

VER8-03

Darkness is Unbound

A One-Round Dungeons & Dragons[®] LIVING
GREYHAWK[®]

Verbobonc Regional Adventure

by Brian Troyan

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Shannus of Glory seeks adventurers willing to prove that his violent actions in the past year have been justified. Has the Great Dire Dark truly returned to the Iron Wood? And if so, who other than Shannus can contain it?
A one-round Verbobonc adventure for PCs level 4-14 (APLs 6-12).

Metaorganizational Focus: Battirovka Family, Bondsmen of Estival, Company of the Black Rose, Itinerant Faith of Trithereon, Pantheon of the Old Faith, Wanderers of Coldeven

Resources for this adventure [and the authors of those works] include *Complete Adventurer* [Jesse Decker], *Complete Arcane* [Richard Baker], *Complete Divine* [David Noonan], *Dungeonscape* [Jason Buhlman and Rich Burlew], *Magic Item Compendium* [Andy Collins et al.], *Sandstorm* [Bruce R. Cordell et al.], *Spell Compendium* [Matthew Sernett, Jeff Grubb and Mike McArtor] and *Vecna Lives!* [David "Zeb" Cook].

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®] rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison.

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Most likely you ordered this adventure as part of an RPGA even from the RPGA website, or you received it from your senior gamemaster. To play this adventure as part of the LIVING GREYHAWK campaign—a worldwide, ongoing D&D campaign set in the GREYHAWK setting—you must sanction it as part of an RPGA event. This event could be as elaborate as a big convention, or as simple as a group of friends meeting at the DM's house.

To sanction an RPGA event, you must be at least a HERALD-LEVEL gamemaster. The person who sanctions the event is called the senior gamemaster, and is in charge of making sure the event is sanctioned before play, runs smoothly on the date sanctioned, and then reported back to the RPGA in a timely manner. The person who runs the game is called the table DM (or usually just DM). Sometimes (and almost all the time in the cases of home events) the senior gamemaster is also the table DM. You don't have to be a HERALD-LEVEL GM to run this adventure if you are not the senior GM.

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PLAYERS READ NO FARTHER

If you are planning on playing this adventure, stop reading now. The rest of the information in this adventure is for the DM only. If you read farther than this section, you'll know too much about its challenges, which kills the fun. Also, if you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, reading beyond this point makes you ineligible to do so.

PREPARING FOR PLAY

To get the most out of this adventure, you need copies of the following D&D books: *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and *Monster Manual*.

Throughout this adventure, text in *bold italics* provides player information for you to paraphrase or read aloud when appropriate. Sidebars contain important information for you, including special instruction on running the adventure. Information on nonplayer PCs (NPCs) and monsters appear in abbreviated form in the adventure text. Full information on NPCs and monsters are given in Appendix 1.

Along with this adventure you'll find a RPGA Table Tracking sheet. If you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, complete and turn in this sheet to your senior GM directly after play. You'll also find a LIVING GREYHAWK Adventure Record (AR).

LIVING GREYHAWK LEVELS OF PLAY

Because players bring their own PCs LIVING GREYHAWK games, this adventure's challenges are proportionate to the modified average character level of the PCs participating in the adventure. To determine this modified Average Party Level (APL) follow the steps below:

1. Determine the character level for each of the PCs participating in the adventure.
2. If PCs bring animals that have been trained for combat (most likely dogs trained for war), other than those brought by virtue of a class ability (such as animal companions, familiars paladin's mounts) or the warhorse of a character with the Mounted Combat feat, use the sidebar chart to determine the number of levels you add to the sum of step one. Add each character's animals separately. A single PC may only bring four or fewer animals of this type, and animals with different CRs are added separately.
3. Sum the results of step 1 and 2, and divide by the number of PCs playing in the adventure. Round up to the nearest whole number.
4. If you are running a table of six PCs, add one to that average.

Throughout this adventure, APLs categorize the level of challenge the PCs face. APLs are given in even-numbered increments. If the APL of your group falls on an odd number, ask them before the adventure begins whether they would like to play a harder or easier adventure. Based on their choice, use either the higher or the lower adjacent APL.

APL also affects the amount of experience and gold a PC can gain at the end of the adventure. If a player character is three character levels or more either higher

or lower than the APL at which this adventure is being played, that character receives only one-half of the experience points and gold for the adventure. This simulates the fact that either the PC was not challenged as much as normal or relied on help by higher-level PCs to reach the objectives.

Furthermore, a PC who is four or more levels higher than the highest APL supported by the adventure may not play the adventure.

LIVING GREYHAWK adventures are designed for APL 2 and higher. Four or five 1st-level PCs may find the challenge of an APL 2 adventure difficult. Suggest the following to these groups to help increase their chances of success:

1. Enlist a sixth player.
2. Advise PCs to buy riding dogs to help protect them, and fight for them.

Time Units and Upkeep

This is a standard 1-round Verbobonc adventure. *As of September 1, 2007, there is no Time Unit cost to play the adventure portion of this adventure; however, standard Time Unit costs still apply to crafting, magic item creation, performing or other non-adventure related activities or penalties. The cost for Standard Upkeep is 12 gp for PCs whose home region is in Verbobonc, or 24 gp for out-of-region PCs. Both Rich Upkeep and Luxury Upkeep cost 75 gp regardless of home region.*

PCs that fail to pay at least Standard Upkeep will retain temporary ability damage until the next adventure, must buy new spell component pouches and healer's kits, and may suffer other in-game penalties (or possibly gain in-game benefits) as may be detailed in this adventure.

A PC that does not pay for at least Standard Upkeep may also avoid the above-described penalties by living off the wild. If the PC possesses four or more ranks in the Survival skill and succeeds at a DC 20 Survival check, the PC will heal temporary ability damage as if he or she paid for Standard Upkeep, may refill spell component pouches and healer's kits, and may restock up to 20 arrows or bolts if the PC has at least four ranks in Craft (bowmaking). The player is allowed to Take 10 on this roll.

More information about Lifestyle and Upkeep can be found in the "Lifestyle and Upkeep" section of Chapter 3 of the *Living Greyhawk Campaign Sourcebook*.

Adventure Background

The Viscounty is finally returning to order after more than a year of chaos. Much of this chaos can be traced back to Lord Shannus's single-minded devotion to destroying the Great Dire Dark.

Shannus is a brass dragon disciple and Mayor of Glory. He rose to fame by defending the people of the Iron Wood from the lycanthropes who infested the forest and ultimately helping adventurers defeat the true threat that lay beneath the woods: an undead embodiment of evil known as the Great Dire Dark.

Early in the year 597, shortly after Viscount Langard disappeared in the Iron Wood under mysterious circumstances, Shannus (at that time, Baron of the Iron Wood) was visited by emissaries from the Gnarley elves. Their leader, an elf by the name of Rygor, gave Shannus a scrap of parchment that bore a prophecy. This portent foretold of the return of the Great Dire Dark.

Shannus believed that only he was capable of containing and destroying the Great Dire Dark. He also knew from past experience with that the more souls who lived within the Iron Wood, the more powerful it would become. Thus, he claimed the whole of the Iron Wood as his dominion and sealed it to outsiders. All traffic on the Low Road to Veluna through the Iron Wood was stopped. Trespassers were threatened with imprisonment and death.

Shannus then raised an army of draconic allies and marched on the town of Validia on the southern edge of the Iron Wood. Validia lay within the dominion of Lord Kosak Chondell, but since it lay within the Iron Wood, Shannus claimed it as his own. Citizens were told to join him or leave. (This was chronicled in the adventure VER7-03 *Mourning Glory*.)

This infringement on another noble's lands led to a counter strike by a combined force from House Chondell, House Stefania, and House Avgustin. Their army, accompanied by adventurers, marched on Validia. The Battle of Validia was fierce, but in the end the town was retaken for House Chondell. Shannus's forces were broken and they retreated back to Glory. The battle was not without Avgustin losses, however. During the fighting, Field Marshal Yronl, the regent of House Avgustin and one of the strongest military commanders in all of the Viscounty, was slain. (See VER7-05 *The Lion and the Dragon*.) This gave rise to Lady Elise, a girl of only fifteen years, taking control of her house directly, possibly before she was ready.

With the Avgustin forces amassed for the march on Validia in the west, Avgustin lands were largely undefended in the east. Lady Godeleva Langmuir chose to make her move. Using covert agents in the town of Swan, she concocted a plot to frame kobolds for killing Waldgraf Corbin Deleveu and a majority of the Mounted Borderers under his command. Langmuir forces would then march into Swan to “restore order” while Godeleva made a case that Lady Elise was not capable of defending the innocent people of Swan.

This plot was foiled by Lord Ludovic Langmuir, his own loyal spies, and a party of adventurers. Lady Langmuir, one of the most crafty minds of the Verbobonc nobility, was removed from power by her son. These events played out in VER7-06 *The Swan and the Crow*.

Although Lord Deleveu and the Borderers were saved, the Waldgraf of Ostverk chose to continue withdrawing troops from the Gnarley Woods, where they had been attempting to keep the insurgent elves from further assaulting human settlements (ever since they had destroyed the town of Terre Verte in VER6-05 *Reclamation*). Deleveu believed that the threat of a noble civil war was more important than the Blackthorn orcs and insurgent elves of the Gnarley Wood.

With this chain reaction of events, and Viscount Langard still missing, Veluna sent an ambassador to restore order to the Viscounty by appointing a new Viscount.

In VER8-01 *Mediation*, it was decided that Lord Wellborn Estival would succeed Langard as Viscount of Verbobonc. He has since made a number of changes in the region to better enforce the rule of Law, including: consolidating law enforcement powers within his noble house guards (the Bondsmen of Estival), disbanding the Mounted Borderers (who had lost two of their four commanders in the assassinations that marred the night of Estival's coronation and a third when he left in disgust), and outlawing the Trithereonite religion in the Viscounty (since a sect of Trithereonites were responsible for the assassinations).

While in Verbobonc, the Velunan ambassador also delivered a proclamation that stripped Shannus of his Barony in the Iron Wood. He was allowed to remain as Mayor of Glory, but if he leaves the town, the Knights of Luna will crush him.

Shannus now seethes in the town of Glory, determined, in spite of his recent failures, to bring an end to the Great Dire Dark once and for all. If he can hire adventurers to seek out his enemy and destroy it, then he will have proven that the actions that he has taken over the last year have all been justified for a greater good.

Unfortunately for Shannus, there can be no justification. The Great Dire Dark was indeed destroyed by adventurers in CY 594. The prophecy that spurred him into action, causing so much chaos in the Viscounty over the last year, seems to have been designed to do precisely that. It appears that Rygor and the elves of the Gnarley have played Shannus for a fool, manipulating him from the start.

Meanwhile, completely unrelated to Shannus's affairs, **Hermann M** is widely known as the brewer of Hermann M's Special Blend, perhaps the most popular locally-brewed beverage in the Viscounty. Unbeknownst to all but a very few people, Hermann M is in fact a powerful druid who has been watching over and protecting the Viscounty for years.

Not far from the town of Validia is a reservoir of Oerthblood, a mysterious substance that ebbs and flows underneath parts of the Flanaess. Although it is inherently magical, unstable, and dangerous, it is not by itself evil. For the better part of the last half a century, Hermann M has guarded it, ensuring that it would not fall into the wrong hands.

The only other people who had knowledge of this Oerthblood reservoir were the two men who helped Hermann M to establish the guards and wards of the Oerthblood Dungeon: Magister Har of the Wrinkle Academy, who is now dead, and Bishop Haufren of the Cudgel, who fell into a magical coma in early 597 and may have died (depending on the critical events of VER8-02 *Crypt Things*).

So when the level of the Oerthblood reservoir slowly began to rise two weeks ago, Hermann M had no one to confer with. He has taken a leave of absence from his brewery and begun keeping a close eye on the Oerthblood reservoir. But his guards and wards are all in place and still secure, preventing prying eyes from finding the dangerous source of power.

But back in Glory, Shannus's diviners have finally discovered a section of the Iron Wood which is warded from their spells. Shannus believes this to be the hiding place of the Great Dire Dark. It is, in fact, the Oerthblood Dungeon of Hermann M.

As the adventure begins, the PCs are wandering Verbobonc City looking for work, unaware that Shannus's call for PCs will pit them against the most deadly guardians of the land and ultimately the original protector of the Iron Wood himself, the druid Hermann M.

Adventure Summary

Introduction: In Verbobonc City, the adventurers may gather information about recent goings-on in the Viscounty.

Encounter One: The party comes upon Ghen Tayber, the owner of a traveling menagerie, just as the Bondsmen of the Viscount are shutting him down. The Bondsmen bring forth two agents of Shannus, who present the PCs with a letter from the mayor of Glory, requesting to speak with them peaceably.

Encounter Two: On their way to Glory, the PCs pass the Quarry between Verbobonc City and Rhynehurst. Hearing panic, the PCs may rush to investigate and battle strange creatures that have arisen from a newly unearthed chamber. This is the PCs' first exposure to the mysterious Oerthblood.

Encounter Three: The PCs investigate the quarry and discover a pool of Oerthblood, from which the monsters appear to have been created. They also hear that three prisoners escaped from the Quarry during the battle.

Encounter Four: Not far from the Quarry, the party either tracks down or runs across the escaped prisoners and must decide what to do with them.

Encounter Five: Passing through Rhynehurst, the party sees more of the influence that the new Viscount's order has brought and has another opportunity to gather information.

Encounter Six: In Glory, Shannus explains the reason for his actions in the past year: the Great Dire Dark has returned. With the help of his old rival Breyin the Moonlord, he enlists the adventurers to defeat the vile creature once and for all.

Encounter Seven: The PCs travel to an area near Validia where Shannus believes the Great Dire Dark lies. Breyin, the Great Dire Dark's previous jailor, reveals that he does not think Shannus is right, but urges the party to continue.

Encounter Eight: Arriving at the site, Breyin is *banished* by a trap, leaving the party to journey through a dungeon beneath the Iron Wood alone.

Encounter Nine: At the deepest point of the dungeon, the PCs discover that a reservoir of Oerthblood, and not the Great Dire Dark, has drawn Shannus' suspicions. Here, the powerful druid Hermann M demands that the party swear themselves to secrecy and depart at once. Otherwise, he will do battle with them.

Conclusion: The party returns to Glory and reports to Shannus. They either hold something back from him in order to keep their vow to Hermann M, or they tell him everything, breaking their vow to the druid. The adventurers are rewarded (or punished) for their decision. Regardless of the outcome, the adventurers learn that someone manipulated Shannus into the actions he has taken over the last year.

Before Play

Before you begin this adventure, it is important to note which PCs, if any, belong to the following metaorganizations, possess any of the following AR rewards, or openly align with any of the following faiths.

Wanderers of Coldeven: In Encounter Four, Cyrus recognizes any fellow members of the Wanderers and begs them for help.

Battirovka Family: In Encounter Four, Kaylissa Whispersail recognizes any fellow members of the Family and begs them for help. Family members are also offered equipment equal to 50gp x APL of the adventure prior to the adventure's beginning. (See **Player Handout #1a**).

Company of the Black Rose: In Encounter Four, Tamatar Gundigoot recognizes any fellow members of the Company and begs them for help. Black Rose Company members are also offered equipment equal to 50gp x APL of the adventure prior to the adventure's beginning. (See **Player Handout #1b**).

Church of Trithereon: These PCs are now considered traitors by the Laws of the Viscounty. Make certain that these players are aware of this and of the consequences. If they are discovered, they will immediately be arrested and held for Treason. See the *Laws of the Viscounty* document, and the abbreviated Laws of the Viscounty in Appendix Four for more details. There is also a chance that Cyrus will recognize them as fellow worshippers in Encounter Four.

Bondsmen of Estival: Other Bondsmen that appear in this scenario treat these PCs with professional courtesy. These PCs may also have legal jurisdiction in this adventure.

Former members of the Mounted Borderers who did NOT enlist with the Bondsmen of Estival: The Bondsmen of Estival who appear in this scenario are aware of the people who chose to turn their backs on the new Viscount. Although Viscount Estival promised that those who wished to leave the ranks of the Borderers could do so without repercussions, the Bondsmen see

these PCs as borderline traitors to the Viscounty and treat them with haughty contempt.

Played VER7-05 *The Lion & the Dragon* and was NOT a member of the Protectors of the Iron Wood at that time: These PCs fought against Shannus and ultimately drove him out of the town of Validia, and he knows that they are partly responsible for his downfall. The Mist Children elves in Encounter One and Shannus in Encounter Six recognize these PCs on sight. Although none of them are pleased about it, they have no choice but to ask the PCs for help.

Oath to Canoness Y'dey (VER7-01 *Cleanse Thy House*): All plant creatures in the Oerthblood dungeon ignore an oathbound PC, unless the PC attacks a plant creature first. See the notes at the top of Encounter Eight for more details.

Favor of Ghen Tayber (VER4-03 *Glory's Warriors*): In Encounter One, Ghen Tayber recognizes PCs who have this favor as PCs who have helped him before. They also gain expanded access on the Adventure Record.

Holy Symbols: It is important to know if any of the PCs openly display holy symbols of any particular deities. Specifically, pay attention if anyone regularly wears the symbol of a god of the Flannae Old Faith (Ehlonna, Obad-Hai, Beory (or Berei), Nerull, or Pelor), including the amalgam holy symbol presented to some PCs in VTF6-05 *Autumn* or DYV6-01 *Festival of the Blood Moon*. These PCs are noted by the shambling mounds in Encounter 8F, and are not attacked unless they attack the monsters first. They may also present their holy symbol forcefully and command those creatures to stop attacking.

Introduction

This adventure begins in Verbobonc City. The adventurers have all come here for their own individual reasons, but the most likely is the same as always: the endless quest for adventure, excitement, and maybe even a little loot to sweeten the experience.

The party of adventurers are not together at the beginning of this adventure. They run into one another in Encounter One. At the players' option, PCs who normally travel together may be in each other's company from the start.

Verbobonc City has seen many changes since last Coldeven. Viscount Estival and his Bondsmen have returned order to the struggling Viscounty, and the Cuthbertine populace has taken great solace in it. Unfortunately for adventurers, the new order means

there isn't much left for sellswords and sellwands to do.

For the last two weeks, the city has been unusually quiet, and your regular haunts have offered no new leads to adventure.

PCs may roll Gather Information or Knowledge (local:VTF) checks at this time to find out what general knowledge of current events that they are aware of. This is in addition to whatever experiences the PCs have had in previous Verbobonc adventures. See the Verbobonc section in Appendix Three: Legwork for results.

It is assumed that PCs who belong to the Battirovka Family and the Company of the Black Rose have been in touch with their fellow members while looking for work. Give PCs who belong to the Battirovka Family **Player Handout #1a**. Give PCs who belong to the Black Rose Company **Player Handout #1b**. These PCs are outfitted with some extra equipment of their choice at no cost. This equipment must be used or returned by the end of the adventure.

This morning finds you on the southeast end of town, near the neighborhood of Gnomeburg.

A street urchin is tacking up small notices on every wall and window in sight. The ragamuffin rushes up to you, attempting to shove one of the fliers into your hand.

If PCs are curious as to what the fliers have to say, they may accept one or they may move over to any of the bills posted on the buildings. Give the players **Player Handout #2**. The handbill announces the return of Ghen Tayber's Mundivagant Menagerie to Verbobonc City.

Suddenly, cries of panic arise from a few streets over. Someone yells, "It's loose! Run for your lives!"

These cries are coming from the direction of the Menagerie. Ask players what actions their characters would like to take.

Whether they rush to the scene or continue to amble toward the Menagerie, the PCs will arrive too late to join in the fight. Nonetheless, they will find adventure today. Go on to Encounter One.

Encounter One: Not Again!

In this encounter, the party runs into Ghen Tayber, the owner of a traveling menagerie, as he is being shut down by the Bondsmen of Estival. Regardless of whether they intervene or not, the Bondsmen decide that the party can clean up some business that has been bothering them.

They force some emissaries from Shannus to deliver their open-ended summons to the adventurers.

The Mundivagant Menagerie

Just down the street from the Kron Hall tavern, Ghen Tayber's Mundivagant Menagerie, which has been in town for the last fortnight, has experienced some 'technical difficulties.' One of the rust monsters escaped from its cage and caused a panic.

By the time the adventurers arrive, however, the Bondsmen of Estival have already subdued the beast.

Near the wagons of the Mundivagant Menagerie, a rust monster lies dead in the street. Men whose tabards bear the now-familiar red sun and black sword crest of Estival are attempting to disperse the rapidly growing crowd.

One of the Bondsmen raises his hands to quiet the commoners and pronounces, "The Menagerie is closed!" much to their groaning disappointment.

A tall man dressed in flamboyant silver and orange clothes rises in protest, "Tendentious, tenebrous tyranny! You've killed Rusty, and now you're shutting me down? This is an outrage!"

Any of the many people here can explain that one of the monkeys who help out with the show failed to latch the rust monsters' cage properly. One of the monsters escaped and began eating metal everywhere. The Bondsmen of Estival showed up very quickly, though, and slew the beast by beating it to death with their shields. The others were contained. Now it looks like the Bondsmen are kicking the Menagerie out of the Viscounty.

One of the Bondsmen throws off his now-rusted and useless armor, cursing under his breath. Glancing up, he sees you and calls out to the Bondsman who made the pronouncement: "Look, Fensentio: Adventurers. Always showing up right after the fight's over."

These two vocal Bondsmen of Estival are **Master Fensentio** and **Regori**. Adventurers might have encountered them as Mounted Borderers in VER7-06 *The Swan and the Crow*. They have since joined up with the Bondsmen of Estival and have been stationed in Verbobonc City. The other two Mounted Borderers from *The Swan and the Crow*, Mikazail and Rosolfo, parted ways with the new Viscount, and do not appear in this adventure.

Fensentio, the highest-ranking Bondsman here, does everything by the books. His younger friend Regori has a haughty disdain for adventurers and something of a short temper.

Ghen Tayber, the colorfully-dressed master of the menagerie, is protesting the closing of his show. He claims that it was all just an accident, and there was no real harm done. If anyone should be mad, it's him, as he has lost *another* rust monster. During the events of VER1-10 *For Man nor Beast* and VER4-03 *Glory's Warriors*, Tayber's rust monsters displayed a propensity for getting killed.

Some PCs may have met Ghen Tayber in those adventures. If any of these PCs are present, Tayber spots them in the crowd and calls them over in the hopes that they make a convincing argument for allowing his show to remain open.

Fensentio is sympathetic, but he is adamant on the order to get these beasts out of town immediately. If they are not well on their way out of the Viscounty today, he will have them all put down. Regori is eager for an excuse to kill them all, especially since he's lost his armor and sword to the rust monster and wants to make an example out of Tayber's business.

Tayber protests that he has yet to secure caravan guards, as his engagement in Verbobonc City was scheduled to continue for another week. If the PCs do not immediately offer to take the job, he looks to them here and makes an offer of employment.

He can offer gold wheatsheaves equal to 50 x APL per character if they agree to help him prepare for travel and escort him to Glory. There, he has contacts that should be able to take him all the way to Mitrik.

See **DM's Aid #1** for more detailed information about Ghen Tayber's Mundivagant Menagerie.

Ghen Tayber, Menagerie Master: Male human Exp7/Druid3; AL CG; Bluff +12, Listen +6, Profession (showman) +13, Spot +9.

The Mist Children Elves

Gentleman Regori, disappointed that it is now unlikely that he gets to slaughter the animals of the menagerie, decides to make some good of the situation.

"Sir," the Bondsman called Regori says to his superior officer, "these sellswords seem rather interested in other people's business. Perhaps we could find them another employer... Like those elves that we picked up this morning?"

"Good idea," replies Fensentio. "Send for them."

While the party assists Ghen Tayber's crew in securing the animals for transport, the Bondsmen of Estival send for two elves that they took into custody earlier that morning.

If they have not already, this break in the action is a good time for the adventurers to introduce themselves to one another. Once they are finished, the Bondsmen should be returning with the Mist Children elves.

Asharath and **Illuviar** are two members of the Iron Wood's Mist Children tribe, the same tribe that Shannus originates from and that acted as his soldiers in the Noble War last year. Shannus has sent these two grey elves to Verbobonc City on a mission to recruit adventurers.

The elves are very much out of their element in the big city, and since they stuck out like sore thumbs, the Bondsmen picked them up for questioning almost as soon as they entered the city.

After a few minutes, an armed escort of Bondsmen arrive with the two elves in tow.

Coming up the street are four Bondsmen of Estival escorting two elves. The elves are dressed as woodsmen and look uncomfortably out of place in the city.

"Here you are, my dear emissaries: Adventurers!" Regori says with a mockingly grand gesture, "Now present your letter and get out of my town."

If there are any PCs in the party who fought against Shannus in VER7-05 *The Lion & the Dragon*, then Asharath and Illuviar recognize them immediately. They protest in elvish that they cannot present their missive to this (or these) adventurer(s).

Regori presses them for a good reason, asking mock-innocently "Why not? Did they fight your master during that little war he started? He's assured us that's all in the past. So that shouldn't matter, now. Right?"

The elves reluctantly offer their letter to the PCs. Give the players **Player Handout #3**.

The PCs are not under any obligation to accept Shannus's invitation, but since the Bondsmen have given the elves no choice but to hire the adventurers or to go home in failure, the elves do their best to impress upon the PCs the importance of hearing Shannus out.

Asharath and Illuviar do not speak fluent Common. They can make their points well-made in Elven, however, if any PCs speak that language. Unfortunately, they do not know the precise nature of Shannus's request, nor how much he plans to offer as compensation for undertaking the mission. They stress that Shannus just wants to be heard. If the PCs then decide that they are not interested, then they are free to refuse.

Treasure: PCs who accept Ghen Tayber's offer of caravan duty can earn the following treasure in this encounter:

APL 6: L: 0 gp; C: 300 gp per character; M: 0 gp.

APL 8: L: 0 gp; C: 400 gp per character; M: 0 gp.

APL 10: L: 0 gp; C: 500 gp per character; M: 0 gp.

APL 12: L: 0 gp; C: 600 gp per character; M: 0 gp.

Development: If the party accepts the summons from Shannus or agrees to escort Ghen Tayber westward along the Low Road, then they should be moving out of town. If any adventurers decline to take up either adventure hook, then for them, the adventure ends here.

