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MAY/JUNE 1999
ISSUE #74

Cover

The red dragon Araakazar ignites his feathered foe in Tony Szczudlo's hot cover for "Preemptive Strike."

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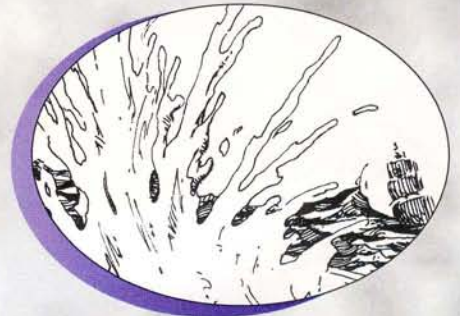
"Whoever battles with monsters had better see that it does not turn him into a monster."

— Friedrich Nietzsche

THE SCOURGE OF SCALABAR 10

by Christopher Perkins

(AD&D[®] Adventure, character levels 1–3; 12 total levels). An undersea menace has the merchants of Scalabar up in arms.



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Editorial



Playtesting

DUNGEON[®] *Adventures* has many contributors, not all of whom appear on the masthead or in the Table of Contents. Among our most valuable contributors are the playtesters who volunteer their gaming time to test adventures before they see print.

Any group of gamers can become *DUNGEON Adventures* playtesters; all we need is an SASE (self-addressed stamped envelope) large enough to contain a full manuscript and a short

letter telling us what types of adventures you prefer (including levels of play and settings). We do our best to match adventures with various playtesters' needs, even though we're limited by the adventures we have in inventory at any one time.

We encourage authors to playtest their adventures before submitting them. While this approach has some merits, the most productive playtest sessions are those conducted by strangers who have neither read nor played the adventures before. These groups are more likely to find serious design flaws and rules omissions, and the best playtest groups can also provide solutions to these problems based on their own experiences.

When we send out a playtest package, we include a questionnaire asking the participants whether the adventure was too easy or too hard, which encounters worked well and which ones did not, whether there was any vital information missing from the text, whether the amount of treasure given out was appropriate, and so forth.

One of my jobs is to review the returned questionnaires and determine which encounters need to be changed, clarified, or developed. I look to see whether the playtest group found any glaring errors and how they suggested we correct them. I love it when playtesters identify a potential problem and offer concrete suggestions for solving it; occasionally we receive comments like "This encounter was weak" or "The players

didn't like the adventure hook" without any suggestions for fixing it. We also receive playtest questionnaires that say, "This encounter was too hard. Here's what we recommend you change ..." or "The dungeon contains too many magical items. I would suggest removing the *ring of x-ray vision*, the *vorpal sword +5*, and the *scroll of protection from solar flares* because they're not important to the adventure and they unbalance the game." This level of feedback is both valuable and time-saving.

Adventures with serious design flaws don't usually find their way into the "accepted" pile. However, it is not uncommon for playtesters to discover a minor adventure flaw for which they have no solution; in that situation, we appreciate comments like "Here's the problem, and we're not really sure how to fix it. You might try this, or you might try that." If none of these suggestions seems quite right, then it's our job to find a solution and, if necessary, contact the author for a quick fix. Even if a playtest group cannot provide a viable solution to the problem, that group has still given us the "heads-up" in time to make the adventure as good as it can be, and that's what playtesting's all about.

Chris Perkins

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ADVENTURES FOR TSR ROLEPLAYING GAMES

May/June 1999
Volume XIII, Number 2

Subscription Queries: 1-800-395-7760 dungeon@pcspublink.com
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Letters



Tell us what you think of the adventures in this issue, or let the editors know what sorts of adventures you'd like to see. Write to "Letters," *DUNGEON Adventures*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055. You can also email us at dungeon@wizards.com.

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Nonlinear Thinking

"Kingdom of the Ghouls" (Issue #70) was one of the best adventures you published recently. It had something that I call the "all setting" approach. I am very fond of adventures that provide a huge background and then give descriptions of several interlocked places and characters without forcing PCs to follow a closely defined path through the adventure. Although some might argue that this makes the adventure harder to adapt to a given setting, I think that these are the adventures that bring out the most in players.

Any fantasy world should have many different places that give the DM opportunities to use adventures not specifically designed for generic settings. For *RAVENLOFT*® adventures, I use a variation of the Shadow World as presented in the *BIRTHRIGHT*® campaign setting. When I want to use a

RAVENLOFT adventure (mostly during weeks with early sunsets leading to cold and windy nights), I simply find a way to lure the PCs into my Shadow World and give them a dose of horror that nicely contrasts with the rest of the campaign.

I would like to see more nonlinear modules in *DUNGEON Adventures*. I can use *RAVENLOFT* and *PLANESCAPE*® adventures because I planned my campaign world around the wide variety of adventures that the magazine offers.

Michael Riewe
Ludwigshafen, Germany

What It Takes

I am writing this letter to address some recent letters in previous issues. I refer to the people who wrote (and continue to write) letters to the editorial staff, accusing them of not just favoritism, but of conspiring with certain writers to get specific adventures published.

First, let me say that I am a yet-to-be-published writer. (Look out world! Here I come!) I hope, one day, to make a living as a writer. As I have explored the publishing industry, I have discovered one inviolable truth. It's cruel, unfair, and almost totally subjective. Like any publication, I see *DUNGEON Adventures* as a business, trying to make money. The fact that it gives young writers the opportunity to see their names in print is a privilege. Whether or not your work is published is typically decided by the first—and almost definitely the second—person who reads it. If they don't like what you wrote or how you wrote it, you get rejected. Harsh? Maybe. Reality? Definitely. The thing one needs to remember, and any pro will tell you this, is don't take rejection personally, even if the editor writes insensitive notes in the margin of the manuscript. There are books published that are filled with collected rejection letters to the likes of Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Orwell. You're in excellent company. Rewrite and resubmit. You never know when a new editor will be at the helm or if a new submission will click where the previous submission clacked.

If you are a writer wishing to publish in a magazine with very specific requirements and you're looking at a

byline, you're doing it wrong. When you research a magazine (you are checking those past issues for ideas that are too similar to yours and referring to those writer's guidelines you requested), you should be looking at editorial preferences in regard to content and style. Look for themes, and plan around them.

When I saw that Mr. Perkins had been hired as editor, I didn't smell a conspiracy, but I did (and do) question his objectivity. (I know, I know—I just said publishing is subjective.) Each editor has his own style and preferences. Write good adventures. Submit them. The really good ones will be published. If the editor consistently rejects quality work because of who writes it, he will produce a poorer magazine, he will get fired, the magazine will carry on, and some other subjective, fallible human being will fill his post.

Let me end with a few controversial thoughts. I strongly doubt there is a group of fantasy gamers conspiring to control the content of *DUNGEON Adventures*, but if there is, it is up to would-be authors to figure out how to join the conspiracy, not the other way around. And if you have submitted twenty adventures that all your gaming chums think are keen, and all of them have been returned with rejection letters, it isn't the magazine, the editor, or bad luck. It's you.

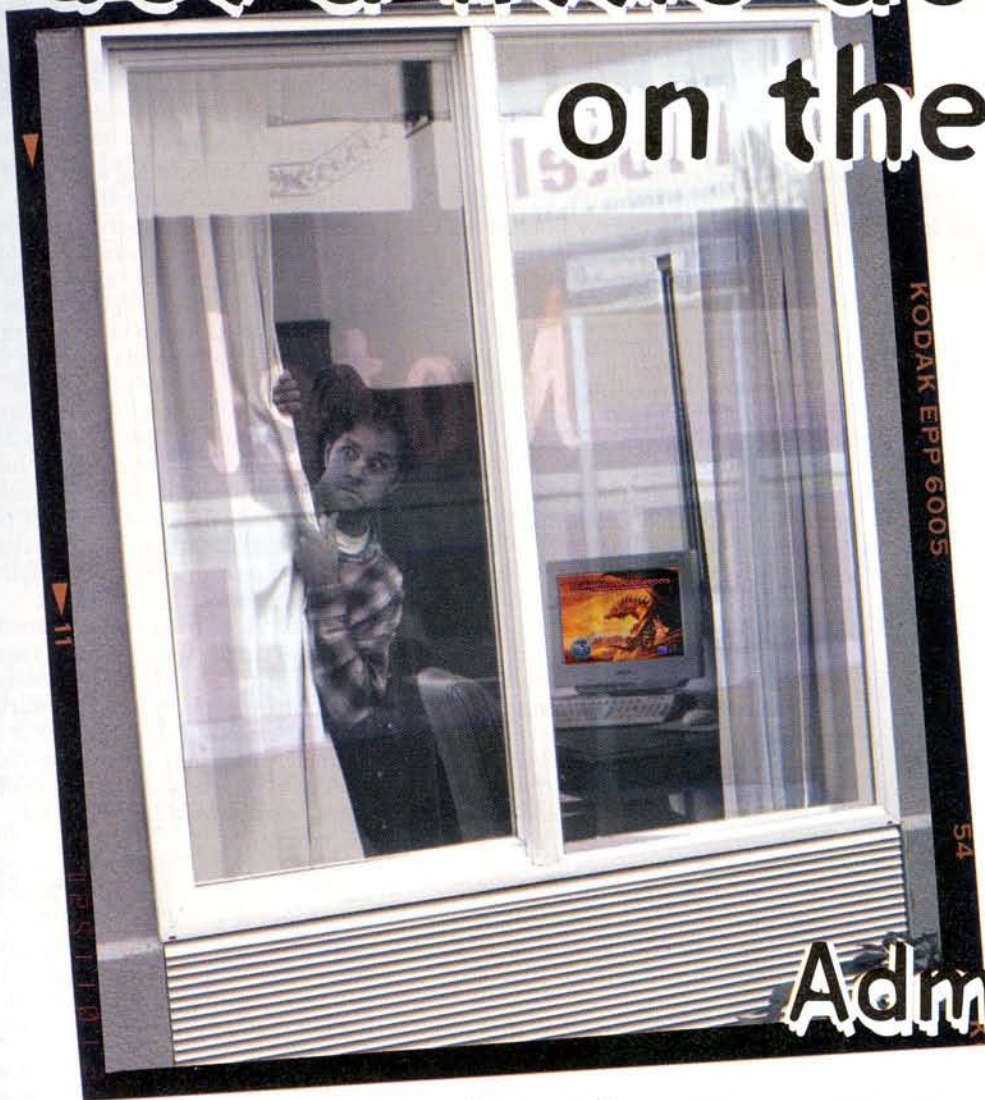
Keep up the good work, and keep those letters coming! It's often my favorite part of the magazine.

Jason B. Bartlett
North Yorkshire, UK

Hey, who you callin' fallible? Them's fightin' words!

*But seriously, the biggest stumbling block to getting published in *DUNGEON Adventures* is the competition. We publish 30-35 modules per year, and we receive more than that number of submissions each month! We have no list of "preferred contributors." Our most prolific contributors also happen to be our most tenacious. These dauntless and intrepid authors are always submitting new proposals, many of which are rejected for whatever reason. Once in a while, however, we accept one. Our most successful writers are so familiar with the magazine that they can separate a new idea from something that's been done before and anticipate the magazine's*

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needs. This is a learned skill stemming from regular contact with the editor (through proposals and queries) and careful study of previous issues and our *Writer's Guidelines*.

Our staff tries to strike the right balance of adventures for each issue: high-level, mid-level, and low-level modules; short, medium, and long scenarios; wilderness, dungeon, and city adventures; the list goes on. Everything needs to fit just right to give readers the most variety for their five dollars. It's a difficult balancing act. If an author submits an arctic adventure and we already have two arctic adventures in inventory, its chance of acceptance is sadly diminished.

At least once per month, by chance, two or more authors submit ideas with striking parallels. If we receive three adventure proposals featuring galeb duhrs, we'll choose the best one, the one that best suits the magazine's current needs, or a different idea altogether if we've seen too many galeb duhrs recently.

The modules featured in the last ten issues demonstrate a broad range of styles, themes, and archetypes. We aren't looking for one particular type of adventure design, but we are looking for something imaginative and innovative and well written. Our standards are tough, and the competition is fierce, but perseverance does pay off sometimes. I'm sure every one of our authors would agree.

Jason makes several strong points. As an encouraging footnote to would-

be authors, one of our upcoming issues (Issue #76, released in August) contains five adventures, all written by first-time contributors!

Funky Dragons

Issue #72 is terrific! I ran "Under a Pale Moon," and although I had to tailor the module for my FORGOTTEN REALMS®-like campaign, it still worked great. One of my players heard me utter the word "Krynn" (or something else related to the DRAGONLANCE® setting) and thought the manticores were funky dragons, especially when I said they couldn't see a lot in the moonlight except the creatures' wings and spikes.

My main reason for writing this letter involves the "Continuing the Adventure" section included at the end of Issue #72. Although I was not consciously aware of it, I realized that the only follow-up adventures that I use are tailored adventures from your magazine, and your addendum has inspired me to start following up with more of my own material. Even though I plan to start following up, "Continuing the Adventure" sections are welcome as far as I'm concerned.

One thing that bugs me about *DUNGEON Adventures* is the binding. The *DRAGON Magazine* binding is so much nicer. I have to carry all my stuff in an over-stuffed backpack, and about one-quarter of my *DUNGEON Adventures* magazines have messed up covers. If there's any way this can be changed, please do it.

Thanks for publishing such a great magazine.

Nate Johnson
via email

Theme Issues?

With regard to running a series of modules, I'd like to see the series carried out through more than one issue. I seldom get around to using adventures right away anyway, so I'd probably have the complete series whether it's in one issue or several. Admittedly, ten months is a long time to wait for a series of adventures. It would be okay to see, say, a trilogy carried out in one issue. I'm flexible. I think a better idea would be to have an occasional theme issue, say one or two out of six (one or two issues per year). *DRAGON Magazine* uses theme issues (giants, dragons, campaign design, elves, etc.), and I think *DUNGEON Adventures* might benefit from the same strategy. Issue themes could feature a particular monster or race (for example, giants or dwarves), a plot theme (murder mystery or first contact), or certain settings (aerial or underwater). I'm sure there are other theme categories I haven't even thought of.

Finally, the quality of the magazine has improved greatly. The covers have become more beautiful (less cartoony), and the adventures have grown more complex and detailed. (It's intimidating to submit anything because the adventures are so well crafted.)

DUNGEON® (ISSN 0890-7102) is published bimonthly by TSR, Inc., 1801 Lind Ave. S.W., Renton, WA 98055, U.S.A. The mailing address for all material **except** subscription orders is DUNGEON Adventures, 1801 Lind Ave. S.W., Renton, WA 98055, U.S.A.; telephone (425) 254-2261; fax (206) 204-5928.

Distribution: DUNGEON is available from game and hobby shops throughout the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, and through a limited number of other overseas outlets. Distribution to the book trade and newsstand distribution throughout the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom is handled by Curtis Circulation Company, 730 River Road, New Milford, NJ 07646-3048, U.S.A.; telephone (201) 634-7400.

Subscriptions: Subscription rates via periodicals-class mail are as follows: \$19.95 in U.S. funds for six issues sent to an address in the U.S., \$24.95 in U.S. funds for delivery to Canada, and \$42.95 in U.S. funds for surface mail delivery to any other address. Prices are subject to change without notice. Payment in full must accompany all subscription orders. Payment should be by check or money order, made payable to Wizards of the Coast, Inc. or by charges to valid MasterCard or VISA credit cards. Send subscription orders with payments to: DUNGEON® Subscriptions, P.O. Box 469106, Escondido, CA 92046-9106. Email: dungeon@pcspublink.com. Toll Free Phone Number: 1-800-395-7760. The issue of expiration of each subscription is printed on the mailing label for each subscriber's copy of the magazine. Changes of address for the delivery of subscription copies must be received at least six weeks prior to the effective date of the change, in order to assure uninterrupted delivery.

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The interior art and maps have reached an all time high. Look at the faded skulls on the pages of "Eye of Myrkul" (Issue #73) and the excellent grayscale maps. They manage to be almost as good as color maps! The inclusion of Nodwick was an excellent idea. The fact that each cartoon relates to an adventure in the magazine is also very smart. The advertising has also been kept to a minimum. *DUNGEON Adventures* has even provided issue indexes to help you find the adventure you're looking for. Where else can you find a magazine this useful? Who collects issues of *Sports Illustrated* and actually uses them? I think the next step in *DUNGEON Adventures'* evolution is to go monthly, go full color, and use the clearly labeled perfect binding used for *DRAGON Magazine*.

Richard A. Hunt
San Antonio, TX

A+ Cartography

I just received Issue #73 with the final installment of the Mere of Dead Men series. I must admit that when the series began, I wasn't entirely sold on the idea. I figured that I might use one or two of the adventures, but that the series as a whole would not see use in my campaign.

With this final installment, I've decided to run the series. I believe that I can slide it as a whole into the general plot of my campaign with only slight tinkering. I don't use the Realms, but I have decided to add the Mere to an unused section of my campaign world.

Chris Perkins asks in his editorial if we would like to see another series. I certainly would. He also asks whether the series should be placed in a single issue instead of one adventure per issue. I would prefer that they be placed in a single issue. If you were to publish the Mere of Dead Men series as one "Special Edition" issue, I would purchase that, too. I feel that having all the material in one volume would make it easier for me as a DM. I would prefer not to have to fumble through five magazines to find all the information that I might need in a given session.

I think the part of *DUNGEON Adventures* that I most enjoy seeing when my issue arrives is the cartography. I remember when module maps were straight off the graph

paper. I have a copy of Issue #11 sitting next to me, and there's no way to compare the cartography. While the work in Issue #11 is good, the work in Issue #73 is incredible. It's not simply utilitarian; it's artistic.

I love the "Nodwick" cartoon strips. Don't ever lose them.

Jim Gonyea
jgonyea@telegram.infi.net

Series Theories

I wanted to commend you on the latest issue (Issue #73). I always look forward to flexible, interesting, low-to mid-level adventures in the classic AD&D® setting. I was very satisfied with "Quoitine Quest" and "The Setting Sun."

In the Issue #73 editorial, it said you were considering a "short series of generic, low-level adventures based around the Sleeping Dragon Inn." The advantages of this would be a long, smooth-flowing storyline with plenty of adventures for the DM. I see two downsides:

1. If the series is obscure and doesn't fit into campaigns easily (for example, a DARK SUN® series in a RAVENLOFT campaign), the customers will be unhappy.
2. If the material is split up over several issues, key information needs to be redistributed; otherwise, if you're missing Part One, Part Two is useless. Again, the customers are unhappy.

Now, I'm all for a short series. I love the idea. However, the series should meet a few requirements:

❖ The series should feature simple, "classic"-style adventures that DMs can adapt to alternative settings like the RAVENLOFT, FORGOTTEN REALMS, and BIRTHRIGHT campaigns. The adventures should be flexible.

❖ The series should be contained in a single issue to avoid the need to reprint key information. The series should not consume the entire issue; there should be an adventure or two for other campaign settings.

❖ If the series must be split over a couple issues, each part should stand independently of the other.

❖ The series should be designed for levels 3-6 but easily adjusted for lower or higher level play.

❖ There should be points at which exploiting a particular class ability is advantageous, but not needed. For example, a well-rounded adventure

would demand a Ranger's tracking ability, a Paladin's *detect evil* power, a Thief's pick pocketing skill, and a Cleric's healing ability, for example.

Jared Stratton
via email

The Mere in Cormyr

The conclusion to the Mere of Dead Men series in Issue #73 was great! Eric L. Boyd once again shows his superb writing talent.

My main problem with the entire series was its placement in the Realms. The North and Waterdeep are great locations, but my campaign is set in Cormyr, the Dales, and Sembia. The solution is easy. On the border of all three regions is the Vast Swamp, an ideal location to transplant the series. In the foothills of the Thunder Peaks, just northwest of Daerlun, is the ruins of a small keep. Proclaimed the Keep of Sir Dirlar on the map in the *Cormyr* supplement, it serves quite nicely as Iniarv's Tower with some minor historical adjustments. The Way of the Manticore makes a suitable replacement for the High Road.

Placing the various locations in the Vast Swamp is not hard. I would put Wolfhill House near the headwaters of the Darkflow, Mornhaven

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Gamer's Guide

PAPER MAYHEM

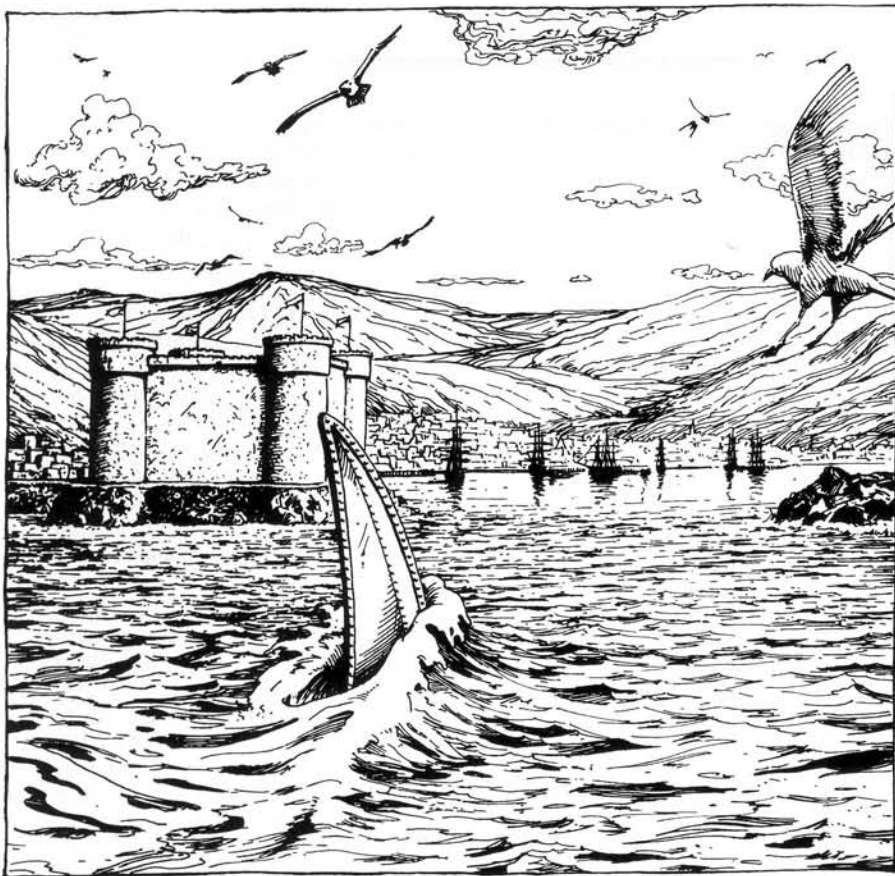
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An ominous fin cleaves the water near Gull Keep.

THE SCOURGE OF SCALABAR

BY CHRISTOPHER PERKINS

Pirates and powderkegs

Artwork by David Kooharian
Cartography by Diesel

This module was inspired by Jules Verne's 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea. Some might regard the submarine as a medieval anachronism. However, true fantasy has no bounds, especially where magic is concerned.

"The Scourge of Scalabar" is an AD&D® adventure for 4–8 characters of levels 1–3 (about 12 total levels). The module is suitable for any campaign; all that's required is a stretch of coastline and a fairly large port (town or city) as the adventure's starting point.

The party should contain a variety of character classes with at least one Wizard and one Thief.

Adventure Background

When you're ready to begin the adventure, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Scalabar is a bustling coastal city. Its thriving economy relies heavily on trade with neighboring communities. The city boasts a sizable Merchants' Guild, dozens of warehouses, and countless taverns for thirsty captains, sailors, and scalawags.

Keeping the coastal trade routes safe is an arduous and costly chore. The heavily laden ships leaving Scalabar are a great temptation for pirates. Scalabar's small fleet of naval cutters provides a partial deterrent. For particularly valuable cargoes, however, it's not uncommon for merchants to hire privateers to run escort. Both the Scalabaran navy and local privateers, however, are baffled by the latest menace to plague the tradeways. In the past two months, there have been two recorded sightings and attacks by a terrible sea monster—a gigantic shark measuring nearly 150 feet from tip to tail! In both attacks, cloudy nights prevented sailors from getting a good look at the beast, and the shark was spotted mere moments before it rammed the ship's hull. The monster struck quickly before plunging into the depths, leaving its prey to sink beneath the waves.

The first victim of the shark's attack was the *Morning Star*, a trade galleon belonging to House Calhaigne of Scalabar. According to

its owner, Sora Calhaigne, the vessel was transporting a consignment of smoke powder southward when it was broadsided and sunk.

The second attack was against the galleon *Seamaid*, a vessel in the service of House Torlen. The ship was two days north and heading to Scalabar when it was attacked. Survivors were plucked from the sea by the ship's escort, but its cargo of flint and bombard casings was lost.

Casualties were light in both attacks. No more than a dozen sailors were lost to the beast of the depths. Survivors attest that the shark had an appetite for destruction, not flesh, and they count themselves lucky to have survived the encounter.

Scalabaran merchants quickly pressured the navy into mounting a hunt for the monster. One week ago the *Trident*, one of the city's naval cutters, set sail to scour the ocean for signs of the beast. The ship has yet to return, and locals fear the vessel and its crew have been lost. Local merchants have offered a reward to privateers able to find and destroy the sea monster. None have taken the bait thus far.

You have arrived in Scalabar at the behest of Sora Calhaigne. The lady of House Calhaigne needs brave heroes to investigate the loss of her galleon, the *Morning Star*. She has reason to believe that the sea monster is not what it seems. She also suspects that a prominent trading rival, Nejan Yalar, is somehow involved in the attacks. House Yalar has been struggling to maintain a profit because it trades the same goods as House Calhaigne and House Torlen.

All three merchant houses specialize in the shipment of smoke powder, flint, wood, iron, and steel needed for wheel-locks, bombards, and other modern weaponry. Sora thinks Yalar is somehow using the threat of the sea monster to eliminate the competition.

The local militia loathes to involve itself in merchant rivalries. The Merchants' Guild is too preoccupied with the sea monster to properly attend to matters, so Sora has summoned you to help her solve the problem.

For the Dungeon Master

Sora Calhaigne offers 3,000 gp in jewelry and gems for help tracking down and stopping the "sea monster" before her other vessel, the *Starfish*, returns to Scalabar to take on a consignment of twelve bombards.

Sora is right to suspect that the sea monster is more than it seems. The monster shark is, in fact, a gnome-built submarine powered by a furnace that feeds on magical items. Sora thinks it's either a submersible vessel or a normal ship outfitted with a ram and masked with illusions.

Sora incorrectly believes that House Yalar is responsible for the attacks. The true villain is actually Zerrick Torlen. Torlen does not own any ships. However, to turn suspicious eyes toward Yalar, Torlen had the submarine attack and sink a vessel (the *Seamaid*) owned by one of his business associates. The cargo was light, and the losses were a minor inconvenience. However, this helped paint Zerrick Torlen as a victim.

Torlen is trying to destroy the competition and become the city's exclusive munitions trader. Torlen knows that House Calhaigne is transporting a consignment of bombards aboard the *Starfish* in a matter of days and has obtained a map of the ship's coastal route. He has also acquired information on the next House Yalar shipment and plans to sink that vessel as well.

The "sea monster" submarine is captained by Drake Brovador, a nefarious pirate. Brovador's only loyalty is to himself, but he relies on his dedicated crew of gnomes to keep the "shark" in perfect working order. The magical items that feed the furnace are provided by Evert, a gnome Illusionist. Evert commissioned the building of the shark and works for an organization called the Smith's Coster, a spelljamming company that wants to control the flow of munitions in this part of the world. Evert has accepted Zerrick Torlen as his sole business contact in Scalabar.

When not prowling the trade routes, the submarine hides inside a natural coastal cavern, the entrance to which is partly submerged and masked by Evert's *hallicinatory terrain* spell.

Plot Synopsis

The characters arrive in Scalabar on Day 1 of the adventure. There they meet Sora Calhaigne and discuss the present situation involving the loss of her vessel, the *Morning Star*. Sora's other ship, the *Starfish*, is due to arrive on Day 7 and depart with its cargo the morning of Day 9. The PCs have that long to find and defeat the "sea monster."

After Sora relays her suspicions regarding House Yalar and the so-called sea monster, PCs might wish to question Nejan Yalar, visit his local warehouse, and confer with survivors of the "shark" attack.

If the PCs speak to Zerrick Torlen, they can use *ESP* spells and similar divining magic to verify that he, not Nejan Yalar, is responsible for the recent attacks. If his treachery is revealed, Torlen and his henchmen attack the PCs. If the PCs defeat Torlen and penetrate his warehouse, they might find a map indicating the location of the sea cave wherein the marauding submarine dwells. The cave is located 17 miles southeast of Scalabar.

If the PCs fail to obtain Torlen's map, the PCs' only hope of finding the sea cave hinges on a clan of locathah who live amid the reefs just off the coast. They have seen the submarine come and go, and they know where the wreck of the *Trident* can be found.

PCs will have difficulty hiring a vessel to take them out to sea. They may book passage on a tradeship heading north or south, but the threat of the sea monster keeps most privateers and freebooters grounded in Scalabar's safe harbor. On Day 3 of the adventure, the naval cutter *Tempest* is dispatched to look for its sister ship, the *Trident*. PCs can join this excursion, hoping to encounter the monster shark. With luck, they'll encounter the locathah first.

Scalabar

Scalabar is ruled by the Rammarch, Justin Marlev (a 4th-level human Fighter). However, the Rammarch is strongly influenced by his advisor, Cedric Parthane (a 6th-level dwarven Priest of Dumathoin) and the city's Merchant Council—a circle of nine merchants, all of whom pay generous

Random Encounters

Characters wandering the streets of Scalabar are subject to random encounters. Despite the recent problems with the "sea monster," the city remains an active, bustling community with many curious goings-on.

Random encounters occur whenever the DM wishes. Roll 1d100 and consult the following table, using each encounter once only:

01-10: A drunken "wharf rat" named Rinbaur the Ragged (0-level human) pesters the PCs as they pass by, begging for spare change.

11-20: Thulbryn, a renowned Bard (3rd-level human), asks the PCs to distract the guards of a local noblewoman to whom he has taken a fancy. Thulbryn offers 25 gp for their assistance. The lady's guards are 2nd-level human Fighters dressed in studded leather armor and armed with shortswords.

21-30: Ulmar the Cutpurse (3rd-level dwarven Thief) attempts to rob one of the PCs on a dare from three other Thieves (2nd-level dwarves) lurking in a nearby alley. Ulmar's chances of picking pockets is 45%, and his preferred target is a small purse or pouch.

31-40: Riannon, a young wench, is accosted by three ruffians (0-level humans) on a street corner. The men are looking for a good time but flee at the first sign of trouble.

41-50: A priest named Hallef (2nd-level human Cleric) approaches the PCs and asks them to make a small donation to his shrine.

51-60: Alathar Wavecrest, a retired ship captain (5th-level human Fighter), mistakes one of the PCs for an old seafaring comrade and insists on reminiscing about "old times" over a tankard of ale.

61-70: A local scribe named Eskan Hasvet (0-level human) has lost his keys and needs assistance breaking into his own residence. Thieves can pick the lock with the usual chances for success.

71-80: Allyx the Sly (a 2nd-level half-elf Thief) tries to pawn a 10-gp gem with a *Nystul's magic aura* spell cast upon it, claiming it's a magical *luckstone*. She asks for 250 gp.

81-90: Militia guards (2nd-level human Fighters) mistake the PCs for wanted smugglers and attempt to apprehend them. Once the error is brought to their attention, they let the PCs go.

91-00: The PCs are attacked by 1d4 stirges from the eastern hills. The creatures are drawn by the city's lamplights. This encounter only occurs at night; otherwise, roll again.

Stirges (1d4): AC 8; MV 3, fly 18 (C); HD 1+1; hp 5 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d3; SA blood drain for 1d4 hp damage per round; SZ S; ML 8; INT animal (1); AL N; XP 175; MM/332.

tithes to the city's tax coffers to maintain their precious status. Sora Calhaigne, Zerrick Torlen, and Nejan Yalar are not among the circle members, although each of them longs to acquire a seat on the Council.

The Scalabaran military is based in Gull Keep, a formidable graystone citadel perched atop a rocky crag at the mouth of the harbor (area 2). The city also maintains a small fleet currently numbering two heavily-armed ships: the *Tempest* and the *Kraken*. These ships routinely scour the waters outside the city. The military is still investigating the disappearance of its third ship, the *Trident*.

Scalabar has temples and shrines dedicated to most, if not all, of the prominent human deities. Elven and dwarven citizens maintain their own

small shrines as well. By far the most prominent temple is the Temple Aqualia (area 7), dedicated to the local deity of the seas and oceans.

Other areas of importance in this adventure include the warehouse district (area 3) and the residences of Zerrick Torlen (area 4), Nejan Yalar (area 5), and Sora Calhaigne (area 6).

Local taverns and inns include the Rusty Anchor (poor, tavern only), the Lazy Lamprey (fair/2 sp per night), the Sword of Scalabar (good/5 sp per night), the Shark's Tooth (excellent, tavern only), and the Harpy's Nest (excellent/1 gp per night, inn only).

Characters wishing to purchase items listed in the *Player's Handbook* or *Aurora's Whole Realms Catalog* may do so at standard costs within Scalabar.

City Encounter Areas

The following encounters are keyed to the map of the city. The characters have been asked to meet Sora Calhaigne at her residence (area 6). Her modest house is situated on Kelp Street; PCs may ask passers-by for directions (in which case, consult the "Random Encounters" sidebar).

1. Harbor.

Large breakwaters enclose the city's harbor, protecting the docks from the foaming maw of the great sea. Perched atop a crag at the mouth of the harbor is a salt-encrusted citadel of gray stone. White gulls circle above the keep. Hundreds more flock around Scalabar's lichen-covered docks, keeping their eye on the galleons and their cargoes of foodstuffs. The harbor is crawling with sailors and dockhands, all shouting and laughing at each other.

On any given day, there are 1d8 merchant ships docked in Scalabar's harbor. There's also a 75% chance that one or both naval cutters (the *Tempest* and the *Kraken*) are also docked. On Day 3 of the adventure, the *Tempest* leaves Scalabar in search of the *Trident*. Unless the PCs happen to be aboard, the vessel has no luck finding its sister ship and returns on Day 8.

A naval cutter has a standard crew of 35 sailors, all trained militia men. The ship also carries 12 additional Fighters of higher experience levels, as well as a captain and a Priest. The *Tempest* captain is an elf named Lendore Brightwave. Her calm control pervades the ship. The vessel's human Priest, Karthol Ulmar, is a thoughtful and pensive old sea-dog.

On Day 7, the *Starfish* arrives in port from a city to the south. This vessel belongs to House Calhaigne and is captained by Dirk Quarzon, a seasoned mariner and ex-husband of Lady Calhaigne.

Captain Quarzon knows of his ex-wife's plan to hire adventurers to stop the sea monster, and he supports her wholeheartedly. Quarzon's ship has 24 highly trained sailors.

Any other vessel that enters Scalabar's harbor either belongs to

one of the local merchant houses (40% chance) or a merchant living in some neighboring city (60% chance). These ships are not carrying munitions or other high-risk cargoes. PCs intent on hiring a ship for the purpose of hunting the "sea monster" find no takers unless the pay is considerable (2,000 gp or more). Sora is unwilling to risk the *Starfish*, but Captain Quarzon has his own mind and might take the risk himself if offered a worthy bribe (2,000 gp minimum).

Possible names for merchant ships visiting Scalabar include the *Waverider*, the *Sea Hag*, the *Sea Urchin*, the *Siren's Song*, the *Pisces*, the *Moray*, the *Maelstrom*, and the *Horizon*. Feel free to come up with other names as needed.

Lendore Brightwave, elf female F5: AC 5; MV 12; hp 33; THAC0 16 (base); #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type +2 (specialization bonus); SA Two-weapon Style specialization; SD 90% resistant to *charm* spells; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 15; ML 16; AL LG; *leather armor +1*, *ring of protection +1*, *longsword +1* (specialized), *potion of water breathing*.

Karthol Ulmard, human male P4: AC 4; MV 9; hp 18; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 17, Cha 13; ML 15; AL LG; *bracers of defense AC 4*, *staff of curing* (25 charges), *footman's mace +1*, holy symbol, vial of holy water.

Spells (5/5/3): 1st—*bles*, *command*, *endure heat/cold*, *remove fear*, *sanctuary*; 2nd—*augury*, *enthrall*, *hold person*, *messenger*, *warp wood*; 3rd—*create food & water*, *water breathing*, *water walk*.

Dirk Quarzon, human male F5: AC 6; MV 12; hp 41; THAC0 16 (base); #AT 1 or 3/2 (specialization); Dmg by weapon type +3 (Strength and specialization bonuses); Str 17 (+1/+1), Dex 16, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 14; ML 15; AL NG; *leather armor*, *scimitar +1* (specialized), *ring of water walking*.

Sailors, human males F1: AC 9; MV 12; hp 7 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; roll 2d4+6 for ability scores; ML 13; AL LG, NG, or CG; *leather jerkin* (AC 9), *cutlass*, *light crossbow*, 2d6 quarrels.



2. Gull Keep. This great citadel serves as the headquarters for the city militia. The keep is commanded by the Castellan, Vulmar Rangeer (a 7th-level human Wizard). The Castellan is in charge of the city's defense in times of war, assigning soldiers to ship duty, and training new recruits.

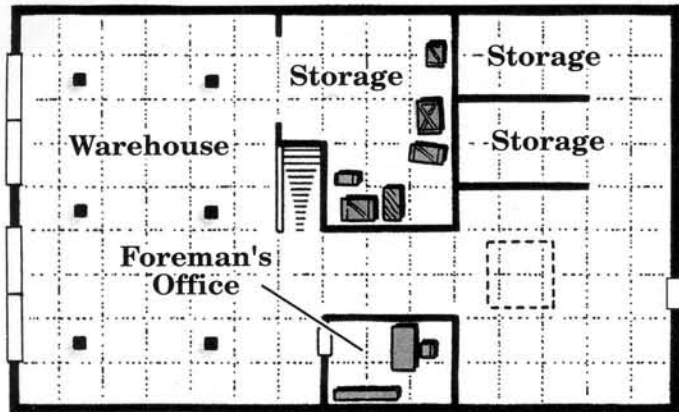
The keep's walls are dotted with shuttered portals, behind which lurks an impressive arsenal of bombards and ballistae, all pointed out toward the sea. Maintaining watch within

the citadel are 60 men-at-arms (1st-level Fighters), a dozen sergeant-at-arms (2nd-level Fighters), and the Captain of the Guard, Leothar Allindor (5th-level half-elf Fighter).

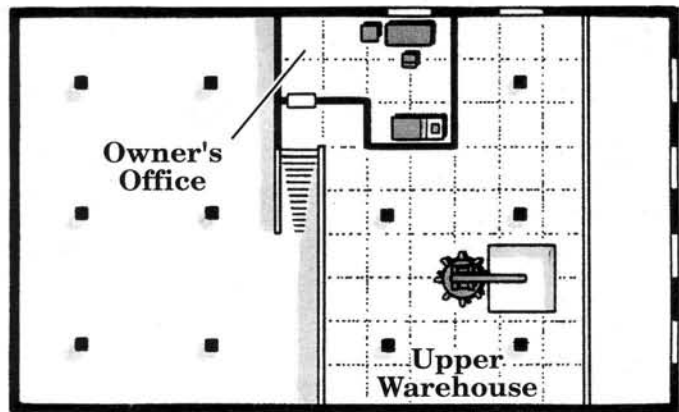
The keep takes its name from the hundreds of sea gulls that constantly fly overhead. Many of the gulls have made homes in the keep's timeworn battlements. In addition to the militia training grounds, the keep contains offices for the Castellan and Captain of the Guard.

TYPICAL WAREHOUSE

One square = 5 feet



Ground Floor



Upper Floor

3. Stores and Warehouse District.

The stores and warehouses are sea-worn, decrepit, closely-packed structures stained with salt and grime. The district, one of the busiest in Scalabar, is overrun with sailors, workers, merchants, and other passers-by.

The PCs might wish to investigate the warehouses of Houses Torlen, Yalar, and Calhaigne, hoping to find some clue to the sea monster's whereabouts or evidence of one merchant's wrongdoings.

A typical warehouse floorplan is given above. The DM may flesh out the particulars using the information below:

House Calhaigne Warehouse

This is one of the better maintained warehouses in the area. Signs above the doors prominently display the name and crest of House Calhaigne. The outside doors are locked, but Sora Calhaigne can furnish the PCs with a key if they're mindful to return it.

Stored in the warehouse are twelve bombardrs lined up in three

rows of four. Each bombard sits atop a flatbed cart with thick wooden wheels for efficient transport along the docks. There are no shells or ammunition for the bombardrs kept in the warehouse; House Calhaigne's last shipment of smoke powder was lost with the untimely sinking of the *Morning Star*.

The warehouse is guarded by four 2nd-level Fighters, all loyal to House Calhaigne. They are honest working men who can vouch for their employer's honesty and integrity. The warehouse contains nothing incriminating or easily transportable.

House Yalar Warehouse

This weather-worn building is locked up tight. Only Griswald Leatherpatch (see area 5) and one warehouse guard have keys to the outside doors. However, the locks may be picked normally by a Thief. PCs who knock on a door are told to leave by one of the guards; if the PCs pretend to serve Nejan Yalar, the guards allow them inside but watch them closely.

The warehouse proper contains six crates, five containing light firearms (wheel-lock pistols) and one containing heavier weaponry (arquebuses). An *alarm* spell has been cast on the crate of arquebuses and triggers whenever an unauthorized person disturbs the crate or its contents.

There are six guards protecting the warehouse and its contents. If intruding PCs are spotted, the guards order the PCs to surrender. If the PCs comply, five of the guards hold them at bay with crossbows while the sixth guard leaves to summon the local militia (requiring 2d6+6 rounds).

PCs caught breaking and entering are fined 100 gp per person. PCs caught stealing are fined 500 gp plus the value of the item if it's damaged or lost; they are also imprisoned for 15 days. Any crime committed here is reported to Nejan Yalar. He accuses Lady Calhaigne of espionage and hires 1d6+4 additional guards plus two trained war dogs to protect the warehouse.

There is nothing incriminating hidden in the warehouse.

Warehouse guards, human males F1 (6): AC 6; MV 9; hp 6 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; roll 2d4+6 for ability scores; ML

12; AL LN; XP 35; scemail, heavy crossbow, 2d4 quarrels, footman's mace, shortsword.

House Torlen Warehouse

This structure is sturdy and secure. Good-quality locks on all outside doors keep intruders out (-15% chance to all Open Locks rolls).

The warehouse is supervised by Zerrick Torlen's half-orc nephew, Jarvis. The young man despises the duties thrust upon him, and he spends most of his time asleep in the owner's office. If intruders are detected, he drinks his potion of *invisibility* and tries to backstab a lone PC. Since Zerrick Torlen trusts few others to guard his warehouse, he's placed a monster in the warehouse to prevent theft or loss (see below).

The warehouse storage room contains sixteen kegs of smoke powder (worth 500 gp each), three wooden chests containing wheel-lock shot (ammunition), and three crates of assembly parts for firearm weapons. There are also several crates and boxes containing crossbows and replacement parts for these mundane weapons. Torlen has had these for some time but has been unable to sell them. He also has two poorly maintained catapults pushed into one corner of the warehouse.

