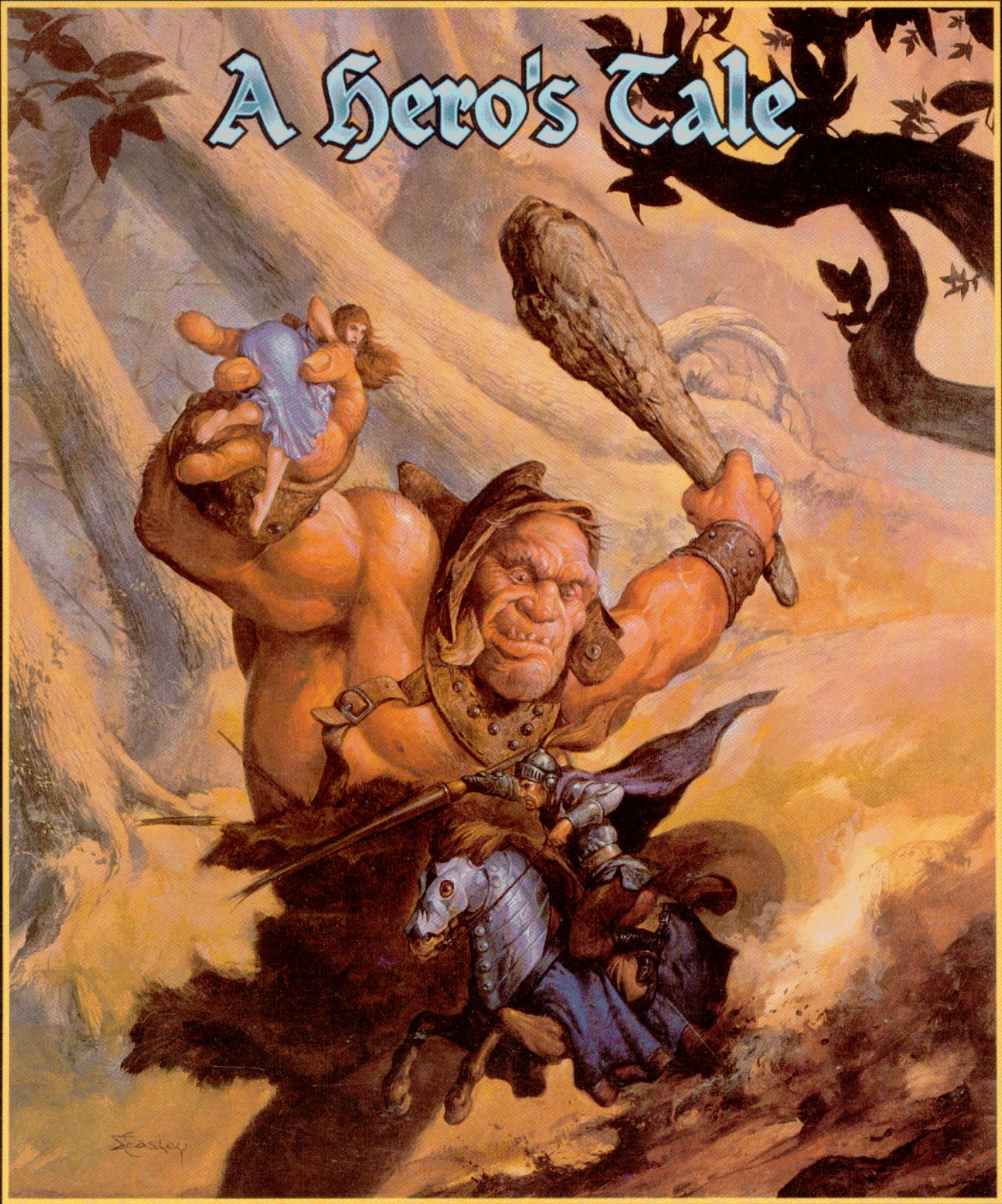




Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

Official Game Adventure



by Monte Cook

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Official Game Adventure

For two to six characters of levels 1-10

A Hero's Tale

by Monte Cook

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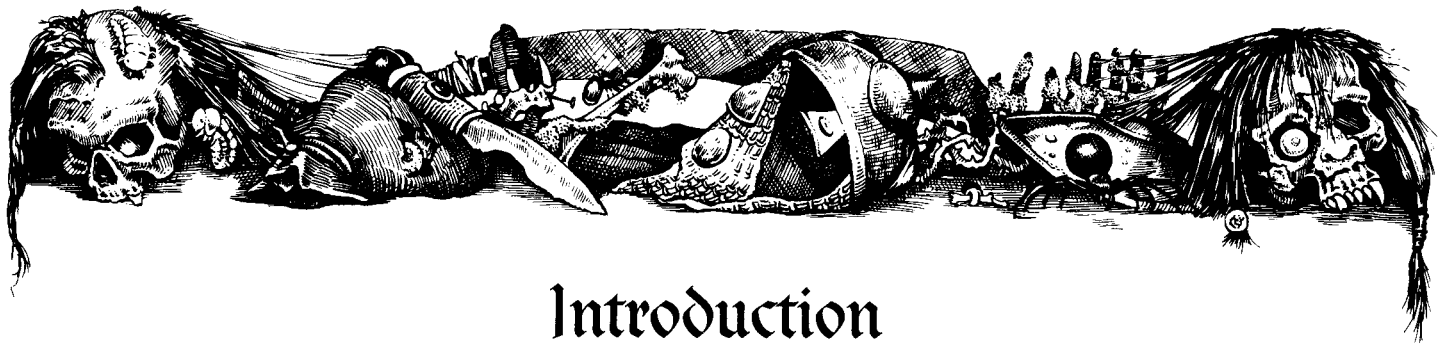
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Introduction

"So it's a tale you want then, eh? So be it. But you'd stop a man before he goes rambling on—as I tend to do somewhat—wouldn't you? I don't want to embarrass myself or bore you youngsters." The old man stroked his neatly-trimmed white beard and stared into his mug of coffee. Thadeus's body was slightly stooped now, but you could see that he once had been a large, muscular man accustomed to physical endeavors.

"Yes, let's see... I certainly had my share of adventures. Made a number of good friends. We all saved each other's lives so many times you needn't even bother counting," Thadeus said, his eyes beginning to fill with a life not seen in a while. "Oh yes, there was Alvarm the wizard, sneaky Tiarath—liked to call himself a rogue, but we all knew he was a thief through and through. Then there was poor old Mynios, a dwarf warrior from Giant's Pass. And then came Hira, a priestess of the Blue Goddess who joined us a little later on. Not many of us, but we were capable, and not just a little lucky."

A wistful smile crossed his lips—one that would appear many times as his tale was told. "We started out in the land of Narthillan, south of the Pellonese Forests. This was before the Great Conjunction, so the Pellonese was still fairly safe. Anyway, we had nothing but what a few coppers could buy, a few horses, and more than our share of foolhardiness.

"Alvarm had heard about an old, ruined castle outside of South Hartford, where there was said to be a fair amount of treasure still buried in a vault. Turned out the tales were true, and we struck it rich. Of course, we had to fight our way out—seems some priest of old put a magic spell on the place and once we entered the vault, the whole castle was crawling with undead. Too bad Hira wasn't with us then. She'd have sent them back to the nether regions where they belonged. I didn't yet have my sword, *Phantom Reaver*, either, but then, I'm getting quite ahead of myself, aren't I?"

"So, Alvarm's quest proved fruitful and we were quite a bit wealthier and (for better or worse) had gained a reputation as heroes. For that reason, we found ourselves on the road north, to the Great Keep. On the way, we passed a horrible little place called Haggash. Yes, Haggash—that's where this tale really needs to begin..."

A Hero's Tale is an anthology of short adventures for AD&D® game players. These scenarios were

written to be inserted by the Dungeon Master into a larger, ongoing campaign. Each will serve as an evening's gaming session. That is, most of the scenarios, if not all of them, can be completed by a group of players in a few hours. They are perfect as interludes between longer adventures or during quests. Many of them are written to be side encounters as the player characters travel to another objective or destination. Suitable to this "fill-in" role, most are easily adapted to any location or clime. While place names are given, these can be freely changed to fit the tone of the DM's campaign.

Alternatively, these adventures could be used as "one-shots," appropriate for an evening's gaming outside of a standard, continuing campaign. Many players find such games entertaining and interesting changes of pace, allowing them to play different characters than those they use in long-term campaigns.

Additionally, these adventures are suitable for smaller groups of players. Most can be played with only three or four player characters of the levels specified. Larger groups can attempt the adventures at lower levels, or the DM can adjust the difficulty to make them more appropriate to a larger party of PCs.

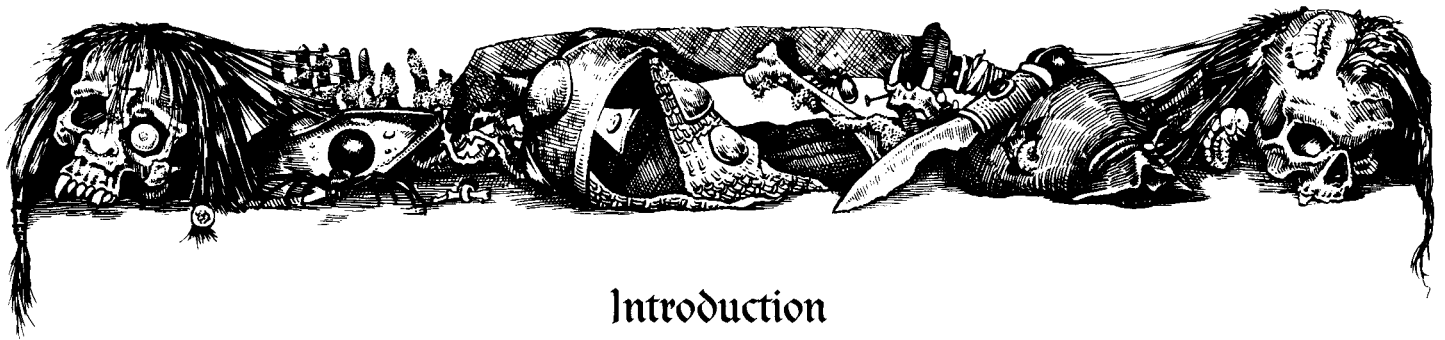
For obvious reasons, the rest of this product is meant to be read by the Dungeon Master only.

The Hero's Tale

At the beginning of each adventure, a brief excerpt from the tale of Thadeus (later known as Thad Bravecloak) tells how he and his comrades came upon the situation detailed in that chapter. The DM can gain various ideas about how to fit the adventures into an ongoing campaign by reading these passages.

Using These Adventures Together

Browsing through the adventures or the table of contents where the appropriate character levels for each scenario are presented, the DM will see that each is written for PCs of different levels. These adventures were intended to be used all in the same campaign, for the same continuing group of



Introduction

characters. However, they were not meant to be used one immediately after the other. Instead, they should be interspersed between larger, longer quests. Used in this way, in order and all together, they tell a single, episodic tale.

Of course, these adventures can also be used independently of each other. Using one or two of these scenarios does not obligate the DM to use them all, in order to complete an epic story line. Perhaps the DM has an established campaign where the PCs are already mid-level, and he chooses to use some of the adventures in this product. That DM might skip over the lower-level scenarios completely, but a great deal of enjoyment can still be had by playing the others.

Having the luxury of starting a long-term campaign, incorporating the first adventure early (preferably after the first or second adventure that the PCs undertake), has its advantages. All of the adventures in *A Hero's Tale* are linked by a minor plot element. This element, a magical item called the *waning star*, is of primary importance in the first and last adventures, but has an indirect influence on all of them.

The effect of using all the adventures together within a single campaign is that the players will see a long-term sub-plot unveil itself slowly. The initial "seed" will be planted early on, but it will not come to a head until possibly years later, when the characters are high level and have experienced much. Further, as they gain experience, they will see the mystery of the chaotic effects caused by the *waning star* (or rather, its absence) and they will solve this mystery in the last adventure. This gives players a feeling of continuity and long-term plotting, as they see that actions taken in the campaign, even early on, have lasting and important effects.

The Waning Star

Long ago, a great priestess of a power representing absolute order forged an orb of silver. It is said that the orb was made from a star that was losing its light, pulled from the heavens to do good on Earth instead. She placed within it the dust of fallen saints and powerful creatures of law (such as ki-rin, shedu, myconids, medusae, and lawful dragons). This holy item's function was to help maintain the order of the universe, or at least the world around her. The forces of chaos, she reasoned, were always looking to upset the balance.

The creation of the *waning star* was a proactive measure in defense of the orderly workings of all things.

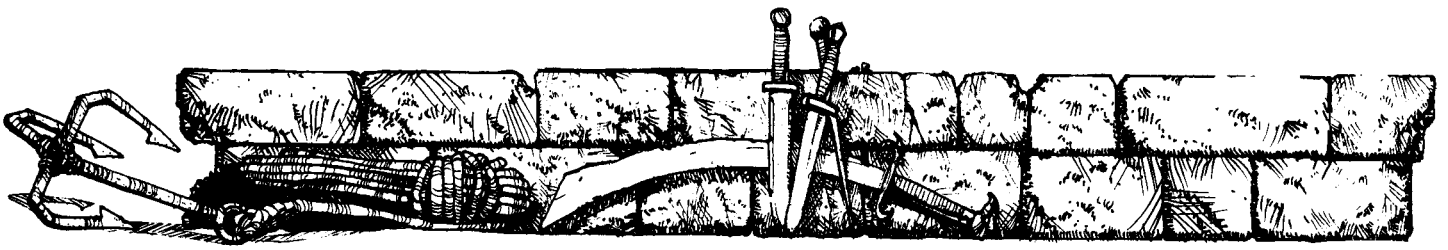
It operated well for untold years. Even as it passed out of the hands of priests and priestesses that guarded it, even as it spent time buried in dragon hoards and lost within subterranean vaults, even as it passed into the hands of those who had no idea what its powers were, it still helped maintain order in the world.

Over the years, it gained the attention of a foul wizard named Whathlin Dyr, a master of chaos magic. It foiled his attempts at unleashing chaos upon the world time after time. Therefore, though he knew not where the device lay, he cast a spell upon it to tear it away from the world—wherever it was—and bring it to a hidden cache in an extra-dimensional fortress of his own creation called the Abados. With the *waning star* removed from the world, the forces of chaos that he had been summoning could seep into the universe.

He had not counted on the actions of a priest named Durham, however, who placed the orb within the foundations of a new church and consecrated it. This blessing protected the *waning star* from Dyr's magic. Dejected and defeated, the evil wizard died a few years later.

His spell remained in effect, however, so that when the *waning star* is removed from the foundation in the first adventure, *Haggash's Secret*, it is instantly transported to the Abados and chaos slowly begins creeping into the world.

The effect of this chaos is minor at first, but is accompanied by a high-pitched, ringing sound. This sound is the tolling of the *entropy bell* within the Abados. The events in adventures two through seven are caused directly or indirectly by the chaos effect resulting from the absence of the *waning star*. Adventure eight gives the PCs a clue as to what is going on, and the last adventure takes the PCs to the Abados, where they recover and return the *waning star* to its proper place.



Haggash's Secret

"We were young, then, and what we lacked in experience, we made up for in exuberance and ideals. The town's name was Haggash—not a pleasant sounding name, but then it wasn't much of a town. Haggash was one of those little hamlets that you pass in your journey to somewhere else, never even making a mental note of the place. That it had a name at all should have made us suspicious, I suppose.

"A few small, stone buildings were arranged in a circle, their roofs made of straw and tar. Other wooden shacks surrounded the circle, radiating outward like tendrils. The whole place couldn't have been home to more than two hundred souls.

"*The Traveler's Boon* was the inn, but it was actually located outside of Haggash, on the main road. A hill separated the village and the inn, and they named it Durham's Hill after some priest who had helped build the tiny abbey which now served as Haggash's only place of worship.

"Well, as I said, Haggash was the sort of place that you'd normally pass by—and we would've—but unfortunately our friend Alvarm had taken ill on the road, and we needed a dry place for him to rest. Haggash is not far from Fathom Lake and more often than not the area's besieged by rainstorms coming off the water's domain.

"We heard at the *Traveler's Boon* that some monks from a strange brotherhood had been seen about town. We, of course, ignored such talk and focused on our own concerns. As I said, we were young."

DM's Notes

Haggash's Secret is an adventure for four to six characters of 1st through 3rd level. 1st level characters, however, are going to be sorely challenged if they attempt to use brute force to succeed. The adversaries in this adventure have potent abilities at their command. Third level characters are much more apt to be up to the challenge of direct physical confrontation.

This adventure can be inserted into any campaign whenever the PCs are traveling from one locale to the next. Details regarding Haggash and its environs can be changed to fit the DM's chosen setting, but maintaining the mood and aura of mystery should be an important consideration.

Much of this adventure depends on natural curiosity on the players' parts. If the DM knows in advance that a greater incentive will be needed, he can reveal to one player ahead of time some of the history of Morning Star Abbey, and a legend that a bandit treasure hoard is hidden somewhere within.

Background

One-hundred-twenty years ago, a cleric named Durham had a tiny abbey built off of the main road, behind a hill. This was to be a secluded place of contemplation and study for those that worshipped any of the gods of light. Durham was interested in aiding all shepherds of goodness, and was uninterested in the petty squabbles that erupted between different faiths. He felt there was room for all beliefs, as long as good triumphed over evil and mankind's best interests were maintained.

Surprisingly enough (or perhaps not), Durham's beliefs were not popular. Many priests in the region were unwilling to consort with those priests of other faiths. In short, no worshippers came to Durham's Morning Star Abbey.

After Durham's death, a group of thieves made their lair in the abbey, waylaying travelers on the road. A group of adventurers eventually cleared the bandits out of the place, and a priestess who was with them then decided to use the building to start her own parish. As the years passed, Haggash grew up around the abbey, becoming home to the farmers and silver miners working in the hills.

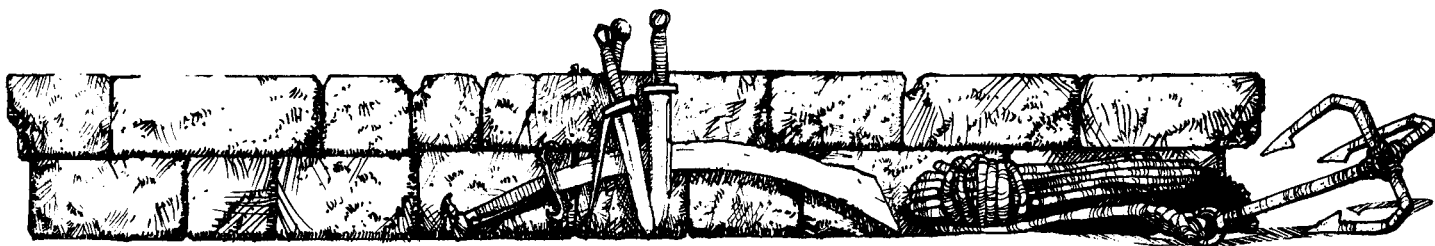
Even after all those years and all those occupants, Morning Star Abbey has a secret. Buried underneath it, within its very foundation, is a magical item called the *waning star*. This holy relic was placed there by Durham to consecrate the place. Durham had no idea what powerful magic he was dealing with.

Current Events

A kenku holy man named Krak-scrik-ikar, working in a far-away land, found an old manuscript relating to the *waning star*. Through its words, careful reasoning, and the investigations of his underlings, he determined (correctly) that the relic is hidden within Morning Star Abbey.

Krak-scrik-ikar desired the *waning star*, believing its great power to be the key which would finally unlock the potential of his people and bring them the respect they deserve (like others before him, he woefully misunderstands the item). Therefore, he sent a band of kenku to Haggash to recover the relic, with instructions not to alert the populace of the town.

The kenku snuck into town in disguise and made their way to the abbey. Once inside, they charmed the cleric, Dosol. Now they are searching the building for the item.



Haggash's Secret

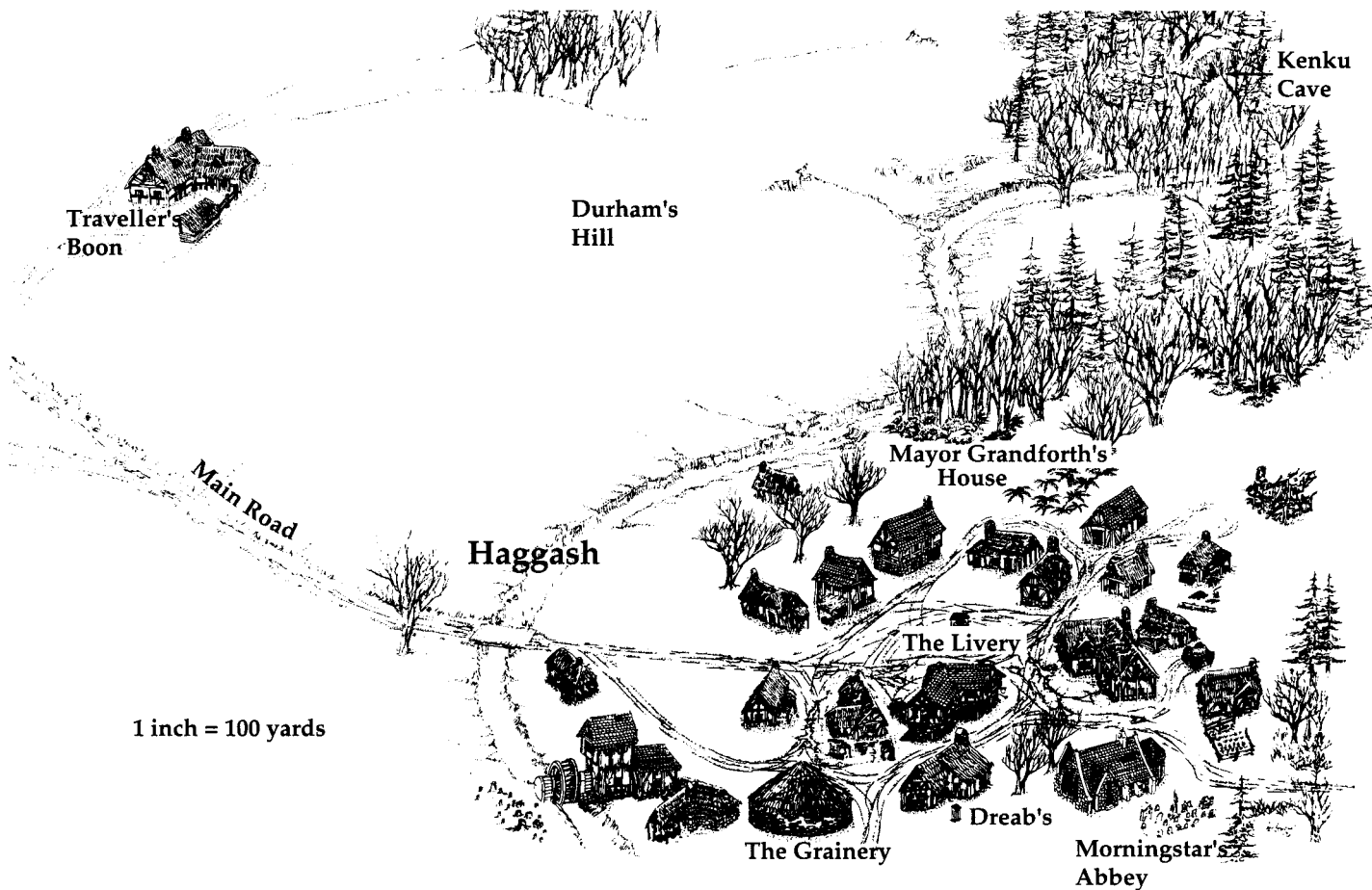
The Kenku

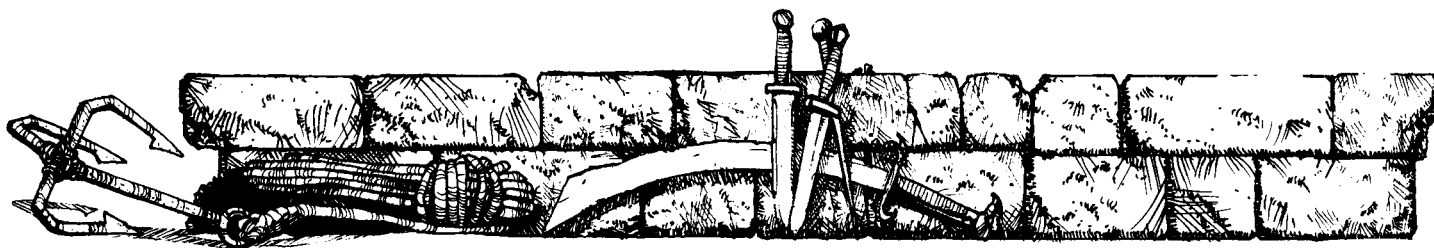
The kenku seeking the *waning star* came to Haggash posing as monks. There are 10 of the hawklike humanoids, all wearing drab brown robes with large cowls to hide their features. If approached, the kenku try to relate, using signs and gestures (and without letting anyone see their faces, for obvious reasons), that they have taken a vow of silence. Any interaction is kept short, so that no one discovers their true identities. In any case, kenku are physically unable to speak any human or demihuman language.

Kenku (10): AC 5; MV 6, FL 18 (D); HD 2 (x7), 3, 4, 5; hp 10 (x 7), 15, 19, 22; THAC0 19 (2 HD), 17 (3 and 4 HD), 15 (5 HD); #AT 3 or 1; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d6 or 1d6 (quarterstaff); SA Nil; SD 50% chance of passing for a human; MR 30%; SZ M (6' tall); ML 13; Int Avg (8-10); AL N; XP 175 (2 HD), 420 (3 HD), 650 (4 HD), 975 (5 HD). *Thief Abilities:* PP 45, OL 37, F/RT 5, S 33, HS 25, DN 15, CW 88, RL 20.

The seven 2-HD kenku are the young, low-ranking members of the mission. They do as they are told (kenku speak telepathically), and avoid any direct contact with humans if they can help it. The 3-HD and 4-HD kenku (their names are Tak-nyik and Rawk-scree, respectively) each have the ability to change their shape for seven days. Tak-nyik has already done so, taking the form of a handsome human male. Tak-nyik interacts with the people that the kenku encounter, if need be. Tak-nyik can cast *magic missile* one time per day if need be as well. Rawk-scree has the ability to become invisible, and usually uses it when the kenku are near others, observing the actions of potential foes. In battle, she can cast *magic missile* and *shocking grasp* once per day.

Scraw-krip-nrak is the 5-HD leader. She has all of the abilities of her lessers, except instead of *shocking grasp*, she can cast *charm person*, as well as *web*. She rarely leaves the abbey, for it is she that has charmed the cleric. Although she has the power to *call lightning*, she has been expressly forbidden to use it unless absolutely necessary, for it would also call a great deal





Haggash's Secret

of attention upon the kenku band.

In addition to their weapons, each kenku has 25 sp per hit die.

The Village of Haggash

Located just off a major road, Haggash is a town seen by many travelers—most, however, ignore it. The section of road that runs by Haggash takes travelers near a large lake called Fathom Lake. The geography of the area combines with abnormally high rainfall to make the area muddy, wet, and miserable. Few people wish to spend much time here.

Haggash's 200 or so inhabitants are either too poor to move, or too stubborn. Long have tales been told of the silver to be found in the hills, and although only a very modest amount has ever truly been discovered, the miners in Haggash are determined to stick things out until they strike it rich.

The people of Haggash are, unfortunately, quick to talk but slow to action. When the kenku came to town, word spread quickly that suspicious-looking strangers were about, but no one did anything about it. Technically, the closest thing Haggash has to a constabulary is the mayor who, in times of need, assembles a volunteer team of men to take care of whatever threatens the town. The most serious thing that ever happens in Haggash, however, is a poacher, a claim-jumper, or wolves, and even in these cases, the mayor and the rest of the town are loathe to act. Most problems are ignored until they go away. Three years ago, for example, an ankheg threatened local livestock, and the mayor and the people did little but keep the children indoors. Eventually, the monster left the area and the problem was considered solved.

The map of the town shows the following locations:

Traveler's Boon: This inn is run by Tal, a failed wizard from a nearby city. He is a slight man, but intelligent. Tal was the first to grow suspicious of the strangers (the kenku), and is not afraid to talk about it.

The inn has four individual rooms and a common room for those wishing to spend the night. The main room of the inn serves ale, beer, and a little wine, as well as stew and occasionally venison. Tal is assisted by his sister, Assa, and her two sons, Thumor and Omnos (13 and 16 years old, respectively).

Mayor Grandforth's House: Grandforth is an older man who has always run the town for as long as anyone can remember. His children have long since moved away and his wife died years ago. Being a hesitant soul, he is reluctant to take any sort of drastic action for any reason—probably not a character trait desirable in the man who also serves as town consta-

ble and judge. If the PCs ever come here to report a crime or wrongdoing, Grandforth will make it clear that there is really very little he can do. If pressed, he will offer each of the PCs 5 gp (payable afterward) if they will take care of the problem themselves.

The house has a cellar meant to be used as a jail cell if ever the need arises.

Dreab's: Old Dreab operates the only thing Haggash has that resembles a store. He keeps various supplies in stock, mostly mining equipment and foodstuffs. His prices range from 150% to 200% of those listed in the *Player's Handbook* because of the difficulty he has in obtaining most of it (traveling merchants do not come to Haggash often—they just pass it by). Dreab buys (or takes in trade) bits of silver ore from the local miners and the meager produce of the local farmers. His son, Nichal, travels back and forth to larger towns with these products in attempts to gain supplies for the store.

The Livery: Derrik is the proprietor of the livery in Haggash, and was once an officer in the army. Now he's more than content to sell mules to the miners and farmers while regaling them with war stories.

Derrik could be an ally to the PCs if they can convince him that something strange is going on. He is one of the few townspeople willing to take action if something bad happens.

Derrik, hm, f3: AC 8 (leather armor); MV 12; hp 21; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (longsword) or 1d6+1 (longbow); SZ M (6'1"); ML 13; AL NG. S 14, D 10, C 16, I 11, W 9, Ch 11.

Personality: Concerned, yet cautious

The Granary: This stone building is used for storing grain and other produce from the local farmers. It is maintained by a woman named Terram and her mentally handicapped son, Roggin.

Morning Star Abbey: See below.

Kenku Cave: Outside of town, the kenku are using a small cave as a lair while in the area. All of them return here after searching through the abbey, although the kenku leader returns for only a few hours each day. At any given time, there might be 0-5 (1d6-1) kenku here, at least one of which is always one of greater than 2 HD.

Morning Star Abbey

The map shows the tiny abbey is made up of just a handful of rooms, including:



The Vestibule: This entry area has a font with a little bit of holy water and a bench along both side walls.

The Nave: The central part of the abbey, this serves as the room where father Dosol holds weekly services and performs religious rites. A single set of pews runs up the center of the room toward the altar.

The Rectory: This back area is where Dosol lives. It was once meant to house many clerics, but now only the single old man dwells there. This means most of the rooms are empty. Even the one Dosol uses is sparsely appointed and extremely modest.

Dosol, hm, P3: AC 10; MV 12; hp 12; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (cudgel); SA spells; SD spells; SZ M (5' 6"); ML 11; AL LG. S 9, D 10, C 11, I 13, W 15, Ch 10.

Personality: Quiet, timid

Special Equipment: potion of healing

Spells (4/2): 1st—*bless, cure light wounds (x2), light*; 2nd—*hold person, produce flame*.

The Crypt: This area is a tiny underground chamber below the abbey, where Durham is buried.

The kenku operate in shifts searching through the abbey, carefully examining every square inch, looking for a secret compartment, a moveable flagstone, or some sort of clue as to the *waning star*'s location. Dosol is usually forced to stay in his room.

The Adventure

The adventure starts with the PCs journeying on a road. As they near Haggash, they are suddenly pelted by rain, and possibly even hail. Read the following text to the players:

Rain. It seems as though it will never stop. The road becomes a river of mud, making it almost useless as a path, but the rough, rugged hills around you offer you even worse footing.

