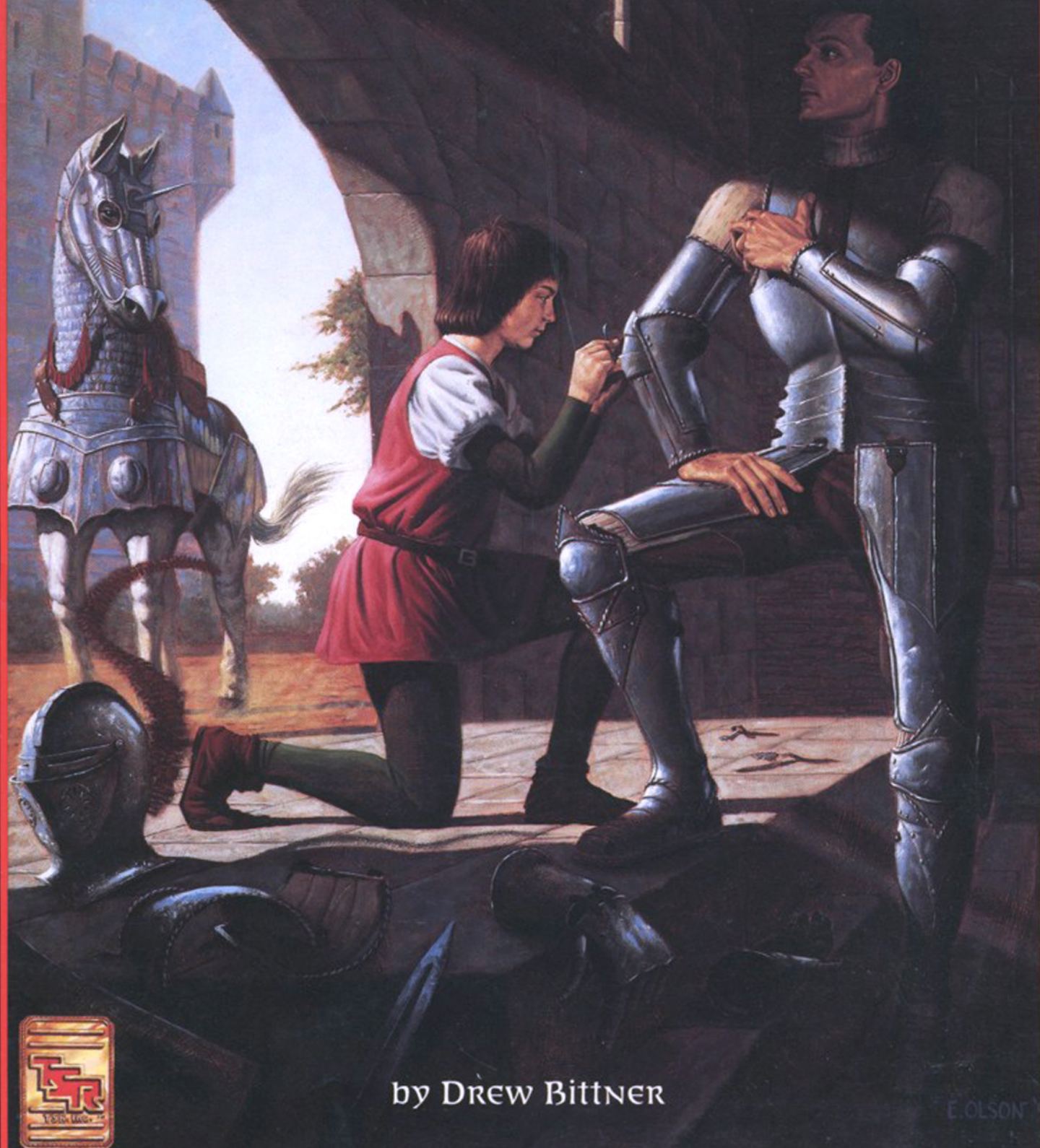


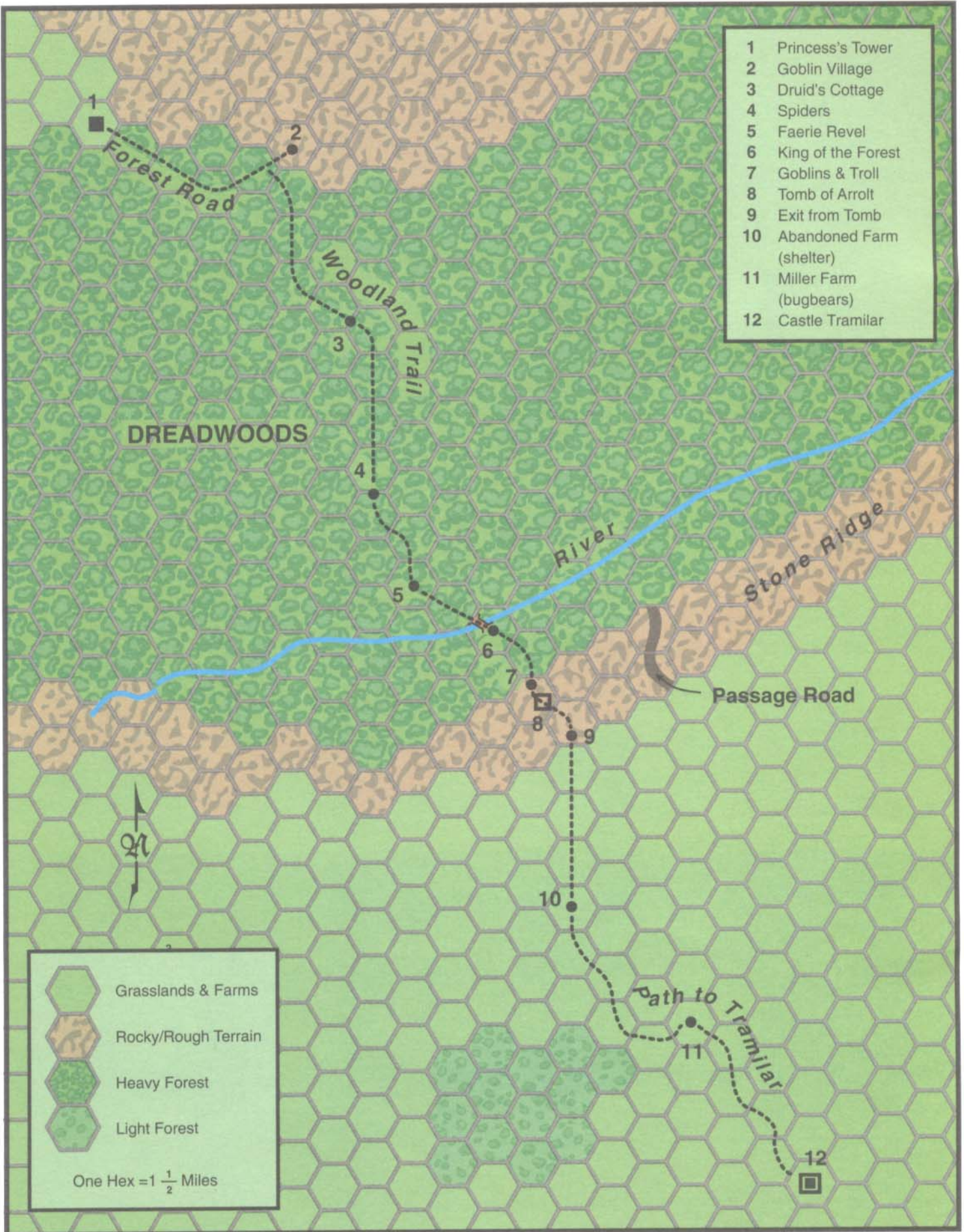
FIGHTER'S CHALLENGE II



by Drew Bittner

E. OLSON

Out Door Map





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Fighter's Challenge II is a ONE-ON-ONE™ adventure. It is designed for very small gaming groups or as a way to give a solitary player character some experience before entering an existing campaign.

This adventure is suited for a 4th- through 6th-level warrior PC. A warrior built with the Cavalier or Noble Warrior kit from *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*, acting as knight errant, is likely to be best off in this adventure, but other warrior types such as paladins or rangers could also be used.

It is possible that one or two other players may wish to become involved in this adventure. If so, there are a couple of nonplayer characters (NPCs) available who, with a little work, could be used as the main PC's companions. DMs including additional players are advised to check subsequent encounters, adjusting the opposition to keep it from becoming too easy for the PCs.

The Background Information gives the PC a behind-the-scenes view of events occurring before the adventure itself begins. In Part One, "The Tower," the PC discovers himself in the middle of an adventure with serious political overtones. The PC must rescue a kidnapped princess and escort her through dangerous territory to restore her to her rightful place.

The adventure becomes a test of survival, throwing the PC and his charge into a series of dangerous situations and unusual encounters. These include meeting a druid and a ranger, running from goblins, a meeting with an undead lord, and a climactic confrontation with the evil witch who is the mastermind behind the princess's abduction. The module also includes sections dealing with further adventures and detailing major NPCs and random encounters.

Though this module uses the pronoun "he" for the PC, the PC can be a female as well, with no change in the adventure's outcome.

Background Information



The Kingdom of Tramilar is now a small land, though once it was truly a mighty kingdom. The Great Pox changed that. Sweeping through this corner of the world just over twenty years ago, it depopulated this realm, killing large numbers of people, until the epidemic ended as quickly as it had begun. It left a land tottering on the edge of ruin, which is only now beginning to rebuild itself. Tramilar's former northern areas are now wild and overgrown, infested with goblins and other monsters who have taken advantage of Tramilar's weakness.

Tramilar's settled areas are temperate and covered by arable land, with scattered forests and rocky hills. The kingdom is occupied mostly by farmers and homesteaders who produce enough to feed the people and pay their taxes. Woodcutters gradually clear away the forests on the kingdom's southern reaches.

Tramilar's king, Ormath the Just, has ruled for 30 years. His justice and strength of character are

admired by the people, as is his grand ambition to reclaim the northern regions Tramilar used to control. His soldiers have made forays against the goblins, holding them behind the Stone Ridge at the northernmost edge of Tramilar.

Ormath's weak-willed son, Alfinor, stands to inherit the throne. His daughter, Princess Ariella, awaits a suitable proposal from an eligible nobleman. Alfinor has gained little respect with the people, as he is a wastrel and spendthrift who spends most of his time gambling and drinking, while Ariella is beloved for her kindness.

Just recently, Princess Ariella has been acting strangely. None can account for her unpredictable mood swings, her sudden caprices, or her fits of sulking in her room.

The most optimistic believe Ariella's actions are merely a phase. Others see dire portents in her irrational behavior. This castle gossip is rapidly spreading across Tramilar, and many wonder about the kingdom's future.

It is a calm, beautiful day in early summer. This far into the wilderness, with no human soul for miles in any direction, it is possible to appreciate the raw beauty of nature.

The terrain around the PC is hilly grassland, with the beginnings of a heavy forest just visible over the next line of hills. Once the final rise is topped, the view of the Dreadwoods is unmatched . . . but not entirely welcome. A great wall of gray-brown tree trunks, thatched by every shade of green ever seen by the eye of man, confronts the PC like a cresting tidal wave of vegetation. A dim aura of menace clings to this wood, with deep shadows behind and between the trees and in the underbrush. It seems as though the woods are waiting for the PC to come close.

A small breeze springs up, carrying the stench of a marshland to the PC's nose, even though there is no evidence of stagnant water anywhere in sight. Nor are there the kinds of buzzing insects common to such a swamp. Indeed, the PC notices that there are few sounds of any kind nearby, and none of them emanate from the Dreadwoods themselves.

This ancient forest earns its name every year, as travelers frequently vanish in its verdant depths. Armed soldier or solitary woodcutter, it makes little difference. Monsters roam from the Dreadwoods to attack homesteads, requiring a vigilant military presence. The Dreadwoods devour those they choose and spare the rest, who often have harrowing tales to tell of their experiences in those unnatural woods.

The wind dies down and the PC can hear the sound of a woman crying out, somewhere nearby. Just over a low ridge to the east, the PC can see a squat, ruined tower constructed of pitted and cracked gray stone. Its base is surrounded by wild, untended bushes. The tower stands near a rocky outcrop, which is also skirted by shrubbery.

There is a chance (base 20%, +1% per point of Intelligence and Wisdom) that the PC spots a small cave entrance concealed behind the plant life. If he succeeds, he can approach. Listening carefully, he notices voices muttering in Goblin (if

the character understands Goblin, he makes out that they are gambling). If he doesn't see the entrance, the goblins remain a surprise until later.

A glance at the tower reveals a broken-down and very old structure. There are missing bricks and jagged cracks in the walls. Tiles fallen from the roof lie on the ground amid chunks of mortar and brick, while thick vines grow on the walls. The door is a single massive piece of oak, banded by rusting iron and held on by large, sturdy hinges. The handle sports an old and poorly maintained lock (+10% to Open Locks attempts). The door is not locked.

