

C2



**5<sup>TH</sup> EDITION**  
**ADVENTURE**

# SHADES OF MIST

**STEPHEN CHENAULT**

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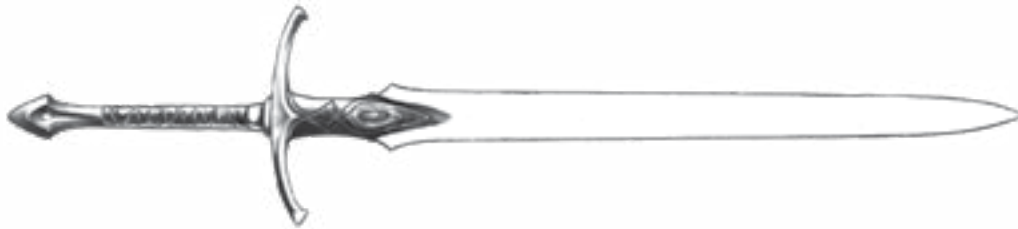
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This adventure combines overland travel with the exploration of the ruins of an old village, monastery, and dungeon. It is not a traditional adventure module that consists of one dungeon or one goal, but rather consists of a series of short adventures, which in turn offer the enterprising Castle Keeper the opportunity for numerous side treks and adventures. It is easy to port into any game and sections can be played or skipped over as needed. Though set in the official **Castles & Crusades®** world of Ahrde, and a sister book to **The Mortality of Green, Shades of Mist** is a complete stand alone adventure. It can be adapted to any homebrew or published setting. As with many of the adventure modules published by TLG, **Shades of Mist** offers numerous, short-encounter areas. Included within are Mount Hermitage, The Meadows, and House of the Fox.

Unlike **C1: The Mortality of Green, Shades of Mist** involves overland travel unaffected by the passage of time, allowing the characters to adventure and explore any of the numerous areas located in the region.

**Shades of Mist** is designed for a well balanced party of 4-8 characters with a challenge level of 4. Once the party embarks upon the adventure there are few places for them to hole up and rest until they come to the elf village of Thel Wogash. There are many encounters in the area and the party should be able to sustain continued damage either through the use of a cleric or healing potions. The Herbalist (*see below*) in town can sell the latter if need be. Clever characters may discover the secret of the willow trees (*see below*) as well. A ranger or druid would be most beneficial as would a rogue for the dungeon beneath the monastery.

## INTRODUCTION

The adventure takes place south of Ends Meet in and around the Valley of the Frog. Located here are the Village of Alice, the Caverns of Amenut, Mount Hermitage, and the Monastery of Aliemor. The inhabitants of the monastery and village abandoned the places because of the haunts that rose from Amenut and Mount Hermitage. These places and the areas around them are where the adventure takes place.

Some 20 years past, an evil wizard who served the Paths of Umbra came to the Bowlgaar orcs where they lived upon the western slopes of the Rhodope Mountains. The Umbrian roused this largely benign band of orcs, filling them with tales of glory and power. With his aid, they prepared for war and greatness. They fortified their town, as well as the mountain passes above them. They crafted weapons and other works, all in preparation for war and conquest. Steadily their numbers grew, until they filled the mountain valleys with their squalid huts and caves. For a time the Mistbane held them from the Darkenfold and they issued from the mountains in the far west and raided the lands of the barbarian tribes who dwelt there. During these early wars the Umbrian cast wild enchantments, trying to summon powers from beyond the Wall of Worlds to aid him and his new found charges. His sorcery did not bring him the power he sought but it did reverberate throughout the Darkenfold, rousing creatures great and small.

When at last the barbarians fled into the east, the orcs turned their attention to the west. For there, across the Mistbane, lay the treasures of the ancients and the Umbrian fired the wills of the orcs with visions of treasure and power. The orcs built a bridge across the Mistbane and crossed into the forest igniting the Bowlgaar War.

One of the first victims of the orc raids was the wife of Balarian, the Chief of the Wood Elves. A raid caught the elf and his family unawares, only he survived, but not without wounds, the rest of his family perished. Overcome with grief Balarian cast aside his blade and fled into the forest deeps, there he was lost for many years. In the meanwhile his people fought on, leaderless now and with little purpose.

The war spread throughout the Millorian, but after several large and inconclusive battles, it became a sporadic war of raids and counter raids. The orcs were not strong enough to attack the elven holds and the Umbrian's magic and the loss of Balarian kept the elves at bay. The war continued for many years.

## THE HAUNTING OF ALICE

Balarian wandered lost for a great while, until he stumbled across a family of humans traveling from Ends Meet to Alice. The Craddock's were, at the time, a powerful family with a mill in Ends Meet; they traded with Greenbriar, Willowbreak, the Eschl and the folk of Alice. It was on a journey to this latter town that the elven chief came across them. Their daughter, Jill, had only recently come of age. She was a beauty to behold. Upon seeing her, Balarian fell in love with the young woman. He tried to woo her, but her father would not have it and in an argument, the Elf Chief slew the father and kidnapped the girl. Loretta, the girl's mother, chased the elven lord down the road until he vanished, leaving her and her other daughter Karen alone in the wood. They returned to Ends Meet to bury their dead and mourn the loss of Jill. The strain was too great on Loretta and eventually she went mad, fleeing her home to wander the Southern Way in search of her lost daughter though she found no sign nor heard rumor of her ever again.

For many long months Loretta's maddened calls fell throughout the wood. Travelers on the Southern Way spoke of a haunted voice, filled with desperation, calling in the evening's shadows. On occasion someone would see her ghostly figure running through the trees, calling and shouting for her daughter to come home. At last Mad Loretta came to Village of Alice. Her cries for Jill carried through the still evening and brought the whole village to arms. They found her by the well, her clothes no more than rags. Those who dared approach her attempted to calm her but could not. And before aught could be decided upon, she rushed headlong off the cliff and plunged to her death.

The next day, they gathered her broken body up and carried to the cemetery at the abandoned monastery and laid her to rest. But it was not long before her ghostly howls again echoed in the still nights; her restless, grief-stricken spirit rose from the dead and wandered the Ridge line and the Valley of the Frog looking for her long lost daughter.

But the haunts of Alice's ghost did not go unnoticed.

### **THREE CURSES**

Beneath the town of Alice lies a network of caves. These caves have long been the home of an ancient creature once revered as a god in the Ethvold. Men called him Amenut and the men of the region swore oaths to him and made sacrifice in his name. But in time his power waned and he fell from men's minds. He crawled beneath the earth to slumber and hide himself. And there he lived for untold centuries. But in recent years Amenut's dreams were disturbed, a biting cold and weird visions disturbed his slumber. These of course were the spells of the Umbrian cast with wild abandon in the hills to the west and south. Amenut awakened, but only so much that he was aware, as a man who rises too early in the morning.

When Loretta came to Alice and in her suffering madness cast herself over the cliff Amenut roused fully from his slumber. Her ghost further disturbed him and he felt a gnawing hunger and an even greater thirst. He crawled through his caves until he came to a narrow aperture leading up. This was in fact the village well from which the folk of Alice drew their water. Amenut settled in it, drinking, and befouling the water.

This poisoning of the well caught the villagers by surprise and heralded the first of the three curses that came to Alice.

For the next several months Amenut haunted the town, but he was fearful and did little harm. He skulked around, trying to unravel the mysteries of his long slumber, but being good of nature, he never actually slew anyone. He did kill and devour several bush cows.

But the same did not hold true for his minions. Many creatures worshiped Amenut in the old days; he was powerful and able to dole out favors to those who called upon him. He protected the forest and many of its denizens. Among his most ardent worshipers was a coven of witches. These women gathered to cast spells, brew potions, make salves and see the future. They were powerful in their own right and many of the folk of the Ethvold came to them for charms, aid, fortunes, and the like. They squandered the blessings of Amenut to gain wealth and comforts and selfishly give themselves power over all around them.

But upon Amenut's disappearance, their power waned and they possessed little or nothing but their own foul tempers and evil hearts. They continued to ply their magics, but these did little but turn them into old, bitter harpies. They drifted out into the Bottoms where they lived in misery for centuries, haunting and tormenting anyone they could find.

When Loretta's cries woke Amenut, the harpies became aware of him and they began making their way south. The murder of harpies gathered at Mount Hermitage, calling out for Amenut. There they encountered a band of luckless outlaws led by a witch of no mean ability. The witch befriended them as much as anyone can befriend harpies and upon learning of the old god Amenut she set her mind to driving out the people of Alice and binding the harpies and the Frog God to her.

She harangued the harpies about their plight so much that one of the murder became so aggravated she went to Alice and

alighted in a great oak that overlooked the village gardens. She began to call and scream for Amenut. Day and night her shrill shouts carried over the town, harassing the townsfolk to no end. Attempts to drive her out failed, but eventually one of the farmers became enraged and hurling a can of nails at her crushed her skull and killed her. She fell from the tree, but where she lay the ground wilted and died. The poison left by her quickly decaying corpse created a perfect breeding ground for blood worms, a foul pestilence difficult to destroy. Soon the worms were everywhere, they destroyed the cows, pigs and few mules in the town and poisoned the small pasture where they fed.

Thus the second curse came to pass.

But all this had not gone unnoticed by even greater powers in the Darkenfold. The ghost of Loretta, the harpies and the blood worms brought the undesired attention of the court of Lilly Fair and the Queen of the Dark Faerie. And even as the people of Alice began to lament their latest spat of bad luck, an even greater and unbearable event occurred. Late in the winter, the Dark Queen sent a sleigh filled with food and drink to the hapless folk of Alice as a gift to alleviate their sufferings. Her fey disguised themselves as elves and they swore they were from the Millorian. But the gift was fraught with peril. The villagers were starving, for their food was gone and the well was often dry and when it had water the taste of it was foul. They accepted the food with relish and threw a great feast. But this was their final undoing. The food, laced with magic, left all the villages dazed and confused. They staggered about the wood as if lost and that is when a horde of evil fey fell upon the villagers and destroyed them. Some fled into the north to come to Ends Meet half frozen and penniless, others fled into the forest where wolves took them and some never left Alice, slain by the poisoned darts of the fey.

Thus came to pass the third curse of Alice.

Alice and its environs fell into disuse, twisted and evil, haunted by the ghost, befouled by the remaining harpies and stalked by evil fey.

### **MOUNT HERMITAGE**

Nodjmet has watched the story of Alice unfold and has recently swooped in to garner what power she can. By befriending the remaining four harpies she was able to learn of the nature of the Og Aust Amenut and she has made many sacrifices and cast many incantations in order to bind Amenut to her. She uses him to summon all manner of evil creatures. Nodjmet uses an old abandoned monastery near Alice as a place from which she casts her evil spells.

But there is more at Mount Hermitage than a witch and her kin. They have imprisoned there a young half-elf, Aenu. The witch is attempting to broker a sale of the prisoner to either the Bowlgaar or the elves. She frequents the monastery often, both to sacrifice to the god Kekki and to commune with the spirits of the Shadow Realm. It is with their help that she hopes to broker her sale.

This half-elf Aenul is of course the son of Jill and Balarian, and the grandson of Loretta Craddock, the ghost who now haunts the whole area and brings such horror to so many. Jill Craddock lives with the wood elves still, though her mother and her life in Ends Meet is little more than a distant memory. The half-elf, grievously wounded, is in need of the healing magic of the Willow Trees encountered on the Mistbane. If the characters are not aware of this, the half-elf will make them aware. If they succeed in bringing the half-elf to safety, the folk of Thel Wogash welcome them as heroes and friends.

Once there of course, becoming enmeshed in the war between the Bowlgaar and the elves is only a matter of time.

In order to free the Og Aust from his prison and Alice from its evil the adventurers must find the monastery where the creature's den lies. Amenut is a good creature, though one whose survival depends upon finding prey. He dwells in a well that leads to a dungeon beneath the village, enslaved to the witch of Mount Hermitage.

Clearing out Alice, Aliemor and Mount Hermitage should involve the characters for some time. Overcoming the Bowlgaar and rooting out the Umbrian wizard are for more powerful adventuring parties. More powerful parties should tackle these adventures. But rooting out the evil in Alice and rescuing the half-elf son of Balarian will certainly win the favor of the elves, earning the party great renown and wealth.

## **THE DARKENFOLD**

The Darkenfold was part of what once was the Ethvold, a forest which spanned across the entire southern reaches of Ethrum from the Rhodope Mountains in the west to the Ardeen River in the east. From the north, it covered the Shelves of the Mist, and much of Southern Kayomar to lap up against the feet of the Bergrucken in the northeast. Those days were long ago, when dragons were young, and the sentients ruled the soil and men and dwarves were few and unlearned. The Darkenfold is a remnant of that forest, stretching only several hundred miles from the Danau River and the Plains of Kayomar in the east to the doorsteps of the unexplored Rhodope Mountains in the west. In the south, the great Soup Marsh hems in the ancient trees, and the forest continues in wild growth from there to the far-off Shelves of the Mist in the distant north. The Eldwood, to the east, holds the heart of the Ethvold of old, but the Darkenfold holds its dark memories. It is an evil wood, filled with its own wild abandon and creatures of ill intent. Those who live there know that the trees and the soil hold memories of their past glory and do not forget the axes of men, orcs, dwarves, and goblins that have plundered them of their wealth and life.

In the north and east, the edges of the Darkenfold are hemmed in by a ring of long, lean black-jack oaks called the Perth Timberland. These trees are small, 30-foot-tall on average, and possess tangled short branches covered in thick green leaves. In the autumn, the leaves cling to the trees for many weeks after the first frost and rustle in the never-ending wind that blows through the forest. These branches hang to the ground to mingle with the thickly-tangled thorns and bushes growing

in the rich, black soil. Travel here is not easy due to the thick bramble which oft times overgrows the few existing paths. The Perth Timberland makes entry to the forest arduous and maintains the dark, deep mysteries within. Travelers usually use the few entrances that roads provide.

Beyond the Perth Timberland lies the old wood. Here, giant oaks, heavy with foliage, mark the heart of the forest. These great trees tower above the moss-covered ground, their leafy canopies blotting out the light of the sun. These peculiar trees are native only to the Darkenfold and give it its name, for the mature trees have a grayish-black bark that absorbs light. A campfire's light, for instance, will not flicker off the trees, but rather vanishes into the bark, as if the trees drink the light. At night, the forest is dark beyond imagining cutting in half twilight vision and duskvision.

Grassy knolls, open meadows, and slow-running brooks pocket the forest deeps and break the sinister visage cast by the old trees. Here, where the sun shines, lilies, daisies, daffodils and other wild flowers bloom. At night, the light of the moon and stars spill through, and when the evening is still, the fey come out to dance, sing, and play. The forest is thick with these creatures. Remnants of the Ethvold, they came here long ago, before the Wall of Worlds girded the earth from the trackless wastes of the Void. Sprites, nymphs, nixies and pixies as well as water lilies, blue bells, wood chips and the like abound throughout the deep recesses of the forest. There are darker fey as well, boggarts, shadows, bullworts and carp snails dwell here. Indeed, many believe that the Darkenfold's nature derives from the Queen of the Unseelie Court who resides in the forest's southern reaches beyond the Downs in the Lilly Fair.

Two main roads cut through the forest. The larger of the two, the Old Post Road, begins in the Town of Elne in the east and meanders through the upper reaches of the forest, until it veers north just above Ends Meet, to emerge in the Broken Steppes south of Petersboro upon the edge of the Shelves of the Mist. The Southern Way, a spur of the Old Post Road, is overgrown and weeded with small trees and is slowly vanishing back into the depths of the Darkenfold. Both roads are vestiges of the Age of Winter's Dark, when the Empire of the Horned God stretched even to these distant reaches. The Old Post Road in particular rises several meters above the forest through which it cuts, being fashioned of several layers of gravel and topped by cobbles. There is enough slant to provide run off, and two long, shallow ditches run the whole length of either side of the road. In many places, the cobbles have cracked and slid away into the ditch, or the road itself has sunken into the moist ground. There were once way posts along the road, which the servants of the Horned God and other travelers used when traveling these dark eves. They were generally one or two-room stone buildings with wood shingle roofs. But those have fallen into ruin for the most part or vanished into the forest entirely.

The Southern Way was never paved, and its condition reflects that. Its track is still visible in most places, but in some, it has vanished into the wood, covered now in young growth trees and brush. The ungeren began work on it at one point but gave



up when the Winter Dark Wars began. The pile of rubble from the cobbles and equipment lies still where the Post Road and Southern Way join, though much of it is overgrown with weeds and the like.

The forest itself is huge and has many prominent geographic regions, divided into three: the Northern and Southern Plateaus and the Mistbane River Basin. A series of foothills, bluffs, and small lakes usually referred to as the Breaks, divide these two plateaus.

**NOTE:** The cover illustration is a view of the long valley that runs the length of the Loretta's Bluff and divides the two plateaus. On the left, lie the Southern Plateau, and the right, the Northern Plateau.

The Northern Plateau consists of the Uplands, Troll Glade, and the Powder River Country. The Upland Valley Region – the Uplands for short – comprise the north-western portion of the forest, where lies the towns of Ends Meet, Greenbriar, Petersboro and the Vale Wood. In the central, northern portion of the forest is the Troll Glade, where ancient trees tower over meadows and slow-moving brooks. The trolls live here in disturbing numbers. Some are ancient and much rooted to the ground; others roam about causing mischief here and there. South and east of the Glade stands the Great Eastern Forest, also called the Powder River Country. Some smattering of small

human villages lie here, most clinging to the forest's edge. The Powder River Country is almost entirely unbroken forest and comprises the deepest portions of woodlands on the Northern Plateau.

The Southern Plateau consists of the Millorian in the west and the Downs in the east, both comprising the heart of the Darkenfold. The Millorian is a deep wooded country of hills and low ridges. There are numerous creeks and brakes, small ponds, lakes, fens and the like. The Millorian was never conquered by the minions of Darkness. Indeed the Downs remained unconquered as well, for here, in these deep woods dwells the Unseelie court, where the Dark Lady of Fey rules. The Downs are rolling, forested hills. They stretch for many miles to the very borders of the Great Soup Marsh. Elves, eschl, halflings, gnomes, goblins, bugbears, and other creatures people the Millorian and the Downs. A few hardy humans live in those parts, and they share their world with all manner of beast, animal, and monstrous creatures. These woods are the hunting grounds of some of the greater and lesser miasmal dragons, the Nakal Dragons being the most common. The fierce creatures are highly predacious and hunt all manner of creatures.

Few men venture into the Darkenfold. Those who do are a hardy lot with stout axes and stouter wills. Some settle in the few clearings or along the old roads, and build strong wooden houses beneath the dark trees and along the meadow tracks.

'Tis unknown what motivates them. Whether some crime or want of justice has driven them, or whether they desire a piece of earth far away from the civilized world, they find a dangerous home in the Darkenfold. They trade in Greenbriar or Ends Meet on occasion, with the wood elves, or sometimes leave the forest to travel to larger towns such as Petersboro in the west and Elne in the east.

A small band of dedicated rangers have taken on the onerous task of protecting the forest and the folk who reside there. They call themselves the "Rangers of the Knot," for they meet in a glade wherein two ancient trees have wrapped their boles around each other. Only recently has the Druidic Council recognized the rangers. The Council promised to deliver them a sapling offspring of the Great Oak to help heal the Darkenfold.

There are numerous elf villages in the Millorian, the southern stretches of the forest. These elves live a semi-nomadic life in the woods, living in small villages, cleverly hidden by magic and the use of the natural surroundings. These folk trade in both Ends Meet and Greenbriar mostly with the frontiersman but they rarely if ever leave the forest. There are some halflings who live here as well, small enclaves in the forest deeps, usually near water, and gnomes as well, most of these in the Timberland region.

There are other strange humanoids in the forest as well, the eschl. These savages live in the stone-age and seem to be a mixture of elf and orc. Their skin is dark colored, almost green and their faces are narrow and flat. They wear animal skins mostly, grease their hair for ceremonies and battle and wield a wicked array of stone and wood weapons in battle. They decorate themselves in all manner of trinkets, paint their bodies, and cut their hair in wild array. The eschl live in small nomadic bands that are generally part of larger tribes. They dwell throughout the forest, commonly found in the Powder River region and the lowlands north and south of the Dog River.

The Mistbane River Basin is the narrow stretch of river-land between the foothills of the Rhodope Mountains and the forest. The River Basin runs the length of the Darkenfold, veering east in the Millorian. It is a slow-moving river until it reaches the eastern reaches of the Millorian where it narrows and picks up speed. There, it becomes a thundering torrent tumbling into a wide lake and wetlands in the southern Downs. It slows to a crawl again and eventually empties into the Soup Marsh.

