

Goblinoid Games

The Secret of Whispering Wood



by
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GORE™

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Preface: *The Secret of Whispering Wood* is the premiere fantasy adventure using Goblinoid Games' G.O.R.E.™ system. Naturally, it is also compatible with any other systems which are themselves completely compatible with G.O.R.E.™ *The Secret of Whispering Wood* is designed for a group of starting adventurers and is suitable for most fantasy campaign settings with a Western European style.

Start: Whispering Wood is a fey and mysterious place avoided by the sparse local human populace. Tales abound that describe the wood as a place of strong and ancient magic – not actually evil, necessarily, but powerful and weird.

For the adventure to make sense there will need to be a reason why the player characters must travel to, or through, Whispering Wood. The GM should determine this according to prevailing conditions in the campaign. Quite possibly, a mage or alchemist could hire the characters to retrieve wood from the Holy Ash (see "Skogsfrundell", below).

Whispering Wood is a mixed forest comprising primarily oaks, ashes, yews, beeches, silver birches, pines and spruces. Old and gnarled trees thrust upwards from the ground, their growth contorted as if by torture, while their roots dig deep into the earth, seeking to clutch onto the bedrock.

It owes its name to the peculiar whispering voices which speak to people – particularly people on their own, the vulnerable, the old or the very young – although what they say, rumor does not specify. These are the voices of the Skogsfrun, about which more details are provided below.

OVERVIEW OF THE WOODS

There are two major nonhuman groups that live permanently in Whispering Wood. They are at war with one another, although the war takes place in the spirit realm and (until the player characters arrive) has not spilled over into the physical world. They are the Skogsfrun and the Brockmen.

There is also a degenerate group of orcs living in the woods. These creatures cannot leave because they are addicted to a substance only found here.

As well as these, there are the usual run of woodland birds and animals – primarily mice, voles, squirrels, badgers, foxes, thrushes, blackbirds and starlings, all of which can sometimes be seen scurrying among the bushes about their business. Of more concern to adventurers will be the boars.

Boars: The greatest boar in the forest is a huge rogue male called Yellowtusk. He is nearly as large as a

pony, has only one eye and only one ear, but his tusks are huge and sharp. Boars are surprisingly intelligent, and Yellowtusk is even more so; his cunning and savagery make him a dangerous foe for the player characters.

If the party is strong, the GM should consider providing Yellowtusk with other boars that act as followers for him, and/or ensuring that he attacks with the advantage of surprise. If the party is weaker, Yellowtusk will attack alone.

| YELLOWTUSK – Giant boar | | | |
|-------------------------|-------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| STR | 17 | Hit points | 19 |
| INT | 7 | Magic points | 10 |
| POW | 10 | | |
| CON | 19 | Tusks | 65% 1d10+1+1d6 |
| DEX | 13 | Trample | 85% 3d6 prone target only |
| SIZ | 18 | | |
| TREASURE | None. | | |

Every hour that the party spends in Whispering Wood, the GM should roll 1d20. On a roll of "1", Yellowtusk will appear. He will automatically attack.

If Yellowtusk has been slain or driven off, the GM should continue to roll the d20. On a roll of "1", a lesser boar (or group of lesser boars according to the party's strength) will appear. Unlike Yellowtusk, these lesser boars can be driven off with fire, diverted by food, or otherwise avoided by a clever party.

If for some reason the party is spending extended periods of time in Whispering Wood, the GM should give consideration to varying the boar encounters with bears, wolves, or woodland animals appropriate to his or her campaign.

Other Creatures Passing Through the Wood: Humans avoid Whispering Wood, but other intelligent creatures may well be found here by an alert player character party. Details of some sample creatures are provided in the text of the adventure and can easily be used as the basis on which such encounters may be extrapolated.

Expected Gameplay: *The Secret of Whispering Wood* does not have a pre-scripted plot, and there are many directions in which the adventure could go.

It is likely that the player characters will become involved in the war between the Skogsfrun and the Brockmen, but it is up to the players which side they choose – if any. Neither side is necessarily "good" or "evil", and there are advantages to siding with each.

Honey Fungus: Honey fungus is found exclusively in Whispering Wood, where it grows wild. The

magical nature of the wood somehow sustains the fungus; it apparently requires something that is essential to Whispering Wood in order to thrive (see "The Holy Ash" below). It has most peculiar properties.

Aside from the chance that an adventurer will become addicted to the substance, honey fungus is highly relevant to certain encounters in the adventure.

Honey Fungus Tea: The safest way to consume honey fungus is to brew it into a weak tea. The tea is pleasantly euphoric, mildly hallucinogenic, and potentially addictive. A pint of this stuff is sufficient to incapacitate the character for 2d6 hours. The tea tastes sweet, rather like hot mead, hence the name of the fungus.

After consuming a pint of honey fungus tea (in total, not necessarily at one sitting), the character will become addicted unless a d% roll of the character's CON score $\times 7$ or less is passed. A roll of 96-00 on the d% automatically results in addiction regardless of CON.

If the character subsequently consumes a second pint of honey fungus tea, the score needed to pass the roll is reduced to CON $\times 6$. After a third pint, it becomes CON $\times 5$, then with each successive pint CON $\times 4$, then CON $\times 3$, then CON $\times 2$, and finally a straight roll of CON or less on d% is required to avoid addiction. This is the minimum possible, so if

a character somehow consumes a hundred pints of honey fungus tea without becoming addicted, he or she may still avoid addiction on the 101st pint by rolling his or her CON or less on d%.

Effects of Addiction: An addicted character must consume honey fungus tea every day or suffer increasing penalties. For every day without the tea, roll 1d6. This percentage is subtracted from the chance of success for all of the character's skill rolls and other checks, and is cumulative.

Once the character is operating at -40%, he or she has a chance to break the addiction. This is abstracted by a roll of POW $\times 5$ or less on d%. If the character fails to break the addiction, he or she may try again when -50% is reached, then -60%, then -70%, and so on. If the character reaches -100% without breaking the addiction, he or she will die.

If an addicted character begins to consume honey fungus tea once more, the penalty will disappear after no more than three days.

Effects of Eating Honey Fungus: Honey fungus may also be eaten, cooked or raw, although this is not necessarily wise. Eating 1 oz of raw honey fungus, or 2 oz of cooked honey fungus, has the same effect as consuming a pint of tea (see above). In addition, there is a chance that the character will become incapacitated by stomach cramps or even die. The chance to avoid incapacitation is CON $\times 5$ or less for cooked honey fungus, CON $\times 3$ or less for



raw, and if the character rolls 00 (for cooked honey fungus) or 97-00 (for raw honey fungus), he or she will die in 1d6 hours.

Effect on Brockmen: Brockmen have a different reaction to honey fungus tea than humans. It has a similar effect on them as alcohol has on humans, and to them, it is no more addictive than alcohol. They traditionally consume it in substantial quantities.

ABOUT THE SKOGSFRUN

Skogsfrun (singular: "Skogsfru") are creatures from Scandinavian legend, but they have been heavily adapted for the purposes of this adventure. GMs who are familiar with the legend will still need to read this section carefully, as there are many departures from the traditional version. The physical form of a Skogsfrun is depicted on the front cover of this adventure.

Natural Form: In their natural form, Skogsfrun are creatures of spirit and, like other spirit creatures, possess only two stats: INT and POW.

SKOGSFRU – Natural form

| | | | |
|------------|-------|----------------------------|----------------|
| INT | 2d6+6 | Magic points | (Equal to POW) |
| POW | 3d6+6 | No effective attack | |

In their natural form, Skogsfrun are invisible and insubstantial. They cannot be attacked by creatures on the material plane, but certain creatures or shamen that can operate on the spirit plane may be able to harm them. They can, however, hear, see, and even speak on the material plane, using tiny fey voices (the "Whispers" of Whispering Wood.)

Skogsfrun have the ability to steal power from dreams. If an intelligent creature is dreaming, a Skogsfru can attempt to invade his or her dream. This is abstracted in game terms by a POW –vs– POW Opposition Test; if the Skogsfru wins, the dream is invaded. If it loses, the creature's night's sleep passes uneventfully.

Once in a creature's dream, the Skogsfru can appear in any form. With humans, this is generally a beautiful or handsome fey or elfin humanoid, chosen to fit the character's sexual preference. In the dream, the Skogsfru will attempt to cause the character to touch it. If touched, the Skogsfru automatically steals 1d3 Magic Points from the character (the character regenerates these as normal) and may enter the character's future dreams at will, until it has taken physical form.

A Skogsfru may only invade one dream at a time, but it could enter several characters' dreams on the same night, stealing Magic Points from each.

Physical Form: To create a physical form, the Skogsfru must spend 25 Magic Points. These may come from the creature's innate Magic Points as well as any stolen from sleeping characters. The physical form will resemble one of the dream forms the Skogsfru has taken, and has the following stats:

SKOGSFRU – Physical form

| | | | |
|-----------------|---------|------------------------------|----------------|
| STR | 3d4 | Hit points | (CON+SIZ)/2 |
| INT | (*) | Magic points | (Equal to POW) |
| POW | (*) | | |
| CON | 3d4 | Dagger | 25% 1d4+2 |
| DEX | 3d6 | Kiss Special | |
| SIZ | 3d4 | | |
| CHA | 5d6 | (*) indicates unchanged from | Natural Form |
| TREASURE | Varies. | | |

A Skogsfru in physical form is subject to attack as normal. If the physical body is slain, the Skogsfru is forced back into its natural form. Since they are physically weak, unskilled in combat and usually unarmored, this is not difficult to accomplish.

However, a creature from whom the Skogsfru has stolen Magic Points in a dream will find the Skogsfru very attractive and will not normally wish to attack it. The character must pass a test (abstracted as a stat –vs– stat Opposition Test, the character's POW –vs– the Skogsfru's CHA) each round in order to take any hostile action against it.

Once in physical form, the Skogsfru will seek to kiss the character. (This cannot be attempted in combat; the character must participate in the kiss for its special power to operate.) With the kiss, the Skogsfru steals the character's willpower and the character *must* obey any orders that particular Skogsfru gives for a period of 2d6 days. A character in this situation may not attack a Skogsfru in any way, under any circumstances.

Normally, of course, the Skogsfru will direct the character to kiss it every day in order to maintain control indefinitely.