Behind the tower, a crude corral has been constructed. A light riding horse idly crops the sparse grass in this enclosure, glancing up when the PC appears but taking no other action. A saddle and riding tack, adjusted for a man-sized rider, is slung astride the corral's fence and is covered by a tarp. The rest of the area behind the tower is thick with weeds and small bushes. No rear entrance to this tower is apparent. The woman's voice comes from inside, through an arrow slit broken out to make a window.

It is possible to enter the tower by scaling the wall to the window or by digging out one of the cracked foundation bricks. Climbing up to the window can be accomplished by using the rules in the *Player's Handbook* or the Mountaineering proficiency. The PC might also try to dig away one of the tower's lower foundation stones. Many are loose and could be moved aside with a moderate amount of effort. Most likely, the PC will climb up to the window, but tailor the description and the encounter to work with any reasonable plan.

The ruined tower's lowest floor is presently dominated by a sizeable iron cage, which holds a beautiful maiden. The cage's top is covered by a rough set of planks to provide some protection from bad weather.

There are a lot of smashed furniture pieces and loose bricks on the floor. Many of the bricks apparently from where the upper floors have fallen in. A staircase once wound around the

Part One: The Tower

inside wall, but now is fallen into disrepair, collapsing entirely halfway between the second and third floors. A PC studying the staircase from the window can see that its splintery boards won't support the weight of an armored man. A rope lowered from the window is required to get safely inside.

Glancing upward, the PC sees a huge hole in the roof. This hole explains the partial shielding the planking gives the captive, but gives no clue as to what could have made such a hole in the first place.

The upper floors have been broken away by brute force, leaving a large space inside of the old structure. Where the upper floors were, only jagged ledges remain. The first ledge is 15 feet off the floor and the second is 25 feet above that. There is a 6-foot gap between that ledge and the

ceiling. Each ledge is 1 foot thick and about 5 feet across, providing the wyvern that guards the tower with plenty of room to hide itself and its treasure.

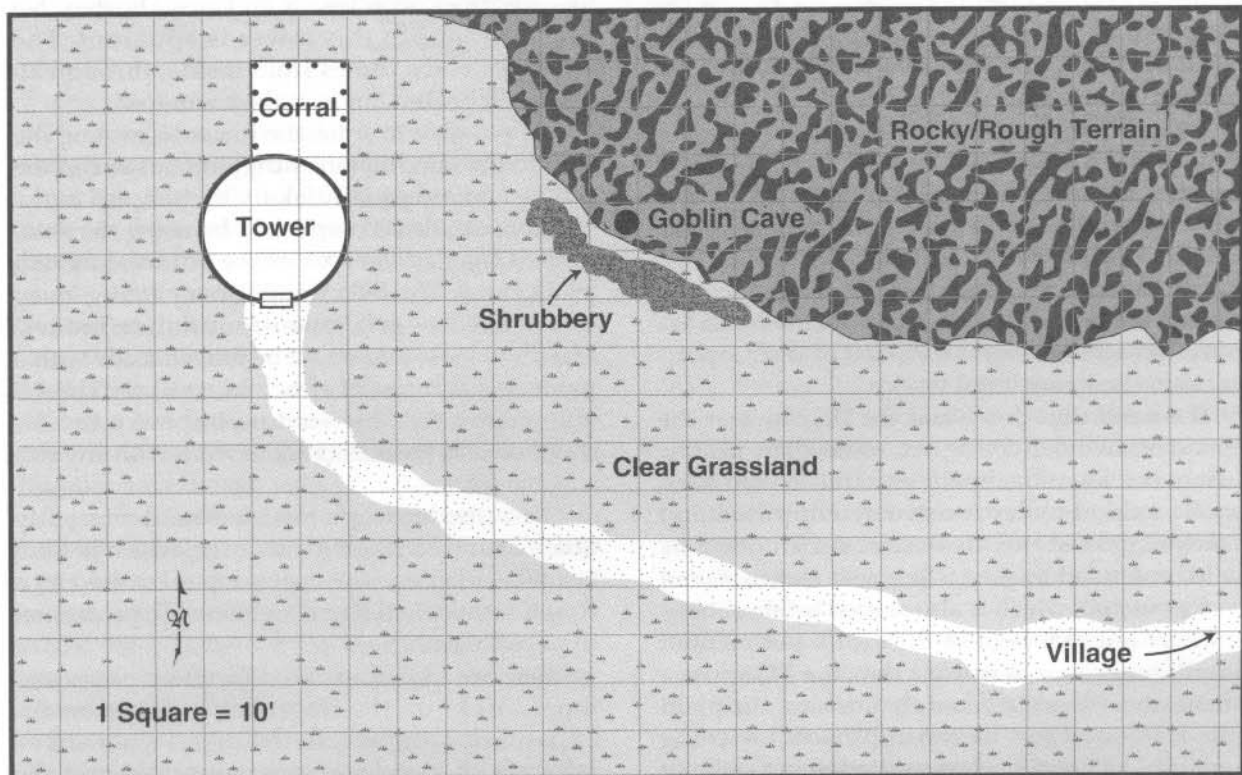
Although a thick patina of dust covers everything, a strange odor hangs in the air of this tower. It is a musky reek, like leather left rotting mixed with an unmistakable smell of dung.

Meanwhile, the maiden forlornly cries, "Is there no one there? Please, if you can hear my call, save me!"

There is a 50% chance she spots the PC as he looks through the window; if so, she shouts to him, "You! O rescuer! You have heard my calls! Please help! Quick as you can, set me free! Before the flying beast returns!"

Her cries have a 20% chance of summoning the wyvern which is guarding the tower before the

Tower



PC can climb down a rope or enter through the front door. If this occurs, the combat between the two takes place outdoors, where the wyvern can use its flying abilities to fullest advantage by avoiding close combat. The five goblins in the cave will appear within 1d4+2 rounds to assist the wyvern (if they can hear the combat, they investigate it as quickly as they can get armed and armored). Their combat tactics in this situation call for one of them to use the crossbow, while the other four secure the princess and hold her hostage, if necessary.

Beware the Wyvern!

Getting inside is surprisingly easy. In spite of its formidable appearance, the door can be pushed aside with a successful Open Doors roll. The lock isn't broken, but it isn't locked. (None of the goblins have the key!)

The tower's floor is covered with garbage and loose, shifting trash of all sorts. Footing is not especially treacherous, but characters can only go at two-thirds of their normal speed and remain certain of their balance; only characters with acrobatic training or a Dexterity of 15 or more can go at their normal movement rate.

If the PC enters the tower without being spotted, the wyvern flaps down from the top ledge to attack him as he crosses the floor. The PC gets to roll a save vs. paralysis to detect the wyvern, as the sound of leathery wings flapping is obvious in the otherwise silent tower. If the PC doesn't notice the wyvern, the caged maiden sees it and alerts the PC before it strikes.

Wyvern (1): AC 5; MV 6/24; HD 5+5; hp 30; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1-12/1-4; AL N(E); SA poison sting (Type F; +2 to saving throw); ML 14; XP 1,350. (This is a young and semi-tame wyvern; its statistics reflect its youth.)

The wyvern has hidden its treasure on the first ledge off the ground. It has 700 gp and six gems (100 gp, 250 gp, 320 gp, 480 gp, 515 gp and 530 gp value) up on the ledge.

The wyvern stays airborne while attacking, so that it can use its sting attack and its bite together. If it is grounded by attacks to its wings, it suffers the same movement penalties as the PC.

If the PC is stung by the wyvern's tail, the poison can be neutralized by a healthy swallow from a stone jug tucked by the door. This fluid is not magical, being an alchemical anti-venom specifically useful against wyvern stings (at the DM's option, it may offer +1 or +2 to saving throws against stings from large insects). It contains six doses of anti-venom. Ariella knows about the jug and points it out to the PC after the battle. It was placed there to give the goblins some protection against the wyvern's bad temper.

Meeting the Princess

When the wyvern is overcome, the PC has a moment to meet the young lady he fought to rescue. The iron cage is not easily opened, as it boasts a high-quality mechanism (-10% to Open Locks).

"You killed the wyvern!" she exclaims. "You certainly are a powerful warrior! Have you come to rescue me?"

Princess Ariella (0-level): AC 7; MV 12; hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL NG; Str 9, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 14; ML 10.

Weapon Proficiencies: None.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Dancing 12, Etiquette 16, Local History 16, Reading/Writing 13, Riding (land-based) 15.

Equipment: *Robe of protection* +3 (also proof against dirt and tearing; protection extends to footwear), fancy ring (2,000 gp value—she specifically mentions it is a gift from her father).

Ariella is a lovely 18-year-old woman, with long hair, large emerald-green eyes, and a slender

Part One: The Tower

figure, wrapped in a lavender dress and a dove gray robe. She wears lavender slippers on her delicate feet.

Ariella, although well intentioned, is not very bright and has led a very sheltered life. She is stubborn, too. The DM should play up on this for comic effect whenever possible.

Her voice, when she addresses the PC, is musical and lilting. "What in the name of Good King Ormath kept you? I've been trapped here for four days! Don't you know it's rude to keep a princess waiting? Wait just a moment, I don't recognize you. Did my father send you? You aren't a brigand, are you?"

The PC can introduce himself at this point. If he is of noble birth, she gains +2 to her reaction to the PC. If he isn't, she is at -1, to a minimum reaction of "Cautious" (a rescue is a rescue, after all). She adds that she is the princess of Tramilar, a kingdom just south of the Dreadwoods. Having been trapped here for four days now, she is grateful to be rescued, but there is one little hitch—the cage is locked and she doesn't know where the key is. Ariella insists the key has to be around somewhere.

The PC can try to break the lock, which requires a Bend Bars/Lift Gates success, or he can locate the key. Either effort requires two to three rounds.

Meanwhile, the five goblins in the nearby cave approach to challenge the intruder. They aren't very disciplined or prepared, since they expect the wyvern's poison would finish off any interloper; their approach is so careless that they gain no bonus to surprise or initiative.

Goblins (5): AC 6; MV 6; HD 1-1; hp 5 (average); THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (light crossbow, stabbing spears and short swords); AL LE; ML 10; XP 15.

"I know there's a key, because the goblins locked me in here and a big goblin comes in every day to drop off food and water," she explains.

Goblins?

"Oh, I thought you'd already seen them," she says apologetically. "There are goblins out there, standing guard. Or they're supposed to stand guard, anyway. Maybe they left. They certainly don't seem very interested in staying in here, with that terrible wyvern flapping about! They come in here to bring in food and water, empty the chamberpot, things like that. They're so awful! Maybe they went home. Oh! There they are!"

The PC looks over and sees two goblins pausing at the doorway. Surprised at finding the wyvern dead, they hesitate just long enough for the PC to try to block them by holding the doorway (the sole defensible position in or around the tower). He must make a Dexterity check in order to reach the door over the treacherous flooring before the goblins have all entered.

One goblin (the corporal in charge of this squad) uses a light crossbow from the safety of the doorway, two others use short stabbing spears, and the other two use short swords. They try to surround the PC and attack whatever side is undefended while the others harry him.

The goblins fight until two have been killed or four have suffered the loss of more than half their hit points; they must make a morale check at this point to continue fighting. If they fail, they flee into the rocky crags, the crossbow-using corporal covering his men while they retreat. Once outside, they look for places to hide until their leader returns (see Vorok, below).

The goblins have little treasure, possessing a total of 79 sp and 41 cp, plus three bottles of average quality wine and rations for three days.

The goblin with the crossbow has an iron key in his belt, which is dropped if that goblin flees the combat. It fits the keyhole and Princess Ariella is free! Ariella daintily steps from her prison, appearing as regal as though she were alighting from a fancy carriage.

Choosing Directions

Once the PC and Ariella get out of the tower, they have to choose a direction to follow in getting Ariella home.

According to what Ariella has overheard from the goblins, the start of the Forest Road is not far distant to the east. Tramilar is almost directly south, on the other side of the Dreadwoods.

"I've heard the woods are dangerous," Ariella says, "but our huntsman says their reputation is much exaggerated. He insists that if a person doesn't return from the Dreadwoods, it is probably due to his own carelessness. Shall we walk through the woods? They don't seem so bad to a brave warrior like you, do they?"

Going through the Dreadwoods and over the Stone Ridge would bring Ariella home within a week, where it would take possibly three times as long to go around and involve a voyage through equally desolate and monster-infested wastelands. Further, the dangerous Pirate Coast lies to the west, where corsairs are known to prey on hapless wanderers.

Ariella encourages the PC to follow the Forest Road, especially since she's always longed for "a real adventure," yet wants badly to be home soon. She is certain her father and brother are heartsick with worry over her. "If we ride, we could be home in only a few days," she urges. "Saddle the horse, warrior, and let's be gone from this terrible place!"

As soon as the last girth is buckled, the sounds of a horse approaching can be heard coming from around the corner of the tower. It is Vorok One-Eye, who has been out riding. He is a spectacularly ugly half-orc warrior, and he doesn't look very pleased to see the PC and Ariella stealing his spare mount!

Vorok approaches slowly and confidently. He smiles evilly at the PC and says, "Well, lookee here. Guess the little missy got herself a hee-ro. Guess we gonna have hee-ro stew tonight, huh?"

He urges his horse forward, swinging his battle axe idly, whistling a little tune under his breath.