But, beyond all the dangers that lurk herein, the Darkenfold is a land of great adventure. It attracts all manner of treasure-hunters, explorers and freebooters, for the forest was once home to the ancient Ethrum, the forbearers of all the humans of the region. The ruins of their once-great kingdoms lay hidden in the forest deeps. Old towers on hills, dungeons beneath them, temples, monasteries and the ruins of all manner of building houses; treasure long forgotten, gold and gems, magic artifacts and sorcery both pure and foul.

## AREAS OF INTEREST

**ENDS MEET:** Where the Old Post Road and Southern Way meet lays the small village of Ends Meet. Once a thriving trade

town, it has since fallen on hard times and has slowly wasted away to the rump of a community it now is. The remnants of an old stone wall surround portions of the village. The wall is in ruins and in but a few places, doesn't rise above three feet. A small inn and trading post, the Cockleburrr Inn and Tavern, encompass the pride and joy of the slightly suspicious but overall friendly villagers, who number about three hundred.

The most prominent figure in Ends Meet is Otto Wagner, the proprietor of the Cockleburrr Inn and Tavern. He is a retired rogue and mercenary. He came somewhere from the Gelderland...an orphan...and worked as a kitchen rat on a pirate ship until he killed his first man at which point he joined the crew. He pirated along the coasts of the straights of Ursal and the Inner Sea until he joined the 'navy' of Fiume of the Hanse city states. He fought orcs and trolls in the Gottland for several years and earned his name as a troll slayer in those parts of the world. He met and fell in love with a thief name Karlia. They ran together for many years, eventually wandering south into the Wilds north of Kayomar where, it appears, orcs slew Otto. Karlia took his body into Maine and had him resurrected. They continued their adventuring ways only a short while but he changed considerably and wanted to take their loot and retire. They ended up where he grew up, in the Gelderland. He ran his own crew for awhile. But shortly after that the Paladins arrested Karlia and had her drawn and quartered. Her body parts were buried in unmarked graves in unmarked locations (the fate of all thieves/rogues and many adventurers in Kayomar) so that Otto could not find her nor bring her back from the dead. He wandered listless for awhile, and eventually ended up in Ends Meet, where he reside to this day. He claims almost no friends and allies, some few rogues in the west, but nothing in these parts. He opened the tavern, later, the inn, and has run them ever since. His real name is Otto Wagner.

For full descriptions of other citizens of Ends Meet please refer to the already published **Mortality of Green** or **Ends Meet**.

**GREENBRIAR:** Another village, Greenbriar, resides under the folds of the wood. It is smaller than Ends Meet and sporting only a tavern (the Long House); Greenbriar sits astride the Westerling River. The hundred or so hearty souls who inhabit Greenbriar are a friendly, if cautious, bunch. The size of the village makes them far more vulnerable-and thus more watchful-than their neighbors in Ends Meet.

**ALICE:** The village of Alice grew up where the Southern Way intersected with the Valley of the Frog. Woodsmen and their families settled the village, and for a brief time plied their trade upon the bluff. They eventually abandoned it when a series of curses befell the village.

**MOUNT HERMITAGE:** Not far from Alice lies a small hill region called Mount Hermitage, under which lie a warren of caves. In those dark and dirty caves lives a family of humans who have for too long removed themselves from any civilizing influences. A witch of some power rules them.

## THE BOWLGAAR

The Bowlgaar Orcs are a tribe of orcs living along the eastern slopes of the Rhodope Mountains. They wandered south from the Wilds shortly after the Winter Dark Wars. Following the course of the Danau River, they migrated into Kayomar, raiding and plundering. They settled in the Twin Forks region but the paladins drove them further into the South Lands, where they crossed the Danau into the Shelves of the Mist. They continued migrating south, sacking Petersboro at one point until they moved into the hill country between the darkenfold and Rhodope Mountains. They eventually settled in the country of Elthrop along the flanks of the Rhodope Mountains and in the Linkmaan Gap, a wide, deep valley that cuts through the Rhodope Mountains from east to west. This was an ancient holding of the Linkmaan Family from Kayomar, abandoned these several thousand years. The few people who lived there they slew or enslaved. The Bowlgaar built cantonments, large wooden fenced palisades with villages in them. Their numbers grew as they lived in the Elthrop County, which they mispronounced into Uwlthrop. Their main cantonment they called Bowlgaardge, which is the Village of the Bowlgaar. Their numbers continued to grow until there were several thousands of them and their holds and fastnesses were sprawled throughout the Gap.

They are well armed and fierce, raiding throughout the southern Darkenfold and the Rhodope Mountains. Having lived in relative obscurity in their mountain fastness they know little of the world at large, fighting small battles in the forgotten wilderness, raiding the goblins of the mountains, the elves or humans of the wood.

The orc Warlord Maelgg the Red leads them, and lately an Umbrian Wizard has joined them.

## WHERE ENDS MEET

The adventure begins in the small town of Ends Meet in the deeps of the Darkenfold. The characters have gathered in Mr. Otto Wagner's comfortable Cockleburrr Inn and Tavern. Their adventures, whether those pitched against the Troll Lord Quagmire, or on some other far distant and lonely road have landed them in a house where warm mead, stewed chicken, potatoes and carrots are the treasure of the evening. Ends Meet is quiet, but its citizens are none too shy about talking, especially when they asked questions about their beloved Darkenfold and the many terrors it houses. It is with a strange relish that they recount grisly tales of death and mayhem, of the fall of heroes and the madness that afflicts the many people who come to this ancient forest seeking gold and glory.

It is here in the Inn that they overhear several of the locals recounting the following tale. The Castle Keeper should read, amend, or shorten the following text as necessary as to not overtax the patience of anxious adventurers. Several of the villagers are telling the story at once, no doubt interrupting each other as they go.

*"Hye! Remember that load of cypress we took down to Alice when we were lads? Good money in that I'll say. Lots of nice*

*thing I bought for my poor old mom." This remark coming from Luth Merridoos, the village tanner, a large, simple looking fellow in a work smock.*

*"Alice, eh? Hadn't heard that name in a spell of storms. Where was that village?" This from a younger fellow, covered in the soot of a smithy, Ed by name, a recent immigrant employed by Benjamin the blacksmith.*

*"Ah, Alice. A good place in its day," answers a wiry looking old timer named Enip. "That old village, it lies south on the Southern Way, where that rough-cut road was to cross the Pigs Trail, built on some low-lying bluffs. A small village on the edge of the world, Alice was founded by woodsmen who migrated from our very own Ends Meet you see. The village prospered for some years, boasting an inn, a store and other shops and a population of over a hundred souls. But it twermt meant to be, for a series of tragic events robbed her of any future. She fell to under a series of mishaps -some say curses- that left her folk without food or water and left them mad and homeless.*

*It all started when Loretta Craddock went mad you see."*

*"There your wrong Enip! It started when those elves kidnapped her daughter!!" A grizzled old gray beard chimes in.*

*"Hye! They stole her daughter and up and killed her husband." Luth interjects. Then leaning forward across the table shouts across the bar, "Hey Olivia! What was old man Craddock's youngest daughter's name?"*

*"Karen." This from a well dressed, kindly looking man. Charl Sands sitting at another table.*

*"Hye! Karen indeed. That being Loretta's youngest. She lived to take to the woods, mad as a carpet of sewed up hens herself!"*

*"Well there you are, you old twist! You are right. But aside from all that Loretta, she brought the first curse down on the folk of Alice. She never got over the loss of her daughters . . . one stolen by those damned elves as you say, the other went out looking for own sister . . . this after the elves slew her husband as you say, and she went mad."*

*Turning then to young Ed. "Early one morning, the folk of Alice were brought from their cozy beds by a wild-pitched screaming. They soon discovered Loretta standing in the middle of the town, singing in a high tone, songs of the Winter Dark Wars. Before anyone could do anything, she fled to the bluffs and threw herself over. Soon thereafter, the village well dried up . . . the first curse don't you know. Folk had to go down to the creek at the foot of "Loretta's Bluff" to gather their water, and many tales tell of encountering the ghost of that poor woman."*

*Grunts from around the bar of "Aye" and "I remember that."*

*"Hells bells came to roost in Alice after that. An old, foul-smelling, evil-tempered harpy nested in the forest near by. Too old to do anything but crone her curses at the villagers, and too clever to be easily caught, she harassed the folk of Alice for months. She met her end though, well deserved by any measure,*



by a well-placed can of nails, thrown by our very own Charl Sands,” motioning to Charl at his table, who himself seems lost in thought. “Charl there, he runs the General Store now, but in those days he lived with his bride just outside Alice. Well, anyway, that can of nails clocked that old harpy in the head and knocked her from her perch. She fell dead as a doornail into the town’s communal cow pen. But her stink and disease caused all the cows to die within a fortnight.

“That was the second curse, you see.”

Luth interrupts again. His voice serious and to the point. “The third curse that sent the last remaining folk to greener pastures occurred on a late winter’s eve. An unusually harsh winter brought uncommon amounts of snow to Alice and the surrounding forest, and the village suffered for the want of ready water and stores of food. In the midst of this suffering, a sleigh came to town, arriving from the south. It was seemingly laden with all manner of good food and drink. In truth, it was sent from Lilly Fair, where the Dark Queen rules. That evil woman and her people drew forth the folk from Alice and ensorcelled them so that they fled into the winter’s wilderness and died or came to the doors of Ends Meet, half frozen and out of their minds . . . that’s how old man Wagner found Charl Sands don’t you know, froze as a stick of firewood on his doorstep.

The conversation goes on for awhile, listing the villagers who died or vanished into the darkened eves of the forest. There seems to be a grim, sad, pride in the ferocity of the forest and its ability to consume travelers.

That last stroke proved the fatal blow to Alice, and it stood a ghost town ever after. There are some three dozen houses, cottages and barns still standing, though many of these are in ruins. Few go to Alice, for the belief that Lilly Fair controls the land is strong, and all put credence to the ghost of Loretta’s bluff, the harpy’s pestilence, and all the other myriad haunts that remain. It’s a bad place for sure. But you know, its houses were left as they were, and all the wealth of those folks left alone for the wolves to scour. Some say there’s a lot more to Alice. Me? I don’t buy it, but maybe . . .”

Charl Sands is undoubtedly in the tavern, as he is every night. He is sitting at a table in front of the fire listening to the same tale he has heard many hundreds of times before. But this time it fires his imagination. If the characters seem interested and ask questions or even if they appear as if they are adventurers of some measure he waits for an opportune moment to engage the characters and seek to hire them to retrieve some treasure he left in his house in Alice so many years ago.



His story is as simple as it is tragic. He fled Alice chasing his wife into the woods. A pack of wolves killed her not far from the village. His attempts to save her proved fruitless and he fled north, the wolves hounding him to the very walls of Ends Meet. He explains that when his wife and he fled their house, they left all their worldly possessions behind, including several small treasures, and that he has never made any attempt to retrieve them. If asked why, he has no real reason; but explains that he is old and his wife long gone, and he knows that he has little time left on the world, so he would like to have some token of her memory. He wants to hire the party to go to Alice and fetch back his wedding rings - his and his wife's - both stored in a hidden compartment in one of the house's walls. There is some other wealth in the cubby, though for the life of him he can't remember what, and the party is welcome to whatever they find. He only wants the rings. He's shy and won't talk about Alice much, if the characters push him he starts muttering about cold snows and wolves. If the players are interested he offers them 100gp in credit at his general store and 100gp in coin after they return the rings to him.

If they take the job, Charl explains to them about the overland road to Alice as well as how to get there faster via the Mistbane. He'll give them directions to the river, where several small canoes lay hidden. They are welcome to use them. He gives them descriptions of his house and how it is easy to find from the Valley of the Frog as it is the only habitation that juts out over the cliff face, supported as it is by stilts angled into the bluff.

The party is encouraged to travel the easy trek to the Mistbane River where they can take several boats out onto the river and head south. In this way they can avoid the dangerous Southern Way and enter the Valley of the Frog, which in turn will bring them abreast of Loretta's Bluff and to the village of Alice. This trek would normally take two days on the river, to where the Valley of the Frog meets the Mistbane, and one day up the Valley. That's assuming, of course, that there are no dangers on the road.

If the characters should choose to take the Southern Way instead, adjust the adventure accordingly. Move the orc encounter designed for the river bank to the Southern Way. They will miss out on the chance of learning about the healing magic of the Willow Mounds. This can aid them with any wounds by giving them a method of healing quickly. However, if they rescue the half-elf from Mount Hermitage, the half-elf will reveal it to them to save his own life (see *Mount Hermitage* below). The overland journey takes at least 7 days' travel as small trees, thickets, bramble, and the like choke much of the Southern Way. Using the wilderness encounter chart below should make the journey a memorable one.

### **ORCS UPON THE GREEN**

It is roughly 11 miles from Ends Meet to Merric's Ford on the Mistbane River. There is a small trail just beyond the bridge in town that leads to the Ford. If the weather holds, it should not take more than a day to get to the Ford. The first mile or so is a

little rough as the forest is thick with young growth, but beyond that it opens up into an open country with an older stand of trees. The walk is easy going from the here to the river with possible encounters. The party arrives at the river late in the afternoon, just as the sun is setting.

When the characters approach the river read the following text.

**The trail opens up and the evening sky greets you in all its glory. To your left, on the south, the ground begins to rise in a small 12-foot-high abutment, capped by wicked looking briar hedges and brush. To your right and in front of you, the country is open with only a few trees marking this far-western edge of the Darkenfold. Below you, the waters of the Mistbane slip by with little sound or fury, only a gentle rushing of so much water. Beyond the 100-foot span of the river the country rises suddenly into the broken gullies, washes, and ridges of the foot hills of the Rhodope Mountains. The soil there is poor and rocky and supports only patches of stunted black jack oaks, thistle hedges and other bramble. In the far distance, these same mountains loom on the horizon.**

The abutment to the left drops off suddenly to the water's edge, the undergrowth growing right up to the edge of the abutment and down its slope. It is here that several long canoes lay hidden.

On the far bank, about a quarter of a mile from the river, laying beneath some bramble on a small rise are two orc scouts. They are well hidden and it takes an extraordinarily watchful person to see them (Wisdom (perception) DC 20). They watch the party for a long time, noting their number, equipment and bearing. Though the orcs cannot hear the party, they try to determine which, if any, of the party members is the leader. Any characters seen pointing or 'lecturing' the others are marked. Both of these orcs are young and anxious to make their first kills.

If no character crosses the river, the orc scouts slip back down the hill and return to the orc camp to raise the alarm.

If any of the party crosses the river alone, the larger of the two slips back down the hill out of sight and moves up the long gully that spills out onto the short beach. He'll move as quickly and quietly as he can to get in a position to attack. If the character is still there, the orc screams his war cry, leaping out of the brush and hurling his spear. He'll pull his war axe and charge the character.

**ORC** (CE Medium Humanoid) HP 15 (HD 2d8+6), AC 13, Spd 30. Str 16 Dex 12 Con 16 Int 7 Wis 11 Cha 10. Perception 10. Intimidation +2, Survival +2. War Axe +5 (1d6+2) or Spear +5 (1d6+2/1d8+2 (versatile); 20/60). SA Darkvision 60ft; Double move as bonus action; favored enemy (humans; as ranger). He is wearing a leather coat and carries a flask filled with rune juice. He isn't carrying anything else, but does have a brass arm band on his right upper arm.

The other scout watches until he witnesses the battle's finish. He then promptly slips back down the hill and heads back to his encampment. The orc takes a little time to hide his tracks as he

retreats and does several switch backs. Should the party cross the river and try to search the bank they are likely, assuming the right skills, to find the trail of the orc and back track it to where he was lying with his companion (Wisdom (survival) DC 12). They can then attempt to track the second orc. He'll have a good 15-30 minute lead on the party and catching him is almost impossible. The orc will arrive back at the larger orc encampment in about 2 hours.

The orcs have stationed themselves about four miles down river, camped in the ruins of an ancient temple. There are 26 raiders in the band, including leaders and scouts. 12 are regular orc soldats, 5 are archers, and 7 are scout/archers. Their leader is a fierce but intelligent brute named Ul-Rot. He commands with an iron fist and drives his raiders hard. The scout leader, Pelg, questions his leadership. Pelg is slightly smaller, but very crafty and filled with a murderous hate. He keeps his scouts close when he can and doesn't commit them to open battle unless he perceives an enemy is wounded or immobilized. If the scout the party encounters is slain Pelg is in a foul mood.

When Ul-Rot gets word of the humans on the river he marshals out his raiders and makes for Merric's Ford immediately. It should be early evening. Ul-Rot sends his scouts out to find the location of the party. They move forward cautiously in a wide moon shaped pattern, the rest of the orcs about a quarter mile behind. Should the party be venturing out in the hills and the orcs spy them the scouts fall back or if discovered fight a running battle falling back to the main group.

In all, it takes about 3 hours for Ul-Rot to move his troops back to the Ford. If the humans are there, Ul-Rot plans to attack them just before first dawn. If they have taken the canoes already, he loses them and they dodged the encounter. He waits upon the Ford banks for the next hapless crew of adventurers. But if the party have set up camp on either bank, he executes the following plan or a version of it.

He divides his band in two, leaving the scouts on the western river bank; he moves upstream and he and his raiders swim across the river. They swing around in a wide arc so that they can attack from the direction of Ends Meet.

The orcs wait until it is the darkest part of the evening, about 4 a.m. At that point the scouts creep out of the woods down to the river's edge, making some noise in hopes of attracting the party's attention. If the party doesn't seem to notice they make more noise, calling out for their friend killed earlier in the day. When they think they have the party's attention they shout at them and taunt them, shooting some arrows over toward the camp. Ul-Rot watches for awhile. If the party gathers itself and moves down to the river, they attack immediately, silently swooping down through the camp. The archers run along the flank and begin shooting arrows at which ever character seems to be the leader. The orcs strike in full fury. Pelg watches from the far shore to make sure all is going well and then sends his orcs into the waters to swim across; it will take several rounds to do so.

**UL-ROT** (CE Medium Humanoid) HP 43 (HD 5d8+15), AC 18, Spd 30. Str 16 Dex 12 Con 16 Int 9 Wis 13 Cha

13. Perception 10. Intimidation +3. Scimitar +6 (2d8+2) or Heavy crossbow +5 (1d10; 100ft/400ft). SA Darkvision 60ft; Double move. He carries studded leather armor, shield, scimitar, heavy crossbow, 8 bolts, dagger, 3gp, and 20sp. Challenge 2 (450 XP). He is wearing a suit of banded chain mail, a large iron helm and iron shield. He has a water skin on him, 12gp and a totem of Unklar carved in jade worth 100gp. Ul-Rot is large and brutish even by orc standards. He weighs 280 pounds and stands 6 feet 2 inches tall.)

**ORCS, RAIDERS X12** (CE Medium Humanoid) HP 15 (HD 2d8+6), AC 13, Spd 30. Str 16 Dex 12 Con 16 Int 7 Wis 11 Cha 10. Perception 10. Intimidation +2. Scimitar +5 (1d8+2) or Heavy crossbow +5 (1d10; 100ft/400ft). SA Darkvision 60ft; Double move as bonus action. They all have iron war hats. Each orc carries 1d6gp and 2d12sp.)

**ORCS, ARCHERS X5** (CE Medium Humanoid) HP 15 (HD 2d8+6), AC 13, Spd 30. Str 16 Dex 16 Con 16 Int 7 Wis 11 Cha 10. Perception 10. Intimidation +2. longbow +5 (1d8+3; 150/600ft) or war axe +5 (1d6+6). SA Darkvision 60ft; Double move as bonus action. They carry small amounts of food, 12 arrows apiece and 1d4gp and 1d12sp.

**PELG** (CE Medium Humanoid) HP 15 (HD 2d8+6), AC 13, Spd 30. Str 16 Dex 12 Con 16 Int 7 Wis 12 Cha 10. Perception 13 (+3). Intimidation +2, Nature +3, Survival +3. 2 Scimitars +5 (1d8+2) or Heavy crossbow +5 (1d10; 100ft/400ft). SA Darkvision 60ft; Double move as bonus action, favored enemy (elves), two-weapon fighting (2 scimitars). He is wearing hide armor, and carries 14gp and 36sp. He also has a small silver whistle that he uses to communicate with his troops. He also has a silver arm band on his right upper arm.)

**GORLINS, SCOUTS X7** (NE S humanoids): HP 7 (HD 2d6), AC 15, Spd 30ft. Str 8 Dex 14 Con 10 Int 10 Wis 14 Cha 8. Perception 14 (+4). Nature +4, Stealth +6, Survival +4. Spear +4 (1d6+2/1d8+2 (versatile); 20/60ft), long knife +4 (1d4+2; 20/60ft) or shortbow +4 (1d6+2; 80/320ft). SA: disengage or hide, favored enemy (elves). They are wearing leather or hide armor and carry a flask filled with rune juice. They aren't carrying anything else, but they do each have a brass arm band on their right upper arm.