Habitat and Diet: Skogsfrun subsist on magical emanations instead of food and air. They can only normally survive in a woodland with strong magical emanations. For the purposes of this adventure, this means that they cannot leave the borders of the Whispering Wood.

Life Cycle and Reproduction: In their natural form, Skogsfrun do not age or reproduce. They can be killed on the spirit plane, but if not killed by something, they live indefinitely.

In their physical form, Skogsfrun age much faster than humans. They spring into existence with an apparent physical age of about eighteen, in human terms, and age the equivalent of one human year for

each week that passes. They may delay this aging process through the expenditure of magic points; any week in which the Skogsfru expends ten magic points not to age, its physical age remains unchanged.

Skogsfrun in male form are infertile and do not reproduce. In female form, they are fertile and breed with humans or humanoids to continue their species. The child is born in nine months, during which time the pregnant Skogsfru is usually protected by any other Skogsfrun in the area. Once born, the Skogsfru child usually disincorporates rapidly and returns to the spirit plane for its development and education.

Religion: Skogsfrun motivations and objectives can only really be understood in the context of their religion.

They have a symbiotic relationship with a major spirit – not quite powerful enough to be called a minor deity – called Skogsledare. This spirit subsists and grows on magic points sacrificed to it by the Skogsfrun. In return, it grants them the power to create physical bodies and, thereby, reproduce and continue the species.

If Skogsledare gains sufficient power, it will be able to give the Skogsfrun more powerful and more permanent physical forms, which is an end the Skogsfrun work tirelessly to achieve. Thus they seek to destroy alternative religions, gain followers they can convert to the worship of Skogsledare, and sacrifice as many magic points as possible to Skogsledare themselves.

THE SKOGSFRUN IN WHISPERING WOODS

There are three Skogsfrun in Whispering Woods. Their names are Aslög, Gittan, and My, and at the start of the adventure, all are in spirit form.

ASLÖG – Natural form

| | | | |
|-----|----|---------------------|----|
| INT | 12 | Magic points | 18 |
| POW | 18 | No effective attack | |

Aslög is the oldest of the Skogsfrun, the leader, and the progenitor (parent) of the other two. Aslög has a mild preference for female forms, but will become male instead if this is appropriate to the preferences of the majority of the player characters. Aslög is concerned to produce more children, and will try to encourage any Skogsfrun in female form to become pregnant.

GITTAN – Natural form

| | | | |
|-----|----|---------------------|----|
| INT | 14 | Magic points | 16 |
| POW | 16 | No effective attack | |

Gittan is the second-oldest, and sees itself as subordinate to Aslög. It is obedient and humorless. Gittan prefers male forms, but will become female instead if none of the player characters have a preference for males.

MY – Natural form

| | | | |
|-----|----|---------------------|----|
| INT | 13 | Magic points | 15 |
| POW | 15 | No effective attack | |

My is the youngest of the Skogsfrun. The other Skogsfrun try to give My orders, but My does not necessarily see itself as subordinate. It has ethical concerns about overriding the will of other intelligent beings, and a persuasive character could convince it not to do so. My prefers female forms, but will become male instead if none of the player characters have a preference for females.

As soon as they perceive the player characters, the three Skogsfrun will attempt to invade their dreams as described above. There is a 25% chance that the characters will be perceived on the first day, a 50% chance on the second day, a 95% chance on the third day, and a 99% chance on the fourth and subsequent days.

If they manage to steal sufficient magic points, the Skogsfrun will take physical bodies as soon as they can, and try to take control of as many player characters as possible. Their objective is to force the player characters to attack the Brockmen and destroy the idols in their temple.

If this is been achieved, the Skogsfrun will be able to take over leadership of the Brockmen's society and force the Brockmen to sacrifice Magic Points to Skogsledare.

SKOGSFRUNDELL

Skogsfrundell is the part of the Whispering Woods that the Skogsfrun will prefer to inhabit once they have physical forms (see the area map for Whispering Woods). It comprises a natural dell containing three hollow trees surrounding a huge central ash; the Skogsfrun will take a hollow tree each for a home.

The Skogsfrundell Dragonflies: Depicted on the front cover of this adventure, the dragonflies of Skogsfrundell are remarkable. They can grow up to a foot long, and they are spectacularly beautiful. Their bodies shine with iridescent light, and in flight, their delicate wings shimmer with all the colors of the rainbow.

These dragonflies feed on mosquitoes, centipedes and beetles for the most part, and so they keep Skogsfrundell free of vermin (particularly insects

which might gnaw on the Holy Ash). They are essentially harmless to humans and Skogsfrun; they will not bite unless grabbed or strongly provoked, and their bite does no damage in game terms in any case.

The Holy Ash: At the centre of Skogsfrundell is an ash tree sacred to the Skogsfrun. It is particularly tall and, unlike most of the twisted trees of the Whispering Wood, grows straight.

This ash tree is the centre of the "weirdness" of Whispering Wood, and its magical emanations pervade the whole forest. It is the Holy Ash that permits the honey fungus to grow, creates the huge dragonflies, and gives the Skogsfrun an anchor on the physical plane.

If the Holy Ash is somehow destroyed – presumably by axe, saw, or fire – then the Skogsfrun will lose their anchor on the physical plane here and they will be forced to depart. However, it is a strong and hearty tree. Destroying it is work for a major forest fire, or if axe or saw is used, will require several hours' labor from strong and hearty workers.

GM option: Wood from the Holy Ash may be usable to create enchanted items of some kind.

WHAT THE SKOGSFRUN KNOW

Despite their determination to attack the Brockmen, the Skogsfrun know surprisingly little about them. This is because the presence of the Brockmen's religious idols keeps the Skogsfrun away from the areas they inhabit.

The Skogsfrun will be able to locate the Brockmen's lands for the characters quite precisely. They know that the Brockmen have several religious idols that they need destroyed, and they can provide a physical description, but they will be unable to provide any other intelligence. They do not know even roughly how many Brockmen there are.

ABOUT THE BROCKMEN

As their name implies, the Brockmen resemble anthropomorphic badgers. In stature they are similar to dwarfs, being short but obviously strong, broad, heavy-shouldered and barrel-chested. They have humanoid arms and hands, but badger-like heads and fur. They have a very sensitive sense of smell, which is as clear for them as sight is for humans, and they often greet one another by sniffing at each other like dogs.

Brockmen are not cleanly creatures, and their bodies are usually infested with lice and ticks. They are sapient, but not particularly clever, and their technology is primitive. Most favor shields and single-handed weapons, particularly simple ones like spears or axes.

BROCKMAN

| | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| STR | 4d6 | Hit points | (CON+SIZ)/2 |
| INT | 2d6 | Magic points | (Equal to POW) |
| POW | 3d6 | | |
| CON | 1d6+12 | Spear | 35% 1d8+1 |
| DEX | 3d6 | Brock Axe | 30% 2d4+2 |
| SIZ | 2d6 | Medium Shield | 30% |
| CHA | 1d6 | | |
| ARMOR | 1 point skin, some wear 1 point armor as well | | |
| TREASURE | Varies. | | |

Habitat and Diet: Brockmen live in remote woodlands, generally those that are isolated from humans. They are omnivorous. Often they grub for worms and insects, and they will sometimes eat dung, giving every sign of liking the taste.

Drinking honey fungus tea is an important part of Brockman culture.

Life Cycle and Reproduction: Mature Brockman females come into season during the dark of the moon. When receptive, they indicate this by spraying nearby males with their urine, which is a signal to mate. If there are several males present, this usually results in a fight, and most Brockman males are scarred from such battles.



The female will give birth to a litter of three to six cubs which are normally weaned during their third year of life. They generally achieve full growth in their fifth year and, if not previously killed, they tend to die in their late teens or early twenties.

Religion: Brockmen worship their ancestors. The most revered ancestors' skeletons are encased in a mixture of clay, rock and blood to make life-size statues, into which the spirits of the ancestors are bound in rituals conducted at the dark of the moon. The statues are then fired and placed in burrows to guard the Brockmen's "treasure" – usually worthless crystals (often quartz), food (including dung), and vast quantities of cooled honey fungus tea that the Brockmen consume in their orgiastic rituals.

Brockman worship involves sacrifice of intelligent beings. They use captives where they can get them, but if none can be found, a Brockman is killed instead.

THE BROCKMEN OF WHISPERING WOOD

There are several dozen Brockmen in Whispering Wood. Their precise numbers should be determined by the GM; there should be enough of them to challenge the player characters in combat, but not so many that the players will be overwhelmed.

The Brockman leaders and important members of the tribe are detailed below. Other Brockmen should use the "typical" Brockman stats as follows:

TYPICAL BROCKMAN

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------------|-----------|
| STR | 14 | Hit points | 11 |
| INT | 7 | Magic points | 10 |
| POW | 10 | | |
| CON | 15 | Spear | 35% 1d8+1 |
| DEX | 10 | Brock Axe | 30% 2d4+2 |
| SIZ | 7 | Medium Shield | 30% |
| CHA | 3 | | |
| ARMOR | 1 point skin | | |
| TREASURE | None. | | |

Gark: Gark is the chief Brockman and leader of the tribe.

GARK

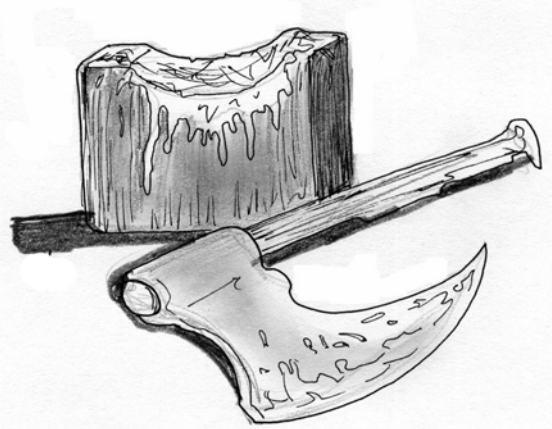
| | | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|
| STR | 17 | Hit points | 14 |
| INT | 9 | Magic points | 12 |
| POW | 12 | | |
| CON | 18 | Spear | 75% 1d8+1 |
| DEX | 10 | Brock Axe | 60% 2d4+2 |
| SIZ | 9 | Medium Shield | 65% |
| CHA | 6 | | |
| ARMOR | 1 point skin plus 3 point cuir bouilli | | |
| TREASURE | Tablets of Spirit, see below. | | |

Gark's *Tablets of Spirit* are primitive-looking clay tablets inscribed with runes that seem to have been scribed with a stylus of some kind. Gark knows a special magical technique for preparing these tablets, and he has prepared 1d6 of them.