Move on to Encounter Two.

Encounter Two: There Will Be Blood

In this encounter, the party passes the Verbobonc Quarry, where the inmates there have unearthed a forgotten chamber, revealing a pool of Oerthblood and the undead which have been trapped within.

On the road westward from Verbobonc, read the following:

Ghen Tayber passes the time by regaling the Mist Children elves with tales of the strange animals he has owned over the years. The two elves' reactions range from disinterest to confusion, and they seem relieved when he takes a break from his stories.

The sun drops down toward the Iron Wood, painting the sky a brilliant red. The trek along the River Road brings you near to the old Verbobonc Quarry, marked by a simple gate and a sign that declares "NO TRESPASSING" in half a dozen languages.

As the wagons pass the dirt road leading to the Quarry, the ringing of a heavy bell echoes across the landscape. It is followed by a throng of screaming voices.

The noise is coming from the Quarry, where some blasting has unearthed a secret chamber, releasing undead horrors on the work camp's prisoners.

The party is free to ignore the commotion if they are so inclined. If so, skip ahead to Encounter Four: The Fugitives.

If the adventurers are, however, worthy PCs, then they should be rushing toward the Quarry. The wooden gate is closed, but not locked, and only five feet high.

Ghen Tayber urges reluctant PCs into action if necessary. If they need no encouragement, he simply yells after them, "I'll just wait here until you get back, then!"

Coming into view of the Quarry itself, it is clear that the orderly worksite has broken into full pandemonium. A cloud of buzzing insects boils toward the terrified workers, droning ominously in a strangely deep pitch. The air is filled with the sickly sweet aroma of blood.

At APL 10, add the following: *Close behind the swarms is a rusty red amorphous blob the size of a small house. It lurches toward the fleeing men and women.*

At APL 12, add the following instead: *Close behind the swarms are three rusty red amoebas, each the size of a small house. They lurch toward the fleeing men and women.*

This side of the Quarry is relatively shallow, with two paths leading down to the pit floor about 40 feet below. See the map in Appendix Five.

The quarry workers are fleeing up the paths out of the worksite. Many are shackled together in groups of three and four, and thus must move as shapeable masses (like swarms) at a speed of 25 feet. The prisoners are largely out of the quarry pit by the time the party arrives and should be clear of the battlefield by the end of the second round.

A DC 10 Knowledge (local:VTF) check indicates that a PC is aware that the Quarry is primarily worked by felons who have been convicted of both Low and High Crimes in the Viscounty. With the recent dissolution of the Mounted Borderers, the Bondsmen of Estival have taken over the duty of overseeing them.

Creatures: The monsters attacking the Quarry were spawned by the growing power of the Oerthblood reservoir beneath the Viscounty and the fading power of a sealed and abandoned Vecnan shrine (for more on both, see Encounter Three, below). When the blood seeped into the shrine's chamber, and was kept in contact with the dark energies there for decades, the evil of the shrine became embodied as the undead horrors which have only now escaped.

They are mindless and have no other goal than slaking their thirst for blood.

APL 6 (EL 7)

Shadow bloodmote cloud: hp 65; see Appendix One.

APL 8 (EL 9)

Shadow bloodmote clouds (2): hp 65 each; see Appendix One.

APL 10 (EL 11)

Shadow bloodmote clouds (2): hp 65 each; see Appendix One.

Blood amniote: hp 65; see Appendix One.

APL 12 (EL 13)

Shadow bloodmote clouds (2): hp 65 each; see Appendix One.

Blood amniotes (3): hp 65 each; see Appendix One.

Tactics: At all APLs, the bloodmote clouds swarm over as many enemies as possible every round.

If present, the blood amniotes always attack the nearest living creature. If all other things are equal, they prefer calling blood from the same host until they cannot do so any longer.

All of the undead fight and feed until they are destroyed.

Any PC who is damaged by or deals melee damage to any of the creatures in this encounter is awarded the **Exposed to Oerthblood** entry on the AR.

Treasure: The bloody menaces have no treasure.

Development: When the battle is over, move directly on to Encounter Three.

Encounter Three: Questions at the Quarry

This encounter deals with the aftermath of the battle in Encounter Two. There are three main events that take place here: Speaking with the Quarry foreman, investigating the origin of the defeated monsters, and finding out about the escaped prisoners.

The Foreman

The first of these events happens as soon as the combat from Encounter Two is completed.

As the din of battle recedes, the cowering prisoners gather enough courage to risk a glimpse of the battlefield. Almost immediately, Bondsmen of the Viscount begin reorganizing them and making a head-count of the Quarry's workers.

A burly man with a huge smile full of perfect teeth comes rushing toward you, "Jumpin' jelly-cubes! Didja see them things?"

This is Foreman "Toothy" McGree, the man who oversees work in the Quarry. He has held this largely boring job for more than a year, and he is terribly impressed with

the adventurers' performance in battle. Toothy eagerly (and colorfully) recounts the events as if the PCs had not been there to witness it themselves. (*"It was all, 'BWAH!' and you were all, 'PWOOSH!'..."*)

He winds down when he runs out of breath, and is eager to find out from the adventurers what was going on. He is, in fact, probably as full of questions as the PCs are. (i.e. What was that thing? You ever fight anything like it before? Is that guy dead? Where did those things come from?)

Toothy actually has useful information; he is just too excited to stop for a moment and think about it. He is jovial and helpful.

The following are some possible questions that the adventurers might ask Toothy. He is just as likely to ask the PCs these same things. Some suggested answers for Toothy are below.

- Who are you? *Me? The name's Toothy McGree, Quarry Foreman at yer service. Who're you fellas, and what can I do ya for?*
- Has this ever happened before? *Not since I been here or that I ever heard of. You ever seen somethin' like that?*
- Where did these things come from? *Well, the screamin' all started o'er at the southern end of the site. I ain't no Gent of the Watch, but I'm thinkin' they must'a come from thataway. Why ya askin'? Ya think there might be some answers back there?*
- Can we investigate the western end of the Quarry? *Can you? Is the Cudgel's mustache white? Hells' heralds, yes! Here, I'll lead the way!*

If the party expresses an interest in investigating the source of the monsters, Toothy leads the party across the broken ground of the quarry. He chats them up on the way across the worksite, and answers (and asks) as many questions as the players would care to field.

Foreman "Toothy" McGree: Male human (Suel/Flan mixed heritage) Exp8; AL Neutral; Knowledge (architecture & engineering) +12, Profession (foreman) +2, Profession (information broker) +12.

The Shrine

Use this information when the party moves over to the western edge of the Quarry to investigate the source of the monsters from Encounter Two.

Dozens of hastily discarded miners' picks and hammers hint that the place where the blood-thirsty

monsters were first sighted must be nearby. A few of the many bodies are already being dealt with by the Viscount's bondsmen.

The bondsmen are dealing with their fallen comrades at the moment, largely ignoring the dead prisoners.

PCs who want to perform Heal checks on any of these bodies, find (with a DC 12 check) that they all appear to have been blood-drained by the undead swarms (and/or oozes). The fact that the prisoners are all held in leg-irons obviously made it difficult to escape from the undead. If one prisoner in a detail fell, all of them did. Some of the victims must have met particularly horrific ends, judging by the looks of terror on their faces.

Before the PCs can investigate much more, the bondsmen working here thank the party for helping, but ask that they move on with whatever business they have with Foreman McGree. They assure the party that they can take it from here.

Just ahead, beyond a large, disturbed boulder is some kind of worked chamber in the side of the Quarry wall.

Oozing out of the mostly-buried stone room is a slowly growing pool of a strange, red-black sludge.

If Toothy is with them, his boisterous attitude changes swiftly to wide-eyed, whispered awe, with: *"Now, what in the nine hells is that...?"*

Although the adventurers have never seen this substance ever before in their adventures, they are entitled to Knowledge checks to reveal what they might theorize about it.

Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (nature): DC 12: It could be some kind of tainted oleum, a usually black, tarry liquid most often found in deserts.

Knowledge (dungeoneering): DC 20: This is no ooze or pudding that you have ever heard of. It isn't 'alive.'

Knowledge (arcana) or bardic knowledge: Bardic knowledge checks gain a +5 to their check result, since most knowledge of this substance comes from myths and tales of adventure.

DC 20: This could be "Oerthblood," a substance only spoken of in legend. It is said to hold great power for those who know how to harness it.

DC 23: Oerthblood can be used in crafting arms and armor, binding the ephemeral power of luck to magic items.

DC 27: It is said that Oerthblood was used in the making of some of the most powerful artifacts ever created.

DC 30: There are only two places on Oerth where Oerthblood is even rumored to exist: Tenser's Fortress of Unknown Depths, and around something called "The Obelisk" beneath Castle Greyhawk, but it is said that even Zagyg never actually found it.

Properties of the Oerthblood

The Oerthblood does not detect as evil, good, lawful, or chaotic. It is oily and tacky to the touch. It smells and tastes like blood. It is not poisonous. *Detect magic* registers a strong aura of transmutation and universal magic.

Any character who touches the Oerthblood receives the **Exposed to Oerthblood** entry on the AR.

Only guards and arcane rituals lost to time can force the Oerthblood to retain its potency if it is removed from the Oerth. If PCs take a sample of the Oerthblood from this place (or from the lake of Oerthblood in Encounter Nine), its magic slowly fades over the next week as it turns into useless, brackish water.

The Chamber

The Oerthblood oozes from out of a chamber that was recently opened by blasting in the quarry. This chamber was once a shrine used by a cult of Vecna in the year 581. It was buried in an earthquake shortly after.

If a PC wants a better view of the chamber from which the undead emerged, read the following.

Behind the broken rocks and rubble is a worked stone room, about twenty-foot square. The back wall is a mass of collapsed rocks and boulders. At the room's center stands a broken piece of stone which was clearly once an altar.

See the map in Appendix Five.

There are no symbols or indications to reveal what god was worshipped here.

A DC 12 Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check reveals that the chamber used to be much larger, but the far end of the room has been buried in what appears to be an earthquake, probably decades ago. The room is in no danger of collapsing further.

This is the most that can be gleaned from looking into the room from the outside. In order to enter, one must either squeeze through the disturbed rocks here (Escape Artist DC 15 for medium-sized PCs), or move the large boulder that blocks the way (a DC 40 Strength check). The crack opens into the half of the room that is covered in an ankle-deep pool of Oerthblood. Moving the boulder

opens the other side of the chamber in such a way that the Oerthblood can be avoided.

The Oerthblood seeps in from cracks at the back of the chamber, coming up from out of the ground.

The altar's main stone is broken, with half of it lying in the pool of blood. The other half holds a secret compartment. This is revealed by a DC 15 Search check. It looks as though it may have been better hidden in the past, but the damage to the altar gives it away.

Within the altar's secret compartment are six vials of unholy water.

Treasure: All APLs: L: 0 gp; C: 0 gp; M: *unholy water* (x6), 2 gp per character each

A thorough exploration of this small chamber will reveal a secret compartment in the wall. It is on the side of the chamber dominated by the pool of blood. The Search DC for this secret panel is 25. The trap that once guarded it (a needle trap) has long since been sprung by the earthquake that buried this chamber decades ago.

Inside this compartment are the remains of a tattered book. A nail sticks out of the front cover, but if it once held anything there it has long since decomposed. The book has been ruined by time and the elements. Its pages have turned into a solid pulpy mass due to varying amounts of humidity, and any attempt to pick it up causes it to fall apart in a rotten mush. It cannot be read by magical or mundane means. It does not detect as magical.

A DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check indicates that the character realizes that this may have once been a *tome of the stilled tongue*, a relic of the faith of Vecna, the god of magic and secrets. Anyone who learns this may make a bardic knowledge or Knowledge (history) check to recall other ties between Vecna and the Verbobonc Quarry:

- **DC 18:** In 581 CY, a cult of Vecna staged an ambush against a party of adventurers in the Quarry, using vampiric mists in their attack.
- **DC 20:** The PCs were apprentices and allies of the Circle of Eight.
- **DC 25:** The cult was led by an avatar of the Whispered One who possessed both the Hand and the Eye of Vecna.
- **DC 30:** The avatar was a man called Halmadar.

The Prison Break

As the party wraps up their investigation of the shrine, the Estival Bondsmen conclude their head count of the prisoners and find that three have escaped. An alarm is sounded.

From across the uneven ground, a signal whistle pierces the air, and the bell in the high watch tower once again rings its alarm. "Master Elondur!" exclaims one of the Viscount's Bondsmen as he rushes up to his superior, "We're three short! They must have slipped away in the chaos."

Master Elondur is the Bondsman in charge of the Quarry. While Toothy McGree oversees the workers, the Quarry is truly Elondur's domain.

Master Elondur: Male human (Oeridian) Ftr8; AL LN; Listen +2, Sense Motive +5, Spot +2.

The Scion curses under his breath and orders the Bondsman to send two detachments on horseback to try to recapture the escaped prisoners. He sends them south and north, betting that the fugitives will avoid the road and the major cities, instead either heading for the Velderdyva River or for open country and the Kron Hills.

Some PCs may volunteer to help. Master Elondur courteously but firmly rejects these offers unless they are made by PCs who are themselves Bondsmen of Estival. The Viscount's men have this matter well in hand, and they do not need the help of adventurers to track down three unarmed escapees.

If a PC who is a Bondsman of Estival offers to help track down the fugitives, then their offer is accepted only if the other members of the party seem equally respectful of the law. If this is the case, then go to Encounter Four and adjudicate the Track checks required to find the fugitives.

Toothy McGree is ordered to organize the prisoners into a burial detail at the nearby cemetery. He bids the party another hearty thanks and a boisterous farewell.

Development: Having learned what little they can about the monsters' attack, the party has no other business here. The Bondsmen curtly thank the PCs for their help in defeating the monsters and encourage them to move on. Under no circumstances may they camp here; this is a prison camp. But Master Elondur suggests a place about a mile up the road. The Viscount's men warn the party to keep an eye out for the escaped prisoners on their journey.

Move on to Encounter Four.

Encounter Four: The Fugitives

Three convicted prisoners escaped from the Quarry during the attacks. They are a motley crew, who are bound together by a common disregard for the new Viscount's rule, by a determination to escape, and by a length of chain through their leg irons.

Contrary to Master Elondur's guess, the escapees have not fled north to the river or south to the Kron Hills. They are making their way west to Rhynehurst. It is the nearest city and under the strict eye of the Viscount's Bondsmen, so the fugitives hope that it will be the last place that the Bondsmen will expect them to go. In Rhynehurst, the trio is going to hole up in a Battirovka Family safe house and then slip out of the city in one of the merchant family's many smuggling vessels.

Tracking the prisoners

PCs with the Track feat who want to hunt down the escaped prisoners (either with or without the blessings of the Bondsmen overseeing the Quarry) may do so with a DC 11 Survival check. As long as the tracker is moving at a base speed greater than 15 feet (the trio's hampered speed), the PCs will be able to catch the fugitives.

When it becomes apparent that adventurers are chasing them down, the escapees surrender. They have no weapons and very little magic at their disposal, and their shackles force them to move collectively (and never moving more than 5 feet away from the next prisoner). They are not stupid, and realize that even an inexperienced group of adventurers could easily kill them all.

Once parley has begun, they will attempt to bargain for their freedom. See "The Arguments for Freedom" section below.

Finding the Fugitives by Happenstance

PCs who are not tracking the three escapees are nevertheless fated to encounter them on the road to Rhynehurst.

As the caravan heads west, about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the Quarry, call for Spot checks. Players who specifically say that they are keeping an eye out for the fugitives get a +5 to this check. A DC 15 catches sight of the trio in silhouette as they cross a small ridge about 100 feet off of the Low Road.

If the PCs spot them, they can act on this or not. If not, the prisoners certainly escape, but it will not be through any help of the party. The PCs do not get any of the following rewards on the AR: **Enmity of the Family**, **Shadowy Gratitude**, or **Lawful Respect**. Go on to Encounter Five.

If the PCs give chase, then the escapees surrender and attempt to parley as soon as it is apparent that they cannot outrun the adventurers.

The Fugitives and Their Crimes

Cyrus Jag is an Oeridian member of the Wanderers of Coldeven and secretly a Trithereonite. He was caught harboring other worshippers of the Summoner while they prepared to flee the Viscounty. To spare him from suffering the punishment of Sediton, his fellows told the authorities that they had held him against his will. While they were executed, Cyrus received the lesser sentence of Aiding and Abetting.

Kaylissa Whispersail is a Cousin in the Battirovka Family. She was caught smuggling weapons out of Verbobonc City to be distributed by the Company of the Black Rose. Her loyalties are to the Family, but like many in the thieves' guild, she believes in the Black Rose's cause fighting overwrought tyranny. She has lost a finger for her crimes and is serving time for the High Crime of Smuggling.

Tamatar Gundigoot is a cobbler who has recently become an armed drifter courtesy of the Black Rose. He witnessed an off-duty Bondsman of Estival making unwelcome advances on a serving girl in Larneystoe and intervened in an attempt to distract the Bondsman with some cantrip illusions. The Bondsman was not amused. Tamatar is now serving a sentence for Negligent Use of Magic.

Cyrus of the Summoner, Wanderer of Coldeven: Male human (Oeridian) Ftr2/Rog2; Chaotic Good; Hide +2, Listen +0, Move Silently +2, Spot +0.

Cousin Kaylissa Whispersail: Female human (Rhennee) Rog6; Neutral; Bluff +12, Hide +11, Listen +9, Move Silently +11, Spot +9.

Tamatar Gundigoot, armed drifter: Male gnome Exp3, Neutral Good; Hide +7, Listen +2, Move Silently +3, Spot +2.

The Arguments for Freedom

The trio of prisoners is in a tight spot and they know it, and appeal to any and all values that they think might sway the party. They promise whatever is necessary in order to secure their release.

The prisoners know that if they are returned to the Quarry, they are going to be executed. A DC 10 Knowledge (local: VTF) check confirms this.

Cyrus claims innocence, being a victim of circumstance. The Trithereonites who invaded his home were not his allies. He has been victimized twice: first by the terrorists, and then by the court system of a tyrant!

He appeals to fighter types, elves, rangers, clerics, and any members of the Wanders of Coldeven.

If Cyrus finds out (or suspects) that one of the adventurers is also a Trithereonite, he will pressure them with innuendo, appealing to their sense of religious freedom. He will also use this argument with any cleric in the party, on purely hypothetical terms (i.e. "This was not the case, I assure you, but if it were your religion that had been persecuted, would you not help your brothers?") Additionally, in all truth, neither he nor his friends had anything to do with the Trithereonites implicated in the Night of the Red Investiture.

Kaylissa maintains that her 'crime' was a big misunderstanding – the ship's ledgers were in error. She was never granted a fair trial, instead being summarily sentenced without anyone listening to her defense. She has been maimed (having lost a finger) over it already. Isn't that enough?

She appeals to any rogues, bards, and swashbuckler types and any members of the Battirovka Family.

Kaylissa claims to have powerful friends, including a brother-in-law in the Battirovka merchant family who will richly reward the PCs if they aid the trio in their escape. As soon as she safely escapes Rhynehurst, she will see to it that the party is rewarded tenfold in the aid that they give to her and her allies.

Tamatar does not think that what he did was a crime. He was defending the honor of a young lady. In what mad, mad world is that something that should get a gnome a prison sentence?

He appeals to artisans, men of knowledge, and any members of the Company of the Black Rose. He also attempts to persuade gnomes, halflings, and dwarves, might see more eye to eye with him.

He has a wife and children back in Larneystoe, and without him working, they will be evicted. If he is returned to the Quarry, he'll surely be executed. Have mercy!

In all cases, and with each of the prisoners, they appeal to the party's sense of what is right... perhaps not by the Law, but what is Right in their hearts. They press this point especially hard with any Bondsmen of Estival who may be in the party, asking nothing more from them but that they turn a blind eye and pretend that they never ran into one another.

If the party asks Ghen Tayber for his opinion about what to do with the fugitives, his honest advice is to let them go free, although he keeps his advice to himself if the party is clearly made up of lawful PCs. The elves Asharath and Illuvitar, if consulted, have no opinion one way or the other.

Development: Refer below for the ramifications of the party's decision.

Releasing the Fugitives

Ultimately, the fugitives want to be freed. If the party seems helpful, they also ask for supplies to aid them along their way. Weapons, rations, clean or mended clothes, lock picks, or even cold hard coin would be welcomed. They are extremely grateful to be released in any account. If the party enables their escape, the PCs are awarded the **Shadowy Gratitude** reward on the AR. They do not receive the **Enmity of the Family**.

Recapturing the Fugitives

If the party is adamant about returning the fugitives to the Quarry, the prisoners are powerless to stop them.

If they are all brought back alive, Master Elondur expresses his gratitude to the party for helping them to maintain order once again, and tells them that the next time he is rotated out to Rhynehurst, he will put their names in for commendations.

Elondur then orders his men to execute the trio and post their heads on pikes at the Quarry gate. If challenged by the party on this, he cites the fact that the fugitives released the monsters, murdering dozens of people to create a distraction to cover their escape. He does not debate the point. The PCs receive both the **Lawful Respect** and the **Enmity of the Family** awards on the AR.

Parties that have at least one member of the Bondsmen of Estival in them receive the same result even if any of the prisoners were killed in recapturing them. The Scion of Estival assumes that fellow Bondsmen would only kill the prisoners if the fugitives left them no choice.

If any of the prisoners are brought back dead by any party that *lacks* a Bondsman of Estival PC, then Elondur browbeats the adventurers as vigilantes and threatens to have the entire party arrested for murder. He does not follow through on this threat, however. Instead, he subjects everyone in the party to a "routine" (but thorough) search for illegal goods (see the sidebar in Appendix Four), confiscating all contraband. Elondur then tells the PCs to get out of his sight before he changes his mind about letting them off easy. In this case, the PCs get the **Enmity of the Family**, but not the **Lawful Respect** entry on the AR.

Regardless of whether the adventurers choose to return the fugitives to the Quarry, help to release them from their bonds, simply turn a blind eye to them, or kill them all, Ghen Tayber still needs to get out of the Viscounty, and Shannus is still awaiting the PCs.

The party should make camp a mile or so west of the Quarry and reach the City of Rhynehurst about four hours after sunrise the next day. Go on to Encounter Five.

Encounter Five: New Order in Rhynehurst

In this encounter, the party passes through Rhynehurst. Nothing of great importance happens here, but it is an opportunity to restock any supplies that they spent in the battle at the Quarry or gather information in town as they go. Alternatively, they can simply continue on without stopping.

As the caravan passes through the trading city of Rhynehurst, several patrols of the Viscount's Bondsmen walk the streets. The people of this city seem far less pleased about the law enforcers' presence than the citizens of Verbobonc City were.

A DC 8 Knowledge (local:VTF) check indicates that the PC is aware of Rhynehurst's long-held reputation as a more lawless town than Verbobonc City.

If PCs would like to gather information as they pass through Rhynehurst, they may do so, but the information that they can learn is limited. The Bondsmen of Estival in this city have already received word (via Jensen's Runners couriers) that Ghen Tayber should be moving through, and they forbid him from spending more than an hour in town, only to restock supplies. He is expressly forbidden from conducting a performance.

Gather Information results are listed on the Rhynehurst chart in Appendix 3: Legwork.

Any equipment to which the PCs have Open Access to can be purchased in Rhynehurst. Anything that is considered Illegal Goods by the Laws of the Viscounty, however, is not available. With so little time to re-supply, the PCs simply cannot track down a black market merchant before the caravan must move out. The exceptions to this are PCs who belong to either the Black Rose Company or the Battirovka Family. Members of these metaorganizations are able to find the appropriate contacts to purchase illegal goods (to which they have campaign access) with relative ease.

If the PCs are still injured from their battle in the Quarry, the casting of up to 4th level divine spells is available in town from the Church of Zilchus. After the Bondsmen burned down the Trithereonite temple, it is the only faith set up to deliver services at this time. Spell casting costs are listed in the *Player's Handbook*.

Much to the Rhynehurst commoners' dismay, Ghen Tayber's Mundivagant Menagerie must move on. As soon as the PCs have taken care of any business they wish to conduct, continue to the town of Glory in Encounter Six.

Encounter Six: Faded Glory

This encounter deals with the party's arrival in the town of Glory. Ghen Tayber releases the PCs from their escort duties, and they speak with Shannus, who, with the help of Breyin the Moonlord, attempts to explain his actions of the last year. The unlikely allies attempt to enlist the party's aid in hunting down and defeating the Great Dire Dark once and for all.

Glory. *The logging town of the Iron Wood has seen a great deal of adventure over the last six years. One thing that has never changed is the Fallen Timber Tavern, the large establishment at the center of the walled community. But today, the four iron cages, which have hung in front of it for so many years, are gone, no doubt removed when Shannus was deposed as Baron of the Iron Wood.*

In front of the tavern stands Shannus's gigantic, black dire horse Mountain, indicating that his master is likely within.

Ghen Tayber thanks the PCs for the escort this far, but assures them that he has other friends here in Glory who can take him out of the Viscounty. He and his crew wish the party good luck and a fond farewell.

The two wood elves Asharath and Illuvitar are glad to be rid of the menagerie. They lead the adventurers into the Fallen Timber Tavern.

Inside the tavern, the once-great Shannus sits in a mockery of royal court. His large chair rests at the end of the room and he has surrounded himself with all manner of draconic creatures who are still loyal to him.

The room is filled with representatives of reptilian races (dragonkin, kobolds, lizardfolk, poison dusk lizardfolk, black scale lizardfolk) and wood elves of the Mist Children tribe.

At Shannus's right side stands a large draconic man covered in gold scales, bearing a greatpick and the holy crest of Bahamut, god of good dragons.

Any PCs who played VER7-02 *Storm the Dragon's Bastion*, VER7-03 *Mourning Glory*, or VER7-05 *The Lion and the Dragon*, or who adventured with him in the past recognize this person as Sir Quinsaron Eldren, now infamously known as the Butcher of Humming's End.

To Shannus's left proudly stands a six-foot tall warrior with the head of a dog. His canine face wears a passive, but stern expression.

PCs that make a DC 16 Knowledge (the planes) check can identify this creature as a hound archon. PCs who played VER3-03 *Glory Dimmed* or VER4-03 *Glory's Warriors* have met this creature before: It is Breyin, the Moonlord, once Shannus's sworn enemy.

