

FantasyCraft



TIME OF HIGH
ADVENTURE

Fantasy Craft

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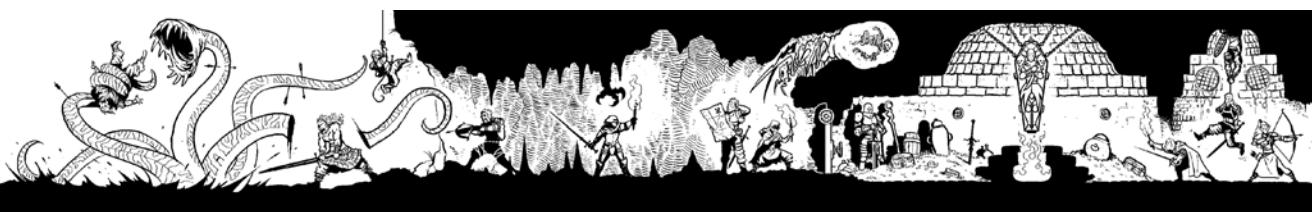
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CHAPTER 1: THE DARKEST HOUR

This adventure is geared to do two things. First, it hopefully shows everyone a good time. The action comes fast and furious, with great potential for heroics. Second, it showcases some of the things that set *Fantasy Craft* apart from other OGL adventure games, including a comprehensive skill system that supports any style of play, simple yet tactical combat rules, magic that refreshes at the rate of the story, scaling enemies, greater control of the action, and a distinctly cinematic flair.

The Darkest Hour is designed for a 4- to 5-hour convention-style timeslot, though it's equally useful in a home game, especially as the introduction to a new campaign.

The action initially takes place in the village of Andra, a quaint little community in a mountain valley known as Fels Cut. The town is mundane in nearly every respect. The villagers are god-fearing folk. They farm and work in nearby quarries, and generally live small, quiet lives.

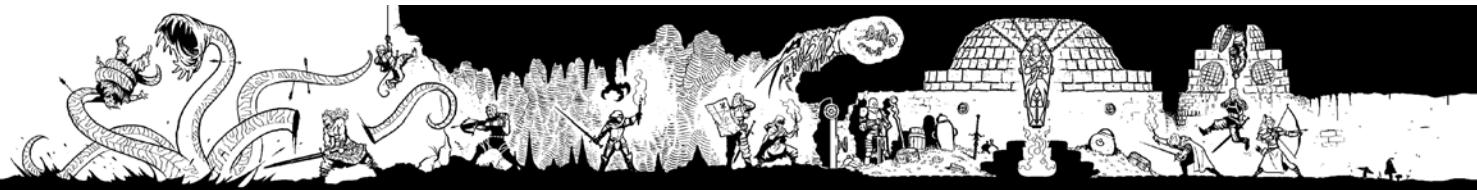
Two other sites stand out in Fels Cut. First is a coaching inn, the Tipsy Wyvern, which is five miles from the village on the other side of the valley. The local thoroughfare passes through the inn at the base of the area's tallest mountain before running through Andra and winding up the next ridgeline.

The second is a local graveyard, where a long-dead sorcerer and local hero named Paschel is buried. Paschel's tomb is the graveyard's centerpiece and his descendants in the village still bring flowers a few times each year.

Two days ago a corrupted knight entered the valley looking for the tomb. He avoided the inn and village, moving in the dead of night. He went by no name other than "Master" and he commanded a wicked rootwalker named Wiltweevil. Together they dream of conquest, establishing a kingdom that would spread over all the lands now tainted with virtue.

Master had no interest in Paschel but rather wanted something buried with the hero — a necromantic artifact called the Soul Star, which has the power to animate and control the dead. Paschel's party had wrested the artifact from the clutches of a demon — the beast that turned Master's heart to shadow — and they knew it couldn't be destroyed. They also knew no one was strong enough to withstand its twisted calling, so they buried it with Paschel, who'd given his life to secure it.

Master and Wiltweevil broke the tomb's ancient seals and found the Star. They used it to raise the harbinger of the dead, a monstrous thing called the Grave Wurm, and set it about its





foul business. The Wurm consumed corpses and expelled a form of walking dead called 'ravengers,' and through the Star Master controlled them all. He placed the first of the ravengers in Wiltweevil's command and ordered them to scour the surrounding lands of all living humanoids.

Last night an adventuring party came to the Tipsy Wyvern Inn, acting on behalf of the High Church of the Realm...

- Barald Rocabienne, a human sage, and leader of the troupe
- Sister Falthene, a human warrior-nun in the dedicated service of the High Church
- Engtas Whisperthorn, an elf tracker and expert archer
- Hertiger, a human crossbowman and mounted scout
- Hasafti Gurion, a dwarf wizard
- Ekrajmez, a saurian burglar

The High Church had charged the party with finding and capturing Master, who had been one of the noblest Soldiers of the Cross before his fall from grace. They tracked Master to the valley and Barald surmised from research that the villain might be after the Soul Star. The party rushed to the graveyard late last night, only to be waylaid by Master and his growing army of ravengers, and faced with overwhelming odds they fell back to warn Andra. Master summoned Wiltweevil and ordered a full-scale assault on the village and grisly deaths for all the Church agents.

Ekrajmez was the first to fall, skewered by one of Wiltweevil's boughs before the party even reached Andra. The ravengers chased the rest of the adventurers into the village and for the rest of the night and through the next day it became a brutal battlefield. Wiltweevil hung back, blending into the tree line to prevent anyone from leaving as the ravengers tore the villagers to shreds.

A few survivors barricaded in houses. The biggest group included the adventurers, who fortified themselves in the mayor's home, a large two-story structure at the center of the village. However, it eventually became obvious that the building wasn't defensible, and just after nightfall the group made a break for the village church, which sits on open ground just outside Andra. Hertiger volunteered to ride to the Tipsy Wyvern and get help, which would also create the diversion needed for the others to escape the mayor's house.

As is the way, the plan immediately went wrong. With the sun setting an unnaturally thick fog rolled in (due to the Master's use of the Soul Star), and with the night's new moon it dropped visibility to almost nil. The flight to the church was a confused mess. Hertiger made for the inn, ravengers hotly pursuing him every step of the way. Barald was badly wounded in the attempted flight and Engtas stayed with him until the ravengers broke through the remaining defenses at the mayor's House. Both were killed, leaving the ravengers in Andra to focus entirely on the group heading for the church.

Ravengers are much faster than typical zombies — in fact, they're much faster than typical humans — and the last two

adventurers knew the enemy would reach them well before they reached safety. So they mounted a final stand, telling the remaining villagers to run for the church and never look back. Falthene and Hasafti valiantly faced the ravenger horde, their last breaths taken when Wiltweevil joined the fray.

As the adventure begins, Wiltweevil has directed his ravengers to find the escaped villagers and scour the rest of the area for survivors (the villagers huddle in the church, which they've feverishly fortified against attack). Master continues to build his ravenger army at the graveyard and Hertiger streaks through the night on a last ditch mission for help.

The Darkest Hour consists of three scenes...

SCENE ONE: A QUIET EVENING INTERRUPTED

En route through the area, the characters have just finished dinner at the Tipsy Wyvern coaching inn. Hertiger breaks through the fog, offers a brief warning, and falls unconscious. The ravengers reach the inn seconds later and lay siege to the building. The inn is overwhelmed far too quickly for its staff to properly secure the buildings, leaving the party to salvage the situation.

SCENE TWO: VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED

Hertiger's warning leads the party to Andra's church, where the survivors can explain what happened. They know Barald had more information about the ravengers but he was left back at the mayor's House. The village is crawling with ravengers collecting corpses for the Grave Wurm and the church survivors warn that the land itself may be turning against them (they're actually just noticing the tree line "change" every so often as Wiltweevil moves around). Assuming the party gets to Barald's body they can recover his journal, which points to Paschel's tomb and explains how to steal control of the ravengers from Master (by taking the Soul Star from him).

SCENE THREE: TO FACE THE FIEND

The action culminates in a fight to the death with Master and his Grave Wurm slave. While taxing and potentially corrupting (should any character try to use the Soul Star himself), the fight can be won, earning the party accolades from the Church (and Hertiger, if he lives).

ADVENTURE TIMING

Scene Two is far and away the most complicated (as Scenes One and Three consist mostly of direct confrontation with little lead-in and few plausible options beyond violence). You should keep this in mind and budget time accordingly. Scene One should





THE SOUL STAR

This fist-sized, multi-faceted amethyst is shaped like a four-pointed star and set in a silver medallion. Its origins have washed out over history but a few know its power. It can be used to summon the Grave Wurm, which animates the dead in service to the artifact's owner. Unfortunately, it does this by sapping the owner's strength of will — his Wisdom — which in turn makes it harder to resist the Star's influence. Eventually the owner becomes the owned, a slave to the Soul Star with no goals of his own except spreading its undead across the whole of the world.

The adventuring sorcerer Paschel gave his life so his party could obtain the Soul Star and they buried it with him. So long as it remained out of living hands its threat was neutralized. Unfortunately, clues to the Star's location were passed down in local history, and eventually fell into the wrong hands — agents of a malevolent demon that corrupted Master. The Church-sponsored party sent to capture Master also found these clues and Barald the sage wrote of them in his journal (see page 20). This information may be of great help to the characters in the final battle against Master and the Grave Wurm.



be a fast, kinetic introduction and take no longer than a quarter of the overall play time. Half the playtime is probably required for Scene Two, leaving the remainder for the final battle with Master.

MENACE

The Darkest Hour assumes a Menace of II (Routine) or III (Challenging), though you can easily adjust that if you like. Keep in mind that a higher or lower Menace will adjust the number of Dramatic scenes.

SLIDING DCs

To allow for play at any Threat Level, this adventure features sliding DCs (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 370).

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Bastian: One of six survivors holing up in the Andra church. He's the village cobbler and the survivors' *de facto* leader. A simple country man, Bastian just wants to see another dawn.

Brigit: One of six survivors holing up in the Andra church. She's Bastian's wife, a tough country woman, and the best fighter among the survivors. She and Bastian make a good couple, fighting together (and dying together as well, if need be). Brigit

is also a descendant of Paschel, the storied hero of Andra. She makes regular trips to the tomb to pay her respects, so she can offer precise directions.

Brother Sevrin: One of six survivors holing up in the Andra church. He's the assistant to Andra's priest, and a recently ordained minister. This is his first assignment, so he's a shade unprepared as the survivors' ecclesiastical leader. His faith is shaken, but if the party can help him regain his confidence he can provide divine aid.

The Grave Wurm: A disgusting and bloated white worm the size of a horse-drawn wagon. It's a slave to the Soul Star, compelled to seek out and consume bodies, expelling them as ravengers under control of the artifact's owner. As the adventure begins the Grave Wurm is still harvesting from the Andra graveyard.

Hertiger: The last survivor of an adventuring party sent by the Church of the Realm to find and capture Master. He's a crossbowman by trade and has only a few conscious breaths left as he reaches the Tipsy Wyvern. He uses them to explain that his friends and others are at the Andra church, and that they need immediate help. The ravengers attack immediately, preventing further discussion, and by the time the fighting is done Hertiger is out for the duration.

Maja Weaver: One of six survivors holing up in the Andra church. She's a dwarf widow and Andra's weaver. She can offer several items to the party, drawn from the small stash of treasures left behind by her husband (who died before the ravener assault).

"Master": The villain of the adventure. His true name is never learned and he doesn't parlay with anyone long enough for introductions to be made. Once a righteous warrior in service to the Church of the Realm, Master was lost to the dark enticement of a depraved demon. The demon told him of the Soul Star, which he now wields. Master's megalomania is deep-seated and irreversible. The party's only recourse is to put him down before he stages a holocaust.

Theodor: One of six survivors holing up in the Andra church. He's 10 years old and helped Brother Sevrin and his superior as the church altar boy. His father was the town sheriff, who remained to defend it from the ravengers. Theodor doesn't know if his parents still live and pleads with the characters to check when they head to the village. Sadly, the boy's father is indeed dead, though his mother lives and can offer the party a weapon left by Paschel's teammates in case the Soul Star should ever be used. The weapon was forged to destroy undead, including the ravengers and the Grave Wurm. If you want to speed things up Theodor's mother can also show the characters a series of secret tunnels under the village, allowing (relatively) safe travel between locations other than the church and graveyard.

Wiltweevil: The Master's henchman and general of his undead army. Master has ordered Wiltweevil to use the first ravengers to exterminate everyone in Andra and prepare the village as a staging ground for the next wave of devastation. Wiltweevil revels in gore, deriving sadistic glee from demolishing "flimsy sacks of blood and water." He attacks without mercy or scruples, referring to all but



himself and Master as "it." As the adventure begins, none of the church survivors have seen Wiltweevil, though they've noticed the tree line "shift" from time to time. They assume dark forces have taken hold in the area and are warping the landscape, and warn the characters not to trust the terrain.

Zerun: One of six survivors holing up in the Andra church. He's the town rat-catcher and knows a variety of ways to move around in Andra without being seen. He might also know about the tunnels under town.

SCENE 1: A QUIET EVENING INTERRUPTED

The Tipsy Wyvern Inn, just after sundown

OBJECTIVES

- (Optional) Save Hertiger from imminent death
- Fight off the ravengers

CHALLENGES

- Hertiger's wounds defy conventional healing techniques
- The ravengers aren't like any undead the PCs have seen before

SYNOPSIS

Scene Type: Standard

GM Briefing: Play begins in the taproom of the Tipsy Wyvern, where all is normal. The characters are given a brief chance to roleplay with the locals before Hertiger races into the courtyard, his horse ridden lame. It dies, pitching him onto the inn's porch just as the first sounds of ravener pursuit are heard through an approaching fog bank. The characters have a slim chance to save Hertiger but only if one or two of them do so during the first few rounds of combat. The resulting fight is the players' first taste of this adventure's undead, which are fast and chaotic rather than slow and lumbering. Once the undead are dispatched, the characters are left to decide how to proceed to the Andra church, where Hertiger's friends are barricaded.

Gear: Much of the PCs' gear is stored up in their rooms — all except their clothes, pouch contents, and incidentals (which may, at the GM's discretion, include a few unobtrusive weapons).

LOCATION

The Tipsy Wyvern is a coaching inn, which differs from a regular inn in that it exists outside a population center, providing a self-sufficient place of lodging not dependent on a nearby village. The inn has a main building containing a taproom and several guest rooms (as well as some small servants' rooms), a staff building where the innkeeper and his family live, and an expansive stable

(with grooms' quarters attached and a small smithy for shoeing and tack). Palisade walls join all three buildings, creating an enclosed central courtyard, and this coupled with the lack of outward-facing ground floor windows means that the Tipsy Wyvern can be fortified easily should the need arise. Unfortunately, the speed of the ravengers' attack is more than any of the staff expect, leaving several points of entry open during the assault.

Ambiance: The air smells faintly of hay and animals (but at least they're clean). There's usually a fair volume of noise, from the whinny of horses and conversation of the grooms to the clinking of crockery and jovial conversation in the taproom. The whole place feels comfortable and welcoming.

Terrain: Indoors/settled

Cultural Interest: The Realm

ACTION

Begin the adventure by reading the following aloud.

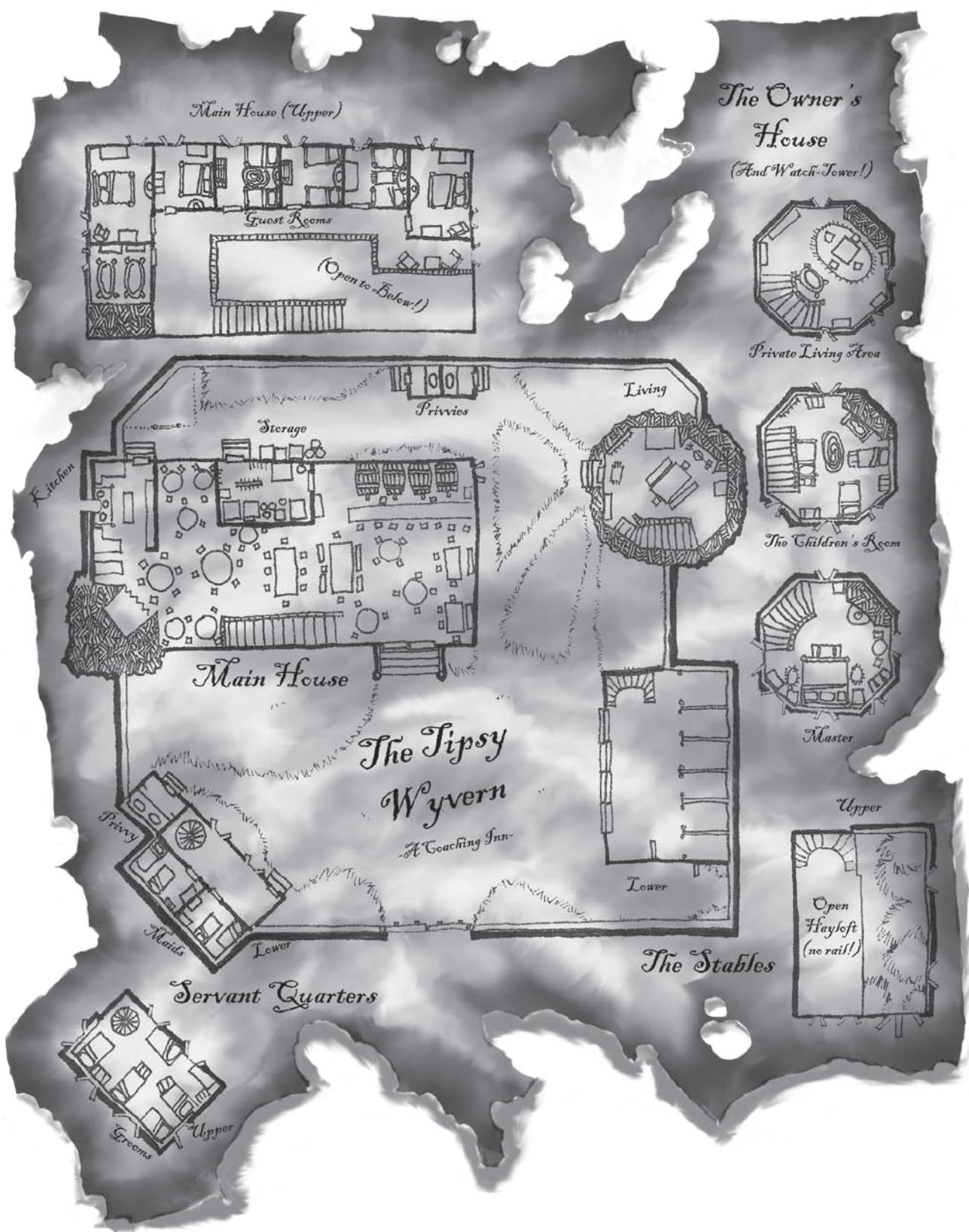
Your party is enjoying the taproom of the Tipsy Wyvern, a coaching inn at the base of a mountain on one side of Fels Cut, a narrow valley. The Tipsy Wyvern lies five miles from the village of Andra, the largest local settlement. As a coaching inn, the Tipsy Wyvern is largely self-sufficient and features a solid outer wall and stone construction characteristic of the buildings in an area with profitable quarries. Staff members are simple and clearly lead unremarkable lives, though the barmaid looks like she might be open to a little taste of adventure later this evening.

The sun has just set and you've just finished dinner, a hearty if unspectacular mutton stew accompanied by pleasantly dense hunks of bread.

The players can take a few minutes to introduce themselves and roleplay a bit, perhaps make a pass at the barmaid. Her name is Lizabet and she was raised at the inn. Her father was an adventurer who spent a loving night in the arms of her mother, also a barmaid. Sadly, she never met him, as he continued his quest the following day and never returned. Lizabet is a pretty young woman, shapely and fit, with dark curly hair and striking ice blue eyes. She's fascinated by adventurers and drawn to their rugged bad-boy nature. Tales of their journeys outside Fels Cut are especially interesting to her. She is, however, strong-willed and witty, and happily trades verbal and physical jabs with anyone.

Turning Lizabet's head is simple for any of the party so long as they treat her with respect — a successful Influence check (average DC) is all that's needed. If more than one character competes for her attention, an opposed Influence check is in order. Once smitten, Lizabet takes every opportunity to be near her crush, intimating that she might be free for the rest of the night once the last of the patrons are gone.

CHAPTER 1





Lizabet remembers the previous group of adventurers well and may mention them, excited that the Tipsy Wyvern is attracting such interesting visitors. Should the characters inquire, they can learn more about the party, including their names, species, classes, and perhaps a few particulars of your device.

When the roleplaying peters, read the following.

There's a commotion in the courtyard — a panicked horse and men shouting...

If the PCs immediately investigate, read the following.

A lathered horse hurtles toward the inn, collapsing several feet away and pitching its rider onto the porch at your feet. The rider is covered in dust, sweat, and blood, and his breathing is raspy and labored.

"Help them!" he croaks. "They're at the church in Andra. You have to help them — before they're found!"

The rider goes limp and his breathing shallows out. He's still alive but won't be for long.

In the distance you hear the sounds of hot pursuit, within a heavy fog bank that's rolling with unnatural speed toward the courtyard gate.

The rider is Hertiger, a member of the adventuring party that visited the inn last night. Lizabet can identify him. He's close to death from several claw and bite wounds and requires immediate attention if he's to survive. Stabilizing him is a Complex Medicine Task (3 Challenges, each taking 2 rounds with a tricky DC). Moving Hertiger before he's stable immediately kills him. Sadly, nothing can be done for his horse.

The wounds are as unnatural as the fog bank. They weep sickly green ichor and though fresh exhibit deep-rooted infection. Black tendrils visibly creep away from the wounds as veins wither and the surrounding muscle dies. No matter how high the characters' Medicine skill bonuses none of them have seen anything like this before, though with a successful Knowledge check (hard DC), for which Medicine grants synergy, the characters learn one thing: the wounds were inflicted by *humans*.

A second Knowledge check (easy DC) reveals from Hertiger's gear that he's a military scout of some kind, probably a mounted archer. With a comfortable saddle, leather armor, a light crossbow, and a goat's-foot loading arm, he's kitted for speed and skirmishing rather than strength and staying power.

The courtyard gate is currently open. Two grooms rush to close it but it requires 3 full rounds for them to do so. The ravengers arrive at the start of Round 3, so unless at least two characters immediately move to help them the undead push through the doors, killing the grooms and reaching the main building by the start of Round 4. If two characters help, the gates close just as the fog bank reaches the inn's outer wall and the closest characters get their first glimpse of the ravengers.

Figures rush through the fog, their motion frenzied. They move with inhuman speed, as if driven by unholy need. There are humans, dwarves, elves, pech, and others, but they all share the same signs — signs of death. Skin sloughs off the eldest of them and putrid rot clings to the rest. Their eyes are glassy yet they focus with single-minded clarity. They are here for nothing short of murder — and you're next.

The ravengers can leap to the top of the walls and climb the rest of the way but it slows them down, keeping them from the main building until the start of Round 6. The characters can use the two extra rounds to stabilize Hertiger and summon the stable hands and other staff into the main building, or if they're callous they can start blockading doors and windows, leaving the hapless NPCs to distract half the ravengers for 2 rounds.

A map of the inn is provided to the left, with a print-ready version on page 76. Don't be afraid to take the combat all over the inn as the ravengers spread out to kill everyone on the premises. Describe the action as a chaotic swirl. Barmaids shutter windows only to find ravengers right behind them. Grooms try to keep panicking horses in their stable stalls only to be pinned down by ravengers at the building's only entrance. Every time the action cools down in one place you should introduce a new problem somewhere else, perhaps two. Ratchet the tension to a fever pitch until you feel the need for the scene to wind down, at which point the characters can start winning without further incidents cropping up.

The ravengers are fast and strong enough to scramble up to the second floor, so even if the Tipsy Wyvern staff are able to secure the ground floor before their arrival there's still plenty of opportunity for them to get into the building. Most of the NPCs are panicked anyway, making it difficult for the few who aren't to properly defend the inn. Unless the characters are quick on their feet and very lucky the scene likely plays out less like a siege scenario and more like a frenetic bloodbath (perhaps grinding down to a creepy guerilla horror scenario if it drags out long enough).

Here's a short list of ideas to get you started.

- An upended lantern starts a fire, perhaps across the only exit for several NPCs. The characters can save them, but only if they act fast and either put out the fire or find another way for the NPCs to escape. If left unchecked the fire spreads, potentially consuming the entire inn. Ravengers rush through the fire to get at victims; they collapse a few rounds later but in the meantime they inflict an additional 1d6 fire damage with each attack.
- The horses get loose from the stable, rushing through the inn looking for a way out. Characters and NPCs in their way must make a successful Jump check (average DC) to avoid being trampled for 1d10 lethal damage.



CHAPTER 1



- Seeing no other way into a blockaded location, a group of ravengers burrow through the earth or floor. Call for a team Notice check (easy DC). With failure, the ravengers gain a surprise round.
- The fog plays tricks with the characters' minds. When characters critically fail Notice or Search checks to see or hear something through the mist they sense something entirely different (e.g. ravengers where they hear or see NPCs, or vice-versa).

Liberally award action dice to characters who risk themselves for others, who promote the action and enjoyment of the scene, and who offer creative ways to enhance play or solve problems. Leaping through the aforementioned fire to help the trapped NPCs is an excellent example, as is leaping onto one of the racing horses

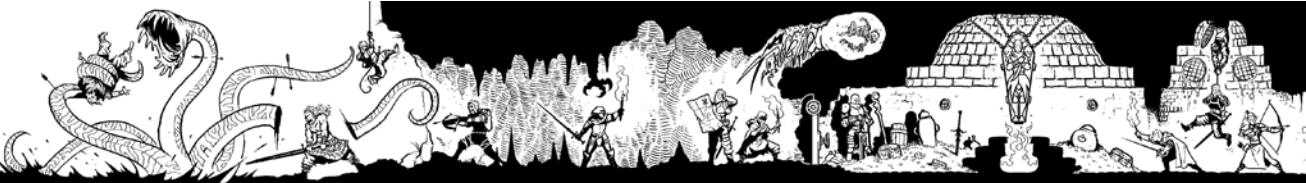
to calm it down (Train Animal check, DC 18). Taking charge and heroically directing a small group of NPCs to success in a skirmish against the ravengers, kicking the legs out from under an ale keg to send it thundering toward the monsters, or just taking the time in battle to calm a terrified staff member — all of these actions and more are worthy of an action dice reward.

The fog creeps across the inn throughout this scene, fully covering the compound by Round 20. In the fog visibility drops to 1/2 normal (rounded down), which is both a boon (the ravengers have just as much trouble seeing through the thick cloud as anyone else, though they can sense living characters by smell) and a burden (it keeps the characters from finding each other, as well as NPCs, and as mentioned it can distort perceptions). You're encouraged to use the fog to heighten the horror of the scene, keeping the characters off guard and unaware of their surroundings — including what may be lurking just out of sight. As it doesn't obey the laws of nature it can seep in around doors and creep up walls, leaving the characters to wonder whether it's a sentient monster. It isn't, and it can't harm the characters in any way, though their nerves may disagree.

The number of ravengers is left to the needs of the combat. Given the size and scope of the coaching inn fights can erupt practically anywhere without notice, or the action can die down suddenly, leaving the party in eerie, apprehensive stillness as NPCs hide and ravengers hunt. The scene should involve just enough quiet to make the characters jumpy, then plenty of running and screaming to cleanse the palette for the next go-around.

The ravengers are blunt in their work. They're attracted to the nearest living targets and mindlessly split up to take on multiple enemies. They don't bother with cover, flanking, or other tactics unless the opportunity is obvious. They're faster than a normal human, though, and they can climb and jump better than most as well. They're bright enough to find new ways into buildings when they can't get through a barricade, and they play on fear and panic. They're mildly cunning, but also bloodthirsty and savage, and fight to the death with no regard to danger.

NPCs at the coaching inn aren't trained fighters but they're not helpless either. They use improvised weapons as they find them (*see their stat blocks for some examples*), and they try to be smart about keeping themselves alive and defending the inn (in that order). Use the NPCs to pace the action. When the characters are having too easy a time of it, introduce a wounded or terrified NPC for them to save (perhaps in the current fight, perhaps nearby). If a character gets into trouble and needs a break, a ravener that's attacking him can savage a screaming bystander instead. Alternately, an NPC could get in a lucky shot and pull an enemy off the characters at a crucial moment. Lizabet is especially good for this; she grabs a wood axe almost immediately and takes her place next to whichever characters flirted with her most successfully. She's not the best fighter, but she's tenacious and feisty.



DIRECTION

Here are some questions you might be asked, and answers for you to offer.

Q: Why are we here?

A: You're adventurers — does it matter? Seriously, you're just passing through and stopped for the evening at the Tipsy Wyvern, an inn you'd heard good things about.

Q: Have any of us been to Andra?

A: No. You were headed in that direction since you're passing through the valley but didn't expect to see it until you continued your journey tomorrow.

Q: Are the wounds on Hertiger and the horse consistent with these undead things?

A: Yes.

Q: Does anyone recognize the rider?

A: Yes. The rider is an adventurer named Hertiger, who visited the inn with five companions last night. Their party also included a human scholar, a human warrior-nun of the Church, a saurian, a dwarven wizard, and an elven archer. The staff recalls that the group was pleasant enough, didn't cause trouble, paid their bill, and were otherwise model guests. They didn't secure a room, racing into the night after talking to Lizabet. According to her, the last thing they talked about was Paschel, a local hero buried in the Andra graveyard.

Q: What time is it?

A: Early evening. The sun has just set.

Q: How long to get to Andra?

A: At a decent pace, just under two hours. Horse travel takes slightly less time unless you move fast.

Q: Wait, this is a coaching inn! Aren't those secure?

A: Not when they've been unmolested for this long. You wouldn't call the locals lax, but they're certainly comfortable.

CAST

TIPSY WYVERN STAFF (STANDARD NPCS)

"Can I help you, good sir?"

Description: Inn staffers wear simple clothes, nothing fancy. They present themselves well in the sweat of a hard day's work. Nonetheless they smile like it's the first day of spring and greet every new customer like royalty.

Motivations: In the main, the staff at the Tipsy Wyvern serves customers well and makes money doing it. They consider themselves prepared for trouble but the raveners give them much more than they bargain for.

Topsy Wyvern Staff (Medium Folk Walkers): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init I; Atk II; Def III; Res IV; Health V; Comp II; Skills: Athletics III, Notice III, Ride III, Search III; Qualities: None

Attacks/Weapons: Improvised club (dmg 1d8 subdual (useless against undead), error 1-2, threat 20, qualities: none), hand axe (dmg 1d6 lethal, error 1-2, threat 20, qualities: AP 1, hurl, trip)

Gear: None

Treasure: None

RAVENERS (STANDARD NPCS, ADVERSARIES)

"Bleargghhiss!"

Description: These crazed undead creatures come in as many species, shapes, and sizes as adventurers. They wear the tattered remains of what they were buried in, scorched and brittle from exposure to the Grave Wurm's acidic stomach. The raveners frequently make savage bite attacks, causing their facial flesh to tear and their teeth to crack and splinter, leaving jagged maws where their mouths once were.

Motivations: Raveners are consumed with hatred for all living things, which they can sense by smell. They slay all living creatures that cross their paths with unnerving speed and ferocity, and when all their enemies are dead, they bring the remains of their victims back to the Andra graveyard so the Wurm can consume and convert them.

Notes: A ravener bite is truly dangerous. Its jagged teeth and ichor-infused maw cause terrible wounds that refuse to heal. Worse, a ravener can spit a wad of ichor and tooth fragments at nearby enemies, which accounts for their bite's increased Reach. Unlike a zombie, a ravener's condition isn't spread as an infection, though party members may not realize this when they first encounter the creatures.

Raveners (Medium Undead Folk Walkers — 65 XP): Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 6, Wis 6, Cha 6; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 40 ft. ground; Init VII; Atk V; Def III; Res V; Health III; Comp I; Skills: Athletics V; Qualities: *Devour, dread, feat (Wolf Pack Basics, Wolf Pack Mastery), light-sensitive, monstrous defense I*

Attacks/Weapons: Bite II (dmg 1d8+1 lethal, threat 17-20, qualities: bleed, reach +2), Slam I (dmg 1d6 lethal, threat 20)

Gear: None

Treasure: None

NEXT STEPS

With the fighting over, the characters can search Hertiger and find his journal (*see page 82*). He also carries a poorly stored ink pen (which is leaking though his pouch), a flint and steel, 16 silver pieces, and the armor and weapons mentioned in the Action section. The inn staff frown if the characters take Hertiger's gear while he still lives but they don't stop them. They're also less eager to offer gear from the inn stores, which can otherwise be used to equip the party if it plans to deal with the raveners.

CHAPTER 1



The party has an obvious destination: the church in Andra. Time is clearly of the essence, and should the party delay ("Let's wait until dawn" or "Let's wait for some troops to get here"), the surviving inn staff assault them with pleas for immediate action. Many of them have family and friends in Andra, and all of them realize that more attacks are coming unless something is done.

Lizabet in particular will push. She's a little starry-eyed about the adventuring lifestyle and if the PCs don't bravely march off to Andra she becomes furious with them. She maligns their manhoods, calls them cowards, lays the death of the village at their feet, and worse. She's got plenty of spunk and more endurance, so she can and will keep the tirade up all night long if necessary. She knows what heroes are supposed to do here and she's not above making the party feel small for ignoring such an obvious need.

Should the PCs persist the atmosphere in the inn turns toxic in a hurry. The staff grows cold, refusing to look the characters in the eye. The other barmaids try to comfort Lizabet, whose ranting can be heard everywhere in the main building. The innkeeper tries to be polite but it's clear he's lost his respect for the heroes. The grooms are sullen, even near the party's horses. Ultimately, the PCs may head for Andra just to salvage their egos.

The staff can describe Andra and even provide a map (see right). The other inn travelers are happy to ride out of the valley to warn of a possible undead outbreak but none of them are adventurers; they won't venture into the village with the party.



SCENE 2: VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED

The village of Andra, late at night

OBJECTIVES

- (Optional) Save the survivors at the church
- (Optional) Save Theodor's mother
- (Optional) Recover Barald Rocobienne's journal
- (Optional) Defeat Wiltweevil
- Proceed to the graveyard to confront Master

CHALLENGES

- The survivors are terrified and paranoid
- Andra is crawling with raveners and Wiltweevil lurks in the trees

SYNOPSIS

Scene Type: Standard

GM Briefing: Ideally this scene begins with the PCs getting into the church, where the surviving villagers fill them in on what's happened and direct them to the wrecked mayor's house to find the sage Barald Rocobienne. They sneak through the ravener-infested village and find Barald but he's already dead. Fortunately, his journal contains clues the party can use in the final battle with Master.



The Village of Andra



CHAPTER 1



The party may also find the remains of Falthene and Hasafti, who gave their lives so the villagers could make it to the church without pursuit. The sheriff's wife, Frida, who is also the mother of one of the survivors (Theodor), hides in her home in Andra and may be rescued, perhaps offering the team much needed support. Neither of these encounters is necessary to continue the plot, however – the characters *could* simply skip Andra and head directly for the graveyard, though doing so would stake the odds heavily against them.

Gear: Anything carried out of Scene 1

LOCATION

The unnatural fog grows thicker as the characters approach Andra, dropping visibility to 1/4 standard (rounded down). The terrain dips en route, which would normally give the characters a bird's eye view of the sleepy community, but instead the party must be nearly upon the outermost buildings before they loom out of the fog. The picturesque cottages are hollow shadows stained and scarred by signs of battle. Doors and shutters lean drunkenly in their frames, bashed in or shattered in the attack. Tattered curtains billow listlessly in the night breeze. Bodies yet to be dragged off by the raveners hang limply out of windows or lie sprawled in the streets. The rest... gone.

Ambiance: All is quiet; there are no animals or other night noises. Smell is the characters' most powerful sense here and the charnel aftermath is crushing. The copper scent of freshly spilt blood blends with the sticky acid-mint flavor of the unearthly fog to leave the characters simultaneously queasy and lightheaded. There's a sense that you shouldn't sit still for too long, lest the very air crust around you. This place hates the living.

Terrain: Forest/jungle and indoors/settled

Cultural Interest: The Realm

ACTION

This scene involves the characters sneaking through and around Andra seeking clues to what's happening – and eventually ways to end the threat. The area is overrun with raveners and Wiltweevil lurks in the trees. Attracting the attention of even one adversary can be devastating, as the sounds of combat can attract more, and more, and...

It should be clear from the outset that the area is not safe, that those responsible for the carnage are probably still close. The bodies of men, women, and children – even animals – are still fresh (and many have not yet been dragged off). Tracks are chaotic and recent. The characters may ignore the signs, in which case they learn the hard way.

The first time the characters enter Andra, and each time they head out for a new location in the village, they may make a team Sneak check opposed by the raveners' Notice (using the *lowest* Sneak bonus among them). If they fail, or if they move without Sneaking, they attract 1d3 raveners. There's no surprise round – the raveners rush into sight and initiative is rolled normally.

If the raveners are slain quickly and quietly (in 3 rounds or less with no noise above typical swordplay), no more of them notice the party and the PCs may continue to their destination unmolested; otherwise, an additional 1d3 raveners enter the fray and the process repeats. If after 6 rounds the combat is still going it attracts Wiltweevil, who lurks just out of sight and watches with interest (note his low-light vision). The rootwalker also arrives if the party suffers a critical failure with any Sneak check.

Wiltweevil's reaction to the party depends on their performance in battle. If the characters do well he lets them continue, shadowing them through the area (they're worthy opponents and that intrigues him – at least, until they truly threaten Master's plans). Wiltweevil is bored with any party that struggles against the raveners and he emerges to rid the world of them. This may result in an early demise for Master's lieutenant (and/or one or more characters!), though you still have plenty of raveners to throw at the characters if you like.

At all times, strive to instill in the party a sense of imminent fright and danger. Ominous sounds from just out of sight and ghastly glimpses of things best left unseen are among the tools of the day. This is an excellent time to invoke stress damage (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 211).

GOING TO THE CHAPEL...

Though the church is the closest of Andra's structures to the coaching inn, the fog keeps the characters from spotting it easily. Finding the south road off the thoroughfare requires a successful Notice check (DC 15), though the party can circumvent the roll by keeping to the eastern side of the creek and heading south (the road becomes visible about halfway to the church, where it's closest to the water).

As the party approaches the church read the following.

The church is built of heavy stone blocks with a slate-tiled roof and was clearly meant to last. It's also highly defensible, with windows that are too narrow for any average human to squeeze through. The windows are still intact, though tightly shuttered from within. The open grass surrounding the structure shows few tracks. It hasn't been breached yet – perhaps it hasn't even been attacked...

To get into the church the characters must first acquire the attention of the survivors within. They could simply knock on a shutter or door, though this yields no response (the survivors don't dare reveal themselves, lest the newcomers be raveners... or worse). Following the knock with intelligible words, however – *that* gets the survivors' attention. "Who's there?" comes the whispered response.

Convincing the survivors to let the party into the church requires a bit of roleplay and an Impress check opposed by Resolve. The survivors are on a razor's edge, so the PCs suffer



a -4 penalty, though this penalty is negated if they mention Hertiger by name.

Failure doesn't keep the characters out of the church but does cause the villagers to hesitate long enough that 1d3 ravengers notice the discussion. They rush toward the church just as the villagers open the door to let the characters in and while the party *can* get inside and shut the door before the ravengers get close enough to attack they may realize it's tactically unwise. Left to their own devices outside, the ravengers beat on the doors and windows, clawing and growling, and draw 1d3 more after 10 minutes. Another 1d3 arrive every 10 minutes thereafter until the area is swarming with them.

Fortunately, fighting ravengers *outside* the church is a great way to bond with the survivors. They grab their crossbows and find the nearest crevice to fire through, supporting the characters as best they can from behind cover. Best of all, the characters are welcomed into the church with open arms after the fight, and the villagers are that much more eager to help them in any way they can.

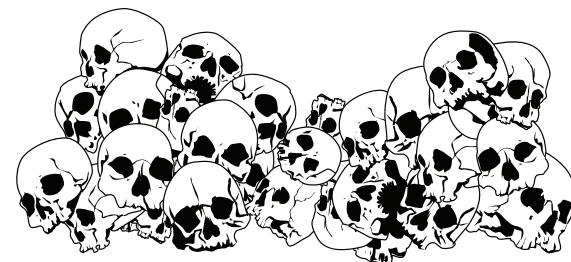
As brothers in arms or fellow survivors the characters enter the church to meet the last six Andra villagers: Bastian (formerly the village cobbler — now technically the mayor), Brigit (Bastian's wife), Maja (a dwarven weaver), Brother Sevrin (the church acolyte — now the village priest, heavens preserve him), Theodor (the altar boy), and Zerun (the town rat catcher).

The survivors can help the characters in several ways. First, they can explain what happened to Hertiger's party, relating the following. We recommend you break this information up through the course of a fully roleplayed discussion.

"We were in the mayor's house and sister Falthene and Engtas said we needed to move. The house was too big, they said, and too open. So we agreed to take a chance and head here. Hertiger would ride like mad for the Tipsy Wyvern while the rest of us made a break across town.

"The rest is sort of a blur. The sage hurt his leg before we got out of the house. The elf stayed with him and told us to keep running. We fought our way out of the village but as we got to the creek the deaders started to catch up. Hasafti and Sister Falthene held back to hold the line and we kept going. We made it but... Such a terrible price..."

"A couple of us have been thinking we should head back and find the others, see if they're still alive. They deserve that much, and more. They saved us. Plus, that sage fella kept checking his journal like it was important. I think it might be. They said they were here for the Church and they seemed to know things about the deaders but... There are just so many of them. I don't know. We just don't know."



If the characters get to know the survivors personally, they may earn some additional support.

- **Brigit** is a descendant of Paschel and each year on the day the Church honored him for his valor she places a single orchid on the steps of his tomb. She can direct the party there, and can also point them to a small game trail leading up to a rise overlooking the graveyard.
- **Brother Sevrin** is a trained Priest and can cast spells — or he could, if his faith wasn't shaken by the day's events (including the death of his mentor, Father Karenus). Rousing Sevrin out of his fugue requires time, compassion, and not a little skill at reading and responding to deep human frailty. Church-related characters can use Impress to fill the void left by Father Karenus, inspiring Sevrin as a new makeshift mentor. Others can use Sense Motive to walk Sevrin through his feelings or Bluff to inspire him with stories of heroes who acted despite fear, re-igniting his sense of duty. In all cases the challenge is overcoming Sevrin's sense of doubt, so the character's skill check opposes his Resolve. Sevrin's healing spells are included with his stat block (see page 18).
- **Maja Weaver**, widow of a former adventurer, can direct characters to her home near the mayor's house, where she keeps a small stockpile of gear.
- **Theodor**, a 10-year old altar boy, has been at the church since the initial attack and worries for his parents. If he learns that the characters are heading back to the village he pleads with them to look for "my da," adding that, "He's the sheriff." Theodor's father is in fact dead, his body already dragged off to the graveyard, but his mother is hiding in their home in the village. If rescued, she can gift the characters with an undead-slaying weapon Paschel's party forged just in case the Soul Star was ever unearthed. If the situation is dire, you may also use her to inform the characters about a series of secret tunnels under the village.
- **Zerun** is Andra's rat catcher and can help the characters get around town without being spotted. Using his advice the team gains a +2 bonus with all Sneak checks made to avoid the ravengers. He may also know about the tunnels mentioned in Theodor's description.

If the adventure is running long or you want to simplify the narrative, feel free to exclude some or all these NPCs.





At this point the characters may have several options: head to the mayor's house or Maja's stockpile; search for the rest of the first adventuring party, or the sheriff and his wife; head to Paschel's tomb; and/or evacuate the survivors, who are split on all options save the last (which they all agree is a very bad idea). They can be won over without a skill check, but only after plenty of resistance. They fear the ravengers but worse, they fear the land itself is turning against them. "The trees..." they warn, "they move." Brigit and Maja, who've spent the most time on watch, can point at parts of the tree line they swear were different before. They can't explain it and everything looks fine now.