The tablets protect against spirit entities. They have a POW of 1d6, and if the bearer is attacked by a spirit, the tablet will "intercept" the attack and become the spirit's target instead. If the tablet is defeated, it will break and become useless.

Gark is vaguely aware of the Skogsfrun, knowing that there are spirit entities in the Whispering Wood that threaten Brockman existence. He will be very suspicious of any characters who ask him about his tribes' protections from spirits, or even worse, ask him directly about religious idols.

Gark seeks to preserve his tribe, and he is always on the lookout for intelligent beings which could be used as sacrifices in the tribe's monthly rituals. The player characters would be ideal for this...



Togg: Togg is Gark's personal champion. He will not hesitate to fight to the death for his master.

TOGG

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| STR | 21 | Hit points | 15 |
| INT | 4 | Magic points | 10 |
| POW | 10 | | |
| CON | 19 | Spear | 85% 1d8+1+1d4 |
| DEX | 11 | Brock Axe | 70% 2d4+2+1d4 |
| SIZ | 12 | Medium Shield | 70% |
| CHA | 3 | | |
| ARMOR | 1 point skin plus 3 point cuir bouilli | | |
| TREASURE | A beautifully-carved spear (no special powers, but has monetary value). | | |

The value of Togg's spear should be calculated according to money considerations in this particular

campaign, but for most G.O.R.E.TM-compatible systems, the sum of 300 silver pieces or 300 pennies (as appropriate) is suggested.

Gragg: Gragg is the tribe's shaman. She is elderly, with silver fur, and more than slightly insane.

| | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|
| GRAGG | | | |
| STR | 9 | Hit points | 8 |
| INT | 7 | Magic points | 17 |
| POW | 17 | | |
| CON | 10 | Spear | 25% 1d8+1 |
| DEX | 11 | Brock Axe | 20% 2d4+2 |
| SIZ | 6 | Medium Shield | 20% |
| CHA | 5 | | |
| ARMOR | 1 point skin | | |
| TREASURE | 3 potions in clay jars. Each potion will heal 1d6hp of damage to one hit location if the whole potion is drunk. A sip will not have any healing effect. | | |

Gark believes that Gragg is completely loyal to him, but in fact, she would quite like to see the tribe have another leader.

THE BROCKMAN VILLAGE

The Brockman village is set in a substantial-size clearing in the forest, approximately eighty feet in diameter. The clearing is clearly not natural – the Brockmen have removed trees and undergrowth so that they can see any creatures which are coming. It comprises a collection of nine low, round mud huts with thatched roofs arranged in a semicircle.

The numbers of Brockmen present here should be determined by the GM to suit the strength of the party, but for a "typical" party playing through the adventure, there should be twenty to twenty-five of them plus Gark, Togg and Gragg.

There are several ways in which the players could approach the village. Each is elaborated in turn below.

Frontal Assault: If the player characters openly approach the village in attack formation, the Brockmen will certainly react with lethal force. There are three hidden scouts in the undergrowth surrounding the clearing (a Notice skill roll to locate each, or an Alertness Test; the GM may roll them, or use the "Typical Brockman" stats provided above). Each has a drum which he will beat once to warn the village. Brockmen will begin pouring out of the huts, armed for war, 1d4 rounds later. Owing to the superiority of Brockman numbers, the players will need to beat a hasty retreat or be wiped out.

Approach to Negotiate: The Brockmen scouts will beat a different signal on their drums (a triple beat). This indicates to the village inhabitants that someone is approaching but they are not an immediate threat.

The Brockmen will come out armed, but not immediately attack. Gark will step forward and speak to the party. He will insist that they hand over their weapons before negotiating.

If the party is foolish enough to hand over their weapons, they will be seized and incarcerated in the Secret Temple (room 2, below) for sacrifice at the dark of the moon. In this case, kind-hearted GMs may permit them an opportunity to escape their bonds (perhaps someone spots the bronze knife in the litter, and can reach it with their toes?)

If the party refuses to hand over their weapons, then the Brockmen will refuse to speak to them. The players will have to retreat or attack.

Infiltration and Stealth: This is a productive approach. The Brockmen scouts are bored and not particularly alert. They rely primarily on their sense of smell, so their chance to Notice depends on whether they are approached from upwind (in which case they have a 40% chance) or downwind (in which case the relevant chance is 10%). If they are silenced, then the huts can be approached safely.

Seven of the huts will contain 1d3+1 Brockmen each, up to the number of Brockmen previously determined by the GM. During the day, most will be asleep and have only a 10% chance of waking if approached stealthily.

The last two remaining huts are those of Gark (Togg lives in his hut with him) and Gragg (who lives alone). Either Gark or Togg will be awake at all times, and will yell to wake the camp if any party member enters their hut.

In Gragg's hut, the party will find a crude map indicating the location of the Secret Temple. There is also a faint trail (Notice or Tracking skill roll to locate it) leading from the village to the Secret Temple.

Observation: A party that watches the Brockmen for a time will discover that the Brockmen sometimes gather for social events when most of them become intoxicated with Honey Fungus Tea. This will present an excellent opportunity to wipe them out.

Returning Brockmen: Please note that not all the Brockmen are present in the village at any one time. Some will be out hunting and foraging (a Brockman food-gathering expedition traditionally lasts two or three days), so returning Brockmen will still pose a potential hazard to the party even if the village is taken out. It is suggested that the GM should assign

about a dozen extra Brockmen to this duty, and they should return at intervals of 3d6 hours in groups of 2d6 Brockmen.

APPROACHING THE SECRET TEMPLE

The Secret Temple entrance is difficult to locate, save by a tracker following the trail from the Brockmen village as noted above or by using the crude map found in Gragg's hut.

The entrance is a rough-looking hole in the ground, partially concealed by undergrowth. Its crudity completely belies the sophisticated stonework from which the Temple is constructed.

THE SECRET TEMPLE KEY

A character familiar with stonework or mining will be able to determine that the Secret Temple must have been fashioned using high quality tools of iron, steel, or some enchanted metal appropriate to the campaign world – in other words, the Brockmen could not have manufactured it (or at least, not in their present state of technology). Presumably some culture or people long-forgotten made this delving for reasons as much lost to history as the makers themselves. The doors are also of stone, and massively heavy, but counterweighted such that when opened with gentle pressure, they rise smoothly into the ceiling. About two minutes after rising, the door slowly settles back into a closed position. The GM should note that owing to the counterweight, there is no great force behind the descent and most obstructions will prevent it.

To most characters in G.O.R.E.TM-compatible games, of course, counterweights are an arcane and unknown principle and the doors will appear to be magical.

The various statues and any other constructions made by the Brockmen, on the other hand, are of much cruder and simpler manufacture, easily distinguished from the original Temple.

Creature movements: As written, there are no random encounters in the Secret Temple, and the creatures are shown in their starting locations. In some places in the text, specific information is given about how the various creatures will move in response to the player characters' presence once these have been detected.

This represents an opportunity for the GM to adjust the difficulty of the area to reflect the playing skill and characters' abilities shown by the players. If the players are novices, the creatures should generally be given lower chances to detect their movement

and react more slowly, or less intelligently, to their presence. If the players are veteran dungeoneers or the characters are numerous or powerful, then the creatures should be more alert and react quickly and cleverly.

Some GMs may also wish to include extra wandering Brockmen to suit the strength of the party.

1. ENTRANCE AREA:

The stone steps plunge steeply into the darkness. The stairs are dusty and cobwebbed, and your feet disturb feeding rats that scurry away into their holes. The passage descends for thirty feet before opening into a hallway ten feet wide with a high-vaulted ceiling. In a recess in a nearby corner, a gigantic statue of some Brockman god, some nine feet high, stands like a guard.

Note: Bright light, loud noise or conversation in this area will attract attention from the Brockmen in area 4. Depending on how suspicious the sound makes them, either one lone Brockman will be sent to investigate, or the whole group will move, ready for war.

The Statue of Thergan: Thergan is the Brockman god of the North Wind, winter, and ice. From beneath thick, beetling brows he seems to frown down at the party in disapproval. He wears human-like clothes (tunic, breeches and cloak) and clutches a tall spear and a round shield. All are made of some slate-grey, brittle stone. The party will note a substantial chip in his forehead.

The statue contains an ancestral Brockman spirit (INT 2, POW 16) but it is presently dormant and difficult to awaken – only an attempt to destroy the statue, or the presence of a Skogsfru, will awaken it. If awakened, it will manifest as a spectral Brockman and attack (a POW –vs– POW Opposition Test). If it successfully causes a creature to run out of magic points, it will possess them and attack physically.

If the party successfully destroys the statue, then the spirit will be banished. Its destruction can best be managed by pushing it over, causing it to shatter. The statue is not anchored to the floor, but it is extremely heavy, having an effective SIZ of 50 (party STR –vs– statue's SIZ Opposition Test); the party can, of course, combine their strength if they cooperate in pushing it over. Some parties may need to bring horses or mules into the dungeon to help them with this.

2. HALL OF WORSHIPPERS:

The door opens on a huge room with curved bays set into the walls and sturdy pillars supporting the ceiling. The floor is lowered in the middle, with two steps down into this lower area, littered with Brockman debris. The walls are decorated with Brockman paintings depicting their ancestors' victories in battle. Although there are no creatures in the room, it is clear that this place is used for strange Brockman rites and rituals, and there are altogether too many reddish-brown stains on the floor and walls, hinting at the bloody and violent nature of their religion.

If the party ask about the paintings, describe them as primitive, resembling prehistoric cave paintings in style, if not in composition. The six Brockman gods are all depicted (see area 1 and area 3 for physical descriptions of them) in their various aspects, Vord more than any of the others.

A careful search of this area may discover:

- A Brockman paintbrush with badger-fur bristles, wedged between two flagstones;
- A bronze-bladed knife with a wooden handle, in the litter;
- A single, whole Brockman tooth.

Either a successful Alertness Test or Notice skill test is required to locate each of these items. None of them are of any immediately apparent use. In fact, all the items can be ransomed back to the Brockmen.

