



THE SECOND BLACK DAWN

MARCO BERTINI

A dark fantasy adventure with at least 30 hours of gameplay, bringing characters from levels 1 to 5.

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INTRODUCTION



*We don't stop playing because we grow old;
we grow old because we stop playing.*
G. B. Shaw

Welcome to "*The Second Black Dawn*", an adventure estimated to last around 30 hours of gameplay, written and designed for Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition. The adventure is designed for characters starting at level 1 and characters should advance to level 5 by the end of the adventure. The ideal group for this adventure comprises four characters, but the adventure can be easily adjusted for a greater or smaller number of players.

This adventure takes place in a generic region ostensibly set in the Forgotten Realms, but the story can be easily adapted to another setting with some minor modifications. If you want to place it somewhere in the Forgotten Realms, one idea is to place the region on an unexplored island off the coast of Maztica, for which there is no previous or current setting material. On the map The Scholar's View of Toril (Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting, 3rd Edition, p.231), the region can be placed on the mysterious island west of Maztica, noted as 'Unknown Lands'.

Character Advancement. At your option, you can use the milestone experience rule. Under this rule, you pick certain events in the adventure that cause the characters to level up. In *The Second Black Dawn*, the characters gain a level after completing each episode, except the introductory Episode 1.

The adventure is divided into five episodes, through which the players will advance until they reach the epilog. Furthermore, in the final section of this document, you can find two useful appendices: a list of songs to use during the adventure, and statistics for the new monsters introduced in this adventure.

The creation of this adventure was a year-long undertaking and was born from my great love for role-playing games and the fantasy genre. I have tried to make the text as accurate, simple, and fun to read as possible. I hope you find that I achieved my goals, that you enjoy the adventure, and that you have great fun running it for your players. Enjoy!

Marco Bertini
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PART 1

Running the
Adventure



BACKGROUND

The First Black Dawn, which occurred many centuries ago, heralded the descent of the gods to the Material Plane. Many bloody and terrible battles ensued, which brought the world to the edge of destruction. At the end of the conflict the evil deities were defeated, and all the gods went back to their planes of origin.

THE BLACK HAND

The Black Hand is an organization that's been around for many centuries, and whose main purpose is to overturn the existing power structure to establish an absolute dictatorship, with the evil Bane in charge. Previously, this sect has mainly concerned itself with contriving harebrained plans that have come to nothing and small-time intrigues, but lately things are starting to change...

The Black Hand is a secret cabal that has recently grown more powerful. It gets its name from one of the most feared and evil gods: Bane. He has many names: The Black Lord, Lord of Darkness, or simply the Black Hand (from a black gauntlet, his weapon of choice). His love for tyranny is well known across the lands. For this reason, when still a mortal, this despot allied himself with two other humans with similar goals, Bhaal and Myrkul, with whom he made a deal that led all three to ascend to godhood. They traveled far and wide destroying many of their enemies and committing heinous crimes until they stole a divine artifact of limitless power: The Tablets of Fate. As a consequence of this terrible act an era of upheaval was ushered in, during which Bane himself was killed during a fierce battle. However, those who thought he was defeated were proved wrong. A few years later, during a night in the deep of winter, there was an explosion of diabolic light and from that blast a new, stronger Bane appeared, with his right hand covered in green flames. *He was back.*



Bane's main intention is still to become overlord of all the known lands. Only on the day when his servants sit on all the thrones of the world, when all the people serve these lords from fear, and when hope and altruism are erased from the world, will Bane finally rest. Until the day when he is finally and completely defeated, the world will not be safe.

The secret cabal of the Black Hand has recently formed an alliance with an evil coterie of necromancers. The latter have cast an enchantment over the region, as part of a larger plan to destabilize the whole region and take control of it. The cabal is ready to perform a powerful and dangerous necromantic ritual, whose climax will be the Second Black Dawn. This ritual will open a gate from which demons, devils and other fiendish creatures will swarm over the Material Plane, bringing death and destruction.

The Black Hand, with the help of Prince Artex (King Belador's advisor and brother) and the goblins of the Scarlet Fang tribe, has kidnapped the king, with the intention of removing a dangerous adversary and putting in motion their larger, viler plan.

THE TENETS OF THE BLACK HAND

- 1) *You will not serve anyone besides Bane.*
- 2) *Always fear and honor Bane and make it so that others fear the god more than you.*
- 3) *Betray Bane and you will die. In death, you will end up pledging allegiance anyway, since he will make you do so.*
- 4) *Submit to Bane, since real power can only be gained by serving him.*
- 5) *The Black Hand always wins against those who oppose it.*
- 6) *Spread the name of Bane and the fear of him.*
- 7) *Whoever opposes the Black Hand will meet Bane's hand before all others.*

STRUCTURE OF THE CABAL

Bane desires that his clerics and worshippers acquire positions of power inside society, by strength or cunning, using this power to incite hatred, fear and destruction. The cabal prefers that members overthrow governments and reach their goals in secrecy, under cover, and without attracting too much attention. The Black Hand is set up as several parallel groups, whose size can vary from a handful to several dozen members.

Inside the cabal a rigid hierarchy applies - challenging or disobeying a superior's order is an insult to the authority of Bane himself and torture, disfigurement or death are likely consequences.

Members of the cabal are noted for their dark purple clothes, even though in public they dress and act like common people.

The Black Hand does not shy away from paying mercenaries to engage in beatings, torture and homicide, which are quite common during an operation. It's very unusual for an initiate of the Lord of Darkness to not have at least some knowledge of these practices.

SETTINGS

With a little work a Dungeon Master can adapt *The Second Black Dawn* to other settings.

Here are a couple of suggestions:

1) Make it so that an existing region in your setting borders the region in the adventure (this should be easy, since the borders are not clearly defined for exactly this reason) and create a quick background of political relationship between the two regions. Introduce a reason why the characters would travel to the region, such as looking for fame and glory in these unexplored lands, and the adventure begins.

2) Take the generic setting information from the adventure and adapt it to the places and locations of your setting. Changing the names and places of the adventure to something more fitting to your setting should be easy enough.

OVERVIEW

For some time now, undead have inexplicably appeared in several places across the region and no-one is able to explain why this is happening: in graveyards, bodies have been found unearthed and people are afraid that their loved ones may come back to (un)life. The kingdom wants to resolve this mystery and has decided to hire a group of independent adventurers to investigate.

The action begins when the characters travel to the king's court to fulfil this duty. Once they arrive at court, they discover that the king is gone and at the same time a further outbreak of undead has hit the kingdom. Their goal should be to find clues regarding the whereabouts of His Majesty, King Belador the Brave.

The first place they should investigate is Edrahil's Wood. The king went there to meet the druid Elu Edrahil and that's where he seemingly disappeared into thin air. Traveling is a dangerous business and the characters will face many hardships, including an undead invasion, before arriving at Edrahil's Wood.

Once they reach the wood, the adventurers can talk with the creatures of the forest and look for clues around Edrahil's village, which is now completely destroyed. If they speak with the animals, they discover that the forest creatures do not know where the druid or the king are and proclaim themselves innocent of Belador's kidnapping. They do bring the characters' attention to the Scarlet Fang goblin tribe however, a threat to the kingdom and to the forest, as possibly responsible for the act, and ask the characters for help in destroying the goblins.

The characters will have to find the goblins' lair and face their king: Slobad the Bloodthirsty. They discover that the goblins are not the masterminds behind Belador's kidnapping, but simply an instrument used by a greater power. They can discover that the king has been imprisoned by the Black Hand in a cursed graveyard near the abandoned village of Ornis.

In the finale, in the abandoned village of Ornis, the forces of good and evil are pitted against each other in an epic battle whose outcome will influence the destiny of the region and perhaps the world!



RUNNING THE ADVENTURE



ny good story needs some rules, and any rule needs the right context.

To play this adventure you only need the rules found in the Player's Handbook, the Monster Manual, and the Dungeon Master's Guide.

ADVENTURE THEMES

It is intended that this adventure be dark and realistic, and you are encouraged to drive that mood home in your descriptions of the places the characters visit and what they experience there. The places the PCs visit are often full of suffering and desperation, but there are elements of hope because a few heroes try to make the world a better place. Given the impact that the forces of evil have in the region, life can be truly dangerous. The players will find themselves caught up in epic conflicts and it will be up to them to try to do the right thing, fighting against fate and steering the course of history.

The setting of this adventure is inspired by classic fantasy, with a strong medieval influence, and a modest role for magic. Society has a rigid structure and there is a well-established hierarchy in place. In villages and wilderness areas there is superstition and ignorance; brute strength is quite often more powerful than reason and words.

This adventure was created and developed with specific story elements. However, you can of course change anything you want, to modify the story and the challenge of combats according to the preferences of your own gaming group.

DUNGEON MASTER ADVICE

To play and enjoy this adventure, collaboration is needed between the DM and the players. If one person's behavior upsets others in the group, the entire game experience will be ruined for all. The DM's and the players' goals are the same: to enjoy themselves in a friendly atmosphere, and to participate in a stress-free game experience. If the DM notices problems in the group, she should talk with the players about them to find a resolution.

This section provides a few simple and easy ideas to help the DM run the adventure based on my experience:

1) THE DM'S WORD IS FINAL

Dungeons & Dragons is based on specific rules. If the players disagree about one, take your time to quietly talk about it, preferably at the end of the gaming session, or at the beginning of the next session, to avoid interrupting the game flow. However, the DM has the final word about any rule (see the Dungeon Master's Guide for further information).

2) ROLEPLAY IS IMPORTANT

Players should be encouraged as much as possible to roleplay their characters' backgrounds and personality as this adds to the fun of the gaming experience.



Encourage the players 'in game' to think, eat and fight as the player envisages their character would. The game is not just about rolling dice - the roleplaying element is core to the game and can bring a huge amount of fun to the experience. It is useful to award extra XP if a player consistently roleplays his character well to further encourage roleplaying. The DM can also encourage the players by roleplaying the NPCs effectively.

As an example of good roleplaying, Bob is playing Thyronimus, a human Lawful Good paladin, dedicated to personal sacrifice and self-denial. Thyronimus is gravely wounded during a ferocious fight in an arena and Bob must decide whether to risk his character's life to help one of his allies. Bob is thinking of saying that Thyronimus will retreat, to reduce the chances of his character dying, but as a character Thyronimus would willingly risk his life to save his friend. Therefore, Bob decides Thyronimus will help and with a lucky roll he rescues his ally, saving both the ally and him. Now, that's great roleplaying!

3) BALANCE FUN, RELIABILITY AND DILIGENCE

While having fun, encourage the group to align with the genre and atmosphere of the scene. The group should know when it's time to crack a joke or not. For example, if the characters are in front of a vampire's coffin under a full moon, surrounded by undead and other foul creatures, laughing and telling jokes can spoil the atmosphere of horror for everybody.



4) ENHANCE THE GAMING ATMOSPHERE

The gaming atmosphere is often not considered enough. For example, when the characters are traveling across the desert of desolation, the atmosphere should be tense: describe the lack of any trees or plants for food or moisture, the intense heat, and the slogging through the shifting sands, the growing thirst; hopefully, the players will reciprocate and those players whose characters are experiencing a desert for the first time will describe how shaken they are by the experience. The DM must promote this kind of atmosphere by any useful means: for example, music is an excellent way to enhance atmosphere. A list in Appendix A has many tracks from famous movies or songs that can help the DM to build the right atmosphere at their gaming table.

5) DISCOURAGE METAGAMING

Often, players learn information that their characters can't know. Discourage the abuse of this type of information, as it can have a detrimental effect on the suspension of disbelief required to enjoy the game. For example, the player Bob says that his character, Thyronimus, accuses Tim's rogue character, Havelor, of theft, even though Bob's character doesn't know that Havelor has stolen an item from him.

CHARACTER CREATION

In this adventure all races and classes from the *Player's Handbook* and other official sourcebooks are suitable for use. To create a character, refer to the *Player's Handbook*. The adventure is optimized for four characters starting at 1st level. A larger or smaller group is possible, but the DM must modify the encounters according to the group's size and power. Running a Session Zero before the adventure starts, to discover player preferences and discuss some important ground rules for playing the adventure, is fundamental to creating a good gaming experience. As noted in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, to engage the players it's important that characters' actions have consequences in the game world, influencing the adventure's storyline.

EQUIPMENT

If you want to create a game with more realism, players can record the weight and location of every item of their equipment. For example, they should note each item as being in their backpack (B), in a secret pocket (SP), or worn (W).

In regard to the buying and selling of equipment, bear the following in mind:

- Don't let the players find valuable and precious items in small villages (is it likely that a small community of 200 souls has a magical blade worth 100,000 gold pieces?), unless of course there are specific reasons why.
- Adjust the cost of living and the price of items based on the location. For example, in a fishing village fish will be cheap and easily available to everyone.
- Apply the law of supply and demand: the more demand there is for something the less supply is available on the market, and so the higher the price.
- Limit the frequency at which the characters obtain magic items, since this can considerably alter the difficulty of the adventure. Remember that in D&D 5th Edition their use is optional.



MAP OF THE KINGDOM



PART 2

The Adventure





EPISODE 1: THE CITY OF HELLENBROWN

The following text offers a *prologue* to the adventure and describes the events that occur before the beginning of the adventure. It can be quickly narrated to the players to introduce them to the adventure and to the region.

Your adventure starts in the Dragon Inn, in Hellenbrown, capital city of this region.

It's an unusually cold autumn night in these southern lands and a strong wind from the north makes the evening even cooler. You have been drawn to the capital by strange events that apparently began about a month ago: undead, such as skeletons, zombies, and ghouls, have mysteriously started to appear across the kingdom. The people are worried that their dead loved ones may rise from the grave. Graveyards are now guarded constantly, day and night, by both the kingdom's guards and groups of mercenaries specifically hired for the job. Furthermore, many gangs of brigands are starting to act more boldly and violently, attacking villages and small towns. These are dark times indeed..

To put a stop to this dreadful situation, the king himself, His Shining Majesty King Belador the Brave of the House of Sylgerios, the Evening Stars, has decided to offer a quest to a group of valiant adventurers. The king wants to find out the root of the curse which is upsetting the kingdom and stop it. The mages of the kingdom have tried to stem the trouble but, alas, their knowledge and skill have not been enough.

You were drawn to the king's court by a proclamation, posted at the corner of the main roads of each town and village across the kingdom, declaring the following:

THE KING'S OFFICIAL PROCLAMATION:

Anyone who brings news of the undead curse plaguing the kingdom or is willing to unearth any useful information about it can report to the king's court in Hellenbrown, where a generous reward will be provided.

ALTERNATIVE MOTIVATIONS

The adventurers could also have been attracted to the city for reasons connected to their Background (they may have a trait of curiosity or a strong desire to eradicate evil from the world) or for specific personal reasons (for example, if a relative or a friend has been directly affected by the current situation).

MONSTER INFORMATION

In the adventure, when you see a monster's name in **bold**, that's an indication that the relevant information can be found in the *Monster Manual* – a page reference is also provided to make it easy to find during gameplay.

The new monsters presented in Appendix B, also **bolded**, have a note after their name to direct the DM to that section for their statistics and further information.

THE JOURNEY BEGINS!

The adventure starts in the capital of the region, Hellenbrown, a large fortified city found to the north of the

King's Forest (a large forest that is home to an independent elven community and where the king hunts in the summer). Many travelers and adventurers make their way to this city; it's the beating heart of the kingdom. Many different races and classes can be found within the city. The city is ruled by King Belador. His wife, Queen Eleanor, died in childbirth some years ago while she was bringing their son Marcus, the heir to the throne, into the world.

These first passages are for the characters that have still to reach the town; for the ones already living in Hellenbrown you can jump ahead to the next section, 'The Dragon Inn' (boxed text with a lighter background can be read or paraphrased to players).

The king's official proclamation has brought you close to Hellenbrown, the capital city of the region, either for personal reasons or from a true spirit for adventure. Despite the unusually cold weather, your spirits are high after an uneventful journey. You reach the outskirts of the city in a good mood and full of vigor. As you continue along the main road, you can now make out the city walls and the main gates in the distance, about a third of a mile from where you stand. Once you near the main gates you find a crowd of people waiting to be let inside. Looking around, you notice many farmers and plenty of women, children, and elders, along with many wagons loaded with everyday items, furniture, and work tools. It seems like these people are perhaps running away from something and taking refuge in the city, taking with them the few things they own.

Although part of the crowd is made up of farmers looking to sell the fruits of their recent harvest, a larger portion hails from Shining Sun, a small village in the Scarlet Moon Hills about two days' walk from Hellenbrown. They have been victims of an assault by a band of brigands called 'The Black Ears', named for the fact that they dye their ears black. The villagers fled to the capital when their village was burned to the ground a couple of days ago.

If the players try to talk with any of these people, after a long silence a member of the crowd, a middle-aged male commoner named Hank, ill-dressed and with fear in his eyes, will turn towards them and start to talk, trying to stifle his tears.

A sob breaks the silence and a farmer, trying to hold back tears, steps forward: "My name is Hank and I am from Shining Sun, a small village a couple of days west from here in the Scarlet Moon Hills. Our village was attacked by a band of ruffians a couple of nights ago. We were eating supper when they showed up, too many for us, we didn't have the strength to defend ourselves...it was a slaughter..."

At this point, Hank's voice breaks, as he tries to swallow his distress. After a little while he wipes the tears from his eyes and starts talking again:

"Sorry, it was a terrible experience... anyway, those amongst us who survived took anything they still had left and escaped with our loved ones. Hellenbrown is protected by strong walls and here, at least, we should be safe..."



If the characters ask for further information regarding the attack, Hank continues:

“They call themselves ‘*The Black Ears*’, and they are thieves and murderers. Curse them all! The king should have them hanged.”

After this interaction, or if the characters decide to go straight for the town gates without talking to the refugees, read or paraphrase the following:

You make your way past some wagons, many of which are loaded with the last fruits of a great summer harvest. You have been waiting in line for some time when your turn to go through the gates finally arrives. A guard sizes you up and after a long stare finally signals you to proceed. And that’s how, after a long journey, you finally enter the city of Hellenbrown that sundown. Once inside the city, the view proves worth the hardships of the journey: impressive houses and even stately palaces attract your attention, while many people of all social standings crowd the streets of the city. However, as amazing as the city is, the sun is setting and you need to find a place to rest before darkness falls, otherwise you might end up having to sleep on the streets.

After finally gaining access to the town ([Hellenbrown’s map can be found on page 16](#)), the characters must find a place to spend the night. It’s assumed that the characters will all “fortuitously” end up at the Dragon Inn, so they can start interacting and get to know each other. If the characters want to go their separate ways, it might be a good idea to have them meet anyway at the inn: for example, if one of them would like to sleep outside, some guards could show up explaining that it’s against the city laws and directing them to the Dragon Inn, and so on...

While you are walking through the paved streets of the city you notice a large, red sign over the door of a building. The words ‘Dragon Inn’ catch your eye. When you near the door, a pleasant, earthy aroma of stew billows out from the inn and your mouth waters in anticipation. Your stomach starts rumbling and you’re reminded it is dinner time. In the meantime, above your heads the sky is darkening, and a cold wind starts to blow through the streets.