The warehouse floor is made of flagstones. On the floor, lurking behind one of the kegs, is a whipsting that Zerrick has domesticated. The whipsting is a bulbous, spherical creature with two 10'-long, whiplike tentacles with a bony needle at the end of each one. It keeps one tentacle coiled underneath, forming a natural spring. When someone other than Zerrick or Jarvis approaches within 5 feet, it springs forward to attack with both tentacles, imposing a -3 penalty to surprise rolls and gaining a +4 bonus to attack rolls for that round.

The upstairs office contains a desk cluttered with invoices and other loose papers. Next to the desk is a heavy iron safe. The lock is complex (-45% to Open Locks rolls) but can be opened magically (using a *knock* spell). Jarvis has seen his uncle open the safe and knows the combination. The safe contains 150 gp in a locked wooden coffer with a *Leomund's trap* cast upon it and two furled scrolls.

The first scroll is a letter from the gnome Illusionist Evert to Zerrick Torlen. It reads as follows:

Zerrick,

You were right. Justin Marlev must have ordered a search for the "sea monster" plaguing Scalabar.

I sent Brovador out to sink the Trident, and he has returned with news that the Trident now sits at the bottom of the sea! Your foolish Rammarch will think twice about interfering with our plans again!

Please verify the next target by the next new moon. Our shark is hungry and waits to be unleashed again!

Evert

The second scroll is actually a map pinpointing the location of the submarine cave. Unfortunately, the map has a *sepia snake sigil* cast upon it, affecting the first person who so much as glances at it. The map is depicted on page 18.

Jarvis Torlen, half-orc male T2: AC 5; MV 12; hp 9; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; Str 9, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 7; ML 9; AL NE; XP 65; leather armor, shortsword, potion of *invisibility*.

Jarvis knows nothing about the "shark," its true nature, or its present location. He does not turn against his uncle for any price. However, the PCs could present Evert's letter to the local militia as evidence. If Jarvis escapes, he warns his uncle of the danger, giving Zerrick time to flee the city before he can be arrested on charges of piracy and conspiracy. Unfortunately, arresting Zerrick does not stop the shark attacks.

Whipsting: AC 7; MV 9, fly 9 (D); HD 1+4; hp 10; THAC0 19 (15 if springing); #AT 3 (bite/two tentacles); Dmg 1-2/1/1; SA venom (see below); SZ M; ML 12; INT average (8); AL N; XP 175; *MC Annual 1*.

The whipsting uses one of its tentacles to wrap around and sting one character while biting that individual for 1-2 points of damage. It uses its second tentacle to lash at other prey in range, trying to inject PCs with its venomous stinger.

PCs stung by a tentacle must save vs. poison at -2 or succumb to nausea and uncontrollable shuddering the round following the sting. Nausea

and weakness ruin all attacks and spellcasting attempted by the victim in that round, all items carried by the victim are dropped, and all tasks requiring Dexterity are impossible. The victim also suffers a -1 AC penalty for that round. On subsequent rounds, the victim can move normally but remains weak—attack and damage rolls suffer -3 penalties in that round, then -2 penalties the following round, -1 penalties on the next round, and return to normal thereafter. Every successful sting results in another round of shuddering and nausea (barring a successful saving throw).

The cracking of the whipsting's whiplike tentacles is loud enough to alert Jarvis if he is sleeping upstairs.

4. Torlen Residence.

Zerrick Torlen's residence is located in the city's southernmost district on Lamp Street. The house is a large, two-story structure with five steps leading up to the entrance. Flanking the double doors are two crouching lion statues. Mounted above the door is a stone fresco carved in the likeness of a dignified human visage.

Zerrick Torlen is a Mage who enjoys playing the role of the town samaritan, helping old ladies with their groceries and such.

The chiselled fresco above the entrance is actually a grandfather plaque—an immobile guardian that has the ability to speak. It can cast *wizard lock* upon the doors (and does so at the first approach of strangers) and can cast *magic missile* (two missiles) once/round and *shout* once/turn. The plaque does not attack unless the PCs seem hostile or Zerrick has ordered it to do so. Any stranger who touches the plaque must save vs. spell or be weakened as if by a *ray of enfeeblement*.

Zerrick has two gnome servants who answer the door. If the PCs ask to question Zerrick about the sea monster, one of the gnomes fetches Zerrick while the other lets the PCs into the foyer. Zerrick claims to have no useful information. He says only that he is "investigating the matter." He laments the "unfortunate loss of cargo" and, of course, the "terrible

loss of life," but an *ESP* spell reveals that he cares about neither.

If confronted by hostile PCs, the gnomes flee the house shrieking and screaming for the local militia. Meanwhile, Zerrick withdraws to his second-floor study, throws his prized belongings into a *bag of holding*, casts *wraithform* on himself, and flees by the quickest route.

In Zerrick's study, coiled around a spellbook lectern, is the merchant's messenger snake. This small, winged serpent is used to transport messages between Zerrick and Evert. When attacked, it flees out the nearest window to safety.

On Day 6, Zerrick instructs his messenger snake to deliver to Evert a letter and a map detailing the *Starfish's* intended route. If the PCs penetrate Zerrick's residence before then, they find the letter and the map on Zerrick's desk in his upstairs study. Zerrick plans to give the map to Evert and have the "sea monster" sink the House Calhaigne galleon. The letter reads as follows:

Evert, you fool!

You were not instructed to sink the Trident! I notified you of the Rammarch's plan so that you would ensure that our "sea monster" would not be seen! Attacking the Trident was risky. In the future, do not misinterpret my instructions!

I am enclosing a map of the Starfish's intended route. The loss of this vessel should thrust House Calhaigne out of the munitions business for good. That leaves House Yalar as my sole competitor. I shall notify you when the next Yalar shipment is due to leave Scalabar.

Z

The letter is written in Zerrick's handwriting. If attacked prior to Day 6, Zerrick takes the letter and messenger snake with him. Indentations from Zerrick's quill pen are visible on and underlying sheet of parchment left behind on the desk—writing that is legible when brushed over with charcoal or chalk.

Zerrick stores his wealth in a secret chamber behind one wall of his study. He cleans out the room before fleeing the house, taking two rounds

to stuff the goods into his *bag of holding*, another round to cast *darkness 15' radius* in the study, and a third round to cast *wraithform* on himself. Once out of the house, he either uses a *fly* spell or his *phantom steed* scroll to make a clean getaway.

If he escapes, Zerrick might become a recurring villain in the DM's campaign. If captured, Zerrick refuses to divulge the location of the "sea monster's" lair, although certain spells (such as *ESP*) might be used to glean this information. If Zerrick is slain, the PCs can still use the map in Torlen's warehouse to find the sea monster's lair (see area 3).

Zerrick Torlen, human male
W7: AC 6 (*armor* spell); MV 12; hp 15; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type or spell; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 9, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 13; ML 11; AL NE; XP 650; *wand of fear* (7 charges), *bag of holding*.

Spells (4/3/2/1): 1st—*armor, charm person, phantasmal force, unseen servant*; 2nd—*darkness 15' radius, summon swarm, web*; 3rd—*fly, wraithform*; 4th—*confusion*.

Zerrick's *bag of holding* contains 145 pp in a large pouch, 863 gp in a wizard-locked coffer, a gold satyr statuette (worth 150 gp), six gems (worth 3 × 100 gp and 3 × 50 gp respectively), four potions (*clairvoyance, ESP, invisibility, and treasure finding*), Zerrick's spellbook (containing all memorized spells plus 2d4+2 additional 1st–4th level spells, all protected by a *fire trap* spell), and three scrolls in wooden tubes (*comprehend languages, phantom steed, and wall of fire*).

Wizbat and Snufwix (gnomes): AC 10; MV 6; HD 1; hp 5, 4; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD +2 to save vs. rods, staves, wands, and spells; SZ S; ML 5; INT very (12); AL N; XP 35; *MM/159*; unarmed.

The gnomes know that Zerrick is behind the sea monster attacks but would never betray their master's confidence. If the PCs successfully *charm* them, the gnomes reveal that the "shark" is, in fact, a magical ship. They do not know the location of the sea monster's lair. They know that Evert (mentioned in Zerrick's letter) is a gnome, but they have never met him and don't know where he is.

Grandfather plaque: AC 6; MV 0; HD 6+2; hp 23; THAC0 nil; #AT

special; Dmg special; SA spells (see above); SZ S (2' tall); ML 17; INT average (10); AL LN; XP 2,000; *MC Annual 3/49* (gargoyle).

Messenger snake: AC 4; MV 6, fly 24 (B); HD 3; hp 14; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SA poison (onset time 2d12 rounds; save or be paralyzed for 1d4 hours); SD chameleon power; MR 30%; SZ S (2' long); ML 11; INT high (13); AL N; XP 975; *MC Annual 3/95* (snake).

5. Yalar Residence.

This commanding, two-story stone house overlooks the city's bustling market square. The residence is surrounded by a chipped iron fence topped with rusty spikes. The entrance consists of two arched doors with bronze, ram-headed knockers mounted on them.

Nejan Yalar is a private man in his sixties. He employs a spectacled halfling named Griswald Leatherpatch to handle the day-to-day affairs of his business. Griswald is a pleasant fellow at first, but he becomes irritable when questioned about House Yalar and outright rude when confronted with accusations or insinuations of impropriety.

If the PCs are polite, Griswald might allow them to speak with Nejan, if the character with the highest Charisma makes a successful Charisma check. The merchant keeps no other company besides Griswald and his six cats. Nejan is blunt and stubborn with a shrewd mind for opportunity. If informed that Lady Calhaigne has hired the PCs to stop the sea monster, Nejan expresses interest in learning what they have discovered so far. Nejan thinks the sea monster is a dragon turtle. He's not unhappy that House Calhaigne and House Torlen have sustained losses as a result of the creature's attacks. Although he does not condone the loss of life, he knows full well "how cruel nature can be."

House Yalar has not yet fallen victim to the sea monster's attack, nor is Griswald motivated to place a bounty on the sea monster's head. The halfling is frugal, if not miserly with Nejan's funds.

Nejan Yalar, 0-level human male (merchant): AC 9; MV 9; hp 5;

THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; Str 8, Dex 9, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 13, Ch 12; ML 12; AL N; XP 7; *ring of protection* +1.

Griswald Leatherpatch, 0-level halfling male: AC 8; MV 6; hp 6; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 9; SA +1 to hit with thrown weapons; ML 11; AL LN; XP 35; throwing dagger, pouch containing 45 sp and six 10-gp gems.

Domestic cats (6): AC 6; MV 9; HD 1/2; hp 3 each; THAC0 20; #AT 3; Dmg 1/1/1; SA rear claws; SD -3 to surprise rolls; SZ T; ML 9; INT animal (1); AL N; XP 7; *MM/38* (cat).

6. Calhaigne Residence.

The residence of Sora Calhaigne is a modest, white-washed affair with an octagonal turret and many gables. A large birch tree grows in the front yard, its gaunt limbs trying vainly to hide the peeling paint around the house's window frames.

Sora continues to live well despite the loss of her galleon, the *Morning Star*. She has no intention of allowing her other vessel, the *Starfish*, to suffer a similar fate.

Sora cannot afford any more than 3,000 gp as a reward for stopping the sea monster attacks. She knows that the Rammarch will reimburse her if the heroes are successful.

Sora strongly suspects that Nejan Yalar is somehow connected to the sea monster's attacks. His business has suffered greatly in recent months thanks to competition from Houses Calhaigne and Torlen, and Sora knows that Nejan has plenty of contacts in Scalabar and other cities who would help him gain a foothold. Sora and Nejan have butted heads more than once and have rarely seen eye to eye. When it comes to business, she knows he has few scruples.

Sora thinks the sea monster is a ship of some kind—perhaps even a submersible vessel. Although she knows nothing of spelljamming, Sora knows that “flying ships” exist. She has no trouble believing that submarines exist as well. The only other possibility is that the “sea monster” is an ordinary vessel disguised or transformed by magic of some kind. Either way, she wants the threat eliminated.

Mindful of thieves, Sora keeps her wealth spread throughout the city. If the PCs request information on ships coming and going from port, she refers them to a retired captain named Hank Bedlow (a 3rd-level human Fighter) who hangs around the Rusty Dagger tavern. He's an old friend who knows what ships are coming and going daily.

If the PCs need a place to start, Sora recommends that they investigate House Yalar. If this turns up no useful evidence, she suggests they question Zerrick Torlen—the second merchant victimized by the sea monster. Sora suspects that Zerrick might have his own spies looking for information about the nefarious “beast of the deep,” but she does not suspect his involvement.

If the PCs fail to turn up any clues to the sea monster's whereabouts, Sora might suggest they approach the priests of the Temple Aqualia (area 7) and beg for guidance.

To keep thieves at bay, Sora has a pair of temperamental war dogs named Spike and Drusilla.

Sora Calhaigne, 0-level human female (merchant): AC 10; MV 12; hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; Str 9, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 13; AL CG; ML 12; gold necklace (worth 250 gp), gold wedding ring (worth 52 gp).

War dogs (2): AC 6; MV 12; HD 2+2; hp 15, 11; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4; SZ M; ML 10 (16 when protecting Sora); INT semi (3); AL N; XP 65; *MM/57*. Each dog wears a gold-studded collar (worth 50 gp) with its name engraved on it.

7. The Temple Aqualia.

Set back from the harbor is a beautiful, white stone temple with pillared porticos leading to an open, airy courtyard. Along the edge of the temple are dozens of cloisters, while toward the back of the building is a large pool and shrine. Clerics of the Temple Aqualia wear robes in many shades of blue. They also wear blue skullcaps, each with a sharklike fin protruding from the top and arching toward the back of the headpiece.

The Priests of the Temple Aqualia are generally passive. Nevertheless,

the priesthood employs 24 1st-level Fighters (12 dwarves and 12 humans) as guards. The Priests and guards are armed with footman's maces.

The High Cleric of the Temple Aqualia is Zaldra Auminar (a 9th-level human Priest), a quiet woman with a melodious voice. If the PCs think to question her about the sea monster, Zaldra can relay the following information, which she obtained through a *commune* spell:

“The sea monster is not of the natural world. It was forged from metal and magic. The man who commands the monster resides here, in Scalabar, but his identity is unknown to me. All I know is that he is a merchant.”

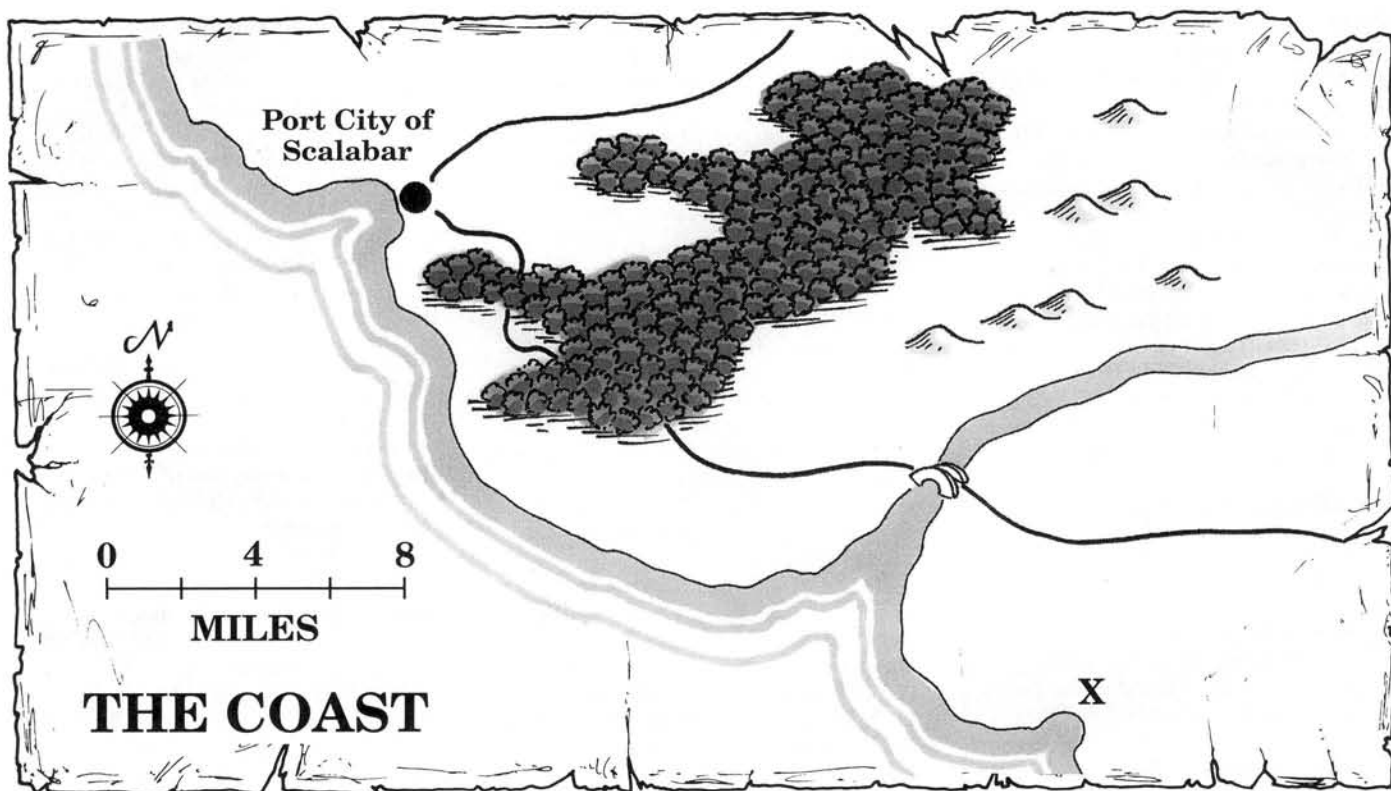
If the PCs are patient, Zaldra can cast another *commune* spell. The answers given are typically “yes” or “no,” so the questions must be phrased accordingly. (The players should be responsible for coming up with the questions.) PCs might use Zaldra's *commune* to confirm a suspect's guilt or innocence as well as pinpoint where the “sea monster” is hidden. This avenue of investigation should only be available if the PCs are unable to find clues or evidence elsewhere in the city.

If the PCs suffered heavy losses breaking into Zerrick Torlen's warehouse or residence, Zaldra might be persuaded to cast a *raise dead* spell upon a PC, provided the party agrees to perform some service on behalf of the temple at some later date. The exact nature of this “service” should be determined by the DM and fit into the ongoing campaign.

Journey To the Cave

Zerrick's map (depicted on the next page) shows the relative position of the pirate cave (marked “X”) wherein the shark submarine is hidden. If the PCs failed to obtain the map hidden in Torlen's warehouse (area 3), they can still locate the sea monster's lair.

Information gleaned from Zerrick or the High Cleric of the Temple Aqualia might be enough to pinpoint the cave's location. The PCs may also scour the coastline for visible caves or signs of the sea monster. Since few ships are willing to invite attack, the



PCs must either seek permission to sign aboard the naval ship *Tempest* (by first visiting Gull Keep and lodging their request with the Castellan), convince Captain Quarzon to risk the *Starfish*, or hire a privateer for 2,000 gp (or more).

The Trip By Water

The “sea monster” remains in its lair until the *Starfish* arrives in Scalabar, at which time it leaves the lair and begins plying the tradeways near Scalabar—just in case House Calhaigne changes the ship’s time of departure.

If the PCs sweep the coastline southeast of Scalabar, they catch the interest of a locathah clan. The fishermen live near a series of warm underwater geysers not too far from Hammerhead Cove and the secret submarine cave. In fact, the locathah have grown accustomed to seeing the metal shark come and go. They know they cannot damage it, and it has never threatened their community, so the locathah wisely leave it alone.

If the PCs are traveling aboard the naval ship *Tempest*, the locathah

recognize the vessel as the sister ship of the *Trident*. The locathah recently discovered the *Trident* on the sea floor. When they see the *Tempest*, a group of three locathah rise to the surface astride giant sea horses and attempt to communicate with the ship’s crew. If the PCs are aboard any other vessel, the locathah do not reveal themselves.

Read or paraphrase the following passage if the PCs encounter the locathah:

You are taken aback by the sudden emergence of three strange humanoids from the water. The creatures have yellow, scaly hides and fishlike heads. They clutch gleaming tridents and ride what look like giant sea horses.

The locathah speak their own language, which consists of lip smacks and guttural croaks. PCs need either a *helm of comprehend languages* and *read magic* or a *comprehend languages* spell. If the PCs defeated Zerrick and seized his *bag of holding*, they might have a scroll with *comprehend languages* written on it.

If the PCs have no means of understanding the locathah, the DM might wish to equip one of the fishermen with an enchanted conch shell that allows its owner to cast *tongues* once per day. The locathah’s message is as follows:

“You are looking for a lost ship? A ship like yours sits at the bottom of the sea. The thing that sank your ship lurks behind the rock. We can show you the way if you follow.”

If the PCs comprehend the fishermen properly, they may either climb atop the locathah’s mounts or ask the *Tempest*’s captain to follow the locathah into Hammerhead Cove. Along the northern cliff of the cove is the secret entrance to the submarine cave. This seaward entrance is 120 feet in diameter; however, all but the uppermost 5 feet of the tunnel lies underwater. Moreover, the entire passage is hidden behind the illusion of a sheer, rocky surface. The locathah can see through the illusion, which can also be revealed using a *detect magic* spell. Otherwise, PCs are entitled to a saving throw vs. spell to disbelieve.

The locathah refuse to follow PCs into the caves. They've done their good deed and want nothing more to do with the PCs or the *Tempest*.

Before she agrees to take the PCs to the sea monster's lair, Captain Brightwave insists that they find where the *Trident* went down, just in case there is flotsam with survivors waiting to be rescued. The locathah agree to escort the *Tempest* to the sunken remains of the *Trident*.

However, there are no treasures or survivors to be found either on the water's surface or inside the sunken wreck. PCs who insist on exploring the wreck are attacked by four lacedons (aquatic ghouls) who have taken a keen interest in the sunken galleon and its cache of corpses. Underwater combat rules and penalties apply. (Consult the *DMG* or *Of Ships and the Sea* accessory for details.)

Locathah (3): AC 6; MV 1, swim 12; HD 2; hp 9 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SZ M; ML 9; INT very (12); AL N; XP 35; *MM/228*; trident.

Giant sea horses (3): AC 7; MV swim 21; HD 3; hp 18 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1; SA tail constriction; SZ L; ML 10; INT animal (1); AL N; XP 65; *MM/117* (fish).

Lacedons (4): AC 6; MV swim 9; HD 2; hp 14, 11, 9, 8; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d6; SA paralyzation; SD immune to *sleep* and *charm* spells; SZ M; ML 14; INT low (7); AL CE; XP 175; *MM/131* (ghoul).

The Trip By Land

PCs who do not wish to journey by sea may attempt an overland route using the trade road southeast of Scalabar. The road passes through the Brendyl Forest, across the Lintari River, and into the rugged terrain of the Hinterland.

The trip by land is hazardous, as the forest is beset by a mad Druid named Morwen Brownleaf. Morwen claims the Brendyl Forest as his own and does not tolerate trespassers. The Druid has become something of a local legend, preying on hapless passers-by like some boogeyman.

Using his *tree* spell, Morwen watches the road while disguised as an unassuming shrub. Once the PCs have passed him and moved 30 yards down the trail, he reverts to his true

form and quietly casts a *barkskin* spell on himself. As the PCs continue moving away on the second round, he casts *spike growth* between him and the party, affecting a 30' x 20' area.

On the third round, Morwen casts *entangle* on the PCs, affecting a 40' x 40' area centered on the party. PCs who look behind them have no trouble spotting Morwen 60 yards away. He is clutching his *staff* and cursing at them wildly.

On the fourth round, Morwen uses his *staff* to summon 120 insects (60 insects + 10 insects per level of the user). The insect swarm materializes around one of the *entangled* PCs, biting him for 12 points of damage (1 hp per 10 insects) regardless of armor worn. (*Entangled* or *held* PCs do not receive a saving throw to evade the insect swarm. Otherwise a normal save vs. staff applies, with modifiers for exceptional Dexterity.) The insect attack lasts one round only, but during that time the PC can do nothing else except fend off the swarm. The insects cannot harm those protected by a *protection from evil* spell.

One subsequent round, Morwen continues to employ his *staff*, using his *warp wood* spell to destroy a PC's bow or crossbow and saving his *goodberries* and *cure light wounds* spell to heal any damage from ranged weapon attacks. Any PC who avoids or escapes Morwen's *entangle* spell can charge the Druid; however, the PC must contend with Morwen's *spike growth* spell; every 10' x 10' square affected by the spell inflicts 2d4 points of damage due to the invisible barbs jutting from the earth. (See the spell description in the *PHB* for details.) Morwen reserves his *hold person* spell for PCs who avoid or survive the *spike growth* trap.

If Morwen succeeds in laying low the entire party, he strips them of their possessions and drags them back to the western edge of the woods as a warning to other passers-by. Morwen doesn't check to see whether the heroes are dead or unconscious; he simply doesn't care. If the PCs are thwarted by the Druid but survive the experience, they may try to pass through the woods a second time. If Morwen is still alive, he uses *animal friendship* to convince a brown bear that the heroes would make a tasty snack. Morwen uses his *hold person*

spell to immobilize PCs while the bear rends them to pieces, or he relies on his *staff*. The bear attacks until reduced to 15 hp or fewer, at which point it flees into the woods.

Morwen wears a *curse* wolfskin that can *polymorph* him once/day into a worg. Unfortunately, the wolfskin also turns him feral. He attacks any creature he sees. Once he assumes worg form, he must remain in this form for six hours, behaving like a typical worg in every respect.

If he's reduced to 15 hp or fewer, Morwen assumes worg form and attacks the nearest PC, fighting until slain. Any PC can effect the magic of the wolfskin; however, a PC who assumes worg form has no qualms about attacking the other PCs and does so until slain or incapacitated.

Morwen Brownleaf, human male D6: AC 10 (5 with *barkskin* spell); MV 12; hp 25; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type or spell; SD +2 to saves vs. fire and electricity; *pass without trace*; Str 12, Dex 9, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 15; ML 11; AL N; XP 650; brown robe, *staff of swarming insects* (9 charges), eight *goodberries* (each heals 1 point of damage).

Spells (5/4/2): 1st—*animal friendship*, *cure light wounds*, *detect snares & pits*, *entangle*, *invisibility to animals*; 2nd—*barkskin*, *hold person*, *speak with animals*, *warp wood*; 3rd—*spike growth*, *tree*.

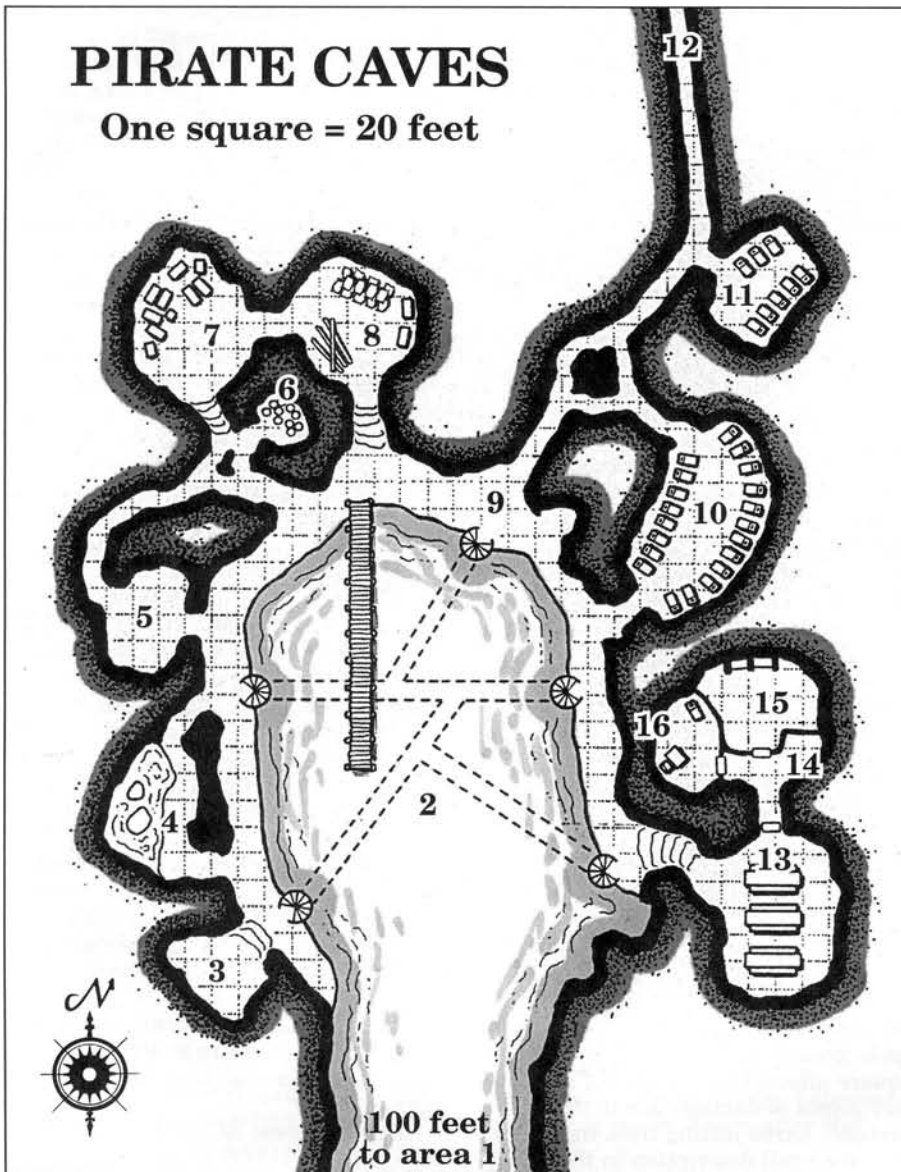
Morwen (in worg form): AC 6; MV 18; #AT 1 (bite); Dmg 2d4; SZ M; *MM/362*; other statistics same as above.

Brown bear: AC 6; MV 12; HD 5+5; hp 27; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1d6/1d6/1d8; SA hug for 2d6 points of damage; SZ L; ML 9; INT semi (3); AL N; XP 420; *MM/17*.

The Pirate Caves

When not prowling coastal waters, the shark submarine remains hidden in its subterranean cavern 17 miles southeast of Scalabar. The submarine cavern is actually part of a larger cave complex embedded deep in the northern cliffs of Hammerhead Cove, an old pirate hideaway.

There are two entrances into the pirate caves: a mostly submerged tunnel leading out to the sea (disguised as an ordinary rock face



thanks to a *hallucinatory terrain* spell) and a smaller tunnel entrance on land (used primarily by Zerrick Torlen's messenger snake). This latter entrance (area 12) is carefully hidden and difficult to find unless one knows exactly where to look. Zerrick's map provides no clues, but heroes searching near the top of the cliffs in the vicinity of the area marked "X" on Zerrick's map have a 1-in-20 chance per hour (per individual searching) of finding the tunnel entrance.

The caves are naturally formed and lit with torches and *continual light* spells. Tunnel ceilings are 10' high, while the height of each cave

measures 1d10+10 feet. (The only exception is the submarine cave, area 2, which is 80 feet high at its peak).

The gnomes who man the submarine and dwell in the caves have rigged a series of brass alarm bells throughout the main cavern. The pull-rope for the alarm is located at area 9. The sound of the bells is loud enough to be heard anywhere within the cave complex.

Depending on the timeline, the submarine may or may not be docked when the PCs arrive. On the morning of Day 7, the submarine *Thresher* takes on supplies, departs the cavern, and begins prowling the tradeways.

(It does this with or without the map of the *Starfish's* intended trade route, just in case House Calhaigne steps up the ship's departure time.) The *Thresher* does not return to the caves until it encounters and sinks the *Starfish* or until Day 10 of the adventure, whichever comes first. If the PCs arrive while the *Thresher* is away, none of the gnome crewmen are present, nor do the PCs encounter the pirate captain, Drake Brovador. The gnome Illusionist Evert and his giff henchmen are present regardless, waiting for Zerrick Torlen's messenger snake to arrive.

Encounter Areas

1. Seaward Entrance. Every eight hours, the gnome Illusionist Evert renews the *hallucinatory terrain* spell concealing the seaward entrance to the pirate caves. The spell hides the 120'-wide tunnel behind the illusion of a rocky wall that perfectly matches the surrounding cliff face.

The locathah clan knows where the tunnel is located and can help the PCs find it. Otherwise, the PCs are on their own. A *detect magic* reveals the illusion's presence; a successful *dispel magic* cast in the area removes the illusory barrier.

Only the top five feet of the tunnel are above water; the remainder lies underwater, meaning the submarine must submerge to pass through this tunnel safely.

2. Docking Cavern. Read or paraphrase the following text when the PCs first enter the cavern, regardless of the tunnel by which they approach:

This cavern has a ribbed ceiling rising to a height of nearly 80 feet. The entire area is illuminated by a series of magical lights cast on the underside of four interlocking, wooden catwalks rigged 40 feet above the water's surface.

The 10'-wide catwalks have wooden railings and are connected to five spiralling wooden stairwells unevenly spaced around the cavern's perimeter.

A thick wooden dock, 200 feet long, protrudes from the northern end of the cavern. Several tunnels lead from this nexus to smaller caves within the complex.

Read or paraphrase the following boxed text if the *Thresher* is docked in the cavern:

Tethered to the dock and displacing a considerable amount of water is a monstrous shark fashioned of riveted iron plates. The *Thresher's* huge dorsal fin rises toward the cavern roof, about 10 feet shy of the overhead catwalks. Standing on top of the shark are several short, chubby humanoids who are watching as the metal cargo doors on the back of the shark fold down and close on their own. More of these squat figures can be seen watching the doors close from the catwalks above.

The waters in this cavern are 50 feet deep. The submarine pier is actually a "floating dock," enabling the *Thresher* to dock easily. The wooden catwalks (indicated with dotted lines on the map) are suspended 40 feet above the water by chains bolted to the cavern ceiling. PCs who leap from the catwalks into the water do not sustain damage, but they risk being attacked by the monsters living in the deep (see below).

When the submarine is present, this cavern is a hub of activity. The stout figures seen on the shark's back and on the catwalks are gnomes. There are twenty-four gnomes in total, all assigned as crew aboard the *Thresher*. They are also responsible for loading the vessel with supplies (most of which are provided by House Torlen and its affiliates). Any gnomes not present in the cavern can be found inside the submarine.

The gnomes are employees of the Smith's Coster, a spelljamming company specializing in munitions. They are neutrally aligned; their only interest is seeing that the submarine and its magical furnace function properly. Although these gnomes have not been paid, Evert has promised them a tidy sum for their loyalty. Whether the greedy Illusionist plans to honor this arrangement remains to be seen.

The submarine captain, Drake Brovador, lives aboard the *Thresher*, preferring his solitude over the company of Evert and the other gnomes.

If the gnomes fall under attack, the ones standing on the submarine's

back quickly scuttle into the "shark" via the hatch behind the dorsal fin. The gnomes on the catwalk use ropes to lower themselves down onto the submarine. The gnomes have practiced these maneuvers, and the crew requires only three rounds to enter the submarine (eight gnomes per round). On the fourth round, the dorsal hatch closes and the *Thresher* prepares for departure. The submarine requires two rounds to emerge from the tunnel and another two rounds to exit the cove outside.

If the submarine has already departed by the time the PCs arrive, Brovador and his gnomes are not present, but Evert (see area 16) has taken measures to ensure the cavern is not left unguarded.

The cavern is home to two merrow (aquatic ogres), both of whom have been *charmed* by Evert. The merrow use their natural camouflage to remain unseen near the bottom of the flooded cave. They are not afraid to pick off anyone foolish enough to dive or swim underwater. The merrow otherwise remain unseen, since none of Evert's gnomes are aware of their presence and the Illusionist wants to keep it that way.

Evert has appeased the merrow with a treasure chest containing 320 sp, 579 cp, 20 pieces of fake jewelry (worth 1d4 gp each), and an ordinary dagger with a bluish *continual light* spell cast on it. The merrow keep the unlocked chest at the bottom of their watery lair.

The merrow aren't the only creatures protecting the cavern. When the *Thresher* is away, Evert also places his two giff henchmen, Mr. Quee and Mr. Queg, here. The giff are mercenaries hired by the Smith's Coster to assist Evert in his efforts to control munitions sales in Scalabar. Each giff carries an arquebus with enough smoke powder for 2d4 shots. Mr. Quee normally patrols the floor, while Mr. Queg patrols up and down the catwalks. Together they like to hum old sea shanties, their tunes resonating throughout the cavern.

Mr. Quee and Mr. Queg (giff): AC 2; MV 6; HD 4; hp 25, 24; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6+7/1d6+7 or by weapon type +7; SA head butt for 2d6 hp damage; MR 10%; SZ L; ML 14; INT low (7); AL LN; XP 420; MM/150; arquebus, footman's flail.

Merrow (2): AC 4; MV 6, swim 12; HD 4+4; hp 21, 18; THAC0 15; #AT 3 or 1; Dmg 1d6/1d6/2d4 or 1d6+6 (spear); SA +1 to hit when charging with spear underwater; SD camouflage; SZ L; ML 15; INT average (8); AL CE; XP 420; MM/272 (ogre).

Gnomes (2d12 in cave at any given time): AC 6; MV 6; HD 1; hp 4 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD +2 to save vs. rods, staves, wands, and spells; Dex 15; roll 2d4+6 for other ability scores; SZ S; ML 8; INT very (12); AL N; XP 65; MM/159; gnomish workman's leather (AC 7), wheel-lock pistol, dagger.

3. Empty Cave. Three steps lead up to a 60'-diameter cave set aside for storage. Presently, the cave is empty and dark.

4. Water Spider Cave.

This cave is connected to the larger cavern by two tunnels. The 30'-high ceiling of the cave is lined with stalactites, and most of the floor is flooded with water of indeterminate depth. Jutting out of the water are two rocky islands. Atop the smaller island sits an iron chest with a heavy iron padlock.

The larger island is three feet from the eastern ledge, and the smaller island is three feet from the larger one. The iron chest weighs 100 lbs. Its rusty lock is not trapped and may be picked normally. Inside the chest are 559 cp and a potion of poison (Type G) with a *Nystul's magic aura* cast upon it.

Lurking under the water near the small island is a giant water spider. Evert has *charmed* the monster, but the spider attacks anyone else. The spider moves with astonishing speed, imposing a -2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls.

The flooded sections of the cave range in depth from 6 to 15 feet. Tucked inside the spider's underwater burrow is a human skeleton dressed in *splintmail* +1. Nearby lies a rusted bastard sword and a *helm of underwater action*.

Giant water spider: AC 4; MV 15; HD 3+3; hp 14; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SA poison (Type F); SZ L; ML 13; INT semi (3); AL CE; XP 420; MM/326 (spider).

5. Cave of Ledges.

The walls of this 20'-high cave are lined with ledges of various heights. Most of the ledges are deep enough and wide enough to support a full-grown man. The highest ledge is roughly 12 feet above the floor, the lowest barely a foot. All of the ledges appear bare.

This cave is devoid of contents and occupants.

6. Keg Storage. This small cave contains ten stacked 30-lb. kegs of smoke powder (worth 900 gp each). Evart, his giff henchmen, and the gnomes keep this supply of smoke powder for their wheel-locks and arquebuses. Igniting a keg with a *burning hands* spell or torch triggers an explosion that causes 3d6 points of damage to anyone within 10 feet of the blast and 2d6 points of damage to anyone between 10 and 20 feet away. (A successful save vs. wands reduces damage by half.) Each additional keg caught in the explosion increases the damage by 1d6 points.

The cave is structurally sound and can withstand the blast if one or all of the kegs explode. However, smoke and fire fill the cave and the nearby tunnels.

7. Storage Cavern. Roughly hewn steps lead up to this 15'-high cave. A *continual light* spell cast upon the ceiling illuminates the area.

Pushed against the walls are ten wooden crates, nine of which contain premolded iron plates, rivets, and tools for repairing the submarine. The tenth crate holds several dozen unused torches. There are also seven barrels of black adhesive tar (for sealing cracks in the submarine's iron hull) and four kegs of oil (for lubricating the submarine's gears). A barrel of tar can be tipped over to coat a 10' x 10' area in sticky adhesive (treat as a *web* spell for creatures trying to cross the tarred area), while a keg of oil treats the same area with the equivalent of a *grease* spell. The oil is not flammable.

8. Storage Cavern. Roughly hewn steps lead up to this magically lit cavern. Piled near the north wall are thirty sacks of assorted foodstuffs.

There are also three barrels of good-quality ale, a stack of lumber, an empty crate marked "Thundersticks" (used to contain wheel-lock pistols) and an unlocked, 3' x 2' x 2' wooden chest containing pistol shot (ammunition), enough for 30 wheel-locks to fire 10 times each.

9. Alarm Pull-rope. Hanging from the ceiling at this point is an ordinary rope that is connected to a series of bells suspended from the catwalks. Anyone pulling this rope causes the bells to ring, alerting the entire cave complex.

10. Gnome Barracks. This 40'-high, roughly hewn chamber is dark, but torches have been placed in sconces spaced evenly around the walls.

Twenty plain wooden cots rest near the walls atop the uneven floor, and each cot is strewn with moth-eaten sheets. The cots are large enough for humans but are currently being used by the gnomes.

11. Gnome Barracks. This cave is 15 feet high. Unlit torches have been placed in sconces about the walls, and spaced along the walls are eight untidy cots identical to those in area 10. Otherwise the room is empty.

12. Tunnel to Surface. This dark, 8' wide, 10'-high tunnel slopes upward at a steady 15° angle, eventually reaching the surface. The tunnel's exit is carefully hidden amid several large rocks and shrubs.

The gnomes seldom traverse this tunnel. The only creature that uses the passage regularly is Zerrick Torlen's messenger snake, which relays letters between its master and the gnome Illusionist, Evart.

A yellowish moss lines the interior walls and floor of this tunnel for a span of 10 feet. PCs might think that this is deadly yellow mold, when in fact the moss is harmless. There are no hazards in the tunnel.

13. Dining Area.

This 25'-high cave is illuminated by four torches placed in sconces along the walls. Most of the cavern is taken up by three long tables with matching benches designed for smaller-than-man-sized folk.

Aside from the furniture and some abandoned mugs and dishware, this area contains little of interest or value.

The door leading to area 14 is made of iron-bound oak and is unlocked. The door wails loudly when opened, alerting the occupants of areas 14 and 16. Applying oil to the rusty hinges allows the door to be opened quietly.

14. Hallway. This corridor is lit by a *continual light* spell. If the giff were not encountered in area 2, they are standing guard here. Mr. Quee blocks the door to area 15; Mr. Queg blocks the door to area 16. Both giff have their arquebuses loaded and ready to fire at intruders.

The door to area 16 is *wizard locked* at 9th-level of ability.

Mr. Quee and **Mr. Queg** (giff): AC 2; MV 6; HD 4; hp 25, 24; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6+7/1d6+7 or by weapon type +7; SA head butt for 2d6 hp damage; MR 10%; SZ L; ML 14; INT low (7); AL LN; XP 420; MM/150; arquebus, footman's flail.

15. Kitchen.

Two stone fireplaces are built into the far wall. Small iron cauldrons bubble and froth above the flames, filling the torchlit cave with spicy aromas. Hanging next to the hearths are several cooking utensils, while stacked atop a pair of stout tables are countless pots and dishes. Working feverishly to keep the kitchen clean are four gnomes with long braided hair.

The four gnomes are females who serve as Evart's cooks and cleaning staff. They are talkative and gentle. However, they can be stubborn and refuse to divulge information about Evart, Captain Brovador, and the other gnomes. They are employees of the Smith's Coster but have little knowledge of spelljamming. When not in the kitchen, they resign themselves to area 11.

The kitchen contains nothing out of the ordinary. If forced to defend themselves, the gnomes grab knives from the nearest tabletop.

