

OLD SCHOOL FANTASY GAMING



# MYSTIC PANGOLIN

ISSUE ONE

AUTUMN 2014

in this first issue of MP, an ogre's lunchbox full of goodies =

- : Pull-out Adventure = The Reliquary of Thazar Zul
- : Secret signs = using hobo signs in your game
- : Dirty Dungeon Dozens = casks and barrels
- : Ports of Call = the ore port of Haefod
- : Randomizer-o-rama = books & scrolls
- : A3 fold-out module, map

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CLOUDSTEPPING



## MYSTIC PANGOLIN ISSUE ONE

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## CONTRIBUTIONS

We are currently not soliciting contributions for Mystic Pangolin - as a new venture we will be seeking to consolidate our production schedule over a couple of issues before committing to any collaboration, and as zine creators ourselves we would want to reward contributors in cold, hard cash at an appropriate and respectful level. As there is no hope of that right now, your help in spreading the word about MP is the most we can ask of you.

We hope that the future will see MP grow to a stage at which we will be both very happy to welcome contributions and very flattered that you would consider us.



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*Short, sharp lists of useful information for world-builders and GMs.*

# DOWN N' DIRTY DUNGEON DOZENS

## **CASKS & BARRELS**

### **Terminology and definitions**

Casks are collectively strong wooden containers used mainly to hold liquids. Historically, casks have been given different names dependant on capacity, which has been determined using the gallon. Unfortunately, the gallon has been defined according to the commodity, so we are presented with three main types of gallon - the ale gallon, the beer gallon and the wine gallon. Therefore, a cask of given capacity will in truth contain a greater or lesser quantity dependant on commodity.

For conversion purposes, and for simple use of this article, I have bypassed the myriad definitions of the different gallons from history, and will use the quantities as defined by the end of the 18th century. Therefore, the ale gallon is  $282\text{in}^3$  or 4.62 litres; the wine gallon, also known as the Queen Anne gallon, is  $231\text{in}^3$  or 3.785 litres, now adopted as the standard US Gallon.

### **1 TUN**

The largest cask size, from which lesser casks are subdivided. The original TUN is calculated at 256 wine gallons, based on the known capacity of the subdivided cask capacities, but by 1347 it is recorded

as actually holding 252 gallons. The TUN was used for beer, ale and wine.

## 2 PIPE

A wine container, capacity 126 wine gallons, or 1/2 TUN. Also called a BUTT.

## 3 PUNCHEON

A wine cask equal to 1/3 of a TUN, or 84 wine gallons. Earlier called a TERCIAN, name derives from 'one third'. Later called a FIRKIN, although differing greatly in capacity from the ale FIRKIN (q.v.)

## 4 HOGSHEAD

A quarter of a TUN, 63 wine gallons. When used for ale, the HOGSHEAD held 48 ale gallons.

## 5 BARREL

Despite being used today as a catch-all name for casks, the BARREL is correctly a container of specific size, which held 1/8 of a TUN. This translated to a medieval capacity of 32 ale gallons or 36 beer gallons. It was standardised during the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603) at 34 gallons.



## 6 RUNDLET

The RUNDLET is often found with the variant spellings RUNLET and RONDELET.

Used for wine and also honey, it measured 1/14 TUN, or 18 wine gallons.

## 7 KILDERKIN

A beer or ale container, the KILDERKIN held 1/16 of a TUN, 16 ale gallons. Equal to 2 ale FIRKINS.

## 8 FIRKIN

An ale cask holding 1/4 of an ale BARREL, or 8 ale gallons, and

therefore 1/32 of a TUN. Prior to the standardisation of ale and beer gallons during the 1700s, a beer FIRKIN held 9 beer gallons. Distinct from the wine FIRKIN, more commonly called the PUNCHEON or TERCIAN.

## 9 PIN

An ale cask, measuring 1/2 FIRKIN, or 4 ale gallons.

## 10 KEG

Historically, a KEG held about 1/3 of an ale BARREL, or 11 ale gallons, which makes it an unwieldy 23 and 1/4 of a TUN. In modern times, the KEG has been adopted as a general term for a container of varying size. The smaller modern PONY KEG is of a 1/4 BARREL capacity, or 8 ale gallons.

## 11 POTTLE

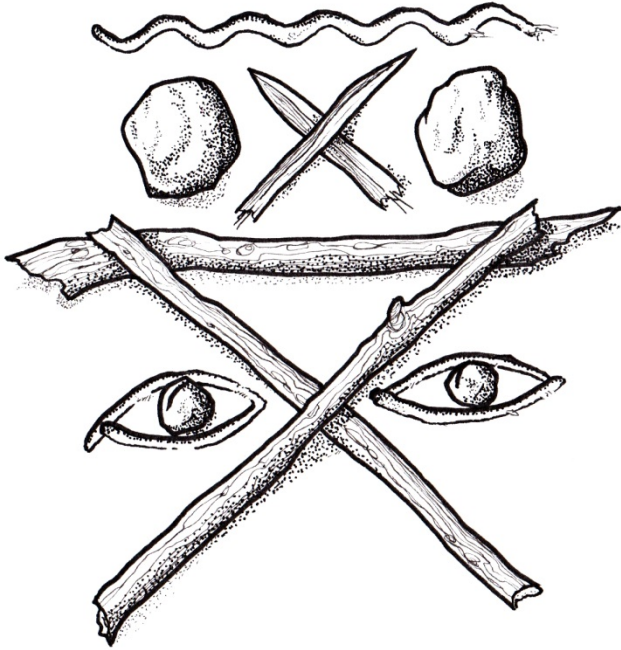
Not a specific cask size, but a pot or drinking vessel with a capacity of 1/2 of an ale gallon. The name was also applied to this quantity of liquid, but it is not known which came first (compare to the smaller liquid quantity a 'tipple' - both display the diminutive suffix).

## 12 SHOOK

To round off our dozen, a SHOOK is the term for the constituent parts of a complete cask, ready for assembly or dismantled and packed for transportation. The name is possibly a contraction of 'shook [or 'shaken'] cask', from 'shaken' meaning 'to scatter or shed'.

Please cite this article in the following way –

Anderson R.G. 2014. *Down 'n' Dirty Dungeon Dozens Casks & Barrels* in **Mystic Pangolin Issue One**, Autumn 2014, pp2-4. Cloudstepping Media.



## AN ELABORATE SYSTEM OF CURIOUS SIGNS

*"After a while he stepped up, and with the spike on his staff scratched a queer sign on the hobbit's beautiful green front-door."*

J.R.R. Tolkien *The Hobbit*

Whilst the various descriptions of the D&D *Thief*, and later *Rogue*, class make mention of the *Thieves' Cant*, that inaccessible jargon of nicknames, synonyms and rhyming slang used to pass information within guilds and robber bands, it is not acknowledged within the original rules that this secret system of communication might extend to signs and symbols. Many GMs will already have adopted a system for doing just this, prompted by their own knowledge of history and popular media, and a straightforward way of incorporating such a system is to import the 'hobo signs' of the USA Depression-era travellers and itinerant workers who 'rode the rails' of the goods trains travelling up and down east and west coast lines and across country.

## Seamless suitability?

Such a system can be transplanted into any gaming milieu – if we accept that a series of symbols can be used to supplement the spoken *cant*, and that this slang is known to have been in use by the 1530s, well before the publication of *cant* phrases in 1566 of Thomas Harman's *Caveat for Common Cursitors*, then it finds a natural home among the lawless classes of *Lamentations of the Flame Princess*.

As for *Call of Cthulhu*, the classic 1920s time period sits very well at the beginning of the Depression and, although the original Conan Doyle stories did not feature them, television adaptations of *Sherlock Holmes* have used hobo signs very well as anachronistic but plausible plot devices, leading us to adopt the signs in *Gaslight* settings. Pulp and Noir settings are right on the button as far as time period is concerned.

Modern day or near-future game worlds could use the sign system in the form of *tagging*, graffiti signatures, which is indeed how modern day train-hoppers use the signs.

For fantasy settings we have no such need of plausibility – if it works, use it. Thieves Guilds in the *Skyrim* computer game use symbols to impart information and, as the quote opening this article illustrates, Gandalf the wizard uses 'a queer sign' to leave information to help Thorin's dwarven party to find Bag-End.

In writing this, the many possibilities of a hobo-centric game set in the Depression era suggest themselves. Anyone wish to take up that challenge?

It is for the GM to decide how the marks are supplied to the players. Some may enjoy giving a 'dictionary of marks' to the player as a physical prop, useable by the character in game. Others may choose to describe a mark and simply tell the player how this should be interpreted.

## Learning the code

The signs themselves are occult knowledge, in the true sense of the term meaning 'secret' and 'only known by the initiated'.



Whilst it would be rare indeed for a single character to know every sign and its meaning, we might see local 'dialects', a series of signs known to those in a given area, along a particular travel corridor, or perhaps specific to one group or guild. Training in the ways of a guild might include tutelage in the use and meanings of signs – how to correctly place them, out of the way of uninitiated passers-by or disturbance. As a guild member becomes more experienced, or rises in prestige, more signs might become available. The character may invent new signs for specific situations, and in turn be the teacher of new initiates.

## **Leaving your mark**

So how do the characters make these signs? An unobtrusive method would be to use sticks and stones to fashion the shapes, but if the user needs to quickly and surreptitiously leave signs, then a faster and more immediate method must be found. Scratching in wet earth is plausible, given the availability, but some sort of writing implement is far better. Chalk, charcoal, a rusty nail, or the more modern marker pen and spray-can, all will leave a mark but the writer will need to ensure that the marks are sheltered from the elements, and that whilst writing he or she remains unobserved.

## **A short lexicon**

The tables given here present a variety of signs, some of which are setting-specific. They are culled from a variety of sources, the main ones being presented here.

### *Internet*

New York Maggie

<http://www.worldpath.net/~minstrel/hobosign.htm>

<http://cyberhobo.com/signs/hobosigns.html>

### *Print*

Stan Richards & Associates *Hobo Signs* 1974 ISBN 978-0879290306























*Image used in table – public domain, from*







*A La California* (1873): Description and travel; Social life and customs written by Colonel Albert S. Evans.













