

GRM01-08

# TEARS OF BLOOD

A One-Round D&D LIVING GREYHAWK<sup>®</sup>

Gran March Regional Adventure

Version 1

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The crowds that Richfest brings to Hookhill can conceal many a criminal or dastardly plot. While innocent folk celebrate, evil is afoot and it is up to you to stop it or thousands may die. An adventure for character levels 1-6.

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This is an RPGA® Network scenario for the Dungeons & Dragons® game. A four-hour time block has been allocated for each round of this scenario, but the actual playing time will be closer to three hours. The rest of the time is spent in preparation before game play, and scoring after the game. The following guidelines are here to help you with both the preparation and voting segment of the game. Read this page carefully so that you know and can communicate to your players the special aspects of playing an RPGA scenario.

## PREPARATION

First you should print this scenario. This scenario was created to support double-sided printing, but printing it single sided will work as well. There is enough room along the inside margin to bind the adventure, if you desire.

Read this entire adventure at least once before you run your game. Be sure to familiarize yourself with any special rules, spells, or equipment presented in the adventure. It may help to highlight particularly important passages.

When you run an RPGA D&D adventure we assume that you have access to the following books: the *Player's Handbook*, the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*. We also assume that you have a set of dice (at least one d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, and d20), some scrap paper, a pencil, an RPGA scoring packet, and your sense of fun. It is also a good idea to have a way to track movement during combat. This can be as simple as a pad of graph paper and a pencil, as handy as a vinyl grid map and chits, or as elaborate as resin dungeon walls and miniatures.

Instruct the players either to prepare their characters now, or wait until you read the introduction, depending on the requirements of the scenario as described in the introduction.

Keep in mind that you must have at least four players (not counting the DM), for the game session to be a sanctioned RPGA event. As well, you cannot have more than seven players participating in the game.

Once you are ready to play, it is handy to instruct each player to place a nametag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for the players (and the DM) to keep track of who is playing which character.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying. That said, you as the DM can bar the use of even core rulebooks during certain times of play. For example, the players are not free to consult the *Dungeon Master's Guide* when confronted with a trap or hazard, or the *Monster Manual* when confronted with a monster.

Some of the text in this scenario is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text for the players will be in gray boxes. It's strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text instead of reading it aloud. Some of this text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters.

## SCORING

After the players have completed the scenario or the time allotted to run the scenario has run out, the players and DM score the game. The RPGA has three ways to score its games. Consult your convention coordinator to determine which method to use for this scenario:

1. No-vote scoring: The players write their names and RPGA numbers on the scoring packet grid. You fill in the top of the grid. That is all. No one is rated. This method is used for people who are just playing for fun.
2. Partial scoring: The players rate the game master and the scenario on their player voting sheet, and provide personal information, but don't vote for other players. The game master rates the scenario and completes personal and event information, but does not rate the players as a team or vote for players. This method is used when there is no competition, but the event coordinator wants information on how the game masters are performing, or the game master wants feedback on his or her own performance.
3. Voting: Players and game masters complete the entire packet, including voting for best player. If this method is used, be sure to allow about 15-20 minutes for the players to briefly describe their characters to the other players, and about 5-10 minutes for voting. This method is used when the players want to know who played the "best" amongst the group, or when the adventure is run in tournament format with winners and prizes.

When using voting, rank the players in order of your voting choice while they are completing their forms, so that you are not influenced by their comments on your abilities. It's a good idea to have the players vote while you determine treasure and experience awards for the scenario.

After voting, give the Scoring Packet to your event coordinator.

This is a LIVING GREYHAWK Adventure. As a Living™ adventure, it is expected that players will bring their own characters with them. If players do not have a LIVING GREYHAWK character generated, get a copy of the current LIVING GREYHAWK character generation guidelines, a character sheet, and a LIVING GREYHAWK log sheet from your convention coordinator or the RPGA Web site, and then have any players without a character create one. Once all players have a LIVING GREYHAWK character, play can begin.

Along with the other materials that you are assumed to have in order to run a D&D game, it is also recommended that you have a copy of the LIVING GREYHAWK *Gazetteer*.

## LIVING GREYHAWK TIER STRUCTURE

Because players bring their own characters to LIVING GREYHAWK campaigns, this adventure is tiered. Basically, the challenges in this adventure are proportioned to the average character level of the characters participating in the adventure. To determine the tier that you will use to run this adventure, add the character levels of all the characters. In addition, add the levels of any cohorts or animals according to the values on their certificates. Cross-reference the total and the number of players participating in the game using the chart below to determine the tier used for this adventure.

	<u>4 players</u>	<u>5 players</u>	<u>6 players</u>	<u>7 players</u>	<u>Lvl Cap</u>
T1:	4-12	5-13	6-14	7-15	4 <sup>th</sup>
T2:	13-22	14-24	15-26	16-28	6 <sup>th</sup>
T3:	23-32	25-35	27-38	29-41	8 <sup>th</sup>

The level cap indicated is the highest level of character allowed to play this adventure. Characters of levels higher than the highest level shown for the highest tier cannot be played.

## IS IT A FULL MOON?

Since the hazards of lycanthropy are a current part of the LIVING GREYHAWK campaign, it may be necessary to determine if this adventure takes place during a full moon. For game purposes, the full moon lasts three days of each month. For a given scenario that does not state the phase of the moon, roll 1d10 before play begins. On a result of 1, the first day of the scenario is a night of the full moon (roll 1d3 to determine where in the sequence of three nights it falls).

## LIFESTYLE

At the beginning of every scenario, each PC is required to pay upkeep costs matching the level of lifestyle they wish to maintain. The lifestyles, and the effects that each has on play, are:

**Destitute:** You have no living space, and must carry all your gear everywhere. You eat poor quality food. You wear a peasant outfit, your only change of clothes.

**Poor:** You sleep in poor accommodations, and eat poor quality food. You wear a peasant outfit, and have two sets of clothing.

**Common:** You have common lodgings, and eat common quality food. You have normal clothing for your profession (adventuring); nothing fancy. You probably have two or three sets of clothing.

**High:** You stay in good quality lodgings, and eat good quality food. You wear anything in value up to courtier's outfits, and generally buy a new set of clothing every two weeks.

**Luxury:** You have luxurious accommodations (twice the cost of good accommodations), and you eat excellent foods. You can throw a banquet for your friends every day, and frequently do. You wear clothing up to the value of noble's outfit, and buy a new set of clothes every week.

Lifestyles come with bonuses or penalties to Diplomacy, Intimidate, Disguise, and Bluff skill checks. These penalties, shown below, should be applied at the DM's discretion, and can sometimes backfire—for example, a PC with a poor lifestyle would not have a penalty when talking to a beggar, but would when talking to a city official. A PC with a high lifestyle should have a penalty when dealing with a group of street thugs, where a PC with a destitute lifestyle might not.

DMs are encouraged to role-play these reactions whenever possible.

Lifestyle Cost	Skill Modifier	
Destitute	14 sp	-2
Poor	43 sp	-1
Common	12 gp	0
High	250 gp	+1
Luxury	500 gp	+2

## ADVENTURE SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

This event takes place in and around Hookhill, the capital city of Gran March. Hookhill is a walled city with a population of around 7,500 people.

This event revolves around a high priest of Incabulos, named Diabolis, going through an initiation rite in order for him to obtain his 6th circle of spells.

Diabolis hires a thief, Cebo, to steal specially prepared healing herbs (Essence of the Violet Lotus) from the local church of Heironeous, just before the city's large summer festival, Richfest. Diabolis accepts an extremely nasty and contagious disease (death occurs only after hours of misery), and he wanders through the city during the festivities creating an epidemic. It is up to the PCs to prevent Diabolis from getting away with his fiendish plot by recovering the Essence of the Violet Lotus to save the day!

## **ADVENTURE SUMMARY**

### **Introduction**

DM Aid One lists a variety of introductions to start the PCs on their way to the Wayberry Inn in Hookhill.

### **Encounter 1 – On the Road**

A lone rider, Cebo, on a phantom steed is moving against traffic. He upsets a cart full of goods. Chickens go everywhere upsetting children, dogs, and other horses. Mass chaos ensues.

The PCs can choose to help the cart driver or pursue the rider. However, the traffic, chaos, and Cebo's careful planning prevent the PCs from successfully pursuing him.

The merchant thanks any PCs that help him. This will provide an opportunity for PCs that are not traveling together to meet each other. The merchant will mention that he has to get his goods to the Wayberry Inn. If the PCs mention that they are going there too, he will offer to help them get there on time if they accompany him.

### **Encounter 2 – The Wayberry Inn**

The PCs reach the Wayberry Inn just after six bells. The inn is crowded, but when the owner learns that the PCs have escorted the merchant he gives the PCs first-rate treatment. The PCs are guided to the common room, where everyone is having a good time (well almost everybody). Good food and drink is available for everyone.

As the Innkeeper announces the bard, a watch officer interrupts and announces that a robbery took place at the temple of Heironeous today. Anyone with information regarding the robbery should make a full report.

The bard begins her tale. In the middle of the long ballad, a cloaked man, Diabolis, rudely gets up and moves through the crowd as he leaves. If the PCs follow, they find that he goes to several other crowded inns and some of the open-air festivities. If harassed outside, he calls for the guards. At one of the festivities, the PCs lose track of him.

### **Encounter 3 – The Morning After**

Eventually the PCs will have to spend the night somewhere (even if it is in the local lockup). When the PCs wake up, it is likely that some of them will not be feeling well (having contracted "Incabulos' Embrace"). Those afflicted will have a sore throat, headache, and a slight fever.

Soon, the PCs will learn that a lot of people are not feeling well. Concerns about the impending plague have caused the authorities to lock the gates and quarantine the city.

Bounty flyers are being posted with Cebo's face. Rumor has it that he robbed the temple of Heironeous and stole powerful healing herbs. The reward for his capture is 1000 gp.

### **Encounter 4 – Thug Attack**

The PCs have a choice. They can either go to the authorities or try to sneak out of town to get Cebo themselves. Either way they go, the PCs run into a group of thugs looting a shop with the shop owner yelling at them. The PCs can stop the looters, help the looters, or ignore the entire situation.

If the PCs try to escape the city, they are captured due to another group that tries the same escape route, but makes too much noise. Either way, the PCs end up talking to the authorities.

### **Encounter 5 – The Whole Truth and Nothing but the Truth**

The PCs are told the real story. The robed figure at the Wayberry Inn was a priest of Incabulos. He is responsible for starting the plague, and is demanding the razing of the Temple of Heironeous, the sacrifice of the high priest in Incabulos' name, and 10,000 gp in gems or he will let the city die.

All the available trackers have been sent out with any available uninfected troops. The remaining troops are needed to secure the city.

The PCs are asked to pursue the villain Cebo and recover the missing Essence of the Violet Lotus. Assuming the PCs agree, they are cured, given magical aid, and taken out of the city.

### **Encounter 6 – On the Road Again**

The PCs return to the scene of the accident in Encounter One where Cebo was seen leaving the road, but there are no tracks. The only course the PCs can choose is to head in the direction they last saw Cebo go. Clues will lead them to the thief's lair.

### **Encounter 7 – The Lair**

Cebo and his half-orc partner Grakos have made camp in a small cave not far from the river. Cebo has set several alarms in the entrance to the cave and they will almost certainly alert Cebo to the party's presence.

Cebo and Grakos defend themselves the best they can. Grakos is a big half-orc with a spiked chain weapon. Cebo has hidden the Essence of the Violet Lotus outside the cave. If Grakos dies or if Cebo looks like he is going to die, he will tell the PCs that he has hidden it. He will try to negotiate his freedom for the location of the Essence of the Violet Lotus. If the PCs agree to let him go, he will tell them where it is.

If the PCs kill Cebo, they will have a hard time finding the Essence of the Violet Lotus. They will need to take Cebo's body to the clergy of Heironeous, who will speak with dead, forcing the location from Cebo's corpse.

### **Conclusion**

The herbs are returned, the church of Heironeous rids the city of the disease, the PCs are heroes, and the villain dies of the plague.

## ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

Because this is a very free flowing module, the PCs may attempt to go to a lot of places not described in the encounters. You will need to be ready to improvise. Information on Hookhill is provided in Appendix One to assist you with this. Remember that if the PCs are trying to go somewhere that you do not want them go, you can always have that area closed off due to the plague.

### Richfest

Midsummer is celebrated with Richfest, a seven-day-long festival. A variety of religions have significant ceremonies during this week. However, Gran March gives additional significance to this festival with Mustering Day.

Mustering Day is the first day of Richfest. All military men who have served their full term are released from service and all conscripts are accounted for and assigned to their training units. They are told to report on the first day of Reaping (the month immediately following the week of Richfest). Thus, Richfest is filled with wild parties as some celebrate their newfound civilian life while others have one last fling.

The PCs arrive on Mustering Day and most of the festivities do not truly begin until sundown, at approximately 9 pm.

### Effects of the Plague

This scenario revolves around a plague, “Incubulos’ Embrace.” The effects of the disease are horrific to behold in a single victim, much less an entire city. Without going into a biology lesson, the virus breaks down the cell walls. The massive tissue damage causes organs to fail and liquids to pool (dead cell tissue). This results in discoloration of the skin and oozing and bleeding wounds, accompanied by seizures caused by the high fever. Basically, it is very unpleasant.

Because the audience for Living Greyhawk varies so much, graphic descriptions of the plague have been left out of the text. It is left to the judge to describe the effects in a fashion that fits the players. You are responsible to create the appropriate atmosphere – the plague should make the players uncomfortable; however, too much graphic description will detract from the module.

The specific game effects of the plague are listed in DM Aid Two.

## INTRODUCTION

There are many different motives as to why the PCs are heading into Hookhill for the festival, and more specifically to the Wayberry Inn. After determining the background of the PCs, tailor one of the introductions from DM Aid One, or make one up that may be more appropriate, in order to set up the scenario.

## ENCOUNTER 1: ON THE ROAD

*It is a warm summer afternoon and you find yourself on the road to Hookhill. The traffic leading into the city for Richfest is much heavier than you anticipated and you are not sure that you are going to reach the Wayberry Inn by six bells. On the road with you are all sorts of people, from farmers to soldiers, merchants to serfs, all heading into the city.*

Pause to allow the PCs to describe themselves if they are not all traveling together as a group.

*Despite the heat of the day and the dust being kicked up by all the traffic, most of the travelers seem to be in good spirits, anticipating the delightful times ahead. Your attention is drawn by some kind of commotion ahead.*

Ask the PCs for reactions. If someone attempts to look to see what’s going on, continue with the read-aloud text. If not, have them roll a Spot check (DC 15) to notice the rider (again, continue with the read-aloud text). If they fail the check and continue on their way, they will reach the site of the commotion before it has been dealt with. Use the appropriate parts of the read-aloud text below and proceed to “Calming the Commotion” and adjust the remainder of the scenario as necessary to account for the PCs not seeing the rider.

*Fifty feet ahead, you see a tall, thin man with black hair, wearing a lightweight green cloak, spurring his horse at a fast gallop directly away from the road. By the time you figure out what’s going on, he has already ridden more than half way toward the woods 300 feet from the road. He turns his head to look behind and you can see that he has a pencil-thin mustache and goatee.*

*Looking toward the source of the commotion, which would appear to be where the rider left the road, you see a merchant’s wagon with spooked horses. It appears that the merchant, his daughter, and their goods have been spilled out the back, freeing several chickens and a pig, causing a snarl in the traffic as people try to move around the spreading chaos.*

Allow anyone with Spellcraft skill that saw the rider to attempt a check (DC 13). A success indicates that the PC can tell the mount is actually a *phantom steed* and not a horse.

Describe the mess up ahead to the PCs. A large dog has started to chase the pig through the crowd; children are running screaming and the like.

