

# **The Case of the Little Gray Box:**

**Ravens Bluff Bureau of Investigation Case #4**

**A One-Round Living City Adventure**

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Blurb: The Ravens Bluff Bureau of Investigation, a private organization which hires mercenary investigators, has asked you to retrieve and deliver a mysterious and magical gray box.

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This is a standard RPGA Network tournament. A four-hour time block has been set aside for this event. It is a good idea to ask each player to put a name tag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for the players to keep track of who is playing which character.

The actual playing time will be about three hours. Make sure you use the last 20 to 30 minutes of the event time block to have the players capsule their characters for each other and vote. The standard RPGA Network voting procedures will be used. Complete the Judge's Summary before you collect the players' scoring sheets. This way you will not be influenced by their ratings and comments.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying.

A note about the text: Some of the text in this module is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text for the players will be in bold italics. It is strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text, instead of reading it aloud, as some of the text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters.

## Tier Structure

Add the levels of the PCs to determine which tier they are on. Tiered events and foes are marked throughout the text.

Tier 1:	Total levels 4-13
Tier 2:	Total levels 14-25
Tier 3:	Total levels 26-37
Tier 4:	Total levels 38-56
Tier 5:	Total levels 57+

## Judge Background

Many centuries ago, an elven wizard created a small gray box. He gave it magical powers, the nature of which have been forgotten through the centuries. During the search for powerful magic to aid in the defense of Ravens Bluff during the recent war, the box was rediscovered by the Ministry of Art. The Ministry has asked the Ravens Bluff Bureau of Investigation (RBBI), a mercenary investigation company, to retrieve the box from a secret laboratory of the Ministry, and take it to a wizard who specializes in ancient elven magic. The RBBI has also been asked to explore the basic magical properties of the box. The wizard lives in

a quiet farming village not far from Ravens Bluff. Nelliott Ess, Chief Investigator of the RBBI, has hired the PCs to perform these tasks.

All of the magical powers of the box will remain secret, except for one: its protective curse. Anyone attempting to activate the box without the proper authority is significantly aged. Thus, the PCs will have the added difficulty of various aging effects while they attempt to deliver the box.

Because this is a secret mission, the PCs will have a cover story to explain their travel. They are to appear as War Heroes, impressing the local folks at the grand reopening of a general store in the small farming village.

The adventure starts with a meeting with Ess, who will ask the PCs to retrieve the box, experiment with it, and take it to the elven magic expert. The location of the Ministry's secret lab is known to a band of highwaymen (highwaypeople?), who take great pleasure in waylaying travelers in that area. After defeating the robbers, the PCs travel to the secret wizard outpost, and retrieve the box. Experimentation with the box will release the curse; all the PCs will be aged in some way. Their only solution to the aging is to visit the wizard who knows about the box. On the way out of the secret wizard's retreat, the PCs are again robbed by the same highwaymen as before. The encounter should be more challenging, as the PCs are much older and less capable. From here the PCs travel to the farm village. Here they get in the way of young adventurers trying to stop a runaway carriage, and are once again reminded of their aged state. After socializing with the townspeople, the PCs meet the wizard. He will ask them all about the box, but will refuse to remove their aging effects until they have completed the other portion of their mission: to act as Heroes and entertain the farm folk who have gathered to see them. The wizard suggests ways they can entertain the crowd. Only once the crowd is happy will the wizard remove the curse of the box.

This adventure is meant to be light-hearted and fun. Whenever possible, challenge the role-playing skills of the players by reminding them of the PCs' ages. Do this by describing their daily aches and pains, making harder the things that young and strong adventurers find easy, etc. Avoid killing the PCs with these extra little challenges, but don't make the normal encounters any easier than they are here.

## Encounter 1: The Mission

*The siege of Ravens Bluff ended more than a year ago. Farmers have begun the spring planting. Merchants are thinking about selling the harvest to citizens for whom food has been imported and*

*expensive. Adventuring still isn't as lucrative as it used to be, because the armies that attacked Ravens Bluff hired or killed all but the toughest of the local monsters. Many adventurers have taken to hiring themselves out as laborers to help rebuild the city. A message arrived at dawn, promising some relief to the boredom. Adventure awaits!*

Give the players **Handout #1**. When the players ask about the RBBI:

*The message asks you to report to the Chief Investigator of the Ravens Bluff Bureau of Investigation, a mercenary investigation outfit. The RBBI is known for discreet investigation of sensitive cases, like when some sheep had turned green, or the connection between Raymond's Oyster Farm and the disappearance of a powerful wizard's apprentice. More recently, the RBBI investigated some unusual occurrences in a haunted library.*

Nelliot Ess is a cross between Humphrey Bogart and the stereotypical B-movie private eye: tough, self-assured and business like, and prone to use unusual metaphors to describe things.

*After a brief walk in the cool morning air under dark and cloudy skies, you arrive at RBBI headquarters, where you are ushered into the office of Nelliot Ess. He is a tall and darkly handsome human, with a serious expression. He gets right to the point. "Investigators," Ess says as he looks up from his paper-laden desk, "I have a simple yet delicate job for you. It involves picking up and delivering a magical artifact to a wizard in a small farm village not far from here, as well as preliminary investigation of the powers of the artifact. For reasons of ...shall we say...security, which I am sure you understand, I cannot give more detail until you have agreed to take the job and security precautions which accompany the contract. Are you available for the investigation?"*

Any PC that does not agree to go on the investigation will be dismissed from Ess' office and wished good luck in the next gaming slot.

*"I am glad to see that you are available. So many adventurers retired after the war. I must now ask you to swear you will keep this conversation and all other details of the case in the strictest possible confidence. I understand that some details may need to be revealed during the execution of the case. Each of you must make your own vow."*

Each PC's vow must be individual. When the vow-taking and role-playing is done:

*"Very well. The Ministry of Arts has commissioned the RBBI to perform a simple task: retrieve a magical box, experiment with it to learn it's most fundamental powers, and deliver it to a wizard in Karney. You are to proceed to the Eagle's Nest, a wizardly retreat and place of study hidden in the mountains half a day's ride south of Ravens Bluff."*

Give the players **Handout #2**.

*"We have obtained permission to enter the grounds of the retreat from the Ministry of Arts. There you will locate the box, and experiment with it. Do this inside the retreat, as it is shielded by mystical powers so as to keep most magical effects from bringing havoc to the surrounding wilderness. When you have performed a basic survey of the artifact's powers, deliver it to a hermit wizard named Lacidem the Withdrawn. Lacidem will contact you at Joe Bob's General Store and Tavern in Karney late tomorrow afternoon at the earliest. He will give you the rest of your pay for the mission. As cover for the mission, and a reason to travel to Karney, you have been hired to serve as entertainment for the grand opening of Joe Bob's Tavern and General Store. There you will pretend to be war heroes so as to awe the locals. Those yokels were hard-hit by the war, and are in need of heroes to restore their faith. Are there any questions?"*

The PCs may ask Ess some questions:

- What do you know about the box?

It was crafted by Elvish the Elder, five or more of elven generations ago. Elvish was an incredibly powerful wizard. Practitioners of the magical arts would describe his powers as being of the 25th Circle. Elvish was protective of his creations, so be wary of traps and curses. The box is a small gray cube, decorated with gemstones of all types, and about one hand (four inches) on a side. It is believed to contain a large magical gem, bigger than a moon on a clear August night. (PCs with an appropriate skill or nonweapon proficiency will vaguely recall an artifact of this description rumored to be a gate to the ethereal plane).

- What do you know about the wizard's retreat?

It's a safe place to play with magic items...that is, safe for the outside world. It's a place for the Ministry to work with items or spells without having to worry about attracting unwanted attention of the Mystrans. ("Hey, it's the Ministry's place, not mine," he say apologetically to any Mystran PCs). The box is hidden there somewhere. The Ministry said adventurers would know where to look for it. The retreat is half a day's

ride or a full day's brisk walk away. (Certified members of the Wizard's Guild will be able to verify this information.)

Note: for the purposes of this adventure, the road conditions allow the PCs to cover 10 miles a day on foot, or 17 miles mounted. Thus, the trip to the wizard's retreat should take about four hours, and the trip to Karney another two hours. The PCs can arrive at Karney late in the afternoon of the day they leave Ravens Bluff.

- What do you know about the wizard to whom we are taking the box?

He said rumor has it he's a great guy. He lives about 25 miles from here. That's all he told us.

- What might be encountered along the way?

Leftovers of invading force, the usual wilderness monsters...dragons, that sort of thing, and bad guys. There are many highwaymen.

- When must we leave?

Tomorrow morning at the latest, although there will be a cash bonus if you complete the mission by tomorrow evening. It takes maybe four hours good ride to get to the retreat, then another two to get to Karney.

- What do you know about Karney?

It's a little farming town, full of people who's problems don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world.

- When or what do we get paid?

Each of you brave philanthropists gets 120 gp/tier (coins or gems) now, and some more when you give the box to the wizard. He didn't say how much more.

- Do we have any official authority?

No, you do not. The RBBI is not a self-serving, slug-brained vigilante group like the City Wa...er, other groups. The mission should be kept in strictest confidence. Don't openly advertise that you're working for me.

Before the PCs leave, they'll need their RBBI badges:

*"One last thing before you leave. Those of you who are not RBBI members will want one of these." Ess places several thick paper RBBI badges on the table. These are translucent; a dragon can be seen when they are held up to the light. "Good luck."*

Have spellcasters pick spells based on this background. If the PCs picked spells earlier, they will have to spend the appropriate time to memorize new spells.

