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# THE DROW WAR

BOOK ONE

## The Gathering Storm



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## The Gathering Storm

### The Adventure Begins!

Something evil stirs beneath the island of Chillhame. Dark forces are gathering and the eyes of the children of the Host turn towards the surface, hungry for victory and vengeance. Soon, the drums of war will beat to the footsteps of the advancing soldiers and the ancient war between the Host and the Starborn will begin once again.

### The Drow War is coming.

This is the first book in the Drow War trilogy, a set of three adventure arcs covering the epic tale of the conflict between the Host and the Starborn. The Gathering Storm will take Player Characters from 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> level as they struggle against the drow and their allies, taking the role of the Starborn—the incarnations of the stars themselves, pitted against the evil and darkness of the Host. They will need to seek the truth of their own natures, travel through ancient ruins and corrupt cities, deal with treachery and trickery and take part in immense battles with the foe.

### And this is only the beginning.

The story arc covers ten adventures, two countries and all the important events, history and Non-Player Characters needed. As well as the adventures themselves, rules are included within for mass battles, new monsters, signature items and the background of an entire campaign setting to run the Drow War in.

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# THE DROW WAR

BOOK ONE

## THE GATHERING STORM

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# The Gathering Storm

Welcome to *The Drow War, Book One: The Gathering Storm!*

This is a linked series of three 256 page books. Each one contains a single epic story broken into ten parts, thus making 30 discrete adventures in total, all tied in to one overarching saga.

The adventures are structured to take the characters concerned from first level to thirtieth level. Each book covers a span of ten levels, meaning that every adventure will (if completed successfully) advance the characters by approximately one level of experience. Naturally, this outcome is not guaranteed, nor is the progress going to be one long grind!

The story of the Drow War begins with a mysterious summoning to a stone circle in the north of the island of Chillhame, close to a fishing village that is about the most unremarkable place on earth. As the Player Characters explore their surroundings and learn more about why they have been brought here, helping the local villagers and finding out about ancient legends, they are abruptly plunged into a burgeoning war. A long-exiled evil has been brooding beneath Chillhame and now its armies seek to march on the surface.

With little time to lose, the Player Characters must bear the proof of the coming invasion to the villages of Chillhame, ultimately presenting themselves to the council of mighty Saragost, the walled seaport city. Even then, their work is not done, as they are sent to bring the alert to several settlements that have been mysteriously *quiet* of late...

Whether the Players succeed or fail, whether the island is alerted or taken by surprise, the invaders still come. Saragost's walls become the site of a battle worthy of legend. Whether the invaders succeed or are driven back to lick their wounds depends more on the Players than on the whim of the gods or the roll of a die.

Having now learned more about their true nature and their ultimate destiny, the Player Characters then head for the decadent streets of Crescent City, a den of thieves – and worse. The search for several ancient artefacts, which will somehow unlock the last secrets of who the Player Characters truly are, takes them to such diverse places as the bowels of a temple deep in the swamps, the testing

maze beneath a building that was once a thieves' guild and most challenging of all, the vault of Crescent City's one and only bank.

With the artefacts claimed, the mystery is solved and the Player Characters understand the full truth of their role in coming events for the first time. Their destiny awaits them in Beacon City, the capital of Caldraza, where the insidious hand of the dark has tampered with the very monarchy itself. Something is rotten in Caldraza and because of its meddling, the minions of darkness now stand to gain a new foothold in the kingdom.

In order to penetrate to the heart of the mystery, the Player Characters must seek out a reluctant princess, whose preference is for battle rather than the dalliances of court. A harrowing time awaits them in forests where unnatural things now walk and where stranger creatures than the dark elves have tainted the land.

At the heart of a palace of black glass, they finally see the face of their true enemy, the chosen one of the dark who has laid all of this machinery in motion. The saga builds to its climax as the Player Characters hurry to confront the conspirators, drive the evil back from whence it came and save the life of one young man in whose hands the future of Caldraza lies. The outcome is not decided in advance and there are several possible endings to this story.

Finally, the testament of a prisoner leads to the uncovering of the enemy's full plan. To win the day, the Player Characters must confront the enemy on their own ground, in the darkness of the caverns beneath the earth. The chance of victory may at last be theirs; but no true and lasting victory can ever be had without sacrifice and if they leave themselves with no other way to stymie the enemy's forces then they may have to make the terrible decision to destroy the lives of one community in order to save another.

Once more, welcome to The Drow War. Enjoy the ride.

# Background Information

The *Drow War* campaign can potentially be set in any game world or campaign setting. However, a war of this scale benefits from having a background that explains it and prepares for it. This chapter provides the background for the world in which the trilogy is set.

The chapter also gives guidelines for creating the characters who will play through the adventure series. They are not normal adventurers – in this adventure trilogy, the Players take on the role of the Starborn, the chosen champions of the Goddess of the Stars in a great struggle between cosmic forces. As the Players will discover, the Starborn have unique characteristics that set them apart from other mortals. This information is for the Games Master only.

The additional information presented here is not supposed to take control of the characters out of the Players' hands, nor decide their choices for them. It is intended to give them a clear and ongoing hook into the events of the story.

The only limit on the Players' freedom is that the Goddess of the Stars, Nuith, has caused them to be reincarnated on the earth in order to protect it from a threat – the Dark, which is working primarily through the drow. As Starborn, this is their destiny and their purpose. They are the incarnations of the stars, just as

certain drow and their allies are incarnations of the darkness. A character can be chaotic evil and still be Starborn. He is just as entitled to defend his home as a lawful good character is.

There should thus be no difficulty if the Players want to play evil or otherwise unconventional characters. They could even play drow characters. Although the highest commanders of the drow are members of the Host, the drow race is not a single monolithic force. It is possible that some of them could be chosen to side with the Stars rather than the Dark.

The story depends on a conflict with the drow and their agents and masters. Without railroading the Players, the Games Master should make it clear that they are on the same side and allied against the Dark, however tenuously. We have attempted to create these adventures in a way that allows for maximum player freedom, but we cannot provide for all options. A Player Character who attempts to change sides is thus likely to find himself with little to do. If a Player Character seriously decides that defying his destiny and siding with the antagonists is what he wants to do, then the Games Master will either have to make that character into a Non-Player Character antagonist, or find some way to weave the character into the ongoing politics and intrigue.

## The World of Ashfar

This is the default setting for the adventures of the *Drow War* trilogy. It is relatively easy to transplant the most important locations, events and characters of *The Gathering Storm* to another existing setting but the world of Ashfar is presented in such a way as to give a Games Master the most possible leeway for filling in their own details and creating their own stories while still giving a cohesive framework and setting for the contents of this book to occur within.

The countries of Ashfar range from cosmopolitan democracies where races of all kinds freely mingle to entrenched bastions of tradition where the same race or class has been dominant for centuries. Unlike other worlds, where different cultures slowly reached out to encounter one another, Ashfar has had a hub for the past thousand and a half years. The civilisation that rules it has had an impact upon virtually all of the humanoid races.

Civilisations from all over the world have been brought into contact with each other via the Xoth Sarandi sea-gates. This has led to a global culture of suavity and acceptance in which you are just as likely to encounter a half-naked barbarian walking down the street as you are to meet a noble in his finery.

The following descriptions are brief summaries of the various nations of Ashfar, so that Players have a basis from which to



### **Magic Restrictions in Ashfar: *raise dead* and *resurrection***

Magic in Ashfar works in much the same way as it does in other campaigns. However, there is one aspect of life that magic cannot alter. The divine spells *raise dead* and *resurrection* do not exist in the world of Ashfar, nor can a *wish* restore life to a dead person. The only type of being that can be restored to life following death is a Starborn or a member of the Host.

For this to happen, the character's body must be reunited with his soul. The body must be taken to a Node (see page 23) in the case of a Starborn, or a corrupted Node in the case of a Host member. There, the forces of the stars or of the Dark pour themselves into the creature's body, reattaching the soul and renewing the flesh. This functions exactly as if the slain character had been *resurrected*.

The power of a Node to restore life to the Starborn, or a corrupted Node to restore life to the Host, makes the Nodes absolutely vital to the unfolding campaign. The Player Characters begin the story at the first Node, the Stones of Heakun at the Tump. The drow attack here has the primary objective of securing this Node and the secondary objective of conquering the rest of Chillhame.

Unlike Non-Player Characters, Player Characters *can* learn spells such as *raise dead* and *resurrection*, which will make them less dependent upon the Nodes as they advance in level. However, these spells will only work on the Starborn or on the Host. Ordinary people cannot be restored to life by any means.

create backgrounds for their characters and the Games Master has information to flesh out the adventures with. Extensive information on the most significant countries in the adventures of this book, Chillhame and Caldraza, is provided within the adventures themselves.

### **Boskenland**

The humans who live here have made their home in about as cold and forbidding a place as could be imagined, yet they seem to like it. Boskenland is all birch woods, bleak hills and blue rocky outcrops. The original human settlers were from Jahannum and have retained their burly, robust approach to life.

### **Brith's Folly**

This craggy, featureless stretch of land is where the god Brith is said to have severed his malformed left hand, which then grew into the spider-goddess She that the drow worship. A crack in the ground supposedly leads to the kingdom of the drow.

### **Caldraza**

A long-established monarchy, Caldraza is one of the wealthier and more refined human nations. The country recently converted officially to the Marianist religion, sweeping away the old Pagan pantheon still worshipped in Chillhame, Ghael and Jehannum. King Titus lost his son and heir a year ago in a murderous attack by a clan of Ghael, leading him to declare war on the entire nation. Troops are gathering on the river border but hostilities have not broken out fully as yet.

Caldraza supplies most of the world with fine glass products, having plentiful supplies of the necessary raw materials and generations of experts to work with it. The royal palace at Beacon City is walled on the outside with black glass panels.

### **Cendra**

The land bridge between the northern and southern continents is a sprawling rain forest, many hundreds of miles from end to end. While the colonists to the north were able to cope with the more temperate climates there, even if they had to wrest the

land from monsters, the humidity and sheer danger of Cendra's jungles were too much for them. The jungles are thickly infested with kobolds on the outer edges and reptilian life forms in the unexplored heart.

There are travellers' tales of human tribes living in the jungle, who speak no known language, though these have never been verified. Expeditions have, however, brought golden ornaments and utensils out of deepest Cendra; whether these are the work of humanoids or some skilled non-humanoid race remains a mystery.

### **Chillhame**

This small island is notable only for being the place where a massive drow army was defeated one thousand years ago, at the end of the last Equinox of the Heroes. It is independent, though the kingdom of Caldraza has long considered it a part of itself and is keen to recover it. The capital of Chillhame is Saragost, a walled city that boasts a fortified harbour.

### **Corona**

Corona, otherwise called the 'Crown of the World', is a series of gigantic ice peaks that rise out of the sea, strangely regular and artificial-looking. The peaks form an insurmountable barrier, concealing whatever lies beyond them from the eyes of the world. Although creatures with the power of flight could theoretically fly over the mountains to see what secrets Corona hides, none is known to have done so successfully. Wild theories nonetheless abound, with some tale-tellers insisting that beyond the peaks there is a titanic hole leading to the interior of the world and others describing a bizarre city built by a race older even than the elves.

Whatever is beyond the peaks of Corona, one thing is known: it occasionally sets the northern sky on fire with rainbows of light, chasing each other in arcs and ripples. These lights can be seen from the Waste and from the northern mountains of Caldraza.







## Eagle Nations, The

This huge country was originally entirely wild and was referred to as the Scarred Land. Monstrous humanoids, giants and dire animals made up its population; the only humanoids to live there were small bands of wood elves, who were tough and resilient enough to cope. Some six hundred years ago, a group of decommissioned Caldrazan warriors decided that it was better to live as rulers in a new land than servants in an old one. They set off for the Scarred Land, determined to carve themselves out a place in the world.

The fighting was hard, but they cleared out an area large enough to support a village and kept it fortified. This village grew into a town and eventually a small city. The elves of Xoth Sarandi, impressed by the humans' bravery and tenacity, constructed a sea-portal to help them bring in supplies and colonists.

Over the last five centuries, colonists have been shipping out to the Scarred Land, with the same dream as the original warriors. Every country in the world, with the exception of the elven nations, has had people leave for a better life in the colonies. The elves retained their attitude of quiet observation, though they continued to give assistance and a second sea-portal was constructed on the western coast a hundred years after the first. The frontier has been steadily pushed back from both sides, so that all that remains of the original wilderness is a broad patch in the centre, which is crammed full of monsters forced out of their original habitat. This patch is still called the Scarred Land.

The settlers organised themselves into regional states, some feudal, some democratic according to the citizens' preference. This collective of sub-kingdoms was termed the Eagle Nations, as it represented liberty and freedom from the chains of the past. For a brief period, the Eagle Nations were united by common treaty and were the most powerful country on the planet. Unfortunately, strife between the different kingdoms has caused the Eagle Nations to collapse on itself, turning a league of allied powers into a country of feuding principalities.

## Ghael

Tribal humans, organised into clans, populate this wild hilly country. Their culture is similar to that of historical Scotland. The clans are constantly feuding with one another, with no one clan holding dominance for long. Caldraza has recently declared war on Ghael, which is prompting the clans to set aside their differences and unite against a common enemy.

The border between Ghael and Caldraza is the river Schlass, which is too broad to be fordable in its lower reaches and runs through the monster-infested Forest of Meere in the upper. The Caldrazans have built a chain of forts along their side of the Schlass, to watch for hostile forces. The Ghaels in turn have established camps along their side but lack the organisation to build permanent defences.

## Horned Reaches, The

This vast area of desolate prairie is named for the herds of horned animals (buffalo, ibex, antelope, feral cattle and the like) that roam across it, migrating from one feeding ground to the next. It has never been settled, as there is no easy way to transport

materials and supplies out into the deep wilderness. Besides, the land is more suited to wild herds than to people. Some wild tribes of elves live here, the descendants of exiles who were driven from Shallenoi centuries ago and who have adapted to living in the inhospitable wild land.

The Horned Reaches form a natural barrier around Shallenoi. Few people would bother crossing the seemingly endless prairie to reach the elven lands, which is one reason why they have lain undisturbed for so long. The sea-gate between Xoth Sarandi and Shallenoi is open only to the elves and to those who they invite. It is not open to tourists or casual visitors.

## Jehannum

This militaristic human country is home to a proud breed of humans, who are convinced of their own superiority and invulnerability. The dwarves of Svarth have been trading with the humans of Jehannum for centuries, exchanging dwarven metalwork for human meat, beer and cereals, with the result that Jehannum is now the most strongly armed and armoured country in the world. The Iron Dukes rule the country from Burgenstoch Castle, a steel-plated fortress in the capital, Crom Calamar.

The drow were once tolerated and sheltered in Jehannum. Following the defeat of their armies in Chillhame, the humans showed compassion for the survivors (mostly females and children) and assigned them land that they could cultivate, on the understanding that they caused no trouble. Much to the surprise of all concerned, the drow proved able to cohabit peacefully, establishing settlements and even trading their knowledge of magic and alchemy with their human protectors. This arrangement came to a bitter, bloody end when the elves of Xoth Sarandi offered Jehannum a massive sum in tribute to cancel the protection, quietly promising a bounty for the head of any drow collected in addition to this. The humans gave vent to their hatred and forced the drow out of the region, an act which the drow have never forgotten, much less forgiven.


## Kahoor

This hot country, blessed with mineral wealth and huge tracts of fertile land, has a rigid caste system, developed when the elves first made contact and entrenched by them over the years. The nobility are so far removed from the peasantry that they are essentially a different species.

The King of Kahoor, Parhav the Thirty-First, is a boy of fourteen. Despite his age, he is not sentimental and has overseen quite draconian punishments for his subjects. The law in Kahoor is rigid and ignorance of it is not an excuse. Furthermore, the upper classes can commit certain offences with impunity, while a serf would be stoned to death for the same thing. There literally is one law for the rich and another for the poor.

Kahoor's principal dependency, Shumil, is much more relaxed. Many of Kahoor's people migrate to Shumil in the hope of finding a more tolerant society, though the work there is no less hard.

On the border of Kahoor and Urmish lies the Wall of Grand Iora, a spectacular structure of white stone, consisting of a single



unbroken wall with guard towers at half-mile intervals. The Wall has defended Kahoor against the monstrous humanoids of Urmish for generations.

would learn the fighting arts of the monk are well advised to pack light and travel to the mountains.

## Kandang

The southern tip of the continent is a marshy place of river deltas and rice fields, where the houses of common folk are built on stilts. This part of Kandang has whole families of boat people, who live their lives migrating from island to island. Further north, one finds ancient cities and lonely towers on hillsides, along with curious ruins from an age where dragons walked among men in human form.

A hereditary line of sorcerers forms the monarchy of Kandang. The usual claims of dragon blood apply. Specifically, the ruling King claims descent from the golden dragons who lived in the area when humans were still living in caves. These legends are well documented and are in fact true.

To be a sorcerer in Kandang is a great honour, as it proves that one is related (however distantly) to the royal ones of old, the Dragon-Kings of Kandang. However, it does make for some strange customs that are repellent to foreigners.

The best-known custom is that of blood preservation. In order to preserve the royal blood in its full strength, interbreeding among the royal family is not only common but required by law. Brothers are married to sisters and parents to children. The result of this is that several members of the dynasty are both physically and mentally unusual. Those with the strongest concentration of dragon blood sometimes have draconian characteristics, such as hourglass-shaped pupils, forked tongues or scaly-looking skin.

## Lost Athul

This island was once home to the Myrrik, a species of sentient tentacled bipeds that have now died out, who worshipped a vast sea-beast as an incarnate deity. Although the Myrrik never allowed visitors further inland than their ports, leading to speculation that they were carrying out horrible rites in their lopsided temples, they were still willing to trade. They supplied Xoth Sarandi with pearls, whale oil and fish in such quantities that a sea-portal was built by the harbour in order to deal with the volume of shipping.

Athul was 'lost' in a titanic cataclysm that submerged the island completely. The Myrrik appear to have been wiped out entirely; the trading ships that came found thousands of floating dead bodies. The sea-portal is still standing.

## Murduk Râm

This country of high mountains and eternal snow is under the control of a wise, benign monarch, King Kallimon, who remains neutral to the conflicts of his neighbours and has occasionally been able to broker diplomatic solutions to their differences. Nobody has ever been able to invade this country, as even the peasants seem to be schooled in martial arts.

There is an abundance of monasteries in Murduk Râm, which draw seekers from all the nations of the world. Those who

## Qual

This region is thickly forested, with great rolling swathes of green land between the wooded regions. It is widely believed to be the most beautiful country in Ashfar; of all the settled lands, it is certainly the least built upon. Qual is home to several thousand families of wood elves, who came here via the sea-ports from Xoth Sarandi and preferred life in the wild to the unending dream of Shallenoi.

There is also a huge half-elf population in Qual. This goes back to the time when the dragon Scalliandrax and the armies that were allied with him laid waste to the kingdom of Kandang, sending the populations of entire towns fleeing into the forests of Qual for shelter. They had previously had a superstitious fear of the forests and the elves that dwelt there, but the horror that was tearing their land apart was worse. The elves realised that the humans were unfit for life in the deep forest and would die without their help. They chose to shelter them, even going so far as to adopt some of them into their own families.

One thousand years after these events, there are very few pureblooded humans left in the forests of Qual. Almost the entire population is elven or half-elven.

## Shallenoi

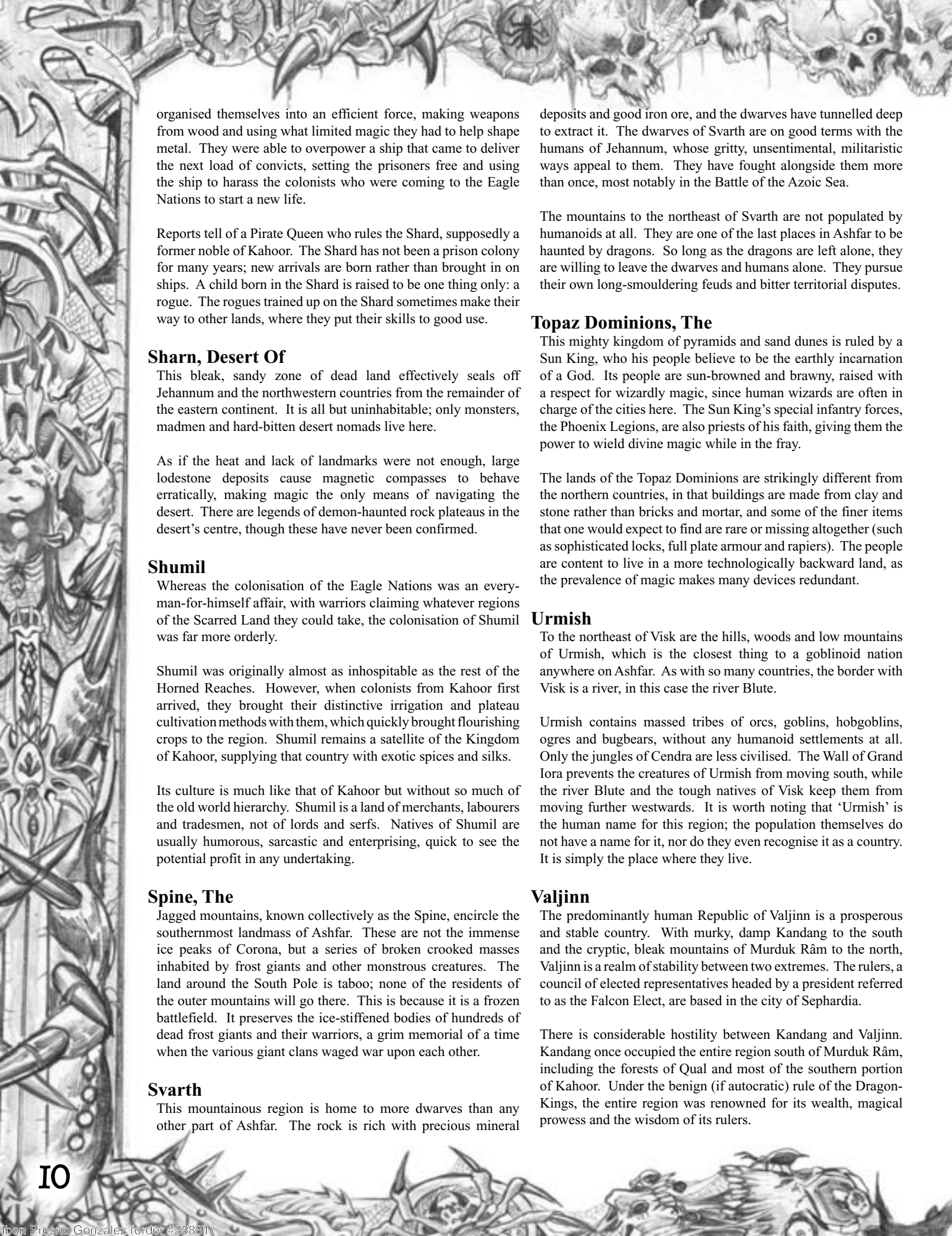
This was the original elven homeland, before Xoth Sarandi was discovered and colonised. It is the oldest continuous civilisation in the world. Only that of the now-destroyed Myrrik was older. Many of the glorious temples, palaces and towers of Shallenoi have stood for three thousand years and are expected to stand for three thousand more. Nothing important has changed in all that time; the inhabitants seem almost as if they are living in a perfect dream. Shallenoi is a flawed paradise, a place simultaneously beautiful and stagnant, stifled under the weight of its own history.

There is more magic worked in Shallenoi than anywhere else in Ashfar. The country seems to run on it. At times it is as if the occupants would rather cast a spell than exert themselves in any other way, even for something so simple as to open or close a door, or lift a book from a shelf. The place is, as human wizards have been known to say, 'drunk on magic'.

## Shard, The

This island, once a small human prison colony, has been completely taken over by pirates. They prey on ships whose owners are too poor (or too mean) to pay to use the sea-ports and take the long overseas route to the Eagle Nations. The pirates of the Shard are not the only group of freebooters in the Incarnadine Ocean; there is at least one other major group, the sea-harriers, whose home is as yet undiscovered.

The Shard was really a self-created problem for Jahannum, Caldraza and Kahoor. When the Eagle Nations were still in their infancy, these countries used the Shard as a dumping ground for their undesirables, sending them there to live in exile as a preferable fate to execution. The criminals of the Shard soon



organised themselves into an efficient force, making weapons from wood and using what limited magic they had to help shape metal. They were able to overpower a ship that came to deliver the next load of convicts, setting the prisoners free and using the ship to harass the colonists who were coming to the Eagle Nations to start a new life.

Reports tell of a Pirate Queen who rules the Shard, supposedly a former noble of Kahoor. The Shard has not been a prison colony for many years; new arrivals are born rather than brought in on ships. A child born in the Shard is raised to be one thing only: a rogue. The rogues trained up on the Shard sometimes make their way to other lands, where they put their skills to good use.

### **Sharn, Desert Of**

This bleak, sandy zone of dead land effectively seals off Jehannum and the northwestern countries from the remainder of the eastern continent. It is all but uninhabitable; only monsters, madmen and hard-bitten desert nomads live here.

As if the heat and lack of landmarks were not enough, large lodestone deposits cause magnetic compasses to behave erratically, making magic the only means of navigating the desert. There are legends of demon-haunted rock plateaus in the desert's centre, though these have never been confirmed.

### **Shumil**

Whereas the colonisation of the Eagle Nations was an every-man-for-himself affair, with warriors claiming whatever regions of the Scarred Land they could take, the colonisation of Shumil was far more orderly.

Shumil was originally almost as inhospitable as the rest of the Horned Reaches. However, when colonists from Kahoor first arrived, they brought their distinctive irrigation and plateau cultivation methods with them, which quickly brought flourishing crops to the region. Shumil remains a satellite of the Kingdom of Kahoor, supplying that country with exotic spices and silks.

Its culture is much like that of Kahoor but without so much of the old world hierarchy. Shumil is a land of merchants, labourers and tradesmen, not of lords and serfs. Natives of Shumil are usually humorous, sarcastic and enterprising, quick to see the potential profit in any undertaking.

### **Spine, The**

Jagged mountains, known collectively as the Spine, encircle the southernmost landmass of Ashfar. These are not the immense ice peaks of Corona, but a series of broken crooked masses inhabited by frost giants and other monstrous creatures. The land around the South Pole is taboo; none of the residents of the outer mountains will go there. This is because it is a frozen battlefield. It preserves the ice-stiffened bodies of hundreds of dead frost giants and their warriors, a grim memorial of a time when the various giant clans waged war upon each other.

### **Svarth**

This mountainous region is home to more dwarves than any other part of Ashfar. The rock is rich with precious mineral

deposits and good iron ore, and the dwarves have tunnelled deep to extract it. The dwarves of Svarth are on good terms with the humans of Jehannum, whose gritty, unsentimental, militaristic ways appeal to them. They have fought alongside them more than once, most notably in the Battle of the Azotic Sea.

The mountains to the northeast of Svarth are not populated by humanoids at all. They are one of the last places in Ashfar to be haunted by dragons. So long as the dragons are left alone, they are willing to leave the dwarves and humans alone. They pursue their own long-smouldering feuds and bitter territorial disputes.

### **Topaz Dominions, The**

This mighty kingdom of pyramids and sand dunes is ruled by a Sun King, who his people believe to be the earthly incarnation of a God. Its people are sun-browned and brawny, raised with a respect for wizardly magic, since human wizards are often in charge of the cities here. The Sun King's special infantry forces, the Phoenix Legions, are also priests of his faith, giving them the power to wield divine magic while in the fray.

The lands of the Topaz Dominions are strikingly different from the northern countries, in that buildings are made from clay and stone rather than bricks and mortar, and some of the finer items that one would expect to find are rare or missing altogether (such as sophisticated locks, full plate armour and rapiers). The people are content to live in a more technologically backward land, as the prevalence of magic makes many devices redundant.

### **Urmish**


To the northeast of Visk are the hills, woods and low mountains of Urmish, which is the closest thing to a goblinoid nation anywhere on Ashfar. As with so many countries, the border with Visk is a river, in this case the river Blute.

Urmish contains massed tribes of orcs, goblins, hobgoblins, ogres and bugbears, without any humanoid settlements at all. Only the jungles of Cendra are less civilised. The Wall of Grand Iora prevents the creatures of Urmish from moving south, while the river Blute and the tough natives of Visk keep them from moving further westwards. It is worth noting that 'Urmish' is the human name for this region; the population themselves do not have a name for it, nor do they even recognise it as a country. It is simply the place where they live.

### **Valjinn**

The predominantly human Republic of Valjinn is a prosperous and stable country. With murky, damp Kandang to the south and the cryptic, bleak mountains of Murduk Râm to the north, Valjinn is a realm of stability between two extremes. The rulers, a council of elected representatives headed by a president referred to as the Falcon Elect, are based in the city of Sephardia.

There is considerable hostility between Kandang and Valjinn. Kandang once occupied the entire region south of Murduk Râm, including the forests of Qual and most of the southern portion of Kahoor. Under the benign (if autocratic) rule of the Dragon-Kings, the entire region was renowned for its wealth, magical prowess and the wisdom of its rulers.



Approximately a thousand years ago, at the last Equinox of the Heroes, many of the family of the Dragon-Kings were destroyed, along with their patron golden dragons. At the head of this massacre was the black dragon Scalliandrax, who had recently fought and overcome the silver dragon Aristeele above the mountains of Svarth and was now convinced of his own invulnerability. The rule of the golden ones in Kandang had been an annoyance to Scalliandrax for many years; he tore into their civilisation without mercy. Many of the humans fled into the eastern forests (the land that is now Qual) for refuge, where groups of elves took pity on them and helped to shelter them.

In the chaos that followed, the remnants of the Dragon-Kings attempted to re-establish their rule over southern Kandang, while a group of ordinary humans were simultaneously rallying the survivors in the north. Without their dragon patrons to guide them, the Dragon-Kings rapidly became mere tyrants, demanding subjection and obeisance. This merely hardened the resolve of the rebels, who declared that Valjinn was to be an independent republic.

## Vella

The hills of Vella are where the gnomes live. They have kept goodwill with their halfling neighbours in Verd for many years, though they are far more curious and eager to explore the world. The academies of Vella are acknowledged to be the best in the world where mechanical sciences and handcrafting are concerned and as a result, gnome artisans are in high demand. Trainee artisans spend a 'journeyman year' travelling the world, working wherever they are required, usually as jewellers, stonemasons or metalsmiths.

The capital city of Vella is Quinazzi, the 'pale snow jewel', a city of canals, walkways and intricate stone fascias.

## Verd

This green and peaceful country is the home of Ashfar's halflings. They live here as they have always lived, content and isolated from the world. The dangers here are very few; there are no monsters any more and even strangers from other races are uncommon. The elves of Xoth Sarandi intended to build a sea-portal by Verd but the halflings petitioned them not to, as they did not want their home opened up to the world. Their request was honoured and Verd was left in peace.

Occasionally, a halfling born in Verd will find the peace and quiet unbearable and go adventuring, taking a ship to Jahannum, Caldraza or the Eagle Nations. Many halfling adventurers hail from Verd and have a strange mixture of homesickness and resentment for the place.

## Visk

The Empire of Visk covers more ground than any other single dominion of Ashfar, ranging from the temperate eastern zones to the flat northern tundra where only the nomads and shamans go. The people of Visk were nomadic for many generations before they settled and are still most comfortable in the saddle, ranging from town to town. The horsemen of Visk are the finest in the world, whether they be the cavalry of the royal guard or the raiders who prey on the border towns.

The Emperor of Visk is Caranacus, who is sixty years old and looks forty, and rules his empire with the confidence of an unconquerable tyrant. He is known to have escaped death countless times, walking away from assassination attempts that left those around him torn to shreds.

Some say that Caranacus is no longer human, that he is some sort of vampire or incarnate ghost. Others claim that he is one and the same person as the historical conqueror Uzbai Jin, who subjugated the lands of western Visk eight hundred years ago and set an entire city to the torch when they did not capitulate quickly enough. Whatever he may truly be, his people all fear him, even those who adore him and would gladly die in his name.

There is an uneasy peace between Visk and Jahannum, though the nations have been at war more than once in the past. The Desert of Sharn forms a natural shield, though its northern coast is less harsh than its central region and invading armies can be (and have been) sent through it. The most celebrated failed invasion of Jahannum came three hundred years ago in the Battle of the Azoic Sea, when a massive force of troop ships from Visk attempted to land on the eastern coast of Jahannum and were repelled by the dwarves and humans of that land fighting together. The superior siege weaponry on the Jahannum side smashed dozens of the ships of Visk to splinters before they could make landfall.

## Waste, The

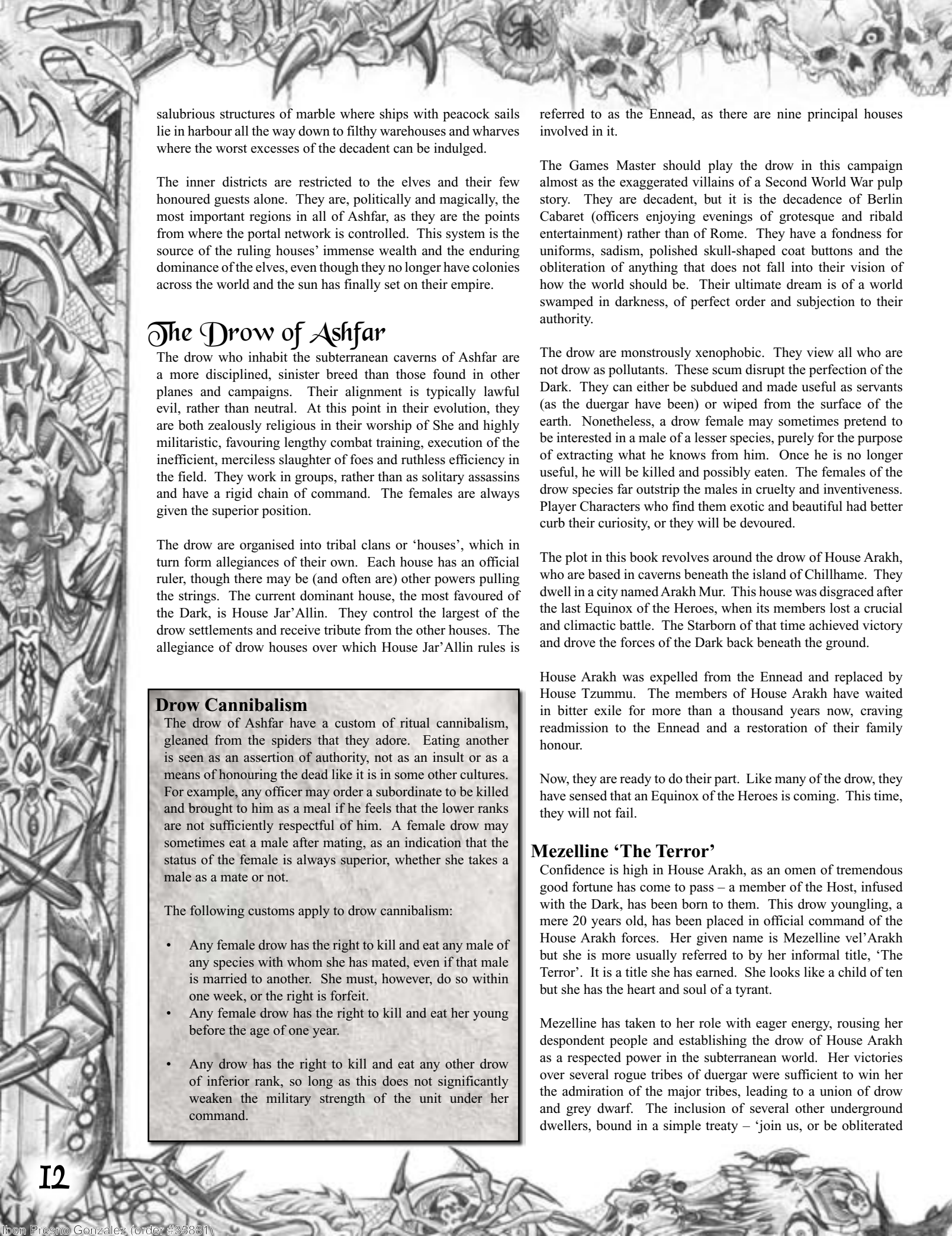
Beyond the limits of Boskenland and the Eagle Nations lies a zone of barren tundra that ultimately becomes an arctic wasteland. No humanoids have ever settled here, for though there is enough hunting to support life, the area is home to dreadful monsters that shun the warmer climes of the south. There are local tales of a snow warlock or ice queen (the legends vary) who has a frosty citadel in the depths of the Waste, but this has never been seen by human eyes.

The nearest settlement to the Waste is Ommersdale, a thriving town built upon the fur trade.

## Xoth Sarandi

The island of Xoth Sarandi, home of the elven archmages, is the undisputed centre of the world. Around the island are titanic stone archways, the sea-portals, which connect to similar archways in far-off parts of the globe. This feat of magic has enabled the elves to colonise the various continents and keep their colonies supplied and defended, without having to risk the hazards of the open sea. Later, when the portals were made available to other races, they grew wealthy beyond measure from the fees they were able to charge from the use of their transport system.

Xoth Sarandi is the crossroads of the world. Almost all ocean-going traffic travels to its destination via this magical island. It is almost entirely urbanised, with two tiers to the city. The outer districts are those in which the other races live, along with those elves who are involved with shipping or trade. These districts are essentially a huge mass of dockland, with buildings ranging from



salubrious structures of marble where ships with peacock sails lie in harbour all the way down to filthy warehouses and wharves where the worst excesses of the decadent can be indulged.

The inner districts are restricted to the elves and their few honoured guests alone. They are, politically and magically, the most important regions in all of Ashfar, as they are the points from where the portal network is controlled. This system is the source of the ruling houses' immense wealth and the enduring dominance of the elves, even though they no longer have colonies across the world and the sun has finally set on their empire.

## The Drow of Ashfar

The drow who inhabit the subterranean caverns of Ashfar are a more disciplined, sinister breed than those found in other planes and campaigns. Their alignment is typically lawful evil, rather than neutral. At this point in their evolution, they are both zealously religious in their worship of She and highly militaristic, favouring lengthy combat training, execution of the inefficient, merciless slaughter of foes and ruthless efficiency in the field. They work in groups, rather than as solitary assassins and have a rigid chain of command. The females are always given the superior position.

The drow are organised into tribal clans or 'houses', which in turn form allegiances of their own. Each house has an official ruler, though there may be (and often are) other powers pulling the strings. The current dominant house, the most favoured of the Dark, is House Jar'Allin. They control the largest of the drow settlements and receive tribute from the other houses. The allegiance of drow houses over which House Jar'Allin rules is

### Drow Cannibalism

The drow of Ashfar have a custom of ritual cannibalism, gleaned from the spiders that they adore. Eating another is seen as an assertion of authority, not as an insult or as a means of honouring the dead like it is in some other cultures. For example, any officer may order a subordinate to be killed and brought to him as a meal if he feels that the lower ranks are not sufficiently respectful of him. A female drow may sometimes eat a male after mating, as an indication that the status of the female is always superior, whether she takes a male as a mate or not.

The following customs apply to drow cannibalism:

- Any female drow has the right to kill and eat any male of any species with whom she has mated, even if that male is married to another. She must, however, do so within one week, or the right is forfeit.
- Any female drow has the right to kill and eat her young before the age of one year.
- Any drow has the right to kill and eat any other drow of inferior rank, so long as this does not significantly weaken the military strength of the unit under her command.

referred to as the Ennead, as there are nine principal houses involved in it.

The Games Master should play the drow in this campaign almost as the exaggerated villains of a Second World War pulp story. They are decadent, but it is the decadence of Berlin Cabaret (officers enjoying evenings of grotesque and ribald entertainment) rather than of Rome. They have a fondness for uniforms, sadism, polished skull-shaped coat buttons and the obliteration of anything that does not fall into their vision of how the world should be. Their ultimate dream is of a world swamped in darkness, of perfect order and subjection to their authority.

The drow are monstrosly xenophobic. They view all who are not drow as pollutants. These scum disrupt the perfection of the Dark. They can either be subdued and made useful as servants (as the duergar have been) or wiped from the surface of the earth. Nonetheless, a drow female may sometimes pretend to be interested in a male of a lesser species, purely for the purpose of extracting what he knows from him. Once he is no longer useful, he will be killed and possibly eaten. The females of the drow species far outstrip the males in cruelty and inventiveness. Player Characters who find them exotic and beautiful had better curb their curiosity, or they will be devoured.

The plot in this book revolves around the drow of House Arakh, who are based in caverns beneath the island of Chillhame. They dwell in a city named Arakh Mur. This house was disgraced after the last Equinox of the Heroes, when its members lost a crucial and climactic battle. The Starborn of that time achieved victory and drove the forces of the Dark back beneath the ground.

House Arakh was expelled from the Ennead and replaced by House Tzammu. The members of House Arakh have waited in bitter exile for more than a thousand years now, craving readmission to the Ennead and a restoration of their family honour.

Now, they are ready to do their part. Like many of the drow, they have sensed that an Equinox of the Heroes is coming. This time, they will not fail.

### Mezeline 'The Terror'

Confidence is high in House Arakh, as an omen of tremendous good fortune has come to pass – a member of the Host, infused with the Dark, has been born to them. This drow youngling, a mere 20 years old, has been placed in official command of the House Arakh forces. Her given name is Mezeline vel'Arakh but she is more usually referred to by her informal title, 'The Terror'. It is a title she has earned. She looks like a child of ten but she has the heart and soul of a tyrant.

Mezeline has taken to her role with eager energy, rousing her despondent people and establishing the drow of House Arakh as a respected power in the subterranean world. Her victories over several rogue tribes of duergar were sufficient to win her the admiration of the major tribes, leading to a union of drow and grey dwarf. The inclusion of several other underground dwellers, bound in a simple treaty – 'join us, or be obliterated

by us' – has created the Cthonic Alliance. Arakh Mur is now teeming with monsters, armoured drow legions, duergar and horrific magical constructs.

Mezelline is now intoxicated with power and is craving more. Ultimately, she intends to rule all of Chillhame, Caldraza and Ghael by playing them off against one another and dividing their forces. There is one major obstacle, however – Underdell, a long-established community of dwarves beneath Caldraza, stands between Arakh Mur and the mainland. The drow can probably smash through the dwarven forces if they take them by surprise but this would leave them depleted and word would undoubtedly reach the capital city of Caldraza before the drow reached them, allowing reinforcements to be sent in plenty of time. Attempting to invade Caldraza by surface assault would be insane, as there are not nearly enough ships to carry drow troops across to the mainland.

Mezelline's plan is thus to retake Chillhame first, corrupting the Node that lies at the Tump and eventually the Node beneath the city of Saragost too. Once Chillhame has been taken, she will approach the kingdom of Caldraza and make placatory offers, assuring the ruler of that kingdom that the drow intend no harm to them and can coexist peacefully. She will even dangle Chillhame itself before Caldraza as a bargaining chip, as Caldraza has long had its eye on Chillhame. As further proof of good faith, she will offer to send troops to assist Caldraza in its ongoing war with its

neighbouring country, Ghael. If the diplomacy does not go her way, she intends to assassinate King Titus of Caldraza and place a doppelganger on the throne instead.

Her real objective is to ensure that the troops of Caldraza are drawn away to the border of Ghael, so that her underground forces can smash through the dwarven community at Underdell and drive straight into the Caldrazan capital, Beacon City, with minimum resistance. With both Chillhame and Caldraza crippled and easy reinforcement from Arakh Mur possible for her armies, she will then be able to approach the Ennead and *demand* readmission for House Arakh.

Such is the plan of Mezelline, the Terror.

## The Elves of Ashfar

The elves are a race in retreat and decline. Centuries ago, they colonised the world from their island home of Xoth Sarandi, building magical sea-gates from that island to the continents of the world. To the races that occupied those continents, they brought their own advanced civilisation, with all the arcane secrets that elves are renowned for. In some places, they ruled over the colonies like despots, turning the other races into slaves. In others, they went so far as to teach the secrets of high magic to the natives, seeing it as a life-improving technology that they would need in order to advance themselves.

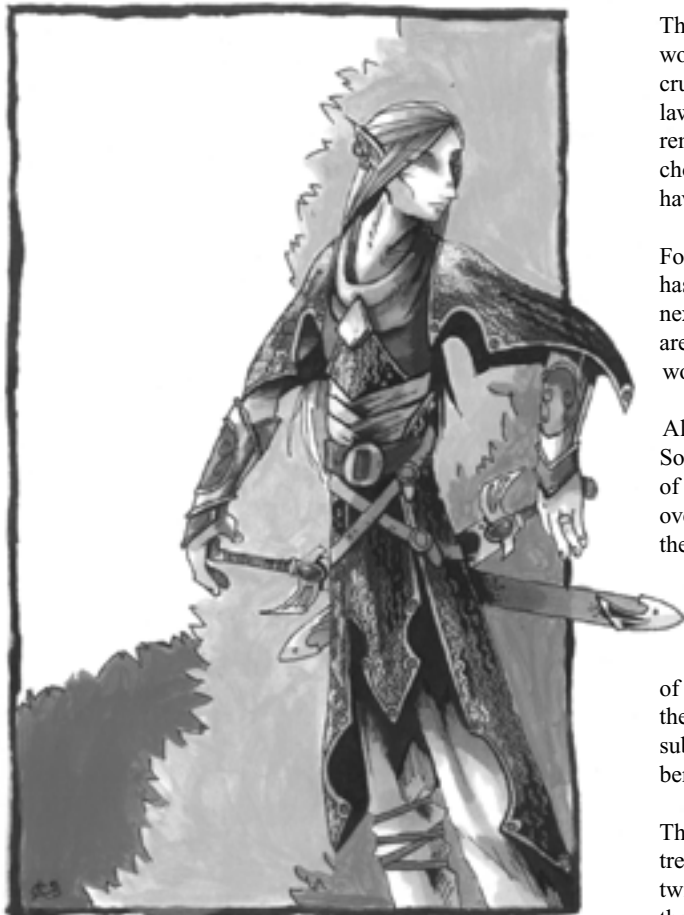
That empire is now gone and has largely withdrawn from the world. As with all empires in their time, it fell into decadence and crumbled, leaving behind only a legacy of beautiful buildings, lawful government and magical knowledge. The elves who remain are mostly the descendants of late colonist families who chose to stay, or young sons and daughters of Xoth Sarandi who have an urge to explore the world.

Following treaties with other races and kingdoms, Xoth Sarandi has changed from the dominant capital of the world to a transport nexus. It now profits by trade, not by conquest. The sea-gates are still active, but are used by commercial shipping to cross the world in days instead of months.

All over Ashfar, the elves are remembered as former overlords. Some regret their passing but most are glad to be back in charge of their own destinies again. The elves' attitude to the people over which they ruled was coloured by how closely they believed themselves to be related to them.

Humans were seen as less evolved brothers, with the potential to achieve much, if they were guided correctly. Many elves took on what they called 'the elven burden' of 'civilising' human beings, which in many cases meant that they installed elven governors controlling provinces of human subjects who were virtually enslaved but were usually treated benevolently.

The elves had only contempt for the squat, lumpen dwarves and treated them as if they were fit only for labour. In this, they twisted the dwarves' own morals. The respect for hard work that many dwarves have was viewed as the dwarves' innate



understanding of their place. They were created to work, while the elves were created to rule. This philosophy worked on paper but failed in real life. The elves simply could not tolerate the claustrophobic underground environments in which the dwarves thrived.

Elven colonies in dwarf lands were thus few and disastrous. The governors given responsibility for them had to be the toughest, most ruthless commanders that the elves could muster. This meant that elven rule was harsh, with relatively minor infractions punished with wounding or death. Enmity between elf and dwarf continues to this day, with the dwarves detesting the elves' arrogance and the elves looking down on the dwarves' rugged culture and graceless form.

The elves have never taken the halflings very seriously, as they do not believe that they are capable of much. To an elf, a halfling will always seem like a child. Elven colonies in halfling lands did not so much govern them as protect them, much as a parent would.

**Swamp Elves:** These are a sub-race of elf found inhabiting the marshes of some parts of Ashfar. They have slightly webbed feet and toes and much larger ears than usual. When resting, they tend to sit in a squatting posture. The elves who first discovered them were horrified, thinking them to be some kind of throwback. Unlike the drow, who were corrupt and evil but at least civilised in their way, the swamp elves were living like the most primitive of humans. The only thing to do was to enslave the lot and put them to work on the elven plantations.

The swamp elves' preference for living in the wild was in fact born of distaste for civilisation and contempt for organised society, not an animalistic nature. They have accepted their role as slaves because they have a philosophy of relaxed endurance. So what if they are working in the fields all day? In time, they believe, the wheel will turn and they will be the ones to rule. Some of the more fanatical swamp elves hold to prophecies that one day a deliverer will come and force this change.

The lot of the swamp elves has not really improved with the passing of elven rule. People are simply too used to thinking of them as illiterate, simple labourers. They are still seen as an underclass and are bought and sold as slaves by all races.

## Pantheons of Ashfar

If the Ashfar campaign background is being used, religious characters may choose from the following deities. If the Games Master wishes to change these, then he may do so, but should make sure that the change is consistent, as various shrines and temples to these Gods appear in the coming adventures. For example, one of the scenarios in Chapter 6: The Lost Villages involves the curse of Wohoon upon a village, so a suitable alternative deity of wild things should be substituted.

### Avillon

The Avillon pantheon is worshipped in Chillhame. It was also worshipped in Caldrazza before that kingdom officially adopted

the church of Marius as the state religion. Humans, halflings and dwarves are most likely to be followers of these deities.

### Aranu

Aranu is the high God of the pantheon, a personification of the Sun who bears a spear of golden fire. He is the Lawmaker of the Gods, setting limits on what even the divine beings may do. Aranu is the special patron deity of kings and tribal chiefs.



**Domains:** Sun, Law, War, Protection

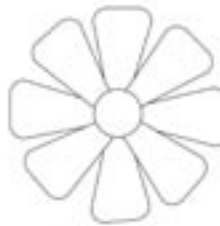
**Alignment:** Lawful Neutral

**Favoured Weapon:** Spear

### Blediwesse

Blediwesse is the flower-maiden of spring rain. She is the special patron goddess of unmarried maidens. She brings life to the earth after the ravages of winter, blessing the earth with the waters that cause plants to ripen. She is also a goddess of wells and rivers, who sends the waters of the natural springs

for the good of men. Priestesses of Blediwesse must be virginal and often go crowned with flowers as part of their regalia.



**Domains:** Good, Healing, Earth, Water

**Alignment:** Neutral Good

**Favoured Weapon:** Sickle

### Firinna

Scarlet-haired Firinna is the quick-tempered goddess of the hearth and of battle. She is compared to the sudden spark that shoots from the fire and burns down your house when you are not looking. She represents the stubborn, selfish side of humanity and is a goddess of envy, resentment and grudges, though she is also the fiery spirit that inspires you to fight to your last breath.



**Domains:** Fire, War, Chaos, Trickery

**Alignment:** Chaotic Neutral

**Favoured Weapon:** Longsword

### Gahaira

Gahaira is the goddess of the north wind, the goddess of hunger, leanness, want and desolation. She is portrayed as an old woman with a lean face and straggly hair. She is mostly propitiated rather than worshipped, with offerings left for her as the evenings begin to grow dark, so that she will not blow too fiercely in the winter months. Men do





not like to speak of her by name and refer to her instead by her title 'the witch of November'.

**Domains:** Air, Evil, Destruction, Death  
**Alignment:** Neutral Evil  
**Favoured Weapon:** Flail



### Hernun

Hernun is the god of the hunt, who is eternally locked in the chase to bring down his brother Wohoon. Sometimes one brother will win, sometimes the other, but the hunt always begins afresh. Hernun represents man at his most basic, contending with the wild. Druids

often revere him, though the more chaotic ones favour Wohoon. He is represented as a powerfully built man with antlers atop his head in honour of the beasts he hunts.

**Domains:** Animal, Protection, Travel, Strength  
**Alignment:** Neutral  
**Favoured Weapon:** Bow



### Old Heakun

This god is also called 'the walker of the plains'. He is muddy brown in colour and is the grandfather of the gods. Unlike them, he did not stay in the heavens and instead chose to wander the earth continually, examining this strange creation that he had made. It is said that Heakun placed megaliths along his path to mark where he had been, giving rise to the legend of invisible lines of force that crisscross the countryside.

**Domains:** Travel, Earth, Magic, Protection  
**Alignment:** Neutral  
**Favoured Weapon:** Club



### Hombel

Hombel is the innkeeper, the storesman, the god of preserving things. He is the one who gives you your due; as such, he is a god of justice, especially of the kind that is often called 'karma' in which you get what you give out. He is represented as a fat, jolly man with a sack over his shoulder. In the abstract, he is symbolised by a set of scales.

**Domains:** Good, Law, Protection, Strength  
**Alignment:** Lawful Good  
**Favoured Weapon:** Mace



### Merrithrawn

The bearded Merrithrawn is the God of bards, sometimes called the charm-singer. In legends, he is so persuasive that he can change the very machinery of the universe to suit himself, simply by talking it around. Rogues often favour Merrithrawn, as he embodies the charm and panache that lets you talk your way out of a sticky situation.

**Domains:** Knowledge, Luck, Magic, Trickery  
**Alignment:** Neutral Good  
**Favoured Weapon:** Short sword



### Wandul

Wandul is the holly-crowned god of the winter months, the god of the cold and the dark. He comes when the darkness begins to grow greater than the light. As with many of the darker gods of the pantheon, the only time when he is worshipped is when people want him to stay away. Worshippers of Wandul are few and are usually fighters or barbarians who revere him as a challenging, grim deity of strength.

Some humans believe that Wandul was originally a god of the giants, left behind from an earlier time.

**Domains:** Death, Destruction, Plant, Strength  
**Alignment:** Lawful Evil  
**Favoured Weapon:** Heavy mace



### Wohoon

Wohoon is the god of the wild things, brother to Hernun. He is not fully human and has the ears and teeth of a wolf. There is nothing of civilisation about him at all. The only worshippers of Wohoon are druids and those who live their lives in the outdoors. Everyone else is content to honour him for what he is – the wild, animal nature that they have left behind.

**Domains:** Animal, Trickery, Chaos, Strength  
**Alignment:** Chaotic Neutral  
**Favoured Weapon:** Greatclub



### Yosa

Yosa charm-weaver is the Goddess of all crafters and makers, from the blacksmith and woodcarver to the seamstress and even the stonemason. She is depicted as a statuesque woman with long scarlet hair, bearing the wheel that is her sacred symbol. The wheel

represents all crafts, being simultaneously the potter's wheel, the spinner's treadle and the waggoner's cartwheel. Hers is the knowledge that is passed down within the home; not just the simple business of managing a house but the crafter's art, vitally important in a cottage industry in which each home is also a place of business.

As the Goddess who manipulates matter into new patterns, she is also a Goddess of magic and of weaving the threads of invisible force. Clerics of Yosa favour the magic of the hearth and home above the more convoluted rituals of high magic. Images of Yosa in clay are often kept above the hearth beside those of Hombul, to protect the house.

**Alignment:** Lawful Good

**Domains:** Law, Magic, Knowledge, Protection

**Favoured Weapon:** Sling

## Callistan

The Callistan pantheon, named after the now-destroyed holy elven city of Callista where all of the gods of elvenkind were worshipped together, includes all of the deities described below. However, many of them are revered only by the elves or by the drow, not by both. Only two deities, Arosi and Jubb, have followers on both sides of the divide.



### Arosi

Arosi is the pale Goddess of intoxication. As such, she is both honoured and feared by elven society; honoured for the rapture her gifts bring and feared for the dangerous rage that can result. Her image is placed upon chalices and drinking vessels in order to secure her blessing and remind her that she is not

forgotten. Among the elves, it is customary (when drinking at a formal occasion) to pour at least one bottle of wine on the ground in honour of fair Arosi, as a libation.

Her patronage extends to all things that appear enticing and yet conceal peril for the unwise, such as flowers that are beautiful but secrete poisons. She is not evil, but she is dangerous. She takes the form of a beautiful, slender elven woman with ice-blond hair and a deceptively innocent smile.

The drow honour Arosi both as the Goddess of drug-induced debauchery and of the poisons they rely upon so much (like alcohol itself, Arosi is not a force for evil, though evil beings are among her most fervent worshippers). Only vegetable poisons are under the dominion of Arosi. Poisons of animal origin, especially those of spiders, are under the direct dominion of She.

**Alignment:** Chaotic Neutral

**Dominions:** Chaos, Luck, Plant, Trickery

**Favoured Weapon:** Dagger



### Brith

When the star goddess Nuith first attempted to create a light for her children on earth to see by, she gave birth to the goddess Lumiya, the moon. Although the elves saw well enough by the silver light of Lumiya, it was too changeable and faint for the other creatures and so Nuith focused her will and created the brilliant light of Brith, the sun.

Brith is the sun god of the Callistan pantheon and the chief deity of all. With the exception of the insane god Jubb and the two principal drow deities, Arkady and 'She', the other gods acknowledge his authority and obey his commands.

He appears as a powerfully built male elf, armoured with golden chainmail and bearing a double-handed sword that shines like the sun. In place of his original left hand is a mechanical one made from mithral. The reason for this is given below, in the description of 'She'.

Brith is worshipped by all, but especially by warriors and nobles.

**Alignment:** Lawful Neutral

**Dominions:** Good, Law, Fire, Sun

**Favoured Weapon:** Greatsword



### Jubb

The fearsome Jubb is pale as a corpse and has eyes of dull red. He is utterly insane. To the elves, he symbolises the battle-madness that can take over a warrior's mind. He was the first male child of Nuith but was found unfit to rule, because of his madness. He represents the wildness that the civilised elves are proud to have outgrown. Wild elves often revere Jubb, seeing in his madness a spontaneity and joy in life that is to be emulated.

Jubb dresses in spiked armour whose pieces seem to have come from several different sources. It is chaotic and ill matched, covered with chains and hooks, decorated with checkerboard patterns in one place and grinning demon faces in other.

**Alignment:** Chaotic Evil

**Dominions:** Animal, Chaos, Destruction, War

**Favoured Weapon:** The dire flail, the many spikes of the head representing the star of chaos.



### Kyros Threadcutter

Kyros is the elven god of law, reason and exactitude. He clears away illusion and reveals truth. Those who ensure that the Law is kept, such as city officials, lawyers and guardsmen, worship him. Despite his intellectual prowess, he is a

very popular God among warriors, as he also stands for honesty and plain speaking.

His title of 'threadcutter' refers to a legend in which he severs the tangled nets of spider-thread spun by She that were holding his fellow deities immobile. Priests of Kyros, who pride themselves on their ability to come straight to the point and not waste time blowing hot air, often recall this legend. In a party of adventurers, a priest of Kyros will insist on action over debate.

Kyros is depicted as a grave young man in dark clothing, wearing ornaments of office and carrying a lamp. His symbolic weapon is the rapier, adopted by the priests because of its piercing directness.

**Alignment:** Lawful Neutral

**Domains:** Law, Knowledge, Strength, Sun

**Favoured Weapon:** Rapier



### Lumiya

Lumiya is the elven goddess of the moon. She rules the night as Brith rules the day. She was the first of the gods to emerge from the starry body of Nuith and carries more of her mother's wisdom than any of the other children. She is the goddess of those who prophesy the future and has a special dominion over the hours of rest, when elves enter trance. This means she is

also goddess of dreams, which often bring visions of what is to come and of healing, which is greatly aided by sleep.

The light of Lumiya is also that by which night creatures hunt. She is both the protector of animals and the patroness of hunting. If an animal escapes the chase, then it is said that Lumiya has blessed it; if the hunting party brings home meat, then thanks are given to Lumiya. Finally, as the changing moon, she is patroness of the tides of the sea.

**Alignment:** Neutral Good

**Domains:** Animal, Healing, Knowledge, Water

**Favoured Weapon:** The sickle, representative of the crescent moon.



### Melmoth

Gaunt, saturnine Melmoth, sometimes called 'the king of shreds and patches', takes the form of a male elf with black hair in straggly tangles. His features are hollow, as if he had gone hungry for many days. His clothes are tattered and torn and he wears a long, hooded cloak.

Melmoth never rests, moving on from place to place eternally. As a God who exemplifies both magic and ceaseless wandering, he is thus the God of all those elven mages who take their magic from town to town, looking for employment. He personifies the need that many elves feel for solitude and distance from the

claustrophobic nature of cities, as well as the wanderlust that draws so many of them to roam far from their homes. Followers of Melmoth generally enjoy good relations with druids, as they share their respect for wild spaces. Many bards also worship him, because of their wandering ways.

**Alignment:** Chaotic Good

**Domains:** Chaos, Magic, Knowledge, Travel

**Favoured Weapon:** The quarterstaff, which is both the staff of the traveller and the characteristic weapon of the wizard.



### Nuith

The goddess Nuith is more of a primal force than a deity. She is the starry heaven itself, from which all else emerged. The elves believe her to be the mother of all earthly life, whether evil or good. That which is 'of Nuith' is necessary to existence. Alien forces,

such as the drow, magical aberrations or demons from other planes, are not 'of Nuith'. They are to be feared and guarded against.

Nuith does not have clerics. She is too distant and universal to be worshipped at all. According to legend, she only intervenes in the lives of mortals through her other children, the Starborn. These are avatars of individual stars, whose destiny it is to protect the world against the forces from outside that threaten it.

**Domains:** Nuith does not have domains, as she is not worshipped and has no priesthood.



### Valkazz

Valkazz the Childfree is the goddess of warrior women. She is called 'the Childfree' not because she is virginal, but because she stands for a way of life that does not involve bringing up the young. In the elven religions, women who choose a path other than that of child-rearing and home-making are respected for it. Although males may

enter her service, her clerics are always female. Priestesses of Valkazz often worship her with riotous celebration that would put any men's feast to shame.

While a cleric of Valkazz is engaged in active temple service, she may take as many husbands as she wishes, but may not become a mother. Should she become pregnant, she must retire from temple service until the child is born, in which event it is either given over to be adopted or the priestess retires altogether, a much rarer event.

Valkazz is depicted as a female elf dressed in leather armour, with broad shoulders and braided waist-length hair. In addition to being a goddess of war, she is also a bringer of favourable winds, so it is customary for an image of Valkazz to be placed at the prow of a ship.

**Alignment:** Neutral  
**Domains:** Air, Destruction, Strength, War  
**Favoured Weapon:** Battleaxe



### Vendyss

The voluptuous Vendyss is the Goddess of the volcano's heart. In the Callistan pantheon, she has presidency over all things of fire, metal and searing heat. She is depicted as a woman wreathed in fire, with hair the colour of metals in a forge. Legends relate that when she lay down to rest in the aftermath of creation, her flaming hair spread through the cooling mantle of the earth, in strands of silver and gold and glimmering copper. These then became the filigree threads of ore that trail through the rock and

can be restored back to metal once again with the application of her own fire.

Clerics of Vendyss are typically weapon smiths, armourers and jewellers. Those who make their living working with metal rely on her blessings to prosper at their trade. As she is the Goddess of precious metals and of fortunes found under the earth, she is also considered to be the Goddess of wealth itself, bringing good luck at the time when it is most needed. Her weapon is the trident, which resembles a flaming torch cast in metal. Clerics of Vendyss have a great respect for non-evil dragons, will always assist them if they are in need and will never assault one except in self-defence.

**Alignment:** Neutral Good  
**Dominions:** Earth, Good, Fire, Luck  
**Favoured Weapon:** Warhammer

### The Creation of 'She'

The creation of She is a central elven legend. Brith the sun god, the second child born of Nuith the Star Goddess, was originally deemed unworthy to hold the throne of the elven gods. He was a proven warrior and his courage was unquestionable, but the seeress Lumiya proclaimed that his nature contained a weakness, an evil. Given time, this evil might grow to consume him. While Brith was still not pure in body and soul, he would not be worthy of the responsibility that was to be his.

The outward sign of this evil within him was his left hand. The body of Brith was beautiful and well proportioned, but the left hand was dark and hook-nailed, the back of it covered with coarse hairs, as if it belonged to something else.

Thus, the sun-lord Brith went into the deserts of sand to search his soul and judge whether he was worthy to be a true King of all elves. After thirty nights of wandering and meditation, he made his decision. If there was evil within him, he would cut it out. This was his warrior's mind speaking. Another might have tried to come to terms with the evil, to overcome it by force of will, but not Brith. In a single moment, he drew his sword and hacked his left hand off at the wrist, then flung it with a curse down a rocky ravine, into the darkness where it belonged.

Brith returned to his fellow gods, who welcomed him. Only Lumiya was silent, knowing that the evil had not been overcome but merely moved to a place where none would see it.

Gods are immortal. Their body parts are no less immortal, whether they are still attached or not.

The left hand of Brith, still living, still evil, crouched in the darkness. It pulsed, slowly, realising that it was free. For the first time, it was *itself*. The fingers elongated; new ones exuded themselves in spindly lengths from the wet stump. Four thin, bony fingers wavered feebly beside a stubby thumb, like some horrible birth deformity. The fingers and thumb thickened, darkening to match the rest of the skin. A single hand had become two hands, fused at the wrists.

The knuckles of the thumbs congealed together, forming a bulbous head. Their curved claws clicked as they met and became inward-pointing jaws. As the body gained mass and the fingers became longer and thinner, the thick black hair that had covered the back of the hand now sprouted over the whole creature. 'She', the devouring spider-goddess, was born – the evil that the sun god cut away from himself and cast into darkness.

In the darkness, the spider-creature found comfort and strength. She soothed her burning wounds in the cool lightless air. Life was already beginning to breed in her bulbous belly. Away from the light of Brith, shielded from the influence of the stars, she absorbed the darkness into herself and fed it into her growing eggs like mother's milk. Her children would shun light, even as she did. When the time came for the stars to send their ambassadors to earth, they would be *opposed*. The darkness too, would have a voice. It would speak through Her spawn.

**Note for Games Master:** The elves of Ashfar do not believe that the drow are truly of the same species as they. They teach that the drow are an alien contamination, the result of the evil that somehow crept into the body of Brith like a spot upon the sun. They are not true children of Nuith, but a cancer. This reflects their own unease that Brith, their principal God, *created* the mother of the drow by casting his own evil nature into a place where it could grow and flourish.



## ‘She’

The true name of this Goddess is never spoken aloud. Only her priestesses and priests may name her and then only when worshipping her with secret rites. She is the Queen of Spiders and the ultimate sovereign of all drow.

All drow honour ‘She’ as their mother and protector. She is their inspiration and the reason that spiders are sacred to them. The legend of her creation is paralleled by the way the drow themselves were cut off from the main body of the elven race and exiled beneath the earth. She has other names that the races of Ashfar use to refer to her, but the drow only ever use the term ‘She’. They know well enough who they are talking about.

**Alignment:** Neutral Evil

**Dominions:** Destruction, Death, Evil, Magic, Protection, War

**Favoured Weapon:** The sacred weapon of She is the net, symbolic of the webs that entrap her foes.



## Arkady

When She began to bring forth children, she produced a litter of six strange beings, resembling Brith in body (for She still bore his elven flesh, having been cut from it) but rich with the darkness that She had absorbed. They were so steeped in darkness that they were more shadow than flesh. Only their bones were wholly solid.

One child, wilier than the rest, crept away unseen. The rest began to tear and devour each other. When the victor finally killed the last of his siblings, it fell asleep in the pile of picked bones – and that is when the lurking one killed and ate it. This child, the last born and the only survivor, was Arkady.

Arkady is the grand vizier of the drow deities, second only in rank to She. She stands for intelligence, without which power is only unlightened force. As such, she is the Goddess of all drow archivists, scholars, researchers, alchemists and wizards. Arkady acts as adviser to She, whispering counsels in her ear, telling the secrets that others believe are safely concealed.

The drow, a people who cherish their own secrets, do not like other people to keep secrets from them. The presidency of Arkady thus extends to spies, interrogators and torturers, as she also has dominion over darkness and the fear of darkness. In truth, Arkady is almost more feared than the primary Goddess of the drow. The head of the Secret Police is always more terrifying than the monarch.

Her form is that of a drow woman whose dark flesh is as translucent as thin smoke. Her pale skeleton can clearly be seen beneath. Her teeth are filed to sharp points. Her symbolic weapon is the scythe and her symbol a mirror of obsidian glass.

The drow create statues of Arkady by encasing sculpted silver bones in molten dark glass, which creates an effect as macabre as it is beautiful. Violet flames burn continually before these statues in offertory shrines.

**Alignment:** Lawful Evil

**Dominions:** Evil, Death, Knowledge, Magic, Trickery

**Favoured Weapon:** Dagger

## The Starborn

This section describes the rules needed to create a Starborn character. The mechanics of the nature of the Starborn are represented in the form of a template, giving a character certain bonus abilities and traits. All the Player Characters are automatically given this template, though they are not aware they possess it. The template does not in any way change their Effective Character Level – the increase in power is suitably minor that it does not create a significant advantage to warrant such a penalty.

Though Player Characters are not initially aware of their nature as a Starborn, or the special powers they have as a result, each should be given the list of Patron Stars and the attendant birthmarks so that they can choose which birthmark they begin the game with. The birthmark is permanent, and cannot be changed.

### The Starborn Template

‘Starborn’ is a template that can be added to any living, corporeal creature (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

A Starborn uses the base creature’s statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

#### Special Qualities:

**Birthmark:** Every Starborn has a birthmark somewhere upon his body that represents the force of the Patron Star to which he is connected. This birthmark will usually be silvery-blue in colour



In the hands of the proper Starborn, a signature item takes on special properties (see page 230).

**Starsoul:** Unlike most living beings in Ashfar, Starborn can be returned to life as described in Magic Restrictions in Ashfar (see page 6).

## The Patron Stars

The Starborn are all magically linked to an actual star and its constellation in the heavens of Ashfar. They are the material incarnation of that star's essence. More than one person can be an avatar of each star.

The stars are diverse in nature but all are on the same side – that of life and the power to make one's own choices. The darkness opposes all of them equally. It is this common origin, irrespective of individual alignment, which makes the Player Characters on the same side. As children of the same Goddess, they belong to the same world, even if they personally would rather despoil it than preserve it. Their destiny is to be protectors of the realm against threats from below the surface and above it, where the darkness grows and is nourished.

The opponents of the Starborn are the Host, who are incarnations of the darkness in the same way that the Player Characters are incarnations of the stars.

The clash between the Player Characters and the drow (and their allies) is thus more than just a fight between material powers. It is the playing out of an age-old conflict between cosmic principles and the outcome will determine the fate of the world for an age to come.

The Starborn have become incarnate on Ashfar before, to defend the earth against the onslaught of the dark. Part of the mystery of the storyline depends on the characters' finding out about what previous avatars of the same star managed to achieve. By learning about other Starborn heroes who came before them, they can finally come to realise what a pivotal part they play in the destiny of Ashfar.

and take the shape of a symbol associated with the appropriate star. The Player should decide whether the birthmark is visible when the character is clothed or not and where on his body it is. It must be at least an inch and no more than a foot in diameter. Noticing a visible small birthmark of this kind is not difficult, requiring only a Spot check (DC 10) to achieve. If the character wishes, a visible birthmark can be hidden with a Disguise check (DC 10) and suitable materials such as greasepaint.

The birthmark grants specific bonus abilities depending on the Patron Star chosen. See the list given below for details.

**Sense Host (Su):** Starborn automatically sense any character with the Host template that comes within 300 feet. They do not know distance or direction, but the sensation of evil increases as they come closer. If they can visually see the Host character, then they are immediately aware of the nature of the character as a member of the Host.


**Signature Item:** Every Starborn is associated with a particular signature item (see page 230). When within five miles of an unclaimed signature item, the Starborn experiences a faint and strange sensation of longing. There is, however, no indication of why they are feeling this sensation or what it means. If within 10 feet of an unclaimed signature weapon then the Starborn experiences a stronger sensation that something that is rightfully their property is close to hand, though they gain no specific details as to the distance or direction.

## Signature Items

Signature items are dealt with thoroughly in the Appendix. During character creation, the Player should specify which sort of magical weapon, armour or shield he would most prefer, if he were given the choice. This will help the Games Master decide what signature item the Player Character should have.

The signature items are objects that are part of the Starborn characters' personal legend, completely bound to them and as much a part of the star's essence as the characters themselves are. Signature items are like magic items that evolve. As the characters advance in experience level, their signature items gain new powers and enhancements.

At the start of the game, the Player Characters do not have any signature items at all. In the course of the story, they must find and retrieve the items that once belonged to their former avatars. The first of these, the sword of Starkweather John, can be found in the first adventure. This item assumes that at least one of the



Players will choose a sword. If none of them do, then change the sword of Starkweather John to an item that they *did* choose!

**Benefit:** +2 luck bonus to Armour Class for one round or +10 ft. increase to movement speed for 1d4 rounds.

## The Constellations

Each of the Starborn is the incarnation of the energies of a single Patron Star. These stars are part of constellations, which determine the type of energy concerned and the benefits that are conferred upon those who are born under them. The Players should each choose a birth sign from the list below. Note that more than one Player can choose the same sign, as each sign contains multiple stars.

As the year progresses, each of the constellations in turn appears on the horizon. The months are thus named after the twelve signs, so that the year begins with the month of the Great Wolf and ends with the month of the Watchman. There is a rough correspondence between the sign and the activity of the month in peasant communities; for example, the month of the Reaper corresponds with harvest time.

### The Benefits Of The Signs

Each sign has two benefits that a Starborn born under the sign can draw upon. One (and only one) of the benefits of a given sign can be invoked once per game session. As the benefit is a manifestation of fate, it takes the form of a luck bonus to the stated check. A result of 'automatic success' gives the *minimum* result necessary to indicate success, no more. The ability can only be used when the skill check DC is 20 or less.

These benefits cannot be used when the character is within 150 feet of a member of the Host or a fragment of the Abyssal Altar, as the energies of the Dark prevent the auspicious currents of the stars from reaching their avatars.

#### 1. The Great Wolf

A wolf's head bares its teeth, with a single star forming the gleam in its eye. The wolf represents the threat of starvation during the cold, dark months of winter, but is also a positive sign, as he devours the old year and its woes.

Those born under the wolf's sign are usually practical, down-to-earth people, with a tendency to be harsh, having contempt for the soft and weak. They are fiercely protective of their few true friends and allies.

**Benefit:** +1 luck bonus to any single attack roll or +1d4 additional damage to any damage roll.

#### 2. The Unicorn

The unicorn's star-tipped horn, reminiscent of the icicles of winter, breaks the horizon as the snowdrops break the cold earth. It is as cold, bright and pure as the ice but brings the promise of renewed life.

People born under the unicorn are enthusiastic, keen and direct. They can become obsessive; when they want something, they stop at nothing to get it. They detest circumlocution and petty debate when there is action to be taken.

#### 3. The Delver

The earth has now softened after the winter frosts. The symbol of a man (or, as some say, a dwarf) digging the ground represents the sowing time, when the farmers plant seeds in the soil. A star gleams at the tip of his shovel.

Those born under this sign are often curious, inquisitive people, with a desire to look below the surface and find out the secrets of others.

**Benefit:** +2 luck bonus to a single Fortitude saving throw or automatic success on a single Strength-based skill check.

#### 4. The Wave

Heavy rains and floodwaters follow the full thaws of spring. The Wave is the symbol of the rushing waters and signals the beginning of the season of safe sea voyaging.

Those born under the Wave tend to be graceful, empathic people, though like the waters they can be deceptive and shallow.

**Benefit:** +2 luck bonus to a single Reflex saving throw or automatic success on a single Charisma-based skill check.

#### 5. The Satyr

With spring in full bloom, the blood runs hot in man and beast alike. The Satyr is the sign of animal energy, fully restored to life. This is an exultant sign, representing joy in one's own strength and the freedom to exercise it.

Those who have the Satyr as their birthsign enjoy life to the full. They can sometimes annoy people by taking nothing seriously, treating life as one big joke. When they are in the mood to be cruel, they can be viciously sadistic in the name of their own fun.

**Benefit:** +2 luck bonus to a single Will saving throw or temporary hit points (+1 per character level) lasting 5 rounds.

#### 6. The Rose

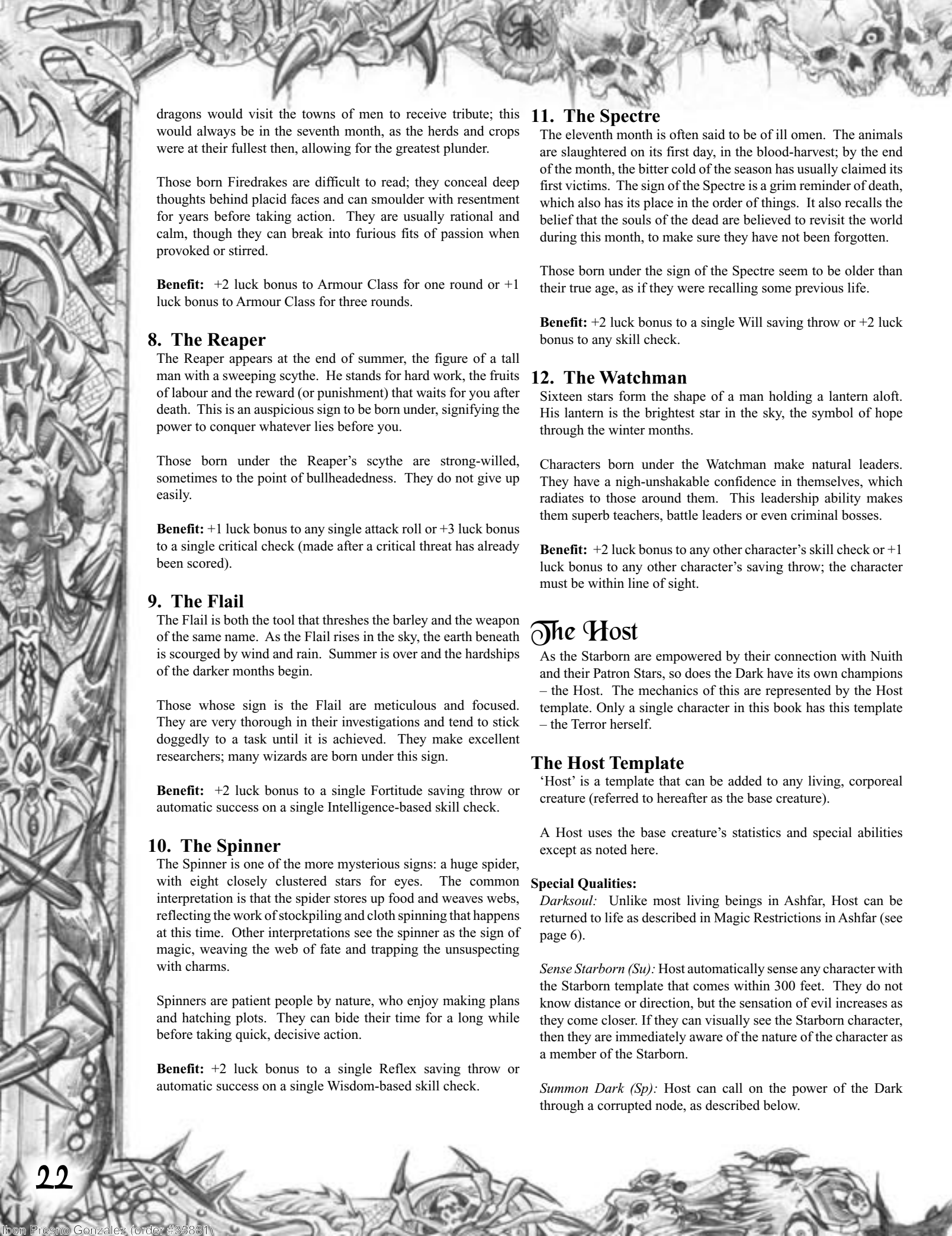
The Rose is the beauty of the blossoming earth made manifest in the heavens, though its thorns also symbolise treachery and cruelty for its own sake.

The people of the Rose are often physically attractive and able to manipulate those around them by subtle cues. They make good leaders, whether of heroes or villains.

**Benefit:** +3 luck bonus to any single Initiative check or automatic increase in Non-Player Character reaction by one stage upon initial contact (see the Diplomacy skill).

#### 7. The Firedrake

A firedrake is the old name for a dragon, specifically one who breathes flame. This sign symbolises the searing heat of summer. It also calls to mind the dim memory of the time when



dragons would visit the towns of men to receive tribute; this would always be in the seventh month, as the herds and crops were at their fullest then, allowing for the greatest plunder.

Those born Firedrakes are difficult to read; they conceal deep thoughts behind placid faces and can smoulder with resentment for years before taking action. They are usually rational and calm, though they can break into furious fits of passion when provoked or stirred.

**Benefit:** +2 luck bonus to Armour Class for one round or +1 luck bonus to Armour Class for three rounds.

## 8. The Reaper

The Reaper appears at the end of summer, the figure of a tall man with a sweeping scythe. He stands for hard work, the fruits of labour and the reward (or punishment) that waits for you after death. This is an auspicious sign to be born under, signifying the power to conquer whatever lies before you.

Those born under the Reaper's scythe are strong-willed, sometimes to the point of bullheadedness. They do not give up easily.

**Benefit:** +1 luck bonus to any single attack roll or +3 luck bonus to a single critical check (made after a critical threat has already been scored).

## 9. The Flail

The Flail is both the tool that threshes the barley and the weapon of the same name. As the Flail rises in the sky, the earth beneath is scourged by wind and rain. Summer is over and the hardships of the darker months begin.

Those whose sign is the Flail are meticulous and focused. They are very thorough in their investigations and tend to stick doggedly to a task until it is achieved. They make excellent researchers; many wizards are born under this sign.

**Benefit:** +2 luck bonus to a single Fortitude saving throw or automatic success on a single Intelligence-based skill check.

## 10. The Spinner

The Spinner is one of the more mysterious signs: a huge spider, with eight closely clustered stars for eyes. The common interpretation is that the spider stores up food and weaves webs, reflecting the work of stockpiling and cloth spinning that happens at this time. Other interpretations see the spinner as the sign of magic, weaving the web of fate and trapping the unsuspecting with charms.

Spinners are patient people by nature, who enjoy making plans and hatching plots. They can bide their time for a long while before taking quick, decisive action.

**Benefit:** +2 luck bonus to a single Reflex saving throw or automatic success on a single Wisdom-based skill check.

## 11. The Spectre

The eleventh month is often said to be of ill omen. The animals are slaughtered on its first day, in the blood-harvest; by the end of the month, the bitter cold of the season has usually claimed its first victims. The sign of the Spectre is a grim reminder of death, which also has its place in the order of things. It also recalls the belief that the souls of the dead are believed to revisit the world during this month, to make sure they have not been forgotten.

Those born under the sign of the Spectre seem to be older than their true age, as if they were recalling some previous life.

**Benefit:** +2 luck bonus to a single Will saving throw or +2 luck bonus to any skill check.

## 12. The Watchman

Sixteen stars form the shape of a man holding a lantern aloft. His lantern is the brightest star in the sky, the symbol of hope through the winter months.

Characters born under the Watchman make natural leaders. They have a nigh-unshakable confidence in themselves, which radiates to those around them. This leadership ability makes them superb teachers, battle leaders or even criminal bosses.

**Benefit:** +2 luck bonus to any other character's skill check or +1 luck bonus to any other character's saving throw; the character must be within line of sight.

## The Host

As the Starborn are empowered by their connection with Nuith and their Patron Stars, so does the Dark have its own champions – the Host. The mechanics of this are represented by the Host template. Only a single character in this book has this template – the Terror herself.

### The Host Template

'Host' is a template that can be added to any living, corporeal creature (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

A Host uses the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

#### Special Qualities:

*Darksoul:* Unlike most living beings in Ashfar, Host can be returned to life as described in Magic Restrictions in Ashfar (see page 6).

*Sense Starborn (Su):* Host automatically sense any character with the Starborn template that comes within 300 feet. They do not know distance or direction, but the sensation of evil increases as they come closer. If they can visually see the Starborn character, then they are immediately aware of the nature of the character as a member of the Starborn.

*Summon Dark (Sp):* Host can call on the power of the Dark through a corrupted node, as described below.



## Nodes

A node is a point where the energy of the stars is focused on earth. Nodes are always marked as special, with some architectural feature or landmark singling them out. Nodes in wilderness areas are often marked with stone circles or single megaliths. Nodes are not natural but artificial, constructed by magical techniques that were known to the elves of Xoth Sarandi in generations past and are now largely forgotten. They must, however, be constructed in places where stellar energy is naturally concentrated, meaning that they cannot be built according to convenience. This rarely happens in more than one location within a 50 mile radius, so the Nodes are quite widely spaced.

A Node benefits Starborn characters as follows:

- Manifestations of the Dark (see below) are unable to enter a Node. The Host, however, can do so.
- While they remain at a Node, all Starborn benefit from double their natural healing rate.
- Slain Starborn characters can be restored to life if they are taken to a Node (see above)

**Corrupted Nodes:** The drow and the other members of the Host who are allied to them have discovered that the Nodes can be corrupted. This turns them into focal points for the Dark, the force that opposes the stars.

Corrupting a Node requires the use of a fragment of the Abyssal Altar, the black stone of pure darkness that is set in the temple of

the spider-deity She, for which see the third book of this series. The attempt to corrupt the Node consumes the fragment, whether it is successful or not. The person making the attempt must be a spellcaster and must perform a demanding ritual that lasts 12 hours. At the conclusion of the ritual, he makes a caster level check; if this exceeds 20, then the Node has been corrupted. If the check fails by more than five, the fragment explodes and the creature attempting the corruption is *disintegrated* as if by the spell. A saving throw (DC 25) is allowed.

A corrupted Node has the following benefits for a member of the Host:

- While at a corrupted Node, a member of the Host has double his natural healing rate. Slain members of the Host can be restored to life at corrupted Nodes.
- A member of the Host can call upon the power of the Dark to manifest through a corrupted Node. This equates to the use of the *planar ally* spell once per three days. The creatures summoned require no payment. Only one member of the Host can use the Node for this purpose at any one time.

## Victory Points

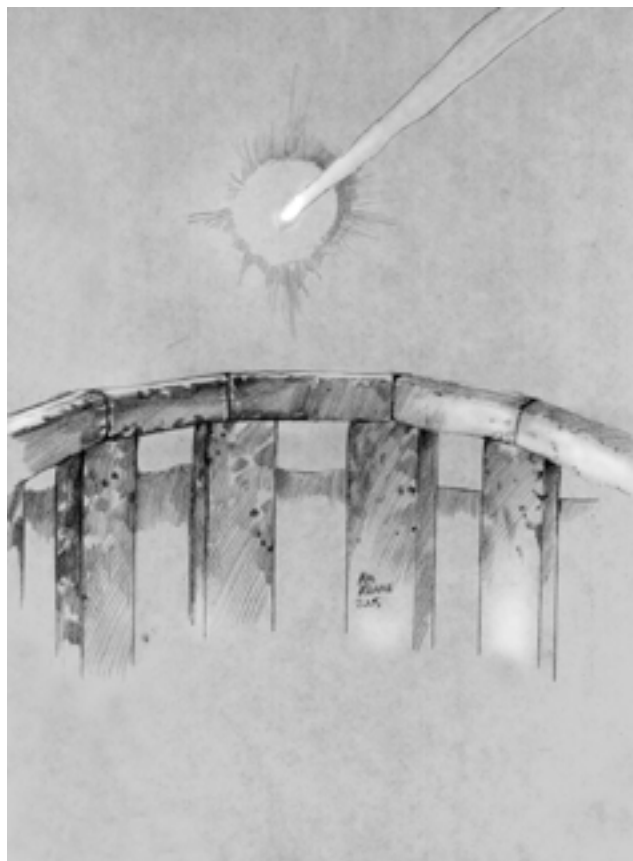
Each episode of the first few adventures has a section for Victory Points. The Games Master awards these after the episode is completed. The more Victory Points the Players earn, the better their chances of victory in Chapter 7, the Battle of Hoxley Fields. The Players are never told how many Victory Points they currently have. They should, however, be informed of the *existence* of Victory Points.

Victory Points tie the first part of the story together and provide a motive for the Players to go out of their way to achieve important goals. Unlike treasure or experience points, which are wholly personal, Victory Points relate directly to the plot. They also allow for greater Player choice without 'railroading'.

For example, the Player Characters might be faced with the choice of taking an easy route through a dangerous area, or tackling the enemy supply train that has camped nearby. If they can engage the enemy force, they are at far greater risk and will delay the achievement of their main goal, but they will earn extra Victory Points, because they will have robbed the enemy of useful supplies.

## A Note On Maps

A number of the maps in this book are presented with square grids overlaid on them. These grid represent 5 foot squares to allow for easy measurements and use in tactical situations.





# Chillhame

This adventure brings the Player Characters into the story, throwing them in at the deep end. They have the chance to learn some tantalising information about their origin and potential, before seeking adventure in a small fishing and farming community with secrets to hide.

## How the Adventure Sections Work

For the Games Master's convenience, the various different sections of the adventure are divided into types. These are Summary, Location, Plot Event, Event, Non-Player Character, Information and Aftermath.

**Summary:** This is a brief summary of the adventure chapter.

**Location:** Entries of this type describe locations that the Player Characters may visit, whether or not there is anything happening there at the time. These can be resources, such as a tavern, or features of tactical importance, such as a marsh or defensive wall. Note that a group's headquarters and its personnel are listed separately, as the group is not bound to one place. For example, a Rogue's Guild meeting house is a Location, while the guild itself is a Non-Player Character Group.

**Plot Event:** These entries describe occurrences that drive the main story forward. They happen irrespective of the Player Characters actions. They are rare, because the Player Characters themselves advance the story for the most part. A plot event usually happens when the Player Characters reach an area for the first time, or when they achieve some decisive objective. The Player Characters cannot avoid plot events, though they can always choose to delay reacting to them, or ignore them altogether.

**Event:** These events can be included at the Games Master's discretion, as and when appropriate. They are not destined to happen but may do as a result of the Player Characters' actions. For example, an event may involve the imprisonment of the Player Characters after they decide to break into a building and are caught. Events frequently involve combat and are recommended for livening up a session when the Players want something to fight, or when they are running behind on experience.

**Non-Player Character:** Both individuals and groups are covered by this type of entry. Non-Player Characters have lives of their own, which they get on with whether the Player Characters are there to see it or not. If a character or monster is of more importance than just one encounter, it will be described here; otherwise, it is given an 'Event' entry.

**Information:** This entry type gives information that the Games Master needs to know and the Players can find out. It is most commonly used for rumours and legends, such as can be

found out by the use of the Gather Information skill or Bardic Knowledge checks.

**Aftermath:** This kind of entry details the various different ways the plot can unfold after a key decision has been made or a critical encounter passed. Aftermath entries include information on experience point bonuses, character rewards, victory points and the fate of the Non-Player Characters involved. Experience point awards for the completion of an adventure are always *per Player*. Each participant gets the same bonus.

## Summary

The Player Characters, who are all Starborn and as yet unaware of their potential, are transported to a stone circle by the goddess Nuith. From there, they can begin the search for their signature items and for the threat they were called together to face. They travel to the village of Bronze in the north of Chillhame.

The item they are sent to find is Starkweather John's sword, which is not actually in his tomb. He asked for it to be concealed under flagstones of the local chapel, to show that his spirit would guard the village until such time as a new hero came. One of the Player Characters is that hero's successor. The townsfolk do not like to talk of the sword, because they fear someone will try to steal it. Worst of all, the tax collectors might take it.

The sword is the first of the Player Characters' signature items. These will stay with them for the rest of the epic saga, if they choose. Unlike conventional magic items, they grow in power and abilities as the characters themselves grow. So, a sword that had a mere +1 enhancement bonus at the character's first level could become a +3 *flaming burst* weapon by eighth or ninth level. The party can, of course, gain and lose other items as they proceed.

Each of the Starborn Characters has at least one item that is his by right. It is part of his spirit and grows with him as his essence does (i.e. he advances in experience). However, only one of these items is found at the start of the campaign. There are other items that are common to the whole group, which are also lost. The quests to find these personal items make up the 'subplots' of the first book.

Beneath the island of Chillhame lies an extensive cavern network in which a rogue drow house resides. The characters do not know this yet, but the drow are greatly interested in the stone circle. They have taken command of several legions of duergar and are pressing towards the surface. The easiest and least obtrusive place for them to break through is the underground region below the mines of Bronze. They are on the verge of breaking through into the upper world.

While the characters are staying at Bronze, a group of children go missing. They were last seen heading up to the old 'haunted'



mines. Heavy rain is falling and the lower levels will soon be flooded out.

The pressure of the floodwaters inside the mine breaks open a weakened wall (weakened because the duergar were tunnelling up from behind) and opens up a section that the villagers did not know about. As the waters subside, the party has the chance to investigate immense subterranean chambers.

The chambers beneath reveal clear evidence of a duergar threat. Although the army is not met face to face, enough evidence is available to show that there are thousands of warriors, far too many for the Player Characters to deal with on their own.

**Subplot:** A gang of rascals has killed a tax collector and dumped his body in the mine, keeping the money for themselves. Almost the whole town knows about it, but nobody is willing to speak out. The tax collector's ghost now lingers in the mine, unable to find peace.

## About the Island of Chillhame

Chillhame, though relatively small, is an independent country. It has been so throughout its life, despite the repeated attempts of invaders to conquer or annex it. The rich soil and abundant fish in the rivers have tempted many colonists and would-be tyrants alike. Some invaders have been driven back, while some have succeeded in entering the island and establishing settlements, only to be slowly absorbed into the populace until it was impossible to tell the difference between conquerors and conquered.

Almost all the races of Ashfar have occupied Chillhame at some time or other. The elves held it for a brief period two thousand years ago, towards the end of their empire. They founded the capital city of Saragost, though the walled capital no longer

resembles the elven city in the least, since that metropolis was burned down to the ground in the Great Conflagration.

The most hated conquerors of Chillhame are the occupants of the Kingdom of Caldraza, a far larger landmass across the sea to the east. The Caldrans overran Chillhame 150 years ago, claiming it in the name of their kingdom, since a noble of the ruling house of Chillhame was proved to be of Caldran descent. With help from the Eagle Nations, mercenaries from Ghael and sustained guerrilla warfare, the natives of Chillhame were able to force the Caldrans out and sign treaties that guaranteed the independence of Chillhame thereafter. The most important document was the Treaty of Cisternum, in which the Caldrans undertook never to send armed forces to the island of Chillhame again.

Caldraza has always seen Chillhame as a rebellious dependency. Whatever the treaties may say, they believe Chillhame to be theirs and will one day find a way to get it back.

The people of Chillhame value their independence. Being islanders, they are not easily trusting of outsiders and react violently to any attempt to take their sovereignty away. They have their own customs, their own beliefs and their own preferences. The attitude to visitors is simple; you can either 'love the island or leave it'.

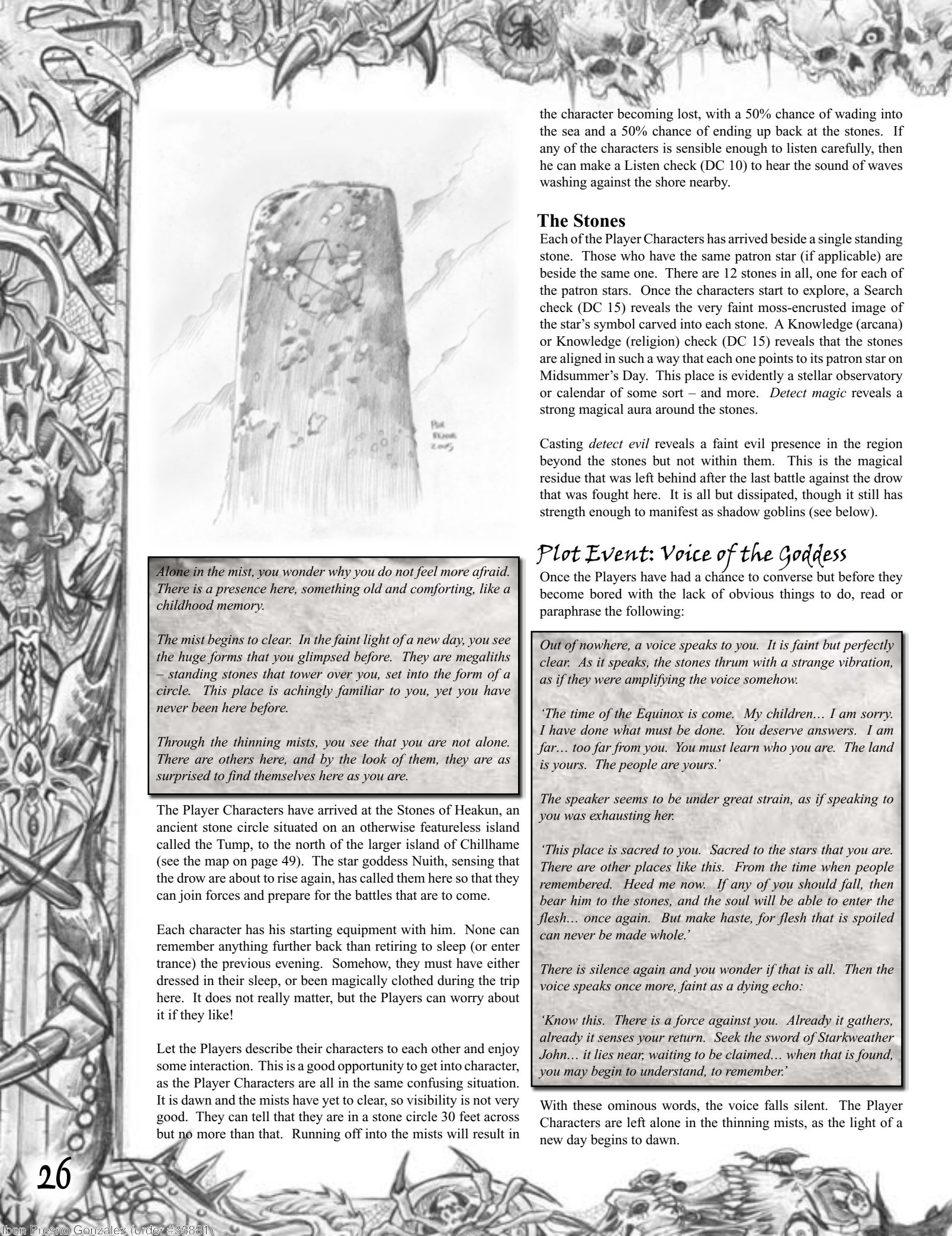
## Plot Event: Arrival at The Stones of Heakun

A warning to the Games Master before the scenario begins: the opening scene of this adventure involves placing the Player Characters directly into a situation that they did not choose to be in. If you feel that your group is likely to object to this, on the grounds that it is 'railroading', then you will have to engineer another reason for them to have come here. This is the one and only place in the adventures to come where the Player Characters are forced into a situation.

Read or paraphrase the following:

*At first, it feels as if you must be dreaming. The sense of dislocation, the giddiness, the feeling of flying rapidly through space, all add to the unreality. Where are you? What were you doing a moment ago? These thoughts arise in your mind, as if you were half-awake, on the borderlands of consciousness. Perhaps you have been knocked senseless, or poisoned with some hallucinogenic drug. One thing is certain; you are in a strange place and you do not remember how you came here.*

*What you can see before you is as clouded and vague as the contents of your mind. There seems to be nothing but mist, swirling in eddies around you, with a suggestion of huge shapes briefly glimpsed through it. The mist is cold on your face and with a start you realise that this is no dream. You are here, physically here in your body, fully dressed and carrying your equipment. There is wet grass beneath your feet. You feel no pain, so it stands to reason that you were not knocked out and dragged here. How, then, did you come to be here?*



the character becoming lost, with a 50% chance of wading into the sea and a 50% chance of ending up back at the stones. If any of the characters is sensible enough to listen carefully, then he can make a Listen check (DC 10) to hear the sound of waves washing against the shore nearby.

### The Stones

Each of the Player Characters has arrived beside a single standing stone. Those who have the same patron star (if applicable) are beside the same one. There are 12 stones in all, one for each of the patron stars. Once the characters start to explore, a Search check (DC 15) reveals the very faint moss-encrusted image of the star's symbol carved into each stone. A Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (religion) check (DC 15) reveals that the stones are aligned in such a way that each one points to its patron star on Midsummer's Day. This place is evidently a stellar observatory or calendar of some sort – and more. *Detect magic* reveals a strong magical aura around the stones.

Casting *detect evil* reveals a faint evil presence in the region beyond the stones but not within them. This is the magical residue that was left behind after the last battle against the drow that was fought here. It is all but dissipated, though it still has strength enough to manifest as shadow goblins (see below).

### Plot Event: Voice of the Goddess

Once the Players have had a chance to converse but before they become bored with the lack of obvious things to do, read or paraphrase the following:

*Alone in the mist, you wonder why you do not feel more afraid. There is a presence here, something old and comforting, like a childhood memory.*

*The mist begins to clear. In the faint light of a new day, you see the huge forms that you glimpsed before. They are megaliths – standing stones that tower over you, set into the form of a circle. This place is achingly familiar to you, yet you have never been here before.*

*Through the thinning mists, you see that you are not alone. There are others here, and by the look of them, they are as surprised to find themselves here as you are.*

*Out of nowhere, a voice speaks to you. It is faint but perfectly clear. As it speaks, the stones thrum with a strange vibration, as if they were amplifying the voice somehow.*

*'The time of the Equinox is come. My children... I am sorry. I have done what must be done. You deserve answers. I am far... too far from you. You must learn who you are. The land is yours. The people are yours.'*

*The speaker seems to be under great strain, as if speaking to you was exhausting her.*

*'This place is sacred to you. Sacred to the stars that you are. There are other places like this. From the time when people remembered. Heed me now. If any of you should fall, then bear him to the stones, and the soul will be able to enter the flesh... once again. But make haste, for flesh that is spoiled can never be made whole.'*

*There is silence again and you wonder if that is all. Then the voice speaks once more, faint as a dying echo:*

*'Know this. There is a force against you. Already it gathers, already it senses your return. Seek the sword of Starkweather John... it lies near, waiting to be claimed... when that is found, you may begin to understand, to remember.'*

The Player Characters have arrived at the Stones of Heakun, an ancient stone circle situated on an otherwise featureless island called the Tump, to the north of the larger island of Chillhame (see the map on page 49). The star goddess Nuith, sensing that the drow are about to rise again, has called them here so that they can join forces and prepare for the battles that are to come.

Each character has his starting equipment with him. None can remember anything further back than retiring to sleep (or enter trance) the previous evening. Somehow, they must have either dressed in their sleep, or been magically clothed during the trip here. It does not really matter, but the Players can worry about it if they like!

Let the Players describe their characters to each other and enjoy some interaction. This is a good opportunity to get into character, as the Player Characters are all in the same confusing situation. It is dawn and the mists have yet to clear, so visibility is not very good. They can tell that they are in a stone circle 30 feet across but no more than that. Running off into the mists will result in

With these ominous words, the voice falls silent. The Player Characters are left alone in the thinning mists, as the light of a new day begins to dawn.

Over the next five minutes, the mists vanish altogether. The Player Characters can see that they are on a scraggy, almost featureless island a quarter of a mile across, with nothing by way of landscape other than grass and rocks. The stone circle is the only sign that anyone has ever been here. To the south, a causeway of stone connects the island to the mainland that can clearly be seen stretching away in either direction. It is currently low tide; the causeway is completely covered by water at high tide, though the Player Characters do not know this.

Any character with the necessary skill can make a Knowledge (geography) skill check (DC 15) to get some idea of where the group actually is. A successful skill check locates the region accurately, while a failed skill check leaves the inquirer stumped. Failure by more than five draws the conclusion that the group is somewhere to the east of Arkossa.

## Plot Event: Shadow Goblins Attack (EL 1)

The goddess mentioned that there was a force gathering strength against the Starborn. The first manifestation of this is the arrival of a group of hostile creatures, manifestations of the Dark, reacting to the presence of the Starborn in the area. These creatures resemble ordinary goblins made from dark, shadowy material. They commence their attack a few rounds after the Goddess has finished speaking. They appear by seething up from the ground, like smoke. They will only appear in the region between the shore and the circle. The shadow goblins cannot enter the circle of stones, so the Player Characters are safe there.



There is one goblin for each of the Player Characters. If they are killed, they fade away along with their gear, just as summoned creatures do. They do not communicate other than to hiss angrily. Their sole objective is to destroy the Starborn while they are still young and weak.

**Shadow Goblins:** Goblin warrior 1; CR 1/3; Small humanoid (goblinoid); HD 1d8+1 (5 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 15 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +2 leather armour, +1 light wooden shield), touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +1/-3; Atk Morningstar +2 melee (1d6) or javelin +3 ranged (1d4); Full Atk Morningstar +2 melee (1d6) or javelin +3 ranged (1d4); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ darkvision 60 ft; AL NE; SV: Fort +3, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 6.

**Skills & Feats:** Hide +5, Listen +2, Move Silently +5, Ride +4, Spot +2; Alertness.

**Equipment & Treasure:** Leather armour, light wooden shield, morningstar, 2 javelins.

## Location: The Causeway

The Player Characters have one hour before the tide begins to come back in and the causeway is submerged below the waves once more. Crossing the causeway takes the party to the mainland.

The country is hilly and barren, with crumbling flint walls dividing up fields where starved-looking sheep graze. From the shore, they can clearly see the small town of Bronze along the coast to the west. Among the hills to the south, there are some rotten-looking wooden structures, the above-ground remains of the old mining complex. Alone on a hill to the east is a windmill, with its sails motionless in the still air; it is impossible to tell if it is still in use.

## Information: The Legend of Starkweather John

The following can be gleaned with a Bardic Knowledge check. The check result determines how much of the legend the bard can recall. The townsfolk of Bronze all know the entirety of the legend, though they do not know the name of the drow wizard. They will not tell the last part to strangers, though; they fear that someone will steal the sword and take away the town's protection against monsters.

Father Bronson knows the first two parts but not the third.

### 10-14:

- The local priest is Father Bronson and he uses his own house for religious services, since the church collapsed and the village cannot afford to build a new one. The town worships the gods of the Avillon Pantheon. Blediwesse is the patron Goddess of the region and her well is dressed with flowers on the holy days. Starkwater John was a fighter of legend, from a time when the drow rose from their dark caverns to challenge the surface world. He was one of a group of heroes who come to earth when their time is right, to protect the world from evil forces. The war was all but won, though

victory had come at a terrible cost. John was the last man standing. All of his fellow heroes, with whom he had fought for so long, had fallen, never to rise again.

**15-19:**

- John pursued his foe, the drow wizard Zomelach, across the island of Chillhame to a village called Bronze. Both of them were intent upon reaching the stone circle at the Tump; John to defend it and Zomelach in a last-ditch attempt to corrupt its power. John and Zomelach finally met and clashed, while frightened villagers watched and recorded what they saw. The air burned with drow magic and screamed with the sound of pitched battle. Zomelach's poisoned weapons bit deep into John's flesh, but not deep enough. With a single decisive sword-blow, the wizard's body fell one way and his head the other. John died soon afterwards from the poison.

**20+:**

- Knowing that he was dying, John asked to be carried to the church where he could make his peace with the Gods. He left his sword with the priest, promising that another would come to claim it one day, but while it remained within Bronze, the town would be safe from the darkness. The priest concealed the sword beneath the flagstones of the chapel and John's spirit, free from his weary body, returned to the stars.



## The Town of Bronze

Read or paraphrase the following:

*This little settlement has clearly seen better days. Many of the wooden buildings seem to have partly collapsed. The town square is little more than an open muddy space, cut with the ruts of wagon wheels, with a squat stone well in the middle. Off to one side is an inn, the largest building in the vicinity, whose sign proclaims it to be the Golden Nugget. Opposite the inn is an open shop with baskets of dry goods set out front. An aged woman sat by the basket is mending a net and narrows her eyes at you.*

Bronze was once a prosperous mining town, with work for everyone. Since the mines were exhausted twenty years ago, there is little wealth left in the village. The inhabitants are just about able to support themselves by fishing. Many of the houses have fallen into disrepair. The townsfolk have a starved, desperate look to them. They are suspicious of strangers but are careful to welcome anyone who might spend money in the town. The default reaction is Indifferent. Jim Oakenbough and his crew of thugs (see below) are Unfriendly, while Father Bronson, the village priest, is Friendly.

Visitors asking for an inn are directed to the Golden Nugget, the town's only hostelry. This sits across the town square from Mother Bailey's goods store, the one-stop shop for hardware and provisions. Other than this, there are no shops at all in the town, though there are boarded up buildings that were clearly shops once. Goods are traded in the square on market day, straight from the barrow.

### Information: Local Gossip

If the Player Characters ask around for information, they can find out any of the following. This is free information and does not require a Gather Information check.

- The settlement's name is Bronze and it is on the island of Chillhame. Eyebrows will be raised if the characters reveal that they do not know where they are, though nothing worse than this will occur. The principal city on the island is Saragost, which lies many days' ride away to the east.
- The headman of the town is Murphy Goodchild. He lives in a large stone house at the west end of the village.
- The local priest is Father Bronson and he uses his own house for religious services, since the church collapsed and the village cannot afford to build a new one. The town worships the gods of the Avillon Pantheon. Blediwesse is the patron Goddess of the region and her well is dressed with flowers on the holy days.
- The island where the stone circle stands is called the Tump.
- Other towns around this area have been attacked from time to time by monstrous humanoids such as goblins and orcs. Bronze has always been left alone.
- Starkweather John was a hero of old time, who came to the village near the end of his life, to fight some dark enemy about which little is known. He was victorious but the poison in his wounds eventually overcame him. He died in the village and was buried nearby, up in the hills. Nobody ever goes up there these days, as the hills to the west are dangerous – there are savage humanoids up there, which

## Bronze Statistics

**Size:** Hamlet (formerly small town)

**Population:** 249

**Racial Mix:** 100% human

**GP Limit:** 100

**Power Centre:** Though the official headsman is Murphy Goodchild (N), the real power lies with Jim Oakenbough (LE)

**Constable:** Davan Gaskell (LN)

**Guards:** Morton Gimbert (LG)

- Starkweather John's tomb has a curse upon it. The last person who tried to break into it was turned into a ghoulish. He still haunts that spot to this day.

## Non-Player Character Group: 'Jim's Boys' (EL 3)

One group of locals will be very unhappy that there are outsiders about. This is the crew of thugs led by Jim Oakenbough, a former soldier who was drummed out of the army and now acts as the local miller. He does not actually do any of the grinding himself, instead granting the farmers of the region permission to use his mill – for a fee, of course.

Jim's boys are feared in the town and have recently caused trouble by cutting the throat of Marcus Capoletto (a travelling tax collector) hiding the body away in the abandoned mines and keeping the stolen revenue under the floorboards of the windmill. This all happened two months ago.

Just about every adult in the town knows about it but none of them is willing to talk. If anyone shows qualms of conscience, Jim just pays them a visit, with a present of a few gold coins and a friendly warning. Even Headsman Goodchild is in the know. Father Bronson has *not* been told, as he would go straight to the authorities, though he suspects that something is going on.

A team was sent from Dunham to investigate but because of Jim's groundwork, they found nothing. Now that these new strangers are in town, Jim will be keen not to let anyone reveal the secret of the missing tax money. He is privately convinced that the newcomers are a follow-up team, attempting to get to the root of what really happened.

**Jim Oakenbough:** Human warrior 2; CR 1; Medium humanoid; HD 2d8+2 (14 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 13 (+3 studded leather), touch 10, flat-footed 13; Base attack/grapple +2/+4; Atk masterwork longsword +6 melee (1d8+2/19-20x2) or shortbow +3 ranged (1d6); Full Atk masterwork longsword +6 melee (1d8+2/19-20x2) or shortbow +3 ranged (1d6); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL LE; SV: Fort +3, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 14.

**Skills & Feats:** Climb +4, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +6, Jump +4, Ride +3, Swim +5; Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword).

**Equipment & Treasure:** Studded leather armour, masterwork longsword, key to windmill, shortbow, 20 arrows, 87 silver pieces, small topaz (90 gp)

**Description:** Smiling and polite, with menacing undertones. Tanned and brawny.

Jim's three henchmen are called Hal Bertram, Tom Cucksmere and Jacko Fenn. They are former comrades from his army days, who are not native to the village but have ended up here for want of anything better to do. Hal Bertram has a special reason for staying here. He is wanted for thievery in Saragost, so he is keeping his head down in this rotting dump.

make trouble for the villages round about. Knowing the ways of monsters, the tomb is probably desecrated by now.

- The town was prosperous until the mines ran out of gold; then it was left to rot.
- The mines are not safe. They were dug too quickly, without proper planning. A hundred years or so ago, there was a rainstorm that went on for weeks and the lower levels were completely flooded.
- The ghosts of dead miners now haunt the old mines. Nobody ever goes up there (a Sense Motive check (DC 15) reveals that the speaker is not being entirely honest).
- If the Player Characters ask, nobody here has ever heard of shadowy goblins appearing out of the earth and attacking people. They are quite willing to believe in them, however.

The following information requires a Gather Information check (DC 15) to extract, as the townsfolk are less willing to discuss it. Each piece of information requires a separate check. If the Player Characters press for more information on any of these points, the townspeople to whom they are talking will refuse to say any more and may even become unfriendly.

If Jim Oakenbough is in the same place as the person or people to whom the Player Characters are speaking, the DC of all Gather Information checks is increased by four, as they fear bringing Jim's wrath down on their heads.

- They say that the mines were closed because they were exhausted but there is still more digging that could be done. There was some other reason for stopping. It has to do with the strange voices that the miners used to hear.
- Starkweather John's sword is not with his body. He said that his successor will come for it one day but until then, the village will be safe so long as it stays here.
- The stone circle on the Tump is old and very powerful. Nobody is quite sure what it is for but they think that the elves put the circle there, long ago, to watch the stars. The townspeople leave it alone, because Starkweather John told them to.
- The enemy that Starkweather John fought was some sort of dark-skinned magician.
- The windmill down the way belongs to Jim Oakenbough.

A result of 5 or less results in the following misinformation:

- Father Bronson has several illegitimate children in the village. They say he is not really a priest at all but an impostor playing the part of one.



**Hal Bertram:** Human rogue 1; CR 1; Medium humanoid; HD 1d6+1 (7 hp); Init +6; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 13 (+2 Dex, +2 leather), touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base attack/grapple +0/+1; Atk rapier +2 melee (1d6+1/18-20x2) or shortbow +2 ranged (1d6+1); Full Atk rapier +2 melee (18-20x2) or shortbow +2 ranged (1d6+1); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ trapfinding; AL CE; SV: Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 14.

*Skills & Feats:* Bluff +6, Diplomacy +4, Disable Device +3, Disguise +6, Escape Artist +4, Gather Information +4, Hide +6, Intimidate +6, Listen +2, Move Silently +6, Open Lock +4, Sleight of Hand +4, Spot +2, Use Rope +4; Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse.

*Equipment & Treasure:* Leather armour, rapier, shortbow, 20 arrows, tanglefoot bag, lantern, flask of oil, 30 ft rope, rogue's tools, 45 silver pieces, silver chalice stolen from a church (90 gp)

*Description:* Weasely-featured, scowling, with bad body odour. Speaks as little as possible.

**Tom Cucksmere:** Human warrior 1; CR ½; Medium humanoid; HD 1d8+2 (10 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 small shield), touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +1/+2; Atk masterwork longsword +3 melee (1d8+1); Full Atk masterwork longsword +3 melee (1d8+1); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL NE; SV: Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8.

*Skills & Feats:* Climb +5, Jump +5, Ride +3, Swim +3; Cleave, Power Attack.

*Equipment & Treasure:* Studded leather armour, small shield, masterwork longsword, bag of food, flask of wine, 20 silver pieces, bottle of rare vintage elven brandy (30 gp), set of chased silver cutlery (65 gp)

*Description:* Beefy and taciturn, with greasy features. He is constantly munching on a chicken leg and taking swigs from his wineskin.

**Jacko Fenn:** Human warrior 1; CR ½; Medium humanoid; HD 1d8+2 (10 hp); Init +2; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 15 (+2 Dex, +3 studded leather), touch 12, flat-footed 13; Base attack/grapple +1/+2; Atk shortsword +2 melee (1d6+1/19-20x2) or masterwork heavy crossbow +4 ranged (1d10/19-20x2); Full Atk shortsword +2 melee (1d6+1/19-20x2) or masterwork heavy crossbow +3 ranged (1d10/19-20x2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL CE; SV: Fort +4, Ref +2, Will -1; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 13.

*Skills & Feats:* Climb +3, Intimidate +3, Ride +4, Swim +3; Point Blank Shot, Rapid Reload (heavy crossbow)

*Equipment & Treasure:* Studded leather armour, shortsword, masterwork heavy crossbow, 20 bolts, whetstone, pouch of tobacco, 30 silver pieces, three gold rings (5 gp each), large golden earring (20 gp), carved ivory pipe in the shape of a wizard's head (30 gp)

*Description:* Snickers quietly at his own jokes. He is tall and scrawny, with long lank hair.

## Location: The Guard-House

This is the only stone building left standing in the town centre. It is a two-storey tower with a crenulated battlement and arrow slits, almost like a little keep. It sees very little use these days. The most likely use of its cells is for a drunkard to sleep the night off.

## The Jail Cells

The basement area of the guard-house is used to keep prisoners in. Metal bars from floor to ceiling divide up the space into two adjoining cells, each with a door in the front. These have sturdy locks, with an Open Lock check (DC 30) required to pick. A small barred window opens on to the street, to give the prisoners fresh air and daylight.

## Non-Player Character Group: The Constable & Guard (EL 4)

The duty of keeping order in Bronze falls to Davan Gaskell, a grizzled old warrior in his fifties. Davan has watched the community he was once proud to serve turn into a crumbling pit of despair. This has broken his will to do anything about it. These days he contents himself with a token check-up of the town every day, knocking on doors and asking if 'everything is all right'. Nobody really expects him to do anything other than put accidental fires out or help look for lost animals. A younger man might have done something about Jim Oakenbough but Gaskell is no longer young. He knows that he is letting himself down and hates himself for it.

**Davan Gaskell:** Human warrior 4; CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 4d8+4 (25 hp); Init +6; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 18 (+2 Dex, +4 masterwork chain shirt, +2 masterwork heavy steel shield), touch 12, flat-footed 16; Base attack/grapple +4/+6; Atk masterwork longsword +8 melee (1d8+2/19-20x2) or masterwork composite shortbow +7 ranged (1d6+2/x3);



Full Atk masterwork longsword +8 melee (1d8+2/19-20x2) or masterwork composite shortbow +7 ranged (1d6+2/x3); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL LN; SV: Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 12.

*Skills & Feats:* Climb +6, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +5, Jump +6, Listen +2, Ride +6, Spot +2, Swim +6; Alertness, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (longsword)

*Equipment & Treasure:* Masterwork chain shirt, masterwork steel shield, masterwork longsword, masterwork composite shortbow, badge of office, lantern, masterwork manacles, key to guardhouse, keys to guardhouse jail cells, hand bell (to ring in case of alarm). Davan's weapons and armour are older than he is and are traditionally worn by the town guard, 25 gold pieces, gold locket with picture of deceased wife (30 gp).

*Description:* Resigned and bitter, with grey-white stubble and a whiff of stale alcohol about him.

The only other guardsman is Morton Gimbert, an idealistic sixteen-year-old who has been inspired by the legend of Starkweather John. Morton still thinks a sword is something more than just a piece of metal. Despite his years, he is shrewd and knows exactly what is going on in the village. He has confronted Jim Oakenbough before and has been laughed at. Now, the roughs in the tavern just sneer at his authority and consider him something of a joke. Morton knows that one day, he will have to live up to the office of town guard.

**Morton Gimbert:** Human warrior 1; CR ½; Medium humanoid; HD 1d8 (8 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 light wooden shield), touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +1/+3; Atk masterwork longsword +5 melee (1d8+2/19-20x2) or shortbow +2 ranged (1d6); Full Atk masterwork longsword +5 melee (1d8+2/19-20x2) or shortbow +2 ranged (1d6); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL LE; SV: Fort +3, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 14.

*Skills & Feats:* Climb +5, Handle Animal +5, Knowledge (history) +3, Intimidate +3, Jump +4, Ride +3, Swim +3; Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)

*Equipment & Treasure:* Studded leather armour, light wooden shield, masterwork longsword (it belonged to his father), shortbow, 20 arrows, blank parchment, ink, quill, book of heroic legends, badge of office, 10 gold pieces, small piece of amber (10 gp)

*Description:* Awkward and spotty but rapidly growing into a sturdy young man.

## Location: Mother Bailey's Store

*You can hardly move inside this dingy store. Barrels and crates threaten to trip you up and fishing nets dangle from the ceiling. There is a strong smell of preserving vinegar and tarry hemp. Judging by the dust, some of these goods appear to have been here for decades. Trade is obviously far from brisk.*

Mother Bailey is the suspicious old woman who was eyeing the characters as they came in. Her shop can offer anything from the PHB that costs 50 gold pieces or less, with the exception of weapons or armour. If she decides that the Player Characters

look like they can afford it, she will slap a 40% price increase on all of her goods. None of them are labelled, in any case – the price is whatever she decides it will be. It is not as if there is anywhere else to shop hereabouts...

## Location: The Golden Nugget

As you enter the inn, the conversation stops and all eyes turn to look at you. You now understand why the town looked so empty. It seems everyone is here. Like the other buildings, the inn looks like it is steadily falling apart. There is no sense of happiness but only a glum resignation. A few heartbeats pass, then the drinkers resume their conversation, more quietly than before.

This two-storey inn smells of fish and is usually full to the brim with villagers drowning their sorrows in penny ale. The inn's name dates from the time when the town was booming and now seems like an ironic joke; the only golden thing in the place is the smoke-stained ceiling. It can provide up to common standards of lodging and food (see PHB).

The place is run by Bernik Oakenbough (younger brother to Jim) and his wife Jinnie. Like many of the residents, they are under Jim's thumb. Jim and his gang can be found in the best corner of the inn on most afternoons, drinking their way through the tax collector's gold.

Unless they prefer to camp out in the wild, which will be uncomfortable, the Player Characters will probably end up using the Golden Nugget as a base of operations. They can rest and prepare spells in the rooms. None of the rooms has a lock but they can be bolted from the inside, meaning that valuables will not be safe there but that sleep will probably not be disturbed by intruders.

## Location: The Windmill (EL 1)

*The windmill that stands before you is clearly still in use. It has a stone base and a swivelling upper section made from wood. To your surprise, it looks well maintained from out here.*

The windmill is Jim Oakenbough's power base. He and his cronies use the living rooms for drinking, gambling, plotting and occasionally whoring, though Bronze has precious little to offer in that regard. The door to the windmill is, of course, locked.

**Windmill Door:** Strong wooden door, hardness 5, hp 20, Strength check (DC 25) to break; Lock check (DC 20) to open.

Inside, the place is a mess. Stained bedrolls, straw and empty bottles cover the floor. Jim hardly bothers with the upper rooms, where the corn is ground. Those townsfolk who grow corn use the mill to turn it to flour, paying Jim for the use of his machinery.

There are three dogs inside the mill, left here by Jim to guard the place. If they hear the Player Characters approaching, they will begin to bark crazily, alerting him if he is present. These are ordinary animals that have been trained using the Handle



Animal skill. They are trained to guard the mill, attack anyone who tries to break in and defend Jim personally.

**Guard Dogs (3):** CR 1/3; Small animal; HD 1d8+2 (6 hp); Init +3 (Dex); Spd 40 ft. (8 squares); AC 15 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base Atk/Grapple +0/-3; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4+1); Full Atk bite +2 melee (1d4+1); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

*Skills & Feats:* Jump +7, Listen +5, Spot +5, Survival +1; Alertness, Track

### The Hidden Loot

The remains of the tax collector's plundered funds are hidden in the windmill, under a loose floorboard near the fire. This requires a successful Search check (DC 20) to locate. It counts as a secret door, so an elf is entitled to an automatic check. Jim is no fool and has made sure that anyone who pulls up the floorboard in the obvious way (simply gripping and tugging) will get a fistful of nails in the face, fired by a powerful spring device.

**Explosion of Nails Trap:** CR 1; mechanical; touch trigger (lifting the board); manual reset; Atk +10 ranged (1d4+1, six-inch nail); multiple targets (fires 1d4 nails at each target in two adjacent 5-ft. squares); Search (DC 14); Disable Device (DC 20).

Jim has taken the additional precaution of smearing the nails with blue dye. Anyone who suffers damage from the nail trap has a 50% chance of being marked under the skin with the dye,

making him identifiable as someone who triggered the trap. This dye takes a week to fade. Magical healing also removes it completely.

There is a total of 840 gold pieces left, stored in a strongbox that has had the lock smashed off. This is stamped with the crest of the city of Saragost, which marks it unmistakably as state property – a deeply incriminating fact. Jim counts this money every night. He has not let his cronies know where the money is kept but if it disappears, they will be the first people he suspects.

### The Mill Machinery

This area is safe enough while there is no wind. However, if a breeze starts up and the sails begin to rotate, the characters will find themselves in danger if they do not know what they are doing. The central mill wheel rotates at quite a pace. Anyone standing on it must make a Balance check (DC 15) or fall prone. A prone character is moved around with the wheel at a rate of ten feet per round.

This is a suitable location for a climactic battle. If Jim is confronted, he will retreat here. He benefits from a +4 competence bonus to his Balance checks when fighting on the moving millstone, as he is used to it.

### Location: The Old Church

*The building that stands before you is a gutted ruin. From the briary churchyard next to it, with simple wooden crosses poking up from the brambles, you immediately recognise it as a place of worship. Through the arched holes that might once have held stained glass windows, you see a rough stone altar, undamaged. Standing behind this with its arms raised is what appears to be a human form, wreathed in blue flowers.*

The ruins of the old church stand near the centre of town. The stone walls are still mostly intact but the roof has collapsed in. It was clearly a grand structure once, a symbol of the place's prosperity and the gratitude that the inhabitants felt for the Gods who had given them such riches. Over thirty years ago, the town could no longer afford to keep the church maintained and so it fell into disuse.

The church is dedicated to the Gods of the Avillon Pantheon, with Blediwsse as the special deity of the region. At the altar, a wooden statue of this Goddess stands with palms outstretched. The statue is covered with pale blue flowers, which on closer examination (a Spot or Search check at DC 15) are found to be growing directly from the wood itself. A Knowledge (nature) check (DC 15) identifies these as an extremely rare bloom that is used by healers to treat poisons. Chewing on the leaves of one of these flowers allows a character a +2 alchemical bonus to all saving throws against poison for 30 minutes. Ten flowers in total can be harvested from the statue.

The Starborn hero Starkweather John came here when he was dying from his poisoned wounds. The priest who was serving at the time took his sword and, at his request, concealed it below



the flagstones of the church. While it lay there, it would keep the town safe from the darkness until a new champion came.

The sword is indeed having an effect. While it lies beneath the stones, unclaimed by a Starborn, it radiates a very weak form of *antipathy* that affects all types of monstrous humanoids. They suffer no penalties while in the village but are simply uncomfortable, preferring to attack other settlements. If one of the Player Characters claims the sword by taking it from its resting place, the protection will end.

Only the tiniest of clues indicates the slab where the sword lies. This is a cross, measuring only half an inch, in the corner of the stone. Finding the correct slab without being told where to look is very difficult, requiring a Search check (DC 25). Lifting the slab up is not easy and requires a Strength check (DC 15). The sword is lying in a depression in the dirt, just as bright as it was when it was first placed there.

The sword is a signature item for one of the Starborn. Its powers vary as the character advances in level. For more on signature items, see page 230.

### *Non-Player Character: Father Bronson (EL 2)*

The local priest is an outsider, who came to the town in response to the occupants' need for spiritual guidance. He has only been here for three years but has built up a sizeable congregation – quite an achievement for a people who felt that their Gods had abandoned them. Father Bronson badly wants to rebuild the old

chapel but does not have anything like enough money, so if the Player Characters make any donations towards this cause then the Father will certainly be well disposed towards helping them out in the future.

The Father does have a secret. He is a retired adventurer, who has given up the questing life for a more peaceful one. All of his old adventuring gear is in storage in his attic. This is listed below under Equipment. Ordinarily, he does not carry more than the robes of office he wears and a few gold pieces.

Father Bronson is convinced that the people of the town are protecting Jim Oakenbough and is very frustrated that they will not simply put their faith in their Gods and confess to whatever it is that has been going on. He has decided that it is time to act. He can be a strong ally for the Starborn, or a dangerous opponent if he finds that they have sided with Oakenbough. Whichever path they choose, Bronson will be close behind.

He will cast spells for the Player Characters in return for the usual donation (see *PHB*) so long as he judges this to be in the best interests of the town. If he hears that they have been causing trouble or assaulting the residents, there will be no chance of help.

Note that Father Bronson is not aware of Starkweather John's sword beneath the flagstones. How he reacts to any attempts on the part of the Player Characters to excavate it from the floor will depend on what sort of relationship they have cultivated with him so far, and whether or not they have rescued the missing children (see below).

**Father Tobias Bronson:** Human cleric 2; CR 2; Medium humanoid; HD 2d8 (12 hp); Init -1; Spd 20 ft. (4 squares); AC 18 (-1 Dex, +7 masterwork half plate, +2 heavy steel shield), touch 9, flat-footed 18; Base attack/grapple +1/+2; Atk +1 *heavy mace* +3 melee (1d8+2); Full Atk +1 *heavy mace* +3 melee (1d8+2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA turn undead; SQ none; AL LG; SV: Fort +3, Ref -1, Will +5; S tr 12, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 14.

*Skills & Feats:* Concentration +3, Craft (carpentry) +3, Diplomacy +3, Heal+4, Knowledge (arcana) +3, Knowledge (religion) +2, Spellcraft +1; Improved Turning, Scribe Scroll  
*Deity, Domains, Spells Prepared:* Blediwsesse; Good (good spells cast at +1 caster level), Healing (healing spells cast at +1 caster level); 0<sup>th</sup> level: *detect magic, mending, purify food and drink, read magic*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *bless water, command, protection from evil*

*Equipment & Treasure:* Masterwork half plate, heavy steel shield, +1 *heavy mace*, holy water vial (x2), holy symbol (blue flower embedded in disc of alchemical crystal, on chain), image of Blediwsesse in gold, 8 inches high (250 gp), 45 gold pieces, antique silver inkwell and quill nib set (95 gp), set of six large ceremonial goblets in chased silver (150 gp)

*Description:* Tobias has mutton-chop whiskers, a perpetually grave expression and a basso-profundo voice.

## Plot Event: Missing Children

At the end of the Player Characters' first day in Bronce, they hear some disturbing news (if they are in the inn at dusk, then they hear it directly from the parents, Tonkin and Mariah Bloom). Two young boys, Jed and Callum, have not returned home and the parents are growing concerned. They went to forage for edible mushrooms along the old road to the south at noon and have not been back since.

The townsfolk will naturally be highly suspicious of the Player Characters, especially if they spent any significant time outside the town during the day. The Player Characters can allay suspicion by going out with a search party or helping in other ways, such as offering to use magic to find out where the boys have gone.

If they do not offer to help immediately, then unless the Player Characters have made any special efforts to win the townsfolk over (such as using Diplomacy to change their attitude, helping with jobs or presenting them with gifts) the general attitude of the town shifts down one notch, from Indifferent to Unfriendly, or from Unfriendly to Hostile.

## The Children's Fate

The children have been kidnapped by the hobgoblins that have taken up residence in the mines. Currently, the hobgoblin tribe's leader, Talks-with-Fists, is insisting that holding them for ransom is a better move than eating them, though his people are grumbling.

## Non-Player Character Groups: The Hobgoblins

There are two tribal bands of hobgoblins nearby. One is encamped in the wooded hills to the west. The band, headed by Split Ear, is relatively small but strong and is sustaining itself by making raids on outlying farms. The band's members have begun to construct a permanent village.

Another band, under the leadership of Talks-with-Fists, has recently come this way, sought to ally itself with the hill band and been angrily rebuffed. There was a brief and bloody scuffle, in which the tribal band of Talks-with-Fists was driven away and warned not to come back.

This is especially bad for the tribe of Talks-with-Fists, as it has recently been driven out of its original home and has been travelling ever since. The former clan chieftain, the brother of Talks-with-Fists, was killed in combat and the new leader wanted to rid himself of a bloodline that he saw as weak. Now, defeated, starving and miserable, the tribe of Talks-with-Fists has gone to ground in the abandoned mines of Bronce. From there, they plan to attack the townsfolk as they venture out of the settlement, then carry them back for food or possibly as bartering tools.

Shortly before the Player Characters' arrival at Chillhame, the two tribes had their fight. This happened near the tomb of Starkweather John (see below).

## Location: The Tomb of Starkweather John

As the Player Characters may already have discovered, the tomb is in the wooded hills to the west of the village. It lies just on the outskirts of the woods. If the Player Characters ask why John was not buried in the cemetery along with everyone else, the townspeople will shrug and say 'That's just how he wanted it.' This is actually true. John wanted a simple burial out in the wilderness, so that any drow seeking vengeance would not go to Bronce to find his remains.

*The tomb is made from four square stone slabs laid end to end on a base made from stone blocks. There is some kind of an inscription on the surface but you cannot make it out from here.*

Carved into the stone slabs that covers John's remains is the following prophecy. It is overgrown with moss and is only partly legible. The underlined words can be read clearly. If a character clears the moss off (this will take at least 30 minutes) then he can read all of the words. Otherwise, a successful Decipher Script check (DC 20) allows the character to read the whole prophecy.

*Stranger, trouble not the bones  
Resting here beneath these stones  
Here lies one of mortal part  
Who held a star within his heart*

*And when They come that came before  
The Stars shall fall to earth once more  
To stand against Her might again  
Who rises from Her sleep profane*

*And when conspirators assail  
The throne, then these may yet avail  
To cast from his exalted place  
The foe that bears a dead king's face*

This prophecy relates to the adventures that are yet to come. The third verse refers to the conspiracy within the royal court of Caldraza, in which the rightful King is killed and replaced with a doppelganger allied with the drow.

The slabs can be removed without too much effort. Inside the tomb lie the bones of Starkweather John – what is left of them. There is only a jawbone, a femur and a skeletal hand. Everything else has been scattered by tomb robbers. His magical armour, helmet and other treasures were plundered years ago.

## Signs of Violence

Any character at the tomb is entitled to a Spot check (DC 15) to notice that there are signs of a recent battle nearby, at the edge of the woods. The ground is trampled and there are splashes of gore on nearby tree branches. A second Spot check (DC 15) notices an arrow embedded in a tree trunk, clearly fired out of the woods at a target coming in from outside. One set of tracks leads into the woods, while a second set leads away down the hill.

If a character attempts to use the Tracking feat to follow these tracks, then the DC of the Survival check to follow the tracks in the wooded area is 9 (soft ground, 16 creatures, 4 days since the trail was made) and the DC to follow the tracks across the hill territory is 15 (firm ground, 12 creatures, 4 days since the trail was made). Remember to add any additional modifiers for visibility. The woodland trail leads to the hobgoblin camp, while the hill trail leads to the abandoned mines.