**Development:** Ask for the intended actions of the PCs. Some PCs will certainly try to pursue the rider (use the information in “Pursuing the Rider” below). Hopefully, some of them will help gather the horses, pigs, chickens, dogs, and children (use the information in “Calming the Commotion”). Others may decide that they must hurry to reach the Wayberry Inn in time (use the information in “PCs in a Hurry”)

## PURSUING THE RIDER

Circumstances make it extremely difficult for the PCs to catch Cebo at this time. He has planned his escape route carefully and taken several steps to ensure his escape. The crowds on the road also hamper pursuit. However, it is still far from impossible for clever and powerful PCs to devise a means of capturing him. It is important to the plot that he get away at this time, so you should run him in as intelligently as possible and use every means at your disposal to allow him to escape. A map showing Cebo's escape route can be found in DM Aid Three. The chase should proceed as follows.

Cebo begins 200 feet away from the PCs before initiative is rolled (his partial action during the surprise round was a single move). The movement of Cebo's *phantom steed* on open terrain is 200 ft. (spell cast at 10<sup>th</sup> level), but all movement is halved in the woods. The crowd and commotion will delay PCs on foot or horseback for one round before they can break free to pursue. At the end of his first round action, Cebo is 150 feet into the woods. Visibility in the woods is limited to 100 feet. Flying above the trees can be done at full movement, but the forest canopy will provide total concealment from above.

If the PCs pursue Cebo into the woods, they must use Tracking checks (DC 14) to follow his trail if they are more than 100 feet behind. The trail is not obvious enough to be followed without the feat. Movement while tracking is reduced to half speed (which is half of normal speed due to terrain). Tracking while moving at full speed results in a -5 penalty to the check.

After moving for three more rounds (going 750 feet into the forest), Cebo reaches a stream. He guides his steed downstream and kicks it into a full run (800 feet per round). Visibility along the stream is increased to 200 feet. Although visibility is not blocked from above, flyers that fall more than 500 feet behind will still lose sight of him in the trees due to the twists and turns of the stream.

If the PCs have been following by tracking rather than by sight, the trail ends at the stream with no indication that he is traveling anywhere but straight across. A successful tracking check (DC 19) will reveal that the horse did not run across the stream normally – the PC will find that the stream bed is undisturbed. The far bank of the stream is also so thickly tangled with vines that no one could have passed through without magic. The PCs will be unable to pick up the trail again and still make it to the Wayberry Inn on time because the search area for his exit point is too large to cover in a reasonable amount of time. If the PCs are determined to search anyway, have them make rolls for each 5-foot stretch of riverbank they search and make it clear that time is passing quickly.

After 1600 feet (two full rounds of movement for Cebo), the stream enters a larger river. If he feels that he has lost the pursuers, he will guide his mount upstream for two more rounds and then will leave the river and go into the forest. He will draw his bow and shoot anything

that could be a familiar that he thinks might be following him. He will then head upstream using the forest for cover to the dock where he plans to hide the herbs he stole.

If the PCs are still in pursuit, he will turn downriver instead and ride his *phantom steed* over a waterfall. He will drink a *potion of feather fall* before going over. His *phantom steed* will disappear as it hits the water and his momentum will carry him under. He will then swim underwater under the waterfall, carrying the saddlebags, to where he has hidden a *potion of gaseous form*. He drinks the potion and drifts away in the mist from the waterfall. Note that neither potion appears in the treasure summary – if he does use them in his escape, he hides them elsewhere against future need. If the PCs follow him in, they will be able to discern that Cebo came into the small cave behind the waterfall, but has just disappeared.

If the PCs take more than ten minutes to return to the road, Brandel will have cleaned up the mess caused by Cebo and will have already left the scene. Proceed to Encounter Two, but make adjustments as necessary. The PCs are late arriving at the Wayberry Inn and their rooms have been given to other customers. All that is available is the suite that would have been given to them at no charge had they helped Brandel, which costs 100 gp a night (or 500 gp for the week). Their deposits can be applied to the cost of the suite, but Sir Wayberry will not give refunds and will not reduce the price of the room (the no refund policy was clear when the deposit was made and he knows he'll rent the suite to someone tonight). The PCs may threaten to take their business elsewhere. Sir Wayberry will politely tell them that they are welcome to do so but that with the crowds in town for Richfest, they are unlikely to find other lodgings and that the suite he has offered may not be available upon their return. Whether the PCs decide to rent the suite or not, Sir Wayberry will offer them a free dinner as compensation for their trouble.

If, despite all of his planning, the PCs manage to capture Cebo, he will demand to be released and will threaten to report them to the next patrol he sees. However, the alert for him has already gone out and the patrols will know his description and what he carries. Improvise the response of the Temple of Heironeous and the city guard using the information found in the Conclusion. The authorities will arrange for the PCs to stay at the Wayberry Inn despite being too late and losing their reservations. Sir Wayberry will offer them the Elector's Suite in honor of their service to the Temple of Heironeous; proceed to Encounter Two but skip the announcement of the theft.

Because the PCs have returned the Essence of the Violet Lotus, the plague will be quickly brought under control and the scenario will end. Give the PCs credit for successful completion of Encounters Six and Seven, which they skipped due to derailing the plot. If you and the players are interested, they can pursue Diabolis and you can use the information in the Appendices to improvise this for them. During their search, you can use Encounter Four as given and you can use Grakos as a

guard for Diabolis if you think that the PCs can handle both at once.

## **CALMING THE COMMOTION**

Hopefully many PCs will try to help bring order to the scene. There should be enough chaos, so that any PC that wants to help will have something to do. Allow almost anything the PCs do to work within reason. Describe the results so that the PCs come across as heroic. This is also an opportunity to get all the players involved.

Once things have settled down, the merchant, Brandel, introduces himself and thanks any PCs that helped calm the ruckus. He will also introduce Sapphire, his blonde, blue-eyed 10-year-old daughter. In expressing his gratitude, he will say “Thank you all for your help. I was already running late and if it was not for you, I would never get these goods to the Wayberry Inn before the festival gets underway.”

Hopefully the PCs will chime in that they are headed to the inn too. Brandel says he knows some short cuts once inside the city, if they would like to travel with him.

If asked about why the horses spooked, Brandel will say that the cloaked rider was moving down the road away from Hookhill. He was moving much too fast against the traffic and his horse came a little too close. Brandel's horses are normally pretty steady, but they immediately began to rear when the rider's horse came within a couple of feet.

If any of the PCs ask, Brandel's wagon holds three barrels of ale, four rounds of cheese, two baskets full of fresh vegetables, ten dozen eggs (half of which were broken in the spill), and six chickens.

When all of the strays have been caught, proceed to Encounter Two.

## **PCS IN A HURRY**

The player hooks all emphasize that the PCs need to hurry to get to the Wayberry Inn before they lose their reservations. Therefore, it is very possible that a PC or two will ignore the commotion and hurry around it. These PCs should not be penalized for trying to get to the inn on time. However, you should try to get the party together.

If a PC or two tries to circumvent the commotion, a mounted patrol will stop them, asking what they are doing and what happened. Have the patrolmen bring the anxious PCs back to the merchant (if pressed, the guards will say they want to make sure the PCs aren't up to anything, since they seem to be in such a big hurry). Have the soldiers get everyone's story. When Brandel learns that the PCs are in a hurry to get to the Wayberry Inn, he will inform them that he is headed there himself and he knows a few shortcuts that should help them arrive in time (“wink, wink”). Proceed to Encounter Two.

## **ENCOUNTER 2: THE WAYBERRY INN**

*Helping out Brandel has turned out to be good fortune. He knew several of the guards at the city's gate. With a quick “silver-plated” handshake and a story of your valorous assistance, he was able to take you all into the city without waiting in the long line of people trying to get in. Without his help you would have most certainly been late.*

*Brandel also knew the fastest route to the Wayberry Inn. Following him you quickly left the crowded main streets and took the much less traveled back streets and alleyways, but there always seems to be just enough room for his cart. You arrive at the Wayberry Inn just past six bells.*

The Wayberry Inn is an impressive place. Its grandeur may only be surpassed by its immense size. You have seen villages smaller than the inn and its support buildings. The carriage house and stables alone are the size of a small palace. The main kitchen is separated from the main building, but is connected by a covered walkway. The main building itself is four stories with a grand entranceway attended by two servants. On the right wing is another grand entranceway, which must lead to the main ballroom.

*Brandel leads you around back toward the kitchen and smokehouse. Behind the inn there is an army of staff scurrying about, from waiters and cooks to maids and porters. Before Brandel can reach the kitchen, a tall rotund man bursts out the side door and gives Brandel a big bear hug. From the way the man is dressed, you would guess that he might be the head chef. You can also see a distinct family resemblance between the two men.*

Brandel introduces the PCs to Stephal, his brother, and tells Stephal how the PCs helped him on the road. Stephal will then make sure the PCs are given the royal treatment. The PCs are introduced to the inn's owner and manager, Sir Benton Wayberry (a retired Knight-Colonel of the Gran March army, see DM Aid Four for more information). Sir Wayberry thanks the PCs for their heroism and asks a favor. He does have rooms for them, but he would be happy to pick up their tab (including meals) if they would all share a suite. He is running out of space in the inn and wants to accommodate as many people as possible.

The rate for most private rooms at the Wayberry Inn is 10 gp per night or 50 gp per week. The Elector's Suite that is being offered runs 100 gp a night or 500 gp per week. Some PCs may ask for their deposit money back, based on the hook they were given at the start of the scenario. Sir Wayberry will not refund deposits and will seem mildly offended at PCs who ask for money back after he has been so generous already.

If the PCs accept Sir Wayberry's offer, they will be treated as honored guests. They will be taken to the Elector's Suite. The suite has a large sitting room with a comfortable sofa, several chairs, and a coffee table

arranged around a fireplace. On one wall is a large mahogany desk. There are two bedrooms, one on each side of the sitting room. Both have two queen-size feather beds; a large wardrobe; a full-length mirror; and a small table with a basin, pitcher full of fresh water, and a small bowl of fresh fruit. The accommodations are first rate.

**Development:** There are a number of things the PCs can do from here. Most likely, they will accept the free meal offered by Sir Wayberry (go to “Dinner Performance”). They may follow up on this by talking to the bard who performs there (go to “Talking to Currin”). They may also choose to enjoy the festivities (go to “It’s a Party”). One way or another, it is quite likely that the PCs will be exposed to Incabulos’ Embrace (see DM Aid Two for details). When the PCs retire for the night, those who are infected experience strange dreams (go to “The Long Night”).

## **DINNER PERFORMANCE**

At dinner, the PCs are given one of the four “tables of honor” close to the stage. The food and drink are of exceptional quality and if anyone looks at a menu, the prices are equally high (dinner and a bottle of wine could easily cost 50 gp, but the PCs are not charged for their meal). The atmosphere in the banquet hall is cheerful and loud. Musicians play up-beat festive music.

If the PCs inquire, they can learn that their table had been reserved for High Abbott Vernett of Zilchus who was expected to arrive, but last minute duties of the church prevented him traveling to Hookhill.

If the PCs look around at the crowd, they will see that the area close to the stage is filled with the more wealthy individuals. At the table next to them are Elector Diayton and his wife and children. Further from the stage are people of various descriptions, but most are of at least middle-class dress. Almost everyone seems to be having a good time.

As the wonderful meal begins to wind down, many of the tables in the back of the room are broken down to make room for more people. Eventually Sir Wayberry takes the stage.

***“I want to thank everyone for coming tonight. I hope you all are having a good time!” Cheers and wine glasses rise up from the audience. “I have the pleasure to announce that we have some fantastic entertainment for you tonight, but before I get to that, a member of the City Watch has an announcement to make.”***

***With that, a young man in uniform takes the stage. It is easy to see that he is a little nervous. “Electors, gentlemen, and ladies, please pardon the intrusion. I do not want to take up too much of your time during this great celebration, but a horrible crime has been committed and I have been ordered to inquire all around town for information or other assistance that might bring justice to this dreadful situation. Early this morning, the Temple of Heironeous was robbed and several men were murdered. Only a few things were stolen, but these items are important to the temple and the safety of our city. So if anyone***

***has any information what so ever, we would certainly be grateful for the help.”***

The guard does not take time to answer questions and if the PCs try to corner him, he has no additional information regarding the crime or what was stolen.

After making the announcement, the man quickly steps down and Sir Wayberry announces the beautiful Currin Foxtail. Currin is an exceptionally eye-catching half-elf with a confident yet casual manner. She has no trouble quickly grabbing the attention of everyone in the room as she begins her tale. Interrupt the story in the middle to relate the following.

***Everyone in the room seems mesmerized by the bard’s sweet song. The room hangs in anticipation of her next word. Even the serving staff has been caught by her tale and they are no longer moving about the room.***

***The atmosphere of the song is broken when an elderly gentleman begins to cough. He gets up from his table as if to leave, but seems disoriented as he moves closer to the stage before finally seeing the exit and weaving his way toward it. As he passes by your table, he is again seized by a coughing fit and the smell of his breath is extremely unpleasant. Several patrons give him disapproving glares as he moves past them and out of the room. You feel the audience’s mood lighten as they return to the enthralled state the bard so effortlessly conjures up.***

This is Diabolis moving through the room. He is under the influence of an *undetected alignment* spell. Diabolis will move close enough to the PCs’ table to expose everyone (see DM Aid Two for the effects of “Incabulos’ Embrace”). Each PC should make a Fort save (DC 23) to avoid infection; paladins are immune.

If the PCs attempt to pursue Diabolis, remind them that they are at the head table and getting up now would be exceptionally rude. If they pursue anyway, describe the looks of displeasure on the face of Currin and just about every other patron as they leave. They will find that Diabolis goes to several other crowded inns and some of the open-air festivities. If harassed outside, he will call for the guards, who will ask that the PCs leave him be because the PCs have no evidence of a crime. At one of the festivities, the PCs will lose track of him. A *cure disease* cast on him will not prevent Diabolis from spreading the plague.

If the PCs do not pursue Diabolis, continue with the bard song and the meal. Inform the PCs that there are many other parties going on all around the city. Improvise various indoor and outdoor celebrations as necessary (see below). The festivities will quiet to a dull roar around 2 a.m. Eventually, the PCs should tire and head to bed. Tell those (especially the ones with the plague), that the day’s activities are catching up with them and they are feeling exceptionally tired.

## **TALKING TO CURRIN**

Some PCs (especially bard PCs) might want to spend some time talking with Currin. After her show, she can be found having a light dinner in the kitchen. She is very



approachable by one or two people and will take real interest in anyone who wants to talk with her. However, she is not interested in talking to a group of people (she cannot really find out enough information about individuals for her to do any good). If the entire party approaches her, she will be polite, but a bit standoffish.

If only a few approach her, she will ask the PCs where they are from, about their travels, who they have met, have they heard any good stories and the like. If asked about her plans, she says she plans to enjoy the festival; she will be staying at the Wayberry Inn and currently does not have any more scheduled paid performances during the festival, but expects that to change.

Currin is a very good judge of character and is always looking for people to add to her information network. She will only select good-natured individuals that do not seem motivated by money, power, or religious fanaticism.

### IT'S A PARTY

If the PCs want to go out and party, there are many parties to crash all over the city. Finding a party is easy, getting to it is more difficult. The streets are crowded with festivalgoers. Most people are drinking and generally having a good time. The military patrols the streets in groups of four, but are not really needed. Despite the festival being a great opportunity for pickpockets, petty crime is almost non-existent. Maybe this is due to that fact that almost every male over the age of 15 is trained to use a sword and many have them.

The parties go way into the night. The wall-to-wall parting begins to break up around 2 a.m., (which is actually early for the festival). Many partygoers complain of being tired or having a headache and turn in early. By 3 a.m. the streets are quiet, which is unheard of during the festival.

By now, infected PCs will also begin to feel the effects of the plague. Tell them they are not feeling well. You can tell affected PCs that they are feeling a little tired and run down; that they must have been singing too loud, because they have a sore throat; or that they must have had too much drink (or too loud a crowd) and are coming down with a bad headache.