There is a 1-in-20 chance that a patch of mist drifts down the river during the battle, if so, there is a 1-in-20 chance that it contains a banshee (see *Mistbane River* below). The banshee attacks anyone in or near the water, orc, man, or demi-human.

Ul-Rot fights ferociously, but if he feels he's overmatched he calls a retreat and his band scatters to the four winds, all fleeing in different directions. If any orcs pass back through the camp and some surely will, they grab whatever backpacks, bed rolls, camping gear or weapons that they can. The whole band eventually regroups at the temple where they were previously camped. Tracking the orcs is possible but very difficult as their boot prints are scattered everywhere and lead in multiple directions (Wisdom (survival) DC 18). Across the river the scouts use extreme care in covering their tracks as they retreat into the mountains making tracking them hard as well (Wisdom

(survival) DC 20). However, a mile or so south of the western river bank (where the orcs scouts originally were) the tracks are left undisturbed and are easier to follow (Wisdom (survival) DC 13). In either case, tracking can be very time consuming, and as the orcs are in a hurry, a ranger will note that it will be difficult to overtake them.

If the party is overthrown, the orcs try to drive them into the river. If the characters begin swimming downstream, as is their only choice, the orcs do not follow for they have a fear of the Willow Trees that grow further down the Mistbane. Assuming the characters are victorious the canoes are there for the taking and travel on the Mistbane can begin.

## THE MISTBANE RIVER

The dark waters of the Mistbane surround you as you move slowly down river. Small patches of mist graze the water's surface as they drift with the water's currents. The river widens considerably south of the Ford. The banks rise gently from the waters edge, where the grass languidly hangs in the water, bent with the current. To the east, the forest looms, dark and deep; to the west, the trees are sparse and the ground rises into the broken hills just a few hundred yards beyond the river's edge. From time to time you spy a willow tree, standing alone upon a small knoll, its rooty feet covered in thick, comfortable looking grass.

The Mistbane River, or the Blue Creek, has its headwaters in the far Rhodope Mountains where it begins as little more than a trickle. It tumbles and flows, following many courses through the Shelves of the Mist, where it gains more strength from tributaries and earns its river name. It breaks free of those hills just north and east of the small town of Petersboro and the Darkenfold. The river widens here and slows its pace considerably, drifting down beneath the eves of the Darkenfold where it continues its southern journey. The river is slow, ranges from 80-120 feet wide, and is rather deep except in the few fords that breach its travel. Patches of light or heavy fog, which reduce visibility considerably, accompany the Mistbane's flow. Considered by many of the locals to be dangerous they avoid the fog at all costs. They speak of tales of ghosts who snatch the unwary from their roosts and carry them to the seas beyond. The river continues its course through the Darkenfold by turning sharply west in the Millorian and passing through Lilly Fair, an even more dank and deadly portion of that horrible wood. The Westerling eventually joins the Mistbane and then with increased strength it flows into the Danau River. The banks of the Mistbane sport many wonderfully tall and full-bodied willow trees. These trees often reside on small grassy knolls at the water's edge allowing their branches and leaves to brush the water. They are vaguely-sentient relatives of the older sentient trees and treants. These willows serve the river as guardians of sorts, offering refuge from the river or the forest, or both.

The river is, as the locals attest, haunted. For to the north, just below the river's headwater, in the lands known as the Shelves of the Mist, the elves once gathered in great numbers. They built

refuges from the Winter Dark in the many hidden valleys and dell. But a long war, the Seven Years War, with orcs from the east, left many homeless and or dead. Amongst these was their beloved Princess. She lies buried upon the banks of the river amidst a field of winter lilies. From there, her spirit rose and traveled the full course of the meandering river to the Beaches of Lawn. A thick fog often covers the Fields of Winter Lilies, for here the dead gather (the spirits of the fallen elves) both of the great wars and those who lived in more modern times. The scars of the Winter Dark still haunt the elves of Aihrde and their fallen cannot come back to life. When they die, their spirits perish with them or wander as lost souls throughout the world. And here where the winter lilies grow, they gather, for rumor of their Princess comes to them and they seek to follow her to the sea.

In patches great and small, these dead spirits of the elves travel the length of the Mistbane River, wrapped in fog and mist, following the river's course to the Bay of Brund. They do not travel quickly and only the strongest winds can move them, but even then these patchy clouds of soul-dust defy the wind, moving slower than one would think they should. Each patch contains 1-4 banshees, some are evil, some are good, and most are uncaring, seeking their princess. They haunt the river all year long, and lingering in real patches of fog or river mist. Encountering one does not necessarily mean a battle must ensue. As often as not, they drift by or around creatures without ever taking notice, though those so engulfed may see the haunted, terrified faces of the dead leering out at them from the moist fog. Any form of excitement enrages the banshees. If creatures flee or attempt to cast spells or act out in any way, it may drive the banshee to attack (50% chance); however, if there is battle or the banshees attacked, the banshees go wild and attack anything within the mist or on its edges.

Encountering these creatures can be deadly as any encounter with a banshee can, though the banshees rarely travel more than a dozen or so feet from the waters edge. Protection lies in the shade of the willow trees that dot the bank of the Mistbane. Here the spirits of the dead will not go, for the willow trees hold a deeper appeal than that cast by their fallen princess – and they fear them.

**NOTE:** Not all the mist or fog on the Mistbane River has banshees in it, most in fact, does not.

**BANSHEE, MIST, 1** (CE Medium Undead) HP 58 (HD 13d8), AC 12, Spd 40ft (fly/hover). Str 1 Dex 15 Con 10 Int 13 Wis 11 Cha 16. Saves Wis +2, Cha +4. Perception 10 (0). Death touch +4 (3d6+2 necrotic), Horrific appearance (All who can see, DC 13 Wis save at disadvantage or frightened for 1 minute; new save each round to end effect; success=immune for 24 hours), wail of the mist (DC 13 Cha save or paralyzed for 1d4 rounds; second attack while paralyzed = new save at disadvantage or maddened-can't take actions or understand language, can only speak in gibberish. Third attack = save at disadvantage or death). SA resistant acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing and slashing from nonmagicsl weapons; immune to cold, necrotic, poison, charmed, exhausted, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained;

*Darkvision 60ft, detect life (5 miles), incorporeal movement. The banshees possess nothing and drift on downstream after any encounter, deadly or otherwise.*

## **WILLOW MOUNDS**

The willow trees along the Mistbane are possessed of powerful magics. Anyone who finds refuge beneath one comes under its spells.

**The willow grows tall above you, but it leans out over the river course where its long arms seem to drag through the cool waters. The mists seem unable to cling to the tree and it is utterly free of the river fogs. Beneath these branches, you feel very safe. The forest takes on a different, almost foreign feel and seems somehow far away. You realize how weary you are as well and the thick grassy loam that laps up to the tree's bowl offer an inviting place to rest and heal.**

Any being who slips beneath the branches of these willow trees is affected by a sleep spell. This spell behaves in all ways like the first-level spell, but can affect creatures of any level or hit dice. Those affected by the magical sleep must make a constitution saving throw. This saving throw determines how long the target is affected by the spell; the Save DC depends upon the age of the tree. Young trees have a DC 15 middle-aged trees have a DC 18, and ancient trees a DC 20. A successful saving throw means the effect lasts until the following morning. Failing the save casts the target into an exceptionally deep slumber lasting 4d6 weeks. Targets failing the save are hidden by the trees via a hallucinatory terrain spell cast upon them; the save DC to see through this illusion is the same as for the sleep spell.

If the target slept normally, upon waking they will gain the effects of a long rest and will recover *all* expended hit dice instead of half; a side effect of this curing is the target is somewhat hungry. Targets waking from a deep slumber will also receive the benefits of *greater restoration* and *heal*, but will also be very hungry and thirsty; also, those awakened early from the deep slumber will not receive these additional benefits.

The willow does not do this from malice but rather to aid those in need. But being a tree, it thinks like a tree and takes little note of the time that may elapse when they snare someone. A willow will ensnare groups of people, but if a willow already has a victim (10% chance) then it will not try again and those who find refuge under their eves can rest unmolested. If several members of a party fail their save, but some do not, waking the victims is impossible *under the tree* and moving them can only be done by overcoming the *hallucinatory terrain*. Any character that saw the sleeping victim lie down or knew that they were there gains advantage on the saving throw. Once removed from beneath the tree, waking the victims is easy.

The banshees will not go beneath the willow eves, and the orcs of the region hate and fear the trees and avoid them always.

If the characters salvaged the canoes, travel down the Mistbane is relatively easy. To the west, lie a series of foothills and

beyond them the towering snow covered peaks of the Rhodope Mountains. To the west, the forest looms, gradually rising in a series of stark rocky bluffs. Travel to the Valley of the Frog should only take about two days from Merric's Ford, and less if the party vigorously canoes. If they are foot bound, or swimming, it will be much more dangerous. A wide trail on the west bank of the river lies in the foot hills, but it is in prime orc country. Travel by foot here allows the characters to move about 12 miles a day. Travel on the east bank, is much harder. The land rises to a series of bluffs overlooking the river and the forest here is very deep. Small game trails can be picked up but they only allows travelers to move about 6 miles a day. These bluffs end only at the Valley of the Frog.

In any case, the party will know of a certainty when they arrive at the Valley of the Frog, for when they come abreast of the valley itself they encounter a small island in the center of the river. Amidst the low vegetation and small trees is a large, ancient, vine-covered statue.

**Upon a small island in the middle of the river, stands a huge stone statue. Worn by rain and erosion, its shape is easy enough to make out. Carved in the dark gray granite is a huge, frog-headed man, sitting upon a throne, he is nude, and carries only a scepter. He looks to the west, toward the mountains; at his back is a broad valley, flanked in the north by steep cliffs and more forest and in the south by huge elm and maple trees. A clearly-marked trail leads into the valley deeps. This can be no other than the Valley of the Frog, where the Pigs Trail runs the length of the infamous Loretta's Bluff.**

## **THE LAMENT OF ALICE**

Alice lies at the end of the Southern Way, where that rough road intersects Loretta's Bluff. It consists of a dozen or so houses circled around a stone well house. Several houses, Charl Sands' amongst them, lie within the confines of the forest. A small trail leads from the village's western edge into the forest and along the bluff. This trail leads to the Monastery. The Pigs Trail runs the length of the Valley of the Frog, from the Broken Vale to the Ford. The Pigs Trail is actually a creek bed that runs dry far more often than it does wet. There are places on the trail where water bubbles up from the ground, flowing down through the rocks for a few dozen meters before slipping back beneath the earth. True to its name the Pigs Trail is a major rutting ground for wild boar.

The river here is very broad and shallow and fording most of the year around is easy. Travel to Alice must be done via foot from here and the journey must begin up the Valley as the bluffs that have lined the river's eastern bank for some days curve back around to the east and serve as the Valley's northern wall.

Travel in the valley is fraught with the normal dangers of the Darkenfold; however, the ghost of Alice haunts this western section of the valley. This incorporeal creature is largely harmless as she roams the valley calling out for her husband and daughters. She is not uncommon here and most nights and

even days the sounds of her cries roll through the valley. Most mistake this for the wind and few can understand her mournful words. If one does listen however, they might pick up the tell-tale sounds of her daughter's names and pleas to return to their mother's empty arms. Whether understood or not, the sound of her voice deadens the spirits of the living.

It is possible to encounter the ghost of Loretta any time during the day or night, but she does not remain in one place for long. Often she approaches campfires, unseen, mumbling and groaning in soft tones, leaving travelers with feelings of unease. She is only visible head on. She greets those unlucky enough to see her with a gaunt face, twisted with anguish and fear.

Those who hear her cries must make a successful charisma save or suffer a -1 penalty on all attribute checks for a full day after hearing it. While traveling between the Ford and the apple tree (see below) there is a 1-in-4 chance of encountering her. Turning her is almost impossible as she does not stay and fight anyone. If by chance a cleric should be lucky the ghost flees down the valley, only to continue her fruitless search.

**The trip up the Valley is an easy one. The 100-foot-high bluff guards your north flank. The trees of the northern plateau grow up to, and in some cases, over the edge of the bluff. Roots jut out from the cliff face tangling back into themselves and the rocky dirt. Some trees lean far over and out from the cliff edge and from time to time these trees loosen huge chunks of the cliff which plummet the hundred or so feet to the valley floor. Loose wood is plentiful everywhere as are fallen trees, rocks and piles of tangled, dirt-covered roots. The creek bed is wide and affords easy travel as the country to the south opens up in wider spaces, older trees and less underbrush. Though you can see further in these eyes of the southern plateau than you have been able to in the north, the trees seem less hospitable, almost as if they are watching you with contempt.**

Travel up the Valley of the Frog is easy and the party can make 12-14 miles a day. It shouldn't take more than three days to arrive at the cliffs under Alice. If for some reason the characters attempt to climb the bluff, they discover that it is rather difficult. The cliff face consists of many small rocks and the like and crumbles when anyone places much weight upon it. Any attempt to climb is done so at a DC 15 Strength (athletics) or Dexterity (acrobatics) check. A climb check is required every 10 feet. If someone does make it to the top they will of course be able to find easy purchase for ropes and haul the rest of the party up. The forest here is very thick, but a game trail runs along the edge of the bluff, curving around in the west to go back up the Mistbane, but in the east, it leads directly to the monastery (see below).

The hunting in the Valley is especially good with wild boars being plentiful. A ranger can pick up their tracks fairly easily (DC 12 Wisdom (survival) check) and hunt them to any one of their ruts or while they are grousing around for food. The hunt should take no more than a day as boars throughout the valley and come to the Pigs Trail for fresh grass and water.

Of course, as with any place that has good hunting, there are predators afoot and this valley is the favorite haunt of a young hill giant by the name of Ferenc. He lives in the Broken Vale Country, about 50 miles east of the village of Alice, in the Cerronne Hills to the south and west of Gurthap Falls. He hunts throughout the Valley and all through the northern Millorian to the Westerling. He never climbs up the bluff. His favorite food is wild boar and he spends the dominant amount of his hunting in the Valley of the Frog.

There is a 1-in-8 chance that any encounters rolled in the Valley of the Frog will be with Ferenc. Whether he stumbles on them, or they him, or if he is near while they are cooking boar the smell of it will attract him. Ferenc is not so very smart, but he is no fool either. If he encounters the party and they seem very strong (i.e. in numbers, armor, weapons), he will not attack them. However, if there are only a few he will certainly attempt to spice up his diet with roasted human or demi-human.

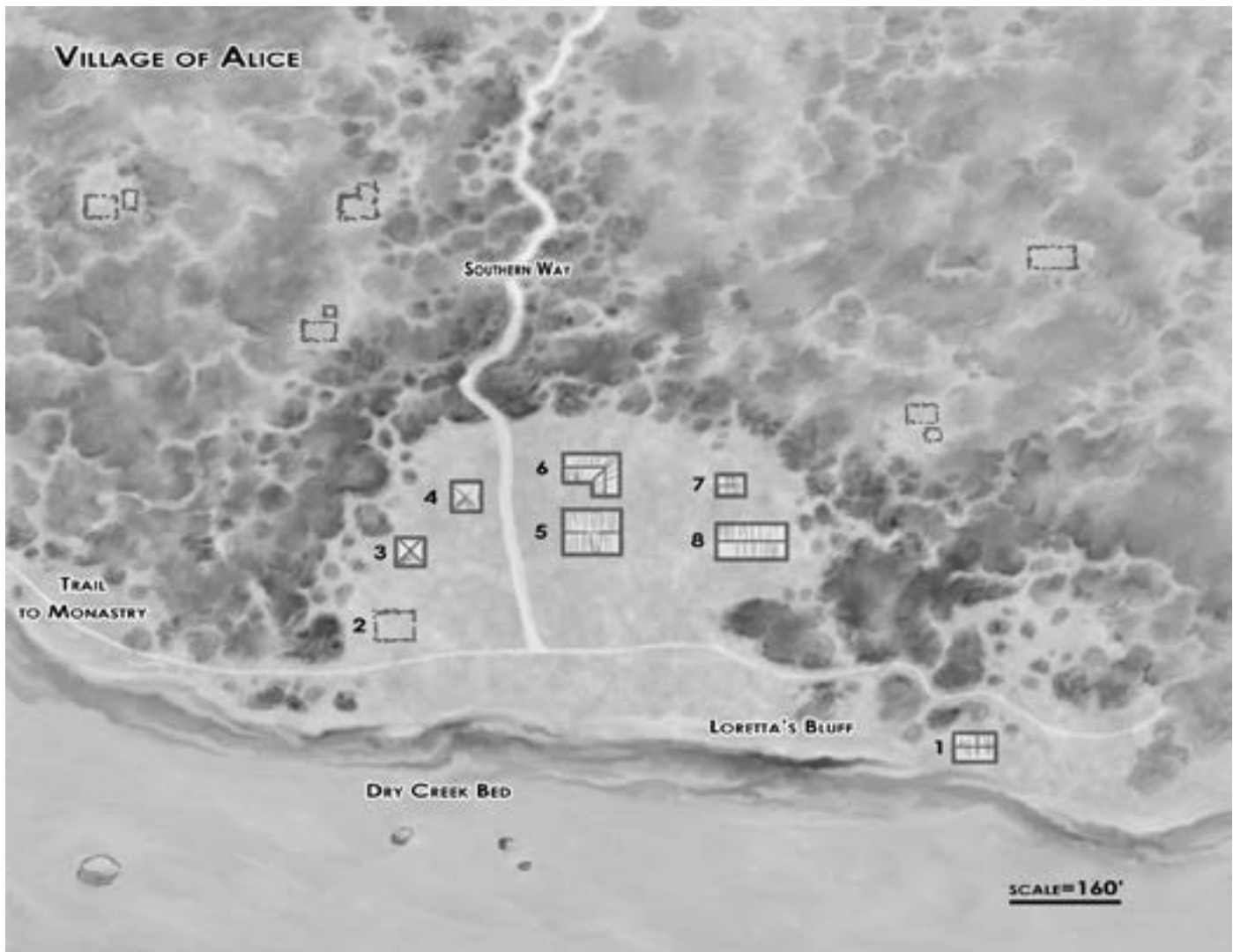
**HILL GIANT** (CE Huge Giant) HP 105 (HD 10d12+40), AC, 13 Spd 40ft. Str 21 Dex 8 Con 19 Int 5 Wis 9 Cha 6. Perception 12 (+2). Greatclub +8 (3d8+5). Rock +8 (3d10+5, 60/240ft) SA Multiattack (2 greatclub)

Ferenc loves to pummel things with his hands so will prefer to hurl the tree trunk at his victims and then weigh into them swinging and punching. If pressed hard he'll attempt to grab the smallest creatures and take off running through the forest. His lair is a wide-mouthed, shallow cave overlooking a small gulch in the Cerronne Hills (see map). Hanging from the roof of the cave in a large bear skin are 350gp in various coin as well as a rolled up tapestry depicting a knight in battle with some type of demon worth 75gp, 10 assorted gems worth 200gp and a magical +2 whip. The lair itself is piled high with bones, wood for his fire and various animal pelts that serve him as clothing or bedding.

### **LORETTA'S AGONY**

A few miles west of Alice, a portion of Loretta's Bluff juts out into the valley in a wide U shape. The trees atop the ridge are thick and hang over the edge in a tangled mass. The Monastery of Aliegor lies beyond these tangles, atop the bluff, overlooking the valley. The trail runs at the feet of the bluff, making it impossible to see the monastery from below. However, the terrain to the south opens up into sparse covered hills for about a mile or so, ending with the tree line that marks the beginnings of the Millorian Wood. It is possible to view the top of the monastery from the trees, its stone works barely visible above the trees along the bluff. Any characters venturing that far south will naturally see it.

About a mile down from where the monastery is, at the foot of the bluff, lies a small cave entrance. It is about 2 feet high and four feet wide, rough, and jagged. A little water spills out of it and winds down to the creek bed. This is one of the entrances to the Caverns of Amenut (see *Caverns of Amenut* below). It is difficult to detect and only someone actively looking along the edge of the bluff in this area is likely to find it. During the rainy season, water flows through the caverns and out the cave



entrance, creating a small wash that runs into the creek bed in the valley. Active searchers must make a Wisdom (perception) check at DC 15 in order to discover the cave entrance; otherwise, only those with a Passive perception of 18 or greater will see the entrance. If someone thinks to follow the wash and traces it to its origins, no perception check is necessary.

About two miles further down, travelers are met with the first certain signs of habitation, the house of Charl Sands.