Looking up, Shannus notices your entrance. A hush falls over the crowd and an air of anticipation fills the room.

Creatures: Shannus is the proud Mayor of Glory, a fully apotheosized Brass Dragon Disciple and unwavering in his belief of the Great Dire Dark's return. He has little patience for adventurers, who have recently plagued him with their meddling: invading his lands to help activate the skyroad pylon for Lord Galans against his wishes, rescuing the Mounted Borderers who he had in custody, and taking arms against him in the Battle of Validia, ultimately leading to his defeat there. Most recently, it was a party of adventurers who read him the proclamation that he was being deposed as Lord of the Iron Wood, so his animosity is justified.

With his patience spent, the only thing that keeps his anger with "PCs" in check is the prophecy he has been given that says (in his interpretation) that adventurers are the key to defeating the Great Dire Dark. Only Sir Quin has convinced him to put his differences with them aside to pursue the greater good of defeating their old enemy.

Breyin, the Moonlord of the Iron Wood, is a hound archon who once fought with Shannus in a war engineered by the Great Dire Dark, their common enemy. Having alienated almost every other potential ally, Shannus has summoned Breyin to help defeat the Great Dire Dark one and for all. Breyin has a much more level head than Shannus and seeks to destroy the Great Dire Dark because of the threat its evil presents. He lives by the axiom, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." Breyin has seen Shannus's prophesy and believes that it must be investigated.

Sir Quinsaron Eldren, Lord Shannus's first lieutenant, is a fully realized Gold Dragon Disciple and a Pious Templar of Bahamut. Many adventurers have ill will toward him due to false rumors which say he was responsible for the Brewfest Massacre at Humming's End in 596, and because he fought against House Avgustin at the Battle of Validia, in which his actions led to Field Marshal Yronl's death. Sir Quin stands silent for most of this scenario, but interjects if his voice of reason is needed.

Shannus: Large male grey elf Sor 8/Dragon Disciple (brass) 10; AL CG; Diplomacy +5, Listen +6, Sense Motive +0, Spot +8.

Breyin the Moonlord: Male hound archon Pal 4/Ftr 4; AL LG; Listen +11, Sense Motive +9, Spot +11.

Sir Quinsaron Eldren: Large male human (Oeridian) Sor1/Ftr 1/Pal 3/Gold Dragon Disciple (gold) 10/Pious Templar 2; AL LG; Bluff: +13, Diplomacy +27, Listen +2, Sense Motive +2, Spot +2.

If the adventurers were a distasteful choice for the elves in Encounter One, then Shannus has a similar reaction to the PCs. The elves Asharath and Illuvitar attempt to explain their actions that they would have preferred to find people more sympathetic to Shannus's cause. But Sir Quin cuts them off, calmly telling Shannus, "*M'lord, remember the prophecy.*" This settles Shannus and allows him to get down to business.

Shannus rises, welcomes the adventurers to Glory, and introduces Sir Quinsaron and Breyin. He asks for introductions from the PCs and then spares no time in cutting to the gist of his summons. The important pieces of information that he needs to get across are bulleted below.

- Shannus has called the adventurers here because he fears that the Great Dire Dark has returned. Shannus produces a parchment from his vest and shows it to the adventurers. Show **Player Handout #4** to the players.
- The prophecy speaks of darkness returning to the land, of few who will believe it, and that adventurers will bear the best chance of defeating it.
- It is this last point that has led him to enlist the party's aid. He says that they must put their differences behind them – as he and Breyin have – in order to bring this great evil to its final end. (Although he does not mention it, Shannus has alienated every other noble who might be able to help him, so at this point adventurers are the only people who might be willing to help prove his righteousness.)
- Shannus calls attention to the prophecy's use of the words "Darkness is unbound." This phrase was the answer to a puzzle door that guarded the Great Dire Dark's vile sanctum back in 593. (Adventurers in VER3-03 *Glory Dimmed* solved this puzzle.)
- Although the Great Dire Dark's location is still clouded from his followers' divinations, by asking oblique questions they have finally determined that a place in the southern part of the Iron Wood not far

from Validia is shielded from divination magic. The Great Dire Dark must be hiding there.

- Breyin will accompany the party as a guide and to insure their success in defeating the evil creature. Shannus would go with them, but the Knights of Luna have confined him to Glory.
- The Great Dire Dark's only known weakness is cold iron. If the adventurers do not own cold iron weapons, he recommends that they purchase some before embarking. One of Shannus's ex-lovers has a forge in town where they can be outfitted.

PCs may have questions. Shannus will entertain them, though he stresses that with every moment the Great Dire Dark is growing stronger. Some possible questions are below.

- What is the Great Dire Dark? The Great Dire Dark is an ancient evil entity, part undead, part fey, part demon. It dwelt beneath the Iron Wood for millennia, imprisoned here by the Moonlord.
- What's in it for us? Shannus is willing to pay the adventurers a handsome fee for undertaking this quest in his name. As a show of good faith, he will even pay them up front.
- Where did the prophecy come from? It was given to Shannus by a very trustworthy source: elven emissaries from the Gnarley Wood, led by one named Rygor who seemed to have his priorities well in-line. PCs who played VER6-04 *Sign of the Black Orchid* recall Rygor as the brutish and self-righteous elven bodyguard to the Celene emissary Eraisothon.
- What will we be up against? When it last arose, the Great Dire Dark had many demonic minions. Like the Great Dire Dark, demons are vulnerable to cold iron weapons.
- Can we take Sir Quin with us? Breyin will be accompanying the party, and that should be enough. Sir Quinsaron will not leave his liege's side.

The adventurers may have questions for Shannus based on events in previous adventures. Some are answered below.

- Why did you close the Iron Wood and invade Validia (in VER7-03 *Mourning Glory*)? *The Great Dire Dark thrives on fear and conflict. The more people it has to feed off of, the more powerful it becomes. I had to close the Iron Wood and send the fearful followers of Chondell out of these lands, lest the Great Dire Dark resurge even faster. For this same reason, I chose to take on the Great Dire Dark*

alone. The nobles of Verbobonc do not share my singular purpose.

- What happened to Field Marshal Yronl's body (in VER7-05 *The Lion & the Dragon*)? I don't know. I presume that the Lizardfolk barbarians consumed his remains.
- Why did you send a kobold assassin after Sir Peri Swan (in VER7-05 *The Lion & the Dragon*)? You insult me. I've never employed assassins, and take great offense at the mere suggestion that I would stoop to Yronl's level. Shannus has no knowledge of the attack on Sir Peri.
- Wait – what?? Your high and mighty Field Marshal Yronl sent an assassin to kill my lieutenant, Quinsaron Eldren, not three days before the Battle of Validia.

If asked, Sir Quin will elaborate on how a kobold assassin who had infiltrated their ranks attacked him. Were it not for the dragon knight's sister Ehlora (his cohort, a cleric of Bahamut), he would be dead right now. The kobold was dressed all in black and wielded a spiked chain. Although thwarted, the would-be killer escaped. It was this assassination attempt on Yronl's part that solidified Shannus's resolve to show no mercy to the attacking Avgustin forces.
- What were in the messages we escorted between you and Lord Galans (in VER7-07 *Bitter Pill*)? I made an offer of peace and co-operation with him. He accepted, though that treaty is obviously void now that he got himself killed.

Once the PCs feel fully briefed, Shannus asks them all to take an oath:

"Give me your word that you will seek out the Great Dire Dark wherever it lurks, that you will destroy it, and then return to Glory to report to me everything that you have seen."

Once Shannus is satisfied in this, the mayor of Glory sends the party off.

"Go, and may the Platinum Dragon protect you. For all of our sakes."

Treasure: As a testament of his good faith in the PCs, Shannus pays them for their service in advance.

APL 2: L: 0 gp; C: 500 gp per character; M: 0 gp.
APL 4: L: 0 gp; C: 1000 gp per character; M: 0 gp.
APL 6: L: 0 gp; C: 2000 gp per character; M: 0 gp.
APL 8: L: 0 gp; C: 3000 gp per character; M: 0 gp.

Development: Once the PCs agree to investigate the place where Shannus suspects the Great Dire Dark to be lurking, allow them to make preparations in town if they like. Shannus and Breyin want the expedition to depart as soon as possible. When the PCs are ready, go on to Encounter Seven.

Encounter Seven: Into the Woods

During the journey to the southern Iron Wood, Breyin confides in the PCs his doubts about what Shannus believes, but he urges them to continue on with the mission in spite of this.

The PCs should leave any horses they possess behind in Glory. Their trek is through dense brush off of any beaten path. If they insist on bringing their mounts, it is possible, though their journey takes twice as long.

Breyin leads you south, through the thick forest of the Iron Wood. Rather than trudging along with you, he teleports ahead by short hops and then waits for you to catch up. He seems focused on an unknown prey, sniffing the air and making adjustments in direction from time to time.

When the daylight fades, the Moonlord suggests making camp.

Allow the PCs a chance to declare any particular actions that they would like to take while setting up camp. At the campfire, Breyin decides to speak to the PCs about his growing misgivings.

Although his face is difficult to read, Breyin looks more grim than usual. He throws another log on the fire and speaks. "I am no longer sure that we are tracking the Great Dire Dark."

This is likely to elicit a response from the adventurers. If not, continue below. Otherwise, allow Breyin's concerns to be revealed in the course of a dialogue with the player PCs. Allow the PCs to lead the conversation, and paraphrase when necessary.

- I respect Shannus, and his enthusiasm to eradicate evil is commendable.
- But he is desperate to justify his actions over the last year. Once he received the prophesy, he closed the Iron Wood and stormed Validia. That led to the counter attack by Houses Chondell, Stefania and Avgustin, which led to the death of Regent Yronl and the weakening of every noble in the western half of Verbobonc. This opened an opportunity for House

Langmuir in the east, and after they attempted to invade Swan, the Mounted Borderers were brought out of the Gnarley to restore order amongst the nobles... Great chaos has been spread across the whole of the Viscounty. And everything hinges on his conviction that the Great Dire Dark has returned. I believed in his conviction, but...

- I was the warden of the Great Dire Dark's Iron Wood prison for millennia. If it had returned, I should think I would have felt it by now.
- For the last four hours, I have been tracking something different – something strange and mercurial. Just as I think I've got its scent, it seems to change. If it is the Great Dire Dark, it is very different than it was before.
- There is an ancient power growing somewhere in these woods. I do not know if it bodes well or ill for these lands. But I, for one, would not let it go on without getting some answers.

Although he is almost certain that it is not the Great Dire Dark, Breyin asks the party to continue accompanying him to investigate this new, growing power. It could be a danger to the Viscounty, or it could mean salvation. But the only way to find out is to hunt it down.

If there is an overly brash or contemptuous character in the party who openly scoffs at Shannus and his ideals, or who seems excessively confident to the point of sinful pride, Breyin singles that character (or PCs) out to offer some advice. This might also be in response to anyone who openly defied Shannus earlier in Glory. ***"You would do well to curb your contempt. One day your mouth may start a fight that your sword cannot win."*** Note that this is not a threat, simply words of wisdom from the archon.

Once all of the pertinent information has been disseminated and the party has agreed to continue on with the mission, Breyin tells them to rest while he departs for the evening. He will spend the night running through the woods with his old allies, the good lycanthropes of the Iron Wood.

A wolf howls out in the darkness, catching Breyin's attention. He moves to the edge of the campsite and says over his shoulder, "Rest well. I'm going to visit some old friends." With that, the Moonlord departs.

Ask PCs if they are setting up watches for the evening. From time to time during the night, people on watch hear the howl of wolves or spot a flash of movement in the dark undergrowth. These are lycanthropes, sent here by Breyin to watch over the party and protect them from

the other dangers of the Iron Wood. Nothing of serious consequence happens for the rest of the night.

Breyin returns near dawn, although he looks a bit more ragged. He is in excellent spirits and is eager to continue the hunt. Once the party is ready to move out, continue on with Encounter Eight.

Encounter Eight: Descent into the Depths of the Iron Wood

This encounter encompasses the adventurers' trek into and through the Oerthblood dungeon of Hermann M. For ease of play, it is broken into its component parts below.

Appendix Five includes tactical maps for all combat encounters.

Divinations

Some wary parties may seek divine aid before undertaking the task before them. The following is a guideline to adjudicating these spells:

- ***Augury.*** Note that augury can only see about a half an hour into the future. Adjudicate for the suggested course of action to the best of your ability. Many actions will yield weal and woe.
- ***Discern location*** (for The Great Dire Dark): The Great Dire Dark does not exist on this plane or any other.
- ***Divination.*** If a cryptic response regarding the dungeon (or its inhabitants) is needed, three suggested answers are offered below, or the DM may create her own response.

"Winter, spring, summer, fall,
the guardians are natural.
They are not evil, they are not good,
these denizens of Iron Wood."

"A dire threat does play a part,
but darkness lies not in its heart.
Balanced power may bring dread
where naught a soul is meant to tread."

"Stem, trunk, branch, and leafy hand
obey their master's last command.
Bellows, brazier, pot, and ewer:
Beware the ire of the brewer."

- ***Locate creature*** (for The Great Dire Dark): The Great Dire Dark is not within range of this spell, no matter where it is cast.

General Dungeon Traits

Except where otherwise noted, the Oerthblood Dungeon is made up of natural stone formations and caverns. Many of these tunnels are tangled with roots, vines, and subterranean plants, but not so much as to hamper movement.

The Oath to Canoness Y'dey

PCs who pledged an Oath to Canoness Y'dey in VER7-01 *Cleanse Thy House* have sworn to protect the land of Verbobonc.

The dungeon is almost entirely populated with living plants, whose connection to the land is strong. The power that has blessed oathbound PCs also marks them as allies of the plant creatures in the dungeon.

As a result, PCs with the Oath to Canoness Y'dey are under a continual *hide from plants* effect while in the dungeon. This works like the *hide from animals* spell, except that it makes the oathsworn character undetectable to creatures with the Plant type. Also, if a character breaks the effect (by attacking a particular plant), it is only broken in relation to the plant that was attacked. Other plants are still unaware of the adventurer.

The PC is not inherently aware of this effect, but may realize what is happening through events experienced in the dungeon.

8A. The Obsidian Obelisk

After three more hours of traveling through the Iron Wood, Breyin stops and sniffs the air. "This way," he says, "We're close."

He changes direction and presses forward, emerging on the edge of a secluded clearing within a depression in the woods. At its center stands a great black stone.

The Clearing

The circular clearing is roughly forty feet across and sinks about 20 feet down from the surrounding forest.

Anyone searching the general area of the clearing is entitled to a DC 15 Knowledge (nature) check to note that it is ringed by many different types of trees that are not normally found in the Iron Wood. All of them are very old, with hefty, thick trunks and strong roots.

The Standing Stone

The Obsidian Obelisk is about five feet wide on each of its four rough sides, and it stands about 20 feet tall, though because of the depression in the landscape, its top does not rise above the surrounding land.

A DC 15 Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (nature) check reveals that obsidian is not a stone that is native to the Iron Wood.

Each side of the stone bears a different, crudely carved symbol. They are: a unicorn stick figure, a leaf, a fat woman, and a skull. Each of these can be identified with a DC 10 Knowledge (religion) check as crude representations of: Ehlonna's unicorn, standing for the Flan goddess of woodlands; Obad-Hai's leafy mask, the Flan god of beasts; Beori's rotund woman figurine, the Flan goddess of the Oerth; and Nerull's skull and scythe, representing the Flan god of death and darkness.

A DC 18 Knowledge (religion) check allows a PC to correctly identify that these four gods (along with Pelor, who is not represented here) are those revered by Flan worshipers of the Old Faith. They represent the four seasons of spring, summer, fall, and winter, respectively. Pelor the Sun Father sits at the center of this cycle in the Flan culture. In other Human cultures, the Old Faith is represented by other quintets of gods and goddesses.

The Entrance

Careful searching of the area around the obsidian stone reveals (with a DC 20 Search check) that beneath the thick undergrowth at the base of the skull symbol side of the stone, there is a concealed trap door in the ground.

The door has not been used in decades, and is warped shut. If it is searched, it does not appear to be locked or trapped. A weather-worn message is inscribed on it in odd letters.

The words are written in Druidic, which uses its own letters, known only to PCs with levels in druid. It reads: ***"Protectors of the Iron Wood: Do not pass. The Winter King awaits."***

Druids reading this realize that the use of the phrase 'Protectors of the Iron Wood' is not a reference to the organization headed by Shannus, but a general address to people who are custodians or defenders of the natural surroundings here. They also automatically know that the Winter King is another name for Nerull.

A *comprehend languages* spell reveals the text of the message, but not the nuances of word choice that druid readers understand. A DC 12 Knowledge (religion) check identifies the Winter King as Nerull the Reaper, Flan god of Death.

A DC 20 Decipher Script check reveals the general content of the message as a warning, essentially saying "Do not enter." A DC 25 on the check also deciphers the latter half of the writing as something akin to "You will find death."

Stuck Wooden Trap Door: 2 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 10; Break or burst DC 23.

When the PCs are ready, Breyin offers to help open the stuck door.

Trap: On the floor of the room beneath the trap door, impossible to detect from outside by normal trap-searching methods, is a *greater glyph of warding*. It is keyed to trigger in the presence of any undead or outsider. Breyin, a hound archon, qualifies. The *glyph* stores a *dismissal* spell, which targets Breyin as soon as the door is opened, when it gains line of effect to him.

If Breyin makes his save and is not *banished*, place an identical trap on the far side of the crevasse in Encounter 8B. If Breyin continually makes his saves, place identical glyphs in every encounter of the dungeon until he fails. By the end of the maze in Encounter 8D, he should be gone. This adventure is for the PCs, not for Breyin.

All APLs (EL 0)

Banishment trap: magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); no reset; targets one or more outsiders or undead, up to 40 HD, no two of which are more than 30 feet apart; spell effect (*banishment*, 20th-level wizard, Will save DC 20 negates); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31.

Note: Since the trap is in the room beyond the trap door, it is impossible to detect the trap or disable it from outside the dungeon. Also, since this trap will only normally affect Breyin and none of the PCs, it does not have an Encounter Level.

As the trap door is opened, a burst of purple light flashes from the room beneath the trap door, and a piercing shriek blares from the darkness within, echoing out of the cavern into the Iron Wood.

Breyin is immediately targeted by the *banishment* spell and vanishes if he fails his Will save (DC 20). Breyin's Will save is +6.

PCs may attempt a DC 26 Spellcraft check to identify the *greater glyph of warding*. A second DC 26 check identifies the *banishment* effect that was tied to it.

The room immediately beneath the trap door is a rough, unworked chamber about thirty feet across. The trap door in the ceiling is only ten feet from the floor. There is a single exit from the chamber, leading deeper underground.

The piercing wail comes from a nest of shrieker fungi that Hermann M has cultivated here amongst other subterranean mushrooms. Due to the shape of the depression of the clearing, the sound is funneled out into the Iron Wood. About a mile away, Hermann M hears

the alert and begins his preparations to defend the Oerthblood at the heart of his dungeon. He *tree strides* to the lake about fifteen minutes after the shriekers go off. See Encounter Nine for more details.

Shriekers (8): hp 11; see *Monster Manual* page 112.

Shriekers normally have a CR of 1, since they give nearby monsters an advantage in combat. There are no nearby monsters here. These shriekers are a story device, used to draw Hermann M to the dungeon for the final encounter. As such, their CR is not included in the adventure's EL calculations.

Development: Once the PCs have silenced the shriekers (or waited for them to calm down), they are free to continue into the depths below. Go on to Encounter 8B.

Breyin, having been transported back to the Seven Mounting Heavens of Celestia, cannot return to the Material Plane without aid. He contacts Shannus, and the people of Glory prepare to summon him again, but they cannot complete the ritual until the next day. At that point, Breyin tells Shannus that he no longer believes the Great Dire Dark has returned. After a heated argument, Shannus decides the PCs should be able to find proof one way or the other at the site that Breyin led them to. They decide to await the party's return.

If the PCs decide to heed the warning on the trap door, then they have to return to Shannus in failure. In this case, the party never meets Hermann M, and the secret of the Oerthblood below remains safe. They do not gain any of the following items on the AR: **Favor of the Brewer**, **Favor of Shannus**, **Favor of the Moonlord**, **Wrath of the Iron Wood**, or **Secret**. Assuming that they return to Glory, adapt Conclusion B to fit their circumstances. Breyin is greatly displeased if they turn back this early.

8B. The Crevasse

About 300 feet down the twisting and descending passage, the party comes to a great natural crevasse. The party is about 100 feet beneath the surface here.

The passage leads straight into open air, ending in the face of a great subterranean cliff. Yawning before you is a deep crevasse that extends down beyond the limits of vision. On the other side of the abyss, the tunnel appears to continue on, but there is no bridge spanning the thirty-foot distance.

The crevasse is thirty feet wide at the point where the tunnel crosses it. The gorge extends down to a jagged floor 90 feet below. Above, the gap between the two sides comes together approximately thirty feet above the party's location. To the left and right, the crevasse extends

100 feet, slowly tapering to an impassable crack on either side.

The adventurers can use any number of methods to get across. Allow the players to be imaginative, and err on the side of the adventurers.

The walls are all rough, natural rock faces (Climb DC 25). There are secure rocks which can be used to firmly fix grappling hooks to at just about any location that the PCs desire.

PCs that fall are allowed to make a DC 15 Reflex save to grab on to any available handhold. If they are near to either side of the crevasse, then they will only fall 30 feet before hitting the narrowing rock face, getting a second Reflex save (DC 25) to stop their descent. Falling damage is 6d6 within 10 feet of both sides, and 9d6 at the center of the gap. In either case, PCs who fall wind up in the center of the gorge, 90 feet below the tunnel openings.

Once the PCs have crossed this hurdle, go on to Encounter 8C.

8C. The Doors of Ill Omen

After traveling along a twisting tunnel for an hour, the party comes to a large set of double doors.

Blocking the way forward is a large set of iron-bound wooden double doors. Inlaid upon them is the symbol of a grinning skull and a portentous warning written in Common: "Naught but Death lies beyond these doors. Turn back now, or prepare to face the Reaper."

These doors are made of darkwood and are locked, but not trapped. Alternatively, the five-inch thick doors can be broken down.

Darkwood Doors: 5 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 50; Break DC 23; Open Locks DC 30.

Note that the dire warning on the doors is a complete fabrication. No great threat lies on the opposite side of the door.

The warning is here to fool adventurers into using up potions and spells to prepare for a battle which will not happen. Many effects' durations expire while the party is lost in the maze that lies on the other side of the doors.

Once the party has opened (or destroyed) the doors, read the following aloud:

Beyond the doorway, the natural tunnel continues on into darkness.

Continue on to Encounter 8D.

8D. The Labyrinth of Eyes

This portion of the dungeon is a complex maze, designed to waste adventurers' time and cause some of their magical preparations to expire.

All walls and corridors in the labyrinth are of the same non-descript quality, though they vary in width from five to fifteen feet. The tunnels are natural formations. Search and Survival checks reveal no tracks or signs of passage.

When the party presses on after opening the Doors of Ill Omen, roll a d20 and consult the following chart for each path the party chooses:

- 1-2:** The passage forks to the left and right.
- 3:** The tunnel declines and turns to the left.
- 4:** The tunnel declines and turns to the right.
- 5-7:** The corridor comes to a four-way intersection.
- 8:** The passage inclines sharply and turns left.
- 9:** The passage inclines sharply and turns right.
- 10-11:** A side tunnel branches away to the left.
- 12-13:** A side tunnel branches away to the right.
- 14-15:** Two side tunnels branch off to the left.
- 16-17:** Two side tunnels branch off to the right.
- 18:** The tunnel twists and turns for 100 feet.
- 19:** The path circles back onto itself. (Do not use this result if it closes off the only remaining route.)
- 20:** The path leads to a dead end. (Do not use this result if it closes off the only remaining route.)

Continue to roll random portions of the maze until it becomes evident to the players that their PCs are in the midst of a labyrinth. They can decide to solve the maze in a number of ways.

Wandering Around

This is the least effective solution, and takes the longest amount of time. The PCs wander the dungeon for 2d6+3 hours before they stumble upon the exit. They inevitably run into one of the labyrinth's gas spores (see below).

Magic

The spell *find the path* solves the maze handily, leading the party in the most direct course to the exit. Assuming a base move of 30, it takes about 90 minutes for a party to get through the labyrinth (or two hours at a base move of 20). They do not encounter any of the gas spores in this case. Other spells may assist in a similar fashion.

Sleeping On It

If the party attempts to rest in the maze, then about every four hours a gas spore (see below) drifts into their campsite. This is no place to rest. Spells like *rope trick* or *Leomund's tiny hut* may help the party avoid these

disturbances. PCs do not gain additional experience by fighting extra monsters.

Brain Power

The adventurers can use their collective intellect and skills to get through the maze by making a straight Intelligence check, a Survival check, or a Knowledge (dungeoneering) check. One player, the leader, determined before the dice are rolled, makes a check of his choice. The other players can assist him by making a DC 10 check with any of the three skills above. Each player may only roll one check.

Once the leader's modified check is totaled, compare the result to the chart below. The highest DC that it achieves determines how long it takes the party to successfully navigate the labyrinth.

DC less than 5:	2d6+2 hours
DC 5:	2d6+1 hours
DC 10:	2d4+1 hours
DC 15:	2d3+1 hours
DC 20:	2d3 hours
DC 25:	1d3+1 hours
DC 30:	1d3 hours (minimum 1.5 hours)
DC 35:	1d3-1 hours (minimum 1.5 hours)

If the party takes four hours or more to get through the maze, then they encounter one of the maze's guardians.

Creatures: Hermann M has transplanted a number of gas spores to this portion of the dungeon to act as sentries. The spores are unintelligent, so they are incapable of upholding Hermann M's ideals, but their instinctual drive to propagate their species by infecting other creatures suits the druid's purpose.

Parties spending four hours or more in the maze run into one of these mindless horrors.

From beyond the next turn in the passage, a large bulbous body drifts into view. Strange stalks sprout from the top of the orb, terminating in staring eyes. As the round body turns, you are faced by a huge unblinking eye and a gaping maw filled with dagger-like teeth.