In truth, they spotted Wiltweevil playing one of his games, lurking in wait for some unlucky villagers to approach the church. If the party has already fought the rootwalker they can perhaps put the survivors' minds to rest on the topic, especially if they claim to have killed the wretched general and/or have trophies to prove it.

THE FALLEN PAIR

Again, the characters must make a team Sneak check as they move through Andra. If Zerun has revealed his secrets about the town's less traveled paths they gain a +2 bonus with this check. (The tunnels lead to many places in Andra but the church is not among them.)

Sister Falthene and Hasafti died at the creek along the most direct route from the church to Andra, though for the sake of the story you can place their bodies anywhere between the locations. Assuming the creek location the pair lies in a foot of slowly running water, surrounded by what's left of the half dozen ravengers they took down before they died.

Sister Falthene was a tall, striking brunette clad in chainmail with a Church Guard tabard. She carried a beautiful, ornately adorned and filigreed bastard sword that now lies in the water beside her. She was brought down by a vast array of tearing and gaping wounds, having lost too much blood to continue.

Hasafti the dwarf wizard is identifiable only by his squat stature and mage's robes. His head has been ripped from his body and lies a dozen feet away. Many of his bones have been broken, as though he was savagely beaten with something extremely large and heavy (Wiltweevil's feeder boughs).

The scene is disgusting and more than enough to prompt stress damage (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 211).

While distasteful, searching the bodies yields some gear and clues as to what's going on in town. In addition to Falthene's bastard sword (dmg 1d10 lethal, error 1, threat 20, qualities: *massive*) and Hasafti's spellcasting components, there's a sturdy metal drinking flask labeled with the dwarven script for "comfort." It's filled with a single dose of a sweet-smelling healing potion (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 163). Hasafti's corpse also clutches in its hand a hunk of what appears to be black tree bark, though none of the nearby trees match the color. Characters who've fought Wiltweevil recognize the hue all too well.

Patches of semi-dry earth are available should the party wish to bury the bodies in makeshift graves. While you may wish to roll a few dice or even ask the players for Sneak checks to be cruel, there's no chance the ravengers find the characters while they're performing this remarkably compassionate act.

THE MAYOR'S HOUSE AND THE TREE IN THE SQUARE

Again, the characters must make a team Sneak check as they move through Andra. If Zerun has revealed his secrets about the town's less traveled paths they gain a +2 bonus with this check. (The tunnels lead to many places in Andra but the church is not among them.)

The mayor's house faces the town square, which places it directly in the area of highest ravenger concentration. On Wiltweevil's orders the zombies still stalk Andra's streets and houses looking for survivors.

As the party approaches or passes the town square (which they must do no matter how they come to the house), read the following.

The mayor's house, which faces onto the enormous town square, is a wreck. Its windows are all torn open and the barricades on the doors have been breached. No fewer than a dozen bodies litter the ground around the building — some villagers, some ravengers. The area was clearly the scene of a pitched battle but it's quiet now.

There's no need to explore the mayor's house, as Engtas and Barald are found in the first room the party enters. They made their last stand in the room, unable to escape with the others. Their corpses lie amongst eight pin-cushioned ravengers stapled to the walls and cluttering the floor. The room is a bloody mess — Engtas' throat is torn out and Barald is gutted — which is enough for additional stress damage (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 211).

Barald's haversack contains his journal and reading through the last few entries yields a player handout (see pages 80–81). This is the best information the party can gain about the challenges facing them in Scene 3.

Unless the characters have already dispatched Wiltweevil, he arrives while they're in the mayor's house. He may be shadowing them, in which case he lurks outside until they emerge. Either way, he decides he's had enough fun with them and prepares to put them down once and for all. He attempts to move to a position from which he can pounce on the party as they leave the area — perhaps an empty patch of grass in the town square, where he can sit still and hopefully be mistaken for a tree the party failed to notice on its way into Andra. For this Wiltweevil makes a Sneak check opposed by a team Notice or Search check, as appropriate. This can result in a truly creepy situation if the party wins this check, with one of them spotting a tree that wasn't there





before (stress damage). With failure they don't notice until they're headed to their next destination, with Wiltweevil benefiting from a surprise round.

The ravengers know better than to interrupt Wiltweevil, so they steer clear of the combat, though some hiss at the party from nearby buildings. If Wiltweevil falls, however, a mob of ambitious ravengers moves to avenge him. Victory against the mob keeps the rest of the ravengers at bay; they're possessed of enough reasoning to know better.

Fleeing Wiltweevil results in a foot chase, the winner determined by the best two out of three opposed team Athletics checks (unless the party adopts an "every man for himself" approach, in which case the action may get as complicated as you prefer). Any chase through the fog immediately becomes a frenzied, blind dive into the unknown. You can highlight this with unexpected obstacles like buildings, wagons, bodies, trees, boulders, and other things that must be leapt or clambered over. Sudden drop-offs and steep inclines occasionally change the pace of the party's flight and you can ask the players for quick descriptions when the characters reach them. Though obstacles and terrain don't apply any modifiers to the chase — both sides have to deal with them equally — they're the best way to spice the rolls up with a little description.

Sadly, there's no opportunity to busy the heroes in the mayor's house (or anyone else in town) — not until after the adventure, at least.

OTHER LOCATIONS IN ANDRA

Again, the characters must make a team Sneak check as they move through Andra. If Zerun has revealed his secrets about the town's less traveled paths they gain a +2 bonus with this check. (The tunnels lead to many places in Andra but the church is not among them.)

Maja Weaver's house stands next door to the mayor's. It's a simple single-story affair that was largely spared from the fighting because it was unoccupied when the ravengers arrived. The stockpile is located in the basement, beneath a pile of firewood. It consists of any 3 non-magical items the party might want (within reason and with your approval). Thankfully the house is empty, though if you're feeling devious you might play the scene up as a potential trap (e.g. describing very recent ravener tracks through the building, having a cat or other small animal knock objects over in adjacent rooms, and the like).

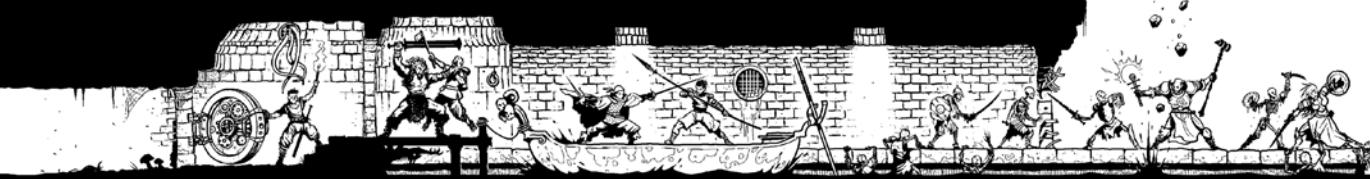
The sheriff's house is located where the road from the Tipsy Wyvern enters Andra, a short walk away from the mayor's house and out of line of sight from the town square. Theodor's mother, Frida, is hiding in the attic, hoping the ravengers near the house will leave soon so she can go looking for her son. One of the fiercest battles in the village was fought right outside the building and the ravengers have only just started to drag the many corpses away. Frida nearly gave herself away when they took her husband. The sight of his mangled body trailing through the dirt

like that... He taught her well, though, and she kept her calm, clutching the hooded lantern she'd taken with her into the attic like the very lifeline it is.

Should the party come close enough to the house for Frida to see them, she lights the lantern and tilts the attic window open far enough to point the light in their direction. Both the ravengers and the party make Notice checks (DC 15) to spot the light, and if the ravengers see it they leave the corpses and head for the house. There are two mobs of them — more than enough to challenge the party — and they do their best to swarm a couple targets rather than spread out. Saving Frida could prove difficult, but it's also quite rewarding.

Recognizing the threat of the Soul Star, Paschel's party specially commissioned a magic bastard sword with an increased threat range when used against undead (18–20). Better yet, when the wielder scores a critical hit against an undead creature using the sword, all other undead within 30 ft. are struck with holy light, suffering 1d10 divine damage. The weapon is called 'Spirit' and its existence has been a secret shared by every mayor and sheriff of Andra since Paschel was buried. No one else was supposed to learn of it, but Theodor's father respected Frida too much to keep secrets from her. Perhaps in the grand scheme of things this was the work of some beneficent power — or just a fluke of good fortune. Either way, Frida happily retrieves the weapon from its hiding place and gives it to the characters if they liberate her.

If the characters also mention that Theodor is alive at the church, Frida declares she's heading there immediately. Letting her go on her own is an option, though not the most heroic one; a less callous party sees that she's reunited with her boy before heading elsewhere. The players may worry that they're on a clock, which is a valid fear and one you shouldn't dismiss, but the reality is that Scene 3 unfolds the same way regardless.



CHAPTER 1



DIRECTION

Here are some questions that might be asked of the church survivors, and their answers.

Q: What do you know about the other party?

A: Bastian says, "There were five. The sage Barald Rocobienne was their leader. There was a woodland scout named Hertiger, an elven archer named Engtas Whisperthorn, the soldier-nun Sister Falthene, and a dwarven wizard named Hasafti Gurion. They arrived just after the raveners — not a second too soon, I might add. They did their best to save us but... There were just too many. Too many..."

Q: What do you know about Paschel?

A: Brigit says, "He was an ancestor of mine, a bunch of generations ago. My family always taught that he was a wizard who went into the world and did good. When he retired here, he had enough money to build this church and he made sure it was built to last. He had a little chest, just a couple feet across, and his Will ordered it to be buried with him. Nobody knows what was in it but there've been treasure stories ever since."

Q: Where did Hertiger find a horse?

A: Maja says, "The Mayor's house had an attached stable. Hertiger found the horse when we were barricading the place. It was a magnificent animal, and well behaved, too. The mayor must have paid top dollar for it."

Q: Where's the village priest?

A: Theodor the altar boy says, "He died. He was tryin' to help people and the deaders killed him. Sevrin's the priest now but he hasn't said much for a while. He just kind of sits there."

Q: The church is on the edge of town. Why haven't you fled?

A: Zerun says, "Cuz there's sommat in the trees, I says. The deaders done bewitched 'em, the trees. There was people what tried to get a-runnin' when the deaders first attacked. Some came back out of the forest sayin' there was ghosts and other such things in there. Others didna come back a-tall. There's sommat *evil* in the trees, I says. We're safer here behind good stone."

CAST

ANDRA VILLAGERS (STANDARD NPCS)

"Did you hear something?"

Description: Before the ravener attack the people of Andra were warm, welcoming, well groomed, and a bunch of other "Ws" that set them apart from your garden-variety villagers. They lived comfortable lives and extended that pleasure to all who visited. Many came to join them, settling in to retire like Paschel's party of old. Today, however, the PCs find Andra under siege by an evil its people can't even fathom and it shows in their beleaguered

appearance. The few survivors wear the same clothes they put on yesterday morning. They cling to the things they were holding when the monsters came, seeking solace in the familiar. They're like phantoms in their own home.

Motivations: The survivors are tired, battered, and paranoid. They still wear comfortable clothes but they're shredded almost beyond recognition. Beneath dirt and blood their sullen faces betray abject defeat. Andra's children wait to die. Still, the light of life burns deep in them and if the characters offer them even a glimmer of hope they latch on with both hands.

Andra Villagers (Medium Folk Walkers): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init I; Atk II; Def III; Res IV; Health V; Comp IV; Skills: None; Qualities: None

Attacks/Weapons: Shortsword (dmg 1d8 lethal, threat 19–20, qualities: *keen* 4), light crossbow with 10 standard bolts (dmg 1d6 lethal, threat 19–20, range 50 ft. × 6, qualities: *AP* 4, *load* 5, *poisonous*)

Gear: None

Treasure: None

Two of the villagers stand out from the rest.

- Brigit is a tougher fighter than the rest, with an Attack Grade of IV and a Defense Grade of V. She also has an axe (dmg 1d10 lethal, threat 20, qualities: *AP* 2).
- Brother Sevrin has the Spellcasting Signature Skill (Grade III) and the Bless, Cure Wounds I, and True Strike I spells (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 228).

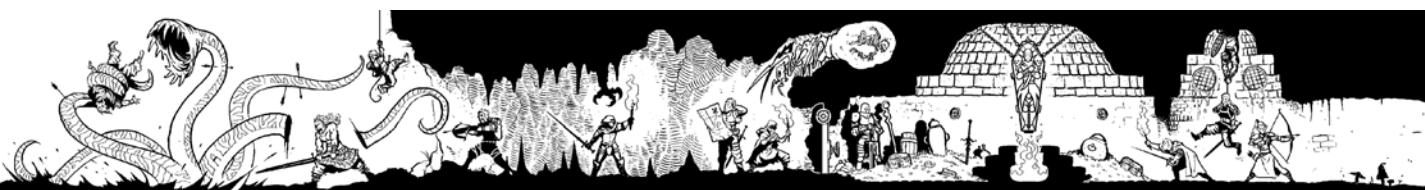
RAVENERS (STANDARD NPCS, ADVERSARIES)

"Bleargghiss!"

Description: These crazed undead creatures come in as many species, shapes, and sizes as adventurers. They wear the tattered remains of what they were buried in, scorched and brittle from exposure to the Grave Wurm's acidic stomach. The raveners frequently make savage bite attacks, causing their facial flesh to tear and their teeth to crack and splinter, leaving jagged maws where their mouths once were.

Motivations: Raveners are consumed with hatred for all living things, which they can sense by smell. They slay all living creature that cross their paths with unnerving speed and ferocity, and when all their enemies are dead, they bring the remains of their victims back to the Andra graveyard so the Wurm can consume and convert them.

Notes: A raveners bite is truly dangerous. Its jagged teeth and ichor-infused maw cause terrible wounds that refuse to heal. Worse, a raveners can spit a wad of ichor and tooth fragments at nearby enemies, which accounts for their bite's increased Reach. Unlike a zombie, a raveners condition isn't spread as an infection, though party members may not realize this when they first encounter the creatures.





Raveners (Medium Undead Folk Walkers — 65 XP):

Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 6, Wis 6, Cha 6; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 40 ft. ground; Init VII; Atk V; Def III; Res V; Health III; Comp I; Skills: Athletics V; Qualities: *Devour, dread, feat (Wolf Pack Basics, Wolf Pack Mastery), light-sensitive, monstrous defense I*

Attacks/Weapons: Bite II (dmg 1d8+1 lethal, threat 17–20, qualities: *bleed, reach +2*), Slam I (dmg 1d6 lethal, threat 20)

Gear: None

Treasure: None

WILTWEEVIL (SPECIAL NPC, ADVERSARY)

"I'll gut you like a fish, you flimsy sack of blood and water!"

Description: Except for the hide of Ekrajmez the saurian, which dangles high in his branches like a horrible hat, Wiltweevil looks just like a natural tree — though perhaps an elder one with scarred bark. He keeps the seams of his face closed most of the time, only cracking them to watch where he's moving and stare down opponents in battle. Wiltweevil excels in war primarily due to his ability to outthink the enemy. His amber eyes glisten with keen wit.

Motivations: Wiltweevil long ago parted ways with reality. Having traveled many years with Master and accustomed to victory, he believes he's unstoppable. This leads to him to view all others but Master as 'things' mere obstacles to be torn down at a whim. Wiltweevil feels no remorse for the countless lakes of blood he's spilt, nor the awful future Master plans for the world. He's content with the constant opportunities provided to toy with Master's foes. Wiltweevil's favorite tactic is to sow fear and discord in the enemy's ranks, reveling as they break down. In forest terrain like this, he frequently plants his feet and sits still; when he's lucky, the enemy is blind enough to make camp under his branches.

Notes: Wiltweevil prefers to ambush opponents and usually opens with a Slam attack, plowing his boughs into both sides of a victim (this is just one attack — the fact that he's using two branches is merely flavor). When fighting more than one opponent, he likes to Grapple one and use it as a Screaming Club on the others (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 220). Wiltweevil is vicious and cruel, seizing every opportunity to gloat.

Wiltweevil (Large Plant Walker — 134 XP): Str 22, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 12; SZ L (2x2, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init IV; Atk VI; Def VI; Res V; Health VIII; Comp II; Skills: Athletics IV, Blend VI, Resolve VI, Sneak VI, Tactics VI; Qualities: *Achilles heel (fire), chameleon II (forest/jungle), condition immunity (bleeding), damage reduction 2, darkvision 1, feat (Ambush Basics, Two-Hit Combo), rend*

Attacks/Weapons: Slam III (dmg 2d8+6 lethal, threat 19–20, qualities: *grab, trip*)

Gear: Grotesque saurian-skin hat

Treasure: 1G, 1T

NEXT STEPS

Eventually the party will decide to head for Paschel's tomb. Scene 3 begins as they leave Andra.

SCENE 3: TO FACE THE FIEND

Paschel's Tomb, a few hours to just before dawn

OBJECTIVES

- Kill or capture Master
- Defeat the Grave Wurm

CHALLENGES

- The arrival of Master brings on a Dramatic Scene
- Master's no slouch and the Grave Wurm is downright nightmarish
- Master knows the Soul Star's weakness and fights tooth and nail to keep the artifact in his possession
- Those pesky raveners just keep coming!

SYNOPSIS

Scene Type: Standard (but becomes Dramatic when Master arrives)

GM Briefing: As the characters arrive at the graveyard Master is in Paschel's tomb and the Grave Wurm is burrowing beneath the headstones, swallowing a couple previously buried bodies. The only enemies on the field are a small group of raveners dragging corpses from Andra to Paschel's tomb so the Wurm can convert them. The characters can attack the raveners and likely defeat them easily, though Master and the Wurm notice the fighting and use it to their advantage. Waiting until the Wurm surfaces is the sounder plan, allowing the party to potentially catch the beast by surprise.

Master arrives late to the combat unless the party sneaks directly into Paschel's tomb (unlikely — remember that the tunnels can't take them there). Should the characters manage this feat anyway, the Grave Wurm bashes its way in though the subterranean walls (a slow process, though exciting). Defeating Master is tough but if the party can steal the Soul Star from him he loses control of the Wurm and the raveners, evening the fight significantly.

Gear: Anything carried out of Scene 2

LOCATION

The tomb is grandiose for a village as small as Andra, carved directly into the mountainside and adorned with sculptures of Paschel and his fellow adventurers. It's the graveyard's centerpiece, typically visible from anywhere close. In the fog it looms over the area like the home of a judgmental god.



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Ambiance: The tomb's stone portal is breached, shards of it scattered about the entrance, which is a pitch-black pit. The scent of freshly dug earth is powerful here, as is visual evidence of the Grave Wurm's tunneling. The air is deathly still and the fog billows thickest and most pungent everywhere in the area.

Terrain: Indoors/settled

Cultural Interest: The Realm

ACTION

The characters may arrive directly from town or use the game trail to get an idea what's going on ahead of time. Either way read the following aloud.

Andra's cemetery occupies a narrow band of land about 60 feet deep and 300 feet wide, stretching along the base of a mountain a mile outside the village. Its centerpiece is an impressive tomb cut directly into the mountainside and decorated with life-size sculptures of an adventuring party. The tomb's entrance has been shattered, pieces of its stone door littering the area. No light is visible from within; indeed, it almost seems like the tomb is consuming light from around it.

The ground is uneven everywhere in the cemetery — shallow depressions and small mounds are everywhere. The air is deathly still and the fog billows thicker than anywhere you've been before.

Through the mist you catch sight of a half dozen undead dragging bodies toward the tomb. They seem to have arrived from Andra.

If the PCs enter the graveyard directly, add the following.

The smell of fresh earth is strong here. The dead have been busy...

The game trail is too far from the cemetery to fire arrows, but surprising the ravagers is simple — they're focused on the task at hand and distracted by Master and the Grave Wurm being so close. This translates to a +2 bonus with the party's Sneak check, which may grant a surprise round.

The Grave Wurm notices any fighting immediately and burrows in that direction. It erupts under the center of the fight at the start of Round 2, forcing everyone within 5 ft. to make a Balance check (DC 18). Any who fail, including ravagers, suffer 1d6 lethal damage and become *sprawled* in the nearest undisturbed and unoccupied squares. As the fight continues the Wurm acts on single-minded impulse, trying to grab and swallow each closest living being in turn.

Unless the characters sneak into the tomb, Master emerges at the start of the round after the Wurm arrives, spreading his arms and bellowing, "Enough!" The Grave Wurm and the ravagers all freeze and even the fog seems to freeze in mid-air.

Master addresses the party that's dared to enter "his domain." The conversation may unfold something like this.

Master: "Bow, for you are in the presence of greatness."

Player Characters: "Yeah... Who are you again?"

M: (with an evil smirk) "You may call me Master."

PCs: "Um ... What are you doing here?"

M: "Laying the foundation of my reign. You will swear your fealty to me. *Now.*"

PCs: "The rootwalker one of yours?"

M: "Wiltweevil is the captain of my army. You will speak of him with respect. Now kneel!"

PCs: "I don't think so. How about—"

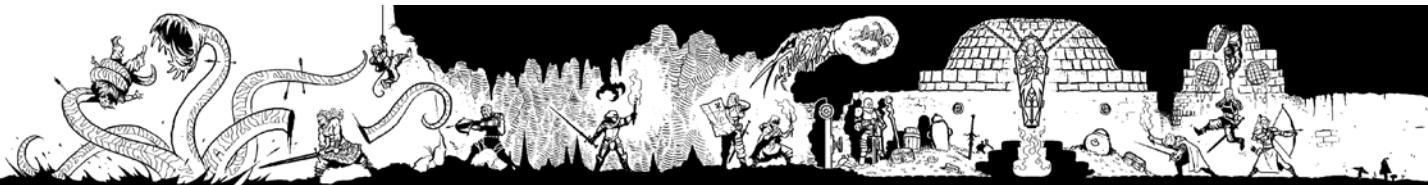
M: "Cease your prattle! All I wish to hear from you are oaths of fealty!"

PCs: "Bite me."

M: "Enough insolence! Die!"

Master's end of the conversation is driven by one thing — sating his insatiable ego. Characters who stroke him may well be kept alive (for a while), but the whole group must swear fealty to avoid renewed fighting. In the unlikely event that the party acquiesces, he demands to know who they are, where they've come from, and what they can offer him. To their benefit he's even more vulnerable to praise while engaged and the party might be able to learn a thing or two about his plan in the process. This option can fill in blanks left by careless or impetuous play earlier in the adventure (heading directly to the tomb, for instance, or failing to find Barald's journal), but it's fraught with danger. Master's people skills are a little erratic; he could decide at any time that the PCs are lying, or have lied, in which case they must pay the price for their bitter betrayal. Even if the party manages to satisfy his twisted logic, he's not about to just lay it all out for them. All sensitive inquiries, like those about the Soul Star, the Grave Wurm, and Master's weaknesses ("our weaknesses" would work better) must be framed as questions from concerned subjects rather than interested adventurers. Otherwise the whole ruse falls apart and the fighting sparks up again, this time with more fury than ever.

The final combat is intense, with Master, the Grave Wurm, and any remaining ravagers assaulting the characters at once. Three additional ravagers are brewing inside the Wurm and





arrive on Rounds 3, 5, and 7, dripping with rank ooze and hungry for their first kills. Any characters killed and swallowed by the Wurm (or swallowed live, only to die in its gullet) may also come back, should the combat continue for long enough.

Remain mindful of the fight's pacing. The onus is on you to make this a suitably climactic battle and if things are going too easily for the party you may want to consider adding a few more raveners. Sinkholes can open under characters, caused by the Wurm's tunneling, and the fog can be used to confuse and obscure the fight, perhaps even splitting it into smaller combats as needed. These last two options can also be used to *help* the characters if needed (sinkholes opening under enemies or the fog obscuring the PCs or their actions).

All opponents fight to the death — Master is undaunted, assured of his ultimate victory no matter the odds, and so long as he wears the Soul Star the Wurm and raveners follow his lead. This is his true weakness — if the characters can remove the Star from Master, he loses control of all its creations. A foolhardy character may even try to *use* the stolen artifact, though doing so places him in mortal jeopardy (*see below*).

Alas, separating Master from the Soul Star is no easy feat. It's buckled to his chest and a character must apply 2 Handle Item Grapple Benefits to remove it (one to unbuckle the Star and another to pull it free). The characters may come up with an alternate plan and you should consider anything they propose, especially if it's fun for everyone.

The Soul Star goes dormant when not worn, in which case the raveners go inert and the Grave Wurm becomes *enraged*. This may result in the Grave Wurm attacking Master. If the characters avoid the ensuing fight, you can just make an opposed attack check to determine the winner (describing the action with appropriate flair, of course). The loser is killed and the winner is

badly wounded: Master drops to 1/2 vitality (rounded down), or the Wurm drops to 2 remaining Damage saves (1 normal + 1 *tough* grade remaining). With any luck dispatching the winner becomes a trivial exercise.

USING THE SOUL STAR

The Soul Star has no intelligence, though its corrupting influence compels the owner to perform actions that may make the artifact appear intelligent. When a character first dons the item, and at the end of each week he wears it thereafter, he must make a Will save (DC 10 + 1 per full week the item has been worn). With failure, the character's Wisdom is impaired by 1 and he becomes irrationally protective of the item, going so far as to attack anyone who attempts to take it from him, until he succeeds with a future Will save. Should the character's Wisdom drop to 0 while he wears the item, he loses conscious control and becomes obsessed with creating new raveners — even if that means finding corpses the old-fashioned way.

The Soul Star becomes dormant when not worn. Should the Grave Wurm still live when this happens it becomes *enraged* and remains so until it's slain or the Soul Star is worn again. While *enraged*, the Wurm considers all living beings targets — even the Soul Star's former wearer.

While the Soul Star is dormant, raveners become inert.

PASCHEL'S CHEST

Should the characters investigate Paschel's tomb, they find the remains of a middle-aged human and a small metal chest containing 2 Treasure Rolls (1C, 1L).

CAST

RAVENERS (STANDARD NPCS, ADVERSARIES)

"Bleargghhiss!"

Description: These crazed undead creatures come in as many species, shapes, and sizes as adventurers. They wear the tattered remains of what they were buried in, scorched and brittle from exposure to the Grave Wurm's acidic stomach. The raveners frequently make savage bite attacks, causing their facial flesh to tear and their teeth to crack and splinter, leaving jagged maws where their mouths once were.

Motivations: Raveners are consumed with hatred for all living things, which they can sense by smell. They slay all living creature that cross their paths with unnerving speed and ferocity, and when all their enemies are dead, they bring the remains of their victims back to the Andra graveyard so the Wurm can consume and convert them.

Notes: A ravener bite is truly dangerous. Its jagged teeth and ichor-infused maw cause terrible wounds that refuse to heal. Worse, a ravener can spit a wad of ichor and tooth fragments at nearby enemies, which accounts for their bite's increased



CHAPTER 1



Reach. Unlike a zombie, a ravener's condition isn't spread as an infection, though party members may not realize this when they first encounter the creatures.

Ravengers (Medium Undead Folk Walkers — 65 XP):

Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 6, Wis 6, Cha 6; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 40 ft. ground; Init VII; Atk V; Def III; Res V; Health III; Comp I; Skills: Athletics V; Qualities: *Devour, dread, feat (Wolf Pack Basics, Wolf Pack Mastery), light-sensitive, monstrous defense I*

Attacks/Weapons: Bite II (dmg 1d8+1 lethal, threat 17–20, qualities: *bleed, reach +2*), Slam I (dmg 1d6 lethal, threat 20)

Gear: None

Treasure: None

THE GRAVE WURM (STANDARD NPC, ADVERSARY)

“*wet huffing breathing*”

Description: This bloated white worm is the size of a horse and wagon, with grotesque purple veins shot through the tissue beneath its semi-transparent skin. It has no eyes nor grasping limbs; the only feature breaking its freakish exterior is its horrifying mouth, a circle of gripping teeth wide enough to consume a man whole. The stench that rises from this awful cavity can bring even the fiercest warrior to his knees.

Motivations: The Grave Wurm exists to serve the Soul Star's owner. It has no true will of its own, being a creation of ancient evil forces made flesh.

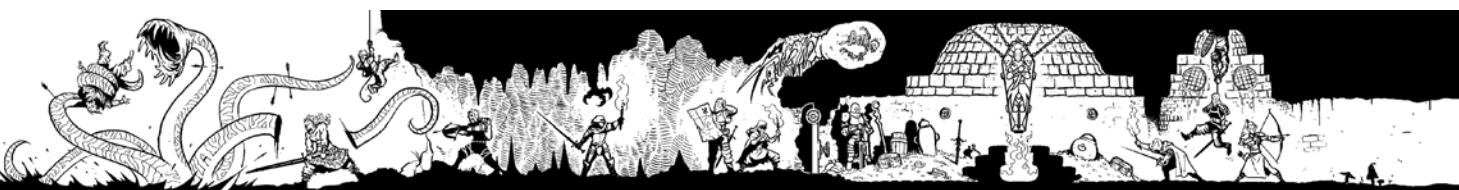
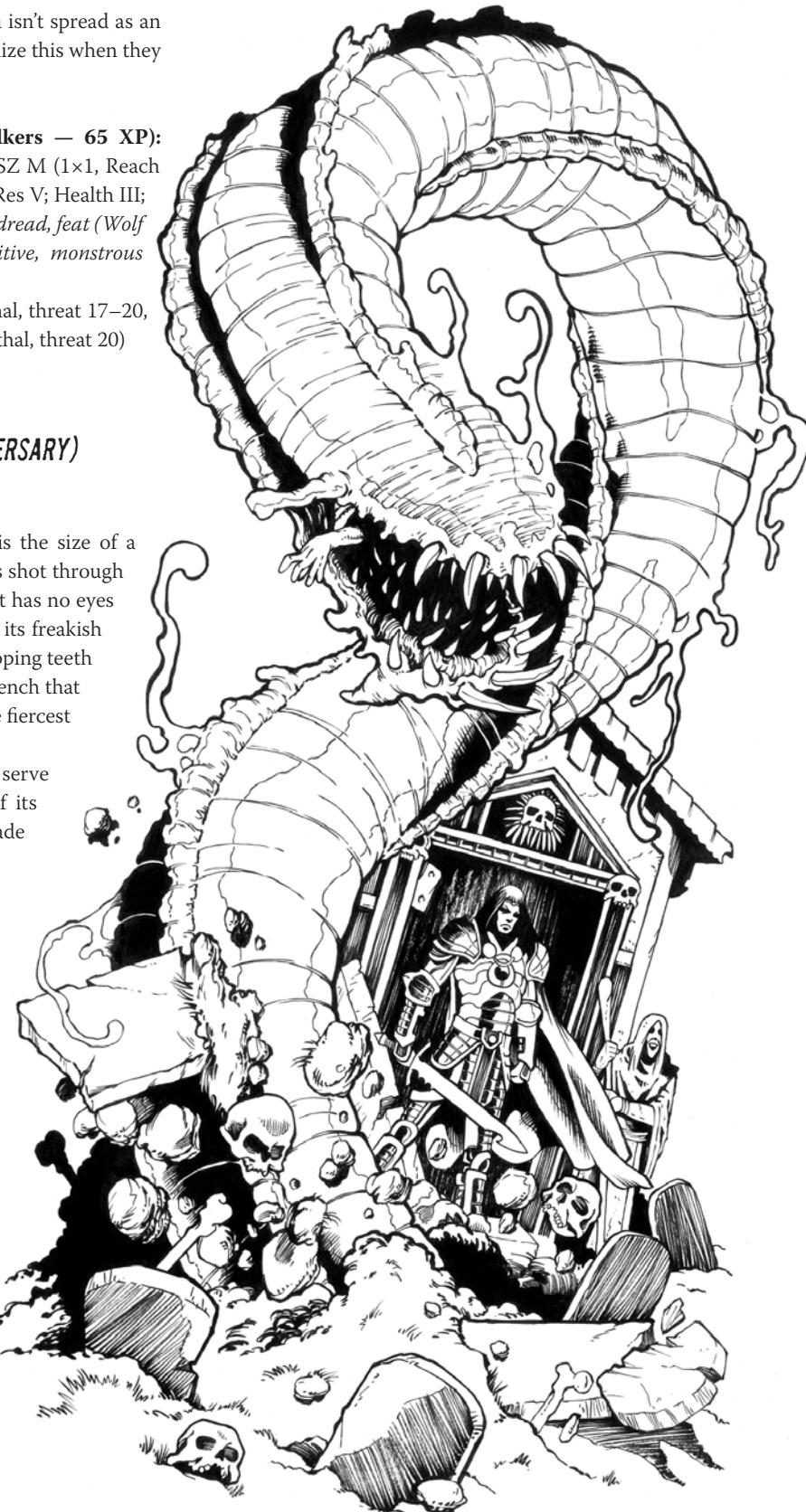
The Grave Wurm (Huge Beast Undead

Burrower — 94 XP: Str 18, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 8; SZ M (4x4, Reach 2); Spd 30 ft. burrow; Init I; Atk V; Def VIII; Res VIII; Health VI; Comp I; Skills: Athletics V; Qualities: *Blindsight, condition immunity (baffled, stunned), damage reduction 3, death throes (divine damage), dread, tough 3*

Attacks/Weapons: Swallow III (dmg 4d8 divine, threat —, qualities: none; notes: grapple benefit — when a character dies in the Grave Wurm's gullet, or the Grave Wurm swallows a corpse, the beast's vile digestive tract takes over, converting the victim into a ravener; the process takes 5 rounds, after which the new ravener is unceremoniously expelled from the Wurm's posterior; the Wurm can process up to 6 victims at a time)

Gear: None

Treasure: 1A, 3T



MASTER (SPECIAL NPC, ADVERSARY)

"I will rule from the heavens to the seas! None shall stand before me!"

Description: Master is an imposing figure, standing well over 6 ft. tall and covered shoulder to toe in black lacquered plates with a fiery red, sable-trimmed cloak billowing behind. He goes without a helmet, inviting discourse during battle, and he pins his hair back with a regal silver circlet so his view of the battlefield is never obstructed. Master's piercing eyes flare with imperious arrogance, all the more when he aims them down the bridge of his patrician nose. He is every inch the model of a dark and sinister king, forged for a life of unforgiving rule.

Motivations: The Soul Star is the perfect vehicle for Master's greatest desire: bloody, apocalyptic conquest. Every life taken and every soul corrupted is another glory in his impending legacy of doom — one from which he might spare the characters, should they swear fealty to him.

Master (Medium Folk Walker — 132 XP): Str 18, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 12; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 20 ft. ground (including armor); Init V; Atk VII; Def V; Res X; Health VIII; Comp VI; Skills: Athletics VII, Intimidate IX, Resolve VIII, Survival V, Tactics VII; Qualities: *Class ability (Paladin: stand in judgment I, take heart), dramatic entrance, feat (Glint of Madness, Misdirection Basics), frenzy II*

Attacks/Weapons: Zweihander (dmg 1d12 lethal, threat 19–20 (18–20 vs. special characters), qualities: *guard +1, massive*)

Gear: Partial platemail armor with light fittings (DR 5, Resist Blunt 1, DP –3, ACP –4, Speed –5 ft., Disguise obvious), Soul Star

Treasure: 1A, 1C, 1M

NEXT STEPS

Ideally, the characters contain the Soul Star, slay the Grave Wurm, and either capture or kill Master. The King's troops follow the next day, cleansing the valley of raveners and helping to rebuild Andra. Peace returns to Fels Cut and in time its reputation heals. It's much longer before the valley's population returns to normal but assuming the church survivors escape there's a solid foundation for the future. If saved, Frida may take up her husband's mantle, enforcing law in the area. If Brother Sevrin's faith is restored, he may wind up Andra's priest in the next few years, offering a unique insight unavailable to many people of the cloth. Bastian's role as leader in the crisis awakens a powerful need to serve and he steps up as Andra's next mayor. One day, Theodor follows in his footsteps.

Zerun? He catches rats for years to come. Some folks realize their potential early.

Barald's journal mentions the Church's interest in Master and the Soul Star, and locals who spoke to the adventurers heard the same. If the characters fulfill this quest, they make powerful allies in the clergy and receive invitations to take on more missions for the church, which you can use as a springboard for greater adventure.

REWARDS AND PENALTIES

Don't forget to add XP for adversaries (listed in their stat blocks).

SCENE 1: A QUIET EVENING INTERRUPTED

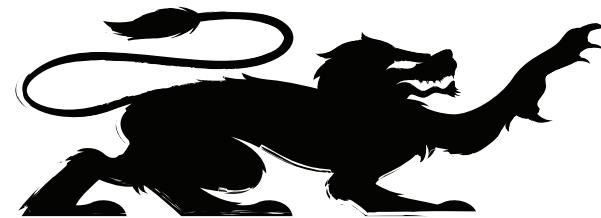
A. Turning Lizabet's head	25 XP
A. Stabilizing Hertiger	50 XP
A. Saving few (25% or less) of the NPCs needing help	25 XP
B. Saving most (26–75%) of the NPCs needing help	50 XP
C. Saving all of the NPCs needing help	75 XP

SCENE 2: VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED

A. Earning the Andra survivors' trust	25 XP
A. Getting to know the Andra survivors personally	25 XP
B. Helping Brother Sevrin overcome his fugue	50 XP
A. Burying Falhene and Hasafti	25 XP
A. Recovering Barald's journal	50 XP
A. Rescuing Frida	50 XP
B. Reuniting Frida with Theodor	75 XP

SCENE 3: TO FACE THE FIEND

A. Defeating Master by using the Soul Star	75 XP
B. Defeating Master without using the Soul Star	150 XP





CHAPTER 2: THE CLEANSING OF BLACK SPUR

Sixty years ago, the citizens of Valespire built a keep atop a small mountain named Black Spur. It was meant to serve as a headquarters while watching over the nearby trade road and suppressing the goblin raiders who ran thick in the area. One night, ten years after the keep was completed, goblins assaulted the site and slaughtered all within. The Valespire High Church decried the butchery as unholy, and declared the Spur and its surroundings anathema. Under church pressure, the King of the Realm built a new trade road and expanded his mounted road-warden patrol corps rather than reclaim the Spur. The keep has since fallen to ruin, neglected and fading from general memory.

The truth, of course, is more complicated.

For over a thousand years the local goblins have called Black Spur "Dur-Basta." The site is quasi-holy to them, for it stands atop a rocky outcropping where a long-dead goblin hero tricked a great demon into entombing itself. This demon, the Hauntbeast, resides within Dur-Basta/Black Spur to this day. Unfortunately, every 50 years an astrological event aligns the aether of the region in such a way as to weaken the Hauntbeast's prison. With the spiritual walls thinned, the Hauntbeast's mind reaches out and corrupts the gullible and weak-willed, summoning them to Dur-Basta and commanding them to free their new master. The goblin shamans call a tribal moot during "the conjunction," turning their combined might toward standing vigil over Dur-Basta and holding the Hauntbeast's followers at bay.

As one might imagine, the goblin shamans were gravely concerned when the humans built their keep. Goblins view humans, and human soldiers especially, as notoriously foolish, and the shamans didn't dare brook the incursion for long. They tried raiding the site, hoping to convince the humans the keep wasn't worth the trouble, but the trespassers proved as stubborn as ever. During the last conjunction, the shamans detected suspicious fluctuations in the aether and grew concerned that some or all of the garrison soldiers had fallen under the Hauntbeast's sway. Facing no better options, the goblins assaulted the keep head-on, wiping out all but a handful of the humans. The survivors fled to Valespire and none of their kind returned.

Meanwhile, the Church's declaration covered for an internal scandal. A high-ranking Church Archivist, Pader Herel Asonza, had been uncovered as a demonologist, but not before he'd left Valespire on an official mission to Black Spur, ostensibly to catalog newly discovered relics held by the keep's chaplain. Piecing



together Asonza's maddened research notes and his collection of forbidden texts, Church officials knew they had a rogue on their hands, and that his true mission at the keep was to free some great evil, but they also knew the Church could never reveal the truth. Religious pressure was brought to bear and the whole affair was hushed up, the site forever abandoned by official decree.

Now, 50 years gone, most of the original churchmen responsible for the cover-up are dead or retired, and the whole thing has been largely forgotten — except, that is, by Pader Agustin Asonza, descendant of Herel and a rising star in the Church Archivum. Agustin stumbled on unsuppressed portions of his progenitor's work and was appalled at what he read. He made it his personal (and private) mission to discover what Herel had been up to at Black Spur during that fateful attack 50 years ago, and to undo any damage Herel may have caused. Unfortunately, Agustin is a man of more scruple than sense, and in riding alone for Black Spur he was attacked by wyverns. He was saved by goblins, who were already gathering in an encampment at the base of Black Spur for their semi-centennial vigil, but both his legs were broken and he couldn't complete his mission.

The goblin chief, Kalkachanla, conversed with Agustin and decided his heart was in the right place, but without healers skilled in human injury he couldn't render assistance to the Archivist. Kalkachanla dispatched one of his top hunters, Trinkesti, with a squad of hunters to the closest human road, hoping to find someone who can help, or at worst travelers who can return him to Valespire.

Guess who's camping on the road when Trinkesti and her hunters arrive?

The Cleansing of Black Spur consists of three scenes...

SCENE ONE: OUT OF THE NIGHT

The PCs are camped for the night when a wyvern attacks. Trinkesti's hunters arrive to help and extend Kalkachanla's invitation for the PCs to come see (and perhaps help) Pader Asonza.

SCENE TWO: SINNER, SAINT

The PCs meet Pader Agustin Asonza and chief Kalkachanla, who explain what's really going on at Black Spur and request the party's aid. Kalkachanla warns that there isn't much time, as the conjunction is nigh and the goblins can't risk anyone being near Dur-Basta when the Hauntbeast's influence reaches its peak.

SCENE THREE: THE RUINS OF BLACK SPUR KEEP

The Party explores Black Spur, finding a murder of wyverns nesting there, and that a cult devoted to the Hauntbeast has somehow penetrated the goblin patrols and is preparing to summon their master. Confronting the cult's high priestess, Achela, most likely triggers Scene 4 immediately (see page 37).

SCENE FOUR: RISE OF THE REAPER

Achela completes the ritual as the party approaches, breaking the first seal on the Hauntbeast's prison. A portion of the demon's malevolent spirit manifests as a huge undead wyvern called The Reaper, and its rise brings on the adventure's great final battle in the keep's courtyard.

ADVENTURE TIMING

Splitting this adventure into four scenes offers maximum flexibility to spellcasters (and other characters with per-scene abilities). Scene 1 is a quick battle followed by quick roleplay, and Scene 2 is all roleplay, as Agustin explains part of his story and (hopefully) convinces the party to aid his quest. Scene 3 is potentially the longest, as the party explores the ruined keep (and likely engages in a series of short skirmishes). Scene 4 is a climactic, pitched fight, and while it contains just the one event, the Reaper isn't likely to go down easily and the action may spread throughout Black Spur Keep.

If time is limited, Scenes 1 and 2 can be run together in about an hour. In a typical convention slot, this should leave two hours for the exploration of the keep, and an hour for the final battle and wrap-up.

MENACE

The Cleansing of Black Spur assumes a Menace of II (Routine) or III (Challenging), though you can easily adjust that if you like. Keep in mind that a higher or lower Menace will adjust the number of Dramatic scenes.

SLIDING DCs

To allow for play at any Threat Level, this adventure features sliding DCs (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 370).

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Pader Agustin Asonza: A human Archivist (priestly scholar) whose private quest is abruptly cut short by a wyvern attack, and whose injuries prompt the goblin chieftain to send for help on the human road. Agustin has learned of the Hauntbeast from Kalkachanla, and assumes it's the focus of his ancestor's dark work, but his injuries prevent him from helping the goblins keep it at bay. Thus he asks the party to help in his stead.

Trinkesti: A leader among the goblin hunters camped at Black Spur. She doesn't much care for humans but loyally follows Kalkachanla's commands.

Kalkachanla: The local goblin chief. He is sympathetic to Agustin's quest but wary that it may deter the goblins from their ancient obligation.

Pader Rafael Oledo: The ghost of Black Spur Keep's former chaplain. His journal may provide a clue for PCs seeking to help Agustin.



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Achela: The leader of a cult dedicated to the Hauntbeast. In her dementia, she believes she'll be rewarded for freeing her master from its prison, and so the task consumes her, utterly and completely dominating her will.

The Cult of the Hauntbeast: These nine cultists — Benn, Caleb, Daghma, Ernesto, Felix, Geony, Hart, Ingmar, and Jeckot — support Achela in all things.

