

# Advanced Dungeons & Dragons

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

Official Game Adventure

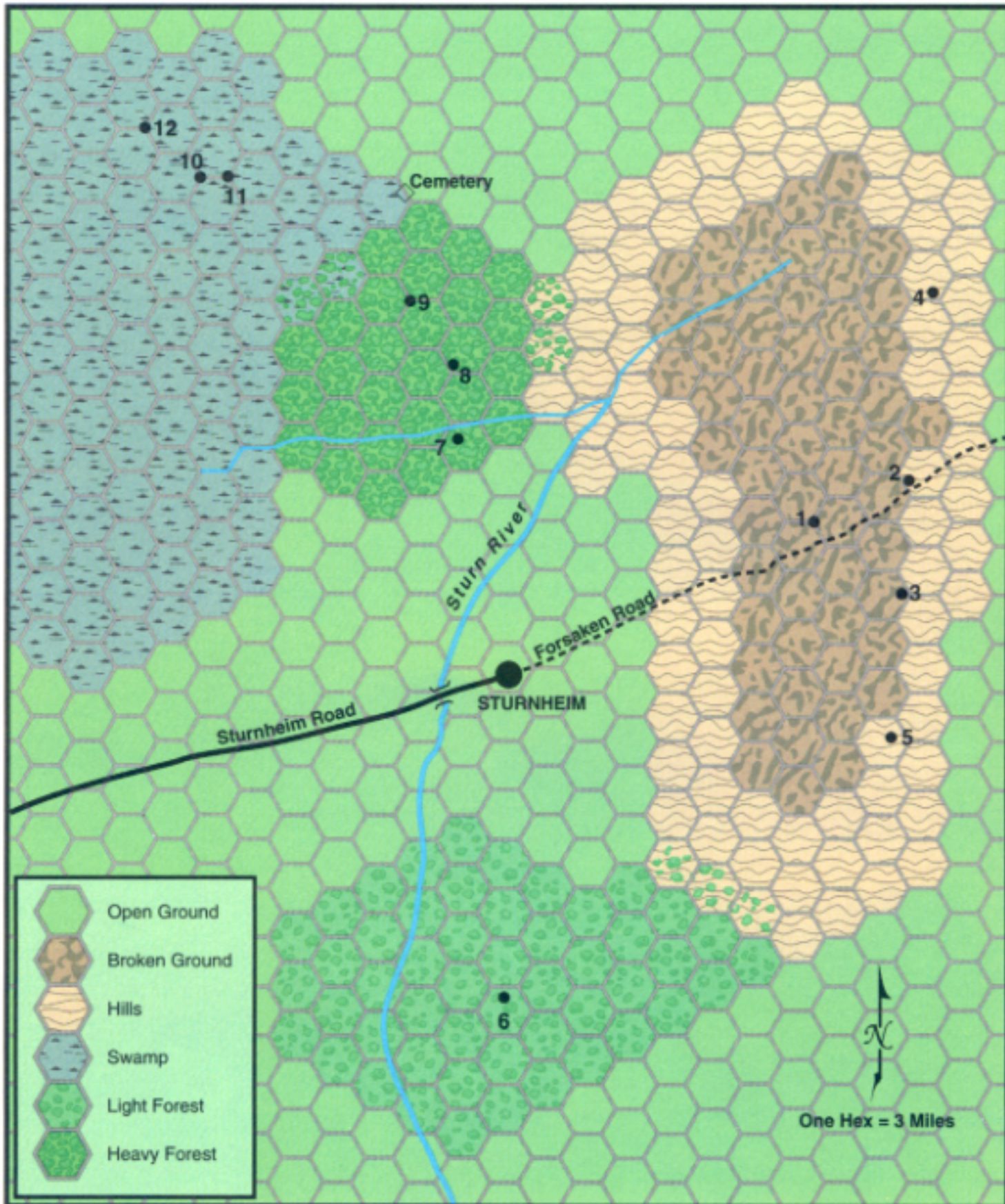
## Fighter's Challenge

by John Terra



TSR

Map 1. Sturnheim and Vicinity



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## FIGHTER'S CHALLENGE

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*Fighter's Challenge* is a one-on-one adventure; it is designed for small campaigns, or as a means to give a solitary PC (Player Character) some experience before placing him in an existing campaign.

There are references made to PHBR1, which is *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*. PHBR1 is not necessary for the running of this adventure, but it helps to flesh things out.

The adventure is suited for a 2nd- through 4th-level warrior PC, or a warrior multi-class (fighter/cleric, fighter/thief, etc.). A cleric or thief may run through this adventure, but a wizard is unlikely to survive.

When running *Fighter's Challenge*, keep in mind that role-playing is still important despite there being only one player and one DM. Roleplay each NPC's personality, especially if henchmen are involved. Play up the feelings of the PC being on his own in an unknown area.

Finally, give the player a break. With only one PC, the margin for error is slim. If the player is having his PC do all the right things and his luck is still bad, go easy on him. Instead of killing the PC, an enemy may take the vanquished PC prisoner, for example, with a possibility of escape later. A gang of brigands may be content with merely taking a few of the PC's things.

### Fighters' Challenge Features

This module details a small campaign revolving around the village of Sturnheim. Sturnheim is covered in the first chapter, since the village is the logical starting point and has the hooks and background for the main plot.

The second chapter deals with the areas between Sturnheim and the ruined tower, the latter being the setting for the main plot.

Chapters three through five cover the tower proper, the underground area, and miscellaneous features respectively.

The final chapter covers the subplots, none of which are necessary for the completion of the main plot, but which may provide items, allies, and clues to make the resolution of the main plot that much easier.

# Chapter I

Sturnheim is a village that has seen better days. Located on an old trade route, this village of 2,000 people saw its fortunes decline when the route fell into disuse.

The change in Sturnheim's fortunes came 40 years ago. A large merchant caravan, which included a gold shipment composed of much of Sturnheim's money in its cargo, disappeared. The gold had been sent away for an investment. The disappearance occurred on the road in the eastern edge of the foothills. Outraged at this loss, many merchant guilds of the surrounding larger cities collaborated and organized different routes, bypassing the unfortunate village.

Determined to restore Sturnheim's honor and reputation, a band of eight adventurers combed the hills looking for traces of the caravan. Four members of the group died unpleasant deaths in the process, and the other four found a mysterious stone sword, but the mission was a failure.

Shamed by their failure, two of the survivors left town. One of these was a warrior named Kesor, a man of evil disposition. He was convinced that the stone sword had some significance, so he traveled widely seeking clues from sages and libraries.

Of the two men who remained behind, one eventually went mad and fled town, and the other, a thief named Poot, kept the stone sword and began his own research into the nature of the sword. Poot, however, stayed in the Sturnheim vicinity.

Years passed, and Kesor, now an old man, finally discovered the true nature of the sword. It is a key to an old tower hidden in the hills, a place the caravan attackers could have used for a lair. Kesor realized that he had the answer to Sturnheim's problem, but he also knew he was too old to utilize this information, so he passed the information on to his son Valdar.

Valdar returned to Sturnheim and, after performing a series of favors for the town, won the peoples' confidence and became Captain of the Militia. Unfortunately, Valdar also struck a deal with a group of brigands who were barely scraping together an existence living on the eastern edge of the hills. According to the deal, the brigands would accept Valdar as their leader and search for the tower ruins, and in return he would pay them a small stipend, and make it easier for the brigands to waylay travelers. The brigands began combing the hills

while Valdar secured his position in town and kept an eye out for Poot.

Recently, the brigands found the ruins, but they could not gain access. They needed the sword-key. The robbers sent a message to Valdar informing him of their success.

When the PC enters Sturnheim, the brigands are in the midst of attacking old Poot.

The villagers' attitude toward strangers depends on the strangers' actions. Visitors who are reasonably polite and spend gold are treated courteously. Strangers who act belligerent, arrogant, condescending, and/or who ask for handouts, haggle over prices, and make it clear that they have no intention of spending much money are treated sullenly, and may even have to suffer a 10% to 50% markup on goods and services.

## Personalities

Sturnheim has its share of interesting people. What follows are the statistics for the NPCs most likely to be encountered in the village.

**Valdar:** AC 0; MV 12; F7; hp 50; THAC0 14; #AT  $\frac{3}{2}$ ; Dmg by weapon; AL NE; Str 17, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 13; ML 18.

Equipment: *Chain armor +1, shield +1, broadsword +2, voulge +1, dagger +1, potion of healing.*

Weapon Proficiencies: Weapon and shield style, broadsword, voulge, dagger.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Tracking 9, blindfighting, land-based riding 12, read/write 12.

Valdar is the captain of the militia. A human male of 30 years, he is a tough leader, and appears fanatically devoted to protecting the town. Handsome in a roguish way, Valdar is quite a dashing figure.

He is suspicious of all strangers, and uses his post as captain to interrogate them and keep tabs on their whereabouts. Anyone mentioning the lost caravan invites very close scrutiny, usually in the form of a pair of militiamen tailing the PC at a discreet distance. Valdar wants Sturnheim's lost treasure, and once he gets it, he'll leave the village forever.

**Kalidar Blusterwind:** AC 10; MV 12; F0; hp 5;

**THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; AL NG; Str 8, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 14.**

Kalidar is the 54-year-old mayor of Sturnheim, and he has been in office for the past 10 years. He is weak-willed, easily bullied and anxious to please. He remembers the lost caravan disaster, and feels that if the treasure were found and returned, Sturnheim's fortunes would improve. He will accept the PC's help in finding it, and will give the PC a 10% finder's fee. Of course, as a matter of routine, he will notify Valdar of the arrangement, which will cause Valdar much distress.

If the PC offers to fight the centaurs, the mayor will be reluctant to agree. If Valdar catches wind that the PC wishes to fight the centaurs, he will support them. The mayor will bow to Valdar. The PC will be paid 10 gp/day.

**Tork:** AC 8; MV 12; F2; hp 20; THACO 19; #AT 2; Dmg 1-2+2 or by weapon; AL CN; Str 17, Dex 9, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 7, Cha 6; ML 15.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Punching specialization, club.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Fishing 6, endurance 15.  
**Equipment:** Leather armor, purse w/10 cp, 2 sp.

Tork, a 21-year-old human male, is the town bully. His face bears the scars of many a brawl, making him rather ugly. He makes a small living selling fish and spends the rest of his time at the Three Crowns drinking and causing trouble. Tork specializes in using his fists (PHBR1, pg 75). He is willing to be hired as a henchman (5 gp/day), though only if the PC beats him in a fistfight.

**Rosamund:** AC 4; MV 12; T2; hp 10; THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL NG; Str 9, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 16; ML 11; SA Backstab; PP 45%; OL 44%; F/RT 30%; MS 31%; HS 25%; DN 10%; CW 10%

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Dagger, sling.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Appraising 12, cooking 12, rope use 18.

**Equipment:** Leather armor, dagger, sling and 20 stones, thieves tools.

Rosamund is a pretty, 19-year-old maiden who is bored with her town. She is looking for adven-

ture and romance, and is willing to be hired as a scout (read: thief) for 4 gp/day. She is bright, mischievous, and flirtatious.

**Coryn:** AC 8; MV 12; F 0; hp 4; THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL CG; Str 9, Dex 6, Con 7, Int 9, Wis 5, Cha 18; ML 8.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Pottery 4.

**Equipment:** Leather armor, longsword.

Coryn is the utterly incompetent, but outrageously handsome, son of the village potter. The 20-year-old man is trying to pass himself off as an adventurer, and will ask for 8 gp/day. He will lie about his experience, claiming to be a modestly successful adventurer. (In fact, the last thing he killed was an angry bumblebee in his bedroom). When danger does arrive, he will go to pieces.

**Tregar Bittermouth:** AC 3; MV 6; F1; hp 14; THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL LG; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 6; ML 14.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Two-handed style, light crossbow, battle axe, horseman's mace.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Mountaineering, endurance 18, hunting 9.

**Equipment:** *Battle axe* +1, plate armor, light crossbow and 12 bolts, horseman's mace, purse w/ 23 gp.

Tregar is a young male dwarf warrior who craves action. He supports himself in the village as a hunter. Tregar will hire himself out for 9 gp/day. He is extremely loyal, unflinchingly brave, and competent. His only drawback is his tendency to complain about everything.

**Helak Jestverse:** AC 2; MV 12; B3; hp 15; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL CG; SA CW 60%, DN 40%, PP 35%, RL 10%; if bard is singing or reciting, +1 bonus to attack rolls or saves, or +2 bonus to morale; singing counters effects of songs and poetry; 15% chance of identifying general purpose of any magical item; May memorize two 1st level MU spells; Str 10, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 9, Cha 17; ML 13.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Two-weapon style speciali-

## Welcome to Sturnheim



zation, main-gauche, foil.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Singing 17, harp 17, local history 17, read/write 17, gaming 17, appraising 16.

Spells: *Identify*, *cantrip*, *taunt*, *read magic*, *comprehend languages*, *friends*.

Equipment: *Ring of protection* +2, *cloak of protection* +2, *foil* +1, *main-gauche* +1, thieves tools, purse w/20 gp.

Helak is a 21-year-old half-elven lad who has a lazy approach to life. He loves singing and playing his harp, especially to eligible young ladies, and his dashing good looks make him a valuable catch.

Helak knows the background of Sturnheim, though he will not bring up the subject. Questions can be answered if the asker is willing to buy drinks. Helak gets bored easily, and he is always looking for something new to do. As a result, he'll offer himself for hire at 10 gp/day or an equal share of the treasure. If this sounds steep, Helak points out that he can act as the PC's chronicler, since "No doubt you are a hero whose tales must be told!" as his favorite line goes. This bard has a

talent for excessive flattery. Helak is a proud fellow and places a lot of worth in himself.

**Carbuncle Blusterbuckle:** AC 9; MV 6; F 8; hp 80; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg by weapon; AL CG; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 6.