The knife is a ritual, priestly item and the Brockmen will be prepared to pay a substantial amount of money to recover it (depending on the referee's particular setting, but the sum of 200 silver pieces or 200 pennies is suggested for "typical" game worlds). The tooth belongs to Togg and he will ransom it back for a small sum (20 silver pieces or pennies is recommended for "typical" game worlds), while the paintbrush is the property of Gragg who likes it and will pay a small sum (10 silver pieces or pennies is recommended for "typical" game worlds) to have it returned to her.

If the party is captured by the Brockmen, it is to this room that they will be brought. They will be held (lashed to the pillars) and ritually killed at the rate of one character every dark of the moon.

3. THE HALL OF STATUES:

This is clearly the innermost sanctum of the Temple – the most holy (or unholy) place where only the Brockmen priests dare tread. Here, five statues of Brockmen gods and goddesses, similar in dimensions and general appearance to the statue you saw at the entrance, glare and glower at you from within their wall recesses. Each statue appears slightly different from the others.

Note: Save for Gragg, no Brockman will enter this holiest of places. If Gragg has been slain or otherwise dealt with, the party can even rest here in perfect safety from the Brockmen – although such an action will certainly draw very unwelcome attention from the primitive and horrific Brockman gods!

All of the statues may be destroyed in the same way as the Statue of Thergan in area 1, and all have an effective SIZ of 50 for the purposes of tipping them over to shatter them.

3A. The Statue of Umosa: Umosa is the Brockman goddess of fertility and childbirth. She seems to glare arrogantly at the party. She wears human-like clothes (a gown and cloak) and clutches something midway between a staff and a club. A raven perches on her shoulder. All are made of some slate-grey, brittle stone.

The statue contains an ancestral Brockman spirit (INT 3, POW 18) but it is presently dormant and difficult to awaken – only an attempt to destroy the statue, or the presence of a Skogsfru, will awaken it. If awakened, it will manifest as a spectral Brockman and attack (POW –vs– POW Opposition Test). If it successfully causes a creature to run out of magic points, it will possess them and attack physically.

3B. The Statue of Delg: Delg is the Brockman god of dreams, nightmares and visions. His teeth are bared in a snarl but his eyes seem anguished and forsaken. He wears human-like clothes (robe, hood and cloak) and his hands are empty, claws unsheathed. All are made of some slate-grey, brittle stone.

The statue contains an ancestral Brockman spirit (INT 2, POW 16) but it is presently dormant and difficult to awaken – only an attempt to destroy the statue, or the presence of a Skogsfru, will awaken it. If awakened, it will manifest as a spectral Brockman and attack (POW –vs– POW Opposition Test). If it successfully causes a creature to run out of magic points, it will possess them and attack physically.

3C. The Statue of Thot: Thot is the Brockman god of strength, stone and the earth. His lower jaw is outthrust, his nose broken, his shoulders broad, his chest deep, and his waist thick. He wears a loincloth and clutches a huge club and a round shield. All are made of some slate-grey, brittle stone. The party will note that his statue seems weathered and old.

The statue contains a very ancient and primitive Brockman spirit (INT 4, POW 16) that disapproves of the trend towards slaughter and hatred the Brockman religion has shown in the last few

millennia. If one of the other spirits is in combat with the party, there is a 5% chance per combat round (cumulative) that this spirit will manifest and attack the other spirit, seeing an opportunity to redeem its people.

Of course, if it must, it will certainly defend the statue that is its home.

If the party defeats the other four spirits and Thot's spirit has manifested itself without being defeated, then it will speak telepathically with them, asking them to forgive its people for their false worship, and not to destroy its own statue, lest the Skogsfrun run amok. This spirit also has the power to break Skogsfrun influence over any party member who is under their spell.

If the party seems sympathetic, Thot will call upon them to bring the Brockman priestess to it. (If Gragg has been slain, another female Brockman will be chosen to stand in her stead.) He will command a peace between human and Brockman and a pardon for all past hostilities. If the party has slain all of the Brockmen in the village, this will need to wait until some of the Brockmen out on foraging expeditions return; see the note on page 10.

Behind the Statue of Thot, there is a secret entrance. This can be found using a normal Alertness Test or Notice skill roll, and Thot also knows of its presence, although he will not speak of it voluntarily. If asked, Thot knows nothing of what is behind the door, saying that this is the place of the people who originally built this temple, and as a usurper, it would not be proper for him to probe its secrets.

He will not object if the party wishes to pass through this door.

3D. The Statue of Vord: Vord is the Brockman god of blood, warfare and death. He is also the leader of the pantheon. He is tall and skeletal and has no eyes or eyesockets. He wears human-like wargear (mailshirt and coif) and clutches a broad axe and a round shield. All are made of some slate-grey, brittle stone. The party will note that his statue is more highly polished than the others.

The statue contains an ancestral Brockman spirit (INT 1, POW 14) which is quite alert. As the party approaches, it will manifest as a spectral Brockman and threaten them with doom unless they leave. If the party does not leave, or if a Skogsfrun is present for some reason, it will attack (POW –vs– POW Opposition Test). If it successfully causes a creature to run out of magic points, it will possess them and attack physically.

3E. The Statue of Inash: Inash is the Brockman goddess of fear and hatred. Her statue has batlike wings, spread in a predatory stance. She is nude. All are made of some slate-grey, brittle stone.

The statue contains an ancestral Brockman spirit (INT 4, POW 16). It is presently semi-dormant – an attempt to destroy the statue, or the presence of a Skogsfrun, will awaken it, and so will any spell used in area 3. If awakened, it will manifest as a spectral Brockman and attack (POW –vs– POW Opposition Test). If it successfully causes a creature to run out of magic points, it will possess them and attack physically.

4. STORAGE AREA:

NB: This description assumes that the characters have surprised the Brockmen in this area. If they have not, the description will need to be amended accordingly.

You look out into a large, L-shaped room packed with boxes, barrels and storage trunks. This is clearly where the Brockmen store items for future use. There is a clear area in the center of the room, where six Brockmen are standing guard.

Unless the party have approached with due stealth, the Brockmen will immediately leap to the attack.

Some GMs may wish to roll up these Brockmen in full according to the rules on page 7 and the core G.O.R.E.TM rulebook. Otherwise, the six Brockmen in this room all have the "typical Brockman" stats shown on page 8. Three are armed with axes, three with spears.

The barrels are crudely-made Brockman things fashioned of wood and rope. There are five of them and they all prove to contain Honey Fungus Tea. The boxes and storage trunks contain the tribe's treasure, which should be determined by the GM according to the needs of the campaign. For "typical" campaigns using G.O.R.E.TM-compatible rules, the total value might be approximately 2,500 pennies or silver pieces, mostly in the form of plunder, although some may be pelts, herbs, or other woodland products.

It will probably take some thirty minutes to search and catalogue all the treasure here, and owing to its weight and bulk, extracting it from the Secret Temple may well require considerable ingenuity on the part of the players.

5. FORGOTTEN TOMB:

The door opens into a square room, perhaps twenty-five feet on each side, with a stone sarcophagus on a raised dais in the middle. The sarcophagus is well-made and clearly dates back to the original construction of this temple, rather than being one of the crude Brockman additions. The sarcophagus remains sealed, and it seems that the superstitious Brockmen have not dared to interfere with it.

However, they have not left the place untouched. The walls of this apparent tomb are marked with an assortment of Brockman graffitoes, as if through irreverence, the Brockmen could somehow reduce the power of this alien spirit in the place they have taken over.

This sarcophagus was prepared for the interment of some ancient chieftain, but in fact was never occupied. If the party opens the lid – which will require considerable strength, since it is heavy and has an effective SIZ of 25 for the purposes of a STR – v– SIZ roll on the Opposition Table – they will discover that the sarcophagus is empty.

The graffiti, if somehow translated, will prove to be typical sexual and scatological innuendo. If the players require examples, the GM may draw on any typical example of lowbrow graffiti.

The Brockmen fear powerful spirits in this room, and must pass a difficult POW test (POWx3 or less on d100) to enter it. Thus, it could form a useful place of refuge for the player characters if necessary. However, if they are aware the sarcophagus has been opened and is empty, this will no longer apply and the Brockmen will feel able to enter the room with impunity.

The secret door in the north wall of this room can be detected with a standard Notice skill check. If found, it will be easy to open.

6. DEAD BROCKMAN:

A revolting stench assails your nostrils as the door opens, revealing a substantial room, perhaps fifty feet by forty feet in overall dimensions. Near the center of the room lies the rotting corpse of a naked Brockman. It has been impaled on a spike. Mold and fungus grow in its fur, and you can see fat maggots wriggling in the flesh.

The Brockman in this room attempted to mate with one of Gark's favored females, and the Brockman ruler decided not to have him sacrificed in the usual way. His alternative punishment here was by way of making an example of him.

The corpse carries a plague. Any character touching it suffers an "attack" from the plague on the Opposition Table (simulated as the disease's POW of

12 –v– the character's CON) to avoid catching the disease. If infected, the character can pass this disease onto his or her companions, also by touch and simulated in the same way. While infected, the character will lose 1d3 points of CON every day until the disease runs its course in 1d6 days. After this, the character will recover 1d6 points of CON each day during his or her convalescence until CON returns to its original level.

Any character whose CON reaches 0 as a result of this disease will die.

7. ROOM OF SKELETONS:

There are five animated skeletons ahead, armed with spears and equipped with shields. They appear human. They immediately move to the attack!

The skeletons have the following stats:

SKELETON

| | | | |
|------------|-----|----------------------|-----------|
| STR | 3d6 | Hit points | N/A |
| INT | 0 | Magic points | 1 |
| POW | 1 | | |
| CON | 1 | Spear | 40% 1d8+1 |
| DEX | 3d6 | Medium Shield | 35% |
| SIZ | 3d6 | | |
| CHA | 1 | | |

ARMOR None, but invulnerable to impaling weapons such as spears or arrows.

TREASURE None.

Skeletons may only be injured by crushing or slashing weapons or by elemental attack forms such as fire. They have no effective minds, so spells which influence their willpower or morale will have no effect on them, and they attack unceasingly until destroyed.



The skeletons do not see with normal senses; they do not require light and cannot be blinded or deafened.

Use the optional hit location table when fighting skeletons. Any hit that does less than 4 damage has no effect in game terms, though shards and splinters of bone may fly off. A hit for 5 damage or more shatters that hit location, destroying it.

