

THE GUILD

GUILD COMPANION PUBLICATIONS

ADVENTURER

PUTTING ADVENTURES BACK INTO ROLEPLAYING

ISSUE 3



WELCOME

To the third issue of *The Guild Adventurer*. As always, our aim is to give GMs the very best in adventures and adventure-related material for Rolemaster, Spacemaster, Shadow World and HARP. In this issue, we add a new feature, “*Sweating the Small Stuff*”, which provides guidance and plot ideas relating to the detail of a fantasy campaign, and begin with a look at the role of money. Like “*Rose Petals and Snow Lions*” in our second issue, “*The Keeper of the Thorn*” is set in northwestern Jaiman and is a supplemental adventure for use with the recently released “*Shadow World: The Land of Xa-ar*” region module. We hope that you will enjoy all of the material in this issue – please send us your feedback so that we can continually improve this series of products. If you would like to submit an adventure or an adventure location for a future issue of *The Guild Adventurer*, please contact me at editor@guildcompanion.com

The Guild Adventurer #3 was produced using the “ransom” or “distributed patronage” model. A small army of Patrons stepped forward and pledged their financial support to buy one or more copies of this issue. Although we did not succeed in attaining the pledge target this time, Patronal support plus the extra sales of both *TGA#1* and *TGA#2* that have occurred since their publications meant that this issue was financially viable. All of us who have worked on this project are sincerely grateful to all of our Patrons. Thank you for your support.

Best wishes,
Nicholas HM Caldwell

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CONTENTS

AND CREDITS

4 THE QUIET TIME
WRITTEN BY : ROBERT DEFENDI

11 DUST TO DUST
WRITTEN BY : MARC ROSEN

20 IDENTITY THEFT
WRITTEN BY : ROBERT DEFENDI

25 MONEY IN FANTASY
ROLE PLAYING GAMES
WRITTEN BY : LAURA TRAUTH
AND TERENCE WYNNE

29 THE KEEPER OF THE THORN
WRITTEN BY : TERRY FIMTHOR

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THE QUIET TIME

By Robert J Defendi

This adventure was written for *The Echoes of Heaven Campaign Setting*, but it can easily fit into any setting with a sufficient degree of magic. In this adventure, the characters will investigate a set of ruins in the wilderness. There, they will have to unravel truth from fiction and find the true evil that lurks in the bones of an ancient keep. But will they find the answer before it's too late, or will they become the keep's latest victims?

This adventure involves ancient ruins, lies, red herrings, and a hidden threat. Parties should find an interesting mix of exploring and fighting. The adventure is aimed at 16th level *Rolemaster* or *HARP* characters.

For more on *The Echoes of Heaven Campaign Setting*, visit www.finalredoubt.com



Using this Adventure in *The Echoes of Heaven*

This adventure is set in the Mortal Realm in the no-man's land between Dientor and Marnele. The adventure as a whole fits neatly between episodes five and six of *The Moving Shadow*. It takes place shortly after the events of *The Last Hallowed Place*. At this point, the characters should still be located in Sulvican City, recovering from their struggles against the army of Demons.

Using this Adventure in Another Campaign

This adventure fits very neatly into *The Echoes of Heaven*. Still, there's nothing about the adventure that excludes it from play in other worlds. In this adventure, we use Ulcers as the mechanism for creating the adventure site, but the cause isn't actually important to the execution of the adventure. This could just as easily be caused by a magical effect (say the collapse of a great magical defense). It could also be explained by a savage haunting, although you'd need an explanation of why it hasn't caused problems until now (then again, maybe it has).

Ulcers

There will be much talk of Ulcers in this adventure. For those who don't own *The Echoes of Heaven Campaign Setting*, an Ulcer is an infection in the fabric of reality, a place where Hell has become a part of the Mortal Realm. In an Ulcer anything is possible and reality breaks down. Ulcers allow for any kind of adventure as you can see in this scenario. There is one way to destroy an Ulcer. The characters must kill every bit of true evil inside. Only when there's no evil to anchor it will the Ulcer finally dissolve (often spectacularly).

Adventure Background

Almost one thousand years ago, the nation of Dientor fell as the Demon Queen opened gates to Hell throughout the country. The nation flooded with Demons. The entire world might have fallen if it wasn't for the actions of Saint Kulan, the Guardian.

Lost in all the stories of Kulan's wars against the Great Fiends is the story of the paladin Aksledion. Aksledion was stationed at a

small fortress which stood between modern-day Marnele and Dientor. When Dientor fell, the fortress ended up on the front line of the push of the Demon army. Kûlan's forces didn't reach them in time, and they stood alone.

The defenders of the keep fell one by one, until the only person left alive was Aksledion. The Paladin fought a valiant fight, but in the end, he too fell.

But he was not defeated.

Aksledion's faith was so great that he continued fighting after his death. He stood, a ghost-like spirit, glowing with divine power, and he fought. The path to Heaven and his reward appeared before him, and he fought. The Demons kept coming, and still, he fought.

In the end, he won.

Aksledion never passed on to his reward. He has stood ever since, guarding the fortress, which has since crumbled to ruins. He has lived in the cellars, and over the centuries, his purpose has faded from stopping Dientor to defending his ruins. The years and the evil flowing out of Dientor's permanent Ulcer have worn on him until he has become something only one step away from Undead when once, he was one step away from a saint.

Twenty years ago, a priest named Trebert had a dream and headed to the ruins. There, he discovered Aksledion in his reduced state. He saw that he had to shield the Protector of the ruins from future influences. He built himself a shack in the ruins and he began to convince wanderers and local villagers that the place was haunted. In doing so, he guarded the Protector from the exhaustion of fighting the petty evils of brigands and wandering criminals.

Weeks ago, the Duke of Hell Morthorn put his plan in motion to take over the Mortal Realm, as detailed in *The Last Hallowed Place*. While the characters are assumed to have won the day in that adventure, the waves of evil coming out of Dientor washed over this area, and Aksledion began his final fall. They managed to throw up wards just in time. Trebert and the Protector stopped the rising evil from completing the corruption of the site, but only just barely.

Now the ruins stand on a knife's edge. Trebert knows the wards hold back evil that will almost certainly tip the Protector over the edge. He doesn't know what to do. In the past, the Protector has sung to him in his sleep, giving him dreams of Heaven and the glory of God. Now, Aksledion is silent. Trebert is desperate. He can think of nothing that will stop Aksledion from turning into full Undead, and he fears with the level of corruption in the ground already, that the site will become an instant Ulcer.

He is at his wit's end.

Setup

Things have been bad since the close of *The Last Hallowed Place*. The party might have won the day, but for how long? The dead rise all over. The Church scrambles to pick up the pieces of their victory and to forge a path forward. See *The Last Hallowed Place* for more details on the state of the world at the end of the adventure.

The characters are called in to meet the Faerarch, the head of the Church. He asks them if they can give him some indication of the exact state of the new world. He is afraid that the border of the Dientor Ulcer grew during the events of the Demon attack. He has a test case he'd like them to investigate.

There are ruins on the edge of the Dientor Ulcer, which have been reported to the Church many times as a possible Ulcer. The Knights Lonnuso have been out there so many times over the years that they've made it a

regular patrol. Each time, in the past, they've declared it to *not* be an Ulcer.

The Faerarch would like the party to go investigate the ruins. He feels that the state of the ruins will be a measure of the state of the world. If the place is still not an Ulcer, then perhaps things are not as bad as they fear. If it is, they will need to take decisive action to repair the damage left by Morthorn's plan. It's a hopeful mission, and one that he prays will turn out to be a quick sightseeing jaunt.

If he has anything, he has hope.

The Journey

Things have calmed down somewhat since the grand battle of a week or two ago. There is still little shipping going in and out of Sulvican City. Still, now that things have calmed down, the Faerarch can commission a ship. This is an inconvenience to the captain, but he's happy to serve at the pleasure of the Faerarch and he's well compensated in the end.

The party sails out from Sulvican City and to the southeast. A few days later they arrive on the shore, some ten miles from the ruins.

There's no need for an encounter on the way to the adventure, but if the party becomes itchy going too long without combat, or if you have a player that you need to feed into the combat grinder once in a while, you might want to throw something in. An encounter of mixed Undead would nicely foreshadow the rest of the adventure. Make sure that the party doesn't know whether they came from Dientor or not.

The Wards

As the party approaches the ruins, allow those naturally inclined to make relevant Maneuver rolls to judge the health of the local flora. It's a Medium difficulty and success shows that the plants here are far more yellow than the time of year and recent rains should dictate. It seems that the pall coming out of Dientor is killing the plants.

When they arrive at the site itself, they will find a wide ring of rocks, carved with runes, glowing faintly in the light of the sun (they appear quite bright at night). If the characters try to pass through, they will find an invisible wall of force keeping them out. Further investigation shows that it is actually a dome, covering an area of several square blocks, with the ruins inside.

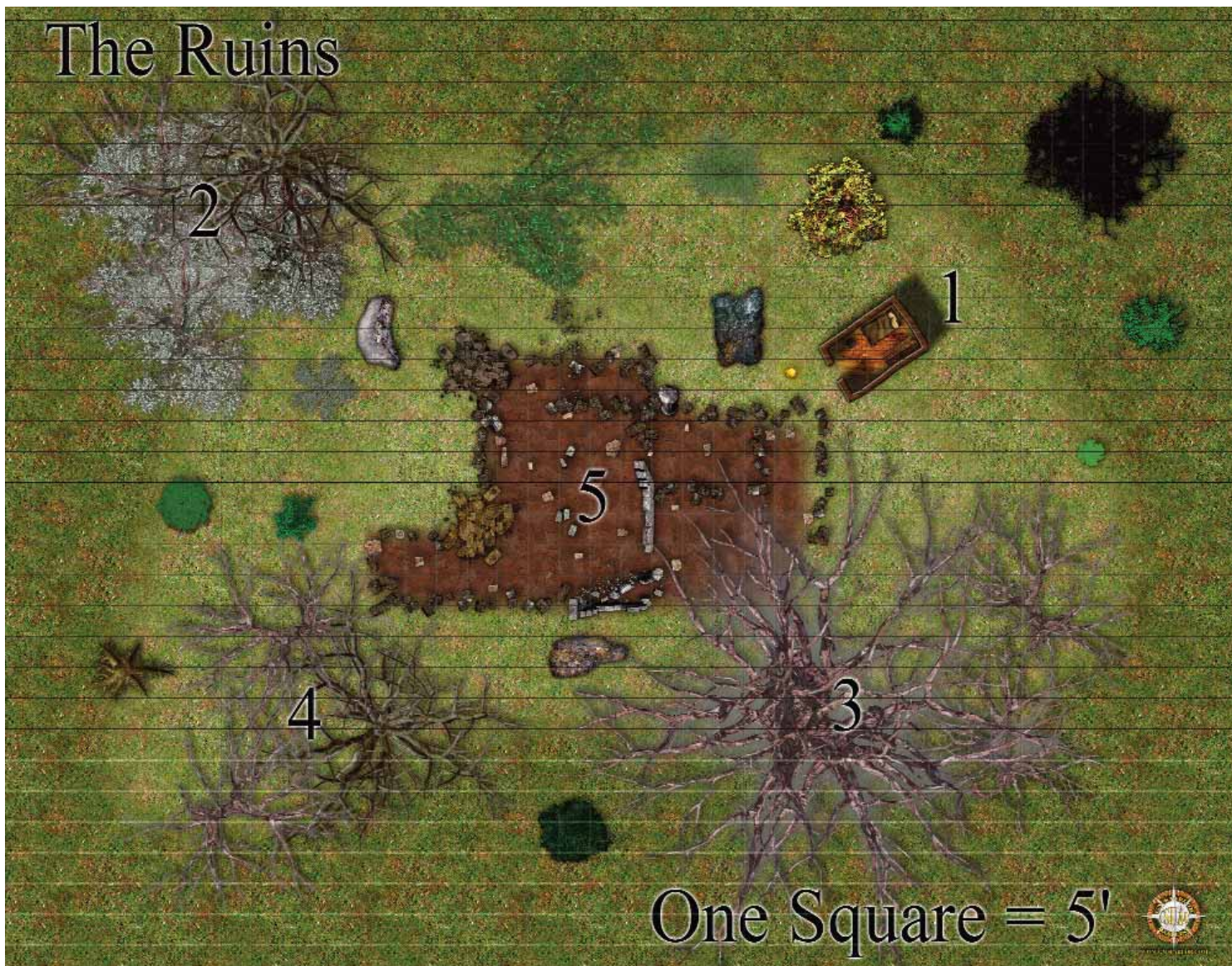
These are the wards that shield the area and the Protector. Under normal circumstances, the party would be able to pass through, but the corruption of the land, so close to Dientor, is too high now, and they've formed an actual physical barrier.

But the party has no way to know that. Relevant lore Maneuvers will show that they are wards, but that the spell seems to be a unique creation. There's no way to tell what they ward against without seeing the entire structure, and it isn't all here (there are sections inside). It could be a ward to stop evil or it could be a ward created by evil entities to keep out meddlers. If the place *is* an Ulcer, this could be a way to protect it until it can become permanent, and maybe combine with Dientor.

If the party finds a way to communicate home for more orders, they are told to risk it and try to get inside. Otherwise, they will likely come to that conclusion anyway.

One can't dig up the runes (the wards protect from the corrupted earth as well), but one *can* dispel the magic. In RM, treat the wards as 15th level. In HARP, give them a +75 bonus to their RR. Either way, the party should be able to bring them down in a few tries. If they try something more creative, play it by ear, but once the wards are broken they can enter the area freely.

Unfortunately, they let in all the evil as well.



The Ruins

The ruins have long since fallen into disarray. Use the Ruins Map for the layout of the above ground area. The party likely approaches from the north-west, but if they do something to change that, let them.

A location-based key is as follows:

1) The Shack: Here the old hermit Trebert lives. He keeps various spell books necessary to cast illusions to protect the site. Trebert is a little mad, and more than a little crazy. He's learned illusion spells to help people believe the locale is haunted. He's become good at hiding this from Witch-Hunters over the years, and he has some mundane tricks so that they'll believe he maintains the effect through ventriloquism and costumes, but in actuality, he's violated his Church's ban on non-divine magic. All the evidence of this is hidden very well under his floorboards (an Extremely Hard Maneuver to find).

2) The Wicker Man: Here the old man has hidden a contraption of branches and pulleys that he can use to create a frightening, ghostly image

of an unnatural creature. In the moonlight, it's extremely convincing. He won't use it during the day, as the cables and pulleys would be too obvious.

3) The Echoes: Here the old man can shout and the nature of the trees, the ground and the ruins serve to make an extremely disconcerting echo. It's very hard to place the origin of sounds coming from here, so he uses it to make disembodied ghost noises.

4) Reflections: Here light from a lantern can shine through the trees to make the convincing image of a vaguely feminine ghost shape. Again, this only works at night.

5) The Maw: This is a new feature. Here the ground opens up into a hole in the ground. It appears shortly after the players beat Trebert, as the place becomes a full Ulcer.

The Ruse

The old man will quickly decide that the characters aren't Witch-Hunters (or if they are, that all bets are off). He has no sophisticated illusions, so he'll

use simple images and sounds to create “ghosts” that appear and attempt to terrify the characters. There is no touch component to any of these illusions, so while the party might be worried at first, once they engage in combat, they should quickly figure things out.

Start with a glance of a ghost through the trees. Then have rumbling sounds assault them from all directions. If the party is combat-heavy, an image of a powerful Elemental Wraith on a skeletal horse might be enough to make the more intelligent balk. Tease and lead on, but the old man tries to avoid real interaction. Don’t let the party get bored, however. Sooner or later, they figure it out. Allow them to get a little frustrated, but only enough that it will add to their satisfaction when they figure out these are all illusions.

After they figure it out, allow them to focus and use Tracking and similar maneuvers to follow the old man back to area 3) where he retreats. There he will bellow “Get out!” in an impressive baritone. When the party captures him, he gives up without a fight.

The Complication

And then, suddenly, he begins to die.

He thrashes about. He falls to the ground. Necromantic energies surge through his body. He bleeds from the eyes, screams. “The Protector!” he shouts. “The Protector guards this place! He’s been silent! The quiet. Dear God, the quiet!”

That’s the last thing he says. After that, he passes on to better places. He resists all healing. The party can bind his soul with a lifekeeping (in fact, this is a good way to keep him from rising as Undead, at least in the short term), but his body is filled with necromantic energies now. There’s no way to bring him back. If they let him go, he will rise as a minor zombie, almost beneath the notice of the party.

He has died because at that moment, the Protector fully corrupted and this place became an Ulcer. His connection to the Protector filled him with the energy of the Undead. At the same time, the maw opened in area 5. The party should be able to notice that it wasn’t there a moment ago, if they look around.

The Ulcer

The Ulcer has formed only moments ago, out of the history and torments of the Protector. The Protector made one last attempt to save the world from himself. He scattered his armor around the Ulcer, sinking some of his power into each section and bound himself in magical chains. He has turned completely evil since, but without the portions of his soul trapped in his armor, he can’t escape.

But the new, evil self isn’t without any power at all. He has managed to create an armor wrack out of Ulcer conjurations, hoping that someone will realize that the armor needs to be reassembled. He then went silent, and now he waits.

6) Entry: This is an earthen chamber with walls clotted together with twisting roots of the plants and bushes above. Loose tunnels lead off in five directions, turning to worked stone shortly thereafter. Out of the north leads a wide, inviting corridor of worked stone. There is an ancient helmet on the ground here.

7) The Protector: This is a grand, circular room with a vaulted ceiling. Panels on the ceiling depict the history of the place. One shows the building of the fortress. One shows the attack by the Demons. One shows the Protector, the only one alive, making a final stand. Next one shows the Protector, fallen, rising as a spiritual being and throwing off the Demons. The final show him defending the place against various foes, in each one

less radiant than the last. In the final episode, he’s exhausted.

The Protector stands as a dimly flickering figure in the middle of the room, a faint figure in armor. The armor is the same design as the helmet. There is an armor rack in the center of the room also, inside the ghostly form. If the characters place the Helmet on the armor wrack, it glows for a moment and then melds with the ghost. From then on, the ghostly armor wears the real helmet, and it seems stronger.

The characters will likely rebuild the entire suit of armor. When they do, they discover the twist. The Protector roars to life, as he shatters the magical wards he’s placed on himself. He bellows and blasts his way out the back wall of the room, leaving a cloud of darkness in his wake. The entire Ulcer shakes and the characters hear a rising howl of Undead behind them. If they don’t follow the Protector, they are in for one hell of a fight.

8) The “Peasants”: This room has three Demons of Gluttony. They are dressed like peasants and they act like peasants. The characters will likely attack them, and if so, the “peasants” will fight them, all the while asking them why they are attacking. Once the fight starts, the “peasants” won’t let it end, though. The only way the characters can get the armor’s right arm, which lies at the back of the room, is to beat the Demons or take the arm without starting a fight.

RM Stats

Level: 20G	Size: L	MS/AQ: FA/FA	
Base Move: 110		Max Pace: Run	MM Bonus: 71
Hits: 351G	Crits: SL	AT (DB): 4(41)	
Attacks: 159LC1 (x2)			

HARP Stats

Level: 20	Size: L	BMR: 15’
Init: +35	DB: +144	Hits: 303
Stamina: +178	Will: +148	Magic: +149

Attacks: 179 M-Slash

Special Abilities: Survival Instinct, Tough Hide (Major), Dark Vision (Greater), Shield Training, Lightning Reflexes.

Important Skills: Brawling (60) 146, Wrestling (63) 167, Perception (63) 149, Duping (62) 138, Public Speaking (4) 46, Trading (23) 99, Jumping (25) 112, Stalking & Hiding (23) 105, Trickery (20) 98.

Once the characters have the arm, they will feel the power of the room clawing at them. When they try to leave the room, they can tell that they can’t without it tearing free a piece of their soul. They can push through, but it will cost them. If they leave the arm behind, there is no cost.

The only way to get out with the arm is to pay the price. Allow the character to pick one talent. They lose that talent and all its effects. If they have no talents left, they can instead take a –20 to a temporary stat that directly affects one of their primary skills.

9) The Game: The Protector was playing a simple game with one of his companions right before the final assault. He has been playing the same game in his head for the last thousand years, the closest thing he had to unfinished business. The unfinished business, however, was that the knight he was playing had never beaten him, and on the day of the final assault, he had received word his father had died. The Protector had intended to lose a game, but he wouldn’t specifically throw one, because of his honor.

This is a simple room with a door out the other side. A powerful magical field blocks the exit, along with an interdiction against teleportation and spells of passing and the like. The only way to get through is to play the game.

The game is a grid of three by three intersecting lines. It's essentially a version of tic tac toe, where the game is played by placing white and black stones on the intersecting lines. The characters know the game and the rules.

They can play the game as often as they like. The opponent's stones appear on the board as if by magic. Black goes first. The players can decide before each game which color they will play.

When a player wins a game, the magical field to 10 drops.

10) The Other Arm: Here sits the other arm of the suit of armor. The characters can collect it without incident. To get out, they will need to pay the price, as with area 8.

11) The Father: This room is decorated as a den, maybe the private room in a lord's solar. There's a fire on one side, with a large chair facing it. Tapestries hang from the wall and a writing desk sits to one side. When the characters enter, a large man in plate mail unfolds himself from the chair. He turns to the party. "Boy," he says. "Feria tells me you were beaten in training today. Again. Take your medicine, you little bastard."

The man is the Protector's father, who beat him almost daily in his youth. The characters must fight him to get past and down the hall to the right.

RM Stats

Level: 20	Size: M	MS/AQ: MF/MF	
Base Move: 45		Max Pace: Dash	MM Bonus: 20
Hits: 250	Crits: —	AT (DB): 20(30s)	
Attacks: 200bs			

HARP Stats

Level: 20	Size: M	BMR: 15'
Init: +20	DB: +102	Hits: 225
Stamina: +65	Will: +55	Magic: +51

Attacks: 180 M-Slash
Special Abilities: Lightning Reflexes.
Important Skills: Brawling (68) 146, Blindfighting (13) 64, Disarm For (10) 60, Perception (19) 78.

12) The First Leg: Here lies the leg of the Protector's Armor. To exit the room, the characters must pay the price, as with room 8.

13) The Quiet Room: This room is almost completely silent. All noises the characters make are completely absorbed. All the characters can hear is the almost imperceptible sound of someone breathing. There is nothing else to worry about in this room, but the characters might find it highly disconcerting.

14) The Lightning Room: The Protector wasn't killed by lightning, but he was grievously wounded by it by the end of the battle. This room contains the final leg of the armor, standing on a low pedestal. As the characters approach, they hear the constant crackle of electricity and they see the blue-white flicker of lightning.

Blasts of lightning course out of the three halls that lead away from this room, grounding on the leg. If the characters try to touch they are hit by three +100 lightning bolts (a huge electricity attack in HARP). They will then be blasted away from the leg.

The characters can approach this problem in a few different ways. They can invent some way to pull the leg off the pedestal. If they move it ten feet away, in a direction that doesn't move it closer to any of the hall, the circuit ends and the lightning stops.

They could also come up with some way to make themselves immune to the lightning. If they do that, they can move it without difficulty, and if they

move it away, as described above, the blasts end.

Finally, they can try to dart down each of the halls in turn. Doing so exposes them to two blasts of lightning, but if the character isn't stunned, they can make it through without being blasted back. If they are stopped by the lightning, they might just have to stand there and take blast after blast until they die. At the end, there is a glass globe, which creates the lightning. Shattering it ends the effects.

Removing the leg from the actual room requires the same sacrifice as listed in room 8.

15) The Fire Cavern: The Protector, in the end, fell to Demon fire. Here, that fire still burns, an infection in the torso of his suit of armor. The characters can see the armor immediately upon approaching the cavern, glowing with a disconcerting red light.

Anyone who touches the armor takes an immediate E heat critical in Rolemaster (a +0 Huge Fire Critical in HARP that ignores all DB.) The character continues to take this damage every round, but before taking damage, he may attempt an RR vs. Channeling (Magic in HARP). In RM, this is a level 20 RR. In HARP, the RR target number is 125.

