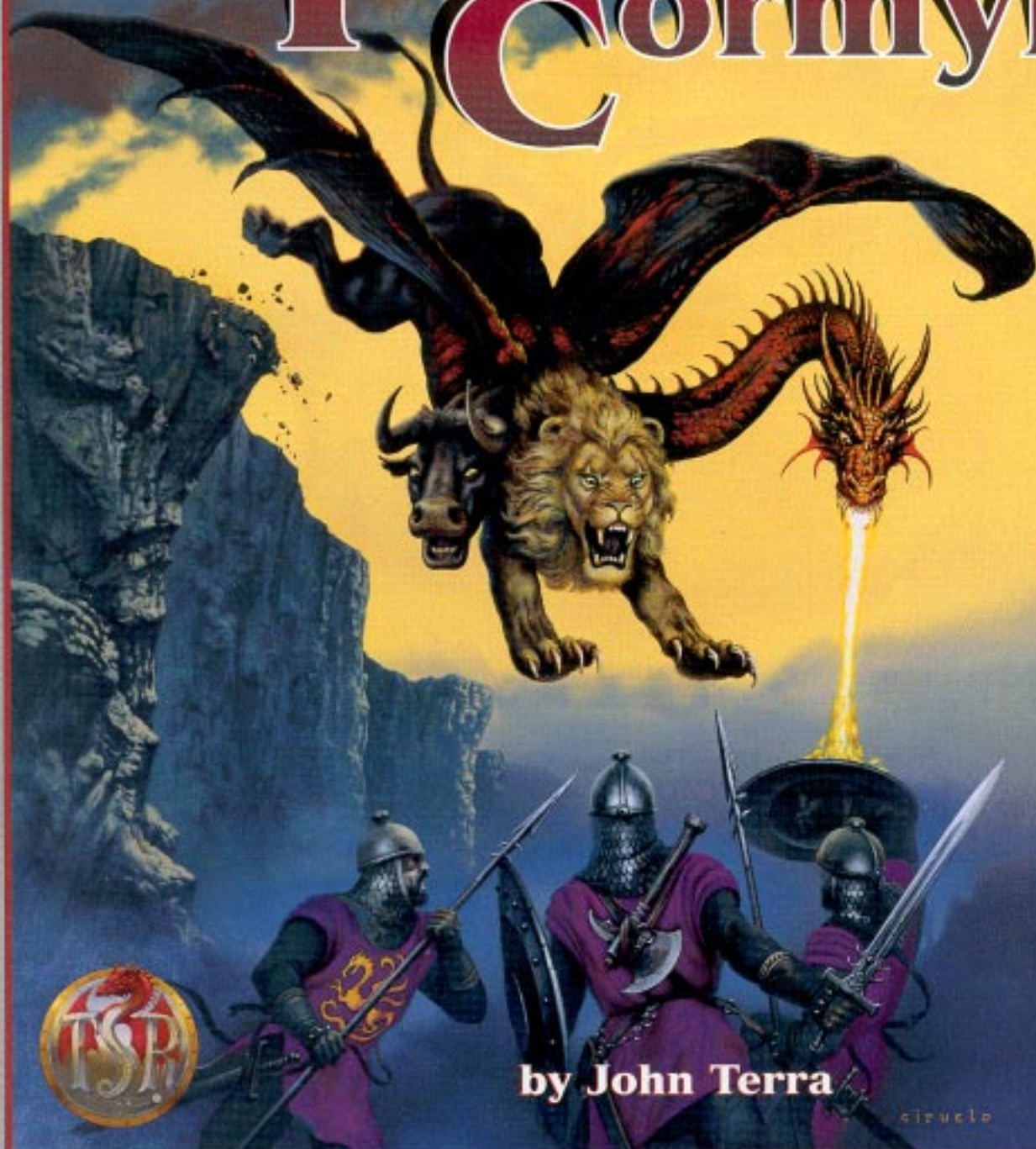




For six to eight characters of levels 9-12

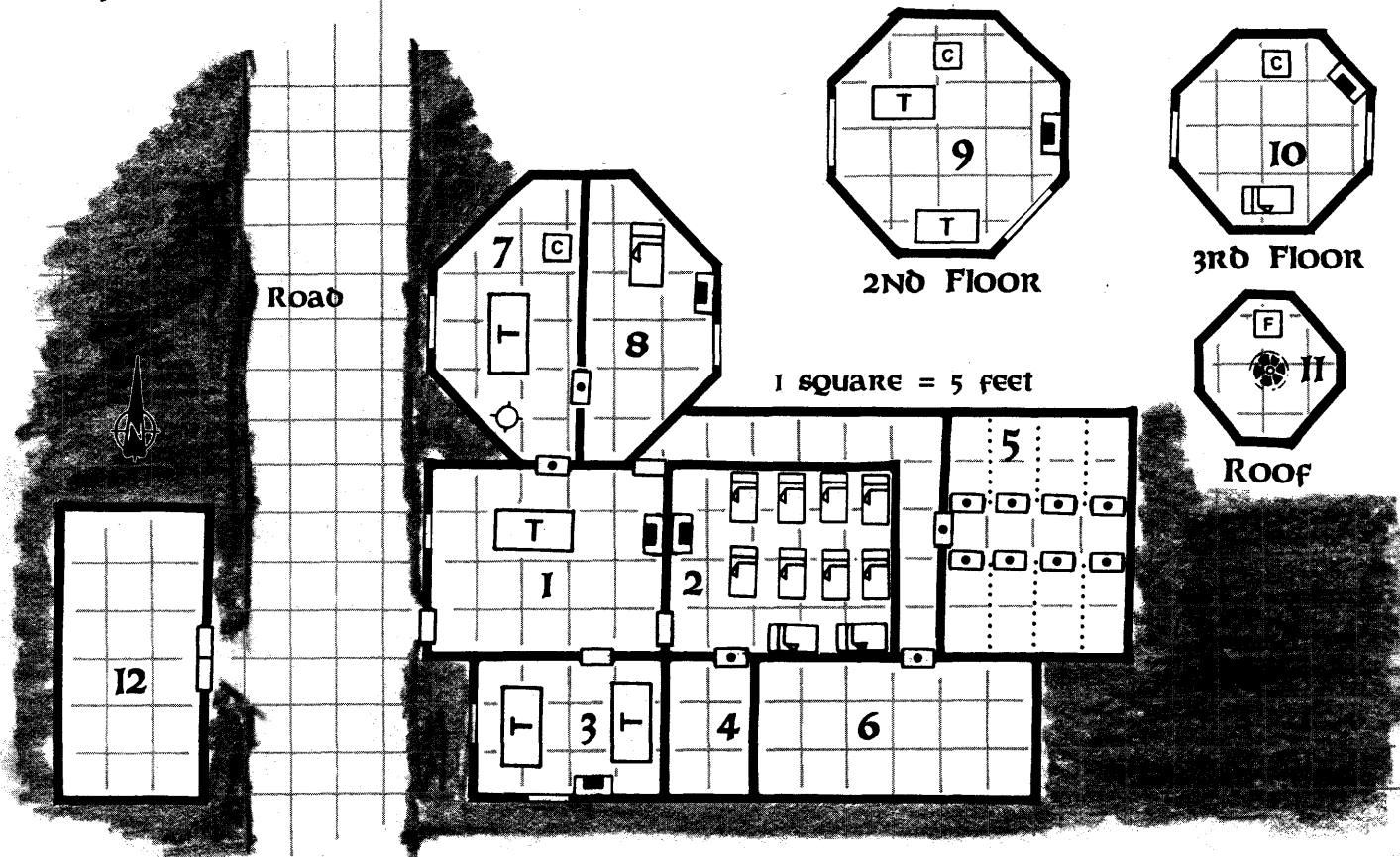
Four From Cormyr



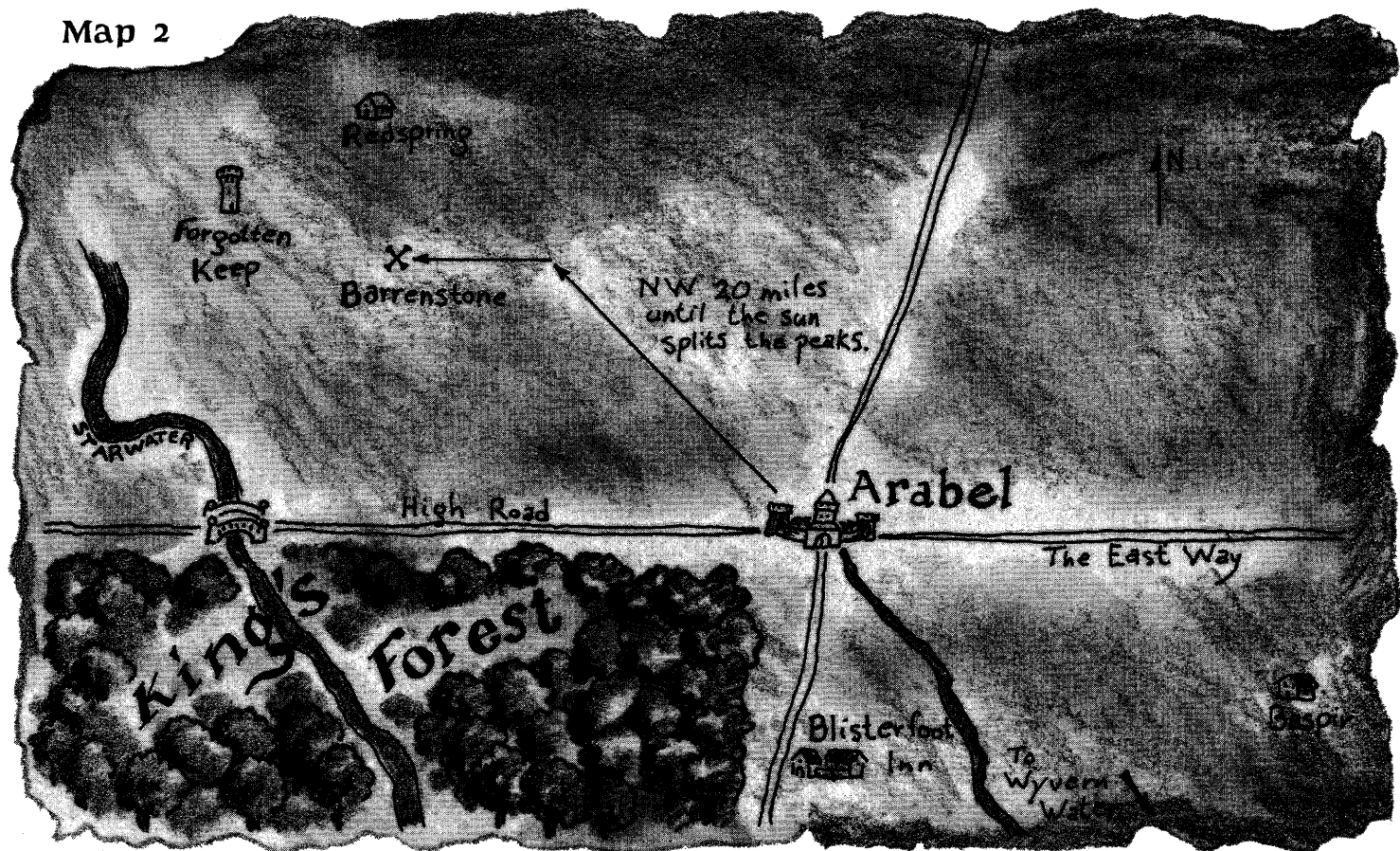
by John Terra

circulo

Map 1 Border Outpost



Map 2





Four from Cormyr

**Four FORGOTTEN REALMS® Adventures
for Characters of Levels 9-12**

by John Terra



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Dedication: Dedicated to my daughter Adrienne Terra, my son John Terra III, and my buddy Hunter Wells, three kids who are becoming part of the next up-and-coming generation of role-playing gamers!

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INTRODUCTION

"Cormyr? Please, I'm not interested in such a place. Who wants, or needs, a place that has been so tamed by good agents of law? Really, now, they've driven out all of the elements that made life so interesting, and replaced them with a pack of boring, predictable, and yes, arrogant and self-righteous, cattle. Give me someplace where I can be free to be who I am, and life has some of that delicious uncertainty that makes it worth living."

—Mendryll Belarod, bard extraordinaire

"Anyone who thinks that Cormyr no longer has any challenges left either is a fool or has not looked hard enough. Perhaps both."

—Elminster of Shadowdale

Cormyr is a nation of the North, located on the northwest coast of the Sea of Fallen Stars. For neighbors, Cormyr has Sembia to the east, the desert kingdom of Anauroch to the north, and the Lake of Dragons to the south.

A civilized nation, Cormyr is ruled by King Azoun IV, a champion of law and good. The king's ethos has contributed much to his desire to make Cormyr a place of justice, safety, and peace, and to keep it that way.

Yet despite Azoun's apparent successes, there is no way for one mortal, regardless of his power, to drive out all evil from his borders. Certainly, there may be less corruption, less overt abuse of power, and less random violence, but evil hearts beat just as strongly here as they do in Zhentil Keep, Waterdeep, or the Moonsea.

Four from Cormyr is a series of four adventures set in the kingdom of Cormyr, exposing the adventurers to a range of challenges and opponents, some obvious, some a lot more subtle. All four adventures are recommended for six to eight characters of levels 9-12.

DM's Information

Four from Cormyr can be played either as four separate stand-alone adventures, or as part of an interlocking campaign. If the latter is being done, there is no set order for the adventures to happen, except that the section called "The Border Crossing" should happen first, and "Redemption" should happen last. Every so often, special information is featured, giving the DM directions for linking all four adventures together.

The unifying theme for the four adventures involves a series of four magic items of historical significance, which also create a single item of great power. Even if the four adventures are not run as a continuity-based campaign, the items can still be used.

DMs should have access to the *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign Setting* boxed set and *Volo's Guide to Cormyr* in order to better run these adventures. Having the *Cormyr* accessory, the *Tome of Magic*, the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures* hardcover book, and *Faiths & Avatars* will also come in handy, but is not necessary.