## The Hobgoblin Camp (EL 5)

There are sixteen hobgoblins of the Split Ear tribal band living in the camp. There is currently one central building, a rough-built log cabin. Three hide tents have been pitched around it. This camp is away from any trails, deep in the wood. Unless the Player Characters are following the trail from the tomb or pursuing one of the hobgoblins back here, they are unlikely to find it.

The hobgoblins have taken some precautions to defend their home. The most obvious entrance routes to the camp have been set with snares and pits. Activating these traps will alert the hobgoblins to the presence of intruders and will bring a couple of warriors running to see who has blundered into their defences.

**Brush-covered Pit Trap:** CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; 10 ft. deep (1d6, fall); Search (DC 16); no check needed to disable.

**Net Trap:** CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +5 melee (see note); Search (DC 15); Disable Device (DC 15). Note: characters in a ten foot square region are grappled by net (Str 18) if they fail a Reflex save (DC 14).

The hobgoblins do not want trouble but they will give a fight to anyone who comes looking for one. The Player Characters can easily find themselves outnumbered and outmatched. Taking on

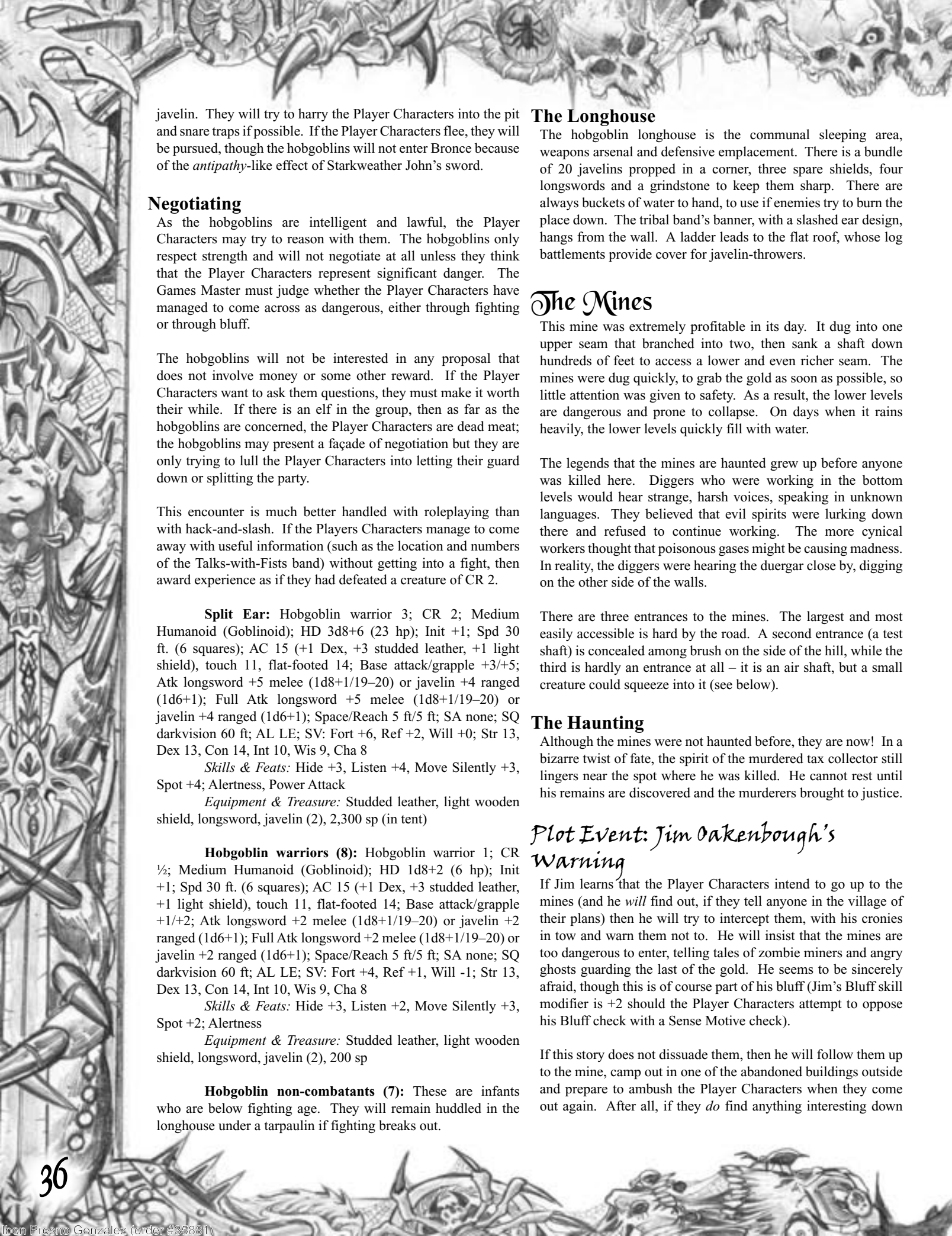


a whole camp full of hobgoblins would be suicidal. If they want to fight, they will need backup from the village, or even the help of the rival hobgoblin band in the mines.

## Combat Tactics

The hobgoblins are not stupid and will not rush blindly in to get slaughtered. They will stay behind cover, throwing javelin after





javelin. They will try to harry the Player Characters into the pit and snare traps if possible. If the Player Characters flee, they will be pursued, though the hobgoblins will not enter Bronze because of the *antipathy*-like effect of Starkweather John's sword.

## Negotiating

As the hobgoblins are intelligent and lawful, the Player Characters may try to reason with them. The hobgoblins only respect strength and will not negotiate at all unless they think that the Player Characters represent significant danger. The Games Master must judge whether the Player Characters have managed to come across as dangerous, either through fighting or through bluff.

The hobgoblins will not be interested in any proposal that does not involve money or some other reward. If the Player Characters want to ask them questions, they must make it worth their while. If there is an elf in the group, then as far as the hobgoblins are concerned, the Player Characters are dead meat; the hobgoblins may present a façade of negotiation but they are only trying to lull the Player Characters into letting their guard down or splitting the party.

This encounter is much better handled with roleplaying than with hack-and-slash. If the Players Characters manage to come away with useful information (such as the location and numbers of the Talks-with-Fists band) without getting into a fight, then award experience as if they had defeated a creature of CR 2.

**Split Ear:** Hobgoblin warrior 3; CR 2; Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid); HD 3d8+6 (23 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 light shield), touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +3/+5; Atk longsword +5 melee (1d8+1/19–20) or javelin +4 ranged (1d6+1); Full Atk longsword +5 melee (1d8+1/19–20) or javelin +4 ranged (1d6+1); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ darkvision 60 ft; AL LE; SV: Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8

*Skills & Feats:* Hide +3, Listen +4, Move Silently +3, Spot +4; Alertness, Power Attack

*Equipment & Treasure:* Studded leather, light wooden shield, longsword, javelin (2), 2,300 sp (in tent)

**Hobgoblin warriors (8):** Hobgoblin warrior 1; CR ½; Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid); HD 1d8+2 (6 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 light shield), touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +1/+2; Atk longsword +2 melee (1d8+1/19–20) or javelin +2 ranged (1d6+1); Full Atk longsword +2 melee (1d8+1/19–20) or javelin +2 ranged (1d6+1); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ darkvision 60 ft; AL LE; SV: Fort +4, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8

*Skills & Feats:* Hide +3, Listen +2, Move Silently +3, Spot +2; Alertness

*Equipment & Treasure:* Studded leather, light wooden shield, longsword, javelin (2), 200 sp

**Hobgoblin non-combatants (7):** These are infants who are below fighting age. They will remain huddled in the longhouse under a tarpaulin if fighting breaks out.

## The Longhouse

The hobgoblin longhouse is the communal sleeping area, weapons arsenal and defensive emplacement. There is a bundle of 20 javelins propped in a corner, three spare shields, four longswords and a grindstone to keep them sharp. There are always buckets of water to hand, to use if enemies try to burn the place down. The tribal band's banner, with a slashed ear design, hangs from the wall. A ladder leads to the flat roof, whose log battlements provide cover for javelin-throwers.

## The Mines

This mine was extremely profitable in its day. It dug into one upper seam that branched into two, then sank a shaft down hundreds of feet to access a lower and even richer seam. The mines were dug quickly, to grab the gold as soon as possible, so little attention was given to safety. As a result, the lower levels are dangerous and prone to collapse. On days when it rains heavily, the lower levels quickly fill with water.

The legends that the mines are haunted grew up before anyone was killed here. Diggers who were working in the bottom levels would hear strange, harsh voices, speaking in unknown languages. They believed that evil spirits were lurking down there and refused to continue working. The more cynical workers thought that poisonous gases might be causing madness. In reality, the diggers were hearing the duergar close by, digging on the other side of the walls.

There are three entrances to the mines. The largest and most easily accessible is hard by the road. A second entrance (a test shaft) is concealed among brush on the side of the hill, while the third is hardly an entrance at all – it is an air shaft, but a small creature could squeeze into it (see below).

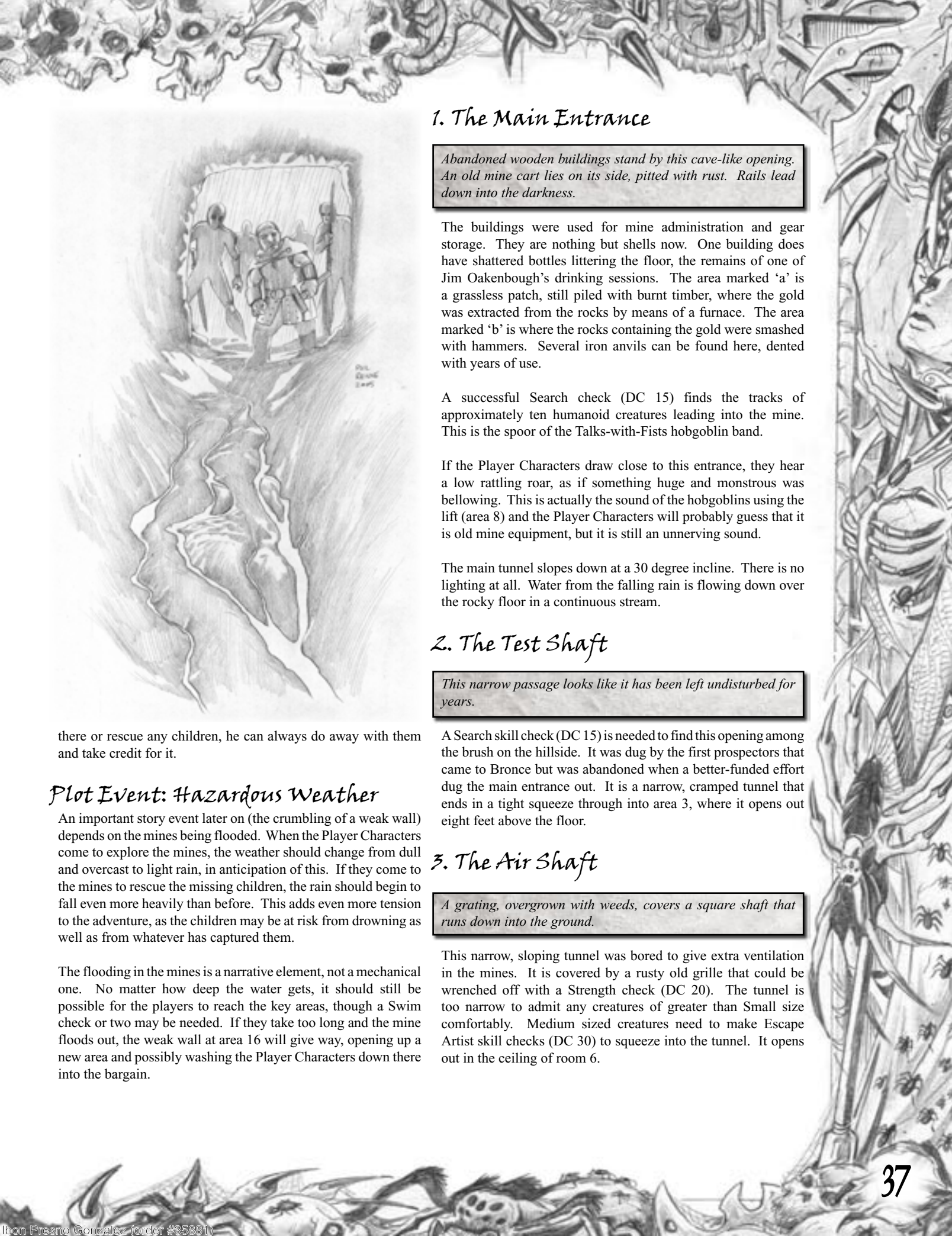
## The Haunting

Although the mines were not haunted before, they are now! In a bizarre twist of fate, the spirit of the murdered tax collector still lingers near the spot where he was killed. He cannot rest until his remains are discovered and the murderers brought to justice.

## Plot Event: Jim Oakenbough's Warning

If Jim learns that the Player Characters intend to go up to the mines (and he *will* find out, if they tell anyone in the village of their plans) then he will try to intercept them, with his cronies in tow and warn them not to. He will insist that the mines are too dangerous to enter, telling tales of zombie miners and angry ghosts guarding the last of the gold. He seems to be sincerely afraid, though this is of course part of his bluff (Jim's Bluff skill modifier is +2 should the Player Characters attempt to oppose his Bluff check with a Sense Motive check).

If this story does not dissuade them, then he will follow them up to the mine, camp out in one of the abandoned buildings outside and prepare to ambush the Player Characters when they come out again. After all, if they *do* find anything interesting down



## 1. The Main Entrance

*Abandoned wooden buildings stand by this cave-like opening. An old mine cart lies on its side, pitted with rust. Rails lead down into the darkness.*

The buildings were used for mine administration and gear storage. They are nothing but shells now. One building does have shattered bottles littering the floor, the remains of one of Jim Oakenbough's drinking sessions. The area marked 'a' is a grassless patch, still piled with burnt timber, where the gold was extracted from the rocks by means of a furnace. The area marked 'b' is where the rocks containing the gold were smashed with hammers. Several iron anvils can be found here, dented with years of use.

A successful Search check (DC 15) finds the tracks of approximately ten humanoid creatures leading into the mine. This is the spoor of the Talks-with-Fists hobgoblin band.

If the Player Characters draw close to this entrance, they hear a low rattling roar, as if something huge and monstrous was bellowing. This is actually the sound of the hobgoblins using the lift (area 8) and the Player Characters will probably guess that it is old mine equipment, but it is still an unnerving sound.

The main tunnel slopes down at a 30 degree incline. There is no lighting at all. Water from the falling rain is flowing down over the rocky floor in a continuous stream.

## 2. The Test Shaft

*This narrow passage looks like it has been left undisturbed for years.*

A Search skill check (DC 15) is needed to find this opening among the brush on the hillside. It was dug by the first prospectors that came to Bronce but was abandoned when a better-funded effort dug the main entrance out. It is a narrow, cramped tunnel that ends in a tight squeeze through into area 3, where it opens out eight feet above the floor.

## 3. The Air Shaft

*A grating, overgrown with weeds, covers a square shaft that runs down into the ground.*

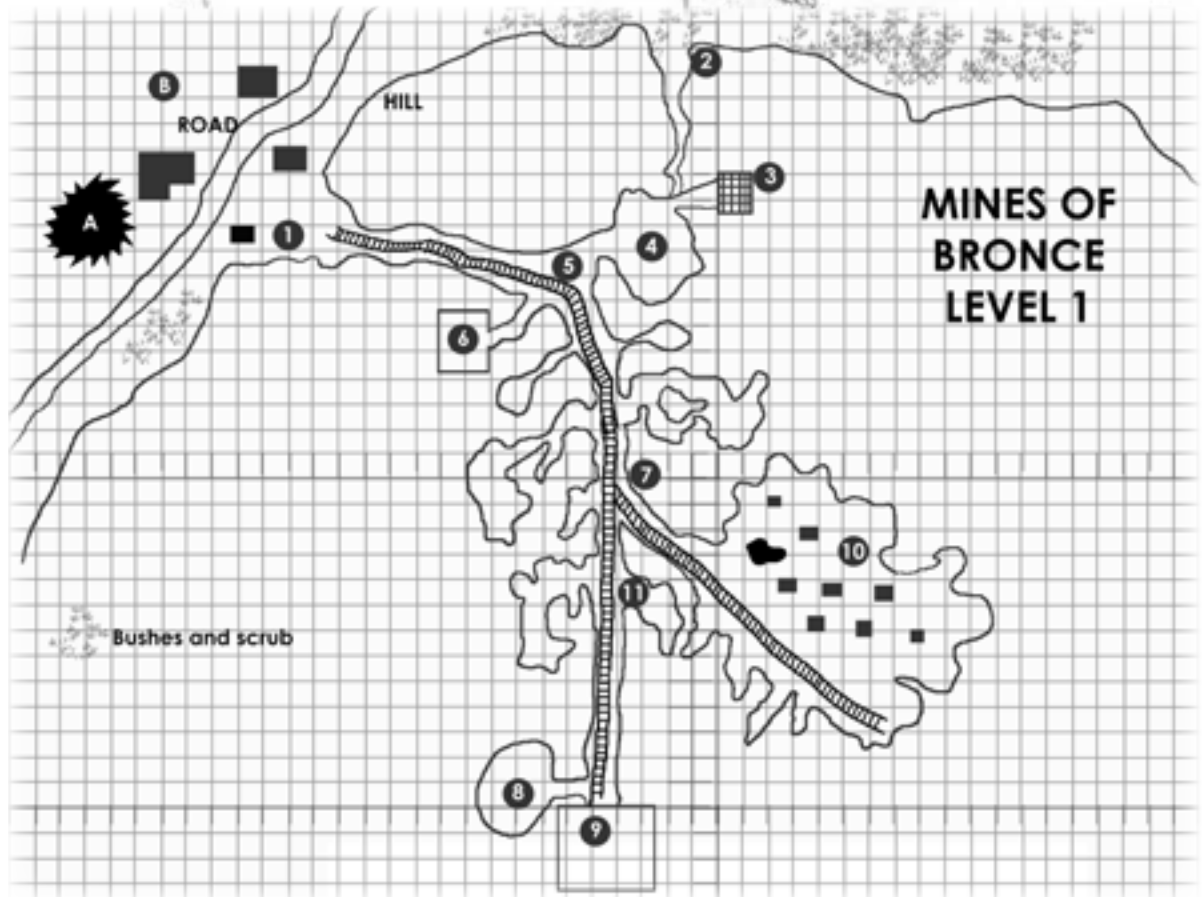
This narrow, sloping tunnel was bored to give extra ventilation in the mines. It is covered by a rusty old grille that could be wrenched off with a Strength check (DC 20). The tunnel is too narrow to admit any creatures of greater than Small size comfortably. Medium sized creatures need to make Escape Artist skill checks (DC 30) to squeeze into the tunnel. It opens out in the ceiling of room 6.

there or rescue any children, he can always do away with them and take credit for it.

### Plot Event: Hazardous Weather

An important story event later on (the crumbling of a weak wall) depends on the mines being flooded. When the Player Characters come to explore the mines, the weather should change from dull and overcast to light rain, in anticipation of this. If they come to the mines to rescue the missing children, the rain should begin to fall even more heavily than before. This adds even more tension to the adventure, as the children may be at risk from drowning as well as from whatever has captured them.

The flooding in the mines is a narrative element, not a mechanical one. No matter how deep the water gets, it should still be possible for the players to reach the key areas, though a Swim check or two may be needed. If they take too long and the mine floods out, the weak wall at area 16 will give way, opening up a new area and possibly washing the Player Characters down there into the bargain.



#### 4: The Tack Room (EL 1/2)

*This chamber must have been used to equip the ponies. It is strewn with mouldy straw and smells of old leather. Some sacks are stacked against the wall. There is a sound of snoring.*

This dug-out area was turned into the tack room for the pit ponies when it became obvious that they would be needed to pull the carts and work the lift. The sacks contain spoiled oats, long rotted.

The snoring comes from one of the older hobgoblins of the Talks-with-Fists band, who is sleeping off a drinking binge among the straw. He has been driven off to sober up. If woken, he will be belligerent and attack.

**Hobgoblin drunkard:** Hobgoblin warrior 1; CR 1/2; Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid); HD 1d8+2 (6 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 light shield), touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +1/+2; Atk longsword +2 melee (1d8+1/19–20) or javelin +2 ranged (1d6+1); Full Atk longsword +2 melee (1d8+1/19–20) or javelin +2 ranged (1d6+1); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ darkvision 60 ft; AL LE; SV: Fort +4, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8

*Skills & Feats:* Hide +3, Listen +2, Move Silently +3, Spot +2; Alertness

*Equipment & Treasure:* Studded leather, light wooden shield, longsword, javelin (2)

#### 5. Mine Cart

*Before you in the gloom is a mine cart, still on the rails. Wooden blocks placed under the wheels prevent it from barrelling off into the mine.*

A Search check (DC 15) reveals that here are some identical wooden blocks scattered nearby and the marks of another mine cart further back than this one, suggesting that someone recently took a cart down into the lower regions. This was Jim Oakenbough, disposing of the tax collector's body by putting him in the mine cart and sending it down the rails to crash somewhere far below.

The Player Characters can start the mine cart moving if they want to. It does not have a brake – this being yet another problem with the mine having been dug on the cheap. Without anything to check its progress, it will quickly pick up speed. Anyone falling from it or jumping out of it while it is moving will suffer 2d6 damage (with a Reflex saving throw at DC 15 to take half). The cart zooms into the dark. Depending how the points at area 7 are set, it will either shoot straight into the hobgoblins' lair (area 5) or track round the bend and crash into another cart just



by the lift shaft (area 8). This may spell disaster if the lift is at the bottom of the shaft...

When the cart hits a buffer while travelling at speed, anyone inside it must make a Reflex saving throw (DC 15) or be thrown out, taking 2d6 points of damage. Anyone hit by the cart itself takes 4d6 points of damage, with a Reflex saving throw (DC 15) for half damage. Those who fail their Reflex saving throws are also knocked prone.

## 6. Strong Room

*The door in front of you is made from solid iron. Two stout sliding bars cross it. They must once have been fitted with padlocks. The door hangs slightly ajar.*

This little cave was used to store the ingots of gold that were smelted outside. The hobgoblins threw the screaming children in here to keep them out of the way while they worked out what to do. The strong room is now empty, as the children have been moved deeper inside the mine; however, a Search check (DC 15) discovers a burned-out candle stub and the words 'Help hobgoblins took us J + C' scratched into the wall with a rock. Jed left this message in case anyone came looking for them.

There is no way to open the door from the inside. Anyone who is thrown in here is stuck here, unless he can somehow batter the door down. Treat it as an iron door (see DMG).

## 7. Points (EL 1)

*The rail tracks split here, one heading straight ahead down a steep incline, the other breaking off to the southeast down a gentler slope. An iron lever, thick with cobwebs, looks like it must control the points mechanism.*

The points are currently set to send the carts directly south. The cobwebs around the lever are exceptionally thick, as there is a swarm of spiders nesting here. These are simple vermin and will only attack if actively disturbed; they have no grasp of tactics, and possess an instinctive fear of fire.

**Spider Swarm:** CR 1; Diminutive Vermin (Swarm); HD 2d8 (9 hp); Init +3; Spd 20 ft (4 squares) climb 20 ft; AC 17 (+4 size, +3 Dex), touch 17, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +1/-; Atk swarm (1d6 plus poison); Full Atk swarm (1d6 plus poison); Space/Reach 10 ft/0 ft; SA distraction, poison; SQ darkvision 60 ft, swarm traits, tremorsense 30 ft, vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 1, Dex 17, Con 10, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2.

**Skills & Feats:** Climb +11, Listen +4, Spot +4

**Swarm Attack:** Creatures with the swarm subtype don't make standard melee attacks. Instead, they deal automatic damage to any creature whose space they occupy at the end of their move, with no attack roll needed. Swarm attacks are not subject to a miss chance for concealment or cover. Swarms do not threaten creatures in their square, and do not make attacks of opportunity with their swarm attack.



**Distraction (Ex):** Any living creature that begins its turn with a spider swarm in its space must succeed on a DC 11 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based.

**Poison (Ex):** Injury, Fortitude DC 11, initial and secondary damage 1d3 Str. The save DC is Constitution-based.

**Swarm Traits:** A swarm is not subject to critical hits or flanking. A swarm composed of Fine or Diminutive creatures is immune to all weapon damage. Reducing a swarm to 0 hit points or lower causes it to break up, though damage taken until that point does not degrade its ability to attack or resist attack. Swarms are never staggered or reduced to a dying state by damage. Also, they cannot be tripped, grappled, or bull rushed, and they cannot grapple an opponent.

A swarm is immune to any spell or effect that targets a specific number of creatures (including single-target spells such as *disintegrate*). A swarm takes half again as much damage (+50%) from spells or effects that affect an area, such as splash weapons.

The lever is stiff but can still be moved.

## 8. Lift Machinery

*This circular chamber has a mechanism like a capstan in the middle, with crossed wooden beams extending out from it. Leather fastenings are affixed to these. A groove in the floor houses a thick chain that runs from the capstan out through a low opening to the west. A lever is set into the floor by the capstan.*

This is the machinery to raise and lower the lift. When the mine was working, pit ponies would walk around the capstan, winding the chain around it and hauling the lift up. The lever sets or releases the brake, locking the capstan in place. If the Player Characters try to work the capstan and raise the lift, a Strength ability score check (DC 25) is necessary for the lift to move. If multiple characters are helping, then a total combined Strength score of 25 or more moves the lift automatically with no need for a check.

A Search check (DC 15) finds fresh flakes of rust on the floor and the marks of hobnail boots. This capstan has been used very recently.

## 9. Lift Shaft

*A square shaft yawns in front of you; you cannot tell how far down it plunges. From a hole in the roof above, a thick metal chain dangles down into the shaft. There is a constant low rushing sound from the water that pours over the rim and down into the darkness.*

*Just at the rim of the shaft, a mine cart is tipped over the buffers at the end of the rail track, as if it had smashed into them at high speed. It looks like it nearly went over all the way.*

If the Player Characters want to get down the shaft, they must either raise the lift or climb the chain. This will require a jump of six feet (resolve this with a Jump check) followed by a Climb skill check to hang on to the chain (DC 15). The shaft drops down a further 50 feet, so any character who slips is in serious trouble. The walls of the shaft are rough but slippery (Climb DC 25).

The lift itself is little more than a box made from metal struts, open on the sides and with a solid base. On top is a pyramid of struts to which the chain is attached.

## 10. Hobgoblin Guard Room (EL 2)

*Crude wooden props hold up the ceiling in these caverns. Years ago, they would have been filled with the din of backbreaking work. Now, they are eerily silent.*

Part of the Talks-with-Fists tribal band is holed up in this area. They have just finished lowering the other part of the band down the lift shaft. Talks-with-Fists has decided that the band would be safer on a lower level of the caves. Although the rain is beginning to flood the place, the hobgoblin leader thinks that the band will be better able to defend itself in a deeper part of the mine. He has sore memories of being defeated by the Split Ear band.

The hobgoblins here are terrified. They have glimpsed the ghostly form wandering about (see area 11) and are on the verge of panic. If they encounter the Player Characters, they will attack frenziedly. A Sense Motive check (DC 10) reveals that these hobgoblins have been scared out of their wits by something other than the party.

**Hobgoblin warriors (3):** Hobgoblin warrior 1; CR ½; Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid); HD 1d8+2 (6 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 light shield), touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +1/+2; Atk longsword +2 melee (1d8+1/19–20) or javelin +2 ranged (1d6+1); Full Atk longsword +2 melee (1d8+1/19–20) or javelin +2 ranged (1d6+1); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ darkvision 60 ft; AL LE; SV: Fort +4, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8

*Skills & Feats:* Hide +3, Listen +2, Move Silently +3, Spot +2; Alertness

*Equipment & Treasure:* Studded leather, light wooden shield, longsword, javelin (2), 300 sp

*Note:* These hobgoblins are shaken, so they take a –2 penalty on attack rolls, skill checks and ability checks. This condition will last for ten minutes.

## 11. Ghostly Form (EL 2)

The first time the Player Characters enter this part of the mines, read or paraphrase the following:

*Out of the darkness in front of you, a human figure slowly condenses. It is a man in traveller's garb, bearing a staff. He has his back to you but is slowly rotating in the air. You see that his feet are a foot above the floor. As his face comes into view, you see that his eyes are missing, his teeth are bared in a rictus grin and there is a ragged slash across his throat.*

This is the ghost of Marcus the tax collector, murdered by Jim Oakenbough and his men. It is not hostile but merely wants to rest. If the Player Characters do not attack it, it will slowly point to the floor (meaning that it needs them to go down to the next level and find its body). If they do attack it, it will use its *frightful moan* and retreat through the floor.

If the Player Characters attempt to leave the mines without having found Marcus' body, he will try to keep them inside until they do. He will do this by manifesting between the Player Characters and the exit, in an attempt to scare them into staying down here. However, he will not harm them if he can help it, as they are his best chance of finding peace – the hobgoblins do not care about his fate.

**Marcus Capoletto:** Medium Undead (Augmented Humanoid) (Incorporeal); CR 2; HD 1d12 (6 hp); Init +0; Spd fly 30 ft (perfect) (6 squares); AC 11 (+3 deflection); Atk incorporeal touch +0 melee (1d6); Full Atk incorporeal touch +0 melee (1d6); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA corrupting touch, manifestation, frightful moan; SQ darkvision 60 ft, incorporeal traits, rejuvenation, +4 turn resistance, undead traits; SV: Fort +0, Ref +2, Will -1; Listen +11, Hide +8, Profession (tax collector) +6, Ride +4, Search +8, Spot +11; Str 9, Dex 10, Con -, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 16;

*Skills & Feats:* Skill Focus (profession); Lightning Reflexes

*Corrupting Touch (Su):* A ghost that hits a living target with its incorporeal touch attack deals 1d6 points of damage. Against ethereal opponents, it adds its Strength modifier to attack and damage rolls. Against nonethereal opponents, it adds its Dexterity modifier to attack rolls only.

**Frightful Moan (Su):** A ghost can emit a frightful moan as a standard action. All living creatures within a 30-foot spread must succeed on a Will save or become panicked for 2d4 rounds. This is a sonic necromantic mind-affecting fear effect. A creature that successfully saves against the moan cannot be affected by the same ghost's moan for 24 hours.

**Rejuvenation (Su):** In most cases, it's difficult to destroy a ghost through simple combat: The "destroyed" spirit will often restore itself in 2d4 days. Even the most powerful spells are usually only temporary solutions. A ghost that would otherwise be destroyed returns to its old haunts with a successful level check (1d20 + ghost's HD) against DC 16. As a rule, the only way to get rid of a ghost for sure is to determine the reason for its existence and set right whatever prevents it from resting in peace. The exact means varies with each spirit and may require a good deal of research.

## 12. Lift Shaft Bottom

*You are deep within the mine, at the bottom of the lift shaft. Water is pouring in from high above. A tunnel leads off into the darkness to the north. Your light reflects off the black water that already partly fills the tunnel. There is no doubt that the mines will be completely flooded if the rain persists outside.*

The water is currently two feet deep at this point. It is pitch black and impossible to see through.

The mouldering body of Marcus Capoletto lies under the water in the northern entrance. If the Player Characters move out of the room without specifying that they are moving carefully (half normal movement rate) then each character that passes must make a Reflex saving throw (DC 13) to avoid falling over the body. It is badly decomposed and has been down here for at least a month, possibly two. Even in its rotten state, the marks of a knife slash through the neck are clearly visible.

The clothes are just rotten muck but with a bit of feeling around a character can find a metal badge of office and a wooden staff. These both require a Search check (DC 15) to locate. The metal badge depicts a bag of money and two crossed quills, with the word 'Saragost' below. A Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check (DC 15) identifies this as the badge of an authorised tax collector.

If the Player Characters retrieve the body and have it decently buried, which Father Bronson will be happy to help with, then the ghost of Marcus will be partially laid to rest but not completely. He will appear before the characters in the night, pointing sadly to his cut throat. The murderers still

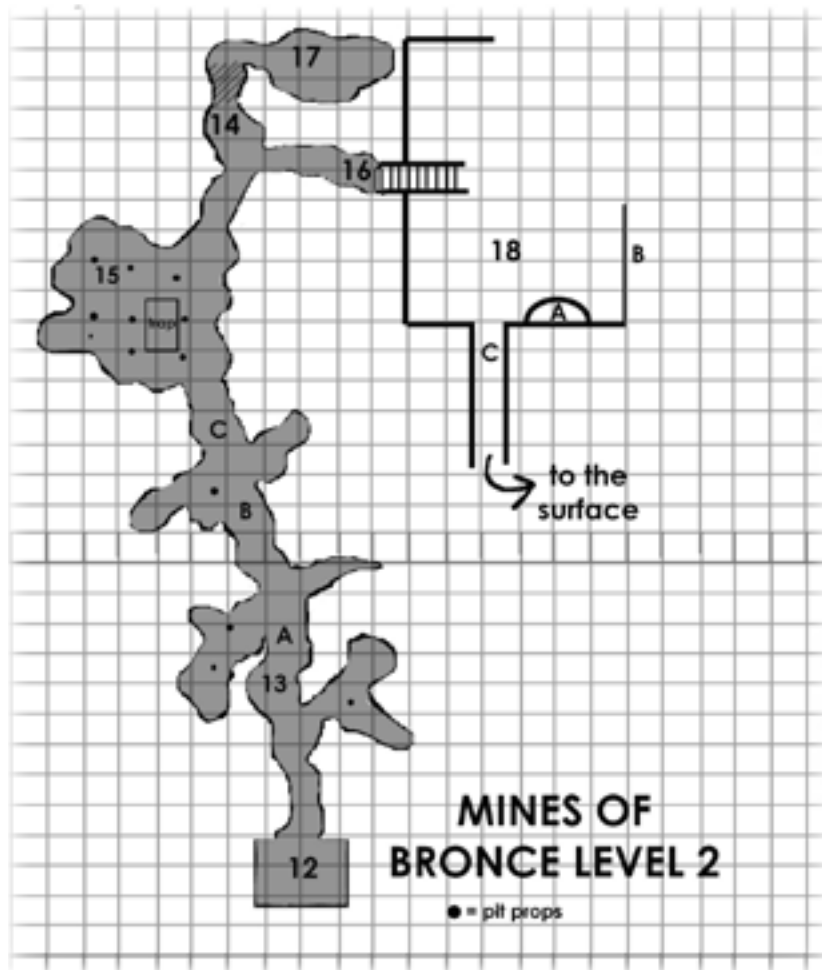
need to be brought to justice. If the Player Characters move on from Bronze, then Marcus will not trouble them further, as he cannot travel outside the village, though good-aligned characters should not be willing to leave the poor shade without helping him find rest.

## 13. Flooded Mine Tunnels (EL 1)

*The further underground you go, the deeper the water becomes. It is nearly up to your waists. If it gets any deeper, then you may have to start swimming. By the sound of it, the rain water is still flowing into the mine. If anything, it is becoming even heavier.*

At the point marked 'a' on the map, the water reaches three feet deep. At point 'b' it is four feet deep and at point 'c', five feet. Halflings and dwarves will have to ride on their comrades' shoulders or find some other way to keep their heads above water.

At point 'd' is a hobgoblin sentry point. The two miserable hobgoblins here have been told to keep watch in case any humans from the village approach, trying to get the children back.



**Hobgoblin warriors (2):** Hobgoblin warrior 1; CR ½; Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid); HD 1d8+2 (6 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 light shield), touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +1/+2; Atk longsword +2 melee (1d8+1/19–20) or javelin +2 ranged (1d6+1); Full Atk longsword +2 melee (1d8+1/19–20) or javelin +2 ranged (1d6+1); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ darkvision 60 ft; AL LE; SV: Fort +4, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8

*Skills & Feats:* Hide +3, Listen +2, Move Silently +3, Spot +2; Alertness

*Equipment & Treasure:* Studded leather, light wooden shield, longsword, javelin (2)

The Player Characters may well end up engaging the hobgoblins while waist-deep in water. While this means they can attack without penalties, having to wade through the water will halve their movement speed and increases the DC of Move Silently and Tumble checks by 4.

## 14. The Tunnel Narrows

*The tunnel becomes abruptly narrower here. It seems to come to a dead end. The mass of rock ahead of you is of a darker colour than the other walls. You cannot tell if the tunnel continues under the waterline.*

At this point, the miners found a thick deposit of very low-quality adamantine ore – too hard to dig through with the tools they had but not worth trying to extract. Instead, they dug sharply down underneath it. The tunnel slopes sharply down underfoot and comes back up on the other side of the rock mass. A Knowledge (dungeoneering) skill check (DC 10) identifies the rock.

If the Player Characters are to progress beyond this point, they must hold their breath and grope or swim under the rock, without knowing if there will be breathable air beyond. If they do decide to dive under, then remember their light sources. Lanterns are not watertight. There is also no easy way for Player Characters who are on one side of the rock to communicate with Player Characters on the other side, so it is a good idea to take such venturesome Players into another room.

The water beneath the mass of ore has been here for a long time. There are living creatures in it, like small eels. These squirm against the Player Characters' bodies as they swim through but do not do any damage.

## 15. Hobgoblin Den (EL 2)

*The mined-out area on this side of the track is higher than the passageway and has escaped flooding so far. The usual crude pit props hold the ceiling up. You can hear a sound of groaning, like a child in pain.*

The main force of the Talks-with-Fists band is huddled in this cavern, wondering what to do next. One of their prisoners, the older boy (Jed) has managed to break free and has headed deeper



into the mines, looking for an exit that he believes is there. The hobgoblins are not bothering to chase him, as they have already explored that area and do not think that there is anywhere left to run. They still have their other prisoner, Callum, tied up with ropes.

Talks-with-Fists is a callous creature and will threaten to cut the boy's throat if the tribe is threatened (he can do this with a simple coup de grace). This is not a bluff. The characters must use stealth or guile to prevail here. The hobgoblins want the village's wealth – two thousand gold pieces will be enough – for which they will return the hostage and leave Bronze in peace. Of course, there is not so much as one thousand gold pieces in all of Bronze, let alone two, but the hobgoblins are sure that the money can be found.

If the Player Characters agree to this bargain and keep to it, then the hobgoblins (who are lawful) will keep to their side too, for as long as it suits them.

**Talks-with-Fists:** Hobgoblin warrior 2; CR 1; Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid); HD 2d8+4 (13 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 light shield), touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +2/+3; Atk masterwork longsword +4 melee (1d8+1/19–20) or javelin +3 ranged (1d6+1); Full Atk masterwork longsword +4 melee (1d8+1/19–20) or javelin +3 ranged (1d6+1); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ darkvision 60 ft; AL LE; SV: Fort +5, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8

*Skills & Feats:* Hide +3, Listen +3, Move Silently +3, Spot +3; Alertness

*Equipment & Treasure:* Studded leather, light wooden shield, masterwork longsword, javelin (2), 450 sp

**Hobgoblin warriors (2):** Hobgoblin warrior 1; CR ½; Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid); HD 1d8+2 (6 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 light shield), touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +1/+2; Atk longsword +2 melee (1d8+1/19–20) or javelin +2 ranged (1d6+1); Full Atk longsword +2 melee (1d8+1/19–20) or javelin +2 ranged (1d6+1); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ darkvision 60 ft; AL LE; SV: Fort +4, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8

*Skills & Feats:* Hide +3, Listen +2, Move Silently +3, Spot +2; Alertness

*Equipment & Treasure:* Studded leather, light wooden shield, longsword, javelin (2)

**Hobgoblin non-combatants (4):** These are children too young to fight. The Player Characters can attempt to threaten the hobgoblin children in a tit-for-tat exchange if they are not good-aligned but they will find that the hobgoblins' attitude is that they can always breed more.

## The Weak Ceiling Trap

The hobgoblins have noticed that part of the ceiling is unsafe in this chamber. Only the pit prop that is wedged under it is preventing it from collapsing. Talks-with-Fists has turned this into an impromptu trap. He has tied a rope around the prop, which one of his warriors is holding the other end of. If he decides to trigger the trap, he will give a prearranged signal. The warrior can tug the rope as a standard action.

If the trap is sprung, then all characters within the shaded area must make Reflex saving throws or take 2d4 damage from falling rocks. This is much less than a true cave-in would cause, as it is only a fall of a few loose pieces of masonry. A character who comes within 15 feet of the trap is entitled to a Spot check (DC 15) to notice the rope tied around the prop.

## 16. Weakened Wall

*This section of tunnel comes to an abrupt stop. The rock face shows the marks of digging but no sign of why the tunnel was abandoned.*

This area is right next to the duergar excavations from below. The rock wall is less than a foot thick and has already been weakened and cracked by pick and hammer blows. It is now not a solid wall any more but several chunks of rock pressed together. A Knowledge (dungeoneering) check (DC 15) reveals that the wall is weak, while a Listen check (DC 20) detects the faint sound of water flowing on the *other* side of the wall, through tiny cracks in the rock.

At some point in this adventure, the wall *will* give way, breaching through into the duergar caves. The story will determine how it happens; here are some possibilities.

• The Players may think of smashing through the wall themselves in order to explore, to look for another way out or to drain the mines. The wall has an effective hardness of 6 and 45 remaining hit points. A character with a pick or maul could break through the wall in ten minutes without having to make rolls.

• If enough water fills the lower tunnels, then the wall will simply give way under the weight. This can make for a good dramatic ending if the Player Characters are trapped in the flooding mine, or think they are.

When the wall does give way, the flood waters will rush out of the mine like a river. Characters who are wholly or partly submerged are in danger of being swept away. Treat this as if the water were making a bull rush attempt on the characters each round for ten rounds. The water moves towards the breach at a speed of 30 ft. (6 squares) and has an effective Strength of 18. On the last four rounds, its Strength drops to 14.

## 17. Whispering Cave

*The tunnel comes to an end here. Crouched against the far wall, pale and shivering, is a human boy of about ten. In the silence, you hear strange noises, like voices whispering.*

The noises are the duergar beneath this tunnel, talking in their hoarse voices about the progress they are making. With a successful Listen check (DC 15) any character who speaks Undercommon can make out the words 'surprise', 'massing' and 'masters'.

The boy is Jed, who is frightened out of his wits. He does not want to stay with the voices but fears returning to the mines where the hobgoblins are. They have not pursued him here, so he believes he is safe. The Player Characters must either calm him down somehow (*remove fear* or the *inspire courage* use of bardic music would do it) or drag him with them forcibly.

## 18. Mustering Hall (EL 1)

*The wall breaks through into an immense cavern. The freed flood waters from the mine are spilling away down the sides of the cave, lost in the darkness below. As you begin to take in the details of the place, you realise that this is not a natural cavern. There are the marks of tools on the walls and floor. This place was dug out – from below.*

*You are standing at the top of a set of steps, hundreds of them, descending into absolute blackness. You have no idea how far down the cavern extends, or how far away the opposite wall is. As the rushing waters ebb away, the silence of the place is absolute.*

This chamber is where the duergar armies were to be assembled and addressed prior to their breaking through to the upper world. The Player Characters stand on top of a dais that was to be used by the duergar general for instructing his troops. The chamber

is not yet ready, as the main tunnel to bring the troops to the surface still needs to be completed and a few annoying monsters need to be disposed of.

**A:** At point A in this room is a lectern, carved out of stone. This was to be used by the general for resting his military plans on. Any Player Character who speaks while standing here finds that his voice echoes around the whole chamber, amplified by the curious acoustics here.

One of the duergar mining overseers has left his plans here, as he found it useful to use this point to shout to his workers. They are in the form of a scroll, written in Undercommon. If none of the Player Characters speaks this language, they can attempt a Decipher Script check (DC 20) to understand the gist; otherwise, they will have to use magic. In a pinch, Father Bronson can cast *comprehend languages* for them. The scroll reads as follows:

*Master Overseer, ensure that the following are in place:  
All special weapons crates from the smithy, laid out according to division and commander  
Chisel assembly zone markings into floor to indicate mustering points (remember, each enclosure to hold at least five hundred of our warriors)  
General Ulsnurr's personal throne (fetch from his chambers)  
Complete access tunnel to surface  
Prepare holding cells for important human prisoners  
Make ambassadorial suite ready for the Most Honoured Allies  
Attend to this with all haste. We have only ten days to prepare until the Legions of the Chthonic Alliance are destined to march on the upper world.*

The scroll is signed with a 'K' rune and a wax seal, depicting three hammers joined at the hilt into a wheel pattern.

**B:** Before you is an arch 20 feet high, closed off with two immense doors of worked stone. These are engraved with ornamental scenes of battle. The craftsmanship is amazing, depicting rank upon rank of bald-headed warriors storming up from the bottom of the doors towards castles and other buildings at the top. You realise that this is meant to represent an army rising from below the earth to attack the surface world.

This is the point of entrance into the Mustering Hall from the duergar burrows below. Any dwarf in the party will instantly recognise it as dwarven work, almost certainly that of the duergar.

The door is closed and locked by magical means. It will not open from this side. Though this may frustrate the Players, they are not yet ready to take on thousands of duergar warriors. They may rest assured that this time will come.

**C:** A broad tunnel, clearly recently dug, leads upwards out of the chamber.

This is the access tunnel to the surface that the duergar are digging. It has plainly been dug very recently, as there is still debris and dust on the floor. The work gang that is digging the



tunnel has gone to eat. It was this gang that can be heard in room 17.

At the end of the tunnel is a lone duergar surveyor, checking the progress of the work. Even on his own, he is a dangerous foe. With his darkvision, he does not need a light, so he will almost certainly see the party approaching before they are aware of him.


**Grobni the Surveyor:** Duergar warrior 1; CR 1; Medium humanoid (dwarf); HD 1d8+5 (9 hp); Init +0; Spd 20 ft in chainmail (4 squares), base speed 20 ft; AC 17 (+5 chainmail, +2 heavy shield), touch 10, flat-footed 17; Base attack/grapple +1/+2; Atk warhammer +2 melee (1d8+1/x3) or light crossbow +1 ranged (1d8/19–20); Full Atk warhammer +2 melee (1d8+1/x3) or light crossbow +1 ranged (1d8/19–20); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA duergar traits, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 60 ft, duergar traits; AL LE; SV: Fort +4, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 4

**Skills & Feats:** Appraise +2, Craft (blacksmithing) +2, Craft (stonemasonry) +2, Listen +3, Move Silently -4, Spot +2; Toughness

**Equipment & Treasure:** Chainmail, heavy steel shield, warhammer, light crossbow, 20 bolts, large expertly cut tourmaline gemstone (250 gp), masterwork artisan's tools (55 gp), parchment, ink bottle, quill

**Duergar Traits:** Duergar have darkvision out to 120 feet, are immune to paralysis, phantasms, and poison, and are dazzled in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

**Spell-like Abilities (Sp):** 1/day—*enlarge person* and *invisibility* as a wizard of twice the duergar's class level



(minimum caster level 3rd); these abilities affect only the duergar and whatever it carries.

The Player Characters may attempt to interrogate Grobni. He will just laugh at them if they attempt this and will not willingly divulge any information. If the Player Characters somehow extract information from him by magical means, they may find out what he knows: the duergar are about to overrun the island of Chillhame and enslave the populace. They are working in concert with some mysterious allies. He does not know who or what they are, because he is not of high enough rank.

## Aftermath

It is essential that the Player Characters come away from the mines knowing that there is an army of duergar about to break the surface and invade the upper world. There is plenty to keep them coming back to the mines – rumours of gold left to mine, the ghost of Marcus, the missing children, or even an attempt to find the sword of Starkweather John.

- If the children are brought safely back to the village, the townsfolk will be grateful, though they will still be afraid of Jim Oakenbough if he has not been dealt with. They will not have to pay for food or drink while they stay in the village (within reason) and villagers will be more forthcoming with information now that they know the characters are trustworthy. The parents of the children are truly grateful but do not have very much in the way of monetary rewards to offer the Player Characters; they can only scrape together 20 gp. However, not that they feel they can trust the Player Characters, the parents and some of the other villagers will let them know the true hiding place of Starkweather John's sword. Bringing back both children alive is worth a story award of 400 XP; bringing one child back is worth 100 XP.
- If the Player Characters can produce the body of the missing tax collector and evidence linking the murder to Jim Oakenbough (such as the strongbox containing plundered gold) then that is all that Davan Gaskell and Morton Gimbert need to arrest him and his thugs. They will ask the Player Characters to lend a hand, as Jim is hardly going to come quietly. Jim's preferred plan will be to retreat to his windmill and make a stand there, or head for the hills and live as an outlaw if this is impossible. Bringing Jim Oakenbough to justice is worth 300-500 XP, depending on how successfully this was done and how few casualties to Non-Player Characters were incurred.
- Following the arrest (or slaying) of Jim Oakenbough, if the Player Characters are decent-minded enough to recover Marcus Capoletto's body from the mines and give it a proper burial, then this should net them an additional 200 XP, as the ghost is laid to rest at last.
- No matter how much the Player Characters may have won the villagers' trust, there will still be some unhappiness if the Player Characters attempt to remove the sword of Starkweather John. This is doubly true if the Player Characters have told the villagers about the coming duergar

hordes, as the sword is the only protection they have. Ultimately, the Player Characters must decide whether to take the sword or leave it where it is. Starkweather John did prophesy that a successor would come one day, so any player who wants to take the sword with him can always try to convince the villagers that he is that successor. Retrieving the sword of Starkweather John is worth 200 XP.

## Plot Event: The Town Meeting

When the Player Characters learn of the planned duergar invasion, they may wonder what to do about it. They will have to produce some kind of evidence if they are to be taken seriously. The body of Grobni or the scroll left in the mustering hall will both be adequate.

**If they tell the authorities:** If the Player Characters do indeed notify the village authorities of the coming assault, then word spreads quickly through the village. This is a small place and everyone finds out everything important sooner or later. There is panic at first, as some of the townsfolk load up wagons with their few goods and prepare to evacuate the town, while others start to make barricades, nail up their doors and windows and take rusty old weapons out of storage.

**If they hush it up:** If they attempt to keep it quiet, then curious villagers who investigate the mine after the Player Characters have been there will find out the truth. This will not happen for two to three days. One way or another, the truth will come out – even if the side of the hill has to collapse. The most the Player Characters can do is to delay the inevitable, which may gain them some useful time to make preparations. If the villagers have to find out about the invasion by themselves, then they will be deeply suspicious of the Player Characters afterwards – why were they not warned about this threat to their lives?

**Once the villagers learn of the impending invasion:** There is loud disagreement about what to do and a meeting is called outside the Headsman's house. There, the villagers argue it out. Some insist that they should stay, trusting to Starkweather John's sword to protect the place (if it is still there), or arguing that the village is all they have ever known and they will defend it. Others argue that the only sane course of action is to head for Saragost, the walled capital of Chillhame, where they stand a better chance of survival. The Player Characters can intervene in this debate; refer to the use of the Diplomacy skill to argue a case before a third party.

No matter what the villagers decide to do, in private Headsman Goodchild and Father Bronson will both beg the Player Characters to ride out to Saragost, taking the evidence of the planned invasion with them. An invasion force of these numbers is clearly not going to stop at Bronce. They are asked to visit the nearby towns along the way and warn them of the coming threat. Headsman Goodchild will provide horses for all the party members if they do not have them already. This becomes the beginning of the second adventure in this series, Raising the Alarm.

**Experience:** The party should now have gained enough experience to advance to level two. If they have not, then several

suitable encounters are provided at the beginning of the next chapter to be put in their way as they travel to Saragost.

### *Victory Points*

The party should be awarded Victory Points depending on how well they have done in this adventure and what actions they have taken upon discovering the duergar threat.

**Warning the village of the impending invasion: 2 points**

**Persuading the townsfolk to seek refuge in Saragost instead of staying at Bronce: 1 point**

**Departing immediately to warn the other villages, even if it is dark: 1 point**

**Each day that elapses after the duergar are discovered before the Player Characters arrive at Saragost: -1 point**

The Games Master should also award a Victory Point for any exceptionally good ideas that the Players may come up with that directly relate to the coming attack.





# Raising the Alarm

## Summary

In the next series of adventures, the Player Characters must travel to the walled town of Saragost, bearing the evidence of the coming duergar assault and warning the various villages on the way. They encounter numerous hazards, from goblin ambushes to roving undead.

## The Road to Saragost

What awaits the Player Characters is something akin to the famous midnight ride of Paul Revere in the real world. They have been asked to ride from Chillhame to Saragost as fast as possible, taking the message of the coming invasion to the towns on the way. Although the adventure does continue in Saragost, the Player Characters do not *have* to warn the villages on the way. However, each village that they notify will earn them Victory Points, as the townsfolk have a chance to prepare.

## Incidental Encounters

If the Player Characters need additional experience to make it to level two, then the following encounters can be included between settlements.

### Event: The Faked Accident (EL 2)

*A carriage lies on its side by the road. It looks like it has crashed; one of the wheels is still rotating. There are no signs of the horses anywhere – perhaps they have bolted? A woman in a white dress, covered in mud and blood, stands swaying by the carriage. She is groaning, as if in pain.*

The Player Characters may now make Spot skill checks (DC 20). Any Player Character with the Tracking feat gains a +2 circumstance bonus to this check. Those who succeed notice that the ground beside the carriage is not churned up, as one would expect it to be from a coach accident. It looks more like the coach has been wheeled here and then gently tipped over.

This is a shakedown. The woman in the dress is bait. Her two companions are hiding behind the carriage, ready to stand up and menace the party with their crossbows. The woman will mumble unintelligibly, hoping that the Player Characters will come closer in an attempt to understand what she is saying. She herself is a non-combatant.

This crew, known as Jerry Codworth, Dumb Tig and Mandy the Fritch, have been causing trouble on the road for some weeks now. Each has a bounty of 300 gold pieces that may be claimed at any guard station in any of the towns the Player Characters visit.

**Jerry Codworth:** Human rogue 1; CR 1; Medium humanoid; HD 1d6-1 (5 hp); Init +2; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 leather), touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base attack/grapple +0/+1; Atk masterwork rapier +3 melee (1d6+1/18-20x2) or masterwork heavy crossbow +3 ranged (1d10); Full Atk masterwork rapier +3 melee (18-20x2) or masterwork heavy crossbow +3 ranged (1d10); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ trapfinding; AL NE; SV: Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 8, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 14.

**Skills & Feats:** Bluff +6, Diplomacy +4, Disable Device +4, Disguise +7, Escape Artist +4, Gather Information +4, Hide +6, Intimidate +6, Listen +2, Move Silently +6, Open Lock +4, Sleight of Hand +4, Spot +2, Use Rope +4; Dodge, Weapon Finesse.

**Equipment & Treasure:** leather armour, masterwork rapier, masterwork heavy crossbow, 20 bolts, thunderstone, lantern, flask of oil, disguise kit, 50 gold pieces, golden neck chain stolen from last victim (300 gp), bottle of fine cologne (30 gp)

**Description:** Lean and bearded, with a scar down the left side of his face. Likes to wear expensive cologne.

**Dumb Tig:** Human warrior 1; CR ½; Medium humanoid; HD 1d8 (8 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 light wooden shield), touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +1/+3; Atk masterwork battleaxe +6 melee (1d8+1/19-20x2) or heavy crossbow +2 ranged (1d10); Full Atk masterwork battleaxe +6 melee (1d8+1/19-20x2) or shortbow +2 ranged (1d10); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL NE; SV: Fort +3, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 4, Wis 8, Cha 14.

**Skills & Feats:** Intimidate +5, Jump +5, Ride +2; Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe)

**Equipment & Treasure:** Studded leather armour, light wooden shield, masterwork battleaxe, heavy crossbow, small stuffed monkey in a waistcoat, 30 gold pieces, small sapphire (250 gp)

**Description:** Covered with bulging muscles and with a completely vacant expression. He looks to Jerry for all of his direction.

### Event: Something Lurking Off The Path (EL 1)

This encounter is appropriate either after the hours of darkness or when the Player Characters are moving through a dimly lit area, such as a deep wood:

*As you travel ahead, a revolting smell suddenly fills the air, as if the bloated stomach of some rotting animal had burst open. Either there is a decomposing body very close by, or something worse is abroad.*

A single straggling ghoul has caught the scent of the party (or their animals) and is lurking by the side of the road, waiting to ambush them and devour them. Make a Hide check for the ghoul, opposed by the Spot checks of the party members. If they come close enough, he will snag the last party member to go past, hoping to paralyze and kill him quickly.

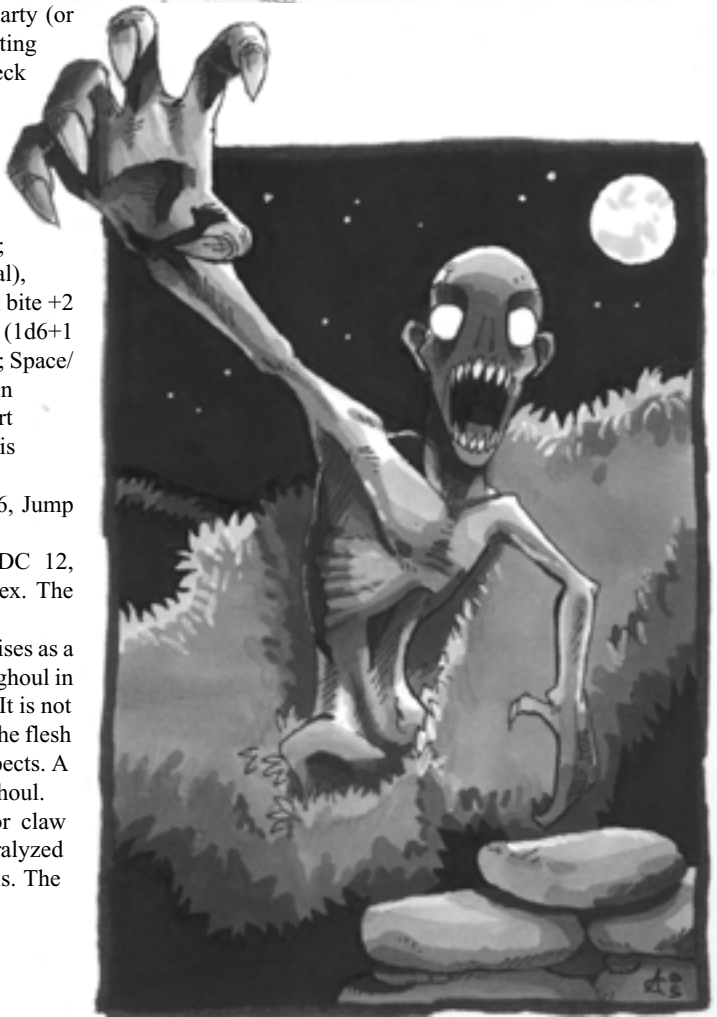
**Ghoul:** CR 1; Medium Undead; HD 2d12(13 hp); Init +2; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 14 (+2 Dex,+2 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base attack/grapple +1/+2; Atk bite +2 melee (1d6+1 plus paralysis); Full Atk bite +2 melee (1d6+1 plus paralysis) and 2 claws +0 melee (1d3 plus paralysis); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA ghoul fever, paralysis; SQ Darkvision 60 ft, undead traits, +2 turn resistance; AL CE; SV: Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 13, Dex 15, Con —, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 12.

*Skills & Feats:* Balance +6, Climb +5, Hide +6, Jump +5, Move Silently +6, Spot +7; Multitask

*Ghoul Fever (Su):* Disease—bite, Fortitude DC 12, incubation period 1 day, damage 1d3 Con and 1d3 Dex. The save DC is Charisma-based.

An afflicted humanoid who dies of ghoul fever rises as a ghoul at the next midnight. A humanoid who becomes a ghoul in this way retains none of the abilities it possessed in life. It is not under the control of any other ghouls, but it hungers for the flesh of the living and behaves like a normal ghoul in all respects. A humanoid of 4 Hit Dice or more rises as a ghast, not a ghoul.

*Paralysis (Ex):* Those hit by a ghoul's bite or claw attack must succeed on a DC 12 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4+1 rounds. Elves have immunity to this paralysis. The save DC is Charisma-based.



## Warning the Villages

For a village to qualify as 'warned', the Player Characters must convince a sufficient number of people of the coming invasion for the message to spread. Simply riding through the village yelling 'The duergar are coming!' will not achieve anything. Remember that the vast majority of people do not even know about a duergar presence under the island.

The most reliable method is to go straight to the village constable or governor (if there is one) and convince him that there is a danger, after which he can then convince the townspeople. Of course, the Player Characters have no way of knowing that he will actually do so; it is up to them to decide when they think the job is done.

The time of day will make a great difference to the outcome. These villages are mostly farming communities, so there will be commoners in the fields from sunrise to sunset. After dark, there will be almost nobody around. The larger towns, namely Lichgate and Lower Scumsgrove, will have people in the taverns until around midnight. From two AM until sunrise, all of these settlements are still and quiet.

## Talking the Talk

As a rule of thumb, an influential person can be convinced of the coming invasion with a successful Diplomacy check, so

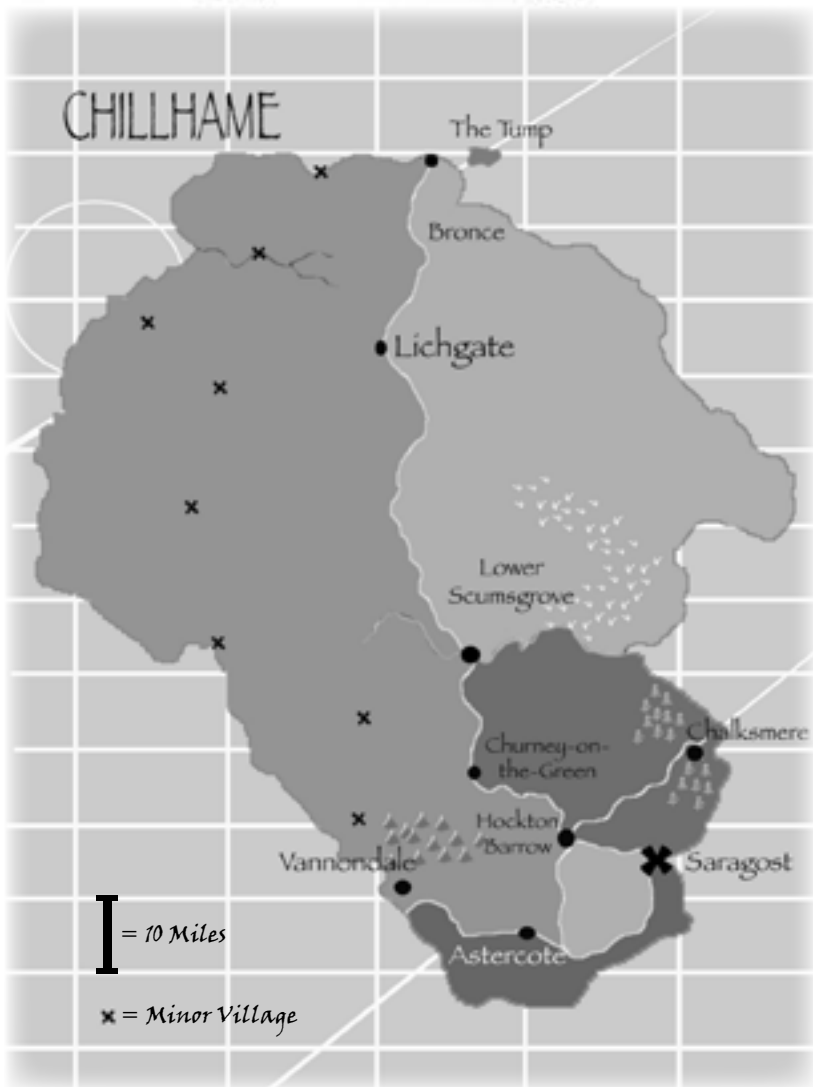
long as the Player Characters have evidence. The DC of the check depends on the attitudes of the person involved. Trying to convince a person without having evidence gives a -4 circumstance penalty to the check.

Person is already helpful towards characters: automatic success  
Person is willing to believe, has respect for the characters or is friendly towards them: DC 10  
Person is sceptical, is indifferent towards characters or has something to lose by believing them: DC 15  
Person is deeply sceptical, is unfriendly towards characters or has a great deal to lose by believing them: DC 20  
Person is hostile towards characters: DC 30

## Lichgate

This town is right in the middle of farming country. It is centred around its market, which serves the surrounding villages. On market days, it is bustling, right from the first hours of daylight. On other days, it is so quiet that it seems abandoned. Everyone is out in the fields.

If Lichgate is notable for anything, it is its ordinariness. This town has never produced any heroes, known any great legends or



### Non-Player Character: Apple Merrywind

Apple Merrywind is one of the town's halflings. The race has been living alongside humans in this town for as long as anyone can remember. She rarely has more to do than lock up drunken farmers overnight or coordinate a group effort to repel ogres from the apple orchards.

Apple will take reports of an invasion very seriously. She has encountered duergar before, while adventuring in Jahanum and she knows how ruthless they can be. She knows, however, that she cannot hope to convince the Council of Elders without the Player Characters' help and respectfully asks them to present their case directly to the Council.

**Apple Merrywind:** Halfling Ranger 3; CR 3; Small humanoid (halfling); HD 3d8+3 (19 hp); Init +3; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 17 (+3 Dex, +1 size, +3 studded leather), touch 12, flat-footed 13; Base attack/grapple +3/+1; Atk small +1 rapier +6 melee (1d4+2/18-20x2) or small +1 handaxe +6 melee (1d4+2/x3); Full Atk small +1 rapier +4 melee (1d4+2/18-20x2) and small +1 handaxe +4 melee (1d4+2/x3); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA favoured enemy (giant), wild empathy; SQ halfling traits; AL LG; SV: Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 13, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 8.

**Skills & Feats:** Climb +6, Craft (woodcrafting) +3, Handle Animal +2, Heal +4, Hide +10, Jump +6, Knowledge (geography) +3, Knowledge (nature) +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Ride +6, Search +3, Spot +4, Survival +3, Use Rope +4; Dodge, Endurance,

had especial trouble from monsters. Even its name has nothing to do with actual liches but only with a burial ground that lies nearby. There are border raids occasionally from roving bands of monstrous humanoids but most villages have those.

As well as its constable, Apple Merrywind, Lichgate has a night watchman named Robin Dunbrook, whose job it is to roam the streets, call the hour and announce any unusual happenings, such as inclement weather or fires breaking out in buildings. If they arrive at night, they are bound to encounter him. Use the typical watchman statistics set for Robin (see below).

**Lichgate Statistics**

**Size:** Small town

**Population:** 1,300

**Racial Mix:** 90% human, 8% halfling, 2% other races

**GP Limit:** 800

**Power Centre:** Council of Elders (LG)

**Constable:** Apple Merrywind (LG)

Track, Weapon Finesse  
**Equipment & Treasure:** Studded leather armour, small +1 rapier, small +1 handaxe

**Apple Merrywind as an Ally**

It is possible that Apple could become a standing ally of the Player Characters, if her duties to Lichgate were discharged. This might happen if the city were evacuated or a military force moved in to take over. Apple is a ranger and much more at home with wilderness work than defending barricades. Her main value as an ally lies in her knowledge of Chillhame. She has travelled extensively and knows the lay of the land. If the Player Characters need information about any of the towns on Chillhame – who is in charge, who really runs the place, which areas are dangerous – then Apple can tell them. In addition, for any given town there is a 30% chance that Apple knows someone on the watch, which can be useful when the Player Characters need someone to vouch for them.



### Event: The Maddened Ankheg (EL 3)

As the Player Characters approach the town, screams for help ring out from one of the fields. Two farmers are fleeing from an ankheg that has burst up out of the ground. Unusually for such creatures, it seems to be maddened, writhing in pain and attacking madly, its jaws champing. It has already spat its acid reserves, ejecting them harmlessly over a field of cabbages. Apple Merrywind has already heard the cries for help and is hurrying to the scene but the Player Characters are closer, so they have a chance to make a difference.

Any Player Character observing the creature for a round may make a Knowledge (nature) check (DC 15) to deduce that the insect has been poisoned. If it is killed, then a successful Search check (DC 15) finds a black arrow embedded in its underbelly. The ankheg blundered into one of the upper tunnels used by the drow, who shot it with a poisoned crossbow bolt for sport. The poison (not the usual kind) has caused severe Dexterity damage. Even with the poison in its system, the ankheg is a dangerous opponent, so the Player Characters must either wait for backup from the village or use careful tactics.

**Poisoned Ankheg:** CR 3; Large magical beast; HD 3d10+12 (22 hp); Init +0; Spd 30 ft (6 squares), burrow 20 ft; AC 15 (-3 Dex, -1 size, +9 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 15; Base Attack/grapple +3/+12; Atk bite +7 melee (2d6+7 plus 1d4 acid); Full Atk bite +7 melee (2d6+7 plus 1d4 acid); Space/Reach 10 ft/5 ft; SA improved grab, spit acid; SQ darkvision 60 ft, low-light vision, tremorsense 60 ft; AL n; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +2; Str 21, Dex 4, Con 17, Int 1, Wis 13, Cha 6.



*Skills & Feats:* Climb +8, Listen +6, Spot +3; Alertness, Toughness

*Improved Grab (Ex):* To use this ability, an ankheg must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If the ankheg is damaged after grabbing its prey, it retreats backward down its tunnel at its land speed (not its burrow speed), dragging the victim with it.

*Spit Acid (Ex):* 30-ft. line, once every 6 hours; damage 4d4 acid, Reflex DC 14 half. One such attack depletes the ankheg's acid supply for 6 hours. It cannot spit acid or deal acid damage during this time. The save DC is Constitution-based.

An ankheg does not use this ability unless it is desperate or frustrated. It most often spits acid when reduced to fewer than half its full normal hit points or when it has not successfully grabbed an opponent.

*Note:* These statistics have been modified to take account of the Drow venom and the bolt damage.


### Event: The Horrid Little Men In The Well (EL 2 or 4)

This event takes place while the Player Characters are in Lichgate. It can be used to fill in time while the Council makes its mind up, to add extra tension or just to help increase the Player Characters' experience points if they are falling behind.

Apple Merrywind asks the Player Characters for their help in solving the mystery of Farmer Cobbett's sheep. They are kept in a field close to the farm, from which they keep disappearing. There are no signs of a struggle, nor any obvious tracks. Farmer Cobbett has gone out to watch on some nights; on those nights, nothing happens. He cannot keep watch every night, however, as he has a working farm to run. His daughter, Jenneaver, is terrified of something and will not sleep without a light on.

The only obvious features of any note by the field where the sheep are kept are a recently dug well that is still in use, a clump of larch trees and a scummy pond. The Player Characters can search these to their hearts' content and find nothing. If the Player Characters think to ask Cobbett about the well, he will explain that his recently deceased father had it dug after the old one was covered over. He does not know why the well was covered up; he just remembers his father going out there with a grim face and a barrow full of wooden planks. He can take the Player Characters to the well's location if they wish. It is just by the border of the field, by the southern fence. The overgrown well is very hard to spot unless you are close to it and requires a Spot or Search check (DC 15) to detect. An elf gets an automatic Search check when coming close to this point, as the well counts as a concealed door.

The old well is the lair of a pair of chokers, unpleasant creatures that snare their prey with swift tentacular arms. They have been dormant without food for a couple of years but have now chewed through the planks covering the well and are snaring sheep that come too close. One night, they went after human prey, snaring a drunken thief who was using



the field as a short cut, singing loudly as he went. Jenneaver saw this happen and has been terrified that the chokers will come to the house and attack her. One of them has, in fact, decided to creep into the house and wait.

The chokers are extremely sneaky and are much too clever to attack sheep when they can see someone watching over them. Player Characters who set sentries overnight will see nothing.

The well is 30 feet deep. The sides are rough masonry, damp but not slippery, making for a Climb DC of 20. The bottom of the well is a stinking mess of sheep carcasses. One of the chokers is lurking in the well, waiting for someone to be foolish enough to try to climb down into it. A Player Character who loses his grip and falls into the rotting maggoty meat is exposed to disease. He must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 14) or contract a fever (damage 1d3 Str, incubation period 2 days).

**Treasure:** Among the rotten sheep is the body of the thief, who was celebrating a good night's highway robbery. He has a pouch on him containing 400 gp and a silver paper knife set with smoky quartz, worth 300 gp.

If the Player Characters find and kill the choker, both Constable Merrywind and Farmer Cobbett are very grateful. Farmer Cobbett is not a wealthy man but he offers the Player Characters rations and fresh meat for their journey, by way of reward. If the Games Master wishes, this encounter can have a 'shock' ending in which the second choker attacks from the rafters while the Player Characters are in the farmhouse enjoying their celebratory meal.

**Chokers (2):** CR 2; Small Aberration; HD 3d8+3 (16 hp); Init +6; Spd 20 ft (4 squares), climb 10 ft; AC 17 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +4 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 15; Base Attack/grapple +2/+5; Atk tentacle +6 melee (1d3+3); Full Atk 2 tentacles +6 melee (1d3+3); Space/Reach 5 ft/10 ft; SA improved grab, constrict 1d3+3; SQ darkvision 60 ft, quickness; AL CE; SV: Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 4, Wis 13, Cha 7.

**Skills & Feats:** Climb +13\*, Hide +10, Move Silently +6; Improved Initiative<sup>B</sup>, Lightning Reflexes, Stealthy

**Constrict (Ex):** A choker deals 1d3+3 points of damage with a successful grapple check against a Large or smaller creature. Because it seizes its victim by the neck, a creature in the choker's grasp cannot speak or cast spells with verbal components.

**Improved Grab (Ex):** To use this ability, a choker must hit a Large or smaller opponent with a tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict. Chokers receive a +4 racial bonus on grapple checks, which is already included in the statistics block.

**Quickness (Su):** Although not particularly dexterous, a choker is supernaturally quick. It can take an extra standard action or move action during its turn each round.

**Skills:** A chokers has a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

## Non-Player Character Group: The Council of Elders

The Council is made up of the village's oldest and most respected inhabitants. Their main concern is to keep everything exactly like it is. Meetings are held to settle feuds between farmers or contested claims to land or property, or occasionally to decide what buildings need to be erected.

The Council is well-intentioned but likes to discuss everything to death. Even if the Player Characters manage to have a town meeting called and their message heard, the chances of its members reaching a swift decision on what to do about the invasion are very slim. Player Characters who sit in on the meeting will find that whenever one elder proposes something definite, another will urge caution or hesitation or 'waiting until we know more'. The whole Council will, if it is allowed to, prevaricate for at least a week before reaching the decision that the town really ought to think about fortifying itself a little better. By that time, the surrounding villages and towns will already be preparing for the duergar invasion.

If the Council is to be spurred to definite action, then the Player Characters must take the initiative. Assuming they do not just quit in frustration and leave Lichgate to its fate, this is where they have a chance to improvise. Depending on the plans they cook up, the Games Master should allow such things as Bluff checks to exaggerate the danger (or make assertions that *other* towns are taking the invasion seriously, so Lichgate should), Diplomacy checks to make stirring speeches in the Council, Perform checks to stir up the townsfolk until they demand action from their elders, or anything else they can think of. Unless the Player Characters *do* intervene, Lichgate will procrastinate itself into its own destruction.

**If the Player Characters warn the Council and induce them to act:** The town follows the direction of the Players, whether they have urged evacuation, fortification or some other course. Either way, the townsfolk have a better chance of survival because they have acted promptly. The whole population of the town, co-ordinated by Apple Merrywind, helps with the effort.

**Victory Points:** 2.

**If the Player Characters warn the Council but leave them to debate endlessly over what to do:** Not only does the town not mobilise itself effectively, it fails to get the word out to other villages in the area. Word eventually filters down to the townsfolk that there is an invasion coming. Some of the farmers take matters into their own hands and make their own fortifications, digging covered pits in the approaches to the town and trying to build a stockade. When the duergar force finally arrives, they encounter some resistance but eventually take the town. Apple survives and takes to the hills with other survivors, forming a token resistance movement.

**Victory Points:** 0.

**If the Player Characters do not warn the Council:** The invading force of duergar takes the village completely by surprise. Apple is killed and the town is occupied without significant resistance, though some of the duergar fall to the

pitchforks of angry farmers. The Council of Elders is executed in the village square and the stored provisions are seized.

**Victory Points:** -2

## Lower Scumsgrove

*The town ahead looks like a scab on the flesh of the land, crusted around the river. Smoke from many chimneys rises over it like a fog. Buildings jostle against one another, crooked and cramped. You have seen pleasant towns and ugly towns, but this town is so hideous that it seems almost surreal. Surely nothing in the waking world is as depraved as this?*

Lower Scumsgrove is surrounded by marshes, which drastically restrict building space. Furthermore, it is a river port town, so large warehouse buildings and rat-infested wharves choke up one side of it. The centre is much richer, being built from stone and slate, but it is possible to walk from a rich neighbourhood to an alley filled with cut-throats in less than a minute.

This town is generally acknowledged to be one of the roughest places in all Chillhame. At its best, it is an overpriced, mean-spirited town. At its worst it is a nest of villains, with a wholly corrupt bureaucracy and many hard-living, hard-drinking riverboat men filling up the dockside taverns and starting fights. Even Crescent City is a more pleasant place to be. There seems to be a disproportionate number of half-orcs in the town. They are tolerated here, because they will usually work for low wages and they are often happy to beat people up when they are paid to.

If the Player Characters try to gain access to the Captain of the Watch or the mayor, then they will be viewed with suspicion from the start: 'What d'you want to talk to *him* for, stranger?' Worse, the town officials are all in the pocket of the Guild of Merchants that owns most of Lower Scumsgrove. Many of the goods that would not make it into Saragost (such as narcotics and slaves) can be slipped into Lower Scumsgrove for the right price. Ships can hire cheap crews here and thugs can be hired for any job, no matter how messy. So long as the money changes hands, everyone is happy.

News of an impending duergar attack will be met with initial contempt. This will quickly turn to anger as the various gangs wonder what the Player Characters are trying to achieve. News like this is bad for business and could ruin Lower Scumsgrove's reputation as a good, quiet place to do a bit of shady dealing. The last thing the town needs, in the eyes of the residents, is a bunch of armoured warriors from Saragost fortifying the place.

### Lower Scumsgrove Statistics

**Size:** Large town

**Population:** 4,000

**Racial Mix:** 90% human, 8% half-orc, 2% other races

**GP Limit:** 5,000

**Power Centre:** The Guild of Merchants (LE) who control the nominal head of the city, Mayor Hodgkiss (LE)

**Captain of the Watch:** Vanson Braddock (LE)

### Location: The Taverns

The dockside taverns can offer services of Common to Poor levels, for 150% of the listed price. They are full of sailors and dockhands looking for work. One would expect such a place to be full of thieves, but there are practically no rogues in Lower Scumsgrove; the constabulary mercilessly roots them out and Vanson Braddock deals with them.

### Information: Local Gossip

If the Player Characters make an effort to blend in and to find out what the word on the street is, they can gain the following information. This requires a successful Gather Information check.

#### DC 10:

- The Guild of Merchants is really in control of the city.
- Mayor Hodgkiss is 'as dodgy as a clay gold piece.' If you are arrested, you can usually bribe your way out of trouble, though theft is not tolerated and damaging Guild property is unacceptable.
- A sadist called Vanson Braddock runs the city watch.

#### DC 15:

- The Guild of Merchants makes a lot of money by importing illegal goods and contraband that would not be allowed in at Saragost. This has made the guild rich enough to buy off the authorities.
- Mayor Hodgkiss is addicted to vice; the Guild sends him girls and fine wines as little bonuses for being a good boy, though they never go in through the front door.
- Vanson Braddock used to be a back-alley brawler. He often murders prisoners in the cells in elaborate ways, knowing that nobody will dare ask what happened to them.

#### DC 20:

- There is a secret doorway at the back of the town hall. It leads directly to the Mayor's rooms. He uses it to receive 'special deliveries' and to sneak out for covert meetings with the Guild of Merchants.
- There is a warehouse in the dock region with a secret dungeon full of slaves, unloaded in the middle of the night so nobody will see.

If a Gather Information check fails by more than five, the following misinformation is gleaned:

- The Guild of Merchants are all undead vampire lords. Their chambers in the guild house are specially proofed against sunlight. The people you see claiming to be the guild are just mortals that they have *charmed* into helping them.

It is almost inevitable that a fight will break out in a tavern if the Player Characters remain there for long enough to make a Gather Information check. The Player Character who is making the check is relatively safe, as he is buying drinks and being sociable. Other Player Characters who have no obvious business in the tavern must roleplay out their time there. The thugs are not interested in avoiding conflict – on the contrary, they *want* to start trouble, as it is their idea of entertainment.



If the Games Master needs an excuse for a fight to start, have one of the tavern residents say to a Player Character, 'Are you looking at me?' If the Player Character says 'yes', then the resident will take offence, claiming that staring at people is ill-mannered and demanding a fight to settle the issue. If the Player Character says 'no', then the resident will take even more offence, asking if there is something wrong with him, or if the Player Character thinks he is not worth looking at. There is simply no right answer.

**Typical tavern thug:** Human warrior 1; CR ½; Medium humanoid; HD 1d8+4 (8 hp); Init +0; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 13 (+3 studded leather), touch 10, flat-footed 13; Base attack/grapple +1/+2; Atk shortsword +2 melee (1d6+1/19-20x2); Full Atk shortsword +2 melee (1d6+1/19-20x2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL CN; SV: Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8.

*Skills & Feats:* Climb +2, Ride +1, Swim +2; Power Attack, Toughness

*Equipment & Treasure:* Studded leather armour, short sword, 5 gp

### Non-Player Character: Mayor Hodgkiss (EL 2)

The mayor is a corpulent swindler who does exactly what the Guild of Merchants tells him to. He is supposed to govern the town as a dependency of Saragost but has no interest in enforcing

the law, only in keeping up appearances. So long as he sends the tax revenue in on time, no questions are asked.

Mayor Hodgkiss lives and works in the town hall building. There is a secret staircase at the back that runs straight to his chambers, which the prostitutes and wine delivery men use.

**Mayor Hodgkiss:** Human aristocrat 3; CR 2; Medium humanoid; HD 3d8-3 (14 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 *ring of protection*), touch 13, flat-footed 12; Base attack/grapple +2/+2; Atk +2 *rapier* +4 melee (1d6+2/18-20x2 plus poison); Full Atk +2 *rapier* +4 melee (1d6+2/18-20x2 plus poison); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL LE; SV: Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 8, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 15.

*Skills & Feats:* Appraise +4, Bluff +7, Diplomacy +7, Forgery +4, Gather Information +5, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (local) +4, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +4, Sense Motive +7, Spot +5; Iron Will, Negotiator, Persuasive

*Equipment & Treasure:* Rich robes of state (800 gp), signet ring (800 gp), mayoral gold chain (1,500 gp), +2 *rapier*, *ring of protection* +2, pot of giant wasp venom (10 doses).

*Note:* Mayor Hodgkiss uses a poisoned rapier. He smears it with giant wasp venom. This has a saving throw DC of 18, with 1d6 Dexterity primary damage and 1d6 Dexterity secondary damage.

*Description:* A mountain of flesh in scarlet robes trimmed with ermine.

### Non-Player Character Group: The Constabulary (EL 4+)

The town watch in Lower Scumsgrove is thoroughly corrupt. While arrests are frequent, it is understood by all that a suitable bribe will result in the 'crime' being forgotten about. Assault, rape and similar crimes can all be erased. Theft, however, is not permitted, as it is bad for business. The Guild of Merchants is not willing to allow rogues on its territory.

The one sure way to get yourself thrown in the cells is to interfere with the operations of the Guild of Merchants. A minor infraction will get you whipped, as a warning; persistent meddling will result in you being shipped to the mainland, to be thrown into the prison of Castelmare and forgotten about.

The Captain of the Watch is Vanson Braddock. He used to be a back-alley fighter until Hodgkiss gave him a badge and a uniform and put him to work breaking heads on the other side of the law. He rules over his watchmen with sadistic pleasure and is known to torture prisoners; he sees it as one of the perks of the job.

**Vanson Braddock:** Human fighter 3; CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 3d10+3(24 hp); Init +1; Spd 20 ft (4 squares); AC 18 (+1 Dex, +5 masterwork breastplate, +2 masterwork heavy steel shield), touch 11, flat-footed 17; Base attack/grapple +4/+6; Atk +1 *longsword* +7 melee (1d8+3/18-20x2); Full Atk +1 *longsword* +7 melee (1d8+3/18-20x2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL LE; SV: Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +0; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 14.



*Skills & Feats:* Cleave, Improved Sunder, Lightning Reflexes, PowerAttack, Weapon Focus (longsword)

*Equipment & Treasure:* +1 longsword, 3 potions of cure light wounds, masterwork breastplate, masterwork heavy steel shield

*Note:* Vanson is sensible enough to back off and use a healing potion if he is getting hurt.

*Description:* Braddock has hollow cheeks, startling blue eyes and a habit of grinning slowly. He has a set of false metal teeth made from mithral (stolen and melted down) to replace the ones that were smashed out of his face in his street fighting days. He never goes anywhere alone, bringing at least one watchman with him at all times.

### Location: The Guild House

The Guild of Merchants has its chambers in the old Corn Exchange building, a huge and richly decorated structure by the town square, with stained-glass windows and statues of gowned women at the corners. It is more ornate than the town hall itself.

The members of the Guild use the hall to meet in safety. The front doors are always locked and nobody ever sees anyone go in or out by that entrance. The Guild members have private tunnels from their dwellings to the guild house, constructed many years ago. Inside, the Guild house is a heavily guarded and richly furnished sanctuary. There are ten guards on every floor (use the typical watchman statistics below) and each room contains 2d6 art objects in cabinets and on stands. See *DMG* for calculating

the worth of these. The Guild has its meetings in a circular room, around a table of ironwood.

### Non-Player Character Group: The Guild of Merchants (EL 2)

Each member of the Guild is an important businessman of the town. You need to be at least an importer of goods, or own a shipping firm, in order to join. The Guild is headed by a chairman, who is elected by vote each year.

**Typical Guild member:** Human aristocrat 3; CR 2; Medium humanoid; HD 3d8-3 (14 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 *ring of protection*), touch 13, flat-footed 12; Base attack/grapple +2/+2; Atk +2 *rapier* +4 melee (1d6+2/18-20 x2 plus poison); Full Atk +2 *rapier* +4 melee (1d6+2/18-20 x2 plus poison); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL LE; SV: Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 8, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 15.

*Skills & Feats:* Appraise +4, Bluff +7, Diplomacy +7, Forgery +4, Gather Information +5, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (local) +4, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +4, Sense Motive +7, Spot +5; Iron Will, Negotiator, Persuasive

*Equipment and Treasure:* Signet ring (800 gp), +2 *rapier*, *ring of protection* +2, pot of giant wasp venom (10 doses).

### Aftermath

**If the Player Characters manage to convince Mayor Hodgkiss about the invasion:** The Mayor's reaction will be to panic. He does not want to take the information to the Guild, as he fears that he will be out of a job – he is only useful as a peacetime puppet leader. He takes the next day to liquidate all of his assets, call in some remaining favours and slip quietly away to Crescent City, where he hopes to use his underworld connections to get a position with one of the rogues' guilds. The Guild does not find out about the invasion until word reaches it from the other villages.

**Victory Points:** 0

**If the Player Characters convince the Guild of Merchants:** Should the Player Characters manage to gain access to the guild house and persuade the chairman of the Guild of the danger, they will be thanked politely for their trouble and rewarded with 1,000 gold pieces each. The Guild then petitions Saragost for direct military assistance, asking the city fathers to authorise Vanson Braddock as the town's new commander. The Guild knows that they can control Braddock as easily as they controlled Hodgkiss, who is useless to them now. Saragost promises to supply a force of soldiers to Lower Scumsgrove, upon delivery of proof of the impending invasion from the Player Characters.

**Victory Points:** 2

**If they only convince Vanson Braddock:** He goes straight to the Guild of Merchants and informs them. They, however, are not convinced immediately (interpreting this as a play for power on Braddock's part) and delay action until they have further confirmation. Braddock is told to find the Player Characters if he can and bring them to the guild house. If they go along with



### The Guild of Merchants as Allies

The Player Characters may be inclined to view the Guild as potential allies, especially if they are not of good alignment. If they throw in their lot with the Guild, then they will gain many privileges. They will not be disturbed in Lower Scumsgrove, will gain automatic immunity from any crime (so long as it can be pinned on a scapegoat) and will be able to buy goods at 70% of the listed price. They will also be able to take ship passage anywhere the Guild can reach, for free.

These rewards have a high price. They will be expected to work for the Guild, paying regular tribute to ensure 'respect' (1,000 gold pieces per month is considered adequate) and will be required to look after the Guild's interests in other cities. This will include lying under oath to cover up for Guild members, sinking ships belonging to rivals and even possibly assassinating the heads of other Guilds.

this, proceed as above, only without the reward, since the Player Characters did not come of their own accord.

**If they fail to warn the town at all:** When the duergar army comes, the gates are thrown open to them and the town is taken without a fight. The drow take over the Guild of Merchants, enjoying the exotic delights of the guild house and dominating their human 'allies' with ease. The town becomes even more decadent and corrupt than it was before. It becomes a major power base for the drow and duergar warriors in the coming war.

**Victory Points:** -2

### Event: Challenge on the Forest Border (EL 2)

This encounter can take place on either of the roads into Churney-on-the-Green that run into the forest.

*Ahead of you is a dense mass of trees, like the wall of a great green citadel, with the trunks so closely spaced that it seems inconceivable a road could pass through them. Yet, you see that the road does indeed lead into the forest, through a gap in the trees like the crack of a door left slightly open, though the path is so dark that you can see nothing past the first few yards. As you approach, you hear a strange howl from behind you on the path, like that of a wolf.*

This is Bonesplinter, one of the worgs that roam the plain. It is howling out a challenge to Corwyn, the wolf animal companion of Jass Cromlin (see below). A Knowledge (nature) skill check (DC 20) identifies this as a challenge howl. The worg has grown to hate the wolf for being the mere lapdog of a good-aligned elf and intends to tear his throat out. The worg will approach the Player Characters, tailing them as they draw closer to the wood. It will not come too close, in case it is attacked. It does not know whose side they are on, if any. Bonesplinter can speak, so will use this ability to his advantage, claiming that he is seeking an enemy and that the Player Characters are not to interfere.



The outcome of this encounter depends on the Player Characters' actions. Ultimately, the worg will goad Corwyn into coming to meet it, then the two wolves will fight it out tooth and claw. Jass will not be able to stop her companion from running off to the fight, as he can run much faster than her.

If the Player Characters help Corwyn, then Jass's attitude will be Friendly when they meet her; if they attack him, it will be Unfriendly. The worg may also attack the Player Characters if it considers them easy meat, at which point Corwyn can come to the rescue if the Games Master thinks it appropriate.

**Bonesplinter the Worg:** CR 2; Medium Magical Beast; HD 4d10+8 (30 hp); Init +2; Spd 50 ft (10 squares); AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Attack/grapple +4/+7; Atk Bite +7 melee (1d6+4); Full Atk bite +7 melee (1d6+4); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA trip; SQ darkvision 60 ft, low-light vision, scent; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 10.

**Skills & Feats:** Hide +4, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Spot +6, Survival +2\*; Alertness, Track

\*Bonesplinter gets a +4 racial bonus on Survival checks when tracking by scent.

**Trip (Ex):** A worg that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip the opponent (+3 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the worg.

**Note:** Bonesplinter can speak Common as well as Worg and Goblin.

## Churney-on-the-Green

*The town before you looks somehow strange, as if it had been grown out of the earth rather than built. None of the buildings seem to be made from stone. Green plant growth covers them up to a height of several feet. All the plants look larger than usual, as if there were some special richness to the soil here. It is uncannily quiet. There is a smell of flowers and herbs; meadowsweet, oak and apple blossom.*

People from other settlements speak of Churney as 'a bit odd. You know, not like the rest of us.' Then they smile and tap their heads knowingly. Some say 'Nice place, but I wouldn't want to live there.' This is because Churney-on-the-Green is quite unlike the other settlements of Chillhame. It is closer to a 'hippy commune' than a mediaeval town.

This town has an unusual power structure. It is supervised by the local druid, Jass Cromlin, an elven woman – one of the few non-humans on Chillhame. The reason for this is the unusual number of sacred trees close to the settlement, many of which have dryads dwelling in them. The humans of Churney are allowed to live and work here and even to take some of the woodland resources, so long as they live in close harmony with nature.

This means that the town has an extremely pagan, naturalistic atmosphere. All the buildings are made from wood and thatch and seem to be very old. Moss and climbing ivy grow over all surfaces. Some of the houses even have vast, colourful fungi growing from the wall, which nobody seems to object to. Every road has trees and lawns, which seem to be unusually lush and healthy. None of the chimneys have smoke rising from them; fires are extremely few.

Food is brought in by foraging trips into the wood, not from organised agriculture. The people of Churney have baskets of mushrooms, berries and nuts outside their houses. There is no market, since nobody needs to buy or sell anything. Everyone seems to live in a peaceful, almost stagnant state.

Churney-on-the-Green prizes its peace over everything else. The villagers do not like noise and clamour and they are greatly opposed to violence. So long as the Player Characters come in peace and do not disturb the town, they are welcome to stay a while. They will even be fed and sheltered. If the Player Characters try to mobilise the villagers into organising against the duergar attack, then they will be horrified. They are a peaceful people and have no truck with fighting. The Player Characters' only chance of convincing them is to gain an audience with the druid, Jass.

## Non-Player Character: Jass Cromlin (EL 6)

Jass is old enough to remember the legends of the Starborn and knows that the duergar threat is real (if unexpected), so the Player Characters will have a good chance of convincing her. Nonetheless, she will be furious if her village has been disturbed. If she sees the Player Characters as threats, she will attempt to neutralise the threat first (by using *entangle* spells to immobilise them) and then negotiate, but she will not try to destroy them unless they attack her or her people.

Jass likes to spend time observing newcomers in the form of a tree, using the *tree shape* spell. Her animal companion is Corwyn, a grey, friendly and rather silly-looking wolf who has such a friendly attitude (at first) that he seems at first glance to be a dog.

**Jass Cromlin:** Elven druid 6; CR 6; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 6d8-6 (24 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 17 (+2 Dex, +1 light wooden shield, +4 *leather armour* +1); Base attack/grapple +4/+5; Atk +2 *scimitar* +7 melee (1d6+3/18-20x2) or +2 *composite longbow* +7 ranged (1d8+3/x3); Full Atk +2 *scimitar* +7 melee (1d6+3/18-20x2) or +2 *composite longbow* +7 ranged (1d8+3/x3); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA spells, wild empathy, wild shape; SQ elven traits, druid abilities; AL N; SV: Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +8; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 8, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 13.

**Skills & Feats:** Concentration +5, Craft (leatherwork) +8, Diplomacy +4, Handle Animal +4, Heal +9, Knowledge (nature) +8, Listen +11, Ride +8, Spot +11, Survival +6, Swim +4; Brew Potion, Craft Magic Arms and Armour



## Churney-on-the-Green Statistics

**Size:** Small Town

**Population:** 1,200

**Racial Mix:** 90% human, 6% halfling, 2% elven

**GP Limit:** 400

**Power Centre:** Jass Cromlin (druid) (N)

*Deity and Spells Prepared:* Hernun; 0<sup>th</sup> level: *create water, cure minor wounds, light, mending, read magic*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *calm animals, entangle (x2), speak with animals*; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: *animal messenger, barkskin, bear's endurance, tree shape*; 3<sup>rd</sup> level: *call lightning, poison, sleet storm*

*Equipment & Treasure:* Light wooden shield, +1 leather armour, +2 scimitar, +2 composite longbow, *potion of cure light wounds*.

*Description:* Jass wears armour made from the pelt of a former wolf companion. Her face is shocking at first sight; she makes body jewellery from sharpened wooden thorns. Currently, she has four wooden spikes piercing her cheeks, like whiskers and one beneath her lower lip, like a labret.

**Corwyn Wolf:** Medium animal; HD 6d8+12 (39 hp); Init +2; Spd 50 ft (10 squares); AC 19 (+3 Dex, +6 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 16; Base attack/grapple +4/+6; Atk bite +7 melee (1d6+2); Full Atk bite +7 melee (1d6+2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA trip; SQ devotion, evasion, link, low-light vision, scent, share spells; AL N; SV: Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 15, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

*Skills & Feats:* Hide +2, Listen +3, Move Silently +3, Spot +3, Survival +1\*; Track<sup>B</sup>, Weapon Focus (bite)

\* Corwyn has a +4 racial bonus on survival checks when tracking by scent.

*Trip (Ex):* A wolf that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip the opponent (+4 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the wolf.

## Jass Cromlin as an Ally

Jass is potentially one of the best allies the Player Characters can have at this stage. If they win her favour, then Churney can serve as a safe haven and rest stop between adventures. Jass can also brew potions and craft items as required, so long as the appropriate price is paid.

However, allegiance is a two-way street. If the Player Characters count on Jass for help, then she will make use of them, too. This will mean doing their part to keep trouble out of Churney. The Player Characters should get used to receiving messages sent via the *animal messenger* spell, alerting them to small bands of monstrous humanoids on the outskirts of Churney that need mopping up. This is especially likely to occur as the advancing duergar army pushes the monsters of Chillhame out of their usual lairs and into settled areas.

## Aftermath

**If the Player Characters warn Churney:** Even if the people of Churney are convinced of the coming threat, they refuse to decamp to Saragost. They will not leave the sacred groves for the duergar to despoil. Instead, they will stay here and prepare a set of defences that the duergar would be wise to avoid. Jass Cromlin sends messages to her fellow druids, calling for their assistance. Walls of thorns close off the roads and the woods are filled with wild creatures. In the weeks to come, Churney becomes a key strategic location in Chillhame, closing off the access road and possibly slowing the duergar advance.

**Victory Points:** 2

**If Churney is not warned:** The duergar hate elves above all else. As they advance across Chillhame, they learn that the town is defended by an elven druid. They crucify Jass on her sacred oak, hack down the dryad trees and destroy the village of Churney-on-the-Green forever.

**Victory Points:** -2

## Hockton Barrow

*As you ride along the road, you see a wooden signpost. The sign reads 'Hockton Barrow, ½ Mile'. What is unusual is that the sign is in the form of a huge wooden arrow, carved from a tree trunk, complete with flights and head. The craftsmanship is outstanding.*

Hockton Barrow is close to the edge of a large wood, mainly composed of yew trees. Yew wood is perfect for one craft above all – bowmaking. The wood's stretchy, elastic heart and tough, hornlike outer layers make it ideal bow material, almost the equivalent of a composite bow. The town is thus famous for its bowyers and its archers. Almost every citizen of Hockton Barrow, with very few exceptions, is an archer. All able-bodied citizens of 15 years and over are required to practice their archery on the village green every Sunday morning.

The town is noted for its good manners as well as its archery. The citizens have a strong sense of civic pride, hospitality and mutual respect. Strangers who keep to these traditions are made welcome, while troublemakers are ejected at the point of several dozen bows at once.

## Location: The Hedgerows

For countless years, Hockton Barrow has been defended by thick, high walls – not of stone but of thorny hedge. These encircle the town, which stands on a hill. There are several gaps in these hedges, through which traffic can pass into and out of the town. From above, the concentric circles of the hedges make the whole town look something like an archery target.

Treat these walls as a static *wall of thorns*, with the exception that the hedge can be damaged by fire and is susceptible to spells that affect plants.

## Hockton Barrow Statistics

**Size:** Small Town

**Population:** 1,900

**Racial Mix:** 93% human, 6% elven, 1% other races

**GP Limit:** 400

**Power Centre:** Headsman Gorming (Exp 4) and the Circle of Briars

**Executive Authority:** Captain Lucie Jabril (War 4)

## Location: The Two Taverns

Hockton Barrow is split by a rivalry – sometimes friendly, sometimes not – between the taverns on either side of its village green. These are the Green Man in the west and the Royal Feathers in the east. The Green Man takes its name because the legendary ranger Cameron Fand, the Chillhame equivalent of Robin Hood, was born there, while the Royal Feathers' claim to fame comes from its former owner having supplied the masterwork ammunition to the King of Jahanum himself, decades ago. The Green Man is a rough-and-tumble kind of a place, unpretentious and unsubtle, while the Royal Feathers prides itself on its cleanliness and quality.

## Plot Event: The Games

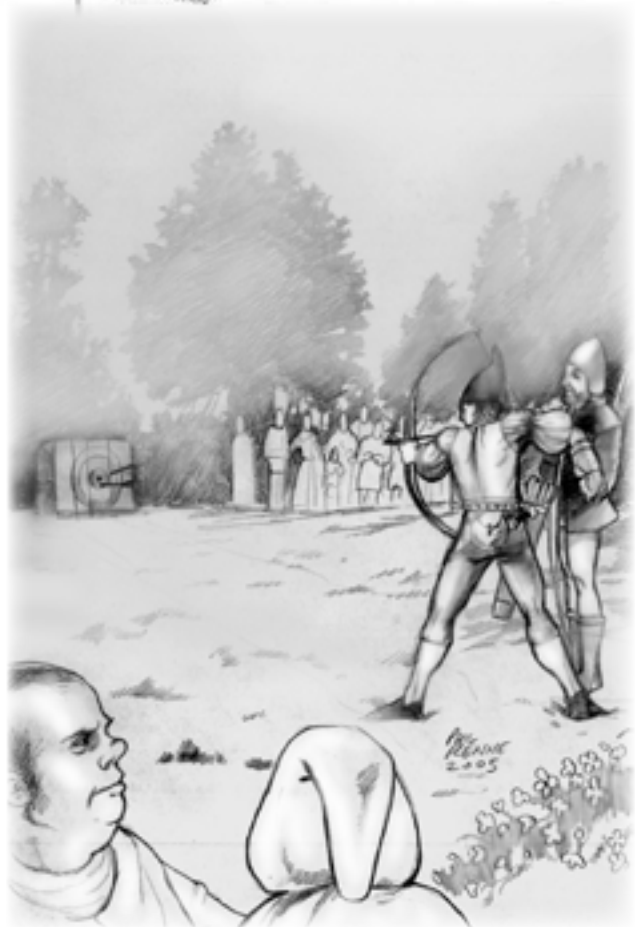
When the Player Characters arrive, Hockton Barrow is preparing for the quarterly Games, an event at which the taverns compete at one another at various sports – tug of war, staff fighting and of course archery. The town is so caught up with these that the Player Characters will have to wait for the Games to be over before they can attempt to talk with a town official.

Most of the competitions are closed to all but residents of the town. There is, however, one contest that is traditionally open to all comers. This is called the Master's Bow, as the best-crafted longbow that season is magically enchanted and offered as the prize for outstanding marksmanship. This is a *+1 composite longbow*, engraved with decorations.

The Player Characters are barred from taking part in the events which involve the taverns facing off against one another but if they have a taste for competition, they can find villagers willing to take them on. The spirit of the contest is in the air and a stranger who is a good sport is always guaranteed to find willing challengers. Betting on the outcome spices the game up. Wagers of up to 300 gold pieces are known, though most of them are much lower. The use of magic to influence the outcome is considered cheating and will result in the miscreant being put in the pillory and pelted with eggs.

Typical games include the following:

- **Wrestling:** Both contestants remove all armour and weapons and engage in a grapple. The first to pin his opponent for two rounds in a row wins.
- **Arm Wrestling:** This is a simple opposed Strength check. The first contestant to win two opposed checks in a row is the winner. A more sadistic variant involves a candle being placed on each side of the table, so that every time the opponent's hand is pushed into the flame, he suffers a burn.



When using this variant, each lost Strength check means that the loser must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 15) or suffer one point of fire damage and one point of Dexterity damage, to a maximum of five points of each.

- **Hand Stabbing:** The contestants must place their hands on the table before them, fingers spread and stab the spaces between the fingers with a dagger, left to right and back again. This requires a Sleight of Hand check (DC 20). Failure on the check deals regular dagger damage, without the character's Strength modifier being added, along with a point of Dexterity damage. The wager is that the character cannot perform the stunt without hurting himself. There is a variant in which the challenger's hand is used instead of the dagger wielder's own. In this case, if the dagger wielder wounds the challenger, he must pay double the stated wager.
- **Drinking a Yard of Ale:** A 'yard' is a glass vessel three feet long, with a bulb at one end and a trumpet-like flared end at the other. It holds about three pints of beer. The game consists in drinking a whole yard as quickly as possible without spilling any (you must pay for it first – this costs two silver pieces). To drink the yard, you must make Constitution ability score checks until the total result equals 35. A check result of less than ten means no progress that round and the result is not counted towards your total. A check result of less than five means a spillage and thus a disqualification. In contests, drinkers race to see who can finish their yard first.

If the Player Characters wish to take part in the Master's Bow contest, they must pay an entrance fee of 50 gold, to help cover the cost of having the bow enchanted. They must then enter the qualifying round, which involves hitting a simple target at a range of 200 feet. Contestants may use their own bows, so long as they are not magical; this, however, is considered a matter of honour, as the judges do not have any way to detect magic.

The qualification target has AC 14 (+4 size) and the range penalty will depend on the type of weapon used. Most contestants use longbows, though the Player Characters may use shortbows if they prefer. Each contestant is allowed three shots and only needs to hit the target once to qualify.

The next round is a scoring round. Contestants are divided into groups of equal size. Again, the target has AC 14 (+4 size) and is 200 feet away. Each contestant has three shots. Each shot is rated by how close to the bullseye it is. In game terms, each point by which the attack roll exceeded the required AC counts as a point scored, with misses counting for nothing. The Player Characters are shooting in competition against other Player Characters here, though the Games Master can roll 2d6 for each Non-Player Character's score to save time. The overall winner of this round from each group goes on to the final.

In the final round, the archers shoot in competition as they did last time, trying to get as high a score as possible with three arrows. This time, a much smaller target is used, which has AC 18 (+8 size); again, it is 200 feet away. The same scoring system is used as for the last round.

### Plot Event: The Hooded Man (EL 5)

Whether the Player Characters are involved or not, one of the contestants in the final round of archery is a short, slender, black-haired man with craggy features who speaks in monosyllables. He is dressed entirely in dark green leather, with a black hooded cloak (this is to keep the sun out of his light-sensitive eyes). A Spot check (DC 20) reveals that he has a small, wooden replica of an archery target on a cord around his neck. With a smirk, he offers to shoot last of all, letting the other contestants go before him. When it is his turn, he fires one shot as normal. For the second, he quickly touches the wooden target around his neck, then loses his arrow. Anyone who has not noticed the pendant does not realise that he is touching it.

The stranger is casting *true strike* as a silent spell. The wooden target is the focus for the spell. It is not magical in itself, so will not radiate magic. Each of his shots thus has a +20 insight bonus to the attack roll. Before each shot, he puts his hand to his target, casts the spell, then fires. Remember to check for arcane spell failure. The stranger is wearing leather armour, so it is a 10% chance. To an outside observer, it does not look like he is casting a spell at all. The Player Characters may know differently. Any Player Character who can see the arrows strike home may make a Spellcraft check (DC 21) to identify this as the result of *true strike*.

**If the stranger wins:** He ignores the polite applause he is given and walks to the judges to claim his prize. He holds it in the air



for a moment, studying it, then breaks the beautiful bow across his knee. The crowd gasps. He drops the pieces to the ground, sneers and says the one word 'Trash'. He then turns and strolls away, walking out of the village with a half-smile on his face. If anyone follows him or tries to accost him, he will ignore them, though if attacked outright he will defend himself.

**If the Player Characters challenge the stranger:** He tosses them his wooden archery target, claiming that he carries it for sentimental value and that they are welcome to examine it. It does not radiate magic; the judges do not have enough knowledge of spells to identify it as a material focus. Anyone trying to argue the case must succeed at an opposed Diplomacy check with the stranger to prove the point.

Duplicating the stranger's feat by using the same spell (or similar clever tricks) adds a +4 circumstance bonus to this check. If the stranger is deemed to have cheated, he will mutter something under his breath, tell the Player Characters that 'they have not heard the end of this' and stalk away. He will hide further down the road and attempt to pick them off at range with his expert bowshots.

**If a fight breaks out:** The stranger is monstrously arrogant and does not think he has anything to fear from a bunch of humans. So long as he is facing opponents he believes to be weak, in a situation where he has the upper hand, he will happily kill them. If he believes he is in danger, he will immediately cast *expeditious retreat* defensively and try to flee, using his scroll of *invisibility* when he is far enough away.

At least five of the good citizens of Hockton Barrow will try to pitch in to help the Player Characters if they start a fight,

though there is not much they can do with bows if the stranger is surrounded by Player Characters. Use the Hockton Barrow Militia statistics for the helpful citizens (see below).

**The Stranger (Oachim Hazai):** Drow fighter 1/ wizard 3; CR 5; HD 1d10+3d4 (13 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 *leather* +2), touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +2/+3; Atk masterwork rapier +4 melee (1d6+1/18-20 plus poison) or masterwork composite longbow +4 ranged (1d8+1 plus poison); Full Atk masterwork rapier +4 melee (1d6+1/18-20 plus poison) or masterwork composite longbow +4 ranged (1d8+1 plus poison); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA poison, spell-like abilities, spells; SQ Drow traits, spell resistance 15; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 18, Wis 8, Cha 16.

*Skills & Feats:* Concentration +6, Decipher Script +10, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +7, Knowledge (history) +7, Knowledge (nature) +7, Knowledge (religion) +7, Knowledge (the planes) +7, Profession (spy) +4, Ride +3, Spellcraft +10; Combat Casting, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell

### Oachim's Letter

The following letter is in Oachim's pouch. It is written in Undercommon, in a flowing hand. It was sealed with a black wax blob that has since been broken. The blob has an 'A' crest stamped into it, surrounded by a wreath of thorns. Delivering this letter to the Saragost Council is worth 2 Victory Points. It reads as follows:

*Greetings of Night and Fire!*

*Since you clearly hanker to visit the upper world before the rest of us, my nephew, then by all means do so. You have my blessing to visit the human settlements and ensure that none is forewarned of our little friends' arrival. Deal with rumours in the usual way – laughter is much more effective than a slit throat.*

*Be especially sure to pass any pertinent information along to our agents in Saragost. Be diplomatic about it, damn you – they have been in service longer than yourself and are not likely to appreciate a smarmy brat parading his expertise about. We are all of House Arakh, remember, from the highest to the lowest and respect is our watchword.*

*Most importantly, ensure that the Circle has not been interfered with, if you can. I have had dreams – troubling dreams, which cannot be dismissed as so many dust-visions. There is nothing in that part of the world but rocks, fish and inbred peasants, so our course should be clear. Yet I wonder. I wonder.*

*Send word to me often. Fail, and I disown you. It is only what you would expect.*

*Your affectionate Uncle,*

A.

*Drow Traits:* Drow have darkvision out to 120 feet, and abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight spell*) blinds drow for 1 round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area. Oachim is using his hood to keep the sun out of his eyes

*Spell-like Abilities (Su):* Oachim can use the following spell-like abilities each once per day: *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*. Caster level 4<sup>th</sup>.

*Spells Prepared:* 0<sup>th</sup> level: *acid splash*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *message*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *disguise self*, *expeditious retreat*, *sleep*; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: *true strike (silent)* (x2)

*Equipment & Treasure:* Masterwork rapier, masterwork composite longbow, 20 arrows, +2 *leather armour*, scroll of *invisibility (CL 3)*, 450 gp, letter (see boxed text).

The Stranger is actually Oachim Hazai, a drow agent who is scouting the upper world in disguise, making sure that the towns and villages know nothing of the coming invasion. So far, he has managed to avoid drawing attention to himself but his supreme arrogance and wish to see humans humiliated has gotten the better of him. The presumptuous little humans of Hockton Barrow are *proud* of their prowess with the bow and Oachim wants to smash not only that pride but the symbol of it – the Master's Bow. This will give his jaded spirit a momentary thrill.

His identity and true appearance are concealed with a *disguise self* spell. He appears to be human while the spell lasts. This is a total of 30 minutes, five of which elapse before the contest begins. The contest takes 20 minutes, so he only has five minutes' grace before his natural form is resumed.

### Non-Player Character: Captain Jabril (EL 3)

Captain Jabril is in charge of the militia. She is Hockton Barrow born and bred and one of the only people who can drink at either tavern freely without being seen as a turncoat.

**Captain Lucie Jabril:** Human warrior 4; CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 4d8+4 (25 hp); Init +3; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 16 (+3 studded leather, +3 Dex), touch 13, flat-footed 13; Base attack/grapple +4/+5; Atk masterwork longsword +4 melee (1d8+1/19-20x2) or +1 *composite longbow* +9 ranged (1d8+2/x3); Full Atk masterwork longsword +4 melee (1d8+1/19-20x2) or +1 *composite longbow* +9 ranged (1d8+2/x3); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL LN; SV: Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 8.

*Skills & Feats:* Climb +5, Intimidate +3, Ride +7, Spot +3, Swim +4; Dodge, Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (longbow)

*Equipment & Treasure:* Studded leather armour, masterwork longsword, +1 *composite longbow* (+1 Str bonus), 20 arrows, spyglass, alarm whistle

*Description:* Lucie is tall and thin as a beanpole, easily mistaken for a man (especially when she is in armour) until you draw close.

## Non-Player Character Group: The Hockton Barrow Militia (EL 1/2+)

Hockton Barrow does not have a police force, because it does not need one. There is a militia made up of volunteers from the citizenry. These men and women have no more obvious sign of office than a green sash. They patrol the area around the town day and night. This sense of civic duty and the ease of armed response means that Hockton Barrow has one of the lowest rates of crime anywhere in Chillhame.

**Typical Hockton Barrow Militiaman:** Human warrior 1; CR 1/2; Medium humanoid; HD 1d8 (8 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 14 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather), touch 11, flat-footed 13; Base attack/grapple +1/+2; Atk longsword +2 melee (1d8+1/19-20x2) or composite longbow +3 ranged (1d8+1/x3); Full Atk longsword +2 melee (1d8+1/19-20x2) or composite longbow +3 ranged (1d8+1/x3); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL LN; SV: Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 9.

**Skills & Feats:** Climb +2, Intimidate +1, Ride +2; Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (longbow)

**Equipment & Treasure:** Studded leather armour, longsword, composite longbow (+1 Str bonus), 20 arrows

## Non-Player Character Group: The Circle of Briars

This is the traditional name given to the Hockton Barrow town council, currently headed by Headsman Gorming. It refers to the thorny briar hedges that protect the town on its outskirts. The council is elected each year by the townspeople and is made up of retired militiamen, members of the craft guilds and those who have done exceptional service in the past. It is limited to nine members.

Headsman Gorming is intrigued by news of a possible invasion. Hockton Barrow can supply archers to help fortify the northern villages, giving the duergar a run for their money. If the Player Characters have already assisted in the capture or slaying of Oachim Hazai (see above) then Gorming will not need any further persuasion that the invasion is imminent.

## Aftermath

**If the Player Characters succeed in warning Hockton Barrow:** Headsman Gorming will authorise Captain Jabril to form scouting patrols, who will rove over the surrounding countryside and report back any intelligence they gather. Furthermore, the Player Characters may all collect a masterwork composite bow (long or short) if they have any use for one, along with as much ammunition as they can carry, with the town's gratitude. Caravans of stockpiled bows and ammunition are dispatched for Saragost, to help the archers of that city fortify the walls. These would have been sent anyway, but not for another month, when the total requested amount was complete. By sending the completed weapons early, Hockton Barrow gives Saragost a vital boost to its defence.

Expertly crafted roadblocks and defensive barricades are set up in days and Hockton Barrow becomes a killing ground for the duergar troops. They are forced to skirt around it, negotiating the Caulksmere Marshes instead of the firm ground.

**Victory Points:** +3

**If Hockton Barrow is not warned:** The duergar still suffer losses when they pass through this area but they are not anything like as heavy as they would otherwise have been. The archers take to the hills, picking off duergar warriors when they get the chance and acting as a guerrilla army. Most importantly, the stockpiled weapons are never sent to Saragost, leaving the guards on the walls short of ammunition and quality bows.

**Victory Points:** -2

## Event: Ogre in the Hedgerow (EL 3)

On the periphery of the town, the Player Characters catch sight of a hulking figure by one of the defensive hedge walls. It is a mucky yellow colour and appears to be hacking at the hedge with a scythe, trying to make a hole in it. This is an ogre, Brubnutch, that has had what it thinks is a cunning plan. It is attempting to make a secret side entrance into the town, through which it can sneak at a later time. If the Player Characters interrupt it, it will turn on them in fury.

**Variant:** For even more challenge, give Brubnutch a companion, Crug. Crug has gone to fetch ale for the two of them from their lair in the hills, then he will take his turn at the scything. Crug arrives shortly after the Player Characters have finished off Brubnutch. The Games Master can time this event as required, either giving the Player Characters a chance to cast healing spells and so on, or just moving straight from one combat into the next. Give Crug identical statistics to Brubnutch.

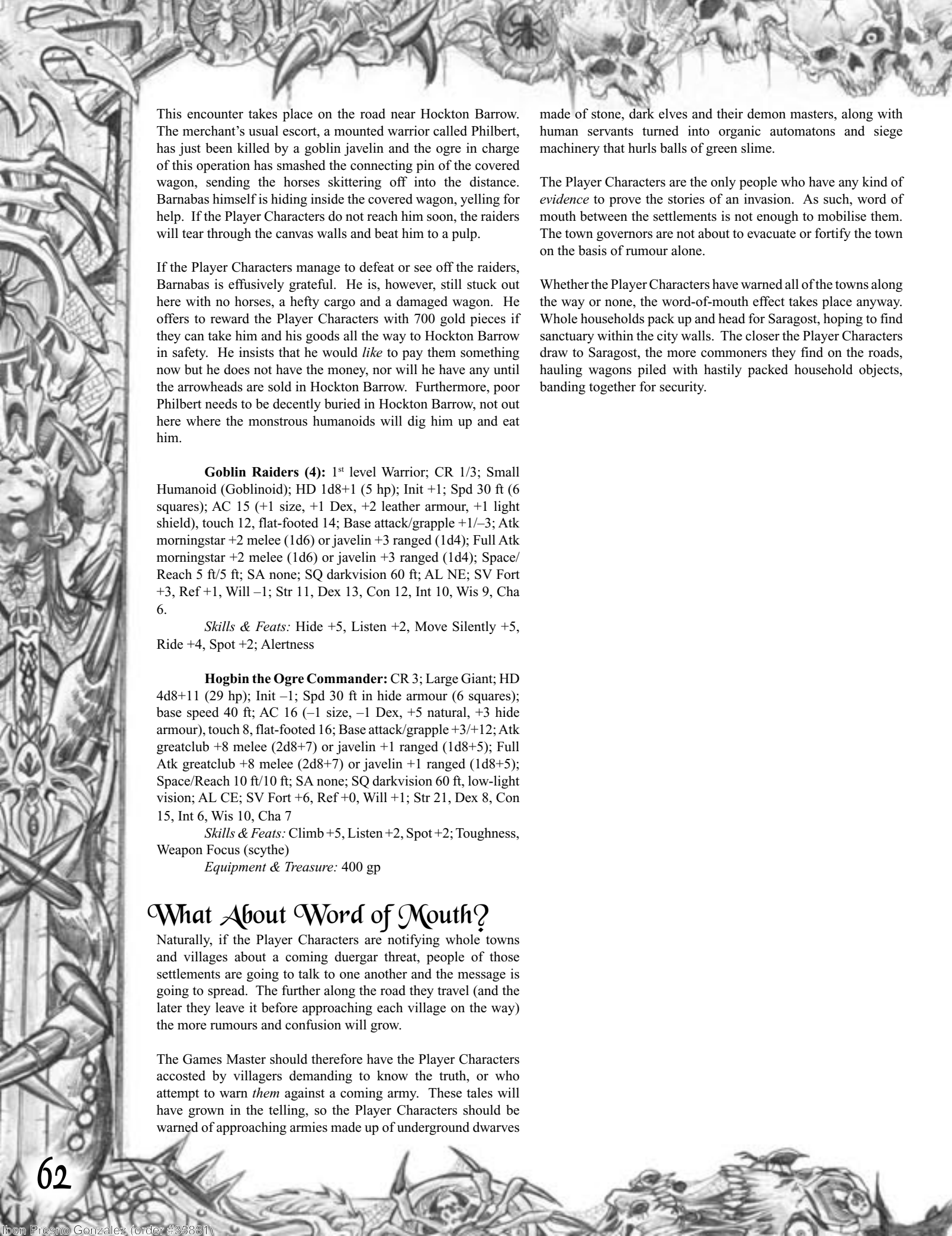
**Brubnutch the Ogre:** CR 3; Large Giant; HD 4d8+11 (29 hp); Init -1; Spd 30 ft in hide armour (6 squares); base speed 40 ft; AC 16 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +5 natural, +3 hide armour), touch 8, flat-footed 16; Base attack/grapple +3/+12; Atk large scythe +8 melee (2d6+7/x4) or javelin +1 ranged (1d8+5); Full Atk large scythe +8 melee (2d6+7/x4) or javelin +1 ranged (1d8+5); Space/Reach 10 ft/10 ft; SA none; SQ darkvision 60 ft, low-light vision; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 21, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 7

**Skills & Feats:** Climb +5, Listen +2, Spot +2; Toughness, Weapon Focus (scythe)

**Equipment & Treasure:** 300 gp

## Event: Merchant under Attack (EL 4)

The Player Characters encounter a travelling merchant, Barnabas Jessop, who is taking his cargo of steel arrowheads from the foundry town of Brant up to Hockton Barrow so that they can be attached to arrows. He makes a regular supply run this time every month and some of the monstrous humanoids in the area (who are tired of being shot at) have grown wise to this. They decide to mount an attack on Barnabas, reasoning that no arrowheads means no arrows.



This encounter takes place on the road near Hockton Barrow. The merchant's usual escort, a mounted warrior called Philbert, has just been killed by a goblin javelin and the ogre in charge of this operation has smashed the connecting pin of the covered wagon, sending the horses skittering off into the distance. Barnabas himself is hiding inside the covered wagon, yelling for help. If the Player Characters do not reach him soon, the raiders will tear through the canvas walls and beat him to a pulp.

If the Player Characters manage to defeat or see off the raiders, Barnabas is effusively grateful. He is, however, still stuck out here with no horses, a hefty cargo and a damaged wagon. He offers to reward the Player Characters with 700 gold pieces if they can take him and his goods all the way to Hockton Barrow in safety. He insists that he would *like* to pay them something now but he does not have the money, nor will he have any until the arrowheads are sold in Hockton Barrow. Furthermore, poor Philbert needs to be decently buried in Hockton Barrow, not out here where the monstrous humanoids will dig him up and eat him.

**Goblin Raiders (4):** 1<sup>st</sup> level Warrior; CR 1/3; Small Humanoid (Goblinoid); HD 1d8+1 (5 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 15 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +2 leather armour, +1 light shield), touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +1/-3; Atk morningstar +2 melee (1d6) or javelin +3 ranged (1d4); Full Atk morningstar +2 melee (1d6) or javelin +3 ranged (1d4); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ darkvision 60 ft; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 6.

*Skills & Feats:* Hide +5, Listen +2, Move Silently +5, Ride +4, Spot +2; Alertness

**Hogbin the Ogre Commander:** CR 3; Large Giant; HD 4d8+11 (29 hp); Init -1; Spd 30 ft in hide armour (6 squares); base speed 40 ft; AC 16 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +5 natural, +3 hide armour), touch 8, flat-footed 16; Base attack/grapple +3/+12; Atk greatclub +8 melee (2d8+7) or javelin +1 ranged (1d8+5); Full Atk greatclub +8 melee (2d8+7) or javelin +1 ranged (1d8+5); Space/Reach 10 ft/10 ft; SA none; SQ darkvision 60 ft, low-light vision; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 21, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 7

*Skills & Feats:* Climb +5, Listen +2, Spot +2; Toughness, Weapon Focus (scythe)

*Equipment & Treasure:* 400 gp

## What About Word of Mouth?

Naturally, if the Player Characters are notifying whole towns and villages about a coming duergar threat, people of those settlements are going to talk to one another and the message is going to spread. The further along the road they travel (and the later they leave it before approaching each village on the way) the more rumours and confusion will grow.

The Games Master should therefore have the Player Characters accosted by villagers demanding to know the truth, or who attempt to warn *them* against a coming army. These tales will have grown in the telling, so the Player Characters should be warned of approaching armies made up of underground dwarves

made of stone, dark elves and their demon masters, along with human servants turned into organic automatons and siege machinery that hurls balls of green slime.

The Player Characters are the only people who have any kind of *evidence* to prove the stories of an invasion. As such, word of mouth between the settlements is not enough to mobilise them. The town governors are not about to evacuate or fortify the town on the basis of rumour alone.

Whether the Player Characters have warned all of the towns along the way or none, the word-of-mouth effect takes place anyway. Whole households pack up and head for Saragost, hoping to find sanctuary within the city walls. The closer the Player Characters draw to Saragost, the more commoners they find on the roads, hauling wagons piled with hastily packed household objects, banding together for security.



# Saragost

## Summary

On reaching the main city of Saragost, the Player Characters encounter the first of the drow's attempts to stop them – an agent on the City Watch, who tries to lure them into an ambush. Once this is dealt with, they must rouse the city council, who are receptive to their message. They have a chance to rest and to buy equipment. In the meantime, the conspiracy within the Council plots against them. Events are set in motion that may land one or more of them in jail, from which they must somehow escape.

The Player Characters are told of the Lost Villages, settlements from which there has been no word for some time. They, too, must be warned – if indeed there is anyone left to warn, for the duergar may have taken the settlements already. Furthermore, each Lost Village ought to be contributing troops to the defence of Saragost. At a time like this, every soldier counts.

## Plot Event: The Mailed Rider

*There is a man ahead of you on the road, dressed in gleaming chainmail, a helmet and a long purple cape. The horse that he rides bears ornamental barding and the shield he carries has a coat-of-arms blazoned on it.*

A Knowledge (nobility and royalty) or bardic knowledge check (DC 15) identifies the coat-of-arms as the crest of the City of Saragost. If the Player Characters come close enough for the rider to see them clearly, he will hail them and ride over. His manner is friendly; he asks if they are the travellers who have been causing such a stir up and down the island. Once he is certain of their identity, he announces himself as Captain Severin of the Westward Watch and declares 'I've been sent to escort you to Saragost. The city council is waiting to speak with you.'

This much is true. He is indeed a Captain of the Watch. He is also a traitor. The drow already have agents in Saragost, working in secret to prepare the city for invasion. These agents have noticed that word has gotten out far too early and are determined to silence the Player Characters before they can do any more harm. They have dispatched a trusted lieutenant, Hugh Severin, to intercept the Player Characters and lead them into a trap. If the Player Characters are willing to trust him, he will ride up the road with them towards the city. He will answer questions as they go.

If the Player Characters ask why they need an escort, Captain Severin will explain that the gates are choked up with 'poor souls' who are desperate to get into the city. Without him there to vouch for them, the Player Characters might be stuck at the gates for days before they gained admittance. Moreover, the Captain can take them straight to the Council, who are waiting to give them an audience.



If he is asked why these people are not being allowed in, he will sigh and explain that it is Saragost policy not to admit anyone who cannot contribute to the economy. 'What that means is, the commoners get taxed to build a city so fine they'll never get to see it, much less live in it.'

If asked what preparations are being made for war, he will grin. 'We might not look like we're ready, but just you wait. Those walls hold a lot of archers. Those duergar come near here and we'll fill 'em more full of barbs than a mantichore's arse.'

Captain Severin is an accomplished liar. If the Player Characters are suspicious, he will nod and tell them that they have every right to be – so would he be, in their shoes. He assures them that the guards at the gate will vouch for him, if they have any remaining qualms.

## Location: The Outskirts of Saragost

*You can hear the cry of gulls and see tall walls of ancient stone in the distance. Above the battlements rise towers, steeples and high sloped roofs. This must be your destination, the seaport of Saragost, capital of the island of Chillhame. As you*

*draw nearer, you see a mass of tents and wagons clustered around the closest gate, like flotsam washed up by the tide. There must be hundreds of people camped out here, unable to get into the city. There can only be one explanation for this – these people have heard the tales of a coming army. They are trying to reach the safety of Saragost but the city has closed its doors to them.*

These people are refugees from the towns and villages of Chillhame, denied entrance to the city because of strict rules that govern admission. Saragost, being a walled city that is already heavily built up, only has so much space to go around. The city is not admitting anyone unless they have a useful trade, at least 50 gold pieces to spend, or can prove that they have legitimate business in the city. Anyone else is deemed to be a 'drain on the economy' and denied entrance. The people camped up outside Saragost are almost all farmers, fishermen and wood crafters, whose skills are next to useless in the big city. Warriors, healers and spellcasters are all welcome.

If the Player Characters pass among the people, offers ring out. Destitute farmers try to sell them furniture from their homes or bags of barley, trying desperately to raise the fifty gold pieces they need to buy themselves admission. If the Player Characters have been warning the villages on the way, then eventually one

of the people recognises them. They are then buried under a mob of commoners who demand to know more, even if they have already been told all there is to know.

**Gaining Admission Without Severin:** If the Player Characters are not in Captain Severin's company for whatever reason, then they must negotiate with the guards to gain admission. They must either have at least 50 gold pieces in coin, or be able to prove that they practice a useful trade. This will not be difficult for most Player Characters but they will still have to wait their turn. There is a long line of petitioners in front of them. If they wait it out, it takes 1d4+1 hours for them to reach the guards. Depending on their time of arrival, this may mean that night has fallen and the Council chambers will be closed. This results in a -1 victory point penalty, because of the delay.

**Sneaking In:** The Player Characters may try to gain entry to Saragost by stealth, such as by riding under the goods in the back of a wagon or by some magical means. The success or failure of these attempts can be resolved in game – if the Player Characters are caught, they will be arrested immediately and taken to the Wharf Gaol (see below). Attempting to enter Saragost illegally is a crime. See the section entitled 'On The Wrong Side Of The Law' below.

### *Plot Event: The Ambush (EL 4, 5 or 6)*

Captain Severin's plan is to lead the Player Characters towards Saragost so that they can see the congestion at the main gate, then take them round to the eastern gate. This, he explains, is to prevent them being mobbed by the peasants and to avoid any assassins that might be waiting for them in the crowd. The eastern gate opens on to a road that runs along the coast rather than inland and is kept closed between sunset and sunrise, so it is less popular with the commoners.

The group passes through the eastern gate without difficulty. The area beyond is a dockside sprawl, with the usual teetering wooden housing and atmosphere of danger. Captain Severin explains that this way is longer, but safer. He leads the party up a side street with abandoned houses on each side. Once they are half way up, the ambush begins.

What happens next depends on how much the Player Characters notice. There are human agents of the drow stationed at the windows of the abandoned houses, ready to open fire with their poisoned crossbows.

This is a tough encounter, more dangerous than the Player Characters will be used to at this level. However, it is not intended to be a wipeout. The total number of agents thus depends on the size and level of the party as follows:

- Average Party Level 2:** Hugh and 2 agents
- Average Party Level 3:** Hugh and 3 agents
- Average Party Level 4:** Hugh and 5 agents





Make a Hide check for each agent, which the Player Characters can overcome with a Spot check. Make a single Spot check to see how many agents the Player Character sees, otherwise there will be too much dice rolling for what should be a tense scene. If the Player Characters notice these opponents, then they are aware of them during the surprise round.

As soon as they can, additional agents pull wagons across the ends of the street, blocking off the exits. This is the signal for the crossbowmen to open fire. Captain Severin spurs his horse ahead for a round or two, then wheels around and comes back to finish off anyone left alive.

**Hugh Severin:** Human fighter 3; CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 3d10+3 (24 hp); Init +1; Spd 20 ft (4 squares); AC 18 (+1 Dex, +5 masterwork breastplate, +2 masterwork heavy steel shield), touch 11, flat-footed 17; Base attack/grapple +3/+5; Atk +1 *bastard sword* +6 melee (1d10+3/19-20x2); Full Atk +1 *bastard sword* +6 melee (1d10+3/19-20x2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL NE; SV: Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +0; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 14.

**Skills & Feats:** Bluff +8, Climb +4, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +10, Ride +4; Cleave, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Persuasive, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bastard sword)

**Equipment & Treasure:** +1 *bastard sword*, *potion of eagle's splendour*, phial of antitoxin, masterwork breastplate, masterwork heavy steel shield, insignia of office, haematite disc (see boxed text)

**Agent:** Human rogue 1; CR 1; Medium humanoid; HD 1d6-1 (5 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (4 squares); AC 14 (+1 Dex, +3

leather armour), touch 12, flat-footed 13; Base attack/grapple +0/+1; Atk poisoned masterwork dagger +2 melee (1d4+1/19-20x2 plus poison) or poisoned masterwork light crossbow +2 ranged (1d8/19-20x2 plus poison); Full Atk poisoned masterwork dagger +2 melee (1d4+1/19-20x2 plus poison) or poisoned masterwork light crossbow +2 ranged (1d8/19-20x2 plus poison); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA poison, sneak attack +1d6; SQ trapfinding; AL NE; SV: Fort -1, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 9, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 11.

**Skills & Feats:** Diplomacy +2, Disable Device +1, Disguise +1, Escape Artist +3, Forgery +1, Gather Information +1, Hide +3, Intimidate +2, Jump +2, Knowledge (local) +1, Listen +2, Move Silently +3, Open Lock +3, Search +1, Sense Motive +2, Sleight of Hand +3, Spot +1, Tumble +2, Use Rope +1; Dodge, Rapid Reload (light crossbow)

**Equipment & Treasure:** Masterwork dagger, masterwork light crossbow, poisoned bolts (3), phial of antitoxin, haematite disc (see boxed text)

**Note:** The venom used on the daggers and crossbow bolts is drow poison. Anyone hit by a poisoned weapon must succeed on a Fortitude saving throw (DC 13) or fall unconscious. After one minute, the subject must succeed on another Fortitude saving throw (DC 13) or remain unconscious for 2d4 hours.

**If the Player Characters do not fall for Severin's trap:** Severin has not come this far by being stupid. If the Player Characters obstinately refuse to go with him, then he will simply shrug and ride off into the city without them, saying that he will see them at the Council chambers. Rather than risk everything by attacking the Player Characters openly, he will ride on ahead, contact the drow agents at the ambush and have them tail the party. Once they think that the Player Characters are vulnerable, they are to attack. They can do this without Severin, as he does not want to compromise his cover even further. Besides, if the party survives, he can use the ambush to his advantage: 'Well, I *did* offer you an escort, but you knew better!'

**If the Player Characters attack Severin before the ambush:** Severin will always choose to flee rather than to fight. He can call other guards to his aid, if there are any nearby. Attacking a guardsman is a capital crime (see below) so the Player Characters will be in deep trouble if they kill any city guards.

**If the ambush completely wipes the Player Characters out:** In the event of total party death, the druid Jass Cromlin will

### The Haematite Discs

Each agent of the drow is issued with a coin-sized disc made from haematite, a black, iridescent mineral found in certain underground places. This disc is their token of authority and is used when meeting other agents or commanders as proof of identity. Each disk bears the *arcane mark* of the drow commander for whom the agent is working. As it is impossible to forge another spellcaster's *arcane mark*, the disc is a surer sign of authority than a signet ring or seal.