HOUSES & BUILDINGS			
	These people are rich		Good people live here
	A gentleman lives here		Kind lady lives here
	An ill-tempered man lives here		Kind woman
	People do not give		Poor man
	Bad man lives here		Church / religious people
	A beating awaits you here		Religious talk will get you a free meal
	A man with a gun lives here		Warning – barking dog
	Cranky woman / bad dog		Bad dog / dog in garden
	Dishonest person lives here		Beware of (four) dogs
	Doctor		Officer of the law lives here
	A doctor lives here. He won't charge for his services		Judge / magistrate lives here
	Help if sick		Courthouse, precinct station
	If you are sick they will care for you here		Jail
	Fake illness here		House is well guarded













M	Tell a hard luck story here		Free telephone
	Tell pitiful story here		Keep quiet – day sleepers / babies
	Owner is in		Owner is out
	You can sleep in hayloft here		You can sleep in barn here
	Housewife feeds for chores		Food for working
	Good food available, but you have to work for it		Sit down feed
	Bread	I8	I ate
	Good place for a hand out		Good chance to get money here
	Easy mark; a sucker		Cowards – will give to get rid of you

TOWNS & COMMUNITIES			
	This community is indifferent to a hobo's presence		Authorities are alert. Be careful
	A crime has been committed here. Not a safe place for a stranger		Police frown on hobos here
	Dangerous neighbourhood		Police are hostile to tramps
	Police are hostile. Look out		Police are not hostile to tramps
	Good clean jail		Jail is filthy
	Workhouse in connection with jail		Jail good for nights lodging
	Town is hostile, get out quick		Circle town
	Main Street good for begging		Main Street no good
	There is alcohol in this town		Negro quarter good to hobos
	Saloons in town		Prohibition (dry) town
	City police are in plain clothes		There are thieves about

TRAVEL			
	Camp here		Fresh water and a safe campsite
	This is not a safe place		Dangerous drinking water
	Hit the road! Quick!		Get out fast!

	Good road to follow		No use going in this direction
	At crossroad go this way		This way
	Turn right here		Turn left here
	Here – this is the place		Road is spoiled with other hobos and tramps
	Good place to catch a train		A trolley stop
	Railroad police not hostile		Railroad police hostile
	Leaving railroad for highway or cross country		Moniker (name,destination,date)

GENERAL			
	Doubtful		OK
	There is nothing to be gained here		Hold your tongue
	Halt		Be prepared to defend yourself
	Danger		Afraid
	Tramps here		Used in conjunction with any other sign – Next Turn

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# RANDOMIZER -O-RAMA

## BOOKS & SCROLLS

### Alternate treasure and adventure hook

*"The past has been rolled into a scroll I shall not see again"*

*Chapter of Coming Forth and Passing Through,  
Papyrus of Ani  
A E Wallis-Budge*

This first *Randomizer-o-rama* presents various types of written and printed artefact. A valuable but often overlooked treasure type, the book or scroll can carry a huge amount of useful information for the PCs but it is almost always added in the form of a throw-away spell scroll from the Random Treasure tables.

This article will briefly explore the types of artefacts which contain the written word – sometimes inscribed, sometimes handwritten or printed – and the nature of the written material itself. It will also touch on the vagaries of survival – can such artefacts survive the many centuries between the fall of the ancient empires and discovery by the hapless adventurers? The various functions of each type are also mentioned, where known from archaeological sources. Of course, in your fantasy game-world each type might be used for whatever function you choose.

As adventure hooks manuscripts, scrolls and books can provide a change from the norm. Perhaps the PCs need to uncover proof of a transaction, lineage or ownership; a college of magic wishes to uncover an ancient work on alteration; the Bard's College would pay handsomely for the fabled lost poetry of Bor-Em Tu'Teers; an ancient codex holds the details of a ritual which will summon an ancient evil, or prevent it; the near-mythical explorer Kotor'Dur mapped the desert lands, and folk memory says he saw the jewelled city of Kazar with his own eyes – the maps could lead you to it.

## TABLET

### Clay tablet

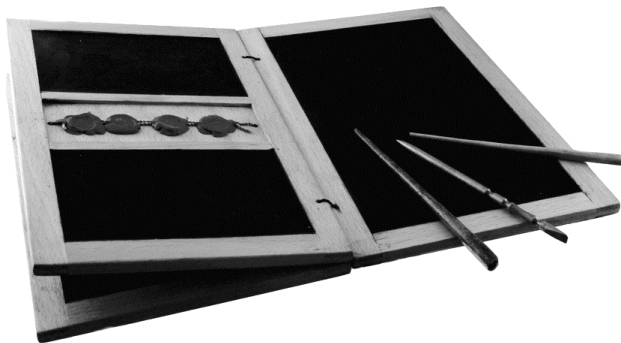
With texts inscribed while the clay is 'wet' and dried very simply in the sun, the tablet is very fragile. This system allowed for the re-use of the material when creating ephemeral records. If greater permanence was required the clay was fired, or 'baked', in the same way as pottery would be in a kiln. This creates a material which will withstand deterioration almost indefinitely, and will only be damaged by crushing or smashing. Some ephemeral tablets appear to have been inadvertently baked by accidental fires. Excavated examples have accounting texts, royal decrees and foundation dedications.

Size: varies from palm-sized to perhaps a foot square.

### Wax tablet

Usually made of beeswax, this slab of soft material sits within a wooden frame, hinged to create a diptych which when closed protects the wax and the written surface. When cold, the wax is brittle and will not accept any incision. To write, the wax must be soft, and to completely erase the written tract the wax has to be heated to 50°C. Wax tablets have been discovered in excellent condition after 500 years underground.

Size: the wooden diptych may measure in the region of 300x200mm, but many smaller examples are known.

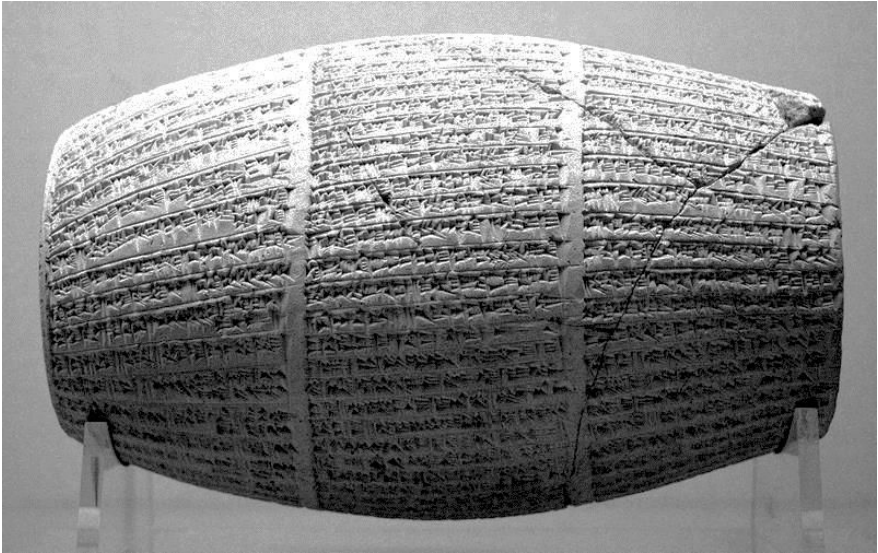


*"Wachstafel rem"* by Photo: Andreas Praefcke - Own work (own photograph).  
Licensed under Public domain via Wikimedia Commons -  
[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wachstafel\\_rem.jpg#mediaviewer/File:Wachstafel\\_rem.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wachstafel_rem.jpg#mediaviewer/File:Wachstafel_rem.jpg)

## CYLINDER

### Clay cylinder

As with the clay tablet, the inscription is made in the wet clay, which is then fired solid. These were typically placed as foundation offerings, describing the origins behind a public building or the myth-history of the ruler who decreed the construction. These are often the only source for individuals otherwise considered mythical or allegoric.



*The Cyrus (Nabonidus) Cylinder, British Museum. Image Wiki Commons, Photo Marco Prins and en:Jona Lendering, from Livius.Org*

Size: examples from the Babylonian civilisation vary in size. The Cyrus (Nabonidus) cylinder measures 230mm long by 110mm wide; the Nabopolassar cylinder measures 98mm x 52mm.

## SCROLL

The scroll is sometimes described using the alternate name 'roll'. Scrolls, or rolls, can be stored in boxes, pottery jars, or in shelf units with small 'cubby-holes', in which volumes of single works might be kept together. Each 'page' – correctly termed a *folio* – is stitched to the next to create a continuous long piece. The length of the scroll is non-standard, being dictated by the amount of space required to fulfil the purpose. The

scroll is somewhat clumsy to read. Roman period scrolls were simply rolled up and loosely tied to prevent their unravelling. To reach the required section the reader had to laboriously unroll the sometimes fragile material, taking some time and risking causing damage. Other civilisations attached a wooden rod to one end, around which the scroll was wrapped. The easiest method of use was to attach a wooden rod to each end, and wrap around each as the scroll was unravelled. This created a far more wieldy object which was almost immediately superseded by the codex, and then the book.

## Bamboo

Narrow strips of bamboo upon which characters were written top-to-bottom in the style of the Chinese, described as being 'the length of a chopstick and as wide as three', were sewn together to create 'pages'. These were sometimes sewn into lengths which were rolled as scrolls, but could also be folded into books, with wooden covers.

Whilst dried bamboo can suffer being wet quite well, prolonged exposure would lead to deterioration and rotting. If stored in dry conditions, survival can be very lengthy.



Sun Tzu's The Art of War,  
Image [vlasta2](#), [bluefootedbooby](#)  
on flickr.com

## **Silk**

More usually considered a garment fabric, silk was used for recording text and images by the fifth century BC and has been discovered in contexts as diverse as court documents, fine paintings and funerary banners. Whilst expensive, silk was far easier to store in rolled form as scrolls, and weighed far less than the bulky bamboo strips. An early Chinese example is a medical treatise entitled '*The prescription for fifty-two kinds of diseases*'.

Silk is very strong, and remarkably resilient although when left wet and allowed to moulder it can deteriorate rapidly. As an organic material, if wet but in an oxygen-free environment, silk can survive very well as the lack of oxygen prohibits bacterial growth.

## **Papyrus**

An early parchment type made from the slit stems of papyrus, a wetland plant, famously used in ancient Egypt but prevalent throughout the Mediterranean region and the Kingdom of Kush.

'Sheets' of papyrus could be stitched together in long sequences, which were then rolled around a wooden stick to create a scroll.

Papyrus scrolls have been found which contain texts of diverse types, ranging from magical rituals; religion and mythology; mathematical treatises; accounts and bills of sale; royal decrees; plays and songs.

If kept in dry conditions, properly prepared papyrus could survive indefinitely. If wet the material will quickly rot, but again a lack of oxygen will arrest bacterial growth and help to preserve the material. At Herculaneum, covered by pulverised pumice from the eruption of Vesuvius in 79AD, papyrus scrolls survived into the modern age by being carbonised, then protected by the volcanic *tuff* entombment of the city.

## **Pothi**

A term describing a particular shape of manuscript. Originating in India, the term comes from the use of palm leaves as writing material – this gives a distinctive long, thin shape. The *pothi* was used in other areas from China through Tibet along the various routes of the Silk Road, although it was often made of paper and not the original palm.



## **Metal**

Soft metals have been used as the base for inscribed texts. In each case the metal has been beaten into a very thin leaf, which has then been rolled for storage. A copper plate dating from 900AD, recording the release of a debtor from obligation, forms the earliest known document from the Philippines. Two copper scrolls were among the texts discovered in Qumran, now known as the Dead Sea Scrolls.