The Four Adventures

The adventures must first begin with "The Border Crossing," which introduces the PCs to Cormyr by having them encounter a Purple Dragon border station. It will be necessary for the PCs to register as an adventuring company. The encounter serves to give the





players a little taste of what it is like to adventure in Cormyr.

"The Bibliophile" is an exercise in player and player character manipulation. On their first night in the city of Arabel, the PCs are pegged as naive newcomers by a less than savory adventuring company. The company manipulates the PCs, through a staged fatal mugging, to explore the complex of Adzerak, an addled lich with an interesting history.

Once the PCs succeed in exploring the old complex, the manipulating tricksters waylay the PCs and hope to pick them clean of their treasure.

"Murder Most Magical" takes place in the capital of Suzail, and offers the PCs a glimpse into Cormyrean politics. All adventuring companies currently in Cormyr are obligated to come to Suzail for the festivities of King Azoun IV's birthday. However, late in the night, the noble who oversees all adventuring company charters is murdered. Suspicion falls on all of the adventuring companies.

Although this adventure certainly presents opportunities for battle, it is more of a murder mystery, requiring attention to be paid to details and clues.

The PCs get a chance to do more traditional adventuring in "Bad Neighbor Policy," when they are hired to track down an adventuring company that has become delinquent in paying its dues. The group was last seen around the village of Thunderstone. The search takes the PCs to that village, to a dungeon in the Vast Swamp, and on a collision course with a rival group of adventurers sponsored by Cormyr's eastern neighbor, the merchant nation of Sembia.

In "Redemption," the PCs must deal with one of the loose ends from the time of Gondegal "The Lost King" and his rebellion of 1352 DR. One of the smarter followers of Gondegal is still clandestinely active around the Stonelands/Thunder Peaks area. He wants to build up his own forces and is determined to succeed where Gondegal failed.

The PCs go to the Stonelands area in order to follow up on rumors of a hidden treasure. What they wind up finding is an old battlefield from the time of Gondegal's rebellion. It is haunted by three dozen Cormyrean soldiers. During the rebellion, these soldiers had two possible sites that they could have marched to, and they chose the easier of the two. As a result, they were not around to defend a small village that was pillaged and

destroyed by Gondegal's forces. The soldiers died and are cursed now, and are looking for a way to break the curse.

When another adventuring company is brutally murdered by the erstwhile follower of Gondegal, the PCs set out to get justice done for the dead. The showdown happens to be on the site of the destroyed village. If circumstances work out, the dead Cormyrean soldiers may get their shot at redemption and aid the PCs in the process.