Gradually, the valley widens until the southern edge of the forest stands well over two miles away. The bluff stretches on, cutting through the forest with tumbled rock and clinging vegetation. The country in the valley is open and airy allowing you to see the pale blue sky above. There are only a few old trees dotting the valley here, mostly hickory, but a few ash, as well as one large apple tree. But the most startling sight lies above you, for resting on stilts built into the side of the bluff is a house constructed of rounded tree trunks. A portion of the house rests upon the bluff's topside, however, a good 40 feet of the old building sticks out over the valley. Wood-cut shingles still top the cabin roof and a large porch wraps around the structure.

A simple search of the area reveals an iron ladder built into the bluff. It leads from the valley floor to the top of the cliff, within 10 feet of the house. The apple tree marks the spot where the ladder is built into the bluff. It is very sturdy and easy to navigate. No climbing checks are necessary unless there is adverse weather or the climber is harassed in some way.

#### **AREA 1 THE HOUSE OF CHARL SANDS**

As noted, this house rests on stilts overlooking the valley. It is a simple, square, two roomed domicile with each room roughly 40 x 60 feet. A porch wraps around the whole structure. In the wall separating the two rooms is a large, double-sided fireplace. This wall rests squarely on the bluff as does the chimney. The windows are open, the shutters long since rotted away. The door is intact however, though somewhat the worse for wear. Old, rotten furniture lies in ruins about the cabin, but the structure itself is largely intact.

A troop of mean-spirited pixies and their cultivated pet, an assassin vine, occupy the house. The vine has grown up on the east side of the house and is not readily visible from the ladder or from below. It has crept through the two east windows, and occupies the better part of the back room, creeping out

along the porch overlooking the valley. The pixies dwell in this tangled vegetation, living symbiotically with the vine.

Assuming the characters approach up the ladder, the pixies are aware of them. They watch the party climb until the leader is near the top of the ladder, at which point the chief fey, Mumtin, sticks his head out over the porch, looking down on the party and tries to parley. He demands payment from the characters, threatening to kill them all if they do not yield up something valuable, such as a piece of jewelry, magic item, or the like. If they balk, or ignore him while he talks he displays his bow and magic arrows and tells them of their magical qualities. "You'll all sleep yourselves right off that ladder at my strumming!"

Warn the characters that they are in a dangerous position, a failed save means they could fall off the ladder to almost certain death below.

Assuming they avoid battle, the pixies allow the party to cap the bluff, but they demand a similar payment before they are allowed in the house. The house is now their home they explain and they don't want just anyone wandering about it. They are playful though serious in their treatment of the characters, more wanting to really hurt and bother them than aid them. If the characters attack, being in a far better position now that they are off the ladder, the pixies use their spells to go on the defensive and retreat to the back room into the waiting arms of the assassin vine. Assassin vines are not common and only astute characters who have encountered them before are likely to recognize them, otherwise the vine gains complete surprise.

The pixies flee out the window while the battle rages with the vine. Once safely there they play their fiddles to deadly affect trying to ensorcel the characters while the vine kills them. If the vine is killed, the pixies flee if they can.

**ASSASSIN VINE** (*Unaligned Large Plant*) HP 53 (HD 6d10+18), AC 15, Spd 0. Str 18 Dex 16 Con 16 Int 5 Wis 12 Cha 5. Perception 13(+3). Stealth +7 (*Advantage*). Slam +6 (1d8+4, reach 10ft). SA Multiattack (8), Constrict (*victim grappled, restrained, escape DC 14 each round, automatic 1d6 damage/round*), Sneak attack (+1d8), trunk defense (*advantage on attacks against those trying to attack trunk*), camouflage (*advantage on stealth*), immune to lightning and all conditions, resistance to cold, fire and piercing from nonmagical weapons.

**PIXIES X4** (NG tiny fey): HP 1 (HD 1d4-1), AC 15, Spd 10ft/30ft (fly). Str 2, Dex 20, Con 8, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 15. Perception 14 (+4), Stealth +7. Attack by spell. SA: druid craft, magic resistance, innate spell casting (Cha; Save DC 12; 1/day: confusion, dancing lights, detect evil and good, detect thoughts, dispel magic, entangle, fly, phantasmal force, polymorph, sleep.)

Buried in the tangle arms of the vine are some hidden treasures: 500gp in mixed coin, mostly gold and platinum, and 7 gems (4 at 10gp, 2 at 20gp, and 1 at 50gp. Also in the vines are four rune stones, each with a small totem face carved on them: a frog, snake, crow, and fish. While of little magical value, they are

important in worship of the Og Aust (see below). Bones, odd bits of metal and leather are the only other things in the vines.

Charl Sand's ring and other treasure lies hidden in a secret compartment in the south western corner's stilt. To get to it one has to climb the rail, and down under the house, clinging to the many handholds and beams underneath to get to the stilt in question. Once there, following Sands' directions, finding the little compartment is easy.

Inside is an iron box that contains a small wooden box, containing the wedding rings of Charl Sands (10gp) and his wife (100gp), a leather pouch with 40pp in it, and a dagger in an ornate wooden sheath. This is a +1 dagger, *dragon's bane*.

## AREA 2 OLD HOUSE

Once a solid, one-room home, it is now fallen into ruin. The doors and windows stand empty, the roof beams collapsed and the roof with it. Everything is overgrown and tangled. A small tree grows in the center of the house. The chimney is largely intact, but beyond that, there is nothing of value in the house.

## AREA 3 WELL HOUSE

This stone structure is in relatively good condition, though vines climb its outer walls and weeds grow up to and around the open doorway. The building stands and still has a roof. Inside is a large open well, the brick facing of which rises about 3 feet above the ground. An ancient pulley still hangs above the well, though the rope is long gone. The pulley and cross beam are both iron and rest upon iron legs so they are very serviceable. A few old, rotted buckets lay on the ground against one wall.

This is the well the Og Aust Amenut "poisoned" and it leads directly to the caverns below where he dwells. The well is about four feet in diameter and drops a full 90 feet before it reaches water. Only the top 30 feet are actually bricked in, the rest is rough-cut rock. Climbing down would be extremely difficult without a rope (Strength (athletics) or Dexterity (acrobatics) DC 18, a check should be made every 10 feet). With a rope the DC decreases to 13. Even a casual observation reveals claw marks and ready-made hand holds on the well walls. It is obvious that something routinely climbs up and down the well shaft.

There is a 10% chance that Amenut is clinging to the sides of the well. If he is, he is ravenously hungry and unless one of the characters is carrying the rune stone of the frog (see above, AREA 1) he will attack anyone looking down (for Amenut's stats see CAVERNS OF AMENUT, ROOM 3 below). He will not come out to fight, but rather seeks to drag one of the characters into the well, dropping them and eating them. If they have the rune stone he will slip back into the darkness.

## AREA 4 SMITHY

This three-room house has two chimneys, one very large, and the other rather small. Much of the house is caved-in and overgrown with the north wall in complete ruin. However the back room, with the remnants of a lean-to attached to it, is in



decent shape. A large fire pit beneath the chimney is intact and still possesses several large iron poles on iron stands over the pit. Rotted bellows and a host of pulleys and metal working tools belie the nature of this place. A one-time smithy, there is little of value here other than the iron of these long-abandoned tools. The building can provide shelter, however, as the roof and walls of the smithy portion are still intact.

#### **AREA 5 Two Dogs Inn**

This wooden structure seems far more sound than the others in the town, being built of large uncut tree logs. It is a single story, two room affair with a simple covered front porch. Large windows look out the front and back. Two chimneys, one in the back, the other in the front, crown the wood-shingled roof. The forest has crept up to it, but left it largely undamaged. A board out front, with two dogs etched into its surface still hangs on two chains.

Inside is a large hall with a fire pit on the east wall. Old tables and benches lie scattered around. They are made of thick oak and are still somewhat intact and sturdy. A long plank mounted on two towers of flat stones marks the bar, behind which is a large rack with a 100-gallon keg still in it. The room is empty.

The back room is a kitchen, with another fire pit, a butcher block weighing 250 pounds and several counter tops and racks with old masonry jars, pots, pans and other cookware on them. The room is deserted.

#### **AREA 6 House**

This large building sits up at an odd angle, as if lifted from the ground. It has a front porch, though the railing is gone and the boards are twisted and broken. Upon closer investigation, one discovers that a large tree has grown up behind the house, lifting the whole structure off its foundation a few feet. Its branches cut in through windows and a huge, thick root pushes up from beneath the main floor. The whole structure is a ruin, with board and shingles broken and scattered about the ground. The interior is in shambles with collapsed ceilings, walls, and stairs. It seems to have once been a large and spacious home.

#### **AREA 7 House**

This is a one-room house in decent shape. Constructed much like Charl Sands' home and the Two Dogs Inn of thick timber it stands solid, though an entire hedge of thorny, blackberry bushes have grown up along the eastern (rear) and northern walls. The house is empty but for the fire place and chimney.

#### **AREA 8 STABLES AND BARN**

The town's communal barn is located just north of the village in a clearing dominated by a small pond. It is easily visible from Area 4.

**Before you stands an immense barn. Over 100 feet long and 50 feet wide, with two large, open doors. Little if anything remains inside except empty stalls and bins, much overgrown with weeds and brush. On the east end**

**of the barn is a large, fenced-in area. It's about an acre of land. An old oak tree towers over the southeast corner of the pen, its gnarled branches hanging out over the garden area like so many fingers. The ground is dark red, seemingly rich with nutrients.**

The barn itself is empty, though in the loft there is some old rotted hay lying about and a pitchfork nearby.

Upon closer inspection of the fenced area the party discovers a skeleton lying in the dirt beneath the tree. Its upper torso is definitely that of a woman, its lower torso that of some type of bird. Aside from the hand-sized hole in the skull, the skeleton is surprisingly well preserved. This one is the body of the harpy slain by Charl Sands with a well-aimed can of nails. Her blood is what spawned the blood worms that now occupy the dirt inside the fence. The ground all about the dead harpy and within the fenced area is a deep red. Upon closer inspection, it seems to be moving. It is, of course filled with blood worms.

**BLOOD WORMS X??** *Blood Worm (Ooze, Leech): (Neutral Tiny Beast) HP 1 (HD 1d2), AC 12, Spd 1ft. Str 3 Dex 3 Con 10 Int 7 Wis 10 Cha 7. Perception 10. Bite +2 (1 point plus 1 point/round for 3d4 rounds). Infestation (each successful bite spawns a new blood ooze the following round; 1d12 damage per day unless DC 12 Constitution save; new save allowed each long rest).*

Anyone who enters the fenced area or comes close to it draws the attention of 1-4 blood worms; they immediately begin moving in that direction. The longer someone remains in the area the more worms that are likely to be attracted, every round, a further 1-4 blood worms attack the victim. They attack until they have killed their prey. They are utterly mindless and individually killing them is relatively easy, but as a group they pose a real threat. They are fearful of any kind of fire and flee from it when exposed.

#### **OUTSKIRTS**

Though the village of Alice consists of only 7 houses and buildings, there are a number of houses in the woods around the village. These houses are little more than ruins, being made of less sturdy material and being more exposed to the damages caused by large trees and the like. There are 14 of these structures spread through the area. All are empty but for common animals here and there and have nothing of value within them. Some are habitable however and could offer shelter from the weather or offer a decent hiding place from spying eyes.

The village is a favorite haunt of all manner of creatures. Wolves, goblins, orcs, ogres, and fey of all stripes frequent the abandoned village fairly often. By searching the area, the characters are likely to draw the attention of all manner of creatures. If they spend the night, there is a 1-in-4 chance of an encounter (see random encounter table above).

North of the village is a pond of obvious human construction covered over with lily pads and a thick layer of scum. The people of Alice constructed the pond after the well ran dry. It is

now home to a host of frogs, turtles and a monstrous alligator. It is very old and measures, from head to tail, 21 feet. The alligator lives in the pond waiting for victims to come close. It approaches, launches an attack, and attempts to drag their prey beneath the water.

**ALLIGATOR** (*Unaligned large beast*) HP 19 (HD 3d10+3), AC 19, Spd 20ft, swim 30ft. Str 15 Dex 10 Con 13 Int 2 Wis 10 Cha 5. Perception 10 (0). Stealth +2. Bite +4 (1d10+2) and target grappled and restrained (Escape DC 12); gator can automatically deal 1d10+2 damage to targets thus restrained, but cannot bite another. SA Hold breath for 15 minutes.

#### **PATHS AND ROADWAYS**

One road leads north from Alice, the Southern Way, already described.

A small path exists behind the Well House as well. This path leads along the edge of the bluff through the forest. The trees here are very old, thick, and squat, almost looming over those who pass beneath. The path rises here, following the contour of the land until it comes to the Monastery of Alielor. There several divergent paths lead off along the bluff to the river and another straight into the forest to Mount Hermitage.

#### **ALIEGOR MONASTERY**

The monastery is perched upon a small abutment on Loretta's Bluff. It isn't large, being several hundred feet across. It is rather

open and those entering the compound can see across the whole area.

If the party arrives from either the bluffs or the village of Alice, they enter in and around **AREA 1**, if they come up from the caverns they arrive at **AREA 10**.

Walking up to the steps from the pathways of the forest to the main temple affords a view of the entire monastery, from the gargoyles of the chapel, to the square tower. Much of it is in ruins, walls are collapsed or ceilings gone. It hasn't been used actively in centuries; its current state of preservation is only due to the Winter Dark and the lingering power of the Og Aust.

The witch comes to the place when she wishes to sacrifice to Amenut. She houses her ponies in the stables and uses the temple or the altar in the gardens of **AREA 9**. There is a 10% chance that Nodjmet is here now with her two sons Sanaka and Djoser. If she is with her sons, there are three ponies in the stable and the sons are lounging about in Area 9, the Gardens of Heth, usually molesting the violet fungus there. The witch is most likely making a sacrifice to Amenut in **AREA 3D**.

#### **AREA 1 NARTHEX**

This one-room building was once the narthex, where penitents gathered to pay their respects or gain the blessings of the Abbot. It is in ruins.



Vines cling to the walls and wrap themselves around the columns on the porch, snaking up to cover the roof. The reddish-brown shingles still cling to the frame of building, though many are broken or hang precariously about. The large, iron, double doors are shut and decorated with the relief of a huge webbed, reptilian foot.

The door is locked from the inside with a slip bolt made of iron. Though somewhat rusted it is still in good shape, such that battering it down is next to impossible. Two windows, placed about 8 feet from the ground on either side of the building, allow easy access.

Within the building lies the wreck and ruin of the previous inhabitants. Old, rotten, and much-decayed wood mark where furniture once stood. Bas reliefs on the walls depict many scenes of worship of the strange animal headed beings. At the far end of the room stands a small altar, decorated with the animal-headed creatures. Upon the top is a small, perfectly smooth, bowl-shaped indentation, at the bottom of which is a small slot. Here penitents dropped coins or gems as sacrifice for the favor of the Og Aust. The coins fell into the recess and into a secret compartment inside the altar. A hidden door in the backside of the altar conceals the secret compartment, inside of which are three small gems, each worth 15gp, 12gp, and 54sp respectively. Finding the secret door requires a successful Wisdom (perception) check (DC 15).

#### AREA 2 ENTRY HOUSE

Tucked beneath the overhanging branches of a large crepe myrtle tree stands a small stone house. This too has red shingles and a stone door. The door is open, off its hinges and lying in the grass outside. One large window that once obviously had shutters on it faces the compound. A low, stone wall angles off this building to the stables (Area 12). There is nothing of value here, though there are many signs that the occasional animal uses the house.

#### AREA 3 MAIN TEMPLE

The steps lead up to a broad landing at the foot of a wall built into the hill. This was once the main temple for the Og Aust, but is much decayed.

Towering over this square structure is a huge stature of some wild monstrosity. The statue faces to the west, overlooking the long Valley of the Frog God. It is possessed of the body and thick, muscled limbs of a man, but the head, feet and hands of a frog-like creature. His long, clawed and webbed fingers grasp a stone scepter in one hand, but the scepter is so long that the creature is holding it with his toes as well. The creature looks benign, though its expression is keen on the horizon offering a hint of mischief.

This is a statue of Amenut, the Frog God. The statue is similar to the one in the Mistbane River (see above). He was one of the more powerful of the Og Aust and this was a monastery devoted to him and his siblings. The building itself is in serious need of

repairs. The roof has collapsed, exposing the six rooms of the temple to the open. Grass, shrubs, and even some small trees grow through the rooms. The walls that separate them are still in good repair, easily supporting the weight of even a very heavy man. Some remnant of the beams remains, jutting out from the walls. One gains access to each room via a ladder and none of the rooms are connected. There are no ladders of course.

For more information on each of the Og Aust see below.

#### 2A NUNT'S CHAMBERS

This chamber belonged to Nunt, a fish-headed god who dwelt in the rivers of the Darkenfold. The room is very wet, with more standing water in it than the others as a small faucet connects this room to the well on the outside of the wall. A little water still trickles through the faucet, pooling on the floor. However years of leaf fall, branches, and other detritus have filled the room with well over a foot of sodden debris. There is little of value here, and even the frescoes carved into the walls are worn with age. No sign of the god remains.

#### 2B HETH'S CHAMBERS

Here the followers of Heth paid homage to that crow-headed god. The room once contained a golden tree where sacred crows dwelt. But scant evidence of the tree's existence remains, as the forest's refuse over time has filled the room and buried the tree. If an enterprising party digs down into the earth they are likely to discover the bent form and broken pieces of the golden tree. In its current state the tree is valued at 400gp. If taken to a goldsmith and restored to its former glory its value increases to 1200gp. It is very heavy in any case and will take the better part of a day to excavate. This chamber often attracts crows, which come here instinctively. Any crow in the chamber can talk and understand vulgate and will engage in conversations with any who are there.

If the party is friendly or displays the rune stones, the crow may be helpful with directions and warnings, even noting the ettercaps in AREA 6 below. If they are not friendly, the crows harass the party with name calling and the like.

#### 2C KEKKI'S CHAMBERS

In this room, the followers of Kekki worshiped the snake-headed god. The room overlooks the broad valley and less detritus has fallen from the forest. Like the other rooms, rain and time have eroded almost all of the carvings, all that is, but for one. Upon the inner wall, running up the length of the wall is the relief of a snake. It is worked in intricate detail and seems more real than stone, for it is in fact a stone golem. Anyone dropping down into the room without the proper command words activates the creature and it instantly attacks. The command words are "Kekki Preserve Us." Amenut knows them as does the witch and the half-elf kept prisoner in Mount Hermitage.

**STONE GOLEM (Lesser)** (*Unaligned Medium Construct*)  
HP 99 (9d10+45), AC 17, Spd 30ft. Str 22 Dex 9 Con 20 Int 3 Wis 11 Cha 1. Perception 10. Slam +11 (3d8+6; magical), Multiattack (2 slam), immutable form, magic resistance.

*Immune poison, psychic, charm, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, damage from non-magic, non-adamantine weapons*) Challenge 5 (1,800 XP).

There is some treasure scattered about the room, lost to previous victims. There is a +1 shield, a potion of cure light wounds, a potion of remove disease, and a potion of bless. A scroll case with two wizard spells (knock, prestidigitation) lies in the mix. There are 120gp-worth of mixed coins and gems.

### 2D AMENUT'S TEMPLE

The chambers of Amenut are largely intact. Here, a statue of the Frog God stands upon a pedestal, though in direct contravention to the one overlooking the temple. This statue has the body of a frog, sitting on all four legs and the head of man. The eye sockets are empty and something the creature held in its hands is missing, probably some type of staff. A close examination reveals that the sockets probably housed jewels of some value, but some enterprising thief absconded with them in days past. The room has many frescoes, but unlike the statue, erosion has destroyed their shape. Cleaned of debris, a small ash pit, damp from the dew, sits at the feet of the statue.

This is where Nodjmet the witch from Mount Hermitage makes sacrifices to Amenut and casts spells to bind him to her. Through him she is able to command the ettercaps in the temple (see below) and gains much of her hag abilities (see MOUNT HERMITAGE above, ROOM 7 for a full description of the witch).

Four large iron rings line the pedestal at the frog's feet. These are made to accommodate two iron poles that are in turn used to lift the two-ton statue from its base: an Herculean task. It takes at least four people to lift the stone and even then its bulk gives it a DC 30 Strength (athletics) check. A single player makes this check, but adds the combined strength bonuses of all who are trying to lift the stone. A maximum of eight characters at one time can combine efforts. If any one character lifting is proficient in Athletics, that character's proficiency bonus is added. If all characters are proficient in Athletics, the check is made with advantage. If the check fails the party must complete a short rest before attempting to lift it again. Beneath the statue lies a small compartment where the sacred trappings of Amenut lay hidden. Within lies an old book, thick and well used. "The Tome of Amenut", written in the ancient Ethrum language, recounts all the sacred rites and incantations for worshipping the Og Aust. Though it does not impart any particular spells to a cleric, it does serve as a *tome of understanding*. It is also a holy item, usable in worship services, for any who wish to pay homage to the Og Aust and usable by priests of the Og Aust as a divine focus. There is also a *periapt of wisdom* +2.