Shattering one leg will reduce the skeleton's movement rate to half of normal. Shattering both legs will prevent it moving at all, as will the destruction of its abdomen. Shattering an arm prevents the skeleton using its shield or weapon (depending on which arm is affected), while the destruction of its chest or skull will prevent the skeleton from acting at all.

These skeletons were set to watch this secret place in ages past by the original builders of the temple. They are very ancient, with age-yellowed bones, and their shields and spears are in a peculiarly antique style. For some G.O.R.E.TM-compatible game worlds, it would be appropriate to describe their spears as bronze-tipped – although this would obviously be unremarkable if the setting was generally Bronze Age in technology.

If the GM does not wish to roll up the skeletons individually, assume that each has 10 DEX, STR and SIZ.

Assuming the skeletons are slain and the characters gain access to the room beyond:

This room is obviously a guard-room for housing the skeletons. It is apparent that others have been here before you, in ages past, for several slain skeletons lie in a pile on the floor. Among the bones you can see the desiccated corpses of two warrior-types, apparently adventurers. They are fully-equipped.

These adventurers have been dead for centuries and their leather and cloth goods are so badly-rotten as to be useless for all practical purposes.

One of them wears a gold ring (suggested value in a typical campaign: 200 pennies or silver pieces) and carries a pitted but serviceable sword (treat as an ordinary shortsword). The other has 133 ancient coins (equivalent to pennies or silver pieces in most campaigns) and a tarnished but serviceable helm (4 armor points).

8. POOL OF SLIME:

The corridor ends in a small chamber, no more than twenty feet on a side. In the northwest corner of the chamber is a small pool, or large puddle, of brackish, stagnant water.

The water conceals a transparent, amoeboid but substantial-sized creature. Because it is transparent, spotting it will require a normal Notice skill check.

| | | | |
|-----------------|-----|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| SLIME | | | |
| STR | 2d6 | Hit points | (CON+SIZ)/2 |
| INT | 1d2 | Magic points | Equal to POW |
| POW | 2d6 | | |
| CON | 3d4 | Absorb | 50%, special damage |
| DEX | 1d6 | | |
| SIZ | 2d4 | | |
| CHA | 1 | | |
| ARMOR | | None, but takes reduced damage. | |
| TREASURE | | None. | |

If the optional hit location table rules are in play, the slime has only one hit location: Body. This contains all its hit points.

The creature has no armor as such. However, it takes only 1hp of damage from slashing, impaling or crushing weapons. It takes full normal damage from magic and elemental attack forms such as fire, so the party's most effective weapons against it may well be their torches or other light source. If faced with a determined attack by creatures armed with fire, it will be very likely (75%) to retreat if possible. The slime can travel across the walls and ceiling as easily as the floor.

If the slime hits a creature, it will secrete digestive substances that inflict 1d3 points of damage per round for 2d6 rounds. Armor will be consumed first (at the rate of 1 hit point per armor point), and the creature can digest metal or leather armor with equal facility. The digestive secretion can be washed off with water if sufficient care is taken, but this will require at least a combat round's work, possibly more depending on the GM's judgment of the situation. (For example, a character would struggle to wash the secretion off his or her own back!)

This particular slime's stats are:

| | | | |
|-----------------|---|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| SLIME | | | |
| STR | 6 | Hit points | 6 |
| INT | 1 | Magic points | 8 |
| POW | 8 | | |
| CON | 7 | Absorb | 50%, special damage |
| DEX | 2 | | |
| SIZ | 4 | | |
| CHA | 1 | | |
| ARMOR | | None, but takes reduced damage. | |
| TREASURE | | None. | |

There are no features of interest or items of value in the room.

9. APPARENTLY EMPTY CHAMBER:

This thirty foot by thirty foot room appears to be empty. There is an exit in the opposite wall.

A careful search of this room might reveal a loose stone in one wall. (This is hard to see, requiring a successful Notice skill check or Alertness test at -20%.) Behind the loose stone is an ornamented metal box containing an ancient dagger, made of some kind of stone resembling obsidian. This weapon is specially enchanted such that it attacks at +5% and inflicts 1d6+2 points of damage. It is valuable and in most campaigns could be sold for a suggested figure equivalent to 1,000 pennies or silver pieces for the dagger and 100 pennies or silver pieces for the ornamental box.

10. TORTURE CHAMBER:

You emerge into a large room, some sixty feet on each side. It is apparently a torture chamber of some kind. There are four cells adjoining the room, two in the west wall, two in the south. Each cell contains shackles, manacles and chains as well as a wooden pallet for sleeping on and the tattered, sodden remains of a blanket.

The main room contains dozens of implements of torture: tongs, hooks, saws, needles, and knives of every description. All appear very old.

The torture implements, if the characters are prepared to sell them, might fetch several thousand pennies or silver pieces, but their sale in most human places would certainly attract attention from the law and, in many games, the priesthood. A search among them carries a 5% risk of receiving a cut which carries a blood-borne disease (with the same effects, in game terms, as the plague described in room 6) and will reveal nothing of interest.

10A. First Cell: Any character searching cell "A" will have a 50% chance of disturbing a tiny but horribly poisonous spider lurking among the shreds and rags of the pallet. The spider will bite, and if the character is not wearing leather gauntlets or better armor on his or her hand, he or she risks being poisoned (test the venom's potency of 8 against the character's CON on the Opposition Table – if the venom wins, the character is poisoned).

The venom is not fatal, but poisoned characters will operate at -25% on all skill checks for the next 2d3 days. The spider will scuttle away, but is easily squished.

10B. Second Cell: Cell "B" contains no features of interest or items of value.

10C. Third Cell: Carved into the pallet on this cell, apparently with a knife, are a few words in an

ancient version of whatever human language the player characters are speaking. They read:

The courage of a lion or the wisdom of a sphinx.

10D. Fourth Cell: Similar to cell "B", this cell is empty.

11. IT'S A TRAP!

A successful Notice skill test or Alertness Test will reveal the pressure plate that triggers this trap.

The pressure plate is fairly sensitive and will be triggered by the first heavy weight or creature of SIZ 4 or more that bears down upon it. Upon being triggered, a scything blade will sweep out from the wall at a height of about three feet above the floor. It has an "attack" rating of 50%, and if it hits, will inflict 3d6 points of damage. Armor does protect against this.

If the characters locate the pressure plate without triggering it, they can set off the trap harmlessly or jump over the plate easily (the distance is only a couple of feet).

The skeletons in room 7 are programmed to check this trap every few days and re-set it if necessary. Obviously, the trap will not be re-set if the skeletons have been destroyed!

The skeletons will always jump over the trap instead of triggering it.

12. ROOM OF FEAR:

A sense of inexplicable dread and horror grows in your belly, and sweat trickles down your back, as you approach this room.

This room tests the characters' courage and resolve. Every round they spend in this room, they will experience nightmarish hallucinations and visions of fear. Certain magic will prevent this (the GM should decide), or characters may overcome their fear through force of will (spending 1 magic point per round to remain still, 2 to progress further into the room).

This magical effect is keyed to a password, which is that given in cell 10C. below: *The courage of a lion..* Speaking these words (in whatever common tongue is appropriate to the campaign) while actually in the room will dispel the fear effect for one hour.

The room is otherwise devoid of items of value or features of interest.

13. ROOM OF HATRED:

Fury and hate are kindled in your heart as you approach this room.

This room tests the characters' wisdom and loyalty. Every round they spend in this room, they will feel intense hatred for everyone around them and are 50% likely to attack the closest person. Certain magic will prevent this (the GM should decide), or characters may overcome their hatred through of will (spending 1 magic point per round to suppress the effect).

This magical effect is keyed to a password, which is that given in cell 10C. below: *The wisdom of a sphinx.* Speaking these words (in whatever common tongue is appropriate to the campaign) while actually in the room will dispel the fear effect for one hour.

The room is otherwise devoid of items of value or features of interest.

14. INNER SANCTUM:

This is apparently a temple to a forgotten god. The roof has partially collapsed, strewing the floor with rubble; but the rest of the room has been well-preserved over the unknown ages. There is an altar and lectern of stone, kneeling-places for the congregation, and the walls are completely covered from floor to ceiling in carefully-chiselled runes. The words and script are archaic, but it is your own tongue, and you are certain that given a little time, you could puzzle out its meaning.

This is the temple to Sstependar Yon, a religion that the player characters can (given time) revive if they wish. Full details of this cult are provided in the



Appendix.

Searching through the rubble will reveal the golden altar service of the temple and the gems and jewels that formerly adorned the High Priest. These should be of significant monetary value; the GM will need to decide how much they are worth depending on the economics of his or her campaign, but the sum of 30,000 pennies or silver pieces is suggested for a typical G.O.R.E.TM-compatible campaign.

15. SPIDER'S LAIR:

A monstrous spider, with a leg span of at least a dozen feet, crouches on the ceiling of this room. Its eyes glitter with arachnid malevolence and its fangs are drooling with poison.

This spider is hungry and will attack ferociously.

GIANT SPIDER

| | | | |
|------------|----|---------------------|------------------|
| STR | 14 | Hit points | (CON+SIZ)/2 |
| INT | 1 | Magic points | As POW |
| POW | 11 | | |
| CON | 12 | Bite | DEXx5% 3d6+venom |
| DEX | 15 | | |
| SIZ | 22 | | |
| CHA | 1 | | |

ARMOR 1 point skin
TREASURE None

OPTIONAL HIT LOCATION TABLE:

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----|---------|
| 01-02 Right Rear Leg | 4hp | 1 armor |
| 03-04 Right Hind Flank Leg | 4hp | 1 armor |
| 05-06 Right Fore Flank Leg | 4hp | 1 armor |
| 07-08 Right Front Leg | 4hp | 1 armor |
| 09-10 Abdomen | 6hp | 1 armor |
| 11-12 Head | 6hp | 1 armor |
| 13-14 Left Rear Leg | 4hp | 1 armor |
| 15-16 Left Hind Flank Leg | 4hp | 1 armor |
| 17-18 Left Fore Flank Leg | 4hp | 1 armor |
| 19-20 Left Front Leg | 4hp | 1 armor |

Note: This spider's hit location table is appropriate for this particular spider (i.e. quite a spindly, long-legged one) in a dungeon environment. It should be adapted for the circumstances as follows:

Attacks from above or beneath: Roll 1d20 as shown.