Gnome females (4): AC 9; MV 6; HD 1; hp 4 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (1d3 with

knife); SD +2 to saves vs. rods, staves, wands, and spells; Dex 15; roll 2d4+6 for other ability scores; ML 8; AL LN; XP 15; MM/159; unarmed.

16. Evert's Chamber. The door to this room is *wizard locked*. If Evert is alerted to the presence of intruders and has time to cast spells, he grabs the valuables from his desk and *dimension doors* into area 8. There he hides his possessions (in the empty crate) and renders himself *invisible*.

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs first enter the room:

This magically illuminated cave contains a comfortable bed, an engraved cedar footlocker, a short mahogany desk, and a matching chair. The back of the chair is carved to resemble a winged imp with fangs. Hanging on the wall behind the chair is a tapestry depicting a merman armed with a trident astride a bluish-green horse with fins instead of hooves and gills along its neck.

The tapestry depicts a merman astride a hippocampus and is of fine quality. It can be sold for as much as 500 gp to an interested buyer, though it is quite heavy (35 lbs.).

If taken by surprise, the gnome Illusionist is seated at his desk across from the entrance, transcribing his *hallucinatory terrain* spell from his spellbook to a scroll. Any unexpected interruption has a 15% chance of ruining his work and rendering the scroll useless. Given a choice, Evert prefers not to fight in this closed-off chamber. See below for a complete description of his tactics when confronted by hostile interlopers.

The footlocker has a *Leomund's trap* spell cast upon it. It is also *wizard locked* shut. Inside the chest are the following items: a *folding boat*, 50 pp in a pouch, and a sack containing 15 gems (5 × 500 gp and 10 × 100 gp respectively). The gems constitute Zerrick Torlen's payment for the sinking of the *Morning Star*.

Evert's desk contains several jars of ink, three writing quills, two scrolls (*passwall* and *protection from poison*), a potion of *water breathing*, and five sheafs of parchment. One piece of parchment contains a letter from Zerrick that reads as follows:



Mr. Quee and Mr. Queg are the best protection a gnome can buy.

My esteemed Evert,
I've just confirmed the fate of the Morning Star. My spies inform me that both the ship and its cargo have been sent to the dark depths. The shark has performed well, and I've

taken the liberty of enclosing your payment in cut gems. Please extend my congratulations to Captain Brovador and his crew!

Your next target will be the galleon Seamaid. The ship, though

allied with House Torlen, is of little consequence to me. The cargo will be light—just enough to divert suspicions away from my house. My messenger snake carries a map of the Seamaid's route. The Seamaid is due to arrive in Scalabar within days, so watch for it.

I'm looking forward to hearing about my "unfortunate loss."

Zerrick Torlen

After fleeing the chamber via his *dimension door* spell, the *invisible* gnome moves onto one of the catwalks in area 2 and waits for the PCs. He then uses his *audible glamer* spell to create the sound of footfalls on another catwalk. If the PCs scramble onto the catwalks, Evert uses his *wand of paralysis* to incapacitate them one by one and knocks them into the water (where they drown or become food for the merrows).

If the PCs refuse to investigate the catwalks, Evert uses his *advanced illusion* to "conjure" either a water or earth elemental (depending on where the PCs are within the caves). Evert makes the illusion attack the PCs but doesn't need to concentrate on it once formed. Evert then uses his *wand* to incapacitate any PCs distracted by the illusion.

PCs who attempt to disbelieve the illusion receive a saving throw vs. spell. If any PC successfully disbelieves and communicates the nature of the illusion to the other PCs, those who failed their save are entitled to another saving throw at a +4 bonus. Otherwise, the elemental persists for nine rounds, at which point the spell ceases and the illusion vanishes.

If reduced to 10 hp or fewer or faced with overwhelming opposition, Evert uses his potion of *water breathing* to escape underwater or casts his *fly* spell and flees via the northern tunnel (area 12). If Evert escapes, he could make an interesting recurring villain in the DM's ongoing campaign.

Evert, gnome male W(III)9: AC 7; MV 12; hp 18; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type or spell; SD +2 on saves vs. rods, staves, wands, and spells; Str 11, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 12; ML 10; AL N; XP 2,000; *wand of paralysis* (36 charges), *dagger +1*, wheel-lock pistol (loaded), waterproofed spellbook (contains all memorized spells listed

below plus *detect magic*, *charm person*, *charm monster*, *continual light*, *improved phantasmal force*, *knock*, and 2d4+2 other randomly chosen spells of 1st through 4th level).

Spells (5/4/4/3/2): 1st—*audible glamer*, *change self*, *feather fall*, *phantasmal force*, *read magic*; 2nd—*invisibility*, *Leomund's trap*, *shatter*, *wizard lock*; 3rd—*clairvoyance*, *fly*, *slow*, *spectral force*; 4th—*dimension door*, *hallucinatory terrain* (x2); 5th—*advanced illusion*, *major creation*.

Advanced illusion elemental: AC 2; MV 6 (swim 18 for water elemental); HD 8; hp 32; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 4d8 (earth) or 5d6 (water); SZ L; ML 20; MM/99–100. The elemental illusion is susceptible to all attacks, and anyone "slain" by the illusion is actually rendered unconscious for 1d3 turns, with damage inflicted by the illusion fully restored afterward.

The Thresher

The submarine's reinforced iron hull renders it impervious to most physical and magical attacks save acid, electricity, and disintegration. The shark's eyes are made of transparent, rock-hard crystal and can withstand 100 points of damage each.

Items such as *portable holes* and spells like *dimension door* and *passwall* can be used to breach the hull, but such magic is not readily available to low-level characters. (Evert keeps a *passwall* scroll among his many belongings in area 16.)

The only conventional means into the submarine is a 4' x 4' iron hatch located behind the dorsal fin. Unfortunately, the hatch is always wheel-locked from the inside when the sub is preparing to leave (or is out to sea). A *knock* spell can open either the hatch or the hydraulic cargo doors.

Detonating a keg of smoke powder (or similarly large explosive) inside the *Thresher* has a 20% chance per keg of causing a compartment leak. Any gnomes who are present and alive try to seal the leak with tar, completing the task in 2d4 rounds; otherwise, the compartment floods in 1d4 turns. The doors inside the shark are airtight so that the flooding of one compartment doesn't necessarily flood the entire submarine. However, flooding area 2 or 3 renders the sub

inoperable and leaves it dead in the water. Flooding five or more compartments sinks the submarine.

Captain Brovador and Crew

Drake Brovador is a notorious pirate. His last ship, the *Barracuda*, was chased down and sunk by the Scalabaran navy three years ago. Captaining the *Thresher* has enabled Brovador to exact revenge for that defeat. The attack against the Scalabaran naval cutter *Trident* was something Brovador pushed for, against Evert's better judgment. That act has fueled the renegade pirate's insatiable hunger for vengeance.

Brovador is a morose, brooding man with a thick black beard and penetrating blue eyes. He does not enjoy the company of his gnomish crew but realizes they are necessary for operating and repairing the shark.

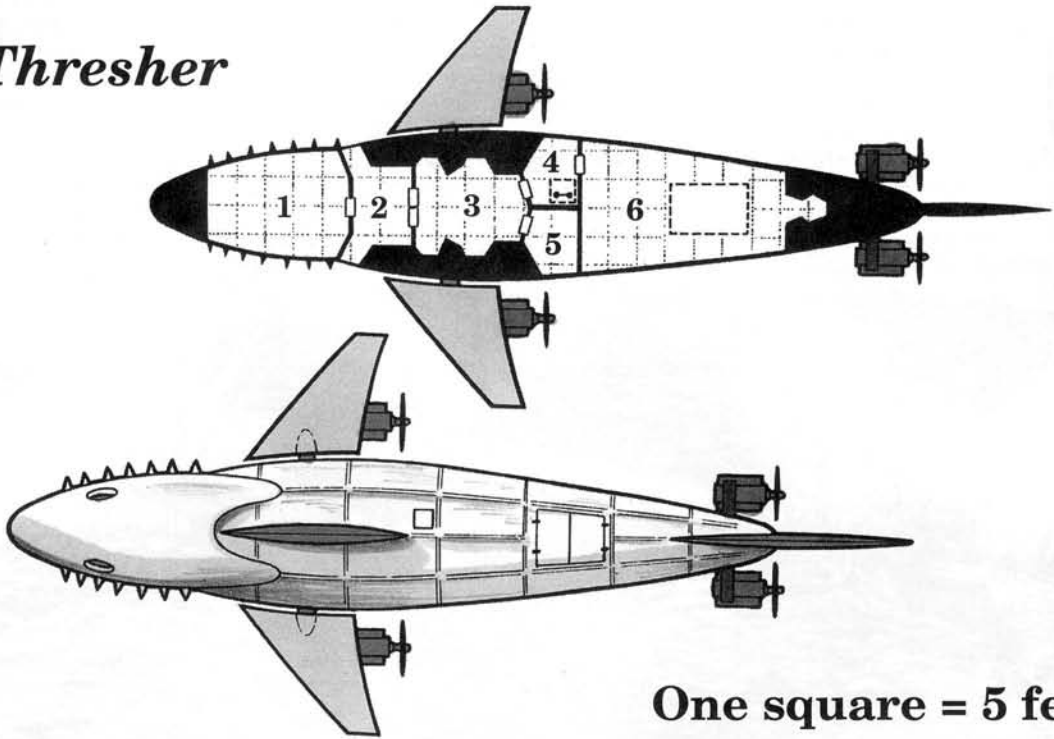
The *Thresher* is fueled by a magical spelljamming furnace. However, the furnace was built by gnomes and has a 5% chance of breaking down per hour of use. (Repairs to the furnace require 1d20+20 gnome-hours.) The furnace (located in area 2) is the equivalent of a minor helm and cannot lift the 60-ton shark out of the water. It can, however, propel the shark forward at an impressive speed (and backward at slower velocities). Turns are handled by the tail fin rudder and by regulating the amount of magical energy fed to the submarine's propellers.

The *Thresher* is treated as AC 0 for attack purposes. It is designed to withstand repeated frontal collisions with larger wooden ships. It was not designed to ram solid rock or similar dense material. Other than its blunt ram, it has no heavy weapons.

The *Thresher* can run with a skeleton crew of eight gnomes. Any less and the submarine cannot maneuver properly. When fully loaded, the *Thresher's* gnomish complement is twenty-four.

The interior of the submarine is illuminated with *continual light* spells. Only area 1 is shielded from the cacophony of gears and mechanisms, and this area is reserved exclusively for Captain Brovador and his pet pseudodragon, Remus. The dragonet is bad-tempered and cruel—as befits a pirate's companion. The

The Thresher



One square = 5 feet

pseudodragon wears a magical hoop earring that affords a -1 bonus to AC and +1 bonus to saving throws.

Drake Brovador, human male
F5: AC 4; MV 12; hp 38; THAC0 16 (base); #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type +3 (Strength + specialization bonuses); MR 35% (only when in direct contact with pseudodragon); Str 17, Dex 9, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 15; ML 16; AL LE; XP 2,000; *chainmail +1*, *shortsword +1* (specialized), wheel-lock pistol.

Remus (pseudodragon): AC 1; MV 6, fly 24 (B); HD 2; hp 11; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d3 + special; SA cataleptic poison (save or lapse into coma for 1d6 days); SD chameleon power; MR 35%; SZ T; ML 15; INT average (9); AL N (evil tendencies); XP 420; *MM/91*; *earring of protection +1*.

Gnomes (up to 24): AC 6; MV 6; HD 1; hp 4 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD +2 to save vs. rods, staves, wands, and spells; D 15; roll 2d4+6 for other ability scores; SZ S; ML 8; INT very (12); AL N; XP 65; *MM/159*; gnomish workman's leather (AC 7), wheel-lock pistol, dagger, tools.

Encounter Areas

1. Captain's Quarters. The following boxed text assumes that Drake Brovador and his pseudodragon are in the room and have been alerted to the presence of intruders:

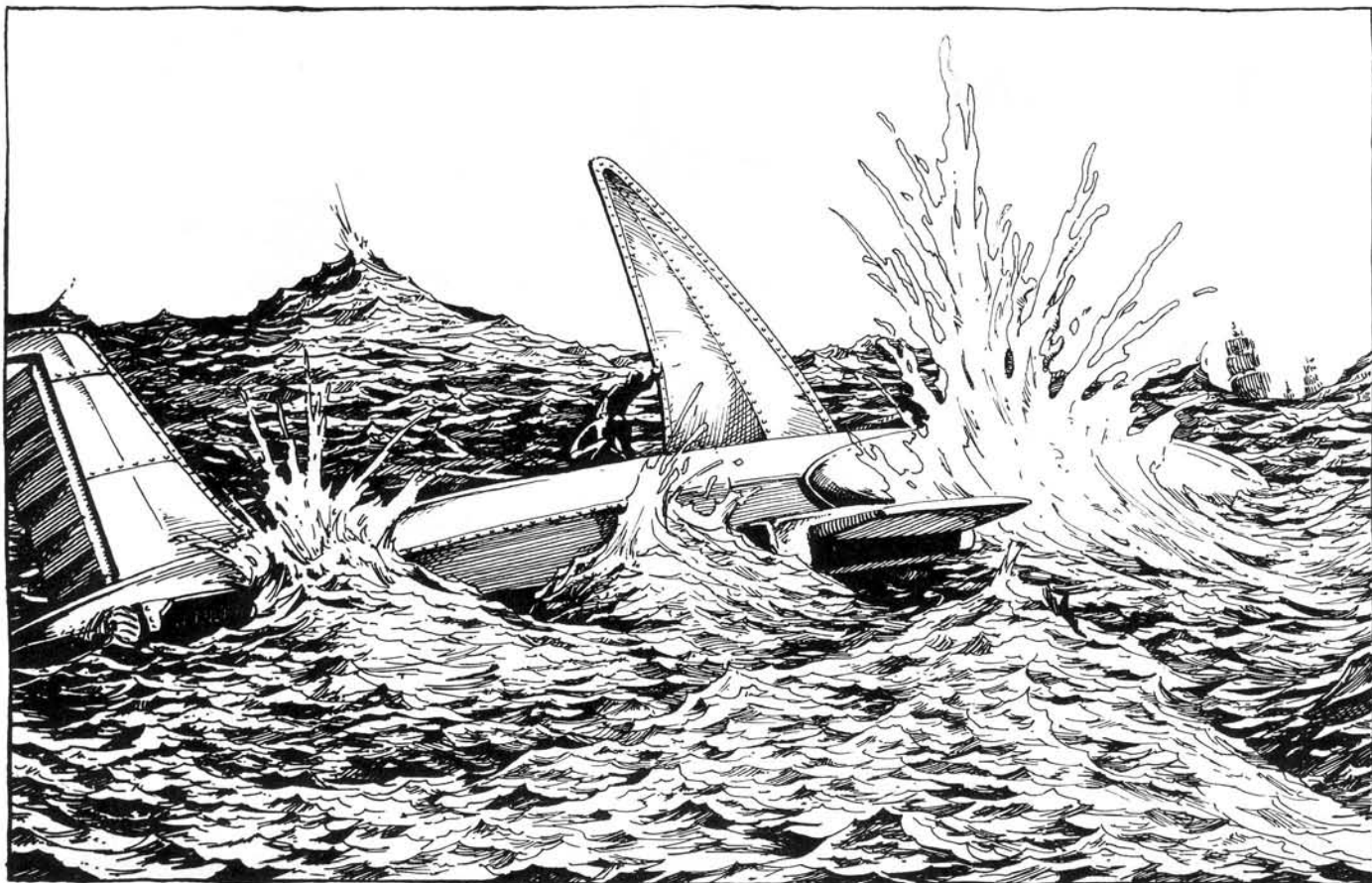
Efforts have been taken to make this room as comfortable as possible. The lighting is softer, and the floor is hidden beneath embroidered carpets depicting starfish, sea lions, and other marine life.

All of the furniture is carved from dark mahogany, engraved with shell-like motifs, and bolted to the floor. There are two padded sofas, one of which is long enough to serve as a bed. Next to a desk covered with nautical charts stands a 5'-tall golden harp shaped like a sea horse. Between the crystalline windows that serve as the shark's "eyes" sits a tall chair, its back turned toward the door. The chair is sculpted in the likeness of an octopus. Rising from the chair is a burly, black-bearded man with a silvery blade secured to his belt and a small, red-winged dragon perched on his left shoulder.

Brovador politely entreats his "guests" to enter. He claims he's willing to discuss the present situation in a peaceful manner, despite his thoughts to the contrary. The first chance he gets, he raises his wheel-lock pistol and fires, then dives for cover behind the octopus-shaped chair. (Treat as 90% cover.) From there, he continues to fire with his pistol until the PCs close for melee, at which point he lunges forth with his sword. Remus remains on Brovador's shoulder for as long as possible, imparting his 35% magic resistance upon the captain.

The large octopus-shaped chair positioned across from the door is magically enchanted. Anyone seated in the chair is granted the ability of *clairvoyance* and can see outside the submarine.

Brovador uses the chair's magic to guide the submarine through the water toward its intended target. Next to the chair is a brass speaking tube that relays the captain's commands to his crew. This brass tube extends to every area of the *Thresher* and allows Brovador to communicate one-way with the gnomes stationed in areas 2-6.



Heroes ride the waves as the pirate sub banks toward its intended target.

There's nothing unusual about the nautical charts atop the desk. Inside the desk is a corked bottle of fine wine, a small mirror, a potion of *water breathing*, and an ornamental sahuagin knife set with coral and pearls (worth 1,500 gp). The golden seahorse harp standing by the desk is nonmagical but exquisitely crafted (worth 2,500 gp). It weighs 60 lbs.

2. Furnace.

Standing in the middle of this chamber is a 6'-tall metal cylinder with a hinged door set into one side. Jutting from the top of the cylinder are a dozen steel tubes that connect to various machine panels in the walls and ceiling. Four iron levers protrude from the cylinder's equator.

The cylinder is the magic furnace that powers the submarine. The furnace is fueled by magical items. A

potion or scroll fuels the furnace for one full day (24 hours). A magical ring provides enough power for one week. A rod, staff, or wand feeds the furnace for a month. The furnace accepts no other items as power sources, and any consumable item placed inside the furnace is forever drained of magic. Presently, the furnace is being powered by a *wand of magic missiles*; removing the charred wand renders it inert and the submarine immobile.

The four levers on the side of the cylinder regulate the magical power flow to the *Thresher's* four propellers. When the levers are in the "middle" position, the power is cut off and the propellers cease. Raising a lever increases the power flow and makes the propeller turn faster. At full speed, all four levers are in the "up" position. When the captain wishes to move in reverse, the levers are pulled to the "down" position, turning the propellers in the opposite direction.

The levers must be moved gradually. Counter-resistance prevents them from being jerked up and down haphazardly. This helps guard against spasms in the gearworks that could potentially cripple the sub.

Four gnomes can work the levers in perfect synchrony.

3. Dining Area and Fin Control.

When the shark is moving, the cacophony of gears and machinery is almost deafening in this room. The gnomes have grown accustomed to the noise.

Set into a niche on either of the chamber's flanks is a series of levers and wheels used to adjust the orientation of the shark's fins, enabling the shark to submerge, bank to port or starboard, roll (if necessary), and ascend. One gnome is required to work each fin, although usually there are two stationed on each side (for a total of four).

Positioned in the middle of the room is stout dining table with two matching benches for the gnomes. A few copper mugs and plates lie strewn atop the table, but these are of little value.

4. Boarding Hatch. An iron ladder leads up to the shark's main hatch. The hatch is magically pressurized and can be locked and unlocked by twisting an iron wheel affixed to its underside. The area is otherwise empty.

5. Galley. This tight room contains a small cooking stove with a magical flue that collects the smoke, a preparation table that's been bolted to the floor, and walls lined with hanging pots and utensils. The gnomes use this area to prepare their own meals and dinners for the captain and his pseudodragon.

6. Cargo Bay and Rudder Control. This room tapers toward the stern. The hollow bay is filled with crates labeled "foodstuffs" and "machine parts" as well as barrels of fresh water and lubricating oil. The walls and ceiling are strung with stowing nets and ropes for lowering cargo into the hold and securing it into place. The gnome crew has enough food and supplies in the hold for a three-week voyage.

Set into the roof of the cargo bay are two hydraulic loading doors, while at the "tail" of the submarine are two iron cranks—one labeled "Rudder Control" and the other labeled "Cargo Doors."

The iron cranks for the submarine rudder and cargo doors each require one gnome to operate, although two are normally assigned.

Concluding the Adventure

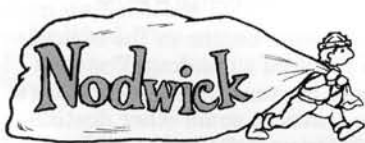
Ideally, the PCs should stop the submarine before it embarks on its next mission. If the PCs defeat Evert and Drake Brovador, the gnomes surrender and place their fate in the hands of the party. All that the PCs need do is alert the Scalabaran authorities and collect their reward!

If the PCs are unable to prevent the submarine's departure, they can book passage on the *Starfish* and wait for the shark to rear its iron fin. Captain Quarzon gladly takes aboard the PCs if they have a plan for stopping the *Thresher*. (For example, they could use a *knock* spell to open the dorsal hatch and either fight their way through the submarine or use powderkegs from the pirate caves to "smoke out" or blast to pieces the submarine's crew.)

If the PCs are unable to alter the shark's course, the *Starfish* is struck midship and swallowed by the sea.

If the PCs defeat the pirates and stop the submarine attacks, each PC should each receive a 500-XP story award in addition to any experience earned for defeating monsters and NPCs (including captives). The DM should also award bonus XPs to PCs who devise clever ways to deal with the pirate threat aside from the usual "hack-n-slash" methods.

If the *Thresher* is captured, the Rammarch of Scalabar quickly claims the vessel as the property of Scalabar, using the submarine to replace the lost naval cutter *Trident*. If the DM wishes to run a seafaring campaign, the Rammarch might ask the PCs to join his navy, giving them command of the submarine and chartering them to protect Scalabar against pirate attacks and other threats from the sea. PCs who refuse the Rammarch's offer and insist on keeping the submarine for themselves are marked as renegades and pursued by the city authorities. This could form the basis of an entire campaign, with the PCs prowling the waterways like Captain Nemo from *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, occasionally partaking in quests to find magical items to fuel the submarine's furnace, searching sunken wrecks, and finding new crewmen to replace those lost in battle. Ω



by Aaron Williams





FIRST PEOPLE

BY KENT ERTMAN

Down in the valley

Artwork by Stephen Schwartz
Cartography by Craig Zipse

Kent writes: "I want to thank the magazine staff for making scatter-brained writers like me look good. If there are any gamers out there living in Medicine Hat, AB, drop me a line at 23 Turner Green SE, T1B 4K1."

"First People" is a generic AD&D® adventure for a party of five or six PCs of levels 4–6 (at least 25 total levels). The party can have virtually any mix of classes and races, as long as there is at least one spellcaster and two or more PCs possess magical weapons. Diplomacy and strategy should ultimately win the adventure, so if the PCs attack first and ponder the consequences later, they are in for a tremendous challenge.

This adventure is set in a warm, temperate climate and centers around a primitive race of humans called the Nuncha, geographically isolated from contact with all other races. The Nuncha are patterned loosely after the First Nations people of Canada. By changing a few of the tribe's beliefs and habits, the setting can easily be adapted to other environments. For example: nomadic Inuit who live in igloos and hunt polar bears; an African setting like that featured in "The Land of Men With Tails" (Issue #56); or a Polynesian tribe like those that still exist in New Zealand. Any of these is easily accomplished with some minor adjustments to the story.

Adventure Background

The adventure begins in the coastal city of Hanford's Landing. The PCs are there because they need to hire a boat to travel to some other destination. Unfortunately, because of a recent outbreak of Goblin Fever, the entire wharf and all of its vessels are under quarantine. The symptoms of this disease are more fully detailed in "Goblin Fever" in Issue #46.

Apparently, a foreign ship arrived with a contaminated crew member who infected dozens of residents before his illness was discovered. No boats can travel in or out of Hanford's Landing until the Brothers of Light—members of the local temple—have cleansed the area and inoculated the rest of the population.

The nearest port city is Raem—a mere day's travel by boat, but inac-

cessible overland because of the impassable mountain range between the two cities. The only other place to hire a ship is Orchid Bay, nearly three months' travel to the east.

During a visit to a local inn, the PCs meet a friendly elven merchant who reveals how centuries ago, before boat travel took hold in the region, there was a well-traveled pass through the mountains. Hanford's Landing was built near the entrance to the pass. Abruptly, 200 years ago, the weather systems over the range destabilized, and incredible windstorms became commonplace. They were so severe that use of the pass became unacceptably dangerous. About this time, travel by ship came into favor, not only for safety but also because a journey by sea was actually many days quicker than one by land. When seismic activity collapsed the pass near Hanford's Landing, no one much cared as overland travel had all but stopped. The storms over the peaks are apparently still such a problem that they even discourage flight over the area.

Later that same evening, the PCs meet a miner who tells them how recent excavations discovered what looks like the beginning of another pass through the mountain range. He doesn't know what kind of path the trail takes or where it emerges on the other side of the range. He laughingly suggests, however, that the PCs would probably rather take the risk than wait months for the quarantine to be lifted. This story begins as the PCs start their travels into the unexplored mountains.

For the Player Characters

After the PCs have met the miner, read or paraphrase the following:

Just like the old miner said, there is a pass just beyond the new iron mine. The trail is like an ancient river bed or some long-forgotten road. Based on the maps you saw in Hanford's Landing, it should take about two weeks to reach Raem, as long as the pass doesn't make any wild detours.

The first night is spent camped on the hard rocky ground, with immense mountains soaring up on both sides. The night sky above is

dotted with silver stars. So far you see no signs of the winds that are supposed to plague the area.

The next morning, you head deeper into the range. The pass rises and falls and wends its way between the mountains. The winds are brisk but not threatening.

Around mid-afternoon, you round a particularly steep and rocky mountain and find yourselves standing on a downward-sloping hillside as the range gives way to a great valley. Apparently, the residents of Hanford's Landing were mistaken! The mountains actually surround an enormous grassy plain. You see a large herd of antelope grazing in the distance, their wavy horns bobbing up and down. Off to your left, a flock of strange, long-legged birds abruptly takes flight in a graceful, undulating cloud, startled by something you cannot see.

This is a fortunate turn of events. It should take two days to ride along the base of the mountain range as you begin searching for another pass.

For the Dungeon Master

This secret valley is home to a primitive tribe of humans called the Nuncha (pronounced NOON-shay). The whole area is protected from the outside world by a mist dragon, using his powers over the weather and his natural mist form to drive away intruders invisibly. For more details about the dragon and the Nuncha, refer to the section "Ancient History" at the end of the adventure.

Normally diligent about patrolling the valley, the wurm is currently in a period of dragon sleep (the resting phase preceding a dragon's advancement to a new age level). For the past several months of his slumber, the mountainous borders have remained undefended, and a few creatures have made minor incursions into the area. This includes the PCs.

Event 1. First Contact.

Within an hour of first entering the plains, the PCs are approached by a Nuncha hunting party. Read or paraphrase the following to the PCs:

Suddenly you are no longer alone. Several strange humans rise from the waist-high grass in front of you. They are short, barely five feet tall, with dark-tanned skin. They are bare-chested and wear pants made from leathery animal skin. Every one of them has long, reddish-brown hair hanging freely over his shoulders. Their tanned faces belie no emotions, but on their cheeks and foreheads are painted odd symbols that seem to give them strange expressions.

They are all male, and each holds a long spear at his side. They stand perfectly still, observing you with their dark brown eyes. Finally one of them moves. He extends his left hand, palm facing the ground, and then clenches it into a fist. He touches it to his forehead, then his chest, and then he bows toward you slightly.

These are thirteen Nuncha Warriors, and they are very curious about the PCs. They have never seen outsiders before and are eager to learn more about them. The bizarre gesturing is a formal Nuncha greeting. The Warriors wait to see how the PCs respond before opening any dialogue. See "The Nuncha" sidebar for more details about their society and customs.

If a PC tries to copy the Nuncha greeting, the native Warriors consider this a gesture of goodwill and advance, smiling to greet the PCs more casually. If the PCs return some kind of greeting from their own culture, the Nuncha look wide-eyed with amazement and see this as a great honor.

The tribe is very affectionate, and every member of the hunting party wants to shake hands with or hug the PCs. Curiously, they have been taught the rudiments of the Common tongue, as shared by their ancestors. Once introductions are complete, the leader of the hunting party welcomes his "lost Nuncha-brothers" to the Nuncha lands. The Nuncha ask all kinds of questions about the party's strange equipment (metal armor, bows, woven cloth, and so forth), touching the items in awe.

Should the PCs end up talking about the world on the other side of the mountains, the Warriors greet

Key to Wilderness Map

A. Mountains. The mountains are broken and jagged, yet very tall and steep. They climb gently and then soar sharply to their summits.

Hundreds of years ago, a disastrous series of earthquakes shattered the mountains and sealed every route through them, except the twin passes at areas **B** and **C**.

B-C. Passes. Both mountain passes are completely safe to travel and, except for the occasional flock of birds, devoid of life. The eastern pass requires a day to cross, while the western pass takes two.

D. Plain. A thick carpet of bright green grass stretches for hundreds of miles in every direction. Antelopes and other hoofed creatures are plentiful here, wandering or running about in herds. Here and there, tall stands of leafy trees rise above the grass. On the eastern, western, and southern horizons the PCs can see the broken peaks of the mountains reaching for the sky with jagged claws. They surround this lush plain like a palisade.

See the "Encounters on the Plain" for details of random encounters.

E. River. While there are dozens of smaller waterways through the plain, this is by far the largest. It is born high in the southern mountain range and roars enthusiastically to the sea at area **G**.

F. The Dark Lake. The PCs should reach this area by **Event 8**, though nothing prevents them from exploring it sooner.

A thick forest surrounds the river here. The branches are so tightly woven, it is as dark as twilight. A mass of fallen trees has partially dammed the river, forming a large pool. In the dim light, its surface looks like smooth, black glass.

This peaceful looking estuary is home to eight starving lacedons. The undead attack anything that comes to the edge of the water.

If any PC approaches the edge of the water, a single lacedon explodes from the pool and attacks (-2 to the character's surprise roll). If the ghoul successfully paralyzes the PC, it

drags its victim underwater and devours him on the spot. If any PC wades into the pool, the remaining lacedons swarm over him in a mass attack.

At the bottom of the 20'-deep pool is a jumble of human and animal bones, all smothered in heaps of dead leaves. Every hour spent searching reveals 0-3 (1d4-1) items from the following list:

- ∨ An iron coffer so thoroughly rusted that it must be broken open; it contains 50 pp.

- ∨ A thick gold bracelet set with ruby chips (worth 300 gp).

- ∨ A skull with six gold teeth (worth 15 gp each).

- ∨ A nonmagical longsword.

- ∨ A rotten sack of 50 gold-painted copper pieces.

- ∨ A leather knapsack filled with rotten clothes and 135 tarnished silver pieces.

Lacedons (8): AC 6; MV swim 9; HD 2; hp 15, 13, 12, 10, 8, 8, 7, 5; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA paralyzation; SZ M; ML 11; INT low (6); AL CE; XP 175; MM/131 (ghoul).

G. Sea. The plain ends abruptly at a sheer cliff that drops nearly 100 feet to a rocky beach below. Turbulent waves smash into the cliff walls.

No specific circumstances bring the PCs here other than random exploring. The entire coastline between the mountains is sheer cliffs—another after-effect of the earthquakes so many centuries ago. It is a long climb down, but anyone with enough rope should be able to do so without much difficulty (+20% to all climbing checks). Thieves who make a successful Climb Walls roll can scale down and up without rope if they wish.

There is a spectacular waterfall where the river from area **E** pours over the cliffs into the sea. If any PC climbs down the cliffs to the base of the waterfall, they find the partially decomposed body of a drowned sailor firmly wedged between two great boulders. He clutches a long wooden spear with an obsidian head. This is a *spear +1*, although the PCs must break the skeleton's fingers to take it. The sailor has no other treasure.

these revelations with stunned, glassy-eyed silence. The leader quickly decides that the PCs should meet the chief and asks them to accompany his Nuncha hunting party back to the "home-place." If the PCs comply, proceed with **Event 2**.

If the PCs bungle and do something that could be construed as offensive, or if they are deliberately insulting, the Nuncha are visibly taken aback. If no apology is forthcoming, the hunters heft their spears and the leader says, "You insult my spirit-honor, outsider." If the party still shows no signs of apologizing, the Nuncha challenge the PCs to a fight for honor (explained below). They likewise spring into battle if the PCs are blatantly hostile.

The Nuncha are not expecting a bloodbath; they are fighting for their honor. They expect the PCs to simply admit they are wrong, and then all is forgiven.

If the PCs slaughter the Nuncha, the PCs' actions (if attributed to them by the rest of the Nuncha tribe) are construed as a declaration of war. There are no future alliances, and the PCs suffer constant attacks for as long as they remain on the plains. The first assault occurs at the party's camp just after nightfall and consists of ten Nuncha Warriors. If the PCs survive, the entire tribe (including the chief, the witch doctor, and the shaman) attacks at daybreak. This continues until the PCs are dead or driven out or the tribe suffers such tremendous losses that it must desist or surrender.

Event 2. The Home-Place.

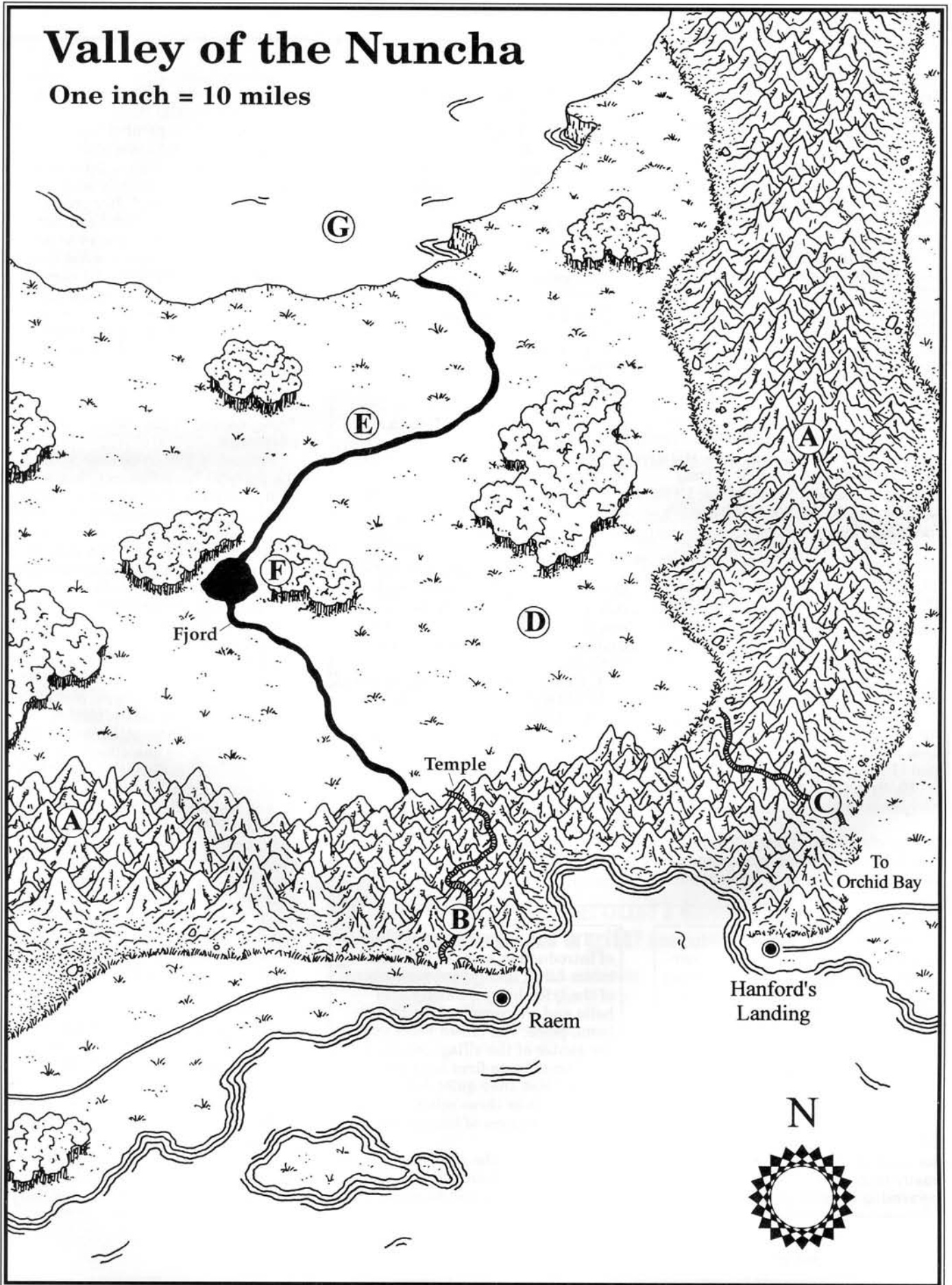
If the PCs accompany the Nuncha Warriors to the home-place, read or paraphrase the following:

Your strange guides lead you to the nearby forest, all the while chatting with you. The huge trees grow hundreds of feet tall, their vast, leafy canopies filtering out the beating sunlight.

Suddenly you crest a small hill, and a cluster of wooden huts with grass roofs comes into view. "This is our home-place," beams one of the grinning natives. He tosses his long reddish-brown hair away from his face and continues walking.

Valley of the Nuncha

One inch = 10 miles



Encounters on the Plain

Herd of animals are everywhere on the plain. Generally they ignore the PCs, but the entire herd bolts if PCs come closer than 200 yards. Every hour, roll on the following table to determine what kind of creature the PCs encounter.

1. Buffalo (2d20+10): AC 7; MV 15; HD 5; hp 30 each; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1–8/1–8; SA charge; SD head is treated as AC 2; SZ L; ML 10; INT semi (2); AL N; XP 175; *MM*/243 (mammal, herd).

2–4. Antelope (2d20+20): AC 7; MV 24; HD 2; hp 8 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1–4; SA stampede; SZ M; ML 3; INT animal (1); AL N; XP 35; *MM*/243 (mammal, herd).

5. Deer (2d4): AC 7; MV 15; HD 2; hp 8 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1–4; SA stampede; SZ M; ML 4; INT semi (4); AL N; XP 35; *MM*/243 (mammal, herd—cattle)

6. Falcon (2d6): AC 5; MV 1, fly 36 (B); HD 1–1; hp 4 each; THAC0 20; #AT 3; Dmg 1/1/1; SZ S; ML 6; INT animal (1); AL N; XP 65; *MM*/27.

7–8. Brown pelican (4d8): AC 7; MV 1, fly 36 (B); HD ¼; hp 2 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SZ S; ML 2; INT animal (1); AL N; XP 15; *MM*/27 (bird, raven).

9. Emu (5d4): AC 7; MV 20; HD 3; hp 17 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1–8; SZ M; ML 10; XP 65; INT animal (1); AL N; *MM*/27.

10. Special Encounter (roll 1d4 and see below).

For special encounters, roll on the following table. The wyvern encounter is unique and can only happen once.

1. Black bear (1): AC 7; MV 12; HD 3+3; hp 24; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1–3/1–3/1–6; SA hug; SZ M; ML 9; INT semi (4); AL N; XP 175; *MM*/17.

Many bears live in the wooded areas of the plain, and occasionally one wanders into the open areas to forage for food or fish in the streams. The bear attacks only if surprised or cornered.

2. Wyvern (1): AC 3; MV 6, fly 24 (E); HD 7+7; hp 45; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 2–16/1–6; SA poison; SZ L (17' long); ML 14; INT low (6); AL NE; XP 1,400; *MM*/366.

This brute is a young and profoundly stupid fellow, wandering quite a distance from his usual hunting territory. He dives to attack the PCs (–2 to surprise rolls), then closes and strikes with his talons and tail. He carries no treasure.

3. Wild horses (2d4): AC 7; MV 24; HD 2; hp 14 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1–6; SZ L; ML 6; INT animal (1); AL N; XP 65; *MM*/194.

These horses are nearly 6 feet tall at the shoulder. They are skittish and run from the PCs as soon as they can see, hear, or smell them. If the PCs could tame these animals, they could serve as battle mounts.

4. Giant wasps (2d4): AC 4; MV 6, fly 21 (B); HD 4; hp 16 each; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 2–8/1–4; SA poison sting; SZ M; ML 9; INT animal (1); AL N; XP 420; *MM*/204.

The wasps' hive lies somewhere in the eastern mountain range, and this contingent is searching for food. They attack without checking morale until at least half of them are killed, at which point they roll morale checks normally.

tall spear decorated with colorful bird feathers, and in the other he holds a brightly painted leather shield. To his right is a withered old woman in a cloak of some soft material, leaning heavily on a gnarled wooden staff. Her red hair shows only a hint of white at her temples. The third is a man wearing a bizarre headdress made from the head of an antelope, its curved horns pointing fiercely to the sky.

These three Nuncha are Chief Wahiah, Kachina the shaman, and Choniak the witch doctor. They and the other villagers are thoroughly described in the "Members of the Tribe" section at the end of the adventure.

Wahiah is just as curious about the party as his tribesmen, but as the leader he feels it his responsibility to evaluate the "lost-brothers" (the PCs), before formally inviting them into the home-place. He offers a few solemn words of greeting, then asks how the lost-brothers came to walk on Nuncha-land. While the PCs are trying to explain, Choniak and Kachina interrupt to ask for clarification.

The PCs and the Nuncha share little in the way of a common frame of reference. The tribe has no concept of farming, domestic cattle, mining, organized government, ocean vessels, or of anything on the other side of the mountains! This first discussion can be frustrating, as the PCs are interrupted frequently.

If the PCs threaten Wahiah or seem hostile, they find themselves staring down an angry crowd of 200 Nuncha bristling with spears. A quick apology might smooth things over, but if they persist, the Nuncha attack until they fail a morale check.

After the players have tried to tell their tale, Wahiah holds his hand for silence, then pauses to think. All he has really understood is that the lost-brothers have come to explore the Nuncha-land and the holy mountains. Read or paraphrase the following to the players at this time:

You can see dozens of Nuncha moving throughout the village, carrying bundles, tending fires, cutting wood, scraping animal skins, cooking long slabs of meat, and doing other chores. As you and your escort approach, a little boy looks up from his work and stares at you in wonderment. He begins running toward you while calling to the others. One by one, the natives drop what they are doing and run over for a closer look. Soon there are many men, women, and children swarming to greet you.

The hugging, smiling, and words of introduction seem to go on for hours until, finally, every member of the tribe has personally said hello and welcomed you to their home-place. The crowd leads you to the center of the village where a number of large fires are burning. At long last, they quiet down and move aside as three other Nuncha, obviously figures of importance, approach.

The man in the center is taller than his tribesman and heavily muscled. In one hand he carries a

Chief Wahiah stands with his hand on his chin. The members of the tribe wait quietly, trading glances between you and him. Finally he speaks in a clear voice that carries

to the entire tribe. "The Nuncha welcome the lost-brothers to the home-place. We wish no fighting with you. Wahiah grants you the right to travel Nuncha-ground. The Earth-Mother blesses your spirit-honor."

There is an excited burst of chatter from the tribe. Choniak the witch doctor scowls.

"But," Wahiah shouts, abruptly silencing the crowd, "the mountains are the home of the Wind-Reaver, and they are forbidden, even to our lost Nuncha-brothers. Wahiah cannot grant permission for our lost-brothers to explore the home of the Wind-Reaver."