Ask for Spot checks from all party members with line of sight to the enemy. If a PC beats the gas spore's Disguise check (DC 25, not including distance modifiers) then the character recognizes that the creature is not what it seems: Its teeth are not bone, but look more like thorns.

PCs that succeed at this Spot check may use Knowledge (nature) to identify the creature as per the normal rules in the *Player's Handbook*.

PCs that fail the Spot check but still wish to identify the monster may do so using Knowledge (dungeoneering). Treat the creature like a beholder when providing the knowledge check's results. See *Monster Manual*, page 26.

Use the map in Appendix Five, representing the random section of the labyrinth in which the gas spore is encountered.

All APLs (EL 3)

Gas spore: hp 15; see Appendix One.

Tactics: The gas spore charges into melee, attempting to infest the nearest living creature with its slam attack.

When it is killed, its "death throes" blast affects all creatures in a 10-foot radius, dealing 6d6 sonic damage and exposing them to its infestation spores.

Development: Once the party has made their way to the exit of the maze, read the following.

The tunnel stops branching, stops twisting and turning, and eventually levels out. The labyrinth's exit has been found.

Not long afterwards, the party comes to the chamber that Hermann M refers to as the Killing Field. Go on to Encounter 8E.

8E. The Killing Field

This portion of the dungeon holds a vegetative horror lying in wait for intruders, a decoy idol, and a false ending to the dungeon, encouraging naïve tomb raiders from discovering the real treasure that lies at the heart of the dungeon.

The tunnel ahead opens into a cylindrical room. Above, a ring of everburning torches illuminates a domed ceiling. At this level, there is a narrow walkway that circles a wide, circular pit. Vines and ivy rise up from below, covering the floor.

When the PCs approach, finish the description of the room.

The walls and floor of the pit are covered in vines and ivy. Sixty feet below, at the center of the room stands a small stone pedestal. On top of it rests a delicate, bejeweled golden skull.

At APL 6 add: *Next to the pedestal, amongst the twisted vines is a gnarled tree, bearing only a few waxy leaves. Its trunk and branches are covered in foot-long thorns.*

At APL 8 add: *Next to the pedestal, amongst the twisted vines are two gnarled trees, each bearing only*

a few waxy leaves. Both trees are covered in foot-long thorns.

At APL 10 add: *Next to the pedestal, amongst the tangled vines is a large leafy bush.*

At APL 12 add: *Next to the pedestal, amongst the twisted vines are two large, leafy bushes.*

There is no visible exit from this chamber.

The Climb DC to navigate the vines is DC 5. The floor of the chamber is sixty feet below the catwalk. PCs that fall take 1d6 points of damage per ten feet fallen.

Paranoid adventurers may correctly guess that there are plant monsters here. If they wish to make ranged attacks from the safety of the top of the pit, allow them to do so, though be sure that players are aware that the golden skull looks fragile. If the PCs heedlessly descend, the plants attack. See the tactics section below, for more details by APL.

APL 6 (EL 6)

Ironthorn: hp 103; see Appendix One.

APL 8 (EL 8)

Ironthorns (2): hp 103 each; see Appendix One.

APL 10 (EL 10)

Greenvise: hp 102; see Appendix One.

APL 12 (EL 12)

Greenvises (2): hp 102 each; see Appendix One

Tactics: As soon as an intruder crosses into their territory, the plants attack. If the party attacks the plants from the safety of the room's upper level, the plants begin climbing up to attack them there.

At **APL 6**, using its extended 15-foot reach, an ironthorn slashes out with its vine rakes. If it hits, it uses its improved grab ability to begin a grapple as a free action. If it then establishes a hold, then it draws the victim in, impales him, and delivers its poison. At **APL 8**, the two ironthorns do not cooperate, but attempt to feed independently from one another.

At **APL 10**, the greenvise's woodsense ability detects anyone touching the ivy at the top of the chamber. It lies in wait until prey crosses into its threatened area. At that point, it leads combat by releasing a cloud of death fog. In the next round, the plant attempts to use its slam attacks and improved grab to snatch up the nearest enemy. If it can move a grabbed creature to its maw, then the greenvise attempts to swallow the adventurer whole in the next round. If the death fog's duration expires or if it

is dispersed, the greenvise takes an action to release its second daily cloud.

If it is instead attacked from range, the greenvise deploys its death fog and climbs toward the attackers. When it can, it fills the upper level area with its second daily death fog and attacks.

At **APL 12**, use the tactics for APL 10. The greenvises take advantage of one another's uses of the death fog, waiting until one effect expires before releasing another.

The Golden Skull

This prize has been placed here by Hermann M in order to fool dungeon delvers into thinking that this is the end of the dungeon.

Properties of the skull: The skull detects as magical with a strong transmutation aura, due to the permanent *Nystul's magic aura* attached to it. It also has a faint aura of Evil, since it is an unholy symbol of Nerull, blessed by clerics of the Winter King.

Failing a DC 25 Appraise check means that the PC cannot fathom the skull's value. If the check is successful, then the PC realizes that it is not inherently valuable at all. The jewels are glass, and the gold is pyrite (fool's gold). It is an extraordinarily skillful counterfeit, however, and might be worth about 500 gp to the right buyer.

Searching the Skull: There are no traps on the skull; it can be picked up without danger. A character that holds it gets an ephemeral sense of uneasiness, but this has no other effect.

Treasure: Take the golden skull.

All APLs: L: 0 gp; C: 83 gp; M: 0 gp.

Searching the Pedestal: A DC 30 Search check of the pedestal reveals that it can be moved from its place on the floor. PCs with the stonemasonry ability that approach the pedestal are allowed a free Search check for this irregular stonework. Elves are permitted a free check due to their racial sixth sense about concealed passages.

A DC 25 Strength check can move the pedestal aside, uncovering a narrow tunnel that descends deeper into the dungeons. Alternatively, the pedestal may be destroyed by brute force.

Stone pedestal: 5 ft. thick; hardness 8; hp 450; Break DC 65.

The Exit

This cramped crawlspace is only four feet wide. For Medium-sized PCs, fighting within it would be difficult, and Large PCs (including centaurs) will be squeezing for its entire length.

The tunnel spirals on, sloping downward for about a mile. PCs with the stonemasonry ability are aware that the tunnel has ultimately led about a half mile deeper beneath the surface.

It finally drops down at one end of a ten-foot-wide, thirty-foot-long tunnel, covered in ivy. Light emanates from the room at the far end of the tunnel.

Development: If the PCs descended through the cramped tunnel, they have emerged in a short passage outside of the Stone Circle room. When they investigate, go to Encounter 8F.

If PCs believe that the skull idol is what they seek, then they likely depart the dungeon at this time. In this case, the party never meets Hermann M, and the secret of the Oerthblood below remains safe. They do not gain the **Favor of the Brewer**, the **Wrath of the Iron Wood**, or the **Secret AR** awards. Nor will they earn the **Favor of Shannus**. Adjudicate their exit from the dungeon and when they return to Glory, go to Conclusion B.

8F. Sticks and Storms

This chamber is Hermann M's second-to-last line of defense against intruders. If the party can defeat this trap and its guardians, then they have only the brewer himself to contend with.

About thirty feet ahead, the tunnel opens into another large, circular room, illuminated by a dozen continual flames around the domed ceiling. Standing stones are arranged around the walls, and the floor is covered in heaps and piles of fallen leaves, lending the room an eerie resemblance to a druid's grove.

A great monolith of black stone stands at the center of the room in a shallow pool of water. It is similar to the stone that marked the dungeon's entrance, but this one bears strange markings in an odd alphabet.

Beyond it, on the far side of the room is an open doorway, leading on into darkness.

The stone's carvings are in Druidic. A PC with any levels in druid can clearly see them from outside the room. They read: "Barley, Malt, Yeast and Hops: with these words, the reaping stops."

If a PC speaks aloud—in *Druidic*—the words for barley, malt, yeast, and hops before crossing into the trap's trigger area, then the trap here is suppressed for two minutes. If the words are spoken after the trap goes off, it resets and lays dormant for two minutes.

A *comprehend languages* spell is of little use here, since the runes must be touched to be understood, and the

spell does not give the caster the ability to speak Druidic aloud.

Hiding in the piles of leaves here are shambling mounds. See Appendix One for their Hide check modifiers. Allow the PCs to make Spot checks. The mounds do not react to the party unless the trap is triggered or the PCs attack them first.

PCs actively searching for traps and PCs with stonemasonry may make a Search check to discover some unusual stonework as they move into the room. There are wall separation traps set into the doorways. See Appendix One for the Search DC, by APL. The trigger is tied to the larger encounter trap, below.

Trap: The stone circle lightning trap in this encounter is an "encounter trap," a concept originally presented in *Dungeonscape*. When activated, an encounter trap acts more like a monster than a traditional trap. It has an initiative count and an attack that it uses to assault PCs in its area on its turn. Also, unlike traditional traps, encounter traps are designed to be encounters that everyone in the party can participate in. PCs can disable portions of it, destroy key components, and use spells to negate its continuing effects.

Note: All Disable Device checks in relation to an encounter trap take only one round to attempt, unlike the usual 1d4 rounds to disarm a conventional trap.

The stone circle lightning trap is a complex magical trap that is triggered whenever someone comes within ten feet of the central obelisk without first speaking the command words that cause it to deactivate for two minutes (see above).

When activated, the central monolith flashes with a blue-white light, and the thrum of energy fills the air. At the same moment, the entrance and exit of the room are sealed by separation wall traps.

Separation Wall Trap: CR +1 (already included in stone circle lightning trap, below); mechanical; detection trigger (*alarm*, see below); automatic reset; sliding wall (DC 20 Reflex save allows adjacent creature to jump to the other side of the wall before it seals); Search DC as stone circle lightning trap, by APL, see Appendix One; Disable Device 29.

Sliding Stone Door: 5 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 75; Break DC 28.

Creatures: The two shambling mounds that lie hidden here are allies of Hermann M. The druid has explained to them in the past (through the *speak with plants* spell) the basics of how the stone circle lightning trap works, and he has impressed upon them the importance of not

allowing intruders to reach the Oerthblood at the heart of the dungeon. They understand the danger that it could bring to all the whole of Oerth if it were to fall into the wrong hands. By their understanding, the “wrong hands” means anyone who is not an ally of Hermann M.

Normally, allies of Hermann M wear holy symbols of the Old Faith and do not set off the trap. If the trap triggers, then the shambling mounds move into combat, but they avoid attacking PCs who display holy symbols of the Old Faith, unless these PCs attack the monsters first.

APL 6 (EL 8)

Advanced Shambling Mound: hp 90; see Appendix One.

Stone Circle Lightning Trap: CR 5 encounter trap; see Appendix One.

APL 8 (EL 10)

Advanced Shambling Mounds (2): hp 90 each; see Appendix One.

Stone Circle Lightning Trap: CR 7 encounter trap; see Appendix One.

APL 10 (EL 12)

Huge Advanced Shambling Mounds (2): hp 168 each; see Appendix One.

Stone Circle Lightning Trap: CR 9 encounter trap; see Appendix One.

APL 12 (EL 14)

Truly Rotten Advanced Shambling Mounds (2): hp 252 each; see Appendix One.

Stone Circle Lightning Trap: CR 11 encounter trap; see Appendix One.

Tactics: The shambling mounds move into melee just after the trap goes off for the first time. They attack the weakest party members with their improved grab and constrict abilities.

Due to the shambling mound’s immunity to electricity, the monsters here are not harmed by the trap. Instead, they gain 1d4 points of Constitution for every lightning arc that hits them.

It is recommended that the DM keep a separate Constitution tracker for each shambling mound, next to their hit point tallies. If a shambling mound is hit by a lightning arc, roll for their Constitution bonus. Every time this number increases to or past an even number (i.e. when it increases from 17 to 18 or from 17 to 19), add a number of hit points equal to the shambling mound’s Hit Dice to its current total. Each increase in a shambler’s Constitution modifier also affects its Fortitude save.

These additions to Constitution stack every time they are hit by a separate electricity attack, meaning that they could gain as much as 4d4 points of Constitution in a single round (if hit by all four of the trap’s lightning arcs).

Even if the trap is triggered and combat begins, the shambling mounds recognize the symbols of Hermann M’s faith. PCs who openly display holy symbols of Beory, Ehlonna, Nerull, Obad-Hai, or Pelor are not attacked by the shambling mounds unless that PC attacks one of the shambling mounds first.

Furthermore, if one of these Flannae Old Faith holy symbols is presented forcefully and strong words are spoken to the monsters, they back down. They do not understand Common (or any language), but they do understand if someone is calling off an attack. Verbal spell components do not fulfill this tactical choice. This tactic is not likely to be stumbled upon by accident unless someone attempts to turn or rebuke the shambling mounds. The PC must make a decision to call them off by presenting their holy symbol and yelling at them.

Treasure: The monsters have no treasure.

Development: Once the trap’s duration has expired, the doors on either end of the room open, allowing the party to continue deeper into the dungeon. The exit of the stone circle room is a short ledge that rapidly disintegrates into an underground gorge. The gorge slides downward at a steep 45-degree grade. At the bottom is a five-foot wide walkway that leads to the left. At the end of this “hall” is the great black door in Encounter 8G.

8G. The Ebony Door

At the threshold of Hermann M’s most private sanctum, the PCs are given a final warning to turn back.

The heavy, iron bound, black wooden door here bears five symbols and below them, a warning written in Common that reads: “All those who seek to protect the Iron Wood and its denizens, turn back now. What lies beyond is not for the eyes of gods or mortals and should remain undisturbed.”

If the PCs have not already identified the gods referenced here, a DC 10 Knowledge (religion) check is needed at this point to correctly recall them as Ehlonna, Obad-Hai, Beory, Nerull, and Pelor. Collectively, these gods make up the Flan version of the Old Faith.

The door is not trapped, but it appears to be barred from the other side. If the party wishes to proceed, they have to break the door down or use magic to bypass it.

Heavy darkwood door: 6 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 60; Break DC 28.

Once past this barrier, the party finds themselves before the lake of Oerthblood. Go to Encounter 9.

If the PCs instead heed the warning on the door and turn back toward Glory, they will have pleased Hermann M with their wisdom. They earn the **Favor of the Brewer** award on the AR. They do *not* gain the **Wrath of the Iron Wood** or **Secret** awards. Proceed to the Conclusion.

Encounter Nine: Blood of the Oerth

At the heart of the Oerthblood dungeon, the party comes face-to-face with the man responsible for setting up the defenses that they have overcome.

The doorway opens into a huge natural cavern, easily a hundred feet in length. It is dominated by a lake of reddish-black sludge. Out across the lake is a small island where two large trees stand beneath the light of an artificial sun affixed in the air overhead.

A dirty and disheveled old man with an untamed beard leans against one of the trees. He holds a gnarled staff in one hand and an ale mug in the other. As he takes a casual swig of his drink, he says, "Please put your weapons away. I'd really prefer not to kill you."

PCs who played the interactive adventure VERI5-03 *March of the Giants* may have met Hermann M then, but he behaved far more like a "crazy old coot" at that time.

One of the trees here is Hermann M's dire tiger Uberstein, whom Hermann M has cast *tree shape* on. The other is the tree which Hermann M uses when he needs to *tree stride* into the dungeon.

Creatures: Hermann M has little patience here. He has spent decades protecting this source of Oerthblood, and the adventurers have systematically bypassed and destroyed his defenses in the span of a single day.

His foremost concern is to keep the Oerthblood out of the wrong hands, and his limited experience with adventurers tells him that they generally cannot be trusted to keep the larger picture in mind.

The surest way to prevent this Oerthblood (or the knowledge of it) from falling into the wrong hands is to kill everyone in the adventuring party and be done with them. Fortunately for the PCs, Hermann M does not like to kill if he can avoid it.

He attempts to speak with the party, but if they are rude, disrespectful, or excessively proud, then Hermann M may decide to demonstrate his power.

All APLs (EL 16)

Hermann M, The Protector of the Iron Wood: male human Drd15/Beastmaster1; hp 108; see Appendix One.

Uberstein: male dire tiger animal companion; hp 135; see Appendix One.

Speaking with Hermann M

If the PCs are wise, they can take advantage of Hermann M's offer to speak, rather than rushing into a fight. If the PCs comply with Hermann M's initial request, he starts the dialogue. He maintains an aura of control, and keeps the conversation moving on his terms.

"Why don't we start with who you are and what in the name of the Reaper's scythe you're doing here."

If the PCs say anything relating to Shannus or the Great Dire Dark, Hermann M dismisses it quickly: *"Shannus's devotion to duty is admirable, but the Great Dire Dark is no more."*

If treated with respect, Hermann M is willing to answer some very basic questions.

- Who are you? *I am Hermann M, the Protector of the Iron Wood and guardian of its secrets.*
- The same Hermann M of 'Hermann M's Special Blend'? *The same.*
- What is this lake made of? *It is Oerthblood, a substance used in the forging of artifacts.*
- What do you want with the Oerthblood? *I've known of this reservoir for decades. I don't wish to use it, only to protect it and the knowledge of its existence from falling into the wrong hands.*
- Who are you protecting it from? *Anyone who would harness its power for their own ends. It is no more good or evil than the person who controls it, but some things are best left undisturbed by the hands of mortals. Or even gods.*
- Can I take some of it? *Absolutely not.*
- Did you know that there is more of this stuff in the Quarry? *Yes. But if you know about it, then things are worse than I thought. I will contain it.*

If the PCs have no questions, or once these basic points have been laid out, Hermann M cuts to the root of the problem.

“Your misguided determination to find what lies in these caverns has led us all to a difficult situation. My efforts have not deterred you from learning what you should never have known. You must swear an oath to keep the secret of this place and never return. If you ever speak of what lies here, rest assured, you will live to regret it.”

Hermann M does not allow anyone to leave who has not sworn an oath to this effect. Once everyone takes this oath, then Hermann M nods, satisfied, and tells them to go.

The oaths to make a full report to Shannus (which the PCs took in Encounter Six) are none of Hermann M's concern. He doesn't care what the PCs decide to tell Shannus, as long as they keep the secret of the Oerthblood.

Hermann M has little patience for “clever” deal makers. If he suspects that someone is trying to leave a loop-hole open as they give their word (i.e. “I will tell no man,” when their intent is to tell Shannus, an *elven* dragon disciple), then the druid calls them out on it. If someone swears an oath to him, he expects them to honor the *intent* of the oath far more than its strict *wording*.

If anyone refuses to take the oath of secrecy, then Hermann M is very plain about not allowing them to leave this place alive. If they steadfastly refuse, even under threat of imminent death, then the druid begins combat (see “Fighting Hermann M,” below). He avoids targeting PCs who are not resisting him, and accepts surrender at any time. PCs who refuse to take the vow of secrecy earn the **Wrath of the Iron Wood** award on the AR.

PCs who take the vow and who honor it receive the **Favor of the Brewer** award on the AR. Once the vows are finished, Hermann M bids the party to depart. When the adventurers do, proceed to the Conclusion.

Fighting Hermann M

Hermann M has been expecting the adventurers ever since they tripped the alarm at the entrance to the dungeon. He has had more precise warning of their impending arrival from the noise of the fight in Encounter 8F.

Upon arriving in the Oerthblood cave, about 15 minutes after the adventurers entered the dungeon, Hermann M cast *longstrider* on himself and on his dire tiger animal companion Uberstein. He also cast spike stones around the entrance to the Oerthblood cavern and the edges of the island. These spells last for 15 hours each. If the PCs does not arrive at the heart of the dungeon that day, then he casts them again in the morning.

When he hears the trap trigger in Encounter 8F, Hermann M begins his final preparations. In case it becomes relevant, he casts these spells in the following order:

Round 1: casts a nonlethal *fire seeds* and drops the eight holly berry bombs in one of the squares at the entrance to the Oerthblood chamber.

Round 2: casts *fire seeds* and drops the eight holly berry bombs in one of the squares at the entrance to the Oerthblood chamber.

Round 3: casts *air walk* on his dire tiger Uberstein, mounts up, and rides across the lake of Oerthblood to the island.

Round 4: casts *barkskin* on himself.

Round 5: casts *barkskin* on Uberstein.

Round 6: casts *stoneskin* on Uberstein.

Round 7: casts *speak with animals*.

Round 8: draws a *potion of greater magic fang (+5)*, and feeds the potion to Uberstein.

Round 9: casts *tree shape* on Uberstein.

Round 10: casts *freedom of movement* on himself.

Round 11: casts *freedom of movement* on Uberstein.

Round 12: draws a scroll and casts *bear's endurance* on himself.

Round 13: draws a scroll and casts *bear's endurance* on Uberstein; casts *nature's favor* on Uberstein (a swift action).

Round 14: casts *healing lorecall* on himself.

Round 15: casts *listening lorecall* on himself.

If combat breaks out, Hermann M spends his first round's actions in the following way: If there are any PCs within their blast radius, he activates the nonlethally-substituted *fire seed* holly berry bombs that are near the entrance of the cavern as a standard action, dealing 8d8+120 points of nonlethal damage to everyone in a 10-foot radius. He dismisses the *tree shape* spell on Uberstein as a free action (as described in the spell, see *Player's Handbook page 296*). He then demands that the party surrender as a free action and spends two charges from his *belt of battle* (a swift action) to gain another standard action, which he uses to ready the casting of a rapid *summon nature's ally VI* if they do not immediately comply. Uberstein readies to charge and pounce on the nearest invader if his master presses the attack.

If the party does not lay down their arms, then Hermann M's readied action goes off. He summons a huge earth elemental next to the party and as a free action (through *speak with animals*) directs Uberstein's charge toward the “softest” viable target.

Every round, Hermann M demands that the party surrender. He accepts surrender from individuals at any

time, calling off his allies from attacking those PCs. If the entire party surrenders, Hermann M is still willing to speak peacefully. Refer to the section, "Speaking with Hermann M," above. If his honorable behavior is not returned in kind, then he shows absolutely no mercy, sparing no one.

Tactics: Hermann M's tactics should be dictated by his opponents' actions, but what follows are general suggestions:

If Hermann M has taken damage, he casts *unyielding roots* on himself.

If the party is airborne, then he may cast a *wall of stone* to create a semi-dome over himself. The next round, he will spontaneously cast a normal *summon nature's ally VI* spell to summon a large air elemental.

If the party is not airborne, he casts a rapid *summon nature's ally V* to summon 1d3 brown bears. He directs them, by virtue of his active *speak with animals* spell to grapple the spellcasters.

Hermann prefers to use his *animal growth* spell after summoning animals, but if necessary, he will cast it on Uberstein alone.

If a heavily-armored character seems particularly effective, he may use his *wall of stone* scroll in an attempt to entrap her, forcing a Reflex save. He may follow this by commanding any present earth elementals to attack the trapped creature from beneath the ground.

If Hermann M feels that he faces a significant threat in the PCs, he triggers the remaining (lethal) *fire seed* holly berry bombs that he placed at the entrance of the cave (assuming that enemies are in their blast radius), and commands his summoned allies to drown the intruders in the lake of Oerthblood. The dire animals may grapple and drag them into the lake for a pin. The huge earth elemental may use its Awesome Blow feat to knock opponents into the deeper parts of the lake. A large air elemental can form a whirlwind and drop PCs in the Oerthblood, as well.

If the battle goes poorly for Hermann M, then he will call Uberstein to his side and activate the *word of recall* stored within his *spellstaff*. It teleports them both back to Hermann M's cabin in the Iron Wood. In this case, all PCs gain the **Wrath of the Iron Wood** award on the AR.

Treasure: Defeat Hermann M and his dire tiger animal companion.

All APLs: L: 109 gp; C: 212 gp, 250 gp of diamond dust; M: *amulet of health +2*, 333 gp per character, *belt of battle*, 1000 gp per character, *cloak of resistance +4*, 1333 gp per character, *cloak of resistance +5*, 2083 gp

per character, *Hermann M's special mug*, 17 gp per character, *Heward's handy haversack*, 167 gp per character, *peripat of wisdom +4*, 1333 gp per character, *potion of greater magic fang +5*, 250 gp per character, *potion of haste*, 63 gp per character, *potion of invisibility*, 25 gp per character, *potion of remove blindness/deafness (x2)*, 63 gp per character each, *ring of protection +2*, 1333 gp per character, *scroll of bear's endurance (x2)*, 12 gp per character each, *scroll of bull's strength*, 12 gp per character, *scroll of cat's grace*, 12 gp per character, *scroll of wall of stone*, 94 gp per character, *+2 death ward wildwood breast plate*, 821 gp per character, *+2 large studded leather barding*, 354 gp per character, *+1 heavy wooden shield*, 96 gp per character.

Development: All PCs who enter this chamber and who also investigated the Quarry shrine gain the **Secret** award on the AR. Any PC who touches the Oerthblood here earns the **Exposed to Oerthblood** award on their AR.

If Hermann M defeats everyone in the party, he revives any unconscious survivors one at a time, offering to release them if they take his vow. Surviving PCs may remove their dead friends, but the druid warns that if they are resurrected, they must be bound by the vow of secrecy.

Once the PCs take Hermann M's vow (or do battle with him), they have nothing left to do but report back to Shannus. Proceed to the Conclusion.

If Hermann M lives, he decides to collapse the Oerthblood dungeon under *earthquake* spells. He also uses *move earth* and *animate plants* to destroy evidence of the entrance grove, ensuring that no one ever returns to the reservoir. But first, he secretly follows the party back to Glory, watching them to see if they hold true to their vows.

Conclusion: Fall from Glory

The return to Glory is uneventful. If the party rests in the Iron Wood on their way back (as is likely), none of the lycanthropes disturb them, still working on the orders of the Moonlord.

If the party has pledged an oath of secrecy to Hermann M, then they may want to decide on what they tell Shannus before they arrive back at the logging town. Give them time to deliberate this amongst themselves before they arrive in Glory.

Once more, you return to Glory. Outside of the Fallen Timber Tavern, Breyin the Moonlord sits in a chair calmly puffing on an ippwood pipe. Shannus, by

contrast, is restlessly pacing the ground. Sir Quin stands nearby, and as you near, the knight draws his lord's attention to your approach.

"Well, what did you find?" the Mayor of Glory eagerly demands. "Tell me everything, starting from when Breyin was banished!"

What the PCs reveal at this point determines the conclusion that they receive and whose favors they earn on the AR.