Anyone in possession of this book and the periapt will immediately gain the favorable attention of Amenut in his dungeons beneath the Bluff (see above).

### 2E CLOISTER

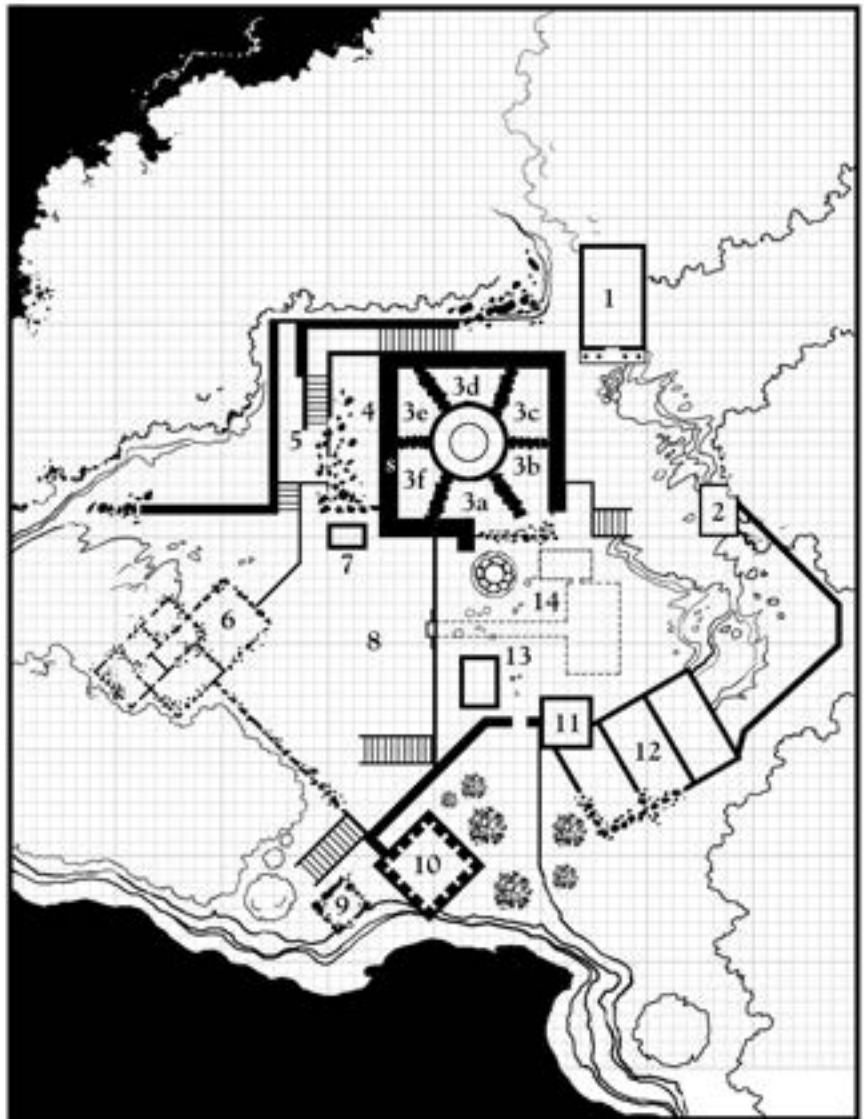
This room once served as a cloister for the monks. Here they kept the garb for the various priests and monks. Filled with debris it has little of value in it.

### 2F GOD CHAMBERS

This was once a library. Looted long ago, its shelves rotted into indistinguishable shapes, lie with other forest debris on the room's floor. A small secret door leads into the crypt (room 4). In times past, this door was the only entrance to that burial chamber. The door still works, but cannot be clocked open as it is from the other side.

### AREA 4 CRYPT

The ceiling here once supported portions of the garden, but it has long since collapsed, burying much of the crypt in dirt and plant life. The first 3-4 feet of the walls are buried, but the rest of the walls' 10 feet are exposed. Here small alcoves are evenly



spaced on all four sides. These alcoves are the resting places for the deceased monks. The bodies of the monks were laid out in the sun until nature took its course, and then the bones were gathered up and placed in the alcoves. Only a few bones remain, many taken by scavengers or lost to the ravages of time and weather and no names mark the inhabitants.

#### AREA 5 CLOISTER

These narrow walkways in conjunction with the roof of the Crypt were designed as a small garden for the monks. Little remains now but moss and some vines and a singular bench overlooking the broad expanse of the Valley of the Frog. In the distance, on a clear day, one can make out the Mistbane River.

#### AREA 6 CHAPEL

The whole corner wall and building here are in ruins. Stone and masonry lie in jumbled heaps, much of it covered with vines and forest growth. Vaguely you discern on a large flat marble floor several columns, mostly gone now but for their bases, in the wreckage. Part of the outer wall remains with a bit of its roof, this section overlooking the forest and the Bluff to the east. Several stone gargoyles still sit here watching the world unfold with witless eyes.

This was once the chapel and great hall where the monks dined and gathered for meetings, feasts and the like. The building is in complete ruin. However, the stone gargoyles are actually a small pod of ettercaps, perched on the wall, waiting for food to wander within their grasp. The creatures have been watching the party since they entered the compound, motionless the entire time. When any party member comes within reach the ettercaps leap upon them.

**ETTERCAPS X<sup>2</sup>** (NE medium monstrosity) HP 44 (HD 8d8+8), AC 13, Spd 30ft, climb 30ft. Str 14 (+2) Dex 15 (+2) Con 13 (+1) Int 7 (-2) Wis 12 (+1) Cha 8(-1). Perception 13(+3). Stealth +4, Survival +3. Bite +4 (1d8+2 plus 1d8 poison (Con DC 11)) and claws +4 (2d4+2) or Web +4, range 30/60, target restrained (Str DC 11 Neg/Esc), Recharge 5-6. SA Darkvision 60ft., Spider climb, web sense (tremorsense on webbing), web walker (ignore webbing).

Scattered in the forest beyond the wall are a host of bones and the creature's treasure. There are 200gp in related coins in a small iron box, a *remove curse* potion, and a +1 *short sword* within.

#### AREA 7 STORAGE

This small stone building is largely intact and once served as a storage house. It is empty now. The door still works, though it has no lock from the inside.

#### AREA 8 INNER COURTYARD

This courtyard is surrounded by walls and paved with large, flat flagstones. Many of the walls are of course crumbled ruins, and in many places the flagstones lie buried beneath ground cover,

grass and the like. Honeysuckle vines cover the inner wall and largely obscure the door and steps that lead up to the Outer Courtyard.

#### AREA 9 GARDENS OF HETH

Leaving the Inner Courtyard by the steps brings one out of the compound and into the Gardens of Heth. Small shrubs and flowers mingle with trees and other forest growth so that the old gardens are almost indistinguishable from the forest itself. A ranger or druid is most likely to notice that these were once gardens. At the end of a barely-distinguishable path overlooking the valley below, stands an intricately-carved altar. Shaped like a crow in flight, the wings spread out about 5 feet from the body, facing the Valley of the Frog to the east. Its legs and lower body are part of the pedestal and the bird's back and wings serve as the altar proper. The back, between the wings, has a small indentation where priests sacrificed to Heth. The legs of the statue vanish into a tangle of vines, but the base, if uncovered is every bit as beautiful as the altar. The statue has not suffered from erosion.

In the midst of all this undergrowth is a violet fungus. Its base rests in the flowery weeds along the steps. Its tentacle-like tendrils however stretch out into the underbrush. Anyone who enters the brush is subject to attack. The creature reacts slowly, usually after its prey has walked down the steps and is approaching the altar.

**VIOLET FUNGUS:** (Unaligned medium plant) HP 18 (HD 4d8), AC 5, Spd 5ft. Str 3 Dex 1 Con 10 Int 1 Wis 3 Cha 1. Perception 6 (-4). Rotting touch +2 (10ft. reach, 1d8 necrotic). SA multiattack (1d4 rotting touch), false appearance (while motionless, looks like ordinary fungus), blindsight 30ft. immune blinded, deafened, frightened.

#### AREA 10 TOWER SQUARE

This short, squat tower seems strangely disconnected from the larger compound. Its workmanship is different as are the stones of its walls. It only stands 40 feet, though it once stood much higher. The ruins of it lie on the ledge overlooking the trail and the valley floor below. Years ago, a dragon swept over the forest and its great wing sliced through the tower, knocking much of it into ruin. Only a skilled architect or dwarf has the ability to determine this, or the crows (see above). The tower once had wooden steps leading up to the top, but these are gone and there is no easy manner to enter. Climbing the walls is the only way. Once on the walls the dirt-covered flagstones of the floor are below. There is a hatchway in the middle of the room, the hatch closed and bolted. A cursory look determines the hatch to be newly constructed (the witch's sons built it).

The hatch opens to a dark, cool, perfectly round stairwell. The stairs seem as if they are part of the wall as they wind down into the darkness. Those that are brave enough to enter find that there are no handrails. The stairwell is several hundred feet deep ending in a small round room with a barred doorway. The doors yield easy and once opened expose a tunnel that leads to the caverns (see Caverns of Amenut above, Area 7).

## **AREA 11 SMOKEHOUSE**

This building is stone and retains much of its shingled roof. The door is broken on one hinge and hangs lazily to the side. It once served as a smoker for meats and such. The ovens still remain, two of them, built into the wall on the far side of the room. The rafters are still intact and hold many nails and hooks, obviously designed to hold foodstuffs. Some fresh jerky hangs from one of the hooks and one of the ovens shows signs of recent use as the witch's sons (see **MOUNT HERMITAGE** above) cooked and dried some meat here recently.

## **AREA 12 STABLES AND BARN**

These three buildings once served as the compound's stables. They are largely intact but have suffered heavy water damage over the years. The roof is torn and broken, and the walls are cracked and in much need of repair. The stables do offer a number of dry spots and some shelter from the weather and are more open than the compound's other buildings. Some tools, long abandoned and covered in rust lie about the place and much of the stalls lay in ruin.

A close examination, however, reveals some animal droppings, these being from the witch's pony as she houses here when she and her sons come visiting.

## **AREA 13 STORAGE**

This is another small storage house. The roof is in bad need of repair and there is no door. The walls are in decent shape.

## **AREA 14 OUTER COURTYARD**

Unlike the Inner Courtyard this area is grassy and open. For whatever reason, the forest has not overtaken this area and it remains clear. There is nothing of value or danger here.

## **MOUNT HERMITAGE**

This area comprises a series of low hills rising from the forest floor, not more than 300-500 feet high, covering some 10 square miles of the forest. The Mount, a name that refers to the whole area, is sparsely forested, and covered in a thick layer of grass. Huge rocks jut out from the pasture here and there offering excellent cover and sometimes shade. It is a favorite feeding ground for the wild deer and elk that dwell in the forest. The gulches that divide the several hills are worn steep with centuries of run off. Two creeks have their origins here; one running off to the Mistbane in the south west, and the other bubbling up from the southern feet of the hills and heading southwest toward Alice. Near this latter creek is a large cave opening that leads into an underground cavern beneath the Mount.

It is here that the witch, Nodjmet, and her family have made their abode. Nodjmet is a witch of some power; having spent her youth in the service of the Empire she learned many of the mysteries of the Umbra, those dark wizard-priests of the Horned God Unklar. With the fall of the Dark Lord, she fled the east for the west, and wandered as a vagabond for many years, until at last she settled in Zinc, a small town in the central Troll Glades.

There she took up with a some-time brigand named Gavin and together they terrorized travelers on the road.

They had many sons together, brought about by her potions as much as anything else and they all proved slow-witted brutes; mean, cruel and much attached to their mother. Gavin was hung by the Rangers of the Knot and she fled again with her progeny to the deeper wood in the south and west finding a home in the dank caves of the Mount.

Here she set up shop, about the time that Loretta came to Alice, maddened at the grief of her loss. Nodjmet watched the whole story of Alice unfold; she became aware of the rousing Amenut and sought to take advantage of it. She cast many spells in order to bind him to her. She found the harpy sisters and befriended them, pretending to be appalled at their tale, mourning the loss of their sister and the like. In this way she bound the harpies to her and learned the rituals of the Og Aust and the worship of Amenut. She learned that in the Monastery were secret passages that led to the den of the slumbering god. There through incantations and wild sacrifices she fed into the frog god's dreams making him hungry and confused, so that he too became bound to her. And through him, she became even more powerful.

The caves are all natural caverns. There is no mineral wealth within, but a stream does bubble up and out into room 6, following a small tunnel out past rooms 2 and 3 and on out the main entrance. The water is not drinkable as Nodjmet and her filthy brood routinely dumps sewage and other waste into the water, on the floors of the caves etc. The regular tunnels are all roughly 10 feet wide, though they narrow or widen on occasion. Where the map is marked "spelunking" the cave narrows to a small aperture about 1-2 feet high and 2-3 feet wide. The creek naturally flows through this narrow corridor. Anyone attempting to crawl through does so on their stomach, half-submerged in water. It is very difficult, but does allow the party to bypass rooms 2 and 3.

The whole cavern stinks and is filthy. The witch has lived here for about 15 years and both she and her brood are a filthy people, the only reason the whole place isn't filled with refuse is their extreme poverty. Moving through the caves is not difficult, though moving silent is hard due to the water and thick clay-like mud on the tunnel floors. Any stealth checks outside of the spelunking cave are made at disadvantage.

The witch keeps a small herd of ponies, very tame, abused and often starved for attention in the clearing. She sends the two-headed dogs to round them up when in need. She uses them to travel to and from the monastery. There are 8 ponies in all.

There are two entrances to the witch's lair; the main cave entrance, and a secret entrance on the top and back side of the hill. The secret entrance is very difficult to note from above as it is located beneath the edge of a large boulder. To find it on the outside, one has to be specifically looking in and around the boulder and even then it is not a sure thing. Finding the entrance requires a successful Wisdom (perception) or Intelligence (investigation) check at DC 20.

## ROOM 1 CAVE ENTRANCE

The entrance is not difficult to locate as the witch and her family uses it daily and dumps much of their refuse about the small creek that bubbles up from below. The cave entrance itself is narrow, only about 4 feet wide and is roughly 8 feet high. Within a few feet, the tunnel widens to its more common 10-foot width.

A sluggish creek flows from a narrow, if tall, cave located beneath the steep cliff above you. The hill stretches, rising until the curve of it is lost in the haze of grass and weeds. There are signs of habitation all about the cave entrance. An old cart, one wheel broken, lies upended some few yards away; crates, barrels, fencing wire, bones of all descriptions and other debris lay haphazardly about, seemingly dropped by a child without thought or reason. Grass has grown up through and around much of the debris. The creek itself moves slowly and has a brackish film on the surface that does not begin to defuse for many hundreds of yards down the hill's slope.

A barrel lying on its side by the cave seems to have been recently placed, as no grass has grown around it. Any ranger who investigates the area for tracks may take note of this (DC 13). Nodjmet has animated a dead snake and placed it by the entrance to the cave. Its singular mission is to jump up and flee into the cavern if anyone should approach the cave. Its passing into the inner caves warns Uotmose and Sneferu who lives in room 2. Observant characters may notice with a DC 15 Wisdom (perception) check the half rotten half bone snake slithering over the debris into the cave. It does not move quickly and can hardly defend itself. Even a cursory examination of the creature reveals that it has long been dead.

**ZOMBIE SNAKE** (NE Medium Undead) HP 2 (HD 1d4-1), AC 8, Spd 20. Str 8 Dex 6 Con 16 Int 3 Wis 6 Cha 5. Perception 8(-2). Bite +1 (1 point). SA Immune to poison, Darkvision 60ft, Relentless Fortitude.

If Uotmose is warned, he sends his brother Sneferu to warn his mother of the invasion while he goes forward with his two-headed dog to investigate. He moves as quietly as he can, though he has no abilities to move silently. As soon as he spies a torch light, lantern light, or anything suspicious, he retreats to his room with his dog and sets a trap.

Sneferu gathers his other two brothers from room 6 and rushes to room 2 to help Uotmose. This takes a full 16 rounds before he returns to room 2.

If the characters stop the snake guardian the brothers remain in room 2.

## ROOM 2 GUARD CHAMBER

There is a makeshift door frame at the entrance to this room and a door made from planks taken from the cart outside. The door is very weak and any good solid push breaks the door open.

Beyond the door lies a room roughly 30 by 40 feet. Tall stacks of wood, broken boxes, barrels and the like dominate the room. On the far wall stands a large bunk bed, blankets lying on top of ragged, straw-filled mattresses. Next to the bunk is a large butcher block with piles of fresh meat stacked on it. Two stools stand next to it. Much of the room stands under an inch or so of water. The creek bed runs through the middle of the room and out into the main hallway. However, several small dams block the water's easy flow.

This room belongs to the two brothers, Uotmose and Sneferu and their two-headed dog, Meat and Stick. If the characters stopped the undead snake from warning them of the party's approach, the brothers are presently building dams on the floor. They are oafish and possessed of little intelligence but, due to the presence of the two-headed dog, very hard to surprise. Both heads of the dog roll surprise rolls, and each head gains a bonus of 8 on their wisdom save. The brothers react quickly to any intrusion attacking ferociously. They fight to the death, shouting and cursing all the while. If the dog is killed in the melee, Sneferu goes berserk, gaining a +2 on all attack and damage rolls but suffering a -4 on his armor class.

The room has two exits. There is little of value in the room, the dams being nothing more than the two brothers playing in water they have occasionally diverted from the main hall beyond. There are two bowls on the floor next to the butcher block with some meat scraps in them.

**UOTMOSE** (CN Human Fighter 5) HP 35 (HD 5d10+5), AC 20, Spd 30ft. Str 16 Dex 15 Con 12 Int 9 Wis 10 Cha 13. Perception 13 (+3). Athletics +6, Insight +3, Intimidation +4. Sv: Str +6, Con +4. Meat Cleaver +8 (1d6+5). SA Darkvision 30ft, Crit on 19-20, Multiattack (2 cleaver).

Uotmose is a brutish looking man about 6 ft. 4 in. tall. He wears ragged cloths and no boots. A large broad belt squeezes a thick waist in too tight, making him look a bit pinched in the middle. A hook on the belt holds his favorite toy, a meat cleaver the size of a full dwarven battle axe.

**SNEFERU** (CN Human Fighter 3) HP 20 (HD 3d10), AC 16, Spd 30. Str 15 Dex 13 Con 10 Int 9 Wis 12 Cha 8. Perception 11(+1). Athletics +5, Intimidation +1. Sv: Str +4, Con +2. Spiked club +4 (1d8+4). SA Darkvision 30ft, Crit 19-20.

Sneferu is smaller than his brother, being only 6 ft. tall. He is ungainly in that his legs are very short and his upper torso very long. His arms are thick, meaty affairs and have huge amounts of fat hanging off the bone. His one eye and double chin make him look more like a croaking frog than a human.

**MEAT AND STICK, TWO-HEADED DOG** (unaligned M monstrosity): HD 4d8+4, HP 23, AC 15. Str 12, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 6. Perception is 13 (+3). Survival +2, Stealth +2. Bite +4 (2d4+2 plus Trip. DC 11 Str. neg.); SA Multiattack (2 bites), Advantage on perception to avoid surprise, hearing and smell.

This dog is heavy-set, about 2 and a half feet at the shoulder. His body is long and thick, like a greyhound's, with shaggy rust colored hair. He has two large heads sprouting from two necks upon his torso. Both heads are constantly snarling, growling, and snapping at one another.

### ROOM 7 ALTAR

Nodjmet has cleared this room and keeps it relatively clean. She uses it as a small temple to cast her spells. On occasion, the harpies come here to lend her support.

The tunnel immediately opens up into a wider room. The walls here are smooth with scores of ledges all about the room. Candles of all shapes and sizes are set on the ledges and great heaps of wax lie pooled around them, on the walls and floor. The walls, ceiling, and much of the floor are black and a heavy dust hangs in the air. Upon the floor stands a single tree, dead and driven into stone. Upon its brittle branches hang scores of small charms, talismans, and other odds and ends.

Charcoal dust covers the temple and moving through it raises quite a cloud. The tree is her altar and she places magical charms on it when she casts spells. These she leaves when done so some of them are very, very old. They consist of all manner of things from rat tails, to eagle claws, and human hair to horse hooves. Whatever she deemed necessary to cast her charms.

There is nothing of value in the room other than the several-hundred candles. The charms are useless to any but a true witch or hag.

### ROOM 4 POOL

During the rainy season, the underground stream runs much deeper and faster. There is a bit of run off that spills into most of the caverns. Room 3 suffers the most from this as water that runs down the tunnel into it has no where else to go.