Weapon Proficiencies: Short sword specialization, weapon and shield style, hand axe, dagger, light crossbow, punching specialization, club.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Armorer 17, weaponsmithing 17, leatherworking 17, blacksmithing 16, read/write 18.

Equipment: *Plate armor (gnome sized)* +2, *shield* +2, *short sword* +3, *dagger* +4, purse w/25 gp.

Carbuncle is a middle-aged gnome male with a twinkle in his eye, a warped sense of humor, and a nonstop mouth. He is the town's blacksmith/weaponsmith/armorer. He has retired from adventuring, but will train fighters in the skills he knows. As a rule, Carbuncle only carries his dagger and purse around town.

Carbuncle knows about the lost caravan disas-

ter, although he was not part of Poot's party. All he knows is that the four survivors refused to tell what sort of beast attacked them, even though they told the old mayor, who has long since died.

**Sereetha Alcoris (Werewolf):** AC 10(5); MV 12(15); HD 4+3; hp 32; THACO 20(15); #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; AL CE; SA Surprise; SD Hit only by silver or +1 or better magical weapon; Str 6, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 18. (Parenthetical stats are for her werewolf form.)

Sereetha is a pretty 24-year-old woman who frequents the inn looking for heroes. Her father is a vampire buried in the graveyard north of town, and Sereetha lures adventurers there on the pretense of needing someone to escort her to the cemetery in order to visit her "dear father's grave." Once she and the hapless adventurer(s) arrive at the cemetery, she reverts to werewolf form and joins her father in the feeding. Sereetha is demure and quiet, painting the picture of the perfect damsel-in-distress. Sereetha rents a room at the inn.

**Mama Chipmunk:** This 70-year-old woman's real name is Naghu, but the villagers gave her the nickname due to her constant chattering. She enjoys hanging about the inn's common room, telling and listening to gossip. She knows the town's background thoroughly, and is therefore a good source of rumors and news. She does not trust Sereetha.

**Average Militiaman:** AC 6; MV 12; F1; hp 7; THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL any good; ML 12.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Short sword, partisan, club, dagger.

**Equipment:** Scale armor, short sword, partisan, club, dagger, badge of office, whistle, purse w/ 2d4 sp.

On-duty militiamen travel in groups of three. They act as the village's defense and police force. The militia is made up of part-timers who have other occupations. Note that all of the NPCs except the mayor and Sereetha have to put in militia duty. The whistle is a distress signal which will summon an additional 2d6 militia in 1d4 rounds. The militia are good, honest folks who would nev-

er act so selfishly that their village's survival would be put in jeopardy.

A little bribery would never put the town in jeopardy!

**Average Brigand:** AC 5; MV 12; F1; hp 5; THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL NE; SA PP 40%, HS 40%, MS 50%; ML 12; XP 50.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Punch specialization, dagger, light crossbow, short sword.

**Equipment:** Studded leather armor, light crossbow and 24 quarrels, short sword, club, dagger, purse w/ 1d6 gp.

These brigands come from the camp to the east. When they enter Sturnheim, it is usually to infiltrate or to get some orders from Valdar. During these trips, they travel in pairs.

### Sturnheim's Details

The road leading northeast into Sturnheim is called the Sturnheim road. It is a well-maintained, clearly-marked road, paved with granite slabs. The road continues northeast beyond Sturnheim, but this section has fallen into disrepair. It has been unofficially renamed the Forsaken Road.

The town is surrounded by a very old 10-foot-tall wooden stockade wall. The two gates are locked from dusk to dawn, and are always guarded by four militiamen each. The walls themselves are coated daily with a slippery resin derived from a local plant. For climbing purposes, the wall is considered a Slippery, Very Smooth surface.

#### 1) The Sign of the Three Crowns.

This comfortable inn has private rooms for 5 gp/night. Drinks are 1 sp, meals are 5 sp. The common room is the favored gathering place for the village, each of Sturnheim's listed NPCs spends at least some of their evening there every day.

Any of the following rumors can be heard at the Three Crowns. Mama Chipmunk and Helak are the most likely source of rumors.

1. A tribe of centaurs dwells to the south. They have become increasingly more belligerent in the past few years. (True)

2. Old Poot is the last survivor of a doomed expedition into the hills 40 years ago. (True)

## Welcome to Sturnheim

3. Poot's house is full of treasure collected during his adventuring days. (False)

4. Carbuncle the armorer is insane. (False)

5. Sereetha is a sweet girl who came to the village last year, apparently searching for long lost kinfolk. (False)

6. Valdar the militia leader is the true power in town. Old Blusterwind is weak-willed and corrupt. (Half True—the mayor is honest)

7. A huge red dragon lives in the mountains to the east. (False—it died long ago)

8. Forty years ago, Sturnheim lost most of its fortune to monstrous raiders. It was never found, and this caused the village's decline. (True)

9. Sturnheim used to bury its dead in a graveyard north of here. It has fallen into disuse in the last 10 years. Nowadays, villagers build funeral boats and release them down the river. (True)

10. Coryn the potter's son is Sturnheim's closest thing to an adventurer. (Very False!)

11. Most strangers looking for adventure round these parts are never seen again. (True. They are either eaten by Sereetha and her father, or they just leave town).

12. Forty years ago, one of old Poot's companions went mad, rode out of town wearing his full plate armor, and was never seen again. (True).

13a. Five years ago, a swordsman and swordswoman by the names of Oznod and Taramai came into Sturnheim in hopes of finding the treasure. A cruel pair, they boasted that they would find the trove and give none to the city. They left for the eastern hills, and never returned. (True)

13b. Same story, except that the couple is rumored to have found the trove and continued east. (False)

### 2) Carbuncle Blusterbuckle's Armory.

This is the town's armorer/weaponsmith. This fast-talking gnome will make a suit of armor to order (see PHBR1 pp 4-9). For wares, all he has ready are two shields of each available size. In the weaponsmithing area, he has a good collection of swords, daggers, spears, polearms, hammers, axes, and maces. Carbuncle will also train a fighter who is ready to go up an experience level, charging 500 gp times the level to be gained.

### 3) Miranda the Healer.

No one knows exactly how to classify Miranda. People have speculated that she is a witch, priestess, hedge wizard, alchemist, or professional healer. In truth, Miranda is a healer whose skill in plant lore enables her to brew potions and make salves.

Miranda sells herbs, including garlic, belladonna, and wolfsbane, for 2 sp/2 gp/4 gp respectively. In fact, Miranda makes a wolfsbane/belladonna brew for curing lycanthropy. The brew cures lycanthropy in victims who have been infected for as long as 24 hours. The potion has a 50% chance of curing the affliction. If the brew fails, it will never work on that particular infection again. In either case, the victim is incapacitated for 1d4 days. The brew costs 10 gp/dose, and only two may be purchased by a PC in a week's time.

At any given time, her potion stock includes four potions of *neutralize poison* (5 gp each), four potions of *cure disease* (5 gp each), six potions of *minor healing* (1d4 hp), (3 gp each). Limit four potions per customer, no more than two of one kind. Her healing services cost 2 gp per visit, 10 gp for nonvillagers.

Miranda is stubborn and hard to fool. Villagers trust her and her potions, and the strong men of the village make sure that no one bullies or harms her.

**Miranda:** AC 10; MV 12; F0; hp 4; AL CG; Str4, Dex 7, Con 10, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 9.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Herbalism 18, healing 18, brewing 18, cooking 18.

### 4) Bertryn's All-Goods.

This store stocks most of the nonweapon/armor equipment found in the *Player's Handbook*, with the exception of transport and animals. It is sold at a 10% markup for strangers. Foodstuffs and spirits are also available.

Additionally, Bertryn has a broken-down nag (see DMG pg 36) which he is anxious to unload for 50 gp (or he will hire it out for 5 gp/day).

Bertryn, a paunchy, balding human male in his early 40s, is full of unasked-for advice, most of it useless. He cannot help but to interject his say into a conversation. Still, many of the village's old men or lazy young men congregate at the store and



swap tales and "facts" that are outrageously inaccurate. Rumors found at the Three Crown Inn are also found here, though with further embellishments.

## 5) Valdar's House.

This house is guarded by two fierce war dogs. As a rule, Valdar is home from midnight to eight in the morning. When he is out, the dogs wander the house, and the front door is locked (Lock quality is excellent, see DMG pg 36, -4 to Open Doors rolls, -20 to Open Locks rolls).

The following items of interest can be found in a locked chest under Valdar's bed: a note reading "Tower found. . .Poot has key?", another parchment saying "15 brig. Avg pay 30 sp/month, Corinna 10 gp/month." In addition, the chest contains a *potion of healing*, a purse with 50 aquamarines worth 50 gp each, and 20 pp.

The dogs, named Vayne and Artree, are mastiffs well-trained by Valdar. They are kept a little hungry, and will enthusiastically tear into anyone who enters the house unaccompanied by Valdar.

**War Dogs (2):** AC 6, MV 12; HD 2+2; hp 14; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4; AL N; ML 12; XP 65.

## 6) Mayor's House.

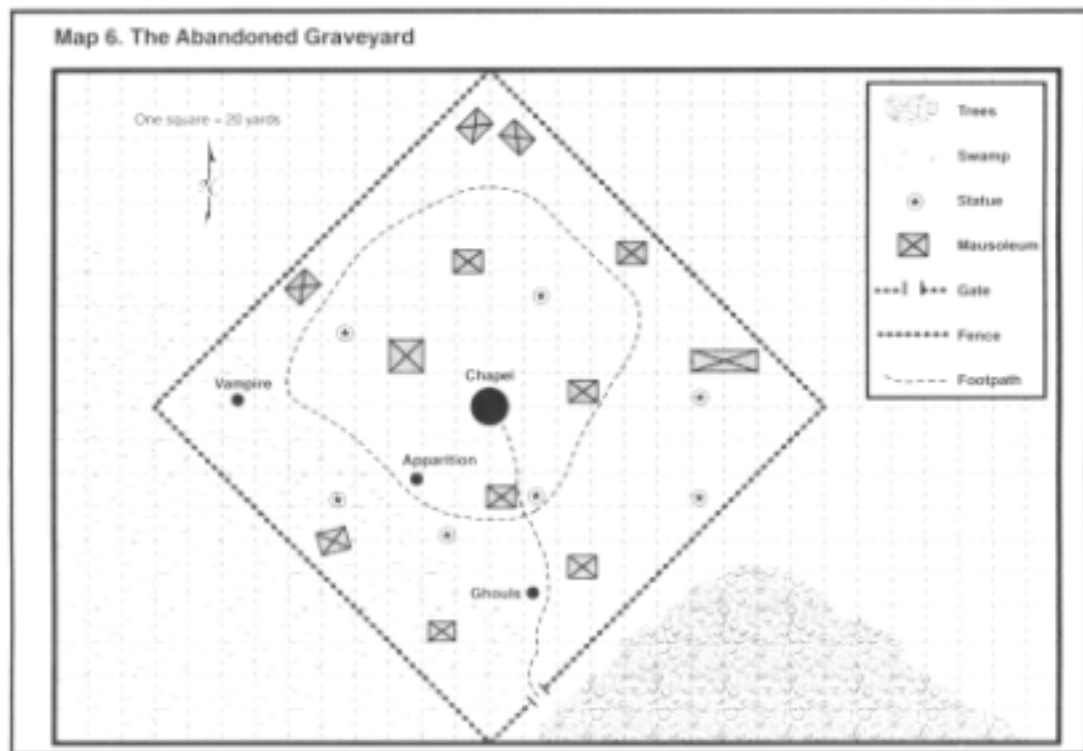
The nicest structure in Sturnheim, there is nothing of interest here. The mayor can be found home from dusk to dawn.

## 7) Poot's House.

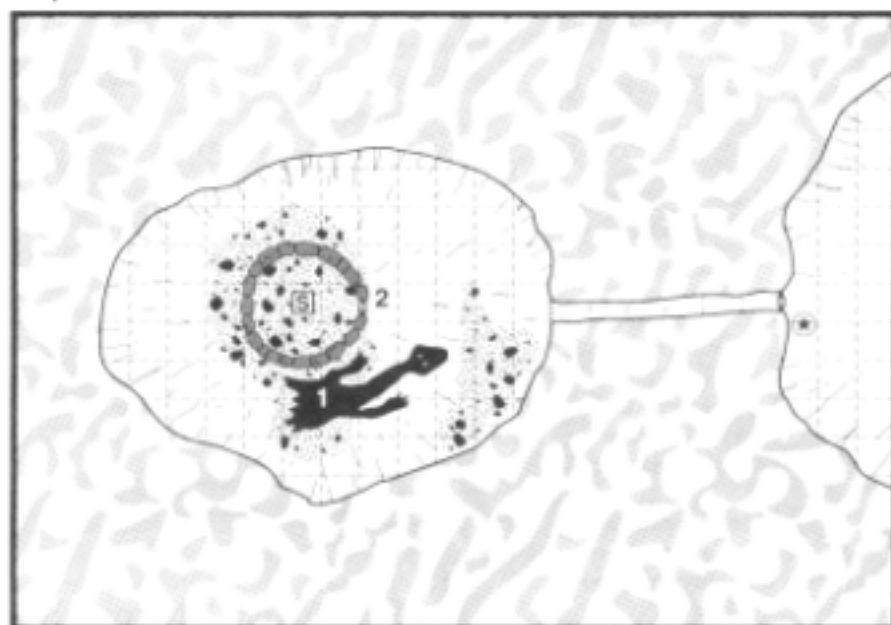
This run-down but comfortable house is a housekeeper's nightmare. The frail lock on the door is more of a suggestion than a deterrent (Lock quality is wretched, +6 to Open Doors rolls, +30 to Open Locks rolls). For every turn of searching, the PC has a 50% chance of finding one of the following. Once an item is found, it cannot be found again:

- a purse with 125 gp (his last reserves)
- a *ring of warmth* (he lost it 5 years ago)
- a scrawled note: "South centaurs friendly."
- another scrawled note: "The key is the sword, the sword is the key! South of Forsaken Road."