Vorok One-Eye (F5): AC 5; MV 12; hp 38; THAC0 16; #AT 1 (3/2*); Dmg by weapon; AL NE; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 5; ML 15; XP 650.

Weapon Proficiencies: Battle axe (specialization: +1 to hit, +2 damage), dagger, heavy crossbow, spear, bastard sword.

Proficiencies: Direction Sense 12, Fire-building 14, Riding (land-based) 14, Weather Sense 12.

Equipment: Fine-quality battle axe, studded leather armor, *medium shield* +1, three daggers, heavy crossbow and 12 quarrels, two spears, light riding horse.

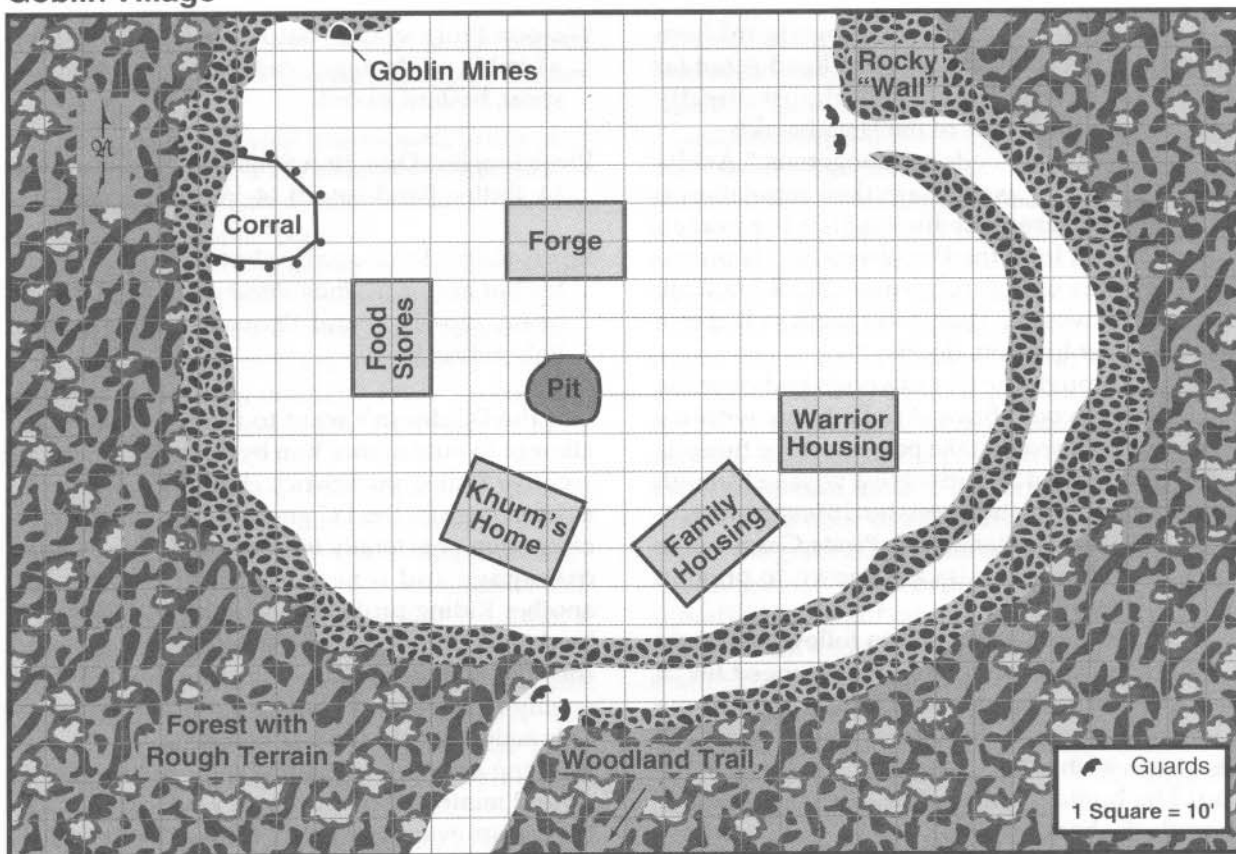
If the PC doesn't want to fight Vorok, he can attempt to outdistance him by winning three consecutive Riding proficiency checks. Vorok tries to at least engage the PC and will pursue until he catches up or is totally outdistanced. The PC may disengage and renew his flight by winning another Riding proficiency check. Should the PC be chased near the goblin village, Vorok gives up the chase (these village goblins belong to an enemy tribe), but not before sounding his horn. This action should confuse and alarm the PC into thinking that Vorok has probably summoned or alerted reinforcements of some kind, only to have those fears evaporate when Vorok actually wheels his horse around and rides away!

In reality, Vorok sounds his horn to alert the sentinels of the nearby goblin village to the presence of an intruder. Killing or unhorsing Vorok prevents the half-orc from warning the villagers of the intruders' presence.

Vorok won't be too concerned if the PC and Ariella fall into the hands of these goblins, as he has a spy planted in their midst—Gunk (see page 10 for details).

Part Two: Goblin Village

Goblin Village



A short but vigorous ride carries the PC and Ariella from sloping plains into light woods. Sunlight streams through the trees, erasing shadows and banishing fears. This part of the forest is welcoming and beautiful. Ariella points this out and tries to use this as an example of how exaggerated the Dreadwoods' bad reputation is.

The Forest Road comes to an end at a fork. The right-hand path is the beginning of the Woodland Trail. The left-hand path travels up to a broad stone shelf two-thirds of the way up a rocky cliff. At the foot of this path are two goblin warriors. One of them has a copper horn, which he sounds whenever travelers come into sight. This alerts a group of eight more armed goblins on patrol, just on the other side of the Forest Road's edge. (In other words, these goblins should be able to intercept the PC and Ariella, even if they are on

horseback.) Four more goblins with crossbows cover the Woodland Trail branch. Each goblin will get one crossbow shot if the PC and Ariella choose to make a run for the Woodland Trail.

The other goblins, armed with short swords and spears, hurry forward to clap the prisoners in chains. They attack to capture, not kill, intruders because they need slaves to work the goblins' mines.

The goblin village, which is just out of sight off of the path, is hard to avoid. One option for bypassing combat is riding straight for the Woodland Trail, where a weathered sign points out "Directions South," along with a rune similar to a dragon's or raven's claw (a local, traditional symbol for danger).

If the PC is being careful, he might also have the chance to enter the woods to avoid notice.

Part Two: Goblin Village

Travel speed is cut to one-quarter normal and the goblins have a 15% base chance, +5% per additional spotter, to notice the PC and his ward passing through the forest nearby. It is also possible to ride hard back along the trail, but Vorok was waiting for them to do that.

Goblin Village Layout

The village rests on a spacious stone ledge, 160 feet by 200 feet, and consists of five crudely built stone longhouses, averaging 30 feet by 20 feet (though one is notably larger and higher quality) and arranged in a circle around a slightly sunken circular pit 10 feet across. This pit holds bonfires at night and is the ring for the occasional gladiatorial combat. A cave at the northwestern edge of the ledge is the entrance to the goblin mines, where the goblins' slaves toil for the remainder of their short lives. (These caves are not otherwise described. Unless things go badly wrong, the PC and his companion should never see the inside of these caves.) Near the cave is a wooden corral, which soon holds the PC's new horse.

If the PC and princess are captured, they are taken to the center of the village and shoved into the shallow pit, facing the mine entrance. The entire population of the village turns out to witness the prisoners being marched into the center of the village; there are 24 goblin women and 15 children. Khurm, the goblin king, comes with his retinue of eight warriors to inspect the prisoners for their potential value as slaves.

His glance at Ariella takes in her fine clothing and noble features. "You are a pretty and well-fed young human," he observes in Common. "Your father must be quite wealthy. What would he pay for your safe return, I wonder? Probably a trunk full of gold, I think. You will tell us who your father is, and we will see if he loves you more than gold, eh?" He cackles at his own joke, then turns to the PC.

"You!" he says. "You look strong! You wear armor and carry weapons. A warrior, true?"

If the PC doesn't answer, a goblin quickly nudges him in the back with a spearpoint, encouraging a prompt answer. A positive response

brings a nasty grin to the goblin king's craggy, toadlike face.

"This is good! We've had no sport since winter ended! You will fight! Do you hear, people? We will have a combat today!"

This is not a request. The princess is almost immediately pulled out of the gladiatorial pit, and the PC's weapons are thrown in at his feet. Khurm mutters to himself about how to ransom Ariella for a fabulous sum, and guessing which manacles will fit the PC when he is thrown into the mines. The PC is just close enough to catch these mutterings.

Khurm won't let the PC be killed in the combat, stopping his champion once the PC is unconscious, though he doesn't say this.

Khurm the Goblin King

Khurm is a large goblin (hp 7), though not as strong as in his prime. He once fought as well as a hobgoblin, but now is equivalent to a goblin (use the statistics on page 6) though he has an Intelligence of 12 and a Wisdom of 13. He maintains his position through shrewd manipulation and intriguing.

His single magic item is a *dagger +1, +3 vs. lycanthropes*; he carries this dagger on him at all times. The PC may have a chance to take it, if he can grapple Khurm during his escape attempt.

The PC can see that none of the goblins arrayed before him seem especially dangerous. He is given the choice of fighting or going immediately into the slave mines. If he accepts, the goblins part as if by magic and the goblin king's champion appears. A huge, bulky figure girded in filthy leather armor, the champion of this village is a half-ogre fighter named "Hragh!"

Hragh! (F4): AC 7; MV 9; hp 31; THAC0 16; #AT 1 (3/2*); Dmg by weapon; AL CE; Str 17, Dex 11, Con 15, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 7; ML 15; XP 120.

Weapon Proficiencies: War hammer (*specialization: +1 to hit, +2 damage), heavy crossbow, spear, bastard sword.

Part Two: Goblin Village

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Direction Sense 12, Weather Sense 12, Climbing 14.

Equipment: Fine-quality war hammer, leather armor, tower shield, heavy crossbow and 12 quarrels, two spears, heavy riding horse.

Note: Hragh! does not have his crossbow or spears in the gladiatorial ring; his sole weapon for this combat is his war hammer.

Hragh! is not much of a gladiator, going for straight-out killing blows rather than the flashier moves of a true battle-artist. He knows he is not to kill the PC outright, as it would make his life unpleasant, and not even the pleasure of combat is worth that.

Through the gaps between her fingers, eyes half shut, Ariella watches the combat. She shouts encouragement to the PC and squeaks with fright whenever the PC is beset by the half-ogre.

If the PC loses to the half-ogre, his unconscious form is thrown into a storeroom in a longhouse, where he will be imprisoned until he recovers enough to work in the mines. Escape attempts should be worked out between player and DM.

If the PC bests the half-ogre, the goblins are taken entirely by surprise for one round, giving the PC a chance to grab Ariella and make an escape attempt. Since nearly everyone was gathered around the central gladiatorial/fire pit, there are no sentries to block their progress. Soldier-goblins, captivated by the combat, are slow to respond to the orders screamed by a furious Khurm, but they try to follow the PC and his ward on foot as fast as they can.

With their superior movement rate, the escapees should be able to outrace the goblins with little difficulty. If encumbrance or other factors are likely to prove a hindrance, have the goblins confiscate most of the PC's possessions to rid him of that pesky weight problem.

In any event, the odds are against the PC reaching his borrowed mount, as it is corralled at the wrong end of the village from the Woodland Trail (see Village Map). Any item or piece of equip-

ment in saddlebags or otherwise left with the horse is lost.

If the situation becomes desperate, the PC could conceivably take (though not kill!) a hostage. Seizing Khurm, by grappling him during the escape, prevents the goblins from attacking immediately, but ensures that they'll pursue the PC and Ariella to the best of their ability. Khurm's pride demands they suffer a heavy price for this indignity! (In game terms, the DM should make one encounter check at the druid's cottage, morning time, and at the spider's grove. Success indicates that 1d4-1 goblins have caught up with the PC and Ariella at this juncture and must be defeated or eluded.)

If all else fails, Vorok's spy, a sneaky goblin named Gunk, tries to get the PC and princess out by claiming to be a friend. He returns the PC's weapons and leads them out of the village. He will not help recover their horse, as the corral is guarded by a watchful sentry. He leads them directly to where Vorok is waiting in ambush. Vorok has a +2 to his chance of catching both the PC and Ariella by surprise. He attacks to kill the PC, so that he can take Ariella prisoner once more for his employer, Zharta the Witch. This combat takes place far enough away from the village that the goblins there will not investigate.



Part Three: Woodland Trail

Beyond the goblin village, the wooden sign mentioned above points out the northern end of the Woodland Trail. The sign is visible from 60 yards away. The forest just past the sign grows thick swiftly, allowing little sunlight to cut through the foliage and dapple the ground. Normal woodland sounds, audible near the goblin village, gradually fade into silence, leaving the forest unnaturally quiet.

Although there are no actual dangers or wandering monsters in this part of the Dreadwoods, the atmosphere is one of gloom and dire menace; as such, it should play on the PC's nerves. Ariella is very nervous, muttering prayers or childhood rhymes to keep her mind off her dismal surroundings.