If anyone touches the character before he throws off the infection, the infection spreads to him as well. This continues until every character is clear of the infection, after which the armor clears as well.

Taking the armor out of the room requires the same sacrifice as in room 8.

16) The Inner Self: Hopefully, the party will come to this room on the heels of the Protector. If they do, they see two versions of the Protector, one shining with a faint holy light and the other radiating fell energies. "Please!" the faint echoes cries. "You've stood against this for so long!"

The Protector bellows and strikes the faint echo down, then barrels on through. The characters can take a round to throw a few pot shots on the Protector, but he keeps going. If a character spends a fate point to finish things quickly in HARP, the Protector will spend a fate point to counter it.

The faint version of the Protector takes a moment to die. Before he does, he wheezes, "I held out for so long. Who destroyed my wards?" He then sees the party and shouts, "Stop me. I held out for as long as I could, but I've fallen to the taint now. Stop me before I finish my work!" Then he fades away.

17) The Gate Room: As the characters enter this room, they see the dark swirling energies of a gate forming. It's an Easy Lore Maneuver of an appropriate type (history, geography, planar lore, etc) to know that Dientor is known for its gates to Hell.

The party will come into the room in time to see the Protector attempting to open the gate. All the players are in place. It's time for the final battle.

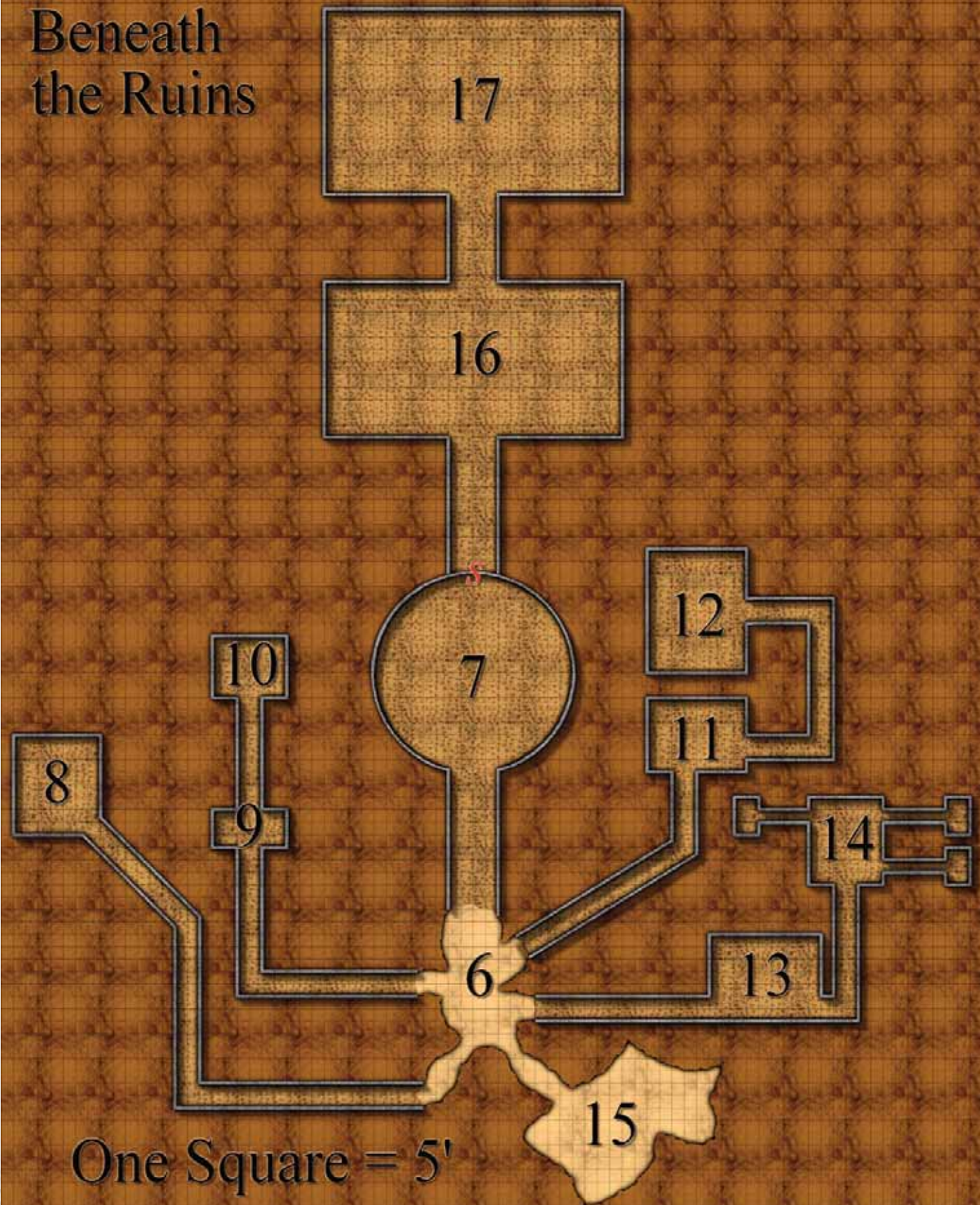
Climax

The party is stuck between two forces. One is the horde of ghosts from the dead defenders of the fortress. On the other side is the Protector, who is trying to open a gate to Hell.

The Protector will attack the party the moment he sees them. Meanwhile, the horde of wailing ghosts they've been hearing will surge in from the rear.

Make the battle large, and wild and exciting. The ghosts will keep coming, two per round, until the party kills the Protector. When they do, the ghosts will stop coming, but the party will have to kill those who remain.

Beneath the Ruins



Rolemaster Stats

The following stats are for *Rolemaster*.

The Protector

Level: 25 **Size:** M **MS/AQ:** FA/FA
Base Move: 110 **Max Pace:** Run **MM Bonus:** 71
Hits: 400 **Crits:** SL **AT (DB):** 20(50)
Attacks: 180bs

Ghosts

Level: 7H **Size:** M **MS/AQ:** FA/FA
Base Move: 100 **Max Pace:** Spt **MM Bonus:** 20
Hits: 100A **Crits:** LA# **AT (DB):** 1(30)
Attacks: 50bs

HARP Stats

The following stats are for *HARP*.

The Protector

Level: 25 **Size:** M **BMR:** 15'
Init: +35 **DB:** +160 **Hits:** 350
Stamina: +183 **Will:** +153 **Magic:** +154
Attacks: 200 broadsword
Special Abilities: Lightning Reflexes.
Important Skills: Brawling (60) 146, Wrestling (63) 167, Perception (63) 149, Duping (62) 138, Public Speaking (4) 46, Trading (23) 99, Jumping (25) 112, Stalking & Hiding (23) 105, Trickery (20) 98.

Ghosts

Level: 5 **Size:** M **BMR:** 14'
Init: +30 **DB:** +35 **Hits:** 130
Stamina: +45 **Will:** +65 **Magic:** +85
Attacks: 90 broadsword
Special Abilities: Flight, Undead Abilities.
Important Skills: Perception (15) 97.

When the characters kill the last of the Undead, the Ulcer shakes and begins to collapse. The characters can escape in time, but you've probably done the collapsing Ulcer bit a few times now, so there's no need to play this one for false tension.

If the characters fail, they likely die, but if they somehow escape, the Protector manages to open his gate. This extends the Ulcer of Dientor by a few miles, but the gate itself will allow Demons to come into the Mortal Realm much closer to civilized lands than before.

If the characters win, they regain the portions of their souls they sacrifice. If they lose, how they can regain these is up to the GM.

Aftermath

If the characters win, the place returns to natural wilderness. Still, the potential of the Ulcer is gone, but the place is also no longer protected either. Now Dientor can creep outward more easily. Still, the characters probably aren't as worried about this as the other events going on in the world.

If the characters fail but still escape, there's a new Demon Gate. Decisive action might close it before it fully integrates into the Dientor Ulcer, but that's beyond the scope of this adventure. If the characters leave it, you'll need to remember that this new gate exists, and plan adventures in your

campaign accordingly. If it becomes fully integrated with Dientor, there is little anyone will be able to do to close it without cleansing all of Dientor.

One way or another, the characters have the answer to their initial question. Things in the world are still getting worse. They didn't completely win at the end of *The Last Hallowed Place*.

The characters likely return to Sulvican City. There, tales of their exploits spread throughout. If they played *The Last Hallowed Place*, the reaction might be a bit of a let down. The people of the city like them, and they celebrate the characters when the opportunity arises (this usually involves buying them a meal or a drink). But the characters experience none of the hype they gained saving the city. In fact, most people they meet probably still talk about the Demon attack, mentioning their more recent accomplishments only in passing.

Continuing to *The Day Before Apocalypse*

If you wish to run the sixth episode in *The Moving Shadow* next, matters are simple. *The Day Before Apocalypse* begins in Sulvican City. As long as the characters are there at that time, matters are easy.

If after assigning experience from this adventure, the characters haven't reached 18th level in *Rolemaster* or *HARP*, then a little extra adventuring might be in order. You can check out our full Adventure Seed products for an additional adventure that fits neatly after this one. Conversely, you might give them some extra experience point awards to get them to the next level. Either way, they should be ready to venture into the *The Land of Blades and Barbs*.

DUST TO DUST

BY MARC ROSEN



This adventure is intended for a party of five 5th level characters. Fewer, but higher level characters will also work. This is intended as almost a random encounter, the party literally stumbling into an unexpected mess. This works best in a dry area where a dust storm makes sense (Plains, Desert, Scrublands), there is a rainstorm variation if the dust version doesn't work, and any variations for the rain version are noted. GMs will need to add and/or change names to fit their specific setting, but this scenario will work in almost any fantasy setting.

Timeline

Four hundred years ago: A battle was fought in a remote location, between forces following a dark god, opposed by an army led by priests and champions of a god of light. At the end of the battle, the victorious forces of the light gathered their wounded, and buried their dead. Twenty-five burial mounds were erected, and the army began the long march home. This out of the way site is mostly forgotten, except by a few scholars.

Two months ago: The three Karra brothers, **Sandor**, **Kelwan** and **Lothos**, are priests of a dark god associated with necromancy. They were sent to rob and defile the unguarded burial site, as a lesson to those who would oppose their lord, and as a slap in the face of the god(s) of light.

They traveled to the site with a wagon, a tough trip for men used to a soft urban existence. Loaded in the wagons were supplies mundane and magical, and a pile of digging tools. They sensed latent magic in the corner mounds, so began instead at the center, leaving the others for last.

At first all went well. They broke into the central mound, looted it, and raised the four corpses inside as undead, and set them to dig up the next mound. Unfortunately, the creatures are too stupid and uncoordinated to use shovels and picks, so can only dig with their hands. Things are going quite slowly. The brothers have been here over two months, and are exhausted, short tempered and eager to be done. Pushing to get the task finished, they have created undead of the bodies in each mound they've opened, but with each extra set of hands, controlling them has become more difficult and exhausting (see #13 below).

Today: As the party was traveling, a nasty storm has blown up out of the west. After a month of no rain, the wind carries a stinging load of dry dust, grit and sand. It's almost impossible not to walk with the wind, so the party has headed east looking for a place to shelter from the storm, and around midday walks right into the burial site. (The dashed line indicated on the map.)

The Karra brothers have retreated to their camp in Mound #13 to wait out the storm, while their undead workers break into mound #24.

Environment

The Storm: The winds are blowing continuously at 30 mph west to east, with gusts up to 50 mph. The dust in the wind is thick, stinging exposed skin, and making it hard to see. Between the wind and the dust there is a -1 per foot of distance penalty to Perception (or Observation) related maneuvers (so looking at something 40' away is at -40). The dust affects



exposed flame lit, enclosed lanterns will require a medium maneuver every 5 rounds.

(In a rain variation, the characters should be cold and wet rather than wind burned and dusty, and there is an additional -30 to any climbing maneuver attempted.)

The Mounds: Each mound is roughly 40' across and 30' high, with steeply sloped sides and domed, almost flat tops. It takes a single climbing maneuver (Medium difficulty) to climb up the side of a mound.

The mounds offer no real shelter from the storm outside, as the wind is channeled around them in random gusts.

The mounds are most easily broken into from above, where flat stones were laid to seal the openings used to inter the dead. It takes about 10 man hours using shovels and picks to dig off the top cover (1 hour for 10 men, 2 hours for 5, etc.) it takes 10x as long to dig off the top cover by hand. It's a Very Hard (RM) / Hard (HARP) strength maneuver to move the heavy stone sealing the entrance, and then roughly a 10' drop down into the tombs within.

Inside the tombs, the walls, ceilings and floors are rough stone, about 8' high. Each mound has four chambers North-South-East-West branching out from the central area with the entry hatch. Inside the mounds there is shelter from the storm in the chambers away from the central area (or in the central area if the entrance is closed or otherwise blocked.)

Nightvision and Darkvision just as much as normal vision. It should be difficult for anyone to distinguish people at 50', and even the mounds will vanish into the dust at around 100'.

The howl of the wind makes it hard to hear anything clearly, normal speaking voices can only be heard if two people put their heads together, and even shouting will be unintelligible from more than 30' away.

All missile and elemental attacks are at -1 per foot of distance to the target in addition to normal range penalties.

It will require a hard maneuver each round to keep a torch or similar

Antagonists

The Karra brothers are camped in Mound #13. **Sandor** is asleep, **Kelwan** is eating lunch while looking over the loot, and **Lothos** is operating the magical circle to control the undead. Most of the undead are busy digging their way into mound #19. There are four **Class III's** "on watch" on mounds #4, #6, #20 and #22, and four **Class II's** and one **Class III** acting as guards at mound #13.

The undead themselves are completely mindless, and will just continue at whatever task they were last assigned unless attacked. If attacked, they will stop what they are doing and attack the nearest living being. (Note, only those attacked will fight, so even if one undead out of a crowd is attacked, the non attacked undead will just keep working.) The party will probably have a hard time permanently killing the undead here due to the storm, so keep track of time for any undead incapacitated, as they will regenerate and return to the fray.

The undead are stupid and not very perceptive, but tireless. The party should find it easy to play cat-and-mouse games in the mound area, but may have problems with the fact that they will have to keep moving.

For each undead killed or incapacitated, there is a 2.5% cumulative chance per round that **Lothos** will notice via the magical circle. If **Lothos** is alerted via the circle, or if the brothers actually see the party, they will all enter the circle and order any undead in contact with the party to attack, while ordering the rest back to mound #13. The brothers are sick of their slow, stupid workers, and a bit nervous about the final four mounds where they have detected active magic, so they will try to capture any intruders so they can put them to work.

Once they've gathered their workers they will split the undead into three groups (They will leave the four **Class II** and one **Class III** guarding mound #13). Each brother will personally direct one Undead (preferably a **Class III**) and direct all others in each group to "Follow your leader and grab anyone you see". This may take a bit of time. If their chosen leader is killed or incapacitated, they'll need to re-order all undead in the group, so whichever undead a brother is controlling will hang back from combat, leading the mob in the search, then into combat, then backing out once the fight is joined.

Any party member captured will be taken back to Mound #13. Whichever brother was controlling the group that captured them will step out of the magical circle to personally disarm, tie up, then interrogate the captive to find out who the party are, how many of them there are, why they are there, etc. (During this period, the group of undead that made the capture will idle at the base of the ladder to #13, but will attack if they see anyone.) If any further captures are made, the same brother will repeat the process, and continue watching/interrogating the bound prisoners. Whichever brother makes the second capture will absorb the idle undead group that made the first capture into their hunting party.

Any undead incapacitated that regenerate back to activity will begin wandering around randomly (and attacking anything living they encounter) until the brothers have time to get them back under control.

If the brothers feel personally threatened, or if more than half the undead (20) are incapacitated or killed, they will attempt to get the party to surrender using threats on the captives (if any) or switch from attempting to capture, to attempting to kill.

If the whole party is captured, the brothers will strip them of everything but their clothing and have the undead drag them to Mound #15. The undead will toss them picks and shovels from the pile west of #13 and force them to dig (With beatings if necessary). This should trigger the event at #15.

The Mounds

#1. This mound has not been opened yet, as the brothers have sensed something within. Inside this mound is buried a champion (knight, paladin) of the light whose oaths are powerful enough that his corpse is stir-

ring to defend the burial site from desecration. If this mound is opened, the **Deathless Champion** will attempt to get to mound #15 and open it, triggering the event there. They will attack anyone or anything that tries to stop them, but their primary goal is to open mound #15, not fight, so they will ignore downed or stunned foes.

The East chamber of the mound contains a sturdy but plain wooden throne, upon which the **Deathless Champion** sits. (Likely by the time anyone gets to this chamber the occupant has already departed.)

The North chamber contains the mummified corpse of the champion's mount. (The horse will not animate). Their saddle and tack are of fine quality but rotten and worthless.

The South chamber contains burial goods, rotten grain, vessels with the residue of water and wine, and a dish of salt.

The West chamber contains a shrine to the appropriate god of light. None of the undead will enter this area unless it is desecrated.

#2 & #3. These mounds have been opened, robbed and desecrated. The contents have been removed, and the interiors polluted with graffiti and filth. (The brothers have been here for months, and have used every chamber in every open mound as a latrine at least once during their stay). Particular attention has been taken to desecrate the shrines in the West chambers.

The entry chambers will be a cyclone of dry dust due to the storm, while an inch of dust and sand will have settled out of the calmer air in the four side chambers. (In the rain variant, all opened mounds other than #13, which has a "door" over the opening will be filling with rainwater, containing four inches of standing, rank, polluted water, and gaining an additional inch for every 4 hours the storm lasts.)

#4. This mound has also been desecrated per above, but atop the mound is a **Class III Undead** keeping watch to the Northwest. Its instructions are to point at anyone it sees and yell (A loud moaning sound "Muuuuuuuuuuh-hhhhhh!"). They will only attack if attacked, or if directed by the brothers via the magical circle. Unfortunately for the brothers, the storm means their watchmen can't see much, and it's almost impossible to hear them unless you're standing on the mound with them.

#5. Another empty, desecrated mound per #2 above.

#6. Other than the fact that the **Class III** is watching northeast, this mound is the same as #4 above.

#7-#10. These are empty, desecrated mounds per #2 above.

#11. This mound is identical to Mound #1, and contains another **Deathless Champion**.

#12. This is an empty, desecrated mound per #2 above.

#13 The brothers have made this mound their camp. The dotted lines connecting to mounds #9 and #18 represent three ropes spiked between the mounds to act as a corral. Inside the corral is an empty wagon pulled against the east side of #13, and three horses (One heavy draft and two riding). Between the undead and the storm, the horses are extremely spooked. It will take a Very Hard (RM) / Hard (HARP) Riding check to calm them enough to mount them. (Any result below 25 on a riding check attempt to soothe the horses, or any startling behavior inside the corral will provoke

all three horses into panic. They will attempt to escape the corral to run away to the east and attack anyone who tries to stop them or blocks their way.)

There is a ladder secured to the west face of this mound that allows easy access to the top. There are dozens of shovels and picks in a loose pile next to the base of the ladder.

On top of the mound are four **Class II Undead** who will attack anyone other than the brothers who climb onto the top of the mound. The hatchway of this mound is blocked with three heavy boards nailed together (the tail-gate of the wagon) and wrapped in a tarp. It's a shoddy, makeshift job, but it succeeds in keeping out the wind and dust. Lifting the hatch, there is a ladder going down into the mound.

Inside the mound, there is a **Class III Undead** guarding the base of the ladder in the central chamber. The East and South chambers are sleeping areas, just piles of blankets and furs with an extinguished lantern. Unless there has been an alarm, **Sandor** is asleep in the South chamber.

The West chamber is the storeroom, with much depleted sacks of dried food, many empty wine bottles and 25 full gallon water skins. **Kelwan** is in here eating a lunch of water, dry biscuit and beef jerky. He is angry that there's no wine left, and carrying on an angry conversation with himself on the subject.

Many of the empty food sacks are now full of loot taken from the desecrated mounds. There are 50 rusty but serviceable broadswords stacked against the west wall.

Sack #1 contains 153 twice-baked biscuits.

Sack #2 contains 25 lbs. of dried beef strips.

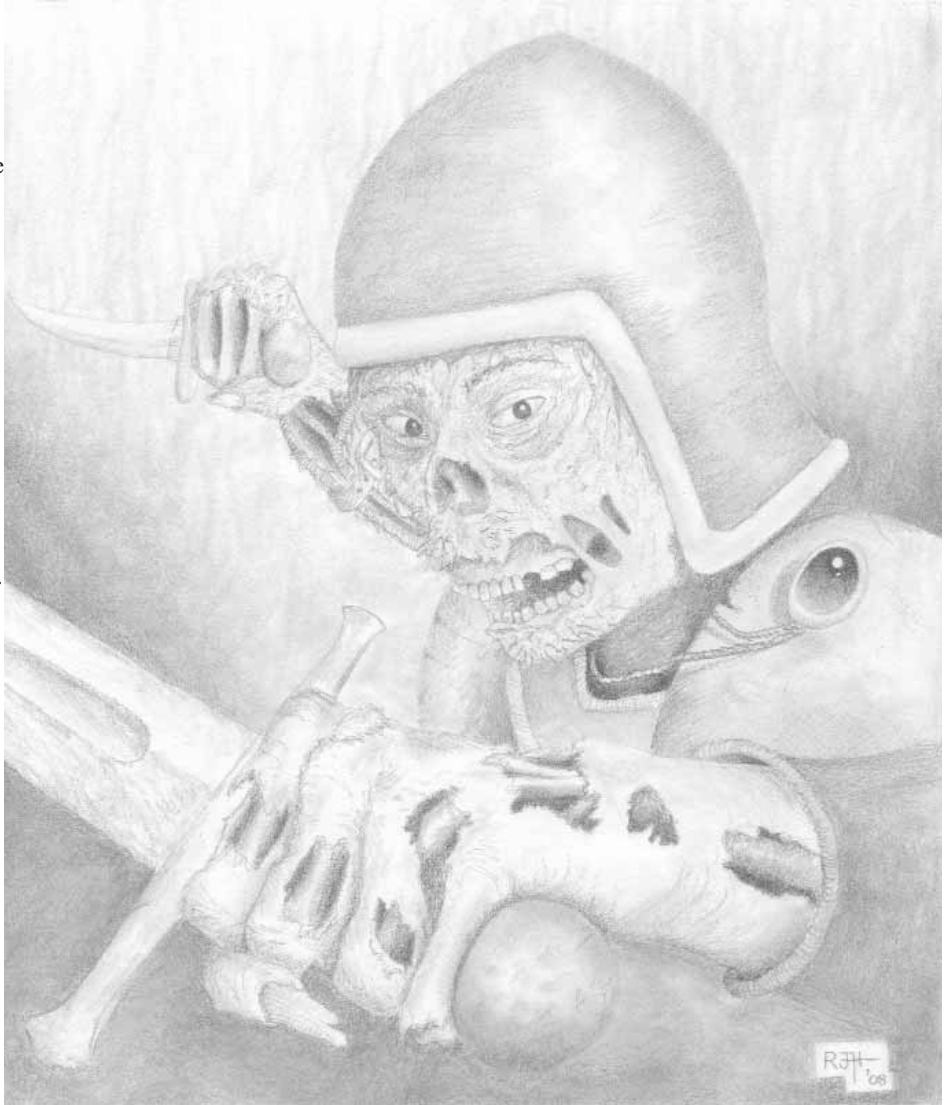
Sack #3 contains 50 copper armbands used 400 years ago to identify the wearer as a lay soldier working for an order of the light worth 2sp each.

Sack #4 contains 46 lbs. of dried beans.

Sack #5 contains an assortment of 50 copper and silver holy symbols worth 1sp each on average. (The brothers intend to use these as part of the final ritual to desecrate the site.)

Sack #6 contains a mix of 400-year-old coins: 32sp, 83cp.