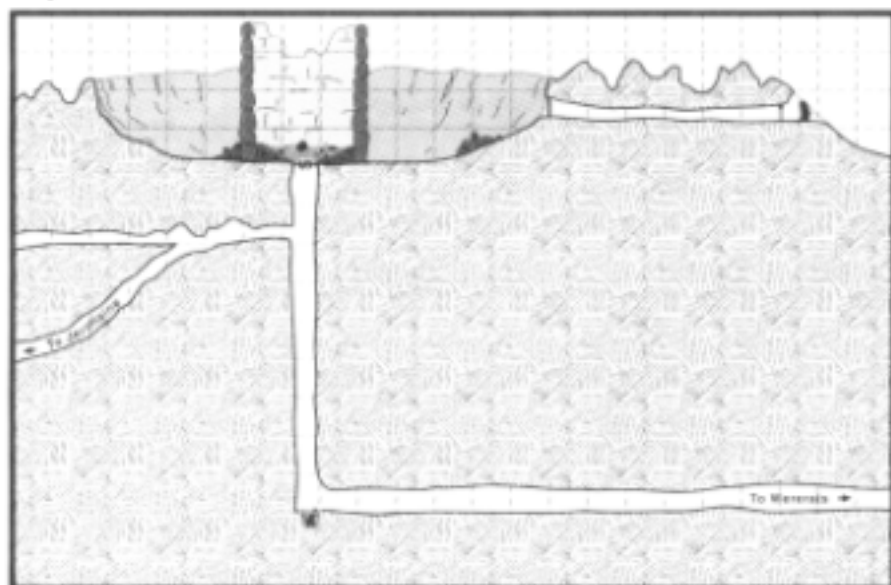
Map 6. The Abandoned Graveyard



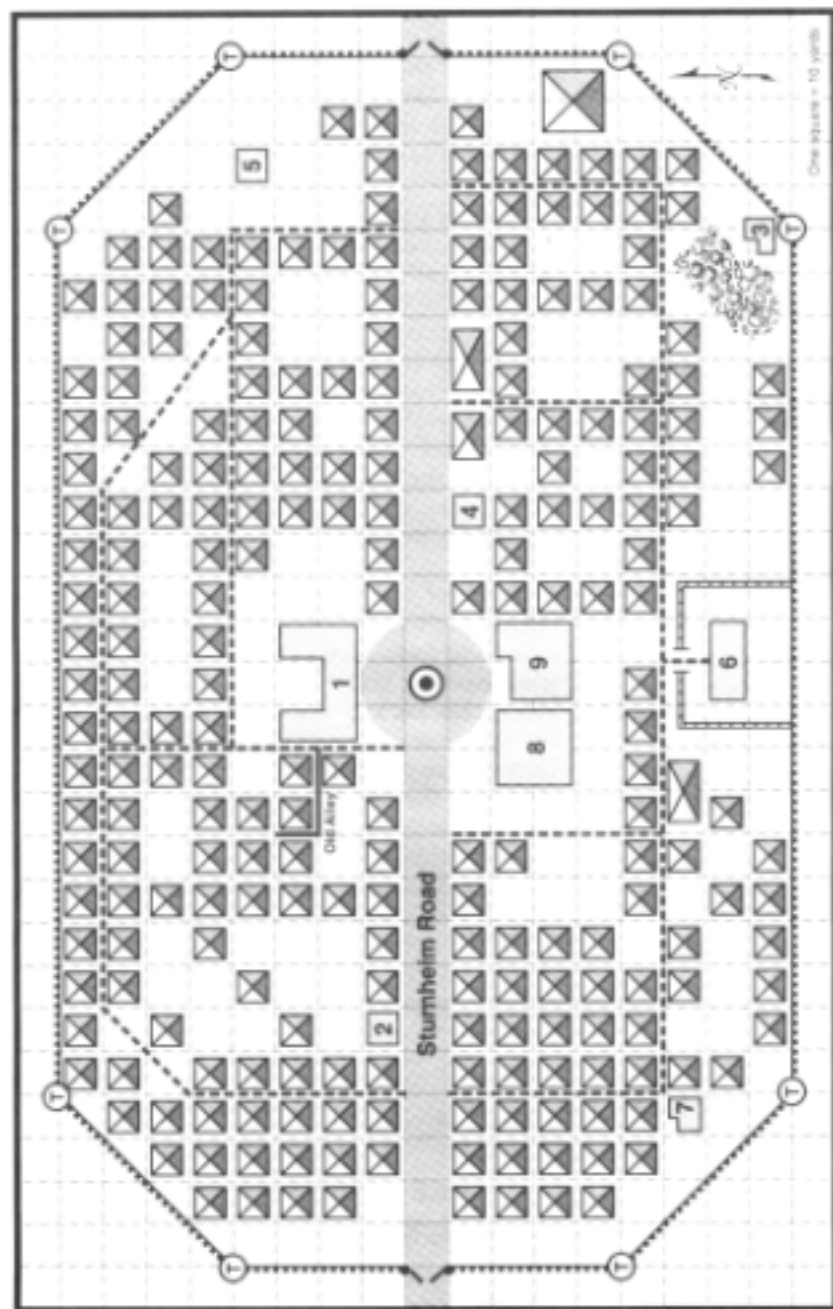
Map 4. The Tower Area



Map 5. The Pit



Map 2. Sturnheim



One square = 10 yards

- Trees
- Gate
- Wall Tower
- Town Well

- 1 Three Crown Inn
- 2 Blusterbuckle's Armory
- 3 Miranda
- 4 Bertryn's All-Goods
- 5 Valdar
- 6 Mayor's House
- 7 Pool
- 8 Militia HQ/Constabulary
- 9 Stable-Livery

## Welcome to Sturnheim

- an old piece of drawing paper, with many doodles on it. One corner shows a big dragon attacking eight figures, with a scribbled caption: "We hit it, but did we kill it?"
- a note written on good parchment: "P. meet me at the Old Alley tonight and bring the key. I have ascertained its origin and purpose, plus the location of the lock. -V."
- a battered great helm
- a painting of Poot and his seven adventuring friends 40 years ago. Valdar looks exactly like his father Kesor.

### 8) Militia Headquarters/Constabulary.

This stone building is the militia assembling point. There is a large foyer for villagers to enter if they have militia-related business. Two maps adorn the wall: One of Sturnheim, and one of the surrounding area.

The building is always manned by six militiamen. There is a locked armory room holding 100 of each weapon carried by the militia, plus 50 suits of scale armor.

There are four jail cells for especially tough prisoners (such as unruly PCs), plus a holding dungeon which fits 24.

The village census/duty roster/roll muster are kept in a small locked office used by Valdar. There is nothing in the office that would incriminate him. Consider all lock qualities in the constabulary to be superior (-6 to Open Doors rolls, -40 to Open Locks rolls).

### 9) Stables/Livery.

This building will house a horse for 1 sp per day, including feeding and care.

## The Key and the Tower

The following section begins the main adventure. The first encounter happens at night in a dark alley of Sturnheim, preferably after the PC has had a chance to settle in at the inn. Boxed text is to be read to the player.

### Villainy at Night

The night is chilly in Sturnheim, and very few people are on the street. As you pass an alley, you hear the sounds of scuffling and a gasping plea for help. Turning to the sound, you see three dark shapes beating upon a fourth shape. A dagger blade flashes briefly.

Three brigands are ambushing Poot. The assailants have their backs turned to the PC. If the PC wishes to call for the militia, they will arrive in 2d4 rounds. The brigands are not willing to engage in combat, so they will attempt to knock out the PC and flee should the PC intervene. The brigands have the stone sword, and will escape over the stockade wall to where they have three mounts hidden, and ride back to the brigand camp.

Should the brigands make their escape with the sword, they will take it back to the camp and wait for Valdar, their boss, who will follow them a day later.

If any of the brigands are captured, they will refuse to talk, and Valdar will take custody of them (releasing them several hours later). One brigand has a note on him: "Meet the old man in the Old Alley, take his key and kill him. Leave town over the east wall, arrangements have been made. Go back to camp and wait for me. -The Leader." The note is in the same handwriting and paper as the note in Poot's house, telling him to come to the alley. The odds of the PC getting a brigand with the note is a base 80%, with a cumulative +10% bonus for each extra brigand captured.

Poot is dying, and no healing will help him. If the PC checks on him, Poot will gasp out: "My house. . . papers. . . Sword. . . is. . . key. . . Forsaken Road through hills. . . south at dragon. . . fortune. . . do. . . tell. . . Val. . .", then die.

### Poot's House

If the PC goes to Poot's house after the murder, he will find it much as earlier described, except that a pair of brigands are also sorting through it, looking for any more clues the old man possibly had. The brigands will clash briefly with the PC, trying their best to escape.

## The Forsaken Road

The road that leads northeast out of Sturnheim is a sad, winding affair, overgrown with weeds. Many of the stones used to pave the road are either gone or are jumbled about at odd angles. Encounters are rolled for once per hour.

### Mad Challenge

About 75 yards up ahead, a mounted figure blocks the road. The figure is dressed in full field plate armor, including a shield and a great helm. Either the armor is orange-red, or it is covered in rust. The warrior holds a lance pointed skyward, a small tattered blue pennant hanging limply from the point.

The horse, a bony old nag, appears weighted down by random slabs of rusted plate barding.

A voice of obvious great age gasps "Halt! If passage on this road you seek, then duel we must till one is weak!"

The bad poet is Sir Nycklos of Roeh, a 70-year-old cavalier who has gone mad. Nycklos is one of the eight adventurers who failed to find the town's treasure 40 years ago. As may be guessed, Nycklos is the party member who went insane and left the village in disgrace.

For the past 40 years, Nycklos has been living in the hills, keeping himself alive by hunting the plentiful game, and guarding the road. The brigands know of his presence and can easily avoid him. Valdar also knows of Nycklos' existence, but has not made the connection.

Nycklos' favorite campsite lies a quarter mile to the north. There, a small cave beside a stream serves as Nycklos' home. The area shows signs of many cooking fires. The cave contains a bedroll, oil lamp, cooking and eating equipment, two jousting lances, two short bows, 12 arrows, and a wooden flute.

Beyond the camp is an area of flat ground 60 yards long, 10 yards wide, bisected lengthwise by a low wall of stones. At one end, there are also two crude archery targets.

In order for the PC to pass, he must joust with Nycklos. If the PC has no horse, he may either participate in an archery contest or a foot list. See

PHBR1, pp 86-88 for detailed rules on jousting.

Note that it is not necessary to beat Nycklos, just fight him. If the PC acted honorably, Nycklos will allow him by. If the PC is female, Nycklos will refuse to fight and allow her to pass. If the PC somehow manages to beat Nycklos, he will offer his services as a bodyguard.

Regardless of the outcome, Nycklos will offer the PC the hospitality of his camp. PCs who contribute to the feast with wine and/or other food will be warmly welcomed.

Nycklos has never stopped blaming himself for failing to find the caravan. He is obsessed with making amends, and he sees his exile as part of his atonement.

If Nycklos is questioned politely, he will reveal the following, bit by bit:

- Whatever took the treasure from the caravan 40 years ago was definitely not humanoid.
- Kesor the warrior was an evil man.
- A stone sword was found by the party 40 years ago, but its function was never ascertained.
- Half the party was wiped out by a red dragon. Nycklos is sure that they wounded it, but he has no hard proof. The old mayor made them swear not to disclose the presence of the dragon, for fear of causing the village to panic.
- Nycklos believes that for the last 40 years, faeries have been secretly stealing his possessions and replacing them with exact replicas.

Nycklos is a psychotic old man. During his lucid moments, he is brave, resourceful, good company, and chivalrous. If he goes along with the PC, he may prove more of a drawback than a help.

Nycklos is based on the cavalier fighter kit in PHBR1, pp 22-24.

**Nycklos:** AC 0; MV 6; F8; hp 70; THAC0: 13; #AT 2; Dmg by weapon: AL LG; SA Immune to fear, +2 to hit with lance, +1 to hit with longsword, +1 to hit with horseman's mace, +4 bonus to saves vs. mind-affecting magic; Str 10, Dex 7, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 9; ML 20.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Longsword specialization, medium lance, horseman's mace, dagger, short bow, broadsword.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Land-based riding 17, etiquette 9, cooking 14, hunting 13, survival 13,

## From Village To Tower

fire building 13, weather sense 13, heraldry 14, fishing 13, musical instrument, flute 6.

Equipment: Full plate armor and shield, great helm, *longsword* +1/+3 vs. *enchanted or spell-using creatures*, medium lance, broken down old medium warhorse.

### The Signpost

The hills ahead seem to be getting progressively smaller, stretching eastward into a rolling plain. One hundred yards ahead lies a curious rock formation.

A PC closing distance to 60 feet and making an Intelligence or Wisdom roll (whichever is higher), can see that the formation vaguely resembles a large dragon, its head pointing south. The formation is a mere 5 feet from the north side of the road.

When the PC passes within 10 feet of the formation, he hears a growling, gurgling noise coming from behind the rocks. Should the PC investigate, read the following to the player:

Behind the rocks is a muscular, stocky man with short, bristly black hair, clad in a filthy tunic. He is eating a squirrel. Several other squirrels lie dead at his feet. A beautiful gold necklace sparkles brightly around his neck. The man looks at you with feral red eyes and snorts, clutching his half-eaten squirrel protectively to his breast, and crouching in a tense manner, as if ready to spring.

The "man" is a wereboar by the name of Ahrne. He is new to the area. Ahrne will not attack unless the PC tries to take Ahrne's squirrels or gold necklace away. If the PC offers food, Ahrne snatches it greedily without thanks. If the PC offers wine, he has Ahrne as a friend for life.