Four from Cormyr

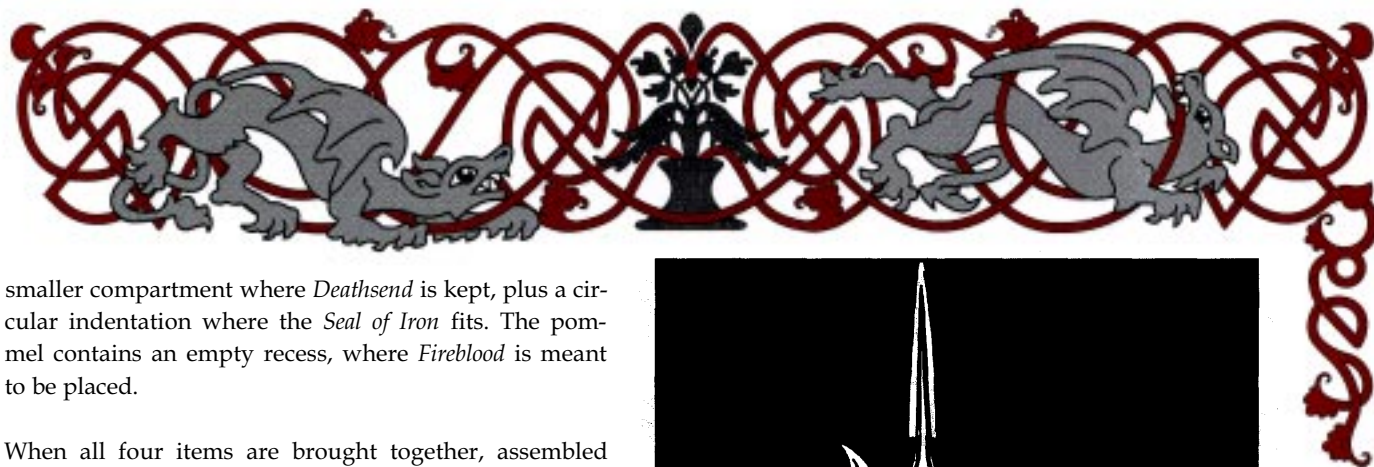
"Four from Cormyr" is the unglamorous name that sages and bards have applied to four magic items forged centuries ago by King Azoun's ancestors. Each is an item of power in its own right—and the power of all four items when brought together is almost on par with that of an artifact. The items are:

The Seal of Iron. A bronze disk measuring two inches in diameter, engraved with the seal of the royal family of Cormyr. When worn somewhere on one's person; it confers complete immunity to all types of fear. The name of the item comes from the iron will it gives the wearer, not its metallic composition!

Fireblood. A brilliant, bloodred gem one inch in diameter, this appears to be an exquisitely carved ruby with what seems to be a bright crimson starburst in its center. The gem is worth at least 10,000 gp. The gem confers upon its wearer a complete immunity to all forms of fire, magical or mundane.

Deathsend. So named because it was used to finish off a foe defeated in combat, this is a dagger made of the finest steel, with a slightly golden glow to the blade. Aside from being a *dagger* +4, it can also determine, when pointed at an enemy, if the victim is a dishonorable, treacherous soul who deserves death, at least as determined by the rules of fair play as set up by beings of lawful good alignment. *Deathsend* will not allow itself to be used as a thrown weapon or in a backstab attempt; any such attack made with the dagger will automatically fail.

Silveredge. This bastard sword is a *sword of sharpness*. Finely worked detailing adorns the blade and handle, showing scenes of kings fighting giants and dragons. The blade's edges are trimmed with silver, hence the name, and the entire sword shines with a sky-blue glow. *Silveredge* is found in a leather scabbard. The scabbard has a



smaller compartment where *Deathsend* is kept, plus a circular indentation where the *Seal of Iron* fits. The pomel contains an empty recess, where *Fireblood* is meant to be placed.

When all four items are brought together, assembled into one unit, and worn by one person, the following additional effects are realized:

- The wielder gains a +2 bonus on attack, damage, and saving throw rolls.
- The wielder may cast a *heal* spell once per day.
- The wielder's PC allies gain a +1 bonus to their attack rolls and saving throws.
- The wielder's NPC allies gain a +4 bonus to their morale scores.

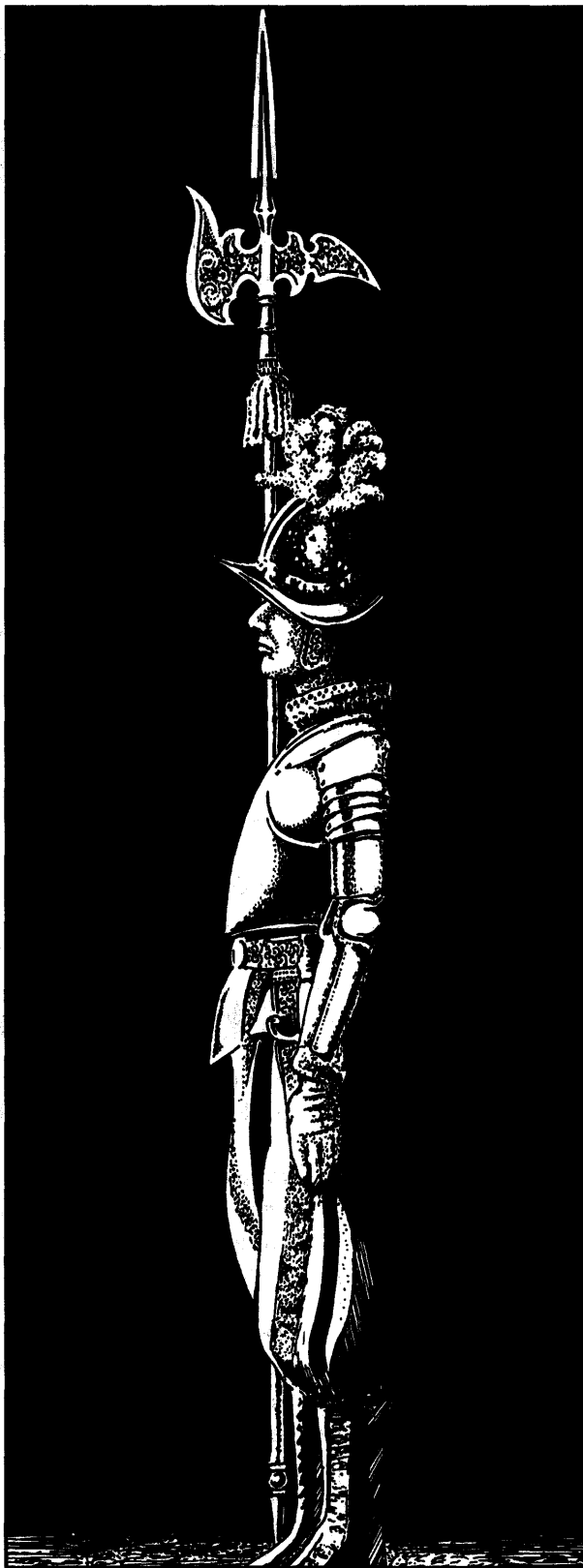
Note that bringing together fewer than all four magic items yields no bonus magic effects. Also, possessing all four items but giving them to four different people to use will nullify the bonus powers.

These items are the legitimate inherited property of Azoun IV. While a good-aligned party of PCs will feel it necessary to return the Four once the items have suited their purpose, they can also anticipate a generous reward for their trouble.

NPC Descriptions

Four from Cormyr includes an abundant supply of nonplayer characters, some of whom are essential to the adventures and others who are "bit players." The characteristics of any or all of them can be adjusted to fit the strength of the PC party, so that the adversaries are neither too powerful nor too weak: add or subtract a level or two, increase or decrease someone's hit points, or change a character's equipment (remembering to adjust the XP value for the character if necessary). As written, the adventure assumes that the PC group is composed of six or more characters of a mixture of classes including at least two fighters, one thief, and two spellcasters.

In some of the lists of spells provided for NPC spellcasters, three special symbols are used: * designates a preferred spell; † identifies a spell or item from the *Tome of Magic*; and ‡ identifies a spell found in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures* hardcover book. Whenever spells from those two books are mentioned, a sufficient number of spells from the *Player's Handbook* is given so that the character can be outfitted with a full complement of spells even if the *Tome of Magic* and the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures* book are not available.