## Encounter 2: The Last Boy Scouts

*On the way out of town you hear "Mystra disintegrate it!" The gentle yet frustrated oath was evidently issued by two little old women who just lost their battle with several large packages. It appears as though they are preparing to attempt to cross the street when they dropped them. A few dozen apples have fallen into the mud and horse droppings in the street. Humans and demihumans alike passing the struggling women are obviously attempting to avoid noticing the situation. To make matters worse, a gentle rain has begun to fall.*

The cold, damp and rainy weather will persist for the rest of the scenario. For mood, make sure you remind the PCs frequently about the miserable the weather, especially once they have been cursed.

This encounter is intended to see how the PCs feel about old people. The PCs can ignore the entire situation and go on about their business, or they can also offer the old women some assistance. Pay careful attention to the behavior of squires, knights, cavaliers, swashbucklers, and other chivalrous types during this encounter.

The women are on their way home from picking up supplies. Normally, Alice's nephew, Duncan, goes with them but he had to work late and this chore just couldn't wait. They each have two large packages. They contain food stuffs, some cloth, some personal items. The packages are not heavy, just bulky. The ladies live in a house behind what use to be Allan Farnsworth's grocery store (heavily damaged during war). This is only two blocks away. The women will be thankful and chatty. If the PCs help the ladies home, Alice will ask them to stay for tea and cookies. She will also let them know, since they are obviously such nice young people, that if they every need a place to stay she has a couple of extra rooms. They are not big rooms but they are warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

**Mrs. Alice Farnsworth** is a lonely old woman whose husband, Allan, died about 15 years ago. Mr. Farnsworth was a grocer. He did pretty well. He left her enough to survive on. The house is paid for and (Waukeen bless him) it isn't drafty. She will talk to the PCs about how lonely she is and what a pill her boarder Mrs. Doris Young can be.

**Mrs. Doris Young** is a stone deaf, lonely old woman. Her husband, William, died of a wasting disease just two years ago. Mr. Young was a banker. However, he

did not believe in owning property so when he died she went to live with her dear friend Alice.

Role-play with the elderly ladies as long as it's fun, then allow the PCs leave town.

## Encounter 3: Mugging

Since just before the war, a mole inside the Ministry of Arts has been selling information about Ministry activities. This mole works through a network of contacts, and has thus disguised his identity well. In a recent deal, he arranged to provide information about persons traveling on Ministry business to a well-funded group of highwaymen. These highwaymen, led by a rogue wizard who was excused from the Mage's Guild for a series of unsavory acts, have thus learned that a party of adventurers will be using the retreat. They do not know which group will use the retreat, but do not turn down the opportunity to rob any rich adventuring parties which come their way. The robbers are cautious, reserving half of their numbers at a base camp, while the other half lay in wait. Full strength is reserved for groups returning from the retreat (encounter 5).

*It has been a miserable ride through the country. The late morning rain has gotten colder and harder, and has made anything more than twenty yards ahead impossible to see. It will be interesting to see what the Ministry of Arts' retreat looks like. At the very least, it should be dry. According to the map, the hidden turn-off to the special chateau is just ahead. These thoughts are interrupted by a call of "Halt! Stand and deliver!" as a trio of comely, chain mail-clad women appear from the brush at the edge of the road, ten yards ahead.*

These bad guys want to steal from the PCs with minimum risk to themselves. They have been preying on travelers since the end of the war. Pickings have been good so far because the few patrols or adventurers who have used this road. Also hiding in the bushes are the rest of the fighters and the thieves (on one side, ten yards from the PCs) and the wizard on the other, twenty yards from the PCs (the edge of visibility). The plan is for the fighters will close to engage the PCs, while the thieves will use their bows on spellcasters, splitting attacks as needed to engage all obvious targets. These should distract the PCs long enough for the wizard to get off spells to incapacitate or kill. The wizard, however, is too interested in saving his own hide; he stays hidden and out of the combat and silently slips into the woods the second combat goes against his PCs. *It is important that the wizard gets*

*away to set up the ambush in encounter five.* If the PCs manage to kill the wizard before he escapes, then a hidden thief gets away. If the PCs search the area after the combat, they will find the tracks which lead to the camp of the rest of the highwaymen. If the PCs care to engage the rest of the group, encounter five occurs here.

The weather will effect this combat. The mud causes unsure footing: movement on the road at a pace faster than a normal walk requires a Dexterity check. Failure means the PC spends the round picking themselves up. Animals are more sure-footed, so are not effected by the mud. The rain reduces visibility: -1 to hit up to ten yards, -2 up to twenty yards; treat as invisible beyond that. The highwaymen have been standing in the cold rain and mud all day, so they have already figured these facts out.

### Party Levels 6-13:

**Rogue Wizard, hm W3 (invoker):** runs away before the PCs spot him.

**Thugs (3), hf F2:** AL CN; AC 3 (chain mail and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 22; THAC0 18 (long sword specialized); #AT 3/2; Dmg 1-8+3 (long sword, specialization and strength bonuses); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18.

**Archers (2), hm F2:** AL CN; AC 4 (chain mail and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 20; THAC0 18 (low bow) or 19 (dagger); #AT 2/1 (long bow) or 1 (dagger); Dmg 1d8 (sheaf arrow) or 1-4 (dagger); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18.

**Thieves (3), hm T3:** AL CN; AC 4 (leather and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 21; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (short sword); SA backstab (2x); SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18. HS 30%; MS 35%.

These sneaky folks will attempt to spot who has the most magic (probably spellcasters) and try to get them first. They will try to avoid priests and paladins of Tyr, as nothing but trouble comes from messing with them.

### Party Levels 14-25:

**Rogue Wizard, hm W4 (invoker):** runs away before the PCs spot him.

**Thugs (3), hf F3:** AL CN; AC 2 (chain mail, shield, and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 31; THAC0 16 (long sword specialized and strength bonus); #AT 3/2; Dmg 1-8+3 (long sword, specialization and strength bonuses); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18.

**Archers (2), hm F3:** AL CN; AC 4 (chain mail and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 25; THAC0 17 (low bow) or 18 (dagger); #AT 2/1 (long bow) or 1 (dagger); Dmg 1d8 (sheaf arrow) or 1-4+1 (dagger and strength bonus); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18.

**Thieves (3), hm T4:** AL CN; AC 4 (leather and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 26; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6+1 (short sword and strength bonus); SA backstab (2x); SD nil; MR nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18. HS 40%; MS 45%.

These sneaky folks will attempt to spot who has the most magic (probably spellcasters) and try to get them first. They will try to avoid priests and paladins of Tyr, as nothing but trouble comes from messing with them.

#### **Party Levels 26-37:**

**Rogue Wizard, hm W5 (invoker):** runs away before the PCs spot him.

**Thugs (3), hf F4:** AL CN; AC 2 (chain mail, shield, and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 41; THAC0 15 (long sword specialized and strength bonus); #AT 3/2; Dmg 1-8+4 (long sword, specialization and strength bonuses); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18.

**Archers (2), hm F4:** AL CN; AC 3 (chain mail and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 30; THAC0 14 (low bow) or 17 (dagger); #AT 2/1 (long bow) or 1 (dagger); Dmg 1d8 (sheaf arrow) or 1-4+1 (dagger and strength bonus); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18.

**Thieves (3), hm T5:** AL CN; AC 4 (leather and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 31; THAC0 17 (strength bonus); #AT 1; Dmg 1-6+1 (short sword and strength bonus); SA backstab (3x); SD nil; MR nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18. HS 50%; MS 55%.

These sneaky folks will attempt to spot who has the most magic (probably spellcasters) and try to get them first. They will try to avoid priests and paladins of Tyr, as nothing but trouble comes from messing with them.

#### **Party Levels 38-56:**

**Rogue Wizard, hm W7 (invoker):** runs away before the PCs spot him.

**Thugs (3), hf F6:** AL CN; AC 1 (chain mail, shield, and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 58; THAC0 13 (long sword specialized and strength bonus); #AT 3/2; Dmg 1-8+4 (long sword, specialization and strength bonuses); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18.

**Archers (2), hm F6:** AL CN; AC 3 (chain mail and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 40; THAC0 12 (low bow) or 16 (dagger); #AT 2/1 (long bow) or 1 (dagger); Dmg 1d8 (sheaf arrow) or 1-4+1 (dagger and strength bonus); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18.

**Thieves (3), hm T7:** AL CN; AC 4 (leather and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 36; THAC0 16 (strength bonus); #AT 1; Dmg 1-6+1 (short sword and strength bonus); SA backstab (3x); SD nil; MR nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18. HS 70%; MS 75%.

These sneaky folks will attempt to spot who has the most magic (probably spellcasters) and try to get them first. They will try to avoid priests and paladins of Tyr, as nothing but trouble comes from messing with them.

#### **Party Levels 57+:**

**Rogue Wizard, hm W9 (invoker):** runs away before the PCs spot him.

**Thugs (3), hf F8:** AL CN; AC 1 (chain mail, shield, and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 70; THAC0 11 (long sword specialized and strength bonus); #AT 2; Dmg 1-8+5 (long sword, specialization and strength bonuses); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18.

**Archers (2), hm F8:** AL CN; AC 3 (chain mail and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 50; THAC0 9 (low bow) or 13 (dagger); #AT 2/1 (long bow) or 1 (dagger); Dmg 1d8 (sheaf arrow) or 1-4+1 (dagger and strength bonus); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18.

**Thieves (3), hm T9:** AL CN; AC 4 (leather and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 42; THAC0 15 (strength bonus); #AT 1; Dmg 1-6+1 (short sword and strength bonus); SA backstab (4x); SD nil; MR nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18. HS 90%; MS 95%.

These sneaky folks will attempt to spot who has the most magic (probably spellcasters) and try to get them first. They will try to avoid priests and paladins of Tyr, as nothing but trouble comes from messing with them.