The West chamber has been converted into a magical work area. The floor has been cleared and smoothed, and an intricate magical circle has been drawn out in human blood (The brothers used their own). The circle contains a triangle, with a smaller circle in each point. As long as one of the brothers sits in one of the points of the magic circle, they can control the undead in this area (out to about half a mile). This control allows each brother to "possess" one of the undead by concentrating (-100 to all actions or perception with their body while "riding" an undead); using the undead's senses and body remotely. They can only control one at a time each, so giving orders to a group will require them to switch from undead to undead each round to change their orders. If all three brothers are in the circle, they can control three at a time, but the need for concentration is exhausting, so they've been taking one-hour shifts to get past the long hours. If the circle is destroyed all the undead will become uncontrolled and wander around attacking anything living (including the brothers).



#14. An open, desecrated mound per #2 above.

#15 This mound is untouched, the interior matches the description of #1 above, but the resident of this mound is a **Deathless Marshal**, a former militant priest of the light. If this mound is opened, the **Deathless Marshal** will be waiting, and will leap up out of the mound the moment the sealing stone is removed.

The **Marshal** will consider the brothers its primary enemy. If the players have already killed or driven off the brothers, and have broken into this mound on their own, then it will consider the players its primary enemy. It will consider the created undead here to be its secondary enemies. (If the players attack the Marshal or any of the champions, they will be considered secondary enemies as well.)

When it leaps out, there will be a flash of light and a loud noise akin to thunder. Anyone evil or "of darkness" will be knocked off the top of the mound to fall 30' to the ground (this includes any of the brothers or any undead, and might include some party members). The tops of mounds #1, #11 and #25 will detonate upward (inflicting B Krush criticals on anyone

standing on top of them). This will free the three **Deathless Champions**. Inside Mound #13 the floor beneath the magical circle in the West chamber will crack, breaking the symbol.

All the undead will become uncontrolled, attacking anyone in their vicinity. The **Champions** will move to join the **Marshal**. The **Marshal** will move to attack the nearest primary enemy, attacking any secondary enemies that get in the way and ignoring anything else. This will continue until all primary foes are dead, when they will then pursue and kill all secondary enemies. If they have slain all primary and secondary enemies, they will proceed to the nearest temple, church or shrine of the light to report what they have done to a priest, whereupon they will fall down dead and inanimate again.

#16-#18. These mounds are empty and desecrated per #2 above.

#19. This mound has not yet been broken into, but the undead are hard at work. Six **Class II Undead** are digging away at the top with their bare hands, and are about an hour from breaking through to the sealing stone. A mob of 25 **Class I Undead** stand at the base of the ladder on the west face of the mound. They will be instructed to carry the contents of the mound back to #13, but for now they are just an idle mob.

Inside the mound, the West and South chambers contain a shrine and burial goods just like #1 above, but the East and North chambers each have the body of a man at arms laid out in them. Each body is laid out on a low wooden platform, and garbed in full rigid leather armor, with a rusty but serviceable broadsword clutched across their chest. Each body still has money in a belt money pouch (6cp for the north, and 4cp for the East.).

#20. Other than the fact that the **Class III** is watching southwest, this mound is the same as #4 above. This is likely the party's first encounter in this area.

#21. This mound is empty and desecrated per #2 above.

#22. Other than the fact that the **Class III** is watching southwest, this mound is the same as #4 above.

#23-#24. These mounds are empty and desecrated per #2 above.

#25. This mound is identical to Mound #1, and contains another **Deathless Champion**.

Aftermath

The **Marshal** and **Champions** will proceed with their vengeance per #15 above; the PCs may be part of this if they have made themselves into either primary or secondary enemies. Either way, if any of the four survive, they will eventually report to a priest before "dying" again, which means the story will get out unless all four are destroyed.

The loot in #13 is potentially dangerous. The centuries old coinage is not a lot of money, but if the party spends it all in one place it might raise questions ("where did you get all these old coins?"). The pile of swords is even more likely to do so, as 50 swords of an old style with maker's marks of a holy order will certainly spark curiosity. The copper armbands will also likely bring questions. The burial ground is supposed to be associated with a still existing militant order of a church of the light, so if the party sells all the loot, it should provoke questions, perhaps even

an investigation. If the report of the burial ground guardians is made, the party might end up being chased as grave robbers or even suspected of being members of the same dark cult to which the Karra brothers belong.

If the four guardians are destroyed, but the undead are not cleared out of the burial grounds, the area will now become a dangerous monster lair.

The cult that sent the Karra brothers to the burial ground may follow up if the three disappear, or if any of the brothers escape, the party may have earned some long-term enemies. The holy symbols and weapons carried by the brothers are all recognizable symbols of their cult, and may cause problems if discovered in the party's possession by either cultists or the authorities.

Encounter Statistics (Rolemaster)

All stats are RMX (RMFRP)

Cultists

Sandor Karra	Profession: 11lvl Evil Cleric
Race: Common Man	
Hits: 70	AT/DB: 6/+5 (6/+9)
PP: 48/96 (82)	MM: +5 (+6) 5'11"
Ag: 78 +5 (+2)	Co: 63 +0 Me: 62 +0
Re: 97 +15 (+8)	Sd: 84 +10 (+5)
Em: 54 +0	In: 95 +15 (7) Pr: 63 +0
Qu: 82 +5 (+3)	St: 60 +5 (+2)

Attacks: Dagger +69

Swim/Climb: +35	Perception: +69	Stalk/Hide: +30/+30
Lore/Craft: +75		

Spell Lists (to level): All Cleric Base to 10th level, Dark Channels, Dark Lore and Necromancy to 11th level.

Appearance: Dark haired, grey-eyed, and mildly sunburned. Tall and thin.

Equipment of note: Dirty and somewhat worn black silk shirt and pants of high quality, with a grey wool jacket with carved bone buttons. Long tan leather coat with full sleeves and a hood.

Carries a +10 dagger of high quality, the pommel is carved in the shape of a skull, with ruby chips for eyes. Around his neck is a holy symbol of his dark god, which acts as a x2 PP multiplier for Evil Channelers (In RMSS/FRP treat as a +1 Spell Adder for evil Channelers).

Persona: Sandor is the oldest brother at 42, and is competing for a promotion to the high council of their evil cult. The success or failure of this mission will have a great impact on whether Sandor gets that seat on the council, and things have already been taking too long, though they are going well. As a result, he will be arrogant and cruel, but constantly urging the brothers to push on so they can get the task done and he can return to seek his promotion. He will try to smooth talk any prisoners, slowly turning to more and more direct or violent methods if he doesn't get what he wants. He is urbane and used to soft living and has not enjoyed roughing it.

Kelwan Karra **Profession:** 7lvl Evil Cleric
Race: Common Man
Hits: 60 **AT/DB:** 6/+10 (6/+18)
PP: 32/64 (60) **MM:** +20 (+27) 5'9"

Ag: 99 +20 (+9) **Co:** 78 +5 (+2) **Me:** 67 +0
Re: 85 +5 (+4) **Sd:** 76 +10 (+4)

Em: 78 +5 (+2) **In:** 95 +15 (+7) **Pr:** 80 +5 (+3)
Qu: 93 +10 (+6) **St:** 74 +5 (+3)

Attacks: Scimitar +60

Swim/Climb: +40 **Perception:** +50 **Stalk/Hide:** +60/+50
Lore/Craft: +52

Spell Lists (to level): All Cleric Base to 7th level, Curses and Necromancy to 7th level.

Appearance: Dark haired, grey- eyed, and mildly sunburned. Slim but muscular, smooth in his movements, like a dancer.

Equipment of note: Dirty but good quality black linen pants and shirt, with a grey wool jacket with carved bone buttons. Long tan leather coat with full sleeves and a hood.

His scimitar is a +10 quality weapon; the hilt looks like a neck supporting a gaping wide mouth (the cross guard) with the blade itself looking like a very long extended tongue. Around his neck is a holy symbol of his dark god, which acts as a x2 PP multiplier for Evil Channelers (in RMSS/FRP treat as a +1 spell adder for evil Channelers).

Persona: At 39, he is the middle brother, lithe and more physically fit than his brothers, this mission has not been as hard for him physically. On the other hand, he's a mild alcoholic, and ran out of wine two days ago, and is in a foul mood about it. He is a natural bully, but knows better than to try it with Sandor, or to push Lothos too far. He will happily act the part of the threatening captor if any party members are captured. Among the pertinent questions, he will be eager to find out if the captives have anything worth drinking.

Lothos Karra **Profession:** 6lvl Evil Cleric
Race: Common Man
Hits: 51 **AT/DB:** 6/+0
PP: 28/56 (54) **MM:** 0 (+3) 5'8"

Ag: 74 +0 (+1) **Co:** 75 +5 (+2) **Me:** 86 +5 (+4)
Re: 74 +0 (+1) **Sd:** 83 +10 (+5)

Em: 72 +0 (+1) **In:** 95 +15 (+7) **Pr:** 60 +0
Qu: 67 +0 **St:** 58 +5 (+2)

Attacks: Morning Star +48

Swim/Climb: +54 **Perception:** +62 **Stalk/Hide:** +58/+63
Lore/Craft: +40 **Ride:** +38

Spell Lists (to level): All Cleric Base to 6^h level, Disease and Necromancy to 6^h level.

Appearance: Dark haired, grey- eyed, and seriously sunburned. Shorter and stockier than his brothers, slightly plump.

Equipment of note: Dirty but good quality black linen pants and shirt, with a grey wool jacket with carved bone buttons. Long tan leather coat with full sleeves and a hood.

His morning star is of +10 quality; a black wood shaft ending in a black iron head. The head is shaped like a skull missing the lower mandible, with projecting fang-like teeth and spikes for hair. Around his neck is a holy symbol of his dark god, which acts as a x2 PP multiplier for Evil Channelers (in RMSS/FRP treat as a +1 spell adder for evil Channelers).

Persona: At 37, he is the youngest brother, and has ended up doing most of the work. He is tired, frustrated and likely to lash out if given an opportunity, and complain at or to his brothers constantly if offered an opportunity or excuse. He misses having servants to do all the scut work, is irritated that the undead are too stupid to do anything but the simplest tasks, and likely to set any prisoners to doing any menial task he can think of.

Created Undead

Animated by the Karra brothers, these abominations are working to despoil the burial ground.

Equipment of note: They have been stripped of everything but their armor.

Persona: Mindless, life destroying automatons. They will obey instructions as long as the magic circle in #13 is intact. If uncontrolled they will attack the nearest living thing, or wander around looking for something living to kill.

Class I **Level:** 1 **Hits:** 25 **AT:** 10(5) **Move:** 40' (Run)

Attacks: Small Bash +25 Small Grapple +25

Perception: -15 (If they are "ridden" by one of the brothers, modify the brother's perception by -25 and use that instead).

Special Abilities: Undead Regeneration, Immune to Stun, and Immune to Bleed. Reduce all criticals by 1 level.

Appearance: They look like walking beef jerky, dried out flesh over stick bones. Their leather armor hangs on their bodies, and most have lost their helms. They jerk and drag as they walk.

Notes: They are so barely animated they cannot make any sounds, and cannot manage the coordination to climb a ladder, so they cannot even get on top of any of the mounds.

Class II Level: 3 Hits: 50 **AT:** 10(15) **Move:** 50'(Run)
Attacks: Medium Bash +40 Medium Grapple +40
Perception: +20 (If they are "ridden" by one of the brothers, use the brother's normal perception instead).
Special Abilities: Undead Regeneration, Immune to Stun, and Immune to Bleed. Reduce all criticals by 1 level.
Appearance: They look like Class I's but move more normally without jerking or dragging their feet.
Notes: Better animated, they can manage a ladder, but cannot climb a mound without one.

Class III Level: 6 Hits: 100 **AT:** 10(25) **Move:** 50'(Sprint)
Attacks: Medium Bash +60 Medium Grapple +60
Climbing: +20 **Perception:** +30 (If they are "ridden" by one of the brothers, use the brother's normal perception instead).
Special Abilities: Undead Regeneration, Immune to Stun, and Immune to Bleed. Reduce all criticals by 1 level.
Appearance: More animated than the others, their flesh seems almost whole, but their skin remains dried, cracked and tattered, exposing the play of muscle below. They can moan or grunt, and move normally.
Notes: These undead can climb ladders, or attempt to climb the sides of mounds without a ladder.

Guardians of the Burial Ground:

These are knights and a priest of the light who swore oaths to fight darkness. Those oaths have dragged them back from the grave to defend the burial ground.

Intelligent and capable of speech, they will likely not bother to talk, instead doggedly pursuing their enemies until all are dead. Their animation is the result of oaths sworn to fight darkness and defend the light, so they will not detect as evil. Repulsions and Undead affecting spells will not work on them, though spells affecting curses or channeling may (see below).

They have an innate sense of direction (the marshal will also have a sense of distance) toward their nearest primary enemy until all are killed, then switch to an innate sense of direction toward their nearest secondary enemy until all are killed, then finally a sense of the nearest living priest of their god to complete their oath quest.

Deathless Champion (Lesser Mummy)

Level: 6 Hits: 100 **AT:** 15(20) **Move:** 50'(Sprint)
Attacks: Bastard Sword +80
Climbing: +20 **Perception:** +30 **Tracking:** +30
Special Abilities: Undead Regeneration, Immune to Stun, and Immune to Bleed. Reduce all criticals by 2 levels.
Appearance: Clad in Full Chain with a T slotted full helm, they would look like knights, but for the fact that their arms are dusty and tarnished, and they carry the smell of old, dry death around them.
Equipment of note: Both their Full Chain and their Bastard Swords are +10 quality items. They wear tabards with the symbol of their order of knights.
Notes: They can be affected by spells that cancel, dispel or neutralize curses or channeling. Consider their animation to be a 12th level effect. Without the guidance of the marshal, they will take the shortest path and make frontal, direct assaults to reach their enemies. They will unquestioningly obey the commands of the Deathless Marshal (see below).

Deathless Marshal (Greater Mummy)

Level: 10 Hits: 150 **AT:** 18(20) **Move:** 55'(Sprint)
Attacks: Large Bash +110, Large Grapple +150, Special (See Below)
Climbing: +34 **Perception:** +54 **Tracking:** +54
Special Abilities: Undead Regeneration, Immune to Stun, and Immune to Bleed. Takes criticals as a Large Creature. Can use "Stunning" from Cleric Base list "Channels" once per round rather than physically attacking.
Appearance: Clad in a metal breastplate and greaves with a T slotted full helm, he looks like a knight, but for the fact that his arms are dusty and tarnished, and he carries the smell of old, dry death around him.
Equipment of note: His armor is +10 quality, just tarnished and dirty. He wears a tabard indicating he is a militant priest of a holy order.
Notes: He is unlikely to speak casually, but his dry, raspy voice may be heard giving commands to the Deathless Champions. He will be affected by spells that cancel, dispel or neutralize curses or channeling. Consider his animation to be a 20th level effect. Capable of complicated tactics, he will make indirect approaches or attacks, or wait for the right moment as necessary. He can and will coordinate the actions of the Deathless Champions, who will obey his commands without question.

Encounter Statistics (HARP)

Cultists

Sandor Karra Profession: 11lvl Cleric **Race:** Human
Hits: 92 **DB:** 14 **Move:** 11' **Init:** 19 **5'11"**
Resistance: Stamina RR: 66, Will RR: 88, Magic RR: 90
Stats: St: 60 (2), Co: 63 (3), Ag: 78 (6), Qu: 82 (7); SD: 84 (9); Re: 97 (10); In: 95 (12); Pr: 63 (5), PP: 121
Attacks: Dagger +68 (S-Slash)
Swim/Climb: +58 **Perception:** +91 **Stalking&Hiding:** +40
Lore/Craft: +70 **Magical Ritual:** +81 **Duping:** +67
Spells: Blur (10) 71, Animate Dead (20) 91, Bless (12) 75, Control Undead (20) 91, Drain Life (20) 91, Harm (10) 71, Holy Symbol (20) 91, Turn Undead (20) 91, Darkness (15) 81, Fear (10) 71, Nightvision (15) 81, Speak with the Dead (20) 91, Summon Undead (15) 81, Undead Mastery (20) 91
Appearance: Dark haired, grey-eyed, and mildly sunburned. Tall and thin.
Equipment of note: Dirty and somewhat worn black silk shirt and pants of high quality, with a grey wool jacket with carved bone buttons. Long tan leather coat with full sleeves and a hood.
 Carries a +10 dagger of high quality, the pommel is carved in the shape of a skull, with ruby chips for eyes. Around his neck is a holy symbol of his dark god, which acts as +2 spell adder.
Persona: Sandor is the oldest brother at 42, and is competing for a promotion to the high council of their evil cult. The success or failure of this mission will have a great impact on whether Sandor gets that seat on the council, and things have already been taking too long, though they are going well. As a result, he will be arrogant and cruel, but constantly urging the brothers to push on so they can get the task done and he can return to seek his promotion. He will try to smooth talk any prisoners, slowly turning to more and more direct or violent methods if he doesn't get what he wants. He is urbane and used to soft living and has not enjoyed roughing it.

Kelwan Karra **Profession:** 7lvl Cleric **Race:** Human
Hits: 94 **DB:** 20 **Move:** 11' **Init:** 22 5'9"
Resistance: Stamina RR: 72, Will RR: 76, Magic RR: 84
Stats: St: 74 (5), Co: 78 (6), Ag: 99 (10), Qu: 93 (10); SD: 76 (8); Re: 85 (7); In: 95 (12); Pr: 80 (8), PP: 100
Attacks: Scimitar +75 (M-Slash)
Swim/Climb: +55 **Perception:** +70 **Stalking&Hiding:** +68
Lore/Craft: +50 **Magical Ritual:** +70 **Duping:** +70
Spells: Boost Quickness (10) 70, Animate Dead (10) 70, Bless (12) 74, Control Undead (15) 80, Divine Hammer (15) 80, Drain Life (15) 80, Holy Symbol (12) 74, Turn Undead (15) 80, Darkness (10) 80, Curse (12) 74, Nightvision (10) 70, Summon Undead (10) 70, Undead Mastery (15) 80

Appearance: Dark haired, grey- eyed, and mildly sunburned. Slim but muscular, smooth in his movements, like a dancer.

Equipment of note: Dirty but good quality black linen pants and shirt, with a grey wool jacket with carved bone buttons. Long tan leather coat with full sleeves and a hood.

His scimitar is a +10 quality weapon; the hilt looks like a neck supporting a gaping wide mouth (the cross guard) with the blade itself looking like a very long extended tongue. Around his neck is a holy symbol of his dark god, which acts as +1 spell adder

Persona: At 39, he is the middle brother, lithe and more physically fit than his brothers, this mission has not been as hard for him physically. On the other hand, he's a mild alcoholic, and ran out of wine two days ago, and is in a foul mood about it. He is a natural bully, but knows better than to try it with Sandor, or to push Lothos too far. He will happily act the part of the threatening captor if any party members are captured. Among the pertinent questions, he will be eager to find out if the captives have anything worth drinking.

Lothos Karra **Profession:** 6lvl Cleric **Race:** Human
Hits: 96 **DB:** 10 **Move:** 9' **Init:** 17 5'8"
Resistance: Stamina RR: 72, Will RR: 80, Magic RR: 84
Stats: St: 58 (2), Co: 75 (6), Ag: 74 (5), Qu: 67 (5); SD: 83 (10); Re: 74 (5); In: 95 (12); Pr: 60 (2), PP: 92
Attacks: Morning Star +57 (M-Crush)
Swim/Climb: +47 **Perception:** +72 **Stalking&Hiding:** +65
Lore/Craft: +40 **Magical Ritual:** +72 **Duping:** +64
Riding: +40

Spells: Blur (10) 72, Animate Dead (10) 72, Bless (12) 76, Control Undead (15) 82, Divine Hammer (15) 82, Harm (10) 72, Holy Symbol (12) 76, Turn Undead (15) 82, Darkness (10) 72, Disease (20) 92, Nightvision (10) 72, Summon Undead (10) 72, Undead Mastery (15) 82

Appearance: Dark haired, grey- eyed, and seriously sunburned. Shorter and stockier than his brothers, slightly plump.

Equipment of note: Dirty but good quality black linen pants and shirt, with a grey wool jacket with carved bone buttons. Long tan leather coat with full sleeves and a hood.

His morning star is of +10 quality; a black wood shaft ending in a black iron head. The head is shaped like a skull missing the lower mandible, with projecting fang-like teeth and spikes for hair. Around his neck is a holy symbol of his dark god, which acts as +1 spell adder.

Persona: At 37, he is the youngest brother, and has ended up doing most of the work. He is tired, frustrated and likely to lash out if given an opportunity, and complain at or to his brothers constantly if offered any opportunity or excuse. He misses having servants to do all the scut work, is irritated that the undead are too stupid to do anything but the simplest tasks, and likely to set any prisoners to doing any menial task he can think of.

Created Undead

Animated by the Karra brothers, these abominations are working to despoil the burial ground.

Equipment of note: They have been stripped of everything but their armor.

Persona: Mindless, life destroying automatons. They will obey instructions as long as the magic circle in #13 is intact. If uncontrolled they will attack the nearest living thing, or wander around looking for something living to kill.

Class I **Level:** 1 **Hits:** 87 **DB:** 15 **Move:** 12'
Init: 12

Attacks: 57-Small Puncture 57-Small Crush 42-Medium Grapple

Resistance: Stamina RR: 57, Will RR: 27, Magic RR: 27

Stats: St: 75 (21), Co: 75 (21), Ag: 75 (6), Qu: 75 (6); SD: 75 (6); Re: 75 (6); In: 75 (6); Pr: 75 (6), PP: 0

Perception: 21 (If they are "ridden" by one of the brothers, modify the brother's perception by -25 and use that instead).

Special Abilities: Death's Endurance, Survival Instinct, Vulnerabilities: Frailty (Head (any)/ Neck (M-Slash))

Appearance: They look like walking beef jerky, dried out flesh over stick bones. Their leather armor hangs on their bodies, and most have lost their helms. They jerk and drag as they walk.

Notes: Weaker than normal Zombies, they are so barely animated, they cannot make any sounds, and cannot manage the coordination to climb a ladder, so they cannot even get on top of any of the mounds.

Class II Level: 2 Hits: 102 **DB:** 20 **Move:** 12' **Init:** 12
Attacks: 72-Small Puncture 72-Small Crush 57-Medium Grapple
Resistance: Stamina RR: 62, Will RR: 32, Magic RR: 32
Stats: St: 75 (21), Co: 75 (21), Ag: 75 (6), Qu: 75 (6); SD: 75 (6); Re: 75 (6); In: 75 (6); Pr: 75 (6), PP: 0
Perception: 26 (If they are “ridden” by one of the brothers, use the brother’s normal perception instead).
Special Abilities: Death’s Endurance, Survival Instinct, Vulnerabilities: Frailty (Head (any)/ Neck (M-Slash))
Appearance: They look like Class I’s but move more normally without jerking or dragging their feet.
Notes: Better animated though still weaker than an average humanoid Zombie, they can manage a ladder, but cannot climb a mound without one.

Class III Level: 3 Hits: 111 **DB:** 25 **Move:** 12' **Init:** 17
Attacks: 91-Small Puncture 81-Small Crush 67-Medium Grapple
Resistance: Stamina RR: 67, Will RR: 37, Magic RR: 37
Stats: St: 75 (21), Co: 75 (21), Ag: 75 (6), Qu: 75 (6); SD: 75 (6); Re: 75 (6); In: 75 (6); Pr: 75 (6), PP: 0
Climbing: +32 **Perception:** +31 (If they are “ridden” by one of the brothers, use the brother’s normal perception instead).
Special Abilities: Death’s Endurance, Survival Instinct, Vulnerabilities: Frailty (Head (any)/ Neck (M-Slash))
Appearance: More animated than the others, their flesh seems almost whole, but their skin remains dried, cracked and tattered, exposing the play of muscle below. They can moan or grunt, and move normally.
Notes: These undead can climb ladders, or attempt to climb the sides of mounds without a ladder.

