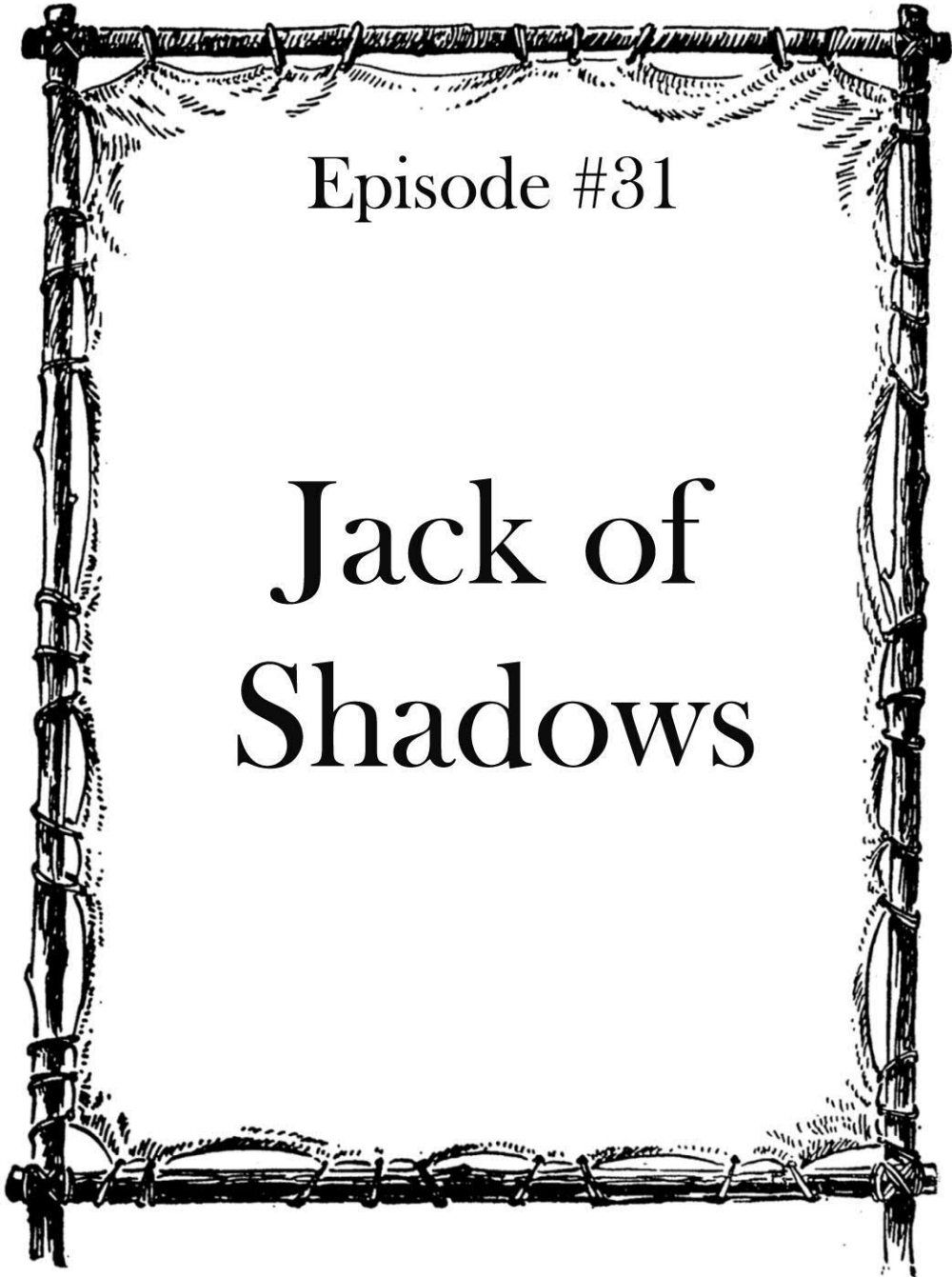


# SANCTUM SECORUM

Episode #31

## Jack of Shadows



COMPATIBLE WITH

**DCC  
RPG**

# Sanctum Secorum Podcast

## Episode #31 Companion

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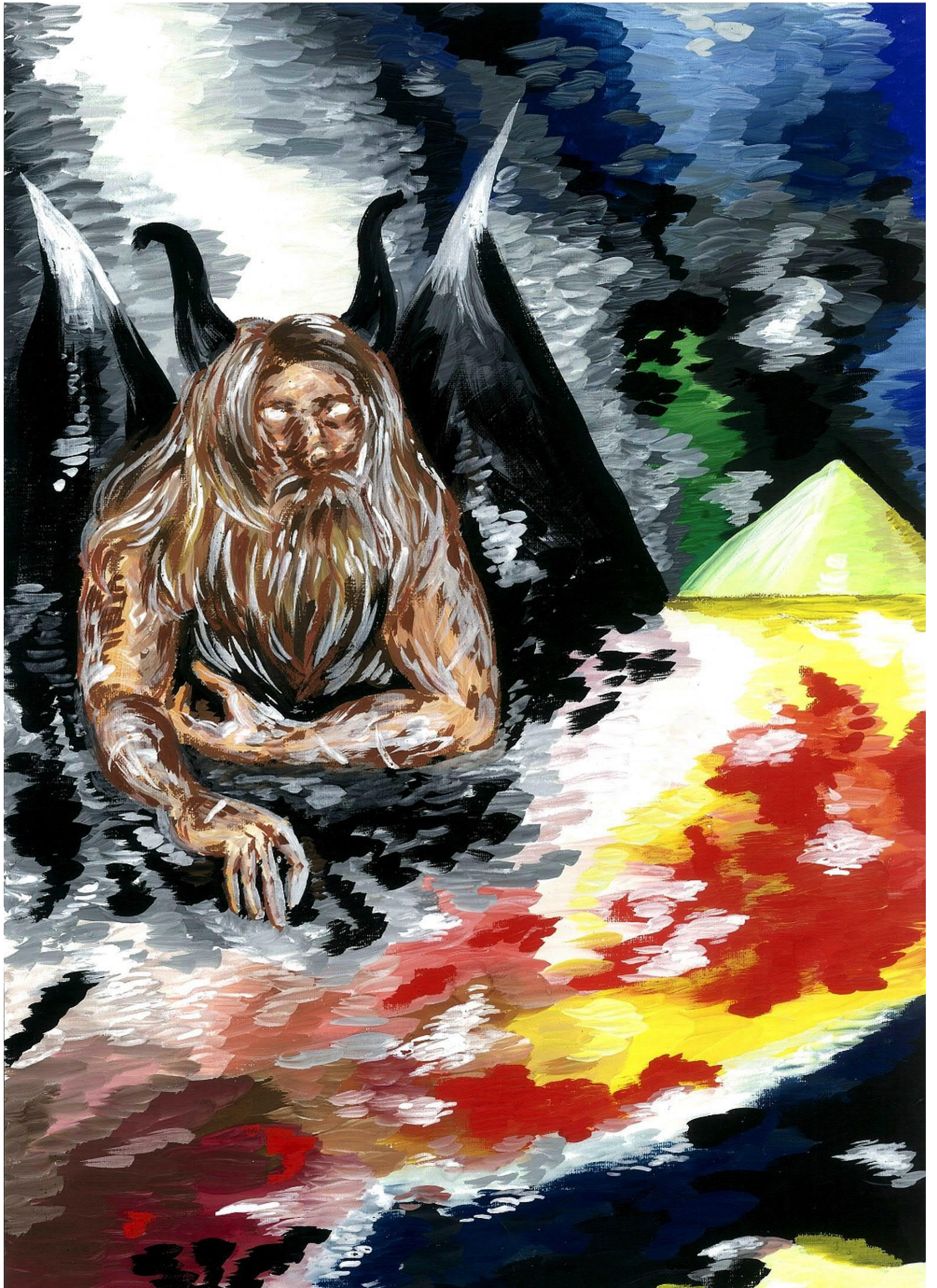
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**Submissions welcomed! Send your art, stats, and comments to [TheHub@sanctum.media](mailto:TheHub@sanctum.media)**



## Sanctum Secorum's Super Number 1 Contest!!

Were you muttering under your breath about not having been at North Texas RPG Con in 2015? Were you even more pained when the Keepers of Mysteries began discussing the FREE release of *Super Number 1 Food Tower* by Matthew Goiffon? Did you shake your fists in the air and curse the stars e'er you were born that you would forever be prevented from enjoying this unique and highly-limited oddity?