In the Roman world, small soft lead scrolls were used as *curse tablets*, deposited in sacred places as their writers beseeched their deities to exact cruel and detailed revenge on petty thieves and love rivals.

## **Other scrolls**

In the Far East, complicated and ritualistic rules dictate the aesthetic principles of various types of scroll for artistic display. This article does not address these, as they are worthy of a far lengthier discussion and do not sit well in this brief look at manuscripts.

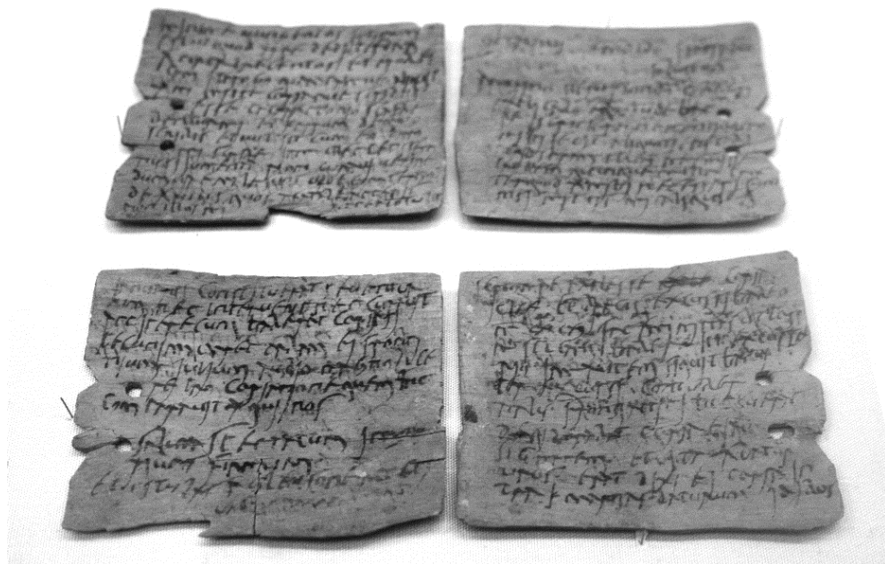
## **CODEX**

The codex was a reaction to the unwieldy scroll. Pages, or *folios*, were combined in a bound form or concertina fold, in order that they might be used more easily. Whilst they share a lot in common with the book, the term correctly describes a distinct, earlier form typified by the handwritten – as opposed to printed - *manuscripts* within. Collected part-works gathered together to form a codex allowed the secure storage of a whole work in one place.

## **Lime bark**

The Roman historian Herodian, writing in the third century AD, mentions 'a *writing-tablet of the kind that were made from lime-wood, cut into thin sheets and folded face-to-face by being bent*'. Such tablets were sensationally uncovered at the fort of Vindolanda on Hadrian's Wall - although these were made of birch, alder and oak - where they had survived in a waterlogged ditch. Again, the oxygen-free conditions in the sealed context had prevented bacterial growth, and helped to preserve the wood. Drilled on one edge to allow their collation into small books, the Vindolanda tablets contained military accounts, letters to and from legionnaires stationed at the fort and, most famously, a birthday

invitation sent from the commandant's wife to a friend. Incidentally, this is the earliest known written Latin in a female hand.



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Roman\\_writing\\_tablet\\_02.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Roman_writing_tablet_02.jpg) by Michel wal

## Parchment

This material is made from animal skin, typically goat, sheep or calf. *Vellum* is the name given to particularly fine parchment made exclusively from the best available calfskin.

Unlike the production of leather, parchment creation does not involve curing, or *tanning*, which means that high levels of humidity can affect the parchment and cause it to swell. For this reason, medieval books were furnished with straps and buckles to prevent the swelling parchment creating a 'wedge' shaped book – the leaves of parchment were sewn and tied to be held tightly to wooden boards creating the 'hinge' of the book – which later developed into the *spine* – but the open side of the book would grow as the parchment swelled, creating a triangular 'wedge'. In extremely wet conditions, the parchment will revert to rawhide.

Parchment could be re-used by scrubbing and scouring the inked surface. In the later first millennium this was not wholly successful, and the overwriting created a manuscript called a *palimpsest*, where fragments of the earlier text can still be read underneath the new writing. This may be a source of much 'lost' information.

## **Paper**

Made of finely chopped wood pulp and textile fibres, the earliest paper appears in the archaeological record in the centuries around the dawn of the first millennium AD. First in China in about the second century BC, paper spread through the Far East and Middle East by the second century AD. It isn't until 1085AD that paper first appears in Europe, with water-powered paper mills appearing in the thirteenth century AD. Independent development in the Americas is seen in the Mayan civilisation by the fifth century AD.

Paper is highly susceptible to damp and wet conditions, mouldering and rotting very quickly once moulds gain a hold. It can rapidly return to its fibrous pulpy state if submerged. The safest way to separate pages and read a waterlogged book is to keep the paper submerged and read it underwater.

## **BOOK**

Relatively cheap and much lighter than existing materials, paper allowed the development of bookbinding, in the Islamic Golden Age from the eighth century AD. Calligraphic and printing techniques developed, with the block book making use of carved woodcuts to mass produce works.

Ya'qubi, the Muslim geographer and historian, wrote that in his time – the later ninth century AD – Baghdad *'had over one hundred booksellers'*, mostly clustered around the mosque and forming a 'booksellers quarter'. The development of the tooled leather lightweight binding so well recognised today had origins in this period.

## **OTHER FORMS**

### **Execration texts**

A method of harming enemies by means of sympathetic magic, execration texts involve the names of individuals, ethnic groups or nationalities being written on pottery fragments or specially made statuettes – typically showing bound prisoners – which are then purposely smashed to simulate the harm the writer wishes to cause these people. In Ancient Egypt these were used in an attempt to harm enemies of the Pharaoh.

## MANUSCRIPTS – type, material and condition

1		2			3			
1d20	TYPE	MATERIAL			1d10	PRESERVATION <sup>1</sup>	LEGIBILITY <sup>2</sup>	
1	TABLET	1d4	1,2,3	CLAY	1	PRISTINE	FULLY LEGIBLE	
2			4	WAX				
3	CYLINDER	CLAY			2	VERY GOOD		
4								
5	SCROLL	1d10	1, 2	BAMBOO	3	GOOD		
6			3	METAL				
7			4, 5, 6, 7	PAPYRUS				4
8								
9					8	POTHI		
10			9, 10	SILK				
11								
12	CODEX	1d6	1, 2	BARK	7	MUCH DAMAGE	PARTIALLY LEGIBLE	
13			3, 4	PAPER				
14			5, 6	PARCHMENT				
15	BOOK	1d6	1	PARCHMENT	8	FRAGMENTARY	FRAGMENTS LEGIBLE	
16			2,3,4	PAPER LOW QUALITY				
17					5	PAPER HIGH QUALITY	9	RUINED <sup>3</sup>
18								
19			6	VELLUM				
20	EXECRATION	CLAY			10	TOTALLY RUINED		

- 1 Preservation level will depend on current storage conditions and history of object.
- 2 Optional – spell scrolls are always fully legible.
- 3 Binding decoration and furnishings, if any, may be salvageable.

## MANUSCRIPT CONTENTS

1d50 Re-roll if inappropriate

1	Foundation texts	26	Ritual observances
2	Creation myth	27	Astronomical observances
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4	Fable	29	Laws
5	Folk tales	30	Mathematical treatise
6	Play – drama	31	Dictionary
7	Play – comedy	32	Will
8	Play – satire	33	Alliances and treaties
9	Poetry – heroic	34	Philosophy
10	Poetry – allegory	35	Alchemical observations
11	Fiction	36	Inventories
12	Proverbs	37	Manifest
13	Riddles	38	Witness statements
14	Essay	39	Confessions
15	Hymns	40	Blueprint – mechanisms
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19	Medical treatise	44	Accounting records
20	Anatomical studies	45	Rent rolls
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## HAEFOD

### Mine head, ore port.

*Ports of Call* appears in each issue of MP, with each article detailing a complete coastal community, including stats for *Swords & Wizardry*.

The small settlement of Haefod serves as an ore port, sending iron ore from the small mines in the slopes above the town to the cities across the bay.

The mines are owned by the Denville family, who own estates around the bay and in the trade city of Elkoran on the north shore of Elkoran Bay. The various traders within Haefod are their tenants, paying rent and a small trade levy annually. They are largely left to their own devices as long as the mines continue to produce high ore quantities.

The miners, mostly dwarves numbering perhaps 20-30, live in the mine tunnels themselves. The few human miners live in a small tent settlement beside the mine entrances, on high ground above the port. They are employed directly by the Denville family and are paid per week by an on-site manager according to the weight and quality of ore extracted.

1. **Haefod iron mines.** The deepest chambers reach the water table, at about 70ft from entrance level. The ore is high quality and shows no sign of giving out. The dwarven miners have carved out small living quarters in the exhausted chambers, allowing them some semblance of the security and familiarity of their mountain holds. Out of deference to the human owners, there is no sign of dwarven artistry at the surface – it is only from about twenty feet in to the tunnels that the dwarves have begun carving in their traditional style. The mines have been worked for almost ten years now, and the operation has long ago settled into a practiced routine. It is estimated that there is another twenty years of known ore to extract, barring any new

discoveries. The Denville family are hands-off as landlords, trusting the operation to their onsite manager.

2. **Beacon tower.** Once used as a warning beacon to guide approaching ships away from the shingle spit at the mouth of the narrow but fast-flowing Kenerik River. The shingle has shifted over the years, and the beacon is no help in navigation, so it now serves as a warning and signalling tower from Haefod to other bay settlements. It is maintained by a dwarf named Merrick Stonehaven, who makes his home on the first floor of this three storey tower.

- Merrick Stonehaven Dwarf F2; HP10 ; AC 5[14] chain shirt; Dam 1d6 (short sword), 1d8 (axe); Sv13 (+4 vs Magic).

3. **The Grey Falcon Inn.** The inn name comes from the badge of the owning Denville family. The Grey Falcon is a well-kept two storey inn offering eight rooms for lodgers, each housing up to three persons, usually made up of ship crews and the assaying men who visit every quarter to inspect the ore quality, one from the Crown and one from the Denville family.

The inn offers good, if a little unadventurous, food and fine ales, brewed in the onsite brew house by the landlord, a dwarf named **Farran 'Brewmaster' Forgemann**. The house special, Iron Ale, has been perfected over many years experimentation, and is a potent brew. Farran's wife, **Hilde**, is the cook and runs the boarding side of the business. This pair spent some time adventuring in the mountains to the west before settling here.