Guardians of the Burial Ground:

These are knights and a priest of the light who swore oaths to fight darkness. Those oaths have dragged them back from the grave to defend the burial ground.

Intelligent and capable of speech, they will likely not bother to talk, instead doggedly pursuing their enemies until all are dead. Their animation is the result of oaths sworn to fight darkness and defend the light, so they will not detect as evil, nor do they have the Corrupting Presence or Constitution Drain of normal Mummies. *Turn Undead* spells will not work on them.

They have an innate sense of direction (the marshal will also have a sense of distance) toward their nearest primary enemy until all are killed, then switch to an innate sense of direction toward their nearest secondary enemy until all are killed, then finally a sense of the nearest living priest of their god to complete their oath quest.

Deathless Champion (Lesser Mummy, Class 3 Undead)
Level: 8 Hits: 119 **DB:** 125 **Move:** 14' **Init:** +15
Attacks: +127 M-Slash (bastard sword)
Resistance: Stamina RR: 60, Will RR: 62, Magic RR: 60
Stats: St: 75 (11), Co: 75 (5), Ag: 75 (9), Qu: 75 (5); SD: 75 (7); Re: 75 (5); In: 75 (5); Pr: 75 (7), PP: 0
Climbing: +60 **Perception:** +52 **Tracking:** +52
Special Abilities: Aura of Fear, Death’s Endurance, Survival Instinct, Re-generation (major)
Appearance: Clad in Full Chain with a T slotted full helm and bearing a shield, they would look like knights, but for the fact that their arms are dusty and tarnished, and they carry the smell of old, dry death around them.
Equipment of note: Both their Full Chain and their Bastard Swords are +10 quality items. They wear tabards with the symbol of their order of knights.
Notes: Without the guidance of the marshal, they will take the shortest path and make frontal, direct assaults to reach their enemies. They will unquestioningly obey the commands of the Deathless Marshal (see below).

Deathless Marshal (Greater Mummy, Class 4 Undead)
Level: 12 Hits: 131 **DB:** 139 **Move:** 14' **Init:** +15
Attacks: +149 M-Slash (bastard sword), 66-Harm spell (12 ranks)
Resistance: Stamina RR: 74, Will RR: 76, Magic RR: 74
Stats: St: 75 (11), Co: 75 (5), Ag: 75 (9), Qu: 75 (5); SD: 75 (7); Re: 75 (5); In: 75 (5); Pr: 75 (7), PP: 96
Climbing: +74 **Perception:** +66 **Tracking:** +66
Special Abilities: Aura of Fear, Death’s Endurance, Survival Instinct, Re-generation (major). Can also cast the spell Harm (Cleric sphere)
Appearance: Clad in a metal breastplate and greaves with a T slotted full helm and bearing a shield, he looks like a knight, but for the fact that his arms are dusty and tarnished, and he carries the smell of old, dry death around him.
Equipment of note: His armor is +10 quality, just tarnished and dirty. He wears a tabard indicating he is a militant priest of a holy order.
Notes: He is unlikely to speak casually, but his dry, raspy voice may be heard giving commands to the Deathless Champions. Capable of complicated tactics, he will make indirect approaches or attacks, or wait for the right moment as necessary. He can and will coordinate the actions of the Deathless Champions, who will obey his commands without question.



IDENTITY THEFT

BY ROBERT DEFENDI

Identity Theft is a *Spacemaster* adventure for 9th level characters. This adventure is designed for a well-rounded privateering crew with solid computer skills, but with a little tweaking it could be altered for a well-connected mercenary crew or perhaps even a group who works for the government (military or espionage, for instance). The main thing is that the crew needs to be important, in its own way, to the war effort.

This adventure is atypical of other privateering jobs. In this adventure, the characters will be fighting online against an identity thief out to destroy their ability to wage war on the Jeronan Empire.

A Note on Tone

This adventure isn't typical. Some groups might not buy into it at all. The idea of almost the entire thing taking place online will appeal to some, but other groups have had far too much of this sort of the thing in the past. If you feel your group might not take well to it, move some of the main encounters into the real world. An e-marketplace can become a real mall. An online game can become a SWAT urban training ground. You'll have to make the bad guy tougher to make up for the lack of cheating, but there's still a working adventure here for groups who've played too much online Halo.

Adventure Background

Jeronan Intelligence, known as the Inquisition, has become rather annoyed by the successes of privateer crews, of late. They have tried to predict and capture privateer ships, but the privateers operate outside the command structure and can be very difficult to track or predict.

Lately, the Inquisition has taken to the Sensenet and the Datanet. They discovered that many privateer meetings and tactics are discussed online. They've managed to infiltrate many of the datanodes frequented by privateers, but the privateers caught onto them and increased their security. The Inquisition adapted and ordered their best men to find new ways to

infiltrate the securest datanodes.

They discovered that the problem was the most successful privateers all know one another. Even if they could hack some of these nodes, they'd be detected and spotted as outsiders right away, and while hackers do exist in the Inquisition good enough to hack without leaving any trace, most of the Inquisitors just aren't that good. So they came up with a new plan.

Identity theft.

It's far more simple to steal the identity of a known privateer. Then one can use the virtual reality of the Sensenet to imitate the privateer in question. Once they imitate the privateer, they can either apply for entry to one of these nodes, or they can do some lower level hacking to fake authorization codes.

For weeks they've been performing these operations. Now people have begun to realize that someone is imitating them online. The Inquisition has a new plan. They will make it look like common theft, and in doing so, they will destroy the electronic identities of some of the most powerful privateers in the ISC.

A Note on Railroading

Railroading is the act of forcing characters along a predefined course. Never railroad a party. This adventure might look tempting for railroading because it's written in a very linear fashion. We did this for the simple reason that the plot is straightforward. If the players want to go off book, let them. If they do something smart that short-circuits the plot, don't stop them, reward them (you'd rather this be the adventure they brag about for years rather than the one they complain about for the same amount of time). If they try to do something that seems suicidal, make sure they understand the tactical situation (nothing is worse than dying over a misunderstanding), then let the chips fall where they may. Roleplaying is a collaborative effort, belonging as much to the players as the GM.

Setup

Little do the characters know, but one of them has had their identity stolen by Jeronan Inquisition. Choose the character wisely, but if one character has the most financial access, then he would be ideal. Preferably, he is a character with a lot of money and access to all pooled funds. If he can take out loans with their ship as collateral, that would be even better. The character needs to be the person who could do the most damage should he decide to rob the crew blind.

The Inquisition has managed to acquire enough information on this character to fake and obtain various identifying codes. They can fool the banks, the credit companies, everyone, as long as they don't show up in person. They have black market biometric machines that always pass convincing data onto the nets. When on the Sensenet, for all intents and purposes, they *are* the character.

There are a couple of ways you can set up this adventure, depending on how much lead time you have. The ideal method would be to start laying the groundwork one or two adventures ahead of time. In this model, you would start giving hints in advance. Maybe one of their friends lets slip that they've seen each more recently than they actually have. He covers that up as a mistake, and you as the GM could even pass it off as your own mistake, to convince the player. You could also drop in hints in lists of red herrings. For instance, you could list all the boring paperwork they have to file electronically when they get back. ("There's a whole pile of boring busy work for you to take care of. Your licenses need to be reviewed, you have several memberships that have expired, you find a bank error in your accounts but it looks like the bank corrected it the next day, one of your Sensenet memberships was on a credit account that expired and they're demanding three months back pay to reactivate your account, and you seem to have picked up a small online fan club that wants a group picture.") After a couple of incidents like this, the player might become just slightly suspicious or annoyed. That's the perfect place to start the adventure.

Alternately, you could just leap into it. If the characters have been out of touch for a while, you might not be able to give more than one hint that something has happened while they were gone. In this version the adventure would start off with almost no warning.

If you have a little time to set up, but not a lot, just drop the hints that you can. This is also a good time to set up how much characters do in the Sensenet for the sake of convenience.

The adventure begins when the focal character goes onto the Sensenet to visit the bank. He's at the bank's local virtual location when he sees someone else using the withdrawal node (sort of like a virtual ATM). When the person turns around, the character stares into his own face.

He might let the Thief go, not understanding what just happened. He might try to stop the Thief, but this is an average sensenet locale, and the Thief can just log out. If the character confronts the Thief, allow just enough time for things to get interesting before he jacks out.

When the character checks the accounts, he'll find every account he can access empty.

Investigation

The characters have a problem. Not only is there an identity thief, but he could be almost anywhere. At the very least he could be anywhere on their current world, and farther if he has access to a quantum link to this corner of the Sensenet.

And so they are stuck with online investigation. The theft happened online after all.

The first thing they will probably do is check with the bank. The bank is, of course, horrified by the news that someone has stolen from their accounts. They will give the party into the hands of one of their data experts, who looks up the errant transactions and compares them to the Victim's current information. They are identical. Perfect in fact. There was no way for the bank to tell the difference between the Victim and the identity thief. The data expert is more than willing to help the Victim set up new codes, keys, and identifiers so that this can't happen again, and the Victim can begin the long and arduous process of trying to clear his name and his credit, but in the short run, this is the best they can do.

If they bring in authorities, the police expert has the same findings. While the bank is willing to help out, they are not at fault. The character can apply for the bank's identity theft insurance, but they will have to prove to the insurance company that they were, after all, robbed. Anything with an insurance company can drag on forever.

Everyone is willing to file the proper reports. If the police are involved, they promise to investigate. By the end of the meetings, however, the PCs should not have great faith in the ability of the authorities to help. If they want to solve this, they'll have to take matters into their own hands.

The characters presumably snoop about. Hopefully, they'll have someone with the computer skills to run the investigation. If not, allow them to hire someone if they have cash or trade. If not, maybe the bank data expert will take pity on them.

This could turn into some dull Static Maneuvers as the party's Hacker tries to track the Thief. This could be done in the privacy of their ship, but it's more interesting if they log onto the Sensenet and use virtual terminals there, where they can do their hacking from exotic locales or lavish virtual mansions. Play up the wonders of the locales on the Sensenet. Allow the players to become immersed in the options of a virtual world.

Allow the Hacker to make a series of Maneuvers. If the player has good ideas, let him investigate them. If they are better than the ideas presented here, allow them to bear fruit. If things go more typically, the Hacker discovers much the same information as the data expert (essentially, that the Thief was very convincing).

However, after they've begun to feel like they are in over their heads, allow the Hacker to make a Hard Computer Hacking Maneuver. If they fail, allow one more, then make them cool their heels before attempting a new one. If they succeed, they notice that their companion is online in two places at once.

The Victim, and the Thief.

Another Hard Computer Crime Maneuver will allow them to try to track the bad guy. A success shows what he's doing, but isn't quite enough to get his location. His actions might give them a new priority, however. The Thief is stealing from an e-commerce market place, and he's using the stolen identity to do it.

Allow the other party members to head there in the sensenet. Let the Hacker know that he might be able to lock the Thief in and turn on collision detection. It's a Very Hard Maneuver to lock the Thief online. An identical Maneuver will turn on collision detection.

If they successfully lock the Thief online, they disable the Thief's ability to log out gracefully. They also disable the ability for him to switch off his Sensenet perceptions to see the real world. All he has to do is turn off the interface, but without any real world senses, this is very difficult.

Meanwhile, collision detection allows the identity Thief's avatar to sense other solid objects and interact with them. Essentially, if they catch the Thief, they can try to restrain him. Meanwhile, the Hacker can work

on tracking the Thief back to his physical location.

Allow the Hacker as many checks as he needs, however an Absolute Failure or worse will alert the Thief to what they are doing. If this happens, the Thief will jack out immediately.

Note: *We've set difficulties for these Computer Crime Maneuvers, but you'll want to play with the difficulties to match your party. If a Very Hard Maneuver is easy for the Hacker, make sure you pump up the difficulties so that it's actually difficult.*

The Market Place

The Market Place has a primary interface which is something like a neon mall, with cascading data stream waterfalls and directory pads every twenty meters or so allowing the shoppers to leap from location to location like a teleport. Along the walls are storefronts where characters can browse, as in a normal store, or with the help of a holographic-style virtual interface.

When the Victims hit a directory node and transport into the market, they'll appear at the node closest to the Thief and they'll see him browsing a software store. As long as he's been locked in by then and collision detection is on, the scene can continue apace. If the Thief isn't locked in, he'll just jack out. If collision detection isn't on, he'll just ignore the party as their actions are ineffectual.

If everything goes as planned, the Thief will spot the party right away and take off. He'll leap onto a directory pad and teleport away.

A Medium Alertness Maneuver allows a pursuer to spot his destination as he approaches a pad. Try to lead the Victims on a merry chase, with the Thief leaping from node to node and then out. Feel free to improvise multiple exotic Sensenet locations.

Presumably the Victims will catch the Thief. Except for special environments, online avatars match their real world counterparts, so you can conduct this combat normally. None of the combatants can become injured in any way, so the Victims will need to try to restrain the Thief.

But by the time they do that, he'll manage to bump into the interface in the real world and manually jack out.

A minute or so later, the police will arrive.

The Police

The police come to arrest the PCs. Now, hopefully the party are law-abiding enough citizens that they don't try to resist or (heaven forbid) attack the police. If they do, improvise the action accordingly. This might take the adventure in a radically different direction.

The party will probably expect this to spiral down a path of the falsely-accused heroes trying to prove their innocence. They might be surprised at how it actually turns out. If the police have been involved previously, they will instantly believe the party's story. If the police haven't been previously involved, they'll check with the locals and find out that the party's story checks out. In addition, the people at the e-commerce marketplace, as well as witnesses in the marketplace itself, confirm everything the party has said.

One way or another, as the police run routine checks, they discover that the target of the theft now has many thousands of credits of loans in his name. If he owns the ship, this could be much higher, even hundreds of thousands or millions of credits, depending on the ship's value as collateral.

This is a good time to revisit the story problem with the players. Our

victim has no money, more debt that he can hope to pay off any time soon, and it will take months to straighten it all out. During those months, the Victim might have the hardest time doing even the simplest things, such as using a vending machine.

You see, *everything* checks a person's records, and if there are credit tags placed on that record, it could alert creditors, call the police, or simply not respond. If a person is tagged as a possible identity thief or a criminal debtor, he could become little more than a ghost in the system.

After all of this, the players should be chomping at the bit to catch the Thief. Even still, the police have one final conversation with them. They warn the party not to become involved. This is a police matter, not a matter for vigilantes. The party would be good to remember that taking the law into their own hands is a crime as well.

With that, the Victims are released.

The Hunt Continues

It would be more than a little surprising if the PCs obeyed the orders of the police. They are player characters after all. They should continue their work unabated.

If they research hacking, or just make a Computer Crime Static Maneuver, then they can discover that they might be underequipped for this job. The Hacker might have good hacking software, but he almost certainly doesn't have software for finding and trapping someone in the Sensenet. They need the proper tool for the proper job.

It takes a Contacting Static Maneuver for the Hacker to get in touch with Hackers of the proper specialty. For 1,000 credits, they can buy the basic software to not only trap and turn on data collisions, but to disconnect the physical disconnect features from the Thief's console. Their previous attempts were able to trap him for the minute or two it took him to find the disconnect command with no feedback from his body. Getting out of the range of his Sensenet equipment, from inside a presumably closed room, and with no feedback from his senses, could take hours of trial and error.

If the party is able to raise some money and route it through another character's account, there exists software, costing 10,000, that will grant a +10 bonus. Either way, they need software.

As a side note, if the Victims can't scrape together any money (if for instance, you've managed to drain all the party's resources) even criminals are willing to bargain. They might be able to get software in exchange for a favor, although the nature of this favor might be distasteful. We'll leave that as an adventure hook for you to work out at your table.

Once the PCs have the software, they can begin to search for the Thief in earnest. It will take a day or two of hacking to find him. Have the Hacker make a series of Computer Crime Static Maneuvers. Each attempt takes twelve hours and has a difficulty of Very Hard. When they finally succeed in a check, they've spotted the Thief online.

They find him at an unlisted Sensenet node, which should clue the astute player into realizing that something might be wrong. If they rush in after him, skip on ahead to the trap. If they don't, allow them to investigate a bit.

Unlisted Sensenet addresses can just be something as simple as a new node that has yet to come online with a real address. It can also be something more sinister. Unlisted addresses are often the home of illegal or illicit nodes. This could be something as simple as pornography that defies cultural norms to fencing sites to illegal piracy sites.

If the PCs look up the address in the public databases, they learn that it

is owned by a shell company. A little more research will show that the company is owned by an offworld corporation, which has fallen to Jeronan forces. This is a typical ploy for people who want to hide the ownership of a company, as the records are almost impossible to verify. It shouldn't take the players a huge leap to reach the conclusion that the address probably holds something illegal.

If they go without realizing it or if they go prepared, either way they are walking into a trap. If they know that a trap is coming, however, they might be better psychologically prepared for what is to come.

When they enter the node, they see what looks like a normal e-market place. If they look at the storefronts, they see pirated software sold at a tiny fraction of the normal price. The people around them seem normal enough, but a Hard Perception Maneuver shows that there's something slightly off about them, and any result better than a straight success shows that they are unnatural. They are probably artificial, nothing more than imperfectly simulated people.

It's then that the Thief springs his trap.

The characters should realize something is wrong when they bump into something. Their collision detection is on and they no longer harmlessly pass through objects. If they try to jack out, they will realize that they can't.

The Hacker will likely try to access his software, and he can, but he'll find out that he's been mostly locked out. At this point the Thief will appear, looking exactly like his Victim.

He has the party at his mercy. He is currently invulnerable. The party can feel pain and take damage. He'll illustrate this by pulling out a pistol and shooting one of them to make his point.

He might then engage in a bit of taunting. At this point have the Hacker begin making Static Maneuvers to figure out what's happening. If the player figures it out himself, let him. Otherwise, the difficulty is Extremely Hard. Let him make a check every so often, and when he

makes it, explain the nature of their situation, as described below.

Meanwhile, the Thief is putting on a performance. He's ranting about how foolish the Victims are, how easy it is to steal from them. He makes a big point about how their deaths will allow him to steal each of their identities in turn, rack up debt before anyone knows. This should seem like a fairly standard bad scene of the villain monologuing to his victims.

While the Hacker is trying to figure out what is going on, he isn't the only one that can develop insight into the situation. Look at the other characters in the party. Have those with the best chance of noticing a Jeronan trait attempt Alertness or Culture Lore: Jeronan Maneuvers. They succeed against a Hard Difficulty. Everyone else can attempt Lie Perception Maneuvers (they can substitute Alertness as a Lie Perception). These alternatives are Extremely Hard.

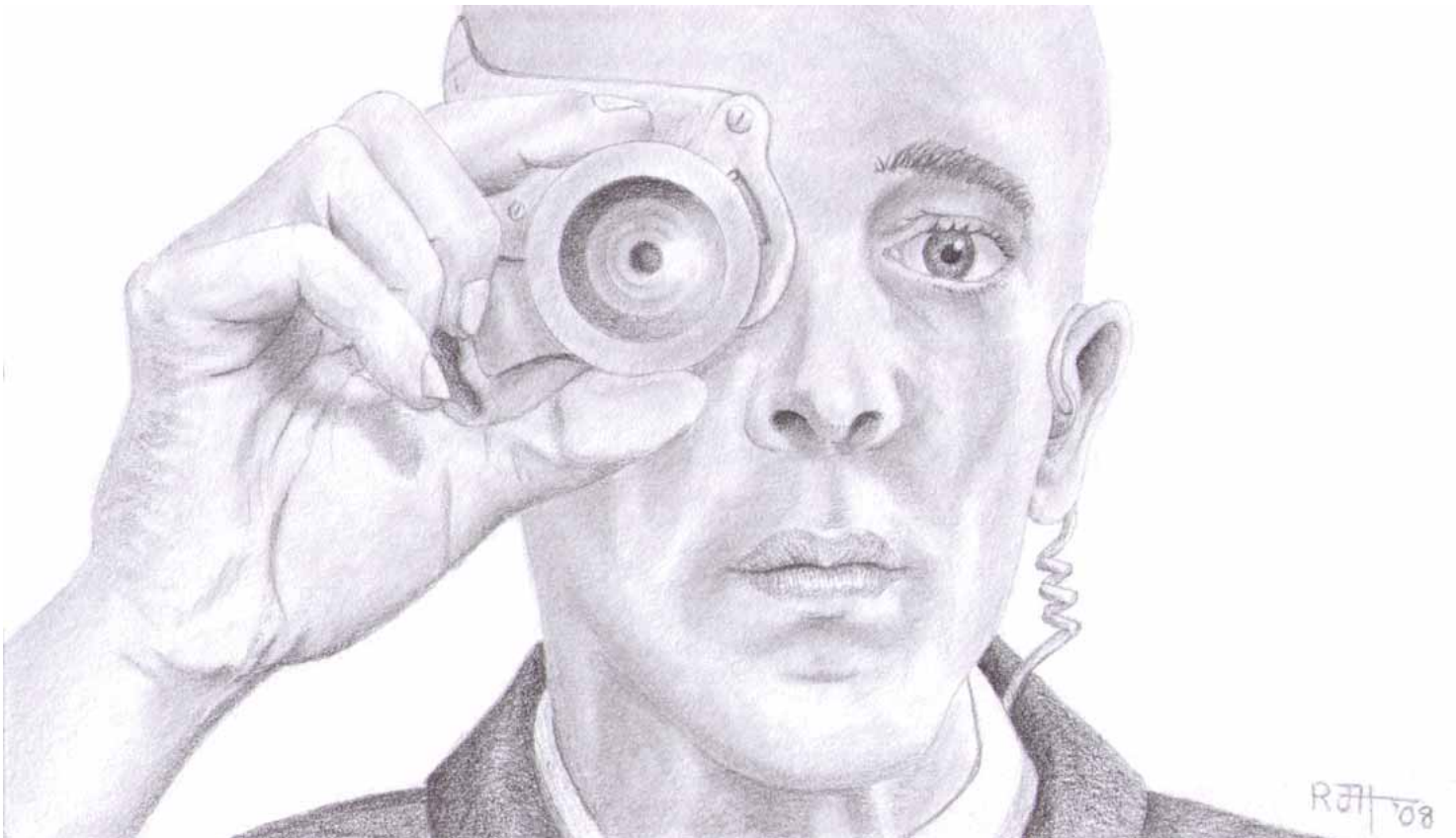
Everyone who succeeds in the Lie Perception Maneuver knows that the Thief is putting on a show. Nothing of what he's saying about the identity theft is true. Those who succeed in the other test spot a Jeronan mannerism or speech transliteration (the man's accent is perfect but he uses Jeronan word order).

The man isn't an identity thief after all. He's a spy.

Let the Victims stew on that until the Hacker succeeds in his Maneuver. When he does, he'll realize where they are. There's only one place where the Thief could so easily change the physics on all their avatars at once. They are in the waiting room of an illegal fighting simulation.

It explains everything. The place is designed to seize control of their connection. There's probably an SI computer dedicated to the task. Here men can fight with all safeties off, the online equivalent of a blood sport. The party has no weapons, because they are in the waiting room. The Thief must be using a hack. But all the Hacker has to do is say, "Begin Game," and the entire place will change. It might just be the surprise they need.

But the Thief is in God Mode.



In the Belly of the Whale

When the Hacker says "Begin Game," everything changes. Suddenly, they find themselves on a debris-strewn battlefield, decked in weapons and armor. The Thief smiles at them a moment, knowingly, and then battle begins.

Conduct battle normally, however the Thief is invulnerable to all the party's attacks. Not so for them, and suffer agonizing pain that's completely realistic. If they ask about the safety or make a comment about not being able to die, let them know that one of the reason that these online bloodsports are illegal is that people have been known to come out of them with brain damage or fatal strokes.

This might not be real in the normal sense, but the threat is real enough.

Allow the combat to progress until the party seems to be comfortable with the new situation. Then the Thief will use his God Mode powers to switch the board out from underneath them. Suddenly, they aren't on a battlefield anymore, but in a warehouse.