Well....about that. You know that the Sanctum Secorum is a library, right? Do you know what libraries are filled with? Yup, all sorts of printed matter. Printed matter such as ...

### Fifty Foot Pharaoh Zine Module No. 01 Super Number One Food Tower 2015 North Texas RPG Convention Edition

That's right, Sanctum Secorum is kicking off 2018 by giving you a chance to win some pretty rare DCC 3rd party swag! The author, Matthew Goiffon, has gifted a small number of these ultra-rare 'zines to Sanctum Secorum. Not only that, but he also provided enough of the pre-gen character sheets for every winner to have a sheet with 4 randomly-created characters!

So, what do you need to do to win one of these rarities? Simple: contribute a piece of content to our contest.

For the next six months, Sanctum Secorum will be running a series of themed content contests with a winner to be chosen at random. Submit something and you too could win.

It is pretty much that cut and dry...although contests are never quite that simple. CYA text follows – because without rules, we cannot have nice things.

## RULES

1. **Content:** Entries must be your own original, previously unpublished, material.
2. **Permissions:** By entering, you grant Sanctum Media non-exclusive rights to publish your entry on the Sanctum Secorum website/social media, in a future issue of the Sanctum Secorum 'zine, and/or any subsequent Sanctum 'zine compilation.
3. **Entry Eligibility:** Eligible entries must be complete and written for use with DCC RPG (or MCC RPG). Monsters must be statted; spells fully written up; etc.
4. **Geographic Eligibility:** The contest is open to participants worldwide in any location where the contest is legal.
5. **Entrant Eligibility:** The contest is open to all persons not currently hosting the Sanctum Secorum podcast, but is open to 'zine contributors past and present. Entries by persons under the age of 18 must have parental permission.
6. **Deadlines:** Entries for each month may be sent ANY TIME prior to the end of that month's contest, including in prior months. Entries must be received no later than midnight EST on the final day of the contest month.

7. **Entry Methods:** Submissions may be sent in two ways:  
Emailed to: [thehub@Sanctum.media](mailto:thehub@Sanctum.media)  
or  
Mailed to: Sanctum Secorum Contest  
4915 Rattlesnake Hammock Rd #139  
Naples, FL 34113
8. **Monthly Contest Themes:** Each month of the contest has a different content theme. To be eligible, content must be received prior to the last day of its associated month.  
**January** - Monsters  
**February** - Character Classes  
**March** - Spells  
**April** - Gonzo (Anything goes - get wild!)  
**May** - Maps  
**June** - Art
9. **Multiple Entries:** Multiple entries by a single entrant for a single month are allowed, but only one prize may be received per month.
10. **Bonus Entries:** In months 1-4, entries accompanied by original art will receive a second entry into the drawing. In months 5-6, entries accompanied by original stats/write-ups will receive a second entry into the drawing.
11. **Minimum Entry Requirement:** Should less than five entries from different individuals be received in a single month, no prize will be awarded and all eligible entries will roll into the next month and appropriate additional prize drawings will be made in the subsequent month.
12. **End of Contest:** Sanctum Media reserves the right to extend the contest by adding additional prizes to later months.
13. **Winning:** Winners will be chosen at random from the pool of eligible entries. Chances of winning vary by the number of entries.
14. **Prizes:** Grand Prize winners will receive one (1) copy of Super Number 1 Food Tower and one (1) page of randomly pre-generated characters for the adventure. Prizes will be delivered via US Post. One additional winner per month will receive a random item from the Sanctum Secorum's Prize Closet.
15. **Prize Limitation:** Only one "Grand Prize" per household. Repeat winners will automatically receive the random prize.
16. **No purchase necessary; void where prohibited by law.**

# Featured Adventure

## The Ruined Keep

An adventure for 12-18 0-level characters or 4-6 1<sup>st</sup> level characters

by Daniel J. Bishop

This is one of two scenarios originally written for *Raven Crowking's Fantasy Game (RCFG)*, the "fantasy heartbreaker" I was writing before I switched to *Dungeon Crawl Classics*. I have converted this adventure to the DCC rules, to be used as a funnel for 12-18 0-level characters or 1<sup>st</sup> level adventure for 4-6 PCs. *RCFG* was already moving away from *D&D* tropes; conversion to *DCC* increases the distance, but this was an early scenario, so it has big spiders, giant frogs, and goblins. All of the new creatures are direct conversions from the earlier version of the adventure. I have tried to make them interesting.

Should you actually run this either way, please email me ([ravencrowking@hotmail.com](mailto:ravencrowking@hotmail.com)) with any comments and a list of the people involved with the game, so that I may list you as playtesters for a final published version.

### Introduction

Somewhere beneath the ruined keep lies the Oracle of the Crystal Grotto. The judge need only allow the PCs to learn this, and give the PCs some question that they need to answer, to hook them into the scenario.

If running a 0-level funnel, the PCs' village may be suffering from an incurable plague, with the Oracle being the only hope of succor. If the PCs are in the early stages of the plague themselves, it will lend a certain piquancy to their mission.

If running a 1<sup>st</sup> level adventure, the judge may let slip that the Oracle can answer questions about some treasure that the PCs discovered, or that the Oracle can lead them to spell knowledge or put them on the right track to obtain something else that they desire.

### Wandering Monsters

There is a 1 in 5 chance of a wandering monster encounter every hour, or after any loud noises (such as combat lasting over three rounds). If an encounter is indicated where there are no creatures remaining in the area for that encounter type, instead no encounter occurs. The judge must use common sense when adjudicating these encounters – the giant bat or great horned owl, for

### Goblins

The goblins encountered in this adventure are orange-skinned with large, curving rams horns and eyes with double-pupils (like those of goats). They chant when they work or fight, saying over and over again (in the goblin tongue):

*Mab-you-get! Mab-you-get!  
In my blood and bone and arm  
Goddess of rams-horn, bright born  
Tooth to foes, shield from harm  
Mab-you-get! Mab-you-get!  
Thou art my only love!  
Thou art my true companion!  
Thou art the keeper of my soul!*

These goblins worship Mabuget (pronounced phonetically above), a goddess of goats, darkness, and the bright-born goblin people of the Undercroft. "Bright-born" in this context means orange-skinned. They are on a rite of passage, demonstrating fitness by seeking slaves and meat-of-two-legs – while they will talk to PCs who approach them respectfully from a position of strength, they will always be thinking about how to turn the tables.

They recently arrived from the north, and know little about the ruined keep. Their tribe is called the Seeping Eye.

instance, are never encountered underground.

### Outdoor Encounter Areas

**A. Moldering Bridge:** A stone archway spans the stream here, with the water flowing beneath it in three culverts. Sod has grown over the stones of the bridge, so that the old stones can now barely be seen.