## **Encounter 4: The Wizard's Retreat**

Refer to the judges' map of the retreat. The PCs arrive at a two-story brownstone house, nestled in a secluded box canyon. The house is manned by *unseen servants*. This spell was cast so many times by high level mages that the unseen servants decided to stay. They are very particular about the house, and constantly pick up after the absent-minded mages. They refuse to venture into

the cellar and are tolerant of guests. The *unseen servants* will leave the PCs alone unless they move things. If they search the shelves for books, as long as the books are in their hands, the servants do nothing. As soon as a book is placed down, or on the shelf in the wrong place, an unseen servant sets it right. The unseen servants will sound a gong at each meal, and they expect the household residents to sit and enjoy the meal they prepare.

***You survived the ambush and dispatched the thieves, and have finally arrived at your destination. Ahead of you, tucked away in a small box canyon is a simple two-story brownstone house. The walls seem to be made of brown stone and the roof is constructed of gray slate. The grounds are well kept, but beyond a few hundred feet the forest grows with lush abandon. This looks like a perfect place for a mage's experimental spell testing home.***

The front door, back door, and all windows are closed but unlocked. Curtains are pulled back during the day and are drawn shut by the *unseen servants* at night. The windows can be opened, but an *alarm* spell is triggered if the house is entered this way. This is a harmless deterrent, and will only serve to annoy the PCs. The alarm shuts off in a few minutes and resets itself automatically. There is a flagstone path that leads from this door to the outhouse.

**The Living Room:** The living room is a large open room lined with bookcases. A large fireplace to the left of the door will spring to life upon the PCs' entry in the room. A big bay window sits in the south wall and several smaller windows are in the north wall, allowing in plenty of ambient light. The bookshelves are covered with many books all organized in sections. There are books on history of the Realms, politics, gardening, armory, and any other subject of general knowledge that wizards needed might need away from their larger libraries. In the center of the room sits a large, overstuffed couch and several comfortable chairs. An exotic but harmless plant grows in a pot next to the fireplace.

**The Dining Room:** The large formal dining room is just to the left of the living room. A polished oak table surrounded by burgundy velvet-lined chairs dominates the chamber. A candelabra graces the center of the table and a chandelier hangs from the ceiling. A china hutch with tea cups and tea servers (decorated with unicorns, ki-rin and other good monsters of the Realms) sits in the south nook, while a built-in wall shelf unit to the east holds many fine plates. The *unseen servants* will have the table set for whatever meal is to be served next. To the north is a large staircase leading upstairs.

**The Kitchen:** The kitchen is long and kept immaculately clean by *unseen servants* with nothing else to occupy their time. The floor is hard marble. There is a large pantry in the west wall. Fresh fruit and other snacks will appear at odd hours in the kitchen on the counter. Copper kettles and iron pans hang from the ceiling over the stove. There is a large oven next to the pantry. In the morning and early evening, *unseen servants* are busy here preparing the meals. They do not appreciate being disturbed or even helped. PCs that attempt to cook their own meals here will have a hard time of it, finding that their ingredients will be put away or tossed away or incorporated into the meal the servants are preparing. There is a door in the north wall that leads out to the outhouse. There are also some stairs leading down.

**The Outhouse:** This is a small wooden shack with a bench. There is a hole in the bench. It doesn't smell too bad, however its purpose is obvious. The *unseen servants* keep this place tidy as well.

**The Study:** The stairs lead up to an large open room that looks like a casual study area. There are two desks lined up against the south wall, and a large circular table in the center of the room. There are two doors in the east and west walls. There is a large window that overlooks the front yard in the south wall. The desks hold the usual assortment of paper, parchment, pencils, quills and ink.

**The Bedrooms:** Each of the doors opens up into a bedroom. The bedrooms to the west are larger, and have two single beds in them. The bedrooms to the east are smaller and have a double bed in them. There is a foot locker at the foot of each bed. It is unlocked and holds an assortment of bedclothes. The closets hold a few robes, casual change of clothes. Nothing here is fancy or out of the ordinary.

**The Work Room:** The stairs lead down into what can only be described as every wizards' dream of a working laboratory. There are tables covered with vials, stoppers, flasks, glass tubes, and an assortment of alchemical contraptions. There seems to be no work or experiments in progress (the *unseen servants* at work again). To the north, there is a cabinet, with the phrase "Dangerous! Explosives!" carved into the front. It has a *fire trap* spell on it, cast at 4 levels/party tier. If the cabinet is touched before the trap is dispelled or the password spoken (the phrase on the front), the fire trap will explode, causing 1d4 +4/party tier damage to any PC caught within five feet of the door. When the cabinet is opened, a shopping list of wizard spell components and six empty potion bottles are found. There is a poorly-hidden (i.e., the PCs find it automatically if they make some effort to search for it) secret door in the south-west corner of the room.

**The Secret Room:** This room is a large rectangular room with a shallow circular pit in the center. Within

the pit a pentagram is inscribed in a five-foot diameter circle. The chalk used to scribe the pentagram and circle is fresh (it was laid to scare off would-be box thieves). A successful spellcraft roll or similar skill will reveal that this area could be used to summon, and hopefully contain, all sorts of creatures. There is no evil detected, as no evil creatures were ever summoned here. Play up the PCs' paranoia concerning the disruption of the pentagram. In the center of the pentagram is a cubic box.

**The Box:** The object the PCs have been sent to retrieve is a thin wooden cube, about four inches on a side. It is gray in color, either from some unknown magical effect, or simply from weathering for a century or two. It radiates strong alteration (extra-dimensional space) and abjuration (curse) magic, but is not evil.

*The box is carved out of some gray wood, and bears an intricate carving on the lid. The centerpiece of this carving depicts an hourglass set against a celestial setting. Inlaid about the centerpiece are carved and brightly colored morning glories and ivy. It almost looks as if they were real. The box is smooth, not a splinter on it. The wood is oddly glossy and it seems to glow from within.*

Pushing a petal on the morning glories or the ivy will trigger a secret panel to spring open. When this happens, read the following:

*A wooden petal depresses and a panel slides open revealing a series of letters OTTFSSSEN, followed by a blank. Below the letters are five wooden buttons each with a single letter (O, T, S, E, N) carved on them. Between them, carved in the panel is: "Press the button with the correct corresponding letter that occurs next in the above sequence."*

The letters represent numbers (One, Two, Three, etc.). The correct although ineffectual solution is T (Ten). If the correct button is pressed:

*As you press the button marked T, the letter T appears to glow in the blank. A voice says "Ten, that is correct." However, something doesn't seem right. You feel faint and dizzy and the world goes dark before your eyes. A ghostly voice speaks around you. "Alas, you are not the intended targets for my curse. I had designed this box to teach an impudent young wizard a stern lesson. This ex-apprentice of mine would curse my old bones for being so slow to teach him the ways of magic. He needed to experience for himself what it is like being old, when the body does not respond like it once used to, but the mind is still keen and sharp. He needed to know what it was like to be bowled over by the young who don't listen to*

*you. I am sorry, but you have set off the curse, and once released, you are bound to its effects until you can discern the key to its reversal." The voice fades away and you drift off into unconsciousness. When you awake, you are in the same room, however the people you are with do not look like the people you started with. In fact, they are old. Really old. Ancient.*

If the wrong button is pushed:

*As you press the button, the letter T appears to glow in the blank. A voice says "That is not the correct button. But it doesn't matter, any button that was pressed would have caused the same thing to happen." As the voice speaks, you feel faint and dizzy and the world goes dark before your eyes. The ghostly voice continues, "Alas, you are not the intended targets for my curse. I had designed this box to teach an impudent young wizard a stern lesson. This ex-apprentice of mine would curse my old bones for being so slow to teach him the ways of magic. He was to experience for himself what it is like being old, when the body does not respond like it once used to, but the mind is still keen and sharp. He needed to know what it was like to be bowled over by the young who don't listen to you. I am sorry, but you have set off the curse, and once released, you are bound to its effects until you can discern the key to its reversal." The voice fades away and you drift off into unconsciousness. When you awake, you are in the same room, however the people you are with do not look like the people you started with. In fact, they are old. Really old. Ancient.*

When any letter button is pushed the curse is triggered. The curse can be avoided by speaking the name of pet dog (Fizzie) of the wizard who created the box.

The curse cannot be dispelled by the PCs (treat it as 25th level). When the box is opened for the first time only, it effects anyone who made a vow connected with the box (all PCs should have done this in encounter one) at any range, without a save (if the players complain, explain it after the game). Squires, knights, cavaliers, swashbucklers, etc. who failed to help the women of encounter two receive one additional old age effect. Point out to the PCs the fact that the box seems to have given special attention to these unchivalrous persons.

**Curse effects:** the PCs black out, and awake having advanced to venerable age: -4 strength (exceptional strength warriors are reduced to 16), -3 con, -3 dex. Racial maxima or minima will not be exceeded, and the wisdom and intelligence of old age are not gained because these come from experience (PHB, p. 32-33). In addition, roll for two effects from **Player Handout #3**. Give the players the appropriate descriptions. You

may find it best to cut **Handout #3** into slips. These effects are *cumulative* with the aging effects noted above. Note that many of these effects will be aggravated by the PCs' particular situation, such as the cold, damp, rainy weather or a long horseback ride. Feel free to torment the PCs with their personal miseries, especially those PCs who failed to be chivalrous earlier.

Once the curse has been triggered, the box opens to reveal a extra dimensional space (equivalent to a *bag of holding*, 500 gp capacity). Note that anything placed into the space has to fit through the four inch square opening.

There is nothing else of obvious interest in the retreat.

## Encounter 5: Mugged Again

This encounter may not occur if the PCs has tracked and engaged the remainder of the highwaymen.