The Border Crossing

As your group travels along the road to Cormyr, you notice a small stone structure ahead of you, abutting a tower three stories high. Four soldiers in purple tabards casually walk into the center of the road and wait for your group to approach.

One soldier, a burly human man, holds out a hand and says, "Hail and well met. Welcome to Cormyr. What manner of business brings such an interesting pack of travelers across our borders?"

A large sign posted near the road's edge reads:

Laws of Cormyr

1. All persons entering Cormyr must register with the officials of a border garrison.
2. Foreign currency can only be used in certain locations. Please exchange your coins for Cormyrean golden lions at your first opportunity.
3. Adventurers must acquire a charter before undertaking any operation as a group.
4. All weapons must be peace-bonded. The only persons exempt from this law are members of chartered adventuring groups and members of mercenary groups that can offer proof of employment.
5. Harming cats is forbidden.
6. Bow your head to royalty and the local nobility.
7. Purple Dragons have the right to search you upon request.
8. Hunting on private land is forbidden.

On the second floor of the tower, a man sits by an open window and seems to be enjoying some fresh air. He looks down at you and waves, and you notice a wand casually resting in his other hand. Perhaps answering the soldier's question would be a smart idea.

The Outpost

Stone outposts similar to this building are located just inside the border along all of the roads leading into Cormyr. Each outpost is staffed by ten Purple Dragons.

Purple Dragons, hm F2 (10): AC 5 (chain); MV 12; hp 12 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword) or 1d6 (flight arrow); SZ M; ML steady (12); Int average (11); AL any good; XP 65 each.

Equipment: chain mail, long sword, short bow with 20 flight arrows.

The burly man who runs this post is Sergeant Stoan, a veteran Purple Dragon. He is a simple man, a conscientious soldier who never fails to inform every stranger of the laws of the land "just so there will be no misunderstandings." He has a deep love for Cormyr and is well liked by his men.

Sergeant Stoan, hm F7: AC 3 (chain mail +2); MV 12; hp 40; THAC0 14 (13 with Str, 12 with long sword +1); #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d8+2 (long sword +1); SZ M; ML steady (12); AL LG; XP 650.





S 17, D 12, Co 17, I 12, W 16, C 13

Personality: professional, fair, combat-experienced

Equipment: long sword +1, chain mail +2.

The fellow with the wand is Torvis Mull, a War Wizard. Although he is a loyal servant of the crown, Torvis is bored and occasionally frustrated by being assigned to border garrison duty. Most of the time, he sits by a tower window and poses intellectual questions to himself.

Torvis Mull, hm M6: AC 1 (*bracers* AC5, *Dex bonus*); MV 12; hp 15; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (*staff*); SZ M; ML steady (12); AL LG; XP 975.

S 7, D 18, Co 15, I 18, W 17, C 14

Personality: inquisitive, snobbish

Special Equipment: *bracers of defense* AC5, *wand of fire*, *war wizard cloak* (see "Magical Items," page 126).

Spellbook (4/2/2): 1st — *alarm*, *charm person**, *comprehend languages*, *detect magic**, *light*, *message*, *shield**, *sleep**, *wizard mark*; 2nd — *detect evil**, *detect invisibility*, *ESP*, *web**; 3rd — *dispel magic*, *hold person**, *spectral force*, *suggestion**.

Outpost Floor Plan

Although all the Purple Dragon border outposts in Cormyr are not built in precisely the same style, most of them conform to the basic design shown in Map 1 (see the inside front cover of this book), which can be used, with slight modifications, at any Cormyrean border crossing.

General information: All locked doors inside the building, including trap doors, can only be opened by using master keys that are in the possession of Sergeant Stoan and Torvis Mull. Other doors are kept closed and unlocked, but can be locked with keys that are carried by all the soldiers stationed at the garrison.

Six or seven of the ten regular soldiers stationed here are on duty at any time. Off-duty soldiers spend their free time relaxing in the common room or sleeping in the barracks; they will generally not be wearing their armor, but will be carrying their swords unless they are asleep.

All persons entering Cormyr are required to sign in at one of the border garrisons. The commander and the resident War Wizard both keep records of individuals who pass through their jurisdiction. In addition, any mage or specialist wizard of 5th level or higher must register with the resident War Wizard. The mage's name, sigil, where-

abouts, and current abode or destination must be made known at all times upon the request of any member of the Purple Dragons or the War Wizards; this information is recorded and continually updated in the library of Vangerdahast, the Royal Magician and head of the War Wizards.

Foreign currency is accepted at many places of business in Cormyr's larger cities (including Suzail, Arabel, and Tilverton, which the PCs will visit in the course of these adventures), but not in smaller municipalities. The larger cities have currency exchanges; until the PCs visit one of these places, they may have trouble paying for lodging, food, or equipment with anything other than gems or jewelry. Objects being kept or stored at a border outpost (including food, clothing, and other essentials) are never made available for purchase by those who are entering the kingdom—everything in the place is the property of the Crown.

Adventurers do not receive charters from border garrisons; those documents are only obtainable at High Horn, in Arabel, or in Suzail. A charter costs 1,000 Cormyrean gold lions, and grants the registered members of the group the right to go about without having their weapons peace-bonded; it does not give those individuals the right to conduct themselves aggressively or in an uncivilized fashion when in the presence of Cormyrean citizens. (Soldiers at the garrison will provide this information if asked, and will give directions to the nearest of the three locations where a charter can be obtained.)

The mandatory peace-bonding of weapons is generally performed by the commander of a garrison, but can be done by any member of the Purple Dragons. This act consists of tying one or more lengths of cord around a weapon so as to fasten it in place and prevent it from being immediately brought into use. The cords are tied in a special knot known only to Purple Dragons and War Wizards—any of whom can recognize an improperly tied cord and has the authority to confiscate any weapons that are not properly peace-bonded.

1. Common room. All foot traffic into and out of the building must pass through this chamber. The stout oak exterior door can be locked and bolted from the inside. A fireplace, a large wooden table, and twelve chairs are the only permanent features of the room.

Travelers coming into Cormyr are ushered into this room in order to undergo the registration process. Going through the process takes one hour for a group of six



people. Under normal circumstances, no “foreigners” are allowed anywhere in the complex beyond the common room (except for VIPs, often escorted into room #7).

2. Barracks. This simply appointed room is the quarters for the ten regular soldiers stationed here. It contains ten cots, ten trunks (each soldier has a key to his own trunk), a couple of small tables, and a fireplace.

3. Kitchen. This room is outfitted with a hearth, tables for food preparation, dishes and utensils, and a larder. Cooking duty is rotated between the ten soldiers. Two men, unarmed and wearing no armor but with their swords close at hand, will be found working in here during the hour before each of the three daily meals is to be served.

4. Armory. On shelves and racks along the walls of this room are long swords, short bows, daggers, spears, and halberds—20 of each weapon when the armory is fully stocked. Also stored here are 400 flight arrows, 200 sheaf arrows, and five sets of chain mail armor.

5. Holding cell. Criminals, unregistered visitors, and other malefactors are kept here while awaiting transport to the nearest city for trial. The door is solid iron, and a guard is always posted in the corridor outside the room if anyone is being held. The room contains eight 5'-by-10' cells, each of which can accommodate as many as four prisoners (although each individual cell has only one cot). A five-foot-wide corridor runs down the center of the room from west to east.

6. Storage. This room contains miscellaneous dry goods (spare clothing and bedding, writing implements, extra chairs, nonperishable foodstuffs, and so forth). It is also the place where any goods confiscated from would-be smugglers are stored. All confiscated items are *wizard marked* by the garrison's resident mage and cannot be removed from the room without the consent of the commander.

7. Meeting room. This room is much more pleasantly appointed than the common room, featuring a soft carpet; braziers for warmth, comfortable chairs, a cabinet holding a carafe of wine and six goblets, and a long, polished table with six matching chairs. The commander holds planning meetings here, and noble and/or influential travelers get processed in this room instead of in the common room.

A ladder on the north wall goes up to a trap door in the ceiling. The passage leads to the wizard's workroom (room #9).