It occurs to you then that if the Nuncha do not allow you to explore the mountains, you won't find the other pass.

Wahiah has forbidden the PCs from traveling through the mountains and further offending the god he calls the "Wind-Reaver" (actually the mist dragon). If the PCs protest but have trouble formulating a plan, the tribal shaman steps in to offer Wahiah a counterpoint.

"But Wahiah," croaks Kachina, "the lost-brothers came from the mountains. They have already walked through the home of the Wind-Reaver. Perhaps their spirit-honor is different from the Nuncha." She raises a bony finger to her lower lip. "Perhaps," she continues in a near whisper, "they are not Nuncha at all!"

Kachina has apparently said something profound, as every Nuncha in the village gasps loudly. Wahiah then speaks, his voice carrying over all others.

"I must think on this matter and ask the Earth-Mother for guidance. Let us prepare a feast to welcome the lost-brothers to Nuncha-land and the home-place." He abruptly claps his hands and once again the village explodes into activity.

The Nuncha's use of the term "lost-brothers" is not intended as an affront to female PCs. If the party is predominantly female, the natives instead say "lost-sisters." When referring to PCs individually, they use "sister" or "brother" as appropriate.

The PCs are left to their own devices as the village goes about preparing for the evening's celebrations. They are, of course, the object of constant attention. Everyone wants to hear the PCs' stories about the world on the other side of the mountains. The PCs should also feel free to interact with the Nuncha, ask them about their beliefs and customs, and explore their village. The PCs might be frustrated that the Nuncha simply refuse to believe that the world continues to exist beyond the mountains. As far as they are concerned, the valley is the extent of the universe. At this point, they are simply incapable of understanding that there are people other than the Nuncha.

At the northern edge of the home-place is a circle of immense stone columns, covered with tiny runes. The Nuncha call it the holy-circle-of-magic. Written on the stone columns are all of the spells known to the Nuncha witch doctors. It is here that Choniak and his apprentice come to study for their spells. The runes are readable to any PC Mage and include the following:

1st—*affect normal fires, armor, burning hands, charm person, magic missile, shocking grasp, sleep;*

2nd—*blur, detect evil, levitate, Melf's acid arrow, mirror image, whispering wind;*

3rd—*fireball, gust of wind, haste, slow, suggestion;*

4th—*enchanted weapon, fear, ice storm, minor creation.*

Event 3. Talons at Twilight.

Shortly before nightfall, read or paraphrase the following:

A terrible scream shatters the stillness. You look through the trees and see a tangle of Nuncha tribesmen thrusting their spears at what looks like an enormous green eagle. A second bird suddenly swoops down from the sky and dives at the group. You hear a sickening crunch as it tears into a Nuncha tribesman. The creature soars back into the sky, bloody talons dripping crimson.

The eagles are actually perytons, and the Nuncha, without any magical weapons, cannot defend themselves effectively. If the PCs run to their aid,

they can prevent further Nuncha casualties. As they approach, the PCs see the "birds" for what they are.

Perytons (2): AC 7; MV 12, fly 21 (C); HD 4; hp 28, 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 4–16; SA +2 to attack rolls, dive; SD +1 or better weapons needed to hit; SZ M; ML 16; INT average (8); AL CE; XP 270; MM/286.

Five Nuncha (three males and two females) do their best to support the PCs, but their nonmagical weapons have little effect. If the PCs can deal 15 points of damage, the perytons screech in frustration and retreat to the southern mountain range.

When the battle is over, Wahiah, Choniak, Kachina, and five Warriors come running from the forest. Kachina immediately moves to tend the injured Warriors. Wahiah stares after the retreating perytons and mutters, "May the Earth-Mother curse the flying fiends." He then spits into his palm and wipes his hand on the head of his spear. Each Nuncha Warrior does the same.

Any injured or slain Nuncha Warriors are taken back to the home-place. Wahiah gestures for the PCs to walk with him. Choniak moves to follow, but Wahiah motions him away. Heading the chieftain, the witch doctor stands back, scowling darkly. If the PCs follow Wahiah, read or paraphrase the following:

Wahiah stands atop a low rise, staring into the fading twilight. "The dark-spirits send the taloned fiends to destroy the home-place—creatures that no Nuncha spear can harm. And then the lost-brothers come, with their shiny weapons that cut the fiends' flesh, with their great magic."

He pauses in silence as the last sliver of light disappears behind a broken mountain peak. He grins mysteriously and then looks at you one by one. "After the feast, Wahiah will send you on a quest. If you are successful, it is a sign from the Wind-Reaver that you are worthy of walking through his home. Now come, let us eat."

Wahiah refuses to discuss the matter further and walks silently back to the village.

Once the PCs are back at the home-place, continue with **Event 4**.

Interlude: The Dark Nymph

Two months ago, a gentle but vain forest nymph named Gwendelin gazed at her reflection in a pool and, taunted by her three elven courtiers, boldly proclaimed herself more lovely than Verenestra, goddess of nymphs. Verenestra overheard Gwendelin's proclamation and cursed her. Rather than alter her physical beauty, however, Verenestra twisted Gwendelin's spirit, turning her into a dark nymph—a being whose malevolence outstripped her beauty.

Gwendelin's curse has had far-reaching effects. As the nymph's forest is essentially a reflection of her own soul, Gwendelin's forest began to wither, and nothing would grow but black, spiny bushes and sickly gray trees with limp yellow leaves. The family of eagles that had served her for decades transformed into hateful perytons. Worst of all, the three beautiful elven men who lived with her as her companions were also cursed by the spiteful goddess and turned into ugly, evil minotaurs. Eventually, Gwendelin and her companions fled the forest to find a new place of unsurpassed beauty to call home. But her curse followed her.

Everywhere Gwendelin went, the land reacted to her presence and grew dark and repulsive. The true irony of her curse is that she can

never again be surrounded by the beauty she craves.

Ultimately Gwendelin found solace in surrounding herself with unchanging stone. Quite by accident she and her consorts discovered an abandoned temple in the southern mountain range. (The temple is located at the mouth of the pass at area **B**.) She sent her peryton servants to explore the surrounding countryside and was delighted to find the Nuncha nearby. To her thinking, they are little more than cattle for her pets' consumption.

Two weeks ago, Gwendelin sent her perytons to the Nuncha home-place to feast. The perytons made off with three females in their initial attack. Since then, Gwendelin has sent her minions on three more raids, though each time the tribe's clever defenses and Kachina and Choniak's spells drove them off. The unexpected fortitude of the primitives was at first merely inconvenient, but now Gwendelin is absolutely infuriated. Her perytons are starved for human flesh. Aside from the minor frustration presented by the Nuncha, Gwendelin is pleased with her new home and intends to stay, refusing to acknowledge Verenestra's hand in this dark turn of events.

At this point Choniak stalks over to the nearest seated PC and glowers down at him. "It is an insult!" he shouts to the entire crowd. He turns and looks to Wahiah, but the chief only glares at him angrily. Choniak then begins searching through the faces of the crowd for some hint of support, and finds none. He then whirls around and claws at the PC's face with his nails. The PC must make a surprise roll; if successful, the PC may block the strike or counter-attack. The rake, if successful, is not severe enough to inflict damage.

Shocked gasps ripple through the crowd, and four Nuncha men leap forward to restrain Choniak. "Enough!" cries Wahiah. "Choniak will leave the home-place and not return for three days. Choniak will consider what he has done and then return to ask forgiveness of the tribe and our lost Nuncha-brother."

Without another word, the witch doctor leaves the home-place. "The feast will continue," declares the chief. The PCs are not troubled again by Choniak until later.

Choniak's scornful outburst is motivated not by reverence for the spirits but by self-preservation. Five years ago he killed his predecessor, Tawahena, and usurped her position. By Nuncha tradition, the apprentice becomes witch doctor only upon the witch doctor's death. Tawahena was only seven years older than Choniak, and he was unwilling to spend his entire life as her apprentice.

He secretly killed her and dumped her body on the mountains, certain it would never be discovered. He was so confident that he barely bothered to conceal it. Now with the PCs entered into the equation, he is terrified they might discover the body and expose his treachery (see **Event 6**).

The PCs might chafe at being sent on a quest not of their own choosing, but Wahiah expects to be obeyed. If they try to negotiate another quest or outright refuse to accept, the entire tribe is insulted. If the PCs are particularly rude, the Warriors in the tribe take turns challenging them to a fight for the chief's honor. Unless the PCs relent, hostilities continue to flare until open combat breaks out. If relations degrade to this point, the Nuncha Warriors take up arms and fight until they fail their morale

Event 4. Dining on Ashes.

The feast starts shortly after sundown, and the Nuncha offer all kinds of strange fruits, vegetables cooked in banana leaves, roasted antelope meat, bowls of boiled grains, and even crude beer. The dinner is loud and boisterous as the Nuncha compete for the PCs' attentions throughout the night. The children want to hear the Bards tell stories, the men want to see the Fighters show their stuff, and charismatic PCs have Nuncha of the opposite sex virtually hanging over them. Early in the evening, the party meets the chief's son, Hamawahiah, and Choniak's assistant, Tasaho.

Part way through the meal, an observant PC (DM's choice) notices Choniak and Wahiah in a heated debate. The PC cannot hear what they are saying over the din of other nearby voices.

Once everyone has eaten, Wahiah stands and calls for silence:

"Wahiah has made a decision. Our lost Nuncha-brothers will complete a quest. They will destroy the flying fiends and return with their heads to the home-place. If they succeed, they may enter the home of the Wind-Reaver. They may cross the great mountains."

"No!" bellows Choniak from behind you. "The lost-brothers must not enter the mountains! The Wind-Reaver has forbidden it!"

"Be silent, Choniak!" barks the shaman Kachina. "Wahiah has spoken. If the Wind-Reaver wills that the lost-brothers may enter his home, there is nothing the Nuncha can say about it." With that, she juts out her chin as if that settles everything.

check. If the PCs have any sense of integrity, they should feel honor-bound to accept the quest, as they would be ridding themselves and the Nuncha of an obviously lethal threat.

During the remainder of the feast, Wahiah tells the PCs all he knows about the perytons, which is actually precious little. He knows that they are impervious to Nuncha spears and that only Kachina and Choniak's spells can harm them. His scouts have also learned that they lair low in the southern mountains, southeast of the "dark lake" (area F). There is a sharp cleft in the rock where the perytons fly after every raid. Wahiah also has a few words of warning.

"Beware the forest of the dark lake, lost-brothers. Our last witch doctor, Tawahena, was killed when she camped there. Even her bear animal-spirit could not protect her from the evil spirits in that place."

The PCs can ask Wahiah or any other Nuncha as many questions as they like, but they learn little more. Eventually they are shown to an empty hut for the night.

The next morning, at the crack of dawn, Wahiah wakes the PCs to send them on their way and wishes them luck. The entire tribe follows the PCs to the edge of the village, waving and cheering as the PCs march across the fields to the mountains.

Event 5. Death From Above.

It takes a full day to reach the base of the mountains from the Nuncha village. If the PCs are looking for the cleft, they find it easily as they approach the range. The cleft is a jagged crack where it looks like a mountain was split in half. A dried-out riverbed snakes upward from the plain and disappears into the crack.

PCs who abandon Wahiah's quest and search immediately for the pass are bitterly disappointed to find that Gwendelin's home blocks the way. Whether they intended to or not, they must deal with her.

There is a base 40% chance that Gwendelin's peryton scouts spot the PCs as they approach the mountain, modified as follows:

✓ +60% if the PCs camp within a mile of the mountain and use a fire;

✓ +55% if the PCs approach at night with light sources;

✓ +40% if any combat breaks out within a mile of the mountain;

✓ -20% if a single PC is scouting out the area alone;

✓ -30% if the PCs approach at night with no light sources.

If the PCs are detected, three perytons attack at nightfall, preferably after the PCs make camp, hoping to swoop down unseen. If the PCs manage to escape observation, skip to **Event 6**.

Perytons (3): AC 7; MV 12, fly 21 (C); HD 4; hp 30, 28*, 20*; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 4-16; SA +2 to attack rolls, dive; SD +1 or better weapons needed to hit; SZ M; ML 16; INT average (8); AL CE; XP 270; MM/286.

The 28-hp and 20-hp perytons are the same creatures that attacked in **Event 3**. Their hit points should be adjusted accordingly.

Each peryton carries a small flask of diluted *oil of fiery burning* (inflicts 2d6+1 points of damage to all within 10 feet). They begin their attack by dropping the flasks onto the party and then swooping down amid the chaos. These beasts retreat if reduced to half their original hit points, flying back to the temple (See **Event 7**.)

Event 6. Tawahena.

As the PCs start climbing into the mountains, presumably following the dried river bed into the cleft, read or paraphrase the following:

The rock walls of the cleft mountain soar upward. After a short climb, you spot a blanched human skeleton in the middle of the dried riverbed, glaring at you with empty eye sockets. There is no skin left on the bones, but long, reddish-brown hair still clings to the skull. A long dagger, made from the wavy horn of an antelope, protrudes from the skeleton's breast bone.

Off to one side, you see a broken and rotting headdress made from the head of a bear. Age and neglect has caused the headdress to decay.

This is Tawahena's body. If the PCs take a closer look at the skeleton, they can see it is still wearing the rotted remains of a bear-skin cloak and a necklace made of bear's

teeth. The antelope horn dagger is Choniak's, although this might not be obvious to the PCs.

Event 7. The Mountain Temple.

PCs who continue to investigate the mountain cleft discover that the path leading through it is more like an ancient roadway than a riverbed. It is, in fact, the pass through the southern mountain range (area B). Read or paraphrase the following if the PCs continue along the path:

The road comes to an abrupt end at the edge of a crevasse hundreds of feet deep. A narrow stone bridge spans the crevasse and leads to a building on the opposite side. The building is a small, two-story granite structure perched precariously on a massive shelf of stone jutting out from the canyon's edge. There is a large balcony with simple stone railings on the second floor.

Sitting motionless in front of the building are nearly two dozen of those flying beasts with antlers. They glare at you malevolently, yellow teeth showing through their wicked grins. A few of them shift their wings uneasily as you appear.

"Help me!" a female voice cries. Suddenly a hooded figure rushes into view on the balcony. "Help me please! They're going to kill me!" Before you can react, a brutish, horned figure reaches out onto the balcony and drags the woman screaming and thrashing back into the building.

Gwendelin's perytons spotted the PCs as they started climbing through the mountain cleft, and virtually everything described above is part of an elaborate ruse. The hooded figure is Gwendelin. She hopes that the little production on the balcony adds enough urgency to put the PCs on edge, preventing them from noticing that most of the perytons in front of the temple are inanimate statues.

There are four hungry perytons interspersed among twenty-one painted paper-maché peryton statues. The rest of Gwendelin's living perytons are hiding in the mountain peaks behind the PCs. Gwendelin hopes that the PCs are fooled into thinking that their enemies are all

right in front of them and launch a strong frontal assault, leaving their rear and flanks undefended, and wasting valuable offensive spells.

If the PCs charge across the bridge or used ranged attacks against the peryton "army," the four real perytons leap into the air and swoop toward the PCs, attempting to draw their undivided attention. The following round, they attack.

Also on the second round, seven more perytons attack from the rear, descending through the cleft mountain to tear into the PCs. PCs must make a surprise roll at -3 against the rear attackers; if the PCs are surprised, the perytons swooping down from behind receive a +2 bonus to hit. Also on the second round of combat, the four perytons perched at area 1 join the fray, fighting to the death.

The narrow stone bridge spanning the canyon is secure. However, PCs struck while crossing the narrow bridge must make a Dexterity check; those who fail are either snatched up by their attacker (if the peryton has at least half its hit points) and dropped the following round or else knocked into the crevasse by the force of the blow. PCs who cannot recover from the fall suffer 20d6 points of damage.

Perytons (11): AC 7; MV 12, fly 21 (C); HD 4; hp 32, 30*, 28*, 26, 20*, 19, 18, 16, 15, 11, 10; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 4-16; SA +2 to attack rolls, dive; SD +1 or better weapons needed to hit; SZ M; ML 16; INT average (8); AL CE; XP 270; MM/286.

The PCs might have wounded or killed some of the perytons in previous encounters. These perytons are marked with an asterisk. Any prior casualties should be deducted from the group attacking from the rear.

Throughout combat, Gwendelin continues her tortured screaming, trying to lure PCs into another trap.

Temple Encounters

1. Stone Shelf. Perched on the stone shelf supporting the temple are twenty-one elaborately painted paper-maché peryton statues. Gwendelin made them in her spare time. They are crudely rendered and seem real only from a distance greater than fifteen feet.

2. Hall of Passage. This hallway is 20 feet wide and 10 feet high. In ancient times, travelers stopped in area 3 to pray before continuing their journey. The floor is covered with a thick layer of coarse sand.

Ten feet down the hall is a 16' square, 7' deep pit trap covered with a thin wooden lid that breaks under the weight of two or more PCs or one heavily armored PC. The lid is covered with sand and is undetectable unless the sand is cleared away. The pit is filled with three feet of a thick, gluey substance.

The fall causes no damage, but the glue is actually a fungus with an unusually sticky consistency. Mixed with the sand falling down from above, the gluey fungus thoroughly gums up the joints in metal armor. PCs in plate or brigandine armor suffer a -5 penalty to hit and a +5 penalty to armor class until the armor is removed, dismantled, and thoroughly cleaned. Those in chain, banded, splint, or scalemail suffer -2 attack penalties and a +2 penalty to AC. PCs also find it difficult to draw sheathed weapons that are filled with sandy glue; apply a -4 initiative penalty during the round a weapon is first drawn. Similarly, coils of rope are difficult to unroll, boots and gloves are hard to remove, bows are useless, quivers of arrows are ruined, and so forth.

Spells that normally affect plants also affect the fungus colony.

Gwendelin never uses the hallway herself. When she wants to leave the building, she has her peryton minions carry her gently. Her minotaurs sidestep the pit, carefully brushing over their tracks.

3. The Temple. The deity to which this temple was dedicated is long forgotten. Stacks of dry wood chips are strewn about the floor, along with tatters of old cloth and rusted chunks of metal. Only the stone dais and altar have survived. There are two stone staircases at the back of the room that lead to the second floor. Piled in the northeast corner of the temple are Gwendelin's dyes and other supplies used for making her paper-maché statuary.

4. Kitchen. Formerly the temple's kitchen, the room is now bare.

5. Monk's Cloister. These cubicles once housed the monks who worked at the temple, but now they are home to Gwendelin's minotaur consorts. Three cells have large beds (worn blankets laid over piles of straw) and oil lamps. The other cells are empty. The whole cloister smells like a barn.

6. Observatory. During crowded services, extra seating was provided here. The benches have long since disintegrated into dry heaps of wood.

7. Gwendelin's Chamber.

Bright tapestries hang on the walls of this spacious room, and thin white curtains partially cover the doorway to the eastern balcony. There is a nicely preserved mahogany bed against the north wall and an equally well-preserved dining table set with fine clayware in the southern portion of the room.

Crumpled on the floor near the eastern doors is the woman in the hooded robe. She is buried in her clothing except for a single, beautiful alabaster leg visible among the folds of her robe. A bull-headed behemoth stands over her, as if contemplating how best to devour its prisoner.

Again, this is another ruse. In addition to the woman and her minotaur "captor," there are two invisible minotaurs standing in the northwest and southwest corners of the room respectively, waiting for PCs to rush forward to fight the third minotaur. PCs suffer -2 penalties to their surprise rolls against the invisible attackers; if the minotaurs surprise the PCs, they receive a +2 rear attack bonus before becoming visible.

If the PCs do as Gwendelin suspects and rush to her aid, she throws back her hood, blinding those who fail their saving throw vs. spell. Her three minotaur henchmen are immune to this effect.

Once combat begins, Gwendelin steps naked out of her robe, slaying anyone not blinded who fails a save vs. spell.

If the PCs do not fall for her trick or immediately attack her, Gwendelin removes her hood the first round of battle and steps out of her robe the following round.

Gwendelin (dark nymph): AC 9; MV 12; HD 3; hp 19; THAC0 17; #AT 0; Dmg nil; SA cause blindness or death; SZ M; ML 14; INT exceptional (16); AL LE; XP 1,400; *MM/270*; *ring of feather falling*.

Because she has fallen out of favor with Verenestra, the Neutral goddess of nymphs, Gwendelin no longer has access to her Druid spells.

Minotaurs (3): AC 6; MV 12; HD 6+3; hp 40, 36, 34; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 2-8/2-8 or 1-4/by weapon type; SA grapple, charge; SD +2 bonus on surprise; SZ L (8' tall); ML 13; INT low (7); AL CE; XP 1,400; *MM/252*.

If Gwendelin suffers more than 15 points of damage, she flees to the balcony (area 8) and whistles to one of her perytons still perched atop the mountain cleft high above. The creature reaches the balcony in one round, grabs the nymph securely in its clutches, and flies off into the mountains. PCs who pursue her have two rounds of attacks before the nymph and her peryton are out of sight. If the peryton is slain or unable to reach her, Gwendelin uses her *ring of feather falling* to float gently to the canyon bottom. Of course, as she floats lazily downward, the PCs have plenty of opportunities to launch ranged attacks or pursue, assuming they have the means.

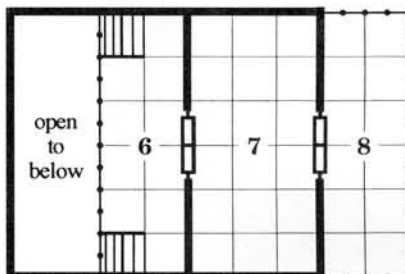
The minotaurs do not flee as long as Gwendelin is present, but if she is slain or runs away, they try to escape.

The room contains several items brought to the temple by Gwendelin's minotaurs from the nymph's previous domicile. The tapestries are not particularly valuable, but the satin sheets on the bed can be sold for 100 gp. The set of clayware is ornately decorated and worth 250 gp intact, but the pieces are fragile and must be carefully transported. Each piece individually is worth about 10 gp. In a small box under the bed are twelve delicate glass bottles. Six of them contain a clear liquid (potions of *invisibility*), while the remaining six are empty.

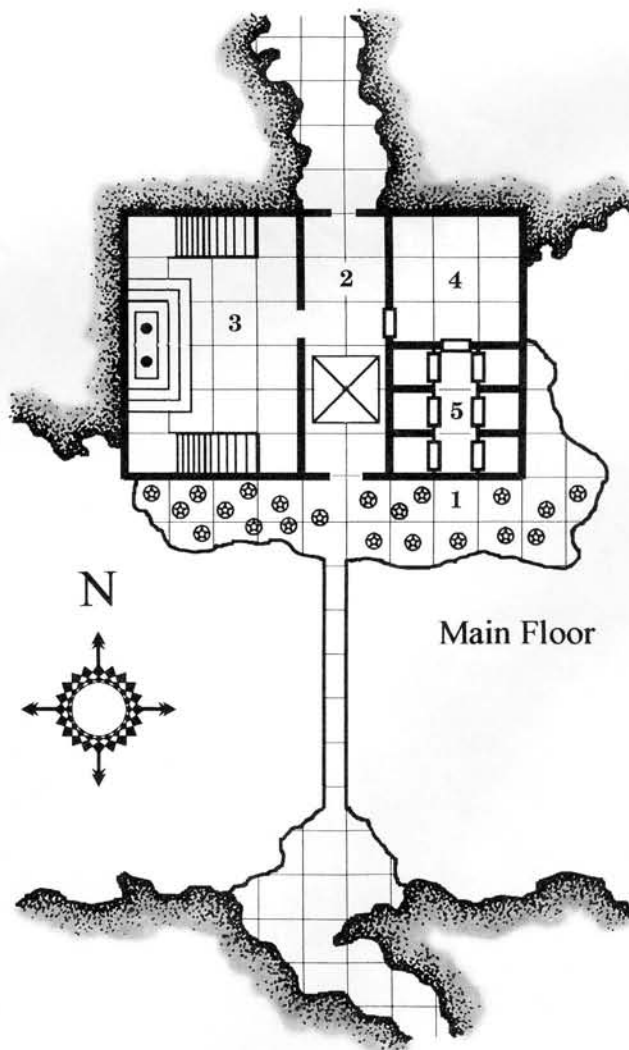
There is a wooden end table next to the bed with three drawers, each holding an unfolded jumble of clothes. Wrapped inside a lacy chemise in the bottom drawer is a golden necklace set with tiny amethysts. The necklace is worth 1,700 gp and is Gwendelin's most prized possession.

The Mountain Temple

One square = 10 feet



Second Floor



Main Floor

Gwendelin commands her minotaur henchmen to attack.



8. Balcony. The temple balcony is surrounded by a 3'-high marble railing and offers a superb view of the canyon. Two wrought iron chairs with purple cushions rest at the south end next to a low metal table. Potted rose bushes line the inside of the balcony, but the flowers are all dead.

If Gwendelin leaps over the railing to escape the PCs and is floating to the canyon floor, the flower pots make excellent missile weapons. Hidden at the bottom of one pot is a dirty burlap bag holding a velvet pouch with ten flawless blue diamonds (worth 200 gp each).

Event 8. Choniak's Revenge.

Choniak has been following the PCs at a distance since they left the Nuncha home-place. He suspects that they found Tawahena's body and, expecting the worst, has taken steps to protect himself. On the night he was banished by Wahiah, he returned to the village, cast his *charm person* spells on Tasaho and Hamawahiah, and used them to abduct Kachina.

His captives are waiting for him at the forest of the dark lake (area F). Choniak is watching the pass from a nearby hiding place and contacts the PCs via *whispering wind* as soon as they reach the valley floor. Read the following description when the PCs return to the valley:

Returning to the valley, you behold a strange sight: a Nuncha spear stuck into the ground and pointed skyward. You see that the spear head is smeared with blood. Tied to the shaft with thin strips of leather are two white bird feathers and a lock of reddish-brown hair, marked with just a hint of gray. A swift breeze catches you by surprise, particularly since it speaks to you with Choniak's voice.

"I have Kachina, Outsiders. Follow the river to the dark lake, and bring Tawahena's remains, or Kachina dies. Do not tell Wahiah."

You look around, but Choniak is nowhere in sight.

The rest of the adventure assumes the PCs do as Choniak commands. If they do not, he kills Kachina, Tasaho, and Hamawahiah, then flees the valley through the pass to Raem.

If the PCs follow the timeline and do not spend time recuperating at the temple, they arrive at the dark lake an hour after sunset, having spent most of the day traveling to and from the temple. If it is night, Choniak carries a lit torch that the PCs can spot as they approach the lake. Regardless of whether they arrive at the pool during the day or night, read or paraphrase the following:

You follow the river north to a lake almost five miles across. The surface of the lake is eerily still, giving it the appearance of dark glass. Standing on the far side of the river near the lake's edge is a man wearing a headdress with antelope horns and clutching an antelope horn dagger. Sitting at the base of a nearby tree is a woman bound with rope, a strap of leather tied over her mouth. "Choniak is here, outsiders," the witch doctor says from across the river. He looks hazy and out of focus.

Tasaho and Hamawahiah both walk out of the trees on your side of the lake, weapons drawn. The two young Nuncha look at you with glazed eyes.

"See, Choniak holds Kachina's life in his hands. Do not fight, outsiders. Give Choniak what he wants, and she will not be harmed."

If the PCs are willing to negotiate, Choniak makes his demands. First, the PCs must throw any evidence of his crime into the lake (the horn dagger, Tawahena's body, her headdress, necklace, and fur robe). Any items that don't sink into the deep, black mud are swept down the river and never found. Second, he insists that the PCs go whence they came and never return.

If the PCs are belligerent or uncooperative, the witch doctor puts his dagger to Kachina's throat. If the PCs do what he asks, he remains true to his word and does not harm her. However, he does not give up his hostages or make any guarantees to the PCs. It is either his way or no way at all.

Before confronting the PCs, the witch doctor casts *armor* and *blur* on himself. If fighting breaks out, he forgets about Kachina for the moment and casts *fireball* at the party. Then

he orders Tasaho and Hamawahiah into melee. He stays on the far side of the river and out of direct combat, if possible. Tasaho begins combat by casting her *magic missile* at a random PC and then attacking with her dagger. Hamawahiah simply attacks whomever is closest. PCs may suspect that Tasaho and Hamawahiah have been *charmed* given the manner in which they attack and their initial hesitation.

Kachina is bound with Choniak's *rope of entanglement* and cannot escape on her own. If the PCs get close to Choniak, he quickly draws his dagger and races over to Kachina to slit her throat. However, when he first approaches the shaman, she plants a stiff kick to his knee, giving the PCs another full round to stop Choniak. If they haven't found a way to intercept him by then or draw away his attention, he kills the canny old woman.

If the PCs took the potions of *invisibility* from the mountain temple, they can use the potions to ambush Choniak. The witch doctor's senses are not so keen that he can sense the presence of invisible foes, and *invisibility* magic is completely alien to him.

The river is 100 yards across and as deep as 10 feet in places. The current is not strong enough to thwart attempts to swim across. Reaching Choniak by crossing the lake or the river is dangerous, however, because of the lacedons living in the lake (see area F).

If the PCs close within melee range, Choniak employs his *shocking grasp* spell. With his spell repertoire exhausted, he attacks with his dagger. Choniak is desperate but not above surrender. If he is reduced to fewer than 6 hit points and has no other options, he drops to his knees and begs for mercy.

If the PCs manage to break the *charm* on either of the two Nuncha, they immediately switch sides and help the party. Any PC who kills Tasaho or Hamawahiah loses their XP value.

Event 9. Loose Ends.

The Nuncha have been searching for Kachina, Tasaho, and Hamawahiah since they went missing, and the

entire plain is crawling with hunting parties. If the PCs acquiesced to Choniak's demands and left the forest without fighting, the Nuncha do not find them. The PCs are free to drag their wounded bodies and egos to the pass and escape the plain if they wish.

However, the sounds of fighting and especially the explosion of Choniak's *fireball* draw every Nuncha for miles to the forest of the dark lake. Shortly after combat is resolved, the natives start appearing.

Exactly how the Nuncha react depends on what happened. Choniak hotly denies any wrongdoing. Wahiah is inclined to believe his witch doctor unless presented with evidence to the contrary. If the PCs managed to salvage some proof from the murder scene, or if Kachina is alive to tell her tale, the chief is easily convinced. Likewise, if either of the two *charmed* youths survived, they also support the PCs' claims. If the chief is convinced of Choniak's guilt, he sentences Choniak to death. The witch doctor is stripped, bound, and left in the forest as food for the bears.

If Kachina, Hamawahiah, and Tasaho are alive, the tribe is overjoyed. If any are dead, Wahiah demands an explanation. If the PCs have no evidence of Tawahena's murder and none of Choniak's kidnappees survived, it is their word against Choniak's. Wahiah has little choice but to condemn the PCs as murderers. They must leave the valley and never return; if they do not comply, Wahiah calls on the entire Nuncha tribe to drive away the outsiders. The Nuncha attack the PCs, fighting until they fail a morale check.

If Choniak is dead, Wahiah still requires evidence of his crimes before he believes the PCs' allegations. If they can provide no evidence, he reacts as above.

Concluding the Adventure

The Nuncha mourn their dead tribesmen, but they do not hold any ill will toward the PCs if they exposed the treachery of the witch doctor. The PCs, revered as great heroes, are free to use the Nuncha home-place as a sanctuary whenever one is needed. Once the PCs present Wahiah with at least one peryton head, he joyfully

grants them permission to travel through “the home of the Wind-Reaver” (the mountains). The PCs are free to come and go as they please, but Wahiah hopes they will honor the Nuncha with one more feast, where they can tell and re-tell the story of their victory over the perytons and their dark queen.

For eliminating the threat of Gwendelin and her perytons, the PCs deserve a story award of 3,000 XP as well as the XP value of any monsters killed. However, the PCs are entitled to the story award only if they accomplished their goals out of obligation to the Nuncha. If they did their best to abandon the natives and ended up eliminating the threat anyway, they receive no story award. For successfully thwarting Choniak, they should receive another 3,000 XP. If they leave the Nuncha on good terms, the PCs earn another 1,000 XP and the undying gratitude of the tribe.

If Gwendelin survived, she has no intention of going near the PCs or the Nuncha again. She assembles her surviving minions and moves as far away from the plain as possible. However, if she was killed and any of the minotaurs are left alive, they

attack without mercy when the PCs return to the mountains.

The Wind-Reaver

Before the PCs leave the mountain pass, they have a brief meeting with Noon Shade, the mist dragon who guards the valley. Read or paraphrase the following:

Out of nowhere, a blast of wind slams into your group, nearly knocking you down. Winds howl and swirl around you, tearing at your hair and clothes. A great, misty shape swims gently through the ragged gusts and descends upon you.

“I am Noon Shade, the Wind-Reaver,” it says with a deep male voice. “I am the defender of this valley, and it is my duty to protect the Nuncha from outside harm. You have infiltrated the valley and exposed my children to your culture. For that, I should kill you.

“However, during my absence you saved the Nuncha from harm. You have done me a service—one I shall not forget. Please accept this gift as a token of my gratitude.

Keep it with you always.”

And just as suddenly as they appeared, the winds abate, and the misty shape is gone.

Lying at the PCs’ feet is a *gem of insight*. The *gem* is also a one-way communication device linked to Noon Shade’s *crystal ball* that allows him to contact the PCs if ever he has need. This could happen if the PCs tell outsiders about the hidden valley. Inevitably, once word gets out of their exploits, other adventurers try to infiltrate the valley. If Noon Shade should ever need assistance driving away intruders, he can reach the PCs through the *gem*, offering them rewards for their services.

If the PCs harmed the Nuncha, the dragon does not speak to them. It attacks until it or the party is slain.

Once the PCs make it safely through the pass and reach Raem, they might be surprised to learn that Goblin Fever has spread here as well, and the entire city is under quarantine (see “Goblin Fever” in Issue #46). Whether the PCs choose to remain, return to the valley, or explore elsewhere is entirely up to them. Ω

The Nuncha

The Nuncha are a primitive tribe of forest dwellers descended from human ancestry. They are an attractive group of people with dark brown skin, long and straight reddish-brown hair, and deep brown eyes. They tend to have soft, delicate features. The men generally go shirtless except during days of unseasonably cold temperatures, wearing only plain, loose pants of antelope hide. The women wear shirts of antelope hide painted with elaborate patterns and weavings. Except for the witch doctor, none of the Nuncha wear headgear of any sort. Nuncha speak a heavily accented version of the Common tongue, often giving long names to simple things.

Nuncha are naturally curious and inquisitive. Their first instinct when confronted with something new is to examine it thoroughly from a distance (usually for only a short time), then to rush in and check it out from up close. This insatiable curiosity

extends to the PCs, who are the subject of the tribe’s fascinated scrutiny for days.

Culture and Society

Nuncha are Neutral Good and quite friendly, but with a fierce sense of pride and justice. They are not prone to violence, but they are quick to fight if their honor is insulted. Their isolation from the rest of the world has led to certain unique perceptions of life.

Their society has a simple organization or hierarchy; there is a chief, a shaman, and a witch doctor. The chief is the supreme leader of the tribe whom all must obey, and all others are of equal status. The shaman and witch doctor are held in high regard because of their age and magic. The Nuncha believe that every member of the tribe is important and valuable, deserving respect and honor suited to his actions. The shaman and witch doctor, while they are spiritual leaders and highly respected, do not wield any real power.

The rules of Nuncha society are simple: treat all others with fairness and justice as you would have them treat you. One who shows no respect deserves none. The tribe works together with remarkable efficiency and little friction between individuals. It is common practice for two members with a dispute to settle the matter by fighting, either with bare hands or wooden sticks instead of spears. It is just as common to take matters before the chief, whose word is final.

The Nuncha have a religious reverence for the mountains that surround the plains, because they are the home to the Wind-Reaver, their guardian spirit. It is unthinkable for any Nuncha to set foot on the mountains, as the Wind-Reaver strictly forbade it, and to do so would be a tremendous insult to his honor. To their understanding, there is nothing on the other side of the range save some aspect of the spirit world—the place Nuncha presumably go when they die.

Views of the World and Others

Because of their complete isolation from the rest of the world, the Nuncha have no concept of "others." The Nuncha's way of integrating the PCs into their world view is to see them as members of the tribe who were lost and now returned. They therefore assume that the PCs share their values. They are friendly, respectful, and courteous to the PCs and expect the same treatment in return. They also fully expect the PCs to show appropriate deference to the word of the chief.

The Nuncha are open-minded enough to accept some differences between themselves and the PCs, but they do not tolerate theft, threats, or blatant disrespect to any member of the tribe. They forgive minor transgressions when given a suitable apology. Their trust withers immediately if they discover they have been manipulated or robbed. This society's greatest strength is its sense of community, and the entire tribe mobilizes to defend itself or its honor, fighting until they fail a morale check.

Personality and Nature

The Nuncha are primitive. Mirrors, crossbows, oil lanterns, and metal weapons are both fascinating and puzzling to them. However, primitive does not mean stupid. They are sharp-minded and not easily swindled or conned. While these new objects pique their curiosity, the Nuncha are not particularly impressed by them. What does impress them are things they can relate to directly: talented fighters, gifted singers, and so on.

Ancient History

The Nuncha are not indigenous to this valley. They were brought here by the Wind-Reaver three hundred years ago. The mist dragon is named Noon Shade, and both he and the Nuncha are from a place far away.

As a young adult, Noon Shade was fascinated with the large tribe of humans living at the edge of a swamp near his lair. He spent a great deal of time observing them secretly in his mist form. Over time, he took a liking to them, even growing protective of them. Unfortunately, Noon Shade's

interest in the humans attracted the attention of a family of black dragons. The abusive beasts set about slaughtering the tribe for sport.

Unable to drive off the more powerful and more numerous black dragons, Noon Shade was forced to flee. The mist dragon felt responsible for the tragedy and decided to save the surviving humans. For the first and only time, he revealed his true form to the tribe and led them through a magical gate that transported Noon Shade and his human charges to the hidden valley. As a sign of gratitude, the humans renamed their tribe after their savior, calling themselves the Nuncha (NOON-shay).

The mist dragon has never interacted directly with the Nuncha since, although he feels strangely obligated to maintain the balance in their lives. He decided that to preserve their way of life, he must prevent the other humans nearby (more advanced certainly, but also more petty and warlike) from interfering with the Nuncha way of life. Noon Shade drove away merchant caravans with his ability to create winds and his *wind wall* ability. He did so in mist form to hide his true nature. The more persistent beasts he drove off the old fashioned way: with claw and tooth.

Nine generations later, the Nuncha no longer remember Noon Shade as a mist dragon. They instead revere him as a guardian spirit who rides the winds and keeps them from harm, and they call him the Wind-Reaver. While his role as savior of their race is also forgotten, they honor the Wind-Reaver as a constant protector of the Nuncha.

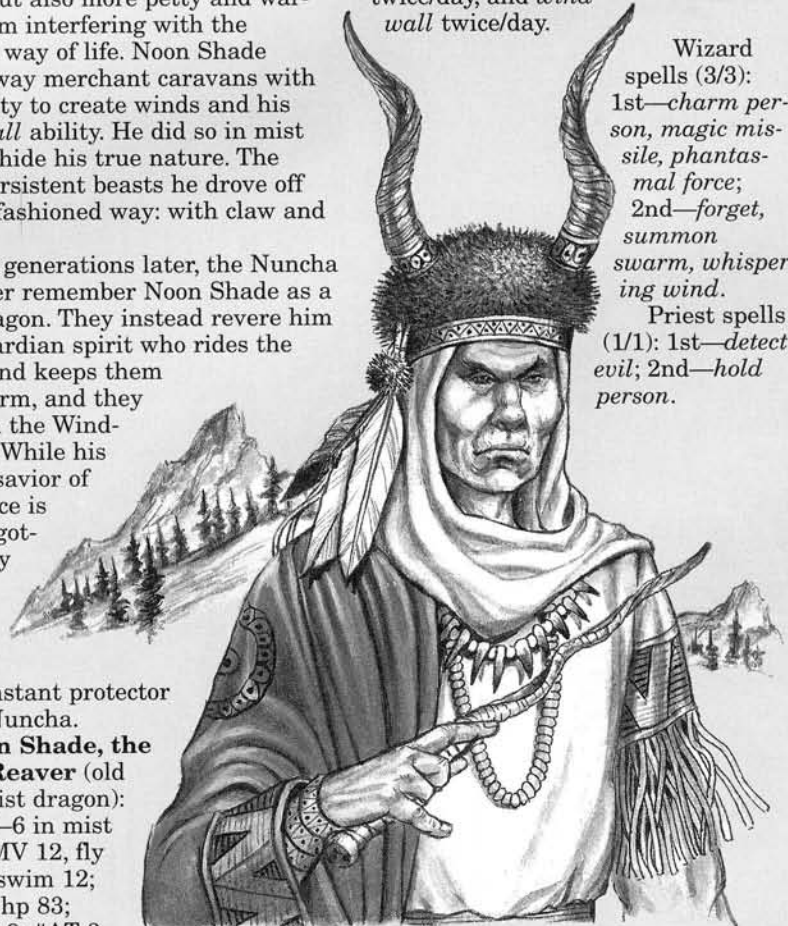
Noon Shade, the Wind-Reaver (old male mist dragon): AC -3 (-6 in mist form); MV 12, fly 39 (C), swim 12; HD 14; hp 83; THAC0 9; #AT 3

+ special; Dmg 1d4+8/1d4+8/2d12+8; SA breath weapon (cloud of scalding vapor 90' long, 30' wide, and 30' high; inflicts 9d6+8 points of damage), dragon fear (30-yard range), tail slap or kick against rear attackers, spells; SD dragon sense; immune to fire and heat; assume mist form; MR 45% (60% in mist form); SZ G (94' body, 85' tail); ML 16; INT exceptional (15); AL N; XP 17,000; MM/84.

As with all mist dragons, Noon Shade can assume mist form at will. In mist form his AC improves by 3, his magic resistance increases by 15%, and he is 75% indistinguishable from normal mist. The dragon may not attack physically in mist form but may use his spells or innate abilities unhindered.

Noon Shade has the following innate spell-like abilities: *water breathing* twice/day, *wall of fog* twice/day, *create water* twice/day, *control winds* three times/day, *solid fog* twice/day, and *wind wall* twice/day.

Wizard spells (3/3):
1st—*charm person*, *magic missile*, *phantasmal force*;
2nd—*forget*, *summon swarm*, *whispering wind*.
Priest spells (1/1): 1st—*detect evil*; 2nd—*hold person*.



Members of the Tribe

The Nuncha survive by hunting the beasts of the plains, so every man, woman, and child is trained in the use of the spear. Their culture has great reverence for females as the bearers of the children and thus tends to de-emphasize them as hunters and encourage them as healers and keepers of the village.

Nuncha males (68): AC 9; MV 12; F3; hp 18 (average); THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 14; AL NG; leather shield; spear, stone battle-ax, stone dagger.

Nuncha females (73): AC 10; MV 12; F2; hp 12 (average); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 14; AL NG; spear, stone dagger.

Nuncha children (47): AC 10; MV 9; F1; hp 5 (average); THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 10; AL NG; spear, stone dagger.

A small number of tribesfolk devote their lives to the hunt. These Nuncha are the Warriors, and the best Warrior is the chief. The chief is appointed until he dies or declares he is too old to continue as leader. Because there are so few female Warriors, there has never been a female chief in recent memory.

Nuncha Warriors (25): AC 9; MV 12; F4; hp 28 (average); THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 16; AL NG; leather shield; spear, stone battle-ax, stone dagger.