*Well, the wizard's retreat was...shall we say....interesting. The box had some unexpected side effects. Now, it is time to make your appearance at the grand opening of Joe Bob's Feed and Grain in Karney. But how you will convince them you are the great war heroes they hired when you look like a group out of the Geriatric Ward of the Adventurers Retirement Home? And to top it off, the cold rain has become harder.*

Allow the PCs to plan and adjust before they leave the wizard's retreat. At the hidden turnoff, three young female fighters swing down from the tree branches above the road. They look skilled, self-confident, and serious. Their arms and armor look similar to the highwayladies from the previous encounter. The fighters give the PCs the standard "stand and deliver" routine, and attempt to delay the PCs long enough for the rest of the muggers to move into good positions. If the PCs makes sufficient noise as they approach the ambush, the enemy wizard will use his spells (if any) to prepare the ambush.

The main goal of the ambush is to kill travelers, then collect their stuff. Although the invoker knows certain destructive evocations might destroys magic or valuable items, he also knows that live adventurers can kill him. Therefore, he will kill first, then worry about magic items later. He also has no qualms about targeting PC mounts (horses make fine targets). The rest of the highwaymen know this as well, so they will not hesitate to kill helpless PCs (example: slit throats of held PCs).

This is almost the same fight as Encounter 2. The PCs may recognize any of the attackers that got away

from the first fight. The fight should be tougher, because the PCs are older now. The mud causes unsure footing: movement on the road at a pace faster than a normal walk requires a Dexterity check. Failure means the PC spends the round picking themselves up. Animals are more sure-footed, so are not effected by the mud. The mud is worse, so the animals must make the same check (treat horses as Dexterity of 15; judges must use their judgment for other animals). Animals that slip the mud must make a ST vs. paralyzation to avoid a broken ankle. Broken ankles can be repaired by any sort of magical healing of no less than two points per PCs tier. Animals which are not healed will refuse to go on, and probably must be destroyed. The rain reduces visibility: -1 to hit up to ten yards, -2 up to twenty yards; treat as invisible beyond that. The highwaymen have been standing in the cold rain and mud all day, so they have already figured these facts out, and thus know how to avoid them.

### Party Levels 6-13:

**Rogue Wizard, hm W3 (invoker):** AL CN; AC 3 (*armor* spell plus dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 10; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (dagger); SA spells; SD spells; MR nil; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 18; SZ M; ML 18.

Spells: 1st level - *armor* (cast), *magic missile* (2x).  
2nd level - *flaming sphere*.

He will hide and not take part in the fight, figuring that a party of adventurers must have something valuable to steal. He was a member of the Mage's Guild but was drummed out for numerous violations.

**Thugs (3), hf F2:** AL CN; AC 3 (chain mail and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 22; THAC0 18 (long sword specialized); #AT 3/2; Dmg 1-8+3 (long sword, specialization and strength bonuses); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18.

**Archers (2), hm F2:** AL CN; AC 4 (chain mail and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 20; THAC0 18 (low bow) or 19 (dagger); #AT 2/1 (long bow) or 1 (dagger); Dmg 1d8 (sheaf arrow) or 1-4 (dagger); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18.

**Thieves (3), hm T3:** AL CN; AC 4 (leather and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 21; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (short sword); SA backstab (2x); SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18. HS 30%; MS 35%.

These sneaky folks will attempt to spot who has the most magic (probably spellcasters) and try to get them first. They will try to avoid priests and paladins of Tyr, as nothing but trouble comes from messing with them.

### Party Levels 14-25:

**Rogue Wizard, hm W4 (invoker):** AL CN; AC 3 (*armor* spell plus dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (dagger); SA spells; SD spells; MR nil; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 18; SZ M; ML 18.

Spells: 1st level - *armor (cast)*, *burning hands*, *magic missile* (2x). 2nd level - *darkness 15' radius*, *flaming sphere* (2x).

He will hide and not take part in the fight, figuring that a party of adventurers must have something valuable to steal. He was a member of the Mage's Guild but was drummed out for numerous violations.

**Thugs (3), hf F3:** AL CN; AC 2 (chain mail, shield, and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 31; THAC0 16 (long sword specialized and strength bonus); #AT 3/2; Dmg 1-8+3 (long sword, specialization and strength bonuses); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18.

**Archers (2), hm F3:** AL CN; AC 4 (chain mail and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 25; THAC0 17 (low bow) or 18 (dagger); #AT 2/1 (long bow) or 1 (dagger); Dmg 1d8 (sheaf arrow) or 1-4+1 (dagger and strength bonus); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18.

**Thieves (3), hm T4:** AL CN; AC 4 (leather and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 26; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6+1 (short sword and strength bonus); SA backstab (2x); SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18. HS 40%; MS 45%.

These sneaky folks will attempt to spot who has the most magic (probably spellcasters) and try to get them first. They will try to avoid priests and paladins of Tyr, as nothing but trouble comes from messing with them.

### Party Levels 26-37:

**Rogue Wizard, hm W5 (invoker):** AL CN; AC 3 (*armor* spell plus dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 14; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (dagger); SA spells; SD spells; MR nil; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 18; SZ M; ML 18.

Spells: 1st level - *armor (cast)*, *burning hands*, *enlarge*, *magic missile* (2x). 2nd level - *darkness 15' radius*, *flaming sphere* (2x). 3rd level - *fireball* (2x).

He will hide and not take part in the fight, figuring that a party of adventurers must have something valuable to steal. He was a member of the Mage's Guild but was drummed out for numerous violations. He will use his *enlarge* spell on one of his fighters in the first round of combat if he thinks he can remain undetected. He may even use his *fireball* on PCs wizards as revenge for being booted from the Guild, but only if his fighters will not also be effected.

**Thugs (3), hf F4:** AL CN; AC 2 (chain mail, shield, and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 41; THAC0 15 (long sword specialized and strength bonus); #AT 3/2; Dmg 1-8+4 (long sword, specialization and strength bonuses); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18.

**Archers (2), hm F4:** AL CN; AC 3 (chain mail and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 30; THAC0 14 (low bow) or 17 (dagger); #AT 2/1 (long bow) or 1 (dagger); Dmg 1d8 (sheaf arrow) or 1-4+1 (dagger and strength bonus); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18.

**Thieves (3), hm T5:** AL CN; AC 4 (leather and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 31; THAC0 17 (strength bonus); #AT 1; Dmg 1-6+1 (short sword and strength bonus); SA backstab (3x); SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18. HS 50%; MS 55%.

These sneaky folks will attempt to spot who has the most magic (probably spellcasters) and try to get them first. They will try to avoid priests and paladins of Tyr, as nothing but trouble comes from messing with them.

### Party Levels 38-56:

**Rogue Wizard, hm W7 (invoker):** AL CN; AC 3 (*armor* spell plus dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 18; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (dagger); SA spells; SD spells; MR nil; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 18; SZ M; ML 18.

Spells: 1st level - *armor (cast)*, *burning hands*, *enlarge*, *magic missile* (2x). 2nd level - *darkness 15' radius*, *flaming sphere* (2x), *stinking cloud*. 3rd level - *fireball* (2x), *hold person*. 4th - *ice storm*, *stoneskin* (cast; 7 protections).

He will hide and not take part in the fight, figuring that a party of adventurers must have something valuable to steal. He was a member of the Mage's Guild but was drummed out for numerous violations. This wizard will open combat with his *hold person* spell directed at the PC fighters. He will use his *enlarge* spell on one of his fighters in the next round of combat if he thinks he can remain undetected. He may even use his *fireball* on PC wizards as revenge for being booted from the Guild, but only if his fighters will not also be effected.

**Thugs (3), hf F6:** AL CN; AC 1 (chain mail, shield, and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 58; THAC0 13 (long sword specialized and strength bonus); #AT 3/2; Dmg 1-8+4 (long sword, specialization and strength bonuses); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18.

**Archers (2), hm F6:** AL CN; AC 3 (chain mail and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 40; THAC0 12 (low bow)

or 16 (dagger); #AT 2/1 (long bow) or 1 (dagger); Dmg 1d8 (sheaf arrow) or 1-4+1 (dagger and strength bonus); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18.

**Thieves (3), hm T7:** AL CN; AC 4 (leather and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 36; THACO 16 (strength bonus); #AT 1; Dmg 1-6+1 (short sword and strength bonus); SA backstab (3x); SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18. HS 70%; MS 75%.

These sneaky folks will attempt to spot who has the most magic (probably spellcasters) and try to get them first. They will try to avoid priests and paladins of Tyr, as nothing but trouble comes from messing with them.

### **Party Levels 57+:**

**Rogue Wizard, hm W9 (invoker):** AL CN; AC 3 (*armor* spell plus dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 22; THACO 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (dagger); SA spells; SD spells; MR nil; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 18; SZ M; ML 18.

Spells: 1st level - *armor* (cast), *burning hands*, *enlarge*, *magic missile* (2x). 2nd level - *darkness 15' radius*, *flaming sphere* (2x), *stinking cloud*. 3rd level - *fireball* (2x), *hold person*, *haste*. 4th - *ice storm*, *cone of cold*, *stoneskin* (cast; 8 protections). 5th level - *cloudkill*, *cone of cold*.

He will hide and not take part in the fight, figuring that a party of adventurers must have something valuable to steal. He was a member of the Mage's Guild but was drummed out for numerous violations. This wizard will open combat with his *hold person* spell directed at the PC fighters. He will use his *haste* and *enlarge* spell on his fighters in the next rounds of combat if he thinks he can remain undetected. He may even use his *fireball* or *cone of cold* on PC wizards as revenge for being booted from the Guild, but only if his fighters will not also be effected.

**Thugs (3), female hm F8:** AL CN; AC 1 (chain mail, shield, and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 70; THACO 11 (long sword specialized and strength bonus); #AT 2; Dmg 1-8+5 (long sword, specialization and strength bonuses); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18.

**Archers (2), hm F8:** AL CN; AC 3 (chain mail and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 50; THACO 9 (low bow) or 13 (dagger); #AT 2/1 (long bow) or 1 (dagger); Dmg 1d8 (sheaf arrow) or 1-4+1 (dagger and strength bonus); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18.