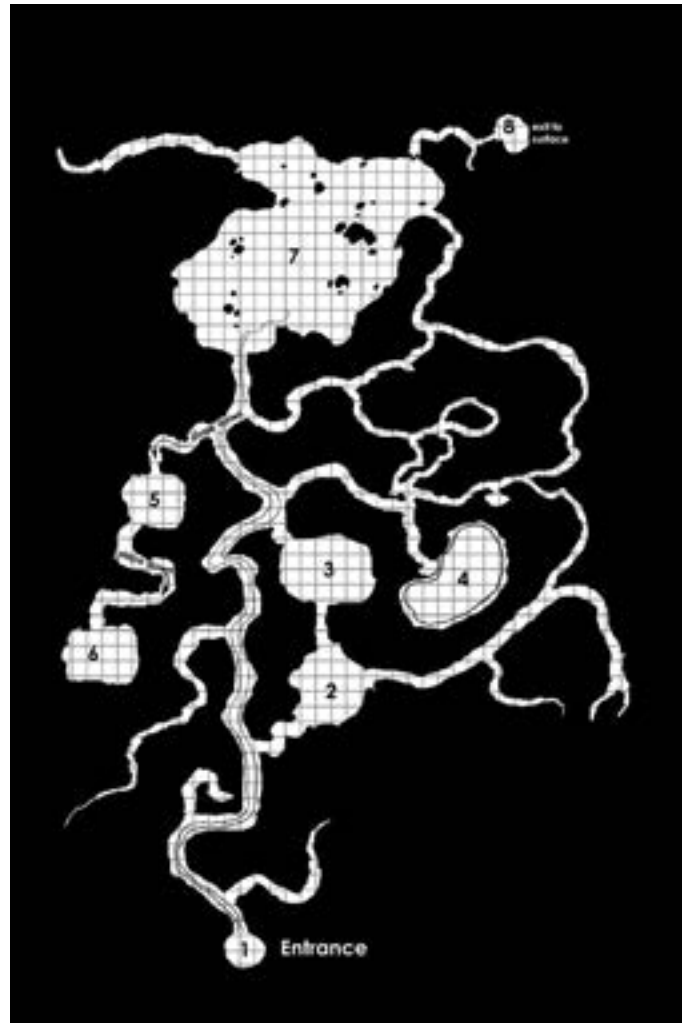
Over the years, it has turned the room into a pool of standing water. As with the rest of the water the sewage and waste of Nodjmet and her family befoul it. The water is brackish, ill-smelling, and undrinkable.

There is nothing of value here; however, there is a small crevice several feet deep and wide on the far side of the room. A body can easily hide in the water in that crevice and Nodjmet, if pressed and able, flees to this room to hide beneath the water until she deems it safe.

### ROOM 5 UPPER DUNGEON

The tunnel that leads to this room is slightly elevated at its opening, but almost immediately descends into the depths. This elevation forces the water from room 6 to continue down the tunnel. Once in a while, during heavy rains, the water flows over the elevated area and floods the rooms below.

An iron grate covers the door to room 5 from floor to ceiling. It is not in any way attached to the wall, but it does rest on



four upturned spikes. Removing it requires tremendous strength as anyone attempting to move the grate must lift it up and off the spikes. Nodjmet's sons usually do this job for her if and when they enter the room to feed the prisoner in room 5 below. Removing the grate requires a Strength (athletics) check (DC 20). Two people can try it at the same time, three if a dwarf or halfling is one of the people. This allows each person to add their strength bonus to the strongest person's roll.

Beyond the grate lies a dank and foul smelling room. The rocky floor is covered with moldy straw throughout which grow a host of 1 and 2-foot-high mushrooms. These underground plants have a pale luminescent color to them and seem covered in some kind of slime.

As soon as anything from the characters -a torchlight, footstep, shadow, etc.- enters the room and touches the mushrooms they begin to emit a loud humming sound. At first it sounds much like a people talking in the distance but soon translates to the babbling chorus of hundreds of people. Within three rounds it is deafeningly loud, warning anyone anywhere in the dungeon that intruders have entered the prison area.

The mushrooms are part of one Shrieker, planted here by Nodjmet as a guardian for her prisoner. Anytime the elf has tried to escape he has sounded the warning and summoned his jailors.



**SHRIEKER:** (*Unaligned medium plant*) HP 13 (HD 3d8), AC 5, Spd 0. Str 1 Dex 1 Con 10 Int 1 Wis 3 Cha 1. Perception 6(-2). Shriek (reaction; when subjected to bright light or a creature comes within 30ft, it emits a piercing shriek and continues to do so for 1d4 rounds after the disturbance is removed). SA Immune blinded, deafened, frightened; false appearance.

Any fire set in the room will burn out within 5 rounds as the whole area, straw included is very wet.

## ROOM 6 DUNGEON

A winding corridor leads down into the depths. This is the lowest section of the dungeon, damp and cool. There is almost no sound from above or below other than that caused by the characters as they move forward. It is dark and empty.

This is where the son of Balarian and Jill Craddock lies bound. He lies in a pile of straw heaped in one corner of the room. Wounds riddle his body, many open and still bleeding, weakening him with blood loss and pneumonia. Once a day, Nodjmet sends a brew down with one of her sons and forces him to drink it. The potion revives him a bit, healing him enough to survive another day.

His name is Aenul and in normal circumstances he is a 3<sup>rd</sup> level ranger. But here, bound and tortured as he is, he has only 6 hit points and is so weak that he can only move on his own volition very slowly. His wounds are grievous and infected and only the restorative powers of the willow trees offer him hope. Assuming the characters find and rescue him, he happily yields any and all information to them that they seek of him. He knows much about the witch and her binding of Amenut. He also knows about the willow trees, banshees, and many other odds and ends about the Darkenfold. What he will not do is take them directly to his people until he is certain of the character's intentions. He cannot fight or even defend himself in his present condition.

## ROOM 7 THE LAIR

This room is the lair of the hag Nodjmet. It is a large cavern filled with all manner of debris, material that she and her sons have collected over the past years and stored here for one reason or the other.

The tunnel opens up into a wide, vaulted chamber. The cave roof is dome shaped with scores of fissures and crevices. The walls, too, are jagged and broken and the floor consists of a number of ever-rising slabs of stone that resemble a giant's stair. Everything is wet, water clinging to the walls, ceiling and pooled everywhere. A narrow stream runs down the slabs of stone, trickling down from one step to the next until at last it meanders from the hall and out down the corridor. Everywhere throughout the cave are piles of garbage; boxes, barrels, furniture, weaponry, clothing, bones, indeed everything you could imagine is here, heaped in piles or thrown about. All of it is old and has suffered tremendous ruin. Four large chains hang from the ceiling with lamps attached, casting a cold pale yellow light throughout the room.

If entry is made from the main corridor, the dog chained there alerts Nodjmet and her other two sons. All of whom attack immediately. They begin by hurling furniture and then pull weapons and leap to the attack. Djosier leads, trying to pin characters while Sanaka cleaves the hapless victims. Their mother uses her sorcery to best effect.

If no warning has sounded and the party enters from the side entrance, there is a good chance they surprise Nodjmet and her sons. The witch's crew should make a single surprise roll with no extra bonuses for the dog.

The room is a perfect battlefield of chaos. There are plenty of places to hide and take cover. It is dark, damp, and moldy. The lamps cast deep shadows along the walls so that vanishing from sight is not difficult for anyone with skill.

**SANAKA** (CN Human Fighter 3) HP 20 (HD 3d10), AC 16, Spd 30. Str 15 Dex 13 Con 10 Int 10 Wis 12 Cha 8. Perception 11(+1). Athletics +5, Intimidation +1. Sv: Str +4, Con +2. Stone-Headed Axe +4 (1d8+4). SA Darkvision 30ft, Dueling, Second Wind (1d8+2; 1/rest), Action Surge (1/rest), Crit 19-20.

Sanaka is a large man with a barrel chest. He is the most normally proportioned of the sons of Nodjmet. He is bearded and has a full head of hair. He doesn't carry anything of any value.

**DJOSIER** (CN Human Fighter 2) HP 15 (HD 2d10), AC 16, Spd 30. Str 18 Dex 13 Con 10 Int 10 Wis 12 Cha 8. Perception 11(+1). Athletics +5, Intimidation +1. Sv: Str +4, Con +2. Man-catcher +6 (1d6+4 and victim restrained; escape DC 15. Victims thus restrained take 1d4 piercing per round but may repeat save at the end of each turn). SA Darkvision 30ft. Defense, Second Wind (1d8+2; 1/rest), Action Surge (1/rest) He has twilight vision and is extraordinarily strong, gaining a +4 on all strength checks, attacks, and damage. He is not very intelligent.)

Djosier is very short but has long arms that drag the ground when he walks. He is extremely stupid and only able to use the man-catcher and his fists in combat. He wears a large sack cloth and will not leave Sanaka's side under any circumstances.

**TWO-HEADED DOG** (*unaligned M monstrosity*): HD 4d8+4, HP 23, AC 15. Str 12, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 6. Perception is 13 (+3). Survival +2, Stealth +2. Bite +4 (2d4+2 plus Trip. DC 11 Str. neg.); SA Multiattack (2 bites), Advantage on perception to avoid surprise, hearing and smell.)

**NODJMET, GREEN HAG** (NE Medium Fey) HP 82 (HD 11d8+33), AC 17, Spd 30ft. Str 18 Dex 12 Con 16 Int 13 Wis 14 Cha 14. Perception 14(+4). Arcana +3, Deception +4, Perception +5, Stealth +3. Claws +6 (2d8+4), Illusory appearance (Look like another creature of her general size and humanoid shape. The illusion ends with bonus action or if she dies. The changes don't hold up to physical inspection or with DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check), Invisible passage

*(invisibility as per spell at will as action). SA Amphibious, innate spell casting (Cha, save DC 12, at will: Dancing lights, minor illusion, vicious mockery), mimicry (animal sounds and humanoid voices. DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals imitations)*

Nodjmet is old, several hundred years old by most accounts. Her form however is that of a well proportioned, healthy middle aged woman. Her face is comely and the look of her mildly attractive. She favors wearing dresses, and has several, all of which accentuate her form. They are old and ragged however, and a little dirty. Her voice grates and her eyes burn with a constant hatred and aggravation. Any who meet her cannot escape the feelings of malevolence that surround her like a shroud

Nodjmet is a green hag. Due to her relationship with Amenut and the harpies, she has all the same powers granted a hag that belongs to a coven; except that she can only cast her coven-derived spells once per day. If the harpies are slain, or Amenut freed from her bondage (being himself defeated, see **CAVERNS OF AMENUT, ROOM 3** above) Nodjmet loses all hag covey abilities. Furthermore, if she flees out into the wild from the Mount and her holy site in the monastery is defiled she loses her ability to control Amenut and her power over him is broken.

Nodjmet is a fierce opponent and capable of great hate, but she has no desire to die and does not hesitate to sacrifice her

children, their dogs, or the Mount to escape. If in combat she sustains half her hit points in damage, she turns herself invisible and flees, preferably using the escape route through **ROOM 8**. Once outside, she flees to the monastery, to regroup and plot her revenge. If violated, she flees the scene entirely, going to the Higden Bogs to the south where she knows of another witch that will give her sanctuary. If she dies or even if she flees from the area award the characters the full experience for her defeat.

Until she is slain or driven from the Ridge, Amenut will never be fully free of her.

**TREASURE** (The room is filled with junk mostly. Almost all of the loot gathered here, the tools, furniture, clothes etc. being moldy, rotten, or useless. However, well hidden in the room's northwest corner (by room 8), is a trunk beneath the slime. In the trunk are Nodjmet's prized possessions: 1200gp in assorted coins, two small boxes of gems worth a total of 2000gp, a gold crown with silver filigree worth 250gp, and several rings each worth 50gp, a small music box worth 10gp and an ivory horn worth 125gp. There is a totem to the Og Aust as well, cast as a frog headed man, it serves as a strand of prayer beads.)

#### **ROOM DEAD-END**

This long corridor is flooded and filled with all manner of foul refuse. It reeks and is the source of most of the stench in



the main room. The hallway angles down and by the time it dead ends, the water is about 5 feet deep. Nodjmet will leap into the water and swim here if she absolutely must. If pressed, she polymorphs herself into a large water snake to better hide, and sinks to the bottom of the tunnel, underwater, until the characters leave.

#### **ROOM C SECRET EXIT**

The entrance to this tunnel is very small, not more than a foot high and about 18 inches wide. If pressed too hard and unable to hide in the Dead End, Nodjmet slips into the tunnel and escapes. The tunnel leads to a natural stair well that leads to the outside. She has had a ladder placed here for just such an escape. If Nodjmet does make it this far, she polymorphs (if she still can) into a bird and takes flight heading for Alice, the Higden Bogs or the Monastery.

### **THE CAVERNS OF AMENUT**

There are three entrances to these caverns. One is through the well as noted in *Alice* above. A second lies on the valley floor, half hidden behind some brush and rubble. A third lies in the Tower Square in the Aliemor Monastery. Each poses its own challenges and brings the adventuring party into the small cavern complex from a very different direction. The easiest entrance to locate it is the well in the village of Alice; however characters can enter from any of the entrances.

#### **THE TUNNELS**

The tunnels range in size through out the complex. They are all natural caverns, though some show signs of widening. At times they narrow to only a foot or so, but generally are wide enough for one person to walk abreast. Sharp rocks, crevices, small ledges and all manner of cavernous surfaces line the rough cut walls, so that any rapid movement by travelers meets with bruised heads, cut hands and the like. The whole complex is damp, moisture being prevalent everywhere. The floors are slippery and at times have thick clay-like mud on them.

There is no natural light in the cave, other than what trickles in around the valley floor entrance and this only extends a dozen or so feet into the cave.

#### **ROOM 1 WELL SHAFT**

The well shaft is a little over 90 feet deep. The first 30 feet of the shaft are bricked in, beyond that, the shaft is rough-cut for about 10 feet and then opens into a wide chamber where the lower portion of the well has fallen away into the lake below.

Use of the pulley system allows party members to lower without fear of falling.

The well shaft opens up into a room that is both wide and long. By the time your head clears the well you are still about 50 feet above the slow moving water. A small ledge runs along one edge of this small underground lake.

The room is actually a small underground lake. An underground stream well fed by large amounts of ground water flows through the caverns. During the rainy season, the water here moves much faster and the cavern floods some as the water struggles to exit through the narrow valley entrance and into the Valley of the Frog beyond. Along the southern edge of the room runs a 3 to 4-foot-wide ledge. It leads to entrances/exits on either side of the room.

Short of climbing along the roof, there is no way to reach the ledge without crossing through the water. It is only about 2 feet deep where the well enters it, deepening the further east one goes into the room. At its deepest point it is 20 feet deep.

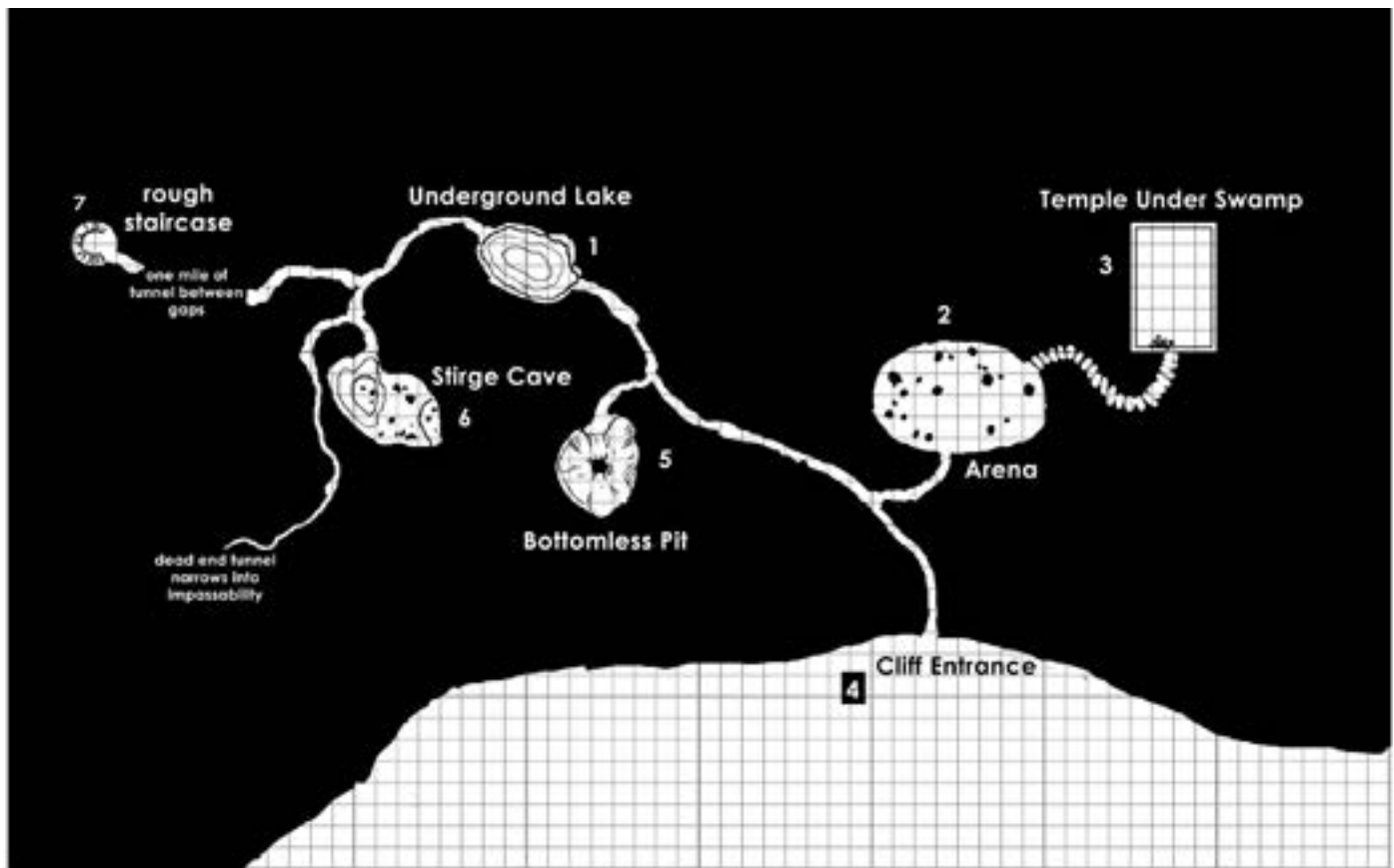
This room is occupied by a water elemental. It is one of the few remaining creatures under the power of Amenut. It lives in the murky depths of the room's far corner. Disturbing the water alerts the creature to intruders and it moves to investigate. It attacks anything that enters the water, unless one of the characters prominently displays one of the rune stones found in the house of Charl Sands. The creature does not attack to the death. If it quickly bested or the fight becomes too hard, it dissolves itself into the water. If it does so, award the characters full experience for defeating the monster.

**WATER ELEMENTAL** (Neutral L elemental) HP 114 (HD 12d10+48), AC 14, Spd 30ft, 90ft (swim). Str 18 Dex 14 Con 18 Int 5 Wis 10 Cha 8. Perception 10(0). Slam +7 (2d8+4), Whelm (recharge 4-6, DC 15 Str or 2d8+4 and grappled (Escape DC 14) and unable to breathe and takes 2d8+4 each turn. New save end of each turn). SA Water form (enter hostile creature's space, squeeze through 1" openings), freeze (if suffer cold damage, speed 10ft/70ft for 1 turn), darkvision 60ft., resist acid, and bludgeoning, piercing and slashing from nonmagical weapons, immune poison, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, unconscious. Speaks aquan

The creature possesses quite a bit of treasure heaped and piled in the far corner of the room, under the water of course. There are 300gp worth of mixed coin, some loose, some in pouches or bags. Much of the coin is very old. A moonstone gem set in a broad gold ring is worth 100gp. There are a number of pieces of old and rusted armor, shields and weapons, but one piece that stands out, even reflecting any light cast into the water. It is an *amulet of natural armor* which increases the wearer's AC by +1. A wooden gourd floats in the water as well, very difficult to detect (DC 17 Wisdom (perception) check) except by chance. The gourd is actually an ancient cup used in the worship of Amenut. Filling it with water from any natural spring, lake or river in the Darkenfold, and drinking that water heals the thirsty recipient for 3d8 points of damage once per day. For more details see *Gourd of the Frog God* in **New Magic Items**.