The Nuncha chief is named Wahiah. He is tall for a Nuncha

(about 5'6"), very broad, and heavily muscled. He is by far the greatest Warrior in the tribe and is specialized with the battle-ax. His son, Hamawahiah, is also a Warrior.

Wahiah (Nuncha chief): AC 7; MV 12; F6; hp 42; THAC0 14 (with Strength bonus); #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type +1 (Strength bonus); Str 17, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 15; SA specialized with battle-ax; ML 17; AL NG; leather shield, spear, stone battle-ax, stone dagger.

Hamawahiah (chief's son): AC 7; MV 12; F4; hp 30; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +3 (Strength and specialization bonuses); Str 16, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 13; ML 14; AL NG; leather shield, spear, stone battle-ax, stone dagger

The tribe always has two healers, and they are typically females. The shaman is Kachina, a withered old woman with a fierce inner fire. She is bent with age and leans heavily on her staff, but she has an exceedingly sharp intellect. Lately, Kachina has been praying mostly for battle spells, though she can pray for others on request.

Kachina (Nuncha shaman): AC 10; MV 6; P4; hp 6; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon -1 (Strength penalty); Str 5, Dex 7, Con 6, Int 17, Wis 17, Cha 14; ML 12; AL NG; wooden staff.

Spells (5/4): 1st—*cure light wounds, command, light, magical stone, protection from evil*; 2nd—*augury, hold person, produce flame, spiritual hammer*.

Kachina's assistant, **Kiva**, is a 12-year-old girl. Though she shows great promise, she is considered 0-level. Both women have the Healing and Herbalism nonweapon proficiencies.

The last position of leadership among the Nuncha is the witch doctor. Each witch doctor chooses an animal spirit to guide and protect him and must single-handedly slay that animal with nothing but a dagger. He then makes a headdress from the head of the animal and makes a new dagger from its rib or horn. The current witch doctor is Choniak, and his apprentice is Tasaho. Choniak's spirit animal is the antelope.

Choniak (Nuncha witch doctor): AC 9; MV 12; W5; hp 14; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon or spell; Str 9, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 11; SA spells; ML 10; AL NE; dagger, *rope of entanglement*.

Spells (4/2/1): 1st—*charm person* (x2), *armor, shocking grasp*; 2nd—*blur, whispering wind*; 3rd—*fireball*.

Tasaho is a striking young woman, stubborn and aloof for a Nuncha but still amicable by non-Nuncha standards. She has chosen the emu as her animal spirit and wears an elaborate headdress made from the spiky black feathers of the bird.

Tasaho (apprentice): AC 10; MV 12; W1; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon or spell; Str 9, Dex 12, Con 9, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 12; SA spells; ML 10; AL NG; dagger.

Spell (1): 1st—*magic missile*.



By Aaron Williams



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Farmer Rander's cattle face the winged terrors of the night.

NIGHT OF THE BLOODBIRDS

BY BRIAN CORVELLO

A feast to the east,
and pests to the west

Artwork by George Vrbanic
Cartography by Craig Zipse

Brian writes: "This adventure is dedicated to my father, Robert. My dad was never a cattle farmer like the Robert in this adventure, but he's just as strong, caring, and hardworking."

"Night of the Bloodbirds" is a generic AD&D® adventure for 4–8 PCs of levels 3–7 (about 24 total levels). A good mix of classes is important, including one or more skilled Fighters and a Priest with access to healing spells. The PCs should be of Good or Neutral alignment.

DMs wishing to play this adventure to the fullest are encouraged to read "The Ecology of the Stirge" article in *DRAGON*® Magazine #239. Other useful supplements include the *Monster Mythology* for its information on goblin deities and Priests and the *Complete Ninja's Handbook* for information on martial arts.

Beginning the Adventure

The story begins as the PCs visit a cattle farm located in the hills near a mountain range. The farm is owned by Robert Rander and his family. The PCs' reasons for visiting the farm are up to the DM. A few suggestions include:

- ❖ Rander is experimenting with a new cattle feed made with a special herb. A Wizard NPC allied with the PCs is working on creating an *ever-bountiful soup kettle* which makes beef stew. He believes the herb can be used to help manufacture the magical item. He sends the PCs to purchase some of the herb. He sends a message to Rander via magical means, so Rander is expecting the PCs.

- ❖ A high-level NPC Priest allied with the PCs must perform a special holiday ceremony. To do so, he requires an animal sacrifice—a fine quality bull. Only the best will do, and Rander raises the best cattle in three kingdoms. The Priest sends the PCs to procure a bull and sends Rander word of their arrival.

- ❖ A temple dedicated to healing in the nearby city has been made aware of a rural outbreak of bovinitis. Bovinitis is a magical disease that affects cows but also affects humans and demihumans who eat infected beef. Farmer Rander's cattle are believed to be among those infected. The temple provides the PCs with a

supply of curative pills to feed any infected cattle. Again, Rander is informed of their coming.

❖ The Randers are friends or relatives of one of the PCs. The PCs have heard that a disease is threatening cattle in the area and decide to check up on Farmer Rander and his herd.

Whatever the reason for visiting, the PCs become involved in a battle to save the farm.

The farm is located about five miles from the nearest town. The hills surrounding it are known to be inhabited by several odd creatures (including elemental spirits) that have, up to now, left the farm alone.

When the PCs have the farm in their sights, it should be early morning. Read or paraphrase the following description:

After a restful night's sleep under the stars, you come within sight of Robert Rander's farm. As you walk toward the front gate, you see thick smoke rising from the pens and smell burning meat.

Passing by a large pen, you see three weary-looking farmhands burning the carcasses of two steer. When they see you, they mutter something under their breaths and continue with their work.

Before they can question the farmhands, Robert himself comes out of the farmhouse to greet them. He welcomes them with a tired voice and asks them to come inside, saying he'll explain everything. The following conversation shouldn't be a monologue; let the players ask questions:

"You've picked a bad time to come," says Robert as he pours coffee into your cups. "Seems this farm is under siege. Two weeks ago it started. Bloodbirds—dozens of them. They've attacked us four times so far. The critters drink the cows' blood; we've lost ten of the herd so far. Couldn't even salvage the beef, and it's just a matter of time before one of us gets hurt. I just don't get it. The bloodbirds ain't never bothered us this much before. If this keeps up, I don't know what we're gonna do!"

If the PCs ask what a bloodbird is, Robert shows them a dead one:

Robert takes out a large, pine box. Opening it, you see a hideous little creature. It resembles a bird only in the general outline. Its wings are batlike, its eyes like a giant fly. It has four insectile legs, each ending in small hooks. Its most distinguishing feature is its long, needle-like beak.

"Ugly lil' critter, ain't it?" says Robert.

The creature is actually a stirge—a familiar sight to any PC who has encountered these beasts before.

If the PCs inquire about the stirges, Robert says he's known of their presence in the hills for years, but they've been nothing more than pests. They've never attacked in such large swarms and never actually killed an animal until recently. If asked what other creatures live in the area, Robert says that years ago he had a problem with hobgoblins, but he hasn't seen them in ages, so he assumes they've moved on. He's also heard rumors of elemental spirits in the hills but doesn't believe them, as he's never seen any.

Robert Rander, male human
F2: AC 8; MV 12; hp 16; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 16; SZ M (5'5"); ML 10; AL NG; padded armor, handax, heavy crossbow, dagger (usually carries only the dagger).

Robert is 54 years old, somewhat chubby, with graying hair. He has all nonweapon proficiencies dealing with animal farming (Animal Handling, Land-based Riding, etc.)

The staff of the farm consists of five hired hands (named Luke, Earl, Val, Sam, and Pete), Robert's wife Patricia, and his two teenage sons, Michael and Jason. All of them are 0-level humans with unremarkable statistics and no fighting skills.

Livestock on the farm consists of sixty cattle (of the finest quality) and six riding horses. Robert's horse, Inferno, has maximum hit points.

Riding horses (6): AC 7; MV 24; HD 3; hp 24, 18, 15 (×3), 13; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 1-2/1-2; SZ L; ML 7; INT animal (1); AL N; MM/194.

Cattle (60): AC 7; MV 15; HD 4; hp 20 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SZ L; ML 4; INT animal (1); AL N; MM/243.

For the Dungeon Master

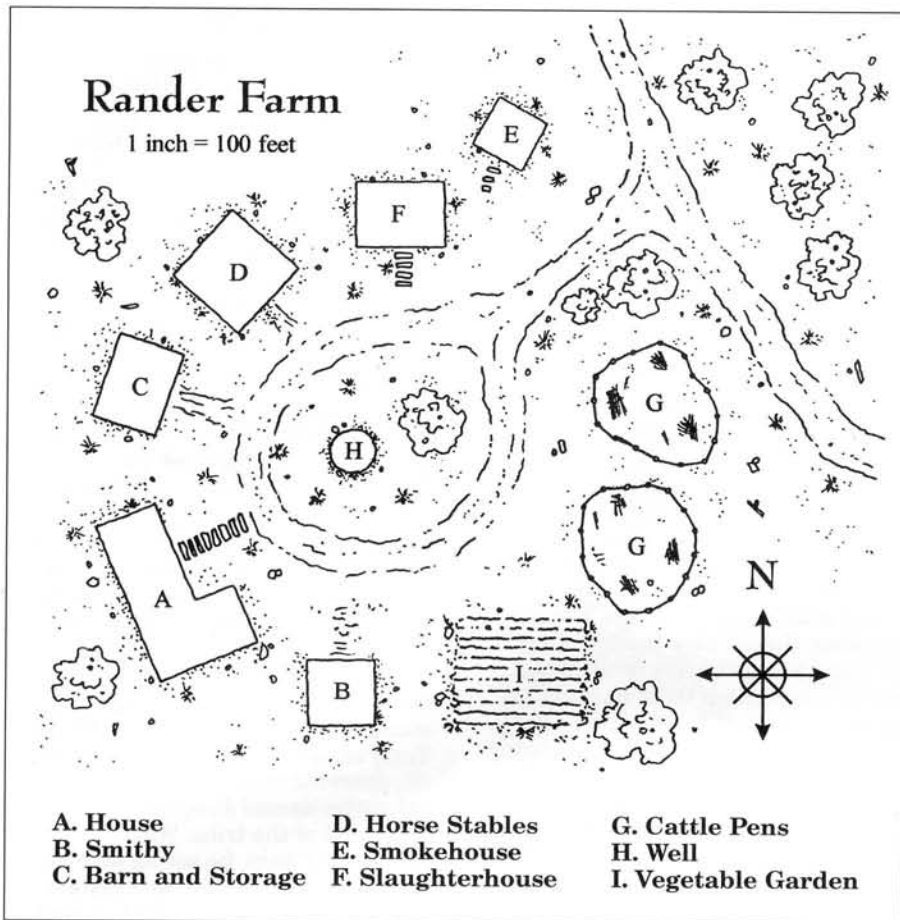
The story behind the stirges begins in a distant eastern land where there lived a large clan of ogre magi (oriental ogres) known as the Dripping Blade. The ogre magi had been at war with a tribe of elves for years. A sub-chief of the Dripping Blade was a powerful ogre mage named Traig. Traig, an expert in alchemy and zoology, liked using trained beasts in war. Although Traig's chieftain was the true leader of the tribe, Traig's ability to master animals and monsters earned him much respect.

Traig eventually decided that he had thoroughly explored the fauna native to his homeland. Thus, he entrusted his duties to his apprentices and went on a pilgrimage to find new test subjects. He promised his tribe he would bring back the deadliest monsters for their war against the elves.

Arriving in the hills not far from the Randers' farm, Traig soon encountered a tribe of hobgoblins. Traig assumed the form of a hobgoblin, *charmed* the chieftain (a burly hobgoblin named Broggar), and took command of the tribe. With the humanoids' help, he set up an elaborate laboratory in the cave system that was their home. Over the next few years, Broggar became somewhat close to Traig, whose appetite for combat was just as fierce as his. Although the *charm* had since worn off, the two were now close allies.

Having secured living arrangements and followers, Traig turned his attention to the local fauna. (His powers of *invisibility* kept the locals from noticing him.) Eventually, Traig found the stirges that had been residing in the hills. Upon seeing the little creatures in action, he knew they had potential. Traig soon realized that a trained horde of these bloodsucking pests could be a formidable asset in any battle.

For weeks, the crafty ogre mage observed the stirges, taking note of their feeding and mating habits and anything else that could be useful. With the hobgoblins' help, Traig captured a few. He dissected some and tested others with chemical elixirs. He analyzed their blood, saliva, and droppings.



You hear your host screaming in the next room, "Earl! Val! Everyone wake up! Them dang bloodbirds are back!"

Looking out the window, you see about two dozen of the winged marauders hovering over the cattle pens, ready to descend on the terrified bovines.

PCs may grab weapons, exit the house, and reach the cattle pens in one round, but they cannot enter the pens and attack until the following round (barring the use of *dimension door* and similar spells). Characters wishing to don armor must spend several rounds doing so. (Consult the "Getting Into and Out of Armor" section in the *PH*.) When Rander, the farmhands, and the PCs burst out of the house, the stirges turn their attacks on them. (The bloodbirds prefer humans over cows.)

The stirges stab at anyone or anything that comes near. Traig has not yet trained them to attack in an orderly manner. Once a stirge has drained 12 hit points, it is sated and flies off. The bloodbirds all have maximum hit points due to Traig's chemical tampering.

Stirges (22): AC 8; MV 3, fly 18 (C); HD 1+1; hp 9 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; SA attack as 4-HD monsters, drain blood (1d4 points of damage per round); SD can only be removed if killed, victim makes successful Strength check, or fire is applied; SZ S; ML 8 (10 as group); INT animal (1); AL N; XP 175; MM/332.

If the PCs are having trouble here, Robert can grab his crossbow and assist. His fighting skills, however, are not equal to the PCs. The DM should make certain he is not killed in this encounter, though he might be wounded.

The stirges retreat if half of them are slain. They fly one mile southwest, where ten hobgoblins are waiting to collect them in four cages (six stirges per cage) and take them back to area 6. PCs who pursue soon lose the birds in the dark sky. Robert discourages PCs from following the stirges at night, claiming that the wilderness is unsafe to travel in the dark.

After the battle, read or paraphrase the following:

Traig's first breakthrough was the creation of a special stirge-repellant. This oily substance, when rubbed on someone's body, causes stirges to ignore him. The oil was nonmagical, and Traig knew it could be mass-produced with little effort.

After nearly a year of study, Traig started breeding the stirges. He injected both the parents and offspring with chemicals designed to make them more aggressive. He also trained the stirges to come at the sound of a high-pitched whistle.

At first, Traig wasn't sure how to feed the new generation of bloodbirds. Then he remembered the cattle farm. He now instructs his minions to bring the stirge cages within a mile of the farm and set them loose every few days. After the stirges have nourished themselves on cattle blood, the hobgoblins use special whistles (made by Traig) to round them up. In addition, this process serves as a good "field test" for Traig's aerial "troops."

As soon as Traig uncovers the secret to fully trained attack stirges, he intends to take his experiments back to his homeland to begin an elaborate breeding operation. However, by then it is probable that everyone on the Randers' farm will be killed or forced to flee the area.

The Attack

If the PCs choose to stay at the farm, Robert gladly accommodates them. The day passes without incident, and the PCs are free to perform any business they were sent for. However, at midnight, Traig launches his next "feeding operation." If the PCs decide to stand guard, the boxed text may need to be altered:

You awaken from a deep slumber with a soft humming in your ears. The humming intensifies until, suddenly, these drones are replaced by the howls of frightened cattle.

The battle has ended, but it is far from over. Robert Rander is red-faced and utterly furious.

"Dagnabbit!!" he yells. "That did it! Listen up, ladies and gents! I'll pay anyone five gold coins for every one of them dang-blasted critters ya bring me on a platter! I want those flying roaches dead! You hear me?! *Dead!!*"

Robert is sincere in his offer. After he has calmed down, he tells the PCs that the most he can afford is 300 gp. He agrees to pay the full amount if the PCs discover what has triggered these recent stirge attacks. (Robert has no idea there is a mastermind behind the attacks. He suspects some environmental factor might be the cause of his recent misfortune.)

The DM may wish to give the PCs added incentive besides money. Perhaps one PC's prized mount is injured in the stirge attack, or perhaps a bull that the PCs intended to buy is killed. If the PCs are Good-aligned, they should investigate out of a sense of responsibility.

The PCs may heal their wounds before searching the surrounding area. However, in four days, another swarm of bloodbirds (of equal size) attacks. These attacks continue every few days until Rander's livestock is devastated.

The Wilderness

If the PCs search the wilderness for the stirges, Robert suggests they wait for daylight. He assumes (correctly) that the bloodbirds are nocturnal creatures, and the best time to hunt for them is during the day. If the PCs didn't notice it, Robert points out that the stirges always flee southwest after feeding.

The surrounding area is comprised of tall hills. Trees are scattered here and there, and the ground is rocky and dry. Natural paths meander through the hills. No matter where the PCs travel above ground, they see no stirges; the hobgoblins have taken all of the ones in this section of the wilderness to Traig's underground laboratory (see area 6 for details).

Areas of interest in the wilderness are detailed below. The DM should feel free to include random encounters as the situation permits.

1. Making Music.

You haven't been traveling long when you hear beautiful music ahead. After maneuvering around some stony protrusions, you see the source of the music. A beautiful, slender woman with flaxen hair and pointed ears sits against a boulder, playing a silver lyre and singing. She has dragonfly wings and wears gossamer robes. As she sings, the wind gently shakes the trees and bushes, causing them to dance to her gentle rhythm.

The woman is Sylvia, a sylph who lives on a hillside several miles south. Sylvia has been composing her melody for days.

If the PCs talk to Sylvia, she asks them their opinion of her music. If they say it's lacking feeling or is otherwise flawed, the sylph's head droops, and she flies away to her hillside to find better inspiration. With her fast flying speed and the ability to render herself *invisible* at will, it is unlikely the PCs can follow her.

If the PCs say the music is flawless or beautiful, she smiles and tries to answer any questions the PCs have. Sylvia knows the following:

- ❖ The stirges have never been a problem in this region until recently. However, some nights in the last few weeks, she's heard distant humming and rustling noises suggesting that the stirges originate from somewhere farther west. Since she is an elemental spirit with magical blood, the stirges have always left her alone.

- ❖ A tribe of hobgoblins live to the west. She doesn't know exactly where, since she has never explored that area.

- ❖ The hills are under the protection of an entity called Rock. If the PCs ask who he is, Sylvia says he's "exactly what you would expect someone named 'Rock' to be."

If the PCs attack Sylvia, she attempts to *charm* the toughest looking Fighter and use him to hold off the rest as she retreats.

Sylvia's treasure consists of 350 gp worth of jewelry, given to her by former lovers. She wears the jewelry openly and attacks if anyone tries to steal them, using *lightning bolt* and *continual light* (cast on an aggressor's eyes) if necessary. She can also sum-

mon an air elemental to aid her, but she does so only as a last resort. The air elemental remains until Sylvia is no longer endangered.

Sylvia (sylph): AC 9; MV 12, fly 36 (A); HD 3; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 0; Dmg nil; SA spells (cast as 7th-level Wizard), summon air elemental once per week; SD *invisibility* at will; MR 50%; SZ M; ML 14; INT exceptional (15); AL NG; XP 2,000; MM/101.

Spells (4/3/2/1): 1st—*charm person, dancing lights, sleep, wall of fog*; 2nd—*continual light, know alignment, stinking cloud*; 3rd—*gust of wind, lightning bolt*; 4th—*charm monster*.

Air elemental: AC 2; MV fly 36 (A); HD 12; hp 78; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 2–20; SA whirlwind; SD +2 or better weapon to hit; SZ H; ML 16; INT low (6); AL N; XP 7,000; MM/99.

2. Rock's Domain. This area is the lair of another elemental spirit, a galeb duhr known as Rock. When the PCs arrive in the vicinity, read or paraphrase the following:

You feel strange vibrations coming from the ground. At the same time, a very low rumble can be heard up ahead.

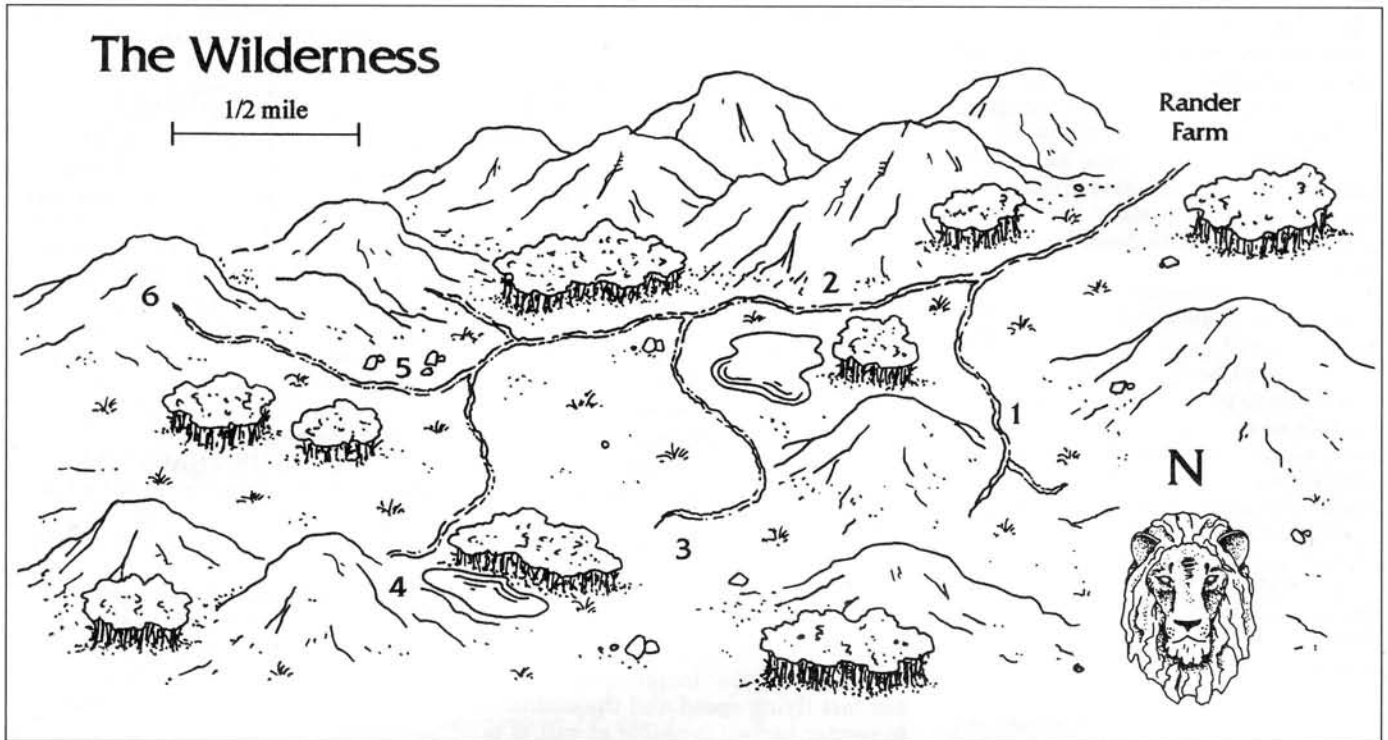
Looking westward, you see the source of the sound. A large boulder rocks back and forth. Two smaller stones are rolling around it, keeping time to the odd "music."

Rock is not hostile unless the PCs destroy or harm any of the surrounding stones. He does not initiate conversation but is polite if spoken to. Those who converse with Rock find him somewhat egocentric, often condescending to those less powerful than himself.

If the PCs state they are looking for stirges, Rock doesn't know what became of them, but he suspects the hobgoblins have something to do with it; he once overheard a pair of hobgoblins complaining about being "stung" by the flying beasts accidentally. The stirges have always left Rock alone because he has no blood on which to feed.

Rock knows everything Sylvia knows, plus the following:

- ❖ The hobgoblins have been in the area for ten years. Their lair is "below the tallest hill to the west, behind two big firs." Rock generally stays



away from their lair. He has no reason to incur the hobgoblins' animosity and just wants to be left alone.

❖ Though he can't say for sure, Rock believes there are about thirty male hobgoblins. (That's the most he's seen at one time.) Rock might know some of the hobgoblins' names, at the DM's discretion.

Rock gives the PCs directions to the hobgoblins' lair but does not go there himself.

The PCs would be wise not to attack Rock, as his great strength and virtual indestructibility make him a terrible opponent indeed. If attacked, he uses his *transmute rock to mud* ability to alter the consistency of the ground around him. PCs in melee range cannot fight Rock while sinking into the mud.

Rock (galeb duhr): AC -2; MV 6; HD 9; hp 52; #AT 2; Dmg 3-18/3-18; SA animate 1-2 rocks, cast *stone shape* at will; cast *move earth*, *pass-wall*, *transmute rock to mud*, and *wall of stone* each once per day (as a 20th-level Wizard); SD immune to lightning and normal fire, saves at +4 against magical fire; SW suffers double damage and saves at -4 against cold; SZ L; ML 17; INT very (12); AL N; XP 9,000; MM/122.

3. Lonely Grave.

You see a strange monument up ahead. A 7'-long stone sarcophagus flanked by two stone lions sits to the side of the path. Near the stone coffin is the mangled body of a hobgoblin clutching a broken sword.

This Druid's resting place has two stone lions (variations of gargoyles) guarding it. These guardians slew an unfortunate hobgoblin just last week after he tried to pry open the coffin. The other hobgoblins have since learned to leave this grave alone.

The PCs can safely approach the grave, even touch it. However, should anyone try to open it, the two stone lions come to life. They first try to scare away the PCs with their roars and then attack with claws and teeth. They do not pursue if the PCs flee. On the grave is an inscription written in Common:

Here lies Alamere Three-trees, beloved druid of the Third Circle and former protector of this region.

If the PCs destroy the lions and break open the coffin, it is hardly worth the trouble; there are no valuables inside. Alamere was actually a low-level Druid who took a vow of

poverty. The lions were donated by a charitable archmage. PC Druids, Paladins, and Good-aligned Priests may be punished by their deities for desecrating Alamere's resting place. Casting *speak with dead* on Alamere's remains does nothing, as the Druid has been dead for centuries.

If a Priest casts *speak with dead* on the dead hobgoblin, much can be learned. First, the hobgoblin's spirit is allowed a saving throw, unless the casting Priest is also Lawful Evil. If its saving throw fails, the hobgoblin reveals some of the following, depending on what is asked:

❖ The hobgoblins' lair lies "under the mountain, behind two big trees."

❖ The trail leading to the hobgoblins' lair is watched by a half dozen hobgoblins. Their task is to ambush anyone seen approaching the lair.

❖ The current leader of the hobgoblins is Traig, a "real smart hobgoblin who knows lots about bloodbirds and carries a large sword." Traig is the one behind the bloodbird attacks. (This is true as far as the dead hobgoblin knows—only the tribe's chief, Broggar, and Priest, Witzlin, have seen Traig's true appearance.)

Stone lions (2): AC 2; MV 21; HD 8+3; hp 51, 45; THAC0 11; #AT 3;

Dmg 1-8/1-8/1-10; SA roar once every 3 rounds (acts as *scare* spell); SD magical weapons needed to hit; SZ M; ML 16; INT low (5); AL NG; XP 3,000; MC Annual 3/49.

4. Poisoned Water. The large spring on the east side of the trail looks like a normal pool of refreshing water. However it carries a dangerous taint.

Although Traig has enjoyed some success with chemicals, all scientists experience their share of failures. Whenever one of Traig's concoctions fails, he dumps it in this spring. Repeated dumpings have poisoned the water.

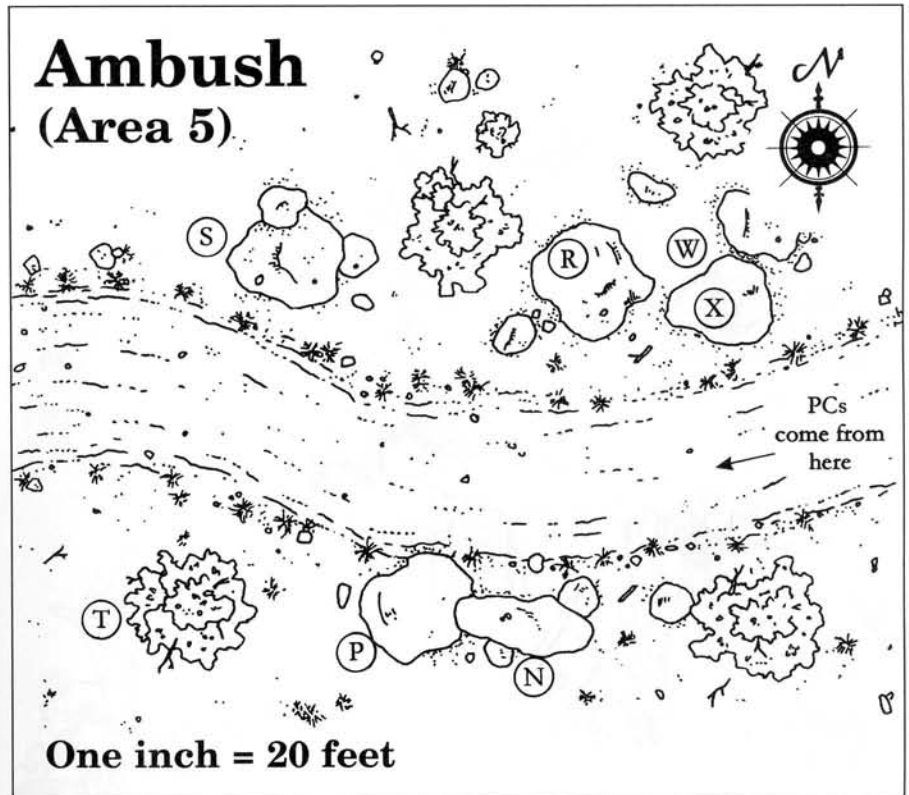
Anyone who drinks from this spring must save vs. poison or suffer an effect identical to the spell *confusion*. However, this effect is not magical in nature, so *dispel magic* has no effect; *neutralize poison*, however, negates the delirium immediately. A *purify food and drink* or *neutralize poison* spell cast on the pool cleanses it of the chemical contaminants.

5. Hobgoblin Ambush. At this point, the PCs have entered the hobgoblins' territory. The DM should avoid describing the area in too much detail, so the PCs are less suspicious. The trail is much like the other trails, except that the boulders flanking the path are unusually tall.

Hiding by the path are six hobgoblins. The hobgoblins' names are Ravoc, Xal'chag, Warmok, Prengrel, Nurjak, and Sklarr. On the map, the letters indicate their positions; thus, "R" is Ravoc, "X" is Xal'chag, and so forth. Ravoc and Xal'chag are atop the two boulders near where the PCs approach. The others are hiding behind boulders.

This ambush has been set for several months. Traig has made it even deadlier by giving each hobgoblin a dose of a potion of *invisibility*. When the lookout (Xal'chag) sees the PCs, he whistles a bird call, and the other hobgoblins quaff their potions.

A seventh hobgoblin (the one marked "T") is actually Traig *polymorphed* into hobgoblin form. (He uses his innate magical ability to turn *invisible*.) The only clue to his true nature is his katana; a successful Weaponsmithing proficiency check reveals that Traig's sword is an oriental weapon.



One inch = 20 feet

Traig is leading the ambush and has brought with him a cage holding six stirges to help. See "The Attack" above for the stirges' statistics and area 6M for Traig's statistics.

Hobgoblins (6): AC 5 (10 when unarmored, 1 while *invisible*); MV 9; HD 1+1; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SZ M; ML 12; INT average (9); AL LE; XP 35; MM/191; see the "Traig's Hobgoblins" sidebar (page 51) for each hobgoblin's weapons, hit points, and treasure.

Unless the PCs are anticipating some kind of ambush, they suffer a -2 penalty to their surprise rolls due to the hobgoblins' *invisibility*. (PCs with the Alertness proficiency suffer no penalty.) The hobgoblins become visible the instant they attack.

Round 1: As the PCs enter this part of the path, Ravoc and Xal'chag, standing on top of the boulders, throw their nets at the two weakest looking PCs, ignoring armor and shield modifiers (magical and Dexterity modifiers apply, however). Entangled PCs cannot attack until they free themselves by making a successful Strength check. The other hobgoblins wait behind their cover

while Traig releases the stirges from the cage. He and the hobgoblins have rubbed themselves with stirge repellent and are not susceptible to attack. The hungry stirges smell the PCs' blood and attack them.

Round 2: Ravoc and Xal'chag leap down and use their spears to stab any PCs caught in the nets. Ensnared PCs lose the benefits of shield and Dexterity modifiers to AC. If no PCs are caught, Ravoc and Xal'chag engage in melee. Nurjak and Sklarr step out from their hiding places and open fire with bows. If the PCs advance, they back up while shooting.

Round 3: Warmok circles around to attack a PC from behind. Prengrel also circles around Nurjak to attack from the side. Other hobgoblins use similar tactics as last round. Traig, still *invisible*, shouts encouragement to his men (in Hobgoblin) and goads the PCs (in Common).

Round 4+: If three hobgoblins are killed, the rest (including Traig) retreat. The stirges attack until slain or sated. The hobgoblins must flee on foot. Traig, on the other hand, turns himself *invisible* (if not already so) and *flies* back to the lair.



Hobgoblins ambush the heroes on a wayward trail.

If a PC manages to locate Traig and attack him, the crafty ogre mage swipes once with his katana then seemingly disappears, retreating as described above. If worse comes to worst, he assumes *gaseous form*. If the PCs somehow manage to keep up

with him (which should be nigh impossible, given his powers), run combat with Traig as detailed under "Facing Traig," described later.

PCs may capture hobgoblins and interrogate them, but only Nurjak and Sklarr speak Common (badly).

The hobgoblins are treacherous and trained to lie when interrogated. If the PCs threaten them with death or torture, the hobgoblins must make a morale check. Failing it means the hobgoblins reveal the location of the lair, but nothing more.

The hobgoblins are far more susceptible to bribery; if one of them is bribed with 100 gp or more, he talks freely. He tells the PC where the lair is and confirms that Traig, the hobgoblin leader, is behind the stirge attacks. The hobgoblins know very little about Traig, only that he is "really smart." The PCs can obtain no additional information from any of them. The hobgoblins refuse to lead PCs to their lair, even if *charmed*, since it would mean certain death.

6. Hobgoblins' Lair. Hidden behind two large fir trees at the base of a tall hill is the entrance to the cave system where Traig and his evil minions dwell. These caves once belonged to a tribe of kobolds until the hobgoblins killed and ate them. Unless otherwise noted, all caves are 12–15 (1d4+11) feet high.

No matter what time of day the PCs arrive, the hobgoblins are in the middle of eating (breakfast, lunch, or dinner). The majority of the males (10 of them) are in area **6G** feasting; two males are guarding the lair entrance (area **6A**), two are guarding the treasure room (area **6J**), and two more are cooking in area **6E**. The tribal Priest, Witzlin, is in area **6H**, meditating. The sub-chief, Grune, and the chief, Broggar, are making plans in area **6K**. Assuming he survived the ambush at area **5**, Traig himself is in area **6M** drinking tea. Tea relaxes him, and he needs to be sharp when the PCs arrive. There are a few other monsters in the lair as well.

If Traig made it back to the lair after the ambush, he warns his allies. Thus, the hobgoblins receive a +2 bonus to their surprise rolls (that is, they are only surprised on a 1).

Only areas **6E**, **6M**, and **6N** are illuminated; the hobgoblins and the ogre mage have infravision. The PCs need their own light sources.

6A. Guard Post. The entrance to the cave is guarded by two hobgoblins, Grengol and Varn. They are sharing a flask of brandy and telling each other

raunchy hobgoblin jokes; they are not drunk, however.

Although there are only two of them, it takes only one hobgoblin to raise an alarm. They aren't dumb enough to take on the entire party by themselves and run to area **6G** at the first sign of trouble.

6B. Weapon Storage. This cavern contains many spare weapons used by the hobgoblins. They are all neatly placed on racks and pegs.

Included are five handaxes, six longswords, four shortswords, two bastard swords, one two-handed sword, eight morning stars, ten daggers, four longbows, and twenty flight arrows in a quiver. None of these weapons are magical, but they are well made and can be sold for standard prices. The room also contains a grindstone and five flasks of polish, used for the weapons.

6C. Males' Sleeping Quarters.

These two caves are where the males of the tribe sleep. They are currently without occupants, containing only straw beds and a few personal belongings, such as tinderboxes, bones, and paste jewelry. There is no treasure here.

6D. Females' Sleeping Quarters.

This cave is occupied by twenty hobgoblin females and twenty-five children. The females have 5 hp each, the children 2 hp each. These hobgoblins are noncombative (AC 10); if attacked, they scream and cower in the corners. This brings every male hobgoblin in the complex to their aid in 2 rounds. Enraged at the attacks on their mates and offspring, the male hobgoblins receive a +2 bonus to their attack rolls and need not make morale checks.

6E. Kitchen. Unless they've been drawn elsewhere, two hobgoblins, Krang and Keldrek, are stirring a pot of foul-smelling stew over a firepit. These chefs are enraged at anyone intruding in their kitchen and attack furiously. Combat here is 50% likely to alert the hobgoblins in area **6G** (if they haven't already been dealt with).

The room contains many pots, pans, utensils, and plates, all of them worthless, as well as a few rabbit carcasses the cooks were about to cut up.

Traig's Hobgoblins

Area	Name	hp	Weapons	Treasure
5	Ravoc	7	net, spear	pouch (17 cp)
	Xal'chag	7	net, spear	pouch (15 cp)
	Warmok	8	spear	none
	Prengrel	5	spear	pouch (12 cp)
	Nurjak	6	shortbow, 20 flight arrows, spear	none
	Sklarr	6	shortbow, 22 flight arrows, spear	chunk of quartz (15 gp)
6A	Grengol	8	halberd	silver ring (20 gp)
	Varn	7	halberd	none
6E	Krang	6	meat cleaver (handax)	none
	Keldrek	5	rolling pin (club)	none
6G	Gurdigar	9	morning star	armband (5 gp)
	Jorok	8	longsword	pouch (10 sp)
	Mordom	7	shortsword	pouch (20 cp)
	Lurz	8	footman's flail	nose ring (11 gp)
	Sarmakai	6	morning star	none
	Elan'dru	7	bastard sword	necklace (10 gp)
	Murzag	7	morning star	nose ring (8 gp)
	Zartang	6	longsword	none
6H	Gaaz	5	morning star	pouch (19 cp)
	Ulun	4	shortsword	none
	Witzlin	29	handax +1, broadsword	see area 6H
6J	Horvok	9	halberd	see area 6J
	Frulgar	9	halberd	see area 6J
6K	Grune	23	battle-ax, dagger	see area 6K
	Broggar	37	katana	see area 6K

6F. Food Storage. This cave serves as a pantry. It contains the carcasses of several deer, rabbits, antelopes, wild ducks, and one bear, as well as several crates of vegetables, cheeses, and butter (mostly stale). There is nothing of value here.

6G. Dining Room. As the PCs approach this cavern, they hear the sound of laughing and conversation. The ceiling of the cave is 20 feet high. A long table is set up inside the room, around which sit ten hobgoblins. (See "Traig's Hobgoblins" sidebar above for names, hit points, and possessions.) The table is laden with platters of cooked ducks and rabbits, as well as great tankards of ale. The hobgoblins talk loudly, eat with their hands, and splatter food and drink everywhere. They are not drunk, however, and suffer no attack penalties.

Because of the hobgoblins' crude noises, the PCs cannot be surprised. If the PCs fail to achieve surprise themselves, one of the hobgoblins notices them and yells to his comrades. After grunting something in their own language, they pick up

their weapons and attack. The hobgoblins attempt to overwhelm the PCs. They are wise enough to target Wizards once they are identified.

Noises of combat or calls to arms are 50% likely to disturb Witzlin (see area **6H**); the hobgoblin Priest then picks up his weapons and comes to investigate, arriving in 1 round.

6H. Priest's Quarters. This cave belongs to Witzlin, the tribe's Priest. The following boxed text assumes that Witzlin is present when the PCs arrive; if he's been lured elsewhere, the text may need to be altered.

Crude furniture and art clutter this cave, and the smell of incense fills the air. Sitting crosslegged on a purple cushion is a hobgoblin muttering softly to himself. Near him are candles, a handax, and a broadsword. A small, translucent orb slowly orbits his head.

The hobgoblin's eyes pop open, and he angrily glares at you.

The hobgoblin Priest doesn't like Traig and cares even less for his

experiments, but so far the ogre mage has proved himself a powerful ally. Witzlin has seen Traig's true form, but Broggar has ordered him not to reveal Traig's true nature to the other hobgoblins. Witzlin is loyal to Broggar and would never willingly betray the chieftain or his tribe.

Witzlin is willing to stand toe to toe with anyone who challenges him. His weapons and spells make him a formidable opponent. He first tries to cast *resist fire* and *protection from good* on himself before attacking with his offensive spells.

The room contains many religious items (bone amulets, unholy ceremonial weapons, and so forth). Good PCs who destroy these items should receive 200 XP. A box under the bed contains Witzlin's savings of 350 gp. The pieces of art displayed about the cave (paintings and clay sculptures mostly) are ugly and worthless.

Witzlin, male hobgoblin P5 of Nomog-Geaya: AC 5; MV 9; hp 29; THAC0 18; #AT 2; Dmg by weapon type +1 (Strength bonus); Str 16, Dex 9, Con 12, Int 11 (12 with *ioun stone*), Wis 12, Cha 7 (14 to hobgoblins); SA spells; SZ M (7' tall); ML 16; AL LE; XP 650; MM/191 (modified); chainmail, broadsword, *handax +1*, *ioun stone* (scarlet and blue sphere; adds 1 point to Intelligence), unholy symbol of Nomog-Geaya.

Spells (3/3/1): 1st—*cause light wounds*, *magical stone*, *protection from good*; 2nd—*resist fire*, *spiritual hammer*, *withdraw*; 3rd—*cause disease*.

As a Priest of Nomog-Geaya, Witzlin can employ two weapons at once without penalty. He can also cast *ray of enfeeblement* once per day.

Witzlin is a tall, muscular, and particularly ugly hobgoblin. He speaks Common as well as his own tongue.

6I. Refuse Pit. This cave is empty save for a 5'-square, 8'-deep pit in the center. A foul stench of waste and offal rises from the hole.

Any non-hobgoblin approaching the hole is attacked by the lair's waste disposal system—an otyugh. The creature is an ally of the hobgoblins, recognizes them by scent, and doesn't attack them. The otyugh usually lives on waste and garbage but wouldn't reject a snack of fresh meat.

When a human or demihuman approaches the pit, it reaches up with a long tentacle to grab anything tasty and drag it into its filthy lair. It has no treasure.

Otyugh: AC 3; MV 6; HD 6; hp 42; #AT 3; Dmg 1-8/1-8/2-5; SA grapple (constricted opponent suffers 1d3+1 points of damage per round; bite is +2 to hit), bite 90% likely to cause debilitating (80%) or fatal (20%) disease; SD never surprised, immune to disease; SZ M; INT low (5); AL N; XP 650; MM/283.

6J. Treasury. The doorway to this cavern is blocked by a gate, which is locked with a superior mechanism (-20% penalty to a Thief's Open Locks roll). Broggar has the key. A *knock* spell also opens the gate.

This small cave contains the tribe's wealth, most of it in large sacks. Guarding the treasure from inside the room are two hobgoblins, Horvok and Frugar. They are currently asleep, leaning against the wall. However, they are light sleepers, and any sound (such as the gate opening, or a battle in area 6G) awakens them. Their first reaction is to hurl a sack containing three live rattlesnakes at the intruders, far enough away to keep from being bitten themselves. They fight to the death to protect the treasure.