### THE LONG NIGHT

Regardless of what the PCs do after dinner, the PCs who failed their Fortitude save and became infected will begin to get sick sometime during the night. Adjust the onset time to fit the situation; by 3 am, most of the infected PCs should be feeling the effects of the illness. You can use the notes in Player's Handout #1 to set the mood. Feel free to use your own description, but you should leave the PCs with the sense that everything is not right and it has affected them as well. If no one in the party is infected, then they will not learn about the plague until morning.

Players will react to the notes differently. You will need to be prepared to handle whatever a PC might do. If a PC decides to explore the inn, he will find that several people are not feeling well.

Down in the common room, several individuals either cannot sleep or have had bad nightmares. Sir Wayberry's wife, Merita, and several of her staff are trying to accommodate the guests the best they can. They have started a fire at the request of several patrons (normally this fireplace is used only during the winter months). Although Merita Wayberry does not have any symptoms (she is a retired paladin), several members of her staff are not feeling well. Most of the sick guests credit their current condition with their partying; however, several have come down with fevers and are more concerned with their general health.

If the PCs decide to investigate the rest of the city, move to Encounter Three.

## ENCOUNTER 3: THE MORNING AFTER

At this point you will have to adjust the timing of the module based upon the PCs' actions. Once they realize that they are sick, they will most likely want to leave their room to find out what is going on. They may even decide to leave the inn. Regardless of where they are going, have the PCs see a lone soldier enter the Inn.

*You find a soldier quickly attaching a piece of parchment to the inside of the front door. As he leaves you barely see a shadow cross the floor as the door closes. The shadow moves across the floor to the center of the room and from it appears Currin Foxtail, the bard. She removes the hood of her cloak to reveal a white cloth covering her nose and mouth serving as a bandana. Also noticing her entrance, Merita Wayberry quickly approaches her and asks Currin what information she brings.*

*"I am sorry to be the bearer of horrific news. You will want to have your husband secure all your foodstuffs in a locked cellar. Although I doubt the riots will come here, it is always better to be safe than sorry. The city has been quarantined. No one is being allowed in or out. Furthermore, the city has been placed under martial law. It is expected that a citywide curfew will be announced sometime this morning."*

The contents of the notice posted on the door can be found in Player Handout #2. PCs who saw Cebo during the disturbance on their way into town will recognize him as the wanted man.

Either the PCs or Merita Wayberry can ask the following questions to gain the additional information. (Note: If there are bards in the party or if a PC has a Knowledge skill that might let them know some of the following information, let them attempt to use these skills before Currin just gives the party the information.)

#### **What is going on?**

The City has been struck by a plague. From my reconnaissance, I can tell you that all areas of the City have been infected. Panic has only just started to break out, and it only looks like the Low District and Temple District will be affected. So far, the militia seems to have

things well under hand, but I do not know how long they will hold. They seem to have been hard hit by the plague as well.

### **What is the sickness?**

If my hunch is right, this is a dreadful disease known as the Embrace of Incabulos. This disease is extremely contagious, immensely gruesome, and about 80% fatal. The gestation period is only 2 to 4 hours, during which time the victim is already contagious.

The first signs seem like the common cold and last for about half a day. Its symptoms are general aches, chills with slight fever, sore throat, and a phlegmy cough. Some people are fortunate and this is as far as the sickness goes.

However, for most the disease gets much worse. During the next stage, the symptoms are fever; dizziness; freezing (swelling) joints; bleeding eyes, nose, and gums; and diarrhea. The body becomes more delicate. The slightest bump can cause a serious bruise. The body itself begins to decay while you are still alive.

In the final stage before death, the victim runs a high fever, has visions, and experiences bloody vomiting and bloody diarrhea. However, the worst part is the victim goes through a special change approximately 30 minutes prior to death. Once the body is almost completely dehydrated, it undergoes one last burst of energy trying to defeat the disease. This burst of energy is usually accompanied with violent hallucinations. The burst lasts about five minutes. During this time, the victim usually goes on a furious rampage. At the end of the burst, the victim becomes unconscious.

### **Who is Incabulos?**

He is the patron deity of disease, plagues, and pestilence.

### **Why haven't the temples done something to stop the plague?**

I am not sure. Normally they would have been much more proactive in trying to hinder the spread of the plague. There is more to this than we currently know. I only came back out of courtesy, to let Sir Wayberry know what I have learned before I depart.

If the PCs want to go with her, she simply tells them she always travels alone.

## **ENCOUNTER 4: THUG ATTACK?**

This is an optional encounter that does not pertain to the main story. If time is becoming a problem (i.e., there is less than an hour left), then skip this encounter, but make sure not to give the PCs the respective experience points. If you have sufficient time, you can run this encounter a variety of ways.

This situation appears as a simple robbery attempt that the PCs come and break up. However, there is much more going on than a simple robbery. Quanith, the "victim," is actually a wealthy fence for the local thieves guild and has several guards in his pocket. His actions

were responsible for getting a local rogue killed. Now the dead rogue's brother, Rifflin, has come back to extract a "little justice." The complete story is in DM Aid Five.

Feel free to run this as a typical thug encounter, or if time permits, give the PCs a chance to hear the details and decide who is right or wrong and what to do about it.

Both the merchant and the "thieves" are currently affected by Stage One of the Embrace.

*The back streets are mostly empty. It would seem that anyone who is willing to break the curfew decided to gather with mob in the temple district. You are making good time when you hear a cry. "Help! City Watch! I am being rob...ugg." The cry is broken off suddenly. From the sound, the cry could not be more than a couple of blocks away.*

Assuming the PCs answer the cry for help, they will arrive at the scene to discover a robbery in progress.

*A large warehouse has its double doors wide open. Two unconscious and bound guards lie on either side of the doors. A plump and well-dressed man stands in the middle of the street with a look of disgust on his face. Next to him stands a tall, thin man wearing long silk robes. The robed man is watching the rotund man with a scowl on his face and his staff ready to strike. Two men and a dwarf, all garbed in adventuring wear, are moving in and out of the warehouse loading a horse-drawn wagon with boxes and crates.*

Thurston is keeping watch over Quanith while Rifflin, Sventh, and Dobnw are loading the wagon. Celentra is on the rooftop 20 feet above, hiding in the shadows and keeping watch (Spot, DC 19).

If the PCs are in view and do not attack on sight, Rifflin will greet them and explain that they are "Only taking what was stolen from my brother, plus penalties and interest." Quanith will deny everything and ask that the PCs stop the thieves, or at least call the City Watch. Rifflin will not go to the authorities for justice because he believes he won't get any (with some justification, see DM Aid Five for his story).

Should the PCs turn the avenging gang over to the authorities, the fence will not press charges (he has his own way of achieving justice) and if the PCs turn over the fence, the authorities will not have enough evidence to prosecute.

**Creatures:** How many of Rifflin's gang will actually fight the PCs depends upon the tier.

- Tier 1:** Rifflin and Sventh (EL 5)
- Tier 2:** Rifflin, Sventh, and Celentra (EL 7)
- Tier 3:** Rifflin, Sventh, Celentra, Dobnw, and Thurston (EL 9)

**Rifflin, male human Rog2/Rgr2:** CR 4; Medium-size humanoid; HD 2d6+2d10; hp 22; Init +3; Spd 30 ft; AC 17 (touch 13, flat-footed 14) [+3 Dex, +4 chain shirt]; Atk +3 melee (1d8+2, longsword) and +3 melee (1d6+1, shortsword), +6 missile (1d8, longbow); SQ Sneak attack

+1d6, evasion; AL CG; SV Fort: +3, Ref +6, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 10, Chr 14. Height 5 ft. 9 in.

*Skills and Feats:* Bluff +7, Diplomacy +11, Hide +7, Intimidate +8, Jump +9, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Open Locks +7, Search +5, Sense Motive +5, Spot +5, Tumble +10, Wilderness Lore +7; Blind Fight, Dodge, Mobility, Tracking, Two-Weapon Fighting.

*Possessions:* chain shirt, green cloak, longsword, shortsword, longbow, 20 arrows.

Rifflin is a handsome, blond human weighing 175 lb. He is friendly, determined, self-assured, steadfast, and loyal.

➤ **Sventh, male human, Ftr3:** CR 3; Medium-size humanoid; HD 3d10+6; hp 28; Init +2; Spd 20 ft; AC 19 (touch 12, flat-footed 17) [+2 Dex, +5 spiked breastplate, +2 large steel shield]; Atk +7 melee (1d10+3, bastard sword); AL CG; SV Fort: +5, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 10, Chr 10. Height 6 ft. 2 in.

*Skills and Feats:* Climb +4, Handle Animal +5, Jump +3, Ride +7, Swim +6; Blind Fight, Exotic Weapon (Bastard Sword), Power Attack, Sunder, Weapon Focus (Bastard Sword).

*Possessions:* spiked breastplate, large steel shield, bastard sword (60 lbs total).

Sventh is a large, muscular man (230 lb) with brown hair. He is quiet, helpful, aggressive, simple, and quick to act.

➤ **Celentra, female elf, Rog2/Wiz2:** CR 4; Medium-size humanoid; HD 2d6+2d4; hp 16; Init +4; Spd 30 ft; AC 14 (touch 14, flat-footed 10) [+4 Dex]; Atk +2 melee (1d6, shortsword), +6 missile (1d6, shortbow); SQ Sneak attack +1d6, evasion, low-light vision, immune to sleep spells, +2 save vs. Enchantment spells or effects; AL CG; SV Fort: +0, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 10, Chr 14. Height 4 ft. 10 in.

*Skills and Feats:* Appraise +7, Climb +5, Concentration +4, Disable Device +7, Escape Artist +9, Gather Information +7, Hide +9, Open Lock +9, Search +7, Spellcraft +6, Spot +5, Tumble +9; Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot.

*Spells Prepared* (4/3, base DC = 12 + spell level): 0—*daze* (2), *detect magic*, *read magic*; 1st—*obscuring mist*, *shield*, *sleep*

*Possessions:* 50-ft knotted rope with grappling hook, shortsword, shortbow.

Celentra has sandy blond hair worn in long ponytails and weighs 95 lb. She is wearing a brown tunic and leather pants and a green half cape. She is cute, clever, observant, quick witted, happy-go-lucky, and caring.

➤ **Dobnw, male dwarf, Clr3:** CR 3; Medium-size humanoid; HD 3d8+9; hp 27; Init +0; Spd 15 ft; AC 18 (touch 10, flat-footed 18) [+8 full plate, tower shield]; Atk +4 melee (1d8+2 Mace); SQ Darkvision, +2 on saves vs. poison, +2 on saves vs. spells and spell-like effects; AL N; SV Fort: +6, Ref +1, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 16, Chr 8. Height 5 ft. 2 in.

*Skills and Feats:* Concentration +8, Heal +8, Knowledge (Religion) +2, Spell Craft +2, Craft (Weaponsmithing) +7, Expertise, Run.

*Spells Prepared* (4/3+1/2+1; base DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*detect magic*, *detect poison*, *mending*, *purify food and drink*; 1st—*detect secret doors*\*, *bles*, *command*, *magic weapon*; 2nd—*detect thoughts*\*, *bull's strength*, *silence*.

\*Domain spell. *Domains:* Earth (turn or destroy air creatures as a good cleric turns undead, rebuke or command earth creatures as an evil cleric rebukes undead, can use these abilities twice per day); Knowledge (all knowledge skills are class skills, cast divinations at +1 caster level).

*Spontaneous casting:* As a neutral cleric of a neutral deity, Dobnw has chosen to convert spells to *cure* spells.

*Possessions:* full plate armor, mace, tower shield, heavy crossbow.

Dobnw carries a holy symbol of Dumathoin (the dwarven deity of mining, exploration, and secrets under the mountain). He is dour, unforgiving, taciturn, neat, sober, and always grumbling about something.

➤ **Thurston, male human, Wiz3:** CR 3; Medium-size humanoid; HD 3d4+6; hp 16; Init +6; Spd 30 ft; AC 16 (touch 12, flat-footed 14) [+2 Dex, *mage armor*]; Atk +2 melee (1d6+1 Staff), +3 missile (1d8, light crossbow); AL N; SV Fort: +3, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 10, Chr 8. Height 6 ft.

*Skills and Feats:* Alchemy +8, Concentration +8, Diplomacy +2, Intimidate +2, Knowledge (Arcana) +5, Knowledge (Religion) +4, Knowledge (Geography) +4, Knowledge (History) +4, Knowledge (Nobility) +5, Scry +4, Spellcraft +8; Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Scribe Scroll.

*Spells Prepared* (4/3/2, base DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*daze* (2), *detect magic*, *read magic*; 1st—*expeditious retreat*, *mage armor*, *sleep*; 2nd—*blindness/deafness*, *Melf's acid arrow*

*Possessions:* staff, light crossbow, 20 bolts.

Despite being six feet tall, Thurston only weighs 145 lb. He wears red and black silk robes with a house crest on his chest and back. He is the son of a lesser noble of Sterich and is snobbish, indignant, egotistical, proud, educated, stuffy, and loyal.

➤ **Quanith, male human, Rog5/Brd3:** CR 8; Medium-size humanoid; HD 8d6+8; hp 42 (currently 38 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AC 11 (touch 11, flat-footed 10) [+1 Dex]; Atk +5 melee (1d4, dagger); SQ Sneak attack (+3d6), evasion, uncanny dodge (dex bonus to AC, can't be flanked), bardic music (inspire courage, countersong, *fascinate*, *suggestion*), bardic knowledge; AL NE; SV Fort: +3, Ref +8, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 10, Chr 16. Height 5 ft. 7 in., weight 220 lb.

*Skills and Feats:* Appraise +10, Bluff +10, Decipher Script +13, Diplomacy +14, Disable Device +10, Forgery +10, Gather Information +10, Innuendo +6, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (history) +4, Knowledge (nobility) +4, Open Lock +5, Perform +10, Profession (merchant) +10, Search +10, Sense Motive +12, Spellcraft

+9, Use Magic Device +10; Iron Will, Leadership, Run, Skill Focus (Sense Motive).

**Possessions:** expensive clothes, emerald ring (200 gp), magnifying glass (100 gp, gives a +2 circumstance bonus to Appraise checks for small or highly detailed objects, such as a gem).

**Spells Known (3/2):** o—*detect magic, mage hand, mending, open/close, prestidigitation, read magic*; 1st—*alarm, charm person, identify*

**Tactics:** Rifflin and his gang will try to leave the PCs alive – binding wounds and attacking to subdue when possible. They are not evil and are certainly not looking for any more trouble than necessary. If one of the PCs goes to summon the watch, they will try to overcome the remaining PCs in ten rounds or less so they can leave with their booty, but will leave without it if they have not overwhelmed the PCs by this point.

Quanith will not fight at all. He would rather deal with his problems in his own way and at a time of his choosing.

## ENCOUNTER 5: THE WHOLE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

The PCs can get to this encounter a variety of ways. They many have sought out someone of authority to report seeing Cebo. Or the PCs could get arrested trying to leave the city. If they do try to sneak out, let another group of NPCs be trying to get out the same way, only they end up drawing the attention of the city watch. Eventually the PCs should tell the guards about seeing Cebo and they will be brought to this encounter.

It is in this encounter that the PCs learn what is really going on. If they confide in the powers-that-be that they saw the murdering thief outside the city, they will be cured and transported to the last location that they saw him.

You can adjudicate how easy the PCs can get an audience with Speaker Lindra of Heironeous and Captain Wistelle Dragus, the commander of the local garrison. This should all be based upon the fact that Gran March is a lawful good society and Hookhill is the center of its bureaucracy. Citizens of Gran March will find gaining an audience much easier than foreigners; likewise, a group of active duty military members will have an easier time than a group of civilians. The amount of bureaucracy is up to you as DM, but do not make it impossible and remember to keep the scenario moving.

Eventually, the PCs should arrive at the Cathedral Valorous of Heironeous. This impressive structure, the second largest building in Hookhill, is constructed of thick granite and resembles more a keep than a temple. Paladins of various rank stand guard at its main doors, preventing the general populace from entering.