8. Commander's quarters. This spacious but spartan room contains a bed, a desk, a fireplace, a personal locker, and a large locked steel chest. The chest contains the legal documents and paperwork recording the passage of all persons who have come through the check-point,

9. Wizard's workroom. This chamber is illuminated by a globe of continual Eight, which can be covered when the light is not needed. It contains the usual items found in a wizard's laboratory (spell components, measuring devices, spell books and other reading material, miscellaneous furniture). The wizard also has duplicates of all the paperwork found in the commander's quarters. Only on extremely rare occasions is anyone other than the garrison's resident mage permitted to enter this room.

A ladder on the north wall goes up to a trap door in the ceiling, which leads to the wizard's quarters.

10. Wizard's quarters. This secluded room contains an expensive carpet, tasteful tapestries on the walls, a very comfortable bed, a fireplace, and a desk. No important equipment or materials are stored here; all such items are in the wizard's workroom.

A ladder on the north wall goes up to a trap door in the ceiling, which leads to the roof.

11. Roof. An iron framework in the middle of the roof holds a red crystal globe with a continual light spell cast upon it. A heavy black tarpaulin is draped over the crystal. If the garrison is in distress, one soldier will obtain a master key (needed to get through the trap doors) from either Sergeant Stoan or Torvis Mull and will immediately head for the roof to take the cover off the globe. When the covering is removed, the red signal light can be seen for miles in all directions. There is a cumulative 10% chance per hour that the signal will be seen by a Purple Dragon roving patrol. At full gallop, they will arrive at the outpost in 2d6+2 minutes.

12. Stable. A dozen light warhorses are stabled here, watched over by two soldiers. Harnesses, saddles, and other types of gear are suspended from hooks in the walls of each horse's stall. At any given time, four of the horses are saddled and ready to ride.





The Bibliophile

This adventure is an exercise in adventurer manipulation. It is recommended that “The Bibliophile” be the first adventure run, since any inexperience or naivete on the part of the just-arrived PCs will make the scam that much easier to pull off. Although the adventure takes place in Arabel and its environs, the location can be changed in order to conform to individual campaigns. All that is required to change the adventure is modifications to landmarks and descriptive text.

If the PCs have not yet obtained an adventuring charter, this should be one of their first chores after reaching the city. The Purple Dragons they encounter at the city gate will direct them to the Citadel, on the city’s west side, where this requirement can be taken care of.

Arabel is one of the rare locations within Cormyr where it is permitted for individuals—even if they are not chartered adventurers or mercenaries—to walk about with unbound weapons. The soldiers at the gate will *not* inform the PCs of this fact when they enter the city.

The Trap Is Set

For a while, you have wandered the streets of Arabel, taking in the sights, trying to get your bearings. The city is called the crossroads of Cormyr by some, and judging by the diversity of people you see, the description is well deserved. However, now twilight is settling in. Accommodations would be a good thing to acquire, and word has it that the Nine Fires Inn has warmth, food, and vacancies.

As you approach the inn, your attention is drawn to noises coming from an alley to the south. Squinting into the shadows, you can see a figure being attacked by four hooded assailants. One of the assailants seems to be trying to tug something away from the victim.

Before you can react, the assailants see you and, after delivering the victim a blow that makes him crumple to the cold cobblestones, they run further into the alley, melting into the growing darkness.

An adventuring company called the Puppetmasters has been spying on the PCs since the characters’ arrival in Arabel. After sizing them up as less informed out-of-towners, the Puppetmasters decided to spring their trap. At the precise right moment, the company’s thief was “waylaid” by four of his compatriots. They pretended to give the man a mortal blow—made convincing by the group’s wizard, who cast a *feign death* spell on the “victim” by touching him just as he was falling to the ground.

When the PCs arrive at the site of the attack, they see an old man with a trickle of blood coming from his mouth. A small purse is fastened to a sturdy leather strap that encircles his upper body. It takes only a moment of examination to determine that he is dead. There are no tracks to be found on the cobblestone streets. There were no other witnesses to the attack, and the PCs could not get a good look at any of the faces of the assailants.

The attackers, who know every inch of this area of the city, split up and regroup several minutes later at the Wink and Kiss Tavern, one block southeast of the Nine Fires.

Checking the old man’s purse reveals a folded-up map (see Map 2, on the inside front cover of this book) and a parchment letter. The letter reads:





My dearest Lyryn,

Just as I hoped, I have managed to secure a map from Barrit of Tilvoerton, showing the ruins of the legendary complex of the old scholar Adzerak. The treasures that await are enough for me to live out my remaining days in comfort. There will also be plenty for you and my granddaughter to live comfortably. Maybe you will even be able to meet a fine man and be wed again.

However, I must be careful; although this is a kingdom where law and fairness prevail, the hearts of some men are still dark. There are many who would kill for this map, but so far, I do believe I have eluded notice.

I shall seek out an honest adventuring company to aid me in exploring the ruins, and pay them their respective shares. Do not worry, there should be plenty enough to go around, if the rumors are true.

Do not fear for me, my daughter. I shall return to you in Thunderstone in two tenduys, with our fortunes made. Until then, pray to Tyr for my safety.

*Your loving father,
Dorenn*

The letter has today's date, and the ink is still fresh, implying that the old man was perhaps on his way to posting the letter to an eastbound caravan to get it delivered to Thunderstone.

If the PCs call for the watch, four members of the city garrison (same statistics as for Purple Dragons; see "The Border Crossing") arrive in 1d4+2 minutes. The guards will take the PCs' statements and allow them to be on their way shortly. If the characters reveal the purse and its contents to the guards, the documents will be confiscated, but the PCs will be rewarded for their lawful gesture by being allowed to make a copy of either or both of them. (The guards are not impressed by rumors of treasure, nor by a crude map that they consider to be a fabrication, but they will keep both original documents for evidence nonetheless.)

What About Adzerak?

After this incident has played out, the PCs should see to accommodations. Once they are settled, they may want to find out more about Adzerak.

A little digging (locating and consulting a sage who is an expert on local history, or making a trip to the royal library in the Citadel) will reveal that Adzerak was a wizard who lived circa DR 1090, nearly three hundred years ago. A worshiper of Deneir, he was obsessed with books and had a remarkable collection of them, rumored

to be one of the most impressive for a wizard of his caliber. He did manage to amass a fortune, much of which he used to buy more and more books. The information the PCs discover will neither support nor refute the facts they have gleaned from the letter and the map.

If the PCs decide not to research the subject of Adzerak, they can pick up some talk among other patrons of the Nine Fires about the Wink and Kiss Tavern being a good place to hear gossip and information, as well as have a good meal. If they go to the Wink and Kiss, they will most certainly meet the four Puppetmasters who have gathered there. (Descriptions of the company members can be found at the end of this adventure.) If the Puppetmasters are asked about Adzerak, they will make a grand show of knowing about him and the fabulous treasure he is rumored to have possessed—but, according to them, no one knows where this treasure is located, and someone who finds out the location would be a lucky person indeed. (This bit of deception is designed to give the PCs any necessary incentive to follow the map and seek out the place it leads to.)

A Most Peculiar Rumor

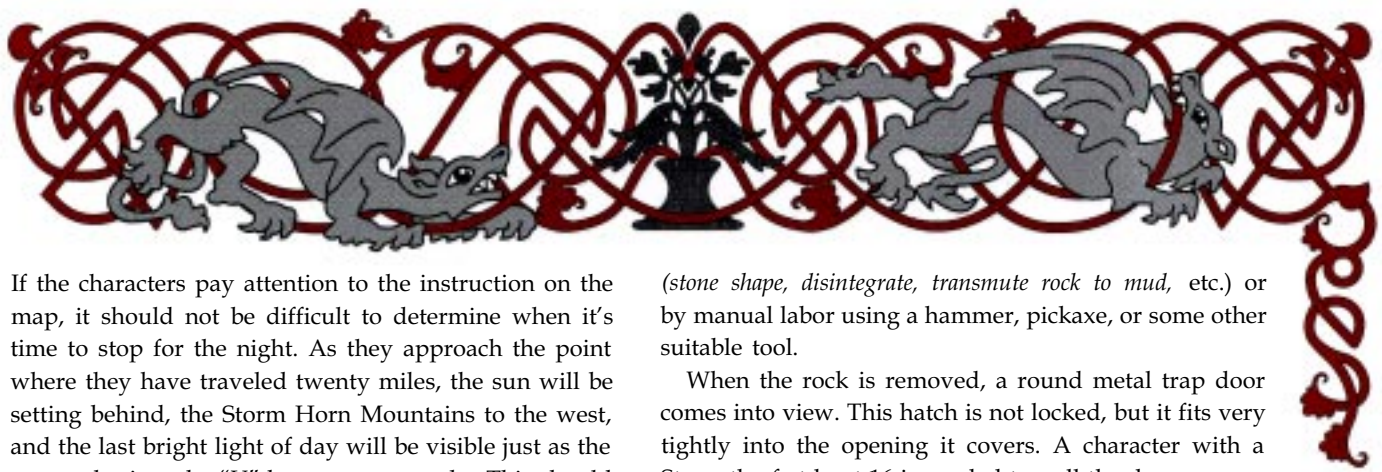
The next day, before the PCs leave the city, they may catch wind of a rumor. It seems that an old man was killed last night in an assault on the streets, but no one now knows where the body is.