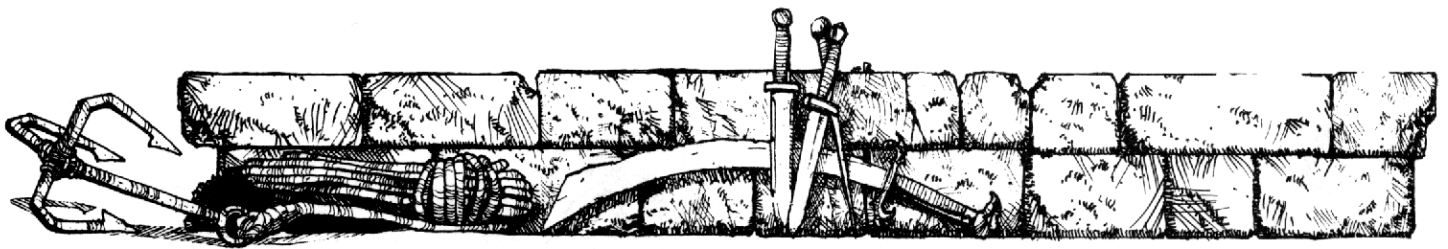
Visibility is very poor, with cold winds tearing sheets of rain across your field of vision. The sound of the storm is tremendous, making it hard for you to hear your companions unless they shout.

Judging by the dark, deep green of the grass and other hardy plants that you see around you, rainfall must be very common in this area.

Just when the PCs can go no further, and night is bringing even colder winds and no respite from the rain, they see the *Traveler's Boon* ahead of them. It is a two-story, stone structure with a wooden roof and two chimneys. A welcoming light comes from the inn's two windows.

If the PCs are not apt to stay the night, and the DM is not afraid to be a little heavy-handed, one (or more) of them should be struck down with a terrible cold, reduced to misery in the downpour. Sick characters have a -1 penalty on THAC0, damage, and proficiency checks for 1d3 days.

Inside the inn, the PCs will find warm food and a dry place to spend the night. They will also find a particularly talkative innkeeper, Tal. Unlike other innkeepers, he needs no money to loosen his tongue—he enjoys gossiping and telling tales for its own inherent pleasures. If the PCs so much as ask "what's new," Tal will fill them in on the latest gossip.



Haggash's Secret

"Well, I'm not one to talk, but there have been some strange folks passin' through here lately. And not all of 'em have really passed through."

At this point, Tal will wait for the gratifying looks of eager anticipation on the faces of his listeners. When asked to, he goes on.

"A bunch of brothers—you know, the religious kind—showed up here the day before yesterday. They've been nosing around a lot. They don't talk at all—can't get them to say a word. I think they're up to no good. But then, what do I know of such things."

Tal doesn't know anything else. If asked questions, he pretends that he knows the answer, but protests that he feels it's better not to say anything. If pressed very hard, he'll admit with great embarrassment that he really doesn't know anything else, but someone else in town might.

First Encounter

If the PCs proceed into town that very night, they will have to fight their way through the rain over or around Durham's Hill to get to Haggash. Visibility is about 10 yards. As PCs enter the small clump of buildings, they spy what appears to be a small band of hooded humans. These are actually five of the kenku: four with 2 HD and Tak-nyik, the 3 HD kenku in human shape. If the PCs simply watch them, they see the cloaked figures head in the direction of their cave lair, slipping into the shadows as they go (using their thief abilities with a +30% bonus because of the rain). Although the PCs are likely to lose the kenkus in the shadows, they may be able to determine that the robed figures disappeared with thieflike skill.

If the PCs approach the kenku, Tak-nyik tells the others to wait as he moves forward to greet the PCs. Although he cannot speak, he tries to communicate through pantomime and gestures that he and his "brothers" have taken a vow of silence and are only in town for a short rest. Tak-nyik's true form is impossible to discern, but any PC looking at the other kenku has a 50% chance to notice that something is strange about them. In the pouring rain, however, no more can be determined. If at any time the PCs prove hostile, the kenku will flee into the stormy night, using their thief abilities to hide, or even their wings to fly once they're out of sight. The DM should note that the kenku have just come from robbing Dreab's, and have tools hidden under their robes (see below).

No other activity occurs in Haggash that night,

and the PCs will find no one to question until the next morning.

Digging Noises

The next morning, the PCs find that the rain has not let up. A few people from the town are breakfasting at the inn, eating hot soup, bread, and strips of dried pork. In the main room, they will be privy to the conversation of the diners, who are huddled around a woman named Cerris. Cerris is a miner who came into town very early that morning.

"As I made my way home last night, I passed by the old abbey, like I always do, and said a little prayer. It's something I always do. Anyway, as I approached, I heard noises that I ain't likely to mistake—digging noises. So, I banged on the door of the abbey to see if something was amiss, and the sounds stopped. Eventually, old father Dosol came to the door, and there was this fellow with him—at least I think he was a man. Real ugly. Wearing a long robe, but I could see his big nose even with his hood pulled low. Dosol says there's nothing wrong, and that I should go home because it's so late."

One of the other patrons speaks up, fascinated, "So what did you do then?"

"What was I supposed to do? I went home."

Once again, the PCs are free to ask more questions, but that is really all Cerris or anyone else knows. They've all heard that the robed strangers have been nosing around town.

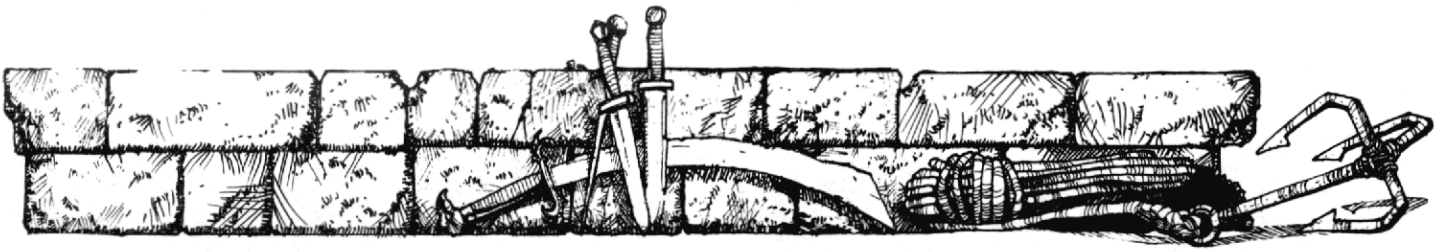
The kenku have determined that the *waning star* must be in the foundation, so they are digging for it.

Haggash by Day

If the PCs proceed into town during the day, they'll be met with torrents of rain, but it won't be as dark as the previous night. The streets of the town are completely empty. There are only two places that the PCs can go to that will reveal any information—Dreab's and the abbey itself.

If the PCs go to Dreab's, it will at first appear as if no one is home. The door is locked. Any PC checking the building, however, will notice that the only window has been broken and rain is getting inside. A PC near the window or the door has a 10% chance each round (perhaps higher if a thief) of hearing a moaning sound.

Investigating the sound requires crawling through the window or breaking down the door. Either way, PCs entering the building find Dreab, beaten and tied up on the floor.



Haggash's Secret

The man is well past his prime, and wearing night clothes. There is a large cut on his balding head, and his head is bruised. His hands and feet are bound. As you enter he seems to be regaining consciousness.

"Thieves!" he shouts, his eyes suddenly widening. "They took my tools. They were sneaky, but I heard them in here. Oh, but there were too many of them for me. Horrible, ugly men—bashed me across the head. It was terrible..."

Dreab lives in the back room of the store (actually, he's converted his home into a makeshift store, and lives only in one room of the house now). He heard the kenku as they broke into the house to get tools for digging—picks, shovels, etc.

If the PCs examine the store, they'll find the most valuable clue available as to the identity of the "monks"—large, brown feathers scattered about the store where the attackers fought with Dreab.

Dreab has no idea where the feathers came from. He'll look through the rest of the store's meager wares, checking to see if anything besides tools was stolen (it wasn't). Although he's very mad, Dreab is obviously too weak to chase after the thieves, even if the PCs tell him that they think they are in the abbey. Even more distressing, if the PCs suggest going to the constable, he'll only laugh. "The mayor's a frightened old coot like me," he will tell them. "His strategy will be to wait quietly until the thieves go away." He sighs. "But what else can we do?"

At the Abbey

Once the players approach the abbey, they'll hear digging sounds for themselves. There are no windows in the old building, and the only way in is the main doors, which they'll find barred from the inside. Whether they knock or begin to break the doors down, the digging noises stop. Dosol comes to the doors and tells the visitors that nothing is wrong. He'll do whatever he can to make them go away, short of using spells or force. If the PCs try to get past him, two 2-HD kenku are also in the vestibule, ready to strike from the shadows. If combat ensues, they will telepathically summon the other 2-HD kenku, which arrive from the lower level 1d3 rounds later. (If the PCs are weak or few in number, the DM should keep some of the 2-HD kenku at the cave lair outside of town to make the encounter easier.) These young, impetuous warriors will fight until only one or two are left. The survivors will then flee or surrender. Obviously, if they surrender, they cannot tell the PCs anything.

The more powerful kenku remain below ground, for they have discovered the *waning star* in the building's foundation by breaking through the walls of the crypt. If the PCs come down the stairs, they are attacked by Rawk-scee, the 4-HD kenku, who strikes invisibly. If hard-pressed, she *shape changes* into an insect and escapes by flying away.

The last two kenku are standing where the *waning star* is still partially buried. Scraw-krip-nrak uses her *web* spell to hold off the party while they finish digging out the magical item. They will fight to the death protecting the orb. If they can escape without killing the PCs, however, they will do so (the kenku are neutral and have no desire to kill if they do not have to).

The Waning Star

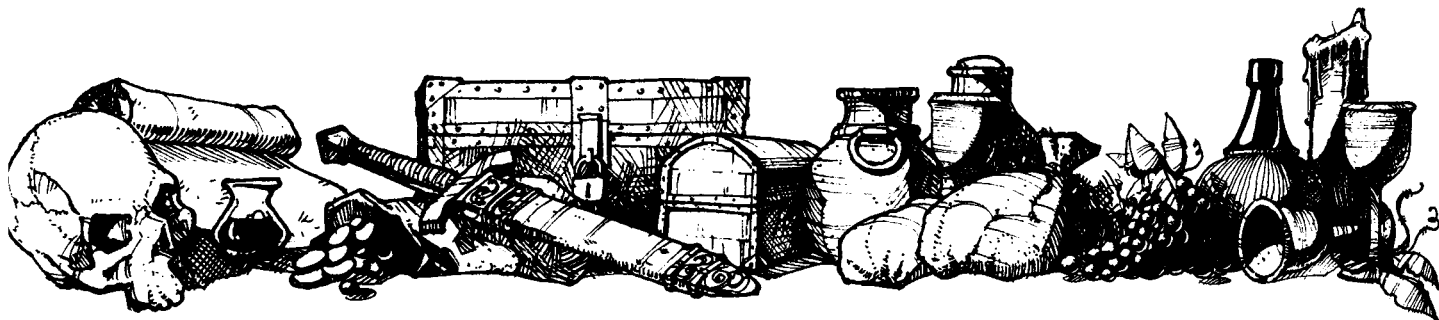
If the PCs gain possession of the item, they will immediately realize that it is unlike anything they have ever seen before. Any wounded (but still living) PC will be immediately and completely healed, and any nonwounded PC will have his primary statistic raised by 1 point for 1d4 days. After each has touched it, however, it will slowly fade away—summoned to the Abados (see Introduction and the Background sections of the other adventures in this book).

Conclusion

No matter what happens, the ending of this short adventure will probably seem unsatisfying to the players. The DM may want to allude to the fact that the events could be foreshadowing things to come. And in fact, if some or all of the other adventures in this book are used, the players will see effects from what has happened here and slowly begin to understand the event's importance.

The people of Haggash will be happy to be rid of the mysterious strangers. The mayor will reward the PCs (no matter what happened) with 5 gp each. Dosol will offer his spells for healing, and Tal will give them a free night's stay and a free meal. None of them know anything about the *waning star*, and they really do not care what happened to it. The true nasty secret of Haggash is its people's limited, self-absorbed vision.

If the PCs managed to get the *waning star* from the kenku, they earn an additional 500 experience points each, even though it escapes them in the end.



Chain Gang

"We had, by that time, spent almost all of the gold that the Duke had given us, and were looking for some way to earn enough to buy passage down the Riefess. A local farmer had told us that the people down the river were having trouble with goblin raids (aren't they always), and a substantial bounty had been placed on goblin pelts. Well, this looked like a quick, fairly easy way to earn some gold—we'd fought goblins before. They can be devious little blokes, but in a straight-out fight they're not much of a problem.

"Ah, we were still young then, and naive.

"We blundered out into the countryside like an ogre looking for a mate. Of course they caught us unaware. When I look back, I can see how . . . oh well, you want the tale, not the analysis of an old man, right? So they sneaked up on us—we could have probably handled an outright attack, but they used magic. Magic from humanoids can catch even seasoned veterans off guard.

"Their magic incapacitated us right quick. Next thing we know, we're being woke up by unkind hands and forced to march off to work in a mine. Seems they found an old dwarven mine and wanted help in clearing it out to find an old dwarf treasure hoard.

"They shackled us together and forced us to march in leg irons. It was a terrible journey, but then old Mynios saw a chance to escape . . ."

DM's Notes

Chain Gang is an adventure for characters of 3rd or 4th level. It involves forcing a situation upon the player characters that they will almost certainly hate—being captured. The challenge of the scenario is that the PCs are placed in leg irons and forced to operate chained together.

This adventure can be inserted into any campaign at any point. The PCs can be ambushed while traveling, while on another adventure, or when using the optional starting point given below.

Background

With the removal of the *waning star* from this plane, the forces of chaos begin to gain greater and greater influence. One of the effects is a series of

seismic tremors and upheavals in a mountainous region where this adventure takes place. Local folk can relate the unexpected and unprecedented quakes to the PCs when they come to the area, although they will report that the tremors have been centered far from any civilized area, and no one has been injured.

What the locals don't know is that a long-forgotten dwarven silver mine was once buried by an earthquake in these mountains. A nearby tribe of goblins has long believed that there is a great treasure buried in that lost mine as well. The recent earthquake uncovered the entrance to the mine, and now the goblins are convinced that the treasure is within their grasp.

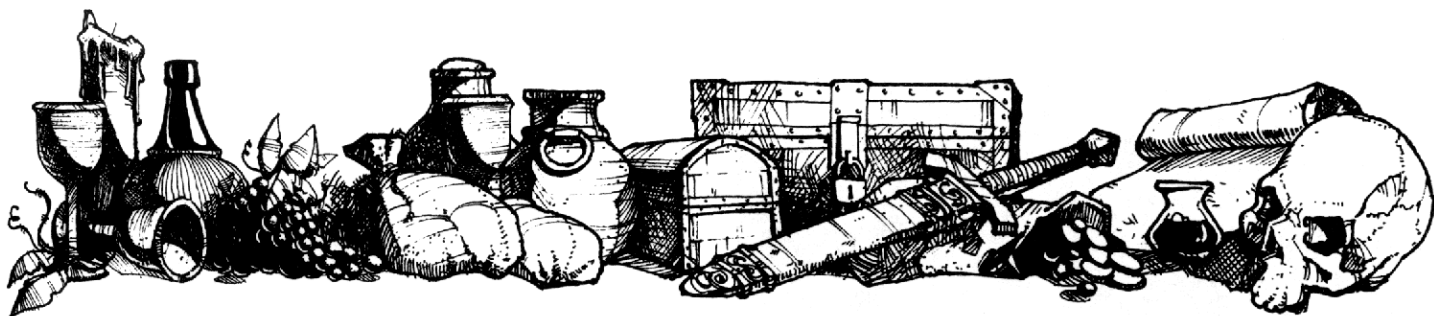
The goblins tried to excavate the treasure, but immediately encountered a number of difficulties. They knew that they had to get aid in this dangerous work, perhaps in the form of human and demi-human slaves, and especially someone who knows something about mining. The goblin chief determined that their chances of capturing worthwhile slaves would be much greater with the help of the nearby bugbear tribe. Entreating the bugbears for help was, of course, essentially turning over control of the operation to them. The bugbears, in turn, hired half-orc and hobgoblin priests (one each) to help capture humans to work in the mine.

Optional Starting Point

If the DM wishes to use this adventure as a stand-alone scenario (as opposed to a side event between other adventures), the following can be introduced at the beginning.

The town of Detwillon is a small community whose residents make their living primarily by sheep herding, keeping their flocks in the local hills. They have always had problems with the local goblin tribe stealing their sheep, but now the little fiends are actually attacking travelers on the road, and even the outskirts of the town itself. The community's residents are worried and are hoping that either the local militia will protect them or some adventuring heroes will slay the humanoids.

The local militia is doing an adequate job protecting the town, but the citizens are not satisfied. Travel on the roads is still very dangerous. There-



Chain Gang

fore, the mayor of Detwillon has posted the following notice throughout the town, and even on fences and trees outside the town:

Heare ye, heare ye!

By Order of the Royally Appoynted
Grande Mayor of Detwillon

The followyng bountys be proffered upon the
fyndish goblins playyng oure landes and
stealyng of oure sheepe:

Goblyn: 5 silver crownes
Bugbayre: 2 gold trumpets
Worg Wolfe: 5 gold trumpets

Proof be required in the forme of a severed
eare off the left side of the beastie.

If the PCs inquire with the mayor in Detwillon (Sir Reggis, a retired knight), the ancient gentleman will tell them that the offer is quite sincere. Further, if the PCs can provide information regarding why the raids have increased with such intensity of late, they will receive a bonus of 100 gp. Since the militia has always been on the defensive, all the mayor can tell the PCs regarding the goblins is that they come from the hills to the west. Beyond that, he can tell them that only lately have the goblins been aided by bugbears or appeared in such number. A few victims of the goblin raids are still missing, and are presumed to have been carried off and eaten.

Into the Hills

When the PCs enter the hills—either looking for the goblins, or on their way to somewhere else—they will immediately come under observation. The bugbears have posted watches throughout the entire area. It won't take the humanoids long to realize that the PCs are above-average in capability and power. Therefore, they will arrange an ambush involving their resident spellcasters.

The Ambush

As the player characters enter a small valley, thick with trees, the humanoids stage their attack. The priests have used their *silence 15' radius* spells

to ensure the success of their ambush. The assault is spearheaded by the spellcasters, beginning with a volley of three *sleep* spells (targeted at the wizardly or scholarly-looking characters, if possible, but not at any elves), and two *command* spells (targeted at the most likely fighter types or elves) commanding the PC to "sleep." All the spellcasters speak the common tongue. Assuming that the PCs are 3rd or 4th level, each *sleep* spell should take out at least one character (there is no saving throw), and the *command* spells will automatically take out one PC with Intelligence of 12 or less (and even a character with Intelligence higher than 12 may fail the saving throw). At this point, if there are any characters left, the goblin witch doctors switch to *command* spells, and the half-orc priest casts *hold person*.

Within two rounds, the PCs should all be asleep or held. If the party is large, or somehow more resistant to magic (in particular elves), add more witch doctors. Although it is slightly manipulative, the DM should assure that this ambush works and that the characters are rendered unconscious. The only other option is to have the spells "fall as they may" and hope that any conscious characters simply surrender when they see the number of their enemies.

Goblin witch doctors, P2/W1 (3): AC 6; MV 6; HD 2; hp 6; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (short sword); SA spells; SD spells; SW -1 in bright sunlight; SZ S (4' tall); ML 10; Int Avg (10); AL LE; XP 65.

Spells (2 cleric, 1 wizard): 1st—*command* (x2) (cleric), *sleep* (wizard).

Hobgoblin priest, P3: AC 5; MV 9; HD 3; hp 12; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (mace); SA spells; SD spells; SZ M (6'4" tall); ML 12; Int Avg (10); AL LE; XP 120.

Spells (2/1): 1st—*command*, *cure light wounds*; 2nd—*silence 15' r*.

Nerl, hom, P4: AC 5 (leather and Dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 19; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (*mace* +1); SA spells; SD spells; SZ M (5' 3"); ML 11; AL NE; XP 175.

S 13, D 17, C 14, I 10, W 15, Ch 6.

Personality: crude, greedy

Special Equipment: *mace* +1



Spells (5/3): 1st—cause light wounds, command, cure light wounds (x2), darkness; 2nd—hold person (x2), silence 15' r.

Carnivorous ape: AC 6; MV 12, 9 in trees; HD 5; hp 28; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d8; SA -3 on others' surprise; SD Nil; SZ M (6' tall); ML 15; Int Semi- (1); AL N; XP 175.

Bugbears (18): AC 5; MV 9; HD 3+1; hp 15 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4 or 1d6+2 (mace) or 1d6+2 (spear); SA -3 on others' surprise; SD Nil; SZ L (7' tall); ML 12; Int Low (7); AL CE; XP 120.

Goblins (32): AC 6; MV 6; HD 1-1; hp 3 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (short sword); SA Nil; SD Nil; SZ S (4' tall); ML 10; Int Low (6); AL LE; XP 15.

Worgs (5): AC 6; MV 18; HD 3+3; hp 16 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4; SA Nil; SD Nil; SZ M (6' long); ML 11; Int Low (5); AL NE; XP 120.

All of the humanoids have 1 sp per hit point. The spell casters each have half that number of gold pieces instead.

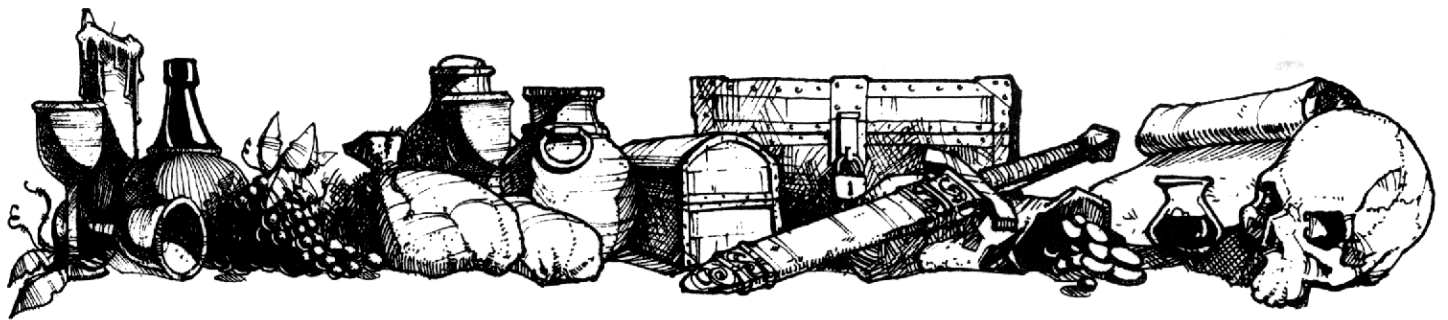
Captured!

When the PCs recover, they find that all of their weapons, equipment, and supplies have been taken from them, including any magical items. Perhaps even worse, they have each been placed in leg irons which connect them all by 3 feet of thick, heavy chain. Only their right legs have been placed in chains, but the goblins don't intend on their captives ever getting out of these bonds—there is no key to the shackles.

To make things even more difficult for the PCs, their hands have been tied behind their backs with strong rope.

Read the following text to the players.

As you become aware of your surroundings, you realize that you have not moved much, but things around you have changed considerably. You are struck by the smell as well as the sight of huge, hairy beast-men standing over you, as well as tiny fiends scurrying about,



Chain Gang

looking like children twisted by foul sorcery.

It takes no time to determine that the smaller creatures are goblins and not much longer to identify the larger beasts as bugbears.

Your companions are about you, in similar condition. Each of you has a heavy, rough leg iron riveted around your right ankle, and each of these is connected to a comrade's shackle by a heavy, black chain. The harsh scratch of hemp tells you that rope binds your arms behind your back. These humanoid have taken no steps to preserve your comfort, as the bonds are cruelly tight and painful.

One of the bugbears is looking right at you as he grunts some guttural command that is foreign to your ears. A goblin with a number of silver earrings and a heavy iron symbol around his neck steps to the bugbear's side and says to you in halting common, "struggle not, cause trouble not, and kill you he won't."

At this point, the bugbears force the PCs to their feet and make them march northwest into the hills (toward the dwarven mine). If any PCs resist, the bugbears beat them until they submit or until they are unconscious. If any captive ever displays spellcasting ability, the bugbears rudely stuff rags into his or her mouth and bind them in place, making verbal (and somatic) spellcasting impossible.

Operating in the bonds is difficult. Effective Dexterity scores are reduced by 3 (along with accompanying AC, missile and reaction adjustments), attack rolls are at -1, and movement is reduced by 25%. Further, if characters try moving faster than a walk, they must make a Dexterity check each minute to avoid falling down.

If one member of the chain gang is rendered unconscious or immobile, the humanoids will not allow the whole gang to stop. The rest will have to drag or carry the incapacitated character (additional -25% movement, additional Dexterity penalty of -2). Further, those next to the character have an additional penalty of -1 to attack rolls.

Lastly, the entire group can only move at the speed of the slowest character, and no one (obviously) can move more than 3 feet away from the people he is shackled to.

One of the last things that the characters will see before beginning their trek into captivity is their

equipment and possessions being hauled by a group of five goblins in an obviously different direction (toward the goblin village as opposed to the mine).

Escape Attempts

The bugbear guards, suspicious by nature, watch the PCs very closely. Additionally, since there are so many of the brutes, it is extremely unlikely that all of them could be made to look away at the same time through trickery or a ruse. (Remember that while the stupidest bugbears are pretty dim, an average bugbear is nearly as bright as an average human, and possesses an animal craftiness.)

Escape is impossible while the PCs' hands are tied. Warriors cannot attempt to break chains, wizards and priests cannot cast spells that have any verbal, somatic, or material components, and rogues cannot pick locks. Slipping free of the ropes can be done with the rope use proficiency (the check is at -6) or with a Dexterity check at -10. However, anyone attempting this under the watchful eyes of the bugbears will be rewarded with a sound thrashing.

The leg irons provide even more of a challenge. The only ways out of the leg irons are a successful bend bars/lift gates roll, magic similar to a *knock* spell, cutting the shackle, or drilling/breaking/driving out the rivet holding the shackle shut.

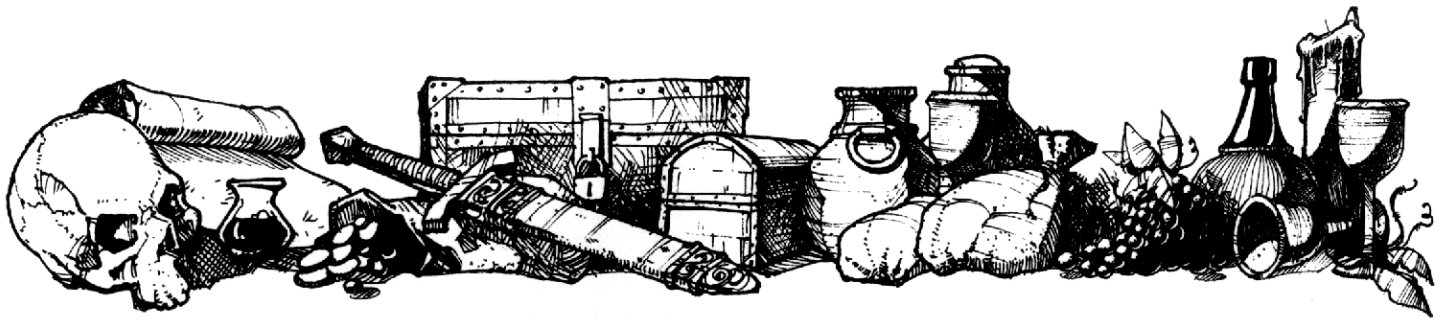
Bend bars/lift gates attempts are made at -5% because of the sturdy nature of the bonds. As always, only one attempt per chain per character can be made.

A *knock* spell will free one character. No other standard 1st or 2nd level spell (those being the only spells available to characters appropriate to this adventure) will break or open the leg irons.

Lockpicking has no effect because there is no lock.

Even if some of the characters get free, those still confined are stuck with the extra chain to contend with, making it all the more cumbersome to move (but not appreciably modifying the existing penalties).

Fighting while shackled (assuming the character has somehow freed his arms) is difficult. Using a weapon larger than size S risks striking a nearby friend, and so accrues a -1 THAC0 penalty, in addition to penalties mentioned above.



Chain Gang

A Lucky Break

The humanoid march the PCs for about an hour, during which time things will look pretty dour for them. At this time, however, this group is ambushed by yet another band of humanoids. The hobgoblin mercenary told a number of his comrades about the dwarven treasure, and has led the goblins and bugbears into an ambush staged by these other hobgoblins.

You've marched for about an hour, your captors never once taking their suspicious, inhuman eyes off of you. All around you are wooded hills and rocky terrain. Suddenly, however, the area around you erupts in noise and motion. Arrows fly through the air and find their targets in goblin hearts. You suddenly realize that you are caught in yet another ambush—but this time so are your captors. Large, brown-skinned goblins swarm in from the surrounding brush. The hobgoblin priest that helped subdue you now hefts his mace and clubs the nearest goblin. Your captors have been betrayed!

Twenty hobgoblins attack from all sides, although none aim their missiles at the PCs (they can use more slaves as much as the bugbears could). This, obviously, would be a perfect time for the PCs to stage an escape attempt. In fact, their captors will be so busy that even if the bugbears or goblins notice them scurrying away, they will not take the time to try to stop them (they realize that the chained-together prisoners will be easy to track and recapture when the fight is over).

Despite the hobgoblin priest's treachery, the bugbears and goblins are able to rout their attackers fairly quickly, thanks mostly to the worgs and the bugbears. The PCs have about four rounds to make good their escape and put some distance between them and the humanoids. If the PCs are really on their toes, they'll realize that it would be smarter to run right away and attempt to free themselves from the ropes and chains later.

Once the bugbears and goblins have defeated their foes, they will begin to chase the PCs. With luck, the characters will probably have a decent head start and at least as much speed as their pursuers (even fettered).

Hobgoblins (30): AC 5; MV 9; HD 1+1; hp 6 each; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4 (broadsword) or 1d6 (short bow); SA Nil; SD Nil; SZ M (6'6" tall); ML 12; Int Avg (9); AL LE; XP 35.

The Chase

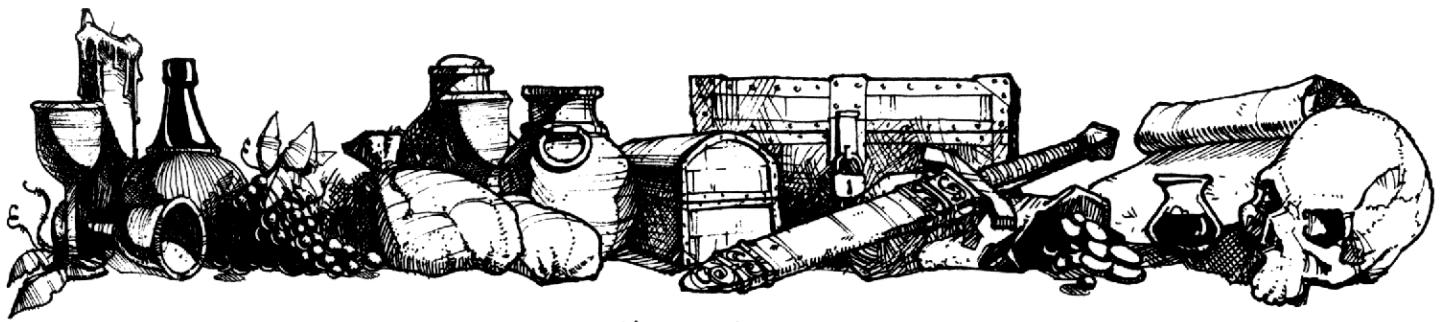
Though the trees are not terribly thick in this region, the underbrush is, and the landscape is full of gullies and other places to hide. However, because of the worgs and their acute sense of smell, the PCs are never going to be able to hide for long.

Twenty-three goblins and fourteen bugbears, as well as all of the worgs (though each has suffered 1d8 points of damage) remain to give chase. Luckily for the PCs, their foes will spread out to find them, so the heroes will never encounter more than half of their former captors at a time.