THE DRAGON INN

The characters should hopefully end up spending the night inside the Dragon Inn so they can meet and socialize. The inn is a typical two-story building: on the ground floor there is a large common room with several tables where various people eat, a large hearth with a roaring fire, and a counter where drinks are served. Behind the counter there is a door leading to the kitchen, while a set of stairs leads to the second-floor bedrooms.

The innkeeper, Omar, originally hailed from the northern mountains. He is a very tall man, heavily muscled, with white hair and a large scar on the left side of his face, gained long ago in battle. He speaks sparingly but, despite his looks, is a gentle soul.

He is assisted in running the inn by Oe, a young half-elf barmaid. Unlike Omar, Oe is slim and talkative, and quickly builds rapport with the inn’s clientele. She has olive skin, dark hair and large green eyes.

CURRENCY: METALLIC DRAGONS

The coins used in this region are called dragons, since there is a dragon’s head on the face of each coin but correspond to the standard coinage of the D&D game if that’s easier to use.

There are four kinds of dragon coins:

- The copper dragon (cd), which corresponds to the copper piece
- The silver dragon (sd), which corresponds to the silver piece
- The gold dragon (gd), which corresponds to the gold piece
- The platinum dragon (pd), which corresponds to the platinum piece

While the characters eat, a town crier enters the inn, spreading the news that the king will reward anyone who will combat the undead hordes that assail the kingdom. Those interested should report as soon as possible to the throne room to seek an audience with the king. This should stimulate discussion and allow the characters to discover a shared goal.

The following patrons can be found inside the inn:

- Four commoners around a large circular table sharing jokes and a hearty meal.
- A couple of young elves hold hands across a smaller table, exchanging endearments and adoring looks.
- A town guard sits on his own in a corner, with his back to the room, hunched over his food. He does not want to be disturbed (if questioned, he will politely answer the characters’ questions in as short a time as possible; otherwise, he ignores everyone).
- In another corner of the inn is a knight, Zigla von Baruff. He is a proud man with a short temper. He is quick to respond with condescension and hostility if he thinks anyone is disrespecting him and will even challenge a character to a one-on-one duel if responded to in kind (use the **knight**, *Monster Manual*, p.347) if there is a fight. However, if combat ensues, von Baruff is cautious of the king’s law and has some honor, so simply knocks out the character; he does not kill them.
- Two halflings, eating and drinking heavily. They are ready to party and could lighten the evening with music and songs or seek the characters’ help with some practical joke at the expense of one of the other clients, such as the knight, Von Baruff.

Regardless of what happens during the evening, once the characters go to bed the night passes without any further incident.





Legend:

- 1. The Entry Gate
- 2. The Dragon Inn
- 3. The Citadel

Map: The City of Hellenbrown

MAGIC IN THE KINGDOM

The DM should be aware of the reactions of local people if any of the characters use magic. Magic is usually treated with mistrust by many inhabitants of the region, somewhere between fear and admiration. The use of magic, especially to solve daily problems, is rare and strange. Magic is primarily used by the lords of the kingdom in warfare or to invoke powerful enchantments to aid them with delicate or personal matters. So, even though it is present, magic is used sparingly, both because wizards are jealous of their secrets and because using magical power too frequently or obviously can attract unwanted attention from more powerful entities...

ON THE CITY STREETS

In the morning, the characters are directed towards a central tower - the citadel - to get more information on the quest and its rewards. The citadel stands high above the rest of the city, guarded by sheer walls with thin arrow slits. Inside the citadel are the king's quarters, the chambers of the King's Council, and the throne room. The city streets are already loud and full of life as the characters set out from the inn. Along the way the characters can see and meet people of many kinds: merchants hawking their wares, farmers yelling out prices to attract potential buyers towards their produce, jugglers and acrobats, and old crones promising to read their futures. Humans are the main race seen, but all the other races outlined in the *Player's Handbook* (elves, dwarves, gnomes, halflings, half-elves, and so on) can be found in the city (and across the rest of the kingdom).



After walking for a while, the characters cross paths with a group of four fanatical barefoot zealots, wearing brown robes, some of them with raised hoods. They are filthy, stink fiercely, and are covered with ugly scars. They are members of a sect called "The Barefeet," a religious order bordering on fanaticism, imposing absolute poverty and complete worship of the gods.

As you head towards the central tower you notice how full of life the city streets are: merchants yell, trying to attract customers with their goods; farmers have set up colorful stalls to sell their produce; jugglers perform for the crowds; lots of people are coming and going. After a while, you hear a bell ringing in the distance and voices shouting "Repent, the end of the world is nigh." You see five individuals, wearing brown robes, coming towards you.

The zealots continue to yell rambling and incoherent phrases about the end of the world, such as: "Repent while you still have time, the world you know will end soon," or "Sinners, the final judgement is upon us and you will burn in the flames of the Nine Hells for eternity!" If the characters stop to talk with them, the cultists sermonize about the corruption of the world and the imminent apocalypse. They accuse the characters of living an immoral and depraved life and try to convince them to give up their worldly possessions and join their cause by giving away everything of worth to the Barefeet cult. If provoked sufficiently, the cultists may draw their weapons and attack the characters. If they are clearly outmatched, they quickly run for the nearest alley, trying to lose themselves amongst the crowd. Either way, the city guards show up quickly on the scene, and stop the fight. Treat the robed fanatics as **cultists** (*Monster Manual*, p.345).

Once the characters continue on their way, they eventually reach the citadel where the king resides. A group of armed guards escort the characters inside. After being marched through several long corridors and a set of stairs, they are deposited in front of a set of the large double doors of the royal hall with another group of armed guards and wait to be admitted to the presence of the king.

THE THRONE ROOM

After waiting a few minutes, the characters are finally invited to enter the throne room.

Once the large doors open, the guards direct you inside. The room is large and lavishly decorated, hung with many rich tapestries depicting epic battles. At your feet, a long, red velvet carpet runs the length of the room until it reaches a massive throne of solid gold. Two guards stand to each side of it but the throne itself is empty.

A surprise awaits the characters - it is not His Majesty King Belador who greets them, but Prince Artex, the younger brother of the king. Indeed, since the king's disappearance Artex has unofficially ruled in the king's stead as the news that the king is missing is still not common knowledge.

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

After a short wait, you hear low voices from a nearby room followed by footsteps coming towards you. As the man enters the room, his footsteps echo in the spacious throne room. A man wearing a sumptuous tunic of black and purple appears and walks toward you with an elegant stride. This does not appear to be the king as he wears no crown on his head, but wears a hat adorned with an ostrich plume. When he gets closer, you notice he sports a well-groomed beard and has light blue eyes and a high-bridged nose. There is authority in his gaze, and you can tell immediately he is someone of importance in the royal court.

“Greetings adventurers, I am Prince Artex, the younger brother of the King”, says the man, looking you over. “The guards told me you are here to answer our call for aid. What might be your names?”

After the adventurers have introduced themselves, Artex explains to the characters that the king has disappeared and asks them to find him as soon as possible:

“I have to inform you that you are not the first group that has answered the king’s call – many have been sent to combat the plague of undead that troubles our kingdom. However, I am actually in need of a small group of adventurers like yourselves who can travel fast and covertly without raising suspicions, for a different task. This may come as a shock, but I have grave news to share with you, which I ask you to keep the utmost secret: my brother, King Belador, has mysteriously vanished. I would ask you to help the kingdom in this time of need by helping to locate our king.”

Artex seems to be quite shaken by his brother’s disappearance. He continues: “If you are interested in undertaking this urgent and important quest, let me explain the full story so you have a clearer picture. What say you?”

If the characters agree to help, he relates to the characters how, a couple of weeks ago, Belador travelled from Hellenbrown to Edrahil’s Wood where he was supposed to meet Archdruid Elu Edrahil, the leader of the forest region, on a political matter. Artex adds that this meeting was supposedly of minor import and he was not privy to any details pertaining to it. From this point onward there has been no news of the king and his guard. Artex informs them that a few of his advisors suspect that His Majesty has been kidnapped by creatures of the wood, or even by Archdruid Edrahil. In the city, rumors are starting to spread about the king’s health, since he has not been seen for quite some time. If the king’s disappearance becomes widely known, other factions may attempt to use this opportunity to foment unrest, especially given the already difficult situation with the plague of undead. This could destabilize the region.

However, the truth actually goes well beyond what even the most wicked might suspect - the king has been kidnapped by the cult of the Black Hand with the help of Prince Artex. The king has only a single young child, Marcus, and his wife died giving birth to the heir. So currently, Artex would become regent of the kingdom in his brother’s absence. Artex is giving this quest to the adventurers to show the King’s Council that he cares for his brother and to thwart any suspicion about his involvement; however, he is specifically sending a group of inexperienced adventurers to look for clues in Edrahil’s Wood whilst knowing the king is elsewhere, in the expectation that they will fail. Only if a player specifically asks to make an Insight check should the DM allow this, and only for the player that asks. A PC can deduce that Artex is lying with a successful *DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check* if they do ask. If they fail, they believe Artex is telling the truth. If they succeed, they suspect that Artex may not be telling the whole truth but are not exactly sure what is false. If the PCs attack Artex based on these suspicions, the guards stop the fight before it can escalate, and the PCs are arrested and should face the full consequences of attacking the crown prince and regent in his palace – death by hanging! It is left to the DM to decide if the foolish characters manage to escape this grisly fate.

A NOTE ON GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY

This kingdom is an independent feudal monarchy, where a royal family rules over many noble houses.

The current king is His Shining Majesty Belador the Brave, Protector and Defender of the Realms, of the house of Sylgerios, the Evening Stars. The king, besides ruling, enacts the laws, and collects taxes from the lords who serve him. The King’s Council, made up of his most trusted nobles and advisors, is called upon by the king in both dire circumstances and in rather sensitive situations. The cities of the kingdom are ruled by various lords, hailing from the main noble houses, who answer directly to the king’s authority.

Beneath the lords are various knightly and chivalrous orders.

Merchants, soldiers and priests make up the next social class whilst the peasantry (artisans, farmers, bakers, etc.) make up the lowest class and form the vast majority of the populace. The social class system is rigid (meaning changing your social class is quite difficult).

The standing of each class inside the hierarchy is based on social status, wealth and power: the higher rank you are, the more power you possess over those lower down the social ladder.

QUESTIONS.

If the PCs wish to ask further questions of Artex, the following information can be used to build Artex's answers:

Who last saw the king?

"Some farmers mentioned having seen the king near the wood the day before his visit to the druid's camp. Reports have surfaced that the druid's camp, which is located in the northern part of the forest, is completely destroyed".

Do you know anything of the plague of undead?

"Unfortunately, this plague of undead seems to have started at much the same time as the disappearance of the king. Freezing winds have also started to blow from the north. The people are scared to go outside their homes at night, and even a simple evening walk can become dangerous, as the dark night can suddenly erupt with horrors out of a madman's dream. Packs of undead roam in many places outside the cities and our scouts have even reported sightings of these foul creatures not far from Hellenbrown in broad daylight...it seems nowhere in the kingdom has been spared this tragedy".

Who are the fanatics in the brown robes that speak of the end of the world?

"Yes, I have heard about these fanatics wandering around the city. I know little of them. It is nothing that the city guards can't handle. Sometimes it can be hard for people to understand the difference between wisdom and folly".

Before taking his leave due to pressing business to attend, the Prince closes the conversation:

"It will be your duty to investigate what really happened in Edrahil's Wood. Find any useful clues that can help us locate His Majesty and return here with any news as quickly as possible. Has the king been kidnapped? If so, by whom? Any kind of clue will be well rewarded, so return to me with your news as soon as possible to receive this compensation for your efforts."

The royal garrison of Hellenbrown will give the characters a map of the region to help during their travels and some official paperwork showing that the adventurers are on a quest on behalf of the king. Furthermore, each character will get a potion of healing (heals 2d4+2 hit points), a riding horse (with bridles, saddle and saddlebags) and 28 daily rations, of which half are for the character and half for the horse.

DEVELOPMENTS

If the characters fought and defeated the Barefeet cultists in the city streets or von Baruff in the Dragon Inn, the DM should assign XP for the defeated enemies. It is assumed that the characters will accept Prince Artex's request and will travel as fast as possible towards Edrahil's Wood to gather clues about King Belador's disappearance.





EPISODE 2: ON THE ROAD

Once they receive the equipment and directions from the garrison guards, the characters can make their way towards Edrahil's Wood. Reaching the wood normally takes about a week on foot from Hellenbrown but thanks to the horses this time can be halved.

The characters must act quickly and so they are likely to look for the fastest road. They can choose to follow a path that skirts the river, they can go more directly across the plains and the Scarlet Moon Hills, or even travel towards Indatium and then head for the wood. The Stormy Waters River cannot be traversed since the riverbed is too rocky and the currents too swift and strong.

The lands alongside the riverbanks are fertile and full of farms and fields, lovingly tended. The DM can create some encounters with the farmers, especially if the characters are looking for a safe place to sleep, like a barn or some stables. The farmers are not very trusting of strangers, but even so they will not be hostile towards the PCs. The rural economy is based on farming, fishing and trade. In the poorer parts, people exist within a subsistence economy (requiring direct production of food and supplies, like clothes and work tools, in order to survive) and primarily use barter as their method of trading.

If the characters want to cross the river, they must make a successful *DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check* to do so, thanks to the strong current. If the characters help each other, perhaps by using a rope to tie to each other, they can make a group check and even get advantage on the roll. They can also look for bridges (these can be found in Hellenbrown or Indatium) or for a crossing where the river is less deep.

THE DEPARTURE

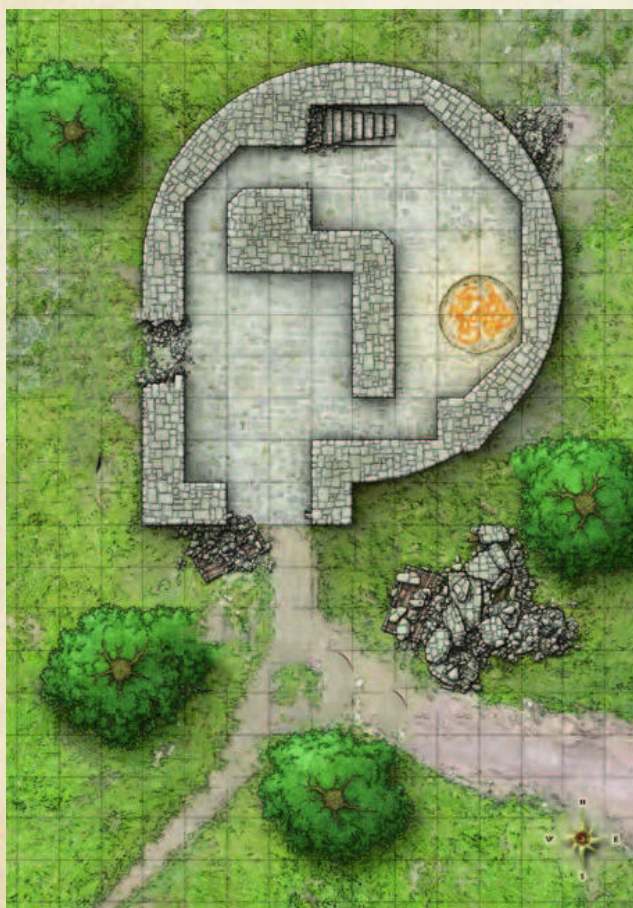
Once the characters leave Hellenbrown, read or paraphrase the following:

You leave Hellenbrown behind you through its main gates, which dwindle into the distance as you travel onward through the morning. The sky is clear, and a cool breeze caresses your skin. As you begin your urgent journey towards Edrahil's Wood, you notice that the landscape is dominated by cultivated fields, where farmers are hard at work gathering the last of their harvests. The first day of travel passes uneventfully.

In the evening, shortly before sundown, the characters reach a small, ancient tower, crumbling and abandoned, where they can take cover for the night.

The tower, as you can see in the map below, has two points of entry: the main one where the main gate once stood, and a second one to the side, where part of the wall has collapsed, leaving a big hole (large enough for a Medium or smaller creature to pass through). The tower also once had stairs, which have now mainly collapsed, which once led to an upper story, now long gone. Even though the upper portion of the tower is missing, the ground floor is still sturdy and does not seem in danger of collapsing.

During the night, the characters are attacked by a small group of undead. Two **zombies** (*Monster Manual*, p.316) and two **skeletons** (*Monster Manual*, p.272) are drawn to the campsite by the presence of the living.



Map of the Crumbling Tower

Once the undead are defeated, there are no further attacks during the rest of the night. The second day of travel also passes without any further surprises. During the third day, as they close in on Edrahil's Wood, the characters notice clear tracks of a great number of men and horses.

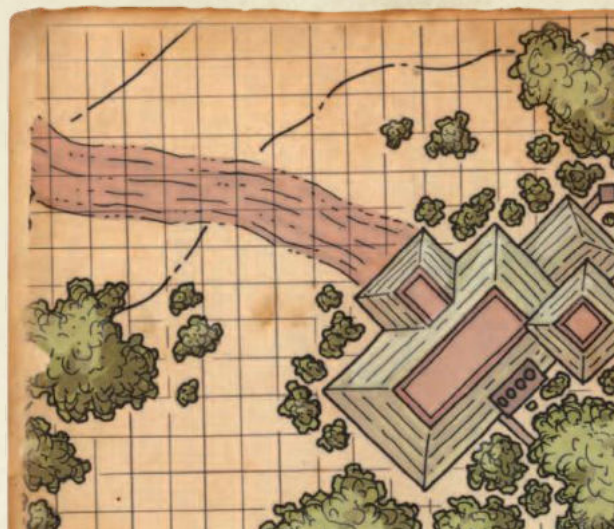
If they decide to follow the tracks, they must make a successful *DC 15 Wisdom (Survival)* check to follow them to the village of Minartias, which they reach after an hour of travel. If the characters decide not to follow the tracks (or fail the check), an hour or so later they come across a young woman trying to escape from the clutches of a **bandit** (*Monster Manual*, p.343). The adventurers are alerted by the young girl's cries for help. If the characters save the girl from her attacker (who is armed) she will thank them and explain that the bandit was part of the Black Ears gang, a group of brigands notorious for attacking and raiding villages.

The girl will add that she was away from the village since she went to get water from the well, which is where the bandit saw her and started chasing her. The girl asks the characters to accompany her back to the village, where she thinks the situation may now be critical.

THE VILLAGE OF MINARTIAS

If they decide to help the village, the characters can reach the village of Minartias after a few minutes of breakneck riding. Even before they reach the village, they can see a pall of smoke rising from the area. As they close in on the village, they begin to hear screaming and the sounds of battle ahead.

On the approach to the village stands an inn, where four **commoners** (*Monster Manual*, p.345) are trying to fight against six **bandits** (*Monster Manual*, p.343). Two of the commoners, both women, have barricaded themselves inside the inn, which the bandits have just set on fire, while three bandits are trying to break down the doors. Nearby, two men are squaring off against the other three bandits.