A *lurk* has dug up under the eastern culvert, creating a burrow for itself and its treasures. It is usually active only after nightfall. It is a fey creature, appearing as a thin, almost skeletally emaciated humanoid with bright green eyes. Its

Roll (1d8)	Encounter
1	<b>Big ants (1d3):</b> Init +0; Atk bite +1 melee (1d3); AC 14; HD 1d8+1; hp 6 each; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; AL L. These ants are about 2 feet long; a maximum of 20 can be encountered.
2*	<b>Wolves (1d2):</b> Init +3; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 1d6; hp 4 each; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +3; AL L. A total of 6 can be encountered.
3*	<b>Giant bat:</b> Init +5; Atk bite +3 melee (1d5 + disease); AC 15; HD 3d6; hp 11; MV 10' or fly 60'; Act 1d20; SP disease (Fort DC 12 or permanently lose 1 Strength after 1 hour), blindsight 240'; SV Fort -2, Ref +8, Will -2; AL N. There is a single giant bat. It has an approximate wingspan of 15' and weighs 200 pounds.
4*	<b>Great horned owl:</b> Init +0; Atk beak or talons +0 melee (1d3-1); AC 12; HD 1d4; hp 3; MV 5', fly 140'; Act 1d20; SP excellent night-vision and hearing; SV Fort -4, Ref +2, Will +0); AL N. There is only one great horned owl, which is a non-combatant unless compelled by magic. It is possible for a successful hit to do 0 damage.
5	<b>Rats (2d6):</b> Init +4; Atk bite +0 melee (1d2-1 + disease); AC 14; HD 1d2; hp 1 each; MV 40' or climb 20'; Act 1d16; SP disease (DC 5 Fort save or 1d3 Strength and Agility damage after 1d5 hours with an additional DC 10 Fort save or added damage each hour thereafter until three saves succeed or the character dies); SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will -4; AL N. There are an unlimited number of rats. They are generally non-combatants, unless they outnumber PCs 5-to-1 or more. It is possible for a successful hit to do 0 damage, but disease still applies.
6	<b>Goblins (1d3):</b> Init -1; Atk spear -1 melee (1d8); AC 12; HD 1d6-1; hp 3 each; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60'; SV Fort -2, Ref +1, Will -2; AL L. These goblins wear leather armor and are armed with spears. Each carries a number of teeth, bat wings, and fang-sharpening rocks in a belt pouch, along with 1d5-1 sp. There are 9 total. See sidebar on prior page.
7*	<b>Ghoul:</b> Init +1; Atk bite +3 melee (1d4+4 plus paralyzation) or claw +1 melee (1d3+4); AC 12; HD 2d6; hp 9; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP paralyzation (DC 14 Will negates, 1d6 hours), infravision 100'; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +0; AL C. There is only a single ghoul. Although it looks like it is barely held together by strings of sinew and threads of muscle, it is extraordinarily powerful, gaining a +4 bonus to all opposed Strength checks.
8	<b>Giant rats (1d3):</b> Init +3; Atk bite +2 melee (1d3 plus disease); AC 12; HD 1d8; hp 5 each; MV 30' or climb 10'; Act 1d20; SP disease (DC 12 Fort save or 1d5 Strength and Agility damage after 1d3 hours with an additional DC 12 Fort save or added damage each hour thereafter until three saves succeed or the character dies); SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will -6; AL N. Only 10 of these creatures haunt this region, each the size of a dog.
* Indicates an encounter that only occurs during nocturnal hours. During daylight hours, no encounter occurs.	

arms and legs are unnaturally long, and can extend to greater lengths than would seem possible. It can squeeze into cracks even six inches wide, and lurks often lair in places that are impossible to reach by human-sized creatures.

They collect shiny things in their burrows, which they steal from travelers. A lurk loves nothing more than creeping up behind a lonely traveler, throttling him from behind, and then taking all the shiny objects the traveler had. Sometimes a lurk will be seen pawing through its treasures in some lonely place under the light of a bright moon.

Lurks are very stealthy, usually gaining surprise on a 1-2 on 1d3. If a lurk's initial attack is successful, it has gotten hold of its victim's throat, and can strangle for automatic damage each round. Victims being strangled cannot call out, and it requires a DC 15 Strength check (using an Action Die) to break free from the lurk's grasp. A lurk can move at half speed while dragging along a victim; the victim can resist with a DC 10 Strength check, but this also uses an Action Die.

Reaching this lurk's burrow is difficult, but can be done by tearing up the sod-covered stones that

once paved the roadway. Within the burrow is a collection of colored river pebbles, buttons (including a dozen brass buttons worth 2 cp each, and three silver buttons worth 1 sp each), shards of glass that have been polished smooth by the water, and a silver ring with a garnet worth 75 gp.

**Lurk:** Init +6; Atk claws +3 melee (1d6); AC 15; HD 3d8; hp 19; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP stealthy, squeeze into small spaces, strangle, drag; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C.

**B. Castle Stream:** The stream is about 10-15 feet wide, shallow (hip deep at its deepest place), and very slow moving. It is covered with duckweed and water lilies. Reeds and cattails grow along its damp banks.

The stream bottom is thick and sticky muck (Strength DC 10 to make forward progress at ¼ speed; 1 in 6 chance of losing each boot; three failed checks in a row means the character is stuck and requires aid to get free). Worse, the bones of the lurk's previous victims lie buried in the



mud, ready to resurface if disturbed. This is not dangerous, but it may be disturbing.

The tadpoles that live in this stream are about as long as large trout. They feed on the duckweed. Some 4 in 6 have growing hind legs that indicate what they are. Giant tadpoles are edible, tasting something like rubbery chicken.

**C. Frog Pool:** This scum and weed-covered pool is the home of three giant frogs. They hide among the weeds and beneath lily pads, instinctively attacking any creature that comes within range of their tongues.

On a natural "20", instead of the normal critical effect, a giant frog can swallow a halfling (or similar creature) whole, doing 1d6 damage per round to the swallowed creature. A swallowed creature can do nothing that requires movement. Against other creatures, use normal critical effects.

A giant frog can pull in a creature with its tongue at a speed of 5 feet per round unless it makes an opposed Strength check (+2 bonus for the frog). Attacking the tongue doesn't affect a frog's hit points, but the tongue is AC 13, and can be severed with 6 hp damage from a slashing weapon or by a successful Mighty Deed. Any frog whose tongue is severed hides at the bottom of the pond and is out of the fight.

These frogs are approximately 5' long and weigh 350 pounds.

**Giant frogs (3):** Init +4; Atk tongue strike (0 plus entrap) or bite +2 melee (1d4+1); AC 13; HD 2d8; hp 9, 12, 14; MV 30' or swim 30' or jump 50'; Act 1d20; SP tongue, swallow whole; SV Fort -2, Ref +4, Will +0; AL N.

**D. Ruined Catapult:** This ruined catapult is a leftover from the assault on the keep, and is of no value. The ropes that held it together have long since rotted – though not rotted through – and the wood is riddled with rot, holes from insects and worms, and soft spots where mushrooms grow. The rear axle is broken, and the right front wheel is missing. A rotting leather sack hidden under the catapult contains 50 sp.

Three **giant centipedes** lair under the catapult as well, though, and attack anything that disturbs them. These are smaller than the centipedes in the core rulebook, being merely as long as a human arm, and are of black hue shot with streaks of red. Their poison requires a DC 10 Fort save, or the victim suffers an additional 1d3 damage each round for 1d5 rounds. Like the centipedes in the core rulebook, they can detect thoughts within 500' and hunt by following psychic emanations.



**Giant Centipede (3):** Init +3; Atk bite +3 melee (1d3 plus poison); AC 14; HD 1d6; hp 1, 6, 4; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP poison, detect thoughts 500'; SV Fort -2, Ref +4, Will +0; AL C.