The DM should make this chase/hide and seek scenario as dramatic as possible. Numerous daring or narrow escapes should occur, as well as hit-and-run battles, and tension-filled situations when the PCs are hiding. The number of foes will almost certainly be enough to keep the PCs running rather than trying a toe-to-toe fight. Some potential, exciting chase scenes include:

- The PCs must leap over a small gully (4 feet wide) to escape pursuers. This requires Strength checks at -2 to make it, and if anyone fails, everyone else must make Dexterity checks to keep from falling down. Fortunately, the chains keep anyone from actually falling into the gully.
- If the PCs hide, they must make Wisdom checks to keep perfectly quiet and still while the bugbears search just a few feet away.
- As they are running, the PCs' chains catch in the brush. Strength checks are required to pull the chains free before the pursuit arrives.

For an extra challenge, the DM can have the PCs encounter some of the routed hobgoblins from the previous fight. These creatures might be disposed to actually help the PCs if the characters can communicate with them and present a compelling enough reason. More likely, however, they will ignore the PCs, or even use them as a distract-



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tion, hoping to escape the bugbears and goblins themselves.

In the end, after the PCs have whittled down the opposition or have hidden so deviously as to impress the DM, the bugbears and goblins will give up and begin marching back to the dwarven mine empty-handed. Remember to always reward intelligent thinking, such as running through a nearby brook or some other trick which will foil the senses of the worgs and bugbears.

An Unlucky Break

Once the PCs have gotten away from their pursuers (one way or another), they have a few moments to rest and decide on their next course of action. Unfortunately for them, their time is truly limited.

All of the activity in the area has drawn the

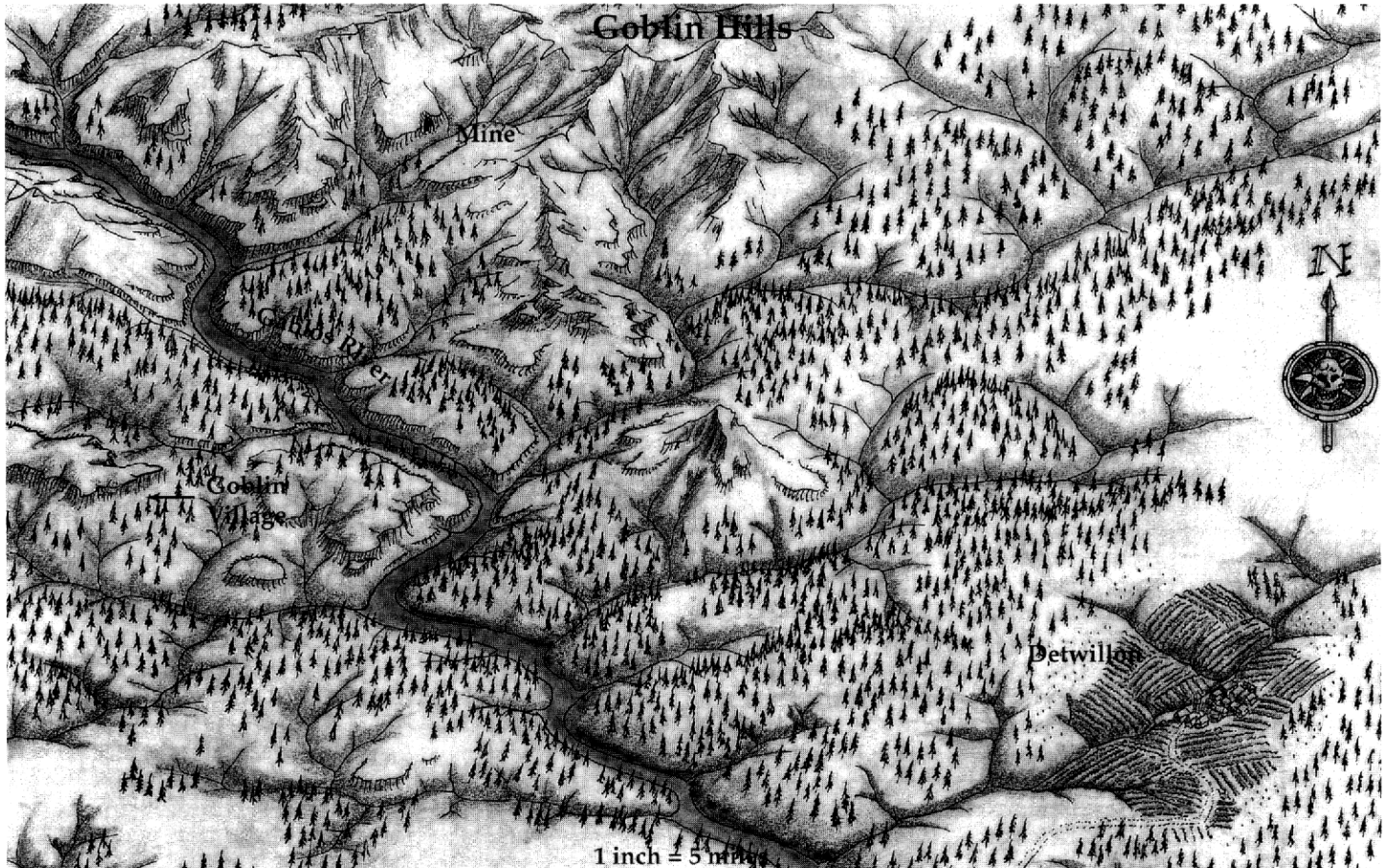
attention of a pair of hunting owlbears. These beasts attack the PCs, hoping to get an easy meal. More than likely, the PCs will still have the leg irons on at this point, making a dangerous encounter even more challenging.

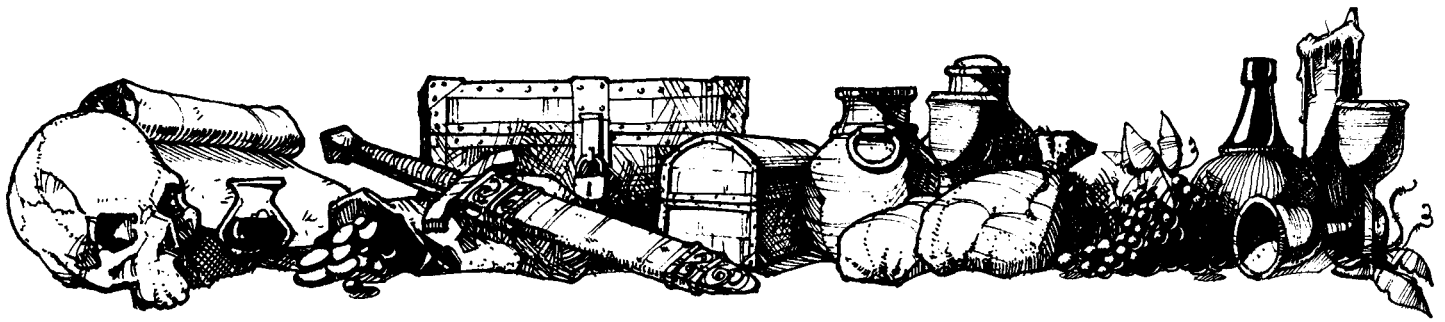
Owlbears (2): AC 5; MV 12; HD 5+2; hp 22, 28; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1d6/1d6/2d6; SA Hit with a claw on a rolls of 18 or better results in a hug for 2d8 hp damage per round; SD Nil; SZ L (8' tall); ML 12; Int Low (5); AL N; XP 420.

Notes: Bend bars roll will break the grasp of the owlbear

Retrieving Equipment

More than likely, one of the PCs' primary goals after their escape will be retrieving their equip-





Chain Gang

ment. This entails finding the path taken by the five goblins back to their village and catching up with them.

Tracking proficiency will come in handy at this point, but even without such skill, the PCs should be able to remember which way the goblins went (west). Actually finding them will take 2d4 hours (1d3 if the PCs make a successful tracking proficiency check). Fortunately, the goblins are slow movers, and catching up with them should not be too difficult, if the PCs are on the right track. The outclassed goblins recognize a hopeless fight when they see one, and will flee or surrender at the sight of the PCs, even unarmed.

The Dwarven Mine

If the PCs decide to investigate where they were originally being taken, they will eventually find themselves at the old dwarven mine after a long trek through wooded hills and dry scrub brush. At the moment, all that is visible from the outside is a shaft extending into the side of a hill. The shaft has been poorly concealed not long ago (no plant life can be seen in the uncovered area), although ancient markings (noticed only by a dwarf) indicate that it was originally excavated by dwarves. Two goblins stand guard in the open near the entrance. If the PCs watch for a minute or two, however, they also see a group of weary townsfolk led up and out of the shaft by a bugbear guard. The slaves carry large baskets filled with stones and dirt, which they dump a short distance from the mouth of the mine. The humans wear leg irons identical to those worn by the PCs.

The mine itself is currently a simple, single, broad shaft, about 20 feet wide and 300 feet long, sloping down steeply. Within the dimly-lit mine are 12 human workers, 24 goblins, 3 bugbears, and possibly the goblins and bugbears remaining from the initial chase, depending on how long the PCs took getting here. It is obvious to anyone that the place collapsed a very long time ago, but now (with a lot of work), the rubble is being cleared. Dwarves, gnomes, and others with knowledge of mining understand that eventually, if the work continues long enough, side passages and chambers will be revealed off the main shaft.

If attacked, the humanoids here will defend the place until half of their numbers are slain, at which time the survivors will flee into the hills.

Considering how many humanoids there are, however, the PCs have little chance to pull off a successful rescue unless they have freed themselves from the chains and recovered their weapons and equipment.

While the PCs are in this area, a powerful tremor shakes the ground. This trembling brings all of the humanoids running out of the shaft in a panic, but presents no real danger to the PCs (unless they are not well hidden when the goblins and bugbears begin surging forward). However, during the tremor, the characters will hear a far-away, deep ringing sound that they cannot identify. This noise is the sound of the *entropy bell* as chaos intensifies in the area. Though they won't be able to identify it at this point, they should recognize the sound in the future when they hear it again, and eventually they may make the connection.

Attacking at the time of the tremor is a good strategy for the PCs. Their foes will be surprised automatically and unable to act for 1d3 rounds because of disorganization, disorientation, and fear. DMs should also make a morale check for all of the humanoids at the moment of attack; those failing the check flee immediately. The PCs should be able to deal with whoever is brave enough to stay and fight.

Ironically, the goblins were completely wrong about the treasure. There is nothing at all of value left within the dwarven mine, even the vein that the dwarves followed there having long since played out. (All of which helps explain the use of "goblin legends" as a euphemism for lies.)

Safety

The PCs should be able to make it back to Detwillon eventually, where they can get the leg irons removed if they haven't already. News that the bugbears and goblins are holding humans captive in the old mine will result in a major raid by the militia. If the PCs rescued the captives on their own, the families of the freed slaves reward them with 1d4x10 gold pieces each. Further, if the PCs took the time to collect trophies for the bounty, they'll probably have a sizable reward coming from the town.

Rescuing the slaves in the mine is worth 200 experience points for each character, and simply escaping is worth 500 points each.



At the Races

"Ah, Ghiarathor, a wonderful town of noble, good-hearted folk. Too bad about the trouble there.

"We were on our way to the wedding of Chiran of Pellioh when we first heard about the races in Ghiarathor. We weren't due in the city-state for a few days, so we decided to take a break and partake of the celebration surrounding these rather odd races.

"They put on quite a spread at that festival, and there were games and contests of skill for Tiarath, who was still young at heart. We all enjoyed the music and the dancing. I met a young lass whose untouched beauty I won't soon forget—her name was Aoran, and her dress was of perfect sky blue.

"In any event, the trouble began with Tiarath, not surprisingly, and ended with all of us fighting for our lives. Things could've gone differently, but old Mynios was not in a patient mood that day. You see, he didn't like bugs."

DM's Notes

This adventure is for characters of 4th to 5th level. This is an off-beat adventure, quite useful as a break between more serious life-or-death scenarios. The DM should do what he can to play up the lightheartedness of the situations involved. Sometimes jaded or over-serious players will look right past the humor inherent in giant beetle races and a culture based on the same.

The player characters can hear of the Ghiriathor races on their way to or from another adventure and decide to take a break and enjoy what sounds to be a fun, relaxing (albeit strange—see below) festival. Or perhaps one of the players knows or learns of the races far ahead of time and the PCs plan ahead to make the trip. If the DM wishes, they could even be traveling to Ghiarathor on other business and come upon the festivities by lucky chance.

Ghiarathor

Nestled in the deep recesses of a dark forest, Ghiarathor is a community cut off from the rest of civilization. For the most part, the people like it that way. The town is made of long, wooden lodges surrounding a central, two-leveled keep of dark lumber. There is no tavern, no stores, no busi-

nesses of any kind. The Ghiarath people live a totally communal lifestyle, each individual doing his part on behalf of the whole.

Two hundred residents make their home in and around Ghiarathor. At least half tend to the ki'o, the name that they give to giant stag beetles. These monsters are domesticated by the Ghiarath, raised from small pupae for the meat and other products that they provide. Other Ghiarath hunt smaller game (often on the backs of k'io), gather or cultivate plants, or work with woodcrafts.

Ghiarath has no constable, no mayor, no leader or authority whatsoever. All decisions are made by the community, and all able-bodied citizens answer the call of duty when defense, emergency assistance, or rule enforcement is required. A strong sense of responsibility is instilled into Ghiarath youth and this, coupled with a strong sense of community, serves to make the small society work.

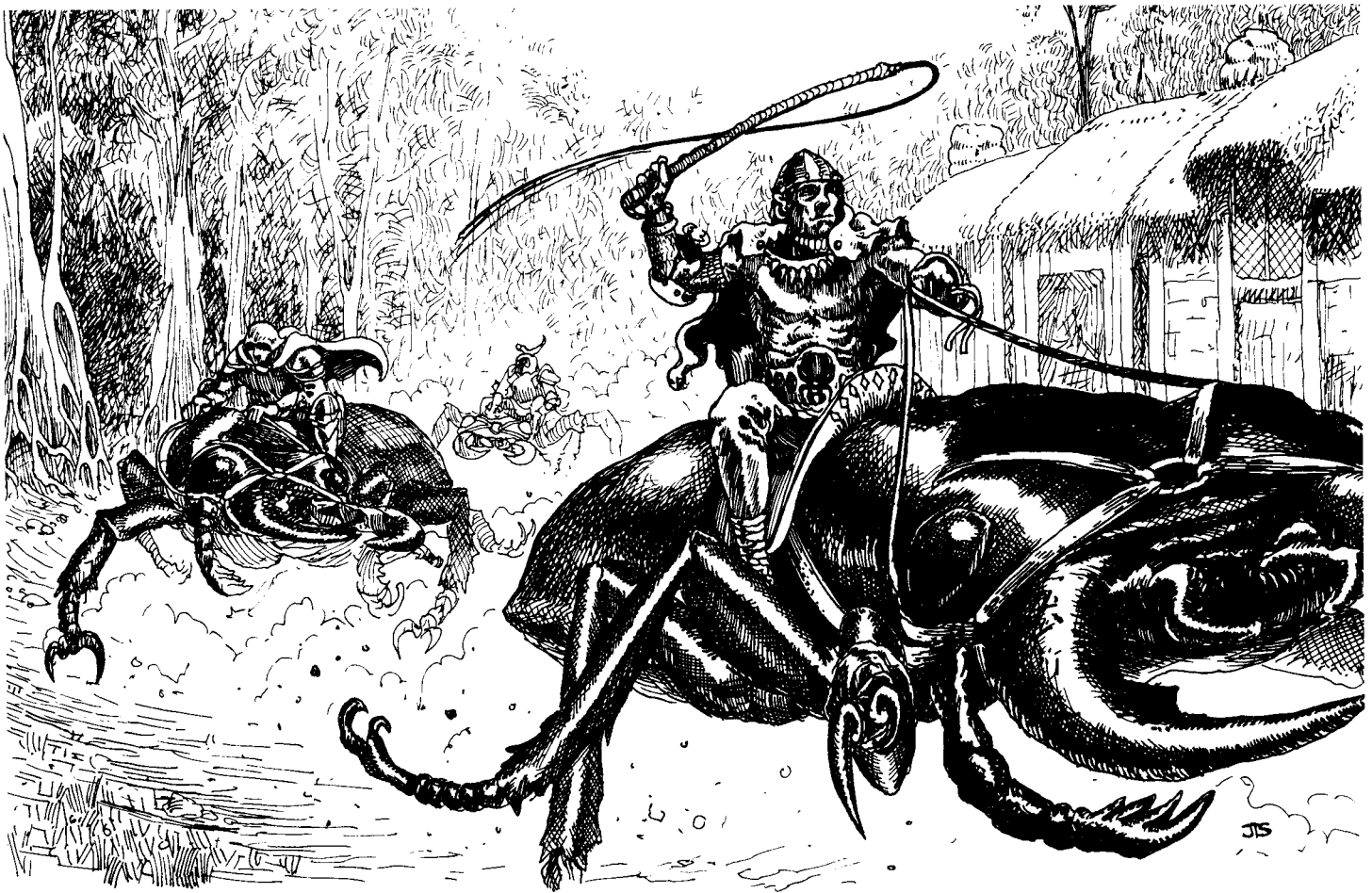
The Ki'o Races

Ki'o provide the Ghiarath with meat (ki'o steak being particularly good when fresh), their carapace and horns are made into armor, tools, and weapons, the hairlike undergrowth is woven into cloth, and various internal organs and fluids are used to make dyes, medicines, solvents, and adhesives. The Ghiarath ride the ki'o, which are faster than the standard giant beetle, for transportation, hunting, and, as we shall see, racing.

Once per year, the people of Ghiarathor hold a huge celebration in honor of their gods, their blessings, and the ki'o. Wonderful foods are prepared, ranging from ki'o stews to ki'o dumplings to ki'o pudding. Everyone dresses in their finest clothes (colored with ki'o dyes) and gathers about the central keep for the day-long games, contests, performances, and for the races.

This festival is known not only throughout the tiny town but in the surrounding regions as well. This is one time of the year that the Ghiarath welcome outsiders into their community, and many do come to enjoy and partake in the spectacle.

Because the people of the community have no real economy, all of the food and crafts are free. Outsiders will be expected to help clean up and pitch in with any other work that comes up, of course.



The Track

The track that the ki'o race around surrounds the entire town of Ghiarathor, making its overall length about a half-mile. It is approximately 30 paces wide in most spots, and freshly cleared of vegetation and obstructions on race day.

On the day of the races, spectators gather at various points around the perimeter of the town. Young boys like to run through the town from one point of the track when the racers pass them by to see if they can reach the other side of town before the ki'o reach the same spot by going around the track.

Betting

Although the Ghiarath do no wagering (for they have no currency or even similar concepts), the outsiders who come to Ghiarathor do enjoy placing a few silvers on their favorites. Gambling in the last few years has been organized by the Flanson brothers, Ruce and Rhet, two enterprising merchants willing to put up large sums to cover the bets. They are also in charge of determining odds on the various racers.

There are usually seven separate races on festival day. Each race has six participants. The Flansons number the racers from one to six (the Ghiarath know the racers by name, and need no such organi-

zation) and rate them on their past records, local reputations, and a few well-educated guesses.

Background

Perhaps not surprisingly, nefarious elements have come to Ghiarathor to take advantage of the money changing hands there. The Ghiarath are unaccustomed to such things, and not equipped to stop it. These are no simple cutpurses, however. Instead, a crime lord by the name of Vajj intends on fixing the races and cheating the Flansons—as well as the other spectators—out of hundreds of gold coins.

To further complicate things, one of the Ghiarath racers, a youth named Maeris, is also trying to fix one of the races—the last. He has become so obsessed with impressing a woman named Taurinth that he is willing to do anything to win the last, and most prestigious, race. He's even willing to cheat.

Race Day

The day of the races proves to be slightly overcast, with a cold wind blowing, but still an adequate day for a festival. The Ghiarath thank their gods that it does not rain, or worse yet, snow.

All of the people of Ghiarathor are present, as well as at least 100 outsiders. Many of these visi-



At the Races

tors are wealthy men and women, come to enjoy a day of relaxation and racing. A great deal of gold will most likely change hands here this day.

The PCs should feel free to mix with the people, partake in the games, enjoy the performances, and interact in any way they wish. They will get more involved in the adventure if at least one of them places bets with the Flansons on the races, which begin promptly at noon.

Additionally, the DM can insure the PCs' involvement by having the Flansons hire one or more of the PCs as guardians. They were not expecting to be dealing with the amount of gold that is being placed in bets, and they are worried about thieves and cheats. They notice one or more of the PCs, who are obviously characters of some accomplishment, and offer them 20 gp each if they will just watch over things and make sure everything goes smoothly and fairly. If this is the case, the PCs' new employers will want at least one of them by the betting table at all times.

The Fix

Vajj and his men approached all of the racers in each of the races and intimidated, threatened, or bribed (although the last method was the most difficult) them in order to assure that every race will be won by the rider of Vajj's choosing. This happened last night, and with a great deal of success. Vajj's men made threats against not only the racers, but their families and even the whole village (implying that they had much more power and many more thugs than they actually do). Vajj knows that this will probably be the last time he can organize a fix this large, or even return to Gharathor, but he does not care because he expects to be filthy rich by the end of the day.

Vajj has assured (at least, to his own satisfaction) that the following racers will win in each of the races:

- 1st Race— #3
- 2nd Race— #2
- 3rd Race— #4
- 4th Race— #1
- 5th Race— #5
- 6th Race— #2
- 7th Race— #6

Vajj, hm, F3: AC 8 (Dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 24; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); SA Nil; SD Nil; SZ M (6'3"); ML 12; AL CE; XP 120.

S 13, D 16, C 17, I 15, W 11, Ch 8.

Personality: Crafty, greedy, cruel

Vajj is very obese (so his Dexterity is surprising), has black, greasy hair, and wears all white clothing. His three daggers are well-hidden. He carries 154 gp and three 100-gp gems in his purse and hidden in his clothing.

Vajj's muscle, hm, F4 (4): AC 5 (chain mail); MV 12; hp 22, 24, 25, 30; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4 (broadsword); SA Nil; SD Nil; SZ M (6' tall); ML 12; Int Avg (9); AL NE; XP 120.

These large, burly men like to stand about and look imposing. They do not hide their weapons or armor, and are itching for a fight. Each has 3d4 gp in addition to his equipment.

The Betrayal

Like the other racers, Maeris was also approached by the racketeers. He pretended to acquiesce, but never actually intended to do anything except win. His problem is that he could not determine who Vajj wanted to win the race (Maeris is #2). Therefore, Maeris had to continue with his plan to sabotage all of the other ki'os involved in his race.

He planned to accomplish this by getting the creatures drunk on a local alcohol called Tripsy. This, he believes, is enough to impair them from running at top speed.

Maeris, hm, F2: AC 7 (leather and Dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 11; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d3 (knife); SA Nil; SD Nil; SZ M (5'6" tall); ML 10; AL N; XP 35.

S 10, D 15, C 12, I 13, W 8, Ch 11.

Personality: Driven by unrequited love

Maeris is small and wiry. He has short brown hair and wears the tough, ki'o-skin leather clothing of the racers. He carries no weapon but his hidden, ki'o-shell knife.



At the Races

Ki'o: AC 3; MV 15; HD 7; hp 30; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 4d4/1d10/1d10; SA Nil; SD Nil; SZ 10' long; ML 13; Int Non- (0); AL N; XP 975.

The Chaos Factor

The first few races pass without incident. As the fourth and fifth races are run, however, more and more people become aware of how few people have won any bets, and begin to realize that Vajj is on a tremendous winning streak. Just before the start of the sixth race, the player characters hear a far-away, deep ringing sound, like the tolling of a massive bell. This sound is an indicator of the increasing chaos with the absence of the *waning star* (see Introduction). Everyone will hear this noise (not just the PCs), but no one can explain it. However, at the same time, an announcement is made that due to a sudden illness of one of the racers in this race, a racer from the seventh race will be moved into the sixth contest.

The racer affected is not the individual that Vajj has picked, so the change does not matter to him. However, as soon as the race starts, the new racer's ki'o stumbles and falls. This brings the race to a halt.

When the beast is examined, handlers quickly determine that it is drunk. It should be obvious to everyone that someone is tampering with the race and trying to fix the outcome (ki'o don't get drunk on their own, after all), and all eyes will turn to Vajj, who has been winning without fail in the past five races.

Maeris never intended for his sabotage to be so obvious, and is confident that the other ki'o he drugged will not react so dramatically in his race. He is willing to simply bide his time until his race is run. However, if anyone (such as investigating PCs) asks him if he knows anything about a fix, he will reveal all he knows about Vajj and the threats that the criminal made upon him in order to fix the race. All the other racers are too afraid or embarrassed to corroborate that testimony, however.

Vajj

Of course Vajj denies everything. If the PCs confront him, however, they reach him as the sixth race (without the injured racer) is restarted. Not surprisingly, Vajj wins his bet placed on this race as well.

When he makes his way over to the Flansons to collect his winnings, the brothers refuse to pay, claiming he's cheated. This is where Vajj's hired muscle comes into play, threatening the Flansons with harm if they do not give their master his due. The Ghiarath, not really understanding (or even paying attention to) the situation, will do nothing to help.

At this point, the PCs should intervene, either because the Flansons hired them for protection in just such a situation, because it is the right thing to do, or because their own wagered money might be on the line. Vajj's men are perfectly willing to fight anyone, including seasoned adventurers like the PCs (they are, in fact, bored with the races and eager for a fight).

The Ghiarath will ignore any such conflict and begin the last race. Vajj does whatever he has to do to break away from the fight to watch this race. The Flansons will ask the PCs to pause for a moment, thus momentarily ending the fight. Vajj will react with outrage when Maeris takes an early lead. The criminal completely loses his composure and runs out onto the race track. If the PCs follow, they must not only deal with Vajj and his men (who will definitely follow their boss), but the oncoming ki'o, who react violently to these obstacles, particularly as the alcohol has already made them foul-tempered (a ki'o, it turns out, is a mean drunk).

In the end, the race should come to a horrible, chaotic end with no clear winner.

Conclusion

Vajj's cheating is exposed by the other racers, who are shaken by the havoc caused in the last race. Maeris's cheating can be revealed if someone (most likely a PC, making an Intelligence check or possessing animal training/handling/lore proficiency) examines the ki'o and smells alcohol all over its body (the ki'o respire through their skin). In short, the villains and cheaters will probably get their due.

In any event, Maeris did not impress his true love. If he was caught, the Ghiarath force him to work shoveling ki'o manure for a full year.

If the PCs handle the entire situation without a major row, the Ghiarath are delighted and the characters earn a 1,000 xp bonus, to be divided equally among all the characters. More likely, the Ghiarath will be upset by the whole affair and won't welcome outsiders to next year's races.



Web of Death

"Of course, not all our days were bright, and not all our adventures successful. I remember the day Mynios died. What a dark time that was.

"We were looking for the Cup of Rhaaz in the Blackmoss Forest. Specifically, we sought the tower of a mage named Finathar, I believe. We never did find it.

"In any event, we were making our way through the brush, and we'd just encountered a rather angry (or perhaps just hungry) griffon. Our spirits were low, and we really just wanted to leave.

"The trees were so thick that a man couldn't see much farther than a few steps ahead of him. Black, wet moss hung down from the branches that would stain your clothes or even your skin if you brushed against it.

"That's when we crossed that horrible bridge—that wasn't. It spanned a gorge that cut across our path. Of course, with all the trees and the precious little light, we couldn't see the bottom of the chasm—we could barely see across it for all the growth.

"Before we knew what was happening, we were caught in some sort of netlike trap. Horrible monsters grabbed at us with spindly arms and nets made of spider's webs. I brandished *Phantom's Reaver*, the sword I'd liberated from the Knights of Thargoul, slashing at the webs that held us fast. Suddenly, I found we'd fallen into a maze made of webbing, suspended from tree to tree. I was sure that we'd not get out alive. Unfortunately, at least for poor old Mynios, I was right."

DM's Notes

Web of Death is an adventure for characters of 4th or 5th level. It is a scenario for a forested area, although a jungle or other similar environment would work as well. It can be inserted into a continuing campaign as an encounter that the PCs stumble into (but perhaps not out of).

Background

Deep in the forest, a pair of mated ettercaps, a bit more intelligent and certainly more ambitious than most of their kind, have created a huge maze of webbing and traps to capture prey. Further, they have brought in giant spiders to help maintain the traps and catch the prey.

Since the coming of the Chaos Effect, however, the ettercaps' intelligence has developed even further. They have expanded the web maze and now encourage the spiders to compete for the kill once a creature has fallen into their trap. Essentially, they are training the spiders, increasing their intelligence and their craftiness. Various berries and roots that the ettercaps have found and applied to their arachnid friends have caused them to grow to an even more frightening size. The first and greatest result of their "experiments" now dwells at the bottom of the web maze.

Ettercaps (2): AC 6; MV 12, Wb 12; HD 5; hp 23, 28; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d8; SA Poisonous bite slays in 1d4 turns unless saving throw vs. poison is made; SD Nil; SZ M (6' tall); ML 13; Int Very (11); AL NE; XP 650.

These ettercaps use their own webbing as lassos to grapple their victims. Treat these heavy, 10-foot-long weapons as mancatchers that inflict no damage. Since their webbing is created naturally, they can easily make new lassos or increase the length up to 50 feet. Because of the influence of the intensifying chaos, the ringing sound associated with such effects accompanies the ettercaps wherever they go.

Large spider (6): AC 8; MV 6, Wb 15; HD 1+1; hp 5 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA Poisonous bite (Type A) with +2 bonus on save; SD Nil; SZ S (2' diameter); ML 7; Int Non- (0); AL N; XP 175.

Huge spiders (2): AC 6; MV 18, Wb 12; HD 2+2; hp 12, 18; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SA Poisonous bite (Type A), with +1 bonus on saves; SD Nil; SZ M (6' diameter); ML 8; Int Animal (1); AL N; XP 270.

Giant spiders (7): AC 4; MV 3, Wb 12; HD 4+4; hp 18, 20, 21, 23, 26, 27, 34; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; SA Poisonous bite (Type F); SD Nil; SZ L (9' diameter); ML 13; Int Low (6); AL CE; XP 650.



Web of Death

Entering the Trap

Read the following to the players.

The forest gets deeper and darker as you continue. The canopy of branches and vibrant leaves almost completely blocks the sun, making it seem as though it is twilight. The trees here are true giants, many must be over 150 feet tall with trunks 15 feet across.

Generations of forest growth have left underbrush, fallen leaves, and fallen trees heaped on the ground, making it very difficult to pass through with any amount of speed. Worse, the rivers that washed through here ages ago (and some still today) have torn away huge portions of earth, leaving the ground itself looking as if it had been tossed about like the contours of a rumpled blanket. Gullies come upon you without warning; an apparently clear path is suddenly blocked by a 100-ton boulder; everywhere you turn, the forest seems to confound your advance.

When the player characters come to the trap area, it is important that they think of it as just another rough area in the forest. This is often difficult, but the less the DM alerts them to their surroundings, the more likely it will be that they are caught appropriately unaware. Describing the area in particular detail will draw their attention to it in an artificial way (so no boxed text is provided for the area until the trap is sprung).

The DM should simply state that ahead of the PCs, they see yet another deep gully, but a wide, natural rock bridge appears to provide a way across. The area is (as everywhere in this part of the forest) thick with large, leafy trees, tangled underbrush, and boulders, making it difficult to see more than 10 or 15 paces. The light is dim and diffused, casting everything in twilight shade. The gully is obviously mostly dry, for trees grow up and out of the bottom, obscuring it completely.

There is nothing natural about the natural bridge. It is a carefully constructed trap made





Web of Death

entirely of very dense webbing covered in leaves, moss, rocks, and dried mud. The web is very sturdy (it does not give or sway with the PCs' weight upon it), and connects two outcroppings of rock from either side of the gully. The effect is very convincing. Only those closely examining the bridge, past the initial portion (the outcropping, which *is* made of stone) have a chance to detect that anything is amiss. An Intelligence check at -5 will reveal the webbing.