Map of the Inn

Once the characters reach the inn, the commoners plead with them for help and, if they choose to do so, the PCs can join the fray against the bandits. Once this threat is dealt with the group can reach the village itself and, once they pass through the partially destroyed gates, they come across the following scene:

Once you pass through the village gates, which hang loosely open on a single hinge, a terrible scene unfolds before you: many houses are on fire; the stench of ash and smoke fills your lungs.

Savage fighting and bloody violence seem to be occurring everywhere you look. On your left two bandits are trying to rob a screaming woman, who is trying to escape them, while her husband, laying nearby in a pool of blood, watches helplessly. To your right, four bandits are trying to break down a door, behind which are probably hidden more innocent villagers. Everywhere there is blood, fire, and screaming.

At your feet there are several bodies, probably belonging to those who tried to defend the main gate, now cut to ribbons by the bandits. Shocked by all the gore and inhumanity, you barely notice the four bandits now moving towards you, weapons at the ready!

The village, which is made up of thirty buildings or so, was surrounded by a wooden palisade, now partly destroyed. The village's meagre defenses are now in tatters and the villagers are trying to defend themselves as best as they can from the assault of the Black Ears, but their foes are better equipped and well-organized.

As soon as they enter the village the characters must fight for their lives as they fend off the attack of four **bandits** (*Monster Manual*, p.343). If they defeat these enemies, only then can they try to save the villagers.

Besides the ones already mentioned, there are many other scenes of violence and combat throughout the village; a DM can create further appropriate situations and encounters to challenge the PCs.

The buildings are quite close to each other but all the paths and roads between lead to a great main square in the middle of the village. In the center of the square is a large statue of a local hero. It is here, in the center of the village, that the last defenders have gathered. Twelve peasants armed with pitchforks (**commoners**, *Monster Manual*, p.343) and a couple of village watchmen (**guards**, *Monster Manual*, p.347) are protecting the village's mayor, Edward (**noble**, *Monster Manual*, p.348).

After the characters have experienced an encounter or two and reached the main square of the village, the wail of a horn echoes across the village and the bandits suddenly step back from their bloody work. Everyone's attention is caught by a massive man, his shoulders covered with furs and sporting a long brown braid, who steps into the square, flanked by ten **bandits** (*Monster Manual*, p.343). This is Olaf, the captain of the Black Ears (**bandit captain**, *Monster Manual*, p.344). A long moment of silence and suspense follows, during which the two factions try to size each other up. Then, Olaf roars with undisguised hatred for his warriors to charge, and the fight resumes.

The PCs can decide to face the bandit captain and his henchmen, but they have very little chance of victory, as they are badly outnumbered (if they still choose to get involved, the DM should award inspiration for their heroism). However, before things get too desperate for the PCs, something unexpected and astonishing occurs, forever changing the lives of those who witness it...

MALEKITH'S ARRIVAL

Read the following to the players:

You see huge gray clouds gathering overhead and the sky darkens suddenly. A blinding flash of lightning tears the sky apart, followed immediately by a tremendous roll of thunder. The reverberation makes everyone flinch, interrupting the battle for a moment.



In that moment, a creature dressed in a long black mantle and sat atop a demonic, flaming horse appears, rises in the air before you as if riding straight from the gates of the Nine Hells.

The creature, riding a **nightmare** (*Monster Manual*, p.235), is Malekith, the leader of the necromancer's sect with which the Black Hand made a deal to spread death and destruction across the region. He is about to bring the dead back to life in Minartias.

Note: No stats are provided for Malekith here as he only remains for a few moments – this scene is designed to inform the PCs of the threat against the realm and foreshadow Malekith's role in a later adventure in the series.

The characters are best advised to escape, and the DM should strongly hint at this to the players - in addition to the growing number of bandits, the characters will shortly be assailed by skeletons and zombies as they rise from the dead. Read or paraphrase the following to the characters:

The terrifying creature looms over you and begins to cackle eerily. It hisses a few words: "Mortals...the time of rebirth is upon you", and then begins to chant, an unholy litany that is painful to the ears. Blood and human flesh start to rain from the sky: eyes, intestines, legs, and arms, fall across the village. The bandits around you have their hands to their ears, whilst a few people fall to the ground, shaking and frothing at the mouth.

As Malekith chants his dark spell, the characters must make a *DC 10 Wisdom saving throw*. If they fail the saving throw, they take *1d4 psychic damage* and fall to the ground, **prone** and **paralyzed** for 1 round.



The DM should then continue with the following description:

Then, the dead begin to rise around you, twisting up and lurching towards you in a mockery of life. They begin to attack everyone around them, indifferent as to whether they are a bandit or peasant. With a diabolical laugh that echoes across the village, the creature and the fiery horse disappear, leaving you in the company of the risen dead. This battle appears to be unwinnable and your death only moments away. But right now, as all around you reel from the effects of the necromancer's chant, you have a chance to escape.

Close to the characters, *1d4 zombies* (*Monster Manual, p.316*) rise from the dead (preferably enemies previously killed by the PCs) and lurch towards them. Others in the area turn their heads grotesquely towards them also, almost in unison. The DM should reiterate the overwhelming odds at this point and describe a street behind the PCs that is relatively clear of threats.

The characters' escape should be easy at this point – the bandits are either affected by the dark spell, or busy protecting themselves from the attacks of the undead, and the village is relatively small. If the characters seek to regroup at the inn, the DM should remember the PCs can still be attacked by any undead risen from those bandits or commoners in that area, as Malekith's spell reaches this area too.

The DM can add more threats during the characters' flight, such as an unlikely alliance between some **bandits** (*Monster Manual, p.343*) and the characters to escape a larger group of **zombies** (*Monster Manual, p.316*). However, the DM should keep in mind that the objective is not to kill the characters, but for them to learn more of the threat to the kingdom.

Once safe, the adventurers can still head towards Edrahil's Wood or alternatively can travel to the nearby city of Indatium to warn the general populace about what happened in Minartias.

THE CITY OF INDATIUM

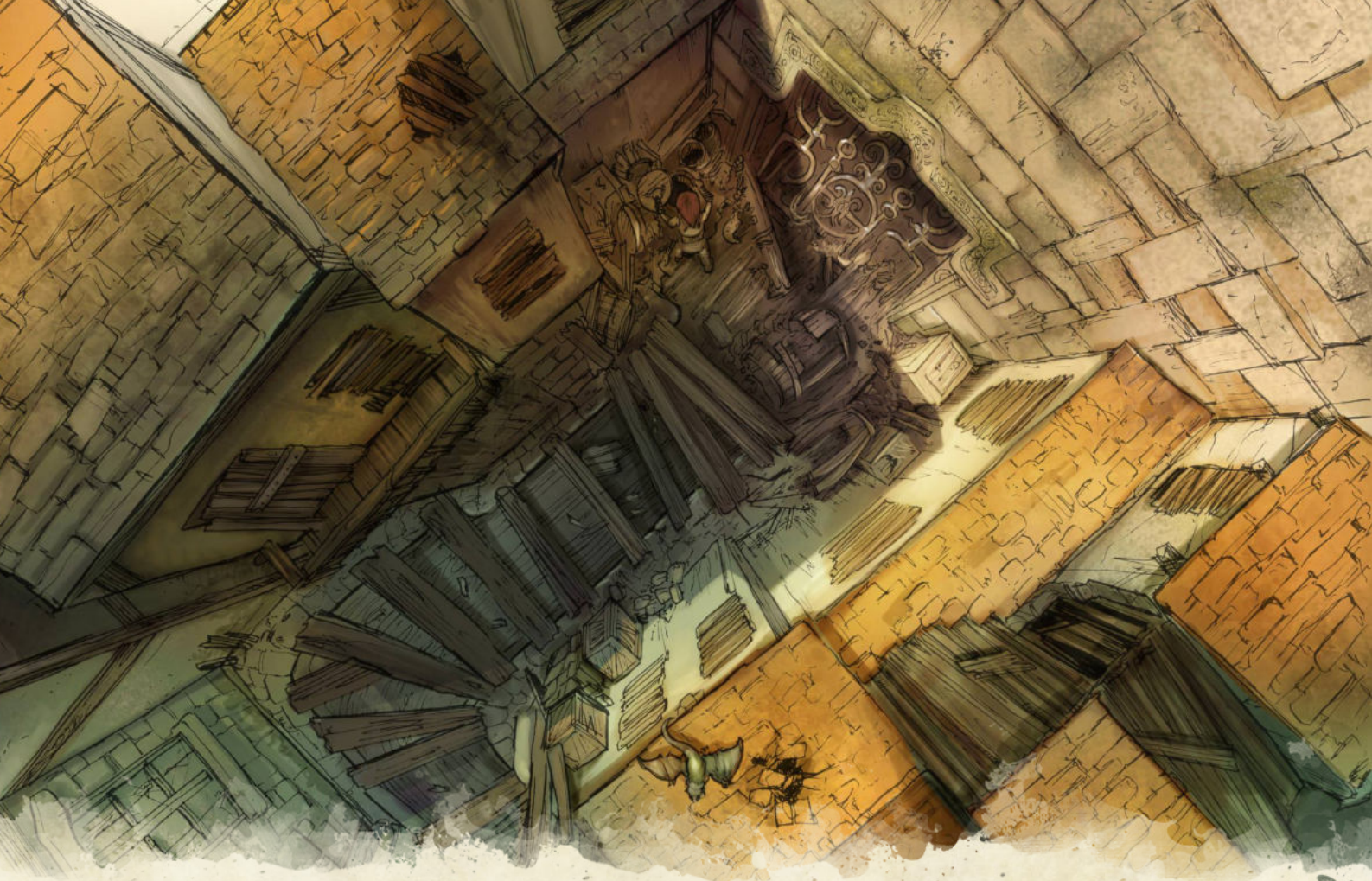
Indatium is a wealthy city, located in the south-west of the region on the shores of Vengeance Lake, and is famous for its valuable marble and ornate houses. Its economy is based on flourishing trade and the extraction of precious ores, minerals, and valuable pale marble, from the Pearl Sand Hills to the south. The city also has a powerful military garrison since the Pearl Sand Hills are an ideal place to hide for those outside the law, as they are composed of a vast region full of caves, grottos and ravines.

Lady Sylene, widow of Lord Oxar of House Corbray, commands the garrison and rules the city. Her late husband, then governor of the town, was killed in the Vast Marsh during a battle that Lady Sylene felt was unnecessary and badly planned. She blamed the king for the debacle and her husband's death. Consumed by grief, she proclaimed herself Ruling Queen in open opposition of the king's authority. Diplomatic relations between Indatium and the rest of the lords of the kingdom are cold, occasionally hostile, but King Belador has so far avoided invading the city as he strives to avoid civil war.

If the PCs decide to travel there to report what happened at Minartias, they must first explain to the **guards** (*Monster Manual, p.347*) of Indatium why they want to be admitted, as the garrison is on high alert given the threat of the king's spies.

If they show King Belador's paperwork, or anyone discovers they are on a quest for the king, they are brought immediately to the queen. If this does not happen, the characters can still rest and recover in the city.

Within the city, the characters can enquire for further information about Edrahil's Wood, but few in Indatium know the forest well, and fewer are willing to discuss these matters with strangers. However, if the characters make a successful *DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check*, the DM should give them a little information on the wood. If the check is failed, the DM can supply the characters with misleading or incorrect information.



If the PCs are brought into the presence of the queen, Sylene will question them, thinking they are spies sent by King Belador, since she is not privy to the disappearance of the king. The characters need to convince the queen that they are not spies, that undead really appeared at Minartias, and that they are trying to save the kingdom from these threats. The DM can roleplay the negotiation out or have the characters make a successful *DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check* to convince the queen. If they are successful, Sylene offers the characters food and lodging, plus 50gd as a reward for the news about Minartias. Otherwise, the characters are arrested and will spend the night in jail before being thrown out of the city the day after (given the absence of overwhelming evidence against them).

The DM can liven up the last part of the journey by creating an encounter with a small band of **goblins** (*Monster Manual*, p.166), a pack of **hungry wolves** (*Monster Manual*, p.341), or a pair of **death dogs** (*Monster Manual*, p.321) defending their territory.

REWARDS

The DM should assign the standard XP awards for the defeated enemies. This episode covers some variable challenges for the characters, which should be rewarded when overcome. The following rewards are just suggestions and the DM can change them as required:

- The DM assigns 25 XP to each character for each commoner saved from the bandits or undead.
- If the group persuades Queen Sylene of their good intentions, they get 100 XP as a Story Award.

The characters should reach 2nd level by the end of this episode from the XP awards, depending on their actions. If the DM uses the milestone rule, the characters automatically reach 2nd level by the end of this episode.

At the end of their journey the characters spot Edrahil's Wood, where they can start looking for clues regarding King Belador's disappearance.



EPISODE 3: EDRAHIL'S WOOD

Edrahil's Wood ([see the map on page 26](#)) can be found in the western part of the kingdom, between the Frozen Peaks (the highest and coldest mountains of the region, home to dwarven clans) and Lake Vengeance. It is the seat of power of the mighty archdruid, Elu Edrahil.

The king disappeared at Edrahil's camp, during his meeting with the druid to discuss political matters. During this meeting, the Scarlet Fang goblins launched a surprise attack on the encampment, helped by a select team of cultists drawn from the Cult of the Black Hand. The plan was masterminded by the ruthless necromancer Malekith. Little could have been done to protect the king. The camp was laid to waste and the king kidnapped, despite the assistance of a young green dragon. Edrahil was heavily wounded but still managed to escape. No one knows if he's still alive. The king is now held prisoner by the Black Hand in a crumbling chapel near the abandoned village of Ornis and will shortly be sacrificed as part of a dark ritual unless the characters find him in time.

In the wood, the adventurers can find a clue connecting the king's disappearance to the Black Hand: if they explore Edrahil's ruined camp, they can find a shield depicting a fist blazing with an eerie green light (the symbol of Bane).

Since the archdruid went missing, the wood has been left unguarded. Undead have started appearing and many evil and ghastly creatures now walk beneath the shade of the trees. The relationship between the humans of the region and the woodland creatures and wood elves has never been great and little trust remains. Before his disappearance, Edrahil tended this relationship, maintaining a bond of mutual respect and peace. With his disappearance, things have started to sour. Traveling in the wood has become dangerous, especially after sundown, as wicked creatures take advantage of unwary travelers.

The wood is inhabited mainly by ancient creatures such as treants and fairy folk, but there are also small groups of wood elves. Many other creatures who usually live in forests, like dryads, trolls, and spiders, can also be found here ([see Encounters in Edrahil's Wood on page 27](#)).

The wood's creatures are usually peaceful and neutral towards strangers, so long as the latter have no hostile intentions. Otherwise, the wood's creatures will try to drive away or even kill hostile intruders, no longer tolerating their presence inside the forest. If strangers threaten their lives, or the forest itself, all the creatures of the wood will cooperate to defend themselves, making best use of their joint abilities.

Before the undead appeared, the fairy folk and wood elves roamed freely across the wood and some small groups even settled in areas beyond the eaves of the forest. However, since the rise of evil within the forest, many of them have retreated to the most secure and secluded place in the wood: The Fairy Glade. The glade is located near the center of the wood, west of the river which crosses the whole forest from north to south. In the glade, the more magical races of the wood, like sprites, dryads, treants, and nymphs, live alongside more mundane races and woodland creatures.

Strangers are generally forbidden to enter the glade - their presence is accepted only under heavy guard and in the direst of circumstances, such as the disappearance of the archdruid. The fairy folk are not easy to approach and try to avoid any contact with strangers.

ENTERING THE WOOD

Once the characters finally arrive at the boundary of Edrahil's Wood, read or paraphrase the following:

It's been a long march but finally you can see in the distance a huge green and brown expanse – a forest whose margins stretch out of sight, beyond the horizon. In a short while, you reach the eaves of what must be Edrahil's Wood. Huge trees, some over a hundred feet tall, form a kind of immense wall, blocking your view. As you get closer, a faint sense of dread blossoms in your hearts.



Map: Edrahil's Wood

When the characters enter the wood, continue with the following:

As you enter the wood, your senses are assailed by the strong scent of resin and unfamiliar blossoms. Picking your way through the forest, you begin to feel stifled: the dense undergrowth is hard to navigate, and a sense of malevolent oppression surrounds you. Very little sunlight passes through the dense canopy, leaving the forest heavily shadowed and your view limited to only a few feet around you. As you continue through the forest, the silence grows more noticeable; all you seem to hear is the sound of your own footsteps...

The characters can look for clues at the druid's camp or, for those with relevant magical abilities, seek out some woodland creatures to ask if they have any information about the king's disappearance.

WOODLAND TRAVEL

The wood is so thick and labyrinthine that those who travel through it must reduce their speed of travel due to the difficult terrain: movement inside the wood is halved for everyone except elves and fey creatures. The density of the trees within the forest forces characters to travel by foot. Vision is hindered due to the restricted light passing through the canopy: the wood is shrouded in dim light, except where there are few or no trees, such as in a clearing. To walk the length of Edrahil's Wood requires about a week of travel, while three or four days are enough to cross its width.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN EDRAHIL'S WOOD

Wicked forces wander the wood, seeking unwary prey, both by day and by night. To determine if an encounter occurs, roll a d20 once every 8 hours of in-game time (this interval can be altered at the DM's discretion). On a result of 15 or more, an encounter occurs. If an encounter occurs, the DM should roll a d8 and a d12, and add the results. The total determines the type of encounter.

Note: The Dungeon Master can change the difficulty level of the encounters simply by increasing or decreasing the number of monsters. This can be a good option if the number of characters is higher or lower than four, or if the DM realizes that the encounters are too easy or too difficult during combat (for more information on how to create a combat encounter, consult pages 81-87 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN EDRAHIL'S WOOD

d12+d8 Encounter

- | | |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 | 3 quasits (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.63) |
| 3 | 1 treant (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.289). The treant is friendly if the group includes at least one elf or a clearly visible fey creature. Otherwise, it's indifferent and avoids the characters. |
| 4 | 2d4 pixies (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.253) (50%) or 2d4 sprites (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.283) (50%). They can lead the characters to the Fairy Glade. |
| 5 | 1 giant spider (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.328) and 2d4+3 spiders (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.337) hidden inside a dark crevice covered in cobwebs. |
| 6 | 1d4 giant owls (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.327) (50%) or 1 owlbear (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.249) (50%) |
| 7 | 1d4 elk (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.322) (75%) or 1 giant elk (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.325) (25%) |
| 8 | 2d4+1 skeletons (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.272) and 1d4+1 zombies (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.316) |
| 9 | 1 dryad (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.121) (50%) or 1d4 satyrs (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.267) (50%) |
| 10 | 1d4 ghouls (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.148) |
| 11 | 2d4 wood elf scouts (use the scout stats, <i>Monster Manual</i> , p.343). If threatened, they sound a horn to summon help from nearby creatures of the wood, who will aid them in the battle (roll again on this table). They can lead the characters to the Fairy Glade. |
| 12 | 2d4+1 goblins (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.166) and 1 goblin sergeant (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.166) |
| 13 | 2d4+2 twig blights (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.32) and 1d4+2 needle blights (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.32) hidden in a small, apparently empty, clearing. |
| 14 | 1 ogre zombie (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.316) and 1d4 zombies (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.316) |
| 15 | An elven song, carried mysteriously on the wind. |
| 16 | 1 dire wolf (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.321) and 2d4 wolves (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.341) |
| 17 | 1d4 centaurs (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.38) |
| 18 | 1d4 gnolls (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.163) and 2d4+3 hyenas (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.337) |
| 19 | 1d4+2 black bears (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.318) |
| 20 | 1 displacer beast (<i>Monster Manual</i> , p.81) |



THE FAIRY GLADE

The *Fairy Glade* is a mysterious place, filled with magic, where many creatures live together. The characters have three options for reaching the glade:

- 1) Being captured or peacefully escorted by a group of wood elves.
- 2) Following a magical creature such as a sprite or pixie.
- 3) Getting there by chance and being questioned by the creatures of the wood about what brings them there.