Whenever an agent goes to meet with his drow masters, he must hold up his disc to the hatch that opens in the door. The drow on the other side can then cast *detect magic* to see if the disc has the appropriate *arcane mark* on it.

retrieve their bodies and take them to the stone circle back at the Tump. This will set them back several days (and lose them an experience level, to boot) but will enable them to carry on with the adventure, no doubt with much higher levels of paranoia. Bear in mind that people do not normally return from the dead in Ashfar, so Captain Severin will be beside himself with fear if he thinks that the Player Characters have somehow come back from the grave.

## Arrival at Saragost

*The city before you is breathtaking. Outside the walls were only flat, featureless plains. Inside, there is a crazy labyrinth of streets, with houses, shops and taverns jostling for space. A constant din of activity surrounds you. The smells are rich and strong – spicy food cooked out on the streets in cauldrons, the dung of horses, perfumes that recall the lands of the elves and a fresh sea breeze blowing in from the west.*

*Towering above all the other buildings is a single spire, on whose top is a transparent globe. Within this, a brilliant fire of red and gold burns, undoubtedly the product of some kind of magic.*

Any local can tell the Player Characters that the spire is called ‘the Tower of Undying Light’ and was set here when the city was first built, to illuminate the harbour. A successful Spot check (DC 25) reveals that the flames inside the sphere are moving around, as if they were surrounding a creature.

## Information: Rumours in Saragost

The following information can be gleaned with a Gather Information check. The check result determines the quality of information. A high check result also gives all the information that would have been gained from lower results.

### 10-14:

- There are three power bases in town – the Council, the group of mages called the Order of the Prism and a group of crime lords.
- The law is strict. Condemned criminals are executed by being manacled to the wharf wall at low tide; the incoming tide drowns them.
- The Grand Baronial Hotel has a dancing mermaid act.
- There is believed to be some kind of corruption in the Council but nobody knows quite what is going on.
- Sometimes, an up-and-coming criminal will be fished out of the harbour, dead from a massive wound to the backside, as if someone had impaled him on a sword blade.
- There is a powerful magical item in the Tower of Undying Light.
- A ghost pirate called Captain Whisper haunts the streets of Saragost.

### 15-20:

- The crime lords are called the Midnight Enclave.
- Several major burglaries have taken place recently, in which guards have fallen unconscious after being wounded by poisoned weapons.
- Stone golems are used to open and close the sea-gates.
- Some people on the council have been seen talking to mysterious strangers in hoods and cloaks.
- The object in the Tower of Undying Light controls the weather.
- This city used to be an elven stronghold but was burned down centuries ago, so practically none of the original buildings are still standing; the elven sewer system is still intact, however and many houses have elf-built cellars, though the occupants do not know it.

### 21-25:

- There is a new faction in town that has infiltrated the Midnight Enclave and the city council. Its members use poisoned weapons and only go out after dark. They use magic to disguise themselves. Several people on the city watch are secretly in their service. Anyone in service to this faction has to carry a secret token that cannot be forged, as proof of his identity.

### 26+:

- The drow have already been seen in Saragost. They are preparing for the invasion. Their allies use haematite disks as signs of their identity. They have to present these disks at the door when they meet with their masters in secret.



- Someone is constructing a powerful explosive device in a warehouse in the docks.

A check result of five or less results in the following misinformation:

- Grandlord Yomah, the ruler of the city, is a drow in disguise. He worships the spider goddess in a private chamber in the Tower of Undying Light.

## Saragost Statistics

**Size:** Large City

**Population:** 25,000

**Racial Mix:** 87% human, 5% halfling, 4% half-orc, 3% elf, 1% half-elf

**GP Limit:** 40,000

**Power Centre 1:** Grandlord Yomah (10<sup>th</sup> level aristocrat) and the City Council (LN)

**Power Centre 2:** Arigane Zakawe and the mages of the Prism (LN)

**Power Centre 3:** The Midnight Enclave (LE)

**Executive Authority:** Chief Constable Anderthorn (10<sup>th</sup> level fighter)

## Plot Event: Warning the Council

Assuming the Player Characters have evaded or overcome Captain Severin's attempt to eliminate them, their first priority is likely to be warning the Council and thus completing the mission assigned to them back in Bronce. They can easily find out that the Council meets in the Tower of Undying Light (see below). It assembles from the hours of nine in the morning to five in the evening, with an hour-long recess for lunch at one.

Once they arrive at the Tower, they only have to give their names and the nature of their mission and they will be shown straight up to the Council chambers. There, they will be asked to present their evidence and give an account of all that has happened. The Council takes immediate note, resolves to appoint Sir Jeren Falconio as military overlord and orders martial law. Rationing is put in place and the reserve guards are called up to man the walls.

The Council then elects to spend the next day in emergency conference, to decide on the best course of action regarding the rest of Chillhame. Since the invasion appears to be imminent

and there is no possible way to bring new troops into the island in time to make any difference, the only option is to entrench and make sure that the key sites are defended to the utmost.

The Council asks the Player Characters to return to the Tower at sunset the next day, so that they can be kept apprised of the situation. If the Player Characters do not keep this appointment, then the Council will send out messengers to find them and bring them to a rescheduled meeting. Unless the Player Characters are expressly trying *not* to be found, then assume that the messengers find them. If the Player Characters are in an unusual location (such as prison) then the messengers have only a 60% chance to find them per day of searching.

## Aftermath

The Council thanks the Player Characters for their assistance so far and offers them a reward of 1,000 gold pieces each. Reaching this stage in the adventure is also worth a story award of 600 experience points.

**Further Adventuring:** The next stage in the adventure comes when the Council asks the Player Characters to travel out and take word of the coming invasion to the Lost Villages (see page 89). From the Council's point of view, the Player Characters should undertake this as soon as possible. There are also several adventure threads that are ongoing within Saragost itself. It is up to the Player Characters how they pursue these threads, if at all. This section is deliberately non-linear. The Player Characters can visit the Lost Villages in any order, or investigate the mysteries of Saragost before heading out to them. Irrespective of what they do, the invasion will begin ten days after the discovery of the letter in the mines of Bronce.

**Additional Reward:** The Player Characters are offered the honour badge of *Freeman of Saragost*. This is a civic honour and bestows a +1 circumstance bonus to any Charisma-based skill checks when dealing with persons who respect rank, such as city officials, shopkeepers, guardsmen and most law-abiding citizens. It does, however, come with the understanding that the Player Characters will be loyal to the city and help to defend it in future. Freeman of Saragost are decorated with a badge of rank worth 50 gold pieces in a simple ceremony. For more information on civic honours, see the sidebar.

## Badges of Honour

The honour badge system is used in all of the lands of Ashfar. Each badge shows that the wearer has earned a degree of merit from service to the governing authorities. The most prestigious badges are the equivalent of nobility and can even confer a noble title, such as Knight.

People who respect rank, such as city officials, guardsmen and lawful commoners, consider badges to be genuine marks of honour and act accordingly. This grants the badge holder a circumstance bonus to Charisma-based checks when dealing with such people. Badges have no effect on members of rogues' guilds, subversives, foreigners or other similar people. The bonuses from badges do not stack. Only the highest applicable badge is used.

There are two types of honour badge: civic and martial. Civic honours are conferred upon those who have given service to a city, while martial badges are conferred upon military personnel, usually for outstanding performance in the field.

A badge represents an ongoing duty as well as an achievement. Once you are issued with a badge, it becomes your duty to honour it. In game terms, Player Characters who have been given badges for achieving important tasks are expected to carry out future missions for the authority who issued them with the badge, on the understanding that suitable rewards (and badges of even greater honours) will ensue.



## Location: The Walls of Saragost

Saragost's walls are 20 feet thick and 40 feet high, with two internal walkways along which guardsmen can patrol. They are made from smooth-fitting masonry (Climb DC 25) and are topped by crenulated battlements. There are guard towers at regular intervals, as shown on the map. These are equipped with three ballistae each. The walls extend outwards from the city, to enclose a section of the sea. This forms the safest harbour in all of Chillhame.

The land gates have strong wooden doors in the front, a portcullis at the rear and a guard house above. The guard house has holes in the floor, through which defenders can cast spells or pour liquids such as molten lead or boiling oil.

Access to the harbour is controlled by the famous sea-gates of Saragost. These are vast lock-like gates made from reinforced wood, each one 30 feet across. Unless an especially large ship is passing through, it is unusual for more than one of the gates to be open. The gates can be opened and closed from the watchtowers on either side. A stone golem in each watchtower provides the manual labour for this.

## Location: The Avenue of Beasts

The main thoroughfare of Saragost is the Avenue of Beasts, so called because of the heraldic stone animals that flank it. The Avenue runs from the western gate to the Stormhold. Notable buildings along its length are the Grand Baronial Hotel, the Inn of the Flaming Beard and the Sanctuary of the Seven Archways.

## Location: The Inn of the Flaming Beard

This is Saragost's most notable and eccentric public house. It began its life as a single bar in a row of shops. As its popularity grew, the owner found himself in desperate need of more space. With the help of some of the patrons, he bought up the properties on either side and knocked a door through the walls. This made the place even *more* popular, resulting in more revenue and the chance to expand even further. Again, the properties on either side were bought and new doors knocked through.

The Inn now occupies an entire row on its city block, with various different bar-rooms where the shops used to be. Inside, it is rather like a long corridor filled with rowdy drunken people. There is a 'smart end' close to the city centre, where the gentry and merchants come and a 'scruffy end' at the other end of the block. The scruffy end serves cheap beer with alchemical additives to make it taste nicer, while the smart end boasts fine wines and mead. The inn thus welcomes all patrons, but they are expected to keep to the part of the inn that is most suited to their appearance and level of wealth.

The inn's name comes from a local ghost story. A pirate captain with a beard made of flames, known only as 'Captain Whisper', is said to stalk through the streets of Saragost at night, begging for a mug of cold ale to put his flaming beard out. This story was actually dreamed up by the Saragost council to add a bit of

local colour, but plenty of people believe it and are terrified of the spectre.

The inn's current owner is a dwarf, Torbrind Gilhoolie, who is known for insulting everyone who comes into his tavern, no matter who they are. The worse and more elaborate the insult, the more respected a client will be by the regulars. It is in fact a form of compliment. If Torbrind ignores you, then you are not worth anyone's time. Moreover, insulting Torbrind back is not only accepted but also expected. Meekly putting up with it will earn you contempt.

## Location: The Grand Baronial Hotel


This is the most prestigious temporary residence in all of Chillhame. It boasts sumptuous suites, a menu featuring delicacies from as far afield as Xoth Sarandi and a spectacular dining area. Persons who are not dressed in the very best attire will not be admitted. Player Characters must wear nobles' outfits (signet ring and all) or they will be turned away at the door by a snooty maitre d'. Clerical attire is grudgingly tolerated, so long as it is clean. No weapons are allowed. These must be checked in at the cloakroom. A typical evening meal at the Grand Baronial, including entertainment, costs 3d6 gold pieces. Add +5 if you want to be seated in the middle tier and +15 if you want to be right next to the performers.

**The Dining Hall:** The tables and chairs are arranged into three descending tiers, forming an inverted pyramid. In the centre of this is a reinforced crystal tank filled with water and sea-growths, lit by coloured lamps from above and below. Two figures like human women smile out from behind the transparent walls, fingering coral-encrusted harps, their fishy tails slowly lashing below them.

This tank (Hardness 15, hp 30, Strength DC 28 to break) is the home of the mermaids Callianne and Ellisper, twin sisters who are the resident *artistes* of the hotel, who perform a routine involving underwater exotic dance and songs in their native language. Their performances are spellbinding. It is not possible to communicate with them unless you are sat in the closest tier. At the end of each performance, the richest patrons in the front row throw them jewellery and gold in appreciation, which they happily accept.

**The Secret Meeting Room:** The entrance to this hidden chamber is in the corridor that leads to the restrooms. The hotel's fancy wallpaper makes the doorway difficult to detect (Search DC 25) and even when the doorway is found, it is not obvious how it should be opened. To open the door, you need to hold a strong magnet to the right area, which moves a tiny clasp out of the way and disables the lock. All the members of the Midnight Enclave carry lodestones for this purpose. Figuring out how the lock mechanism works requires a Knowledge (architecture and engineering) or Knowledge (dungeoneering) check (DC 30). The door is made from disguised strong wood (Hardness 5, hp 20, break DC 25). Attempts to smash the door in will draw the attention of the hotel staff, who will call for the city guards.

Inside, the room is sumptuously furnished:



*This octagonal room has a ceiling of deep blue and is lit by a single lamp, burning with an indigo flame. All of the walls are fitted with mirrors, with the exception of the one by which you entered and the one opposite. The black marble table is also octagonal and has eight throne-like chairs set around it, carved from wood as dark as onyx. Against the far wall is a small table, on which sits a human skull, the whiteness of the bone glaring brightly in the dark room.*

## *Location: The Tower of Undying Light*

*This narrow, windowless tower dominates the skyline, rising like a slim white finger above the city. It looks like it is about 150 feet high. It is topped with a transparent sphere inside which a flaming shape flails its wings.*

All of the chairs have solid box-like bottoms instead of legs. They are affixed to the floor. One of the eight chairs is in fact a concealed death trap. The Midnight Enclave seat visiting guests in it, so that they can be disposed of with the flick of a switch if necessary. Candidates who are approached to join the organisation will also be killed in this way if they refuse, as the Enclave cannot afford to have anyone other than its own members knowing about the room.

All of the chairs have a discreet switch under the arm. Pressing the switch activates a trap in the chair, sending a sword blade up through the base and into the body of the person sitting on it. A person seated in the chair is treated as prone for purposes of the attacking blade. By the rules of the Enclave, any member can veto an applicant during his interview simply by pressing the switch.

**Impaling Blade Trap:** CR 4; mechanical; manual trigger; automatic reset; Atk +20 melee (2d4+8/x4, scythe); Search (DC 21); Disable Device (DC 18).

## *Non-Player Characters: Callianne and Ellisper*

The mermaids are far from unhappy in their role as entertainers. They are here under a properly drawn-up contract and enjoy charming their audience with their singing and dancing. When their contracts expire, they will be returned to the sea.

The Player Characters may become friendly with the mermaids but it will take a good deal of flattery and attention to win their favour. They are fond of bright shiny things, especially when these cost a lot of money. It is important to give them both presents of the same value. If a Player Character favours one of them over the other, then the slighted mermaid will become petulant and her sister will soon turn on the Player Character for upsetting her.

The mermaids know the following information, which they will entrust to anyone they consider a true confidant:

- Some shady group meets here regularly, in a secret room off the upstairs restrooms. The mermaids believe it is the Midnight Enclave.
- Sometimes people go in and never come out.
- Count Crastic is a member of this group.
- The most notorious assassin in the city is called Rueben Grim. He is a member too.
- There is a plot afoot to surrender the city to a coming invasion force.

The creature inside the sphere is a phoenix, the pride of the city. It lives an unhappy life, condemned to live out its days inside a crystal prison, eventually dying for a day or two and returning to life from the ashes. The sphere is 20 feet wide and made from alchemically reinforced crystal (Hardness 15, hp 30, Strength DC 28 to break). If the phoenix were somehow released – for instance by unleashing the Stormdreamer Stone's *storm of vengeance* on the tower – it would be grateful to the Player Characters and perform three services for them before flying back to the far lands of its origin. The citizens of Saragost would, however, be livid at the loss of their prize.

## **Level 1: Guardrooms and Entrance Hall**

Six senior guardsmen, a guard captain and one of the mages of the Prism (see below) watch over the Tower at all times. A heavy steel portcullis closes the tower off.

## **Level 2: Council Chambers**

By long-established tradition, the Council of Saragost meets in the Tower of Undying Light. The council chambers are circular and furnished with bookcases, which are filled with civic records and documents of statecraft. The crest of the city occupies the far wall, neatly covering the door to the staircase up to the next level. This is where the Player Characters will be given audience.

## **Level 3: The Stormdreamer Stone**

From the concealed door in the council chambers, a winding staircase leads up the inside wall of the tower. There is no banister or handrail, so anyone who falls into the empty space in the tower's centre will plummet the whole distance.

At the very top of the tower is a room that none speak of. The door to this room is kept securely locked (Open Lock DC 40). It is made from iron (Hardness 10, 60 hp, break DC 28) and has been fitted with a *destruction* trap (see *DMG*) to prevent tampering. Touching the door with anything other than the proper key activates the trap. This is because the room contains one of Saragost's most important magical items.

The Stormdreamer Stone is a multifaceted orange gem that floats in a bowl of mercury. Its function is to control the weather around Saragost, ensuring that the city is never struck by storms, the rain is never too hard and that the harbour winds are always favourable. It is Saragost's guarantee to the shipping masters that their vessels shall always find safe haven here.

Grandlord Yomah has the only key to this room and is the only person entitled to use the Stone's magic. The Stone is equivalent to an *orb of storms*. So far, despite occasional attacks from

enemy forces, no ruler of Saragost has ever activated the *storm of vengeance* function, for fear of causing untold damage to the city and its residents.

### Location: The Sanctuary of the Seven Archways

This dazzling white marble building is in the shape of a heptagon with a central dome. Ornamental gardens with cleanly swept paths surround it. It is the place of study and residence of the Adepts of the Prism, the fellowship of wizards who have prominence in Saragost. The central dome houses the Prism for which the order is named.

Members or guests of the Order may reside here free of charge and may use the Sanctuary's facilities to prepare spells, craft magic items or carry out research. The Sanctuary's library provides a +4 equipment bonus to any relevant Knowledge skill checks when looking for historical or obscure information.

### Location: The Grove of Hernun

The Grove is a central park within Saragost, a small wild space contained within the overbuilt city. It was established by demand of the priests of Hernun and the druids who also serve him, so that there would still be a place for nature to flourish even inside the lifeless masonry.

Inside the walls that surround the Grove, one might be in a forest. Trees grow thickly round and about, forming a small enclosed copse. The only artificial features are a pool in the Grove's centre, used by the priests for meditation and spell

preparation and a shrine close to the entrance. The pool is 20 feet wide and 15 feet deep and is dark, with so many green lilies and weeds floating on its surface that it is impossible to see what is beneath. On festival days, the cult of Hernun lights the wood with lanterns and hosts feasting and dancing in his honour.

By ancient custom, the Grove is a neutral place. Enemies meet here to discuss business under a flag of truce. Couples seeking privacy come here, knowing they will not be disturbed. Nobody of non-chaotic alignment who is native to the City of Saragost would willingly break the peace of the Grove. Anyone foolish enough to do so will attract the instant ire of Hernun's priests and druids, who will bestow *curses* on the wrongdoer.

Fleeing into the Grove to escape pursuers is not easy, as the entrances have a continual force of two street guards present (see below). Even if a fugitive made it into the Grove, this would only be a temporary respite, as the priests have an arrangement with the City Council to locate and evict any wanted criminal who attempts to take refuge in the Grove. However, the priests also have the right to grant sanctuary, meaning that anyone who they deem is under their protection may not be removed for seven days or until the priests choose to release them. The priests will only do this if the petitioner can convince them that there is a very good reason why they should grant protection, such as danger of excessive punishment, or evidence of innocence that is being withheld. *Zone of truth* spells will be employed if necessary.

### Location: The Hall of Echoes

This is the main bardic library of Saragost, a repository of learning, lore and civic history. Arcane matters are not covered in depth, as the Sanctuary of the Seven Archways has the monopoly on those. The Hall is an underground vault beneath an unremarkable looking building (it resembles a stone box with a peaked roof, like a tomb or well-house) just south of the Grove of Hernun. Roots from that grove poke through the arched ceiling. The stone door is securely locked (Open Lock DC 40). The little chamber beyond is Michael Dunsany's living space, with a spiral stair in the floor that leads down to the Hall itself.

The Hall is indeed echoing, owing to a quirk of the architecture. This imposes a -2 circumstance penalty to all Move Silently checks and adds a +2 circumstance bonus to all Listen checks. It is filled with bookcases stuffed with volumes. A good push would knock a row of them down like dominoes. Up the side of one wall are scroll compartments, with parchment rolls crammed into them - an easy surface to climb, if one was inclined to do so. The resources in this library add a +4 circumstance bonus to any single Knowledge check, including Bardic Knowledge but with the exception of Knowledge (arcana). A person must spend at least four hours in research to benefit from this bonus.

Michael Dunsany presides over this archive, assisted by a group of 11 bards. These are rarely







found in the library, as they spend their days travelling and learning new lore to add to it. From 0-3 bards are present here at any one time.

### **Subjects Player Characters Might Want To Research**

The Player Characters may want to use the library's resources to find out more about who they are and the resting places

of their signature weapons. This will take time, as there is a vast amount of information here to be sifted through. Michael Dunsany learned everything he knows about the Starborn from these scrolls (see the legend sidebar) so the Player Characters can find out the same information if he has not already passed it on to them. For storytelling purposes, it is actually better if the Player Characters do the research themselves.

The Player Characters will eventually learn the location of their weapons from the Orb of Azurite (see page 173) but the Games Master may use the library to foreshadow what they discover. Refer to Chapter 2, Background Information, for the system to assign each character's weapon to a specific adventure.

### *Non-Player Character Group: The Adepts of the Prism*

Members of this arcane order use optics as a metaphor for magic, seeing the division of white light into colour as a parallel of the way arcane energies combine to make up reality. Hard study and disciplined meditation are insisted upon.

By agreement between Lady Arigane and Grandlord Yomah, members of the order assist the city watchmen with their magic and will often accompany guardsmen on their rounds. The guardsmen can always call for help to the Adepts if they encounter a strange or supernatural threat to the city.

Player Characters may apply to join the Order if they wish, which brings privileges and obligations. Members can use any of the Order's facilities and may copy spells from the spellbooks in its keeping. A membership fee of 500 gold pieces per month is charged. Order members must also devote at least half an hour of each day to meditation on the symbolic prism that they are given. This adds half an hour to the time taken to prepare spells.

**Joining the Order:** The Order accepts only those who are not of chaotic alignment. To join, the applicant must pass a written examination in magical theory, which requires a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 20). Failure in this examination means that the candidate may not apply again for one month, except by permission of the Head of the Order.

**Guests of the Order:** A non-chaotic wizard or sorcerer may request the hospitality of the Order, even if he is not a member. This entitles him to use the Order's facilities for three days and nights. During this time, he must cause no disruption. Failure to keep to the rules of hospitality results in an instant expulsion with no possibility of further hospitality.

### *Non-Player Character Group: The Council of Saragost*

There are five members of the Council at any one time. The Council is appointed by the local nobility, who also vote on who shall be President. The current President, thus the highest-ranking official in all of Saragost, is Grandlord Yomah.



## Grandlord Peregrine Yomah

Yomah is dark-skinned, wearing a thick golden headband of office and peacock-coloured silk garments. He has an unconscious loftiness to him that many mistake for common arrogance. He is simply used to being obeyed. He was born to rule and brought up accordingly.

**Yomah:** Human aristocrat 10; CR 9; Medium humanoid; HD 10d8+10 (55 hp); Init +4; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 14 (+4 *bracers of armour* +4), touch 10, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +7/+6; Atk +1 *axiomatic longsword* +9 melee (1d8+1/19-20x2); Full Atk +1 *axiomatic longsword* +9/+3 melee (1d8+1/19-20x2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL LN; SV: Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 16.

**Skills & Feats:** Bluff +5, Diplomacy +21, Forgery +8, Gather Information +13, Handle Animal +8, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +15, Listen +4, Perform +5, Sense Motive +20, Spot +5; Improved Initiative, Leadership, Negotiator, Skill Focus (diplomacy), Skill Focus (sense motive)

**Equipment & Treasure:** +1 *axiomatic longsword*, *bracers of armour* +4, phial of antitoxin, headband of office (3,000 gp), key to the Stormdreamer Stone room (see The Tower of Undying Light), *potion of cat's grace* (x2)

## Lady Arigane Zakawe

Lady Arigane represents the concerns of Saragost's arcane spellcasters on the Council. She is the head of her own college of wizards, the Adepts of the Prism, who have their headquarters

in the Sanctuary of the Seven Archways in the Avenue of Beasts. Arigane is quietly contemptuous of the nobility and does not view anyone who does not study magic as an equal. She is extremely inquisitive by nature and loves to find out new information.

Count Crastic is afraid of her and fears that she will pry into his mind. She already knows that he has connections with the Midnight Enclave but does not know of his drow affiliation. She has refrained from bringing Crastic's criminal connections before the Council because she abides by the adage 'keep your friends close and your enemies closer'. While Crastic does not know how much she knows, she is relatively safe.

**Arigane:** Human wizard 10; CR 10; Medium humanoid; HD 10d4+10 (35 hp); Init +2; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 15 (+3 *bracers of armour* +3, +2 Dex), touch 13, flat-footed 12; Base attack/grapple +5/+6; Atk +1 *quarterstaff of defending* +7 melee (1d6+2/1d6+2) or masterwork heavy crossbow +7 ranged (1d10/19-20x2); Full Atk +1 *quarterstaff of defending* +7 melee (1d6+2/1d6+2) or masterwork heavy crossbow +7 ranged (1d10/19-20x2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA spells; SQ none; AL LN; SV: Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 17, Wis 8, Cha 10.

**Skills & Feats:** Concentration +15, Decipher Script +9, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (local) +16, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +16, Profession (librarian) +10, Spellcraft +16; Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Magic Arms and Armour, Dodge, Extend Spell, Improved Counterspell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Mastery (*charm person*, *invisibility*, *summon monster III*)

*Spells:* 0<sup>th</sup> level: *detect magic, message, open/close, read magic*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *charm person, comprehend languages, disguise self* (x2); 2<sup>nd</sup> level: *detect thoughts* (x2), *invisibility, locate object*; 3<sup>rd</sup> level: *heroism, illusory script, clairaudience/clairvoyance, summon monster III, tongues*; 4<sup>th</sup> level: *arcane eye, locate creature, scrying*; 5<sup>th</sup> level: *contact other plane, mage's private sanctum*

*Equipment & Treasure:* Bracers of armour +3, +1 quarterstaff of defending, potion of invisibility, scroll of heroism, scroll of summon monster III, spellbook

*Familiar:* Aristaeus (owl), who gives Arigane a +3 bonus to Spot checks in bright light; SQ alertness, evasion, share spells, empathic link, deliver touch spells, speak with master, speak with other birds; Int 10, natural armour +5

## Count Thaddeus Crastic

The Count is a gaunt man of calm demeanour who likes everything to run smooth as clockwork. He sees life as a simple series of mathematical equations: survival and prosperity are merely matters of balancing the odds. He never allows himself to become angry, nor even to raise his voice. Everything he says is in the same calm, gentle tones, even when he is slitting a throat.

Count Crastic's position on the Council comes from his genius with numbers. He applies this knowledge to the city's economic concerns, figuring out the optimum degrees of taxation and predicting the best investments. The city has prospered under his influence. Everyone ascribes this to his business skill, but it also has a lot to do with his connections in the Midnight Enclave, who can apply pressure right where it needs to be applied.

**Crastic:** Human fighter 7/rogue 3; CR 10; Medium humanoid; HD 7d10+3d6+10 (63 hp); Init +7; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 20 (+6 *studded leather of silent moves* +3, +1 light wooden shield, +3 Dex), touch 13, flat-footed 17; Base attack/grapple +8/+10; Atk +1 *rapier* +12 melee (1d6+4/16-20x2) or masterwork heavy crossbow +11 ranged (1d10/19-20x2); Full Atk +1 *rapier* +12/+7 melee (1d6+4/16-20x2) or masterwork heavy crossbow +11 ranged (1d10/19-20x2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ evasion, trapfinding, trap sense +1; AL LE; SV: Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 10.

*Skills & Feats:* Bluff +5, Climb +9, Decipher Script +5, Diplomacy +3, Disable Device +5, Disguise +3, Gather Information +3, Intimidate +12, Jump +5, Knowledge (local) +5, Move Silently +11, Profession (economist) +5, Ride +4, Swim +9; Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Critical (rapier), Improved Feint, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Persuasive, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon Specialisation (rapier)

*Equipment & Treasure:* *Studded leather of silent moves* +3, +1 *rapier*, light wooden shield, heavy crossbow, haematite disc, strong lodestone

## Michael Dunsany

Michael was born without legs and uses a specially designed *chair of flying* to move himself around. He has thus been able to wander the country in his early life as is required of a bard, though these days he is settled in Saragost and intends to

remain so. He has a room in the Hall of Echoes (see above) and maintains the library there.

He is the city's archivist. He makes it his business to chronicle the history and culture of Saragost, so that the Council's decisions can be made in full awareness of what has gone before. Michael is the most popular person on the Council among the city dwellers, as he makes sure that hundreds of years of local tradition are not thrown away in favour of some scheme that would make money for the merchants. He also spends a good deal of his time among the people, telling them tales and performing for them free of charge.

Michael has heard of the Starborn and can shed some light on the Player Characters' origin, though he will not be willing to discuss it where others can hear. If the Player Characters want to talk to him in private, he will arrange a meeting at the Hall of Echoes or in another neutral place, such as the Grove of Hernun. He can provide as much of the Legend of the Starborn as he knows, for which see the boxed text below.

Michael also knows that there is some sort of sealed chamber beneath the city that was used by the Starborn of a previous age but he does not know where it is, nor how to open it.

**Michael:** Human bard 10; CR 10; Medium humanoid; HD 10d6-10 (27 hp); Init +2; Spd fly 40ft (8 squares) (average manoeuvrability); AC 15 (+2 Dex, +3 *studded leather*), touch 12, flat-footed 13; Base attack/grapple +7/+7; Atk +1 *rapier of wounding* +10 melee (1d6+1 and 1 Con/17-20x2) or masterwork heavy crossbow +10 ranged (1d10/19-20x2); Full Atk +1 *rapier* +9/+3 melee (1d6+1 and 1 Con/17-20x2) or masterwork heavy crossbow +19 ranged (1d10/19-20x2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA bardic music, countersong, inspire courage +2, inspire competence, spell-like abilities, spells; SQ bardic knowledge; AL NG; SV: Fort +2, Ref +9, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 9, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 16.

*Skills & Feats:* Bluff +13, Climb +3, Concentration +3, Diplomacy +16, Gather Information +16, Hide +8, Knowledge (history) +14, Listen +5, Perform (oratory) +19, Profession (archivist) +5, Sense Motive +5, Sleight of Hand +6; Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Skill Focus (perform), Weapon Finesse

*Spells:* 0<sup>th</sup> level: *daze, flare, lullaby, mage hand, ghost sound, prestidigitation*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *animate rope, disguise self, erase, hideous laughter*; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: *blindness/deafness, daze monster, glitterdust, scare*; 3<sup>rd</sup> level: *confusion, dispel magic, major image, sculpt sound*; 4<sup>th</sup> level: *rainbow pattern, shadow conjuration*.

*Equipment & Treasure:* *chair of flying* (a chair that functions in all respects as a *broom of flying*), +1 *rapier of wounding*, key to the Hall of Echoes

*Note:* If Michael is removed from his chair, he is prone and cannot stand up. His movement is reduced to one five foot step per round. However, he can attempt to climb as if his base movement speed was 30 feet.

## Sir Jeren Falconio

Sir Jeren is one of Saragost's knights, on the Council because of his military expertise. He is technically in command of the city's

## The Legend of the Starborn

The stars in heaven are not mere balls of fire but souls – souls that are greater and brighter than we can ever hope to understand. They are not Gods, for Gods dwell on other planes. However, they are like Gods in that they have an interest in human affairs on earth. The opposing power to the stars is the darkness that lies between them, occupying the cold and desolate places. The stars are not evil nor good; they merely exist. The darkness, by contrast, is that kind of evil which cannot abide that which is different from itself. It seeks to absorb, to control, to assimilate. All mortal life, good and evil alike, is endangered.

Once in every age, there comes an Equinox of the Heroes. At this time, the power of the darkness and the power of the stars leave their equilibrium. What was certain becomes confused. What was concealed becomes manifest. Stasis gives way to conflict. According to ancient principles laid down before the universe awoke, a portion of each cosmic force is invested into mortal agents. The stars, each with its own unique essence, incarnate themselves into the bodies of mortal heroes. Similarly, the power of the darkness, universal and undifferentiated, reaches out and infuses itself into those who will become its pawns.

Those mortals who are born with the souls of stars are called the Starborn. Their adversaries, born of the principle of darkness, are called the Host.

The victory of either side determines which power will be dominant over the world until the next Equinox. Victory by the Starborn heralds an age in which mortals make their own destiny, choosing wisely or foolishly, each for himself. Victory by the Host destroys any hope of individuality. Conformity, uniformity, darkness and silence characterise the time.

It is known that the elven race has an especial interest in the Equinox of the Heroes, though nobody is quite certain why. There is an episode in their history that the younger elves do not remember and the older ones do not speak of. What is known is that those elves who aided the Starborn in past aeons created artefacts that would maintain the connection between the stars and the earth. These varied in form but the most common were circles of stone, which acted as observatories and calendars as well as spiritual sanctuaries. At these places, the power of the stars was focused and strengthened. They would become rallying points for the Starborn at each Equinox of the Heroes. If one of the Starborn was slain, the star-soul could be reunited with the body by taking it to one of these places.

defences in times of peace, though in practice the guardsmen of the walls look to their own immediate commanders for guidance. Sir Jeren is not particularly competent as a governor, preferring to make a difference down on the ground, instead of passing edicts and checking tax revenues.

**Sir Jeren:** Human fighter 10; CR 10; Medium humanoid; HD 10d10+10 (69 hp); Init +2; Spd 20 ft (4 squares); AC 19 (+1 Dex, +8 full plate), touch 11, flat-footed 19; Base attack/grapple +10/+13; Atk +2 *greatsword* +17 melee (2d6+8/18-20x2); Full Atk +2 *greatsword* +17/+11 melee (2d6+8/18-20x2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL LG; SV: Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 9, Cha 10.

*Skills & Feats:* Craft (weaponsmithing) +4, Handle Animal +3, Intimidate +10, Jump +6, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +5, Profession (field commander) +5, Ride +12; Cleave, Combat Expertise, Great Cleave, Greater Weapon Focus (greatsword), Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Leadership, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialisation (greatsword)

*Equipment & Treasure:* Full plate, +2 *greatsword*

## Non-Player Character Group: The Midnight Enclave

This group is the focus of all organised crime in Saragost. It masterminds everything from lucrative smuggling, larceny and assassination operations to street thievery, extortion and vice. It is not a rogue's guild (unlike those found in other cities, such as Crescent City) as its members do not have that kind of a fraternal bond. It is much more like a secret corporation.

The Enclave has a simple strategy. If anyone opposes its operations, whether he knows that he is doing so or not, then he is given a warning. It consists of a bottle of excellent wine, delivered to the recipient's door, with a blank black label attached to it. Any citizen of Saragost knows that the wine is a sign that you should have a pleasant evening while you can, because the next day you will be dead. If the recipient does not take the opportunity to stop what he is doing, then one of Rueben Grim's assassins will perform the necessary execution. If the recipient *does* stop, then he will be left alone, so long as he does not return to his former course of action.

The current meeting place of the Midnight Enclave is a private room at the Grand Baronial Hotel. At any one time, most of the group's members are likely to be out of the city making deals in other areas. The three permanent members of the group are listed below.

### Count Thaddeus Crastic

See his description in the Council of Saragost entry. The drow are steadily infiltrating the Midnight Enclave through Count Crastic and are using it for their own ends.

### The Washerwoman

Nobody knows her real name and she is not telling. The red-cheeked jolly old matron called the Washerwoman is well known on the streets of Saragost. She has a small army of orphan children who she employs to go and fetch laundry from the customers and bring it back. By giving the children jobs, she keeps them from destitution. They all seem to be happy and well fed.

What hardly anyone knows is that the children are not just laundry runners. They are thieves, pickpockets, spies and couriers. A laundry basket is a perfect way to carry stolen jewellery from one side of the city to the other without anyone suspecting a thing; and the children swap baskets so often that anyone who did try to catch one of them at it would have to move very quickly to find anything incriminating. Naturally, the children do not steal from those whose laundry they are taking in – that would draw suspicion immediately. Even if one of the children were caught, the crime would not reflect on the Washerwoman, who is only a kindly provider, teaching the little brats an honest trade. Her base of operations is the laundry works (see below) where concealed rooms store the swag and junk she has accumulated.

**Washerwoman:** Human rogue 6; CR 6; Medium humanoid; HD 6d6-6 (17 hp); Init +3; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 14 (+3 Dex, +1 padded armour) touch 13, flat-footed 11; Base attack/grapple +4/+4; Atk +1 dagger +8 melee (1d4+1/19-20x2) or masterwork light crossbow +8 ranged (1d8/19-20x2); Full Atk +1 dagger +6/+6 melee (1d4+1/19-20x2) or masterwork light crossbow +2 ranged (1d8/19-20x2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA sneak attack +3d6; SQ evasion, trapfinding, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV: Fort +1, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 8, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 14.

**Skills & Feats:** Bluff +5, Diplomacy +5, Disable Device +4, Disguise +5, Escape Artist +6, Forgery +4, Gather Information +5, Hide +6, Intimidate +5, Jump +3, Knowledge (local) +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Open Lock +6, Search +4, Sense Motive +4, Sleight of Hand +6, Spot +4, Tumble +6, Use Rope +6; Dodge, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse

**Equipment & Treasure:** +1 dagger (x2), masterwork light crossbow, *potion of cat's grace*, 1,300 gp

**Note:** The Washerwoman can always be assumed to have made Sleight of Hand checks to conceal her daggers among the folds of her clothing. Her crossbow is hidden under a pile of laundry and is an emergency weapon. Her preferred attack is to strike with both daggers simultaneously while targets are still flat-footed, trying for sneak attack damage with each one.

## Rueben Grim

Mr. Grim is a gnome. There are very few gnomes in Ashfar, as they tend to congregate in their own isolated island communities. Having spent his youth in a circus being poked and peered at, he has a seething hatred for humans and thus enjoys his profession as an assassin. He is very sensitive about his height.

Grim never goes out into Saragost during the daylight hours. When he is seen, it is usually a fleeting glimpse. He wears a red coat with a hood that covers his face, which often causes him to be mistaken for a child. Only when he turns around and drives a hooked hammer repeatedly into his victim is his wizened little face seen for what it is, his eyes burning with hate.

**Rueben Grim:** Gnome rogue 5/assassin 3; CR 8; Small humanoid; HD 8d6 (30 hp); Init +7; Spd 20 ft (4 squares); AC 17 (+3 Dex, +1 size, +3 studded leather); Base attack/grapple +5/+1; Atk +1 *gnome hooked hammer* +7 melee (1d6/x3 with blunt head or 1d4/x4 plus poison with hooked head) or masterwork heavy crossbow +10 ranged (1d8/19-20x2 plus poison); Atk +1 *gnome hooked hammer* +7 melee (1d6/x3 with blunt head

or 1d4/x4 plus poison with hooked head) or masterwork heavy crossbow +10 ranged (1d8/19-20x2 plus poison); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA death attack, poison, sneak attack +5d6, spells, spell-like abilities; SQ gnome traits, evasion, trapfinding, trap sense +1, improved uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV: Fort +2, Ref +10, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 14.

**Skills & Feats:** Bluff +10, Craft (alchemy) +7, Disguise +10, Gather Information +6, Hide +15, Intimidate +10, Jump +8, Listen +11, Move Silently +11, Open Lock +11, Search +4, Sense Motive +4, Sleight of Hand +6, Spot +4, Tumble +6; Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike

**Equipment & Treasure:** Three doses of blade venom (saving throw DC 20, primary damage 1d6 Con, secondary damage 2d6 Con), smokestick (x2), +1 *gnome hooked hammer*

**Spells:** *Colour spray*, *disguise self*, *ray of enfeeblement*

**Note:** Rueben's skills include his racial bonuses.

## Non-Player Character Group: The Saragost Guards

Saragost equips its guards well. Many of the citizens have a cavalier approach to security, feeling that they are safe enough behind their huge city walls, but the guards are nonetheless respected and valued. Street guards are put to work guarding doors and patrolling the roads, while wall sentries walk the battlements and keep watch from the guard station roofs.

Guards are found in the following groups:

- wall patrol (found on walls only) of 2-6 wall sentries
- small street patrol of 2-4 street guards and 1-2 wall sentries with a 50% chance of a senior guard
- security detail of 3-9 street guards, 2-4 wall sentries and a senior guard, with a 50% chance of a mage
- gate guard of 5-10 street guards and 2-4 wall sentries
- watch-house of 6-30 street guards, 4-16 wall sentries, 2-5 senior guards and 1-2 mages

In the city centre, a guard or citizen who raises the hue and cry will attract the attention of a guard patrol. It takes them 1d6 rounds to arrive. Additional guards will not arrive unless they are obviously needed to help the situation and a message reaches the watch house calling for backup, in which case 3d6 street guards and 3d4 wall sentries will be dispatched from the nearest available one.

**A Note On Equipment:** All masterwork guard equipment is issued by the government and stamped with the crest of Saragost, so it is difficult to resell it in the city. Possession of such equipment without due authority is a serious offence and carries a minimum prison sentence of three months.

**Typical Wall Sentry:** Human warrior 1; CR ½; Medium humanoid; HD 1d8 (8 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 chain shirt), touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +1/+2; Atk masterwork longsword +3 melee (1d8+1/19-20x2) or masterwork composite longbow +4 ranged (1d8+1/x3); Full Atk longsword +3 melee (1d8+1/19-20x2) or composite longbow +4 ranged (1d8+1/x3); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL LN; SV: Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 9.



**Skills & Feats:** Climb +2, Intimidate +1, Listen +2, Spot +2, Ride +2; Alertness, Weapon Focus (longbow)

**Equipment & Treasure:** Chain shirt, masterwork longbow, masterwork longsword, *potion of cure light wounds*

**Typical Street Guard:** Human warrior 1; CR ½; Medium humanoid; HD 1d8 (8 hp); Init +1; Spd 20 ft (4 squares); AC 16 (+1 Dex, +5 masterwork breastplate), touch 11, flat-footed 15; Base attack/grapple +1/+3; Atk masterwork halberd (1d10+2/x3) or masterwork shortbow +3 ranged (1d6); Full Atk masterwork halberd (1d10+2/x3) or masterwork shortbow +3 ranged (1d6); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL LN; SV: Fort +3, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 9.

**Skills & Feats:** Climb +4, Handle Animal +4, Knowledge (local) +2, Intimidate +2, Jump +3, Ride +3, Swim +2; Power Attack, Weapon Focus (halberd)

**Equipment & Treasure:** Masterwork breastplate, masterwork halberd, *potion of cure light wounds*

**Typical Senior Guard:** Human warrior 4; CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 4d8+4 (25 hp); Init +6; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 18 (+2 Dex, +4 masterwork chain shirt, +2 masterwork heavy steel shield), touch 12, flat-footed 16; Base attack/grapple +4/+6; Atk masterwork longsword +7 melee (1d8+2/19-20x2) or masterwork composite longbow +7 ranged (1d8+2/x3); Full Atk masterwork longsword +7 melee (1d8+2/19-20x2) or masterwork composite longbow +7 ranged (1d8+2/x3); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL LN; SV: Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 12.

**Skills & Feats:** Climb +6, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +5, Jump +6, Ride +6, Swim +6; Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Cleave

**Equipment & Treasure:** Masterwork chain shirt, masterwork heavy steel shield, masterwork longsword,

masterwork composite longbow, *potion of cure moderate wounds*

**Typical Guard Mage:** Human wizard 5; CR 5; Medium humanoid; HD 5d4 (14 hp); Init +2; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 12 (+2 Dex), touch 12, flat-footed 10; Base attack/grapple +2/+1; Atk +1 dagger +4 melee (1d4+2/19-20x2) or +1 heavy crossbow +5 ranged (1d10+1/19-20x2), Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA spells; SQ none; AL LN; SV: Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 8

**Skills & Feats:** Concentration +8, Craft (alchemy) +4, Decipher Script +4, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (local) +10, Spellcraft +10; Combat Casting, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Counterspell, Lightning Reflexes, Scribe Scroll

**Spells:** 0<sup>th</sup> level: *resistance, daze, detect magic, read magic*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *enlarge person, mage armour, protection from arrows, protection from evil*; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: *bull's strength (x2), cat's grace*; 3<sup>rd</sup> level: *haste*

**Equipment & Treasure:** +1 dagger, +1 heavy crossbow, tanglefoot bag (x2), spellbook, scroll of greater magic weapon, scroll of hold person (x2)


## Event: On The Wrong Side Of The Law

For a variety of reasons, including the actions of Non-Player Characters, several of the Player Characters are highly likely to end up under arrest. In Saragost, the laws are strict. All persons arrested on suspicion of committing crimes are locked up in the Wharf Gaol until the day of their hearing comes up. This usually takes 1d3 days, as the wheels of justice turn very quickly here.

Trials are held before one of the city magistrates, who hears the case, makes the judgement and pronounces sentence if applicable. Defendants may either speak for themselves or hire a representative to speak for them. Representatives can be hired from the Guild of Lawyers (100 gp x lawyer's skill ranks in Diplomacy); there is no provision for those who cannot afford representatives, though some clerics will act as such for free, in the interests of extending justice. These clerics can be found in the temples of Brith, Tornulf, Kyros Threadcutter and especially Aranu.

If you are found guilty, then the penalty is a fine (usually ranging from 50 to 2,000 gold pieces), a public flogging, expulsion from the city on pain of death, or execution. The latter is carried out by chaining the condemned person to the walls below the windows of the Wharf Gaol at low tide, so that the rising tide drowns them while the other prisoners watch.

**Gaining A Pardon:** All sentences are passed in the name of the Council of Saragost. This body can therefore pardon any crimes and lift any sentence. Once a pardon has been granted, the crime is erased from the record, though not from the memories of those



involved. It takes the agreement of three council members to issue a pardon, which must be sealed and signed by all three.

### *Location: The Wharf Gaol*

The Wharf Gaol is a stinking, rat-infested prison that takes up part of the docks of Saragost. With the exception of Castilmare on the mainland, it is the worst place in all of Avillon to be locked up. A character who eats the food is exposed to intestinal disease (Fortitude saving throw (DC 13), damage 1d2 Strength, incubation period 1 day). The cells have unremarkable locks (Open Lock DC 20) and are made from worked stone with a single wall of iron bars. These can be bent with a Strength check (DC 25). The guards are mostly street guardsmen and senior guards, with two guard mages on duty for special cases (see page 77).

When a Player Character is imprisoned, all of his weapons and equipment are confiscated and stored in a locker in the main guard room. These are not returned until the sentence has been served or a pardon has been issued. Executed prisoners' equipment is sold at auction to raise money for the Council.

He is then stripped down to his undergarments and searched. The guardsmen may make a Search check at this point if the Player Character has concealed anything in his clothing. That done, he is given a simple grey prison robe and taken to his cell. Player Characters who are wizards, clerics or sorcerers (or are suspected of being such) have their hands bound and their mouths gagged, so that they cannot cast spells. Make a Use Rope check for the guards to place these bindings. Spellcasters are given solitary confinement, while other characters are allowed to share cells, though no more than three will share any one cell.

Characters who are imprisoned here on suspicion of non-capital crimes have it slightly better than others, as they occupy the cells away from the wharf wall. Those who may be executed if found guilty (or who are awaiting execution) have cells whose barred windows open on to the sea. Directly beneath those windows are manacles, which hold the rotting bodies of prisoners executed by drowning, or living people sentenced to die that day. Every day, as the tide draws higher, the pitiful screams of doomed men can be heard rising from the wharf wall, only to turn into a final bubbling shriek before the waves wash the last sounds away.

When the day comes for their execution, condemned prisoners are loaded on to a boat and then taken to the wharf wall to be manacled into place. Once there, they are not removed until the manacles are needed for a new prisoner. The manacles are of ordinary quality, with an Escape Artist check (DC 30) needed to slip free and a Strength DC of 26 to break. The lock quality is Simple, with an Open Lock check (DC 20) needed to open. A character cannot use the Open Lock skill to open manacles from which he is hanging, though another character who is close enough can try to pick the lock. Attempting to free a prisoner is a sure way to take his place the next day. To add to their misery, the condemned usually suffer the jeers of passing fishermen and sailors, who hurl dead fish at them.

It takes exactly six hours for the tide to rise from a prisoner's feet to his head. A short character, such as a typical halfling, has

considerably less time! This can make for a frantic race against time to save a condemned friend.

**Escape from the Wharf Gaol:** The Player Characters may need to escape from the Gaol. The first step is to get out of the cells. They will no doubt have their own plans as to how to go about this but if they are completely stuck, the Games Master can introduce any of the following:

- If the party includes a rogue with Open Lock, one of the Player Characters finds a nail on the floor. This can then be used as an improvised tool with the Open Lock skill. Most Player Character rogues should be able to open one of the locks with this, if they take 20. For additional challenge, have the Player Character who finds the nail be locked in a different cell to the party rogue, if there is one.
- A barbarian, Grun, is imprisoned in the same cell as one of the Player Characters. He is depressed and utterly without hope, because he is drunk. This stone cell is just reminding him how far he is from his beloved open plains. He is not quite strong enough to bend the bars. If the Player Characters in another cell can taunt and provoke him into flying into a barbarian rage, he will forget his depression, prise the bars open in sheer fury (with his temporary bonus to Strength) and come for them. Pacifying him again will be a whole different problem.
- A sickly maniac in the next cell calls one of the Player Characters over and whispers in his ear that he is in fact a werewolf but that nobody is to know. He offers to bite the Player Character and pass on the lycanthropy, so that the Player Character and his friends can escape the cell. Whether the maniac actually is a werewolf or not is for the Games Master to decide. In any event, the maniac dies shortly after making the offer (and possibly biting the Player Character). If the maniac is genuinely a werewolf, then the change in the Player Character will not take effect until the next full moon and even then, he will be unable to control his animal form. The other Player Characters will be trapped in a cell with a raging bear, which will probably leave them in a worse position than they already were.

Once the Player Characters break out of the cells, they then have to get past the guards at the top of the stairs and out into the city. One way to do this is simply to run like crazy, barge past any opposition and not look back. This splits the Player Characters off from their equipment, however and they cannot hope to get it back without a pardon. Another option is to use magic, such as *invisibility*. If the Player Characters do not have any magic, then include a Non-Player Character sorcerer in another cell who will help them if they free him and take off his bonds and gag so that he can cast spells. The only other alternative is to fight it out, which could well be fatal, especially if one of the prison guards gets away and goes for reinforcements.

### *Location: The Barrowghast (EL 12)*

This is a ship, docked in Saragost harbour. It is the current headquarters of the drow emissaries who have been assigned the duty of preparing Saragost for invasion, using its criminal



underworld to do so. The drow have chosen to operate from a ship because it is far easier to flee in one if everything should fall apart. Besides, the docks are a good anonymous place to be. A cargo that is not unloaded will not be inspected and a passenger who never comes ashore will not be asked about his business in the city.

The Barrowghast is a large three-masted merchantman, designed to carry cargo, not to fight. It has been converted so that part of the cargo hold now forms a secret cabin, where the very special guests reside. It was originally berthed in Crescent City, where the drow made contact with the captain and made him an offer he could not refuse.

Drow agents from within Saragost and elsewhere come here to receive their assignments. Any agent of the drow who comes here to speak with his associates must first talk to the captain of the ship and his men. Once they are satisfied that the agent is genuine, they allow him to go below decks, where he must present his haematite disc in front of a spyhole. A drow on the other side can then cast *detect magic* to check the rune on the disc. If this is not the *arcane mark* of one of the drow who has been assigned to the conquest of the upper world, then they sound the alarm.

Count Crastic comes here once a week to report to his new friends on how the plans are progressing. He has so far been able to avoid being followed here...

### Captain Elseren Callai

Captain Callai is in overall command of the operation. She reports back to General Gallah. Her mission is to ensure that Saragost's defences are crippled before the duergar army arrives at the city gates. If she succeeds, she will be promoted to the next rank; if she fails, she will be sacrificed on the altars of She, and she knows it.

**Elseren:** Drow cleric 9; CR 10; Medium humanoid; HD 9d8+9 (53 hp); Init +1; Spd 20 ft (4 squares); AC 20 (+9 *full plate of fortification* +1, +1 Dex), touch 11, flat-footed 19; Base attack/grapple +6/+6; Atk +1 *morningstar* +7 melee (1d8+1/x2 plus poison) or masterwork heavy crossbow +8 ranged (1d10/19-20x2 plus poison), Full Atk +1 *morningstar* +7/+2 melee (1d8+1/x2 plus poison) or masterwork heavy crossbow +8 ranged (1d10/19-20x2 plus poison); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA poison, spells, spell-like abilities, turn/rebuke undead; SQ drow traits, spell resistance 20; AL LE; SV: Fort +9, Ref +4, Will +8 (+10); Str 10, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 16 (18), Cha 15

**Skills & Feats:** Concentration +6, Diplomacy +6, Heal +6 (+8), Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (history) +5, Knowledge (religion) +5, Knowledge (the planes) +5, Spellcraft +5; Combat Casting, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Lightning Reflexes, Spell Focus (necromancy)

**Drow Traits:** Drow have darkvision out to 120 feet, and abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.



*Spell-like Abilities (Su):* Drow can use the following spell-like abilities each once per day: *dancing lights, darkness, faerie fire*. Caster level 9<sup>th</sup>.

*Spells:* Deity: She; Domains: Death, Protection; 0<sup>th</sup> level: *detect magic (3), read magic, resistance*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *bane, cause fear, command, shield of faith, obscuring mist, sanctuary*; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: *aid, bull's strength, cure moderate wounds (2), death knell, owl's wisdom*; 3<sup>rd</sup> level: *animate dead, blindness/deafness, dispel magic (2), summon monster III*; 4<sup>th</sup> level: *divination, giant vermin, lesser planar ally, spell immunity*; 5<sup>th</sup> level: *slay living, symbol of pain*

*Equipment & Treasure:* Full plate of fortification +1, +1 morningstar, periapt of wisdom +2, drow poison (3 doses), key to strongbox, holy symbol (spider amulet carved from her mother's bones)

**Note:** The statistics given in parenthesis are those that apply when Elseren has her *periapt of wisdom*.

*Description:* Elseren's pale eyes are tinged with red, as if blood were leaking into them. She shaves the sides of her head and wears her hair in a white crest.

## First Lieutenant Jaim Zharamu

Jaim is the arcane arm of the trio. He uses his spells to keep them secure and snuff out anyone who looks like they are making trouble. He lusts after Elseren, who he cannot have, because of her religious devotion to her Goddess and her superior rank. This thwarted desire makes him especially vicious towards anyone inferior to himself.

**Jaim:** Drow wizard 8; CR 9; Medium humanoid; HD 8d4+8 (29 hp); Init +2; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 12 (+2 Dex), touch 12, flat-footed 10; Base attack/grapple +4/+4; Atk masterwork rapier +5 melee (1d6/19-20x2 plus poison) or hand crossbow +6 ranged (1d4/19-20x2 plus poison), Full Atk masterwork rapier +5 melee (1d6/19-20x2 plus poison) or hand crossbow +6 ranged (1d4/19-20x2 plus poison); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA poison, spells, spell-like abilities, turn/rebuke undead; SQ drow traits, spell resistance 19; AL LE; SV: Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 12, Cha 13

*Skills & Feats:* Bluff +4\*, Concentration +12, Craft (gemcutting) +10, Decipher Script +15, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (history) +15, Knowledge (the planes) +9, Listen +3\*, Spellcraft +15, Spot +3\*; Combat Casting, Greater Spell Focus (abjuration), Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (abjuration), Spell Focus (evocation)

\*Derived from familiar.

*Drow Traits:* Drow have darkvision out to 120 feet, and abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.

*Spell-like Abilities (Su):* Drow can use the following spell-like abilities each once per day: *dancing lights, darkness, faerie fire*. Caster level 8<sup>th</sup>.

*Spells:* 0<sup>th</sup> level: *resistance, ray of frost, detect magic, read magic, arcane mark*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *alarm, hold portal, shield, mage armour, true strike, ray of enfeeblement*; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: *arcane lock, protection from arrows, resist energy, web, scorching ray*; 3<sup>rd</sup> level: *nondetection (3), magic circle against good*; 4<sup>th</sup> level: *lesser globe of invulnerability, stonemin*

*Specialisation:* Abjuration. May not cast Illusion or Enchantment spells.

*Equipment & Treasure:* Metamagic rod of empower (lesser), drow poison (3 doses), scroll of explosive runes

*Description:* Jaim has the creased face of a man in his sixties and his hair is lank and thinning. When he speaks, he always sounds as if he is being deeply sarcastic.

**Alisheen (Jaim's familiar):** Snake (tiny viper): Tiny Animal; HD ¼ d8; hp 14; Init +3; Spd 15 ft (3 squares), climb 15 ft, swim 15 ft; AC 21 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +6 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 18; Base Atk/grapple +4/-7; Atk bite +9 melee (1 plus poison); Full Atk bite +9 melee (1 plus poison); Space/Reach 2 ½ ft/0 ft; SA poison, deliver touch spells; SQ empathic link, improved evasion, share spells, speak with master; SV: Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +7; Str 4, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2

*Skills & Feats:* Balance +11, Climb +11, Hide +15, Listen +6, Spot +6, Swim +5; Weapon Finesse

*Poison:* Saving throw (DC 10), initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con.

## Second Lieutenant Sarak Surulish

Sarak is a drow war-prince, born to noble blood but not yet proven in the field, who longs for the day when the battle will begin. He is becoming frustrated with the cramped confines of the Barrowghast and thinks he will go crazy if he does not shoot something soon. His team mates have had to talk him down several times from going up on deck and picking off a sailor from the docks. Sarak is the youngest of the three by far and is hot-blooded where they are cautious and calculating.

**Sarak:** Drow fighter 8; CR 9; Medium humanoid; HD 8d10+16 (64 hp); Init +1; Spd 20 ft (4 squares); AC 22 (+1 Dex, +9 full plate +1, +2 heavy steel shield), touch 11, flat-footed 21; Base attack/grapple +10/+13; Atk +1 longsword (human bane) +15 melee (1d8+5/18-20x2 plus poison) or masterwork hand crossbow +13 ranged (1d4/19-20x2 plus poison); Full Atk +1 longsword (human bane) +15/+9 melee (1d8+5/18-20x2 plus poison) or masterwork hand crossbow +13 ranged (1d4/19-20x2 plus poison); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA poison, spell-like abilities; SQ drow traits, spell resistance 19; AL LE; SV: Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 14

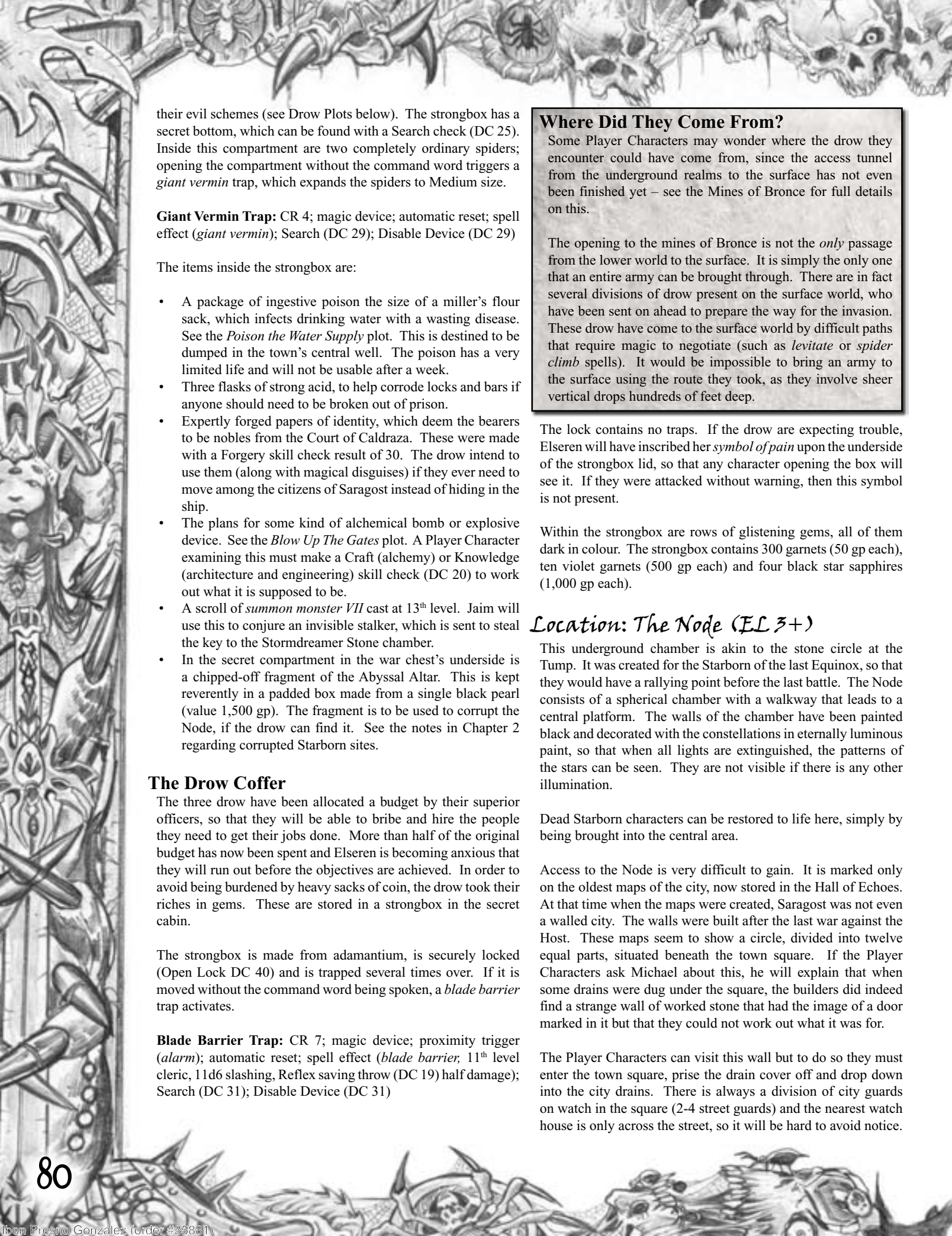
*Skills & Feats:* Climb +8, Craft (weaponsmithing) +11, Handle Animal +7, Intimidate +13, Jump +8, Ride +7; Cleave, Dodge, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (longsword), Power Attack, Weapon Focus (hand crossbow), Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialisation (longsword)

*Equipment & Treasure:* Full plate +1, heavy steel shield, +1 longsword (human bane), masterwork hand crossbow, drow weapon venom (3)

*Description:* Sarak has a narrow, vulpine face, gashed on the cheeks by duelling scars. His speech is bombastic and boastful when addressing enemies but often sullen and petulant when talking to a superior.

## The Drow Arsenal

The drow have a war chest filled with items that they have been given to wreak havoc in the city. These each play a central part in



their evil schemes (see Drow Plots below). The strongbox has a secret bottom, which can be found with a Search check (DC 25). Inside this compartment are two completely ordinary spiders; opening the compartment without the command word triggers a *giant vermin* trap, which expands the spiders to Medium size.

**Giant Vermin Trap:** CR 4; magic device; automatic reset; spell effect (*giant vermin*); Search (DC 29); Disable Device (DC 29)

The items inside the strongbox are:

- A package of ingestive poison the size of a miller's flour sack, which infects drinking water with a wasting disease. See the *Poison the Water Supply* plot. This is destined to be dumped in the town's central well. The poison has a very limited life and will not be usable after a week.
- Three flasks of strong acid, to help corrode locks and bars if anyone should need to be broken out of prison.
- Expertly forged papers of identity, which deem the bearers to be nobles from the Court of Caldraza. These were made with a Forgery skill check result of 30. The drow intend to use them (along with magical disguises) if they ever need to move among the citizens of Saragost instead of hiding in the ship.
- The plans for some kind of alchemical bomb or explosive device. See the *Blow Up The Gates* plot. A Player Character examining this must make a Craft (alchemy) or Knowledge (architecture and engineering) skill check (DC 20) to work out what it is supposed to be.
- A scroll of *summon monster VII* cast at 13<sup>th</sup> level. Jaim will use this to conjure an invisible stalker, which is sent to steal the key to the Stormdreamer Stone chamber.
- In the secret compartment in the war chest's underside is a chipped-off fragment of the Abyssal Altar. This is kept reverently in a padded box made from a single black pearl (value 1,500 gp). The fragment is to be used to corrupt the Node, if the drow can find it. See the notes in Chapter 2 regarding corrupted Starborn sites.

## The Drow Coffer

The three drow have been allocated a budget by their superior officers, so that they will be able to bribe and hire the people they need to get their jobs done. More than half of the original budget has now been spent and Elseren is becoming anxious that they will run out before the objectives are achieved. In order to avoid being burdened by heavy sacks of coin, the drow took their riches in gems. These are stored in a strongbox in the secret cabin.

The strongbox is made from adamantium, is securely locked (Open Lock DC 40) and is trapped several times over. If it is moved without the command word being spoken, a *blade barrier* trap activates.

**Blade Barrier Trap:** CR 7; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; spell effect (*blade barrier*, 11<sup>th</sup> level cleric, 11d6 slashing, Reflex saving throw (DC 19) half damage); Search (DC 31); Disable Device (DC 31)

## Where Did They Come From?

Some Player Characters may wonder where the drow they encounter could have come from, since the access tunnel from the underground realms to the surface has not even been finished yet – see the Mines of Bronce for full details on this.

The opening to the mines of Bronce is not the *only* passage from the lower world to the surface. It is simply the only one that an entire army can be brought through. There are in fact several divisions of drow present on the surface world, who have been sent on ahead to prepare the way for the invasion. These drow have come to the surface world by difficult paths that require magic to negotiate (such as *levitate* or *spider climb* spells). It would be impossible to bring an army to the surface using the route they took, as they involve sheer vertical drops hundreds of feet deep.

The lock contains no traps. If the drow are expecting trouble, Elseren will have inscribed her *symbol of pain* upon the underside of the strongbox lid, so that any character opening the box will see it. If they were attacked without warning, then this symbol is not present.

Within the strongbox are rows of glistening gems, all of them dark in colour. The strongbox contains 300 garnets (50 gp each), ten violet garnets (500 gp each) and four black star sapphires (1,000 gp each).

## Location: The Node (EL 3+)

This underground chamber is akin to the stone circle at the Tump. It was created for the Starborn of the last Equinox, so that they would have a rallying point before the last battle. The Node consists of a spherical chamber with a walkway that leads to a central platform. The walls of the chamber have been painted black and decorated with the constellations in eternally luminous paint, so that when all lights are extinguished, the patterns of the stars can be seen. They are not visible if there is any other illumination.

Dead Starborn characters can be restored to life here, simply by being brought into the central area.

Access to the Node is very difficult to gain. It is marked only on the oldest maps of the city, now stored in the Hall of Echoes. At that time when the maps were created, Saragost was not even a walled city. The walls were built after the last war against the Host. These maps seem to show a circle, divided into twelve equal parts, situated beneath the town square. If the Player Characters ask Michael about this, he will explain that when some drains were dug under the square, the builders did indeed find a strange wall of worked stone that had the image of a door marked in it but that they could not work out what it was for.

The Player Characters can visit this wall but to do so they must enter the town square, prise the drain cover off and drop down into the city drains. There is always a division of city guards on watch in the square (2-4 street guards) and the nearest watch house is only across the street, so it will be hard to avoid notice.

The drain cover is stiff (Strength check at DC 22 to open) and makes a loud creak when removed, which will alert any nearby guards who succeed at a Listen check (DC 15).

The drains are narrow (five feet across) and characters of greater than Small size must stoop. When the wall is found, it is obvious that it is part of a much older structure. The stone door is magically treated to be resistant to spells and damage. It can only be opened by one of the Starborn laying their hand upon it. It was built for them, so they alone can unseal it again. If this is done, the door moves inwards with a groan and a gust of thousand-year-old stale air blows from within.

The Node is not just an energy point. It is also a prison. The departing Starborn sealed several creatures of darkness up here, as the energy of the place would keep them in stasis. Lurking in the darkness behind the stone door are a host of shadows. Most of these will simply rush past the Player Characters and up into the city, eager to be free and to join their drow masters. Some will, however, see the Player Characters as a threat and will stay to attack them. Determine how many shadows stay by the size and average level of the party:

**Average Party Level 2:** 1 Shadow  
**Average Party Level 3:** 1 Shadow  
**Average Party Level 4+:** 2 Shadows

**Shadows:** Medium Undead (Incorporeal); CR 3; HD 3d12 (19 hp); Init +2; Spd fly 40 ft (good) (8 squares); 13 (+2 Dex, +1 deflection), touch 13, flat-footed 11; Base Atk/grapple +1/-; Atk incorporeal touch +3 melee (1d6 Str); Full Atk incorporeal touch +3 melee (1d6 Str); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA create spawn, strength damage; SQ darkvision 60 ft, incorporeal traits, +2 turn resistance, undead traits; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +4; Str -, Dex 14, Con -, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 13

**Skills & Feats:** Hide +8\*, Listen +7, Search +4, Spot +7; Alertness, Dodge

**Strength Damage (Su):** The touch of a shadow deals 1d6 points of Strength damage to a living foe. A creature reduced to Strength 0 by a shadow dies. This is a negative energy effect.

**Create Spawn (Su):** Any humanoid reduced to Strength 0 by a shadow becomes a shadow under the control of its killer within 1d4 rounds.

## *Location: Meryna's Emporium Arcane*

This claustrophobic timber-framed shop, crooked and out of place on an otherwise smart street, serves the magical needs of Saragost's spellcasting community – the part that does not belong to the Order of the Prism, that is. The Order grows its own herbs and produces its own material components, whereas the sorceress Meryna sells to the hedge wizards, street mages and other freelancing students of magic. The Order of the Prism views this shop as a chaotic, distasteful place and does not patronise it unless it is desperate for some component that cannot be found anywhere else. Inside, the place is stuffed with boxes that overflow with fur, feathers, stoppered vials of mercury, tannis root and other magical paraphernalia.

Meryna is a red-haired half-elf who always seems to be slightly drunk (she takes surreptitious swigs from a smoking bottle under the counter) but is not at all impaired by it. She is, in fact, addicted to potions and cannot get through the day without drinking one, though she has managed to break down her consumption so that she sips a single potion all day rather than downing one every hour. Her familiar, a raven named Mortigern, keeps careful watch over the shop from his perch in the rafters.

## *Location: Jehethrian and Croke Arms and Armour*

This is Saragost's most expert smithy. Messrs. Jehethrian and Croke supply the city guards with their mastercrafted weapons and armour, by special agreement with the Council. Any piece of weaponry or armour (up to the city's maximum gold piece limit) may be purchased here. There is, however, a wait for unusual items, as they are not always in stock. Any magical exotic weapon or any magical weapon that has special features as well as an enhancement bonus must be built from scratch (see *DMG*) and cannot be bought 'off the shelf'.

## *Location: Martin Chandler Supplies*

Martin sells general adventuring and exploration equipment, of the kind that does not usually cost more than 100 gold pieces. His three-storey trading post is hung with rope in coils, nets, backpacks that hang from the ceiling, second-hand blankets, bedrolls and such like. He mainly deals with the military but will sell to anyone who can find the cash.

## *Adventures In Saragost*

The city is an ideal place for the Player Characters to find adventure. The main plot thread is the drow's infiltration of the Midnight Enclave and their attempts to have the city ready for the duergar armies to take, but there are other adventures to be had.

Many of the most dangerous Non-Player Characters are of relatively high level (8-10). This means that the Player Characters will not be tackling them until they are closer to those levels themselves. However, all of the enemy forces involved have minions who have Challenge Ratings more suitable to the Player Characters.

In particular, the drow lieutenants lairing in the Barrowghast are unlikely to be within the capability of the Player Characters to deal with as yet but can send agents to harrass the Starborn every step of the way. Once the Player Characters *are* of a suitable level to be able to engage Elseren, Jaim and Sarak, they are likely to have moved on from Chillhame to Caldraza, where the events in the latter part of the adventure arc occur. In this case, the drow lieutenants can appear in and around Crescent City and Beacon City to continue to hound the Starborn, either beating a hasty retreat from Saragost if the invasion attempt fails or setting off at a more leisurely pace later on if it is successful.

## Darkness unleashed

Once the Player Characters unseal the Node, the Games Master has a free hand to release evil on to the city. There are several shadows imprisoned in the Node; there could well be other sleeping horrors incarcerated along with them, which burst free when the door is unsealed.

The shadows can also multiply, creating a nest of undead in the city. They will make for the poorest regions, draining victim after victim until all the houses on a tumbledown street are filled with decomposing bodies and lurking shadows. The Player Characters will find themselves targeted by these creatures and must seek out the nest and destroy it.

## The Alchemist's Warehouse (EL 5+)

Martin Chandler is concerned that one of his suppliers, an alchemist, has been a bit quiet lately. He has investigated and found that there are strange rumours. According to those who have passed nearby, strange noises have been heard coming from a building that belongs to him. He uses this building to store large quantities of raw materials for making alchemical items with. One dock guard claims that a shipment stored at the alchemist's warehouse has somehow broken out of its case and taken the warehouse over.

This statement is true. The warehouse has become infested with experimental homunculi, which are similar to the standard variety (for which see *MM*) but are more intelligent and independent of their creator. The alchemist ordered a batch of them from an unreliable supplier, who had produced them to sell as 'helpers' but had not done enough research first. They arrived in several glass jars, which they have now smashed and which lie on the floor of the warehouse, fluid leaking from them. The alchemist himself is being held in the centre of the homunculus nest, tied with ropes. They are feeding from him a little at a time, draining his blood to survive. If he hears anyone enter the building, he will call weakly for help.

The creatures like being off the ground. They have used the gluey residue from the barrels of alchemical compound to stick planks and ropes together, forming a labyrinthine cradle up by the rafters of the warehouse. They are light enough to skitter freely about on the planks but anyone weighing more than 100 lb. will cause the planks to give way, sending the explorer plummeting to the floor 40 feet below. The planks are also narrow (six inches wide) so Balance skill checks must be made if the Player Characters move at speed along them.

The total number of homunculi should be enough to provide a challenge to the Player Characters:

**Average Party Level 3:** 2 Improved Homunculi

**Average Party Level 4:** 3 Improved Homunculi

The alchemist will be immensely grateful to be rescued and will offer the Player Characters up to 1,000 gold pieces' worth of his alchemical products as a reward.

**'Improved' Homunculus:** CR 3; Tiny Construct; HD 4d10 (22 hp); Init +2; Spd 20 ft (4 squares), fly 50 ft (good); AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 size), touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base attack/grapple +3/-7; Atk bite +7 melee (1d4-1 plus poison); Full Atk bite +7 melee (1d4-1 plus poison); Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft/0 ft; SA poison; SQ construct traits, darkvision 60 ft, low-light vision; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +5;

Str 8, Dex 15, Con —, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 8

*Skills & Feats:* Hide +14, Listen +6, Spot +6; Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Finesse

*Poison (Ex):* Injury, Fortitude DC 13, initial damage sleep for 1 minute, secondary damage sleep for another 5d6 minutes.

## The Ratmasters (EL 2+ & EL 5)

The Inn of the Flaming Beard becomes infested with rats. Bards cannot play over the sound of scrabbling and scratching. Customers complain when fat rats fall from the rafters and land in their beer. The bar snacks are devoured and only droppings are left behind. Torbrind Gilhoolie is forced to ask the Player Characters for help. In return, he promises free lodging whenever they are in the city, half price drinks at the Inn and (grudgingly) 500 gold pieces each.

The Player Characters are sent down into the cellar, to investigate. One or more rat swarms attack them in a frenzied, squirming mass:

**Average Party Level 2:** 1 Rat Swarm

**Average Party Level 3:** 2 Rat Swarms

**Average Party Level 4:** 3 Rat Swarms

**Rat Swarm:** CR 2; Tiny Animal (Swarm); HD 4d8 (18 hp); Init +2; Spd 15 ft (3 squares), climb 15 ft; AC 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex), touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base attack/grapple +3/-; Atk swarm (1d6 plus disease); Full Atk swarm (1d6 plus disease); Face/Reach 10 ft/0 ft; SA disease, distraction; SQ half damage from slashing and piercing, low-light vision, scent, swarm traits; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 2, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2


*Skills & Feats:* Balance +10, Climb +10, Hide +14, Listen +6, Spot +7, Swim +10; Alertness, Weapon Finesse

*Swarm Attack:* Creatures with the swarm subtype don't make standard melee attacks. Instead, they deal automatic damage to any creature whose space they occupy at the end of their move, with no attack roll needed. Swarm attacks are not subject to a miss chance for concealment or cover. Swarms do not threaten creatures in their square, and do not make attacks of opportunity with their swarm attack.

*Disease (Ex):* Filth fever—swarm attack, Fortitude DC 12, incubation period 1d3 days, damage 1d3 Dex and 1d3 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

*Distraction (Ex):* Any living creature that begins its turn with a rat swarm in its space must succeed on a DC 12 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based.

*Swarm Traits:* A swarm is not subject to critical hits or flanking. Reducing a swarm to 0 hit points or lower causes it to break up, though damage taken until that point does not degrade



its ability to attack or resist attack. Swarms are never staggered or reduced to a dying state by damage. Also, they cannot be tripped, grappled, or bull rushed, and they cannot grapple an opponent.

A swarm is immune to any spell or effect that targets a specific number of creatures (including single-target spells such as *disintegrate*). A swarm takes half again as much damage (+50%) from spells or effects that affect an area, such as splash weapons.

A little digging around (Search check, DC 15) uncovers a hole in the cellar wall, leading to the cellar of the building on the other side of the block. This is a derelict shop that once sold clothing and has been boarded up.

The abandoned shop is a frightening place. Dummies in dusty gowns stand silently in the gloom. Some appear to be moving, as rats scuttle under the cloth. Investigation upstairs reveals a hidden room filled with finery, which has been taken down from the walls, tried on and left lying about. A nest of purple and scarlet cloth has been built on the floor, on which two children are sleeping. They are wearing royal robes that are slightly too big for them. They look around ten years old.

These are Bahn and Lisbet, two infant vampires. They seem to be ordinary children until they attack. They have been undead for over 50 years and are as cunning, intelligent and ruthless as adults. They have been sending the rat swarms into the Inn of the Flaming Beard to disrupt trade. Bahn and Lisbet work for the Midnight Enclave, who keep their existence hushed up and provide them with shelter in the city in return for services.

Gimbert, a businessman who has opened a rival tavern in the next street (the Golden Harp), approached the Enclave and asked for help to put his competitor out of business. Rueben Grim realised that this would be an ideal job for the vampire children and sent them to plague the place with rats.

The vampires will pretend to be ordinary city children, poor destitute orphans, who have come in here to sleep in a warm place. They will not pounce until they think they can get away with it. If the Player Characters are close to defeating the vampire children, they will beg for mercy and claim that they did not *want* to do this – the nasty gnome *made* them do it.

This encounter can be tuned down if the Player Characters are not yet equipped to deal with two vampire children. Drop the number of vampires to one.

**Bahn and Lisbet:** CR 3; Small Undead; HD 1d12 (6 hp); Init +6; Spd 20 ft (4 squares); AC 17 (+6 natural armour, +1 size), touch 11, flat-footed 17; Base attack/grapple +0/-2; Atk slam +2 melee (1d4+1); Full Atk slam +2 melee (1d4+1); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA blood drain, children of the night, dominate, create spawn, energy drain; SQ alternate form, damage reduction 10/silver and magic, fast healing 5, gaseous form, resistance to cold 10 and energy 10, spider climb, turn resistance +4; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 12, Con —, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 14

**Skills & Feats:** Bluff +10, Hide +13, Listen +11, Move Silently +9, Search +8, Sense Motive +9, Spot +11; Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes

**Blood Drain (Ex):** A vampire can suck blood from a living victim with its fangs by making a successful grapple check. If it pins the foe, it drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of Constitution drain each round the pin is maintained. On each such successful attack, the vampire gains 5 temporary hit points.

**Children of the Night (Su):** Vampires command the lesser creatures of the world and once per day can call forth 1d6+1 rat swarms, 1d4+1 bat swarms, or a pack of 3d6 wolves as a standard action. (If the base creature is not terrestrial, this power might summon other creatures of similar power.) These creatures arrive in 2d6 rounds and serve the vampire for up to 1 hour.

**Dominate (Su):** A vampire can crush an opponent's will just by looking onto his or her eyes. This is similar to a gaze attack, except that the vampire must use a standard action, and those merely looking at it are not affected. Anyone the vampire targets must succeed on a Will save or fall instantly under the vampire's influence as though by a dominate person spell (caster level 12th). The ability has a range of 30 feet.

**Create Spawn (Su):** A humanoid or monstrous humanoid slain by a vampire's energy drain rises as a vampire spawn (see the Vampire Spawn entry) 1d4 days after burial.

If the vampire instead drains the victim's Constitution to 0 or lower, the victim returns as a spawn if it had 4 or less HD and as a vampire if it had 5 or more HD. In either case, the new vampire or spawn is under the command of the vampire that created it and remains enslaved until its master's destruction. At any given time a vampire may have enslaved spawn totaling no more than twice its own Hit Dice; any spawn it creates that would exceed this limit are created as free-willed vampires or vampire spawn. A vampire that is enslaved may create and enslave spawn of its own, so a master vampire can control a number of lesser vampires in this fashion. A vampire may voluntarily free an enslaved spawn in order to enslave a new spawn, but once freed, a vampire or vampire spawn cannot be enslaved again.

**Energy Drain (Su):** Living creatures hit by a vampire's slam attack (or any other natural weapon the vampire might possess) gain two negative levels. For each negative level bestowed, the vampire gains 5 temporary hit points. A vampire can use its energy drain ability once per round.

**Alternate Form (Su):** A vampire can assume the shape of a bat, dire bat, wolf, or dire wolf as a standard action. This ability is similar to a polymorph spell cast by a 12th-level character, except that the vampire does not regain hit points for changing form and must choose from among the forms mentioned here. While in its alternate form, the vampire loses its natural slam attack and dominate ability, but it gains the natural weapons and extraordinary special attacks of its new form. It can remain in that form until it assumes another or until the next sunrise. (If the base creature is not terrestrial, this power might allow other forms.)

**Gaseous Form (Su):** As a standard action, a vampire can assume gaseous form at will as the spell (caster level 5th), but it can remain gaseous indefinitely and has a fly speed of 20 feet with perfect maneuverability.

*Spider Climb (Ex):* A vampire can climb sheer surfaces as though with a spider climb spell.

## The Hounds of Yarnak (EL 3+)

One of the Player Characters is jostled in a crowd, while in a bar or similar social situation, by a slender blond youth. This person tries to slip something into the Player Character's pocket. The Player Character can make a Spot check opposed by the rogue's Sleight of Hand check (who has a +7 bonus to this skill) to notice this. The object is a small crude statue of a half-man, half-canine creature, crouched down as if to spring. If the Player Character notices, he can attempt to accost the youth, who will try to flee.

The statue is a cursed item that the youth, Jan Cadro, discovered on the gnawed corpse of his brother. Tony Cadro was a thief and grave robber, who had dug the statue up out of one of the older tombs in the city cemetery. He was immediately subject to its curse. The owner of the statue becomes the prey of yeth hounds, who emerge from the darkness of the old tomb and glide across the sky in search of their quarry. Jan Cadro has so far been able to elude them but he knows that he cannot avoid them forever. He is trying to escape the curse by slipping the statue to a stranger.

At midnight each night, a group of yeth hounds emerge silently from the tomb. The hounds focus on the statue, not upon the person who has it. They can always tell the location of the statue, as if by a *locate object* spell with unlimited range. Magical means may be taken to prevent this, such as *nondetection*. They will tear the bearer in pieces, along with anyone with him but this is only so that they can reach and retrieve the statue.

**Average Party Level 2:** 1 Yeth Hound

**Average Party Level 3:** 2 Yeth Hounds

**Average Party Level 4:** 2 Yeth Hounds

If the Player Characters attempt to return the statue to the tomb from whence it came, they will have to search the graveyard and find the proper tomb. Tony Cadro did not tell his brother which one it was. A Search check (DC 30) can locate a tomb that seems to have been violated recently, with signs of crowbar damage to the door. The inscription reads only 'YARNAK', with no other clue as to the occupant's identity. If the Player Characters are not willing or able to search the graveyard, they can always wait until midnight and look to see from whence the yeth hounds emerge.

Returning the statue to the tomb prevents any further yeth hound assault and should bring a story award of 500 experience points per Player Character. If any of the Player Characters investigate the tomb, they find a coffin made from solid lead, sealed with molten silver (worth 20 gp if it were recovered somehow). Inside this coffin is a human skeleton from which grey, silken hair grows in abundance, not just from the head but from all of the bones as well. There is so much of it that it is wadded tightly against the coffin lid. Yarnak, whoever he is, is quite dead. His identity is revealed in the second book of this series.



**Jan Cadro:** Human rogue 1; CR 1; Medium humanoid; HD 1d6-1 (5 hp); Init +2; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 15 (+2 Dex, +3 studded leather), touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base attack/grapple +0/+1; Atk masterwork rapier +3 melee (1d6+1/18-20x2) or masterwork heavy crossbow +3 ranged (1d10); Full Atk masterwork rapier +3 melee (18-20x2) or masterwork heavy crossbow +3 ranged (1d10); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ trapfinding; AL NE; SV: Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 8, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 14.

**Skills & Feats:** Bluff +6, Diplomacy +4, Disable Device +4, Disguise +7, Escape Artist +4, Gather Information +4, Hide +6, Intimidate +6, Listen +2, Move Silently +6, Open Lock +4, Sleight of Hand +7, Spot +2, Use Rope +4; Skill Focus (sleight of hand), Weapon Finesse.

**Equipment & Treasure:** Studded leather armour, masterwork rapier, masterwork heavy crossbow, 20 bolts, masterwork rogue's tools, 300 gp

**Yeth Hounds:** CR 3; Medium Outsider (Extraplanar, Evil); HD 3d8+6 (19 hp); Init +6; Spd 40 ft (8 squares), fly 60 ft (good); AC 20 (+2 Dex, +8 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 18; Base attack/grapple +3/+6; Atk bite +6 melee (1d8+4); Full Atk bite +6 melee (1d8+4); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA bay, trip; SQ damage reduction 10/silver, darkvision 60 ft, flight, scent; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 17, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 10

**Skills and Feats:** Listen +11, Spot +11, Search +7, Survival +11 (+13 following tracks)\*; Improved Initiative, Track

\* A yeth hound has a +4 racial bonus on Survival checks when tracking by scent.

**Bay (Su):** When a yeth hound howls or barks, all creatures except other evil outsiders within a 300-foot spread must succeed on a DC 11 Will save or become panicked for 2d4 rounds. This is a sonic mind-affecting fear effect. Whether or not the save is successful, an affected creature is immune to the same hound's bay for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

**Trip (Ex):** A yeth hound that hits with its bite attack can attempt to trip the opponent (+3 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the yeth hound.

**Flight (Su):** A yeth hound can cease or resume flight as a free action.

## The Horror in the Green (EL 5+)

This mini-adventure is most suitable for a party that contains a druid, or that has already struck up good relations with the clerics and druids at the Grove of Hernun.

Within the Grove of Hernun, all is no longer peaceful. A group of merchants who went to discuss business on the neutral ground of the Grove were discovered in the early light of morning, torn to shreds and partly devoured. The animals have hidden themselves in the very depths of the woods and will not come out.

The priests of Hernun do not want the city guardsmen blundering through their Grove with swords and crossbows, though they cannot argue that the menace *has* to be dealt with. The Council of Saragost asks the Player Characters if they would look into it, since they have proven themselves in the past and can be trusted to respect the Grove.

The entity responsible for these assaults is a green hag (or possibly more than one, if additional challenge is needed) who entered the city while disguised as an ordinary woman, looking for a suitable place to make into her home. Even the monsters of

Chillhame have now heard of the coming invasion and this hag is no fool. She, like many humans, believes she will be safer within the walls of Saragost than out in the wilderness. She now lurks at the bottom of the sacred pool during the day, using *water breathing*, hiding herself away until the hours of darkness come. The priests do not realise that she is hiding right under their noses. She is a wily creature and will use *disguise self* to pass herself off as one of the priests if she thinks she will be detected. If the Player Characters wound her severely, she will retreat to the sacred pool, as she does not expect to be followed there.

If one green hag is not challenging enough, the Games Master can add one or both Griselda's sisters, Acknes and Gerth. If the Player Characters can destroy the green hag threat, the guardians of the Grove will be deeply in their debt and will reward each participating character with either a payment of 2,000 gold pieces or a +1 *quarterstaff*, as they prefer.

**Griselda the Green Hag:** CR 5; Medium Monstrous Humanoid; HD 9d8+9 (49 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares), swim 30 ft; AC 22 (+1 Dex, +11 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 21; Base attack/grapple +9/+13; Atk claw +13 melee (1d4+4); Full Atk 2 claws +13 melee (1d4+4); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA spell-like abilities, weakness, mimicry; SQ darkvision 90 ft, spell resistance 18; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 19, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 14

**Skills & Feats:** Concentration +7, Knowledge (geography) +7, Hide +9, Listen +11, Spot +11 Swim +12; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Great Fortitude

**Spell-Like Abilities:** At will—*dancing lights*, *disguise self*, *ghost sound* (DC 12), *invisibility*, *pass without trace*, *tongues*, *water breathing*. Caster level 9th. The save DC is Charisma-based.

**Weakness (Su):** A green hag can weaken a foe by making a special touch attack. The opponent must succeed on a DC 16 Fortitude save or take 2d4 points of Strength damage. The save DC is Charisma-based.

**Mimicry (Ex):** A green hag can imitate the sounds of almost any animal found near its lair.

**Equipment & Treasure:** Griselda's gear is in the weed-tangled muck at the bottom of the lake, in a waterproof bag made from a giant's bladder. A Search check (DC 20) is needed to find it. She owns 400 gold pieces in coin, a black pearl worth 500 gold pieces and a *wand of colour spray*, which is marked with the colours of the rainbow in rings on one end. The *wand* has 23 charges left.

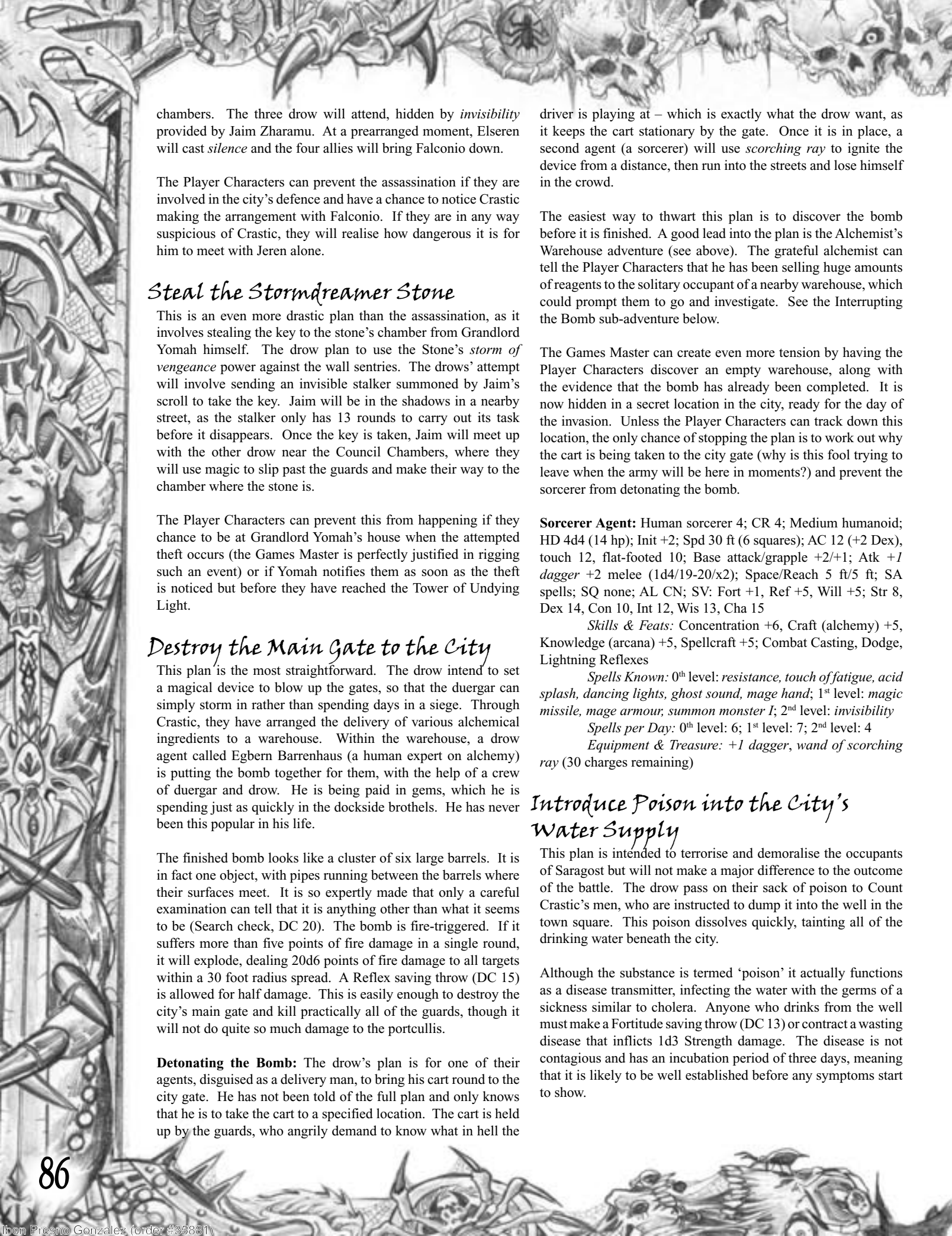
## The Drow Plots

The drow intend to break down the city's defences from within. They have several tactical objectives that may accomplish this end, which the Games Master may draw from as necessary. These must be brought to a head just before the invasion is due to commence, or they will risk being uncovered and foiled.

### Assassinate Jeren Falconio

Without his leadership, the wall defences will be slightly weaker, so Falconio is an obvious target. The plan is for Count Crastic to hold a private audience with Jeren Falconio in the council





chambers. The three drow will attend, hidden by *invisibility* provided by Jaim Zharamu. At a prearranged moment, Elseren will cast *silence* and the four allies will bring Falconio down.

The Player Characters can prevent the assassination if they are involved in the city's defence and have a chance to notice Crastic making the arrangement with Falconio. If they are in any way suspicious of Crastic, they will realise how dangerous it is for him to meet with Jeren alone.

### Steal the Stormdreamer Stone

This is an even more drastic plan than the assassination, as it involves stealing the key to the stone's chamber from Grandlord Yomah himself. The drow plan to use the Stone's *storm of vengeance* power against the wall sentries. The drows' attempt will involve sending an invisible stalker summoned by Jaim's scroll to take the key. Jaim will be in the shadows in a nearby street, as the stalker only has 13 rounds to carry out its task before it disappears. Once the key is taken, Jaim will meet up with the other drow near the Council Chambers, where they will use magic to slip past the guards and make their way to the chamber where the stone is.

The Player Characters can prevent this from happening if they chance to be at Grandlord Yomah's house when the attempted theft occurs (the Games Master is perfectly justified in rigging such an event) or if Yomah notifies them as soon as the theft is noticed but before they have reached the Tower of Undying Light.

### Destroy the Main Gate to the City

This plan is the most straightforward. The drow intend to set a magical device to blow up the gates, so that the duergar can simply storm in rather than spending days in a siege. Through Crastic, they have arranged the delivery of various alchemical ingredients to a warehouse. Within the warehouse, a drow agent called Egbern Barrenhaus (a human expert on alchemy) is putting the bomb together for them, with the help of a crew of duergar and drow. He is being paid in gems, which he is spending just as quickly in the dockside brothels. He has never been this popular in his life.

The finished bomb looks like a cluster of six large barrels. It is in fact one object, with pipes running between the barrels where their surfaces meet. It is so expertly made that only a careful examination can tell that it is anything other than what it seems to be (Search check, DC 20). The bomb is fire-triggered. If it suffers more than five points of fire damage in a single round, it will explode, dealing 20d6 points of fire damage to all targets within a 30 foot radius spread. A Reflex saving throw (DC 15) is allowed for half damage. This is easily enough to destroy the city's main gate and kill practically all of the guards, though it will not do quite so much damage to the portcullis.

**Detonating the Bomb:** The drow's plan is for one of their agents, disguised as a delivery man, to bring his cart round to the city gate. He has not been told of the full plan and only knows that he is to take the cart to a specified location. The cart is held up by the guards, who angrily demand to know what in hell the

driver is playing at – which is exactly what the drow want, as it keeps the cart stationary by the gate. Once it is in place, a second agent (a sorcerer) will use *scorching ray* to ignite the device from a distance, then run into the streets and lose himself in the crowd.

The easiest way to thwart this plan is to discover the bomb before it is finished. A good lead into the plan is the Alchemist's Warehouse adventure (see above). The grateful alchemist can tell the Player Characters that he has been selling huge amounts of reagents to the solitary occupant of a nearby warehouse, which could prompt them to go and investigate. See the Interrupting the Bomb sub-adventure below.

The Games Master can create even more tension by having the Player Characters discover an empty warehouse, along with the evidence that the bomb has already been completed. It is now hidden in a secret location in the city, ready for the day of the invasion. Unless the Player Characters can track down this location, the only chance of stopping the plan is to work out why the cart is being taken to the city gate (why is this fool trying to leave when the army will be here in moments?) and prevent the sorcerer from detonating the bomb.

**Sorcerer Agent:** Human sorcerer 4; CR 4; Medium humanoid; HD 4d4 (14 hp); Init +2; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 12 (+2 Dex), touch 12, flat-footed 10; Base attack/grapple +2/+1; Atk +1 *dagger* +2 melee (1d4/19-20/x2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA spells; SQ none; AL CN; SV: Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 15

*Skills & Feats:* Concentration +6, Craft (alchemy) +5, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Spellcraft +5; Combat Casting, Dodge, Lightning Reflexes

*Spells Known:* 0<sup>th</sup> level: *resistance, touch of fatigue, acid splash, dancing lights, ghost sound, mage hand*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *magic missile, mage armour, summon monster I*; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: *invisibility*

*Spells per Day:* 0<sup>th</sup> level: 6; 1<sup>st</sup> level: 7; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: 4


*Equipment & Treasure:* +1 *dagger, wand of scorching ray* (30 charges remaining)

### Introduce Poison into the City's Water Supply

This plan is intended to terrorise and demoralise the occupants of Saragost but will not make a major difference to the outcome of the battle. The drow pass on their sack of poison to Count Crastic's men, who are instructed to dump it into the well in the town square. This poison dissolves quickly, tainting all of the drinking water beneath the city.

Although the substance is termed 'poison' it actually functions as a disease transmitter, infecting the water with the germs of a sickness similar to cholera. Anyone who drinks from the well must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 13) or contract a wasting disease that inflicts 1d3 Strength damage. The disease is not contagious and has an incubation period of three days, meaning that it is likely to be well established before any symptoms start to show.





Preventing this horrible deed will only be possible if the Games Master (by fiat) rules that the Player Characters have a chance to notice Crastic's agents bringing the sack of toxin into the square. If they have been watching the Barrowghast or tailing Crastic, then they should certainly be given the chance to thwart the poisoning.

The contamination will naturally fade away within one week. The Player Characters can help to combat the effects of the disease by providing fresh drinking water from other sources (such as spells), teaching the citizens to boil water before use, using *purify food and drink* repeatedly when people come to fill buckets at the well, enlisting the help of the various temples in the city to do likewise and so on.

If the drow succeed in poisoning the city, the Player Characters should be given -2 victory points, as many troops will be unfit for combat when the invasion comes.

### Corrupt the Node

If the drow can corrupt the Node that lies beneath the city, then they have scored a more important victory than the conquest of the city by military force would bring them. A corrupted Starborn site allows the Dark to manifest in the form of extraplanar monsters, as well as giving the Host a means to return from the dead.

The drow must first find the Node if they are to corrupt it. The most obvious place for them to look for information is the Hall of Echoes. Jaim will take the lead here, using his magic to conceal himself and then attempting to follow any visitors to the Hall through its locked portals and into the archive rooms. Once he has a chance, Jaim will ransack the archives looking for information on the node. If Michael Dunsany can examine the aftereffects of Jaim's rummaging about, he will be able to tell exactly what he was looking for.

Even if the drow locate the Node, they cannot open it. They can certainly try – and the Player Characters may well come across them as they descend into the drains to look for it. Once the Node is open, though, they will use all their resources to reach it and perform the ritual of corruption. Should the Player Characters be so foolish as to leave the Node without guards, the drow will enter the Node without trouble and begin the corruption ritual the night before the invasion is due to commence.

The Player Characters do have a chance to save the Node, even if the drow begin the ritual. As explained in Chapter 2, the corruption of a Starborn site causes all Starborn within a half-mile radius to feel nauseous and weak. If the Player Characters work out what is going on from this, they may reach the Node in time to disrupt the ritual and prevent the stellar forces from being choked off at the heart.

### Harassing the Player Characters

The trio of drow work from behind the scenes. The last thing they want is to confront the Player Characters openly. They will therefore attempt to get rid of them by other means, according to how much of a threat they are believed to be. The drow

attacks will be scaled according to the Player Characters' level of experience. The drow have limited means and do not want to use more force than they have to.

The first time the drow will hear of the Player Characters is when Count Crastic reports back from the Council meeting and tells them that the Council has been warned. The drow are furious but understand that nothing can be done about it now. The drow do not realise at first that the Player Characters are Starborn unless they pass on information about the nature of the Starborn to Crastic, who can in turn identify the Player Characters tell them. Once the drow realise that their incarnate enemies are present, they will hatch any number of schemes to destroy them. These will include:

- Sending drow agents to spy on them and find out where they live, in preparation for other attacks.
- Laying ambushes of drow agents.
- Sending a chain devil summoned by Elseren's *lesser planar ally* spell to tear them to pieces.
- Have the drow agents in the city guard arrest the Player Characters on suspicion of possession of illegal substances (such as poison) or stolen property, then plant some on them or in their living quarters. They can then be thrown in the Wharf Gaol, where another attempt on their life can be made.

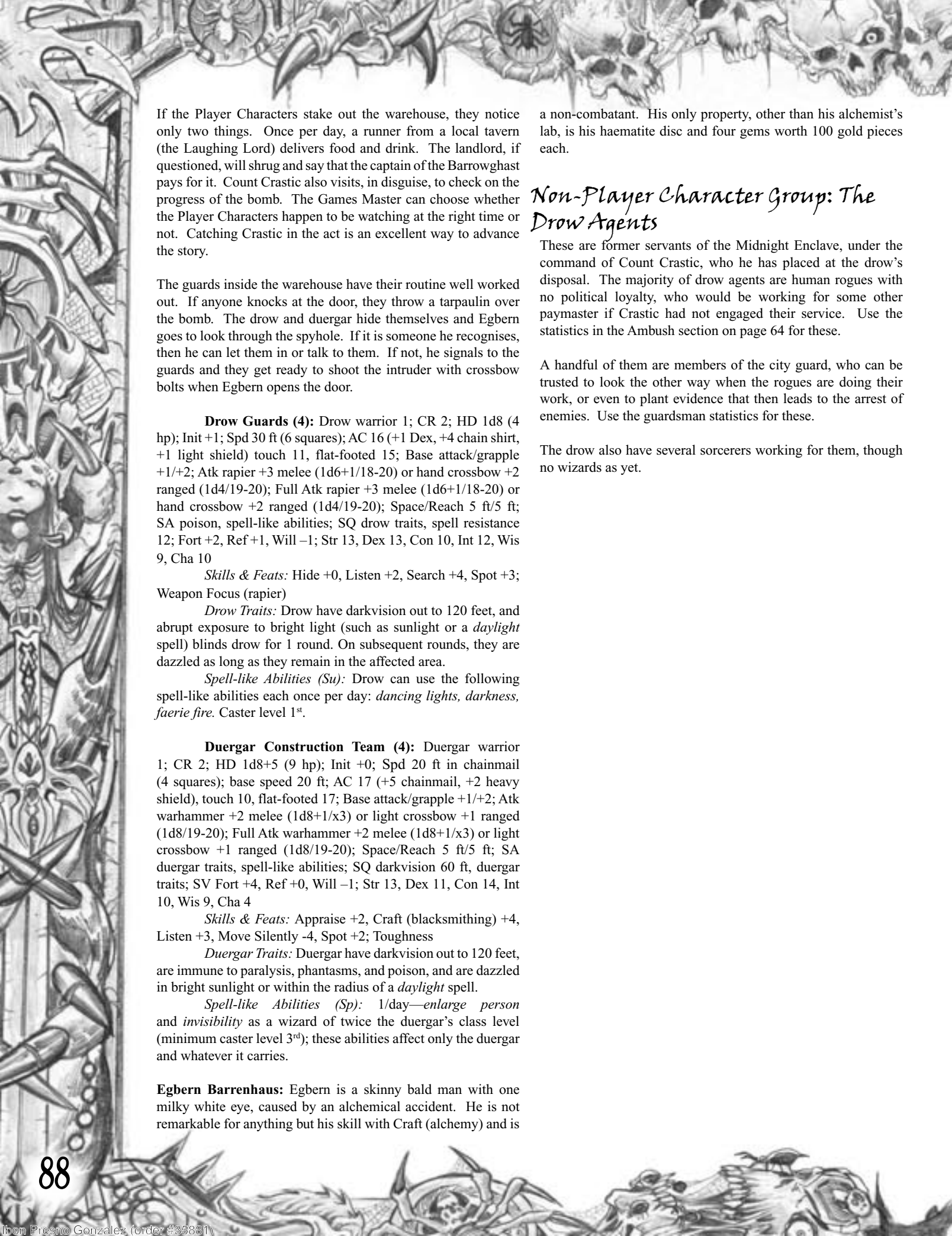
If the Player Characters leave the city, the attacks will cease for the moment. The drow cannot spare the resources to hunt the Player Characters through the wilderness, nor do they have agents who are used to outdoor work.

### Event: Interrupting the Bomb

This is a suitable adventure to run the night before the duergar arrive, as it allows the Player Characters a chance to thwart the main danger to the city just when it was about to be unveiled.

If the Games Master decides that the Player Characters have done enough investigation to justify finding out about the bomb's construction, then proceed as follows. A contact (such as the rescued alchemist, a sailor on the docks or a shop owner) tells them that a large quantity of alchemical products has recently been delivered to a warehouse in the dock region. They have checked with the letting office and learned that someone called 'Captain Black' is currently renting the warehouse. Nobody on the docks has ever heard of this person.

The drow have assigned a construction team and a guard team from among their agents. These persons are sternly instructed to stay inside the warehouse at *all* times. The construction team consists of duergar, smuggled into the city on one of Count Crastic's ships, under the direction of Egbern Barrenhaus, while the guard team is made up of four drow soldiers who were brought in with the three officers. The nonhumans are more comfortable working at night and in low lighting conditions, so the team spends its time from dusk till dawn distilling the alchemical substances down into refined explosives and the daylight hours asleep.



If the Player Characters stake out the warehouse, they notice only two things. Once per day, a runner from a local tavern (the Laughing Lord) delivers food and drink. The landlord, if questioned, will shrug and say that the captain of the Barrowghast pays for it. Count Crastic also visits, in disguise, to check on the progress of the bomb. The Games Master can choose whether the Player Characters happen to be watching at the right time or not. Catching Crastic in the act is an excellent way to advance the story.

The guards inside the warehouse have their routine well worked out. If anyone knocks at the door, they throw a tarpaulin over the bomb. The drow and duergar hide themselves and Egbern goes to look through the spyhole. If it is someone he recognises, then he can let them in or talk to them. If not, he signals to the guards and they get ready to shoot the intruder with crossbow bolts when Egbern opens the door.

**Drow Guards (4):** Drow warrior 1; CR 2; HD 1d8 (4 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 16 (+1 Dex, +4 chain shirt, +1 light shield) touch 11, flat-footed 15; Base attack/grapple +1/+2; Atk rapier +3 melee (1d6+1/18-20) or hand crossbow +2 ranged (1d4/19-20); Full Atk rapier +3 melee (1d6+1/18-20) or hand crossbow +2 ranged (1d4/19-20); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA poison, spell-like abilities; SQ drow traits, spell resistance 12; Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 10

*Skills & Feats:* Hide +0, Listen +2, Search +4, Spot +3; Weapon Focus (rapier)

*Drow Traits:* Drow have darkvision out to 120 feet, and abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.

*Spell-like Abilities (Su):* Drow can use the following spell-like abilities each once per day: *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*. Caster level 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Duergar Construction Team (4):** Duergar warrior 1; CR 2; HD 1d8+5 (9 hp); Init +0; Spd 20 ft in chainmail (4 squares); base speed 20 ft; AC 17 (+5 chainmail, +2 heavy shield), touch 10, flat-footed 17; Base attack/grapple +1/+2; Atk warhammer +2 melee (1d8+1/x3) or light crossbow +1 ranged (1d8/19-20); Full Atk warhammer +2 melee (1d8+1/x3) or light crossbow +1 ranged (1d8/19-20); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA duergar traits, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 60 ft, duergar traits; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 4

*Skills & Feats:* Appraise +2, Craft (blacksmithing) +4, Listen +3, Move Silently -4, Spot +2; Toughness

*Duergar Traits:* Duergar have darkvision out to 120 feet, are immune to paralysis, phantasms, and poison, and are dazzled in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

*Spell-like Abilities (Sp):* 1/day—*enlarge person* and *invisibility* as a wizard of twice the duergar's class level (minimum caster level 3<sup>rd</sup>); these abilities affect only the duergar and whatever it carries.

**Egbern Barrenhaus:** Egbern is a skinny bald man with one milky white eye, caused by an alchemical accident. He is not remarkable for anything but his skill with Craft (alchemy) and is

a non-combatant. His only property, other than his alchemist's lab, is his haematite disc and four gems worth 100 gold pieces each.

## *Non-Player Character Group: The Drow Agents*

These are former servants of the Midnight Enclave, under the command of Count Crastic, who he has placed at the drow's disposal. The majority of drow agents are human rogues with no political loyalty, who would be working for some other paymaster if Crastic had not engaged their service. Use the statistics in the Ambush section on page 64 for these.

A handful of them are members of the city guard, who can be trusted to look the other way when the rogues are doing their work, or even to plant evidence that then leads to the arrest of enemies. Use the guardsman statistics for these.

The drow also have several sorcerers working for them, though no wizards as yet.

# The Lost Villages

## Summary

The Player Characters have now delivered word of the coming invasion to the Council at Saragost. The town messengers can take care of the alarms to remaining villages from here on in. There are, however, three villages that have not been heard from for a while. Town messengers are chosen for their speed, not for their skill in confronting unknown dangers. This is a job for adventurers, not couriers.

The Player Characters are asked to take word to the Lost Villages and offered a handsome sum for their help. This series of adventures is a simple set of trips from Saragost out to isolated towns, where the Player Characters have no idea what will be waiting for them. They can be undertaken in any order.

## Plot Event: The Council Convenes

*You are assembled before the Council of Saragost, who watch you in silence, waiting for their leader to speak. Grandlord Yomah rolls out a map, which you immediately recognise as the island of Chillhame. Towns and villages are marked on the map; you notice that almost all of them have been marked with a ring of blue ink.*

*'These,' Grandlord Yomah explains, 'are the settlements which have now been warned of the invasion by yourselves, or which our messengers will soon be reaching. Thanks to your efforts, almost all of the island is prepared to face the coming threat. There are, however, exceptions. The villages of Astercote, Chalksmere and Vannondale have all been... strangely uncooperative. Our messengers report that Chalksmere is barricaded and has a warning sign before it, while the people of Vannondale appear to have given up talking to outsiders altogether. As for Astercote, we have heard nothing at all of it and the locals are muttering strange things.*

*'These are not mere hamlets that might have been abandoned overnight. These are villages of many hundreds of people. We are gravely concerned, not only to know what has become of them, but also to alert them to the coming danger. Our messengers are efficient but they are not fit to send on expeditions into the unknown. We must therefore call upon the services of those who have aided us in the past.*

*'We request that you ride out to these lost villages, investigate what has befallen them and ensure that the townspeople are properly notified of the invasion. We need the troops those towns will provide! We have precious few days left to us before the creatures from the north will begin their march across the island. Go quickly, for many lives depend upon it.'*

*'We will keep you apprised of events here,' adds Lady Arigane. 'When the enemy is sighted, you will be the first to know.'*

If Count Crastic is present at the meeting, add the following:

*Count Crastic clears his throat. 'It will also be a good thing, in our collective opinion, for you all to spend time outside the city instead of remaining continually in Saragost. It appears there are some here who do not appreciate the service you have done for us and would very much like to have quiet words with you about it. We would rather have you alive. There will be enough martyrs soon enough, I fear.'*

The Council will provide the Player Characters with any mundane supplies and provisions they need, within reason. A wagon and horses is an acceptable request, as is food for the journey, but requests for magic items or warships will be ignored. The Player Characters can depart whenever they are ready.

## Event: Encounters While Travelling

The news of the coming invasion has swept across the island. A tide of human traffic is moving towards Saragost, as evacuees make their way to the city. Many villages send only their women and children to Saragost, leaving the men behind to fight.

This obvious unease has had an impact in the communities of monstrous humanoids, too. Some have taken advantage of the drop in numbers in the villages to raid and loot; there are now some settlements that have been entirely taken over by ogres and goblins, as their former inhabitants have fled. Others are waiting by the roads, knowing that evacuees are easy pickings. The Player Characters can expect to meet opportunistic monstrous humanoids every step of the way.

While the Player Characters are on the road to or from Saragost or between the Lost Villages, the Games Master can choose any of the encounters below as appropriate or roll randomly. There is a 10% chance per hour of an encounter occurring.

## Chalksmere

### Summary

The entire village is cursed with lycanthropy. They are all wereboars, with one exception. As the curse is of divine origin, it does not follow the usual pattern for lycanthropy – the villagers change form at nightfall every day and recover their human shape in the morning.

One person (Wem, the village idiot, the only person exempt from the curse) has the duty to lock them all inside the village hall overnight until they are human again, for their own protection. Any people who are trapped outside when the sun sets become

## Encounters While Travelling

d%	Encounter	Purpose	Average EL
01-02	1 wyvern	Picking off and devouring stragglers	6
03-06	1d4+2 worgs	Preying on travelling families	6
07-12	1 ogre and 1d4+2 hobgoblin warriors	Moving to a new base to avoid invasion	5
13-18	2 goblins mounted on worgs	Scouting ahead looking for vulnerable villages	5
19-24	1 shadow mastiff (night only)	A manifestation of the Dark, looking for prey	5
25-33	1d2 locust swarms	Devouring crops that have been left unprotected	4
34-42	1 human ranger (Rgr4)	Patrolling the land to make sure it is safe for the travellers	4
43-53	1d4+4 goblins	Setting traps on the road to cripple wagons	4
54-61	1 ogre	Raiding wagons for food and ale	3
62-70	1 ankheg	Disturbed by noise of vehicles, seeking food	3
71-80	1d3 gnolls	Scouting to see why the humans are all leaving	3
81-93	3d4 commoners	Heading for the safety of Saragot	2
94-100	1 merchant with 1d4 warrior escorts (L2)	Making for the city	2

boars and run wild in the nearby forests, where the Hunter – a dark figure sent by a deity – hunts and slays them.

The curse came from the wild god, Wohoon, who has a shrine in the woods. The Hunter is a creature sent by Wohoon's brother, Hernun. The curse is rooted in the past. Two weeks ago, one of the village's hunters slew and ate a sacred boar and made it into a stew, which the whole village tasted, with the exception of Wem. This earned them the curse of Wohoon, whose sacred animals were supposed to be left untouched.

There is only one way to lift the curse, which is to wrap the guilty hunter in the skin of the sacred boar he killed and take him to the shrine. If this is done, he will become a boar forever and the townspeople will be freed.

**Note:** For story purposes, it is much better if the Player Characters arrive at Chalksmere during the hours of darkness. The Games Master is justified in slowing the Player Characters with a *deus ex machina* storm or an encounter or two on the way.

## Approaching Chalksmere

*The road to Chalksmere runs ahead of you, over a bridge and into woodland. As you approach the bridge, you see that someone has tried to barricade it on the Chalksmere side. There is a pile of rough logs blocking the path. Sticking into the pile is a wooden sign, with the words TERN BACK NO BODY HEAR scrawled on it in an infantile hand.*

Anyone examining the tracks in the ground by the logs and succeeding at a Survival check (DC 16) can ascertain that all the tracks were made by the same person. A single humanoid acting on his own made this barricade. He wore large boots and was quite heavy-set. This was Wem, doing his best to warn travellers off coming here.

## Location: The Woods

The woods that screen Chalksmere off from the rest of the island are deep, thick and dark. All around, the sound of wildlife can be heard. A simple Survival or Knowledge (nature) skill check



## Chalksmere Statistics

**Size:** Hamlet  
**Population:** 300  
**Racial Mix:** 100% human  
**GP Limit:** 100  
**Power Centre:** Headsman Hanniver (N)  
**Constable:** Roger Burlingrave (Warrior 1)

(DC 10) reveals that the woods seem to be much more full of living creatures than they should be. Any Player Character in the area feels oddly like he is being watched.

From time to time, the Games Master should have the Player Characters make occasional Spot checks (DC 15). If successful, they see a dark humanoid shape vanishing behind a tree. This is the Hunter, waiting for his time to visit the village and observing the new arrivals as they pass by.

## Location: Chalksmere Village

Assuming the Player Characters come here by night:

*The village is a simple one, with humble wooden buildings and muddy streets. As you walk through, you realise that something is not quite right. The village seems to be completely deserted. No lights burn in any of the houses and no smoke comes from any of the chimneys. From somewhere in the distance, you can hear the sound of squealing pigs, so there is livestock here, at least.*

If the Player Characters investigate any of the houses, they find them empty of people. There is one bizarre feature common to all: a pile of folded clothes just by the doorway. It seems that the villagers removed their clothes, folded them neatly and then just walked off into the night. If the Player Characters head deeper into the village:

*As you enter the town square, you see a single stone building in the centre. Here, at last, is some sign of life. The coloured windows are filled with light and a figure stands out at the front, holding a lantern.*

The figure is Wem (see below). He will be surprised and terrified to see the Player Characters and will continually glance past them to see if the Hunter is coming.

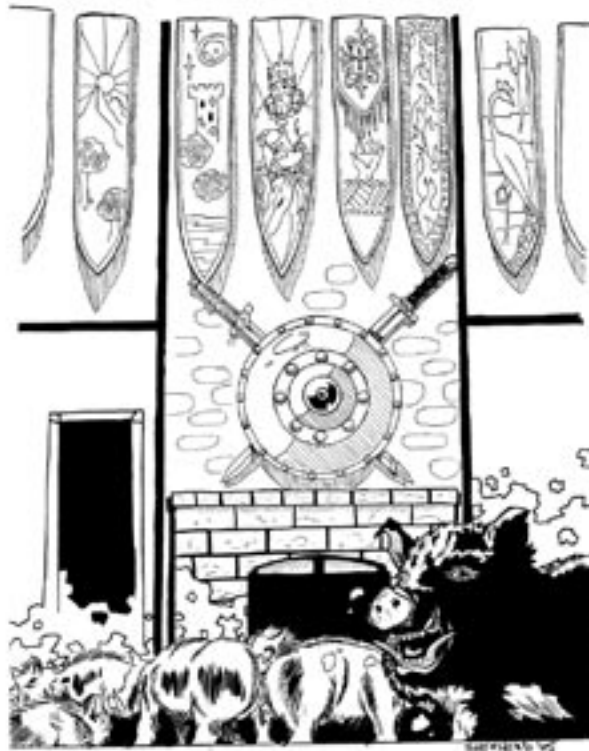
## Location: The Town Hall

*This high stone building is clearly the town hall. It has the reek of a pigsty about it. It must once have been a fine structure, with its stained glass windows and carved buttresses, but now the ground around it is churned to mud and spattered with dung. The sound of hundreds of grunting swine comes from inside. Heavy wooden doors block the entrance.*

The door is both locked and barred from the inside. A character can open the lock with an Open Lock skill check (DC 30) but the bar cannot be lifted from outside. A Strength check must be made to smash it open. The DC is 28 if the door is both locked and barred and 25 if it is only barred. Wem will do what he can to prevent the Player Characters from breaking the door open.

There are six stained glass windows in all, 15 feet above the ground. Other than the main door, they are the only way into the building.

Inside the town hall are three hundred villagers in boar form. The majority of the boars have no idea that they were once human



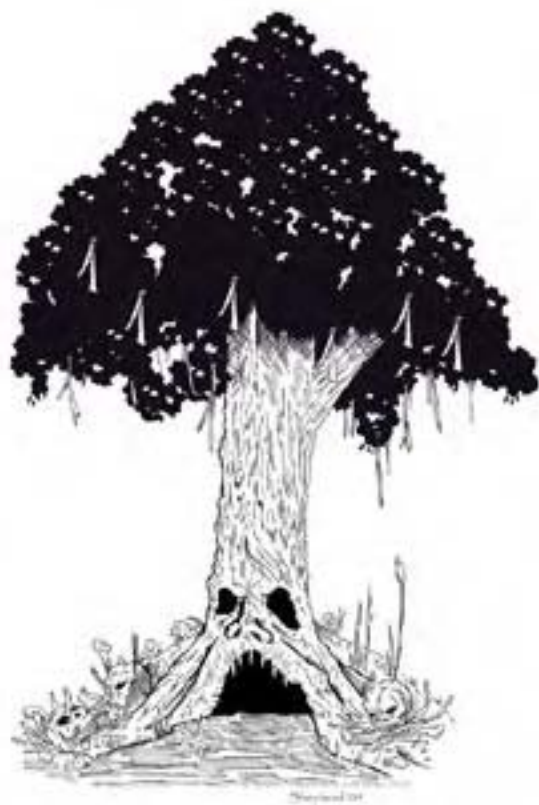
and will try to rush out of the door in a mad stampede if the Player Characters break it open. They will head for the woods and the Hunter will then set off after them, killing one for certain before dawn, when the naked villagers awaken among the trees with no memory of the night before. Player Characters who get in the boars' way will be gored and trampled.

The town hall itself is a complete wreck. There are eight splendid tapestries on the walls, depicting scenes of rural life and visits by royalty (worth 300 gold pieces each), which have escaped damage because they are above ground level. Everything else – chairs, tables, books and carpets – has been turned to a reeking mess of trash.

## Location: The Shrine of Wohoon

*In the clearing before you is a gigantic oak tree, which has been shaped somehow so that the trunk has a human-like face in it. The face is hideous, with a wide-open mouth and hollow eyes. The lower part of the mouth is full of black water. The branches of the tree have old, faded ribbons tied in them, as if from some festival long ago. The place is obviously sacred to something.*

*There are three piles of bones set at the base of the tree. The bones are picked clean. Each pile has the skull set on top – the skull of a human being.*



A Knowledge (religion) check (DC 15) identifies this as a shrine to Wohoon. Any follower of Wohoon or Hernun can tell this without having to check.

Under the water inside the mouth are offerings that the villagers have left in times past: 34 silver pieces, 12 gold pieces and a gold ring worth 20 gold pieces. Taking any of these offerings away from the shrine brings down Wohoon's curse on the perpetrator; treat this as a *bestow curse* spell with a saving throw DC of 30, which gives the victim  $-6$  Constitution. *Remove curse* will only work if the offerings have been returned, or an offering of equivalent value is given.

The bones are clearly the remains of people who have been cooked and eaten. It is impossible to tell how they died. They have been piled up on purpose, like offerings.

A Search check (DC 15) around the shrine reveals large splashes of spilled blood near the trunk. This is where Garstang killed the sacred boar that was sleeping here.

### Non-Player Character: Wem (EL 4)

*The man before you has wide, frightened eyes, thick stubble, a round podgy face and thinning ginger hair. He is massively built, with clothes that do not fit him properly. He is looking at you as if he had never seen people like you before.*

Wem used to be the 'village idiot' of Chalksmere. He has the mind of a child of seven and the body of a 30 year old lumberjack.

Before the curse of Wohoon struck the village, he was well taken care of, given simple tasks to do and watched over by the whole population. Now, he is the only person who can be trusted to help when the villagers suffer the curse. The villagers can only barricade themselves into the town hall and lock the door. Wem has to keep watch for the Hunter and make sure he does not get in. If there are strayed villagers anywhere, he must find them before the Hunter does and lock them up safely.

During the day, Wem sleeps in one of the barns, exhausted from his night's work. At night, the Player Characters can find him standing outside the town hall, a lantern in his hand, guarding the door. He will not hurt them but he will refuse to let them in.

Wem speaks in short gabbled phrases. 'Don't know you.' 'Deer man come.' 'Everyone is pigs.' If the Player Characters are patient with Wem, they can get some limited information from him:

- If asked who he is: 'Am Wem.'
- Nobody is at home. Everyone is locked up inside. 'They's all pigs now.'
- He is watching for the deer man.
- Something comes for the sheep at night. It has taken (he counts on his fingers) some sheep.
- The deer man did not always come. It used to be different.
- Wem's never been a pig.
- The deer man frightens Wem and has funny eyes, but Wem has to stand to his duty.

If the Player Characters attack Wem, he will give several pitiful shrieks and bear it for as long as he can, cowering, before running away. He is not used to being hurt. Once a person hurts him, he will never go near them again.


**Wem:** Human commoner 5; CR 4; Medium humanoid; HD 5d4+20 (34 hp); Init +0; Spd 30ft (6 squares); AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Base attack/grapple +2/+6; Atk unarmed strike +6 melee (1d3+4 nonlethal); Full Atk unarmed strike +6 melee (1d3+4 nonlethal); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL NG; SV: Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +6; Str 19, Dex 10, Con 18, Int 3, Wis 16, Cha 10.

*Skills & Feats:* Listen +7, Spot +7; Endurance, Great Fortitude, Iron Will

### Non-Player Character: The Hunter (EL 6)

*Something like a man, seven feet tall and with antlers branching from his shaggy head, rears up before you. He is naked but for a fur cape. A stout bow is slung over his shoulder and he carries a long flint-tipped spear in one hand. His eyes are pits of green fire.*

The God Hernun has sent the Hunter to prey on the transformed villagers, to punish them for insulting his brother Wohoon. During the day, the Hunter keeps himself to the woods, leaving the villagers alone as they attempt to lead a normal life but preventing them from leaving the village if they try to. When



the sun goes down, he lopes down into the village to hunt for the boar-villagers. He contents himself with one kill per night. Killed villagers are roasted and eaten, after which their picked bones are lain as an offering at Wohoon's shrine.

The Hunter is only here for the villagers. He will not attack anyone else unless they attack him first. Wem has so far prevented him from breaking into the town hall simply by standing in his way and barring the entrance. As the Hunter is not willing to hurt Wem, he has to withdraw. He is, however, beginning to hatch other plans.

If the Hunter is killed, his body dissolves into mist. He will reform the next day at sunset. He does not have any animosity towards those who kill him; it is just part of the cycle of life.

The Hunter can speak but prefers to remain silent. If he does not think he can get what he wants other than by talking, then he will reluctantly speak in a voice like rustling leaves. He will order anyone in his way to 'stand aside', as this is Gods' business. The only elaboration he will offer is 'A sacred thing was stolen and has not been replaced.'

A Knowledge (religion) check (DC 15) or a Bardic Knowledge check (DC 20) identifies the Hunter immediately as an envoy of the God Hernun, the brother of Wohoon. Clerics of either deity recognise him instantly without having to check.

**The Hunter:** Avatar ranger 5; CR 6; Large augmented humanoid; HD 5d8+5 (31 hp); Init +2; Spd 40ft (8 squares); AC 20 (+2 Dex, +8 natural, -1 size), touch 12, flat-footed 18; Base attack/grapple +5/+15; Atk +2 *spear* +12 melee (2d6+8/x3) or +2 *composite longbow* +8 ranged (2d6+8/x3); Full Atk +2 *spear* +12 melee (2d6+8/x3) or +2 *composite longbow* +8 ranged (2d6+8/x3); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA favoured enemy (animal, monstrous humanoid); SQ low-light vision, wild empathy, woodland stride; AL CN; SV: Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 22, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 12.

**Skills & Feats:** Concentration +7, Handle Animal +7, Hide +8\*, Knowledge (nature) +6, Listen +9, Move Silently +8, Spot +9, Survival +9; Dodge, Endurance, Improved Bull Rush<sup>B</sup>, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Track, Rapid Shot

\*The Hunter receives a +8 racial bonus to Hide checks when in a wooded environment.

**Woodland Stride:** The Hunter may move through tangled or overgrown areas freely, as if by the druid class ability.

**Note:** After the Hunter has thrown his spear, he can summon it back to his hand as a free action.

**Increasing the Challenge:** If the Player Characters are too high level for this encounter, then give the Hunter the ability to summon one or more Howlers, which he will employ like hunting hounds.

## Non-Player Character Group: The Cursed Villagers

If the Players encounter the villagers by night, they will all be in boar form. The ordinary villagers do not have any control over their lycanthropy, so no hybrid form is available. Unless any of

them has escaped, the boars will all be running around the inside of the town hall, grunting and squealing in panic.

This lycanthropy is the result of a curse and as such does not work by the usual rules. It cannot be passed on by a gore or bite attack. Its victims are afflicted, rather than natural, lycanthropes.

If the Player Characters speak to any of the villagers while they are human, they will beg for help in lifting the curse that has been laid on Chalksmere. They have tried to leave the village and seek help but the figure of the Hunter has always appeared in front of them, warning them to turn back. None of the villagers, with the exception of Garstang the young huntsman, understands why the curse has come upon them. All they remember is that the curse began the night after a marvellous feast, in which the whole village enjoyed roast boar. They can point out Garstang as the huntsman who brought the boar back. Its skin now hangs above the fireplace in the town hall.

Garstang insists that he killed the boar at the edge of the forest, but this is a lie (a Sense Motive skill check opposed by his Bluff check detects the lie). He killed it while it was sleeping at the Shrine of Wohoon. Any follower of Wohoon or Hernun will recognise this as a shocking blasphemy, while anyone else who succeeds at a Knowledge (religion) check (DC 15) will also realise this.

Garstang knows what must be done and dreads it. He does not want to be a boar for the rest of his life. He is so determined to avoid this fate that he has gained a measure of control over his lycanthropy. If anyone tries to take him to the shrine of Wohoon against his will, he will assume hybrid form and attack them. Killing Garstang does not lift the curse. It only means that another villager, such as his sister Gersha, will have to take the sacred boar's place.

**Working Out What To Do:** Any follower of Hernun or Wohoon and anyone with more than three ranks in Knowledge (religion) understands the principle of natural balance. What is taken away must be replaced. Garstang must, somehow, replace the sacred boar. The obvious thing to do, from that point of view, is for Garstang to offer himself to Wohoon while playing the part of the boar. If the Player Characters cannot work this out for themselves, then the Games Master can have them make Knowledge (religion) checks to gain hints.

**Garstang, human form:** CR 4; Medium humanoid (Human, Shapechanger); HD 1d8+3 plus 3d8+9 (30 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 16 (+1 Dex, +2 natural, +3 studded leather) touch 11, flat-footed 15; Base attack/grapple +3/+4; Atk greatclub +4 melee (1d10+1) or javelin +4 ranged (1d6+1); Full Atk greatclub +4 melee (1d10+1) or javelin +4 ranged (1d6+1); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ alternate form, boar empathy, ferocity, low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 8, Wis 11, Cha 10

**Skills & Feats:** Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +4, Listen +3, Spot +3; Alertness<sup>B</sup>, Improved Sunder, Iron Will<sup>B</sup>, Power Attack, Toughness

**Garstang, hybrid form:** CR 4; Medium Humanoid (Human, Shapechanger); HD 1d8+3 plus 3d8+9 (30 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 19 (+1 Dex, +8 natural) touch 11, flat-footed 18; Base attack/grapple +3/+6; Atk greatclub +6 melee (1d10+4) or claw +6 melee (1d4+3); Full Atk greatclub +6 melee (1d10+4) and gore +1 melee (1d6+1) or 2 claws +6 melee (1d4+3) and gore +1 melee (1d6+1); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ alternate form, boar empathy, damage reduction 5/silver, ferocity, low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8

*Skills & Feats:* Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +4, Listen +3, Spot +3; Alertness<sup>B</sup>, Improved Sunder, Iron Will<sup>B</sup>, Power Attack, Toughness

**Garstang, boar form:** CR 4; Medium Humanoid (Human, Shapechanger); HD 1d8+3 plus 3d8+9 (30 hp); Init +1; Spd 40 ft (8 squares); AC 19 (+1 Dex, +8 natural) touch 11, flat-footed 18; Base attack/grapple +3/+6; Atk gore +6 melee (1d8+4); Full Atk gore +6 melee (1d8+4); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ alternate form, boar empathy, damage reduction 5/silver, ferocity, low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8

*Skills & Feats:* Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +4, Listen +3, Spot +3; Alertness<sup>B</sup>, Improved Sunder, Iron Will<sup>B</sup>, Power Attack, Toughness

*Alternate Form (Su):* A wereboar can assume the form of a boar or a boar-humanoid hybrid.

*Boar Empathy (Ex):* Communicate with boars and dire boars, and +4 racial bonus on Charisma-based checks against boars and dire boars.

*Curse of Lycanthropy (Su):* Any humanoid or giant hit by the wereboar's gore attack in animal or hybrid form must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or contract lycanthropy.

*Ferocity (Ex):* A wereboar is such a tenacious combatant that it continues to fight without penalty even while disabled or dying.

### Event: Attack of the Hunter

The Hunter is determined to break open the Town Hall where the boars are kept. This cowardly hiding inside a stone building is not sportsmanlike. He does not want to get inside and massacre them, as that would not be a challenge. He just wants them running around in the wild, where he can hunt them properly. The problem is Wem, who will not let him past and who he is forbidden to harm.

So, he will come to the door and try to intimidate Wem into letting him in (which Wem will not do). When this fails, he will throw his spear through each of the windows in turn, in the hope that Wem will run round and try to stop him. Whether Wem does so or not, the Hunter will then go to fetch some wood and rubble that he can pile up by the window, so that he can climb up and let himself in.

The Player Characters should be there when this attack takes place. They can react to it as they choose but if the Hunter is



successful, there will be no way to keep him from hunting the villagers on future nights.

### Event: The Owlbear (EL 4)

While the townsfolk are incarcerated and only Wem is left, a wild creature is devouring the livestock. An owlbear is coming down from the forest and helping itself, finding no farmers anywhere to protect their herds. The owlbear has no connection to the Hunter or to the curse. It is just making the best of the situation. For additional challenge, the Games Master can rule that there are two owlbears, a mated pair.

**The Owlbear:** Large Magical Beast; CR 4; HD 5d10+25 (52 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 15 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +5/+14; Atk claw +9 melee (1d6+5); Full Atk 2 claws +9 melee (1d6+5) and bite +4 melee (1d8+2); Space/Reach 10 ft/5 ft; SA improved grab; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 21, Dex 12, Con 21, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10

*Skills & Feats:* Listen +8, Spot +8; Alertness, Track

*Equipment & Treasure:* The owlbears' nest is just inside the forest edge and can be found with a little searching (Search DC 15). There are two eggs in it, as well as a mouldering human corpse whose money pouch contains 300 gold pieces. Owlbears do not deliberately collect treasure; the body is here purely by accident, as the female brought it to feed the chicks with when they hatch.