**Thieves (3), hm T9:** AL CN; AC 4 (leather and dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 42; THACO 15 (strength bonus); #AT 1; Dmg 1-6+1 (short sword and strength

bonus); SA backstab (4x); SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 18. HS 90%; MS 95%.

These sneaky folks will attempt to spot who has the most magic (probably spellcasters) and try to get them first. They will try to avoid priests and paladins of Tyr, as nothing but trouble comes from messing with them.

The invoker carries a few stolen items that he has yet to identify: *potion of geisha form*, *pawbands of animal defense AC 4*, a book of rare poetry (nonmagical, but valuable), a scroll of tax exemption (nonmagical), a *plume of panache*, and a *dagger +1/+2 vs. followers of Tyr*.

## **Encounter 6: Far and Away**

The PCs continue to make their way to Karney. The wizard has his summer home here, and he was awaiting the results of the investigation of the box.

*It's miserably cold and the rain continues. The mud seems to be getting deeper. The mud didn't used to be this bad, but then again, you were never this old either. Sort of gives one a new outlook on life, yes? Ahead is what appears to be a road sign, but with the fog, drizzle, and your ancient eyes, it's hard to make out from this distance.*

The road sign points to Ravens Bluff to the north, Dragon Falls to the south and Karney to the east. The sign is 6 feet tall and the letters are normal size. PCs with vision problems will need to get right up to the sign in order to read it. If they choose the wrong direction, there are always a few travelers who can help them... if they ask for help. Once they are on the right road leading to Karney read the following.

*You travel along the road, hopefully in the right direction. The road signs are difficult to read, to say the least. Why in Tyr's name don't these towns make signs larger, instead of posting the names in such teeny lettering? The pebbles on the road are painful to step on, when the mud isn't trying to eat you. Strange how you never noticed this before. The cold fog is miserable. It never seemed to affect you the way it does now. You see a brown shape move across the path and away in front of you. Squinting, it looks like a medium-sized four-legged animal bounding away. It seems the right size for a deer, but you aren't sure what it was. The way seems very long, and you get to the point where you might wonder if such a trek was the best thing for someone in your condition. After all, you aren't as young as you used to be. Up*

*ahead, you finally see a building, and perhaps a small village. A faint garlic smell fills the air.*

The four-legged animal is indeed a deer, just hard to make out with poor vision and the fog. There is a guard post with two human guards. Unless the PCs exercise extreme caution and alertness, they will probably miss it because of their poor senses. Allow the PCs to decide how they want to enter the village.

If they check in with the guards, the guards will be suspicious. If they walk into town without stopping to state their business with the guards, the guards will be annoyed. The guards will tend to shout, in order to get themselves understood, because everyone knows old people can't hear well. If the PCs state that they are going to the wizard's house or that they have business with the wizard, the guards will direct them to the market place saying that they can find the wizard there. Lacidem is well-known in the town, and the citizens of Karney are protective of their eccentric wizard. Strangers are treated with respect if they come to do trade with the village, but with veiled hostility if the villagers think they have come to upset/meddle/interfere/bother or otherwise perturb their wizard. The villagers will not be afraid to tell the old folks (the PCs) to get lost if the PCs is annoying or inconsiderate.

Of course, there are two wizards in town: Lacidem and Joe-Bob. The guards will assume the PCs mean Joe-Bob unless they state otherwise. Have fun trying to confuse the old folks with this.

If the PCs treats the villagers with respect, they will be led to the market place.

Hans: The younger of the two. He is impatient, eager, bored, impetuous, restless and impulsive. He will treat the old people very discourteously. He doesn't have time for them. He wants to go out on adventure. Old people don't have much to offer and he knows better than them anyway. He'll make comments that old people like that shouldn't be out, that they need their rest, that they need to be careful, and so forth.

Franz: Middle-aged Franz is cunning, lazy, bored, self-important, officious, and quiet. He will tolerate some of Hans' lesser offenses to the older people, but not all of them. However, he doesn't want to have to write up Hans or do any paperwork. He just wants to make sure the old people are no trouble.

The guards will let the old people move along when they are satisfied that the group means no harm. If the PCs treats the guards with respect (regardless of how the guards treat the PCs) they will be led to the market place.

*The village is small, and everything smells of garlic. The houses are a bit blurry, but they seem clean. People on the street seem friendly though none stop*

*to talk with you. You follow the streets working your way to the center of the village. Along the corner of the one street is a small group of gnomes... make that halflings... no, no, ohhh, those are children.*

The PCs will encounter some children who will bounce around, talk fast, holler, confuse, tease and otherwise attempt to get the PCs' goat, so to speak. These children are hanging around at the corner of market square. Feel free to insult and bully the PCs, but keep it all in fun (insulting players is bad). The children are normal, rebellious children who treat their elders with the usual dose of disrespect. Pick on the PCs' looks - especially the changes (bald, fat, smelly). They see the old PCs as easy game and will try and con them out of money, items or play them for sport, but they will not steal (if they are caught, they'll be reported to Hanz and Franz, the local lawmen. The thought terrifies the kids).

If the PC's are good sports, the children will give back what they conned out of them. If the PCs become hostile, the kids disperse and regroup to pelt the PCs with rotten vegetables from a rooftop. The children will have an excellent chance to escape down an alley. If the PCs actually attack the children, guards and farmers will appear in sufficient numbers and sufficient force (use judgment as to what is needed, and bring in a disguised Lacidem if needed) to capture that PCs and place them in jail for the night, to stand trial (and possible hanging) the next day. Lacidem is very high level, so he has access to just about any spells the judge needs, short of a *wish*

Eventually, the PCs will meet a sweet innocent child named Candy who will lead them through the market place to all her favorite farm stalls. Here they will interact with the villagers and perhaps purchase some items. Candy leads the PCs to the marketplace telling them all about the wonders that she sees there. In reality, this is all one shop which caters to the needs of farm folks. But to Candy's eyes, this place is huge. In the store there are candlys (candles), pretty streamers, a neat pantsholderupperkeeperinplace (belt buckle), heaven (the candy buckets), spectacles (glasses), and headwarmers (hats). Just about anything normal can be found here, at somewhat inflated prices (25% above PHB prices).

During this, they will discover that Lacidem will probably attend the opening of a new store at the end of Market Street. They will also learn that Lacidem often disguises himself so as to avoid the usual annoying fame that comes from being a powerful wizard living among ignorant farmers. If asked, Candy can describe Lacidem's undisguised appearance: old man, long white beard, pointed blue hat with moon and stars (really neat hat). And he smells OLD.

**Candy, human girl:** Age 6. Loves candy. Talks with a lisp. Cute blond braids. Absolutely adorable. Holds hands with the PCs, but switches PCs every few minutes.

## Encounter 7 - The Rescuers Down Under (the wheels)

Skip this encounter if time is short. This is where the PCs really find out what it's like to be old.

*You've now had a taste of what it really is like being old. People do treat you differently. It doesn't matter if you've lived a long life and have contributed a lot to society. It doesn't matter if you are... or were... a hero. People tend to discount you and treat you as if you were a child. Even children don't respect you.*

*At the very edge of your vision you see people jumping and waving. Hey, this is better. Maybe they are starting to appreciate all the great, heroic deeds you have done. You stand in the street waving back, when suddenly, Candy shouts, "Look Out!" She lets go of (insert PC name)'s hand and darts away through the gathering crowd. Moments later you hear a low rumbling.*

Have the PCs declare their actions. A runaway coach is bearing down on the PCs. Six stalwart NPC adventurers are doing their best to stop the coach and keep it from killing anyone. They really don't need six old has-beens (the PCs) standing in the middle of the street to interfere with their rescue efforts.

PCs who state that they are trying to get out of the way have 1 round to do so. Some of them might not be able to based on their age handicaps. There is a 25% chance that someone who has poor eyesight will actually go in the direction of the oncoming coach if they fail to be careful about figuring out which way is which.

PCs who hesitate will be in the path of the oncoming coach. If one PC is in the way, the action of the NPC adventurer mage will be to levitate that person out of harm's way. If two PCs remain in the way, a swashbuckler will swoop down from a nearby building and rescue them. If three PCs are in the way, one will be levitated, one will be rescued by the swashbuckler and one will be trampled for 8d4 of damage (two horses on the coach, each hoof = 1d4 damage). If the PCs just can't get out of the way, they will be trampled.

Feel free to modify the situation as needed to play up the PCs' aging effects, and to create more swashbuckling and heroic scenes for the NPC adventurers, especially at the expense of the PCs.

The NPC adventures are here to rescue the farm folks (especially the young attractive ones) from the carriage, not to fight the PCs. If combat breaks out, the NPCs will defend the village to the death, dying heroically but easily and pointlessly.

Once the runaway coach has been halted, the young adventurers will stop and find out who these people are. They won't believe that they are really young adventurers trapped in old bodies. They may see the adventurer garb and figure that these old people are reliving the glory days of their youth. After chastising the PCs severely, and making sure that the damsel in distress in the runaway coach is okay, the NPC adventurers will ask the PCs how to get to Joe Bob's, because they want to meet the famous war heroes that will be there.

The heroic NPCs are:

Flashy Pierre: a human swashbuckler rogue with a huge handlebar mustache. A very flashy guy who uses a rapier and will risk his life to kiss the hand of a lovely lady. Always seems to have a flower available to give away.

Brutus: a big dumb dwarf fighter wearing plate mail and swinging a two-handed battle axe. Solves his problems with violence, drinking, and gold. Often forgets what he's doing, but really a nice guy at heart.

Justice Lawgiver, The Right Hand of Tyr: a Tyrian specialty priest whose favorite spell is *hold person*. Loves to exert his control over anything he can. Arrogant and self-righteous, he'll find ways to enforce his brand of Tyrian law wherever he can.

Ivan the Invoker: a human invoker who likes flashy, obvious spells. Will go out of his way to be the center of attention.