Read or paraphrase the following when the characters enter the Fairy Glade:

You find yourselves inside a beautiful clearing and immediately feel the magic and wonder which fills this place. Faerie dragons of many colors, no more than three feet in length, swoop and play around you. In the center of the glade is a large lake surrounded by a thin mist, where beautiful nymphs swim and frolic. A quick glance towards them is all it takes to leave you completely awed by their unearthly beauty. You also notice a few houses set high in the trees and catch the occasional glimpse of shy elven children watching you; they seem to be more curious than frightened. Many kinds of wild animal roam freely in this magical place: the likes of deer, boars, and owls, raise their heads to gaze at you without fear as you pass by.

After a short walk you reach a large hut, set beneath an enormous tree. A calm, slow voice, which seems to come directly from the tree bark, invites you to sit.

"Greetings young adventurers, my sylvan friends told me of your presence and led you to me. They were right to do so as in these dark times it is better not to be too trustful. What brings you to Edrahil's Wood? How can we know you do not threaten the wood and its inhabitants?"

Alanor, the oldest **treant** (*Monster Manual*, p.289) of the glade, is a voice of authority in the wood, respected by everyone. He stands in for Edrahil while the druid is missing.

Alanor tells the PCs that the king came to the wood to meet Edrahil. However, they were attacked whilst in the meeting and both were found to have disappeared after the terrible battle. Alanor stresses that the creatures of the wood are not responsible for the king's disappearance, they are also victims of the attack. However, some of the creatures saw the goblins and other creatures kidnap the king. Alanor adds that after the battle Edrahil disappeared, and from then on undead began to appear inside the wood itself, whereas previously they had been kept from its borders by the druid's power. The creatures of the wood believe an evil and corrupt power is taking hold in the region and this is perhaps related to the disappearance of the druid and the king.

In listening to the PCs, Alanor realizes they could be helpful in freeing the wood from the threat of the Scarlet Fang goblins, who regularly harass the inhabitants of the wood.

After a pause, he speaks to the PCs:

"In the Fairy Glade there are many who do not see your presence as acceptable. I must admit that it's been many years since we allowed strangers to enter this sanctum. We have made an exception because we need all the help we can get since Edrahil disappeared. The creatures of the wood are in mourning; we suffer from his absence. But we aren't fools and need to know we can trust you.

There is a goblin tribe called the Scarlet Fang, which has been raiding the wood lately. It's likely they are responsible for the king's kidnapping. These tiny, stupid goblins have always been a bother, but never before have they been such a threat. Lately though, they have become bolder and fiercer, attacking those who travel through the wood and killing many innocent creatures.



The caw of a crow interrupts the conversation.

Then Alanor continues

We think this may be related to the rise to power of a new goblin king. He calls himself Slobad the Bloodthirsty and he is far more cunning and violent than his predecessors. He has increased the strength of his tribe by allying with others. He is a large goblin, much taller and stronger than the others.

If you bring us his head, we will know to trust you. We will then take you to Edrahil's camp, where you can look for clues as to the king's disappearance, and hopefully Edrahil's too. Furthermore, to reward your help, we will give you a magical ring that once belonged to Edrahil."

The goblin tribe poses a serious threat to the inhabitants of the forest. The treant will keep to his word if they are successful, rewarding them with a magical silver ring that belonged to Edrahil: **a ring of protection** (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, p.191). The creatures of the wood will also lead the PCs to where King Belador was kidnapped - Edrahil's ruined camp, theatre of the fierce battle that led to the disappearance of both the king and the druid.

If the characters so wish they can spend the night in the Fairy Glade and are given access to some wooden huts built in the treetops. Thanks to the magical influence of the glade, the characters spending the night here are fully healed and recover from any negative conditions they might be suffering from, e.g. exhaustion, curses, diseases, etc.

When they are ready, the characters are guided by an elven scout to the goblins' lair on the outskirts of the wood.

ABANDONED LAIR OF THE GREEN DRAGON

This was once the lair of a young green dragon, which fought and died at the druid's encampment. Since it's been abandoned for some time, all its treasures have been pillaged. When the characters reach this area, read or paraphrase the following:

Up ahead you can see a high cliff; scanning the cliff face, you spot what appears to be the entrance to a cave, partially concealed by thick foliage. What do you do?

This cave was once the hideout of the Scarlet Fang goblins. They abandoned the place years ago, when a green dragon drove them out and took possession of the cave, turning it into his lair. The cave has lain empty since the dragon was killed in the battle near Elu Edrahil's camp - the dragon was summoned to the battle by the druid, who commanded him to repel the invaders. If the characters enter the dragon's old lair, read or paraphrase the following:

You clear aside the plants and enter the cave. You are unable to make out the extent of the cave from the little light that shines in from the entrance. You can barely make out that the walls are solid rock and the ceiling is quite high. As soon as you step further inside, you can feel dampness in the air. A strong acidic scent fills your lungs, making the air difficult to breathe.

The first section of the cave is approximately 60 feet long. At the end of the first section there is a large cavern, where the dragon once rested. If the characters want to explore the rest of the cave, they will find only barren tunnels previously created by the goblins. There is also a dark, damp corner where the dragon once kept his hoard before it was stolen, where the PCs find a **mimic** (*Monster Manual*, p.220) in the shape of a treasure chest, waiting for an unwary adventurer to pillage the coins that glisten inside. The DM can use [the table on page 27](#) to create an encounter with other creatures that may have made the cave their new home since the dragon disappeared.





ELU EDRAHIL'S RUINED CAMP

Elu Edrahil's camp was destroyed over two weeks ago, during the attack when the king was kidnapped. The houses and huts that made up the encampment, some of which were built in the treetops, have been destroyed, and the bodies from the battle carried away by the attackers.

In the middle of the ruins of the camp lies the body of a dragon, now a **young green dragon zombie** (new creature, see *Appendix B*). Read or paraphrase the following to the players once they near the encampment:

You notice that the forest is thinning. Shortly afterwards, you reach a large clearing, where you find the ruins of what was once probably the druid's camp. You notice blood on the ground amongst piles of debris; in a few trees, you can make out the remains of what once might have been treetop lodges. This area of the forest is much lighter due to the open canopy, so you can see right across the clearing. In the middle you see a huge, still shape, gray in color, and coiled in a tight ball. You don't see anyone else around. An unnatural silence fills the air.

If the characters search for clues, they will likely pass near the big gray shape in the middle of the clearing. This is the body of the young green dragon, which fought and died here, and whose body still remains. The body has already been decomposing for quite some time and gives off a terrible stench. If the characters move into the clearing, the dragon zombie rises after $2d6+1$ rounds to attack the PCs.

The dragon (or rather, its remains) fights fiercely until destroyed. If the characters try to escape, the dragon follows them within the area of the ruined camp, leaving the clearing only if provoked. Read or paraphrase the following to the characters if they get close to the body:

As you move closer to the gray shape in the middle of the clearing a strong, noxious stench fills your nostrils, making you want to retch. You see a huge, once-powerful body now reduced to rotting flesh; it was once a young dragon but is now no more than a pile of putrefying flesh and bones. Instead of the nose there are two large openings, but even though the head is now ruined you can still make out the elongated shape of a dragon's head. Its scales, which once likely glowed with brilliant hues, are now just a drab crust.

The characters can deduce that the body is a zombie if they make a successful *DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check*.

As soon as the dragon zombie rises, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

You see the empty eyes of the beast suddenly flicker with some sort of life, lit by a dark spark of hatred. Its powerful wings, now skeletal, open wide and the huge creature tries to rise, bellowing out a horrific screech, and sloughing pieces of skin and rotting flesh. Once on its feet, the dragon zombie, raging at your presence, lowers its head and charges!

Once the undead creature is defeated, the clearing is free of enemies and the characters can start looking for clues. If they make a successful *DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check*, they find a metal shield in some bushes, which sports an insignia of a fist surrounded by green flame (a symbol of Bane used by the Black Hand). The adventurers can recognize this symbol relates to Bane with a successful *DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check*, and with a successful *DC 20 Intelligence (Religion) check* they can identify that it relates to a sect of Bane known as the Black Hand. If the PCs fail to find the shield, and there is an NPC with them, the NPC should bring it to their attention as this clue is crucial. Alternatively, a wild animal might bring their attention to it just as they are leaving the clearing.

ABANDONED RUINS

A small path within the forest leads to some ruins close to a ravine. These ruins were once a temple, one of ancient construction but only abandoned a few decades ago (see *the following image*). The structure is seriously damaged - both the walls and ceiling are littered with huge cracks and parts of the roof have collapsed. Inside the building, wild plants have grown under the areas where the roof has collapsed, and puddles of rainwater have gathered across the floor.

Lately, three **half-ogres** (*Monster Manual*, p.238) have made this place their hideout. They hunt for unwary prey both inside and outside the wood. They hide their loot in some old rusty boxes - the locks are rusted tight and require a successful *DC 20 Dexterity check with thieves' tools* to pick. The boxes are kept in the least damaged room of the building (in the bottom right corner of the map). It's here that the half-ogres spend their time admiring their loot when not sleeping or eating. Otherwise, they are out hunting for food (usually woodland animals) or looking for new treasure to steal.

The half-ogres have recently allied with the Scarlet Fang goblins and, even though the goblins live elsewhere, the half-ogres communicate regularly with them, know where their lair is, and are up to date with the goblins' activities. If captured, they can reveal what they know to the PCs if the characters promise to spare the lives of the half-ogres. They also know that the goblins, having helped with Belador's kidnapping, must surely have information about where the king is now. If needed, they can lead the characters to the goblins' hideout.

If the characters stumble upon these ruins in the day, they have a good chance (85%) of finding all three half-ogres inside the building, resting or cooking.

During the night, while the others sleep, one of the half-ogres stays up to keep watch and, after waking the others, attacks anyone who invades their hideout.

TREASURE

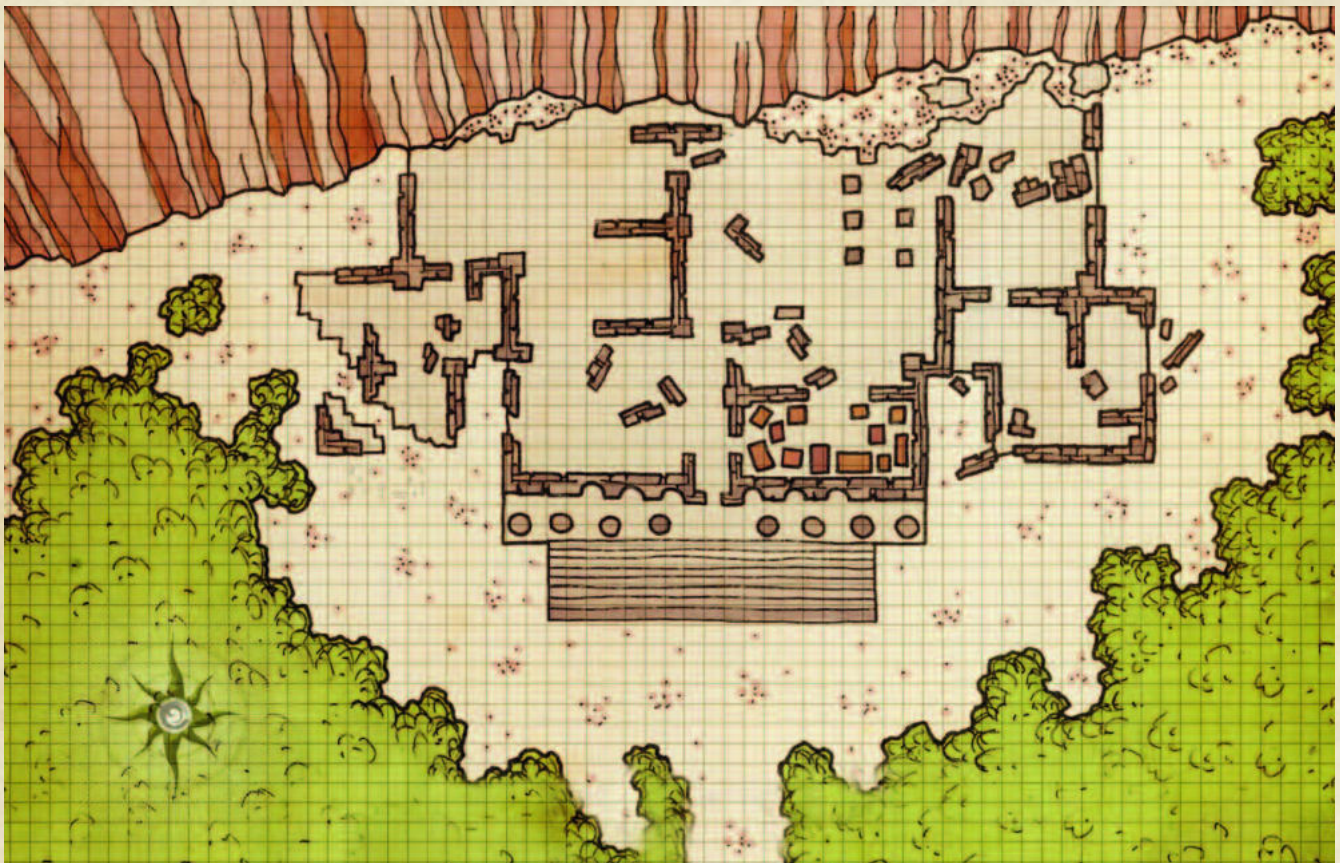
Inside the boxes, the following treasure can be found:

- *Coins*: 2125 cd, 489 sd, 42 gd;
- *Gemstones*: 1 river pearl worth 15 gd;
- *Art Objects*: a carved bone statue (worth 10 gd), clothes of spun gold for a Medium size humanoid (30 gd), a copper cup enameled with silver (15 gd), a small mirror in a painted wooden frame (5 gd), and a gold locket with a portrait inside (25 gd).

REWARDS

The characters should reach 3rd level by the end of this episode. The DM can assign the standard XP for defeated enemies. If the characters steal the treasure of the half-ogres or extract information from them about the goblins' hideout without resorting to combat, reward them with 800 XP for their cunning. If the DM uses milestones, the characters automatically reach 3rd level at this point.

The characters, after exploring the wood, should proceed to the goblins' hideout to look for the king.



Map: Abandoned Ruins



EPISODE 4: THE GOBLINS' CAVE

The goblins' hideout is situated in a cave a couple of hours from Edrahil's Wood. The characters should seek out the goblins since they are the main suspects for the kidnapping of Belador.

Slobad the Bloodthirsty, king of the goblins, made an alliance with the Black Hand sect, in exchange for coin. The goblins then took part in King Belador's kidnapping during his visit to Edrahil's Wood, helping the Black Hand to take care of the king's guards. The goblins, though, have never held the king captive, and he is actually being held by the sect in the village of Orniss.

THE SCARLET FANG GOBLIN TRIBE

The Scarlet Fang is a tribe of goblins made up of around one hundred goblins (including twenty elite goblins and ten goblin sergeants), who have been living near Edrahil's Wood since they were ousted from their lair by the green dragon. The name of the tribe is symbolized on their shields and armor - a large fang, painted in red to represent the blood of their enemies.

Slobad the Bloodthirsty gained his name from the reputation he earned for the brutal violence he showed towards his captives and his general aggression towards other races. Slobad was able to unite all the goblins of the area into a single, strong tribe. Besides being bigger (he is Medium size) and stronger than other goblins, Slobad is also a diplomat and tactician. He recently made a deal with the Black Hand sect, who enlisted the goblins to kidnap Belador (in exchange for a substantial reward), and he also brokered a pact with the sect to then attack the villages of humans in the area.

LIFE OF THE TRIBE

The goblins spend most of the time inside their hideout, only going outside at night since they are nocturnal creatures. Besides hunting in Edrahil's Wood (the main reason they are hated by the wood's creatures), they sometimes attack small groups of travelers or human villages with little protection, in order to steal anything of value. The goblins' loot, taken from their raids, is hidden in their cave inside a secret room only the king and his trusted advisors know how to enter.

Thanks to a deal made with the Black Hand and the confusion born from the appearance of the undead, Slobad and his tribe have grown bolder and have increased their raids on travelers, the villages in the area, and those who live in the wood. It was near one of the villages near Edrahil's Wood, Bybay, along the road to Hellenbrown, that a group of goblins assailed a caravan and kidnapped an ambassador that was traveling towards the capital.

The ambassador, named Gilead, has been kept prisoner in the tribe's cells for quite some time now. If rescued, he will reward the characters (and the DM should reward the players with some additional XP – see the end of this section for further details).

COMBAT AND TACTICS

Goblins try to make the most out of their numbers, making it their main strategy. In all circumstances, their aim is to surround their enemies and overwhelm them with pure numbers.

If possible, the goblin fighters will try to avoid a direct confrontation and attack with surprise. They are evil by nature but also cowardly and will never risk their life in a face-to-face fight if they can use a more secure strategy to get the same results.

They will run away if the enemy is stronger than them and, if they are outnumbered, will seek reinforcements. If they must protect their hideout, goblins become braver; if their lair is attacked, the goblins will not run away so easily and will face the enemy more courageously.

They fight with both melee weapons (short sword and shield, lance, glaive, rapier) and with ranged weapons (shortbows or javelins); they usually have leather or studded leather armor to protect themselves from attacks.

GOBLIN FIGHTER VARIANTS

The usual **goblins** (*Monster Manual*, p.166) are small humanoid creatures, selfish, with a black heart. Even though they are weak on their own, goblins usually live in large groups. They do follow orders, though more out of fear than due to any real discipline. If not forced by a leader, they are quite likely to run away from stronger enemies or when outnumbered. The promise of a large reward or some loot is the best way to motivate goblins to fight.