Attacks from the left: Roll 1d12 (i.e. hitting the creature's right side).

Attacks from the right: Roll 1d12+8 (i.e. hitting the creature's left side).

Attacks from in front: Roll 1d20 but treat a hit to the rear leg as the fore flank leg, and to the hind flank leg as the front leg.

Attacks from behind: Roll 1d20 but treat a hit to the front leg as the hind flank leg, and to the fore flank leg as the hind leg.

The spider's venom is lethal. If it bites a victim and punctures his or her armor, the victim must roll on the Opposition Table, matching his or her CON against the venom's strength (which is equal to the spider's CON). If the character wins, he or she survives the poison. If the venom wins, he or she will be paralyzed in 1d6 combat rounds and dead 1d6 rounds later.

The spider can lose one or two legs with no loss of movement speed. If it loses three or four, its movement speed will be halved. If it loses five or six, its speed will be quartered, and losing a seventh leg will prevent it from moving entirely.

This creature is motivated by food, and will go for the easiest meal. Quick-thinking players could distract it using meat or any reasonably fresh carcass belonging to a creature of SIZ 5 or greater.

The ceiling of the room is covered with giant spider webs. If these are burned, nothing will be found – but if they are searched carefully without burning, a fragile fragment of parchment will be revealed. This parchment contains the same phrase as carved into the pallet in area 12C:

The courage of a lion or the wisdom of a sphinx.

16. GOLEM'S CHAMBER:

Before you is a substantial chamber, forty feet by sixty feet, with exits in the north and west walls. What appears to be an animated stone statue stands near the center of the chamber. It carries a huge stone club.

The golem is programmed to attack any humanoid living creature that actually enters the room, but it is also programmed never to leave the room. Its programming requires it to ignore any creature that lies on the floor, provided the golem has hit it at least once, and to clear any corpses out of the room.

Its stats are:

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------|
| GOLEM | | | |
| STR | 24 | Hit points | 24 |
| INT | 1 | Magic points | 1 |
| POW | 1 | | |
| CON | 24 | Club | 50% 5d6 |
| DEX | 8 | | |
| SIZ | 24 | | |
| CHA | 1 | | |
| ARMOR | 6-point stone skin | | |
| TREASURE | None. | | |

The golem takes no more than 1 damage from impaling weapons such as spears and arrows that

penetrate its armor. It takes no more than 2 damage from slashing weapons, but full damage from crushing ones, again providing its armor is penetrated.

It is vulnerable to magic owing to its low POW, but like the skeletons in room 7, it does not have a mind or senses in the normal way, and cannot be charmed, demoralized, blinded or otherwise affected by similar magic.

The golem is very slow. It moves at half the speed of the slowest character and can only attack once every two rounds. Thus, considering that it cannot leave the room, intelligent parties should be able to avoid it.

HERE ENDS THE DESCRIPTION OF THE SECRET TEMPLE

Rippleback Bridge

At a glance, it is immediately apparent how Rippleback Bridge got its name; it is a very ancient stone construction that has partly subsided over time, leaving a very rough, pitted and rutted surface. It would be possible, though difficult, for a cart or small wagon to pass the bridge, and up to three human characters may walk abreast in crossing it.

Crossing the bridge isn't strictly necessary unless the players have brought a vehicle of some kind; the Witling Beck is shallow enough to wade, even for a dwarf.

If the Brockmen are aware of (and hostile to) the players, they will be watching Rippleback Bridge and will probably use it as an ambush site.

If the players approach Rippleback Bridge during daylight, there is a 60% chance that they will encounter a human fisherman here. This is Sikurh, a semi-permanent inhabitant of Whispering Wood, and a potentially helpful NPC if approached correctly.

SIKURH STROMM

Sikurh is 51 years old. In his youth he was a formidable warrior. Now he lives in Whispering Wood because he prefers the solitude here.

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| SIKURH | | | |
| STR | 14 | Hit points | 16 |
| INT | 12 | Magic points | 15 |
| POW | 15 | | |
| CON | 17 | Spear | 80% 1d8+1+1d4 |
| DEX | 14 | Axe | 75% 1d8+1+1d4 |
| SIZ | 15 | Medium Shield | 75% |
| CHA | 10 | | |
| ARMOR | 1 point leather normally. Has 5 point chain mail in his hut. | | |
| TREASURE | Varies. | | |

He knows Whispering Wood well, being aware of the location of Skogsfrundell and the Secret Temple, but will not necessarily disclose it to casual enquiries.

Sikurh is very much a loner. He relies only on himself and expects others to do the same, and he has very little patience with weaklings.

He has a hut in the woods nearby which he built himself a few years ago. It is simple and serviceable. Here, he keeps his old armor and weapons as well as a few items of sentimental value, particularly possessions of his dead wife, who is buried in the forest nearby with a simple headstone.

How helpful Sikurh is to the player characters should depend on how well they are doing and the GM's assessment of their chances of success. If they are really struggling, Sikurh can be brought in to assist them or even rescue them if they are captured.

However, the GM should be careful to ensure that Sikurh does not take over too much. The adventure should focus around the player characters, and all important decisions should be made by them.

ORCS' ENCAMPMENT

The GM may wish to substitute other humanoid creatures appropriate to the specific campaign world for the orcs. Trolls or even human bandits would be equally appropriate.

ABOUT ORCS

Orcs are vile and degenerate creatures that hate most other life forms. In some game worlds, they are corrupted elves. They dislike work, but love combat and torture.

ORC

| | | | |
|------------|-------|----------------------|----------------|
| STR | 4d6 | Hit points | (CON+SIZ)/2 |
| INT | 2d6+2 | Magic points | (Equal to POW) |
| POW | 3d6 | | |
| CON | 2d6+6 | Spear | 35% 1d8+1 |
| DEX | 3d6 | Scimitar | 35% 1d8+1 |
| SIZ | 2d6+2 | Medium Shield | 30% |
| CHA | 1d6 | | |

ARMOR None natural. Most wear 3 point cuir bouilli or better.

TREASURE Varies.

Habitat and Diet: Orcs live anywhere they can, and are usually unwelcome. They prefer to occupy buildings constructed by harder-working and less violent species rather than having to make their own; but at need, they can make mines or burrows.

Orcs are nocturnal and can see reasonably well even in complete darkness. They prefer to sleep during the day, and dislike the sun. All their skills are at -5% if in bright sunlight.

Life Cycle and Reproduction: Orcs can live for approximately 50 years, but most meet death through violence much earlier. Orc females breed prolifically, giving birth to an average litter of 4; more than two thirds of births are male. By the age of 9-10, the young orcs are ready to take part in scouting missions or fire missiles; they can generally fight in melee from the age of 14 or so.

Religion: Some orcs are shamanic, others worship a small evil pantheon. A fair proportion of orcs are able to cast basic healing magic – which is necessary given the violent nature of their society – but few progress beyond very simple spells.

THE ORCS IN WHISPERING WOOD

There is a small tribe of 13 orcs in Whispering Wood – 11 males and 2 females. They are debased and decadent even by orc standards, most having become addicted to honey fungus tea, and they will probably die out in less than a year. Unless the GM wishes to roll up all the orcs individually, 11 of them use the "typical orc" stats provided below.



| TYPICAL ORC | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------|
| STR | 14 | Hit points | 11 |
| INT | 9 | Magic points | 11 |
| POW | 11 | | |
| CON | 13 | Spear | 35% 1d8+1 |
| DEX | 10 | Scimitar | 35% 1d8+1 |
| SIZ | 9 | Medium Shield | 30% |
| CHA | 3 | | |
| ARMOR | 3 point cuir bouilli. | | |
| TREASURE | None. | | |

Muzgash: Muzgash is the orcs' shaman and healer.

| MUZGASH | | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------|
| STR | 12 | Hit points | 11 |
| INT | 10 | Magic points | 14 |
| POW | 14 | | |
| CON | 15 | Spear | 40% 1d8+1 |
| DEX | 12 | Scimitar | 40% 1d8+1 |
| SIZ | 7 | Medium Shield | 35% |
| CHA | 5 | | |
| ARMOR | 3 point cuir bouilli | | |
| TREASURE | None. | | |

Muzgash is able to cast the spell *Cure Wound 2* which costs him 2 magic points and heals 1d3 hp of damage.

Lurz: Lurz is the biggest orc and theoretically the leader, although he is too incompetent and stupid to provide much in the way of leadership.

| LURZ | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| STR | 19 | Hit points | 14 |
| INT | 7 | Magic points | 9 |
| POW | 9 | | |
| CON | 17 | Spear | 55% 1d8+1+1d4 |
| DEX | 10 | Scimitar | 50% 1d8+1+1d4 |
| SIZ | 11 | Medium Shield | 50% |
| CHA | 2 | | |
| ARMOR | 3 point cuir bouilli | | |
| TREASURE | 374 coins (silver pieces or pennies suggested). | | |

Against a group of younger adventurers, Lurz is personally quite dangerous in melee combat. However, he is indecisive and cannot organize his orcs effectively. When called upon to give an order, there is a 35% chance that in his drug-befuddled state he will be unable to think of anything to say.

THE ORCS' ENCAMPMENT

Consisting of only a few crudely-constructed and makeshift shelters, the orcs' encampment is a poor and shoddy thing even by orc standards. There is always a guard, but there is a straight 40% chance

that the guard will be too befuddled by honey fungus tea to observe any player character approach. If the guard is sober, the GM should determine the chance of detection in the usual way.

When the players approach, for each orc, roll 1d10 to determine its state of intoxication:

- 1: Incapacitated; may not act.
- 2: Intoxicated; all rolls at -25%
- 3: Intoxicated; all rolls at -15%
- 4: Intoxicated; all rolls at -5%
- 5-10: Sober, acts normally.

An intoxicated orc always has a 5% chance at using any of its skills successfully, even if intoxication would otherwise have reduced its skill to zero.

There are piles of honey fungus lying around in this encampment and a cooking-pot of tea is usually brewing. A female will usually be tending the fire.

ORC MOVEMENTS

Unless the GM wishes to allow for the possibility of encounters with wandering orcs, then unless and until they catch sight of the player characters, assume that they are basically static, wishing only to remain in their camp and slowly drink themselves to death.