The mine manager, a dwarf named **Brek Stormhelm**, occupies a room at the inn permanently. He is the paid man of the Denville family, responsible for overseeing the mine operations and paying the miners. He fought the orcs thirty years ago at the infamous Siege of Granite Pass, a fact that is known by the Forgemanns but not openly spoken of. Brek would rather live in the mine like the other dwarves, but believes he must stay apart from the workers to maintain his position and is acutely aware he is the hired hand of human overlords although he is staunchly loyal to them and fair with the workers. He is from a different clan background to the bulk of the miners.

- Farran Forgemann Dwarf F2; HP11 ; AC 7[12] leather jerkin; Dam 1d6 (short sword); Sv13 (+4 vs Magic).

- Hilde Forgemann Dwarf F1; HP6 ; AC 7[12 ] leather jerkin; Dam 1d8 (mace); Sv14 (+4 vs Magic).
- Brek Stormhelm, Dwarf F3; HP20 ; AC 7[12 ] leather jerkin; Dam 1d8 (axe); Sv12 (+4 vs Magic).

4. **Hemlinn Livery.** Sublet from the Forgemanns at 3 who do not like to work with horses, this stabling and livery business is operated by **Landothel Hemlinn**, an elf. He lives in rooms in the loft of the large barn.

Hemlinn cares for the horses of inn lodgers and the ponies and mules used by the miners. He works well with Ben Lorinn, the smith. Hemlinn also offers a small amount of livery, in the form of four good quality light horses, which may be rented by those Hemlinn considers will care for them correctly. He will ask exhaustive questions about horse handling before allowing a rental. Tack and harness can be purchased or repaired here for a good price.

- Landothel Hemlinn Elf T3; HP9 ; AC 9[10 ] clothes; Dam 1d6 (long bow) 1d6 (short sword); Sv13.

5. **Ore bins.** This wooden open construction simply a grid of open-fronted square spaces separated by high stout planking walls - serves as a storage point for separated ore, ready for loading on to ships. The ore is raw, unprocessed, and is sorted simply by grade according to the most recent assay. A wooden railway brings ore buddles down from the mine entrances, pulled by mules and tipped out into the appropriate bin.

6. **Smithy. Ben Lorinn.** The smith finds plentiful if repetitive work in fashioning clenched nails and fixings for the shipbuilding and repairs, and the many items needed in the mines. The dwarves continually torment him with comments on his under-par non-dwarvish work, but know that his work is excellent (for a human). Wife **Becca** takes in laundry and sewing for miners and other Haefod residents.

- Ben Lorinn Hum F2; HP 15; AC7 [12 ] leather jerkin; Dam 1d8 (hammer); Sv13.
- Becca Lorinn Hum C2; HP 8; AC9 [10 ] clothes; Dam 1d4 (rolling pin) 1d8 (hammer); Sv14.

7. **The Haefod Store, general store.** Owned and operated by a portly human woman named **Gwyneth Murrow**, with help from her twenty-something son **Randolph**, the Haefod Store sells basic clothing and jerkins, leather hides, buckets, fireside equipment and utensils. There is also a good stock of dry and fresh foods, when in season. There is a good supply of fish from Floyd Yengsur (8), and apples and other fruits which Gwyneth collects from the nearby wilds. She will often forage for mushrooms with Meranin Felmanderin (9) and her son Lithanon.

Prices are fair, moderate. Quality is good, and Gwyneth is a fair bargaining trader. She will buy goods from the travellers who pass through, but does not have much need for weapons and armour, although iron can always be used as a raw material, so she is probably more interested in damaged and less –exotic items as she can pay a low price for them. Magic items may be too expensive for her, but she may ask Meranin to take a look at things which pique her interest.

The store is open from dawn until dusk, and is operated for the most part by Gwyneth herself. When she is away from the store her son Randolph takes over.

In the private quarters, Gwyneth is keeping the small statuette (see *local happenings*) discovered by Lithanon, while she and Meranin try to find out more about it.

8. **Cottage.** Home of a fisherman, **Floyd Yengsur**. In fine weather, Floyd will be out on the bay in his small faering from dawn to late morning, fishing for the plump Porwhack which shoal in the shallow water. He sells his catch to the general store daily. Faering kept in the boathouse when not at sea.

- Floyd Yengsur Hum T2; HP6; AC9 [10] clothes; Dam 1d4 (fishing knife); Sv14.

9. **Cottage.** Home of lumber saw yard operator **Nandrell Felmanderin**. He has a wife, **Meranin**, and a young son, **Lithanon**.

- Nandrell Felmanderin Elf F1; HP8 ; AC 7 [12] leather jerkin; Dam 1d8 (sword); Sv14.
- Meranin Felmanderin Elf M1; HP4 ; AC 9 [10] clothes; Dam 1d6 (sword); Sv15.

10. **Cottage.** Home of carpenter and shipwright **Marcus Seinfeld.**

- Marcus Seinfeld Hum F1; HP 5; AC 7 [12 ] leather jerkin; Dam 1d8 (sword); Sv14 .

11. **Lumber saw yard.** Timber from the inland forests is brought overland, down the Kenerik River, or across the bay from the forests of the north hills. It is seasoned in the lumber yard and sawn into lengths suitable for shipbuilding and for use in the mines. Almost all mining equipment – barrows, kibbles, pit props - is made on site as needed. The saw yard is operated by the elf Nandrell Felmendarin (9).

12. **Shipyard and bathouses.** The shipwright Marcus Seinfeld (10) undertakes repairs and maintenance on company vessels as part of his job, but will contract out for non-company work. He is also building a merchant ship for company use, which stands above the strand on trestles while he works. Marcus has hopes of buying the ship he is building. He has saved a down payment and looks forward to running a coastal trader around the bay. He is a trained sailor, having operated the mine vessels across the bay for three years before settling here as shipwright. He has two small faerings in the boatshed, which he uses for fishing on the bay and for small journeys further afield. He will rent one out for a fair price, and is willing to sell it outright to further his aims of ship owning.

One other faering, owned by fisherman Floyd Yengsur (8), is stored here in the boatshed, alongside the stripped hull of another company vessel.

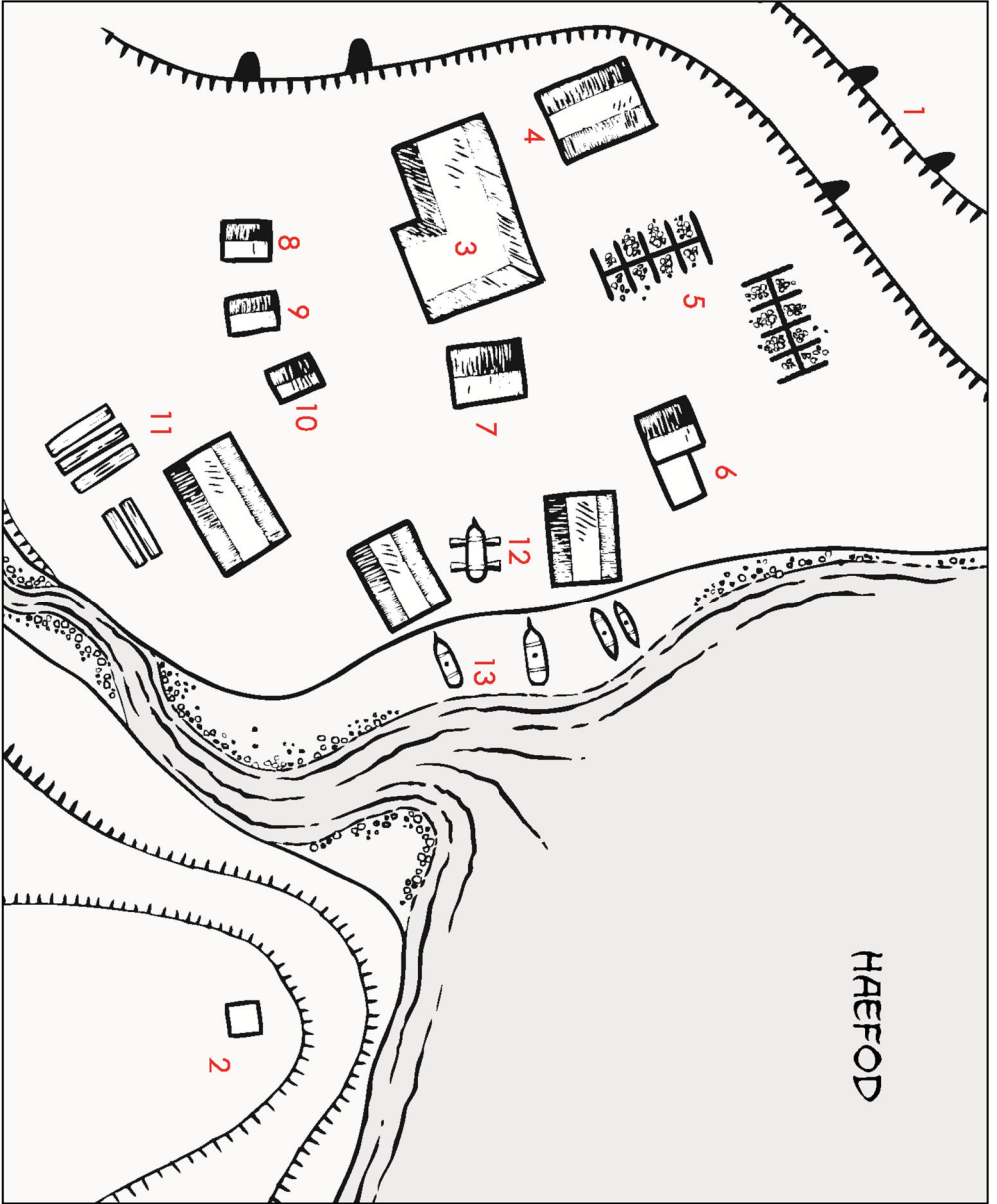
13. **Strand.** This broad tidal shingle beach serves as a pulling up point for ships while they load ore or careen their hulls. Loading is undertaken at low tide by the ships' crew and overseen by the master and the mine manager. Ships refloat and sail at high tide. Most ships are company vessels of the Denville family, but occasionally other vessels buy a load of ore directly from the mine manager, but only under prior arrangement. The strand is also the stopping place for distressed vessels, or those seeking respite from the sudden violent storms thrown up by Elkoran Bay. Such vessels and their crews are made welcome by the residents.