The treasure bags contain 1,205 cp, 892 sp, 565 gp, 15 semi-precious stones (worth 20 gp each), a nonmagical ring set with a small diamond (300 gp), a set of four silver bells (20 gp each), and a set of 32 ivory and onyx chess pieces (5 gp each, or 280 gp for the set). None of the hobgoblins knows what the chess pieces are used for, but they value the ivory and onyx; Traig has never seen chess either, but he suspects the pieces belong to a game of some kind.

Rattlesnakes (3): AC 6; MV 15; HD 2+1; hp 16, 14, 13; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA poisonous bite (save at +3; onset time 1-4 turns; causes incapacitation for 2-8 days); SZ S; ML 8; INT animal (1); AL N; XP 175; MM/320 (snake, poisonous).

6K. Chief's Cavern. This cavern contains a bed and belongings for Broggar, the tribe's chieftain. In addition to the bed, there is a desk and table. Mounted on the walls are six

trophies—heads of powerful monsters Broggar has killed, including an ogre, a manticores, a kuo-toa, a griffin, and both heads of a two-headed troll (his proudest accomplishment). The necks of the troll heads were quenched with acid to prevent regeneration.

Unless they have been lured elsewhere, Broggar and his sub-chief Grune are here. Both are trained Fighters with superior hit points and fighting skills.

Broggar, male hobgoblin F5 (chief): AC 2; MV 9; hp 37; THAC0 16 (14 with Strength and specialization bonuses); #AT 1 or 3/2 (with specialized weapon); Dmg by weapon +3 (Strength and specialization bonuses); Str 17, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 9, Cha 8 (16 to hobgoblins); SZ M; ML 15; AL LE; XP 270; MM/191 (modified); chainmail, katana (specialized; see below).

Broggar speaks his own tongue, Common, and Orcish.

Broggar is Traig's chief assistant and trusted friend. He is a veteran of many conflicts with orcs, dwarves, and elves. He especially hates elves; several years ago, an elf gouged out his left eye in a fight, forcing Broggar to wear a leather patch.

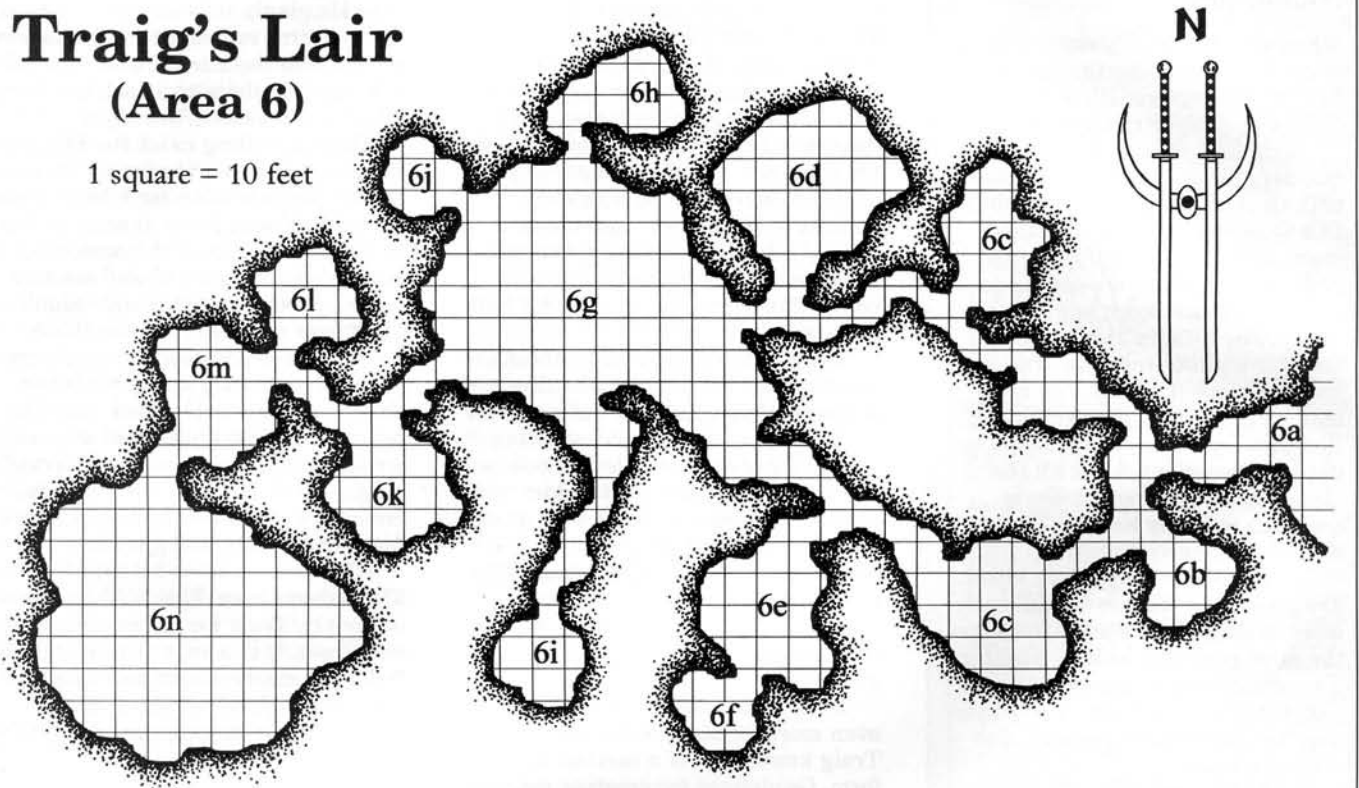
Traig has loaned Broggar a valuable gift: a katana. This oriental sword is described in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*. Broggar has practiced with the katana extensively and is now specialized with it. When used with one hand, a katana inflicts 1d10 points of damage to size M or smaller creatures, 1d12 points of damage to larger ones. Used two-handed, the weapon inflicts 2d6 points of damage to all creatures. Broggar prefers the two-handed style. Note that this is not the same katana used by Traig in the earlier ambush.

Grune, male hobgoblin F3 (sub-chief): AC 3; MV 9; hp 23; THAC0 18 (17 with specialization); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +3 (Strength and specialization bonuses); Str 16, Dex 9, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 6 (14 to other hobgoblins); SZ M; ML 14; AL LE; XP 120; MM/191 (modified); chainmail, small shield, battle-ax (specialized), dagger.

Grune is a grim-faced and fierce warrior. As a reminder of his greatest victories, he has three skulls (belonging to two humans and a dwarf) tied to his belt.

Traig's Lair (Area 6)

1 square = 10 feet



The sub-chief despises Traig, since he feels Broggar trusts the ogre's opinions more than his (and he is correct). He does not automatically betray the tribe (he hates humans more), but if Traig gets in trouble, Grune does not lift a finger to help the ogre mage. Grune has never seen Traig in his true form, but Grune is smart enough to suspect the hobgoblin "scientist" is more than he claims to be.

Broggar commands Grune to attack the PCs while he retreats to area **6M**. He stays there with Traig to await the PCs.

In the desk is a leather bag containing 230 pp as well as a string of small pearls worth 300 gp. This is Broggar's stash, kept in case he needs to flee the lair.

6L. Traig's Storeroom. This cave is used by Traig as his storeroom. All hobgoblins save Broggar are forbidden to venture this far into the lair.

The room is full of wooden crates, labeled in Traig's home language. The stack in the north corner contains

flasks and bottles of chemicals and scientific apparatus. The chemicals here are quite common (salts, acids, bases, and so forth) and are worth only 50 gp total to an alchemist or Wizard. The acids are too weak to be used as effective weapons.

Another stack contains Traig's special store of food and wine. The food is gourmet, including caviar, pheasants, escargot, and truffles, and the wines are of excellent vintage. Disguised as a human, Traig buys or steals most of this food from the nearest city. PCs can sell the food and wine for a total of 650 gp.

Other boxes include books that the ogre has no need for in his lab. They are written in an oriental language and have little value to the PCs. If they are translated by magic, they prove to be books of alchemy and animal science.

One box is of special value. It contains five bottles of a nonmagical, oily fluid. The labels on the bottles read "Stirge Repellent" in the ogre mage's language. Each bottle contains ten doses; a PC rubbing a dose on his

skin is ignored by stirges for two hours (12 turns). Each bottle is worth 20 gp to a Wizard or alchemist.

6M. Traig's Quarters. The following text assumes that the PCs encounter Traig here:

This 15'-high cave smells of sweet incense and is cluttered with beautiful but oversized furniture, including a bed and desk. A fire blazes in a large fireplace embedded in the west wall. Hanging on the south-east wall are paintings of bizarre landscapes.

Sitting in a huge armchair is a 10-foot tall humanoid dressed in brightly colored clothes. He has blue skin, green hair, and two ivory horns protruding from his forehead. He is drinking from a silver cup.

He addresses you in a peculiar accent. "So these are the ruffians who've invaded my home? Welcome ... I've been waiting for you."

The creature is, of course, Traig. The ogre mage is polite, as this is his

Facing Traig

When the PCs finally engage Traig in combat, it is important to note Traig's intelligence. He is a clever fighter and cagey tactician.

Traig first tries to get from his quarters (area **6M**) to his lab (area **6N**). Once there, he waits for the PCs to follow. Then, as he cajoles them, he turns himself *invisible* and uses his *chime of opening* to open the stirge cages, one per round. The hungry stirges attack the PCs without reprieve. Traig has covered himself with stirge repellent, so the stirges ignore him. If Broggar is present, he has also used the repellent. After all the cages have been opened, Traig wades in with his katana. Broggar, if alive, assists.

If most of the stirges are killed, Traig's tactics become significantly more deadly. He attempts to *charm* the most powerful-looking Fighter; if successful, he commands the PC to defend him from attack. He then uses his potion of *fire breath*, one dose at a time.

Traig does not fight to the death to preserve his lair. If seriously wounded, he tries to flee. He assumes *gaseous form* and seeps through one of the holes in the ceiling. (If he used that ability to escape the ambush at area **5**, he turns himself *invisible* and *flies* to the main entrance, using *cone of cold* if the PCs pursue.) Once on the surface, he solidifies and flies to safety. If followed, he turns around and casts his *cone of cold* at pursuers. If the spell has already been exhausted, he tries to blow them out of the sky with his *wind fan*.

Traig might return a few hours later to salvage what remains of his lab. If he does, he turns himself *invisible* and investigates. If the PCs are still there, he does not confront them, preferring to live to fight another day.

style, but his politeness is merely a facade to disorient his foes. In battle, he is ruthless and cold.

Traig (ogre mage): AC 4; MV 9, fly 15 (B); HD 5+2; hp 39; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 1–12 or by weapon type; SA/SD attacks and saves as 9-HD

monster, spell-like abilities; SZ L (10' tall); ML 14; INT genius (17); AL LE; XP 1,400; MM/272.

Traig can, at will, *fly* (for 12 turns), become *invisible*, cause *darkness* in a 10' radius, *polymorph self* (humanoids only), and regenerate one hit point per round. Once per day he can cast *charm person* and *sleep*, assume gaseous form, and create a *cone of cold* (60 feet long, terminal diameter of 20 feet, inflicting 8–64 points damage; save vs. spell for half damage).

Traig fights with a large katana (see area **6K** for details). He also keeps the following magical items on his person: a *ring of water walking*, an *amulet of inescapable location*, a pair of *boots of elvenkind* (taken from his tribe's enemies), a *chime of opening*, a *wind fan*, a potion of *fire breath*, and a potion of *delusion*. (He thinks this last one is a potion of *extra-healing*.) He also keeps the keys to the cages in area **6N** with him at all times.

If the DM wants to make Traig even more formidable, he may give Traig knowledge of a martial arts form. Guidelines for creating martial arts are in *The Complete Ninja's Handbook*.

Traig is an expert in alchemy and zoology and knows a smattering of many other fields. He should be considered a sage with those areas of expertise. In addition to his own language, he speaks Common, Elvish, Dwarvish, Orcish, and Hobgoblin.

Traig is 10 feet tall, weighs 325 pounds, and is 52 years old. He has a large tattoo of a bloody sword on his back (his clan's symbol). He considers himself a cultured nobleman and gentleman, far removed from the brutish western ogres. (He denies that his people are even related to them.) Traig is never condescending and never loses his temper. He is superlatively kind and polite, even toward a person he plans to eat. This doesn't translate well to unintelligent animals and beasts, however. He sees animals as nothing more than tools and things to be tinkered with.

Traig considers his hobgoblin allies useful pawns and tolerates their crudeness. He would think nothing of sacrificing them or betraying them (except Broggar, whose loyalty he admires).

Traig is quite willing to talk to the PCs. He gladly tells them what he is doing in this region, about his experiments with the stirges, and even why he's sending them to attack the farm ("Nothing personal," he says).

Traig is willing to let the PCs live, so long as they surrender all magical items (compensation for killing a few hobgoblins) and leave at once. If the PCs refuse or attack the ogre, refer to the adjacent "Facing Traig" sidebar.

The cave contains many valuables. The silver tea service is worth 400 gp. The three paintings (brought from Traig's homeland) are worth 50 gp each. A drawer in the desk contains a bag holding 556 gp, as well as several scrolls and papers (written in Traig's language) and a *manual of gainful exercise*. Finally, the bed's sheets are fine satin, worth 150 gp.

6N. Laboratory. This 40'-high cave is used by Traig for his experiments on stirges. It is a vast grotto, and the ceiling is marked with several small holes through which the sunlight pours. The holes measure about 1 foot in diameter.

The most significant features in the room are the three large, mesh cages hanging from the ceiling. Each cage contains twenty stirges that chitter and flap their wings when anyone enters. These stirges have statistics identical to those that attacked the farm. (See "The Attack" for details.) If any escaped that encounter, they are here as well, digesting the cows' blood. The cages are locked, and Traig carries the keys.

In the western part of the cave is a large bin containing stirge guano. This blood-red substance is thinner than bat guano. Embedded in the guano are several dozen clutches of stirge eggs. If left alone, they hatch in about two weeks.

The eastern part of the room is taken up by counters and tables. The work tables contain all the paraphernalia necessary for a proper biology lab, such as scalpels, dissecting trays, syringes, clamps, probes, and other odd items. Other tables contain alchemical equipment such as flasks, beakers, and test tubes, as well as an assortment of chemicals in labeled bottles. These chemicals are rather rare; PCs can sell them to an alchemist or Wizard for 500 gp total.

Many of the chemicals are poisonous (almost every poison type is represented), but such bottles are clearly labeled with skull-and-crossbones symbols. The tables also contain three jars of stirge repellent.

In the southern part of the cave is a 10' x 10' glass display case containing several skulls of various large creatures, such as a giant lizard, a hill giant, and an elephant. These skulls were donated by the hobgoblins, who thought Traig could use them. Traig keeps them as macabre decorations. The elephant skull is worth 100 gp for the ivory tusks.

Finally, there is a bookshelf filled with books on science and alchemy. They are written in an oriental language (not Ogre Mage, but the Common tongue spoken by the humans of his homeland). PCs would be hard pressed to find a buyer for these tomes, though an alchemist who could read them would pay about 250 gp for the collection. There are thirty-five books.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs kill every last bloodbird and bring their remains back to the farm, the highest bounty they can receive is 300 gp. Such actions may

not be necessary, however. If the PCs simply release surviving stirges into the wild (hopefully far from the farm), they probably won't bother the Randers again provided Traig conducts no further "experiments."

Robert might pay the PCs the reward if he learns that they killed or drove away the orchestrator of the attacks, but he's understandably worried if Traig escaped.

If Traig did get away, there's no telling where he'll show up next. He continues his experiments on monsters; though he might abandon his work on stirges, his next test subjects could be even deadlier creatures. Regardless, he never forgets the insult of defeat and seeks to feed the PCs to his newest altered beasts. He might even receive help from the rest of the Dripping Blade clan in the future. (On the other hand, the tribe's elven enemies might learn of the PCs involvement and seek to form an alliance with the heroes.) Traig is in no hurry and might loom in the shadows for years. Ω



Special thanks to this issue's playtesters!

Colleen Simpson
 Guy Granger
 David Brasaz
 Chris Hardham
 Carla Dunn
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The elven griffon-riders of Lothmenzo'cath are a stern but hearty breed.

Paul dedicates this adventure to longtime DUNGEON® Adventures editor Barbara G. Young, whose words of encouragement and sound advice have kept him writing over the years.

“Preemptive Strike” is an AD&D® adventure for 3–5 player characters of levels 10–15 (about 50 total levels). Each PC may have one or two henchmen, followers, or hirelings (no lower than 6th-level) accompany the party. The total number of levels of the PCs and their NPCs should be between 60 and 75. A well-balanced group works best, with each member having access to magical weapons and items.

Because this scenario involves a fair amount of aerial combat, the DM should carefully review the rules on aerial combat presented in the *DMG* prior to running the adventure. As written, the adventure gives the PCs the opportunity to learn the Riding—Airborne (Griffon) nonweapon proficiency and to acquire griffons for their use. If the PCs already have the means to fly long distances (such as *brooms* or *carpets of flying*), the DM may need to tailor the adventure.

The text also assumes that the PCs, given their high levels, are nobles with their own keeps, religious strongholds, wizard's towers, or thieves' guilds within a domain ruled by a monarch. The scenario begins in the kingdom of Lungardy or another domain that better suits the DM's campaign. All that is needed is a nearby elven domain and bordering mountainous terrain inhabited by unruly fire giants.

Adventure Background

For months it seemed the Kingdom of Lungardy would go to war with the Duchy of Ballastri to the north, but the two governments stopped their quarreling when a greater threat appeared. Lothmenzo'cath, the Kingdom of the Elves, was invaded by an army of fire giants and their humanoid allies from the Smoking Mountains. Crafty elven archers and Mages have delayed the giants and inflicted terrible losses on the evil invaders, but elven losses have mounted, and it is only a matter of time before Lothmenzo'cath falls. The elves have never been friendly toward their human neighbors, and

PREEMPTIVE STRIKE

BY PAUL CULOTTA

The heat of battle

Artwork by Terry Dykstra
Cartography by Craig Zipse

the kingdom is brewing with rumors about whether Lungardy will aid the elves or hold back its strength, in case the giants don't stop at the border. Rumors are equally rife about whether the Duchy of Ballastri might aid the elves or ally with the giants. Most disturbing of all are occasional sightings of red dragons with giant riders, and thus far no one has heard or seen any reaction by the renowned griffon riders of Lothmenzo'cath.

For the Dungeon Master

To a red dragon, there is nothing tastier than a fair elf maiden. Unlike humans, however, elves have a high resistance to *charm* spells, so the usual red dragon ploy of charming a village into making sacrifices does not work. Furthermore, the elves live in deep forests and are hard to find; when they are found, volleys of finely crafted but lethal elven arrows greet the poor dragon. Burning the forests down is not a good solution either, as the forests of Lothmenzo'cath seem highly resistant to flames, and ill-placed breath attacks could very well consume the tasty treats that the red dragons sought in the first place.

The fire giants of the Smoking Mountains have no particular love for the nearby elves either. Their previous attempts to raid the forests of Lothmenzo'cath have always been frustrated by elven traps and griffon riders who fly their steeds outside the range of the giants' boulders and pepper the invaders with arrows.

A venerable red dragon named Sulfuria came upon a solution to this knotty problem. She approached Bunson, the fire giant king, with a bargain. She and her kin would secure the airspace from the pesky griffon riders and guard the fire giants' supply lines and logistical base. In exchange, the giants and their humanoid allies would invade Lothmenzo'cath, subjugate the elves, and provide the dragons with tasty elf prisoners. Bunson agreed, rusted his allies, and accumulated the necessary facilities and supply sources to sustain the invasion.

When the giants attacked, the appearance of red dragons quickly sent the elven griffon riders into hiding, where the elf king has kept them in reserve. With their griffon riders

out of action, the elves' demise is inevitable even though they are fighting hard and giving up ground slowly.

One elf noble, Kl'maran Windspur, a captain of the griffon riders, chafed at this situation. Sooner or later, he and his comrades would be ordered to make a last-ditch suicidal attack against the powerful red dragons. He pleaded with the king to allow a sneak attack on the giants' logistical base in the Smoking Mountains, but the king stubbornly refused.

Kl'maran resigned himself to following the king's orders, but then another casualty report came from the front. Gla'mereth, an elven archer whom Kl'maran had long adored, was missing, last seen falling under the stout club of an ogre. Burning with the need to avenge Gla'mereth, the griffon rider captain stole five griffons and took them to Lungardy. If the elven king would not allow a raid on the giants' base, perhaps the humans could be convinced to act on his behalf.

Starting the Adventure

A herald visits each PC's residence bearing a message from the King. The message reads as follows:

You are hereby summoned to the Court in Palangard by his Royal Highness, Stephanos III, King of Lungardy. His Majesty wishes it known that the future of the kingdom (and all the holdings of its nobles and people) are in grave danger and that your services are required. Your presence, and that of no more than two of your loyal followers, is urgently requested. Time is of the essence.

*Stephanos III
King of Lungardy*

The following description assumes that the PCs have received the king's message, gathered their followers, linked up with one another, and left for the city of Palangard when the following occurs:

This midsummer day is oppressively hot. As you head toward the city of Palangard, you hear a loud eaglelike screech from the hill to your left. Racing across the sky are five winged griffons. Mounted on

one of them is an elf who blows a high-pitched whistle before twisting in his saddle to fire an arrow at an enormous red dragon in pursuit. Astride the monstrous reptile is red-haired, black-skinned giant wielding a large sword.

At the sound of the whistle, the four riderless griffons scatter in different directions. Meanwhile, the elf's arrow sinks into the dragon's right eye, and with an outraged bellow, it blasts a gout of flame that singes part of the griffon's wing, causing it to flutter down to a field about 100 yards away. Roaring in triumph, the dragon lands and, licking its chops, slinks toward the injured griffon. The elf pulls free of the saddle, unsheathes his sword, and prepares to face the approaching reptile.

The dragon and its fire giant rider were on patrol when they spotted the griffons. They are so focused on destroying the elf rider and his griffon that they do not notice the PCs approaching from the rear. Give the PCs a free round of action, treating the dragon and fire giant as automatically surprised.

PCs with a movement rate of 12 or better can reach the dragon in one round. Once damaged by the PCs, the dragon and giant attack them. The DM should keep in mind the dragon's fear radius (20 yards with +2 to saving throws). Also, the dragon just used its breath weapon and cannot use it for two more rounds. The DM should give PCs who attack the dragon's blinded right side a +2 to their attack rolls. The dragon suffers a -4 attack penalty when striking opponents on its blinded side. The dragon and giant fight on the ground until the dragon has lost 40 hit points, at which point it takes flight and flees. If the dragon loses more than three-quarters of its hit points, it cannot fly, and in that instance, both it and the giant fight to the death.

Brimstone (fire giant): AC -1; MV 15; HD 15+2; hp 92; THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 2d10+10; SA hurl rocks for 2d10 points of damage; SD immune to non-magical fire; magical fire inflicts -1 hp/die damage; catch large missiles 50% of time; SZ H (18' tall); ML 16; INT low (7); AL LE; XP 8,000; MM/137.

Skorch (adult male red dragon): AC -5; MV 9, fly 30 (C; D when mounted), jump 3; HD 17; hp 98 (currently 89); THAC0 3; #AT 3 + special; Dmg 1d10+6/1d10+6/3d30+6; SA breath weapon (cone of flame 90' long and 30' wide at the base, causing 12d10+6 points of damage); spells; *feared aura* (+2 to saves); wing buffet for 1d10+6 points of damage (victim must make a Dexterity check or be knocked prone, automatically losing initiative the following round); tail slap for 2d10+12 points of damage (affects up to six creatures; those struck must save vs. petrification or be stunned for 1d4+1 rounds); kick for 1d10+6 points of damage (victim must make a Dexterity check or be knocked back 1d6+6 feet); SD immune to fire; spells; MR 35%; SZ G (85' body, 72' tail); ML 17; INT exceptional (15); AL CE; XP 15,000; MM/68.

Memorized spells: 1st—*audible glamor*; *magic missile*; 2nd—*invisibility* (used).

Innate abilities: *heat metal* (1/day), *affect normal fires* (3/day), *pyrotechnics* (3/day).

Kl'maran Windspur, male elf
F7: AC 0; MV 12; hp 55 (24 currently); THAC0 14 (base); #AT by weapon type; Dmg by weapon type; SA specialized with longbow; SD 90% resistance to *sleep* and *charm*; Str 16, Dex 16, Int 13, Wis 16, Con 12, Cha 14; ML 18; AL CG; *chainmail* +3, *longsword* +1, *longbow* +1, silver medallion (detailed below).

NWPs: Animal Training—Griffon (16), Reading/Writing (14), Riding—Airborne (Griffon) +1 (15).

Kl'maran is a rugged, slender, 5'6" tall elf with dirty blonde hair and bright blue eyes. His silver medallion is shaped like a griffon's head and is the symbol of his rank. The medallion has a small hole used as a whistle to signal commands to griffons.

Astrak'fleet (griffon): AC 3; MV 12, fly 30 (C, D if mounted); HD 7; hp 44 (11 currently); THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/2-16; SZ L; ML 12; INT semi (4); AL N; XP 650; MM/178.

Astrak'fleet ("Starspeed" in the Common tongue) is Kl'maran's fiercely loyal griffon mount. If Kl'maran is rendered unconscious, Astrak'fleet stands over his body and does not let anyone touch him. Short of killing the griffon, PCs might get to the elf by offering food or by subduing it.

Astrak'fleet wears a finely crafted leather saddle.

Kl'maran is a brave elf noble desperate to find allies to help him raid the fire giants' supply base, although he does not articulate this except to King Stephanos. Once the giant and the dragon are defeated or driven off, Kl'maran requests safe escort to Palangard. He does not request healing for himself or his griffon but does not refuse it either. Kl'maran needs to speak soothingly to the griffon before a PC healer can approach the beast safely.

Kl'maran uses his whistle to summon the other griffons that scattered and hid nearby. The other griffons also have saddles on them, but no riders. If asked about this, Kl'maran merely says, "That is a subject which I intend to discuss with your king."

Traveling to the royal palace takes the remainder of the day and could be the source of interesting roleplaying encounters. The griffons are tired after their long flight and hungrily eye every horse they see (including the PCs' mounts). Smart PCs might stop at a farm and buy a horse, cow, or some other meat for the griffons lest they raid a pasture on their own. Also, when the PCs approach the capital city, the citizens panic at the sight of winged monsters. To avoid this, a PC can approach the city alone and warn the guards of the griffons' approach so that the guards clear the way and keep the people calm. Award 500 XP to any PC who thinks of this. Once inside the city, guards show the PCs and Kl'maran an empty warehouse within the palace grounds to stable the griffons, and they promptly take Kl'maran to an audience with King Stephanos. They also review the king's invitation to the PCs and offer them well-appointed rooms within the castle. If the PCs appear wounded from their earlier encounter, Clerics emerge from the local temple to cast healing spells and, if necessary, raise dead characters.

Getting the Mission

Two hours after arriving at the royal palace, the PCs are treated to a royal feast with King Stephanos III and Kl'maran. Over dinner, the king thanks them for responding to his summons and states:

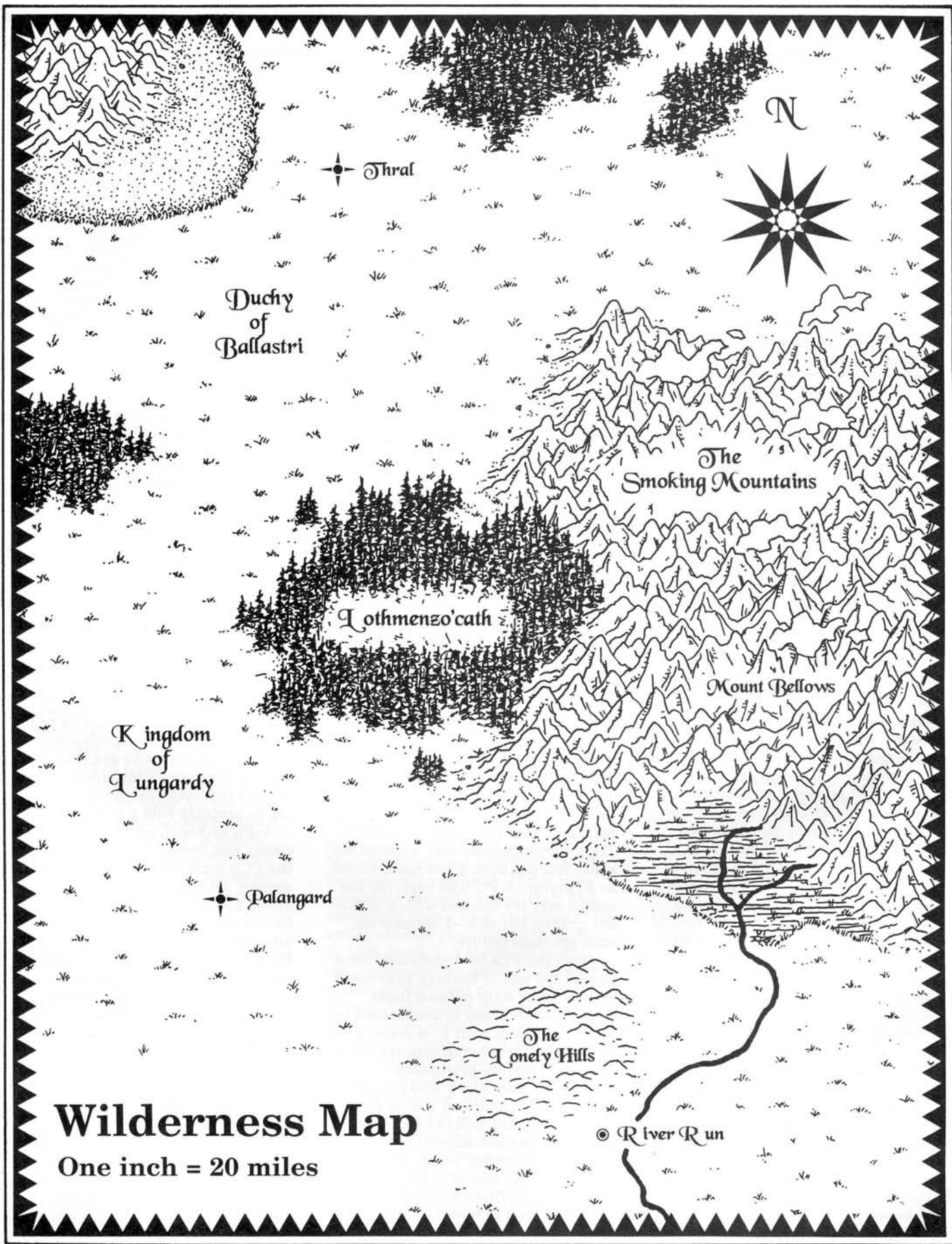
"As you may have heard, giants and red dragons have invaded Lothmenzo'cath, and the elves are sorely pressed. Although I was tempted to go to their aid, there are several noble houses within the kingdom that believe that I should keep our forces within Lungardy. These brilliant strategists also believe that given the distrust between us and Lothmenzo'cath, we would be just as well off with fire giant neighbors as elves. Such fools that try to tie my hands!

"Even so, I need to do something while keeping unity within the kingdom. My original plan was to muster our reserves and deploy them along the border in a show of force, hopefully to discourage the giants from further advances. That was the intent of my original message to you: to order you to mobilize all your followers and levies.

"Then today your timely help enabled this brave elf, Captain Kl'maran, to arrive here with five griffons. It seems that King Marjak'lemenza has placed all his griffons in hiding as a reserve. Captain Kl'maran is not content with these orders; he wants to conduct a daring raid on Mount Bellows, in the Smoking Mountains far behind enemy lines, where the giants have a base for all their supplies. The elf king would not allow this, and so Kl'maran came to us. He is willing to train four of you to ride the griffons he brought with him so that you may accompany him on this mission. With your help, we intend to execute a pre-emptive strike on Mount Bellows to destroy their supplies and facilities.

"Why such a raid? Frankly, an army marches on its stomach, and an army of giants, dragons, and ogres has a very large stomach indeed. Without supplies, the fire giants' army will be forced to return home. That should also end the giant threat to Lungardy, for I am sure the giants plan to invade Lungardy once they are done with the elves.

"Kl'maran tells me that he can train you to control and fly the griffons in a week's time. The only question is, are you brave enough to try?"



Wilderness Map

One inch = 20 miles

This is not a situation where the king offers the PCs a reward for conducting the strike. They are subordinate lords, after all, and he appeals to their sense of pride, bravery, and patriotism. The king intends to reward successful PCs (see "Concluding the Adventure"), but he does not articulate this. Remember that King Stephanos has the dicey job of balancing the various noble houses within his kingdom and wants to feel out the PCs' loyalty and bravery. If there is a PC who has not yet attained status as a lord, the king might tell that PC, "You will be amply rewarded if you survive," but he says no more than that.

Finally, if the PCs sound hesitant about taking the mission, Kl'maran mentions that whoever survives with his mount can keep the griffon for his very own. The thought of owning a griffon mount should be enough of a hook to make any heroic PC ache for the chance to go on the adventure.

Becoming Griffon Riders

Training occurs near a farm outside of Palangard, and the king provides one horse (a broken-down nag) every other day for the griffons to feed on. The king also provides a 5th-level Cleric with healing spells in case "accidents" occur during training.

Becoming griffon riders in such a short time is not an easy proposition, and the DM should rigorously make the PCs abide by the rules to become one. The DM should also keep in mind that PCs who fail still have other ways to carry out the mission. (See "The Copernicus Option" below.) If a PC does not acquire the Riding—Airborne (Griffon) proficiency, the DM should encourage that PC to have one of his henchmen try.

A griffon rider candidate must first pass a test of bravery. The unarmed and unarmored PC must fearlessly approach his griffon, murmuring its elven name softly and stroking the griffon's neck. There are four other griffons besides Starspeed. Their elven names are Cuja'screl (Sharphook), Bral'jurak (Bloodclaws), Dervissa'klar (Airgust), and Diva'damax (Plummet). Each had a griffon rider who died in battle and might approve of a new rider. If the PC makes a successful Charisma

check at a -2 penalty, the griffon accepts him as a prospective rider. If a PC already possesses the Riding—Airborne (Griffon) proficiency and needs a griffon mount, he must still pass the test of bravery.

PCs might get inventive with their approach to the griffon. Kl'maran does not suggest anything to the PCs, nor does he dissuade them from trying anything reasonable. Some things that the PCs might think of include:

∨ Approaching the griffon with a piece of horseflesh: +1 bonus

∨ *Animal friendship* spell: +2 bonus if the griffon fails its saving throw, but this only works for the caster. While griffons are technically not animals, they have close to animal intelligence. If the griffon makes its saving throw, there is no bonus.

∨ *Charm monster* spell: Works only for the caster. The griffon needs to make a saving throw. If it fails, it accepts the caster temporarily. If it makes the saving throw, it attacks the caster. Note that there is a 35% chance each week that the *charm* breaks, requiring the PC to make a normal Charisma check or suffer the consequences.

If the PC fails his check, Kl'maran must make a successful Animal Training proficiency check to divert the griffon from attacking the PC. Failure indicates that the griffon attacks the PC, but each round Kl'maran has another opportunity to divert the griffon's attention and calm it down, but at a -1 cumulative penalty. Other PCs with the Animal Training proficiency may attempt the same, but not during the same round as Kl'maran. A PC who survives the ordeal may try the test with a different griffon, but at a -1 penalty for each previous failure.

Once the PCs (or henchmen) have passed the test of bravery, they must endure three days of basic flight instruction. Success is determined by a Wisdom check with a -6 penalty, -4 if the PC or henchman already has a Riding—Airborne proficiency.

PCs and henchmen who pass the basic flight instruction can fly on a griffon to Mount Bellows but cannot engage in any meaningful maneuvers when aerial combat occurs. Those PCs and henchmen who have received basic flight instruction are not considered to have the Riding—

Airborne proficiency. They can take off, ride the griffons, land safely, and that's about all. Basic flight training does not enable the PCs or henchmen to employ special maneuvers. In combat situations, the rider must make a Strength check each round unless he is tied into the saddle. Further, he has to make a Constitution check at +2 each round to avoid passing out.

The final stage is advanced flight training, which lasts four days. Only PCs and henchmen with at least one available proficiency slot can proceed this far into the training.

Advanced flight training teaches one how to execute tricky maneuvers such as plummeting, rapid ascent, loop-de-loops, sudden reductions of speed through a quick expansion of the griffon's wings, and hovering. Those who pass may also use lances and pole-arms to charge opponents. Finally, PCs may execute the various skills listed on page 83 of the *PH*. Passing advanced flight training requires a Wisdom check (at +2 if the PC or henchman already has a Riding—Airborne proficiency).

PCs and henchmen who pass all three phases of training may add Riding—Airborne (Griffon) to their list of nonweapon proficiencies, but with the following modifications:

∨ PC or henchman has two proficiency slots available: Both are used but proficiency checks are rolled against Wisdom -3 for one year since it normally takes two years of training to properly ride a griffon.

∨ PC or henchman has one proficiency slot open: It is used up, and the PC's proficiency checks are rolled against Wisdom -4 until another slot opens up through level advancement. Once that occurs, the new slot is automatically dedicated to Airborne—Riding (Griffon), at which point the proficiency penalty drops to -3.

During the course of training, the DM should allow the PCs to come up with ideas on flight formations, group maneuvers, and ways to signal each other, perhaps with colored flags or whistles. Award 300 XP to any PC who comes up with a good idea.

Griffons (4): AC 3; MV 12, fly 30 (C, D if mounted); HD 7; hp 46, 44, 39, 38; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/2-16; SZ L; ML 12; INT semi (2-4); AL N; XP 650; MM/178.

The Copernicus Option

After the crash course in riding griffons, the PCs and their henchmen receive another summons to appear before the king. He expresses his elation at their having passed the training (or dismay at having failed), and then states the following:

"Before you leave on this mission, there is one recent matter that I need you to handle. I have received word from Lord Cedric of River Run that a green dragon has appeared in his area and is ravaging the countryside. I fear that this beast fled the giants invading Lothmenzo'cath. As you know, Lord Cedric's manor provides many sheep for this kingdom, and we cannot prepare for war with a green dragon on the loose there! My troops are deployed along the border, and I cannot spare them to go off on a dragon hunt. You, however, can get down there quickly and perhaps test your new aerial skills."

Kl'maran wants no part of this mission and insists that King Stephanos put off the "dragon hunt" until the giants in Lothmenzo'cath have been dealt with. Technically there is no way that King Stephanos can order the elf to comply, since he is not a subject of Lungardy. Hence the PCs have to wing this mission alone. It is possible that some heroes could fly to River Run while others make their way along the road. If asked, Kl'maran denies the possibility of a green dragon fleeing from his country, as the elves purged all dragons from their territory long ago.

Peryton Ambush

It is 60 miles from Palangard to River Run—a good two days' flight. If none of the PCs can fly, it takes slightly longer, but fortunately a good road leads from Palangard to Lord Cedric's manor. On the morning of the second day, the PCs pass over the Lonely Hills, home to a nest of perytons. The perytons fly up above and behind them, attempting to attack with the sun at their backs. PCs who are keeping a sharp lookout to their rear need only make an Intelligence check to notice the perytons rising up.

Otherwise, have each PC roll for surprise with a -3 penalty to his roll. The perytons focus their attacks on the last griffon. When they plummet down, they do so at twice their normal speed (MV 42), striking with a +2 bonus to hit. The perytons' goal is to knock the griffon out of the air, hopefully killing its rider, so they can rip the rider's heart out.

Mounted griffons are not as agile as the perytons, but they are still faster. After the initial round, the PCs may simply flee. If they stay and fight the perytons, they have the advantage of the perytons focusing all their attacks on one griffon, thus presenting themselves as relatively easy targets. PCs casting spells or using weapons must first make a successful Airborne—Riding (Griffon) proficiency check. The DM should let the players make the attack and damage rolls for their griffons.

Perytons (8): AC 7; MV 12, fly 21 (C); HD 4; hp 26, 24, 23, 21, 20, 18 (×3); #AT 1; Dmg 4-16; SA dive (+2 to attack rolls); SD +1 or better weapons to hit; SZ M; ML 16; INT average (8); AL CE; XP 270; MM/286.

If the PCs defeat the perytons, they may search the hills for the perytons' nest, spotting it on a roll of 1-2 (d10) for each hour spent searching. The nest is woven with pieces of cloth and paper and contains human bones, two gems (worth 200 gp each), and three peryton eggs worth 100 gp each. Just outside the nest is a small torn rug fouled with excrement.

Examination of the papers in the nest reveals writing on them, and a Wizard PC can see that they used to be pages of a spellbook. If the PCs dismantle the entire nest, they find two intact pages, each containing one spell, *web* and *passwall*, both written at 15th-level. The spellbook pages may be treated as scrolls. Detecting magic on the small rug outside the nest reveals a faint dweomer, and examination reveals a command word ("puzyar") woven into the fabric. The rug is actually a *carpet of flying* that can accommodate one person, but it does not function until repaired by a *mending* spell or someone making a successful Weaving proficiency check. The carpet, spellbook, and gems belonged to an unfortunate Wizard who flew by the perytons' nest a few months ago and was killed.

Meeting Copernicus

The PCs should reach Lord Cedric's keep without further incident. When they arrive, they find several of his men-at-arms are in bandages and have their arms in slings, while Lord Cedric himself is in bed with a broken leg. Lord Cedric tells the PCs that he couldn't wait any longer for the king to send help because he was losing at least two sheep per day to the dragon. Moreover, his people were insistent that he do something before the dragon started eating people.

Lord Cedric and his men found the dragon's lair in an old cave ten miles west of his keep, and when they tried to smoke it out, it emerged very angry and battered the interlopers. Lord Cedric lost his prize war horse in the fight and considers it a miracle that neither he nor his soldiers were killed. He describes the dragon as an "enormous, vile creature with green scales and huge teeth and claws who yelled 'And don't you ever come back!' as we retreated." He entreats the PCs to hurry to the cave and take care of the dragon.

None of Lord Cedric's men wants to guide PCs to the lair, as one encounter with the dragon was quite enough, and Lord Cedric, even if healed, wants no part of it either.

Lord Cedric, male human F9: AC 2 (9 unarmored); MV 12; hp 70 (31 currently); THAC0 12 (base); #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type + Strength bonus; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 12; ML 16; AL NG; *longsword* +3, *chainmail* +2 (not worn currently).

Lord Cedric mentions that he was unable to harm the dragon, as his magical sword just bounced off its tough, green scales.

In fact, the "green" dragon is really a mature adult copper dragon named Copernicus. He used to lair in a desert located farther south but grew bored and decided to move. Winging his way north, he spotted a perfect spot: a huge cave close to fields full of juicy sheep! He took up residence several weeks ago and has claimed the area for himself. This new environment is much damper, causing his copper scales to tarnish green.

With directions, PCs can find the cave of the dragon, but both from the air and up close the entrance looks entirely too small for a dragon of any



Heroes negotiate with the reclusive and temperamental "green dragon" Copernicus.

size, as it is only 6' wide and 12' tall. After his encounter with Lord Cedric, Copernicus suspected that Cedric might send a band of dragon-hunters after him and has disguised his entrance with his *stone shape* ability, making it smaller. (When he wants to go back inside, he merely widens it with his claws). Copernicus has cast *invisibility* on himself and sits on a nearby hillock 60 yards away, keeping watch for any would-be dragonslayers approaching his lair. He has rigged the entrance to the cave with his *alarm* spell.