The PCs are taken inside the temple, past a large open courtyard, into one of the side towers. The PCs are led to a large map room where a group of individuals seem to be discussing the current dilemma. There are two women who both seem to hold the commanding presence in the room. One is Captain Wistelle Dragus, who is the highest-ranking officer in the city and is responsible for keeping order in Hookhill. The other is Lindra of Keddin's Run and the Speaker of the Temple of Heironeous. Roleplaying notes on each are provided in DM Aid Four.

The PCs will be presented to the two leaders, who will question them about what they saw. After the PCs have had a chance to tell their story, Lindra asks them to undertake a mission to recover the Essence of the Violet Lotus.

*Lindra stands and addresses you all. "In this time of darkness, I will take your presence here to be a sign that you are divine instruments of Heironeous' will. Before I ask you to undertake such an important mission I want you to fully understand the circumstances surrounding this ordeal.*

*"Yesterday morning, a man that matches the description of the mysterious rider you spoke of, broke into our temple vaults despite our holy wards. He killed two priests on guard using a vile poison. Several items were stolen. Among them, and what is most important to us now, is the Essence of the Violet Lotus. When heated and swallowed, it imbues the user with the ability to shrug off the effects of nastiest diseases and poisons. The Essence had been distilled and concentrated, so that even the small cask that was stolen contains enough to protect the entire city.*

*Early this morning, we received a box containing a piece of parchment and a ceremonial dagger covered in dark runes and glyphs. The note explained that the city has been exposed to the Embrace of Incabulos. It also related that the only way to appease the Lord of Disease is to raze the Temple of Heironeous; sacrifice the Speaker, myself, in the name of Incabulos, using the enclosed dagger; and pay a tribute of 10,000 lions in gems. Only then will the Essence of the Violet Lotus be returned. If this is not done, it is likely that thousands of people will be dead by tomorrow morning.*

*Currently, we have the contaminated soldiers protecting the walls to prevent the spread of the disease to other cities. The few troops that have not been contaminated are outside the city looking for the thief and the Essence. Our divinations tell us that the Essence and the thief who took it are outside the city. The priest of Incabulos who is the cause of our problems is still in Hookhill. However, our divinations have not been able to reveal any more than this.*

*What I propose is to send you to the city gates, where you will be cured of all diseases. Then you will be taken to where you last saw the thief. You must do whatever it takes to recover the Essence. It is essential you return with the Essence before midnight or I am prepared to meet the demands of the priest of Incabulos, although I doubt he will keep his side of the agreement.*

Answer any of the PCs' questions the best you can. If they ask what else was stolen, tell them that most of the items have been recovered through the use of divination magic.

The items had been left all around town, one of the items was even found at the Wayberry Inn.

Assuming the PCs agree, they are escorted out of city, where a paladin or cleric cures each of them (they will take precautions to make sure they are far enough apart from each other so that they are also no longer contagious). Then they will be given horses (or whatever is appropriate) to get them to where they last saw Cebo. Proceed to Encounter Six.

## ENCOUNTER 6: ON THE ROAD AGAIN

*You are once again on the road outside of Hookhill where you saw the disturbance yesterday. This stretch of road seems remarkably different now that it is deserted.*

The purpose of this encounter is to get the PCs from the road to the cave entrance where Cebo is hiding. If the PCs do not find their way to the cave, then the adventure is over and the scenario ends poorly. Therefore, the PCs need to make it to the cave entrance, but you should make them feel that finding the cave is no easy chore and that they are uniquely qualified to find the way. There are signs along the way, but if they are unable to discover them or ignore them, a blink dog will arrive and show them the way (at the cost of the experience points for this encounter).

The correct route is as shown in DM Aid Three.

- Into the forest 750 feet until you come to a stream
- Go right along the stream (downstream)
- A piece of ripped cloak hangs from a branch that reaches over the middle of the stream (Spot, DC 30, +15 circumstance bonus if the PCs are looking at the trees);
- The stream merges into a 500-foot-wide river; this time, upstream (to the left) is the way to go
- There is an empty scroll tube on the riverbank 1600 feet from where the stream enters the river (Spot, DC 10)
- Tracks lead into the woods; following them (DC 10) will lead the PCs to the cave where Cebo is hiding

The following provides more information about each area.

### Forest

The forest has a relatively dense canopy, so the forest floor is fairly clear and does not prevent movement, only reduces it. Assuming the PCs move into the forest away from the road, they will eventually come upon the stream. Finding Cebo's tracks from the day before requires a Tracking check (DC 15).

### Stream

The correct direction is to move downstream. Directly across the stream from where Cebo approached are thick vines that would make passage very difficult at best. It should be clear to the PCs that Cebo did not cross over the stream. If the PCs move upstream, they will eventually come to where the stream springs forth from the earth. At this point is a group of druids who are in the middle of the mid-summer ritual. They are not happy about the interruption, but tell the PCs that they have been here for over a week and have seen no one. They do not know about the plague and do not feel it is any of their concern. Hopefully, this will be enough to send the PCs downstream.

Cebo rode his horse down the middle of this stream. Along the way, he caught his cloak on a branch that overhangs the river. The PCs can find the piece of ripped cloth based with a successful Spot check (DC 30). If, however, a PC mentions that he is looking up in the trees or over the stream, give him a +15 circumstance bonus. The ripped cloak has Cebo's scent, which could be used to help track him once he dismounts from the protected *phantom steed*.

### River

Eventually the PCs will reach the river. The river is a large, slow moving river about 500 feet across. As the PCs look around trying to decide which way to go, they will notice that a summer storm seems to be brewing upstream. A Spot check (DC 10) will reveal that although there does not yet seem to be any rain, there is what could only be described as "silver lightning."

A successful Knowledge (religion) check (DC 15, +10 circumstance bonus if the person is a follower of Heironeous) will bring to mind that a silver lightning bolt is one of the symbols of Heironeous. If the PCs ask, the storm is upstream and on the same side of the river.

If the PCs go downstream, they will find a waterfall about 300 feet from where the stream enters the river. The waterfall has a 10-foot drop and the PCs can find numerous hand- and footholds to enable them to climb down, although the spray makes the rocks slippery (Climb DC 15). It should be obvious that a horse could not go this way, although it is possible the PCs might go on anyway. If time is becoming an issue, the blink dog will arrive and show them the right way.

### Riverbank

The riverbank is very soft, so it is easy to find the point where Cebo left the river if the PCs are searching on the correct side (Tracking DC 5). There are horse tracks leading out of the water and bootprints leading off (the hoofprints simply stop). There is also a discarded scroll tube nearby. It will be discovered on a successful Spot check (DC 10).

If the PCs miss the tracks and the scroll tube or travel up the wrong side of the bank, they will eventually come to a bridge that crosses the river. The guards on the bridge can report that no one has been seen moving up the river

since the beginning of the festival. If the PCs move back down the river, give them another chance for the Search and Spot checks. If they cannot find the trail, use the blink dog.

### Tracking

Around the scroll tube, the PCs can easily follow the deep footprints left in the mud leading inland (DC 6); however, the ground becomes a little firmer after the trail enters the forest (DC 11). If the PCs found the piece of Cebo's cloak, they can also attempt to track by scent, if they have an animal or familiar with the Scent ability (DC 16). After following the trail for about 1000 feet, have the tracker make another check (same DC). If this second check is successful, the tracker will notice that the trail splits: there are tracks leading away to the southwest and the trail ahead (to the north) has tracks going in both directions. The tracks to the southwest lead to the cave. If the PCs go to the cave, proceed to Encounter Seven. The tracks to the north lead to the dock where Cebo hid the Essence of the Violet Lotus. There are many sets of tracks in the dock area, so it will become impossible to tell exactly where Cebo went after heading toward the dock.

The dock belongs to a wealthy farmer who uses his boat to transport his goods upstream to market. The farmer need not make an appearance in this event unless the PCs go looking for him. The farmer has not seen anything, but his farm hands took his boat to town for the festival and have not returned. He is beginning to worry.

**Development:** It is possible that the PCs will guess that Cebo hid his booty in the river. The water is murky and visibility is very limited. PCs will need to specify that they are searching the dock pilings to find Cebo's chest (Search DC 15). Details about the chest and how it is hidden can be found at the end of Encounter Seven.

If the PCs are unable to follow the tracks in the forest, the blink dog will come and lead them to the cave (proceed to Encounter Seven).

## ENCOUNTER 7: THE LAIR

The trail leads to a cave entrance about 5 feet wide and 7 feet tall.

*The narrow cave winds back and forth, slowly descending into the earth. The cave varies between 3 to 7 feet wide and similar dimensions in height. After traveling about 100 feet you find a lit torch secured in a sconce.*

If the PCs are searching as they go (for traps, tracks, or whatever), they will find that the cave is filled with life. Anyone making a Wilderness Lore or Knowledge (nature) check (DC 5) can tell that this cave has a variety of inhabitants, including beetles, worms, rats, bats, and snakes and that the cave has even served as a winter resting place for a bear or two. A successful Search check

(DC 10) will produce a medium-sized rattlesnake skin. A successful Tracking check (DC 5) will reveal many humanoid footprints; (DC 10) will reveal three distinct sets of footprints coming and going; (DC 20) will reveal the latest footprints are two sets going in, one being heavy-set and the second light on his feet, and will permit tracking into the next cave, revealing the safe path past the caltrops (see below).

*Traveling deeper into the cave, you find another torch about 50 feet from the last. A third torch is discovered after another 50 feet where the cave widens to about 10 feet. At this point the cave bottoms out. A pool of water fills the cave width for about 15 feet. The torchlight reflecting off the stagnant water reveals that the cave ascends steeply on the far side.*

**Traps:** The water is only about 2 feet deep. However, the bottom is covered with caltrops except for the 3 feet closest to the right side of the cavern (keep in mind that since the Search is DC 15, it can be attempted by anyone and they may take 20). About three-quarters the way across is a trip wire that is attached to a bunch of bells hidden in the wall (this trap is well enough hidden that it can only be found by rogues).

Also hidden in a crevice in the wall is Cebo's familiar, a rat named Twitch. Twitch knows to stay well hidden, but he will alert Cebo if he hears anything out of the ordinary or if someone brings a light source.

Finally, in Tiers 2 and 3, Cebo has cast an *alarm* spell (mental alarm) 20 feet past the pool of water.

➤ **Caltrops:** CR 1/2; +0 melee attack for each 5-ft square (shield, armor, and deflection bonuses do not count but footwear gives +2 armor bonus to AC); attack does 1 point damage and reduces speed by one half for one day or until Heal skill used (DC 15); Search (DC 15); Disable Device (automatic, can move through them at one-half or avoid all together once the safe path is discovered).

➤ **Trip Wire Trap:** CR 1/2; audible alarm; Reflex save avoids (DC 20); Search (DC 25); Disable Device (DC 20).

➤ **Twitch:** Rat familiar (non-combatant), Hide +18, Listen +6, Spot +6

*The cave continues upward, but not as steep as before. Once again you come to a torch, this time it is at the entrance to a large cavern.*

Once the PCs enter the cavern, continue with the read-aloud text.

*It is clear that an underground river once flowed through this room. Initially, the floor descends steeply. After descending 40 feet, there is a flat, dry riverbed. More torches light this area enough to see that the floor rises rapidly for about 50 feet to the far wall. The cave you were traveling seems to continue into the rock on the far side.*

Cebo and his bodyguard, Grakos, have set up an ambush on the far side. Cebo cannot be seen without low-light or darkvision because the torches are positioned carefully so their light doesn't reach the balcony on which he waits. Grakos is completely out of sight of the PCs until they reach the riverbed, and even then they will need low-light or darkvision to see up into the tunnel where he waits. On Tiers 2 and 3, if Cebo and Grakos know the PCs are coming, you should mention that the far wall glistens in the torchlight (due to the oil covering it).

This is where the combat can get nasty (and complicated). Therefore detailed instructions and a map have been provided (DM Aid Six). Note that the map shows the slopes in a flattened projection, showing the total distance along the slopes rather than the horizontal distance covered (in order to make it easier to determine movement).

(A) This is where the PCs enter the room. The tunnel at this point is about 8 feet high and continues into the room before it slopes upward.

(B) This slope is at a 50-degree angle, which requires a climb check with a DC 0. Although the DC 0 may seem pointless, it is important here that the PCs are "climbing." Climbing affects movement rate (moving one-half your speed is a full round action, moving full speed can be done as a full round action incurring a -5 penalty on the Climb check) and enemies attack climbing opponents as if they were stunned (+2 on attacks, no Dex bonus to armor class, and cannot use a shield). Furthermore, a successful attack requires the climber to attempt another climb check. Failure indicates a fall.

(C) This is a flat, dry riverbed. It contains several loose stones. The north end looks like there was a cave-in years ago that halted the flow of the underground river.

(D) This is a much steeper slope than the side the PCs entered (60-degree slope, qualifying as a wall). To climb this side requires a DC 13 Climb check. This will be modified by +5 (to DC 18) when made slippery. It is most likely that PCs will take several rounds climbing this side of the chamber (see Area B and review climb rules).

(E) This 10-foot passage is only at a 45-degree slope and therefore does not require a climb check. The ceiling here is only about 4 feet tall.

(F) This small ledge is where Grakos waits for approaching PCs. Grakos has extinguished all torches in this area. Since he has darkvision, he needs no light. By standing on the ledge, he gains 50% cover (+4 cover AC bonus, +2 Reflex save bonus) from those below (he does not receive cover from attackers in the square next to the ledge). Plus, the darkness gains him nine-tenths concealment (40% miss chance). He is hooked to a harness that prevents him from being pushed into the pit behind him. It will take him a full-round action to detach himself from the harness, but if he is in a hurry, he can cut himself loose with a partial action. On his right side

are six barrels. These contain soapy water on Tier 1 and oil on Tiers 2 and 3.

(G) If someone falls into this pit they will take 1d6 points of damage. Climbing out of the pit requires a climb check, DC 25. It is possible to jump up and grab the rim of the hole (apply a standing Jump check to reach the rim, then a Climb check at DC 5).

(H) This is where the secret door is that leads to the balcony above the main room (Area I). A Search Check (DC 15) will reveal the door.

(I) This is the hidden balcony from which Cebo fires on the PCs. The rim of the balcony provides him with 50% cover from attacks from below (+4 cover AC bonus, +2 Reflex save bonus – use *shield* spell bonuses instead if the spell is active). The light from the torches does not reach up to the balcony, so unless the PCs have special vision, he receives the benefit of nine-tenths concealment (40% miss chance). The wall leading up from the slope to the balcony has few handholds, so climbing is difficult (DC 25).

(J) This is the area where Cebo and Grakos are making their temporary quarters. There are two bedrolls and two chests here. The chests contain clothes, but one of them has two arcane scrolls hidden at the bottom (*comprehend languages* at 1<sup>st</sup> level and *cat's grace* at 3<sup>rd</sup> level).

**Creatures:** Cebo Cranster is a clever rogue/wizard who has gained a reputation for being able to successfully plan and execute robberies that rogues with twice his experience would not even consider attempting. Cebo has often said, "With the right knowledge and the right tools, anything can be stolen. Now keeping it, that is an entirely different story." Instead of stealing things of value and then trying to sell them, Cebo has taken a more mercenary approach to his profession. If someone wants something they do not have, he will offer it to them for a price.

Grakos is Cebo's "bodyguard." Grakos is a large, dumb half-orc that Cebo has befriended. Besides being a powerful warrior, Grakos is very good at following simple orders. Cebo likes to keep Grakos out of sight, so that if there is a double cross, Grakos is Cebo's ace in the hole. Grakos has developed a deep loyalty towards Cebo and will give his life to save his "friend." Cebo shares a strong bond with Grakos, but it is more like that of a boy with his pet dog. Cebo knows Grakos' limits and how to instruct him such that Grakos is not confused as to what to do.