Conclusion A: Revealing the Oerthblood to Shannus

If PCs choose to disregard their vow to Hermann M in order to tell Shannus what truly lay at the heart of the dungeon, then Shannus is forced to confront the fact that he has been manipulated into doing great harm to the Viscounty.

"No!" Shannus cries with incredulity, "This cannot be! It cannot! The prophecy foretold that the Great Dire Dark had returned!"

"But if the prophecy is false," he continues impotently, "then everything that it urged me to do has brought only chaos and death to the people of Verbobonc: Validia, the war with Avgustin... noble houses destroyed, hundreds slain, and all for nothing. And for all, Shannus bears the blame."

He pulls from his vest the tattered prophesy which spurred him into action. "Curse the day that Rygor and the Gnarley elves laid this in my hands, for it led only to ruin!"

Sir Quinsaron moves to steady his lord, but Breyin merely looks on in pity.

The parchment slips from Shannus's hand and the once great ruler of the Iron Wood falls to his knees, crying out to the Iron Wood: "Shannus is undone!"

The PCs receive the **Favor of Shannus**, the **Favor of the Moonlord**, and the **Wrath of the Iron Wood** awards on the AR. They do not receive the **Favor of the Brewer**.

The End

Conclusion B: Never Reaching the Oerthblood OR Concealing the Oerthblood from Shannus

This Conclusion is used when PCs either turn back before reaching the end of the dungeon or when they tell Shannus everything *except* what was discovered in Encounter Nine.

1) If the PCs never reached Encounter Nine, or if they present him with the golden skull idol, then Shannus is outraged that they have not followed through on their

quest. He believes that they have been duped by the Great Dire Dark.

"Fools!" Shannus rages, "The prophecy said to seek adventurers that they would lead to its defeat. But you fell for the simplest of tricks, and the Great Dire Dark still lives!"

Skip the next read-aloud text block and continue below.

2) If the party reached Encounter Nine and decides to keep their vow to Hermann M by revealing everything to Shannus *except* what lies beyond the Ebony Door, then he is outraged at their insolence. He believes that they are in league with the Great Dire Dark and are hiding something to protect it.

"Deceivers!" Shannus rages, "The prophecy said to seek adventurers that they would lead to its defeat. But the Great Dire Dark still lives, and you protect it with your silence and your lies!"

Continue either of the above paragraphs below.

Pulling the tattered prophesy from within his vest, he crushes it in his fist. "Curse the day that Rygor and the Gnarley elves laid this in my hands, if it leads only to the likes of you!"

He throws it at your feet and orders, "Be gone from my sight, false adventurers! Obviously only Shannus can be trusted with this task." With that, Shannus storms inside the Fallen Timber Tavern.

Breyin and Sir Quinsaron exchange a look, and Shannus's lieutenant slowly follows his lord.

Breyin turns to you with an expression full of pity for the mayor of Glory. "I do not know all that you found in the Wood, but I know that it was not the Great Dire Dark. I fear that Shannus has been manipulated this past year. In pursuing his enemy, he has weakened the Viscounty at every turn. The Gnarley elves who nudged him into action with this prophesy have much to answer for."

The PCs receive the **Favor of the Moonlord**. If they reached Encounter 8G (the Ebony Door), they also gain the **Favor of the Brewer** on the AR. They do not receive the **Favor of Shannus** or the **Wrath of the Iron Wood**.

The End

Conclusion C: Telling Shannus what he wants to hear

Some parties may decide that the best way to keep their vow to Hermann M is to tell Shannus what they know he wants to hear. If the PCs decide to lie to Shannus, telling him that they encountered the Great Dire Dark (and

perhaps that they vanquished it), then they receive the following conclusion.

“Vindication!” Shannus laughs. “I never doubted the truth of the prophecy. It foretold your victory!”

From his vest he pulls the tattered prophesy that spurred him into action. “Gods bless the day that Rygor and the Gnarley elves laid this in my hands. Closing the Iron Wood, invading Validia, the war with Avgustin – all of it was in the name of this greater good!”

“Come, my friends, inside, where we will toast our triumph over darkness!” Shannus and Sir Quinsaron stride into the Fallen Timber Tavern.

Breyin, however, slowly shakes his head and condemns you with his gaze. He clearly knows that the Great Dire Dark had never returned, and that the chaos and destruction Shannus brought to the Viscouny was for no greater good.

“It seems that the elves manipulated Shannus,” he says. “though we do not yet know their motives. With your lies, you have made yourselves their accomplices.”

With that, the Moonlord departs Glory while Shannus’s misplaced revelry begins.

The PCs receive the **Favor of Shannus**, and the **Favor of the Brewer** on the AR. They do not gain the **Favor of the Moonlord** or the **Wrath of the Iron Wood**.

The End

Experience Point Summary

To award experience for this adventure, add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Then assign the experience award. Award the total value (objectives plus roleplaying) to each character.

Encounter Two: There Will Be Blood

Defeat the bloody monsters.

APL 6	210 XP
APL 8	270 XP
APL 10	330 XP
APL 12	390 XP

Encounter Eight-D: The Labyrinth of Eyes

Bypass the gas spore by navigating the maze quickly, or defeat the gas spore in combat.

APL 6	90 XP
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APL 8	90 XP
APL 10	90 XP
APL 12	90 XP

Encounter Eight-E: The Killing Field

Defeat or get past the plant monsters.

APL 6	180 XP
APL 8	240 XP
APL 10	300 XP
APL 12	360 XP

Encounter Eight-F: Sticks and Storms

Defeat the shambling mounds and the stone circle lightning trap.

APL 6	240 XP
APL 8	300 XP
APL 10	360 XP
APL 12	420 XP

Encounter Nine: The Blood of the Oerth

Defeat Hermann M and his dire tiger. This encounter is untiered, and it is not necessary to earn these experience points to gain the maximum possible in this scenario.

APL 6	480 XP
APL 8	480 XP
APL 10	480 XP
APL 12	480 XP

Award for Good Roleplaying

APL 6	180 XP
APL 8	225 XP
APL 10	260 XP
APL 12	305 XP

Total Possible Experience

APL 6	900 XP
APL 8	1125 XP
APL 10	1350 XP
APL 12	1575 XP

Treasure Summary

During an adventure, PCs encounter treasure, usually finding it in the possession of their foes. Every encounter that features treasure has a “treasure” section

within the encounter description, giving information about the loot, coins, and magic items that make up the encounter's treasure.

The loot total is the number of gold pieces each character gains if the foes are plundered of all their earthly possessions. Looting the bodies takes at least 10 minutes per every 5 enemies, and if the PCs cannot take the time to loot the bodies, they do not gain this gold. If you feel it is reasonable that PCs can go back to loot the bodies, and those bodies are there (i.e., not carted off by dungeon scavengers, removed from the scene by the local watch, and so on), PCs may return to retrieve loot. If the PCs do not loot the body, the gold piece value for the loot is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

The coin total is the number of gold pieces each character gains if they take the coin available. A normal adventuring party can usually gather this wealth in a round or so. If for some reason, they pass up this treasure, the coin total is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

Next, the magic items are listed. Magic item treasure is the hardest to adjudicate, because they are varied and because PCs may want to use them during the adventure.

Many times PCs must cast *identify*, *analyze dweomer* or similar spell to determine what the item does and how to activate it. Other times they may attempt to use the item blindly. If the magic item is consumable (a potion, scroll, magic bolts, etc.) and the item is used before the end of the adventure, its total is subtracted from the adventure totals below.

Once you have subtracted the value for unclaimed treasure from each encounter add it up and that is the number of gold pieces a PCs total and coin value increase at the end of the adventure. Write the total in the GP Gained field of the adventure certificate. Because this is a Regional scenario, PCs may spend additional Time Units to practice professions or create items immediately after the adventure so this total may be modified by other circumstances.

L: Looted gear from enemy

C: Coin, Gems, Jewelry, and other valuables

M: Magic Items

Encounter One: Not Again!

Accept Ghen Tayber's offer of employment.

APL 6: L: 0 gp; C: 300 gp per character; M: 0 gp.

APL 8: L: 0 gp; C: 400 gp per character; M: 0 gp.

APL 10: L: 0 gp; C: 500 gp per character; M: 0 gp.

APL 12: L: 0 gp; C: 600 gp per character; M: 0 gp.

Encounter Three: Questions in the Quarry

Discover the secret cache of unholy water in the abandoned shrine.

All APLs: L: 12 gp; C: 0 gp; M: 0 gp.

Encounter Six: Faded Glory

Accept Shannus's mission.

APL 2: L: 0 gp; C: 500 gp per character; M: 0 gp.

APL 4: L: 0 gp; C: 1000 gp per character; M: 0 gp.

APL 6: L: 0 gp; C: 2000 gp per character; M: 0 gp.

APL 8: L: 0 gp; C: 3000 gp per character; M: 0 gp.

Encounter Eight-E: The Killing Field

Take the golden skull idol.

All APLs: L: 0 gp; C: 83 gp; M: 0 gp.

Encounter Nine: The Blood of the Oerth

Kill Hermann M and his dire tiger companion.

All APLs: L: 109 gp; C: 212 gp, 250 gp of diamond dust; M: *amulet of health +2*, 333 gp per character, *belt of battle*, 1000 gp per character, *cloak of resistance +4*, 1333 gp per character, *cloak of resistance +5*, 2083 gp per character, *Hermann M's special mug*, 17 gp per character, *Heward's handy haversack*, 167 gp per character, *periapt of wisdom +4*, 1333 gp per character, *potion of greater magic fang +5*, 250 gp per character, *potion of haste*, 63 gp per character, *potion of invisibility*, 25 gp per character, *potion of remove blindness/deafness (x2)*, 63 gp per character each, *ring of protection +2*, 1333 gp per character, *scroll of bear's endurance (x2)*, 12 gp per character each, *scroll of bull's strength*, 12 gp per character, *scroll of cat's grace*, 12 gp per character, *scroll of wall of stone*, 94 gp per character, *+2 death ward wildwood breast plate*, 821 gp per character, *+2 large studded leather barding*, 354 gp per character, *+1 heavy wooden shield*, 96 gp per character.

Maximum Possible Treasure

APL 6: 900 gp

APL 8: 1300 gp

APL 10: 2300 gp

APL 12: 3300 gp

Items to be Listed on the AR:

Cross out any item not gained.

Exposed to Oerthblood: You have been touched by an ancient arcane substance. The ramifications of this are as yet unclear.

Thanks of the Menagerie Master: Ghen Tayber will help you keep track of an item which you might purchase later. Choose one item below to which you gained access and change it to Frequency: Any. If you have the Favor of Ghen Tayber from VER4-03 *Glory's Warriors*, choose three items.

Favor of Shannus: The Mayor of Glory is proud of your dedication. He provides access to the items below marked *Sh* and opens access to the Dragonheart Mage (*RotD*), Dragon Devotee (*RotD*), and Wild Mage (*CAr*) prestige classes.

Favor of the Moonlord: For seeking out darkness wherever it may lurk, Breyin makes the items below marked *ML* available to you. He also opens access to one of the following weapon enhancements: *metalline* (*MIC*), *mighty smiting* (*MIC*), or *holy* (*DMG*).

Favor of the Brewer: The Protector of the Iron Wood respects your discretion. He offers the items below marked *HM* and opens access to the Bonded Summoner prestige class (*MH*).

Wrath of the Iron Wood: The forces of nature have rebelled against you. From now on, you suffer a -2 penalty to attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks whenever you are in a woodland environment. This curse can only be removed by a *miracle* or *wish*.

Lawful Respect: For helping justice prevail, the Bondsmen of Estival grant you access to the items below marked *BE* and one of the following weapon enhancements: *axiomatic*, *maiming* (*MIC*), or *merciful*. Members of the Bondsmen of Estival gain 3 Affiliation points.

Shadowy Gratitude: You have performed a great service for the Battirovka Family and the Black Rose Company. They open access to the items below marked *BB* and to one of the following weapon enhancements: *anarchic*, *blurstrike* (*MIC*), or *deadly precision* (*MIC*). Members of either organization gain 3 Affiliation points. Members of both earn 6 in each.

Enmity of the Family: Word of your merciless adherence to the Law has spread. From now on, all rogues who sneak attack you twist their blades to inflict more pain. They may re-roll all sneak attack dice against you that come up as a one.

Secret: You have learned that reservoirs of Oerthblood are pooled beneath the Viscounty.

Reward Notes for the AR

Exposed to Oerthblood: This item is awarded to all PCs that make a successful melee attack against any monsters in Encounter Two, who take damage from any monster in Encounter Two, or who come into contact with any Oerthblood in Encounter Three or Encounter Nine.

Thanks of the Menagerie Master: This favor is given to all PCs who agree to escort Ghen Tayber and his menagerie to Glory.

Favor of Shannus: This favor goes to PCs who reach Encounter Nine and tell Shannus about the Oerthblood, or to PCs who tell Shannus that the Great Dire Dark had returned.

Favor of the Moonlord: All PCs who investigate the dungeon earn this award. But it is not awarded if the party misleads Shannus into thinking that the Dire Dark had returned. Breyin does not condone justifying Shannus's actions.

Favor of the Brewer: This award is given to PCs who either swear to keep the Oerthblood reservoir secret or who turn back in Encounter 8G, just before reaching the Oerthblood lake (since Hermann M respects their wisdom in heeding his warning). PCs cannot gain both this favor and the Wrath of the Iron Wood.

Wrath of the Iron Wood: This award is given to PCs who swore not to reveal the secret of the Oerthblood reservoir and then broke that oath by telling Shannus about it. PCs who violate their oath by exploiting a technical loophole still earn this award. All PCs receive this wrath if they fight or kill Hermann M and never take his oath.

Lawful Respect: This award is granted to all PCs if the party returns the fugitives from Encounter Four to the custody of the Bondsmen. The prisoners must be returned alive unless there is a Bondsman of Estival in the party.

Shadowy Gratitude: This award is granted to all PCs if the party aids the escape of the fugitives in Encounter Four. Merely ignoring the them is not enough to earn this favor; PCs must encounter and actively help them.

Enmity of the Family: This AR award is given to parties that recapture and turn in any of the fugitives, either dead or alive.

Secret: PCs that learn of the Oerthblood in Encounter Three and in Encounter Nine earn this award. Finding the Oerthblood in both encounters is required.

Items Found During the Adventure

APL 6

Unholy water, Freq: Adv, 25 gp
Sh mithril buckler, Freq: Regional, *RotW*
Sh scroll of alter fortune, Freq: Adv, *PH2*
Sh scroll of animalistic power, Freq: Adv, *PH2*
ML adamantite longsword, Freq: Adv, *DMG*
ML scroll of healing spirit, Freq: Adv, *PH2*
ML scroll of mark of doom, Freq: Adv, *PH2*
HM Hermann M's Special Stein, (everfull mug (*MIC*)
that creates Hermann M's Special Blend) Freq: Adv,
400 gp
HM thorn pouch, Freq: Regional, *MIC*
HM scroll of linked perception, Freq: Adv, *PH2*
HM scroll of mass longstrider, Freq: Adv, *PH2*
BE inquisitor bracers, Freq: Regional, *MIC*
BB arcane thieves' tools, Freq: Metaregional, *MIC*

APL 8 (as APL 6 plus the following)

Sh true strike gauntlets, Freq: Regional, *MIC*
ML sacred scabbard, Freq: Adv, *MIC*
HM bag of flames, Freq: Regional, *MIC*
BE armbands of might, Freq: Regional, *MIC*
BB mask of lies, Freq: Metaregional, *MIC*

APL 10 (as APL 6-8 plus the following)

Sh strongarm bracers, Freq: Regional, *MIC*
ML ring of vengeance, Freq: Adv, *MIC*
HM wilding clasp, Freq: Regional, *MIC*
BE noble pennon, Freq: Regional, *MIC*
BB deathstrike bracers, Freq: Metaregional, *MIC*

APL 12 (as APL 6-10 plus the following)

Sh metamagic rod (*sculpting*), Freq: Regional, *MIC*
ML celestial armor, Freq: Adv, *DMG*
HM bracers of lightning, Freq: Adv, *MIC*
BE the fist, Freq: Regional, *MIC*
BB rod of cats, Freq: Metaregional, *MIC*

Appendix 1: NPCs

ALL APLs

Introduction and Encounter Three: Questions at the Quarry

BONDSMAN OF THE VISCOUNT CR 2

Male Human ranger1/fighter 1

LN Medium humanoid (Human)

Init +1 **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +4

Languages Common and either: Elven (50%), Gnomish (25%), or Orcish (25%)

AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17
(+1 Dex, +5 armor, +2 heavy shield)

hp 17 (2 HD)

Fort +6, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

Speed 60 feet (12 squares) mounted, or 20 ft. (4 squares) on foot

Melee masterwork lance +4 (1d8+2/x3) or

Melee longsword +4 (1d8+2/19-20)

Ranged light crossbow +3 (1d8/19-20)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4

Atk Options Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-By Attack

Combat Gear *oil of magic weapon, potion of cure light wounds*

Abilities Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10

Feats Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-by-Attack, Track

Skills Handle Animal +3, Knowledge (Local) +1, Ride +6, Sense Motive +3, Speak language (elven, gnomish or orcish), Spot +4, Survival +5

Possessions combat gear plus light warhorse (with maximum hit points), military saddle, bit and bridle, saddlebags, plus chain mail, heavy shield, masterwork lance, longsword, silver morningstar, sap, crossbow with 10 bolts, tabard bearing the crest of House Estival, map of Verbobonc, pocket guide to the Laws of the Viscounty, flint and steel, 5 torches, 5 days rations and feed, waterskin, bedroll, signal whistle, manacles, holy symbol of St. Cuthbert

*while charging a small/medium unmounted opponent, the Borderer's stats change as follows:

AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 15

Melee* masterwork lance +7 (2d8+6/x3)

*includes charge, higher ground, 1-point Power Attack

Encounter Eight-E: The Labyrinth of Eyes

GAS SPORE (FROM LORDS OF MADNESS) CR 3

Neutral Large Plant

Init -3; **Senses** All-around vision, Low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +4

Languages None

AC 6, touch 6, flat-footed 6
(-1 size, -3 Dex)

hp 15 (10 HD)

Immune critical hits, mind-affecting effects, poison, paralysis, polymorphing, *sleep* effects, stunning

Fort +4, **Ref** +0, **Will** +3

Speed Fly 20 ft. (4 squares) poor, with hover

Melee Slam +9 (1d6+4 and spores)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +14

Atk Options infestation

Special Actions death throes (6d6 sonic and spores)

Abilities Str 16, Dex 4, Con 4, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1
SQ beholder camouflage

Skills Disguise -5 (+15 imitating beholders), Search +4, Spot +4

Death throes (Ex) A gas spore reduced to 0 or fewer hit points immediately explodes in a powerful burst of spores and foul-smelling gas. This blast effects all creatures in a 10-foot radius, dealing them 6d6 points of sonic damage and exposing them to the spores (see Infestation, below). A DC 10 Reflex save halves the damage. The save is Constitution-based. The spores are dispersed in this explosion and cannot be harvested thereafter.

Infestation (Ex) Any living non-plant creature that is damaged by a gas spore's slam attack or its death throes must immediately succeed on a DC 12 Fortitude save or become infested with spores. An infested creature takes 1d4 points of Constitution damage upon becoming infested and an additional 1d4 points of Constitution damage every hour that follows as the spores rapidly grow and consume flesh. The save DC is Constitution-based.

These spores are similar to poison, and anything that delays, neutralizes, or prevents poisoning has a similar effect on the spores. Creatures immune to extra damage from critical hits or immune to poison are immune to a gas spore's infestation.

When the victim's Constitution is reduced to 0, it dies. Its body immediately dissolves into a formless mush that transforms into 1d4 Small gas spores over the course of 1 minute. Each Small gas spore has 1 Hit Die. These gas spores grow rapidly, gaining one Hit Die per minute until they reach their maximum size (10 Hit Dice).

Beholders, beholderkin, and creatures with beholder grafts are immune to gas spore infestation, and gas spores know intrinsically to ignore such creatures.

All-around vision (Ex) A gas spore can see in all directions at once. Because of this, it gains a +4

racial bonus on Search and Spot checks, and it cannot be flanked.

Beholder camouflage (Ex) A gas spore's appearance is so clever that it gains a +20 racial bonus on Disguise checks to appear as a beholder.

Flight (Ex) A gas spore's body is naturally buoyant. This buoyancy allows it to hover and fly at a speed of 20 feet. This buoyancy also grants it a permanent *feather fall* effect (as the spell) with personal range.

Description A bulbous body floats toward you. It has a central, unblinking eye, and a large maw filled with dagger-like teeth. Smaller eyes, attached to wriggling stalks, sprout from the top of the orb-like body.

While a gas spore resembles a beholder in appearance, it is in fact a form of fungus. The creature is hollow, filled with a large volume of spores under terrific pressure. A gas spore is typically about 8 feet in diameter, but weighs only 50 pounds.

Encounter Nine: Blood of the Oerth

HERMANN M **CR 16**

Neutral Male humanoid (human Flan) druid
15/beastmaster 1

Init +2 **Senses** Listen +18, Spot +21

Languages Common, Druidic, Auran, Terran

AC 28, touch 14, flat-footed 19
(+2 Dex, +6 armor, +3 shield, +5 natural (*barkskin*), +2 deflection)

hp 108 (16 HD)

Immune poisons

Resist *death ward* armor

Fort +18, **Ref** +14, **Will** +20; +4 against fey

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares; base 30 ft. plus *longstrider*)

Melee yarpick thorn spiked gauntlet +11 (1d4+1) or

Melee masterwork quarterstaff +12 (1d6+1)

Ranged masterwork sling +13 (1d4+1)

Base Atk +11; **Grp** +12

Atk Options spontaneous summoning, wild shape

Druid Spells Prepared (CL 15th):

8th—(1/day) *Unyielding roots**

7th—(2/day) *rapid summon nature's ally VI*,
nonlethal substituted *fire seeds*

6th—(4/day) *fire seeds*, *greater dispel magic*,
rapid summon nature's ally V, *wall of stone*

5th—(5/day) *animal growth*, *stoneskin*, *rapid
summon nature's ally IV*, *tree stride*, *wall of thorns*

4th—(5/day) *air walk*, *freedom of movement*,
freedom of movement, *spike-stones*, *arc of
lightning**

3rd—(6/day) *cure moderate wounds (2)*, *poison*,
protection from energy (2), *sleet storm*

2nd—(7/day) *barkskin (2)*, *nature's favor*, *healing
lorecall**, *listening lorecall**, *tree shape*

1st—(6/day) *longstrider*, *longstrider*, *obscuring
mist*, *produce flame*, *speak with animals*

0th—(6/day) *guidance (2)*, *cure minor wounds
(3)*, *detect magic*

Combat Gear *belt of battle**, *spellstaff* (storing a word of recall, see the *spellstaff* spell in *PHB*), *potion of remove blindness/deafness (x2)*, *potion of haste*, *potion of greater magic fang (+5)*, *potion of invisibility*, *scroll of cat's grace*, *scroll of bear's endurance (x2)*, *scroll of bull's strength*, *scroll of wall of stone*, *tanglefoot bags (8)*.

Abilities Str 12, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 22, Cha 8

SQ animal companion (advanced dire tiger named Uberstein), thousand faces, trackless step, wild empathy +17, wildshape (tiny to huge animal or plant) 5/day, woodland stride

Feats Augment Summoning, Craft Wondrous Item, Natural Spell, Rapid Spell*, Skill Focus (Handle Animal), Spell Focus (Conjuration), Nonlethal Substitution*

Skills Concentration +21, Handle Animal +7, Heal +16, Jump +2, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (nature) +7, Listen +18, Profession (brewer) +16, Speak Language (4 ranks), Spot +16, Survival +14

Possessions combat gear, plus +2 *death ward*, *wildwood breast plate**, +1 *heavy wooden shield*, *ring of protection +2*, masterwork quarterstaff, masterwork sling, 10 sling bullets, *peripart of wisdom +4*, *Hermann M's Special Stein**, *Heward's handy haversack*, yarpick thorn spiked gauntlet, 250 gp worth of diamond dust, and three sprigs of holly and mistletoe (*divine foci*), 212 gp.

Description Hermann M looks like the epitome of a crazy old coot. His large beard and hair are a tangled mess, he is missing some teeth, and his clothes are ragged.

He is widely known as the brewer of Hermann M's Special Blend, a popular Verbobonc draft whose label bears his likeness. But very few people can claim to have met the hermit in person.

His true purpose, however, is to guard the secrets of the Iron Wood. Two of the most important secrets he keeps are the presence of the Oerthblood reservoir and the secret ingredient of Hermann M's Special Blend. The Oerthblood might be discovered in this adventure, but no one will ever find out that the secret ingredient of Hermann M's Special Blend is nonlethally-substituted *fire seeds* made from the berries of an assassin vine.

* see Appendix 2: New Rules Items

UBERSTEIN: DIRE TIGER ANIMAL COMPANION

Neutral Large Animal

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +6, Spot +9

Languages None

AC 30, touch 12, flat-footed 27

(-1 size, +3 Dex, +5 armor, +8 natural)

hp 135 (18 HD)

Resist evasion

Fort +17, **Ref** +16, **Will** +15

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares; base 40 ft. plus *longstrider*)

Melee claw +21 (2d4+9), or

Melee 2 claws +21 (2d4+9) and bite +18 (2d6+4)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +25

Atk Options improved grab, pounce, rake +19
(2d4+4)

Abilities Str 28, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10

SQ Link, share spells

Feats Alertness, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Improved Natural Attack (bite), Run, Stealthy, Weapon Focus (claw), Multiattack

Skills Hide +7 (+11 in undergrowth), Jump +14, Listen +6, Move Silently +11, Spot +9, Swim +10

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a dire tiger 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 it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can rake

Pounce (Ex) If a dire tiger charges, it can make a full attack, including two rake attacks.