It takes four hours of travel through the murky woods to reach a good stopping point (the druid's cottage). As the druid's cottage is neared, the trail cuts through a particularly heavy stand of trees shrouded with dense underbrush. The thorn-studded shrubbery seems to reach for the PC and princess, but only plucks at their clothing. They don't get entangled unless they are moving at full normal movement or are fighting. As they cross this stretch of forest, the dimness of the deep woods seems to lighten somewhat up ahead. A small stream can be heard gurgling further along the trail. Ariella seems jubilant at this tiny crumb of hope.

"Ah, salvation! Fresh water! Hurry ahead, and see what can be seen!" Ariella urges the PC to scout the land ahead until he agrees to do so.

Upon advancing, the PC finds a clearing ringed by heavy, thorny bushes, broken only by a path of crushed stone that leads to the door of a well-tended cottage. A garden lies alongside the cottage. There are heads of lettuce, carrots, tomatoes, squash, and even a couple of pumpkins. Behind the cottage is a clothesline bearing a couple of trousers and a shirt. If the PC checks the site quickly and returns to Ariella, he notices nothing else. If he remains a moment, to catch a glimpse of the cottage's occupants, he hears a bird call (Animal Lore proficiency reveals this is a real bird call

and not a goblin signal). The door opens soon afterward, and a middle-aged man steps out.

Kesryk (D5): AC 9; MV 9; hp 32; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL N; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 15; ML 12.

Weapon Proficiencies: Staff, sling, dagger.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Animal Lore 14, Cooking 12, Healing 15, Herbalism 16, Local History 13.

Equipment: Quarterstaff, chain mail, medium wooden shield, sling, two daggers, mule.

Spells (memorized): (1st) *Animal friendship, cure light wounds, endure heat/cold*; (2nd) *barkskin, heat metal, speak with animals*; (3rd) *spike growth*.

Kesryk is a kind and friendly individual. He quickly spots the PC and steps closer, addressing him over the low wall of thorny shrubs.

"Well, young one, you must not be very comfortable sitting in the bushes like that," he says to the PC. "Won't you come in and make yourself at home? Or are you traveling with others, whom I cannot see?"

Despite his friendly overtures, Kesryk is ready for trouble. His closest animal friend, a huge brown bear, is close at hand and can be summoned by whistling.

Brown Bear (1): AC 6; MV 12, HD 5+5, hp 24; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/1-8; AL N; ML 10; XP 420.

The brown bear (who Kesryk calls "Voro") is fiercely protective of the druid, and comes at a charge when Kesryk whistles for him.

At this point, the PC ought to mention that he is traveling with a companion, whereupon Kesryk asks him to summon or retrieve this companion and be his guests for dinner. If the PC goes inside first, to scout out the druid's cottage, he

Part Three: Woodland Trail

hears a piercing shriek within a few minutes. It is Ariella, who is thoroughly entangled in Kesryk's thorns. Her magical robe has protected her from any scratches, but she is in a foul mood because, as she says, "You left me out there in the forest, where any kind of wild beast could have attacked and eaten me!"

When she sees the bear, she screams and points, requiring a great deal of calming down before introductions can be made.

Kesryk knows of Ariella and is very surprised to find the princess so far from home. He is also very concerned that in the last week, there's been a great upswing of woodcutting on the edges of the forest. His "sources" tell him that Prince Alfinor is responsible, or has at least given his permission to the woodcutters. If the PC reveals who Ariella is, Kesryk persuades Ariella to set matters right when she is back home.

For now, however, Kesryk offers them the hospitality of his house, which includes a meal. Bread is just finished baking and a fresh pot of honey is in the kitchen (hidden from the bear). Cheese, fruits, and green salad complete the meal. Kesryk is a vegetarian.

Over dinner, the druid offers to share his knowledge of the woods so that the PC and his ward may have an easier journey:

- Following this trail, the PC and his ward will come across a river, with a bridge spanning it. The man there is aggressive and may challenge the PC to a nonlethal contest of arms for the right to use the bridge.
- There are giant spiders living in the forest, though none have ever been seen near the trail.
- On the far end of the forest is some kind of tomb, dedicated to an ancient hero. Few people ever go there, though it was once the destination of many pilgrimages.
- Because the forest itself is quite dark, several monsters prowl around inside without fear of the light of day. The PC and the princess should take caution, running if they encounter anything truly dangerous.

Kesryk assumes without even asking that the PC and Ariella will stay the night, since there are many dangers and few places of safety in the Dreadwoods. He will also heal the PC of any injuries sustained thus far. Ariella insists on paying the druid for any healing, but has no money. The PC will have to pay.

The night is uneventful, except that Voro can be heard snuffling around the compound. Once or twice, a muffled shout is audible as someone rapidly flees the area.

When morning comes, Kesryk cooks a hearty breakfast and points to where he has gathered provisions in two small, bulging sacks. There is enough food to keep both well fed for three days, easily, up to five if the meals are a bit scanty. "You may have to do some foraging or hunting of your own, children," he says. He has also found some additional clothing for Ariella, including sturdy walking shoes and a thick cloak, plus two old and tattered blankets. "You need hardier clothes to go into the woods, my dear, and I'd not see you so poorly equipped!" he says.

If the two travelers ask him to accompany them, he says he is very sorry but there are too many matters requiring his personal attention for him to help her return to her rightful place. "I do wish you the very best, children," he says warmly.

Finally, there is nothing left to say except farewells. Kesryk and Voro watch the two as they travel down the trail and out of sight.

At the DM's discretion, should another player want to get involved, Kesryk could be used as another PC, though subsequent encounters should be altered to keep them challenging.

Part Four: Spiderwebs

The day passes uneventfully as the PC and Ariella walk along. As they continue, the woods grow thicker and seem more menacing. By late afternoon, the trees are gloomy and oppressive. The trail narrows to an effective width of 4 feet.

"Help! Help, travelers!" comes a shout from high up in a tree. Looking upward, the adventurers see a manlike figure thrashing within a shroud of gray strands tightly wrapped around him.

Swarming in the trees overhead are three large spiders, apparently looking to add to their food supply. They scuttle over to position themselves above the PC and Ariella, webs drop down, and combat begins. It is possible, though it would be chancy, to cut Rhodoban free before the combat starts; because of his venom-sickness, he is at -1 to attack and defend and moves at only 6 until two hours pass, when the venom's effects are finally shaken off or until he drinks some of the wyvern anti-venom.

The spiders' combat arena is a glade roughly 30 feet by 30 feet, filled with branches and obstructions (movement reduced by half).

Spiders, Large (8); AC 8; MV 6, wb 18; HD 1+1; hp 6 (average); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1; AL N; SA poison (type A, +2 to save); ML 7; XP 175.

If two spiders are killed or crippled, the third departs for the treetops, leaving the adventurers to claim its treasure. If the adventurers are having an easy time of it, two more large spiders appear, scuttling through the trees to help fight the "prey" on the ground. Should the adventurers be truly hard pressed, the spiders begin to realize this prey, while possibly "killable," is giving them more resistance than they care to face. There is easier prey elsewhere. They retreat and watch the characters for a chance to sneak-attack them.

The treasure is scattered around on the ground of the glade, lying underneath mounds of leaves and branches. There are lots of old bones and webs scattered among the treasure. It consists of 80 gp (in one leather bag), 112 sp, and a small

hide pouch holding a *bead of force*. It takes 1d8+1 turns to find all the treasure.

Once the spiders are overcome, the man in the webs is quickly cut free. Although a bit woozy from the poison bite, he manages a graceful bow. "Greetings, my very good friends! I am Rhodoban the Magnificent, minstrel and bard, teller of tales and singer of great ballads, and such will I create to commemorate this battle!"

Rhodoban (B4): AC 8; MV 12; hp 16; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL NG; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 14; ML 7.

Weapon Proficiencies: Sling, broad sword, longbow.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Musical Instrument (harp) 17, Local History 15, Reading Lips 12, Languages (Elvish 14, Orcish 13).

Equipment: Leather armor, small harp, longbow with 20 arrows, broad sword, six torches, tinderbox, four days' rations, *potion of healing*.

Rhodoban is a slender, handsome man with a charming, relaxed manner that sets folk at ease. He is fearful of combat, however, and will fight only if he cannot run or hide. He is extremely interested in hearing about Princess Ariella's predicament and insists on helping out. As the day is growing late, he suggests they press on before darkness falls. It takes an hour's walk, by which time the woods are nearly dark. Rhodoban lights a torch if the PC doesn't have one.

A small glade is found which proves suitable for camping, with sufficient dry wood close to hand for a small fire.

Part Five: King of the Forest



The next morning dawns bright and clear, with sunlight streaming through the woods. According to what Ariella has heard, there should be a river just ahead, before the forest ends at the foot of the Stone Ridge.

After breakfast, the adventurers follow the trail, which is now wider (6 feet across) and seems better traveled, though who would use it out here is an unanswered question. Not long into the morning, the sound of running water is heard from somewhere ahead. Rounding a bend in the trail, the PC sees a narrow river crossing the path. It is spanned by a wooden bridge in good repair. Standing atop the bridge is a tall, muscular man holding a quarterstaff.

"Hold, travelers! I am the King of the Forest, and I own this bridge," he shouts to them. "What toll will you pay for its use?"

The King of the Forest (Marle) (R5): AC 5; MV 12; hp 33; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL NG; SA & SD as ranger; HS 31; MS 40; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 12; ML 15.

Weapon Proficiencies: Longbow, quarterstaff, long sword, dagger, sling.

Secondary Skill: Forester.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Bowyer/Fletcher 14, Animal Lore 14, Survival (forests) 15, Tracking 18, Endurance 13.

Equipment: *Studded leather* +2, long sword, 1d8 *potions of healing* (in wineskin; see limitations above), quarterstaff, longbow with 30 arrows.

The King of the Forest is a solitary ranger. He challenges all who pass through to meet him with a quarterstaff on the bridge, to contest their right of passage. (Rhodoban, being a bard, is exempt from this challenge, though the King asks politely if he would favor him with a single song for payment.) The bridge is 30 feet long and 5 feet across,

Part Five: King of the Forest

with no rails on either side. It is sturdy enough for a pair of horses, but creaks loudly if a cart rolls over it (5% cumulative chance of breaking for every 100 lbs. weight over 1,500 lbs.).

He doesn't care much for the local goblins, his closest neighbors to the south, and often fights them (whenever he's in this part of the forest). Essentially, he's lonely for good company.

The PC can try to avoid this encounter, but the river is running fast and would be very difficult to cross. If the PC asks what toll the man demands, the man smiles and says, "Only a test of arms with you, good fellow! Grab yourself one of those staves there and try your hand at getting past me! Perhaps one of us will take a good drubbing, but if so, I know a way to lessen our miseries. Come, step up!"

There are several quarterstaves next to the bridge. Accepting the challenge means fighting to subdue the other, not injure or kill. The King is very sure the PC understands that this is a friendly bout before they begin. He also insists that if the PC is wearing any metal armor, he remove it beforehand. Getting knocked into the river would probably lead to his drowning.

If the PC refuses the challenge, the King grumbles loudly about "no backbone in the current generation," then says he will accept a dozen pieces of gold, apiece, to let the PC, bard, and princess cross over his bridge. Although he is genial, he won't let them cross without money or combat as payment.

The combat begins by mutual agreement, after both combatants are braced and ready to fight. If either person rolls a natural 20 and then fails a Dexterity check (at -2), he falls into the river and is swept along 4d10 yards before finding a branch stretched across the river, which can be grabbed and used to reach either shore. If the King is knocked in, he declares the PC the winner and immediately acts like his best friend.

If the PC is knocked off, the King laughs loudly and congratulates the PC on taking his dunking well. "You are wetter in body but better in spirit, I'll warrant, friend," he shouts. Ariella giggles

playfully, while Rhodoban helps him dry off.

Once the contest is over, the King (whose real name, he says, is Marle) produces a wineskin full of sweet-tasting water. The PC finds that each swallow acts as a *potion of healing*. Marle explains that there is a spring nearby whose waters are magical and healthful. Water taken from the spring stays magical for a brief time (1d6+2 turns), reverting to ordinary water afterward. (This water may be helpful in making *potions of healing*, at the DM's option.)

"That was a fair match, friend," Marle says appreciatively. "I don't find many out here who are courteous enough to spar with me. What do you in these woods?" If the PC explains their situation, Marle is attentive and interested, but there is little he can do to help. He fled Tramilar almost seven years ago, when the young prince wrongfully accused him of a crime. He has no wish to return and face the king's justice with the prince's word against his.

"'Twould hardly be a sporting contest, that, now would it?" he jokes, though there is an undercurrent of regret in his voice. The princess admits knowing nothing of these events, but promises to put in a good word for him when she gets to Tramilar.

If asked, Marle says that there are goblins at this end of the forest, as well as up at the northern end. "The little pests are everywhere, since the Pox decimated Tramilar and her armies," he notes. "You can hardly throw a rock but that it hits a goblin, in some places. Best be very careful. They do not much like those who cross through their territories."