Ahrne will allow the PC to view the necklace, but he will not take it off and he will be ready to slash at the PC at the first sign of trickery. If the PC or one of his hirelings has the Appraisal proficiency, he will find out that the necklace's value is 2,000 gp. There is a gold medallion on the necklace which reads "Sturnheim Caravan Company" and is dated 46 years ago.

If Ahrne is asked about how or where he got the necklace, he will say that he found it several days

ago, "near a stone man with empty hands." He will take the PC to the location provided the PC feeds him three meals a day, supplies him with a weapon, and gives him a share of any further loot found. Interrogation is always an option, but Ahrne can't give specific instructions or directions, saying "I know the path when I see it."

Strapped on Ahrne's back is a round stone disk 2 feet in diameter. This is his armor, so he says, and he found it close by the necklace. However, he will not volunteer this information unbidden. It is a stone shield, used in conjunction with the stone sword to open the tower door.

Ahrne is rude, coarse, disgusting, and greedy. On the other hand, he knows the area and is easily impressed by well-made armor and weapons. As long as a PC does not insult or abuse Ahrne and keeps him fed and/or supplied with wine, the PC has a staunch ally.

**Ahrne the Wereboar:** AC 4; MV 15; HD 5+2; hp 22; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2-12; AL N; SD: Silver or +1 or better weapon to hit; ML 13; XP 650.

### The Door

After all of your traveling through the rough hills, you finally come upon a great stone door set into an especially craggy hillside. Loose rocks and rubble are strewn about the ground around the door. A life-sized statue of an armored man is to the right of the door, with its back set against the hillside wall. The statue's right arm is upraised over its head, its right hand grasping empty air. The statue's left arm is lifted to its eye-level, with the left forearm held out as if it bore an invisible shield.

The door has no keyhole, no handle. The stone sword that Poot found ages ago must be fitted onto the right hand, and a stone shield must be fitted on the left forearm. No amount of lockpicking, Open Doors rolls, or magic will open the door. The stone "keys" are needed.

If the PC missed the stone shield and the DM wishes to be merciful, he may allow a resourceful PC to place a normal shield on the statue's left arm and let that work. The stone sword, however, is absolutely essential!

The tower complex is the resting place of the lost caravan treasure. Forty-five years ago, a female red dragon brought together an unlikely band of robbers which consisted of winged monsters: harpies, wyverns, manticores, and griffons. They would swoop down on travelers of the old Sturnheim Road (before it became known as the Forsaken Road), lift them bodily into the air, and fly off to the abandoned tower in the rough hills.

As a rule, the robbers were careful not to take too much, so as not to scare away potential travelers. Even at the scene of the robberies, the area was picked clean of any traces of a struggle, and no victims were allowed to survive.

A colony of wererats, attracted by the robbers' cast-offs, settled down directly under the tower. They were happy to live off the monsters' flotsam, and they did an excellent job of not being discovered.

Forty years ago, when the huge caravan departed from Sturnheim and the red dragon smelled all that gold, she knew she could not pass it up.

Despite local gossip and speculation, the caravan's guards gave a pretty fair account of themselves, slaying most of the gang's manticores and harpies.

When Poot's expedition came to the mountains searching for the lost caravan, they too gave a good account of themselves, better than anyone in Sturnheim guessed. When the dust cleared, only the red dragon remained standing, and even then she was mortally wounded. The only other creatures that remained were the offspring of the winged robbers, left back at their respective lairs. With no strong leader anymore, the young could not match the dragon's success, and each species drifted away from the other and lived its life in its own way.

### Gaining Entry

Once the "keys" are fitted onto the statue, read the following to the player:

With the sound of grating stone, the vast door slides open to reveal a long tunnel heading deep into the heart of the hill.

If the PC enters, continue by reading the following to the player:

It is apparent from the most casual observation that this tunnel has not been used in years. Brown weeds and roots crack through the rock, and cobwebs hang from the ceiling. Your footsteps echo loudly down the tunnel, announcing your arrival whether you like it or not.

The walls are decorated with faded paintings of various winged forms attacking human travelers. A huge red dragon figures prominently in these paintings, as does a tower set in a small valley. The drawings are rather crude, with very little artistic merit.

At the end of the tunnel stands a portcullis.

The portcullis is rusted shut, with no keys or levers handy. A Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll will be needed to open it.

Due to an abundance of rocks and rubble beyond the portcullis, there is not much to see from the tunnel's vantage point.

### The Courtyard

Making your way around the rubble, you realize that you are standing at the bottom of a bowl-shaped depression, with craggy hills on all sides. In the center of this area, the shattered, blackened remains of a stone tower stand before you. Judging by the amount of rubble at its base, it was once very tall. Now, all that remains is perhaps one story worth of building. It appears that the tower was ruined by a vast gout of flame.

The most likely source of the flames lies beside the ruins: a huge red dragon, stretched out like a giant red cat, stares at you.

What the PC does not know is that the dragon is just the dried carcass of one of the great beasts. This dragon was responsible for the destruction of half of Poot's party and the ruining of the caravan. When Poot's party fought it, one adventurer got a lucky shot at the beast and delivered a mortal wound which caused complications several weeks later, killing the beast.

The great dragon has been reduced to a hollow corpse that has been remarkably well-preserved by a group of jermlaine that use the carcass as a sec-

## The Tower

ondary lair. The tail and hind quarters of the dragon, as well as most of its insides, have been eaten away, although this is not immediately obvious due to the cover provided by the rubble. A pack of giant rats, allies of the jermlaine, also dwell in the carcass.

The carcass has a one-foot-wide hole which leads to the jermlaine's underground main lair.

If it is night, and the PC is wandering in this area either alone or with only one ally, the jermlaine will swarm out of the dragon's mouth and attack, preferably while the intruders' backs are turned. A party of three or more adventurers will be too much for the cowardly creatures to handle. However, they will follow the intruders and wait for an opportunity to attack.

A search through the rocks and rubble reveals one of the following per searcher per turn of searching. Each item can be found only once.

- A rusty shield +1
- A battered bastard sword *frost brand*
- A rotting leather purse with four 100-gp emeralds
- A rotting purse with 50 pp
- A 25 gp silver ingot
- A gold brooch with a mounted ruby (a *brooch of shielding*)
- A *ring of wizardry* (1st level spells)
- A silver *battleaxe* +2
- An old bronze seal of authority, bearing the mark of Sturnheim.
- A very old human skull, cracked open by something obviously very big.

DMs should allow the items most useful to the PC to be found first.

The rest of the area has numerous animal bones strewn about.

When attacking, the jermlaine will primarily use their blackjacks in an attempt to pummel their victim into unconsciousness. DMs should use the rules for bypassing armor and sapping from PHBR1, pp 65 and 72 respectively. If the jermlaine defeat the PC, they will strip him, tie him up, and leave him to the mercy of wandering beasts.

The jermlaine were attracted to this area by the number of rats and wererats dwelling here. The bane-midges do not know where the dragon kept its treasure.

**Jermlaine** (12): AC 7; MV 15; HD 3 hp; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-2 or 1-4; L NE; SD Detect invisible/silently moving creatures 50%, 75% undetectable if listened or watched for, Makes all saves as 4 HD creatures; ML 12; XP 15.

The rats dwell in the carcass and are allied with the jermlaine. They will attack only if the jermlaine do. If a PC or ally can speak with animals, the rats will tell him that more giant rats live around here, but those belong to the man-rats who live underground.

**Giant Rats** (4): AC 7; MV 12; Sw 6; HD 2 hp; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; AL NE; SA Disease; ML 7; XP 15.

### The Ruined Tower

If anyone takes a close look at the tower's construction, and either makes a Stoneworking proficiency check, or is a dwarf or gnome and makes a Wisdom or Intelligence check, they will notice that the tower appears to have been set rather haphazardly on this plot of ground, almost as if it had been slammed into the earth by a large hand.

What in fact happened, was that the red dragon, in the last days of its life, ruined much of the tower, then lifted up and put aside the intact remains. The dragon then dug a deep hole for its treasure, poured the loot into the hole, then replaced the tower atop it, slamming it down as the last of its strength ebbed away. Unfortunately, the dragon dropped the treasure right into the wererats' laps.

The odor of offal assails your nose as you approach the open doorway to the tower, the door having been blasted off its hinges long ago. Rustling noises, like the wings of pigeons, echo from the dark portal.

A pair of harpies lives in the ruined tower. The tower ceiling, not visible from the outside, is partially collapsed, giving the harpies an aerial escape hatch. The floor is covered in filth six inches deep.

The two harpies are sisters, offspring of the robber gang harpies. They still remember those days, and if somehow interrogated, they will brag about their parent's success.



The harpies did not want to stay in this little valley, but every time they attempted to fly out, a nearby wyvern chased them in hopes of a quick meal. Now, the sisters are trapped here, living off small game and the occasional reckless jermlaine. This forced living arrangement has not done much for their temperament. Ironically, the wyvern only visits this area four times each day, and four times each night, but the harpies are too cowardly to take a chance.

If the harpies manage to charm the PC rather than eating him, they will send the PC off to kill the wyvern or die trying. The only treasure to be found is a handful (20) of gold coins with the Sturnheim mint mark on them, all dated at least 41 years ago. The harpies keep the coins in an old, battered helm.

The only entrance to the lower areas is covered in the harpies' filth. For the benefit of demihuman PCs, this entrance can be treated as a concealed door, stonework pit, or unsafe floor. If all else fails, an Intelligence or Wisdom check will reveal the pit entrance.

**Harpies (2):** AC 7; MV 6; FI 15(C); HD 7; hp 28; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; AL CE; SA Singing and charm; ML 13; XP 1,400.

## The Pit

Beneath scoops of filth, then large, filth-covered rocks, lies a pit as wide as an elf is high. It appears that someone or something has been at work smoothing out the pit sides. Drops of disgusting ooze that fall into the pit travel quite a long while before making a "splat" noise.

The pit is 90 feet deep and 5 feet wide; for purposes of climbing, the surface condition is Slightly Slippery and Rough (-25 penalty to Climb Walls,  $\frac{1}{3}$  climbing rate).

Twenty feet down the pit is a 3-foot-high tunnel branching out. This is the jermlaine tunnel, which leads to their lair. A PC making a lot of noise while climbing (hammering in pitons, etc.) will attract the jermlaine's attention, who will cut the PC's ropes, or attempt to make the PC lose his grip on the wall.

The bottom of the pit is moist earth, covered in

ordure. An Intelligence check will reveal that there is more filth here than can be accounted for by only the harpies overhead. Lying just a few inches under the surface is an otyugh. The beast lives here, having an arrangement with the colony of wererats which live down here. The wererats use this place as their waste disposal. A 5-foot-high tunnel leads into the subterranean areas that mark the wererat territory.

**Otyugh:** AC 3; MV 6; HD 6; hp 36; #AT 3; Dmg 1-8/1-8/2-5; AL N; SA Grab, disease; SD Never surprised; ML 14; XP 650.

## Jermlaine Lair

The only access to this lair, short of shrinking oneself, is the horizontal shaft that branches out from the pit under the harpies' lair. The tunnel twists and turns for 200 feet, until it ends at a series of four small, 8-inch-high tunnels. This is the beginning of the jermlaine lair.

If a PC actually manages to get into the tunnels, the lair has 12 jermlaine plus however many were able to escape from the encounter in the dead dragon on the surface.

The jermlaine treasure consists of 920 sp, a black pearl worth 500 gp, a *potion of longevity*, and a *wand of wonder*.

**Jermlaine (12+):** AC 7; MV 15; HD 3 hp; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-2 or 1-4; AL NE; SD Detect invisible/silently moving creatures 50%, 75% undetectable if listened or watched for, makes all saves as 4 HD creature; ML 12; XP 15.



## Chapter IV

### Wererat Lair

There are 18 wererats dwelling in this lair. They have packed away the dragon's treasure for their own benefit. Recently, a team of duergar broke into the tunnels. These evil dwarves learned about the treasure and are now in the process of slowly taking over the wererat dens.

The only reason that the wererats have not since run away from the powerful dwarves is the presence of the red dragon's heart, which the wererats removed and placed in a special chamber as an object of worship. Perhaps the cave is responsible, perhaps the wererats' faith is but, whatever the reason, the heart is now magical. It often fills the wererats with bravery and feelings of invincibility.

The only thing the wererats need now is breeding stock. DMs can decide just how far to pursue this in their games. The wererats may attempt to capture the PC and his allies for mating purposes.

The two barricades closing off areas of the complex that the duergar have taken over are made up of loose stone and rubble and are always guarded by two wererats and two giant rats. If duergar attempt to break through, the wererats sound an alarm, a very distinctive, high-pitched squeal. There is a 10% chance per hour of a duergar raid.

All of the wererats carry short swords and daggers.

#### 1) Rat Dens

Each of these rough chambers has 12 common rats and a strong stench. When a nonwererat enters, they chatter loudly as a warning.

**Rats (12):** AC 7; MV 15; HD 1 hp; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1; AL N; SA disease; ML 3; XP 7.

#### 2) Communal Area

This rough chamber is littered with bones of small animals and humans. There are skulls and finger bones dangling from the ceiling as if in decoration.

This is the communal area of the wererats. The bones are of duergar origin, as this is where most of the pack eat. There is a 60% chance of encountering 1d3 wererats, and an additional 40% chance of encountering 1d4 giant rats in this chamber.

**Wererats:** AC 6; MV 12; HD 3+1; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL LE; SA Surprise; SD Hit only by silver or +1 or better weapons; ML 12; XP 270.

**Giant Rats:** AC 7; MV 12, Sw 6; HD 3 hp; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; AL NE; SA Disease; ML 7; XP 15.