Allow that battle to continue for a round or two, then switch again, this time to a hospital. Continue these switches as the climax progresses. Make sure to take the opportunity to make things bad happen at these changes. They could vary from life threatening (a character's cover completely disappearing, for instance) to embarrassing (appearing in a dance studio in leg warmers). The Thief isn't above having fun with the players.

Allow the players to use the surrounding terrain to their advantage, so the fight can stretch out a bit. Since the bad guy can't die at this point, the longevity of this scene is dependent on the PCs surviving.

Don't let the fight go so long as to be boring, however. Reward creative thinking. Let them briefly trap or hinder the Thief. Let them feel like they are accomplishing something.

Meanwhile, the Hacker probably wants to attempt Maneuvers to figure out how to turn off God Mode. It's not that easy. These sites aren't supposed to allow them in the first place. Let the Hacker know that there are probably site postings about cheats, but that he doesn't know what they are. If he's smart, he'll try to find these posted rules. It's a Medium Computer Operation Maneuver to do so.

He discovers that cheats are completely against the rules. He also discovers that there are two types of games, open and closed. He will find a footnote that certain players gain free membership here if they bring all their combat software, to guard against police and other interlopers.

If the Hacker moves to immediately try to open the game to other players, let him know that the Thief has the interface completely under his control. Even if he can succeed, all the Thief has to do is notice to close the game again.

Hopefully they will realize a distraction is in order.

Let the players devise their plan. The Hacker need only succeed in a Hard Computer Crime Maneuver to open the game. They probably think that's enough, but no one will come to join. And still no one. If they don't ask, volunteer that people choose games based on the descriptive text. They need something to lure them in.

If the players come up with something enticing or humorous to attract other players, they come immediately. The first one appears and shoots the Thief, but realizes the Thief is in God Mode. He is outraged, and fires off his combat software just as the Thief kills him.

But the software worked. The Thief is now just a normal player.

The battle should probably be quick and brutal from here on. When

the players win, contestants will begin filling the game, asking what happened. One of them is the Admin of the entire site.

When the players tell him, he's outraged. Then he checks a virtual datapad and asks them if they want to know where the bastard lives.

The Thief

Level: 15	Size: M	MS/AQ: FA/FA
Base Move: 15	Max Pace: Dash	MM Bonus: 50
Hits: 136	Crits: —	AT (DB): VIII(72s)

Attacks: 136 H&K X-25 Assault Blaster.

Falling Action

The players can go to take care of the Thief themselves, or they can call out the authorities. The authorities are more likely to get the job done. The Thief probably isn't dead, and there's a greater chance of him shaking off the effects of the online death and escaping if they don't have law enforcement near him pick him up.

However, if they risk it, they will find him still unconscious hours later when they arrive at his home on the other side of the planet.

How they deal with this situation is up to them. We aren't here to judge.

If the party can get the authorities on their side, things will move smoothly from here. To do this, they need to either give the man over to the Bureau of Criminal Investigation (Federal Law Enforcement) alive, or they need to produce a plausible story of how he came to die.

If they can't do that, then they'll have months of haggling and arguing and proving who they are before they can get back their funds and reverse all their debt. If they can, then the BCI can smooth things along, correcting matters in a couple weeks.

After the BCI investigates, they'll confirm what the party should suspect. The man was a spy. He had actually stolen the Victim's identity weeks before and used it to infiltrate online groups of Privateers all over the planet. If they act now, they might get out word before these Privateers, their intelligence known to the Jeronans, fly into trap after trap. The Thief only stole the victim's money as an afterthought. He probably felt that if he could discredit and disgrace the victim, making him look like he desperately needed money, then the other Privateers would never believe that he hadn't betrayed them, and the Thief's method of infiltrating the Privateers would never be discovered.

All's well that ends well.

If the BCI only get a dead body in the end, they'll confiscate all the Thief's possessions for further counterintelligence. If they get a live Thief, the party will never hear news of him again. The BCI, after letting the party know what really was going on, will tell them that this is the end, and they'll deny any knowledge of these events after the dust has settled.

Still, if they're on the BCI's good side, they might end with a valuable connection or two. But most importantly, they'll end with their money, their credit, and their ship intact. Most of all, they'll end with their identity.

MONEY IN FANTASY ROLE PLAYING CAMPAIGNS

BY LAURA TRAUTH AND TERENCE WYNNE



This is, we hope, the first of a series of articles on how to add depth to (primarily fantasy) role playing campaigns by “sweating the small stuff” – those details that can add depth to your world not found in the generic dungeon crawl. Why start with money? Let’s face it: Money is probably an important part of any campaign. In fact, along with experience, money is one of the two primary measures of success and/or failure for players. Their characters can count money, too, even when they can’t quantify experience (beyond interesting scars). Even in the real world, words have power, and just by giving name to coins, a GMs can increase the immersion of the shared stories they create with their players. Groats, Angels, ducats, *pfennige*, and Thalers just *sound* more impressive than copper, silver, and gold pieces.

So, then, what is money? Money is simply a medium of exchange. In the best case, money should be easily transportable, durable, divisible, and have some intrinsic worth. Transportability is fairly obvious; better for a stonemason to carry a pocketful of coins to the market in the next town than to drag his wares with him to buy eggs. Durability makes sense, too. What good is money that rots or evaporates? It should *last*; it should be hard to destroy. Salt works; if it gets dissolved in water, it will be intact after the water is evaporated away. Salt doesn’t rot; it doesn’t spoil. Gold, and to lesser extents, silver and copper don’t rust or tarnish, and mixed metals can be separated again. Divisibility means you can make change

without losing value; a large gem that gets broken down into many smaller stones was much more valuable than the sum of its (smaller) parts. Paper money is inherently worthless; it has value only because people choose to believe it has value. This works in times of stability, organization, and trust. In times of disorder or uncertainty, people still flock to specie metal, because it is somewhat rare and useful for itself. It has inherent value. How many game campaigns are going to be set in entirely peaceful, orderly, law-abiding settings? On the other hand, the medium can’t be too valuable either. Money would be painfully dysfunctional if the smallest coin was a piece of gold worth ten times what the average shopkeeper earned in a year. This is exactly what happened in Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire – even the smallest coin became too valuable to spend and ended up in hoards.

But I want to use giant clamshells as a medium of exchange. Okay. Why would people use them? Have they not discovered metalworking? Is there some overpowering religious significance to giant clamshells? If you, as GM, decide to go this route, think through the implications for other aspects of the culture. Will the clamshell users be willing to “sell” the sacred clamshells to outsiders? Are the people from the next tribe/island/kingdom heretics for using the *wrong* clamshells? Will a good clam season mean inflation? Are sacred clamshells used for ceremonial purposes? (“I think he really likes you; he and your father just sat down

and ate a dozen clams!”) Is the value of a clamshell dependent on its size, its color, or the danger of acquiring it? How will people know differences in value?

Given those limitations, however, money can be what you make it. Even if you stick with traditional precious metals, you have a lot of flexibility. Gold and silver can be in the shapes of bricks or arm rings, balls or disks. Coins don't even have to be flat and round. The Byzantines stamped their coins into small cups,¹

which stack easily. The Hellenistic Bactrians struck some square coins, notably the *chalcus* and *dichalcus*.²

Silver coins with few base metals resist tarnishing, while those with large amounts of base metals (billon coins) tarnish quickly. In medieval Europe, such coins were referred to as “white” and “black,” respectively. The connotations that can be assigned to such coins are endless. Perhaps merchants keep a spare “white” coin in their shops because it is considered to be very bad luck to end the day by handling a “black” coin. Bar fights could ensue when characters pay for their final round at “last call” at the local tavern with “black” coins.

Please also don't limit yourself to decimal denominations; they are a very recent invention. Instead, consider base twelve coinage. Why twelve? Well, it is divisible by two, three, four, and six. In fact, it is the smallest natural number that has four proper divisors. The relationship between numbers is not a cultural invention; it is a mystery of the universe. Even people who can't really count can take twelve things and make two rows of six or three rows of four. Seen that way, twelve (or its multiples) is a very natural basis for coins. Twenty-four is also another good basis for denominations – it is the smallest number with six proper divisors.

Let us look at some historical systems of coinage. Consider the state of affairs in several European countries in 1701. Why 1701? Well, it was the beginning of the Age of Reason, so it should be more accessible to the modern mind than the Medieval Era. It also gives us seven centuries of history (roughly) since the re-emergence of coins in Europe after the fall of Rome. In most role-playing campaigns, adventurers will spend at least as much time looking for ancient hoards of wealth as they will earning rewards in new coins from grateful monarchs.

Most readers will be familiar with the English coinage of the beginning of the 18th Century – 12 pence (d. from the old Roman *denarius*) to the shilling (s., not for shilling, but for the *solidus*), and twenty shillings to the pound (£ for the *Librium*). Coins were also struck in the following denominations: ¼ d. (farthing), ½ d. (half penny), 1 d. (penny), 1.5 d. (three halfpence), 2 d. (twopence or florin), 4 d. (fourpence or groat), 6 d. (sixpence), 9 d. (ninepence), 1 s. (shilling), 2 s. 6 d. (half crown), 3 s. (three shilling), 5 s. (crown), 10 s. 6 d. (gold half guinea), £1 (silver pound and gold sovereign), £1 1s. (gold guinea), and £5 5s (gold five guineas).³

Older coins (such as might be found by hardy adventurers) of note included the eleven pence (11 d.), the double crown and half pound (both 10 s.), the angel (gold 3 s. 4 d.) and the angel (gold 6 s. 8d.).

Rather more complicated was the situation in the newly minted (sorry!) kingdom of Prussia. There the basis of coinage was the silver Imperial Thaler. Gold coins were struck only for foreign commerce; all general circulation coins were silver. In Brandenburg, the Thaler was made up of 24 Good Groschen, each of 12 *pfennige*. In Ostfriesland, the same Thaler was composed of 36 *Mariengroschen*, each of eight “good

pfennigs,” or 54 *Stüeber*. In East- and West-Prussia, the Thaler was composed of 30 *Düttchen* each of three Groschen, which were themselves composed of three shillings. In Schlesien, the Thaler was composed of 30 *Silbergroschen*, each of three *Kreuzer*.⁴

To delve into details on all the coins minted by Prussia would quickly lead to madness. Still, fractional-Thaler coins were not dependent on local variations. One, 2/3 (Gulden), 1/3, and 1/12 silver Thaler coins were struck in the first decade of the 18th Century. Unfortunately, in the previous century, the Brandenburg Thaler had been composed of 72, then later 90 (presumably not-so-good) Groschen.⁵

A 1/5 Thaler (tymph) from the 1680s was 18 groschen, whereas the 2/3 Thaler of 1701 was 16 groschen. Throw in a little seigniorage (shorting the value of the specie in some coins to make a profit for the mint) and a major war or two in the 17th Century and you have a total mess. The only practical solution was to weigh and test each coin. Never mind what happened when you had coins from multiple kingdoms (as an aside – the Imperial Thaler was worth about 5 s. English).

You do this for fun? Okay, what's the bottom line? Well, not all coins of the same nominal face value are created equal. The difference between a character doing well in haggling and doing poorly may not be so much in the final price, but the quality of the coins he or she has to give up to make that price. The value of a particular coin at a particular place on a particular day might depend on the weight and purity of specie, the relative value of gold to silver to copper to other metals, the point of origin, the condition of the coin, and whose face is on it. Consider this passage (Harry Turtle-dove, *Swords of the Legion*, p. 5.):

“And I owe you a sixth. Would you like it in gold or silver?”

“Silver, I think.” Videssian sixth-goldpieces were shoddy things, stamped from the same dies as the one-third coins but only half as thick. They were fairly scarce, and for good reason. In a purse they bent and even broke, and they were more likely to be of short weight or debased metal than more common money.

What will the coins in your campaign look like? Until the mid-17th Century, most coins were made by hand hammering a blank of the appropriate size and weight (a planchet) between two dies. If the strike was imperfect, some of the metal would squeeze out beyond the edge of the die (and whatever pattern it contained). It was relatively easy to shave, or clip, some of the extra metal outside the pattern and short the weight of the coin. Do this enough times and you could “stretch” your supply of money. Unfortunately, the monarch's image on the coin was his guarantee that the coin was of the appropriate weight. Giving lie to a monarch's word had a name – treason.⁶

In a world with magic, there are some complications. If sympathetic magic exists, will a monarch dare to put his face (or family crest) on his coins? Can hostile magic be worked against him, his line, or the kingdom through the coins? Do the priests bless every coin as it is struck to protect the ruling family? If it is not safe to put either the likeness or the crest of the ruler on a coin, there is still considerable propaganda value to using some sort of recognizable likeness. Perhaps the image of the patron deity of the polity is a safer image, although that could lead to problems if the coins are used for a purpose opposed to the will of the deity. Perhaps the likeness of some plant or animal sacred to the deity is even better – historically, the Athenians adorned their coins with the owl, sacred to Athena. One could even conceive of a situation in which coins are struck bearing the likeness of a minor (and therefore safe) deity, but over time the

deity gains power and adherents *because* of the circulation of the coins. What then? Will it be safe to melt down the old coins and issue new ones with some other, still unimportant deity on them? If people dare not, say, buy spring water or headache cures with coins bearing the likeness of Bacchus and philandering husbands fear the wrath of Hera if they use her coins to cheat on their wives, then there will be an internal “rate of exchange” among the same denominations struck by a state, just because their perceived utility varies.

Is it possible to strip the protection from a coin? If so, a magically powerful group could begin a nefarious plot to bring down a small (or, perhaps, not-so-small) kingdom by buying up its currency (Quoth the Finance Minister, “Good news, Your Majesty! We are getting excellent prices on the marble we need for the High Temple; your superiority is clear for all to see on your gold coins!”) and stripping them of their protection. From there, all sorts of evil plots could be unleashed.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

An Adventure Hook. Four hundred years ago, the Usurper defeated and killed the rightful king in a civil war. He ruled for fifteen years, until he drowned while crossing a river. His body was never recovered. The rightful line was restored and the known coins of the Usurper were melted down. To this day, it is believed that if a sufficiently skilled mage can find one of the Usurper’s coins and throw a coin into the river where he drowned, the Usurper’s shade can be summoned and bound to answer questions. Perhaps this is because the priests did not perform the proper rites of protection over the Usurper’s coins in acts of quiet defiance, or perhaps this is because the Usurper was never laid to rest in properly consecrated ground.

Yet Another Hook. Your PCs are staying in the capital city of the Kingdom of Florin. Your party munchkin, Barak the Unethical, has lifted the coin pouch of a nondescript fellow drinker in the local bar. He pays for his drink with the stolen loot, only to realize he’s handed a ducat from Guilder to the bar tender. Cries of “Spy!” and “Traitor!” ring out as the nondescript victim vanishes into the night....

So far we’ve been talking about traditional forms of money. Most campaigns are run in a European setting, so traditional coinage is probably what most of you will be using – most of the time at least! But what if you have some non-human races in the game? Would elves or dwarves or intelligent fungi use the same things for money as human cultures? How can you give your non-human cultures some unique flavor without having to create detailed monetary systems for each from scratch? Do such cultures need a monetary system at all? Well, probably! You can do without coins, but doing without any medium of exchange is a difficult alternative – both for the players and their characters.

Why is some form of money so necessary to ‘civilization?’ Well, imagine life without a standard medium of exchange. If you don’t pick one thing like gold or silver or some other precious material as a standard medium of exchange, then EVERY trade good is its own medium of exchange. If you take some wool to market one day to get some eggs and cheese, you would need to negotiate the worth of the wool separately for each exchange. Moreover, the worth of the wool would depend not on its general use within society but on how much that particular merchant

needed it. Barter systems are very time consuming and unpredictable and therefore tend to disappear as the amount of trade increases. Low trade settings, where most settlements are self sufficient and need only occasional outside goods like early medieval Europe may well still barter, but once you get trade towns and market fairs, you’ll need a common medium of exchange. Of course, in a very magical society, perhaps traditional work and traditional goods aren’t necessary to survive. If you are invulnerable to heat and cold, why would you need clothes? If you can cast a simple spell and cause a tree to burst out in ripe fruit, why would you need to buy food? Fey or elven societies might well fit very different parameters than human ones.

Adventure Hook the Third: Your PCs stumble upon the court of a Faerie queen. Not needing normal industry or trade, the fey don’t use money for exchange. Instead, they use beauty as their currency. The PCs’ money is useless. They must create art or music of great beauty in order to receive shelter and assistance from the Fey. Of course if they are too successful, they may not be allowed to leave!

Even the societies in your world that need mediums of exchange need not use coins *per se* if that’s not the feel you’re going for. Coins didn’t enter western history until nearly 2500 years after silver as a medium of exchange⁷.

Before then, simple weights of silver, such as the silver *shekel*, which weighed a third of an ounce, were used⁸.

Coins have the advantage of course, that their weight is, in theory, guaranteed. So what to do if coins don’t have the foreign feel you’re looking for, yet you still need a medium of exchange?

Fortunately there are many examples of things that meet many (if not all) of the criteria for money from other, non-Western, cultures around the world. For example, compressed bricks of tea were used for currency throughout much of Asia.⁹

These often were imprinted with symbols and images and thus, except for their brick-like size were coin-like in many ways. While they could be crumbled up, the hard compression of the leaves actually makes this rather difficult. Score-lines allowed for easy sub-division of a brick. In metal-rare Central America, cacao beans, rare shells, and parrot feathers served money-like functions.¹⁰

In Micronesia, the Yap people used large, carved circular stones for money. These Rai stones may have diameters as large as ten feet and could require the effort of many people to roll them to a new location. As you might guess, they are used primarily for symbolic exchanges like treaties, marriages, or dispute resolution. Once iron tools reached the Yap and made quarrying the stones easier, only pre-iron stones, known to have been quarried with traditional tools, maintained their value.¹¹

Salt is perhaps the most famous example of a money alternative. Salt has been traded since at least the Neolithic and at times used as currency by the Romans, the Mongols, and the Mayans. The Latin word for salt, *sal*, is the origin of our modern word salary¹²

A Final Adventure Hook: In some region of your world a civilization uses strange, hexagonal stones for currency. Like the Giant’s causeway in Northern Ireland, these stones are believed to have been created by giants many years previously. The PCs may have been hired by a naturalist or an architect to acquire some of the stones for a new palace or museum. Needless to say, the native people won’t appreciate their ‘money’ being

stolen. The giants that created the stones might not appreciate outsiders taking it away either!

Regardless of whether you use cacao beans or giant stones or Thalers, angels, and ducats for your currency, taking the time to define your gaming world's currency systems will add depth, complexity, and realism for your players. When player consider loose change as potential opportunities for mystery, danger, adventure, and character development, you will know you've succeeded, and anything that creates more opportunities for role playing and problem solving is definitely worth sweating the small stuff for!

¹ See, for example,
<http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/?irn=302792>.

² See, for example,
<http://www.worldcoincatalog.com/AC/C3/India/IndoBactrians/IndoBactrianEmpire.htm>.

³ A very nice summary can be found at
<http://www.24carat.co.uk/denominationsframe.html>.

⁴ Klaus Martin, *Die preuischen Münzprägungen von 1701 – 1786*, 1976, p. 21.

⁵ Chester L. Krause & Clifford Mishler, *Standard Catalog of World Coins, 1601 – 1700*, p. 309 – 346.

⁶ For many excellent examples, see , the searchable web site of the Old Bailey prison in England. These hundreds of thousands of records demonstrate the penalties for both treason and common theft and show the values of many goods as well.

⁷ Heather Pringle, “The Cradle of Cash,” *Annual Editions: Western Civilization I*, Robert Lembright ed., McGraw-Hill Dushkin, Guilford, CT: 2001.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ken Bressett, “Tea Money of China,” *International Primitive Money Society Newsletter* Number 44, August 2001 , repeated online at: <http://www.charm.ru/coins/misc/teamoney.shtml>. [Accessed 17 May 2008].

¹⁰ ThinkQuest Team 16325. “Empires Past: Aztecs: Trade, Economy and Merchants” 31 August 1998. <<http://library.thinkquest.org/16325/y-eco.html>>. [Accessed 2 June 2008].

¹¹ Various, “Rai Stones,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rai_stones. [Accessed 28 May 2008].

¹² Mark Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History*, Penguin Books, New York: 2003.

THE KEEPER OF THE THORN

BY TERRY FINTHOR



INTRODUCTION

This adventure is set in northwestern Jaiman. It begins in northern Saralis, but the main action happens on what was once the border between the old realms of Saralis and U-Lyshaak. It can serve as an isolated adventure, or the launching-point for a greater quest. It concerns the Order of the Thorn, one of the 'Four Orders' of northwestern Jaiman; it is an ancient Elven group that has fallen from its original ideals. In this adventure, the group discovers an Order artifact, which leads them to a secret Thorn ritual site. There they witness a gathering of Order members, and possibly uncover the secret plot of the Thorn.

I. ◉ ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The characters encounter seeing thrones, which lead them to a holy place of the Order of the Thorn, and an encounter there with some members of that cult, including one of the four Keepers of the Thorn. The adventure consists of finding this secluded location, discovering its secrets, defeating or avoiding the members of the Order there, and possibly uncovering the larger plans of the Order. The Thorn's plans are rather long-range, so the characters could continue to pursue this, or return to it later (which might be preferable if they are not high enough level to face off with the head of the order of the Thorn). However, once introduced to this faction, the characters could continue to have encounters with its minions and receive clues while engaging in other activities. This interweaving of several different plotlines can make for a richer campaign environment.



- Town
- ⊙ City
- ⊛ Capital
- ∴ Ruin
- 🏰 Tower/Castle/House
- ⛪ Temple
- ⛎ Tomb
- ⊕ Ancient Battlefield
- Paved (old kingdom) road
- - - Dirt road
- · - Partly Overgrown road
- · · Heavily Overgrown road

2.9 BACKGROUND

Once a positive force in the region with their fellow Orders, the Thorn became more narrow-minded in its goals, and vulnerable to the influence of Drûl Churk, one of the Dragonlords. Churk wishes to see the ‘infestation’ of all human races eliminated from the planet, and he (in the guise of a wise counselor and calling himself Durnanga) has twisted the Thorn’s love of growing things towards matching his goals. He has also corrupted a powerful Dryad who now serves as a channeling focus for the order: essentially their god.

In this way the Thorn has become even more radical and dangerous than the Order of the Elder (described in the Xa-ar module). Using the political chaos of the last few years as cover, the Thorn has spread a hostile wilderness along the southwest shore of the Artolia River, reaching towards the Nereis River further south in many areas. Recently they have begun making inroads on the north shore of the Artolia as well.

CHARACTER INVOLVEMENT

An involving factor would be for one character to be a relative of one of the four Keepers of the Thorn, unknowingly at first of course. Taris the Keeper in question, is Erlin/Laan, so this would be possible in any one of several racial ties. Through this, he could have a link to the Keeper, which would allow him to have dreams to direct the group to this location. In fact, the character might be guided to this place as a possible recruit for the Thorn. These orders were originally ‘good’ organizations; it is only recently that some of them have become corrupted, and none are purely evil. For a long time, Thorn was perhaps... misguided.

The Keeper has an older half-sister, an Erlin who was a member of the order but then left it. Both of them are hundreds of years old, so it is possible that the character is a niece or nephew, offspring of their mother’s brother or sister.

3. NPCs

Following are brief descriptions of important NPCs in this adventure.

DURNANGA, THE GARDENER

Durnanga is actually Drûl Churk, the Green Dragon. A Dragonlord, he possesses one of the Six Helms of Changing (which allows him to assume human form), and sees an opportunity in Jaiman to further his ultimate agenda of removing all intelligent mammalian life from the planet. He visits western Jaiman and appears to the leaders of the four orders at one of their monthly gatherings. He comes to them as *Durnanga*, an ‘Animist of an Elder Race’ and offers them aid in their war against demonic forces. The Elder and Nya demur, but Oak and Thorn agree to hear his advice.