Part Six: Cut Off at the Pass

Eventually, a brightness is visible far down the trail. The trail itself constricts a bit, narrowing to scarcely 3 feet across. The end is actually blocked by a foot and a half of thick foliage that must be cut away by the PC. The leafy foliage effectively hides the end of the trail (80% completely), even after it's been cut to permit the PC, Rhodoban, and Ariella to get through to the rocky ground on the other side.

As the three characters reach the end of Dreadwood, there is one last obstacle to overcome before they can reach Tramilar itself. Known as Stone Ridge, this stone rampart is a range of bluffs that are difficult to cross directly. Known for the occasional troll or ogre resident, Stone Ridge's southern face is the northernmost border of Tramilar. Crossing the ridge is the most direct way of getting Ariella home.

The best-known route across this ridge is the aptly named Passage Road, which cuts through Stone Pass. However, the PC won't be given much time to search for Stone Pass, as a troop of goblins are approaching from the west!

Goblins (12): AC 6; MV 6; HD 1-1; hp 5 (average); THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (see below); AL LE; ML 10; XP 15.

The goblins are armed with short swords. Three of them have (unloaded) light crossbows, which they immediately work to ready. The sword-users hold back until the crossbows are ready. The point of this encounter is to drive the PC and his companions into Gloombarrow. If a dozen goblins don't frighten the PC, then add a dozen more!

If the PC chooses not to fight the goblins, the PC, princess, and bard can run east. A clear path exists along the base of the ridge, giving few obstacles. But after running for five minutes, just as they outdistance the goblins, they see a troll ambling in their direction from the east!

Troll (1): AC 4; MV 12; HD 6+6; hp 32; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 5-8/5-8/5-12; AL CE; SA attack multiple opponents; SD regenerate 3 hp/round; ML 14; XP 1,400.

The troll is carrying no treasure.

Once it catches sight of the three characters, the troll moves toward them steadily, breaking into a full run as it gets near.

The adventurers are caught between a rock and a hard place, for certain. As the goblins close in from the west and the troll nears them from the east, the PC's options are few, especially since they are well away from the trail.

The PC may choose to survey the ridge behind him. If he doesn't, Ariella or Rhodoban do. Faint, weathered indications of a rocky trail can be seen, carved out of the stone and leading toward a rift in Stone Ridge. It would be impassable for a horse, but footing for humans proves to be adequate (no combat penalties), even though the path might lead to a dead end. This is the only partially defensible location in sight, so that there is virtually no other option.

One of the group notices a rusty red scrawl on one boulder. It depicts a skull with a couple of goblin runes sketched beneath. Very little imagination is needed to sense that this is a symbol for danger.

The goblins and the troll pause only briefly on seeing each other, then continue their individual pursuits of the characters. Whoever gets there first is the winner!

At the end of the stony trail is a small stone building 30 feet across, with a fallen door in front of the characters. A long-dead goblin lies across the threshold of the door frame, over which is carved "ARROLT." If the heroes enter, the goblins snarl and gibber at each other but do not pursue. The troll grunts in rage, but doesn't follow them, either. It leaves, but the goblins take up station, waiting for the characters to come out.



Just inside the building is a series of engraved words. Although it is dark inside, the letters can just barely be discerned:

Let all who stand here know of the valor of Arroll, who held the Stone Pass alone against the hordes of goblinkind. May his spirit rest with the Powers Above, and his memory stand as long as human-kind dwell in these lands.

The doorway in the back of the building is the entrance to this place, the Tomb of Arroll (lately called "Gloombarrow"). It is a necropolis of discolored white marble, cracked and pitted from ages of exposure to the elements. The granite foundations are eroded and encrusted with lichen. The name "Arroll" is only just legible above the first doorway in faded gilt lettering.

The tomb is an elaborate underground complex, once a dwarven settlement back before Tramilar was a kingdom. The entire complex was

taken over by a brotherhood of paladins nearly 600 years ago to honor Arroll's heroism. The brotherhood dwindled over the years, until the last died during the Great Pox not long before Ariella's birth. Since that time, the tomb has been overrun by monsters—like the Deathless Lord.

1. Entrance

This room is bare of the ornamentation it must once have held. Brackets for tapestries and bent metal studs of former sconces are yet visible on the walls. The floor is bare stone, devoid even of the rotted remnants of straw or other common floor covering, though it appears to be very burnt toward the far end. The sound of water dripping can be clearly heard from somewhere inside.

The interior is completely dark, requiring torchlight to see. Dim flickers of light can be seen along the walls from time to time. These are ancient globes of glass, enchanted with *continual light* spells that have grown weak over time.

Part Seven: Gloombarrow

These “light-spheres” can’t be used for illumination, but they increase the impression of ominous shadows gathering in every corner.

Once the characters get two-thirds of the way into the room, they hear squeaking sounds. They turn to find a metal-barred portcullis being lowered across the doorway. (There is a pressure plate in the floor, which can be located on a roll of 1 or 2 on 1d12, or a Find Traps roll for a thief character, if they are scrutinizing the flooring.) A Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll is needed to remove this barrier. When the portcullis is lowered into place, scurrying sounds (ordinary rats) can be heard in the room’s corners. The rats do not attack.

At the far end of the room, a clicking sound can be heard as the trio reaches the door on the other side of the chamber. A sharp smell of something burning, like brimstone, reaches their noses. It seems to come from above them.

A saving throw vs. wands at +2 allows the adventurers to dodge the spouts that slide from the tops of the walls and spew burning fluid at them! (This trap is triggered at the same time as the portcullis, and is the primary reason most goblins and the troll avoid this cave.)

Equal to burning oil, the fluid does 1d8+1 for every round’s attack that hits and continues to do damage until extinguished. Once the adventurers cross through into the next room, the spouts retract and the fluid burns itself out. (The paladins did not use this defense. The Deathless Lord discovered the system intact but unused and set his servants to making it operational.)

2. First Sanctuary

This room is a common area sanctuary for use when entering or leaving the tomb. The altar is broken into three large chunks of stone, while the trappings are torn down and twisted unrecognizably. There is no vestige of the holiness that filled this room for centuries, long ago.

There is a low moaning sound coming from one end of this room. Investigation reveals an air vent. Wind outside must be blowing across the vent’s exterior, making it moan.

3. Grand Reception Hall

This room was once a great hall, from the days when dwarves lived in these tunnels. The furnishings are austere and minimal, consisting mostly of marble benches and dust-coated tapestries, many of them on the floor.

Torchlight picks out movement in the far left corner, where an arch is dimly visible. Hunched shapes shamble forward into the light, their rotted features revealing them to be zombies!

There are three zombies in the room when the characters enter. Three more appear after 1d6+1 rounds of combat, lured from their haunts deeper in the complex by the noise.

Zombies (6): AC 8; MV 6; HD 2; hp 9 (average); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; AL N; ML special; XP 65.

4. Hallways

The hallways of this complex are patrolled by skeletons, marching about in trios. There are a dozen in all, but they are never gathered together unless the Deathless Lord summons them. The odds of encountering a patrol in any given hall is 1 in 1d6, rolled when the party turns a corner in a hall. Once all 12 skeletons have been encountered and defeated, no others appear. They do not go into the Second Sanctuary (area 10), regardless of their lord’s orders.

Skeletons (3 of 12): AC 7; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5 (average); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (weapon); AL N; SD piercing/edged weapons do half damage; ML special; XP 65.

5. Collapsed Hallway

This is a collapsed passage. Stones blocking the passage vary in size from fist-sized chunks of rock to boulders as tall as a man. It would take a team of men and someone with Mining, Engineering, or Stonemasonry proficiency to excavate this passage and open the chambers beyond.

Part Seven: Gloombarrow

6. Sitting Room

There is nothing remarkable about this room. It contains a great deal of broken furniture, including a dozen shattered chairs and a table with two broken legs. Burn marks deface the walls and stone shelves. Ashes and burnt book bindings remain on the shelves, along with several (inanimate) mouse skeletons.

A tapestry on the floor in one corner is two-thirds destroyed, but the remainder could be identified by someone with Appraisal proficiency as one of the few known works of Kalistiel the Weaver, whose surviving works are all accounted masterpieces. Even this scrap (4 feet square and 130 lbs.) is worth 2,500 gp to a collector.

7. Kitchen

This room is so badly damaged that only the hearth gives any indication of its original purpose. The room is filled with clutter and debris, none of it in useful condition and much of it potentially hazardous (sharp rusty edges, protruding nails, etc.), making entry into the room itself unwise. In the cabinet nearest the door, there is an unlabelled bottle that bears some faint scorch marks. A label found near the bottle reads "Health," but the fluid inside is actually an *elixir of madness*. It was once a *potion of healing*, but was ruined by the intense heat of the fire that destroyed this room.

Written in soot on one wall is the following (in Elvish):

*Are You Lost?
Are You Found?
What Do You Seek Here Underground?*

*If Light You Seek,
If Sunlight You'd Find,
Then Search Behind This Sooty Blind!*

*A Passageway Here Awaits,
To Get Past He-Who-Bleeds,
And Find Yourself 'Mid Leaf and Seed.*

The meaning of the rhyme is obvious (for elves). First, why are the characters here? Second, are they trying to get out? And third, if so, then right behind the rhyme is the solution to their problems. The difficulty is finding someone who reads Elvish and then interpreting the rhyme. If any of these questions are read aloud (in Common or Elvish) and then answered, the edges of the doorway glow slightly and the wooden covering can be moved as though it weighed next to nothing. Otherwise, a Bend Bars/Lift Gates Strength roll is needed to move it.

8. Servant's Passage

Behind the heavy wooden panel in the kitchen is the servant's passage, a tunnel 6 feet high by 10 feet across that bypasses the Deathless Lord's offices. In former times, it was used to bring supplies into the tomb complex from the Tramilar side of the Stone Ridge. Now it lies forgotten behind some rubble.

A dead body is propped up just inside the passage, to discourage stray goblins from exploring it, but there is just a hint of fresh air once past the corpse. There is a 45% chance the body will fall on Ariella when she brushes past it, making her scream piercingly. The tunnel exits 20 yards south of Cormot's tunnel (area 17).

9. Dining Chamber

This room was a grand hall where the brotherhood took its meals. The long trestle tables are so much kindling now, along with the benches. There are some banners still on the walls, but they are tattered and ruined.

A *magic mouth* spell, badly deteriorated by time, begins muttering gibberish. The heroes might think it is the beginning of a spell being cast, especially since the light-spheres brighten a touch (filling the room with shadows, instead of being pitch black).

The *magic mouth* continues with its muttering rising to a wailing scream, then silence, and the light-spheres dim once more.

Part Seven: Gloombarrow

10. Second Sanctuary/Tomb

This room contains the actual tomb of Arrolt, a marble sarcophagus that dominates the far end of the chamber. Gold letters on the side give testimony to his last resting place. A body, that of an ancient man dressed in a monklike cassock, lies at the foot of the sarcophagus as if asking forgiveness; the body shows no sign of decay.

A statue of a beautiful woman stands beside the sarcophagus, a mute guardian of this place. The inscription behind the statue reads:

*The Blessed Queen Isilondrea,
In Whose Honor Arrolt Gave His Life.
May Her Reign Be Ever Blessed.*

A small cabinet stands to the other side, also untouched by time or vandalism. The room is laid out like a small chapel, with several benches arranged around the sarcophagus.

There is a strong aura of goodwill and benevolence in this chamber. If pursued by undead, the heroes notice that zombies and skeletons will not enter this room. (The threshold is covered by a strong *protection from evil* spell.)

From 10 feet away, the characters can see a piece of paper lying atop the marble box. It is a message, which reads:

Dear Defenders of Holiness, who come to see this blessed place, we have failed in our mission to ward this tomb. Sickness and age have taken too great a toll. The Powers Above only know what manner of evil might usurp our home for their own uses, but I have implored those same Powers that this room should never suffer the presence of evil creatures. Should you be in need, a draught of health lies in yon cabinet. A passage from this place stands behind the Statue of the Queen. You need only shift her icon aside by sliding her to her right. This tunnel leads to passages that go out toward the kingdom to the south. Best of luck, kind pilgrim I will never meet. All blessings in the Powers. Your servant, Hamlidrax, Last of Arrolt's Tomb.

11. Armory

This section hasn't been used for many years. Great numbers of weapons adorn the walls, hanging from iron hooks and crowded on the shelves. Virtually all of them are rusty and easily broken (treat as Poor quality). Arrows are warped and bows are brittle, the strings rotted away.

A large mound of refuse fills one corner of the room, a distasteful mass of bones and offal swept from other parts of the underground complex and deposited here in this unused room. However, this garbage contains a great treasure; a long sword, which appears to be rust-free and sound. It is a *sun blade*. The blade was buried on purpose, as the undead in these halls are aware of its powers and greatly fear it. The PC must actively search through the refuse for 1d4+1 rounds before the weapon is found. Giving the mound a casual glance won't discover the sword, though *detect magic* notes the presence of strong magic in the room. Ariella will not help the PC search, as she refuses to touch garbage.

12. Sleeping Chambers

These small, cell-like rooms were the sleeping chambers of the paladins of Arrolt's order. There is nothing of real value amid all the wreckage. All that remains after so many years is rat-chewed garbage.