If the orcs become aware of the player characters, there is a very good chance that the orcs will try to hide by moving their camp to another location in the woods. However, if the orcs have won a battle with the player characters and Lurz remains alive, it is 50% likely that he will lead the orcs in search of their base, hoping to loot and plunder it.

The orcs also occasionally venture out to forage, although catching meat for the cooking pot is a bit too difficult for most of them and they prefer to scratch for roots, nuts and berries.

WITLING LAKE

Witling Lake is an ancient and magical lake which lies at the heart of Whispering Wood. Over the centuries, the Witling Beck has brought with it magical, faerie emanations from Skogsfrundell and they have collected at the lake, making it a center of enchantment scarcely less powerful than Skogsfrundell itself.

WITLING LAKE DURING THE DAY

During the hours of daylight, the waters of Witling Lake are benign and reflect the viewer's hopes and aspirations. Anyone so much as casually glancing

into the water will catch tantalising glimpses of scenes most pleasing to them.

If a character is enticed to look more deeply into the rippling waters, he or she will see a vision of some aspired goal achieved or some hoped for outcome attained. This will be so powerful and moving that the character must pass a roll (POWx5 or less on d100) to avoid diving into the lake to try to enter the scene.

The water is no more harmful than ordinary water, but to a character in metal armor, this is quite harmful enough! Removing armor will take a number of combat rounds equal to the armor value in points, so a character in 5-point armor will sink for 5 rounds before the armor can be taken off. Each round under water, the character must pass a Swimming skill check to hold his or her breath. Failure indicates the possibility that the character will drown – CONx5 or less on d100 the first round, CONx4 or less the second round, and so on until on the fifth round and thereafter, the player must roll his or her character's CON as a percentage on d100 or inhale water and drown.

Falling into the water will immediately dispel the vision.

WITLING LAKE DURING THE NIGHT

During the hours of darkness, the waters of Witling Lake are malevolent and reflect the viewer's fears and nightmares. Anyone who even glances at the water will catch glimpses of the most awful horror.

If a character for some reason looks more deeply into the darkling waters, he or she will see a vision of some terrible torture or loved one harmed. This vision will be so real that the character must pass a roll (POWx5 or less on d100) to avoid diving into the lake to try to prevent the outcome envisioned.

As with the daytime waters, no harm will be suffered directly, but characters in metal armor may drown; use the rules described in the previous section to resolve this.

THE ISLAND

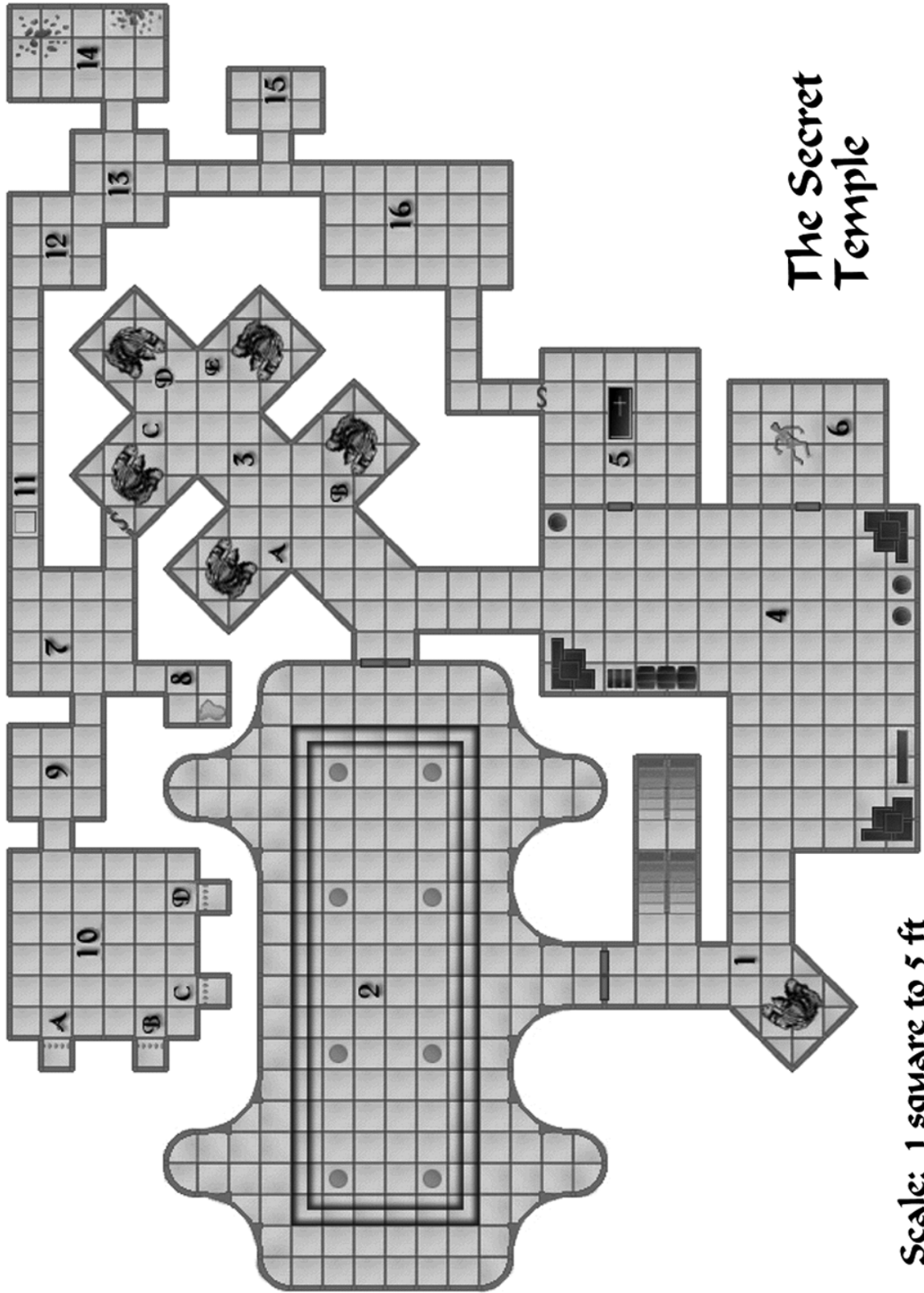
At the center of Witling Lake is an enchanted island. Seen from the edge of the lake, this island appears to be verdant and wooded, seeming to be in Spring, regardless of the time of year elsewhere in the world.

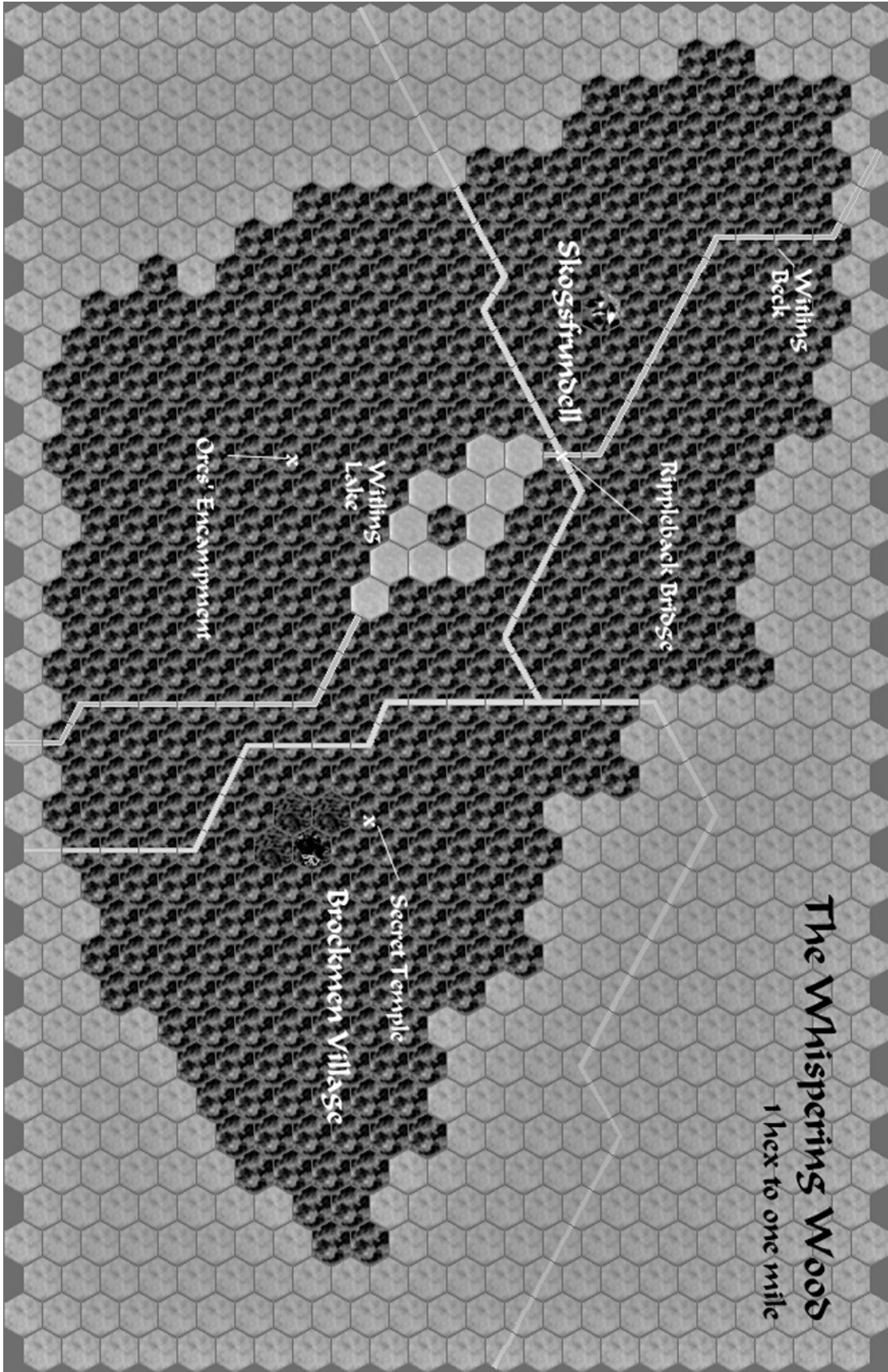
This area has been left intentionally blank for the GM to expand according to his or her desires for the campaign. Possible encounters on Witling Isle include:

- An oracle who reveals (true or false) visions of the future to the player characters;
- Some goal or lost NPC mentioned in a player's character background or arising from the group's previous adventures;
- A long-lost, possibly highly evolved (or seriously degenerated) clan or tribe.