What actually happened is that the city guards removed the body to an unsecured holding area (which is standard procedure, and which the Puppetmasters knew would happen), where it was due to be examined in detail the next morning. But a couple of hours after the "attack," the *feign death* spell wore off, and the old thief escaped from the holding area, planning to meet back up with his companions the following day.

The Journey

Realizing (from the map) that they have a 20-mile trip ahead of them to reach the place where they are supposed to turn and head due west, the PCs should be eager to rise in the morning and stock up with provisions for the ride. Assuming that they get on their way no later than mid-morning, their mission will be off to a good start.

You depart the crowded streets of Arabel and ride off in a northwesterly direction. The terrain and weather are perfect for riding.



If the characters pay attention to the instruction on the map, it should not be difficult to determine when it's time to stop for the night. As they approach the point where they have traveled twenty miles, the sun will be setting behind, the Storm Horn Mountains to the west, and the last bright light of day will be visible just as the sun settles into the "V" between two peaks. This should be the group's signal to make camp and get some rest before proceeding directly west the next morning.

Normal random encounters should be rolled on the trip from Arabel to this point, plus nighttime encounters rolled on each of the three overnight watches. (Use the "Temperate Plain" encounter table provided on page 127.) Barring a random encounter, the night passes uneventfully, although during the night, select one PC to have a dream of the rotting body of an old man, plodding determinedly across a great plain under a brilliant canopy of stars, the lights of a large city fading slowly in the background. The man's face shows hatred and bloodlust, his one intact eye burning with the fires of revenge.

The second leg of the trip, a ten-mile ride due west, takes half a day of travel by horseback. As on the first leg, roll for the likelihood of random encounters.

The Destination

Keeping the sun at your back, you travel due west looking for the place on the map described as "Barrenstone." After half a day of steady movement, you see an unusual-looking patch of ground ahead. In stark contrast to the tree-dotted grassland around it, this large disc of soft stone is free of vegetation.

This piece of seamless rock was magically created by Adzerak using a *transmute mud to rock* spell. It is 300 feet in diameter and a uniform 2 feet in depth, and beneath the rock at the center of the circle (designated by the "X" on the map) is the entrance to Adzerak's underground domain. (Changing this patch of land from mud to rock and back again was Adzerak's way of concealing the entry to his residence while allowing himself access to the entrance whenever he desired to come or go.)

By pacing off the distance from opposite edges, it should be simple for the PCs to locate the center of the disc of stone. To gain entry to Adzerak's home (depicted in Map 3, on page 15), it is necessary to remove the rock in a 5-foot-diameter circle around the center of the disc. This can be accomplished by a number of magical means

(*stone shape*, *disintegrate*, *transmute rock to mud*, etc.) or by manual labor using a hammer, pickaxe, or some other suitable tool.

When the rock is removed, a round metal trap door comes into view. This hatch is not locked, but it fits very tightly into the opening it covers. A character with a Strength of at least 16 is needed to pull the door open.

Adzerak's Home

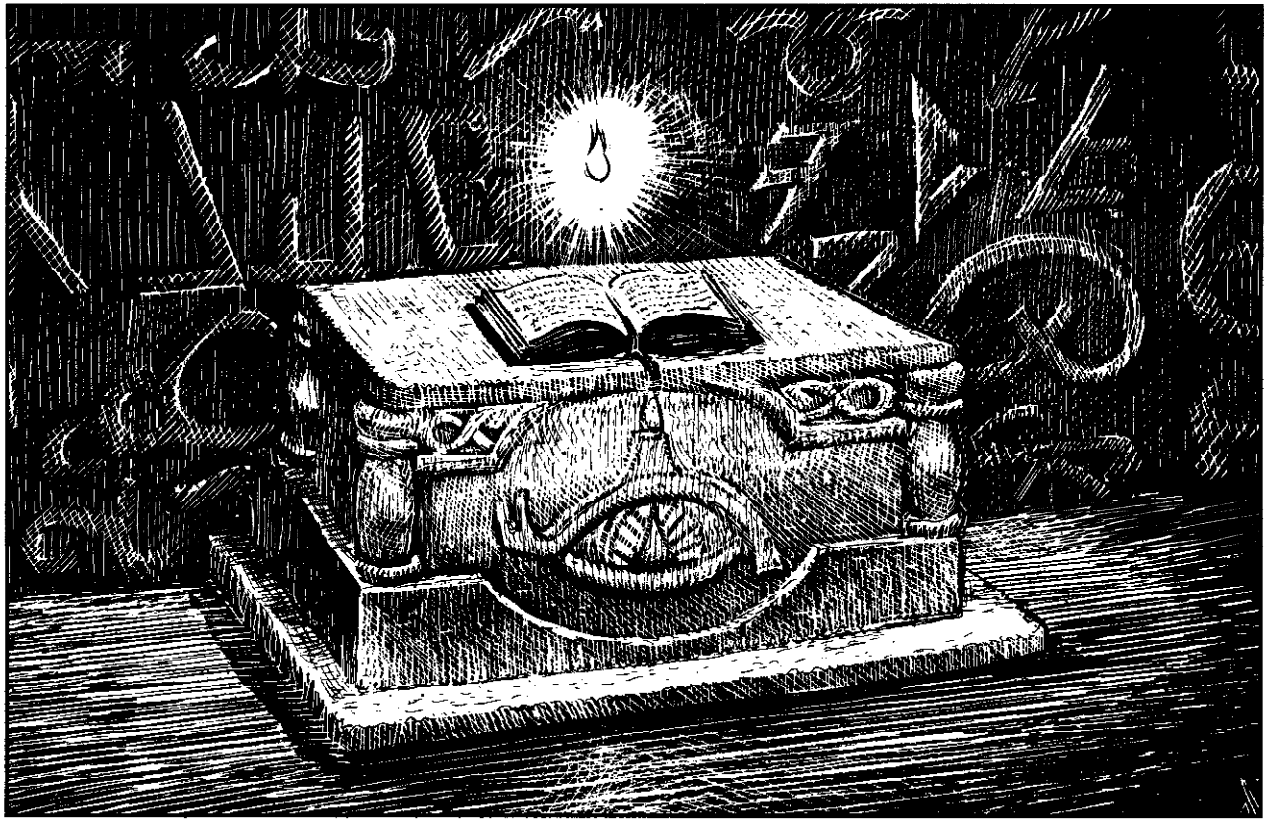
1. Entry. *The trap door opens grudgingly, with a loud shriek of rusted hinges. The odor of mold and decay coming up from below is an indication that you are the first people to set foot here in centuries. A stone spiral staircase descends into the darkness.*

The stairs go down 20 feet and end at the beginning of a corridor heading south. The corridor ends at a rusted iron door, which is locked. A small hook is set into the upper part of the door. Hung from the hook, suspended on a chain, is a thin, featureless metal disc. Turning the disc over will reveal a sign bearing the words "No Entry Without Appointment" elaborately engraved into the metal. The curlicues in the engraving are actually *explosive runes*. If the trap is not detected, the runes will detonate, causing 6d4+6 hit points of damage to the character standing closest to the door.

2. Antechamber. *The air in here is foul and stifling, probably because any ventilation shafts have been long since blocked up by the debris of centuries.*

A chandelier still hangs on the ceiling of this large antechamber. A few moldering chairs and couches, which look like they were pretty comfortable a few centuries ago, are scattered about the room. Doors are set in the center of each wall. The eastern door, made of what looks like cheap wood, is ajar. The southern door is made of more expensive wood, and appears tightly closed. The most impressive portal is the double doors on the western wall. These doors are set with stained glass that still looks beautiful, and on each one is a carving of an eye surmounted by a candle.