TARIS KREMKURIN, KEEPER OF THE THORN

Taris was born in Lu’nak in TEI 5235; her mother is an Erlin/Jaimani Elf, her father was a Laan, descended from exiles of Zor long ago. Her mother died in childbirth, and her Laan father died a few weeks later out of grief. She joined the Order several hundred years ago at the encouragement of her older half sister, and rose to the rank of Keeper in 5910 when her predecessor was slain in a battle with a demon.

She is a fervent believer in Durnanga’s plan to eventually wipe out all intelligent mammalian life, even though that includes the eventual deaths of the members of her own order. She considers this a ‘holy calling.’ Needless to say, she is a religious zealot who could not be easily convinced to turn away from this course of action, and would consider anyone who tried to stop her—including her own sister—a dangerous heathen.

Taris Kremkurin is one of four *Keepers of the Thorn*, senior adherents to the Guardian of the Thorn. All are women, and also blind; instead using an enchanted Mask of Thorns and a magical empathy with surrounding plants to ‘see.’ They use the plants around them to sense locations rather than actually see using the visible spectrum, so invisibility and other visual defenses (e.g., *Blur*) are useless. They cannot be surprised. However, if they are ever trapped in a place with no plants, or without their Mask of Thorns, they are truly blind. The mask normally appears as a sort of black wood tiara with large thorns jutting outwards; in this form, it gives the wearer a basic ability to see and navigate about. In a combat situation, the Mask grows down over the upper part of the face and the rest of the head, and it almost looks like a hollowed-out sea urchin. This not only provides enhanced sense awareness, but acts as a full helm with a 40% chance of annulling head and neck criticals. This mask has become part of the wearer, root-like tendrils extending into the brain.

Taris wears an enchanted defensive coat, with dark green robes over it.

Each of the four Keepers also has a *Thornstaff*, a staff of black wood with large thorn-like protrusions near the top. They vary slightly in powers depending on the owner. Taris’ has the following powers:

Thornstaff

- Melee weapon: Strikes using the Flail table, +20.
- Adds +30 to frontal and flank DB vs. up to three melee opponents by parrying (no effort on the user’s part is required).
- Will cast *Deflections Organic* 4x per day.
- It ‘grows’ thorn projectiles in its core, which can be fired from the tip. It strikes using the light crossbow table, and can fire either one thorn, or a spray of three (but only at one target). For the spray, the OB is halved, but any hits are tripled, and if a critical is achieved, add an additional critical one level less in severity.
 - x4 PP enhancer for Animists (RMSS/FRP: x2 PP Animist multiplier).

OMIVA KREMLUM, SHADOW LOREMASTER

Omiva is Taris' older half-sister, born in TEI 4232. She was indoctrinated into the Order of the Thorn in TEI 4695, and later, she encouraged her younger half-sister to join, feeling that Taris needed structure in her life. Meanwhile, in 5145, Omiva was secretly approached by the Loremasters to join their organization. She did so, remaining a member of the Thorn for many centuries afterwards but never revealing her Loremaster association. She eventually became disillusioned with the narrow goals of the Thorn even before the arrival of Durnanga on the scene in 5881, but remained in the order at the urging of her Loremaster superiors. She rose to the position of Keeper in 5712 and retained that rank until 5895, when Durnanga convinced the Guardian (the head of the Order) to sacrifice her normal sight for the ambient presence sight of plants, with the help of his creation, the Mask of Thorns. The four Keepers were commanded to do the same. (What the Guardian and Keepers do not know is that Durnanga can, at will, see what they see.)

Horrified by this blinding ritual that she considered an abomination, Omiva handed over her staff and severed all contact with the Thorn—including with her sister, who had become a devout follower of Durnanga. She went to the Loremasters in the hope that they would intervene, but they demurred. Frustrated with this organization as well, she turned in her ring and left the Loremasters in 5910, the same year that Taris was named a Keeper of the Thorn.

Like the infamous Elor Once Dark, Omiva is now what some call a 'Shadow Loremaster.' She is old and powerful, and is no longer shackled by the restrictions of the Loremaster code, though she retains unofficial contact with some of them, including Vena Nascharath (who is somewhat of a renegade herself). However, Omiva is conflicted. She does still agree with the Loremasters that direct intervention is perilous, but she thinks that the Thorn under Durnanga's influence is dangerous.

GM Note: Omiva is the dark-green clothed figure in the character's first vision. She will encounter the characters and guide them on their way south towards the Secret Hollow (she will detect the Thorn pin) as an opportunity to disrupt the Order, and perhaps show her sister how the Thorn has become twisted.

KHORIK THANDER, THORN GUARD CAPTAIN

He is a tall, powerfully built Dyar Elf, a warrior and the lead bodyguard of the Keeper. He wears armor made up of black-lacquered wood pieces over a thigh-length tunic of quilted green cloth. He wields a sword made up mainly of Dir-wood (it has a black alloy edge). For missile weapons, he has 10 small throwing daggers designed to look like thorns. While Khorik is not as unquestioning in following Durnanga's teachings as Taris, he is pledged to protect her. He commands the archers and a number of other guards.

THE ARCHERS

The Jaimani Elves Gladiis and Vardiss are twin sisters. While not Animists, they are loyal members of the Order. They wear a lighter-weight version of Khorik's laminated armor over quilted green cloth tunics, and use longbows of black Dir-wood. They do not wear helmets; their long brown hair is pulled back in a ponytail. The bows alone add +20 to OB. The sisters have numerous non-magical arrows with +5 steel tips, plus 4 magic arrows that disappear when they leave the bow, making them impossible to deflect or parry (they become visible when they strike a target), and 4 magic arrows with eog tips: these are armor-piercing arrows: for defensive purposes plate becomes chain, chain becomes leather, and they are additionally +15 against all targets. Though the twins are not strong on melee, each has a thorn long-knife of black alloy, which strikes on the main gauche table.

THE MONKS

These monks, while tall and strong, are actually all female Erlin Elves, they serve the Keeper and participate in the ritual. They wear green robes that add +80 to hiding when near plants (anywhere in the Secret Hollow). Each wears reinforced leather bracers/wristbands (+20 to frontal DB) and carries a +20 black alloy dagger fashioned like a large thorn with a handle. They keep their hair cut very short. Under their robes they wear quilted green cloth tunics, which protect as AT9 (20), and knee-length breeches. While called 'monks' and possessing martial arts capabilities because of special training, they are all actually of the Channeling realm. One is a Ranger, one an Animist and one a Warrior-Monk aligned with Channeling. They all have keys to the cells in the underground halls, and thorn-daggers like Korik. Each also has a ring with special powers. Brelian's Ring allows her to summon and control 2 Earth Elementals once per week, but only from the North Chamber of the Tyl Ormun. If Brelian is stunned, unconscious or killed while the elementals are active, they will go berserk till destroyed or their summoned time (36 rounds) expires. Kelta's ring allows her to cast *Stone/Mud*, but only on the floor of the central hall of the Tyl Ormun. Anyone standing in the affected area (except the Thorn members) is at -70 to movement because of the mud. Rhem Shoa's ring allows her to cast *Dark Sleep* 3x per day, and *Muting* 3x per day. A target failing a RR vs. *Muting* is unable to make a vocal sound for 1 minute/caster's level. She mainly uses this to help capture sacrificial victims. The rings are all gifts from Durnanga, and are tied to him: he can track their location.

4.0 SCENES

As this adventure is fairly linear, it is presented as a series of scenes, with accompanying layouts.

4.1 THE SEEING SEATS

Note: This starting scene is set in northern Saralis, but could be moved to anywhere in the region; as noted below there are many

of these structures scattered about NW Jaiman.

The characters are traveling along the Northern Passage Highway (the old kingdom road running along the south foothills of the Saral March/Kaldsfang Mountains in northern Saralis) somewhere between Roog and Nirima, and one of the player-characters notices what looks like a small structure on a tree-covered hillock a few hundred yards to the south of the road. Normally the structure would be obscured but a tree on the north side of the hill has fallen (there was a recent storm) taking down smaller trees and underbrush, and exposing this structure. One member of the group (the one unknowingly related to the Keeper) in particular might feel a particular draw to this structure.

The group makes its way to the structure, encountering very heavy underbrush around it. It would probably be almost unreachable if the tree had not fallen to leave an opening. Once they reach the object, however, they will find that it—and the ground immediately around it—is relatively clear of foliage. There is just some moss on the northern sides, and a few small trailing vines. The structure itself is actually four throne-like chairs set facing away from each other in four directions, with a tapering obelisk in the center at their backs. The thrones are large and simple in overall form, but the upper back of each has a beautiful bas-relief. On the throne facing basically south is a pattern of thorn-covered branches, west is elder branches, north is an oak, east is the *nya* plant. The thrones sit on a pedestal about twenty feet across, with four steps leading up to the thrones. The entire structure is built of a mottled green-grey marble, except for a rough green quartz-like stone about the size of a human fist set in the top of the obelisk.

This is an object built by the Four Orders, a group of ancient Animistic Elves. The thrones do show some signs of weathering, but it is difficult to say how old they are without spells (they in fact date back to the Second Era, near the time of the founding of the Orders). If detection spells are cast while on the pedestal, they give off faint Essence, Channeling and Mentalism emanations. But if one steps outside the pedestal, no power can be detected; they are shielded somehow outside that circle. However, a Detect Channeling spell will pick up something else. A few yards from the pedestal, buried under about a foot of accumulated leaves and other layers of natural accumulation, is a skeleton. There is nothing else left except a small pin, made of some black metal, in the shape of a short branch with several long thorns extending from it. The pin is a +3 Channeling enhancer (RMSS/FRP: +1 Channeling spell adder). It is also the symbol of the Order of the Thorn, and higher-level members possess a pin like this. It can aid in using the thrones, even among the unskilled. There is also a broken wand giving off very faint Channeling.

These thrones were known as 'seeing seats,' and the Orders would use them to communicate across great distances. One would sit in a throne of their particular Order and concentrate on another throne of the same group. Some of these were located at temples or other important sites of the Orders and so

always had members nearby, who could sense the 'call' from one of the remote thrones. A kind of telepathic communication was established, including visual communication. More powerful members of the Orders could use these thrones to view the vicinity of other thrones even when they were unoccupied, and even to transport there. Knowledge of this ability has been long lost, however. Full use of the thrones required skill and training.

GM Note: There are actually several of these scattered about northwestern Jaiman, though most have become overgrown with foliage and concealed. Knowledge of the locations was lost during the time when the Orders were disbanded.

When any of the characters with any magical inclination sits in one of the thrones, they will get a slight tingle of magical energy and a permanent bonus of 1 PP (only works once) or if not of any realm, they will get a general feeling of well-being and gain 1-4 permanent temp hits. Also, this will only work sitting on one throne; they may have to try various ones to get the benefit. The character related to the Keeper must sit on the Thorn throne. He will also go into a trance and have a vision:

You see a square chamber, dimly lit with a shimmering blue-green light. In the center of the chamber is a swirling pool of luminous water, and the walls of rough stone blocks are nearly covered with vines. The ceiling is translucent and gives off a soft bluish light, though this is clearly an underground chamber. There is a roaring sound, like a waterfall, in the background as if it is very loud but in a large, far-off cavern. Closer, though, you can hear the soft whispering of the vine leaves, stirred by soft breezes. Three throne-like chairs stand in a row along each wall, a few feet in front of the vines. The center chair in each trio is slightly larger than the others. They are of similar design to the ones in the woods, and on the back of each trio is carved the same emblem as on those other thrones: a thorny branch, an oak sprig, elder branch and nya sprig.

You blink, the room blurs, and when your vision clears five of the seats are occupied. On one side in the center thorn throne is a man of middle-years, completely bald, with bright emerald eyes and robes of various shades of green. Flanking him on his right side is an Elven woman with light brown skin in black clothes and holding a black staff. She wears a tiara-like headband that looks to be made of a branch with huge thorns radiating out. The woman's eyes are strangely black, and there is something odd about the way her head turns in reaction to a sound with her gaze fixed forward. Her face is expressionless. She wears robes of varying green colors like those of the bald man. On the man's left side is a tall raven-haired Elf with a black longbow. He wears black scale armor of strange design and a dark green surcoat with a thorn emblem on the chest. His expression is one of watchful wariness.

Facing them across the pool in the Oak thrones are a young, powerfully-built man with white-blond hair and silvery eyes in the center throne, and on one side is a man who looks to be part-

elvish. He appears a bit short for that race, and shows some signs of age and a streak of grey hair, so he might be a part-mortal. He is dressed in fine clothes, of a fashion lately seen in Sel-kai.

The bald man in green speaks: "Why did you wish to meet, my brother?" You comprehend his words, but you feel as though he is speaking in a language the Elves on either side of him do not understand.

The man with silver eyes answers: "Because I know your plans for that order, and they will do far more harm than good. In fact, you invite disaster upon all of us with this ending."

"Who are you to know what is 'harm' and what is 'good' any more than the Loremasters or the Trae Arnak? We must act to protect ourselves, as you have said."

"But the price is too high. What you seek to destroy..."

"...are over and again the tools of the first masters of this world. Eliminate the tools and they are crippled."

"I think Red and White and yes, even Black would disapprove of this course of action, if they knew. They do not object to co-existing."

"It is a weakness you all share. You have become too like them." As he says this, the man in green's emerald eyes seem to glow, and for a moment his form shifts and becomes indistinct, then clarifies again. "You, Voriig, seem to have appointed yourself the arbiter of things, and yet you are the youngest of us. Tell me something that will convince me to change my course and I will consider it. Otherwise, you waste my time and yours. Perhaps your efforts would be better spent on our sister, who consorts with the First Ones and that dark priesthood which seeks oblivion." Then he sits up taller in the throne, and when he speaks again it is in a different tongue, Erlin. You realize, though his gaze is fixed on the silver-eyed one, he is primarily addressing the Elves flanking him. "The lord of Encla Turic does not approve of our plans."

For the first time, the woman speaks, her voice a flat alto without emotion: "Those who walk seem intent on destroying each other; we shall help them. Durnanga has shown us the true way."

"Do you even know who this Durnanga really is?" The short Elf asks derisively.

"He is old and wise, and has taught us much about our history. The Thorn Guardian has grown powerful, as have we Keepers. He has given us purpose again, and that is all we need to know, Ag-onar of the Grey Ring."

"And what will you do when only your people are left?"

"We know our destiny and welcome it, We will become one with Ia."

"So, my brother, have you no other ally to counsel against this holy calling?" The man in green gestures to the empty throne next to the silver-eyed man.

"I too would oppose such action." An alto voice comes from the empty throne, followed by a trembling of the air in that space, like heat distortion. A moment later, a figure solidifies in the seat, all robed in very dark green with a deep hood pulled forward so their face is obscured. The voice is low but it could be a woman.

For the first time, the man in green has a spark of apprehension on his face, but he says nothing.

The hooded person continues. "There will come a time—sooner than you know—when your kind will need those who walk on two legs.

"And for you, sister..." the hooded one's head snaps over to face the woman in green with the blank eyes. "...there will be nothing."

The dream ends. This of course does not provide much concrete information. With research, the GM might add more bits. But a few days later, the group will encounter Omiva Kremlum.

4.2 THE SHADOW LOREMASTER

Some time soon after their encounter with the Seeing Seats, Omiva Kremlum will seek out the character who had the vision. While she is reluctant to fight the Order of the Thorn directly, she will give hints to the character, directing him to her sister's secret shrine in the hope that the character will discover Durnanga's plan and free Taris one way or another.

One night, the character will be awakened by a small cat-like creature with mottled brown fur. It has large paws with fairly articulated digits (and retractable claws), including rudimentary opposable 'thumbs.' (This creature is Ibaris, a semi-intelligent pet of Omiva's) The encounter would be easiest if the character is camping outdoors, but the cat is capable of climbing and is fairly dexterous. It will make it clear that it wants the character to follow him. If others are awakened and try to go along, it will hiss at them. It leads him to the nearest wooded area, then scrambles up a tree. Before the character can do anything else, Omiva emerges from the tree. She holds up a hand as if to say 'hold,' then she chants a verse in her deep, resonant voice:

*Elder, Nya, Oak, and Thorn,
Four Elven cults of old
From good intentions was evil born
All their roots have gone cold*

*A river flows from lake to bay
With many a treach'rous turn
A border and a barrier
Its waters endlessly churn*

*On the west bank, downstream
A narrow riverling pours
Up the steps amid the steam
Waterfalls come in fours*

*'Ware the hungry whirlpools
and the scalding spout of spray*

*and hidden 'neath the blinding mist
Elements seek fresh prey*

*Yet the Thorn will pray
And seek a dark day.*

Then she steps back into the tree. Note that she is not actually there; she is using a sort of projection spell that she developed herself. She can appear through any tree in a hundred mile radius. She is taking this precaution in case the character decides to be hostile.

Left behind, stuck into the tree-trunk is a wand about ten inches long, fashioned to resemble a huge thorn. The pointed end is extremely sharp and could be used as a stabbing dagger. At the other end, which would normally be where the thorn meets the branch, an oval blue-green cabochon (like an opal) has been attached. It glows dimly. This is a thorn-wand, and it has several powers.

The Thorn-wand

- Of Channeling, but can be used by anyone who makes their Staves/Wands (RMSS/FRP Attunement) roll, using IN as a bonus. The higher the roll over 100, the more of the wand's powers the owner knows immediately.

- Seeks holy Places of the Thorn (right now, Omiva has set it to seek the Secret Hollow, but once it arrives there it will be 'released' and will seek whichever of the five Thorn holy places the attuned user desires: one of the four Keeper homes or the Guardian's home). It seeks these places in a rather crude way: it becomes warm and a slight glow emanates from the gem when it is pointed in the right direction; it becomes cold and the gem goes dark when pointed away.

- Will fire up to eight *Water Bolts* per day. Casting is instantaneous; caster can fire up to one per round. Caster can use two 'charges' to double the hits (e.g., fire 4 bolts per day, each delivering double hits).

- +10 Dagger, *Of Slaying* those with no Elven blood.

4.3 TRAVERSING SARALIS

While Jiax Alizon claims to be king of most of Saralis and rules from Tarunak ("New Turak") a mere 150 miles as the crow flies from the Secret Hollow, much of Saralis remains a wild, lawless land, dotted with remote homesteads and small holdings ruled by knights with ambitions. The south is also where many Pale Men retreated to when King Kier routed them. The area map shows local roads, but most are little more than narrow packed-earth ways with trees and underbrush nearby that could serve as hiding places for robbers. There are even some Lûgroki lurking in the region, sleeping in caves by day and emerging at night to terrorize the area.

Encounters through Saralis could provide some less challenging engagements for the characters, plus they will get a feel

for the unstable nature of the area. Of course, the players might quickly figure out where they want to go from a map, go to Rapata and take a boat down the coast and follow the Artolia up from Getesh...

4.4 ALONG THE ARTOLIA RIVER

The *Artolia River* (also known as the 'Rough River' to some local residents) once formed the border between the old crown realms of Saralis and U-Lyshaak. It also has the distinction of being the single river leading from Jaiman's central lake system to the ocean. Unfortunately, the Artolia is only navigable along stretches near its source and mouth; the twisting central section is more waterfall and rocky rapids than river. The southwest (once U-Lyshaak) shore of the Artolia is primarily steep hills and cliffs, while the Saralis side along the northeast is mostly gentler slopes. This is because the river is actually along an ancient fault line, and the southwest side heaved upwards, creating the dramatic difference. An old road runs along the northeastern side, from the new capital of Tarunak on the L'kyran lakeshore all the way down to Getesh on Syrania Bay. The King of Saralis has dedicated some troops and laborers to patrolling and repairing the road, but he is stretched thin right now. There are a number of small villages and farms scattered along the road, but the lands in between have reverted to wilderness. Highwaymen are not uncommon on this road.

The steep rocky terrain on the southwest side is mostly uninhabited, and along this shore are narrow clefts cut into the land where swift streams have cut a swath. Within one of these ravines is a hidden gathering place of the Order of the Thorn.

Should the group encounter some non-hostile local NPCs in their travels in this region and strike up a conversation, it is likely that the locals will mention that there have been some strange disappearances. They say that people have gone missing as far back as anyone can remember, but they put it down to running off or meeting with some other unhappy random fate. But in the last few years, people in the region—especially young adults—have been vanishing at an increasing rate. People in villages in the area talk about vampires or slave traders and all kind of other wild theories, but no one has ever found any proof of any foul play. (They are being kidnapped by the Order of the Thorn to use in their sacrifice rituals, described below).

GM Note: To make this more 'personal' and urgent, the GM may wish to have the sacrifice described below to be someone the group has met... or in extremis even arrange for the monks to capture one of the group members (not the one with the Thorn link) and have them be the potential sacrifice.

4.5 A DREAM

One night on the way to the Secret Hollow, the linked character has a dream:

A woman strides confidently through a towering forest in the

deep night; she carries a long black staff with several large thorns protruding from it. The thick undergrowth parts before her with creaking and slithering sounds. As the light of Orhan falls on her face, you recognize her as the black-eyed woman from the earlier vision, but here her head is bare and her eyes are hazel. Instead of the blank look on her face she has an intent, alert expression. Others follow in her wake. There is the sound of a roaring waterfall in the distance, but growing closer. She stops in front of a large tree, and raises her staff, speaking an order in a language you do not know. Those following her stop and stand as if waiting for something. She lays her hand on the trunk. A moment later she removes her hand, steps into the tree and vanishes. Each of the others in her entourage follow. The forest is quiet again except for the quiet groaning of the dark tangle of branches slowly returning to their previous place.

Now you are looking down into a deep, narrow cleft, hidden from the outside by surrounding trees. A hundred feet down is a clearing ringed by more trees, and across this clearing snakes a stream, which feeds a succession of three circular pools, each with an obelisk in the center. A green quartz cluster glows atop each obelisk. The stream is directed through the pools in such a way as to make the water in each form a whirlpool. The woman emerges from a tree near the bottom of the clearing and walks along a path that skirts the pools, sometimes dipping into water at the edge. You realize she is barefoot. The other members of the entourage exit the tree after her and follow... the details become less clear at this point. Eventually they make their way to a grassy mound in the center of this clearing and the woman begins to chant. Suddenly in a flicker of light, a man appears in front of her: it is the bald man from the earlier dream.

“What are you doing here? How dare you desecrate a holy place of the Thorn?” The woman demands.

“I am Durnanga, and I can help you achieve your goals.” The man speaks in a strange voice, almost like two voices overlaid on each other.

The dream ends.

4.6 THE BAAS VURD

The *Baas Vurd* (E: “Secret Hollow”) is one of four holy shrines of the Order of the Thorn in the region (there is a fifth, high holy shrine, the *Gedak Tyrl* (E: “Great hall of Thorns”) home of the Guardian of the Thorn). The *Baas Vurd* is located in a narrow cleft in the tall plateau on the southwest side of the *Arto lia*, right where the river makes a tight dogleg and the current is extremely swift and treacherous. A narrow, churning stream long ago cut a deep sheer trough through the rock and runs through the hollow in a convoluted path; it is called the *Usuiv Throk* (E: “Guardian Waters”) and forms a barrier around a spit of land along the north side of the hollow. It is clear to anyone who gazes down into the cleft (assuming they could find it from

above; the area is covered by a dense forest, and many trees overhang the edge of the hollow) that the path of the *Guardian Waters* through the hollow was not shaped by the hand of nature. The sides of the hollow are hundred-foot tall, almost vertical cliffs, partially covered with vines; exposed rock shows clear sedimentary striations. Anyone inside will find the place is surprisingly bright considering its high walls. The *Baas Vurd* is a strange place of circular pools of swirling water, stepped waterfalls, and obelisks.

Theoretically, access could be gained to the hollow via the *Usuiv Throk*, but the stream is hidden—and even underground for several stretches), deep and turbulent, with many rocky areas.