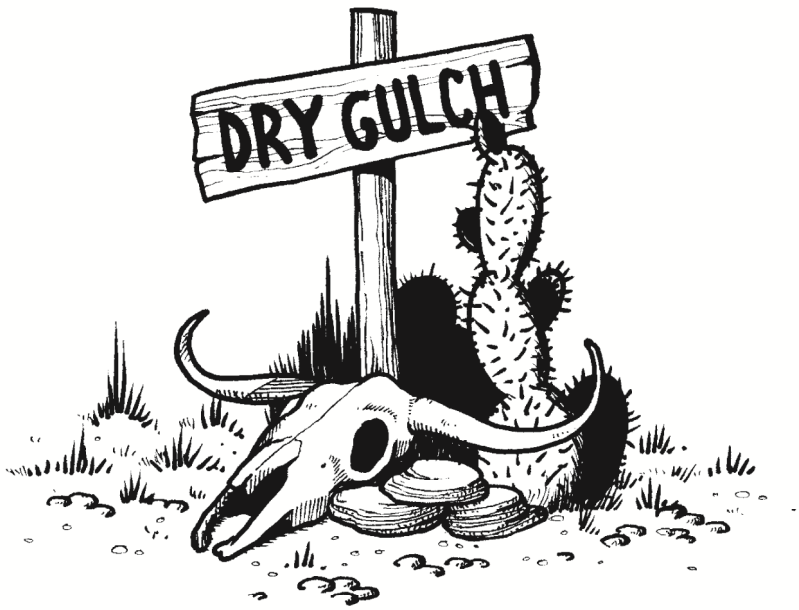


Land travellers regularly pass through Haefod to take passage on the vessels calling here. Ore vessels may occasionally take up to four paying passengers at the master's discretion, but this is relatively rare. Merchant vessels are more likely to take paying passengers, but will not alter their course without a very large payment.

## Local happenings

- Gwyneth Murrow (7) and Meranin Felmanderin (9) were picking fruits when Meranin's son Lathanon found a small stone statuette half buried in the mossy ground of the wild fruit trees to the west, above the mines. The statuette shows a tall, bird-like creature with a long beak which rests on its chest. The eyes are hollow and staring, and viewers feel unease when seeing the thing. The women have hidden the statuette in the private quarters of Gwyneth's Haefod General Store (7) while they research the object and decide whether to keep, sell or discard it.
- Fisherman Floyd Yengsur (8) pulled up a curious thing – expecting a very heavy fish he was surprised to find he had hooked a half-man half-fish creature, dead and part-decomposed. He buried the remains in the gravel beach north of the Strand (13).
- Merrick Stonehaven, who keeps watch at the Beacon Tower (2), has been having disturbing dreams. He is tired and grouchy, and near his wits end. He has been sleeping but not resting as dream creatures 'with talons, but see-through, like shadows' chase him through a bleak rocky landscape, 'similar to the land around Haefod but with the trees and grass all gone and dust'.
- The Denville family are worried that a rival noble clan, the Turek family of the White Bear, are planning hostile take-overs of their provincial operations, including the Haefod mining port. They have instructed their manager, Brek Stormhelm (3), to keep an eye out for strangers bearing a white bear symbol.





# LOW DOWN DIRTY SKUNK

WHETHER YOUR OLD WEST IS  
WILD OR WEIRD,  
LOW DOWN DIRTY SKUNK  
COULD BE JUST THE ZINE YOU'RE  
LOOKIN' FOR



FEBRUARY 2016  
FROM CLOUDSTEPPING

# The RELIQUARY of THAZAR ZUL

an adventure for character levels 2-4



ADVENTURE INSERT WITH MYSTIC PANGOLIN ISSUE ONE

CLOUDSTEPPING

# The RELIQUARY of THAZAR ZUL

## AUTHOR'S NOTES

This adventure is statted for Swords and Wizardry, but is easily converted to your chosen system. Monster descriptions are taken from three main sources, both freely available online - the abbreviation SW stands for the *Swords & Wizardry* rulebook, SWMB for the *Swords & Wizardry Monster Book* both by Matt Finch and available at [www.swordsandwizardry.com](http://www.swordsandwizardry.com); VV is *Varmints and Vermin* by Roger S. G. Sorolla, at <http://rolesrules.blogspot.ca/2010/05/varlets-and-vermin-10.html>; each abbreviation is followed by the relevant page number. I hope you enjoy this first *Mystic Pangolin* adventure and, as always, use what you like, leave what you don't.

## SYNOPSIS

The PCs are employed, by means of a ruse, to seek out an ivory chest, containing a mummified head – the remaining piece of the body of necromancer Thazar Zul. His cult seek to reassemble his corpse and resurrect him to lichdom. The quest takes them into the caverns below a ruined watchtower, now occupied by rival humanoid tribes and weirder creatures of the deep and dark. Many of the ancient traps securing the place are still active, and there is some suggestion of a darker menace waiting in the depths.

## THE TRUE STORY

A secretive necromantic cult, the CULTUS TENEBRAE, have been working for many years to resurrect the arch-sorcerer THAZAR ZUL, creator of the path which they follow. Following a gruesome incident involving the mortal remains of both the Queen and Princess-Heir of a long-forgotten empire in the east, Thazar Zul was subjected to the Death of a Thousand Eagles, being partially

defleshed alive by birds as he lay chained to the top of a stone pillar. His flayed corpse was then dismembered, with the quarters being sent to the ends of the empire. His head was removed and placed in a warded chest, then entrusted to staunch men-at-arms who bore it in secret to a nameless repository in a far-off land.

The cult have at last discovered the location of the head, and employ the player characters by means of a ruse to recover it. A second group, lawless mercenaries under the control of the cult, are to follow the PCs, waiting their chance to ambush the weakened adventurers after the relic is secured and brought to the surface.

## THE RUSE

Most character parties would rather fight against the necromantic cult than help them, so CULTUS TENEBRAE will have to employ a ruse –

### THE LITTLE OLD LADY RUSE

My days are almost done, but I do wish to leave something for my grandchildren, and their children. My clothes may be worn and patched but they were once fine – this is Hennes Greigsdottir's needlework, you know. My husband owned all the land from Mosshill to Ferrel's Cross, but it was stolen. Stolen in a crooked land deal by that snake Ector Kale. We lived on turnips. For years. Oh, how I hate turnips. But Ector Kale didn't live to enjoy our land, No, his horse took a tumble, or he tripped while ploughing, or something. My sons told me he was gone and I danced a little jig! But a funny thing happened – his body was dug up! Probably by some other poor soul he had cheated and ruined. When they found his body they reburied it, but without the head, because that was gone. It had been taken away, why I don't know. But it might be a very good thing, because my son has found a man who can speak with the souls of the dead, not that Kale can have a soul, the black-hearted wight. If we could put the head back with the body, we can make Ector Kale own up to the crime, and claim back our land! And between you and me, my son still remembers exactly where he hid the head – you wouldn't forget a thing like that, would you? I can't pay you much, because all our money will have to go to this fellow who will speak with Ector Kale, but you must take this now. Take it and please bring me that... that thing!

She will give them a small pouch which holds perhaps 100gp worth of gold dust.

If the characters ask searching questions, she is ready with answers –

- The gold dust was panned from a stream on the land in question. Probably came from a deposit much farther away, up in the hills beyond the boundary of her former estates.
- This happened perhaps 50 years ago, her sons are now elderly themselves and cannot venture into the caverns in search of the head. One son, Andres, will take them part way to the resting place of the relic. He tells them the box is behind a fish statue.
- The 'man who can speak with the souls of the dead' is a powerful magician, very grumpy and doesn't like having his time wasted. He showed them his powers by making the skeleton of a dog, a pet buried by the sons over 50 years ago, bark and whine when the magician called his name, 'Storen'.
- Her husband – also Andres - 'just dwindled', a broken man, and died within a year or two of losing his estates.
- Yes, she did intimate that her sons had some involvement in the missing head affair, but she doesn't know if they were involved in Kale's death, and will be indignant if it is suggested.

## RUMOURS

Younger individuals have no knowledge of any of this tale, or the characters and places involved. Older folk and the longer-lived races may impart some of the following, which can help to cement the ruse –

- 1 Hennes Greigsdottir was a well-regarded seamstress from the far north, from a skilled tailoring family.
- 2 Mosshill and Ferrel's Cross are old-fashioned local names for places out of town, or was it Mashill and Terrel's Point?
- 3 Ector Kale? If he's buried round here it will be in the boneyard just up the hill.
- 4 Land from here to Ferrels has been broken up and settled for years. Used to be part of a big estate.
- 5 Wouldn't be wantin' to speak with the long dead – they might tell my wife all about my younger days!
- 6 Ector Kale was a thief. I'll say no more.



## THE FRONTIER TOWER

On a high hilltop, hidden among the trees which have overgrown the site in the last hundred or so years, stand the tumble-down ruins of a former watch post. Reaching two storeys in height, and with a great rent in one side, the tower is moss-covered and crumbling. The ground around the base is uneven where fallen stone has become grown over, and ivy trails from the broken crenelations which still top the watch platform. An air of damp decay lies over the place.

Two GNOLLS have a temporary camp site here in the ruins.

### **GNOLL** (SWMBp34)

HD2; AC5 [14]; Atk 1 bite (2d4) or weapon (1d10); Mv9; Sv16;CL/XP 2/30;  
Special: None

Poking around in the ruins, it will become apparent that any stairs leading downwards are buried by fallen masonry and the moss and bramble undergrowth. It will take some time to move enough rubble to discover the top steps of a stone staircase. This staircase is largely open, as a huge lintel stone once fell into the stairwell preventing infill from other material.

Following any battle with the Gnolls, and every hour during the clearing of the rubble and undergrowth, there is a 30% chance of an inquisitive creature encounter.

1 1-3 GIANT CENTIPEDE (small, non-lethal) (SWMBp13)  
HD1d2hp;AC9[10];Atk 1 bite (0+poison); Mv13;Sv18;CL/XP 1/15;  
Special:non-lethal poison bite (+4 Save)

2 1-2 BEETLE (GIANT FIRE) (SWMBp10)  
HD1d3;AC4[15];Atk 1 bite (1d4+2);Mv12;Sv18;CL/XP 1/15;  
Special:Light glands

3 4-6 GIANT RATS (SWMBp65)  
HD1d4hp;AC7 [12];Atk 1 bite (1d3);Mv12;Sv18;CL/XP A/5;  
Special:5% are diseased

4 1-3 STIRGE (SWMBp78)  
HD1+1;AC7 [12];Atk 1 proboscis (1d3);Mv3 (Fly18);Sv17;CL/XP 1/15;  
Special: Blood drain (1d4), +2 to hit bonus



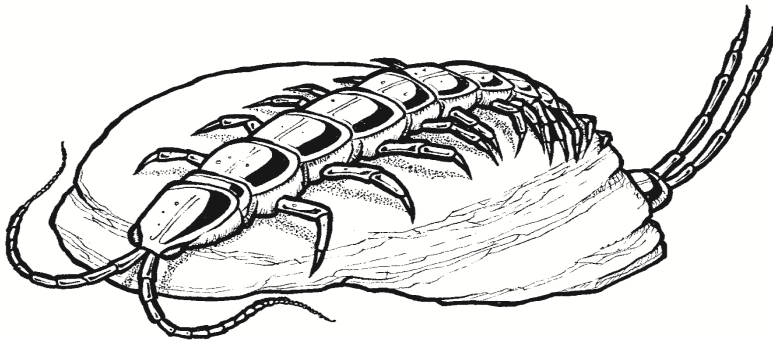
Once uncovered, the stairs lead down into a stone walled basement room, built into the natural contours of the hilltop. The floor slopes very gently to the east, where a grille in the floor served to expel the products of foul weather, condensation and dampness from the stone-built room, and any effluent from prisoners who may have been kept here from time to time.