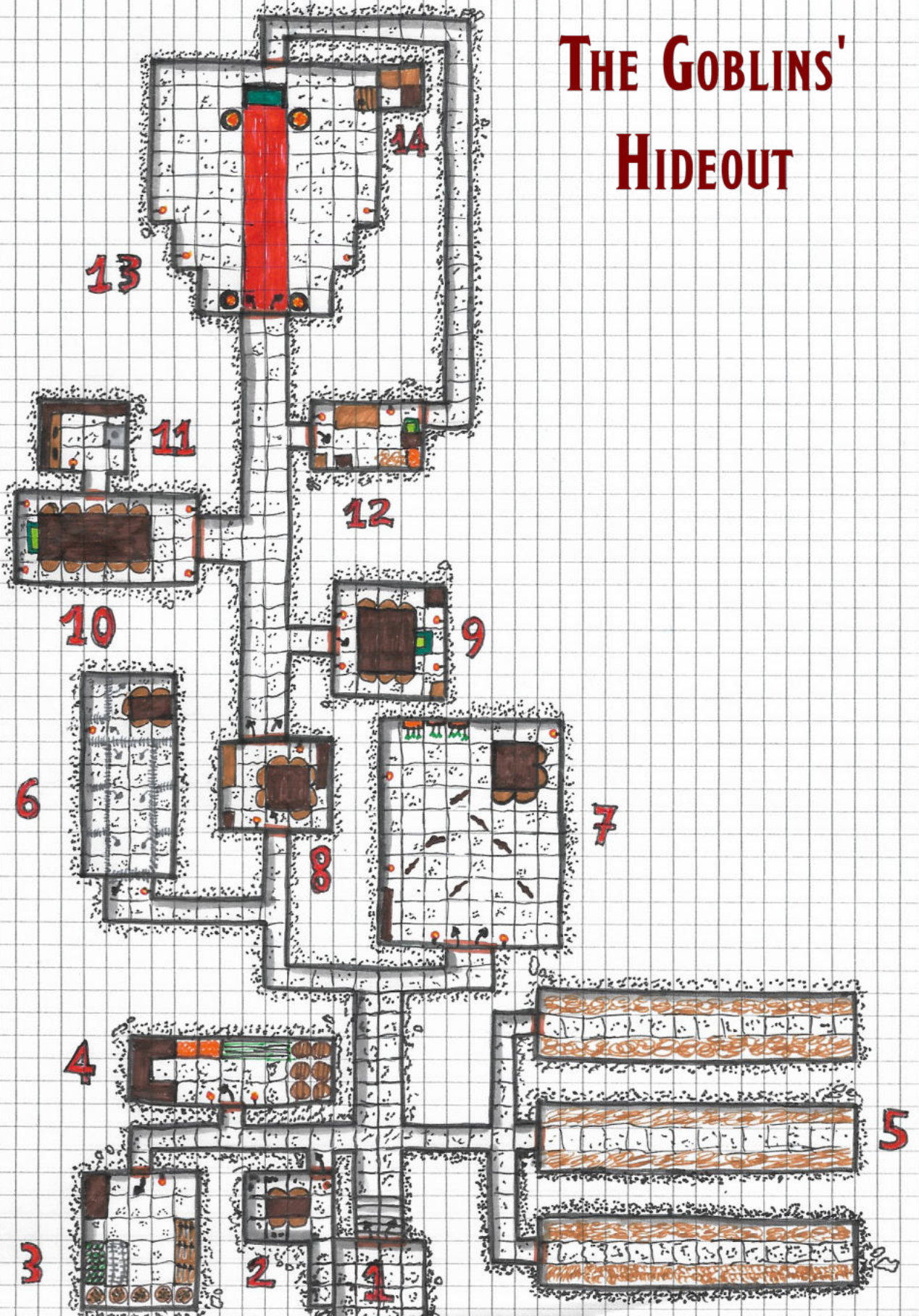
Elite goblins (*new creature*, see *Appendix B*) are the finest fighters in the tribe. They are physically stronger and are more experienced in battle (or have undergone harsh training). They usually have more robust armor and often use two-handed weapons, striking fear into the hearts of both goblin-kind and their enemies.

Goblin sergeants (*new creature*, see *Appendix B*) are the highest authority in the tribe, bar the goblin king. They are held in high esteem and respected by all in the tribe. When they give orders, other goblins had better react immediately unless they want a taste of the sergeant's whip. Due to their trusted position in the tribe, they hold keys that grant access to almost all areas of the goblin lair. During combat, a sergeant tends to give orders from the back, avoiding the front line, since he deems his life more important than his underlings. Sergeants usually have better-kept weapons than other goblins.

In the chain of command, the goblin king ranks above all other members of the tribe. Only the strongest and most respected individuals can hope to become the goblin king. To remain in authority, it is necessary to be smart (a rare thing for a goblin) and cunning to avoid being assassinated by other goblins. **Slobad the Bloodthirsty** (*new creature*, see *Appendix B*) is one of the most savage and violent kings the Scarlet Fang tribe has ever had.



THE GOBLINS' HIDEOUT



Map: The Goblins' Hideout

THE DUNGEON

The goblins' lair is full of narrow passageways ideally suited for the small creatures. These narrow passageways are not shown on the map, but the DM can place them where deemed appropriate. They are considered *difficult terrain* for Medium creatures and DMs should review the rules for **squeezing into a smaller space** (*Player's Handbook*, p.193) before allowing Medium or larger creatures to use them.

Furthermore, rooms and corridors have low ceilings; creatures of Medium size or larger should beware of hitting their heads on the ceiling. The DM can choose whether this has any effect on PCs' movements and actions (you can choose to give *disadvantage* in certain situations). The inside of the dungeon is either *dark* or *dimly lit* (the DM should review the rules on **vision and light** (*Player's Handbook*, p.193) before running this section).

There is a goblin patrol on duty at all times, consisting of a **goblin sergeant** (*Appendix B*), two **elite goblins** (*Appendix B*) and four **goblins** (*Monster Manual*, p.166). The patrol will investigate any noise made by the characters, which could complicate any of the encounters below at the DMs discretion, to heighten the danger.

1. CAVE ENTRANCE

You enter a small cave, dimly lit from the outside light, around 7 feet high and 20 feet wide. The dampness here seems to soak into your bones. Further from the entrance, the floor grows bare and muddy. The back of the cave is moss-covered and drips with moisture.

The entrance to the lair of the goblin tribe lies hidden at the back of this cave. Any character with a *passive Perception of 10 or more* notices tracks that stop at the back of the cave, which can be identified with a successful *DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check* as those of goblinoids. A character who makes a successful *DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check* discovers a double iron door hidden behind a thick curtain of wet moss. The door is locked but the lock can be picked with a successful *DC 20 Dexterity check* using thieves' tools, or it can be forced open with a successful *DC 20 Strength check*. In the middle of the door behind the moss is a spyhole, used by the goblin guards to monitor the cave entrance, which can be spotted with a successful *DC 25 Wisdom (Perception) check*.

2. GUARD ROOM

A small passageway leads to a 20-foot-by-15-foot room. In the room is a wooden rectangular table with five chairs set around it. Scattered across the table are some gaming dice and a few copper coins. Behind you, you can see that one side of the door contains a spyhole that looks back into the cave from where you entered.

Four **goblins** (*Monster Manual*, p.166), one **goblin sergeant** (*Appendix B*) and a **bugbear** (*Monster Manual*, p.33) act as guards to monitor the cave entrance (Room 1).

There are three guard groups, with the following schedule:

1st group: 0:00 am - 7:50 am

2nd group: 08:00 am - 3.50 pm

3rd group: 04:00 pm - 11.30 pm

If they hear intruders inside the cave entrance, the guards monitor the characters through the spyhole. If the PCs leave the area, the guards do nothing. However, if the PCs find the hidden door, the goblins quickly leave through a small tunnel that emerges close to the entrance outside. They then enter the cave and attempt to ambush the PCs from behind. The bugbear remains behind in the guard room. The guards can also call for reinforcements from the training hall (Room 7) or the dormitory (Room 5).

While on duty, the guards pass the time by gambling at the table. On the table are 5d4 copper pieces.

3. ARMORY

You open the door and enter a vast, well-lit, square room. Many wooden shelves line the walls, while chests and barrels are strewn across the floor, filled with battered weapons and armor. This looks to be the goblin tribe's armory.

This room contains simple weapons and armor in poor condition, and excludes those of the sergeants, which are specially forged and of higher caliber.

The door (AC 15, 10 hp, immune to poison and psychic damage, resistant to piercing and slashing damage) is locked and only the king and his most faithful lieutenants own a key. If the PCs don't have one of these keys, they can pick the lock with a successful *DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools*. Alternatively, they can break the lock apart with a successful *DC 15 Strength check*.

The PCs can take any of the weapons – there are short bows, morningstars, spears, arrows, shortswords, and longswords. The armor - leather and studded leather – is of small size. Both the weapons and the armor are badly worn and can be sold for only half the price listed in the *Player's Handbook*.

4. LARDER

This wide room has many barrels and shelves filled with stinking food. A few carcasses are hung by hooks from the ceiling, and slowly drip blood onto the floor. This seems to be the tribe's larder.

This room is the goblin tribe's larder and contains food and 'delicacies' prepared by goblin chefs. The barrels are filled with rust-colored, rancid beer, brewed by the goblins themselves.

With a successful *DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check*, the PCs find a couple of chests that contain better quality food (2d4+1 'special rations'), usually reserved for the tribe's leaders. Even if these special rations are not very tasty, each one can feed a Medium creature for two days instead of one.

If the characters taste these rations, read the following:

You don't know what kind of ingredients the goblins have used but, despite the odd taste, you feel more energized than usual.

The beer and the rest of the food are too revolting to be edible.

5. DORMITORY

The room is almost dark, but you can make out it's a long hallway. Along its walls, you glimpse many straw beds and a few torches that shed a dim light across the room. This appears to be a dormitory, and you notice some sleeping goblins on the beds. Unless you're stealthy, they're likely to wake up!

Some furs cover the entrance to the dormitory. The area is made up of three long halls, each one containing straw beds and a few torches that shed a dim light. Most goblins sleep here, more often by day than by night. In each hall, the PCs can find (25% chance by night, 75% chance by day) 6d4 **goblins** (*Monster Manual*, p.166) and 1d4 **elite goblins** (*Appendix B*) sleeping. PCs must make a successful DC 9 *Dexterity (Stealth)* check or the goblins awaken. All the goblins, while they sleep, are considered unconscious.

If they fail the check, the goblins wake and attack the PCs. The goblins in the other halls will come to the aid of their allies in the following round. Assume that wakened goblins and elite goblins in the dormitory have AC 12, since they will not have the opportunity to don armor or grab shields.

6. CELLS

You enter a dimly lit room. You barely make out a narrow passageway with cramped cells secured by iron bars. At the end of the corridor a portcullis of iron bars blocks the passageway. Beyond the portcullis, there's a table with several goblins seated on chairs.

If the goblins notice the PCs, read or paraphrase the following:

When the goblins see you, they draw their weapons and start screaming unintelligible words.

This damp, dark room is the tribe's prison. Goblins are imprisoned there who have broken the tribe's laws or they are used for prisoners captured during the goblins' raids, who wait to be ransomed. The prison holds seven cells. In the cell furthest from the entrance is a human; well-dressed but filthy. He's Gilead, a **noble** (*Monster Manual*, p.348) envoy from the village of Indatium. If freed, Gilead asks to be escorted to Indatium or Hellenbrown.

If asked, Gilead tells his tale:

"I'm an envoy from Indatium; I was travelling to Hellenbrown for business when my caravan was attacked by goblins. It was awful! They slew my guards and my comrades, butchering them in front of me. They spared my life because I am rich, and they have demanded a ransom from my family."

If the PCs are willing to escort him to Indatium or Hellenbrown, award them 200 XP each. In addition, Gilead will give them 100gd as a reward for having saved an envoy of the kingdom.

While with the PCs, Gilead will follow them but stay out of combat. The rest of the cells are currently empty unless the DM chooses to populate one or two with a goblin prisoner. Six **goblins** (*Monster Manual*, p.166) are on guard here, three armed with shortbows and three with scimitars, along with two **elite goblins** (*Appendix B*) and one **goblin sergeant** (*Appendix B*). Some are sitting around a table at the end of the room; the others are standing.

The guards have the following schedule:

1st group: 6:00 am - 11:50 am

2nd group: 12:00 am - 5:50 pm

3rd group: 6:00 pm - 11:50 pm

4th group: 0:00 am - 5:50 am

7. TRAINING HALL

Moving aside some furs, you see a wide hall about 30-foot-by-30-foot square. Inside, some goblins are practicing with weapons, and various racks with weapons stand at the edges of the room, a sign that this may be the training hall of the tribe.

This room is the training hall of the entire tribe and is lit by torches on the walls. There is a table, bows and arrows to fire at targets, scarecrows with shields to facilitate melee training, and other training equipment. The room is more heavily populated at night. From 6pm to 12am, and 1am to 7am, 3d4+3 **goblins** (*Monster Manual*, p.166) (half armed with ranged weapons, the other half with melee weapons), 1d3+1 **elite goblins** (*Appendix B*), and one **goblin sergeant** (*Appendix B*), are regularly found here.



8. CHECKPOINT ROOM

You enter this room and come face to face with several goblins seated around a table. Without a moment's notice, they leap up and attack you.

This room is a buffer zone before the throne room. It marks the line between the area inhabited by common goblins and the quarters of those in the higher ranks of the goblins. In the middle is a table with some chairs, while other furniture stands around the edges of the room. A group of guards monitors the area and authorizes access to the next level.

The guards include one **goblin sergeant** (*Appendix B*), three **elite goblins** (*Appendix B*) and **eight goblins** (*Monster Manual, p.166*), and their duty is to keep away any lower status goblins from the rest of the complex. The goblin sergeant has the keys for any door in the dungeon, except the king's private chamber (Room 12), the hidden trapdoor in Room 13, and the treasure chest in Room 14, which only Slobad has.



9. WAR COUNCIL ROOM

When you open the door, you find a large, square room beyond. In the center of the room is a table covered with scrolls. Many chairs are set around the table and another chair is positioned against the wall opposite, bigger and more well-furnished than the others. A cabinet is set against another wall.

The door is locked but it can be picked with a successful *DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools* or can be forced with a successful *DC 15 Strength check*. The room is square, 25 feet by 25 feet, and is the location for the tribe's war councils.

The council members are:

- King **Slobad the Bloodthirsty**
- four **goblin sergeants** (advisors to the king)
- two kingsguards (**elite goblins** with maximum hit points) that protect the king and guard the room's entrance.

The council decides on future wars and raids, planning the tribe's strategies. The party has a 10% chance to find the war council at work. The cabinet isn't locked and contains a map of the goblins' lair.

10. ROYAL DINING HALL

This room is about 50 feet long and 20 feet wide. In the middle stands a huge table with many seats around it. One of them is lavishly adorned. On the far wall of the room, some furs cover what looks to be the entrance to a passage.

Only the strongest and most distinguished members of the tribe have access to this place. The door is locked but it can be picked with a successful *DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools* or can be forced with a successful *DC 15 Strength check*. Only the king and his most faithful lieutenants have the key. It's lit by several torches and in the middle stands a very long table surrounded by chairs. The larger, more lavishly adorned chair is the king's seat. The PCs can encounter King Slobad and his lieutenants (the war council, see Room 9) there during dinner or supper (25% chance from 6pm to 8 pm, 12am to 2am, and 6am to 8am; otherwise the room is empty). In this case, two alert kingsguards (see Room 9) stand near the door ready to fight, even if the rest of the goblins are surprised.

11. KITCHEN

If the PCs investigate the passage in Room 10, read or paraphrase the following:

As you move aside the furs that cover the passage you find a poor excuse for a kitchen beyond. You see many little cabinets, drawers, and shelves full of pots. On a table, leftover food corrupts the air with its foul stench: hygiene is clearly not the goblins' priority.

The furs cover a big hole in the wall of the Royal Dining Hall. Through it, the PCs can enter the kitchen, a room 20 feet long and 15 feet wide. Inside the kitchen, the tribe's cooks prepare meals for the king and his faithful lieutenants. The other goblins cook their own meals but sometimes the cooks are ordered to prepare a feast for the entire tribe. The room is full of pots, drawers, and little cabinets where the food is stored. Alternatively, the food is bled, dried, cut into pieces, and stored in the larder (see Room 4). Many dishes, knives and forks are strewn around the room. If the PCs found King Slobad and his entourage in the Royal Dining Hall (see Room 10), 1d3+1 **goblins** (*Monster Manual*, p.166) armed only with daggers and with an AC of 12 (as they wear no armor) are in the kitchen, ready to help the king.

PCs with a *passive Perception* of 10 or higher, find 1d4 'special rations' (see Room 4) and 1d4 poor quality rations, reserved for the common goblins.

If the PCs discover the rations, read or paraphrase the following regarding the poor-quality rations:

You see vermin nibbling pieces of meat of doubtful origin. From the sight and foul stench, you quickly realize nobody in their right minds would eat this food.

12. BEDROOM OF SLOBAD THE BLOODTHIRSTY

The door to this room is guarded by two kingsguards (see Room 10) and is locked. It can be picked with a successful *DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves' tools* or can be forced with a successful *DC 20 Strength check*.

As soon as you open the door, you set foot on a luxurious carpet. A huge carved bed lies in the right corner of the room, next to a little table with some scrolls upon it. A highly decorated cabinet is set against the left-hand wall. You're clearly in the private chamber of the goblin king, Slobad the Bloodthirsty!

The wooden cabinet is open, with the following items inside: a map of the Edrahil Woods and the cave of the goblins, one piece of blue quartz (worth 13gd), one gem of onyx (50gd), and one piece of pink quartz (50gd), along with many personal documents.

With a successful *DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check*, the PCs find a half-burned document (as if someone had unsuccessfully tried to destroy it). It's an agreement between the goblins and the Cult of the Black Hand. In it, the two parties agree not to cross each other. The Black Hand clearly paid the goblins for their aid in kidnapping the king, and to raid the human villages, bringing chaos to the region. The document reveals that the king is being held in the forsaken village of Ornis, in the Vast Swamp, and constitutes a decisive clue in tracking down King Belador.

By day, Slobad's prized equipment is held here: a two-handed axe with carved images of the deity of the goblins on the hilt (worth 30gd) and a half-rusted scepter of metal, adorned with the symbol of the Scarlet Fang tribe (on its pommel is a big green gem, an emerald worth 500gd), and half-scale armor suitable for a Medium creature (worth 50gd). If the PCs succeed on a *DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check*, they find a secret door in the right wall, which the king can use to escape from danger if appropriate.

By day, the PCs have a 75% chance to find Slobad (see Appendix B) sleeping here, whereas by night the chance reduces to 25%. If the PCs make any noise in the room whilst the king is sleeping, they must succeed on a *Dexterity (Stealth) check* against the king's passive *Perception*. If they lose the contest, the king wakes up. If this occurs, Slobad tries to grab the axe and scepter and escape through the secret door, then hiding in the throne room.

13. THRONE ROOM

Once you open the heavy metal doors, you find a huge hall beyond. A long red carpet runs from the middle of the room to a large, greenish, rusty throne at the end. On each side of the carpet, tall braziers bring light and warmth to the room, in addition to the torches lining the walls. All the bystanders in the room, goblins all, turn to look at you.