#### **ROOM 2 ARENA**

The main cavern branches off into a very small, narrow corridor. This corridor is only about 3 feet wide at its widest. It slopes down at a 10-degree angle for 40-50 feet until it finally opens up into a wide, bowl-shaped room. The floor of the corridor is very slippery with wet clay. Careful examination of the clay



by a ranger reveals the tracks of some type of clawed creature (Wisdom (Survival) DC 17). The tracks seem to go both ways and they are of Amenut the Frog God.

The corridor opens up into a wide, circular chamber. The air is cool and moist and the whole room glistens, as if coated by a thin layer of slime as millions of small water droplets reflect the light cast by your party. The rock is ancient, and seems heaped upon itself in drooping piles. Stalactites cling to the ceiling above, thick at the base, meshed together in places but stretching down from the darkness above, their singular forms holding yet more water. On the floor many small stalagmites rise up, trying vainly to reach the ceiling above. Pools of water stand upon the floor here caught in the thick clay. The whole looks more like the maw of some ancient creature than a room.

The priests of Amenut used this room as a sacrificial chamber. Here his supplicants would gather and lay treasures or food or whatever valuables they believed would garner them the favorable attention of the frog god. It has been many years since any such sacrifices and the room has nothing of value in it.

On the far wall is a very small opening, about 3 feet wide and 24 inches high. It leads into a tunnel of about the same size that eventually takes one to the Chamber of the frog god. Most people can fit through such an opening, but no one will be able to wear armor and spelunk, nor carry weapons belted to their sides. All such equipment must be drug behind or pushed in front of the cavern.

#### ROOM 2 CHAMBER OF THE FROG GOD

The tunnel gives way to a narrow ledge that overlooks a large rectangular room. The ledge runs along the entire length of the room and is only 12 inches wide and covered in a much-eroded, chipped, and cracked ceramic tile. The room resembles a pool, though the water within is very shallow. There is a 15-foot drop from the ledge to the floor below and it is about 25 feet from the ledge to the ceiling above. Several large rocks piled and heaped on high so that they reach the height of the ledge itself stand roughly off-center in the room, resembling something of a pedestal.

A thick slime resides on the bottom of the pool/room. Covered in dark green algae, here and there huge lily pads rest upon the slime, their leaves three to five feet broad. A powerful stench rises from the floor and lingers throughout the chamber. The room appears to be empty.

This is the residence of the once powerful frog god, Amenut. When his worship by peoples spread far and wide throughout the Darkenfold, he dwelt in this once opulent garden pool. But such is his fate that he exists now only in the memories of his followers and the few forest dwellers that still pay him homage. He has little power, and less inclination to make them more than they are, contenting himself with living in this mire.

Assuming the frog god is here, the creature will try to avoid any kind of confrontation with the party, by slipping into the mire behind the pedestal of stones - the very stones he used to sit upon and listen to supplicants - and camouflaging himself. If for some reason the party discovers him and calls him

out, he'll call for them to leave him be and find some other creature to molest. If they offer him a sacrifice or in some way befriend him he will come forth, slowly and cautiously, expecting treachery to hear the party out. Though weak, the creature is extremely wise and able to answer most questions about the Darkenfold and its present inhabitants. He knows of the coming and going of the harpies, what is happening at Mount Hermitage (elf prisoner) as well as the depredations of the Bowlgaar in the west and rise of the Eschl in the east and their ongoing war with the Green Wizard (see **C3: Upon the Powder River**). He can answer any questions the party has about the present war between the elves and orcs (see above). If the party is particularly kind and giving then Amenut freely grants them information they may not ask about. The Castle Keeper should freely offer up plot points about anything the troop has learned of to date, such as the elf prisoner at Mount Hermitage.

The creature before the characters however is an avatar of the god and can be slain. If Amenut's avatar is slain it turns to dust. Slaying the avatar is something Amenut will remember, and gods do not look favorably upon mortals that perform such an act. In time, Amenut will create a new avatar and continue about his business on Aihrede.

While in his chamber, Amenut is able to camouflage himself to be virtually impossible to detect. Only a detect magic spell can reveal the presence of the avatar.

**AMENUT'S AVATAR** (NG medium celestial) HP (HD 18d8+), AC 18, Spd 03ft. Str 18 Dex 17 Con 16 Int 15 Wis 18 Cha 18. Perception 17(+7). Arcana, History, Medicine, Nature. Claws +7 (2d6), bite +7 (2d8). SA Multiattack (2 claws, bite), Rake (if both claws hit, 1d12 slashing), innate spellcasting (Cha; save DC 15): 2/day - bestow curse, clairvoyance, detect invisibility, dispel magic, entangle, legend lore, locate object, minor illusion, read magic, read languages, remove curse; 1/day - insect plague (as 9th level slot). He has no treasure of which to speak. Challenge 5 (1,800 XP).

Amenut is just over six feet tall and has the legs, arms, and torso of a thin, muscular man. His scaly skin is black-green and covered in a thin coat of slime. A gigantic frog-like head balances upon the thin neck like a ball on a toothpick. His mouth is wide and deep, and his lips are thick, his mouth lined with thousands of tiny razor sharp teeth that look more like spots from a distance. His ears are flat and little more than holes in his head and his eyes are bulbous, greenish-yellow and placed on either side of his pinched nose.

#### ROOM 4 CAVERN ENTRANCE

At the foot of the Bluff lies a small cave entrance. It is about 2 feet high and 4 feet wide, rough, and jagged. A little water spills out of it and winds down to the creek bed. This cave is the main entrance to the Caverns. It is very difficult to detect and only someone actively looking along the edge of the bluff in this area has a chance of finding it. A CL10 wisdom check applies to anyone passing by, while anyone actively searching for the entrance must make a CL5 wisdom check. During the rainy

season, water is frequently running out, though only during and immediately after large rain storms does the water make entering or exiting impossible.

#### ROOM 5 BOTTOMLESS PIT

The tunnel here is narrow and looks more like a fissure than anything else. It slopes up at a slight angle from the main tunnel. It ends abruptly upon a small ledge that overlooks a deep pit. This large room is a natural cave-pit that plunges almost 300 feet into the earth where it ends in a huge underground lake. The lake is part of an underground reservoir several hundred acres in size. With its vaulted ceiling, this massive cavern is easy to navigate and offers much to explore as there are several islands, sand bars and the like scattered throughout. Gaining entrance is extremely difficult and hazardous and getting back out is even more so.

Amenut's followers used the pit room as a place to kill people. Victims were drug up the tunnel and tossed into the pit where they fell to their deaths below. It has not been used thus for many centuries. Long ago Marik Redhair stole into Amenut's chambers to slay the frog god. He failed and driven into the pit room, plunged to his death at the bottom of the pit. Little remains of him in the lake below but his *vorpal sword* lies upon the lake bottom. It is some 30 feet off center from the pit and lying at the bottom of 20 feet of water. A detailed search may reveal the sword to the most desperate of treasure hunters.

#### 6 STIRGE CAVERN

This open cave has a fissure that leads to the outside of Loretta's Bluff. Here stirges leave and enter, nesting on the roof of this cave.

**A heavy odor of decay hangs in the air as you enter the room, though some traces of fresh air linger here and there. The cave here is wider than the tunnel but has suffered many collapses and slate and rock lay upon the floor here and there. The rock is stained in places, dark against the darker stone. The roof is open but filled with crevices and cracks throughout.**

The Stirges attack immediately.

**STIRGES X14** (Unaligned Tiny Beast) HP 2 (HD 1d4), AC 14, Spd 10ft/40ft. Str 4 Dex 16 Con 11 Int 2 Wis 8 Cha 6. Perception 9(-1). Blood Drain +5 (1d4+3/rnd attached). SA darkvision 60ft.

#### ROOM 7 TOWER

The tunnel is over a mile long but ends in a rough-hewn doorway. The doorway is blocked by a metal grate, placed here long ago. Though locked, it is easy enough to break as the metal is long rusted and decayed. A successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check breaks the iron bars and the door falls away.

The rough-hewn passage goes a few more feet until it comes to a round chamber, a stairwell. The stairwell rises into the darkness, a thin set of steps built into its sides. The stairs are very sturdy

and lead to the Tower Square in the Aliigor Monastery (see above, the **MONASTERY OF ALIEGOR, AREA 10**).

The room is magical in nature, being the roof of one of the mythical Rings of Brass, magical tunnels built by the dwarves long ago that crisscross the planes and record the *Language of Creation*. The floor serves as a cap to the Ring of Brass tunnel and is over 20 feet thick. If *detect magic* is cast in the room, it reveals thousands of tiny runes written on the floor. Also a dwarf in the room has a chance, through a determine depth and direction check, to determine that a deep cavern lies beneath. Digging through the stone is impossible unless a *dispel magic* is cast on the runes and dispels them. Treat this as a specialized *guards and wards* spell with a *dispel magic* DC 16 (6<sup>th</sup> level). If *detect magic* is cast, any dwarf can read the runes or a mage with the *read magic* spell. The runes reveal the nature of the tunnel beyond.

**NOTE:** The Rings of Brass are ancient dwarven tunnels, built to travel the planes. Discourage exploration of the tunnels by characters until they are higher level. This plot device serves to set up future high level adventures. If they choose to enter, however, they will invariably get lost in the tunnels and be transported to any other realm of your choosing, be it elsewhere on Aihrde, to Earth of the 1930s, a strange and steampunk world where superheroes walk the world, a science-fiction universe or any other realm of your nefarious design.

## **MILLORIAN WOOD**

The Millorian is wood elf country. Here the wood elves have dwelt for countless centuries, unconquered by man or beast. The forest comprises the deepest recesses of the Darkenfold. "Millorian" translates in the Vulgate as "going deeper" or "deepening." Most humans and travelers call the wood just that, The Deepening.

The roots of the ancient Rhodope Mountains stretch far out into the country of the Millorian, breaking it up into many small ridges, valleys, breaks, and gulches. Both spring and autumn are wet, the near constant rain keeping the many creeks flowing and small woodland lakes filled to near capacity. There is almost always morning fog throughout the wood from the Mistbane to the Downs. Moss abounds throughout the Millorian finding purchase on rocks, across ancient tree roots and the like. The trees here are mostly oak and beech, though large stands of maple and ironwood trees are not uncommon. Smaller red dogwood and flowering poplar trees grow throughout the region as these are the favorites of the wood elves who often gather beneath their eaves when they bloom. Hawthorn trees are common and often cultivated by the elves to block entry to areas they like kept secret as these thick hedge-like trees are graced with flowers and guarded with thorns, making passage through them difficult if not impossible.

The large stands of oaks are not unusually tall, despite their age, but are thick of bowl and stout. They grow shallow roots in the rocky ground, roots that add to the chaos of small ridges, moss covered rocks and other impediments that make travel

here difficult. The country is home to many weird and magical creatures such as dryads, harpies, jaculus, naga, fey of all stripes as well as hosts of wild animals. Some sentients, the treants, remain here as well, wandering from stream to lake, drinking and pondering what trees will.

The wood elves claim all this land as their own, though they contest it with bands of bugbears, lizard men, goblins and now the Bowlgaar orcs. They are distant cousins of the elves of King Nigold who lives in the Eldwood far to the east, but they make little pretense at this. Here the elves live in small bands of 20 to 200. For the most part, they do not build houses or tents, but live in the open, sleeping in the trees or on the ground as it suits them. The changing weather does not bother them and whether it is hot, rainy or snow is falling they continue to wander in the open. Always on the move, they hunt the large forest deer, boar, and other game as well as make breads from the red wheat that grows along the banks of the many lakes in the region. Some few have gathered to build small villages of wooden and dirt houses and of these the most famous is Thel Wogash where Balarian is Lord.

## **THEL WOGASH (HOUSE OF THE FOX)**

South of Loretta's Bluff, several miles into the Millorian lies the elf village of Thel Wogash, the House of the Fox. Here Balarian the Wood Elf rules and at his side sits Jill Craddock of Ends Meet, Loretta's daughter. She is the mother of Balarian's son, Aenul who has spent so many long months in the dungeons of the Witch of Mount Hermitage. The village is the largest elf village in the wood, consisting of close to 500 people and well over a hundred homes. These houses sprawl out through a deep valley guarded by hedges of hawthorn trees that are in some places over 100 feet thick. There are only two entrances to the valley, one a secret path through the hedges that leads south and located at the west end of the valley. This entrance is a maze of twisting paths leading single-file through the hawthorn hedge.

Once through the hedge, the visitor discovers by a wide valley of many moss-covered ledges. Red dogwoods abound and bloom most of the year round, their red petals shining in the light of the sun or moon. The petals are everywhere, blown on the wind as they constantly fall. The numerous houses built into the valley walls, beneath ledges or outcrops, consist largely of stone with moss covered roofs. A small lake dominates the valley center and upon it stands the House of the Fox, Balarian's home.

Balarian's abode is large and built upon a large slab of stone placed at the lake's center. It is one of the few wooden houses in the valley and seems made from thick uncut beams and roofed with willow rushes. Vines climb over it and large loose, light screens hang from ceilings and walls. It look more like a banyan tree than a house as it sits upon its stone foundation. A small bridge leads out to it that can be crossed by only one abreast.

The party is only welcomed here if they have aided the wood elves in some way. Fighting the orcs to the west or rescuing the son of Balarian. In the latter case the elves heal their wounds, feed, and house the party until they are fit for travel. All their equipment is serviced and they are given food for four weeks,

water flasks filled with a healing drought and each are given one magical item. The Castle Keeper should dole these out by the character's need. Roll or choose a standard item from the core Fifth Edition Game Master's Guide that each character can use or will at the very least benefit the party.

Here they also learn of the war with the Bowlgaar orcs. The elves do not invite the party to join them as they are not inclined to take on allies for they always try to avoid interactions with outsiders. They will not discourage the characters from taking an active role in killing any orcs of course, but do not ask for aid. If aid is offered or an alliance proffered Balarian remarks only that he appreciates the offer and will get back with them next spring, which of course he never does.

The characters may stay as long as they like. And if they did rescue and return the half-elf they are welcomed back as friends when in the future they find themselves in the Millorian.

## APPENDIX A: NEW MONSTERS

### BLOOD WORMS

Blood worms are small snake like worms, averaging 12-18 inches long and about 2 inches in diameter. They are white, segmented worms with a small aperture at one end for a mouth, lined with thousands of tiny teeth.

**CURSED FEY SPAWN.** These are creatures born of the blood of evil fey. The poisoned blood of fallen faeries must spill into rich, vibrant soil in order for the worm to spawn. Once it does, so the worms propagate quickly, spreading over vast fields where they mature into large foot long worms. They are not able to move quickly or far so they generally take up residence where they spawn. They are mindless creatures, always hungry, unaffected by temperature or weather of any kind.

Blood worms are highly susceptible to fire and shy away from it, but they will strike as soon as the danger passes.

**INFESTERS OF BLOOD.** Blood worms lie in wait for victims to come to them. When any living creature moves within striking distance of a worm, roughly a foot, the worm strikes out attempting to bite the creature and latch on. Worms will continue to attack a victim no matter how many other worms have latched on. Frequently creatures who stumble into blood worm fields are attacked and after a few rounds stumble and fall exposing even more of their body to more worms. Also, these worms are not able to bite through armor of any kind, but will latch onto leather armor, shields, equipment, or anything else they strike. After one round they fall off to strike again. They can bite through clothing.

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### BLOOD WORM

TINY BEAST, UNALIGNED

ARMOR CLASS: 12 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS: 1 (1d2)

SPEED: 1ft.

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STR:	DEX:	CON:	INT:	WIS:	CHA:
3 (-4)	3 (-4)	10 (0)	7 (-2)	10 (0)	7 (-2)

DAMAGE VULNERABILITY: FIRE

SENSES: PASSIVE PERCEPTION 10

CHALLENGE: 0 (10 XP if a victim overcomes infestation; 0 XP otherwise)

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### Special Qualities

**Infestation.** The bite of a blood worm carries with it thousands of tiny larvae. These spill into the victims blood stream and within a few short rounds infect the whole body. The larvae attach onto the inner walls of veins and begin to chew their way through the flesh. Unless the victim succeeds at a DC 12 Constitution save, the larvae will begin breaking through the walls of veins in 1d4 days. When this happens the victim begins bleeding internally, suffering 1d12 points of damage in the first 24 hours after the breakthrough. Within 48 hours the victim begins bleeding from their eyes, mouth, nose and any tears or cuts on their body. Thereafter, the victim takes a further 1d12 points of damage each day as the victim begins internal hemorrhaging. A new save is allowed at the end of each long rest, ending the infection on a success. A *cure disease* spell, *heal* or any means of neutralizing poison will destroy the larvae and end the infection. Also, raising the victim's temperature to over 100 degrees for 1-4 hours kills the larvae and sweats them out. Dropping the victim in heated water, hot springs, etc usually achieves the desired result.

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### Actions

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack.* +2 to hit, one target, reach 5ft. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage, plus infestation. Once latched on, the blood worm automatically deals an additional point of necrotic damage each round as it drains the victim's blood. After 8 (3d4) rounds it will drop off, engorged.

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## ADDITIONAL DARKENFOLD MONSTERS

Use these stats if encounter table results indicate:

**ALLIP** (NE Medium Undead) HP 48 (9d8), AC 13, Spd 30ft (fly). Str 6 Dex 13 Con 10 Int 12 Wis 10 Cha 18. Perception 10 (0). Stealth +8. *maddening touch* +6 (Spell touch attack; 1d4 wisdom drain; lasts until victim completes long rest; allip gains 5 temporary hit points) SA *babble* (all creatures within 60 ft. must make a DC 15 wisdom save or be affected as per the hypnosis spell for 1 minute. Victims save again at the end of each turn, ending the effect and gaining immunity for 24 hours on a success); *madness* (anyone attempting to use mind affecting effects must make a DC 15 wisdom save or be driven mad, affected as per confusion for 1 minute. A new save is allowed at the end of each of the victim's turns to end the effect); *incorporeal movement* (can move through solid objects and occupied squares but takes 5 force damage if its turn ends inside another object).

**DEVIL, BARGHEST** (LE Medium Fiend): HD6d8+6 (HP 37), AC 15, Mv 30ft. Str 17 (+3) Dex 15 (+2) Con 13 (+1) Int 15 (+3) Wis 14 (+2) Cha 14 (+2). Saves: Str +6, Dex +5, Wis +6. Perception 15 (+5), Stealth +5, Survival +5. Multiattack: Bite 2d6+3 piercing and Claw 1d8+3 slashing. Multiattack (2 claws and bite), Change Shape (goblin or wolf), Consume soul (those killed can't be raised), feed (gain 1 HD/3 victims killed), Pass without trace (wolf form), Spell-like abilities (Save DC 15). At will-change self, levitate, minor illusion, misdirection; 1/day-charm monster, dimension door, fear.

**DRAGON, NAKAL (YOUNG ADULT)** (Neutral Medium Dragon): HP 57 (HD 10d8+8), AC 15, Spd 30ft/30ft (fly)/20ft (swim). Str 16 Dex 15 Con 18 Int 6 Wis 18 Cha 7. Saves Strength +6, Dex +5, Con +7. Perception 22 (+7/Advantage), Stealth +5, Survival +7, Nature +7. Tail +6 (1d8+3 plus 1d6 poison), Bite +6 (1d6+3), Claws +6 (2d6+3). SA Multiattack (tail, bite and 2 claws), darkvision 60ft, acute senses (advantage on all perception checks), Infection (tail slap requires DC 16 con save or victim paralyzed for 24 hours; success means victim poisoned for 24 hours). Immune to paralyzed, unconscious. Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

**SHADOW MASTIFFS** (NE M Fiend) HP 28 (HD 5d8), AC 15, Spd 50. Str 15 Dex 16 Con 15 Int 4 Wis 4 Cha 2. Perception 10. Bite +5 (2d4 plus Trip (DC 13 Con neg.)). SA Bay (Flee in panic 1d6 rounds; DC13 Wis save = frightened instead); Blend (Invisible in darkness); Incorporeal (Attackers disadvantage), Damage Resistance (nonmagical); Sunlight vulnerability (Daylight destroys it). CR: 2, XP Value: 450

## APPENDIX B: NEW MAGIC ITEMS

### GOURD OF THE FROG GOD

*Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)*

In the days when the Dwarves were yet young and the humans just began to branch out through the world, men worshiped the Og-Aust. They were primitive, having hardly mastered metallurgy of even the most basic kind. They were skilled in stone and wood working however and these cups were some of their most prized possessions. These gourds were carved from the large expansive above ground roots of cedar trees, smoothed and shaped and covered with enchanted resin to protect them from the elements (though they are not true "gourds" their shape resembles one).

These magic items are blessed and have a variety of powers as seen in the short list below. Any given gourd will have only one power, which can be used but once per day, and only one who has attuned to the gourd can use its powers by drinking fluid from it.