These NPCs are intended to parody some well-known Living City PC types. Feel free to modify them as needed to provide fun and good role-playing.

## Encounter 8: Gratuitous Optional Violence

Skip this encounter if time is short. At some convenient time for the judge and inconvenient time for the PCs, they will hear the sound of frightened horses and yells of a man from the distance, muffled by the cold fog that has arisen. Upon investigation they will discover a farmer defending his draft horses from attacking griffons. One horse is already down, and the farmer and other horse are damaged. The griffons attack the draft horse until the PCs engage them, then defend themselves until their morale breaks. The fog stops the PCs' infravision. The griffons are navigating by the smell of warm horseflesh, so they suffer no attack penalties in the fog. They will attack horses

(draft or PC) in preference to non-equines such as the PCs or the farmer. The farmer will not back off; the draft horses are his most valuable possession. The farmer, named Billy-Bob (no relation to Joe-Bob) can be fully healed with a *cure light wounds* spell, and can provide the same information about Karney and the hermit wizard as any of the previous NPCs could provide. If one or both of the draft horses dies, Billy-Bob will be too grief-stricken to provide any useful information for the PCs.

#### **Party Levels 6-13:**

**Immature Griffon (2):** Int Semi; AL N; AC 5; MV 12, Fl 30 (MC C); HD 4; hp 26; THAC0 16; # AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/2-8 (claw/claw/beak); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ L (6' long); ML 9 (does not break as long as horseflesh is at stake).

If captured and successfully returned to Ravens Bluff, these baby griffons can be sold for 5,000 gp each. They cannot be kept by the PCs.

The horse which is down has -3 hp at the start of the combat. The heavy fog reduces visibility to 50 feet.

#### **Party Levels 14-25:**

**Griffon (1):** Int Semi; AL N; AC 3; MV 12, Fl 30 (MC C); HD 7; hp 50; THAC0 13; # AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/2-16 (claw/claw/beak); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ L (9' long); ML 12 (does not break as long as horseflesh is at stake).

**Immature Griffon (2):** Int Semi; AL N; AC 5; MV 12, Fl 30 (MC C); HD 4; hp 26; THAC0 16; # AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/2-8 (claw/claw/beak); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ L (6' long); ML 9 (does not break as long as horseflesh is at stake).

If captured and successfully returned to Ravens Bluff, these baby griffons can be sold for 5,000 gp each. They cannot be kept by the PCs.

The horse which is down has -5 hp at the start of the combat. The heavy fog reduces visibility to 40 feet.

#### **Party Levels 26-37:**

**Griffon (3):** Int Semi; AL N; AC 3; MV 12, Fl 30 (MC C); HD 7; hp 50; THAC0 13; # AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/2-16 (claw/claw/beak); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ L (9' long); ML 12 (does not break as long as horseflesh is at stake).

**Immature Griffon (2):** Int Semi; AL N; AC 5; MV 12, Fl 30 (MC C); HD 4; hp 26; THAC0 16; # AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/2-8 (claw/claw/beak); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ L (6' long); ML 9 (does not break as long as horseflesh is at stake).

If captured and successfully returned to Ravens Bluff, these baby griffons can be sold for 5,000 gp each. They cannot be kept by the PCs.

The horse which is down has -7 hp at the start of the combat. The heavy fog reduces visibility to 30 feet.

#### **Party Levels 38-56:**

**Griffon (5):** Int Semi; AL N; AC 3; MV 12, Fl 30 (MC C); HD 7; hp 50; THAC0 13; # AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/2-16 (claw/claw/beak); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ L (9' long); ML 12 (does not break as long as horseflesh is at stake).

**Immature Griffon (2):** Int Semi; AL N; AC 5; MV 12, Fl 30 (MC C); HD 4; hp 26; THAC0 16; # AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/2-8 (claw/claw/beak); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ L (6' long); ML 9 (does not break as long as horseflesh is at stake).

If captured and successfully returned to Ravens Bluff, these baby griffons can be sold for 5,000 gp each. They cannot be kept by the PCs.

The horse which is down has -8 hp at the start of the combat. The heavy fog reduces visibility to 20 feet.

#### **Party Levels 57+:**

**Griffon (8):** Int Semi; AL N; AC 3; MV 12, Fl 30 (MC C); HD 7; hp 50; THAC0 13; # AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/2-16 (claw/claw/beak); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ L (9' long); ML 12 (does not break as long as horseflesh is at stake).

**Immature Griffon (2):** Int Semi; AL N; AC 5; MV 12, Fl 30 (MC C); HD 4; hp 26; THAC0 16; # AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/2-8 (claw/claw/beak); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ L (6' long); ML 9 (does not break as long as horseflesh is at stake).

If captured and successfully returned to Ravens Bluff, these baby griffons can be sold for 5,000 gp each. They cannot be kept by the PCs.

The horse which is down has -9 hp at the start of the combat. The heavy fog reduces visibility to 10 feet.

## **Encounter 9: Joe Bob's Grand Opening**

Joe Bob's General Store and Tavern is somewhat hard to find, as it's located on the edge of town behind a huge copse of trees. Eventually, the PCs will find it: some towns person will finally give them useful directions, or they'll stumble upon it on their own.

*You find a rustic yet not worn building constructed of new hand-hewn logs atop a stone foundation with a large stone chimney. The windows are shuttered. A carved wooden sign proclaims this to be Joe Bob's General Store and Tavern. Another sign, it's ink running slightly in the rain says: Grand Opening and Annual First Annual Garlic Festival! Spectacular Prices! Free Wine with Purchase of a Hoe! Meet Famous Dragon Slayers and War Heroes! The smell of good cooking, and a hint of spiced wine are awfully inviting after long trip in the cold rain. The smell of garlic is stronger here than any other place in Karney. The place doesn't look very busy.*

When the PCs enter:

*The inside of Joe Bob's is warm, noisy, and crowded. The tavern and general store form one large room. A huge stone fireplace casts a warm glow over the entire common room. The kitchen is visible behind the large oak bar. The place smells of spiced wine, hot stew, newly worked leather, and garlic. All the tables are full of farmers. The room suddenly gets quiet as you enter; and then folks return to their drinks and conversation. The barkeeper, a thin man wearing a holy symbol of Mystra glances at you, then goes back to cleaning a mug.*

The barkeeper is Joe Bob, a retired adventuring wizard. The Great War convinced him adventuring is too dangerous, so he decided to open this bar/general store to meet people. Today is the grand opening. Joe Bob was offered the PCs for minimal cost (20 gp) by an anonymous talent agent in Ravens Bluff. It was a deal he couldn't refuse. Joe Bob knows of the wizard sought by the PCs, but does not know what he looks like today because of his frequent disguises. Joe Bob pushes today's special: garlic beer. He brewed it himself with local garlic, and will be personally insulted if the PCs don't at least try it.

Joe Bob needs to be convinced that these old people masquerading as adventurers are the war heroes he hired. Once they have managed this, he will announce them to the crowd:

*In a loud voice, Joe Bob addresses the crowd: "Gentle folk of Karney! These are the war heroes I promised you!" After a moment of stunned silence, the room is filled with laughter and comments about your age. Only one farmer looks at you with interest.*

The respectful farmer is Lacidem in disguise. Lacidem is grouchy and has a short attention span. He is aware that locals think he is nasty, but the reputation works to keep noisy neighbors away. Otherwise they'd drop by all the time asking for love potions or amulets to keep

their cows healthy. When the PCs approaches he will ask if they have the box, what they have learned about it, and why they are adventuring when they are so old. The PCs will probably also ask if he can remove their old age curse. Only after the PCs has told Lacidem all the details of their trip from Ravens Bluff, he will reply:

*"I am powerful, and can remove your curse, if that is what you desire. I will only do this once you have fulfilled all of your contract. You were hired to entertain these fine folks. Only when they are pleased will I solve your problem. So tell me, how will you entertain the crowd? They want to see your skills, and hear all about your part in The Great War."*

There are two ways to entertain the crowd:

The PCs designs their own entertainment for the crowd. This can be anything the PCs want to do, as long as adventuring skills are demonstrated, and a heroic story of the recent war in Ravens Bluff is told. The story need not be true, but it must be entertaining.

Lacidem will suggest a heroic play should the PCs ask his advice. Lacidem will point out that if all the PCs want to be restored, then all the PCs must be involved in the play. Because this is the PCs' task to complete, Lacidem will refuse to assist them with magical special effects, etc.

The PCs can perform various individual demonstrations. Lacidem will ask that each PC do the following tasks:

- Draw pictures for hanging on the Bragging Wall. Joe Bob says that some day famous and infamous people who have visited the place will all have their portraits there. The pictures should be heroic self-portraits. Joe Bob will provide a cracked mirror if asked. He wants each PC's picture to be self-drawn because it will be more memorable for the customers that way. (players draw pictures of how their characters view themselves).
- A lying contest. Tell the biggest lie in 20 words or less. The lies should of course involve heroism and The Great War. Lies involving garlic will be especially appreciated.
- One small boy approaches the PCs and asks for an autograph, and adventuring/war stories. If PCs are in a storytelling mood, room gets quiet. Everyone pays attention; news/stories/bards are rare after the war. The locals are Folks for war news. Let this go as long as it's interesting. With some self-centered PCs, this could take a long time.

Only after the PCs have entertained the Lacidem and the crowd will he discuss removing the curse effect of the little gray box.