#### 3A) Sleeping Area

This room appears to be a sleeping area. The stench of rats is particularly bad here. The chamber floor is covered in filthy rags, which are obviously used as bedding. The decor of the room is rather odd; objects that look to be of value are placed around the room in a haphazard fashion. Three rat-folk rouse themselves and face you, chattering angrily.

All of the bedding is made up of once-beautiful tapestries, silk and other rare cloths, which are ruined beyond salvaging. Other objects in this room are: a cracked vase (former value 5,000 gp), a pewter buckler (500 gp), four dented golden goblets (50 gp ea.), and a replica of Sturnheim's official seal made of gold and decorated with aquamarines (10,000 gp).

**Wererats (3):** AC 6; MV 12; HD 3+1; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL LE; SA Surprise; SD Hit only by silver or +1 or better weapons; ML 12; XP 270.

#### 3B) Sleeping Area

This chamber is used as a sleeping area, as evidenced by the wadded masses of bedding scattered about the floor. A canopy propped up by two wooden poles acts as a resting area for three large wererats, who angrily advance at you.

This sleeping area is much the same as 3A, with the following exceptions. The canopy is a *sheet of smallness*. The room also has: a chessboard made of ivory and obsidian (500 gp), a broken bronze lamp, a silver coffer (150 gp), and one velvet-lined boot. One wererat wears a *ring of free action* in his nose.

## The Underground Complex



**Wererats (3):** AC 6; MV 12; HD 3+1; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon: ALL; SA Surprise; SD Hit only by silver or +1 or better weapons; ML 12; XP 270.

#### 4) Leader's Chamber

This room has iron doors salvaged from the tower ruins. Neither door is locked, but each still requires an Open Doors roll to pass through.

Through the door is a bed/chamber of acceptable standards for a surface dwelling human. A thick carpet covers the floor. A man and woman, clad in black leather and of thin, wiry build, stare at you appraisingly. The man absently strokes his moustache as he stares at you, and the woman, who despite having darting, beady eyes is quite attractive, plays with a strand of her long black hair as she gives you the once over, a smile of contempt on her face.

"What business have you here?" the man demands. "You are surface dwellers! Who are you?" You notice that the man has a foil and a dagger on his sword belt, and his hands have dropped to within easy reach of them.

The man and woman are Oznod and Taramai, the human couple who came looking for the trove five years ago. They were infected with wererat lycanthropy and became leaders of the lair.

Oznod is a swashbuckler with a cruel, arrogant streak. He is shrewd and, unless provoked, will not attack. He will instead call on his little-used etiquette to talk to the PC. Rules for swashbucklers can be found in PHBR1, pp 34-35. Oznod often consults Rajeesha the water naga (see Room 5) for advice.

Taramai is a myrmidon, a professional soldier. She wants to return to the surface, but the campaign against the duergar has piqued her interest. For more information on the myrmidon, consult PHBR1, pp 25-26.

The room has a tapestry depicting Sturnheim and vicinity (1,800 gp), two emerald-encrusted golden goblets (700 gp ea.), a marble sculpture of a dragon in flight (1,000 gp) (the statue is the size of a large house cat), and a huge oak chest with a battle scene carved on the lid (120 gp).

The chest is locked. Inside lies 500 50 gp opals, 1,000 pp, two *potions of heroism*, two *potions of*

## The Underground Complex

*extra healing, one jar of Keoghtom's Ointment, and a scroll of protection from undead.*

Under the carpet lies a trap door. This door gives access to what remains of the treasure of the lost caravan. The treasure consists of: 25,752 gp, 42,997 sp, 12 diamonds worth 1,000 gp each, a sack of 50 pearls worth 50 gp each, and 18 bottles of expensive, 50-year-old brandy (each bottle worth 200 gp).

**Oznod:** AC 1; MV 12; HD 5; hp 35; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL LE; SA Surprise; SD Hit only by silver or +1 or better weapons; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 12; ML 16; XP 1,000.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Two-Weapon Style, foil, stiletto, long sword, main-gauche.

**Equipment:** *leather armor +2, foil +2, stiletto +1, boots of striding and springing, purse w/ 75 gp.*

**Taramai:** AC 2; MV 12; HD 5; hp 36; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL LE; SA Surprise; SD Hit only by silver or +1 or better weapons; Str 15, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 15; ML 16; XP 1,000.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Crossbow specialization, bastard sword, hand axe, dagger.

**Equipment:** *Leather armor, light crossbow of speed +1, 16 bolts +1, 4 bolts +2, bastard sword, dagger of venom, ring of protection +1, cloak of protection +1, purse w/ 55 gp, 2 rubies (500 gp ea.).*

### 5) Pool Cavern

This huge chamber is a cave formation taken up mostly by a huge pool of water. The walls and ceiling are rough stone, and the ground is sand. An extremely narrow ledge runs from the east shore to the far southern end of the cave, where a pair of carved stone stairs lead up to two dark openings.

This cave chamber is the wererats' source of water, and the occasional fresh water fish to supplement their diet.

From the shore, the pool's bottom slopes gently for about 2 feet, then plunges down 40 feet. The

water, which comes from an underground crack, is cool and fresh.

At the bottom of the pool lies a water naga named Rajeesha. She acts as an adviser to the wererat community, and is held in awe by the wererats as an oracle.

Rajeesha has a great amount of curiosity, and would much rather talk to interesting people than kill them.

There are three things that a PC may ask of Rajeesha. The PC may ask Rajeesha to let the PC pass unmolested, attempt to turn Rajeesha against the wererats, or convince Rajeesha to join the PC as a henchman. Each attempt requires a roll on the Encounter Reaction table. A Friendly result allows the PC to pass, or turns Rajeesha against the wererats, or makes her join the PC. Any Hostile result makes her attack the PC immediately.

Attempts at either asking Rajeesha to let the PC pass, or to have her join the PC, are rolled on the Friendly column at a +1 penalty. An attempt to make her turn actively against the wererats is rolled on the Indifferent column at +3 penalty.

Rajeesha has a lair at the bottom of the pool, containing 20 pearls worth 50 gp each, a *potion of water breathing*, a *potion of fire resistance*, and a *shield +1* (a bit rusted and dented).

**Rajeesha the Water Naga:** AC 5; MV 9, Sw 18; HD 7; hp 40; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; AL N; SA Spell abilities as a 5th-level wizard; ML 11; XP 3,000.

### 10) Heart Chamber

The entire chamber is ablaze in a fiery red light, which emanates from a fleshy heart 6 feet in diameter. The heart rests atop an oblong marble slab. Surrounding the heart are small carved figures. Even the air seems to be charged with energy and, even though the heart does not move, you hear a heartbeat pounding in your head.

Oznod and the rest of the wererats did a very, very stupid thing. The slab is not an altar, but a sarcophagus belonging to an archmage who originally dwelled in the tower above. This burial chamber is the only subterranean room of the tower which has survived the ravages of time.

The archmage sought lichdom, but the formula did not work as expected. Instead, the wizard's body collapsed into dust, while his life force and some other odd magic stayed in the vicinity.

The two most profound effects of his attempt are the unusual preservation of the red dragon corpse at the base of the tower, and the enchantment and preservation of the dragon's heart resting atop the tomb. A lesser effect has been the extremely slow transference of the wizard's life force into the nearest dead body of significant size, namely the red dragon.

As for the heart, alchemists are always on the lookout for dragon parts, especially brains and hearts. If the PC decides to keep a small part of the dragon for himself, treat it as an amulet which protects the wearer from *fear* spells for one year, after which it rots and disintegrates.

The figures around the heart are 32 chess pieces made of ebony and ivory, worth a total of 640 gp. They were placed there for decorative purposes only and have no magical properties.

PCs who just wish to destroy the heart can do so. No benefits are gained, and the wererats will lose their nerve, allowing the duergar to easily overrun the lycanthropes within  $24 + 2d12$  hours.

The exit from the wererats' secret escape tunnel is cleverly hidden with loose boulders and other such debris. A well-hidden trail snakes down to the area where the large tunnel through the hills ends.

### The Duergar Sector

The invading duergar have taken over about a fifth of the wererats' complex. Unlike the wererats, the duergar enthusiastically patrol the corridors they have captured. Patrols are encountered on a 1-2 on 1d6; checks are made every round spent in the corridors. A typical duergar patrol consists of two duergar on steeders. The duergar are ferocious and will attack outright anything that is not a duergar. Nonduerger attempting to ride a steeder must make a Land-based riding check at -4 penalty.

**Duergar (2):** AC 4; MV 6; HD 2+4; hp 14; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL LE; SA Opponents get a -2 penalty on surprise, duergar get a +2 bonus on surprise; SD +4 bonus on saves vs. magic, immune to paralysis and phantasm/

illusions and poisons; ML 13; XP 650.

Equipment: Chain armor and shield, light crossbow and 24 bolts, pick.

**Steeders (2):** AC 4; MV 12; HD 4; hp 24; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; AL N; SA Feet stick to victim 50% chance-requires a successful attack but victim is treated as AC 10 minus Dex and magical bonuses; SD Leap; ML 11; XP 120.

### 7) Duergar Assembly Area

The chamber is dimly lit with phosphorescent fungus. The air smells of mold and dirt, mingled with the sweat of bodies and the oil of weapons. A number of small, dwarf-sized shapes rise up to face you, weapons gleaming in the low light.

This chamber is used as a staging area for the duergar and a guard post for keeping an eye on the slaves in the chamber beyond. Four duergar are found here at all times.

Besides the duergar, there are eight short stools, a crude low table, several pitchers of ale made from fungus, and platters of meat whose origin is best not speculated about.

**Duergar (3):** AC 4; MV 6; HD 2+4; hp 14; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL LE; SA Opponents get a -2 penalty on surprise, duergar get a +2 bonus on surprise; SD +4 bonus on saves vs. magic, immune to paralysis and phantasm/illusions and poisons; ML 13; XP 650.

Equipment: Chain armor and shield, light crossbow and 24 bolts, pick.

**Duergar Captain (1):** AC 2; MV 6; HD 4+6 (F4); hp 36; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL LE; SA Opponents get a -2 penalty on surprise, duergar get a +2 bonus on surprise; SD +4 bonus on saves vs. magic, immune to paralysis and phantasm/illusions and poisons; ML 15; XP 950.

Equipment: Plate armor and shield, hammer, short sword, *brooch of shielding*.

## The Underground Complex

### 8) Slave Pen

The stink of unwashed bodies assails your nose, and the sound of rustling chains and groans fill your ears. Huddled in the dim torchlight are three humanoid forms, chained to the rough cavern wall.

This chamber is used by the duergar to keep the slaves they require to clean up debris and remove rock slides. The slaves are in relatively good shape, since they arrived here a mere two weeks ago.

Cheery is a halfling thief who was caught stealing by the duergar. Cheery enjoys the good life, but cannot bear to work, thus he turns to thievery.

Grook is a nasty little goblin who was captured in a duergar battle. All he wants is to get out. He will not want to be a PC henchman, though he will ally himself with the PC until the danger is past.

Quarra is a female drow warrior. Stunningly beautiful, proud, and aloof, she will nevertheless ally herself with the PC in order to secure her freedom. She will even give her word that she will be a loyal ally for as long as the duergar threat is present in the complex. Quarra is a pragmatic sort.

**Cheriadoc (Cheery) Busyfingers:** AC 6; MV 6; T 4; hp 18; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL CG; PP 55%, OL 42%, F/RT 45%, MS 43%, HS 35%, DN 25%, CW 78%, RL 20%; SA Surprise backstab double damage; Str 8, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 7, Cha 12; ML 10.

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, short sword, sling.  
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Appraising 14, cooking 14, gaming 12, healing 5.

**Grook the Goblin:** AC 10; MV 6; HD 1-1; hp 7; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL LE; ML 10; XP 15.

**Quarra Zolond:** AC 8; MV 12; HD 3 (F3); hp 23; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL CE; SD +2 bonus on surprise rolls, may cast *dancing lights*, *faerie fire*, and *darkness* each once per day; MR 56%, +2 bonus on saves vs. magic; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 18; ML 15; XP 650.

### 9) Arrival Chamber

There is steady air current coming from within this chamber. It carries with it the odor of dwarves and animals. There are several short human shapes in the chamber.

Once the PCs make an attempt to enter the chamber, continue reading to the player:

Inside the chamber, the half-dozen duergar spot you, grab their weapons, and charge you, yelling loudly. A group of large spiders lay tethered against the opposite wall.

This room was the area of the wererat complex where the duergar broke through. The dark dwarves now use it as a staging area for new arrivals. The room contains nothing of value, just a few bedrolls and flasks of fungus ale.

The four spiders are steeders, and will not be part of the melee against the PC unless a duergar manages to untether them.

The southwest corner of the room features a tunnel entryway 6 feet in diameter. This tunnel leads downward at a sharp angle, and is the means of eventually accessing the duergar's homelands.

**Duergar (4):** AC 4; MV 6; HD 2+4; hp 14; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL LE; SA Opponents get a -2 penalty on surprise, duergar get +2 bonus on surprise; SD +4 bonus on saves vs. magic, immune to paralysis and phantasm/illusions and poisons; ML 13; XP 650.

**Steeders (4):** AC 4; MV 12; HD 4; hp 24; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; AL N; SA Feet stick to victim 50% chance-requires a successful attack but victim is treated as AC 10 minus Dex and magical bonuses; SD Leap; ML 11; XP 120.

### 10) The Tunnel

The tunnel is quiet, save for an occasional faint metallic clink. A strong odor reminiscent of musk and wet rocks and soil hangs in the air.

The duergar, irritated by the lack of a decisive victory against the wererats, have captured an umber hulk and chained it to the tunnel floor. They

hope to use it against the wererats, but for now they keep it in the tunnel so as not to have to worry about staring into its eyes and such.