**E. Castle Rubble:** The rubble where the keep had fallen is stone, tile, brick, and bits of wood. The area has been tunneled through by rats, and is capable of shifting if climbed on (1 in 6 chance; a dwarf, miner, or similar character will recognize the danger). Shifting rubble causes 1d3 damage, has a 1 in 6 chance of being loud enough to trigger a wandering encounter, and has a 1 in 6 chance of trapping a leg (Strength DC 25 to free, with up to 4 characters aiding; no movement possible; -4 to AC and attack rolls).

**F. Spider Trees:** These mixed maple and oak trees extend off the map as a form of light scrub. The whole wood is infested with large spiders (each about the size of a large cat). They are light brown and yellow with a mark on their abdomens similar to a reddish-orange skull.

Strands of web crisscross the areas between the trees. These are difficult to see (Luck DC 15) before encountering them directly. There is a 1 in 6 chance of encountering a web each minute spent in this area.

Deer, boar, and similar woodland animals are wrapped in dried bundles high among the trees. A typical encounter here is with 2d4 large spiders.

These spiders have an evil form of intelligence and can speak with those who understand the language of their kind. If the judge has a wizard of elf seeing to learn spider climb or spider web, the PC may be required to seek a needed part of that spell from these spiders.



**Large spiders:** Init +4; Atk bite +1 melee (1d4 plus poison); AC 15; HD 1d8+1; hp 6 each; MV 20' or climb 20'; Act 1d20; SP poison (Fort DC 10 or an additional 1d5 damage for 3 rounds), webs (entangle, DC 10 Strength check to break free); SV Fort -2, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

## Ruined Keep Encounters Upper Levels

**1. Archway:** This is a crumbling archway between two towers, both of which contain arrow slits covering this way. The archway is 10 feet wide, rising to a height of 10 feet. The doors are long gone, but pieces of the iron hinges remain, showing that there were once double doors opening outward from the keep. These hinges are very rusty.

**2. South Tower:** This is a 30-foot square tower. The main floor still survives, as does part of the second floor. Within the main floor, cobwebs crisscross the rafter beams, and the floor is thick with dirt and bits of stone. An iron ladder is bolted to the center of the south wall, leading upwards to a trapdoor to the second floor. Arrow slits look toward the gateway, to the south, and to the east. A **large spider** (originally from **Area F**) hides in the

rafters, waiting for prey. The first person in this area may make a DC 15 Luck check to avoid surprise.

The upper floor has no ceiling, and the walls are fallen to uneven heights. The remains of the wall are as low as 4 feet and as high as 12 feet. In one of the highest points near the southwest corner, a socket from the now-lost second floor provides a nesting spot for a mated pair of **great horned owls**. One of these owls is in the nest; the other is a wandering encounter. There are three eggs in the nest.

**Large spider:** Init +4; Atk bite +1 melee (1d4 plus poison); AC 15; HD 1d8+1; hp 9; MV 20' or climb 20'; Act 1d20; SP poison (Fort DC 10 or an additional 1d5 damage for 3 rounds), webs (entangle, DC 10 Strength check to break free); SV Fort -2, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

**Great horned owl:** Init +0; Atk beak or talons +0 melee (1d3-1); AC 12; HD 1d4; hp 3; MV 5', fly 140'; Act 1d20; SP excellent night-vision and hearing; SV Fort -4, Ref +2, Will +0; AL N. It is possible for a successful hit to do 0 damage.

**3. Lower Courtyard:** Bits of tile can still be seen through the soil and grass here. There was once a decorative pattern in bright blue, rich browns, and subtle shades of green – a map of the lands all around the keep. To the northwest, a wide broken stairway leads to the upper courtyard.

**4. North Tower:** Only the walls of this tower still remain, standing some 12 to 15 feet high. Sockets where the roof-beams divided the second floor from the ground floor are still visible, but the wooden beams and flooring are long gone. Arrow slits look south to the gateway and eastward. An iron ladder is bolted to the north wall, but it leads nothing. A trapdoor hidden beneath dirt and soil leads to **Area 9**. It is locked (DC 15), but the key can be found in **Area 6**.

**5. Upper Courtyard:** This area is occupied by six **goblins** (two spearmen, three archers, and an animal trainer armed with a whip) and their two trained **tiger-sized rats**. They will attack any creature that they become aware of.

The animal trainer must give up either a move or an attack to direct the dire rats, which otherwise attack the nearest creature – including the goblins. The rats wish to slay a creature then carry it off to eat; without their trainer they do not continue the fight beyond that point. See sidebar on page 7.

**Goblin spearmen (2):** Init -1; Atk spear -1 melee (1d8); AC 12; HD 1d6-1; hp 3, 4; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60'; SV Fort -2, Ref +1, Will -2; AL L. These goblins wear leather armor and are armed with spears. Each carries has 1d5-1 sp.

**Goblin archers (3):** Init -1; Atk short sword -1 melee (1d6) or short bow +1 ranged (1d6); AC 12; HD 1d6-1; hp 3, 6, 7; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60'; SV Fort -2, Ref +1, Will -2; AL L. These goblins wear leather armor and are armed with short swords, short bows, and a quiver of 1d6+6 arrows each. Each also has 2d5 sp.

**Goblin animal trainer (1):** Init -1; Atk whip -1 melee (1d4 plus entangle); AC 12; HD 1d6-1; hp 7; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', whip entangles on 18-20 (DC 10 Ref to avoid or DC 10 Strength or Agility to escape); SV Fort -2, Ref +1, Will -2; AL L.

The animal trainer wears leather armor and two copper bracelets worth 5 sp each. He is armed with a whip. He has 15 sp and 18 cp in a dirty belt pouch. Characters in medium or heavy armor take no damage from the whip unless entangled.

**Tiger-sized rats (2):** Init +4; Atk bite +4 melee (1d8); AC 12; HD 4d8; hp 16, 14; MV 40' or swim 20'; Act 1d20; SP disease (Fort DC 12 or suffer muscle cramps for 1d5 days, reducing Strength and Agility by 1d5 each); SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +0; AL C.

**6. Ruined Kennel:** This area is 20 feet deep and 50 feet across, being a ruined kennel. It still smells faintly of wet fur and dog. The ceiling beams are a mere 8 feet overhead. Old gnawed bones litter the floor. There is the collapsed wooden frame of a cot near the southeast corner.

In the days when this was still used, the dogs would be kept here, and their trainer would sleep in this room on the cot. The bones are mostly those of sheep, cattle, and deer, tossed to the dogs, but there are also the bones of a human soldier wearing chainmail – a chain around his neck still holds the rusted iron key to the trapdoor in **Area 4**.

Under the cot is a small unlocked chest containing a moldy cloth bag with 35 cp in it, a *potion of haste* (reddish tint, cinnamon smell, spicy but metallic taste, grants a +4 bonus to initiative that lasts 10 rounds and an extra 1d12 Action Die during this period), and two *potions of healing* (light green, fragrant smoke rolls out of bottle when opened, no odor, minty taste, each healing 1 Hit Die). All of the potions are in glass bottles.

**7. Ruined Chamber:** This chamber is 20 feet deep by 30 feet wide, with a ceiling 8 feet high. What it was used for is no longer obvious – apart from cobwebs and fallen stone, there is nothing here. Anyone who searches this area will find a slip of paper that reads “...lies beneath the north tower in the Crystal Grotto...”