Tricks Uberstein has been trained to perform the following tricks: Attack, Come, Defend, Fetch, Guard, Heel, Stay, and Track

Possessions *amulet of health* +2, *+4 cloak of resistance*, *+2 large studded leather barding*

Power-up Suite If Hermann M is able to prepare for battle, change Uberstein's statistics as follows:

AC 35, touch 12, flat-footed 32

hp 171 **DR** 10/adamantine (150 points)

Melee claw +26 (2d4+14), or

Melee 2 claws +26 (2d4+14) and bite +28 (2d6+14)

Grp +25, automatic success to resist or escape

Atk Options rake +24 (2d4+9)

These adjustments account for: *barkskin*, *bear's endurance*, *freedom of movement*, *greater magic fang* +5 (affecting his bite attack), *nature's favor*, and *stoneskin*.

ENCOUNTER TWO: THERE WILL BE BLOOD**SHADOW BLOODMOTE CLOUD** (FROM *LIBRIS MORTIS AND LORDS OF MADNESS*) **CR 7**

NE Fine Undead (Extraplanar, Swarm)

Init +1; **Senses** Darkvision 60 feet, low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +0**Languages** None**AC** 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18 (+8 size, +1 Dex)**hp** 65 (10 HD)**Immune** ability drain, any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless it also affects objects or is harmless), critical hits, disease, death effects, energy drain, fatigue, flanking, exhaustion, massive damage, mind-affecting effects, nonlethal damage, paralysis, physical ability (Str, Dex, Con) damage, poison, sleep effects, stunning, weapon damage**Resist** cold 15, evasion**Fort** +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8**Weakness** takes +50% damage from area effects**Speed** Fly 30 ft. (6 squares)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.**Melee** swarm (1d4 plus blood drain)**Base Atk** +5; **Grp** —**Atk Options** distraction**Special Actions** shadow blend**Abilities** Str 4, Dex 13, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1**SQ** swarm traits, undead traits**Skills** Move Silently +7**Blood drain (Ex)** A bloodmote cloud drains blood and deals 1d4 points of damage and 1d2 points of Constitution damage to any creature whose space it occupies at the end of its move.**Distraction (Ex)** Any living creature that begins its turn with a bloodmote cloud in its space must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based.**Swarm attack (Ex)** 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.**Shadow blend (Su)** In any conditions other than full daylight, a shadow bloodmote cloud can disappear into the shadows, giving it total concealment. Artificial illumination, even a *light* or *continual flame* spell, does not negate this ability, but a *daylight* spell will.**Description** This cloud of buzzing insects boils toward its victims, droning ominously in its strangely deep pitch and accompanied by the sickly sweet aroma of blood.**ENCOUNTER EIGHT-F: THE KILLING FIELD****IRONTHORN** (FROM *SANDSTORM*) **CR 6**

Neutral Large Plant

Init +0; **Senses** blindsense 60 feet, low-light vision; Listen +1, Spot +13**Languages** None**AC** 24, touch 9, flat-footed 24 (-1 size, +15 natural)**hp** 103 (9 HD)**Immune** critical hits, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison, polymorphing, sleep, stunning**Resist** fire 5**Fort** +13, **Ref** +3, **Will** +4; +2 versus fire attacks**Speed** 10 ft. (2 squares)**Melee** vine rake +8 (1d6+3), or**Melee** 2 vine rakes +8 each (1d6 +3)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.**Base Atk** +6; **Grp** +13**Atk Options** Improved grab**Special Actions** Impale (2d6+4 plus poison)**Abilities** Str 17, Dex 10, Con 25, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 1
SQ plant traits**Feats** Ability Focus (poison), Heat Endurance*, Improved Heat Endurance*, Toughness**Skills** Spot +13**Impale (Ex)** An ironthorn deals 2d6+4 points of damage to a grabbed opponent with a successful grapple check. The opponent is pulled deep into the plant's thorny mass and is subject to the plant's poison (see below).**Improved grab (Ex)** To use this ability, an ironthorn must hit with a vine attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can impale.**Poison (Ex)** Injury, Fortitude DC 23, initial damage paralysis 1d4 minutes, secondary damage 2d4 Con. A victim must save against the secondary damage each minute that it is held in the thorns. The save DC is Constitution-based.**Description** This twisted shrub is the size of an apple tree, with thick bark and only a few waxy leaves. It is covered with wicked, foot-long thorns.

* see Appendix 2: New Rules Items

ENCOUNTER EIGHT-G: STICKS AND STORMS**ADVANCED SHAMBLING MOUND** **CR 7**

Neutral Large Plant

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 feet, low-light vision; Listen +8, Spot +0**Languages** None**AC** 20, touch 9, flat-footed 20 (-1 size, +11 natural)**hp** 90 (12 HD)

Immune electricity, critical hits, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison, polymorphing, sleep, stunning

Resist fire 10

Fort +11, **Ref** +3, **Will** +5

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); swim 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee slam +15 (2d6+6), or

Melee 2 slams +15 (2d6+6)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +19

Atk Options improved grab, constrict 2d6+9, Cleave, Power Attack

Abilities Str 22, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 9

SQ plant traits

Feats Cleave, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Hide +7 (+19 in swampy or forested area), Listen +8, Move Silently +8

Constrict (Ex) A shambling mound deals 2d6+9 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved grab (Ex) To use this ability, a shambling mound must hit with both slam attacks. 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.

Immunity to electricity (Ex) Shambling mounds take no damage from electricity. Instead, any electricity attack (such as *shocking grasp* or *lightning bolt*) used against a shambling mound temporarily grants it 1d4 points of Constitution. The shambling mound loses these points at the rate of 1 per hour.

STONE CIRCLE LIGHTNING TRAP CR 5

Description This chamber is a forty-foot radius circle.

There are doorways at the south and north ends of the room. Spaced evenly around the walls are eight standing stones, and at the room's center is a small pool of water with a central obelisk standing within it. (See the DM Aid in Appendix Five)

The trap is activated when a creature moves within 10 feet of the central menhir without speaking the command words that are printed on the stone in Druidic (Barley, Malt, Yeast, Hops).

When the trap is activated, sliding walls close both doorways. PCs in adjacent spaces can make a DC 20 Reflex save to jump to the opposite side before they seal the chamber for the duration of the trap.

As the doors close, the central stone flashes with light and four bolts of lightning arc between the stones standing at the periphery of the room.

Each round on the trap's initiative count, roll 2d8 four times, but do not add the values. An arc of lightning springs forth between the stones indicated on each die. For example, a roll of 4 and 8 in one 2d8 pair means that a bolt of electricity connects stone #4 and stone #8.

If doubles are rolled on a pair of dice (for example, two 2's), then that arc of lightning crackles on the indicated stone (stone #2). All PCs

standing adjacent to it are subject to the attack, but that is the extent of its effect.

If an individual stone is destroyed, it no longer originates lightning, nor can it act as an anchor in future rounds. If a lightning arc would normally be connected to it, then it instead crackles on the remaining stone, only affecting adjacent squares. Doubles rolled on a destroyed stone have no effect at all.

The central standing stone never acts as an anchor to the arcing lightning, but it serves as a central disarm location for the entire trap. It is, however, protected by a poisoned needle trap. The first character to attempt to disable the stone circle lightning trap's central point without first searching for traps on the center stone is subjected to the Trapguard Trap (see below).

Search DC 20; **Type** Magical

Trigger Detection (*alarm*); **Init** +2

Effect *Arcs of lightning** (2d6 damage, Reflex DC 15 for half); between four pairs of standing stones

Duration 8 rounds

Destruction AC 15; hp 12; hardness 5 (each standing stone)

Destruction AC 17; hp 22; hardness 5 (central stone, shuts down all lightning arcs, but doors remain closed until the trap's duration expires)

Disarm Disable Device DC 29 (each standing stone)

Disarm Disable Device DC 29 (central stone, shuts down all lightning arcs, but doors remain closed until the trap's duration expires; see also the trapguard trap, below)

Dispel DC 15 (each standing stone)

* see Appendix 2: New Rules Items

TRAPGUARD TRAP

Description This trap guards the central stone of the stone circle lightning trap, above.

Poison Needle Trap: CR 1; mechanical; touch trigger; manual reset; Atk +8 ranged (1 plus greenblood oil poison (DC 13 Fortitude save resists (poison only), 1 Con/1d2 Con); Search DC 22; Disable Device DC 20.

ENCOUNTER TWO: THERE WILL BE BLOOD

SHADOW BLOODMOTE CLOUD (FROM *LIBRIS MORTIS AND LORDS OF MADNESS*) **CR 7**

NE Fine Undead (Extraplanar, Swarm)

Init +1; **Senses** Darkvision 60 feet, low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages None

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18 (+8 size, +1 Dex)

hp 65 (10 HD)

Immune ability drain, any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless it also affects objects or is harmless), critical hits, disease, death effects, energy drain, fatigue, flanking, exhaustion, massive damage, mind-affecting effects, nonlethal damage, paralysis, physical ability (Str, Dex, Con) damage, poison, sleep effects, stunning, weapon damage

Resist cold 15, evasion

Fort +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8

Weakness takes +50% damage from area effects

Speed Fly 30 ft. (6 squares)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Melee swarm (1d4 plus blood drain)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** —

Atk Options distraction

Special Actions shadow blend

Abilities Str 4, Dex 13, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1

SQ swarm traits, undead traits

Skills Move Silently +7

Blood drain (Ex) A bloodmote cloud drains blood and deals 1d4 points of damage and 1d2 points of Constitution damage to any creature whose space it occupies at the end of its move.

Distraction (Ex) Any living creature that begins its turn with a bloodmote cloud in its space must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Swarm attack (Ex) 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.

Shadow blend (Su) In any conditions other than full daylight, a shadow bloodmote cloud can disappear into the shadows, giving it total concealment. Artificial illumination, even a *light* or *continual flame* spell, does not negate this ability, but a *daylight* spell will.

Description This cloud of buzzing insects boils toward its victims, droning ominously in its strangely deep pitch and accompanied by the sickly sweet aroma of blood.

ENCOUNTER EIGHT-E: THE KILLING FIELD

IRONTHORN (FROM *SANDSTORM*) **CR 6**

Neutral Large Plant

Init +0; **Senses** blindsense 60 feet, low-light vision; Listen +1, Spot +13

Languages None

AC 24, touch 9, flat-footed 24 (-1 size, +15 natural)

hp 103 (9d8+63)

Immune critical hits, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison, polymorphing, sleep, stunning

Resist fire 5

Fort +13, **Ref** +3, **Will** +4 (+2 versus fire attacks)

Speed 10 ft. (2 squares)

Melee vine rake +8 (1d6+3), or

Melee 2 vine rakes +8 each (1d6 +3)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +13

Atk Options Improved grab

Special Actions Impale (2d6+4, plus poison)

Abilities Str 17, Dex 10, Con 25, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 1

SQ plant traits

Feats Ability Focus (poison), Heat Endurance*, Improved Heat Endurance*, Toughness

Skills Spot +13

Impale (Ex) An ironthorn deals 2d6+4 points of damage to a grabbed opponent with a successful grapple check. The opponent is pulled deep into the plant's thorny mass and is subject to the plant's poison (see below).

Improved grab (Ex) To use this ability, an ironthorn must hit with a vine attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can impale.

Poison (Ex) Injury, Fortitude DC 23, initial damage paralysis 1d4 minutes, secondary damage 2d4 Con. A victim must save against the secondary damage each minute that it is held in the thorns. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Description This twisted shrub is the size of an apple tree, with thick bark and only a few waxy leaves. It is covered with wicked, foot-long thorns.

* see Appendix 2: New Rules Items

ENCOUNTER EIGHT-G: STICKS AND STORMS

ADVANCED SHAMBLING MOUND **CR 7**

Neutral Large Plant

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 feet, low-light vision; Listen +8, Spot +0

Languages None

AC 20, touch 9, flat-footed 20 (-1 size, +11 natural)

hp 90 (12 HD)

Immune electricity, critical hits, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison, polymorphing, sleep, stunning

Resist fire 10

Fort +11, **Ref** +3, **Will** +5

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); swim 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee slam +15 (2d6+6), or

Melee 2 slams +15 (2d6+6)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +19

Atk Options improved grab, constrict 2d6+9, Cleave, Power Attack

Abilities Str 22, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 9

SQ plant traits

Feats Cleave, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Hide +7 (+19 in swampy or forested area), Listen +8, Move Silently +8

Constrict (Ex) A shambling mound deals 2d6+9 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved grab (Ex) To use this ability, a shambling mound must hit with both slam attacks. 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.

Immunity to electricity (Ex) Shambling mounds take no damage from electricity. Instead, any electricity attack (such as *shocking grasp* or *lightning bolt*) used against a shambling mound temporarily grants it 1d4 points of Constitution. The shambling mound loses these points at the rate of 1 per hour.

STONE CIRCLE LIGHTNING TRAP CR 7

Description This chamber is a forty-foot radius circle. There are doorways at the south and north ends of the room. Spaced evenly around the walls are eight standing stones, and at the room's center is a small pool of water with a central obelisk standing within it. (See the DM Aid in Appendix Five)

The trap is activated when a creature moves within 10 feet of the central menhir without speaking the command words that are printed on the stone in Druidic (Barley, Malt, Yeast, Hops).

When the trap is activated, sliding walls close both doorways. PCs in adjacent spaces can make a DC 20 Reflex save to jump to the opposite side before they seal the chamber for the duration of the trap.

As the doors close, the central stone flashes with light and four bolts of lightning arc between the stones standing at the periphery of the room.

Each round on the trap's initiative count, roll 2d8 four times, but do not add the values. An arc of lightning springs forth between the stones indicated on each die. For example, a roll of 4 and 8 in one 2d8 pair means that a bolt of electricity connects stone #4 and stone #8.

If doubles are rolled on a pair of dice (for example, two 2's), then that arc of lightning crackles on the indicated stone (stone #2). All PCs

standing adjacent to it are subject to the attack, but that is the extent of its effect.

If an individual stone is destroyed, it no longer originates lightning, nor can it act as an anchor in future rounds. If a lightning arc would normally be connected to it, then it instead crackles on the remaining stone, only affecting adjacent squares. Doubles rolled on a destroyed stone have no effect at all.

The central standing stone never acts as an anchor to the arcing lightning, but it serves as a central disarm location for the entire trap. It is, however, protected by a poisoned needle trap. The first character to attempt to disable the stone circle lightning trap's central point without first searching for traps on the center stone is subjected to the Trapguard Trap (see below).

Search DC 22; Type Magical

Trigger Detection (*alarm*); **Init** +3

Effect *Arcs of lightning* (3d6 damage, Reflex DC 17 for half); between four pairs of standing stones

Duration 10 rounds

Destruction AC 17; hp 17; hardness 7 (each standing stone)

Destruction AC 20; hp 31; hardness 7 (central stone, shuts down all lightning arcs, but doors remain closed until the trap's duration expires)

Disarm Disable Device DC 29 (each standing stone)

Disarm Disable Device DC 29 (central stone, shuts down all lightning arcs, but doors remain closed until the trap's duration expires; see also the trapguard trap, below)

Dispel DC 17 (each standing stone)

* see Appendix 2: New Rules Items

TRAPGUARD TRAP

Description This trap guards the central stone of the stone circle lightning trap, above.

Poison Needle Trap: CR 2; mechanical; touch trigger; repair reset; lock bypass (Open Lock DC 30); Atk +17 melee (1 plus poison, needle); poison (blue whinnis, DC 14 Fortitude save resists (poison only), 1 Con/unconsciousness); Search DC 22; Disable Device DC 17.

ENCOUNTER TWO: THERE WILL BE BLOOD

BLOOD AMNIOTE (FROM *LIBRIS MORTIS*) CR 9

Neutral Huge Undead

Init +5; **Senses** Blindsight 60 feet; Listen -5, Spot -5

Languages None

AC 26, touch 13, flat-footed 21

(-2 size, +5 Dex, +13 natural)

hp 65 (10 HD); **fast healing** 5; **DR** 10/—

Immune ability drain, physical ability (Str, Dex, Con) damage, critical hits, death effects, disease, energy drain, exhaustion, fatigue, flanking, gaze attacks, illusions, mind effects, nonlethal damage, paralysis, polymorph, poison, sleep effects, stunning, visual effects.

Fort +3, **Ref** +8, **Will** -2

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 20 ft.

Melee Slam +9 (2d6+6 plus blood call)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +18

Atk Options blood call

Special Actions self spawn

Abilities Str 19, Dex 20, Con —, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 1

SQ mindless, ooze traits, undead traits

Blood call (Su) Whenever a blood amniote strikes a living creature in melee combat, its touch causes the target's body to expel a portion of its own blood through the pores. The expelled blood gathers and flows across the intervening distance between the prey and the blood amniote. This attack deals 1d4 points of Constitution damage to the foe.

If a blood amniote deals as many points of Constitution damage during its existence as its full normal hit point total, it self spawns (see below).

Self spawn (Ex) If a blood amniote deals as many points of Constitution damage during its existence as its full normal hit points total, it self spawns, splitting into two identical blood amniotes, each with a number of hit points equal to the original blood amniote's full normal total.

Description A clot of animate blood the size of a small house, this amoeba of failed life is hungry to add new blood to its oozing body.

SHADOW BLOODMOTE CLOUD (FROM *LIBRIS MORTIS AND LORDS OF MADNESS*) CR 7

NE Fine Undead (Extraplanar, Swarm)

Init +1; **Senses** Darkvision 60 feet, low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages None

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18

(+8 size, +1 Dex)

hp 65 (10 HD)

Immune ability drain, any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless it also affects objects or is harmless), critical hits, disease, death effects, energy drain, fatigue, flanking, exhaustion, massive damage, mind-affecting effects, nonlethal damage, paralysis, physical ability (Str, Dex, Con) damage, poison, sleep effects, stunning, weapon damage

Resist cold 15, evasion

Fort +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8

Weakness takes +50% damage from area effects

Speed Fly 30 ft. (6 squares)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Melee swarm (1d4 plus blood drain)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** —

Atk Options distraction

Special Actions shadow blend

Abilities Str 4, Dex 13, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1

SQ swarm traits, undead traits

Skills Move Silently +7

Blood drain (Ex) A bloodmote cloud drains blood and deals 1d4 points of damage and 1d2 points of Constitution damage to any creature whose space it occupies at the end of its move.

Distraction (Ex) Any living creature that begins its turn with a bloodmote cloud in its space must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Swarm attack (Ex) 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.

Shadow blend (Su) In any conditions other than full daylight, a shadow bloodmote cloud can disappear into the shadows, giving it total concealment. Artificial illumination, even a *light* or *continual flame* spell, does not negate this ability, but a *daylight* spell will.

Description This cloud of buzzing insects boils toward its victims, droning ominously in its strangely deep pitch and accompanied by the sickly sweet aroma of blood.

ENCOUNTER EIGHT-F: THE KILLING FIELD

GREENVISE (FROM *MMII*)

CR 10

Neutral Huge Plant

Init +4; **Senses** blindsense 60 feet, low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +12

Languages None

AC 16, touch 8, flat-footed 16

(-2 size, +8 natural)

hp 102 (12 HD)

Immune acid, critical hits, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison, polymorphing, sleep, stunning

Fort +14, Ref +6, Will +6

Speed 10 ft. (2 squares)

Melee slam +17 (2d4+9), or

Melee 4 slams +17 each (2d4+9) and bite +11 (1d6+4)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +26

Atk Options Improved grab

Special Actions death fog, swallow whole

Abilities Str 29, Dex 10, Con 18, Int 3, Wis 11, Cha 6
SQ plant traits

Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Great Fortitude, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Spot +12

Death fog (Su) Twice per day, a greenvise can emit an acidic fog that functions like an *acid fog* spell, except as follows. The death fog's area is a 40-foot-high spread with a 60-foot radius. Within this area, all sight, including darkvision, is limited to 5 feet. A creature within 5 feet has one half concealment (20% miss chance). Creatures farther away have total concealment (50% miss chance and attackers can't use sight to locate the target). Any creature attempting to move through the death fog progresses at one-tenth normal speed, and each of its melee attack and melee damage rolls incurs a -2 circumstance penalty. A death fog prevents effective ranged weapon attacks, except for magic rays and the like.

In addition to obscuring sight, a death fog is highly acidic. Each round, the fog deals 3d8 points of acid damage to every creature and object within it (no saving throw). A severe wind (31+ mph) disperses these vapors in 1d2 rounds; otherwise, the effect lasts for 3d6+1 rounds.

Greenvises are not impeded by their own death fog, so they can move and fight within the fog freely.

Improved grab (Ex) If a greenvise hits an opponent that is at least one size category smaller than itself with a slam attack, it deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it gets a hold, it can transfer the opponent to its mouth with another successful grapple check, dealing automatic bite damage, then try to swallow in the next round. Alternatively, the greenvise has the option to conduct the grapple normally, or simply use its tendrils or maw to hold the opponent (-20 penalty on the grapple check, but the greenvise is not considered grappled). In either case, each successful grapple check it makes during successive rounds automatically deals slam or bite damage, as appropriate.

Swallow whole (Ex) A greenvise can swallow a single creature that is at least one size category smaller than itself by making a successful grapple check, provided that it already has that opponent in its maw (see Improved Grab, above). Once inside the greenvise, the opponent takes 2d6+9 points of bludgeoning damage and 2d4 points of acid

damage per round from the plant's stomach. A successful grapple check allows the swallowed creature to climb out of the stomach and return to the greenvise's maw, where another grapple check is needed to get free. Alternatively, a swallowed creature can try to cut its way out with either claws or a light piercing or slashing weapon. Dealing at least 20 points of damage to the stomach (AC 18) in this way creates an opening large enough to permit escape. Once a single swallowed creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; thus, another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out. A greenvise's stomach can hold 1 Large, 4 Medium, 16 Small, or 64 Tiny or smaller-sized opponents.

Woodsense (Ex) A greenvise can automatically sense the location of anything within 60 feet that is in contact with vegetation, even objects or creatures that are not in contact with the same vegetation as it is.

Description A greenvise is a larger, sturdier version of the venus fly trap, with a thick, green, trunk-like stem and four sturdy tendrils that hang down like vines. When the creature opens its mouth, a mottled pink maw lined with tooth-like thorns is revealed; when closed, the mouth structure resembles an ordinary leafy bush. A greenvise has small tendril-like roots that it uses to move.

ENCOUNTER EIGHT-G: STICKS AND STORMS

HUGE ADVANCED SHAMBLING MOUND CR 9
Neutral Huge Plant

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 feet, low-light vision; Listen +8, Spot +0

Languages None

AC 21, touch 7, flat-footed 21
(-1 Dex, -2 size, +14 natural)

hp 168 (16 HD)

Immune electricity, critical hits, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison, polymorphing, sleep, stunning

Resist fire 10

Fort +14, Ref +4, Will +7

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); swim 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee slam +21 (4d6+10), or

Melee 2 slams +21 (4d6+10)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +30

Atk Options improved grab, constrict 4d6+15, Cleave, Power Attack

Abilities Str 30, Dex 8, Con 22, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 9
SQ plant traits

Feats Cleave, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Hide +8 (+20 in swampy or forested area), Listen +8, Move Silently +7

Constrict (Ex) A shambling mound deals 4d6+15 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved grab (Ex) To use this ability, a shambling mound must hit with both slam attacks. 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.

Immunity to electricity (Ex) Shambling mounds take no damage from electricity. Instead, any electricity attack (such as *shocking grasp* or *lightning bolt*) used against a shambling mound temporarily grants it 1d4 points of Constitution. The shambling mound loses these points at the rate of 1 per hour.

STONE CIRCLE LIGHTNING TRAP CR 9

Description This chamber is a forty-foot radius circle. There are doorways at the south and north ends of the room. Spaced evenly around the walls are eight standing stones, and at the room's center is a small pool of water with a central obelisk standing within it. (See the DM Aid in Appendix Five)

The trap is activated when a creature moves within 10 feet of the central menhir without speaking the command words that are printed on the stone in Druidic (Barley, Malt, Yeast, Hops).

When the trap is activated, sliding walls close both doorways. PCs in adjacent spaces can make a DC 20 Reflex save to jump to the opposite side before they seal the chamber for the duration of the trap.

As the doors close, the central stone flashes with light and four bolts of lightning arc between the stones standing at the periphery of the room.

Each round on the trap's initiative count, roll 2d8 four times, but do not add the values. An arc of lightning springs forth between the stones indicated on each die. For example, a roll of 4 and 8 in one 2d8 pair means that a bolt of electricity connects stone #4 and stone #8.

If doubles are rolled on a pair of dice (for example, two 2's), then that arc of lightning crackles on the indicated stone (stone #2). All PCs standing adjacent to it are subject to the attack, but that is the extent of its effect.

If an individual stone is destroyed, it no longer originates lightning, nor can it act as an anchor in future rounds. If a lightning arc would normally be connected to it, then it instead crackles on the remaining stone, only affecting adjacent squares. Doubles rolled on a destroyed stone have no effect at all.

The central standing stone never acts as an anchor to the arcing lightning, but it serves as a central disarm location for the entire trap. It is, however, covered in contact poison. The first character to attempt to disable the stone circle lightning trap's central point without first searching for traps on the center stone is subjected to the Trapguard Trap (see below).

Search DC 24; **Type** Magical

Trigger Detection (*alarm*); **Init** +4

Effect *Arcs of lightning** (4d6 damage, Reflex DC 19 for half); between four pairs of standing stones

Duration 12 rounds

Destruction AC 19; hp 22; hardness 9 (each standing stone)

Destruction AC 23; hp 40; hardness 9 (central stone, shuts down all lightning arcs, but doors remain closed until the trap's duration expires)

Disarm Disable Device DC 29 (each standing stone)

Disarm Disable Device DC 29 (central stone, shuts down all lightning arcs, but doors remain closed until the trap's duration expires; see also the trapguard trap, below)

Dispel DC 19 (each standing stone)

* see Appendix 2: New Rules Items

TRAPGUARD TRAP

Description This trap guards the central stone of the stone circle lightning trap, above.

Contact poison: CR 4; mechanical; touch trigger; no reset; poison (sassone leaf residue, DC 16 Fortitude save resists, 2d12 hp/1d6 Con); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 19.