The Reaper: The Hauntbeast never makes an actual appearance in this adventure (the whole of the region would be in very dire trouble if it did), but a sliver of the creature's psyche gets loose and takes the form of this nightmarish abomination, which resembles a tremendous, rotting, undead wyvern. Though wearing what may be familiar skin to the characters, the Reaper is quite obviously not of this world.

SCENE 1: OUT OF THE NIGHT

The Road to Valespire, just after sunset

OBJECTIVES

- Fight off a lone wyvern
- Agree to accompany Trinkesti to the goblin camp

CHALLENGES

- A lone wyvern streaks out of the night to ambush the party.
- Trinkesti's hunters aren't especially fond of other species.

SYNOPSIS

Scene Type: Standard

GM Briefing: The party is camping for the night when they're attacked by a wyvern looking for dinner. Trinkesti and her hunters arrive to help the party and after the battle, assuming the party doesn't attack the goblins, they speak of an injured human at their camp who needs assistance.

Gear: Possessions only

LOCATION

The party is traveling along a road to Valespire, and has camped for the night at a little half-walled enclosure built and maintained by the Realm's road-warden corps. The enclosure is 20-ft. square and has waist-high stone walls with no roof and a central fire pit. A 20-ft. split-rail fence sticks out from one side, meant as a hitching post for animals. The place is kept up but devoid of comforts — the road-wardens intending the walls to give travelers shelter from the wind, no more.

Ambiance: The night is clear (faint ambient light) and breezy, with the scent of the fire in the air.

Terrain: Plains

Cultural Interest: The Realm

ACTION

Begin the adventure by reading the following aloud.

Your party is camped just off the road in a little travelers' enclosure maintained by the king's road-warden corps. It's 20-ft. square with waist-high stone walls, no roof, and a central fire pit. A 20-ft. split-rail fence sticks out from one side, meant as a hitching post for animals. The place is well kept but not comfortable — the road-wardens clearly don't intend anyone to linger.

Your animals are hitched up, the fire's banked low, and you settle in for the night.

This is a good time to draw a map and settle sleeping arrangements and watch schedules. Halfway through the first watch, a wyvern dives silently out of the night sky, looking for a quick kill (roll its Sneak vs. the PCs' Notice to see if it gains a surprise round). The creature uses its Charging Basics feat to approach a target, attack, and move away with its second half action, keeping itself out of Reach as much as possible. It tries to sting its first target and sow confusion, and if it can get its prey to scatter, it chooses a good-looking meal and tries to make off with it. The PCs are unlikely to scatter, of course, but that's the wyvern's hope.

Only one wyvern attacks. These creatures typically appear in mobs, but the purpose of this combat is to introduce the PCs to the goblins and the local fauna, not to bog the action down with a big fight in the opening minutes.

The wyvern's true combat advantages are the conditions — sleeping prey and faint ambient light — and the faster the PCs overcome these challenges the better off they'll be. All characters not on watch must grab weapons and possibly don armor, and unless more light is forthcoming all combatants, including the wyvern, gain a +4 bonus to Defense (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 218). The goblins' darkvision negates this bonus, of course, but they're also sensitive to light and suffer 20 flash damage if the PCs produce brighter illumination (like a torch). This could lead to chaos — have fun with it, but be careful not to pit the goblins against the characters.

Don't hesitate to award action dice to PCs who jump into battle without even thinking about taking the time to don their armor. A hero who pauses only long enough to grab his sword deserves to be rewarded for his courage.

In the second full round of combat, Trinkesti and her hunters break from the bushes and move to shoot the wyvern out of the sky. They remain mounted and fight with their bows until the wyvern is brought down.

After the fight, there may be a tense moment while the PCs and the goblins eye each other suspiciously. Unless the characters attack, Trinkesti lowers her bow and holds up a hand in parlay.





"Hold. We have a human at our camp who needs help. Do you have a healer?"

Assuming this sparks a conversation, Trinkesti directs her hunters to start dressing out the wyvern. If the party admits to having a healer (or anyone with healing ability), Trinkesti asks that the party follow her group to the goblin camp.

Should the PCs answer in the negative, the goblin hunter asks that they at least come get the injured human and "take it away." Trinkesti refers to Agustin as an "it" throughout the discussion, regardless of what's said or asked ("He or she? I haven't looked. Humans are all alike on the outside. On the inside, too, if you bother to poke them with something sharp").

Callous PCs may balk at charity healing, in which case Trinkesti offers the party dressed out wyvern viscera for their trouble ("the meat's tasty unless you hit the poison sacks, and some wizards pay for the stinger, eyes, and claws"). She won't offer coin to help humans, but she might mention that the injured human is a priest, and suggest the Church may pay for his safe return.

PCs who inquire about local history may know goblins seized the Black Spur Keep from humans around 50 years ago (see the next section), and may cite this as a reason not to trust Trinkesti and her group, or worse, to attack them. This may be a good time to remind the party that these particular goblins are asking about a healer to help an injured human. Failing that, the party may want to travel to Black Spur Keep to investigate whether the goblins are indeed in possession of a human, and why.

DIRECTION

Here are some questions you might be asked, and answers for you to offer.

Q: Why are we here?

A: You're adventurers, en route to Valespire where you hear the road-wardens are recruiting. You know, fortune, glory, and the adoration of the masses. The usual.

Q: What's a road-warden?

A: The road-wardens are custodians of the King's roads but more importantly they're spiritual guides, traveling the Realm's roads to glean insight from the gods. The road-warden corps that serves this region got a big boost about 50 years ago when Black Spur Keep, a local guard outpost, was overrun and declared a taint on the land.

Q: What happened to Black Spur Keep?

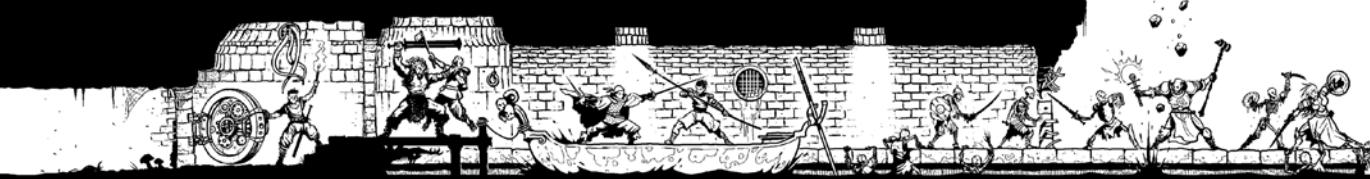
A: The story goes that goblins assaulted the keep and slaughtered every living thing therein. Only a handful escaped, and when they got back to Valespire and told their tale, the High Church decried the butchery as unholy and declared the whole place unclean. They pressured the throne to abandon the outpost, and the King at the time built a new road to avoid the place (you're currently traveling along this new road now).. The King also expanded the road-warden patrols rather than try to re-take the keep.

Q: What's happening at the Keep now?

A: Nobody knows. It's a sin to visit, so nobody does, and with the new road there isn't a good reason to get close. The goblins could be using it as a capital now for all anybody knows.

Q: Is that a goblin chick? I've never seen one of those.

A: Keep staring and you may not live to see another. She looks hardcore like that.



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CAST

No XP is listed for the goblins as the party shouldn't earn any for attacking well-meaning allies.

TRINKESTI (SPECIAL NPC)

"Don't be stupid."

Description: Trinkesti is a goblin female, which sets her apart from the most of the vigil-keepers. As a huntress, she dresses light and is built for speed and stealth. She wears her hair in a long braid and sports a shapeless red cap.

Motivations: Having fought for respect among her mostly male peers, Trinkesti's earned a reputation for hard work and determination. She's also grown largely humorless, as she doesn't like to show weakness before her hunters. Unlike many of her people, she has no love of pretty things — she's hardcore like that. She is, however, sympathetic to other hardcore females, particularly adventuring women.

Trinkesti (Small Folk Walker): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ S (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init IV; Atk VI; Def IV; Res II; Health V; Comp II; Skills: Notice V, Search VI, Sneak V, Survival VI; Qualities: *Class ability (Scout: huntsman — killing blow, trophy hunter), darkvision I, favored foes (animal), feat (Ambush Basics), light-sensitive*

Attacks/Weapons: Hatchet (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 20; qualities: AP 2, *hurl, trip*), reflex bow + 40 barbed arrows (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 20; range 30 ft. x 6; qualities: *bleed, poisonous*)

Mounts and Vehicles: Hunting Wolf (see right)

Gear: 2 jaw traps

Treasure: 2T

GOBLIN HUNTERS (STANDARD NPCS)

"Shh! You'll wake something... bad."

Description: Trinkesti's hunters also kit for speed and stealth. They wear no armor and carry weapons they can use from wolf-back. All look surly, and all look ready to inflict violence to anyone who gives them trouble.

Motivations: These hunters are ferociously loyal to Trinkesti. She's proven herself to them time and again, and so they'll follow her to the ends of the earth. For the purposes of this scene, this means that none of them make a move without their leader's direct order. If they have to fight, they guide their wolves into flanking positions, coordinating to cause the most damage. Versus much stronger foes, they use their superior mounted mobility to harass the enemy.

Goblin Hunters (Small Folk Walkers): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ S (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init IV; Atk V; Def III; Res II; Health IV; Comp II; Skills: Notice

III, Search VI, Sneak III, Survival VI; Qualities: *Class ability (Scout: huntsman — killing blow, trophy hunter), darkvision I, favored foes (animal), feat (Ambush Basics), light-sensitive*

Attacks/Weapons: Hatchet (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 20; qualities: AP 2, *hurl, trip*), reflex bow + 40 barbed arrows (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 20; range 30 ft. x 6; qualities: *bleed, poisonous*)

Mounts and Vehicles: Hunting Wolf (see below)

Gear: 2 jaw traps

Treasure: 2T

HUNTING WOLVES (STANDARD NPCS)

"Grrrr."

Description: The goblins ride big wolves bred for size and cunning. Most bear the scars of fighting difficult prey (and surviving intra-pack challenges), and all are exceptionally menacing.

Motivations: The wolves have no significant motivations of their own. They obey their masters. Absent commands, they act out of self-preservation, attacking when they think they can win and fleeing if faced with a superior foe.

Hunting Wolves (Medium Animal Walkers): Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 5, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground (Run 150 ft.); Init II; Atk IV; Def IV; Res III; Health IV; Comp —; Skills: Search IV; Sneak II; Survival IV, Tactics IV; Qualities: *Feat (Wolf Pack Basics, Wolf Pack Mastery), improved sense (scent), superior runner I, superior traveler I, tough I, trick (Called Shot)*

Attacks/Weapons: Bite II (dmg 1d8+1 lethal; threat 17-20; upgrades: *trip*)

Gear: Riding tack

Treasure: 2T

WYVERN (STANDARD NPC, ADVERSARY)

"Hssssss!"

Description: Roughly resembling a dragon blended with a vulture (with scales across some of their bodies and feathers elsewhere), these beasts have no forearms and lack breath weapons. Nevertheless, they're fearsome predators respected and feared for their natural prowess.

Motivations: Wyverns are straightforward predators with few true tactics. They only retreat when severely outnumbered or facing a much stronger foe.

Wyvern (Large Beast Flyer/Walker — 85 XP): Str 14, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 9; SZ L (2x3, Reach 1); Spd 60 ft. winged flight, 20 ft. ground; Init III; Atk VI; Def III; Res VI; Health VII; Comp I; Skills: Search VI, Sneak V; Qualities: *Condition immunity (paralyzed), damage reduction 4, feat (Charging Basics), improved sense (scent), light sleeper*





Attacks/Weapons: Bite III (dmg 2d10+2 lethal; threat 17–20), Tail Slap II (dmg 1d10+2 lethal + paralyzing poison; threat 19–20; upgrades: *reach +1, venomous*), Wing Slam × 2 (Slam I: dmg 1d8+2 lethal; threat 20)

Gear: None

Treasure: 1A, 1T

NEXT STEPS

Ideally, the PCs agree to accompany Trinkesti and her hunters to the goblin camp, in which case they arrive just before dawn. Proceed to Scene 2.

Of course, the party may choose to attack the goblins instead, especially if they're predisposed by local history (see *Direction*, page 31). If they insist on this course of action, there are a couple options.

If the party attacks the goblins during the wyvern fight, Trinkesti orders a withdrawal. The goblins use Total Defense to get and stay clear, leaving the party to fight the wyvern alone. Should the party press the fight against the goblins, you may want to add a second wyvern to keep them busy until tensions die down and peaceful talk can commence.

If the party attacks after the wyvern is downed, Trinkesti spends a round shouting "Wait! Wait!" and if that doesn't help she orders a retreat. The goblins are mounted on great wolves and likely faster than the party, so the scene likely ends with them fleeing into the night. The party can track them back to their camp (leading to Scene 2), especially if their interest is piqued at mention of a human ("captive") in the goblins' possession.

SCENE 2: SINNER, SAINT

The goblin encampment, just before dawn

OBJECTIVES

- Agree to help Pader Asonza

CHALLENGES

- The party is outnumbered by goblins 15-to-1. Stupidity may result in somebody getting killed.
- Pader Asonza is gravely wounded, and the party may not be able to help him.

SYNOPSIS

Scene Type: Standard

GM Briefing: The goblin encampment is a community clearly preparing for violence. The party is shown to the chief, Kalkachanla, who introduces them to Pader Agustin Asonza. The Archivist's legs are smashed and it's unlikely the party can truly help him in the short term, but he's conscious and coherent.

He explains how he came to arrive at the goblin camp and asks the party to finish what he started — explore the keep and find anything related to the Hauntbeast's prison, so he can research how to strengthen it.

Gear: Possessions, and maybe a few wyvern pieces.

LOCATION

The goblin encampment has a core cluster of obviously permanent structures. Half a dozen low-slung longhouses (built for small creatures) and animal pens form the center of the camp, with tents surrounding them in a roughly oval pattern. It's conceivable that the goblins have been living here for decades, perhaps since the massacre of the garrison. Looming over the encampment is Black Spur, a small mountain (perhaps 500 ft. high), with a ruined keep at its peak.

Ambiance: Goblins aren't known for their hygiene and this camp is no exception, though steps have been taken to keep it defensible. Piles of dung and trash, for instance, are kept to a few locations rather than strewn about. There are even a few latrines dug, though they're open to the air rather than sheltered in any way. The smell of refuse, animals, and cooking fires is thick in the air, and many goblins are eating their main meal in the hours just before dawn. Soon they will retire, leaving the day to the gray morning haze (dim ambient light).

Terrain: Plains

Cultural Interest: Goblin Tribes, The Realm

ACTION

Assuming the party travels with Trinkesti and her hunters, read the following aloud.

The goblin hunters lead you off the road and into the wilderness. You travel through the night, and as the grey of pre-dawn begins to thread along the horizon you realize your destination.

The mount known as Black Spur is a heap of rock about 500 ft. high, and you can just make out a ruined keep at its peak. Fifty years ago, say the local legends, goblins assaulted the human garrison here and slaughtered all within. Only a few survived, and when their tale was told the High Church declared the whole area anathema — desecrated ground.

It would appear the goblins don't listen to the High Church edicts. Their distinctly military encampment is built up at the base of Black Spur, and it's here that your travel ends. Half a dozen low-slung longhouses and animal pens form the center of the camp, with tents surrounding them in a roughly oval pattern. The camp is maybe a hundred goblins strong and it's clear they've been living here for decades — perhaps since the massacre of the garrison.



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Your arrival draws looks of curiosity and suspicion from the goblins, but given your escort you go unchallenged. You're led to a somewhat better appointed longhouse in the center of the camp, and waiting for you is a wizened goblin chieftain. Your guide exchanges a respectful greeting and the older goblin sizes you up for a moment before speaking.

"Which of you," he asks, "is the healer?"

"Oh, Praises to Heaven! I'm so glad they found someone. Tell me, are you just travelers, or are you more, shall we say, adventure-minded?"

The goblin leader introduces himself as Kalkachanla and directs the healer, should one identify him or herself, inside the main longhouse. Kalkachanla doesn't protest if the entire party wants to enter, as he's more interested in getting Asonza out of here than he is in observing pleasantries and protocol, though his lip curls with distaste at anyone who ignores his requests.

The longhouse's interior is one big chamber, with sleeping mats along the walls and a central fire pit exhausting through a hole in the roof. The structure is built for small creatures and so Medium characters must stoop or crawl to enter (larger characters must stay outside). The ceiling is high enough that Medium characters can stand within, though they brush the roof. If the party healer happens to be Large or bigger, Kalkachanla orders Asonza brought out of the longhouse on a pallet, so the party can deal with him in the open.

Kalkachanla brings the healer to Asonza (the chieftain assumes the healer is also the party's leader unless someone else does most of the talking), at which point the Archivist perks up and speaks.

"Oh, Praises to Heaven! I'm so glad they found someone. Tell me, are you just travelers, or are you more, shall we say, adventure-minded?"

Any remotely adventure-minded answer prompts Agustin to launch into his tale. He first reviews or explains the accepted High Church version of events at Black Spur Keep 50 years ago (see the *Direction* section of Scene 1), after which he continues with the following.

"I work in the High Church Archivum and recently came across documents leading me to believe that the accepted version of events at Black Spur may be, shall we say, incomplete. I rode here to see if there was still anything to be found at the ruin, and unfortunately got more than I bargained for. I was attacked by a wyvern, which killed my horse, and I broke my legs when it threw me. It was only the intervention of these goblins that saved my life."

"Over these last days — it's so hard to reckon time through the pain — I had several conversations with good chief Kalkachanla here, and he filled in several gaps in the King's account. It appears that what we call Black Spur is in fact a goblin holy site called Dur-Basta, where one of their heroic ancestors tricked a great demon into entombing itself. This demon, the Hauntbeast, resides at the keep, held prisoner to this day. Unfortunately, there's an astrological event every 50 years that weakens the prison and the Hauntbeast uses these periods to reach out with its foul mind and corrupt the gullible and weak-willing. It calls them here and demands they free it, so the goblins have set up this encampment and bring their tribes together during this 'conjunction' to guard the keep from the Hauntbeast's minions.

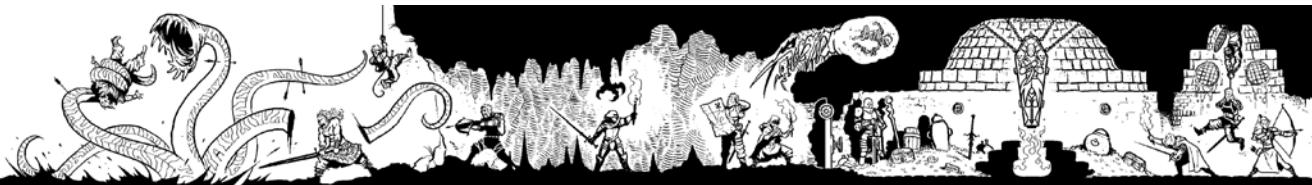
"Our keep, shall we say... interrupted their vigil. They raided to drive us away and when that didn't work they reclaimed the site to protect us all. I know it's hard to believe but these goblins are our salvation. They're the reason we're all still standing here, and despite their awful deeds we owe them a debt of great thanks — and more, if you'll prepared to help.

"We're nearing another conjunction, and as you see the goblin tribes have gathered, but that's not how you can help. I believe the Hauntbeast's prison can be strengthened with the application of magic not possessed by the goblins. If I can learn more about the prison, bring that information back to my colleagues in the Archivum, perhaps we can help these goblins contain this monster for good and all."

So I ask... will you help me? There can be no better time to learn of the prison than now, when it is most tangible — most vulnerable — and when the Hauntbeast is most active. Please... enter the keep and seek anything that might yield new findings. Will you do this? Can I count on you?"

Sages, historians, and scholars in the party may well be chomping at the bit to help, but others may be more mercenary. Should the PCs haggle, Agustin explains that if there's information to be found and the PCs find it (and it works), it's a double-win: the goblins can leave their vigil and the kingdom gets its keep back. Both would potentially owe a debt to whoever made it possible. If pressed, Agustin can also promise to draft from Archivum accounts to fund this as a "mission of acquisition," offering up to (TL × 100) silver pieces upon his safe return (and the delivery of useful new information) to Valespire.

The party's healer(s) can use the discussion time to assess Agustin's injuries. He's in bad shape, with two broken legs (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 207), and while the party can perform



Treatment checks to help him (and prepare him for the journey to Valespire), he can't venture into the keep with them. He also refuses to leave the encampment until the party agrees to help — this may be the only chance to learn more about the Hauntbeast's prison in his lifetime and he doesn't intend to miss it.

If the party accepts Agustin's offer, Kalkachanla interjects with the following..

"Beware. The conjunction comes, and none can be atop Dur-Basta when the Hauntbeast tests its walls. Come dusk, my hunters will enter the keep like lightning. We will kill all that stirs there, no matter its stance or species. The human Agustin's words may be wise but we cannot risk his offer of help becoming a path to the Beast's freedom. You understand this? We will not stand in your way, but if you remain atop Dur-Basta come sunset, you will die."

Kalkachanla isn't negotiating here. He's providing as clear a warning as he can.

DIRECTION

Here's some Q&A that might occur in this scene.

Q: Does anyone live in the keep?

A: Kalkachanla says "No. It was left as it fell so many years ago. We guard the road to the keep but we do not live there. It is cursed ground."

Q: Does anyone know what's inside?

A: Agustin says "It's clear that a murder of wyverns is nesting up there. We've seen them, and one attacked me! The goblins have been dealing with them more of late. I suspect the Hauntbeast's power is driving them to greater violence."

Q: What's the deal with this conjunction thing?

A: Agustin says "Much of it is bound up in goblin mysticism and their shamans don't reckon magic the way we do, so it's difficult to say. It does appear that the natural ebb and flow of aether in the area is affected in some way by the moon, and that every 50 years it creates some kind of alignment that either increases infernal power or decreases the divine. Either way, it's the Hauntbeast's best chance of escaping its prison, and it happens at sunset tonight."

Q: Why don't we just wait 'til tomorrow?

A: Agustin says "The best time to study a thing is when it's active. Witnessing the Hauntbeast's struggles may provide crucial clues about its prison, and reveal other sorcery that may strengthen it and end this danger. After the conjunction, this opportunity will be lost."

Q: Why aren't the goblins vulnerable to the Hauntbeast's powers?

A: Kalkachanla says "Goblins are *less vulnerable*, but not immune. We just stick together and watch for signs of trouble. We prefer to kill our friends than fall to the Beast."

Q: How do we know you're not under the Hauntbeast's power right now?

A: Kalkachanla says "If we were, I wouldn't warn you. I would smile and say 'Yes, adventurers, go to Dur-Basta. All is well.' And then I would chuckle as the Hauntbeast took your naïve lives."

CAST

No XP is listed for the NPCs in this scene as none of them mean the party harm and any combat that occurs can only be the result of unnecessary party aggression.

PADER AGUSTIN ASONZA (SPECIAL NPC)

"I believe I understand."

Description: Agustin is reasonably fit man, though he's clearly no fighter. Usually clean-shaven, he currently has a scruff of beard, as he's been living with the goblins for a few days now. His legs are mangled and he cannot walk. The goblins have done their best to splint his broken limbs but their knowledge of human injuries is sketchy at best, and it's questionable whether they helped or harmed him more in the process.

Motivations: Agustin is convinced he can help put things right at Black Spur Keep, if only he can recover what his ancestor took in. He also believes he can't afford to admit what he knows about old Pader Herel's ties to the slaughter of 50 years ago, lest he be tarred with the same brush.

Pader Agustin Asonza (Medium Folk Walker): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init I; Atk I; Def II; Res II; Health II; Comp V; Skills: Investigate VII; Qualities: *Bright I, class ability (Explorer: bookworm II; Keeper: bright idea I), interests (goblin lore, dark magic), meek*

Attacks/Weapons: Scholar's sword (dmg 1d8 lethal; threat 20; qualities: *finesse, lure*)

Gear: Scribe's kit, astrolabe, magnifying glass

Treasure: None

KALKACHANLA (SPECIAL NPC)

"You would be useful to us, if only you weren't so reckless."

Description: Kalkachanla is a wizened old warrior but his eyes still shine in his leathery face. He wears full war-gear with the air of one who knows can kill, though not one who revels in it.

Motivations: The chieftain was at the keep during the battle 50 years ago, and the horrors of that night have gifted him with remarkable wisdom and patience. He understands that Agustin

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is no threat, and believes the Archivist may be the best hope to hold the Hauntbeast at bay forever. Shenanigans, however, will be met with Kalkachanla's sword.

Kalkachanla (Small Folk Walker): Str 15, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 25 ft. ground; Init V; Atk IV; Def IV; Res IV; Health V; Comp III; Skills: Intimidate VIII, Resolve IV, Tactics VIII; Qualities: *Class ability (Captain: battle planning I (crush them!, press on!), take heart), darkvision I, fearless I, feat (Ambush Basics, Battlefield Trickery, Coordinated Attack, Coordinated Move), frenzy II, light-sensitive, menacing threat*

Attacks/Weapons: Bastard sword (dmg 1d10+2 lethal; threat 20; qualities: *massive*)

Mounts and Vehicles: Hunting wolf (see right)

Gear: Moderate scalemail with light fittings (DR 5; Resist Edged 3; DP -2; ACP -2; Spd -5 ft.; Disguise obvious)

Treasure: 1A, 2C, 1M

GOBLIN RIDERS (STANDARD NPCS)

"We are vigilant. Death to the Hauntbeast's minions!"

Description: The main goblin force is fearsome. All look surly, and all look ready to shred anyone presenting trouble.

Motivations: These goblins have been sent from all the local tribes as "chosen" guardians for the Hauntbeast vigil. They have no problem with killing the PCs but understand Kalkachanla's desire to get the blundering human scholar clear of the area. If they have to fight, the riders guide their wolves into flanking positions, coordinating to cause the most damage. Versus much stronger foes, they employ their superior mounted mobility.

Goblin Riders (Small Folk Walkers): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ S (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init IV; Atk V; Def III; Res II; Health IV; Comp II; Skills: Notice III, Search VI, Sneak III, Survival VI; Qualities: *Class ability (Scout: huntsman — killing blow, trophy hunter), darkvision I, favored foes (animal), feat (Ambush Basics), light-sensitive*

Attacks/Weapons: Hatchet (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 20; qualities: *AP 2, hurl, trip*), reflex bow + 40 barbed arrows (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 20; range 30 ft. x 6; qualities: *bleed, poisonous*)

Mounts and Vehicles: Hunting Wolf (see below)

Gear: Partial studded leather armor (DR 2, Resist —; DP -1; ACP -0; Spd —; Disguise -0)

Treasure: 2T

HUNTING WOLVES (STANDARD NPCS)

"Grrrr."

Description: The goblins ride big wolves bred for size and cunning. Most bear the scars of fighting difficult prey (and surviving intra-pack challenges), and all are exceptionally menacing.

Motivations: The wolves have no significant motivations of their own. They obey their masters. Absent commands, they act out of self-preservation, attacking when they think they can win and fleeing if faced with a superior foe.

Hunting Wolves (Medium Animal Walkers): Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 5, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground (Run 150 ft.); Init II; Atk IV; Def IV; Res III; Health IV; Comp —; Skills: Search IV; Sneak II; Survival IV, Tactics IV; Qualities: *Feat (Wolf Pack Basics, Wolf Pack Mastery), improved sense (scent), superior runner I, superior traveler I, tough I, trick (Called Shot)*

Attacks/Weapons: Bite II (dmg 1d8+1 lethal; threat 17-20; upgrades: *trip*)

Gear: Riding tack

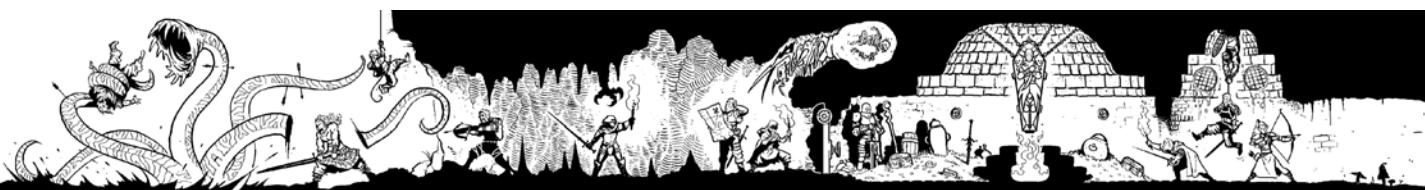
Treasure: 2T

NEXT STEPS

This scene likely ends with the party agreeing to help Agustin and heading up to the keep, in which case they arrive just after dawn, in full daylight.

If the party cannot offer Agustin any healing at all, his wounds will keep for another day or two before they become truly life-threatening, and even if they won't he'd still implore them to venture into the keep. "The safety of the Realm is at stake. My life is trifling by comparison."

It's equally possible that the PCs have enough skill, magic, or both to completely heal Agustin. In this case, he happily joins the party in their new quest, though he stays out of combat and out of the party's way as much as possible. He isn't trained as an adventurer, after all, and he's overjoyed to leave what should have been a hero's job all along to the experts. This may even work to the party's advantage when Agustin returns to Valespire and recounts the characters' exploits.



SCENE 3: THE RUINS OF BLACK SPUR KEEP

Black Spur Keep, morning

OBJECTIVES

- Find Pader Rafael's journal
- Explore Black Spur Keep

CHALLENGES

- A murder of wyverns nests in the keep.
- Cultists dedicated to the Hauntbeast have snuck in and are preparing to free their master.

SYNOPSIS

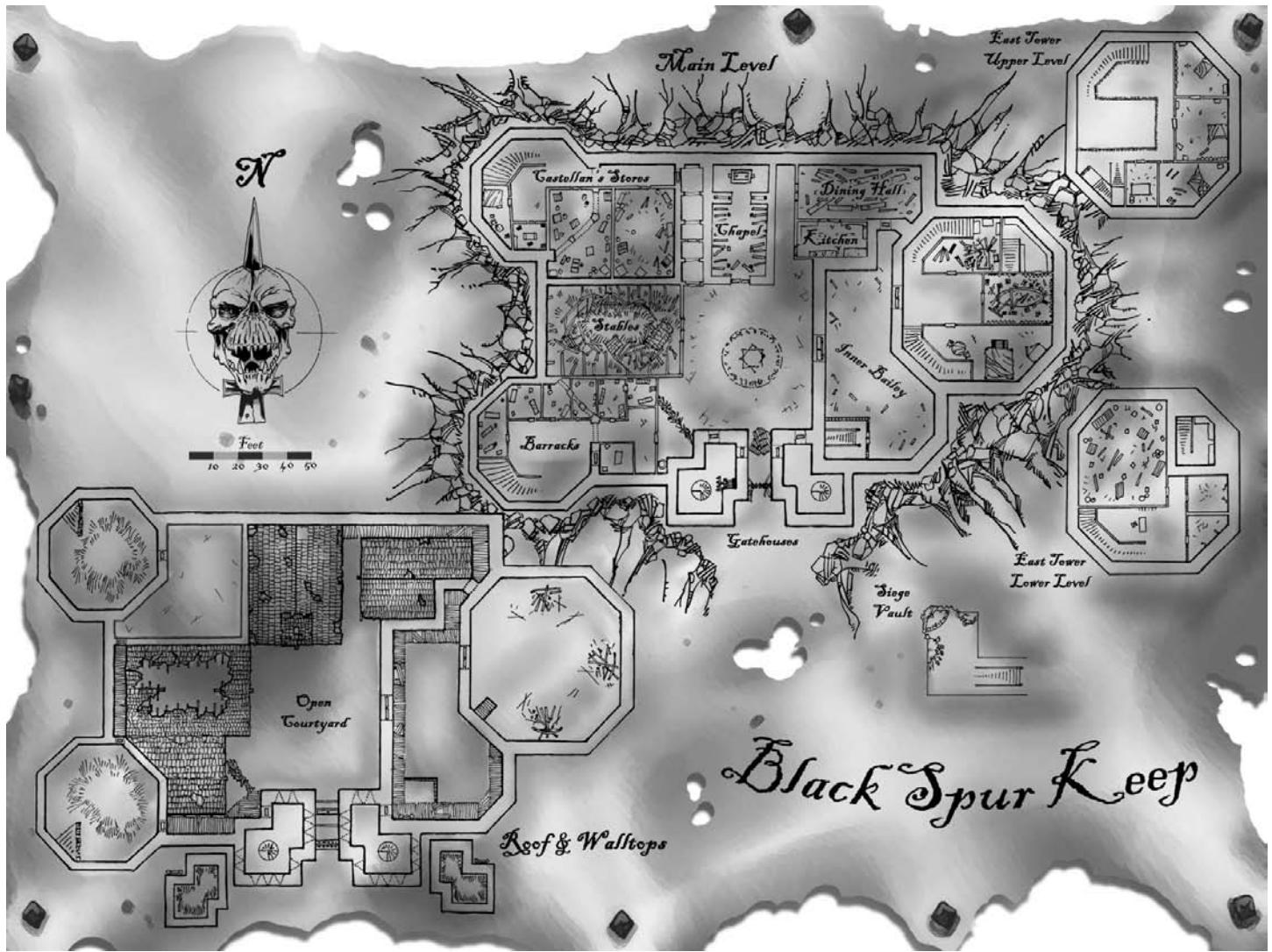
Scene Type: Standard

GM Briefing: To satisfy their promise to Agustin, the party will likely fight wyverns at least once, and probably several times. Pader Rafael's journal is in the Chapel, and provides an important clue that can point the party to the Infernum, an evil tome currently held by the cult priestess Achela. This is what Agustin needs to strengthen the aether-prison. Sadly, facing Achela probably triggers Scene 4 (see page 37).

Gear: Whatever the party has from the first two scenes — likely, Possessions alone.

LOCATION

Black Spur Keep is a wreck. Every door has been forced and unless otherwise stated cannot either open or close. In some cases the doors are gone entirely (with the same effect). The keep's walls are 15 ft. high and topped with battlements (there



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was no need to build the walls higher, as the sheer approach would keep siege parties from exploiting them). Walkways are situated 10 ft. up as shown on the map on page 33. The western turrets match the walls in height, and the eastern tower stands 30 ft. high, containing a second story and a battlemented roof.

Skeletons and the decomposing remains of humans, horses, goblins, and wolves are sprinkled throughout the debris of the goblin assault and many minor clashes since (including shields, armor scraps, rusted weapons, rotted tack, door remnants, and the like). This has two mechanical effects. First, characters suffer a -2 penalty with Sneak checks in the keep, as there's just too much underfoot that crunches, scrapes, and shifts. Second, dropping prone into the debris and holding still grants a +2 bonus with Hide checks (which rises to +4 if the character spends a half-action burrowing into the scraps). This second bonus also applies to Stash checks made for objects as well.

Ambiance: The day is pleasant, clear, and breezy, the sun casting bright ambient light across areas open to the sky. Unfortunately, the keep smells of age and death. Everything here is musty and/or dusty, the debris of battle mixed with wyvern droppings and the remains of the murder's recent prey.

Terrain: Mountains

Cultural Interest: The Realm

ACTION

Open this scene by reading the following aloud.

The day is pleasant and the air is clear and breezy as you make your way along the track to the keep. Halfway up the mount, you find evidence of battle — skeletons and long-decayed corpses of goblins and wolves still lie where swords and bolts stole the life from them decades ago. As you approach the keep grounds, the smell of death becomes overwhelming. The structure's huge doors are long gone, the entrance yawning like an indifferent god, waiting to swallow you whole...

The wyvern murder roosting in the keep consists of 2 mobs (each mob equal in number to the number of PCs in the party). Wyvern nests are located atop each gatehouse tower, atop each of the western turrets, and inside the ruined stables. The first thing to do when preparing the scene is figure out how many wyverns are present and distribute them roughly evenly between these areas (with any odd remainder starting in the stables, which have the most room).

All wyverns are in their nests when the party arrives, though you should have them move about periodically to keep the party on its toes. The wyverns have visual range increments of 100 ft. (about a quarter of the length of the keep), hearing range increments of 50 ft., and scent range increments of 10 ft. (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 217). Whenever PCs move or linger within

these ranges, and especially if they enter a wyvern's line of sight or make unusual noises (scuffling around is ignored but shouting or breaking things isn't), they should make a team Sneak check opposed by the wyvern's Notice (for added discomfort, you can make both checks secretly). The wyvern notices the party if it wins the check, and if it scores a critical success and/or the PC(s) score a critical failure, the nearest *two wyverns* notice.

Any wyverns that spot intruders take flight and spend a round scanning visible parts of the keep for others. The characters may seize this opportunity to duck for cover, in which case they get one last chance to avoid combat. Another team Sneak check is made — no secret rolls this time — and if the party wins the check (remember the debris rules in the Location section), the wyvern(s) lose track of them and return to their nest(s). Otherwise, roll for initiative.

Fortunately for the party, the wyverns are used to one or two of them periodically slipping off for a bite, and since what they bring back isn't always dead the rest ignore the sounds of small skirmishes within the keep. Consequently, the party has three full rounds to finish each fight before attracting more wyverns. If they can bring their opponent(s) down and go quiet in that time, no more join the fray; otherwise, a fresh wyvern leaves its nest to investigate. It spends a round scanning the area and then joins the battle on a fresh Initiative Count, after which the three-round clock starts again. Unless the party can end the fight in that time, another wyvern joins, and so on.

Also remember that there's an active cult presence in the keep. This should become apparent to the PCs early on (the arcane sigil in the courtyard is a big, fat clue), but the party won't actually meet any of the other intruders until they enter the east tower (see page 37). In fact, the cult may not even notice the party entering the keep, as they have only a single lookout atop the eastern tower, and he's watching for wyvern activity, not foot traffic. The cultists teleported in using a disposable magic item and initially set about searching the keep, but the wyverns attacked shortly after the sigil was scribed in the courtyard. The cult has holed up in the eastern tower since, assuming their master will take care of the wyverns once it's freed.

Should the PCs become entrenched in an escalating battle they can't win, you can use the cultists to save the adventure and raise the stakes at the same time. Simply proceed to Scene 4, with Achela completing her ritual and the Hauntbeast bursting up through the courtyard (see right). The wyverns correctly identify the demon as the superior threat and attack, allowing the PCs a brief respite before the victor (the Hauntbeast, of course) turns its attention back to them. For simplicity, assume this pitched battle takes a full round per wyvern, the demon sending one of the lesser creatures crashing down into a part of the keep at the end of each of its Initiative Counts. If the party rushes into a structure, you can use the falling wyvern corpses to accentuate the chaos outside, which may be very effective if the party rushes the eastern tower to engage the cultists.





GATEHOUSE

Two 30-ft. (two-story) towers flank the keep's gaping opening. A set of thick doors once stood here as well but they've been burned and smashed, leaving only a wedged-open portcullis. The pulley-works is in the western gatehouse on the ground level, though the ropes have rotted away. If the portcullis is dropped there's no way to re-raise it without spending a day re-threading the pulley. Industrious characters may see this as an advantage, luring a wyvern — or the Reaper — through the gateway to bring the portcullis down on top of it. With a successful Taunt (or another tactic you approve), this inflicts 3d6 lethal damage (AP 4), with a critical success acting like a critical hit. This also yields an Instant Reward of 2 Reputation (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 344).

The eastern gatehouse's second floor has a door leading to the inner bailey. It was never forced and remains in its jamb, swollen tight. Forcing it to gain entry to the walkway beyond requires an Athletics check (average DC), and doing so also triggers a Sneak check with a -4 penalty opposed by the wyvern nesting on the gatehouse roof (don't forget there's a wyvern on the western gatehouse roof as well).

Also in the eastern gatehouse tower are the remnants of a fresh-killed human, perhaps only a day or two dead. The corpse wears a ring bearing the goblin theological symbol for evil, which can be identified with a Knowledge check (tricky DC).

The wyverns' treasure is found in their nests atop the towers.

COURTYARD

Most debris has been cleared from this area, making it difficult to cross without triggering a Sneak check. The party may still brave the area, however, as it contains a bold and fascinating feature: an arcane circle roughly 30 ft. in diameter, scribed in chalk, blood, wax, and colored sand. A successful Knowledge check (average DC with a Spellcasting synergy) reveals that the circle is an immense summoning sigil, though if the check also beats the hard DC it's evident the sigil has been drawn improperly and won't contain anything of significant power.

An old barricade has been erected in the southwestern corner of the courtyard, ostensibly by the defenders of 50 years ago. Another successful Knowledge check (easy DC with a Tactics synergy) reveals that the fighting was fierce around the barricade — that it was probably location of the defenders' last desperate stand against the goblins.

The cistern behind the barricade doesn't look safe to drink, what with the soot and floating debris, but it's actually harmless, if a bit brackish and sulfuric.

BARRACKS/SOUTHWEST TURRET

The turret at the keep's southwest corner contains a barracks comprised of a several small rooms with bunks and footlockers. A fair amount of the furniture that once stood in these rooms was pulled out and refashioned as the courtyard barricade, but most

of the footlockers remain, scattered to the edges of the room in the chaos. Searching the former garrison's belongings nets two Treasure Rolls (1C and 1L), but also triggers a Sneak check against the wyvern nesting atop the turret.

Note that the turret's wide stairs allow the wyvern to chase the party back into the barracks, or to stalk down into the structure if they attract it with a clumsy search. On the up side, fighting the wyvern within the turret ensures that no more wyverns are attracted by the sound of combat, no matter how long the fight takes.

Once again, the wyvern's treasure can be found in its nest on the roof.

STABLES

This building once had a wooden roof but it's collapsed, leaving the interior open to the sky. A large wyvern nest is found here, built on a luxurious pile of straw, collapsed rubble, roof beams, horse corpses, wyvern droppings, and other detritus. This is an extremely dangerous place for the party to be near, as the whole nest of wyverns responds if even one wins a Notice check.

Of course, the wyverns' loot, buried in the huge nesting pile, may make the fight worth the trouble.

CASTELLAN'S STORES/NORTHWEST TURRET

The two largest rooms in this complex were used for storage, one for foodstuffs and the other for weapons and armor. The food has almost entirely rotted, though searching for a few hours uncovers a few things sealed in tight barrels that have survived (Treasure Roll 3G, all three rolls made exclusively in the Food & Drink section). The weapons and armor are all gone save for 27 normal arrows wrapped in an oilskin case, which slid beneath a table and were missed by the defenders 50 years ago.

The castellan's quarters and office have been ransacked, though the office still contains the garrison payroll (1C) in a locked chest in a corner. The lock isn't trapped and has a tricky DC.

There is a wyvern nest atop this turret, identical to the one in the southwest turret. This wyvern can also stalk down into the turret if the PCs attract its attention, and the resulting fight is likewise isolated.

CHAPEL

The chapel is a thick-walled stone building with a bell tower. Its peaked wooden roof remains intact. Just inside and to the east of the double doors (only one remains) hangs a dried-out rope with an ornamental tassel — the bell-pull. To the west of the doors is a rickety and aged ladder leading to the bell tower. The pews are intact and bodies are laid lengthwise along the benches; this place was used early in the battle as a hospital and retreat for the wounded but eventually the goblins broke in and put everyone to the sword.



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The altar is simple, with a wooden holy symbol atop a dusty and rotted linen tablecloth. To the west of the altar, at the back of the chapel, stand a rickety writing desk and a short bookshelf. As the PCs approach halfway up the chapel, the ghost of Pader Rafael appears here, at the desk. Rafael is a ghost in the classic sense — more a temporal echo that any sort of intelligent, willful undead. As such, his spirit isn't aware of the party, nor can they interact with it in any way.

Read the following aloud.

You spot a child dressed in a priest's habit sitting at the desk, though a second look reveals that the figure is actually a Pech, writing in a book. He finishes, and after blowing the ink dry for a moment he closes the book and rises to shelve it. The book is already on the shelf, however, and the Pech's copy seemingly merges with the old one and vanishes.

The Pech kneels at the altar for the space of a moment's prayer, then hurries out of the chapel. His form fades away about halfway to the door, and for a moment you can almost hear the sounds of battle in the distance.

The manifestation repeats about every ten minutes — the time required to peruse the journal, which the PCs can grab from the shelf. No check is required to identify the important sections, which are reproduced as a handout on page 83 — just patience and perhaps a Sneak check or two if the rest of the party does anything to attract the wyverns.