Unfortunately, the duergar have badly underestimated this creature. It has snapped off the chains holding its arms, and has burrowed out the stake that secured the chains to the solid rock. Instead of escaping, however, the umber hulk waits here, listening to the duergar plot, hoping to surprise its former captors as well as getting some of that treasure which the duergar seem so intent on having. The umber hulk is also intrigued by the wererat colony, and views it as a potential source of food.

When the PC first sees the umber hulk, the first thing that will be apparent is the chain. Allow the PC to make an Intelligence or Wisdom Check, whichever is more favorable to the PC. If the Check is successful, the PC notices that the chain is, in fact, not attached to the ground. If the Check is failed, it still appears that the beast is shackled to the tunnel floor. Once the PC gets close enough, the hulk will attack.

**Umbur Hulk:** AC 2; MV 6, Br 1-6; HD 8+8; hp 48; THAC0 11; #AT 3; Dmg 3d4/3d4/1-10; AL CE; SA Confusion; ML 13; XP 4,000.

### 11) Duergar Commander

This chamber has a single short-legged bed, an owlbearskin rug on the floor, and many decorations on the walls. A single lantern with a red lens casts a crimson glow throughout the room, a glow supplemented by a brazier filled with hot coals for warmth.

A huge spider sits in one corner of the room in what apparently is an area made up for the comfort of the beast. A single duergar occupies the room, and he is quite displeased at your presence.

This is the duergar chief's room. As soon as the PC enters, Grekat, if not surprised, blows a silver whistle that he keeps around his neck. This signal brings 1d4 duergar soldiers in 1d4+1 rounds. The spider also leaps up and attacks the intruder.

If the chief is interrogated, all he will say is that he was given command of this expedition to seek food and treasure. When his spies infiltrated the

wererats' complex and overheard talk of a dragon's hoard, the duergars' course was clear. They have been fighting the wererats for the past two weeks.

The room contains a tapestry of two knights fighting a blue dragon (worth 2,000 gp), a complete set of alabaster spice containers (worth 1,000 gp), a pair of dice carved from emeralds and fitted with gold pips (worth 500 gp), and a locked iron chest. The chest is filled with 1,000 gp, all of the coins betraying the mint mark of Sturnheim, two *potions of healing*, a *horseman's mace +1*, and a *manual of bodily health*.

Grekat wears a gold chain and pendant around his neck. The pendant is decorated with topazes, emeralds, rubies, and diamonds in a starburst pattern. The object is worth 10,000 gp, and also comes from the caravan's lost trove.

**Grekat Deathblade, Duergar Chief:** AC 2; MV 6; HD 7 (F7); hp 49; THAC0 13; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon; AL LE; SA Opponents get a -2 penalty on surprise, duergar gets a +2 bonus on surprise; SD +4 bonus on saves vs. magic, immune to paralysis and phantasm/illusions and poisons; ML 15; XP 3,000.

Equipment: Plate armor and shield, *short sword +1*, *hammer +3*, *amulet of nondetection*, *dust of invisibility* (4 applications), *purse w/ 35pp*



## Chapter V

When the PC emerges from the wererat lair, there is but one final obstacle. The spirit of the archmage has taken over the remains of the red dragon, and is quite angry. The last few millennia were as mere minutes to the mage; the last thing he remembers is his original dying breath. Now, he awakens, fully sentient, expecting to be a lich, and instead he is trapped in the body of a half-eaten red dragon.

When the PC passes by the body, read the following to the player:

A loud scraping noise comes from behind you, as if a huge bulk was being dragged along the ground.

Give the PC a chance to act, then continue reading to the player:

The red dragon is slowly rising, its eyelids painfully cracking open. The jaws open, and a hollow voice exclaims, "It worked! I am alive, alive!!!" The triumphant tone comes to an abrupt halt as the dragon holds up a withered claw and inspects it, a look of alarm creaking into the draconian facial features. Its jaw drops open in what you would swear was amazement.

Abruptly, the dragon turns around and looks down the length of its body, half of which is long gone. An unholy howl comes from the great beast: "Noooooo! This cannot be! It was all planned so well! Thieves! Assassins! Someone's responsible for this!" The dragon halts its tirade as it turns back and looks at you, a leer now crackling onto its features.

Unfortunately for the archmage, his dragon form has no breath weapon, no spells, and no special abilities of any kind. The archmage does not know this, and will certainly waste the first three rounds trying to breathe fire or cast spells.

There is a 30% likelihood each for the jermlaine or the rats to be still in the body when it animates, offering perhaps some truly odd combat possibilities.

Technically, this dragon is a zombie, a corpse given unlife. For turning purposes, consider it a wight. If the dragon body is destroyed, read the following to the player:

As the great beast collapses into a heap of ruined flesh and bones, a silver mist boils up from the remains. Slowly, the mist takes the form of an old man in robes, holding an elaborately carved staff. "You!" he bellows, his face twisted in rage. "You ruined my chances of lichdom! Why? I do not even know you!" Suddenly his voice is gone, and his form fades. In a few heartbeats, the apparition is gone.

If the PC was farsighted enough to destroy the body when he first came upon it, this encounter does not happen, but the PC gets a 2,000 xp bonus.

**Dead Dragon:** AC -3; MV 3; HD 13; hp 42; THAC0 10; #AT 3; Dmg 1-10/1-10/3d10; AL CE; ML 18; XP 5,000.

### Wyvern Watches

Located just 1,000 feet ahead and above the escape tunnel exit is a wyvern lair. From this vantage point, the wyvern can see the tower and the clear area around it. The wyvern is always watching for the harpies, in case the latter try to leave. The wyvern keeps the harpies here for no other reason than maliciousness.

The wyvern's lair consists of a cave in the hillside. Its treasure includes: 675gp, 854gp, a *potion of diminution*, eight *arrows +1*, an *arrow of dragon slaying*, short bow +2, *cloak of elvenkind*, and a pair of *boots of the north*.

**Wyvern:** AC 3; MV 6, Fl 24 (E); HD 7+7; hp 42; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 2d8/1-6; AL NE; SA Poison; ML 14; XP 2,000.

### Sturnheim's Gratitude

If the PC brings the booty back to Sturnheim, the entire village is grateful. The PC is given 10% of the total gp value of the haul, plus he gets to keep any magical items found. In addition, the PC may stay at the inn free for a month. Any goods or services purchased in the village will have a 25% discount for the PC.

If Valdar's role in this affair was exposed, the grateful villagers will nominate the PC for the position of militia leader.



## The Brigands of the Hills

The brigands' camp is hidden in the hills north of the Forsaken Road. The criminals take extra precautions (taught to them by Valdar) to cover their tracks, penalizing any Tracking attempt with a -4.

A series of five similar wooden huts, a larger wooden cabin, and a central fire pit make up the bulk of the camp. The five huts are homes for the regular brigands, while the cabin houses Valdar (when he visits), as well as Corinna Adontalyn, Valdar's trusted second-in-command.

A cave on a nearby hill has been altered into a stable for the eight high-spirited quality horses plus their saddles and other riding equipment.

One brigand is always on guard duty at the mouth of the cave/stable. Two pairs of brigands patrol the camp's outer perimeter. The bandits patrol in shifts of eight hours.

Each of the five huts contains 3d4 × 10 sp, a table, a small brazier, several pounds of coal, a hooded lantern, eight flasks of oil, and a flint and steel. There are also three of each of the following: bedroll, knapsack, blanket, waterskin, and chair. The huts have makeshift doors with poor quality locks (+4 to Open Doors rolls, +15 to Open Locks rolls) on them, though the brigands usually just bar the doors on the inside.

The cabin has a normal lock on it (no bonuses/penalties), and can also be barred on the inside. The interior is just one large room, with hooks to set up privacy curtains if needed. Furnishings and equipment includes: two beds, a table and two chairs, a fireplace with plenty of firewood, hooded lantern, six flasks of oil, and several changes of clothes (cloaks, boots, shirts, pants).

The masonry of the fireplace contains a loose stone, which conceals a large hole that holds the camp's treasury. A fireproof leather bag contains: 250 gp, 300 sp, 50 agates (10 gp ea), a scroll of *protection from undead*, and a *potion of treasure finding*.

Unbeknownst to Valdar, Corinna has established her own secret hiding place, under a loose board next to her bed. In this space are: 54 gp, 67 sp, 12 pp, a *potion of gaseous form*, a *potion of healing*, an *onyx dog figurine of wondrous power* (she is unaware that it is magical), and a letter from Valdar. The letter, addressed to Corinna, says that he suspects that the town's treasure is in the hills

somewhere, and asks her to lead the brigands on a search for it. Valdar promises that the militia will never harass the brigands, and that he will personally see that they can climb over the stockade safely. The letter is dated two years ago.

Valdar told Corinna to destroy the letter, but she has kept it as an opportunity to blackmail him in the future, if need be.

If the brigands managed to make it back from Sturnheim with the stone sword, it will be in the fireplace recess.

Corinna is a moderately attractive half-elven woman in her late 20s. She is a calculating, devious, yet unflinchingly brave adventurer. Corinna always seeks an advantage, or at least a way to make a profit.

If Corinna is interrogated, she will reveal:

- Valdar is secretly her accomplice, and he has the brigands looking for the lost caravan's treasure.
- The brigands recently found a likely site of the treasure (the entry to the tower area), and relayed the information to Valdar, who knows where the key is.
- The key is the stone sword.
- Valdar makes sure that the militia is not patrolling the places where the brigands happen to be.
- A group of centaurs in the south woods have caused the brigands much grief.

**Brigands (15):** AC 5; MV 12; F1; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL NE; SA PP: 40%; HS 40%; MS 50%; ML 12; XP 50.

Weapon Proficiencies: Punch specialization, dagger, light crossbow, short sword.

Equipment: Studded leather armor, light crossbow and 24 quarrels, short sword, club, dagger, purse w/ 1d6 gp.

**Corinna Adontalyn:** AC 3; MV 12; F3; hp 21; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL NE; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 15, Cha 14; ML 16; XP 1,500.

Weapon Proficiencies: Punching specialization, light crossbow, bastard sword, dagger.

Nonweapon proficiencies: direction sense 16, fire-building 14, riding, land-based 18, running 6, tracking 15.

Equipment: *studded leather armor* +2, *bastard*

## Subplots

sword +1/+3 vs lycanthropes and shape-changers, light crossbow +2, 20 bolts +2, dagger, purse w/30 gp.

### Fangflight

Fangflight the manticore is ugly even as far as manticores are concerned. This, coupled with his foul disposition, uncouth use of the Common language, and longing for the good old days of plentiful pillage, make for a truly dangerous, insulting, and downright disgusting opponent.

A cave high up the slope of a rocky hill serves as his lair. Fangflight wears a leather collar that acts as a *ring of feather falling*.

Fangflight does not attack an opponent immediately, but rather engages in abuse-laden dialogue with the intruder, culminating in a demand for three good reasons why the manticore shouldn't just give the PC a slow, messy, painful death. A hefty (1,000+ gp) bribe, a magical item, and two or more bottles of liquor are three good reasons.

If somehow the PC manages to coax information out of Fangflight, he gets the following: the fate of the caravan, the location of the tower, and the fact that there is a red dragon living there.

**Fangflight:** AC 4; MV 12, Fl 18(E); HD 6+3; hp 27; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-8; AL LE; SA Tail spikes 1-6 dmg; ML 14; XP 1,400.

Treasure: 549 gp, *plate armor of rage* +1, *stone of good luck*, *helm of comprehending languages* (actually looks like a spittoon, and that is what Fangflight uses it for!).

### The Great Misunderstanding

Miranda the herbalist often needs the rare plants and roots that grow in the sylvan woods south of Sturnheim. She sometimes hires villagers to collect the plants, but thanks to Valdar's rumor mongering, most are afraid to enter the woods anymore. Miranda is very interested in hiring a PC (she will pay him in potions and services) to collect some rare plants from the center of the woods.

A tribe of centaurs dwells near where the plants grow. The centaurs have had clashes with Valdar's brigands and they are convinced that it is the village itself that bears them ill will.

Thus, the centaurs have been preparing for war

against the village. The current tribe consists of 12 adult males, 24 adult females, and 10 foals. The centaur's community consists of 13 huts, a central hearth/cooking fire, a well, and an area set aside for the growing of rare plants and herbs. This area has the plants that Miranda seeks.

Surrounding the lair is a cleverly camouflaged wall of thorns and thistles. Anyone who unwittingly crosses this barrier must save vs. breath weapon or take 2d4 points of damage from the thorns. A successful save results in half-damage. A PC who can Find/Remove Traps, or has the Set Snares, Survival, or Tracking proficiencies is allowed a check to see if he notices the brambles before hitting them.

Whether the save was made or not, it takes the PC 1d4 + 1 rounds to extricate himself, although he will still not have gotten through the wall. If the PC wishes to make his way forward through the thorn wall, the amount of time is doubled, and the PC takes an additional four points of damage, with no save allowed.

The wall of thorns has two safe areas: on the eastern and westernmost portions of the perimeter. There is always one centaur guarding each gap.

There are always two pairs of centaurs patrolling the woods. There is a 1 in 8 chance per turn for the PC to encounter a centaur pair. If the PC gets caught in the brambles, a pair of centaurs arrives in 1d4 rounds.

Whatever the circumstances, read the following when the PC arrives within sight of the camp:

A great circular clearing stretches out before you. The grass is neatly trimmed, and all the trees at the edge of the clearing have been carefully pruned. Over a dozen wooden huts dot the landscape, with a large cooking area with a stone well in the middle of the clearing. One area of the camp appears to be a garden.

The occupants of the camp are everywhere. Powerful-looking centaurs draw water from the well, drill with spears, or tend the garden, while young centaur foals play tag with each other or create minor mischief.

As the centaurs notice you, the activity halts as centaur mares hurriedly gather their young to their side and move toward the huts. The male

centaurs, spears, bows, and clubs at the ready, stare at you with hostile suspicion and begin closing range.