## TIER 1 (EL 4)

➤ **Cebo Cranster, male human Rog1/Wiz(Conj):** CR2; Medium-size humanoid; HD 1d6+1d4+2; hp 11; Init +3; Spd 30 ft; AC 24 (touch 20, flat-footed 21) [+3 Dex, +4 *mage armor*, +7 *shield*]; Atk +1 melee (1d4+1, dagger), +3 missile (1d6, short bow); SQ sneak attack +1d6; AL NE;

SV Fort: +3, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 10, Chr 14. Height 5 ft. 10 in.

*Skills and Feats:* Climb +5, Concentration +6, Decipher Script +7, Disable Device +7, Hide +7, Knowledge (Arcana) +4, Knowledge (Religion) +4, Knowledge (Nature) +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +7, Open Lock +7, Search +7, Sense Motive +4, Spot +4, Use Magic Device +8; Point Blank Shot, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Use Magic Device).

*Possessions:* 6 poisoned arrows (Save DC 13, 1d6 Con/1d6 Dex), 40 normal arrows, shortbow, dagger, key to watertight chest.

*Spells Prepared* (3+1/2+1, base DC = 13 + spell level, no Evocation spells): 0—*detect magic, mage hand, ray of frost, read magic*; 1st—*mage armor, shield, true strike*

➤ **Grakos, male half-orc Bbn1/Ftr1:** CR 2; Medium-size humanoid; HD 1d12+1d10+2; hp 20; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; AC 17 (touch 12, flat-footed 15) [+2 Dex, +5 breastplate]; Atk +7 melee (2d4+5, spiked chain), +4 missile (1d8, longbow); SQ darkvision, rage 1/day, fast movement; AL NE; SV Fort: +5, Ref +2, Will -1; Str 20, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Chr 6. Height 6 ft. 3 in.

*Skills and Feats:* Climb +6, Jump +6, Listen +3, Wilderness Lore +3; Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Spiked Chain).

*Possessions:* breastplate, spiked chain, longbow, 20 arrows.

## TIER 2 (EL 8)

➤ **Cebo Cranster male human Rog3/Wiz(Conj.)3:** CR 6 Medium-size humanoid; HD 3d6+3d4+6; hp 29; Init +3 (+5); Spd 30 ft; AC 24 (26) (touch 20 (22), flat-footed 21) [+3 (+5) Dex, +4 *mage armor*, +7 *shield*]; Atk +4 melee (1d4+1, dagger), +6 (+8) missile (1d6, short bow); SQ sneak attack +2d6, evasion, uncanny dodge (dex bonus to AC); AL NE; SV Fort: +5, Ref +7 (+9), Will +4; Str 12, Dex 17 (20), Con 12, Int 16, Wis 10, Chr 14. Height 5 ft. 10 in.

*Skills and Feats:* Climb +9, Concentration +10, Decipher Script +11, Disable Device +11, Hide +7 (+9), Knowledge (Arcana) +4, Knowledge (Religion) +4, Knowledge (Nature) +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +9 (+11), Open Lock +11 (+13), Search +11, Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +11, Spot +4, Use Magic Device +12 (+16 for scrolls); Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Use Magic Device).

*Possessions:* 12 poisoned arrows (Save DC 15, 1d6 Con/1d6 Dex), 40 normal arrows, shortbow, dagger, key to watertight chest.

*Spells Prepared* (4+1/3+1/2+1, base DC = 13 + spell level, no Evocation spells): 0—*detect magic, mage hand, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic*; 1st—*alarm, mage armor, shield, true strike*; 2nd—*cat's grace, darkvision, glitterdust*

➤ **Grakos male half-orc, Bbn2/Ftr2:** CR4; Medium-size humanoid; HD 2d12+2d10+4; hp 35; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; AC 17 (touch 12, flat-footed 15) [+2 Dex, +5 breastplate]; Atk +10 melee (2d4+5, spiked chain), +6 missile (1d8,

longbow); SQ darkvision, rage 1/day, fast movement, uncanny dodge (dex bonus to AC); AL NE; SV Fort: +7, Ref +2, Will -1; Str 21, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Chr 6. Height 6 ft. 3 in.

*Skills and Feats:* Climb +8, Jump +8, Listen +4, Wilderness Lore +4; Blind Fight, Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Spiked Chain), Weapon Focus (Spiked Chain).

*Possessions:* breastplate, spiked chain, longbow, 20 arrows.

## TIER 3 (EL 10)

➤ **Cebo Cranster, male human, Rog4/Wiz(Conj.)4:** CR 8; Medium-size humanoid; HD 4d6+4d4+8; hp 38; Init +4 (+6); Spd 30 ft; AC 25 (27) (touch 21 (23), flat-footed 21) [+4 (+6) Dex, +4 *mage armor*, +7 *shield*]; Atk +6 melee (1d4+1, dagger), +9 (+11) missile (1d6, short bow); SQ sneak attack +2d6, evasion, uncanny dodge (dex bonus to AC); AL NE; SV Fort: +5, Ref +9 (+11), Will +5; Str 12, Dex 18 (22), Con 12, Int 16, Wis 10, Chr 14. Height 5 ft. 10 in.

*Skills and Feats:* Climb +11, Concentration +12, Decipher Script +13, Disable Device +13, Hide +7, Knowledge (Arcana) +4, Knowledge (Religion) +4, Knowledge (Nature) +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +9, Open Lock +13, Search +13, Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +15, Spot +4, Use Magic Device +14 (+18 for scrolls); Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Use Magic Device).

*Possessions:* 18 poisoned arrows (Save DC 17, 1d6 Con/1d6 Dex), 40 normal arrows, shortbow, dagger, key to watertight chest.

*Spells Prepared* (4+1/4+1/3+1, base DC = 13 + spell level, no Evocation spells): 0—*detect magic, mage hand, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic*; 1st—*alarm, mage armor, protection from good, shield, true strike*; 2nd—*bull's strength, cat's grace, darkvision, glitterdust*

➤ **Grakos, male half-orc Bbn3/Ftr3:** CR 6; Medium-size humanoid; HD 3d12+3d10+6; hp 50; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; AC 17 (touch 12, flat-footed 15) [+2 Dex, +5 breastplate]; Atk +12/+7 (+14/+9) melee (2d4+5 (2d4+7), spiked chain), +8 missile (1d8, longbow); SQ darkvision, rage 1/day, fast movement, uncanny dodge (dex bonus to AC); AL NE; SV Fort: +7, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 21 (24), Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Chr 6. Height 6 ft. 3 in.

*Skills and Feats:* Climb +10, Jump +10, Listen +5, Wilderness Lore +5; Blind Fight, Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Spiked Chain), Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (Spiked Chain).

*Possessions:* breastplate, spiked chain, longbow, 20 arrows.

## AUGMENTED TIER (EL 12)

➤ **Cebo Cranster, male human Rog5/Wiz(Conj.)5:** CR 10; Medium-size humanoid; HD 5d6+5d4+10; hp 46; Init +4 (+6); Spd 30 ft; AC 25 (27) (touch 21 (23), flat-footed 21) [+4 (+6) Dex, +4 *mage armor*, +7 *shield*]; Atk +6 melee (1d4+1, dagger), +9 (+11) missile (1d6, short bow); SQ



sneak attack +3d6, evasion, uncanny dodge (dex bonus to AC); AL NE; SV Fort: +5, Ref +9 (+11), Will +5; Str 12, Dex 18 (22), Con 12, Int 16, Wis 10, Chr 14. Height 5 ft. 10 in.

**Skills and Feats:** Climb +11, Concentration +15, Decipher Script +15, Disable Device +15, Hide +7 (+9), Knowledge (Arcana) +5, Knowledge (Religion) +4, Knowledge (Nature) +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +11 (+13), Open Lock +15 (+17), Search +15, Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +17, Spot +4, Use Magic Device +16 (+20 for scrolls); Blind Fight, Brew Potion, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Use Magic Device).

**Possessions:** 18 poisoned arrows (Save DC 19, 1d6 Con/1d6 Dex), 40 normal arrows, shortbow, dagger, key to watertight chest.

**Spells Prepared** (4+1/4+1/3+1/2+1, base DC = 13 + spell level, no Evocation spells): 0—*detect magic*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*; 1st—~~alarm~~, ~~mage armor~~, *protection from good*, ~~shield~~, *true strike*; 2nd—~~bull's strength~~, ~~cat's grace~~, *darkvision*, *glitterdust*; 3rd—*blink*, *sleet storm*, *stinking cloud*

➤ **Grakos, male half-orc, Bbn4/Ftr4:** CR 8; Medium-size humanoid; HD 4d12+4d10+8; hp 65; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; AC 17 (touch 12, flat-footed 15) [+2 Dex, +5 breastplate]; Atk +15/+10 (+17/+12) melee (2d4+8 (2d4+10), spiked chain), +10 missile (1d8, longbow); SQ darkvision, rage 2/day, fast movement, uncanny dodge (dex bonus to AC); AL NE; SV Fort: +9, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 22 (26), Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Chr 6. Height 6 ft. 3 in.

**Skills and Feats:** Climb +12, Jump +12, Listen +6, Wilderness Lore +6; Blind Fight, Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Spiked Chain), Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (Spiked Chain), Weapon Specialization (Spiked Chain).

**Possessions:** breastplate, spiked chain, longbow, 20 arrows.

**Tactics:** Unless the PCs manage to bypass all of their warning measures, Cebo and Grakos will know of their approach well before they arrive. Cebo will position himself on the balcony and fire upon the PCs as soon as they enter the main cavern. He will use his poison arrows first. All areas of the main cavern are within the first 60-foot range increment of his shortbow. Once climbers are within 30 feet (where the “D” is positioned on the map), add sneak attack damage to his successful attacks (due to loss of Dex bonus to armor class for climbing). If the PCs climb up into the tunnel so that he has no more targets, he will move back to the secret door and help Grakos.

At Tier 1, Grakos begins pouring the soapy water down the slope as soon as Cebo begins firing. He is able to pour two barrels per round, extending the slippery area for 20 feet with each two barrels (i.e., the first two barrels make the top 20 feet slippery, the second two make the top 40 feet slippery, and the last two make the entire slope slippery). On Tiers 2 and 3, he pours the oil before the PCs arrive, provided that he and Cebo are warned of their coming. He will use his darkvision to watch the slope and will toss down a flask of alchemist's fire to

ignite the oil when the first PC is halfway up. The oil will burn for 1d4+1 rounds, doing 1d6 points per round, save for half damage. Grakos will then wait on the ledge and attack the PCs with his chain as they come into range. If more than one PC is able to attack him at one time, he will move back to use the pit to keep the PCs from ganging up.

If things are going badly, Cebo will try to negotiate for his escape (see Development below).

**Treasure:** There are two arcane scrolls (*comprehend languages* at 1<sup>st</sup> level and *cat's grace* at 3<sup>rd</sup> level) at the bottom of one of the chests of clothing in Area J.

**Development:** It is important not to let the PCs kill Cebo too quickly. He should have a chance to warn the PCs that the cure is not here, but hidden "In a place the no one will ever find, at least until it is too late." He says this if it looks like his life is in danger or the PCs have neutralized Grakos.

There are several ways that Cebo will reveal the whereabouts of the missing Essence of the Violet Lotus.

- He will start by offering to sell it to the PCs. He will explain to the PCs that he is an honorable thief and has yet to be paid for his goods. And his employer is late. You can handle the negotiations any way you want, but he will not accept anything less than 1,000 gp per tier and the PCs' assurances that he can go free. Ask the players for their PCs' true intentions. If they are intending anything but truly letting him go, they need to make a successful Bluff check. If they fail, Cebo will refuse to tell them anything (unless magically compelled) from then on. If everyone in the party convinces him that they will let him go, he will show them where the herbs are hidden.
- A successful Diplomacy check (DC 15 on Tier 1, DC 17 on Tier 2, DC 19 on Tier 3) or a successful *charm person* spell will allow Cebo to reveal the location and turn himself in on the condition that the PCs agree to explain to the authorities that he turned himself in on his own volition.
- A successful *read thoughts* spell will reveal the location.
- If Cebo is slain, a *speak with dead* spell will reveal the location.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** In Tier 1 Cebo is fairly fragile and the PCs have fewer avenues to coerce him into revealing the truth. As long as they make a sincere effort to get the information from him, let them succeed, but only award half the possible experience if you have to be lenient.

The Essence of the Violet Lotus is hidden about a 10-minute walk from the cave, down in the river. It is sealed in a watertight metal chest. A rope is tied around the metal chest and the chest is at the bottom of the river (15 feet deep). The other end of rope is tied to a nearby dock piling (below the water line).

**Iron Chest:** 0.5 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 15; AC 5; Break DC 25; Open Lock DC 25.

The chest lies in a wide section of the river where the water is fairly slow moving. The chest weighs 45 lb. and if the PCs find the rope, they should have no trouble recovering it (unless time permits and you want to make it more complicated). Once recovered, the PCs can determine that although the chest is locked (DC 25), it is not trapped. The inside of the chest has been enchanted by the clergy of Incabulos to prevent divination spells from locating the contents on a single-use basis. Once the chest is open, the enchantment is gone.

If the PCs return to Hookhill with the Essence of the Violet Lotus, proceed to Conclusion: Heroes. If not, proceed to Conclusion: Failure.

## CONCLUSION: HEROES

Once the PCs recover the herbs, they can return to the city in about an hour. On the way back they will be approached and recognized by a small group of the city militia. They were sent out to assist with the PCs' return. They will escort the PCs to where a carriage is hitched and waiting.

*As the carriage speeds toward the city, a militiaman sitting next to the driver blows a message on a horn. When the carriage reaches the city, the gates are open and the guards have cleared the streets of pedestrians. The carriage never even slows down until it reaches the temple district, where the streets are lined with the sick and dying.*

*The line of paladins protecting the temple of Heironeous make a path through the crowd so you can quickly reach the temple. Once inside the church, the Speaker is waiting for you with over a dozen other clergy. When the Speaker sees that you have returned with the stolen herbs, a look of renewed hope and relief befalls her face. She quickly whispers a prayer of gratitude. She turns to the waiting priests and commands them to prepare the curing broth.*

*She then turns toward your party with a moist eye "You have saved us all. You are truly heroes to be celebrated. We are.... I am in your debt."*

She will personally cure any wounds the PCs have. If a PC lost his life in trying to recover the herbs, the high priestess will raise him if the player desires it. The high priestess will then ask the PCs to tell her what happened after they left the city.

By the time the PCs are finished, the potent broth is finished. Cups of the broth are brought to the PCs as well as the Speaker. The broth is a thin yellow liquid with green specks (the herbs) suspended within. Although it has a minty smell, it tastes very bitter.

Once everyone has had a good drink, the Speaker will inform the PCs that her priests will be taking the broth throughout the city. She would like the PCs to accompany her in delivering the brew to the sick waiting outside the church. Once outside, the PCs will find that

the crowd has already been assembled into serving lines. The many priests are already attending to those that are the sickest. The Speaker stands on the steps of the temple and makes a quick speech to the crowd praising Heironeous and informing the crowd of the commendable deeds of the PCs. The gentle strength and confidence in which the Speaker delivers her speech has a restoring and soothing effect on the fearful crowd.

As the PCs help the sick, have the PCs make a single Spot check (DC 15). A successful check will allow the PC to notice that one of the men in the line waiting for the is the same individual that left the Wayberry Inn during the bard's song. A Spot check at DC 20 will reveal that the man is hiding a dagger under his robed sleeve. A Spot at DC 25 will further reveal a reddish liquid coating the dagger blade. The man is of course Diabolis. Having failed in his mission, he hopes to appease his deity by killing the Speaker. He is currently very sick with the plague and thus is easily overcome. If the PCs try to stop him, he will defend himself to the best of his ability (using total defense to receive a +4 dodge bonus to AC), trying to save the poison on his blade for an attack on the Speaker. The paladins will quickly come to the PCs' aid. Once Diabolis is subdued, he curses the PCs (if he can) and dies. His body quickly rots before the PCs and is nothing more than dust in less than a minute. The Speaker will remove Diabolis' curse if any PCs are affected. The PCs will receive the promised 1000 gp reward whether they have returned with Cebo or not.