DINING HALL/KITCHEN

The dining hall's long tables and benches are strewn with bodies, the result of fierce fighting. The door to the inner bailey is breached and the carnage continues through it. A successful Knowledge or Investigate check (average DC) suggests that the goblins gained access to the inner bailey through this door, bypassing the heavy doors in the courtyard.

The kitchen was clearly spared most of the fighting as most of the scullery staff was killed in the dining hall melee. A single dead goblin is found in the room, locked in eternal struggle with the corpse of the garrison's cook.

INNER BAILEY

The massive doors between the inner bailey and the main courtyard are closed and barred, and have been for 50 years; the goblins bypassed this defense by moving through the dining hall (see above). Bodies and wreckage abound here as it endured some of the most pitched fighting 50 years ago.

A small portion of the bailey is walled off as a siege vault (see next). The vault's double-doors have been pried open and shattered. This was clearly one of the goblins' destinations during the assault.

SIEGE VAULT

This is the siege vault mentioned in Pader Rafael's journal (see page 83), initially intended as a store for food and other supplies critical to the keep's prolonged defense. The ground level portion of the vault is empty save for debris left behind by the attacking goblins, but following the stairs down to the basement reveals that the vault doesn't contain supplies at all. Rather, the northwestern portion of the vault has been dug open, revealing the edge of a massive stone disk (the rest clearly extending out under the courtyard). Crude eldritch carvings are etched across what little of the disk's surface is visible, and a successful Knowledge check (average DC with a Spellcasting synergy) reveals the same details about the disk as the sigil in the courtyard (see page 35).

EAST TOWER

The ground level doors into the east tower were breached long ago but have been propped back together, the work obviously recent. Two cultists are stationed inside as guards. Their readiness depends on how the rest of the scene has unfolded.

- If the party fought wyverns anywhere in the open, or did anything else to make their presence obvious (firing guns, ringing the church bell, etc.), the cultists are aware there are "intruders" in the keep and the guards are waiting for them. In this case the PCs must make a successful team Notice check opposed by the cultist's Sneak or the cultists gain a surprise round as the party enters.
- On the other hand, if the PCs have been exceptionally sneaky, or simply managed to do their fighting out of sight somehow (e.g. by luring wyverns down into the west towers and dealing with them there), the party may gain a surprise round if they make a successful team Sneak check opposed by the cultists' Notice; otherwise, the combat begins without a surprise round.

Especially wily PCs may be able to fast-talk the cultists into believing the party's here to help free the Hauntbeast, though it isn't easy. The party must make a team Bluff check opposed by the cultists' Sense Motive. The PCs suffer a total -10 penalty (-4 as the cultists aren't expecting reinforcements and -6 for the cultists' Cold Disposition — they aren't nice people and don't like outsiders). Some PCs may have class, feat, or other abilities to impact this check (or circumvent it), and these may or may not be available here, depending on the circumstances.

If the party wins the check, the guards welcome the PCs as fellow cultists and jovially inform them they're just in time, as "Achela should be completing the ritual any time now." The PCs also gain an Instant Reward of 2 Reputation, as this kind of deception is too cool not to be told and retold for adventures to come. Achela is located in her "chapel" upstairs (see Officer's Barracks/Cult Headquarters, right), and PCs thought to be cultists can simply walk right up to see her.





Fighting anywhere in the east tower can be heard throughout the structure, drawing the other cultists into the combat. Any fighting here in the entry hall is immediately spotted by the cultist on the upper level landing (*see right*), who fires into the combat with his light crossbow. He uses free actions to cry for help from the others in the upper level, with the results described in that section.

Captain's Office (Ground Level, North of Entry Hall)

The desk here contains some loot (1L), but getting to it could be an issue, as the cult has stacked a couple dozen skeletal corpses throughout the room, along with wreckage they've cleared from other parts in the tower. Clearing a path takes 10 minutes of shoving and dragging, and reveals the body of the keep's former captain, Hector, still in his armor and carrying his equipment (moderate chainmail, a long sword, 2 daggers, and 2G in other assorted gear).

Captain's Quarters (Ground Level, South of Entry Hall)

This spacious, once well-appointed room contains the remnants of a large canopy bed, a footlocker, a wardrobe, a table, and two chairs. A compartment in the bottom of the wardrobe (average Search DC to find) holds a bit of loot (1L).

Meeting Room/Private Stores

(Ground Level, East of Entry Hall)

This room contains a long, heavy table with a dozen sturdy chairs, all of which are still mostly intact. A torn tapestry map of the kingdom (circa 50 years ago) hangs on the east wall, and another displaying a broad battle scene hangs to its left. This second tapestry is more or less intact, concealing a door in the north wall (not a secret door, just a hidden one), which leads to an isolated basement room where the keep's private stores were kept. The goblins never discovered this room, and so it remains undisturbed even after all these years. The low-ceiling cellar contains luxury foodstuffs (mostly rotted), as well as several bottles and casks of fine wine (worth 150s).

Basement (Tower Lower Level)

The majority of the east tower's lower level contains more storage — mostly rotted food and ruined sundries, though an hour's search recovers a bit of salable treasure (1L).

The southeastern room here is a cell, though its only feature of note is a set of grimy manacles hanging on the back wall, a gruesome reminder of years past.

Officer's Barracks/Cult Headquarters

(Tower Upper Level)

This level once housed the keep's officers but it's now almost entirely bare, most of its contents torn apart during the goblin attack and since cleared out by the cultists. Achela works her ritual in the southeast chamber, where the walls are covered



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with ghastly eldritch symbols, scrawled with a maddened hand. The former occupant's bed has been turned into a sacrificial altar where an unlucky cultist has been ritually vivisected, her blood flung about the room and soaking the old mattress. Achela stands above the corpse, nearing the end of the arcane process required to free the Hauntbeast.

She reads from the Infernum, the book referenced in Pader Rafael's journal (*see page 83*), which rests on a reading stand beside the bed. The Infernum is what Pader Agustin needs so his allies in the Archivum can help shore up the Hauntbeast's prison, though the PCs may not be able to claim it immediately — there are cultists and a horrible monster to attend to first.

Five cultists stand around Achela, chanting in low tones. Two of these cultists always remain to protect Achela and help with the ritual, even if combat erupts elsewhere in the tower. If and when fighting moves into this room, these cultists move to defend Achela, happy to lay down their lives for their dark mistress.

Additionally, a single guard is stationed on the upper level's landing, armed with a light crossbow. Engaging him immediately attracts both the cultists in the entry hall (who arrive to engage the following round) and those in Achela's ritual room (three of whom arrive at the start of Round 3). The reverse is also true — should a fight start in the ritual room, the landing cultist arrives at the start of Round 2 and those below arrive at the start of Round 3).

You have some options as the party enters the east tower, and especially as they reach Achela. If the party has had a relatively easy time of it and you have the time to run Scene 4, Achela completes the ritual at the end of her Initiative Count after the PCs enter the ritual room. This immediately triggers the final scene and the arrival of the Reaper, and probably leaves the party with at least a few cultists to deal with as well. The party is made aware of the avatar's arrival as its roar and movements rattle the tower to its foundations.

Alternately, if the party is low on ability uses and other resources, and/or if one or more of them are badly injured or you're running low on time, you can give them a chance to interrupt the ritual. Take quick stock of the PCs' options, vitality, and gear, and decide before running this combat (or the rest of a running combat) how long it takes Achela to complete the ritual: 1 to 5 full actions (3 being a good default if you're unsure how to gauge the party's remaining strength). If the party can keep her from performing these actions — with any combination of combat or other actions, the ritual is halted.

If the PCs Bluffed their way here, they're in the best position of all. Achela is a tad on the crazy side and unlikely to question more cultists unless they do something very out of character (like interfering with the ritual). She's thoroughly engrossed as they arrive, which counts as a Terminal Situation (*see Fantasy Craft, page 217*), so the PCs can simply behead or shank her to interrupt her dark work.

Halting the ritual doesn't necessarily have to prevent the Reaper's arrival. You can use the process to ramp up tension in this scene and still trigger Scene 4 when the ritual is interrupted (on the grounds that the party's actions prevented the Hauntbeast from arriving in all its world-shattering might).

Should the ritual end before the Reaper's arrival, the earth quakes and all living beings atop Black Spur hear a great monstrous roar of frustration rage through their minds. The remaining cultists, in a fit of despair that their chance at greatness has been stolen away, attack the PCs and fight to the death. This impacts the XP awarded (*see page 43*), but also gives the party the very best chance of ultimate survival.

DIRECTION

Here are some questions you might be asked, and answers for you to offer.

Q: How do I feel? Can I tell if the Hauntbeast is trying to take over my mind?

A: Hard to say. Sometimes you think you feel something, like someone's watching you, or you catch movement at the corner of your vision. You can't be certain if it's a presence, or just this creepy old ruin.

Q: C'mon, I'm a hardened adventurer — how creepy can it be?

A: Pretty creepy. Who knows how many men, goblins, horses, and more died here, and no one's ever picked up the pieces. Even scavengers seem to avoid the place. There are no rodents, insects, or other animals, and everything looks frozen in place, like a tomb no one bothers to visit.

Q: So the wyverns are all that lives here?

A: So it would seem — though Kalkachanla did mention that the Hauntbeast summons weak-willed people and creatures as the conjunction grows near. They probably aren't long-time residents, though.

Q: Could the wyverns have drawn this symbol in the courtyard?

A: Not a chance. Beyond the general lack of fine motor skills needed to scribe anything properly magical, wyverns are animalistic predators. They don't practice magic.

Q: Well somebody had to draw it. How could someone have gotten in past the goblins?

A: If whoever drew the sigil practices magic, there are any number of ways they could have slipped past the vigil. Teleportation comes to mind...

Q: Was that an earthquake?

A: Earthquakes don't roar. Nice knowing you!





CAST

Pretty much everything here wants to kill the characters, and they haven't even hit the main event yet.

WYVERNS (STANDARD NPCS, ADVERSARIES)

"Hssssss!"

Description: Roughly resembling a dragon blended with a vulture (with scales across some of their bodies and feathers elsewhere), these beasts have no forearms and lack breath weapons. Nevertheless, they're fearsome predators.

Motivations: Wyverns are straightforward predators with few true tactics. They only retreat when severely outnumbered or facing a much stronger foe.

Wyverns (Large Beast Flyer/Walkers — 85 XP): Str 14, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 9; SZ L (2x3, Reach 1); Spd 60 ft. winged flight, 20 ft. ground; Init III; Atk VI; Def III; Res VI; Health VII; Comp I; Skills: Search VI, Sneak V; Qualities: *Condition immunity (paralyzed)*, *damage reduction 4*, *feat (Charging Basics)*, *improved sense (scent)*, *light sleeper*

Attacks/Weapons: Bite III (dmg 2d10+2 lethal; threat 17–20), Tail Slap II (dmg 1d10+2 lethal + paralyzing poison; threat 19–20; upgrades: *reach +1*, *venomous*), Wing Slam × 2 (Slam I: dmg 1d8+2 lethal; threat 20)

Gear: None

Treasure: 1A, 1T

ACHELA (STANDARD NPC, ADVERSARY)

"The master comes!"

Description: Achela would probably clean up nice, if she bothered. As it stands she's a mess, with paint and gore smeared over her nearly-nude body and slender bones threaded into her hair. She wears a great deal of jewelry but it's all cosmetic (worn to impress a suitor the day she became a brainwashed cultist), and has no real value.

Motivations: Achela is well and truly insane. She can't be swayed from summoning her new master, the Hauntbeast, and only death stays her hand. Achela is surprisingly dangerous in combat, moving with frenzied and furious speed.

Achela (Medium Folk Walker — 45 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init VII; Atk III; Def V; Res II; Health II; Comp III; Skills: Bluff V, Impress V, Sense Motive VII, Spellcasting II; Spells: Locate Object, Scrye I; Qualities: *Feat (Lady Luck's Smile)*, *rend*, *spell defense I*

Attacks/Weapons: Ceremonial cult dagger (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 19–20; qualities: *bleed*, *hurl*)

Gear: Mage's pouch, the Infernum

Treasure: 1C, 1L

CULTISTS (STANDARD NPCS, ADVERSARIES)

"Hail the master!"

Description: These sad, supernaturally dominated stooges have ritually scarred themselves as a token of their unwilling reverence. They wear the clothes and accessories of their former lives and PCs who've spent time in the area may identify some of them as citizens of Valespire and neighboring areas. PCs who live here may even recognize one or two of the cultists as friends and acquaintances, leading to the delivery of uncomfortable news to relatives and others after the adventure.

Motivations: The cultists follow Achela's lead without question (or for that matter, interpretation). All are devoted worshippers of the Hauntbeast and patently incapable of defying his will, or that of his appointed agent in this world. They're also immune to Morale and other effects that lead them to betray their unholy allies.

Cultists (Medium Folk Walkers — 25 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init II; Atk II; Def III; Res IV; Health II; Comp II; Skills: Resolve V; Qualities: *Cagey I*, *class ability (Sage: assistance I)*, *rend*

Attacks/Weapons: Club (dmg 1d8 subdual; threat 20), light crossbow + 10 bolts (1d6 lethal; threat 19–20; range 50 ft. × 6; qualities: *AP 2*, *load 5*)

Gear: None

Treasure: None

NEXT STEPS

Assuming the Reaper arrives, whether the party interrupts the ritual or not (see page 37), the action shifts immediately to Scene 4. If the Reaper's arrival is thwarted, the adventure ends and the party collects no XP from Scene 4.

SCENE 4: RISE OF THE REAPER

Black Spur Keep, mid- to late afternoon

OBJECTIVES

- Slay the Reaper
- Destroy the cult
- Recover the Infernum

CHALLENGES

- The Reaper is an infernal horror — you know, the kind the old school avengers chat about when they want to scare the new kids at the tavern. It won't go down easily.
- This is a Dramatic scene and the stakes are therefore higher for everyone.



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- The cult may try to help the Reaper against the players — unless you're feeling particularly kind.
- If the PCs have taken too long, a hundred goblins will swarm in and kill them without mercy.

SYNOPSIS

Scene Type: Dramatic

GM Briefing: Whether because Achela's ritual is completed or interrupted, the Reaper arrives, bursting through the arcane sigil in the courtyard. It takes the monster a few rounds to realize it can break free of the sigil but when it does it immediately makes to kill every living thing in the area. This is a straight-up fight to the death with a creature out of nightmare.

Gear: Possessions, plus whatever the party has carried out of previous scenes.

LOCATION

The Reaper's arrival tears the courtyard to pieces, tossing stone fragments in all directions, and as it breaks free of the sigil the downdraft of its huge wingspan kicks up a lot of wind, and still greater clouds of debris. PCs atop the gate houses and eastern tower suffer no significant effects from this, but anyone standing in the open on lower terrain suffers a -2 penalty with attack checks. The Reaper is immune to this penalty.

Ambiance: The wind also carries with it the smell of death and rot, and the Reaper's unnerving roars continue unabated throughout the scene, with effects described in its stat block (see page 42). This isn't a moment for the faint-hearted and there's no time to concoct complex plans.

Terrain: Mountains

Cultural Interest: The Realm

ACTION

If Achela lives as the Reaper arrives, read the following aloud to start this scene.

The cult priestess' voice rises to an atonal wail, a sound met by a hideous roar from outside the tower. The building is rattled to its foundations and you have to brace against something to keep your footing.

The priestess' eyes snap open and she cackles with mad glee: "The master comes!"

Otherwise, read the following aloud.

The ground trembles and the tower shifts as a frightening roar is heard outside. The building is rattled to its foundations and you have to brace against something to keep your footing.

For a moment after, it's like the whole world freezes in place, awaiting... You shudder to consider.

Read the following aloud to any characters outside.

The whole of Black Spur wavers as a terrifying roar is heard, seemingly rising through the earth itself. It's many seconds later before your vision clears and your hearing returns. Something in you is different now, like a piece of your soul is missing, or has fled this awful place.

These unfortunate souls have the misfortune to be at ground zero, without cover, for the Reaper's first roar, and must make a Fortitude save to resist its effects (see page 42).

Start the initiative clock and keep it running, the better to provide the proper sense of pressure and approaching horror (plus, timing is an issue, as explained in a bit). You may wish, however, to relax the movement rules unless the party is chasing down cultists or other enemies. If possible, give everyone a chance to establish where they are and what they're doing as the Reaper emerges.

Round 1: Surviving cultists rush to the roof of the east tower to get a look at the courtyard as the Reaper's first roar is heard everywhere in the keep (this is what those outside save against).

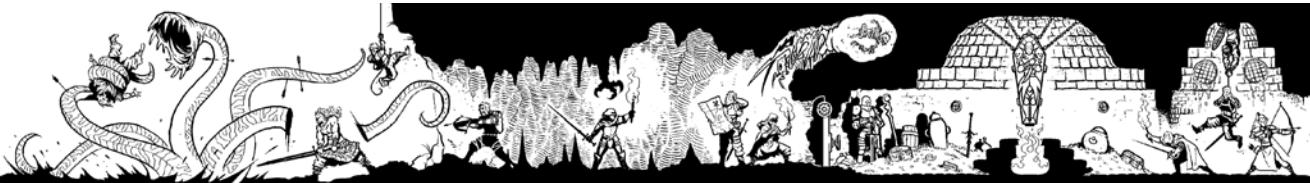
Round 2: The Reaper fully coalesces in the sigil and any remaining wyverns emerge from their nests, viewing the courtyard with curious suspicion. Surviving cultists collapse to their knees before their master, gibbering nonsense as the experience drives them irreparably mad.

Round 3: The Reaper begins testing its bonds and the wyverns take flight, circling high above the sigil. They howl and shriek in support of the Reaper, the Hauntbeast's influence taking hold.

Round 4: The Reaper frees itself from the improperly drawn containment sigil and each character and creature within 30 ft. must make a Fortitude save (average DC) or become sprawled.

Round 5: The Reaper moves to kill every living creature in the keep, its wings kicking up debris as described in the Location section (see left). Unless the party has attacked, the Reaper starts with any cultists on the roof of the east tower, who flail and genuflect all the way up to the first of them being eaten alive. After that their survival instinct kicks in and they flee for their lives — all but Achela, who wades into the nearest combatants fighting the Reaper. Like we said, she's a tad on the crazy side.

As of Round 5, the fight is well and truly on. Those first four rounds are all they have to dispatch remaining cultists (and/or wyverns if the party is feeling frisky), get in position, and prepare spells, abilities, and anything else they think might help them survive the coming onslaught. Any damage directed at the Reaper before Round 5 immediately breaks the containment sigil and frees the beast, though only casters may know this and only with a successful Knowledge check (hard DC with a Spellcasting synergy).





CHAPTER 2



The Reaper is an exceptionally tough opponent, quite capable of taking the entire party on by itself. It attacks head-on, using its roar attack as often as possible to blanket the ground beneath it, and lays into the closest attackers with its melee attacks and its frenzy ability. In any rounds when its most recent attacker is dead or unavailable, it attacks and/or consumes the nearest living thing, be it cultist, wyvern, or player character (or, if they've arrived, goblin).

You have more options here. If the party is struggling, you can bring the cultists and/or the wyverns in to help.

- The cultists are fanatically dedicated to their master — until its avatar starts eating them, at which point their biological imperative kicks in and they flee. They could just as easily turn on the Reaper, throwing themselves at the beast in a futile display of rebellion. They don't stand a chance of hurting the monster but they might slow it down as it enjoys each of them as a momentary snack.
- The wyverns fall under the Hauntbeast's control from the start but could break free for a period (or for good) and attack the Reaper. Alternately, they could rush to support their "god" and attack the party, or simply circle until and unless the Reaper is defeated, then flee into the night sky.

There's also the little matter of the goblin moot to consider. If the PCs take too long to search the keep, or the fighting continues past the sun's crest over the horizon, the goblins swarm up the mount, single-mindedly killing everything in their path. It's debatable whether they're a match for the Reaper on their own but in any case you shouldn't be running that combat step-by-step (should it even come to that). The logistics are simply untenable, and no fun for anyone. It's best to use the goblins as another way to spice up the final battle and/or distract the Reaper or hinder the PCs as they try to put the beast down. The presence of literally dozens of combatants can promote all sorts of amazing sequences against which the players can earn their legends.

Read the following aloud when and if the Reaper is defeated.

With the Reaper slain, the party is left to pick up the pieces and contemplate its lonely place in a universe that allows something that terrible to exist.

CAST

THE REAPER (SPECIAL NPC, ADVERSARY)

"RrrrAAAH!"

Description: The Reaper is a fiend of the first order, resembling a wyvern in an advanced state of decay. Its wing-leather is tattered and the flesh of its body is half-gone. One eye socket is empty and the other is filled with a rheumy eyeball

glowing with malevolent rage. It reeks of sulfur and rot, and has a breathy, stomach-churning roar that can bring the stoutest warrior to his knees.

Motivations: As a herald of the Hauntbeast, the Reaper is a weakened manifestation of that cosmic enemy's savage soul. It's bent on sowing death and carnage, creating the proper carpet of gore for the arrival of its lord. Achela doesn't entirely grasp that the Reaper isn't actually the Hauntbeast but Agustin can explain the difference to survivors after the dust settles.

The Reaper, Alpha Wyvern (Large Beast Undead Flyer/Walker — 155 XP): Str 16, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 9; SZ L (2x2, Reach 3); Spd 60 ft. winged flight, 20 ft. ground; Init III; Atk VII; Def IV; Res VI; Health VIII; Comp II; Skills: Search VI, Sneak V; Qualities: *Class ability (Captain: battle planning I (crush them!, no prisoners!)), condition immunity (paralyzed), damage reduction 4, feat (Charging Basics), frenzy II, improved sense (scent), treacherous, veteran II*

Attacks/Weapons: Bite III (dmg 2d10+3 lethal; threat 17–20; upgrades: *grab*), Tail Slap II (dmg 1d10+3 lethal + paralyzing poison; threat 19–20; upgrades: *reach +1, venomous*), Wing Slam × 2 (Slam I: dmg 1d8+3 lethal; threat 20), Roar (soul-draining attack IV: 60-ft. cone; Fort DC 25 or die (standard character), lose 1 action die and 10 max. vitality (special character))

Gear: None

Treasure: None

NEXT STEPS

With the Reaper defeated (or prevented from arriving), the party is left to decide what to do with any surviving enemies. Cultists and wyverns flee when the dust settles (out of fear or simply to escape the chaos), and while the latter simply fly off to new roosts the former are troublesome. Any who get out of the keep are likely caught by the goblins and slain, and any the PCs take prisoner are doomed to wretched lives in Valespire's asylum (or worse).

There may yet be plenty of treasure to recover in the keep, if the party can stomach collecting it, and the Infernum can be delivered to Pader Agustin — unless the PCs decide to keep it (*see right*). This earns the Pader's thanks, and possibly that of the Church as well (again, if the party's successfully finished *The Darkest Hour*), plus any reward haggled in Scene 2.

Expanding the adventure is simple: Agustin may ask the PCs to take him to Valespire, delivering the book safely to the Archivum; spellcasters may be tapped to help strengthen the Hauntbeast's prison; and the Church may try to suppress Agustin's work as heretical, leading to a much grander campaign rooting out corruption of the cloth. The Hauntbeast can become a running adversary, its cults targeting the party and its pervasive influence infiltrating their dreams. The magic imprisoning the Hauntbeast has also been left deliberately vague so you can add specifics fitting your campaign, if you so desire.





REWARDS & PENALTIES

Don't forget XP for adversaries (listed in their stat blocks).

SCENE 1: OUT OF THE NIGHT

- | | |
|--|-------|
| A. Agreeing to travel to the goblin camp | 50 XP |
|--|-------|

SCENE 2: SINNER, SAINT

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------|
| A. Successfully Treating Agustin | 50 XP |
| A. Agreeing to investigate the keep | 100 XP |

SCENE 3: THE RUINS OF BLACK SPUR KEEP

- | | |
|---|--------|
| A. Completing the scene without fighting a single wyvern | 25 XP |
| B. Completing the scene without attracting the attention of a single wyvern | 50 X |
| A. Identifying the nature of the sigil and/or disk | 25 XP |
| A. Finding and reading the journal | 50 XP |
| A. Interrupting the ritual without preventing the Reaper's arrival | 25 XP |
| B. Interrupting the ritual and preventing the Reaper's arrival * | 100 XP |
| A. Recovering the Infernum | 100 XP |
| A. Ending the threat before the goblin assault | 100 XP |

* In this case, the PCs gain no experience for Scene 4.

SCENE 4: RISE OF THE REAPER

- | | |
|---|--------|
| A. Recovering the Infernum ** | 100 XP |
| A. Ending the threat before the goblin assault ** | 100 XP |

** These rewards may not be earned again if they were already earned in Scene 3.

PRIZES

Here are a couple examples of Prizes the party may earn in this adventure. These are, of course, just a limited sampling, as PCs with enough Charisma and the right abilities might even earn the trust of Trinkesti or Kalkachanla, or call upon them later for favors, just as they might the Church (assuming it's not hunting them for uncovering secrets it would prefer conceal). Particularly ambitious PCs might lobby the King of the Realm to claim Black Spur Keep as a Holding — on the grounds that the party restore it to its former glory and maintain it as a fort defending the area.

CONTACT: PADER AGUSTIN ASONZA

If one or more characters treat Asonza kindly, you can offer him as a Contact (at the normal Reputation cost, based on your perception of his Level of Trust).

As a Church Archivist, Agustin can supply the party with extensive information denied the greater populace, especially if you're playing in the default Realm setting (*see page 70*). The Archivum has been investigating forbidden matters for hundreds of years, concentrating especially on topics of use to adventurers (who routinely venture into places they're not supposed to go and fight things the Church refuses to acknowledge). This is an excellent way to introduce new details about monsters, dungeons, nefarious villains, and practically anything else you like.

What Agustin is *not* is a personal lieutenant or follower. He's strictly a non-combatant — not a coward by any stretch, but certainly looking forward to a long and happy life away from the excitement of places like Black Spur Keep. He's happy to meet the characters in civilized places, where he can share a cup of tea and quietly pass along his findings, but nothing will get him back in the wild — especially not after today.

MAGIC ITEM: THE INFERNUM

If the party keeps the Infernum rather than turning it over to Asonza, it becomes a Magic Item Prize with the following stats. The Reputation cost in this case is quite obvious, given the nature of the object and the Church's interest in keeping it safely tucked away.

Item: Book

Essence: Interest (Study: Demonology)

Charm: Greater Spell Effect (Call from Beyond V — may only be used to summon evil outsiders; 1 use per adventure at Levels 8–11, 2 uses per adventure at Levels 12–16, 3 uses per adventure at Levels 17–20)

Reputation Value: Varies by item Level (*see Fantasy Craft, pages 195 and 199*).

Note: Due to this item's Charm, its Level must be 9 or higher. Should the adventure be run at a lower Threat Level, the item's Level is 9.





CHAPTER 3: THE VAULT

The following may well be all the introduction many players require.

Many years ago, the archmage Aesta Vessamden settled in a quiet corner of the Realm to build a tower and live out her golden years. A difficult woman to please, she added to the construction continually, and the stronghold grew into a sprawling maze of chambers and towers and courtyards. Some say she went mad there. Some say she was subtly cursed. One thing is certain, however: one day she died.

Construction ceased at her death, and as years rolled by parts of Caer Aesta fell into disrepair. Some were looted, burned, or collapsed. All that remains now of the once enormous complex is a great vault. It has withstood the ravages of time, its stones remaining unweathered and unblemished even as the rest of the Caer decayed.

The vault is the last piece of Caer Aesta standing. As the rest of the ruin yielded little of note, stories say that the vault is the final resting place of Aesta's entire fortune: gold and jewels, to be sure, but also Aesta's magic and research notes. And so here you are — a party of adventurers in search of fortune, glory, knowledge, or a little of all three. The stories may say that many before you have tried their skill against the vault, and none have ever returned, but you're different. You're sure of it.

And before you stands the door.

This is a dungeon crawl. Those five words should conjure many images in the head of GMs and players alike, and *The Vault* strives to present as complete and compelling a dungeon crawl experience as possible. The dangers will be great, and the rewards equally so (though for some, simply surviving will be reward enough).

The Vault in its simplest form contains five scenes. Two optional scenes are included for GMs with no time constraint.

SCENE ZERO: MADIGAN'S CROSSING (OPTIONAL)

This is an optional introductory scene for home play. It presents Madigan's Crossing, a roadside inn that caters to adventurers heading to Aesta's vault. The story can be told to



the party through roleplayed interaction with the innkeeper and his neighbors. The biggest rumor people hear is that the place apparently changes: past the front door there's sometimes a corridor, but other times it's just blank wall.

SCENE ONE: ABOVE AND BELOW

The party enters the Vault and descends a vertical shaft to find the first chamber. The room is a single huge trap, with a complicated lock on a door opposite the entrance that triggers several effects. Chief among these is the reveal of a gargantuan gelatinous cube below the room. Worse, the cube can attack with pseudopods, dragging PCs into its mass well before the retracting floor has a chance to plunge them into the creature's acidic body.

SCENE TWO: ISOLATION

After leaving Scene 1's trapped chamber, the party is confronted with a serious problem — the corridor behind them has changed position, allowing them access to another chamber, but completely cutting off their exit. Proceeding down the new corridor the party enters a long hall, also thoroughly trapped. The party may well end up in makeshift cells, being picked off individually by a pack of bladed constructs called Death Spheres.

SCENE THREE: WHAT LURKS BENEATH

The action of Scene 2 again shifts the corridors of the Vault, allowing the PCs further access, but also distancing them further from escape. This time the corridor becomes a shaft leading further down, into another chamber. While this chamber was once trapped, a herd of bulettes has inadvertently destroyed the workings, allowing the PCs access to the old trap-works. Clever parties can learn much here about the mechanisms that operate the Vault. However, one bulette remains near, and won't take kindly to intruders.

SCENE THREE AND A HALF: THE CAVERNS BELOW (OPTIONAL)

This is an expansion scene for those wishing to play The Vault in an unrestricted home campaign. It presents a larger cavern complex with a small ecology of its own, and an ongoing power struggle between local ettincaps and an invading burrowing behemoth who's enslaved the remains of the bulette herd. GMs are encouraged to expand this section as much as they wish, or run it as written, depending on the needs of their game and the nature of their campaign world.

SCENE FOUR: THE GARDEN

Shifting the corridors with discoveries made in Scene 3, the party gains access to Aesta's old research garden. Unfortunately, in the years of neglect following her death, the room has been overtaken by carnivorous plants, waiting patiently for the intrepid and unsuspecting. The room has no traps, but is full of monsters that require immediate attention. Hidden under some of the overgrowth is the mechanism that allows access to the next (final) chamber.

SCENE FIVE: THE SANCTUM

This is Aesta's treasure chamber, and the real goal of the adventure. Unfortunately, it holds a guardian of its own — one the PCs aren't likely to soon forget. From here, the corridors can be shifted to allow the party to escape Aesta's vault.

ADVENTURE TIMING

The Vault is designed to be run in a four- to five-hour time slot common to convention play. However, it has several time-management issues the GM should be well aware of at the outset. First, several scenes contain extensive traps. While care has been taken to address methods by which these traps can be discovered, disabled, or triggered, players are notorious for the unexpected. GMs should prep thoroughly and expect to handle player creativity on the fly.

This adventure's central conceit is the Corridor Sphere, which is discussed in Scenes 1 and 2. The Sphere's apparent randomness is a danger-spot for curious players. They may fixate, doing everything in their power to ascertain the Sphere's nature and workings, and it's important to address these schemes quickly, lest the action slow to a crawl.

Lastly, a GM running *The Vault* for his home group has two additional scene options, which can dramatically expand the adventure. At conventions and game days (or whenever time is limited), the GM should skip these scenes and stick to the adventure's central narrative.

MENACE

The Vault assumes a Menace of IV (Dangerous) or V (Death-Defying), though you can easily adjust that if you like. Keep in mind that a higher or lower Menace adjusts the number of Dramatic scenes.

CAMPAIGN QUALITIES

Any visit to Aesta's vault is noteworthy, and success and survival against its dangers are especially so. The *triumphant heroes* campaign quality is recommended throughout this adventure.

SLIDING DCs

To allow for play at any Threat Level, this adventure features sliding DCs (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 370) and trap difficulties (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 338).



CHAPTER 3



DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The Cube: This gargantuan gelatinous cube waits hungrily in the first vault chamber. Essentially mindless, it attacks the party as soon as they're vulnerable, and doesn't stop until it's slain or has consumed everyone in the room.

The Death Spheres: These gleaming spheres are the size of a large fist and mounted with whirring blades and slicing edges. They watch over the vault's second chamber.

The Bulette: This creature's mate was slain in the third chamber of the vault. She lairs nearby, unwilling to leave the area where she birthed her young.

The Plants: The carnivorous remains of Aesta's research garden have extended their roots far and wide to maintain nourishment, but their presence is felt here in the garden chamber.

The Treasure Hoard: Just when the PCs think they've won, even the spoils turn against them, driven by a semi-magical hive mind with a vicious temperament. After this dangerous foe, the PCs may never again be able to look at a stack of coins without a shudder.

Conner Madigan: Conner owns and runs Madigan's Crossing, the roadside inn presented in Scene 0. His grandfather opened the Crossing and his family has been making a killing from selling overpriced gear and half-true gossip to adventurers ever since.

Rediitha: The Crossing's apothecary has a variety of potions and other consumables for sale to the adventure-minded, and a homesick saurian proprietor looking for news about her people.

Salty: This old blacksmith is a fixture at the Crossing, telling stories and nursing ale at Madigan's for hours each day. He's a font of "knowledge" about the vault and its environs, and some of what he knows is even true.

Silken-Hair-Who-Learns-Wisdom: This ettercap is the leader of his tribe, which makes its home in the cave complex beneath the Vault. His people are currently locked in a bitter struggle with a creature he calls Shiny-Eye, a burrowing behemoth that's encroaching on the caves.

Shiny-Eye: This burrowing behemoth seeks the ettercaps' gem hoard and has dominated a local bulette herd it regularly sends into their camp.

SCENE 0: MADIGAN'S CROSSING

*A crossroads near the ruins of Caer Aesta, evening
Dim ambient light and moderate ambient noise*

OBJECTIVES

- Obtain final gear if needed before entering the Vault
- Listen to the patron's gossip and "delves tips"

CHALLENGES

- Not all the gossip learned at the Crossing is true.
- Gear prices are insanely inflated at the Crossing; needy PCs had better also have a good Hagggle skill.

SYNOPSIS

Scene Type: Standard

GM Briefing: This is an optional introductory scene, featuring a small marketplace at the crossroads leading to the Vault, which earns coin from passing adventurers come to try their luck. Madigan's Crossing allows PCs to establish a base of operations in exploring the Vault if they so choose.

Gear: Possessions only, though more gear may be purchased at the Crossing.

LOCATION

Madigan's Crossing is almost a small village, with a dozen buildings scattered across the four corners of two intersecting roads. Services include an inn attached to a general store (the original Crossing), a blacksmith and livery stable, and an apothecary. Several small homes have cropped up here as well, occupied by peasant farmers and herdsmen who make their living in the area and have been drawn to the burgeoning community.

Ambiance: Madigan's Crossing is a homey, welcoming place. The people are used to visitors of all sorts and make pleasant company for all but the most vehemently antisocial. The area smells of inn-cooked food at nearly all hours, accompanied by the clinking of crockery and the buzz of conversation. The shops are open late into the night, and every window is cheerfully lit.

Terrain: Indoors/settled

Cultural Interests: The Realm

ACTION

If you're running this optional scene, begin the adventure by reading the following aloud.

The sun is just sinking into a vibrant purple dusk as you crest the last rise and look out over Madigan's Crossing, a travel stop at an old crossroads near the ruins of Caer Aesta. You're close, but the hour is growing long and a soft bed and a hot meal sound like an excellent idea...

Several parts of the Crossing may interest PCs. Their locations and offerings are presented here in rough order of relevance, but bear in mind that what the PCs do here is almost entirely open-ended.

MADIGAN'S CROSSING: THE INN

The Crossing's main feature is the inn, and some or all of the characters likely head here first. The building full name is "Madigan's Crossing," and a sign above the door proclaims this.





It's a sturdily built two-story wooden structure, with a store and tavern on the first floor and rooms for rent above. The owner, Conner Madigan, lives in a small house just behind the inn with his wife (Sura) and six children (son Jacks and daughters Reeda, Rooke, Gudrun, Hafril, and Bethil).

The inn was here first, built by Conner's grandfather, and other residents of the Crossing drifted in over time. The story is well-known and oft-told by the locals: "Old Madigan" (bless his soul) was the serving man for a group of adventurers and daredevils who passed through looking to test the dangers of Aesta's vault. Madigan was left at the Crossing to establish a base camp, and stayed when his masters never returned. He built

the inn and brought in supplies, which were purchased from nearby herdsmen and farmers, as well as from other adventuring companies that followed. Over time, other folk asked to work at the Crossing, "and here we are."

The inn's main floor is mostly gear stocks: everything the enterprising vault-delver might want, from rope to backpacks, climbing gear to tools and bedrolls, compasses to digging equipment, and so on. Everything through the Ancient Era on Tables 4.6: Goods, 4.7: Kits, and 4.11: Food and Drink in Chapter 4 of the *Fantasy Craft Rulebook* is available at the Crossing — at four times the listed price. Madigan doesn't traffic in weapons or armor.



CHAPTER 3



At a small bar tucked in a corner of the building, Conner accepts payment and deals ale (and spirits concocted by Rediitha, which are more potent). He also offers simple but filling food (bread, cheese, stew, and so forth). One or two locals can be found at the bar at any hour, getting a good drunk going or sleeping one off.

Either Conner or Sura is here from mid-morning until late evening. Their oldest son Jacks, age 15, helps with stocking and carrying, and the girls, ranging in age from 14 down to 5, help or run around being children. The youngest adore adventurers and are completely unfazed by growling and posturing. They endlessly pester new visitors with questions, though always in the cutest possible fashion.

Conner readily admits he knows nothing about the Vault or its contents, and directs those interested to Salty the blacksmith.

Locals invite adventurers to sign (or carve) their names on "the wall," a long exterior portion of the inn facing the road. The wall is kept free for the "final musings" of those who've previously arrived to enter Aesta's vault. The signatures run floor to ceiling and include every conceivable adventurer's mark: custom and unique weapons buried in the wood; carved or branded symbols; spell components; crafted items; trophies of favored kills and prizes won on previous exploits; claw and tooth marks; bits of adventuring clothes; exotic currency; letters from flowery visitors; obscene stains near the ground a visitor shouldn't consider too carefully; calling cards, should anyone want to summon the dead; and yes, even a few actual signatures.

SALTY'S (SMITHY AND STABLES)

Salty is a wizened old coot, bent with age, but can still effect basic repairs on armor, weapons, and animal tack. He does so while spouting a string of obscenities that only a man his age can get away with.

The smithy and stables are clean but old, and Salty charges three times the base rate for all repairs and services. When not working, the blacksmith can be found snoozing in a hammock in the stable, or drinking at Madigan's Crossing.

Salty is an endless fountain of information and gossip, most completely made up. He has an answer to every reasonable question about anything (and his response to the unreasonable? "Who the \$#!@ cares about that *%&%^ sort of \$#!@^, anyway?"). No one who's entered the Vault has returned, so Salty has no concrete information on the interior or what to expect inside, but he merrily makes it up, claiming he heard it from travelers, passing scholars, or other dubious sources that can't be confirmed.

The one accurate detail Salty has is that the corridors in the vault move. He can't back this up, of course, but in this case his wild tale is completely true. Salty's long since lost track of what he's heard and what he's imagined, so this tidbit tends to slip into regular conversation with everything else.

REDIITHA THE APOTHECARY

Rediitha is a female saurian herbalist. She's easily the most exotic of the Crossing's locals, and given to diaphanous shawls and scarves accessorized with excessive jewelry. Rediitha spends most of her time in her shop, concocting potions and herbal remedies for passing adventurers.

The shop is well stocked: everything through the ancient era on Tables 4.9: Consumables and 4.10: Elixirs is available. She doesn't carry poisons but can manufacture them as a matter of special order, employing the Crafting rules to do so. Like Conner, Rediitha charges four times the base prices listed in the *Fantasy Craft Rulebook*.

Rediitha knows nothing of the Vault, and says as much. She points to Salty as the local authority on that sort of thing.

OTHER LOCALS

Most of the others living at the Crossing are farmers or herdsmen tending nearby land and herds. They can provide good directions to the ruins of Caer Aesta, but are otherwise of no immediate help.

DIRECTION

Here are some questions you might be asked, and answers for you to offer or implement.

Q: Why are we here?

A: You're adventurers, and Aesta's vault promises great adventure. This may be a good place to read (or re-read) the introductory text.

Q: Nobody knows what happened to Aesta?

A: Nothing is certain, though stories abound. Some say she died in the vault, others that she simply left this existence for some magical ascension beyond understanding.

CAST

CONNER AND SURA MADIGAN (SPECIAL NPCS)

"The Vault, eh? Well, be sure to sign the wall before you go."

Description: Conner is a reasonably fit man in his 40s, with black hair, a full beard, and gray eyes. Sura is pretty in a girl-next-door sort of way; she's curvy from years of child-bearing and keeps her long brown hair braided for convenience.

Motivations: The Madigans are jovial by nature, happy to while away hours listening to adventurers brag about their exploits while selling them overpriced liquor. They make a good clean living at the Crossing and want nothing more than to keep it that way.

The Kids: The Madigan children aren't presented with a stat block, as they're non-combatants and shouldn't need to make





checks or fight. They automatically resist Intimidate attempts, however, and Impress checks against them always succeed by 5 points.

Conner and Sura Madigan (Medium Folk Walker — 35 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init II; Atk IV; Def III; Res IV; Health III; Comp I; Skills: Athletics III, Haggle VI, Sleight of Hand III; Qualities: *Grappler*

Attacks/Weapons: Club (dmg 1d8 subdual; threat 20)

Gear: Booze (6 uses), spirits (3 uses)

Treasure: 2C

REDIITHA (SPECIAL NPC)

"Greetings. What can I provide?"

Description: A saurian female, Rediitha cultivates an exotic aura with exaggerated gestures, body paint, silken scarves, bangles and lace and fringe, and a wide array of jewelry. That she pulls it off with any degree of taste is a miracle.

Motivations: Rediitha loves her position as “the odd one” at the Crossing, and bombastically greets new adventurers like she’s their best friend. She presses saurians in the party for news of the homeland, even if they protest or say they grew up elsewhere.

Rediitha (Medium Folk Walker — 47 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init I; Atk I; Def IV; Res III; Health III; Comp III; Skills: Crafting IV, Haggle V, Medicine VI, Resolve IV; Qualities: *Aquatic I, cold-blooded, darkvision I, expertise (Medicine), feat (Alchemy Basics, Bandage, Basic Skill Mastery (Healer))*

Attacks/Weapons: Tail Slap II (dmg 1d8 lethal, threat 19–20, qualities: *reach +1*)

Gear: 10 bandages, cart (Spd 20 ft. ground (Run 40 ft.); Travel 2; SZ/Def L/9), chemist’s kit, doctor’s bag

Treasure: 1G, 1M

SALTY (SPECIAL NPC)

"What the \$#^@ is it now?!"

Description: Raggedy, balding, and spindly save for a robust beer gut, Salty is the “vulgar old man” to a T.

Motivations: Ultimately, Salty bears no one any malice; he’s not mean, just opinionated.

Salty (Medium Folk Walker — 30 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init II; Atk IV; Def I; Res II; Health IV; Comp I; Skills: Athletics V, Crafting III, Haggle III, Resolve III; Qualities: *Improved stability*

Attacks/Weapons: Mallet (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 20)

Gear: Crafting kit

Treasure: 1G

THE LOCALS (STANDARD NPCS)

"Good day, sir. And good luck."

Description: These good, solid people work an honest day for an honest wage, which they spend at the Crossing for food, supplies, and entertainment from visiting adventurers. As a rule, they’re sturdy and unafraid to get dirty.

Motivations: None. The locals are happy with their lives and events at the Crossing. They’re not opposed to raising a glass with visitors, however, particularly if they’re amusing or willing to share stories from elsewhere in the Realm.