The chief of the tribe is a young, powerful stallion named Heerhah. He has not been chief for very long; the previous chief died of old age a week ago. Heerhah is harsh, but fair. He wants what is best for the tribe, and currently humans are a threat.

Regardless of how the centaurs met the PC, Heerhah will be cautious and very suspicious. The PC must win his trust, and there are several ways of doing this.

- The PC must make a distinction between himself and the brigands. In the centaurs' eyes, all humans are alike.
- The PC must make a distinction between brigands and villagers, as the current centaur sentiment is to go into Sturnheim and just slaughter everyone.
- If the PC has already eliminated the threat of the brigands, he must furnish some sort of proof.
- The PC may offer his services to get to the heart of the matter. The centaurs accept the offer and give him four sundowns to solve the problem.
- The PC can ask the centaurs why they are so hostile to humans, allowing the chief the luxury of airing his grievances in a manner much laced with oaths and insults.

The PC can find out the following from Heerhah:

- The centaurs have clashed with cruel men who come from Sturnheim at night and either take the Forsaken Road or skulk along the borders of the centaurs' forest.
- These men head northeast into the hills. Sometimes they ride horses, taking care to hide them at a spot just outside of the village.
- One man, who looks more powerful and intimidating than the rest, comes and goes often. If pressed, the centaurs describe Valdar.

- Some of the men even found the centaurs' treasury and stole most of it. This was what fostered the construction of the thorn wall.

If the PC has come for Miranda's plants, the centaurs refuse to part with them, and not even gold will change their minds. The PC must fight Neeeha, a tough centaur, to earn the right to take the plants. The combat is nonlethal, and most likely it will be a wrestling match. If the PC has offered to help the centaurs, they will give him whatever plants he needs, plus a centaur companion, namely Neeeha, who will stay with the PC until the problem is solved.

If the PC refuses to deal with the centaurs and wishes to look for the plants growing wild in the forest, a skill check must be made every hour, using either Agriculture, Herbalism, or Survival. A successful check nets the PC a tenth of what he needs.

Chief Heerhah has a medium shield, *medium lance* +1, and a *longsword* +3. The tribe has no treasure worth mentioning, the brigands having made off with it (about 2,000 gp worth).

Neeeha is a big, ugly, and stupid centaur stallion, but is a steady companion. He loves to wrestle, and if he has to fight the PC, he will use wrestling as an opening tactic (see PHBR1, p 75).

The centaurs are equipped with spears, composite longbows, 30 sheaf arrows, and clubs.

**Average Centaur (10):** AC 5; MV 18; HD 4; hp 24; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/and weapon; AL NG; ML 14; XP 175.

**Neeeha:** as above, plus Str 18, Dex 15, Con 18, Int 6, Wis 9, Cha 5; ML 16.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** longbow, club, spear and wrestling specialization.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Hunting 8, endurance 18, set snares 14.

**Equipment:** Composite longbow, club, spear, 30 sheaf arrows, 50 feet of rope.

**Chief Heerhah:** AC 4; MV 18; HD 5; hp 35; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/and weapon; AL NG; ML 17; XP 350.



### Daddy Knows Best— Maiden in Distress

In this subplot, Sereetha Alcoris, the werewolf, attempts to lure the PC into the abandoned graveyard north of the village. She will be at the Sign of the Three Crowns Inn, looking helpless and in distress. If the PC does not approach her, she will initiate the encounter herself. In any case, read the following to the player:

Sereetha Alcoris, the pretty young woman staying at the Inn, has been wandering the common room aimlessly, a look of distress on her face. As you sit face to face with her, you can see that her eyes are puffy and red from crying.

"It is getting so that all of the backbone of Sturnheim has given way," she murmurs, half-angry and half-grief stricken. "All I wish to do is to pay respects to my dear father, who is no longer among the living. He lays at the Sturnheim graveyard, the abandoned one to the north. The way is harsh and rife with dangers, and none here," she says bitterly as her eyes

sweep the common room, with every man who meets her gaze lowering his head in shame, "None here have the nerve to escort me there!"

She leans over to you, putting her soft hands in yours. "Perhaps you? You are not of this village, so you do not bear its taint of cowardice! Escort me there, for when my father died, he left me well-provided for, and I have no one in life to share it with. . . . No one."

If the PC is female, Sereetha will instead approach the PC with the "All of the men in this town are cowards, so I come to a sister in my time of need" line, though she will still offer a reward.

If the PC accepts, Sereetha will be delighted, and suggest that they leave at eight in the morning. The cemetery is a 10-hour journey, regardless of whether on foot or horseback. (The North Forest is too dense to allow faster movement.) The PC may ask the patrons of the inn why none of them have accompanied Sereetha. With heads hung down, and voices an embarrassed mumble, the customers relate all sorts of horrors that supposedly dwell in

the graveyard. DMs should feel free to let loose with the most absurd stories that a superstitious mind could conceive.

If the PC asks why the graveyard is so far away, the reply is that the town founders were worried about undead, not that anyone has ever seen any or had confirmed reports about them.

## The North Forest

Unlike the sylvan woods to the south, the North Forest is a thick, chaotic growth of trees and underbrush. The going is slow here, despite a dimly perceptible trail that leads to the graveyard. There are several points of interest in the forest, which are outlined following.

### A) Whoooo Goes There?

As you negotiate your way through the dense woods, a mournful hooting comes from ahead, to your right.

If the PC closes in, continue reading the description to the player:

An owl lays on the ground, with its left wing splayed out at an awkward angle instead of folded against its body. The tail end of an arrow shaft sticks out from under the left wing. The bird looks at you and hoots again.

Sereetha will recommend that the poor beast be put out of its misery. If the PC tries instead to help the bird, it flies up into the air and the broken arrow shaft falls to the ground. This is actually a ruse; the owl was testing the PC's nature.

"Put me out of my misery, indeed! Giving up hope a bit too quickly, are we?" the owl asks reproachfully in perfectly articulated Common. "Still, I appreciate your desire to help, kind warrior, rather than just giving up. What do you seek here, where no humans have tread for many a moonrise?"

The owl's name is Ooohooroo, but will go by the name Mousebane if the former is too difficult

to say. Mousebane is a talking owl of great wisdom, and she is currently looking for a lucky band of humans to gain the benefit of her great wisdom.

Sereetha will do her best to convince the PC that the bird is not worth having around. She will even make hints that "it is hard to share thoughts of a personal nature if there is a third party present!" Thanks to Sereetha's "mercy killing" remark, Mousebane is already soured toward her.

Mousebane knows that an owlbear prowls in these woods, and that a graveyard lies north of here, though the place is partially sunken into a swamp. The swamp, located west of the graveyard, has slowly been encroaching eastward, and Mousebane will give a lecture on wetlands and the ecosystem, whether asked to or not.

Mousebane is a female owl. She speaks Common, black dragon, centaur, elf, halfling, and Druidic. Mousebane always uses ten words to say something which normal folk would express in four. She is exceptionally intelligent, and enjoys talking. If asked politely, she will accompany the PC.

**Mousebane, the Talking Owl:** AC 3; MV 1, Fl 36(C); HD 2+2; hp 12; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-2; AL LG; SA Swoop; SD Never Surprised; MR 20%; ML 15; XP 975.

### B) Bear Facts

The air is filled with a buzzing noise, punctuated by a few snuffles and growls. The noise comes from a point ahead.

If the PC closes in, continue reading the following to the player:

A huge black bear leans against a huge oak, its paws waving at a large opening in the tree trunk. A cloud of bees hovers about the hole, from which a golden liquid oozes. The bear turns and looks at you, sniffs the air, and returns to his task.

If the PC helps the bear get the liquid, which is honey, the bear will follow the PC into any situation that does not involve undead (at the grave-

## Subplots

yard, the bear would wait patiently at the edge of wholesome ground). Should the PC abuse the bear, it will snarl and amble off. If the PC attacks the bear outright, it will defend itself.

The bear will follow a ranger PC whether or not the warrior helps the bear get the honey. The bear knows rangers, and knows that they make good companions and can find food easily. It still won't go near undead, however.

Helping the bear get the honey involves dealing with a swarm of angry bees. Anyone attempting to get to the honey is stung for a number of hit points equal to his armor class divided by two, rounded up. Smoke and fire will drive off the bees with no damage done to the party.

Should the bear and the owl both join the party, Sereetha, her temper showing signs of wear, will mutter how things have turned into a menagerie.

**Black Bear:** AC 7; MV 12; HD 3+3; hp 26; THAC0 17; #AT 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA Hug; AL N; ML 10; XP 175.

### C) Owls, Bears, Owlbears

Off to your left is a group of old tree trunks. They are bare of any leaves, but they appear to have been placed together to form a giant lean-to. A few bones lay scattered in front of what seems to be an opening, and an odor of rotting flesh wafts over to you.

This is the den of the owlbear, and it will certainly smell the PC and come out charging. The PC will notice tracks of a very large beast if a Tracking roll is made. If Mousebane is with the group and the bear has been encountered, the owl will say:

"This is eminently logical. First you meet an owl, then you meet a bear, now you meet an owlbear. Very logical, very logical indeed. Didn't surprise me, not a bit! I could see this coming a mile away! You had better do something, since the chap looks rather hungry. Mind it's hug, it's an embrace you don't want to have! Just as dangerous as hers!", Mousebane looks at Sereetha, who frowns at the owl.

Mousebane does not have a clue as to Sereetha's true nature. Her last remark was simply a sarcastic jibe at the woman.

The owlbear has some booty buried beneath one of six piles of bones. The treasure includes: a gold bracelet (500 gp), an opal (500 gp), *amulet vs. undead* (6th level effect), a scroll of *protection vs. undead*, and a *dagger* +2.

**Owlbear:** AC 5; MV 12; HD 5+2; hp 22; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/1-12; AL N; SA hug; ML 12; XP 420.

## The Graveyard

Sturnheim's leaders, out of fear of possible undead, decided that the cemetery should be far from the village. The problem with the Sturnheim graveyard is that it was built close to a swamp-land. As the years went by, the swamp spread eastward, the moisture leeching into the graveyard.

The cemetery occupies a square plot of land, 500 yards on each side. The swampland has claimed a section 500 yards long and 100 yards wide, the far western fifth of the total area. The Alcoris crypt is located in this section.

All movement is halved in this marshy area, and the DM must make an encounter check every round on 1d6, with a 1-2 indicating an encounter. Roll 1d8 on the following table.

- 1 A rotting coffin floats by.
- 2 A giant leech attaches itself to the PC.
- 3 PC falls neck deep into a sinkhole. 50% chance of losing an item.
- 4 Yellow musk creeper and zombie.
- 5 1d6 normal rats.
- 6 1-2 giant rats.
- 7 Swirling mist resembles a human shape, then disappears.
- 8 1 ghoul.

**Giant Leech:** AC 9; MV 3; Sw 3; HD 1; hp 8; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; AL N; SA Drain blood; ML 7; XP 65.

**Yellow Musk Creeper:** AC 7; MV 0; HD 3; THAC0 17; #AT 2-12; Dmg Special; SA Gas; SD Immune to mind-affecting spells; ML 20; XP 650.

**Yellow Musk Zombie:** AC 10; MV 6; HD 2; hp 15;

THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SD Immune to mind-affecting spells; ML 20; XP 125.

**Rats:** AC 7; MV 15; HD 1hp; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA Disease; AL N; ML 3; XP 7.

**Giant Rats:** AC 7; MV 12, Sw 6; HD 2 hp; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; SA Disease; AL NE; ML 7; XP 15.

The woods that you have been traveling through fall away abruptly as the ground slopes gradually downward and becomes progressively moister. The air is heavy with a deep mist which carries the fetid odor of swampland.

Your destination, the graveyard, stretches to the northeast and northwest. A great iron fence blocks casual entry, and a huge granite archway, fitted with a gate, seems to be the only way in. The gate and fence are overgrown in places with clinging green vines and moss.

Numerous headstones, obelisks, and crypts poke out of the mist, like tiny islands in a sea of fog. Points of light flicker through the mist.

To the west, a vast swamp extends as far as the eye can see.

Sereetha explains that the lights are grave candles that magically cast lights that mark a grave of special reverence. Mousebane will announce that she does not like this place, and asks that everyone turn back immediately. Of course, Sereetha will guide the party straight to her father's crypt.

There is one feature of the cemetery that is of possible benefit to the PC: a granite chapel which stands in the center of the cemetery. This generic chapel has been consecrated to good deities, and has a *protection from evil* and *protection from undead* cast upon it. Mousebane knows of this place, and will mention it to the PC.

#### A) Ghouls of my Dreams

As you pass a particularly chaotic jumble of tombstones, the ground in front of them erupts, and three horrendous screeching humanoids lunge at you, their stringy grey hair trailing cemetery dirt. The gruesome duo approaches, opening mouths filled with yellow fangs, and filthy claws caked with mud and viscera.

If the PC can turn undead, add one ghoul.

**Ghouls (2):** AC 6; MV 9; HD 2; hp 10; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA Paralyzation; SD Immune to sleep and charm spells; AL CE; ML 14; XP 175. The ghouls have no treasure.

#### B) Spirit Warning

The mist ahead to your right swirls and takes the form of a human woman dressed in phantom armor. She looks at you and shakes her head, pointing back in the direction of the gate. She looks at you again, points to Sereetha, and shakes her head frantically, holding her hands up and out, palms facing you, a look of pleading on her face. At last, the apparition points to the ground in front of it, and motions you closer. A hand grabs your arm.

Sereetha has seized the PC's arm and is staring at the apparition, a look of anger on her face. If asked, she will say that the specter is an evil spirit that lures unwary victims to a spot of quicksand. Sereetha will do everything she can to keep the PC away from the apparition.

In fact, the apparition is the spirit of one of the eight adventurers who searched for the lost caravan 40 years ago. This woman, Carella, was one of the adventurers who left the village in disgrace.