***“That was fun. But now I have a serious question: why do you want to be restored? What is wrong with being old?”***

Lacidem is interested in the PCs' unique perspective on old age vs. young age. He'll make sure he gets an opinion from each PC, and will be happy to philosophize with the PCs as long as it's interesting. Once he has an opinion from each PC:

***“Very interesting. Do all of you want to be made young again? If not, please stand over there.”***

Lacidem does not know how long the curse lasts, or what other effects it might have. If they chose to remain old, he refuses to be responsible for later effects. PCs that wish to be young again will have all curse effects successfully and automatically removed. PCs who wish to stay old should be issued a cert from the end of the module. PCs who refuse to participate in the entertainment of the crowd can still buy a *remove curse* from Lacidem. He charges 500 gp/PC level in certed cash (non-magical items with certs that give a gp value) or magic items. Because they didn't entertain the crowd, the price is not negotiable. Lacidem will refuse to deal with really obnoxious PCs; they will have to seek a *remove curse* or other magic back in Ravens Bluff. This costs twice Lacidem's price. No system shock check is required for growing old (the curse) or being restored. It's just one of those things that would not be fair, since the PCs cannot avoid the curse except by not going on the adventure.

Finally, Lacidem has a fine parting gift for the PCs:

***“The local folks go nuts over hero-types like yourselves. I figured that I could profit on that fact by making these.” Lacidem hold up a set of small wooden figures that look just like each of you. “I had hoped to sell these figurines to the farmers for a few gold apiece. But I couldn't make myself take advantage of these fine folks. Instead, I'd like you to have them as a memento of your trip to Karney with the little gray box.” He hands each of you the figurine that looks exactly like you. “The figurines will respond when spoken to.” Now, I'd like the box, please. And have a safe return to Ravens Bluff.***

**The End**

## Treasure Summary

If it's not on this list, the PCs cannot have it. This is a house rule that overrides whatever the PCs may have found on the adventure.

### Encounter 5

*Dagger +1, +2 vs. followers or Tyr:* This dagger is +2 vs paladins and priests of Tyr, and those who venerate Tyr by attending the church services. Unfortunately, this means that the dagger is +2 vs all citizens of Ravens Bluff, since Tyr is in the Civic Religion. Value: 1200 gp.

*Potion of geisha form:* drinking this potions imbues the user with the appearance, mannerisms, and skills of a geisha for 1-7 hours. Since geisha vary in detail between various cultures, the user must describe the geisha before the potion is consumed. This potion is a favorite amongst thieves and Joydancers. Value: 500 gp

*Pawbands of animal defense AC 4:* these bracers function exactly like *bracers of defense AC 4*, except they work only on normal animals. They do not work on creatures shapechanged into animals. Further, though they are on the animal they are considered the property of the animal's adventurer owner. Value: 18,000 gp

*Book of Rare Poetry:* This nonmagical book contains hundreds of exquisite poems and sonnets. Use of this book adds +1 to appropriate NWP checks. Value: 1500 gp.

*Scroll of Tax Exemption:* This nonmagical scroll contains many finely-written lines of legal terms which exempt the holder from paying taxes to the Office of The Exchequer of Ravens Bluff for two years (real time). It requires the name of the PC and the date the scroll was obtained to become a legal document. Once the PC's name is added, the scroll cannot be traded unless the new name is successfully forged by a PC with the forgery NWP. Value: 1000 gp.

*Plume of panache:* This large and bright red ostrich plume is always clean and crisp, regardless of what happens to the PC wearing it. A favorite among swashbucklers. Value: 500 gp.

### Encounter 8

5,000 gp per immature griffon captured and successfully returned to Raven's Bluff. They cannot be kept by the PCs.

### Encounter 9

*PC Action Figures:* Each action figure is carved out of onyx and bears a striking resemblance to the PC. When the figure is addressed, it speaks a catch phrase of no more than ten words, similar to a *magic mouth* spell. The catch phrase is one that the PC is known to speak. Value: 1,500 gp.

### Pay from RBBI

120 gp/tier for each PC if the mission is completely successfully.

Certs for permanent old age effects: The character named chose to remain old. The character is aged to 90% of his or her racial maximum age. This aging comes from a curse, and can be removed at any time by the application of a remove curse spell (cost 1000 gp per PC level). No system shock is required to remove the curse. The character has the following stat changes: -4 strength (exceptional strength warriors are reduced to 16), -3 con, -3 dex. Racial minima will not be exceeded, and the wisdom and intelligence of old age are not gained because these come from experience (PHB, p. 32-33). Also write in the aging effects from Player Handout #3 which the PC has.

### Fame Award

If the PCs speak of their deeds themselves, they get one Fame point in general. Since the RBBI prides itself on discretion, it would be better not to discuss the adventure (no Fame award).

## Experience Point Summary

Experience is calculated as follows for Living City events.

1. Sum the experience listed below for objectives.
2. Assign discretionary role-playing experience (0-500 points). These should reward accurate character portrayal throughout the adventure, not just how well the PC interacted socially.
3. Finally, multiply the total by the tier according to this chart:

Levels 6-13	Tier 1
Levels 14-25	Tier 2
Levels 26-37	Tier 3
Levels 38-56	Tier 4
Levels 57+	Tier 5

PCs should get the experience points of the tier for which they qualify, regardless of which tier is actually played. For example, if you have a Tier 3 group and you have to bump the combats by one tier to challenge

them, they still get the experience points for a Tier 3 group, not for a Tier 4 group.

### Encounter 1

Asking useful questions about the mission 50 xp

### Encounter 2

Appropriate behavior toward the ladies 25 xp

### Encounter 3

Defeating the highwaymen 100 xp

### Encounter 4

Retrieving the little gray box 100 xp

### Encounter 5

Defeating the highwaymen 200 xp

### Encounter 6

Getting into town without trouble 50 xp

Leering the location of Lacidem 50 xp

### Encounter 7

Participating in stopping the coach 100 xp

### Encounter 8

Defeating the griffons 100 xp

### Encounter 9

Entertaining the crowd 100 xp

Total Experience for Objectives: 875 xp

Roleplaying Experience: 0-500 xp

**Total Possible Experience: 1,375 xp**

For Tier 2: 2,750 xp

For Tier 3: 4,125 xp

For Tier 4: 5,500 xp

For Tier 5: 6,875 xp

**Handout #1: Message from Nelliot Ess**

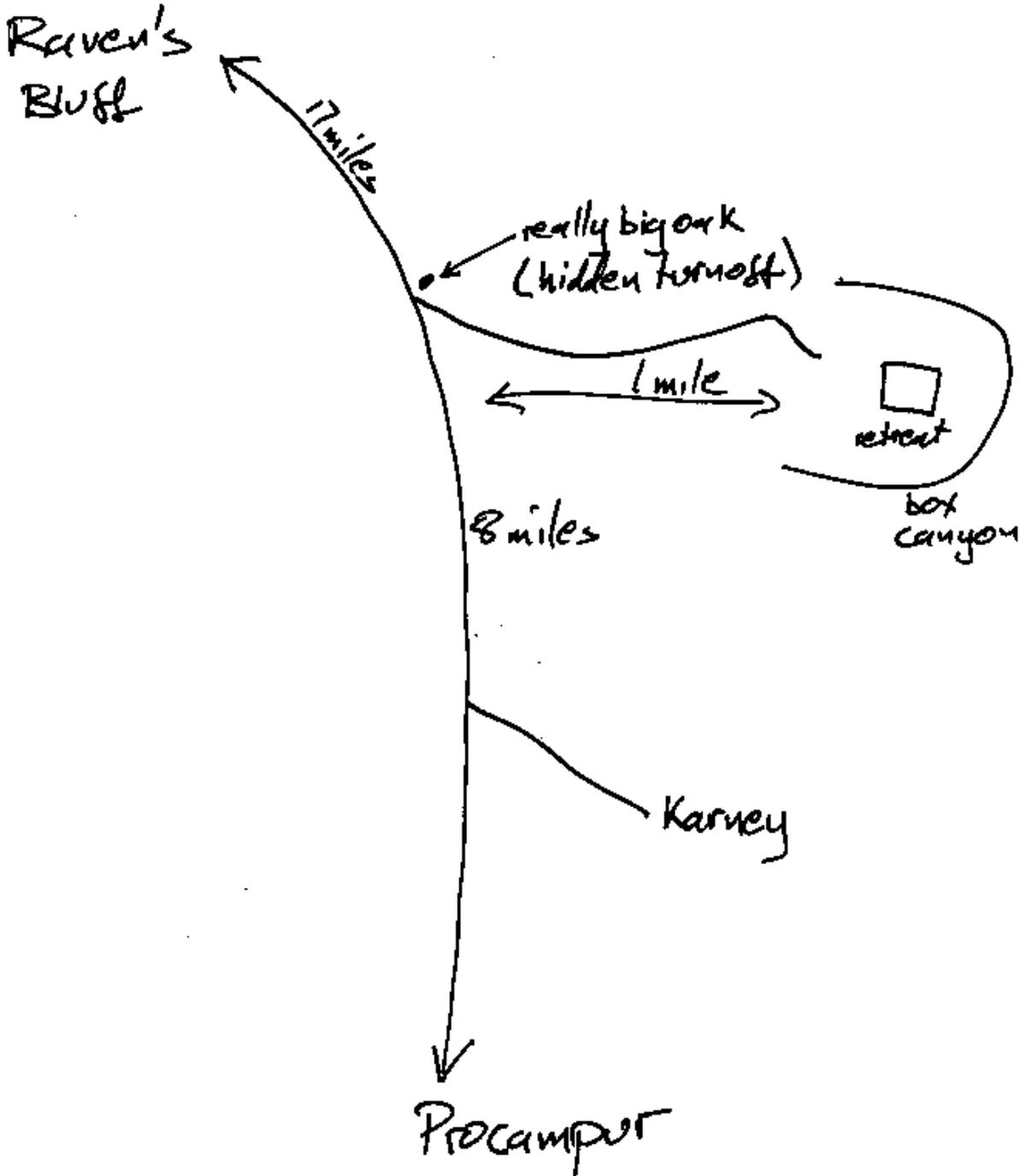
Sirs/Madams:

I have need of a skilled and balanced adventuring team to handle a sensitive matter. For reasons of security, I cannot reveal any details of the case in this note. If you are interested, please appear at RBBI headquarters no later than two hours after dawn today. Agents who have worked with the RBBI before should bring their badges.