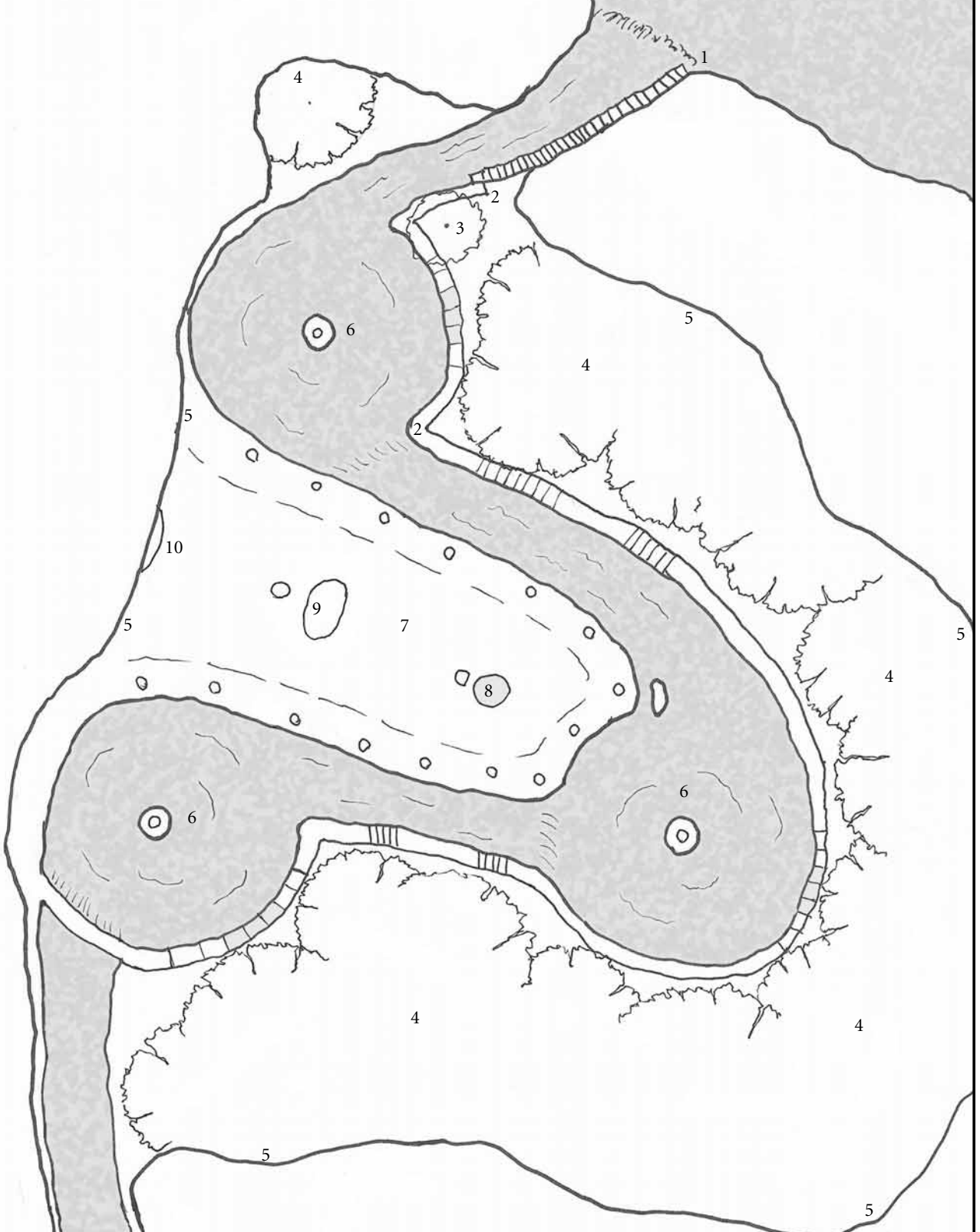
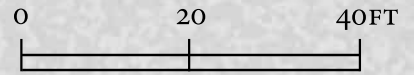
1. Hidden Stair. The only other surface access to this cleft is via a narrow stone stairway carved out of the rock next to the waterfall where the *Usuiv Throk* spills into the *Arto lia*. This stairway is partially under the waterfall and is hidden from view. If one is looking for the stair it is *Medium* (+0) to detect. If not specifically looking for the stairs, they are *Extremely Hard* (-30) to see. Just getting to the stairs on the rapids of the *Arto lia* is a *Very Hard* (-20) boating maneuver—or for the foolhardy, a *Sheer Folly* (-50) swimming maneuver. And depending on the time of year, the river water can be extremely cold. Climbing the narrow, wet stairs is a *Hard* (-10) maneuver. The stair is about fifty feet tall, going a third of the way up the cliff side.

2. Pathway. Upon reaching the top, the characters come to a paved pathway next to a stream at the top of the waterfall. The path is five feet wide, and fashioned of green-grey stones of various shapes, fitted together so skillfully that no weeds or grass grow between them. Note that the path actually descends a few steps as it skirts along each pool, so that a small portion of the path is under water. Members of the Order of the Thorn entering this place traverse the path, their feet entering the water of the three pools as they go; this is part of the ritual, and also allows them to pass onto the altar without being harmed. Each pool also confers a *Bless* to members of the Order, adding +5 to DB and maneuver rolls, cumulative (+15 total). Doing this would not *Bless* the characters but it would allow them to pass the warding pillars surrounding the peninsula without making a RR.

3. Door Tree. Next to the path at the top of the stairs, this is the tree that members of the Order use as the endpoint of a *Tree Door* to enter the Hollow. It is a thirty-foot-tall gnarled old oak with a three-foot diameter trunk.

4. Guard Trees. All of the area outside of the *Usuiv Throk* (E: “Guardian Waters”) is covered by trees, a mix of deciduous and coniferous varieties, ranging from twenty to fifty feet in height (still fifty feet below the top of the hollow). This—and an area of the forest above up to a distance of about 500 feet surrounding the hollow—is the *Nadum Lemira* (E: “Watching Woods”). The trees outside of the hollow are merely observers; they will not attack, but they alert the Keeper of the Thorn that

Baas Vurd
Secret Hollow



there are intruders in the vicinity. Down in the hollow, however, the trees are more aggressive. Anyone straying off the path will be attacked by these animated plants. The GM should determine how many trees are in range (1-3) and roll attacks. The trees cannot move their roots, but they can extend their branches a surprising distance, up to fifteen feet beyond the regular edge of their foliage. This includes above them, should anyone try to fly down from above. It is important to note that the trees do not ‘see;’ they sense the target’s presence. Because of this, *Invisibility* is a useless defense against them. Conversely, Mentalists using *Presence* or related spells will get a vague, decentralized positive reading of a presence in the entire forest, but no other information.

5. Guard Vines. These hang down the sides of the hollow from the plateau above, and from several patches of earth along the sides of the walls. The vines can reach out away from the wall about ten feet, and of course can reach just about any spot along the wall to attack someone climbing down.

6. Pools/Waterfalls. There are three perfectly circular pools, each about forty feet across. Each is fed in series by the Usuvi Throk, which emerges from the southwest side of the hollow as a small but powerful waterfall. Stepped waterfalls/streams connect the pools, guided in such a way as to create a whirlpool current in the pool. In the center of each pool is a circular pedestal five feet in diameter a few feet taller than the outer edge of the pool, with a cylindrical obelisk in the center. Each obelisk is covered with vines with purplish-green leaves and small red flowers (they bloom year-round). These are *Halverum* (E: “Creeping Dream”) a mutated version of Dreamvines, which can grow very quickly. It has spread over large areas on the forest floor around the hollow and along the southwest coast of the Artolia. Atop each tapered, twenty-foot tall marble obelisk is a rough green crystal on the top. Characters making a successful *Hard* (-10) *Perception* roll will notice that some water appears to be flowing down through slots in the sides of the pedestals. Also, there is a narrow invisible bridge connecting the center platform of each pool to the peninsula. Outside the trio of whirlpools, the hollow is filled with trees: a mix of oak, maple and various conifers.

7. Thorn Temple. The stone path winds around the outside of the pools, and finally across the base of the waterfall at the south end of the hollow. Anyone walking across this last stretch is bathed in the chilly mist coming off the waterfall before following the path along the wall of the hollow and onto the small peninsula of land that extends from the west side of the wall. Thorny thokot bushes line the edge of this spit of land, as well as a string of smaller, six-foot tall obelisks. The thokot is animated, and can strike anyone trying to get onto the land across the stream, and can also attack as far as ten feet inside the shore. The obelisks form a warding perimeter: anyone who has not made the passage along the path through the pools must make a successful RR vs. 10th level Channeling or be pushed back and take a C Shock Critical (available in the *Shadow World*

Master Atlas, among other places). Subsequent attempts require a RR at -10 each time, cumulative. The warding barrier protects overhead as well in a dome shape. Those using *Leaving*, *Long Door* or *Teleport* must roll as well; failure sends them bouncing back to their origin point.

8. Throne and Pool. At the outermost end of the peninsula is a pool of water about ten feet across, with a stone throne of the same design as the other thrones in front of it. This is where the Keeper sits and gains visions, and performs other rituals.

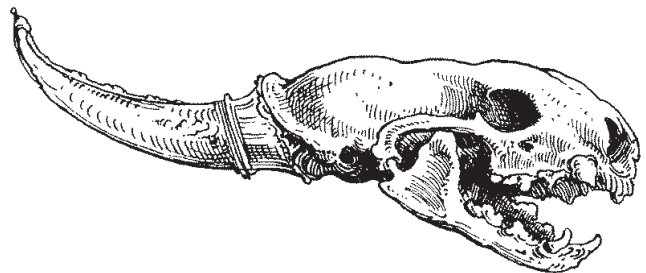
9. Sacrificial Altar. Halfway back along the peninsula is a roughly oval stone platform about ten feet long and three feet high. Growing all around the base of the platform and creeping up the sides is *Halverum*, with unusually large red flowers. On top of the platform are some kind of black alloy fixtures resembling manacles. A few feet further back is an obelisk similar to the ones in the center of the pools, but larger: it is thirty feet tall, with a glowing green quartz cluster atop it. This obelisk is covered with engraving in an ancient, unreadable writing, and at about chest height on the side facing the back wall (and the door, see below) is an inlaid disc of green quartz about 3” across. Pressing this disk will open the door (#10).

10. Door. Set into the stone wall at the back of the spit of land is an alcove, ten feet wide, twenty high and ten deep. At the back of the alcove is a door of the same green-grey stone as the path. If the green disk on the obelisk is pressed, the door will slide down into the floor; otherwise it is *Sheer Folly* (-50) to pick the lock/activate the mechanism to cause the door to lower. Beyond the door is a small circular chamber, about four feet in diameter. There is no floor in the chamber. One must step inside, and they are whisked down the shaft in a gust of air, 100 feet to a niche in the side of a great hall. No one else can be transported down until the person exits the niche. Two people could go down at once if they step into the shaft together.

4.7 THE RITUAL

The rituals of the Order are ancient, but this one has been twisted in recent years by Durnanga and the current Guardian from its harmless origins. Now it involves human sacrifices to the fallen dryad who is the channeling source for the order.

Guided by the wand, the characters should arrive at the time when the sun is highest in the sky, when the Keeper performs



a daily ritual. Just as the characters come up the stairs, the last monk is emerging from the tree at the top. Ahead of him in a procession along the path are Taris, followed by Khorik, then the twin archers, then finally the three monks. Taris has her 'mask' retracted, so the characters can see her face. She looks straight ahead, seemingly paying no attention to where she is walking; her stride is confident if slow. The monks have their large hoods pulled up, their hands in their sleeves, and they are chanting something in low voices that the characters do not understand. It is impossible to tell that they are in fact women. All of the entourage are barefoot. Eventually they make their way to the center peninsula. Taris seats herself at her throne with the twins on either side. Their bows are strung but they have not nocked arrows; they look straight ahead. Khorik stands behind the throne; only he seems to be looking carefully about the hollow. Taris stares down into the pool before her.

A monk steps behind the large pillar (#9), a successful *Hard (-10) Perception/Observation* roll by a character and they will see the monk press on the green disk, and the door at the back of the peninsula open. Two of the monks step inside together; the third turns her back to the door and continues chanting.

A few minutes pass, then one of the monks emerges, carrying a body over his shoulder. It is bound from shoulders to toes in some kind of brown vine, and has a sack over its head, but is squirming as much as it can. As the monk proceeds to the platform with his burden, the other monk emerges from the door. The third monk joins them, and together they lay the body on the platform, cut the dead binding vines, and secure it spread-eagle on top with the manacles. One monk pulls the hood off. It is a young Jameri man of perhaps 20 years, wearing a simple tunic and breeches typical of the common people of the area. He struggles against the bonds, and there is an expression of terror on his face but he makes no sounds.

Note: At this point the character with the Thorn Wand may notice that it is growing very cold, which it never has before. If the player tries to determine the reason for this, he may make a Staves/Wands (Attunement) roll. If successful, he learns that this wand is very old, from the early days of the Order of the Thorn, and it feels that what is happening below is an abomination. The GM should also know that any Water Bolt attacks using the wand against this group have a +20 to hit and do double hit damage.

Once the young man is secure, the monks step away from the platform, still chanting. Taris rises from her throne, kneels before the pool and scoops up some water in one hand. She turns and walks to the platform, where she raises her staff and dribbles the water over the writhing youth. She shakes off the remainder into the Halverum at the base, while slowly walking in a circle around it. She begins to sing in an eerie rising and falling tone, and raises her staff; the green quartz at the top of each obelisk begins to glow. The Halverum vines writhe. The three monks turn and walk away, each towards one of the whirlpools, even as the vines slither up the sides of the platform. Then monks step out over the pools and seem to walk



on air towards the center of each one (there is an invisible bridge connecting each obelisk to the peninsula). The monks reach the platforms and begin to circle the obelisks as the vines reach the youth and begin to twist around his limbs. He struggles even more wildly, and opens his mouth as if screaming, but no sound comes out. The green quartz glows more brightly

Once the vines touch the youth, he will take 1-4 hits every round as they painfully begin to burrow into his flesh. Once he is rendered unconscious the process continues. 10 rounds after losing consciousness he is completely enveloped in the vines and the process is irreversible: they are consuming his body. The vines will stop their attack if Taris or any of the monks stops chanting, but they will not retreat unless she is rendered unconscious or killed. If they are merely stopped, the victim can be cut away from the vines. If he is not yet unconscious, just healing the hits will destroy them. If he is already unconscious, it will require 2-8 *Major Vessel Repairs* and 2-8 *Muscle Repair True* to reverse the damage they have done (he could be *Lifekept* to suspend him till the other repairs can be done; otherwise the damage will kill him in 2-12 hours).

If the characters do nothing, 4 minutes (24 rounds) after the victim loses consciousness, the vines slither away and there is nothing left. The green quartz at the top of the columns stops glowing; the Thorn wand returns to a neutral temperature. Taris returns to the throne to meditate for a few minutes while the monks go back downstairs to tend to the remaining prisoners. After about half an hour they will gather on the peninsula, then process out of the Hollow the way they came.

STOPPING THE RITUAL

If the characters try to intervene, the moment Taris perceives them, she shouts "capture the intruders!" And her thorn mask will 'grow' down over her eyes and the back of her head. The archers will use the obelisks as partial cover, while the monks will use adrenal maneuvers to *Leap* across to land and engage the characters.

4.8 THE TYL ORMUN: STONE HALL

This is the underground section of the holy site.

1. **Niche:** This connects to the Hollow via the open shaft.

2. **Hall:** This oval room has a high ceiling which is really an extension of the walls: it is an oval vertically as well as horizontally. Only the floor is a flat surface. Vines cover the walls/ceiling despite the dim lighting. Three corridors lead out of this hall, which is lit only by the dim flickering light of the rooms beyond (treat as moonless night for mortals; they will require a minute to adjust to even that lighting so treat them as -30 for maneuvers, perception, melee, the negative decreasing by 5 every round over 6 rounds).

3. **North Chamber:** A domed room almost forty feet in diameter, with a pillar in the center, and holes in the floor and ceiling slightly larger than the pillar, allowing the luminous cascade of water from above to fall down and away. The room is lit as if bright sunlight was shining down the hole in the ceiling, so it is very bright in the center, dim near the perimeter. Vines cover most of the dome but there are none on the earthen floor. (This room is used to summon the Earth Elementals). Earth Elemental description: A concentration of billowing earth; must maintain contact with ground (including stone); grappled victim takes a "C" impact crit (1/rd); nine feet tall; "air" crits against it are rolled on slaying column.

they do not connect with the floor or ceiling. Instead a roaring cascade of water spills down over these pillars, and light also comes down with surprising intensity.

5. **South Chamber:** Residences. Periodically up to six monks reside here. They train and meditate, and use this as a base from which to capture future sacrifices. There are six cots, separated by folding screens, and basic bathing and toilet facilities.

6. **East Chamber:** This chamber is lined with barred cells where future sacrificial victims are held. Currently there are three prisoners: 2 young women and a teenage boy. They are fairly well cared for by the monks, who visit daily.

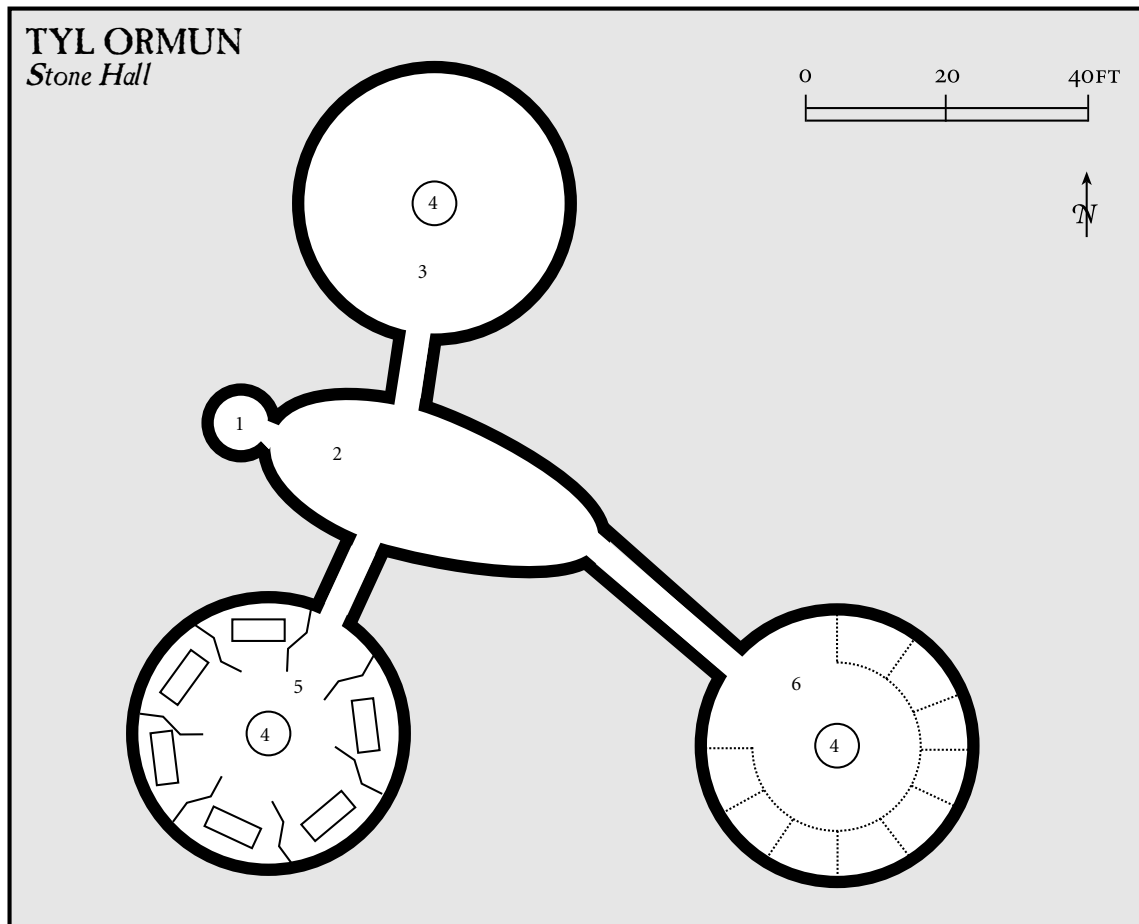
4.9 AFTERMATH

Assuming the characters try to stop the ritual, there are basically two possible outcomes for them:

If things do not look good for the characters, there is a possibility that Omiva will step in to aid them, but she will remain in the shadows, and not attack Taris directly. If the characters are defeated, they will not be killed. Instead they will be imprisoned to serve as future sacrifices.

If the battle goes well for the characters, the monks and Taris of the Thorn will fight to the death; Khorik and the archers are loyal but not suicidal. If things look hopeless, they will attempt to escape. If captured, none of them will willingly discuss the

Order of the Thorn or its practices; Taris will only make ominous statements that the characters have made an enemy of the Thorn, etc. The nearby residents will be grateful to have their family members returned, but depending on how the characters handle the situation, there is nothing to stop the Thorn from resuming their activities... unless the Thorn Staff is destroyed. (That could be another adventure in itself.) In any case, they will indeed have made enemies of the Order of the Thorn, and now they possibly know of the Order's sinister long-range plans, and of their shadowy ally.



4. **Waterfall of Light:** as noted in #3, these are pillars, yet

NPC CHART: RM2/RM CLASSIC

Following are listed important and/or relevant NPCs for the area. Most have a description in the text describing their background and personality, and more details about any special magic items.