Look at Map 3 for a layout of the bridge area.

Going Up! (Trap A)

This is the first trap entered by the PCs, but it is not activated until at least one (preferably two, depending on the size of the party) character gets to Trap B. When this happens, anyone in the area of Trap A is caught within a web-net hidden within the bridge underneath them. This net scoops them up from below and springs upward to the Trap A arrival point within the maze.

Anyone in this area when the trap is sprung must make a Dexterity check with a -10 penalty to dive backward (40%) or forward (60%) reflexively and avoid being caught. Those diving ahead, however, must make another Dexterity check, this time with a -5, to avoid falling into Trap B. Further, diving ahead requires anyone who successfully avoided Trap B to make a second attempt to avoid it each time an additional character crashes ahead, potentially knocking the first character into the hole.

Read this text to anyone standing in the area covered by the trap (as marked on the map) once the trap is sprung.

As you cross the gorge, you suddenly see those ahead of you disappear down into the natural bridge, as if they'd fallen through paper! Before you can react to help them, a concealed net that was spread out underneath you is yanked upward by cords hidden in the shadow and hanging moss. If you fail to act quickly, you're sure to be caught!

Going Down! (Trap B)

This part of the trap is much like a covered pit. A thin layer of webbing covered with dried mud and leaves conceals a hole. Anyone stepping onto

the center of that area will break through the webbing and fall through the hole down into the maze at the Trap B arrival point. It is possible, or actually likely, however, that unless the falling character was specifically far ahead of the others in the group, or alone on the bridge, the character behind the first will also be caught in the trap and fall.

The first character must make a Dexterity check with a -10 penalty to avoid falling by grabbing the sides of the hole as he falls. He must then make a Strength check with a -2 penalty to pull himself back up. Any characters in the area when the first character reaches its center must make Dexterity checks with -5 penalties or they fall also. If this check succeeds, it indicates that the character(s) pulled back to the thin space between the two trapped areas (though the players may not realize they are in a safe zone).

When the trap is sprung, read the following text to those caught in its confines.

As you cross the bridge, suddenly, surprisingly, your footing gives way! It is as though you stepped into a hole covered by some thin crust and broke through—and it is a long way down!

Separating the Group

One of the crucial points of the scenario, initiated in this first set of traps, is that the party is separated into at least two groups. Although it is difficult to handle two or more groups, it is the PCs' attempts at reuniting the party which make *Web of Death* an interesting and challenging encounter. The PCs are unlikely to simply fly away, break through the maze and escape, or burn the whole thing down if their friends are still lost somewhere inside the maze.

The DM should prohibit communication between the players whose characters are separated unless the PCs come up with some means of contacting each other (such as with spells).

Troubleshooting

If no one is caught by one of the traps (a very unlikely circumstance), the encounter can still proceed—as long as at least one character is caught by one of the traps.



Web of Death

The DM can assume that the ettercaps are watching as the PCs cross the bridge, probably from above and below. If it appears that the heroes are avoiding the traps, the ettercaps do whatever they can to interfere. For example, a character who catches himself as he falls through Trap B might find himself lassoed by an ettercap below and pulled down (assume the ettercaps have Strength of 17).

The Web Maze

This maze is made up of passages constructed almost entirely out of webbing. The passages vary in width and curve upward on both sides to form walls 8 to 9 feet high. Anchors stretch to the sides of the gully or to trees to support the passages, but the whole tubelike passage wobbles and shakes unnervingly when the PCs walk on it. The inhabitants of the maze, however, are able to move through it without such disturbances. The dim light of the area is even worse here, with visibility past 15 or 20 feet being rare—although, for obvious reasons, this would be a foolish place to light a torch! The sides of the web passages are extremely flammable. Unless they have magical light, the PCs should do without.

Within these passages, the actual webbing has been so covered with fallen leaves, dirt, and wet growths of moss that the floor is no longer viscid. This makes it possible to walk. The walls, however, maintain their adhesiveness, so characters attempting to climb them will find themselves quickly caught, held fast as though in a *web* spell.

Some PCs may try to cut a hole in the side of the passage or in the floor in order to see out (particularly when they are first deposited there). This is fairly easily done with a minute or two of work, but it reveals little. The trees and moss are thick and reduce the range of vision to less than 10 feet. Further, the PCs will see that the whole area is filled with thin sheets of webbing (visible only now, not from the bridge or the sides of the gully) which also obscure vision.

At some point, the PCs may wish to try to escape by similarly chopping their way through the sides of the web-passage and climbing down. It is important to note that unless the characters attempting this are next to one of the trees or the sides of the gorge, there is no suitable place to anchor a rope or climb. The trees and rock walls provide an anchor for ropes and a medium on

which to climb. However, the DM should point out the many areas of thick webbing on the trunk of the tree or along the cliff face as one descends or ascends that are potentially full of spiders, more traps, or both. In fact, these areas are trapped, and the DM should make any attempts at descent or ascent as nasty as possible. Further, the ettercaps may try to lasso characters and haul them back up or down, into the maze. Getting to the gorge's bottom or back up to the top is not going to get the characters any closer to reuniting with their friends, either.

Some DMs may wish to fill the gorge's bottom with a ground-level web maze with more spiders and perhaps even more ettercaps (this would be just below and around the last area detailed in the text below). Lastly, and perhaps most importantly to those attempting escape, because of the foliage and the webs, the characters never know exactly how far down the ground lies (the bridge is approximately 100 feet above the level of the deep gully).

In Case of Fire

As previously mentioned, using fire within the web maze is very dangerous. A stray spark, a slight stumble, and a huge fire could start. This is particularly dangerous here, since the webbing that will burn away is what is keeping the PCs suspended so far off the ground. If a fire is started, it will burn quickly, consuming the webs, tearing apart the passages, and most likely starting the trees ablaze, which will probably lead to a forest fire—this deep in the forest, with no place to hide from a fire's wrath, the PCs probably would not escape alive from a forest fire. These dangers should be pointed out to a fire-brandishing PC.

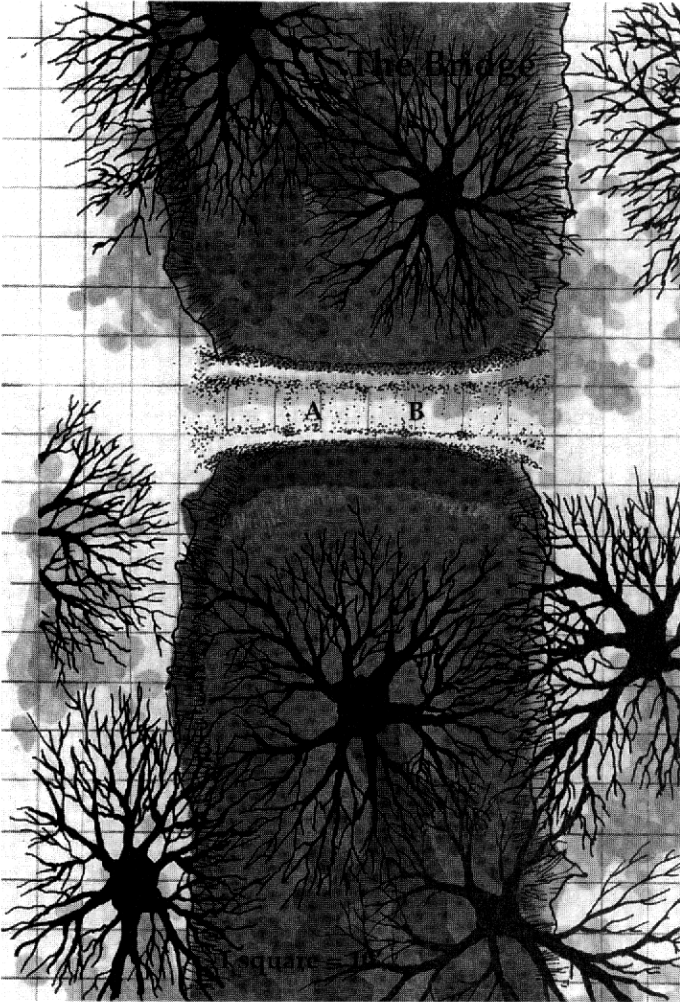
In any event, falling damage aside, a creature caught within the maze while it burns will take 1d6 points of damage each round for 1d6 rounds as the webs burn.

1. Trap A Arrival

The net that you are caught in flings upward and through the air dozens of feet above the bridge. It roughly comes to a stop, and you see that you've somehow been deposited within a cocoonlike horizontal tube, with an opening above you.



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When the characters are brought up in the net from below, the trap brings them up through a thin membrane of webbing. Here, the net fuses with the membrane forming the floor of the passage at this spot, 40 feet above the bridge.

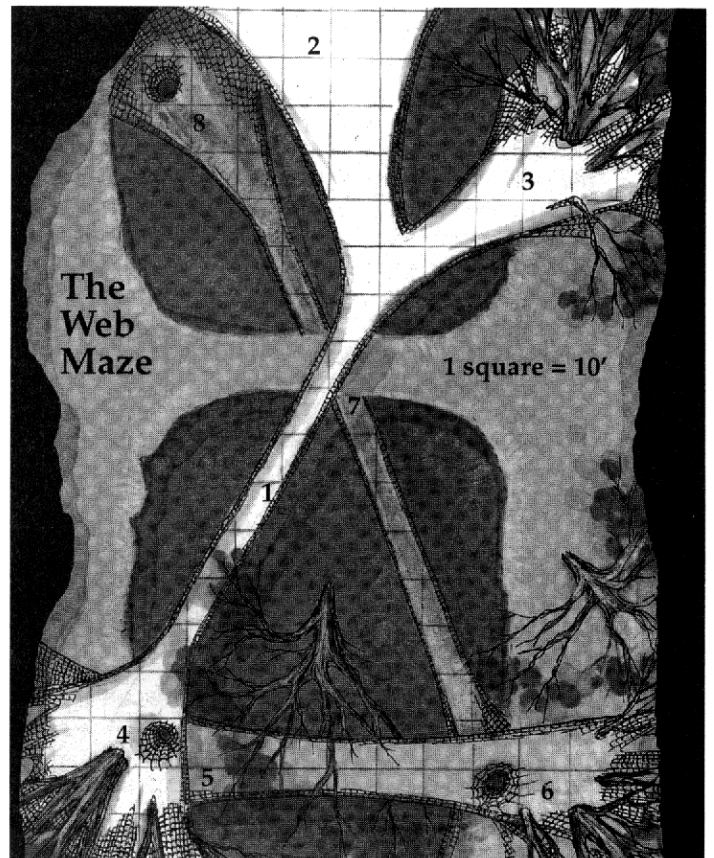
2. False Spider

Here the web-passage meets up with the trunk of a huge tree, entangling its many branches and obviously using the trunk for support. Directly ahead, in front of the trunk, is a huge mass of webbing with an enormous, shadowy spider waiting within.

The spider appears to be at least 12 feet in diameter. It is, however, completely fake—made of carefully spun webs and placed in just enough light to appear real—even at very close range. The movement of the PCs on the passage makes it seem to move via crafty connections to the webbing.

Inside the faux spider are a number of venom sacks so that if it is shot with a missile or attacked with a piercing weapon, a stream of poison (class N; contact, 1 minute onset, save vs. death/25 pts. dmg.) is sprayed out up to 5 feet. One character within that distance, if any, is hit by the poison. This poison is a special mixture concocted by the ettercaps using their own venom and other natural toxins.

Two huge spiders wait here, well concealed, for victims to be distracted by the fake spider before they attack.





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Huge spiders (2): AC 6; MV 18, Wb 12; HD 2+2; hp 13, 16; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SA Poisonous bite (Type A), with +1 bonus on saves; SD Nil; SZ M (6' diameter); ML 8; Int Animal (1); AL N; XP 270.

3. Spider Lair

The web-passage widens here, in an area surrounding and anchored to another tree. Large shapes—some man-sized, others appearing more the size of deer, bears, or other large mammals—are cocooned in webbing all around you, stuck to the sides of the tree, the web-constructed floor, or hanging down from above. From their appearance and the smell of death, these are most certainly the dried, blood-drained victims of the spiders that made this horrible web.

This is indeed where many of the giant spiders live and keep their victims until they are needed. A single giant spider remains here to guard against intruders. It will only reveal itself, emerging from behind one of the dried husks, if the PCs enter the area. If this place is searched, an assortment of mundane weapons, armor, tools, bags, and more can be found here, as well as a vial of holy water, a potion of *sweet water*, and a pouch with 13 gp, 54 sp, and 21 cp, all dropped by the humanoid victims.

Giant spider (1): AC 4; MV 3, Wb 12; HD 4+4; hp 18; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; SA Poisonous bite (class F); SD Nil; SZ L (9' diameter); ML 13; Int Low (6); AL CE; XP 650.

4. The First Shaft

The passage merges with the branches of a very high tree, as the web lines spread out in all directions to form anchors to the branches. There is a vertical shaft, similar to the passage but completely enclosed, descending from here, apparently down to the central trunk. The drop appears to be about 50 feet.

Characters will find it difficult, but not impossible, to climb down this shaft. The sides are

sticky, but won't trap a climber's hands or feet like a *web* spell. Characters can grab hold of the strands and climb. Climbing chances are 70% (or +30% if a thief), but standard climbing speed is halved. If a climbing roll is failed, there is a 75% chance that the character becomes entangled in the webbing (as a *web* spell), and a 25% chance that he falls down, suffering 3d6 damage (the webbing at the bottom cushions the fall slightly).

5. Ambush

At the bottom of the shaft, one ettercap and four giant spiders wait in ambush. They attack the characters as they emerge from the shaft, one by one. If need be, they will go up the shaft to get at the PCs. The characters' attack and damage rolls are penalized by -2 if fighting while climbing.

If this group of monsters is approached from the passages to the east or south, they flee up the shaft to ambush the intruders later.

6. The Second Shaft

A vertical shaft begins here, extending downward along the trunk of a gigantic tree. The rest of this wide area is entangled with webbing stretched throughout the branches of the tree.

Like the first shaft (area 4), this one descends about 50 feet. Rules for climbing are the same. The area around the top of the shaft is the domain of six large spiders, which drop down to attack the PCs if they linger for more than a single round here.

At the bottom of the shaft, three huge spiders attack characters that enter the area.

Huge spiders (3): AC 6; MV 18, Wb 12; HD 2+2; hp 9, 11, 13; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SA Poisonous bite (Type A), with +1 bonus on saves; SD Nil; SZ M (6' diameter); ML 8; Int Animal (1); AL N; XP 270.

7. Trap B Landing

Characters that fall from Trap B land here. Because of the nature of the web, despite having fallen almost 50 feet, they suffer only 2d6 points of damage—essentially, the web is flexible enough to absorb their impact and "catch" them.



Web of Death

As soon as fallen PCs land, an ettercap and two giant spiders try to force the characters to move, in effect herding them toward the third shaft. If the player characters do not flee in the proper direction, the ettercap and spiders fall back to the area below the second shaft, where three more huge spiders wait.

Ettercap (1): AC 6; MV 12, Wb 12; HD 5; hp 21; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d8; SA Poisonous bite slays in 1d4 turns unless saving throw vs. poison is made; SD Nil; SZ M (6' tall); ML 13; Int Very (11); AL NE; XP 650.

Huge spiders (2): AC 6; MV 18, Wb 12; HD 2+2; hp 7, 11; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SA Poisonous bite (Type A), with +1 bonus on saves; SD Nil; SZ M (6' diameter); ML 8; Int Animal (1); AL N; XP 270.

8. The Third Shaft

Unlike the other shafts, this vertical passage is not detectable by the PCs. Instead, it is more of a trap, like the covered pit trap that was encountered earlier in the scenario. The map shows the area which covers the pit. A saving throw vs. breath weapon is required to avoid it. If successful, this indicates that the character has grabbed the sides of the pit and kept himself from falling. However, a second save vs. paralyzation is required to determine if the character can hang on and pull himself back up to the top of the shaft, because wet moss around this area makes it very slippery.

The Sphere of No Escape

Having fallen down the shaft, you are saved by a soft, cushioned landing. You quickly realize, however, what broke your fall is not all good news—you are immersed in thick, sticky strands of webbing, almost liquid in their glueyness. As you struggle in the morass of webs, you see that you are in a huge chamber, almost a perfect sphere, about 60 feet across.

Even worse, looming above you and moving slowly downward is an immense spider, so large it nearly blocks out the upper half of the sphere; its body must be nearly 20 feet across!

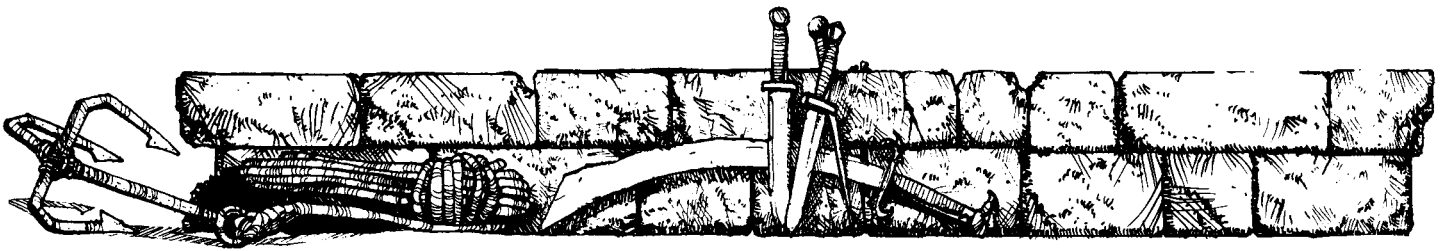
This chamber is not shown on the map. It lies 80 feet below the opening at the top of the third shaft (60 feet of the fall is within the spherical chamber). Characters take only 1d6 points of damage from the fall, but are trapped by the morass of webbing, identical to a *web* spell, that they plunge into. To determine how far each character is embedded into the web, subtract the damage the character suffered in the fall from 6; a character who suffered 4 points of damage, for example, must struggle free from 2 feet of webbing. A character who suffered 6 points of damage is not entangled. Escaping from the webs is handled exactly as described in the *web* spell. A successful saving throw vs. spell reduces the webs entangling that character to half strength (essentially, that character landed well and is in a good position to escape).

Unfortunately, as they struggle, the characters are attacked by the gargantuan spider, the core of the ettercaps' experiments.

Attached to one side of the sphere is a webbed-up mass of treasure that the monster has begun hoarding as its intelligence grows. Within this mass is a sack of 253 gp, 390 sp, and 481 cp; a backpack containing sixteen 10 gp gems, five 50 gp gems, three 100 gp gems, and a small, golden idol of a local god worth 75 gp; a *bastard sword* +2, a clerical scroll of *cure light wounds*, *neutralize poison*, and *tongues*; and a *rod of terror* with eight charges.

The desiccated, fragmented remains of the spider's victims, as well as bits of their mundane equipment, lie about the webbed treasure.

Gargantuan spider: AC 4; MV 9, Wb 12; HD 8+8; hp 40; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 2d6; SA -5 penalty to victim's surprise rolls, poisonous bite (class O injected, onset 2d12 rounds, paralytic); SZ G (20' diameter); ML 14; Int Low (6); AL CE; XP 3,000.



Look of Love

“Three years after we first visited the little town of Haggash, we began to figure that something was going on with that ringing sound, but we had no idea what. You see, when we were in the Capatha Wastes, we came upon another adventure. Or, rather, it came upon us. It was one of those sorts of things when there’s a lot more going on than first meets the eye, you understand?”

“Well, what happened was that we found a small battlefield with some bodies—none of them human or anything close. Alvarm recognized the two horrible monsters to be something he called ‘grell,’ but none of us knew what the humanoid creatures were. We later learned they were grimlocks, and if we had known that they were associated with mind flayers we probably would have got ourselves out of there right quick. Of course, looking back, I’d have almost preferred flayers to what we stumbled into.

“Do you have any idea what it’s like to be turned to stone? To feel your flesh growing dry and hard and brittle, to feel your blood thicken and solidify, to feel your lungs stop breathing and your heart stop pumping—and yet, still live, trapped within your own body?”

“If you don’t, then try to keep it that way—it’s a terrible fate. I’d never been much for magic until that wizard cast the spell that brought me back to the world of flesh. That magic was worth every copper.

“I suppose the long and the short of it is, the only thing worse than a medusa is a medusa in love.”

DM’s Notes

This adventure is for 5th and 6th level characters. It can be inserted virtually anywhere in the DM’s campaign world, as long as it is a place that is somewhat remote or isolated.

Like many of the adventures in *A Hero’s Tale*, *Look of Love* is most easily used as the PCs are traveling from one place to another (DMs should note that the adventure assumes that the PCs will be in the area around nightfall, as well as spending the night there).

Alternatively, the PCs could be sent to the area on a mission to find and slay the medusa that has so long plagued the area. Or, perhaps word has it that some new sort of monster is heading into the area and some patron in a nearby community wants the PCs to investigate the potential threat.

Background

Vallasta is a medusa. She is ancient as her kind goes, and has learned much lore and secret knowledge that her sisters have not. For example, Vallasta is a priestess of the goddess Kali (the goddess of death). Worship of Kali, a chaotic evil power, has changed Vallasta’s own alignment to chaotic evil.

Long ago, when Vallasta lived much deeper in the underworld, she met a small group of mind flayers, and they promised to teach her the disciplines of psionics if she performed a service for them. The illithids sent Vallasta on a mission to slay many drow that lived nearby. After she completed the dangerous task, she discovered that the illithids never intended to keep their end of the bargain. For this affront, she slew the mind flayers and took their grimlock servants for her own.

Vallasta also has a mate, a maedar named Chaolosh. For many years they have dwelt in relative harmony in their subterranean lair, but of late strife has entered their relationship. For the most part, Chaolosh always allowed Vallasta to be the dominant member of the couple. Now, however, he is sure that she is leading the couple and their servants into certain doom.

Recently, a large number of grell have encroached upon the territory claimed by the medusa pair, both above and below ground. Though the medusae have sent the grimlocks out to drive the monsters off, it has been to no avail. Chaolosh is determined that the only way to survive is to make peace with the grell and establish some sort of territorial agreement. Vallasta will have none of it. She will accept nothing less than the withdrawal of the grell or the death of each and every one of them.

The night before the PCs get involved, Chaolosh left the lair he and his mate had shared for so long. He sought out the grell in order to plead for peace. At the same time, Vallasta prepared for war.

The Battlefield

The player characters are first introduced to the situation as they stumble upon the site of a battle between some grell and some grimlocks that took place a few nights ago in the isolated wasteland surrounding the medusa lair.

Dusk approaches. As you make your way across an open field, the smell of death suddenly stings your nostrils. Flies buzz thickly in the air. Looking ahead, you see that you are wandering onto a recent battlefield.

The bodies of eight wild-haired, gray-skinned humanoids are scattered about with their axes and swords around them. Some are partially eaten—all have been killed by a powerful, ripping and tearing weapon—though you can't tell from the wounds whether it was a natural or manufactured weapon.

Two other dead monsters can also be seen on this battlefield. Huge, bulbous bodies, which look much like large brains even before the bloating of death occurred, are surrounded by 10 long tentacles. Bloody beaks, apparently the weapons used to tear apart their humanoid foes, extend from the fronts of the brainlike bodies. The corpses have been hacked with large-bladed weapons and have many arrows stuck into their bizarre hides.

The humanoids are grimlocks and the monsters are grell. It is clear from the manner in which the bodies are positioned and situated that there were originally more participants on both sides. The bodies are a few days old, judging by the amount of decay.

Observant PCs will notice that no bows can be seen on any of the dead grimlocks, nor does it seem like a weapon appropriate to their clumsy hands and crude visages. The arrows were shot by Vallasta and were poisoned with her venom (although only the most knowledgeable expert on poisons could determine that it was medusa venom, particularly after so long a period).

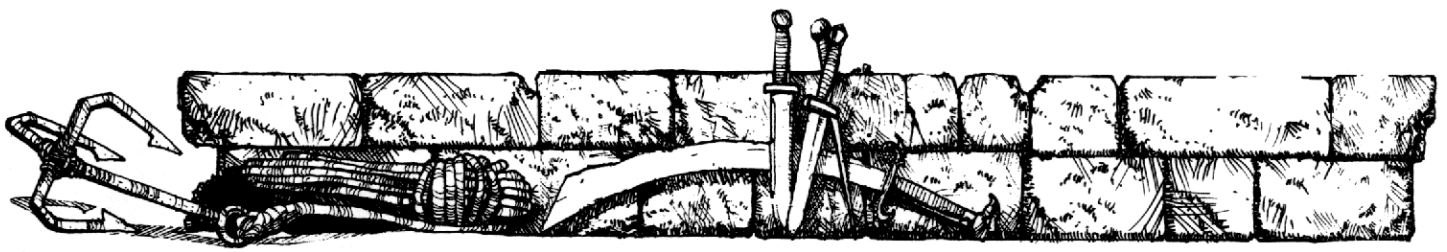
If so desired, a PC with the tracking proficiency could trace the grimlock's tracks back to Vallasta's lair. Such a tracker could also tell that there was someone else who was not a grimlock with them (the medusa).

If the PCs do not do any tracking, they will encounter a pair of raiding grell after night falls.

Grell Raiders

There is no town or even village in which to spend the night in this area. This desolate place offers only a few good campsites for the PCs. Whether they make camp or attempt to press on through the night, they encounter some wandering grell.





Look of Love

It is a calm, cool night. The star-filled sky is brilliant above you, but no star outshines the bright, three-quarter moon.

Through the dark of night, you see some large, moving figures. Covered by darkness and underbrush, these figures seem to be trying to creep up on you.

This movement is, in fact, a distraction. One grell makes the aforementioned noises and movements—simulating as best it can the noises and movement of a number of creatures—while the other drops on one of the PCs (choose randomly) to gain surprise. This crafty attack gives the heroes a -3 penalty to their surprise roll. If the monster successfully paralyzes the character, it will lift him high into the air while using its beak to slash at the hapless foe. It slashes at this single, trapped character until he is dead or unconscious, and only then moves down to another target.

The other grell is armed with three tip-spears: sharpened metal tips on his tentacles. It wades into battle using these weapons to slay or at least occupy the attention of the characters on the ground while its partner finishes off its single victim. If hard-pressed, both grell will flee by levitating very high into the air and flying away.

These grell seek to kill all intelligent beings in their newly claimed territory. If they are defeated but return to the rest of the group with news of the PCs, the grell will return in greater numbers (1d6+3) to the same location in 2d4 hours.

Grell (2): AC 5; MV Fl 12 (D); HD 5; hp 22 each; THAC0 15; #AT 11 or 4; Dmg 1d4 (x10)/1d6 or 2d6 (x4, spear-tips)/1d6; SA Tentacle hits cause paralysis (+4 to saving throws) lasting 5d4 rounds; SD Nil; SZ M (4-ft. diameter); ML 13; Int Avg (10); AL ME; XP 2,000.

Chaolosh Intervenes

There's no rest for the PCs, even if they destroy or drive off the grell. Their battle has been monitored by a third party, who intervenes soon after the battle.

A figure steps out of the darkness soon after your battle ends. A powerful male humanoid of a race you cannot quite place strides purposefully forward. His well-sculpted physique

exudes male confidence, his hairless body uncovered except for what appears to be a long kilt colored in earthy tones.

"You only serve to anger them," he states flatly in a halting, thickly accented common. "This does no good. Not for you, and not for me. Leave this area at once."

With these cryptic words, Vallasta's mate, Chaolosh, (a maedar) points in the direction from which the PCs came (not the way they are going), and begins backing away. More than likely, the PCs are not going to react well to these mysterious and threatening words of advice and will badger Chaolosh with questions. He will not answer any of them. If followed or attacked (or even approached), he simply sinks into the stony ground below his feet.

At this point, the PCs should be intrigued and perhaps a little annoyed. Chaolosh does not know where the PCs came from, he was just pointing away from the lair of Vallasta. Chances are, the characters will head in the opposite direction from what they were told—that is, toward the lair. If they do, use the encounter called *Another Visitor*.

Chaolosh, maedar: AC 3; MV 9; HD 6; hp 30; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 2d4/2d4; SA Stone to flesh once every three turns; SD Pass through stone at will (requires one round of concentration), immune to petrification, paralyzation, *hold*, *slow*, and similar spells, as well as medusa poison; SZ M (6' 9" tall); ML 14; Int Very (12); AL LE; XP 975.

Personality: Level-headed unless mate is threatened

Special Equipment: ring of protection +2

Another Visitor

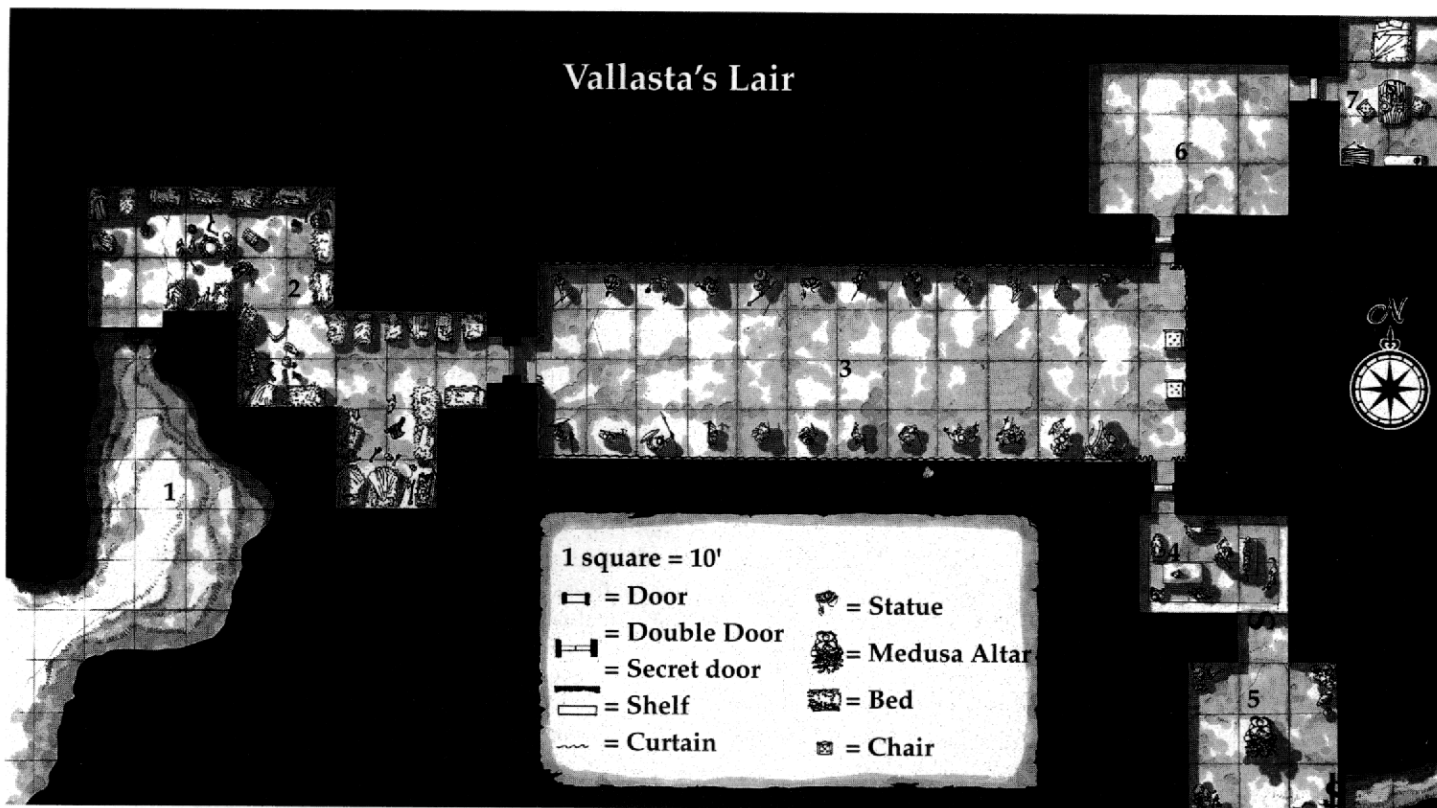
When the PCs travel in the direction of the medusa lair, they have another mysterious encounter.