13. Sparring Room

This wood-floored chamber seems to have been used as a practice room by the paladins. Thick mattresses, now mildewed and ruined, stand piled in one corner, while ropes hang from the ceilings and sets of rotted wooden weapons stand in another corner. A door at the far end of the room leads to the hot springs.

14. Hot Spring Bathing Chamber

There are four slime-rimmed pools in this room, with steam rising from each one in delicate gray tendrils. Here is a series of natural bathing ponds. There are four zombies in this room, scraping away slime from the pool farthest from the door (see zombie statistics on page 18). They

will pursue the characters to the foot of the steps leading up to the Deathless Lord's chambers, but no farther than that.

15. Devotional Chamber

This is a small chapel for special occasions, lying just off the dining chamber, near the tomb. It was sanctified originally, but now is nothing more than an empty room.

16. The Lair of the Deathless Lord

This section of the tomb lies at the bottom of a staircase, 20 feet from top to bottom. This room was once used by the commander of the paladin brotherhood as an office and greeting room. The furniture is not entirely destroyed, despite suffering years of deterioration. A table is now covered by bottles, human and goblin skulls, candles, and other alchemical paraphernalia.

As the characters enter, they notice the dim lights from several candles lighting this series of chambers. The sound of glass breaking echoes from one room ahead, and a small, elderly man stamps out, a wand clenched firmly in his hand.

This old man is the Deathless Lord, terror of the Dreadwood monsters. He is covered with cobwebs and other sorts of dirt, with chemical stains on his robe and hands. His ratty beard is dark gray with lighter streaks. The hair left on his head is nearly white.

"What is this? Intruders? Those infernal dead fail me once more!" He brandishes the wand at the characters. "Do not move. Your death is certain if you seek to flee from me!"

He introduces himself as Cormot, a necromantic alchemist, who has spent the last century seeking after the vilest sorts of knowledge. He took over this complex when the paladins were dead, hoping to wrest secrets from their bodies, but their innate holiness frustrated that effort. He could not make them speak.

Since then, his magical researches have changed him greatly. When he tried to become a lich, he found he lacked the necessary strength of will to undertake the final step and kill himself. The

process had already started, though, leaving him with some undead attributes. He informs them, with some smug pride, that his touch drains the strength from living victims (taking 1d4 points per touch; victim falls unconscious at zero Strength). He can also raise up a dead body as a zombie or skeleton simply by touching it. He controls all the undead thus raised. One unfortunate result, which is his great secret, is that his spellcasting abilities are gone.

"Being the master of this place of death, I am he who holds the power of life and death over you," he says menacingly. "Tell me your tale. If it amuses me, you may serve me, but if it doesn't—you may still serve me, though in another way." His laugh is bone-chilling. He is obviously insane.

Cormot, the Deathless Lord (M9): AC 7; MV 9; hp 35; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL LE; SA Strength drain; Str 9, Dex 13, Int 16, Wis 12, Con 12, Cha 8; ML 14; XP 3,000.

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, staff, club.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Ancient History 15, Reading/Writing (Common 16, Ancient Runic 14), Spellcraft 16, Herbalism 13, Beast Lore (undead) 15, Glassblowing 13, Carpenter 12, Languages: Goblin 12, Troll 9.

Equipment: *Wand of magic missiles* (11 charges left), two *potions of undead control*, two flasks of acid (3d8 damage), 210 gp, 138 sp.

Spells: None.

Cormot professes little interest in the heroes' tale unless the PC tells it with extraordinary gusto (in which case Cormot can make a Reaction Roll, to revise his early hostile impression of these intruders). Rhodoban may not tell the story; Cormot says he wants to hear it from the warrior (the PC), "without all the bard's fancy, tricky words." If Cormot is bored, he will try to sum-

Part Seven: Gloombarrow

mon his remaining undead servants as he "escorts" the heroes into a side chamber that can be locked. His distraction while summoning his minions gives the PC a chance to attack. Cormot may get a Dexterity check to react, but does not get to attack that round if his roll fails; he is too surprised to counterattack.

If attacked and overwhelmed, his hands and wand safely restrained, Cormot surrenders. If killed, he comes back to life within 2d12 hours, his statistics just as they were when he was first encountered. He has become a unique undead, less powerful but more intelligent than most. At this point, he is also permanently trapped in this complex, the place of his death. Leaving (or being removed) would consign him to true death. (DMs may choose to give Cormot additional abilities with this afterlife transformation, to make him more formidable in subsequent encounters.)

In the back of this chamber, beyond the T-shaped stone support in the middle (which has

been hollowed out to provide shelving for many of Cormot's books), is where Cormot rests. This is also where he keeps his treasure, including a spellbook (written in Ancient Runic and holding *alarm*, *burning hands*, *protection from good*, and *shield*) and a box with his money.

17. Passage Out

Beyond Cormot's workshop, the heroes can feel a faint breeze of fresh air from an unobtrusive little side-tunnel that looks like nothing more than an especially deep closet. This passageway leads to a long flight of stone steps, which are unlighted. At a cautious pace, descending these steps takes nearly an hour; they come to an abrupt halt at a door, which is not locked but is barred from this side. The bar is bent out of shape, requiring a Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll from the PC.

Once through this passage, there is a short trail leading down the hillside. Looking out, Ariella gives a happy exclamation. This is Tramilar!



Part Eight: Home to Tramilar

Beyond the tomb's walls, a bright morning sun rises over the northern edge of Tramilar. The land hereabouts is sparse and sickly, as though a monster or evil spell has leached away the vital energies of the countryside. It is far from being as green and pleasant as Ariella describes the southerly portions of Tramilar.

Amid the tall grasses, a trail winds its way south. It is clearly visible from the rocky slope, snaking through the grasslands that cover the miles to the nearest farm.

While walking this distance, Ariella is so happy that she makes constant small talk with the PC. The discussion covers her life as a princess, including a pet name ("Pinky") given to her as a child by her uncle, Baskillion.

The first day heading toward Tramilar sees little besides wild grasses, copses of willow and beech trees, and a scattering of homesteads apparently abandoned during the Pox.

"These were all good, happy farms, Father tells me," Ariella notes sadly. "The people died so quickly. The Pox just took them all. There was nothing the priests could do, or so they say. The people would have turned against the priests, I think, except that the Pox vanished and Father kept the peace among the survivors. He had to remarry; Alfinor's mother died of the Pox."

By noon, shelter can be taken in an empty farmhouse that hasn't completely fallen apart. There are even vestiges of a garden, providing potatoes and lettuce, plus a few apples from a stunted old tree. The night passes uneventfully as does most of the next day.

About eight miles from the castle stands a homestead. It appears heavily fortified, but it is under siege by three bugbears, who are smashing at the farmhouse's door with the stump of a tree. In the farmyard, several domesticated animals lie dead and the outbuildings are smashed to kindling, a testimony to the destructive frenzy of the three monsters.

People inside see the PC approach and call out for help. They add that one of their family has been injured, and they cannot hold out long.

Bugbears (3): AC 5; MV 9; HD 3+1; hp 15 (average); THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; AL CE; SA +3 to surprise, +2 damage with weapons; ML 12; XP 120.

The bugbears are carrying much of their treasure with them, as they are nomadic young males looking to find a place of their own apart from their tribe. Their aggregate treasure is 70 cp, 26 sp and 15 gp. They have clubs with bark still on them and are wearing heavy clothing but no real armor.

If the PC is overwhelmed by the bugbears, a stout middle-aged man emerges from the house to stand by his side. He is a zero-level fighter with 17 Strength and a large war hammer (actually a tool taken from his home's small forge).

After the fight, provided the PC wins, Ariella tells the PC that roaming bugbears often wander this side of the Stone Ridge, seeking easy prey like farmers for their plundering. A patrol of footmen used to guard these outlying farms, but the Chevalier of Woodsedge recently passed away without an heir and no replacement has been elevated by the king.

The family inside the house, who identify themselves as the Millers, unbarricade the door if the PC defeats the bugbears, bandaging him if he has been injured (the wife has an effective proficiency of Healing 14, from caring for her family's ailments). They do not recognize Ariella as their princess, though they do state that she seems familiar. If she identifies herself as the princess, the family is polite but clearly doesn't believe her, humoring her like someone who's a bit addled.

Once past the Millers' farm, it is only another day's walk to the castle. Two miles before arriving, the road rises to where the PC can view the castle. It is a grand castle on a low hill, which in turn is surrounded by a thriving town.

Ariella bursts into tears on seeing her home. "I never knew my home could look so beautiful," she says quietly. "After all we've been through, my rescuer, I doubt I'll ever leave it again!"

Part Nine: Castle Tramilar

The town seems to be prosperous, yet there is little cheer. People are suspicious and doubtful of strangers. If anyone is asked or one of the town's two taverns is entered to gain information, the PC finds that the princess's odd behavior and the king's serious illness are making times ahead very uncertain. Grealis the Priest has led the court in prayer for the king, yet there has been little improvement in his condition. Folk are worried and their fears are growing. They are muttering about the Pox and how the priests couldn't seem to do much about it. Fears of a renewed outbreak of Pox are especially high.

"I do not know what they mean about Father being sick," Ariella says. "He was perfectly fine the night I was kidnapped."

If Rhodoban is present, he notes the coincidence, leaving it for the PC to put that together.

"If someone is truly impersonating the princess, we will have to have a plan when we con-

front them," Rhodoban says. "I can gain entry as a bard and scout around . . . where is Ariella?"

The tavern keeper nods toward the door. "I think the young lady headed out there," he says. "I could swear I've seen her before."

Ariella is on her way to the castle, only 100 yards away, when the PC catches up to her.

"I will not have an impostor taking my place! We are going up there now to put a stop to it! I'm the rightful princess and I can prove my identity. Let us go!" she demands angrily. If the PC doesn't restrain her, she will continue to the castle on her own, demonstrating how headstrong she can be. However, if the PC attempts to restrain her by force, the men-at-arms at the castle gate notice and intervene. Otherwise, they do nothing.

Should Ariella reach the gate, she is stopped by four men-at-arms, all of whom appear thunderstruck at seeing her, particularly in such rough clothing. "Your Highness?" one gasps. "What in



Part Nine: Castle Tramilar

the world are you doing outside the castle? We . . . we just . . .”

“He’s trying to say we just saw you go inside with your brother, milady,” states a grizzled old sergeant. “Which leaves us with a sticky question. Exactly who are you, and how do you come to wear our princess’s face?”

Men-at-arms (four 0-level fighters): AC 5; MV 9; hp 7; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL any good; ML 13.

Weapon Proficiencies: Broad sword, dagger, halberd, crossbow (1 in 3 has longbow instead).

The men-at-arms have their chain mail armor and weapons on them. One has a brass horn (used to alert the other men-at-arms of danger or the arrival of a visitor).

Ariella’s Evil Twin

Prince Alfinor, as heir apparent, is holding court and will see the “strangers” as soon as his schedule permits (he is just keeping them waiting because it suits his unpleasant temperament).

The PC and Ariella are conducted into the royal audience chamber, to find themselves facing Prince Alfinor, a lazy and dissipated youth who has obviously been indulging his many vices. At the moment, he is nursing a terrible hangover and, consequently, is in an extremely bad mood. He is shocked at seeing Ariella and immediately demands explanations, though he won’t allow Ariella to speak. Courtiers babble possible answers at him (one or two even guess that she is a doppelganger, sent to sow confusion at court during the king’s illness).

Prince Alfinor (F4): AC 10; MV 9; hp 26; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL N(E); Str 10, Dex 9, Con 11, Int 11, Wis 5, Cha 10; ML 10.

Weapon Proficiencies: Bastard sword, short bow, war hammer, whip.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Dancing 11, Etiquette 11, Riding (land-based) 15, Hunting 15, Tracking 12, Falconry (Animal Handling) 13.

Equipment: *Chain mail* +2 (no longer fits perfectly), *bastard sword* +2, *gauntlets of ogre power*, excellent-quality, medium war horse, two trained hunting falcons.

Alfinor is tall (6 feet) and heavy-set, with his father’s frame but little of his robust physique. His face is slack and puffy with self-indulgence, his eyes are perpetually bloodshot and his general appearance is slovenly under ordinary circumstances. He is a grave disappointment to his warrior father and is a very weak individual, easily manipulated by one as devious as Zharta.

He doesn’t know Zharta is a wizardess. He just thinks Ariella has finally revealed her true personality and is eager to plot with him about the kingdom’s future.

Zharta the Witch (W9): AC 6; MV 12; hp 30; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL CE; Str 9, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 17, Wis 12, Cha 7; ML 17; XP 3,000.

Weapon Proficiencies: Staff, dart, dagger.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Ancient History 16, Reading/Writing 16, Spellcraft 17, Animal Handling (monsters) 15.

Equipment: *Wand of fire* (6 charges), *staff* +2, *ring of protection* +2, *cloak of the bat*.

Spells (memorized): (1st) *Alarm, armor, charm person, protection from good*; (2nd) *darkness 15’ radius, detect good, improved phantasmal force, Tasha’s uncontrollable hideous laughter*; (3rd) *dispel magic, feign death, hold person*; (4th) *phantasmal killer*.