If the PCs have not yet encountered Slobad, read the following:

One of them catches your eye: he sits on the throne, has a wicked gaze, and a big scar that runs right across the right side of his face. His size is larger than a normal goblin. He breaks the silence, squawking some words in common: "I don't know who you are, but you have shown boldness to make it this far. But this is as far as you go!" Then, he barks orders to the other goblins "Kill the intruders! Kill them! Come on worms, kill them!"

This huge hall is the largest room in the dungeon. At the far end of it sits a majestic throne, reserved for the king of the Scarlet Fang tribe. In this room, the king holds audience, listens to the pleas of his subjects, and delivers his rulings. Since he's the strongest goblin of the tribe, his authority is absolute and undisputed.

Six braziers and many torches warm the room. The braziers radiate 20 feet of bright light and 40 feet of dim light, while the torches radiate 15 feet of bright light and 30 feet of dim light. The room is decorated with tapestries featuring battle scenes portraying *Maglubiyet*, the evil god of the goblinoids.

The goblinoids likely to be in the room are:

- **Slobad the Bloodthirsty** (*Appendix B*);
- Two kingsguards (**elite goblins** with maximum hit points) (*Appendix B*)
- Three **goblin sergeants** (*Appendix B*)
- 1d4+1 **goblins** (*Monster Manual*, p.166)

If the room is empty, its doors are barred and locked. The door has AC 17, 18 hp and immunity to poison damage. It can be picked with a successful *DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves' tools* or it can be forced with a successful *DC 20 Strength check*. During the fight, if a goblin escapes, it returns after 1d6+1 rounds, bringing 1d4+2 **goblins** (*Monster Manual*, p.166) and a **goblin sergeant** (*Appendix B*) as reinforcements.

Slobad does not fight to the death, and surrenders if he looks likely to be defeated. If this occurs, he offers the tribe's treasure to the PCs. Furthermore, Slobad can inform the PCs that King Belador is held near the abandoned village of Ornis, in the Vast Swamp, and reveals that he participated in the king's abduction, having been paid by a mysterious organization, the Cult of the Black Hand. Slobad has a set of keys that open any lock in the dungeon as well as the Scarlet Fang's treasure chest (see Room 14). The other goblins surrender or run away should Slobad surrender.

With a successful *DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check*, the PCs find a hidden trapdoor at the back of the room that leads to the treasure room (see Room 14). Only the king and his most trusted lieutenants know its location. There's also a secret door (see the map) that leads to Slobad's bedroom (Room 12).

14. TREASURE ROOM

A secret trap door, whose location is known only by the king and a few older and trusted members of the tribe, is concealed within the design of the floor of the throne room and hides access to a small cellar. If the PCs find and open the trapdoor, read or paraphrase the following:

You open the trapdoor and climb down a flight of stairs until you come to a small and dusty square room. The ceiling is very low and covered with dangling cobwebs. In front of you lies a locked chest and a shelf with some objects on it.

On the shelf are four 'special rations' (see Room 4), two traveler's robes in bad condition, and a rope. The lock of the chest has a mechanical trap. The PCs can find the trap with successful *DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check* and disable it with a successful *DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves' tools*. The trap triggers if the PCs try to open the chest without the right key (Slobad has it, see Room 13). If triggered, acid sprays from the chest, causing *3d6+3 acid damage* to each creature within 5 feet of the chest and destroying half of the treasure within (randomly decided by the DM).



Inside the chest, the PCs find (if not destroyed by acid):

- *Coins*: 1782 sd, 412 gd, and 20 pd.
- *Gems*: 2 blue lapis lazuli (12 gd each) and 4 pearl (8 gd each).
- A scroll with the *burning hands* spell
- Four *potions of healing*





AWARDS AND AFTERMATH

Give standard XP for enemies defeated. PCs should reach 4th level by the end of this section.

If the PCs make it through the dungeon and gain the relevant information to save the king without killing Slobad, the DM should provide a Story Award of 1600 XP to reward their cunning.

If they escort Gilead to a city or the capital, give them 200 XP and the reward from Gilead of 100gd each.

If you use milestones, the PCs reach 4th level at the end of this section.

If they kill Slobad, they can bring his head back to the Fairy Glade to obtain the reward of the magical ring of Elu Edrahil from Alanor and gain access to the druid's ruined camp.

In any case, at the end of this episode, the PCs should return to the capital and report to Artex on what they have discovered before deciding their next move, both in order to gain the promised rewards, and as requested by the prince – the DM should remind the players of both the reward and their responsibility towards the prince at this point.

If the PCs decide to go directly to Ornis, skip ahead to the section on the town of Danatya (if they decide to pass through the city) or the Vast Marsh (if they don't). However, the DM will need to adapt some of the elements to take account of their lack of information when they reach Ornis, if this is the case.



CHAPTER 5: THE CURSED GRAVEYARD

Once the characters discover King Belador isn't held captive by the goblins but is in the abandoned village of Ornis, they may return to Hellenbrown and report to Artex. Their trip back should be safer than their previous one as they're more experienced now and are more aware of the dangers in the area.

However, the DM can place some encounters along their path if desired, e.g. four **giant hyenas** (*Monster Manual*, p.326), a pair of **ogres** (*Monster Manual*, p.237), or three **hobgoblins** led by a **hobgoblin captain** (*Monster Manual*, p.186).

RETURN TO HELLENBROWN

When they arrive at the capital, the PCs are received by Artex. Having previously been already warned of their arrival, he's eager to know about the outcome of their quest. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs arrive:

In the throne room, prince Artex warmly greets you: "Hail adventurers! How did you fare on your quest? Did you discover news about our beloved king's disappearance?"

Having been informed of the king's current whereabouts, Artex feigns astonishment.

If the characters inform him that they found a shield with a green hand painted on it in the ruined camp of Edrahil, the prince lies to them, telling them he knows nothing of the symbol. If a player specifically asks, the PC can detect the prince's lies with a *DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check* – but don't ask the players to automatically make this check. Refer to their first encounter with Artex as to the consequences of attacking the crown prince in his own palace! Unless the PCs attack Artex, the prince asks them if they will undergo another mission on behalf of the crown:

"The proof of His Majesty's kidnapping is extremely worrying. We must act now, before it's too late. Your quest isn't finished yet. I would ask you to go to Ornis in the Vast Swamp, as soon as possible, to find and free King Belador. I will alert the city's army to bring justice to these fools who kidnapped our king; however, these things will take some time to put into place. While I'm issuing these orders, I ask you to leave for Ornis immediately, since time is precious. Meanwhile, as I promised you, here's your reward for your faithful service to the kingdom."

If the DM allows the use of magic items, Artex allows the characters to choose an item from the royal treasury or the royal magicians' laboratories.

Each character can pick an uncommon magic item from those in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Here are some examples of uncommon magic objects that might be available:

- *+1 dart* (see *Dungeon Master's Guide*, p. 213)
- *Wand of magic missiles* (see *Dungeon Master's Guide*, p. 211)
- *Bag of holding* (see *Dungeon Master's Guide*, p. 153)
- *Bracers of archery* (see *Dungeon Master's Guide*, p. 156)

Alternatively, each character can choose to receive *500 gp* or a *parcel of land* (see page 229 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). As it is now late evening, the prince invites them to spend the night at the palace before they set off on their mission early the next morning.

However, Artex really has very different plans for the PCs: as an agent of the Black Hand, his goal is to now kill the adventures rather than help them free the king. From his perspective, they now know too much and are dangerous to the Black Hand's cause. The quest assigned to them is merely a trap to get them outside the city. Allies of the Black Hand will then ambush the characters during the trip, returning the items or reward to the crown's coffers. Artex's intention is that the PCs' deaths should seem like a tragic accident and thus no suspicion will arise regarding Artex's involvement.



The next morning, Artex informs the PCs that they should speak to a man called Anar, who lives in Danatya and can provide information about the village of Ornis. He provides the PCs with this information, knowing that Anar will innocently report back on the meeting so Artex can learn if the PCs escape the ambush he has arranged. However, the information Anar can provide can be useful to the PCs in their quest.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE BLACK HAND

Before leaving, the characters can seek out further information about the Black Hand. Court members or city guards can tell the characters that the Black Hand is an evil and mysterious cult, which died out many years ago. Its members were mad disciples of dark powers and sought supremacy over the region.

Most citizens think that the Black Hand is just a legend as it has been decades since it was last heard of. However, on a successful *DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check*, the characters are directed to an old man with a long, white beard and deep pockmarks on his face, in a run-down inn. He's willing to talk with the PCs if they buy him some ale. If the PCs meet him, read or paraphrase the following:

The old man is chewing tobacco. When you enquire regarding the Black Hand, he stops chewing and gazes at you with big, brown eyes. He hasn't the usual look of the others who you have spoken to, who seem to know nothing about the subject.

He responds: "I heard one tale about the Black Hand many moons ago. I was a merchant then and traded with a woman who told me about this cult of evil disciples that worshiped despicable and foul creatures. This woman had heard they performed sacrifices to those creatures. They were called the Black Hand, according to her. But I don't know anything more about it than that."

He starts chewing another piece of tobacco. "Honestly, I never took heed of her tales, but who knows? Maybe, looking back on it, she was right...where's my ale!?"

The man has no other useful information.

If they found the shield in the camp of Elu Edrahil, the PCs can also spend some time researching the symbol in the royal archives. If they succeed on a *DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check*, they discover it's a symbol of the evil god Bane. Prophecies tell that Bane knows an obscure secret that would allow him to rule the world, commencing his reign of harsh tyranny over every living creature. Many believe this is just a legend, but the truth is very different...

AMBUSH ON THE DUSK PLAINS

The characters head towards Ornis, in the Vast Marsh. Artex has given them fresh horses and rations for the journey, which is significantly shorter than the previous one. The marsh is two days travel from the capital, while Danatya is a day and a half (if they travel by foot, double the time). Prince Artex informs the Black Hand of the characters' departure and asks the cult to kill them. In the first section of the journey, the characters cross the Dusk Plains: the landscape is made by cultivated grain fields, where peasants plow the land and graze animals.

The first day of travel is quiet and uneventful but during the night they're attacked by a **barbed devil** (*Monster Manual*, p.70) and his companion, a **hell hound** (*Monster Manual*, p.182). The devil is Belzkar, a notorious and evil assassin hired by the Black Hand to kill the characters. His pet, the hell hound Beltor, faithfully serves him and is loyal to the death. Belzkar tries to ambush the characters and is willing to risk his life, and his pet's, to accomplish his task. If the characters survive the ambush, they arrive in Danatya the following day.

THE TOWN OF DANATYA

The town of Danatya lies near the Vast Marsh. It's a small, quiet town, located on the shores of the River Blackbanks. Its inhabitants are mainly farmers and it's renowned for the eponymous Danatyan wine, the grapes for which are grown on the slopes of the nearby Scarlet Moon Hills. Only a small garrison defends the town, as Danatya has never been subject to attack from the creatures that dwell in the marsh. The characters are welcomed by the citizens and Count Marsilio, a gentle, fat man who rules the town in the name of the king. If for some reason the characters traveled to Ornis directly from the goblin lair and pass through Danatya on their way, they might learn of Anar and his knowledge of Ornis from the count.

After some research, the characters find Anar, the man described by Artex (or Marsilio), in a tavern. Anar is a well-to-do Danatyan wine merchant in his thirties, six feet tall, and of normal build. His clothes are quite elegant: a blue waistcoat and a long undergarment of brown wool. His forehead is covered by amber hair that reaches to his shoulders, and his eyes are deep green. When the characters ask him about Ornis, Anar is happy to tell them the story of what happened in the village to Valor, his grandfather and the old mayor of Ornis. After the characters have been properly introduced, Anar begins his tale:

"I thank you for your interest in my story, young adventurers. Make yourselves comfortable as I tell you about the terrible misfortune that beset my family fifty years ago.

It began when the old Duke Lanxet, lord of Bybay, built the village of Ornis in the Vast Marsh. Its purpose was to flaunt the magnificence of House Urlik. Duke Lanxet desired that the building of the village be a symbol of his might and so he wanted it to be truly marvelous.



My grandfather, Valor, had just moved to Bybay when Lord Lanxet charged him to go into the marsh to build the village. My grandfather accepted the task with joy, hoping he would improve the social status of his family. He was also happy to contribute to the might of his lord and his dominion but, alas, things didn't go well.

After a year's hard work, and thanks to the massive budget allocated to the project by the duke, the masons had constructed a small but busy outpost, the bare bones of the future Ornis. Due to his hard work, my grandfather was granted the title of mayor by the old duke. He was both happy and proud, and acted honorably during his period in charge."

Anar takes a brief pause to drink what remains of his wine and then continues with his tale:

"Alas, my grandfather's happiness didn't last long, as with all good things in this world. The inhabitants began to be attacked by creatures from the marsh. Those assaults threatened the very existence of the village. I wasn't born yet, and my grandmother told me the story, so I've never understood if perhaps it was just a child's tale to hide other nefarious happenings. She told me that her family and the other villagers left Ornis after my grandfather was found dead. In those tumultuous hours, my ancestors left behind a precious golden candelabra, which my family had owned for centuries. I wanted to retrieve this item but can't retrieve it myself, since the marsh is too dangerous for me. So, I ask for your help. I'll give you 250 gold pieces each and you can take any other precious items you find in my ancestors' house. The candelabra's easy to recognize: it's a typical eight-armed piece made of pure gold.

The village of Ornis is located on the shores of a great lake in the center of the marsh, but I can't be more precise than that as I've never been there. The town hall, where my grandfather lived, is a big building in the center of the village and you'll easily spot it because it's the tallest in the village according to my grandmother. If you accept this quest and are successful, my family and I will be forever grateful. If you have any questions, just ask".

In the abandoned village, the characters can encounter a strange hag and various undead creatures. A ghost haunts the town hall, and attacks anyone enters there, mindlessly furious at his sad fate. The ghost is the soul of Valor, Anar's grandfather, who still resides there.

After the meeting with Anar, the characters are ready to go into the Vast Marsh, seeking the village of Ornis.

THE VAST MARSH

After a few hours' travel, you finally reach the edges of the Vast Marsh. The terrain here is uneven and soft. As you move deeper into the marsh, a humid, foul fog curls around you. The marsh is strewn with dead trees and small, dark pools. The place feels inherently hostile and perilous.

The Vast Marsh is a very dangerous area. It takes a couple of days to reach Ornis. The atmosphere is dark and gloomy, and the place is very humid. The terrain is irregular, full of holes, with many small lakes and bogs that slow movement.

The whole region is considered **difficult terrain**. A character riding a horse has particular difficulties – the horse is completely unable to gallop, and riders suffer disadvantage in combat. Due to the extreme conditions, characters suffer disadvantage on any checks to forage while in the marsh.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN THE VAST MARSH

During their trip, the characters can encounter many dangerous creatures. Roll a d20 every 8 hours. On a roll of 15 or higher, an encounter occurs. Roll a d8 and a d12 and sum the results to determine the type of encounter. The DM can modify the encounter frequency and their difficulty.

Note: *The Dungeon Master can change the difficulty level of the encounters simply by increasing or decreasing the number of monsters. This can be a good option if the number of characters is higher or lower than four, or if the DM realizes that the encounters are too easy or too difficult during combat (for more information on how to create a combat encounter, consult pages 81-87 of the Dungeon Master's Guide)..*

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN THE VAST MARSH

d12+d8 Encounter Type

- 2, 3 1 **green hag** (*Monster Manual*, p.177) using the semblance of a young girl crying for help, to trick the PCs, and 2d4 **vine blights** (*Monster Manual*, p.32).
- 4, 5 *The remains of an old caravan. Characters can find a small bag containing 6d6 gd and 1d6pd*
- 6, 7 A ruined temple. Inside, there's 1d4+1 **yuan-ti pureblood** (*Monster Manual*, p.310) and a 50% chance of 1 **yuan-ti abomination** (*Monster Manual*, p.308).
- 8, 9 2 **ogre zombies** (*Monster Manual*, p.316) and 2d4 **zombies** (*Monster Manual*, p.316)
- 10, 11 1 **orc eye of Gruumsh** (*Monster Manual*, p.247) and 2d4+3 **orcs** (*Monster Manual*, p.246), looking for loot.
- 12, 13 1 **shambling mound** (*Monster Manual*, p.270) and 1d4+2 **needle blights** (*Monster Manual*, p.32)
- 14, 15 A small grove of rotten trees with 2 **wights** (*Monster Manual*, p.300) and 1d4+1 **skeletons** (*Monster Manual*, p.272).
- 16, 17 A fetid bog, where the characters must succeed on a **DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check** or suffer one level of **exhaustion** (see *Player's Handbook*, p.291) due to the sinking mud and noxious fumes
- 18, 19 1 **ghast** (*Monster Manual*, p.148) and 1d4+2 **ghouls** (*Monster Manual*, p.148)
- 20 1 **troll** (*Monster Manual*, p.291) and 1 **will-o'-wisp** (*Monster Manual*, p.301).



THE ABANDONED VILLAGE OF ORNIS

This village, which originally hosted about 200 people, lies on the shores of the lake near the center of the Vast Marsh. The area was cleared, on Duke Lanxet's orders, to build the outpost and spread the might of House Urlik in the region. The first inhabitants of Ornis came from Danatya and Bybay.

However, Lanxet's plans went badly awry: the village was abandoned shortly after construction after falling under constant attack from foul creatures. In addition, the whole marsh wasn't particularly conducive to everyday life. During the final attack, the monsters killed the newly appointed mayor, Valor. Due to his tragic death just as he achieved this weighty position, and with his intended work still unfulfilled, Valor's soul still haunts the town hall. Nobody has ever returned to Ornis, which, at least officially, has been uninhabited for several decades. However, a death hag has recently moved there, with the intention of finding a quiet place to harvest new victims.

Elsewhere in the village, King Belador is held by the Black Hand in the graveyard.