ENCOUNTER TWO: THERE WILL BE BLOOD

BLOOD AMNIOTE (FROM LIBRIS MORTIS)

CR 9

Neutral Huge Undead

Init +5; **Senses** Blindsight 60 feet; Listen -5, Spot -5

Languages None

AC 26, touch 13, flat-footed 21

(-2 size, +5 Dex, +13 natural)

hp 65 (10 HD); **fast healing** 5; **DR** 10/—

Immune ability drain, physical ability (Str, Dex, Con) damage, critical hits, death effects, disease, energy drain, exhaustion, fatigue, flanking, gaze attacks, illusions, mind effects, nonlethal damage, paralysis, polymorph, poison, sleep effects, stunning, visual effects.

Fort +3, **Ref** +8, **Will** -2

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 20 ft.

Melee Slam +9 (2d6+6 plus blood call)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +18

Atk Options blood call

Special Actions self spawn

Abilities Str 19, Dex 20, Con —, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 1

SQ mindless, ooze traits, undead traits

Blood call (Su) Whenever a blood amniote strikes a living creature in melee combat, its touch causes the target's body to expel a portion of its own blood through the pores. The expelled blood gathers and flows across the intervening distance between the prey and the blood amniote. This attack deals 1d4 points of Constitution damage to the foe.

If a blood amniote deals as many points of Constitution damage during its existence as its full normal hit point total, it self spawns (see below).

Self spawn (Ex) If a blood amniote deals as many points of Constitution damage during its existence as its full normal hit points total, it self spawns, splitting into two identical blood amniotes, each with a number of hit points equal to the original blood amniote's full normal total.

Description A clot of animate blood the size of a small house, this amoeba of failed life is hungry to add new blood to its oozing body.

SHADOW BLOODMOTE CLOUD (FROM LIBRIS MORTIS AND LORDS OF MADNESS)

CR 7

NE Fine Undead (Extraplanar, Swarm)

Init +1; **Senses** Darkvision 60 feet, low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages None

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18

(+8 size, +1 Dex)

hp 65 (10 HD)

Immune ability drain, any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless it also affects objects or is harmless), critical hits, disease, death effects, energy drain, fatigue, flanking, exhaustion, massive damage, mind-affecting effects, nonlethal damage, paralysis, physical ability (Str, Dex, Con) damage, poison, sleep effects, stunning, weapon damage

Resist cold 15, evasion

Fort +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8

Weakness takes +50% damage from area effects

Speed Fly 30 ft. (6 squares)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Melee swarm (1d4 plus blood drain)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** —

Atk Options distraction

Special Actions shadow blend

Abilities Str 4, Dex 13, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1

SQ swarm traits, undead traits

Skills Move Silently +7

Blood drain (Ex) A bloodmote cloud drains blood and deals 1d4 points of damage and 1d2 points of Constitution damage to any creature whose space it occupies at the end of its move.

Distraction (Ex) Any living creature that begins its turn with a bloodmote cloud in its space must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Swarm attack (Ex) 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.

Shadow blend (Su) In any conditions other than full daylight, a shadow bloodmote cloud can disappear into the shadows, giving it total concealment. Artificial illumination, even a *light* or *continual flame* spell, does not negate this ability, but a *daylight* spell will.

Description This cloud of buzzing insects boils toward its victims, droning ominously in its strangely deep pitch and accompanied by the sickly sweet aroma of blood.

ENCOUNTER EIGHT-F: THE KILLING FIELD

GREENVISE (FROM MMII)

CR 10

Neutral Huge Plant

Init +4; **Senses** blindsense 60 feet, low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +12

Languages None

AC 16, touch 8, flat-footed 16

(-2 size, +8 natural)

hp 102 (12 HD)

Immune acid, critical hits, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison, polymorphing, sleep, stunning
Fort +14, Ref +6, Will +6

Speed 10 ft. (2 squares)

Melee slam +17 (2d4+9), or

Melee 4 slams +17 each (2d4+9) and bite +11 (1d6+4)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +26

Atk Options Improved grab

Special Actions death fog, swallow whole

Abilities Str 29, Dex 10, Con 18, Int 3, Wis 11, Cha 6

SQ plant traits

Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Great Fortitude, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Spot +12

Death fog (Su) Twice per day, a greenvise can emit an acidic fog that functions like an *acid fog* spell, except as follows. The death fog's area is a 40-foot-high spread with a 60-foot radius. Within this area, all sight, including darkvision, is limited to 5 feet. A creature within 5 feet has one half concealment (20% miss chance). Creatures farther away have total concealment (50% miss chance and attackers can't use sight to locate the target). Any creature attempting to move through the death fog progresses at one-tenth normal speed, and each of its melee attack and melee damage rolls incurs a -2 circumstance penalty. A death fog prevents effective ranged weapon attacks, except for magic rays and the like.

In addition to obscuring sight, a death fog is highly acidic. Each round, the fog deals 3d8 points of acid damage to every creature and object within it (no saving throw). A severe wind (31+ mph) disperses these vapors in 1d2 rounds; otherwise, the effect lasts for 3d6+1 rounds.

Greenvises are not impeded by their own death fog, so they can move and fight within the fog freely.

Improved grab (Ex) If a greenvise hits an opponent that is at least one size category smaller than itself with a slam attack, it deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it gets a hold, it can transfer the opponent to its mouth with another successful grapple check, dealing automatic bite damage, then try to swallow in the next round. Alternatively, the greenvise has the option to conduct the grapple normally, or simply use its tendrils or maw to hold the opponent (-20 penalty on the grapple check, but the greenvise is not considered grappled). In either case, each successful grapple check it makes during successive rounds automatically deals slam or bite damage, as appropriate.

Swallow whole (Ex) A greenvise can swallow a single creature that is at least one size category smaller than itself by making a successful grapple check, provided that it already has that opponent in its maw (see Improved Grab, above). Once inside

the greenvise, the opponent takes 2d6+9 points of bludgeoning damage and 2d4 points of acid damage per round from the plant's stomach. A successful grapple check allows the swallowed creature to climb out of the stomach and return to the greenvise's maw, where another grapple check is needed to get free. Alternatively, a swallowed creature can try to cut its way out with either claws or a light piercing or slashing weapon. Dealing at least 20 points of damage to the stomach (AC 18) in this way creates an opening large enough to permit escape. Once a single swallowed creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; thus, another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out. A greenvise's stomach can hold 1 Large, 4 Medium, 16 Small, or 64 Tiny or smaller-sized opponents.

Woodsense (Ex) A greenvise can automatically sense the location of anything within 60 feet that is in contact with vegetation, even objects or creatures that are not in contact with the same vegetation as it is.

Description A greenvise is a larger, sturdier version of the venus fly trap, with a thick, green, trunk-like stem and four sturdy tendrils that hang down like vines. When the creature opens its mouth, a mottled pink maw lined with tooth-like thorns is revealed; when closed, the mouth structure resembles an ordinary leafy bush. A greenvise has small tendril-like roots that it uses to move.

ENCOUNTER EIGHT-G: STICKS AND STORMS

TRULY ROTTEN ADVANCED SHAMBLING MOUND CR 11

Neutral Huge Plant

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 feet, low-light vision;

Listen +8, Spot +0

Languages None

AC 21, touch 7, flat-footed 21

(-1 Dex, -2 size, +14 natural)

hp 252 (24 HD)

Immune electricity, critical hits, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison, polymorphing, sleep, stunning

Resist fire 10

Fort +18, Ref +6, Will +9

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); swim 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee slam +28 (4d6+11), or

Melee 2 slams +28 (4d6+11)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Base Atk +19; **Grp** +37

Atk Options improved grab, constrict 4d6+16, Cleave, Power Attack

Abilities Str 32, Dex 8, Con 22, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 9

SQ plant traits

Feats Cleave, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Hide +16 (+28 in swampy or forested area), Listen +8, Move Silently +7

Constrict (Ex) A shambling mound deals 4d6+16 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved grab (Ex) To use this ability, a shambling mound must hit with both slam attacks. 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.

Immunity to electricity (Ex) Shambling mounds take no damage from electricity. Instead, any electricity attack (such as *shocking grasp* or *lightning bolt*) used against a shambling mound temporarily grants it 1d4 points of Constitution. The shambling mound loses these points at the rate of 1 per hour.

STONE CIRCLE LIGHTNING TRAP CR 11

Description This chamber is a forty-foot radius circle. There are doorways at the south and north ends of the room. Spaced evenly around the walls are eight standing stones, and at the room's center is a small pool of water with a central obelisk standing within it. (See the DM Aid in Appendix Five)

The trap is activated when a creature moves within 10 feet of the central menhir without speaking the command words that are printed on the stone in Druidic (Barley, Malt, Yeast, Hops).

When the trap is activated, sliding walls close both doorways. PCs in adjacent spaces can make a DC 20 Reflex save to jump to the opposite side before they seal the chamber for the duration of the trap.

As the doors close, the central stone flashes with light and four bolts of lightning arc between the stones standing at the periphery of the room.

Each round on the trap's initiative count, roll 2d8 four times, but do not add the values. An arc of lightning springs forth between the stones indicated on each die. For example, a roll of 4 and 8 in one 2d8 pair means that a bolt of electricity connects stone #4 and stone #8.

If doubles are rolled on a pair of dice (for example, two 2's), then that arc of lightning crackles on the indicated stone (stone #2). All PCs standing adjacent to it are subject to the attack, but that is the extent of its effect.

If an individual stone is destroyed, it no longer originates lightning, nor can it act as an anchor in future rounds. If a lightning arc would normally be connected to it, then it instead crackles on the remaining stone, only affecting adjacent squares. Doubles rolled on a destroyed stone have no effect at all.

The central standing stone never acts as an anchor to the arcing lightning, but it serves as a central disarm location for the entire trap. It is, however, covered in contact poison. The first character to attempt to disable the stone circle lightning trap's central point without first searching for traps on the center stone is subjected to the Trapguard Trap (see below).

Search DC 26; **Type** Magical

Trigger Detection (*alarm*); **Init** +5

Effect *Arcs of lightning** (6d6 damage, Reflex DC 16 for half); between four pairs of standing stones

Duration 14 rounds

Destruction AC 22; hp 27; hardness 11 (each standing stone)

Destruction AC 27; hp 49; hardness 11 (central stone, shuts down all lightning arcs, but doors remain closed until the trap's duration expires)

Disarm Disable Device DC 29 (each standing stone)

Disarm Disable Device DC 29 (central stone, shuts down all lightning arcs, but doors remain closed until the trap's duration expires; see also the trapguard trap, below)

Dispel DC 22 (each standing stone)

* see Appendix 2: New Rules Items

TRAPGUARD TRAP

Description This trap guards the central stone of the stone circle lightning trap, above.

Contact poison: CR 6; mechanical; touch trigger; no reset; poison (terinav root, DC 16 Fortitude save resists, 1d6 Dex/2d6 Dex); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 19.

Appendix 2: New Rules Items

Source: *Complete Divine*

New Feats

Heat Endurance [General]

Either as a result of growing up in the waste, or by training your body and mind to ignore the effects of searing heat, you can exist with ease in high-temperature environments.

Prerequisite: Base Fortitude save +2

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on saving throws against fire effects. You can exist comfortably in temperatures up to 120 degrees Fahrenheit without having to make Fortitude saves. Your protection against Heat is Level 1.

Source: *Sandstorm*

Improved Heat Endurance [General]

You can survive even in the most extreme natural heat conditions.

Prerequisites: Base Fortitude save +6, Heat Endurance.

Benefit: You gain fire resistance 5. If you already have fire resistance, it increases by 5. You can exist comfortably in temperatures up to 160 degrees Fahrenheit without having to make Fortitude saves. Your protection against heat is level 3.

Source: *Sandstorm*

Nonlethal Substitution [Metamagic]

You can modify an energy spell to deal nonlethal damage.

Prerequisites: Knowledge (arcana) 5 ranks, any metamagic feat.

Benefit: Choose one type of energy (acid, cold, electricity or fire). You can then modify any spell with the chosen descriptor to deal nonlethal damage instead of normal energy damage. The nonlethal spell works normally in all aspects except the type of damage dealt—for example, a nonlethal fireball has the same range and area, but since it deals nonlethal damage instead of energy damage, it will not damage objects or set fire to combustibles in the area.

A nonlethal spell takes up a spell slot of one level higher than the spell's normal level.

Source: *Complete Arcane*

Rapid Spell [Metamagic]

You can cast spells with long casting times more quickly.

Benefit: Only spells with a casting time greater than 1 standard action can be made rapid. A rapid spell with a casting time of 1 full round can be cast as a standard action. A rapid spell with a casting time measured in rounds can be cast in 1 full round. Rapid spells with casting times measured in minutes can be cast in one minute, and rapid spells with casting times measured in hours can be cast in 1 hour.

A rapid spell uses up a spell slot one level higher than the spell's normal level.

New Equipment

Belt of battle

Price (Item Level): 12,000 gp (13th)

Body Slot: Waist

Caster Level: 9th

Aura: Moderate; (DC 19) transmutation

Activation: — and swift (mental)

Weight: —

A *belt of battle* helps you avoid being caught off guard in combat and allows occasional bursts of extra activity. While worn, it grants you a +2 competence bonus on initiative checks. This is a continuous effect and requires no activation.

In addition, a *belt of battle* has three charges, which are renewed each day at dawn. Each time you activate the belt, one of the black pearls set into its buckle turns white. The pearls return to normal when the belt's charges renew. Spending 1 or more charges grants you an extra action, which must be taken immediately (before you take any other action).

1 charge: 1 move action.

2 charges: 1 standard action

3 charges: 1 full-round action.

Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *haste*.

Cost to create: 6000 gp, 480 xp, 12 days.

Source: *Magic Item Compendium*

Death ward enhancement (from *Magic Item Compendium*)

Price (Item Level): +1 bonus

Property: Armor or Shield

Caster Level: 7th

Aura: Moderate; (DC 19) necromancy

Activation: Immediate (mental)

Armor and shields that have this property are favored by those dedicated to fighting the foul art of necromancy. While wearing or using death ward armor or a death ward shield, you can activate the armor to ignore any death effect (including death spells, magical death effects, and energy drain) or negative energy effect (such as *inflict* spells or *chill touch*).

The death ward property functions once per day.

Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *death ward*.

Cost to create: Varies.

Source: *Magic Item Compendium*

Hermann M's Special Stein

Price (Item Level): 400 gp (3rd)

Body Slot: — (held)

Caster Level: 6th

Aura: Faint; (DC 16) conjuration

Activation: Standard (command)

Weight: —

Three times per day, when you recite the command word, this mug fills with 12 ounces of water or Hermann M's Special Blend (your choice).

Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, Nonlethal Substitution, five ranks in Profession (brewer), *create water*, *fire seeds*.

Cost to create: 200 gp, 16 xp, 1 day.

Source: based on the *everfull mug* from *Magic Item Compendium*

New Spells

Arc of lightning (from *Spell Compendium*)

Conjuration (Creation) [Electricity]

Level: Druid 4, sorcerer/wizard 5, Windstorm 5

Components: V, S, M/DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Area: A line between two creatures

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Reflex half

Spell Resistance: No

This bolt deals 1d6 points of electricity damage per caster level (maximum 15d6) to both creatures and to anything in the line between them.

Both creatures must be in range, and you must be able to target them both (as if this spell had them as its targets). Draw the line from any corner in one creature's space to any corner in the other's space. The bolt affects all squares in this line.

Arcane Material Component: Two small iron rods.

Healing lorecall (from *Spell Compendium*)

Divination

Level: Cleric 2, druid 2, ranger 1

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 10 minutes/level

A caster with 5 or more ranks in Heal can, when casting a conjuration (healing) spell, choose to remove any one of the following conditions affecting the subject of the spell, in addition to the spell's normal effects: dazed, dazzled, or fatigued. A caster with 10 or more ranks in Heal can choose from the following conditions in addition to those above: exhausted, nauseated, or sickened.

Also, when determining the amount of damage healed by your conjuration (healing) spells, you can substitute your total ranks in Heal for your caster level. The normal caster level limit for individual spells still applies; thus, a 3rd-level cleric with 6 ranks in Heal when under the effect of *healing lorecall* cures 1d8+5 points of damage with a *cure light wounds* spell.

Material Component: A mint leaf.

Listening lorecall (from *Spell Compendium*)

Divination

Level: Druid 2, ranger 2

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 10 minutes/level

You gain a +4 insight bonus on Listen checks. In addition, if you have 5 or more ranks in Listen, you gain blindsense out to 30 feet. If you have 12 or more ranks in Listen, you gain blindsight out to 15 feet.

A *silence* spell or effect negates the blindsense or blindsight granted by a *listening lorecall* spell.

Nature's favor (from *Spell Compendium*)

Evocation

Level: Druid 2, ranger 2

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 swift action

Range: Touch

Target: Animal touched

Duration: 1 minute

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

You grant the subject animal a +1 luck bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls for every three caster levels you possess (maximum +5).

Unyielding roots (from *Spell Compendium*)

Transmutation

Level: Druid 8

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Willing creature touched

Duration: 1 round/level (D)

Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

The creature you touch must be standing on or otherwise touching the ground for this spell to have an effect on it. For the duration of the spell, the touched creature can't move from its current space, nor can it be moved from its space by bull rushes, overruns, magic such as *Bigby's forceful hand*, or any effect short of a massive earthquake.

Such attempts simply fail. If an overrun attempt is made against a creature with *unyielding roots*, the rooted creature must block rather than avoid the overrun. The rooted creature automatically wins the Strength check to stop the overrun and can make a Strength check (opposed by the overrunning creature's Strength or Dexterity check) to knock the overrunning creature prone.

The roots draw life energy from the ground that feed the touched creature, healing up to 30 points of damage per round, neutralizing poisons automatically, and wiping away negative levels (as the *restoration* spell). The touched creature

gets a +4 bonus on Fortitude and Will saves as long as the roots remain, but a -4 penalty on Reflex saves.

Appendix 3: Legwork

At various points throughout this adventure, the PCs may want to find out more information about the happenings in the Viscounty. Have them make the appropriate skill checks, with higher checks resulting in more information. Other knowledge skills may be used, in addition to the ones listed, at the DM's discretion. The DM is reminded that each Gather Information check takes 1d4+1 hours. All DCs are increased by +5 for Bardic Knowledge checks.

Gathering Information in Verbobonc City: (Bardic Knowledge, Gather Information, Knowledge [Local: VTF]).

DC 3: Verbobonc has a new Viscount – Lord Estival, who only returned to these lands a few years ago to reclaim his patents of nobility. It's wonderful to see Castle Greyfist occupied again. Veluna couldn't have chosen a better friend to the common man. May the Cudgel bless his reign!

DC 4: Viscount Estival has really cleaned up the city. After the Mounted Borderers disbanded, he appointed his own guards, the Bondsmen of Estival, to handle law enforcement in Verbobonc.

DC 5: Bishop Haufren has been in a coma for a really long time. I wonder if he'll ever wake up.

DC 7: Magister Har was conducting some mad experiment on the Skyroads. It went wrong and blew up in his face, killing him and taking half of the Wrinkle Academy with him! Now the scholars don't have anywhere to read their books. Boo-hoo. It's high time they got real jobs like the rest of us!

DC 9: Lord Langmuir and Lady Elise Brandenberg have set a date for their wedding. It's so exciting!

DC 10: The night of Viscount Estival's coronation, Trithereonites made a coordinated strike against the head of every noble house in the lands. Demonic agents of the Summoner killed almost every last one of them. Because of that, some people are calling Estival's ascension "The Red Investiture."

DC 11: Since the assassinations were orchestrated by his cult, worshipping Trithereon is now punishable by death. The Viscount's not taking any chances with those anarchists. Serves 'em right for what they did!

DC 12: Shannus was stripped of his nobility and placed under house arrest in Glory. He deserves worse, after he started that whole civil war between the nobles by invading Validia last year.

DC 13: With Shannus removed from power, the Low Road through the Iron Wood is open again. Of course, now the lycanthropes will probably be back on the prowl. Zilchus save us!

DC 15: Supplies of Hermann M's Special Blend are running out all over town. Probably the fault of those lazy Rhennee bargefolk in Rhynehurst. Bah! This *would* have to happen to *my* favorite beer!

DC 16: The Great Dire Dark is back. A friend of mine knows a merchant who saw it last week when he got caught in the Iron Wood after dark. Where's Shannus when ya need him?

DC 17: I was worried that the Cienega Valley wineries would stop production when House Langmuir was threatening to invade the town, but it looks like the danger has passed now that Lord Ludovic's deposed his mother. Cheers to the Sun Father for that!

DC 18: Some adventurers assassinated Lord and Lady Saflynd, but they say that the whole noble family were actually werewolves! The other nobles who were killed on the night of the Red Investiture were the heads of Houses Chondell, DeChutes, Deleveu, Galans, Haxx, Rhynehurst, Saflynd, and Stefania.

DC 20: Bondsmen have been pickin' up law breakers all over the region since Lord Estival became the Viscount. Its getting hard to make a dishonest wage. Show your nose in the wrong place, and you'll get a one-way ticket to the Quarry.

DC 23: The ranks of the Black Rose Company have swollen in the wake of the dissolution of all the noble houses. I've seen people coming and going from their headquarters at all hours. I wonder what they're up to in there.

DC 24: I heard that the Autumn Wind Brewery in Swan is a secret hideout for kobold insurgents! They're putting something in the ale!

DC 26: Some Trithereonites are claiming that the cultists who organized the assassinations of the Red Investiture all belonged to a separate sect of followers with no ties to the rest of their church. A likely story!

DC 28: I don't trust the new Viscount. He's been too successful with everything he's undertaken. By Olidammara's dice, nobody's *that* lucky!

DC 30: Didja hear? Some adventurers actually found Viscount Langard! No one knows where he is now, though. Whaddy make o' that?

Gathering Information in Rhynehurst: (Gather Information, **NOTE:** all DCs have been increased by 10, because of the limited amount of time available for gathering information)

DC 13: Viscount Estival's rule and the strict policing by the Bondsmen of the Viscount have hurt commerce in the city.

DC 15: The late Lord Rhynehurst allowed for a number of methods to speed trading and transactions through the town. Those options are no longer available.

DC 18: Many traders, who avoided taxes before, have now been ruined by the assessment of back taxes and the stringent application of shipping rules and regulations.

DC 20: The re-opening of the Iron Wood has brought renewed land trade with Devarnish, but with Lord Shannus deposed and his forces confined to Glory, the Iron Wood threatens to become a haven for lycanthropes once more.

DC 25: Darkhapor, the floating Rhennee barge town just outside of Rhynehurst, has a reputation as a haven for lawlessness. With their business being encroached upon by the new rule of the Viscount, the bargefolk are talking more and more about 'breaking the piers' and allowing the waterborne town to sail away down the Velderdyva.

DC 30: Cordova "The Bear" Battirovka was assassinated a few months ago, but his merchant family seems to be doing well for themselves under its new leadership, considering the circumstances.

DC 35: A number of traders affiliated with the Battirovka Merchant Family have been seen associating with suspected Black Rose Company adventurers. It is possible that the merchants and the adventurers have joined forces.

DC 40: Some people say that fugitive Trithereonites have sought refuge in Darkhapor.

DC 45: With the recent deaths and dissolutions of so many noble houses, the Battirovka Family has lost many of their trade agreements and sponsors. They have created a pact with the Black Rose Company and are acting as bladerunners for the adventurers' guild, smuggling weapons and goods to the people who need them.

Appendix 4: The Laws of the Viscounty

The Laws of Verbobonc are designed to maintain the status quo, protecting the nobility at the expense of the common man. Commoners – including all player PCs – have very few rights. If they break the law, they will be punished.

HIGH CRIMES AND LOW CRIMES

All crimes in the Viscounty are classified as either high crimes or low crimes.

Commoners can be accused of any crime by any agent of law enforcement or any noble at any time, so long as the accusing authority is within his jurisdiction.

Nobles cannot be accused of low crimes. They can be accused of high crimes, but only by individuals with the Right of High Justice.

LEGAL AUTHORITY: THE RIGHT OF JUSTICE

All legal authority in Verbobonc is divided into two distinct categories: High Justice and Low Justice.

Representatives of the law imbued with the Right of Low Justice are involved in the prosecution of ‘day-to-day’ law enforcement and may charge and arrest any non-noble offender for any crime. A character that bears the Right of Low Justice may only arrest another character if he either witnesses a crime being committed or if a criminal confesses to committing a crime. Arresting agents cannot fine other player PCs TU and gold, nor can they remove PCs from play. The DM adjudicates the penalties for breaking the law.

The Right of High Justice is held by the Viscount, the heads of noble houses, and their most highly appointed representatives. Anyone with the Right of High Justice may charge, arrest, investigate, try, and sentence any offender for any crime. Only those with High Justice may charge a noble with breaking the law, and only for high crimes. Nobles are immune to prosecution for low crimes. No player character in Verbobonc has the right of High Justice, unless he has specific regional documentation to that effect.

See the **Table 1** below for more details on authority and jurisdiction of various Metaorganizations.

LAWS IN THE GAME

Laws are enforced by the Dungeon Master when the need arises. Before the arrest and adjudication of a player character happens, the DM should warn the player that he is about to commit a crime. If the player decides to act criminally, the DM must decide if there

is any way for the authorities to know what has transpired. If so, he should inform the player that his actions will have consequences and that they will be adjudicated after the play session. If the player continues to commit crimes, the DM should adjudicate it immediately and remove the character from the play session for the time being.

Once play has finished, the DM should make a final determination of all of the penalties that the character will receive, using **Table 2** below for guidance. Any crimes for which the punishment is Death or Exile, must be adjudicated by a member of the Verbobonc Triad. All other crimes may be adjudicated by the judge at the table.

If the player of a convicted character wishes to appeal the judge’s ruling, he should contact the Verbobonc Triad.

ILLEGAL GOODS

The following items are illegal in the Viscounty: *assassin’s dagger*, *dagger of venom*, *darks skull*, drugs, *dust of disappearance*, flesh golems and *flesh golem manuals*, *gal-garan*, *hand of glory*, *hand of the mage*, holy symbols of evil gods, holy symbols of Trithereon, *life-drinker*, *mask of lies*, *nine lives stealer*, poisons, *robe of bones*, slaves, *slaying arrow*, *sword of life stealing*, thieves’ tools, thinuan weapons, and *unholy weapons*.

Additionally, scrolls and wands of spells with the [Evil] descriptor and any item that radiates an aura of evil, requires an evil creator, bestows curses, animates the dead, or summons or commands elementals, demons, devils, or undead are likewise outlawed.