### Event: The Offering

If the Player Characters are able to bring Garstang (willing or unwilling) to the shrine of Wohoon and he is either in boar form or wrapped in the dead boar's skin, the following happens:



*There is a sudden silence. The face on the tree blinks its wooden eyes. The yawning mouth slowly begins to speak, water sloshing out of it as it moves. The words are in some barbaric, ancient language, but you instinctively understand what is being said:*

*'Wohoon accepts the offering. Do not kill that which is sacred to Me again. As you have made right that which you did, I give you now my blessing. You will run with the boars in the woods at night, but it shall be by your own will. No Hunter will come to slay you. Your children shall be human by day and boars in the hours of darkness, as they will, for as long as your bloodline shall continue. I have spoken.'*

Garstang (or whoever is offered to replace the boar) is magically transformed while the voice is speaking. He becomes a boar permanently, with no memory of his former life. He takes his place at the foot of the tree and goes to sleep.

The other villagers become lycanthropes but are given the power to control their disease. They are now, essentially, natural wereboars and will be able to assume hybrid form. This is the 'blessing' of Wohoon. Many of the women react to this with horror, while the men are more stoic about it.

The Player Characters may realise that a force of wereboar warriors could be a major asset to the defence of Saragost. The villagers will mostly be unwilling but there are some young men who would be glad to fight in defence of the city, wearing their new hybrid form. If the Games Master decides that the Player Characters have made a good and persuasive case for some of the villagers to come and defend Saragost, then a new division of the city guards is created – the War Tusks.

## Aftermath

Breaking the curse of Chalksmere is worth a story award as if the Player Characters had defeated a CR 7 encounter.

## Victory Points

Breaking the curse and warning the village of the coming invasion.

**Victory Points:** 1

Persuading some of the villagers to come and fight in Saragost as 'War Tusks'.

**Victory Points:** 2

## Vannondale

### Summary

The peasants in this village live in fear of the 'folks at the big house', the Colombe family. These are the local nobility, who keep themselves to their mansion on the hill above the village. Ten days ago, they were foolish enough to hold a masked ball but did not invite the local wizard, Petrus Carolus, who took massive umbrage.

Just in time for the ball, a special pack of fireworks and masks arrived. The masks were magically cursed, clamping

themselves to the wearer's face, while the fireworks summoned bizarre creatures from other planes that ran whooping through the mansion causing havoc. Petrus appeared in the middle of all this chaos, laughing, and installed himself as the new ruler. Everything in the mansion has since gone to rack and ruin.

Petrus Carolus still rules over the mansion and the unfortunate nobles, who have been unable to dislodge him from his position in the book tower. He has moved some of his 'pets' over from his former tower lair. Carolus has sent Lord Colombe down to the village, to warn the peasants not to leave or to speak to strangers, nor to let anyone leave the area, until his business is finished. The villagers are too terrified of him not to comply.

The real motive behind Carolus' actions is not just revenge. He knows that there is something serious afoot. An Equinox of the Heroes is taking place and he wants to know exactly what that means. Carolus has known for some time that a former Lord of the Colombe family, the eccentric Alphonse Colombe was a devoted astronomer. The Book Tower is equipped with an elaborate telescope and numerous texts on astronomy. Carolus is using these to learn as much as he can but is currently frustrated because the telescope is missing a complicated eyepiece. The current Colombe family does not even know about the telescope.

## Location: The Outskirts of Vannondale

*The beautiful countryside before you falls away to a shallow valley, where you can see a small town nestled at the bottom. This must be Vannondale. Beyond the town, at the top of the rise, is a single isolated building, clearly a manor house of some kind. You are not certain, but it seems that odd coloured lights are flickering in the upper windows of the house.*

## Location: The Village

*You make your way towards the sleepy-looking town of Vannondale. As you do so, you see people up ahead catch sight of you and start running away. Doors close, curtains are drawn and shutters are fastened. As you come closer to the town, you see that it is completely shut up. It seems the people here are trying to avoid you – each and every one of them. They must have been in a hurry, because someone has left a half-eaten meal and a jug of ale on the table outside the tavern.*

The village has what look to be excellent facilities, including a gear and tackle shop, a clean and well-kept tavern and even a chop house, with a sign outside advertising 'our famous peppered steak'. However, nobody is willing to speak to the Player Characters at all.

If the Player Characters try to force their way in to a house or tavern, the occupants will not put up a fight, though they will try to barricade the entrance. They do not want to fight the Player Characters, they just do not want to talk to them. The only way



the Player Characters will succeed in getting any information out of them at all is to somehow get inside one of the buildings (or wait until a villager *has* to leave) and then use magic or outright intimidation to make the villager talk.

The villagers only know the following:

- The nobility in the Big House have not come down to the village for over a week now, with the exception of one visit from Lord Colombe.
- Ten days ago, the nobles had a big party and there were ever so many bangs and flashes from up there.
- Lord Colombe came down the morning after, wearing a hood so his face could not be seen, though it was definitely him – they recognised his voice and build, though he spoke with a lisp, which was strange. He told the villagers that they would be in big trouble if they talked to anyone.

### Non-Player Character Group: The Colombe Family

The family consists of Lord Padraic and Lady Martina, the sons Gustave and Eustace, and the daughters Justine and Candia. With the exception of Eustace, who has made an escape bid, they are all in their rooms in the mansion.

Treat the Colombe family as first-level aristocrats. Petrus Carolus has warned them to keep to their rooms. If they behave themselves, he will remove the masks eventually – or so he says. He sends an *unseen servant* round with their meals twice a day. Currently, the family is in disgrace because Eustace has escaped, so they are being fed stale bread and salty water as punishment.

**Colombe family member:** CR ½; Male or female human Aristocrat 1; Medium humanoid; HD 1d8 (4 hp); Init +0; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Base attack/grapple +0/+0; Atk fist +0 melee (1d3); Full Atk fist +0 melee (1d3); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none SQ none; AL LG; SV: Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 8, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 13

*Skills & Feats:* Bluff +7, Diplomacy +7, Gather Information +5, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +5, Sense Motive +5; Negotiator, Persuasive

*Equipment & Treasure:* 40gp

### Event: Eustace Colombe Says Hello (EL 6)

This event takes place if the Player Characters head up to the Colombe mansion.

As the Player Characters approach the mansion, a figure comes stumbling towards them up the road. They can easily see him before he sees them and take cover if they wish.

*The creature staggering up the road looks like a man, dressed in expensive courtly clothing. He has a frilled white shirt that is slashed in places and stained with blood, tight breeches and boots of fine leather. His face, however, is that of a locust, with long antennae and pulsing mouth flaps. The eyes goggle at you as he comes closer. He clutches at his head and you hear a sound like stifled screaming.*

This is Eustace Colombe, one of the sons of the Colombe family. He put on a grasshopper mask at the ball and has been unable to remove it. He successfully slipped out of the mansion and is trying to make it to safety. He cannot speak with the mask on, though he can still breathe. If he has a chance to talk to the Player Characters, he will try to communicate with signs, frantically asking them to help. He will write words down if they give him a pen and ink, or will scratch words into the dust or mud of the road if that is all that is available to him. If they attack him, he will flee.

Eustace can tell the Player Characters the following:

- His name is Eustace Colombe, second son of the Colombe family, who own the mansion house across the valley and who are the lords of Vannondale.
- The Colombe family could be very helpful to Saragost. They have considerable riches and could donate a good deal to the defence of the city. They also own three large merchant ships currently docked at Saragost harbour, which could be turned over for use as troop transports or for evacuation. If the Player Characters want the help of the Colombes, they will have to help them first.
- This face is a magical mask that Eustace cannot remove.
- The house has been taken over by an insane wizard. The wizard came on the night of the Grand Ball.
- The wizard sent some fireworks and amazing masks, which turned out to be magical booby-traps. This all happened before any of the other guests arrived. When they did arrive, they found the doors locked and the strange noises from within scared them off. Now the family is trapped. If they

do not do what Carolus wants, he will never take the masks off again.

- Eustace does not know what the wizard wants. At first Eustace thought he was insulted because he did not get an invite to the Ball but now he is not so sure. Why has the wizard not left yet?
- The wizard's name is Petrus Carolus. He is highly chaotic. He lives in a tower five miles to the southwest. Usually, he is reclusive. It is not like him to do something as drastic as this.
- The wizard has brought horrible monsters to guard the house: a two-headed giantess, some rotting corpses of animals and furry humanoid brutes, little demons that scratch you, something female that changes its form each day and something which Eustace has not seen yet that makes horrible gurgling noises from behind the library door.
- Eustace escaped by waiting until the female thing was asleep and the two-headed giantess was drunk, then outrunning the zombies to the conservatory, smashing a pane of glass and diving through the hole. That was how he got these cuts and scratches.

Eustace will not want to go back to the house, even if the Player Characters ask him to go to help them find their way around. He will have to be talked into going (Diplomacy check, DC 20) or magically cajoled into it.

Carolus has, of course, noticed Eustace's flight and has sent some of his pets, the harpies Maxeen and Sharrin, to bring him back. Eustace only has a few moments to communicate with the Player Characters before the creatures dispatched from the mansion catch up with him. The Games Master should choose a suitably dramatic moment for this to happen. They will try to use their song to draw him back. If this does not work, they will become frustrated and tear him to pieces. If severely injured, the harpies will withdraw to the eastern attic of the house, room 25A, to recuperate.

**Harpies:** CR 4; Medium Monstrous Humanoid; HD 7d8 (31 hp); Init +2; Spd 20 ft (4 squares), fly 80 ft (average); AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base attack/grapple +7/+7; Atk club +7 melee (1d6); Full Atk club +7/+2 melee (1d6) and 2 claws +2 melee (1d3); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA captivating song; SQ darkvision 60 ft; AL CE; SV: Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 17

**Skills & Feats:** Bluff +11, Intimidate +7, Listen +7, Perform (oratory) +5, Spot +3; Dodge, Flyby Attack, Persuasive

**Captivating Song (Su):** The most insidious ability of the harpy is its song. When a harpy sings, all creatures (other than harpies) within a 300-foot spread must succeed on a DC 16 Will save or become captivated. This is a sonic mind-affecting charm effect. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the same harpy's song for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

A captivated victim walks toward the harpy, taking the most direct route available. If the path leads into a dangerous area (through flame, off a cliff, or the like), that creature gets a second saving throw. Captivated creatures can take no actions

other than to defend themselves. (Thus, a fighter cannot run away or attack but takes no defensive penalties.) A victim within 5 feet of the harpy stands there and offers no resistance to the monster's attacks. The effect continues for as long as the harpy sings and for 1 round thereafter. A bard's countersong ability allows the captivated creature to attempt a new Will save.

**Adjusting the Challenge:** If two harpies are too many for the Player Characters to cope with at their current level, then drop the number to one.

## The Colombe Mansion

*The Colombe mansion is a two-storey structure with peaked roofs. There are two wings, one to the east and one to the west. At the end of the eastern wing is a conservatory. Between the two roof sections is a glass dome, behind which a tower-like structure with a round roof rises above the lower levels. All of the windows seem to have elaborate iron grilles over them, with the exception of the conservatory and a single tiny window at the top of the east wing. Steps lead up to an arched portico at the front of the house.*

### Outside

The ornamental lawns to the west of the house are blackened and charred with roughly circular patches. In the centre of each of these, a diligent Player Character can find the shell of a spent firework (Search DC 15).

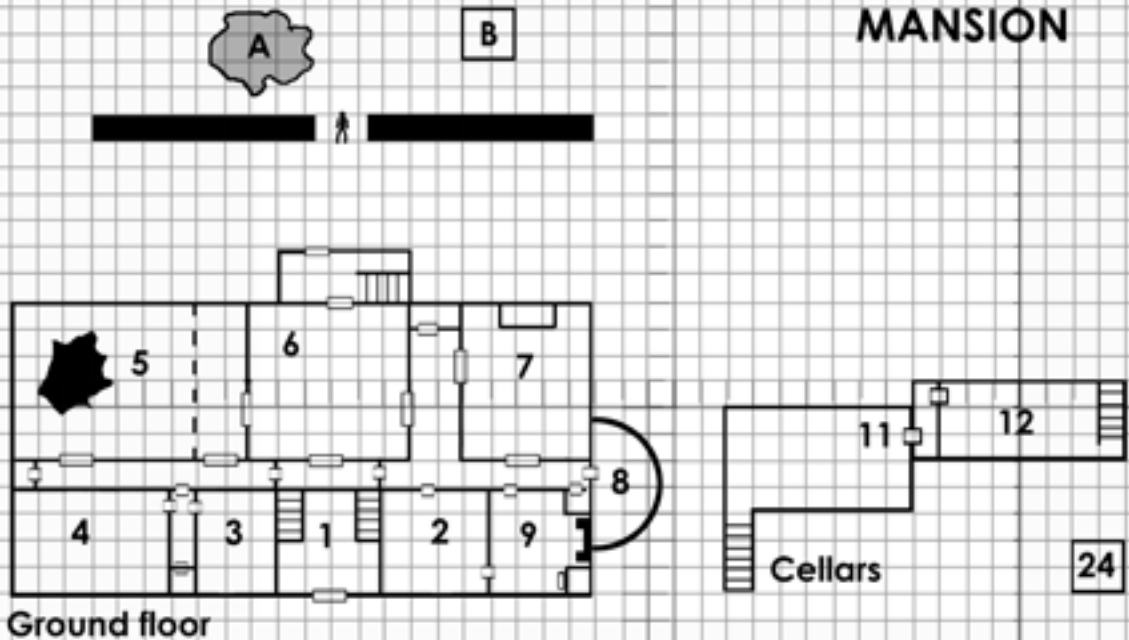
A Player Character who investigates the rear of the house may make a Spot check (DC 15) to notice that some of the roof tiles over the kitchen have given way, exposing a space that could be widened to let a person crawl in. A Player Character who takes this route must first climb up the side of the house (Climb DC 20) and then spend 1d4 minutes removing tiles. This will create a lot of noise unless the Player Character states that he is trying to be quiet, which entitles him to a Move Silently check opposed by the Listen checks of the creatures that are moving around downstairs. Once the hole is big enough, he can lower himself into room 10A.

One of the panes of glass in the conservatory is broken. Anyone looking into the conservatory can see only plants and a rough shape beyond them. Anyone who succeeds at a Spot check (DC 15) can glimpse past the plants the charred corpse of a brown bear, half its face burned away to the bone and the eyeball moving about aimlessly, standing in the centre of the room.

### The Compost Heap (EL 3+ & EL 4)

To the north of the kitchens, past the inner hedge, is the region where Old Scortus the gardener kept his compost heap (A) and garden shed (B). From a distance, a Player Character can see that there are some large chickens scraping around near the heap. Scortus himself is standing just to the south of the heap, facing it, a grey figure in a straw hat and overalls with a rake in one hand. He does not respond to calls. If the Player Characters come closer, they can see that Scortus has been completely petrified. His face is still twisted in disbelief.

## COLOMBE MANSION



Allow the Player Characters a Spot check (DC 15). Anyone who succeeds notices that the ‘large chickens’ have batlike wings and long reptilian tails. The chickens are not chickens at all but cockatrices, more of Carolus’ exotic pets that he has set here to prevent busybodies from disturbing him.

**Average Party Level 3: 1 Cockatrice**  
**Average Party Level 4-5: 2 Cockatrices**

**Cockatrices:** CR 3; Small Magical Beast; HD 5d10 (27 hp); Init +3; Spd 20 ft (4 squares), fly 60 ft (poor); AC 14 (+1 size, +3 Dex), touch 14, flat-footed 11; Base attack/grapple +5/-1; Atk bite +9 melee (1d4-2 plus petrification); Full Atk bite +9 melee (1d4-2 plus petrification); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA petrification; SQ darkvision 60 ft, low-light vision; AL N; SV: Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +2; Str 6, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 9

*Skills & Feats:* Listen +7, Spot +7; Alertness, Dodge, Weapon Finesse<sup>B</sup>

*Petrification (Su):* Creatures hit by a cockatrice’s bite attack must succeed on a DC 12 Fortitude save or instantly turn to stone. The save DC is Constitution-based. Cockatrices have immunity to the petrification ability of other cockatrices, but other petrification attacks affect them normally.

Lurking in the stinking morass of the compost heap is an otyugh. It has so far eaten two fleeing servants, a bugbear zombie that wandered off in the wrong direction and young Bob, the gardener’s help.

**Otyugh:** CR 4; Large Aberration; HD 6d8+9 (36 hp); Init +0; Spd 20 ft (4 squares); AC 17 (-1 size, +8 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 17; Base attack/grapple +4/+8; Atk tentacle +4 melee (1d6); Full Atk 2 tentacles +4 melee (1d6) and bite -2

melee (1d4); Space/Reach 10 ft/10 ft (15 ft with tentacle); SA constrict 1d6, disease, improved grab; SQ darkvision 60 ft, scent; AL N; SV: Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +6; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 5, Wis 12, Cha 6

*Skills & Feats:* Hide -1\*, Listen +6, Spot +6; Alertness, Toughness, Weapon Focus (tentacle)



\*The otyugh has a +8 racial bonus to Hide checks made in the compost heap.

*Constrict (Ex):* An otyugh deals automatic tentacle damage with a successful grapple check.

*Disease (Ex):* Filth fever—bite, Fortitude DC 14, incubation period 1d3 days; damage 1d3 Dex and 1d3 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

*Improved Grab (Ex):* To use this ability, an otyugh must hit with a tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

*Equipment & Treasure:* In the sagging belly of the otyugh are the bones of its victims and a horrible mulch of undigested stomach contents. Any Player Character determined enough to sift through these will find Bob's key to the garden shed and a total of 120 gold pieces that the servants were carrying when they were devoured.

## The Garden Shed

This wooden shed is kept closed with a stout padlock (Open Lock DC 30). The door is a good wooden one. Inside, it is musty and dark, full of agricultural implements. Player Characters who take the time to search through these (Search DC 20) will find a masterwork scythe and a small oilskin package, tightly bound up with twine, which has obviously not been opened in years. This contains a single dose of *powder of blight*.

**Powder of Blight:** This is a slick black powder like graphite dust. When applied to a single plant, it destroys it completely as per the *blight* spell. The wielder can use it to harm a plant type creature (a touch attack, or ranged touch attack if the packet is thrown, is needed) in which case it deals 7d6 points of damage, with a Fortitude saving throw (DC 16) allowed for half damage.

Moderate necromancy: CL 7<sup>th</sup>; Craft Wondrous Item; *blight*; Price 1,400 gp.

## The Doors

The front doors in the entrance to the mansion are closed and *arcane locked*. The doors are made from strong wood (break DC 23). The only other entrance is around the back, leading into the kitchen. This is also *arcane locked* but is not so strong (break DC 18).

## The Windows

The Colombes are very security-conscious. Almost all the glass windows in the house are covered with ornamental iron grilles for extra security. These require a Strength check (DC 28) to bend or break. The only places where a glass pane is not covered with iron grillwork are the conservatory (the strong, lockable wooden doors into this room were thought to be security enough) and the window into the attic space.

## Wandering Creatures

The following entities are moving from room to room in the bottom storey of the house. They have been told to watch over the place and keep intruders out. If any of the Player Characters

does something that makes a lot of noise, such as smashing in a door, breaking a window or starting a fight, then all of these creatures are entitled to Listen checks to hear them. They will come running if they hear any disturbance.

## Pogsnort

Pogsnort, a female ettin, is in charge of downstairs security. She is enjoying the job, as Carolus has permitted her to raid the Colombe food stores each evening after her shift finishes. Carolus encountered her hammering at his tower door one morning with a crew of monstrous humanoids in tow, looking for food. He persuaded the giantess to work for him, using *fireballs* on her allies as a demonstration of what he could do if he was displeased. So far, Pogsnort is happy enough, though she is planning to desert if the food or the gold run out.

Pogsnort is a very tough monster for the Player Characters to face at their estimated current level (4-5). Pogsnort spends the days guarding, the evenings completely drunk and the nights unconscious. Due to her near-constant inebriation, Pogsnort constantly suffers a -2 penalty to attack rolls as well as Wisdom and Dexterity. If Pogsnort is encountered in the evenings while truly drunk, these penalties increase to -4.

**Pogsnort the Ettin:** CR 6; Large Giant; HD 10d8+20 (65 hp); Init +3; Spd 30 ft in hide armour (6 squares); base speed 40 ft; AC 18 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +7 natural, +3 hide), touch 8, flat-footed 18; Base attack/grapple +7/+17; Atk morningstar +12 melee (2d6+6) or javelin +5 ranged (1d8+6); Full Atk 2 morningstars +12/+7 melee (2d6+6) or 2 javelins +5 ranged (1d8+6); Space/Reach 10 ft/10 ft; SA none; SQ low-light vision, superior two-weapon fighting; SV: Fort +9, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 23, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 11

*Skills & Feats:* Listen +10, Search +1, Spot +10; Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack

*Superior Two-Weapon Fighting (Ex):* An ettin fights with a morningstar or javelin in each hand. Because each of its two heads controls an arm, the ettin does not take a penalty on attack or damage rolls for attacking with two weapons.

*Equipment & Treasure:* Pogsnort has taken Janice Colombe's pearl necklace, which she wears as a bracelet. It is worth 1,500 gp. She is also carrying the key to the library on her belt.

*Note:* Pogsnort cannot easily fit through some of the doors and corridors in the mansion, as they are only five feet wide. She will squeeze through them if she has to.

## The Zombies

Carolus animated these shambling monstrosities to provide a cheap guard force, using the scorched remains of Pogsnort's allies. After all, they do not smell any worse than Pogsnort and having them around helps to remind her of the fate of those who cross him. The corpses were obviously burned to death. Stubs of white bone poke out of their blackened flesh.

The bugbear zombies have been told to defend the lower storey. They operate independently of Pogsnort, making their rounds in a constant tireless trek. They open the doors of each room in turn and look inside, working clockwise from the entrance hall. Pogsnort avoids them, as they make her uneasy.

One of the brown bear zombies has fallen down through the burned floorboards in the ballroom into the wine cellar (see area 5) and cannot climb out again. The other brown bear zombie has been set to guard the conservatory, to prevent anyone else escaping through broken panes.

**Bugbear Zombies (3 patrolling groups of 2):** CR 2; Medium Undead; HD 6d12+3 (42 hp); Init +0; Spd 30 ft (6 squares; cannot run); AC 15 (+5 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 15; Base attack/grapple +3/+6; Atk morningstar +6 melee (1d8+3) or slam +6 melee (1d6+3); Full Atk morningstar +6 melee (1d8+3) or slam +6 melee (1d6+3); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ single actions only, damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 17, Dex 10, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1

*Skills & Feats:* Toughness

*Single Actions Only (Ex):* Zombies have poor reflexes and can perform only a single move action or attack action each round. A zombie can move up to its speed and attack in the same round, but only if it attempts a charge.

**Brown Bear Zombies (2):** Large Undead; CR 4; HD 12d12+3 (81 hp); Init +0; Spd 40 ft (8 squares; cannot run); AC 17 (-1 size, +8 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 17; Base attack/grapple +6/+18; Atk claw +12 melee (1d8+9) or slam +12 melee (1d8+9); Full Atk 2 claws +12 melee (1d8+9) and bite +2 melee (2d6+4), or slam +12 melee (1d8+9); Space/Reach 10 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ single actions only, damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +8; Str 29, Dex 11, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1

*Skills & Feats:* Toughness

*Single Actions Only (Ex):* Zombies have poor reflexes and can perform only a single move action or attack action each round. A zombie can move up to its speed and attack in the same round, but only if it attempts a charge.

## 1. Entrance Hall (EL 5)

*This hallway is floored with gleaming marble tiles in black and white. Above, a chandelier sheds light from a hundred continually burning candles. A grand staircase to the north leads up to a balcony on the second floor. A smell of wood polish, roasting meat and burned fabric hangs in the air. On the balcony overhang is an ornate family crest, depicting a dove spreading its wings above a cowering serpent.*

The chandelier's candles are pottery fakes on which *continual flame* has been cast. Among their heatless flames, three quasits are nesting. These are associates of Unctuous Merth, Carolus' familiar, who have been given leave to visit this place. Rather



than attack the Player Characters outright, they will drop down silently behind them and follow them through the house, skittering away if they are spotted.

**Blaxum, Hoxhum and Scrunt, the Quasits:** CR 2; Tiny Outsider (Chaotic, Extraplanar, Evil); HD 3d8 (13 hp); Init +7; Spd 20 ft (4 squares), fly 50 ft (perfect); AC 18 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 15; Base attack/grapple +3/-6; Atk claw +8 melee (1d3-1 plus poison); Full Atk 2 claws +8 melee (1d3-1 plus poison) and bite +3 melee (1d4-1); Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft/0 ft; SA poison, spell-like abilities; SQ alternate form, damage reduction 5/cold iron or good, darkvision 60 ft, fast healing 2, immunity to poison, resistance to fire 10; AL CE; SV: Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 8, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10

*Skills & Feats:* Bluff +6, Diplomacy +2, Disguise +0 (+2 acting), Hide +17, Intimidate +2, Knowledge (the planes) +6, Listen +7, Move Silently +9, Search +6, Spellcraft +6, Spot +6; Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse

*Poison (Ex):* Injury, Fortitude DC 13, initial damage 1d4 Dex, secondary damage 2d4 Dex. The save DC is Constitution-based and includes a +2 racial bonus.

*Spell-Like Abilities:* At will—detect good, detect magic, and invisibility (self only); 1/day—cause fear (as the spell, except that its area is a 30-foot radius from the quasit, save DC 11). Caster level 6th. Once per week a quasit can use commune to ask six questions. The ability otherwise works as the spell (caster level 12<sup>th</sup>).

*Alternate Form (Su):* A quasit can assume other forms at will as a standard action. This ability functions as a polymorph spell cast on itself (caster level 12<sup>th</sup>), except that a quasit does not regain hit points for changing form, and any individual quasit can assume only one or two forms no larger than Medium. Common forms include bat, monstrous centipede, toad, and wolf. A quasit in alternate form loses its poison attack.

## 2. Games Room (EL 5)

*A large green billiard table dominates this oak-panelled room. On the walls are the heads of strange creatures, some of which you recognise. On the western wall is a dartboard, with a javelin hurled through it and into the wooden panelling beyond. Around a circular table beneath the dartboard, four strange creatures are playing cards. They seem to be men with the heads and tails of dogs.*

The heads mounted on the wall are those of a worg, a gryphon, a unicorn and a dire lion. Lord Tarquin Colombe, grandfather of the current Lord Colombe, killed them all some 50 years ago.

The dog-headed creatures are using Candia Colombe's *tarot cards* to play poker with (see below). They are dog-men, the results of Carolus' experimentation with species fusion. Each one was grown in a vat back at Carolus' tower. They resemble ordinary humans but have the heads of dogs, bristly hair on their bodies and tails poking from their britches. They can speak, though their speech is distorted.

Carolus originally intended them for guard duty but has found Pogsnot and the zombies to be much tougher and more frightening, so the dog-men have been given indefinite relief from duty until Carolus decides what to do with them. They are thus entertaining themselves. Eventually, one of them will have to fetch Pogsnot's dinner up from the food and wine stores, as she is too large to fit down there.

Each of the creatures has the head of a different type of dog. There is a bulldog, a German shepherd, a greyhound and a Chihuahua. Their reactions to the Player Characters will depend on the type of dog they are.

**Dog-men:** Hybrid warrior 2; CR 2; Medium humanoid; HD 2d8+2 (11 hp); Init +0; Spd 40 ft (8 squares); AC 15 (+5 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 15; Base attack/grapple +1/+3; Atk greataxe +3 melee (1d10+2/x3) or bite +3 melee (1d6+2); Full Atk greataxe +3 melee (1d10+2/x3) and bite -1 melee (1d6+1); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ low-light vision, scent; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 9

**Skills & Feats:** Intimidate +1, Listen +4, Spot +4, Survival +2; Alertness<sup>B</sup>, Power Attack

**Tarot Cards:** These are not normal tarot cards, but are magical playing cards used to tell the future through divination magic. The owner of a set of *tarot cards* can perform an augury once per day (80% chance of correct answer) and a divination once every three days (90% chance of correct answer). The cards can be used to cast more auguries and divinations than this but each successive use beyond the

safe limit lowers the chance of a correct answer by 10%, to a minimum of 5%. The more the cards are consulted, the less likely they are to give an accurate answer. The cards can also be used to supplement a regular augury or divination spell, in which case the chance of an accurate answer is increased by 4%. This use of the cards does not count as a 'use' as far as daily limits are concerned.

Moderate divination; CL 10<sup>th</sup>; Craft Wondrous Item; *augury, divination*; Price 9,600 gp.

## 3. Head Butler's Quarters

This room is furnished comfortably but not luxuriously. A glimmering candle on the dresser lights a strange scene. On the single bed sits a figure dressed all in black, with a long coat and scarf. His face is nothing but a naked skull. He is writing something on a piece of parchment.

This macabre figure is Prospero, the head butler of the household. He was cajoled into wearing one of the enchanted masks and is now stuck with it, like the rest of the family. He has, however, not permitted this setback to interfere with his duties and is compiling a list of what will need to be bought to set the house right again once the interfering wizard has gone.

Prospero will be graciously helpful to the Player Characters, especially if they have Eustace Colombe with them. He can talk, though as he has the face of a skull, he finds it difficult to pronounce labial sounds. 'Welcome to the Colombe Mansion, my name is Prospero,' would be 'Relcong to the Colong Nansion, ny nane is Croszero.'

He can provide the Player Characters with a detailed map of the mansion, drawn from memory, including the sealed attic hatch to the western attic. He would prefer not to leave his room (there are lists to be made!) but will do so if pressed into it, or if a family member asks it of him. Prospero is a non-combatant.



#### 4. Servants' Quarters

*Three bunk beds stand against the walls of this plain room. There are wooden chests at the foot of each. The room looks like it has been abandoned in a hurry.*

The servants who stayed here have fled back down to the village of Vannondale where they came from. They did not want to stay around while Carolus was turning the mansion into a carnival of horrors. Any Player Character who roots through the abandoned possessions can find three small pieces of jewellery: a golden portrait locket worth 50 gp, a bracelet made from silver and amethysts worth 25 gp and a golden brooch in the shape of a dragonfly worth 100 gp. Each one requires a Search check (DC 20) to find. These items clearly belonged to the servants, who would be overjoyed to have them back.

#### 5. Ballroom

*This enormous room has a ceiling painted with scenes of Gods looking over the clouds of heaven, cunningly designed to impart a sense of perspective. There is a balcony to the east, with double doors leading into the second storey. Beneath, the parquet floor shows that someone once spent a fortune constructing this place. A huge, ugly scorch mark in the room's centre catches your eye. There are bare, charred joists visible – it seems that a fire has burnt right through the floor and into the space below. The hole is around ten feet wide. At the western end of the room is a minstrel's podium, with abandoned instruments still lying there. The north wall has chairs lined up against it, as if in anticipation of a dance.*

If the brown bear zombie is still trapped down in the wine cellar, add the following for any Player Character who makes a Listen check (DC 15):

*There is a repetitive sound from the room below, half scraping and half sliding, as if something large and heavy were dragging its bulk around with difficulty.*

The musical instruments on the podium are all of masterwork quality. The majority of the musicians that were entertaining the family at the ball simply left their instruments behind and ran away. Carolus did not bother to stop them. There is a violin, a flute, a harpsichord and a double bass left here.

Player Characters who take the time to search the room can find an unused firework (Search DC 25) that has rolled under a chair. This is one of Carolus' set of Turlingdrome's *Magnificent Fireworks*, specifically the *witches' cauldron* firework.

#### 6. Dining Hall

*The centrepiece of this room is a table of dark wood, so finely polished that it gleams like a surface of black mercury. A massive silver candelabrum sits in its centre. On the walls, portraits of noble ladies and gentlemen look down at you disapprovingly. One end of the table is piled high with gnawed chicken carcasses, half-eaten lettuces, rotting fruit and other organic trash. Several empty bottles lie on the floor in that part of the room. Above, the ceiling is a faceted dome of coloured glass panes; you can just make out an upper gallery through the glass.*

This is where Pogsnot has her feasts each evening. If she is asleep or drunk, this is where she will be.

The candelabrum on the table is a stunning piece, worth 1,250 gold pieces. It is, however, fixed securely to the table by bolts and cannot easily be removed. A Disable Device skill check (DC 25) or Craft (carpentry) skill check (DC 20) is necessary to remove the item without damaging it. Failure by more than five badly damages the candelabrum, reducing its value to 65% of what it originally was. The object is bulky – its long, curved branches take up a lot of space – and so it has an effective weight of 30 lb.

#### 7. Family Chapel

Petrus Carolus has *arcane locked* all the doors into this room. He intends to have it properly desecrated when he can spare the time but right now it is not worth the effort. The arcane locks are to prevent any of the creatures in the mansion from trying to get in and steal the altar service and also to keep the family from using the chapel as sanctuary. He has already had to drag Candia Colombe out of here once, before the arcane locks were active.

*This room is obviously used for worship. Alcoves in the walls hold statues of the Gods of the Avillon pantheon. You recognise Merrithrawn with his lute, Blediwesse with her wreaths of flowers and solemn Aranu standing in the place of greatest*





*honour behind the altar. On either side of the chapel, wooden pews are arrayed in ranks. Someone has obviously invested a great deal of money in this place, though you are not entirely convinced that it is for reasons of piety.*

This chapel, though not the rest of the building, is *hallowed* (see PHB). Any creature of lawful good alignment enjoys the effect of a *bless* spell while he is in the chapel area.

There are six statues in all, representing Merrithrawn, Aranu, Blediwesse, Hombel, Yosa and Hernun. A Search or Spot check (DC 20) reveals a hastily scribbled note at the foot of the statue of Blediwesse. It reads 'Flower maiden, unwed Goddess of spring, spare me this fate, or else welcome me into your household, for I shall stay no longer on earth if this creature claims me as his own.' The note is a petition from Candia, who is convinced (following an erroneous tarot divination before her cards were stolen) that Petrus Carolus intends to marry her, which he does not.

The altar is made from carved wood and is hollow like a cupboard. A secret panel (Search DC 25) allows access to the interior. Inside the altar is a set of six small chalices wrought in gold, decorated with vine leaf designs. These are used when the family celebrates religious services. Each chalice is worth 500 gold pieces.



## 8. Conservatory (EL 4)

*This conservatory is made from glass panes and a wooden framework. Exotic plants and flowers coil around bamboo canes, blocking off the view to the outside. A cold breeze blows in through the place where one of the panes has been smashed.*

One of the brown bear zombies (see above) is silently guarding this room, in case anyone tries to flee the house the same way that Eustace did. The doors to the west are closed but not locked. They were clearly once doors to the outside before the conservatory was built on to the house.

## 9. Smoking Room (EL 4)

*This comfortable looking room is evidently a lounge or parlour of some sort. A padded leather sofa takes up the space below the southern window and there is a grand fireplace in the eastern wall. On the floor is a fur rug made from the skin of some kind of huge wolf. Close to the fireplace is a cylindrical smoking apparatus with six pipes extruding from it, taller than a man. Something is still smouldering within it.*

The smoking apparatus is a large hookah pipe, made from worked bronze, which Lord Alphonse Colombe brought back from travels in the Sephardine lands. The dog-men in room 2 have been smoking tizla leaves in it. Tizla leaves are a mild narcotic substance, which is similar to tobacco and has a flavour of burnt amber. Examination reveals that it is bolted into place.

A Player Character can unscrew the bolts with a Disable Device skill check (DC 15) but even if the hookah is moved, it is still affected by the animate objects trap (see below) if it is within 210 feet of the trap. The rug is a large winter wolf pelt, worth 200 gold pieces.

There is a secret panel in the eastern wall, long forgotten about. It now has a bookcase in front of it. This gives anyone examining the area an especially difficult DC for Search checks (DC 25) to find anything there.

The fireplace in the eastern wall conceals a secret that not even Prospero the head butler knows about. The back of the fireplace is an iron plate, which is covered in caked layers of soot. If a Player Character brushes this off, he can see the crest of the Colombe family crudely embossed on the plate. A Search check (DC 20) reveals that this crest is actually movable. The shield can be pried open. It is stiff and creaks noisily. Behind the shield is a lever. Pulling this causes the secret door to the south of the fireplace to swing inwards. As there is a bookcase in front of it, nothing obvious happens. A Player Character who succeeds at a Listen check (DC 20) can hear the panel swinging open and can point to where the sound came from. A Player Character who scores more than 15 but less than 20 hears the panel open but cannot tell where this happened.

The secret area is trapped with an *animate objects* trap. If the command word is not spoken when a Player Character steps into

the secret area, the trap is triggered and the hookah pipe comes to life as an animated object. Its first act is to unscrew its own bolts, which it can do in one round. Next, it will attempt to strangle the life out of the intruders. If it succeeds in doing so, it will close the secret panel, make everything in the room right again and screw itself back into place.

**Animate Objects** trap: CR 6; magic device; proximity trigger (alarm); automatic reset; spell effect (*animate objects* targeted on hookah pipe, 11<sup>th</sup> level cleric); Search (DC 31); Disable Device (DC 31).

**Animated Hookah Pipe:** CR 4; Large Construct; HD 4d10+30 (52 hp); Init +0; Spd 40 ft (multiple legs); AC 14 (-1 size, +5 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +3/+10; Atk slam +5 melee (1d8+4); Full Atk slam +5 melee (1d8+4); Space/Reach 10 ft/10 ft (tall); SA constrict; SQ construct traits, darkvision 60 ft, low-light vision, hardness 9; AL N; SV: Fort +1, Ref +1, Will -4; Str 16, Dex 10, Con —, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 1

**Constrict (Ex):** The hookah pipe attacks using one of its flexible smoking tubes. The other tubes waver in the air menacingly but cannot be used as weapons. It can inflict 1d8+4 damage with a successful Grapple check against a creature up to one size larger than itself. It can also make constriction attacks against multiple creatures at once, if they are all of Small size or smaller.

**Note:** This animated object has been given a higher CR than its usual 3 to reflect its constriction ability and its high Hardness.

**The Secret Area:** This small space is thick with the dust of many decades of disuse. The salient features are a ladder against the eastern wall, leading upwards into the secret area to the east of the master bedroom and downwards into a space just off the cellar, and a small coffer against the north wall. The coffer is locked but not trapped (Open Lock DC 25) and contains nothing but a small brass object that looks like a cross between a piece of plumbing and a telescope. It has a screw thread at one end, so it is obviously meant to be attached to something. This is the missing eyepiece for the telescope in the observatory, room 26A.

Lord Alphonse Colombe, who was paranoid about being observed, used to use this secret passageway to move between the floors of his mansion without being seen. He hid the eyepiece in this area so that nobody but him could use the telescope.

## 10. Kitchens

*These kitchens are in a shocking state. Food is liberally scattered over the floor, shards of broken crockery litter every surface and eggs have been thrown at the walls. A huge cooking range takes up most of the western wall, with gleaming pots and pans hanging above it. A cauldron of some kind of tar-like stew is bubbling on the range, with a spoon circling in it. As you watch, a dustpan and brush moves through the air, sweeps a few shards up, dumps them into a bin and repeats the process.*

This mess was created when some mephits summoned by a magnificent firework ran amok. There are two *unseen servants* present (prepared as an enlarged spell) set here by Petrus Carolus. One is cleaning up the mess, while the other is cooking for the guards.

## 10A. Roof Void

*You are squeezed into a cramped crawlspace just above the kitchen, full of cobwebs. There are rafters below you. The plaster between them is stained with damp.*

Nothing lives here but mundane spiders and beetles. A character who has climbed in through a hole in the tiles can easily smash his way through the wattle and daub between the rafters and drop down into the kitchens safely. Any Player Character weighing more than 80 lb. who puts his weight between the rafters (rather than on them) automatically breaks through and falls into the kitchen, taking falling damage from a ten foot drop.

## 11. Wine Cellar

*Light enters this cellar room from a hole burned in the floor above. The air is cool here and smells of damp stone. The north wall is filled with little brick alcoves from floor to ceiling. In many of these are individual bottles of brown glass and pottery.*

One of the brown bear zombies (see above) is trapped here. It cannot get out, as the doors are too small for it. They are four feet across.

Lord Colombe's wine collection is of excellent quality. There are 64 bottles left, each one worth 10 gp, along with five dusty bottles of an extraordinary wine made from distilled roses, which are worth 40 gp each. Pognort is drinking her way through this reserve at the rate of ten bottles per night.

## 12. Food Stores

*This cool, dark cellar is evidently a food store. Several cuts of meat hang from hooks on the north wall and assorted barrels and sacks sit stacked up to the south. There is a faint sound of many scrabbling claws from the sacks.*

Disturbing the sacks (which contain grain) dislodges 1d3 rat swarms, which attack whoever disturbed them. Ordinarily, the servants would have kept the rats out but the squalid conditions above have drawn them in. They used to nest in the compost heap but the ottyugh keeps eating them, so they have moved.

## 13. Upper Landing (EL 6)

*This gallery has a domed glass roof of many panes, each one fitted with a wrought iron grille. A similar dome, made from coloured glass but without the grille, covers the central region of the room. Light filters in from outside and down into the*

room below. There are double doors to the north and south, with smaller doors to the east and west. In each corner is a huge padded armchair.

If Sho'Hasta the lamia is present and has had a chance to activate her illusions, then add the following:

On each side of the double doors to the north is a creature larger than a horse, with the body of a great golden lion, wings like those of a hawk and a humanlike head with a mane of thick hair. The creature on the left smiles silently, while the one on the right laughs out loud.

If any Player Character succeeds at a Listen check (DC 20) then read or paraphrase the following:

From behind the northern doors comes a faint babbling sound as if many voices were talking all at once, or many small creatures were arguing in a strange language. From somewhere to the west, you can hear the faint sound of sobbing.

The northern doors are *arcane locked*. Carolus has also taken the precaution of casting *fire trap* on the doors, just in case anyone bypasses the *arcane lock*. The DC to find or disable the *fire trap* is 29. It deals 1d4+12 points of damage to all creatures within a five foot radius, with a Reflex saving throw (DC 20) allowed for half damage.

## The Upstairs Guardian

Pogsnort's brutal strength is good enough for the downstairs region but Carolus needs something more intelligent and capable for the upstairs, which is closer to his sanctum sanctorum in the book tower. He has assigned one of his oldest allies, a wicked creature called Sho'Hasta, to watch over the upper part of the house. She is a lamia and is quite content to lounge around here all day long, defending the place against intruders who never come. She has bullied and intimidated the family members since she first came here, promising to slice the first troublemaker open with her claws and lick up their innards.

Sho'Hasta enjoys playing with her prey. To amuse herself, she will sometimes use her *disguise self* spell-like ability to make herself appear to be a gnosphinx (a much more dangerous creature than a lamia) and create a *major image* of a second gnosphinx across the hallway, so that the place appears to be flanked by sphinxes. If the Player Characters should wander her way, she will try to separate them with a subterfuge. While concentrating on the *major image*, she will make it speak while she herself remains silent. Any Player Characters present will be greeted with the following, from the speaking sphinx:

'Hold, little ones. My master may be willing to grant you audience but, I warn you, he does not give his time to every man-jack who comes calling. You must select one among your number who shall speak for you. That person alone may stay, and answer the riddle of Speech and Silence. All others must depart by the route by which you came. Choose swiftly, for if more than one of you remains in a minute's time, my sister and I shall devour them.'

Of course, if the Player Characters are foolish enough to divide their numbers, Sho'Hasta will simply attack the one left behind. If they call her bluff and stand their ground, she will pretend that they have 'passed the first test' and then send them off to fetch her 'the feather of the strangest bird in the garden'. This is an attempt to get them petrified by the cockatrices. She will keep them busy with such riddles for as long as it amuses her to do so, hoping to whittle down their strength. While they are off running fools' errands, she will attempt to get backup from other creatures (such as the harpies) and attack them on their return. She will also notify Carolus that they are here, so that he can fortify her with suitable spells.

**Sho'Hasta the Lamia:** CR 6; Large Magical Beast; HD 9d10+9 (58 hp); Init +2; Spd 60 ft (12 squares); base speed 40 ft; AC 18 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +7 natural, +3 hide), touch 11, flat-footed 16; Base attack/grapple +9/+17; Atk touch +12 melee (1d4 Wisdom drain) or +1 dagger +13/+8 melee (1d6+5/19-20) or claw +12 melee (1d4+4); Full Atk touch +12 melee (1d4 Wisdom drain); or +1 dagger +13/+8 melee (1d6+5/19-20) and 2 claws +7 melee (1d4+2); Space/Reach 10 ft/5 ft; SA spell-like abilities, Wisdom drain; SQ darkvision, 60ft., low-light vision; SV: Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +7; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 12

**Skills & Feats:** Bluff +14, Concentration +10, Diplomacy +3, Disguise +1 (+3 acting), Hide +11, Intimidate +3, Spot +11; Dodge, Iron Will, Mobility, Spring Attack

**Spell-Like Abilities:** At will—*disguise self*, *ventriloquism*; 3/day—*charm monster* (DC 15), *major image*



(DC 14), *mirror image*, *suggestion* (DC 14); 1/day—*deep slumber* (DC 14). Caster level 9<sup>th</sup>. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

*Wisdom Drain (Su)*: A lamia drains 1d4 points of Wisdom each time it hits with its melee touch attack. (Unlike with other kinds of ability drain attacks, a lamia does not heal any damage when it uses its Wisdom drain.) Lamias try to use this power early in an encounter to make foes more susceptible to charm monster and suggestion.

*Equipment & Treasure*: +1 dagger.

### 13A. Corridor

The north wall of this corridor is hung with portraits of odd-looking people, who you assume are members of the Colombe family. There is a row of four doors to the south. A single set of double doors opens to the north, through which you can see a balcony area above a huge ballroom. A sound of sobbing comes from the western end of the corridor.

In the ceiling of this corridor is a hatch that leads to the western attic. It has been covered over with plaster and then wallpapered, thus counting as a concealed door. Anyone searching this section of ceiling can find it with a Search check (DC 20). An elf gets a chance to notice it automatically as he passes.

If the Player Characters trouble to examine the paintings or they successfully make a Spot check as they pass (DC 15), they can find one that is strangely smaller than the rest:

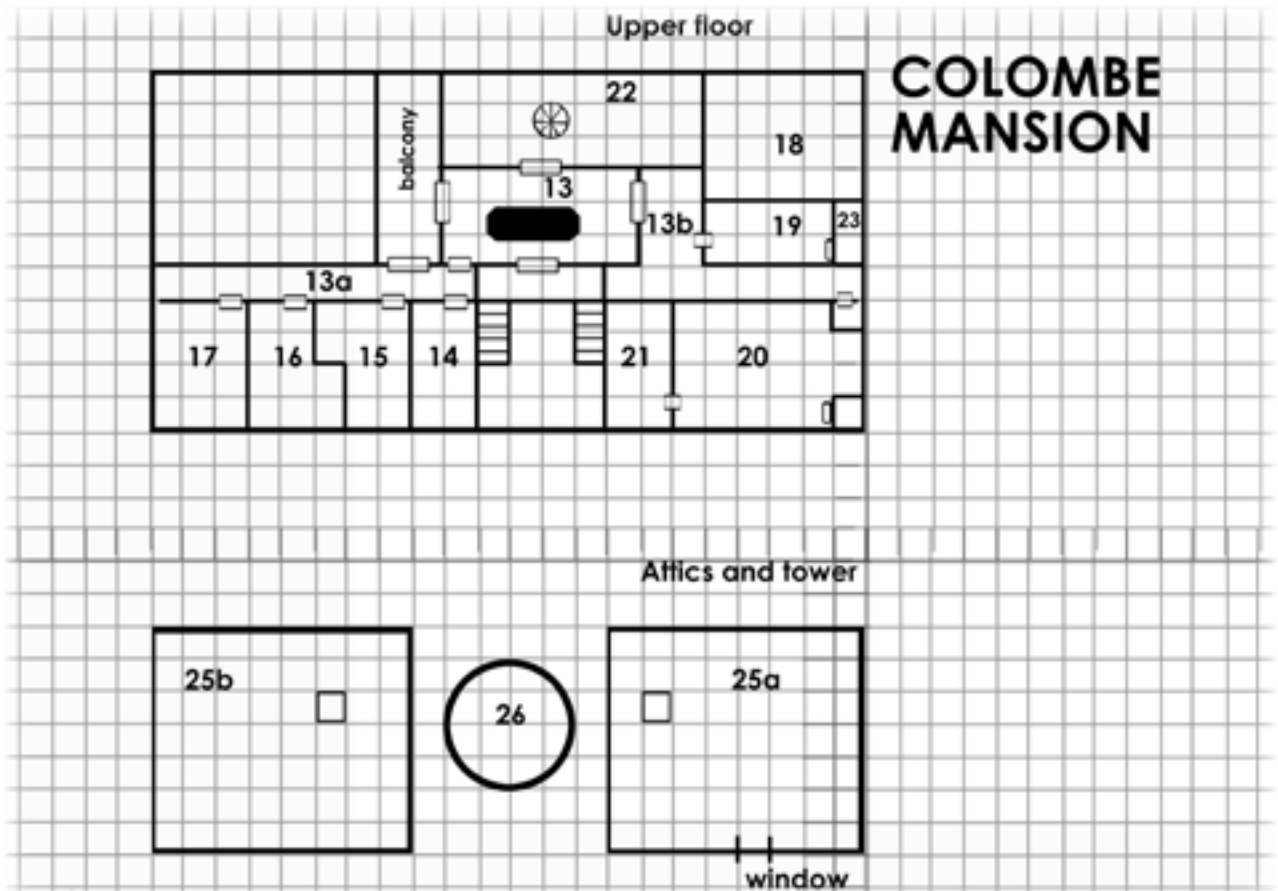
*This portrait depicts a small gentleman with wispy white hair and half-moon glasses. He wears a tight-fitting black velvet tunic. On a desk in front of him is a scroll on which a constellation is marked, though it is not named. The gentleman is holding compasses to the scroll in such a way as to touch two stars at once. Behind him are arched windows through which the night sky can be seen. The nameplate states that this is Lord Alphonse Colombe.*

A Knowledge (arcana) or similar skill check (DC 20) identifies this constellation as that of the Reaper. The stars that the compasses are touching are the Reaper's eye and his hand, though nobody but an expert astrologer would know this. The Player Characters can, however, look up this information quite easily in the library and its attached book tower.

### 13B. Corridor

*Above you, a hatchway has been opened in the ceiling, leading into an attic space. A strong stench of the dung of some meat-eating creature exudes from it. You see claw marks on the rim of the hatchway. There is no ladder.*

This hatch leads to room 25A, the eastern attic.



## 14. Candia Colombe's Bedroom (EL 1/2)

This room is carpeted in blue, with a dresser and wardrobe in black wood. In the room's centre is a vast four-poster bed fitted with midnight blue hangings. The curtains are drawn. From inside comes a sound of sobbing; the voice is female.

If the Player Characters draw the curtains:

*A figure like a young woman is seated on the bed, holding a hand mirror limply. A sound like sobbing comes from it. Its hair is long, straight and black; her face is a blank white porcelain mask with a single tear painted at the corner of one eye. The face looks slowly up at you.*

This is Candia Colombe, the eldest daughter of the family. She is convinced that Petrus Carolus wants to marry her by force, because she has seen this in her tarot cards. This conviction, as well as the blank mask that has fused itself to her face, has temporarily overwhelmed her courageous spirit and she is sobbing her heart out. She will be wary of strangers, though the presence of Eustace will make her friendly.

Candia will freely volunteer any information she knows that could be useful. She knows as much as Eustace. She also knows that the family has a chequered history and is privy to a few facts that young Eustace has not been told, which she will tell the Player Characters if they ask:

- Lord Alphonse Colombe was more than a little eccentric. He liked to observe things – people, animals, the stars – but hated to be watched himself. They say he built at least one secret passage in the house, so that he could move between the floors without anyone seeing him. He disappeared at the age of 60. Nobody knows where he went.
- There is definitely a sinister presence somewhere in the west wing. Candia thinks there was some family tragedy, long ago, when the house was first built. She does not know the details but thinks it has something to do with two brothers who are now buried side by side in the family plot.
- Lord Tarquin Colombe, her great-grandfather, was a bloodthirsty man who loved to kill strange animals. He had several of them stuffed or mounted.
- Her brother Gustave is mentally very fragile. He was originally an adventurous man who loved to carry on the family tradition of exploring far countries, but he saw some gruesome sights when he was on an expedition to the far north. It is not certain what these were but the common belief is that he had to eat human flesh when his team were trapped by a blizzard.

## 15. Eustace Colombe's Bedroom

*This bedroom is in disarray. Someone has pulled all the sheets from the bed and tried to knot them together into a rope. The walls are hung with paintings depicting massive battles from history. On a bookcase against the near wall are several miniature figures of knights in armour.*



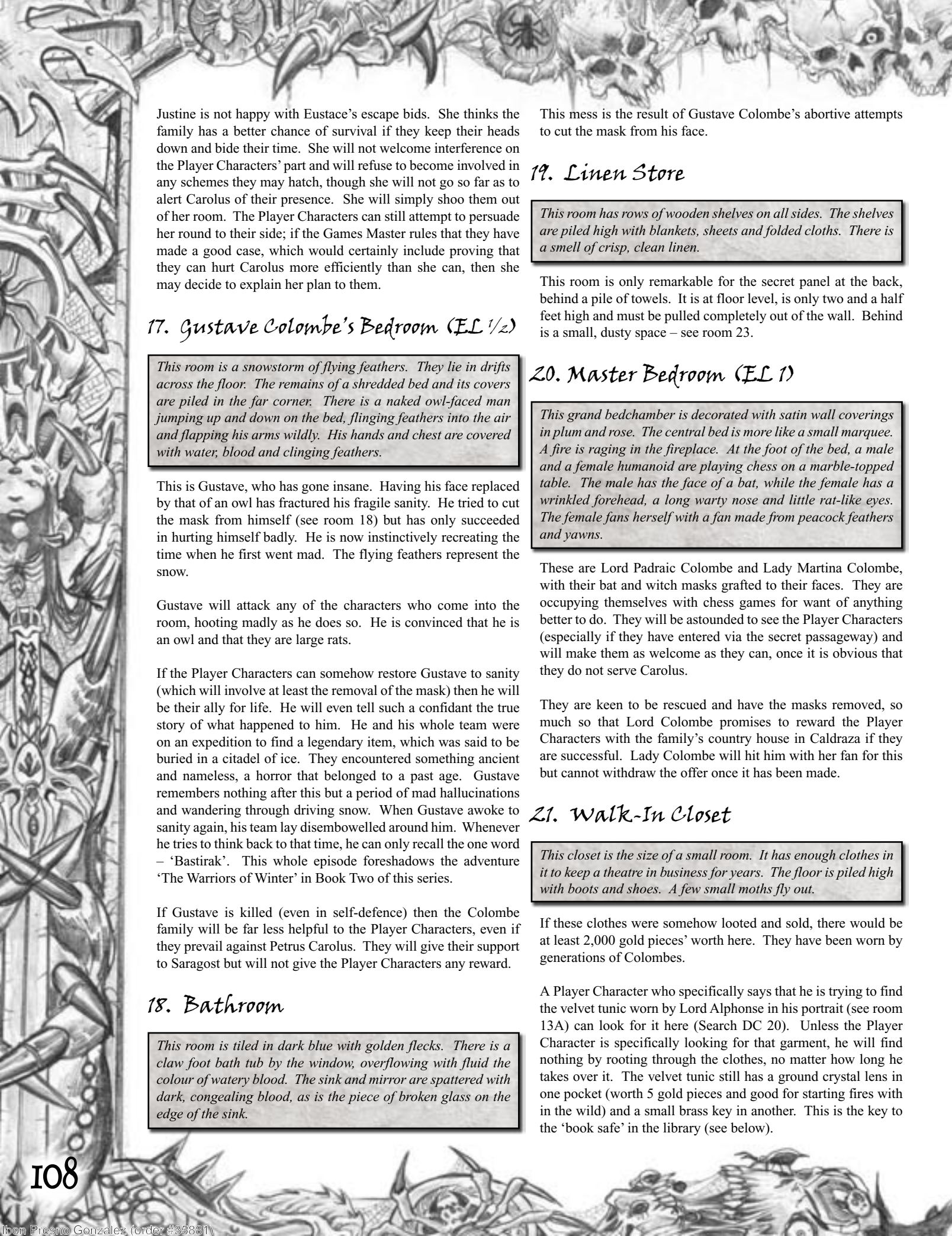
The knotted sheets are from Eustace's first escape attempt, which faltered when he could not break the iron grille over the window or climb into the attic without being seen. He aspires to be a knight some day and the scenes of battle on his bedroom walls reflect this aspiration.

## 16. Justine Colombe's Bedroom (EL 1/2)

*The bedroom behind this door is tidy and clean. A young woman with amber-coloured ringlets is sat at her dressing table, brushing her hair. She looks around and you see she has the face of a brindled cat.*

Unlike her sister and parents, Justine has kept a level head throughout all of this. Like Eustace, she is determined to escape but she is also hell bent on inflicting harm on Petrus Carolus before she does. She has learned his routine and is aware that the *invisible servant* who does the cooking brings him a cup of strong coffee every evening. As it cannot open the *arcane locked* library door, it knocks and leaves the coffee outside for him to collect. Unbeknownst to Carolus, Justine has hidden away a phial of sleeping draught that once belonged to Gustave, to help him through his troubled nights. She intends to drug his coffee with it, then stab him to death while he lies insensible.

**Sleeping Draught:** Ingested poison; DC 15; Initial damage 0; Secondary damage unconsciousness 1d3 hours



Justine is not happy with Eustace's escape bids. She thinks the family has a better chance of survival if they keep their heads down and bide their time. She will not welcome interference on the Player Characters' part and will refuse to become involved in any schemes they may hatch, though she will not go so far as to alert Carolus of their presence. She will simply shoo them out of her room. The Player Characters can still attempt to persuade her round to their side; if the Games Master rules that they have made a good case, which would certainly include proving that they can hurt Carolus more efficiently than she can, then she may decide to explain her plan to them.

## 17. Gustave Colombe's Bedroom (EL 1/2)

*This room is a snowstorm of flying feathers. They lie in drifts across the floor. The remains of a shredded bed and its covers are piled in the far corner. There is a naked owl-faced man jumping up and down on the bed, flinging feathers into the air and flapping his arms wildly. His hands and chest are covered with water, blood and clinging feathers.*

This is Gustave, who has gone insane. Having his face replaced by that of an owl has fractured his fragile sanity. He tried to cut the mask from himself (see room 18) but has only succeeded in hurting himself badly. He is now instinctively recreating the time when he first went mad. The flying feathers represent the snow.

Gustave will attack any of the characters who come into the room, hooting madly as he does so. He is convinced that he is an owl and that they are large rats.

If the Player Characters can somehow restore Gustave to sanity (which will involve at least the removal of the mask) then he will be their ally for life. He will even tell such a confidant the true story of what happened to him. He and his whole team were on an expedition to find a legendary item, which was said to be buried in a citadel of ice. They encountered something ancient and nameless, a horror that belonged to a past age. Gustave remembers nothing after this but a period of mad hallucinations and wandering through driving snow. When Gustave awoke to sanity again, his team lay disembowelled around him. Whenever he tries to think back to that time, he can only recall the one word – 'Bastirak'. This whole episode foreshadows the adventure 'The Warriors of Winter' in Book Two of this series.

If Gustave is killed (even in self-defence) then the Colombe family will be far less helpful to the Player Characters, even if they prevail against Petrus Carolus. They will give their support to Saragost but will not give the Player Characters any reward.

## 18. Bathroom

*This room is tiled in dark blue with golden flecks. There is a claw foot bath tub by the window, overflowing with fluid the colour of watery blood. The sink and mirror are spattered with dark, congealing blood, as is the piece of broken glass on the edge of the sink.*

This mess is the result of Gustave Colombe's abortive attempts to cut the mask from his face.

## 19. Linen Store

*This room has rows of wooden shelves on all sides. The shelves are piled high with blankets, sheets and folded cloths. There is a smell of crisp, clean linen.*

This room is only remarkable for the secret panel at the back, behind a pile of towels. It is at floor level, is only two and a half feet high and must be pulled completely out of the wall. Behind is a small, dusty space – see room 23.

## 20. Master Bedroom (EL 1)

*This grand bedchamber is decorated with satin wall coverings in plum and rose. The central bed is more like a small marquee. A fire is raging in the fireplace. At the foot of the bed, a male and a female humanoid are playing chess on a marble-topped table. The male has the face of a bat, while the female has a wrinkled forehead, a long warty nose and little rat-like eyes. The female fans herself with a fan made from peacock feathers and yawns.*

These are Lord Padraic Colombe and Lady Martina Colombe, with their bat and witch masks grafted to their faces. They are occupying themselves with chess games for want of anything better to do. They will be astounded to see the Player Characters (especially if they have entered via the secret passageway) and will make them as welcome as they can, once it is obvious that they do not serve Carolus.

They are keen to be rescued and have the masks removed, so much so that Lord Colombe promises to reward the Player Characters with the family's country house in Caldraza if they are successful. Lady Colombe will hit him with her fan for this but cannot withdraw the offer once it has been made.

## 21. Walk-In Closet

*This closet is the size of a small room. It has enough clothes in it to keep a theatre in business for years. The floor is piled high with boots and shoes. A few small moths fly out.*

If these clothes were somehow looted and sold, there would be at least 2,000 gold pieces' worth here. They have been worn by generations of Colombes.

A Player Character who specifically says that he is trying to find the velvet tunic worn by Lord Alphonse in his portrait (see room 13A) can look for it here (Search DC 20). Unless the Player Character is specifically looking for that garment, he will find nothing by rooting through the clothes, no matter how long he takes over it. The velvet tunic still has a ground crystal lens in one pocket (worth 5 gold pieces and good for starting fires with in the wild) and a small brass key in another. This is the key to the 'book safe' in the library (see below).

## Carolus' Notes

**Entry 1:** Slotting with lenses prepared according to Alluric's method yields a crimson aura a whole eighteen degrees across in each case. Conclusion: definite increase in type 3 etheric radiation from the key stars. When did this begin? Equinox has clearly already moved into second stage. They may have become MANIFEST. Impossible to make more precise readings without Alphonse's own eyepiece. This construction of mine is of course genius in itself but is far from satisfactory. Must send the quasits to look for it again.

**Entry 2:** Interstellar darkness thicker than before. Should be reading background glow at least but nothing. Are the cardinal stars draining energy from the ether somehow? Impossible – they work on different spectra. Can only conclude that the dark is rising in ANSWER to the increased stellar brilliance.

**Entry 3:** Fascinating object sighted tonight moving in easterly trajectory. Not a comet. Too low in the heavens. Also, shape all wrong – bulbous at rear rather than at head. Could not get a good sighting but detected motion around the flanks, as of waving tendrils. Possibly a vast elemental, or something of extraplanar origin? In any case, probably unrelated to the other phenomena. Expect it flew low over eastern Caldraza. Must contact with old Mondwick Thaum and find out if he saw it.

**Entry 4:** Nova flare in the eighth quadrant! We have an instance of direct resonance between Ashfar and the Sphere of the Fixed Stars. This is exactly as Cantagrulos of Peskari recorded it in the 13<sup>th</sup> epoch, when he speaks of the head of the Dragon being suffused with flame. Well, well. The Goddess is not so far from us as the storybooks would have us believe.

**Entry 5:** There are forms in the darkness. It is becoming articulate. The Starborn have awoken and so have the Host. It cannot be long before they will encounter each other face to face. Time for those of us who know what is coming to choose which side our bread is buttered on.

**Entry 6:** Intriguing. My own chart indicates that a conjunction will occur in mere days. These incarnate Stars will cross my path, while they are yet newly awoken to their potential. I marvel once again at the splendid irony of the universe. Let us see what use we can make of them.

## 22. Library (EL 1)

This room has an almost hallowed feel to it; it is so tidy and well kept. It is evidently a library. Each wall is lined with bookcases, with the exception of the far wall, which shows a stained-glass image of an angel holding one hand upraised in blessing and an open book in the other. The carpets underfoot are thick, probably to prevent footsteps from disturbing the readers. In the room's centre is a desk, at which a bizarre humanoid figure is sitting. It seems to be a manikin made from glass, with red liquid sloshing around inside as it moves. It has an open book in front of it, which it flicks through rapidly, page by page. Behind it is a spiral iron staircase, leading up through a circular hole in the ceiling.

The humanoid figure is Carolus' amanuensis, Albie. An amanuensis is a rare form of construct that has no combat function at all and exists purely to absorb and store information. Albie has been told to process all the books in the library. This is much easier for Carolus than moving the books physically would be.

Albie is not hostile and will communicate with the Player Characters if they talk to him. He will fire a farrago of questions at them: where are they from, for whom are they working, what have they seen so far today, and so on. His voice is polite and neutral. He will not tell them anything about his employer, though he will give information about who and what he is and about what he has read in the books, which is mostly trivia.

A closer look at Albie reveals that he is indeed made from some flexible transparent material, like elastic glass. He is cold to the



touch. The liquid inside him appears to be blood. There is some kind of inner skeleton, made from spirals of metal wire but it is impossible to see quite what shape it is. The Player Characters can smash Albie to pieces easily, as he poses no threat, nor will he even alert Carolus to their presence. Carolus will be furious if they do, as Albie is irreplaceable.

**Albie the Amanuensis;** CR 1; Medium Construct; HD 2d10+20 (31 hp); Init +0; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Base attack/grapple +1/+1; Atk slam +1 melee (1d4); Full Atk slam +1 melee (1d4); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ construct traits; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 10, Dex 10, Con -, Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 4

*Skills & Feats:* Decipher Script +4, Knowledge (all) +12\*

\*An amanuensis has a +8 racial bonus to any generic Knowledge skill check. It can recall any single fact from any book that it has read, at will.

*Repair:* Albie is fragile and can easily be damaged. Topping up his internal workings with a pint of fresh blood from a humanoid (poured in through a valve in his neck) restores 1d8+1 hit points.

### Carolus' Notes

On the desk in front of Albie is a pile of handwritten notes. Carolus has compiled these while he has been using the telescope. They are mostly technical jottings but the following coherent sentences can be gleaned. Each one requires a Decipher Script check (DC 10) to understand, as the handwriting is terrible. See the boxed text on the previous page for the notes.

### The Book Safe

A character searching the bookcases may find Lord Alphonse's hidden safe (Search DC 25). This is a locked iron box in the shape of a one-foot cube, fixed in place, mocked up to look like a group of fat books packed close together. The lock is of the highest quality (Open Lock DC 40). Inside the safe is a bag containing 450 gold pieces and a small intricately carved wooden box, lined with silk, worth ten gold pieces. The box contains a pair of *eyes of the eagle*, which Alphonse used to assist him in his stellar observations.

### 23. Secret Cupboard

*Through the gap where the panel was, you can see a small cubby-hole with what appears to be a box pushed to the back of it.*

Shoved into this cupboard is a dusty wooden box, which is neither locked nor trapped. It contains three black silk ritual robes, a silver chalice worth 20 gold pieces, a silver masterwork dagger worth 322 gold pieces, a golden disc six inches across with a pentagram engraved into it worth 200 gold pieces and a sheaf of papers written in cipher. A Decipher Script skill check (DC 20) shows these to be an attempt to construct the initiation rituals of a diabolic secret society. This stash of items dates back to the time of Lord Tarquin Colombe, who went through a period in his teens when he was fascinated by devils and demons. A

simple Spellcraft check (DC 15) reveals that there is no genuine magic in these rituals at all.

### 24. Secret Store Room (EL 2)

*You must now be at the cellar level of the house. The walls are bare brick and the air is freezing cold and smells of damp. There is a pile of decaying matter heaped against the north wall, so badly rotted that you can barely make out what it used to be. Some of the walls are spotted with white and brown fungus. A single wooden table and chair sit in the centre of the room.*

This was Lord Alphonse's food supply and private dining area. The rotted matter is what is left of boxes of fruit, loaves and vegetables after more than a hundred years have passed. Anyone who succeeds at a Spot check (DC 15) notices the following anomaly:

*It may be a trick of the light, but you are certain that a dark cluster of fungus below the north wall forms the rough outline of a human form.*

These are the mould-encrusted remains of Lord Alphonse, who suffered a coronary arrest in his little hideaway and was never discovered. His bones are covered with brown mould (see the DMG). The only item of value here is his signet ring, worth ten gold pieces, which confirms his identity. The Colombe family will be pleased to have the mystery of his disappearance solved at last and will give the Player Characters an additional reward if his remains are recovered; see the *Aftermath* section.

### 25A. Eastern Attic

*This dusty room under the eaves had obviously been left unused for years before its new tenants moved in. There is junk and clutter everywhere, from old wooden toys and painting easels to large trunks. Piled up by the window are some shredded clothes, which have been made into a filthy nest. A few long, matted hairs have been pressed down into the cloth. There is a hot stink of dung.*

This room is where the harpies, Maxeen and Sharrin, are nesting. They fly out from here to try to catch Eustace (see above) and will retreat back here if wounded. The window can be opened and shut but does not lock.

Searching the attic for anything useful is a time-consuming, noisy enterprise. For every round that the Player Characters spend rooting through the old boxes and crates, Sho'Hasta is entitled to a Listen check (DC 20) to hear something moving about in the attic. If the harpies are not known to be dead, then the noises will be blamed on them (though the Games Master can have creatures come to investigate anyway if this would make for a good scene), whereas if they have been killed, nothing else has any business being up in the attic, so the lamia will come and investigate the intruders, using illusions to split them up and disguise herself.



The Player Characters can find plenty of interesting items in the attic, most of them completely useless. Each successful Search check (DC 15) locates one of the following. Work through the list in order:

- A masterwork breastplate, originally the property of Lord Colombe's grandfather Tarquin, which bears the family crest embossed on the front.
- A complete human/elvish dictionary.
- A spyglass with its lenses missing.
- A stuffed girallon under a sheet.
- A wooden rocking horse made from re-used pieces of barrel.
- Several sheaves of paper with maps of the stars on them, with many crossings-out, corrections and re-drawings.
- A collection of rare beetles in a shallow glass-fronted box.
- A lead crystal globe. This is a prop and is not magical. It is worth five gold pieces.
- Three bottles of green fluid, which prove to be undrinkable homemade elderflower wine.
- A fancy dress costume of a frog with a crown on its head.
- A disfigured doll with one eye missing and a sinister expression, leaking sawdust from its belly.
- Five dried monkey heads strung on a piece of black cord.
- A moth-eaten wedding dress under a pile of old books.
- A box of rather sickly-smelling incense sticks.
- A huge doll's house, four feet wide, fashioned in exquisite detail. This would be worth 100 gold pieces if it could somehow be removed from the attic.
- A portrait of some Colombe family member of the past, mostly obliterated by an ugly black mould. All that can be seen is that he was a young man. The corroded nameplate reads 'M - Col'. A successful Decipher Script check (DC 20) reads this correctly as Michel Colombe.
- A case containing several cloves of garlic, a bottle of holy water, five crude wooden stakes and a holy symbol of Aranu.
- A funeral urn containing the ashes of 'Loyal Bellman', who is otherwise unidentified. If the Player Characters waste resources finding out his identity, they learn that he was a hunting dog.
- A complete courtier's outfit.
- An artificial leg made from porcelain, with leather straps to hold it in place.

If the Player Characters are sufficiently determined (or demented) to have dug through all of the above, then the final Search check reveals the real prize to be found here. This is a box, covered with purple velvet and fitted with a tiny lock. The family crest is stamped on the top. The lock is trapped to prevent tampering, though what was originally very potent poison has degraded and become almost inert over time:

**Old Wyvern Venom Needle Trap:** CR 3; mechanical; touch trigger; manual reset; Atk +17 melee (1 plus poison, needle); poison (wyvern poison, Fortitude saving throw (DC 13) resists, 1d4 Con/1d4 Con); Search (DC 24); Disable Device (DC 24).

Inside the velvet-lined box is a pair of duelling rapiers, identical in all respects but for a slight smear of blood on the end of one. A master craftsman, who must have spent years over them, has clearly made these. They are masterwork silvered weapons,

with rubies inlaid into the hilt and guard and fine gold tracery at the base of the blade. Individually, they are worth 1,000 gold pieces each; the sale price can be increased by 20% if both rapiers are present, as it increases the value.

These items have a grim history. They were given as a Midwinter present to the eldest son of the family, Michel Colombe, many centuries ago. He fought a practice bout with his brother Marc while they were both drunk and accidentally ran him through, killing him. He was overcome with guilt from which he never recovered and hanged himself in the western attic some months later. The Lord Colombe of the time had the western attic sealed and stowed the rapiers away here without telling anyone. They have since been buried under layers upon layers of junk.

### 25B. Western Attic (EL 3)

*You are in a huge windowless attic, above the west wing of the house. Thick support beams span the area. There is a smell here of old, unopened rooms, decaying wallpaper and slow madness.*

This unlit space seems empty. It has not been entered for centuries and the entrance hatch below has long since been plastered over. A previous Lord had the attic closed when a son of the family, Michel Colombe, hung himself here in a fit of suicidal depression, after he accidentally killed his brother with his Midwinter gift (see above). His shade still haunts the place, in the form of an allip. Unlike the usual allip, he does not venture out of this room and is bound here.



**Michel Colombe, Allip:** CR3; Medium Undead (Incorporeal); HD 4d12 (26 hp); Init +5; Spd fly 30 ft (perfect) (6 squares); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 deflection), touch 15, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +2/—; Atk incorporeal touch +3 melee (1d4 Wisdom drain); Full Atk incorporeal touch +3 melee (1d4 Wisdom drain); Space/reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA babble, madness, Wisdom drain; SQ darkvision 60 ft, incorporeal traits, +2 turn resistance, undead traits; AL NE; SV: Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +4 Str —, Dex 12, Con —, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 18

**Skills & Feats:** Hide +8, Intimidate +7, Listen +7, Search +4, Spot +7, Survival +0 (+2 following tracks); Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes

**Babble (Su):** An allip constantly mutters and whines to itself, creating a hypnotic effect. All sane creatures within 60 feet of the allip must succeed on a DC 16 Will save or be affected as though by a hypnotism spell for 2d4 rounds. This is a sonic mind-affecting compulsion effect.

Creatures that successfully save cannot be affected by the same allip's babble for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

**Madness (Su):** Anyone targeting an allip with a thought detection, mind control, or telepathic ability makes direct contact with its tortured mind and takes 1d4 points of Wisdom damage.

**Wisdom Drain (Su):** An allip causes 1d4 points of Wisdom drain each time it hits with its incorporeal touch attack. On each such successful attack, it gains 5 temporary hit points.

## Z6A. Concealed Observatory

*Instead of climbing into a domed space, you find yourself on a flat circular floor above the mansion, open to the air! Either the roof of the tower has somehow been removed while you were inside, or it is invisible when you are inside it. In the centre of the floor is a complicated brass construction, the largest part of which is a telescoping cylinder.*

This is Alphonse Colombe's secret room, from which he would observe and catalogue the stars through his tremendous telescope. The walls are, indeed, transparent from the inside, thanks to an expensive magical effect.

Petrus Carolus is here, having long since worked out how to gain access to the observatory room. He has attached a jury-rigged tangle of lenses and mirrors to the telescope, in an attempt to replace the missing eyepiece. If he was expecting the Player Characters, then he will have cast defensive spells in anticipation of their arrival. If they take him by surprise, they find him bent over the telescope, muttering.

## Non-Player Character: Petrus Carolus (EL 12)

*Before you stands a barrel-chested man with bright, intelligent eyes. He has a huge frizz of hair and a beard to match, so his face seems to be surrounded by an explosion of hair. He wears a hideously coloured waistcoat with a purple and yellow motif and pointy-toed boots.*

Petrus is chaotic and evil to the core but is not impulsive; this whole operation has been deliberately planned so that he can get to the telescope (and Lord Alphonse's books) and find out more about the Equinox of Heroes, since he believes (correctly) it is an event so important that it could shake the whole world.

He will *not* attempt to fight the Player Characters, though he will defend himself if attacked, in such a way as to neutralise the threat without causing death. He does this because he does not want to risk the telescope becoming damaged in a fight and because he already suspects that the Player Characters are, in fact, the Starborn of this era. If he makes a stand against them now, he thinks that this will mean he has chosen a side. He wants to weigh up whether the Starborn or the Host are more likely to succeed, then choose his side accordingly.

His first reaction to the Player Characters will be to offer them a cup of tea and invite them to sit down and talk this whole business through. He wants to find out how much they know about themselves. He will ask how they came to be on Chillhame, why they are in the mansion and what they know about current events. He seems not to mind that they have broken into the house and (presumably) slaughtered several of his servants.

## Z6. Book Tower

*This cylindrical tower has a flat ceiling. The walls are lined entirely with bookcases. Off to one side is a sliding ladder mounted on a circular rail, which looks like it could be moved around the room so as to reach any shelf. Around the upper section of this room, above the bookcases, are frescoes two feet high, each one depicting one of the signs of the zodiac.*

Petrus Carolus has cast *alarm* here, to warn him if anyone is closing in on his lair.

The key to reaching the topmost room is in the frescoes. The ladder can be swivelled around to reach them. The fresco of the Reaper conceals a hidden switch, which can be found if a Player Character specifically states that he is examining this fresco (Search check DC 30). Pressing the reaper's eye and hand simultaneously activates the switch. The clue to this is in the portrait of Lord Alphonse Colombe in corridor 13A.

Activating the switch causes the lower part of one of the bookcases to swing open silently, revealing a very narrow shaft (three feet across) with a ladder up to the concealed observatory. A character can find this doorway with a Search check (DC 25) but cannot open it except by means of the switch, unless the door is simply forced open (Break DC 28).



**If they go along with Justine's plan of drugging Petrus' coffee:** This plan actually has a slim chance of success. Justine does not know quite how to deal with Sho'Hasta the lamia on the landing, so she is hoping that the creature will go to sleep at just the right time. If the Player Characters manage to slip the knockout draught to Petrus and he fails his Fortitude saving throw, he will collapse in the library and they can then attempt to bind him, deliver a *coup de grace* or whatever else they choose.

**If they side with Petrus Carolus and abandon the Colombes to their fate:** Petrus is delighted that the Player Characters are sensible enough to throw in their lot with him. He insists that any good-aligned characters are sent on their way with a little golden handshake of at least 200 gold pieces, so that they will not hamper the remaining party members. That done, he asks for the Player Characters' help to find the eyepiece (see above) and tells them that they are welcome to stay at the Colombe mansion whenever they wish, since he will be living here from now on. He cannot promise to help with the defence of Saragost, though he will give the players the remainder of his box of *Turlingdrome's magnificent fireworks* as a goodwill gift. If the Player Characters then go on to win the battle of Hoxley Fields, Carolus will side with them firmly and send them a message to that effect. He then becomes an ally.

There are several possible outcomes for this scene:

**If the Player Characters simply try to kill Petrus Carolus:** They have a slim chance of being able to do this but the odds are stacked against them. Carolus is far above their level range. He will try to dissuade them from attacking for the first couple of rounds, using non-lethal spells. He is quietly confident that even a group of young Starborn cannot prevail against him. If the Player Characters persist, then he will start to use damaging spells against them. If the Player Characters win, then they win. If they lose, then Carolus will spare one of them to talk to and interrogate and will have the bodies of the rest thrown on to the compost heap.

**If they demand that Petrus Carolus leave the mansion and/or restore the Colombe family:** Petrus will explain that he is using the telescope, which is a unique scientific instrument, so he cannot carry out this research elsewhere. He only intended to take a day over it but because the eyepiece is missing, it is taking much longer. If the Player Characters are willing to give him the eyepiece (or find it for him) then he can make his observations, record the results and head back to his tower. If they cannot do this, then he will just have to stay here until the observations are complete. This will take at least three more days.

**Petrus Carolus:** Human wizard 12; CR 12; HD 10d4+10 (36 hp); Init +6; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 *bracers of armour*), touch 12, flat-footed 10; Base attack/grapple +6/+6; Atk dagger +6 melee (1d4); Full Atk dagger +6/+1 melee (1d4); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA spells; SQ none; SV: Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +8; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 17, Wis 14, Cha 10

**Skills & Feats:** Concentration +16, Decipher Script +18, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (history) +18, Listen +2,\* Profession (astronomer) +17, Spellcraft +18, Spot +2\*; Combat Casting, Enlarge Spell, Extend Spell, Improved Counterspell, Improved Familiar, Improved Initiative, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll

\*Derived from familiar.

**Spells:** 0<sup>th</sup> level: *daze* (2), *read magic*, *touch of fatigue*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *alarm*, *cause fear*, *magic missile*, *protection from law*, *sleep*; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: *arcane lock* (2), *scorching ray*, *unseen servant* (2, prepared as enlarged spell); 3<sup>rd</sup> level: *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *deep slumber*, *dispel magic*, *fireball*, *stinking cloud*; 4<sup>th</sup> level: *animate dead*, *black tentacles*, *fire trap*; 5<sup>th</sup> level: *dominate person*, *symbol of pain*, *telekinesis*; 6<sup>th</sup> level: *scorching ray* (quicken), *repulsion*

*Equipment & Treasure:* bracers of armour+2, wand of summon monster III (13 charges), remains of a box of Turlingdrome's magnificent fireworks (see below), 1,000 gp.

**Unctuous Merth, quasit familiar:** Tiny outsider (Chaotic, Extraplanar, Evil); HD 7 (18 hp); Init +7; Spd 20 ft (4 squares), fly 50 ft (perfect); AC 22 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +7 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 19; Base attack/grapple +3/-6; Atk claw +8 melee (1d3-1 plus poison); Full Atk 2 claws +8 melee (1d3-1 plus poison) and bite +3 melee (1d4-1); Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft/0 ft; SA deliver touch spells, poison, spell-like abilities; SQ alternate form, damage reduction 5/cold iron or good, darkvision 60 ft, empathic link, fast healing 2, immunity to poison, improved evasion, share spells, spell resistance 17, resistance to fire 10, speak with master, granted abilities; SV: Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 8, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10

*Skills & Feats:* Bluff +6, Diplomacy +2, Disguise +0 (+2 acting), Hide +17, Intimidate +2, Knowledge (the planes) +6, Listen +7, Move Silently +9, Search +6, Spellcraft +6, Spot +6; Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse

*Poison (Ex):* Injury, Fortitude DC 13, initial damage 1d4 Dex, secondary damage 2d4 Dex. The save DC is Constitution-based and includes a +2 racial bonus.

*Spell-Like Abilities:* At will—detect good, detect magic, and invisibility (self only); 1/day—cause fear (as the spell, except that its area is a 30-foot radius from the quasit, save DC 11). Caster level 6th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Once per week a quasit can use commune to ask six questions. The ability otherwise works as the spell (caster level 12th).

*Alternate Form (Su):* A quasit can assume other forms at will as a standard action. This ability functions as a polymorph spell cast on itself (caster level 12th), except that a quasit does not regain hit points for changing form, and any individual quasit can assume only one or two forms no larger than Medium. Common forms include bat, monstrous centipede, toad, and wolf. A quasit in alternate form loses its poison attack.

### New Magic Item: *Mask of Transfixed Aspect*

These accursed items resemble expertly crafted carnival masks, made from wood, *papier mache*, leather or pottery. When they are placed on a wearer's face, they animate, so that the mask moves when the wearer's face does. The wearer does not acquire any of the qualities of the creature that the mask represents but he is limited to the mask's features to communicate, so unless the mask is of a humanoid or a creature that can speak, the wearer cannot communicate intelligibly.

Each mask has two command words. When the first is pronounced, the mask fuses itself in place and becomes part of the wearer's body. He is allowed a Fortitude saving throw (DC 17) to resist this effect. Once the mask is fused, the wearer cannot remove it. If he tries to cut it off, the effect is as if he were cutting his own face off. Pronouncement of the second command word releases the mask, turning the wearer back to normal. If the mask's function is suppressed by *dispel magic* or a similar method, it can be removed.

Moderate transmutation; CL 9<sup>th</sup>; Craft Wondrous Item; *alter self, baleful polymorph*; Price 20,000 gp.

### New Magic Item: *Turlingdrome's Magnificent Fireworks*

These wondrous items are usually found in ones and twos, left in biscuit tins and other safe places. Less frequently, incomplete boxed sets will be found, such as the one now owned by Petrus Carolus. These contain 1d4 *brilliant sparklers*, 1d3 *small rockets*. Each of the other firework types has a 20% chance to be present.

Very rarely, a complete set will be found packed in a box filled with tissue paper and sawdust, with a brightly coloured label on the top. A complete set contains a single *taper of authority*, one *roaring dragon*, five *small rockets*, two of each other *magnificent firework* and ten *brilliant sparklers*.

Each of the *magnificent fireworks* can be used only once. They do not require any command words to activate but they must all be lit (an action equivalent to lighting a torch). Once a *firework* is lit, it goes off in exactly two rounds, on the initiative count of the person who lit it. Dousing the *firework* with water puts it out and makes it soggy and useless until it has been dried out again. A soaked *firework* has a 35% chance to be ruined altogether.

If *fireworks* have not been properly stored in cool dry conditions, then each one has a 20% chance of appearing to go out the round after it was lit. A firework that appears to have gone out has either genuinely gone out (50% chance) or is merely smouldering and will go off in a further 1d3 rounds (50% chance).

*Taper of Authority:* This slim wooden taper looks completely unremarkable. When lit, it burns continually without being consumed, giving off light equivalent to a candle.

The sole function of the *taper of authority* is to give the wielder control over a particular set of *magnificent fireworks*. If any given *firework* is lit with the appropriate *taper of authority*, then the holder of the taper can direct and control it, if this is an option for the *firework*. A creator can only manufacture a *taper* to give control over *fireworks* that he has himself created, not those of others.


Faint evocation; CL 3<sup>rd</sup>; Craft Wondrous Item; *alarm, arcane mark, continual flame*; Price 12,000 gp.

*Brilliant Sparkler:* This object appears to be a length of metal wire dipped in some sort of grey substance. When lit, the end flares into bright sparks, shedding light equivalent to daylight in a 30 foot radius.

The wielder may use the *sparkler* to write a message in the air, draw an inscription, or otherwise make a mark. The message remains hanging in the air in glowing blue for 1d3 hours. The *sparkler* burns for ten minutes before going out.

Faint evocation; CL 3<sup>rd</sup>; Craft Wondrous Item; *light, arcane mark*; Price 75 gp.

*Blue Devil:* This *firework* is a stubby blue cylinder like a fat candle, with cartoon-like pictures of smoky blue devils chasing each other around the circumference. When lit, it first pours



out thick blue smoke in a 20 foot spread, the equivalent of that produced by a *pyrotechnics* spell.

On the second round, 1d4+1 blue-hued fire mephits are summoned. These mephits are immune to the effects of the smoke cloud. If the person who lit the *firework* holds the *taper of authority*, then they obey his commands. Otherwise, they simply attack anything within sight. The smoke cloud and the mephits both remain for 11 rounds before disappearing. The *firework* continues to burn in the cloud's centre and the mephits can touch it to gain fast healing. The holder of the *taper of authority* can dismiss the smoke or the mephits at will.

Moderate conjuration; CL 11<sup>th</sup>; Craft Wondrous Item; *pyrotechnics, summon monster VI*; Price 7,200 gp.

*Fiery Serpent*: This yellow cone has a wick in the top and an image of a coiled snake around the casing. When lit, it burns with a fierce sulphurous light, scorching the ground around it in a five foot spread. Any creature in this area suffers 2d6 fire damage for each round it remains there, with a Reflex saving throw (DC 13) allowed to negate this damage.

On the third round, a summoned thoqqua is called into being directly below the *firework* and bursts through the ground, coiling madly as if in pain. The thoqqua is assumed to burrow through ten feet of material before breaking the surface, creating a tunnel that other creatures can use. The holder of the *taper of authority* can direct the thoqqua as he chooses if the *firework* was lit thereby. If it is not so directed, it attacks indiscriminately.

Faint conjuration; CL 5<sup>th</sup>; Craft Wondrous Item; *flaming sphere, summon monster III*; Price 1,000 gp.

*Roaring Dragon*: This impressive *firework* is a huge red pyramid, with a large dragon claw on one of the faces. Lighting it causes it to sputter briefly then cough a small sphere of red flame up into the air. This explodes into the form of a huge red dragon, which roars and blows flame, though not in such a way as to set light to anything. Waves of tangible heat come from it.

This is all an illusion, and the holder of the *taper of authority* can control it. If it is not controlled, it simply roars and circles around until the effect expires. The illusory dragon cannot travel more than 840 feet from the *firework*. After 11 minutes, the dragon dissolves into a shower of red sparks.

Observers believe the dragon to be real by default, as with all figments, though they may make a Will saving throw (DC 17) to disbelieve the illusion if they interact with it.

Moderate illusion; CL 11<sup>th</sup>; Craft Wondrous Item; *persistent image*; Price 2,750 gp.

*Volcano*: This *firework* is decorated to resemble an erupting volcano. When lit, it first emanates a fountain of sparks that inflict 2d6 fire damage on all creatures within a ten-foot radius, with a Reflex saving throw (DC 15) negating this damage.

After two rounds, a flow of molten lava emerges from the *firework*, expanding in a spread of five feet per round for eight

more rounds, upon which the *firework* goes out. Creatures who are in a square into which lava expands may make Reflex saving throws (DC 16) to take no damage. Any creature that fails its saving throw or that ends its turn in a square that has filled with lava takes 2d6 fire damage (and continues to take 1d6 damage for 1d3 rounds afterwards) on each round of exposure. The lava disappears when the *firework* expires.

Moderate conjuration; CL 10<sup>th</sup>; Craft Wondrous Item; *wall of fire, transmute rock to mud*; Price 2,500 gp.

*Small Rocket*: This rocket is eight inches long and has a stick attached for planting it in a bottle or the ground. It is coloured blue with white stars. Upon ignition it shoots into the air and explodes into a rain of coloured stars that fall slowly to earth, burning with dazzling intensity. These illuminate a 120 foot radius with shifting-coloured light as bright as daylight.

Creatures that suffer penalties in bright light (such as drow) also suffer them in the light of the *small rocket*, though this light does not damage creatures that are vulnerable to daylight. The illumination lasts for ten rounds.

Moderate evocation; CL 10<sup>th</sup>; Craft Wondrous Item; *dancing lights, daylight*; Price 1,500 gp.

*Large Rocket*: This rocket is as fat as a scroll case and is tipped with a nosecone like a wizard's hat. When it detonates, a sequence of massive coloured explosions fills the sky, with burst after burst going off, showering amber, gold and scarlet stars.


This beautiful display can captivate any creature that sees it. The *rocket* affects up to 30+3d4 hit dice of creatures within a 60 foot radius spread as if by a *hypnotic pattern*, though no single creature of more than 18 hit dice can be affected. Those with fewest hit dice are affected first and among those with equal hit dice, those closest to the rocket's launching point are affected first. A Will saving throw (DC 13) is allowed to resist the effect. The *hypnotic pattern* created by the falling stars lasts for 12 rounds.

Moderate evocation; CL 10<sup>th</sup>; Craft Wondrous Item; *hypnotic pattern*; Price 3,000 gp.

*Thunderclap*: This tiny *firework* looks like a miniature, purple stick of dynamite. It goes off with a flash and a bang. The flash-bang dazzles and deafens all creatures within a ten foot radius spread, with a Fortitude saving throw (DC 11) allowed to negate the dazzle and a second Fortitude saving throw (DC 13) to negate the deafness. The dazzle effect lasts for one minute but the deafness is permanent. These saving throws must be made separately.

Faint evocation; CL 5<sup>th</sup>; Craft Wondrous Item; *flare, cause blindness/deafness*; Price 625 gp.

*Witches' Cauldron*: On the side of this spherical, heavy *firework* is a silhouette of an ugly cartoon witch stirring a cauldron. Lighting the *firework* produces nothing but a heavy green smoke, which seethes and boils for two rounds and fills a 20 foot radius



spread out from the *firework*. This smoke does not move, is two feet deep and has no effect other than to look sinister.

On the third round, the *firework* ejects a summoned swarm of bats, which obey the holder of the *taper of authority* if present and otherwise attack anyone nearby. On the fourth round, the region already filled with smoke erupts with *black tentacles* created at the *firework*'s caster level. Again, these obey the *taper*'s holder. Ten rounds after the *firework* was lit, all these effects cease.

Moderate conjuration: CL 10<sup>th</sup>; Craft Wondrous Item; *summon swarm*, *black tentacles*; Price 4,000 gp.

## Location: The Tower of Petrus Carolus

The Player Characters may hit on the idea of visiting Carolus' tower, since he is obviously not in it. Any of the villagers or a member of the Colombe family can give them directions. The tower is 15 miles to the west of Vannondale.

*In front of you, a miserable grey heath stretches for miles. There is nothing living here - not that you can see, anyway. A squat tower rises up from the bracken, made from stark white stones. It has no windows and one arched black doorway.*

Any Player Character who succeeds at a Spot check (DC 15) notices a device mounted at the top of the tower. This resembles a large metal tube on a tripod. It is Carolus' own telescope, which while cleverly built is not as powerful as he needs it to be.

For story purposes, the tower is empty of monsters. Carolus has moved all of his creatures and important items to the mansion, leaving only traps behind to dissuade the local monstrous humanoids from intruding. If the Games Master wishes, the tower can be populated with more creatures. This is recommended if the Player Characters are falling behind on experience.

**Doors:** The doors have been *arcane locked* and *fire trapped*, as is Carolus' wont.

**Lower Room:** The entrance hallway is decorated with twisted sculptures in black metal, fitted with *continuous flame* torches in violet glass globes. There is an immense black velvet cushion in the north-eastern corner with tawny yellow hairs clinging to it, where Sho'Hasta the lamia sleeps.

**Middle Room:** This is Carolus' library, workshop and experimentation room. There are four tall glass vats, all empty, against the north wall (he created the dog-men in these). Player Characters rooting through the junk can find several texts on species splicing and the creation of hybrids (Search DC 20). Against the south wall is a coffin-sized box lined with soft material, where Albie the amanuensis is kept when he is not working. Examination of the books reveals that many of them are texts on astronomy and astrology.

**Upper Room:** Luminous globes representing the planets, hanging on chains from the ceiling, light the bedchamber, which is painted black. In the centre of the room is a circular bath full of warm dark fluid treated with alchemical salts, so that a creature can float in it. This is where Carolus sleeps.

There is a secret panel in the wall (Search DC 20). It is trapped with a *summon monster VI* trap:

**Summon Monster VI trap:** CR 7; magic device; touch trigger (*alarm*); no reset; spell effect (*summon monster VI*, 12<sup>th</sup> level wizard); Search (DC 31); Disable Device (DC 31).

Behind this is a small compartment containing a parchment scroll, sealed with crimson wax. This is the contract between Carolus and a demonic entity called Aubri, in which various powers and privileges are conveyed in exchange for Carolus' immortal soul. A Knowledge (the planes) skill check (DC 20) concludes that Aubri is of the order of demons called the marilith. Setting fire to the contract does not nullify it, but it does deal 10d6 points of fire damage to Carolus, wherever he happens to be.

**Tower Top:** The trapdoor leading from this room to that below it is made from stone, *arcane locked* and *fire trapped* as usual. The very top of the tower is featureless but for a plinth on which stands Carolus' telescope. This is essentially a large spyglass on a tripod, bolted in place. It would be worth 4,000 gold pieces if removed, which requires a Craft (blacksmithing) or Disable Device skill check (DC 25).

## Aftermath

This adventure is over once the Colombe family has been restored to normal, or Carolus has been left in peace to lord it over them permanently. Either way, word is sent to the villagers that the invasion force is coming and that they are to send troops to defend Saragost.

The key to finishing the adventure is to provide Carolus with the eyepiece. If this is done, he finishes his work that same evening and heads back to his tower, with any of his remaining creatures following on after him. If he does not have the eyepiece, the Player Characters will have to decide what to do in the three days that it will take him to complete his research. This may even lead to them missing the battle at Saragost altogether.

Concluding this adventure is worth a story award equivalent to defeating a CR 7 threat. It is a tough one. If the Player Characters managed to keep all the members of the Colombe family alive, then they should receive a bonus of 300 experience points each.

**If the Colombe family is restored to normal and Carolus returns to his tower:** The Colombes are eternally in the Player Characters' debt. If Lord Colombe has offered them the family's summer residence in Caldraza, then he makes good on his promise and fetches them the deeds. The Player Characters thus become owners of a Medium dwelling worth 10,000 gold pieces. If not, he writes them a banker's draft for the sum of 2,000 gold pieces per Player Character, which they can cash in Saragost. Lord Colombe then gives the Player Characters a letter, placing

two of his merchant ships at the disposal of the Saragost Council.  
**Victory points:** 2

**If the Player Characters left Carolus in charge or did not restore the family to normal:** Carolus maintains neutrality while the duergar march across Chillhame, sending messages to the drow commanders that he is not siding with either them or their foes. No troops are sent.

**Victory points:** -1

**If the Player Characters left nobody in charge but warned the village:** In the absence of any governing authority to tell them what to do, the villagers hastily hold a council meeting in the town hall and debate what to do next. A small volunteer force of troops elects to go to Saragost, with many others choosing to stay at home and hang the consequences.

**Victory points:** 0

## Astercote

As the Player Characters draw near to the place where Astercote is marked on the map, they see something wholly unexpected. Instead of a village, the ground slopes downwards into a massive crater a mile across, with bare earth showing instead of grass and plants. The road to Astercote stops dead at the lip of the crater. It is as if the whole village had been scraped up by a gigantic hand and carried off. A few confused sheep are wandering and bleating across the torn earth.

There is no sign anywhere nearby to show what has happened to the village. *Detect magic* spells reveal a lingering aura of a massive amount of magic, as if a major artefact had been used. If the Player s search around to find clues to Astercote's fate, have them make a Spot check (DC 15). Those that succeed notice a black and white mass up in the top of a tall pine tree. It is a cow, fallen from the edge of the floating village and caught in the pine's topmost branches.

## Games Master's Information

Astercote was the home of a sorcerer, who had been keeping an artefact known as the Stone of Caradeth safe within his cellar. According to his researches, the Stone was the mystic power source that kept the legendary Stronghold of Caradeth 'eternally raised on high', a euphemism which the sorcerer believed meant 'standing upright'.

When rumours of an impending invasion reached the sorcerer's ears, he decided to activate the Stone in order to keep the village safe. To his horror, the Stone raised the village and the countryside for a mile around it 'on high' by levitating it up into the clouds. The village of Astercote and its hapless inhabitants are currently drifting aimlessly around at cloud level, blown about by the winds and unsure if they will ever return to earth, let alone to their original home.

At the Games Master's discretion, some of the villagers nearby may have seen Astercote take to the air or heard the earthquake-like sound of the village heaving itself free from the bedrock.

## Conclusion

Once the Lost Villages have been contacted and assisted, they dispatch their troops to the walls of Saragost. The word has now spread, and everyone is braced for an invasion from below.

## Event: Messages from Lady Arigane Zakawe

Arigane will use *dream* or *sending* spells to send messages to the Player Characters while they are away from Saragost. The messages she sends will depend on how far the duergar army has advanced. She will notify them as soon as the army emerges from below the ground and send an update as each village is passed along the way.

The purpose of this story feature is to keep the Player Characters mindful of the countdown to invasion and of the consequences of their own actions earlier. The villages they passed while playing through Chapter 2 will either survive or be destroyed depending on what they themselves did, so they should definitely hear about this.

The kind of message Arigane might send would be:

*The Enemy has been sighted at last. There are many more than we had anticipated. It seems they have learned that we were warned of their arrival and are deploying reserves. Scouts stationed at Bronze report a force of some ten thousand grey dwarves, led by dark-skinned commanders that can only be drow. They move by night, so it is difficult to gain a true reckoning of the size of their force. More information will be forthcoming as we receive it. Be well. Arigane.*

If the Player Characters have not yet returned to Saragost by the day before the invasion, she will send the following:

*It is imperative that you return with all speed. If there is aught you can do to conclude your business early, then do it. The enemy is almost at the gate. If you do not return soon, then they shall stand between you and us.*

*My heart is in turmoil. I fear that you have been sent away not for the help it would bring from the Lost Villages, but so that you would not be here when the enemy came. There are those here that fear you, that dread what you might yet become. Ah, what was the sense in sending you away for the sake of three mere towns?*

*Lord Yomah has been most unwisely counselled. It was Crastic who spoke the strongest in favour of sending you to the Lost Villages. I fear him. The man is too fond of secrets.*

At the very least, Arigane will keep the Player Characters informed of the progress of the enemy. If they have also cultivated her as an ally, she will confide other information in them as well, such as her doubts about Crastic's loyalty. The Games Master can use this method to supply the Player Characters with plot threads to pick up back in Saragost, if they have missed out on any.

# The Battle of Hoxley Fields

## Summary

The duergar and their allies cross the island of Chillhame and finally arrive at the Hoxley Fields by Saragost, where they encamp. When dusk breaks, they begin their attack. Whether they take the city or are beaten back depends on the Player Characters' actions to date and their decisions during the battle.

## Event: Returning to Saragost

When the Player Characters finally return to Saragost, they find no trace of the commoners who were encamped outside the city, waiting to enter. These have either been accepted into the city or driven away from the walls by arrow fire. Lord Falconio has given the order, at Count Crastic's insistence, to fire at any person who is still outside the walls after a three hour period.

The travellers have mostly decamped to Ashburn Wood, where they have set up camp in the wild. The community of dispossessed people, who have left behind all they had and have now been turned away from the place that was meant to shelter them, is filled with hatred for Saragost and its governors.

Inside the walls, the Player Characters are welcomed as heroes. People from the villages along the main road recognise them. They may even meet up with some friends they made while they were warning the villages. The townsfolk are still alive, thanks to them. They will offer to buy the Player Characters drinks; whether they accept is up to them but they should be aware that the city is still dangerous and the drow agents will take any opportunity to have the Player Characters snuffed out.

## Plot Event: Contact from Lady Arigane

If Lady Arigane is still alive, she will pass the following information on to the Player Characters. As it is fairly long, she will send it to them in scroll form.

If she has been killed, then another wizard of the Order of the Prism will do it. No matter how the information gets to the Player Characters, it needs to be passed on, as it is the bridge to the next series of adventures. Refer to the boxed text below.

## Arigane's Message

*My research has finally begun to bear fruit. As you must be aware by now, you are each far from being normal members of your race. Your presence here, at this time, is more than fortuitous; it was ordained. This battle, monstrous though it is, is only the first skirmish on the road to something far greater. If you are to know the full truth about yourselves and fulfil your destiny, then you must walk that road to its ending.*

*In order to realise who you are, you must first recover the legacy of who you were – or, more correctly, who those people were who went before you. Each of you has a birthright, an item that belongs to you by cosmic law and is, in a sense, an aspect of your soul. Without those items, whether you wield them or not, you are incomplete.*

*Since they were last held in Starborn hands, they have become scattered. Some have been stolen, some kept secure. This much we know – they have not gone more than four hundred miles from the site of the last battle, where Starkweather John fell. There is only one being who can tell you precisely where these items are now. He knows, because he was there at the time of the last Equinox. He is one of your kind, though he is greatly changed. It has been many centuries since he walked the earth as an elf. Though he was once a hero, we cannot now tell what he has become. Seek him in the Temple of Kharad, in the marshes to the west of Crescent City, where he has slept for many ages. He had another name once but now you may know him as the Ragged Man.*

*Whether or not the Enemy prevails here in Saragost, you must seek he who dwells in Kharad's Temple. Almost all of the ships have fled the harbour, fearing the battle to come. Look for a barque named the Elensil. She is mine. I entrust her and her crew to you. They have been told to obey your orders as they would obey my own. You may go whither you will in her. Crescent City, the port they call the Thieves' Kitchen, should be your first destination. After then, I cannot say. I pray that you will bring the Elensil back home safe to Saragost one day, though I sense in my heart that I will never sail in her again.*

*I have divined the future for you and it is dark. There are, yet, some points of light; some gleams of hope, some stars to steer by. For me, I go to prepare the Sanctuary for what is to come. Even if the grey legions of our enemies defile or tear down every other sacred place in this city, the Sanctuary shall stand.*

Arigane

A Knowledge (religion) or bardic knowledge check (DC 25) reveals that the name 'Kharad' is that of an obscure elvish god of vegetation and fertility, worshipped by a very small number of elves in the past and not at all today.



## Event: First View of the Army

At some point, the Player Characters will have sight of the invading force of duergar. Depending on their actions, this may be out in the field before the army even reaches Saragost, from a watchtower or wall in the city, or even from the wilderness if they arrive back too late. Irrespective of when that happens:

*The army that was bred in the underground caverns now surges across the upper world. Rank upon rank, legion upon legion of grey warriors, remorseless and rhythmic as a vast machine, are marching across the land. Chainmail and axe blades that have never seen the sun before now gleam in the daylight. Shrunken, deformed faces snarl out at the world, tiny eyes screwed up in disgust at the unusual brightness. As you look at this army of stone-grey soldiers, you know one thing for certain. They will not be taking prisoners, nor will they be offering terms. They intend to take what they have come for.*

*In the rear ranks, you see a strange sight. Burly duergar are carrying sedan chairs, draped with black and purple silk, decorated with woven silver thorns. These must be the commanders of the army, kept veiled from the last rays of the sun. There can be little doubt of what race occupies these transports.*

*Lumbering along within the ranks of duergar are several massive figures. They have bodies like those of pale, flabby giants but their heads are bulbous metal spheres, like helmets. From the necks of the helmets extrude pipes that sink into the flesh below, with discoloured veins spreading out from the entry point. You have never seen such creatures before and can only guess at what they may be.*

These entities are Hruggi, composite undead creatures similar to zombies, made from the decapitated bodies of giants to which magically empowered metal heads have been grafted. Drow pilots direct these creatures by means of special headbands, which allow them to *scry* on the creature and issue commands to it. The Hruggi are used as siege engines and gate smashers.

## Plot Event: Arrival at the Walls

The army arrives at sunset. They prefer to fight in gathering darkness, as their eyes are more used to it.

*Darkness is gathering fast. Lamps are lit in the city, but all the shops are shuttered up and the taverns are closed. The streets that had been so noisy and full of life are deserted of everyone save the patrolling guards on duty.*

*Outside the walls of Saragost, in the red rays of the setting sun, the enemy has come into view. The grey legions, flanked by the helmeted shambling giants, advance towards the city walls with a slow inevitable march. Head guardsmen shout orders to waiting archers and creaking ballistae are wheeled into place. Quivers full of arrows are brought out of storage and the smell of wood smoke is strong in the air as the fires are lit under cauldrons of oil. In less than ten minutes, the enemy will be within striking distance. It is time to decide where your place in the coming battle will be.*




The Player Characters must now choose whether they are going to be directly involved in the battle or not and if so, what their risk level is going to be. Refer to *Appendix 2, Mass Battles* for the rules for running this section. If you prefer, simply let the battle progress as you see fit, focusing only on the battle encounters that each Player Character must confront.

The Player Characters do not have the option to take on the Command position. Jeren Falconio, or his successor, will be doing that. If they opt for the Combat position, they will be sent to join the guardsmen on the walls. High risk Player Characters are placed near the gatehouse, medium risk Player Characters on the walls to each side and low risk Player Characters in the towers, where the ballistae are. If the Player Characters want to stay together, they must all choose the same risk level. Uninvolved Player Characters are either inside buildings in the city or in the streets close to the centre, away from the fighting to come.

## The Challenge

*From the grey hordes beyond the walls, a low rumble begins to rise. It is unclear at first what this is. You realise that it is the sound of thousands of grey dwarves making the same guttural, growling sound, like wolves about to kill. The earth vibrates with it.*

*Then, a single clear female voice rings out, which cannot be that of a dwarf:*



*'People of the City! Know this! We, your future masters, are not without mercy. Cast down your weapons and admit us without bloodshed! What good will it do you to waste the lives of your fighting men in a futile effort? Will you blindly serve these lords of yours, who are sending you to your deaths? Or will you rather accept us and be treated kindly under our rule?*

*'This army you see before you is but the merest shard, the tiniest splinter of the Chthonic Alliance, a group led by the Terror itself, born according to prophecy. Thousands stand here; tomorrow, they could be tens of thousands! Did you perhaps hope for victory? Hope is a bitter blessing. Certainty is better. We promise, as a race that honours law, to treat you mercifully if you spare yourselves this fight. If you know your history, you know that we never break our promises.*

*'I say truly, to those who now heed me, that the future for you is a good one. In years to come you will tell your children that you made the right choice, the truly brave choice. For, if you had not, you would have had no children to tell, but only the unending darkness of a fool's grave. Would you rather have the cold earth for a blanket and worms in your eyes, or a warm fire, a mug of ale and your children's laughter in your ears?*

*'Choose! Lay down your arms and drink with us this evening as kinsmen, or fight and fill the gutters of the city with your hearts' blood! Five minutes you have to decide and that is all!'*

*An uneasy murmur runs the length of the walls. Men glance at one another, not wanting to be the first to speak. The voice has clearly unsettled them.*

The men look to Lord Jeren Falconio, who merely sets his jaw at this and refuses to answer it. He knows that he is no orator, so he is not going to make a fool of himself by attempting a speech.

If any of the Player Characters feels like taking centre stage, then now would be the time. A passionate speech right now would boost the morale of the defenders. Treat any attempt to answer the drow back as a Perform (oratory) or Diplomacy skill check (DC 20). Success gives the defenders a +1 morale bonus on their first battle check, while failure by more than five gives them a -1 morale penalty on the same check. If a Player Character gives a particularly inspired speech, then it is only fair to allow him a circumstance bonus for good roleplaying.

### Open-Ended Battle

Given the number of different factors involved in this battle, it is impossible to predict exactly what will happen. The progress of the battle will be very different if the drow blow up the gate; the defenders of Saragost will lose their first and most important line of defence. Even if the bomb plot fails, the Hruggi may succeed in smashing the gates down anyway. The loss of the gates does not necessarily mean that Saragost is doomed, as the defenders can carry on fighting from the walls and streets.



### The Bomb Plot

If the Player Characters have not already uncovered and thwarted the plot to blow the city gates apart, then this is the first thing to happen. See *Chapter 5, Saragost* for details of the bomb. The Player Characters still have a chance to prevent it from being detonated.

If the drow agents manage to destroy the gates, then the duergar army automatically succeeds at its first tactical objective, namely smashing its way into the city.

### The Stormdreamer Stone

If the Stormdreamer Stone is used to call forth a *storm of vengeance* against either side in the conflict, it inflicts troop loss (-3) upon them. Grandlord Yomah is reluctant to use the Stone; he will not do so unless the defenders are seriously outnumbered, though a Player Character can always try to persuade him otherwise.

Use of the Stone to produce weather effects could also influence the battle. A high wind would make ranged combat practically impossible, which would favour the invaders. Rain would give the attackers a slight disadvantage (-1 to battle checks) while fog would simply postpone the battle until the combatants could see again.

## Plot Event: The Battle Begins

One single event signals the start of the battle, whether it is a massive explosion from the gatehouse, a blast from Captain Tzanvine's *horn of evil*, one of the Hruggi hurling a rock against the walls, or a sergeant screaming out the order to open fire. In seconds, the air is filled with whizzing crossbow bolts and flying arrows.

The duergar army's tactics are simple. They intend to pummel away at the main gates of Saragost, with the Hruggi acting as animated battering rams. The Hruggi can take plenty of punishment before going down, so this should keep the humans occupied. Daylight will only last another 20 minutes. When darkness falls completely, if the gates have not yet fallen, they will send a small team of sappers to the western gates, along with several battalions of duergar using their *invisibility* spell-like abilities. Under cover of *invisibility*, these will attempt to dig tunnels down under the gate towers and then collapse them, bringing the gates down in a shower of falling masonry. The main bulk of the army will then move around to the western gate and enter the city that way.

## Battle Statistics

The following statistics are for use with the narrative battle system in Appendix 2. If the Games Master prefers, he can simply rule that the defenders eventually win spectacularly if the Player Characters have more than five victory points, that they lose outright if the Player Characters have less than five victory points and that anything else results in either a very costly victory or a marginal defeat, according to whether the Player Characters had any victory points at all or not.

**Troop Strength Bonuses:** This is where the Player Characters' hard work (or lack of it) in the preceding scenarios pays off. The duergar have a default troop strength bonus of +20. Subtract the Player Characters' total number of victory points from this figure. If it yields a negative, then that translates to a troop strength bonus for the defenders instead.

**Command Ratings:** Sir Jeren Falconio has a total command rating of 17 and five competent officers who increase this to 27, which gives him a +5 command bonus to his battle checks. Captain Tzanvine has a command rating of 11 and four competent officers who increase this to 15, giving her a +2 bonus.

It is possible that Jeren Falconio may have been killed by the drow. In this event, his successor, Tarquin Wintergrave, takes over. He has a command rating of only 10.

**Terrain Features:** The walls of Saragost provide the defenders with a +10 bonus to their battle check. Breaking through the walls counts as a tactical objective for the attackers. They need to beat the defenders' battle check by ten to do this by sheer force. If the Player Characters have done anything like as well as they should have, this will be extremely difficult for the attackers, so they will have to resort to guile.

## Combatant Statistics

The following statistics are provided for the battle encounters that Player Characters face. Use the Battle Encounters table in Appendix 2, Mass Battles, for these.

### Duergar Soldier (Opponent)

Duergar warrior 1; CR 1; Medium humanoid (dwarf); HD 1d8+5 (9 hp); Init +0; Spd 20 ft in chainmail (4 squares), base speed 20 ft; AC 17 (+5 chainmail, +2 heavy shield), touch 10, flat-footed 17; Base attack/grapple +1/+2; Atk warhammer +2 melee (1d8+1/x3) or light crossbow +1 ranged (1d8/19–20); Full Atk warhammer +2 melee (1d8+1/x3) or light crossbow +1 ranged (1d8/19–20); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA duergar traits, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 60 ft, duergar traits; AL LE; SV: Fort +4, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 4

**Skills & Feats:** Appraise +2, Craft (blacksmithing) +2, Craft (stonemasonry) +2, Listen +3, Move Silently -3, Spot +2; Toughness

**Duergar Traits:** Duergar have darkvision out to 120 feet, are immune to paralysis, phantasms, and poison, and are dazzled in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

**Spell-like Abilities (Sp):** 1/day—*enlarge person* and *invisibility* as a wizard of twice the duergar's class level (minimum caster level 3<sup>rd</sup>); these abilities affect only the duergar and whatever it carries.

**Equipment & Treasure:** Warhammer, light crossbow, 40 bolts, chainmail, heavy steel shield.

### Duergar Veteran (Minor Hero)

Duergar warrior 3; CR 3; Medium humanoid (dwarf); HD 3d8+12 (25 hp); Init +1; Spd 20 ft in chainmail (4 squares), base speed 20 ft; AC 18 (+1 Dex, +5 chainmail, +2 heavy shield), touch 11, flat-footed 17; Base attack/grapple +3/+5; Atk warhammer +6 melee (1d8+2/x3) or light crossbow +4 ranged (1d8/19–20); Full Atk warhammer +6 melee (1d8+2/x3) or light crossbow +4 ranged (1d8/19–20); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA duergar traits, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 60 ft, duergar traits; AL LE; SV: Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 4

**Skills & Feats:** Appraise +2, Craft (blacksmithing) +3, Craft (stonemasonry) +2, Listen +5, Move Silently -3, Spot +6; Toughness, Weapon Focus (warhammer)

**Duergar Traits:** Duergar have darkvision out to 120 feet, are immune to paralysis, phantasms, and poison, and are dazzled in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

**Spell-like Abilities (Sp):** 1/day—*enlarge person* and *invisibility* as a wizard of twice the duergar's class level (caster level 6<sup>th</sup>); these abilities affect only the duergar and whatever it carries.

**Equipment & Treasure:** Warhammer, light crossbow, 40 bolts, chainmail, heavy steel shield.

### Duergar Caveknight (Major Hero)

Duergar fighter 5; CR 6; Medium humanoid (dwarf); HD 5d10+18 (45 hp); Init +1; Spd 20 ft in chainmail (4 squares), base speed 20 ft; AC 18 (+1 Dex, +5 chainmail, +2 heavy shield), touch 11, flat-footed 17; Base attack/grapple +5/+8; Atk masterwork warhammer +10 melee (1d8+5/x3) or light crossbow



slashing, remote piloted, single actions only, darkvision 60 ft, undead traits; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +14; Str 27, Dex 6, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1

*Skills & Feats:* Toughness

*Remote Piloted:* The Hruggi cannot act on their own. They must be guided from afar by a pilot, using a magical headband (see boxed text).

### Duergar Commander (Minor Officer)

Duergar fighter 6; CR 7; Medium humanoid (dwarf); HD 6d10+21 (54 hp); Init +1; Spd 20 ft in full plate (4 squares), base speed 20 ft; AC 21 (+1 Dex, +8 full plate, +2 heavy shield), touch 11, flat-footed 20; Base attack/grapple +6/+9; Atk masterwork warhammer +11 melee (1d8+5/x3) or light crossbow +7 ranged (1d8/19–20); Full Atk masterwork warhammer +11 melee (1d8+5/x3) or light crossbow +7 ranged (1d8/19–20); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA duergar traits, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 60 ft, duergar traits; AL LE; SV: Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 4

*Skills & Feats:* Appraise +2, Climb -2, Craft (blacksmithing) +7, Craft (stonemasonry) +6, Listen +1, Move Silently -4, Spot +3; Cleave, Dodge, Leadership, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (warhammer), Weapon Specialisation (warhammer)

*Duergar Traits:* Duergar have darkvision out to 120 feet, are immune to paralysis, phantasms, and poison, and are dazzled in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

*Spell-like Abilities (Sp):* 1/day—*enlarge person* and *invisibility* as a wizard of twice the duergar's class level (caster

+6 ranged (1d8/19–20); Full Atk masterwork warhammer +10 melee (1d8+5/x3) or light crossbow +6 ranged (1d8/19–20); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA duergar traits, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 60 ft, duergar traits; AL LE; SV: Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 4

*Skills & Feats:* Appraise +2, Climb -1, Craft (blacksmithing) +6, Craft (stonemasonry) +6, Listen +1, Move Silently -3, Spot +2; Cleave, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (warhammer), Weapon Specialisation (warhammer)

*Duergar Traits:* Duergar have darkvision out to 120 feet, are immune to paralysis, phantasms, and poison, and are dazzled in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

*Spell-like Abilities (Sp):* 1/day—*enlarge person* and *invisibility* as a wizard of twice the duergar's class level (caster level 10<sup>th</sup>); these abilities affect only the duergar and whatever it carries.

*Equipment & Treasure:* Masterwork warhammer, light crossbow, 40 bolts, chainmail, heavy steel shield, *potion of cure light wounds*.

### Hruggi (Major Hero)

Special hill giant zombie; CR 7; Large undead; HD 24d12+3 (159 hp); Init -2; Spd 40 ft; AC 19 (-1 size, -2 Dex, +12 natural), touch 7, flat-footed 19; Base Atk/grapple +12/+20; Atk greatclub +20 melee (2d8+12) or slam +15 melee (1d8+8) or rock +11 ranged (2d6+8); Full Atk greatclub +20 melee (2d8+12) or slam +15 melee (1d8+8) or rock +11 ranged (2d6+8); Space/Reach 10 ft/10 ft; SA rock throwing; SQ damage reduction 5/



## The Hruggi

The nightmarish and nigh-on unstoppable Hruggi are the closest thing to a zombie giant that the necromancers of the drow have been able to produce. Made from the remains of poisoned or ambushed hill giants, they leave a wake of destruction behind them and open the way for the drow to invade.

True giants cannot be made into zombies, as the *animate dead* spell cannot animate any creature with more than ten hit dice. Some success has however been had with hill giant corpses. The only way to overcome the limitations of the *animate dead* spell was to replace the creature's head entirely.

The Hruggi heads are a fusion of dark magic and construct-building expertise. They attach themselves to the giant's headless corpse and animate it with foul ichors and necromantic infusions. There is a major flaw with the Hruggi, however; this is their inability to act independently. They must be given orders each and every round. If one of the Hruggi does not receive orders, or if the drow directing it is killed, it will stand motionless and not even defend itself. If it falls, it will make no attempt to get back up.

Each Hruggi head is linked to a headband that allows the wearer to direct it. No special skill is required for this and the pilot does not need to see the Hruggi; he can *scry* on it indefinitely, as if he were using the *scrying* spell. Directing a Hruggi requires concentration. Focusing on the Hruggi requires a full-round action, though the pilot can continue to do other things while concentrating on directing it, exactly as if he were maintaining concentration on a spell. If the pilot is distracted, he must make a Constitution check (DC 16). Failing this check means that the Hruggi can take no actions next round.

Hruggi are undead and can be turned. If this happens, the pilot cannot control the Hruggi until the turning has worn off.

level 12<sup>th</sup>); these abilities affect only the duergar and whatever it carries.

**Equipment & Treasure:** Masterwork warhammer, light crossbow, 40 bolts, full plate, heavy steel shield, 2 *potions of cure light wounds*.

**Spell-like Abilities (Su):** Drow can use the following spell-like abilities each once per day: *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*. Caster level 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Equipment & Treasure:** Masterwork rapier, net, hand crossbow, 20 bolts, chainmail, 2 *scrolls of cure light wounds*.

## Drow Commander (Major Officer)

Drow cleric 6; CR 7; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 6d8+6 (33 hp); Init +2; Spd 20 ft in chainmail (4 squares), base speed 30 ft; AC 19 (+2 Dex, +5 masterwork chainmail, +2 heavy shield), touch 12, flat-footed 17; Base attack/grapple +4/+5; Atk masterwork rapier +6 melee (1d6+1/18-20) or hand crossbow +6 ranged (1d4/19-20) or thrown net +7 ranged (entanglement); Full Atk masterwork rapier +6 melee (1d6+1/18-20) or hand crossbow +6 ranged (1d4/19-20) or thrown net +7 ranged (entanglement); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA spells, spell-like abilities, poison, rebuke undead; SQ drow traits, spell resistance 17; AL LE; SV: Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +8; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 10

**Skills & Feats:** Concentration +7, Diplomacy +3, Heal +9, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (history) +4, Knowledge (religion) +4, Spellcraft +4; Combat Casting, Leadership, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Proficiency (net), Weapon Focus (net)

**Deity/Domains:** She; Protection, War

**Spells:** 0<sup>th</sup> level: *detect magic*, *guidance*, *inflict minor wounds*, *resistance*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *command*, *doom*, *entropic shield*, *magic weapon*, *shield of faith*; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: *augury*, *cure moderate wounds*, *hold person*, *spiritual weapon*, *summon monster II*; 3<sup>rd</sup> level: *animate dead*, *dispel magic*, *magic vestment*, *prayer*

**Drow Traits:** Drow have darkvision out to 120 feet, and abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.

## Captain Tzanvine (Army Commander)

Drow cleric 8; CR 9; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 8d8+16 (52 hp); Init +2; Spd 20 ft in full plate (4 squares), base speed 30 ft; AC 22 (+2 Dex, +8 masterwork full plate, +2 heavy shield), touch 12, flat-footed 20; Base attack/grapple +6/+7; Atk masterwork rapier +9 melee (1d6+1/18-20) or hand crossbow +8 ranged (1d4/19-20) or thrown masterwork net +9 ranged (entanglement); Full atk masterwork rapier +9/+4 melee (1d6+1/18-20) or hand crossbow +8 ranged (1d4/19-20) or thrown masterwork net +9 ranged (entanglement); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA spells, spell-like abilities, poison, rebuke undead; SQ drow traits, spell resistance 19; AL LE; SV: Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +9; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 10

**Skills & Feats:** Concentration +10, Diplomacy +3, Heal +9, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (religion) +4, Profession (field commander) +7, Spellcraft +4; Combat Casting, Leadership, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Proficiency (net), Weapon Focus (net)

**Deity/Domains:** She; Protection, War

**Spells:** 0<sup>th</sup> level: *detect magic*, *guidance*, *inflict minor wounds*, *resistance*, *virtue*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *command*, *cause fear*, *doom*, *entropic shield*, *magic weapon*, *shield of faith*; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: *augury*, *cure moderate wounds*, *hold person*, *spiritual weapon*, *summon monster II*; 3<sup>rd</sup> level: *animate dead*, *dispel magic*, *magic vestment*, *prayer*, *wind wall*; 4<sup>th</sup> level: *divine power*, *inflict critical wounds*

**Drow Traits:** Drow have darkvision out to 120 feet, and abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.



*Spell-like Abilities (Su):* Drow can use the following spell-like abilities each once per day: *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*. Caster level 8<sup>th</sup>.

*Equipment & Treasure:* *Horn of evil*, masterwork rapier, masterwork full plate, masterwork net, hand crossbow, 20 bolts, 2 scrolls of *cure light wounds*.

## Dramatic Events

Some of the Player Characters may elect to remain inside the city instead of fighting on the front lines. Before the fighting begins, the city is strangely peaceful, with the streets empty of people and all the houses shuttered. The Games Master can emphasise the strangeness of walking down a broad street at dusk when there is nobody at all around.

The Games Master can give the Player Characters in the city any of the following events to deal with, while their friends battle it out:

**Rescue Mission:** A rock thrown by one of the Hruggi comes sailing over the city walls and smashes into the base of an old, ill-kept two-storey house. With a terrible groaning sound, the corner of the building crumbles, sending bricks and dust cascading into the street. The sound of screaming comes from inside. The Player Characters have only ten rounds to rescue the occupants before the whole house collapses. They could be helped down from an upstairs window, or one Player Character could go inside and carry them out. To buy more time, a strong

Player Character could try to hold up the collapsing masonry; this would require a Strength check (DC 25) each round and would delay collapse.

For a variation on this encounter, the rock can be replaced with a burning tar barrel. The fire spreads quickly and will burn down the whole block if the Player Characters do not act fast. The downstairs rooms of the burning building are filled with flame and thick smoke. A character who inhales this must make a Fortitude saving throw each round (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or spend the round doing nothing but choking and coughing. If he does this for two rounds in a row, he takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. All creatures within smoke have concealment (20% miss chance). The fire spreads at the rate of one square per round. A Player Character in a burning square suffers 1d6 fire damage per round, with a Fortitude saving throw (DC 15) for half damage. In addition, he must succeed at a Reflex saving throw on each round of exposure (DC 15) or catch fire himself, for which see *DMG*.

**Help the Wounded:** As the battle rages at the walls, warriors who have been cut down are brought to the temples on stretchers, so that they can be healed. The Temple of Aranu is filled with the bodies of the dead and dying. The priests are working as hard as they can to save them. Player Characters can pitch in with this effort by helping to heal the wounded with magic and dragging them back from the danger zone. For a more dramatic episode, one of the priests of Aranu can ask the Player Characters to take a hospital wagon to the gatehouse and back. This would require repeated Ride checks to keep the horses under control, as well as exposing the Player Character to attack from any enemies who have managed to get inside the gates.

**Stop the Looters:** The empty city streets have left some businesses undefended. In areas far away from the main gatehouse and the watchtowers, local thugs are taking advantage of the absence of guards to help themselves to free goods. In the chaos of a battle, who is going to notice another smashed door and ransacked shop? The Player Characters encounter a group of criminals breaking into a building. There is nobody else around to help, so they must do the job themselves if it is going to get done at all.

**Find the Missing Parents:** A terrified child is screaming from an open window for her mother and father to come home. The neighbours are looking after her but cannot leave the house, because of the orders from the guards not to go outside the building. If the Player Characters volunteer to help, all the neighbours can tell them is that the girl's parents were last seen heading to the grandparents' house, to leave a basket full of supplies and make sure they were secure. The neighbours provide an address: 11 Ashlar Lane, which is in the poor quarter close to the docks.

The girl's parents, Rexell and Domine, have been taken prisoner by a group of families in Ashlar Lane. These families are convinced that Rexell is a traitor and informant, who is out on the streets for no good reason. They think this for one simple reason: Rexell is a Caldrazan, so he must want nothing more than to see Saragost and all of Chillhame conquered by foreign powers. The families have gone crazy with paranoia as they

wait for the battle to begin and are taking their anger and fear out on anyone they think has anything to do with it.

Rexell and Domine are being held upstairs in one of the houses in Ashlar Lane. The Player Characters will have to use a good deal of diplomacy (or intimidation) to persuade the families to let them go. The families are not warriors, just ordinary people who think they are doing the right thing.

## Deciding Which Side Wins

This battle is meant to be intense, exciting and dramatic, with the Player Characters taking on important roles. If it goes on for too long, it may begin to drag; the last thing we intend is for this to be an interminable chain of combat encounters. The Games Master may therefore rule that if the attackers have not succeeded in breaking through the city's defences after ten battle rounds, then the duergar army retreats to rethink its strategy, meaning that the defenders win the day for now.

Similarly, if the attackers do manage to break through the city gates and run riot in the streets, then the battle can be deemed to be automatically lost five battle rounds later. The end of the battle comes when the duergar break into the Tower of Undying Light and occupy the council chamber. The sign that the attackers have taken the city is a lightning storm that breaks out above the Tower, a clear indication that they have taken the Stormdreamer Stone and the city is therefore lost.



## If the Attackers Win

The first thing the duergar forces will do if they win is to occupy all of the guard towers and civic buildings in Saragost. Duergar lieutenants and their patrols march through the streets warning all citizens to stay indoors for the moment. Anyone suspected of being a guardsman is executed on the spot. Hundreds of former guardsmen throw away or hide their equipment, afraid of being discovered.

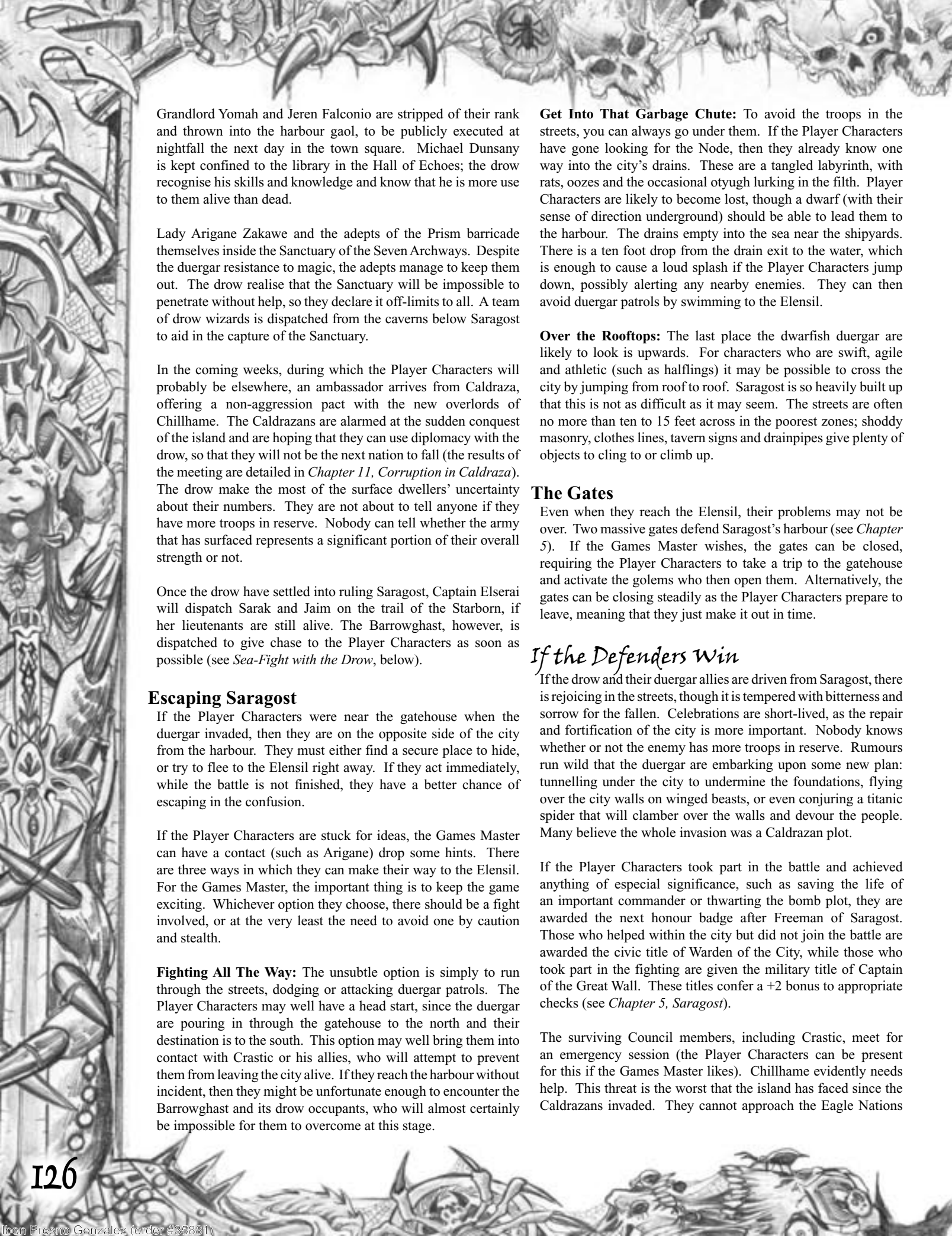
Curfew is introduced the next day. Citizens are not allowed out of their houses between the hours of eight in the morning and six in the evening. They may move freely during the night, though they will be shot with crossbows if they try to enter any forbidden areas. Patrols of duergar move through the streets with plodding, workmanlike predictability. They raid house after house, looking for troublemakers and caches of weapons.

The Player Characters are almost certain to be caught if they remain in Saragost. The only places where they could conceivably shelter for any length of time are the Sanctuary of the Seven Archways and the Grove of Hernun, which is dangerous in itself. Once they have Arigane's letter, they should make their way to the harbour as quickly as they can. The Games Master can play up the drama of this escape, having duergar patrols pass by or even having drow officials demand to know who the

Player Characters are and what their business is. Again, the best inspiration for these scenes is to watch old war films!

The conquerors of Saragost soon settle in. In the Tower of Undying Light, a new governing council is formed. Captain Elseren Callai is proclaimed overall governor, in the name of the Chthonic Alliance. Captain Tzanvine remains in the city as military commander. Within days, the Terror herself arrives to take over the city.

Of the previous council members, only Count Crastic is kept on. He is given the position of governor, meaning that it is his role to represent the new Council to the subjugated human inhabitants of the city. The drow allow him complete freedom to intimidate, execute and take his pleasure with any non-drow or non-duergar in the city. This gives him the power and privilege he has always craved. In the days to come, Crastic becomes despised even above the drow and duergar, as it becomes apparent that he has sold out his own people. The Midnight Enclave expands its ranks as never before, becoming the unofficial Secret Police of the new regime. Its members mingle with the other people of the city, reporting back to the drow if they hear of any planned insurgency or even words spoken against the rulers.



Grandlord Yomah and Jeren Falconio are stripped of their rank and thrown into the harbour gaol, to be publicly executed at nightfall the next day in the town square. Michael Dunsany is kept confined to the library in the Hall of Echoes; the drow recognise his skills and knowledge and know that he is more use to them alive than dead.