## CONCLUSION: FAILURE

The text below includes some fairly graphic depictions of the effects of the plague. Be sure to adjust it as appropriate for the players at your table.

*You return to Hookhill to find a scene of absolute horror. The sick and dead line the streets. It appears that the madness has stricken many of those who were ill and there are signs of rioting and destruction throughout the city. Numerous fires burn out of control.*

*A few apparently healthy individuals with rags tied around their faces load bleeding corpses onto wagons. They appear to be taking the dead to the burning buildings in order to incinerate the bodies. One collapses as you pass by and his companions load him on the wagon as well. The pall of smoke brings the stench of burnt flesh.*

*As you approach the Temple of Heironeous, you find that the death and destruction are more concentrated there because of the sick seeking aid. You see the body of a paladin guard that has been rent asunder by the maddened crowd. A few individuals wander aimlessly about, as if dazed by the carnage. The Speaker stands upon the steps of the Temple, tears streaming down her face. She holds the sacrificial dagger loosely in her hand.*

*"It is too late. The other elders chose not to give in to the demands and now there is nothing that can be done."*

*A robed figure comes up behind the Speaker and lays a hand upon her shoulder. "You should have listened to me. Know now the divine wrath of Incabulos." The Speaker jerks under his*

touch and blood pours forth from her eyes and mouth. Her skin takes on a purple hue as she collapses upon the steps.

The robed figure cackles in triumph, speaks the word "Home," and disappears in a flash of light. You notice wisps of smoke seeping out from the main doors of the temple.

Incabulos has transferred the disease from Diabolis to the Speaker and granted him the spells he sought. The Speaker will die unless a *cure disease* is administered immediately. However, even if she lives, the experience has shattered her faith and she retires from public life. Diabolis has set a fire in the Temple that is too great for the PCs and the few remaining healthy followers of Heironeous to extinguish. Incabulos is pleased with his servant.

### The End

## EXPERIENCE POINT SUMMARY

To award experience for this adventure, add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Then assign the discretionary roleplaying experience award. The roleplaying award should be given for consistent character portrayal and contribution to the fun of the game. You can award different roleplaying amounts to different characters.

Award the total value (objectives plus roleplaying) to each character.

### Encounter One

Helping the merchant 50 xp

### Encounter Four

Capturing the looters 100 xp  
 Killing the looters 50 xp  
 Looters run off 25 xp  
 (100 xp max)

### Encounter Six

Following the trail without help 25 xp

### Encounter Seven

Bypassing trap and alarms 50 xp  
 Defeating Cebo and Grakos 200 xp  
 Finding the Essence of the Violet Lotus 50 xp

Total experience for objectives 475 xp  
 Discretionary roleplaying award 0-25 xp

**Total possible experience 500 xp**

## TREASURE SUMMARY

Player characters may keep items from the scenario that are listed on the treasure list below or which meet the following conditions:

1. The item must be non-magical and specifically listed in the text of the adventure (e.g armor on foes). If it is not listed in the text, the characters cannot keep it. Items of this nature can be sold for 50% of book value, or recorded on a log sheet.
2. Animals, followers, monsters, henchmen, and so forth (any living being, basically) may not be kept from a scenario for any reason unless the treasure summary lists the being specifically. It is okay for the player characters to form relationships with NPCs, but these will not be certified and cannot bring material benefit to the character. Contacts (sources of extra information) must be specifically certified.
3. Theft is against the law, but may be practiced by some player characters. Items which are worth more than 250 gp that are of personal significance to the owner (including family heirlooms), and all magical items, will be discovered in the possession of the character by one means or another. The character must return the item and pay a fine equal to three times the value of the item stolen. In addition, the PC caught receives campaign-decided penalties for being known as a thief. For other stolen items which meet the criteria in #1 above, use your judgment and the circumstances within the game to determine whether a PC thief gets away with the theft or not.

Any item retained according to these rules, which does not have a certificate, will not ever have a certificate issued for it.

The campaign staff reserves the right to take away any item or gold acquired for things that it later finds unreasonable but which were allowed at the time.

### Encounter Four

- Arcane scroll of *comprehend languages* (Cost: 25 gp; Size: tiny; Uses: one; Tradable: yes; Rarity: common; Weight: \*) written at 1st level
- Arcane scroll of *cat's grace* (Cost: 150 gp; Size: tiny; Uses: one; Tradable: yes; Rarity: common; Weight: \*) written at 3rd level

### Conclusion: Heroes

- Influence Point with the Church of Heironeous
- 1000 gp

## APPENDIX ONE - HOOKHILL

Hookhill is the capital city of Gran March, with a population of approximately 7,500. It is a walled city, most of which makes up one big district. The Commandant's Keep is a mini-district unto itself, as is the Army headquarters.

Although the Commandant governs Gran March, Baron Mithtin Dragus governs the city of Hookhill. Captain Wistelle Dragus (Pal9), his granddaughter, commands his Baronial Pride (the Pride is 100 soldiers, half of whom would be attending to business elsewhere in the Barony).

Hookhill is home to about 1,000 troops of various types. They are distributed and organized as follows.

About 150 of the soldiers are really administrators. Another 500 make up the Commandant's Own. This elite unit answers only to the Commandant. While a portion of them guard the Commandant's Keep at all times, the majority would be available to respond to emergencies. The 50 members of the Baronial Pride that remain in the city are responsible for keeping the peace, with the assistance of 20-30 constables (all of whom are veterans).

Each Elector also has 10 soldiers available to him or her. Although some of these soldiers will be left to guard each Elector's main estate, most will be present in the Hookhill town homes protecting the Electors themselves, who have come for the festival.

Outside the city, troops are organized in Files of eight men each. However, standard patrols within an area as well regulated as Hookhill consist of four men. This puts four military patrols and three constable patrols (two men in each) out in the city at any given time (assuming three shifts), with another several hundred men ready to respond to trouble. Time of day shouldn't make too much difference.

The city is home to many temples and priests. The most significant temples near or in Hookhill are the Cathedral Valorous (Heironeous, headed by Lindra of Keddin's Run), Attanien Estates (Zilchus, outside the city proper), and The Halls of Purity (Pholtus). There are smaller temples as well. A description as to how each church responds to the plague is provided below.

Many of the Electors have come to Hookhill for the festival. If the PCs are looking for gossip you may wish to include that Elector Ocedrius lost his son and only heir, Kehlerran Ocedrius, in the campaign against the giants in Geoff, and has been withdrawn and acting a bit strange lately.

### GEOGRAPHY SURROUNDING THE CITY

Barony Dragus features rolling plains and rich farmland. The terrain is broken by small forests and stands of trees (most no more than two miles in diameter). Small rivers and streams drain to the west and southwest across the Barony. The largest river is

known as Keddin's Run, and there is a town of the same name where the Stone Road crosses the stream about 14 miles north of Hookhill.

In Barony Dragus, all roads lead to Hookhill. The Stone Road is an ancient and very important road that runs from Thornward in Bissel to Niolo Dra in Keoland, and passes directly through Hookhill. The entire length of the road in Gran March is paved with stone, and it is very well patrolled and maintained. Pedestrian and mounted traffic is permitted to pass the road freely, while wheeled vehicles pay nominal tolls. The Stone Road is free of fords and ferries – where it crosses water it is always bridged in stone and the bridges are guarded at all times. It is at these guard posts that the tolls for wagons, carts, and carriages are assessed. Typical tolls are 1 cp per axle for cargo vehicles and 5 cp per axle for passenger vehicles. Toll stations are spaced about every 15-25 miles, so a wagon could expect to pay about 10 cp in road tolls during a trip the length of Barony Dragus.

### MAJOR TEMPLES IN HOOKHILL

There are at least seven different deities represented by shrines, churches, cathedrals, and other holy areas in and around Hookhill. Below is a description of these “holy” areas and how their priests will respond to the plague.

The most central to this story is the Cathedral Valorous of Heironeous. The great stone cathedral is the center of Heironeous' worship in Gran March. The cathedral is the second largest building in Hookhill, after the Commandant's Keep. The Cathedral Valorous is one of the most important temples of Heironeous in the Flanaess. The cathedral features trophies and tapestries (and colored windows in the larger temples) displaying the triumphs of good men and of Heironeous over the forces of evil. It houses a copper statue of the Power, with silver chain mail and battle-axe, and with 7 silver bolts radiating from behind his head, prominently displayed behind the altar. Services include singing of battle hymns, offerings, and feasting.

The church is led by a tripartite council, elected every 11 years by a vote of a synod consisting of the highest-ranking priests from around the country. From the three they select one to serve as the Speaker. The current Speaker, Lindra of Keddin's Run, is an aggressive leader who seeks to expand her church through aggressive recruitment of new followers, especially in the military. Under her leadership, the military chaplains have become more proselytizing and vocal and the wandering priests have taken great pains to show how the ideals of the Heironean faith apply to daily life.

The temple to St. Cuthbert could be considered simple and crude when compared to the grandiose temples of Heironeous and Pholtus. Although the current High Priest of St. Cuthbert,

Vandal Miller, is from Hookhill, he is not currently in the city.

During the plague, the temple will be open to all who wish to enter. The acolytes and younger priests are caring for the sick and needy, while the elder, more experienced priests have gone into private chambers to pray and discuss the situation. None of the priests have much time for conversation. All the paladins of St. Cuthbert have been sent outside the city to search for the Essence of the Violet Lotus.

Pholtus has a large following in Hookhill. The Halls of Purity hosts the largest congregation of Pholtites in Gran March. The temple is constructed from white marble and adorned with silver and white fixtures and cloths. The temple is kept immaculately clean and elegant and is quite striking to behold.

The leader of the temple in Hookhill is Guiding Light Cassandra Nemmener, who is heir apparent to the office of Shining Master. Although the church is well known for seeking out and destroying evil and chaotic monsters across the realm, Cassandra is also known for tending to the needs of the destitute. She provides food, alms, and of course spiritual guidance.

The plague seems to have caught this temple unprepared. Cassandra has offered the City any resources the church has to offer. Meanwhile, the priests have done their best to tend to the needy; however, no directives have been issued to the priests, which is unusual for such a lawful church.

The temple of Zilchus is actually outside the city in an area known as the Atannien Estates. When the wealthy merchant Torrin Atannien died without heirs in 533 CY, he left his estates to the church. (As the Atannien family had been granted ownership of the land for a great service some 300 years before, it did not revert to the government.) Since then, the manor house has been converted to a fully functional temple, while the other buildings are used for other temple purposes, such as training of acolytes, living quarters for visiting dignitaries, and an office for the High Priest.

Unfortunately, most of the church's priests were caught in the city and have not been able to return to the temple due to the quarantine.

Similarly, the High Priest of Phyton, High Plowshare Fendon Dorthal maintains a shrine about 30 miles south of Hookhill. Because most of Phyton's clergy were at the shrine holding their own ceremony, they have not yet learned of the plague in Hookhill.

The shire to Fharlanghn is about a half-day journey south of Hookhill on the main road. The priests of this shrine learned about the plague very quickly and have spent their efforts warning travelers away from Hookhill. Currently, only one priest remains at the shrine to assist those in need.

Most of the followers of Obad-Hai that might tend a small grove near Hookhill have traveled to Shalm's Grotto, a secluded location somewhere in the Dim Forest for their midsummer ritual.

## APPENDIX 2 – CRITICAL EVENT SUMMARY

DMs – Please fill out the information below and return it to your event's RPGA coordinator.

RPGA Event Coordinators – If your event is held before December 31, 2001, please summarize the information and email the results to Pete Winz ([pwinz@nc.rr.com](mailto:pwinz@nc.rr.com)) or mail the completed forms to

Pete Winz  
1006 Queensbury Circle  
Durham, NC 27713

1) Did Cebo go free?

2) Did Grakos go free?

3) Did the PCs return with the Essence of the Violet Lotus in time?

4) Which NPCs, if any, died?

## DM AID 1 – PLAYER INTRODUCTIONS

You may read these to the players or make copies for handouts. Each PC should be given an appropriate introduction from the choices below, with adjustments as necessary, or you can make up your own as appropriate.

### ACTIVE DUTY GRAN MARCH MILITARY

You find yourself on the road to the capital city of the Gran March, Hookhill. You plan to reach the city just in time for the Richfest, which begins tonight at dusk (about 9 pm) and continue for 7 days. Richfest is the seven-day long midsummer festival. A variety of religions have significant ceremonies during this week. However, Gran March puts additional significance on this festival with Mustering Day.

Mustering Day is the first day of Richfest. All men who have served their full term are released from service and all conscripts are accounted for and assigned to their training units. They are told to report on the first day of Reaping, the month immediately following the week of Richfest. The effect of this makes Richfest filled with wild parties as some celebrate their newfound civilian life while others have one last fling.

You have orders to report to Lt. Borzac in Hookhill in one week's time. Until then you are off-duty. This turns out to be both good and bad. On one hand, you will not have to work, allowing you to enjoy Richfest. However, due to the Festival, the barracks will be too crowded and you will have to find another place to sleep. Fortunately, one of your military buddies agreed to make reservations for you at one of the finer inns in town. The letter he sent you said that he put down a 10 gp deposit for you at the Wayberry Inn, but that you needed to check in before six bells today or you will forfeit your room. Your buddy also said that he will be on duty, but will try to get by to buy a round of drinks. You may not be sure that you want to stay in such a fancy place as the Wayberry Inn, but it is nice to know you at least have a bed reserved for tonight, because with all these people heading to the City, there will not be a lot of extra beds to go around.

Since your buddy is on active duty, you do not expect to see him until the end of the week.

### TRAVELER FROM AFAR

You find yourself on the road to the capital city of the Gran March, Hookhill. You plan to reach the city just in time for Richfest, which you understand begins tonight at dusk (about 9 pm). Richfest is the seven-day long midsummer festival. As a traveler from afar, you did not want to miss the opportunity to see the capital city of Gran March, especially during one of its biggest festivals. One of your fellow countrymen recommended that you stay at the Wayberry Inn in Hookhill. He had marvelous things to say about the place (though he did say it was somewhat on the pricey side). When he learned that you would be visiting Hookhill during Richfest, he said you would definitely need reservations, which he happily said he would make for you. You were skeptical of his high praise until you learned that tonight after dinner the renowned bard Currin Foxtail is going to perform. If she is as good as her reputation, the price for a room will be well worth the price of admission. Given the number of people on the road, you are glad to know you will have a place to lay your head. From all the traffic, it looks like the city will be crowded tonight. The only stipulation your friend mentioned is that you will need to check into the Inn by six bells or you will lose your reservation.

### CONNOISSEUR OF GOOD FOOD AND DRINK

You find yourself on the road to the capital city of Gran March, Hookhill. You plan to reach the city just in time for Richfest, which begins tonight at dusk (about 9 pm). Richfest is the seven-day long midsummer festival. A variety of religions have significant ceremonies during this week. However, Gran March puts additional significance on this festival for it is during this time that all men who have served their full military term are released from service and all conscripts are accounted for and assigned to their training units.

Yes, you have earned yourself a little R&R and now you are going to take it. However, what makes this particular celebration special for you is that you have reservations (and a 50 gp deposit) at the celebrated Wayberry Inn. This is not just any Inn. The Wayberry Inn is renowned for serving some of the best food in all of Gran March and its extensive wine cellar is said to house finest wines and ales to be found anywhere.

Your only concern now is reaching the Inn by six-bells. In the letter you received confirming your confirmation clearly stated that if you did not check in by six bells, Sir Benton Wayberry is permitted, at his discretion, to rent your room to another guest. Normally, you would have had no trouble reaching the city and the inn with time to spare. Nonetheless, you did not think the roads would be this crowded with all the traffic heading to Hookhill. At least it is beautiful day for traveling. You should still be able to reach the inn with time to spare, barring any unforeseen circumstance getting in your way.