The grille also served as a bolt-hole, an escape route from the tower in case of overwhelming assault. It is almost cemented shut with accumulated soil and residue, but this can be chiselled out in 2 rounds with a sharp stick, stone or even a blade. It hinges open stiffly to reveal a short 10' drop into a cavern below.

### **1. THE CAVERN BELOW**

This rough stone cave is well lit by natural light from an entrance to the east. A trickling rivulet runs through a well-worn natural trough towards this entrance, where moss and ivy swathe the stone. This small cave mouth opens in the hill face below the tower, obscured by undergrowth and large boulders, and was used as the escape route by any escaping watchmen.

At the western end of the cavern the rock narrows where the rivulet flows from deeper within the hill. The stone surface here is worn smooth and stained with the passage of creatures, to a height of perhaps eight feet. A narrow squeeze passage, of only one to one and a half feet wide, leads further into the cave system.



## 2. THE VALLEY

From the cavern the stream falls over a steep cliff face to the valley below, where it has formed a pool and becomes a strong river flowing south. The cliff face is covered with thorny scrub and any approach is a treacherous one across crumbling exposed rock. The cavern entrance is small, at about 3 feet across, and is obscured from below by the scrubby vegetation.

### THE CAVES

The caves are generally uneven but relatively smooth, as they were carved from the rock by water action. In the Gnoll and Kobold quarters there has been some digging to widen passages and create small 'rooms'. In these places the rock is more angular.

Near the underground river, the rock walls are slippery and covered with dark moss and fungus. The river water is clear and fast moving. At its deepest it reaches perhaps six feet, within a deep cut channel in places ten feet deep.

### RANDOM CAVERN ENCOUNTERS 1d6

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | 1-4 TUNNEL PRAWN (SWMBp84)<br>HD1; AC4 [15]; Atk 2 pincers (1d2); Mv6; Sv17; CL/XP 1/15;<br>Special: Climbing       |
| 2 | SORCERY LEECH (SWMBp75)<br>HD1hp; AC9 [10]; Atk negligible(0); Mv1; Sv18; CL/XP 1/15;<br>Special: Arcane Siphon     |
| 3 | 4-6 GIANT RATS (SWMBp65)<br>HD1d4hp; AC7 [12]; Atk 1 bite (1d3); Mv12; Sv18; CL/XP A/5;<br>Special: 5% are diseased |
| 4 | 1-2 GNOLLS (SWMBp34)<br>HD2; AC5 [14]; Atk 1 bite (2d4) or weapon (1d10); Mv9; Sv16; CL/XP 2/30;<br>Special: None   |
| 5 | 1-4 KOBOLDS (SWMBp46)<br>HD1d4hp; AC6 [13]; Atk 1 weapon (1d6); Mv6; Sv18; CL/XP A/15;<br>Special: None             |
| 6 | ROT GRUB (SWMBp68)<br>HD1hp; AC9 [10]; Atk 1 burrow; Mv1; Sv18; CL/XP 1/15;<br>Special: Burrows to heart            |

## GNOLL CAVERNS ENCOUNTERS 1d6

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | 1-4 TUNNEL PRAWN (SWMBp84)<br>HD1; AC4 [15];Atk 2 pincers (1d2); Mv6; Sv17;CL/XP 1/15;<br>Special: Climbing  |
| 2 | 1-3 GIANT CENTIPEDE (small, non-lethal) (SWMBp13)<br>HD1d2hp;AC9[10];Atk 1 bite (0+poison); Mv13;Sv18;CL/XP 1/15;<br>Special: non-lethal poison bite (+4 Save)   |
| 3 | 4-6 GIANT RATS (SWMBp65)<br>HD1d4hp;AC7 [12];Atk 1 bite (1d3);Mv12;Sv18;CL/XP A/5;<br>Special:5% are diseased  |
| 4 | 1-2 GNOLLS (SWMBp34)<br>HD2; AC5 [14]; Atk 1 bite (2d4) or weapon (1d10); Mv9; Sv16;CL/XP 2/30;<br>Special: None   |
| 5 | 2-3 GNOLLS (SWMBp34)<br>HD2; AC5 [14]; Atk 1 bite (2d4) or weapon (1d10); Mv9; Sv16;CL/XP 2/30;<br>Special:  |
| 6 | 1-4 GNOLLS (SWMBp34)<br>HD2; AC5 [14]; Atk 1 bite (2d4) or weapon (1d10); Mv9; Sv16;CL/XP 2/30;<br>Special: None; 20% chance that 1 is a 3HD LEADER with AC4[15] |

## KOBOLD CAVES ENCOUNTERS 1d6

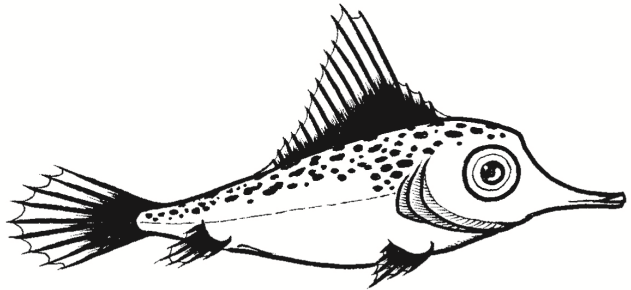
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | 1-4 TUNNEL PRAWN (SWMBp84)<br>HD1; AC4 [15];Atk 2 pincers (1d2); Mv6; Sv17;CL/XP 1/15;<br>Special: Climbing  |
| 2 | 1-3 GIANT CENTIPEDE (small, non-lethal) (SWMBp13)<br>HD1d2hp;AC9[10];Atk 1 bite (0+poison); Mv13;Sv18;CL/XP 1/15;<br>Special: non-lethal poison bite (+4 Save) |
| 3 | 4-6 GIANT RATS (SWMBp65)<br>HD1d4hp;AC7 [12];Atk 1 bite (1d3);Mv12;Sv18;CL/XP A/5;<br>Special:5% are diseased  |
| 4 | 1-4 KOBOLDS (SWMBp46)<br>HD1d4hp; AC6 [13]; Atk 1 weapon (1d6); Mv6; Sv18;CL/XP A/15;<br>Special: None   |
| 5 | 2-8 KOBOLDS (SWMBp46)<br>HD1d4hp; AC6 [13]; Atk 1 weapon (1d6); Mv6; Sv18;CL/XP A/15;<br>Special: None   |
| 6 | 2-12 KOBOLDS (SWMBp46)<br>HD1d4hp; AC6 [13]; Atk 1 weapon (1d6); Mv6; Sv18;CL/XP A/15;<br>Special: None  |

## WATER ENCOUNTERS

If the characters enter the subterranean river, they will be attacked within 1d3 rounds by a small shoal of HARPOONFISH.

### HARPOONFISH

HD: 1-3hp;  
AC: 3 [16];  
Atk: 1 (1hp +  
needle-dart  
poison);  
Mv: 0 (Swim 12);  
Sv:16; CL/XP:1/20;  
Special: spits  
barbed needle-  
dart to inject venom;  
venomous dorsal spines.



The HARPOONFISH lives in the crystal clear waters of subterranean rivers and lakes. Measuring 6 - 8 inches long, the harpoonfish has a huge pale eye which can see very well in the blackness. It has sharp spines in the dorsal fin which, if stepped on, can puncture skin and inject venom.

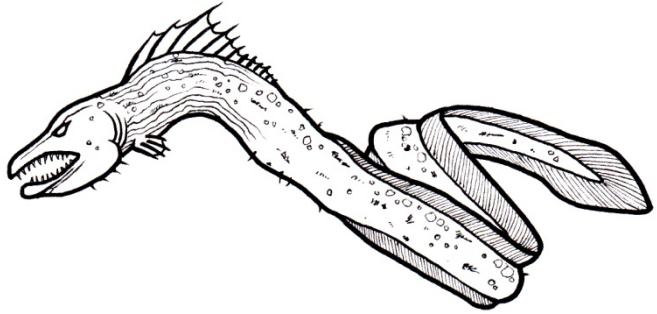
It attacks prey using a 'harpoon needle', a tiny barbed needle of modified chitin which it spits from its elongated mouth parts. The harpoonfish can fire this needle underwater, or out of the water at a target by lurking just below the water surface. This needle injects a paralyzing venom into the target, causing extreme pain followed by numbness and uselessness in the target area for 1d10 rounds. A successful Save roll against the spine venom or needle attack will half the time. The barbed needle can penetrate wool, linen or similar cloth to reach the skin. Once the harpoonfish has used a harpoon it must 'reload' from a continually replenishing store of perhaps ten within its 'harpoon glands' or *radular sac*.

The harpoonfish typically occurs in small shoals of 1-6 fish. It can make good eating, but must be cleaned properly – the dorsal spines and 'harpoon gland' in the head must be removed carefully prior to eating.

Within the fetid water in area 17 THE FLOODING ROOM are 2-8 PUTRID EELS.

### PUTRID EEL

HD: 2;  
AC: 4 [15];  
Atk: 1 bite  
(1d4+disease);  
Mv: 0 (Swim 12);  
Sv:16;  
CL/XP:1/20;  
Special: disease  
upon successful  
hit (save or  
contract black rot disease).



The putrid eel lives in filthy stagnant waters, where it hunts in small shoals of 2-8 creatures. While the fast-moving eel is very capable of hunting live prey it prefers to eat putrid flesh. To this end any prey is stored in underwater 'storage areas', named retting ponds, to begin rotting. Prey is pushed into small spaces or under obstructions in order that it might remain submerged.

However, it is not from this habit that the eel gets its name. The skin of the eel is blistered and suppurating, perhaps from being constantly subjected to foul and bacteria-ridden water, or perhaps from some other evolutionary development. The result of this is that the eel will pass on virulent bacteria to anything it bites, a benefit to it in hunting as the bacteria immediately cause a necrotizing infection. Due to the blackening of the flesh as the bacteria spreads this infection is known among humanoid species as 'the black rot'.

BLACK ROT will incubate, causing high fever within one hour. Thereafter, a further Save roll is needed, Success will cause the loss of 1d4hp and the continuation of the high fever, which wears off after 1d4 hours. Failure results in the disease worsening - it causes 1d2 damage per hour until stopped, which can be achieved by CURE LIGHT WOUNDS. It will be totally cured by CURE DISEASE. Stopping the rot by removal of an infected limb will only have a 40% chance of success. The infected

person will stink of putrid flesh, and will become infectious when only 2 hit points remain.