Lady Arigane Zakawe and the adepts of the Prism barricade themselves inside the Sanctuary of the Seven Archways. Despite the duergar resistance to magic, the adepts manage to keep them out. The drow realise that the Sanctuary will be impossible to penetrate without help, so they declare it off-limits to all. A team of drow wizards is dispatched from the caverns below Saragost to aid in the capture of the Sanctuary.

In the coming weeks, during which the Player Characters will probably be elsewhere, an ambassador arrives from Caldraza, offering a non-aggression pact with the new overlords of Chillhame. The Caldrazans are alarmed at the sudden conquest of the island and are hoping that they can use diplomacy with the drow, so that they will not be the next nation to fall (the results of the meeting are detailed in *Chapter 11, Corruption in Caldraza*). The drow make the most of the surface dwellers' uncertainty about their numbers. They are not about to tell anyone if they have more troops in reserve. Nobody can tell whether the army that has surfaced represents a significant portion of their overall strength or not.

Once the drow have settled into ruling Saragost, Captain Elserai will dispatch Sarak and Jaim on the trail of the Starborn, if her lieutenants are still alive. The Barrowghast, however, is dispatched to give chase to the Player Characters as soon as possible (see *Sea-Fight with the Drow*, below).

## Escaping Saragost

If the Player Characters were near the gatehouse when the duergar invaded, then they are on the opposite side of the city from the harbour. They must either find a secure place to hide, or try to flee to the Elensil right away. If they act immediately, while the battle is not finished, they have a better chance of escaping in the confusion.

If the Player Characters are stuck for ideas, the Games Master can have a contact (such as Arigane) drop some hints. There are three ways in which they can make their way to the Elensil. For the Games Master, the important thing is to keep the game exciting. Whichever option they choose, there should be a fight involved, or at the very least the need to avoid one by caution and stealth.

**Fighting All The Way:** The unsubtle option is simply to run through the streets, dodging or attacking duergar patrols. The Player Characters may well have a head start, since the duergar are pouring in through the gatehouse to the north and their destination is to the south. This option may well bring them into contact with Crastic or his allies, who will attempt to prevent them from leaving the city alive. If they reach the harbour without incident, then they might be unfortunate enough to encounter the Barrowghast and its drow occupants, who will almost certainly be impossible for them to overcome at this stage.

**Get Into That Garbage Chute:** To avoid the troops in the streets, you can always go under them. If the Player Characters have gone looking for the Node, then they already know one way into the city's drains. These are a tangled labyrinth, with rats, oozes and the occasional otuyugh lurking in the filth. Player Characters are likely to become lost, though a dwarf (with their sense of direction underground) should be able to lead them to the harbour. The drains empty into the sea near the shipyards. There is a ten foot drop from the drain exit to the water, which is enough to cause a loud splash if the Player Characters jump down, possibly alerting any nearby enemies. They can then avoid duergar patrols by swimming to the Elensil.

**Over the Rooftops:** The last place the dwarfish duergar are likely to look is upwards. For characters who are swift, agile and athletic (such as halflings) it may be possible to cross the city by jumping from roof to roof. Saragost is so heavily built up that this is not as difficult as it may seem. The streets are often no more than ten to 15 feet across in the poorest zones; shoddy masonry, clothes lines, tavern signs and drainpipes give plenty of objects to cling to or climb up.

## The Gates

Even when they reach the Elensil, their problems may not be over. Two massive gates defend Saragost's harbour (see *Chapter 5*). If the Games Master wishes, the gates can be closed, requiring the Player Characters to take a trip to the gatehouse and activate the golems who then open them. Alternatively, the gates can be closing steadily as the Player Characters prepare to leave, meaning that they just make it out in time.

## If the Defenders Win

If the drow and their duergar allies are driven from Saragost, there is rejoicing in the streets, though it is tempered with bitterness and sorrow for the fallen. Celebrations are short-lived, as the repair and fortification of the city is more important. Nobody knows whether or not the enemy has more troops in reserve. Rumours run wild that the duergar are embarking upon some new plan: tunnelling under the city to undermine the foundations, flying over the city walls on winged beasts, or even conjuring a titanic spider that will clamber over the walls and devour the people. Many believe the whole invasion was a Caldrazan plot.

If the Player Characters took part in the battle and achieved anything of especial significance, such as saving the life of an important commander or thwarting the bomb plot, they are awarded the next honour badge after Freeman of Saragost. Those who helped within the city but did not join the battle are awarded the civic title of Warden of the City, while those who took part in the fighting are given the military title of Captain of the Great Wall. These titles confer a +2 bonus to appropriate checks (see *Chapter 5, Saragost*).

The surviving Council members, including Crastic, meet for an emergency session (the Player Characters can be present for this if the Games Master likes). Chillhame evidently needs help. This threat is the worst that the island has faced since the Caldrazans invaded. They cannot approach the Eagle Nations



for help this time, since the unity of those nations has collapsed, leaving a continent full of independent states warring against one another.

The only option seems to be to approach the Caldranzans and ask for military assistance. This, though, would nullify the treaty of Cisternum, in which Caldranza promised never to send troops to Chillhame. Once Caldranzan forces were on the soil of Chillhame, they would undoubtedly try to take it for themselves. Besides, the city's populace would be outraged at the thought of Caldranzan soldiers in their country. They are willing to trade with Caldranzans but will never again be ruled by them. The soldiers would be pelted with rocks and eggs in the streets!

The Player Characters may make suggestions during this discussion. Lady Arigane and Michael Dunsany will be interested in hearing what they have to say, while Count Crastic will politely point out that they are *not* city governors nor military commanders and so should perhaps know their place.

While the Council wrestles with its decision, the Player Characters are free to leave. Arigane will urge them to do so, if she is present. They must reach Crescent City and make contact with the mysterious Ragged Man.

**The Drow:** The Terror is furious that her invasion plan has been thwarted and has Captain Tzanvine executed, if she is still alive. The drow and duergar forces retreat northwards. They occupy the northern villages of Chillhame and dominate the countryside surrounding it. The stone circle at the Tump is corrupted and forms The Terror's new base of operations. The northern towns that are left undefended are sacked and burned out of sheer spite.

The drow lieutenants leave the harbour on the Barrowghast to rendezvous with the remaining drow and duergar forces, before dispatching a number of soldiers on the ship to give chase to the Starborn (see *Sea-Fight with the Drow*, below). The lieutenants themselves are sent across to the mainland some time later, to try and pick up the trail of the Player Characters and hunt them down.

The Terror decides not to commit further troops to taking Saragost for the moment. She already has a Node for herself; let them keep their precious city while they still can. All of her remaining military might will be needed when the time comes to smash through Underdell.

## The Elensil

Lady Arigane's ship, the Elensil, is one of only six vessels remaining in Saragost harbour (the Barrowghast is another – see Chapter 5). She is an elven warship of the *Corsair* class, a gift from the elven wizards of Xoth Sarandi (see the *Seas of Blood* supplement or the *Book of the Sea* from Mongoose Publishing for more information about such ships and rules for conducting sea battles).

The Elensil has two masts and a crew of 30. They are all 1<sup>st</sup> level experts with the statistics given below. Her captain, Tobias



Brennan, has been told to expect the Player Characters and will hurry them on board as soon as they arrive. Each Player Character has a cabin to himself.

The ship is armed with three ballistae, one mounted on either side and one at the bow. These devices are simply siege machines, bolted in place on the deck. Follow the rules in the *DMG* if the Player Characters attempt to use them against anything.

The crew have been paid up in full for the next three months, so the Player Characters do not have to worry about finding salary for them for now. If they are still making use of the Elensil after this time, they will have to come up with 145 gold pieces per month to pay their crew. There are sufficient provisions in the hold to last for two months comfortably and three months if food is rationed.

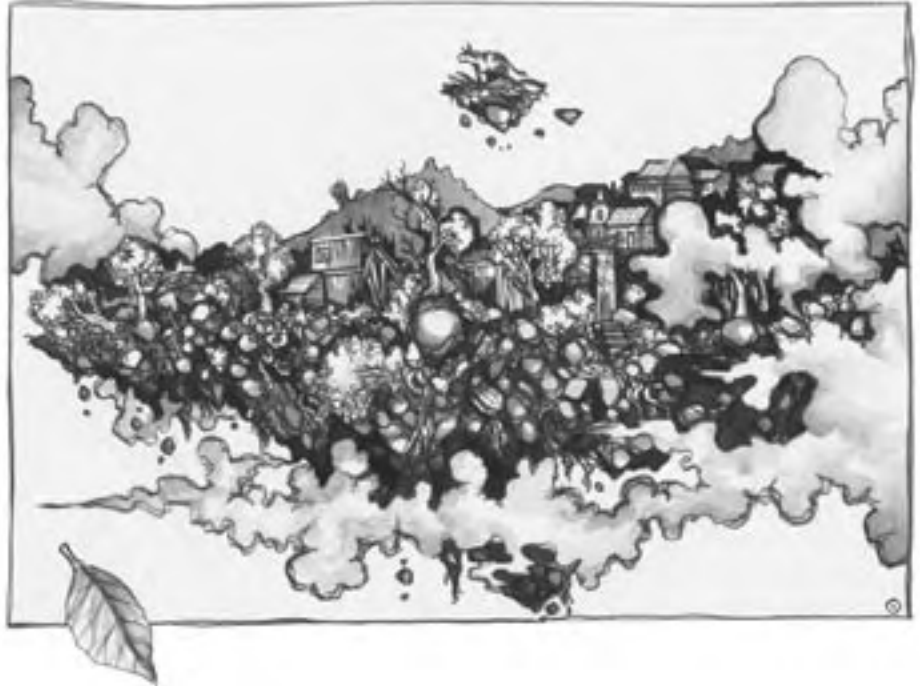
The Elensil travels at a speed of 60 miles per day. The Player Characters can travel from Saragost to Crescent City in three days.

**Sailor:** CR ½; Male or female human expert 1; Medium humanoid; HD 1d4+1 (3 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Base attack/grapple +0/+0; Atk shortspear +0 melee (1d6); Full Atk shortspear +0 melee (1d6); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none SQ none; AL NG; SV: Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 8

**Skills & Feats:** Balance +5, Climb +4, Profession (Sailor) +4, Swim +4, Use Rope +5; Great Fortitude

**Equipment:** Shortspear

**Crew Morale:** The crew trust Lady Arigane, who is a woman of her word and has never failed to pay them. She is also a strict disciplinarian, which pleases the Captain well. They are therefore willing to give the Player Characters the benefit of the doubt at first. If the Player Characters treat the Captain and crew with respect and do not give stupid orders, then they will retain the crew's loyalty without trouble. However, any orders along the lines of 'let's go and be pirates' will be met with complete scorn. Abuse of the crew will cause them to mutiny and sail the ship either to Saragost (if it is still in the hands of the defenders) or to Xoth Sarandi, where friends of Lady Arigane will repossess it.



## Sea Encounters

The following optional encounters can be included en route to Crescent City:

### *Sighting of Astercote*

At dusk one evening, the lookout calls everyone on to the deck. He is screaming 'Land! Land!' His voice sounds demented, as if he had seen something that twisted his sanity. If the Player Characters rush on to the deck, or were already there, they catch sight of an immense brown disc hovering in the sky, vanishing over the horizon. It seems to be some sort of floating island.

This is, of course, the vanished village of Astercote (see Chapter 6), which was torn out of the ground by the magic of an artefact and raised into the heavens, where it would be safe from the coming invasion. It appears again in *Book Two* of the *Drow War* series.

### *Devils across the Water (EL 8)*

If Saragost fell to the invaders, then the drow will rapidly find and attempt to corrupt the Node if they have not done so already. Word quickly reaches them that the Player Characters have set off in the Elensil, so the corrupted Node's power to manifest the Dark is called into use.

Captain Tzanvine sends a summoned erinyes, Melheveveth, to wreak havoc on the ship. The devil will fly around the ship's masts, shrieking with hellish laughter and firing her flaming arrows into the sails and the deck.

If the Player Characters and the crew do not react quickly and put the fires out, the damage will slow the ship down, increasing the time it takes for them to reach Crescent City and exposing them

to further attacks. Melheveveth's mission is to cripple the Elensil, so that the Barrowghast can catch up with her and capture the Player Characters on board. Once it is clear that the Elensil is significantly slowed, she will depart.

The erinyes expects that none of the crew have weapons that can hurt her, so she will mock them and pick a few off for sport. The only chance the crew have is to use the ship's ballistae, but the Player Characters may well have their own ranged weapons and magic that they can attack her with. If she is wounded, then she will attempt to complete her mission but as a devil she is lawful as well as evil – she was summoned just to slow the ship and not to fight the Starborn, and thus when she feels her task is complete she will feel no compunctions about rapidly departing.

**Melheveveth:** CR 8; Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, lawful); HD 9d8+45 (85 hp); Init +5; Spd 30 ft (6 squares), fly 50 ft (good); AC 23 (+5 Dex, +8 natural) touch 15, flat-footed 18; Base attack/grapple +9/+14; Atk longsword +14 melee (1d8+5/19–20) or +1 flaming composite longbow (+5 Str bonus) +15 ranged (1d8+6/x3 plus 1d6 fire) or rope +14 ranged (entangle); Full Atk longsword +14/+9 melee (1d8+5/19–20) or +1 flaming composite longbow (+5 Str bonus) +15/+10 ranged (1d8+6/x3 plus 1d6 fire) or rope +14 ranged (entangle); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA entangle, spell-like abilities, *summon devil*; SQ damage reduction 5/good, darkvision 60 ft, immunity to fire and poison, resistance to acid 10 and cold 10, see in darkness, spell resistance 20, telepathy 100 ft, true seeing; AL LE; SV: Fort +11, Ref +11, Will +10; Str 21, Dex 21, Con 21, Int 14, Wis 18, Cha 20

*Skills & Feats:* Concentration +17, Diplomacy +7, Escape Artist +17, Hide +17, Knowledge (any two) +14, Listen +16, Move Silently +17, Search +14, Sense Motive +16, Spot +16, Survival +4 (+6 following tracks), Use Rope +5 (+7 with



bindings); Dodge<sup>B</sup>, Mobility<sup>B</sup>, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Shot on the Run

*Entangle (Ex)*: Each erinyes carries a stout rope some 50 feet long that entangles opponents of any size as an animate rope spell (caster level 16th). An erinyes can hurl its rope 30 feet with no range penalty. Typically, an erinyes entangles a foe, lifts it into the air, and drops it from a great height.

*Spell-Like Abilities*: At will—greater teleport (self plus 50 pounds of objects only), charm monster (DC 19), minor image (DC 17), unholy blight (DC 19). Caster level 12<sup>th</sup>. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

*Summon Devil (Sp)*: Once per day an erinyes can attempt to summon 2d10 lemures or 1d4 bearded devils with a 50% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 3<sup>rd</sup>-level spell.

*True Seeing (Su)*: Erinyes continuously use true seeing, as the spell (caster level 14th).

*Equipment & Treasure*: +1 flaming composite longbow, rope.

## Sea-Fight with the Drow (EL 6+)

The Player Characters have not yet had much chance to confront the drow directly. They have been working behind the scenes and striking through hired agents. This encounter is recommended if the Games Master wants to bring them face to face with their enemies at this stage. This is more a matter of story pacing than anything else. If the Player Characters are taking it a step at a time, then confrontation with the drow *en masse* can wait until

the end of this book, but if they are desperate for drow blood, then this scene is a good way to give them a chance of some.

Shortly after the Player Characters leave the city, the Barrowghast sets off from Saragost in pursuit of the Elensil. The drow have worked out that there are Starborn involved in the fight to oppose them and want to crush them before they get any further. In command of the ship is one of the drow commanders from the battle (see above for statistics) with 20 first level drow warriors accompanying her.

If the Elensil has already been damaged in a fight with the erinyes Melheveth (see above) then the Barrowghast catches up with the Player Characters very rapidly, coming upon them when they have little time to prepare. They should have between ten and 20 minutes to get ready for the fight. If the Elensil is undamaged, then the Barrowghast may not catch up at all. It will follow them all the way to Crescent City, where the drow will sneak out of the ship at night and go hunting for the Player Characters.

**The Fight**: Assume that the crew of the Elensil and the drow warriors inflict roughly equal casualties on each other. The two sides can be fighting among themselves while the Player Characters engage with the commander and her immediate guards. The Player Characters' actions should decide the battle; if they defeat the commander, then the Barrowghast is theirs, while if the drow defeat them, the Elensil will be taken back to Saragost and the Player Characters must find a new way to escape.

## Aftermath

If the Player Characters contributed to the successful defence of Saragost by fighting in the battle or giving significant aid within the city (such as healing the injured or helping to rescue those trapped in damaged buildings) then a story award equivalent to a CR 7 challenge is appropriate.

By the end of this section, the Player Characters should be approximately seventh level and certainly no lower than sixth. If the Players are happy to combat one foe after another, then the battle can be used as a way to gain massive amounts of experience.



# Crescent City

## Summary

The Player Characters travel to Crescent City, the port town on the western shores of Caldraza. It is immediately apparent that it is a strange and degenerate place, with feuding crime lords warring for control of the districts and a monotheistic religious group holding official authority. The city's nobles own plantations around the city, where the indigenous swamp elves work as slaves.

*Note:* The adventures following from this chapter are non-linear. The Player Characters can go where they want, when they want. Although they are more likely to go to the Temple of Kharad before attempting contact with any of the crime lords or entering the thieves' maze, the city information is given first for the sake of convenience.

## Arrival at Crescent City

*The skyline of the city ahead of you is a strange mixture of graceful elven towers and humble slate roofs. In the centre of all is a high steeple, strangely plain and bland in design. As you draw closer, a medley of unfamiliar smells fills your nostrils: unknown meats simmering, cheap perfume, roses and violets, the swampy reek of black mud and something else underlying it all, the sugary spoiled smell of human decadence.*

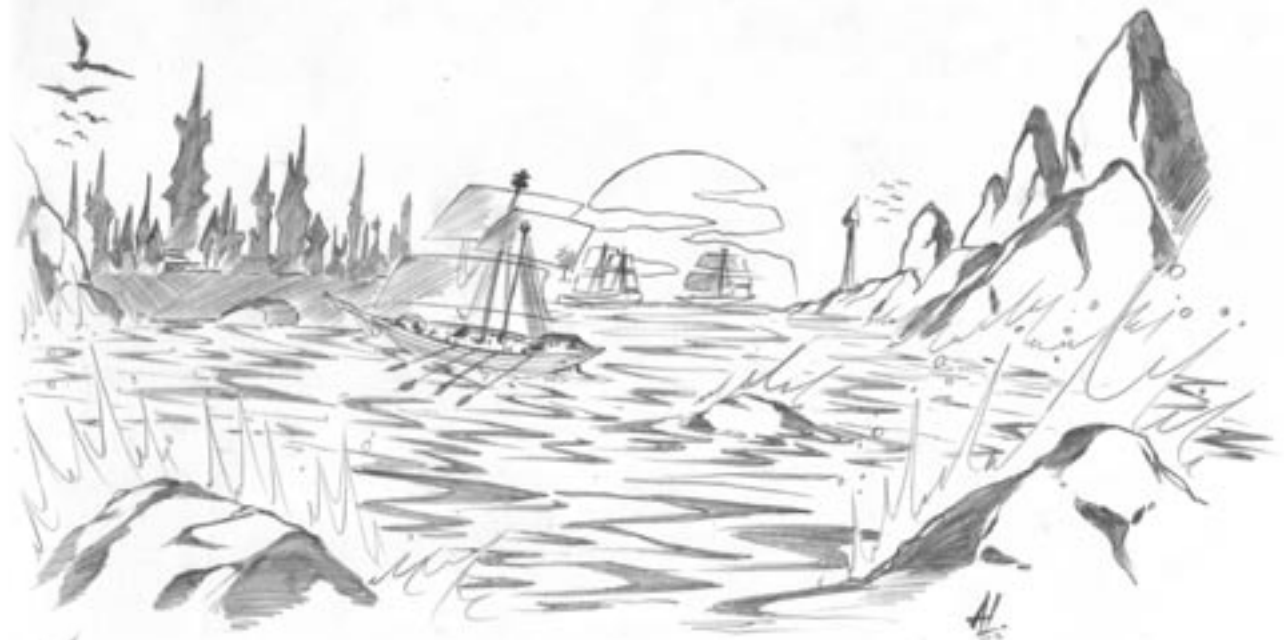
This city is situated slightly upriver, as the mouth of the Sappent is too marshy to build upon. It has a hot, drowsy, muggy feel to it. It was originally settled by the elves, who began the tradition

of enslaving their swamp elf relatives. The original elven part city is still largely intact and is referred to as the old elven quarter. The humans have built their less beautiful constructions around it.

Crescent City is a place of vice and corruption. Its morals are those of the waterfront whorehouse. If you can afford it, you can have it. The city guards are nothing more than a brute squad, murders go unreported every day and the crime gang members are the ones who command real respect on the streets. Only the rival factions' constant fighting between themselves keeps the governor's authority steady.

The city's rogues were once united, ten years ago, under the legendary King and Queen of Thieves, Thom and Lolly Lankin. Crime was actually *less* of a problem in those days, as the Lankins kept their crews in order and maintained a strange form of peace with the governing authority. This Golden Age could not last. A new Primarch of the Marian Church decided to smash this house of rogues and sent an expeditionary force from Beacon City, the capital of Caldraza. Many rogues now believe that treachery from within the ranks betrayed the secrets of the Lankins' guild house; in any event, the King and Queen of Thieves were publicly executed and the criminal underworld went from being organised to being a chaotic struggle for territory. The crime rate rocketed.

According to long-established rumour, Thom and Lolly hid the wealth of the Guild away somewhere in the guild house, in the old Testing Maze below the cellars. Most of the more experienced rogues in the city have been down there at some





## CRESCENT CITY AND ENVIRONS

▲ Swamp elf villages

point in their lives, looking for the Lankins' lost gold. It has become something of a running joke. The old guild house is now a hospice, in which the monks of St. Cecilia (an order of Marians) heal the sick. The rumours about a lost treasure are quite true, though the Player Characters will be scoffed at if they talk about looking for it. Every new rogue in town thinks that he will be the one to discover the Lankins' gold...

As the port is, ironically enough, a holy city (being the place where Blessed Marius first began to preach) it is primarily the responsibility of the Church and not the State. The Church does not, however, concern itself with secular affairs, so it appoints

### Crescent City Statistics

**Size:** Large City

**Population:** 22,000

**Racial Mix:** 80% human, 8% elf, 6% halfling, 4% half-elf, 2% other races

**GP Limit:** 40,000

**Power Centre 1:** Archbishop Vigilance Derrick and the Church of Marius (LN)

**Power Centre 2:** Lord Malthus, the City Governor (LE)

**Power Centre 3:** The Four Crime Lords (LE), each ruling one section of the city

**Executive Authority:** Commander Alfonso (10<sup>th</sup> level fighter)

a politician to act with its blessing. Currently, the church-appointed governor is Lord Malthus.

Crescent City is something of an embarrassment to Caldraz, as it is flagrantly immoral and decadent. However, it is also massively profitable. Travellers from all continents come there to sample its seedy pleasures and those travellers spend money, drinking at the bars, buying souvenirs and filling the whores' purses. Even though the amount that makes its way into the tax collectors' coffers is a fraction of what *ought* to be coming in (given the amount of tax-fiddling that takes place) it is still more than any other city brings in, with the exception of Beacon City itself.

Crescent City has a higher population of rogues per capita than any other settlement in all of Ashfar. This is why it is sometimes called the Thieves' Kitchen. As a result, those rogues that the Player Characters encounter here will tend to be of far higher level than those of Chillhame. They have had many years to practice their skills in an environment ideally suited to doing so.

**Typical Crescent City Rogue:** Human rogue 3; CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 3d6-3 (7 hp); Init +5; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 leather), touch 11, flat-footed 13; Base attack/grapple +2/+3; Atk rapier +3 melee (1d6+1/18-20x2) or heavy crossbow +3 ranged (1d10); Full Atk rapier +3



melee (18-20x2) or heavy crossbow +3 ranged (1d10); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA sneak attack +3d6; SQ evasion, trapfinding, trap sense +1; AL NE; SV: Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 8, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 11.

*Skills & Feats:* Bluff +3, Diplomacy +3, Disable Device +2, Disguise +3, Escape Artist +4, Gather Information +3, Hide +4, Intimidate +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Open Lock +4, Sleight of Hand +4, Spot +3, Use Rope +4; Dodge, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse.

*Equipment & Treasure:* Rapier, heavy crossbow, 20 bolts, leather armour, thieves' tools, 20gp.

### *Information: Rumours in Crescent City*

The following information can be gleaned with a Gather Information check. The check result determines the quality of information. A high check result also gives all the information that would have been gained from lower results.

If the Player Characters ask for more information on subjects relating to the history of the rogues' guilds, the central bank or the old rogues' testing maze, they will be told that the only people who really know the truth are the four crime lords themselves. They were all members of the old guild who went independent ten years ago, when the authorities smashed it.

#### **10-14:**

- There are four competing crime lords running the city – Lord Raglan, Jimmy the Tailor, Little Reginald and Dark

Mariah. If you commit a crime on their turf without their permission, then you are in a lot of trouble.

- On each crime lord's territory, there is one tavern where the crime lord's men rule the roost and can drink in safety; the landlord is in cahoots with them and will provide alibis and hiding places when needed.
- The crime lords have an agreement with the guards, meaning that their people can usually get away with petty crimes, so long as nobody is badly hurt.
- Lord Malthus is the official governor and he seems to be doing very well so far, though nobody is entirely sure how.
- The swamp elves have been slaves for as long as anyone can remember, though there are rumours of an uprising.
- There is a haunted plantation up the river somewhere.
- A serial murderer is doing away with people. He mutilates the bodies in some horrible way.

#### **15-20:**

- Lord Raglan's tavern is the Merry Jackdaw, Jimmy the Tailor's is the Pig and Hammer, Little Reginald's is the Chandler's Arms and Dark Mariah's crew drink at the Lifeless Lass.
- When the authorities crushed the old Rogues' Guild ten years ago, the King and Queen of Thieves hid some special treasures away somewhere in the testing maze under the guild house. Nobody has ever found it, though plenty of people have tried. The guild house is a hospice now, sacred to Saint Cecilia.
- There is a tavern in the centre of town called the Laughing Lord, which is the only neutral territory in the city as far as the crime lords are concerned. They meet there if they ever want to have a face-to-face discussion.
- There are people in the city who are preparing to arm the swamp elves for revolution.
- There is a whole plantation up the river that is completely deserted. The owners just fled one day without ever explaining why. Since they never sold the land to anyone, it is unused and the mansion house has gone to rack and ruin. If you go there on a dark night, you can hear screaming.
- The serial murderer takes his victims' faces.

#### **21-25:**

- The old Rogue's Guild was double-crossed – an insider let the authorities in, though nobody knows who or how.
- Lord Raglan's lieutenant, Jackary, is some kind of a vampire.
- The building that is now the Town Hall used to be a temple to the elven God Brith; there are rooms in there that nobody knows about.
- Dark Mariah is half-drow; that is where she gets her dark skin tone.
- The deserted plantation belonged to the Valjean family.

#### **26+:**

- Among the treasures hidden away by the King and Queen of Thieves was an artefact that they stole from the crypt of a hero who fell in a battle over a thousand years ago. According to legend, he was slain in battle but came back from the dead to help his comrades.
- The central bank has some artefacts stored in it that have been there for centuries.

## The Revellers

Many of the working residents are dressed normally as they would be in any other city but there is also a class of citizen who always seems to have just left for a party, or to be coming home from one. These are the Revellers, the people who live for nothing but sensation and entertainment. Most of them are nobles who do not need to earn their own money or merchants who have made a fortune. Some are the children of hard-working parents who are partying their way through their inheritance.

The Revellers wear carnival dress, which will always include a mask of some kind. They are always encountered in groups, either reeling down the streets drunkenly, sitting on steps and singing, or lounging around in the sun, too intoxicated on drugs to say more than a few sleepy words. Favourite costumes are the Harlequin, the Jester, the Vampire, the Demon Queen, the Bishop, the Laughing Old Man and the Ice Princess. Animal costumes, such as frog, fox and bat, are also very common.

The prevalence of the Revellers is yet another contributor to Crescent City's high crime rate. Since it is socially acceptable to go out in a mask, it is easy to commit any amount of minor crimes without being identified. Masks free the Revellers to do things that they would not ordinarily do, such as seduce people they have never met before, break windows and run away laughing, or even set buildings on fire. The Church of Marius strongly disapproves of the Reveller tradition but since it is such an entrenched local practice, drawing tourists from all around the world, there is not very much that it can do.

Revellers are only found in the central districts of the city, in and around the old elven quarter. That is where the parties are. Most Revellers know better than to venture out into the areas of poorer housing. Those who do go there are not welcome; they are almost always beaten up and robbed, though sometimes a kindly resident will show them back to the city centre.

A revelling costume can help with the Disguise skill, to a limited extent. It adds an equipment bonus to a character's Disguise check to avoid being recognised, ranging from +2 to +6 depending on how much of the body the costume covers. You do not get a choice, however, about what you look like, nor can you combine this bonus with that you would gain from a disguise kit. In addition, you cannot use a revelling costume to impersonate someone else unless the people you are meeting expect that person to be wearing the exact costume that you now are.

- The King and Queen of Thieves survived their deaths somehow, though nobody has any idea where they are today.
- When the Valjean family abandoned their plantation and headed overseas, they did not take their eldest son Michel with them.

A check result of five or less results in the following misinformation:

- Lord Malthus is in fact a woman called Jessica. The beard is false – somebody once saw it begin to peel off in the middle of a council meeting, at which 'Malthus' rushed out of the room and did not come back for ten minutes. Jessica is Archbishop Vigilance Derrick's secret lover, which is how she got the position of governor of Crescent City.

## Typical Sights of Crescent City

The city has an atmosphere all its own. The residents have a casual, laid-back approach to life, which includes merely shrugging at the news that some new atrocious crime has taken place. Visitors from other cities can find it very surreal. The amused disinterest is almost like being in a dream. The smell of the place is most memorable of all. It is a mixture of river mud, human sweat, freshly boiled coffee and piquant spices, along with something older and darker, a suggestion of sweet poison.

A wanderer on the city streets can find any of the following:

- Swamp elves out on the street corners, cooking up cauldrons of stew and offering cupfuls for a copper. The stew is spicy and delicious but has pieces of tentacle floating in it.
- Naked or semi-naked women and men of various races. They display themselves behind bawdyhouse windows

and beckon travellers to come inside, with no shame or inhibition.

- Portrait painters, who will capture your likeness in charcoal for a silver piece or in oils for a gold.
- Brightly coloured silk tents in which mystics offer to tell fortunes, brew up potions or place a hex for you.
- Bunco stalls where quick-fingered tricksters play the games of 'hunt the pea' and 'find the lady'.
- Crowds of people gathered to watch animals fight each other and bet on the outcome, the most popular being large spiders and scorpions.
- Stalls selling 'magic charms' made from dried pieces of swamp monsters, hung on chains and leather thongs. These are not actually magical but the people who buy them do not know this.
- Jugglers, conjurers and illusionists putting on a performance in the park, with entertained onlookers throwing handfuls of silver.
- Exotic tobaccos for sale that have hallucinogenic properties (1d6 temporary Wisdom damage) but instil euphoria in the smoker.

## Shakedown and Dirty Tricks

Crescent City is rife with crime and to its practitioners, the Player Characters look like just another bunch of fresh-faced tourists off the boat. The Games Master can apply any of the following at a suitable point in the game, to give the Player Characters a challenge and to convey the crookedness of the city. Use the stat blocks given for the typical Crescent City rogue.

- A scantily dressed woman offers to show one of the male Player Characters 'a good time'. Before he can answer, they

are interrupted by a group of roughs, who demand to know why the Player Character is 'bothering the lady'. On this pretext, they attempt to beat the Player Character up and take his money.

- A rogue dressed as a gentlewoman slips a purse with a few silvers in it into one of the Player Characters' pockets in a crowded street, then raises a hue and cry. Her friends, waiting nearby for this signal, rush in to 'help'. They attempt to beat the Player Character within an inch of his life, using the purse as an excuse and taking anything else they find on him.
- An old man has dropped one of the two crutches that he uses to lean on. He is trying to pick the other one up but is not doing very well, as his legs are so wobbly. Nearby, his colleague is ready to pick the pocket of anyone who is charitable enough to bend down and pick up the crutch. A Player Character who is occupied in doing this receives a -2 circumstance penalty to his Spot check to notice he is having his pockets picked, though other Player Characters with him suffer no penalty. If the ruse has not hooked anyone for a few minutes, the colleague helps pick the crutch up and the two decamp to a different part of the city.
- A stall sells cut-price potions made by 'the famous Agnetha, Witch of the Swamps'. The potions on display are genuine and can be authenticated with a *detect magic* spell. Each one has a tiny label reading 'do not shake'. When the stallholder sells one of the potions to a customer, he uses his Sleight of Hand skill to swap the actual potion for a bottle of coloured water. If a customer complains that the potion did not work, he will point out the label and explain that they must have shaken it, which of course cancels the magic. Player Characters are allowed a Spot check (opposed by his Sleight of Hand skill check) to detect the fraud.

### *Location: The Cathedral of Blessed Marius*

This huge building towers above the others in the city centre, giving the whole sprawling mass of the city a focus point. It was built only thirty years ago, when the royal family officially embraced Marianism as the religion of Caldraza and funded cathedrals in all the major cities.

It is a vast, grim, joyless structure, designed to convey the permanence of Law. There are no decorations or architectural touches. Everything is stark and geometric, as if to say that mathematics (rather than beauty or morals) is what connects man with the eternal. A central window in the main tower is circular with six radiating spokes, the image of the great Wheel from Marius' vision.

Archbishop Vigilance Derrick holds religious services in the cathedral every day, with the assistance of ten acolytes. It is a *hallowed* site, with a *zone of truth* spell keyed to it. Vigilance Derrick himself casts these spells. The *zone of truth* effect means that the Cathedral is also an ideal place to use as a court of law, since those brought here cannot knowingly lie (unless they make their saving throws or have spell resistance – the save DC is 15). Trials of major importance to the City are thus held here rather than in the petty courts.



### *Location: The Town Hall*

In striking contrast to the blocky cathedral of Marius, the town hall is a palace-like structure with slender towers and high, thin windows. Anyone who has seen elven architecture before recognises the style instantly; a Knowledge (religion) skill check (DC 20) identifies it as a temple of the elven sun god, Brith. Alcoves above the main entrance hold statues of human figures representing law and order, though it is obvious that they were not the original occupants; the style is very different.

Lord Malthus governs the city from here, with his extensive entourage of clerks and secretaries. The topmost floor of the town hall contains a strange circular room, with the constellations depicted on the floor in mosaic form. This is the stellar Node for this city, constructed by the elves (see Chapter 5, Saragost, for details) and any Starborn character who dies can be restored to life by being brought here. This may, of course, be very difficult in practice, as the building is in use throughout the day and locked up securely at night.

### *Non-Player Character: Archbishop Vigilance Derrick*

The Archbishop is a solemn man with wispy white hair and a nose reminiscent of a vulture's beak. The Primarch, the head of his Church, has sent him to oversee the religious affairs of Crescent City, the sacred place where Marius first began to



## Marianism

The religion of Marianism, from the words of the prophet Marius, has grown from a mere cult over the centuries to become the official state religion of Caldraza. It involves the worship of Law as a concept, with no deities involved. Marianism sees the worship of such deities as Aranu and Hombel as 'mere paganism', which is grudgingly tolerated but only as better than no religion at all. Marianists are determined to convert as many pagans to their beliefs as possible, thinking that this brings true civilisation instead of primitive chaos.

Marius was a human slave in the time of the elven occupation. He became enlightened when he saw a vision of the universe as a great wheel, raising some and crushing others, with no malice or blessing involved. Order, and only order, was the nature of the divine. This knowledge liberated him from the fear of death. Nothing was arbitrary; everything was meaningful. If it was not his time to die, then he would not die. If it was, he would. Either way, there was no sense in fearing it.

Marius led a human revolt against their elven overlords, which was quickly crushed. The elven ruler of the city recognised the signs of a prophet in the man and demanded an audience. Marius calmly explained that the elves were dominant now, but that men would be dominant in times to come. Such was the turning of the wheel and there was nothing either Marius or the elf could do to prevent it.

Outraged at being addressed in this way by a mere human slave, the governor ordered that Marius would learn some important lessons about the way the universe worked. It was not some impartial cosmic machinery but the will of individuals that determined how things transpired; in this case, it was the governor's will that Marius should die. Marius was lashed to the hands of the central clock of Beacon City in a cruel parody of his own beliefs, so that the inevitable clockwork of the machine would tear him in two.

Before he died, Marius calmly denounced the elves and promised his people that they would soon be gone. His words proved true, for the elven empire began to crumble that same year and the great retreat back to Xoth Sarandi began.

Clerics of Marius take a new name when they are ordained. It is traditional to name yourself after one of the virtues, such as Justice, Vigilance or Loyalty.

**Domains:** Law, Protection.

**Alignment:** Lawful Neutral

**Favoured Weapon:** Quarterstaff

preach. He views the place with disgust. In his eyes, it is a dunghill heaving with maggots, a profanation of the past.

The Archbishop habitually dresses in white vestments while he is in the Cathedral. He does not wear armour, placing faith in his religion (and his divine spells) instead.

**Vigilance Derrick:** Human cleric 10; CR 10; Medium humanoid; HD 10d8 (45 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 11 (+1 Dex), touch 11, flat-footed 10; Base attack/grapple +7/+6; Atk +1 *axiomatic quarterstaff* +7 melee (1d6/1d6x2); Full Atk +1 *axiomatic quarterstaff* +7/+2 melee (1d6/1d6x2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA spells, undead turning; SQ none; AL LN; SV: Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +10; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 14.

**Skills & Feats:** Concentration +10, Diplomacy +12, Heal +8, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (history) +12, Knowledge (religion) +12, Knowledge (the planes) +7, Spellcraft +7; Extra Turning, Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Greater Spell Penetration, Spell Focus (evocation), Spell Penetration

**Deity/Domains:** Marianist; Law, Protection

**Spells:** 0<sup>th</sup> level: *detect magic* (2), *detect poison*, *guidance*, *read magic*, *resistance*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *detect chaos*, *detect undead*, *divine favour*, *protection from chaos*, *sanctuary*, *shield of faith*; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: *bull's strength*, *calm emotions*, *cure moderate wounds*, *hold person*, *spiritual weapon*, *zone of truth*; 3<sup>rd</sup> level: *blindness/deafness*, *daylight*, *glyph of warding*, *magic circle*

*against chaos*, *magic vestment*; 4<sup>th</sup> level: *discern lies*, *order's wrath* (2), *restoration*; 5<sup>th</sup> level: *atonement*, *dispel chaos*, *hallow*

**Equipment & Treasure:** +1 *axiomatic quarterstaff*, ruby ring of office (2,000 gp).

## Non-Player Character: Lord Malthus

The governor of Crescent City, who is appointed by the Church but is not himself a cleric, is a charming man with an elegantly trimmed beard and a habit of talking to anyone, princes or peasants, as if they were sat in a tavern together and not in a huge office. He lives his life on the knife-edge between the reality of Crescent City as it is, with all its crime, vice and corruption, and the vision of order that the Archbishop has for it. The Archbishop loathes Malthus but cannot do without him. Malthus is quite aware of this; the cleric thinks that the aristocrat is secretly laughing behind his back, which of course he is.

Malthus is expected to keep order in the city, which he does – at least a semblance of order. The crime is all organised crime, which at least makes sure that random incidents are very uncommon. Most of the violence is between one group of villains and another and takes place on the borders between the territories.



Malthus is the third governor of Crescent City to be appointed this year. The first was assassinated and the second fled the city with a vast amount of embezzled funds. So far, after six months in office, Malthus is doing an acceptable job in the eyes of the Church. According to the official statistics, he has kept the crime rate down. The Church is unaware that Malthus has mostly achieved this by subtly reorganising the legal system so that some petty crimes are not recorded on the books and thus are not counted in the statistics. The reason for this, according to him, is to cut down on ink and parchment consumption and free up constables' time. That is the kind of man that Malthus is.

Malthus' saving grace is his ability to play factions off against one another and keep them all guessing about what he actually has in mind. Just as you think you know where you are with him, he plays a new card and you are back to the start. Nobody in the city is quite sure how Malthus' system of government actually works, but all agree that he is a genius at manipulating people's expectations.

To get the portrayal of Malthus right, the Games Master should have him do unpredictable or random things through his officials, without having Malthus himself show any sign of dementia. A Player Character might be brought in for questioning one day and kept for eight hours without food or water, then given a reward of several hundred gold pieces with a 'thank you' note from Malthus the next day. Malthus' grip on his authority is secure simply because nobody knows quite what would happen if he were removed from power and nobody is willing to take the risk of removing him. How much of Malthus' scheming is purposeful and how much is play-acting is up to the Games Master; but the more of an enigma he is, the better he works as a character.

**Lord Malthus:** Human aristocrat 14; CR 13; Medium humanoid; HD 14d8 (63 hp); Init +5; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; Base attack/grapple +10/+10; Atk +1 rapier +11 melee (1d6+1/18-20x2); Full Atk +1 rapier

+11/+6 melee (1d6+1/18-20x2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL N; SV: Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 22 (18).

*Skills & Feats:* Bluff +28, Diplomacy +28, Forgery +12, Gather Information +23, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +12, Listen +9, Perform +13, Sense Motive +14, Spot +9; Improved Initiative, Leadership, Negotiator, Persuasive, Skill Focus (bluff), Skill Focus (diplomacy)

*Equipment:* +1 rapier, cloak of charisma +4, ring of office (500 gp).

## Bostock

Lord Malthus' right-hand-man is Bostock, a skinny young clerk with a weak, sickly smile and a watery laugh. Bostock's mission in life is to have everything tidy, organised and neat. His favourite word is 'nice'. He speaks in singsong tones and never, ever loses his temper. He will be the first person the Player Characters encounter if they try to arrange an audience with Malthus.

## Non-Player Character Group: City Guards

Almost all the guards in Crescent City are on the take. That is how the system works. Being a guard entitles you to enforce your authority on others, so it is a great draw for bullies and hard cases. Most guards in Crescent City are neutral evil or lawful evil. Newcomers who do not understand how the system works will be given a very rough time.

**Typical City Guard:** Human warrior 1; CR ½; Medium humanoid; HD 1d8+3 (7 hp); Init +1; Spd 20 ft (4 squares); AC 16 (+1 Dex, +5 breastplate), touch 11, flat-footed 15; Base attack/grapple +1/+3; Atk masterwork halberd (1d10+2/x3) or shortbow +2 ranged (1d6); Full Atk masterwork halberd (1d10+2/x3) or shortbow +2 ranged (1d6); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL LE or NE; SV: Fort +3, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 9.


*Skills & Feats:* Climb +4, Handle Animal +4, Knowledge (local) +2, Intimidate +2, Jump +3, Ride +3, Swim +2; Toughness, Weapon Focus (halberd)

*Equipment:* Masterwork halberd, breastplate, shortbow

## Event: A Jolly Good Hanging

Crescent City has harsh justice. It is not as draconian as it was in the days of Jenny Grogan (see the Tavern entry below under Dark Mariah) but you can still be hung for thefts of sums as relatively little as one hundred gold pieces. Hanging is quick and economical; it is also a cheap form of public entertainment. Offenders who are not hanged are flogged instead, or put in the pillory. Prison in Crescent City itself is strictly a temporary measure, while the authorities work out whether to flog or hang you.

Having a friend or ally of the Player Characters sentenced to be hung (or even one of the Player Characters) is excellent drama, as there is guaranteed to be a rescue attempt. Use the following rules for hangings.



First, the city executioner prepares the noose, which requires a Use Rope skill check (DC 15). The criminal is then marched up the steps to the beat of a slow drum, while his crimes are read out. He is traditionally allowed to say a few last words, which (if the victim is a rogue, as he usually is) consist of boasts and posturing, since making a good exit is essential if you are going to be remembered. You can get away with one minute's worth of last words (ten rounds) before the crowd and the executioner grow impatient.

The executioner then places a hood on the victim's head and fastens the noose around his neck, which calls for a second Use Rope check (DC 10). When the drum stops beating, the lever is pulled, the trapdoor opens and the victim drops. If, and only if, all the Use Rope checks have been successful, the victim suffers a coup de grace: he takes 2d6+2 points of damage, with a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + damage dealt). A failed saving throw means that his neck breaks and he dies instantly. Those killed on the gallows are usually allowed to hang for a while to make sure they are dead, then cut down and thrown into a pit of lime. If the criminal is especially notorious, pieces of the rope are sold off as souvenirs.

If the rope has been sabotaged or the knot tied wrongly, or the victim made his Fortitude saving throw, then he is not in danger of a broken neck when he reaches the end of his drop. Instead, he begins to choke. Use the drowning rule (see the *DMG*) to handle this. The character cannot breathe from the moment he finishes his drop.

A character who tries to hack through the rope to save a friend must inflict at least five points of damage on it. The rope has damage resistance 10/slashing and an AC bonus of +8 against ranged attacks.

## Event: The Serial Murders

The streets of Crescent City are host to a far more sinister danger than mere human rogues. A solitary killer has been preying on the populace, both women and men, and leaving them with their throats slit and their faces flayed from their bodies. He has shown no tendency to prefer any one Crime Lord's territory over another's, leading the criminals to think that he is not (as was originally believed) working for one of them. The murderer prefers to dump the bodies in the river, making it hard to identify them.

So far, the victims have been Segmund Turvey (landlord of the Laughing Lord tavern), two waterfront whores, a Reveller, a priest of Marius, a guardsman and a rogue who was returning from a burglary.

The serial murders are intended to form a chilling subplot to the main adventure. The Player Characters may come across a freshly slain victim and give chase to the murderer, or even be mistaken for the killer themselves.

## Non-Player Character: The Face Thief

The murderer is not, in fact, one person, nor is he even alive. He is not even a he! The Face Thief is the restless spirit of Jocelyn Turvey, the wife of the former landlord of the Laughing Lord tavern in the centre of the city – the one place, coincidentally, that the four Crime Lords all recognise as neutral territory. The Turveys were retired warriors; Jocelyn was widely considered one of the best female fighters in the city, as well as one of the most beautiful women.

Jocelyn's husband, Segmund Turvey, was violently jealous. He was convinced she was having affairs with other men behind his back. To keep her to himself, he knocked her unconscious and chained her up in the attic of the tavern. In his drunken madness, he decided to 'ugly her up' as well, burning off her face with a flask of acid. This killed her instantly, to Segmund's horror. When he awoke, sober, he made up his mind what to do. He told his regulars that she had gone home to live with her mother, and good riddance. Since the Turveys frequently quarrelled, this did not seem implausible.

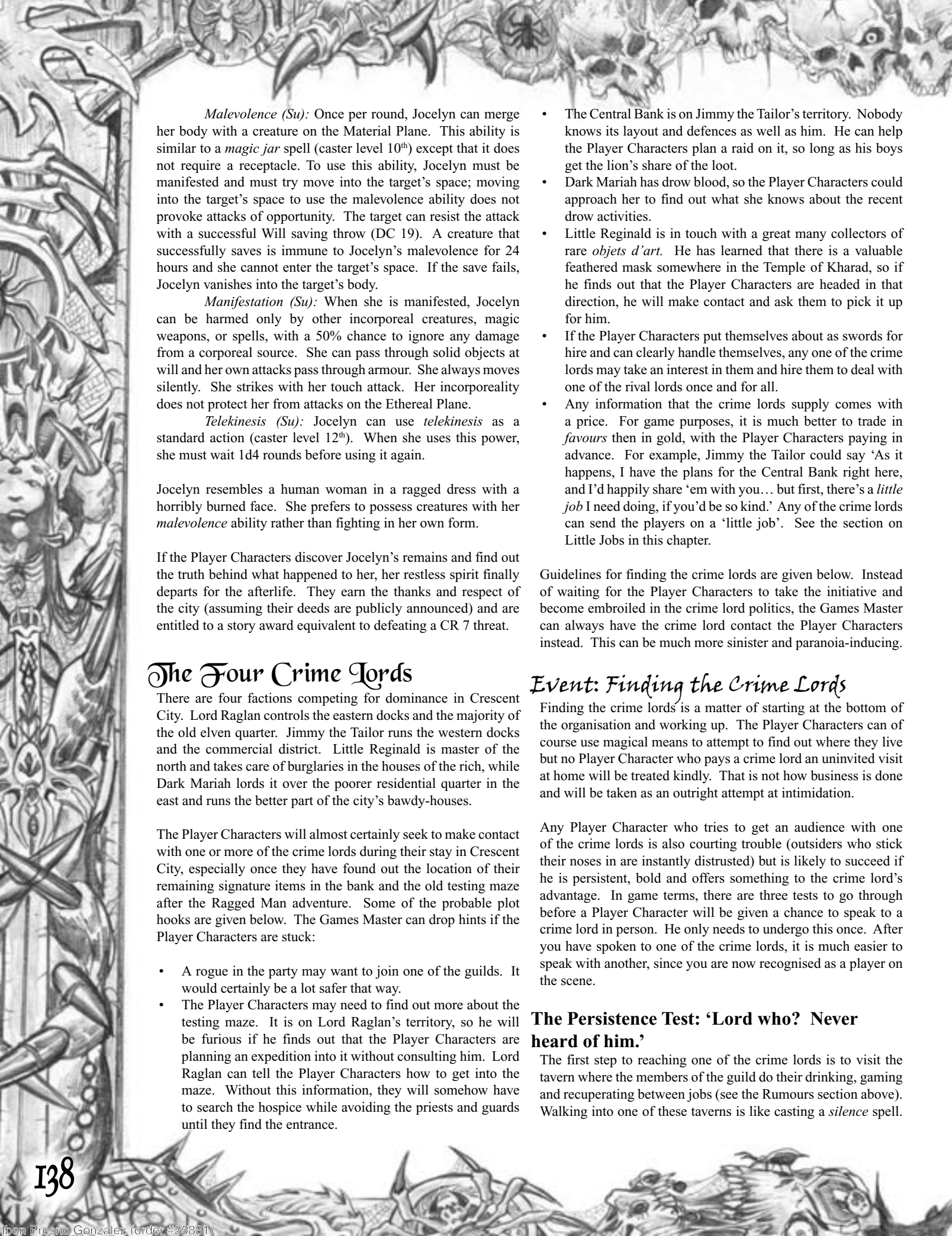
Jocelyn's ghost soon rose from the sad remains, demented and warped from the cruelty that had been inflicted on her. She possessed a passer-by, broke into the tavern and butchered her husband, slicing off his face as retaliation for what he did to her. This, however, did not bring her the rest she had craved. For Jocelyn to find peace, someone would have to find her body and tell her story to the world. For now, she continues her bloody work, slaughtering and disfiguring her victims.

Jocelyn uses her *malevolence* ability to possess people, who then carry out the killings. She then abandons them, leaving them with no awareness of what has happened. It is quite possible that one of her puppets could be caught bloody-handed at the scene of a murder and arrested. Unless his innocence could be proved, he would hang for sure – an excellent way to get one of the Player Characters' friends, or possibly even a Player Character, in trouble.

**Jocelyn Turvey's Ghost:** Human warrior 8 (incorporeal); CR 9; Medium undead; HD 7d12 (45 hp); Init +5; Spd fly 30 ft (6 squares, perfect); AC 11 (14 when manifest), touch 11, flat-footed 10; Base attack/grapple +8/+11; Atk (ethereal only) longsword +12 melee (1d8+3/19-20x2); Full Atk (ethereal only) longsword +12/+7 melee (1d8+3/19-20x2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA draining touch, malevolence, manifestation, telekinesis; SQ incorporeal, undead traits; AL NE; SV: Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 17, Dex 13, Con -, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 18.

**Skills & Feats:** Climb +6, Handle Animal +3, Intimidate +3, Ride +3; Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)

**Draining Touch (Su):** When Jocelyn hits a living target with her incorporeal touch attack, she drains 1d4 points from any one ability score she selects. On each such successful attack, she heals five points of damage to herself. Against ethereal opponents, she adds her Strength modifier to attack rolls only. Against non-ethereal opponents, she adds her Dexterity modifier to attack rolls only.



*Malevolence (Su):* Once per round, Jocelyn can merge her body with a creature on the Material Plane. This ability is similar to a *magic jar* spell (caster level 10<sup>th</sup>) except that it does not require a receptacle. To use this ability, Jocelyn must be manifested and must try move into the target's space; moving into the target's space to use the malevolence ability does not provoke attacks of opportunity. The target can resist the attack with a successful Will saving throw (DC 19). A creature that successfully saves is immune to Jocelyn's malevolence for 24 hours and she cannot enter the target's space. If the save fails, Jocelyn vanishes into the target's body.

*Manifestation (Su):* When she is manifested, Jocelyn can be harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, magic weapons, or spells, with a 50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source. She can pass through solid objects at will and her own attacks pass through armour. She always moves silently. She strikes with her touch attack. Her incorporeality does not protect her from attacks on the Ethereal Plane.

*Telekinesis (Su):* Jocelyn can use *telekinesis* as a standard action (caster level 12<sup>th</sup>). When she uses this power, she must wait 1d4 rounds before using it again.

Jocelyn resembles a human woman in a ragged dress with a horribly burned face. She prefers to possess creatures with her *malevolence* ability rather than fighting in her own form.

If the Player Characters discover Jocelyn's remains and find out the truth behind what happened to her, her restless spirit finally departs for the afterlife. They earn the thanks and respect of the city (assuming their deeds are publicly announced) and are entitled to a story award equivalent to defeating a CR 7 threat.

## The Four Crime Lords

There are four factions competing for dominance in Crescent City. Lord Raglan controls the eastern docks and the majority of the old elven quarter. Jimmy the Tailor runs the western docks and the commercial district. Little Reginald is master of the north and takes care of burglaries in the houses of the rich, while Dark Mariah lords it over the poorer residential quarter in the east and runs the better part of the city's bawdy-houses.

The Player Characters will almost certainly seek to make contact with one or more of the crime lords during their stay in Crescent City, especially once they have found out the location of their remaining signature items in the bank and the old testing maze after the Ragged Man adventure. Some of the probable plot hooks are given below. The Games Master can drop hints if the Player Characters are stuck:

- A rogue in the party may want to join one of the guilds. It would certainly be a lot safer that way.
- The Player Characters may need to find out more about the testing maze. It is on Lord Raglan's territory, so he will be furious if he finds out that the Player Characters are planning an expedition into it without consulting him. Lord Raglan can tell the Player Characters how to get into the maze. Without this information, they will somehow have to search the hospice while avoiding the priests and guards until they find the entrance.

- The Central Bank is on Jimmy the Tailor's territory. Nobody knows its layout and defences as well as him. He can help the Player Characters plan a raid on it, so long as his boys get the lion's share of the loot.
- Dark Mariah has drow blood, so the Player Characters could approach her to find out what she knows about the recent drow activities.
- Little Reginald is in touch with a great many collectors of rare *objets d'art*. He has learned that there is a valuable feathered mask somewhere in the Temple of Kharad, so if he finds out that the Player Characters are headed in that direction, he will make contact and ask them to pick it up for him.
- If the Player Characters put themselves about as swords for hire and can clearly handle themselves, any one of the crime lords may take an interest in them and hire them to deal with one of the rival lords once and for all.
- Any information that the crime lords supply comes with a price. For game purposes, it is much better to trade in *favours* then in gold, with the Player Characters paying in advance. For example, Jimmy the Tailor could say 'As it happens, I have the plans for the Central Bank right here, and I'd happily share 'em with you... but first, there's a *little job* I need doing, if you'd be so kind.' Any of the crime lords can send the players on a 'little job'. See the section on Little Jobs in this chapter.

Guidelines for finding the crime lords are given below. Instead of waiting for the Player Characters to take the initiative and become embroiled in the crime lord politics, the Games Master can always have the crime lord contact the Player Characters instead. This can be much more sinister and paranoia-inducing.


## Event: Finding the Crime Lords

Finding the crime lords is a matter of starting at the bottom of the organisation and working up. The Player Characters can of course use magical means to attempt to find out where they live but no Player Character who pays a crime lord an uninvited visit at home will be treated kindly. That is not how business is done and will be taken as an outright attempt at intimidation.

Any Player Character who tries to get an audience with one of the crime lords is also courting trouble (outsiders who stick their noses in are instantly distrusted) but is likely to succeed if he is persistent, bold and offers something to the crime lord's advantage. In game terms, there are three tests to go through before a Player Character will be given a chance to speak to a crime lord in person. He only needs to undergo this once. After you have spoken to one of the crime lords, it is much easier to speak with another, since you are now recognised as a player on the scene.

## The Persistence Test: 'Lord who? Never heard of him.'

The first step to reaching one of the crime lords is to visit the tavern where the members of the guild do their drinking, gaming and recuperating between jobs (see the Rumours section above). Walking into one of these taverns is like casting a *silence* spell.



Everyone suddenly shuts up and looks at you. Conversation gradually resumes and the drinkers withdraw their gaze.

Player Characters who ask questions about the local crime lord are met with blank expressions and a shrug. The locals look to one another and pretend to ask if anyone has ever heard of this alleged master criminal, which nobody has. The Player Characters are told that they will have to ask elsewhere, though they can stay if they like, just as long as they keep buying drinks. This is the 'wall of silence', the first barrier. If Player Characters attempt Sense Motive checks to see whether the rogues are being honest, then the Games Master should roll a Bluff check for the rogues. Bear in mind that one rogue will do the talking and the others will back him up, which translates to an Aid Another action. Up to five rogues can aid the one making the Bluff check.

The only way to break through this wall of silence is to keep on doggedly. The rogues have no time for tourists or meddlers and this is their way of fending them off. Repeated inquiries will result in frowns, rolled eyes and a sense of mounting irritation. When it becomes apparent that the Player Character is not going to go away until he gets an answer, move on to the second stage.

### **The Bravery Test: 'You don't have any idea what you're getting into.'**

This stage begins with a group of rogues standing up and swaggering over to the Player Characters. They drop the pretence of not knowing what the Player Characters are talking about. The tactic now is to try to scare them off. Player Characters cannot be forced into a course of action by Intimidate checks (that only applies to Non-Player Characters) so the Games Master will have to roleplay this to the hilt. The rogues will smash bottles and brandish them at the Player Characters, juggle daggers while grinning coldly, poke the Player Characters in the chest while yelling into their faces and so on.



This is not actually intended to end in bloodshed. The rogues are confident and on their own turf but they still would rather not fight. If a fight *does* break out, the rogues will only deal non-lethal damage unless the Player Characters deal lethal damage to them. In this event, the bartender and the remainder of the rogues will try to break the fight up. Nobody wants a death on the premises.

The Player Characters can pass this test either by sheer persistence (again) and refusing to back down or by beating one or more of the rogues unconscious. Killing one of them is the worst possible move. That marks the Player Character in question as an enemy for life, or at least until the crime lord pardons them, which is unlikely. If one of the Player Characters kills a rogue, the others will flee the tavern; they are going for backup. Within minutes, as many rogues as can be mustered will descend upon the Player Characters and attempt to take revenge.

### **The Test of Means: 'So why would the boss want to talk to you, anyhow? What makes you special?'**

Once the Player Characters have proved themselves, a voice calls for the rogues to stand down. At this point, the crime lord's lieutenant takes over and addresses the Player Characters directly. He calls them over to a table and asks them just what it is that they think is worth taking up the crime lord's precious time.

The rogues generally assume that anyone who looks like an adventurer and is trying to talk to the boss is interested in joining the guild, so any other reason for wanting to talk will cause raised eyebrows. Depending on the Games Master's assessment of the Player Characters' stated reasons, the lieutenant will either make an appointment for them the next day at the crime lord's residence or say that he will have to 'see when he can fit you in', a euphemism for 'don't hold your breath'.

As a rule, most reasons that have been thought through will earn the Player Characters an audience. Only flippant or vague ones will be fobbed off. Remember that the lieutenant's job is to deal with business in advance so that the crime lord does not have to. If he failed to make the most of a promising new contact, he would displease his master.

### **The Lords Themselves**

Statistics are given below for the crime lords, each of whom is a dangerous opponent on his own, let alone with a rogues' guild backing him up. Each of the crime lords has a residence listed. This is where the Player Characters will be told to go for their appointment, if they succeed in arranging one.

#### *Non-Player Character: Lord Raglan*

Raglan is a stocky, powerfully built man of less than average height, with bleach-blond hair and craggy features. He always dresses in ink-black leather. Raglan was a good friend of Thom and Lolly Lankin and barely made it out of the old Guild House

in time to escape with his life. There are those that say this makes him the most likely thief of all to have been the traitor, since he knew where they were at all times.

**Lord Raglan:** Human rogue 10; CR 10; Medium humanoid; HD 10d6 (35 hp); Init +7; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 18 (+3 Dex, +5 *studded leather* +2), touch 13, flat-footed 15; Base attack/grapple +7/+9; Atk +2 *rapier* +12 melee (1d6+3/18-20x2) or +1 *dagger* +12 melee (1d4+3/19-20x2) or masterwork heavy crossbow +11 ranged (1d10); Full Atk +2 *rapier* +10/+4 melee (1d6+3/18-20x2) and +1 *dagger* +10/+5 melee (1d4+3/19-20x2) or masterwork heavy crossbow +11 ranged (1d10); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA crippling strike, sneak attack +5d6; SQ evasion, improved uncanny dodge, trapfinding, trap sense +3, uncanny dodge; AL CN; SV: Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 12

**Skills & Feats:** Bluff +9, Craft (trapmaking) +3, Disable Device +7, Disguise +9, Escape Artist +11, Gather Information +9, Hide +7, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (local) +7, Listen +10, Move Silently +11, Open Lock +11, Search +4, Sleight of Hand +7, Spot +5, Use Rope +7; Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse

**Equipment & Treasure:** +1 *dagger*; +2 *rapier*; +2 *studded leather*

**Note:** Lord Raglan's combat style is based around an overwhelming first round attack. With a full attack against a flat-footed or flanked opponent, he can land four sneak attacks and inflict eight points of Strength damage in addition to the hit point damage from the sneak attack.

**Residence:** Raglan's house is in the heart of the city on the edge of the elven quarter, surrounded by spike-topped walls and guarded by dogs. Two sentries stand at the gate.

**Tavern:** Raglan's boys drink at the Merry Jackdaw, a spit-and-sawdust pub over the road from his house. The inn sign depicts a jackdaw with a nest full of stolen jewellery, a deliberate insult to those who resent the rogues' freedom to steal.

**Lieutenant:** Raglan's lieutenant is Jackary, a tall sardonic man with black hair to his waist. Nobody knows it, but it was Jackary who betrayed the Lankins, back when he was nothing but a young pickpocket who had just joined the guild.

### *Non-Player Character: Jimmy the Tailor*

So called because of his habit of leaving people needing stitches, Jimmy is a lean 50 year old with a deep scar down his left cheek. He was Thom Lankin's main rival for the throne of the King of Thieves and had his eye on Lolly, too. Nonetheless, he always kept faithfully to his position, content to assume the role of lieutenant. Some say that he must have been the traitor, since he was so jealous of Thom's position; those who support him argue that it makes no sense for him to have had the whole guild smashed, since with the guild gone he had nothing to inherit from Thom.

**Jimmy the Tailor:** Human rogue 6/Ftr 4; CR 10; Medium humanoid; HD 6d6+4d10 (43 hp); Init +2; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 17 (+2 Dex, +4 *studded leather of improved*



*shadow* +1, +1 masterwork light steel shield), touch 12, flat-footed 15; Base attack/grapple +8/+11; Atk masterwork longsword +13 melee (1d8+3/17-20x2) or masterwork heavy crossbow +11 ranged (1d10); Full Atk masterwork longsword +13/+8 melee (1d8+3/17-20x2) or masterwork heavy crossbow +11 ranged (1d10); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA sneak attack +3d6; SQ evasion, trapfinding, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV: Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 12.

**Skills & Feats:** Bluff +3, Climb +7, Diplomacy +6, Disable Device +10, Disguise +5, Gather Information +8, Handle Animal +5, Hide +7, Intimidate +11, Jump +7, Knowledge (local) +10, Listen +8, Move Silently +11, Open Lock +7, Ride +6, Search +8, Sleight of Hand +6, Spot +4, Use Rope +4; Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Feint, Iron Will, Mobility, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)

**Equipment & Treasure:** *studded leather of improved shadow* +1, masterwork longsword, masterwork light steel shield, masterwork heavy crossbow

**Residence:** Jimmy lives in an expensive second-floor apartment in the commercial district. The door staff controls admission, much like in a hotel.

**Tavern:** The crew is based at the Pig and Hammer. The Pig is actually a silver bar, not an animal; the inn's name refers to the blacksmith's craft, not the butcher's. This is a noisy downmarket place where pit fights happen every weekend. The nobility and the merchants often come here to 'slum it' and watch the fights at these times. They are tolerated so long as they spend money, but they are not really welcome during the week.

**Lieutenant:** Jimmy is assisted and represented by Cavalliera, a tall woman with tightly tied-back hair and the grace of a dancer. She is polite to a fault. A Player Character spending any time in her company learns that she is sophisticated, broadly educated and fluent in many languages.

## Non-Player Character: Little Reginald

Little Reginald is a halfling, possibly the most vicious of his race ever to reside in the city. He rarely goes outdoors any more. He is content to sit around his large house in a quilted velvet dressing gown, smoking expensive tobacco and giving orders to his underlings. He made his fortune as a burglar before retiring to train others in the profession; he now makes five times as much in 'insurance' collected from his rich neighbours as he used to by stealing goods and selling them. The nobles in his residential area would much rather pay a modest protection fee each month in order to avoid being burgled than come home to a ransacked mansion.

Not many people suspect Little Reginald of being the traitor who betrayed the Lankins. Those few who do suspect him do so mainly because he has nothing obvious to gain – and nobody who *did* have anything obvious to gain would be stupid enough to sell out the old Guild.

**Little Reginald:** Halfling rogue 10; CR 10; Small humanoid; HD 10d6+20 (55 hp); Init +6; Spd 20 ft (4 squares); AC 20 (+6 Dex, +2 leather, +1 size, +1 two-weapon defence), touch 17, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +8/+3; Atk small masterwork rapier +15 melee (1d4/18-20x2) or small masterwork dagger +15 melee (1d3/19-20x2) or small masterwork throwing axe +16 ranged (1d4); Full Atk small masterwork rapier +13/+9 melee (1d4/18-20x2) and small masterwork dagger +13/+10 melee (1d3/19-20x2) or small masterwork throwing axe +16 ranged (1d4); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA sneak attack +5d6; SQ defensive roll, evasion, halfling traits, improved uncanny dodge, trapfinding, trap sense +3, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV: Fort +6, Ref +14, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 22 (18), Con 14, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 8.

**Skills & Feats:** Bluff +4, Climb +2, Diplomacy +4, Disable Device +12, Disguise +4, Escape Artist +16, Gather Information +4, Hide +20, Intimidate +4, Jump +2, Knowledge (local) +12, Listen +7, Move Silently +18, Open Lock +16, Search +16, Sense Motive +5, Sleight of Hand +16, Spot +10, Tumble +11; Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Two-Weapon Defence, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse.

**Equipment and Treasure:** *gloves of dexterity* +4, masterwork rapier, masterwork dagger

**Residence:** Reginald keeps an exquisitely furnished house in the hills to the north of Crescent City. Much of the beautiful furniture used to belong to other owners.

**Tavern:** The Chandler's Arms used to be a candle maker's pub. It is still decorated with many candelabras, sconces and lighting fixtures fitted with bulbs of blue and gold coloured glass. It is the only tavern used by a crime lord that is anything close to salubrious. Reginald's men are expected to be a cut above the rest; they dress well, keep clean and consider themselves 'gentlemen thieves' as opposed to the street scum and harlots that the other crime lords command.



**Lieutenant:** Little Reginald's assistant is Tantivy Tod, a human who pretends to the airs and graces of the nobility. He casts himself as a huntsman, leading the 'hounds' (the rogues) to their prey.

## Non-Player Character: Dark Mariah

Mariah is a half-elf. Her mother was a human adventurer, her father a drow. This origin, along with her inherent sorcerous abilities, made her a social outcast from a young age. She has clawed her way to the top of the food chain, working the docks and whoring herself for food or money, sometimes having to kill clients who refused to pay or turned rough. She now rules her region of the city with absolute authority. She alone of the four crime lords was never a member of the old Rogue's Guild under Thom and Lolly Lankin. Her climb to power has taken place since that institution was smashed.

Mariah despises her father, though she has never met him (he seduced and abandoned her mother, who later died). She is no friend to the drow. She has a default attitude of Friendly to anyone who counts himself the drow's enemy. Unfortunately, she knows very little. The only information she can give the Player Characters is as follows:

Her father's name was Revekhal Sunspite. He was a navigator on a pirate vessel, a fugitive from the Drow Empire below the earth. He had committed some kind of crime against his people and was convinced that if he returned, he would be eaten. According to Sunspite, the drow were planning a massive invasion of the upper world, as soon as 'the time was right' and a force called 'the Dark' was able to assist them. The invasion could only succeed if it took place at the time of the rising Dark and not otherwise. When Sunspite fled, the drow were trying to organise the subterranean races into a single titanic army called the Cthonic Alliance.

Mariah can also give the Player Characters an insight into drow culture by telling them about drow cannibalism practices (see page 12) and the origins of the drow goddesses She and Arkady (see page 19). Her father appears in person in the second book of this series.

**Dark Mariah:** Half-elf rogue 5/sorcerer 5; CR 10; Medium humanoid; HD 5d6-5+5d4-5 (20 hp); Init +6; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 ring of protection +1), touch 13, flat-footed 11; Base attack/grapple +5/+6; Atk +1 dagger of venom +7 melee (1d4+2 and possible poison) or masterwork heavy crossbow +8 ranged (1d10); Full Atk +1 dagger of venom +7 melee (1d4+2 and possible poison) or masterwork heavy crossbow +8 ranged (1d10); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA sneak attack +3d6, spells; SQ evasion, half-elf qualities, trapfinding, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; AL CN; SV: Fort +1, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 8, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 17.

**Skills & Feats:** Bluff +12, Concentration +4, Diplomacy +9, Disable Device +5, Disguise +7, Escape Artist +6, Gather Information +9, Hide +6, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Listen +7\*, Move Silently +9\*, Open Lock +7, Search +2, Sense Motive +4, Sleight of Hand +6, Spot +6\*, Tumble +10, Use Magic Device +7, Use Rope +6; Combat Casting, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse.

\*Includes bonus derived from familiar

**Spells Known:** 0<sup>th</sup> level: acid splash, daze, detect poison, detect magic, mage hand, touch of fatigue; 1<sup>st</sup> level: mage armour, shield, spider climb, true strike; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: cat's grace, scorching ray

**Spells per Day:** 0<sup>th</sup> level: 6; 1<sup>st</sup> level: 7; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: 5





*Equipment and Treasure:* +1 dagger of venom, ring of protection +1 masterwork heavy crossbow.

**Familiar:** Mariah's familiar is Layla, a black kitten.

*Layla:* Tiny Animal; HD 1/2d8 (effectively 10); hp 9; Init +2; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 17 (+3 natural, +2 size, +2 Dex), touch 14, flat-footed 15; Base attack/grapple +5/-7; Atk claw +7 melee (1d2-4); Full Atk 2 claws +7 melee (1d2-4) and bite +2 melee (1d3-4); Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft/0 ft SA deliver touch spells; SQ empathic link, improved evasion, low-light vision, scent, share spells, speak with mistress; SV Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 3, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 7

*Skills & Feats:* Balance +10, Climb +6, Hide +14\*, Jump +10, Listen +3, Move Silently +6, Spot +3; Weapon Finesse

**Residence:** Dark Mariah has private rooms above one of her bordellos, the Lament Flame. A secret door behind a mirror at the top of the stairs on the second floor leads to these. There is always a rogue on guard duty.

**Tavern:** The Lifeless Lass is a dockside boozing house, much like any other, except that it is staffed entirely by women and most of the clientele is female. This does not stop them drinking, swearing and fighting like a bunch of male sailors. The centrepiece of the tavern is the corpse of a young woman, which hangs behind the bar from a hempen rope round her neck.

The eponymous 'lifeless lass' is Jenny Grogan, hung for stealing a single copper piece from a merchant's pocket seventy years ago. She was cut down from the gallows, expertly stuffed and preserved and hung up in the tavern, where she has been attracting tourists ever since. She is something of a lucky mascot for Mariah's rogues. A favourite joke of Mariah's is to wait until there are only a few clients left in the bar, drunk out of their wits, and then start moving Jenny's dead arms and legs with thin wires that run through the ceiling, terrifying the drunkards and sending them screaming from the pub.

**Lieutenant:** Magdalene is Mariah's lieutenant; her hair is red, cut very close, and her eyes green. She is also Mariah's elder half-sister on the mother's side and is fully human. She is a seasoned female rogue who does not suffer fools gladly. The rogues give her the respect they would give any male lieutenant.

## The Lieutenants

Each crime lord has one lieutenant who is trusted above all others. He (or she) is a sidekick, right-hand-man, enforcer and probable successor. For the sake of economy of space, each of the lieutenants can be assumed to have the stats listed below. However, their personal equipment varies as stated.

Human rogue 7; CR 7; Medium humanoid; HD 7d6 (24 hp); Init +5; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 leather), touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base attack/grapple +5/+6; Atk masterwork rapier +8 melee (1d6+1/18-20x2) or heavy crossbow +7 ranged (1d10); Full Atk masterwork rapier +8 melee (18-20x2) or heavy crossbow +7 ranged (1d10); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA sneak attack +4d6; SQ evasion, trapfinding,

trap sense +2, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV: Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 9.

*Skills & Feats:* Bluff +4, Diplomacy +4, Disable Device +6, Disguise +4, Escape Artist +7, Gather Information +4, Hide +7, Intimidate +9, Listen +7, Move Silently +12, Open Lock +7, Sense Motive +12, Sleight of Hand +7, Spot +7, Tumble +12, Use Rope +7; Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse.

*Equipment & Treasure:* Masterwork rapier, heavy crossbow, 20 bolts, leather armour, thieves' tools, 50gp

*Jackary's Equipment:* Cloak of the bat (this is why some believe him to be a vampire)

*Cavalliera's Equipment:* Ring of protection +2

*Tantivy Tom's Equipment:* Boots of speed

*Magdalene's Equipment:* Ring of feather falling, ring of mind shielding

## Little Jobs

This section is optional and is intended to extend the Crescent City part of the saga, if the group is enjoying the setting. In order to gain a crime lord's favour or extract some information from him, you must first do a little job for him. The mini-adventures given here are all suitable little jobs that the Player Characters can do.

## Break up The Independents (EL 8+)

A nest of thieves has started up without authorisation from any of the crime lords. They are operating on the border between two of the crime lords' territories. The Player Characters need to smash the nest as soon as possible. Since the rogues are operating on the border, it is not clear whose problem it is, so neither crime lord wants to be the one to tackle it officially. The Player Characters are a perfect solution, since they can wipe the competition out without doing so in the name of any faction.

There should be between six and 12 rogues, depending on the party's level and how much of a challenge the Games Master wishes to present the Player Characters with. They are occupying an abandoned building that was previously a church. The shadows high up in the rafters (20 feet above ground level) are ideal places to hide and fire missiles down at intruders. The rogues are good at balancing on these beams and will give any Player Character who comes up there a knife-fight to be remembered (frequent Balance checks will be called for). They will pull their rope ladders up behind them if they have sufficient warning, so the Player Characters must get up there some other way.

## Go Tagging

A common way for the gangs to count coup against one another is by 'tagging' the walls in an enemy gang's territory with brightly coloured paint. As a test of bravery (or just for his own amusement) a crime lord could send the Player Characters into a rival's district with instructions to paint at least five walls with insulting slogans. For even more kudos, the Player Characters can pick up luminous paint from any adventuring supplies shop (2 gold pieces a tin) so that the message shows in the dark as well. Defacing a building is a flogging offence, so if any guards catch

the Player Characters at it, they will be locked up overnight and given 40 lashes in the town square in the morning. This will be nothing compared to what the insulted crime lord has in mind for them.

As a variant on this, the crime lord could send the Player Characters to scrawl insulting messages directed against Archbishop Vigilance Derrick or Lord Malthus.

### *Fetch The Coffers Back*

Some young adventurers who fancied themselves as 'decadents' asked one of the crime lords for some narcotics, so that they could set up in business. As they had no money, they asked if

they could take the narcotics up front and pay as soon as they had sold them. The crime lord agreed to this. Stupidly, the adventurers tried to flee the city with the coffer full of narcotic herbs. The crime lord knows where they are. They are hiding out in a cheap boarding house in the dockland area, waiting for the morning to come. They have booked passage on a ship out of Crescent City, which leaves at first light. The Player Characters are given an address and sent to retrieve the coffer, with an understanding that the adventurers are to be punished.

This adventure is a chance for any evil Player Characters to be truly evil and re-enact favourite scenes of retribution ('What ain't no place I ever heard of! They speak Elvish in What?') and for any good Player Characters to stretch their resources to the limit as they attempt to keep their integrity intact.

### *Spy on a Rival*

The Player Characters are sent to gather intelligence on one of the other crime lords. They are expected to work their way into that lord's confidence as best they can and come back with some definite information about what he is planning. This is a good opportunity for the Player Characters to play one side against another, if they are brave enough to try such games.

### *Assassinate a Lieutenant (EL 7+)*

The most challenging of the 'little jobs' requires the Player Characters to take out one of the four lieutenants. A crime lord will only give this mission if he genuinely thinks the Player Characters can do it, or if he thinks the exact opposite and wants to have some fun with them.





# The Ragged Man

## Summary

The Player Characters find that the Temple of Kharad is a stepped stone pyramid out in the western marshes. The swamp elves consider it taboo and the humans avoid it, since several people who have gone in have never come out. The Player Characters can journey there on a hired barge but the trip is a hazardous one. Within the Temple of Kharad, they encounter horrors ranging from giant vermin to shambling undead.

The Ragged Man is one of the Starborn of the last Equinox, who was evil-aligned though he fought the Dark. Unwilling to yield to death, he instead became undead. He now holds the Orb of Azurite, the artefact that gives the Starborn the power to sense the location of their own kind and the stellar nodes, and to *scry* on the parts of their souls that are invested in the signature weapons. The Orb is the key to finding the remaining weapons, as well as being a useful piece of equipment in the adventures to come.

The Ragged Man himself wields one of the weapons. The others prove to be close by in Crescent City itself. Most of them are in the city bank in a safe deposit box, meaning that the Player Characters will have to break into a bank vault in order to steal it – a challenge if ever there was one! The last is hidden away in the old rogues' testing maze, under the building that used to be the guild house. See the next chapter for these.

## Journey to the Temple

This section covers the Player Characters' journey up the Sappent river to the Temple of Kharad, where they have been told to seek the Ragged Man.

### *Event: Finding Where the Temple of Kharad Lies*

If the Player Characters are following Lady Arigane's instructions to the letter, then their first priority after settling into Crescent City will be to find the Temple of Kharad. Asking around the city taverns does not help. Nobody who drinks there ever has any reason to go west into the marshes. The only people who do are the swamp elves, who take trips into the bayous to fish, hunt game, visit their families and forage for medicinal plants.

The Player Characters can find groups of swamp elves on the docks, unloading small boats full of dead creatures. These range from buckets of crayfish to the slippery coils of huge swamp snakes, killed for their meat and for the skulls, which the tourists buy.

With a little friendly talking (Diplomacy skill check, DC 15) the Player Characters can learn that there is indeed a temple out in the marshes and furthermore, the swamp elves will be glad to

take the Player Characters close to it, for the right price. They absolutely refuse to take the Player Characters all the way but they will not say why; a Sense Motive check (DC 15) reveals only that there is some sort of taboo at work. The swamp elves are dirt-poor, so they will persuade the Player Characters to part with as much as possible for their transport services.

Most of the boats are either barges, pulled along by horses, or punts, shoved along by poles. The barges are much larger and are used to transport heavy cargo, while the punts move lighter loads such as a day's haul of crayfish. Sailboats are uncommon, as the region has little wind and the thick plant growth blocks off what wind there is.

If the Player Characters want to pilot their own boat down the river, they can buy one easily enough. This is, however, a city of cheats and swindlers and any of the merchants on the docks will be delighted to palm off a leaky old shell on the Player Characters. A Profession (sailor) or Craft (carpentry) check (DC 10) is needed to tell whether or not a given boat is seaworthy. A typical asking price for a barge in good condition is 800 gold pieces, while a punt can be picked up for as little as 100. If the Player Characters opt for a barge, they will need to buy a horse as well.

Whatever form of transport they take, they will need a swamp elf along to guide them to the temple. Swamp elves rarely ever travel alone, so bringing one of them means that his whole immediate family is likely to come along for the ride. Attempts to persuade a swamp elf to draw a map are futile, since they are not literate.

### *Location: The River Sappent*

The Sappent is a broad, shallow river that flows slowly and smells putrid. Much of the traffic down the river is made up of barges, bearing the loads from the plantations down to the city, where it can be loaded into warehouses. The section of the river up to the fort is quite busy and is not often attacked by monsters, so the Player Characters are likely to have an easy time of it on the first leg of their journey unless they go looking for trouble.

A poled punt or horse-drawn barge can cover five miles per day. Travelling faster than this in a punt is possible but will leave the pole-wielder fatigued or exhausted. Walking is easy up to the fort, as there are towpaths, but beyond the fort it is slow going (half normal movement rate) as the ground is marshy and there is no path. The Player Characters must also leave the horse behind, if they have one, as there is nowhere for it to walk.

### *Location: The Plantations*

The land to the west of Crescent City, on either side of the river, is exceptionally fertile. It was thus used as plantation land by

## Swamp Elves

Swamp elves have a greenish-brown tinge to their skin, wide amber eyes and large ears that draw to a point. Their limbs are thin, even more so than those of a typical elf. There is a small amount of webbed skin between their fingers and toes. Swamp elves do not like to sit on chairs and prefer to squat down like frogs to take their rest.

The origins of the swamp elves are unknown. Some think that they are a result of crossbreeding between elves and aquatic dragons in former aeons (which, given their sorcerous propensities, seems plausible) while the majority of elves believe them to be a degenerate bloodline, as different from the pure elves as apes are to men.

Swamp elf racial qualities are identical to those of normal elves, with the following modifications:

- No bonus Martial Weapon Proficiency feats.
- +2 racial bonus on Balance, Climb and Jump checks. Swamp elves are light and limber and their legs are more powerful than they look.
- +4 racial bonus on Swim checks. The swamp elves are in and out of the water all day long.
- Illiteracy. Swamp elves are automatically illiterate (as per the barbarian class feature) because they are denied an education.
- Swamp elves are highly resistant to disease. They gain a +2 racial bonus on all saving throws against disease effects.
- Swamp elves can hold their breath for longer than other races can, as they are used to spending time underwater. A swamp elf can hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to three times his Constitution score.
- Favoured class is ranger, rather than wizard. Swamp elves produce a great many sorcerers but their lack of literacy means that they do not produce any wizards at all.

the elven nobles who first came here and later by the human aristocrats who assumed their place. From the river, the Player Characters can clearly see workers toiling in the fields and large manor houses overlooking the estates.

### *Optional Event: Dinner at the Manor House*

As their journey upriver will take several days, the Player Characters may try to stay the night at one of these plantation houses. Unless they are dressed appropriately (no travelling clothes) they will be refused flat out. A Diplomacy skill check (DC 20) and a good cover story will be needed.

Success means that the Player Characters are invited to dinner and to spend the night (though their crew, if they have one, is of course excluded from this offer). Nobles own all the houses, so the Player Characters will be expected to be polite and to express support for the nobility. Any sentiments along the lines of 'How can you possibly enslave your fellow creatures?' will result in ejection from the house.



What transpires overnight is up to the Games Master but experience has shown that many Player Characters will try to steal the family silver and run away, so be prepared for that. An incident at a manor house will result in guards watching out for the Player Characters on the way back, which adds spice to the adventure. Moreover, if they did not leave their vessel with adequate protection, there is always the chance that a river monster will attack and overturn it.

### *Location: The Fort*

The fort is a square stone tower by the riverside, with a quay beside it where vessels can be moored. It has only two levels. The bottom area is a rush-floored living, sleeping and gaming room, with a raised platform to keep equipment off the floor. A ladder leads to the upper level, which is little more than a wooden ceiling.

There is an old ballista at the top that has not been used in many months. A Spot check (DC 15) reveals ballista bolts embedded in the trees across the river, evidently the result of soldiers using them for target practice. When the fort is mobilised to battle stations, the archers crowd to the top and kneel behind the crenulated wall, which gives them cover (+4 to Armour Class).

This stone fort marks the western extremity of the land holdings in Crescent City. There are no more plantations beyond the fort, as the land is marshy and good for nothing. Just past the fort, the abandoned, overgrown remains of the old Valjean plantation can be seen to the south, shunned by all, including the swamp

elves. If the Player Characters ask about it, their companions say only that it is a bad place, where a wicked man once lived.

After the fort, the land is considered unclaimed wilderness. It is technically the property of the King of Caldraza, though nobody except the swamp elves wants to live there. The soldiers stationed here are supposed to act as an early warning system in the event of swamp elf uprisings or monsters coming from the marshes toward the city. In practice, what they actually do is to spend the day getting drunk and playing cards. This posting is considered to be one of the luckiest a guard can get.



## Event: Inspection

The soldiers at the fort are obliged to stop and inspect any vessel going up or downriver, since nobody other than the clerics at the Mission should have any business out there. The Player Characters are thus going to encounter a group of 15 annoyed soldiers who are already halfway to being drunk and who now have to inspect their vessel. If any of the Player Characters is rude or fails to show the proper 'respect', a fight is certain to break out.

There are 15 guards at the fort. Use the guard statistics from Crescent City (see page 136). Seven guards are wall sentries and watch from the top of the fort, seven are street guards and one (the captain) is a senior guard.

**Story Developments:** If the Player Characters kill even one of the soldiers, there are repercussions back in Crescent City. Attacking a guard fort is an offence far beyond mere thievery – it is an assault on the Caldrazan kingdom itself.

If the Player Characters were seen in the company of swamp elves, then the immediate assumption is that a revolution is happening. On their way back, the Player Characters will encounter guard patrols from the city combing the marshes for any sign of them. They will also find the bodies of swamp elves hanging from the trees, as a warning to any that are thinking of revolting. Depending on how much damage the Player Characters dealt, an entire settlement of swamp elves may have been decimated.

## Location: The Hoglepot Marshes

These marshes are thick with foliage and noisy with animal life. There are many bayous off the central river, leading through labyrinths of green to the settlements of the swamp elves.

For a variety of reasons, the Player Characters may track through the marshes instead of travelling on the river – their boat may sink, they could be trying to evade pursuers, or they may be

trying to reach a destination by a more direct route. Refer to the swamp category of marsh terrain (see the *DMG*) for marsh hazards, such as quicksand.

**Bubbles:** The Hoglepot Marshes derive their name from the methane bubbles that rise from the bog-water, like a boiling cauldron. The first time the Player Characters encounter a patch of bubbling swamp, they may believe that there is something lurking under the water's surface. The Games Master should play on these fears, especially after dark. Spouts of marsh gas sometimes spontaneously ignite, causing weird green and blue flames.

Once the Player Characters have established that the bubbles are only swamp gas and not evidence of something sinister, the Games Master can have a suitable creature hide under the water ready to ambush them; in this case, the bubbles *are* its breath. A tuberous glunt is ideal (see *Appendix III* for full statistics).

## Location: Swamp Elf Villages

By decree from the King of Caldraza, those swamp elves who do not yet have an owner are allowed to live in the marshlands that they have occupied for generations. Their settlements are primitive stockades, with huts made from wooden branches overlaid with mud. The swamp elves survive by fishing and hunting in the surrounding marshes.

At any time, a member of another race is allowed to come and claim one of the swamp elves as a servant, so long as he has an appropriate license to do so from the Crescent City Labour Office. The Office sells these licenses at exorbitant rates. Licenses will also not be issued during 'breeding times', when the swamp elf population needs to replenish itself. In essence, it is very much like the way hunting is regulated. The swamp elves are treated as if they were animals, there for the dominant races to use as they will.

## Marsh & River Encounters

d%	Encounter	Purpose	Average EL
01-03	1 hag covey (sea hag, annis, green hag)	Using a pool of swampy water to try to see the future in	8
04-08	1 grey render	Fetching meat for a nearby black dragon hatchling	8
09-13	2d4 harpies	Picking the flesh from the bones of a dead human snatched from his boat	8
14-19	2d4+1 lacedons	Fighting over (or nesting in) the decayed, submerged corpse of a grey render	7
20-26	1 chuul	Seeking for rare skulls to add to its collection – it has plenty of swamp elves already	7
27-35	1 tuberous glunt (see <i>Appendix III</i> )	Lurking in the water, waiting for prey	7
36-44	1d4+2 4 <sup>th</sup> level swamp elf rangers	Hunting for game to feed the village	7
45-57	1d4+1 vargouilles	Ranging forth from the Valjean plantation	7
58-69	1 spectre	Haunting the place where his drowned bones lie	7
70-78	2d4 crocodiles	Feasting on the fish heads and tails dumped from a swamp elf settlement	6
79-86	1 seven-headed hydra	Following the boat, waiting to be fed something	6
87-94	2 giant crocodiles	Basking in the mud on the shore	6
95-100	1 shambling mound	Lying in the swamp waiting for something to tread in it	6

**Totem Poles:** Characters who pass by or visit the villages of the swamp elves will notice poles carved from tree trunks. These depict the heads of the primary animal deities that the elves look to for guidance in their shamanic practices. The order is always the same. There is a macaw head on top, followed by a monkey, then a snake, then a crayfish. The swamp elves consider these poles sacred and will be outraged if the Player Characters desecrate them. Even touching them is forbidden for outsiders. The totem animals and the order they are in will prove important later on in this chapter.

### Event: Swamp Elf Hospitality

If the Player Characters have been respectful towards the swamp elves with whom they are travelling, then once they have travelled beyond the fort, they will be invited to stay in a swamp elf village instead of camping out. Their reception is cautiously polite at first (especially if there are any elves in the party) but becomes warmer if the swamp elves learn that they are not locals. They are given bowls of stew and a hut to spend the night in.

**Pitching In:** The following encounter is optional but recommended. While the Player Characters are staying with the swamp elves, there is an attack on the settlement.

If the village is close to the old Valjean plantation, then the attack takes place at night. A host of vargouilles comes flapping out of the trees and dives shrieking on to the panicking swamp elves (see the Old Valjean Plantation for vargouille statistics). There should be between four and seven of the horrors. Once they are disposed of, the swamp elves can explain that they come from the 'bad place' (the Valjean plantation) and beg the Player Characters to make sure that no more of them come. This will mean a trip out to the plantation to find the source of the evil.

Alternatively, a single black dragon (juvenile) can ambush a hunting party on its way back to the village, trying to grab the catch before the swamp elves make it to the stockade. The

yells for help reach the Player Characters in time for them to do something about it. The dragon is young but not stupid and will try to withdraw if it is severely injured.

### Event: Marsh and River Encounters

Marshes are well known for being dangerous places, where monsters lie in wait. The Player Characters are guaranteed to run into many challenges out here. Only use the encounter table below once the Player Characters have passed the fort location (see above). Roll for an encounter once per day.

The Player Characters should not always be forced into fighting the creatures, unless the creatures are specifically intending to attack anyway; they can be glimpsed through the branches as the Player Characters drift past on their vessel.

## The Old Valjean Plantation

*This land was once a thriving plantation but now weeds grow in the unploughed soil and rusting tools lie among them. There is no clue to suggest why the place has been abandoned. The soil seems as good as any and the ground is firm underfoot.*

*Ahead, the house itself sits empty as a skull, or so it appears. The windows are all smashed in, the rail around the porch has rotted and fallen away and not even the birds are coming close. Perhaps the explanation for this desolation lies somewhere inside.*

The Valjean estates have been deserted for ten years or so. As far as anyone can remember, the family just upped and left one day, sending all the slaves back to their village and taking a ship to some unknown destination. Most strange of all, they did not sell the land. They still own it, so nobody else has been able to lay claim to it.

The true story behind the deserted estate revolves around Michel Valjean, who was the black sheep of the family; he drank, he gambled, he kept inappropriate company, he treated the slaves viciously and (inevitably) he began to dabble in dark magic. The family could overlook Michel's odious ways up to a point but when he took up unsupervised wizardry, they simply relegated all such activities to the cellar and pretended it was not happening. Michel converted the largest of the cellar rooms into a temple for himself, where he practiced his own made-up rituals, largely as an excuse to engage in debauchery.

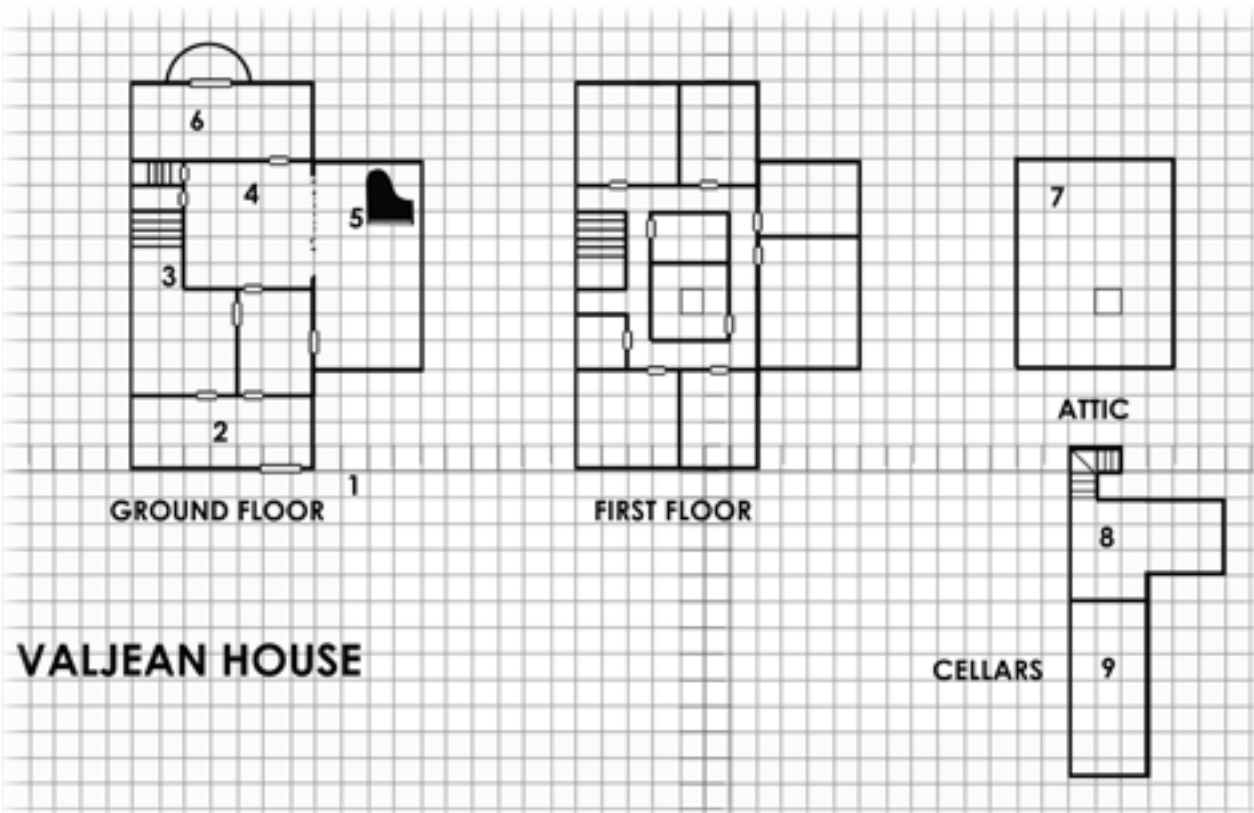
Michel still yearned for real magic but did not have the discipline to study as a wizard, nor the magical potential to become a sorcerer. The only option was to look for a shortcut to power. A tome he bought from a spellcaster in Crescent City purported to hold the secret of opening a gateway to a realm of chaos, where magical servitors waited to grant their masters' every whim. Valjean performed the ritual as indicated, which included the unwilling sacrifice of a sentient victim, one of the servants. The ritual did indeed open a gateway to Chaos but what came through were not obedient servants.

A powerful sucking wind began to blow, as if the gateway were trying to suck Michel through into the chaos plane. Next, a flock of shrieking winged heads, accompanied by howling deformed beasts like dogs and something like a dark skinny man with a single horn in its head, struggled through the gate. The humanoid

demon lashed Michel in place where he clung to a support beam, so that his body would dangle forever in the maw of the gateway, holding it open for the creatures of chaos to come and go.

When the spawn of Chaos ran and flapped, howling, through the manor house, leaving havoc in their wake, the family knew immediately that Michel was responsible. His screams could be heard coming from the rooms beneath. Instead of investigating, they simply fled without looking back, running into the night and taking what they could carry. Michel was abandoned to face his fate alone. For years, he has been hanging in the gale beneath the house, half in and half out of the gateway.

The creatures he let loose – several vargouilles, two howlers and a babau demon named Ozzalkrund – have ravaged around and about to their great satisfaction. They enjoy adding to the legend of the haunted house by slaughtering people who are stupid enough to come here. The vargouilles have succeeded in increasing their numbers many times over and now nest in the attic space of the manor house, flying out at dusk like bats. The howlers, likewise, have bred and increased their numbers and now range freely within the house, hunting after dark. The babau is using the gateway as a means of fetching living people back to the great abyss from whence he hails, adding to his master's store of souls.



When the Player Characters enter the manor house, a team of rogues from Crescent City has recently been in before them. These rogues, who worked for Jimmy the Tailor, were convinced that the manor house was not *really* haunted and that there had to be some enormous treasure concealed here, perhaps by smugglers.

## 1. Outer Courtyard

*Lying in plain view in this courtyard is the body of a man, wearing bloodstained leather armour. He is clearly dead, since his head is missing. It seems to have been ripped from his neck, rather than cut.*

This rogue fell victim to a vargouille's kiss, as his comrade inside soon will. The disease ran its course and his head wrenched itself free from the body. The corpse has 45 gold pieces, a set of masterwork thieves' tools and a note from Jimmy the Tailor. This reads:

*Leo,*

*Very well, check out the Valjean place if you really want to. It's out of the city, so it's not my concern. I doubt you'll find anything, but in case you do, the usual percentage applies. You might want to take McCann with you. He's a sorcerer; good with that supernatural stuff.*

*Do I think it's haunted? Of course I do. That's why I've never gone there. I'll stick to guards that I can hit.*

*J.T. (sealed)*

## 2. Entrance Hall

*This hallway must have been lavish once. Now, it is a festival of mildew and decay. The ceiling is festooned with cobwebs and the furniture is sagging and rotten. Patches of mould have spread across the carpet like a disease. Scattered on the floor are the remains of a recent meal – chicken bones, eggshells and the singed end of a loaf of bread.*

All Player Characters may now make Listen checks (DC 20). Those who succeed hear a faint sound of screaming, as if a man were in a state of extreme terror or pain. It is, however, impossible to tell where the sound is coming from. The sound of screaming stays with any Player that hears it, getting louder and quieter at random as they move around.

## 3. Stairway (EL 2)

*A broad staircase leads to the upper levels. There is blood splashed up the walls, decking the peeling wallpaper with brown stains. From above comes the unmistakable sound of someone approaching, step by step.*

Basil the rogue is staggering down the stairs. He is in the final stages of transformation into a vargouille. The Player



Characters have plenty of time to retreat if they do not want him to meet them. A Listen check (DC 15) reveals that the person approaching is doing so at a strangely slow pace, as if they were drunk, lame or exhausted.

When Basil finally emerges, the following happens:

*A slender man staggers into the room, his face bright scarlet as if he were suffocating. There is something very wrong with his face. His lips have shrunk back from his teeth, which look longer than they should be. His ears are large and webbed-looking. He looks around and babbles meaninglessly, then seems to come to his senses and gasps, 'help... please!'*

Whether the Player Characters try to help or not, the following inevitable result occurs:

*The man's eyes roll back into his head and he tries to scream but only a whine comes out. There is a horrible tearing sound and the head rips partly free of the neck; then another, and the body and the head fall twitching in different directions. Instantly, the ears swell and unfurl, becoming membranous wings. With an awkward flurry, the torn-off head flings itself into the air and whizzes around the room like a trapped bat, shrieking madly.*

The newborn vargouille then attacks the Player Characters, with no memory of its previous life.

**Vargouille:** CR 2; Small outsider (Evil, Extraplanar); HD 1d8+1(5 hp); Init +1; Spd fly 30 ft (good) (6 squares); AC 12



(+1 size, +1 Dex), touch 11, flat-footed 11; Base attack/grapple +1/-3; Atk bite +3 melee (1d4 plus poison); Full Atk bite +3 melee (1d4 plus poison); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA shriek, kiss, poison; SQ darkvision 60 ft; SV: Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 5, Wis 12, Cha 8

*Skills & Feats:* Hide +9, Intimidate +3, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Spot +5; Weapon Finesse

*Shriek (Su):* 60 feet range; victims must succeed on a Fortitude saving throw (DC 12) or be paralysed with fear for 2d4 rounds or until the monster attacks them, goes out of range, or leaves their sight.

*Kiss (Su):* Delivered as melee touch attack against paralysed target; victim must succeed on a Fortitude saving throw (DC 15) or begin transformation into a vargouille.

*Poison (Ex):* Injury, Fortitude (DC 12) or be unable to heal the vargouille's bite damage naturally or magically. A *neutralise poison* or *heal* spell removes the effect, while *delay poison* allows magical healing.

#### 4. Smashed Wall

*The wall here has been bashed away completely. The bricks are nowhere to be seen.*

Ozzalkrund took the bricks so that he could wall up the vortex area and minimise the chances of anyone finding Michel Valjean.

#### 5. Piano Room

*This room is dominated by the huge piano at one end. It must once have been shipped out here at considerable expense. Now it just gathers dust and bird droppings. The walls and floorboards of this room are deeply scored with claw marks and strange spines like porcupine quills protrude from the timbers. A few scattered fragments of bones lie in the corners of the room, too chewed for you to tell what creatures they came from. The single boot that lies against the far wall may provide a clue.*

The howlers have been using this room to fight, mate and devour prey in. The babau Ozzalkrund occasionally plays on the piano, which is completely out of tune from the damp and creates a suitably discordant racket. This can be used to create a suitably eerie ambience in the house if the Player Characters occasionally hear the sound of piano music echoing through the walls. The boot still has a foot in it, bitten off in a feeding frenzy.

#### 6. Living Room (EL 6+)

*This room is thick with the stench of strange beasts. All the furniture has been clawed to ruin and is now nothing but rags and broken wood. Above the debris is a smashed mirror in a gilded frame. Windowed double doors stand open on to the back of the house, the glass in them broken long ago.*

This is where the howlers are nesting. They use the open double doors to enter and leave the building. They will wait to ambush

the Player Characters rather than coming to investigate. All of them will pounce on the first target to come within range. If they are losing the fight, they will flee out into the marshes and begin howling. They will pursue the Player Characters at range, howling all the time, hoping to drive them insane with this relentless assault on their senses.

The number of howlers depends on the party's average level:

**Average Party Level 6:** 3 Howlers

**Average Party Level 7:** 4 Howlers

**Average Party Level 8:** 5 Howlers

**Howlers:** CR 3; Large outsider (Chaotic, Evil, Extraplanar); HD 6d8+12 (39 hp); Init +7; Spd 60 ft (12 squares); AC 17 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +5 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +6/+15; Atk bite +10 melee (2d8+5); Full Atk bite +10 melee (2d8+5) and 1d4 quills +5 melee (1d6+2); Space/Reach 10 ft/5 ft; SA quills, howl; SQ darkvision 60 ft; SV: Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +7; Str 21, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 8

*Skills & Feats:* Climb +14, Hide +8, Listen +13, Move Silently +12, Search +7, Spot +13, Survival +2 (+4 following tracks); Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative

*Quills (Ex):* An opponent hit by a howler's quill attack must succeed on a Reflex saving throw (DC 16) or have the quill break off in his flesh; this causes a -1 penalty per quill on attack rolls, saving throws and skill checks. Removing a quill deals 1d6 points of damage, though a Heal check (DC 20) removes it without this extra injury

*Howl (Ex):* Players within hearing range of a howler for a full hour must succeed on a Will saving throw (DC 12) or take 1 point of Wisdom damage. Repeat this saving throw each hour.

#### 7. Attic Space (EL 8+)

*You look up into a scene from hell. The eaves of this house are clustered with the foul scarlet heads, dangling from the tentacles they have twined round the roof beams, their wings folded around them like sleeping bats. They hang in the dust and darkness like grotesque pods.*

This is the vargouilles' nesting space (see page 150 for their statistics). There are a suitably large number of them here - enough to pose a major challenge based on the party's level and numbers. They are currently asleep, so the Player Characters have a chance to attack first.

**Average Party Level 6:** 7 Vargouilles

**Average Party Level 7:** 10 Vargouilles

**Average Party Level 8:** 13 Vargouilles

Once the hatch is open, on every round on which the Player Characters make any noise (that is, they move or act *without* making Move Silently checks) the vargouilles may make a Listen check at a -4 penalty (DC 10) to wake up. If the Player Characters make Move Silently checks, then those should be opposed by the vargouilles' Listen checks, again at a -4 penalty

owing to them being asleep. If a single vargouille wakes up, its first act will be to shriek and wake up all the others.

There is a single hole in the eaves a foot across. This is how the creatures are entering and leaving the attic.

## 8. The Outer Temple (EL 6)

*This chamber has been set up for the performance of some foul rite. The room is steeped in darkness as thick as smoke. You can dimly see that an altar made from stone slabs occupies the centre of the room, with a chalk triangle drawn around it and diverse mystical sigils scrawled on the surfaces. On the altar are the skeletal remains of what used to be a human being, some wisps of hair still clinging to the skull.*

This is the room that Michel used to perform the gateway-opening ritual. A Spellcraft skill check (DC 20) reveals that this is not the set-up for any known arcane or divine spell, though it bears certain resemblances to a *planar ally* spell.

Ozzalkrund the babau has used its *darkness* spell-like ability to drench the room in shadows. All creatures gain concealment (20% miss chance). The babau itself is hiding behind the altar, waiting for a creature to come close enough for it to sneak attack. It will not use its ability to summon another babau, as it does not want others of its kind finding out about the portal and muscling in on its territory. Ozzalkrund will use *greater teleport* to retreat upstairs if it has to; in this event, it will seek aid from the howlers and vargouilles, if they are still alive.



**Ozzalkrund:** CR 6; Medium outsider (Chaotic, Extraplanar, Evil); HD 7d8+35 (66 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 20 (+1 armour, +1 Dex, +8 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 19; Base attack/grapple +7/+12; Atk claw +12 melee (1d6+5); Full Atk 2 claws +12 melee (1d6+5) and bite +7 melee (1d6+2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA sneak attack +2d6, spell-like abilities, *summon demon*; SQ damage reduction 10/cold iron or good, darkvision 60 ft, immunity to electricity and poison, protective slime, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, and fire 10, spell resistance 14, telepathy 100 ft; SV: Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 21, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 16

**Skills & Feats:** Climb +15, Disable Device +12, Disguise +13, Escape Artist +11, Hide +19, Listen +19, Move Silently +19, Open Lock +11, Search +20, Sleight of Hand +11, Survival +1 (+3 following tracks), Use Rope +1 (+3 with bindings); Cleave, Multiattack, Power Attack

**Spell-Like Abilities:** At will—*darkness*, *dispel magic*, *see invisibility*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only). Caster level 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Protective Slime (Su):** Any weapon that hits Ozzalkrund takes 1d8 points of acid damage from his protective slime, with no damage reduction from hardness. A magic weapon or a creature attacking with an unarmed strike (or similar) may attempt a Reflex saving throw (DC 18) to avoid taking this damage.

**Summon Demon (Sp):** Once per day a babau can attempt to summon 1 babau with a 40% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 3<sup>rd</sup> level spell.

**Equipment & Treasure:** Bracers of armour +1, 2 potions of cure moderate wounds, 544 gold pieces.

Ozzalkrund has smashed an upstairs wall and used the bricks to wall off the southern section of the temple room. It *teleports* in and out when it needs to feed Michel. Any Player examining the southern wall may make a Search check (DC 15) to notice that the masonry is much more recent and not put together very well. If this search is conducted while the *darkness* effect is still active, the DC is raised by ten.

If the Player Characters smash a hole through the brick wall, they hear and feel raging winds tearing at them from beyond, along with the clearly audible screams of a man in torment.

## 9. The Gateway

*There is a howling gale in this cellar room, tugging at your clothes and hair. The winds come from a black vortex in the south wall, only three feet or so across, through which you can dimly see the outline of strange thin mountains and distant figures that no sane mind could describe.*

*Suspended in the air, half in and half out of the vortex, is the emaciated figure of a human being. His hands have been lashed to a support beam, so the winds keep him hanging in the air but cannot pull him all the way through. His face is almost that of a skull, but the sunken eyes that roll madly in their sockets are those of a living man. He tries to speak, his voice a thin whine above the roaring winds:*

*'Listen! You must understand! I have been here for years, so many years, ever since it happened! The demon is keeping me alive! It brings me water and... food... scraps of meat... I dare not think where the meat comes from. I try to refuse it but the hunger is too great!*

*'While I live, the gateway cannot close. They are using it, using it to cross between their world of chaos and our world. They want to make it larger. While it is small, only the heads can come through, but there is something beyond... something huge. It wants to tear the gate open and enter this plane.*

*'I have become the gateway! For pity's sake, kill me! Close the vortex and let me find peace!'*

The distorting effect of the chaos gateway is responsible for Michel's 'screams that come from nowhere'. It is randomly distributing the echoes of those screams across the region, which is why the house and its grounds have seemed haunted.

The gale from the vortex is the equivalent of a continuous and exceptionally powerful *gust of wind* spell, with the difference that the wind is blowing towards the 'caster' (the vortex) instead of away from it. Treat all creatures as if they were two size categories smaller than they are for the purposes of this effect. Any creature that fails its Fortitude saving throw (DC 16) while adjacent to the vortex is sucked through to the chaos plane and must somehow be rescued. If the vortex is closed while the creature is still on the other side, then it is trapped.

Killing Michel closes the vortex immediately. This is not, however, as easy as it may seem. He has only six hit points, but continued exposure to the vortex has given him spell resistance 18, eight points of natural armour and regeneration of three hit points per round (fire and acid deal normal damage to him). He desperately wants to die but cannot.

Severing the ropes that bind him is the easiest way to close the gate. Michel flies screaming into it and it closes behind him. The Player Characters can also hurl Michel into the vortex by smashing the support beam, though if they do this they have 1d4 rounds in which to escape before the whole cellar caves in.

Closing the chaos vortex is worth a small story award, equivalent to defeating a CR 7 encounter. It does not dismiss any creatures that are still on the material plane. If the swamp elves learn that the Player Characters have found the source of the demonic heads and howling beasts and destroyed it, they will be awed and reverential, treating the Player Characters not so much as heroes but as prophesised saviours. The default reaction from all swamp elves becomes helpful thenceforth.

## Location: The Mission (EL 6)

*In a cleared area to the side of the river stands a long wooden building, obviously not the work of the swamp elves. From inside comes the curious sound of many voices singing and having trouble with the words. From what you can hear, the song sounds like a hymn of some sort.*

This wooden church building is the result of Archbishop Vigilance Derrick's obsessive plan to bring Marianism to the pagans. His idea was to build a mission hall out here in the swamp, so that the denizens would be able to come and worship Marius. So far, the effort is not working too well. The swamp elves enjoy the singing and claim to have converted but go straight back to their shamanic ways as soon as they leave the mission.

If the Player Characters have been taken this far by swamp elves, then they go no further. They tell the Player Characters that the Temple of Kharad is due south on this very tributary and that they should take the left fork at the 'dead god'. They do not elaborate as to what the dead god is.

The cleric in charge here is Father Abstinence Morton, an enthusiastic man who seems to take an honest pleasure in his work. He is obsessed with the purity of the body, rejecting all contamination. He considers the swamp a mass of toxins and pollutants, making cleanliness all the more important. His obsession means that he is happy to cure all those who ask for it, without charge. Vigilance Derrick is urging more threats of hellfire and less curing of wounds, or the pagans will never bother to convert, but Abstinence Morton is running the mission his own way and intends to carry on doing so.

**Abstinence Morton:** Human cleric 6; CR 6; Medium humanoid; HD 6d8 (27 hp); Init -1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 9 (-1 Dex), touch 9, flat-footed 10; Base attack/grapple +4/+5; Atk quarterstaff +5 melee (1d6+1/1d6+1x2); Full Atk quarterstaff +5 melee (1d6+1/1d6+1x2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA spells, undead turning; SQ none; AL LG; SV: Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +7; Str 12, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 14.

**Skills & Feats:** Concentration +4, Diplomacy +6, Heal +10, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (history) +5, Knowledge (religion) +5, Knowledge (the planes) +5, Spellcraft +5; Brew Potion, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Improved Turning

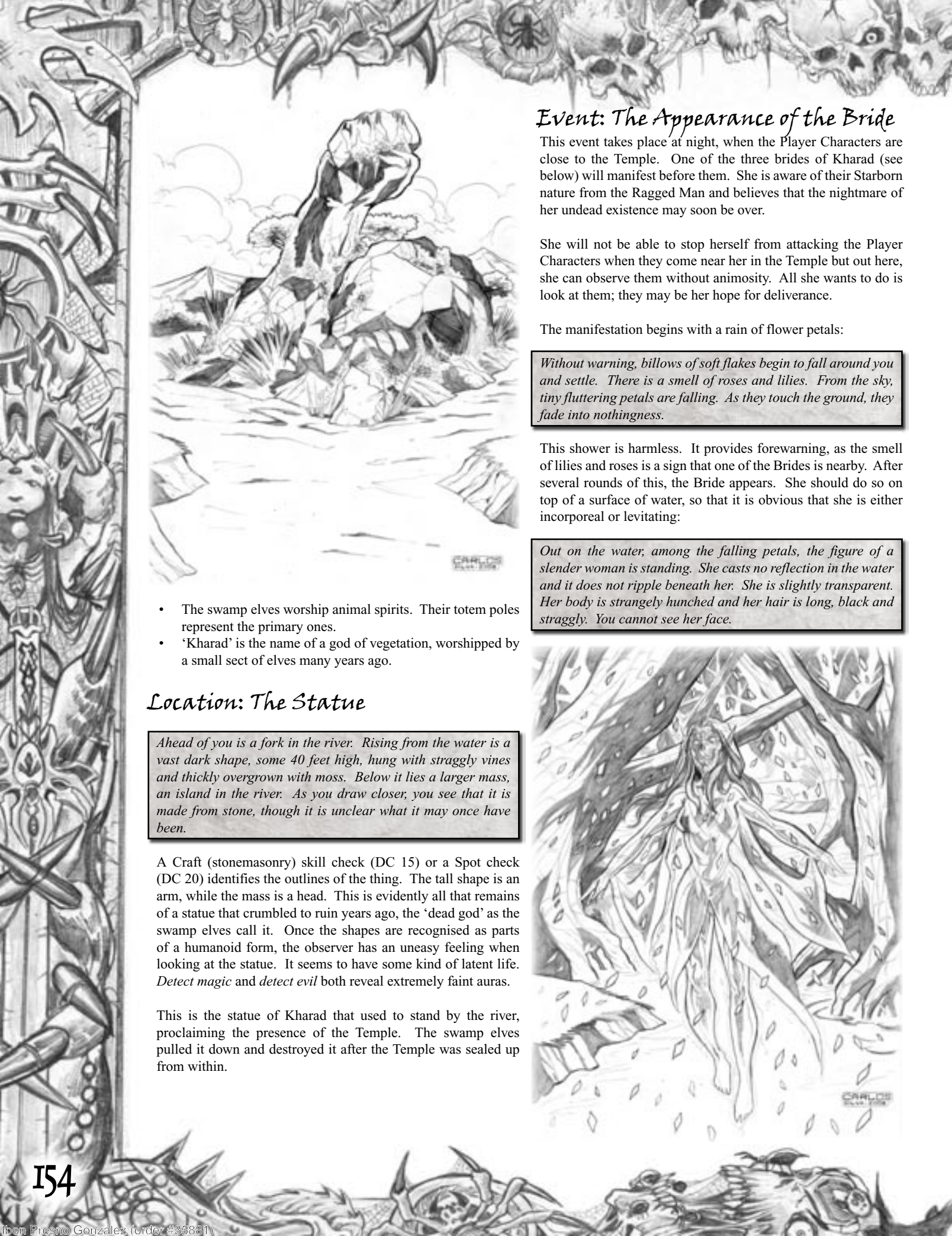
**Deity/Domains:** Marianist; Law, Protection

**Spells:** 0<sup>th</sup> level: *create water, detect poison, purify food and drink (2), mending*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *bless water, deathwatch, endure elements, remove fear, sanctuary*; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: *aid, bear's endurance, delay poison, remove paralysis, shield other*; 3<sup>rd</sup> level: *protection from energy, remove blindness/deafness, remove disease*

**Equipment & Treasure:** Quarterstaff, silver communion set (100 gp)

Visitors who are respectful (and do not interrupt the service) are made welcome and helped to some of the meagre food that is on offer. Father Morton is glad of civilised company and asks for all the news from the city. If the Player Characters ask him for information, he knows only the following:

- There is indeed a temple further south from here but it is a wretched place, best avoided by clean-minded people. He has never been south of this point but the last priest to serve here has. That priest unfortunately went insane and fled into the swamp some months ago. The poor man is probably long dead by now. His name was Father Industry Maxwell.
- He has no idea what the 'dead god' means.



- The swamp elves worship animal spirits. Their totem poles represent the primary ones.
- 'Kharad' is the name of a god of vegetation, worshipped by a small sect of elves many years ago.

### Location: The Statue

*Ahead of you is a fork in the river. Rising from the water is a vast dark shape, some 40 feet high, hung with straggly vines and thickly overgrown with moss. Below it lies a larger mass, an island in the river. As you draw closer, you see that it is made from stone, though it is unclear what it may once have been.*

A Craft (stonemasonry) skill check (DC 15) or a Spot check (DC 20) identifies the outlines of the thing. The tall shape is an arm, while the mass is a head. This is evidently all that remains of a statue that crumbled to ruin years ago, the 'dead god' as the swamp elves call it. Once the shapes are recognised as parts of a humanoid form, the observer has an uneasy feeling when looking at the statue. It seems to have some kind of latent life. *Detect magic* and *detect evil* both reveal extremely faint auras.

This is the statue of Kharad that used to stand by the river, proclaiming the presence of the Temple. The swamp elves pulled it down and destroyed it after the Temple was sealed up from within.

### Event: The Appearance of the Bride

This event takes place at night, when the Player Characters are close to the Temple. One of the three brides of Kharad (see below) will manifest before them. She is aware of their Starborn nature from the Ragged Man and believes that the nightmare of her undead existence may soon be over.

She will not be able to stop herself from attacking the Player Characters when they come near her in the Temple but out here, she can observe them without animosity. All she wants to do is look at them; they may be her hope for deliverance.


The manifestation begins with a rain of flower petals:

*Without warning, billows of soft flakes begin to fall around you and settle. There is a smell of roses and lilies. From the sky, tiny fluttering petals are falling. As they touch the ground, they fade into nothingness.*

This shower is harmless. It provides forewarning, as the smell of lilies and roses is a sign that one of the Brides is nearby. After several rounds of this, the Bride appears. She should do so on top of a surface of water, so that it is obvious that she is either incorporeal or levitating:

*Out on the water, among the falling petals, the figure of a slender woman is standing. She casts no reflection in the water and it does not ripple beneath her. She is slightly transparent. Her body is strangely hunched and her hair is long, black and straggly. You cannot see her face.*





*She is moving, very slowly, approaching you across the water. There is a sudden blink, and she is abruptly closer to you by several feet; it happens again, and she is closer still.*

If any of the Player Characters comes close enough to see her clearly (within 30 feet) then her face becomes visible:

*You see the points of ears through the matted hair and realise that the creature is elven. She is wearing a mask like a human skull, with gems in deepening shades of blue set in spiral patterns around the empty eyes. Then, as you notice the ragged scraps of skin around her face, you realise that it is not a mask.*

The Bride is the spectral one, Kreesha (see below). If the Player Characters attempt to attack her but do no damage, she will ignore them until she has had a good long look at them (1d4 rounds of observation) then she will vanish back into the darkness. If they succeed in hurting or turning her, she will flee instantly.

## The Temple of Kharad

The cult of Kharad was a forbidden one among the elves. Its adherents worshipped death and life as two aspects of the same deity. They believed that death was necessary if life was going to continue (or else, there would eventually be no more room) and that nothing in the Universe could be created without some equivalent thing being destroyed. In practice, they honoured their deity with sacrifice. Kharad was both the black earth that absorbed the corpses of the dead and the vitality of the soil that gave rich green crops in springtime. The symbol of Kharad was a skull twined with vines, new life breaking forth from the dead.

As the worship of Kharad was forbidden in the nearby elven colony (which eventually became Crescent City), those elves who were members of the faith took refuge in the marshes to the west, among the swamp elves that their fellows had enslaved. With the unwilling help of the swamp elves (and potent magic of their own) they built a temple where they could worship freely. In time, even the swamp elves were admitted to the congregation and their 'primitive' tribal deities were included in the temple's statuary. Swamp elves who did this were cursed by their families for having turned from the religion of their ancestors. This and the sacrificial practices at the Temple are the reasons why the swamp elves do not like to be reminded of the place.

The high priest of Kharad was an elf whose powers of leadership and persuasion were said to be legendary in their scope. He commanded absolute loyalty from his followers, many of whom swore that they had seen him perform the ultimate miracle. He had been killed and returned to life. He was thus more than just a priest – he was seen as an incarnate God, the earthly avatar of Kharad himself.

In reality, the high priest was one of the Starborn of the last Equinox. He was one of the clerics of the group and fought alongside the likes of Starkweather John to defeat the Dark. He was evil-aligned and a follower of Kharad. Following his

restoration to life, his mind caved in and he believed himself to be Kharad in the flesh.

When the elves retreated to Xoth Sarandi, the cult of Kharad remained. The high priest of Kharad slowly became insane. He demanded a succession of 'brides' from the congregation, who were ritually sacrificed and mummified, in preparation for his afterlife in which they would be his brides in paradise. The afterlife was denied to them, however and they arose as undead, unable to pass on while the high priest still lived.

Next, he ordered that the pyramid should be sealed and that the faithful should remain below, to practice their rites without interference from the upper world. A few of the congregation fled at this, bringing tales of horror back to their communities. Since the temple was sealed, nobody has heard anything from within.

The high priest is now a half-mad, undead monstrosity. He has outlived even his natural lifespan as an elf. He has only been able to do this by leeching power from the artefact he was given to guard, the Orb of Azurite. As the most naturally long-lived member of the last Starborn group, he was given the duty of passing on the Orb to the next group of Starborn who arose, whether he was still alive at that time or not. He ought to have used the Orb to contact the Player Characters and told them more

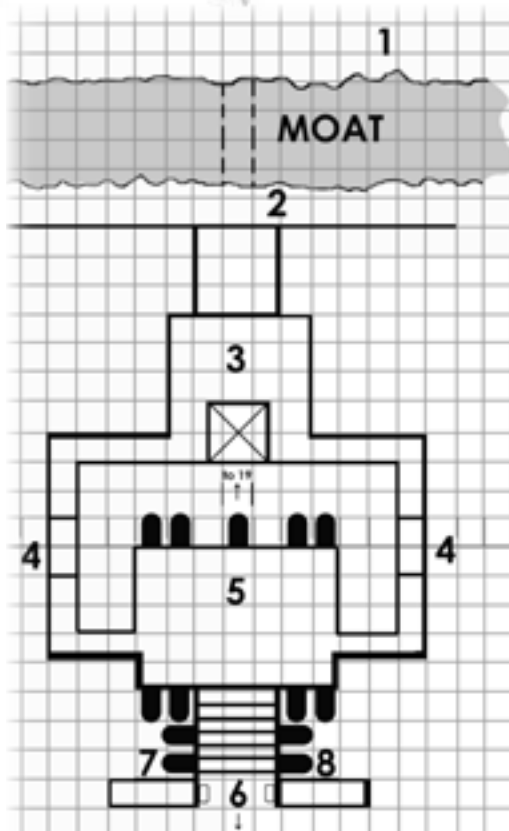
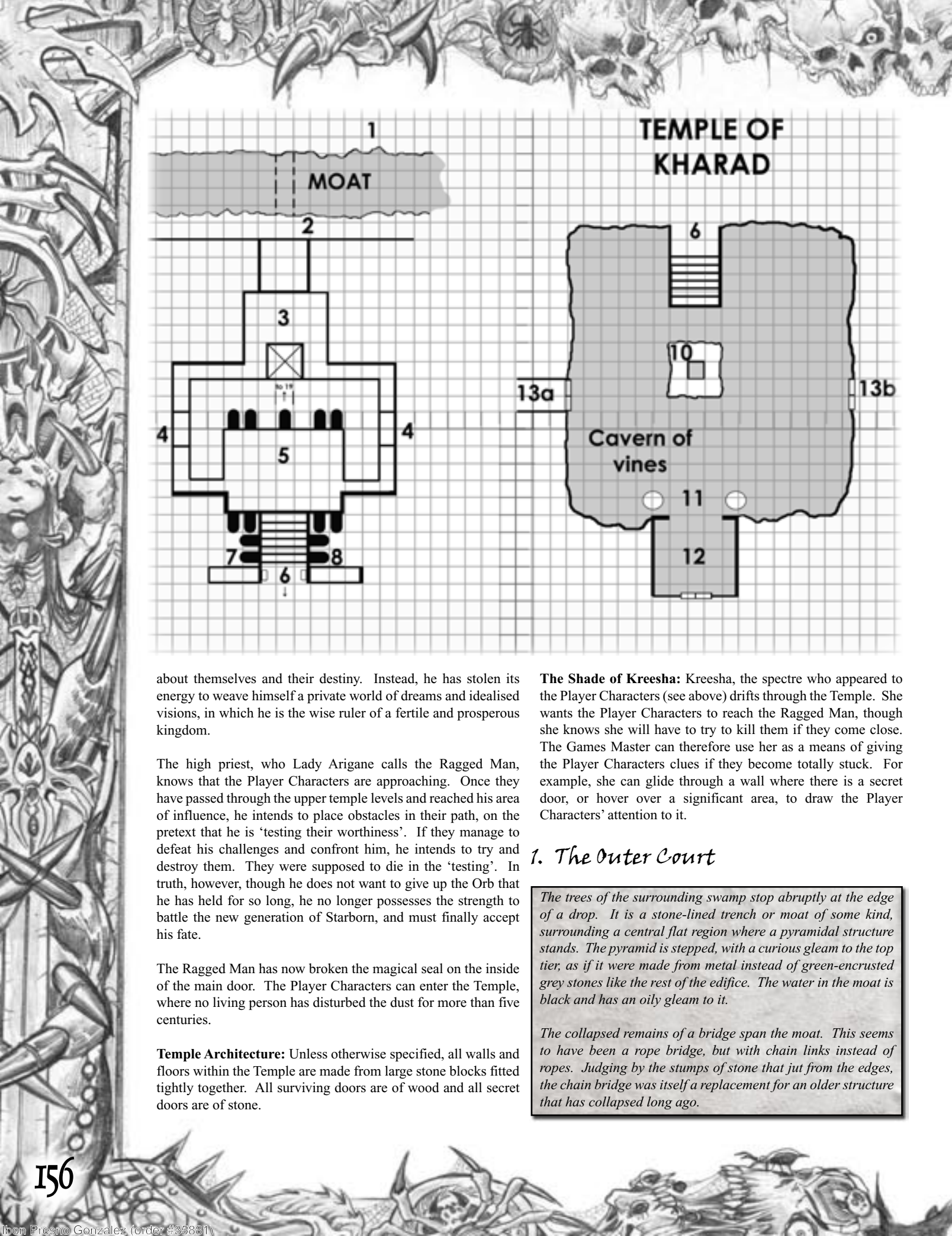
### Increasing the Challenge

The Temple of Kharad makes a fine 'dungeon romp' in itself but if the Games Master wants to make the experience more interesting, he can include the following variation:

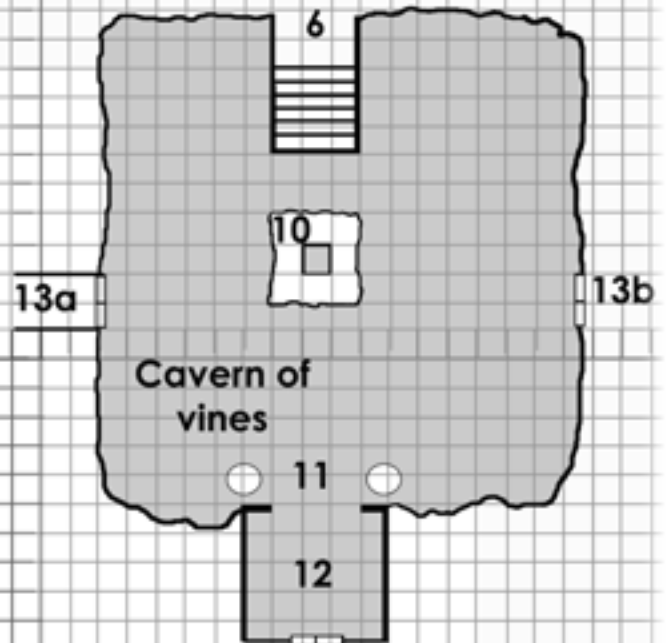
A group of rogues from one of the four guilds has found out about the Player Characters' expedition to the Temple and is convinced that they are on to something big. With the blessing of their guild master, they set off in pursuit of the Player Characters, tailing them and doing their best to stay out of sight. They enter the Temple shortly after the Player Characters do but make their own way through it, falling foul of different traps and engaging different monsters. The rogue team should never solve a puzzle or defeat a major monster for the Player Characters – instead, use the encounters as they stand but have the rogues defeat an additional monster, or trigger a trap not described in the text.

The rogue team should consist of the lieutenant (see *Chapter 8, Crescent City*) and as many additional 'typical Crescent City rogues' as there are Player Characters. Some of these should, however, die either on the way or in the Temple. Use the deaths among the rogue team to build up the threat of the Temple. They can, for example, fall into the water in the Room of Vines and be devoured by the ripping-fish, or have their faces sucked off by the curse trap in the Hall of Statues.

It is also possible for the rogue team to call a temporary truce and join forces with the Player Characters against the creatures in the Temple, especially if both sides are badly hurt. This is a very good opportunity for roleplaying and tension building.



## TEMPLE OF KHARAD



about themselves and their destiny. Instead, he has stolen its energy to weave himself a private world of dreams and idealised visions, in which he is the wise ruler of a fertile and prosperous kingdom.

The high priest, who Lady Arigane calls the Ragged Man, knows that the Player Characters are approaching. Once they have passed through the upper temple levels and reached his area of influence, he intends to place obstacles in their path, on the pretext that he is 'testing their worthiness'. If they manage to defeat his challenges and confront him, he intends to try and destroy them. They were supposed to die in the 'testing'. In truth, however, though he does not want to give up the Orb that he has held for so long, he no longer possesses the strength to battle the new generation of Starborn, and must finally accept his fate.

The Ragged Man has now broken the magical seal on the inside of the main door. The Player Characters can enter the Temple, where no living person has disturbed the dust for more than five centuries.

**Temple Architecture:** Unless otherwise specified, all walls and floors within the Temple are made from large stone blocks fitted tightly together. All surviving doors are of wood and all secret doors are of stone.

**The Shade of Kreesha:** Kreesha, the spectre who appeared to the Player Characters (see above) drifts through the Temple. She wants the Player Characters to reach the Ragged Man, though she knows she will have to try to kill them if they come close. The Games Master can therefore use her as a means of giving the Player Characters clues if they become totally stuck. For example, she can glide through a wall where there is a secret door, or hover over a significant area, to draw the Player Characters' attention to it.

### 1. The Outer Court

*The trees of the surrounding swamp stop abruptly at the edge of a drop. It is a stone-lined trench or moat of some kind, surrounding a central flat region where a pyramidal structure stands. The pyramid is stepped, with a curious gleam to the top tier, as if it were made from metal instead of green-encrusted grey stones like the rest of the edifice. The water in the moat is black and has an oily gleam to it.*

*The collapsed remains of a bridge span the moat. This seems to have been a rope bridge, but with chain links instead of ropes. Judging by the stumps of stone that jut from the edges, the chain bridge was itself a replacement for an older structure that has collapsed long ago.*

**The Moat:** The water in the moat comes almost up to the edge, stopping two feet shy of it. The moat water is filled with fiendish leeches, large black slug-like creatures that latch on to animals and suck blood from them. They prey on the reptiles that swim up to the moat through the underground channel connecting it to the river. They cannot leave the water but if a Player falls in, or puts a limb in, they will rapidly cluster on him; between three and six leeches will attack at once.

**Fiendish Leech:** CR ½; Tiny magical beast; HD 1d8 (4 hp); Init +2; Spd 5 ft swim 20 ft; AC 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex), touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base attack/grapple +1/-11 (+1 when attached); Atk touch +3 melee (attach); Full Atk touch +3 melee (attach); Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft/0 ft; SA attach, blood drain, smite good; SQ darkvision 60 ft, resistance to cold 5 and fire 5, spell resistance 6; AL NE; SV: Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 3, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 6

*Skills & Feats:* Hide +14; Weapon Finesse

*Anaesthetic (Ex):* Those who are attacked by leeches often do not realise it until the creature has already begun to feed. When a leech clamps on to a victim, it secretes anaesthetic that masks the pain of the bite. On any round on which a victim takes Constitution damage, he must make a Spot skill check (DC 15) to notice that he has been wounded. Other characters nearby can also make Spot checks (DC 20) to notice the leech.

*Attach (Ex):* If a leech hits with a touch attack, it clamps its mouth on to the opponent's body. An attached leech is effectively grappling its prey. The leech loses its Dexterity bonus to Armour Class and has an Armour Class of 12. Leeches have a +12 racial bonus on grapple checks, which has already been figured into the Base Attack/Grapple entry above. An attached leech can be killed with a weapon or grappled itself (the victim grips it and rips it off). To remove an attached leech through grappling, the opponent must achieve a pin against the leech. However, ripping a leech from a victim inflicts an automatic point of damage.

*Blood Drain (Ex):* A leech drains blood, dealing one point of Constitution damage in any round when it begins its turn attached to a victim. Once it has dealt three points of Constitution damage, it detaches and swims away.

**The Bridge:** The bridge is little more than two chains strung across the moat, held in place by iron stakes hammered into the stone. There are wooden planks here and there, spanning the chains and held there by brackets. Originally, there were planks all the way along the bridge but the great majority have now rotted or broken and fallen through. In the centre, the chains droop so low that they are touching the moat water.

The left-hand chain is poorly secured at the temple end. If weight is placed on it, it will come loose. The only way to test this, short of flying over with magic and looking, is to tug on it. The right-hand chain is secure. A character can drag himself along the chain to the other side but if he does so, his body will dangle in the water and the leeches will attack. Walking on the chain as if it were a tightrope is very difficult but possible and calls for a Balance check (DC 24).