This list is not exhaustive, and Dungeon Masters should exercise their judgment.

More detailed information on Verbobonc’s laws, legal system, and methods of law enforcement can be found in the *Laws of the Viscounty* document, available for download at www.verbobonc.net.

Table 1: Legal Jurisdiction of Verbobonc Metaorganizations

Organization	Authority	Jurisdiction
Knights of the Faithful Defender	High Justice	All Verbobonc
Bondsmen of Estival - House Nobles	Low Justice	All Verbobonc
Gentlemen of the Watch	Low Justice	Verbobonc City
Gnarley Rangers	Low Justice	Gnarley Forest
Noble House Guards	Low Justice	Appropriate Noble Lands
Mayors, Sheriffs, and Constables	Low Justice	The local settlement they have been appointed to

Table 2: Crimes and Penalties

Crime	Class	Penalty
Aiding and Abetting	Low	100 gp OR 500 gp OR 1,000 gp + 4 TU
Arson	High	500 gp +, 1 TU
Assault	Low	50 gp OR 1,000 gp, 2 TU
Banditry	High	Forfeiture of all possessions, 1 TU per 100 gp of stolen goods.
Battery	Low	200 gp OR 2,000 gp, 10 TU
Blackmail	High	90% of wealth, 26 TU
Blasphemy	High	Public whipping
Bribery	Low	Ten times value offered and public whipping OR forfeiture of all gold carried, expulsion from metaorg, and public whipping
Burglary	Low	200 gp, 2 TU OR 1,000 gp, 10 TU
Destruction of Noble's Property	High	Cost of repairs, 1 TU per 1,000 gp of damage
Disturbing the Peace	Low	Up to 450 gp and/or 1 TU
Extortion	High	90% of wealth, 26 TU
Forgery	Low	Confiscation of all possessions, 13 TU, loss of finger
Fraud Against a Noble	High	Forfeiture of all possessions, 26 TU OR death
Grave Robbing	Low	Confiscation of carried goods, 1,000 gp, 5 TU OR confiscation of carried goods, 5,000 gp, 13 TU
Impersonation of a Noble	High	Forfeiture of wealth and all possessions, 52 TU OR death
Interfering with the Representative of a Noble	Low	Up to 300 gp, 4 TU
Kidnapping	High	Confiscation of goods carried, 1,000 gp, 26 TU OR confiscation of goods carried, 10,000 gp fine, 104 TU, and loss of eye and hand.
Magical Assault	High	Confiscation of spellbooks, 500 gp, 4 TU OR confiscation of spellbooks and goods carried, 2,000 gp, 13 TU, and loss of ear.
Malicious Mischief	Low	Up to 1,000 gp, up to 4 TU, and full reimbursement of property value
Manslaughter	High	Forfeiture of all equipment, property, and wealth, 52 TU.
Murder	High	Death
Negligent Use of Magic	High	Confiscation of spellbooks, 500 gp, 4 TU OR confiscation of spellbooks and goods carried, 2,000 gp, 13 TU, and loss of ear.
Ownership of Illegal Goods	Low	Varies: Confiscation of the item(s) owned and a warning and fine of 100 to 2,000 gp to exile from the region, as deemed by the item.
Perjury	High	600 gp, 8 TU
Piracy	High	Confiscation of all wealth, 500 gp, 10 TU OR confiscation of all wealth, 2,000 gp, 26 TU, and loss of eye.
Resisting Arrest	Low	300 gp, 2 TU OR 600 gp, 4 TU
Robbery	High	Confiscation of goods carried, 1,000 gp, 10 TU OR confiscation of goods carried, 5,000 gp, 26 TU, loss of hand
Sedition	High	13 TU
Smuggling	High	Confiscation of illegal goods, 2,000 gp, 13 TU, public whipping, loss of a finger. Sometimes exile.
Theft	Low	Confiscation of goods carried, 200 gp, 5 TU OR confiscation of goods carried, 1,000 gp, 12 TU, loss of finger
Treason/Revolt	High	Forfeiture of all possessions, property, and wealth, and death by hanging, draw and quartering, or stoning.
Trespassing	Low	20gp – 500 gp

Appendix 5: DM's Aids and Player Handouts

DM's Aid #1

Ghen Tayber's Mundivagant Menagerie

Ghen Tayber, Menagerie Master, has been touring the lands of the Ververdyva Trade Route for many years. Tayber is a showman who loves to entertain, so his work delights him a great deal. He is a genuinely cheerful man.

In his time as a performer, he has created a sensation by collecting strange and exotic beasts, often captured in the wild by adventurers. Tayber travels with his company up and down the Ververdyva Trade Route in their colorful wagons, unfurling their silver and orange banners and flags to perform in any hamlet or town with a population to support an audience. In larger towns and cities, Tayber will often set up for two or three weeks at a time under his grand tent before venturing back onto the road.

Tayber feels no qualms about displaying caged animals for profit; he thinks he's doing townspeople a service by showing them monsters that they wouldn't ever see (or survive to tell of) in the wild. However, Tayber won't allow any mishandling of his creatures, and sees to their comfort even before his own. Tayber does this for economical reasons: people will pay more to see healthy, strong animals than sickly, dying ones.

Tayber has replaced some of his stoic, silent crew with more colorful help. His lovely assistants during performances are two indistinguishable, nubile blonde young ladies named **Syreena** and **Sylphia**. He also employs a pair of taciturn Attloi Rhennee twins named **Slapdash** and **Slipshod** as assistant animal handlers. The rest of the crew is made up of eight large, taciturn men who defer to Tayber on almost everything. Two trained monkeys help out the crew with simple tasks.

Tayber's menagerie currently boasts thirteen unusual animals: two camels, two monkeys, a dancing wolf, two rust monsters, a grick, an owlbear, a dire weasel, a malformed horse, a giant eagle (advertised as a baby roc), and a spider eater. See the *Monster Manual* for all statistics.

Tayber's pair of camels draws his lead wagon, and teams of oxen pull the other four.

Wagon 1: Ghen himself usually rides on this lead wagon. Beside him is his wolf animal companion, Dancing Dellia, who wears a ballerina outfit during her

performances. The wagon bears a wooden cage holding two rust monsters.

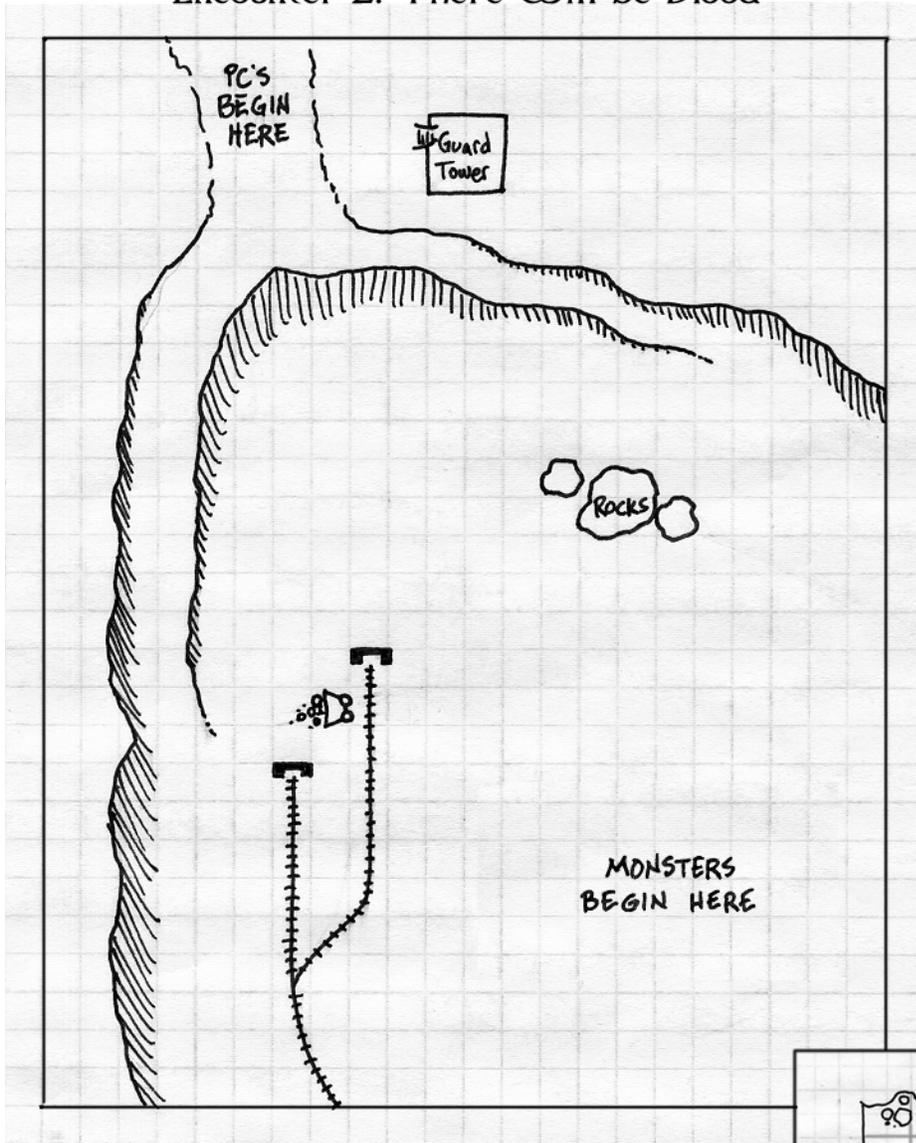
Wagon 2: Driven by Slapdash, this wagon carries two cages. Inside the larger one is an overweight and largely sedentary owlbear who has grown lazy and accustomed to the 'good life' of being a performer. During shows, he grudgingly wears an arlecchino clown hat. The smaller cage holds an aggressive grick.

Wagon 3: Syreena drives this wagon. It carries a cage holding a dire weasel, and another cage holding a deformed horse. The horse has two-foot antelope-like antlers growing out of its head, but is otherwise perfectly healthy. This wagon also carries the Menagerie's supplies and camping gear.

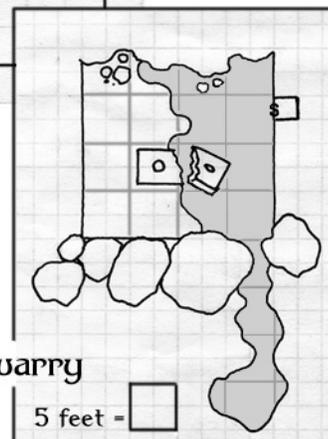
Wagon 4: Sylphia handles this wagon, which carries the performance tents and signage for the show. The two monkeys who help with the performances usually ride on this wagon, as well.

Wagon 5: Slipshod brings up the rear of the caravan in a wagon laden with two large cages. One holds a "baby roc" (actually, a giant eagle), and the other holds a spider eater. When the menagerie sets up shop, these beasts are let out to stretch their wings on large tethers. They are carefully controlled by the handlers to keep them from attacking livestock, small animals, the rest of Tayber's crew, or—most importantly—the other animals of the menagerie.

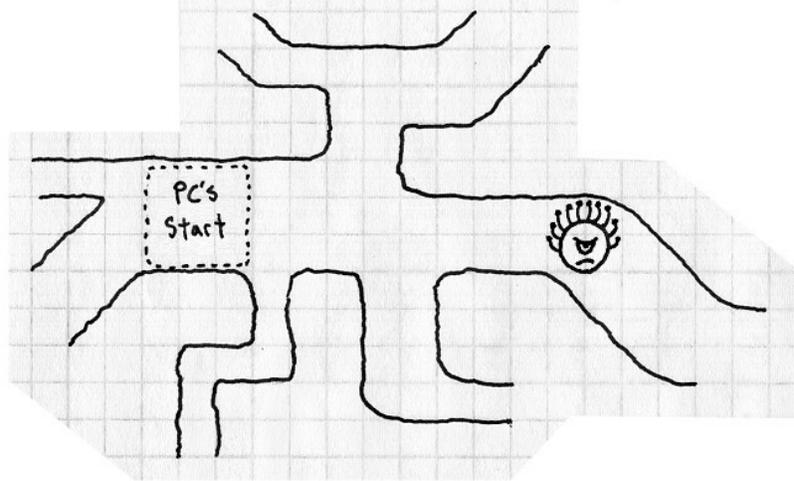
Encounter 2: There Will be Blood



Encounter 3: Questions in the Quarry

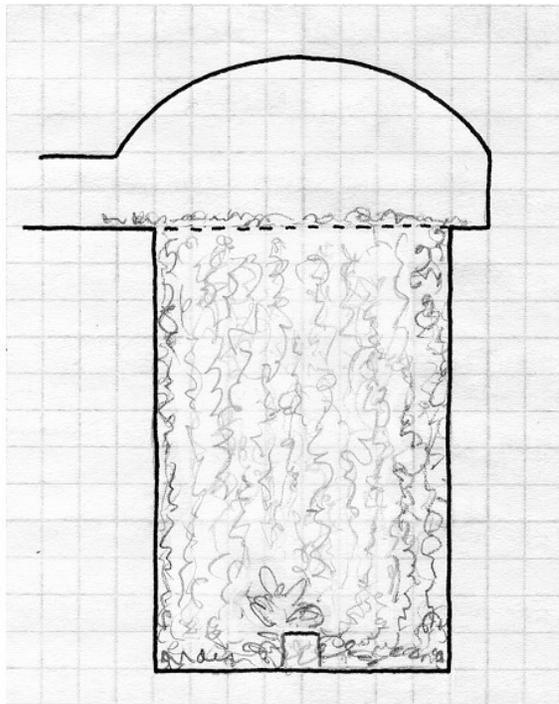


Encounter 8D: Labyrinth of Eyes

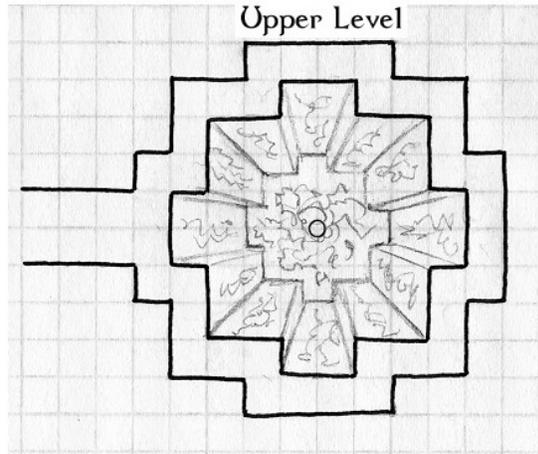


Encounter 8E: The Killing Field

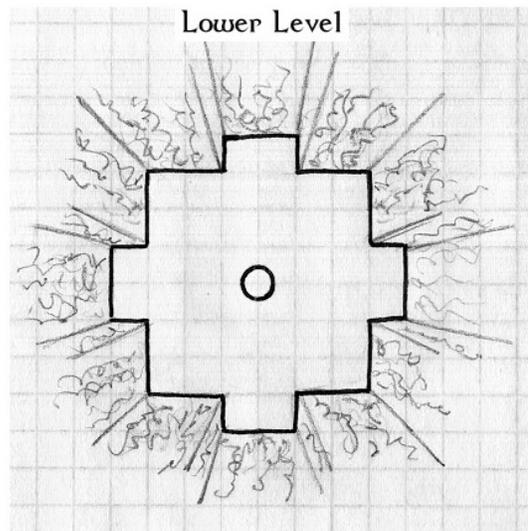
Side View



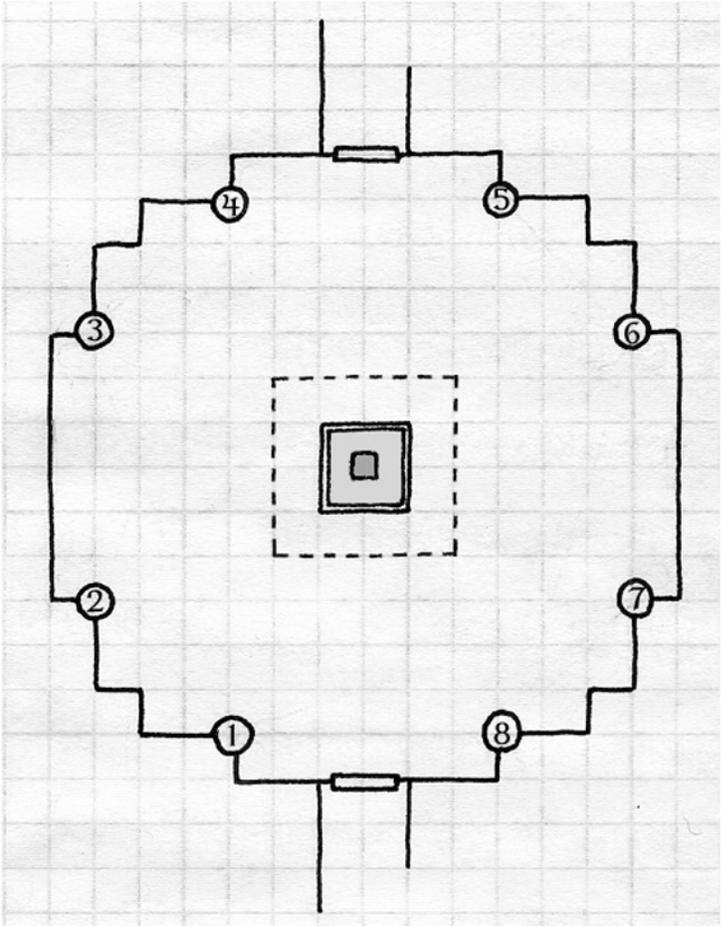
Upper Level



Lower Level

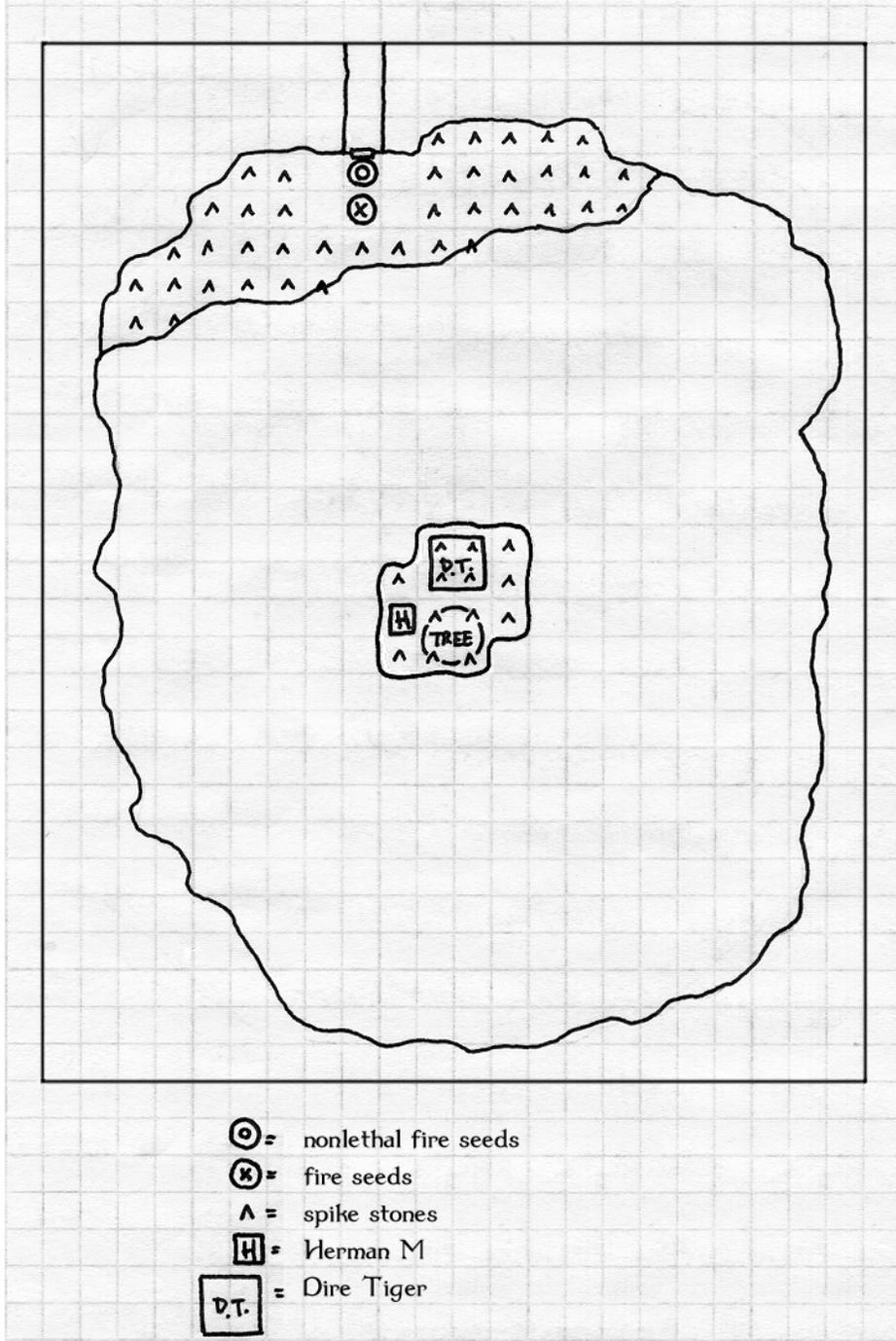


Encounter 8G: Sticks and Storms



-  trap trigger area
-  shallow pool of water
-  central stone obelisk
-  standing stones
-  hidden doors seal the room

Encounter 9: Blood of the Oerth



Player Handout #1a

Battirovka Merchant Family: Due to your contacts within the Battirovka Merchant House, you are aware of some privileged information. It is expected that you keep this to yourself.

- 1) Late last year, Cordova “The Bear” Battirovka, our Father, was assassinated by insurgent members of the Family working in concert with the Dyvers Alliance. A bard named Brooknir Veladorn has assumed the mantle of the Bear and married Cordova’s daughter Illanya.
 - 2) With the assassinations of Lord Willem Haxx and Lord Wendell Rhynehurst, and with Viscount Langard gone, the Family has lost its major sponsors in Verbobonc. These men represented not only some of our best customers, but also offered a measure of protection from prosecution, since they graciously accepted regular bribes. We have no such relationship with Viscount Estival.
 - 3) Because of these losses, and because we share a common antipathy for the overly strict rule of Law, the Family has entered into a mutually beneficial relationship with the Company of the Black Rose. The Family’s business now greatly revolves around smuggling weapons and contraband gear for the adventuring company.
 - 4) As such, members of the Black Rose, should you encounter them, should be treated as our closest allies. It is been recommended that you do as many of your brothers and sisters have done and join up with the adventuring company. You may do so before this adventure begins.
 - 5) While you were at a safehouse in Verbobonc, your halfling Uncle Farrin offered you the use of some equipment, should you find work. You may take mundane equipment, scrolls, and potions of a value equal to 50gp x APL to be used in your next great exploit (that is, this adventure). This equipment, if not used up, must be returned at the end of the adventure.
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Player Handout #1b

Company of the Black Rose: Due to your contacts within the Company of the Black Rose, you are aware of some privileged information. It is expected that you keep this to yourself.

- 1) With so many disenfranchised noble vassals and the disbandment of the Mounted Borderers, the Company is enjoying a new surge in membership.
- 2) Because of this surge, and because we share a common antipathy to the overly strict rule of Law, the Company of the Black Rose has entered into a mutually beneficial relationship with the Battirovka Merchant Family. The Battirovkas are now acting as the Company’s primary smugglers, moving weapons and supplies to the people who need them.
- 3) As such, members of the Family, if they are encountered, should be treated as our closest allies in the war against oppression.
- 4) While you were at the Kron Hall tavern in Gnomeburg looking for adventure, a Company Officer quietly offered you the use of some supplies for use should you find any work. You may take mundane equipment, scrolls, and potions of a value equal to 50gp x APL to be used in your next great exploit (that is, this adventure). This equipment, if not used up, must be returned at the end of the adventure.

GHEN TAYBER PRESENTS THE VAGANT MUNDI MENAGERIE

FEATURING:

The Most AMAZING ANIMALS
From The **SEA OF DUST**
THE HOWLING
BLACKMOOR & BEYOND!

ALIVE!

THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

A detailed illustration of a bear is positioned in the center, holding a banner that reads 'MUNDI MENAGERIE'. The bear is drawn with fine lines and cross-hatching for texture. The entire poster is framed with decorative, hand-drawn borders and scrollwork.

COME ONE **FUN FOR ALL AGES** **COME ALL**

BEASTS! BRUTES! **MUTANTS! MONSTERS!**

5^{sp} GENERAL ADMISSION LIMITED ENGAGEMENT! ASK ABOUT OUR GROUP DISCOUNTS FOR YOUR GUILD! 2^{gp}

Player Handout #3

This letter was presented to you by the elves Asharath and Illuvitar of the Iron Wood's Mist Children Tribe.

Adventurers,

The land has need of your swords and spells, for a great evil has returned, threatening to engulf all the Viscounty in its darkness. Time is crucial, for this power grows stronger with each passing day.

I respectfully request your presence in the Town of Glory as soon as possible. I can promise a small fortune in wheatsheaves if you undertake this quest on my behalf, and you will have the thanks of the Viscounty and all of its peoples if you succeed.

Shannus

Lord Mayor of the Town of Glory

Player Handout #4

This tattered parchment is in Shannus's possession. It bears a prophecy:

Beware! His darkness is unbound,
and few believe he has returned.
Through his lies his guile continues,
Seizing power that'd once been spurned.

So look to those who choose adventure,
heralding from both near and far.
For these brave souls will be decisive,
in defeating the cruel and horrible dire dark.

Critical Events Summary

Please submit the answers to these questions to the Verbobonc point of contact before May 14th, 2008. Answers can be sent electronically to poc@verbobonc.net. Use the subject line "VER8-03 Critical Event Summary."

1. Did the party turn in the fugitives from Encounter Four, or did the trio escape?
2. Did the party reach the final chamber of the Oerthblood dungeon (Encounter Nine)?
3. Did the party kill Hermann M?
4. Did the party tell Shannus about the Oerthblood?
5. Did the party lie to Shannus, telling him that the Great Dire Dark had returned? And if so, did the party tell him that it has been vanquished?
6. Please list any other events that happened during the scenario that you feel the Triad should be aware of.