Local Farmer or Herdsman (Medium Folk Walker — 28 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init II; Atk III; Def I; Res IV; Health V; Comp I; Skills: Athletics IV, Crafting IV, Survival IV; Qualities: None

Attacks/Weapons: Scythe (dmg 1d10 lethal; threat 20; qualities: AP 2, trip) or quarterstaff (dmg 1d8 subdual, threat 20, qualities: double, trip)

Gear: 3 fresh food

Treasure: 1L

NEXT STEPS

Sooner or later, the PCs will move on to the Vault. Tailor this scene to your group: if nobody cares, move quickly through the Crossing or skip it altogether. If they tend toward the “meet and greet” style of role-playing, give them plenty of opportunity to converse with Madigan and the rest of the townsfolk. The Crossing can even become a recurring locale in your campaign — there’s bound to be someone willing to sell the party a house nearby if they want one.

SCENE 1: ABOVE AND BELOW

Aesta’s vault entrance, mid-morning, clear day

OBJECTIVES

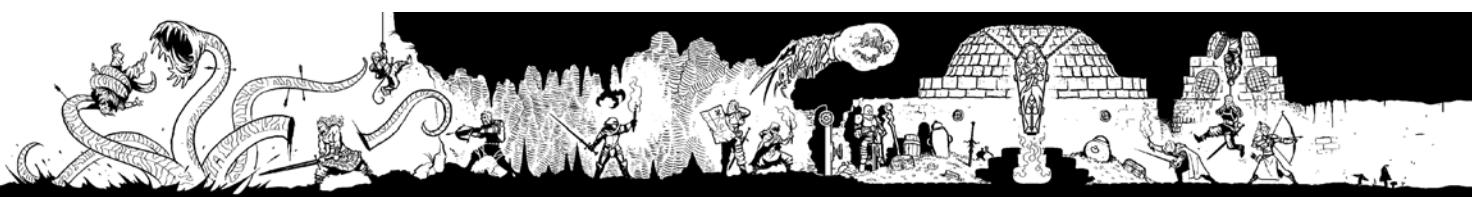
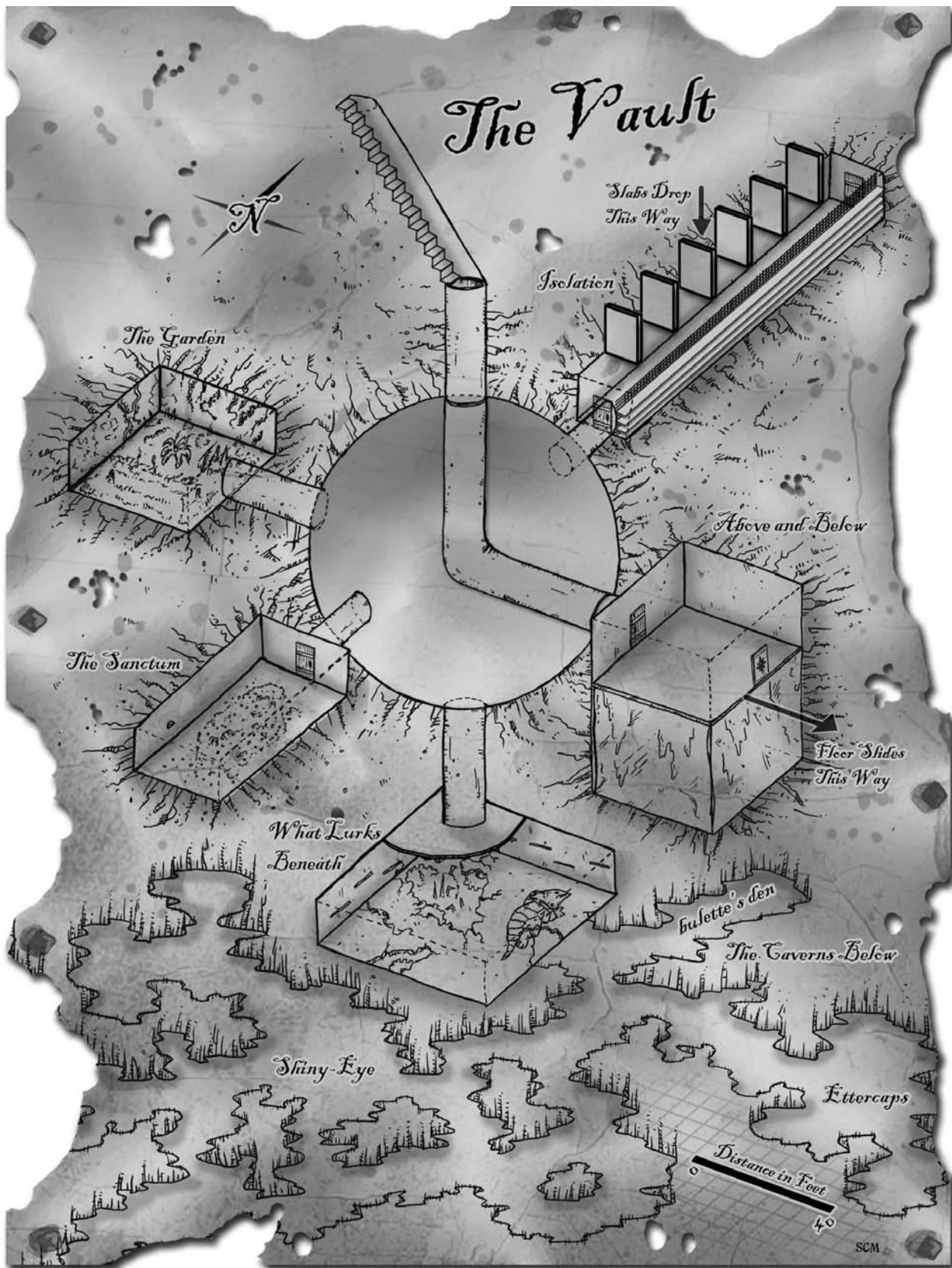
- Enter the Vault and descend the entry shaft
- Discover and use the trigger lever in the first chamber (which moves the Corridor Sphere)

CHALLENGES

- A gargantuan gelatinous cube sits in a vast pit beneath this room.
- The room’s trap slides back the floor, eventually dumping the party into the cube.
- Checks to cast Divination spells automatically fail in the vault.



CHAPTER 3



SYNOPSIS

Scene Type: Dramatic

GM Briefing: There are two principal parts to this scene. First, the players enter the vault and find nothing but a downward shaft, which they must navigate (with rope, wings, or whatever other means they possess). This isn't difficult, but where and how they choose to affix a rope may matter in Scene 2.

Second, at the bottom of the shaft the party travels down a corridor to a steel-banded wooden door, past which is the vault's first chamber. This room is an enormous trap built to do two things: slide the floor back so the cube beneath can attack, and trigger the Corridor Sphere for the first time, allowing the party to move further into the vault. Details on the Corridor Sphere are presented to the right.

The wooden door slams shut behind the party when they enter the first chamber, keeping the PCs from seeing the Corridor Sphere move. Characters who remain behind in the corridor shift with the Sphere, and those who try to wedge the door open find objects they use destroyed (those who try to wedge it open themselves may lose limbs, or worse).

Gear: Personal gear, plus whatever may have been purchased from Madigan in Scene 0.

LOCATION

The vault sits amid the ruins of Caer Aesta. The rest of the structure is now little more than knee-high rubble.

The front door isn't trapped and opens into a tubular stair angling down. After a distance, the stair ends at a round vertical shaft. Eighty feet below, the shaft empties into a level corridor that travels 50 ft. and ends at an unlocked door that also isn't trapped. This leads to a 35-ft. square chamber, which is empty save for an impressive and seemingly thick steel door on the far side.

Ambiance: The vault interior is dark, still, and quiet. There's no ambient light, little dust, and the air feels old and stale. Nothing moves here but the party.

Terrain: Indoors/settled

Cultures Interests: None

ACTION

The introductory text can lead directly to this scene if time is limited. The party stands at the remains of Caer Aesta, at the door to the vault, a 40-ft. square building of well cut and expertly laid stone. The door is situated in the center of the south wall and built of hardwood timbers, and neither it nor the walls show signs of age or weathering. The door is mounted solidly in its frame, with a smooth latching mechanism and well-balanced hinges. It isn't locked or trapped.

The door opens into a tubular corridor, ten feet across, angling down at a 45-degree angle, with stairs shaped into the bottom. The stairs descend thirty feet, at which point the tubular corridor bends sharply into a vertical shaft. This bend means there is no "edge" at the lip of the shaft — it's rounded off.

The party can descend the shaft in many ways. The most obvious method is rope, though a piton must be driven into a wall or the stairs as there's no ready protrusion to use as an anchor. With a secured rope, the Athletics DC to climb down the shaft is average. Free-climbing is much more difficult, with a hard DC. Some PCs may be able to fly, making the descent simple.

In the shaft, the PCs automatically notice concentric seams in the tubular walls. There is a seam just a few eighths of an inch wide running in a ring around the tube every four feet. Each seam is two inches deep. The seams appear to serve no function other than as an odd decoration (*see the Corridor Sphere, below, for details on the seams*).

The bottom of the shaft is 80 ft. down, where the tubular construction again makes a sharp bend, emptying into a level corridor that travels 50 ft. and ends at a steel-banded wooden door. The seams from the shaft continue in the corridor, right up to the door. This new door appears functionally identical to the entry door.

THE CORRIDOR SPHERE

What the party has just traversed, unbeknownst to them, is Aesta's crowning engineering achievement: the Corridor Sphere. It is a sphere of stone, 80 ft. across, with a single right-angle corridor running through its center (40 ft. into the center, then a right-angle turn, and 40 ft. out to the edge). The first 40 ft. of entry shaft above are fixed. After that, the shaft enters the Corridor Sphere (the seam disguised among the otherwise typical and meaningless seams in the passage). Likewise, walking the first 40 ft. along the corridor takes the PCs out of the sphere, with the final 10 ft. to the chamber door being fixed construction.

The Corridor Sphere is connected in only a few places to the rest of the vault. It mostly floats, carefully levitated in a spherical housing with less than half an inch between it and the surrounding construction. As the PCs move and act within the vault, the Corridor Sphere will rotate like an enormous lock tumbler (triggered by secondary catches in the traps of the vault), revealing new areas within the complex. The edge of the sphere is camouflaged within the concentric seams in the corridor, and as the corridors themselves are tubular it should be very difficult to figure out how the corridors keep changing (or identify that only one set of seams has any true function).

When the Corridor Sphere moves it rotates 90 degrees at a time. It completes this movement in a single round, and the works are completely noiseless.

Note: Clever use of a Levitate spell, pushing carefully down or up, can allow a savvy spellcaster to work the Corridor Sphere to their own purposes (which is how Aesta once navigated the vault herself), though the caster needs to be able to manipulate 1,000 lbs. in order to shift the sphere. Multiple casters working as a group could do this as well, as long as their combined total load is 1,000 lbs. or greater.

CHAPTER 3



THE STEEL-BANDED DOOR

The door leading into the first chamber is in fact a minor trap, albeit one with potentially deadly operation. It senses all characters within 40 ft. and magically swings shut when the first of two events occurs: the last character through the door moves more than 5 ft. into the room and no other characters remain in the corridor; or any character touches the steel door at the other side of the first chamber.

The steel-banded door swings shut with such enormous power that any obstructing object, magical or otherwise, is immediately destroyed (snapped cleanly in two). No amount of Strength can keep the door open and any character holding it finds himself yanked forward as it closes. In the interest of fairness, any character standing in the doorway or holding the door when it's triggered may leap in either direction or let go as a free action, but any character brave or foolish enough to force the issue finds whatever's in the way when the door closes cleanly severed. This may result in an automatic critical injury in the case of a limb or a few fingers (*see the Table of Ouch, Fantasy Craft, page 207*), but anyone stupid enough to block the door with his torso and/or head is instantly killed (reduced to -10 wounds).

The steel-banded door is immune to damage of all kinds and cannot be removed from its hinges.

THE FIRST CHAMBER

Read the following aloud when the characters reach this location.

The door at the end of the corridor opens into a 35-ft. square room (with a 20-ft. high ceiling). You enter the room in the center of one wall and a huge steel door is situated at the same point in the wall directly across the room. A heavy wheel and an obvious combination lock are visible in the center of the door. The room is otherwise empty and featureless.

The room is in fact 55-ft. high, floor-to-ceiling. Twenty feet are above the chamber's apparent floor, and below that is a 35-ft. deep pit, occupied by a Gargantuan gelatinous cube. Improper manipulation of the lock opens the "floor," letting the cube attack.

LOCK AND PIT TRAP (70 XP)

Mechanism: Clockwork device (the combination lock)

Difficulty: Intricate (DC 20 + TL, 4 Challenges)

Concealment: Average/superior

Target: Entire party

Effect: Alarm (releases cube)

Before starting the Task to open the door, a savvy adventurer should Search for traps (if he forgets to declare a Search, use his Notice skill instead). The check is made against the trap's Stash bonus of +10. Success reveals that the lock mechanism is

connected to the floor, and that the floor itself isn't connected to the walls — improperly manipulating the lock will somehow move the floor.

Make a second roll using the trap's Stash bonus of +20, comparing the result to the searching PC's original roll (don't call for a second Search or Notice check). This second roll is for the secondary trigger that moves the Corridor Sphere. Beating this second higher DC reveals that the lock is connected to something outside the room as well as to the floor, and that this second trigger is entirely separate from the floor mechanism.

Disabling either trigger requires a Prestidigitation or Crafting check (DC 20 + TL). Failure to disable the first trigger (the "floor trigger") moves the floor as described in the following sections. Failure to disable the second trigger (the "Corridor Sphere" trigger) moves the Corridor Sphere 90 degrees, as described at the beginning of Scene 2. The first trigger must be disabled before the second.

The wheel on the steel door will not turn (allowing the door to open) as long as the lock is engaged. Opening the lock involves 4 Challenges, each corresponding to a tumbler in the lock. Opening the lock requires Prestidigitation or Crafting skill checks, and the DC for each challenge is 20 + TL.

TUMBLER 1

With success, the first tumbler clicks into place. With failure (assuming the floor trigger isn't disabled), the floor slides 10 ft. away from the entry door. This exposes a pit that's home to the room's guardian: a Gargantuan gelatinous cube (*see page 54*).

If either the floor trigger or the Corridor Sphere trigger was disabled, success with the first tumbler engages a redundant mechanism that rearms both triggers via a secondary set of catches. Make a Notice check for the acting character against the mechanisms' respective Stash bonuses to spot this.

TUMBLER 2

With success, the second tumbler clicks into place. If the Corridor Sphere trigger was not disabled, success with the second tumbler also rotates the Corridor Sphere 90 degrees (*see page 51*).

With failure, assuming the floor trigger isn't disabled, the floor slides 10 ft. away from the entry door. This may expose the gelatinous cube for the first time, or simply push the party into even tighter quarters while defending against the ooze.

Success with the second tumbler rearms the floor trigger as described in the previous section. If the Corridor Sphere trigger remains disabled at this point, it does not rearm as described above.

TUMBLER 3

With success, the third tumbler clicks into place.

Failure causes the floor to slide ten feet away from the entry door. Again, this may mean the start of battle with the cube, or it



may mean that the party now has only a 5-ft. "ledge" left to them, the ooze almost completely exposed, and 30 ft. of open space between them and the entry door.

TUMBLER 4

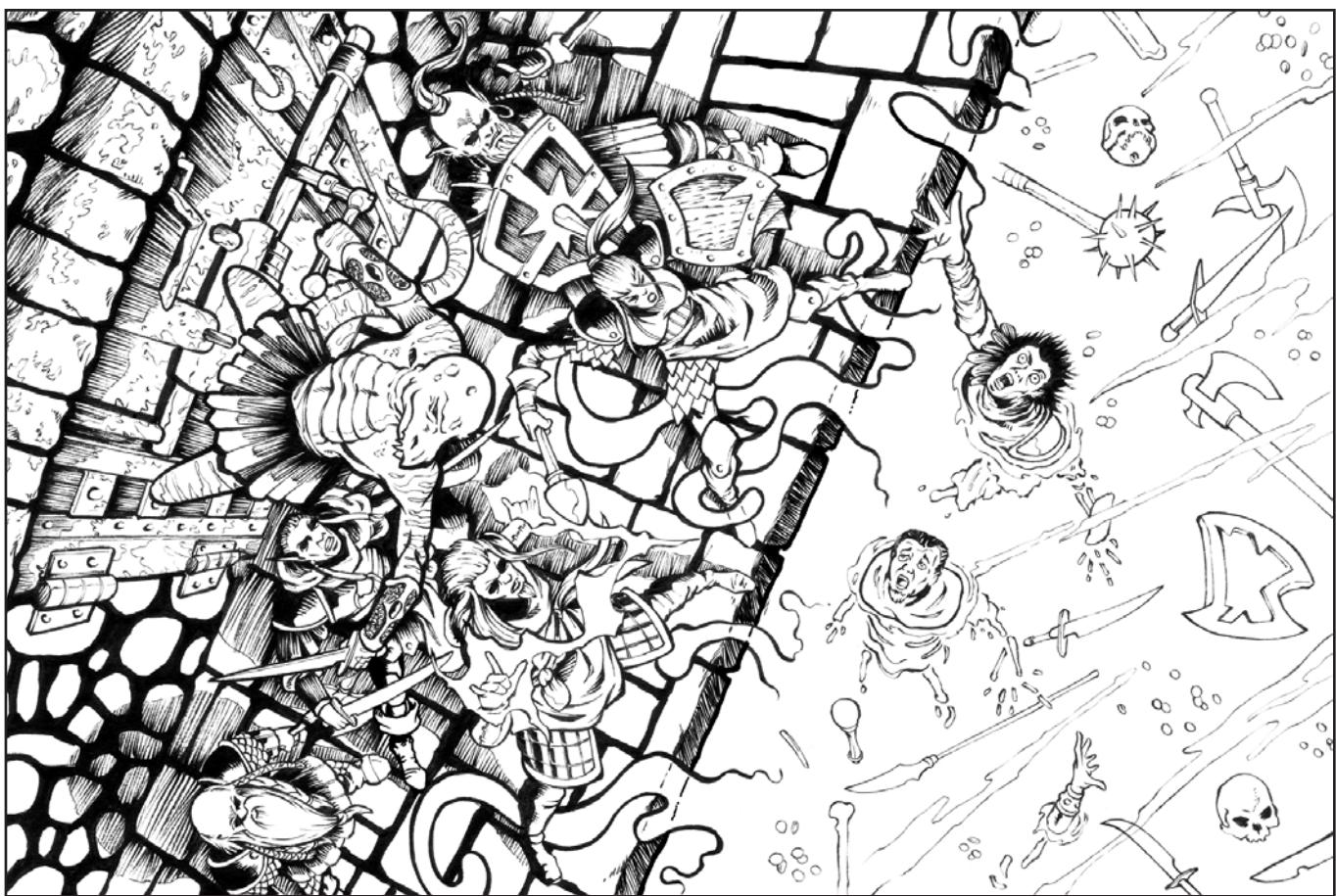
With success, the fourth tumbler clicks into place and the wheel can be turned, opening the door.

With failure, the floor slides 5 ft. away from the entry door. There may now be no floor in the room and the cube is completely

Disabling this mechanism is counterproductive, however, as flipping the lever slides the floor back into its starting position if it's open at all, and rotates the Corridor Sphere (*see Next Steps and Scene 2*) if it hasn't rotated already.

DIRECTION

Here are some questions you might be asked, and answers for you to offer or implement.



exposed. Any PC lacking wings or some other way to stay aloft must make a desperate Athletics check to find finger- and toe-holds in the walls; otherwise, he falls into the cube. The character at the lock may grab the wheel or other parts of the door to stay out of the ooze, requiring a tricky Athletics check.

BEYOND THE STEEL DOOR

Beyond the steel door is a wall with a large lever set into it — and nothing else. Search checks (against the lever mechanism's Stash bonus of +10) reveal that it's connected to the floor (and something outside the room). A Disable check (DC 10 + TL) is required for each trigger. The floor trigger must be disabled first.

Q: Okay, so what's with these seams?

A: They appear every four feet in the tubular corridor. Each is less than a quarter-inch wide, and only an inch or two deep. They don't appear to have a function.

Q: This is taking too long. I cast Knock on the steel door.

A: This allows the wheel to turn and the door to open, per the spell (*see Fantasy Craft, page 135*). In this case the floor does *not* open (or doesn't open any further than it may already be at the time of casting). If the Corridor Sphere's trigger wasn't disabled first, opening the door in this fashion rotates the sphere as well, which may make the sphere's motion even more mysterious.



CHAPTER 3



Q: What do you mean, Divination spells don't work? I can't cast Detect Magic?

A: Nope. The casting automatically fails. Worse, because a check is still technically being made, you spend the spell points as normal, without benefit.

Q: This room's got trap written all over it. I stay outside and let the burglar work.

A: Any characters who stay in the corridor outside the chamber rotate with the sphere (likely a disconcerting experience, not unlike tumbling over a waterfall in a barrel), and are able to identify this motion (and the real seams). Note also that characters who opt to stay atop the entry shaft are *entirely* cut off from the party (and may well be out of the adventure — such is the fate of the timid).

CAST

There's only one NPC here, and it's not very talkative.

THE CUBE (SPECIAL NPC, ADVERSARY)

(clumsy wet slapping and wiggling sucking)

Description: A massive mindless block of mostly-transparent goo. It almost looks like a body of very still water, until it erupts in Slam attacks and Grapples.

Motivations: The cube waits patiently for delicacies from above, nurtured in lean times by a magically perpetuating stream of gruel leaking slowly from the center of the floor. This nourishment keeps it alive, but isn't enough to sate its hunger, and so the cube readily consumes any living thing that comes within reach.

Notes: The Gelatinous Cube fills a pit 35 ft. deep, and sits just inches below the sliding floor. It can't pull itself out of the pit but it can use its Slam attack to grapple PCs and pull them in, where they fall through the Cube's mass, sinking 10 ft. per round until they reach the bottom. Once the Cube pulls a PC into its mass, it stops grappling that one and targets another. Any character inside the Cube at his Initiative Count suffers the Cube's Engulf damage (and an equal amount of stress damage — falling through a gelatinous cube is far more heinous than merely being overrun by one). Also, a character submerged in the cube may only hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to half his Constitution score.

Swimming in the cube requires a hard Athletics check. The cube isn't made of water and its body has none of the buoyancy of water, so moving through it is far from easy.

A character who reaches the surface within reach of an ally can be pulled free of the ooze as a full action (assuming the ally can actually lift the struggling character, per the lifting rules on page 154 of the Fantasy Craft Rulebook). Rope and other objects touching the cube also makes Damage saves against its Engulf attack every round.

Even if the cube is killed, its inert body still fills the pit. Swimming through a dead requires a tricky Athletics check and the swimmer suffers no Engulf damage.

Heroic Opportunity: It's conceivable that a character may willingly dive into the cube to help an ally back to the surface. This is worth an action die on the spot, and if successful it's worth 2 bonus Reputation as an Instant Reward (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 344). Swimming through the cube while dragging an ally requires a desperate Athletics check.

The Cube (Gargantuan Animal Ooze Walker — 79 XP):

Str 10, Dex 2, Con 18, Int 1, Wis 2, Cha 2; SZ G (7x7, Reach 4); Spd 15 ft. ground; Init I; Atk IV; Def I; Res I; Health IV; Comp —; Skills: None; Qualities: Blindsight, chameleon II (caverns/mountains, indoors/settled), critical hesitation, damage immunity (electrical), shambling, tough III

Attacks/Weapons: Slam I (dmg 1d10 acid; threat 20, upgrades: grab), Engulf (Swallow II, dmg 2d8 acid, notes: Grapple benefit — Large and smaller only), Paralyzing Pseudopods (paralyzing attack III: Fort DC 20 or become *paralyzed* for 3d6 rounds, upgrades: *supernatural attack (Slam)*)

Gear: None

Treasure: 2A (buried in the mass, inexplicably undigested)

NEXT STEPS

To pass back through the steel-banded door and proceed further into the vault, the Corridor Sphere must be rotated. This can potentially become a major speed bump if the party disables the triggers on the steel door but aren't willing to reengage them to see what they do, or simply refuse to throw the lever behind the steel door. It's possible the party may simply give up and leave, or fall back to spend a night healing after the cube attack.

Assuming one of the many trap triggers rotates the Corridor Sphere, however, the steel-banded door may be re-opened, leading to Scene 2.

SCENE 2: ISOLATION

Under the vault building, later in the day (maybe a new day)

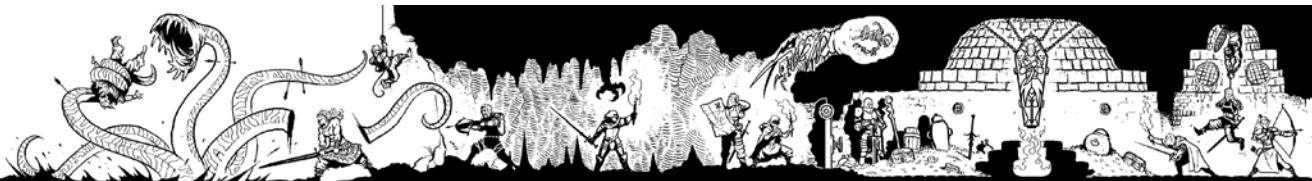
No ambient light (the party needs to create its own or concoct a way to see in total darkness)

OBJECTIVES

- Find the trigger that moves the Corridor Sphere
- Avoid or defeat the death spheres

CHALLENGES

- This chamber's trap isolates the PCs from one another.
- The death spheres try to pick off isolated PCs one by one.
- Divination spells still don't work.



SYNOPSIS

Scene Type: Standard

GM Briefing: The Corridor Sphere has rotated 90 degrees, laying the once-vertical shaft over and turning it into a right-hand turn. While the party can investigate this phenomenon, they're also presented with another steel-banded wooden door, this time leading to a new part of the vault (see page 52).

This new area is a long corridor with thousands of small objects displayed along one wall behind a long grate. Hidden among these displays are two mobs of death spheres, waiting patiently for the party to trigger the area's trap, which slams walls down amidst the party, cutting them off from one another. The spheres can move through the grate at will, and with the party separated the spheres become a formidable foe indeed.

Gear: Possessions only (and the party may lose some of its rope getting into this scene)

LOCATION

Most of this scene takes place in a new chamber revealed by the Corridor Sphere's rotation — more a corridor really, 15 ft. wide and 100 ft. long, built square rather than tubular like the central construction, with another steel-banded wooden door leading in and a heavy wooden door at the far end.

The new chamber's right-hand wall consists of a beautiful wrought-iron grate, running floor to ceiling. Beyond the grate, hundreds of small curiosities rest on a variety of pedestals and shelves: eyeballs in jars, wire-assembled monkey skeletons, stuffed fish, metal spheres and canisters, scrolls and maps in frames, and even a few things that look like treasure.

Ambiance: The air is as still as ever here. The displayed objects are clean and apparently well preserved, as the room lacks the musty smell of a museum or library. As usual, the only light comes from the party; the area is otherwise pitch black.

Terrain: Indoors/settled

Cultures Interests: None

ACTION

Start this scene as soon as the party passes back through the steel-banded wooden door in the first chamber, finding the corridor aligned differently...

Passing back through the steel-banded door, you're greeted with a distressing sight. Where once the corridor beyond ended in a shaft to the surface, now the corridor travels 50 ft. and turns to the right.

Note that any rope left hanging in the entry shaft was cut when the sphere rotated, and is now laying in the corridor (the severed end resting about 30 ft. from the sphere's central corner — it slid in a little after being cut). Should the party think to measure the rope the find, it indicates it was cut roughly 40 ft. above the previous "floor."

Past the right turn, the characters find a second steel-banded door (50 ft. from the corner). This door slams shut like the first and is triggered in the same fashion: when the last character through the door moves more than 5 ft. into the room and no other characters remain in the corridor; or when any character touches the far door.

Read the following when the second steel-banded door is opened.

The door opens into another corridor, 15 ft. wide and 100 ft. long, built square this time, with a heavy wooden door at the far end. The entire right-hand wall is a beautiful wrought-iron grate, running floor to ceiling. Beyond the grate, hundreds of small curiosities rest on a variety of pedestals and shelves: eyeballs in jars, wire-assembled monkey skeletons, stuffed fish, metal spheres and canisters in a variety of shapes and sizes, scrolls and maps in frames, and even a few things that look like treasure.

As in Scene 1, the entire chamber is one huge trap.

MUSEUM CORRIDOR TRAP (35 XP)

Mechanism: Pressure plate

Difficulty: Simple (DC 10 + TL, 2 Challenges)

Concealment: Average

Target: Entire party

Effect: Alarm (opens the far door and alerts the death spheres)

Many pressure plates line the corridor, starting 10 feet in front of the far door. Each pressure plate occupies an area 15 ft. wide and 10 ft. long, in sequence away from the far door. There are a number of pressure plates in the corridor equal to the number of PCs + 1 (e.g. if five characters are exploring the vault, there are six pressure plates).

The door at the end of the museum corridor is locked but no key mechanism is apparent. It's impervious to damage and can't be removed from its hinges. Searching the door opposes the trap's Stash bonus of +10, with success determining that all the plates in the hall must simultaneously be pressed to open the door. The Search check doesn't reveal how many plates there are but this information can easily be gleaned through trial and error. Each plate activates under 100 lbs. of weight, and again, all plates must be simultaneously activated to open the door.

In practice, this means the PCs have to spread out down the corridor, each activating a different plate. The extra plate can be activated by a personal lieutenant, animal companion, or a summoned creature with enough weight, but a collection of gear totaling 100 lbs. will suffice. Note also that certain characters, like goblins and pech, may not weigh enough to activate a plate. The party may need to get creative.

CHAPTER 3



Once the plates are active, two things happen simultaneously: the far door opens and vertical stone slabs drop down from the ceiling, landing between the pressure plates and isolating the character(s) on each plate in their own 10-ft. by 15-ft. prison cell.

Each character can deal with this development in one of three ways: attempting to catch a descending slab to keep from being walled in; attempting to leap off his pressure pad and into the next enclosure; or standing still and waiting to see what happens next.

- Each slab is 4 in. thick, 15 ft. wide, and 20 ft. tall (extending into the ceiling). Each weighs 3 tons (6,000 lbs.), so catching one is unlikely but possible (see *Carrying Capacity* on page 154 of the *Fantasy Craft Rulebook*, and the *Push Limit* check on page 70). A character who tries to catch a slab and can't hold the weight must make a Reflex save (DC 10 + TL) or suffer 1d6 lethal damage per Threat Level and fall back into his original cell.
- Diving beneath a falling slab requires a Reflex save (DC 10 + TL). With failure, the character suffers 1d6 lethal damage per Threat Level and recoils back into his original cell.

The characters can still communicate thanks to the fact that one wall of each cell is a massive grate. Sadly, this also grants entry to 2 mobs of alerted death spheres (see right), which whir to life and streak out from the shelves and shadows beyond. Given enough time, impatient or desperate characters might be able to break through the grates (their Construction is Hard 2), though disabling the trap also serves this purpose. In all likelihood, the party will have to deal with the death spheres before they can see about escaping Aesta's latest masterpiece of trap design, though inventive characters might see other avenues to escape.

Character(s) in the cell with the far door see a lever within (like the one found in Scene 1). Pulling the lever rotates the Corridor Sphere a second time, allowing the party to proceed to Scene 3 (once they get out of their cells, of course). As before, Search checks against the trap's Stash bonus of +10 reveal the lever mechanism is connected to the ceiling and something outside the room.

This trap's two mechanism Challenges each have a Disable DC of 10 + TL, and the ceiling trigger must be disabled first. Disabling both raises the slabs and opens the steel-banded door that led into this area, letting the party continue back into the Sphere Corridor (and possibly Scene 3).





DIRECTION

Here are some questions you might be asked, and answers for you to offer or implement.

Q: The Door's locked but there's no keyhole. I cast Knock then. How 'bout them apples?

A: Sure thing! The door opens, the slabs drop, and the death spheres zoom in as described earlier.

Q: Can I reach the stuff on the shelves and pedestals?

A: The nearest items are 5 ft. beyond the grate. Any reasonable way to reach this far (or pull an object back across this distance) works just fine. If you like, a looter might snag a death sphere, which could be mighty interesting when the trap is triggered.

CAST

DEATH SPHERES (STANDARD NPCS, ADVERSARIES)

(high-pitched buzzsaw shriek)

Description: Each fist-sized sphere is made of shining metal. Its approach is heralded by a high-pitched whine.

Motivations: The spheres are programmed to kill anything standing or moving in the room when the trap goes off, and to return to their shelves when the task is done. Two spheres attack each PC and should a pair finish their target off they split and move to adjacent cells to attack the next nearest opponents. The death spheres fight to the death.

“Heroic” Opportunity: The spheres can't tell a living opponent from a dead one — unless a live opponent is standing or moving — so clever (or cowardly) PCs may drop and play dead. Though this tactic is automatically successful, any character doing so loses 1 Reputation at the end of the adventure; the story's just too ridiculous not to be told and re-told by his companions.

Death Spheres (Diminutive Construct Flyers — 62 XP):
Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ D (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 50 ft. flight; Init VII; Atk IV; Def I; Res II; Health I; Comp —; Skills: None; Qualities: *Banned action (Blend, Sneak), charge attack, critical surge, ferocity, frenzy II, mook, natural defense (lethal), spell reflection, treacherous*

Attacks/Weapons: Whirling Blades (Gore II, dmg 1d3 lethal, threat 18–20, qualities: *AP 2, bleed, keen 4*)

Gear: None

Treasure: 5T, 5L, 5G (this represents looting the shelves)

NEXT STEPS

Disabling both of the lever trap's triggers opens the steel-banded door leading into this area. Since the far door must be opened to get to the lever, and this rotates the Sphere Corridor, it's on to Scene 3!

SCENE 3: WHAT LURKS BENEATH

*Deeper in Aesta's vault
Pitch dark, and getting darker...*

OBJECTIVES

- Descend another shaft
- Discover and puzzle out the exposed trap-works of the room
- Avoid or defeat the bulette lurking nearby

CHALLENGES

- While the trap in this chamber has been mostly disabled, the party may still set off pieces of it while discerning its function.
- A bulette lairs nearby — and responds unkindly to visitors.

SYNOPSIS

Scene Type: Standard

GM Briefing: The Corridor Sphere has shifted again, this time rotating what would have been a left turn back to the cube chamber into a vertical shaft down. This descends to the remains of another trap chamber. This time, however, the trap has been broken by a herd of bulettes, and can provide an important opportunity to study the workings of Aesta's traps. One bulette remains, and she's not happy.

Gear: Possessions

LOCATION

This chamber is very different from the rest, as the trap has been inadvertently destroyed by passing bulettes. One of them died as it broke through the wall and was filleted by the trap's whirling blades, but the rest smashed through and kept digging.

Ambiance: There's a slight tang of aging rot in the air, plus the cold scent of old burrowed earth. The party's light sources glint off a variety of metal surfaces — the remains of the trap's old blades.

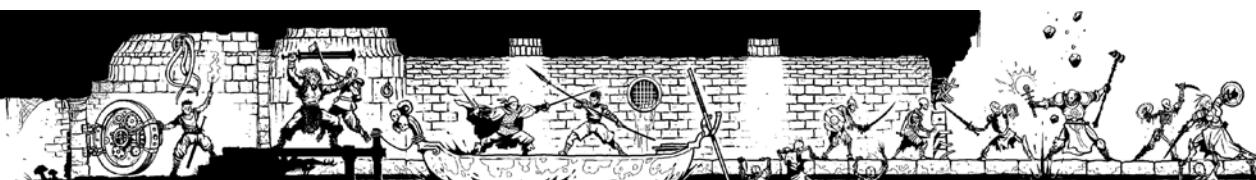
Terrain: Caverns/mountains, indoors/settled

Cultures Interests: None

ACTION

As the party re-enters the Corridor Sphere after Scene 2, read the following aloud.

Something has again happened to the central corridor. Rather than a left turn back into the room with the steel door, the corridor now travels 50 ft. and turns into a vertical shaft down. Apparently the vault is deeper than you thought.



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The shaft descends 80 ft. (40 ft. of which are inside the Corridor Sphere, 40 ft. of which are fixed in the new location). There is no steel-banded door here; instead, the characters find this area disturbed by other intruders. Read the following aloud as one or more characters descend the new shaft.

The tubular shaft descends 80 ft. straight down before exiting through the ceiling of a large chamber. Spikes are the first indication of a floor, offering a rough idea of new dangers, but they're also jutting up at odd angles, which seems wrong. As the actual floor comes into view, you find many sections ripped up, exposing gears, spikes, and other parts of a complex trap mechanism. A large boat-shaped creature lies dead at one side of the chamber, chunks of it torn away and strewn about by circular blades half exposed in the floor. Part of the room seems to have collapsed into a long, deep hole, dirt and rubble surrounding the edges.

This 50 ft. square, 15 ft. high room was once another nasty trap, before a herd of bulettes inadvertently destroyed much of it as they tunneled through. The trap's inner mechanisms have fallen out of their preset places and are now largely inert. The dead bulette was the last to be torn to pieces by the trap's original function.

This offers the party a unique window into the vault's innermost workings, especially since the destruction has disrupted the magic countering Divination spells in this chamber and the caves beneath. Investigating the trap is a cooperative Complex Task with 4 Challenges.

Challenge 1 (Knowledge Check DC 15 + TL, 1d6 minutes per attempt): With success, the party identifies the dead creature as a bulette and discovers the start of the floor trigger mechanisms it set off. The trap is currently inert. With failure, the character with the lowest result triggers an old piece of the trap, suffering 1d6 lethal damage as a spring-loaded saw blade slices across his body.

Challenge 2 (Search DC 10 + TL, 1d3 hours per attempt): With success, the party locates and maps the trap's triggers, ensuring that no further parts of the trap can be accidentally set off. With failure, the character with the lowest result triggers an old piece of the trap, suffering 1d8 lethal damage from spinning blades or thrusting spikes. Also, the noise alerts the nearby bulette and she moves to investigate.

Challenge 3 (Investigate DC 15 + TL, 1d4 hours per attempt): With success, the party determines the relationship between this trap's triggers and the Control Sphere trigger (though it doesn't reveal what this second trigger sets in motion). Failure carries no obvious penalty, but alerts and attracts the nearby bulette.

Challenge 4 (Investigate or Prestidigitation DC 15 + TL, 1d6 minutes per attempt): With success, the party can activate the Control Sphere trigger, which rotates the central corridor a third time, allowing access to Scene 4. As the rotation is perfectly silent, the change may only be noticed by those with line of sight and illumination to see the corridor move (from their perspective it spins counter-clockwise). Unlike the previous chambers' Control Sphere triggers, this one can be triggered multiple times, each time shifting the corridor to the previous position (between Scenes 2 and 4). As with the last two Challenges, failing here attracts the nearby bulette.

Exploring the dug-out hole leads to a 10-ft. wide natural tunnel with two branches. One leads to an empty cavern and the other to what's now the bulette's den. If she hasn't responded to noise in the chamber yet, secretly make Notice checks for her as the party approaches. She attacks savagely when she spots the party, believing them to be somehow responsible for the death of her mate.

DIRECTION

Here are some questions you might be asked, and answers for you to offer or implement.

Q: I try a Detect Magic spell. Does it work?

A: As a matter of fact, it does. Apparently the damage in this chamber also broke the vault's magic defenses — at least here.

CAST

BULETTE (SPECIAL NPC)

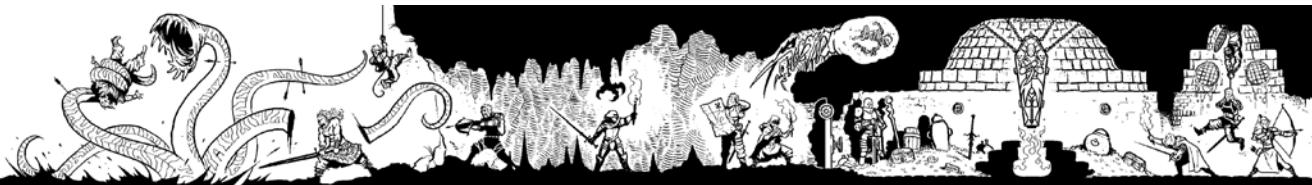
"Raaar!"

Description: With a long body tapered like a torpedo, protected by large boney plates, and supported by squat but powerful legs, a bulette is essentially a bottomless, mobile, armored stomach.

Motivations: This bulette was pregnant when its mate died, and has calved in her den, though the newborn isn't strong enough to move on yet. His mother is angry at the loss of her mate and naturally protective of her calf, and acts out furiously on all newcomers.

Notes: Characters spot the calf with a successful Notice check (easy DC). If the bulette is slain, the calf can potentially be seized as loot, or perhaps as a future animal companion (though getting him out of the vault is a Herculean task). The calf has a stat block but doesn't fight and adds no XP to the adventure reward. It must be nurtured for three full days (eating twice as much as a normal Medium creature) before it can fend for itself.

Heroic Opportunity: Animal-savvy PCs can attempt to calm the bulette rather than fight it. This may only be attempted if no PC has yet attacked the creature. The process is functionally



identical to an Influence check, using the Survival skill rather than Impress. The bulette's Disposition starts at -5, and if it rises to 0 or higher, she backs off, protecting her calf but not leaving the party be. The calf can't be taken, but the brave and wily bulette-tamer earns 2 additional Reputation at the end of the adventure.

Bulette (Huge Animal Burrower/Walker — 113 XP): Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 6; SZ H (2x4, Reach 1); Spd 10 ft. burrow, 50 ft. ground; Init IV; Atk VII; Def V; Res VIII; Health VI; Comp —; Skills: Acrobatics VI, Athletics III, Notice III; Qualities: *Blindsight, damage reduction 4, darkvision II, fearless II, improved sense (scent), superior jumper III, tough I*

Attacks/Weapons: Bite III (dmg 2d12+4 lethal; threat 17–20), Claw II × 2 (dmg 1d10+4 lethal; threat 19–20; upgrades: AP 2), Swallow III (dmg 4d8+4 acid; notes: Grapple benefit — Medium and smaller only)

Gear: None

Treasure: 1A, 2T

Bulette Calf (Medium Animal Burrower/Walker — 91 XP): Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 6; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 10 ft. burrow, 30 ft. ground; Init IV; Atk V; Def III; Res VI; Health IV; Comp —; Skills: Acrobatics VI, Athletics III, Notice III; Qualities: *Blindsight, damage reduction 4, darkvision II, fearless II, improved sense (scent), superior jumper III, tough I*

Attacks/Weapons: Bite I (dmg 1d8+4 lethal; threat 18–20), Claw I × 2 (dmg 1d6+4 lethal; threat 20; upgrades: AP 2), Swallow I (dmg 1d10+4 acid; notes: Grapple benefit — Tiny and smaller only)

Gear: None

Treasure: 1A, 2T

NEXT STEPS

From here the party can climb back up into the vault and proceed to Scene 4 (see page 63). If you're running this at home with without a time limit, you can replace the empty underground chamber with the entrance to the optional Scene 3.5...



Squeezing

Some areas in the caverns aren't dug out sufficiently for larger creatures. A character may move through a space of at least 1/2 his Footprint (rounded up). While doing so he's flat-footed, loses dodge bonuses to Defense, and moves at 1/2 normal Speed (rounded down, to a minimum of 10 ft.).

Note that some large creatures exist here in the caverns, but they're burrowers and create a space the size of their Footprint as they travel.

SCENE 3.5: THE CAVERNS BELOW

Far below Aesta's vault

As dark as it gets; the deeps of the earth are almost impossibly dark

OBJECTIVES

- Help the ettercaps defend their home, OR
- Help Shiny-Eye drive the ettercaps out

CHALLENGES

- A burrowing behemoth and a herd of bulettes seek to push the ettercaps out and take their accumulated treasures, OR
- A band of ettercaps guard a hoard of precious metals and gemstones.