**8. Ruined Kitchen:** This area is a ruined kitchen, some 50 feet wide by 20 feet deep and 12 feet high. The eastern wall is dominated by a large fireplace, its blackened stones long since gone cold. The scarred remains of several oaken trestle tables are here, all fallen into ruin. Rusted iron pots, pans, and kitchen utensils are scattered on the floor or hanging from the walls.

A **poisonous adder** is beneath some of this rubble. Anyone bit by this snake must succeed in a DC 22 Fort save or take 2d4 points of permanent Stamina damage (1d3 normal Stamina damage on a successful save). It is fast enough to strike twice in the same round (as indicated by its Action Dice).

**Poisonous adder:** Init +6; Atk bite +3 melee (1d2 plus poison); AC 14; HD 1d6; hp 4; MV 20'; Act 1d20 + 1d16; SP poison; SV Fort -2, Ref +8, Will +0; AL N.

## Lower Level

**9. Stairway Down:** The trapdoor opens to a stone shaft, some 10 feet deep, with an iron ladder bolted

to the north wall. At the end, there's a stairway going south for 20 feet, a landing, and then stairs going west 20 feet. Apart from dust, cobwebs, and small rubble, the stairway is empty.

**10. Dungeon Entrance:** This is a 30-foot square room vaulted to a height of 12 feet. There is an arched doorway in the center of the north, south, and west walls. The area smells of damp stone, and water seeps down the south wall to collect in stagnant puddles on the floor.

**11. Storeroom:** The door to this room is stuck from the damp, requiring a Strength check (DC 12) to open. Beyond the door is a 30 foot by 60 foot room, with a ceiling vaulted to a height of 10 feet. It smells of rot. The room is filled with various crates, bags, and barrels, all of which are rotting, damaged, or sprouting pale violet mushrooms, yellowish mold, and the like.

Water has oozed through cracks in ceiling and walls, so that all of the walls are damp to the touch.

For each turn of searching, roll on the following table. If an item has already been found, instead nothing is found that turn. If all the items are found, then nothing further is found of any significance (although the judge should continue to roll as long as the characters are willing to search; remember to check for wandering monsters every hour).

**12. Jailor's Office:** The stout wooden door that leads to this room has a window with iron bars looking in. The bars are rusted, but strong at their core (Strength DC 25 to bend or pull out). The door creaks as it is opened.

Beyond the door is a 20-foot square room with a similar door in the far wall. The room is 10 feet tall. This room was once an office for the keep's jailor. Pegs on one wall once held keys and gear. There is still a light patch on the floor where the jailor's desk once stood. An empty sconce near each door once held torches to light the room – the soot on the ceiling makes it obvious that the sconces were once used.

The far door is locked with a sliding bolt, which can easily be unlocked from within the room. It creaks open on rusty hinges. Unless the hinges are oiled, the skeletons in **Area 13** are automatically aware that the door has been opened.

**13. Dungeon Cells:** Beyond the door is a long, low hallway (arched to about 7 feet high), with iron-barred doors hanging open on either side. The hall is 50 feet long, with four 10-foot square cells to the north, 10 to the south, and one to the far east. The area smells of old rot and corruption.

Each cell holds three animated **skeletons**, for a total of 27. These are primarily the remains of prisoners left here to die by the jailor, although one is the assistant jailor who began to release the prisoners from their cells before the jailor locked him in. The jailor's assistant wears chainmail.

These un-dead are animated by their hatred and despair. Given the chance, they will not stop to slay the fallen, but rather exit this area, locking the door behind them (Strength DC 30 to open; a

### Cursed Longsword

This longsword is not magical, but is cursed by the spirit of its former owner. Each time it is drawn in combat, the wielder must make a DC 10 Will save to prevent the spirit from possessing him. The character then attacks with a 1d3 Deed Die, but will continue to attack indiscriminately until nothing living remains within 100' of him. Only then does the possession end.

This curse can be ended by divine magic, or by seeing that the remains of the jailor's assistant in Area 13 receive a proper burial.

chopping weapon can cut the door open by doing 60 hp damage). The skeletons cease to be animated once this is accomplished, falling to pieces in **Area 12**.

**Prisoner skeletons (26):** Init +0; Atk claw +0 melee (1d3); AC 9; HD 1d6; hp 4 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead, half damage from piercing and slashing weapons; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; AL C.

**Jailor's Assistant:** Init +0; Atk claw +0 melee (1d3); AC 14; HD 3d6; hp 15; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead, half dmg from piercing and slashing weapons, regenerate 2d5 points of damage at the start of each round until it leaves this area; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; AL C. Chainmail, key ring for cells.

**14. The Room of Reliefs:** This room is some 20 feet deep by 50 feet wide. Sconces for torches (now empty) are bracketed to the wall on either side of the door. The room is vaulted to a height of 12 feet. The far wall is carved with several images of knights cut into relief on the wall. That wall seems to be damp – water seeps through the ceiling and across the reliefs to puddle on the floor. The room otherwise seems to be empty.

There is a secret door (DC 15) on the western wall – one of the relief knights can swing outward

Roll (d8)	Item Found	Notes
1-3	Yellow Mold Patch	Spores in 10-foot cloud, Fort save DC 12 or Reflex save DC 15, 1d6 Stamina damage. Destroyed by fire (not a good idea here!) Three patches can be found.
4	Barrel of Oil	A sealed barrel containing 20 gallons of lamp oil (160 pints).
5	Barrel of Rusty Swords	Apparently 20 rusty longswords in scabbards, worth 5 gp each; #20 is not rusty, but is a cursed longsword (see sidebar, above).
6	Crate of Copper Plates	This crate contains 50 copper plates, each worth 5 sp.
7	Sack of Coins	This large burlap sack is rotting apart. It contains 25 gp, 125 sp, and 476 cp.
8	Metal Shield	This small metal shield is in good condition, with only a little rust, but is non-magical.

when the catch is released (pulling the sconce to the south of the doorway). The secret door opens into a passage only 5 feet wide and 6 feet high, running at a slightly downward slant 30 feet to **Area 15**.

Once the door is opened, the plink-plunk of dripping water, and the murmur of running water, can easily be heard.

**15. Cavern Stream:** The passage enters into a natural cavern some 15 feet high, its ceiling thick with straw-like pipe stalactites and dripping water. The walls glitter in the torchlight due to water and chips of mica. A stream enters the cavern from the north, moving placidly in a series of tiers to the south.

The floor is fairly uneven, but it is clear that frequent passage had long ago worn a clear route along the river. The stream pours into a chasm to the south (**Area 16**).

The remains of a rope bridge that once crossed the chasm are clearly visible, but the wooden mooring posts are rotted, and easily crumble when any strain is placed upon them. The bits of rope still wrapped around the mooring posts are in even worse condition.

A rope tied to one of these mooring posts has a 4 in 6 chance of causing the post to give way per round that weight is placed upon it. It is a 20 foot drop to the chasm pool (2d6 damage; broken bone on any natural "6").

**16. Chasm Pool:** Climbing down to the chasm pool from the north is a DC 15 climb walls or Strength check – the way is not steep, but the walls are slick with water. Climbing back out to the south is a DC 20 check, as the way is still slippery, but even steeper.

The water of the pool is dark and oily. The average depth is about 2 feet, but there is a 1 in 6 chance per round of stumbling into a pocket 1d6 feet deeper (for multiple characters, the chance applies to a random character each round).

This pool is the lair of a **tentacled beast**. The beast can squeeze through the holes in the pool walls and floor to get to deeper, darker waters (both to feed and to escape if need be). The tentacled beast looks something like an oily black squid with pulsing red veins and only three tentacles. Its eyes glow with a pale lavender light. It can attack opponents up to 10' away with its tentacles, grasping opponents to draw to its beaked maw on the next round (Strength DC 10 to escape). Grasp opponents take tentacle damage automatically each round.

