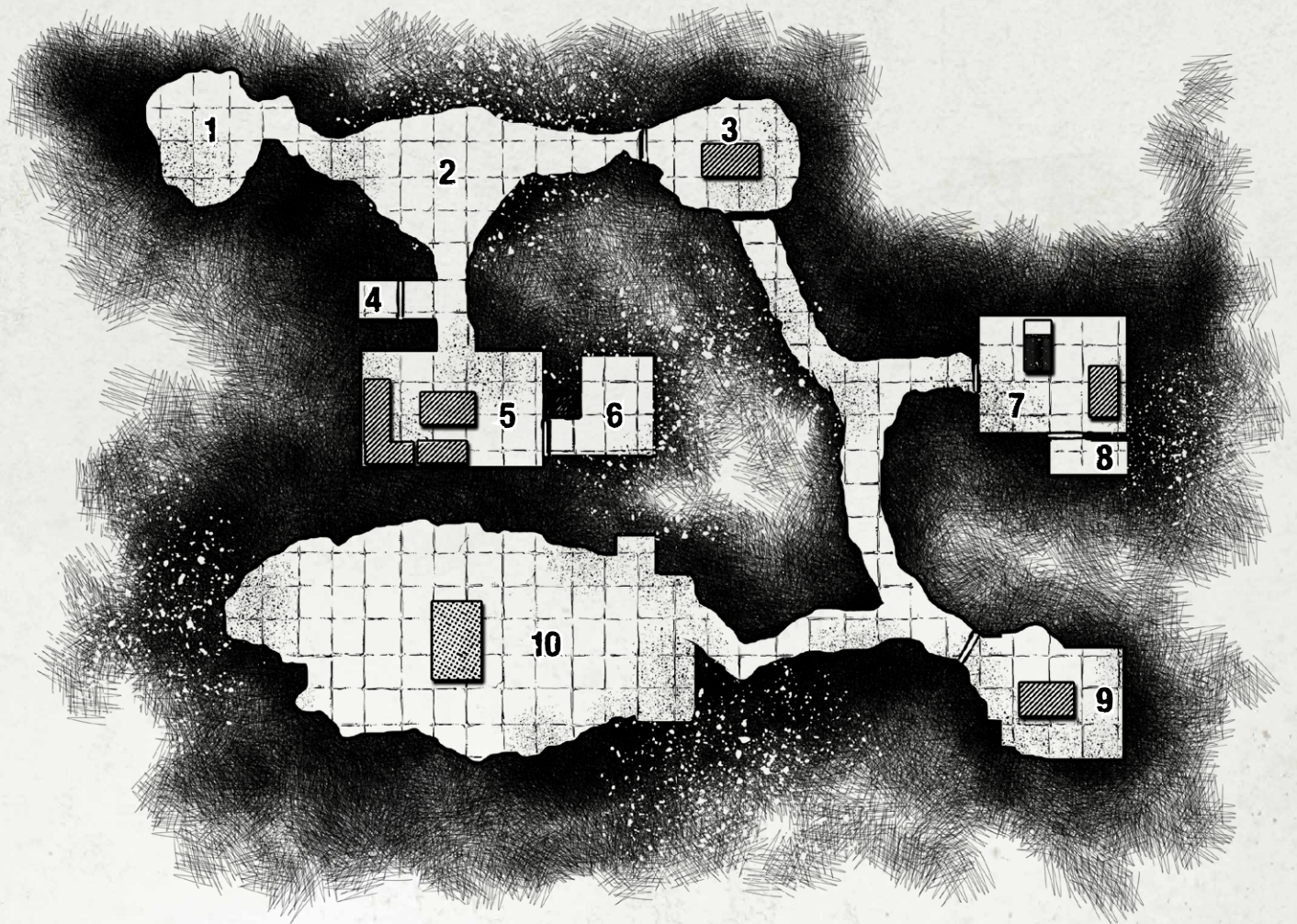
The map on the table shows the barony surrounding Kingarten, and includes notes on how Reeve planned to annex the lands of several of the free farmers, increase taxes, and burn down part of the forest to make room for more farmland. It also clearly shows a large number of farms being demolished, with no plans for relocating them, all with the goal of adding them directly to the baron's holdings. The map itself is so detailed that, if you wish to insert secret treasures or other rumors in the surrounding area, this would be an appropriate place to include them. The map itself is high enough quality that it is worth 200 gp to the right buyer.

AREA 10: THE ALTAR

This large, humid cave is lit only by a line of candles upon a large black slab, their light reflected by the slick walls and floor. A pale, dark-haired woman stands behind the altar with her arms held up, singing what sounds like a Vindari funeral dirge in a sonorous voice.

This is Svige, Bride of the Black Earth, and the song she is singing is actually in Aklo, a prayer to Ka'sogrotha. Svige is proud and willing to monologue if given the opportunity, mostly about the glories of the Worm of the Black Earth, the folly of the Church of the One True God, and the like. She is supremely confident and will make an effort to win over the characters, convincing her to work with her if at all possible. She is not stupid, however, and unless they have been very careful, she will have noticed their intrusion into her lair before they reach her (especially if they triggered the *Skull of Dark Sights* in Area 3, fought the earth elemental in Area 7, or made any noise in Area 9). She will have cast some (or all) of the following spells in preparation: *mage armor*, *conjure minor elementals* (earth elementals), and *stonekin*.

Though she will try to bring them over to her side, if the characters refuse it is only a matter of time until she attacks. When it comes to a fight, treat Svige as a **mage** with the following spells memorized:



Cantrips (at will): *acid splash, fire bolt, light, mage hand*

1st level (4 slots): *mage armor, magic missile, shield, thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *misty step, ray of enfeeblement, suggestion*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, fireball, vampiric touch*

4th level (3 slots): *conjure minor elementals, ice storm, stoneskin*

5th level (1 slot): *dominate person*

Treasure. Svige keeps nothing of value here, though she does have a chest in a small alcove to the north that contains various ritual ingredients and implements. Characters who inspect the cave can find several thin veins of silver and gold which, if extracted, provide 400 gp worth of silver dust, and 200gp worth of gold dust.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

If the characters kill Svige, her spell over Taelerys will fade, and the enchantment will be gone by the time she next wakes up. Provided they resolve things in time for the wedding, the baroness pays them and invites them to attend, but afterward pays them no more mind that she would any other guest of middling importance. The bride and groom will greet them as honored guests however, and inform them that they will always be welcome within their lands, and need only ask to be provided with room and board or supplies (within reason). The newlyweds (and the baroness as well) can serve as patrons or provide further adventure hooks as needed.

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