SYNOPSIS

Scene Type: Standard

GM Briefing: This scene is an optional side-quest. Below the room detailed in Scene 3 is a labyrinth of natural caverns. In one of these tunnels lives a tribe of cave-dwelling ettercaps, and in another is a recently arrived burrowing behemoth, seeking treasures and prey to hoard and eat. The behemoth, Shiny-Eye, has enslaved part of the old bulette herd, and is considering ways to dislodge the ettercaps and take their treasures. The ettercaps know Shiny-Eye has a cache of his own and they'd love to kill him and add to their stockpile. The party has an odd choice here, in that they can aid either side and reap spoils accordingly. As this scene could take quite a long time, it should not be included in convention or game day play, where time is a factor.

CHAPTER 3



Note also that as this scene is set outside the Vault complex, Divination magic works normally.

Gear: Possessions, plus whatever the characters have found thus far

LOCATION

The cave complex was formed partly by nature and partly by years of passing burrowers. Its tunnels wind and twist through pitch dark, some soft and close to collapse, others shored up by past or present inhabitants.

Ambiance: The scent of earth and age is strong here in the Deeps. Periodic glints twinkle in the party's light, flecks of precious metals or uncut gems trapped in the stone and dirt. Always the tunnels lead on, accompanied by an odd vertigo that tickles the mind with fancies of infinity.

Terrain: Aquatic (in the ettercap village), caverns/mountains

Cultures Interests: The Deeps

ACTION

Read the following aloud as the party enters the tunnels.

Ahead stretches a long rough tunnel in the earth. It soon meets others stretching into the darkness, becoming a maze in the Deeps. The scents of earth and age are strong here — these caverns are very old. Periodic glints twinkle in your light, flecks of precious metals and uncut gems trapped in the stone and dirt. Always the tunnels lead on, accompanied by an odd vertigo that tickles the mind with fancies of infinity.

Two forces occupy this area, struggling for dominance.

- A tribe of cave-dwelling ettercaps, who have to this point lived a pleasant existence accumulating the tunnels' natural treasures and eating fish caught in the lake around their village. The ettercaps have little use for the "pretties" they stockpile, using them to decorate their mud lairs, though they place an odd local emphasis on whose nest is most decorated.
- Shiny-Eye, a burrowing behemoth new to this area of the Deeps, who has recently arrived in search of treasures and prey. Shiny-Eye enslaved part of the bulette herd with his hypnotic gaze and commanded them to destroy the vault chamber above, and is considering ways to dislodge the ettercaps and take their treasures. The ettercaps know Shiny-Eye has a cache of his own, and they'd love to kill him and add to their pretty homes.

Areas controlled by each side are marked on the map, which is found on page 50, with a print-ready version on page 79. The direction the PCs head from the hole in the destroyed trap room determines the force they encounter first.

MEETING THE ETTERCAPS

Heading toward the ettercaps, the PCs first encounter 2 mobs of the creatures at the spot marked "guards." Read the following when they arrive.

As you round a bend the tunnels open into a bizarre chamber. Across the walls and floor are draped thickropy webs, pasty and glistening in your light. A bulette struggles weakly in one section of webbing, twitching oddly in the webs. Something else must be wrong with it, as the webs alone shouldn't be able to hold it.

Nearby, a strange chirruping voice calls out, "Stand still, surface-walkers! Be still or we kill!"

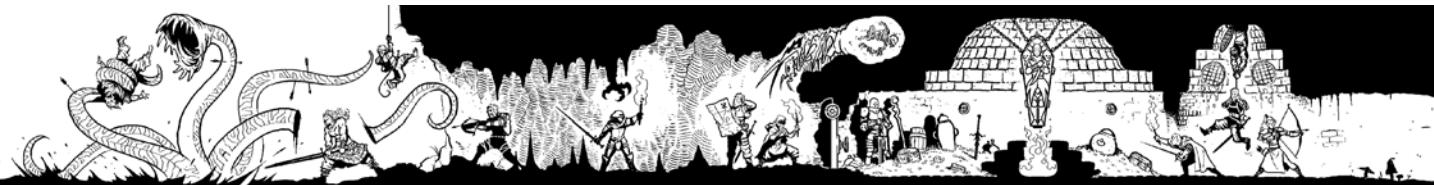
The guards are supervised by Silken-Hair-Who-Learns-Wisdom, the ettercap chief, who's come to inspect the settlement's defenses and ask for news of Shiny-Eye and his bulettes (one of which the guards recently caught). The party's light is obvious from a great distance and alerts a lookout, who summons Silken-Hair as they arrive. The chief does the talking as the other ettercaps hide among the webs (in shallow dugout holes beneath and behind). If the party can convince Silken-Hair they mean no immediate harm (with Impress checks, for example — Silken-Hair's Disposition begins at -1), he parlays with them; otherwise he orders the others to attack.

It's possible, of course, the party arrives without light. In this case, the characters make Blend or Sneak checks, as appropriate, against the ettercaps' Notice. If the ettercaps win, the scene unfolds as described above; otherwise, the party comes upon Silken-Hair and the guards in the open, as they're examining the bulette (which is heavily dosed with ettercap venom and can barely move, even if freed). The party may watch for a time, in which case Silken-Hair kills the bulette and the ettercaps go about the yeoman work of dressing it out, one mob carrying the meat back to their village.

If the encounter becomes a fight, the guards move to entangle and numb as many of the PCs as possible as quickly as possible, but don't kill anyone if they can help it. Silken-Hair interrogates any prisoners and may still be Impressed to parlay, though his Disposition has dropped to -16.

Parlaying with Silken-Hair is reasonably straightforward. He explains the situation and offers the party a third of Shiny-Eye's treasure in return for their help killing him. Successful Sense Motive checks reveal that the chief has no scruples about killing anyone and taking their possessions (he sees the party as useful and has spared them to get their help rather than out of kindness or a sense of fair play). Silken-Hair can be Haggled, but not above a 50/50 split.

Silken-Hair sends a mob of "hunters" to show the party the way to Shiny-Eye's lair. These NPCs don't fight with the characters but will help cover their retreat if it comes to that



(throwing webs to slow pursuit). Silken-Hair can also offer a small number of items — bandages and salve made of a disgusting blend of fish parts and web-spit, refreshing and vitality potions (equally disgusting), and hold person vials (web-wads) — which are sold at the prices listed on Table 4.9: Consumables (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 162). “Our people like the pretties,” he explains. The ettercaps can also supply all the fish the characters can eat (for free), which counts as fresh food (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 165).

Even a helpful party can’t stick around too long, however; Silken-Hair lets them spend one night if they want, but awakens them after 8 hours of rest and demands they go after Shiny-Eye. He’s got no patience for freeloaders.

MEETING SHINY-EYE

Heading toward Shiny-Eye, the PCs encounter him at his lair (marked on the map). Read the following as they arrive.

As you round a bend the tunnels open into a bizarre chamber. Across the walls and floor sparkle countless bits of precious metal, crystal, and stone — it’s a natural treasury, and a kaleidoscopic show in your light. Your reverie is cut short, however, by presence of bulettes. A whole pack of the boat-shaped creatures leaps to their stubby feet as you enter the chamber, growling and cough-barking.

A massive insectoid creature rises behind them, its shadow playing evilly against the far wall. It points and bellows in a deep baritone: “Be still, surface vermin! State your business or it’ll be the death of you!”

Shiny-Eye is sitting in his favorite room thinking, surrounded by his enslaved bulettes. The party’s light is obvious from a great distance and alerts the bulettes, which draw Shiny-Eye’s attention. If the party can convince the behemoth they mean no immediate harm (with Impress checks, for example — Shiny-Eye’s Disposition begins at -1), he parleys with them; otherwise he orders the bulettes to attack, wading in behind them with relish.

It’s possible, of course, the party arrives without light. In this case, the characters make Blend or Sneak checks, as appropriate, against the bulettes’ Notice. If the bulettes win, the scene unfolds as described above; otherwise, the party comes upon Shiny-Eye and the bulettes in the open, lounging in the chamber. The party may watch for a time, in which case Shiny-Eye makes a clicking noise and one bulette rises and stares into his multi-faceted eyes. A moment later the bulette leaves the chamber on the hunt (and may stumble across the party, unless they also beat its Notice).

If the encounter becomes a fight, Shiny-Eye pulls no punches, slaughtering the party as quickly as he can. He fears protracted may leave him vulnerable should the ettercaps attack.

Parlaying with Shiny-Eye is reasonably straightforward. He explains the situation and offers the party a third of the ettercaps’

treasure in return for help killing them. Successful Sense Motive checks reveal that the behemoth has no scruples about killing anyone and taking their possessions (he sees the party as useful and has spared them to get their help rather than out of kindness or a sense of fair play). Shiny-Eye can be Haggled and has no problem sacrificing most of the ettercaps’ treasure — he’s more interested in the tribe as a supply of food.

Shiny-Eye sends a bulette to show the party the way to the ettercaps’ village. It’s a dominated creature and doesn’t fight with the characters unless they make a successful Survival check (average DC) to break through to it (and even in this case they can only give it one simple command). The bulette defends itself as needed, and retreats to the behemoth’s lair if it fails a single Damage save.

Even a helpful party can’t convince Shiny-Eye to share its lair; characters who want to sleep will have to find another spot.

PLAYING BOTH SIDES

Canny adventurers may parlay with both sides before choosing to help either, or play them against one another in a devious scheme of their own. After all, there isn’t really any moral high ground in this conflict — both sides want the other dead and their possessions looted. A case could be made for the ettercaps defending their homes, but they could do that without Shiny-Eye’s death: sooner or later he’d grow tired of the conflict, eat his bulettes, and move on.

No matter how the party approaches it, the situation should provide a vibrant role-playing opportunity.

THE OPPOSITION

There are 10 mobs of ettercaps in the village but half are noncombatants — females and young who flee into the tunnels if an attack goes poorly, never to return. This number includes the guards in the room with the entangled bulette, save chieftain Silken-Hair.

Shiny-Eye controls a single mob of bulettes, which fight to the death. Shiny-Eye does his best to retreat if these are slain and vice-versa (the bulettes wanting nothing to do with anyone capable of slaughtering the creature that’s subjugated them for so long). Both tunnel away, doing their best to collapse the earth behind them.

A SPECIAL REWARD

The ettercaps have a surprisingly useful treasure the PCs may not realize they need until they find it. The creatures make special rope out of web strands and other materials that has astounding strength and durability (it operates like silk rope with a construction of Soft 3 and double the normal maximum load).

With an hour’s search after an assault, the party can recover 500 ft. of this from the village, in a variety of individual lengths (which the ettercaps use primarily to make fishing nets). Alternately, Silken-Hair offers them up to 100 ft. in any desired length if they defeat Shiny-Eye and his bulettes.

CHAPTER 3



CAST

SILKEN-HAIR-WHO-LEARNS-WISDOM (SPECIAL NPC)

"What you want, surface-things?"

Description: Silken-Hair has the same gray-white mottled skin of his fellow cave-dwelling ettercaps, along with a significant growth of fine hairs sprouting from his back — a sign of maturity and dominance in the tribe.

Motivations: Silken-Hair and his people have no serious motivation. They eat fish, decorate their homes, and ignore the surface world and its wizard's vaults.

Notes: Though rolled as normal, Silken-Hair's treasure takes the form of flecks of precious metal and raw gemstones collected from the surrounding tunnels, which he wears in his hair and uses to decorate his hut. There is no actual coin among this yield.

Silken-Hair-Who-Learns-Wisdom (Medium Horror Walker — 71 XP): Str 12, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init V; Atk IV; Def II; Res VII; Health III; Comp II; Skills: Athletics VI, Crafting II, Notice V, Sneak VI; Qualities: *Darkvision II, feat (Coordinated Attack, Great Fortitude), superior climber II*

Attacks/Weapons: Bite I (dmg 1d8+1 lethal, threat 18–20, qualities: *venomous*: numbing poison (dmg 2d6 subdual, qualities: *concentrated, fast-acting*)), Claw I × 2 (dmg 1d6+1 lethal, threat 20), Web (entangling attack II: 60 ft. Ray, Fort save DC 15 or be entangled for 2d6 rounds)

Gear: None

Treasure: 3C

ETTERCAPS (STANDARD NPCS)

"Aieee! We must flee!"

Description: Vaguely humanoid spiders, with eight eyes on their heads and long spindly limbs, ettercaps also have pebbly gray-white skin common amongst cave-dwelling creatures.

Motivations: The ettercaps follow their leader, Silken-Hair, without question.

Notes: Though rolled as normal, the ettercaps' treasure takes the form of flecks of precious metal and raw gemstones collected from the surrounding tunnels, which they use to decorate their huts. There is no actual coin among this yield.

Ettercaps (Medium Horror Walkers — 69 XP): Str 12, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 8; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init V; Atk IV; Def II; Res VII; Health III; Comp II; Skills: Athletics VI, Crafting II, Notice V, Sneak VI; Qualities: *Darkvision II, feat (Great Fortitude), superior climber II*

Attacks/Weapons: Bite I (dmg 1d8+1 lethal, threat 18–20, qualities: *venomous*: numbing poison (dmg 2d6 subdual, qualities:

concentrated, fast-acting)), Claw I × 2 (dmg 1d6+1 lethal, threat 20), Web (entangling attack II: 60 ft. Ray, Fort save DC 15 or be entangled for 2d6 rounds)

Gear: None

Treasure: 5C

SHINY-EYE (SPECIAL NPC, ADVERSARY)

"Now die, vermin!"

Description: This bipedal beetle has hooked claws, mandibles that can punch through plate steel, and two enormous compound "eyes" that incite madness and paranoia in victims.

Motivations: Shiny-Eye is an opportunist always looking out for number one. He has no motivations beyond food and treasure (his comfort trappings).

Notes: Shiny-Eye's coin treasure includes actual coin from a variety of lands, some outside the Realm.

Shiny-Eye (Large Horror Burrower/Walker — 110 XP):

Str 16, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ L (2x2, Reach 2); Spd 20 ft. burrow, 20 ft. ground; Init III; Atk IV; Def V; Res VI; Health IV; Comp II; Skills: Athletics V, Notice V, Survival X; Qualities: *Blindsight, damage reduction 4, feat (Pathfinder Basics (caverns/mountains)), superior climber II, tough I*

Attacks/Weapons: Bite III (dmg 2d10+3 lethal, threat 17–20; upgrades: *AP 2*), Claw II × 2 (dmg 1d8+3 lethal, threat 19–20; upgrades: *AP 2*), Confusing Gaze (enraging attack II: 50 ft. gaze; Will DC 15 or become *enraged* for 2d6 rounds)

Gear: None

Treasure: 2C, 2L, 1T

BULETTES (STANDARD NPCS, ADVERSARIES)

Raaar!

Description: With a long torpedo-shaped body protected by boney plates and supported by squat but powerful legs, a bulette is essentially a mobile, armored stomach.

Motivations: Shiny-Eye has enslaved these bulettes to do his bidding without question.

Bulette (Huge Animal Burrower/Walker — 113 XP):

Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 6; SZ H (2x4, Reach 1); Spd 10 ft. burrow, 50 ft. ground; Init IV; Atk VII; Def V; Res VIII; Health VI; Comp —; Skills: Acrobatics VI, Athletics III, Notice III; Qualities: *Blindsight, damage reduction 4, darkvision II, fearless II, improved sense (scent), superior jumper III, tough I*

Attacks/Weapons: Bite III (dmg 2d12+4 lethal, threat 17–20), Claw II × 2 (dmg 1d10+4 lethal, threat 19–20; upgrades: *AP 2*), Swallow III (dmg 4d8+4 acid; notes: Grapple benefit — Medium and smaller only)

Gear: None

Treasure: 1A, 2T



NEXT STEPS

This scene can be expanded as the entrance to any size cavern complex, as fits the needs of your story and setting. Several tunnels lead off the map for this exact purpose and should be closed off (as shown) if you want the action to end here.

Returning to the vault means climbing back up through the shaft in the broken chamber, a process that takes just over an hour.

SCENE 4: THE GARDEN

Deep in Aesta's vault

The garden's phosphorescent lichen offer faint ambient light.

OBJECTIVES

- Survive
- Find the trigger for the Corridor Sphere, allowing access to Scene 5

CHALLENGES

- The garden has been overtaken by carnivorous plants, which think the party might be tasty.
- Divination magic doesn't work, as in Scenes 1 and 2.

SYNOPSIS

Scene Type: Dramatic

Campaign Qualities: Tense

GM Briefing: The trigger in scene 3 rotates the Sphere such that, when the PCs climb back up the shaft from the destroyed trap room, the corridor extends 90 degrees counterclockwise from where it was before. The typically tubular corridor ends in another steel-banded door leading into a massive, long-abandoned garden chamber.

Once a repository of magical flora, this area is now overgrown with slasher vines and a fanged vase. Predictably at this point, the lever that allows access to Scene 5 is hidden in the undergrowth — where these killer plants lie in wait.

Gear: Possessions, plus whatever the characters have found.

LOCATION

This botanical laboratory once had long planting tables in neat rows, but the tables are now wrecked and the plants have taken over. Vines and runners loop and droop from every surface, and the old aisles are nearly impassable. Faintly glowing lichen lives in patches throughout the chamber.

Ambiance: The lichen's dim blue glow throws odd shadows and casts the entire chamber in an eerie gloom. The moist scent of earth is thick in the air here, coupled with the aromatic tang of weirdly flowering plants.

Terrain: Forest/jungle, indoors/settled

Cultures Interests: None

ACTION

As the party re-enters the Corridor Sphere after Scene 3 or 3.5, read the following aloud.

The corridors continue to shift, revealing new secrets of the vault. Ascending the shaft from the wrecked trap room, you find the tubular corridor heading in a new direction. As before this ends in a steel-banded wooden door.

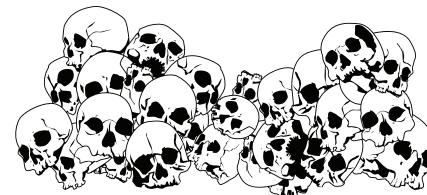
Give the party whatever time they need to prepare before opening the door and then continue...

The door opens into a teeming mass of wild vines and leaves, softly cast in the dim blue illumination of patchy growths on the walls. Perhaps this was once a garden of some kind, but the planting tables have gone unintended too long and the plant life has long since taken over. Vines the width of a man's wrist intertwine with slender runners, the mass looping and drooping from every surface. Whatever aisles once graced the chamber are impossible to see let alone navigate, and the blanket of nature grows even denser the deeper you venture into the place.

This is a direct combat encounter. The banded door swings shut once the last character moves more than 5 ft. into the room and no others linger in the first 40 ft. of the corridor (any other trigger is lost to time), and the slasher vines seize this moment to attack. The fanged vase here, not being mobile, waits for living targets to come within reach, and the slasher vines periodically try to Bull Rush characters toward it (the vase ignores unborn characters in favor of those that breathe and bleed).

After the battle, the PCs can search the room, which nets the treasure listed in the monsters' stat blocks and worthless remnants of Aesta's gardening equipment. With a successful Search check (easy DC), the party also finds a small cabinet door set halfway up the far wall (largely covered by glowing lichen), which is locked but not trapped. The lock has been compromised by lichen and rust, and can't be disabled, but it can be forced with relative ease (having a Construction of Soft 1).

Within the cabinet is a lever like the others before. Success with a Search check (tricky DC) indicates that it's connected to a mechanism outside the room, which the characters can now identify as the central corridor.



CHAPTER 3



DIRECTION

Here's a question you might be asked, and an answer for you to offer or implement.

Q: How in all the worlds did a wizard grow plants in an underground garden?

A: Well, she was a wizard. Academically speaking, it's possible that the lichen on the walls provide some kind of nourishing light, and who knows how deep the roots of all these plants go. They could reach all the way to the surface! In fact, now that you think about it, these might actually be the roots of surface plants!

CAST

FANGED VASE (SPECIAL NPC, ADVERSARY)

(Snapping maw and quivering limbs)

Description: This massive plant's center stalk is a bulb-shaped mass twice the size of a fully grown man, topped with three toothy, flesh-grinding "flowers." A mat of tentacle-fronds surrounds these mouths, ready to snatch up prey and deliver them for digestion.

Motivations: The vase has no agenda beyond sustenance. While its deep and expansive roots extend all the way to the surface and provide a measure of nourishment, its true hunger is for flesh, and it attacks living targets with flurries of tentacle slaps, followed by grappling and swallowing, until it's destroyed. The vase attacks Small targets first if it can, followed by Medium and then Large ones. It doesn't attack unborn and other dead characters unless they first attack, and even then it doesn't swallow them, choosing instead simply to beat them to death.

Fanged Vase (Large Immobile Plant — 55 XP): Str 16, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 3, Wis 2, Cha 7; SZ H (3x3, Reach 1); Spd —; Init V; Atk V; Def I; Res III; Health IV; Comp —; Skills: Search III; Qualities: *Blindsight, tough II*

Attacks/Weapons: Swallow I (dmg 1d12+3 lethal; notes: Grapple benefit — Medium and smaller only), Tentacle Slap I × 3 (dmg 1d10+3 lethal; threat 20; upgrades: *grab, reach +2*)

Gear: None

Treasure: 1A, 1G

SLASHER VINES (STANDARD NPCS, ADVERSARIES)

(Slithering vines sliding across other undergrowth)

Description: Masquerading as decorative ivy, these vines droop across the aisles and thread through other foliage. They strike quickly, seeking to immobilize prey and suckle on the blood of the dead.

Motivations: These creatures have no agenda beyond sustenance. They attack until destroyed, focusing on the closest creatures first, regardless of their Sizes or species.

Slasher Vines (Large Plant Walker — 38 XP): Str 14, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 1, Wis 2, Cha 2; SZ L (3x1, Reach 2); Spd 10 ft. ground; Init II; Atk I; Def I; Res III; Health III; Comp —; Skills: Athletics III, Notice III; Qualities: *Chameleon I (indoors/settled), grappler, improved stability*

Attacks/Weapons: Squeeze III (dmg 2d12+2 lethal; notes: Grapple benefit)

Gear: None

Treasure: 1A

NEXT STEPS

This room's lever rotates the Sphere Corridor once more, bringing the downward shaft that previously dropped into the wrecked trap room up to form another turn, this time into Scene 5.

SCENE 5: THE SANCTUM

Aesta's Treasury

This room's permanent spells project bright ambient light.

OBJECTIVES

- Survive
- Find the trigger for the Corridor Sphere one last time, allowing escape to the surface

CHALLENGES

- The vault's treasure hoard has gained sentience, and doesn't want to be looted.
- Divination magic continues to not function.

SYNOPSIS

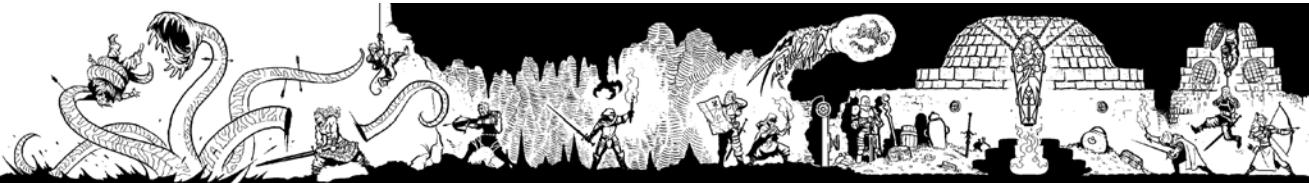
Scene Type: Dramatic

GM Briefing: The vault's final chamber once held pile after pile of coin, magic, and other treasure. Like magnets among nails, however, the magic items bled energy into the surrounding spoils. Now the entire treasure hoard is a semi-sentient hive mind with a mean streak. To collect Aesta's treasure, the party first has to kill it — before it kills them.

Gear: Possessions, plus whatever the characters have found since entering the Vault.

LOCATION

This chamber was never organized, as Aesta spent most of her time elsewhere; her research never allowed her the time she needed to sort through all the valuables, and so she simply left them where they were chuck in the first place. Today the room's filled ankle- to knee-deep in coins, jewelry, objects d'art, knick-knacks, gear, and assorted oddities.





Light is provided by a series of permanent Dancing Lights spells, which together offer bright ambient light throughout the room. Small niches are carved all over the walls, each containing a coffer, gem, or similar small treasure.

Ambiance: The dancing lights reflect, refract, and gleam from the impressive piles, and the air is crisp and clean, welcome respite from the musty, stygian blackness that's come before.

Terrain: Indoors/settled

Cultures Interests: None

ACTION

As the party re-enters the Corridor Sphere after Scene 4, read the following aloud.

The corridors have shifted once again, this time replacing the downward shaft with a turn to the right. You brace for another scrap as you approach yet another steel-banded portal...

Give the party whatever time they need to prepare before opening the door and then continue...

This time, shockingly, bright light spills from the chamber when you open the door, its warm glow a welcome respite from the stygian darkness that's come before. You squint as your eyes adjust, not sure whether to believe them. Is it over? Have you finally found... Aesta's treasure?

The floor is lost under piles of coin, jewelry, art, knick-knacks, gear, and more. Tiny orbs hover in the air, glowing with bright ambient light and reflecting, refracting, and gleaming from the beautiful blanket of riches. Still more valuables are visible in niches along the walls...

You've finally reached your destination.

Take note of characters who cry "Whoopie!" and dive into the treasure. It's an understandable reaction, but also one they're likely to regret. Casually move their figures or tokens into the room and let the characters enjoy a few moments of greedy, unbridled victory. Let cautious characters come in and prod with quarterstaffs, or kick curiously into the treasure, revealing



CHAPTER 3



the floor is indeed beneath the ankle- to knee-high piles. You can even make the first couple treasure rolls (starting with the Ls), but be sure to keep track of important details like whether the PCs put down their weapons and shields.

After a couple minutes of high-fiving and triumphant exultation (maybe spreading the party throughout the room), read the following.

There's a tug at your leg, followed by a tidal wave of coins rushing through and around your legs. The wave becomes a whirlwind as the coins are kicked up into the air, swirling around you. Other treasures are swept into the funnel, violently bashing or slicing past. All the glittering prizes you were already selling or mounting on your walls at home suddenly pull together into something vaguely resembling life, with two of the largest gems surfacing where eyes might be. They flare, burning with malevolent ire.

With a sinking lurch, you realize that this room may truly be the end of your quest after all.

The Hoard would prefer to start with an Ambush, and does unless it fails its Tactics check (versus a team Notice check).

DIRECTION

Here are some questions you might be asked, and answers for you to offer or implement.

Q: Wait a minute, the door to the treasure room was unlocked and not trapped?

A: This deep in the vault, why bother? The vault is the lock — and you've well and truly picked it.

Q: What are the illuminating orbs?

A: They're intangible points of light floating in the air. The smart money's on magic (which is true — a successful DC 10 Spellcasting check identifies them as Dancing Lights).

CAST

THE HOARD (STANDARD NPCS, ADVERSARIES)

(shifting, clinking coins and other treasures)

Description: The treasure piles are now a single, combined creature, magically granted life by an unlikely combination of items and the vault's unique properties. Thousands of coins and items rise in slashing sheets and fall in crushing waves, writhing and undulating around and amidst the entire party. Sometimes the mockery of a face appears, viewing the party through jewel-eyes burning with malevolent fire, and it's in these moments when the characters think they hear a faint, demeaning titter. It's every greedy dungeon delver's worst nightmare.

Motivations: The Hoard is only semi-intelligent, concerned strictly with killing intruders (and adding any goodies they carry to its mass). Despite this, the creature takes on the party in a cunning and tactically sound manner, making full use of its abilities and feats to separate the characters and attack from all angles.

Notes: While the Hoard is a single entity, its stats are those of a full mob of standard monsters, the better to illustrate its "everywhere at once" nature and attacks. Each of these NPCs operates and acts like a single adversary and the Hoard's overall size and shape diminishes as each adversary is slain. There's great potential here to drive the players into a frenzy, as every hit could destroy some of the treasure the party came here to claim.

The Hoard (Medium Construct Horror Walkers — 141 XP): Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 2); Spd 10-ft. ft. ground; Init III; Atk VIII; Def III; Res VIII; Health VI; Comp III; Skills: Athletics III, Disguise VIII, Search III, Tactics V; Qualities: *Chameleon II (indoors/settled), class ability (Captain: Battle Planning I (Crush Them!, No Prisoners!), Scout: Sneak Attack II), damage immunity (acid), damage reduction 5, feat (Coordinated Attack, Misdirection Basics, Wolf Pack Basics, Wolf Pack Mastery), hive mind, tough I, treacherous, veteran II*

Attacks/Weapons: Slam III (dmg 2d6+3 lethal: threat 19–20; upgrades: *grab*), Squeeze II (dmg 1d10+3 lethal; notes: Grapple benefit)

Gear: None

Treasure: 10A, 5C, 5L

NEXT STEPS

Nestled in one of the many niches along the walls, a small coffer is bolted onto its shelf. Inside this coffer is a button, and pressing the button rotates the Corridor Sphere one last time, shifting the entrance formerly leading to the plant room into a vertical shaft leading up. This reconnects with the entry shaft, letting the PCs exit the vault at last (assuming they can make the final 80 ft. climb).

The party emerge from the vault heroes, and they'll doubtless live on in stories at the Crossing and beyond for many generations to come. Oh, and there's all that treasure. That, too.

REWARDS AND PENALTIES

Don't forget to add XP for adversaries (listed in their stat blocks).

SCENE 0: MADIGAN'S CROSSING

A. Speaking with Salty

25 XP





SCENE 1: ABOVE AND BELOW

A. Navigating down the entry shaft 50 XP

A. Bypassing or disabling the Lock and Pit trap 70 XP

SCENE 2: ISOLATION

A. Determining that a rope anchored down the entry shaft was cut 40 ft. up 25 XP

A. Opening the far door (and triggering the trap) 25 XP

A. Bypassing or disabling the Museum Corridor Trap 35 XP

SCENE 3: WHAT LURKS BENEATH

A. Navigating down the new shaft 25 XP

A. Beating 1–2 Challenges in the investigation 50 XP

B. Beating 3–4 Challenges in the investigation 75 XP

C. Watching the Sphere Corridor's shift 100 XP

SCENE 3.5: THE CAVERNS BELOW

A. Parlaying with Siken-Hair without fighting 50 XP

A. Parlaying with Shiny-Eye without fighting 50 XP

SCENE 4: THE GARDEN

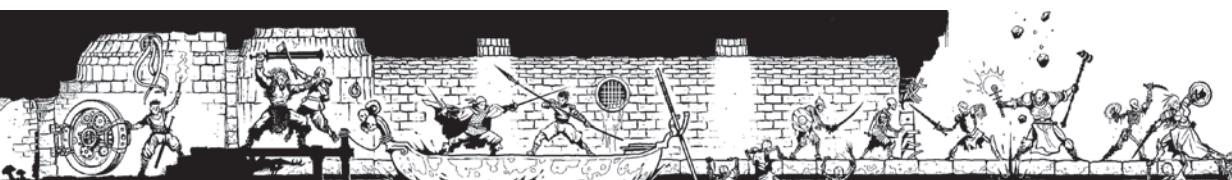
A. Navigating up the shaft from the ruined trap room 25 XP

A. Using the lever to move the Corridor Sphere 50 XP

SCENE 5: THE SANCTUM

A. Testing the depth of the piles before the attack 25 XP

A. Preventing the Hoard's Ambush 25 XP





CHAPTER 4: ADVENTURING IN THE REALM

Time of High Adventure features three separate adventures that share similar themes and a few common locations mentioned in passing. Valespire, for example, was introduced early in the development of Fantasy Craft. We wanted an evocative name for a place that could appear in any setting without dragging along baggage GMs had to incorporate in their games. After all, Fantasy Craft was, and still very much is, about *your* worlds, *your* stories, and *your* characters, and it's always been critical to us not to interfere with that.

Initially, we didn't even decide what Valespire was. It could have been a valley, or a kingdom, or a mythical, magical glade misplaced when the gods blinked at the dawn of time. Of course, gamers being curious creatures, we saw questions about the Valespire and the rest of the Realm almost immediately upon the independent release of this volume's first adventure, *The Darkest Hour*. They intensified when we put out *The Cleansing of Black Spur*, partly because the core book didn't include a default setting (another effort to make the game *yours*), but since there are three original worlds in the *Adventure Companion*, we were still content to leave the questions for you to answer.

Then came *The Vault* and plans for this book, and we saw an opportunity not only for a (small) expansion of the Realm and a struggle that Loren Dean had (perhaps inadvertently) written into the backdrop, but also to add some further practical advice about using the adventures, which brings us to...

FURTHER EXPLOITS

...in which we explore new beginnings and never-endings.

EXPANDING THE DARKEST HOUR

The simplest way to introduce *The Darkest Hour* at your table is as a diversion on the way to another quest (perhaps with a destination in a distant land, beyond the region we refer to here as The Realm). All that's necessary is that the party pass through a cozy mountain valley named Fels Cut, wherein it finds an unassuming coaching inn named the Tipsy Wyvern. Small villages like Andra are easy to place, and just as easy to overrun without serious story repercussions, so a zombie invasion shouldn't seriously disrupt your greater plans.





At first, you may feel the need to scale back the volume of proper names in this adventure — Barald's journal names three other sages and at least one other village, for example — but they can also be a boon to your campaign backfill. The more names are swirling around the richer the world seems, and the more options the players perceive.

The adventure's conclusion presents a wide array of new hooks. Ideally, the heroes have contained the Soul Star, slain the Grave Wurm, and either captured or killed Master. The King's troops sweep through the area the next day, and this provides the perfect opportunity to introduce your players to local nobility. The encounter can lead several different directions, from "You cleaned up that Andra business nicely. I have another task demanding adventurers as resourceful as you." to "Curses, you've discovered my secret cult connection! Now I must have you assassinated!"

Rebuilding Fels Cut can occupy the party, which may have its eye on a future Holding in the village of Andra. This is a bottomless wellspring of potential hooks, from "We're so glad we found you! Andra's been siezed by bandits and they're living in your manor!" to "Something slimy's taken up residence in Zerun's tunnels. Any chance you'd crawl in there for a look?"

There's also great potential for follow-on Church intrigue. Barald's journal mentions interest in Master and the Soul Star, and the party can make powerful allies in the clergy if it returns the artifact "to protect the Realm from its vile influence." This almost certainly secures future invites to act in the name of Church (see page 71), which invariably lead to confrontations with sects of the infamous Circle (see page 72).

Of course, depending on the state of the "Church" in your world (and the composition of your group), the players may decide they either can't or won't return the Soul Star. Powerful artifacts are always tempting Prizes, after all, but they also come with a price. Parties driven by a sense of altruism may find themselves tempted to use it (Can't get into that castle? You have access to your own army of undead, you know...), while those driven by greed may find themselves as much slaves to the Soul Star as the other way around (especially if one or more of them fail Will saves when using it).

EXPANDING THE CLEANSING OF BLACK SPUR

Much like *The Darkest Hour*, this adventure can be slotted into any road journey, offering a chance for heroism and some extra XP on the way to a greater story goal. All that's needed is an abandoned garrison near the party's route, which is soon revealed as the sanctioned Black Spur Keep. The fortification's backstory can serve your campaign flavor, offering color and depth to a location that might otherwise be little more than a name on a map, and also cast a shade of grey over both the local King and the leadership of the Realm's Church.

With the Reaper defeated (or never arrived), the party must decide what to do with any surviving cultists. They can't just turn them loose, and while some may argue to kill them (or let the goblins do it), others may want to haul them to the nearest asylum, a location dripping with story potential ("You there! Arrange my release and I'll lead you to a great treasure, yes! The Duke incarcerated me here when I refused to tell him where it is, but let me out and I'll share it with you, yeeeeessssssss!").

The nearest asylum, of course, is in the Realm's capital city of Valespire (see, told you we'd expand on the idea), and a visit to its bustling streets can pave the way for limitless adventure. The party may soon find itself tracking cult cells, only to discover a practitioner in town is the scion of a noble house. Before the characters know it they're embroiled in an escalating series of assassination attempts as the scion's shamed family and allies try to silence everyone involved, including their wayward son.

If not the cultists then Pader Agustin may lead the party to Valespire, where he must deliver the Infernum to his superiors at the Church Archivum. The magic imprisoning the Hauntbeast has been left deliberately vague so you can add specifics fitting your campaign, and spellcasters may be tapped to help strengthen the spells holding the monster at bay. The whole party could be dispatched to gather obscure magical components or lore important to the effort, and these quests or a reveal of Agustin's family secret may get the group tarred as heretics, despite them technically working "on the same side."

The big hook here, though, is the Hauntbeast. Establishing a good villain is 90% of the work in any memorable campaign, and while the party learns this adversary's goblin name in this adventure, the "Hauntbeast" can be an alias for any imprisoned world-shattering, other-worldly creature in your world — a world-shattering, other-worldly creature that knows the characters by name, and has a reason to want them dead, or worse. The Hauntbeast can easily become a running adversary, its cults hunting the party in the waking world and its pervasive influence infiltrating their dreams. This conflict can be as confined or explosive as you want, and could even take center stage in a full-scale battle to save the entire world.

EXPANDING THE VAULT

The Vault is quite a departure from the other two adventures, being less a chance outing than a known destination for veteran and/or foolish parties. Madigan's Crossing can be encountered anywhere, of course, but the adventure is used to best effect if rumors of Aesta's vault dribble into campaign legend long before the players arrive. Too often players approach dungeons with workmanlike precision, ignoring anything that doesn't aid their descent. Yet story and legend are key to developing the Vault as a truly threatening place — the sort of place *players* avoid "until we've got a few more levels under our belts." Building that kind of mystique creates a new type of campaign reward, and makes besting the Vault a major accomplishment.





Despite all this, the Vault doesn't even need Aesta. It can easily be stripped of backstory and dropped into an existing dungeon, as a major milestone, a choke point before the party can progress, or as the ultimate goal of a larger exploration. All you really need is a round shaft down, and you're in. The adventure doesn't even need to end with the Vault, as the caverns below are left open-ended for further subterranean fun.

Beating the Vault can spark many adventures. Conner Madigan may have a secret package his grandfather left for anyone who emerges alive — a package that can contain any hook(s) you desire: a treasure map leading away from the Vault; secret lore about Aesta's lifelong work and her insidious goals; a request to pay visits to the loved ones of other adventuring parties that never made it out; or even a curse permitting Old Man Madigan to haunt the characters who succeeded where his master failed — at least until they put his spirit to rest.

Victory over Aesta's creation also brings significant local reputation, which has rewards and perils of its own. Nobility may wish to entertain "the delving heroes," only to attract an endless string of up-and-coming punks seeking to challenge the party "who ain't so tough as all that," plus rival treasure-hunters after the party's take from the expedition.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The freeform nature of these adventures lets you play them together in any combination, though *The Darkest Hour* and *The Cleansing of Black Spur* should probably precede The Vault in most cases, especially since the former two can easily create hooks leading to the third.

One option finds Master (from *The Darkest Hour*) a powerful cultist and possibly also a member of the Circle (see page 72). While he believes he's on a personal quest in this adventure, he's instead (and of course) serving the ends of an even more powerful demon. In this scenario the Grave Wurm is an avatar of the Hauntbeast just like the Reaper, and by using the Soul Star (a piece of the demon's amethyst left eye), "Master" is actually advancing *his true master's* agenda of release from its prison beneath Black Spur Keep.

The party foils Master's plot and ends up with the Soul Star, which is taken for safekeeping by the High Church (with much thanks and a small monetary reward). An adventure or two later the characters travel past Black Spur Keep and become embroiled in Pader Agustin's misbegotten quest, nor realizing the stories are connected. The cult is put down, the goblins are impressed, and Agustin is given the Infernum (and possibly an escort back to Valespire).

Back at the Archivum, Agustin and his colleagues establish that the demon's prison can in fact be strengthened, but it requires the use of another artifact called the Crown of Fate, on which the Soul Star must be mounted. The Crown is a magical amplifier,

allowing a spellcaster to seal the demon's prison forever. Agustin can retrieve the Soul Star from the Church treasury, but only if the Crown can be found and shown to the Church elders as proof that something good will be done with the infernal gem.

Archivum records show that the Crown's last known owner was archmage Aesta Vessamden, who reportedly secured it in the vault of her personal stronghold to keep it out of "the wrong hands." Unfortunately, she died many years ago, and her stronghold is in ruins (though the vault still stands, and none who have entered have ever returned).

This is just one of many ways to thread these adventures together, and you may be thinking of a few more even now. If so, great! Make yourself some notes and call your players — you've got a campaign plan.

THE REALM

Like the Fantasy Craft rules, the adventures here are built to be customized to taste. They can easily be blended into any campaign world or time period with little to no work, and as shown in the previous section they can springboard into further adventures or combine for greater continuity with ease. Here we offer a bit of expansion for their shared backdrop, The Realm, and showcase a few ways to get the most out of it, whether you're stripping it for parts or using it as written.

BASE ASSUMPTIONS

Like many open-ended fantasy lands, the Realm leaves many details to the GM's device, yet you can run adventures here without preparation if you like. This is because, unlike the campaign settings in our forthcoming *Adventure Companion*, which adjust the rules to showcase the game's world building tools in action, the Realm is intended to use the core rulebook "as written." By default, every species, monster, treasure, terrain type, rule, and core character option in Fantasy Craft is available unless the GM says otherwise.

The Realm assumes the campaign's Era is Feudal, the most common era of classic fantasy gaming and the one with the greatest amount of core gear and rules support (for more information about the Feudal Era, see *Fantasy Craft*, page 306). Of course, there's nothing in particular preventing you from shifting to another time — the Vault's technology and a few pieces of NPC gear may seem advanced in an earlier Era, but both are easily chalked up to unique or "magical" items particular to those characters, and needn't set greater precedent unless desired.

Because the Realm is also intended as a traditional fantasy setting with all character options available, the *miracles* and *sorcery* campaign qualities are in effect (see *Fantasy Craft*, pages 324–325). This is especially important when planning a Realm-based campaign, considering the long-term struggle between the Church and the Circle (see right).



MAGIC AND MIRACLES

Adding *miracles* or *sorcery* qualities won't drastically affect the adventures in this book. In fact, you can easily change the environment to fit the thrust of your campaign with just a few tweaks, like so...

- *Generous Universe*: For a campaign in which the heroes are Church agents, this quality rewards their victories over the Circle and its minions (and vice-versa).
- *Lost Magic*: The laws of the land banning certain types of magic might be more draconian in your campaign, making this a useful tool in shaping your world. Some potential lost Disciplines may include Calling, Charm, Secrets, and the whole of the Reaper School.
- *Strict Universe*: The animosity between the Church and the Circle, while not an all-out war, could easily escalate with the heroes at the front line. This quality is a great addition to such games, forcing the heroes to choose a side and stick with it.
- *Wild Magic*: Another fun campaign quality, *wild magic* is reflective of the Church's belief that unfettered arcane power can never be trusted.

VALESPIRE

In a place of myth and mystery, south of the grandeur of Thistledown Forest where ancient tree lords sway in mocking amusement, and north of the Elemental Barrens where all is waste and woe, there stands a spire of glittering minerals trapped in amber. Legend has it that when the gods placed the last stone in the Realm they fashioned a javelin from the sun, the moon, and the stars, and cast it into their creation to point the way for the many fledgling species they'd sprinkled across the land.

The javelin cracked the earth in all directions, forming a vast array of canyons, and each species set out through one of them to find its new home. The elves found the Thousand Whisper Glade and the dwarves descended into a pit they later discovered was the nostril of an apocalyptic beast (fortunately, it's still sleeping and they've grown fond of the smell). The saurians swam to a nearby island and forbid visitors, but return frequently with tasty turtle meat they catch in the icy depths. All gods' children found separate homes, yet they allied together to protect them.

They created the sentinels known today as road-wardens.

LAW OF THE LAND

The people of the Realm worship on roads as others might worship at temples. They travel as a form of reverence, to give thanks to their heavenly creators, and they instituted the road-wardens not only to keep the roads safe and well-maintained — for roads are the life-blood of any culture spread across this much territory — but also to keep the peace, spiritually speaking, and over time their tales became gospel.

THE CHURCH

The road-wardens were granted private sanctums in every city in the Realm, places where they could meditate on lessons learned in their travels and how to reveal the glory of the gods to those not fortunate enough to walk their path. These sanctums were eventually ordained and drew congregations, forming the union known today as The Church of the Realm. Road-wardens remain a critical component of the Realm's system of faith, but now they do most of their meditating out in the wild, visiting their former sanctums primarily to bolster support and deliver the Word from neighboring territories.