It is as though this barren wasteland is no waste at all, but a hub of activity. Ahead of you, from behind a large outcropping of rock, a female voice comes forth.

"Ignore my mate. He is a foolish oaf, afraid of his own shadow. The invaders are fine targets for your swords and arrows.

"If you are enemies of the grell, however,

Vallasta's Lair



you travel in the wrong direction. They lie toward the mountains. You'll find none of their kind ahead of you."

The voice is that of Vallasta. The PCs now stand close to her lair, and if they approach her, she will retreat into it to gain a more defensible position.

A Not-So-Subtle Clue

If the player characters look carefully around the area before following Vallasta into her lair, allow them to make a find secret doors roll. Any successful roll means that character found something strange (though it is not a door). The find is a bird, perched upon a rock, made of solid stone. Just moments ago, this unfortunate crow landed near Vallasta and looked too close. Usually, the medusae clear the area of such obvious tell-tale signs, but there was no time for that today.

The Lair

The following is a detailed layout of the medusa lair, corresponding to the map provided. The ceilings vary from 7 to 10 feet in height. All rooms are dark unless otherwise noted.

1. Entrance

This chamber is disguised to look like a cave, in order to fool passersby and wandering beasts. When the medusae are away, it discourages any intruders from looking closer. When the fiendish inhabitants are present, it serves to put anyone entering at ease, allowing the medusae to strike while their prey is

betrayed by this false sense of security.

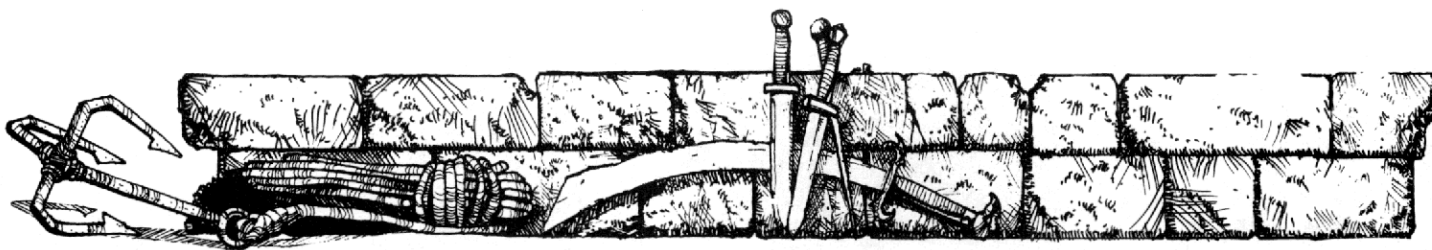
The secret door pivots open when a small stone lever on the opposite end of the cave is slid one way or the other. Opening the door, however, insures that the guards from area 2 pour forth into the room to attack. When this happens, read the following text to the players:

With a loud scrape, a secret door on the side of the cave opposite the hidden catch opens. Before you are able to see through this new opening, the room is flooded by terrible creatures, their stench almost as horrible as their appearance. Wild black hair flies about their faces, which are covered, like the rest of their bodies, with scaly, grey flesh. It is their eyes that pierce you, however. White, sightless eyes stare out as the creatures swarm toward you, axes and swords brandished eagerly.

The grimlocks fight to the death, afraid of Vallasta's retribution more than the strangers' swords. See room 2 for stats.

2. Guards

You see a simple room that almost certainly is home to the creatures that just attacked you—it has their smell. Low, wooden pallets serve as beds for as many as 30 of the creatures, although many look as though they have not been used in a while. Rags, bones, tools, weapons, and miscellaneous refuse lie scattered over the floor.



Look of Love

This room is the lair of the aforementioned grimlocks. Originally 30 in number, only 10 remain. Each has its own pallet to sleep upon, with any other possessions simply scattered about. If the PCs search the room, however, they will find a few valuable items and coins. Altogether, 34 gp, 91 sp, 114 cp, one 10 gp gem, a dagger with a dented golden hilt worth 25 gp, and a flask of oil can be found, as well as a vast array of old, worthless junk and some rather disgusting remains and waste.

Grimlocks (10): AC 5; MV 12; HD 2; hp 10 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SA Nil; SD Immune to spells and attacks involving vision; SW Loud noise blinds them, reducing attack rolls by -2; SZ M (6' tall); ML 11; Int Avg (8); AL NE; XP 35.

3. Hall

After the crude cave entrance and the disgusting guards' room, you are most surprised to enter an elegant and tastefully appointed reception hall. Well-crafted statuary lines both long walls with heavy, red curtains hung majestically behind them. Red carpet of the same material leads up to a matching set of light gray, stone chairs. The chairs are intricately carved, complementing (rather than competing with) the natural veins of a greenish stone. To the right and left, on either side of these chairs, are stone doors bound in iron.

This is a room used to entertain visitors that the medusae want to impress rather than simply eat (or at least impress before they eat). Such guests used to include drow, duergar, and other subterranean races. Since they have not entertained for many years, the medusae use this as a sitting room to relax and talk.

Each statue is unique: a beautiful maiden, a powerful knight, a wizened sage, etc. Close examination and a successful Intelligence check reveal that each has a subtle expression of fear or surprise on its face. The statues are, of course, petrified humans and demihumans. Chaolosh has driven a small nail into the back of each of the statue's heads, however, so should they ever be "rescued" with a *stone to flesh* spell, they will instantly die. The medusae kept only those statues that did not have obvious or exaggerated expressions of horror on their faces.

The door to the left (the one leading to the medusae's suite, area 6) is locked. The other is not.

After the PCs have spent two or three rounds in

this room, Chaolosh appears from behind them, having just returned to the lair.

A voice, familiar in its accent and lack of emotion, is heard from behind you. "You were fools to come here. If you have harmed Vallasta, you will know the true meaning of vengeance."

Standing at the entrance to the hall is the hairless, muscular man wearing the kilt. His eyes are dark, and his fists are clenched at his sides.

At this point, Chaolosh waits momentarily for a response. He knows that Vallasta can take care of herself, and that she is probably alive and waiting in the salon. However, if she is hurt, he is ready to tear into the PCs with unbridled fury. Strangely enough, he is not very upset over the slaying of the grimlocks. He was never fond of the barbaric creatures, and he always felt that they gave Vallasta a false sense of security (for, in the end, they did not provide much protection).

Basically, these are the PCs' options:

Talk: They can try to reason with the maedar, but no matter what they say, he wants them out of his lair and wants to ensure the safety of Vallasta. He's perfectly willing to resort to violence.

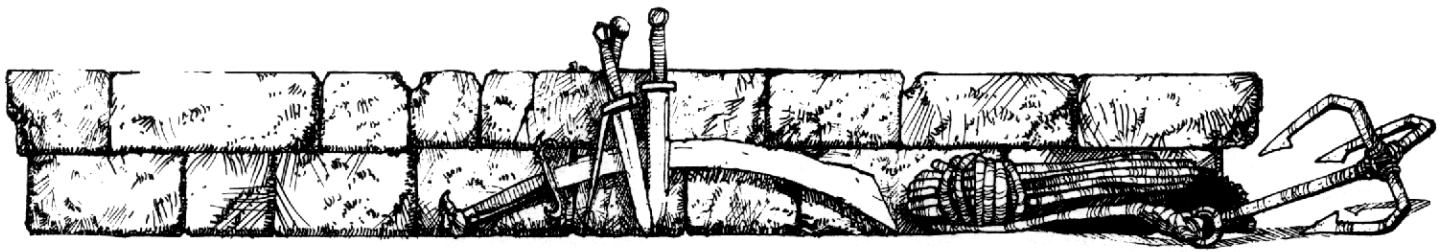
Fight: The PCs can attack Chaolosh, but after one round Vallasta comes to the sounds of combat, and is infuriated at seeing her lover harmed or even threatened.

Flee: If the PCs try to flee out of the lair, Chaolosh will not try to stop them. Instead, he will only make sure that they get all the way out. If, however, they try to flee deeper into the lair, the maedar pursues and attacks.

4. Larder

Another room filled with statuary. While all are astounding in their quality, it is an odd collection. Deer, rabbits, birds, reptiles, rodents, and other animals have their likenesses perfectly captured in stone. These statues sit on the floor on one of two long, wooden tables, or on one of many shelves set into the walls. Further, statues of two humans, an orc, and an elf are here, but they have startled or even terrified expressions on their faces.

This room is used to store petrified victims. Then, depending on what the evil masters of the lair wish to eat, Chaolosh turns one or more of them



Look of Love

back to flesh and kills them before they can once again gaze upon Vallasta.

A small ceramic urn on one of the shelves is filled with petrified insects. These, as well as the other statues, are worth money as exquisite sculpture or simple curiosities. Prices garnered would depend on the condition they were in when they reached the buyer (most are very delicate), but could range from 1 to 100 gp or more each.

There is a secret door behind a false wall section that can be pushed backward or pulled away from the wall. This leads to the shrine.

5. Shrine

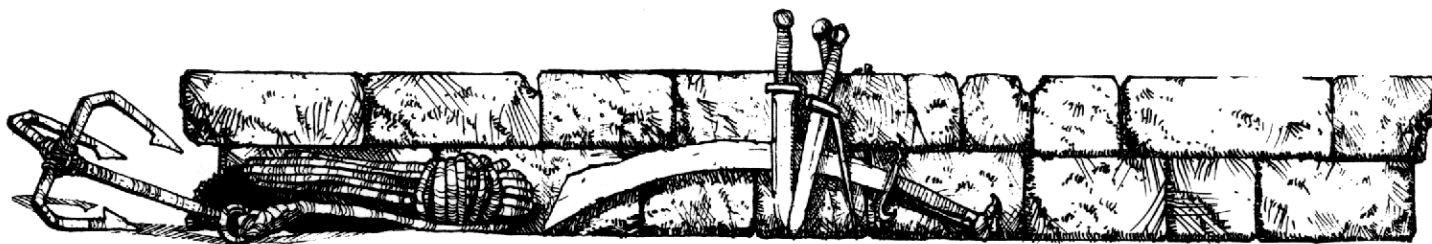
A palpable feeling of dread passes over you like a chill as you enter this small room. At first you think that the only thing in the room is a large, ebony stone, carved in the likeness of a medusa's head with a flat spot on top surrounded by snakes. This strange sculpture is 3 feet wide and horrifying in its visage. Only after a few seconds do you realize that human and

demihuman skulls litter the corners of the room, as if cast off casually by someone standing near the black stone carving.

The stone medusa head is an altar dedicated to Vallasta's patron, the evil goddess Kali. Vallasta sacrifices all of the intelligent prey that she petrifies after Chaolosh restores them to flesh but before they are eaten. The medusae eat everything but the heads, which are left on the altar until completely decayed, after which the skulls are cast off and a new victim is sought.

Anyone closely examining the head will see the blood stains, and any priest or paladin will immediately recognize it to be an evil altar. One of the carved snakes on the altar can be moved like a lever, opening yet another secret door. This heavy stone door slides to one side revealing a rough-hewn passage. The tunnel leads for miles, descending the entire way, into the subterranean underworld of the drow, illithids, duergar, and other races. Vallasta once had great traffic with these creatures, but remains at home more now that she has a mate.





Look of Love

6. Salon

"By Kali, you've come to your doom this time, humans. Look into the eyes of your destroyer!"

At this point, if the PCs look into the room for any reason, they must make saving throws vs. petrification. Vallasta is waiting, ready for battle.

When the PCs encounter Vallasta this time, however, whether here or in the Hall (area 3) if she comes out to help Chaolosh, the lair is also invaded by grell after the third round of combat.

There are four grell this time, and they seek to destroy everyone. The medusa will turn to attack these new monsters (although there is still a 25% chance each round that a random character will need to make a saving throw vs. petrification if they remain in the fight, as she glances around to survey the battle). The grell, having no eyes, are immune to her gaze attack, but not the venom of her snake-hair or weapons.

Chaolosh, if present, continues attacking the PCs unless he sees Vallasta in trouble. Vallasta, being more hot-tempered, will not concern herself with the fate of the maedar—unless he is killed. At that point, she will do whatever she can to destroy everything in sight, attacking with a +1 to attack and damage rolls.

Vallasta, medusa, P6: AC 1 (*cloak of displacement* and chaos powers); MV 9; HD 7; hp 50; THAC0 13; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg 1d4 or 1d4+1 (*dagger* +1) or 1d6+1 (x2—*longbow* +1); SA Poisonous bite or poisoned dagger and arrows, gaze causes petrification within 30'; SD Immune to heat and cold, first attacks miss because of *cloak of displacement*; SW Mirror reflects gaze; MR 25%; SZ M (6'5" tall); ML 18; Int Genius (17); AL CE; XP 6,000.

Notes: The chaos effect has given her all abilities shown above not normal to medusae; characters hear a far-off ringing sound (the chaos bell) while in battle with her.

Personality: Domineering, overconfident

Special Equipment: Dagger +1, longbow +1, *cloak of displacement*

Spells (3/3/2): 1st—*bless*, *cure light wounds*, *darkness*; 2nd—*charm person* or *mammal*, *hold person*, *silence* 15'R; 3rd—*dispel magic*, *meld into stone*.

Since the disappearance of the *waning star*, Vallasta has gained new powers. She believes they come from Kali, when in fact they are part of the chaos effect. Vallasta long ago made a pact with the wizard Dyr (see Introduction) to gain more power, and thought that he had cheated her. In fact, his spells of chaos are only now coming to effect. She has not even revealed these new powers to Chaolosh yet, and so he does not understand her feelings of virtual invulnerability.

7. Suite

This beautifully appointed chamber is obviously the home of the mated couple. A huge bed dominates the room, but there is also a fine wooden table, two chairs, a night stand with a lighted oil lamp, two unlit braziers, and a wooden wardrobe.

Though the silk sheets on the bed, china on the table, and even the furnishings themselves are all worth a great deal of money, the real treasure is within the wardrobe.

Hanging in the wardrobe is fine clothing for both medusa and maedar, as well as perfumes and cosmetics. However, the wardrobe has a false back that hides a large compartment. Here can be found a bag of coins (123 gp, 239 sp) and a jewelry box containing 10 pieces of jewelry worth 3d10x10 gp each. Lastly, potions of *extra-healing*, *fire resistance*, and *growth* are kept here for emergencies.

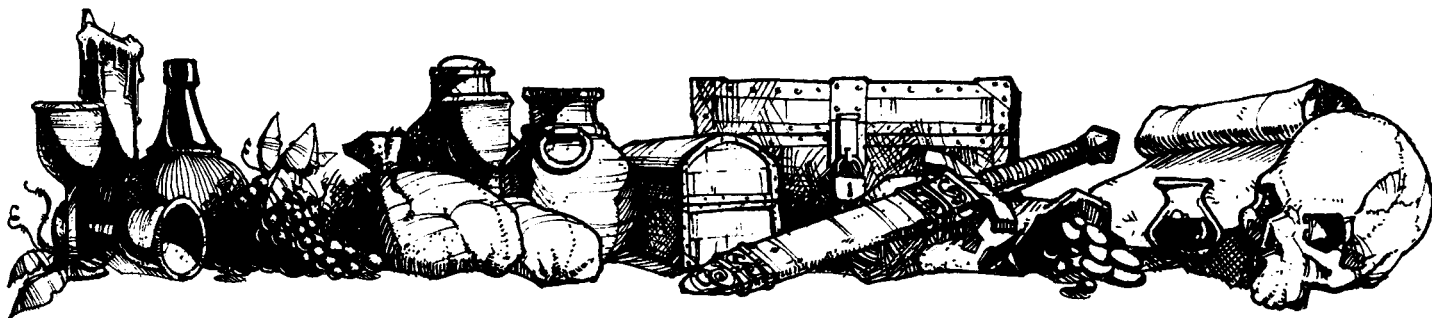
The Grell Community

The group of invading grell, their leaders and lair, are all out of the scope of this adventure, but the DM is free to devise his own adventures based on their presence if the PCs choose to investigate.

If all of the grell in this adventure are slain, or even just those in the last encounter, the remaining grell realize that the risk from moving into this territory is too great.

Conclusion

For the most part, this is a kill or be killed adventure. Because of their evil natures, neither the grell nor the medusae can truly be reasoned with or rendered nonthreatening. The surrounding communities and other travelers will always be at risk with either group of monsters about.



Frost and Thorn

"The power of magic is one worthy of respect. That I now know.

"That summer we found ourselves in the dry wastelands of the west. Tiarath's horse died from the heat, and the others weren't looking good. If we didn't find water soon, we knew that we would all would be dead within two days.

"Then Alvarm felt it. A snowflake on his cheek.

"I told them that we could hardly ignore such an omen and should follow where the wind was blowing from. Sure enough, it led us to a hidden valley, one filled with snow and ice. It was enough to save us, but soon we discovered that the wintry weather was a terrible plague upon those who lived there, and threatened many lives. Worse, this strange, unnatural cold brought horrible monsters unknown to those parts.

"I was all for helping those poor folks, but it took a priestess named Hira to convince the other two. Soon the four of us found ourselves trekking through a horrible blizzard looking for the source of the magical winter."

DM's Notes

Frost and Thorn is an adventure for characters of 6th or 7th level. This scenario can be inserted between other larger quests in a campaign, although its significance is not diminished by its length. No doubt the players will see the profundity of a power that can change the weather.

It is set in a valley located in a dry, warm region, but it can be transplanted anywhere that wintry weather would be strikingly out of season.

To incorporate into an existing campaign, the DM may wish to place the Valley of Thorns in the path of the PCs as they travel from one place to another. Otherwise, the adventurers can hear about the strange, cold weather and travel there to see if they can do anything to help.

Background

The chaos effect, because of the absence of the *waning star*, is growing in intensity. In the Valley of Thorns, the effect takes the form of an unseasonable, terribly harsh winter, torn from the mind of an old, ailing frost giant. This giant, Uniir, was trapped long ago in the valley by a group of adventurers, forced to endure its long, hot sum-

mers. Only in winter can Uniir's strength be restored, and the Valley of Thorns is unused to snow and cold to any great degree.

In fact, it is the dry, warm weather which caused Uniir to be banished here by a magical item crafted by a wizard who lived in the much colder north. The *wand of cruel banishment* was used by a group of humans who were battling Uniir for his treasure. The frost giant has been here for 15 years.

Now, however, the chaos effect has come, as well as the strange ringing sound that always accompanies it. The effect has also summoned creatures native to the cold regions to populate the newly frozen realm: yeti, ice trolls, and more. All of this has brought Uniir his greatest wish. He seeks now only destruction and revenge for his torment.

The Valley of Thorns

As shown on the map, this valley is long and narrow, created by a fast-moving river called the Rhundis. On the banks of this river, white roses grow thickly on thorn-covered vines, giving the valley its name.

Two villages are located in the valley, one at its mouth and one deeper in. Varawa is at the mouth of the valley where the Rhundis plunges over Rose Falls and into the more fertile lowlands to the south and east. This town is where the PCs will be introduced to the adventure and encounter Hira, a priestess with a mission.

The small town of Rhund supports itself with the raising of cattle, which are taken to Varawa on barges and eventually to other communities. Varawa is a larger community whose people are vegetable farmers. The people of both towns are dark of hair and complexion, usually wearing loose-fitting white tunics or light robes.

Varawa

By the time the PCs get to Varawa, either by accident or by design, winter has gripped the valley for two weeks. The entire area is covered in 5 to 6 feet of snow and the river is filled with ice (but not completely frozen over yet).

Many of the people of the valley have fled, but others stayed. At first, they believed that it was a



fluke and that it would end quickly. Even when they knew that it was no mere random happenstance, they thought it would eventually end. Now, most are convinced that it is magic, but they still believe that it can be overcome.

The cold has spread. It originated deeper within the valley, it is said, but its radius is growing. It will be a threat to larger communities farther out as the winter storm grows.

Far ahead of you, a small town rests, nestled between two sharp inclines that tower over it. Thrusting out of this narrow valley, to the east of the community, is a narrow river that plunges over the side of a cliff beyond the vale.

Incongruously, a cold wind spills out from the valley, carrying with it snow and ice into the warm environment around you. You can feel it even at this distance, and as you move forward, the temperature drops noticeably.

At this point, if the characters were not heading for Varawa intentionally, their curiosity is probably going to be piqued. It is obvious to them that by the time they get to the village, they will be in the grip of a winter storm. As the PCs approach Varawa, read the following.

Closer in, the town appears to be held in the grip of an unnatural storm. Snow has piled up in drifts against stone buildings never meant

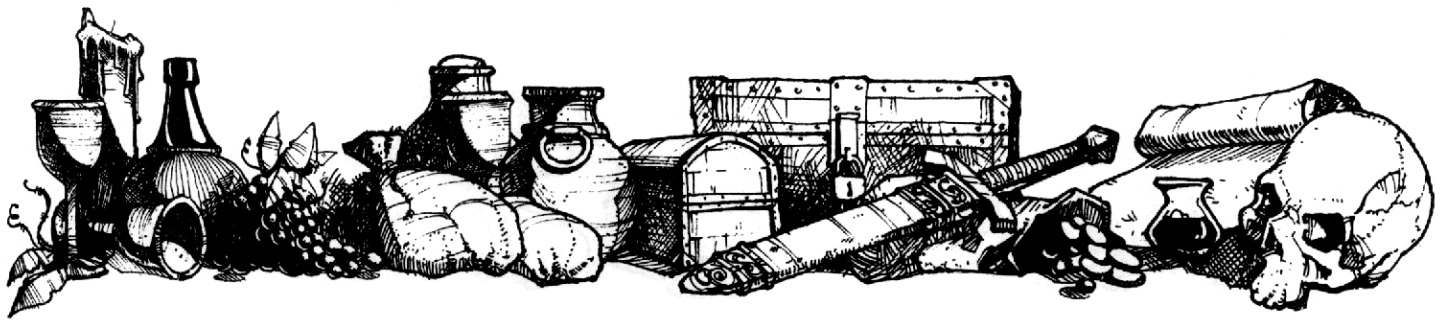
to keep out the cold. Unshuttered windows are now covered with cloth and wood. Smoke pours from recently created crude smoke holes in each structure. No people are present—everyone must be hiding from the storm.

It is likely that the PCs are not dressed appropriately for the cold temperatures and winds. If they enter Varawa, they will want to get inside shelter as quickly as possible. Luckily, just on the edge of town is a tavern called the *Song and Ale*. Any character who stays outside unprotected for more than 15 minutes begins suffering damage at a rate of 1 hp per 10 minutes.

Once inside the tavern, read the following.

Inside the tavern, it seems you have entered a wartime shelter rather than a drinking house. An armed guard stands nearby, turning to face you immediately as you enter. Behind him, people of all ages huddle around a fire. The fire pit appears to be recently dug, and smoke hangs in the air because of the poor ventilation. The people look more than just cold—they are frightened, tired, and low in spirits. "What do you want?" the door guard demands.

It will not be hard for the PCs to assure the guard that they mean no harm. They are obviously not winter-related monsters, which is what he is



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supposed to be guarding against (the town was recently attacked by a pack of yeti and only narrowly drove them off).

Normally in Varawa, all cooking is done on outside fires, as fires aren't needed for heating homes. The PCs can join the others in warming themselves by the fire and get something to eat or drink if they wish. The owner of the *Song and Ale* is Sahr, a robust woman who is doing her best to help provide food, warmth, and shelter to the people left in the community.

From the conversations of others, the PCs can determine the following:

- The wintry weather began about two weeks ago. It shows no sign of stopping.
- Only about 120 people remain in town. More than 200 have left, and over 30 have died from the cold and the more recent monster attacks. Those that remain are determined to wait out the storm—they will not leave their homes.
- No one knows for sure where the cold and the monsters came from, but it started deeper in the valley and spread outward. It is continuing to spread. Most believe that it is magical in origin.
- There is a smaller town deeper in the valley called Rhund. No one has heard from Rhund in days.

The people are friendly, but weary. They have gotten very little sleep in the last few days because of the cold and fear of monster attacks.

After the PCs have learned a little about the situation, Hira comes to them.

As you warm yourselves, a woman approaches you. She is in her early thirties, with long black hair pulled tightly back behind her head. Clothed in blue robes with makeshift cloth bindings about her to keep warm, she carries a wooden staff with a blue gemstone at its top.

"Excuse me," she says, "but could I ask for a moment of your time?" She sits. "My name is Hira, and I am a shepherd of the Lady of Blue, protector of this valley. It is my duty and obliga-

tion to travel deeper into the storm and determine how the people of Rhund fare." She pauses, obviously thinking some faraway thought for a moment. She sighs and continues.

"I am aware of my limitations—I cannot make the journey alone. The path is fraught with danger. However, I have no wish to take from Varawa any of the strong defenders that are left. You are obviously individuals of skill and power. Is there any way I can persuade you to aid me?"

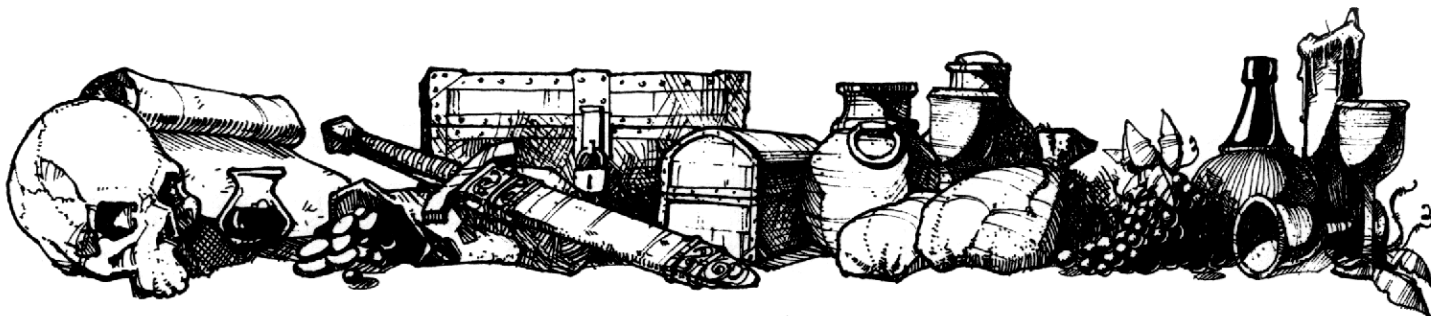
The Lady of Blue, or the blue goddess, is a local deity. She is a protective, lawful good power of home and hearth. Hira is a devout priestess who sincerely and effectively watches over the people of Varawa.

Hira is obviously troubled, however, and there is more to her worry than the people of Rhund. Her younger brother, Marhl, traveled to Rhund just before the storm came. She has no idea what became of him.

Should the characters ask for money, she can offer the meager sum of 10 gp per person. However, she will rely more on their sense of decency and charity than their need for payment. If the PCs agree, Hira will be as accommodating as she can be in regard to waiting until they have rested and equipped themselves. She will show them how to take extra garments and blankets and wrap them about a body to ward off the cold—a skill she has had to develop quickly. Everything must be wrapped, especially feet.

She tries to provide the characters with anything they feel they need (including food), but the DM should keep in mind that Varawa has only those items which would be found in a simple, warm-weather community.

The journey normally takes eight to ten hours on foot, but Hira fears that in the storm, the journey will take twice that long. Horses are uncommon in this region, but if the player characters wish to ride their horses they will find that the horses cannot move appreciably faster than men in the storm. Hira also tells the PCs that the trail they must follow may not be easy for horses—there will be rocky patches where the party will need to climb up or down a bit, and now those places will be covered in ice. Smart PCs will leave their horses in Varawa (or even outside the valley altogether).



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Hira, hf, P6: AC 5 (chain mail); MV 12; hp 35; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (staff); SA spells; SD spells; SZ M (5' 5" tall); ML 15; AL NG.

S 12, D 10, C 14, I 15, W 17, Ch 14.

Personality: Kind, giving, selfless

Special Equipment: gem of seeing (set into top of staff)

Spells (5/5/4): 1st—*bles*s, *command*, *cure light wounds* (x2), *light*; 2nd—*augury*, *chant*, *hold person*, *resist cold* (x2); 3rd—*create food and water*, *cure disease*, *dispel magic*, *prayer*.

Though I Walk Through the Valley

Heading into the valley means heading into the blizzard. Things get much worse as a character goes deeper into the storm. The following modifications apply to all characters (but not monsters

accustomed to the cold) while in the blizzard:

-1 on melee attack rolls

-2 on missile attack rolls

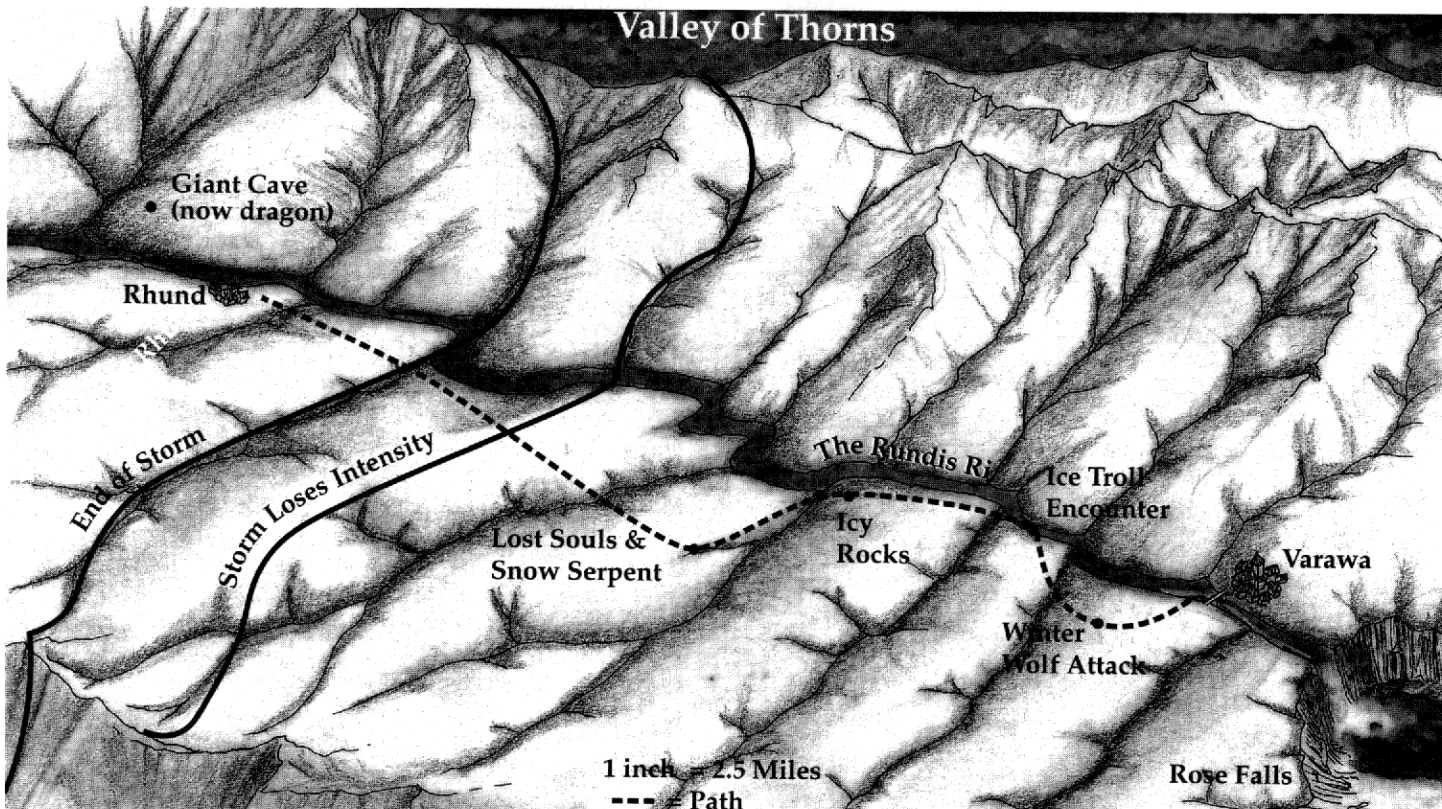
-1 on Str, Dex, and Con checks

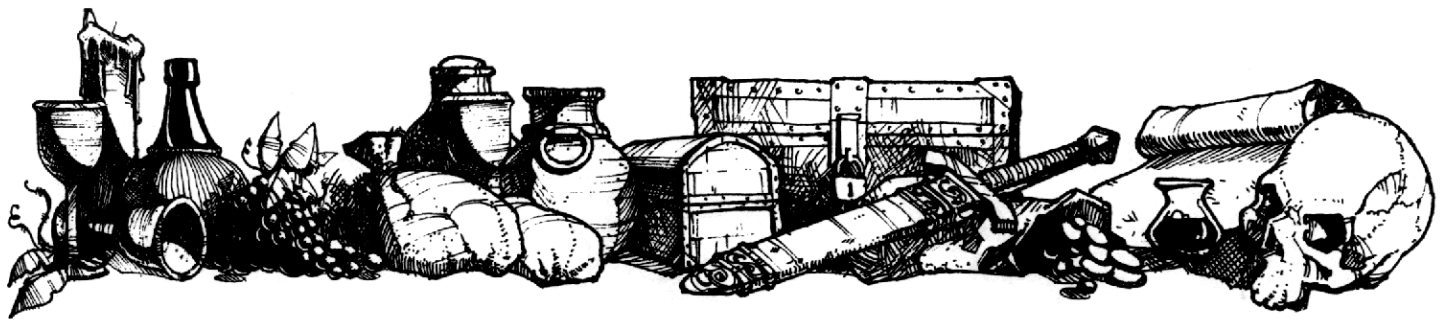
1d6 x 10 feet visibility maximum

characters must be very close (1 or 2 feet apart) to speak

Assuming the characters wear at least moderately protective clothing or wraps, they will not suffer points of damage from the cold until they have been out in the snow for more than 12 hours. After this length of time, they each take 1 point of damage for every 4-hour period without warmth of some kind (a fire, or shelter such as a cave).