Have fun with it!

HERE ENDS THE EXPEDITION TO WHISPERING
WOOD





APPENDIX: THE CULT OF SSTEPENDAR YON

This cult will not be appropriate for all game worlds. The GM should feel free to substitute an alternative religion appropriate to his or her campaign world in place of that presented here.

Sstependar Yon is a god of altered mental states, particularly insanity. His cult is now forgotten elsewhere in the world, but the player characters may be in a position to revive it, depending on how the adventure evolves.

LAY MEMBERSHIP

Lay members of the cult of Sstependar Yon must have visited the Secret Temple and read the Words of Madness (which are those inscribed on the temple's walls). They must choose to embrace the precepts of Sstependar Yon, unless they are already insane, in which case they will automatically become lay members.

Lay membership is open to characters of all intelligent races and of either gender, provided they have reached maturity.

A lay member has a 15% chance of learning the spell "Berserk Fury" from the Words of Madness. If one character understands it, he or she may teach it to others, but only members of the Cult of Sstependar Yon will be able to use it, and if a character leaves the cult for any reason, memory of the spell will not be retained.

Berserk Fury

This spell costs 1 magic point to cast. It has no range (may only be cast on the character who uses it) and lasts for 10 melee rounds.

While in the Berserk Fury, the character does not feel pain and cannot be killed by a melee weapon. Do not roll weapon damage against a character in Berserk Fury; merely note down how many dice to roll, and tot them up. Apply all damage rolled immediately the spell expires.

Other kinds of damage may still kill a berserk character (such as leaping off a cliff or being enveloped in a dragon's flaming breath). This will only happen if the character suffers so much damage that he or she could potentially be killed outright with one roll; in this case, the dice should be rolled and applied as normal.

A character in a Berserk Fury gains +5% on all attack chances and inflicts +1 damage with all attacks. However, he or she suffers a penalty of -5% on all parry chances owing to loss of the instinct of self-preservation.

Berserking characters are immune to all mind-affecting magic while the spell lasts because of their temporary insanity.

INITIATE MEMBERSHIP

In order to qualify as an initiate, a character must have been a lay member for at least a year. After a year of lay membership, a spirit sent by Sstependar Yon will visit the character and explain the requirements to become an initiate:

- The character must go on a pilgrimage. Sstependar Yon may choose to impose a suitable destination on him or her, or the character may be allowed to choose, but a key aspect is that the pilgrimage must take the character over a long journey (at least 100 miles) and involve tests of the character's abilities (possibly, but not necessarily, including combat). If the pilgrimage does not test the character stringently enough, Sstependar Yon may choose to require a second and more strenuous journey.
- The character must sacrifice 1 permanent point of POW to Sstependar Yon.
- The character must voluntarily accept an insanity from the Insanity Table (see below).

The point of POW may be regained normally. The insanity is incurable and remains for the rest of the character's life.

An Initiate of Sstependar Yon may automatically learn the spells Berserk Fury, Summon Spirit of Madness, and Bind Spirit of Madness. Each spell costs 1 point of permanent POW to learn.

Summon Spirit of Madness

This spell costs 2 magic points to cast. Casting takes ten minutes and the spirit will arrive 1d100 minutes afterwards, appearing within 1 meter of the character.

Madness Spirits have an INT of 1d6 and a POW of 3d6+6. On arrival, they will attack anything within range unless controlled.

If the Spirit of Madness is victorious in spirit combat, it will inflict a randomly-determined insanity from the Insanity Table (see below).

Speaking the words of this spell backwards will dismiss the Spirit of Madness. This costs 2 magic points and takes ten minutes. It is automatically successful.

Madness spirits are Sstependar Yon's most common servants, although there are certainly others. They may choose to be invisible, but most prefer to take insubstantial, nightmarish forms, which are typically asymmetrical and have invertebrate features such as tentacles, insect legs, scorpion tails, or lobster claws.

However, these spirits are unpredictable in the extreme, and have also been known to take the form of a cheerful leprechaun or a fluffy bunny rabbit.

Bind Spirit of Madness

This spell costs 1 magic point to cast. Casting takes five minutes, but the casting may begin while waiting for the Spirit of Madness to arrive, and if completed before it appears and the spell is successful, it will automatically be bound on arrival

This spell has a 5% chance of failure. The caster does not know whether it has succeeded, so the roll is not normally made until the spirit appears.

A bound spirit is under the caster's telepathic control while the caster concentrates. If the caster ceases to concentrate, the spirit will mindlessly keep doing whatever it was doing the last time it was directly controlled.

Initiates of Sstependar Yon may voluntarily choose to sacrifice points of INT to the Lord of Madness. This is never compulsory, but a sacrificed point of INT may not be regained. In return, the character may ask for Sstependar Yon's direct intervention to perform a miracle.

To have any chance of success, such miracles should be relatively modest. For example, a single dead character may be returned to life, or up to ten people may be miraculously transported to a place of safety.

The chance that Sstependar Yon will intervene is 1% per point of INT that the character has sacrificed. If Sstependar Yon does intervene, then the character must start afresh; the "slate is wiped clean" of any previously-sacrificed points.

Initiates must donate at least 20% of their time and income to the cult. The money is held by a member of the priesthood (the longest-serving initiate, if there are no priests as yet) and must be spent directly on projects benefiting the cult as a whole – such as the construction or maintenance of a fresh temple, for example. None of the funds thereby raised may be spent on adventuring materials or training.

PRIESTHOOD

In order to qualify as a priest, a character must have been an Initiate for at least two years, must have a POW of 15 or more, and may not have an INT in excess of 12.

The character must perform the same tasks as those required to become an initiate, i.e., undergo a further pilgrimage, sacrifice a further point of POW, and voluntarily accept an insanity.

Most G.O.R.E.TM-compatible campaign worlds have specific benefits for full priests, such as access to special types of priestly magic. The GM should

consult his or her source material on the game world for descriptions of appropriate benefits, or make up suitable special abilities.

Priests must donate 50% of their time and income to the cult.

INSANITY TABLE

| D100 Roll | Insanity |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 01-06 | Agoraphobia |
| 07-13 | Alcoholism |
| 14-20 | Amnesia |
| 21-26 | Anorexia |
| 27-33 | Catatonia |
| 34-40 | Claustrophobia |
| 41-46 | Dementia |
| 47-54 | Homicidal Mania |
| 55-60 | Kleptomania |
| 61-66 | Manic-Depressive |
| 67-74 | Megalomania |
| 75-80 | Paranoia |
| 81-86 | Pathological Liar |
| 87-93 | Phobia |
| 94-97 | Schizophrenia |
| 98-00 | Suicidal Mania |

Note: The following section is intended as a description of insanity for gaming purposes. The reality of mental illness is very different to the discussion here. It is not our intention to be insensitive towards those with real life mental illnesses.

Agoraphobia: The agoraphobic individual will not willingly venture outdoors or into wide open spaces. If forced outside, the sufferer may (50%) become violent.

Alcoholism: The alcoholic character requires strong drink every day, and may become violent (50%) if this is denied. At least once a day, and every time alcohol is available (such as when in the vicinity of a pub or tavern), the character must have a drink. After drinking, there is a 3 in 6 chance that the character will insist on a further drink. Such behaviour will continue until the character passes out.

Amnesia: Every time the character attempts to use a skill, there is a 50% chance that he or she will find the spell gone from his or her memory, in which case it cannot be recalled for the rest of the day and may be gone for longer. The character may re-roll to see if the skill is remembered each morning.

Anorexia: An anorexic character will refuse all forms of food or nourishment and, if force fed, there is a 50% chance that he or she will induce vomiting.

Catatonia: The catatonic character loses volition and there is a 50% chance that he or she will ignore any situation as irrelevant to him- or herself.

Claustrophobia: Particularly difficult in dungeons, claustrophobia is the opposite of agoraphobia. The claustrophobic individual will not willingly venture into enclosed spaces and will fight to escape them. If in an enclosed space, there is a 50% chance that the sufferer will become violent.

Dementia: The insane character loses 1d6 points each of INT, POW and CHA.

Homicidal Mania: The character has an insatiable urge to kill. The victim must be of the same race as the insane character and normally (75%) of the opposite gender. The must kill at least once a week until cured.

Kleptomania: The character has an insatiable urge to steal. The character will take any opportunity to pocket a gem, coin or small magic item. If the stolen objects are taken away from the character, there is a 50% chance that he or she will become violent.

Manic-Depressive: During the manic phase (which lasts 2d6 days), the character will become very excited about something – virtually anything will do. The character will select a goal (which may be a very inappropriate one) and focus totally on achieving it. Then there is an intermediary phase, which lasts 2d6 days, and a depressive phase, in which the character will always assume that there is no chance of success. A depressive character will want to remain indoors in a place of safety, and in bed if possible. The depressive phase lasts 2d6 days, followed by which there is another 2d6-day intermediary phase before the cycle begins again.

Megalomania: The character will believe that he or she is the best – at everything. He or she will demand to be leader of the party, will issue peremptory orders to other party members, and there is a 50% chance that the megalomaniac will become violent if these are not obeyed. Any suggestion that he or she is not the leader and/or nor the best-qualified person for any particular job will always result in violence from the megalomaniac.

Paranoia: Paranoia is very dangerous in adventuring situations. The paranoid will believe that "they" are out to get him or her, and will suspect anyone and everyone of working for "them" – particularly party members. The paranoid will generally disobey orders and ignore suggestions on the assumption that they are intended to cause the character harm. Eventually the character will flee his or her group or normal social circle.

Pathological Liar: The pathological liar is concerned with deception, not necessarily untruth. Thus, he or she is capable of telling the truth, but will only

normally do so if he or she will not be believed. Otherwise, the insane character must respond to all questions with lies.

Phobia: The character suffers from a strong and completely irrational fear of some substance, creature, or situation.

Schizophrenia: The character's personality splits into 1d3 separate personalities, each of which may have a different alignment or even class. Typically the personalities are not aware of each other.

Suicidal Mania: The character is driven to self-harm. He or she may never flee from combat or any kind of dangerous situation. Faced with a pit or chasm, the insane character must jump over it; faced with a chest, he or she must open it; faced with an enemy, he or she must fight it, etc.

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