### **3. TERRITORIAL MARKERS**

This cavern is bordered by the subterranean stream, which runs quickly through a deep channel to the south. A narrow ledge passage runs alongside the river to the west, and at this point stands a tall untidy totem pole, featuring a grimacing dog-like face atop a pillar swathed in soiled and tattered rags, leather strips and bead strings. Here and there, tufts of a yellowish fur are tied on, along with two or three furry tails, in the same yellowish fur mottled with darker spots.

This is the KOBOLD TOTEM, marking the boundary of the KOBOLD CAVES. The fur and tails are those of GNOLLS, enemies of the kobolds in these caves. The Gnolls will not venture past this totem except in numbers, as they believe the totem is warded by Kobold shamans. If the characters touch the totem, nothing untoward happens. If they take any of the Gnoll tails they may be shown to the Kobolds to make them slightly more amenable to parlay, but there is a 40% chance the Kobolds will realise the trophies have been stolen from their own totem, causing hostility.

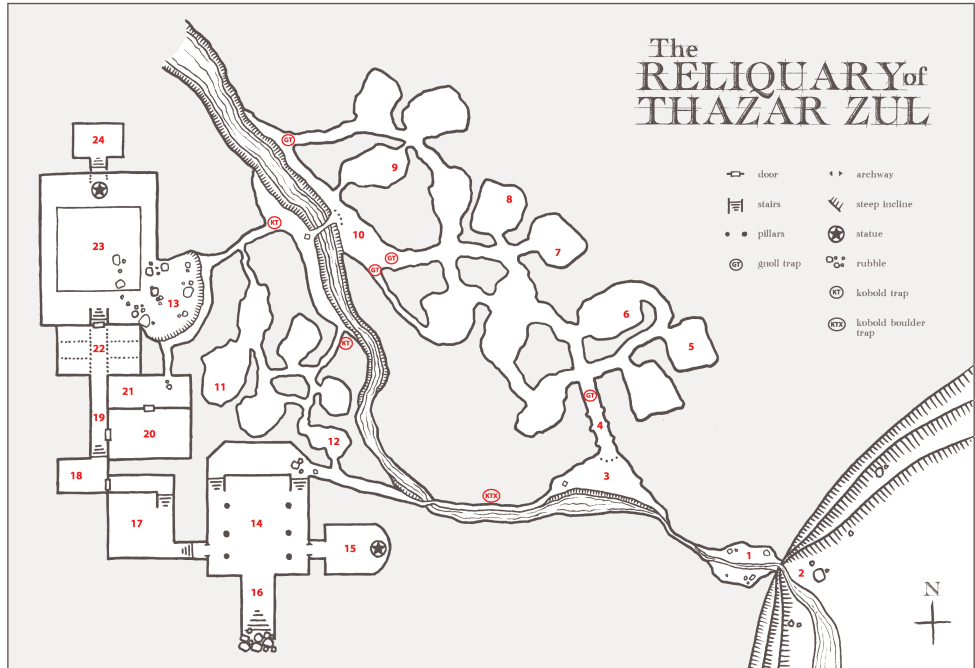
A wide passage runs off to the north, the entrance to which is adorned with four wooden spears stuck end-on into the ground and supported by rocks. These are topped with Kobold skulls, and are decorated with paint daubs and red ribbons and rags. These form a boundary marker at the entrance to the GNOLL CAVES. Kobolds will not pass this boundary unless in numbers. They believe the barrier to be protected by curses placed by Gnoll shamans.

### **THE GNOLL CAVES**

This warren of caves is inhabited by a small group of Gnolls, the Red Drop tribe. There are 20-40 Gnolls present at any one time, of which 75% are combatants. A group of 5 or larger will include one 3HD Leader. Their chief is a 4HD Chieftain, usually found in or around area 7.

Where (GT) is marked on the map there is a fiendish GNOLL TRAP. These are cruel maiming traps fashioned from bones and sinew, festooned with sharpened bone and pottery sherds and metal scraps to create a

# The RELIQUARY of THAZAR ZUL



spiked grid which is sprung out towards oncomers by means of an elaborate system of plaited sinew triggers hidden amongst the rubble and detritus on the floors of the caves. These spiked traps hinge from the ceiling, swinging down into the front of victims. When sprung, the trap makes a great crashing sound due to the loose materials attached to the grid, alerting creatures nearby.

Each cavern is littered with rags and filthy straw, where the Gnolls bed down. There is a 40% chance of finding 1d10GP, 1d20SP and 1d20CP amongst the mess, and a 10% chance of finding items of personal non-magical jewellery of values in the range of 1d100GP. Such a search would take 1d4 rounds and make a good deal of noise.

### 1. KOBOLD SKULL AVENUE

This tunnel has crude niches carved along the walls, into which KOBOLD SKULLS have been placed, reinforcing the Gnoll territorial claim. At the north end of the tunnel, before the crossroads, is a Gnoll trap.

### 2. GNOLL YOUNG

The Gnolls operate a form of crèche here, where their young – kits – are kept together under the watch of 1d4 2HD females. The yipping and howling from 2d10 kits can be heard some distance away.

### 3. SLAVE CAVERN

The Gnolls keep their slaves in filthy conditions here, bound hand and foot on long continuous 'slave-chains' of wound sinew and vines. There are currently 1d8 slaves present, mostly humans but with the possibility of 1-2 other humanoids. The slaves are beaten and resigned to their fate, anxious that the Gnolls may soon see them as food. They may choose to make their own way out of the caverns, but one slave, a Dwarf 2<sup>nd</sup> level Fighter named Stromm, will ask to join the party. He has only the clothes he stands in, but can quickly find some sharpened bones to serve as weapons until he can equip himself.

#### **STROMM**

Dwarf; Fighter2; LG; HP13; Atk19; ACSTR15; INT 10; WIS 9; DEX 12; CON 14; CHA 10



One of the slaves, Merton, was originally captured by the Kobolds, who held him for a few days until he escaped their caverns only to run into a Gnoll party and was captured again. He saw the Kobolds bring 'a huge furry bear-like thing' into their caverns, half-dragging it and pushing it along with spear jabs. This was about ten days ago, he thinks, but he has begun to lose track of the days.

#### **4. GNOLL KITCHEN**

This cavern is smoky, and smells of wood smoke and stale grease and fat. There are several stone-lined pits in the floor, each of which holds smoking embers of cooking fires. One or two have fire dogs topped with roasting spits, but nothing is currently being prepared. A midden in the far north-west corner is made up of heaped gnawed bones of former victims.

1d4 sleeping Gnolls are found here, snoring on their makeshift rag beds.

#### **5. PRISONER CAVERN**

In one corner of this cavern are three humans, tied hand and foot with rough rags. They were captured by a Gnoll raiding party from their farmland two days ago and may become slaves, or perhaps form a 'living larder' for the creatures. One has died from injuries, but the two remaining captives are in a state of panic and will promise anything if freed. They will initially need to be calmed down to prevent them making a good deal of hysterical noise. If they accompany the characters there is a 10% chance per half hour of the panic overcoming them, at which point they will run blindly in a random direction, seeking to escape the caves. This chance rises to 15% if hostile creatures are encountered.

#### **6. GNOLL CHIEFTAIN CAVERN**

There is a 60% chance the GNOLL CHIEFTAIN, a 4HD Gnoll, will be sleeping here on a large pile of rags. He will be attended by two 3HD GNOLL LEADERS. The Chieftain has a +2 SILVER DAGGER as well as his sword.

In a small hessian sack amongst the rags is the chieftain's hoard – 36GP, 25 SP, a silver finger ring (8SP) and a POTION OF GROWTH.

## **7. THE STONE ARCH BRIDGE**

This wide cavern is dominated by a deep chasm through which the subterranean river flows. Wide ledges on either side are joined by a narrow stone arch which spans the river chasm. To the east of this arch are several Gnoll territorial totems, spears topped with Kobold skulls. On the western side, a Kobold territorial pillar stands, again festooned with Gnoll fur and tails. Neither group of humanoids will cross to the enemy side unless they number more than twenty and have their chieftain with them.

## **THE KOBOLD CAVES**

This small cluster of caves is home to a tribe of KOBOLDS, the Dog Tooth clan. There are 30-50 individuals present at any one time, of which 70% will be combatants. A group of 6 will include one 2HD LEADER. Their chief is a 3HD giant of a Kobold who is usually found around area 11.

Where (KT) is marked on the map there is a cruel KOBOLD TRAP. These are hinged from the ceiling and sprung using twisted sinew, and are fashioned from strong vines to create a grid, onto which spikes made from sharpened bones are attached. The triggers are hidden among the detritus and rubble on the cavern floors. When sprung, the traps will cause a clattering sound which will alert nearby creatures.

Where (KTX) is marked on the map, the Kobolds have rigged up a rudimentary FALLING RUBBLE TRAP. Stones and boulders are balanced atop a plank, which will be pulled loose when the hidden sinew triggers on the floor are disturbed. This trap will also create noise, not least from boulders falling into the river below, and will alert nearby creatures.

Each cavern is littered with rags and filthy straw, where the Kobolds bed down. There is a 40% chance of finding 1d10GP, 1d20SP and 1d20CP amongst the mess, and a 10% chance of finding a scroll from Table73 (SWp124), discovered by the Kobolds in the temple complex. Such a search would take 1d4 rounds and make a good deal of noise.

## 8. KOBOLD CHIEFTAIN CAVERN

There is a 50% chance that the Kobold Chieftain, a 3HD huge Kobold, will be encountered here. He will be attended by 2-4 2HD KOBOLD LEADERS. The Chieftain has a belt pouch holding two gold finger rings (7GP each) and 1d20GP.

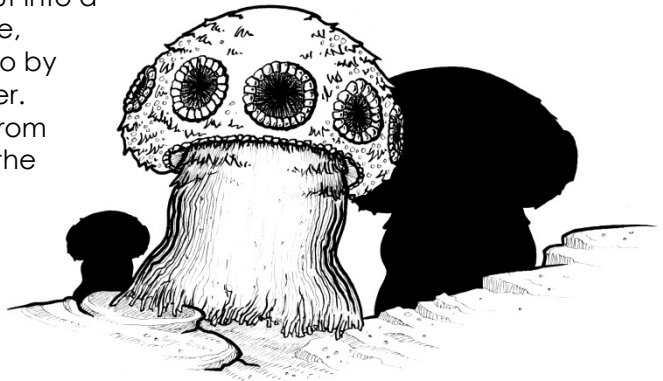
## 9. DIGGING PARTY

Propped up along the cavern walls are many digging tools – picks, shovels and the like – along with several rudimentary wooden wheelbarrows. Shallow scrapings and loose rubble in the east wall suggest the Kobolds are attempting to extend their living quarters by excavating new space.

The digging party themselves number 2d4 Kobolds, and will return noisily to their tools within 1d6 rounds.