The storm before you blows head-on into your face. Airborne ice crystals sting your eyes and bite at your cheeks. The blizzard presents itself as a virtually impenetrable wall that is always ahead of you. Now and again, particularly





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when the cold wind blows very hard, in the distance you hear a ringing sound—perhaps the tolling of a large bell.

Hounds of the Storm

The characters make their way for two hours before the first sign of real trouble. As the PCs advance through the blizzard, they encounter a small pack of winter wolves.

From far off, you hear a howling cry. You have heard it before, but then you thought it was the wind. Now, you know it to be something else. Despite the wind driving the bitter ice and snow into your face and eyes, you see what seems to be darting movement. Eyes stare out of the storm at you—suddenly accompanied by fangs...

The wolves attack immediately out of hunger. If more than two of them are killed, however, they retreat back into the storm. Brandishing any sort of magical fire will also drive them off.

Winter wolves (5): AC 5; MV 18; HD 6; hp 25, 28, 30, 34, 40; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4; SA Breathe cold once every 10 rounds for 6d4 damage to all within 10 ft. (save for half damage); SD Immune to cold; SW Heat inflicts +1 per die of damage; SZ L (9'-12' long); ML 13; Int Ave (9); AL NE; XP 975.

The River

Five hours after their encounter with the wolves, the path of the characters takes them near the River Rhundis.

The storm lightens slightly, allowing you to see and hear the roaring River Rhundis not far off to the side of your path. This portion of the river is open, but the banks are filled with ice. Occasionally, chunks of this ice break off and flow downstream, carried by the powerful current.

If the characters approach the river or study it closer, read the following text.

As you watch, a chunk of ice, freed by the river's flow, begins to move against the current. Slowly it rises out of the water and seems to take on a huge, humanlike shape, its long fingers resembling daggers made of ice.

If the PCs do not watch the river, their chance of surprise is modified by a -1 penalty.

Ice trolls begin rising out of the water and attacking. They avoid getting too far from the river, however, since their regeneration works only in water. In fact, they will prefer to wait until the PCs approach the riverside to attack, but if it looks as though the party will pass by without going near the water, they will attack anyway.

One of their number always remains in the water, hurling daggers made of ice shards (+4 damage for high Strength, -1 because they're ice, for a net +3 damage bonus).

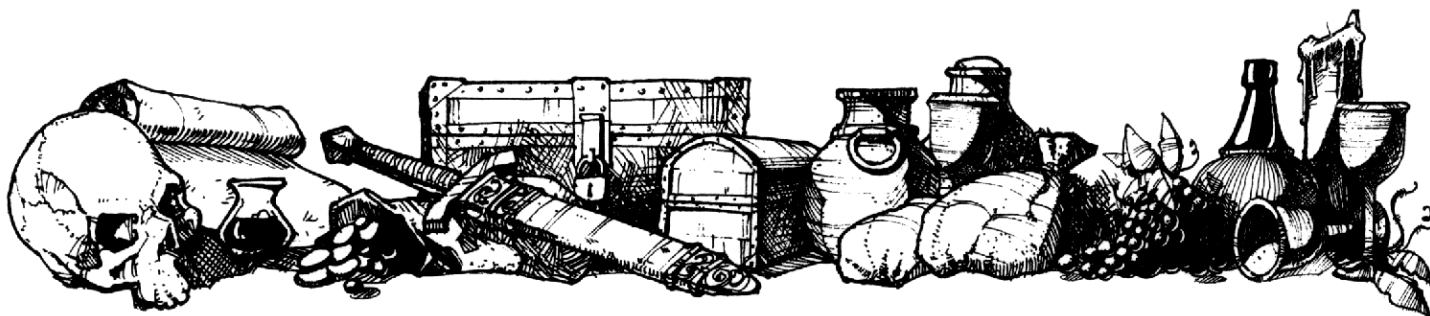
Lastly, the ice trolls have prepared the area in which the battle occurs with traps. They dug pits and then filled them with lightly packed snow. There is a 1 in 10 chance, per round, that a character will fall into one of these pits. No damage is inflicted, but a Strength check is required to hang on to whatever the character is holding (if anything), and a full round is required for the character to pull himself out of the trap (no other activity is possible). The trolls will take full advantage of fallen characters, striking at them with a +4 bonus to hit.

The trolls have accumulated no treasure in this new lair of theirs.

Ice troll (10): AC 8; MV 9; HD 2; hp 12 each; THAC0 19; #AT 2; Dmg 1d8/1d8; SA Nil; SD Regenerate 2 hp per round when in water; SW Double damage from heat, edged weapons sever limbs on a roll of 20; SZ L (8' tall); ML 11; Int Avg. (10); AL CE; XP 175.

Ice and Stone

As Hira said, there are some rocky patches where the travelers must do some easy climbing. If characters ask why the path is so rugged, she replies that most significant travel through the valley utilized the river.



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The ice and snow, however, have made the easy hike into a dangerous one. An hour after the encounter with the ice trolls, the characters are forced to scramble up a long, rocky incline. Each character must make a Dexterity check with a -1 penalty. Thieves can make climbing checks (unmodified, as the easy nature of the climb and the treacherousness of the ice cancel each other out). Those that fail slip on the rocks and fall, suffering 1d2 points of damage and causing a 3d10 minute delay.

Lost Souls

After the adventurers pass these icy rocks, they can travel uninterrupted through the blizzard for four more hours before they have another encounter.

Two people from Rhund stumble into the path of the PCs. These poor souls are bound in rags, but bare patches of skin can be seen, red and peeling from frostbite. They do not seem to notice, however, because both of them have been driven mad by the blizzard and the terrifying events in Rhund.

These two townspeople, a small, thin man and a large, rotund woman, are so insane that the PCs are not going to be able to communicate with them in a normal fashion. Neither will answer any questions, although the woman will rave on and on about "defending against the giant—no the dragon—no! They fight, but we die. We all die." The man stares into space, completely silent.

Hira will insist that she and the PCs do everything they can to help these two, but there will not be long to debate, because as the party deals with the insane wanderers, they are attacked by a snow serpent that had been stalking the pair (it will attack them first). More than likely, the two nameless people will be killed before the party can slay or drive off the snow serpent.

Snow serpent: AC 6; MV 9; HD 10; hp 54; THAC0 11; #AT 2; Dmg 1d4/2d10; SA Successful hit on first attack indicates victim is trapped in coils, both attacks are automatic after that; SD Immune to cold; SZ G (100 ft. long); ML 10; Int Animal (1); AL N; XP 2,000.

Rhund

After the encounter with the mad townspeople, the PCs have at least some small idea of what awaits them in Rhund. At the very least, they know that things are not good there. Indeed, they are correct. One advantageous facet of Rhund, however, is that it is out of the storm.

The PCs will notice that the storm loses its intensity at a point where Hira tells them that they are still two hours from Rhund. An hour's travel later and the PCs find themselves staring at a sun-drenched open snow field with only a light, cold breeze. The air is still intensely cold, but the blizzard is gone. This is because the winter storm is spreading outward and away from Rhund. It has passed through this area, which now sits untouched, like the eye of a wintry hurricane.

First Sight

When the PCs get within visual distance of Rhund, read the following:

Built upon a hill with one of the steep valley sides behind it, the little village of Rhund is obviously held captive by the snow and ice which have blanketed it and the surrounding lands. Trees never meant to bear the burden of heavy snow bend, bow, and even break under the weight. Thorny rose bushes, for which the valley is named, choke and die from the ice.

From where you stand, it looks as though there is activity on the far side of the village, but nothing near you—nothing that you can discern at this distance, anyway.

As they get closer, read the following:

You hear the sounds of construction. Closer still, you begin to see people in the village, and it appears that they are tearing apart their homes. This activity makes little sense in the biting cold, but it is undeniable. They break apart the stone and wood, bringing it to the far side of the village. Among the people you see large apelike creatures covered in long, white

fur. They seem to menace and guard the workers, like cruel taskmasters.

Now is not the time for rash action. Charging in to save the townspeople will bring all 10 yeti and the frost giant into a large, open combat—one which the PCs probably could not win.

The Battlefield

As the PCs make their way into the town, they cross through the site of a large battle.

You make your way into the obviously enslaved village. Looking down, you notice a peculiar thing. You stand within the site of a huge struggle. Trees are toppled, others are covered with a thick coating of ice—thicker than trees exposed to the storm. The snow and earth is all tumbled about. Looking closely, you can make out prints. One is a humanlike track of a booted foot over 2 feet long! The other is the same size or larger, but in the shape of a clawed talon.

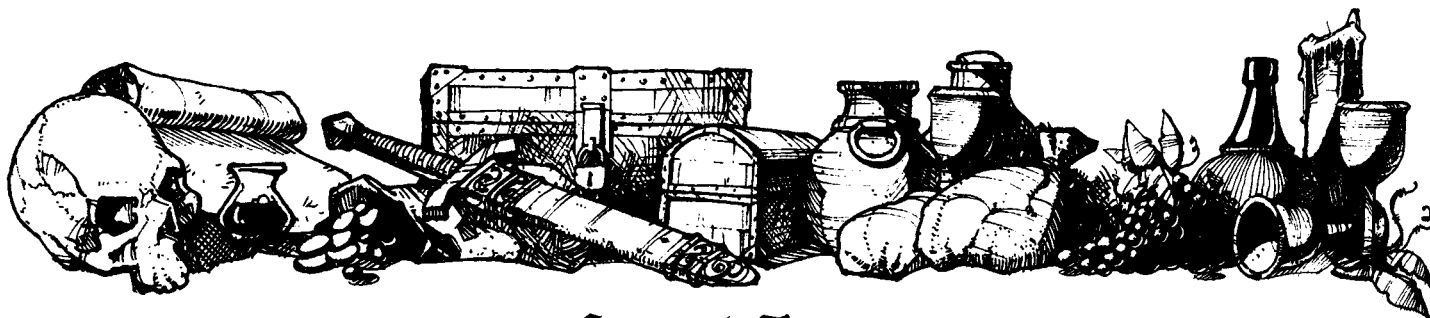
This is where Uniir had a battle with a juvenile white dragon, which was also summoned by the storm. The battle, which occurred eight days prior, ended with the giant driving off the beast. Uniir, however, is convinced that he needs a fortress to protect himself from such threats—especially if he is to be the lord of this new frozen realm as he now sees himself.

Entering Town

Uniir used to live in a cave by the river where the warm valley was at its coolest. No one knew of his existence, although tales were occasionally told of some monster that was seen hunting deer or other animals. He could never leave for any significant amount of time (long enough to escape), because he could not survive the heat. Now the giant makes his lair in the small town, having enslaved its populace and forced them to build him a castle. His yeti servants work the people while he waits in the town hall, the only building currently large enough to hold him.

The townspeople are terrified, weary, and dangerously ill from the cold, but Uniir does not care. When they have served their usefulness, the people will feed him and his yeti for some time. There are 83 people left alive (one is Hira's





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brother), and 39 have died, either from the cold, from the work, or under the giant's heel for resisting his tyranny.

Uniir has placed a white pudding at the entrance to the town hall as a guardian. Inside, he's demolished the floor of the second story, so that there is enough room for him to stand erect within the building.

All 10 yeti work the people all day long, resting only at night. The yeti have claimed a large home next to the town hall as their lair.

White pudding: AC 8; MV 9; HD 9; hp 50; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 7d4; SA Dissolve animal and vegetable material in one round; SD 50% chance to be mistaken for ice and snow, immune to acid, cold and poison, lightning bolt causes it to divide; SZ M (7-ft. diameter); ML Special; Int Non- (0); AL N; XP 1,400

Yeti (10): AC 6; MV 15; HD 4+4; hp 20 each; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6/1d6; SA If claw attack roll is 20, victim is squeezed for 2d8 damage, if surprised, opponent is paralyzed with fear for 3 rounds during which claw and squeeze attacks hit automatically; SD invisible in snow if 10 ft. or more away, immune to normal cold; SW damage from heat is increased by 50%; SZ L (8 ft. tall); ML 13; Int Avg (9); AL N; XP 420.

Uniir, frost giant: AC 0 (chain mail); MV 12; HD 14+4; hp 74 (but down to 63 from battle with dragon); THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 or 2d8+9 (battle axe); SA Hurl rocks up to 200 yds. for 2d10 damage; SD Immune to cold; SZ H (21 ft. tall); ML 14; Int Avg (9); AL CE; XP 7,000.

The Enemy of My Enemy

While the PCs can try to isolate some of the yeti and ambush them, or sneak into the giant's lair while he sleeps, or charge right in and do battle with everything in sight, there is a less obvious option available to them.

The dragon, Fryggarilomos, has taken up residence in the cave by the river where Uniir once lived. Any of the townspeople can tell the PCs which direction the dragon flew after losing its fight with the giant.

If the PCs approach Fryggarilomos with the idea of an alliance against the giant, the dragon will gladly accept (probably plotting to betray them later, although that may not be an issue—see below). With her help, the PCs should be able to overcome Uniir.

Fryggarilomos, juvenile white dragon: AC 1; MV 12, Fl 40 (C), Br 6, Sw 12; HD 11; hp 69; THAC0 9; #AT 3+special; Dmg 1d6+4/1d6+4/2d8+4; SA Breathe cold cone 70 ft. long, 25 ft. wide at the base inflicting 4d6+4 damage (save for half) once every three rounds; SD Immune to cold; SZ H (30 ft. long, 25 ft. tail); ML 15; Int Low (7); AL CE; XP 8,000.

Conclusion

Only with the death of Uniir can the wintry weather be banished. The chaos effect took it from his mind, so he is the source of its power. Upon his demise, the snow and ice melt completely away and the other creatures disappear (including the dragon).

Award each PC an additional 1,000 experience points for banishing the weather and freeing the valley.

If she survived and an NPC is a desirable addition to the group, Hira can join the PCs on further adventures. Otherwise, she can serve as a valuable contact and resource for clerical matters.



The Mistake

"By this time, we'd made something of a name for ourselves. Why, in some circles, we were thought of as heroes and treated like kings! A reputation—even a good reputation—can come back to haunt you, though. Remember that!

"No, this time, our reputation led a couple of gnomes to us, asking for our aid. These were the dirtiest, foulest little beasts I'd seen since we wandered into that goblin den a couple of years earlier.

"They told us that some evil woman had taken over their clan and threatened the whole region. Alvarm recognized these smelly little brutes to be an evil strain of gnome, and we were ready to dismiss them altogether, but then we heard them refer to a peculiar ringing sound whenever she was around, and we knew that we were going to have to check their story out.

"More than anything, I just wanted to know what that ringing sound was."

DM's Notes

This scenario is for characters of levels 7 and 8. A small group is acceptable, and even perhaps desirable, as the PCs are going to want to be able to infiltrate the monsters' lair.

Like the rest of the adventures in this book, *The Mistake* can be inserted virtually anywhere and anytime into an existing campaign. With little or no modification, it can be adapted to any fantasy setting.

How the adventure begins is up to the DM. The PCs are contacted by two spriggan gnomes in a local tavern, on the road, or anywhere appropriate. The PCs are chosen because of their reputation as powerful heroes.

Background

People have been disappearing from the County of Abarnaise for years. The locals have generally attributed it to a group of slavers that lives in the nearby hills. The locals are right. A clan of spriggan gnomes dwells in the caves found in the hills, and they frequently raid merchant caravans and attack lone travelers, apprehending them and selling them to willing buyers—evil humans, drow, duergar, giants, humanoids, etc.

Recently, however, the clan made a mistake. They waylaid a carriage and apprehended the dri-

ver. Inside, they found a beautiful woman who was asleep and beyond awakening. The spriggans took them both and threw them into the slave pens.

After the sun set, the woman awoke—she was a vampire! She fed on some of her fellow slaves, charmed her guards, and quickly began taking control of the lair. After taking as much vengeance on her former captors as she felt was adequate, the vampire, whose name was Khinava, decided to make the best of her situation and make the slavery ring her own. Not only would these gnomes serve as her personal guard, not only would she take their lair for her own, but she would use them to gather slaves for a huge chaotic army, all under her command!

Khinava has become a tool of the chaos effect sweeping through the land. To further her chances of creating her chaos army, the effect has altered her *charm* power so that she can actually *dominate* those she charms.

The Plea

The PCs are contacted by two spriggan gnomes at some convenient point. It should be noted that these emissaries are going against their natures asking for help, keeping their bad tempers and violent tendencies in check as best they can. They bristle at being called gnomes ("We be spriggans, lame-eye! Can't ye see straight?"), and they refuse to talk directly to any gnome, whether PC or NPC, but will occasionally glance hatefully at them.

The first of the two gnomes has reddish hair, pulled back behind his head and curled in a long handlebar mustache. His ears and nose are large, and his body is thick and sturdy. Most striking, however, is the smell. His body, hair, and clothing are covered with dirt and filth; he smells like rotten eggs. His companion is as filthy or worse with black hair and almost comically pronounced sideburns.

The red-haired one speaks. "Are ye the 'eroes [fill in mispronounced versions of a few of the PC's names here]? We've come a-lookin' fer ye."

Before you can ask who they are or what they want, the little gnome speaks again. "We've a-come 'ere ta ask thine 'elp. Our clan's been overcome by a bell-woman."



If the PCs ask for more information, the gnomes will continue. If they send the gnomes away or reject them in any way, the black-haired gnome grows to his 12-foot height and says, "We came to talk to ye, and we're a-gonna talk!" They'll react similarly if anyone (PC or NPC) tries to tell them to leave if this encounter happens in a public place.

If allowed to continue, read the following:

"She's a wily one, with weird powers and an appetite for thine blood," the crimson-haired fellow says with a wild look. "The vixen's a-taken our folk's minds from 'em, got 'em under a spell or somethin' of the kind.

"We a-heard o' thine prowess in battlin' monsters. This one, she's a monster all right. Her plans're far worse than anythin' we could've ever done to ye. Yer better off with her gone—that's a straight fact.

"We want thee ta rid us of this 'ere blight—fer blight she is upon our kin. 'An this is our offer to ye—free our folk, 'an we be on our way. No spriggan'll trouble yer lands or yer folk. Two threats to ye gone with one stroke. We'll even leave ye with 'alf our remainin' loot.

"Well, what say ye?"

At this point, the PCs may decide that they do not care to help the evil gnomes. Their offer is moot—their threat has already been eliminated. They might also think this is all a trap (although *detect lie* spells and the like will reveal that every word is the truth). Perceptive PCs will note the sincere fear and desperation in the manner and voice of the spriggans—it is no trap. These two just barely escaped with their lives and their minds intact, and their desperation is real.

Some PCs, in particular those who have played in previous adventures, might be curious as to the reference to the "bell-woman." If asked, the spriggans will say "Where'ere she goes, ye can a-hear this ringin' sound far away, like a bell."

No matter what, the spriggans are right—it is in the best interest of the surrounding community if the PCs deal with this threat, before the vampire builds her army of dominated slaves. With the spriggans' description of Khinava and her taste for blood, smart PCs should realize that they will face a vampire and equip themselves appropriately (wooden stakes, holy water, etc.).



The Mistake

Spriggan gnomes: AC 5 (chain mail); MV 9 or 15; HD 4 or 8+4; hp 19 or 40 each; THAC0 17 or 11; #AT 2; Dmg 2d4(x2) (broadsword) +7 (Strength bonus if giant-sized); SA When small, can use the following spell-like powers (once per round): *affect normal fires*, *shatter*, and *scare* (-2 to saving throws); SZ S (3 ft. tall) or L (12' tall); ML 16; Int Avg (9); AL CE; XP 3,000.

Notes: some encountered later in the adventure have other weapons

Thief Abilities: PP 75, OL 78, F/RT 70, MS 77, HS 64, DN 35, CW 81, RL 40.

The Lair

The spriggans (whose names are MacGren and MacGryer) will lead the PCs to their lair, but they will not enter it, nor will they go within a quarter-mile of it. "That's the job o' thee! We's done a deal!" they will say.

The lair is about 10 miles up into the hills. It is located in an area riddled with caves, but the spriggans tell the PCs which cave entrance to use. This is actually a secret back way into the lair, but they warn the PCs that there might still be a guard on watch (fortunately for the PCs, Khinava is not that organized yet—there is no guard). The spriggans will even sketch a very crude map in the dirt for the PCs, but they have very little idea where the vampire makes her home.

If the PCs are discovered by any of the residents of the lair, a cry of alarm will be raised if possible, bringing all of the occupants down upon the PCs' heads. Careful planning and subtlety is the key here.

The DM should note that the map shows a number of crawlspaces. These are for the spriggans to crawl through—only creatures of size S can make it into these narrow passages, and even then they must crawl slowly. These allow the spriggans to move about or escape their lair without fear of attack by larger foes. They will use these to move around, surround and cut off the PCs if possible. All rooms, on the other hand, are very large, to allow the spriggans to grow to giant size.

1. Secret Entrance

The biggest difficulty in using the secret entrance is its size. The spriggans designed it to take advantage of their small form. Thus, the tunnel is only 3 feet in diameter. This means that man-sized creatures must crawl through the passage.

The danger here comes at the end of the tunnel, where it opens into the refuse cave at the back of the lair. All attacks on prone characters are made with a +4 bonus as they crawl into the room.

2. Refuse

The secret entrance comes through a cave filled with waste. A new resident has recently oozed its way in through the unguarded secret passage. An ochre jelly is busily devouring what it can from the refuse, but will gladly strike at fresher meat if it comes in.

Ochre jelly: AC 8; MV 3; HD 6; hp 31; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 3d4; SA Nil; SD *lightning bolts* divide creature into two half-strength jellies; SZ M (6' long); ML 10; Int Non- (0); AL N; XP 270.

3. Cistern

A natural spring here feeds a small pool which provides water for the lair. The room is down a flight of narrow, slippery stairs. Two slimy buckets for hauling water can be found here.

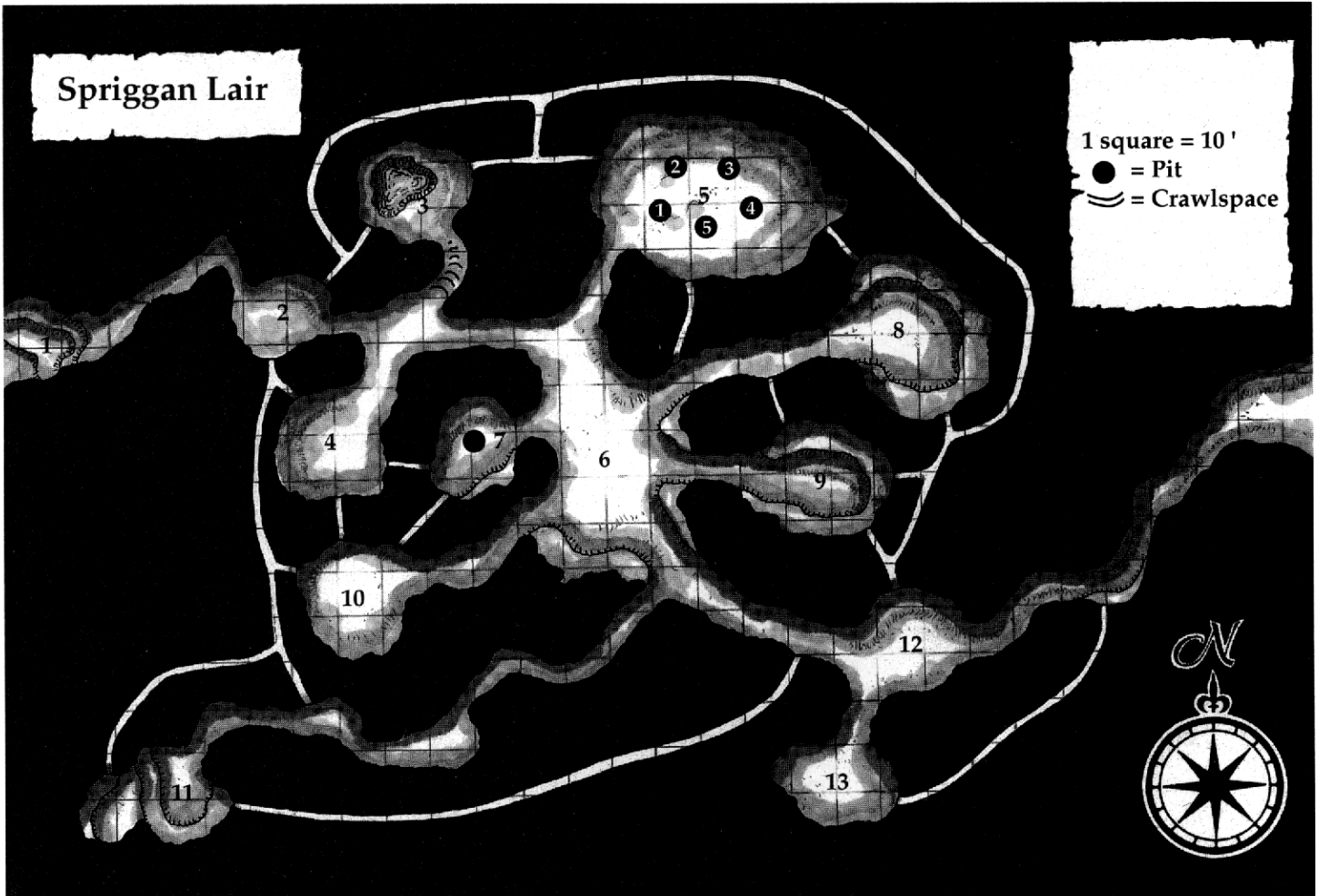
4. Storeroom

This room is filled with boxes, barrels, bales, and crates of stolen goods. All manner of supplies, equipment, and foodstuffs can be found here.

5. The Slave Pens

The pens here are nothing more than pits covered by iron grates held down with large rocks. They are crude but effective. Each pit is 20 feet deep. Prisoners are raised and lowered by a rope with a loop tied in the end. The whole place is dank and foul, but not much more so than the rest of the lair.

Spriggan Lair



A single spriggan armed with a war hammer stands guards here. If attacked, he grows to his large size and immediately opens the pens. Despite the fact that they are still kept in the pens (there is no room for them elsewhere), all of the slaves are dominated by the vampire and will attack intruders.

There are five pens, each containing a different number of slaves:

- Pen #1: 3 male humans and a male elf
- Pen #2: 1 female human
- Pen #3: 2 male bugbears
- Pen #4: 2 male humans and 1 male dwarf
- Pen #5: 2 female humans

Pen #2 also contains the blood-drained corpses of three female humans, slain by Khinava when she woke up there. They are old but show obvious bite-marks on their necks.

Human slaves, 0-level (8): AC 10; MV 12; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (club); SZ M (5'-6' tall); ML 10; Int Avg (10); AL N.

Fanwe, em, F2: AC 9 (Dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (club); SA ; SD 90% immune to *sleep* and *charm*; SZ M (5' 8" tall); ML 13; AL NG.

S 13, D 15, C 10, I 10, W 9, Ch 16.

Personality: Carefree, frivolous (now dominated)

Figgar, dm, T4: AC 8 (Dexterity bonus); MV 9; hp 16; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1 (*dagger* +1); SA x2 backstab; SZ M (4'5" tall); ML 12; AL N.

S 10, D 16, C 12, I 11, W 9, Ch 10.

Personality: Quiet, sly

Special Equipment: he's hidden a *dagger* +1 in his boot

Thief Abilities: PP 45, OL 37, F/RT 45, MS 33, HS 25, DN 15, CW 88, RL 20.

Bugbear slaves (2): AC 5; MV 9; HD 3+1; hp 16, 18; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4 or 1d6+2 (mace); SA -3 on others' surprise; SD Nil; SZ L (7' tall); ML 12; Int Low (7); AL CE; XP 120.

6. Common Room

The spriggans meet here for meals and what little socialization occurs in their society. The room is littered with trash, bones, and refuse. Two long, wooden tables dominate the room, surrounded by numerous chairs. Trophies taken in battle, such as shields bearing local coats of arms, and monster,



The Mistake

human, and gnomish skulls, are hung on the walls.

At any given time there are three or four spriggan females and one or two males here. All are unarmed and unarmored, but can use their great strength in their large form to swing chairs (1d6 damage +7 Strength bonus, usable 1d4 times before they shatter) and even the tables (2d6+7 damage) as formidable weapons. Further, in their smaller forms they will use *shatter* and *scare* to ward off opponents or *affect normal fires* to extinguish their light sources and put outsiders at a disadvantage.

Spriggan females fight as males except that in giant form they have only 7+4 HD and 32 hp.

7. Kitchen

Little more than a larder with a large firepit in the center, this cave serves as the spriggan kitchen. Huge hocks of meat hang on hooks, while other sorts of food are scattered about in various containers, or simply lie on the dirty floor. When the PCs arrive there is no one here, and the pit's fire is out (the spriggans are good at putting out fires).

8. Male Quarters

There's room for a dozen, but only five spriggans are currently here. They will respond wherever they're needed if an alarm is raised, but otherwise they rest here, awaiting orders from Khinava. Six small double bunks fill the room. Various weapons, equipment, and armor lie scattered about. All the spriggans arm themselves with battle axes if a fight breaks out, but only four turn to giant size; two remain in their smaller form to sneak around for a backstab attack with daggers.

9. Female Quarters

Similar in size and appearance to the filthy male quarters, this place houses only three females. They are unarmored and armed with daggers.

10. Child Quarters

Spriggans have no family unit; the young are cared for (barely) by the whole clan. Eight young spriggans are here, but they are noncombatants,

having not yet attained the special powers of adults. They have only piles of leaves and hay to sleep upon, and no weapons or armor at all.

11. Khinava's Chamber

Here was once the chamber of the spriggan leader, but now Khinava the vampire calls this chamber home. If the PCs come by day, she is asleep in her coffin and will not awaken unless roused by her human caretaker. This mysterious individual is a man who fell in love with Khinava years earlier and now serves as her bodyguard—particularly important during sunlit hours. He is not dominated, but he will fight to the death for her. He would selflessly sacrifice his own life for hers without a moment's hesitation.

The head of the spriggan leader is sitting atop a shelf in this room. The clan's treasure is scattered about the room, all of it having been presented to their new master. It includes 873 gp, 544 sp, 3,490 cp, 29 gems worth 1d4x10 gp, 8 pieces of jewelry worth 1d10x10 gp, a golden lamp worth 500 gp, a *decanter of endless water*, and the leader's *battle axe* +2.