Nelliot Ess  
Chief Investigator  
Ravens Bluff Bureau of Investigation

The Case of the Little Gray Box  
Player Handout #2

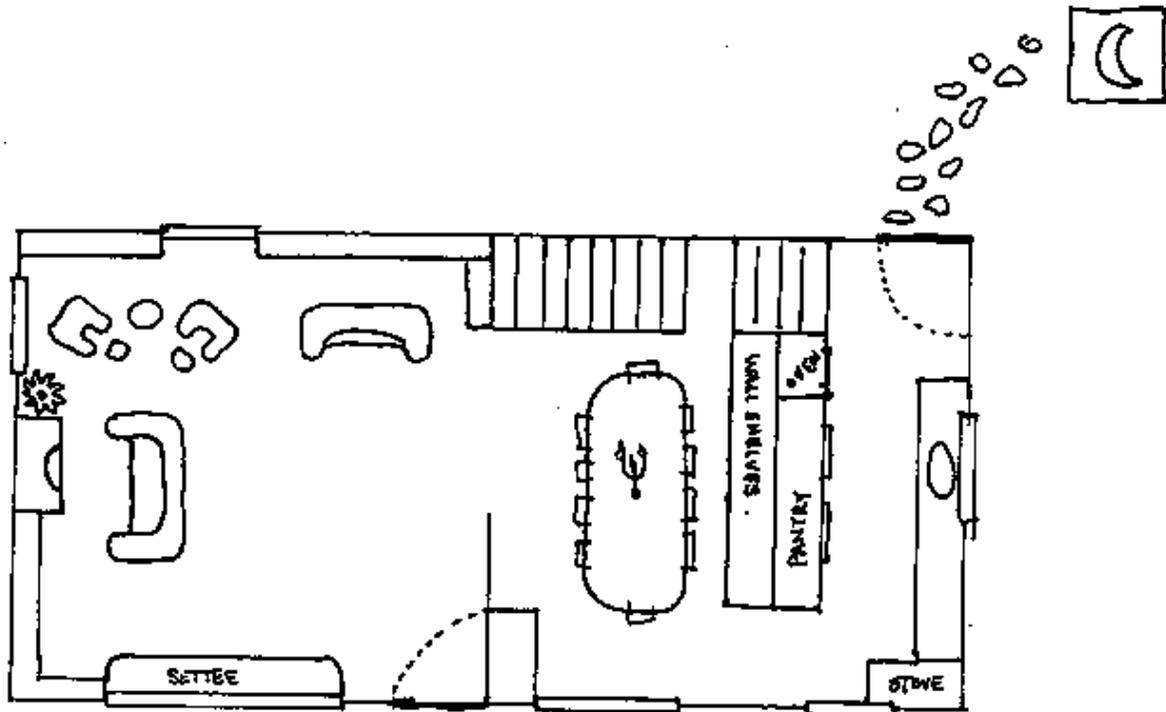
Not to scale!



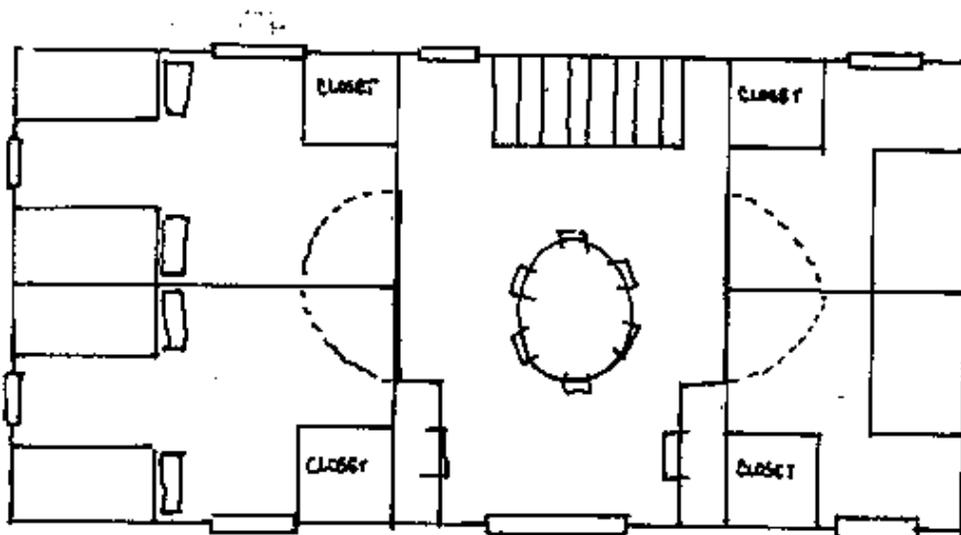
### Handout #3: Curse Effects

1. Prunism: excessive wrinkling of the skin. (-3 Cha)
2. Sagginess: muscles sag and it feels like strength is failing. Skin gets all flabby. (-1 Str, -1 Cha)
3. Near-sighted: cannot see anything beyond three feet clearly. Total fuzziness beyond 10 feet. Affects range weapons and spell casting. (-4 to hit for range weapons beyond ten feet; spellcasters have 75% chance to miss range/target)
4. Flabbiness: PC has gained excessive weight; starting to display a potbelly. (-1 Cha)
5. Short Attention Span: The PC is not focused completely in the present. Keeps getting distracted. (Spellcasters must save vs. int at -4 to actually remember the spell they are going to cast. Failing means that the spell they were going to cast is lost, and the round is spent in mental fumbling. All non-weapon proficiencies are at -4)
6. Rheumatism: The PC finds that it hurts to move. They have excessively painful joints. Moving quickly is extremely painful. (-2 Dex. Thieves are -30% to all thieving skills that require dex. Casting time is doubled for spellcasters)
7. Baldness: The hair on the top of the PC's head falls out. The sides remain, and the hair there is thin and gray. (-2 Cha)
8. Poor Hearing: PC cannot hear anything below a shout. PCs wearing headgear which covers the ears cannot hear anything at all. (-2 penalty to surprise rolls. 40% chance to miscast any spell with a verbal component. -90% to detect noise)
9. Stooped/Hunchback: PC cannot stand straight and needs a cane to walk. (-1 Dex, -1 Str, All missile shots are -4 to hit. Movement cut in half)
10. Sensitive to Temperature: PC is never happy with the temperature. Anything hot or cold hurts the teeth. (receive +1 damage to any cold/heat attacks, -1 to save cold/heat attacks. Complain a lot.)
11. Grumpiness: PC is in a general bad mood all the time. (-2 Cha, Complain a lot)
12. Excessive Complaining: PC complains about everything - good way to get attention. Can't anyone do anything right? Why must I always be the victim? (-2 Cha. Complain a lot).
13. Dental Difficulties: PC's teeth fall out. This makes it hard to eat anything solid. (dex check to cast any spell with a verbal component. -1 Cha)
14. The Shakes: The PC is afflicted by bouts of uncontrollable shaking (-2 dexterity, 20% penalty to thieving skills, 20% chance spell failure with somatic component).
15. Easily Bruised: The PC will be covered with bruises any time they bump something, or something bumps them. (PC takes an extra point of damage from each successful hit)
16. Breathing Problems: The PC is afflicted with coughing and wheezing bouts. They are winded easily. (Cannot move silently. Spellcasters 10% chance to cough while casting. If missed, spell can be attempted in the next round. -1 cumulative penalty to fighting every other round: round 2 = -1 to hit, round 4 = -1 to hit, etc. Resets to zero at the end of the combat)
17. Scratchy Voice: PC cannot speak clearly. (-4 to singing proficiency. Vocal nonweapon proficiencies have 20% penalty. 20% failure rate for spells with a vocal component. -2 to Cha)
18. Bad Odor Paranoia: PC thinks everything doesn't smell right. Things smell funny. (-2 Cha. Complain a lot).
19. Excessive Hair: Thick gray hair grows from the PC's ears, nose, and other unsightly places. (-2 Cha)
20. Liver Spots: PC's hands, face and body are covered with excessive brown spots. (-2 Cha)

The Case of the Little Gray Box  
DM Map #1

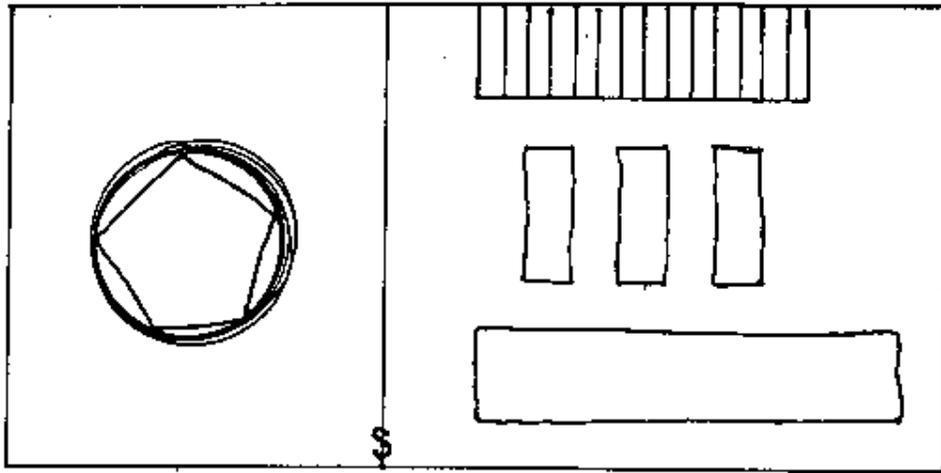


WIZARD'S HOUSE - MAIN LEVEL



WIZARD'S HOUSE - SECOND FLOOR

**The Case of the Little Gray Box**  
**DM Map #2**



① FIRE TRAPPED