ALIGNMENT: THE CHURCH

Whether patrolling, traveling, or simply admiring the roads of the Realm, the flock all have one thing in common: faith that their ultimate destination is salvation.

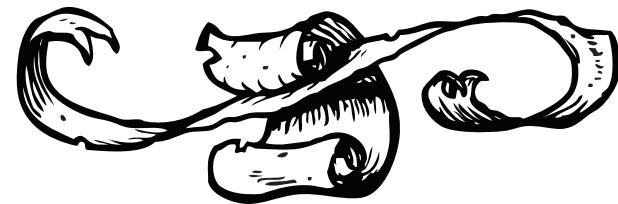
Paths: Beasts, Heroism, Knowledge, Order

Alignment Skills: Athletics, Investigate, Ride, Survival

Ritual Weapon: Mace

Avatar: Guardian Angel

Opposing Alignment: The Circle



ARCHIVISTS

The Valespire hosts many significant cultural institutions but few are as esteemed as the Archivum, where Church scholars record miracles and other gifts from the heavens. Sadly, the Archivists' attention is now split between their calling and tracking down heretical arcana (see page 72).

Archivists (Medium Folk Walker — 76 XP): Str 10, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init IV; Atk II; Def IV; Res VI; Health: IV; Comp: IV; Skills: Blend V, Haggle V, Investigate VIII, Prestidigitation VI, Search VI; Alignment: The Church; Qualities: *Bright* II, *critical surge*, *devoted* (*Heroism* I, *Knowledge* II)

Attacks/Weapons: Mace (dmg 1d8 lethal, threat 20, qualities: AP 4)

Mounts and Vehicles: Riding horse (Spd 50 ft. ground (Run 250 ft.); Travel 7; SZ/Def L/IV)

Gear: Holy book (journal), scribe's kit

Treasure: 1C, 1T

CHAPTER 4



INQUISITORS

Unlike Archivists, the Inquisitors had no place in the Church before the arcane schism (*see below*). Their only focus is eliminating the unholy threat posed by sorcery.

Inquisitors (Medium Folk Walker — 67 XP): Str 14, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init III; Atk V; Def IV; Res III; Health: VI; Comp: I; Skills: Athletics V, Intimidate VIII, Resolve IV, Survival V, Tactics V; Alignment: The Church; Qualities: *Class ability (Paladin: battle planning I (I want them alive!, press on!), stand in judgment I), fearless II*

Attacks/Weapons: Keen Mace (dmg 1d8 lethal, threat 20, qualities: AP 4, keen 4)

Mounts and Vehicles: Riding horse (Spd 50 ft. ground (Run 250 ft.); Travel 7; SZ/Def L/IV)

Gear: Manacles, jaw trap

Treasure: 2G

CHURCH QUESTS

Typical Church quests may involve...

INSPIRING THE MASSES

The Church's primary focus remains the work of the road-wardens ("it continues as it began, the road ever onward..."). The missionaries travel the Realm, seeking guidance through experience — not only their own but from others they encounter, and they pass this wisdom along in each city they visit.

CLAIMING ARTIFACTS

The Archivists' job is all the more important now, if only to keep powerful arcana out of the hands of necromancers, diabolists, and other sorcerers.

HUNTING CULTISTS

Spearheading the continuing crusade against the Circle, the Inquisitors seek retribution for all the order's past sins (and according to Church elders, they're legion).

What's the Circle, you ask? Well...

THE CIRCLE

Long ago, arcanists were accepted throughout the Realm. They cast spells the way smiths forged weapons and merchants plied their trade, offering their services to adventuring parties, courtly nobles, and the great trading houses of the land. Many Lords and even a Prince or two were known sorcerers, weaving magic as often to promote their celebrity as their causes. Then, one day, a small group of radicals did the unthinkable: they looked to the stars and moons and other bodies in the heavens, long believed the temples of the gods, and asked, "How?"

At private gatherings in cloistered recesses of Archivum libraries, deep forest cottages, and the personal retreats of a few wealthy supporters, these free thinkers speculated on the nature and history of the universe. They mapped the skies, charted the seasons, and wrestled with the fundamentals of time, gravity, and weather. They studied every species in the land, and came to realize that contrary to accepted faith, they had simply too many things in common to have been created apart — and it was in that discovery that they changed the world.

There's a popular Church prayer: "A thousand thousand species, each created in the likeness of its own lords, yet as the gods share the heavens, so shall we share the Realm, and we are honored and privileged to live by their example." The radicals admitted it was touching thought, but it was scarcely supported by their findings. Indeed, they were seeing an altogether different pattern, and they called it, and themselves, the Circle.

With a name and the truth behind their cause, the Circle set about educating the masses. They taught that everything was cyclic, that the heavens and seasons and life itself were guided by natural forces beyond anyone's control, even theirs (and having pushed their magical inquiries much further than anyone else on record, they had hard evidence to back up their claims). Worst of all, they proved, to a great many, that the moons and stars in the sky were not the celestial palaces of gods and life-forgers, but merely far-away suns, perhaps lighting other worlds like this one. It was in this that they finally drew the attention, and hatred, of the Church of the Realm.

The history of the Church's bloody crusade against the Circle is well known, recounted as a cautionary tale for children whose eyes burn too brightly with wonder and curiosity. Within a single generation the flock's stoutest of heart and ablest of body were trained, mobilized, and unleashed as Inquisitors, whose task it was to wreak righteous fury on any who dared attack the Word. "Free thinkers," especially those known to have subscribed to the Circle's heretical agenda, were imprisoned without trial. Though efforts were made to reform them most perished deep in the bowels of the Spirit Forge, that infamous mountain aerie at the edge of the Howling Maw.

A special fate befell sorcerers, particularly those who claimed to have made contact with "true gods" from places beyond the Realm. Even the Circle's founders criticized these members, who dabbled in necromancy, summoning, and other dark arts, but the Church's reckoning became legend. Inquisitors hunted them ruthlessly, and when they tracked one down they would subject them to "the Forsakening," a process by which their memories were stripped away, one by one, until nothing remained but a hollow, frightened shell. The process had a happy side effect supporting the crusade, in that it also robbed victims of motor control, their muscles seizing until they were eventually frozen in place, as rigid and immobile as a stuffed trophy. This is exactly how the Inquisitors left them, as warnings to any who might consider similar pursuits.



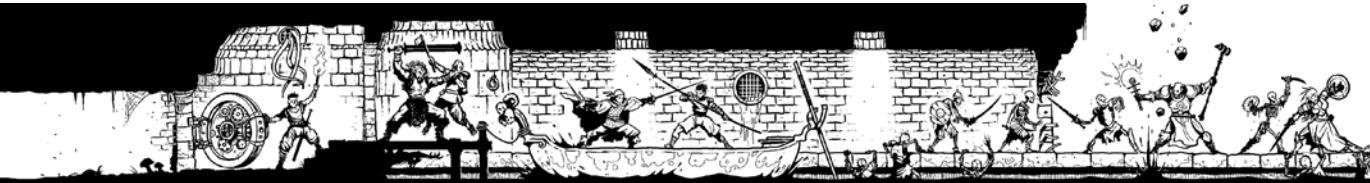
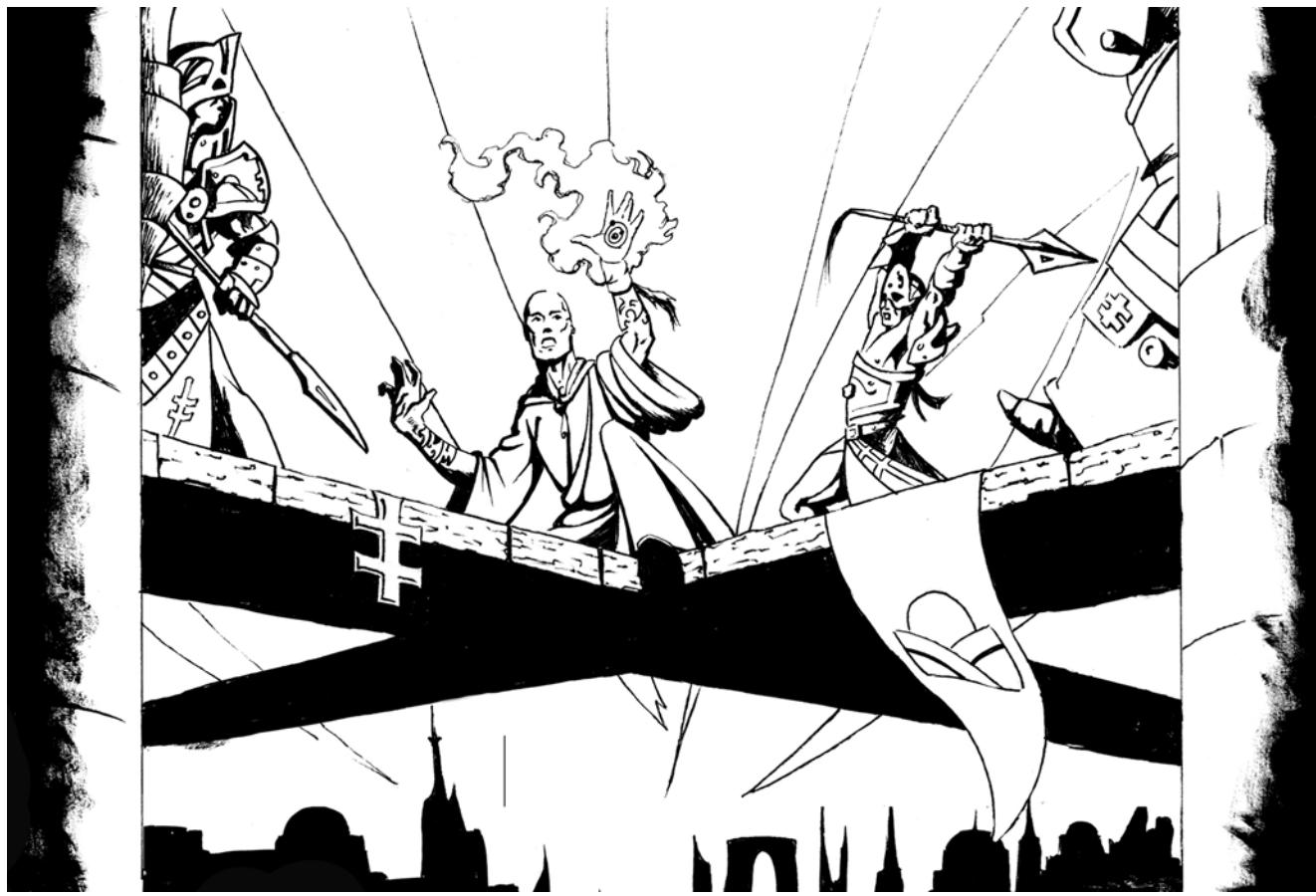
In truth, the Forsaking is not a miracle (as the Church claims), nor is it a byproduct of the Circle's "dangerous" research. It's actually a poison, derived from the roots of the Cresting Willow, a rare flower only encountered near the Spirit Forge in the first weeks of spring. Its unique properties might never have been discovered, if not for the Willow's glistening dew, which can be visible for miles at dawn. Church acolytes originally mistook the illusion for a sign from the gods, and followed it to the cliffs where the Willow appears. They collected the flower and brought it back to the Archivum, who later learned of the flower's potential through an unfortunate mishap involving a bishop now frozen in one of their labs.

Mechanically, Forsaking poison has the *concentrated* upgrade and the following stats: incubation: 1 hour; Fort save (DC 14) or suffer 1 temporary Dex impairment and lose all memory of 1 event, person, place, or thing chosen by the GM. The Dex loss represents the target's gradual loss of muscle control, each point of impairment representing another seizure and stiffer mobility afterward. When the victim's Dex reaches 0, he is frozen in place forever. No process has yet been found to reverse this fate. GMs are advised not to hand this poison out freely, though a fair method might grant access to heroes with the *potent elixir II* ability or the Alchemy Supremacy feat.

The Forsaking was just what the Church needed to draw the Circle out of hiding, and in fact, it spurred them to full-scale war. The conflict has continued for centuries, though the Church has the ears of the nobility and most of the populace, plus a very public, very well-trained force of Inquisitors and hired mercenaries (read: adventurers), so the state of the struggle today is somewhat one-sided.

In its present state, "the Circle" is a motley network of mages, sorcerers, necromancers, artificers, and other will-workers, still working to solve the riddles of the universe. They don't try to educate the masses anymore, preferring instead to live long enough to answer the many mounting questions that plague their order. Why, for example, do all their attempts to communicate with the gods instead draw creatures like the Hauntbeast? Are these beings merely closer to the Realm or are they all that lives beyond our understanding?

Circle leaders shudders to consider the latter possibility, for while they don't share the Church's faith in well-meaning divine bloodlines watching over and protecting the worthy, they aren't prepared to consider a world in which the mortal species are indeed the pinnacle of creation. None of them deserve that title, not with the crimson staining their boots, especially when so much of it belonged to innocents.



CHAPTER 4



There are nine masters at the head of the modern Circle — one for each School derived from nature, plus an Archmage who is master of all eight, and therefore wisest of them all. Only the Archmage has access to the journals of his predecessors, which are his guide and conscience in times of turmoil. The Circle's current Archmage, Cassin Meer, is calling for an end to the long war with the Church, espousing a view of the evolving pattern that reveals the folly of continued bloodshed.

Sadly, many of his colleagues, and even a few of the Nine, have no such intentions. They point to the continued persecution of the enlightened and call for more violence, not less. There are even rumblings of splinter groups forming within the core of the Circle, which could jeopardize all the knowledge it's collected and all the mysteries it's yet to unravel. For the time being, the Nine abide these rumors, hoping truly dangerous individuals like Achela and Master are exceptions rather than a trend. In time, they accept, the pattern will be revealed.

ALIGNMENT: THE CIRCLE

As a group that has long suffered Church oppression, the Circle pays little heed to ritual or worship. There will always be outliers that form cults to the otherworldly creatures certain magic seems to attract, but most Circle adherists place their faith in the cyclic pattern that has guided everything since the dawn of time. Under the guidance of Cassin Meer, the Circle's Alignment has gradually shifted of late, now embracing techniques formerly relegated to Mist Dancers and other spellcasting thieves (see *Circle Magisters, next*).

Paths: Deceit, Knowledge, Magic, Secrets

Alignment Skills: Bluff, Crafting, Investigate, Tactics

Ritual Weapon: Shod Staff

Avatar: Lich Circle Magister (former Archmage)

Opposing Alignment: The Church

CIRCLE MAGISTERS

At Cassin Meer's behest, certain members of the Circle have trained with the famed Valespire thieves' guild (though how he brokered the deal is anyone's guess — some fear he may have offered an open-ended favor that has yet to come due). The result are the Magisters, "sorcerer-spies" who act as couriers and liaisons between the Circle's broadening ranks.

The Magisters also seek out new magic and secrets buried by the Church, and serve as representatives when the Circle needs outside help (most often in the form of adventuring parties willing to stand up against the Church for coin or creed).

Though Magisters are perhaps best equipped to blend with the uninitiated, they most often employ their formidable talents to remain undetected, and only fight if cornered.

Their loyalty to the Circle and its tenants is absolute, and even if they're captured or slain a rune carved into their flesh incinerates their bodies in a conflagration of arcane fire.

Circle Magister (Medium Folk Walker — 50 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init V; Atk III; Def IV; Res IV; Health: II; Comp: III; Skills: Bluff III, Blend III, Investigate V, Spellcasting V; Spells: Detect Magic, Expedited Retreat, Flawless Fib, Identify I, Mage Scribe I, Protection from Alignment, Scrye I; Qualities: *Class ability (Assassin: hand of death, quick on your feet; Explorer: bookworm I), death throes (fire), expanded spellbook II, honorable, interest (Alignment: Circle)*

Attacks/Weapons: Shod staff (dmg 1d8 lethal, threat 19–20, qualities: *double, trip*)

Mounts and Vehicles: Riding horse (Spd 50 ft. ground (Run 250 ft.); Travel 7; SZ/Def L/IV)

Gear: Partial leather armor (DR 1; Resist Fire 3; DP –1; ACP –0; Spd —; Disguise +0), mage's pouch

Treasure: 1C, 1M

PATER MAGIS

Pater Magis are senior sorcerers assigned to the group's strongholds and safe houses. They're charged with enforcing the Inner Circle's dictums, screening new members, and seeing to the needs of arcanists in their region. They toe the Circle's current line and are militantly wary of outsiders. Each Pater reports directly to the Inner Circle and is the closest most people will ever get to the society's leaders.

Pater Magis (Medium Folk Walker — 100 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 16; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground; Init VII; Atk II; Def VI; Res VII; Health: IV; Comp: VII; Skills: Crafting VII, Intimidate VII, Investigate VIII, Spellcasting VIII; Spells: Call from Beyond II, Charm Person III, Cloudkill, Command II, Detect Lies, Disintegrate, Freedom of Movement, Project Presence, Resilient Sphere I, True Seeing; Qualities: *Class ability (Mage: master of magic), expanded spellbook II, feat (Double Cast, Hidden Spells), interest (Alignment: Circle), unlimited spell points*

Attacks/Weapons: Superior drake-crafted shod staff (dmg 1d8+1 lethal, threat 19–20, qualities: *double, trip*; special: may be used as a mage's pouch)

Mounts and Vehicles: Riding horse (Spd 50 ft. ground (Run 250 ft.); Travel 7; SZ/Def L/IV) or none

Gear: Scroll of Restoration II, Scroll of Power Word: Recall

Treasure: 1C, 2L, 2M

CIRCLE QUESTS

The Circle's greatest interest is the acquisition, preservation, and concealment of knowledge about the patterns of the world, particularly those exploring the nature and limits of arcane magic. Decades in hiding and a very contentious relationship with the powers-that-be have forced their hand, prompting them to use "under-handed" techniques learned from grifters and thieves, and they also sometimes rely on outsiders (like adventuring



parties) to act as intermediaries and for discreet and isolated tasks. Such parties never meet their employers or see the big picture; that way, even if they're captured, they can't betray the Circle to the Church or the Crown.

Typical Circle quests may involve...

REVEALING SECRETS

The machinations of the Inner Circle are a mystery to all, their plans guided by glimpses of the future, riddles posed by extradimensional beings, and internal rivalries so complex some of the Nine can't decipher them. Despite such a small and intimate leadership, the Circle has dozens of adventuring groups, allied guilds, archaeological expeditions, and other enterprises on its payroll at a time, each gathering tiny pieces of a very large and mysterious puzzle. The form these secrets take, and the tapestry they eventually weave, can form the basis of an entire campaign.

RECOVERING STOLEN ARTIFACTS

The Church's hunt for artifacts and relics of all sorts has cost the Realm's magic community dearly, for the secrets of many great masters have been denied, declared unclean, and locked away forever. Recovering these rare treasures — by any means necessary — remains a long-standing Circle priority. Contracted agents are frequently hired to burgle Church vaults, accost treasure-seeker trains, and even kidnap Archivists if even a minor artifact is at stake.

LIBERATING COMRADES

While many low-ranking Circle initiates are branded with runes that destroy them to prevent their capture or betrayal, experienced mages are far too valuable to be lost. The first goal in recovering these captives is to reveal as little about the Circle as possible — preferably even concealing that the captive is a caster, let alone affiliated with the enemy. Failing that, liberation assignments tend to become bloodbaths, eliminating anyone and everyone who's uncovered Circle secrets.

AUTHOR'S AFTERWORD

Back in the day, when I was 7 or 8, my mother brought home this slim red box with a dragon, a wizard, and a spearman on the cover. To this day she's not sure what she thought would come of it — I think she hoped Dungeons & Dragons could become a family activity, though it never did. The cover was sure cool, however, and I begged and begged, in my 7- or 8-year-old way, until she just let me have the box and read the books within. I still have my copy of *Keep on the Borderlands* — with the illustrations colored in with crayola markers.

Anybody who gets in as young as I did doesn't get to play for a while. You need friends who play, and they have to live nearby. I found a few: Colin, Reid, Chad, and others, but we were all 8 or 9 years old, so not much got done. Still, we pestered our parents, who continued to buy us books because even if there were weird rumors about the game it had to be safer than drugs or porn — and it kept us out of trouble. So we amassed big piles of RPGs and pretended to play. I read module after module after module.

Keep on the Borderlands. Isle of Dread. Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth. Ravenloft. Dungeonland. Pharaoh. The stories fascinated me, but it would be five or six years before I met anyone who actually *played*. High School junior Bill Ringland was delighted when one fateful lunchtime my goofy freshman band-nerd self walked up to his table in the school library, asked about what he was drawing, learned it was for a Traveller game, and immediately asked if I could play. I met Steve Hough in the same game (some Crafty fans may recognize him as the company's lead graphic designer). We became a tight circle — Bill, Steve, Chris, Bryan, Afshin, Rob (Vaux, formerly of AEG), and others. We played and played and played some more, and over time I found new adventures: Queen of the Demonweb Pits. Shadows over Bogenhafen. Shadows of Yog-Sothoth. The Ruins of Warsaw. The Ruins of Undermountain.

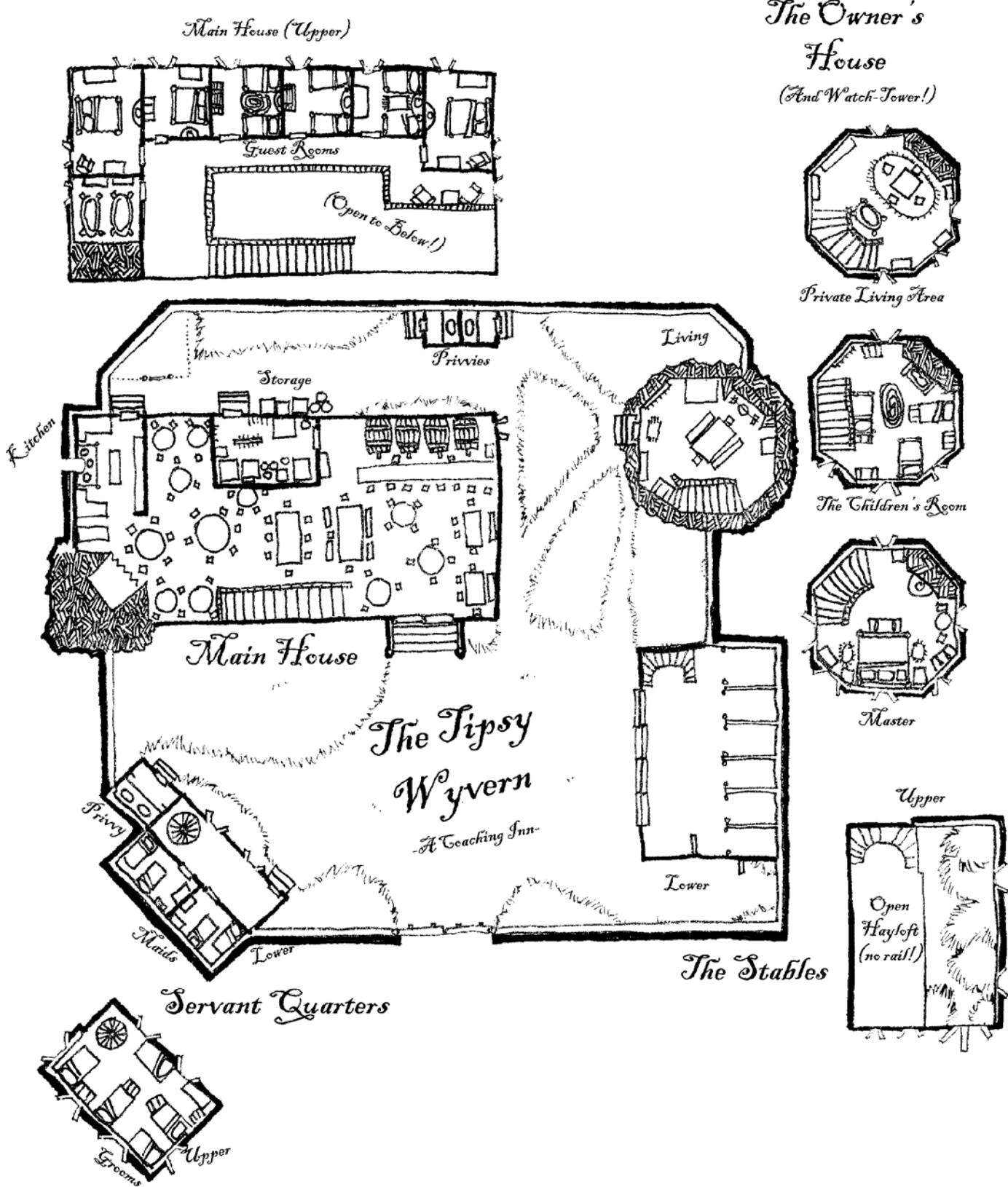
(Steve got a date once, and we cheered for him as only socially-stunted gamers can, but then she stood him up. We, his valiant cohorts, helped him drown his sorrows with a Call of Cthulhu all-nighter.)

Over the years, I've met many other gamers and played with many other groups. I've played fabulous adventures run by GMs with outlines on scraps of notebook paper. Some made it all up on the fly, tailoring the game to the party, but even they owned stacks of modules. Tomb of Horrors. Ghost Tower of Inverness. Vault of the Drow. White Plume Mountain. Everybody's got a few, and those collections taught me something.

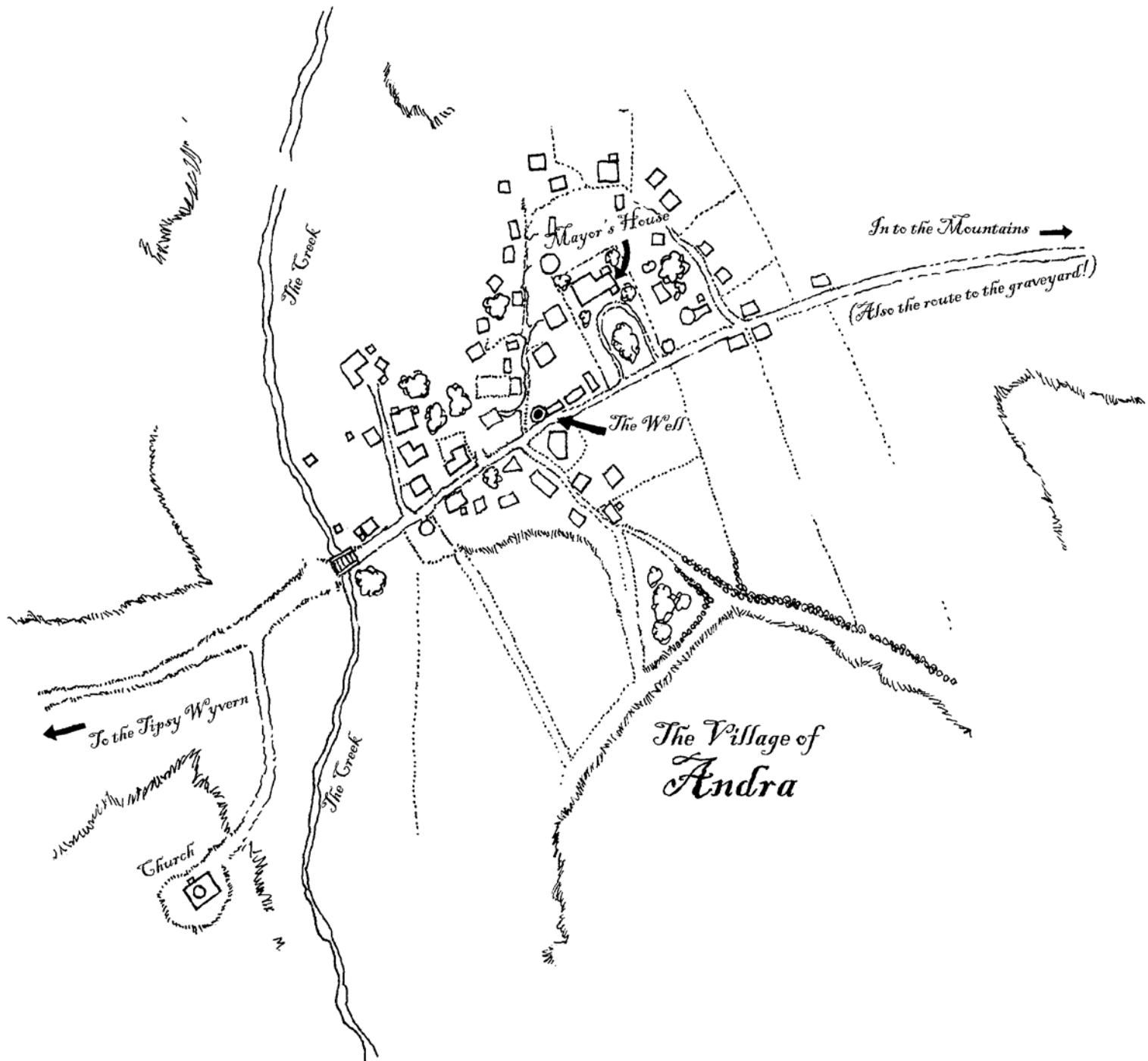
We all start someplace, and few of us can pick up a new game and puzzle it out on our own. We all know what a fantasy adventure's supposed to look like from the *player's* side — we've got Frodo, the Mouser, Lythande, and Conan to thank for that. But how to create your own? How do you find a story that flows well with the right balance for an evening of fun? Especially when you're using a system like Fantasy Craft, which is at once instantly recognizable and unexpectedly (yet ever-so-coolly) deep? You sometimes need an example of the rules in the wild, a few ideas to get the creativity flowing. It's why you find sample adventure ideas at the back of so many RPG rulebooks, and it's ultimately why this book exists.

I hope you embrace what's here, but I also hope you tear it apart. Mine it for plots, NPCs, and locations, and only use what suits you — and what works in your world and story. Take them for what they are: just one way to write a Fantasy Craft adventure, and when you're ready, I hope you put fingers to keyboard (or pen to page) and get Crafty yourself. Enjoy!

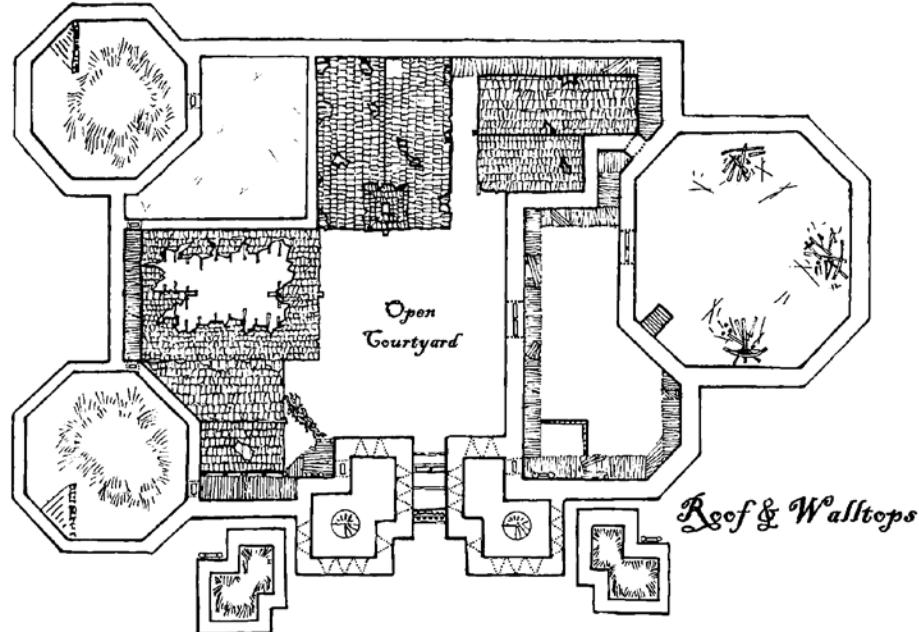
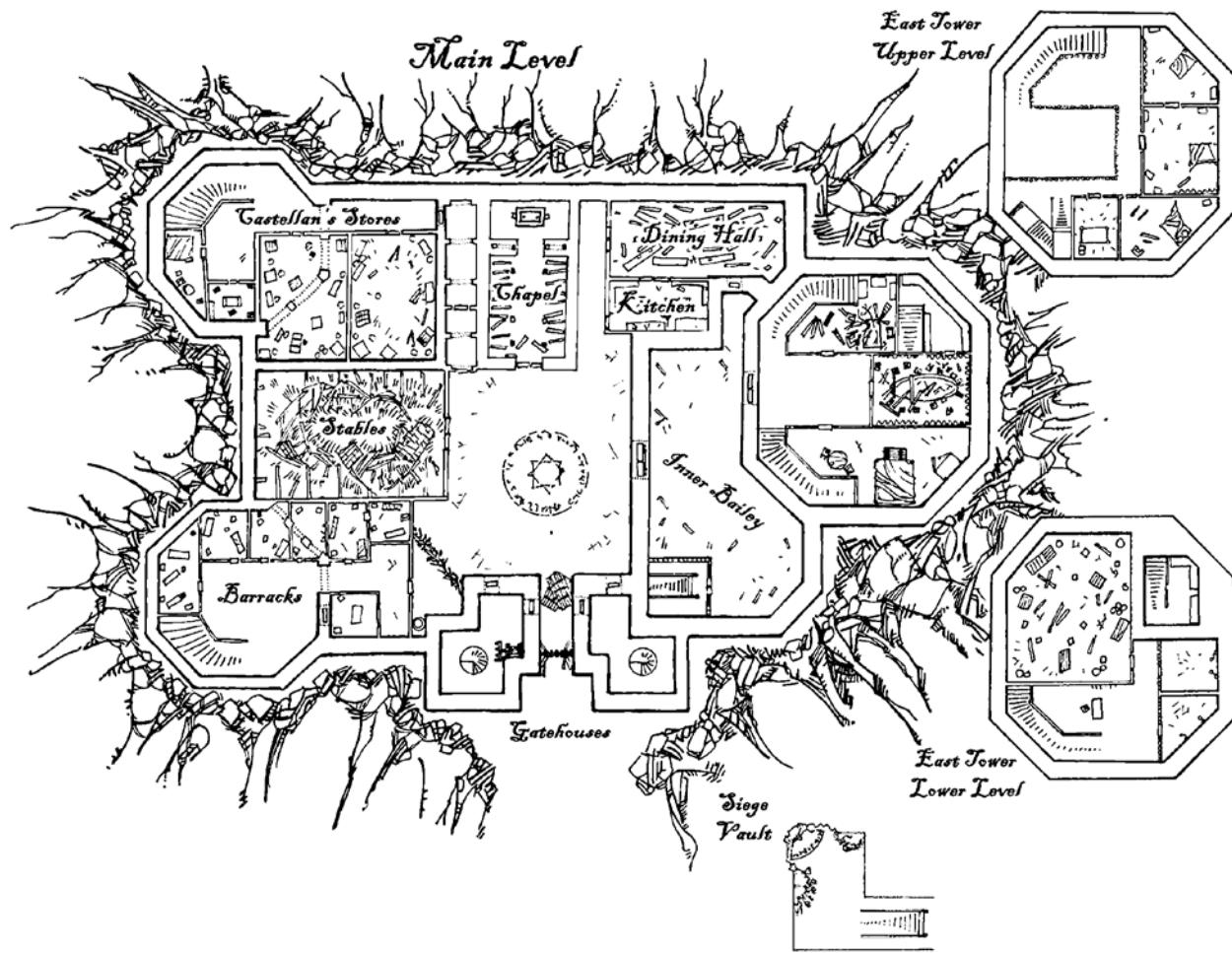
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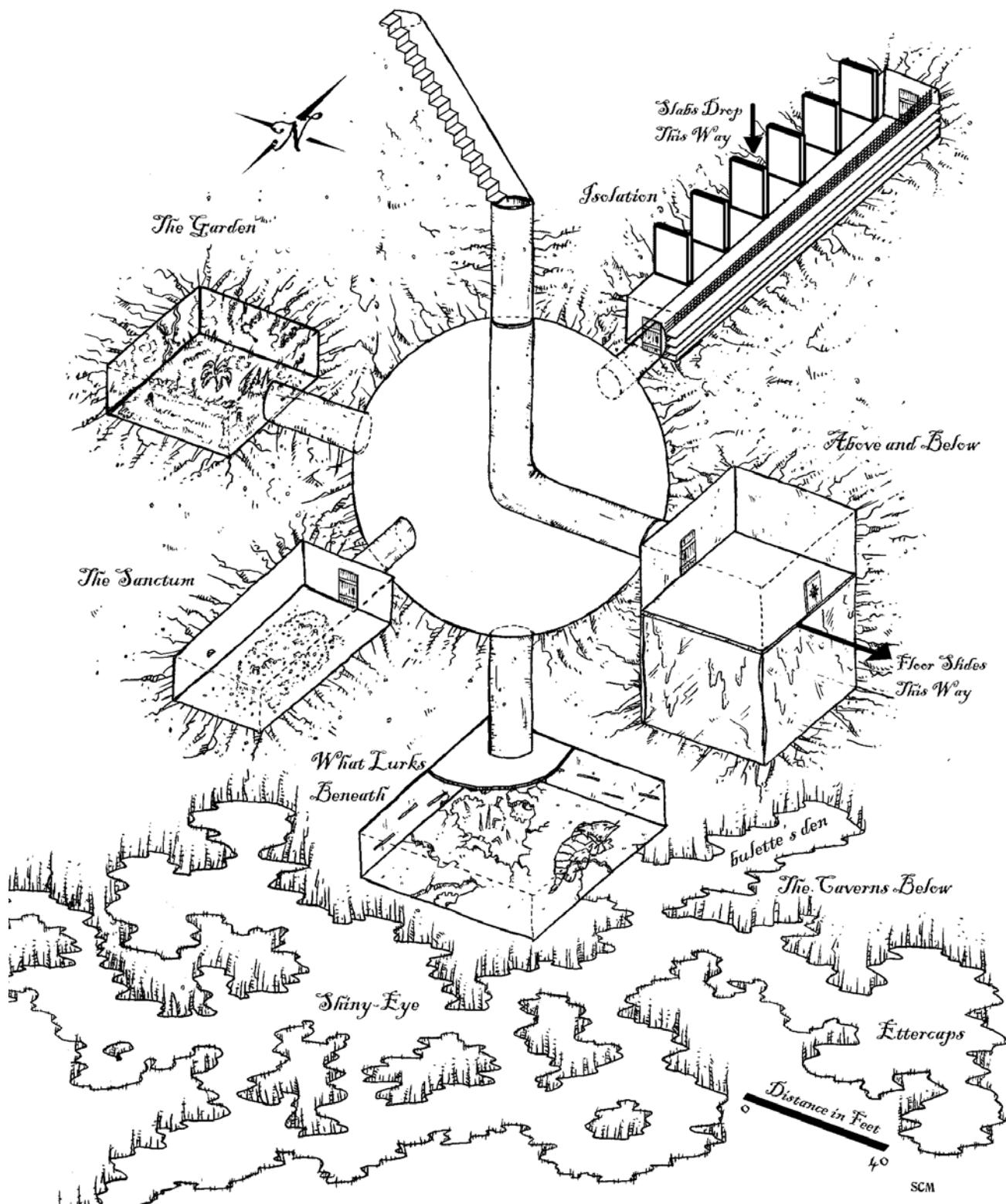
THE DARKEST HOUR



THE CLEANSING OF BLACK SPUR



THE VAULT



EXCERPTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF BARALD ROCOBIENNE

As regards one Paschel, an alleged wizard of dubious note:

Paschel was, according to the tax rosters of Valespire, an “adventuring wizard.” This appellation is not borne out by examination of the Mage’s Guild rosters, which never list Paschel with a rank higher than apprentice. That he may have been a tale-spinner, however, is neither here nor there. The point stands — he went into the world, returned with a chest of treasures, lived a fine “retirement” in his home village where he was regarded as a local hero, and had his chest entombed with him.

This chest is the sticking point. While the Church of course believes Paschel may possess one or several holy relics (and why the Church cannot keep track of its sacred property continues to boggle the mind), he had one adventure that continues to bear note.

The only apparent mention of Paschel beyond official rosters of the tax and guild-membership variety (hardly a promising sign for an “adventuring wizard” seeking to lead a life of renown) lies in the story circulated in a coastal town called Hondel. This town, it would seem, was suddenly and unexpectedly invaded by a horde of the undead, and subsequently saved by an adventuring company including a bold but naïve wizard named “Passle.” The company to which he belonged fought off the horde and recovered from its leader an item named in the legend (for the story is generations old) the Soul Stone. This item is never mentioned in any further histories of the area and indeed is mentioned in regional texts as “lost to us.” Given Paschel’s apparent proximity to the Soul Stone, and its subsequent disappearance, one is given to wonder whether his fingers were perhaps stickier than his reputation.

Paschel appears to have been brave but unable to think a problem through to its end. It plausibly follows that he kept the Soul Stone (along with holy relics the Church couldn’t keep their hands on, and whatever other treasures large or small would fit in his alleged chest) for bragging rights or some other mundane purpose. If this is the case, his village could be sitting on an artifact of extreme power and the Church would rightly wish to see his chest removed and returned to Valespire for safekeeping.

Perhaps the Churchmen aren’t the fools I thought. Not entirely.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF BARALD ROCOBIENNE

On the Soul Stone:

According to Guichard, what the villagers of Hondel called the Soul Stone is in fact called the Soul Star. It is a fist-sized amethyst cut into a four-pointed star, set in a silver medallion conforming to the gem's shape. The medallion is apparently rung for a chain or ribbon or other band, though such an addition would not be part of the item itself. Guichard notes that the reverse of the medallion is featureless and that this has led scoundrels to create fakes, knowing it would be harder to reveal their fraud.

On the power of the thing Guichard is vague and I suspect he has no real experience with it. Montoni, however, describes plainly an experience with the Soul Star and while his writings smack of tenuous sanity his discussion of a great white worm in service to the Soul Star cannot be entirely discounted. Apparently this worm creates ravening undead fiends of both speed and cunning — not the best news, as this is borne out in the legend from Hondel.

Tarant's writings support the white worm as well, naming it the Grave Wurm (the spelling is likely more a product of Tarant's time but I note it here on the chance it will prove useful). Tarant describes the monster as an immense scavenging beast whose bodily processes create fodder for the Soul Star's necromantic magicks. Further information is not forthcoming, though the obvious conclusion is grotesque almost beyond contemplation.

Fortunately, Tarant's notes also include a faint glimmer of hope for containing the Soul Star, should the need arise (I hope to the heavens that it does not, and that this errand is entirely as it seems). Tarant draws comparisons from the Grave Wurm's power over the dead and concludes that the Soul Star may ironically require a tie to the living.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF BARALD ROCOBIENNE

On the last page, in a hurried hand:

We are besieged.

I have seized a moment to organize my thoughts before fully displaying them to my companions, who are too consumed with fighting off the creatures in the streets to listen to my mental meanderings — they need something simple, and I must first simplify the concepts to myself. Tarant's discussions of the artifact drawing reason from its wielder (like a lamprey draws life force from a shark) quickly grow mind-numbingly esoteric but the principal point bears note: The Soul Star may well need to be possessed to work its magic, which leads to an obvious weakness...

The undead in Andra do not spawn from mere death. We've been watching for Ekrajmez' animated corpse but have yet to see it among the attackers, nor have we seen any disquiet corpses. We have, however, seen the undead dragging some corpses away — perhaps to the graveyard. If we survive this assault, the graveyard must be our next destination.

I believe what we are seeing here is the Soul Star's corruption of the one called "Master," whom the Church sent us to capture. They forbade us from recounting our mission and I am tempting my soul in writing this, but I feel death is all too close and should we fail someone must take up the charge. Together or apart the Master and the Soul Star must be returned to the Church. Only they have the facility to deal with this permanently.

EXCERPTS FROM THE TRAVELING JOURNAL OF HERTIGER

Only the first couple pages of the journal are filled. The entries aren't dated and the handwriting is inexpert. The journal itself seems fairly new.

Barald told me I'd do well to keep a record of my travels, so I bought this book to write them in.

We're off to a village called Andra in Fels Cut. The Church contacted Barald through Sister Falthene and set us up with a nice little tomb-robbing job. Of course, it's the Church, so they call it reclamation or something. A wizard named Paschel died out there and he supposedly took some holy relics to the grave. Now the Church wants them back.