If the PCs come at night, Khinava could be found anywhere in the complex. In gaseous form, she can use the crawlspaces to move about the complex or even escape.

Khinava, vampire: AC 1; MV 12, F 18 (C); HD 8+3; hp 49; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+4; SA Touch drains 2 energy levels, gaze dominates, shape change to bat or gaseous form, summon 10d10 bats or rats which arrive in 2d6 rounds, spider climb at will; SD +1 or better weapon to hit, immune to poison, paralysis, sleep, hold and charm, when reduced to 0 hp merely turns to gas; SW Garlic, mirrors, and holy symbols repel, holy water inflicts 1d6+1 damage, sunlight and a wooden stake through the heart destroy; SZ M (5'7" tall); ML 16; Int Exceptional (16); AL CE; XP 8,000.

Notes: Domination power comes from the chaos effect

Like the medusa Vallasta from Adventure Five, Khinava once made an alliance with the wizard Dyr (see Introduction). Only recently has she received her new power from their bargain.

"The caretaker", hm, F7: AC 3 (plate mail); MV 12; hp 71; THAC0 14 (13 with Strength); #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d8+3 (longsword +2, +1 Strength bonus); SZ M (6'1"); ML 18; AL N; XP 975

S 17, D 12, C 18, I 10, W 8, Ch 15.

Personality: Devoted

Special Equipment: long sword +2

12. Guard Room

If someone were to assault the cavern complex, they would have to fight their way through this room. There are always six spriggans on duty here. They are armed with halberds (which normally hang on the wall) and short swords.

The room also contains two long benches and a table, on which a strange game is played with bones and stones.

13. Hounds

The spriggans have kept death dogs here as guards and hunting animals for years. These are well-trained by the spriggans but now serve Khinava.

Death dog (5): AC 7; MV 12; HD 2+1; hp 7, 9, 10, 12, 16; THAC0 19; #AT 2; Dmg 1d10/1d10; SA Bite carries disease (save vs. poison or die in 4d6 days); SD Nil; SZ M (6'. long); ML 11; Int Semi- (3); AL NE; XP 120.

Conclusion

If the vampire is slain permanently or even reduced to 0 hit points, she loses control over those she dominates. The remaining spriggans will be free, as will the slaves. Strangely enough, the vile gnomes remain true to their word and leave the area altogether (though more out of fear of the slayers who killed the vampire than a commitment to their word).

Award lawful characters 200 experience points for every spriggan they *did not* kill, since the spirit of the agreement entailed that there would be some of the spriggans left at the end to be free. Likewise, award each character 300 experience points for every human or demihuman slave that was not killed, even though they were dominated.





elves refused to fight back and interpreted the situation as a sign that perhaps they should leave their new home...

The Letter

At some point (DM's choice), the PCs receive the following letter from their acquaintance, Gyanis. The message is delivered by a human courier who tells the PCs (if asked) that he was given the letter by an elf with greenish-silver skin. The letter reads:

My Dear Friends,

I hope this short missive finds you hale and hearty as always. For myself, I can only say that I am happy to be with my new love, Rhianna. Her every move is filled with grace, and her beauty is unmatched in any kingdom. She is of the elves of the sea, and her people live in a village called Sinnoma.

I have traveled to Sinnoma to convince her father that Rhianna and I should marry and that my only place in life is at her side. He, unfortunately, feels otherwise.

Now all my pleadings may be moot, however, for Sinnoma is threatened by a huge beast that the elves refuse to fight. I have never actually seen the monster, but the elves call it Lamass, father of the air. They feel that he is a powerful spirit of their religion come to exact vengeance for past sins.

I need your help, my friends. For my sake, and for the sake of the love I feel for fair Rhianna, please come to Sinnoma.

Yours,

Gyanis

The letter ends with the exact location of the aquatic elf village on the coast.

On the Road

Cool sea breezes blow in from the relatively calm sea. The shadows grow long, but you are nearing your destination.

Suddenly, you are engulfed in shadow. Something has crossed between you and the setting sun. You hear a mighty flapping of

wings and look up and across the gentle waves to see a creature not unlike a huge lion with great, unfurled wings stretched out across the sunset.

As suddenly as it appeared, it is gone.

This encounter is not a combat encounter. Do not allow the PCs to track or attack the lammasu as it flies by. This is only a foreshadowing and an advance clue.

Sinnoma

Even with directions provided by the letter, finding Sinnoma is not easy (although these aquatic elves are more open and social than most by far).

Gyanis' instructions lead you to the top of a high, rocky cliff standing hundreds of feet above the gently crashing waves. It is a place of stark beauty, but you see no village.

Then, you hear something from below you, and a webbed, greenish hand comes from the other side of the cliff. Soon, you are joined by a warrior of greenish skin and deep blue hair. On a belt made of sea-reeds, he wears a jagged stone knife, but in his hands he holds a ladder made of seaweed. He secures it to a nearby rock and says, "Welcome to Sinnoma."

The sea elf village is actually built into the side of the large cliff, accessible only from above or from the sea. Refer to the map of Sinnoma for an idea of the town's layout.

By the time the PCs arrive at the aquatic elf community, Gyanis has already told the elves that great heroes are coming to solve all of their problems. Thus, the adventurers are greeted warmly and with respect. They are shown to the home of the leader, Dhonar, where they are given lodgings.

Once there, they will find Gyanis, Rhianna, and, of course, Dhonar (who is also the father of Rhianna). Dhonar explains the situation to them.

"Our tale is a long one, and strangers may not be privy to most of it—even those who come bringing aid," the elf leader tells you with a smile. "But I can tell you this, only 18 tides of the new moon had passed since our coming



The Covey

here before Lamass came to us speaking of vengeance with his teeth and claws.

"Lamass is a spirit of life. Our stories tell of how Lamass saved the great hero Erindes from death by taking him from the water and into the skies, far from the reach of the shark-toothed devils. Since this time, we live to serve Lamass and his spirit-brothers.

"Now, however, Lamass strikes at us with the ferocity of death. He does not feast upon our flesh, but rather slays and destroys, and then simply leaves. No warrior of the sea will raise a violent hand against the spirit of life. Nor would I want him to.

"Likewise, I do not seek your aid if your plan is to war with this spirit. Such an act would be a great sin. Perhaps, however, if we knew what wrong we had committed to earn such wrath, we could make atonement or penance. Our holy speakers have said that it was our coming to this spot, and abandoning the deeper shoals. Others felt that it was the magic to which we willingly submitted that

made us breathers of both air and water. Some of our village have gone to find Lamass to establish which was our true sin, but few have returned and none have succeeded.

"Now we live here, prisoners in our own homes, waiting helplessly for the spirit of life to bring us death. What do you land-walkers propose to do? What help do you bring?"

All look expectantly at you, including Gyanis.

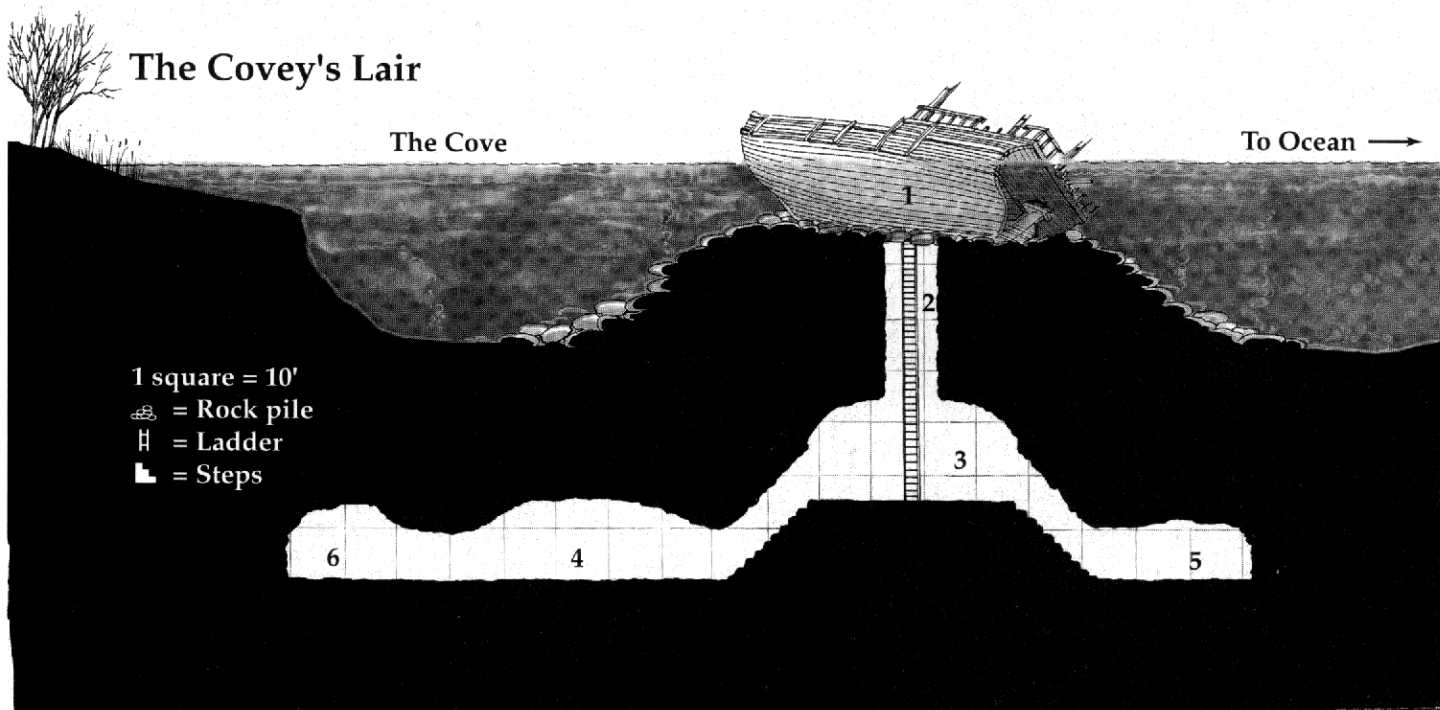
Dhonar, em, F9: AC 4 (hide armor and Dexterity bonus); MV 9, Sw 15; hp 58; THAC0 12 (9 with trident); #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d6+4 (*trident* +2, +1 Strength bonus); SD 90% immune to *sleep* and *charm*; SZ M (6'3" tall); ML 15; AL CG. S 16, D 16, C 13, I 15, W 17, Ch 16.

Personality: Noble, stern

Special Equipment: *trident* +2

Sea elf warrior: AC 6 (hide armor); MV 9, Sw 15; HD 1+1; hp 6 each; THAC0 20 (19 with trident); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (*trident*); SD 90% immune to *sleep* and *charm*; SZ M (6 ft. tall); ML 13; AL CG.

The Covey's Lair





The Covey

Our Heroes

At this point, the PCs can discuss the situation further with the elf leader and propose whatever they like. Most likely, their plan will be to either wait until the creature comes for another attack, or to go looking for it or its lair.

No matter what their plan, Gyanis will insist that he accompany them.

Gyanis, hm, T7: AC 4 (leather armor and Dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 29; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (short sword) or 1d4+1 (sling); SA x3 backstab; SZ M (5'9" tall); ML 13; AL N.

S 10, D 18, C 9, I 11, W 10, Ch 15.

Personality: Dashing, emotional, likeable, driven by love

Special Equipment: Boots of levitation, pearly white ioun stone, pale lavender ioun stone

Thief Abilities: PP 70, OL 67, F/RT 55, MS 65, HS 53, DN 25, CW 94, RL 35.

Gyanis is a swashbuckling rogue who lives and plays hard. He will be a valuable ally to the PCs in battle, although he sometimes gets in over his head. Rhianna and he will have a tearful farewell before the party goes off on its mission.

Waiting

The PCs will not have to wait long for the lammasu to attack again. The following evening (he always strikes near dusk, the sea elves will explain), the beast will swoop into the area in an attempt to scoop swimming elves out of the water, or even fly into the community's caves.

The elves try to stop the PCs from harming the lammasu. If the characters do manage to attack the creature, they will earn the eternal hatred of the aquatic elves and will be forcibly banished from Sinnoma.

Attempts to communicate with the lammasu will prove fruitless unless the PCs use *ESP* or a similar form of magic or psionics. Contact with the lammasu's mind reveals that it is no lammasu at all, but rather a polymorphed creature. It is constantly thinking about how strange and difficult flying is, what an exciting and efficient body this is, and whether it will be allowed to regain its own form some day.

The creature is an ogre with a *hag's eye*. This

item is created from a human's eye but resembles a small gem (its real form can be seen with *true seeing*) on a chain around its neck. The covey can see everything that happens through the item.

Even if the PCs discover the lammasu deception, the sea elves will not allow them to attack it unless the characters can somehow prove to Dhonar's satisfaction that the creature is not a lammasu.

If the PCs do manage to prove this to the elves and capture the ogre, it reveals the location of the covey's lair under duress. However, if the *hag's eye* is still present and operating, the hags will know the PCs are coming. The ogre has no idea the apparent gem is a magical item, but does know that the hags gave it to him to wear.

Lammasu/ogre: AC 6; MV 12, Fl 24 (C); HD 4+1; hp 18; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6/1d6; SA Double damage if swooping down from above; SD Nil; SZ L (5' high at shoulder); ML 12; Int Low (8); AL CE; XP 650.

Looking

If the PCs begin searching the area surrounding Sinnoma, the hags learn of their presence fairly quickly through their ogre spies, which are everywhere. The covey dispatches two ogres per PC to destroy them or drive them off. The leader has a *hag eye*, as described above. The ogres will attack the PCs in a straightforward manner, fighting until they are obviously beaten. At that point, they surrender. Threats of violence can coerce them into revealing the location of their lair and their masters' identities.

If the PCs defeat the ogres, another option is to use the Tracking proficiency to follow their path back to the covey's lair. The ogres took no steps to cover their trail.

Ogre: AC 5; MV 9; HD 4+1; hp 18 each; THAC0 17 (15 with spear); #AT 1; Dmg 1d10 or 1d6+6 (spear); SA Nil; SD Nil; SZ L (9' tall); ML 12; Int Low (8); AL CE; XP 270.

The True Enemy

Not far from the aquatic elf village, a small, virtually hidden inlet conceals the lair of the covey.



The Covey

If the Hags Know the PCs are Coming

The hags have well-prepared contingencies for intruders and interlopers. If they have enough time, the hags will use their *dream* and *control weather* abilities to frighten and drive away intruders. Once the brave heroes set out, but before the PCs get to the location of the lair, the forewarned hags will set up the following distractions.

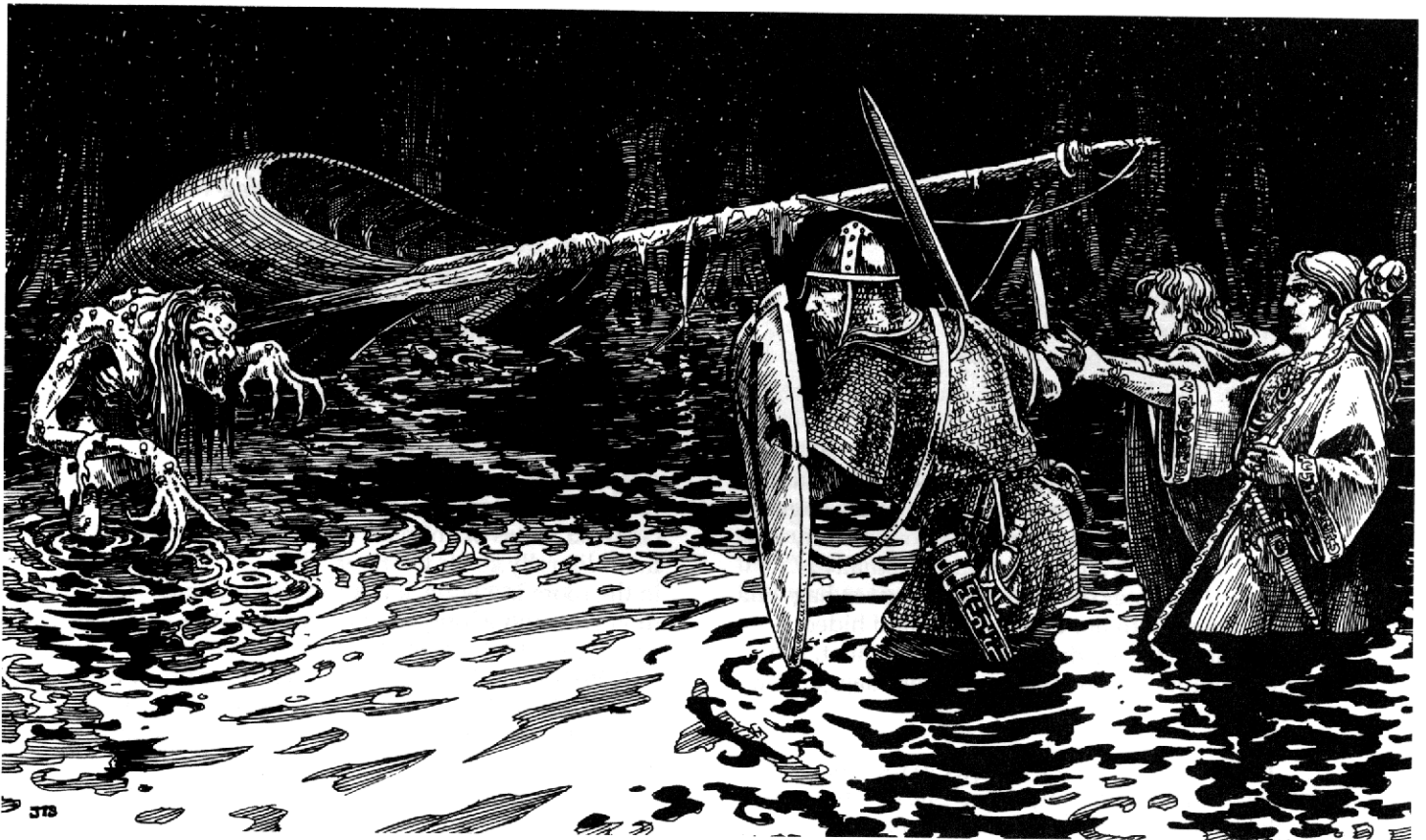
First the greenhag, Grusilla, will use her mimicry ability to draw the PCs into a trap once they enter the woody area between Sinnoma and the hags' lair.

As you head toward what you believe to be the lair of your enemy, you pass through a thick wood of young, green trees prospering in the humid, lush coastal environment. Not far

off you can hear the crash of waves and the sounds of sea birds, but your vision is limited by the thick growth so that the sea is no longer within view. Suddenly, you hear a harrowing sound. A voice, not unlike those of the fair elf maidens of Sinnoma, cries out in pain.

If the PCs follow the cries directly, they will walk into a 50 ft. x 20 ft. concealed pit trap. The pit is 20 ft. deep (2d6 damage to all) and waiting at the bottom are six starving, maddened crabmen. Grusilla (on the opposite side of the trap) will make her way back to the lair using *invisibility* and *pass without trace* while the PCs are occupied.

If the PCs persist toward the lair, Anamohr the annis uses her *change self* ability to appear as a tall, beautiful woman who has been set upon by five ogres (stats as above, hp 24 each).





The Covey

These woods grow more dark and twisted the further you plunge into them. Danger seems to be the focus of the day, for ahead you see a terrible sight. A human woman, in a warrior's garb, bravely but fruitlessly holds off the aggression of a number of huge, bestial ogres. She will soon meet a grisly end if unaided.

If the PCs come to help, she and the ogres attack with surprise to destroy them. If she and her ogres begin to lose, she'll use the ogres and a conjured *fog cloud* or two to cover her escape into the woods and back to the lair on her *broom of flying*.

Crabmen (6): AC 4; MV 9, Sw 6; HD 3; hp 16; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6/1d6; SA Nil; SD Nil; SZ L (8' tall); ML 12; Int Low (5); AL N; XP 65.

The Covey's Lair

If the ambushes and diversions fail to deter the adventurers, the hags hurry back to defend their lair. If the heroes manage to surprise the covey, all three will be in their living quarters when the PCs arrive.

Pressing through the foliage toward your goal, you come upon a surprising find. A small, completely calm inlet is hidden by the surrounding forest. The water is thick with weeds and algae. In the center of the stagnant cove is an old wooden ship, half submerged and lying on its side. The entire area is still—not a sound can be heard.

This is the covey's lair, or at least the visible part of it. The small ship rests atop a rock pile covering the submerged, subterranean home of the hags. Because of the ship's resting position, the tiny bay looks to be much shallower than it actually is.

If the PCs enter the water, Sorri the sea hag will attack them with her deathly gaze and hideous appearance. If they draw into close combat, she will attempt to swim away, using her dagger as a last defense.

1. The boat. Once the PCs get to the small ship, they see that it is resting atop a pile of large rocks. If they enter the ship's hold, (assuming they have

light with them), they can easily determine that a hole in the ship's hull leads down into a shaft through the rock pile and deep underground.

The ship's interior is filled with slimy algae, leeches, and water snakes. One thing it is not filled with is water; apparently, the hull and submerged deck are still watertight. Any character who knows anything about boats will realize that keeping this area from flooding requires some maintenance.

There is also a permanent *fear* enchantment here so that anyone failing a saving throw vs. spell suffers a penalty on all die rolls, worsening them by 1.

2. The shaft. A wet, slimy, iron ladder leads down into the earth. The rock walls of the shaft are wet and covered in algae, leeches, and insects. A Dexterity check must be made by each character descending. A failed roll indicates that the character slipped and fell 1d4x10 feet (40 feet being the entire length of the shaft), suffering 1d6 points of falling damage per 10 feet.

3. The guardian. Using their *animate dead* power, the hags have created an animated giant skeleton. This monster attacks any nonhag entering the chamber and fights until destroyed.

Fomorian giant skeleton: AC 6; MV 9; HD 13+3; hp 68; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; SA Nil; SD Immune to mind-influencing spells and cold, half damage from edged and piercing weapons; SW holy water inflicts 2d4 damage; SZ H (13 ft. tall); ML Special; Int Non-(0); AL N; XP 5,000.

4. Living Space. If any of the hags are alive and were able to return to the lair, they will be here. This is where the horrible threesome eats and sleeps. They sleep upon beds of algae, moss, and fungus, and a large flat stone serves as their table. Gnawed bones of animals, humans, and demihumans literally cover the floor. The only other item in the room is a large, black cauldron (empty at the moment), and a long wooden stirring stick covered with a foul, greenish crust.

5. Prison/Larder. Though currently empty, this cave is where the hags keep prisoners and those who will eventually end up on their table. Chains are bolted to the walls, but most of the chamber is empty; they usually create a *forcecage* to hold their captives.



The Covey

6. Treasure. This cave holds the covey's prized possessions within a single gigantic chest. The chest is covered with yellow mold and locked tight (Grusilla carries the key on her person). The contents of the chest include: 1,593 gp, 1,638 sp, a bejeweled pendant worth 1,000 gp, a flask of many potions containing potions of healing, treasure finding, and growth, a wand of illumination, a pair of gauntlets of ogre power, and a copy of *Milian's Tome*.

Milian's Tome is a book of ancient lore detailing many things. Found within its pages is a listing of the ancient treasures within the labyrinth of the old castle where the village of Sinnoma can now be found (the hags marked this page). This book also mentions the *waning star* and describes it in enough detail that PCs taking part in the adventure entitled *Haggash's Secret* will recognize it. The book describes the item as an artifact of supreme order whose absence from the world would allow chaos to seep in. Most importantly, it relates that a wild mage named Whathlin Dyr sought to destroy, steal, or overcome the *waning star* so that he could unleash chaos upon the world. He awaited the day, it says, when the *entropy bell* would ring as the wild magic began to influence reality.

Yellow mold: AC 9; MV 0; HD N/A; hp N/A; THAC0 (adjusted THAC0); #AT N/A; Dmg N/A; SA If touched roughly, 50% of the time it will emit a 10-ft. cloud of deadly poisonous spores (saving throw negates); SD Only fire can destroy it; SW *continual light* renders it dormant for 2d6 turns; MR 20%; SZ S (covers the chest); ML N/A; Int Not ratable (0); AL N; XP 65.

Notes: Cure disease and resurrection within 24 hours are necessary to restore life

The Hags

Grusilla, greenhag: AC -2; MV 12, Sw 12; HD 9; hp 49; THAC0 11; #AT 2; Dmg 1d2+6/1d2+6; SA -5 to opponents' surprise rolls in forest or swamp, can use the following spell-like powers (once per round): *audible glamor*, *dancing lights*, *invisibility*, *pass without trace*, *change self*, *speak with monsters*, *water breathing*, and *weakness*; SD Surprised only on a 1 in 10; MR 35%; SZ M (5'3" tall); ML 17; Int Very (12); AL NE; XP 4,000.

Anamohr, annis: AC 0; MV 15; HD 7+7; hp 37; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1d8+8/1d8+8/2d4+1; SA If all three attacks hit, opponent is grappled, and attacks in following rounds automatically hit, *change self* into large human, ogre, or small giant, cast *fog cloud* three times per day; SD Surprised on a 1 in 10, edged weapons inflict 1 hp less; SW Blunt weapons inflict 1 hp more; MR 20%; SZ L (8 ft. tall); ML 15; Int Very (11); AL CE; XP 5,000.

Special Equipment: broom of flying

Sorri, sea hag: AC 7; MV Sw 15; HD 3; hp 20; THAC0 17 (12 with dagger); #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+8 (dagger +2); SA *change self* at will, sight causes foes to lose one-half Strength for 1d6 turns unless save is made, 3 times per day gaze causes death within 30 ft. (25% of the time) or paralysis for 3 days (75% of the time); SD Nil; MR 50%; SZ M (5'3" tall); ML 11; Int Avg (10); AL CE; XP 2,000.

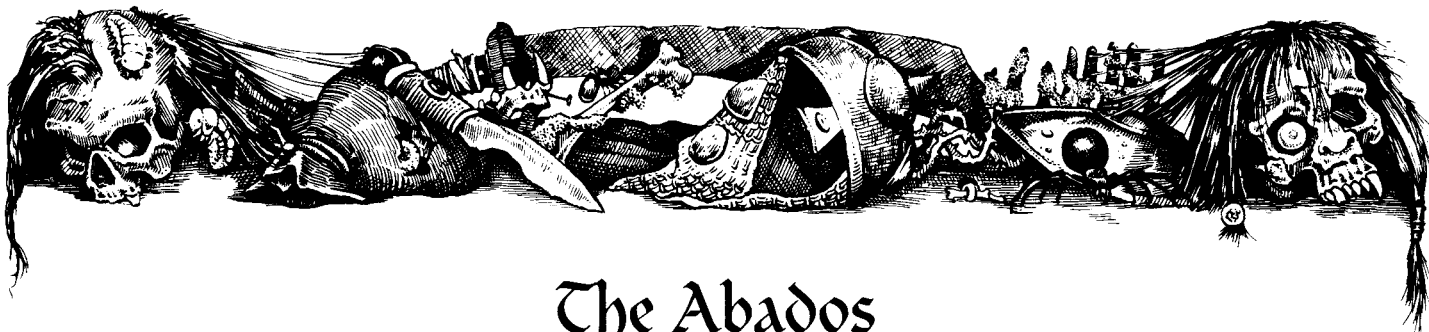
Special Equipment: dagger +2

Together, the hags have the following abilities as a covey: *curse*, *polymorph other*, *animate dead*, *dream*, *control weather*, *veil*, *forcecage*, *vision*, and *mindblank*.

Conclusion

This adventure has no chaos effect as a part of it. It does, however, remind the PCs of the *waning star*, provides a unifying clue, and leads directly into the last scenario.

Once the hags are slain or chased away, the aquatic elves are safe. The leader is so happy that he allows Gyanis (assuming he survived) to marry Rhianna. The elves are also interested in the treasures that might lie under their village, and ask the PCs for their help in recovering them (if the DM wishes to devise such an adventure).



The Abados

"Finally, the last mystery of our careers was about to be solved! Finally, all would be revealed! Experienced as we were, we had no idea what we were getting involved in. We had done good things. We had righted wrongs. But when we found ourselves going to the Abados, we were suddenly struggling to save the entire world from chaos.

"Old Mynios would have liked that adventure, I think. The odds were against us, that's for sure. This strange extra-dimensional realm was filled with monsters and traps the likes of which we'd never seen.

"When we returned, somehow folks found out about our deeds. Well, that's when the elves gave me that silly name of Thad Bravecloak. I've never liked pretense, though, and that name sure smacks of it. So, you can always just call me Thadeus, all right?"

DM's Notes

The last adventure in this book, *The Abados*, is for characters of 9th or 10th level. It is directly linked to the previous adventures, particularly *The Covey*. Those DMs who have not used the previous adventures but desire to use this one should choose one of the Alternate Beginnings presented to start the scenario.

Background

DMs using this adventure should first familiarize themselves with the introduction to *A Hero's Tale* as well as the other adventures in this product.

Many years ago, a powerful wizard specializing in wild magic named Whathlin Dyr created his own demiplane within the Ethereal Plane. From this tiny pocket dimension, he began casting powerful spells that would unleash chaos into the world. He was thwarted at every turn, however, by the *waning star*. So infrequently did his spells succeed that he created the *entropy bell*, so that it would ring whenever chaos managed to slip into his crystal sphere. The bell never rang in Dyr's lifetime. A few years after its creation, the wizard died, dejected and half-crazed from his failures.

As presented in *Haggash's Secret*, however, a spell that he cast upon the *waning star* finally came to fruition and brought that magical device to the

Abados (which is what Dyr called his extra-dimensional fortress), locking it away in a vault. Chaos began worming its way into the once protected world, and the bell began to ring. Some of the occurrences of this chaos effect became evident in the other adventures in this product.

Now, however, the PCs have uncovered a book, *Milian's Tome*, which documents the wizard's struggle with the *waning star*, and the forging of the *entropy bell*. This is a wonderful clue, but not enough to lead the PCs on to anything. Until now.

It Begins

If the PCs are astute as well as zealous, they may have already attempted research in libraries and with sages regarding the *waning star*, the *entropy bell*, or Whathlin Dyr. If so, they should have been able to learn all the information presented in the Introduction regarding these topics. The only thing that remains unavailable is the location of the Abados and how to reach it.

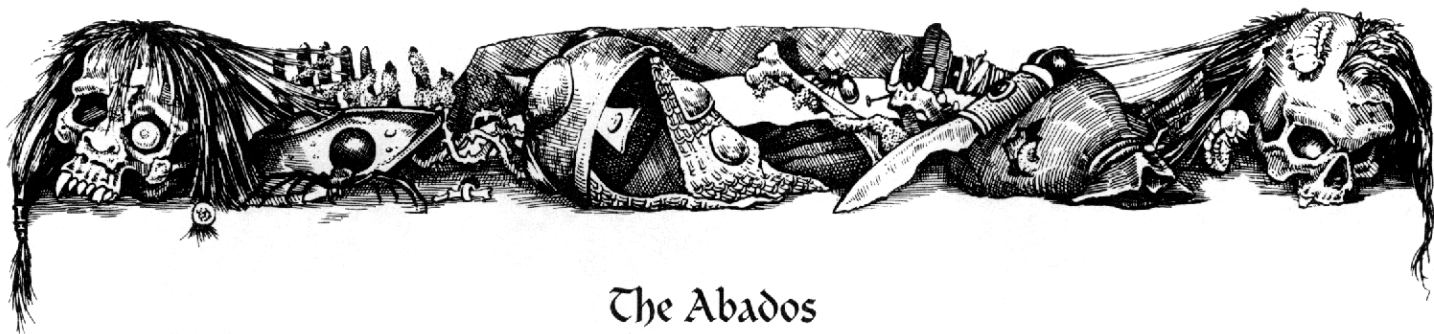
At a later point in the campaign, this information is handed to the characters on the proverbial platter. They hear a tale (from a sage, a contact, in a tavern, or whatever), telling of a magical portal that opens up each night at midnight at a place called Clear Spring. The portal began opening with the coming of the most recent new moon, and stays open each night for only one hour.

The tale goes on to say that some adventurers traveled into the portal to explore. The one that returned had nothing to say on the matter except that beyond the gateway lay a horrible place called the Abados.