The thing is intelligent enough to flee if it loses more than half its hit points, and has no treasure.

**Tentacled beast:** Init +4; Atk tentacle +4 melee (1d6) or bite +4 melee (1d8); AC 19; HD 4d8; hp 20; MV swim 30'; Act 3d20; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +10; AL C.

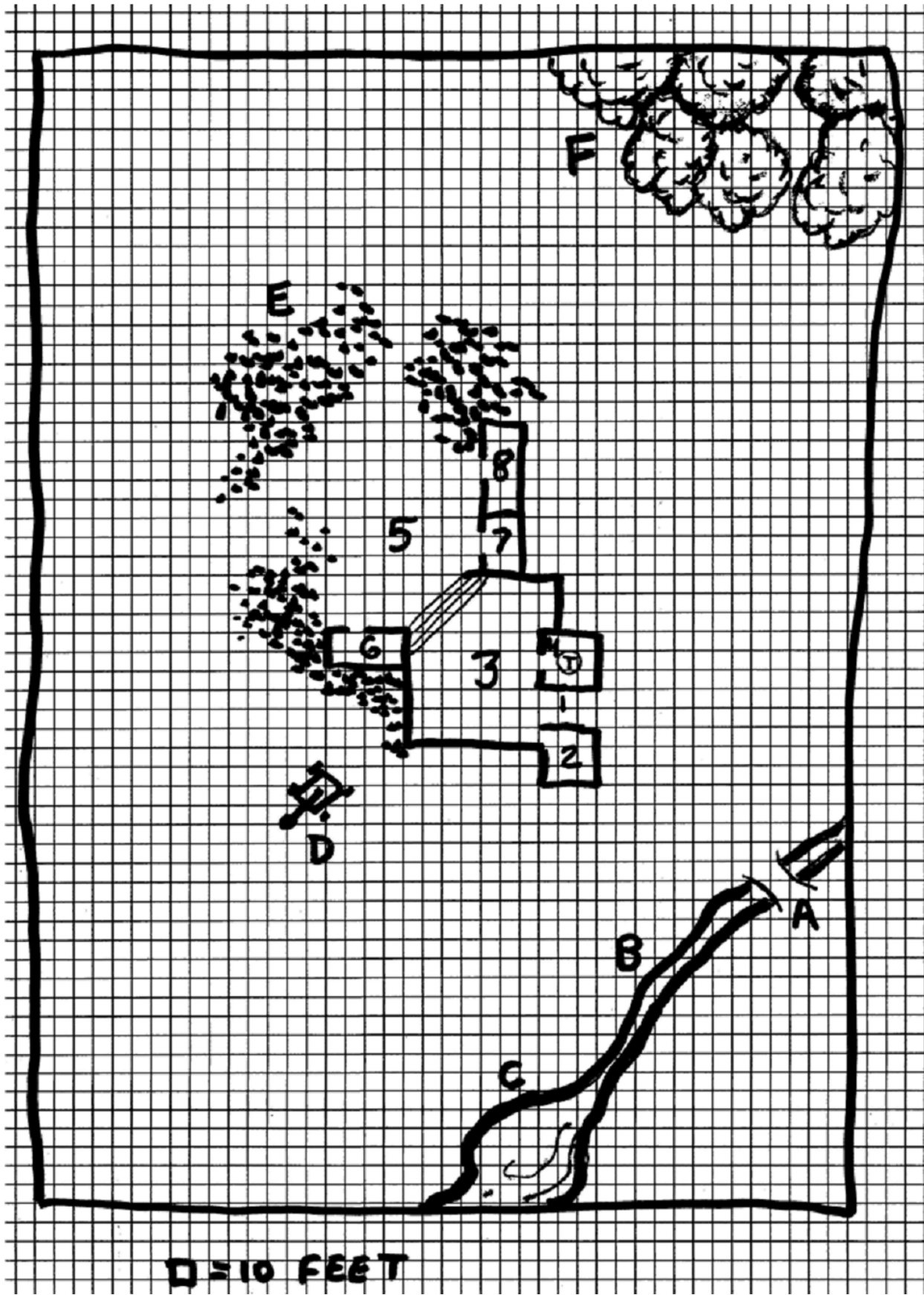
**17. The Crystal Grotto:** The entry to this cavern has rotting mooring posts like Area 15. The cavern proper is 60 to 70 feet across. It is a wonder of stalactites, stalagmites, and columns, up to 45 feet high. Everything glistens with mica, water droplets, and gypsum crystals.

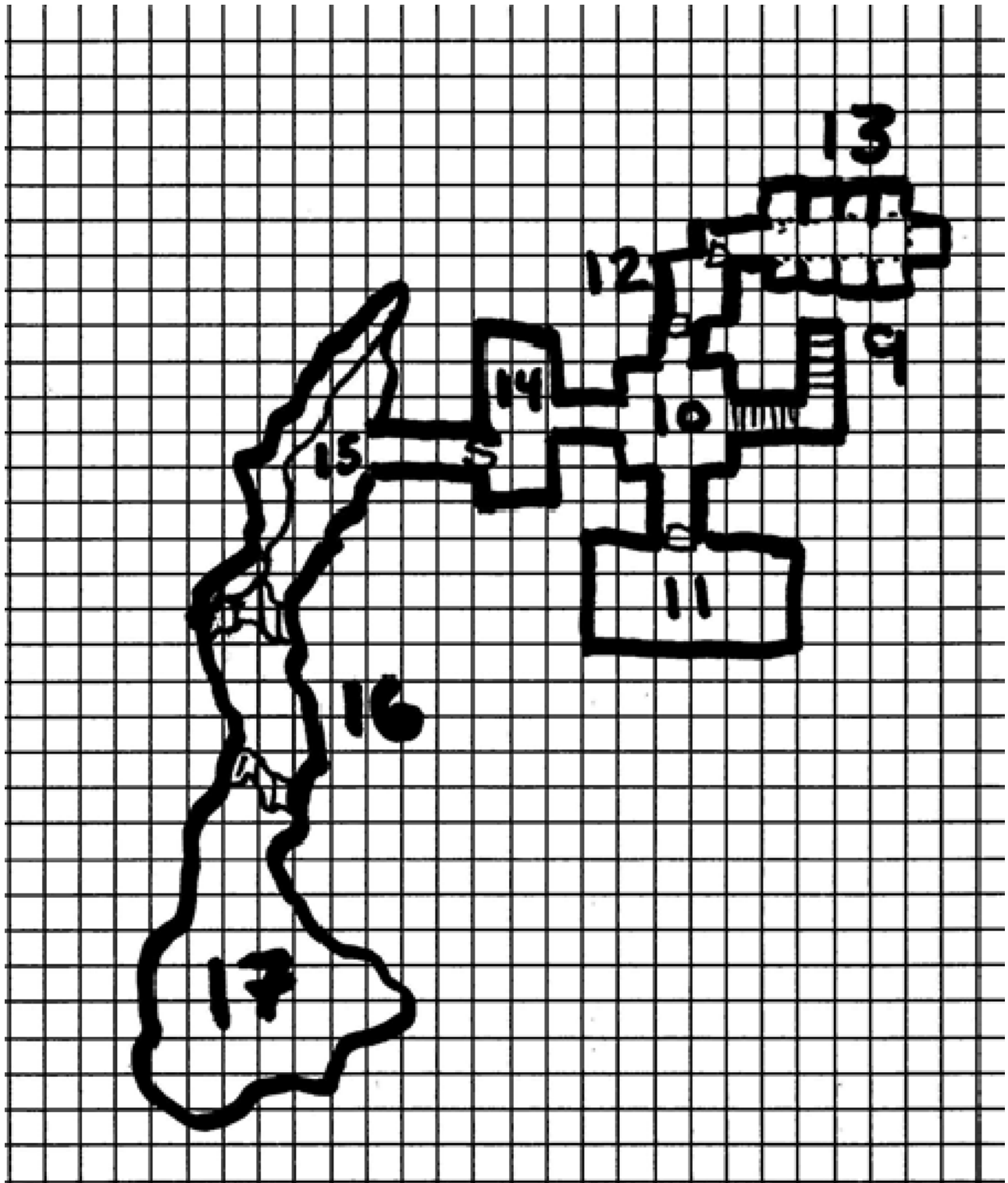
In the rough center of the grotto is a natural pool containing pure, cold water. Around its rim, runes are carved which read "Behold the Oracle of the Grotto. Drink and Be Answered." If a character drinks from the pool, the water turns deep blue and a female voice rings out "Ask boldly, but not overbold, lest answers make your blood run cold".