- 1) **GOURD OF HEALING:** Heal 3d8 hit points once per day
- 2) **GOURD OF CURING:** Cure diseases once per day
- 3) **GOURD OF VISION:** Cure Blindness once per day

4) **GOURD OF DIVINE STRENGTH:** Increase all of the drinker's attributes by 1 point for 10 minutes, once per day

5) **GOURD OF OG'S BLESSING:** Bless anyone sprinkled with the water for 10 minutes, once per day

6) **GOURD OF SPELL RESISTANCE:** Grant spell resistance for 1 minute, once per day

### PERIAPT OF WISDOM

*Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)*

This lovely piece of jewelry appears to be a flawless pearl set into a fine, delicate chain of white gold, designed to be worn about the head. When worn and attuned to a user, it raises the wearer's Wisdom score by +2. A wearer's Wisdom score can be raised above normal racial maximums through wearing this item (that is, it can boost player character Wisdom scores above 20).

## APPENDIX C: THE OG AUST, THE OLD ONES

Before all else there was darkness and it was called the Void. The Void was peopled by creatures both great and small. These were of the All Father's devising. When the All Father created the world it shone in the limitless dark like a beacon. Some, overcome with terror, fled from it even into the deepest reaches of the Void. Others however, drawn to the light, crossed the dark to the edges of the world and passed over into it. In later days men called these creatures the Val Eahrakun.

Newly-made and filled with the cataclysm of creation, Aihrde welcomed the Val Eahrakun, and they settled into the world wherever it suited them. Some had immense power, others were small and weak, but they were magical creatures one and all. In later ages, men worshipped the greater of these as gods, for they commanded powerful sorcery. They even paid homage to the lesser Val Eahrakun, the fey, and prayed to them or made small sacrifices to them where they lived, in the streams and lakes, under hills, and in the roots of ancient trees.

The Og Aust were gods and fey who lived in the Ethvold. The ancient Ethrum first encountered them, and these humans fell to worshipping them, building many temples and holy places in their honor. The worship of the Og Aust is an animist religion, as the Ethrum found a spiritual connection between the world in which they lived and these magical creatures.

The greatest of the Og Aust were Let, Amenut, Nunt, Heth, and Kekki. The religion, however, was not limited to these, as men prayed to hosts of fey, both great and small, from dryads in their groves of trees, to water sprites in the rivers and creeks. The religion and worship of the Og Aust died off centuries before the Winter Dark as more powerful gods changed the scope of the world. The many ruins of old monasteries, temples, dungeons, and the like litter the all the Valley of Kayomar, and many of these have their origins in the worship of the old ones.



Still the worship of the old ones continues, mostly by those few folk of the Darkenfold, the southern Rhodope Mountains, the Soup March, and other areas in the region. The lizard men, eschl, many of the humans, and even elves in those regions still pay homage to them, if a bit secretly, and though the power of the old ones waned, they want only for the return of the Ethvold to restore the religion and the gods to their former glory.

### **AMENUT, THE FROG GOD**

**ORDER:** Val Eahrakun, Og Aust

**PROVINCE:** Water, Earth, Knowledge

**PLANE:** Aihrde

**ALIGNMENT:** Good

**TEMPLE:** Rock pedestals built in cypress groves

**SACRIFICES:** Any wealth, magic

**HOLY DAYS:** Full and half moon

**SUPERSTITIONS:** Salt

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Mace

**MISSIONARY:** "Water Surrounds"

Amenut crossed into the world of Aihrde before the first light. In the darkness he found a river, deep and slow and he settled into its cool waters. There Tefnut found him, and granted him domain of the river and all the lands about. This was the Mistbane River that flowed through the Darkenfold. He was the first of the Og Aust to come to the lands that blossomed into the Ethvold, and he ruled there under her for many ages of the world. He grew wise and powerful in that wisdom, and ruled the hearts of men until the latter days of the world when the Ethvold failed and his power, long tied to the deep valleys and tall trees, waned. In time he faded from the minds of men so that only a few called to him and he became lost in the deep caverns beneath the world.

Amenut takes the form of a tall human with greenish skin, whose head is that of a frog. He wears no clothes but for his long, enveloping cloak. He once bore the *Cloak of Amen*, a powerful cloth that held much of his power, but it faded with his might and is lost; with it he held a golden scepter, a +5 mace, but it was stolen from him while he slumbered. The cloak acts as +7 chain mail and gives the wearer the powers of a knight.

Amenut lives on, and now dwells in the Caverns of Amenut, beneath the village of Alice in the Valley of the Frog.

He is benevolent if indifferent to the supplications of his followers. In the days when men worshiped him regularly, he answered prayers as the mood struck him, but great sacrifice was always rewarded with knowledge and boons. Now his reach is small, and he can reward only simple deeds and lesser spells to his clerics. He longs for a return to his days of glory.

Worship of the Frog God is simple and involves laying valuables at the feet of pedestals constructed at his holy sites. Sacrifices to Amenut earn the supplicant the benefits of an *augury* spell.

### **HETH, THE CROW GOD**

**ORDER:** Val Eahrakun

**PROVINCE:** Air, Afterlife

**PLANE:** Aihrde

**TEMPLE:** None

**ALIGNMENT:** Neutral

**SACRIFICES:** Casting seed to the four cardinal directions, meditation

**HOLY DAYS:** Prayers at sunset

**SUPERSTITIONS:** Noose

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Bows

**MISSIONARY:** None

Before the forests of the Ethvold grew in the Valley of Kayomar, Amenut settled in those lands. He lived in the Mistbane river, a servant of Tefnut. It was here that Heth found him. A creature of careful thought, Heth came to Amenut without form. He settled upon a rock and watched Amenut, and the Frog God rose and spoke to him and they were ever after companions. So it was that Heth, a servant of Toth, came to dwell in Aihrde. In later ages he took up the duty of guiding the dead upon the Arc of Time, of judging them, or passing them on to his master, but he always loved the Ethvold and in time took the guise of a great crow, and so he dwelt ever after.

He was worshiped as a powerful god of the underworld by the Ethrum. Men worshiped him far and wide, and almost everyone made sacrifice to the crow god before any task. His great temple they built in the Oak Stand in the Downs of the Darkenfold. From there Heth herded the souls of men and brought them to the nether planes or the stone fields as he deemed they deserved. Men called upon him whenever they went into battle, traveled dangerous roads, or did anything that might cost them their lives. His followers were many and they followed an intricate system of rites in his worship.

In time, as the Ethvold failed, so did Heth. Now he dwells in the upper reaches of the Darkenfold, powerful upon the Arc of Time, but a shadow of his former self upon Aihrde.

When he appears to his followers, it is always as a dark-skinned man with huge black crow wings. His face is dark as well with no shape, only the hint of eyes in the shadows. From the profile he sported a long, narrow beak. In battle, he carries a large magical +5 composite bow and a quiver filled with *arrows of slaying*. But such a form is taxing and Heth does not maintain it in these latter days. Now, reduced in power, Heth's spirit occupies the body of a huge crow that lives in the oaks of the Oak Stand. He longs for a return to greatness.

Men of the wilds and deep woods still pay homage to him and worship him as a patron, but far and wide he is still called upon and sacrifices are made to him by casting seed in the four cardinal directions, in hopes that the road of the dead shall be straight and true. Sacrifices to Heth also earn the supplicant the effects of a *speak with dead* spell.

## KEKKI, THE SNAKE GOD

**ORDER:** Val Eahrakun (Og Aust)

**PROVINCE:** Evil, Time, Wasting Away

**PLANE:** Maelstrom

**ALIGNMENT:** Chaotic Evil

**TEMPLE:** Pyramid

**SACRIFICES:** Feasting on raw red meat using a ceremonial, crooked dagger

**HOLY DAYS:** Harvest Moon

**SUPERSTITIONS:** Circles

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Dagger

**MISSIONARY:** "Where time's waste, Kekki lies."

Kekki came to the Ethvold after its first flowering, but before the Ethrum. There he found the gardens of Tefnut and seeing them, he desired them. But his mind was not bent toward their beauty, but rather the desire to devour them. Only the wasting away of things caught his eye.

Where the water grinds down riverstone lies Kekki, where the rain shapes the hill, or the root breaks the earth, or time wastes all, Kekki lies. It is with an eye toward the sorrow and evil of loss that Kekki's mind is bent, not the nobility of spirit that comes with the passing of years. He lords over the waste of time and loves the ruin of it and he is altogether without emotion. He is not evil. He is not good. He just is. Tefnut never warmed to him and he took the guise of a long, legless creature, and from him all snakes came into the world.

Throughout the ages the slow wastage of time would fail to satisfy him; then he would appear among men as a force of chaos and destruction. Often summoned from distant realms of delight, he would return and vie with Amenut for dominance of the Ethvold and its people. Once in a great while, his priests would gain the upper hand and he lorded over the forest in a horrible reign of death and madness. For this reason all men hated him and his worship was punishable by death. When the Ethvold diminished so did he, so that he took his favorite form and sank into the morass of that timeless forest.

He always appears as a great serpent, with the head and upper torso of a man. Twice armored in his own scales and rings of +3 chain mail, he wields his long twisted +5 *dagger of venom*, as skilled as any warrior.

The early Ethrum feared Kekki as he ruled the worlds of evil and darkness. Few worshiped him openly, but those seeking power beyond that of mortal men paid homage to him, gathering in small cults and making sacrifice to him. Sacrifices to Kekki earn the supplicant the ability to age one object, once, reducing its effective by -1 (magic items are excluded).

The lizard men of the forest still worship Kekki, and for that reason he possesses some power and can grant clerics spells and their abilities. He does not dwell in the forest but rather lives on distant planes, coming only when summoned.

## NUNT, THE FISH GOD

**ORDER:** Val Eahrakun

**PROVINCE:** Underworld, Water, Lakes

**PLANE:** Aihrde

**TEMPLE:** Caverns with water

**ALIGNMENT:** Neutral Evil

**SACRIFICES:** Food given to the fish

**HOLY DAYS:** Crescent Moon

**SUPERSTITIONS:** Flowering trees

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Axe

**MISSIONARY:** "The gift of the Fallen."

Nunt dwells in the deeps of the Endless pools. There he harvests the souls that Heth finds lacking. As they slip into the Pools, he devours them. These are misspent souls who deserve more than the oblivion of the Endless Pools but are found unworthy of the Stone Fields, and after a time of his own choosing he returns the spirits to the world to begin again. He was widely worshiped in the Ethvold and found solace in the company of Heth, who dwelt in those deep forests for many rin of the world. His worship has fallen off so that few know of him, but those who do, seek to make sacrifices for the good of their own afterlives.

Nunt always appears in the guise of a thin humanoid creature with a long face that much resembles a fish's head. He has scales all over his body, fins on his legs and arms, and gills along his neck. He rarely leaves the water and is able to move from one body of water to the next, no matter its size.

All feared Nunt, for his domain was that of the dead held between worlds. His temples were, as the few that remain are, all underground, in caves or dungeons where water was prevalent. His main temple complex stood in the Barrel Hills near the Barrel Wood. In battle he carries a *vorpal axe* and a +4 shield and dons +4 scale armor.

Nunt vanished from the world many centuries ago, but he dwells still in the deep waters beneath the Lake of Nunt in the Low River Country of the Darkenfold. He has taken the guise of a large albino salamander.

His totems, all of the moon, were common and most everyone carried one as a sign of respect for the deity and of course as a symbol to keep them out of Nunt's Realm. To gain his good will, a portion of food is always tossed into the water so that the fish there might eat. Sacrifices to Nunt earn the supplicant the ability to find someone on the Arc of Time.

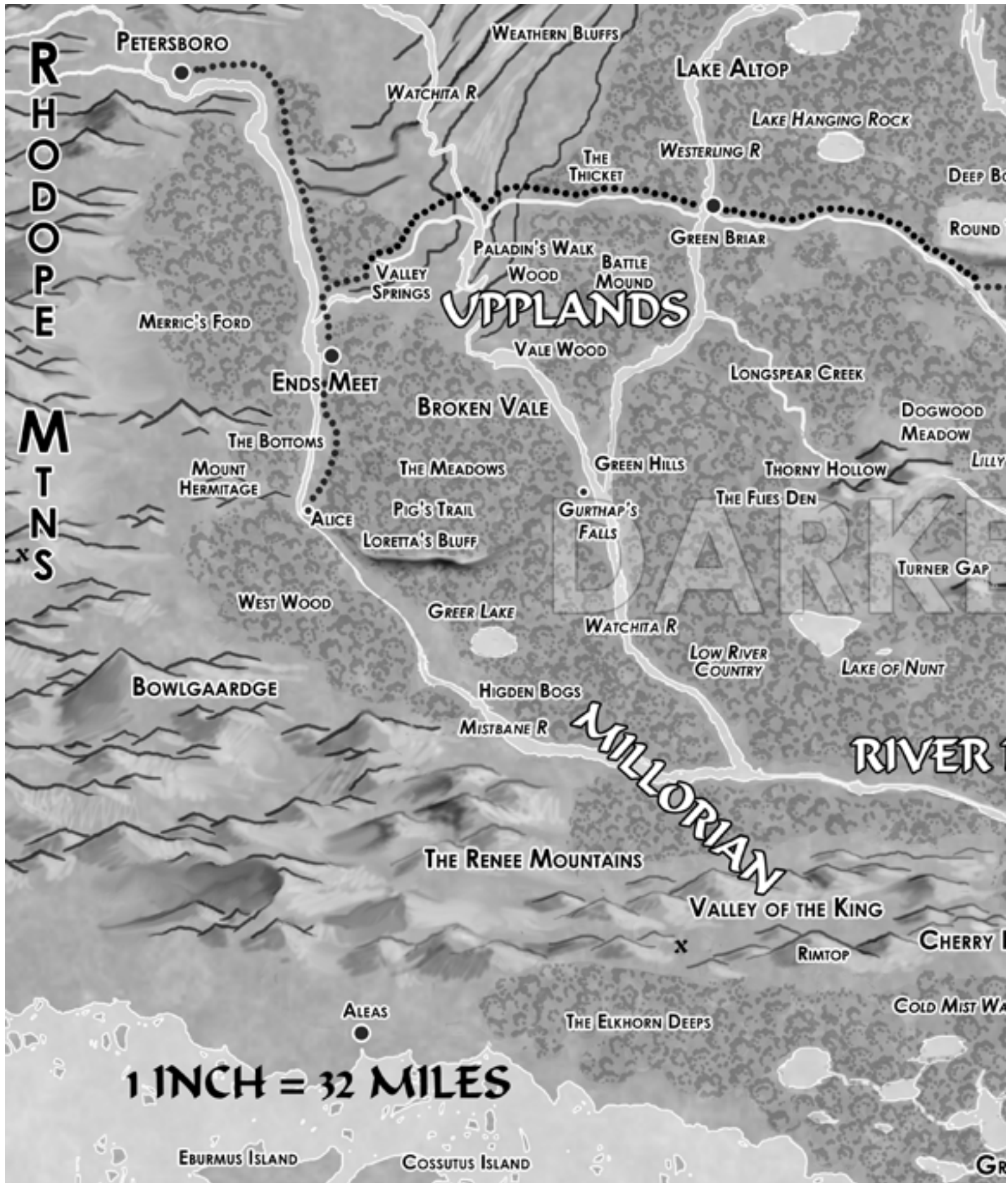
Encounters are governed by region. Though the adventures in Shades of Mist are of mid-level range the Darkenfold is a forest filled with limitless adventure possibilities.

**TABLE 1: DARKENFOLD ENCOUNTER CHART**

ENCOUNTER	UPPLANDS/TROLL GLADES	MILLORIAN/ DOWNS	POWDER	MISTBANE RIVER BASIN
ALLIGATOR	-	-	01-02	01-04
ALLIP*	1	1	-	05-06
ANKHEG	2	-	02-03	-
ASSASSIN VINE	3-5	2-3	04-06	07-10
BARGHEST, DEVIL*	-	4	-	11-12
BASILISK	6	5	-	-
BEAR, BROWN	7-9	6-8	07-10	13-15
BEHIR	10	9	11-12	16-17
BLINK DOG	11-13	10-11	-	-
BOAR	14-16	12-14	13-16	18-20
CENTAUR	17	15-16	17	-
CHIMERA	18	17-18	18	21-22
COCKATRICE	19-20	19-21	-	-
DEMI-HUMAN	21-23	22-23	19-22	22-25
DRAGON	24	24	23	26-28
DRYAD	25-26	25-26	24-25	29-31
ETTERCAP	27-28	27-28	-	-
ETTIN	29	29-31	26-27	-
FROG, GIANT	30-31	32-33	28-30	32-34
FUNGUS, VIOLET	-	34	31-33	35-37
GIANT	32-33	35-37	34-36	-
GORGON	34	38	-	-
HAG, NIGHT	35	39	37	38-39
HARPY	36-37	40-41	38-39	40-42
HERD ANIMAL	38-40	42-44	40-41	-
HUMAN	41-43	45	42-45	43-46
HUMANOID	44-46	46-48	46-47	-
HYDRA	-	49-51	-	-
JACULUS	47	52-54	48-49	-
LAMIA	-	55	-	-
LAMMASU	-	56-57	-	-
LION	48-50	58-60	50-51	47-49
LIZARD FOLK	51-52	61-63	-	50-53
LYCANTHROPE	53-54	64-65	52	54-56
MANTICORE	55-56	66-67	53-54	-
NAGA, DARK	57-58	68	-	-
NYMPH	59-60	69	55	57-60
OGRE	61-63	71-71	56-58	61-62

OWLBEAR	64-65	72-73	59-61	63-65
PSEUDRAGON	66	74	62-62	-
SATYR	67-68	75-76	63	-
SHAMBLING MOUND	-	-	64-65	66-68
SNAKE, GIANT	69-71	77-78	66-67	69-72
SPIDER	72-73	79-80	68-71	-
SPRITE	74-75	81-82	72	73-75
STIRGE	76-77	83-84	73-75	76-78
TICK, GIANT	78-80	-	76-79	-
TOAD, GIANT	81-83	85-86	80-82	79-81
TREANT	84-85	87-88	83-84	82-84
TROLL	86-88	89-90	85-87	-
TROLL, LORD	89	91	88	-
UNDEAD	90-92	92	89-91	85-89
UNICORN	93	93	92	90-92
WILL-O'-WISP	94-95	94-95	93-94	93-94
WOLF	96-98	96-98	95-97	95-96
WYVERN	99-100	99-100	98-100	97-100
<b>DRAGON</b>				
DRAGON, COPPER	01-20	05-15	01-20	01-25
DRAGON, GREEN	21-50	16-30	21-50	26-100
DRAGON, NAKAL*	51-99	31-89	51-99	-
DRAGON, RED	100	90-100	100	-
<b>GIANT</b>				
CLOUD	-	01-10	-	-
HILL	01-50	10-50	01-50	01-100
STONE	51-75	51-75	51-90	-
FIRE	76-100	76-100	91-100	-
<b>DEMI-HUMAN</b>				
DWARF	01-25	01-05	01-25	01-05
ELF	26-30	06-60	26-30	06-35
GNOME	31-75	61-80	31-75	36-60
HALFLING	76-100	81-100	76-100	61-100
<b>UNDEAD</b>				
BANSHEE	-	01-10	-	01-100
GHOST	01-05	11-25	01-05	-
SKELETONS	06-25	26-35	06-25	-
SHADOW	26-35	36-45	26-35	-
SHADOW MASTIFF*	36-50	46-66	36-50	-
WRAITH	51-75	67-87	51-75	-
WIGHT	76-100	88-100	76-100	-

\*see Appendix A



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PETERSBORO

WEATHERN BLUFFS

LAKE ALTOP

WATCHITA R.

LAKE HANGING ROCK

THE THICKET

WESTERLING R.

DEEP B...

ROUND

GREEN BRIAR

VALLEY SPRINGS

PALADIN'S WALK WOOD

BATTLE MOUND

UPPLANDS

VALE WOOD

MERRIC'S FORD

LONGSPEAR CREEK

ENDS MEET

BROKEN VALE

DOGWOOD MEADOW

THE BOTTOMS

MOUNT HERMITAGE

THE MEADOWS

GREEN HILLS

THORNY HOLLOW

LILLY

ALICE

PIG'S TRAIL

GURTHAP'S FALLS

THE FLIES DEN

TURNER GAP

LORETTA'S BLUFF

WEST WOOD

GREER LAKE

WATCHITA R.

LOW RIVER COUNTRY

LAKE OF NUNT

BOWLGAARDGE

HIDDEN BOGS

MISTBANE R.

MILLORIAN RIVER

THE RENEE MOUNTAINS

VALLEY OF THE KING

CHERRY I...

ALEAS

THE ELKHORN DEEPS

COLD MIST WA...

1 INCH = 32 MILES

EBURMUS ISLAND

COSSUTUS ISLAND

GR



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