When PCs approach the entrance to the lair, they hear deep snores emanating from inside the cave—the result of Copernicus' *ventriloquism* spell. If the PCs trip the *alarm* or converse outside the cave, they hear the dragon's voice from within roaring, "Who dares approach my cave? Didn't I tell you people never to come back?" This resounding bellow causes the griffons to make a morale check; failure indicates that they fly off and must be retrieved later. It also gives Copernicus a big laugh.

Copernicus can maintain his *ventriloquism* for up to 18 rounds, threatening to devour anyone who dares enter his lair. Any attempts to *detect evil* or the like results in failure, as Copernicus is not in the cave.

PCs who suspect a ruse can make a saving throw vs. spell with a -2 penalty to detect the nature of the ruse. Those who state that they are suspicious because there is no way the dragon could spot them outside receive only a -1 penalty. A *detect invisibility*, *true seeing*, or similar spell might reveal Copernicus if cast within range of the dragon. Once they detect him or once the *ventriloquism* expires, Copernicus uses his *transmute rock to mud* ability (thus becoming visible) to mire the PCs in 3'-deep mud as he glides down to them. If the griffons were not scared off before, they dash away with frightened squawks now.

The PCs are within Copernicus' *fear* radius, but the mud is intended to keep them from fleeing. Copernicus roars out, "I told you, didn't I? I told you, don't come back! What do I have to do? Eat one or two of you before you get it? This area is mine!"

PCs can fight the dragon—attacking at a -4 penalty if they are stuck

in the mud—but Copernicus fights back fiercely, reducing them to unconsciousness and then dumping them outside Cedric's keep. If they deal more than 50 points of damage to the dragon, Copernicus fights to kill.

Copernicus (mature adult male copper dragon): AC -4; MV 9, fly 30 (C), jump 3; HD 16; hp 118; THAC0 5; #AT 3 + special; Dmg 1d6+7/1d6+7/5d4+7; SA *slow* gas (30' × 20' × 20' cloud; save or be *slowed* for 21 rounds) or acid spurt (70'-long, 5'-wide stream inflicting 14d6+7 points of damage); spells; *fear* aura (25 yards, +1 to saves); wing buffet for 1d6+7 points of damage (victim must make a Dexterity check or be knocked prone, automatically losing initiative the following round); tail slap for 2d6+14 points of damage (affects up to six creatures; those struck must save vs. petrification or be stunned for 1d4+1 rounds); kick for 1d6+7 points of damage (victim must make a Dexterity check or be knocked back 1d6+6 feet); SD spells; immune to acid; MR 20%; SZ G (65' body, 55' tail); ML 16; INT high (14); AL CG; XP 16,000; MM/77.

Spells memorized (3/1): 1st—*alarm*, *feather fall*, *ventriloquism*; 2nd—*invisibility*.

Innate abilities: *forget* (1/day), *neutralize poison* (3/day), *spider climb* (at will), *stone shape* (2/day), *transmute rock to mud* (1/day).

If they manage to slay the dragon, a treasure trove awaits them if they can find it. Hidden in the dragon's cave, underneath a huge boulder that requires a combined 90 Strength to move, is a *portable hole* containing 3,442 gp, 4,217 sp, four gems (total value 4,000 gp), a bag with six *beads of force* inside, and potions of *clairaudience* (×2), *extra-healing* (×2), *levitation*, and *diminution*. There is also a clerical scroll (*earthquake*, cast at 16th-level). The *portable hole* looks like a 2'-diameter cylindrical hole going into the earth, but the edges can be grasped and expanded to its normal 6' diameter.

Negotiating with Copernicus should prove a far better option than combat. PCs should realize that the dragon could have maimed them but held off for some reason. Copernicus realizes that killing intelligent creatures has a tendency to bring on more dragonslayers, and he really

just wants to be left alone. Further, if any of the PCs have fought green dragons in the past, they notice (with a successful Intelligence check) that this green dragon looks a little different; specifically, its scales are significantly lighter.

If referred to as a green dragon, Copernicus laughs and scrapes off a bit of green tarnish from his scales, revealing their true coppery hue. He promises to spare the heroes if they can think of a good riddle he hasn't heard before. Copernicus loves mind-boggling riddles. The DM should let the players confer and come up with a riddle, writing the answer down secretly. If the DM can solve it, then so can Copernicus; if he can't solve it and it's a reasonably good riddle, then Copernicus states that it was a good one. He then plucks each PC from the mud and lets them go. As an alternative, the DM can come up with several good riddles before play and require the PCs to solve them. A third alternative is to allow a PC to make a Gaming proficiency check.

PCs who honor the dragon with a riddle can strike up an alliance with Copernicus against the fire giants and red dragons, as well as furnish a means of transportation for PCs and henchmen who don't have griffons to ride. Initially, the copper dragon has no desire to mess with a bunch of red dragons, but with the right reasoning and compensation, he can be persuaded. The best reasoning is that once the giants and red dragons conquer the elves, they would doubtless head into Lungardy, making it only a matter of time before Copernicus has to confront the red dragons anyway. Copernicus loves to wheedle and bargain, and in the end he settles for no less than the following:

- ▽ Undisputed ownership of the 25-square-mile area around his cave;
- ▽ A promise from the king to honor his right to the land and his privacy;
- ▽ Tribute of one sheep per day plus shepherds to tend them (he promises not to eat the shepherds);
- ▽ One good riddle each month.

Not only does he agree to participate in the preemptive strike against the red dragons and fire giants, but Copernicus agrees to ally with King Stephanos III in the event Lungardy is invaded.

Once terms have been reached, Copernicus goes in his cave, dumps his coins out of the *portable hole*, but keeps the potions, scroll, and *beads of force* in case he and the PCs need them. He has no clue what the beads are and gladly gives them to any PC who comes up with another good riddle. Lastly, Copernicus helps the PCs find their fled griffons and drops the PCs close by so they can retrieve their mounts. There are no encounters on the way back to Lord Cedric's manor or Palangard. PCs should have Copernicus land out of sight so the people in the city don't panic.

Note that Copernicus can carry up to three PCs or henchmen (with equipment) on his back.

The King is elated at any reasonable bargain struck by the PCs, especially since he has gained a powerful ally. He orders his scribes to prepare a deed to the dragon's land and confers upon the dragon the title of Lord Copernicus. Lastly, he sends Lord Cedric a message to stay off the dragon's property and gives him a deed for substitute land.

Roleplaying Copernicus

Once Copernicus joins the ranks of the party, the DM should roleplay him more passively. This is the PCs' adventure, and they should plan and execute it with the dragon as an ally, not as a leader. Let them come up with the ideas, and use the dragon in a supporting role. If they ask Copernicus for assistance, he simply tells them what he can do, but not how he should do it. He leaves the strategy to the PCs. He does as instructed, disobeying only those orders he perceives as suicidal.

For example, Copernicus can cast *invisibility* once per day, and it is probably a good idea for him to travel to Mount Bellows invisibly since a flying dragon is rather noticeable. Let the PCs know that Copernicus can cast *invisibility*, but let them make the suggestion that he should travel to Mount Bellows invisibly.

Another option for the DM is to have another player who is not a regular member of the playing group be a "guest player" and run Copernicus just like a PC. Another option would be to allow a player whose character has died to run the dragon.

To the Smoking Mountains

Once the PCs have returned from their adventure in River Run, Kl'maran insists that they head to Mount Bellows as soon as possible. The PCs have to decide who is going to fly on which creature, and PCs might prevail upon King Stephanos to pay for some kind of saddle to fit the dragon so they can fly securely.

If they retrieved the *carpet of flying* from the peryton lair, the PCs can arrange to have it re woven by a master weaver, but it costs 1,000 gp. King Stephanos can't pay for this expense; with his entire army and militia mobilized, he is financially strapped. Any PC with the Weaving proficiency can repair the *carpet* in three days by making a successful proficiency check and paying 100 gp for fine thread and other materials. A *mending* spell repairs the *carpet* instantly. If they don't have the funds or means to repair the *carpet*, Copernicus lends them the money if they can come up with another good riddle.

Travel To the Mountains

It takes three days to reach Mount Bellows, and the first two days are uneventful as the PCs travel over friendly territory. Once they reach the foothills and peaks of the Smoking Mountains, however, there is a noncumulative 25% chance per hour that they encounter a pair of adult red dragons, each mounted by a fire giant rider. If PCs think of traveling at night, the chance for detection drops to 5%, and only one dragon is encountered. PCs who travel at night and at high altitudes negate encounters, since traveling at high altitudes is beyond the visual and infravisional ranges of the red dragons. Traveling at high altitudes, however, is frighteningly cold; PCs have to make a five Constitution checks (each one at a -1 cumulative penalty) with failure resulting in 2d6 points of damage. (*Endure cold* spells reduce damage by half, while *resist cold* spells negate damage entirely.) Another problem the PCs have to overcome is their own inability to see while flying at night. Award 500 XP to any PC who devises a way to overcome the visual problem (for example, by suggesting that Copernicus fly just to the rear of the griffons and *carpet*, keeping

everyone in sight with his draconian vision and issuing commands to keep the flyers in the right direction.)

Axard and Felzikor (fire giants): AC -1; MV 15; HD 15+2; hp 82, 75; THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 2d10+10; SA lance attack (see below); SD immune to nonmagical fire; magical fire inflicts -1 hp/die damage; catch large missiles 50% of time; SZ H (18' tall); ML 16; INT low (7); AL LE; XP 8,000; MM/137.

The fire giants wield huge iron lances that strike for 2d10+10 points of damage.

Vermillius and Svastra (adult male and female red dragons): AC -5; MV 9, fly 30 (C; D when mounted), jump 3; HD 17; hp 92, 89; THAC0 3; #AT 3; Dmg 1d10+6/1d10+6/3d30+6; SA breath weapon (cone of flame 90' long x 30' wide at the base, causing 12d10+6 points of damage); spells; *fear* aura (+2 to saves); wing buffet for 1d10+6 points of damage (victim must make a Dexterity check or be knocked prone, automatically losing initiative the following round); tail slap for 2d10+12 points of damage (affects up to six creatures; those struck must save vs. petrification or be stunned for 1d4+1 rounds); kick for 1d10+6 points of damage (victim must make a Dexterity check or be knocked back 1d6+6 feet); SD spells; immune to fire; MR 35%; SZ G (82' body, 70' tail); ML 17; INT exceptional (15); AL CE; XP 15,000; MM/68.

Vermillius's memorized spells: 1st—*detect magic*, *enlarge*; 2nd—*ray of enfeeblement*.

Svastra's memorized spells: 1st—*magic missile*, *sleep*; 2nd—*scare*.

Innate abilities of both dragons: *heat metal* (1/day), *affect normal fires* (3/day), *pyrotechnics* (3/day).

Mount Bellows

Kl'maran can guide the PCs right to Mount Bellows. At night, the glow from the volcano's lava lights up the sky, while during the day a cloud of smoke marks its location. PCs can land on any nearby mountain and survey the vicinity before proceeding directly there. PCs who fly there in the daylight are noticed by the juvenile red dragon perched on the volcano's rim, and it screeches out a warning to the venerable red dragon, Sulfuria, and her other offspring (see

area 21) who emerge from the crater 2 rounds later, determined to destroy the interlopers.

Mount Bellows rises in the distance, and perched near the lip of the bubbling cauldron of lava is the fire giants' supply base. Built into the volcano's south side, you see a huge stone wall with a gatehouse. Beyond a courtyard is an immense cave opening leading into the mountainside. A roadway leads from the gatehouse down the mountain and then winds its way westward. There are two large ballistae atop the gatehouse and several guards patrolling the walls.

Perched on the volcano's rim, not far from the giants' stronghold, is a red dragon.

Unless the PCs are invisible, they are spotted as they fly over Mount Bellows. If they peer into the fiery cauldron, they see an immense pool of lava several hundred feet below them and a big ledge on which sits a monstrous red dragon more than twice the size of the one standing guard on the volcano's rim.

The great dragon on the ledge is the venerable Sulfuria. Perched on the crater's rim is Araakazar, one of Sulfuria's brood (a male juvenile red dragon).

The PCs need to devise a strategy for reaching the keep and accomplishing their mission. Rousing the dragons alerts the entire keep and negates the element of surprise. However, slipping past the dragons unseen is almost impossible unless the PCs are invisible or otherwise obscured. The DM should remember that Sulfuria can *detect invisibility* within 100 feet, and Araakazar can *detect invisibility* within 40 feet.

Volcano Rim

Twelve firenewts, each mounted on a giant strider, patrol the rim of the volcano at all times, watched closely by Araakazar. The rim of the crater is 300 feet above the entrance to the fire giant stronghold. While the juvenile dragon keeps a lookout directly over the base entrance, the firenewts keep a sharp lookout around the rest of the volcano and repel intruders who try to enter via the crater. They

also have a secondary function: in the event of an attack, the firenewts have their striders shoot a *fireball* down into the crater, warning Sulfuria that something is amiss. Due to the crackling and popping of the lava, there is a 20% chance that Sulfuria does not hear this signal.

Araakazar (juvenile male red dragon): AC -3; MV 9, fly 30 (C), jump 3; HD 15; hp 87; THAC0 5; #AT 3 + special; Dmg 1d10+4/1d10+4/3d10+4; SA breath weapon (cone of flame 90' long and 30' wide at the base, causing 8d10+4 points of damage); spells; kick for 1d10+4 points of damage (victim must make a Dexterity check or be knocked back 1d6+4 feet); SD immune to fire; SZ G (48' body, 39' tail); ML 18; INT exceptional (15); AL CE; XP 12,000; MM/68.

Spell memorized (1): 1st—*sleep*.

Innate abilities: *affect normal fires* (3/day), *pyrotechnics* (3/day).

Firenewts (10): AC 5; MV 9; HD 2+2; hp 12 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (pike or sword); SA pike inflicts double damage when used with charging mount; breathe fire for 1d6 points of damage; SD +3 on saving throws and -1 damage vs. fire; SW -3 on saving throws and +1 damage vs. cold; SZ M; ML 12; INT low (6); AL NE; XP 175; MCA3/46.

Any PC struck by a mounted firenewt's pike must make a Strength check with a -5 penalty. Failure results in being trampled for an additional 1d10 points of damage by the firenewt's giant strider mount.

Elite firenewts (2): same as other firenewts except AC 3; HD 3+3; hp 21 each; THAC0 17; XP 270.

Giant striders (12): AC 4; MV 15; HD 2; hp 10 each; THAC0 19; #AT 2; Dmg 1d8/1d10; SA breathe *fireball* once/hour (20-yard range for 1d6 points of damage); SD immune to fire; +2 to saving throws vs. magical attacks; intense heat and flame act as *cure light wounds* spells; SW water acts as poison; SZ L; ML 12; INT animal (1); AL NE; XP 270; MCA3/100.

Level 1

1. Gatehouse and Walls. The basalt walls enclosing the courtyard are 40 feet high and 30 feet thick. Stone ramps lead up to the tops of the walls, which are without battlements.

A 20'-deep chasm separates the road from the gatehouse entrance. A wooden drawbridge, when lowered, spans the chasm and permits entry into the courtyard. At any time of the day, nine ogres are on duty, with four manning the two ballistae on the gatehouse, four patrolling the walls, and one leader in charge. Every eight hours, the guards are replaced (See "Daily Base Activities" below).

Atop the gatehouse is a pole, and hanging from it are a metal hoop and large metal rod. The ogres strike the hoop with the rod whenever the drawbridge is lowered or there is an attack, alerting the entire stronghold. Clanging the hoop always alerts the sentinel dragon Araakazar and the fire giant castellan (see area 4).

If intruders are detected and the alarm is rung, Araakazar swoops down to attack interlopers within 2 rounds, the fire giant castellan in area 4 emerges in 4 rounds, and the rest of the ogres (see area 5) appear in 8 rounds.

A caravan of twenty wagons driven by firenewts and hauled by giant striders (same statistics as those on the volcano rim) leaves the base around midmorning (about 10:00 A.M.). These wagons are loaded with rothé meat, weapons, and other supplies for the giant armies. In the late afternoon (around 4:00 P.M.), another caravan arrives with empty wagons.

Ogre wall guards (4): AC 5 (natural); HD 4+1; hp 25 each; THAC0 17; Dmg by weapon type +6; SA +2 to attack rolls with weapons; SZ L; ML 12; INT low (5); AL CE; XP 270; MM/272; club, three spears.

Ogre ballistae crew (4): same as other ogres except that when firing ballistae, THAC0 19; Dmg 3d10/3d12; ROF 1/8. In melee combat, these ogres wield heavy clubs.

Vulkar (ogre gatehouse commander): same as other ogres except AC 3; HD 7; hp 33; THAC0 13; Dmg by weapon type +6; SA +3 to attack rolls with weapons; XP 650; platemail, two-handed sword.

Each of the ogres wears a cheap-looking copper ring. These are *rings of comfort* that reduce damage from heat-based attacks by 1 hit point.

Ogres lack infravision, so a nighttime air assault into the courtyard has a reasonable chance of success

Daily Base Activities

Just prior to sunrise, the fire giant castellan Hlastos changes the guard in area 1. About an hour after sunrise, firenewts arise and start hitching up giant striders to wagons on Level 3 and loading weapons made by the salamanders in area 18. The wagons are taken to Level 2 where they are loaded with food and hides. Finally, they are driven to the courtyard and marshalled into a marching order.

Around midmorning, the firenewt caravan leaves the base loaded with rothé meat, hides, and weapons.

An hour after noon, Najetta the fire giantess shepherd leads a herd of rothé from Level 4 to the pens in area 11. She then takes a maiden from area 12 and feeds her to Sulfuria between 1:00 and 2:30

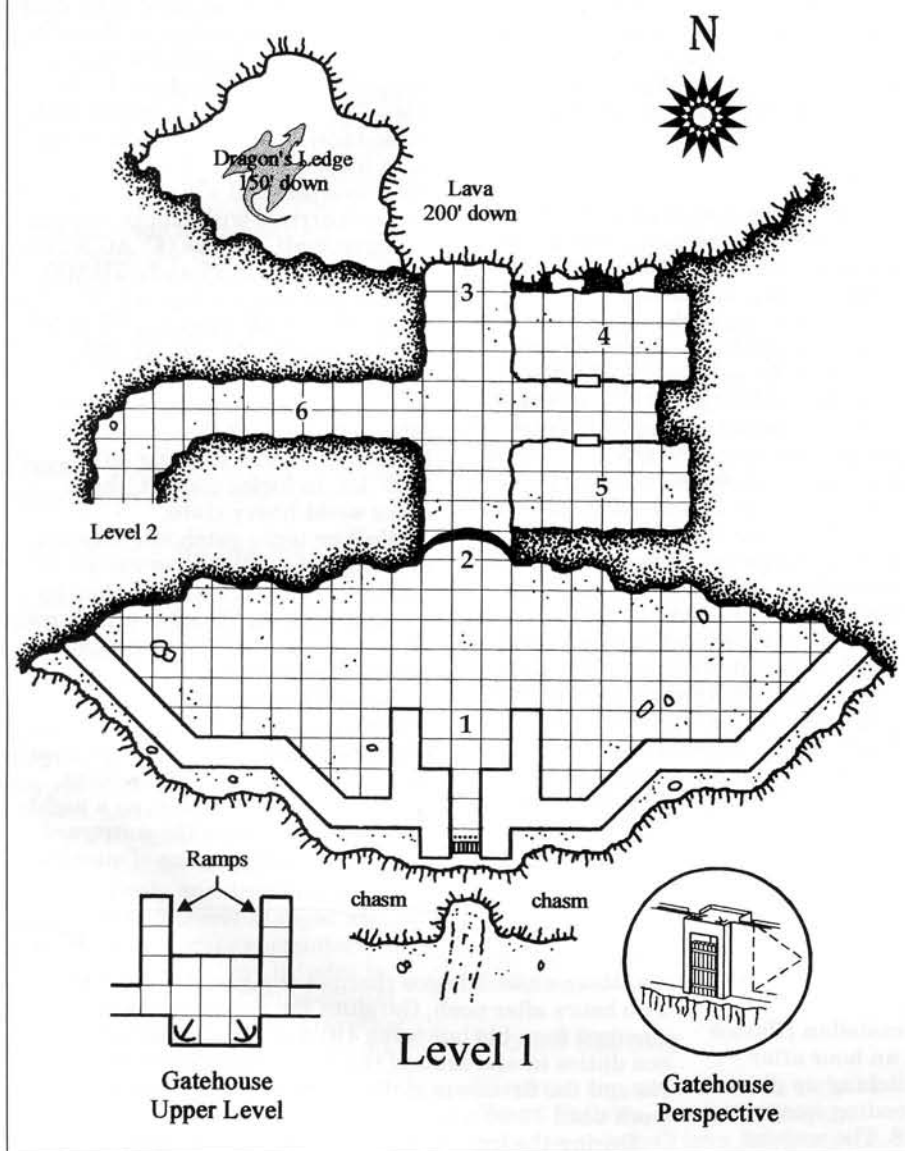
P.M. Meanwhile, Hlastos changes the guard in area 1. Two hours after noon, Gargluth the fire-ettn butcher emerges from his lair (area 10) and attends to various duties in and around the smokehouse (area 8). He and the firenewts stationed in the smokehouse work until 10:00 P.M.

During the late afternoon, a firenewt caravan arrives at the base with empty wagons. It proceeds down to Level 3 where the giant striders and wagons are put in their stables. (This takes about 9 turns).

At dusk, firenewt Priests hold religious services that last an hour (see area 16). Three hours after dusk, Hlastos changes the guard in area 1. About four hours after dusk, the firenewts in area 8 and the butcher in area 9 are off duty and return to their lairs, areas 14 and 10 respectively.

MOUNT BELLOWS

1 square = 30 feet



they are subjected to intense heat coming from the volcano's core. Every turn they remain on this level, they suffer 1 point of damage. A successful Endurance nonweapon proficiency check or magical protection (*protection from fire, control temperature, and so forth*) may negate damage. If the PCs are wearing the ogres' *rings of comfort*, they suffer no damage while on this level.

3. Ledge. Looking off this ledge, the PCs can see a huge bubbling pool of lava 200 feet below. About 150 feet down is a large promontory (area 21) that serves as Sulfuria's lair. Unless the great dragon has been summoned elsewhere, her monstrous form can be seen curled up on the ledge below.

If fighting erupts this area, the fire giant from area 4 attempts to grasp and hurl PCs down into the lava (70% chance) or to the dragon (30% chance). Grabbing and hurling a PC is treated as a called shot and inflicts no initial damage; however, a PC who falls into the lava without magical protection is slain instantly, while anyone hurled into the clutches of the dragon sustains damage from the fall and Sulfuria's subsequent attacks. Only a body falling down into her lair arouses Sulfuria. Once annoyed, she flies up to area 3 and uses her devastating breath weapon against any enemies in sight.

Sulfuria is not drawn to sounds of yelling and fighting since the ogres are always quarreling and the fire giant often bellows orders at them.

4. Castellan's Quarters. This room contains an enormous bed covered with furs, a giant-sized chair carved from rock, and a huge wooden chest. Two windowlike apertures provide an impressive view of the bubbling lava cauldron below.

This room belongs to Hlastos, the fire giant castellan. Hlastos does not like being in charge of the base and having to worry about the many details (managing the ogres, keeping Sulfuria happy, negotiating with suppliers, getting caravans out on time, and so forth). He would much rather be off with the rest of the troops slaying elves! When the PCs enter his room, he joyously grabs his iron two-handed sword and attacks. Hlastos neither gives nor receives quarter,

(especially if a *silence 15' radius* spell is cast upon the metal alarm system). Note also that Copernicus can use his *spider climb* ability on the stone walls or use his *stone shape* ability to create handholds in the walls for the PCs; however, the PCs should come up with their own tactics. PCs who simply land in the courtyard and enter the stronghold are pursued by

the ogre guards. Araakazar, seeing the ogres evacuate their posts, swoops down into the courtyard to ensure that no one tries to sneak in or out, using his ability to detect invisible creatures within 40 feet.

2. Entrance Cave. A large cave mouth 90' wide and 60' tall leads into the volcanic base. Once the PCs enter,

although he bellows for his ogre troops to help him if needed. The ogres (area 5) respond in 4 rounds.

Hlastos (fire giant castellan): AC -1; MV 15; HD 15+5; hp 110; THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 2d10+10; SA hurl rocks for 2d10 points of damage; SD immune to nonmagical fire; magical fire inflicts -1 hp/die damage; catch large missiles 50% of time; SZ H (18' tall); ML 16; INT low (7); AL LE; XP 8,000; MM/137; giant two-handed sword, key to chest (see below).

Hlastos' chest is locked, and the key is in the giant's belt pouch. The lock can be picked by a Thief (-20% chance). Inside are sacks containing 5,233 sp (coins used to pay the ogres). The furs on the bed are worthless, as the intense heat has dried them out.

5. Ogre Barracks. This filthy lair is occupied by the ogre mercenaries who guard the walls and gatehouse. If not previously alerted, the ogres are automatically surprised, as they spend their off-duty time gambling, drinking, quarreling, and sleeping.

The ogres fight until their chieftain falls, at which point the survivors must make a morale check at -2 or surrender and parley for their freedom. Note that unless the PCs speak orc, troll, stone giant, gnoll, or ogre, verbal communication is tricky unless magic is employed. Ogres who surrender insist on being allowed to leave under arms and promise not to trouble the adventurers again. The ogres cannot draw a map of the lower levels since they are not allowed down there. They refuse to accompany the PCs into the lower levels unless they are *charmed* ("Big fire dragon down there!").

If they surrender and are spared, the ogres withdraw to the closest fire giant base and report what happened. Twelve hours later, fifteen fire giants and six hell hounds arrive at Mount Bellows to hunt down the PCs and retake the stronghold.

Turang (ogre chieftain): AC 4; MV 9; HD 7; hp 37; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4+7; SA +2 to hit with weapons; SZ L; ML 12; INT average (9); AL CE; XP 975; MM/272; *bastard sword +1*, gold chain (200 gp value).

Nurak and Gurbaaz (ogre patrol leaders): AC 3; MV 9; HD 7; hp 33 each; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+6; SA +2 to hit with weapons; SZ L; ML

12; INT low (7); AL CE; XP 650; MM/272; military fork, 2d10 sp.

Ogres (16): AC 5 (natural); HD 4+1; hp 25 each; THAC0 17; Dmg by weapon type +6; SA +2 to attack rolls with weapons; SZ L; ML 12; INT low (5); AL CE; XP 270; MM/272; club, 2d10 sp.

6. Corridor. The corridors of the fire giant stronghold are 40 feet wide and 25 feet high. The one on this level heads to the west and then curves down to Level 2. Every 100 feet or so is a pile of glowing, oozy rock. These giant strider droppings are completely odorless and radiate as much light as a torch. Stepping in one causes 1d6 points of heat damage. These same droppings exist here and there in the corridors on Levels 2 and 3.

Level 2

On this level, PCs suffer 2 points of heat damage per turn as they are much closer to the hot lava core. Again, magical protection or an Endurance proficiency check (made at a -1 penalty) negates or mitigates this damage.

7. Storeroom. Hanging from hooks are dozens of butchered and dried rothé carcasses. The rothé, stripped of their flesh, are almost unrecognizable, but they resemble large cows. Some of the carcasses are a dark brown, others are a bright red, and yet others have a yellowish tinge to them.

In a far corner are eight boxes containing rothé organs. In another corner is a pile of skinned rothé hides. A few hours after sunrise, a caravan of firenewts and giant strider wagons pulls up (from Level 3) and loads the rothé carcasses, hides, and foodstuffs. At other times, two firenewts from area 8 or 9 are hanging up a new carcass. Once per day, two firenewts take up two rothé carcasses to the ogres and fire giant residing on Level 1.

8. Smokehouse.

Peering into this chamber you see several grayish-brown humanoid creatures that have smooth flesh and heads that remind you of eels. Some of them haul in bloody carcasses on wheelbarrows, others hang the carcasses on hooks, and

others baste the meat with sponge-tipped poles dipped in three huge urns. Still others winch the meat out on cables to an open area that glows and smokes fiercely.

Eight firenewts work in here, smoking rothé carcasses over the volcanic lava and basting them with the fire giants' favorite sauces (deep mushroom, fire mead, and extra hot) all purchased from drow traders.

Fighting the firenewts does not attract Sulfuria unless someone falls onto her ledge. There is a 30% chance that the fire ettin butcher (area 9) hears the ruckus and joins the battle. Fortunately, the firenewts are so absorbed in their work that the PCs have a good chance of surprising them (-4 penalty to the firenewts' surprise roll).

Firenewts (8): AC 5; MV 9; HD 2+2; hp 16, 13, 12 (x3), 11 (x3); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (meathook); SA breathe fire for 1d6 points of damage; SD +3 on saving throws and -1 damage vs. fire; SW -3 on saving throws and +1 damage vs. cold; SZ M; ML 12; INT low (6); AL NE; XP 175; MCA3/46.

9. The Butcher. In this area is an aproned two-headed giant with an ebony sheen to its skin and blood up to its elbows. It wields a cleaver in one hand and a long skinning knife in the other, using these instruments to slaughter, skin, and butcher rothé from the holding pen (area 11).

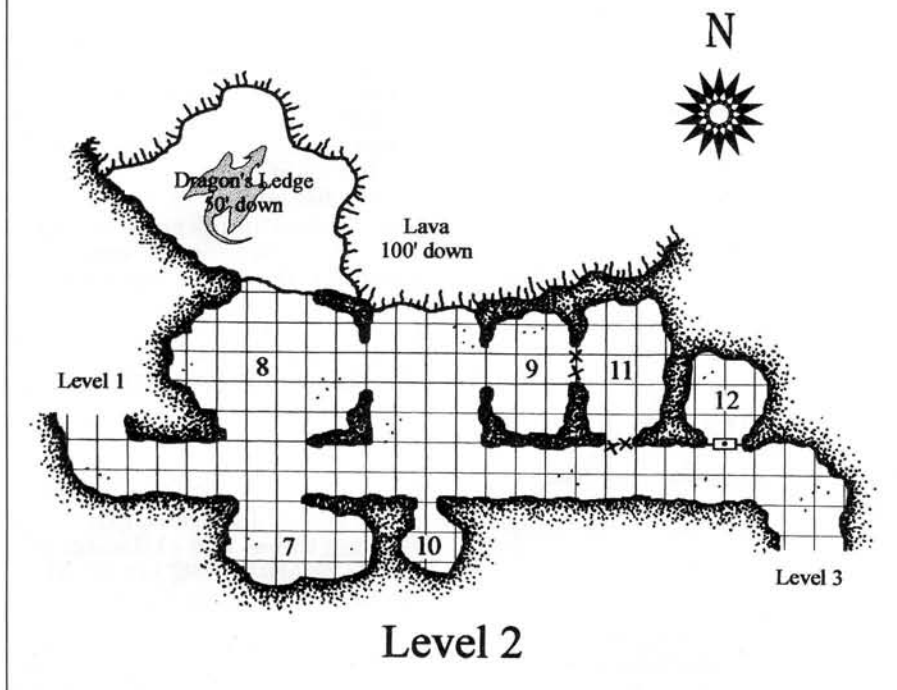
Delectable organs are put in boxes, carcasses are put in wheelbarrows (for transport to area 8), skins are piled in the middle of the floor, and entrails are thrown in large urns (to feed the giant striders on Level 3).

This creature is Gargluth, a cross between a fire giant and an ettin. The fire giants hoped that the crossbreed would be a great warrior with improved weapons skills, but the thing is woefully stupid, even by fire giant standards. However, they were able to train it to complete menial tasks such as butchering rothé.

There is a 40% chance that the fire ettin just continues doing his work when he sees the PCs, but each round after the first, there is a 10% cumulative chance that the fire ettin realizes that something is wrong and goes looking for the PCs. (Of course,

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1 square = 30 feet



he attacks the PCs instantly if they attack him first.) Clever PCs who can communicate with the stupid brute might convince Gargluth to leave them alone, but the fire ettin does not help them, draw maps, or impart any useful information.

Gargluth (fire ettin): AC 3; MV 12; HD 12; hp 80; THAC0 9; #AT 2; Dmg 2d6+8/1d10+8; SA hurls rothé carcasses up to 40 yards for 2d8 points of damage; SD surprised only on 1 or 2; reduced damage from fire (-2 per die damage); SZ H (14' tall); ML 15; INT low (5); AL CE; XP 5,000; MM/135, 137.

10. Gargluth's Lair. Amid a pile of filthy, dried skins is a bloody bag holding fifteen semi-precious stones (total value 300 gp) belonging to Gargluth. The lair also contains "Buddy," Gargluth's pet fire toad. It attacks anyone who comes into the lair. Harming the fire toad infuriates Gargluth, causing him to tirelessly hunt down those responsible.

Fire toad: AC 10; MV 6, hop 6; HD 4+1; hp 25; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2d8 (small 5'-radius *fireball*; range 30 feet; save vs. breath weapon for half damage); SD suffers -1 damage/die vs. fire-based attacks; SW +1 damage/die vs. cold or water damage; SZ S (4' long); ML 10; INT low (5); AL CN; XP 270; MM/345.

11. Rothé Pen. Large iron barricades block the entrances to a holding pen for rothé awaiting slaughter. Climbing over or crawling under the barricades is not difficult for human-sized PCs, but moving a barricade requires a Strength of 22 or a combined Strength of 60.

Every day around noon, Najetta and her hell hounds (see area 20) herd thirty rothé up from Level 4 for the butcher's daily work (which finishes around 7:00 P.M.). The rothé are frightened and attack anyone who enters the pen. A PC who uses *Speak with animals* obtains limited information about Najetta and her dogs.

Rothé (30): AC 7; MV 9; HD 2; hp 13 each; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d8; ML 13; INT animal (1); AL N; XP 35; MM/241 (mammal).

12. Prisoner Pen. The iron door barring this chamber is secured with a hefty padlock of excellent quality (-20% chance to Open Locks rolls). Najetta (see area 20) has the key and opens it once a day, right after herding the rothé into their pen. She plucks an elf maiden prisoner out, takes her to the ledge, and calls down to Sulfuria who flies up, snatches the maiden, and returns to her ledge to enjoy her snack.

The keyhole is 10 feet above the floor, and a PC Thief may need to stand on someone's shoulders to pick it. Inside the chamber, huddled in the dark, are six female elven Warriors, all prisoners of war who are used by the fire giants to appease Sulfuria. Among the surviving maidens is Gla'mereth, the Warrior adored by Kl'maran. The prisoners have no idea of what happened to the twelve other elves who were removed, only that one was taken away each day by an ill-tempered fire giantess. From their cell, they have heard wagons moving, cattilelike noises, and dogs snarling, but they are not sure of the times when these sounds occurred.

Prisoners, female elves F2 (5): AC 10; MV 12; hp 16, 15, 13, 12, 11 (subtract 2d4 hp for injuries and ill treatment); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA +1 to hit with bow or sword; SD silent movement and surprise; MR 90% resistance to *sleep* and *charm* spells; SZ M; ML 13; INT high (13-14); AL CG.

The DM may assign names to these NPCs as needed. They are not anxious to fight the giants or ogres but will if given weapons.

Gla'mereth, female elf F5: AC 8; MV 12; hp 45 (30 currently); THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 15; ML 12; AL CG. Gla'mereth is ashamed that she was captured and is eager to vindicate herself in battle. Whoever lends weapons or armor to Gla'mereth earns her gratitude. If the DM wants the adventure to take a romantic turn, Gla'mereth could fall for one of her PC saviors, possibly turning the jealous Kl'maran against the PC.

One odd feature of this cell is that the temperature in here is only about 90 degrees—far cooler than outside the cell. Casting *detect magic* reveals a magical orange stone the size of a hen's egg in the middle of the room. Imbued with a *control temperature* spell by a fire giant shaman, the stone reduces the temperature in a 25'-radius area, negating the damage caused by the intense heat. It does not reduce damage from dragon breath, lava, or other intense fire source. The stone may be picked up and taken. The DM should note, however, that this convenient magical item has a small drawback: when the PC carrying the stone comes within 25 feet of one of the base's residents, the creature has a 75% chance of noticing the sudden change in temperature; no surprise is possible.

Level 3

PCs without protection from heat suffer 3 points of damage each turn they remain on this level. Note that the magical rock in area 12 negates this damage for those within its area of effect.

13. Wagons. This large area is where the firenewts' two-wheeled wagons are kept when an empty caravan arrives. It is also where the firenewt drivers bring the giant striders to be hitched up in the early morning hours. (See "Daily Base Activities" sidebar.) The area holds up to twenty-five of the large wagons.

14. Firenewt Lair. This large cavern holds up to seventy-two firenewts, depending on what time the PCs come here. The cave also serves as the abode of two fire giant "advisors" to the firenewt contingent. As long as the giants are alive, the firenewts fight fiercely and never check morale.

Not all of the firenewts are found here. Twelve firenewts are assigned to patrol the volcano rim, eight are assigned to the smokehouse (area 8), two are stationed in the egg chamber (area 15), and twenty-five are responsible for the supply wagons. During the hour after sunset (6:00–7:00 P.M.), all firenewts withdraw to the chapel (area 16) for worship; the fire giants allow this only because it makes the firenewts more agreeable.



The fire giants and firenewts form a line of defense against unwanted incursors.

The firenewts assigned to the volcano rim, the smokehouse, and the egg chamber are detailed separately. The remaining firenewts, including the firenewt overlord, are detailed below.

The firenewts were subjugated by the fire giants and serve them reluctantly. There are six females left in the tribe; the others were slain, and the giants have threatened to kill the remaining females if the firenewts

ever turn against them. Firenewts who fail their morale checks promise to leave the PCs alone provided the PCs agree not to harm the firenewts' eggs (see area 15). If friendly relations are struck with the firenewts, the creatures warn the PCs of the dragons, salamanders, fire giants, and hell hounds. The firenewts know the full layout of the base, including where the giants keep their prisoners (area 12).

The two fire giants, Chaar and Barinda, make sure the firenewts do as they are told. So long as the giants live, the firenewts do not consort with the PCs. The giants are responsible for ensuring that each firenewt contributes to the war effort.

Under a rock on the far side of the cave is some of the firenewts' treasure: a sack with 258 gp and six gems (value 1,500 gp each).

Firenewts (18): AC 5; MV 9; HD 2+2; hp 12 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SA: breathe fire for 1d6 hp damage; SD +3 on saving throws and -1 damage vs. fire; SW -3 on saving throws and +1 damage vs. cold; SZ M; ML 12; INT low (6); AL NE; XP 175; MCA3/46; shortsword, pike.

Elite firenewts (7): same as other firenewts except they are AC 3; HD 3+3; hp 21 each; THAC0 17; Dmg 1d8; XP 270; battle-ax (specialized; +1 to attacks, +2 to damage, and 3/2 attacks per round).

Uvaashu (firenewt overlord): Same as other firenewts except he is AC 3, HD 4+4, hp 33; THAC0 17; Dmg 1d6+1; XP 420; *pike* +1.

Chaar and Barinda (fire giants): AC -1; MV 15; HD 15+2; hp 93, 77; THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 2d10+10; SA hurl rocks for 2d10 points of damage; SD immune to nonmagical fire; magical fire inflicts -1 hp/die damage; catch large missiles 50% of time; SZ H (18' tall); ML 16; INT low (7); AL LE; XP 8,000; MM/137.

In addition to throwing boulders (each giant has four boulders), the female fire giant, Barinda, uses a giant-sized bola, made of three iron balls linked by a chain. She whirls and tosses this weapon at targets up to 200 yards away, and it skips along a flat surface an additional 30 yards. The bolas can hit up to three targets standing within 20 feet of each other. Anyone struck by a giant bola is wrapped up by the chains and suffers 6d4+6 points of damage. Horses hit by the bolas have a 40% chance of breaking a leg. It requires three rounds of assistance (or a successful Bend Bars roll) to free a victim from the tight chains.

15. Egg Chamber. In this area are ten firenewt eggs guarded by two elite Warriors who attack intruders on sight. If captured, the eggs may be sold for 100 gp each.

Elite firenewts (2): see area 15 for complete statistics.

16. Firenewt Chapel. Standing against the north wall of this room is a 12'-high idol fashioned from gold to resemble a huge bonfire. The idol represents Kossuth, the Elemental Lord and the firenewts' deity. (See *Monster Mythology* for details.) No less than 15,000 gp were melted down to make this idol, but it weighs far too much for a PC (or even several) to carry. Merely touching the metal causes 1 point of heat damage.

The idol stands before an opening in the wall that overlooks the bubbling cauldron of lava 10 feet below.

17. Priests' Quarters. Two firenewt Priests reside here, plotting how to free their tribe from the fire giants. They have concluded that the best thing to do is to play along with them and prove their worth. Thus, when PCs enter their chamber or the chapel, the firenewts attack fiercely using their spells. They also "break" any deal the PCs might have made with Uvaashu, the firenewt overlord, and lead all firenewt survivors to hunt down the heroes. If the PCs slay the Priests, the other firenewts aren't terribly upset, since many of the firenewts believe that under the Priests' influence they had fallen out of Kossuth's favor.

Ssusp and Vezakkas (firenewt Priests): AC 5; HD 3+3; hp 26, 22; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA breathe fire for 1d6 points of damage; clerical spells (cast at 4th-level); SD +3 on saving throws and -1 damage vs. fire; SW -3 on saving throws and +1 damage vs. cold; SZ M; ML 13 (16 while within 50 feet of their idol); INT average (9); AL NE; XP 650; MCA3/46; footman's mace.

Spells (3/2): 1st—*animal friendship*, *create water* (already cast), *faerie fire*; 2nd—*heat metal*, *pyrotechnics*.

The firenewt Priests have no treasure other than a large, sealed jug holding 20 gallons of water. Water is poisonous to firenewts and giant striders, and the Priests use it to intimidate their followers. For the PCs, the water provides refreshment.

18. Forge. When the PCs are within 200 feet of this location, they hear loud clanging and the sound of metal

striking metal. The PCs see a large anvil, over which stand a pair of copper-scaled serpents with humanlike heads and torsos beating heated metal with large black hammers. Two more of the coppery creatures tend a roaring fire and melt metal bars. Stacked in a corner are several giant-sized two-handed swords, ax heads, and spear heads.

The four serpentine creatures are salamanders. Caravans bring them metal bars that are melted down and forged into the giants' weapons of war, which are picked up by the outgoing firenewt caravans and delivered to the front along with the other supplies. When they spot the PCs, they grab their spears and attack. If the PCs press them, they retreat toward the lava pit and then try to grab their opponents (a successful tail attack) and throw them into the lava. If their morale breaks, they dive into the lava and swim away, since they are immune to the molten rock.

PCs who do not stop the salamanders from getting away are in for a nasty surprise. The salamanders swim around and climb the far side of the dragon's ledge (area 21), awaken Sulfuria, and tell her what has happened. Sulfuria then flies down to the opening on this level and investigates, incinerating interlopers with her breath weapon.

There are 300 bars of steel and 200 bars of iron in this area—far more than the PCs can hope to carry. PCs can wreck this facility by not only disposing of the blacksmiths, but also by tossing the ingots into the lava, along with the 500-lb. anvil.

Salamanders (4): AC 5 (upper body), 3 (lower body); MV 9; HD 7+7; hp 57, 51, 48, 42; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 2d6/1d6; SA heat causes 1d6 points of damage to creatures within 10 feet; SD +1 or better weapons to hit; immune to fire-based attacks; SW cold-based attacks inflict +1 point of damage per die; SZ M; ML 13; INT high (14); AL CE; XP 2,000; MM/103 (elemental fire-kin).