Once an answer is given, the water returns to its former state, and another being can petition the Oracle. The Oracle will answer three questions during each period from new moon to new moon. If asked to show herself, the Oracle will advise against this. Her beauty is such that any creature that sees her is stricken blind (no save – simply determine from the players which characters look).

A low alcove to the east, roughly 20 feet across and only 5 feet high, contains a large, locked (DC 15) chest that can be forced open with a DC 20 Strength check. Alternatively, its leather straps can be cut to open it. The key to this chest is on the key ring in **Area 13**. Within the chest are:

- A large leather sack containing 60 ep and 120 sp.
- A small teak box with a catch holding it shut. Inside, what appears to be about 12 gp are actually 250 gp – the box is an extradimensional space capable of holding up to this amount. The space does not change the weight of the box; the contents weigh as much as they would if carried otherwise.
- A normal dagger whose pommel is made of a polished weasel's skull.
- A silver chalice studded with small garnets worth 250 gp.
- A pearl necklace with a golden clasp, worth 75 gp.
- A silver salt cellar (empty) worth 15 gp.
- A finely made short sword (which does 1d7 damage due to the skill of its craftsmanship) in an ivory sheath worth 20 gp.





# Fiction

## *The Blood-Drinking Box*

### Part 7

#### Upward Spiral

As the damaged crew departed the guano mound a horrible, high-pitched screeching erupted from the sanctum. All the party looked back to find a dark cloud spewing from the peak of the mound. In the dim light of the cavern, it looked like tinted smoke. As the swarm closed on the party, the dangers became evident. They creatures could best be identified as fleshy, grapefruit-sized globs, haphazardly covered in eyes of various sizes. They screamed through snaggle-fanged mouths and catch the stale, subterranean air with wings of various kinds of leather and feather. It appeared the little beasts were simply a hodge-podge of anatomies from various creatures.

The necromancer, Nekros the Grotesque, had named these fangsights upon their creation.

Madis didn't wait and moved hastily along the bridge. Frila helped Elviodia, though burnt in a terrible fashion, make way toward the bridge's base.

Z yelled out above the screaming mass behind, "Rappi, we need those potions!"

Serak began running, quickly taking the lead, and keeping an eye out for the first enchanted portion of the bridge. The beginner rogue hit the bridge and didn't break stride. He leapt headlong across the span, landing on the other end in a roll and rising to hit feet. The heavy lead pipe rolled free, coming to rest at the edge of the bridge.

Serak turned to find Madis struggling over with the cylindrical 'Box'.

"Throw it!" Serak called back frantically.

"Sorry mate," Madis danced across the bridge until he too was on the other side, he set the box to rest and moved for his sword.

Annoyed, Serak said nothing.

Frila guided Elvee across the bridge and past the on-guard, Madis and waiting Serak.

Z stopped short and faced the oncoming horde of ugliness and they instantly swarmed about her, engulfing her, biting and gnashing. She staggered across the narrow enchantment to collapse in front of Madis and Serak. Serak did nothing but Madis helped her up, brushing away a few straggling fangsights.

Z glanced at the new gash created from the numerous bites with a grunt. She was now weakened to a similar fashion as Elvee, yet she could still stagger onward to freedom.

Hundreds of paces away, at the base of the bridge, Sevoi led Rappi and Blacyn moved toward the fleeing party. Sevoi called out, "We are on our way." Though the three could not yet see them, they could hear the screeching of the fangsights and the exclamations of excitement from the party, and it only proved to quicken their steps.

The fangsight swarm drew back, swooped through the darkness and drove onward as the retreating party frantically made their way along the bridge to the second enchanted stretch. Serak felt the fangsights immediately behind, he turned and stood to Madis, "Give the Box to me; your skills are needed to help our escape."

The big warrior nodded agreeance and Madis relinquished Yarafad's Box and turned to assist Z while Frila remained with Elvee.

"Sevoi!" Serak shouted as he spotted the warpriest through the eerie dimness of the bridge.

Rappi and Blacyn emerged from the blackness behind Sevoi.

All three were taken aback as they saw the shadows of the swarm encroach unto their shipmates.

Madis yelled out, "Rappi, we need those potions right quick."

Rappi moved forward to cross the weakened bridge.

Serak motioned to one side, "Step on this side Halfling."

Rappi did as told and his foot slipped off, but he simply dropped his body forward and fell onto the secure side of the bridge with a grunt. The torch the halfling held fell to the rippling, golden liquid below where it was snuffed out instantly. Serak grabbed him by the pack and clumsily drug him up. Now, Rappi covered his head as the fangsight swarm fell upon them all.



The swarm descended on Frila and she released hold of the elven marksman to fend off the unnatural vermin.

Scream and gnash.

The barbarian slashed out and struck down a few of the creatures, though not enough to do any apparent harm.

Screech and bite.

Madis dug through the pack, finding a vial of the life-giving elixir and allowed it to drip on Z's lips. Some of her strength magically renewed, she grabbed at the vial and drank the rest, her wounds instantly healed from the sacrifices she had made.

Howl and snap.

Rappi scampered to his feet and grabbed another vial, doing much the same to the burnt figure of his first mate. "Elvee, what happens in this hellish place?"

The elf's wounds healed as instantly as they had been had and she answered him, "Such are the ways of our necromancer opponent, Halfling."

Caw and rip.

All were once again on their feet.

Serak looked back at the swarm, "All fine and well, mates, but could we please move on?"

Elviodia took note and ordered. "Keep goin', mates!"

\*\*\*\*\*

Carefully, the crew crossed and reached the base of the bridge, but by that time the fangsight swarm had all but disappeared. The sounds of the vermin could still be heard echoing off the empty cavern walls. All of them bled from injuries the swarm had dealt, none of which were fatal.

The crew, now all together again, slumped down to rest. Those who did not know were told of the Box and the sacrifice that had been made. Those who did not know were told of the assault from the tirgefrabs. Silence once again fell on the crew of the Cinmora as they all sat in the dim light of the junction of the stairwell and the bridge.

Serak spoke softly, "Elviodia, it was two days travel down here; it will surely be the same walking out. From what we've learned there were six of the cats that had attacked us. Now it seems two remain, unless there are more of the devils around." The elf added, "We also have to consider the issue of our escaped demon, who may very well be gone and of no further trouble. However, that may be too much to ask of our fate."

Almost as if on cue a rumble slowly filled the air, causing Elviodia to go silent.

Serak recognized the position of her head and got to his feet, ear to the darkness above.

A dull thud had begun and vibrated the earthworks they stood upon. Slowly in the beginning the rumble would pause, then thud, pause, and thud. The blink of silence between the pause and thud became shorter and shorter. The rumbling became louder unto every member of the crew could hear it. Taking up weaponry, Madis collected the Box; they waited for the rumbling as the thunderous noise closed in on the crew.