## 2. Temple Gateway

*The square archway before you seems to be an obvious entrance into the temple. A single huge stone block closes it off. It is fifteen feet square, with no sign of a door anywhere. In front of this block are two small stone posts, three feet high and three feet apart. They are badly eroded but look vaguely like hunched creatures of some sort.*

These stylised pillars are the key to opening the gate. They may once have resembled winged monkeys but the stone is too eroded to tell.

If a Player stands with one hand on each pillar, with his skin in contact with the stone (if he is wearing gloves or gauntlets, nothing will happen) then the stones will begin to draw energy from him and channel it into raising the block. Each round that passes lifts the block by five feet (to its maximum height of 15 feet) and deals one point of Strength damage to the Player touching the pillars. If he releases the pillars, the block begins to descend at the rate of five feet per round, moving on an Initiative count of 1. The block is five feet thick. Any creature left underneath the descending block is in danger of being crushed to death. He must make a Reflex saving throw (DC 22) or die. Even if he makes his saving throw, he suffers 8d6 crushing damage. A character with Evasion who makes his saving throw takes no damage.

### 3. Entrance Chamber

*This room smells of dust and decay, with an acrid stench of embalming spices. Against the south wall is a fresco of a humanoid figure with spread wings. His head is a skull with living briars twisting through it. Beneath this is an open pit in the floor that looks like it was once hidden but is now stuck open. It drops down ten feet, to a mass of jumbled bones and rotten debris. You cannot tell how deep this is.*

*Just inside the entrance are the smashed stumps of two similar pillars to those outside. On the floor by the stone block are the cracked, smashed fragments of a crimson wax disc.*

There is no way to raise the block from this side, as the Player Characters will soon realise if they try to make the smashed pillar stumps work. The Ragged Man destroyed the means of opening the gateway from the inside.

The fragments of wax disc are the remains of the magical seal that was placed on the door, which disabled the lifting mechanism from the outside. A Player who examines it closely (Spot check DC 25) can tell that it was *not* broken by the stone block being raised but by a blow from a blunt object. If the disc is reassembled, a Spellcraft check (DC 13) ascertains that it used to be a magical object having some connection to the *dispel magic* spell.

If the Player Characters try to obstruct the descent of the block, the Games Master should bear in mind that the block weighs several tons and there is nothing nearby that could be used to brace it. Nonetheless, the Player Characters may think of something, if the alternative is being trapped inside a sinister Temple with no obvious way out.

**The Fresco:** Beneath the figure of the winged skull-faced deity are the less distinct images of three female figures, each one with abundant hair and no visible face. There is some script below in what seems to be a variant of Elvish. A Decipher Script skill check (DC 20) identifies three names and three sets of word and number pairs, as follows:

XIOLOCHE	Man'ak 13	Hekolosh 22
NUNANNA	Relethen 18	Man'ak 2
KREESHA	Abriolon 30	Shenn 6

Anyone who can read Elvish identifies the first column as a set of names and the second two as days of months, so Man'ak 2 is the second day of the month of Man'ak. The first date is when the Bride was born, the second the day of her death, in keeping with the reverence for both death and life practiced by the cult of Kharad. The dates also have bearing on the opening of some secret doors in the Temple (see the Room of Jars).

**The Pit:** The pit is filled with the jumbled bones of hundreds of sacrificial victims, offered up here to Kharad as part of a purification ritual before the faithful could enter. During the time of the cult's greatest popularity, swamp elf captives were taken and sacrificed here almost every week.

A cursory examination (Search check DC 10) reveals one curious detail. One of the victims' skulls has a golden coin in its mouth. Digging around in the muck reveals 4d10 more such coins, some of which have tooth marks in the soft gold. Each coin is large enough to be worth five gold pieces. The coins have a skull twined with briars on one side and a single word on the other. A Decipher Script skill check (DC 20) reveals this word to be pronounced 'ragadash', though there is no clue as to what the word may mean. If magic is used to translate the word, it means 'sacrifice'.

### 4. Spider Pits (EL 4)

At the points indicated are counterweighted pits. These were installed as a defensive measure in case the Temple was ever invaded, though they were never used. They have now had the safety bolt removed. The pits involve a ten foot section of false floor. The first five feet are on solid ground and the next cover the pit. A character walking on the first five feet is in no danger. As soon as he treads on the second five feet, the floor section tilts and he falls into the pit *unless* there is someone else standing on the section behind him, which holds the floor section in place. This trap is thus most likely to catch the person at the back of the party, since there is nobody behind him to weight the trap shut. The counterweight effect means that the trap slams shut once a character has fallen into it, so all that the other party members usually notice is a loud slam from behind them and the sudden absence of a comrade.

**Hidden Pit Trap:** CR 3; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; Reflex saving throw (DC 20) avoids; ten ft deep (1d6, fall); Search (DC 25); Disable Device (DC 20).

The shaft below the pit drops straight down for ten cobweb-choked feet and then slopes dramatically at a sheer angle for 30 feet more, opening out over the Cavern of Vines. A Player who has fallen down the pit must make a Climb check (DC 10) to catch himself, or he slips down the slope and out over the cavern. This results in a drop of 100 feet into water (2d3 non-lethal damage, 6d6 falling damage). A character who falls from the western shaft has the chance to grab at a vine as he falls past but this requires a tough Reflex save (DC 20).

To make matters worse, the shaft is also infested with monstrous spiders, two in each pit. The surface is precarious, so fighting on it calls for Balance checks. Characters who have fewer than five ranks in Balance are considered flat-footed (see *DMG*). A character who loses his balance begins to fall down the shaft and must catch himself as above.

**Monstrous Spiders (8):** CR 1; Medium Vermin; HD 2d8+2 (11 hp); Init +3; Spd 30 ft (6 squares), climb 20 ft; AC 14 (+3 Dex, +1 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 11; Base attack/grapple +1/+1; Atk bite +4 melee (1d6 plus poison); Full Atk bite +4 melee (1d6 plus poison); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA poison, web; SQ darkvision 60 ft, tremorsense 60 ft, vermin traits; SV: Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 17, Con 12, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 2

*Skills & Feats:* Climb +11, Hide +7\*, Jump +0\*, Spot +4\*; Weapon Finesse<sup>B</sup>



*Poison:* Fortitude saving throw (DC 12), initial damage 1d4 Strength, secondary damage 1d4 Strength.

## 5. Hall of Statues

*This silent chamber is lined with alcoves to the north and south; five in the north wall, four in the south. The floor of the room is marked with a pattern of lines and rectangles. In the centre of the southern wall is an archway fashioned from stone carved to look like tangled vines, or vines magically transmuted into stone – it is impossible to tell which. There is a shadowy figure in each alcove, eight feet tall and immobile.*

The pattern on the floor is a mere abstract but looks like it might mean something. Feel free to request Decipher Script checks, Knowledge (arcana) checks and anything else that the Player Characters might want to try.

The figures are stone statues, each one of a powerfully built male humanoid in tribal dress, very similar to the garb worn by swamp elf shamans. Each of the statues is holding up its right hand in a gesture of benediction and gripping a wavy-bladed dagger in the left. The statues have the heads of animals or monsters, with the exception of the statue in the centre of the north wall, which has no face, just a smooth oval. The order is as follows:

**North Wall:** Monkey, panther, blank face, crayfish, tuberous glunt (see *Appendix III*)

**South Wall:** Macaw, frog, snake, bat

If any of the statues is examined, the Player doing so may notice that the right hand is hinged at the wrist (Search skill check, DC 20). Pulling the statue's hand results in an audible and ominous click.

Behind the blank-faced statue is a concealed door that is practically impossible to find (Search skill check, DC 30). It cannot be opened without first visiting the statues in the proper order and pulling the right hand of each one. The order is that preserved in the swamp elves' totem pole design: macaw, monkey, snake, crayfish.

The hand of the blank-faced statue must be pulled last of all. If this is done, the statue silently drops downwards, taking the back of the alcove with it and revealing a passageway to the north. However, if the statue's

hand is pulled without having pulled the hands of the other statues in the proper order, a terrible transformation occurs.

The Player touching the statue must make a Will saving throw (DC 22) or have his face melt from his head, like liquid wax. There is only a blank, featureless mask left behind, without eyes or mouth but with nostrils. As this happens, the Player's face appears on the stone statue, as if the statue had stolen it. The face fades away over the next 24 hours, becoming less and less distinct, until the statue's face is a smooth oval once again.

A Player who falls foul of this trap is blind and unable to speak, though he can still hear. His face can only be restored by means of a *remove curse* spell or better. The effective caster level is 12.


## 6. The Great Stair

*The air in this stone staircase is chill and damp. The steps are bowed in the centre, worn down by the footfalls of thousands of people over the years. On either side, dark alcoves hold the slumped figures of humanoid beings in tarnished armour, gripping spears.*

The figures in the alcoves are the skeletons of elves, set here as honoured sentinels. A Player who gets a clear look at them immediately notices that the sockets have wet, living eyeballs in them, which follow the Player Characters' movements. The Ragged Man can *scry* through these and is currently doing so.

The skeletons' armour is masterwork chainmail, a fine mesh characteristic of elven workmanship, though not proper elven chain. Their spears were once masterwork spears but the wooden hilts are ruined and they will shatter if wielded. The





skeletons do not animate and can be smashed easily. They offer no resistance. All they do is stare.

A Player passing the secret door to the Room of Jars (see below) may make a Survival skill check (DC 20) to detect the smell of vinegar from somewhere nearby.

**Secret Doors:** There are secret doors made from stone at the points indicated on the map. These require a Search check (DC 20) to find.

Each door has a calendar wheel on it, marked with the days of the year divided into twelve months and showing the eight festival dates on which the cult of Kharad would assemble to make an important sacrifice. These wheels can be turned; they make a clicking noise when they turn, as if some clockwork mechanism were at work within. When released, the wheels slowly rotate back to their original position, taking from one to eight rounds to do so, depending on how far they were turned.

If the wheel is turned to a specific key date and then released, the secret door opens for one round and then closes. The date to open the western door is the day of Xioloche's birth, while the date to open the eastern door is that of her death.

The wheels are on both sides of the door (they are in fact cylinders that run through the doors) so it is possible to open the door again and leave the secret room. However, the date of Xioloche's death is in the eighth month, so it takes eight rounds for the door to open. This is important if the room is filling with blood, as described below.

## 7. The Room of Jars

*There is an overpowering stench of vinegar in this sealed room, with a deeper musky scent of old preserved spices. The walls are layered with dusty shelves that hold row after row of jars. Most are small clay pots sealed with dribbles of wax. A few are much larger, about a foot high. These are on the very highest of the shelves.*

The small clay pots contain rare preserving unguents. There are 48 of them in total. Each one weighs 1 lb. and could be sold for 25 gold pieces. Hidden away among them, requiring a Search check to find (DC 20) is a phial of oil of keen edge.

The larger pots contain human organs: a brain, a liver, a heart, a bundle of intestines and a pair of kidneys. They are steeped in a liquid that smells exactly like strong vinegar. They are warm to the touch and clearly still alive. They are the internal organs of Xioloche, one of the Brides.

The Player Characters can destroy them easily, which cripples Xioloche (see Room 16). If this is done, the last organ explodes in a gout of blood that builds to a torrent and then a geyser, flooding the room. The level of blood in the room rises rapidly. Within four rounds, the room is full of blood from floor to ceiling. It is opaque and impossible to see through with any form of normal sight, including darkvision.

Characters trapped in the blood begin to drown if they have not held their breath; see the drowning rules in the *DMG*. If the Player Characters destroy the organs in some other area, then they are not in so much danger.

## 8. The Temple in Miniature

*This small, low room contains one single striking feature – a model of a temple of some sort, made from delicately carved wood. A grand staircase leads down to an open chamber, where eight great statues flank a central raised dais divided into flower beds, in the centre of which stands a small pyramid-topped structure with open sides. Pathways run from it to staircases down through the floor that end in doors in the walls.*

*At the far end of the chamber are two statues, one with the features of an elf and his right hand raised, the other with a skull for a face, raising his left hand. Each statue is holding a strange mace or club of some kind, like a simple rod with a ball on the end. The two statues stand on either side of a doorway, beyond which is a plain room with a small stone altar in it.*

This was the model for the Temple that was to be built, which the Ragged Man considered too holy to destroy even after it had fulfilled its function. He gave it to Xioloche as a birthday present. The important feature of this model is that it shows the doors, now submerged, to the east and west of the cavern of vines.

## 9. The Cavern of Vines (EL 4)

*The corridor opens out into a gigantic cavern, not at all the kind of thing you would have expected to find under a swamp! The roof is some sixty feet above you, with countless vines and dangling growths hanging from it, as if the vegetation of the world above had broken through into the world below. The vines are so thick and multitudinous that you cannot see the ceiling. Tiny dark shapes flit to and fro among them.*

*Below, an expanse of dark water shimmers, ripples spreading through it from an unseen source. The bottom of the cavern is flooded to an unknown depth. In the centre is an overgrown island with a small white structure on it that has a pyramidal roof. There are eight piles of loose stone breaking the surface of the water, in two rows of four. At the far southern end of the room is an archway, flanked by two statues.*

*After only three steps, the stairway leading down into the cavern is broken, as if some huge hand had struck it. From the few remaining steps on the island, you can see where it originally led. Now, there is only a sheer drop.*

The piles of loose stone are the remains of fallen statues, larger versions of those in the Hall of Statues above, which crumbled (as did the staircase) when a massive earthquake struck. The floodwaters are 20 feet deep and completely conceal the doors to the east and west.

The thick vines are strong enough to bear some weight, so a Player could cross the room by swinging from vine to vine. Identifying a vine strong enough to climb requires a Survival or Use Rope skill check (DC 15) while even the strongest of vines will break if more than 120 lb. of weight is placed on it. If a Player comes close to the exits of the spider shafts (see above) the spiders nesting there will attack him. The bats among the vines are ordinary bats and provide the food source for many of the creatures living here.

There is a 20 foot drop down into the water from the top of the crumbled steps. This is not enough to hurt the Player Characters seriously if they fall into it (1d3 non-lethal damage) but they will have to swim to stay afloat and there are creatures in the water that will attempt to devour them. Any character looking closely at the water can see schools of pallid fish darting about. A Knowledge (nature) skill check (DC 25) identifies these as, apparently, a form of piranha. They are ripping-fish, vicious albino creatures sacred to Kharad, formerly kept in a pool in the temple floor and now infesting the whole flooded area.

If any Player enters the water after he has been splashed with blood (or immersed in it) as a result of destroying the preserved organs in the Room of Jars, the ripping-fish home in on him with their blood scent ability.

**Albino Ripping-Fish Swarm:** CR 4; Tiny animal (Swarm); HD 9d8 (40 hp); Init +3; Swim 30 ft (6 squares); AC 15 (+2 size, +3 Dex), touch 15, flat-footed 12; Base attack/grapple +6/-; Atk swarm (2d6 plus wounding); Full Atk swarm (2d6 plus wounding); Space/Reach 10 ft/0 ft; SA distraction, wounding; SQ blood scent, half damage from slashing and piercing weapons, swarm traits; AL N; SV: Fort +6, Ref +9, Will +5; Str 3, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 4

*Skills & Feats:* Swim +5\*; Weapon Finesse

\*Relates to the avoidance of hazards only.

*Swarm Attack:* Creatures with the swarm subtype don't make standard melee attacks. Instead, they deal automatic damage to any creature whose space they occupy at the end of their move, with no attack roll needed. Swarm attacks are not subject to a miss chance for concealment or cover. Swarms do not threaten creatures in their square, and do not make attacks of opportunity with their swarm attack.

*Blood Scent (Ex):* A ripping-fish swarm can detect blood in water, as if by the scent special ability. Treat 'upwind' and 'downwind' as 'upstream' and 'downstream'. Characters who suffer piercing or slashing damage while in water are considered to be bleeding for the purposes of this ability. A swarm that wounds a victim and causes bleeding can attract other swarms in the same area, causing the victim to be devoured in moments.

*Devour (Ex):* Ripping-fish can strip the flesh from a creature's bones in seconds, making them useful to necromancers who can thus animate corpses as skeletons. A swarm of ripping-fish can reduce a corpse to a skeleton in 3d4 rounds. While it feeds, the swarm will not attack other targets.

*Distraction (Ex):* Any living creature that begins its turn with a swarm in its space must succeed on a Fortitude saving throw (DC 14) or be nauseated for one round. The save DC is Constitution-based.



*Wounding (Ex):* Any living creature damaged by a ripping-fish swarm continues to bleed, losing one hit point per round thereafter. Multiple wounds do not result in cumulative bleeding loss. The bleeding can be stopped by a Heal check (DC 10) or the application of a *cure* spell or some other healing magic.

*Swarm Traits:* A swarm is not subject to critical hits or flanking. Reducing a swarm to 0 hit points or lower causes it to break up, though damage taken until that point does not degrade its ability to attack or resist attack. Swarms are never staggered or reduced to a dying state by damage. Also, they cannot be tripped, grappled, or bull rushed, and they cannot grapple an opponent.

A swarm is immune to any spell or effect that targets a specific number of creatures (including single-target spells such as *disintegrate*). A swarm takes half again as much damage (+50%) from spells or effects that affect an area, such as splash weapons.

Buried in the muck and ooze under the water are the skeletal remains of those devotees of Kharad who remained behind when the temple was sealed. They voluntarily congregated here and took massive doses of poison in a ritual suicide. Their fanatical spirits remain bound here, waiting for a chance to adore him again.



## 10. The Island (Life Temple) (EL 5)

*This hummock of mud and reedy vegetation rises out of the water to a height of some five feet. Gentle ripples wash out from its edges. A stone pavilion stands in its centre, with a squat altar of some kind in the midst.*

Lurking in the reedy mud behind the pavilion is a pair of giant praying mantises, using the green growths to hide.

**Giant Preying Mantis (2):** CR 3; Large vermin; HD 4d8+8 (26 hp); Init -1; Spd 20 ft (4 squares), fly 40 ft (poor); AC 14 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +6 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +3/+11; Atk claws +6 melee (1d8+4); Full Atk claws +6 melee (1d8+4) and bite +1 melee (1d6+2); Space/Reach 10 ft (4 squares)/5 ft; SA improved grab; SQ darkvision 60 ft, vermin traits; AL N; SV: Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +3; Str 19, Dex 8, Con 15, Int —, Wis 14, Cha 11

**Skills & Feats:** Hide -1\*, Spot +6

**Improved Grab (Ex):** To use this ability, a giant praying mantis must hit with its claws attack. If it wins the ensuing grapple check, it establishes a hold and makes a bite attack as a primary attack (at its full +6 attack bonus).

**Skills:** A giant praying mantis has a +4 racial bonus on Hide and Spot checks. \*Owing to its camouflage, the Hide bonus increases to +12 when a mantis is surrounded by foliage.

A Spot skill check (DC 15) detects the remains of stone borders among the mud, where the divisions between the flowerbeds used to lie. Within the stone pavilion is an altar in the form of a low stone cylinder, engraved with images of a winged deity showering forth life from his hands, causing plants to grow on the earth. There is a broken blob of cement on the top of the altar, where some fixture has clearly been snapped off. This was where a *decanter of endless water* stood, symbolic of the blessing of Kharad in his life-giving aspect.

Examination of the engravings reveals more of the archaic elven script. A Decipher Script skill check (DC 20) identifies three phrases: Sham Tak, Sham Hoph and Sham Huul. These are the command words for the *decanter of endless water*.

A thorough search of the island (Search DC 20) locates the source of the ripples – the fallen *decanter*, emitting a constant trickle of the life-giving water. Over the centuries, this trickle has flooded the entire region, which is of course made from stone and has no way to drain the water out.

## 11. The Gateway

*Two stone statues tower above you on either side of this gateway. They must once have been painted in bright colours, for you can see tiny flakes of paint on the mottled stone. The one on the left has the face of a solemn adult elf and is raising his right hand; the one on the right has the face of a naked skull and is raising his left. Each statue holds a simple club or mace in its off hand, resembling a cylinder with a ball on the end.*

If any Player thinks to examine the maces, have him make a Spot check (DC 15); success reveals flakes of metallic silver paint on the mace held by the skull-faced statue and golden paint on the elf-faced one.

## 12. The Inner Temple (Death Temple) (EL 8)

*This room is strangely featureless and has a lifeless, hushed feel to it, as if it had been cleansed of all living things. The floor is tiled with white marble and a rough-hewn stone altar is at the south end. Five feet in from the door, there is a broad black burst on the floor, as if something had exploded there, or been burned in a bonfire. Against the west wall is a large brass gong, hanging from a twisted black iron frame.*

This chamber is subject to a permanent *desecrate* effect.

It has been programmed with a sequence of magical events, to enable the lesser priests of Kharad to conduct worship effectively without the Ragged Man having to be present. If the gong is struck, its low chiming boom sounds throughout the Chamber of Vines. A *magic mouth* then barks the single word 'Ragadash!' This is the sign that it is time to make sacrifice.

The ten foot circle where the burn mark is now becomes the trigger zone for a *flame strike*. The principle is that the faithful pile their sacrifices of grain, fruits and animals on to this space and then the fire of Kharad descends from above and claims it. The *flame strike* does not occur if there is nothing on the trigger spot, nor will it occur if nothing is placed there within five rounds of the gong being struck.

**Flame Strike trap:** CR 6; magic device; proximity trigger (special, see above); automatic reset; spell effect (*flame strike*, 9<sup>th</sup> level cleric, 9d6 fire, Reflex saving throw (DC 17) half damage); Search (DC 30); Disable Device (DC 30).

If the sacrifice is especially precious (either a living creature of greater than 6 intelligence, or treasure worth more than 500 gold pieces) then a further magical effect happens. The altar glows from within with a strange brownish light and becomes semitransparent. A silver mace-like object, identical to that which the skull-faced statue is carrying outside, becomes visible. A character can reach in and grasp it.

The altar remains misty and insubstantial for five rounds, after which it becomes solid stone again. If the mace is placed back on the altar, it sinks back into it and cannot be retrieved. It is merged with the altar as a form of *meld into stone* effect, so attempts to retrieve it by smashing the altar are futile.

The silver mace is the *Sceptre of Death*, for which see the sidebar.

If a Player claims the sceptre, then a terrible thing happens. Alerted by the presence of what seems to be a new priest, the devotees of Kharad awaken. Weed-draggled skeletons, dripping with black slime, slowly clamber out of the waters in the Chamber

of Vines and lurch towards the Inner Temple. They attempt to slay anyone present except the wielder of the Sceptre of Death. So long as the Player holds on to the sceptre, he is safe.

These undead entities are mud zombies, similar to the regular variety but fortified by the energies of the Temple (see *Appendix III*). If they enter the Temple of Death, they gain the benefits of the *desecrate* effect.

**Mud Zombies (12):** CR 1; Medium undead; HD 2d12+3 (16 hp); Init -1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares; cannot run); AC 13 (-1 Dex, +4 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 13; Base attack/grapple +1/+2; Atk slam +2 melee (1d6+1) or club +2 melee (1d6+1); Full Atk slam +2 melee, (1d6+1) or club +2 melee (1d6+1); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ single actions only, damage reduction 5/slashing, fast healing 2, darkvision 60 ft, resistance to cold 10 and electrical 10, undead traits; AL NE; SV: Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1

*Skills & Feats:* Toughness

*Fire Paralysis:* A mud zombie that suffers fire damage must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + fire damage dealt) or be paralysed for 1d4 rounds, as the earth is baked on to its bones.

*Water Vulnerability:* A mud zombie that is immersed in running water loses half of its hit points per round of immersion, as the earth is washed away from it. A mud zombie that is blasted with a stream of high-pressure water, such as from standing under a waterfall or being hosed down with the geyser effect of a *decanter of endless water*, is instantly destroyed.

### 13a and 13b. The Stone Doors

These stone doors are submerged below the waterline when the Player Characters first encounter them, so they are not likely to be noticed at first. The western one is slightly ajar (it is open, but only by a foot) so the tunnel beyond is flooded for a short distance, before a long flight of steps rises back out of the water and into area 14. The name 'Xioloche' is inscribed upon it. The eastern one is shut tight and bears the name 'Nunanna'.

Both these doors require either the touch of one of the sceptres to open them, or a cleric to channel energy into them. Positive or negative work equally well. The western door can also be wrenched fully open through sheer brute force, requiring a Strength check (DC 24).

Opening the eastern door causes the whole flooded section to empty out, with a tumultuous gush of water rushing through the door and over the edge of the chasm. Characters in the path of this surge are in danger of being swept away. Refer to the similar section in the Mines of Bronze (Chapter 1) for rules governing emptying caverns.

### The Sceptres of Life and Death

These are central regalia of the cult of Kharad, representing his ability to give life with one hand and take it with the other. They are identical in form, being ceremonial maces a foot and a half long, composed of a cylindrical handle and a round ball. The *Sceptre of Life* appears to be made from some lightweight gilded metal (not solid gold) while that of Death is much heavier and coated in bright silver. Their material value appears to be 120 gp and 60 gp respectively.

The *Sceptre of Life* allows the use of *lesser restoration* once per day and *cure serious wounds* three times per day. The *Sceptre of Death* allows the use of *slay living* once per day and *animate dead* three times per day. In addition, each *Sceptre* allows a cleric to channel energy once more per day than he would ordinarily be able to (such as to turn or to rebuke undead) with the limitation that the *Sceptre of Life* allows only the channelling of positive energy and the *Sceptre of Death* negative.

Both *Sceptres* are tied to the energy of the Temple and do not function if taken beyond it. As well as their magical powers, the *Sceptres* function as keys to certain closed areas within the Temple, such as the Sarcophagus of Kreesha. The *Sceptre of Life* lies within Xioloche's glass coffin (see page 166).

### 14. The Labyrinth under The Marsh (EL 7)

*This arched tunnel is like no other you have seen in the Temple. The floor is of stone and seems to be mundane enough but the walls are absent altogether. Instead, the swamp itself is above and around you, glistening like a soap bubble, held at bay by some invisible force field in the shape of a half-cylinder. You can clearly see the mass of water, mud, roots and weeds pressing down on the field. There are even fish and other living creatures moving around out there, startled at your appearance.*

*In the centre of the floor, some 20 feet ahead of you, is a single flagstone in which a crystal rod is embedded, lying lengthways along the tunnel. It glows with a weak green radiance.*

The crystal rod is emitting the field that holds the swamp back, thus forming the corridor. This whole section is made up of tunnels and rooms created by similar crystals. The rod projects a field in the form of the crystal, so cylindrical rods create cylindrical tunnels, while spheres create round rooms. Where the fields intersect, they cancel each other out, creating openings.

This insane extension of the temple into the underwater world of the marsh was the Ragged Man's way of entombing Xioloche among the roots and plants that were her natural domain but still giving himself a way to visit her remains.

The walls of the chambers are the equivalent of a *wall of force*. The crystals have five hit points and a Hardness of five. Smashing one of the crystals collapses the field, destroying (and sealing



provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

**Tubers (Ex):** The tuberous glunt is so named because of the tuber-like growths that hang from it. These are the beginnings of new glunts. When they are ripe and ready, they fall from the creature's body and gestate in the depths of the bog.

These growths are edible and surprisingly delicious. They heal damage as a healing potion does, curing a total of 1d8 + the hit dice of the glunt. Each glunt has a total of 2d4 such tubers on its body. Ripping a tuber from a glunt while it is still alive is possible. Use the rules for grabbing an item that a creature is carrying. The glunt gets a +4 bonus on its roll, as the tubers are well secured.

**A - Malfunctioning Crystal:** The crystal at this point has become damaged when a glunt blundered into it. It glows with a very faint flickering light. The field around it is still active but is beginning to fail. A steady stream of water is dribbling in through the top of the bubble. Every round, roll 1d4; on a result of 1, the crystal fails altogether and the marsh floods in. Continue to roll on subsequent rounds; on a second result of 1, the crystal begins to function again and the bubble re-establishes itself, though anything that was in the area is forced outside it.

**B - Dragon Bones:** At the point marked on the map, the Player Characters may be able to see something interesting submerged in the marsh. With a successful Spot check (DC 20) they notice something out there which looks like a gigantic ribcage. A Knowledge (nature) skill check (DC 20) identifies this as part of the skeleton of a dragon.

The remains of a long-dead black dragon do indeed lie here, along with what is left of its hoard. If the Player Characters can contrive some way to reach it, they can uncover 18,000 silver pieces, 11,000 gold pieces and two huge silver-inlaid pearls worth 2,500 gold pieces each.

Depending on how battered and tired the Player Characters are by this point, the Games Master may include one of the dragon's spawn, lurking among its bones and attempting to claim the hoard for its own. If so, it should be no older than juvenile.

## 15. The Reed Garden (EL 6 & EL 13)

*This spherical chamber has a central raised bed of flowers and plants. You recognise many of the plants from the marsh, growing with lush life, as well as many bizarre growths that may have come from other worlds or even other planes. In the centre of the riot of plants, almost hidden, is a coffin of glass.*

In life, Xioloche had been a swamp elf maiden, familiar with the powers and properties of all the marsh's plants. The Ragged Man had her placed here, where she could be among her beloved green life. She is attended by a shambling mound, who is under instructions to protect her tomb from defilers. The shambling mound hides among the plants, pretending to be one of them.

**Shambling Mound:** CR 6; Large plant; HD 8d8+24 (60 hp); Init +0; Spd 20 ft (4 squares), swim 20 ft; AC 20 (-1 size, +11 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 20; Base attack/grapple



+6/+15; Atk slam +11 melee (2d6+5); Full Atk 2 slams +11 melee (2d6+5); Space/Reach 10 ft/10 ft; SA improved grab, constrict 2d6+7; SQ darkvision 60 ft, immunity to electricity, low-light vision, plant traits, resistance to fire 10; AL N; SV: Fort +9, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 21, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 9

**Skills & Feats:** Hide +3\*, Listen +8, Move Silently +8; Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (slam)

**Improved Grab (Ex):** Must hit with both slams; can then start a grapple as a free action. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

**Constrict (Ex):** A shambling mound deals 2d6+7 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

**Immunity to Electricity (Ex):** Electricity grants a shambling mound 1d4 points of Constitution instead of damaging it. The shambling mound loses these points at the rate of one per hour.

**Skills:** Shambling mounds have a +4 racial bonus on Hide, Listen, and Move Silently checks. \*They have a +12 racial bonus on Hide checks when in a swampy or forested area.

## 16. The Tomb of Xioloche

*The body of a female swamp elf lies within the transparent coffin, her expression peaceful. Her eyes are closed. She appears to be dead, though her features are undecayed. On a silver plate above her head is an inscription.*

The tomb's inscription reads 'The Most Zealous' and requires a Decipher Script check to understand (DC 20). The coffin is made from panes of glass and can easily be smashed. Xioloche does not awaken unless her body is touched, in which event her eyelids flick open to reveal faceted emeralds instead of living eyes.

Xioloche screeches and babbles in archaic elvish. This will draw the patrolling tuberous glunt to her, if it is still alive. She will attempt to destroy or drive off her assailants and then return to sleep. If she is destroyed and her body examined, the Player Characters find ugly seams in her body where her key organs have been removed. In the cavity where each one should be is a roll of parchment with arcane scrawls upon it.

**Xioloche (Mummy Lord):** Mummy druid 3; CR 13; Medium Undead; CR 8; 8d12+3+3d8 (68 hp); Init +1; Spd 20 ft (4 squares); AC 21 (+10 natural, +1 Dex), touch 11, flat-footed 20; Base attack/grapple +6/+13; Atk slam +13 melee (1d6+10 plus mummy rot); Full Atk slam +13 melee (1d6+10 plus mummy rot); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA despair, mummy rot; SQ damage reduction 5/—, darkvision 60 ft, undead traits, vulnerability to fire; AL NE; SV: Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +11; Str 24, Dex 12, Con —, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 15

*Skills & Feats:* Concentration +7, Hide +7, Knowledge (nature) +7, Listen +8, Move Silently +7, Spot +8; Alertness,

Great Fortitude, Greater Spell Focus (transmutation), Spell Focus (transmutation), Toughness

*Spells:* 0<sup>th</sup> level: *cure minor wounds, guidance (2), resistance*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *entangle (2), longstrider*; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: *bull's strength, resist energy*

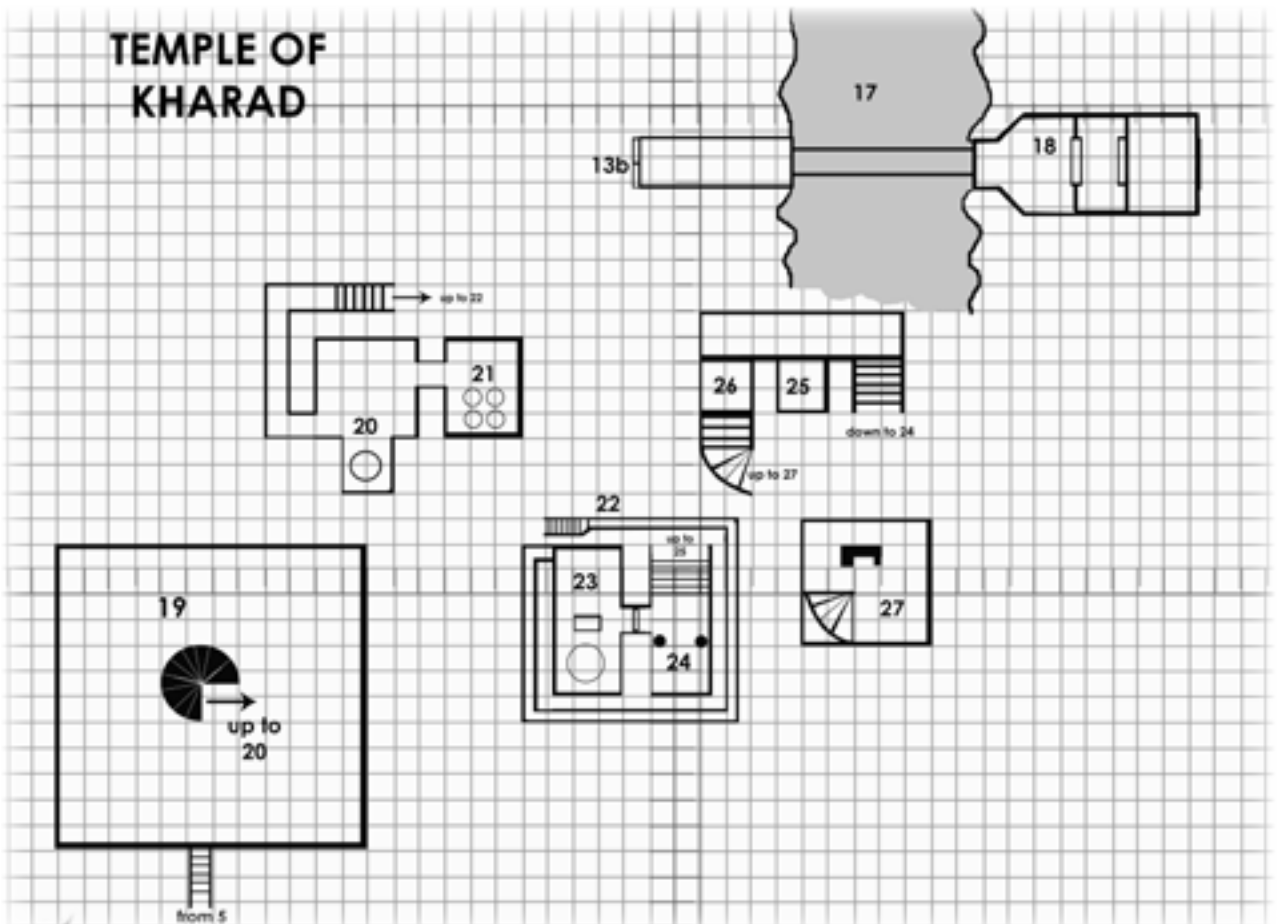
*Despair (Su):* At the mere sight of a mummy, the viewer must succeed on a DC 15 Will save or be paralyzed with fear for 1d4 rounds. Whether or not the save is successful, that creature cannot be affected again by the same mummy's despair ability for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

*Mummy Rot (Su):* Supernatural disease—slam, Fortitude DC 15, incubation period 1 minute; damage 1d6 Con and 1d6 Cha. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Unlike normal diseases, mummy rot continues until the victim reaches Constitution 0 (and dies) or is cured as described below.

Mummy rot is a powerful curse, not a natural disease. A character attempting to cast any conjuration (healing) spell on a creature afflicted with mummy rot must succeed on a DC 20 caster level check, or the spell has no effect on the afflicted character.

To eliminate mummy rot, the curse must first be broken with break enchantment or remove curse (requiring a DC 20 caster level check for either spell), after which a caster level check is no longer necessary to cast healing spells on the victim, and the mummy rot can be magically cured as any normal disease.





*Equipment & Treasure:* Xioloche's emerald eyes are worth 3,000 gold pieces each. They are also part of the key to unlocking the Gate of Kharad (see below). Additionally, the *Sceptre of Life* lies in her glass coffin.

**Destroying Xioloche's Organs:** If the Player Characters have destroyed any of Xioloche's organs (see room 7) then her threat potential is drastically reduced. Destroying her brain reduces her Intelligence and Wisdom to zero, removing her spellcasting abilities. Destroying her heart inflicts 30 points of damage on her. Destroying the liver or intestines inflicts ten points of damage. If any of the organs have been destroyed, then Xioloche's body will have bloodstains on it at the appropriate place.

## 17. The Chasm

*This shaft plunges straight down into darkness. You have no idea how far it may reach. A weak-looking bridge made from stone slabs and corroded metal girders connects one side to the other. On the far side, you see the lights of glimmering torches.*

This pit is not bottomless, though it might as well be. It drops for six hundred feet before reaching a single hollow cavern in which is an underground lake, where nothing but mould is living. The bridge looks unsteady but is in fact quite sound.

## 18. The Shrine of Nunanna (EL 8)

*Before you is the entry to a shrine or tomb of some kind, surrounded by a ring of burning torches that give off no heat. The entryway to this structure is a simple dark aperture, with a curtain of blue beads on silver wire closing it off. Above the aperture is a silver plate on which an inscription gleams.*

The inscription reads 'The Fairest' and requires a Decipher Script check to understand (DC 20). The bead curtain is made from semiprecious stones and silver and is worth 100 gold pieces. The torches are ordinary sticks on which *continuous flame* has been cast. There are eight of them.

Inside the shrine, it is dark. All that can be seen is a plate of glass, hanging on the far wall in a silver frame. Through this, the Player Characters can see a beautiful young elven woman, brushing her hair and looking out at them. The room she is standing in is hung with colourful woven blankets and fitted with luxurious furniture, including divans of gilded wood with purple cushions and a low table of ebony, all of which looks to be very valuable. The woman does not react to the Player Characters' presence. If they tap on the glass, she comes over and peers at them.

Nunanna dwells in a pocket paradise created for her by the Ragged Man. The plate of glass is a one-way mirror. Nunanna sees herself as eternally young and her surroundings as opulent. This is an illusion, as Nunanna is a vampire and cannot cast a reflection. Those looking in on her through the glass see her the same way. This was the Ragged Man's intention. He wished to preserve her as she was.



However, if the mirror is smashed, the truth is suddenly apparent. The room is full of heaps of mildew and rot, while Nunanna herself is a shrivelled near-skeletal monster whose finger bones protrude from the ends of her fingers. Her canine teeth are razor-sharp diamonds. Anyone smashing the mirror robs her of her endless dream, so she will fall upon them shrieking and try to tear their throat out.

**Nunanna:** Elf vampire sorcerer 6; CR 8; Medium undead; HD 6d12 (39 hp); Init +3; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 19 (+3 Dex, +6 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 16; Base attack/grapple +3/+8; Atk slam +8 melee (1d6+5); Full Atk slam +8 melee (1d6+5); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA blood drain, children of the night, dominate, create spawn, energy drain, spells; SQ alternate form, damage reduction 10/silver and magic, fast healing, gaseous form, resistance to cold 10 and electrical 10, spider climb, turn resistance, undead traits; AL NE; SV: Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 17, Dex 20, Con -, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 20

*Skills & Feats:* Bluff +9, Concentration +9, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Spellcraft +11; Augment Summoning, Combat Casting, Spell Focus (conjuration)

*Spells Known:* 0<sup>th</sup> level: *resistance, touch of fatigue, acid splash, dancing lights, ghost sound, mage hand, mending*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *shield, magic missile, mage armour, summon monster I*; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: *glitterdust, web*; 3<sup>rd</sup> level: *Summon monster III*

**Spells per Day:** 0<sup>th</sup> level: 6; 1<sup>st</sup> level: 7; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: 7; 3<sup>rd</sup> level: 4

**Treasure:** Nunanna's sparkling diamond fangs are worth 1,500 gold pieces each. They are part of the key that unlocks the Gate of Kharad (see below).

**Blood Drain (Ex):** A vampire can suck blood from a living victim with its fangs by making a successful grapple check. If it pins the foe, it drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of Constitution drain each round the pin is maintained. On each such successful attack, the vampire gains 5 temporary hit points.

**Children of the Night (Su):** Vampires command the lesser creatures of the world and once per day can call forth 1d6+1 rat swarms, 1d4+1 bat swarms, or a pack of 3d6 wolves as a standard action. (If the base creature is not terrestrial, this power might summon other creatures of similar power.) These creatures arrive in 2d6 rounds and serve the vampire for up to 1 hour.

**Dominate (Su):** A vampire can crush an opponent's will just by looking onto his or her eyes. This is similar to a gaze attack, except that the vampire must use a standard action, and those merely looking at it are not affected. Anyone the vampire targets must succeed on a Will save or fall instantly under the vampire's influence as though by a dominate person spell (caster level 12th). The ability has a range of 30 feet.

**Create Spawn (Su):** A humanoid or monstrous humanoid slain by a vampire's energy drain rises as a vampire spawn (see the Vampire Spawn entry) 1d4 days after burial.

If the vampire instead drains the victim's Constitution to 0 or lower, the victim returns as a spawn if it had 4 or less HD and as a vampire if it had 5 or more HD. In either case, the new vampire or spawn is under the command of the vampire that created it and remains enslaved until its master's destruction. At any given time a vampire may have enslaved spawn totaling no more than twice its own Hit Dice; any spawn it creates that would exceed this limit are created as free-willed vampires or vampire spawn. A vampire that is enslaved may create and enslave spawn of its own, so a master vampire can control a number of lesser vampires in this fashion. A vampire may voluntarily free an enslaved spawn in order to enslave a new spawn, but once freed, a vampire or vampire spawn cannot be enslaved again.

**Energy Drain (Su):** Living creatures hit by a vampire's slam attack (or any other natural weapon the vampire might possess) gain two negative levels. For each negative level bestowed, the vampire gains 5 temporary hit points. A vampire can use its energy drain ability once per round.

**Alternate Form (Su):** A vampire can assume the shape of a bat, dire bat, wolf, or dire wolf as a standard action. This ability is similar to a polymorph spell cast by a 12th-level character, except that the vampire does not regain hit points for changing form and must choose from among the forms mentioned here. While in its alternate form, the vampire loses its natural slam attack and dominate ability, but it gains the natural weapons and extraordinary special attacks of its new form. It can remain in that form until it assumes another or until the next sunrise. (If the base creature is not terrestrial, this power might allow other forms.)

**Gaseous Form (Su):** As a standard action, a vampire can assume gaseous form at will as the spell (caster level 5th), but it can remain gaseous indefinitely and has a fly speed of 20 feet with perfect maneuverability.

**Spider Climb (Ex):** A vampire can climb sheer surfaces as though with a spider climb spell.

## 19. The Weavers' Chamber (EL 6)

*This large room is ankle-deep in webs. They lie in grey blankets and drifts across the floor. Against the far wall, five cocoons have been placed at regular intervals. In the room's centre, an iron spiral staircase leads up to a hole in the ceiling. Multiple strands of thick webbing trail from it.*

The staircase has actually broken loose from its moorings, as a Spot check reveals (DC 15). Only the webs are holding it in place. If they are cut or burned down, the staircase falls with a tremendous clangour and the Player Characters must find another way up. The 60 foot square region around the staircase is covered with ettercap webs (see below).

Among the webs at the periphery of the room are the rusted remains of broken cages and the bones of various exotic animals. Player Characters can identify the skulls of a gryphon, a dragon and even a unicorn. This room was originally used to keep rare captive animals for special sacrifices to Kharad but it has been neglected and all of the inhabitants have died, with the exception of the ettercaps and their pet spiders. The Keeper still carries out his duties and throws food down to the creatures, which is why they are still alive.

**Monstrous Spiders (2):** See room 4 for statistics.

**Ettercaps (2):** CR 3; Medium aberration; HD 5d8+5 (27 hp); Init +3; Spd 30 ft (6 squares), climb 30 ft; AC 14 (+3 Dex, +1 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 11; Base attack/grapple +3/+5; Atk bite +5 melee (1d8+2 plus poison); Full Atk bite +5 melee (1d8+2 plus poison) and 2 claws +3 melee (1d3+1); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA poison, web; SQ low-light vision; AL NE; SV: Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 6, Wis 15, Cha 8

**Skills & Feats:** Climb +10, Craft (trapmaking) +4, Hide +9, Listen +4, Spot +8; Great Fortitude, Multiattack

**Poison (Ex):** Injury, Fortitude (DC 15), initial damage 1d6 Dex, secondary damage 2d6 Dex.

**Web (Ex):** An ettercap can throw a web eight times per day. This is similar to an attack with a net but has a maximum range of 50 feet, with a range increment of ten feet and is effective against targets of up to Medium size. The web anchors the target in place, allowing no movement. An entangled creature can escape with a Escape Artist check (DC 13) or burst the web with a Strength check (DC 17). The web has six hit points, hardness zero and takes double damage from fire.

Ettercaps can also create sheets of sticky webbing from 5 to 60 feet square. They usually position these to snare flying creatures but can also try to trap prey on the ground. Approaching creatures must succeed on a Spot check (DC 20) to notice a web, or they stumble into it and become trapped as though by a successful web attack. Attempts to escape or burst the webbing receive a +5 bonus if the trapped creature has something to walk on or grab while pulling free. Each five foot square section has six hit points, hardness zero and takes double damage from fire.

An ettercap can move across its own sheet web at its climb speed and can determine the exact location of any creature touching the web.

## 20. The Keeper's Vault (EL 7)

*This room is featureless but for a trough of green liquid in its centre and a stone basin against the far wall. The basin is filled with an unpleasant-looking crimson sludge, like minced beef or bloody porridge. Beside it is a crusted scoop. On mounts on the west wall are strange implements: a large prod of some kind, a huge net and a crossbow fitted with a harpoon.*

*Lying motionless in the green liquid is a figure like a man but larger. He seems misshapen, as if he had been put together wrongly.*

This room is where the Keeper of the animals would live. His duty was to feed and guard the exotic beasts. No mortal Keeper managed to survive for long, so the Ragged Man built a flesh golem out of their torn remains and had a lot more success that way.

The basin is magical and continually generates protein-rich ooze that is an ideal feed for beasts. Twice per day, the Keeper plods to the staircase and throws scoops of this stuff into the places where the cages used to be.

The implements on the wall are meant for the Keeper to use, to control the exotic beasts in the room below. The net is an ordinary net (large size) and the prod is a form of longspear that deals nonlethal damage and can be used to deliver a *shocking grasp* effect (caster level 5, 15 charges). The Keeper never bothers to use them.



**The Keeper (Flesh Golem):** Large Construct; CR 7; HD 9d10+30 (79 hp); Init -1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 18 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +10 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 18; Base attack/grapple +6/+15; Atk slam +10 melee (2d8+5); Full Atk 2 slams +10 melee (2d8+5); Space/Reach 10 ft/10 ft; SA berserk; SQ construct traits, damage reduction 5/adamantine, darkvision 60 ft, immunity to magic, low-light vision; AL N; SV: Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +3; Str 21, Dex 9, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1

**Berserk (Ex):** There is a cumulative 1% chance each round during combat that the Keeper goes berserk, attacking the nearest creature to itself or smashing some object.

**Immunity to Magic (Ex):** The Keeper is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. A magical attack that deals cold or fire damage slows the Keeper (as the *slow* spell) for 2d6 rounds, with no saving throw. A magical attack that deals electrical damage breaks any *slow* effect on the Keeper and heals one point of damage for every three points of damage the attack would otherwise deal. If the amount of healing would cause the Keeper to exceed its full normal hit points, it gains any excess as temporary hit points.

## 21. The Chamber of Endless Vitality

*There are four cucurbits of cloudy glass in this room, each one the height of a man and filled with murky liquid that bubbles furiously. Rods of some dark substance are half-submerged in them, with metal hawsers trailing from them through supporting frames to a central wooden cradle. This is fitted with a metal crown or headband.*

This room is where the Keeper replenishes his strength. The cucurbits are primitive batteries, using an amalgam of magic and alchemy to provide a constant electric current. The liquid in them is strong acid. Anyone touching the metal headband must make a Reflex saving throw (DC 20) or take 2d6 electrical damage. If the Keeper is damaged, he comes here and puts the headband on until his damage is healed.

## 22. The Spiral

*This narrow passageway is so cramped that it feels as if you are moving in the spaces behind the walls, rather than down any conduit that was meant to be trod by a human being.*

The passage here is two and a half feet across. The Player Characters will have to move down this spiral in single file. The Ragged Man had the temple built this way to enable incorporeal and gaseous creatures to come to him but keep larger beasts away.

## 23. Private Temple (EL 9)

The door to this room is made from reinforced wood and is locked (Open Lock DC 25).

*Within is a long, high-ceilinged room with a stone altar in the centre, thick as treacle with crusted blood from many sacrifices over countless years. On it, an incense burner smoulders with*

*fresh coals. Beyond the altar is a round stone pool, filled to the brim with a matt black substance.*

*Overhead, a multitude of grisly creatures whirr around the room. These things resemble the skeletons of human babies, with batlike wings grafted to their shoulder blades. Their large heads nod and snap and their little bony limbs reach out to you.*

These things are the Chuballak, undead servitors created in a rite too awful to describe. They are the Ragged Man's inner temple attendants. Their function is usually to prepare the room for the rituals, helping to hold incense burners and keep creatures under control.

They are extremely competent at snatching items away from people (they are used to removing robes and items from the Ragged Man and investing him in new ones during the course of elaborate rituals) so their battle tactic is to mob a single target and strip him of as much gear as possible. The Chuballak fling any weapons or magical items that they strip from their enemies into the Offering Pool at the far end of the temple.

**Chuballak (4):** CR 4; Small undead; HD 4d12 (26 hp); Init +5; Spd 20 ft (4 squares), fly 40 ft (8 squares, good); AC 16 (+5 Dex, +1 size), touch 16, flat-footed 11; Base attack/grapple +3/+1; Atk bite +8 melee (1d4+3); Full Atk bite +8 melee (1d4+3) and two claws +3 melee (1d3+1); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA chatter, disarm; SQ undead traits, damage resistance 5/



bludgeoning and magic, darkvision 60 ft; AL NE; SV: Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 17, Dex 20, Con —, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 10

*Skills & Feats:* Hide +10, Listen +4, Move Silently +11, Sleight of Hand +8, Spot +7; Improved Disarm, Improved Unarmed Strike, Weapon Finesse<sup>B</sup>

*Chatter (Su):* Before they attack, the Chuballak keep up a constant chattering with their skulls as they fly around. This shreds the nerves of those who are exposed to it. All creatures within a 60 foot spread must make Will saving throws (DC 12) or begin to shiver uncontrollably, suffering 1d3 points of temporary Dexterity damage. This is a mind-affecting sonic effect. The saving throw is Charisma-based. A creature that makes its saving throw cannot be affected by the same Chuballak's chattering for 24 hours. A Chuballak cannot chatter and bite in the same round.

*Disarm (Ex):* The Chuballak have a +8 racial bonus to Disarm attempts.

**The Offering Pool:** This depression is completely filled by a quiescent black pudding. It has learned, in its mindless way, that if it waits here then it will be fed. The Chuballak throw the residue of sacrifices, old weapons, dungeon refuse and all manner of things into it and it dissolves them all with equal hunger. If there is nothing else to eat, the Chuballak go and fetch a scoop of protein slime from the Keeper's Vault.

**Black Pudding:** CR 7; Huge Ooze; 10d10+60 (115 hp); Init -5; Spd 20 ft (4 squares), climb 20 ft; AC 3 (-2 size, -5 Dex), touch 3, flat-footed 3; Base attack/grapple +7/+18; Atk slam +8 melee (2d6+4 plus 2d6 acid); Full atk slam +8 melee (2d6+4 plus 2d6 acid); Space/Reach 15 ft/10 ft; SA acid, constrict 2d6+4 plus 2d6 acid, improved grab; SQ blindsight 60 ft, split, ooze traits; AL N; SV: Fort +9, Ref -2, Will -2; Str 17, Dex 1, Con 22, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 1

*Skills & Feats:* Climb +11

*Acid (Ex):* The creature secretes a digestive acid that dissolves organic material and metal quickly, but does not affect stone. Any melee hit or constrict attack deals acid damage, and the opponent's armor and clothing dissolve and become useless immediately unless they succeed on DC 21 Reflex saves. A metal or wooden weapon that strikes a black pudding also dissolves immediately unless it succeeds on a DC 21 Reflex save. The save DCs are Constitution-based.

The pudding's acidic touch deals 21 points of damage per round to wooden or metal objects, but the ooze must remain in contact with the object for 1 full round to deal this damage.

*Constrict (Ex):* A black pudding deals automatic slam and acid damage with a successful grapple check. The opponent's clothing and armor take a -4 penalty on Reflex saves against the acid.

*Improved Grab (Ex):* To use this ability, a black pudding must hit with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

*Split (Ex):* Slashing and piercing weapons deal no damage to a black pudding. Instead the creature splits into two identical puddings, each with half of the original's current hit points (round down). A pudding with 10 hit points or less cannot be further split and dies if reduced to 0 hit points.

**The Altar:** The incense burner on the altar is made from a red gold frame with a brass interior, with fittings made from human finger bone. It is worth 1,000 gold pieces. Beneath the altar, in a small cavity that is easy to miss (Search DC 20) are three blocks of *incense of meditation* wrapped in waxed cloth.

**Note:** This encounter has the potential to be lethal – the Chuballak and the pudding together make up a far higher EL than the party should be facing. However, bear in mind that the black pudding is not inclined to stir from its pool unless it is harmed. If the Player Characters tackle the threats sequentially, they are more likely to survive.

## 24. The Guardian of the Way (EL 7)

*Between two stone pillars stands a hideous, twisted creature. It resembles a bald-headed human being that is standing with its back to you. Its head has somehow been wrenched around to face backwards, so that it is staring down the passage. One of its arms has been stitched into a slash in its back; the other is abnormally large and muscular and has been dislocated to point in the same direction as the face. A blackened tongue pokes from its mouth and saliva drips constantly from its chin.*

This is an Invunche, a temple guardian created by steadily deforming a human being over many months and then summoning a demonic entity to occupy the flesh, in a perverse variation of the procedure used to create constructs. It is an



intelligent, brutal servant. When it attacks, it drools and emits a high-pitched giggling like that of a madman or a child.

If the Invunche sees the Player Characters, it will come after them but will not pursue further than the end of its corridor. Its *true seeing* special quality means that it will notice them even if they are invisible.

**Invunche:** CR 7; Medium construct; HD 6d10+20 (53 hp); Init -5; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 18 (+2 Dex, +6 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 16; Base attack/grapple +7/+10; Atk slam +10 melee (1d4+4); Full atk slam +10 melee (1d4+4); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA heart strike, frightful presence; SQ darkvision 60 ft construct traits, heart devouring, spell resistance 16, *true seeing*; AL N; SV: Fort +9, Ref -2, Will -2; Str 17, Dex 14, Con -, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8

**Skills & Feats:** Listen +13, Spot +13; Alertness, Power Attack

**Heart Strike (Ex):** The Invunche's dislocated arm can punch through the ribcage of an opponent and rip the heart from his breast. Three times per day, it can make a heart strike attempt. This must be declared before attacking. If the Invunche successfully hits and deals damage, the victim must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 plus total damage dealt). Failure means that the victim's heart is torn from his chest and he dies. Success means that the victim merely suffers an additional 1d4+4 points of damage. The Invunche can only perform a heart strike on creatures within one size category of itself. Creatures that are not vulnerable to critical hits or do not have hearts (such as some aberrations) are immune to this attack.

**Heart Devouring (Su):** The Invunche does not need to eat. It does, however, draw sustenance from fresh hearts. If the Invunche consumes a heart within five rounds of the victim's death, it heals 2d8 hit points.

**Frightful Presence (Ex):** The Invunche's strange backwards scuttling and giggling is horrible to behold. Any creature within 30 feet when the Invunche attacks must make a Will saving throw (DC 12) or become frightened for 5d6 rounds. An opponent that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to that same Invunche's frightful presence for 24 hours. Frightful presence is a mind-affecting fear effect.

**True Seeing (Su):** The Invunche benefits from the effects of *true seeing* at all times.

## 25. The Sarcophagus of Kreesha (EL 7)

*This chamber smells of incense and spices. The walls are covered with a mosaic of brightly coloured tiles, depicting a longhaired woman in a feathered mask speaking to crowds of people. Above this is a decorative border made from similar tiles. The blue tiles in the pattern are glowing, filling the chamber with a soft light. In the room's centre is a low stone sarcophagus, with the stone figure of the same masked woman on the lid. An inscription has been carved into the stone at her feet.*

The inscription on the sarcophagus reads 'The Wisest' and requires a Decipher Script skill check to understand (DC 20).

This is where the bones of Kreesha lie, she who was the first and most trusted of the Brides. She no longer inhabits her physical remains. Instead, she haunts the tomb and its environs as a spectre, sometimes draining the life force from swamp elves who stray into the wrong part of the marsh.

Kreesha is the most active of the three Brides. Xioloche is content to dream green dreams under the marsh and Nunanna is confined to a private chamber of her own vanity. Kreesha, though, roams far and wide, hoping for some release from her wretched condition. If the Player Characters have not already attacked and destroyed her elsewhere in the Temple, she can always be found here.

**Kreesha (spectre):** CR 7; Medium undead (Incorporeal); HD 7d12 (45 hp); Init +7; Spd 40 ft (8 squares), fly 80 ft (perfect); AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 deflection), touch 15, flat-footed 13; Base attack/grapple +3/-; Atk incorporeal touch +6 melee (1d8 plus energy drain); Full atk incorporeal touch +6 melee (1d8 plus energy drain); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA energy drain, create spawn; SQ darkvision 60 ft, incorporeal traits, +2 turn resistance, sunlight powerlessness, undead traits, unnatural aura; AL LE; SV: Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +7; Str —, Dex 16, Con —, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 15

**Skills & Feats:** Hide +13, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (religion) +12, Listen +14, Search +12, Spot +14, Survival +2 (+4 following tracks); Alertness, Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative

**Energy Drain (Su):** Living creatures hit by Kreesha's incorporeal touch attack gain two negative levels unless they succeed at a Fortitude saving throw (DC 15). For each such negative level bestowed, Kreesha gains five temporary hit points.

**Create Spawn (Su):** Any humanoid slain by a Kreesha becomes a spectre in 1d4 rounds. Spawn are under Kreesha's command and remain enslaved until death. They do not possess any of the abilities they had in life.

**Unnatural Aura (Su):** Animals, whether wild or domesticated, can sense Kreesha's unnatural presence at a distance of 30 feet. They do not willingly approach nearer than that and panic if forced to do so; they remain panicked as long as they are within that range.

**Sunlight Powerlessness (Ex):** Kreesha is powerless in natural sunlight (not merely a *daylight* spell) and flees from it. If Kreesha is caught in sunlight, she cannot attack and can take only a single move or attack action in a round.

**Kreesha's Remains:** The sarcophagus lid is heavy and difficult to shift, requiring a Strength check to lift (DC 20). Within, the bones of Kreesha are laid out in reverent order, with various pieces of jewellery on them. Her ankles are draped with golden chains (400 gp each), her breastbone is covered by a falcon-shaped necklace in gold and lapis lazuli (800 gp), her wrists bear bracelets of twisted gold and silver wires set with tiny diamonds (200 gp) and her neck bears a faience scarab on a long-decayed silk collar. This last item is a *scarab of protection*, with eight uses left. The remains of a feathered mask conceal her face. Beneath, her skull has been adorned with ten blue gems. These

little sapphires are worth 300 gold pieces each and are part of the key to room 26, the Gate of Kharad.

## 26. The Gate of Kharad

*The corridor ends in a single mighty block of basalt stone, with the baleful image of the skull twined with briars glaring from it. Around the skull is an inscription in tangled, florid script. The air here is icy cold and you feel as if you were standing on the brink of some great abyss, rather than in the bowels of the pyramid.*

A Decipher Script skill check (DC 20) gives the following as the inscription's meaning:

'Behind the last seal He rests, who is the Lord of this place. He is the servant of the Master of Life and Death, the Sovereign of the Two Gates. His are the twin powers of golden blessing and silver destruction. Let none approach save the Three who he has blessed as Brides, unto whom he has given the jewels of his kingdom for a dowry. Peace of undying darkness be his for ever and for ever.'

The stone block is the seal on Kharad's throne room. It absolutely will not budge unless the proper keys are brought close to it. These are the jewels set into the skulls of the Brides: Xioloche's emerald eyes, Nunanna's diamond fangs and Nunanna's sapphire facial gems. Only the gems need to be present, not the whole Bride or even the skull.

If the jewels are brought close, they begin to glow with light. All three sets of jewels must be present for the door to open. If this is achieved, there is a thunderous crash that vibrates through the whole Temple and the block steadily begins to sink downwards.

## 27. The Throne

*A hellish, throbbing blue glare lights this pyramidal chamber, its source the orb in the room's centre. The light ripples like water, pulsing rhythmically as a heart.*

*The sloping walls here are thickly matted with thorny briars. They are growing out of the very stone, as if the plants were merged with it somehow. The briars waver and twitch, writhing slowly like slender serpents. In each corner of the room stands a sturdy column, reaching from floor to ceiling.*

*You see that the pulsing blue orb is held in the withered claw of a figure, sat upon a throne of carved stone. It is dressed in the ragged remains of a high priest's robes. The skin, too, hangs ragged on the body, hanging in limp folds like wallpaper that has rotted and begun to peel. The head nods in time to the pulses of the light.*

This being is, of course, the Ragged Man. His power is now all but spent and he is nothing but a husk, clinging to the Orb of Azurite and using it to keep his Starborn soul bound to his

body. At his feet lies the signature weapon that he bore when he fought as a Starborn at the last Equinox of the Heroes. It now belongs to the Player most suited to bear it.

Once the Player Characters are in the room with him, he will address them in a voice that is little more than a croaking whisper:

*'So. At last, it is time. It is... strange. I have held this desiccated flesh for centuries and still I crave another minute of life. In the name of mercy, grant me another minute to breathe this foul air... to feel agony, for it is better than feeling nothing.'*

If they do not answer him, he continues:

*'I know you are there. I have watched you. Come... you have nothing to fear from me now. I am... a memory... the husk of a fading star. Nothing more.'*

If they ask him questions, he responds as best he can:

- The other signature weapons have not gone far. They are in Crescent City. One is secreted in the old Testing Maze where the King and Queen of Thieves once held court. The others were bought by a merchant, Ombar Lutz, and are locked away in a vault in the Central Bank.
- His name used to be Severil Blackthorn, a member of the troupe led by Starkweather John. They fought the last survivors from the drow army a great many centuries ago on the island of Chillhame and were victorious, though at a great cost. He was killed in the battle but restored to life in the stone circle called the Tump. Returning from death to life convinced him that Kharad had singled him out for special duty on earth. Only a priest who had known both life and death could properly administer the rites of Kharad, who comprises both in one deity.
- The sphere he holds is called the Orb of Azurite. He was supposed to seal it up safely, until the new Starborn could come and claim it. That was meant to be his sacred duty. Instead, he warped its power to extend his own life, populating the Temple with strange entities, creating his undead Brides and establishing magical traps.
- The Dark is rising again. Whenever there is an Equinox of Heroes, the Starborn and the Host are forced into conflict, which decides the fate of the races who dwell upon the earth.
- The Orb's power is greatly reduced now, because he has been draining it away. It should, however, still be able to help them. It gives the bearer the ability to sense the nearest Node, if there is one. It also confers the power to detect the Host and the creatures sent forth from the Dark.

The Player Characters can attack the Ragged Man if they choose. Nothing, however, will harm him unless the Orb is taken from his hand. If this happens, the flesh pours off his bones like dust and the skeleton falls in a rattling heap. The light of the



Orb fades, leaving the room dark but for the Player Characters' lights, if they have any.

Then, with a creak of ancient stone, the walls of the room open out like the petals of a flower, letting daylight (or moonlight, if it is night) stream in. The roof remains supported by the corner columns. The Ragged Man's chamber is the topmost room of the pyramid; with the walls opened out, the Player Characters can easily descend the tiers of the pyramid.

### *The Orb of Azurite*

The Orb is a blue crystal sphere three inches across. It is a minor artefact, cast down to Ashfar by the Star Goddess herself, to assist the Starborn in their war against the Host. The Orb has the following powers, with a caster level of 20 where relevant:

- The wielder is automatically aware of the direction and distance of the nearest Node or stone circle. He can also sense Nodes that have been corrupted by the Dark.
- The wielder can *scry* on any of the signature weapons (whether they are currently wielded or not) and is aware of their location relative to him, as if by a *locate object* spell with infinite range.

- The wielder of the Orb can call forth *daylight* at will. The light is an intense blue colour but is otherwise as described in the spell.
- Once per week, the wielder of the Orb can call upon the guidance of Nuith, as if by a *divination* spell.
- The wielder is automatically alerted when any member of the Host is present within a radius of 300 feet. He is only conscious of a presence; he cannot tell how many members there are, nor their direction or distance. If he was asleep, he is instantly awoken.







# Rogues' Business

## Summary

To retrieve the last of the signature weapons, the Player Characters must dare the hazards of the testing maze under the old rogues' guild house and risk everything by breaking into the central bank. These adventures take place back in Crescent City (see *Chapter 8*).

## The Testing Maze

This section covers the headquarters of the old rogues' guild and the testing maze beneath it, where one of the Player Characters' signature weapons lies hidden.

## What the Crime Lords Know

If the Player Characters are on friendly terms with any of the crime lords except Dark Mariah (who has come to power since the old Rogues' Guild was smashed ten years ago) they can get details about the old testing maze. Even Dark Mariah has heard of it, and though she suspects it was beneath the old rogues' guild she does not know anything about how to reach it or what to expect within it. It was built in a sub-cellar, below the more easily accessible upper cellars.

The rogues were divided into three classes: Apprentice, Journeyman and Master. Apprentices learned the ropes in the training halls, stealing purses from dummies covered in bells that jingled if you made a false move, and learning how to duck and weave to avoid pursuit. Journeymen applied their skills on the streets, thieving at will and bringing home a contribution for the Guild. Masters were allowed to teach and had luxurious quarters in the guild house.

The rank of Master Thief was not easily earned. In order to prove yourself a Master Thief, you had to make it from one end of the maze to the next, in under an hour. The maze was not so much a labyrinth as an obstacle course, with nasty and ingenious traps. Traditionally, no rogue was ever allowed to warn another of the dangers in advance, though rogues being rogues, a fair bit of cheating went on. The Crime Lords honour this tradition and will not give the Player Characters any warning of what they are likely to encounter.

It was understood that the testing maze was lethal. Nobody *had* to apply for the rank of Master; it was voluntary. Those who ran the maze and died in the attempt were buried with honour and their families cared for. Once you were in, however, something ensured you *stayed* in until you either finished the course or died. The Crime Lords will not say exactly how this was achieved. They grin privately at this point.

## The Legend of the Secret Horde

It has long been rumoured that Thom and Lolly Lankin hid away some fabulous treasure before the raid took place. Even wilder rumours suggest that they are still alive somehow, despite being hanged in plain sight in a crowded town square, since attempts to contact their spirits have been fruitless. Those brave souls who have eluded the priests in the hospice and made it into the old testing maze have found nothing (except, in some cases, a painful death) and the legend of the secret horde is considered to be an urban myth by those who are in a position to know.

## How to Get In

The Crime Lords can tell the Player Characters where the entrance to the Testing Maze is. There is a flagstone in the cellar room directly underneath the main entrance hall. Although the Crime Lords will not know it, this is the room currently being used as the morgue. Lift that and climb down the ladder. Once you have walked across the white line on the floor, the testing process begins.

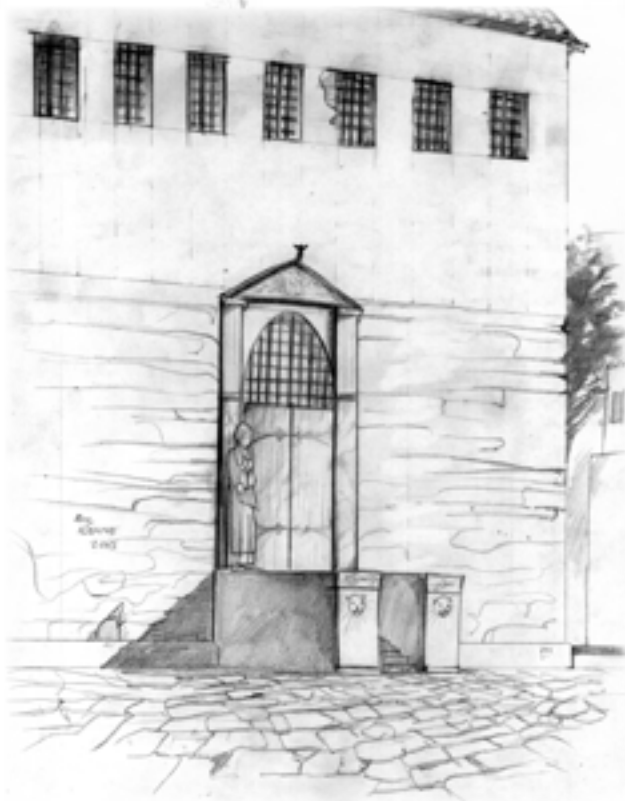
If the Player Characters are on friendly terms with a Crime Lord, he can also tell them that the old strong room was on the first floor at the end of a corridor to the west. There is precious little chance of anything being left to loot there but the Player Characters are always welcome to search! Currently, the strong room is in fact being used to keep a werewolf locked up...

## The Hospice of Saint Cecilia (Old Guild House)

At first glance, this building looks much like any other in the rich part of the city – a large, two-storey structure like a manor house. A second look reveals that the ground floor has no windows at all and the windows in the upper floor are covered across with iron bars.

When the old rogues' guild was crushed ten years ago, the authorities of the Marian Church decided to replace darkness with light. What better use for a den of thieves than to turn it into a house of healing? They tore out the furnishings and burned them, replacing the sofas and armchairs with simple truckle beds and enamel basins. Clerics moved in where the rogues had once ruled. Soon, the guild house was filled with the moans of the sick and dying, as robed priests and nuns moved from bed to bed trying to ease their suffering.

The Hospice is dedicated to caring for the poor of the city, those who do not have the gold to pay for *remove disease* or even *cure light wounds* spells. *Remove disease* costs a minimum of 150 gold pieces, which is way beyond the means of most ordinary working people. Within the Hospice, they can receive free



medical care. It does not grant instantaneous relief like magic does but it does at least give a chance of recovery.

**Interior:** The décor of the old Guild is mostly gone. The thick carpets have been thrown out in favour of stark white floor tiles, which bestow a -2 penalty on Move Silently skill checks. The Hospice still retains its expensive wall panelling, made from exotic dark woods. These look as if they could conceal any number of secret compartments. The Player Characters will be wasting their time if they look for any, though, as there are none to be found, except in the secure ward (room 8).

### Non-Player Character Group: The Staff

Acolytes of the Marian faith make up the staff of the Hospice. They are not expecting combat. Sometimes a patient will become violent but that is the extent of the danger they usually have to face. If there is any trouble, they will run out into the street and raise the hue and cry, bringing guards down on the place. The administrators are senior clerics.

Each staff member wears a simple grey hooded robe. There are around 40 of them in the hospice, so if a Player Character decided to try disguising himself as one, the patients would not be likely to notice, though the staff definitely would.

**Typical Acolyte:** Human cleric 1; CR 1; Medium humanoid; HD 1d8+3 (7 hp); Init +0; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Base attack/grapple +0/-1; Atk quarterstaff -1 melee (1d6-1/1d6-1); Full Atk quarterstaff +0 melee (1d6-1/1d6-1); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA spells, undead

turning; SQ none; AL LN; SV: Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +3; Str 9, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 8.

**Skills and Feats:** Heal +5, Knowledge (religion) +5, Listen +3, Profession (hospitaller) +5, Spot +3; Alertness, Toughness.

**Deity/Domains:** Marius: Law, Protection

**Spells:** 0<sup>th</sup> level: *create water, detect poison, cure minor wounds*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *cure light wounds (2), sanctuary*

**Equipment & Treasure:** Quarterstaff.

**Typical Administrator:** Human cleric 6; CR 6; Medium humanoid; HD 6d8+3 (30 hp); Init +0; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Base attack/grapple +4/+3; Atk quarterstaff +3 melee (1d6-1/1d6-1); Full Atk quarterstaff +3 melee (1d6-1/1d6-1); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA spells, undead turning; SQ none; AL LN; SV: Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +7; Str 9, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 8.

**Skills & Feats:** Heal +13, Knowledge (religion) +10, Listen +4, Profession (hospitaller) +10, Spot +4; Alertness, Skill Focus (heal), Toughness.

**Deity/Domains:** Marius: Law, Protection

**Spells:** 0<sup>th</sup> level: *create water, detect poison, cure minor wounds, virtue (2)*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *cure light wounds (2), deathwatch, remove fear, sanctuary*; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: *calm emotions, cure moderate wounds (2), remove paralysis, status*; 3<sup>rd</sup> level: *protection from energy, remove disease, remove blindness/deafness*

**Equipment & Treasure:** Quarterstaff. Additionally, all administrators have a set of keys that unlock any locked door in the hospice, with the exception of the secure ward (room 8). Only the senior administrator, Father Tonkin, has the key to that room.

**Killing Priests:** Killing a priest of Marius is a hanging offence in Crescent City. Anyone who slaughters a priest who was administering to the sick cannot expect any sympathy from the judge. If the Player Characters kill any of the acolytes or administrators, then they will be marked men from that point onward. Even the Crime Lords frown on that kind of behaviour. No true professional *needs* to kill a first level cleric.

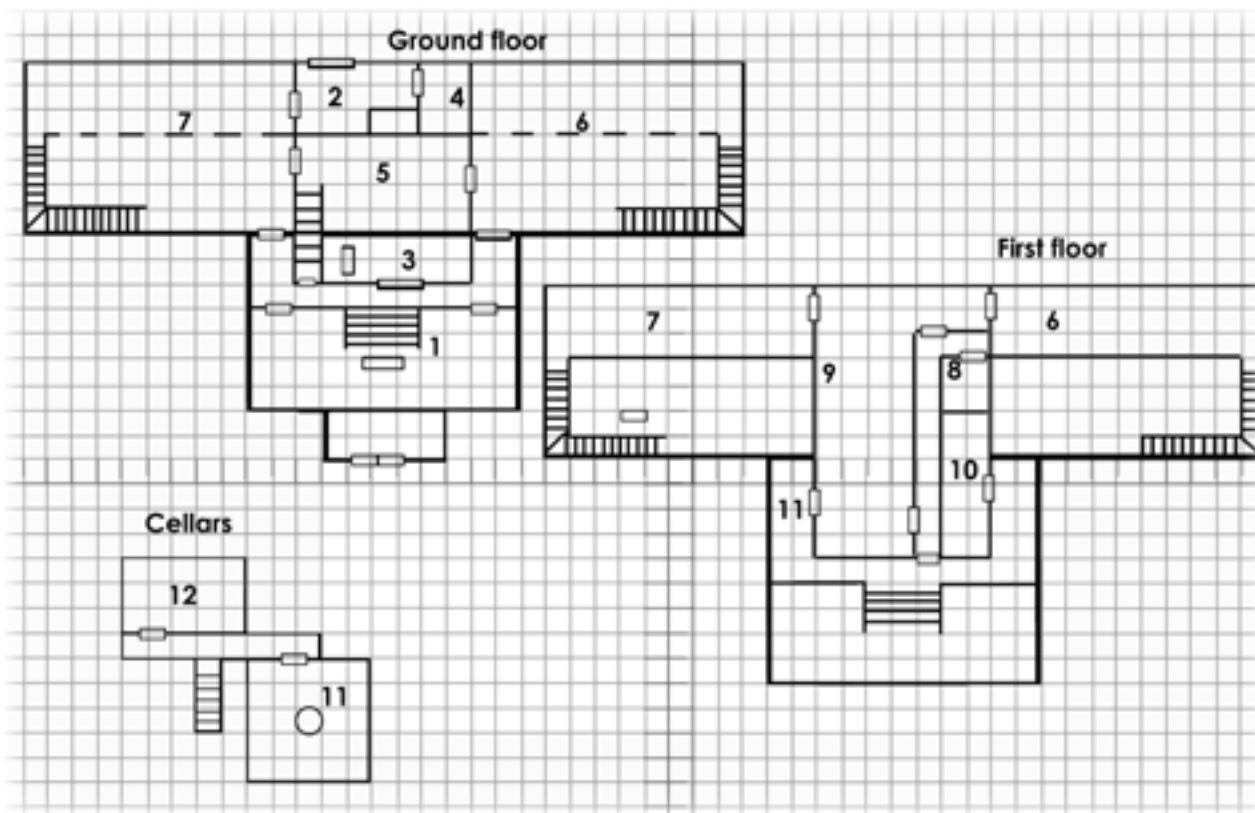
### 1. Entrance Hall (EL 6)

*An administrator in a grey robe sits at the desk here, making notes in a thick book. There are benches against the wall. From upstairs comes the sound of groaning voices. Past the desk, a staircase leads up to a balcony.*

The wooden double doors to this area are kept open from dawn to midnight. Even when they are locked for security, there is still a staff member on duty here in case of emergencies.

The administrator, Father Dawkins, keeps the record of every patient admitted. Unless the Player Characters have some sort of cover story, such as a sick or injured comrade, they will be politely escorted to the exit. Tourists are not welcome.

The priests are especially alert against requests to visit the sick in the wards, as many of the local criminals used to do this to finish off a wounded witness who was recovering here. Any person admitted is taken straight to the wards to be tended to,



or to the surgery area if the injury is severe. If the hospice is especially busy, then only urgent cases are admitted. Those that can wait are sat on the benches and told that a priest will be with them soon. Dead bodies are taken down to the morgue and a guard called to interview those that found them.

## 2. Kitchens (EL 3)

*These kitchens are clearly in constant use. The room is filled with steam and condensation drips from the wall tiles. A huge cauldron of soup is bubbling on the stove.*

Three acolytes are tending to the cooking. The steam gives each creature in the room partial concealment (20% miss chance). The soup is given to the patients in the wards and any left over is given to the poor and hungry around the back of the building.

## 3. Chapel (EL 2+)

*This little chapel is starkly furnished. Bare wooden pews, a simple table covered with a cloth for an altar and a large symbol of a man lashed to the arms of a clock are the only furnishings. A white enamel bowl filled with water is on a stand by the door.*

The acolytes and administrators use the chapel for prayer and to prepare their divine spells. There are always 2d4 acolytes and 0-2 administrators in the chapel at any time, day or night. Three potions of *cure light wounds* are kept in the drawer of the altar table. Patients with extremely severe injuries are rushed straight to the chapel, where they can be given magical healing or helped to a potion. The water in the bowl is holy; there is enough to fill four vials.

## 4. Storerooms

*Herbs and dried meats hang from the ceiling in this storeroom. Below are barrels and sacks. Stacked on shelves against the far wall are several small wooden boxes.*

The door to this room is locked (Open Lock DC 20). The boxes contain bandages, swabs and poultices of healing herbs. Each one is the equivalent of a healer's kit (+2 equipment bonus to Heal checks, ten uses) and there are eight of them. The other supplies in this room are mundane. A Knowledge (nature) skill check (DC 10) identifies large amounts of wolfsbane among the hanging herbs.

## 5. Surgery

*The stench of vinegar and herbs almost, but not quite, masks the coppery odour of blood in this room. From the instruments mounted on the wall, you can tell that this is an operating room and not a torture chamber, though those who have been taken here for treatment might not recognise the difference. There are three tables in the room's centre and a huge chandelier overhead, whose many candles light the room brightly. The tables are covered with bright white cloths.*

The instruments include bone saws, scalpels and mallets for breaking and resetting bones. The priests do not often resort to surgery but sometimes they have little choice.

## 6. East Ward

*This long room has low cot beds arranged in rows down either side. In the beds, contorted figures lie, some groaning in pain or delirium, some sleeping, some lying still and pale as death. A stairway leads to an upper floor, where you can see more beds and more stricken people. There is a stink of vomit in the air.*

This ward is used to house diseased, poisoned or moribund patients. Those who are expected to be in for some time are brought here. At the Games Master's discretion, Player Characters who come too close to the beds can be exposed to disease.

## 7. West Ward

*This long room has low cot beds arranged in rows down either side. In the beds, people are sitting up and talking with one another. Many have bloodied bandages on their limbs or heads. A stairway leads to an upper floor, where you can see more beds and more people in them.*

The patients here are on a short-term stay. This is where the victims of injury are brought. At the weekends, the west ward fills up with wounded drunkards who have gotten into fights and been gashed with a blade or had their heads split with a club.

Depending on the time of day, there may be acolytes moving among the patients. There are not many spare beds but there is always enough room for one more. Unless the Player Characters have some obvious business here, the conscious patients will stare at them and may even ask what they are doing there. Since the patients here are penniless, the Player Characters will also be asked for money or alcohol.

## 8. Secure Ward (EL 5)

The door to this room is much more solid than the others (reinforced wood) and the lock is of better quality (Open Lock DC 30). There is a small sliding panel in the door, which is also locked, though this lock can be opened with one of the administrators' keys or picked (DC 20). Inside can be seen a

small cubical room whose walls are padded with thick wadding, like a bedroll. The room has one occupant:

*Huddled in the corner of this room, with her hands trussed behind her back, is a miserable-looking human girl of about seventeen. Her hair is long and matted and her eyes sunken and dark, as if she has not eaten in some time. The room's padded walls suggest that she is likely to throw herself around, but as you look at her, it seems unlikely that she is interested in moving at all. In places, the padding is torn off in strips, revealing wood panelling beneath.*

The girl is Dennie Moncrieff, the daughter of one of the nobles living to the north of Crescent City. Her father pays the Hospice a handsome sum to keep her locked up here, on the pretext that she is a dangerous lunatic. This she is, in a very literal sense. Dennie is a werewolf (she was bitten while out hunting with her brother) and as such is an embarrassment to her family. The official story is that she has shipped out to the Eagle Nations to take care of family holdings over there.

Dennie's presence in the Hospice is a sensitive secret. Vigilance Derrick himself has been trying to cure her, coming to the Hospice to cast *remove disease* during the days of the full moon, but the trouble is that Dennie does not *want* to be cured. She lives in hope of escaping this place and running wild in the hills.

If she becomes aware of the Player Characters, she will try to enlist their help to escape. Her story is that she is the daughter of an aristocrat, kept incarcerated because she rebelled against her father's authority too many times. She has friends in the nobility, members of the Reveller set, who will reward the Player Characters handsomely if she is rescued.

**Dennie Moncrieff, human form:** Werewolf aristocrat 4 (human, shapechanger); CR 5; Medium humanoid; HD 3d8+3 plus 2d8+9 (34 hp); Init +2; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base attack/grapple +4/+3; Atk unarmed strike +3 melee (1d3-1 non-lethal); Full Atk unarmed strike +3 melee (1d3-1 non-lethal); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ alternate form, wolf empathy, low-light vision, scent; AL CE; SV: Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 9, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 15.

**Skills & Feats:** Bluff +12, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +9, Gather Information +9, Intimidate +9, Perform (sing) +9; Blind-Fight, Combat Expertise, Iron Will (B), Skill Focus (bluff)

**Dennie Moncrieff, wolf form:** Werewolf aristocrat 4 (human, shapechanger); CR 5; Medium humanoid; HD 3d8+3 plus 2d8+9 (34 hp); Init +4; Spd 50 ft (10 squares); AC 16 (+4 Dex, +2 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base attack/grapple +4/+4; Atk bite +5 melee (1d6); Full Atk bite +5 melee (1d6); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA curse of lycanthropy, trip; SQ alternate form, wolf empathy, damage reduction 10/silver, low-light vision, scent; AL CE; SV: Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +5; Str 11, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 15.

**Skills & Feats:** Bluff +12, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +9, Gather Information +9, Intimidate +9, Perform (sing) +9; Blind-Fight, Combat Expertise, Iron Will (B), Skill Focus (bluff), Track, Weapon Focus (bite)

**Dennie Moncrieff, hybrid form:** Werewolf aristocrat 4 (human, shapechanger); CR 5; Medium humanoid; HD 3d8+3 plus 2d8+9 (34 hp); Init +4; Spd 50 ft (10 squares); AC 16 (+4 Dex, +2 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base attack/grapple +4/+4; Atk claw +4 melee (1d4); Full Atk 2 claws +4 melee (1d4) and bite +0 melee (1d6); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA curse of lycanthropy, trip; SQ alternate form, wolf empathy, damage reduction 10/silver, low-light vision, scent; AL CE; SV: Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +5; Str 11, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 15.

**Skills & Feats:** Bluff +12, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +9, Gather Information +9, Intimidate +9, Perform (sing) +9; Blind-Fight, Combat Expertise, Iron Will (B), Skill Focus (bluff), Track, Weapon Focus (bite)

**Alternate Form (Su):** A werewolf can assume a bipedal hybrid form or the form of a wolf.

**Curse of Lycanthropy (Su):** Any humanoid or giant hit by a werewolf's bite attack in animal or hybrid form must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or contract lycanthropy.

**Trip (Ex):** A werewolf in animal form that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip the opponent (+2 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity.

If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the werewolf.

**Wolf Empathy (Ex):** Communicate with wolves and dire wolves, and +4 racial bonus on Charisma-based checks against wolves and dire wolves.

Unknown to Dennie, the room she occupies was once the above ground strong room for the Guild, in which the petty cash stores were kept. There is still a small reserve hidden behind one of the panels. If the padding is torn off the western wall and the panelling examined, a successful Search check (DC 20) turns up a hinged panel behind which is a portable metal safe. The safe lock is practically impossible to pick (Open Lock DC 40). Inside is a velvet bag containing 3,000 gold pieces and 5,500 silver pieces. To date, none of the rogues who have raided the maze below the hospice have found this safe, nor do they even know it is there.

## 9. Staff Quarters

*This room contains many bunk beds, with wooden footlockers at the base of each.*

The acolytes and administrators sleep here and keep their few worldly possessions in their footlockers. These are all locked (Open Lock DC 20) and contain nothing more than books, cheeses, apples, holy tracts, letters from loved ones and a silver piece or two. During the day, 1d4 acolytes are asleep here, having worked through the night. During night hours, there are up to 30 acolytes sleeping.

## 10. Supervisor's Office

*This comfortable room is fitted with a desk and tall bookcases, crammed with leather-bound texts. On the wall is a portrait of*



*a bearded man, his face contorted in suffering, surrounded by a halo of light.*

The portrait is an icon of Blessed Marius, a fine piece of art worth 100 gold pieces. The books are volumes on theology, herbalism and medicine. Father Tonkin can be found here, reading, praying or sleeping.


## 11. Bell Rope

*At this point, a rope dangles from a hole in the ceiling.*

The priests ring this bell to rouse the patients at seven o'clock every morning. It can also be used as an alarm bell in the case of emergencies, such as fire or assault. If the Player Characters leave dead or unconscious bodies lying around or are openly violent, one of the priests will try to reach this bell rope and sound the alarm.

## 11. Morgue

*This chamber is filled with a strange blue light, emanating from a jagged chunk of crystals on a pedestal in the room's centre. The air in here is icy cold and your breath forms steamy clouds. There are large wooden shelves on the walls. On each one is a humanoid form covered by a sheet.*



The crystal is a chunk of *frigoric*, a naturally occurring substance similar to ice that radiates cold in the same way that burning coals radiate heat. The *frigoric* crystals keep the room cold and prevent the bodies from decomposing too quickly. Anyone touching the crystals suffers 1d3 points of cold damage. *Frigoric* dropped into water freezes it solid; a cubic foot of *frigoric* will freeze a ten foot cube of water.

The shapes under the sheets are, as might be expected, naked dead bodies. These are awaiting cremation or dissection. There is nothing unusual about them.

The entrance to the testing maze is directly under the pedestal. A Search skill check (DC 15) is required to locate it. The flagstone is heavy and hard to lift, as it has been some time since it was opened (treat as a stuck door, Strength DC 20 to open). Beneath, iron rungs lead down into the darkness.

## 12. Dissection Room (EL 6)

*Sconces in the walls light this room. A table in its centre immediately catches your attention. The body of a human female is splayed across it. The skin on the face is missing and the torso has been cut open. From the precision of the cuts, you judge that this is not butchery but anatomical science at work. Shelves on the walls hold thick books and an assortment of glass jars in which human organs are floating.*

The followers of Marius are not opposed to science and discovery and so have embraced the study of medicine as well as the more traditional route of prayer to heal the sick. Father Cornelius, an administrator, can be found in this room, opening up the bodies of the dead with his scalpel and trying to form a better idea of what it was that killed them.

The unfortunate corpse on the table is one of the victims of the ghost Jocelyn Turvey, the Crescent City serial murderer (see Chapter 8). Father Cornelius is looking for clues as to why she was killed but is finding none.

## 13. Preparation Space

*The small room at the bottom of the ladder has no light sources at all and the air is chill. The place has a haunting, abandoned feeling to it and yet you feel as if you are being watched. To the south is a flat stone door with a curious depression at eye height, as if a coin had been pressed into soft clay. To the east, a passageway leads off as far as you can see. There is a white line painted on the floor, which you instinctively recognise as some sort of starting point.*

The stone door is the entrance for those rogues who had already achieved 'master' status. They could press their medallions into the depression, opening the door and allowing them into the observation tunnel, from which they could watch the challengers run the maze and jeer or shout encouragement as they chose. The stone door will not open unless one of the medallions is used as the key.

So long as the Player Characters stay on the west side of the white line, nothing will happen. The moment any of them crosses over the line, the following happens:

*A tremendous booming clang rings through the underground maze, like an enormous bell striking the hour. From the west wall, a swirling fog appears, advancing slowly and steadily. It is completely opaque and seems to move forward as a solid block, not a vague creeping mist. From within the wall of fog, screaming faces rise, only to sink back in again. Like trapped souls, they appear, shriek silently and vanish back into the advancing fog.*

**The Fog Wall:** The fog moves forward at the rate of five feet every minute (six rounds). This is slow enough for the Player Characters to outrun it easily but if they stop to rest or take too long over a task, it will soon catch up. If any of the Player Characters voluntarily comes into contact with the fog or is adjacent to it when it moves into his space, he must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 20) or gain one negative level. If a Player Character gains more negative levels than he has levels of experience as a result, he dies. His face joins those that scream silently from the fog.

**The Observation Slits:** At the points indicated on the map are observation slits. These are one inch high and five feet across. The rogues who had already attained the rank of Master Thief would watch their comrades' progress through them and sometimes fire missile weapons, if the candidate was especially unpopular.

## 14. Chasm Jump

*The passageway comes to an abrupt halt here, plunging down in a smooth drop. At the bottom of the pit, you can see nothing but blackness. The opposite side is ten feet away.*

The bottom of the pit is covered by a continual *darkness* effect, so no amount of light will reveal it. It drops down for 100 feet, so any Player Character falling down it suffers 10d6 falling damage. The obvious thing to do is to leap across it, but the testing maze is not about doing the obvious thing.

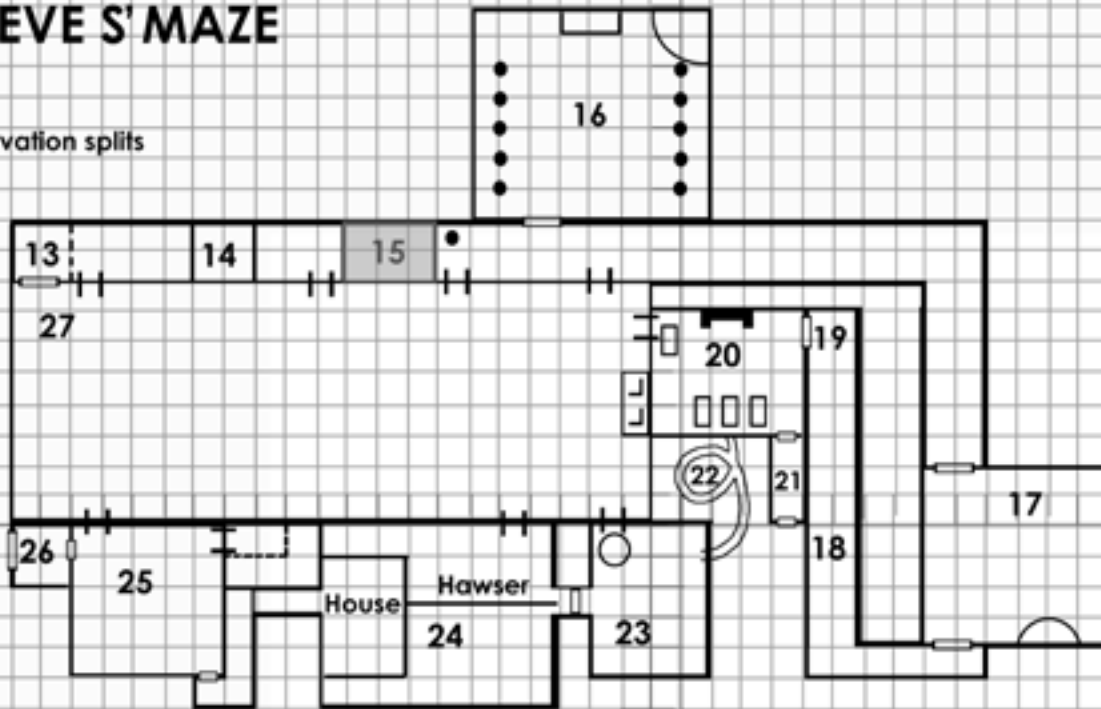
Halfway across the chasm are three metal bars set in a vertical line several feet apart, which span the gap completely and have a permanent *invisibility* effect on them. A Player Character who tries to leap the pit will slam straight into the bars and fall down it. He has a chance to catch the bars as he falls but this is very difficult as they are invisible (Reflex save DC 25). The Player Characters can cross the pit easily by throwing a rope over one of the invisible bars, making it secure and climbing across, or by jumping and catching the bars once they know they are there.

If the Player Characters throw stones or coins over the pit in an attempt to strike any invisible object that might be there, they have a one in six chance per attempt of striking one of the bars.

Passing the pit is equivalent to defeating a CR 5 challenge.

# THIEVE S' MAZE

|| Observation splits



## 15. Stairway

*A flight of stone steps leads downwards. At its base, a squat stone figure like a gargoyle looks up at you with blue glass eyes.*

The steps are all pressure-sensitive and fitted with *lightning bolt* traps. For the sake of simplicity, treat the entire staircase as one trap. The lightning bolt descends from the ceiling above, striking only those Player Characters who are within a five foot square. Attempts to disable these magical traps are especially perilous, as they are fitted with a tamper-proofing device. A Disable Device attempt that fails by more than five activates the trap.

There is one easy way to bypass the trapped stairway. The gargoyle (which is a fixture, not a monster) is the trigger. If its glass eyes cannot see the Player Character treading on the steps, then the trap does not discharge. It does not have any special visual senses. A Player Character can therefore move safely down the stairs by extinguishing his lights or by covering the gargoyle's head with a cloth, or some similar strategy. Alternately, destroying the eyes is also a possibility as they are only made of glass; each eye has an AC of 22 (+8 size, +4 natural armour), 5 hit points and damage reduction 5/ bludgeoning.

Passing the trapped stairs is equivalent to defeating a CR 6 challenge.

**Lightning Bolt trap:** CR 4; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; spell effect (*lightning bolt*, 5<sup>th</sup>-level

wizard, 5d6 electricity, DC 14 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 28; Disable Device 28.



## 16. Automaton Room (EL 11)

*The doors here are large and made from reinforced wood, as if some grand chamber lay beyond.*

The doors are locked with an exceptional mechanical lock (Open Lock DC 40). Directly in front of the doors is a pressure plate. Stepping on it triggers the automaton sequence, as follows:

*From somewhere within, the sounds of music strike up. The doors swing inward, revealing a high-ceilinged chamber with many decorated stone pillars. It is filled with white-faced people dressed for a formal ball. You see courtiers, ladies in fine dresses, men-at-arms standing sentinel and at the end of the room, two thrones in which a king and queen preside over the scene. Musicians on a podium to the right are providing the waltz tune.*

*As the people begin to move, you notice that they are not actually people at all. Their faces are blank white enamel masks, their limbs are stiff and they make strange clicks and twangs as they move. The gentlemen bow to the ladies and they begin to dance.*

If the Player Characters simply watch the automatons go through their routine, then after one dance they settle back into their places and the doors swing shut again.

If they have a chance to examine the automatons closely, they see that the costumes and finery are only mock-ups but that the queen is wearing a large red jewel on a silver chain from her neck.

The purpose of this room is for the aspiring thief to make his way through the dancers to the thrones at the end of the room, dance with the queen automaton, steal the red jewel that hangs from her neck and leave the room without being detected. The automatons will react as if the Player Characters were guests at a ball, since that is what they are 'programmed' to do. They never speak, communicating instead with mime and body language. They use exaggerated gestures to convey emotion.

So long as the Player Characters do not take any hostile actions, nothing untoward will happen. The automatons will take part in dance after dance, so long as the Player Characters remain in the room. Once they leave, the dances stop. If the Player Characters attack the automatons or a theft is noticed, then all of the automatons in the room will attack, except for the musicians who continue to play. The gentlemen draw their rapiers; the men-at-arms swing their halberds and foot-long metal claws spring from the fingers of the female automatons.

In total, there are two men-at-arms, four gentlemen, four ladies, one king, one queen and three musicians. The queen will approach the first Player Character to come close to her and silently request a dance, offering her arm.

Removing the jewel from the queen's neck requires a Sleight of Hand skill check, opposed by her Spot check and that of any other automaton standing near her. With a Perform (dance) skill

check (DC 15) a Player Character who is dancing with her can steer her away from other automata.

**Automatons (15):** CR 4; Medium construct; HD 4d10+20 (42 hp); Init -1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 18 (-1 Dex, +9 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 18; Base attack/grapple +3/+6; Atk halberd +6 melee (1d10+4/x3) or rapier +6 melee (1d6+3/18-20x2) or claw +6 melee (1d4+3); Full Atk halberd +6 melee (1d10+4/x3) or rapier +6 melee (1d6+3/18-20x2) or 2 claws +6 melee (1d4+3); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ construct traits; AL N; SV: Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +4; Str 17, Dex 9, Con -, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 1.

**Skills & Feats:** Listen +12, Spot +15; Alertness, Skill Focus (spot)

## 17. Golem Room (EL 11)

*This chamber's ceiling is thick with webs. The floor underfoot is strewn with fragments of white shell, as if someone had thrown broken eggshells about. To the south, a huge stone figure stands in front of a basin or trough, where water gleams. The figure has a cloth around its eyes, like a representation of blind justice.*

The figure is a blind stone golem. It can only track its opponents by sound. The broken eggshells on the floor are exactly what they appear to be. They bestow a -4 circumstance penalty on all Move Silently skill checks in this region. If the golem successfully hears an opponent, it will attempt to attack it. Clearing the eggshells away is possible, but makes noise.





**Stone Golem:** CR 11; Large construct; HD 14d10+30 (107 hp); Init -1; Spd 20 ft (4 squares); AC 26 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +18 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 26; Base atk/grapple +10/+23; Atk slam +18 melee (2d10+9); Full atk 2 slams +18 melee (2d10+9); Space/Reach 10 ft/10 ft; SA slow; SQ construct traits, damage reduction 10/adamantine, darkvision 60 ft, immunity to magic, low-light vision; AL N; SV: Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 29, Dex 9, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1

**Slow (Su):** A stone golem can use a *slow* effect, as the spell, as a free action once every 2 rounds. The effect has a range of 10 feet and a duration of 7 rounds, requiring a DC 17 Will save to negate. The save DC is Constitution-based.

**Immunity to Magic (Ex):** A stone golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted below. A *transmute rock to mud* spell slows a stone golem (as the *slow* spell) for 2d6 rounds, with no saving throw, while *transmute mud to rock* heals all of its lost hit points. A *stone to flesh* spell does not actually change the golem's structure but negates its damage reduction and immunity to magic for 1 full round.

**Basin:** The basin is full of water, which completely hides the transparent jewel inside it. Locating the jewel by sight alone is next to impossible (Search DC 35) whereas searching the water by hand is more likely to succeed (Search DC 20). However, searching the water silently by hand is very hard, as it sloshes and drips, drawing the attention of the ever-alert golem. For each round of searching, the Player Character must also make a Move Silently skill check at a -4 circumstance penalty, opposed by the golem's Listen check.

## 18. Copper Hallway

*This long corridor is lined with plates of metal. They cover the walls from floor to ceiling. By the colour, you guess that they are copper.*

Entering the hallway triggers a mass *heat metal* effect on the copper plates. The temperature in the hall rapidly becomes searing hot. Leaving the hallway causes the plates to cool down again. The heat effect can only be cancelled by placing the clear and the red jewels into their sockets in the copper doors (see below).

The *heat metal* effect deals damage as per the spell, although it can maintain searing temperature indefinitely until all characters have left the corridor.

## 19. Copper Doors

*The corridor ends in two doors of copper. Each one bears an embossed design, a tree with arching branches that end in globe-shaped fruit.*

If the designs are examined closely (Spot check, DC 25) the Player Character spots that one of the fruit has a faceted depression instead of a smooth one. A second successful check notices a similar depression on the other door. These hollows

are the perfect shape to receive the red and the clear jewels from rooms 16 and 17. When the jewels are set in place, the doors swing open with a croak of strained metal. The heat effect in the hallway immediately ceases. The jewels *teleport* back to their original places.

## 20. The Restful Inn

*This room is mocked up to seem like the inside of a tavern. There is a table with benches, a fireplace where a fire is burning and three barrels on stands against the wall. Two cats are lounging in front of the fire. An embroidered sign in a frame on the wall reads 'Bide a while and take thy rest, for too much hurry fails the test.' There is a simple wooden door in the south wall.*

If the wall of fog is visible from where the Player Characters are now, they see that it freezes in place. While the Player Characters remain in the inn room, the fog does not advance.

**Barrels:** The left-hand barrel contains strong, dark beer that has healing properties. Each pint drunk heals 1d8+1 points of damage. The first pint is safe but drinks taken after that have a chance of intoxicating the Player Character. A Fortitude saving throw (DC 15 +1 per pint already drunk) must be made, with failure dealing 1d3 ability damage to the drinker's Dexterity, Intelligence and Wisdom.

The middle barrel does not yield anything. It masks the true exit from this room. If the end of the barrel is prised open, it can be crawled into and the tunnel entered. This does not count as a secret or concealed door, since the barrel can obviously be opened, just like all barrels can.

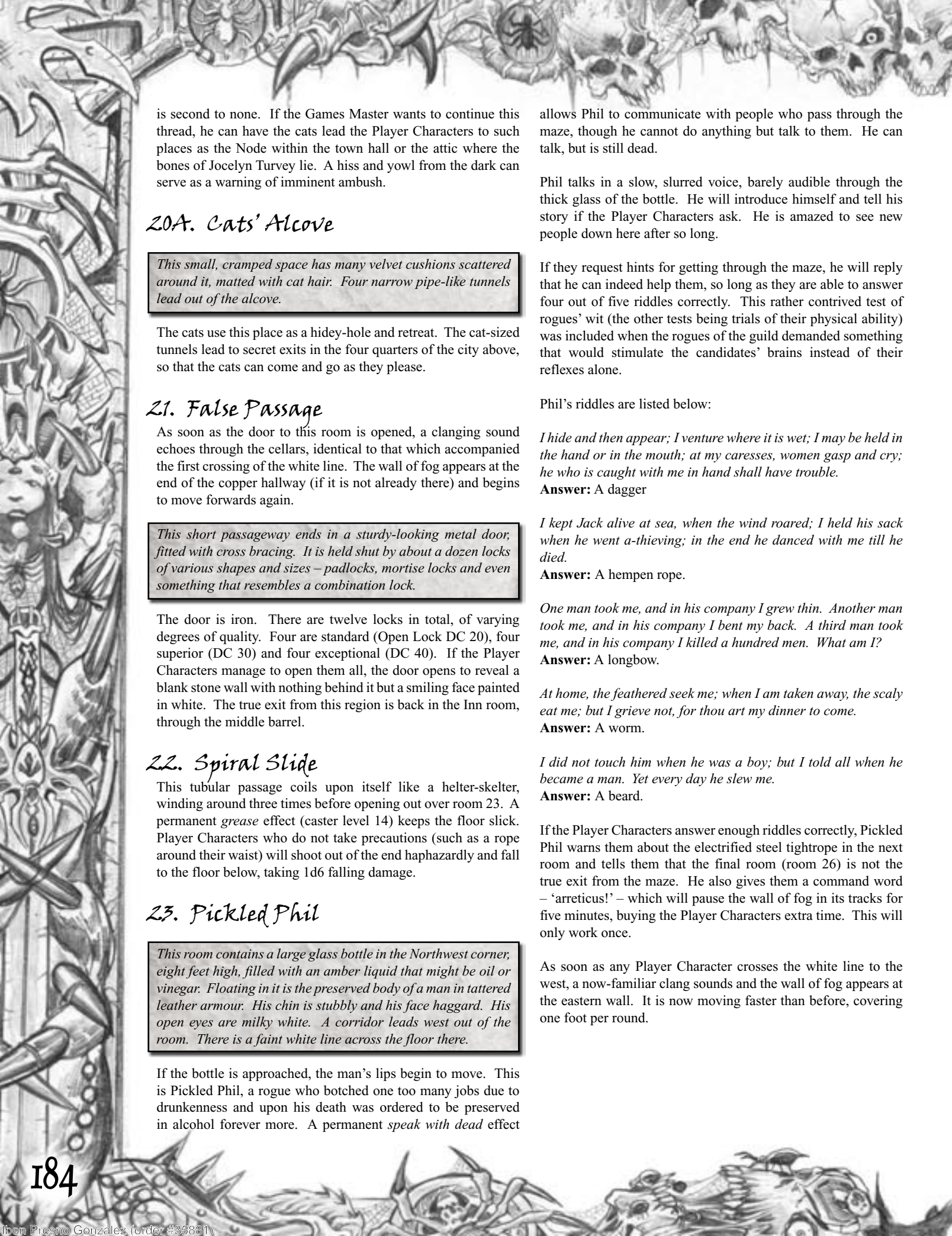
The right-hand barrel is full of ordinary water.

**Fire:** The fire in the fireplace is hot and crackles but is nonetheless an illusion (a permanent *major image*, caster level 14). The chimney is a tight squeeze for creatures of Medium size (Escape Artist check, DC 30). Small or smaller creatures can climb up it without difficulty. A Player Character who ascends the chimney finds himself in room 20A.

**Cats:** The cats are friendly and approachable. The male is black with a white patch over one eye, the female brindled. These are more than they appear to be.

The cats' bodies house the souls of Thom and Lolly Lankin, the King and Queen of Thieves. Although *resurrection* is unknown in Ashfar, there is a belief in reincarnation and some druids are believed to be able to call souls back into animal bodies. Thom and Lolly made plans with a druid friend that if they should ever be slain, they would be called back into suitable bodies so that they could continue to prowl the streets and rooftops. Accordingly they were *reincarnated* as cats and still keep watch over the thieves' maze like they always used to.

The Player Characters can communicate with the cats, who will give them assistance if they are treated well. The cats can even become allies; their knowledge of the city and its secret places



is second to none. If the Games Master wants to continue this thread, he can have the cats lead the Player Characters to such places as the Node within the town hall or the attic where the bones of Jocelyn Turvey lie. A hiss and yowl from the dark can serve as a warning of imminent ambush.

## 20A. Cats' Alcove

*This small, cramped space has many velvet cushions scattered around it, matted with cat hair. Four narrow pipe-like tunnels lead out of the alcove.*

The cats use this place as a hidey-hole and retreat. The cat-sized tunnels lead to secret exits in the four quarters of the city above, so that the cats can come and go as they please.

## 21. False Passage

As soon as the door to this room is opened, a clanging sound echoes through the cellars, identical to that which accompanied the first crossing of the white line. The wall of fog appears at the end of the copper hallway (if it is not already there) and begins to move forwards again.

*This short passageway ends in a sturdy-looking metal door, fitted with cross bracing. It is held shut by about a dozen locks of various shapes and sizes – padlocks, mortise locks and even something that resembles a combination lock.*

The door is iron. There are twelve locks in total, of varying degrees of quality. Four are standard (Open Lock DC 20), four superior (DC 30) and four exceptional (DC 40). If the Player Characters manage to open them all, the door opens to reveal a blank stone wall with nothing behind it but a smiling face painted in white. The true exit from this region is back in the Inn room, through the middle barrel.

## 22. Spiral Slide

This tubular passage coils upon itself like a helter-skelter, winding around three times before opening out over room 23. A permanent grease effect (caster level 14) keeps the floor slick. Player Characters who do not take precautions (such as a rope around their waist) will shoot out of the end haphazardly and fall to the floor below, taking 1d6 falling damage.

## 23. Pickled Phil

*This room contains a large glass bottle in the Northwest corner, eight feet high, filled with an amber liquid that might be oil or vinegar. Floating in it is the preserved body of a man in tattered leather armour. His chin is stubby and his face haggard. His open eyes are milky white. A corridor leads west out of the room. There is a faint white line across the floor there.*

If the bottle is approached, the man's lips begin to move. This is Pickled Phil, a rogue who botched one too many jobs due to drunkenness and upon his death was ordered to be preserved in alcohol forever more. A permanent *speak with dead* effect

allows Phil to communicate with people who pass through the maze, though he cannot do anything but talk to them. He can talk, but is still dead.

Phil talks in a slow, slurred voice, barely audible through the thick glass of the bottle. He will introduce himself and tell his story if the Player Characters ask. He is amazed to see new people down here after so long.

If they request hints for getting through the maze, he will reply that he can indeed help them, so long as they are able to answer four out of five riddles correctly. This rather contrived test of rogues' wit (the other tests being trials of their physical ability) was included when the rogues of the guild demanded something that would stimulate the candidates' brains instead of their reflexes alone.

Phil's riddles are listed below:

*I hide and then appear; I venture where it is wet; I may be held in the hand or in the mouth; at my caresses, women gasp and cry; he who is caught with me in hand shall have trouble.*

**Answer:** A dagger

*I kept Jack alive at sea, when the wind roared; I held his sack when he went a-thieving; in the end he danced with me till he died.*

**Answer:** A hempen rope.

*One man took me, and in his company I grew thin. Another man took me, and in his company I bent my back. A third man took me, and in his company I killed a hundred men. What am I?*

**Answer:** A longbow.

*At home, the feathered seek me; when I am taken away, the scaly eat me; but I grieve not, for thou art my dinner to come.*

**Answer:** A worm.

*I did not touch him when he was a boy; but I told all when he became a man. Yet every day he slew me.*

**Answer:** A beard.

If the Player Characters answer enough riddles correctly, Pickled Phil warns them about the electrified steel tightrope in the next room and tells them that the final room (room 26) is not the true exit from the maze. He also gives them a command word – 'arreticus!' – which will pause the wall of fog in its tracks for five minutes, buying the Player Characters extra time. This will only work once.

As soon as any Player Character crosses the white line to the west, a now-familiar clang sounds and the wall of fog appears at the eastern wall. It is now moving faster than before, covering one foot per round.

## 24. Steel Tightrope (EL 10)

*A strange tableau meets your eyes. The corridor ends in an abrupt drop. Twenty feet below, a mock-up of a city street has been created, cobblestones and all. To the west is a facsimile of the front of a house, with a peaked roof. A metal hawser has been strung from the edge of the corridor to the roof of the house. Below, in the street, animated figures move. They are dressed like men and women but are made from straw bundles, like scarecrows. Incongruously, they carry weapons – clubs, crossbows and even scythes.*

This set-up is designed to test the rogue's ability to adapt to unexpected situations and move quickly. The metal hawser is one inch thick and can be balanced on (Balance check DC 20). Alternatively, a character can cross it by swinging hand-over-hand (Climb DC 10).

To complicate matters, the hawser pulses with an electric jolt every 1d3 rounds. Any creature that is in contact with the hawser at the end of a round on which it pulses suffers 1d8+8 electrical damage. A Reflex saving throw is allowed for half damage (DC 20) but if the creature is hanging from the cable, it must let go of it in order to make its saving throw. As always, Player Characters who suffer damage while balancing must make a fresh Balance check or lose their balance and fall. Player Characters who fall from the hawser take 2d6 falling damage. Balancing on the roof is much easier; the DC of the Balance check here is 15.

The animated figures are straw golems (see *Appendix III*). They have been instructed to attack any creature that falls into their midst. They will not pursue creatures that leave the ground. Player Characters who fall into the street area can escape the straw golems by climbing up the front of the 'house' (Climb DC 15) or up the eastern wall (Climb DC 25).

**Straw Golems (8):** CR 4; Medium construct; HD 4d10+20 (42 hp); Init +3; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 17 (+3 Dex, +4 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +3/+5; Atk club +5 melee (1d6+2) or slam +5 melee (1d4+2) or heavy crossbow +6 ranged (1d10/19-20x2); Full Atk club +5 melee (1d6+2) or slam +5 melee (1d4+2) or heavy crossbow +6 ranged (1d10/19-20x2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA fire madness; SQ construct traits, damage resistance 10/slashing, fire vulnerability; AL N; SV: Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 16, Con —, Int —, Wis 12, Cha 1

**Fire Madness (Ex):** Straw golems that sustain fire damage automatically catch fire. When this happens, they fly into a mad rage and attack the creature responsible for the burning, or if that creature cannot be found, anything nearby except another straw golem. They will smash everything in their path to get to the creature. While the straw golem is burning, its slam attacks inflict an additional 1d6 points of fire damage. The golem will prioritise attacking its tormentor over extinguishing its own flames.

**Re-Stuffing (Ex):** A straw golem that is near a source of hay can re-stuff itself. This is a full-round action and restores 1d6 hit points to the golem.



## 25. Snake Pit

*There is no visible floor in front of you. Instead, there is a square pit, which is filled to the brim with a single mass of writhing snakes. The majority seem to be vipers of average size, though you think you see the coils of something far larger. A narrow ledge, no more than two inches in width, runs round the west wall to the other side. On the east wall are several little brackets like the iron clamps used to hold torches, dotted at random across the wall.*

Player Characters can cross the wall on the west by moving slowly and making a Balance check (DC 15) or they can cross the eastern wall by making a Climb check (DC 15) as they prefer. They may wonder how such a huge quantity of snakes could survive down here without food. The answer is that they cannot. The snakes are a powerful *permanent image* (caster level 16, Will saving throw DC 21 to disbelieve if interacted with). The pit is a mere five feet deep. Below the surface level a tunnel, concealed by the snakes' writhing bodies, leads eastwards to the throne room.

## 26. Final Room

*This ten foot square room seems entirely featureless but for the door in the western wall. This is made from bright metal and looks solid as a fortress. The lock mechanism looks like something from an alcoholic gnome's delirium tremens.*

The observation slits that have been in most of the rooms so far are absent from this room.

As the Player Characters enter, have them make a Spot check (DC 10). Those that succeed notice the stone ceiling wobble very slightly, as if it was about to fall or descend slowly and crush them all. This is a trick, designed to make the aspiring master rogue nervous.

The contraption on the door consists of five lock barrels set one inside the other, with an absurdly complicated system of wires and levers connecting them to one another. A Craft (blacksmith), Open Lock or Disable Device skill check (DC 30) results in the Player Character noticing that the super-lock does not actually do anything.

## 27. Throne Room

*This immense room is draped in dusty cobwebs. Through them, you see two high-backed thrones on a podium, with a wooden coffer at their base. From high above, a golden chandelier sheds light on the room.*

The coffer is locked (Open Lock DC 20). Inside are 15 medallions made from gilded metal. These have no financial value but were once recognised as the sign of a Master Thief. They can be used to open the stone door at the start of the testing maze and admit the Master Thief straight into the throne room.

The thrones are made from wood that has been painted with leaf gold. The signature weapon that the Player Characters have come here to find is concealed in the base of the throne on the right. The compartment that hides it is cunningly concealed and the gold paint hides the telltale cracks (Search DC 30).

## Aftermath

A medallion that proves you have run the Testing Maze is no small sign of status. Any Player Character who wears one of these openly gains a +2 circumstance bonus to all Charisma-based skill checks when dealing with the rogues of Crescent City.

Completing the Testing Maze is worth a story award equivalent to a CR 7 challenge.

## The Bank Job

This scenario is optional. The Games Master can have all the Player Characters' remaining signature weapons concealed in the Testing Maze if preferred.

The adventure is small, but *extremely* challenging. Player Characters will not be able to succeed by storming their way through it. They will have to evade guards rather than confront them and use stealth instead of strength. The Games Master should not feel any obligation to let the Player Characters succeed against the odds; an adventure like this is often more enjoyable when everything goes wrong.

## The Remaining Signature Items

The Player Characters will have learned from the Ragged Man that the last of their signature items are stored in the lower vault of the Central Bank, where a man called Ombar Lutz placed them. Researching this name in the local libraries and magical shops (Gather Information check, DC 20) reveals that he was a wealthy merchant. He bought a collection of curious artefacts ten years ago and stored them at the bank, but he died before he could reclaim them from his deposit box.

The Player Characters thus have no hope of convincing the bank tellers of their claim to the weapons. They do have a right to them – the weapons are aspects of themselves, after all – but there is no way to get them back other than by breaking into the bank and taking them.

The Player Characters may find the idea of robbing the bank very appealing, as they can come away with a pile of other people's loot as well as their own weapons. Good characters and possibly neutral ones should have issues with this, as morally speaking it is no better than breaking into a house and stealing the contents. The only ethical justification for breaking into the bank at all is to get the weapons back.

**Using the Orb:** If the Player Characters attempt to use the Orb of Azurite to *scry* on the weapons' current location, they see them in a closed metal case that hangs in absolute darkness with no visible means of support. The only objects that can be seen are other, similar metal cases, floating in the dark at distances of 20 to 30 feet away. The whole area is lit by a dull greenish glow.

## The Central Bank

Crescent City is one of the few settlements to have a bank, or to need one. In most cities, citizens look after their own wealth. In a place like this, with crime so high, citizens who can afford it prefer to keep their most valuable possessions locked up safely in the vaults of the Central Bank.

The Bank has an excellent track record. Robberies have been attempted before but nobody has even made it past the cashiers, let alone the security doors. The bank employs wizards to set guarding spells and patrol the area, along with their tireless shield guardians. This ensures that even invisible would-be robbers are stopped short.

## Skipping the Bank Job

It is entirely possible that the Player Characters might choose to skip this section of the adventure, either through pursuing other priorities or seeing an attempted bank job as beyond their capabilities for the time being. This is a valid choice to make and it does not necessarily prevent them from getting hold of the weapons in the future. If they manage to ally themselves with Lord Malthus then, if he discovers their interest in the signature weapons held in the bank, he will proceed to acquire the weapons himself and offer to sell them to the Player Characters, as mentioned under *If It All Goes Horribly Wrong...* (see page 193). Alternatively, if they rescue Princess Romily in the next chapter and are on good terms with her, they may be able to persuade her to requisition the weapons from the bank herself and then pass the items onto the Player Characters.

The Bank is an unremarkable building from outside. The walls are made from granite blocks and the roof is a stone dome. There is a carved stone gargoyle on each corner, its mouth gaping in a silent scream. There do not appear to be any windows at all. Two large wooden doors in the front are the only visible entrance.

## The Dimensional Lock

The entirety of the bank, with the exception of one room, is subject to a permanent *dimensional lock* effect (caster level 18). This prevents thieves from *teleporting* into the place and from using similar means of gaining access such as *ethereal jaunt*. It also ensures that nobody caught in a *forcecage* can use *teleport* to escape.

## Traps

The bank's most ubiquitous hazard for the intruder is the *forcecage/alarm* trap. The bank's owners would far rather capture intruders than harm or kill them, as they can then be arrested and made an example of. These traps are located at the points marked with an F on the map.

The traps' triggers are set so that an employee of the Bank will not activate them but any other creature that moves into the relevant area will. The traps 'see' with *true seeing* and have a +30 bonus to their Spot skill checks. They have a visual range of 120 ft but will only activate when creatures step into the shaded area.

**Forcecage/alarm traps:** CR 8; magic device; visual trigger (*true seeing*); automatic reset; spell effect (*forcecage*, 13<sup>th</sup> level wizard); spell effect (*alarm*); Search (DC 32); Disable Device (DC 32).

The *forcecage* is the cube of force variant of the spell.

**The Blue Carpet:** The main hallway and part of the region beyond the security door are carpeted in blue. These blue areas are those where it is safe to walk if you are not an employee, though you are of course not allowed to go through the security door without permission.

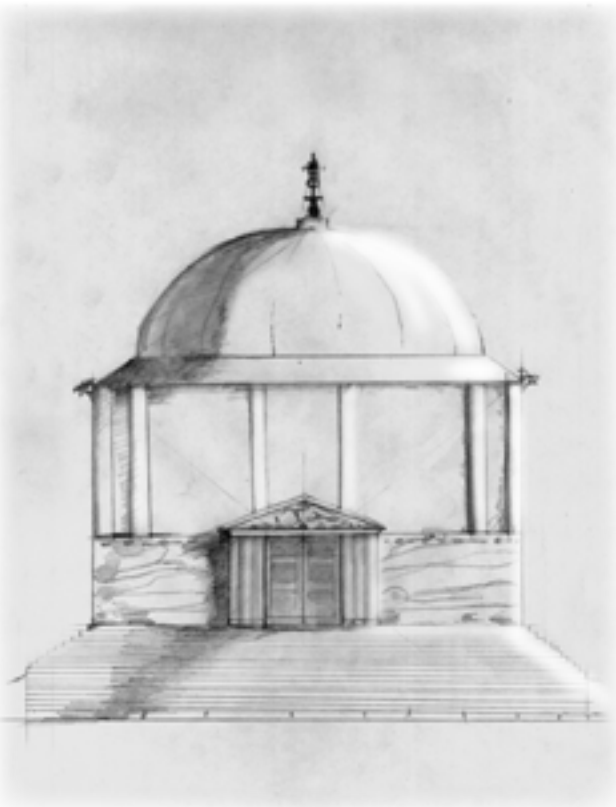
Sometimes, a customer of the Bank will be allowed to accompany an employee into the inner chambers, such as when a customer has a valuable or fragile item to deposit and wants to watch it being stored securely. When this happens, the customer is told to keep to the blue carpet and not to step off it for any reason. This is so that he will not activate any of the magical traps. The blue carpet runs to within five feet of the upper vault door but not all the way – close enough for a concerned customer to watch his goods being stowed.

**Visitor Talismans:** On some very rare occasions, a person who is not an employee of the bank will be taken to areas that are not covered by the blue carpet. There are ten talismans in storage in the manager's office which, when worn, cause the traps to recognise the person wearing them as 'safe' and thus not trigger. The talismans are six inches across and have a complicated pattern of interlaced silver geometric designs on them, making them hard to forge (Forgery DC 25). As the traps use visual cues, a duplicate talisman could fool them, though an illusory one could not; the traps see with *true seeing*.

In order to be given a visitor's talisman, a Player Character would have to have a good reason for visiting the manager in his office. The most likely reason is a simple job application, as interviews take place there.

## The Alarm System

The bank has a magical alarm system, composed of a number of wooden figures discreetly attached to the furniture. They resemble elven women with wide-open mouths and folded wings, rather like ship's figureheads, each one a foot high. These



are linked, so that the activation of one triggers the activation of all the rest and similarly with deactivation. Speaking one command word sets the entire system off, while speaking another deactivates it. A third shuts the system down altogether, disabling all the traps.

The guards are taught the first word but not the second. Only the bank manager himself and his deputy know the words to deactivate the alarm once it has been triggered. The bank manager is the only person who knows the word to shut the system down completely. To preserve security, these words are changed every month.

If any of the magical traps is activated or one of the guards uses the command word to activate the alarm, the following occurs. The carved wooden figures on all the furnishings all begin to shriek at once, as do the stone gargoyles on the outside of the building. Simultaneously, an alarm sounds at the nearest guardhouse, which will bring a group of ten guards hurrying to the bank in 6d4 rounds.

Activating any of the *forcecage* traps triggers the alarm, as does a failure of the *status* monitoring system on the guards (see below).



## The Manager

The manager of the Central Bank is Ruthven Calamus, a distinguished, balding elf with pince-nez spectacles and tufts of fuzzy grey hair above his ears. He affects an affable, somewhat foolish air, joking with his employees and playing the part of an absent-minded philanthropist, occasionally giving vent to a loud neighing laugh. In reality, he is far more competent than he appears and is an extremely shrewd judge of character. He can drop the buffoon façade in a second and become coldly efficient, instructing his shield guardian to incapacitate or kill those who threaten his enterprise.

**Ruthven Calamus:** Elf wizard 14; CR 14; Medium humanoid; HD 14d4 (35 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 *amulet of natural armour*), touch 15, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +7/+6; Atk masterwork rapier +8 melee (1d6-1/18-20x2); Full Atk masterwork rapier +8 melee (1d6-1/18-20x2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA spells; SQ elf traits; AL LG; SV: Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +12; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 12.

*Skills & Feats:* Concentration +7, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Listen +17, Profession (banker) +20, Search +6, Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +21, Spot +14; Alertness (from familiar), Craft Staff, Craft Wondrous Item, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll, Improved Counterspell, Spell Focus (conjunction), Spell Penetration, Weapon Finesse

*Spells:* 0<sup>th</sup> level: *daze, touch of fatigue, message, resistance*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *shield, mage armour, identify, charm person, cause fear*; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: *arcane lock, obscure object, detect thoughts, see invisibility, misdirection*; 3<sup>rd</sup> level: *dispel magic (2), nondetection, suggestion, slow*; 4<sup>th</sup> level: *arcane eye, black tentacles, detect scrying, summon monster IV, greater invisibility*; 5<sup>th</sup> level: *mage's private sanctum, mage's faithful hound, secret chest*; 6<sup>th</sup> level: *antimagic shield, guards and wards*; 7<sup>th</sup> level: *spell turning, grasping hand*

*Familiar:* Bat (grants +3 bonus to Listen checks).

*Equipment & Treasure:* Master keys to all doors in the bank, control amulet for shield guardian, *amulet of natural armour* +4, *staff of conjuration*

## Guards

The mortal guards are all elven wizards, hired because elves do not have the same need for sleep as other races. Each wizard has a shield guardian to assist him. There are three guards in total, keeping watch day and night. They each move around within their designated areas, checking that all is well. One is stationed in the entrance hall, another in the cashiers' area and the third in the upper vault area. There are no guards in the lower vault region, as it is off-limits even to them.

**Status Monitoring:** When each guard begins his work shift, he makes his way to the statue in the cashiers' area and touches it. This triggers a *status* effect (caster level 10), which lasts until he leaves the building. While the effect is running, any change in the guard's physical condition triggers the alarm. For example, if a guard were to fall asleep, be wounded or be knocked unconscious, the alarm would go off. The only way to harm one of the guards without triggering the alarm is to get rid of the *status* effect first by using *dispel magic* or a similar process.

**Shield Guardians (3):** CR 8; Large construct; HD 15d10+30 (112 hp); Init +0; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 24 (-1 size, +15 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 24; Base attack/grapple +11/+21; Atk slam +16 melee (1d8+6); Full atk 2 slams +16 melee (1d8+6); Space/Reach 10 ft/10 ft SA none; SQ construct traits, darkvision 60 ft, fast healing 5, find master, guard, low-light vision, *shield other*, *spell storing*; AL N; SV: Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 22, Dex 10, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1

**Find Master (Su):** As long as a shield guardian and its amulet are on the same plane, the shield guardian can find the amulet wearer (or just the amulet, if it is removed after the guardian is called).

**Guard (Ex):** If ordered to do so, a shield guardian moves swiftly to defend the wearer of its amulet, blocking blows and disrupting foes. All attacks against the amulet wearer take a -2 penalty when the shield guardian is adjacent to its master.

**Shield Other (Sp):** The wearer of a shield guardian's amulet can activate this defensive ability if within 100 feet of the shield guardian. Just as the spell of the same name, this ability transfers to the shield guardian half the damage that would be dealt to the amulet wearer. This ability does not provide the spell's Armour Class or saving throw bonuses.

**Spell Storing (Sp):** A shield guardian can store one spell of 4<sup>th</sup> level or lower that is cast into it by another creature. It 'casts' this spell when commanded to do so or when a predefined situation arises. Once this spell is used, the shield guardian can store another spell or the same spell again. These shield guardians have *black tentacles* as their stored spell, cast by the wizard guards.

**Guards (3):** Elf wizard 8; CR 8; Medium humanoid; HD 8d4 (20 hp); Init +3; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 *ring of protection*), touch 15, flat-footed 12; Base attack/grapple +4/+3; Atk masterwork rapier +8 melee (1d6-1/18-20x2); Full Atk masterwork rapier +8 melee (1d6-1/18-20x2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA spells; SQ elf traits; AL N; SV: Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 8, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 17, Wis 12, Cha 11.

**Skills & Feats:** Concentration +11, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Listen +14, Search +5, Spellcraft +14, Spot +10; Alertness (from familiar), Dodge, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (conjunction), Spell Penetration, Weapon Finesse

**Spells:** 0<sup>th</sup> level: *daze*, *touch of fatigue*, *message*, *resistance*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *hold portal*, *shield*, *mage armour*, *hypnotism*, *ray of enfeeblement*; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: *glitterdust*, *web*, *see invisibility*, *cat's grace*, *darkvision*; 3<sup>rd</sup> level: *dispel magic*, *stinking cloud*, *hold person*, *haste*; 4<sup>th</sup> level: *black tentacles*, *lesser globe of invulnerability*

**Familiar:** Bat (grants +3 bonus to Listen checks).

**Equipment & Treasure:** Keys to front doors and security door, control amulet for shield guardian, *cloak of resistance* +2, *ring of protection* +2 (all issued by the bank)

## Locks

Unless otherwise specified, all doors in the bank are fitted with locks of excellent quality (Open Lock DC 40). Even the doors to relatively unimportant areas are kept locked.

## 1. Main Doors and Entrance Hall

The doors into the bank are reinforced wood. The hall is carpeted in blue and lit by globes that hang on chains from the ceiling at varying heights. There is a set of six arched openings to the east at waist height, through which the customers can converse with the tellers. These openings can be closed by metal grates from the tellers' side; treat these as the equivalent of small iron doors. Below the openings is a level shelf for writing on. To the north of these is a metal security door, which closes off the private areas from the general public.

## 2. Cashiers' Area

On the tellers' side of the central wall are stools and a single long bench with drawers containing blank receipts, bottles of ink, spare paper and parchment and such like. When the bank closes for the evening, all coinage left in the tills is moved to the petty cash room.

The job of the cashiers is to change coins into different denominations (such as giving ten silvers for a gold) and to take deposits in coin. Receipts are issued for these and a credit is made against the person's account. Anyone wanting to leave an item for vault storage or retrieve one from the vaults has to speak to the manager, who the cashiers will be happy to call. The cashiers will *not* exchange jewellery or gems for coins. Such items must be left in the vaults.

There is room for six cashiers to work at once behind the long wooden bench. To one side is a small kitchen where the employees can have lunch, as they are not allowed off the premises during their shift. Beside it is a basic restroom facility, the bank's one vulnerable point, as it connects to the sewer system. The relevant drain is two feet wide and ten feet long but could be enlarged with picks and hammers. Unless magical means were taken to muffle the noise, the racket would definitely attract the guards.