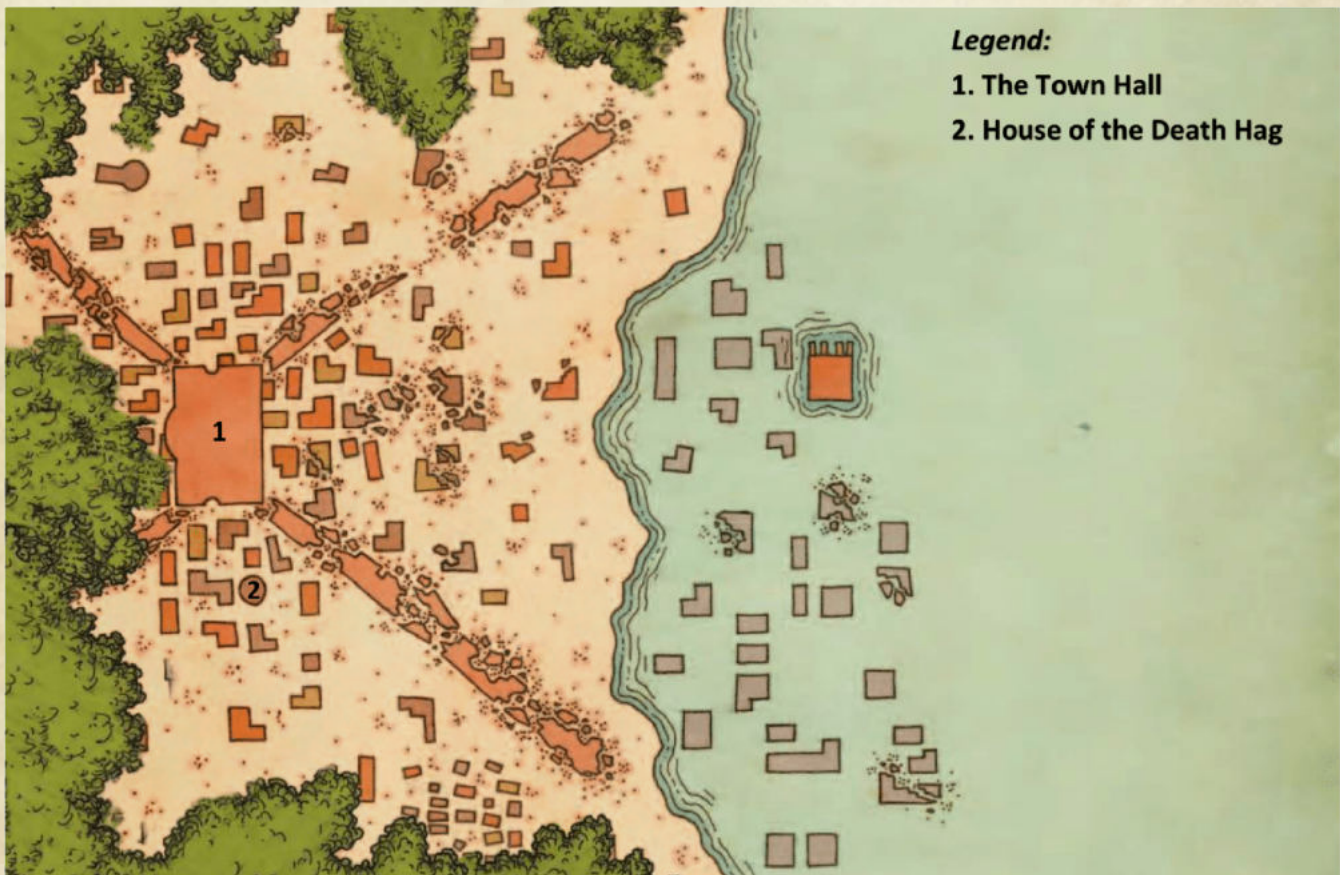
ENTERING THE VILLAGE OF ORNIS

Following an old, almost unrecognizable path, you manage to finally reach the entrance to Ornis. A group of ruined buildings lies in front of you, the overcast sky giving the place a gloomy, eerie atmosphere. Plants and mud have covered almost everything in the intervening years. From your viewpoint you can count around forty buildings, only a few of which are still standing. At the center you can make out a tall building, only partially ruined: it's the tallest and most impressive structure in the village.

The village, made up of about forty buildings, has been abandoned for several decades. Most homes have collapsed and those still standing have been invaded by thick, wild vegetation, along with mud and slime.

A malign presence haunts the tallest building, the town hall: the ghost of Valor. The ghost wanders the building, restless and eager to take out his anger and frustration on whoever comes within reach. There's nothing in the other buildings in the village that is of any value to the characters, except the old town hall.

Once the characters enter the village, a **death hag** (*new creature, see Appendix B*) tries to lure them into one of the village houses using deceit, before she attacks them.



Map: The Abandoned Village of Ornis

Read or paraphrase the following:

As you're walking through the streets, you notice something move in one of the windows of a nearby building. As you move past the door, you can see a humanoid figure sitting in a rocking chair, its back turned to the door. It appears to be an old lady with long white hair. She's silent and the only thing you can hear is the creaking of the chair as it rocks back and forth.

The creature remains silent if the characters ask questions from outside the house. However, if it sounds like they will leave without entering, it asks for help, inviting them into the building.

As they step into the room, an obscene and disquieting laugh escapes the lips of the death hag, who has disguised herself as an old woman. When they near the chair, the death hag rises and turns in an instant, changing abruptly into a terrible monster with huge fangs and black, spider-shaped eyes (if the characters succeed on a *DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation)* check, they discover it's an illusion). As this happens, several undead creatures creep from the shadows of the room and the adjacent buildings to aid the death hag - two **ghouls** (*Monster Manual, p.148*), 1d4+1 **skeletons** (*Monster Manual, p.272*) and 1d4+1 **zombies** (*Monster Manual, p.316*).

Even if the characters decide not to enter the house, these undead creatures will attack them as they try to leave.

The death hag carries her magic rune. When the hag is dead, the PCs can try to destroy the evil item, which frees the innocent souls trapped within. If they succeed, award them **250 XP each**. In addition, they benefit from the effects of a **bless spell for the next 24 hours**.

THE TOWN HALL

The town hall was the place where the most important people of Ornis gathered to discuss and vote on decisions that affected the village. In addition, the duke had private rooms here and administered the law. It has been deserted for many years but is still standing and partially intact. When the PCs reach the town hall, read or paraphrase the following:

You reach an old building, partially ruined. It was probably an important place before the village was abandoned, if its size and location in the center of the village is any indicator. It's clearly seen better days, but it's still standing.

The golden candelabra the PCs seek is in a cupboard in Valor's old bedroom, on the first floor. When they enter the town hall, have the characters make a *DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)* check. If successful, they hear disturbing wailing from the first floor. It's the **ghost** (*Monster Manual, p.147*) of Valor, restlessly roaming the house. The spirit never travels outside the town hall in sunlight. Valor shows himself to the characters 1d4 rounds after they enter the town hall and warns them to leave in a terrible, ghostly voice. If they insist on remaining, the ghost asks why they have come to this forsaken place.

If they tell the ghost of the quest set them by his grandson Anar, to retrieve the golden candelabra, the family heirloom, they must make a *DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion)* check. If successful, Valor is so affected by his memories and the emotion associated with his family that he leads the PCs to the candelabra before disappearing. The candelabra is worth over 5,000 gd. If the characters fail to convince the ghost, it becomes menacing and attacks them.

TREASURE

Inside the town hall, the characters find:

- *Coins*: 97 cd, 32 sd, 42 gd, 3 pd;
- *Gems*: 8 turquoise gemstones (worth 10 gd each);
- *Objects of Art*: a small golden bracelet (worth 25 gd), a silver necklace with a precious stone as pendant (250 gd);
- *Magic Item*: 1 *potion of greater healing* (4d4+4 hp), **candelabra of candor** (see below)

NEW MAGIC ITEM: CANDELABRA OF CANDOR

Wondrous item, uncommon, requires attunement

When all the candles in this eight-armed candelabra of pure gold are lit, it creates a 15-foot radius sphere emanating a *zone of truth* (as the spell), centered on the candelabra. The effect lasts as long as the candles remain lit (the candles last about eight hours if not extinguished). Once the candles are extinguished, the effect ends and cannot be used again until the next dusk. New candles can replace the old when the old ones are used up, as the magic lies within the candelabra, not the candles.



THE CURSED GRAVEYARD

Near the abandoned village of Ornis, just a few minutes by foot, lies an old graveyard, once dedicated to Lathander, which has been cursed and corrupted by the cultists of the Black Hand. Once they have dealt with the death hag and retrieved the candelabra, the characters hear chanting from the graveyard and can investigate. In this grim place, the cult is performing the first of a series of foul rituals that will open a gate to summon legions of fiends and other abominations to the Material Plane. The goal is to destroy the region and trigger the Second Black Dawn, to establish Bane's tyranny over every living creature that survives the cataclysm.

A heavy rain soaks your clothes as you approach the place where the chanting originates. After a while you reach the gates of an old graveyard. Inside, on your left, you can see a group of buildings. This appears to be where the chanting is coming from. The atmosphere around you is gloomy and eerie...the graveyard seems to have been abandoned for many years.

[A map of the graveyard can be found on page 48.](#)

The entrance (11) is on the left, while a tall wall runs around the boundaries of the graveyard, blocking the view from the outside. In the north-western area is a large building, which contains some chapels and an abandoned temple (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8). In the main chapel (7), King Belador is held captive. He's about to be sacrificed during the ritual being enacted by the Black Hand.

This sacrifice is only the first step in their foul plan to bring ruin to the region. The characters must hurry to save Belador and stop the ritual. Just as they enter the graveyard, from each of the mausoleums (9) a **wight** (*Monster Manual*, p.300) suddenly appears, while 1d3+1 **ghouls** (*Monster Manual*, p.148) creep from the crypt (13) and 1d3+1 **skeletons** (*Monster Manual*, p.272) from the charnel house (12), seeking to close with the characters.








A NOTE ON RELIGION

Although there are many chapels and temples within the villages and towns of the kingdom, and a wide variety of gods are worshipped (reference the list of Forgotten Realms deities in the *Player's Handbook* appendix for examples), it is usually easier to find houses of worship dedicated to good deities, rather than neutral or evil ones. Lathander, the Morninglord, is the primary god worshiped in the region. The worship of Lathander is both influential and flourishing, a god greatly loved by all the social classes: commoners, nobles, and merchants alike. As the god of dawn and renewal, he represents a new beginning and hope for those who have lost their way. With his aspects of hope and perseverance, Lathander smiles on adventurers, though sometimes his other traits of naivety and vanity are also applicable to adventurers.



GRAVEYARD

- 1. Entrance hall
- 2. Priests' quarters
- 3. Dining area
- 4. Library
- 5. Storage
- 6. Vestry
- 7. Funeral chapel
- 8. Private chapel
- 9. Mausoleum
- 10. Vault
- 11. Lich-gate
- 12. Charnel house
- 13. Crypt
- 14. Mass grave
- 15. Lich wall (4 feet high)

-  Altar
 -  Brazier
 -  Candelabra
 -  Gravestone
 -  Statue
 -  Pillar
 -  Secret trapdoor
- [Search DC25]



One square = 5 feet

Map: The Cursed Graveyard

You can choose to give the characters advantage on their initiative check, since they see the undead creatures from afar and can evaluate their intentions. Due to the curse on the graveyard, you can also use the optional rule for **fear** (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, p.266): the characters make a *DC 15 Wisdom saving throw*; on a failed save they are *frightened for 1 minute*. At the end of each of its turns, an affected character can make a new saving throw, ending the effect on a successful roll.



Once they have defeated the undead, they can enter the chapel (7) where the dark ritual is being performed. At the end of the rite, Belador will be sacrificed. Several cultists of the Black Hand are in the chapel. They wear dark purple robes and aid their leader in the foul ritual, preparing the king's body for the rite. Belador is unconscious, in a magical sleep that can be dispelled only if the ritual is interrupted. However, the characters must first defeat the ritual guardian: a **wraith** (*Monster Manual*, p.302).

When you open the heavy door of the chapel, you immediately realize from where the chant was coming. You see six hooded creatures in dark purple robes that are performing a dark ritual. They circle a man in rich clothing, almost certainly King Belador, who seems unconscious. He sleeps even through the loud chanting around him. Suddenly, an incorporeal shade rises from a nearby tomb and floats menacingly towards you.

The five **cultists** (*Monster Manual*, p.345) have maximum hit points. As the characters enter the chapel, the cultists stop chanting and, along with the cult leader (a **cult fanatic** – *Monster Manual*, p.345), attack the PCs. In addition, the wraith, set to guard the proceedings, joins the fight.

If they win the battle, the characters can approach the king and awaken him. He opens his eyes and with difficulty stands up:

The king opens his eyes and stands up after a brief pause. He stares at you with attention and says: "My sincere thanks for saving me. Your arrival has been most opportune. If it weren't for you, I don't know how this would have ended. Who are you?"

Once the characters have introduced themselves, the king continues:

"I can't remember how I came to this place, I only know a small army of undead and goblins attacked us in Edrahil's Wood and kidnapped me, after having killed my guards. I don't know their purpose, but from what I see around me, I was about to be sacrificed to some evil power. When we reach Hellenbrown, I'll investigate these happenings further. But for now, let us leave. In Hellenbrown, I will arrange a great feast to celebrate your bravery and faithfulness to the crown. Your names will be recorded in the annals of the kingdom, for you have saved the king's life!"

CONCLUSION

The liberation (or death) of the king marks the end of the adventure.

If the characters fail, the dark ritual is fully performed and Belador is killed. Without his guidance, the region is torn apart by violent civil war; the foul plans of Malekith become more concrete and real, and the end of the world draws closer.

If the characters rescue the king, the plans of the Black Hand, and the plan of Prince Artex to seize the throne, are halted. When they reach the capital, the characters are named knights of the kingdom.

If you use milestones, characters should reach 5th level when they complete the adventure.

However, a dark shadow still lies across the region. Malekith's plans have only just begun. The characters can help the king fight rebels and conspirators and defeat the Black Hand once and for all, in the next chapter of this saga: "The War for the Throne!"



APPENDIX A: MUSIC

Using music during gaming sessions can be very useful, improving the gaming experience and identification with the atmosphere of the adventure. However, music has drawbacks too: it can distract the players and the Dungeon Master, or can simply be very noisy. The DM should discuss the players' preferences. The Dungeon Master can choose a limited number of tracks and use them at specific moments of the adventure to highlight the most important moments. Alternatively, the Dungeon Master can play the tracks at a low volume, to avoid distraction. I personally use a mixture of the two methods.

This section provides a soundtrack that can be used at significant moments in the adventure:



<i>Song's Name</i>	<i>Author, Band or Movie</i>	<i>Situation</i>
The Guild Of Ambience	<i>The Guild Of Ambience</i>	Music useful for many situations (crypt, forest, marketplace, etc.)
Battle For Camelot	<i>Tartalo Music</i>	Epic Battle
Riddle of Steel	<i>Conan the Barbarian</i>	When a PC begins an epic feat
Ibelin	<i>Kingdom of Heaven</i>	Marketplace or city entrance
Main Theme	<i>Black Sails OST</i>	Entrance to <i>Nadèm</i>
Tattered Sails Shanty (Extended)	<i>Curse of the Vampire Coast</i>	Piratical atmosphere
Lords of Iron (Celtic metal)	<i>Lords of Iron (Celtic metal)</i>	When you describe the setting
The Anvil of Crom	<i>Conan the Barbarian</i>	When the adventure begins
Blunt the Knives	<i>Howard Shore & The Dwarfs</i>	Music in an inn
Mercy in the Darkness	<i>Two Steps from Hell</i>	When the party arrives in Minartias
Archangel	<i>Two Steps from Hell</i>	When the party enters Minartias
Satan's Arrival	<i>Pieces of Eden</i>	When Malekith arrives in Minartias
The King's Arrival	<i>Game Of Thrones</i>	Entry to the court of a lord, or Queen Regent Sylene
Casterly Rock	<i>Game Of Thrones</i>	Edrahil's Wood
Lothlorien	<i>The Fellowship of the Ring</i>	Entrance to the fairy glade
Foundations of Stone	<i>The Two Towers</i>	When the party enters the ruined camp of Edrahil
Khazad-dûm	<i>The Fellowship of the Ring</i>	When the party fights against Slobad the Bloodthirsty
Mereen	<i>Game of Thrones</i>	Ambush on the Dusk Plains
A Little Place Called Home	<i>Adrian von Ziegler</i>	City of Danatya
Shelob's Lair	<i>The Return of the King</i>	When the party arrives in Ornis
72 Virgins	<i>Two Steps from Hell</i>	The Cursed Graveyard
Hunter's Moon	<i>Two Steps from Hell</i>	Final Fight

APPENDIX B: MONSTERS

ELITE GOBLIN

Small humanoid (goblinoid), neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (studded leather)

Hit Points 14 (4d6)

Velocità 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	8 (-1)

Skills Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Goblin

Sfida 1/2 (100 XP)

Nimble Escape. The elite goblin can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

Polearm Master. When the elite goblin takes the Attack action with its goblin bill hook, it can use a bonus action to make a melee attack with the opposite end of the weapon. The attack uses the same modifier as its goblin bill hook attack but does 1d4 bludgeoning damage. When the elite goblin wields its goblin bill hook, other creatures provoke an opportunity attack from it when they enter the reach it has with that weapon.

ACTIONS

Goblin Bill Hook. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) slashing damage.

Elite goblins are the finest fighters in the tribe. They are physically stronger and are more experienced in battle (or have undergone harsh training). They usually have more robust armor and often use two-handed weapons, striking fear into the hearts of both goblin-kind and their enemies.

NEW WEAPON: GOBLIN BILL HOOK

The goblin bill hook is a shortened polearm about 5 feet in length, weighted suitably for use by small creatures. The end has a wide, hooked blade. The hook can also be used to try to drag riders off horses with an opposed Strength check.

Cost: 25 gp

Damage: 1d8 slashing

Weight: 4 lb.

Properties: *Two-handed*, can be used with the polearm master feat.

GOBLIN SERGEANT

Small humanoid (goblinoid), neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (scale mail, shield)

Hit Points 21 (6d6)

Speed 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)

Skills Stealth +6 (disadvantage from armor worn)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Goblin

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Nimble Escape. The goblin sergeant can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The goblin sergeant makes two attacks with its rapier. The second attack is made with disadvantage.

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Javelin. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30 ft./120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) piercing damage.



REACTIONS

Redirect Attack: When attacked by a creature it can see, the goblin sergeant can swap places with an ally within 5 feet of it. The ally becomes the new target of the attack.

Goblin sergeants are the highest authority in the tribe, bar the goblin king. They are held in high esteem and respected by all in the tribe. When they give orders, other goblins had better react immediately unless they want a taste of the sergeant's whip. Due to their trusted position in the tribe, they hold keys that grant access to almost all areas of the goblin lair. During combat, a sergeant tends to give orders from the back, avoiding the front line, since he deems his life more important than his underlings. Sergeants usually have better-kept weapons than other goblins.



THE GOBLIN KING: SLOBAD THE BLOODTHIRSTY

Medium humanoid (goblinoid), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (scale mail)

Hit Points 44 (8d8+8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)

Skills Stealth +6 (disadvantage from armor worn)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Goblin

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Nimble Escape. Slobad can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Slobad makes two attacks with his battleaxe. The second attack is made with disadvantage.

Battle Axe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d10 + 1) slashing damage.

Javelin. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30 ft./120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

Redirect Attack: When attacked by a creature it can see, Slobad can swap places with an ally within 5 feet of it. The ally becomes the new target of the attack.

In the chain of command, the goblin king ranks above all other members of the tribe. Only the strongest and most respected individuals can hope to become the goblin king. To remain in authority, it is necessary to be smart (a rare thing for a goblin) and cunning to avoid being assassinated by other goblins. **Slobad the Bloodthirsty** is one of the most savage and violent kings the Scarlet Fang tribe has ever had.