If the PCs found out anything about Adzerak before they left Arabel, a successful Intelligence check by any one of them will yield the fact that the carving on these doors is the symbol of Deneir, the god of glyphs and images. If any of the player characters has the religion nonweapon proficiency, it will be immediately apparent that what lies beyond the double doors is a room devoted to the worship of Deneir. The double doors are locked but can



be opened easily (+50 bonus to a thief's chance of picking the lock).

With the exception of a 300-year-old gold coin under the cushion of one of the couches (value 1 gp by weight, or 100 gp to a collector), nothing in this room is of any interest or value.

Visible in the dust on the floor are four distinct set of human-sized footprints that wander all through the room, with the trails leading to and from the east door.

3. Shrine to Deneir. *A feeling of security and enlightenment covers you as you enter this room. Despite the lack of functioning ventilation, the air still seems healthy and comfortable.*

A simple stone altar with a small flame flickering in the air above it stands against the west wall. The walls are decorated with carvings of every glyph, symbol, and letter of all the written languages known in Faerûn.

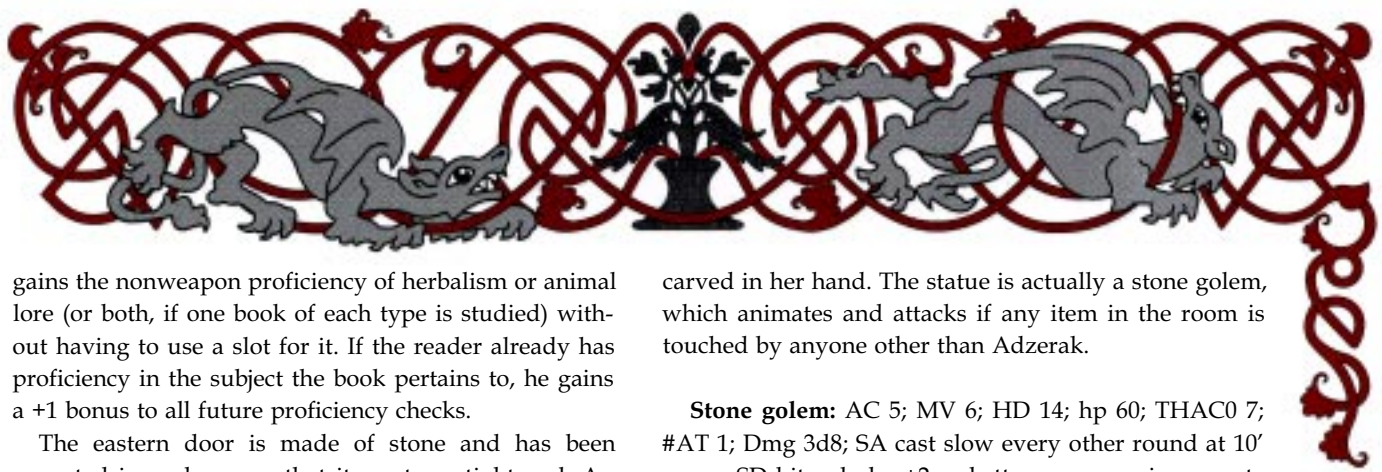
This chamber has remained immune to the ravages of time for more than three centuries, ever since Adzerak had it sanctified by a high-level priest of Deneir. The flame atop the altar is a *dancing lights* spell upon which

Adzerak cast permanency, so as to form it into an everlasting tribute to the holy symbol of his deity. The flame does not give off heat, and it cannot be moved. The illumination from it is sufficient to bathe the entire room in a dim golden light.

A single book lies on the altar just below the flame. It is called *The Deneirian Codex*, and covers in detail all the aspects of Deneir, his ethos, and how he is worshiped.

4. Adzerak's Den. *After getting past the locked door, you are rewarded with what looks like a far more comfortable room than the antechamber. One immediately noticeable improvement is the better air quality. A thick layer of dust covers the furniture, carpet, and bookcases. A bucket of very dry, gray wood stands next to the fireplace. The eastern wall has a door set into the center.*

This was Adzerak's favorite room. The shelves along the north, south, and east walls contain hundreds of books on various topics. In particular, the bookcase on the east wall north of the door holds Adzerak's collection of written works on the subjects of plant lore and animals. Any character who studies one of these books for one week



gains the nonweapon proficiency of herbalism or animal lore (or both, if one book of each type is studied) without having to use a slot for it. If the reader already has proficiency in the subject the book pertains to, he gains a +1 bonus to all future proficiency checks.

The eastern door is made of stone and has been mounted in such a way that it creates a tight seal. An iron ring set into the door enables it to be pulled open by anyone with a Strength of 16 or higher.

5. Laboratory. *The stench of still-potent chemicals and the odor of mildew and rot waft out to meet you as soon as you open the door. Bright light fills the room, and as your vision adjusts, you see the source: a beautifully carved granite statue of a ten-foot-tall, shapely woman with an open book in her right hand, and holding aloft a glowing rod in her left hand. She is standing in the southeast corner of the room.*

The room contains two large, chemical-stained stone tables filled with alchemical equipment such as braziers, furnaces, beakers, retorts, distilling coils and the like, plus containers holding various substances, and stacks of books. By comparison, a small table in the northeast corner is relatively uncluttered. A large book lies open on it, and around the book are a dozen jars of various sizes.

The wall opposite the door you entered through has a door set into the center.

This is a fully equipped and still functional wizard's laboratory. The room contains 50 books scattered about, 48 of them typical treatises on alchemy and other wizardly topics. One book is a *manual of golems (stone)*. The last book is called *The Lifecycle Arcane*. This is the large tome that is resting on the small table in the corner of the room. The book outlines the stages of life as a wizard lives them, starting with apprenticeship and proceeding through cantrip mastery, graduation, spellbook acquisition, specialization, laboratory creation, item fabrication, stronghold construction, taking on apprentices, retirement, and finally, lichdom.

A successful spellcraft proficiency check reveals that the ingredients in the dozen containers on the small table are the potion ingredients necessary to carry out the ritual that brings about lichdom. Each container is roughly half full, indicating that some portion of the ingredients has been used. An even more obvious giveaway is the fact that *The Lifecycle Arcane* is open to the chapter on lichdom.

The ten-foot-tall stone statue provides illumination by means of a *continual light* spell cast on the wand

carved in her hand. The statue is actually a stone golem, which animates and attacks if any item in the room is touched by anyone other than Adzerak.

Stone golem: AC 5; MV 6; HD 14; hp 60; THAC0 7; #AT 1; Dmg 3d8; SA cast slow every other round at 10' range; SD hit only by +2 or better weapons, immune to most spells; SW *stone to flesh, transmute rock to mud*; SZ L; ML fearless (20); Int non- (0); AL N; XP 8,000.

6. Adzerak's Bedroom. *This room contains an opulent bed with an elaborate "A" carved in the headboard, a dresser with a washbasin and pitcher, a nightstand with a hooded lantern and five books, and a full-sized wardrobe made of cedar. Everything has a layer of dust on it. Even after all these centuries, however, the cedar still has some of its distinctively pleasant smell.*

In the southeast corner of the room stands an eight-foot-tall statue of a muscular young man.

Adzerak enjoyed an eclectic selection of reading, as the books on the nightstand will attest to. The titles are: *Cheating Death by Spell and Incantation*, *A Dissertation of Law and Morality as Seen by Tyr's Church*, *Calimshan on Three Gold Pieces a Day*, *Elminster: An Unauthorized Biography*, and *Shocking Tales of Elven Desire*.

The nightstand has a drawer, with a single key inside it. This key opens the door to the treasure room (#10).

The wardrobe contains various robes, cloaks, and a *necklace of memory enhancement* (see *Tome of Magic* page 141, or the "Magical Items" section in the back of this book), the latter hanging on a hook. In the back of the wardrobe is a secret door that leads to the library (#11.)

The statue is actually a stone guardian golem with orders to attack anyone other than Adzerak who opens the drawer in the nightstand or removes any of the contents of the wardrobe.