In the course of her travels, Carella met a wizard named Renstip Alcoris. The two adventured together, fell in love, and were wed. The happy couple had a child, Sereetha, who is with the PC.

Ten years ago, Carella and Renstip, plus their wizard-in-training 14-year-old daughter, were traveling near Sturnheim when they were attacked by a vampire and its werewolf companion. The werewolf killed Carella and injured Sereetha before being killed by Renstip. The vampire and Renstip fought each other to a mutual demise. Grief-stricken, Sereetha buried them both in the graveyard, unaware that her father was a vampire.

Before Sereetha entered Sturnheim, she discovered that she had been infected with lycanthropy, and that her whole personality had changed to fit this new development. Acting on a hunch, she returned to the graveyard in time to see her father rise again as an undead. Renstip had nothing but

## Subplots

contempt for Sturnheim and its treatment of his late wife, so father and daughter worked out a system where she would go to Sturnheim and bring him fresh meat every so often.

The ghost of Carella is bound by Renstip's power not to speak until he is destroyed, so she must try to drive off potential victims with hand gestures. At her feet, buried under a foot of dirt, is her old longsword, now very rusty. It is +1/+3 vs. *Lycanthropes and shapechangers*. (DM Note: If the PC already has one of these swords, substitute it with a *silver longsword +1*.)

If Renstip is killed, Carella can speak. She tells her story, as well as gives an account of the fight against the red dragon.

Sharp-eyed PCs who ask about the ghost's facial features may notice that she resembles Sereetha.

Sereetha will not attack the spirit, but a PC glancing at her face will see that the pretty woman has a look of barely controlled fury. She will refuse to answer any questions about the spirit, claiming that it is just an obstacle in her path, preventing her from seeing her father.

### C) Daddy's Home

Looming before you is a marble mausoleum of great size and design. Carved above the rusty iron door is the name Pelmore. Scattered about the ground in front and sides of the tomb are many human skulls and bones. "This is my father's tomb," Sereetha says, her head bowed in reverence. "I would be honored if you walked in with me."

The name on mausoleum is different from the surname of the deceased because, after emerging from the ground, Renstip just moved into the nearest decent-looking mausoleum.

Scattered about the ground in front and sides of the tomb are many human skulls and bones, all that's left of Sereetha's previous escorts.

If the PC agrees to accompany Sereetha into the mausoleum, continue by reading the following to the player:

The door opens easily enough, and Sereetha walks in and requests that you follow.

Should the PC refuse to accompany Sereetha, she will enter and fetch her father. If it is daylight, she will stay in the tomb, scream, and hide, hoping to lure the PC into the tomb. Read the following to the player (altering the description accordingly if the PC does not enter the tomb).

Your footsteps echo on the marble floor as you make your way to the far end of the crypt. A loud squeal, like moving hinges, screeches throughout the chamber. Ahead, a coffin lies opened, and a man-sized figure clad in a black robe stands before you, two tiny points of red light shining from the hooded head. "Ah... dinner is served!" he remarks, gliding toward you as Sereetha screams.

If the PC traveled here without henchmen or hirelings, kind DMs may wish to allow the PC a free action. So confident is the father and daughter team that their approach is lackadaisical at best.

Renstip, a former 8th level mage, is without his spell books, thus he relies on his vampiric abilities.

Sereetha will attempt to get behind the PC, then transform into a werewolf.

Tucked behind his coffin is Renstip's treasure, items from victims. If things look hopeless for the PC, DMs may allow the poor victim to spy an item or two, sticking out from behind the coffin.

**Renstip Alcoris, Vampire:** AC 1; MV 12, FI 18(C); HD 8+3; hp 35; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; SA Energy Drain; SD +1 or better weapon to hit; AL CE; ML 16; XP 3,000.

Treasure: *ring of free action*, *wand of magic detection*, *winged boots* (flying speed 21), *silver dagger +1/+2 vs. larger than man-sized creatures*, *dust of tracelessness*, 577 gp, 210 pp, six bloodstones (150 gp ea.).

### The Swamp

The swampland has a chilling mist that clings to you, a mist made up no doubt of swamp gasses and other things best left unspoken. The mists obscure your vision. The soil is extremely moist, and many sections are submerged under several inches of water.



The plant life in the swamp consists of many hanging vines and drooping willow trees, with a variety of unhealthy looking shrubs dotting the landscape. The air is filled with noise; toads croaking, insects buzzing, and the occasional splash or bubbling, its origin uncertain.

This putrid area constantly releases swamp gases into the air, creating a permanent source of low-lying fog. Only on the sunniest and driest of days does the mist burn off. The swamp's soil is sodden and infested with vermin.

#### A) Stoned Dragon

The mists part ahead of you, revealing a great winged beast, a dragon, standing on four powerful legs, one of its forepaws raised for the attack. The creature's jaws are wide open in anticipation of an easy meal. It remains absolutely still.

If the PC approaches, continue reading:

Upon closer examination, you realize that the beast is a stone statue of a dragon. There is no pedestal, no carvings, just an incredibly lifelike statue.

This statue is actually a huge black dragon that wound up on the receiving end of a beholder's petrification ray. The she-dragon also fatally injured the beholder and removed an eye stalk. The beholder has limped back to its lair to die, leaving a trail of ooze.

If the PC makes a Tracking proficiency check, he finds that the dragon's tracks come from the northwest, the trail of dribbling ichor, and an eyeball on a small stalk. If the Tracking check was made by four or more, the PC can tell that the ichor is from four to six hours old.

#### B) Trolling for Beholders

If the PC makes additional Tracking checks, he will notice that two sets of large humanoid footprints meet the ichor trail, and follow it. The ichor trail is two miles long, with the troll tracks joining up at the halfway point.

The trail ends at a large tree which has a massive amount of branches clumped together like a giant nest. An 8 foot wide opening in the mass of branches sits 25 feet off the ground. Chomping and slurping noises come from the hole.

The troll pair cornered the beholder in its lair, and are now feasting on the beast. They are too busy eating to notice the PC should he decide to climb up the tree to take a better look. The PC gains surprise against the snacking trolls. Read the following if the PC climbs up to the hole:

A putrid smell washes over you as you climb the tree. When you peer into the hole, you see a huge spherical cavity about 30' in diameter; the walls are made of petrified tree branches.

What looks like a deflated ball with several eyes growing on stalks sits on the floor of the lair; many of its eye stalks have been ripped out. A huge central eye is shut, and the beast is not moving.

Huddled on each side of the misshapen sphere are two green-skinned humanoids with long noses, huge claws, and stringy black hair. They are eating the beast, their backs turned to you.

If the PC does not betray his presence, he can safely get away. If he makes a noise, the trolls spin around and say: "Go 'way! Dis iz our food. We tracked it fair 'n square! Find yer own food!"

The trolls will not pursue the PC immediately, though there is a 35% chance that the pair will attempt to follow the PC as a further meal. If they do so, they will be 15 minutes behind the PC. If the PC is alone, make one of the trolls badly injured, and unable to act while it regenerates.

One of the trolls carries a filthy burlap bag, which contains the pair's treasure: four beholder eye stalks, two dead lizards, and a pretty rock. One lizard has a gold ingot (500 gp) shoved into its gullet, the other has a pearl (500 gp) and a *ring of free action* in its gullet.

The beholder's treasure, which the trolls have not found yet, consists of 24 electrum trade bars (50 gp ea.), a *wand of magic missiles*, *gauntlets of ogre power*, a *manual of puissant skill at arms*, and a *battleaxe +2*. All of this booty rests on a curved metal tray, which is actually a *+2 shield*.



**Trolls (2):** AC 4; MV 12; HD 6 + 6; hp 40; THAC0 13; #AT 1d4 + 4/1d4 + 4/1d8 + 4; SD Regeneration; AL CE; ML 14; XP 1,400.

### C) Like Mother Like Son

If the PC follows the dragon tracks, they continue intermittently for six miles. The black dragon would take to the air, look around, land, walk a bit, then repeat the process. The tracks lead to a cave entrance. Read the following to the player:

Through the mists is another dragon form, this one much smaller. Like the first one, this one stands stock still.

This young male dragon is quite alive, but has frozen in place upon spotting the intruder. He realizes that his mother has been gone for an unusually long time and is frightened.

Caustalak, having been told tales of the eye tyrants who can turn victims to stone, is playing dead. Once the PC gets within melee range, the dragon will reach out and grab the PC, attempting

to pin the intruder to the ground, while sweeping away any NPCs with its tail. Once his victim is pinned, the dragon will interrogate the PC about the she-dragon's whereabouts. Caustalak also wants any treasure the PC and his NPC companions have, plus an NPC to snack on.

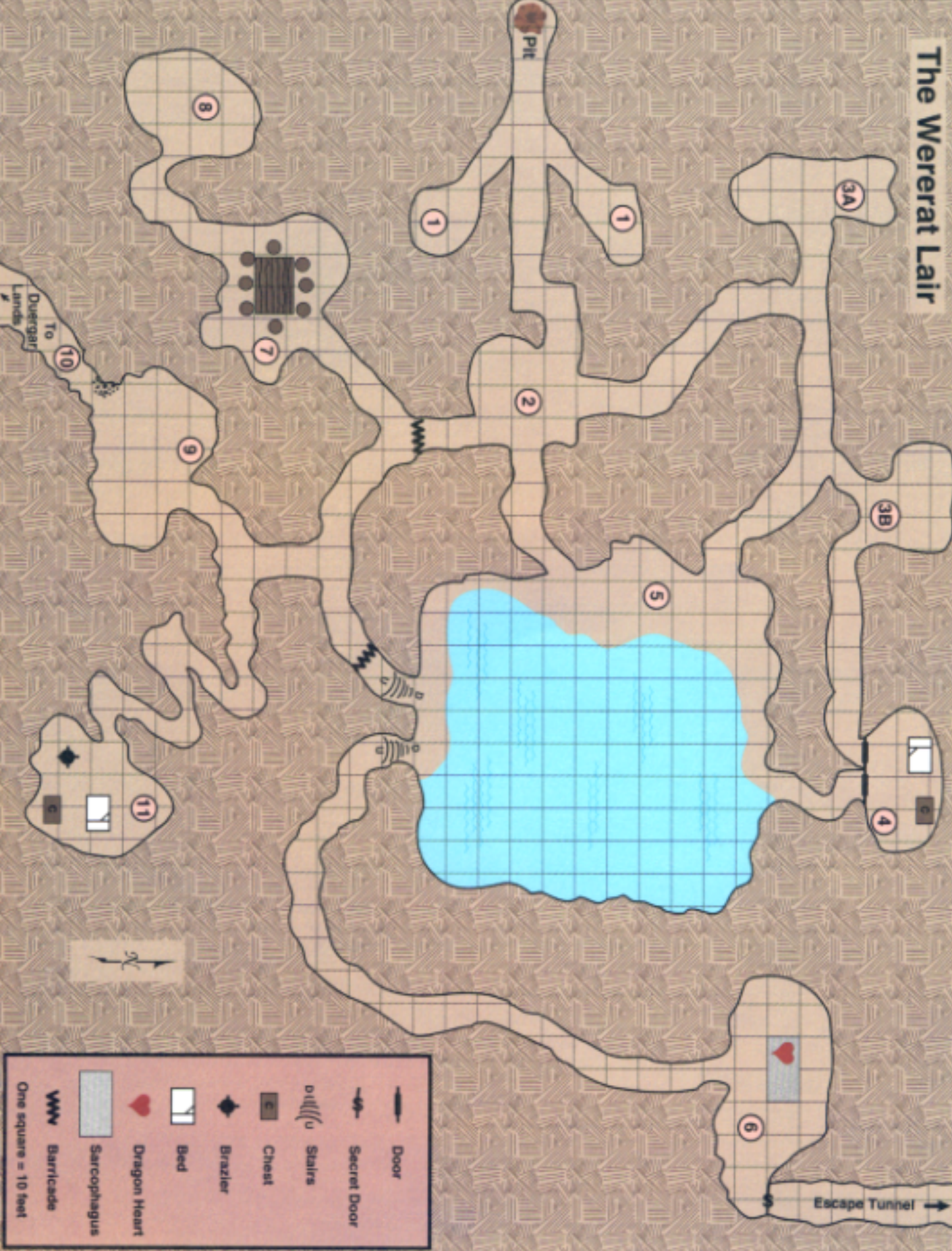
A surefire way of getting Caustalak to let go of the PC is to tantalize the beast about the location of the dragon's mother.

If the trolls have been following the PC, they arrive either right before Caustalak attacks the PC, or 15 minutes have gone by, whichever comes first.

The cave holds the dragons' treasure trove: 2,589 gp, 4,701 sp, 12,127 cp, scroll of *protection from magic*, ring of *water walking*, wand of *illumination*, *periapt of proof vs. poison*, plate armor +2, *longsword flametongue*.

**Caustalak, a Young Black Dragon:** AC 2; MV 12, Fl 30(C), Sw 12; HD 10; hp 40; THAC0 11; #AT 3 + special; Dmg 1-6 + 3/1-6 + 3/3-18 + 3; SA Acid breath: 6d4 + 3; SD Water breathing, acid resistant; AL CE; ML 16; XP 3,000.

# The Wererat Lair



	Door
	Secret Door
	Stairs
	Chest
	Brazier
	Bed
	Dragon Heart
	Sarcophagus
	Barricade

One square = 10 feet

Escape Tunnel →

To  
Dwergar  
Lands

Pit

3A

3B

4

6

5

2

1

1

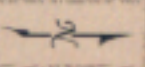
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10



## FIGHTER'S CHALLENGE

by JOHN TERRA

Decades ago, Sturnheim was a thriving trade town on a major caravan route. But then, disaster struck when a gold-laden caravan disappeared without a trace. Financially ruined, the town slipped into decline, and now lies almost forgotten on a route that is seldom traveled anymore.

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