Zharta, in her natural form, is a withered crone whose exterior ugliness doesn’t begin to match

Part Nine: Castle Tramilar

her inner evil. She is actually only 31 years old, but her magical workings have prematurely aged her and warped her mind. She believes wholeheartedly that she is destined to rule Tramilar and that Ormath and his family are annoyances that her magic entitles her to remove.

In her natural state, she wears tattered, oft-patched robes over her skeletal body, with a bit of ribbon holding her bird's nest hair together above her angular face. She is presently under a variant *polymorph self* spell that makes her appear to be Princess Ariella. Her bizarre mannerisms have been attributed to nervousness over King Ormath's condition.

At present, she is working to forward her plans by poisoning the king, leaving his malleable son to inherit the throne. Her plans beyond Ormath's death are murky and constantly changing, though she firmly plans to take the throne soon.

Ariella eventually gets a chance to speak. She tells her story, from her abduction a week ago to her adventures in the Dreadwoods and the Stone Ridge with the PC. Courtiers mutter comments to each other, gradually falling silent as they become interested in her story. Just as she describes reaching the gate, Alfinor stops her irritably.

"You recite these fabulous tales as though they really happened," he snorts. "Who could have survived such perils? I find this to be a poorly conceived joke, if not a danger aimed at the heart of our kingdom. Speak straightly and say who you really are under that guise you wear!"

"I am Ariella! And I can prove it!" She turns to the PC and whispers, "How do I prove it?"

Using two pieces of information dropped along the way, the PC has enough evidence to establish her identity. If he doesn't think of these two factors, the DM can let him roll an Intelligence check to see if he recalls them in time. Without evidence, the PC and princess are sent to the dungeon.

1) Ariella is wearing a ring given to her by her father. It is distinctive and easily identified, and Zharta doesn't have it.

2) Ariella's childhood nickname, Pinky, is known only to herself and a few others. Zharta is unaware of it.

If Alfinor disputes the validity of the ring, the king's jeweler can vouch for what is inscribed inside: "To Pinky with love, Daddy."

Alfinor is still not completely satisfied, but sends for "Ariella," who cannot be found. He commands a group of six men-at-arms to accompany him, along with the heroes, as they go look for her. The group searches through the castle, eventually coming to the tower used by Numis, the court wizard. Numis's door is open and sounds of objects being thrown reaches their ears. Inside, they find "Ariella" rummaging through Numis's things!

Zharta sees her plans unravel before her eyes when the real Ariella steps into the room. Nevertheless, she tries to play the injured innocent.

"Who is this impostor, Alfinor?" she asks sweetly.

If seriously threatened or confronted with evidence against her, she flies into a rage at the PC and others.

"You! My plans are ruined, all because of your meddling in the affairs of your betters! I may have lost this chance at the throne, but my magic is still with me," she shrieks, "and I will have this kingdom yet! Curses upon you!"

Screaming, Zharta uses her *wand of fire* to set up a *wall of fire*, then uses her *cloak of the bat* to fly out of the room and escape. A few squawked curses reach the ears of all those gathered in the room.

None of the guardsmen react quickly enough to shoot at her. Having been deprived of his weapons by the guardsmen, the PC has little opportunity to attack the escaping wizardess himself. He might try to grab away the crossbow of any nearby guardsman, but the other guardsmen would try to overbear him immediately to recover the weapon, thinking him an assassin. To make a shot, a Dexterity check at -2 is needed. After one round, Zharta is gone and any opportunity to attack her here is lost.

Part Ten: Down in the Dungeon

If Ariella cannot prove her identity, because the ring is stolen or the PC forgets the pet name Ariella told him, then he and Ariella are taken to the dungeons until the court wizard returns from his vacation in four days (at which time, Zharta has fled and the king is too ill to recover, leaving Alfinor in charge).

The dungeons are dimly lit, the tiny cells full of old straw and containing only a clay pot, a leather pitcher, and a wooden stool. The jailor is an old man-at-arms. He sleeps much of the time and performs his duties slowly, never speaking to any of the prisoners. He doesn't volunteer his name. Ariella knows him only as "Uncle Trap," a name most of the local children use for him. (In and of itself, this nickname is not proof of anything. The jailor won't be surprised if she uses it.)

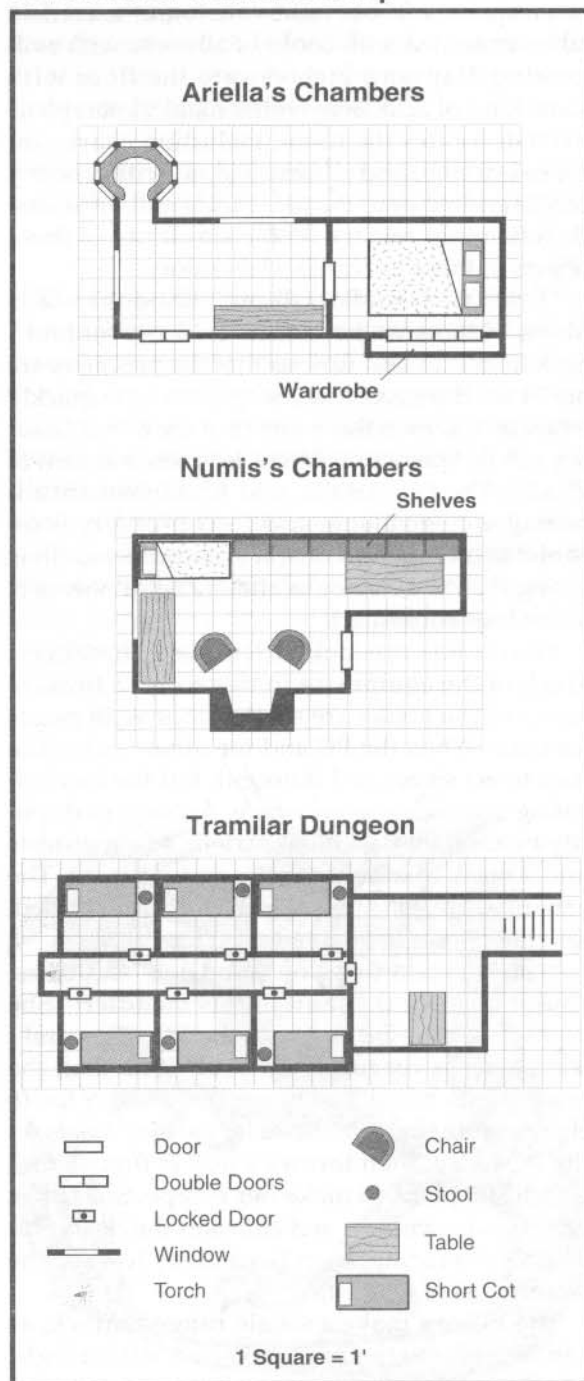
The first night in the dungeon, nothing much happens. Ariella hears the guards making loud, rude comments about her. If the PC stands up to them on her behalf or consoles her, she re-rolls her initial Reaction Roll to the PC at +2.

The second day, the false Ariella visits. She says that she is interested only in seeing the impostor and asking what her business could be. Inwardly, though, she is seething with rage and plotting how to kill Ariella before Numis the court wizard returns. Zharta ignores the PC, concentrating on Ariella. She won't work any magic openly, since there are two guardsmen present during her visit to the dungeon (and even she would have a hard time explaining the deaths of four people and her own survival). However, she whispers to Ariella that her life is over with the setting of the sun. Ariella bursts into tears.

The PC has a chance of noticing that the locks down here are rusty and poorly maintained; King Ormath doesn't devote much attention to the upkeep of these little-used areas. If an escape cannot be managed here, Rhodoban and a chambermaid (see Castle Folk) might lure off or drug the guards, setting the PC and princess free to look for evidence to support their claims.

It may occur to the PC to check Ariella's chambers. Moira the chambermaid (see Castle Folk)

Portions of Tramilar Keep



Part Ten: Down the Dungeon

can help the PCs reach Ariella's chambers with no encounters. Those rooms are found to contain tables crammed with books of all sorts, with evil-looking diagrams etched onto the floor with some kind of acid. Some other magical paraphernalia decorates the room, including charts, incense burners, and a human skull with a heavy candle melted onto the top. Moira and other castle folk might remark on the similarity of these objects to those in Numis's laboratory.

"Fetch Captain Baskillion," Rhodoban tells Moira. "I think we have some evidence for him." Baskillion is at first furious that the prisoners are out of the dungeon, but changes his tune quickly when he is shown the contents of the room. Leading a detachment of soldiers, he goes in search of Zharta. The PC, Ariella, and Rhodoban are encouraged to go along, and their property is restored to them before Zharta is encountered (thus giving the PC a chance to attack Zharta normally in the final encounter).

Zharta has ransacked Numis's chambers. Much of the equipment in this room is broken, many of the books are on the floor with pages torn out. When the PC and the others enter, she tries to act sweet and innocent, but the incriminating evidence is everywhere. Accused of duplicity by Captain Baskillion, Ariella's face distorts into a mask of inhuman rage and ugliness. The variant *polymorph self* spell she wore is discarded, revealing her true (and hideous) face.

"I do not know how you found out," she hisses, "but it must be the fault of this meddler!" She points one gnarled finger at the PC. "Beware! I will have my vengeance on you!" With that, she reaches into her sleeve to ready a *wand of fire* (6 charges remaining). She casts *burning hands* on the PC twice, then throws a *wall of fire*, behind which she plans to make her escape. She flings herself out a window and activates the *cloak of the bat* she is wearing, then flaps away toward the swamp east of the castle.

The PC can make a single ranged attack, as can one man-at-arms equipped with a light crossbow. By the time anyone can reach the win-

dow to watch her escape, she is out of bowshot distance.

The danger to the kingdom from the wizardess has been averted.

Apologies and the Hero's Reward

When the princess's identity is established, the entire court surrounds her and the PC, offering their apologies. Many say, "I knew you were the real princess all along, Your Highness," and similar fawning sentiments.

The king soon recovers his health and judges that the PC has well earned a reward (as promised by Ariella) for returning the princess safely to her family. In addition to the gold promised by the young maiden, the king offers the PC a position with his royal guard as a lieutenant.

This position pays 5 gp per month, plus room and board. The PC has 20 men-at-arms to command (which is half the standing army) and reports to a rather lazy general named Baskillion (see Castle Folk). If the character is of noble birth, he is additionally given a very small grant of land next to the Dreadwoods (this area is not quite enough to qualify as a stronghold) and earns the title "Chevalier of Woodsedge." His duties are those of any feudal lord: Collect and pay taxes, administer the king's justice, field a levy of peasants if the kingdom goes to war, attend court functions, and so forth.

Ariella begs the PC to accept, as she has become quite fond of him. (Romance, however, is out of the question. The princess wants someone of royal blood who also has a dragon or two under his belt, as well as a large treasury.)

The Continuing Adventures hinge on the PC remaining in Tramar for a few more weeks. Even if the PC chooses to move on, there are some loose ends left. . . .

Part Eleven: Continuing Adventures

STALKING THE WITCH

Although Ariella and the Kingdom have been saved from Zharta's machinations this time, she may still be on the loose and a danger to the people of Tramilar. A study of papers left in Ariella's chambers include mention of a house in the swamps to the east of the castle.

The king orders the PC, as his first assignment, to gather the army and set out at once to arrest her. The PC may ask to hold off a day or two, to give Numis time to return and accompany the army, but the king is against the idea. The PC maybe able to persuade him if he argues convincingly; otherwise, he has to set out the next morning with the 20 men garrisoned in the castle.

Ten miles from the castle, the road becomes a muddy morass just as it enters the swamp itself. Footing is treacherous (-2 to initiative from horseback, -1 to attacks and defenses on foot) and the air is venomously stagnant. Gnats and mosquitoes swarm in clouds over the pools of muddy water, making man and horse alike miserable. Also, the temperature seems to go up 20 degrees, making heavy armor especially uncomfortable (treat as the first stage of a *heat metal* spell).

All travelers require extra water at this stage of the journey, but all of the local water is foul and has a 65% chance of causing serious and debilitating illness (requiring *cure disease* to overcome immediately). Most of the men-at-arms know this from their basic training. If the PC doesn't know it, one of the soldiers will give him a "friendly word of warning."

The witch's second home is not hard to locate. It is situated seven miles into the swamp, directly off what used to be a road. Inside it has a variety of alchemical gear and very little furniture.

Zharta has been expecting the soldiers. And she has a surprise waiting for them.

A small creature can be seen scratching in the dust in front of her house. From the trail, it looks as though it might be an unnaturally large and featherless chicken, but it isn't. It is a cockatrice!

The PC can make a Wisdom check to see if he notices the petrified grass the cockatrice is scratching through before the monster actually attacks him. Otherwise, the cockatrice has a chance of getting surprise on the PC.

Cockatrice (1): AC 6; MV 6/18; HD 5; hp 28; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; AL N; SA petrifying gaze; ML 11; XP 650.