### TRAVELING TO SEE THE PERFORMANCE OF A RENOWNED BARD

You find yourself on the road to the capital city of Gran March, Hookhill. You plan to reach the city just in time for Richfest, which begins tonight at dusk (about 9 pm). Richfest is the seven-day long midsummer festival during which all

men who have served their full military term are released from service and all conscripts are accounted for and assigned to their training units. The parties are said to be amazing!

Although the parties will be fun for sure, you are looking forward to seeing the performance of one of the land's most renowned bards, Currin Foxtail. She is said to be one of the best. This is a special occasion, because she does not perform as much as she used to. However, it is said she is returning a favor to Sir Benton Wayberry, for she is singing in his inn. The Wayberry Inn also has its reputation as a fine establishment for nobles, officers, and successful merchants. You had to pay a 10 gp deposit just to hold a room. The letter you received confirming your reservation clearly stated that if you did not check in by six bells, Sir Wayberry is permitted, at his discretion, to rent your room to another guest. Normally, you would have no trouble reaching the city and the inn with time to spare. Nonetheless, you did not think the roads would be this crowded with all the traffic heading to Hookhill. At least it is a beautiful day for traveling. You should still be able to reach the Inn with time to spare, barring any unforeseen circumstance getting in your way.

## **WON A NIGHT ON THE TOWN IN A GAMBLING MATCH**

You are still not sure this is worth the trouble. It had been late and you had been gaming for hours. You had taken this petty noble for all he had on him; all he had left was this "pre-paid luxury accommodations at one of the most distinguished inns in all Gran March during the biggest festival of the year." You are not sure what to expect. He even told you that the renowned bard Currin Foxtail would be performing in the inn on the opening night of the celebration. He said that he had already paid over 200 gp for the weeklong stay. All he wanted was you to spot him the 30 gp for the silly bet. Well, now you have this extravagant vacation, not that you couldn't use the rest.

You find yourself on the road to the capital city of Gran March, Hookhill. Richfest in Hookhill should be quite a party. Although Richfest officially began this morning, the real celebrations begin tonight at dusk (about 9 pm). You were told that you need to check in at the Wayberry Inn by six bells or you will forfeit your "reservation," which is little more than a signed note to the innkeeper, some Sir Benton Wayberry, saying that you and your companions will be staying in the accommodations the sucker had previously arranged.

## **REWARD FOR SAVING THE SON OF THE TOWN ELDER**

You find yourself on the road to the capital city of Gran March, Hookhill. You plan to reach the city just in time for Richfest, which begins tonight at dusk (about 9 pm). Richfest is the seven-day long midsummer festival during which all men who have served their full military term are released from service and all conscripts are accounted for and assigned to their training units.

You and your companions had no idea the shepherd you were saving from a pack of wolves was the grandson of an Elector. Nor did you expect such an elaborate reward. Besides the hero's feast that the town put on, you and your companions were given the Elector's prepaid weeklong stay at one of the most distinguished Inns in all Gran March during the biggest festival of the year. The Elector and his family were not going to be able to make it to Hookhill after all. You are not quite sure what to expect, but you have certainly earned a little R&R.

You were told that you need to check in at the Wayberry Inn by six bells or you will forfeit your "reservation," which is little more than a signed note to the innkeeper, Sir Benton Wayberry, making his apologies for not making the festival and saying that you and your companions will be staying in the accommodations the Elector had previously arranged.



## DM AID 2 – INCABULOS' EMBRACE

Incabulous' Embrace is the name of the disease that plagues Hookhill. Its effects are similar to the ebola viruses except the "Embrace" is magically enhanced to be much more contagious and it runs its course much faster. The effects of the virus are quite horrific and the DM is asked to consider his audience before going into graphic descriptions. However, you should attempt to communicate as best you can the horror that an epidemic of this disease would create.

The Embrace is being spread by one of Incabulos' priests. Anyone who comes within 20 feet of him must make a Fort save (DC 23) or contract the disease. Anyone who contracts the disease immediately becomes a carrier. Anyone who comes within 10 feet of a carrier must make a Fort save (DC 15) to avoid contracting the disease. A Fort save must be made each time a potential victim comes within 10 feet of a carrier.

Those who cleanse themselves of the disease are still subject to a relapse if they are once again exposed. Furthermore, the disease quickly reaches the state it was in when the victim was originally cured, taking only one sixth the normal time to progress to its former stage.

The disease can be cured magically. Paladins are completely immune to the disease and do not even serve as a carrier.

Once the disease is contracted, it progresses through various stages. At each stage beyond the first, there is a chance that the disease will stall or even go into regression. At the end of the duration of a particular stage, the victim makes a Con check against the DC of the next stage. If the victim fails the check, he progresses to the next stage. If he succeeds, he remains at the current stage for an additional period of half the normal duration for that stage. At the end of this period, he is required to make a second Con check against the DC for the current stage, but without any penalties due to the Embrace. If this check is successful, the victim drops to the earlier stage and is there for half the normal duration for that stage and then is well and is no longer a carrier. If the second check is failed, the victim proceeds to the next stage of the illness and continues normally. The game effects described below are not cumulative – only apply the effect described for the current stage. Reductions in stats are used for stat checks only; do not apply additional penalties to combat rolls and skill checks for reduced stats resulting from the Embrace.

### Stage One (Onset)

Duration: 2-4 hours (1d3+1)  
Symptoms: None  
Game Effect: None

### Stage Two (Ague)

Con Check: None (automatic progression)  
Duration: 11-18 hours (1d8+10)

Symptoms: General aches, chills with slight fever, sore throat, phlegmy cough  
Game Effect: A -1 penalty to each stat, -1 penalty to all combat rolls and skill checks, -2 on initiative rolls.

### Stage Three (Tears of Blood)

Con Check: DC 13  
Duration: 9-15 hours (1d6+8)  
Symptoms: Fever; dizziness; freezing (swelling) joints; bleeding eyes, nose, and gums; diarrhea  
Game Effect: A -3 penalty to each stat, -3 penalty to all combat rolls and skill checks, -4 on initiative rolls, 50% reduction in movement.

### Stage Four (Bloody Flux)

Con Check: DC 15  
Duration: 2-4 hours (1d3+1)  
Symptoms: High fever, hallucinations, bloody vomiting, bloody diarrhea.  
Game Effect: A -5 penalty to each stat, -5 penalty to skill checks, the victim can only defend himself, -8 on initiative rolls, may only take a partial action each round, movement is reduced to 10% of normal (but never less than 5 ft.).

Special: The victim goes through a special change approximately 30 minutes prior to the end of this stage. The body undergoes a one last burst of energy trying to defeat the virus. This burst of energy is usually accompanied with violent hallucinations. The burst lasts for 3d4 minutes. At the end of the burst, the victim becomes unconscious.

During the burst of energy, the stat, skill, and combat penalties are temporarily suspended and the victim actually gains 1d4+1 points of Strength. He regains 50% movement and can use full round actions. The victim is also immune to mind affecting spells as if he were undead. Finally, the victim acts as under the influences of a *confusion* spell except the 1d10 roll results are changed as follows:

1-3 Wander away for 1 minute (unless prevented),  
4-9 Attack nearest creature for 1 round,  
10 Act normally for 1 round.

### Stage Five (Death)

Con Check: DC 13  
Duration: Permanent  
Symptoms: Death  
Game Effect: Death

When a victim reaches stage five, death occurs, usually as a result of drowning from too much liquid in his lungs. It may be important to note that someone who dies from the Embrace remains

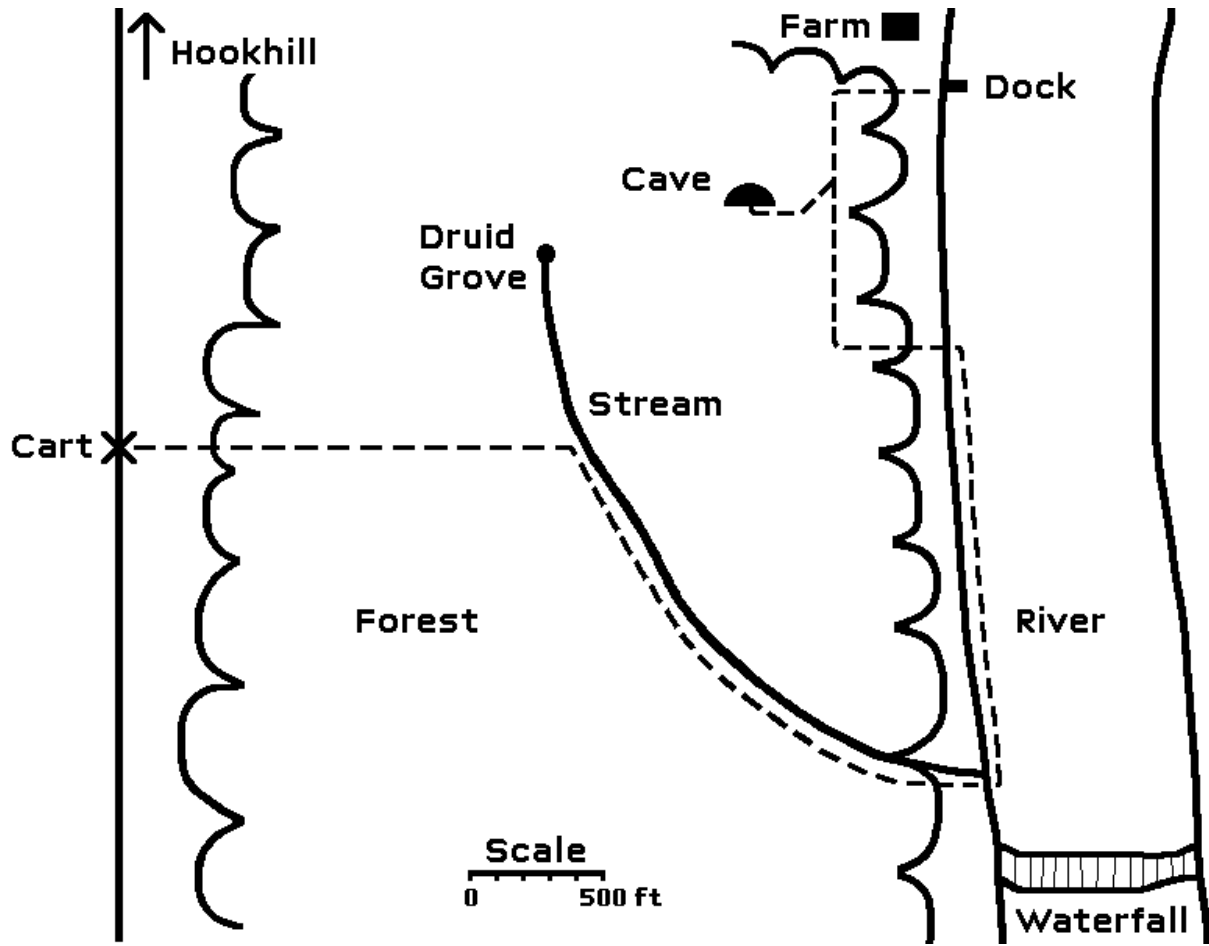
contagious for an additional 24 hours, but the effective radius is dropped to 5 feet.

## **THE ESSENCE OF THE VIOLET LOTUS**

The Essence of the Violet Lotus that was stolen from the Church of Heironeous is a concentrated mixture that aids someone's natural immune systems to fight off the effects of disease or poison. A broth concocted from this Essence grants anyone who drinks it a +10 circumstance bonus to Con checks or Fort saves vs. disease or poison for 36 to 72 (6d6+30) hours. Unfortunately, once the broth is made, it will only remain potent for 12 hours.

As the name suggests, Essence of the Violet Lotus is comprised primarily from the pollen of the violet lotus flower harvested in early spring. Although the violet lotus pollen maybe the most exotic ingredient, it by no means the only ingredient. Actually, taken by itself, the violet lotus can be lethal, though not anywhere near as lethal as some of its cousins.

# DM AID 3 – CEBO'S ESCAPE ROUTE



## DM AID 4 – NPCS

The following NPCs appear in non-combat roles in this scenario. Therefore, instead of providing stat blocks in the encounters in which they appear, they are provided in this appendix. Furthermore, I invite authors to use the NPCs that are presented here (and survive this event) in future events.

☛ **Diabolis male human, Clr11/Mnk4:** CR 15; Medium-size humanoid; HD 15d8+30; hp 108; Init +6; Spd 40 ft; AC 19 (touch 16, flat-footed 17) [+2 Dex, +4 Wis, +3 *magic vestment*]; Atk +13/+10/+7/+4 melee (1d8+2, unarmed strike), or +13/+8/+3 melee (1d4+2+poison, dagger); SQ Rebuke undead, unarmed strike, flurry of blows, stunning attack (DC 16), evasion, still mind, slow fall (20 ft); AL LE; SV Fort: +13, Ref +9, Will +15; Str 10 (14), Dex 14, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 18, Chr 10. Height 5 ft. 9 in.

*Skills and Feats:* Concentration +21, Escape Artist +8, Hide +6, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Knowledge (religion) +6, Listen +10, Move Silently +6, Scry +9, Spellcraft +20, Tumble +6; Blind Fight, Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Run, Spring Attack.

*Possessions:* poisoned dagger (wyvern poison, injury DC 17, 2d6 Con/2d6 Con)

*Spells Prepared* (6/7/6/6/5/3/2, base DC=14 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, guidance, light, mending, read magic, resistance*; 1st—*inflict light wounds\**, *cause fear, command* (2), *deathwatch, obscuring mist, sanctuary*; 2nd—*desecrate\**, ~~*bull's strength*~~, *death knell, endurance, resist elements, undetectable alignment*; 3rd—*magic circle against good\**, *bestow curse, contagion, deeper darkness, magic vestment*; 4th—*unholy blight\**, *freedom of movement, inflict critical wounds* (2), *poison*; 5th—*circle of doom\**, *ethereal jaunt, true seeing*; 6th\*\*—*harm\**, *word of recall*.

\*Domain spell. *Domains:* Destruction (smite power, a supernatural ability to make a single melee attack with a +4 attack bonus and a +11 damage bonus, must declare before making attack, usable once per day); Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level).

\*\*Diabolis does not receive 6th level spells until he completes his quest (i.e., only for “Conclusion: Failure”).

Diabolis is a middle-aged man with a balding head fringed by scraggly brown hair. He has a prominent hooked nose and a bad complexion. He wears brown robes. This twisted and evil man is a servant of Incabulos. For years he has acted as a servant and errand boy for more powerful priests in his cult. He has managed to navigate the treacherous waters one always finds when surrounded by powerful evil men. For years he has prayed to Incabulos to promote him to the ranks of the upper echelon. For decades his prayers went unanswered. Until now!

Incabulos visited Diabolis in a fevered hallucination. He promised Diabolis great power, enough to gain the respect of his peers and more. All

that is required now is the Rite of Passage. Diabolis would accept the Embrace of Incabulos. The form of the “Embrace” is a terrible disease that is magically designed to be extremely contagious. Once Embraced, all Diabolis must do is spread the disease to create a plague that will claim the lives of thousands. Those who witness the plague and survive would dare whisper the name of Incabulos with respect and reverence.

However, Diabolis has greater plans for his Lord's gift. Not only will he inflict the plague on the capital city of Gran March, he will do it at the peak of Richfest. Furthermore, he will demand the sacrifice of the Speaker of Heironeous. This will make priests of the other gods tremble at Incabulos' name.

☛ **Sir Benton Wayberry male human, Ftr6/Pal3:** Medium-size humanoid; HD 7d10+14; hp 76; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AC 10 (touch 10, flat-footed 10); Atk +12/+7 melee (1d8+4, crit 17-20, longsword); SQ *Detect evil, divine grace, lay on hands, divine health, aura of courage, smite evil, remove disease, turn undead*; AL LG; SV Fort: +13, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 12, Chr 16. Height 6 ft. 2 in.