## 2a. Employee Lounge

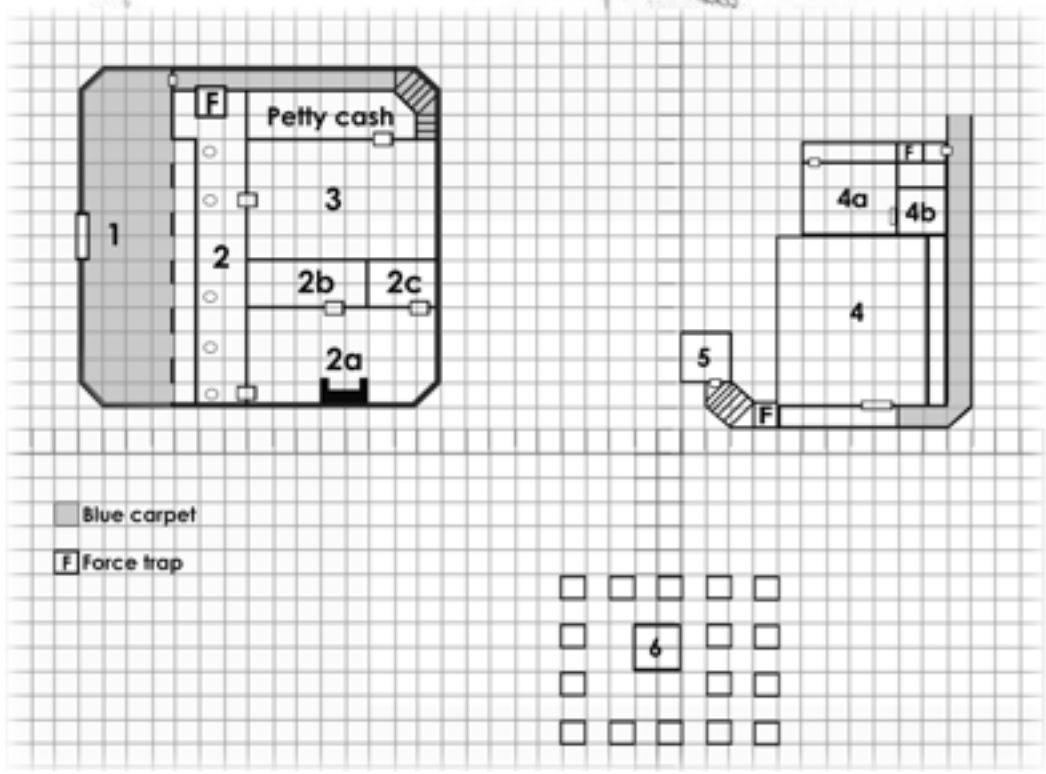
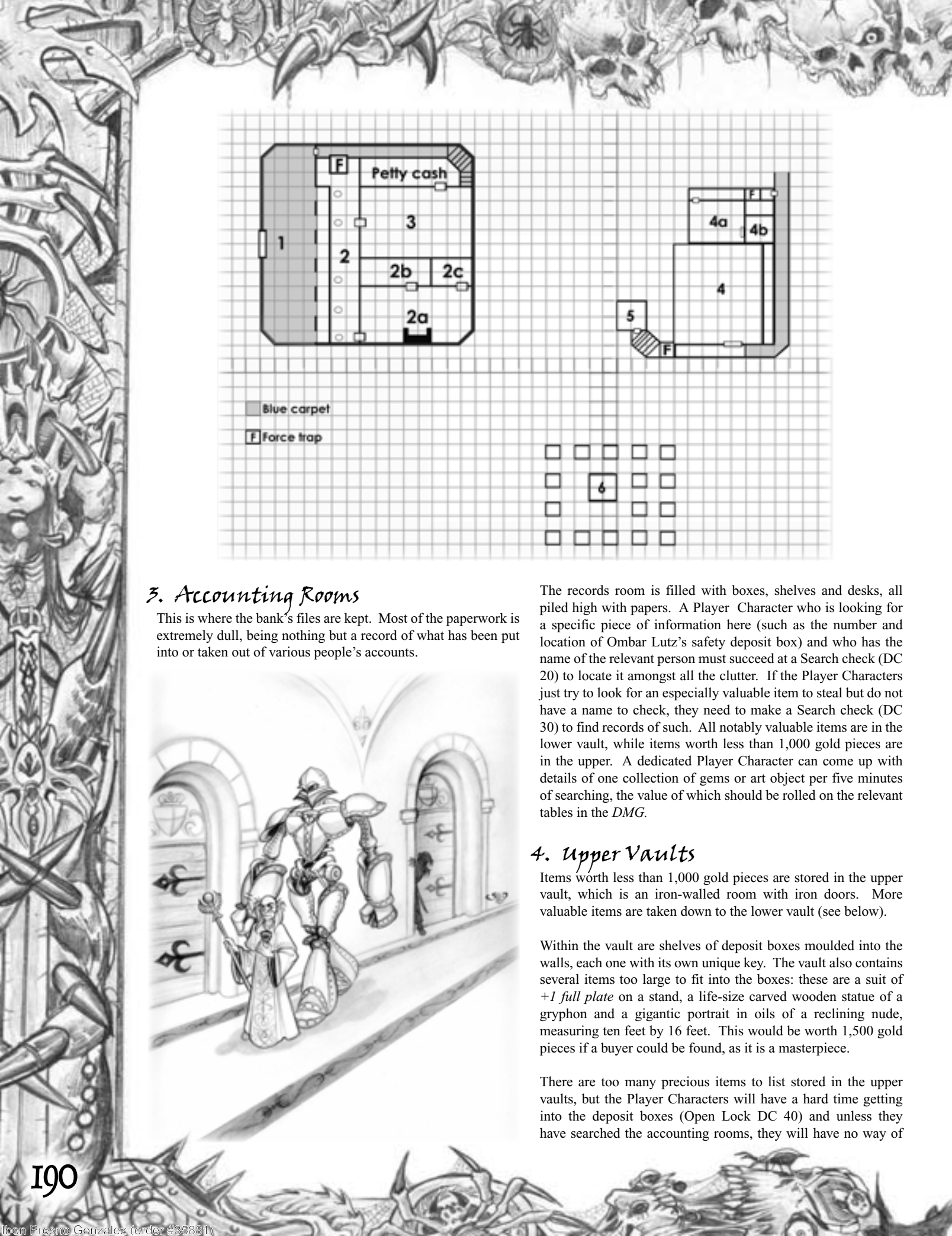
This is where the bank tellers take their lunch breaks and store their personal possessions during work hours. It is a comfortable and expensively decorated room, with overstuffed leather sofas, a large fireplace (the heat is produced by a sphere on which a permanent *heat metal* effect has been placed, as a chimney would be a security risk) and a portrait of the manager looking stern on the south wall. During the night hours, one of the three guards is stationed here, along with his personal shield guardian.

## 2b. Kitchen

This small room has cupboards filled with groceries and work surfaces on which they can be prepared.

## 2c. Privy

These immaculately clean restrooms are tiled in blue. If the Player Characters break in through the drain system, then this will be the first room they see. Too much noise in this area will attract the guard in the employee lounge.



### 3. Accounting Rooms

This is where the bank's files are kept. Most of the paperwork is extremely dull, being nothing but a record of what has been put into or taken out of various people's accounts.



The records room is filled with boxes, shelves and desks, all piled high with papers. A Player Character who is looking for a specific piece of information here (such as the number and location of Ombar Lutz's safety deposit box) and who has the name of the relevant person must succeed at a Search check (DC 20) to locate it amongst all the clutter. If the Player Characters just try to look for an especially valuable item to steal but do not have a name to check, they need to make a Search check (DC 30) to find records of such. All notably valuable items are in the lower vault, while items worth less than 1,000 gold pieces are in the upper. A dedicated Player Character can come up with details of one collection of gems or art object per five minutes of searching, the value of which should be rolled on the relevant tables in the *DMG*.

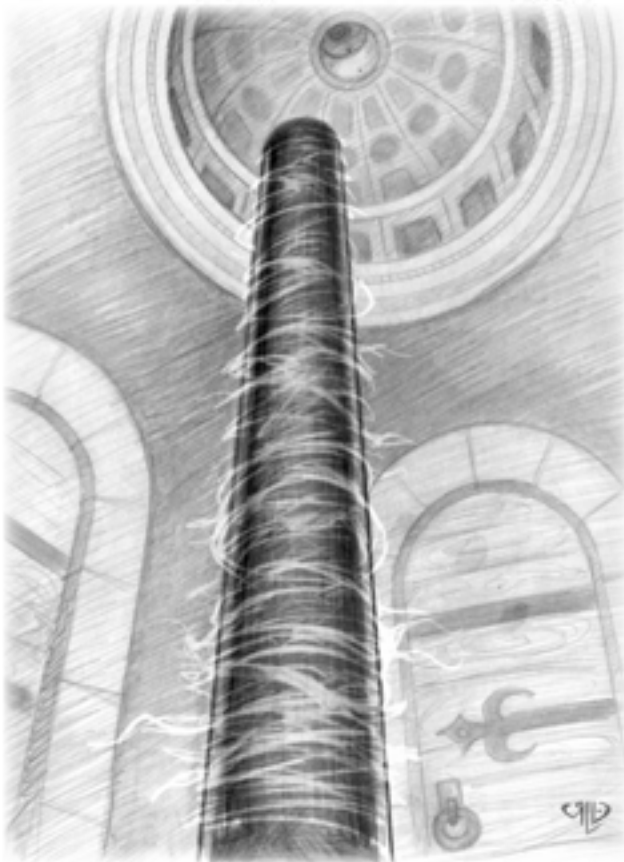
### 4. Upper Vaults

Items worth less than 1,000 gold pieces are stored in the upper vault, which is an iron-walled room with iron doors. More valuable items are taken down to the lower vault (see below).

Within the vault are shelves of deposit boxes moulded into the walls, each one with its own unique key. The vault also contains several items too large to fit into the boxes: these are a suit of +1 full plate on a stand, a life-size carved wooden statue of a gryphon and a gigantic portrait in oils of a reclining nude, measuring ten feet by 16 feet. This would be worth 1,500 gold pieces if a buyer could be found, as it is a masterpiece.

There are too many precious items to list stored in the upper vaults, but the Player Characters will have a hard time getting into the deposit boxes (Open Lock DC 40) and unless they have searched the accounting rooms, they will have no way of





knowing which ones contain valuable items and which contain objects of sentimental value only.

#### 4a. Manager's Office

This room is furnished in dark woods, polished to a liquid shine. A single oil lamp on the desk lights the place with a warm glow. The central feature of the room is a massive desk, huge as a church altar. On this, and on the bookcases behind it, are ledgers, folders and hardback books, all in immaculate order.

In a locked drawer of the desk are the visitor's talismans (see above). Careful examination of the desk (Search check, DC 25) discovers a hidden switch on the underside. This opens the secret door to the east, leading to the alarm hub.

Examination of the books reveals that the manager has a keen interest in minerals and metallurgy, as more than half of them are on this subject. A Player Character who takes the trouble to search through the books discovers a rare volume on planar theory lying open on the desk, one that does not seem to belong with the rest of the tomes that concern themselves with more mundane matters. The volume is a study of the evil planes and has the names of many demiplanes listed in the appendix. One of these, Abbosachaloch, has been underlined neatly.

Abbosachaloch is a plane of the Abyss that has, according to the author, been dedicated wholly to punishing the miserly and usurious by injecting white-hot molten gold into their body

cavities. The manager chose this as a suitable command word to activate the planar gate at the lower vault – a form of private joke.

#### 4b. Alarm Hub

This is a simple column of black stone veined with brilliant blue, which hums with arcane energy. It is the central focus for the magical alarm system. In order to shut down the alarm once it has been activated or disable the system completely, the appropriate command words must be spoken in this room and no other. Activating or deactivating the system without knowing the proper words requires a Use Magic Device skill check (DC 25).

### 5. Lower Vaults

The problems of secure storage in a city full of thieves perplexed the founders of the Central Bank for months until one of them hit upon the obvious solution. The *secret chest* spell allowed items to be stored on the ethereal plane – why not extend the principle and have the vault on a separate plane altogether? Research discovered a suitable demiplane, little more than a bubble in the astral flux. The inner vault was built there under conditions of the utmost secrecy.

The *dimensional lock* effect that covers the rest of the building extends only to the iron vault door at the end of the descending stairs shown on the map. An insightful Player Character who figures this out could use it as a point to *teleport* into. Beyond that point is a ten foot square chamber with nothing at all remarkable about it but for a circle marked out on the floor in orange tiles. This circle is a *plane shift* device, needing a command word to activate. This word, Abbosachaloch, is noted in the manager's office (see above). Abbosachaloch itself is *not* the destination plane, though the Player Characters may think that it is. Without the command word, the circle needs a Use Magic Device skill check to activate (DC 25).

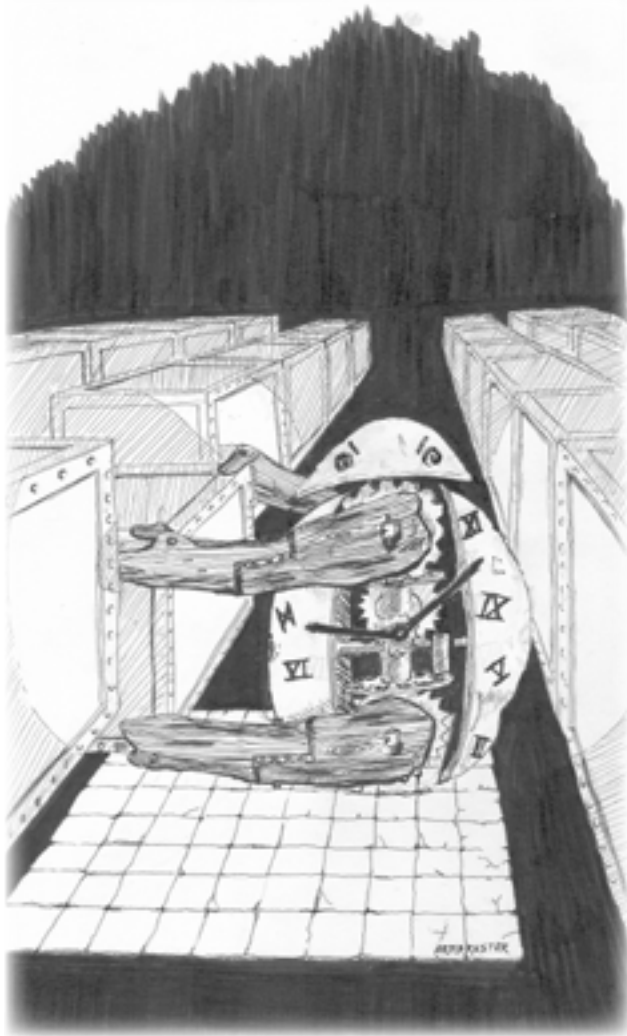
#### 6. The Vault Plane (EL 7)

The subplane that serves as the vault is accessible only by means of the *plane shift* device. It is not possible to enter it by any other means or pass to any other plane from it.

When the Player Characters appear in the plane, they are standing upon an identical ten foot square floor to that in the bank. It is floating in a seemingly endless black void. Above, hundreds of metal boxes hang in the air, evenly spaced in a grid formation. Each one bears a serial number.

Floating among these boxes are two things that appear to be construct creatures, roughly spherical beings with four jointed arms, little stubby domed heads and spotlights that shine from their bodies. They emit periodic puffs of gas.

The demiplane has no gravity. Objects float where they are placed until they are moved. This is highly convenient, since large heavy safes and their contents can be moved around here by the weakest of bank tellers on whom *fly* spells have been cast. A character who jumps up into the air continues to travel in



the same direction at his base speed. The only firmly anchored object in the whole plane is the ten foot square of floor.

### Ticktocks

The bank manager has commissioned two resident servitors, who inhabit the plane and are built to be manoeuvrable here. These are the constructs described above. They use their gas jets to manoeuvre in the weightless environment. They are obedient to the bank manager alone and at his command will grab and fetch the boxes, so that their contents can be extracted or added to, then return them.

They will leave the Player Characters unmolested unless they attempt to move the boxes from their positions, at which point they will drive the Player Characters off as best they can and restore order. If the Player Characters flee, they will not pursue them. The ticktocks are not built for combat. They are mere servants.

**Ticktocks (2):** CR 5; Large construct; HD 8d10+30 (74 hp); Init +2; Spd fly 40 ft (8 squares, perfect in weightless environment, poor in any other); AC 22 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +11 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 20; Base attack/grapple +6/+5;

Atk slam +5 melee (1d8-1); Full atk 2 slams +5 melee (1d8-1); Space/Reach 10 ft/10 ft SA none; SQ construct traits, darkvision 60 ft, low-light vision; AL N; SV: Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 8, Dex 14, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1

### Planning the Job

If the Player Characters are being at all sensible about the bank raid, they will plan it out in advance.

Reconnaissance is the key. If the Player Characters can contrive a plan to get inside the bank during working hours, they can find out what kind of creatures guard the place and how the security measures work. If they can wangle a meeting with the bank manager and get through the first security door, then so much the better.

Another good plan is to get hold of a floor plan of the building. Any one of the four Crime Lords can supply them with this. If a Crime Lord thinks that the Player Characters have a fighting chance, he may offer to sponsor their mission, providing equipment and some backup from his men. These can perform useful services such as causing distractions and leading the guards away. Naturally, he will want a cut of the profits and will not be interested in any weird old weapons that he cannot use.

The real mystery of the bank is the inner vault. Nobody in the City except the bank's most senior employees has ever seen it, so there are no floor plans available. A friendly Crime Lord can however tell the Player Characters that one group of rogues tried to tunnel into it from a neighbouring building, only to find that there was no vault and they were tunnelling through earth and rubble.

The Player Characters will need to come up with a plan for achieving each of the following. Suggested schemes are given below. The Crime Lords or allied Non-Player Characters can provide these suggestions if the Player Characters are stuck for ideas. It would also be a good idea to have one of the Crime Lords give the Player Characters the checklist below so that they have an idea what to expect, as most Player Characters are not used to planning bank heists.

- Getting into the building (the main entrance is guarded and visible from the street).
- Finding out how the alarm system works and if it can be shut down.
- Avoiding the patrolling wizards and their shield guardians.
- Finding out whereabouts the signature weapons are kept.
- Opening the security door that leads to the vault area.
- Accessing the inner vault.
- Getting out quickly if everything goes wrong.

### Reconnoitring and Entering the Building

Teleportation into the foyer is not possible, as the area is covered by a *dimensional lock*. There are two ways to enter the bank: by subterfuge or by forced entry.

## If It All Goes Horribly Wrong...

So, what happens if the bank job turns out like *Reservoir Dogs* instead of *Ocean's Eleven*?

The first thing to happen is the arrival of the city guards upon the scene. They secure the bank while a messenger is sent to the bank manager's home. Meanwhile, crowds gather outside in the street, attracted by the howling gargoyles on the roof. Player Characters in *forcecages* are watched carefully, to make sure they do not pull out any magical items and dispel the cage – not that the guards can actually do anything in that event.

Within ten minutes, the bank manager arrives. He listens to the guards' account of events and checks for himself to find out exactly what has been stolen and from where. Eventually, he deactivates the force cages and the assembled guards attempt to manacle the Player Characters and escort them to the guardhouse cells. They are kept incarcerated there for two days then taken for trial at the Cathedral of Blessed Marius (see Chapter 8, Crescent City).

The trial is conducted under the influence of a *zone of truth* spell. Trials are handled in inquisitorial fashion – there is no speaker for the defence, just three people asking questions and taking notes. Lord Malthus, Archbishop Vigilance Derrick and an additional cleric from the church of Marius take on these roles.

A trial can be a fantastic roleplaying opportunity, especially when the Games Master can influence the Player Characters' expectations of what is to come. Let them think that their lives are hanging by a thread and give them the chance to explain their actions. Of course, if they were wantonly destructive or stole more than they needed to in the bank, this may be difficult! Eventually, the trial gives its verdict. The Player Characters are found guilty of theft (and possibly other crimes) but in view of the circumstances, the return of all stolen property and a hefty fine on top of that is considered adequate.

If the Player Characters killed anyone during the raid, they are in much more serious trouble. The person responsible for the death will be executed by hanging on the next day. Malthus cannot prevent this; the most he can do is to play down the idea that any of the other Player Characters were accessories.

**Getting the Weapons Back:** Lord Malthus will meet with the Player Characters privately after the trial and offer to sell them the signature weapons, which he has 'requisitioned for state use'. He will milk the Player Characters for as much as he can get, although the weapons are of no use to him. He is intrigued by what he has learned of the Starborn and would very much like to have them owe him a favour.

Subterfuge requires dealing with other people face to face, which makes the initial stages much more hazardous. A good subterfuge would involve tailing a bank employee home, kidnapping him and using magic to assume his appearance, then meeting up with other employees and casually discussing bank security. This would not fool the traps, though it would probably fool the staff.

Alternatively, a Player Character who fit the preferred criteria (elven wizard) could apply for a job at the bank. He would have to undergo a rigorous interview (complete with *zone of truth* spells) to check his motivation and would probably not be placed into a position of trust, but he would at least get a good look at the inside of the bank.

A very simple way to find out what is behind the security door is to talk to the bank manager about a valuable item that you wish to deposit. The Player Characters are bound to have several such items by now, so they can arrange an interview and be shown the upper vaults. This gets them part of the way into the building, which is a good start...

A Player Character of small size could be smuggled into the vaults inside a package. One of the crime lords could supply a drug that simulates the effects of death, allowing the Player Characters to claim they were storing the embalmed body of a

friend for a couple of nights, before shipping him home for a proper funeral.

The least hazardous way to enter the bank is through the city sewers. Although this information is not widely known, the bank is required by law to provide for the needs of its employees on site, so there is a privy in the employees' area. The Player Characters would have to dig their way up through the drains, but they would at least be inside.

## Avoiding the Guards

The Player Characters' best hope of avoiding the guards is good old-fashioned stealth such as rogues excel at, rather than magic. The *status* effect on the guards makes incapacitating them impossible, so the first priority there is to remove that effect.

## Disabling the Alarm System

The best strategy of all would be to make for the alarm hub and disable it. This could be achieved with a Use Magic Device skill check, or more reliably with a *rod of cancellation*. With the alarm system out of the way, the Player Characters can dispatch the guards with relative ease.

## Aftermath

Successfully retrieving the signature weapons from the bank vault is worth a story award equivalent to a CR 10 challenge.

Once the Player Characters have gathered together all their remaining signature weapons along with the Orb of Azurite, they are fully prepared to take on the role of Starborn heroes defending the world against the rising Dark. Accordingly, the night after all of the weapons are finally brought together, each Player Character experiences a dream so vivid that it is like waking into another plane:

*You feel as if you are falling down an endless tunnel, with walls of rough rock. Bats whirr through the darkness and strange, vast fungal growths bulge from the damp stone. You suddenly realise that you are dreaming but the realisation does not wake you. You are being whirled through the air at tremendous speed, down and down and yet further down.*

*Then there is a dizzying moment of plummeting through pitch darkness; and then you are hovering in a chamber that seems horribly familiar, as if you had seen it before, though you know you have not. A mass of black stone fills the centre of the room, so dark in hue that it seems to devour the light and to exude darkness like smoke, though its edges are perfectly distinct. You know instinctively that this is the heart of a power as vast and cold as space, a power that despises you simply because you dare to exist. Were you truly here, you feel, it would leech the life out of you.*

*The stone has been chipped in many places, as if flakes have been chiselled off and taken away as relics.*

*There are eight figures here, conducting a ceremony of some kind. The figures have manes of white hair and ink-black skin. They wear robes of translucent fabric and move with the slow, patient grace of spinning spiders, placing ritual items in their places – a platinum skull that steams with blue mist, a chalice carved from a single gigantic ruby, a crystal disc engraved with a complicated web. As to what the purpose of this ritual may be, you cannot guess.*

*There are voices speaking from somewhere nearby – a female and a male. The male speaks: ‘You are watching them?’*

*‘I am,’ the female responds.*

*‘It is confirmed, then? The one they call the Terror has begun her campaign?’*

*‘She has. Already she has taken one circle. I confess, I am a little impressed.’*

*‘A Node, corrupted? Without access to the Altar? How?’*

*‘It seems House Arakh retained fragments from the end of the last war. With those, she broke the hold of the star-bitch over the stones. There is no doubt that she is of us, of the Host. Her followers have grown strong. Even the grey ones bend the knee to her. None of us foresaw it, but House Arakh is indeed*

*favoured of the Dark. Perhaps it is the will of the Dark that we admit them back to the Ennead.’*

*‘It could be an aberration. House Arakh lost the last war for us. Why should we ever forget that?’*

*‘I do not intend to forget any details of the last war, brother. Unlike you, I was there. I think we shall watch this Terror that Arakh has bred for a while longer. She has not called for our help yet, and for that I respect her, if for nothing else. Let us see how she fares. Let her prove what she is so desperate to prove.’*

*‘Where is she now?’*

*‘Let us find out. I see her... in council with her generals. They are speaking of Caldraza, of some subterfuge. Curious. What is the creature plotting? Let me listen... Ah! Cunning indeed! Even now, while her diplomats are awaiting audience with the King of Caldraza, speaking of treaties and compromise, the subtle knives of her other agents gleam in the shadows! Oh, she will have her treaty, right enough, whether King Titus wishes it or not... and by the time anyone detects her, the damage will be done... hold! There are other eyes here! Who observes us?’*

*With that, you awaken suddenly, with a lingering cold in your bones.*

Nuith has sent the Player Characters this vision. Two of the heads of the Ennead are conversing by the Abyssal Altar, the focal point of the Dark. They have seen the Terror’s plan: she has sent an ambassadorial party to Caldraza, along with a doppelganger assassin in the form of a drow. Once they are within the Caldrazan palace, they are to keep up the façade of a diplomatic visit.

If the King agrees to their treaty proposals, then they are to accept them, but if he does not, then they are to assassinate the King of Caldraza and place the doppelganger on the throne instead. The false King will then agree to all the proposed treaties that the drow ambassadors make.

The Player Characters should now realise that they have to travel to the capital of Caldraza, Beacon City, as fast as possible and thwart the drow plot. The Terror has arranged to have Caldraza on her side one way or another, as it is impossible for her to extend her dominion without some means of moving the Cthonic Alliance troops from Arakh Mur to the mainland. The drow cannot cross from Chillhame to the mainland, as they do not have anything like enough ships. The only route is in the underground tunnels.

Drawing the Caldrazan troops away to the border is crucial to her strategy, as she needs to leave the dwarves of Underdell without any hope of reinforcements.

# Corruption in Caldraza

## Summary

The drow have implemented the next stage in their plan. While the Player Characters have been tracking down their signature weapons, the Terror has sent a group of ambassadors to the Caldrazan capital, Beacon City. King Titus of Caldraza has proved unwilling to sign a non-aggression pact with the drow, so he has been assassinated and a doppelganger put in his place. An alliance has now been signed.

The Player Characters do not know whether King Titus is acting from his own free will or not, but based on the dream of the night before, it should be obvious that there is a conspiracy afoot and that all is not as it seems. Their first step must be to find allies who will believe their story and who will help them confront the drow. The best candidate for this is Princess Romilly, the estranged daughter of King Titus. Next, they will have to travel to Beacon City, find a way into the palace and deal with the corruption at its heart.

Finding Princess Romilly is not easy. She has been assigned to a border fort close to the Forest of Meere, in preparation for the invasion of Ghael. When the Player Characters arrive there, they discover that she has not been seen for several days, not since she headed into the forest with a group of her most trusted warriors for a purpose she did not disclose to the men of the fort. The Player Characters must venture into the most dangerous woodlands in all Caldraza and find out what has happened to the Princess.

## The Huntress Lilleth

While the Player Characters are in Caldraza, there is a creature stalking them. This is the Terror's personal assassin, Lilleth VaNarr, who has been charged with the duty of neutralising the Starborn threat before they interfere with the developments in Caldraza. Lilleth has been *teleported* into Caldraza from the House Arakh stronghold in Arakh Mur, beneath Chillhame.

The Games Master should use Lilleth as a seemingly omnipresent threat, who haunts the Player Characters without coming into combat range until she is good and ready. Lilleth will always be one step ahead of the Player Characters and cannot resist terrorising them with whatever psychological tricks she can play.

If they go into a tavern on the road, they should learn that there was a hoarse-voiced woman asking if anyone had seen people matching the Player Characters' descriptions; if they camp out overnight, they should find a wavy-bladed black dagger driven into the ground by their heads the next day; if they go to a temple for healing or to stock up on supplies, they may even find the head priest slumped over the altar with his throat cut.

Lilleth should not, however, be given godlike powers – just a degree of narrative license! If the Player Characters mount a careful guard, then she should not be able to slip past them. They should have the impression that she is very good at what she does, not that she is some sort of Games Master-created 'munchkin' character.

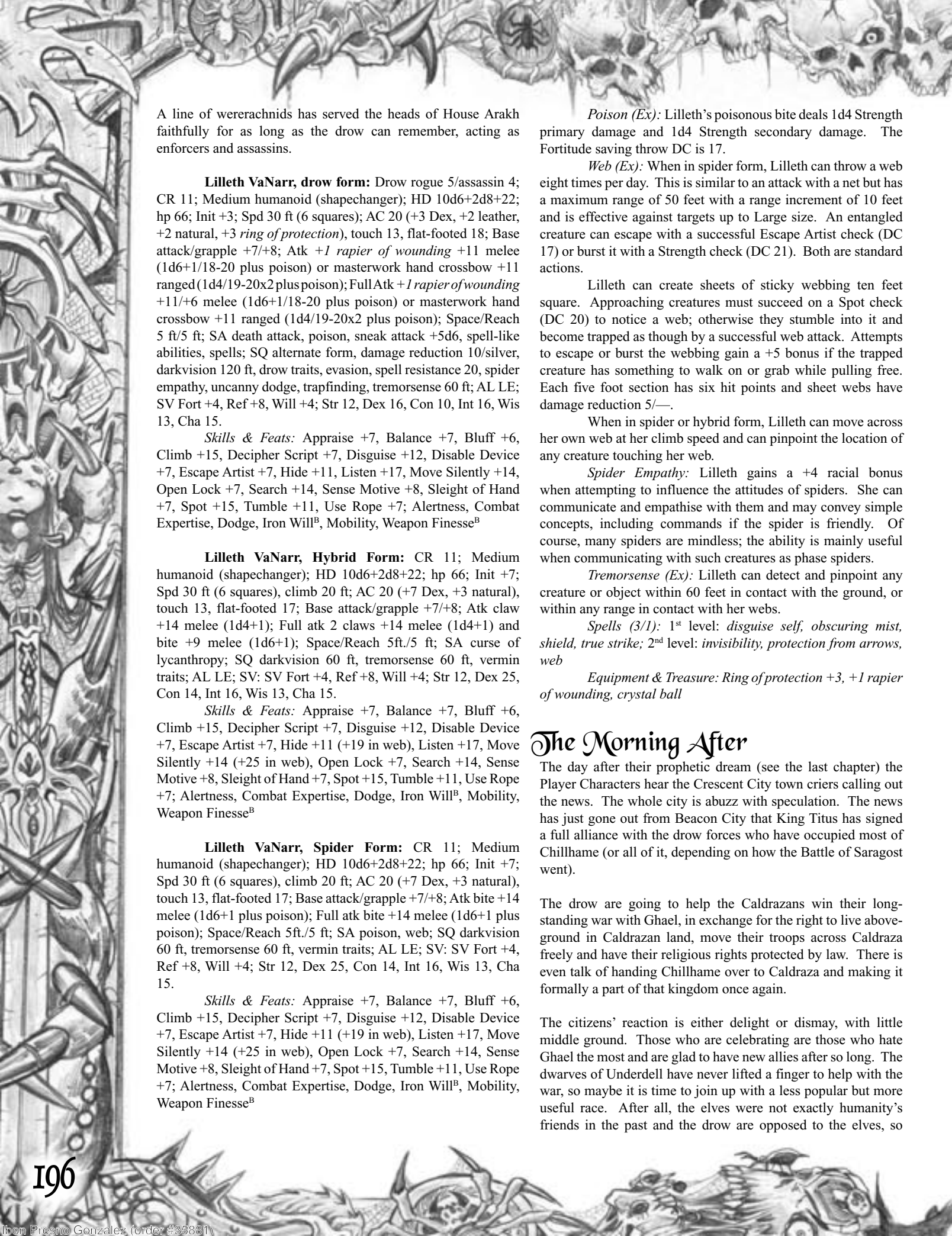
Lilleth will only strike when the Player Characters draw close to the palace at Beacon City. She will choose her moment carefully, observing from afar with her *crystal ball* and waiting for the Player Characters to drop their guard.

## From Two Legs To Eight

Lilleth is a rare species, a Wererachnid. This is a form of natural lycanthropy exclusive to drow, in which the creature assumes the form of a monstrous spider. In all other known strains of lycanthropy, the sufferer has a second form of the animal type. This is the only lycanthropic condition in which the creature assumes the form of a vermin creature.

The hybrid form is a hairy hunched creature with the mandibles of a spider, four vestigial (and useless) spider limbs at the waist and multiple eyes like those of a spider.





A line of wererachnids has served the heads of House Arakh faithfully for as long as the drow can remember, acting as enforcers and assassins.

**Lillesh VaNarr, drow form:** Drow rogue 5/assassin 4; CR 11; Medium humanoid (shapechanger); HD 10d6+2d8+22; hp 66; Init +3; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 20 (+3 Dex, +2 leather, +2 natural, +3 *ring of protection*), touch 13, flat-footed 18; Base attack/grapple +7/+8; Atk +1 *rapier of wounding* +11 melee (1d6+1/18-20 plus poison) or masterwork hand crossbow +11 ranged (1d4/19-20x2 plus poison); Full Atk +1 *rapier of wounding* +11/+6 melee (1d6+1/18-20 plus poison) or masterwork hand crossbow +11 ranged (1d4/19-20x2 plus poison); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA death attack, poison, sneak attack +5d6, spell-like abilities, spells; SQ alternate form, damage reduction 10/silver, darkvision 120 ft, drow traits, evasion, spell resistance 20, spider empathy, uncanny dodge, trapfinding, tremorsense 60 ft; AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 15.

**Skills & Feats:** Appraise +7, Balance +7, Bluff +6, Climb +15, Decipher Script +7, Disguise +12, Disable Device +7, Escape Artist +7, Hide +11, Listen +17, Move Silently +14, Open Lock +7, Search +14, Sense Motive +8, Sleight of Hand +7, Spot +15, Tumble +11, Use Rope +7; Alertness, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Iron Will<sup>B</sup>, Mobility, Weapon Finesse<sup>B</sup>

**Lillesh VaNarr, Hybrid Form:** CR 11; Medium humanoid (shapechanger); HD 10d6+2d8+22; hp 66; Init +7; Spd 30 ft (6 squares), climb 20 ft; AC 20 (+7 Dex, +3 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 17; Base attack/grapple +7/+8; Atk claw +14 melee (1d4+1); Full atk 2 claws +14 melee (1d4+1) and bite +9 melee (1d6+1); Space/Reach 5ft./5 ft; SA curse of lycanthropy; SQ darkvision 60 ft, tremorsense 60 ft, vermin traits; AL LE; SV: SV Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 25, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 15.

**Skills & Feats:** Appraise +7, Balance +7, Bluff +6, Climb +15, Decipher Script +7, Disguise +12, Disable Device +7, Escape Artist +7, Hide +11 (+19 in web), Listen +17, Move Silently +14 (+25 in web), Open Lock +7, Search +14, Sense Motive +8, Sleight of Hand +7, Spot +15, Tumble +11, Use Rope +7; Alertness, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Iron Will<sup>B</sup>, Mobility, Weapon Finesse<sup>B</sup>

**Lillesh VaNarr, Spider Form:** CR 11; Medium humanoid (shapechanger); HD 10d6+2d8+22; hp 66; Init +7; Spd 30 ft (6 squares), climb 20 ft; AC 20 (+7 Dex, +3 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 17; Base attack/grapple +7/+8; Atk bite +14 melee (1d6+1 plus poison); Full atk bite +14 melee (1d6+1 plus poison); Space/Reach 5ft./5 ft; SA poison, web; SQ darkvision 60 ft, tremorsense 60 ft, vermin traits; AL LE; SV: SV Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 25, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 15.

**Skills & Feats:** Appraise +7, Balance +7, Bluff +6, Climb +15, Decipher Script +7, Disguise +12, Disable Device +7, Escape Artist +7, Hide +11 (+19 in web), Listen +17, Move Silently +14 (+25 in web), Open Lock +7, Search +14, Sense Motive +8, Sleight of Hand +7, Spot +15, Tumble +11, Use Rope +7; Alertness, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Iron Will<sup>B</sup>, Mobility, Weapon Finesse<sup>B</sup>

**Poison (Ex):** Lillesh's poisonous bite deals 1d4 Strength primary damage and 1d4 Strength secondary damage. The Fortitude saving throw DC is 17.

**Web (Ex):** When in spider form, Lillesh can throw a web eight times per day. This is similar to an attack with a net but has a maximum range of 50 feet with a range increment of 10 feet and is effective against targets up to Large size. An entangled creature can escape with a successful Escape Artist check (DC 17) or burst it with a Strength check (DC 21). Both are standard actions.

Lillesh can create sheets of sticky webbing ten feet square. Approaching creatures must succeed on a Spot check (DC 20) to notice a web; otherwise they stumble into it and become trapped as though by a successful web attack. Attempts to escape or burst the webbing gain a +5 bonus if the trapped creature has something to walk on or grab while pulling free. Each five foot section has six hit points and sheet webs have damage reduction 5/—.

When in spider or hybrid form, Lillesh can move across her own web at her climb speed and can pinpoint the location of any creature touching her web.

**Spider Empathy:** Lillesh gains a +4 racial bonus when attempting to influence the attitudes of spiders. She can communicate and empathise with them and may convey simple concepts, including commands if the spider is friendly. Of course, many spiders are mindless; the ability is mainly useful when communicating with such creatures as phase spiders.

**Tremorsense (Ex):** Lillesh can detect and pinpoint any creature or object within 60 feet in contact with the ground, or within any range in contact with her webs.

**Spells (3/1):** 1<sup>st</sup> level: *disguise self*, *obscuring mist*, *shield*, *true strike*; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: *invisibility*, *protection from arrows*, *web*


**Equipment & Treasure:** *Ring of protection* +3, +1 *rapier of wounding*, *crystal ball*

## The Morning After

The day after their prophetic dream (see the last chapter) the Player Characters hear the Crescent City town criers calling out the news. The whole city is abuzz with speculation. The news has just gone out from Beacon City that King Titus has signed a full alliance with the drow forces who have occupied most of Chillhame (or all of it, depending on how the Battle of Saragost went).

The drow are going to help the Caldranzans win their long-standing war with Ghael, in exchange for the right to live above-ground in Caldrazan land, move their troops across Caldraza freely and have their religious rights protected by law. There is even talk of handing Chillhame over to Caldraza and making it formally a part of that kingdom once again.

The citizens' reaction is either delight or dismay, with little middle ground. Those who are celebrating are those who hate Ghael the most and are glad to have new allies after so long. The dwarves of Underdell have never lifted a finger to help with the war, so maybe it is time to join up with a less popular but more useful race. After all, the elves were not exactly humanity's friends in the past and the drow are opposed to the elves, so



perhaps humans and drow should have joined forces a long time ago.

Those who are horrified by the news are those who know most about the drow and about history. They cannot believe that King Titus, old and senile though he may be, would ally the Caldrazan people to a force of darkness and evil. No good can come of this, they say. The official religion of Caldraza is Marianism – how can the Church of Marius approve of an allegiance with a race that is known to worship dark gods and rumoured to sacrifice intelligent beings to them?

Many of the elves that live in Caldraza silently gather their belongings and board boats in the harbour. They are leaving for their island of Xoth Sarandi, where they can live unmolested, far away from a people that allies itself to their worst enemies.

### *Non-Player Character Group: The Caldrazan Royal Family*

The only surviving members of the Caldrazan Royal Family are King Titus himself, the sickly Prince Caspar and the estranged Princess Romilly.

**The Death of Rufus:** King Titus' son, Prince Rufus, was so popular and well-beloved that people secretly believed he would not live to an old age. Those whom the Gods love die young, as it is said. Titus adored Rufus and was confident that when his time came to pass on, the throne would be in good hands. Rufus married a noblewoman, Anastasia, who bore him one pale son, Caspar. To the dismay of his grandfather, Caspar suffered from a blood disorder, which caused even small wounds to bleed freely. He had to have a cleric on hand at all times, to heal the cuts and grazes he suffered while playing. Nonetheless, Anastasia was healthy and would no doubt bear more sturdy heirs in time.

The promise of a future dynasty was cruelly dashed last year when Rufus and Anastasia were killed during a visit to Ghael, where a clan chieftain, Gregor MacHallish, had invited them. This man claimed that he wanted to build diplomatic bridges between the countries. His motives were more selfish – he was seeking to set himself up as High King of Ghael and was hoping for foreign sponsorship, so that he could get the better of the other clans.

When Rufus and Anastasia arrived, several members of Gregor's clan decided that it would be better to hold them to ransom than to go through with their chief's plans. The attempt to imprison them went badly wrong and the two nobles were killed. The killers were not acting with their clan's approval, but this did not prevent King Titus from declaring war. As far as he was concerned, his son and daughter-in-law had been gulled into a trap and murdered in cold blood. If Caspar had not been too sick to travel, the whole line could have been wiped out.

In his misery following the death of his beloved son, King Titus abandoned the faith of his ancestors and turned to Marianism for solace. He declared the Church of Marius the official state religion, saying that the old pagan days were over and should be left to barbaric nations like Ghael.

This was too much for his daughter, Romilly. She had already rejected numerous arranged marriages, disdaining all men as pathetic and had a reputation as a firebrand. Now, she rejected her father's imposition of state religion.

**Princess Romilly:** The Princess is a devotee of Firinna, the chaos-loving warrior goddess. She would not surrender her faith. For this, she was sent to the borders of Ghael, where she could command an outpost and defend the land against the insurgent barbarians. Some of the citizens of Caldraza believe that Romilly would make a better ruler than Titus but they refrain from saying so too loudly. The clansmen of Ghael respect Romilly more than any other Caldrazan noble, as she has a strong fighting spirit.

**King Titus:** The King of Caldraza is a haggard man of 70, dressed in heaps of purple velvet. He stinks abominably, as he never bathes any more. None of his courtiers dares to suggest that he do so. His life is consumed with bitterness since the death of Rufus. He wants to see Ghael punished but in his heart of hearts, he has no real spirit to continue this war. It will not bring his son back.

The Player Characters will probably never meet the real King Titus, as by the time they reach Beacon City, he will have been assassinated and replaced by the doppelganger. Ironically, the doppelganger cannot replicate his terrible body odour, which causes some of the courtiers to comment on what a changed man the King is since signing this alliance with the drow.


**Prince Caspar:** The heir to the throne of Caldraza is now eight years old. He is a pallid, weak-looking boy with straw-coloured hair and watery eyes. Whenever he is wounded, he continues to suffer one hit point per round from bleeding until he receives magical healing. He is kept locked in his rooms in the castle.

Caspar is currently at a critical point in his life. If he continues to grow up sheltered from the world, without being allowed to play with others or take any risks, he will become a miserable, cowardly young man in later years and will rule the kingdom as a paranoid despot. If he is allowed to explore the world for himself and overcome the limitations of his illness, he may become a strong, compassionate man with tolerance for the shortcomings of others.

### *Information: The War with Ghael*

Ghael is a hilly, relatively undeveloped country, divided from Caldraza by the River Shlass and by the monster-infested Forest of Meere. Unlike Caldraza, Ghael was never 'civilised' by the elves. As a result, the settlements and the culture are human through and through. Buildings are made from rough stone and important towns always have a stone keep or even a castle wall. The men and women of Ghael all wear their hair long and in plaits. Many of the men also favour kilts instead of breeches and prefer to fight with greatswords.

Ghael has had little wealth for centuries. Its people are tough, weather-beaten survivors who have lived by herding, farming and basic crafts. Instead of a single centralised government, it has an allegiance of warrior clans. The clans have spent half of history making war on one another and the other half uniting



behind a High King, moving from one state to the other like a pendulum swinging back and forth. When the clans are not fighting one another, they are making border raids into Caldraza, stealing sheep, cattle and sometimes women.

The countries have never been formally at war before, as Ghael has nothing that Caldraza wants (it is too barren) while the tribes cannot stay united for long enough to inflict any major damage upon Caldraza. Border raids are about all that they can manage reliably. Even these are only a concern in the summer months, when the river is low enough to ford safely.

The new war with Caldraza has done more to unite the clans than any other factor in history. For once, they face a common threat and will have to work together to confront it. The current High King is Aengus Thornwell. He is massing his men on the banks of the river, preparing to defend against the enormous Caldrizan invasion that he has heard is coming.

### *Information: Rumours in Caldraza*

The Player Characters may try to find out more about what is happening in Beacon City, the background to current events and the history of the war. The following information can be gleaned with a Gather Information check. The check result determines the quality of information. A high check result also gives all the information that would have been gained from lower results.

#### **10-15:**

- Caldraza declared war on Ghael last year, after Prince Rufus and his wife were killed during a visit there.
- King Titus has sent his own daughter to the border fort at Pengallin, near the forest of Meere.
- The heir to the throne, Prince Caspar, has some kind of sickness.
- King Titus converted to Marianism after his son's death and rejected the old pagan ways on behalf of the whole kingdom.
- There was a strange comet in the sky two weeks ago.
- The drow have said that they will help with the war against Ghael. Thousands of troops are being sent to the border, ready for an invasion. The big push into Ghael is coming any day now.

#### **16-20:**

- Princess Romilly is out of favour with her father because she has refused numerous marriages. She is a dedicated fighter and is respected by the men of Ghael. She is stationed near the forest of Meere, which is so full of monsters that neither the Ghaels nor the Caldrzans will enter it.
- Prince Caspar is kept locked in a special room in the castle, so that he does not injure himself. If he starts bleeding, it does not stop.
- King Titus has refused to meet his council but has addressed the people of Beacon City from his palace balcony. The drow ambassadors are still in the palace.

#### **21-25:**

- Princess Romilly refused to convert to Marianism when the rest of the court did. She worships Firinna, the goddess of battles. She has expressed contempt for all men and has

said that she will never marry, no matter what her father wants.

- It is said that she used to sneak out of the palace at night to a secret pagan chapel, though nobody knows how she did so without being detected, or where this chapel was located.
- King Titus has ghastly body odour. It is said that he never bathes, as an act of mourning for his dead son.

#### **26-30:**

- King Titus' body odour has mysteriously gone over the last couple of days.
- A person who has seen the King up close claims that he looks slightly different, but he cannot put his finger on exactly what is wrong.
- Word from the fort at Pengallin is that Princess Romilly has gone missing in the Forest of Meere – if she is not found quickly, there will be no hope for the royal line of Caldraza.

## Beacon City

The capital of Caldraza, Beacon City, lies at the foot of a smouldering volcanic mountain named Mount Wedderburn. Powerful druidic magic ensures that the volcano remains dormant.

The city is famous for one feature above all: glass. The elves who first settled the city found plentiful sources of minerals nearby that were perfect for making glass in all colours of the spectrum, including vast amounts of obsidian from the volcano. Caldraza still supplies much of the civilised world with glass; the elves of Xoth Sarandi drink from translucent lavender goblets and the dwarves of Jehannum from diamond-like tankards, but both were made here.

The glass industry has meant that the capital of Caldraza is a city of crystal light. All the buildings have vast windows with multiple panes. Even the humblest inns tend to have stained-glass features that would be more appropriate to a church in other countries. The larger buildings are made from nothing *but* glass, strengthened with magic and alchemy and bonded together with





## Beacon City Statistics

**Size:** Large City

**Population:** 22,000

**Racial Mix:** 88% human, 4% halfling, 4% dwarf, 2% elf, 2% other races

**GP Limit:** 40,000

**Power Centre 1:** King Titus (LN); civic authority, Mayor Tickerum (LG)

**Power Centre 2:** His Holiness the Primach Rechartus VII, Head of the Church of Marius (LN)

**Captain of the City Guard:** Sir Timothy Marshall (Ftr 10)

steel. At night, the lights inside the buildings shine through the glass walls and roofs, making the whole city lambent as a bag of jewels.

So much glass in one place means that vandalism must be curbed. Within the city, it is an offence to carry missile weapons in a state in which they could be fired. Bows must be unstrung and crossbows disabled. Slings are forbidden altogether. The city guards will be lenient with newcomers but not more than once. Breaking a window will earn you a public flogging.

**Being Shoved through Windows:** Despite the best efforts of the city watch, citizens are thrown and pushed through windows rather often. A creature that is propelled through a window (such as by a *bull rush* attack) suffers 1d3 attacks, each at +4 melee. Each attack inflicts 2d4 slashing damage if it hits, with a critical range of 18-20. Climbing through a broken window without knocking the glass splinters out first requires a Dexterity ability score check (DC 15) with failure inflicting 2d4 slashing damage on the victim.

## Event: Rebuffed At The Palace

The Player Characters may try to walk straight up to the Winter Palace and ask to see the King. The guards on the door will refuse them entry point-blank. They have been given clear instructions to admit nobody but the generals of the Caldrazan armies, the drow ambassadors, and members of the royal family. Attempting to fight one's way in is an act of cosmic stupidity that will bring hundreds of guards down upon the person responsible.

The Player Characters may try to sneak in or use magic – after all, they have just raided a bank vault, so entering a palace should be no problem. This approach may well be successful up to a point and bring the Player Characters close to the ambassadors, but confronting the false King and the drow without Romilly is fairly suicidal. A single yell for help will bring the whole palace guard force down on the Player Characters.

The Games Master should use subtle hints to dissuade the Player Characters from trying to raid the Palace before they have Romilly's help. A good way to do this is to have the Player Characters find out about the rumoured secret passage that the Princess was believed to use, so that she could worship her pagan deity when the rest of the royal family was paying obeisance to Blessed Marius. If they insist on assaulting the Palace directly, then the best they can hope for is a glorious, spectacular and short

fight. The guards of the inner chambers are 10<sup>th</sup> level fighters to a man and are quite able to make mincemeat of uninvited guests.

## Finding Romilly

The Player Characters can get directions to Pengallin from any settlement. By their current level, they should have no difficulty getting there within days.

**Background:** Romilly headed into the forest to meet up with a young man of Ghael, Jamie Macrieth, who is in command of a legion of his own on the other side of the woods. Jamie is an old friend of the Princess, the only man who has been able to stand up to her in a fight, for which she spared his life. Jamie has sent the Princess a message requesting a meeting, in the hope that the two of them can prevent the war from getting any worse. If the two sides near Meere can agree not to engage in fighting yet, then there is a chance that the bloodshed can be averted for a while.

Unfortunately, the forest of Meere is currently infested with an alien horror. An extraplanar intelligence, hailing from the obscure plane of Xorix, has sent forth part of itself into the material plane in order to learn more about the creatures there. The jelly-like entities that form an aspect of that intelligence (and operate like independent brains) arrived two weeks ago in a living vehicle that was mistaken for a comet by most of those who saw it.

Their intention was not malevolent, but the extraplanar fungus growing on the vehicle has begun to devour the local flora and fauna, spreading grey rot through the trees and turning animals and monsters alike into maddened part-fungal creatures. The Xorixians are not sure what to do about this and are debating the matter inside their craft.

Jamie has succumbed to the fungus, which has infested him and is taking over his body, while Romilly, who has a broken leg from fighting with other fungal-infested creatures, is trying to drag him back to safety. She is having a lot of trouble, as Jamie is maddened by the fungus and continually tries to fight her off.

**Encounters:** Encounters en route to Pengallin are infrequent and are mostly large groups of Caldrazan soldiers being moved from their former posts to the border forts along the River Shlass. Monsters that would normally haunt the highways are keeping their distance, scared off by that many armed men.

Many of these soldiers seem ill equipped for their job, lacking decent armour or weapons. This is because they have been hastily drafted from the village populations in preparation for a decisive invasion of Ghael. The closer the Player Characters come to Pengallin, the more likely it is that the soldiers they meet will be headed there too, to reinforce the fort.

The soldiers are not supposed to talk to civilians while they are on the march but they will do so as soon as their captains are out of sight. They will have many questions for the Player



Characters: is it true that we are now allied with the dark elves? Has Chillhame really fallen? Have they ever fought against the men of Ghael and is it true that they wear skirts into battle?

### *Location: The Fort at Pengallin*

The fort is a large stone keep, evidently of elven make. The graceful curves of the masonry give that away. By the looks of it, it has stood for over a thousand years already. It is bustling with activity when the Player Characters arrive, with wagons of supplies being unloaded and distributed.

**Who Did You Say You Were?:** The Pengallin fort is a tightly run military outpost, formerly commanded by Princess Romilly herself and now under the command of her lieutenant, Geoffrey Bustard, 'as in the *bird*, damn it'. The soldiery often 'accidentally' mispronounce Geoffrey's second name.

Lt. Bustard is in no mood to tolerate fools. He has no idea where the Princess has gone and is not inclined to discuss the matter with strangers. As the Player Characters are not even members of the Caldrazan army, they have no business hanging around the fort. Their reputation may precede them and they may even be considered heroes but this does not grant them admission. For all anyone knows, they are spies from Chillhame.

They will have to set out after Romilly without Bustard's help or win him around somehow. His default attitude is Unfriendly, simply because the Player Characters do not belong here among

the preparations for war. If they can change his attitude with Diplomacy checks, he will let them into the fort to talk. Of course, if the Player Characters have somehow gained a good reputation in Caldraza or have signed up with the Caldrazan army, Bustard will be much more co-operative.

All Bustard knows is that Romilly left the fort two nights ago, armed and armoured and was seen by the gate sentries heading into the forest of Meere. She told nobody where she was going and took only three men with her. These were her most trusted companions from among the soldiery.

**Looking for Clues:** Bustard will absolutely forbid the Player Characters to search Romilly's room but they may slip by him and do so anyway. Player Characters are sneaky like that.

The Princess's room in the fort is spartan, with no decoration other than weapon racks. There is an image of the Goddess Firinna on the wall, with a candle still burning in front of it. A Search check (DC 20) finds some tawny feathers near the barred window. A Knowledge (nature) skill check (DC 20) identifies these as hawk's feathers. Jamie Macreith's hawk, Jessa, dropped these when she bore Jamie's message to the Princess.

**Barrack Room Gossip:** If the Player Characters spend any time talking to the soldiers at the fort, they learn that strange things have been sighted in the sky. Two weeks ago a comet passed directly overhead, so close that the soldier on watch could see its shape quite clearly. Last night, a flying island could be seen moving on the northern horizon, moving as silently and slowly as a cloud. There is much talk of 'signs and portents' and 'the end times coming upon us all'.

The soldier who saw the comet describes it as 'like a ruddy great vegetable, bulging at the back, all covered with these wiggling things like hairs. A demon of Hell it was, sir, and I pray Blessed Marius will keep us all in his sight.'

### *Location: The Forest of Meere*

Meere is a forest of towering pines. It forms a natural border between Ghael and Caldraza, as neither side dares to venture too deeply into it. Meere is home to teeming dens of kobolds in its outer fringes and green dragons raise their hatchlings in its depths. Only the most daring and well-trained rangers and druids would travel more than a few miles into Meere.

Now, a new menace has emerged in the forest. Even the dragons are remaining in their lairs, reluctant to face the strange smelling grey shapes that stagger among the tall trees.

For the full rules for the grey fungus in its myriad forms, see *Appendix III* (page 242).

### **Romilly's Tracks**

The Player Characters can track Romilly and her three henchmen without difficulty. A Player Character who has the Tracking feat can make a Survival skill check (DC 12) to follow the trail they left behind. Alternatively, Player Characters can use magical means to find the Princess. Whichever option is used, the result

is the same: they headed deep into the forest, moving due east, as if they were intending to travel straight into Ghael.

## 1. Shattered Trees

At this point, the Player Characters should make a Spot check (DC 15). Those who succeed notice that the tops of nearby trees have been broken off and snapped branches lie scattered several yards away. Something large smashing into the treetops must have caused this. This was of course the Xorix craft, coming in low to make its landing. A Player Character with the Tracking feat may make a Survival skill check (DC 20) with success indicating that he discerns the direction in which the object flew.

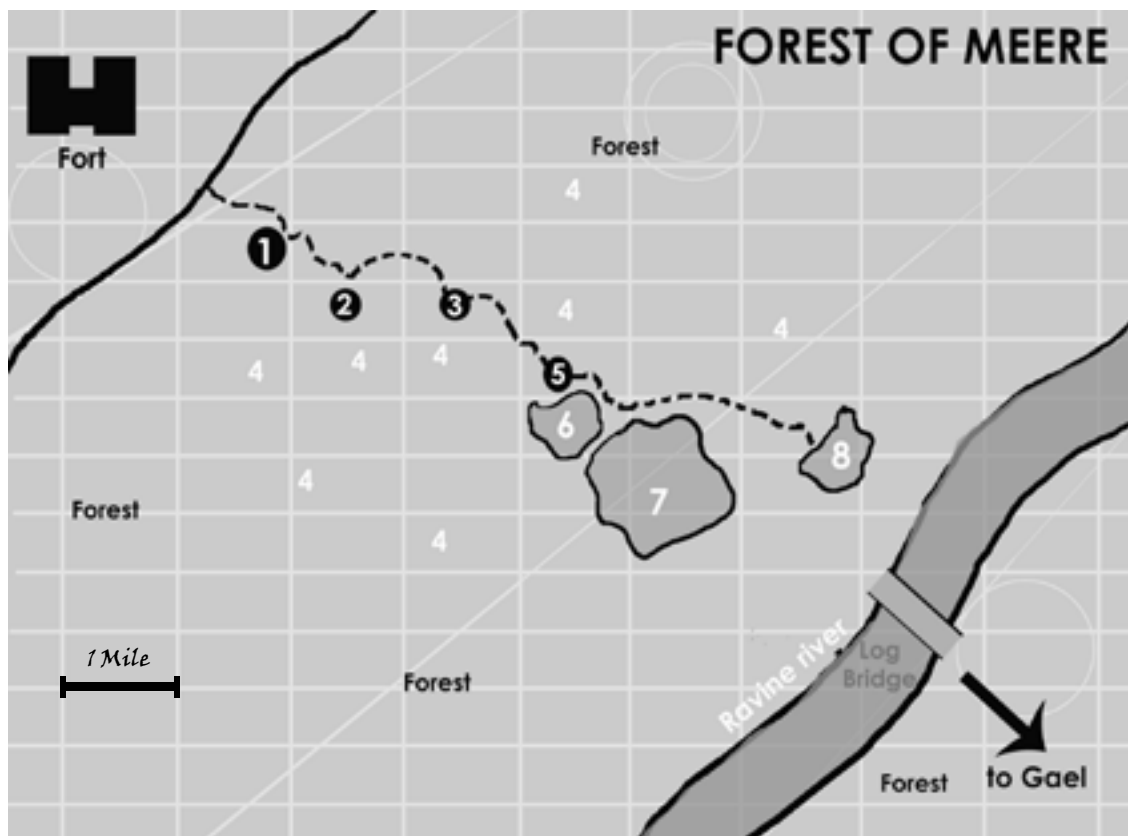
## 2. The Shambling Rottenness (EL 6)

The grey fungus deposits at the points marked 3 on the map have infected several creatures over the course of the last two weeks. These are now either roaming the woods, roaring and insane, or have fully succumbed to the infection and become fungal zombies. The latter are now trudging westwards toward human civilisation, where they can infest more vessels.

The first creature of this kind that the Player Characters encounter is a grey render. This has been overcome by the fungus and is now a fungal zombie (see page 246). It is smashing its way through the pines, heedlessly breaking chunks of itself off against the trunks as it goes. Most of the skull is visible and the bones can be seen poking through the thick greyish coating, as if the creature were wearing a hooded robe.



**Grey Render Fungal Zombie:** CR 6; Large plant; HD 10d8+3 (48 hp); Init +0; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 20 (-1 size, -2 Dex, +13 natural), touch 7, flat-footed 20; Base attack/grapple +7/+20; Atk bite +15 melee (2d6+6); Full atk bite +15 melee (2d6+6) and 2 claws +10 melee (1d6+3); Space/Reach 10 ft/10 ft; SA stinking spores; SQ plant traits,



regeneration 10; SV: Fort +14, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 27, Dex 6, Con 10, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 1

*Skills & Feats:* Toughness

### 3. Tattered Remnants (EL 8)

Strewn across the forest floor in this vicinity are the torn pieces of what was once a human being. This was Jackson Meredith, who was running back to the fort to get help for Romilly and Jamie. The body has clearly been here for less than a day. A Knowledge (nature) skill check (DC 15) reveals that it was torn asunder by some large creature but that none of it seems to have been eaten. It seems that whatever did this was not motivated by a need for food. A Search skill check (DC 15) locates the badge of a Caldrazan military officer among the detritus, proof enough that this was one of Romilly's men.

If the Player Characters remain in this area for longer than a few minutes, or follow the tracks that lead from the remains (Survival skill check, DC 10) they meet the perpetrator, a second grey render (the mate of the first) that has contracted the fungal infection and been driven into a mad rage.

**Grey Render (Fungus Infested):** CR 8; Large magical beast; HD 10d10+40 (95 hp); Init +0; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 19 (-1 size, +10 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 19; Base attack/grapple +10/+20; Atk bite +15 melee (2d6+6); Full atk bite +15 melee (2d6+6); 2 claws +10 melee (1d6+3); Space/Reach 10 ft/10 ft; SA improved grab, rend 2d6+9; SQ darkvision 60 ft, low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV: Fort +14, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 23, Dex 10, Con 18, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 8

*Skills & Feats:* Hide +2, Spot +10, Survival +3; Cleave, Power Attack, Improved Bull Rush, Track

*Improved Grab (Ex):* To use this ability, a gray render must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

*Rend (Ex):* A gray render that wins a grapple check after a successful bite attack establishes a hold, latching onto the opponent's body and tearing the flesh. This attack automatically deals 2d6+9 points of damage.

### 4. Grey Fungus Deposits

In each of these locations is a Large-sized fungal mass (see below), emanating alluring scent. The mass sits in the centre of a crater of white, decayed vegetation. A Knowledge (nature) or Knowledge (the planes) skill check (DC 20) confirms that this diseased-looking stuff does not originate on the material plane.

A Knowledge (the planes) skill check (DC 30) specifically identifies Xorix, a plane of sentient plant life, as the origin plane. Xorix is little studied and only a few facts are known about it, the most important being the dominance of vegetable over animal life.

If the Player Characters destroy the fungus and examine the remains beneath, they discover that mound 4a is growing over the bones of a large humanoid (possibly an ogre or a giant), mound 4b is encasing a dead wyvern (clearly recognisable by its jointed tail) and the smaller mound 4c covers over a human skeleton.

This is all that is left of Sharp-eye Shaun, one of the three henchman of Romilly's who succumbed to the alluring scent and became engulfed by the fungus. Most of his equipment is ruined, but a set of elven chain armour can clearly be seen draping the upper body and further investigation (Search check, DC 20) uncovers a rotten quiver in which are 20 intact +2 arrows, protected from the fungus by dint of their enchantment.

### 5. Something Once A Man (EL 8)

As the Player Characters pass by this point, have them make Spot skill checks (DC 15). Those who succeed notice a figure hidden amongst the undergrowth, watching them. Its face is partly exposed bone, partly raw flesh and mostly grey clinging matter. One eye socket is empty. The creature seems to be an animated human corpse, wearing a filthy suit of chainmail and carrying a longsword and bow.

This is Gerry van Dorn, the third of Romilly's henchman. He, too, has been infested by the fungus but has managed to resist the complete breakdown of his mind, through sheer determination. His body has all but rotted but his brain is mostly intact. If he were treated immediately with *remove disease*, it would be possible to save him.

Gerry has no idea who the Player Characters are. If they attack him, he will fight back with a roar, flying into an uncontrollable rage midway through the combat. If they try to communicate, he will talk to them, though he has difficulty making himself understood, since much of his face is gone. As soon as he is certain that the Player Characters are not enemies, he will urge them to find the Princess and tell them which direction to travel in.

If the Player Characters take up too much time deciding what to do or withhold a cure (or cannot provide one) then Gerry collapses and dies before their eyes, begging them with his last breath to destroy him if he should become one of those shambling monsters. The fungus takes over his body and he arises within minutes as a fungal zombie.

**Gerry van Dorn (Fungus Infested):** Human fighter 8; CR 8; HD 8d10-32 (12 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares) or 20 ft in chainmail (4 squares); AC 16 (+1 Dex, +5 chainmail), touch 11, flat-footed 15; Base attack/grapple +8/+11; Atk +1 *heavy flail* +13 melee (1d10+7/19-20) or +1 composite longbow +11 ranged (1d8+4/x3); Full atk +1 *heavy flail* +13/+8 melee (1d10+7/19-20) or +1 composite longbow +11/+6 ranged (1d8+4/x3); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ fungus infested, rage; SV: Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 2, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8

*Skills & Feats:* Climb +5, Handle Animal +3, Intimidate +1, Jump +7, Ride +3, Swim +5; Cleave, Dodge, Great Cleave, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (heavy flail), Weapon Focus (longbow), Weapon Specialisation (heavy flail)

*Equipment & Treasure:* +1 *heavy flail*, +1 *composite longbow*, officer's insignia, gold ring (50 gold pieces).

## 6. Test Subject (EL 8)

The jelly-men of Xorix had been conducting experiments on the creatures of Ashfar before the grey fungus ran out of control. They have now retreated back into their craft, to ponder what to do next. They are debating whether to observe the progress of the fungus in an alien environment, or clean up their mess and destroy it all before leaving.

Their hasty retreat has left several test subjects imprisoned within *forcecages* in various parts of the forest. In this area, a *forcecage* contains a very angry juvenile green dragon, Sethimus. It was following the new, delicious scent of the grey fungus and stumbled into the cage trap. It has since worked out (though loath to admit it) that the trap probably saved its life.

Sethimus will appeal to the Player Characters to release it. It has no idea how long the *forcecage* will last but it does not want to stay inside for a second longer than necessary. It promises, grinning, that they will not be harmed. If the Player Characters are reluctant to set the dragon free, it will make the point that the one thing that destroys the fungus and its creatures is acid, so Sethimus' acidic breath is the best hope of destroying the fungal infestation and saving the forest.

If the Player Characters do release the dragon, it will insist that they accompany it to the source of the blight. As far as it is concerned, they are its servants now. It wants revenge against the creatures from Xorix and the fungus plague to be scoured from the forest. If it finds the Xorix craft, it will do its best to tear it open and devour the creatures inside.

Though it is perverse, brutal and evil, Sethimus is a lawful creature. If the Player Characters refuse to release it unless it swears not to harm them, then it will eventually consent to this and will keep its word. It will, however, be extremely literal in its interpretation of its promises. For example, a party that it swore to leave alone until they were out of the forest might well be breathed on in sheer spite as soon as they were three feet past the last of the trees.

**Sethimus (juvenile green dragon):** CR 8; Large dragon (Air); HD 14d12+42 (133 hp); Init +0; Spd 40 ft, fly 150 ft (poor), swim 40 ft; AC 22 (-1 size, +13 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 22; Base attack/grapple +14/+22; Atk bite +17 melee (2d6+4); Full atk bite +17 melee (2d6+4) and two claws +12 melee (1d8+2) and two wings +12 melee (1d6+2) and 1 tail slap +12 melee (1d8+2); Space/Reach 10 ft/5 ft (10 ft with bite); SA breath weapon, spell-like abilities, spells; SQ darkvision 120 ft, immunity to acid, *sleep* and paralysis, low-light vision, water breathing; AL LE; SV: Fort +12, Ref +9, Will +11; Str 19, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 14

**Skills & Feats:** Bluff +13, Concentration +13, Diplomacy +13, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (nature) +12, Listen +12, Move Silently +10, Search +13, Sense Motive +13, Spellcraft +12, Spot +13, Swim +14; Cleave, Flyby Attack, Hover, Power Attack, Wingover

**Breath Weapon (Su):** 40 ft cone, 8d6 acid damage, Reflex saving throw (DC 20) halves.

**Spells:** As 1<sup>st</sup> level sorcerer.



**Sorcerer Spells Known (5/4):** 0<sup>th</sup> level: *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *resistance*, *mage hand*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *obscuring mist*, *charm person*

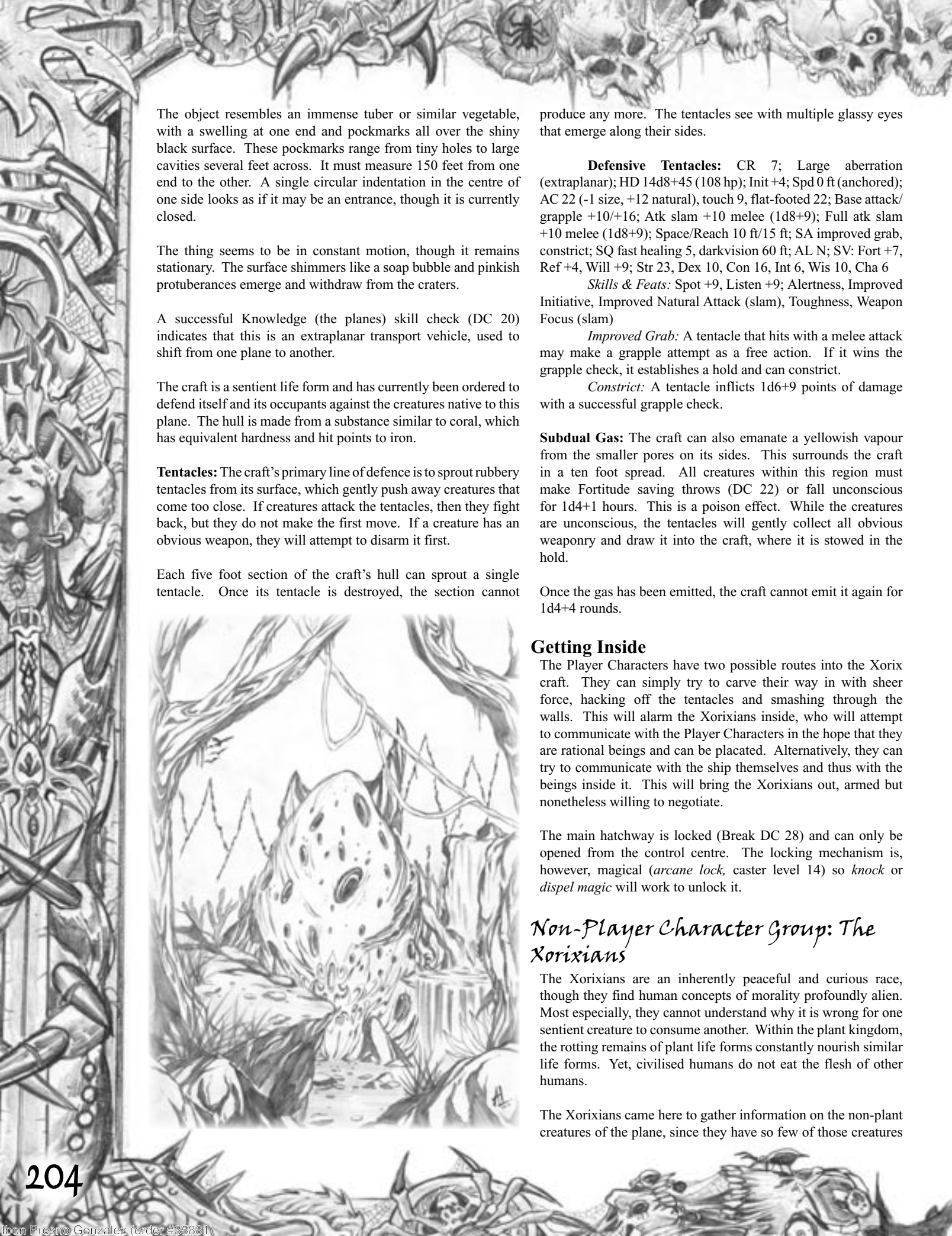
**Xorix forcecage generator:** These extraplanar magical devices look like discs made from blue coral. They are proximity traps that can be used over and over again. When activated, they generate a *forcecage* trap that triggers when any creature larger than Small size comes within ten feet. Creatures nearby are allowed a Spot check to detect the hidden disc (opposed by the Hide check of the creature that concealed it) while rogues are also allowed a Search check to detect the magical trap effect.

The generators use up one charge every time they are activated and one charge for every 12 hours of use. A single generator holds 20 charges. Once it is spent, it must be recharged at a Xorix bio-energy station before it can be used again. There is a recharging station on the craft.

**Trap:** CR 8; magic device; proximity trigger; manual reset; spell effect (*forcecage*, 14<sup>th</sup> level wizard); Search (DC 32); Disable Device (DC 32). When active, the trap can be deactivated (rather than disabled) with a Use Magic Device skill check (DC 25).

## 7. The Spearhead from Xorix (EL 7+)

In the centre of a crater of scorched trees is a vast, incongruous shape. The trees around it are not corroded by fungus, but blasted as if by intense heat.



The object resembles an immense tuber or similar vegetable, with a swelling at one end and pockmarks all over the shiny black surface. These pockmarks range from tiny holes to large cavities several feet across. It must measure 150 feet from one end to the other. A single circular indentation in the centre of one side looks as if it may be an entrance, though it is currently closed.

The thing seems to be in constant motion, though it remains stationary. The surface shimmers like a soap bubble and pinkish protuberances emerge and withdraw from the craters.

A successful Knowledge (the planes) skill check (DC 20) indicates that this is an extraplanar transport vehicle, used to shift from one plane to another.

The craft is a sentient life form and has currently been ordered to defend itself and its occupants against the creatures native to this plane. The hull is made from a substance similar to coral, which has equivalent hardness and hit points to iron.

**Tentacles:** The craft's primary line of defence is to sprout rubbery tentacles from its surface, which gently push away creatures that come too close. If creatures attack the tentacles, then they fight back, but they do not make the first move. If a creature has an obvious weapon, they will attempt to disarm it first.

Each five foot section of the craft's hull can sprout a single tentacle. Once its tentacle is destroyed, the section cannot

produce any more. The tentacles see with multiple glassy eyes that emerge along their sides.

**Defensive Tentacles:** CR 7; Large aberration (extraplanar); HD 14d8+45 (108 hp); Init +4; Spd 0 ft (anchored); AC 22 (-1 size, +12 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 22; Base attack/grapple +10/+16; Atk slam +10 melee (1d8+9); Full atk slam +10 melee (1d8+9); Space/Reach 10 ft/15 ft; SA improved grab, constrict; SQ fast healing 5, darkvision 60 ft; AL N; SV: Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +9; Str 23, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 6

**Skills & Feats:** Spot +9, Listen +9; Alertness, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (slam), Toughness, Weapon Focus (slam)

**Improved Grab:** A tentacle that hits with a melee attack may make a grapple attempt as a free action. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

**Constrict:** A tentacle inflicts 1d6+9 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

**Subdual Gas:** The craft can also emanate a yellowish vapour from the smaller pores on its sides. This surrounds the craft in a ten foot spread. All creatures within this region must make Fortitude saving throws (DC 22) or fall unconscious for 1d4+1 hours. This is a poison effect. While the creatures are unconscious, the tentacles will gently collect all obvious weaponry and draw it into the craft, where it is stowed in the hold.

Once the gas has been emitted, the craft cannot emit it again for 1d4+4 rounds.

## Getting Inside

The Player Characters have two possible routes into the Xorix craft. They can simply try to carve their way in with sheer force, hacking off the tentacles and smashing through the walls. This will alarm the Xorixians inside, who will attempt to communicate with the Player Characters in the hope that they are rational beings and can be placated. Alternatively, they can try to communicate with the ship themselves and thus with the beings inside it. This will bring the Xorixians out, armed but nonetheless willing to negotiate.

The main hatchway is locked (Break DC 28) and can only be opened from the control centre. The locking mechanism is, however, magical (*arcane lock*, caster level 14) so *knock* or *dispel magic* will work to unlock it.

## Non-Player Character Group: The Xorixians

The Xorixians are an inherently peaceful and curious race, though they find human concepts of morality profoundly alien. Most especially, they cannot understand why it is wrong for one sentient creature to consume another. Within the plant kingdom, the rotting remains of plant life forms constantly nourish similar life forms. Yet, civilised humans do not eat the flesh of other humans.

The Xorixians came here to gather information on the non-plant creatures of the plane, since they have so few of those creatures

on Xorix. They have laid *forcecage* traps in several parts of the forest, in order to gather specimens for study.

Xorixians are vegetable life forms but are so highly evolved that they count as outsiders rather than plant class creatures. They are almost always of neutral alignment. Many of them are wizards, with a smaller number being druids.

**Typical Xorixian:** Medium outsider (extraplanar); CR 6; HD 8d8+11 (47 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 20 (+1 Dex, +9 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 19; Base attack/grapple +8/+7; Atk slam +7 melee (1d6-1) or corrosive spit +9 ranged (1d4 acid); Full atk 2 slams +7 melee (1d6-1) or corrosive spit +9 ranged (1d4 acid); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA blinding spurt, digestive embrace; SQ amoebic, damage resistance 5/slashing, fast healing 5, darkvision 60 ft; AL N; SV: Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 20, Wis 12, Cha 14

**Skills & Feats:** Climb +12, Escape Artist +24\*, Diplomacy +15, Hide +24\*, Listen +14, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (nature) +18, Knowledge (the planes) +18, Move Silently +14, Search +18, Spellcraft +18, Spot +14, Use Magic Device +15; Endurance, Improved Natural Ability (blinding spurt), Toughness

\*Xorixians receive a +10 racial bonus to Escape Artist and Hide checks, as their bodies are semi-liquid and can move through narrow gaps.

**Amoebic (Ex):** Xorixians' jelly-like bodies are highly flexible. They can squeeze through narrow spaces without any penalty to movement. They never need to make Escape Artist checks when moving through narrow gaps.

**Blinding Spurt (Ex):** A Xorixian can spit an adhesive glob of muck that plasters itself over the eyes of an opponent, blinding him until he can remove it. The Xorixian must succeed at a ranged touch attack to hit the opponent with the globule, which has a range increment of ten feet. If the globule hits, the target must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 15) or be blinded by clinging, painful slime. This must be washed away to restore the victim's sight. A Xorixian can use this ability three times per day.

**Digestive Embrace (Ex):** Xorixians are filled with swirling digestive juices. They can secrete these juices through their skins, so as to break down food more easily. A Xorixian can take a standard action to coat itself with acidic slime (it is resistant to its own acid damage, though not to any other kind) that deals 1d8 acid damage to any weapon that touches it. Hardness does not reduce this damage at all. A magic weapon may attempt a Reflex saving throw (DC 15) to avoid taking this damage. A creature who attacks the Xorixian with an unarmed attack, unarmed strike, touch spell or natural weapon takes this damage as well but can negate the damage with a DC 15 Reflex saving throw.

**Equipment & Treasure:** *Wand of comprehend languages* (50 charges), *wand of charm monster* (6 charges)

## Inside the Xorix Craft

The interior of the craft is unpleasantly warm and damp, like being inside a hothouse for exotic plants. There is a constant gurgling noise from the walls as nutrients are routed through them and waste products expelled.



The craft is a mobile research vessel. It is an adapted version of the levitating shells that are used on Xorix for conducting research in hard-to-reach areas. This model incorporates *plane shift* magic.

### 7a. Research Area

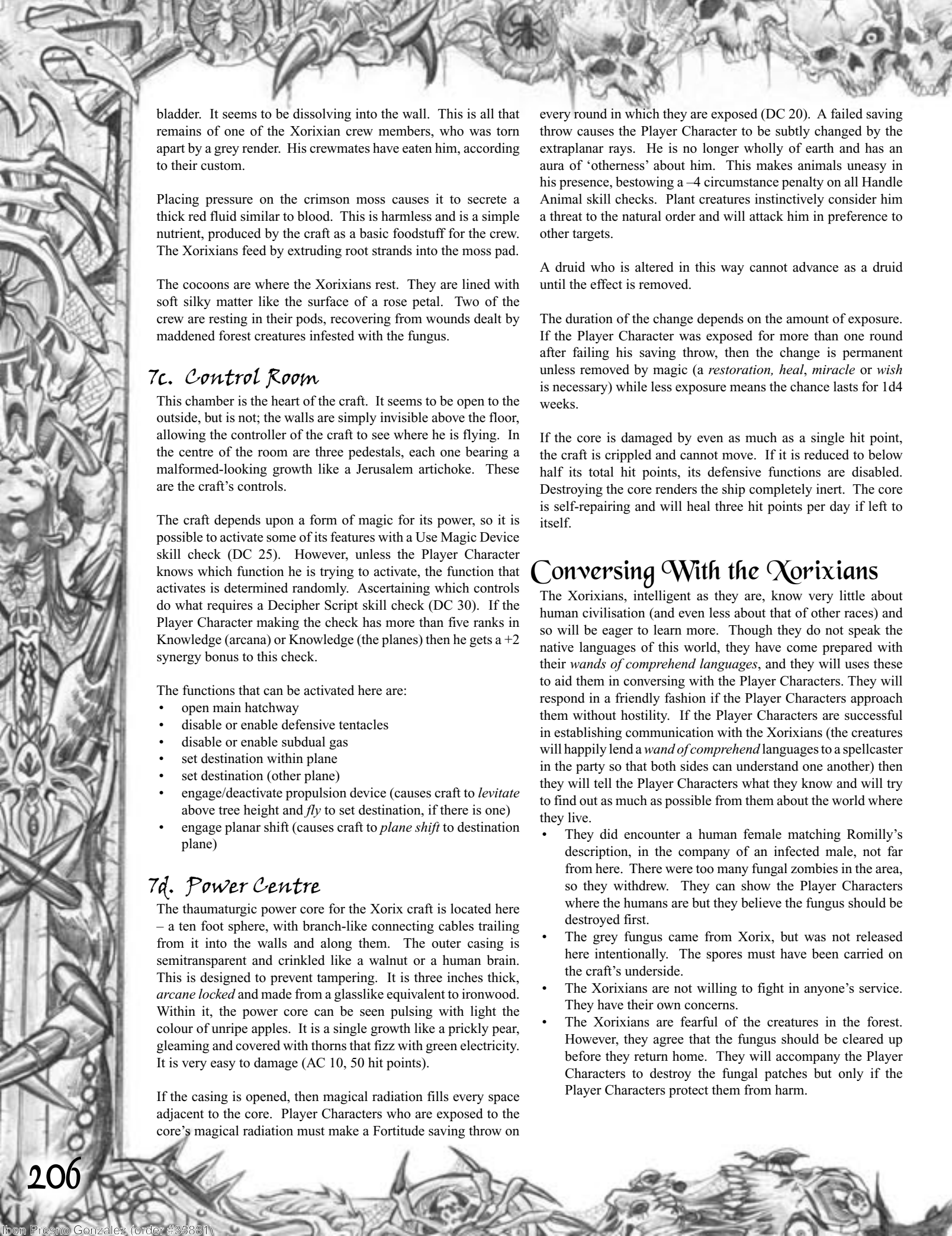
This room is lit with a pale green glow from overhead. There are four slabs of material resembling slate in the room. Each one bears the partially dissected corpse of a human being. These were the four warriors that Jamie brought with him when he came to meet Romilly. The Xorixians found their bodies and brought them back to examine them.

The eastern wall is completely taken up with a bank of organic controls of different kinds: knobs and levers that resemble toadstools, bulbous swellings like tree boles pulsing with interior lights and regions covered with tiny wavering fronts like rippling grass. A Search skill check (DC 15) discovers a slot into which the Xorix *forcecage* generators can be placed to recharge them.

Two Xorixian researchers are arguing here across the bodies of the warriors. The debate is actually very polite, but the sound is like that of drunken pigs fighting in mud. One of them is arguing in favour of destroying all the fungal infestation outside, while the other is insisting that it is a perfect time to study how a strong Xorixian species fares on an alien plane.

### 7b. Crew Quarters

The centre of this room's floor is covered with a spongy pad of crimson moss. Hanging from the ceiling by creeper-like cords are seven cocoons resembling seedpods, the size of a human being. Two of these are bulging and obviously full; the others are semitransparent and empty. Against the far wall is a loose pile of some transparent skin-like substance, rather like a burst



bladder. It seems to be dissolving into the wall. This is all that remains of one of the Xorixian crew members, who was torn apart by a grey render. His crewmates have eaten him, according to their custom.

Placing pressure on the crimson moss causes it to secrete a thick red fluid similar to blood. This is harmless and is a simple nutrient, produced by the craft as a basic foodstuff for the crew. The Xorixians feed by extruding root strands into the moss pad.

The cocoons are where the Xorixians rest. They are lined with soft silky matter like the surface of a rose petal. Two of the crew are resting in their pods, recovering from wounds dealt by maddened forest creatures infested with the fungus.

### 7c. Control Room

This chamber is the heart of the craft. It seems to be open to the outside, but is not; the walls are simply invisible above the floor, allowing the controller of the craft to see where he is flying. In the centre of the room are three pedestals, each one bearing a malformed-looking growth like a Jerusalem artichoke. These are the craft's controls.

The craft depends upon a form of magic for its power, so it is possible to activate some of its features with a Use Magic Device skill check (DC 25). However, unless the Player Character knows which function he is trying to activate, the function that activates is determined randomly. Ascertaining which controls do what requires a Decipher Script skill check (DC 30). If the Player Character making the check has more than five ranks in Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (the planes) then he gets a +2 synergy bonus to this check.

The functions that can be activated here are:

- open main hatchway
- disable or enable defensive tentacles
- disable or enable subdual gas
- set destination within plane
- set destination (other plane)
- engage/deactivate propulsion device (causes craft to *levitate* above tree height and *fly* to set destination, if there is one)
- engage planar shift (causes craft to *plane shift* to destination plane)

### 7d. Power Centre

The thaumaturgic power core for the Xorix craft is located here – a ten foot sphere, with branch-like connecting cables trailing from it into the walls and along them. The outer casing is semitransparent and crinkled like a walnut or a human brain. This is designed to prevent tampering. It is three inches thick, *arcane locked* and made from a glasslike equivalent to ironwood. Within it, the power core can be seen pulsing with light the colour of unripe apples. It is a single growth like a prickly pear, gleaming and covered with thorns that fizz with green electricity. It is very easy to damage (AC 10, 50 hit points).

If the casing is opened, then magical radiation fills every space adjacent to the core. Player Characters who are exposed to the core's magical radiation must make a Fortitude saving throw on

every round in which they are exposed (DC 20). A failed saving throw causes the Player Character to be subtly changed by the extraplanar rays. He is no longer wholly of earth and has an aura of 'otherness' about him. This makes animals uneasy in his presence, bestowing a –4 circumstance penalty on all Handle Animal skill checks. Plant creatures instinctively consider him a threat to the natural order and will attack him in preference to other targets.

A druid who is altered in this way cannot advance as a druid until the effect is removed.

The duration of the change depends on the amount of exposure. If the Player Character was exposed for more than one round after failing his saving throw, then the change is permanent unless removed by magic (a *restoration*, *heal*, *miracle* or *wish* is necessary) while less exposure means the change lasts for 1d4 weeks.


If the core is damaged by even as much as a single hit point, the craft is crippled and cannot move. If it is reduced to below half its total hit points, its defensive functions are disabled. Destroying the core renders the ship completely inert. The core is self-repairing and will heal three hit points per day if left to itself.

## Conversing With the Xorixians

The Xorixians, intelligent as they are, know very little about human civilisation (and even less about that of other races) and so will be eager to learn more. Though they do not speak the native languages of this world, they have come prepared with their *wands of comprehend languages*, and they will use these to aid them in conversing with the Player Characters. They will respond in a friendly fashion if the Player Characters approach them without hostility. If the Player Characters are successful in establishing communication with the Xorixians (the creatures will happily lend a *wand of comprehend languages* to a spellcaster in the party so that both sides can understand one another) then they will tell the Player Characters what they know and will try to find out as much as possible from them about the world where they live.

- They did encounter a human female matching Romilly's description, in the company of an infected male, not far from here. There were too many fungal zombies in the area, so they withdrew. They can show the Player Characters where the humans are but they believe the fungus should be destroyed first.
- The grey fungus came from Xorix, but was not released here intentionally. The spores must have been carried on the craft's underside.
- The Xorixians are not willing to fight in anyone's service. They have their own concerns.
- The Xorixians are fearful of the creatures in the forest. However, they agree that the fungus should be cleared up before they return home. They will accompany the Player Characters to destroy the fungal patches but only if the Player Characters protect them from harm.





If the green dragon Sethimus is with the Player Characters, then any chance of a peaceful dialogue is doomed. Sethimus wants these filthy alien blobs destroyed. They have corrupted his forest and – worse – caged him against his will. That is not something the dragon’s pride will allow him to accept.

If the Player Characters agree to help the Xorixians destroy the fungus patches, then they will be led to three more areas where the grey fungus has taken root. The Xorixians are immune to the fungus’ alluring scent, so they can approach it safely. They destroy it by exuding acid on to it from their bodies.

If the Games Master wishes, further combat encounters can be added here. There are plenty of monsters in the forest of Meere and many of them could easily have become infected.

**A Dragon’s Ire:** If the Player Characters did not release Sethimus earlier, then his *forcecage* has now expired. He will be far from pleased that the Player Characters did not free him from the indignity of capture and is delighted to have the chance to destroy both them and the loathed Xorixians. Sethimus is a powerful foe, so the Player Characters may find themselves fleeing back to the Xorixian craft and possibly even flying to a new destination.

## 8. Romilly and Jamie

Romilly and Jamie are beside a fire in the centre of a clearing. Jamie is moaning in delirium while Romilly tries to make him drink from a waterskin. Romilly is waiting for Jackson Meredith, who set off towards the fort to fetch help. She does not know that he is dead. Jamie’s animal companion, the hawk Jessa, has flown off back to his camp in the hope of leading more of his men here.

Player Characters nearing Romilly’s camp risk running into the snares she has set to give her an edge against monsters and human enemies. With her ankle broken she has not been able to do very much, but the traps are still a potential hazard while there are other creatures abroad.

**Snares (3):** CR 2; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; single target; Atk +15 melee touch (net attack); Search DC 15; Disable Device DC 10.

After her experiences with fungus-infested teammates suddenly going insane and attacking, Romilly is even more wary and sharp-tongued than usual. She will hold the Player Characters at bay with a drawn bow as best she can, warning them not to approach until they can reassure her that there is *no trace* of the vile grey rot anywhere on their bodies. There is no way to placate her other than by stripping off completely and showing no fungal patches, at which point she will grudgingly lower her bow and accept parley. Romilly has a deserved reputation as a firebrand and will shoot to kill if the Player Characters come closer than 30 feet before establishing trust.

Jamie is clearly a man of Ghael. His greatsword and kilt give that away. He is also obviously a victim of the fungus, which has spread over half of his face and is eating away at his scalp. He cannot have long left before the fungus claims him. If the

Player Characters do not have the wherewithal to remove the infection, then they will have to take him to the Caldrazan fort or to the camp in Ghael. Of the two, the fort is closer, while the Ghael camp is not only at a greater distance but reaching it requires crossing a log bridge over a ravine in the heart of the forest, and then crossing over into hostile Ghael territory.

If the Player Characters can remove the disease, then both Jamie and Romilly are curtly appreciative. They explain the situation, since the Player Characters have saved Jamie’s life. Both of them have effectively committed treason against their own side, in order to delay the start of the fighting. Romilly is furious that her father has not only continued a war against the whole nation of Ghael because of what one clan did, but has also now allied the kingdom with the disgusting drow.

## Princess Romilly of Caldraza

Romilly was never the stereotypical courtly princess, even when she was little. She always preferred riding and hunting to the stately balls and social events. She demanded a ‘proper sword’ for her 8<sup>th</sup> birthday and was found practicing with it when she should have been attending the party in her honour. She has kept the company of soldiers and fighting men all her life, to her father’s dismay, and has fought in countless skirmishes against the monstrous humanoids and magical beasts in the north of Caldraza.

More recently, she has been forced to fight against the raiders from Ghael on Caldraza’s eastern borders. She hates this post, as she considers the Ghaels to be no enemies of Caldraza and her father’s motivation for making war on them to be stupid and misguided. It is also, in a circuitous way, her fault and she knows it. Her refusal to take a husband has left the Kingdom with no better heir than the fragile Prince Caspar.

By killing Prince Rufus, the Ghaels took away her dynasty’s best hope for a secure future. They did not just kill a royal, they killed the man who was supposed to rule. While Romilly remains unmarried, she cannot hold the throne herself and Caspar’s blood disorder makes him far too easy to assassinate. Her stubbornness may spell the end of her father’s dynasty, a bloodline that has held the throne of Caldraza for over 700 years.

Romilly is a stockily-built woman with a high forehead, sharp features and red hair tied tightly back. Her men sometimes refer to her as the Steel Fox.

**Princess Romilly:** Human fighter 6/rogue 4; CR 10; HD 6d10+4d6+20 (67 hp, currently 20); Init +2; Spd 30 ft (6 squares), currently 15 ft due to injury (3 squares); AC 20 (+2 Dex, +3 magical shield, +5 elven chain), touch 12, flat-footed 20; Base attack/grapple +9/+12; Atk +2 *longsword of ghost touch* +15 melee (1d8+5/19-20) or +3 *composite longbow* +15 ranged (1d8+6/x3); Full atk +2 *longsword of ghost touch* +15/+10 melee (1d8+5/19-20) or +3 *composite longbow* +15/+10 ranged (1d8+6/x3); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA sneak attack +3d6; SQ evasion, trapfinding, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; AL CG; SV: Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 8



*Skills & Feats:* Balance +6, Bluff +3, Climb +7, Craft (trapmaking) +9, Escape Artist +6, Handle Animal +3, Hide +6, Intimidate +3, Jump +7, Knowledge (local) +5, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Ride +10, Search +5, Sense Motive +3, Spot +4, Swim +7, Tumble +3; Dodge, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Mounted Combat, Mounted Archery, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (longbow), Weapon Focus (longsword)

*Equipment & Treasure:* +2 light steel shield of arrow deflection, +3 composite longbow, arrow of giant slaying (2), arrow of magical beast slaying (2), +2 longsword of ghost touch, elven chain armour

### Jamie Macrieth of Ghael

Jamie is young to be the head of a clan, but that is how fate has fallen out; his father was killed in the clan's ongoing feud with Clan MacHallish. This was the same clan that invited Prince Rufus to Ghael and it was a MacHallish that killed him. This common hatred of Clan MacHallish, coupled with a profound mutual respect, is what has led Jamie and Romilly to attempt peace talks in the midst of burgeoning war.

King Titus does not recognise any difference between the various clans of Ghael and sees the whole nation as a land of murderous brigands. Romilly had hoped that with Jamie's help, she could perhaps persuade him to target only the MacHallishes and not the whole country, but now that the drow have made an alliance with Caldriza, she knows that the war will be going ahead anyway and the only thing to do is to minimise the casualties.

Jamie is blond, with a trimmed beard and a long plait. He has elaborate tribal tattoos across his back, the mark of his headship of the Clan.

**Jamie Macrieth:** Human ranger 10; CR 10; HD 10d8+20 (65 hp); Init +6; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 18 (+2 Dex, +6 chain shirt +2), touch 12, flat-footed 16; Base attack/grapple

+10/+12; Atk masterwork greatsword +13 melee (2d6+3/19-20x2) or masterwork composite longbow +15 ranged (1d8+2/x3); Full atk masterwork greatsword +13/+8 melee (2d6+3/19-20x2) or masterwork composite longbow +15/+10 ranged (1d8+2/x3); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA favoured enemies (humanoid (human) +6, humanoid (goblinoid) +4, magical beast +2); SQ evasion, swift tracker, wild empathy, woodland stride; AL CG; SV: Fort +9, Ref +9, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10

*Skills & Feats:* Climb +9, Craft (weaponsmithing) +7, Handle Animal +7, Heal +8, Hide +10, Knowledge (nature) +7, Knowledge (geography) +7, Listen +8, Move Silently +10, Ride +10, Search +7, Spot +8, Survival +11; Endurance, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Leadership, Manyshot, Rapid Shot, Skill Focus (survival), Track, Weapon Focus (longbow)

*Animal Companion:* Jessa (hawk)

*Spells:* 1<sup>st</sup> level: detect snares and pits; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: barkskin

*Equipment & Treasure:* Chain shirt +2, masterwork greatsword, masterwork composite longbow, gold torc of authority adorned with rubies (2,000 gold pieces).

### Getting Romilly's Assistance

Romilly will listen attentively to any speculation that her father might have been magically influenced or even replaced with some sort of doppelganger. She offers to accompany the Player Characters back to Beacon City in defiance of her orders and confront both her father the King and the drow who have made themselves so comfortable in the royal palace.

She confirms that she did indeed sneak out of the palace to visit a secret temple to Firinna. There is a hidden tunnel that leads through the catacombs under the palace into the city. Although it means sharing the secret of the temple with outsiders, she is willing to take the Player Characters to the tunnel and enter the palace with them.

Some sort of story will have to be told to Bustard at the fort, as he is technically obliged to place Romilly under arrest if she disobeys her orders. Perhaps the Player Characters could come up with something?

Romilly will sneer at the suggestion that Jamie is some kind of lover of hers. He is not. She has no time for such sentimental trash. She respects him because he is tough and honourable, that is all.

### Incoming Ghaels

If the Games Master wants to introduce more chaos, confusion and roleplaying opportunities into the story, then a group of Ghaels from Jamie's camp can arrive before he is cured, led to the clearing by Jessa the hawk. The Ghaels know nothing of Jamie's agreement to meet up with Romilly. All they will see is a moaning giant, and an enemy princess, in the company of strangers. Their leader has clearly been poisoned or bewitched somehow. Jamie is too incoherent to tell them the truth.

The Ghaels will demand the return of their leader, which Romilly will refuse, preparing for a fight. Some hasty diplomacy is needed, or the result will be bloodshed.

**Ghael soldiers, kinsmen of Jamie Macrieth (4):** Human fighter 5; CR 5; HD 5d10 (27 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 chain shirt), touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +5/+7; Atk greatsword +8 melee (2d6+4/19-20x2) or composite longbow +6 ranged (1d8+2/x3); Full atk greatsword +8 melee (2d6+4/19-20x2) or composite longbow +6 ranged (1d8+2/x3); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL N; SV: Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 8

**Skills & Feats:** Climb +4, Handle Animal +1, Intimidate +1, Jump +4, Ride +3, Swim +4; Cleave, Great Cleave, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Focus (longbow), Weapon Specialisation (greatsword)

**Equipment & Treasure:** 300 gold pieces, *potion of cure light wounds*

## Aftermath

Retrieving Princess Romilly from the forest is worth a story award equivalent to a CR 8 challenge. If the Player Characters were able to save Jamie as well, then an additional story award equivalent to a CR 7 challenge should be granted.

## Into the Palace

Once they have successfully retrieved Princess Romilly from the forest of Meere, the Player Characters should be making plans to enter the palace at Beacon City and find out the truth behind the King's involvement with the drow.

The Caldrazan royal palace is in the northern quarter of the city, where it sprawls the lower slopes of Mount Wedderburn. The walls of the building are made from thick panes of black volcanic glass. From outside, it looks rather like a gigantic gleaming black wedding cake, arranged in three concentric octagonal tiers. In the centre is a single needle-like spire, hundreds of feet high.

The Palace is built to be visually splendid, not structurally sound. In a siege situation, the walls could be smashed relatively easily, though nothing less than a siege weapon would do much damage to them. The fragility of the Palace is Caldraz's testament to the strength of its armed forces. No enemy army has reached the capital in centuries, nor do the Caldrazans believe one ever will.

If they attempt to enter the front gate in Romilly's company, the guards will refuse to admit them. The Princess is allowed to pass but they are not, as the King has given strict instructions to admit nobody other than ambassadors and members of the royal family. Rather than attempt to fight through over two hundred guards, Romilly suggests withdrawal for the moment.

The Player Characters' best chance is to use the secret passage and hope that the Princess will be able to negotiate with the guards on the inner tiers, who are old friends of hers. Romilly will however go along with other plans, if they seem workable.



For example, the Player Characters might disguise themselves as drow and pretend to be a follow-up group of ambassadors, escorting the Princess home.

**The Tiers:** The outer tier is given over to guard rooms, supply stores and the royal stables. The middle tier contains staterooms, ballrooms, audience chambers and the main throne room, as well as the entrance to the dungeons. The central tier is where the royal family and their closest retainers live, along with any visiting dignitaries.

## Non-Player Character Group: The Palace Guards

There are two divisions of guard within the palace, namely the regular guard and the elite guard. The regular guard patrol the outer walls and middle tier and watch from the battlements, not that they expect there to be any disturbances of the peace. The elite guard are the royal family's bodyguards, the most trusted of all. They have rooms in the inner tier.

**Regular Guard (200):** Human warrior 4; CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 4d8+4 (21 hp); Init +6; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 18 (+2 Dex, +4 masterwork chain shirt, +2 masterwork heavy steel shield), touch 12, flat-footed 16; Base attack/grapple +4/+6; Atk masterwork longsword +7 melee (1d8+2/19-20x2) or masterwork composite longbow +7 ranged (1d8+2/x3); Full Atk masterwork longsword +7 melee (1d8+2/19-20x2) or masterwork composite longbow +7 ranged (1d8+2/x3); Space/

Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL LN; SV: Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 12.

*Skills & Feats:* Climb +6, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +5, Jump +6, Ride +6, Swim +6; Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Cleave

*Equipment & Treasure:* Masterwork chain shirt, masterwork heavy steel shield, masterwork longsword, masterwork composite longbow

**Elite Guard (20):** Human fighter 10; CR 10; Medium humanoid; HD 10d10+10 (69 hp); Init +2; Spd 20 ft (4 squares); AC 19 (+1 Dex, +8 full plate), touch 11, flat-footed 19; Base attack/grapple +10/+13; Atk masterwork greatsword +16 melee (2d6+7/18-20x2) or masterwork heavy crossbow +13 ranged 1d10/19-20); Full Atk masterwork greatsword +16/+11 melee (2d6+7/18-20x2) or masterwork heavy crossbow +13 ranged 1d10/19-20x2); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL LN; SV: Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 9, Cha 10.

*Skills & Feats:* Craft (weaponsmithing) +4, Handle Animal +9, Intimidate +10, Jump +6, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +5, Ride +12; Cleave, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Great Cleave, Greater Weapon Focus (greatsword), Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialisation (greatsword)

*Equipment & Treasure:* Full plate, masterwork greatsword, masterwork heavy crossbow

## Location: The Temple of Firinna

The secret temple where Princess Romilly used to go to worship her Goddess is located among the buildings to the southwest of the Palace. From the outside, the building looks like a simple incense and herb shop, where customers can buy pots of perfume or cones of scented wax. In the back, hundreds of candles are burning before an image of the fire-haired war goddess.

Worshipping the old Avillon pantheon in Caldrazza is not illegal unless it is done openly. Secret or discreet temples are tolerated. For Romilly, use of the temple is very risky, as her family is supposed to be Marian through and through. The bulk of the populace has no idea that a member of the royal family refused to convert, although there are always rumours.

The building was not always a temple, of course. The tunnel leading to the Palace was there long before the building was used. Originally, several hundred years ago, the building was a brothel, enabling the cream of Caldrazza's courtesans to visit the King through the secret tunnel. Later, it was sealed up for security's sake only to be reopened again in the last hundred years after the ruling dynasty had forgotten all about it.

The Priestess of Firinna who oversees the Temple, Jandive Melzen, will be overjoyed to see the Princess again. She will offer healing and restorative services to any of the Player Characters who need it, free of charge.

Jandive will however be very uneasy about admitting males to the Temple if they are not themselves devotees of Firinna, even if their motive is simply to use the tunnel and reach the Palace. Unless the Player Characters can persuade her otherwise with

a Diplomacy check (DC 30) she will require them to swear a solemn oath before entering the holy place. They must swear never to take the life of a woman who has not attacked them first, to respect the temples of Firinna as sanctuaries and to honour female warriors no less than the male. Many Player Characters will not find this at all limiting and would do so anyway; however, it may make for moral difficulties later in the game when they confront the Terror.

**Tunnel Entrance:** The entrance to the tunnel leading from the temple to the palace is concealed behind a wall hanging in the temple. The door is small, wooden and ordinary looking. The tunnel beyond is dry and smells slightly sulphurous, from the volcanic fumes drifting into it from below.

## Location: The Tunnel

The tunnel leads from the temple of Firinna to a set of dungeons underneath the second tier of the palace. Entering by means of the tunnel bypasses the outer defences but still leaves the elite guards to deal with.

The tunnel is partly natural and partly artificial. At each end, picks and shovels have dug it out, while the midsection consists of great bubbles in the volcanic rock. Several branches lead off from the main tunnel, down which hazards are lurking for unwary wanderers. If the Player Characters have Princess Romilly with them, she can show them the most direct route to the palace.

It is, however, a long time since the Princess ventured down here, and things are not quite how she remembers them. The dungeons that were abandoned for so long are now in use once again. King Titus has been interrogating prisoners from Ghael in one section. In another, the drow are keeping some special beasts, *teleported* in from home. They are using the dungeons to accumulate a reserve fighting force, just in case the Starborn try to confront them here.

## 1. A Thousand Steps

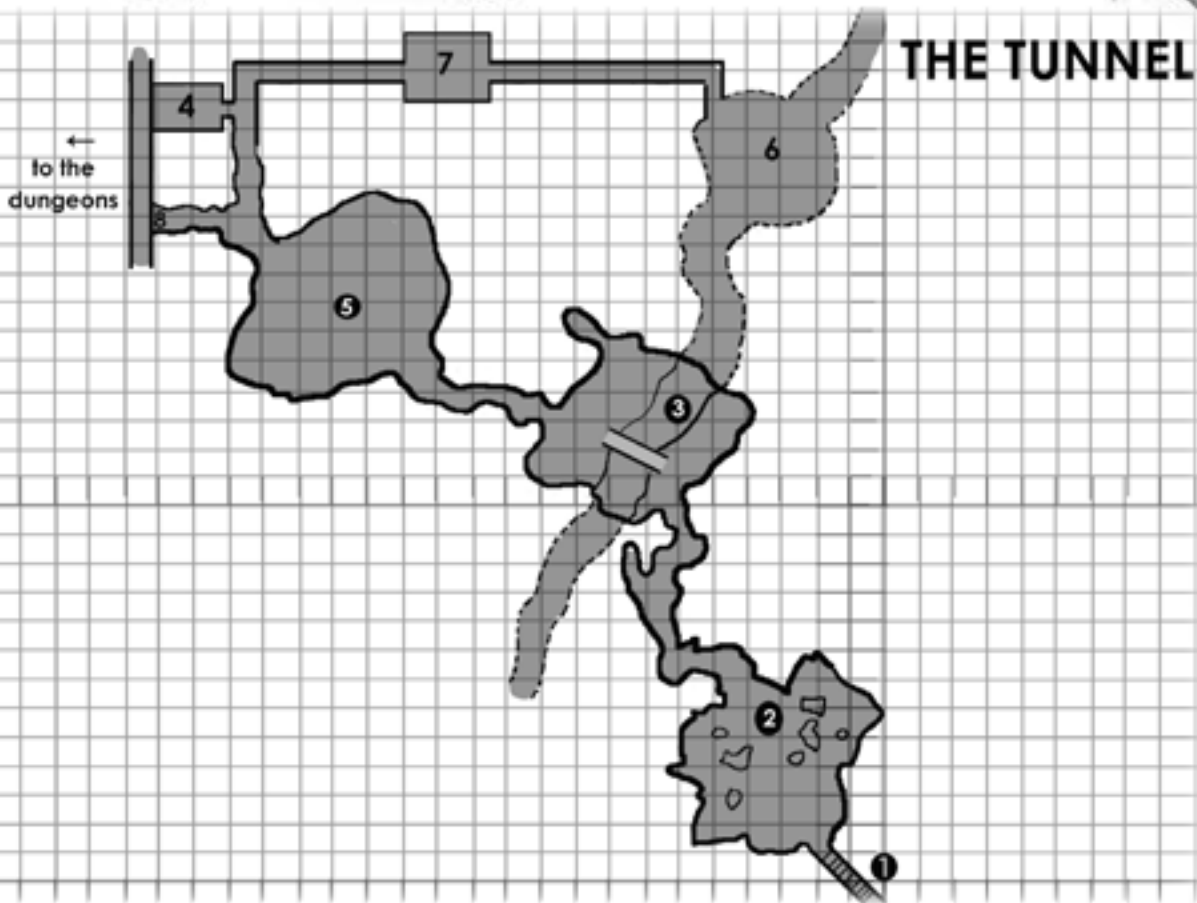
*This stairway is narrow and exceptionally steep, winding downwards through the rock. The stench of sulphur in the air grows stronger and stronger as you descend. At the bottom of the stairs, there is an iron gate, hundreds of years old by the look of it.*

Romilly remembers that this gate was never locked, because the lock was far too rusty.

Opening the gate is difficult, as it is stuck (Open DC 22). If the Player Characters force it, the metallic groan will give the scouting party in the room beyond plenty of warning.

## 2. Scouting Party (EL 8)

*Beyond the iron gate is a large natural cavern, uncomfortably warm and strewn about with huge boulders. The floor is raw rock, flinty and uneven.*



**The Drow Scouts:** While exploring the dungeons, the drow have discovered the tunnel from the other end and are alarmed. This is a possible security breach, so they must find out where it leads. They are currently mapping out the caverns close to the iron gate.

If they have warning of the Player Characters' approach, they will dart into the shadows as quickly as they can and watch them enter. They will hide behind boulders and use them for cover.

Once they have had a good look at the Player Characters, they will try to return to their commanders at the palace and give them warning that the Player Characters are coming. They will not engage the Player Characters in open combat if they can avoid it. A poisoned bolt from the darkness to slow them down is preferable to a face-to-face fight.

**Drow Scouts (3):** Drow rogue 5; CR 6; HD 5d6-5 (12 hp); Init +2; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 17 (+3 Dex, +4 leather +2), touch 13, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +3/+4; Atk masterwork rapier +5 melee (1d6+1/18-20 plus poison) or masterwork hand crossbow +5 ranged (1d4/19-20x2 plus poison); Full Atk masterwork rapier +5 melee (1d6+1/18-20 plus poison) or masterwork hand crossbow +5 ranged (1d4/19-20x2 plus poison); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA poison, sneak attack +2d6, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 120 ft, drow traits, evasion, spell resistance 16, uncanny dodge, trapfinding; AL NE; SV Fort

+0, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 8, Int 16, Wis 11, Cha 15.

**Skills & Feats:** Appraise +7, Balance +7, Bluff +6, Climb +5, Decipher Script +7, Diplomacy +6, Disable Device +7, Escape Artist +7, Hide +11, Listen +10, Move Silently +11, Open Lock +7, Search +14, Sense Motive +4, Sleight of Hand +7, Spot +8, Tumble +11, Use Rope +7; Alertness, Weapon Finesse

**Drow Traits:** Drow have darkvision out to 120 feet, and abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.

**Spell-like Abilities (Su):** Drow can use the following spell-like abilities each once per day: *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*. Caster level 5<sup>th</sup>.

**Equipment & Treasure:** Drow poison (1d4-1 doses), *leather armour* +2, masterwork rapier, masterwork hand crossbow

### 3. Lava Flow (EL 10)

*At this point, a natural rock bridge spans a slowly flowing river of glowing orange lava.*

The drow have chosen this spot as the ideal place to keep one of their little pets. Under the surface of the lava, the pyrohydra Vorn is lurking. The mentors of the Terror raised Vorn from a



hatchling and he has been trained not to attack drow or creatures that resemble them. However, he easily forgets this if he is provoked.

Vorn is listening for the sound of footsteps on the rock bridge. If he hears a Player Character pass, one head will break the surface of the lava, then another, then another until the full bulk of the beast heaves itself into view. Vorn will try to snatch Player Characters off the bridge and pull them into the lava, as this kills them more quickly than chewing them up.

The lava is flowing from the entrance to a tunnel, which leads deeper into the volcano. A natural narrow ledge (six inches wide) runs along the tunnel's side, so Player Characters can move along it if they choose. This route eventually leads to region 6, avoiding the hundred drow soldiers and their officers in the Halls of Gathering.

This combat is potentially extremely difficult for the Player Characters due to the advantages that Vorn gains from the terrain. While his body is in range for the party to attack it, the lava prevents him being flanked or encircled and presents an equal danger to the health of the Player Characters should they fall or be thrown into it. As such, the Encounter Level for the battle with Vorn is increased to 10.

**Vorn, Eight-Headed Pyrohydra:** CR 9; Huge magical beast; HD 8d10+43 (87 hp); Init +1; Spd 20 ft (4 squares), swim 20 ft; AC 18 (-2 size, +1 Dex, +9 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 17;

Base atk/grapple +8/+20; Atk 8 bites +11 melee (1d10+4); Full atk 8 bites +11 melee (1d10+4); Space/Reach 15 ft/10 ft; SA fire breath; SQ darkvision 60 ft, immunity to fire, fast healing 18, low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV: Fort +11, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 19, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 9

*Skills & Feats:* Listen +7, Spot +8, Swim +12; Combat Reflexes<sup>B</sup>, Iron Will, Toughness, Weapon Focus (bite)

*Fire Breath (Ex):* Vorn can breathe jets of fire ten feet high, ten feet wide and 30 feet long. All of his heads breathe once every 1d4 rounds. Each jet deals 3d6 points of fire damage per head, with a Reflex saving throw allowed for half damage (DC 19).

*Killing a Hydra:* Vorn can be killed either by severing all his heads or by slaying his body. To sever a head, an opponent must make a successful sunder attempt with a slashing weapon. The Player Character should declare where the attack is aimed before making the attack roll. Making a sunder attempt provokes an attack of opportunity unless the foe has the Improved Sunder feat. An opponent can strike at Vorn's heads from any position in which he could strike at Vorn himself, because his heads writhe and whip about in combat. An opponent can ready an action to attempt to sunder one of Vorn's heads when the hydra bites at him. Each of Vorn's heads has ten hit points.

Losing a head deals five hit points of damage to Vorn's body. A natural reflex seals the neck shut to prevent further blood loss. Vorn can no longer attack with a severed head but takes no other penalties.

Each time a head is severed, two new heads spring from the stump in 1d4 rounds. Vorn can never have more than 16 heads at any one time and any extra heads he gains beyond the original eight wither and die within a day. To prevent a severed head from growing back into two heads, at least five points of cold or acid damage must be dealt to the stump (a touch attack to hit) before the new heads appear. A frost weapon (or similar effect) deals its energy damage to the stump in the same blow in which a head is severed. Cold or acid damage from an area effect may neutralise multiple stumps in addition to dealing damage to Vorn's body. Vorn does not die from losing his heads until all its heads have been cut off and the stumps seared by cold or acid.

Vorn's body can be slain just like that of any other creature but he possesses fast healing and is difficult to defeat in this fashion. Any attack that is not (or cannot be) an attempt to sunder a head affects the body.

Targeted magical effects cannot sever Vorn's heads (and thus must be directed at the body) unless they deal slashing damage and could be used to make sunder attempts.

*Equipment & Treasure:* The charred remains of earlier victims are digesting in Vorn's belly. Among the horrid residue are four fire opals, once part of a choker, worth 1,000 gold pieces each. There is also a *minor ring of energy resistance (fire)*. Each item requires a Search check (DC 20) to locate among the mess.

#### 4. Ghosts at The Table

*Bricks and mortar have been pulled away from the wall here, revealing an old wooden door that stands ajar. It looks like the damage is very recent.*

There were originally two doorways to this room, both of which have been walled over. Many of the people who lived in the palace believed it to be cursed and none of the palace staff liked to spend time there. Eventually the room was walled up and abandoned. The drow who came scouting down here noticed that there was a concealed door and broke it open. As the room seemed to be empty, they shrugged and moved on.

The room contains a single long table, thick with dust and cobwebs, with ten throne-like chairs set around it. The walls are hung with rotting tapestries, depicting the dynasties of Caldraza and those who have held the royal throne.

If Romilly is with the Player Characters, she hesitates for a moment upon seeing this, as if she were remembering something almost forgotten. She then says ‘This is the Hall of the Blood. I remember reading about it in the palace library, but I could never find where it was. They must have sealed it up.’

If the Player Characters enter the room, dim grey figures begin to appear in the thrones, with their eyes glowing redly. These are the ghosts of the Kings and Queens of Caldraza, back into the past all the way to the original King Ludovic who sits at the head of the table, bloated like a toad and bearded like an unruly hedgerow. The ghostly royals observe the Player Characters for a while, then turn to look at an empty chair. In this, the image of a thin man with a bald head and a trimmed grey beard appears, clad in royal ermine.

This is the ghost of King Titus. If Romilly is with the Player Characters, she recognises him immediately and turns pale, knowing that her father is dead without a doubt. If Romilly is

not present, then any Player Character can identify the late King with a Knowledge (nobility and royalty) skill check (DC 20).

The ghosts will communicate with the Player Characters if they are asked questions. Things they might say include the following:

‘We fear for the future of the bloodline. The young prince is the rightful heir and he is in mortal danger.’

‘The dark ones infest our palace like ticks on a proud lion. They have placed a puppet on the throne, a mockery of the true King.’

‘It is time for the Princess to heed the call of her royal blood. The Throne must be defended, or Caldraza will become the strongest principality of the Dark.’

‘If you fail, we will not rest. You will see us in the night when we come for you.’

Despite these threats, these ghosts are non-combatants. They do not assault the Player Characters for any reason and if attacked will fade away and not return.

## 5. Halls of Gathering (EL 14)

*This underground chamber looks like it was last used for some grand party, perhaps a hundred years ago. The rock walls are hung with faded decorations, banners that are now grey with age and draped with dust, streamers of crinkled paper and papier-mâché masks.*

*Whatever its purpose may have been then, the creatures here now are not here for a party. There are at least a hundred drow warriors in this hall, some camped out on bedrolls, some sat talking on silken cushions. There are four tents rigged on the cavern floor, presumably for the officers.*

A Player Character approaching the room is entitled to a Listen check (DC 15) to hear the sound of many voices in quiet conversation.

The hall was the site of the Caldrazan Royal Ball 250 years ago, as Romilly can confirm if she is with the party. She can explain what happened:

‘Well, the King reigning at the time – Gustave, I think it was - thought it would be a jolly idea to hold the ball in the caverns beneath the palace dungeons, just for a bit of variety. It got off to a good start but halfway through some guests who were playing hide-and-seek were poisoned by yellow mould and died. It was agreed that the party was not a success, so the idea was never repeated. They just left the place as it was. Now I think about it, there were stories that some other guests disappeared completely during that game of hide-and-seek. Naturally, there’s a legend that their ghosts still haunt the lower reaches of the palace. I can’t say I ever saw them.’





The drow encamped here have been *teleported* in to help capture the palace if there were any problems placing the doppelganger in King Titus' place. They are being kept in reserve for the day when the Terror smashes through the dwarven settlement at Underdell and moves into Caldraza to take over.

The Player Characters will have to sneak through this room or take the more perilous route along the bank of the lava stream (see below), unless they feel like a truly epic battle or can come up with a cunning plan. If the Player Characters *do* decide to fight their way through, the drow will not blindly line up to be slaughtered. They will close ranks, use their spell-like abilities and send some runners upstairs to fetch the senior officers.

**Drow Warriors (100):** Drow warrior 1; Medium Humanoid (Elf); HD 1d8 (4 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 16 (+1 Dex, +4 chain shirt, +1 light shield) touch 11, flat-footed 15; Base attack/grapple +1/+2; Atk rapier +3 melee (1d6+1/18–20) or hand crossbow +2 ranged (1d4/19–20); Full atk rapier +3 melee (1d6+1/18–20) or hand crossbow +2 ranged (1d4/19–20); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA poison, spell-like abilities; SQ drow traits, spell resistance 12; AL NE; SV: Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 10

*Skills & Feats:* Hide +0, Listen +2, Search +4, Spot +3; Weapon Focus (rapier)

*Drow Traits:* Drow have darkvision out to 120 feet, and abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.

*Spell-like Abilities (Su):* Drow can use the following spell-like abilities each once per day: *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*. Caster level 1<sup>st</sup>.

*Equipment & Treasure:* Chain shirt, rapier, hand crossbow, 30 gold pieces

**Drow Officers (4):** Drow cleric 6; CR 7; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 6d8+6 (33 hp); Init +2; Spd 20 ft in chainmail (4 squares), base speed 30 ft; AC 19 (+2 Dex, +5 masterwork chainmail, +2 heavy shield), touch 12, flat-footed 17; Base attack/grapple +4/+5; Atk masterwork rapier +6 melee (1d6+1/18–20) or hand crossbow +6 ranged (1d4/19–20) or thrown net +7 ranged (entanglement); Full atk masterwork rapier +6 melee (1d6+1/18–20) or hand crossbow +6 ranged (1d4/19–20) or thrown net +7 ranged (entanglement); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA spells, spell-like abilities, poison, rebuke undead; SQ drow traits, spell resistance 17; AL LE; SV: Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +8; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 10

*Skills & Feats:* Concentration +7, Diplomacy +3, Heal +9, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (history) +4, Knowledge (religion) +4, Spellcraft +4; Combat Casting, Leadership, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Proficiency (net), Weapon Focus (net)

*Drow Traits:* Drow have darkvision out to 120 feet, and abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.

*Spell-like Abilities (Su):* Drow can use the following spell-like abilities each once per day: *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*. Caster level 6<sup>th</sup>.

*Deity/Domains:* She; Protection, War

*Spells:* 0<sup>th</sup> level: *detect magic*, *guardian of faithfuls*, *inflict minor wounds*, *resistance*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *command*, *doom*, *entropic shield*, *magic weapon*, *shield of faith*; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: *augury*, *cure moderate wounds*, *hold person*, *spiritual weapon*, *summon monster II*; 3<sup>rd</sup> level: *animate dead*, *dispel magic*, *magic vestment*, *prayer*

*Equipment & Treasure:* Masterwork rapier, net, hand crossbow, 20 bolts, chainmail, 2 scrolls of *cure light wounds*, scroll of *bless*.

## 6. The Flaming Lake

*At this point, the ledge alongside the lava flow comes to a sudden stop. The tunnel expands into a low-ceilinged cavern (ten feet high) with a lake of lava beneath. Across the cavern, you can see the entrance to another tunnel near the top of the wall, leading away from the mountain's heart and back to the palace dungeon rooms. Three iron chains hang from the ceiling and a large dark mass, half-submerged, lurks in the lava below.*

The iron chains hang from staples in the ceiling at points 6a, 6b and 6c, with hooks on the end. These were used to suspend alchemical cucurbits in the days when the Palace had a resident alchemist. Now, they just dangle above the lava, a foot above its surface.

The only other object of note is a huge iron barrel, half-submerged in the lava, in the centre of the chamber. The spigots, pipes and flanges protruding from it make it look almost like the head of a dragon, which may cause some panic. A Knowledge (architecture and engineering) skill check reveals that it was part of an experimental steam engine that did not work. The barrel measures five feet by eight feet and is cylindrical. As it is filled with air, it floats.



The Player Characters can use their ingenuity to come up with ways to cross the lava. Swinging from one iron chain to the next is possible (a Jump check is required to make the leap and a Climb check is then needed to catch the next chain) but the metal is scalding hot. While a Player Character is holding it, he suffers 1d4 points of fire damage per round.

In addition, the chain at point 6c is loose and has a one in four chance to pull free of its moorings if sudden weight is put on it. A character examining the chain to check whether it is safe can make a Spot or Craft (blacksmith) check (DC 20) to notice that the bracket is coming away from its mounting.

## 7. The Old Alchemical Laboratory

*This room is piled high with laboratory furniture. Glass jars, retorts, bottles of coloured salts and cloudy oils, tongs and alcohol burners all jostle for space. Everything is covered with a thick layer of dust. There is an acrid stink in the air. The skeleton of a humanoid creature, perhaps a gnome or halfling, lies sprawled on the floor.*

When the Palace had a resident alchemist, he was obliged to do his work down here beneath the palace instead of in the upper rooms, as the stench of the projects on which he worked would not be so noticeable in these sulphurous tunnels. He was happy to do this, as he could experiment with the lava and attempt to construct steam engines in his spare time. When an accident created a lingering poison gas cloud, the whole room (dead alchemist and all) was bricked up and quietly forgotten about.

If the Player Characters spend time searching through the room, they can locate the poison bombs that the alchemist was working on when he died. These are egg-shaped capsules of glass with a yellow fluid filling them. If they are thrown, they break and release a cloud of poison gas (ten foot cube). This allows a Fortitude saving throw (DC 18) and deals one point of Strength primary damage followed by 2d4 points of Strength secondary damage.

The door out of this room has been walled up from the other side. The Player Characters can smash through it without difficulty (treat it as a six inch thick masonry wall) but this will make a lot of noise and attract Leski's attention in the interrogation chamber (see Room 2 in the Dungeons section below).

## 8. Concealed Door

This secret doorway is the one that Romilly used to sneak in and out of the palace. It opens via the classic technique of pulling on a wall sconce, which causes a section of wall to swing away. The doorway is obvious from this side; finding it from the other side requires a Search check (DC 20).

## The Dungeons

These cold masonry tunnels contrast sharply with the elegance of the black glass palace above. The Kings of Caldraya used to use them to punish palace staff who had broken the strict rules and to keep certain prisoners close so that they could be gloated

over. Now, the drow have taken control of them. The palace staff let them come and go without question, too terrified of them to say anything.

### 1. The Captives from Ghael

Hanging from iron chains on this wall are three warrior men of Ghael (War 4) from the Dunwallis clan. One has already died from starvation and the other two are close to death. The King used to come to interrogate them every evening but has not come for three days. The survivors have stayed alive by sucking moisture from the damp moss on the walls.

These prisoners have simply been forgotten about. Now that King Titus is dead, nobody cares about them. The drow do not have any interest in them, since the war on Ghael is just an excuse for them to send troops into Caldrayan cities.

The Ghaels have assumed that this is just some new torture and believe the Caldrayans are starving them to death on purpose. If the Ghaels are freed, they will be exhausted until they have a chance to eat, drink and sleep. They will be grateful for release but cannot supply any useful information about the palace.

### 2. The Interrogator (EL 11)

In this room is an iron cage, dangling from the ceiling by a chain. It contains a male dwarf, clad in nothing but a dirty rag, gritting his teeth and refusing to scream. A grinning drow woman is preparing hot irons and is about to begin interrogation. This is Leski Chrizelle, the head torturer of the crew.

**Leski Chrizelle:** Drow fighter 10; CR 11; HD 10d10 (55 hp); Init +3; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 18 (+2 *amulet of*



*natural armour*; +3 Dex, +3 studded leather), touch 13, flat-footed 13; Base attack/grapple +10/+13; Atk +1 *vicious falchion* +15 melee (2d4+2d6+7/15-20 plus poison) or masterwork hand crossbow +14 ranged (1d4/19-20 x2 plus poison); Full atk +1 *vicious falchion* +15/+10 melee (2d4+2d6+7/15-20 plus poison) or masterwork hand crossbow +14 ranged (1d4/19-20 x2 plus poison); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA poison, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 120 ft, drow traits, spell resistance 21; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 14.

*Skills & Feats*: Bluff +2, Climb +7, Handle Animal +15, Intimidate +20, Jump +9, Listen +2, Ride +6, Search +2, Spot +2; Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Critical (falchion), Mobility, Persuasive, Power Attack, Skill Focus (intimidate), Weapon Focus (falchion), Weapon Specialisation (falchion)

*Drow Traits*: Drow have darkvision out to 120 feet, and abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.

*Spell-like Abilities (Su)*: Drow can use the following spell-like abilities each once per day: *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*. Caster level 10<sup>th</sup>.

*Equipment & Treasure*: +1 *vicious falchion* (this weapon deals an extra 2d6 points of damage to the target and 1d6 points of damage to Leski, who does not mind the pain), *amulet of natural armour* +2

The dwarf is Gremnya Adler, a denizen of Underdell who was visiting Caldraza for some jeweller's rouge. The drow are keen to find out as much as they can about Underdell's defences, the guard routine and how prepared they are for a drow assault. The

drow already know that Caldraza is pledged to support Underdell in the event of an attack and vice versa; what they want to know is whether the dwarves have any idea yet of what is going to hit them.

Gremnya is only a jeweller and has nothing but a basic idea of his city's defences. The drow has made the mistake of gloating to him about the invasion plans, as she did not intend him to survive the interrogation. If the Player Characters free him, he will tell them the full story.

The drow allegiance with Caldraza is going to draw troops away to the border with Ghael and leave both Underdell and Beacon City without defence, so that the drow can smash straight through Underdell and send troops flooding into Caldraza, first to 'garrison' the Caldrazan cities and ultimately to take them over once so many Caldrazans have been slaughtered in the war with Ghael that they can no longer defend themselves.

Gremnya will gladly join the Player Characters if they free him, though he has no armour or weapons and is little use in a fight.

### 3. The Beastkeeper (EL 9+)

*This corridor has cells on either side, fronted by iron bars. There is a balcony above and to the west, with a metal grating closing it off from the rest of the room. On the balcony, a male drow is sitting back in a chair, with his feet up on the edge.*

*Inside the cells are savage-looking creatures, snarling and pacing back and forth.*

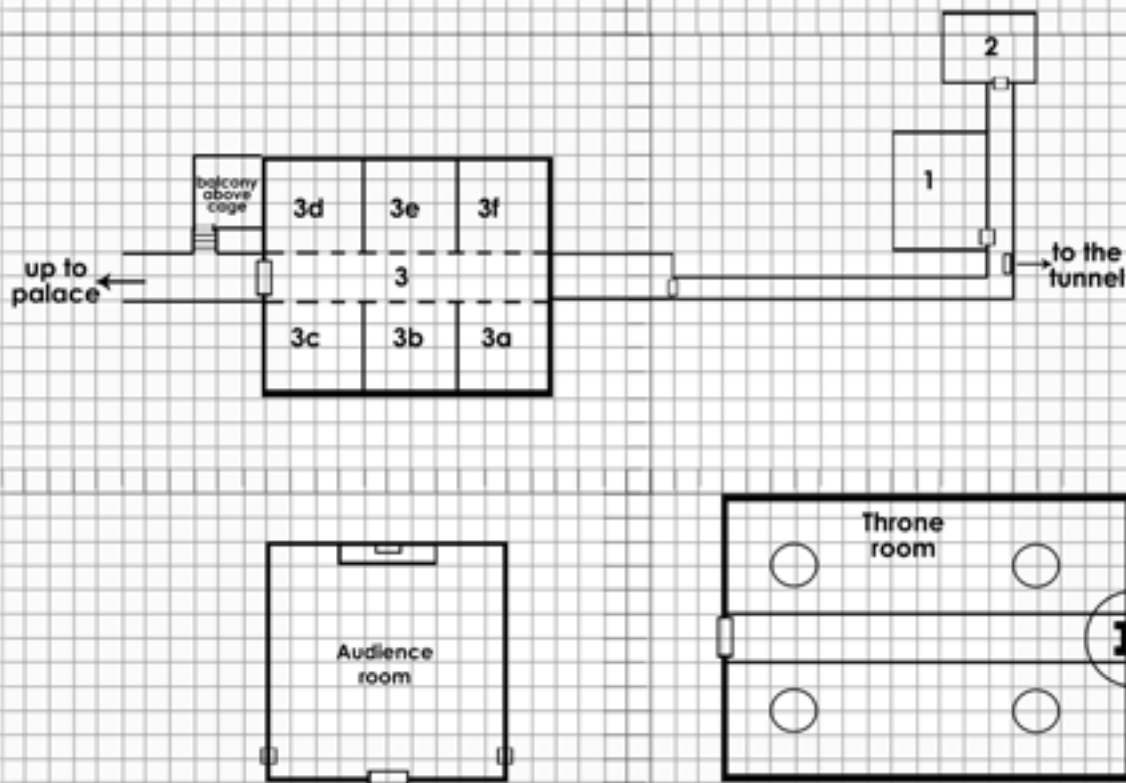


These cells were originally meant for holding groups of dangerous prisoners. The cell doors and the door to the whole room can be opened, closed and locked remotely from the balcony area. This was to ensure that the prisoners could be let out at feeding times without the warden having to go into the room. After they had eaten, they would be ordered back into their cells and the door locked again.

The drow are using these cells to hold some of the monsters they have brought from home. Zebbeth the Beastkeeper is responsible for their care. If Zebbeth sees that the Player Characters are nosing around, he will close and lock the door to the room and begin to open the cell doors, laughing all the while. What he will *not* do is unleash all the monsters at once, as they are just as likely to kill each other as they are to attack the Player Characters.

This is another encounter that can be fatal if the Player Characters are careless. The Player Characters can sabotage the door locks and prevent them from opening with a successful Disable Device skill check (DC 20). Alternatively, an Open Lock check (DC 25) can open up one of the cells and let the creatures within free, which may be useful for pitting the monsters against each other.

Note that the Player Characters can attack creatures in cages that have not yet been released by using missile weapons, reach weapons and spells through the bars; the bars provide cover for the monster within.



The monsters in the cells are as follows:

**3a:** This cell contains a breeding pair of manticores, growling and rattling their spikes. They have learned not to fire them at the creatures in the other cages.

**Manticores (2):** CR 5; Large magical beast; HD 6d10+24 (57 hp); Init +2; Spd 30 ft (6 squares), fly 50 ft (clumsy); AC 17 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +6 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 15; Base attack/grapple +6/+15; Atk claw +10 melee (2d4+5) or 6 spikes +8 ranged (1d8+2/19–20); Full atk 2 claws +10 melee (2d4+5) and bite +8 melee (1d8+2); or 6 spikes +8 ranged (1d8+2/19–20); Space/Reach 10 ft/5 ft; SA spikes; SQ darkvision 60 ft, low-light vision, scent; AL LE; SV: Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 20, Dex 15, Con 19, Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 9

*Skills & Feats:* Listen +5, Spot +9, Survival +1; Flyby Attack, Multiattack, Track<sup>B</sup>, Weapon Focus (spikes)

*Spikes (Ex):* With a snap of its tail, a manticore can loose a volley of six spikes as a standard action (make an attack roll for each spike). This attack has a range of 180 feet with no range increment. All targets must be within 30 feet of each other. The creature can launch only 24 spikes in any 24 hour period.

**3b:** The occupant of this cell is a huge monstrous scorpion.

**Monstrous Scorpion:** CR 7; Huge vermin; HD 10d8+30 (75 hp); Init +0; Spd 50 ft (10 squares); AC 20 (-2 size, +12 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 20; Base attack/grapple +7/+21; Atk claw +11 melee (1d8+6); Full atk 2 claws +11 melee (1d8+6) and sting +6 melee (2d4+3 plus poison); Space/

Reach 15 ft/10 ft; SA constrict 1d8+6, improved grab, poison; SQ darkvision 60 ft, tremorsense 60 ft, vermin traits; AL N; SV: Fort +10, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 23, Dex 10, Con 16, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 2

*Skills & Feats:* Climb +10, Hide -4, Spot +4

*Constrict (Ex):* A monstrous scorpion deals automatic claw damage on a successful grapple check.

*Improved Grab (Ex):* To use this ability, a monstrous scorpion must hit with a claw attack.

*Poison (Ex):* Injury, Fortitude DC 18, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based. The save DC is Constitution-based.

**3c:** In this cell, a gorgon paws the floor, snorting.

**Gorgon:** CR 8; Large magical beast; HD 8d10+40 (84 hp); Init +4; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 20 (-1 size, +11 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 20; Base attack/grapple +8/+17; Atk gore +12 melee (1d8+7); Full atk gore +12 melee (1d8+7); Space/Reach 10 ft/5 ft; SA breath weapon, trample 1d8+7; SQ darkvision 60 ft, lowlight vision, scent; AL N; SV: Fort +11, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 21, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 9

*Skills & Feats:* Listen +9, Spot +8; Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will

*Breath Weapon (Su):* 60-foot cone, once every 1d4 rounds (but no more than five times per day), turn to stone permanently, Fortitude DC 19 negates. The save DC is Constitution-based.

*Trample (Ex):* Reflex DC 19 half. The save DC is Strength-based.

**3d:** This cell contains a petrified grey render, turned to stone when the gorgon breathed on it through the bars.

**3e:** The occupant of this cell is a chimera, with a white dragon head.

**Chimera:** CR 7; Large magical beast; HD 9d10+27 (76 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft (6 squares), fly 50 ft (poor); AC 19 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +9 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 18; Base attack/grapple +9/+17; Atk bite +12 melee (2d6+4); Full atk bite +12 melee (2d6+4) and bite +12 melee (1d8+4) and gore +12 melee (1d8+4) and 2 claws +10 melee (1d6+2); Space/Reach 10 ft/5 ft; SA breath weapon; SQ darkvision 60 ft, low-light vision, scent; AL CE: SV: Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 4, Wis 13, Cha 10

*Skills & Feats:* Hide +1, Listen +9, Spot +9; Alertness, Hover, Iron Will, Multiattack

*Breath Weapon (Su):* This chimera breathes a 20 foot cone of cold. Its breath weapon is usable once every 1d4 rounds, deals 3d8 points of damage and allows a Reflex saving (DC 17) throw for half damage.

**3f:** In this cell are two wolves with white fur. One is a winter wolf; the other is an unfamiliar beast, resembling a winter wolf with straggly fur and eyes of solid black. An atmosphere of gloom and misery surrounds it. This is a bleak wolf, a rare creature from the northern mountains of Caldraza that occasionally ventures underground.

Bleak wolves are creatures of chill and despair, driving their victims nearly insane with depression. They are the embodiment of the spirit of cold and lonely places that drives men to drink or suicide. They often hunt in the company of winter wolves, as their *crushing despair* effect helps bring down foes.