We leave in the morning. Tonight we're staying at a nice inn called the Tipsy Wyvern. There's a good-looking barmaid here I may have to double back for. It's been a while.



THE SOUL STAR

"I heard its summons clearly from the first moment I sensed the Beast, like they were of the same flesh once, long ago... when the world was but a cinder off the flame of creation."

— Master's last words

This fist-sized, multi-faceted amethyst is shaped like a four-pointed star and set in a silver medallion. It pounds in your palm like an over-eager heart, consumed with the thrill of a new owner. Your own heart races to keep up, and you feel the desperate need to drape the Star's slender chain around your neck, obeying its primal call...

EXCERPTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF PADER RAFAEL OLEDO

Last entry, dated 50 years ago

The goblins did not bother with siege — they simply attacked! A great horde is pressing against the walls even now, and they may gain entry at any moment. Saints preserve us! Pader Herel has locked himself atop the eastern tower and I fear for his soul! If only I could have sounded a warning! Curse me for not trying.

The day prior

Pader Herel grows more distant and paranoid with each passing hour. I looked through his reference books while he slept, and was appalled. He has an Infernum! Part of me wants to believe that his soul is strong, and he can use the secrets therein to puzzle out the goblin problem. But such a book as this is proscribed for a reason. Even skimming a page made me queasy. I know not what course to take now. Pader Herel is technically my superior, and he and Captain Hector seem to get along so well I cannot exercise my authority as the keep's chaplain. I can only hope Pader Herel leaves soon but even this is in vain, for the goblins are massing around the Spur. I have nothing but dread for the future.

Two days earlier

Pader Herel Asonza of the Archivum has arrived to examine our artifacts. He seems a learned man, and has hit it off with Captain Hector.

One week earlier

The siege vault diggers have uncovered the leading edge of a great stone disk covered in odd markings. Hopefully someone from Valespire will arrive soon and put the rumors to rest. Captain Hector ordered two more men flogged today for spreading “seditious lies” — stories about ghosts and curses, and intruding on something the goblins thought was best left buried. I disagree with the methods but I also understand the dangers of loose talk, and with the goblins raiding so frequently now I have to wonder where there's any truth to their concerns.

Two weeks earlier

Work on the siege vault hit a snag today. The soldiers have discovered a cache of bones and treasure, and one of the old veterans claims that they look goblin in nature. The more they dig, the more they find. We are stockpiling the artifacts in the dining hall, where they can be laid out. Captain Hector has sent a rider to Valespire for a scholar to evaluate the find.

THE DARKEST HOUR

RAVENERS (STANDARD NPCS, ADVERSARIES)

Raveners (Medium Undead Folk Walkers — 65 XP): Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 6, Wis 6, Cha 6; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 40 ft. ground

INITIATIVE VII	+ _____
RESILIENCE V	+ _____
Athletics V	+ _____

ATTACK V	+ _____
HEALTH III	+ _____

DEFENSE III	+ _____
COMPETENCE I	+ _____

Types

Undead: The NPC is a supernatural force clothed in the physical or spiritual remains of a once-living creature. It gains the *darkvision I* and *light-sensitive* NPC qualities at no additional cost, can't fall unconscious, and is immune to Constitution damage, subdual and stress damage, diseases, and poisons, as well as the *bleeding*, *paralyzed*, *sickened*, and *stunned* conditions. It's also immune to critical injuries other than battered and broken limbs, suffering the former with any result below 30 and the latter with any other result. The NPC suffers damage instead of healing from Light spells and heals instead of suffering damage from Darkness spells. It regains vitality normally but does not naturally heal wounds, though it may benefit from all Medicine checks as normal (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 77). An undead NPC doesn't age and doesn't need to eat, sleep, or breathe.

Qualities

Darkvision I: The NPC ignores penalties from dim and faint light.

Devour: The NPC can feed on the dead, gaining incredible strength. This takes a full action and destroys the target body. The NPC gains a +1 bonus with attack checks, skill checks, and damage rolls for a number of rounds equal to the devoured target's Career or Threat Level.

Dread: Each time an opponent attacks the NPC and misses, the opponent suffers 2 stress damage.

Light-Sensitive: Each time the NPC enters a more brightly lit area, it suffers 20 flash damage (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 210).

Monstrous Defense I: The threat ranges of attacks targeting the NPC decrease by 1. If this reduces a threat range to less than 20, the attacker may not score a threat.

Wolf Pack Basics (Feat): The NPC gains an additional +2 bonus when attacking a *flanked* opponent (total +4).

Wolf Pack Mastery (Feat): The NPC inflicts 1 die of sneak attack damage when attacking a *flanked* opponent. Also, an opponent becomes *flanked* when the NPC and any teammate are both adjacent to him in any configuration.

Attacks/Weapons

Bite II (dmg 1d8+1 lethal, threat 17–20)

- **Bleed:** An opponent struck with the weapon must make a successful Fortitude save (DC equal to the damage after DR and Resistances are applied) or begin *bleeding*.
- **Reach +2:** The wielder's gains +2 Reach with this weapon.

Slam I (dmg 1d6 lethal, threat 20)

Gear & Treasure

None

WILTWEEVIL (SPECIAL NPC, ADVERSARY)

Wiltweevil (Large Plant Walker — 134 XP): Str 22, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 12; SZ L (2x2, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground

INITIATIVE IV	+ _____
RESILIENCE V	+ _____
Athletics IV	+ _____
Sneak VI	+ _____

ATTACK VI	+ _____
HEALTH VIII	+ _____
Blend VI	+ _____
Tactics VI	+ _____

DEFENSE VI	+ _____
COMPETENCE II	+ _____
Resolve VI	+ _____

Types

Plant: The NPC is an animate plant. It gains the *aquatic I* and *light sleeper* NPC qualities at no additional cost and is immune to diseases, poisons, sneak attack damage, and the *fixated*, *paralyzed*, and *sickened* conditions. A plant ages and must eat, sleep, and breathe.

Qualities

Achilles Heel (Fire): When the NPC suffers damage of the specified type (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 209) or source (such as a weapon category, NPC Type, etc.), he also suffers an equal amount of lethal damage.

Ambush Basics (Feat): The NPC requires only 2 rounds to make a Tactics/Ambush check. Also, his attacks inflict an additional die of sneak attack damage.

Aquatic I: The NPC may hold his breath for a number of minutes equal to 15 × his Constitution score.

Chameleon II (Forest/Jungle): The NPC gains a +8 bonus with Stealth and Hide checks while moving and automatically becomes *hidden* when stationary. He also gains 1 die of sneak attack damage during each of the first 3 rounds of combat in the chosen terrain.

Condition Immunity (Bleeding): The NPC is immune to the *bleeding* condition.

Damage Reduction 2: The NPC gains 2 Damage Reduction.

Darkvision I: The NPC ignores penalties from dim and faint light.

Light Sleeper: Each time the NPC enters a more brightly lit area, he suffers 20 flash damage (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 210).

Rend: Each time the NPC hits an adjacent opponent, he may make a free attack against the same target.

Two-Hit Combo (Feat): At the start of the NPC's Initiative Count he may accept a -2 penalty with his attack and skill checks until the start of his next Initiative Count. Once during that round he takes a half action to make 2 unarmed Standard Attacks.

Attacks/Weapons

Slam III (dmg 2d8+6 lethal, threat 19–20)

- **Grab:** The attack latches onto the target with each hit, letting the NPC Grapple the same target as a free action.
- **Trip:** The NPC gains a +2 gear bonus with Trip actions.

Gear & Treasure

Grotesque saurian-skin hat, 1G, 1T

THE DARKEST HOUR

MASTER (SPECIAL NPC, ADVERSARY)

Master (Medium Folk Walker — 130 XP): Str 18, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 12; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 20 ft. ground (including armor)

INITIATIVE V + _____

RESILIENCE X + _____

Athletics VII + _____

Survival V + _____

ATTACK VII + _____

HEALTH VIII + _____

Intimidate IX + _____

Tactics VII + _____

DEFENSE V + _____

COMPETENCE VI + _____

Resolve VIII + _____

Qualities

Dramatic Entrance: The scene becomes Dramatic when the NPC arrives (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 335). If the scene is already Dramatic, the GM gains 1 additional action die per player character that may only be spent to support this NPC's actions.

Frenzy II: The NPC may frenzy 3 times per combat, each time gaining a number of additional half actions in one round equal to the number of opponents he faces (maximum equal to the total extraordinary and natural attacks he has + 2). These half actions may only be used to attack and may be used to make multiple extraordinary attacks in the same round. Unless the NPC has only 1 attack, each attack must use a different weapon, extraordinary attack, or natural attack that the last.

Glint of Madness (Feat): The NPC inflicts 1d10 stress damage when he Threatens an opponent. Also, once per round when one of his attacks renders an opponent unconscious or dead, he may immediately Threaten another opponent as a free action.

Misdirection Basics (Feat): The NPC's threat range with attacks against special characters increases by 1. The NPC also counts as 3 additional characters when determining numerical advantage.

Stand in Judgment I (Paladin Class Ability): The NPC may spend a full action passing judgment on a single adversary within line of sight. Choose Fortitude, Reflex, or Will saves. The opponent suffers a morale penalty with saves

of the chosen type equal to the NPC's Strength modifier (minimum 1). This penalty lasts until the end of the scene or until the NPC passes judgment on a different adversary. The NPC may use this ability a number of times per scene equal to his starting action dice.

Take Heart (Paladin Class Ability): Once per dramatic scene, the NPC may spend a full action in powerful speech. He and each teammate who can see or hear him immediately recovers to 1/2 their maximum vitality (rounded up).

Attacks/Weapons

Zweihander (dmg 1d12 lethal, threat 19–20 (18–20 vs. special characters))

- **Guard +1:** When armed with this weapon, the wielder gains the listed gear bonus to Defense. He loses this bonus when *flat-footed*, *held*, *helpless*, *pinched*, or *sprawled*, or unconscious.
- **Massive:** A character must have a Strength score of 15 or higher to wield this weapon. Also, a smaller opponent who's struck with the weapon must make a successful Fortitude save (DC equal to the damage after DR and Resistances are applied) or become *sprawled*.

Gear & Treasure

Partial platemail armor with light fittings (DR 5, Resist Blunt 1, DP -3, ACP -4, Speed -5 ft., Disguise obvious), Soul Star, 1A, 1C, 1M

THE GRAVE WORM (STANDARD NPC, ADVERSARY)

The Grave Wurm (Huge Beast Undead Burrower — 94 XP): Str 18, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 8; SZ M (4x4, Reach 2); Spd 30 ft. burrow

INITIATIVE I + _____

RESILIENCE VIII + _____

Athletics V + _____

ATTACK V + _____

HEALTH VI + _____

DEFENSE VIII + _____

COMPETENCE I + _____

Type

Beast: The NPC resembles and is easily mistaken for an animal but may have any Intelligence score. It lacks hands or other fine manipulators and can't take actions requiring them. It can only use armor, handheld gear, and non-natural weapons specifically modified for its use. A beast ages and must eat, sleep, and breathe.

Undead: The NPC is a supernatural force clothed in the physical or spiritual remains of a once-living creature. It gains the *darkvision 1* and *light-sensitive* NPC qualities at no additional cost, can't fall unconscious, and is immune to Constitution damage, subdual and stress damage, diseases, and poisons, as well as the *bleeding*, *paralyzed*, *sickened*, and *stunned* conditions. It's also immune to critical injuries other than battered and broken limbs, suffering the former with any result below 30 and the latter with any other result. The NPC suffers damage instead of healing from Light spells and heals instead of suffering damage from Darkness spells. It regains vitality normally but does not naturally heal wounds, though it may benefit from all Medicine checks as normal (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 77). An undead NPC doesn't age and doesn't need to eat, sleep, or breathe.

Qualities

Blindsight: The NPC has extraordinarily or supernaturally acute senses that replace its vision. Its blindsight operates like vision out to 10 blindsight increments, each equal to its Wisdom score \times 10 ft. Within this range the NPC ignores ambient light penalties and cannot be *blinded*. It also sees *hidden* and *invisible* characters and objects without restriction.

Condition Immunity (Baffled, Stunned): The NPC is immune to the *baffled* and *stunned* conditions.

Damage Reduction 3: The NPC gains 3 Damage Reduction.

Darkvision I: The NPC ignores penalties from dim and faint light.

Death Throes (Divine Damage): The NPC thrashes about viciously when killed. Its body is destroyed, inflicting 1/2 his base XP value in divine damage (rounded down) with a blast increment of 1 square.

Dread: Each time an opponent attacks the NPC and misses, the opponent suffers 2 stress damage.

Light-Sensitive: Each time the NPC enters a more brightly lit area, it suffers 20 flash damage (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 210).

Tough 3: The NPC ignores the effect of 3 failed Damage saves per scene.

Attacks/Weapons

Swallow III (dmg 4d8 divine, threat —)

- **Grapple Benefit:** When a character dies in the Grave Worm's gullet, or the Grave Worm swallows a corpse, the beast's vile digestive tract takes over, converting the victim into a ravener. The process takes 5 rounds, after which the new ravener is unceremoniously expelled from the Wurm's posterior; the Wurm can process up to 6 victims at a time.

Gear & Treasure

1A, 3T

THE CLEANSING OF BLACK SPUR

GOBLIN HUNTERS (STANDARD NPCS)

Goblin Hunters (Small Folk Walkers): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ S (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground

INITIATIVE IV	+ _____	ATTACK V	+ _____	DEFENSE III	+ _____
RESILIENCE II	+ _____	HEALTH IV	+ _____	COMPETENCE II	+ _____
Notice III	+ _____	Search VI	+ _____	Sneak III	+ _____
Survival VI	+ _____				

Qualities

Ambush Basics (Feat): The NPC requires only 2 rounds to make a Tactics/Ambush check. Also, his attacks inflict an additional die of sneak attack damage.

Darkvision I: The NPC ignores penalties from dim and faint light.

Favored Foes (Animal): The NPC's threat range increases by 2 when attacking and making Notice, Sense Motive, and Survival checks targeting animals (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 226).

Huntsman — Killing Blow (Scout class ability): It costs the NPC 1 fewer action dice to activate a critical hit against an animal, elemental, fey, ooze, or plant (minimum 0).

Huntsman — Trophy Hunter (Scout class ability): The NPC can drop even the biggest game with a single attack. When the NPC attacks an animal, his threat range increases by 3.

Light-Sensitive: Each time the NPC enters a more brightly lit area, he suffers 20 flash damage (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 210).

Attacks/Weapons

Hatchet (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 20)

- Armor-Piercing 2:** The weapon's attacks ignore 2 Damage Reduction. When a weapon and its ammunition both have this quality, their AP values are combined.

HUNTING WOLVES (STANDARD NPCS)

Hunting Wolves (Medium Animal Walkers): Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 5, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground (Run 150 ft.)

INITIATIVE II	+ _____	ATTACK IV	+ _____	DEFENSE IV	+ _____
RESILIENCE III	+ _____	HEALTH IV	+ _____	COMPETENCE —	N/A
Search IV	+ _____	Sneak II	+ _____	Survival IV	+ _____
Tactics IV	+ _____				

Types

Animal: The NPC is non-sapient, relying on base instinct and natural ability to survive. Its Intelligence score may not be higher than 6 and it may not become proficient except with extraordinary and natural attacks. The NPC doesn't have a Competence bonus but it may gain Acrobatics, Athletics, Blend, Intimidate, Notice, Resolve, Search, Sense Motive, Sneak, Survival, and Tactics as Signature Skills. Unless otherwise specified, the GM determines whether any animal is trained. A trained animal can be ridden, accepts commands, and may receive advanced training (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 83). An animal ages and must eat, sleep, and breathe.

Qualities

Called Shot (Attack Trick): The NPC may try to find a chink in a target's armor. He suffers a -3 attack check penalty if the target is wearing partial armor, a -6 penalty if the target is wearing moderate armor, or a -9 penalty if the target is wearing full armor. With a hit, the attack ignores any Damage Reduction provided by the target's armor.

Improved Sense (Scent): The NPC's scent range is halved (rounded down), and he suffers a -4 penalty with related Awareness and Perception checks.

- Hurl:** The NPC may throw this weapon with a range of 15 ft. × 2.
- Trip:** The wielder gains a +2 gear bonus with Trip actions. With a ranged attack, the wielder may try to Trip opponents in Close Quarters.

Reflex Bow + 40 barbed arrows (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 20; range 30 ft. × 6)

- Bleed:** An opponent struck with the weapon must make a successful Fortitude save (DC equal to the damage after DR and Resistances are applied) or begin bleeding.
- Poisonous:** The weapon may be poisoned with 1 half action and exposes a target with a hit that inflicts at least 1 damage after Damage Reduction and Resistance are applied. Unless otherwise specified it may carry only 1 dose of poison at a time.

Mounts & Vehicles

Hunting Wolf (see separate stat sheet)

Gear & Treasure

2 jaw traps (1x1 area, 1 Challenge to Bypass or Disable, trigger effect: 2d8 lethal damage + bleeding and slowed), 2T

Superior Runner I: The NPC's Speed multiplier when Running increases by 1 (to 5).

Superior Traveler I: The NPC's Travel Speed increases by 1 MPH (to 4 MPH).

Tough 1: The NPC ignores the effect of 1 failed Damage save per scene.

Wolf Pack Basics (Feat): The NPC gains an additional +2 bonus when attacking a flanked opponent (total +4).

Wolf Pack Mastery (Feat): The NPC inflicts 1 die of sneak attack damage when attacking a flanked opponent. Also, an opponent becomes flanked when the NPC and any teammate are both adjacent to him in any configuration.

Attacks/Weapons

Bite II (dmg 1d8+1 lethal; threat 17–20)

- Trip:** The NPC gains a +2 gear bonus with Trip actions.

Gear & Treasure

Riding tack, 2T

THE CLEANSING OF BLACK SPUR

GOBLIN RIDERS (STANDARD NPCS)

Goblin Riders (Small Folk Walkers): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ S (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground

INITIATIVE IV	+ _____	ATTACK V	+ _____	DEFENSE III	+ _____
RESILIENCE II	+ _____	HEALTH IV	+ _____	COMPETENCE II	+ _____
Notice III	+ _____	Search VI	+ _____	Sneak III	+ _____
Survival VI	+ _____				

Qualities

Ambush Basics (Feat): The NPC requires only 2 rounds to make a Tactics/Ambush check. Also, his attacks inflict an additional die of sneak attack damage.

Darkvision I: The NPC ignores penalties from dim and faint light.

Favored Foes (Animal): The NPC's threat range increases by 2 when attacking and making Notice, Sense Motive, and Survival checks targeting animals (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 226).

Huntsman — Killing Blow (Scout class ability): It costs the NPC 1 fewer action dice to activate a critical hit against an animal, elemental, fey, ooze, or plant (minimum 0).

Huntsman — Trophy Hunter (Scout class ability): The NPC can drop even the biggest game with a single attack. When the NPC attacks an animal, his threat range increases by 3.

Light-Sensitive: Each time the NPC enters a more brightly lit area, he suffers 20 flash damage (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 210).

Attacks/Weapons

Hatchet (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 20)

- Armor-Piercing 2:** The weapon's attacks ignore 2 Damage Reduction. When a weapon and its ammunition both have this quality, their AP values are combined.

WYVERNS (STANDARD NPCS, ADVERSARIES)

Wyverns (Large Beast Flyer/Walkers — 85 XP): Str 14, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 9; SZ L (2x3, Reach 1); Spd 60 ft. winged flight, 20 ft. ground

INITIATIVE III	+ _____	ATTACK VI	+ _____	DEFENSE III	+ _____
RESILIENCE VI	+ _____	HEALTH VII	+ _____	COMPETENCE I	+ _____
Search VI	+ _____	Sneak V	+ _____		

Types

Beast: The NPC resembles and is easily mistaken for an animal but may have any Intelligence score. It lacks hands or other fine manipulators and can't take actions requiring them. It can only use armor, handheld gear, and non-natural weapons specifically modified for its use. A beast ages and must eat, sleep, and breathe.

Qualities

Charging Basics (Feat): The NPC's Speed increases by 5 ft. and he gains a trick.

- Charge (Run Trick):** The NPC may make 1 free attack at any point during his movement (ignoring adjacency for that attack only). The NPC may use this ability a number of times per combat equal to his starting action dice.

Condition Immunity (Paralyzed): The NPC is immune to the *paralyzed* condition.

Damage Reduction 4: The NPC gains 4 Damage Reduction.

Improved Sense (Scent): The NPC's scent range is halved (rounded down), and he suffers a -4 penalty with related Awareness and Perception checks.

• **Hurl:** The NPC may throw this weapon with a range of 15 ft. × 2.

• **Trip:** The wielder gains a +2 gear bonus with Trip actions. With a ranged attack, the wielder may try to Trip opponents in Close Quarters.

Reflex Bow + 40 barbed arrows (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 20; range 30 ft. × 6)

- Bleed:** An opponent struck with the weapon must make a successful Fortitude save (DC equal to the damage after DR and Resistances are applied) or begin *bleeding*.
- Poisonous:** The weapon may be poisoned with 1 half action and exposes a target with a hit that inflicts at least 1 damage after Damage Reduction and Resistance are applied. Unless otherwise specified it may carry only 1 dose of poison at a time.

Mounts & Vehicles

Hunting Wolf (see separate stat sheet)

Gear & Treasure

Partial studded leather armor (DR 2, Resist —; DP -1; ACP -0; Spd —; Disguise -0), 2T

THE CLEANSING OF BLACK SPUR

ACHELA (STANDARD NPC, ADVERSARY)

Achela (Medium Folk Walker — 45 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground

INITIATIVE VII	+ _____	ATTACK III	+ _____	DEFENSE V	+ _____
RESILIENCE II	+ _____	HEALTH II	+ _____	COMPETENCE III	+ _____
Bluff V	+ _____	Impress V	+ _____	Sense Motive VII	+ _____
Spellcasting II	+ _____				

Spells

Locate Object (Level 2 Divination): Casting Time: 1 minute; Distance: Unlimited; Duration: 1 hour per Casting Level; Effect: The NPC senses the direction of a familiar object, or the nearest object of a general type (e.g. sword, coin, jewel, etc.).

Scrye I (Level 1 Divination): Casting Time: 10 minutes; Distance: Remote; Duration: 1 minute per Casting Level (dismissible); Effect: The NPC projects her vision and hearing to 1 fixed, familiar location. While projecting, she cannot see and hear from her body.

Qualities

Lady Luck's Smile (Feat): When the NPC rolls an action die, it explodes on its highest or second highest natural result (e.g. 5–6 on a d6, 9–10 on a d10, etc.).

Rend: Each time the NPC hits an adjacent opponent, she may make a free attack against the same target.

Spell Defense I: The NPC has Spell Defense 15.

Attacks/Weapons

Ceremonial cult dagger (dmg 1d6 lethal; threat 19–20)

- **Bleed:** An opponent struck with the weapon must make a successful Fortitude save (DC equal to the damage after DR and Resistances are applied) or begin *bleeding*.
- **Hurl:** The NPC may throw this weapon with a range of 15 ft. × 2.

Gear & Treasure

Mage's pouch, the Infernum, 1C, 1L

CULTISTS (STANDARD NPCS, ADVERSARIES)

Cultists (Medium Folk Walkers — 25 XP): Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground

INITIATIVE II	+ _____	ATTACK II	+ _____	DEFENSE III	+ _____
RESILIENCE IV	+ _____	HEALTH II	+ _____	COMPETENCE II	+ _____
Resolve V	+ _____				

Qualities

Assistance (Sage class ability): The NPC may increase the error range of an ally's skill check by 1 to reduce the time it takes to 1/2 normal (rounded up, minimum 5 minutes). The NPC may assist only 1 ally at a time and may not perform any non-free actions when using this ability. This ability may not be used with Downtime checks.

Cagey I: The NPC may automatically succeed with 1 save per scene.

Rend: Each time the NPC hits an adjacent opponent, he may make a free attack against the same target.

Attacks/Weapons

Club (dmg 1d8 subdual; threat 20)

Light Crossbow + 10 bolts (1d6 lethal; threat 19–20; range 50 ft. × 6)

- **Armor-Piercing 2:** The weapon's attacks ignore 2 Damage Reduction. When a weapon and its ammunition both have this quality, their AP values are combined.
- **Load 5:** The weapon is reloaded with 5 Handle Item actions.

Gear & Treasure

None

THE CLEANSING OF BLACK SPUR

THE REAPER (SPECIAL NPC, ADVERSARY)

The Reaper, Undead Alpha Wyvern (Large Beast Flyer/Walker — 155 XP): Str 16, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 9; SZ L (2x2, Reach 3); Spd 60 ft. winged flight, 20 ft. ground

INITIATIVE III + _____

RESILIENCE VI + _____

Search VI + _____

ATTACK VII + _____

HEALTH VII + _____

Sneak V + _____

DEFENSE IV + _____

COMPETENCE II + _____

Templates

Alpha: The NPC's Initiative, Attack, Defense, Health, and Competence rise by I each and his Strength and Dexterity rise by 2 each (already factored in). He also gains *class ability* (*Captain: battle planning I*), *treacherous*, and *veteran II*.

Types

Beast: The NPC resembles and is easily mistaken for an animal but may have any Intelligence score. It lacks hands or other fine manipulators and can't take actions requiring them. It can only use armor, handheld gear, and non-natural weapons specifically modified for its use. A beast ages and must eat, sleep, and breathe.

Undead: The NPC is a supernatural force clothed in the physical or spiritual remains of a once-living creature. It gains the *darkvision I* and *light-sensitive* NPC qualities at no additional cost, can't fall unconscious, and is immune to Constitution damage, subdual and stress damage, diseases, and poisons, as well as the *bleeding*, *paralyzed*, *sickened*, and *stunned* conditions. It's also immune to critical injuries other than battered and broken limbs, suffering the former with any result below 30 and the latter with any other result. The NPC suffers damage instead of healing from Light spells and heals instead of suffering damage from Darkness spells. It regains vitality normally but does not naturally heal wounds, though it may benefit from all Medicine checks as normal (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 77). An undead NPC doesn't age and doesn't need to eat, sleep, or breathe.

Qualities

Battle Planning I (Captain class ability): The NPC may begin each combat with 1 of these battle plans already in effect and may enact a new one as a full action. Each plan's benefits last until the end of the current combat or until the NPC enacts a different battle plan. A battle plan grants the NPC and each teammate who can see or hear him a +2 morale bonus with the following rolls and values.

- *Crush Them!*: Melee and unarmed attack checks
- *No Prisoners!*: Lethal damage rolls

Charging Basics (Feat): The NPC's Speed increases by 5 ft. and he gains a trick.

- *Charge (Run Trick)*: The NPC may make 1 free attack at any point during his movement (ignoring adjacency for that attack only). The NPC may use this ability a number of times per combat equal to his starting action dice.

Condition Immunity (Paralyzed): The NPC is immune to the *paralyzed* condition.

Damage Reduction 4: The NPC gains 4 Damage Reduction.

Frenzy II: The NPC may frenzy 3 times per combat, each time gaining a number of additional half actions in one round equal to the number of opponents he faces (maximum equal to the total extraordinary and natural attacks he has + 2). These half actions may only be used to attack and may be used to make multiple extraordinary attacks in the same round. Unless the NPC has only 1 attack, each attack must use a different weapon, extraordinary attack, or natural attack than the last.

Improved Sense (Scent): The NPC's scent range is halved (rounded down), and he suffers a -4 penalty with related Awareness and Perception checks.

Treacherous: The NPC may activate threats as critical hits for 1 less action die (minimum 0).

Veteran II: The NPC's Threat Level increases by 2 (maximum TL 20).

Attacks/Weapons

Bite III (dmg 2d10+3 lethal; threat 17–20)

- *Grab*: The attack latches onto the target with each hit, letting the NPC Grapple the same target as a free action.

Tail Slap II (dmg 1d10+3 lethal + paralyzing poison; threat 19–20)

- *Reach +1*: The wielder's gains +1 Reach with this weapon.
- *Venomous*: The attack transmits paralyzing poison, exposing any target who suffers 1 or more damage after Reduction and Resistances (incubation: 1 minute; Fort save (DC 12) or become *paralyzed* for 1 minute).

Wing Slam × 2 (Slam I: dmg 1d8+3 lethal; threat 20)

Roar (soul-draining attack IV: 60-ft. cone; Fort DC 25 or die (standard character), lose 1 action die and 10 max. vitality (special character))

Gear & Treasure

None

THE VAULT

THE CUBE (SPECIAL NPC, ADVERSARY)

The Cube (Gargantuan Animal Ooze Walker — 79 XP): Str 10, Dex 2, Con 18, Int 1, Wis 2, Cha 2; SZ G (7x7, Reach 4); Spd 15 ft. ground

INITIATIVE I	+ _____
RESILIENCE I	+ _____

ATTACK IV	+ _____
HEALTH IV	+ _____

DEFENSE I	+ _____
COMPETENCE —	N/A

Qualities

Blindsight: The NPC has extraordinarily or supernaturally acute senses that replace its vision. Its blindsight operates like vision out to 10 blindsight increments, each equal to its Wisdom score \times 10 ft. Within this range the NPC ignores ambient light penalties and cannot be *blinded*. It also sees *hidden* and *invisible* characters and objects without restriction.

Chameleon II (Caverns/Mountains, Indoors/Settled):

The NPC gains a +8 bonus with Stealth and Hide checks while moving and automatically becomes *hidden* when stationary. He also gains 1 die of sneak attack damage during each of the first 3 rounds of combat in the chosen terrain.

Critical Hesitation: The NPC wavers when he suffers a critical hit or failure, becoming *slowed* for 1 round.

Damage Immunity (Electrical): The NPC is immune to electrical damage.

Shambling: This NPC may take only 1 half action or 1 full action per round and may not Run or make any free attacks.

Tough 3: The NPC ignores all damage from up to 3 critical hits per scene.

Attacks/Weapons

Slam I (dmg 1d10 acid; threat 20)

- **Grab:** The attack latches onto the target with each hit, letting the NPC Grapple the same target as a free action.

Engulf (Swallow II: dmg 2d8 acid; notes: Grapple benefit — Medium and smaller only)

Paralyzing Pseudopods (paralyzing attack III: Fort DC 20 or become paralyzed for 3d6 rounds)

- **Supernatural Attack (Slam):** Once per round when the NPC hits with its Slam attack, the target is also automatically hit by this save attack.

Gear & Treasure

2A (buried in the mass, inexplicably undigested)

DEATH SPHERES (STANDARD NPCS, ADVERSARIES)

Death Spheres (Diminutive Construct Flyers — 62 XP): Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ D (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 50 ft. flight

INITIATIVE VII	+ _____
RESILIENCE II	+ _____

ATTACK IV	+ _____
HEALTH I	+ _____

DEFENSE I	+ _____
COMPETENCE —	N/A

Qualities

Banned Actions (Blend, Sneak): The NPC can't take perform Blend or Sneak checks (due to the high whine of its blades).

Charge Attack: Up to 3 times per combat, the NPC may take a free Standard Move before attacking.

Critical Surge: The NPC gains clarity with each critical hit or success, also gaining 1 additional half action.

Ferocity: The NPC may immediately make a free attack when it fails its last Damage save.

Frenzy II: The NPC may frenzy 3 times per combat, each time gaining a number of additional half actions in one round equal to the number of opponents it faces (maximum equal to the total extraordinary and natural attacks he has + 2). These half actions may only be used to attack and may be used to make multiple extraordinary attacks in the same round. Unless the NPC has only 1 attack, each attack must use a different weapon, extraordinary attack, or natural attack than the last.

Mook: The NPC automatically fails Damage saves.

Natural Defense (Lethal): Each time a character hits the NPC with an unarmed or melee attack, the attacker must make a Reflex save (DC 15) or suffer 1d6 lethal damage (from the sphere's whirling blades).

Spell Reflection: Each time the NPC is the target of a successfully cast spell, it may make a Will save (DC 20) to reflect it to another target within 30 ft.

Treacherous: The NPC may activate critical hits/successes.

Attacks/Weapons

Whirling Blades (Gore II: dmg 1d3 lethal; threat 18–20)

- **Armor-Piercing 2:** The weapon's attacks ignore 2 Damage Reduction. When a weapon and its ammunition both have this quality, their AP values are combined.
- **Bleed:** An opponent struck with the weapon must make a successful Fortitude save (DC equal to the damage after DR and Resistances are applied) or begin *bleeding*.
- **Keen 4:** The weapon's damage rises by 4 when determining critical injuries and massive damage (see *Fantasy Craft*, page 208).

Gear & Treasure

5T, 5L, 5G (this represents looting the remaining shelves)

THE VAULT

SILKEN-HAIR-WHO-LEARNS-WISDOM (SPECIAL NPC)

Silken-Hair-Who-Learns-Wisdom (Medium Horror Walker — 71 XP): Str 12, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground

INITIATIVE V	+ _____
RESILIENCE VII	+ _____
Athletics VI	+ _____
Sneak VI	+ _____

ATTACK IV	+ _____
HEALTH III	+ _____
Crafting II	+ _____

DEFENSE II	+ _____
COMPETENCE II	+ _____
Notice V	+ _____

Qualities

Coordinated Attack (Feat): Once per round as a full action, the NPC may direct a teammate who can see and hear him to make an immediate Standard Attack.

Darkvision II: The NPC ignores all ambient light penalties.

Great Fortitude (Feat): The NPC's base Fortitude save bonus increases by +3, and he also gains 4 extra wound points.

Superior Climber II: With a successful Climb check, the NPC moves 3 times the resulting distance (e.g. a result of 10 ft. becomes 30 ft.)

Attacks/Weapons

Bite I (dmg 1d8+1 lethal; threat 18–20)

- **Venomous:** The attack transmits numbing poison with the *concentrated* and *fast-acting* upgrades, exposing any target who suffers 1 or more damage after Reduction and Resistances (incubation: 1 round; Fort save (DC 14) or suffer 2d6 subdual damage).

Claw II × 2 (dmg 1d6+1 lethal; threat 20)

Web (entangling attack II: 60 ft. Ray, Fort save DC 15 or be entangled for 2d6 rounds)

Gear & Treasure

3C

ETTERCAPS (STANDARD NPCS)

Ettercaps (Medium Horror Walkers — 69 XP): Str 12, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 8; SZ M (1x1, Reach 1); Spd 30 ft. ground

INITIATIVE V	+ _____
RESILIENCE VII	+ _____
Athletics VI	+ _____
Sneak VI	+ _____

ATTACK IV	+ _____
HEALTH III	+ _____
Crafting II	+ _____

DEFENSE II	+ _____
COMPETENCE II	+ _____
Notice V	+ _____

Qualities

Darkvision II: The NPC ignores all ambient light penalties.

Great Fortitude (Feat): The NPC's base Fortitude save bonus increases by +3, and he also gains 4 extra wound points.

Superior Climber II: With a successful Climb check, the NPC moves 3 times the resulting distance (e.g. a result of 10 ft. becomes 30 ft.)

Attacks/Weapons

Bite I (dmg 1d8+1 lethal + numbing poison; threat 18–20)

- **Venomous:** The attack transmits numbing poison with the *concentrated* and *fast-acting* upgrades, exposing any target who suffers 1 or more damage after Reduction and Resistances (incubation: 1 round; Fort save (DC 14) or suffer 2d6 subdual damage).

Claw II × 2 (dmg 1d6+1 lethal; threat 20)

Web (entangling attack II: 60 ft. Ray, Fort save DC 15 or be entangled for 2d6 rounds)

Gear & Treasure

5C

THE VAULT

SHINY-EYE (SPECIAL NPC, ADVERSARY)

Shiny-Eye (Large Horror Burrower/Walker — 110 XP): Str 16, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ L (2x2, Reach 2); Spd 20 ft. burrow, 20 ft. ground

INITIATIVE III + _____

RESILIENCE VI + _____

Athletics V + _____

ATTACK IV + _____

HEALTH IV + _____

Notice V + _____

DEFENSE V + _____

COMPETENCE II + _____

Survival X + _____

Qualities

Blindsight: The NPC has extraordinarily or supernaturally acute senses that replace its vision. Its blindsight operates like vision out to 10 blindsight increments, each equal to its Wisdom score \times 10 ft. Within this range the NPC ignores ambient light penalties and cannot be *blinded*. It also sees *hidden* and *invisible* characters and objects without restriction.

Damage Reduction 4: The NPC gains 4 Damage Reduction.

Pathfinder Basics: Caverns/Mountains (Feat): The NPC gains Falling Resistance 5 and a +2 bonus with Climb checks.

Superior Climber II: With a successful Climb check, the NPC moves 3 times the resulting distance (e.g. a result of 10 ft. becomes 30 ft.)

Tough 1: The NPC ignores all damage from 1 critical hit per scene.

Attacks/Weapons

Bite III (dmg 2d10+3 lethal; threat 17–20)

- **Armor-Piercing 2:** The weapon's attacks ignore 2 Damage Reduction. When a weapon and its ammunition both have this quality, their AP values are combined.

Claw II \times 2 (dmg 1d8+3 lethal; threat 19–20)

- **Armor-Piercing 2:** The weapon's attacks ignore 2 Damage Reduction. When a weapon and its ammunition both have this quality, their AP values are combined.

Confusing Gaze (enraging attack II: 50 ft. gaze; Will DC 15 or become *enraged* for 2d6 rounds)

Gear & Treasure

2C, 2L, 1T

BULETTES (SPECIAL NPCS)

Bulette (Huge Animal Burrower/Walker — 113 XP): Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 6; SZ H (2x4, Reach 1); Spd 10 ft. burrow, 50 ft. ground

INITIATIVE IV + _____

RESILIENCE VIII + _____

Acrobatics VI + _____

ATTACK VII + _____

HEALTH VI + _____

Athletics III + _____

DEFENSE V + _____

COMPETENCE — N/A

Notice III + _____

Qualities

Blindsight: The NPC has extraordinarily or supernaturally acute senses that replace its vision. Its blindsight operates like vision out to 10 blindsight increments, each equal to its Wisdom score \times 10 ft. Within this range the NPC ignores ambient light penalties and cannot be *blinded*. It also sees *hidden* and *invisible* characters and objects without restriction.

Damage Reduction 4: The NPC gains 4 Damage Reduction.

Darkvision II: The NPC ignores all ambient light penalties.

Fearless II: The NPC is immune to negative Morale effects.

Improved Sense (Scent): The NPC's scent range is halved (rounded down), and it suffers a -4 penalty with related Awareness and Perception checks.

Superior Jumper III: With a successful Jump check, the NPC moves 4 times the resulting distance. (e.g. a result of 10 ft. becomes 40 ft.).

Tough 1: The NPC ignores all damage from 1 critical hit per scene.

Attacks/Weapons

Bite III (dmg 2d12+4 lethal; threat 17–20)

Claw II \times 2 (dmg 1d10+4 lethal; threat 19–20)

- **Armor-Piercing 2:** The weapon's attacks ignore 2 Damage Reduction. When a weapon and its ammunition both have this quality, their AP values are combined.

Swallow III (dmg 4d8+4 acid; notes: Grapple benefit — Medium and smaller only)

Gear & Treasure

1A, 2T

THE VAULT

FANGED VASE (SPECIAL NPC, ADVERSARY)

Fanged Vase (Large Immobile Plant — 55 XP): Str 16, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 3, Wis 2, Cha 7; SZ H (3x3, Reach 1); Spd —

INITIATIVE V	+ _____
RESILIENCE III	+ _____
Search III	+ _____

ATTACK V	+ _____
HEALTH IV	+ _____

DEFENSE I	+ _____
COMPETENCE —	N/A

Qualities

Blindsight: The NPC has extraordinarily or supernaturally acute senses that replace its vision. Its blindsight operates like vision out to 10 blindsight increments, each equal to its Wisdom score \times 10 ft. Within this range the NPC ignores ambient light penalties and cannot be *blinded*. It also sees *hidden* and *invisible* characters and objects without restriction.

Tough 2: The NPC ignores all damage from 2 critical hits per scene.

Attacks/Weapons

Swallow I (dmg 1d12+3 lethal; notes: Grapple benefit — Medium and smaller only)

Tentacle Slap I \times 3 (dmg 1d10+3 lethal; threat 20)

- **Grab:** The attack latches onto the target with each hit, letting the NPC Grapple the same target as a free action.
- **Reach +2:** The wielder's gains +2 Reach with this weapon.

Gear & Treasure

1A, 1G

SLASHER VINES (STANDARD NPCS, ADVERSARIES)

Slasher Vines (Large Plant Walker — 38 XP): Str 14, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 1, Wis 2, Cha 2; SZ L (3x1, Reach 2); Spd 10 ft. ground

INITIATIVE II	+ _____
RESILIENCE III	+ _____
Athletics III	+ _____

ATTACK I	+ _____
HEALTH III	+ _____
Notice III	+ _____

DEFENSE I	+ _____
COMPETENCE —	N/A

Qualities

Chameleon I (Indoors/Settled): The NPC gains a +4 bonus with Stealth and Hide checks while indoors or in settled terrain.

Grappler: The NPC gains a +2 bonus with Athletics checks made during a Grapple.

Improved stability: The NPC is considered 1 Size category larger for carrying capacity, Trample attacks, and resisting Bull Rush and Trip attempts so long as it's standing firmly on the ground and not climbing, flying, or riding.

Attacks/Weapons

Squeeze III (dmg 2d12+2 lethal; notes: Grapple benefit)

Gear & Treasure

1A

THE VAULT

THE HOARD (STANDARD NPCS, ADVERSARIES)

The Hoard (Medium Construct Horror Walkers — 141 XP): Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; SZ M (1x1, Reach 2); Spd 10-ft. ft. ground

INITIATIVE III	+ _____
RESILIENCE VIII	+ _____
Athletics III	+ _____
Tactics V	+ _____

ATTACK VIII	+ _____
HEALTH VI	+ _____
Disguise VIII	+ _____

DEFENSE III	+ _____
COMPETENCE III	+ _____
Search III	+ _____

Qualities

Chameleon II (Indoors/Settled): The NPC gains a +8 bonus with Stealth and Hide checks while moving and automatically becomes *hidden* when stationary. It also gains 1 die of sneak attack damage during each of the first 3 rounds of combat in the chosen terrain.

Battle Planning I (Captain class ability): The NPC may begin each combat with 1 of these battle plans already in effect and may enact a new one as a full action. Each plan's benefits last until the end of the current combat or until the NPC enacts a different battle plan. A battle plan grants the NPC and each teammate who can see or hear it a +2 morale bonus with the following rolls and values.

- *Crush Them!:* Melee and unarmed attack checks
- *No Prisoners!:* Lethal damage rolls

Coordinated Attack (Feat): Once per round as a full action, the NPC may direct a teammate who can see and hear it to make an immediate Standard Attack.

Damage Immunity (Acid): The NPC is immune to acid damage.

Damage Reduction 5: The NPC gains 5 Damage Reduction.

Hive Mind: The NPC shares thoughts and reactions with others of his species within 1 mile. It cannot become *blinded*, *deafened*, *flanked* or *flat-footed* unless all others of his kind who can see and hear it already suffer the condition.

Misdirection Basics (Feat): The NPC's threat range with attacks against special characters increases by 1. The NPC also counts as 3 additional characters when determining numerical advantage.

Sneak Attack II (Scout class ability): The NPC gains 2 dice of sneak attack damage.

Tough 1: The NPC ignores the effect of 1 failed Damage save per scene.

Treacherous: The NPC may activate critical hits and successes.

Veteran II: The NPC's Threat Level increases by 2 (maximum Threat Level 20).

Wolf Pack Basics (Feat): The NPC gains an additional +2 bonus when attacking a *flanked* opponent (total +4).

Wolf Pack Mastery (Feat): The NPC inflicts 1 die of sneak attack damage when attacking a *flanked* opponent. Also, an opponent becomes *flanked* when the NPC and any teammate are both adjacent to him in any configuration.

Attacks/Weapons

Slam III (dmg 2d6+3 lethal; threat 19–20)

- **Grab:** The attack latches onto the target with each hit, letting the NPC Grapple the same target as a free action.

Squeeze II (dmg 1d10+3 lethal; notes: Grapple benefit)

Gear & Treasure

10A, 5C, 5L

CHAPTER 4



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