19. Giant Strider Pen. The firenewts confine their giant striders in this large pen. There are always at least twelve giant striders contained here, but after the daily firenewt caravan has arrived and unlimbered the wagons, there are twenty-five more.

The giant striders attack anything coming into their pen that is neither a firenewt nor a giant.

Giant striders (12 or 37): AC 4; MV 15; HD 2; hp 10 each; THAC0 19; #AT 2; Dmg 1d8/1d10; SA breathe *fireball* once per hour (20-yard range for 1d6 points of damage); SD immune to fire; +2 to saving throws vs. magical attacks; intense heat and flame act as *cure light wounds* spells; SW water acts as poison; SZ L; ML 12; INT animal (1); AL NE; XP 270; MCA3/100.

20. Giants' Quarters. This large room is sometimes occupied by two fire giants. The first is Crumshang, the superintendent of supplies and the enormous son of a disastrous mating between a fire giant and storm giant. Crumshang has dark skin and carrot-red hair like other fire giants, but his skin has a slight greenish hue. His eyes are purple, and he stands 22 feet tall.

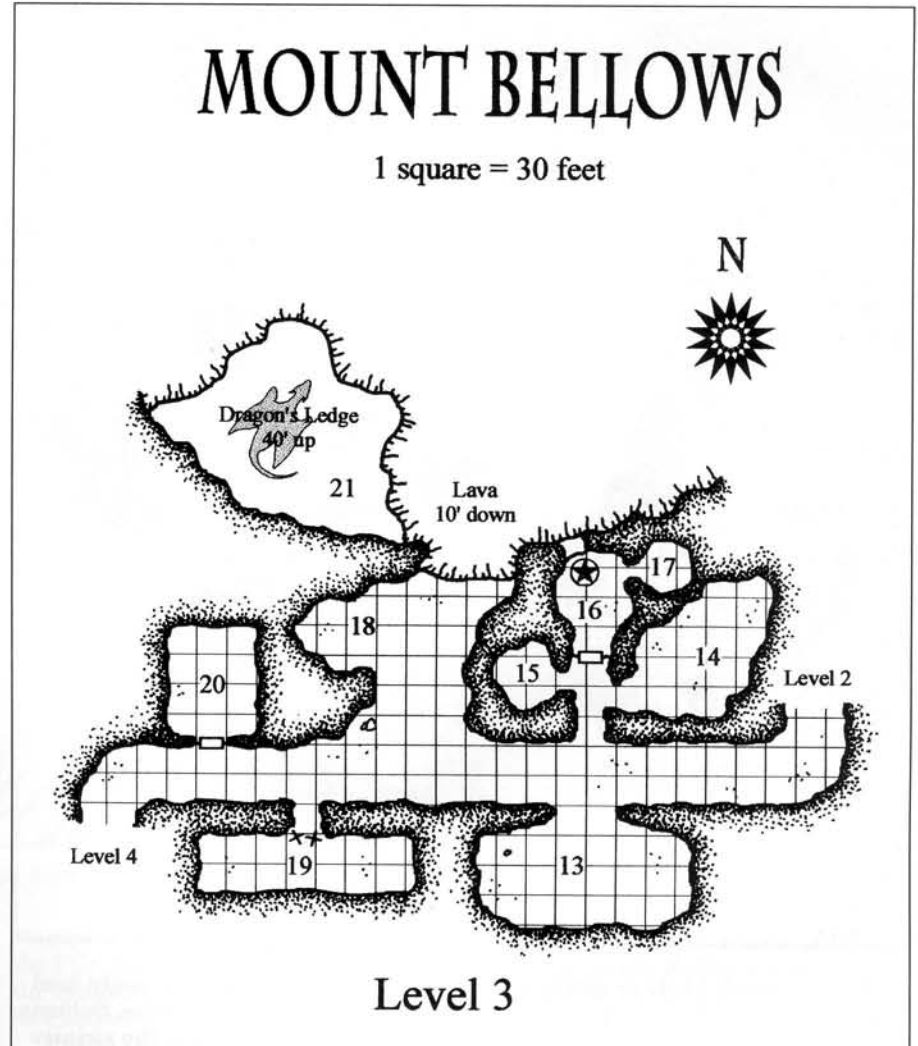
Crumshang is married to Najetta, the female fire giant who tends the herds of rothé on Level 4. Generally Crumshang is stuck in this room, going over endless mounds of paperwork, while Najetta is only in here during sleeping hours; otherwise she and her hell hounds are in area 22.

Najetta's hell hounds are always with her and fight ferociously to protect their mistress. Najetta is fierce and cruel, and she delights in watching her hounds tear apart prey.

In addition to a large bed, desk, and chair, there is a locked iron chest (8' x 5' x 5') that contains 10,888 gp. These coins are used to pay the drow traders who bring rothé to Mount Bellows every week from the Underdark. Crumshang has the iron key to this chest tied to his belt.

Crumshang (fire giant/storm giant crossbreed): AC -2; MV 15; HD 18; hp 112; THAC0 3; #AT 1; Dmg 2d10+10; SA hurl rocks for 2d10 points of damage; cast *lightning bolt* (10d6 points of damage) once/day; SD immune to nonmagical flames; magical fire inflicts -1 hit point per die; catch large missiles 50% of time; saves with +3 bonus on any electrical attacks (half or no damage); SZ G (22' tall); ML 16; INT very (12); AL CE; XP 10,000; MM/137, 146.

Crumshang carries an enormous *sword* +2 that can be wielded only by



a giant. If anyone hurts his beloved Najetta, he flies into a rage, attacking twice per round for an additional +3 points of damage per blow.

Najetta (fire giant): AC -1; MV 15; HD 15+4; hp 92; THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 2d8+10; SA hurl rocks for 2d10 points of damage; SD immune to non-magical fire; magical fire inflicts -1 hp/die damage; catch large missiles 50% of time; SZ H (18' tall); ML 16; INT average (10); AL LE; XP 8,000; MM/137.

Najetta fights with a 14'-long, iron shepherd's crook and either whacks her opponent with it or, on a natural roll of 19 or 20, hooks her opponent and hurls him into a wall for 3d8+10 points of damage. In her apron, Najetta has a book written in fire giant. Detailed within are various transactions involving the purchase

of rothé. Any PC who reads the book discovers that drow traders come to Mount Bellows and sell the giants three hundred rothé each week.

Hell hounds (4): AC 4; MV 12; HD 7; hp 52, 45, 41, 40; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10; SA breathe fire for 7 points of damage; SD immune to fire; surprised only on a roll of 1 or 2; detect hidden or invisible creatures 50% of the time; SZ M; ML 13; INT low (5); AL LE; XP 1,400; MM/187.

On a natural roll of 20, a hound can bite its opponent and breathe fire at the same time, inflicting 1d10+7 points of damage.

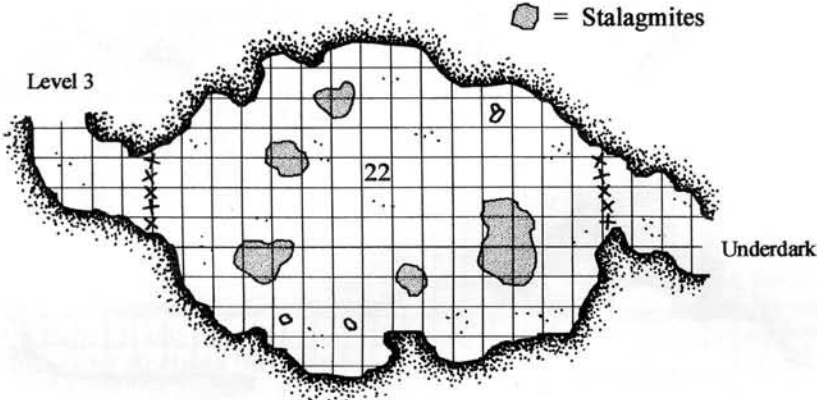
21. Dragon's Ledge. It is here that Sulfuria lairs while her consorts are off waging war with the giants. Once each day she expects and receives an elf maiden from area 12.

MOUNT BELLOWS

1 square = 30 feet



 = Stalagmites



Level 4

The PCs aren't likely to confront Sulfuria on this ledge; it is far more likely that the huge dragon hears a ruckus somewhere and investigates. With her enormous wingspan, Sulfuria can fit into any of the central openings on any of the levels but cannot squeeze into the corridors; she has absolutely no problem flying out of the volcano's crater. Note also that there is nothing preventing her from sticking her head down a corridor and breathing fire.

Sulfuria is a cunning and ruthless opponent who attacks with every means at her disposal. She has seen plenty of battle in her nearly 1,000 years and knows just about every dirty trick. Her only weaknesses are her pride and overconfidence. If she holes up the PCs (for example, between Levels 3 and 4), she challenges them to come out in the open where they may do battle honorably. However, Sulfuria is chaotic and cruel, attacking at the first opportunity.

Although appearances might lead the PCs to believe otherwise, Sulfuria is not the only dragon in the vicinity of the ledge. Swimming in the deep cauldron of magma, impervious to the heat, is Sulfuria's daughter. If she is reduced to 60 hit points or fewer, Sulfuria unleashes a terrible bellow that shakes the entire volcano and summons forth Neliflurix from the lava. Sulfuria also commands her son, Araakazar—the dragon who guards the volcano's rim—using him to cut off the PCs' escape and hunt down any who manage to flee.

Sulfuria (venerable female red dragon): AC -9; MV 9, fly 30 (C), jump 3; HD 21; hp 152; THAC0 1; #AT 3; Dmg 1d10+10/1d10+10/3d10+10; SA breath weapon (cone of flame 90' long and 30' wide at the base, causing 20d10+10 points of damage); *fear* aura (40 yards; -2 to saves); wing buffet for 1d10+10 points of damage (victim must make a Dexterity check or be knocked prone, automatically

losing initiative the following round); tail slap for 2d10+20 points of damage (affects up to ten creatures; those struck must save vs. petrification or be stunned for 1d4+1 rounds); kick for 1d10+10 points of damage (victim must make a Dexterity check or be knocked back 1d6+10 feet); snatch; spells; SD immune to fire; spells; MR 55%; SZ G (158' body, 144' tail); ML 18; INT exceptional (16); AL CE; XP 22,000; MM/68.

Magical spells (2/2/2/1): 1st—*charm person, shield*; 2nd—*improved phantasmal force, mirror image*; 3rd—*hold person, nondetection*; 4th—*charm monster*.

Clerical spell (1): 1st—*pass without trace*.

Innate abilities: *affect normal fires* (3/day), *detect gems* (3/day), *heat metal* (1/day), *hypnotism* (1/day), *pyrotechnics* (3/day), *suggestion* (1/day).

Neliflurix (juvenile female red dragon): AC -3; MV 9, fly 30 (C), jump 3; HD 15; hp 93; THAC0 5; #AT 3; Dmg 1d10+4/1d10+4/3d10+4; SA breath weapon (cone of flame 90' long and 30' wide at the base, causing 8d10+4 points of damage); spells; kick for 1d10+4 points of damage (victim must make a Dexterity check or be knocked back 1d6+4 feet); SD immune to fire; SZ G (52' body, 42' tail); ML 18; INT exceptional (15); AL CE; XP 12,000; MM/68.

Spell memorized (1): 1st—*shield*.

Innate abilities: *affect normal fires* (3/day), *pyrotechnics* (3/day).

On the ledge, Sulfuria has added a bit of treasure to go into her hoard (hidden elsewhere far away). She has 177 pp, 3,222 gp, six gems (5,000 gp each) and an elven *longbow* +2. She also possesses a *crystal ball with clairaudience* with which she communicates with her male consorts serving in the war. If things go badly for her, she contacts the males and apprises them of what has happened; the males then block escape routes back to Lungardy. (See "Escaping Mount Bellows" below.)

Level 4

This level is much deeper in the ground than the previous levels and does not abut the volcanic core. Hence it is much more comfortable here, and PCs do not suffer heat damage every turn.



A heroic infiltrator perpetrates a daring escape from Mount Bellows.

22. Rothé Herd. This is an enormous cavern filled with 150 rothé that contentedly chew on lichen and moss that grow in the area. The room is fitted with the same iron barricades as found in area 11.

If Najetta has not yet been encountered, she is in this chamber. She sits with her hell hounds behind the huge stalagmite at the far east end of the cavern. PCs making loud noises or harming the rothé alert Najetta to their presence. Her hell hounds quickly round up the rothé and have them stampede toward the PCs. The sound of the stampeding rothé alerts every monster in the base unless the heroes stop them somehow. (A *wall of fire* to block the stampede would work nicely, for example.)

PCs caught in the stampede (Dexterity check at -4 penalty to find a stalagmite or other safe place to avoid being crushed) suffer 5d8 points of damage, and their items must save vs. crushing blow or be destroyed. Note that the rothé simply

stampede; they do not stop and fight the PCs. Those who manage to avoid the rothé must fight Najetta and her hell hounds.

Rothé (150): AC 7; MV 9; HD 2; hp 13 each; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d8; ML 13; INT animal (1); AL N; XP 35; MM/241 (mammal).

In the far eastern end of the cavern is a barricaded passageway that leads down into the Underdark. Drow traders use this passage to bring the rothé that they sell to the giants. No drow appear in this adventure, but if the DM wants to expand the scenario into an Underdark campaign involving drow, here is the place to do it.

Escaping Mount Bellows

Once the PCs have completed their mission, they must evacuate Mount Bellows and head for home. If a general alarm has been sounded, Sulfuria and her children, Araakazar and Neliflurix, are on the prowl.

If there is any indication that the destruction of the base's supplies and

facilities was due to actions of PCs from Lungardy, Sulfuria uses her *crystal ball* to communicate this fact to her male consorts. As the PCs wing their way home, there is a base 50% chance that they encounter one of her consorts. This last aerial battle is fought to the death. It is very likely that PCs will be transporting any prisoners from area 12 on the backs of griffons. If Copernicus is carrying the prisoners, his maneuverability rating is reduced to E unless he drops down and unloads his cargo first. Note that the griffons may only transport two riders apiece.

Another possibility is that PCs have lost some of their mounts and instead use magic, such as *teleport* spells, to get back to Lungardy. In some instances, PCs might have to walk all the way back home, and it is a sure bet that patrols of giants, hell hounds, strider-mounted firenewts, and ogres (not to mention red dragons) are hunting for them. In this instance, the DM should use monster statistics from the adventure text to

develop any encounters along the way; PCs forced to travel on the ground have a 30% chance of running into something each day that they remain in the Smoking Mountains.

If the heroes rescued the elven prisoners from Mount Bellows but have fared poorly otherwise, or if Copernicus is not with them for whatever reason, the PCs are saved by the sudden, timely appearance of thirty elves astride griffons—members of Captain Kl'maran's elite air force. The king of Lothmenzo'cath, regretting his earlier decision to hold back his elven griffon-riders, sends them into the Smoking Mountains to see the PCs safely escorted from Mount Bellows.

Temper (adult male red dragon): AC -5; MV 9, fly 30 (C; D when mounted), jump 3; HD 17; hp 99; THAC0 3; #AT 3; Dmg 1d10+6/1d10+6/3d30+6; SA breath weapon (cone of flame 90' long × 30' wide at the base, causing 12d10+6 points of damage); spells; *fear* aura (+2 to saves); wing buffet for 1d10+6 points of damage (victim must make a Dexterity check or be knocked prone, automatically losing initiative the following round); tail slap for 2d10+12 points of damage (affects up to six creatures; those struck must save vs. petrification or be stunned for 1d4+1 rounds); kick for 1d10+6 points of damage (victim must make a Dexterity check or be knocked back 1d6+6 feet); SD spells, immune to fire; MR 35%; SZ G (81' body, 73' tail); ML 17; INT exceptional (15); AL CE; XP 15,000; MM/68.

Memorized spells (2/1): 1st—*magic missile*, *shield*; 2nd—*blur*.

Innate abilities: *heat metal* (1/day), *affect normal fires* (3/day), *pyrotechnics* (3/day).

Baldemir (fire giant): AC -1; MV 15; HD 15+2; hp 76; THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 2d10+10; SA hurl rocks for 2d10 points of damage; SD immune to non-magical fire; magical fire inflicts -1 hp/die damage; catch large missiles 50% of time; SZ H (18' tall); ML 16; INT low (7); AL LE; XP 8,000; MM/137; huge iron battle-ax.

Elven griffon-riders (30): AC 4; MV 12; F4; hp 32 each; THAC0 17 (base); #AT 2 (bow) or 1 (sword); Dmg by weapon type; SA specialized with longbow; SD 90% resistance to *sleep* and *charm*; ML 18; INT high (13-14);

AL CG; *chainmail* +1, shortsword, longbow, 24 *arrows* +1.

Griffons (30): AC 3; MV 12, fly 30 (C, D if mounted); HD 7; hp 35 each; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/2-16; SZ L; ML 12; INT semi (2-4); AL N; XP 650; MM/178.

Concluding the Adventure

The preemptive strike succeeds in stopping the war between the giants and the elves if the PCs accomplish one of the following:

✓ Destroy the base. This can be done only with powerful magic such as the *earthquake* spell from Copernicus's scroll, a *wish*, or something else that causes the volcano to erupt and destroy Mount Bellows.

✓ Kill Sulfuria. This breaks the morale of the other red dragons. They fly away and divide Sulfuria's horde, which leaves the airspace open for Lothmenzo'cath's griffon riders. The elves waste no time destroying any further supply convoys to the giants. Without supplies, the giants are forced to retreat back into the Smoking Mountains.

✓ Block the tunnel leading to the Underdark. This cuts off the food supplies necessary to feed the giants and all their allies. Ogres, orcs, and other allies of the giants start deserting. Again, the giants have to retreat. Note that this can be done in one of several ways. The PCs could collapse the tunnel (by making a successful Engineering proficiency check), or they could descend into the Underdark and ambush the drow traders bringing the rothé. In either case, the drow do not want to be seen as accomplices in the war and withdraw their support.

✓ Destroy at least two caravans of strider-drawn supply wagons. Each caravan has twenty-five wagons. Destroying this many wagons or giant striders stretches the transport system of the giants to the point where they cannot get enough food and supplies. Note that this can be accomplished not only through the physical destruction of the wagons and striders but also if the PCs convince the firenewts to desert (see area 14).

King Stephanos awards successful PCs with titles and lands, and he allows them to keep any treasure

gained from the giants. Those PCs who are already nobles attain the next higher rank in nobility (lord to baron, baron to duke, duke to viscount, or whatever ranking system the DM uses) and are given an additional 25 square miles of land. Untitled PCs who are of the requisite level are ennobled as minor lords and receive an initial fiefdom of 25 square miles.

PCs who survive this epic should receive 20,000 XP each plus their share of XP for monsters defeated. Additionally, the DM should consider awarding the following bonuses:

✓ Destroying Mount Bellows: 50,000 XP.

✓ Each elf hostage rescued: 2,000 XP (maximum award 12,000 XP).

✓ Sealing off the tunnel that leads to the Underdark: 10,000 XP.

✓ Destroying the forge and all metal supplies: 5,000 XP.

✓ Destroying the giant striders and/or supply wagons: 5,000 XP. PCs might be so successful that they not only destroy the wagons that are in the base, but they wait for the next caravan to arrive so they can destroy these as well. If they do this, double the bonus.

✓ Destroying all rothé and food supplies: 5,000 XP. Note that the PCs don't necessarily have to kill the rothé to gain these bonus points. They could lower the drawbridge and shoo them outside the base where the rothé scatter into the mountains, or they could herd them back into the Underdark and collapse the tunnel behind them.

Possibilities for future adventuring are endless. Surviving red dragons, furious at the death of their beloved Sulfuria, might contact dragon-allied sects to find out who was responsible. The fire giant king, angry at the loss of his key supply base, could also seek revenge.

PCs might have to travel to Lothmenzo'cath and plead Kl'maran's case before the elf king who, although pleased at the end of the war, is not pleased that his orders were disobeyed and is very displeased that Kl'maran gave away four of the royal griffons. Last, but not least, PCs could always return to Mount Bellows and explore what is down that entrance to the Underdark. Ω

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LETTERS (continued from page 9)

Towers in the Dragonslayer lizard man tribe's range, Holk House near the northwestern edge close to Ghars, within the Blood Moon orc tribe's boundaries, and Castle Naerytar in the northeast tip of the swamp near Hooknose Crag. The Cormyrean Marshes from *Elminster's Ecologies* has the map broken down into tribal boundaries and known ruins.

The kingdom established by Uth Myrmoran becomes the ancient elven kingdom hinted about in *Elminster's Ecologies*. Uthtower becomes the unknown ruins in the center of the Vast Swamp. We can even replace Ebondeth, the black dragon, with Thauglor the Black from the *Cormyr* novel. Voaraghamanthar and Waervaerendor become the offspring of Skurge, the black dragon from the Marshes of Tun. Of course, Daerlun is a major Cult of the Dragon stronghold, easily replacing Leilon.

Anyway, the point behind this is to illustrate how easy it can be to adapt these realms-specific adventures to wherever your campaign is set. True, I just moved the series from one part of the Realms to another, but it can be done for other settings as well. Use each adventure as the basis to build your own adventures, supplementing the specific facts with those appropriate for your setting.

Paul DeMars
Guthrie, OK

Cyberpunks of Mistmoor

For the last couple of years, I have had neither the time nor the opportunity to do much gaming, but I used to be a regular AD&D player and DM. I also got heavily into *Cyberpunk 2020**, *Call of Cthulhu**, and about a dozen other gaming systems.

Through all of my roleplaying experience, *DUNGEON Adventures* magazine has always been one of my favorite gaming supplements. I have wanted to write you for a long time and kept putting it off until I read Issue #73.

Other letter writers seem to complain about the presence of world-specific modules that they cannot adapt to their own campaigns. The letter from Berislav Lopac impressed me. Like Berislav, I have adapted adventures from your magazine into other settings. My personal favorite was "The Ghost of Mistmoor" (Issue #35).

I was GMing a *Cyberpunk 2020* campaign and sent the characters into the bayou to fight a 200-year-old voodoo priest in a haunted civil war manor. It worked quite well, and the conversion/preparation of the module took only an hour—much quicker than preparing an adventure from scratch.

I have converted other modules in *DUNGEON Adventures* into *Call of Cthulhu* scenarios. A friend of mine used to GM *Star Trek**, and he even worked a module from *DUNGEON Adventures* into his campaign (and no, it was not a *SPELLJAMMER** adventure). I would just like to say keep up the good work. I wish you were a monthly publication. I like the mix of settings, themes, and levels you have provided over the years.

Steven Peterson
via email

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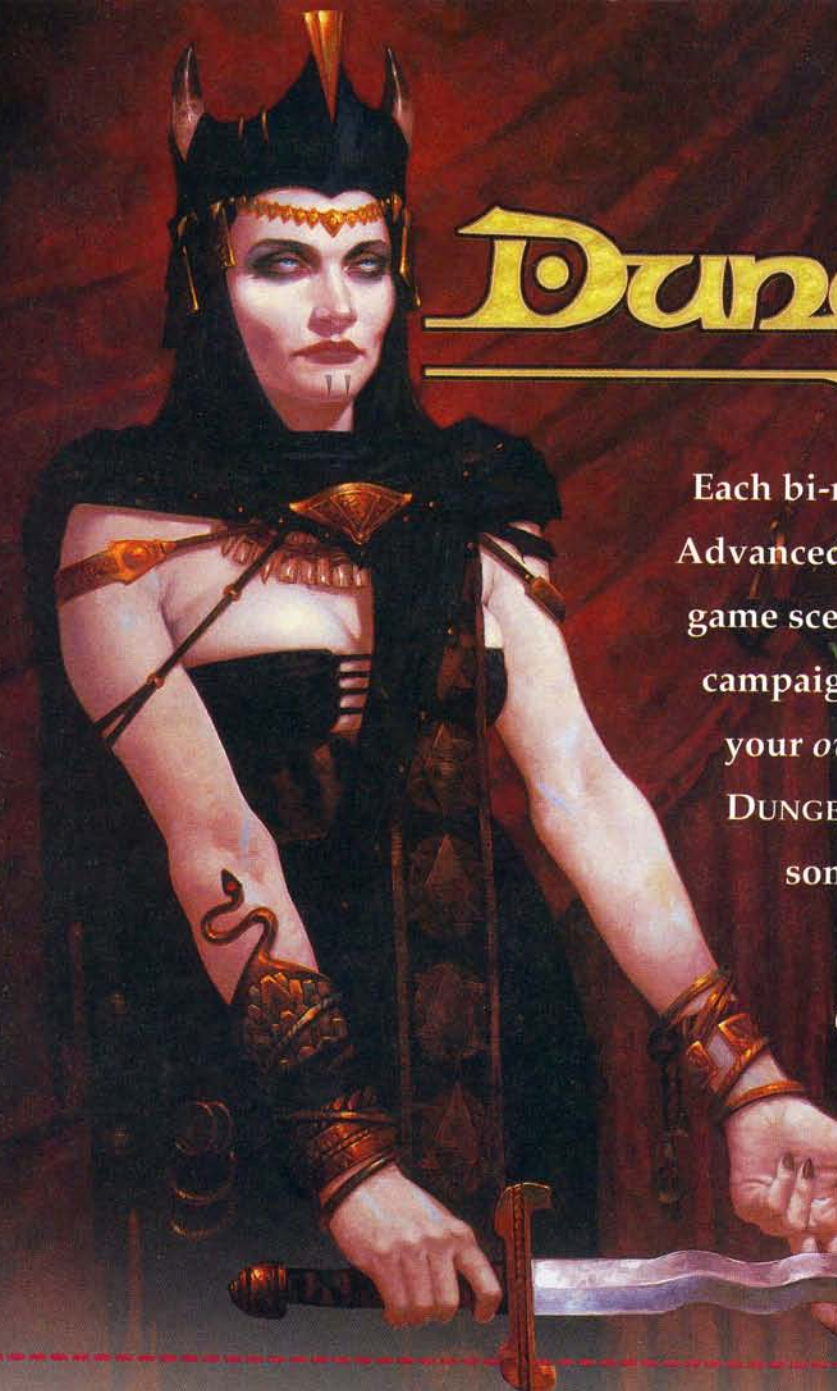
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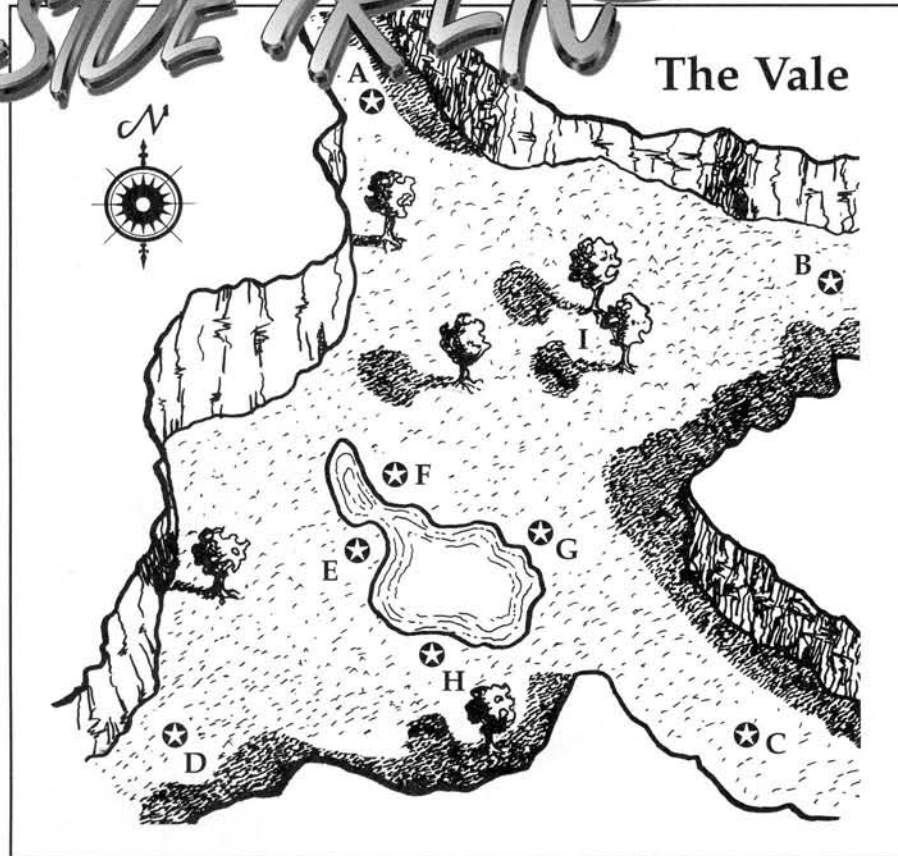
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SIDE TREKS



The afternoon sun beats down on your necks, the dry winds causing a gritty dust to work its way under your clothes and armor. After traveling the endless canyons and gullies of this arid mountain range, your thoughts turn to rest for the evening.

You round the canyon and find yourselves standing near the edge of a large, grassy glade with a pond at its center. Guarding the mouth of the canyon, standing between you and the glade, is a tall statue.

The statue is described in area **D**. If the PCs continue toward the Vale, read or paraphrase the following:

The small glade beyond the statue is quite a sight to behold. Soft mosses and swaying grass carpet the floor of the vale, while hardy trees, some even bearing fruit, dot the rocky slopes of the vale's interior. Best of all, a standing pool of crystal-clear water in the glade's center reflects the fading sunlight in dozens of dazzling streaks and sparkles.

The serenity of the vale is tempered by the four statues of women placed around the pond, standing or kneeling at the pool's edge. Each statue has a look of anguish carved into its face.

The DM should suspend wandering encounters as well as the discovery of the PCs by pursuers or enemies while they are within the Vale. No violence (other than what the PCs bring with them) occurs here.

PCs searching the Vale find the remains of numerous campfires, all of them several months old. PCs resting in the Vale feel a deep sense of peace and tranquillity. Should any of them take a prolonged rest (an hour or longer) or perform some sort of deep meditation, the Vale's peculiar properties manifest. The PCs in question begin to hear the soft weepings of a woman in the distance. Should the PCs attempt to locate the source of the weeping or attempt to follow it, the weeping quickly trails off into utter silence, at which time the PCs notice two things:

- ❖ They have an out-of-body experience. They can see their bodies resting on the ground, as if they were floating above them in some spiritual form.

- ❖ Other than the initial weeping, which does not return, all is silent,

BY MARC JOHNSON

Cartography by Delfino

"The Vale of Weeping Widows" is an AD&D® Side Trek adventure for 3–5 PCs of levels 4–6 (about 20 total levels). Ideally, the Vale exists in the Greypeak or Desertmouth Mountains bordering the Anauroch Desert of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting. However, any mountainous region typified by rocky slopes, arid landscape, and mysterious background should suffice.

The adventure is easy to run; the challenge for the DM is carefully creating a suspenseful atmosphere. It might be a good idea to play some low and somber music in the background and to lower your voice and slow down your descriptions a bit at the start, so that when the storm builds and the strangeness starts, you can quicken and raise your voice to match.

The Vale is an place of contrasts. The juxtaposition of the rocky slopes and the Vale's lush, green interior coupled with the serenity of the pool and

the anguish of the statues will hopefully invoke a feeling of uneasiness.

Beginning the Adventure

The PCs should come upon the Vale while traveling the canyon floors of a mountain range. The day should be drawing to a close, with the sun just beginning to set. Rangers and Druids notice the distinct signs of a storm front moving in, whose high winds and driving rains should be respected and feared by the PCs. The PCs should be tired, haggard, thirsty, and perhaps even wounded; in this case, the Vale should come as a welcome sight to them.

The following description should be read or paraphrased to the players as the PCs approach the Vale for the first time. Unless the DM decides otherwise, the text assumes that the PCs arrive at the Vale via the southwestern canyon (near area **D** on the map).

THE VALE OF WEEPING WIDOWS

even though the PCs might see companions talking or moving about. They cannot hear anything in their disembodied state.

The magic of the Vale grants sleeping and meditating PCs a spirit form, incapable of interacting with the real physical world but also unable to be noticed or affected by things in the physical world. No sounds can be heard while in spirit form, and neither magic nor psionics can be employed. The only available sense in the spirit world is sight. A PC in spirit form can fly as fast as he or she wishes but cannot pass through solid objects.

The DM can allow PCs in spirit form to venture beyond the confines of the Vale, glimpsing places and creatures that lie ahead of them. Marauding monsters can be seen, ruins discovered, or communities found. (If the DM does not want PCs taking advantage of this spirit form, he or she may decide that PCs in spirit form cannot move beyond visual range of the Vale's pond, although the spirit form is an excellent way of leading PCs to new adventures.) The spirit form phenomenon works only when a character is at complete rest and peace.

The Coming Storm

During the time between the beginning of sunset and the fall of night, nothing untoward occurs to the PCs apart from the steady approach of the storm. It is only about halfway through the second watch when the storm actually starts.

The storm manifests with light rain driven by heavy winds (-2 on all visibility-related checks and ranged attack rolls), becoming heavier as the night passes. The rain should be described as drenching, running freely from faces and soaking clothing within minutes. The PCs might find shelter in the crags and nooks of the Vale's rocky walls or under the branches of the sturdy trees that dot its interior.

Areas of Interest in the Vale

Refer to the map of the Vale for the following areas of interest:

Outer Statues (Areas A-D)

Each of these weathered sculptures depicts a 10'-tall woman in a different anguished stance. They are hewn from light gray, slatelike stone. Dwarves and gnomes have a 5% chance per level of recognizing a definite similarity to deep, subterranean rock. Although the statues are heavily weathered, they were obviously crafted by a master. The statues are immovable by any means short of an earth elemental, *move earth*, *limited wish*, *wish*, or *earthquake* spell. Spells such as *stone shape* work normally, however.

Each of the outer statues face outward, as if to greet new arrivals to the Vale.

- A. Standing, dejected head held low.
- B. Standing, arms and face uprisd in anguish.
- C. Kneeling, face covered in hands.
- D. Standing, holding one hand over its mouth.

Inner Statues (Areas E-H)

These statues are of the same basic design as the outer statues, except that they are life-sized and show few signs of weathering. The statues stand right at the edge of the pond.

- E. Standing, head lowered and arms covering it.
- F. Kneeling, hands covering face.
- G. Kneeling with hands on the earth, anguished face looking into the pool.

H. Prone, with head resting face down on hands.

The Trees

The trees scattered throughout the Vale are particularly hardy, although how they bear fruit remains a mystery. Anyone eating a fruit instantly heals 1d4 points of damage. However, a PC can only regain hit points in this manner once per day. Eating more fruit does not heal more damage. The fruit lose their magic if taken from the Vale.

I. These two trees stand side by side, some ten feet apart. Their branches intertwine to form an archway, and strange runes are carved on their southwestern sides. The runes cannot be translated, even with magic. The DM may assign whatever significance he or she wishes; perhaps if the runes are traced with fingers, dried leaves swirl about between the trees, forming a *gate* to a long-lost place. Alternatively, touching the runes with a magical weapon might spark some ancient magic, forming the area between the tree trunks into a scrying device, perhaps even able to see into the past and future.

The Pond

The pond's waters are crystal clear, and the bottom can be seen some ten feet down. The water from the pool is invigorating when imbibed, restoring 1-2 hit points to the drinker. The rays of the morning sun must strike the water for this effect to occur again; the water can be removed from the pool and its magic preserved, but only if the water is exposed to morning sunlight; otherwise, it loses its potency. A single creature can gain no more than 4 hit points from the water in any given day, and never more than its maximum hit points allow.

History of the Vale

The Vale's history is penned in the blood of those who are buried here. Long ago, before the Great Sand Sea began its advance, there prospered a land known as Reikal, under the rule of the Reik-Thalliak dynasty. With the advance of the desert sands, the land's rulers grew desperate to save their nation and sought advice and counsel from every source available. The counsel they ultimately chose was unfortunate indeed.

The children of the Reik-Thalliak dynasty followed the advice of seductive Lower Planar powers, waging war on their neighbors in pursuit of the favor and gifts of their fell advisors, who promised them godhood and the power to stop the inexorable march of the desert sands.

Generations passed with the Reik-Thalliaks becoming more infatuated in their divine pursuit. Soon, their land was an empire, but at the same time nothing more than a corrupt oligarchy. Resistance grew

within the populace, and on the night Devon Reik-Thalliak, last surviving son of the dynasty, was to ascend to godhood, the empire fell into revolt. When it seemed the resistance might gain a foothold, it was horribly betrayed from within. It was only through the courage and sacrifice of the resistance leaders that Reik-Thalliak's ritual of ascendance was thwarted. The would-be god-king fled the chaos of the capital city, never to be seen again.

With this defeat, Reik-Thalliak's regime crumbled. To protect the memory of those resistance leaders who had fallen, a distant mountain vale—far out of reach of the desert's advance—was selected as a grave site, tended by the wives and daughters of the slain. After the final burial, these women were never seen again. Over the years, travelers would spin tales of a vale full of statues of anguished women, and of the strange sense of peace found there—mute testimony to the sacrifice of courageous men from a land long lost.

As the storm begins to intensify, a small pack of leucrotta moves half a mile up the northwest canyon. They begin imitating human voices in an attempt to lure unwise travelers from the protection of the Vale. The following description should be read to those on watch:

The oncoming storm brings with it a deep chill as the winds pick up, rushing through the canyons and causing the boughs of the trees to sway and creak. You glance about furtively, but you see only the anguished, waterworn faces of the stone women near the pond, lamenting some unknown fate. Then, from the northwest canyon, you hear something under the drumming rain—the sobs of a woman, intensifying with the galing wind.

The eerie weeping is the leucrottas' attempt to lure the PCs out of the protection of the Vale and into the northwest canyon, where the creatures wait in ambush.

Having traversed the Vale on several occasions, the leucrotta chose to take advantage of the grim setting,

harsh weather, and steep canyon walls in their hunt for food. The patient leucrotta continue their cries throughout the night, forcing travelers to stay awake, investigate, or leave.

Should the PCs choose to investigate, they must travel nearly half a mile down the canyon. Climbing the steep, 30'-high canyon walls requires a successful climbing check (or Climb Walls check) at -30%. Walking along the edge of the canyon wall is dangerous due to the wet, crumbling stone; a Dexterity check at -6 is required each turn to keep from sliding down the wall and suffering 1d6+2 points of damage.

As the PCs continue down the northwest canyon, the wails of the "women" are heard with increasing clarity. As they reach the half-mile point, two leucrotta charge them; PCs in the canyon must make a successful Detect Noise roll at -30% or an Alertness proficiency check at -6 to hear the muted sounds of the leucrottas' cloven hooves on the earth. The sound continues for two rounds, after which the two leucrotta attack the nearest PCs. Leucrotta can bite and trample a single target in the same

round. The trampling attack inflicts 2d6 points of damage, and the charging leucrotta receive a +2 attack roll bonus for the charge but suffer a +2 penalty to their armor class.

Whether or not their charge is successful, the two leucrotta continue past the PCs (toward the Vale) until they are 60 feet away from them. PCs who turn southeast to confront the stampeding leucrotta suffer a -4 penalty to their surprise rolls when two more leucrotta appear from the northwest to attack their rear flanks. These latter leucrotta receive a +2 bonus to stealthful rear attacks, and PCs may not count their shield and Dexterity modifiers against these attacks.

The leucrotta fight until two of their number are slain or heavily wounded (reduced to 5 hp or fewer). In that case, they gallop northwest whence they came (MV 36), leaving the party's sight at the start of the next round due to the twisting canyon walls. The PCs may pursue if they wish; however, the leucrotta are far from their lair and have no treasure.

Once the combat is over, the PCs may return to the Vale to complete their night's rest unmolested.

The storm passes just before the coming of dawn. The heavy rains wash away all tracks and signs of the leucrotta.

Leucrotta (4): AC 4; MV 18; HD 6+1; hp 44, 39, 35, 30; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 3-18; SA trample, crushing hooves; SD kick in retreat for 1-6 points of damage; SZ L; ML 14; INT average (10); AL CE; XP 975; MM/221.

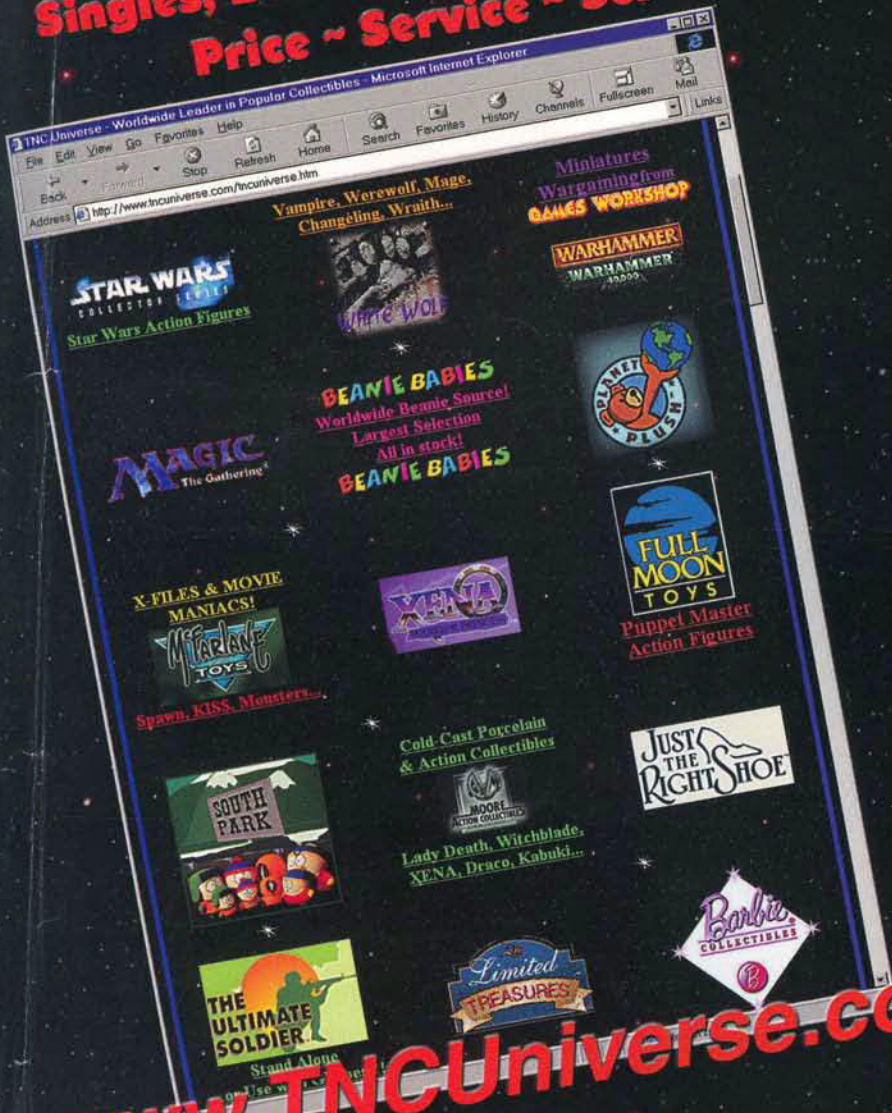
The Oops File!

There is an error in the "Celtic Adventure Notes" sidebar (paragraph 3) on page 11 of "Quoitine Quest" (Issue #73). Druids may not attempt to turn Lady Penrhys, as the text indicates, since Druids cannot turn undead.



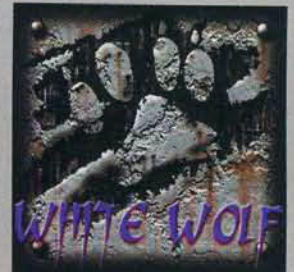
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