## 10. NATURAL AMPHITHEATRE

This cavern opens out into a natural amphitheatre, formed centuries ago by the underground river. The floor falls away from a broad ledge and the thin western wall collapsed easily, falling into area 23, when the Kobolds tried to extend by digging.



The amphitheatre floor is home to 1d4 SHRIEKERS.

**SHRIEKER** (SWp112)

HD3; AC7 [12]; Atk None; Mv1; Sv14; CL/XP 3/60; Special: Shriek

## ANCIENT TEMPLE RUIN

Many years ago, lost to memory, a dark cult of the corrupted Merfolk goddess, T'taqua, worshipped their carnivorous deities with sacrifices to freshwater water demons. The tunnelling kobolds inadvertently broke through into the complex and, following a few encounters with the fiendish traps still set within the temple, blocked off the entrances and shunned the place. One room, the former pool of worship, has come in handy for them as a pen in which to keep their OWLBEAR, recently captured and awaiting use as an attack weapon to cause havoc among the Gnolls.

### 11. PILLARED CHAMBER

A high-ceilinged chamber, with a raised walkway and stage to the north, reached from the floor by staircases on either side of the room. The pillars are decorated all over with curving stylised wave patterns. Standing on either side of the three archways in the south of the room a fully armoured skeletal humanoid stands as sentinel, swathed in cobwebs and clutching rusting and woodworm-ridden spears (see *cover illustration*). Pots and urns lie on the floor and contain 2d20GP and 2d20SP in total.

In the north-east corner a tunnel from the Kobold caves has broken through the wall, scattering rubble onto the floor and triggering a pressure-plate spear trap in the wall. The protruding spears have impaled a hapless kobold, who remains there in a desiccated near-mummified state. A similar trap, as yet unsprung, is located in the opposite north-west corner of the upper walkway.

### 12. STATUE CHAMBER

Against the eastern, curved, wall of this smaller chamber stands a huge statue of a turtle, posed as if swimming with head and forward fins downwards, surrounded by kelp fronds. Carved from fine marble, the statue is now stained and dirty.

On the floor before the statue lie several dishes and bowls, in which lie various shrivelled fruit seeds and stones, relics of ancient offerings. If examined carefully, it is evident that the bowls themselves are of

valuable materials – one is silver (30SP), two are carved jade (8GP each), and all measure about 7-8inches across.

In several small depressions in the base of the statue, where the fins of the turtle meet the base, are four pearls each worth 10-20GP.

### **13. AN ANCIENT ROCKFALL**

Stairs lead upwards from area 14 through a corridor to the south, but the passage is completely blocked by a mass of rubble and architectural fragments, fallen from above. Clearing these massive stones would take days and create a huge amount of noise. Beyond the stairs lie the forgotten ruins of the upper level of this temple complex.

### **14. THE FLOODING ROOM**

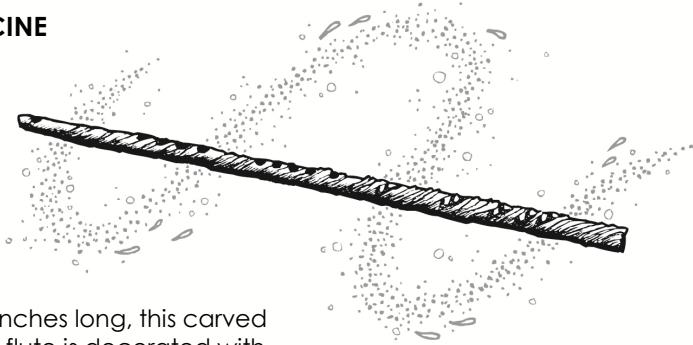
A large section of the floor here is below the door levels, with a high flight of stairs from each doorway. The floor is stained in greenish patches and here and there are small discoloured puddles. Perceptive characters may notice the green staining continues up the walls to just below the height of the staircases, some ten feet above. Each wall is holed by 4-inch pipes, as many as twenty in each.

A trap is triggered by the pressure of weight on the main room floor – when the total weight on the floor reaches at least 500lbs both staircases will swing down and become smooth vertical surfaces. At the same time, filthy stinking water will begin pouring in through the holes in the walls from age-old cisterns behind the stonework. With the water will come the decomposing remains of creatures which have attempted to make the water pipes their homes, along with the creatures which have preyed on them, 2-8 PUTRID EELS. The room will fill to a depth of 10 feet in half an hour.

### **15. SIDE CHAMBER**

A mouldering table and two benches stand here. Along the north wall is a long wooden shelf, littered with rotting wooden objects. Among this mess is a bone FLUTE OF PISCINE CHARMING.

## FLUTE OF PISCINE CHARMING



Measuring 14 inches long, this carved pale-coloured flute is decorated with curving wave patterns and sinuous fish. When played, it will soothe any aggressive marine creatures up to a total of 1d6 hit dice within a 10 foot radius, preventing an attack. A trained musician would be able to charm 2d6 hit dice of creatures. The flautist must play continually to maintain the effect, and will be unable to use their hands for any other action. The flute is fashioned from the long spiral tooth of a narwhal, and would be valued at 250-300GP.

## 16. MURAL CORRIDOR

The walls on either side of this corridor are carved with a bas-relief mural, depicting sinuous waves in which twisted merfolk swim. At the northern end of each mural, various humanoid species are being thrown in to the water as the aggressive merfolk devour them.

The door between areas 19 and 20 is locked and trapped, as described below.

## 17. VESTRY

The door between areas 19 and 20 is secured by a high quality lock. Picking the lock may trigger an explosive trap, which will shake the door from its hinges and cause 1d8 damage to any creature within 10 feet.

The door between areas 20 and 21 is barricaded as described at area 21. The doorframe and stonework are scorched by the former explosive trap, also described below.

This room served in the past as a vestry, where priests and functionaries donned their ceremonial costumes prior to their rites in area 23. Now, rows of carved horn hooks along the southern wall bear the tattered remnants of blue and silver-thread vestments. There are two long neck chains hanging among the rags, plaited silver wires on which twenty polished lapis beads are strung, each measuring about 24 inches in length. Each is worth

## **18. KOBOLD QUARTERS**

A tunnel from the KOBOLD CAVES has broken through into this chamber. Rough filthy straw bedding covers the floor. The door between areas 20 and 21 is barricaded on this side by two large wooden beams wedged from the floor against the door. The wood of the door is scorched and the frame and stonework around the door also shows signs of blast at some time in the past. To those who might recognise this, it is evident that a trap has been triggered by the opening of the door.

## **19. CELLS**

Rusted iron bars reach from floor to ceiling forming six separate cells of 10 x 5 feet. One or two retain the chain and padlock by which means they were secured shut, but these are rusted beyond practical use. Two doors, from cells opposite each other, are opened fully so they overlap to create a barrier across the passage, and are padlocked together with one of the long-rusted chains.

The wooden door to area 23 is locked shut.

## **20. THE EMPTY POOL**

An 8-foot deep empty pool dominates this chamber. The stonework is finely carved, but has lain unused for centuries. It is stained and puddled here and there, but the floor of the pool is still an impressive mosaic picture of fish-like creatures. No known species can be identified. The walls of this high chamber are decorated with frescos, the colours of which are faded and patchy, depicting watery scenes with fantastical marine creatures.

Dominating the pool now is a heap of soiled straw at the north end, atop which is a chained OWLBEAR, somehow captured by the Kobolds and kept here until they can launch an attack in strength on the Gnome caves. The chains are only of 10 feet in length, and are attached to the floor in two places by iron spikes driven through the mosaic floor. If enraged by an attack, the owlbear will attempt to pull these chains from the ground. Each round it can roll twice, once for each chain, and will succeed in freeing the spikes on a roll of 15 or higher. This target decreases by 1 each round as the spikes become loosened.

**OWLBEAR** (SWp109)

HD5+1; AC5 [14]; Atk 2 claws (1d6), 1 bite (2d6); Mv12; Sv12; CL/XP 5/240;

Special: Hug for additional 2d8 if to-hit roll is 18+

At the far north end of the chamber is a statue, finely worked from once-pure white marble, now stained and chipped. It is shaped into a slender merfolk figure, with a graceful curving scaled tail below the waist and a fish-like head with long flowing hair cascading down its back. The right arm is gracefully extended above the head, reaching a height of 8 feet. The left arm, however, is missing at the shoulder, where an irregularly-shaped indentation suggests the shape of a corresponding fixing-pin presumably attached to the missing arm.

The missing arm lies amongst the rubble barricade between areas 14 and 17, identifiable by the distinctively shaped fixing pin at the shoulder. The shoulder of the statue contains a cog-operated mechanism which is unlocked by the fixing-pin. When the arm is reattached it will sit upright, matching the attitude of the right arm. It can then be pulled forwards and down, causing the statue to swing around towards the west, revealing a narrow staircase leading down into area 24.

## 21. THE HIDDEN ROOM

A short flight of steps leads into a room stuffed with artefacts. Rotting textiles, presumably former curtains and carpets, are heaped across the floor, where broken pots and urns make an uneven surface. Worm-riddled wooden statuettes and carvings, some with fragments of gold leaf adhering lie alongside piles of mouldering parchments and broken architectural pieces. Among this rubbish is the RELIQUARY, a carved



ivory box measuring 24 x 12 x 12 inches. It weighs 8lbs. The box radiates strong magic, and tingles faintly to the touch. There is no visible means of opening the lid, there is no visible lock. The reliquary is magically sealed and requires a lengthy ritual to open.

## **THE AMBUSH**

The CULTUS TENEBRAE MERCENARIES are waiting for the characters to emerge from the caverns, lying in wait keeping watch on the ruined tower.

Depending on the party's surviving numbers and general health the GM may decide on a course of action which introduces the mercenaries. Perhaps the mercenaries have entered the caves following the party; have fallen foul of traps, gnolls or kobolds; the party may meet them on the way out, in battle with the humanoids or licking their wounds; waiting in cover beyond the ruined tower, preparing to ambush a weakened party.

### **MERCENARIES (3)**

Human F2; HP11; AC6[13]Ring; Sword 1d8; Sv13

Human F2; HP10; AC7[12]Leather; Sword 1d8; Sv13

Human F1; HP6; AC7[12]Leather; Longbow 1d6, Short Sword 1d6; Sv14

Defeated and injured mercenaries can be made to divulge their orders – the characters will learn the truth behind their quest, and are left to decide their course of action. Will they seek revenge on the Cultus Tenebrae and the deceitful Little Old Lady? Will they seek to destroy the head of Thazar Zul? Will they involve the authorities and smash the Cult? Perhaps the remaining ruins of the Temple of T'taqua should be explored to learn more about this lost religion? And there is still the problem of the Gnoll and Kobold populations this close to town.

# **THE RELIQUARY OF THAZAR ZUL**

written and illustrated by Blackie Carbon  
September 2014

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