ORDER OF THE THORN

Name	Lvl	Hits	AT(DB)	Sh	Gr	Melee Ob	Missile Ob	Mov
Taris Kremkurin	16	89	14(70/40)*	N*	N	95flail*	83lcb*	15
Age:? (Appears about 25); Sex: F; Ht/Wt: 6'0"/140; Hair/Eyes/Build: Brown/black/slender; Dmnr: Cold, fanatical; Race: Erlin/Laan; Profession: Animist; Skills: Chan40; Climb35; DirSp45 (Shock Bolt); Perc85; Rune65; S&H70/110 (outdoors); S&W70; Swim30. Secondary Skills: Animal45; Camo90; Cav50; CirclR35; DemnLr20; DragLr40; Forage80; HerbLr75; Ldrshp45; Medit70; PwrPercep40; PubSp20; Rmas20; SenseRealWp15; Sing45; Stra&Tac30; Subdu30; Surveil66; WeathWatch89. Stats: St-65; Qu-92; Em-45; In-99; Pr-86; Ag-95; Co-71; Me-80; Re-73; SD-82; Ap-91. Spells: All Base Animist to 20th, Barrier Law, Light's Way, Locating Ways to 20th; Lore to 10th. PP: 128 (32x4 multiplier) Items: Thornstaff;* Thorn Mask;* Protective coat;* Robes of Hiding, +50 to hiding outdoors in foliage.								
Omiva Kremlum	24	110	11(65)	Y	N	84Saren	99lb	10
Age:? (Appears about 25); Sex: F; Ht/Wt: 6'2"/145; Hair/Eyes/Build: Brown/green/slim; Dmnr: Cold, Bitter; Race: Erlin; Profession: Animist; Skills: Chan35; Climb60; DisTrap30; Perc100; Ride45; Rune25; S&H85; S&W70; Swim50; Track55. Secondary Skills: Acrob40; Act35; Animal60; BscMath15; Camo80; Cav60; CirclR20; Chem50; Contort40; Cook60; DemnLr65; DetTrap45 (outdoors); Diplom20; DisrmFoe50; Disguis45; Diving20; DragLr40; 1stAid50; Fletch45; Forage50; HerbLr70; LocScrt65 (outdoors); Medit65; Navig30; PoisonLr20; PwrPercep30; PubSp35; Sail25; SenseRealWp20; Signal55; Sing45; StarG40; Stra&Tac20; StunMan15; Subdu40; Surveil30; WeathWatch50. Stats: St-88; Qu-90; Em-56; In-95; Pr-81; Ag-97; Co-65; Me-75; Re-87; SD-43; Ap-73. Spells: All Base Animist to 25th. Channeling Lore, Locating Ways, Calm Spirits, Concussion's Ways, Barrier Law, Weather Ways to 20th. PP: (48x3=) 144. Items: Saren, +20; Enchanted tunic, protects as AT 11(20); Enchanted longbow +15; bracelet x3 spells any Channeling profession.								
Khorik Thander	14	145	14(75)	Y	Y	175bs	87da	10
Age:? (Appears about 25); Sex: M; Ht/Wt: 6'8"/200; Hair/Eyes/Build: Black/green/athletic; Dmnr: Wary; Race: Erlin/Loar; Profession: Fighter; Skills: Amb±8; Climb55; DisTrap30; ManeuvArmor50; Perc90; PickLock40; Ride67; S&H75/125; Swim50; Track65. Secondary Skills: Acrob45; AdrMv50; Camo50; Cav15; Contort55; DetTrap35; Diplom40; DisrmFoe25; Forage35; Ldrshp45; LocScrt20; Navig35; PwrPercep20; Seduct30; SenseRealWp20; Signal70; Stra&Tac50; StunMan40; Subdu50; Surveil40; WeathWatch20. Stats: St-96; Qu-95; Em-45; In-80; Pr-92; Ag-94; Co-90; Me-76; Re-77; SD-80; Ap-92. Items: lacquered wood scale armor/greaves, protects as AT 14(40) but encumbers as leather jerkin; enchanted +20 sword of Dir-wood and black alloy; ten +10 throwing daggers; cloak, adds +50 to hiding outdoors in foliage.								
Gladiss (Archer)	8	123	14(58)	N	Y	127lb*	45mg*	5
Age: 340 (Appears about 20); Sex: F; Ht/Wt: 5'11"/135; Hair/Eyes/Build: Brown/green/athletic; Dmnr: Neutral; Race: Jaimani Elf; Profession: Fighter; Skills: Climb40; Perc65; PickLock15; Ride; S&H; Swim45; Track40. Secondary Skills: Acrob25; AthlG20; Camo45; Contort20; Cook10; Craft15; Dance30; Fletch50; Forage25; LocScrt10; PoisonLr15; SenseRealWp5; Signal30; Stra&Tac20; StunMan10; Surveil20; WeathWatch20. Stats: St-80; Qu-96; Em-82; In-78; Pr-73; Ag-94; Co-84; Me-75; Re-66; SD-81; Ap-93. Items: +20 Dir-wood bow, magic arrows;* lacquered wood scale armor/greaves, protects as AT 14(10) but does not encumber ; +10 long knife, strikes on the main gauche table.								
Vardiss (Archer)	8	124	14(55)	N	Y	125lb*	50mg*	5
Age: 340 (Appears about 20); Sex: F; Ht/Wt: 5'11"/135; Hair/Eyes/Build: Brown/Green/Athletic; Dmnr: Neutral; Race: Jaimani Elf; Profession: Fighter; Skills: Climb45; Perc50; Ride45; Swim40. Secondary Skills: Acrob30; Appr20; Arch20; Astro20; AthlG15; BscMath20; Camo35; CirclR10; Chem20; Contort25; 1stAid30; Fletch40; LocScrt15; LockLr20; Math5; Sail25; Signal35; Skat20; Stra&Tac20; Surveil30. Stats: St-85; Qu-95; Em-82; In-78; Pr-73; Ag-94; Co-84; Me-75; Re-66; SD-81; Ap-93. Items: +20 Dir-wood bow, magic arrows;* lacquered wood scale armor/greaves, protects as AT 14(10) but does not encumber ; +10 long knife, strikes on the main gauche table.								

Name	Lvl	Hits	AT(DB)	Sh	Gr	Melee Ob	Missile Ob	Mov
Brelian (Monk)	6	69	9(30)	N	A	See Martial Arts	65da	10

Age: 110; **Sex:** F; **Ht/Wt:** 6'2"/150; **Hair/Eyes/Build:** Black/Blue/Athletic; **Dmnr:** Cool; **Race:** Erlin; **Profession:** Ranger; **Skills:** Amb±6; Climb30; M/A St 55R3; M/A SwT 65R3; Perc45; Ride20; S&H60; Swim30; Track55. **Secondary Skills:** Acrob45; ADrMv60(Leap); Animal30; Camo25; Cav10; Contort25; 1stAid20; Forage30; HerbLr15; PoisonLr20; PwrPercep10; Sail25; Signal30; StarG5; StunMan15; Subdu5; Surveil20. **Stats:** St-96; Qu-91; Em-66; In-90; Pr-69; Ag-90; Co-91; Me-64; Re-45; SD-67; Ap-88. **Spells:** Base Ranger Nature's Guises, Nature's Way, Moving Ways to 10th, Open Channeling Barrier Law to 5th. **PP:** 6 (+4). **Items:** Ring: +4 spells, summon and control 2 Earth Elementals once per week; * Eight +10 throwing daggers; unencumbering quilted green cloth tunic, AT9 (20).

Kelta (Monk)	7	88	9(75)	N	A	See Martial Arts	75da	20
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Age: 241; **Sex:** F; **Ht/Wt:** 6'3"/155; **Hair/Eyes/Build:** Brown/Green/Athletic; **Dmnr:** Cocky; **Race:** Erlin; **Profession:** Warrior Monk; **Skills:** Climb35; M/A St 80R4; M/A SwT65R4; Perc65; Ride44; S&H77; Swim20. **Secondary Skills:** Acrob15; ADrMv70(Leap); Cav15; CirclLr5; Chem20; Contort35; Cook5; Dance5; DetTrap25; DisrmFoe30; Forage10; LocScrt10; PwrPercep20; Sail10; Signal30; Sing10; Skii20; StarG5; Stra&Tac20; StunMan30; Subdu35; Surveil15. **Stats:** St-91; Qu-99; Em-56; In-70; Pr-88; Ag-99; Co-90; Me-60; Re-72; SD-78; Ap-81. **Items:** Ring: +4 Spells, cast *Stone/Mud* 2x per day; * Eight +10 throwing daggers; unencumbering quilted green cloth tunic, AT9 (20).

Rhem Shoa (Monk)	8	48	9(55)	Y*	A	See Martial Arts	63da	5
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Age: 180; **Sex:** F; **Ht/Wt:** 6'1"/135; **Hair/Eyes/Build:** Red-Brown/Blue/Athletic; **Dmnr:** Cold; efficient; **Race:** Erlin/Loar; **Profession:** Animist; **Skills:** Climb40; DisTrap10; DirSp40 (Shock Bolt); M/A St 56R3; M/A SwT55R3; Perc50; Ride30; Rune20; S&H50; S&W20; Swim5. **Secondary Skills:** ADrMv65 (Leap); Camo30; Chann5; CirclLr10; DrugTo20; 1stAid30; Forage20; Juggl15; LocScrt10; Medit15; Navig10; PoisonLr15; PwrPercep20; Sail5; SenseRe-alWp15; Signal30; StarG25; Stra&Tac15; StunMan10; Subdu4; Surveil25; WeathWatch20. **Stats:** St-67; Qu-92; Em-73; In-100; Pr-; Ag-89; Co-54; Me-90; Re-56; SD-76; Ap-88. **Spells:** Base Animist Moving Ways, Nature's Protection, Nature's Movement to 10th, Open Channeling Light's Way, Spell Defense, Barrier Law to 5th. **PP:** 24 (+4). **Items:** Ring, +4 spells, cast *Dark Sleep* 3x per day, and *Muting* 3x per day; Enchanted forearm bracers: left bracer casts *Shield* 2x per day; right bracer casts *Deflections* 2x per day, each has a duration of 10 rounds (bracers are adjustable and could be worn by any adult; they must be worn together to work); eight +10 throwing daggers; unencumbering quilted green cloth tunic, AT9 (20).

* = Special; see text.

OTHER NPCs

Type	Lvl	Base Rate	Max Pace/ MN Bonus	Speed MS/AQ	Size/ Crit	AT Hits (DB)	Attacks	# Enc.	Outlook
Pale men Robbers									
Sarlen	7	30	Dash/10	MD/MD	M/-	71 13(10)	66bs/45cb	1	Greedy
Forl	5	40	Dash/10	MD/MD	M/-	56 9(20)	55ss/31sb	1	Greedy
Treggin	4	40	Dash/10	MD/MD	M/-	35 9(10)	49ss/25da	1	Greedy
Cale	3	40	Dash/10	MD/MD	M/-	35 5(15)	36ss/22sb	1	Greedy
Lugroki									
Brugg	4	50	Dash/10	MD/MD	M/-	41 5(10)	61 scimitar/35sb	1	Aggr.
Fruck	5	45	Dash/10	MD/MD	M/-	55 9(10)	67 scimitar /40sb	1	Aggr.

BEASTS & MONSTERS CHART

Type	Lvl	Base Rate	Max Pace/ MN Bonus	Speed MS/AQ	Size/ Crit	AT Hits (DB)	Attacks	# Enc.	Outlook (IQ)
Guard Trees	10D	—	—/—	—/MF	L/LA	250/30‡11(10)	40LGr or 50MBa or 50Whip	1-3	Protective
Guard Vines	2B	5	Walk/0	IN/MF	M/—	40/10‡ 3(10)	30SGr or 20Whip	2-4	Protective
Guard Thokot	4B	15	Walk/0	SL/MF	M/—	70/20‡ 4(15)	50MGr/35Mhorn	2-4	Protective
Halverum Vines	3	10	Walk/0	IN/MF	M/—	30/10‡ 3(10)	Sleep/25SGr/21-40 hits/rnd	3-6	Protective
Earth Elemental	12	45	Run/0	SL/MD	M/II	87 8(20)	90LBa/40LGr/[Impact B]†	2	Berserk

* = Special; see text.

§ = If the attack on the left has attained a non-Tiny critical, this attack will occur in the **same** round of combat after the attack which obtained that critical.

† = If the attack on the left has attained a non-Tiny critical, this attack will occur in the **next** round of combat after the attack which obtained that critical.

‡ = Second hit number is for the specific branch or vine tendril. Exceeding that total means the part is severed.

= Stun Result and Hits/Rnd do not affect the creature.

NPC CHART: RMSS/RMFRP

Following are listed important and/or relevant NPCs for the area. Most have a description in the text describing their background and personality, and more details about any special magic items.

ORDER OF THE THORN

Name	Lvl	Hits	AT(DB)	Sh	Gr	Melee Ob	Missile Ob	Mov
Taris Kremkurin	16	89	14(70/40)*	N*	N	95flail*	83lcb*	15
<p>Age:? (Appears about 25); Sex: F; Ht/Wt: 6'0"/140; Hair/Eyes/Build: Brown/black/slender; Dmnr: Cold, fanatical; Race: Erlin/Laan; Profession: Animist; Skills: Alert30; Attune70, Chan40; Climb35; DirSp45 (Shock Bolt); Observ85; Rune65; S&H70/110 (outdoors); Swim30. Secondary Skills: Animal45; Camo90; Cav50; Circlr35; DemnLr20; DragLr40; Forage80; HerbLr75; Ldrshp45; Medit70; PwrPercep40; PubSp20; Rmas20; SenseRealWp15; Sing45; Stra&Tac30; Subdu30; Surveil66; WeathWatch89. Stats: St-65; Qu-92; Em-45; In-99; Pr-86; Ag-95; Co-71; Me-80; Re-73; SD-82; Ap-91. Spells: Animal Mastery to 20th, Herb Mastery to 20th, Nature's Lore to 20th, Nature's Movements/Senses to 20th, Nature's Protection to 20th, Plant Mastery to 20th, Barrier Law to 15th, Light's Way to 20th, Locating Ways to 20th; Lore to 10th. PP: 218 (109x2 multiplier) Items: Thornstaff;* Thorn Mask;* Protective coat;* Robes of Hiding, +50 to hiding outdoors in foliage.</p>								
Omiva Kremlum	24	110	11(65)	Y	N	84Saren	99lb	10
<p>Age:? (Appears about 25); Sex: F; Ht/Wt: 6'2"/145; Hair/Eyes/Build: Brown/green/slim; Dmnr: Cold, Bitter; Race: Erlin; Profession: Animist; Skills: Alert40; Attune70; Chan35; Climb60; DisTrap30; Observ100; Ride45; Rune25; S&H85; Swim50; Track55. Secondary Skills: Acrob40; Act35; Animal60; BscMath15; Camo80; Cav60; Circlr20; Chem50; Contort40; Cook60; DemnLr65; DetTrap45 (outdoors); Diplom20; DisrmFoe50; Disguis45; Diving20; DragLr40; IstAid50; Forage50; HerbLr70; LocSrt65 (outdoors); Medit65; Navig30; PoisonLr20; PwrPercep30; PubSp35; Sail25; SenseRealWp20; Signal55; Sing45; StarG40; Stra&Tac20; StunMan15; Subdu40; Surveil30; WeathWatch50. Stats: St-88; Qu-90; Em-56; In-95; Pr-81; Ag-97; Co-65; Me-75; Re-87; SD-43; Ap-73. Spells: Animal Mastery to 25th, Herb Mastery to 25th, Nature's Lore to 25th, Nature's Movements/Senses to 25th, Nature's Protection to 25th, Plant Mastery to 25th. Lore to 20th, Locating Ways to 20th, Calm Spirits to 20th, Concussion's Ways to 20th, Barrier Law to 20th, Weather Ways to 20th. PP: (136x2) 272. Items: Saren, +20; Enchanted tunic, protects as AT 11(20); Enchanted longbow +15; bracelet x2 spells any Channeling profession.</p>								
Khorik Thander	14	145	14(75)	Y	Y	175bs	87da	10
<p>Age:? (Appears about 25); Sex: M; Ht/Wt: 6'8"/200; Hair/Eyes/Build: Black/green/athletic; Dmnr: Wary; Race: Erlin/Loar; Profession: Fighter; Skills: Alert20; Amb±8; Climb55; DisTrap30; ManeuvArmor50; Observ90; PickLock40; Ride67; S&H75/125; Swim50; Track65. Secondary Skills: Acrob45; ADrMv50; Camo50; Cav15; Contort55; DetTrap35; Diplom40; DisrmFoe25; Forage35; Ldrshp45; LocSrt20; Navig35; PwrPercep20; Seduct30; SenseRealWp20; Signal70; Stra&Tac50; StunMan40; Subdu50; Surveil40; WeathWatch20. Stats: St-96; Qu-95; Em-45; In-80; Pr-92; Ag-94; Co-90; Me-76; Re-77; SD-80; Ap-92. Items: lacquered wood scale armor/greaves, protects as AT 14(40) but encumbers as leather jerkin; enchanted +20 sword of Dir-wood and black alloy; ten +10 throwing daggers; cloak, adds +50 to hiding outdoors in foliage.</p>								
Gladiss (Archer)	8	123	14(58)	N	Y	127lb*	45mg*	5
<p>Age: 340 (Appears about 20); Sex: F; Ht/Wt: 5'11"/135; Hair/Eyes/Build: Brown/green/athletic; Dmnr: Neutral; Race: Jaimani Elf; Profession: Fighter; Skills: Alert20; Climb40; Observ65; PickLock15; Ride; S&H; Swim45; Track40. Secondary Skills: Acrob25; AthlG20; Camo45; Contort20; Cook10; Craft15; Dance30; Fletch50; Forage25; LocSrt10; PoisonLr15; SenseRealWp5; Signal30; Stra&Tac20; StunMan10; Surveil20; WeathWatch20. Stats: St-80; Qu-96; Em-82; In-78; Pr-73; Ag-94; Co-84; Me-75; Re-66; SD-81; Ap-93. Items: +20 Dir-wood bow, magic arrows;* lacquered wood scale armor/greaves, protects as AT 14(10) but does not encumber ; +10 long knife, strikes on the main gauche table.</p>								
Vardiss (Archer)	8	124	14(55)	N	Y	125lb*	50mg*	5
<p>Age: 340 (Appears about 20); Sex: F; Ht/Wt: 5'11"/135; Hair/Eyes/Build: Brown/Green/Athletic; Dmnr: Neutral; Race: Jaimani Elf; Profession: Fighter; Skills: Alert20; Climb45; Observ50; Ride45; Swim40. Secondary Skills: Acrob30; Appr20; Arch20; Astro20; AthlG15; BscMath20; Camo35; Circlr10; Chem20; Contort25; IstAid30; Fletch40; LocSrt15; LockLr20; Math5; Sail25; Signal35; Skat20; Stra&Tac20; Surveil30. Stats: St-85; Qu-95; Em-82; In-78; Pr-73; Ag-94; Co-84; Me-75; Re-66; SD-81; Ap-93. Items: +20 Dir-wood bow, magic arrows;* lacquered wood scale armor/greaves, protects as AT 14(10) but does not encumber ; +10 long knife, strikes on the main gauche table.</p>								

Name	Lvl	Hits	AT(DB)	Sh	Gr	Melee Ob	Missile Ob	Mov
Brelian (Monk)	6	69	9(30)	N	A	See Martial Arts	65da	10

Age: 110; **Sex:** F; **Ht/Wt:** 6'2"/150; **Hair/Eyes/Build:** Black/Blue/Athletic; **Dmnr:** Cool; **Race:** Erlin; **Profession:** Ranger; **Skills:** Alert20; Amb±6; Climb30; M/A St 55R3; M/A SwT 65R3; Observ45; Ride20; S&H60; Swim30; Track55. **Secondary Skills:** Acrob45; ADrMv60(Leap); Animal30; Camo25; Cav10; Con-tort25; 1stAid20; Forage30; HerbLr15; PoisonLr20; PwrPercep10; Sail25; Signal30; StarG5; StunMan15; Subdu5; Surveil20. **Stats:** St-96; Qu-91; Em-66; In-90; Pr-69; Ag-90; Co-91; Me-64; Re-45; SD-67; Ap-88. **Spells:** Inner Walls to 5th, Moving Ways to 6th, Nature's Guises to 6th, Nature's Summons to 6th, Nature's Way to 6th, Path Mastery to 6th. **PP:** 41 (+2 adder). **Items:** Ring: +2 adder, summon and control 2 Earth Elementals once per week; * Eight +10 throwing daggers; unencumbering quilted green cloth tunic, AT9 (20).

Kelta (Monk)	7	88	9(75)	N	A	See Martial Arts	75da	20
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Age: 241; **Sex:** F; **Ht/Wt:** 6'3"/155; **Hair/Eyes/Build:** Brown/Green/Athletic; **Dmnr:** Cocky; **Race:** Erlin; **Profession:** Warrior Monk; **Skills:** Alert15; Climb35; M/A St 80R4; M/A SwT65R4; Observ65; Ride44; S&H77; Swim20. **Secondary Skills:** Acrob15; ADrMv70(Leap); Cav15; CirclLr5; Chem20; Con-tort35; Cook5; Dance5; DetTrap25; DisrmFoe30; Forage10; LocScrt10; PwrPercep20; Sail10; Signal30; Sing10; Skii20; StarG5; Stra&Tac20; StunMan30; Subdu35; Surveil15. **Stats:** St-91; Qu-99; Em-56; In-70; Pr-88; Ag-99; Co-90; Me-60; Re-72; SD-78; Ap-81. **Items:** Ring: +2 Spell adder, cast *Stone/Mud* 2x per day; * Eight +10 throwing daggers; unencumbering quilted green cloth tunic, AT9 (20).

Rhem Shoa (Monk)	8	48	9(55)	Y*	A	See Martial Arts	63da	5
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Age: 180; **Sex:** F; **Ht/Wt:** 6'1"/135; **Hair/Eyes/Build:** Red-Brown/Blue/Athletic; **Dmnr:** Cold; efficient; **Race:** Erlin/Loar; **Profession:** Animist; **Skills:** Alert35; Attune20; Climb40; DisTrap10; DirSp40 (Shock Bolt); M/A St 56R3; M/A SwT55R3; Observ50; Ride30; Rune20; S&H50; Swim5. **Secondary Skills:** ADrMv65 (Leap); Camo30; Chann5; CirclLr10; DrugTo20; 1stAid30; Forage20; Juggl15; LocScrt10; Medit15; Navig10; PoisonLr15; PwrPercep20; Sail5; SenseRealWp15; Signal30; StarG25; Stra&Tac15; StunMan10; Subdu4; Surveil25; WeathWatch20. **Stats:** St-67; Qu-92; Em-73; In-100; Pr-; Ag-89; Co-54; Me-90; Re-56; SD-76; Ap-88. **Spells:** Nature's Movement/Senses to 8th, Nature's Protection to 8th, Barrier Law to 8th, Light's Way to 8th, Lofty Movements to 8th, Spell Defense to 8th. **PP:** 63 (+2 spell adder). **Items:** Ring, +2 spell adder, cast *Dark Sleep* 3x per day, and *Muting* 3x per day; Enchanted forearm bracers: left bracer casts *Shield* 2x per day; right bracer casts *Deflections* 2x per day, each has a duration of 10 rounds (bracers are adjustable and could be worn by any adult; they must be worn together to work); eight +10 throwing daggers; unencumbering quilted green cloth tunic, AT9 (20).

* = Special; see text.

OTHER NPCs

Type	Lvl	Base Rate	Max Pace/ MN Bonus	Speed MS/AQ	Size/ Crit	AT Hits (DB)	Attacks	# Enc.	Outlook
Pale men Robbers									
Sarlen	7	30	Dash/10	MD/MD	M/-	71 13(10)	66bs/45cb	1	Greedy
Forl	5	40	Dash/10	MD/MD	M/-	56 9(20)	55ss/31sb	1	Greedy
Treggin	4	40	Dash/10	MD/MD	M/-	35 9(10)	49ss/25da	1	Greedy
Cale	3	40	Dash/10	MD/MD	M/-	35 5(15)	36ss/22sb	1	Greedy
Lugroki									
Brugg	4	50	Dash/10	MD/MD	M/-	41 5(10)	61 scimitar/35sb	1	Aggr.
Fruck	5	45	Dash/10	MD/MD	M/-	55 9(10)	67 scimitar /40sb	1	Aggr.

BEASTS & MONSTERS CHART

Type	Lvl	Base Rate	Max Pace/ MN Bonus	Speed MS/AQ	Size/ Crit	AT Hits (DB)	Attacks	# Enc.	Outlook (IQ)
Guard Trees	10D	—	—/—	—/MF	L/LA	250/30‡ 11(10)	40LGr or 50MBa or 50Whip	1-3	Protective
Guard Vines	2B	5	Walk/0	IN/MF	M/—	40/10‡ 3(10)	30SGr or 20Whip	2-4	Protective
Guard Thokot	4B	15	Walk/0	SL/MF	M/—	70/20‡ 4(15)	50MGr/35Mhorn	2-4	Protective
Halverum Vines	3	10	Walk/0	IN/MF	M/—	30/10‡ 3(10)	Sleep/25SGr/21-40 hits/rnd	3-6	Protective
Earth Elemental	12	45	Run/0	SL/MD	M/II	87 8(20)	90LBa/40LGr/[Impact B]†	2	Berserk

* = Special; see text.

§ = If the attack on the left has attained a non-Tiny critical, this attack will occur in the **same** round of combat after the attack which obtained that critical.

† = If the attack on the left has attained a non-Tiny critical, this attack will occur in the **next** round of combat after the attack which obtained that critical.

‡ = Second hit number is for the specific branch or vine tendril. Exceeding that total means the part is severed.

= Stun Result and Hits/Rnd do not affect the creature.



G.C.P.

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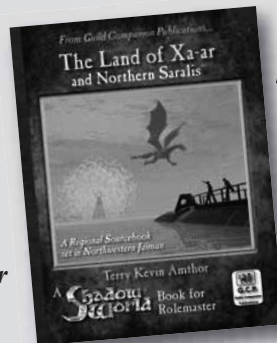
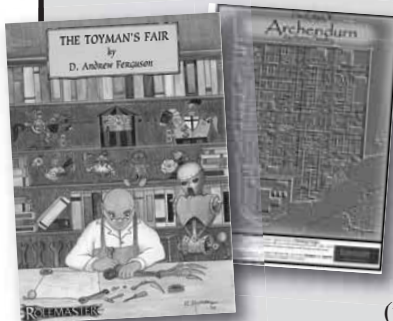
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