This information should get the PCs motivated. It is important to stress that the portal began opening at the start of the lunar cycle, because if the PCs think that the portal will stop opening when the cycle ends, they are right. Time is of the essence. This portal is a creation of the *waning star* (hence its regularity), but it can open the portal only under these exact conditions.

Alternate Beginnings

If the PCs are not in possession of *Milian's Tome* or have not come to the necessary conclusions required to have the above tale mean anything to them, there are two options. The first is to have an NPC of respectable and benevolent nature (prefer-



The Abados

ably one known to the PCs) tell them all of the information regarding the *waning star*, the wild mage, and everything else. This NPC could then send the PCs through the portal on the mission to retrieve the artifact.

The other option is to simply have the player characters come upon the portal to the Abados and explore. This is simple but perhaps not very satisfying.

Clear Spring

When the PCs arrive, read the following:

When you finally arrive at Clear Spring, you see that there is little here besides the spring itself. A thick, arborous landscape spreads to the horizon as far as the eye can see. In a beautiful glen, a tiny community of woodsmen have built a total of five buildings beside a lovely, sparkling pool created by the bubbling spring.

On the other side of the pond is an old, ruined building. It looks to have at one time been a church.

Twenty-three people live in the hamlet called Clear Spring. Woodcutters all, they do not have much contact with the outside world (and speak only halting common), but were quick to spread the word of the mysterious portal which appears each night. If the PCs talk to the people living here, the simple folk will direct them to the town's unofficial leader, Svehn.

Yes. Svehn has seen your portal. Yes. Did not know it was portal the first time. Big ball of light appears in church ruins near pond. Yes. Svehn has seen men go into portal, after Svehn tells people of nearby villages. Men say light is a portal. Only one men comes out. He tells Svehn things very bad inside light.

Svehn will also tell the PCs the details that they have already heard regarding the timing of the portal's appearance (it lasts from midnight to one o'clock exactly).

The Ruins

Exploring the ruins reveals nothing. These ruins have been picked over by treasure seekers and the like for years, and there is nothing of interest left. All that remains are piles of rubble, a few standing walls and pillars, and the foundation.

The Portal

If the PCs watch the ruins at night, at exactly midnight they will see the following:

In the center of the ruins, where the vestry of the church probably was, a shining sphere of white light at least 30 feet across appears soundlessly near the ground. It lights up the entire ruins as well as much of the pond and the surrounding woods.

Stepping into this sphere sends the characters hurtling through the planes to the pocket dimension called the Abados.

Conditions Within the Abados

Physically, the PCs will notice no differences between being in the Abados and being on their home plane except for a tingling sensation, as if the air has some sort of electrical charge (the place is filled with chaos energy).

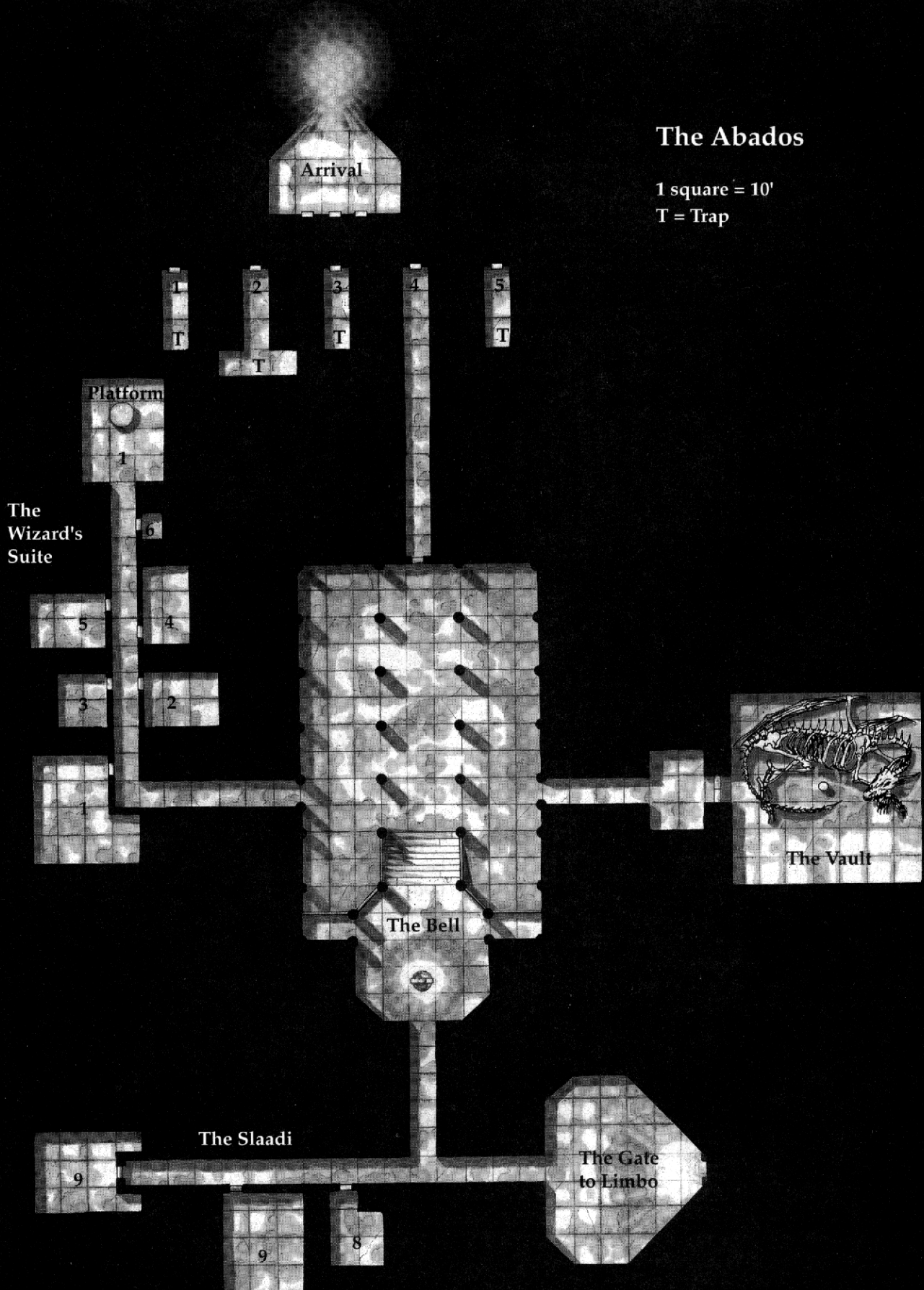
The effect of the Abados becomes clear when someone casts a spell or uses a magical item with a spell-like effect. There is a flat 25% chance that a spell's effect will be completely random. Use the wild surge table in the *Tome of Magic*, or the *wand of wonder* table in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*, or randomly determine a different spell effect of the same level. The slaadi, golem, and traps encountered in this adventure are immune to this condition, but the lamia noble still has a 10% chance to lose control of her spells.

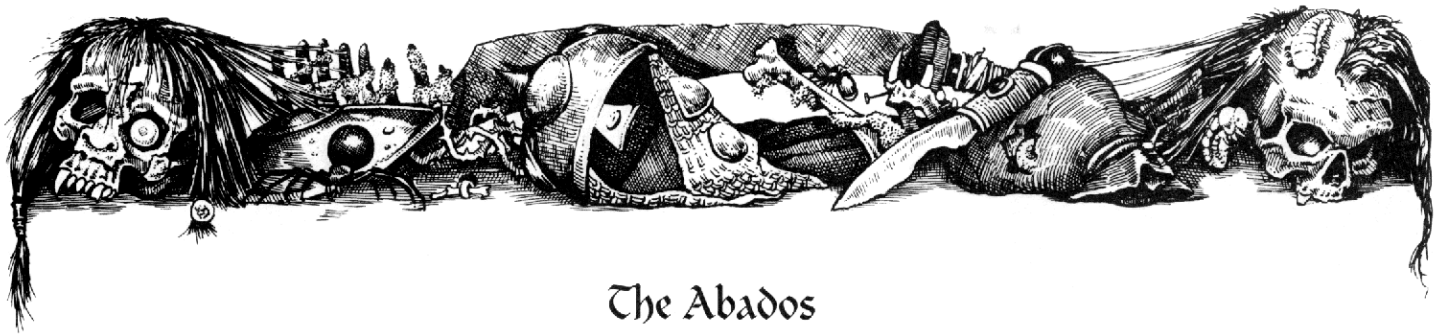
If an illusion or phantasm spell is successfully cast, there is a 5% chance that the illusion will become real (even gaining life if it is an illusion or phantasm of a living creature). In any event, illusions do not need to be concentrated upon to be sustained here (these effects are caused by the Ethereal Plane more than the chaos of the Abados).

The Abados

1 square = 10'

T = Trap





The Abados

Arrival

You feel the transition as you step from the light which shakes you from the inside out. Visions of misty borders, deep oceans of endless nothing, and thin veils separating distant worlds fill your head.

The other side of the portal is an oddly shaped chamber with misty, ghostly walls to either side. You cannot quite see through them, or perhaps you can, but there simply is nothing beyond them to see. The far wall is solid enough, appearing to be stone with three round, iron hatches in a row near the center.

The wizard, Whalthin Dyr, set up a devious trap at the entrance to the Abados. Beyond the three hatches are five hallways. Through wild magic, these hallways shift back and forth as the latch on any of the hatches is unsealed so that the hallway beyond whichever hatch is opened will be random. The spell upon the room makes it impossible to open a new hatch (thus changing the hallway configuration), while another remains unclosed.

When a latch on an iron hatch is unsealed, the characters hear loud clanking and banging sounds (the whole hallway section is moving back and forth randomly), and the DM should roll a d6 to determine what is revealed when the hatch opens (reference the map for each hallway's position): 1—A, 2—B, 3—C, 4—D, 5—E, 6—an error in the mechanism prevents the hallways from lining up properly and the hatchway is between two halls. PCs have access (albeit narrow), to two passages (determined randomly).

Four of the five passages are trapped and are dead-ends. Hallway A has an infinitely renewing arrow trap at the end activated as soon as a character steps into the hall. 2d4 arrows +1 fire from hidden holes in the far wall each round a character remains in the hallway. The arrows have a THACO of 12 (including magical bonus).

Hall B ends in what appears to be a "T" intersection. When a character enters the intersection portion, however, flame jets fire from either side, engulfing the whole area and inflicting 4d6 points of damage to everyone anywhere in the hallway (saving throw vs. reduces damage to half).

The passage marked C causes a 1-inch-thick iron wall to drop at the area marked on the map as soon as a character passes the line. A Dexterity

check at -4 will allow a character to roll under the closing wall before it lowers completely. A choking, noxious, green, class J poison gas then fills the closed-off section, forcing anyone within to save vs. poison or die in 1d4 minutes; characters who save suffer 20 points of damage. This trap takes 1d10 minutes to reset.

D is the correct passage which will allow PCs to get into the Abados—specifically into the room of the bell—but E is another trap. One round after it is entered, the floor of the hallway becomes electrified, inflicting 2d10 points of damage per round on anyone touching it (save for half damage).

The Bell

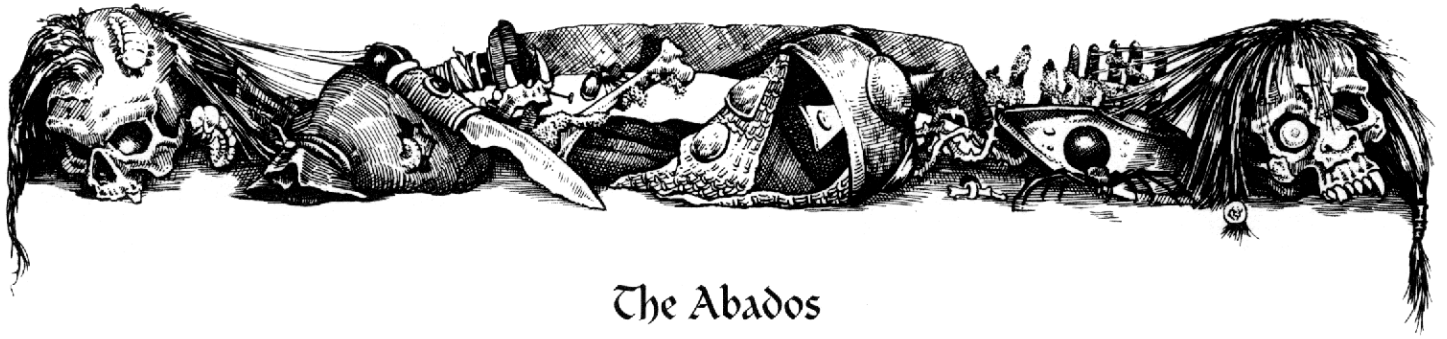
The room beyond the iron door at the end of the long hall is grandiose. Huge pillars support an arched, 40-foot ceiling. A 30-foot-wide staircase rises on the far side of the room, at least 100 feet away. It rises to a balcony from which a multicolored cacophony of light spills forth into the otherwise dark room.

As you look about, there are slight movements of shadows within the rainbow of light. You get the impression that you may not be alone in this cathedral-like room.

When the wizard passed away, the Abados fell under the command of his consort, a monstrous lamia noble familiar with planar travel. In fact, when the PCs arrive, the lamia is not in the Abados. Her servants, summoned through the gate to Limbo in the Slaadi area, are on hand. Three red slaadi hide in the shadows (60% undetectable) and behind pillars, attacking soon after the PCs enter. They are posted as guards and will fight to the death.

Red slaadi (3): AC 4; MV 6; HD 7+3; hp 35 each; THACO 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4/2d8; SA Once per day, can stun all within 20 ft. for 2 rounds with a loud croak (save vs. petrification to avoid), twice per day can *gate* 1-2 red slaadi with a 40% chance of success; SD Regenerate 2 hp per round; MR 30%; SZ L (8' tall); ML 10; Int Low (6); AL CN; XP 2,000.

Notes: There is a 25% chance per claw hit that a tiny egg pellet is implanted in the opponent, killing him in three months and producing a blue slaad.



The Abados

Up the Stairs

At the top of the stairs is a long balcony with a low iron railing. Beyond this area is the *entropy bell*.

At the top of the stairs the source of the light is revealed. Floating 8 feet in the air, apparently supported by the swirling chaotic energies around it, is a large, gray, iron bell. Strange sigils and runes have been engraved on its surface in a wild pattern.

If a *detect magic* spell is used, the bell registers as very magical, and chaotic neutral in alignment if such is detected as well. Examining and even touching the bell poses no direct danger. The chaotic energies have no effect on the PCs. If the bell is rung (by striking or swinging it), the sound will remind the PCs of the deep, resonant ringing sound that they have heard on earlier adventures (but much closer now—assuming they have taken part in the earlier scenarios in the book).

The bell rings on its own anytime a significant amount of chaos seeps into the PCs' homeworld. Ringing the bell artificially draws the attention of the master of the place (the lamia noble Shalshinis), bringing her back from her interplanar travels via her *cubic gate* (she was searching through the Labyrinth of Madness (see that product) for her lost twin sister, Shslinsi). She will appear in the magical research room of the Wizard's Suite, and she will attempt to gather some of the Abados's guardians together before she looks for the interlopers.

Shalshinis, lamia noble, W8: AC 0 (bracers); MV 9; HD 10+1; hp 62; THAC0 11; Dmg 0; SA touch drains 1 point of Wisdom, has the following spell-like powers (usable once per day): *charm person*, *mirror image*, *suggestion* and *illusion*; SD Nil; MR 30%; SZ M; ML 14; Int High (14); AL CE; XP 4,000.

Personality: bitter, vengeful, violent

Special equipment: *cubic gate* (one face leads to the Abados), bracers AC 2

Spells (4/3/3/2): 1st—*grease*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *spook*; 2nd—*alter self*, *blindness*, *invisibility*; 3rd—*fireball*, *lightning bolt*, *slow*; 4th—*dimension door*, *stoneskin*

The Wizard's Suite

This area of the Abados was Dyr's personal quarters and work area.

Hallway Guardian

A new type of golem, developed by Dyr, guards this area. It attacks immediately in the confines of the hallway, invisibly and almost certainly with surprise (-4 penalty to PCs' surprise roll). Like all golems, it fights to the death.

The construct is a doppelganger golem. It is like a flesh golem except that it has the power to take on the physical form, defensive capabilities, and attack capabilities of whatever it is fighting. This includes AC, THAC0, damage inflicted, spellcasting abilities, etc. If there is more than one PC, it will take on a different, random form each round. Its mimicking abilities even mimic magical items, and it will always attack with the most efficient and deadly means at its disposal in the PC's form—whether it be melee, spellcasting, magical item, etc. It also has the power to become invisible at will and retains the nonmagical weapon and spell immunities of a normal flesh golem.

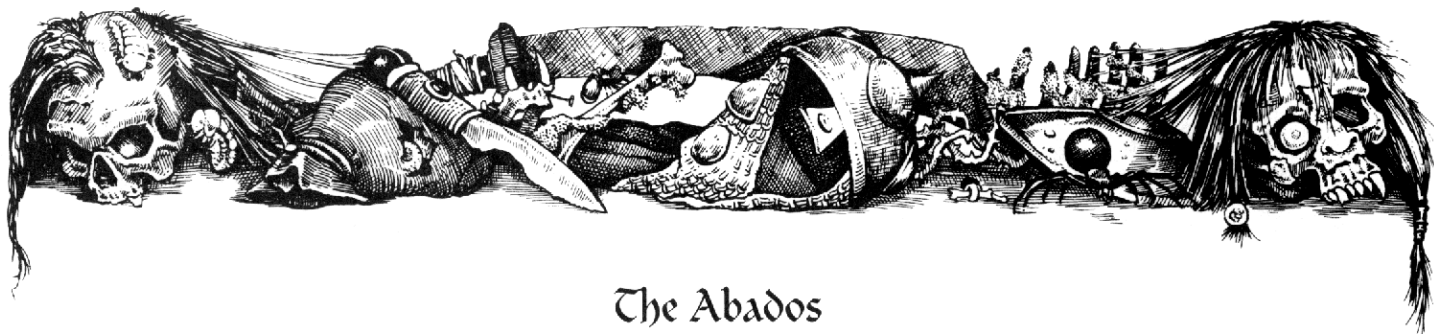
Doppelganger golem: AC varies; MV varies; HD 10; hp 40; THAC0 varies; #AT varies; Dmg varies; SA Duplicates the powers of its opponents; SD +1 or better weapon to hit, immune to all spells except fire and cold which merely slow for 2d6 rounds and lightning which restores 1 hp for each die of damage it normally inflicts; SZ varies; ML 20; Int Semi-(2); AL N; XP 5,000.

Individual Rooms

The doors to these rooms (except the privy) are locked (Shalshinis has the key).

1. Bedchamber. This room was shared by Dyr and Shalshinis. A large, round bed dominates the room, but there are also numerous dressers, chests of drawers, and wardrobes filled with clothes. One chest in the far corner is filled with jewelry, a fetish both occupants had (and the primary monetary treasure of the Abados). The chest is *fire trapped*, inflicting 1d4+20 points of damage (save for half





The Abados

damage) and contains 56 normal pieces of jewelry, from earrings to necklaces to brooches to bracelets, all worth 1d10 x 1,000 gp. Mixed in with this jewelry is a *talisman of Zagy* and a *necklace of strangulation*, making the total actually 58 pieces of jewelry.

2. Library. With only a few exceptions, all of the hundreds of books on the wooden shelves in this room are about chaos, philosophies of chaos, or the planes of chaos. There is no order to these books (not surprisingly), so it is difficult to find anything specific.

3. Storeroom. This room is full of supplies. Much of it is old and rotting, having been kept since Dyr's death. All of it is mundane and relatively valueless.

4. Study. More books on shelves, a desk, a few chairs, and a long storage chest occupy this otherwise drab room. The place is a mess, with books and papers tossed about haphazardly.

If at least 10 minutes are spent looking through the dishevelled room, the PCs will find the only thing of real value or meaning here: Dyr's journal. This diary contains (in the hard-to-decipher scrawl of the near mad wizard) notes on his creation of the Abados and the *entropy bell* (but no specifics on how it was done), attempts to bring more chaos into the world, his struggle against the *waning star*, and his eventual despair and plans for suicide.

More specifically, the diary speaks of attempts to bring more chaos into existence by creating earthquakes, changing weather patterns, giving more power to monsters, and causing random, unpredictable (and usually bad) events. All of these schemes can be related to occurrences within the other adventures in this book. The book also details the further ravages the world will face (if the *waning star* is not returned)—mountains crumbling, tidal waves, disease, meteor strikes, and worse. It is clear that if the *waning star* is not returned, the world is ultimately doomed.

The journals take 3d4 hours to read and interpret because of Dyr's horrible handwriting and poor writing skills. If anything about Dyr comes through his writing, it is that he was a frenetic, raving lunatic with delusions of grandeur and an extremely chaotic nature.

5. Parlor. A finely appointed sitting room with padded chairs, low tables, and divans. A long dining table, still covered with fine (but dirty) dishes, is pushed against the far wall and girded by wooden chairs.

6. Privy.

7. Research Room. This room has a 100-foot ceiling. Nothing is near the floor, but a number of different magical research "stations" levitate magically above. These are reached by a 10-foot-diameter, round iron platform that rises and lowers by means of a large lever at its center.

As the platform rises, it stops at various points where a levitating platform holds some sort of experiment. All of them have fallen into disarray since Dyr's death, but most show that he was attempting to magically combine things (elements, substances, spells, even creatures), that were never meant to be combined. All still here were failures and provide little to the PCs except examples of Dyr's twisted mind and imagination. That all the levitating experiments continue to levitate, however, is still a testament to Dyr's impressive skill when he was lucid.

If Shalshinis the lamia noble returns to the Abados, she will appear here.

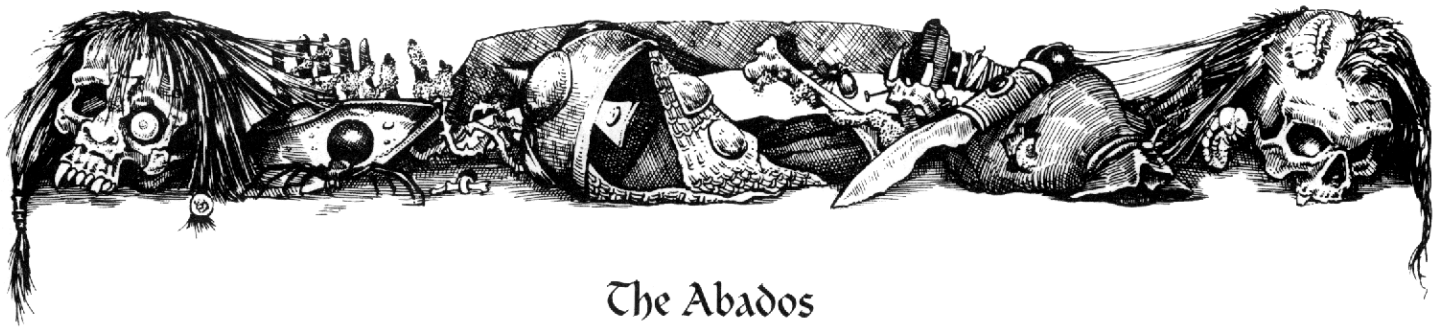
The Slaadi

Before his death, Whalthin Dyr created a permanent gate to the plane of Limbo within the Abados. This was to facilitate travel, but it also attracted the attention of some of the inhabitants of that plane, the slaadi. Dyr made pacts and agreements with these creatures of chaos, hoping to secure more power for himself.

Gate to Limbo

You have entered a large room with angled walls that narrow to a point directly across from the entrance. There a single archway, leading nowhere, opens into the wall. The chamber is empty with the exception of completely unfamiliar, alien symbols scrawled on the floor. The symbols are inscrutable, but the pattern of the writing seems to point toward the arch.

Suddenly, the arch changes. It warps, almost



The Abados

liquifies, and then becomes a shining nimbus of energy. As you watch, a gigantic, froglike humanoid, blue scales covering its massive 10-foot frame, shambles out of the arch toward you and opens its terrifying, toothy maw.

The blue slaad attacks the PCs immediately, but will retreat back through the gate if seriously threatened. Unless the PCs follow it through without hesitation, the gate closes and is inaccessible to them. To use it, they must have the key, which is now forever lost. The slaadi, however, can use it at will.

The gate leads to the maelstrom of Limbo, the plane of ultimate chaos. Unprepared characters may very well be eternally lost or completely consumed if they cross over.

Blue slaad: AC 2; MV 6; HD 8+4; hp 45; THAC0 11; #AT 5; Dmg 2d6 (x4)/2d8; SA Bite has a 10% chance to infect the victim with a rotting disease, can use the following spell-like abilities once per round: *hold person* (one person only), *passwall*, and *telekinesis*, can gate 1-4 red or 1-2 blue slaadi four times per day with a 40% chance of success; SD +1 or better weapon to hit; MR 40%; SZ L (10' tall); ML 12; Int Low (7); AL CN; XP 9,000.

Other Rooms

8. Guard Room. In this room, four red slaadi (see above for stats, hp 34, 35, 38 and 40), remain on guard at all times. They watch the diagonal hall leading from the area surrounding the bell and leap out to attack any intruders.

The room itself is sunken by 2 feet, filled with water which magically heats to boiling and then cools to freezing, randomly changing from one extreme to the other, as well as stopping at points in between. This randomly changing environment makes them feel more at home.

9. Living Quarters. These rooms are for the slaadi to stay in when they are in the Abados. Round, understuffed, yet puffy cushions lay about the floor to sleep upon. Bones and other food remnants are scattered on the floor. One blue (hp 42) and two red slaadi (hp 34 and 39) occupy the first room. The one at the end of the hall is empty.

The occupied room has some treasure that the creatures brought with them in a large leather bag. This includes twelve 50-gp gems, 132 gp (these are of githzerai make), and a bag of powdered plant material from Limbo that gives humans nightmarish delusions if inhaled (save vs. poison to avoid, incapacitated by terror for 1d4 hours if fail).

The Vault

This is where the *waning star* is kept. It has remained undisturbed since its arrival.

The Trap

The foyer area outside the vault is trapped (this is not marked on the map). The whole area flares with wild magic if entered, requiring all to make a save vs. spell. Characters who fail must roll a d10 to determine their fate:

- 1 5d6 points of fire damage
- 2 3d10 points of electrical damage
- 3 7d4 points of cold damage
- 4 *polymorphed* into a random animal
- 5 struck blind and deaf until *cured*
- 6 teleported back to Clear Spring
- 7 teleported back to the abbey in Haggash
- 8 *slowed* until dispelled
- 9 lose one level
- 10 put in *temporal stasis* until dispelled

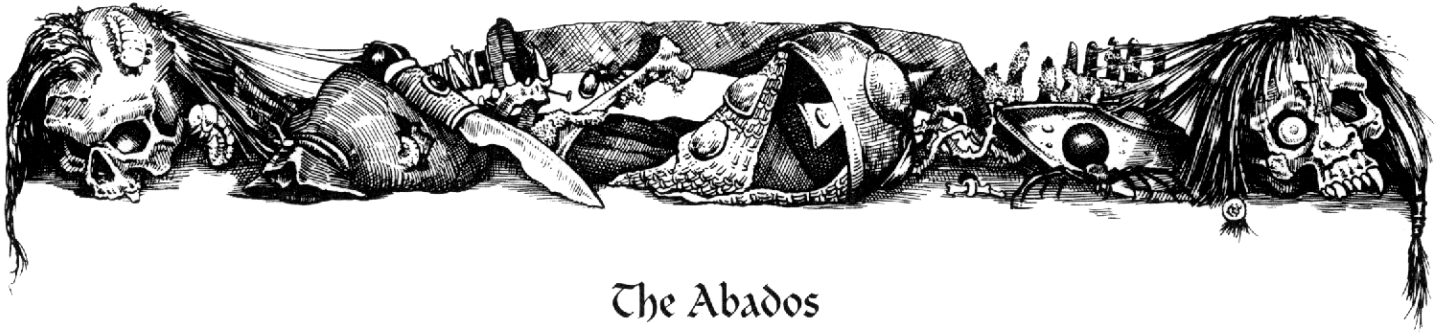
The Lock

The iron door of the vault is locked. This is no ordinary lock, but a magical combination lock. Three sets of tumblers are manipulated by three numbered dials which must be turned to the correct position in the correct order. The worst part is, the combination is random.

The only way to open the lock is to use a divination spell to gain the proper combination ahead of time. Otherwise, the door must be destroyed. This is quite a feat, considering the door is foot-thick iron (AC 5, 200 hit points).

The Guardian

When the door is opened, the guardian of the vault is awakened from its magically induced sleep (which has never happened before).



The Abados

Once past the door, you see before you an immense chamber with only two things in it. Dead center in the room is a narrow pedestal of black onyx on which rests a shining, delicate white globe. Surrounding the pedestal, however, is a horrifying, black-scaled, draconic creature, obviously just awakening and appearing angry.

The globe is, of course, the *waning star*. Those PCs who took part in Adventure One will recognize it immediately. Its guardian, however, is a dracolisk charmed to serve as the artifact's guardian, even though when it was put into its magical sleep, the *star* had not yet appeared, and it looked as though it never would. Nevertheless, the dracolisk will defend its treasure with its life.

Dracolisk: AC 3; MV 9, Fl 15 (E); HD 7+3; hp 59; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1d6/1d6/3d4; SA Can breathe a stream of acid 5 ft. wide and 30 ft. long inflicting 4d6 damage (save for half) three times per day, gaze petrifies within 20 ft.; SD Only 10% likely to be petrified by its reflected gaze; SZ H (20' long); ML 15; Int Avg (10); AL CE; XP 3,000.

The Waning Star

Once its guardian is taken care of, the *waning star* can be removed from its resting place and handled without risk. At this point, it will be able to offer the PCs the same powers it displayed in the first adventure: a wounded character will be instantly and completely healed and an unharmed character will have his primary statistic raised by 1 point for 1d4 days. The artifact possesses other powers, but none can be accessed by the PCs. The item's magic is very esoteric, nothing so straightforward as casting *fireball* three times per day. The item was also never meant to be wielded, but was to stand on its own as a talisman for the entire world.

The *waning star* almost possesses an intelligence of its own. In its semi-sentient need to fulfill its task of guarding the world from chaos, it has opened the portal that the PCs came through, and they will feel its eagerness to be returned if they touch it.

However, if the pedestal is not destroyed, the *waning star* will come back to this chamber as soon as it is taken from the Abados. The spell that Dyr

cast long ago to draw the *waning star* out of the world is focused on the pedestal and remains in effect until the pedestal is destroyed. The pedestal can be smashed to bits quite easily, but a *dispel magic* spell is required to stop the *waning star* from returning to this spot.

Returning to the World

Getting back to the Prime Material Plane is possible only when the portal is open, and that occurs only during the hour between midnight and one o'clock. If the PCs have their own means of transportation or the lamia's *cubic gate*, they may be able to bypass the portal.

Unless the PCs spent less than an hour in the Abados, which is unlikely, they must wait until the next night to leave. There is no day or night in the Abados, so they must keep track of time themselves. Because the *waning star* can open the portal only during this one particular cycle of the moon, if the PCs somehow stay past that cycle, they will need to find their own way home.

Once they return, the question of what to do with the *waning star* arises. It has no powers for the PCs to utilize (the healing and stat increasing powers work for them only when they initially recover the item). Sages or holy authorities will recommend that it be placed in a safe spot, so that it is always guarded. An appropriate place would be the Morning Star Abbey in Haggash, since that is where the PCs originally encountered it. Responsible PCs will set up some sort of means to assure its safekeeping, but that is up to them.

Conclusion

With the end of this adventure, the PCs may now have some planar travel opportunities. They also have earned great respect and the admiration of others back in their own world.

In any event, award 1,000 experience points to each character for returning the artifact to Haggash, or at least to a safe place. Award an additional 500 to those willing to take steps to guarantee its future safety.

If she is still alive, Dyr's lamia noble lover will not rest until the PCs are dead and the *waning star* is removed again or destroyed. She is intelligent and powerful enough to cause serious trouble, or at least ignite a further adventure or two.

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