The cockatrice has no treasure of its own, but Zharta keeps a scroll with a *stone to flesh* spell in case of emergencies. She will use it to resuscitate the PC, because she'd rather torment him than let him remain a statue. (This also gives him a chance to overcome her, once revived.) If the soldiers overcome the cockatrice, Zharta is equipped with her full complement of offensive spells and her *wand of fire*. She won't hesitate to throw a *fireball* from out of her window, especially if there's a chance it will blast the PC to kingdom-come.



Continuing Adventures

Zharta will only consider surrender if she runs out of spells and charges in her wand, and cannot use the *cloak of the bat* to escape. Even then, she envenoms her nails (Type E) and attempts to scratch the PC's face. At that point, without her spellbooks and no magic items to help, she is relatively powerless and can be taken into custody, though she will curse bitterly, hatefully and inventively, keeping up a stream of blistering invective until sealed into a dungeon cell.

THE LAST LAUGH

Two nights after Ariella is returned, a castle guard turns up dead near the castle's pantry. He has been strangled. A quick interview with all those in the area (a cook, two servants, and a page) indicate very little, although the page says he thought he saw someone duck into a closet right after the dead guardsman walked out of the kitchen, toward the pantry. The page, Corwyn (0-level child), says that whatever sort of person he saw, it looked like it had on clothes like the king's chessboard.

A quick Intelligence check by the PC identifies the garb as that worn by a jester. In Castle Tramar, there is only one jester, a dwarf called Mottle (due to his blotchy skin). With his newly granted authority, the PC can order a search of the castle to find the dwarf. A check of the pantry indicates that one or two bags of flour have been opened, though this is not easy to detect (Wisdom check at -3 required to notice the tampering). The flour is laced with poison.

A shout is raised in the residential section of the castle. Mottle was spotted slipping upstairs while the PC was investigating the kitchen.

Mottle (17): AC 8; MV 6; hp 26; THAC0 17; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon; AL CE; Skills: PP 35, OL 40, F/RT 30, MS 95, HS 95, DN 45, CW 90, RL 0; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 5; ML 16; XP 975.

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, hand crossbow, sling, staff, short sword.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Juggling 17, Tightrope Walking 15, Tumbling 15, Blind-fighting 14.

Equipment: *Ring of protection* +2, *dagger* +3, thieves' tools, garrote, hand crossbow, sling, change of clothing (black ninja-style garb), a ruby worth 350 gp).

Mottle is a dwarf jester, a rare sort who uses his ugliness as his own best material. He wears black-and-white checked clothing, including a cap and cloth shoes with bells.

Mottle denies knowing anything about the dead guardsman, but the PC can make a Wisdom check to see if he notices the telltale traces of flour on Mottle's fingers. If he makes this discovery and voices it, Mottle's face changes, growing serious, even murderous. If the PC is alone, the jester attempts to kill him then and there, first trying to distract him so that he can attempt a backstab (+4 to hit if PC is distracted, damage multiplier is x3). Mottle is sworn to kill the royal family if the witch should be discovered. He was her co-conspirator in poisoning the king, as well. He will not admit to any wrongdoing, preferring a silent death than a talkative (if short) life in the dungeon.

If Zharta is taken into custody before this side adventure occurs, he will try to release her before poisoning the flour in the pantry. There is a 20% chance he might succeed; if so, the discovery of her escape is made the next morning.

Random Encounters/Castle Folk

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

For every five hours spent in the forest (i.e., twice per "walking day"), the DM should check for random encounters. On a 1 or 2 on 1d10, an encounter occurs as listed below. The table below modifies the one found in the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®:

- 1- Tick, giant
- 2- Elf, wood
- 3- Wyvern (wild)
- 4- Lynx, giant
- 5- Bear, brown (45% chance it is Voro, the druid's ally)
- 6- Horse, wild
- 7- Owl, giant, or skunk, giant
- 8- Wolf or worg
- 9- Goblin or NPC (fighter, level 1d4-1)
- 10- Goblins (2d4)
- 11- Herd animal
- 12- Kobold
- 13- Orc
- 14- Bugbear or ogre
- 15- Troll or treant
(Note: If a troll is ever encountered, use the statistics given in "Light at the End of the Forest"; it will be the same troll)
- 16- Spider, giant
- 17- Snake, constrictor or poisonous
- 18- Owlbear or ghoul (ghoul only near Gloombarrow)
- 19 & 20- DM special

CASTLE FOLK

There are four main NPCs who live and work around the castle.

Numis, Court Wizard (M7): AC 9; MV 9; hp 22; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL CG; Str 7, Dex 8, Con 9, Int 17, Wis 9, Cha 9; ML 12.

Weapon Proficiencies: Staff, dagger.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Reading/Writing 17, Languages, Ancient (2 miscellaneous) 16, Spellcraft 16.

Equipment: *Robe of protection +1, staff of the magi.*

Spells: Numis's books are fairly extensive (even if some are apparently ruined); he has almost all spells of first, second, and third level recorded.

Numis is an aged fellow who matches the wizard stereotype almost perfectly. His long beard often falls into his soup, while his bushy eyebrows hide twinkling gray-green eyes. He smokes a pipe more because it is expected of him than out of personal preference (he rarely smokes when meeting with just one or two people), and his familiar, a black tomcat named Task, is respected for his formidable mousing abilities.

Numis doesn't believe in keeping his light under a bushel. He talks openly about the various experiments he is performing and the magical research he's done, all of which is tedious for non-wizards. He exaggerates his own accomplishments. Numis is a proficient wizard, but he is not the world-class mage he claims to be.

Captain Baskillion (0-level fighter): AC 1; MV 9; hp 6; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL NG; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; ML 12.

Weapon Proficiencies: None.

Castle Folk

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Appraising (weapons only) 16, Etiquette 14, Hunting 12, Riding (land-based) 14, Weather Sense 13.

Equipment: *Bastard sword +4 defender, chain mail +2, shield +2, dagger +2/+3 vs. larger than man-sized, high-quality medium war horse with horseshoes of speed.*

Captain Baskillion is a lazy, affable sort who has seen very little combat and doesn't really know how to lead fighting men. He got this post from being the king's brother-in-law.

He has collected some rather fancy pieces of martial hardware, however (see Equipment, above). Baskillion may not know how to use a sword, but he knows nearly everything else about them from years of collecting.

Baskillion has no wife or children of his own. He is fiercely protective of Alfinor and Ariella as a result. Baskillion may get involved in an adventure when encountered outside the castle's wall. He greatly enjoys hunting and may invite the PC to go with him sometime.

Father Grealis (P4): AC 10; MV 12; hp 15; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL LG; Str 11, Dex 9, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 13; ML 15.

Weapon Proficiencies: Mace, staff, war hammer.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Religion 17, Reading/Writing 14, Languages, (Elvish) 14.

Equipment: *Ring of spell-turning, mace +1, holy symbols (silver and wood), six vials of holy water.*

Spells: (1st) *Bless, command, cure light wounds, protection from evil*; (2nd) *enthrall, withdraw*.

Father Grealis is a plump, middle-aged, clean shaven man with a tonsure and a friar's cassock. He is almost always carrying a book of some kind (not always his holy book) and enjoys stopping to chat casually with anyone he might meet in the halls of the castle.

He is a good man who has been in the hinterlands (i.e., Tramilar) for much of his life. As a result of being away from the strict hierarchy of his faith, he has developed some liberal interpretations of the holy writ that might not be entirely in accord with his superiors. He is widely respected and admired as a great friend to the needy and a steadfast friend of good and enemy of evil.

Moirra (chambermaid; 0-level): AC 10; MV 12; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1 (punch); AL NG; Str 11, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 15; ML 15.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Cooking 15, Etiquette 15, Dancing 12.

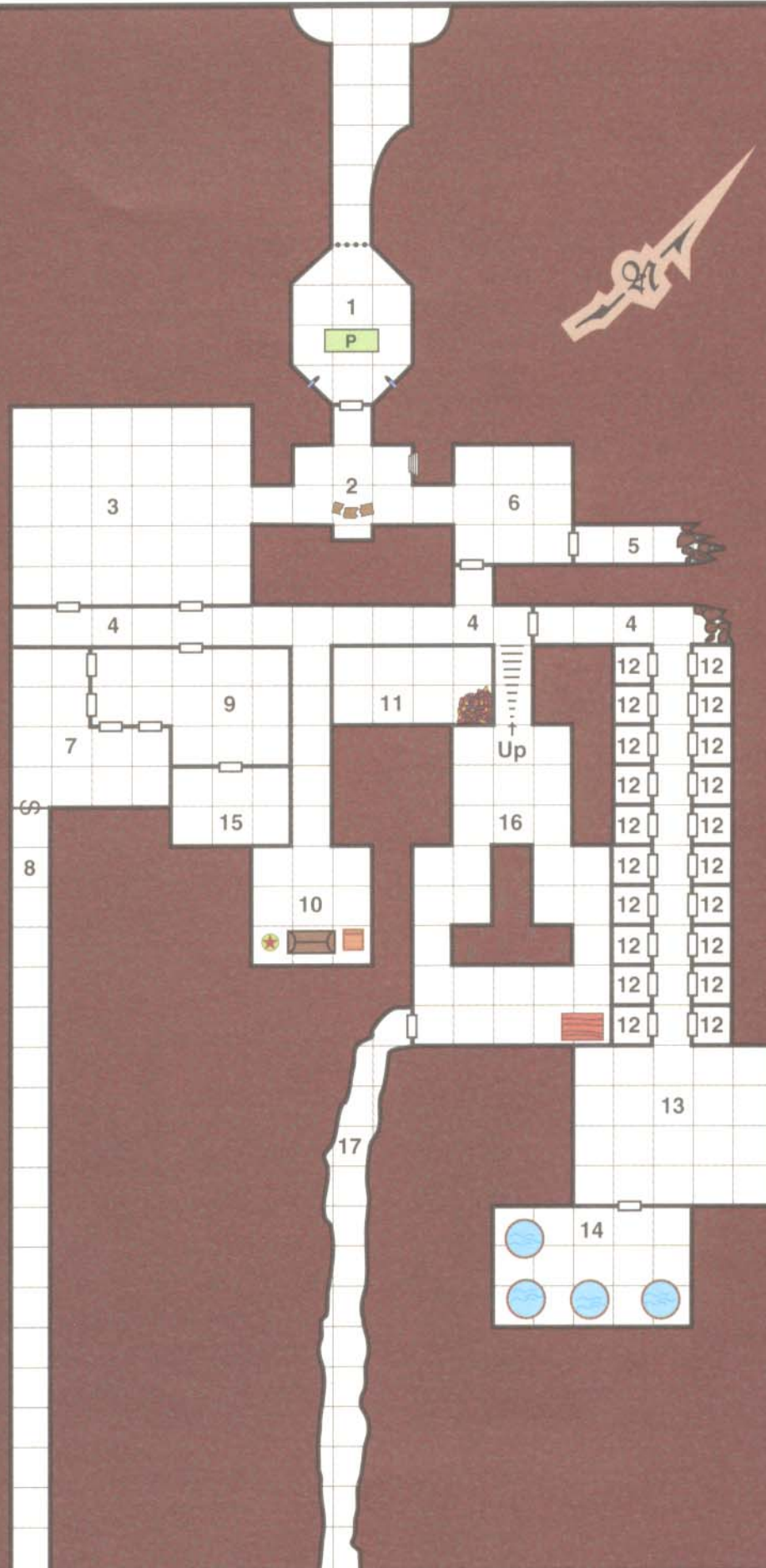
Moirra is the chambermaid who assists Rhodoban in his efforts to free Ariella, if those efforts are required. She is a lovely young woman who is currently engaged to one of the men-at-arms. She believes (secretly) that the PC is a folk hero come back to life, due to the incredible deeds she believe he has accomplished, and she will treat him with even greater deference than she gives the king. Moirra's dream in life is to settle down on a prosperous farm and raise a large number of children. Although she has lived her entire life in town, and knows nothing of farm life, she is continually talking about the country, farm animals, crops, harvesting, and any other farm topic. She will keep talking as long as she can find anyone to listen.

Gloombarrow Tomb

- 1 Entrance
- 2 First Sanctuary
- 3 Grand Reception Hall
- 4 Hallways
- 5 Collapsed Hallway
- 6 Sitting Room
- 7 Kitchen
- 8 Servant's Passage
- 9 Dining Chamber
- 10 Second Sanctuary/Tomb
- 11 Armory
- 12 Sleeping Chambers
- 13 Sparring Room
- 14 Hot Spring Bathing Chamber
- 15 Devotional Chamber
- 16 The Lair of the Deathless Lord
- 17 Passage Out

-  Door
-  Secret Door
-  Portcullis
-  Stairs
-  Pressure Plate
-  Air Vent
-  Oil Spouts
-  Broken Alter
-  Table
-  Cabinet
-  Statue
-  Sarcophagus
-  Tub
-  Refuse

1 Square = 10'



FIGHTER'S CHALLENGE II

by Drew Bittner

The kingdom of Tramar was once a powerful state. Now, disease and dissent have left the kingdom weak. The Dreadwoods on the kingdom's northern border are a haunt for evil creatures and plots. Discord stalks the very halls of the king. Only the bravest and most dedicated warrior could overcome the obstacles hidden in the forest and lurking in the throne room.

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