DEATH HAG

Medium fiend, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 97 (13d8 + 39)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

Skills Arcana +5, Deception +4, Insight +4, Perception +4, Religion +5, Stealth +3

Senses darkvision 90 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal, Sylvan

Challenge 4 (1100 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The hag's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *chill touch*, *minor illusion*

1/day each: *hex*, *inflict wounds*.

Magic Rune (10 souls) As long as the death hag is within 20 feet of her magic rune, she can cast *animate dead* as many times as the number of souls imprisoned inside the rune, or until it's destroyed.

Mimicry. The hag can mimic animal sounds and humanoid voices. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check.

ACTIONS

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) slashing damage.

Illusory Appearance. The hag covers herself and anything she's wearing or carrying with a magical illusion that makes her look like another creature of her general size and humanoid shape. The illusion ends if the hag takes a bonus action to end it or if she dies.

The changes wrought by this effect fail to hold up physical inspection. For example, the hag could appear to have smooth skin, but someone touching her would feel her rough flesh. Otherwise, a creature must take an action to visually inspect the illusion and succeed on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check to discern that the hag is disguised.

Necrotic Curse (1/day) The hag targets a creature within 15 feet of her that she can see. Summoning foul and evil power from the Shadowfell, the hag channels it in a maleficent whisper that hits the target and drains its vitality. The target must roll a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failed roll it takes 28 (7d8) necrotic damage, or half as much damage on a successful save. Constructs and undead are immune to this effect.



Death hags are foul creatures of extreme evil, whose main goals are to gain power and destroy life. A death hag doesn't care for others and rejoices in pain and ruin. They study for long years to discover the secrets of the afterlife. They carry with them a powerful magic item, made after years of intense study, called a *magic rune*, which grants them power and renown with other hags. The *magic rune* usually takes the form of a black stone with a circular shape and is used by the hag to imprison the souls of those she has killed, magnifying her magical powers. In order to free the trapped souls, it's necessary to destroy the rune. The hag is strongly tied to this magic item and will do anything to protect and preserve it. After they have created their *magic rune*, each hag starts to hunt victims to trap their souls.

YOUNG GREEN DRAGON ZOMBIE

Large undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 103 (10d10 + 48)

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	6 (-2)	15 (+2)	3 (-4)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Con +5, Wis +2

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., Passive perception 9

Languages understands Common and Draconic, but can't speak

Challenge 5 (1800 XP)

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the young green dragon zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The young green dragon zombie makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6+4) slashing damage.

Dark necromantic magic permeates the corpse, animating it as a zombie ready to obey any order of their creator, without fear or hesitation. The zombie moves with a jerky, uneven gait, carrying the stench of decay.

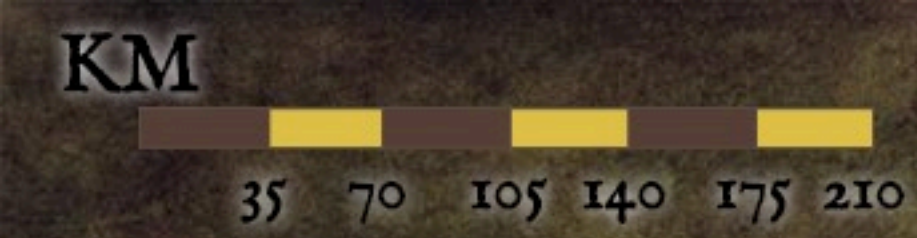




WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

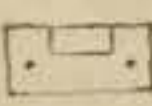


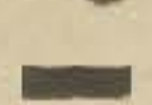


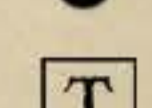
THE ADVENTURE IS NOT FINISHED YET: WHILE THE PCs WERE BUSY FIGHTING THE CULTISTS OF THE BLACK HAND TO FREE THE KING, AT COURT PRINCE ARTEX WAS PLOTTING TO SEIZE THE KINGDOM AND USURP THE THRONE OF HIS BROTHER. QUEEN SYLENE, THE RUTHLESS WOMAN EAGER TO TAKE REVENGE ON THE KING FOR THE DEATH OF HER HUSBAND, IS READY TO MAKE WAR ON THE CROWN IN ORDER TO TAKE CONTROL OF THE KINGDOM. MEANWHILE, UNCARING OF POLITICAL PLOTS IN THE REGION, MALEKITH THE NECROMANCER STILL PURSUES HIS PLAN TO FINISH THE FOUL RITUAL TO OPEN THE FIENDISH GATE THAT WILL CAUSE HAVOC AND CHAOS IN THE WORLD. BUT NOT EVERYTHING IS LOST! SOME UNEXPECTED ALLIES ARE READY TO HELP THE PCs. YOU CAN FIND ALL THIS AND MORE IN THE NEXT CHAPTER OF THE SAGA: *"THE WAR FOR THE THRONE"*.

THE THREAT OF THE BLACK HAND HAS STILL NOT BEEN ERADICATED AND CIVIL WAR IS ABOUT TO BE UNLEASHED UPON THE KINGDOM. GET READY TO FACE THESE AND OTHER CHALLENGES IN THE NEXT CHAPTER OF THE SAGA: *"The War for the Throne"*.



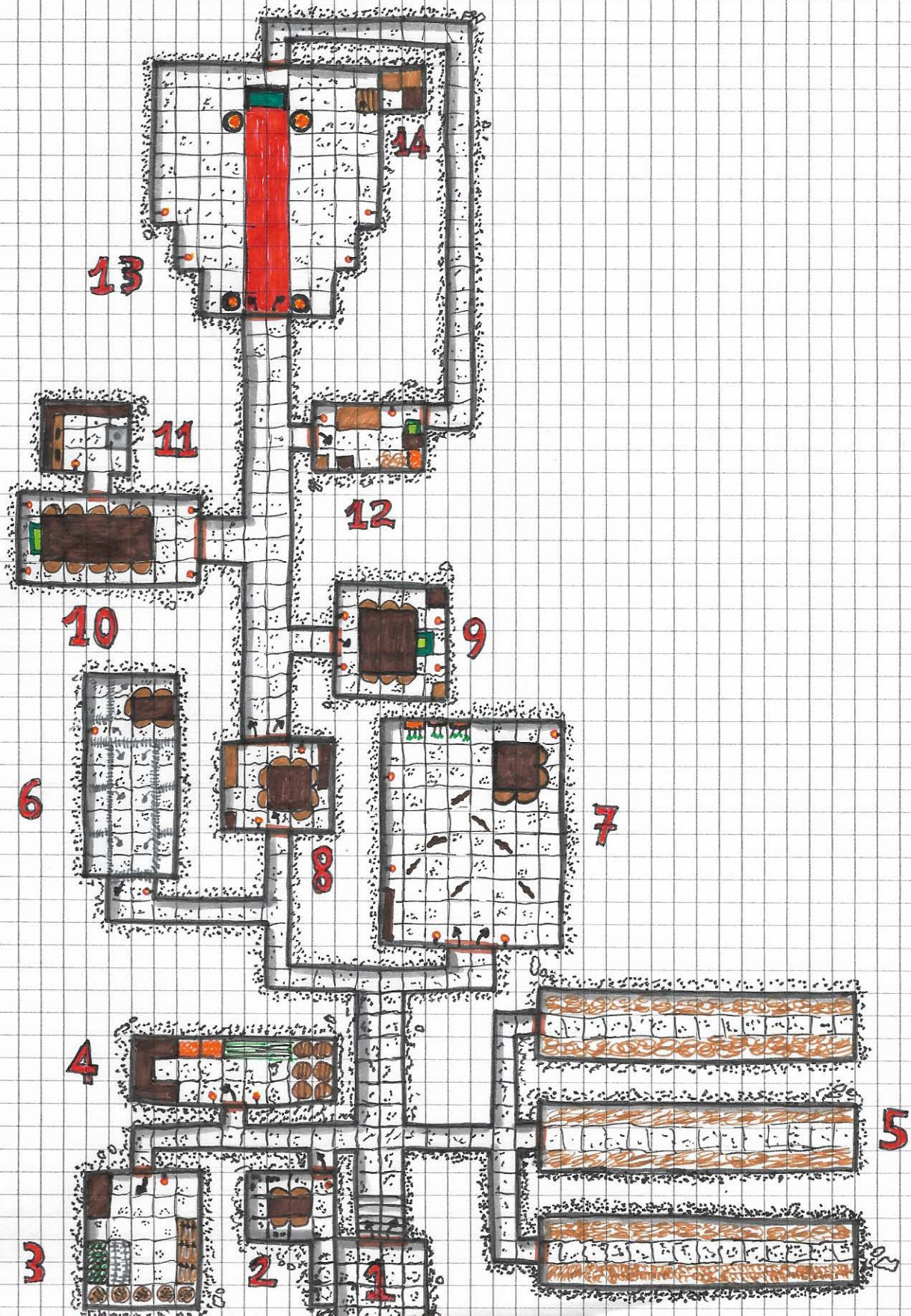
GRAVEYARD

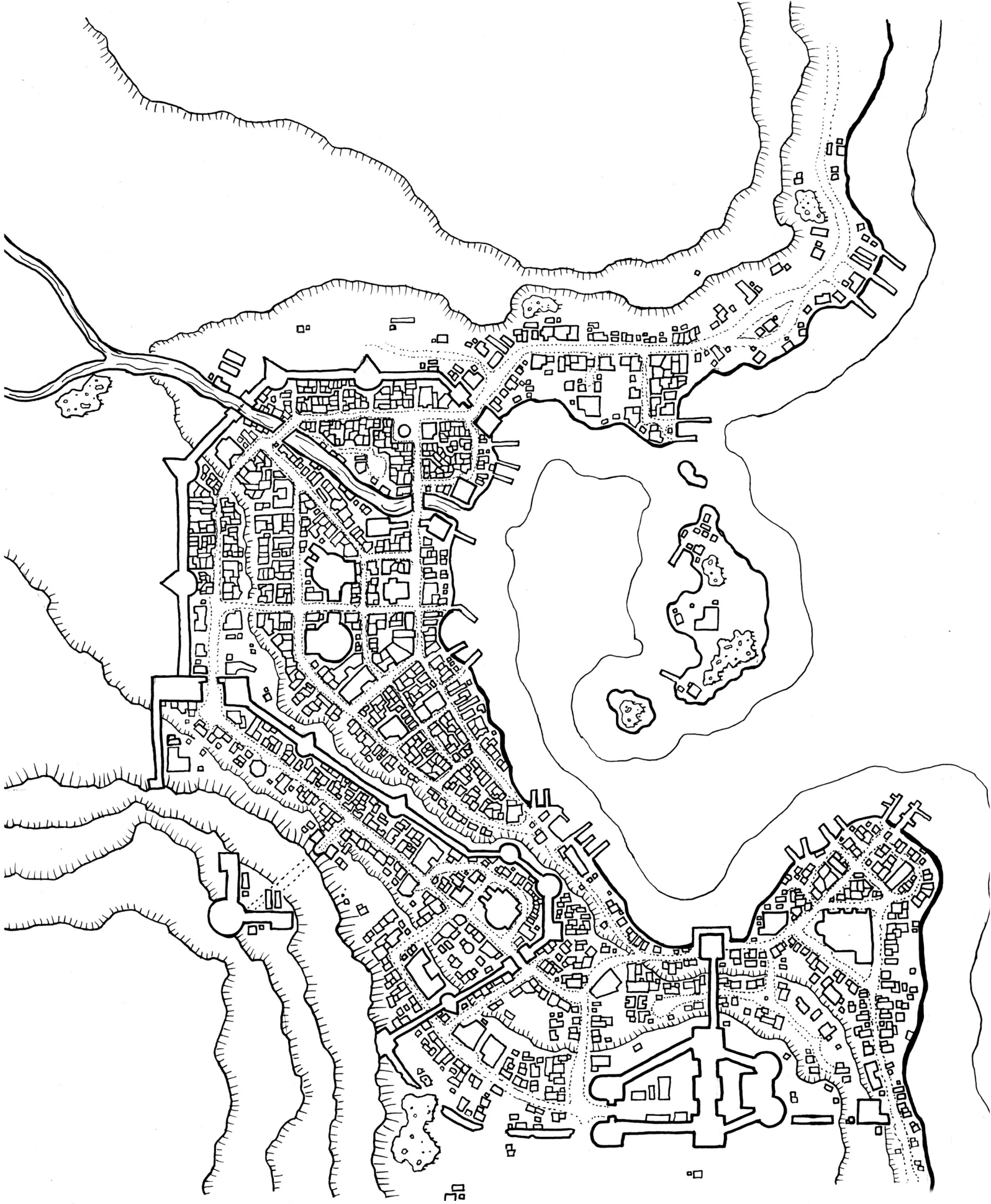
- 1. Entrance hall
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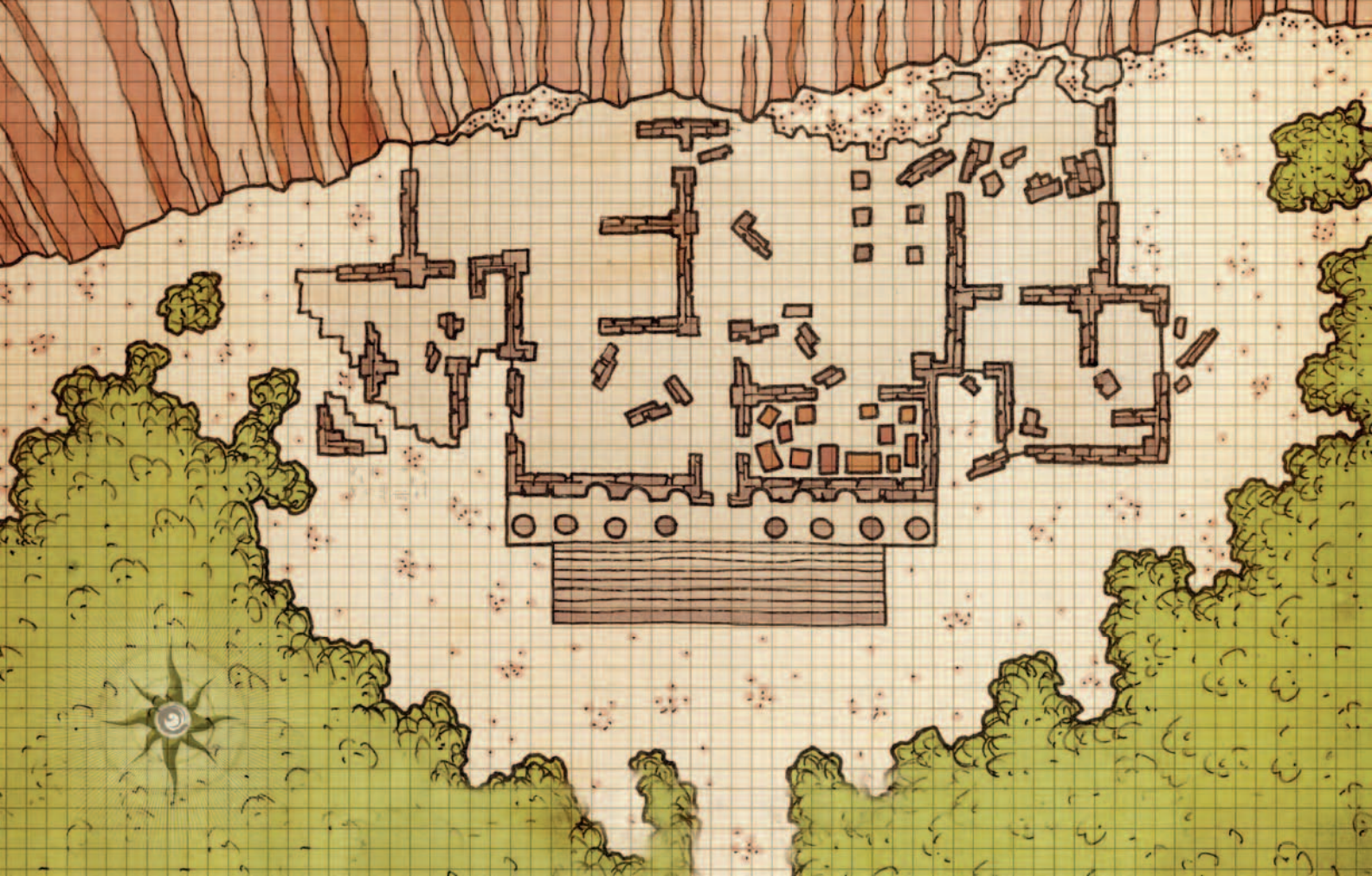
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 -  Candelabra
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 -  Statue
 -  Pillar
 -  Secret trapdoor
- [Search DC25]

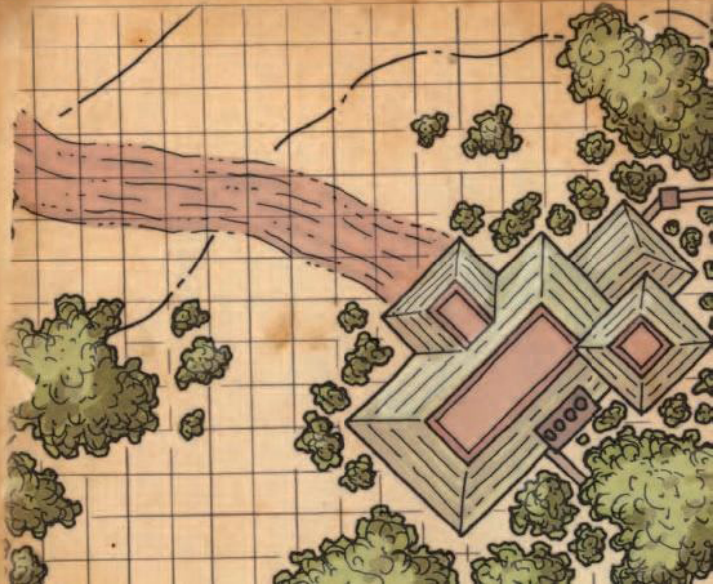


One square = 5 feet















THE SECOND BLACK DAWN IS COMING...

THE KING IS MISSING. HORDES OF UNDEAD SPREAD ACROSS THE KINGDOM LIKE A PLAGUE. OUTLAWS ATTACK AND PILLAGE DEFENSELESS VILLAGES.

A PARTY OF ADVENTURERS IS CALLED UPON TO EXPLORE THE REGION AND INVESTIGATE THE MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF THE KING...

IN THIS EPIC ADVENTURE, FIERCE COMBAT ALTERNATES WITH EXPLORATION AND INVESTIGATION, IN SCENES BRIMMING WITH ADRENALINE AND MYSTERY.

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- Illustrations carefully chosen to enhance the text of the adventure.
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***FIND OUT WHAT IS BRINGING THE KINGDOM
TO ITS KNEES... BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!***

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MY NAME IS MARCO BERTINI, I GRADUATED IN COGNITIVE APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF BOLOGNA WITH THE HIGHEST GRADES. I HAVE BEEN PLAYING DUNGEONS & DRAGONS FOR OVER 20 YEARS. I HOPE YOU ENJOY THIS CAMPAIGN!

IF YOU'VE ANY QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS,
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