Blacyn grumbled, "I've heard a cave-in afore, ain't no cave-in, but could very well be a trap headed this'a way."

Silently the crew waited for something horrible to fill the darkness above them; and the thudding became more rapid and built to a thunderous pounding and more-so to a ground-shattering crashing. All fell silent.

A roar of laughter filled the darkness ending with an ear-piercing scream, several of the crew jumped in response, and still nothing materialized from the black.

After several hour-long minutes, Elviodia whispered, "Let's move."

The crew walked in silence. Madis and Blacyn led the way, Serak and Rappi right behind, Elviodia and Z in the middle, with Sevoi and Frila watching the rear. The remains of the first day allow the crew to pass the broken span of stairs, shortly afterward they made camp.

\*\*\*\*\*

Serak took a spot near Elviodia asking, "Elvee, before the fire trap while we were back at the sanctum, did you recover anything?"

The elf regarded Serak then answered, "I did, potions and a scroll. I don't know what they are."

"Perhaps Sevoi could deduce their nature?" Serak asked.

"He's a warpriest, possessing divine might." Elviodia replied, "The scroll would be as wordless to him as it would be to me, but the potions he may know of. I will show them to him when we are all alert."

Serak nodded then ventured, "Mind if I look at the scroll?"

Elviodia looked at Serak for a long moment, and pulled the scroll case from her sack.

Serak grinned, unrolled it and read through the first few lines, squinted and read again. "I think you found magical writing, it looks like a spell to bring light upon something?"

Elviodia remarked, "You don't sound too certain, Master Serak?"

Serak rolled the scroll back up, presenting it and the case back to the elf, "I'm certain."

The crew fell silent, collecting their strength in rest.

Blacyn had the watch when a light emanated from out in the midst of the darkness. With a quizzical glance he hoisted his warhammer and shield.

The light spoke, "Blacyn son of Raedoc, son of Burrin, son of Ashak, son of Threg Orickslayer."

Blacyn called out, "Aye, 'ho the hells are you?"

Elzemon knew something of the crew of the Cinmora now, having spent these past days watching them from afar. He knew they were a resourceful group, a fair enough quarry to free him yet providing entertainment along the way against the traps of that nasty human who had bound him. Truly, Rhalabast, the puppet Elzemon worked though, far surpassed the quasit's summation in his ability to acquire such a talented party. The Box would soon be free of this sanctum, and Elzemon's binding enchantment would be broken. But first, he so indeed wanted to play with the piety of these fools.

"Our-father Torag wishes you join him in his hall of heroes." Elzemon boomed in a voice, greatly unlike his own, "The Storm God wishes to test your mettle with the diabolical creatures contained within Yarafad's Box."

Blacyn looked over his shoulder at the white cylinder which sits near Madis. "Do he now?"

"Blacyn, your faith is strong, but your ability may be lacking to rank among the heroes here."

"Nay, Messenger." Blacyn retorted.

"Aye, mighty Blacyn, let the blood run dry within the Box. Allow the creature within to challenge you and take your rightful position among us." Elzemon had to hold his laughter. Such fools mortals can be.

The dwarf walked over to the Box and looked down upon it. "The blessings of Torag be upon mi'for what I am about to do." He turned back to the light in the darkness, "Nay, Messenger, if Torag should question my service it will not be in the midst of my crew that lay unawares."

The light faded.

Elzemon boiled with hatred at the dwarf. How dare he ignore the request of his 'patron', is this mortal fake or mindless fodder. It mattered little to the demon. He had other challenges to meet them with before their trek is through.

Blacyn awoke Sevoi with no word of the visit from the Messenger and watches continued.

The whole of the crew arose when Elviodia opened her eyes. The elf turned to Serak as they both readied for the final leg of the trip, "Serak, the last of our torches are nearly gone. Can you cast this scroll for light?"

Serak nodded, his eyes set on hers, "I can try." Of course, Serak had been taught to read magic scrolls by Gamma, and he was fairly certain he could do this one. Mere moments later the end of the failing torch was set alight with magic. Though no heat was produced, the whole of the crew could see in the thick blackness.

This second trek found them in the same marching order as the previous day. However, the time was ripe for a final confrontation.

Ahead, in the darkness, Madis and Blacyn could see the stalking forms of the two remaining tirgefrabs. The two warriors signaled back to the others as Madis set the Box down carefully.

Madis whispered, "Those two cats are ahead. I believe one is wounded."

Elviodia asked, "Have they heard us?"

Madis shook his head, "I don't think so."

Serak was tired, he felt dirtier than he had ever been and as if he had worked four weeks on the docks for these few days in this pit. "We got any fire cocktails?" he joked.

Elviodia recalled the potions she had found in the study. "Perhaps, can anyone relate to these?" she pulled the still intact potions from her slightly burnt sack.

Everyone looked at them, it was Sevoi who spoke up, "Possibly, but my divining talents are not what I would prefer them to be." He brought one to the light, examining its appearance. He blinked and looked again rolling the potion bottle around, possibly looking at consistency. "This may be something simpler than a potion; I'd say it is more akin to the golden liquid at the bottom of this wretched cavern."

Serak, "That sounds to me like it can be thrown on someone or something?"

Elviodia remarked, "We don't know what that liquid was. It may very well give them some unforeseen new ability."

The others of the crew looked from Sevoi to Elvee to Serak, then back to Elvee. Serak finished, "At this point, I'd rather gamble and toss the potion. It could be an acid or something."

Elviodia nodded and handed one potion to Serak. She gave the other potion to Madis. "Madis, you can see them, you have first throw. I will have the second throw. Master Serak, the final throw is yours and it will surely be as they approach. By the time the cats get here Blacyn and Madis will have the frontline."

Everyone nodded.

Madis moved up to range and let the vial fly without much hesitation. He scored a direct hit and the vial shattered sending the liquid across one cats flank. It screamed in agony and the beast dropped in its hind quarters, as if carrying a tremendous burden. Not realizing what the liquid had done Madis readied for the defensive with the dwarf. The two tirgefrabs started toward the crew, the one that had been struck moved far slower than the other. Rappi held the torch as high as he could allow letting the light shine as far as it could.

Elviodia saw the tirgefrabs enter her vision and let fly with her own vial. The vial broke on the lead cat and it stopped instantly trying to shake the liquid free from its head. It growled but continued as the other was allowed to catch-up.

The tirgefrabs came into the view of the magical light and Serak wasted no time releasing his own vial. It missed but shattered before the cats, sending the liquid toward both.

The cat that had been struck by Madis appeared to feel the liquid more as it jumped back. The other cat, which Elvee had struck in the face, only appeared to get angrier.

The cats both opened their wide mouths and released streams of vomit upon the crew. The puke stream landed across Z's flank and she cursed.

Madis and Blacyn both delivered horrid blows upon the remaining cats.

Dropping them where they once stood. Madis burying his sword into the skull of one and Blacyn soundly broke the other's neck at the place where the shoulders joined.

The crew continues their trek, with few words among them. Z weakened and in tow with Frila by her side. The day's end brings a long period of peace and quiet, unfamiliar to the crew during their entire trip down here. Since Z had been 'feeding' the Box before, Blacyn did so this time to ensure the Box stayed shut. With Z in her weakened state, to bring her more damage may take her life.

The crew continued onward, pressing for the entry, reliant on the notion not to spend another night in this abyssal darkness. Ahead a pin-point of light shown far above and before too long the crew found the rough stone platform of which they entered.

 *To Be Continued* 

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