**Winter Wolf:** CR 5; Large magical beast; (cold); HD 6d10+18 (51 hp); Init +5; Spd 50 ft (10 squares); AC 15 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +6/+14; Atk bite +9 melee (1d8+6 plus 1d6 cold); Full atk bite +9 melee (1d8+6 plus 1d6 cold); Space/Reach 10 ft/5 ft; SA breath weapon, freezing bite, trip; SQ darkvision 60 ft, immunity to cold, low-light vision, scent, vulnerability to fire; SV: Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 13, Cha 10

*Skills & Feats:* Hide -1\*, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Spot +6, Survival +1\*

\*The wolves' natural colouration grants them a +7 racial bonus on Hide checks in areas of snow and ice. A winter wolf has a +4 racial bonus on Survival checks when tracking by scent.

*Breath Weapon (Su):* 15 ft cone, once every 1d4 rounds, damage 4d6 cold, Reflex save (DC 16) for half.

*Freezing Bite (Su):* A winter wolf deals an extra 1d6 points of cold damage every time it bites an opponent, as if its bite were a frost weapon.

*Trip (Ex):* A winter wolf that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip the opponent (+8 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the winter wolf.

**Bleak Wolf:** CR 7; Large magical beast; (cold); HD 6d10+18 (51 hp); Init +5; Spd 50 ft (10 squares); AC 15 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +6/+14; Atk bite +9 melee (1d8+6 plus 1d6 cold); Full atk bite +9 melee (1d8+6 plus 1d6 cold); Space/Reach 10 ft/5 ft; SA breath weapon, freezing bite, trip; SQ damage resistance 5/ magic, darkvision 60 ft, immunity to cold, low-light vision, scent, spell resistance 16, vulnerability to fire; SV: Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 13, Cha 10

*Skills & Feats:* Hide -1\*, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Spot +6, Survival +1\*

\*The wolves' natural colouration grants them a +7 racial bonus on Hide checks in areas of snow and ice. A winter wolf has a +4 racial bonus on Survival checks when tracking by scent.

Bleak wolves have the same special attacks and qualities as winter wolves, as well as the following:

*Bloodletting (Ex):* Bleak wolves' curved teeth are razor-sharp and can cause terrible wounds. If a bleak wolf succeeds at a Grapple check against a victim, it tears at his blood vessels and inflicts one point of Constitution damage as well as its ordinary bite damage. Creatures immune to critical hits (such as plants and constructs) are immune to this Constitution damage.

*Mournful Howl (Su):* A bleak wolf's mournful howl affects all enemies within a 60 foot spread. They must make a Will saving throw (DC 18) or be affected by a profound malaise similar to a *crushing despair* spell. Each affected creature takes a -2 penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, skill checks, and weapon damage rolls. This lasts for five minutes. A creature that successfully saves is immune to the same wolf's mournful howl for 24 hours. The saving throw DC is Charisma-based and includes a +6 racial bonus.

**The Doors:** The door to the room is iron, with a lock of excellent quality (Open Lock DC 40). The doors to the cells are iron bars, with locks of superior quality (Open Lock DC 30).

**The Balcony:** The grille that protects this region is made from iron. There are seven levers here, six small and one large. The small levers control the cell doors, the large one the main door to the room. The lever settings are 'open' (up), 'closed and unlocked' (centre) and 'closed and locked' (down).

**Zebbeth the Beastkeeper:** Drow ranger 8; CR 9; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 8d8 (36 hp); Init +3; Spd 30 ft; AC 18 (+3 Dex, +4 chain shirt, +1 light steel shield), touch 13, flat-footed 17; Base attack/grapple +8/+9; Atk +1 *merciful longsword* +10 melee (1d8+1d6+2/19-20 non-lethal plus poison) or +1 *composite longbow* +13 ranged (1d8+1/19-20 plus poison); Full atk +1 *merciful longsword* +10/+5 melee (1d8+1d6+2/19-20 non-lethal plus poison) or +1 *composite longbow* +13/+8 ranged (1d8+1/19-20 plus poison); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA favoured enemy (humanoid (dwarf) +4, humanoid (elf) +2), poison, spell-like abilities, spells; SQ drow traits, swift tracker, wild empathy, woodland stride; AL NE; SV: Fort +6, Ref +9, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 17

*Skills & Feats:* Climb +7, Handle Animal +12, Hide +9, Jump +7, Knowledge (nature) +6, Listen +7, Move Silently +9, Ride +9, Search +7, Spot +7, Survival +7; Endurance, Manyshot,

Rapid Shot, Skill Focus (handle animal), Track, Weapon Focus (longbow)

*Drow Traits:* Drow have darkvision out to 120 feet, and abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.

*Spell-like Abilities (Su):* Drow can use the following spell-like abilities each once per day: *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*. Caster level 8<sup>th</sup>.

*Spells:* 1<sup>st</sup> level: *entangle*, *resist energy*

*Equipment & Treasure:* +1 *merciful longsword*, +1 *composite longbow* (Zebbeth uses his *merciful longsword* to subdue creatures intended for capture, though he can also use it to knock them unconscious before making a coup de grace)

**Lazlo the Viper, Animal Companion:** Medium magical beast; HD 4d8 (18 hp); Init +3; Spd 20 ft (4 squares), climb 20 ft, swim 20 ft; AC 19 (+4 Dex, +5 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 15; Base attack/grapple +3/+2; Atk bite +7 melee (1d4-1 plus poison); Full atk Bite +7 melee (1d4-1 plus poison); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA poison; SQ evasion, link, share spells, scent; AL N; Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +2; Str 9, Dex 18, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2

*Skills & Feats:* Balance +12, Climb +11, Hide +13, Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +7; Weapon Finesse

*Poison (Ex):* Lazlo has a poisonous bite that deals initial and secondary damage of 1d6 Con unless a Fortitude save (DC 11) is successful.

## Within the Palace

The palace is a labyrinth of corridors and empty rooms, unpopulated save for bewigged flunkies hurrying from place to place. Millions of gold pieces have been spent on it to turn it into the most impressive building in all of Caldrza. It is far huger than it needs to be and only a tiny fraction of it is actually used. It is so large and sprawling that we have detailed only the relevant areas. The Palace should not be explored and mapped like a dungeon, as it is too vast and the Player Characters do not have time to pick their way through it. Instead, moving through the Palace should feel like running through the most opulent maze imaginable.

If Romilly is with the Player Characters, then she can lead them straight to the throne room, the royal bedchambers or the audience rooms as they choose. If the Player Characters have no guide, then refer to the random palace region and encounter tables below. A Player Character can attempt to find his way to a specific part of the Palace by making a Survival check (DC 20).

## Typical Palace Corridor

This describes a 30 foot section of palace corridor.

Palace corridors in the inner tiers are thickly carpeted (+2 circumstance bonus to Move Silently skill checks) and ten feet wide. Doors to rooms are usually locked (Open Lock DC 30).

In every 30 foot section of corridor, there is an art object (or a collection of art objects) worth 1d10x100 gold pieces on display,

such as vases, statues of ivory, chessboards with silver chess pieces, large paintings, crystal ornaments or carved cabinets. Player Characters who try to loot as they go can help themselves to as much of this as they can carry but will quickly become overburdened.

Each section also has an additional random feature as determined on the table below. Where more than one option is given, use the one that makes the most sense according to how the random map has evolved. Common sense should always apply – this is meant to simulate the experience of moving through an immense building, not generate a plausible ground map.

d100 Roll	Feature
1-10	Rooms on either side (unguarded)
11-40	Single room (unguarded) or junction
41-70	None
71-90	Single room or junction plus guards
91-00	Rooms on either side plus guards, or access to other tier

**Guarded Rooms:** When guards are encountered, they are not always defending a room. They are also likely to be patrolling that part of the palace, receiving orders, making reports or talking casually with one another.

**Access to Other Tier:** When the table indicates that the Player Characters can now access one of the other tiers, they have found one of the entrances to the next ring of the palace (either inner or outer as the Games Master chooses). 1d3+1 elite guards always guard these entrances.

**Sounding the Alarm:** If at any point the Player Characters are caught, the guards will try to sound the alarm, which involves yelling out warnings to other nearby guards. There are no alarm bells or gongs, as they have never been needed. This will bring additional guards to the area, looking for the Player Characters. These arrive at an average rate of two every other round, to a maximum of ten.

## Typical Palace Chamber

Most of the Palace rooms are not functional. They exist purely to give the nobles of Caldrza yet another room in which to dine, dance, play cards, debate politics or flirt with one another – not that much of this happens under the current monarch, as he is too old for courtly parties.

A typical palace room will be designed around a theme or colour, such as ‘the blue room’ or ‘the hunting room’. This is the only way the rooms can have any distinctiveness in a palace of many hundreds of rooms. One room in four will be arranged around a centrepiece object, such as a statue, a fountain, a musical instrument or a dining table. Palace rooms always contain at least two chairs, set against the wall close to the entrance.

Only one room in ten will be in use. Disused rooms have their furniture covered with white sheets to protect them from the dust. Rooms in use contain any of the following:

d100 Roll	Feature
1-10	1d2 guards, having a quiet smoke where nobody will find them
11-40	1d4 members of the Palace staff, cleaning the room
41-70	1d4 first level nobles, conversing and relaxing
71-90	1d2 palace counsellors, discussing the new arrivals
91-00	1d2 surprised drow warriors, exploring the palace

## Key Rooms

The following rooms contain important encounters. The Player Characters' movements through the Palace should bring them to both of these.

### Audience Room (EL 9+)

This chamber has a dais at the far end, on which is a lectern. Behind this, a smiling drow in a chainmail shirt is addressing an assembled company of ten royal counsellors. All but two of these (Brandin Hest the court wizard and Sir Francis the captain of the guard) are non-combatants and have offices such as castellan, royal treasurer and chief clerk.

The drow, Phosphile the Eloquent, is explaining (with the help of a map) how the alliance between House Arakh and Caldraza will work. While the Caldrazan troops head to the Ghael border, the drow will begin to send boats across from Chillhame laden with warriors, who will help to garrison the Caldrazan cities as well as reinforcing the border troops. When King Titus gives the word, the allied armies will advance across the river into Ghael



and subdue the savages once and for all. The counsellors are nodding at this, unsure how to react.

What happens next is entirely up to the Player Characters and largely depends on whether they have Romilly with them. If she is present to denounce the King as an impostor, then Brandin Hest and Sir Francis immediately join her, order the other counsellors out of the room and batter Phosphile within an inch of his life before setting off to slay the false King.

If the Player Characters are on their own, they will have a much harder time. The immediate response from the gathered counsellors will be to fetch the guards and have them imprisoned. They will have to make a Diplomacy check (DC 25) to even buy the time to make their case. Following this, they should engage in opposed Diplomacy checks with Phosphile, who smoothly assures the assembled company that nothing is amiss and that these ruffians are mere anarchists, intent on bringing down the royal house. As soon as one side achieves a decisive victory in the debate, the counsellors side with them.

**Phosphile the Eloquent:** Drow rogue 8; CR 9; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 8d6+8 (36 hp); Init +3; Spd 30 ft; AC 18 (+3 Dex, +4 chain shirt, +1 light steel shield), touch 13, flat-footed 17; Base attack/grapple +6/+5; Atk masterwork rapier +10 melee (1d6-1/18-20 plus poison) or masterwork hand crossbow +10 ranged (1d4/19-20 plus poison); Full atk masterwork rapier +10/+5 melee (1d6-1/18-20 plus poison) or hand crossbow +10 ranged (1d4/19-20 plus poison); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA spell-like abilities, sneak attack +4d6, poison; SQ drow traits, evasion, improved uncanny dodge, spell resistance 19, trapfinding, trap sense +2; AL NE; SV: Fort +3, Ref +9, Will +3; Str 8, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 18

**Skills & Feats:** Bluff +15, Diplomacy +18, Escape Artist +14, Gather Information +15, Hide +14, Listen +14, Perform (oratory) +15, Search +2, Sense Motive +12, Spot +14; Dodge, Skill Focus (diplomacy), Weapon Finesse

**Drow Traits:** Drow have darkvision out to 120 feet, and abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.

**Spell-like Abilities (Su):** Drow can use the following spell-like abilities each once per day: *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*. Caster level 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Equipment & Treasure:** Chain shirt, light steel shield, masterwork rapier

**Sir Francis, Captain of the Guard:** Human fighter 12; CR 12; Medium humanoid; HD 12d10+12 (78 hp); Init +2; Spd 20 ft (4 squares); AC 19 (+1 Dex, +8 full plate), touch 11, flat-footed 19; Base attack/grapple +12/+15; Atk +1 *brilliant energy greatsword* +19 melee (2d6+8/18-20x2) or masterwork heavy crossbow +15 ranged 1d10/19-20; Full Atk +1 *brilliant energy greatsword* +18/+13/+8 melee (2d6+8/18-20x2) or masterwork heavy crossbow +15 ranged 1d10/19-20x2; Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA none; SQ none; AL LN; SV: Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 9, Cha 10.

**Skills & Feats:** Craft (weaponsmithing) +4, Handle Animal +9, Intimidate +10, Jump +6, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +12, Ride +12; Cleave, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Cleave, Greater Weapon Focus

(greatsword), Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Mobility, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialisation (greatsword)

*Equipment & Treasure:* Full plate, +1 brilliant energy greatsword, masterwork heavy crossbow, *potion of cure moderate wounds* (2), *potion of neutralise poison*, vial of antitoxin (2)

**Brandin Hest, Court Wizard:** Human wizard 12; CR 12; Medium humanoid: HD 12d4+24 (54 hp); Init +6; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 12 (+2 Dex), touch 12, flat-footed 10; Base attack/grapple +6/+6; Atk +3 *quarterstaff* +9 melee (1d6+3/1d6+3); Full atk +3 *quarterstaff* +9/+4 melee (1d6+3/1d6+3); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA spells; SQ none; AL LN; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 17, Wis 12, Cha 11

*Skills & Feats:* Concentration +16, Decipher Script +18, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +18, Listen +2,\* Profession (counsellor) +17, Spellcraft +18, Spot +2\*; Alertness (from familiar), Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Magical Arms and Armour, Extend Spell, Improved Counterspell, Improved Familiar, Improved Initiative, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll

*Equipment & Treasure:* +3 *quarterstaff*, *potion of expeditious retreat*

**Lexington the Weasel, Familiar:** Tiny magical beast; HD 12d8 (27 hp); Init +2; Spd 20 ft (4 squares), climb 20 ft; AC 20 (+2 size, +2 Dex, +6 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 18; Base attack/grapple +6/-6; Atk bite +8 melee (1d3-4); Full atk bite +8/+3 melee (1d3-4); Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft/0 ft; SA attach, deliver touch spells; SQ improved evasion, low-light vision, scent, share spells, speak with master, spell resistance 17; SV: Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +0; Str 3, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 5

*Skills & Feats:* Balance +10, Climb +10, Hide +11, Move Silently +8, Spot +3



This is where the climax of this adventure takes place. The Player Characters should be well aware that they are in for a hard fight. There are a variable number of enemies here, based on the number of allies that the Player Characters have with them. Depending on how they have handled the preceding areas, they could be on their own, or they could have the captain of the guard, the court wizard and a group of elite guards on their side. What is important is that they confront the Terror in person, rather than a Non-Player Character doing it.

There are three possible ways to present this encounter, as follows.

### 1) An Unexpected Marriage

*Sat smirking on the throne is a drow girl of about twenty – a mere child by elven standards. She wears a silver headdress topped with a white plume and is holding the trembling hand of a pale boy in a blue velvet tunic, who stands beside her.*

*‘Well?’ she says. ‘Are you not going to congratulate me on my wedding?’*

If Romilly is present, she adds ‘Hello, sister-in-law.’

On the orders of the false King Titus, the Terror has just been hastily married to Prince Caspar by the rites of the Church of Marius. This means that when Caspar and Romilly are dead, the Terror will become the lawful queen of Caldraz. Disastrous though this is, it is still legally binding by Caldrazan law. Even revealing the impostor King will not change the fact of the wedding having taken place. The guards are now obliged to protect the Terror, as she is a member of the royal family by marriage.

## Throne Room (EL 12+)

*Your boot heels click against a floor of polished marble, the sound seeming strangely loud in the expectant silence.*

*This room is so saturated with gold that it seems you are breathing in gold dust. The walls are covered with stylised vine leaves weaving in and out of columns, all of them gleaming with gold. Four immense pillars of glass hold up the ceiling, their interiors beautiful rainbows of swirling colour. The light in the room comes from a single massive crystal hanging from the ceiling, blazing from thousands of facets.*

*At the end of the room is a throne that looks as if it is made out of a single piece of red amber. On the wall behind it, a beautiful painting of Blessed Marius reaches from ceiling to floor, his face contorted in pain as the clock hands stretch his suffering body.*

*Surrounding the throne is a group of drow warriors, their armour gleaming, their weapons drawn. They watch you, waiting, not saying a word.*

*The throne is not empty.*





The Player Characters must somehow get Caspar to safety, neutralise the immediate threat of the Terror and deal with the other drow. If they attack the Terror, the guards *will* stand against them. They have sworn an oath to protect the royal family and will not go against it. To do so would be tantamount to an alignment change.

## 2) A Royal Hostage

This outcome should only be used if Romilly is with the Player Characters.

*King Titus, or whatever has assumed his form, sits on the throne, glaring at you. One of the drow comes forth, holding the limp body of the young Prince Caspar in his arms, a dagger at his throat.*

*'Girl,' sneers the king, 'the royal line of Caldrazza is a knife blade away from total destruction. Take so much as a step towards this throne, and the boy dies.'*

Naturally, the Terror does not intend Romilly or anyone who is with her to leave the room alive. The hostage situation is just so she can stall for time while her warriors move into position around the Player Characters. She intends to present the massacre as a terrible assault by the Player Characters, who she will portray as anarchists from Chillhame bent on bringing down the monarchy. She will blame them for the deaths of Caspar and Romilly, while keeping her fake Titus on the throne.

## 3) Bluffing It Out

*King Titus sits in the throne and calmly watches you approach. 'What is this treason?' he says. 'What, have my guards been bewitched? Who admitted this filth into my throne room? I warn you, I am King of Caldrazza still and I shall not fall to rebels! Seize them!'*

If Romilly is present, he loudly claims that she has been placed under some sort of wretched spell and demands that she be taken to a safe place where the court wizard can lift it from her. Any Palace guards present must make Sense Motive checks, opposing the doppelganger's Bluff check, in order to see through the lie. If the Player Characters are able to kill the doppelganger or dispel its magical disguise, then the guards are no longer deceived.

This is the easiest variant to run, as it turns into a straight fight immediately.

## The Doppelganger

The doppelganger is crucial to the Terror's plan and knows it. It has been enjoying living like a king. Although it will have to follow the Terror's orders for the rest of its life, it will also have the best of everything; and if one day it decides to leave, there is not much that the Terror will be able to do about it.

If fighting breaks out, the doppelganger will hide behind the troops. It did not sign up as a warrior. Its job is to dupe the populace of Caldrazza, not fight them.



**The Doppelganger:** Medium Monstrous Humanoid (Shapechanger); CR 3; HD 4d8+4 (22 hp); Init +1; 30 ft (6 squares); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base attack/grapple +4/+5; Atk slam +5 melee (1d6+1); Full atk slam +5 melee (1d6+1); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA detect thoughts; SQ change shape, immunity to *sleep* and charm effects; AL NE: SV: Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 13

**Skills & Feats:** Bluff +10\*, Diplomacy +3, Disguise +9\* (+11 acting), Intimidate +3, Listen +6, Sense Motive +6, Spot +6; Dodge, Great Fortitude

\*When using its change shape ability, the doppelganger gets an additional +10 circumstance bonus on Disguise checks. If it can read an opponent's mind, it gets a further +4 circumstance bonus on Bluff and Disguise checks.

**Detect Thoughts (Su):** The doppelganger can continuously use *detect thoughts* as the spell (caster level 18<sup>th</sup>; Will saving throw (DC 13) negates). It can suppress or resume this ability as a free action.

**Change Shape (Su):** The doppelganger can assume the shape of any Small or Medium humanoid. In humanoid form, the doppelganger loses its natural attacks. The doppelganger can remain in its humanoid form until it chooses to assume a new one. A change in form cannot be dispelled, but the doppelganger will revert to its natural form if it is killed. A *true seeing* spell or ability reveals its natural form.

**Equipment & Treasure:** Caldrazan crown jewels (golden diadem with diamonds worth 5,000 gold pieces and ebony-handled silver sceptre inlaid with single emerald, worth 3,500 gold pieces).

## The Terror and her Guards

The leader of the House Arakh forces looks like a drow girl of 20. Her eyes are a freakishly bright shade of blue. She

habitually wears her silver headdress (a *helm of teleportation*) and a moulded breastplate of mithral into battle.

When within 300 feet of her, the Player Characters can feel her presence and she can feel theirs. On seeing her for the first time, the Player Characters know instinctively that she is of the Host, just as she knows that they are Starborn.

The Terror is a powerful foe but young and overconfident. She is used to privilege, having grown up as the great hope of House Arakh, their one chance of reinstatement into the Ennead. She has yet to learn the lessons of failure. So far, all of her schemes have worked out perfectly, with the possible exception of the invasion of Saragost, which the Player Characters may have prevented.

She will not enter combat directly unless she has to. Instead, she will cast defensive spells upon her own troops and lead from the rear, staying well out of the fighting, screaming orders and promising agonising death if the troops do not fight well.

If the Terror is wounded or the battle turns against her, she will use her *helm of teleportation* to flee to Arakh Mur and begin the attack on Underdell. The loss of their leader will demoralise the drow troops badly and they will surrender after 1d4 further rounds of fighting.

**Mezeline Vel'Arakh, the Terror:** Drow fighter 4/cleric 6; CR 11; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 6d8+4d10-10 (39 hp); Init +2; Spd 20 ft in breastplate (4 squares), base speed 30 ft; AC 23 (+2 Dex, +7 *breastplate* +2, +4 *heavy steel shield* +2), touch 12, flat-footed 21; Base attack/grapple +8/+10; Atk +2 *rapier* +12 melee (1d6+1/18-20 plus poison) or thrown net +10 ranged (entanglement); Full atk +2 *rapier* +12/+7 melee (1d6+1/18-20 plus poison) or thrown net +10 ranged (entanglement); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA spells, spell-like abilities, poison, rebuke undead; SQ drow traits, spell resistance 21; AL LE; SV: Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +9; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 8, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 16

**Skills & Feats:** Concentration +7, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (history) +4, Knowledge (religion) +4, Intimidate +11, Listen +2, Profession (force commander) +11, Search +2, Spot +2, Spellcraft +8; Combat Casting, Leadership, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Proficiency (net), Weapon Focus (net)

**Deity/Domains:** She; Protection, War

**Spells:** 0<sup>th</sup> level: *detect magic*, *guidance*, *inflict minor wounds*, *resistance*; 1<sup>st</sup> level: *command*, *doom*, *entropic shield*, *magic weapon*, *shield of faith*; 2<sup>nd</sup> level: *augury*, *hold person* (2), *spiritual weapon*, *summon monster II*; 3<sup>rd</sup> level: *dispel magic*, *summon monster III* (2)

**Equipment & Treasure:** +2 *breastplate*, +2 *heavy steel shield*, +2 *rapier*, *helm of teleportation*, net

**Guards:** The number of the Terror's guards depends on the number of allies the Player Characters have with them. The base number of opponents that the Player Characters will face is two drow officers (see page 214), two drow scouts (see page 211), eight drow warriors (see page 214) and two drow elites (see below). For every important Non-Player Character with significant combat ability who is present and allied with the Player Characters, increase the numbers of the drow by one elite,

one warrior and either one scout or officer. For every regular palace guard present, increase the numbers of the drow by two warriors. This is meant to be a fierce, difficult fight and the death of one or more of the Players is a possibility.

If any of the three lieutenants from *Chapter 5, Saragost* have managed to survive to this point, then they can also be present in this battle, replacing a drow commander and two warriors for each lieutenant. Note that this may tip the balance too strongly against the Player Characters if they have been significantly weakened by the adventure into the palace so far.

**Drow Elite:** Drow fighter 5; CR 6; Medium humanoid (Elf); HD 5d10 (32 hp); Init +3; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 21 (+3 Dex, +6 +1 *breastplate*, +2 *heavy steel shield*) touch 11, flat-footed 15; Base attack/grapple +5/+7; Atk masterwork longsword +9 melee (1d8+10/19-20); Full atk masterwork longsword +9 melee (1d8+10/19-20); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA spell-like abilities; SQ drow traits, spell resistance 16; AL NE; SV: Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 10

**Skills & Feats:** Intimidate +8, Listen +6, Search +6, Spot +6; Combat Expertise, Dodge, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialisation (longsword)

**Drow Traits:** Drow have darkvision out to 120 feet, and abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.

**Spell-like Abilities (Su):** Drow can use the following spell-like abilities each once per day: *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*. Caster level 5<sup>th</sup>.

**Equipment & Treasure:** Masterwork longsword, +1 *breastplate*, masterwork heavy steel shield, *potion of bull's strength*.

## Aftermath

If the Player Characters are able to work their way through all the hazards and defeat the Terror in the throne room, they should receive a story award equivalent to defeating a CR 12 challenge. However, they should not receive experience points for defeating the Terror yet, as she has merely been driven off, not finished. If they are to defeat her once and for all, they must travel to Underdell and defend it against the encroaching armies from Arakh Mur.

If either Romilly or Caspar survived, then the Player Characters are also promised a reward of 50,000 gold pieces and their own castle and lands in Caldraza, as the service they have done to the royal family is almost unimaginably great.

First, there is a battle to fight and a war to win.

# The Fate of Underdell

## Summary

In the final episode in the adventure, the Player Characters must rush to help fortify a dwarven community against an incoming army of drow from Arakh Mur. If Underdell stands fast, the drow will never be able to invade Caldraza through the underground route. If it falls, then nothing stands between them and Caldraza. The Player Characters may have to make a terrible choice – the destruction of one community for the preservation of another.

More than any other episode, the events in this chapter depend on what the Player Characters have already done. If the new monarch of Caldraza is on their side, then they can count on Caldrazan military backing to help defend the dwarves. If the Kingdom is thrown into anarchy, or the drow still hold the throne through their puppet doppelganger, they will have nobody but themselves to trust. This chapter is therefore not presented as a set scenario but as a selection of possibilities, which the Games Master can choose from as the story plays out.

## A Coronation and A Crisis

Following the events of the last chapter, there will probably have been some critical changes in the Caldrazan palace. If the Player Characters have been completely successful, then Princess Romilly and Prince Caspar are both still alive and the drow have been driven from the palace. However, happy endings do not happen nearly as often as people would like. The following section covers several of the most likely outcomes.

### *If Romilly and Caspar are both alive*

The young Prince is crowned King in a hasty ceremony in the palace chapel. The people of Beacon City crowd to the palace to greet their new ruler. Many cheer, though some shake their heads and mutter that the dynasty is on its last legs now. Princess Romilly publicly swears to defend her brother to the last drop of her blood, which gives some of the doubters confidence that he will not be snuffed out as quickly as all that.

King Caspar's first act is to knight the Player Characters (should they accept the honour) for their role in saving the throne from the drow. He then dispatches messengers to Ghael to sue for peace, urging that the two nations unite against the common threat of the drow. He insists that the Player Characters leave for Underdell as fast as possible, so that the dwarves will have plenty of warning. He will send as many troops as he can spare (500 infantrymen) to follow on after them. This is not as much as he would like to offer, but Beacon City will be an unstable place for a while and the army will be needed there. Besides, the Terror's plan has already borne some fruit. Many Caldrazan troops have already been sent to the border with Ghael and it would be impossible to recall them in time.

Romilly bids the Player Characters farewell and good luck. She cannot accompany them, as Caspar needs her.

### *If Caspar lived but Romilly died*

The weakling Prince is crowned and presented to his people – and it is the saddest day of his life. He ought to be looking to his councillors for advice but does not trust them, as they have kept him sheltered from the world for years. Having nobody else to turn to but the Player Characters, he begs them to help him run the kingdom. The councillors of the Palace disapprove of this, as the Player Characters are not what they would consider good role models; they are adventurers like his late sister and look what became of her.

Caspar does not provide any troops to help the Player Characters defend the dwarves of Underdell unless they persuade him to do so. He asks them not to leave, as he will need their guidance in days to come. The Player Characters will have to decide whether to stay and help Caspar while the dwarves are assaulted, or leave him to fend for himself while they help the dwarves.



Without Romilly to lean on, Caspar clings to the Player Characters. This will be a blessing and a curse. They will be able to guide the King and advise him on the decisions he should be making (naturally, he gets the final say) but they are also landed with the responsibility of giving him moral guidance, when he has never had any before. This outcome essentially allows the Player Characters to shape the character of Caldrazas king. If they do not make sure that he is well protected, then he will be assassinated within weeks.

### *If Romilly lived but Caspar died*

The warrior princess is crowned as a warrior queen. There is fighting in the streets between those who support her and those who consider her the kingdom's final doom. Romilly does her best to establish order and regain the confidence of her people. Her counsellors advise her that unless she marries and produces an heir, the royal line will die out. People are superstitious and believe that unless the family continues to govern Caldrazas year after year, there will be disaster. Romilly refuses to marry.

The Queen of Caldrazas immediately calls a halt to the war with Ghael and orders all Caldrazan cities to fortify themselves against a coming drow invasion attempt. She is an excellent

tactical commander; the army follows her faithfully, though the nobles and merchants consider her the worst ruler they have had in generations and pray for the day when she sees sense and marries a suitable nobleman.

Queen Romilly the First knights the Player Characters (if they accept it) and asks them to honour the age-old alliance between the dwarves and the Caldrazans by riding to defend Underdell, with 500 Caldrazan infantrymen at their back.

### *If Romilly and Caspar were both killed*

Caldrazas dissolves into immediate anarchy. With the three most important people in the Kingdom (the King, the Princess and the Prince) all dead – and apparently on the same day – there is uproar and factionalism. Two nobles, Lord Maximillian of Jerrul and Lord Bennister of Magan Thayne, both declare themselves King and produce elaborate lineages to support their claims. Within days, dozens of nobles cleave to one side or the other and the Kingdom is torn apart by civil war.

If the drow forces succeed in removing the obstacle of Underdell from their path, they find a kingdom divided against itself, ripe for the conquering. Three possible outcomes follow. Either the drow back one faction against the other (using their usual methods of guile and insinuation), or they wage open war and ride roughshod over both the factions, or the Church of Marius picks one noble over the other and commands all the faithful to recognise that noble as their true King, on pain of divine wrath. The last option reunites the Kingdom, though there is still anarchy in many rural areas as peasant communities turn back to the old pagan faiths and reject their new ruler.

## **Underdell**

The mining community of Underdell is situated beneath the mountains of Maurn in the north of Caldrazas. Unusually for a dwarven town, it is not a series of chambers and corridors dug out of the rock. Instead, it is an orderly array of stone houses across the base of an immense cavern, in the centre of which is a rock pillar.

Massive iron girders hold the pillar in place. Without these, the excavations around its base and below the village would have caused it to collapse, bringing the full weight of the mountain's roots down on the community. The dwarven engineer who built the pillar supports was named Mungellan, so the pillar itself is referred to as Mungellan's Brace. The engineering work is the pride of the town.

Underdell is, like many dwarven towns, reclusive. Its inhabitants do not care for Caldrazas much. The nearest dwarven settlements are hundreds of miles away in northern Ghael, so the townsfolk here do not even get to see many visitors of their own kind. The yield from the mining here is mostly gemstones, sufficient to keep the community going but not so rich that it will ever attract



## Underdell Statistics

**Size:** Large town

**Population:** 4,500

**Racial Mix:** 98% dwarf, 2% gnome

**GP Limit:** 3,000

**Power Centre:** Jarl Tamerlane Mountainsheart (7<sup>th</sup> level fighter/3<sup>rd</sup> level dwarven defender)

**Constable:** Unska Brunger (6<sup>th</sup> level fighter)

**Guards:** 3<sup>rd</sup> level fighters

many immigrants. Underdell is a little pocket of dwarf culture in the middle of a human kingdom.

The settlement has been here for less than a thousand years, so the dwarves have no memory of the last time the drow were here. They have learned, however; and they also learned to dread a certain gateway of stone that lay at the end of a tunnel to the west of Underdell beyond the Iron Bridge, a tunnel that was dug out long before the first dwarf came here to claim mining rights.

## Non-Player Character Group: The Drow Army

The drow army has roughly the same composition as that which assaulted Saragost, so the same encounter tables can be used as are found in Chapter 7: The Battle of Hoxley Fields, with the exception that the commander of the forces is the Terror herself.

However, since this battle is a critical one, the drow have access to special troops that they could not use before. The following alternative option can be included for the major hero:

## Drow Elite (Major Hero)

**Drow Elite:** Drow fighter 5; CR 6; Medium humanoid (Elf); HD 5d10 (32 hp); Init +3; Spd 30 ft (6 squares); AC 21 (+3 Dex, +6 +1 breastplate, +2 heavy steel shield) touch 11, flat-footed 15; Base attack/grapple +5/+7; Atk masterwork longsword +9 melee (1d8+10/19–20); Full atk masterwork longsword +9 melee (1d8+10/19–20); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA spell-like abilities; SQ drow traits, spell resistance 16; AL NE; SV: Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 10

**Skills & Feats:** Intimidate +8, Listen +6, Search +6, Spot +6; Combat Expertise, Dodge, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialisation (longsword)

**Drow Traits:** Drow have darkvision out to 120 feet, and abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.

**Spell-like Abilities (Su):** Drow can use the following spell-like abilities each once per day: *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*. Caster level 5<sup>th</sup>.

**Equipment & Treasure:** Masterwork longsword, +1 breastplate, masterwork heavy steel shield, *potion of bull's strength*.

## Greater Shadow (Major Hero)

**Greater Shadow:** CR 8; Medium Undead (Incorporeal); HD 9d12 (58 hp); Init +2; Spd fly 40 ft (good) (8 squares); AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 deflection), touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base attack/grapple +4/—; Atk incorporeal touch +6 melee (1d8 Str); Full atk incorporeal touch +6 melee (1d8 Str); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft; SA create spawn, strength damage; SQ darkvision 60 ft, incorporeal traits, +2 turn resistance, undead traits; AL CE; SV: Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +7; Str —, Dex 14, Con —, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 13

**Skills & Feats:** Hide +8\*, Listen +7, Search +4, Spot +7; Alertness, Dodge

**Strength Damage (Su):** The touch of a greater shadow deals 1d8 points of Strength damage to a living foe. A creature reduced to Strength 0 by a shadow dies. This is a negative energy effect.



*Create Spawn (Su):* Any humanoid reduced to Strength 0 by a greater shadow becomes a shadow under the control of its killer within 1d4 rounds.

These greater shadows are manifestations of the Dark itself, bred out of the lightless hollows of Arakh Mur and sent to serve the Terror faithfully. They act as assassins, gliding forth as instructed to find the enemy heroes and commanders and draining away their strength.

### *Location: The Gate of Bitterness*

This gigantic stone gateway, 80 feet high and 40 wide, is the mark of House Arakh's exile. A single word in Elvish script – 'begone' – is carved across the two doors.

The governor of the Ennead set the Gate in place at the end of the last Equinox of Heroes, sealing House Arakh beneath the island of Chillhame in punishment for their defeat. They would forever be condemned to live in the shadow of their shame.

The Gate of Bitterness would only open at the hand of one who was blessed by the Dark; in other words, a member of the Host.

Naturally, the drow have always believed that the Dark would continue to favour the nine houses of the Ennead above others. The arrival of the Terror has challenged this belief.

### *Location: The Iron Bridge*

The Iron Bridge is another of Mungellan's engineering wonders. It is a 15 foot wide flat metal bridge that extends 60 feet across a natural chasm. Mungellan built it to create an easier route for the dwarves to reach the richer gem deposits to the west of Underdell. With admirable foresight, he created the bridge in such a way that it could be extended and withdrawn. Mungellan knew that the Gate of Bitterness lay in the depths to the west and feared that one day, whatever lurked behind it would emerge.

The Terror intends to lead her forces over the Iron Bridge and into Underdell, as it is the most direct route into the town. If the Player Characters can get there in time, they can retract the bridge and force the drow to take the more punishing route through the mines, where the dwarves will be better able to defend the tunnels.

The Iron Bridge is a perfect place for a confrontation with the vanguard of the drow army. The mechanism to withdraw the bridge is located directly beneath the eastern end of it, in a small chamber carved out of the rock. The only way to reach this is via a narrow flight of steps that lead down the side of the chasm. The stone doorway into the control room has not been opened in years and despite Mungellan's superb workmanship, it is stuck (Strength DC 28 to force).

**The Bridge Controls:** Inside the control room is a huge iron wheel connected to a system of cogs and gears. Each round of applying force to it (Strength check, DC 28) retracts the bridge by five feet. Twelve successful checks are thus required to retract the bridge all the way, though most creatures are unable to jump across a gap of more than twenty feet.

### *Event: The Attack Begins*

As soon as she is finished with the Palace of Caldraza (whether she is fleeing in defeat or returning in victory) the Terror will *teleport* back to Arakh Mur. From there, she will lead her armies to the Gate of Bitterness and lay her hand upon it. At this, a wave of crackling darkness spreads along the cracks around the doors and with a titanic groan they steadily swing open. The drow forces then advance to the Iron Bridge and from there to Underdell.

If the Player Characters are not physically present when the Terror opens the gate, then one of them should see it happen in a vision or a dream, in a similar way to the dream of the Abyssal Altar that happened earlier.





## Event: The Battle

Like the battle of Hoxley Fields, this battle can be played out with the additional rules in Appendix 2.

**Troop Strength Bonuses:** The drow have a troop strength bonus of +20. This is reduced to +15 if the Player Characters were able to gain military assistance from Caldraza.

**Command Ratings:** The Terror has a base command rating of 12 and has five competent officers who raise this to 22, for a +4 command bonus. The Player Characters' command rating depends on who is leading their army. By this stage, it is likely to be one of the Player Characters.

**Defensive Emplacements:** The tunnels directly to the west of Underdell are wide and not easily defensible, giving a +4 bonus to the defenders' battle checks. If the Player Characters are able to retract the iron bridge and divert the drow through the mines, then they have to approach through the southern tunnels, which are far steeper and narrower and easier to defend, giving a +10 bonus to the defenders' battle checks.

## What Price Victory?

In this battle, the odds are stacked against the Player Characters from the start. Underdell is not a city built for war, unlike Saragost. Its people are brave and rugged but they are not all warriors. In short, there is no way to win this battle just by fighting to the death, as the drow forces are far too strong.

There are two ways to win:

- **Kill the Terror.** If the leader of the drow army is killed, then they are lost. Their only reason for fighting at all is the Terror, who carries the favour of the Dark. The Player Characters will have to find a way to reach her and destroy her. This is not as hard as it might sound, as her position on the battlefield is always obvious from her battle standard. In this battle, she is leading from close to the front, not from the rear.

The drow will not surrender immediately if the Terror is killed. They will continue fighting for 2-4 more battle rounds as the news spreads, after which they will begin to retreat. They will flee all the way to Arakh Mur if allowed to. That city is beyond the scope of this book, so the Games Master will have to take over the story from that point if that is what the Player Characters decide to do.

- **Bury Underdell.** If the Player Characters pull down Mungellan's Pillar, the cavern will collapse and the drow's route into Caldraza will be closed off. This will leave hundreds of dwarves homeless and without an income, as well as causing some casualties on the Player Characters' side – after all, someone has to make sure the pillar is pulled down.

Bringing down Mungellan's Pillar will require a large amount of damage dealt to exactly the right place (an Architecture and Engineering skill check at DC 20 establishes this) so the Player Characters will have to think up a way to do this. The dwarves will not consent lightly to the destruction of

their home but they *will* agree to it if surrender is the only other option.

## Aftermath

If the Player Characters manage to finish the Terror and shatter House Arakh's plans, then they deserve a hefty story bonus to their experience. As a guideline, they should be around 10<sup>th</sup> level at the conclusion of this adventure.

There will be many questions left unanswered. What happens to the drow forces in Chillhame, now that the Terror is destroyed? Who is on the throne of Caldraza, will there ever be lasting peace with Chillhame, and what of the war with Ghael? As for the bigger picture, now that the Dark no longer favours House Arakh, how will the houses of the Ennead begin *their* assault on the upper world?

The answers to the most important questions will, as ever, depend on the Player Characters.

The story continues in Book 2 of the Drow War trilogy, *The Dying of the Light*, from Mongoose Publishing.



# Appendix 1: Signature Items

The first part of the Drow War includes quests for several unique items. These are, like the Player Characters themselves, instances of stellar energy being infused into a material vessel. Unlike the Starborn, these weapons are not created anew upon each Equinox of the Heroes. They stay on earth, meaning that they have to be kept safe by those who await the return of the Starborn. As the world is a chaotic place, full of thieves and vagabonds, it is quite common for these sacred weapons to be stolen, traded or lost.

Each Starborn has a weapon (or a set of armour or a shield) that is his by right. It belonged to his predecessor and now belongs to him. However, he does not start the game with it. If he wants to reclaim it, he must go searching for it. The first of these items, the sword of Starkweather John, is relatively easy to find and is intended to introduce the Player Characters to the concept of signature items.

All signature items have the following features in common:

- Their special features cannot be accessed by anyone other than the Starborn to whom they belong. Only the relevant enhancement bonus is available. For example, a +3 *flaming burst* weapon in the hands of anyone but the Starborn whose weapon it is can only ever function as a +3 weapon.
- As signature items are closely linked to individual people, their powers are not fixed. Each Starborn who bears the item in his time can express different powers through it. The powers of signature items are directly linked to the experience level of the character. As the character's level increases, he may add augmentations to the weapon. These choices, once made, cannot easily be revoked. Only when the character gains a new level of experience can he reconfigure the item's powers.
- All signature items begin as ordinary +1 versions of the item. When a Starborn character first claims an item that belongs to him (defined as the moment when he picks it up) he may configure it as described below.

Assigning powers to a signature item works like building a magic item from scratch. There are a certain number of points to assign, determined by the



character's overall level. These can be translated into a simple enhancement bonus or into an ability of an equivalent bonus value. See *DMG* for these.

Character Level	Item Bonus Points	Maximum Enhancement Bonus
1	+1	+1
2	+1	+1
3	+2	+1
4	+2	+2
5	+3	+2
6	+3	+2
7	+4	+3
8	+4	+3
9	+5	+3
10	+5	+4
11	+6	+4
12	+6	+4
13	+7	+5
14	+7	+5
15	+8	+5
16	+8	+5
17	+9	+5
18	+9	+5
19	+10	+5
20	+10	+5



## Variant Signature Items

For variety, a Games Master may wish to assign signature items to Player Characters which are not magical weapons or armour. A magical ring might possess an increasing deflection bonus as well as gaining elemental resistances as the Starborn increases in level, while a spellbook could reveal more and more spells over time as well as granting its wielder metamagical abilities like a *metamagic rod*. As a general rule, such items should be gaining a new ability or an upgrade to an existing one every two levels but should be specifically tailored to the Starborn in question.

The character's level also determines the maximum enhancement bonus that may be incorporated into the weapon. Even if you have four bonus points to allocate, you cannot give a weapon a +4 enhancement bonus until you reach 10<sup>th</sup> level.

## Examples of Signature Items

The Starborn hero Roderick, a fighter, discovers the Sword of Starkweather John in the village of Bronce. He is first level, so the sword is the equivalent of an ordinary +1 *longsword* for him. Upon reaching third level, Roderick has an additional bonus point to use. He cannot simply make the sword into a +2 *longsword*, because its maximum enhancement bonus is still +1 for now. If he wants to alter the weapon, he must therefore add a special ability that is the equivalent of a +1 bonus. Consulting the lists in *DMG*, Roderick's Player opts to make the weapon a +1 *flaming longsword*.

When Roderick reaches his fourth level of experience, he may reconfigure the item if he wishes. As the item's maximum enhancement bonus is now +2, he now has the option to make it

a +2 *longsword* without the *flaming* special ability, or to replace the *flaming* special ability with a different special ability that is worth a +1 bonus. He chooses to increase the enhancement bonus, so the sword is now a +2 *flaming longsword*.

A second hero, the wizard Alcofribias, claims the Staff of Niasmah from its resting place. Alcofribias is ninth level. He may immediately configure the staff's powers. He has five bonus points to allocate, with a maximum enhancement bonus of +3. He opts to make the item into a +1 *staff* with the *brilliant energy* special ability.

## Level Loss and Signature Items

When characters lose experience levels, their signature items are also affected if their lowered level would result in fewer bonus points for the item. Maximum enhancement bonus does not apply in the case of lowered levels. The appropriate number of bonus points is 'frozen' and cannot be used, which will result in the temporary loss of a special ability or an enhancement bonus.

The character must choose how this affects the item. Suspending even one point from a special ability cancels that ability completely. The character cannot reconfigure the item until he regains the experience level he had when he last modified it. No item can have its enhancement bonus reduced to less than +1 by level loss.

**Example 1:** Roderick is hit by a wight and unfortunately loses an experience level the next day as a result. As he still has the same number of bonus points available at third level as he did at fourth, his sword is not affected. He cannot, however, reconfigure the item until he reaches fourth level once more.

**Example 2:** Alcofribias is slain in combat and taken to one of the elven stellar circles, so that his soul can be returned to his body. He loses a level of experience and is returned to life. He must now suspend an aspect of his staff until he returns to ninth level. He cannot reduce the enhancement bonus, as it is already at its lowest permissible level of +1, so he has to suspend the *brilliant energy* special ability. The staff now functions for him as a +1 *staff*.



# Appendix 2: Mass Battles

The following rules are intended to simulate Player Character involvement in a large-scale battle. If the Games Master wants to play out any of the battles in these books as a wargame scale event, then a system such as the Open Mass Combat System from *The Book of Strongholds and Dynasties* (Mongoose Publishing) can be used.

## What These Rules Are For

The point of this section is not to provide war game rules for d20. It is meant to make huge battles enjoyable for the Player Characters and give them a chance to take part in a meaningful way. Usually, when a large battle takes place, the Games Master can either run the Player Characters through dozens of combat encounters (which takes far too long) or shift the Player Characters to the background and use war game rules to resolve the battle, which does not give the Players a sense of participation unless they are lucky enough to have a command position.

If the Games Master wants, he can just use the battle encounter rules below and forget about the rules for resolving the battle's outcome. When an epic scale battle takes place in an adventure, the Games Master usually knows beforehand which side is most likely to win. The important thing is for the Players to feel like they can make a difference.

## Command, Combat or Uninvolved?

The first decision to make is what part the character will play in the coming battle. Will he be directing the movement of troops from a safe vantage point, taking part in the actual fighting as a member of either army, or choosing his own course with the battle as a backdrop?

### Command

Only one character on each side in the battle can have a command position. In very large battles, this character will usually be a general, giving orders from a secure station. In smaller ones, the character may well be fighting on the field along with the other warriors. Other officers contribute to the general's battle checks but do not directly influence the battle's outcome.

The battle checks made by the generals decide the battle. The characters at the troop level occasionally have a chance to influence the outcome by achieving tactical objectives but for the most part, their role is simply to fight and to stay alive.

Inexperienced Player Characters are very unlikely to be placed in command of a whole force. A Player Character will not be given command until he is at least sixth level (and capable of

gaining the Leadership feat) so a Non-Player Character will almost always take the command position.

A good example of a Player Character in a position of command is a paladin, praying for divine guidance and directing the defence of a city.

### Combat

Player Characters with this position are in the battle as combatants and expected to fight. They are given orders, deployed into the field and lined up against the combatants on the other side. This position is the most dangerous one that a Player Character can take. It places you right in the thick of the action, offering plenty of opportunities to get at the enemy and make a real difference.

Combatants are always identifiable as such, as the forces engaging in combat need to know who is friend and who is





foe. To this end, they usually wear uniforms or sashes, carry standards or wear a given device on their shield.

A good example of a Player Character in a combat position is a fighter, armoured in full plate, carving his way through the enemy ranks.

While they remain uninvolved, the encounters they face are entirely up to the Games Master. However, if they become directly involved in the combat (such as by being noticed by a sentry, or targeted by the enemy general) then they take on the Combat position by default, with the Games Master deciding the level of risk as appropriate to the circumstances under which they became involved in the fighting.

## *Uninvolved*

Player Characters with this position are not considered to be part of the battle, though it can still affect them and they can affect it. Uninvolved Player Characters are almost always characters who would not fit in to a typical army unit, such as rogues, druids or wizards. The general on their side does not consider them to be subordinates, though he may ask them to carry out special assignments. Unlike Player Characters in combat positions, uninvolved Player Characters are not given encounters every battle round, so long as they remain uninvolved. Their participation is handled as if it were ordinary narrative gaming, with the battle as backdrop.

Uninvolved Player Characters are only considered uninvolved so long as they stay out of the area where the battle is going on. They are thus in a perfect position to carry out tactical assignments, such as sniping at extreme range, espionage on the enemy position, use of spells to confuse the enemy forces and so on.

## *Keeping Track of the Action*

The Games Master should be able to tell the Player Characters what the opposing sides are doing and where they are, more to help them visualise the action and their part in it than because it makes a difference to the battle's outcome. The only time at which the whereabouts of troops becomes relevant is when the generals are deciding upon tactical objectives. For example, you cannot charge the gates if there are no troops in range.

## *The Battle Round and Battle Check*

A battle round is a five minute period. Every battle round, the generals of the opposing sides each make battle checks. A battle check is always an opposed check, whether the battle involves a simple combat of force against force, or more complicated objectives.

The winner of the battle check has 'the tide of battle' in his favour. The amount by which he beat his opponent may bring additional advantages.

## The Battle Check

A battle check is made as follows:

**1d20 + command bonus + troop strength bonus**

## Command Bonus

Seasoned commanders are more effective in the field and can direct troops more efficiently. Strategic skill derives from a combination of combat experience and native intelligence.

A general's command bonus is derived from his command rating, as shown in the table below. To calculate a general's command rating, add together his fighter levels, half his levels in other classes and his Intelligence modifier. If he has levels as a warrior instead, then add his warrior levels minus one. Other factors, such as the Leadership feat, increase a general's command rating as follows:

**Leadership feat:** +4 to command rating.

**Skill ranks in military command Profession:** Add half the total skill ranks to the command rating.

**Capable officers:** Generals benefit from having capable officers on the field. Each such officer adds half his fighter or warrior levels (and one-quarter of his levels in other classes) to the general's command rating. However, the total benefit from officers cannot exceed the general's total number of fighter or warrior levels. In addition, when these officers are killed, their benefit is lost.

Command Rating	Command Bonus
1-5	+0
6-10	+1
11-15	+2
16-20	+3
21-25	+4
26-30	+5

If the general in command of an army is killed, incapacitated or otherwise prevented from giving orders, then his designated replacement must assume command, if he has one. An army that has no commander suffers a -2 penalty to all battle checks and has the target number for all tactical objectives increased by +2, since achieving tactical objectives depends on co-ordination and leadership.

## Troop Strength Bonus

Troop strengths are decided by comparing the size and might of the two contending armies. Assign the stronger army a troop strength bonus, depending upon the amount by which it

outnumbers the opposition, the superiority of its weapons, the quality of its armour, any special attacks and so on. This can be any figure from +1 to +50. It is decided only by the constraints of the story.

Troop strength is the factor that, more than any other, represents a reduction of the many complexities of the d20 system into a single raw statistic. In blunt terms, it represents who is most likely to win and how quickly it will happen.

As this is a story concern rather than a function of the rules mechanics, do not worry too much about translating monsters and the like into troop strength numbers. Just decide, as Games Master, which side is the strongest. What kind of a battle is it? Are the Player Characters leading a surprise assault on an unsuspecting enemy stronghold, holding out while hoping desperately for reinforcements, or waiting to meet an honourable foe on the field?

The detail of the armies' clash, in which the nature of the creatures making up the army becomes relevant, is played out through the Player Character involvement. The battle checks are just to decide the general flow of the battle and the achievement of tactical goals.

## Modifiers

Various factors beyond the strength of the troops and the efficiency of the generals influence the outcome of the battle and determine its progress.

## Who Is On The Offensive?

The first question to answer in each battle round is which side is on the offensive. In almost all situations, one side will mostly be attacking and the other side defending. Even when two forces clash on an open plain, the battle usually begins with one side charging at the other.

If the offensive force has the tide of battle on its side after the battle check, then it inflicts more casualties. If the defensive force has the tide, then it suffers fewer.

If, as a result of the battle check beating the opponents' by five or more, the offensive side earns bonus consequences, then it inflicts higher casualties *and* suffers fewer; vice versa for the defensive. Thus, an offensive force with good tactical command can massacre opponents without suffering many losses, while a defensive force that is expertly deployed can repel or rout attackers without itself taking much damage.

Some forces receive bonuses when they are on the offensive, others when they are on the defensive. For example, a force that includes large numbers of barbarian warriors excels at offence, while a phalanx of armoured dwarves excels at defence.

The shape of the battlefield and the initial deployment of the forces will usually determine which side is attacking and which is defending. This usually stays the same for the duration of the battle.

## Going on the Offensive or Defensive

A general who was previously on the offensive can choose to go on the defensive. If the other side does not immediately answer this by taking up the offensive role, then the general has withdrawn from the field and conceded the battle. For example, a horde of hobgoblins that had swept down from the woods and encountered unexpectedly heavy resistance in a town could begin to retreat back to the woods.

A general who was on the defensive can switch to the offensive, though he may only do so in response to the other side's decision to go on the defensive. If he does so, he forfeits any bonuses to his battle check that defensive factors had given him. For example, a force might ride out from a castle to pursue a fleeing enemy, or charge down a hill towards an enemy force that was beating a retreat.

It is worth noting that some generals will go on the defensive purely in order to trick their opponents into giving up their well-defended positions.

## Battle Check Outcomes

Result	Offensive	Defensive
Wins by less than 5	Inflicts 1	Inflicts 0*
Wins by 5-10	Inflicts 2	Inflicts 1
Wins by 11-15	Inflicts 3	Inflicts 2
Wins by 16-20	Inflicts 5	Inflicts 3
Wins by 21-25	Inflicts 8	Inflicts 5
Wins by 26-30	Inflicts 12	Inflicts 8

\*If the offensive side was trying to achieve a tactical objective, then the defensive side inflicts one casualty.

## Terrain Modifiers

Terrain almost always benefits the defender. The following set of examples shows the kind of bonus to the defender's battle check that should be applied.

Defender's Position	Battle Check Bonus
On a low hill	+2
On a high hill	+3
In a wood	+4
Surrounded by a berm	+5
On battlements*	+10

\*Defenders cannot take casualties unless the attackers have ranged weapons.

## Tactical Objectives

A tactical objective is a goal to be achieved by one side or the other. Put simply, when you achieve a tactical objective, your forces gain access to a part of the battlefield from that they previously could not reach.

Almost all tactical objectives involve destroying, breaking through or taking control of a defensive feature. Invading a

keep, breaking a wall of pikes and pushing through defenders into a cavern are all examples of tactical objectives.

## Battle Check DCs for Given Objectives

The Games Master must assign battle check target numbers to any tactical objectives that the generals choose to aim for. To achieve the objective, the general's battle check must beat his opponent's by at least the stated amount.

This is mainly a narrative feature, giving meaning and structure to battles by allowing Player Characters to keep up with significant developments: the orcs are kept from the walls, the bridge is destroyed, the messenger escapes the field and so on.

Achievement of objectives may, at the Games Master's discretion, have an impact on the whole battle. See under 'Major Changes to the Battle' below. The easy way to judge these changes is to interpret them as cancellations (or adoptions) of bonuses that the other side had, or assignment of new bonuses due to a better deployment. For example, if the defensive side was benefiting from the shelter of a stockade that was then destroyed, simply cancel the bonus. If the offensive side was able to deploy archers on a high hill, award them a suitable bonus.

Objective	Battle Check Target
Take a low hill defended by human warriors	+2
Break a shield wall	+4
Storm over a berm	+6
Break a dwarven shield wall	+6
Get a siege tower in position	+8
Smash down a fortified castle gate	+10

Note that some features, such as major defensive emplacements, both provide a bonus to the defender's battle check *and* increase the difficulty of taking them over. This is because attacking such a target is difficult but taking it over is more difficult still.

## Casualties

When the battle check result indicates so, significant casualties are inflicted. During battle, casualties are always being taken, sometimes heavy, sometimes light.

## Taking Losses

This system does not keep track of troop numbers. Instead, losses are expressed as a cumulative troop loss penalty to the generals' battle checks. Assume that losses are *always* taking place. The system only records those losses that are significant; that is, the instances when one side suffers many more casualties than the other.

Troop loss is measured as a penalty. Do not deduct troop loss from any troop strength bonus that a side may have. Troop strength is a measure of how inherently powerful a side is and how much it outnumbers the other side by.

## Rout Check

Battle Check Result	Consequence	Result
Below 5	Total rout	Side disperses or is massacred, battle lost
6-10	Many troops flee or are trapped	1d4 troop loss
11-15	Some troops flee or are trapped	1 troop loss
16+	Side holds firm	None

### Rout

Rout is what happens when one side inflicts heavy losses on the other and their morale begins to crack. When a side begins to rout, troops may either flee the field in panic, or be cut off from support and slaughtered.

When a given side in battle has suffered troop loss that exceeds the enemy's troop loss by three or more, it is in danger of rout. At the beginning of each round of battle, the commander must make a single battle check and consult the table below. If, following the round, the troop loss figures return to within three of each other, then the check does not need to be made next round.

**Special Modifiers:** This battle check benefits from a +2 circumstance bonus if the side is on the offensive. The commander may also add his Charisma ability score modifier to the check.

### Reckless Attacking

A general may order a reckless attack at any time. In a reckless attack, troops are sent in without concern for their safety. For example, rushing at a charging foe or running uphill to attack archers are both reckless attacks. This tactic adds a bonus to the general's battle check result for that round, from +1 to +5, at the cost of an equivalent troop loss penalty on later rounds. Reckless attacks are most commonly made to achieve difficult tactical objectives.

## Player Involvement

This section covers how battles affect Player Characters individually.

### Deciding Risk Level

Each Player Character involved in the battle must decide his risk level. This is either Low, Medium or High. The risk level reflects a combination of factors including how close to the front line the Player Character is, what sort of targets he is going after and how likely he is to leave himself without support from the rest of the army.

The more risk to which a Player Character exposes himself, the more likely it is that his efforts will have an impact on the whole battle. This impact can be in the nature of a boost to morale, such as when a Player Character captures an enemy standard; it can be a change to the other side's military strength, such as when a Player Character topples an enemy siege tower; it can even involve crippling the other side's tactical competence, such

as when a Player Character is able to kill one of the other side's commanders.

Only Players Character can make these differences deliberately. Non-Player Character warriors are suited to take on opponents of a similar stature to themselves, while Players Character tend to seek out enemy champions, or try to take on key targets like war elephants or siege engines.

**No Risk:** Uninvolved characters are not at risk. However, sometimes characters who are involved in an especially large battle are not at risk simply because there are so many troops or fortifications between them and the enemy. The option to choose a risk level of 'None' may only be taken if the Games Master allows it. It represents the Player's Character keeping himself in a secure location, such as a command tent or inner keep. As the battle progresses, the option may disappear altogether.

## Major Changes to The Battle

A peal of thunder rolls across the battlefield and it begins to rain; soon the cavalry is mired in thick mud. The drow sneak an explosive device to the city gates and blow them wide open, allowing the army outside to flood in. After many hours of battle, night falls. A sapper successfully collapses a tunnel under the castle walls, bringing down a whole corner of the building. The heroes destroy the evil artefact they were seeking and a massive blast tears through the enemy citadel. Do these occurrences make a difference? Indeed they do.

Since the battles unfold as part of a story, it is not only possible but likely that unforeseen events will influence what happens. Furthermore, the Player Characters are the most likely people to create these events. Independent Player Characters have more freedom and individuality than any other agent on the field. To them, the battle is the backdrop for the heroic deeds they do.

When an event takes place that gives either side either an advantage or a disadvantage, the Games Master must assess the scale and apply the result by fiat. For example, the arrival of reinforcements cancels penalties from troop loss. Adverse weather conditions, such as rain or fog, usually benefit the defending side.

If the event helps with the possible achievement of a tactical objective, then lower the battle check target accordingly. For example, if a Player Character personally fells five of the guards who were standing fast on a berm, then drop the check target from +5 to +4.

However, if the event actually achieves the objective at a stroke, then use the event as the guide to what happens, not the battle

check result. For example, if a Player Character destroys a castle gate with a *disintegrate* spell, then the battle check target does not apply.

Having major heroes on the field is a great way to add excitement and interest to a battle. Player Characters tend to make a beeline for them, especially if they are large monsters.

## Battle Encounters

All Player Characters in the Combat position are assigned encounters with each battle round. This represents the number and strength of enemy warriors that they must face. It also gives them the opportunity to challenge key figures on the battlefield or assist with the achievement of tactical objectives.

Roll 1d100 and consult the table below to determine battle encounters. Where there is an 'or' option, the Player Character can choose which challenge to face.

## Opponents

Where opponents are referred to, this means an encounter with the type of creature that makes up the rank and file of the army. In the majority of battles, these will be ordinary 1<sup>st</sup> level warriors.

## Minor Heroes

A minor hero is not in a position of command but is still bigger, tougher or more frightening than the rest of the enemies around him. A typical minor hero is the 'most vicious guy in the platoon' – he is not the commander but is still looked up to by the rest of the warriors. Minor heroes are typically two to three levels above the rank and file. They are usually warriors, though a few can be spellcasters. An easy way to generate a minor hero is to take an ordinary warrior, use the elite array for his ability scores and add two more warrior levels.

Minor heroes have the same quality of equipment that their comrades-in-arms do.

## Major Heroes

Major heroes are Non-Player Characters in their own right. They have a special role to play on the battlefield, usually that of dealing massive amounts of damage or providing some specialist service such as healing or spellcasting. They are five to six levels above the rank and file. Major heroes in monstrous armies are almost always giants or similar large creatures. They could also be war elephants, constructs or even dragons.

Non-living battle engines, such as siege machines also count as major heroes. If the battle contains siege machines, the Games Master can substitute one for a major hero; in this case, the opponents encountered along with it are its operating crew.

## Minor Officers

These officers are in command of small units. In troops of humans and similar races, they are usually fighters or aristocrats as opposed to warriors. An officer's role is to direct the fighting, not to be the first to join in with it. Among monstrous humanoids and goblinoids, minor officers can also be adepts or sorcerers. Officers are never encountered unaccompanied.

A minor officer is usually two to three levels above the rank and file. Their equipment is always of superior quality to that of the bulk of the warriors, especially their armour. Most minor officers take the Leadership feat if they are eligible. Officers typically have some insignia to identify them as such, such as a sash, tabard or a design upon their shield, so that the troops know where to find them in the heat of battle.

## Major Officers

Major officers are in command of multiple units. The general of each side is a major officer. They contribute directly to the general's command rating. Hence, killing or incapacitating a major officer is a serious blow to the army. For this reason, major officers will always be accompanied by a hero or by multiple warriors.

Major officers are at least six levels above the rank and file. They should be created as Non-Player Characters, with names and abilities filled out. Officers' reputations are widely known; the soldiers on each side will point them out to one another. This way, when the Player Characters encounter them, they will know who they are dealing with.

Major officers have superior equipment and may also have magic items. As a rule of thumb, equip them as if their total wealth was 150% of that given for Non-Player Character gear value in *DMG*, as the items they have are not always their own personal property but are sometimes given to them by their generals to use on the field.

## Battle Encounters

1d100	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk
01-10	No encounter	No encounter	No encounter
11-25	No encounter	No encounter	1d4 opponents
26-50	No encounter	1 opponent	Minor Hero OR 1d6 opponents
51-65	1 opponent	1d4 opponents	Minor Officer and 1d4 opponents
66-90	1d4 opponents	Minor Hero OR 1d6 opponents	Major Hero and 1d4 opponents OR 2d4 opponents
91-95	Minor Hero OR 1d6 opponents	Minor Officer and 1d4 opponents	Major Officer and 2d4 opponents or Minor Hero
96-00	Major Hero OR 2d4 opponents	Major Hero OR 2d4 opponents	Major Officer and Major Hero or 3d6 opponents



## Combat During Battle

Combat in the course of a battle is played out just as any other fight would be. The only difference is that there are hundreds of other fights going on all around. Even if the Player Character in question has dozens of allies to either side, they are not considered to be included in the fight, as they have their own fights to worry about. The Player Character's battle encounters represent the foes that he, personally, must face.

The exception to this is when two or more Player Characters have chosen to be in the same place on the field. When this happens, roll a single battle encounter and apply the result for all. For example, an attack by a single enemy becomes an attack by one enemy per character. In the event of multiple enemies, roll separately for each character present.

The encounter table given is for generic battle. Using this table as a guide, the Games Master can create suitable encounter tables for other battles, to reflect the likely challenges that Player Characters can encounter.

## Morale Boost

A Player Character who successfully defeats a significant opponent (minor hero, major hero, minor officer or major officer) may attempt to boost the morale of the troops around him by drawing attention to his victory. He makes an immediate Charisma ability score check (DC 20). Any troop loss penalties sustained so far by his side are added as a circumstance penalty to this check, while any troop loss penalties sustained by the other side are added as a circumstance bonus. In addition, slaying a major hero or major officer adds a +2 circumstance bonus to this check, while slaying the general adds a +4 circumstance bonus.

If the Charisma check is successful, then the Player Character's side gains a +1 morale bonus to all battle checks made in the next battle round.

## Prior Wounding

The enemies that the Player Characters encounter on the battlefield will not always be at full hit points. Like the Player Characters themselves, they will have fought with other opponents before. The more troop losses the side has suffered, the more likely it is that individual warriors will be injured. In the closing stages of a battle, it is relatively easy for Player Characters to find opponents who are already weary and bloodied and finish them off. Commanders are the exception, as they usually refrain from entering into combat.

When a Player Character encounters any enemy except for a non-combatant commander, roll 1d20 and subtract the side's total troop loss penalty. The table below shows what proportion of their original hit points the enemies have. Apply the same result to all enemies encountered in a group.

### Prior Wounding

Check Result	Hit Point Total
5 or less	25%
6-10	50%
11-15	75%
16-20	Full hit points

## Trying To Reach a Given Opponent


Sometimes, a Player Character will be able to see a given opponent from far off and will do his best to reach him. For example, a hill giant might be hurling rocks, or a ballista firing deadly javelins into the ranks. In this case, the Player Character is trying to direct the action rather than waiting to see what the Battle Encounters table brings up for him.

In this event, simply identify the Player Character's chosen objective from among the possible battle encounters. If his battle encounter roll comes up with that type of objective, then he has reached his target. For example, if a Player Character wanted to reach a hill giant on the enemy side, that would count as a major hero. He would therefore encounter the hill giant (as opposed to any other major hero on the field) as soon as the Games Master rolled a result between 66 and 90 on the Battle Encounters table.

## Surprise

There is a flat one in six chance that a Player Character's opponent(s) will be distracted, busy with another fight or





otherwise occupied when the Player Character encounters them. The Player Character thus has a surprise round to act in.

## Ranged Battle Encounters

Not all combat situations in a battle will involve face-to-face tussling and the clash of weapons. When one side is fighting from a defensive position such as a keep or wood, or when one or both of the sides has a large number of projectile weapon wielders, the combat may begin at range.

Ranged battle encounters work slightly differently to close combat ones. There is no assumed trading of blows. Just because you shoot at someone, he will not shoot right back at you. Furthermore, in the confusion of battle, it is not always possible to tell who has shot at you. Ranged combat for Player Characters is opportunistic; it is about taking advantage of a chance to take a shot at an important target. Conversely, enemy combatants will sometimes pick a Player Character as their target.

To resolve a ranged encounter, roll once on the Battle Encounters table to determine the best target that the Player Character can hit. He can choose to attack that target if he chooses, or a target further down the list. Next, roll secretly on the Battle Encounters table to determine who has chosen the Player Character as a target. After the first round of ranged combat, the Player Character can either stick with the target he has chosen or attempt to find out who just shot at him. This will usually require a Spot check (DC 15).

A ranged combat encounter lasts until all participants on one side are dead or until 1d4+1 rounds have passed, whichever is sooner. The assumption here is that the chaos of battle makes it unlikely that a Player Character will be able to maintain fire against a given target or set of targets for very long.

## Duration of Combat

Combat in battle continues until either the character or his opponents are slain, or until one side retreats. In some situations, such as when a character is fighting on the front line of an army, retreat is impossible.

## The Territory

The kind of 'battle map' appropriate for any given battle encounter depends on the intensity of the fighting where the Player Character is. As a general rule, high risk Player Characters tend to find themselves with close quarter maps, medium risk Player Characters with skirmish maps and low risk players with open maps.

## Close Quarter

The enemy ranks are pressed up against your own. Fighting in a pitched battle like this is usually a matter of facing your opponent and hitting him until he dies. There is little room to manoeuvre.

All the squares behind the Player Character and to either side should be filled with warriors on his side, while the row facing

him and the squares behind it should be filled with enemy warriors.

## Skirmish

Skirmish maps represent parts of the battlefield where the fighting is between clustered groups rather than ranks. Skirmishing takes place in the centre of the field where organised battle lines have been broken through or on the periphery of the battle, where the troops are not massed together. Some smaller battles begin as skirmishes.

In a skirmish map, there is room for groups to move about, though the groups are still close together. To simulate this, use clusters of two to five opponents, with no more than 40 feet between any one creature. After a battle has been raging for some time, so that many of the warriors have been cut down, skirmish maps become the default even for high-risk Player Characters.

## Open

Open maps represent areas where the battle has either finished or has not yet begun.

In an open map, the only participants present are the Player Character and the creatures he encounters. Any other creatures on the battlefield are too far away to have an impact on the combat.

## Battlefield Hazards

The types of special terrain found on battlefields are described in *DMG*. Two additional terrain types are described below.

**Bodies:** When combat has raged for many rounds, the bodies of the dead begin to pile up around you and it is hard to manoeuvre. Regions that are strewn with the bodies of the dead should be treated as zones of light rubble. Treat regions where the fighting has been especially intense or where Large or larger creatures have been slain (such as the mounts of cavalry) as if they were filled with dense rubble.

**Mud:** When battles take place in heavy rain, the ground is quickly churned up into a muddy morass. This is perilous for heavily armoured characters or those who are trying to ride mounts. It costs two squares of movement to enter a square filled with churned mud and the DC of Balance and Tumble checks there increases by three. A Balance check (DC 10) is required to run or charge across mud, or to stand up from prone when in a muddy square. Guiding a mount through slippery mud requires a Ride check (DC 15).

## Ending the Battle

If either side flees the field, such as from a disastrous rout check, then the battle is definitely over unless the other side decides to pursue them. If the rout check result indicates that the vanquished side attempts to flee but the terrain does not allow for retreat, then the Games Master can assume that the army has been massacred to a man.

Some battles will involve more complicated victory conditions. In these cases, the Games Master may set criteria to determine when the battle is considered over, according to the demands of the story. These can be flexible but will usually include the achievement of a given tactical objective (the horde breaks into the keep), the death of a particular character (the lich-lord is destroyed) or some similar story-based goal (the artefact is thrown into the volcano).

If there is an obvious way to win the battle other than by routing the enemy, then the Player Characters should always be told what it is. For example, if a battle is being fought against a gigantic horde of undead that are dependent upon an artefact to remain animated, then the Player Characters should not be expected to wade through zombies all day.

Unlike conflicts in the real world, fantasy battles often hinge upon some kind of dramatic single combat. This is much more use than muddy realism, as it allows the Player Characters a chance to be heroes. The trick as a Games Master is not to give these opportunities away too readily. The system here obliges the Player Characters to take risks and endanger themselves if they want a shot at the Witch-King or the siege mammoth. They can attempt to fight their way through to them but they cannot simply stroll up and attack.


## Example of Mass Combat

A force of two thousand orcs is advancing on the village of Dunport. The Player Characters are Jassipus, a half-orc barbarian, Hethlic, a human fighter and Cuffy, a halfling rogue. The villagers place Hethlic in command of the village's defences. He thus assumes the Command position. Jassipus joins the village warriors on the front rank, taking a Combat position. Cuffy elects to be Independent, knowing that there will be plenty of bodies to loot.

Dunport's defences are practically nonexistent. Fortunately, Hethlic ordered the construction of a simple berm several weeks ago and the villagers got to work. It is not much, but it is better than nothing. The Games Master rules that the shoddy berm is a defensive emplacement worth +4 to battle checks when defending. If the orcs want to try to take it – as they almost certainly will – they will have to hit a target number of +6, which will not be easy.

The Games Master assesses troop strengths. The orcs definitely have the advantage. There are more of them and they are well armed. He assigns the orcs a troop strength bonus of +2. The orcs are obviously on the offensive and the humans on the defensive.





The army is on the horizon. The Player Characters must now choose their risk levels. Hethlic will command from the field, so he chooses Low. Jassipus is eager for glory and chooses High. Cuffy decides that he will wait out the fighting in the village tavern and chooses to be uninvolved. The Games Master allows this, as the tavern is at the centre of the village and far from the fighting.

The battle begins. Before any battle checks are made, the combatants begin to fight. The Games Master rolls the encounters for Jassipus and Hethlic. Jassipus faces three orcs, who he slashes to mincemeat with his axe. Hethlic has a javelin thrown at him, which causes him a minor injury.

It is time to make the first battle checks. The orcs' general is Black Tongue. He is a competent warrior but he is not a tactical genius. Hethlic, on the other hand, has served in many campaigns and has a good grasp of tactics. Hethlic has a command modifier of +2. Rather than whittling down the enemy from afar, the orcs decide to storm the berm right away. They will need to beat Hethlic's result by more than five to take the berm. Black Tongue, being an orc, decides on a reckless attack, gaining a +3 bonus to his battle check, at the cost of a -3 troop loss penalty on later rounds. He decides that it is worth it. He may lose troops, but the troop loss penalty is slightly less than the benefit that the berm is giving the humans.

Hethlic rolls an 8. Adding +2 for his command bonus and +4 for the berm yields a result of 14. Black Tongue rolls a 16. Adding +2 for his troop strength bonus and +3 for his reckless attack gives a final result of 21. This beats Hethlic by six, more than the five that Black Tongue needed to accomplish his objective.

With a roar, the orcs rush over the berm, driving the beleaguered humans back, though dozens of them are killed in the charge.

The result on the battle check outcome table is 'inflicts 2', so the defenders of Dunport are now suffering a -2 troop loss penalty to their battle check.

It is now time to roll for battle encounters. Jassipus is right in the thick of it as the orcs make their bloody charge. The encounter result gives him the option to strike at a crucial target (a major officer or a minor hero). He takes the major officer option. Since the orcs only have one major officer, who is commanding the whole side, Jassipus finds himself facing Black Tongue, the enemy general! There are three orc warriors along with him, too. It is time for Jassipus to start cleaving.

In the fight that ensues, Jassipus kills Black Tongue, though he is sorely wounded in the fight. The orcs are over the berm but they have lost their commander. They will be subject to a -2 penalty to their battle checks from here on.

Jassipus decides to make the most of his victory by attempting a morale boost. He holds the head of Black Tongue high where the human troops can see it and roars as only a barbarian can. The morale boost is resolved as a Charisma ability score check (DC 20). Jassipus rolls 15. This is modified to 20 (-1 for his poor Charisma ability score modifier, +4 because he has killed the enemy leader, -2 for the defenders' troop loss, +4 for the

orcs' troop loss) which is just enough to boost the morale of the men around him. The defenders of Dunport will receive a +1 morale bonus to their battle check next round.

On the next battle round, the Games Master rules that since the orcs are now in the village, nowhere is entirely safe. Cuffy is therefore given a Low risk rating instead of a rating of None.

Battle checks are rolled again. Hethlic scores 10. With modifiers (+2 for his command bonus, +1 for the morale boost that Jassipus provided and -2 for troop loss) this becomes a result of 11. The leaderless orcs score 14, modified to 10 (+2 troop strength, -2 for being leaderless, -4 troop losses). The defenders have the tide of battle, but it is not sufficient to make a significant difference. The humans stand their ground.

In the battle encounters phase, Jassipus encounters three more orcs, hungry for revenge. His wounds from his heavy fight earlier on prove too much and the orcs defeat him. He is left to bleed to death in the mud. Hethlic escapes encounters, while Cuffy finds himself confronted by a marauding orc; one sneak attack later, the orc is dead.

The third battle check is made. Hethlic rolls 17 and the orcs score 13. Modifiers adjust these scores to 18 and nine. The defenders, rallied by Hethlic, are starting to inflict significant casualties. The table reads that the attackers suffer troop loss (-1).

The Games Master rolls for encounters for each remaining participant. Hethlic has to fight off two orcs, while Cuffy meets none. He slips out and begins searching the bodies of fallen orcs.

At the start of the next battle round, the humans are now on a total troop loss penalty of -2 and the orcs on a penalty of -5. This means that the orcs must make a rout check next round. The orcs roll eight for their rout check, modified to six (+2 troop strength, +2 for being on the offensive, -2 for being leaderless, -4 troop losses). The initial rush of their charge has worn off and the humans' superior organisation is beginning to tell on them. They suffer 1d3 troop loss; the Games Master rolls a three. Dozens of individual orcs are picked off and looters break away from the army. The orcs now have a total troop loss penalty of -8.

Each side now makes its battle check. The humans roll 15, the orcs 12. These are modified to 16 and four. A further troop loss penalty is inflicted on the orcs (-2). The Games Master decides that the orcs have had enough. They choose to go on the defensive, falling back from the town.

Hethlic now has the option of pursuing them. He decides not to. If the orcs retreat all the way to their camp in the woods, then they will have bonuses to *their* defence. The humans are in no mood to continue fighting. They have managed to survive and that is enough for now.

The battle is over. Both sides have taken heavy casualties. Even on the rounds when the humans suffered no troop loss penalty, they were still losing warriors. The weary task of clearing up the bodies and repairing the damage now begins.

# Appendix 3: New Monsters

## Albino Ripping-fish Swarm

Tiny Animal (Swarm)

**Hit Dice:** 9d8 (40 hp)

**Initiative:** +3

**Speed:** Swim 30 ft (6 squares);

**Armour Class:** 15 (+2 size, +3 Dex), touch 15, flat-footed 12

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +6/-

**Attack:** Swarm (2d6 plus wounding)

**Full Attack:** Swarm (2d6 plus wounding)

**Space/Reach:** 10 ft/0 ft

**Special Attacks:** Distraction, wounding

**Special Qualities:** Blood scent, half damage from slashing and piercing weapons, swarm traits

**Saves:** Fort +6, Ref +9, Will +5

**Abilities:** Str 3, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 4

**Skills:** Swim +5\*;

**Feats:** Weapon Finesse

**Environment:** Warm marshes & swamps

**Organisation:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 4

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral

**Advancement:** None

\*Relates to the avoidance of hazards only

*A school of pallid fish darts through the water.*

Ripping-fish are a species of piranha-like fish native to the swamps and mangroves of Ashfar. Ripping-fish are more dangerous and aggressive than normal piranha but are thankfully not as common. Albino ripping-fish are an extremely rare mutation that is considered as sacred to Kharad. The worshippers of Kharad who dwelt in the Hoglepot Marshes collected all the albino ripping-fish they could find, keeping them in a consecrated pool within their temple where the fish were fed sacrifices. With the flooding of the inner temple the fish have escaped from their confinement.

## Combat

When well-fed and satiated, ripping-fish are only dangerous to injured creatures entering the water, as the scent of blood sends them into a frenzy. Unfortunately, ripping-fish in the wild are never well-fed or satiated and will attack any living creature they encounter. The swarm deals 2d6 points of damage to any creature whose space it occupies at the end of its move.

**Blood Scent (Ex):** A ripping-fish swarm can detect blood in water, as if by the scent special ability. Treat 'upwind' and 'downwind' as 'upstream' and 'downstream'. Characters who suffer piercing or slashing damage while in water are considered to be bleeding for the purposes of this ability. A swarm that

wounds a victim and causes bleeding can attract other swarms in the same area, causing the victim to be devoured in moments.

**Devour (Ex):** Ripping-fish can strip the flesh from a creature's bones in seconds, making them useful to necromancers who can thus animate corpses as skeletons. A swarm of ripping-fish can reduce a corpse to a skeleton in 3d4 rounds. While it feeds, the swarm will not attack other targets.

**Distraction (Ex):** Any living creature that begins its turn with a swarm in its space must succeed on a Fortitude saving throw (DC 14) or be nauseated for one round. The save DC is Constitution-based.

**Wounding (Ex):** Any living creature damaged by a ripping-fish swarm continues to bleed, losing one hit point per round thereafter. Multiple wounds do not result in cumulative bleeding loss. The bleeding can be stopped by a Heal check (DC 10) or the application of a *cure* spell or some other healing magic.

## Amanuensis

Medium Construct

**Hit Dice:** 2d10+20 (31 hp)

**Initiative:** +0

**Speed:** 30 ft (6 squares)

**Armour Class:** 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +1/+1

**Attack:** Slam +1 melee (1d4)

**Full Attack:** Slam +1 melee (1d4)

**Space/Reach:** 5 ft/5 ft

**Special Attacks:** None.

**Special Qualities:** Construct traits

**Saves:** Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0

**Abilities:** Str 10, Dex 10, Con -, Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 4

**Skills:** Decipher Script +4, Knowledge (all) +12\*

**Feats:** None

**Environment:** Any

**Organisation:** Single

**Challenge Rating:** 1


**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral

**Advancement:** None

\*An amanuensis has a +8 racial bonus to any generic Knowledge skill check. It can recall any single fact from any book that it has read, at will.

*This appears to be a humanoid manikin made of glass. As it moves, red liquid sloshes around within it. There seems to be some sort of wire skeleton or framework inside its glass shell.*



An amanuensis is a relatively rare form of construct. Unlike most golems and constructed guardians, an amanuensis is not designed for combat but purely for the purpose of absorbing and storing information for its owner. Left in the vicinity of books or other recorded knowledge, an amanuensis will rapidly read through them all; if it encounters sentient creatures that it can communicate with, it will question them about any and all topics that they might be able to provide new information about. There is no known limit to the amount of information an amanuensis can hold at any one time.

An amanuensis can speak Common and up to four other languages, chosen at its creation.

## Combat

An amanuensis never enters combat unless forced into it, either to act in self-defence or at the command of its creator. As these constructs are so valuable, the master of one would only order an amanuensis to fight if no other options were available.

**Repair (Su):** An amanuensis is fragile and can easily be damaged. It can repair itself magically if fresh humanoid blood is added through a valve in its neck. This repair requires a pint of humanoid blood and restores 1d8+1 hit points.

## Construction:

An amanuensis' body must be made from exquisitely fashioned glass and metal wire, costing 10,000 gp. Assembling the body requires a DC 20 Craft (glasswork) check.

CL 15<sup>th</sup>; Craft Construct, *legend lore*, *polymorph any object*, *vampiric touch*, caster must be at least 15<sup>th</sup> level; Price 40,000; Cost 20,000 gp + 1,600 xp

## Automaton

Medium Construct

**Hit Dice:** 4d10+20 (42 hp)

**Initiative:** -1

**Speed:** 30 ft (6 squares)

**Armour Class:** 18 (-1 Dex, +9 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 18

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +3/+6

**Attack:** Halberd +6 melee (1d10+4/x3) or rapier +6 melee (1d6+3/18-20x2) or claw +6 melee (1d4+3)

**Full Attack:** Halberd +6 melee (1d10+4/x3) or rapier +6 melee (1d6+3/18-20x2) or 2 claws +6 melee (1d4+3)

**Space/Reach:** 5 ft/5 ft

**Special Attacks:** None

**Special Qualities:** Construct traits

**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +4

**Abilities:** Str 17, Dex 9, Con -, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 1

**Skills:** Listen +12, Spot +15

**Feats:** Alertness, Skill Focus (Spot)

**Environment:** Any

**Organisation:** Single or group (2-20)

**Challenge Rating:** 4

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral

**Advancement:** None

*The face of this humanoid figure is a blank enamel mask, and as it moves forwards it is accompanied by clicks and twangs from within its frame.*

A wizard made a number of these automatons for the old rogues' guild in Crescent City; he also created and sold more of this design to other wealthy buyers to serve as guards. The frame of an automaton is made of wood, metal, wires and gears but this is rarely visible, as the constructs are usually dressed up in clothing or livery to conceal all but their blank, enamel faces.

Automatons have a surprising level of intelligence for magical constructs and are endowed with extremely acute senses. Despite their intelligence however, they are usually given a simple set of instructions to follow through repeatedly, such as patrolling an area or, in the case of the rogues' guild, acting out a scene.

An automaton can understand Common, although it cannot speak.

## Combat

Automatons fight with whatever weapons they are equipped with. Though somewhat clumsy, they are strong. If an automaton has been assigned to guard an area, it will fight to the death to defend its post but will not pursue a fleeing foe.

## Bleak Wolf

Large Magical Beast (Cold)

**Hit Dice:** 6d10+18 (51 hp)

**Initiative:** +5

**Speed:** 50 ft (10 squares)

**Armour Class:** 15 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 14

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +6/+14

**Attack:** Bite +9 melee (1d8+6 plus 1d6 cold)

**Full Attack:** Bite +9 melee (1d8+6 plus 1d6 cold)

**Space/Reach:** 10 ft/5 ft

**Special Attacks:** Breath weapon, freezing bite, trip

**Special Qualities:** Damage resistance 5/ magic, darkvision 60 ft, immunity to cold, low-light vision, scent, spell resistance 16, vulnerability to fire

**Saves:** Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +3

**Abilities:** Str 18, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 13, Cha 10

**Skills:** Hide -1\*, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Spot +6, Survival +1\*

**Feats:** Alertness, Improved Initiative, Track

**Environment:** Cold mountains & underground

**Organisation:** Solitary, pair or pack (3-5)

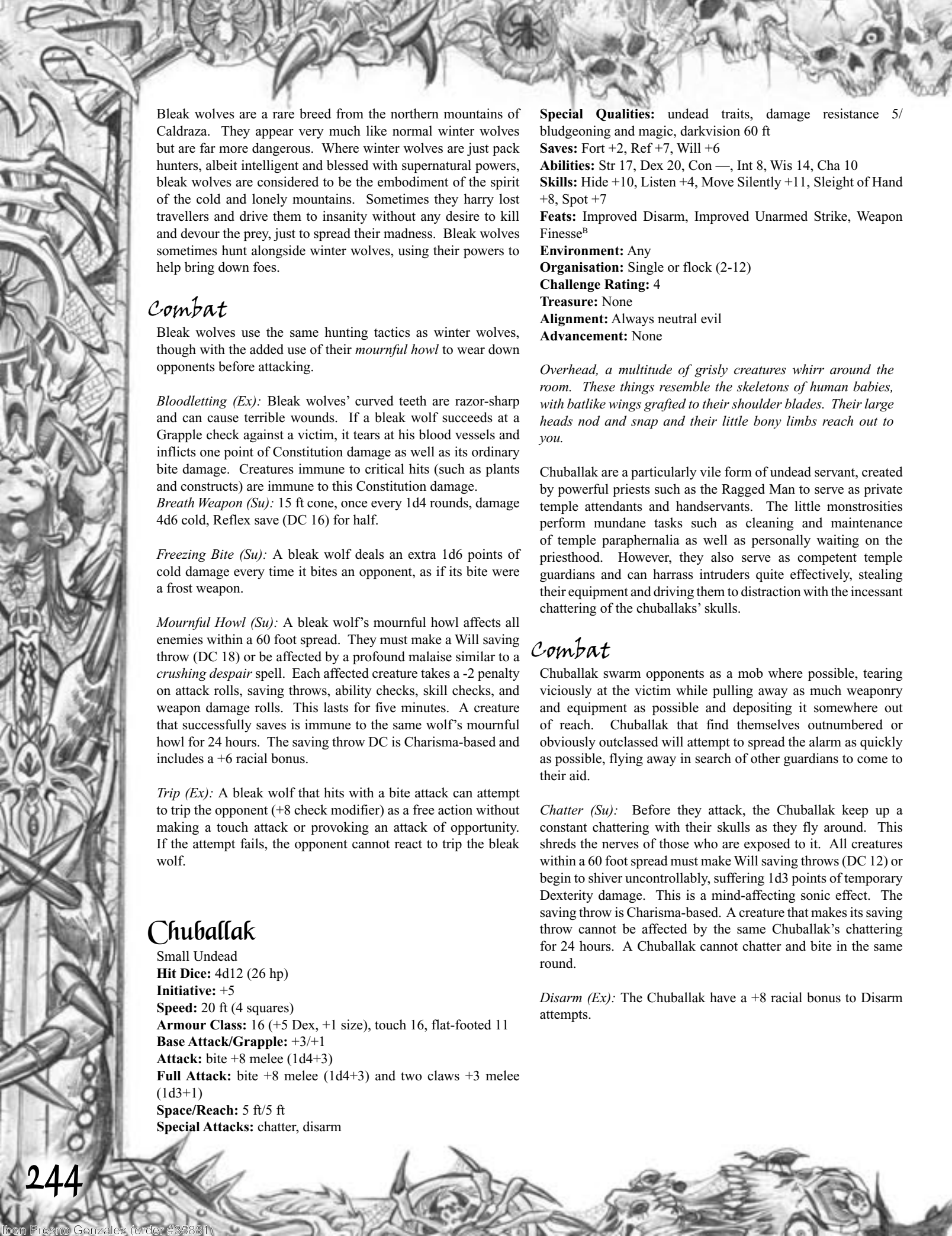
**Challenge Rating:** 7

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Usually neutral evil

**Advancement:** 7-9 HD (Large); 10-18 HD (Huge)

*This large white wolf seems surrounded with an atmosphere of gloom and misery; its eyes are solid black.*



Bleak wolves are a rare breed from the northern mountains of Caldraz. They appear very much like normal winter wolves but are far more dangerous. Where winter wolves are just pack hunters, albeit intelligent and blessed with supernatural powers, bleak wolves are considered to be the embodiment of the spirit of the cold and lonely mountains. Sometimes they harry lost travellers and drive them to insanity without any desire to kill and devour the prey, just to spread their madness. Bleak wolves sometimes hunt alongside winter wolves, using their powers to help bring down foes.

## Combat

Bleak wolves use the same hunting tactics as winter wolves, though with the added use of their *mournful howl* to wear down opponents before attacking.

*Bloodletting (Ex):* Bleak wolves' curved teeth are razor-sharp and can cause terrible wounds. If a bleak wolf succeeds at a Grapple check against a victim, it tears at his blood vessels and inflicts one point of Constitution damage as well as its ordinary bite damage. Creatures immune to critical hits (such as plants and constructs) are immune to this Constitution damage.

*Breath Weapon (Su):* 15 ft cone, once every 1d4 rounds, damage 4d6 cold, Reflex save (DC 16) for half.

*Freezing Bite (Su):* A bleak wolf deals an extra 1d6 points of cold damage every time it bites an opponent, as if its bite were a frost weapon.

*Mournful Howl (Su):* A bleak wolf's mournful howl affects all enemies within a 60 foot spread. They must make a Will saving throw (DC 18) or be affected by a profound malaise similar to a *crushing despair* spell. Each affected creature takes a -2 penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, skill checks, and weapon damage rolls. This lasts for five minutes. A creature that successfully saves is immune to the same wolf's mournful howl for 24 hours. The saving throw DC is Charisma-based and includes a +6 racial bonus.

*Trip (Ex):* A bleak wolf that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip the opponent (+8 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the bleak wolf.

## Chuballak

Small Undead

**Hit Dice:** 4d12 (26 hp)

**Initiative:** +5

**Speed:** 20 ft (4 squares)

**Armour Class:** 16 (+5 Dex, +1 size), touch 16, flat-footed 11

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +3/+1

**Attack:** bite +8 melee (1d4+3)

**Full Attack:** bite +8 melee (1d4+3) and two claws +3 melee (1d3+1)

**Space/Reach:** 5 ft/5 ft

**Special Attacks:** chatter, disarm

**Special Qualities:** undead traits, damage resistance 5/ bludgeoning and magic, darkvision 60 ft

**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +6

**Abilities:** Str 17, Dex 20, Con —, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 10

**Skills:** Hide +10, Listen +4, Move Silently +11, Sleight of Hand +8, Spot +7

**Feats:** Improved Disarm, Improved Unarmed Strike, Weapon Finesse<sup>B</sup>

**Environment:** Any

**Organisation:** Single or flock (2-12)

**Challenge Rating:** 4

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral evil

**Advancement:** None

*Overhead, a multitude of grisly creatures whirr around the room. These things resemble the skeletons of human babies, with batlike wings grafted to their shoulder blades. Their large heads nod and snap and their little bony limbs reach out to you.*

Chuballak are a particularly vile form of undead servant, created by powerful priests such as the Ragged Man to serve as private temple attendants and handservants. The little monstrosities perform mundane tasks such as cleaning and maintenance of temple paraphernalia as well as personally waiting on the priesthood. However, they also serve as competent temple guardians and can harass intruders quite effectively, stealing their equipment and driving them to distraction with the incessant chattering of the chuballaks' skulls.

## Combat

Chuballak swarm opponents as a mob where possible, tearing viciously at the victim while pulling away as much weaponry and equipment as possible and depositing it somewhere out of reach. Chuballak that find themselves outnumbered or obviously outclassed will attempt to spread the alarm as quickly as possible, flying away in search of other guardians to come to their aid.

*Chatter (Su):* Before they attack, the Chuballak keep up a constant chattering with their skulls as they fly around. This shreds the nerves of those who are exposed to it. All creatures within a 60 foot spread must make Will saving throws (DC 12) or begin to shiver uncontrollably, suffering 1d3 points of temporary Dexterity damage. This is a mind-affecting sonic effect. The saving throw is Charisma-based. A creature that makes its saving throw cannot be affected by the same Chuballak's chattering for 24 hours. A Chuballak cannot chatter and bite in the same round.

*Disarm (Ex):* The Chuballak have a +8 racial bonus to Disarm attempts.

## Dog-Man (Hybrid)

Medium Humanoid

**Hit Dice:** 2d8+2 (11 hp)

**Initiative:** +0

**Speed:** 40 ft (8 squares)

**Armour Class:** 15 (+5 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 15

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +1/+3

**Attack:** Greataxe +3 melee (1d10+2/x3) or bite +3 melee (1d6+2)

**Full Attack:** Greataxe +3 melee (1d10+2/x3) and bite -1 melee (1d6+1)

**Space/Reach:** 5 ft/5 ft

**Special Attacks:** None

**Special Qualities:** Low-light vision, scent

**Saves:** Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +1

**Abilities:** Str 15, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 9

**Skills:** Intimidate +1, Listen +4, Spot +4, Survival +2

**Feats:** Alertness<sup>B</sup>, Power Attack

**Environment:** Any

**Organisation:** Single, pair or pack (3-12)

**Challenge Rating:** 2

**Treasure:** Standard

**Alignment:** Usually neutral

**Advancement:** By character class.

*This humanoid has the head and tail of a dog.*

The experimentation of Petrus Carolus has created a number of dog-men, simple hybrids of the two species that result in a relatively pliable and loyal servant species. Their creation by Carolus is not an isolated incident however, as hybrids have been created, one way or another, by numerous spellcasters from various different species.

Dog-men can speak Common although their speech is distorted.

## Combat

Like their canine cousins, dog-men favour lots of shouting and barking to try and intimidate the enemy before actually engaging in combat. Making a foe flee is far preferable to exposing oneself to harm, after all. They are fundamentally pack fighters and a lone dog-man will run for help rather than fight.

## Grey Fungus

The fungal parasites that arrived on the extraplanar Xorixian vessel have a life cycle consisting of three stages.

### Stage One: Fungal Mass

The cycle begins with a mass of the fungus, which exudes a delicious scent, attracting creatures to come and eat it. When a creature comes into contact with the fungus, spores are released that burrow under the creature's skin. These then grow on the creature's body, infesting it with a grey fungal crust.

The grey fungus also exudes tendrils that devour vegetable matter in the near vicinity, turning it to a white flaky substance. This sustains it while it waits for creatures to come close and receive its spores. Fungal masses can easily be seen from a distance, as they are in the centre of a ten foot radius 'crater' of collapsing white vegetable growth.

The fungal mass varies in size, depending on the size of the creature that it originally was. When disturbed, such as when hit with a weapon or a damage-dealing spell, it exudes a cloud of spores in a ten foot spread. These are clearly visible as motes in the air. All creatures within the area of effect must make Fortitude saving throws (DC 15) or contract the fungal disease, becoming infected creatures. The effective incubation period is one day.

The fungus is immune to physical and energy damage, with the exception of acid damage, which destroys it.

**Alluring Scent (Ex):** Any creature that subsists on food and breathes air that comes within thirty feet of the fungal mass is exposed to its alluring scent. These creatures must make Will saving throws (DC 22) or be filled with an overpowering hunger for the fungus, which to them smells like the sweetest ambrosia.

Affected creatures move towards the fungal mass taking the most direct route available. If this takes them through a dangerous area, such as over a cliff edge, then they are allowed a second saving throw to shake off the effect. Creatures affected by the scent can take no actions other than to defend themselves. They cannot run away or attack, but they suffer no defensive penalties. A creature that reaches the fungus begins to break off chunks and devour them. Eating the fungus increases the DC of the saving throw against the fungal infection by +10.

A creature holding its breath can avoid the need to make a saving throw. Creatures that make their saving throws cannot be affected by the same fungus's alluring scent again for 24 hours.

### Stage Two: Infected Creature

The fungus now begins to corrupt the host body like a disease, dealing 1d6 Intelligence and 1d6 Constitution damage per day. The disease cannot be removed by non-magical means and requires a *remove disease* spell or better. When its Constitution score reaches zero, the creature becomes a fungal zombie (see below).

**Rage:** A creature in the early stages of fungal infection is prone to mad rages, as the fungus devours the brain. Otherwise, it behaves as normal for a creature of its kind, though the fungus can clearly be seen growing on its body. A creature has a 10% chance per round to fly into a rage when other creatures are close to it. A creature that is raging attacks the nearest creature indiscriminately. If there is nothing left alive to attack, it will smash objects or plants instead until the rage ends, which takes 2d6 rounds.

While the fungus is in this stage, it does not exude spores and the rotting effect is thus non-contagious. If it is killed by any

other cause than the fungal infection, it does not become a fungal zombie.

### Stage Three: Fungal Zombie

As the infection progresses, more and more tissue is absorbed until eventually the host body dies and the rudimentary intelligence of the fungus takes over. At this stage, the creature resembles a rotting body or a skeleton that is almost entirely covered with lumpy grey fungus.

The creature's sole objective now is to propagate itself. It will live for only three more days. It moves to a suitable spot where animals or monsters will find it, then collapses. Within a day, the fungus loses its original shape and becomes a spore-producing mass, beginning the cycle again. The fungus shrivels and dies within three weeks, whether it has passed on its spores or not. The remains of the host creature can be seen under the fungus with a successful Spot check (DC 20).

If the fungal zombie encounters small numbers of living creatures while it shambles towards its eventual destination, it will attempt to kill them and drag the bodies to the place where it is headed, so that their remains will nourish it. If it meets with large numbers of creatures, it will collapse ahead of time, in the hope that they will be drawn to its alluring scent when it takes root.

### Fungal Zombie Template

"Fungal Zombie is an acquired template that can be added to any corporeal creature (other than an undead) that has a skeletal system (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

**Size and Type:** The creature's type changes to plant. It retains any subtypes except alignment subtypes and subtypes that indicate kind. It does not gain the augmented subtype. It uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

**Hit Dice:** Drop any Hit Dice from class levels (to a minimum of 1) and change the remaining Hit Dice to d8s.

**Speed:** If the base creature can fly, its manoeuvrability rating drops to clumsy.

**Armour Class:** Natural armour bonus increases by a number based on the fungal zombie's size:

Tiny or smaller	+0
Small	+1
Medium	+2
Large	+3
Huge	+4
Gargantuan	+7
Colossal	+11

**Base Attack:** A fungal zombie has a base attack bonus equal to 3/4 its Hit Dice.

**Attacks:** A fungal zombie retains all the natural weapons of the base creature but loses all proficiency with other weapons. A fungal zombie also gains a slam attack.

**Damage:** Natural weapons deal damage normally. A slam attack deals damage depending on the fungal zombie's size. Use the base creature's slam damage if it is better.

Fine	1
Diminutive	1d2
Tiny	1d3
Small	1d4
Medium	1d6
Large	1d8
Huge	2d6
Gargantuan	2d8
Colossal	4d6

**Special Attacks:** A fungal zombie retains none of the base creature's special attacks. It gains the following special attack:

*Stinking Spores (Ex):* A fungal zombie can shower spores from itself that have a disgusting stench, like putrid entrails. This attack affects all creatures that are adjacent to the fungal zombie. Creatures in the affected areas must make Will saving throws (DC 10 + half the fungal zombie's HD) or be nauseated for 1d4 rounds. Once the fungal zombie has used this ability, it cannot use it again for 1d4 rounds.

**Special Qualities:** A fungal zombie loses most special qualities of the base creature. It retains any extraordinary special qualities that improve its melee or ranged attacks. It gains the following special qualities:

*Damage Reduction 5/slashing:* The fungal zombie's spongy body is hard to damage other than by slicing it to pieces.

*Regeneration:* A fungal zombie counts all damage as non-lethal, with the exception of acid damage. It recovers an amount of non-lethal damage per round determined by its size.

Fine	1
Diminutive	2
Tiny	3
Small	5
Medium	7
Large	10
Huge	14
Gargantuan	20
Colossal	25

**Saves:** Base save bonuses are Fort +1/2 HD +2, Ref +1/3 HD, and Will +1/3 HD.

**Abilities:** A fungal zombie's Strength increases by +4, its Dexterity decreases by -4, its Intelligence changes to 6, its Constitution changes to 10 and its Charisma changes to 1.





**Skills:** A fungal zombie has no skills.

**Feats:** A fungal zombie loses all feats of the base creature and gains Toughness.

**Environment:** Any forest or jungle.

**Organization:** Any.

**Challenge Rating:** Depends on Hit Dice, as follows:

Hit Dice	Challenge Rating
½	½
1	1
2	2
4	3
6	4
8–10	6
12–14	8
15–16	10
18–20	12

**Treasure:** Standard

**Alignment:** Always neutral

**Advancement:** As base creature, or — if the base creature advances by character class

**Level Adjustment:** —

Although fungal zombies resemble the undead, they are not undead and cannot be turned. Their rotting bodies and exposed skulls are merely the residue of the host creature, manipulated by the controlling fungus.

Once the fungus takes control and a creature becomes a fungal zombie, the intelligence of the fungus manifests. This is often a

greater intelligence than the host creature had to begin with. The fungus is concerned to propagate itself above all else and can thus exhibit cunning, ingenuity and forethought, far more than its opponents tend to expect. It is not mindless and will avoid combat if superior numbers threaten it.

## Hruggi

Large Undead

**Hit Dice:** 24d12+3 (159 hp)

**Initiative:** -2

**Speed:** 40 ft

**Armour Class:** 19 (-1 size, -2 Dex, +12 natural), touch 7, flat-footed 19

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +12/+20

**Attack:** Greatclub +20 melee (2d8+12) or slam +15 melee (1d8+8) or rock +11 ranged (2d6+8)

**Full Attack:** Greatclub +20 melee (2d8+12) or slam +15 melee (1d8+8) or rock +11 ranged (2d6+8);

**Space/Reach:** 10 ft/10 ft

**Special Attacks:** Rock throwing

**Special Qualities:** Damage reduction 5/slashing, remote piloted, single actions only, darkvision 60 ft, undead traits

**Saves:** Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +14

**Abilities:** Str 27, Dex 6, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1

**Skills:** None

**Feats:** Toughness

**Environment:** Any

**Organisation:** Solitary & controller

**Challenge Rating:** 7

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral evil

**Advancement:** None

*This looks like the lumbering corpse of a dead giant except for its head, as it seems to be wearing some sort of bulbous, spherical helmet of metal. From the neck of the helmet extrude pipes that sink into the flesh below, with discoloured veins spreading out from the entry points.*

The Hruggi are the final result of extensive drow necromantic research into the creation of larger and more powerful zombies. While the *animate dead* spell cannot create zombies with more than ten Hit Dice, the magical helms that are attached to the decapitated bodies of slain hill giants overcome these limitations and animate the corpses in a combination of dark magic and alchemy.

Hruggi are more powerful than normal zombies but suffer a further limitation – they need a ‘pilot’, a controlling creature linked to them by a magical headband who directs their actions. Directing a Hruggi requires some concentration and without a guiding intelligence, Hruggi revert to motionless inactivity.

## Combat

Hruggi tend to just pulverise designated targets with their fists or with thrown rocks. While a controller can get more advanced tactics out of them, a Hruggi doesn’t have many other options

open to it other than application of brute force, so they are usually employed as siege weapons and assault spearheads.

*Remote Piloted:* The Hruggi cannot act on their own. They must be guided from afar by a pilot, using a magical headband. No special skill is required for this and the pilot does not need to see the Hruggi; he can *scry* on it indefinitely, as if he were using the *scrying* spell. Directing a Hruggi requires concentration. Focusing on the Hruggi requires a full-round action, though the pilot can continue to do other things while concentrating on directing it, exactly as if he were maintaining concentration on a spell. If the pilot is distracted, he must make a Constitution check (DC 16). Failing this check means that the Hruggi can take no actions next round.

*Single Actions Only (Ex):* Hruggi have poor reflexes and can perform only a single move action or attack action each round. A Hruggi can move up to its speed and attack in the same round, but only if it attempts a charge.

## Invunche

Medium Construct

**Hit Dice:** 6d10+20 (53 hp)

**Initiative:** -5

**Speed:** 30 ft (6 squares)

**Armour Class:** 18 (+2 Dex, +6 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 16

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +7/+10

**Attack:** Slam +10 melee (1d4+4)

**Full Attack:** Slam +10 melee (1d4+4)

**Space/Reach:** 5 ft/5 ft

**Special Attacks:** Heart strike, frightful presence

**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft construct traits, heart devouring, spell resistance 16, *true seeing*

**Saves:** Fort +9, Ref -2, Will -2

**Abilities:** Str 17, Dex 14, Con -, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8

**Skills:** Listen +13, Spot +13

**Feats:** Alertness, Power Attack

**Environment:** Any

**Organisation:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 7

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral evil

**Advancement:** None

*This hideous, twisted creature resembles a bald-headed human being that is standing with its back to you. Its head has somehow been wrenched around to face backwards, so that it is staring down the passage. One of its arms has been stitched into a slash in its back; the other is abnormally large and muscular and has been dislocated to point in the same direction as the face. A blackened tongue pokes from its mouth and saliva drips constantly from its chin.*

Invunche are temple guardians, created by steadily deforming a human being over many months and then summoning a demonic entity to occupy the flesh in a perverse variation of the procedure used to make constructs. An Invunche is an intelligent, brutal

servant. When it attacks, it drools and emits a high-pitched giggling like that of a madman or a child. An Invunche usually just has to deal with interlopers intruding on temple grounds but some evil priests use them as personal bodyguards

An Invunche can speak Common, Abyssal and Infernal.

## Combat

An Invunche always has a designated person or location that it has been assigned to guard. It will fight viciously in the defence of its ward but will not pursue foes if they flee from the area. An Invunche usually just seeks to close with its opponents and then tears them apart.

*Heart Strike (Ex):* The Invunche's dislocated arm can punch through the ribcage of an opponent and rip the heart from his breast. Three times per day, it can make a heart strike attempt. This must be declared before attacking. If the Invunche successfully hits and deals damage, the victim must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 plus total damage dealt). Failure means that the victim's heart is torn from his chest and he dies. Success means that the victim merely suffers an additional 1d4+4 points of damage. The Invunche can only perform a heart strike on creatures within one size category of itself. Creatures that are not vulnerable to critical hits or do not have hearts (such as some aberrations) are immune to this attack.

*Heart Devouring (Su):* The Invunche does not need to eat. It does, however, draw sustenance from fresh hearts. If the Invunche consumes a heart within five rounds of the victim's death, it heals 2d8 hit points.

*Frightful Presence (Ex):* The Invunche's strange backwards scuttling and giggling is horrible to behold. Any creature within 30 feet when the Invunche attacks must make a Will saving throw (DC 12) or become frightened for 5d6 rounds. An opponent that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to that same Invunche's frightful presence for 24 hours. Frightful presence is a mind-affecting fear effect.

*True Seeing (Su):* The Invunche benefits from the effects of *true seeing* at all times.

## Leech, Fiendish

Tiny Magical Beast

**Hit Dice:** 1d8 (4 hp)

**Initiative:** +2

**Speed:** 5 ft swim 20 ft

**Armour Class:** 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex), touch 12, flat-footed 12

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +1/-11 (+1 when attached)

**Attack:** Touch +3 melee (attach)

**Full Attack:** Touch +3 melee (attach)

**Space/Reach:** 2-1/2 ft/0 ft

**Special Attacks:** Attach, blood drain, smite good

**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft, resistance to cold 5 and fire 5, spell resistance 6

**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1

**Abilities:** Str 3, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 6  
**Skills:** Hide +14  
**Feats:** Weapon Finesse  
**Environment:** Warm marsh & swamp  
**Organisation:** Swarm (3-6)  
**Challenge Rating:** ½  
**Treasure:** None  
**Alignment:** Always neutral evil  
**Advancement:** None

*Small, dark shapes undulate through the water.*

Fiendish leeches are used to guard bodies of water around and within dark temples. These large, black, slug-like creatures are the result of infusing normal swamp leeches with evil energies and tainting them with fiendish essence. Little more than mindless animals with a particularly vicious streak to them, fiendish leeches are extremely dangerous for anyone who falls into water infested with them.

#### **Combat:**

Leeches simply approach a target and attach themselves, before draining blood until they are sated. If only a single leech attacks a victim, the unfortunate subject may not even be aware of it due to the creature's anaesthetic bite; larger numbers of leeches can quickly drink a victim dry.

*Anaesthetic (Ex):* Those who are attacked by leeches often do not realise it until the creature has already begun to feed. When a leech clamps on to a victim, it secretes anaesthetic that masks the pain of the bite. On any round on which a victim takes Constitution damage, he must make a Spot skill check (DC 15) to notice that he has been wounded. Other characters nearby can also make Spot checks (DC 20) to notice the leech.

*Attach (Ex):* If a leech hits with a touch attack, it clamps its mouth on to the opponent's body. An attached leech is effectively grappling its prey. The leech loses its Dexterity bonus to Armour Class and has an Armour Class of 12. Leeches have a +12 racial bonus on grapple checks, which has already been figured into the Base Attack/Grapple entry above. An attached leech can be killed with a weapon or grappled itself (the victim grips it and rips it off). To remove an attached leech through grappling, the opponent must achieve a pin against the leech. However, ripping a leech from a victim inflicts an automatic point of damage.

*Blood Drain (Ex):* A leech drains blood, dealing one point of Constitution damage in any round when it begins its turn attached to a victim. Once it has dealt three points of Constitution damage, it detaches and swims away.

## **Mud Zombies**

Medium Undead  
**Hit Dice:** 2d12+3 (16 hp)  
**Initiative:** -1  
**Speed:** 30 ft (6 squares; cannot run)  
**Armour Class:** 13 (-1 Dex, +4 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 13  
**Base Attack/Grapple:** +1/+2  
**Attack:** slam +2 melee (1d6+1) or club +2 melee (1d6+1)  
**Full Attack:** slam +2 melee, (1d6+1) or club +2 melee (1d6+1)  
**Space/Reach:** 5 ft/5 ft  
**Special Attacks:** None

**Special Qualities:** Single actions only, damage reduction 5/ slashing, fast healing 2, darkvision 60 ft, resistance to cold 10 and electrical 10, undead traits  
**Saves:** Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3  
**Abilities:** Str 12, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1  
**Skills:** None  
**Feats:** Toughness  
**Environment:** Any  
**Organisation:** Solitary, pair or congregation (3-18)  
**Challenge Rating:** 1  
**Treasure:** None  
**Alignment:** Always neutral evil  
**Advancement:** None

*This mishapen figure is a skeleton, covered in black slime and mud and wreathed in dripping waterweed.*

A mud zombie is made from the skeletal remains of a devoted religious worshipper who has died within a temple that later became flooded. The skeleton is caked in thick mud and slime and often used as rooting by water plants as well. Much like normal zombies, mud zombies are essentially mindless and move with a shambling gait while leaving a trail of water and mud as they go.

#### *Combat*

Mud zombies attack intruders with a straightforward lack of tactics, attempting to pummel foes into oblivion with their fists. As their mud-clad bodies slowly heal damage dealt to them, mud zombies can sustain a great deal of damage over time.

*Fire Paralysis:* A mud zombie that suffers fire damage must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + fire damage dealt) or be paralysed for 1d4 rounds, as the earth is baked on to its bones.

*Single Actions Only (Ex):* Mud zombies have poor reflexes and can perform only a single move action or attack action each round. A mud zombie can move up to its speed and attack in the same round, but only if it attempts a charge.

*Water Vulnerability:* A mud zombie that is immersed in running water loses half of its hit points per round of immersion, as the earth is washed away from it. A mud zombie that is blasted with a stream of high-pressure water, such as from standing under a waterfall or being hosed down with the geyser effect of a *decanter of endless water*, is instantly destroyed.

## **Straw Golem**

Medium Construct  
**Hit Dice:** 4d10+20 (42 hp)  
**Initiative:** +3  
**Speed:** 30 ft (6 squares)  
**Armour Class:** 17 (+3 Dex, +4 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 14  
**Base Attack/Grapple:** +3/+5  
**Attack:** Club +5 melee (1d6+2) or slam +5 melee (1d4+2) or heavy crossbow +6 ranged (1d10/19-20x2)

**Full Attack:** club +5 melee (1d6+2) or slam +5 melee (1d4+2) or heavy crossbow +6 ranged (1d10/19-20x2)

**Space/Reach:** Reach 5 ft/5 ft

**Special Attacks:** None

**Special Qualities:** construct traits, damage resistance 10/ slashing, fire madness, fire vulnerability

**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +4

**Abilities:** Str 14, Dex 16, Con —, Int —, Wis 12, Cha 1

**Skills:** None

**Feats:** None

**Environment:** Any

**Organisation:** Solitary, pair or gang (3-8)

**Challenge Rating:** 4

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral

**Advancement:** None

*This appears to be an animated scarecrow.*

A simple and relatively cheap construct, straw golems are made from bundled straw around a basic wooden framework, often finished off with a set of clothes and a hat. Originally created as an improvement on the mundane scarecrow, a version that could actually chase away birds, animals and intruders, straw golems are also owned by certain wizards and organisations who need numerous and inexpensive servants and guards. Once created, a straw golem never needs paying, never tires and never complains, so they also make good, if rather stupid, labourers. Their only flaw is a tendency to go up in flames at even the slightest spark, after which they rampage amok in a fire-fuelled fury.

## Combat

Straw golems approach combat unimaginatively, simply attacking their target until it or they die, unless they are set on fire. However, their relative manual dexterity compared to most golems means that they can wield ranged weapons with some proficiency and this is their preferred form of attack.

**Fire Madness (Ex):** Straw golems that sustain fire damage automatically catch fire. When this happens, they fly into a mad rage and attack the creature responsible for the burning, or if that creature cannot be found, anything nearby except another straw golem. They will smash everything in their path to get to the creature. While the straw golem is burning, its slam attacks inflict an additional 1d6 points of fire damage. The golem will prioritise attacking its tormentor over extinguishing its own flames.

**Re-Stuffing (Ex):** A straw golem that is near a source of hay can re-stuff itself. This is a full-round action and restores 1d6 hit points to the golem.

## Tuberous Glunt

Large Plant

**Hit Dice:** 10d8+30 (75 hp)

**Initiative:** +0

**Speed:** 20 ft (4 squares), swim 30 ft

**Armour Class:** 20 (+8 natural, -1 size), touch 9, flat-footed 20

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +7/+17

**Attack:** Tentacle +14 melee (1d6+6)

**Full Attack:** 4 tentacles +14 melee (1d6+6)

**Space/Reach:** 10 ft/10 ft

**Special Attacks:** Belch fire, constrict, improved grab

**Special Qualities:** Critical hit vulnerability, plant traits, tubers, resistance to fire 10

**Saves:** Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +5

**Abilities:** Str 23, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 4

**Skills:** Hide +9, Listen +4, Spot +4

**Feats:** Alertness, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (tentacle)

**Environment:** Temperate marsh

**Organisation:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 7

**Treasure:** None (except tubers)

**Alignment:** Always neutral

**Advancement:** 10-20 HD (Large), 21-30 HD (Huge)

*A large, humanoid mass of warty vegetable matter heaves itself up out of the swamp. It gurgles and sloshes as it moves forwards, sighting its prey with the cluster of eyes atop its 'head'.*

The tuberous glunt is a bizarre vegetable life form (undoubtedly related to the shambling mound) that hides itself under the surface of deep bogs and waits for prey. It likes to hide in areas that produce abundant marsh gas, as its own bubbly emanations are often mistaken for ordinary swamp discharge. Glunts dig themselves deep in the ooze so as to hide effectively, meaning that the pit left in the square where a glunt has been lurking is at least ten feet deep.

A tuberous glunt is roughly humanoid in shape, with blackish-green skin and a vast sagging belly from which a continuous gurgling comes. Several potato-like growths hang from its back, like bloated warts that have grown out of control. Instead of a head, it has a mass of knotted, slimy vegetation like an uprooted tree stump, from which emerge four long root-like tentacles. On top of the rotten mass is a cluster of eyes, which looks exactly like a mass of bubbles from a distance. When the creature hides itself, waiting to ambush prey, it leaves only these bubble-like eyes above the surface. Passing creatures often mistake the eyes for marsh froth until it is too late.

## Combat

Tuberous glunts prefer to attack from ambush, grabbing a victim and constricting them to death as quickly as possible. If faced with multiple dangerous opponents, a glunt may just grab one and attempt to flee, dragging the target underwater to drown it.

**Constrict:** A tuberous glunt inflicts 1d6+9 points of damage with a successful Grapple check.



**Critical Hit Vulnerability:** Plant creatures are ordinarily not subject to critical hits. However, a successful critical hit on a tuberous glunt that deals piercing or slashing damage may rupture its belly. The glunt must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 plus damage dealt). If it fails, its belly is ruptured and it cannot belch fire until it has healed, which takes it one week of rest.

In the event that a flaming weapon causes the rupture, the belly explodes, killing the glunt outright and dealing 1d6 fire damage per hit die that the glunt had in a 30 foot radius spread. A successful Reflex saving throw (DC 18, Constitution-based) halves this damage.

**Fire Belch (Ex):** The glunt's belly is full of flammable swamp gas. Once per round, it can belch this gas through any of its trunks, igniting it on the way by some mysterious process of internal alchemy. The fire extends in a jet measuring 5 ft by 30 ft. All creatures within the area of effect suffer 2d6 points of fire damage +1 per hit die of the glunt, with a Reflex saving throw allowed for half damage. The saving throw (DC 18) is Constitution-based.

The glunt cannot belch fire with a tentacle that is grappling an opponent, but it can (and does) hold prey immobile with one tentacle while roasting it with fire from another. Once a glunt has belched fire, it cannot use the ability again for 1d3 rounds.

**Improved Grab (Ex):** To use this ability, a tuberous glunt must hit a Large or smaller opponent with a tentacle attack. It can then

attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

**Tubers (Ex):** The tuberous glunt is so named because of the tuber-like growths that hang from it. These are the beginnings of new glunts. When they are ripe and ready, they fall from the creature's body and gestate in the depths of the bog.

These growths are edible and surprisingly delicious. They heal damage as a healing potion does, curing a total of 1d8 + the hit dice of the glunt. Each glunt has a total of 2d4 such tubers on its body. Ripping a tuber from a glunt while it is still alive is possible. Use the rules for grabbing an item that a creature is carrying. The glunt gets a +4 bonus on its roll, as the tubers are well secured.

**Skills:** \*A tuberous glunt gets a +4 racial bonus to Hide checks made when immersed in a swamp environment.

## Xorixian

Medium Outsider (Extraplanar)

**Hit Dice:** 8d8+11 (47 hp)

**Initiative:** +1

**Speed:** 30 ft (6 squares)

**Armour Class:** 20 (+1 Dex, +9 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 19

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +8/+7

**Attack:** Slam +7 melee (1d6-1) or corrosive spit +9 ranged (1d4 acid)

**Full Attack:** 2 slams +7 melee (1d6-1) or corrosive spit +9 ranged (1d4 acid)

**Space/Reach:** 5 ft/5 ft

**Special Attacks:** Blinding spurt, digestive embrace

**Special Qualities:** amoebic, damage resistance 5/slashing, fast healing 5, darkvision 60 ft

**Saves:** Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +7

**Abilities:** Str 8, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 20, Wis 12, Cha 14

**Skills:** Climb +12, Escape Artist +24\*, Diplomacy +15, Hide +24\*, Listen +14, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (nature) +18, Knowledge (the planes) +18, Move Silently +14, Search +18, Spellcraft +18, Spot +14, Use Magic Device +15

**Feats:** Endurance, Improved Natural Ability (blinding spurt), Toughness

**Environment:** Plane of Xorix

**Organisation:** Solitary, pair or expedition (3-18)

**Challenge Rating:** 6

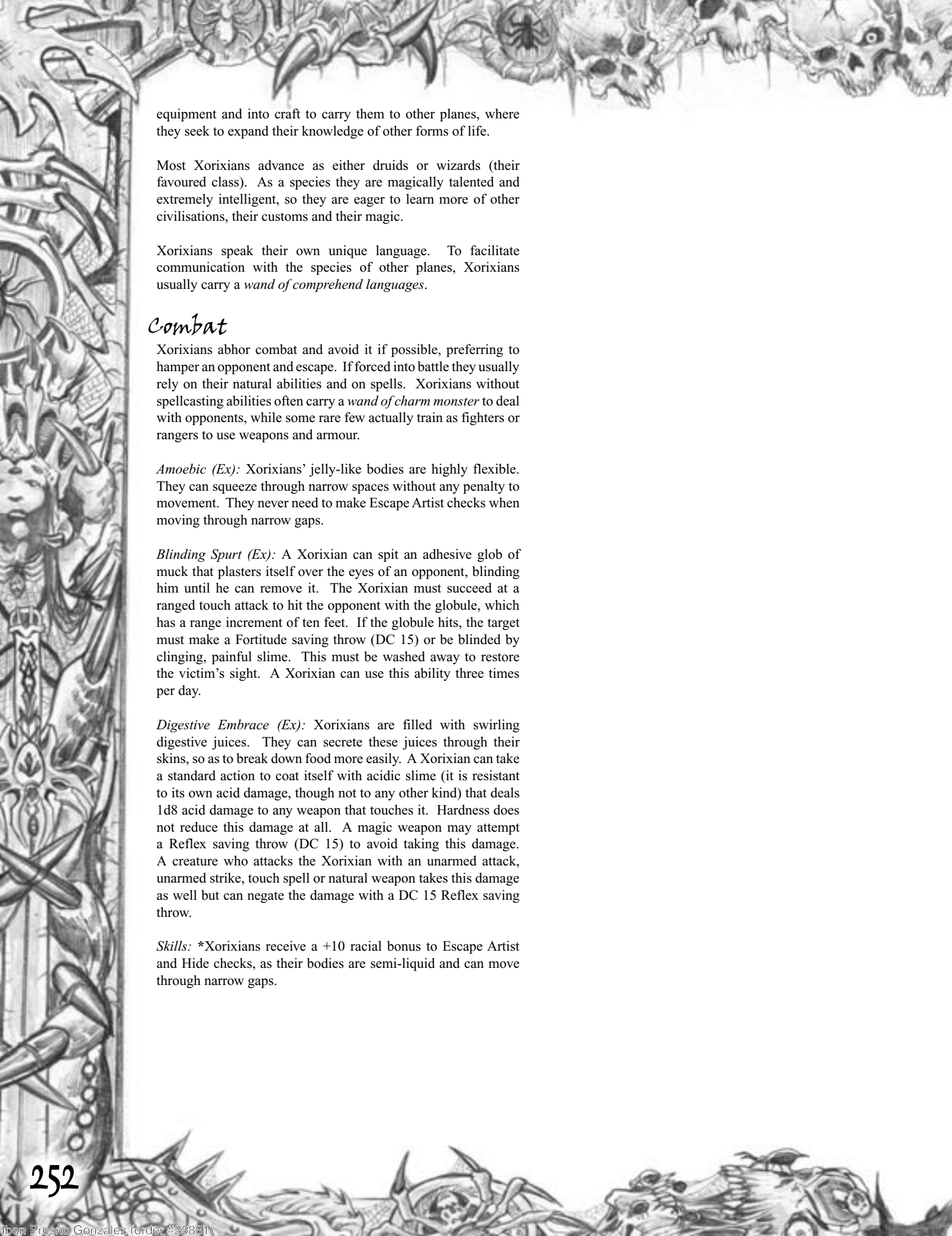
**Treasure:** Standard

**Alignment:** Usually neutral

**Advancement:** By character class

*This bizarre figure is roughly humanoid. It seems to be made of jelly-like flesh and strands of tough vegetable matter, and is covered in a slick film of slime.*

The Xorixians are an inherently peaceful and curious race that originates in the plane of Xorix, a place where plant-based life forms are dominant. They use magic to turn plants into living



equipment and into craft to carry them to other planes, where they seek to expand their knowledge of other forms of life.

Most Xorixians advance as either druids or wizards (their favoured class). As a species they are magically talented and extremely intelligent, so they are eager to learn more of other civilisations, their customs and their magic.

Xorixians speak their own unique language. To facilitate communication with the species of other planes, Xorixians usually carry a *wand of comprehend languages*.

## Combat

Xorixians abhor combat and avoid it if possible, preferring to hamper an opponent and escape. If forced into battle they usually rely on their natural abilities and on spells. Xorixians without spellcasting abilities often carry a *wand of charm monster* to deal with opponents, while some rare few actually train as fighters or rangers to use weapons and armour.

*Amoebic (Ex):* Xorixians' jelly-like bodies are highly flexible. They can squeeze through narrow spaces without any penalty to movement. They never need to make Escape Artist checks when moving through narrow gaps.

*Blinding Spurt (Ex):* A Xorixian can spit an adhesive glob of muck that plasters itself over the eyes of an opponent, blinding him until he can remove it. The Xorixian must succeed at a ranged touch attack to hit the opponent with the globule, which has a range increment of ten feet. If the globule hits, the target must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 15) or be blinded by clinging, painful slime. This must be washed away to restore the victim's sight. A Xorixian can use this ability three times per day.

*Digestive Embrace (Ex):* Xorixians are filled with swirling digestive juices. They can secrete these juices through their skins, so as to break down food more easily. A Xorixian can take a standard action to coat itself with acidic slime (it is resistant to its own acid damage, though not to any other kind) that deals 1d8 acid damage to any weapon that touches it. Hardness does not reduce this damage at all. A magic weapon may attempt a Reflex saving throw (DC 15) to avoid taking this damage. A creature who attacks the Xorixian with an unarmed attack, unarmed strike, touch spell or natural weapon takes this damage as well but can negate the damage with a DC 15 Reflex saving throw.

*Skills:* \*Xorixians receive a +10 racial bonus to Escape Artist and Hide checks, as their bodies are semi-liquid and can move through narrow gaps.



# Designer's Notes

**B**ack in the eighties, a guy called Matt (not our own Mr. Sprange of Mongoose, I hasten to add) wrote in to a gaming magazine I used to read to complain about a published D&D adventure he had read. Everyone else seemed to be praising it to the skies, so I took note of what he was saying immediately. It is still a popular adventure in some circles, so I will not name it here.

The basis of his complaint was that the adventure, though undeniably rich with imaginative ideas, was completely linear. You got to play the characters you were given, and you could play them in a given way. The scenes were scripted, the descriptions there for you to read out. Everything was preordained. Matt wanted to have his *own* adventure, to make his *own* story, not just play through someone else's. No matter how good a story is, what's the point of taking part in it if you don't actually get to change anything?

Well, I thought to myself, I'm with you there, Matt. If I ever write adventures for money (at the time, it seemed about as likely as our school rock band ever taking off) then I'll not write them like *that*. No, the adventures that I write will have twists and turns and people will be able to affect the world around them. Just see if they don't.

Fate has an annoying way of giving us the opportunity to put our money where our mouth is.

Writing the first part of this trilogy has been a major learning experience. Sometimes, you have to lay down the story. Sometimes, you can afford to give the Players greater freedom. What is always crucial, I am discovering, is that the Games Master has enough material not only to tell the story but to *improvise*. If the Games Master can confidently make stuff up in a manner that is consistent with the game world *and* gels with the unfolding story *and* fills in all the bits that I haven't been able to cover in the last 255 pages, then I've done my job.

The infuriating part is that you only have so much space to work with. If you try to pre-empt every choice the Players could possibly make and allow for it, thus maximising their freedom, then you end up with dozens of wasted pages that detail the options they *didn't* take. If you think *exclusively* in terms of plotted scenes, major moments and set pieces, instead of saving those moments for what I've termed the 'plot events', then you have a far easier job

of writing, but then the Players aren't really adventuring, they're just passengers.

I've tried to err on the side of freedom. If this has left any Games Master short of material, or less than confident about improvising, then you can always drop me an email courtesy of Mongoose and I'll do my best to fill in the gaps. I can't think of everything, and besides, I like getting emails from other human beings occasionally.

Oh, the other thing I can't stand is scenarios that don't make sense. I admit it, I am a stickler for plausibility. I probably worry far too much about this, but the one thing that scares me witless as a Games Master is the prospect of being told 'Hang on, instead of doing this elaborate and difficult thing, why aren't your monsters just doing this, which would be much more straightforward?' or something similar. If there are hobgoblins in the mines, I want them to have a *reason* for being in the damn mines. Similarly, if the drow are invading, I need them to have a *motive* for invading. After all, if the Players are going to win, they need to try to outthink their enemies as well as outfight them, which means creating enemies that behave in a sane, consistent manner, rather than just being arbitrarily 'evil'.

So, one down and two to go. I hope you and your Players enjoy the story.

Special thanks to Randy Milholland, for moral support and laughs; Ian and Bridie, for love and friendship; and my fiancée Lucy, for the Mug of Endless Tea, without which I would still be looking at a single page with *Chapter 1* written at the top of it.

CHARACTER \_\_\_\_\_ PLAYER \_\_\_\_\_  
 CLASS \_\_\_\_\_ LEVEL \_\_\_\_\_  
 RACE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 SUBRACE (IF ANY) \_\_\_\_\_ ALIGNMENT \_\_\_\_\_  
 PATRON DEITY / RELIGION \_\_\_\_\_  
 APPEARANCE \_\_\_\_\_

AC WHEN  
FLAT FOOTED  
AC VERSUS  
TOUCH ATTACKS  
MAX DEX  
BONUS  
ARMOUR CHECK  
PENALTY  
ARCANE SPELL  
FAILURE

--	--	--	--	--

**ABILITY SCORES**

	SCORE	MODIFIER	TEMP SCORE	TEMP MODIFIER
STRENGTH				
DEXTERITY				
CONSTITUTION				
INTELLIGENCE				
WISDOM				
CHARISMA				

**HIT POINTS**

SUB DMG	
HIT DIE	
DAMAGE REDUCTION	

**ARMOUR**



= 10 +

CLASS

ARMOUR WORN

**ARMOUR**

ARMOUR	SHIELD	DEX	WIS	SIZE	NATURAL	MISC

SAVING THROWS

	TOTAL	BASE	ABILITY	MAGIC	MISC	TEMP	MODIFIERS
FORTITUDE (CON)							
REFLEX (DEX)							
WILL (WIS)							

COMBAT BONUSES

	TOTAL	BASE	ABILITY	SIZE	MISC	TEMP	MODIFIERS
INITIATIVE (DEX)							
MELEE (STR)							
RANGED (DEX)							

**WEAPONS**

WEAPON	ATK BONUS	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	RANGE	TYPE	SIZE	HARD	HPS
NOTES								
WEAPON	ATK BONUS	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	RANGE	TYPE	SIZE	HARD	HPS
NOTES								
WEAPON	ATK BONUS	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	RANGE	TYPE	SIZE	HARD	HPS
NOTES								

**STARBORN ABILITIES**

PATRON STAR:

GRANTED ABILITIES:

MAX RANKS = LVL +3 (2)

	CROSS CLASS	KEY ABILITY	MODIFIERS	TOTAL	ABILITY	RANKS	MISC
ANIMAL EMPATHY	Y / N	CHA					
APPRAISE ✓	Y / N	INT					
BALANCE ✓	Y / N	DEX *					
BLUFF ✓	Y / N	CHA					
CLIMB ✓	Y / N	STR *					
CONCENTRATION ✓	Y / N	CON					
CRAFT ✓ ( )	Y / N	INT					
CRAFT ✓ ( )	Y / N	INT					
CRAFT ✓ ( )	Y / N	INT					
CRAFT ✓ ( )	Y / N	INT					
DECIPHER SCRIPT	Y / N	INT					
DIPLOMACY ✓	Y / N	CHA					
DISABLE DEVICE	Y / N	INT					
DISGUISE ✓	Y / N	CHA					
ESCAPE ARTIST ✓	Y / N	DEX *					
FORGERY ✓	Y / N	INT					
GATHER INFORMATION ✓	Y / N	CHA					
HANDLE ANIMAL	Y / N	CHA					
HEAL ✓	Y / N	WIS					
HIDE ✓	Y / N	DEX *					
INNUENDO	Y / N	WIS					
INTIMIDATE ✓	Y / N	CHA					
INTUIT DIRECTION	Y / N	WIS					
JUMP ✓	Y / N	STR *					
KNOWLEDGE ( )	Y / N	INT					
KNOWLEDGE ( )	Y / N	INT					
KNOWLEDGE ( )	Y / N	INT					
KNOWLEDGE ( )	Y / N	INT					
LISTEN ✓	Y / N	WIS					
MOVE SILENTLY	Y / N	DEX *					
OPEN LOCK	Y / N	DEX					
PERFORM ( )	Y / N	CHA					
PROFESSION ( )	Y / N	WIS					
PROFESSION ( )	Y / N	WIS					
READ LIPS	Y / N	INT					
RIDE ✓	Y / N	DEX					
SEARCH ✓	Y / N	INT					
SENSE MOTIVE ✓	Y / N	WIS					
SLEIGHT OF HAND	Y / N	DEX					
SPELLCRAFT	Y / N	INT					
SPOT ✓	Y / N	WIS					
SWIM ✓	Y / N	STR ★					
SURVIVAL ✓	Y / N	WIS					
TUMBLE	Y / N	DEX *					
USE MAGIC DEVICE	Y / N	CHA					
USE ROPE ✓	Y / N	DEX					
	Y / N						

✓ CAN BE USED WITH 0 RANKS, \* ARMOUR CHECK PENALTY APPLIES, ★ -1 PER 5 LBS OF EQUIPMENT



**EQUIPMENT**

CURRENT LOAD	TOTAL WEIGHT CARRIED	

**FEATS**

--

**LANGUAGES**

--

**MONEY & GEMS**

CP - SP - GP - PP - GEMS -
--

**CLASS/RACIAL ABILITIES**

--

**SPELLS**

--

**EXPERIENCE**

TOTAL EXPERIENCE  XPS NEEDED FOR NEXT LEVEL
---

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