*Skills and Feats:* Diplomacy +11, Handle Animal +8, Heal +6, Knowledge (Religion) +3, Profession (Soldier) +6, Ride +10, and Sense Motive +9; Blind Fighting, Improved Critical (longsword), Leadership, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

Sir Benton Wayberry is a physically powerful man with an intense presence. He was the fourth son of Durant Wayberry, an Elector of Hookhill. With little hope of inheriting the family title, Benton looked to the military. During his decorated military career he was known for inspiring his troops to accomplish feats of greatness; each man achieving more heroism than he ever knew he had in him.

About 15 years ago while stationed in Hookhill, Benton was having a conversation with his younger brother, Alton, who had just mustered out of the army. His brother was not sure what he was going to do now, but thought about being bartender or a cook. Benton convinced (and financed) Alton to work for him by opening an inn in Hookhill.

Alton, who has a great eye for detail, brought the Inn success, particularly popular with off-duty military officers and their families. It also was recommended to traveling dignitaries who came to the city for official business. Every couple of years, the two brothers would plan an expansion and the inn continued to grow.

Benton prospered in the military, reaching the rank of Knight-Colonel and being inducted into the Knights of the March (the ancient noble order of knights). Eventually, he could no longer stomach sending young men into dire peril, even if it was for a good cause, and he retired from military life. He joined

his brother, with his new goal to make his patrons as happy and content as possible. Benton found this to be a much more rewarding career. He has since married and started a family. He has vowed to come to his country's aid if need arises, but for now, he is devoted to his family and his inn.

♣ **Curriu**      **Foxtail**      **female**      **half-elf,**  
**Rogr/Rgrt/Brd10/Shadowdancer2:** CR 14; Medium-size humanoid; HD 13d6+1d10; hp 60; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; AC 20; Atk +7/+2 melee (1d6, rapier) and +7 melee (1d4, dagger); SQ Immunity to *sleep* spells, +2 racial bonus to saves against Enchantment spells and effects, low-light vision, sneak attack (+1d6), favored enemy (Scarlet Brotherhood), bardic music (inspire courage, countersong, *fascinate*, *suggestion*, and inspire greatness), bardic knowledge, hide in plain sight, evasion, darkvision, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CG; SV Fort: +5, Ref +14, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 10, Chr 17. (5 ft. 2 in. tall)

*Skills and Feats:* Animal Empathy +5, Bluff +12, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +10, Escape Artist +6, Gather Information +15, Hide +12 (22 with cloak), Innuendo +4, Knowledge (Geography) +8, Knowledge (History) +8, Knowledge (Nobility) +8, Listen +10, Move Silently +12, Perform +18, Search +8, Sense Motive +10, Spot +6, Tumble +12, Wilderness Lore +5; Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Expertise, Mobility, Spring Attack, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting.

*Possessions:* *cloak of elvenkind, slippers of spider climbing, ring of jumping, bag of holding.*

*Spells Known* (3/4/4/3, base DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*dancing lights, daze, detect magic, mage hand, prestidigitation, read magic*; 1st—*charm person, cure light wounds, expeditious retreat, message*; 2nd—*cat's grace, detect thoughts, suggestion, tongues*; 3rd—*blink, charm monster, greater magic weapon, haste.*

Curriu is a renowned lyricist and has traveled all over Oerth entertaining audiences wherever she goes. Despite her age of 73, she is still strikingly attractive. She is a kind spirit. Although she never seems to stop moving, she always takes time to make everyone she talks to feel special and important.

Secretly, Curriu works to thwart the efforts of the Scarlet Brotherhood. Her deep-seated hatred is based upon the death of her brother at their hands. She maintains friends that unknowingly serve as her eyes and ears. Curriu works and travels alone. She has lost too many good friends on her missions of revenge against the Brotherhood and is not willing to endanger anyone else's life.

♣ **Lindra of Keddin's Run** (female human, Clr 12) is one of the three leaders of the Church of Heironeous in Gran March and the current Speaker in Hookhill. She is an aggressive leader, who seeks to expand her church through aggressive recruitment of new followers, especially in the military. Under her leadership, the military chaplains have become more proselytizing and vocal, and the wandering priests have taken great pains

to show how the ideals of the Heironean faith apply to daily life

♣ **Captain Wistelle Dragus** (female human, Pal 9) is the highest-ranking officer in Hookhill and is responsible for keeping order. She is the granddaughter of the current Baron, Mithtin Dragus. Her family connections have led to her being promoted rapidly to Captain, and she is currently in charge of her grandfather's Pride of soldiers (a Pride is a unit of 100 cavalry troops). She typically splits her troops into two sections, sending out a Squadron (50 troops) under Lt. Verrin and Line Sgt. Axtell to patrol the barony. She keeps the other Squadron to garrison Hookhill, and is assisted by Lt. Nurile. She's very young for her rank (22 years old), but served at the front lines of so many combat units that grandpa got nervous and had her transferred closer to home.

She is relatively shrewd and works hard at her job, but has only been in this post for 6 months, so hasn't picked up all the subtleties of maintaining order in a big city. She's never seen without *Glaereth* (a +1 battle axe that's been in the family for generations).

## DM AID 5 – RIFFLIN’S STORY

Nozgun and Rifflin were brothers that were orphaned by goblins at a young age. Nozgun, the older of the two took his little brother from the ruins of the family farm and made their way to Hookhill. To survive, the two youths fell in with a group of young pickpockets and although there was never seemed to be enough to eat, the two had a reasonably pleasant childhood given the circumstances. When Nozgun reached the appropriate age, he said farewell to his brother and joined the military as a good citizen of Gran March. Two years later, Rifflin joined for his tour of duty as well.

Both brothers shared similar qualities and were natural born leaders and tacticians. It is not surprising that each of brothers found himself as a leader (not ranking officer, but leader) of the troops around him. Despite the fact that they mustered out of the military at different times, they each found themselves as leaders of the their own adventuring party. While Rifflin’s group was comprised of your typical glory-seeking adventures, Nozgun’s group resembled a small thieves’ guild.

Enters Quanith, a seedy fence, who has grown rich and plump doing business in Hookhill for the last decade. He learned of a merchant-wizard that was traveling east with a case of spellbook-quality tomes, enchanted ink, and over two dozen cockatrice feathers. Quanith met with the mage and attempted to bargain down the price. However, the shrewd mage knew well the value of his prize cargo and did not budge. Extremely disappointed, Quanith made it know that he was willing to buy just such an inventory about half the price that the mage was asking. Three days after the mage left town, Quanith had an associate spread the word that the mage had just such a cargo.

It was not long before Nozgun heard about Quanith’s “shopping list” and where the goods might be acquired. He and his group of thieves hurried to catch up with the wizard’s caravan. Through an elaborate ploy, Nozgun and his associates were allowed to join Quanith’s caravan. The rest was easy. They stole the merchandise and beat feet back to Hookhill. When Nozgun went to deliver the goods, he told Quanith the whole story. When Quanith learned that the wizard was still breathing, he dropped his price to one-tenth his original offer. The last thing Quanith wanted was problems with a mad mage. Understandably, Nozgun was furious. He took his stolen goods and stormed out.

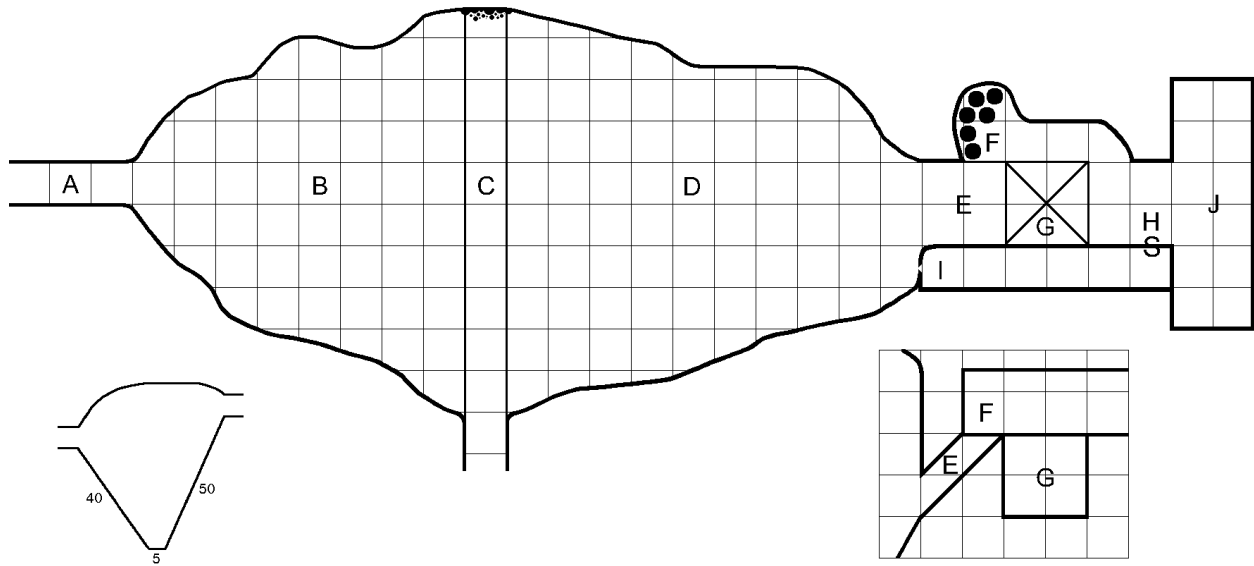
As it turned out, the mage must not have cared much about being robbed, because he never even returned to Hookhill to try to regain his belongings. After waiting two months to see if the mage came looking for them, Nozgun realized he was probably safe. He started to make cautious inquiries as to who might be interested in purchasing such an inventory. This time it was Quanith’s turn to be upset. After all, this should have been his commission.

Quanith let it be known (in some unsavory places) that he was willing to buy such an inventory, but at half

the price Nozgun was asking. Getting some boxes from Nozgun was not the same as facing down a powerful mage. It was not long before a group of thugs went to pay Nozgun a visit. What actually transpired is not clear, but Nozgun did not survive the encounter.

When the thugs told Quanith about the encounter, it is said he feigned disappointment and then said with a grin “Here is an extra 10 gp for being so prompt with the goods.”

# DM AID 6– MAP OF CEBO'S LAIR



## **PLAYER HANDOUT #1**

The following text is to be given to players infected with Incabulos' Embrace during the night as their symptoms arise. Each block of text is to be given to a different infected player. Feel free to alter them in any to suit the situation. Expect the players to take actions that will likely not allow all the following to be distributed. The purpose here is to set a mood that "things" are not entirely right. Only infected PCs should be given notes.

### **Note One**

You awake in the middle of the night with a chill and a slight headache. You feel more tired than when you went to bed. You can hear the gentle snoring of those around you. The quiet of the night is broken by someone a few rooms away having a coughing fit. The coughing only lasts a few seconds, then it is over and all is restful again. You notice the window open letting in the cool summer night air. Before you even decide whether or not to close the window another chill runs over your body.

### **Note Two**

You awaken from a deep sleep with a sudden start. You realize you were having a nightmare. You were being chased in dark alleyways or maybe even the sewers by many small dark creatures with sharp teeth. Just when you thought you had escaped, you turn a corner and there they are waiting for you.

A chill runs down your spine as you remember them swarming your body, their little sharp teeth piercing your flesh, biting deep into your muscle. While most of them were content to run up and down your body, some actually burrowed under your skin.

Just remembering your dream makes you feel achy all over, especially in your joints. If it is possible you feel more exhausted than you did when you went to sleep.

### **Note Three**

You awaken from a deep sleep with an urgent call of nature. You are so tired you almost do not want to get up. As you sit up in bed, you find yourself a bit dizzy and lightheaded. You decide to spare your companions by opting not to use the chamber pot, but instead make your way down to the outhouse. Maybe the trip will help clear your head (if you want to use the chamber pot and not leave the room, STOP reading and inform you DM of your decision).

Despite the late hour, you can hear several hushed voices coming from the common room. You glimpse in to the common room as nature's call becomes more insistent. You see several people, most still in their night clothes, just sitting and quietly chatting with one another, some just stare off into space, some are wrapped in blankets despite the warm summer night. A fire has been started in the large fireplace and Sir Wayberry's wife and a couple of serving women are scurrying about the room with teakettles.

You make it out to the outhouse just in time. From the stench, the outhouse has seen its share of business tonight. In a stall next to you, some poor lad must have had too much to drink from the sound of his dry heaves. A line has formed by the time you have finished your business. All you want to do is climb back between the sheets. And although you do feel a little less dizzy than when you woke up, you are exhausted and the night air has seem to give you a chill as a shiver runs down your spine. (Let the judge know if you do anything except go back to bed.)

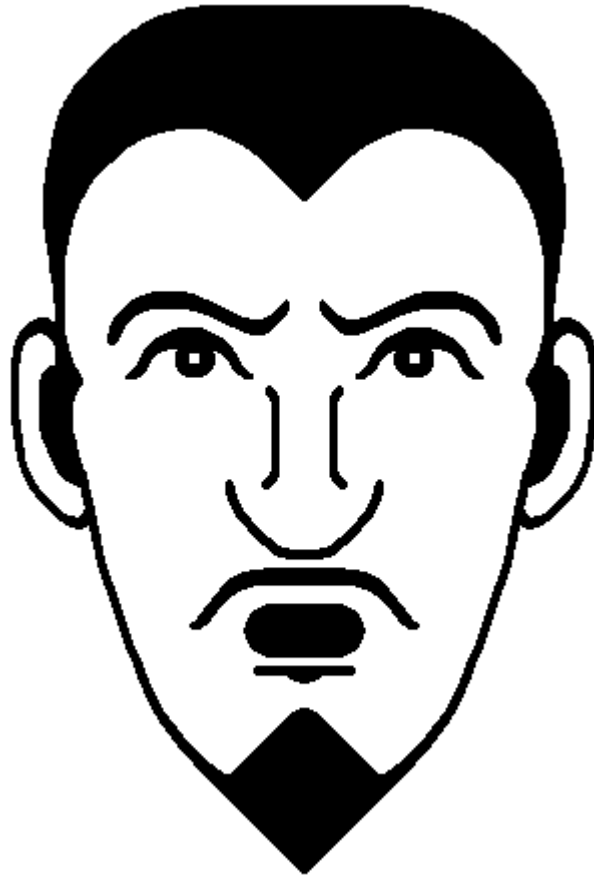
### **Note Four** (Only if a fellow PCs is trying to wake the PC up)

You have been dreaming, well it has been closer to a nightmare. Your friends had been taken captive and are going to be sacrificed to some demonic creature if you don't rescue them, only you do not know where they are. In your search, you learned of one evil man that might know where your friends are being held. You followed him from one dark place to another, never quite catching him. At each place he went, he left some wicked creature for you to deal with. However, you finally caught up with the evil man and there had been a struggle. You had him pinned on the ground and were about to get the needed information from him when you heard your name being called from a distance. Part of you realized you were dreaming and someone was trying to wake you. However, the information you labored so hard for was about to be forthcoming. Somewhere deep in your mind a decision was made, you needed the information, so with every effort you tried to focus on the dream. The evil man opened his mouth to reveal your friends' whereabouts. However, as he opened his mouth, his lips began to peel back, the very flesh of his face rotted away before your eyes. Now all that was left was his bony skeleton, and now, somehow, your positions were reversed. He was sitting on your chest with his skeletal hands ringing your throat. He was going to choke the very life out of you. But then you remember this is only a dream; you have to wake up. You strive to regain consciousness, but the skeleton has a firm grasp around your throat. The only way to break his hold is with a scream!

Once you have finally managed to pull yourself to consciousness, you find yourself exhausted and achy. As much as you do not want to go back to sleep, you are so tired you do not want to move. Your throat is sore, both inside and out and just breathing seems to be a labor. A sudden chill runs down your spine as you remember the grip the foul creature had on you.



**WANTED  
ALIVE**



**REWARD  
1,000 GP**

**Bring this man to the proper authorities or the Temple of Heironeous. Warning, this man is known to be a ruthless murderer and should be apprehended with care. Any information that might lead to the whereabouts of this man should be brought to the attention of the local authorities immediately, regardless of curfew.**