Stone guardian golem: AC 2; MV 9; HD 4+4; hp 30; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1d8+1/1d8+1; SD 1/4 damage from edged weapons, 1/2 damage from cold, fire or electricity, immune to normal missiles; SW *stone to flesh, transmute rock to mud, stone shape, dig*; SZ L; ML fearless (20); Int non- (0); AL N; XP 650.

7. Hallway. *This musty hallway harbors a sinister chill that seems to seek you out and cling to you. Torch sconces are set into the walls at ten-foot intervals, but the torches themselves have long since burned out. There are two doors*



on the northern wall of the corridor and two doors on the southern wall. The pair of doors closest to the antechamber are slightly ajar, and the other two doors are closed.

Suddenly, the two partially open doors explode outward, discharging four emaciated humans with grayish skin and eyes glowing red with evil. A horrendous stench of decomposition assails you, carried on a cold dark breeze that heralds the attackers' presence.

The four attackers are wights, who in life were Adzerak's four apprentices. When Adzerak incorrectly cast the enchantment to turn himself into a lich, the error caused a wave of energy-draining force that coursed through the complex, turning the innocent adepts into horrendous undead. They have been stuck down here for centuries, starved to the point of madness yet never dying.

Wights (4): AC 5; MV 12; HD 4+3; hp 21 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SA energy drain; SD hit only by silver or +1 or better magical weapons, immune to sleep, charm, hold, cold-based spells, and poison or paralyzation attacks; SW holy water, raise dead, bright light; SZ M; ML elite (14); Int average (10); AL LE; XP 1,400 each.

8. Southern Dormitory. The door to this room hangs loosely on its hinges. Looking inside, you are hard pressed to identify even one piece of furniture; it looks as if an extremely efficient vandal took special care to reduce everything in this room to kindling. Splintered wood, shattered glass, torn cloth, and a layer of goosedown feathers cover the floor.

This room was the bedroom of two of Adzerak's apprentices. In their rage and frustration after being turned into wights, they tore their room apart.

9. Northern Dormitory. Although the door to this room is in better shape than the one to the south, the interior of the chamber is much the same: devastated beyond recognition, as if someone tore everything apart with their bare hands.

This room was the bedroom of two of Adzerak's pupils. However, one of these two had a little more self-control than his comrades, and managed to keep his wits about him long enough to write down a message on parchment. Each PC has a cumulative 10% chance per round of searching the room to find the parchment. It reads:

"Our master is a fool. I knew the enchantment wasn't being prepared correctly, but he wouldn't listen. Now he has

what he wants, and we four are doomed to this existence forever. Damn him and his books! Doesn't he know that he's now cast from Deneir's sight?"

10. Treasure Room. The door to this room is made of iron, heavily engraved with various decorations and arcane symbols. A stout steel lock is set into the door.

Among the decorations on the door is a symbol (pain). If the key from Adzerak's bedroom is employed here, the portal opens safely, bypassing the trap. If the door is opened by any means other than using the key, the symbol is activated—all characters are wracked with pain, causing a -2 penalty to Dexterity and a -4 penalty on attack rolls for 2d10 turns.

If the PCs succeed in getting through the door by any means, they must be careful not to let it swing open any more than is necessary for each character to enter one at a time. If they do not specifically keep the door from opening all the way (perpendicular to the corridor), the leading edge of the door will break a *hedged prison* (see the *binding* spell, *Player's Handbook* page 239) that confines a nabassu. If it is freed, the nabassu will immediately attack.

Tanar'ri, greater — nabassu: AC 0; MV 12, Fl 15 (C); HD 7+10; hp 50; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 2d4/2d4/3d4 (claw/claw/bite); SA death gaze once per day, darkness 15' radius, backstab (x2); SD hit only by cold iron or +1 or better magical weapons; SZ M (7' tall); ML champion (15); Int high (13); AL CE; XP 9,000. (See *PLANESCAPE® MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®* Appendix, page 106.)

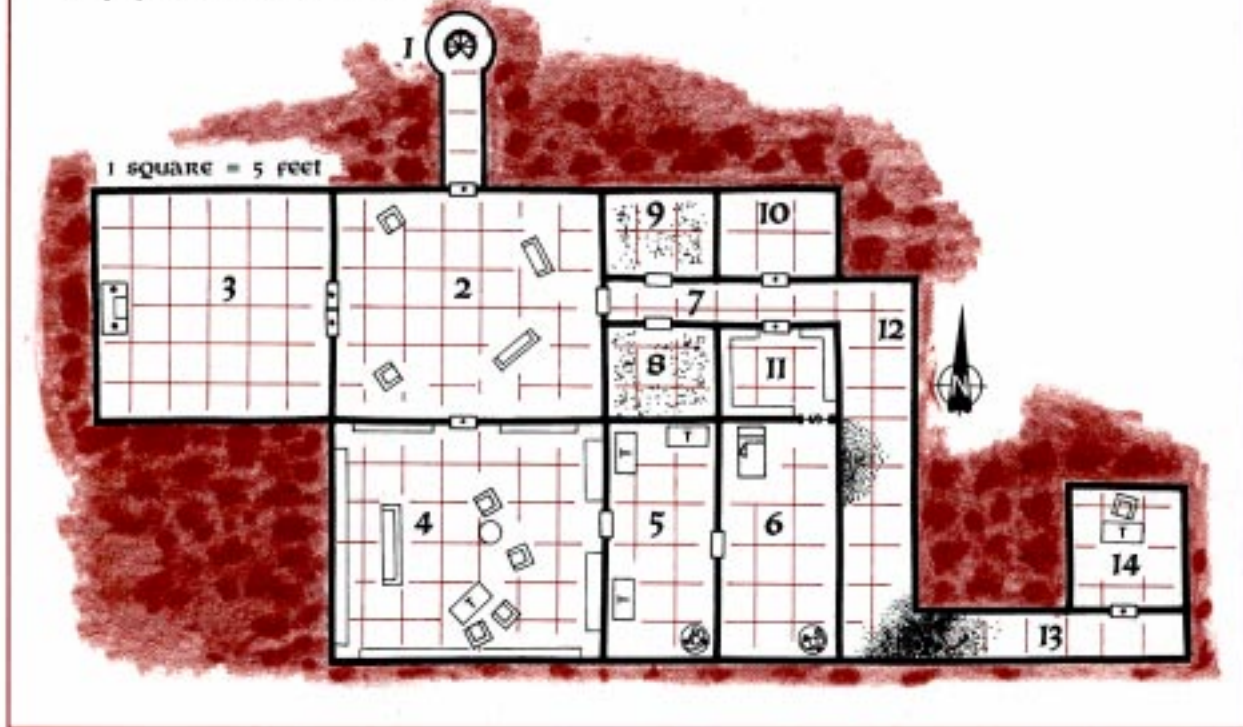
Note: A target hit by the *death gaze* must make a successful saving throw vs. spell or transform into a ghastr (or ghoul, if the victim is a demihuman) over the next 10 days. The death of the nabassu or a *remove curse* spell prevents the process from being completed.

Adzerak had stored away quite a lot of money for the purchase and preservation of more books. Additionally, he came across some magic items that he did not sell, and just tossed them into a chest and put them in this room.

There are a total of eight chests and one urn in this room. The urn contains 100 diamonds, each worth 100 gp. Six chests hold 4,000 gp each, and one contains 2,000 pp. The eighth chest contains a robe of useful items, a *periapt of health*, a *bag of tricks*, a *rope of climbing*,



Map 3 Adzerak's Home



a *Nefradina's* identifier, and a scroll with the spells *ride the wind*, *chaos shield*, *fireball*, *wizard sight*, and *spirit armor*. The scroll functions at the 12th level of spell-casting ability.

Also in the chest is a short sword magnificently decorated with gems, and a gold and platinum trim. It is a *short sword* +3, but is also intelligent. The sword's name is Imp.

Imp: Intelligence 15, Ego 15; chaotic neutral; speaks ogre, troll, hill giant, common; *detect invisible objects* 10' radius, *detect gems* kind and number 5' radius, *strength* once per day. The sword heals its wielder's wounds, repairing damage equal to half the hit points of damage that it inflicts on an enemy in any particular round. Imp can also *dispel magic* at a base 50% chance of success, modified as per the description of the 3rd-level priest spell. However, the manifestation of magic to be dispelled must be something tangible or visible, such as a *glyph of warding*, *wall of force*, *magic mouth*, *wall of fire*, etc.

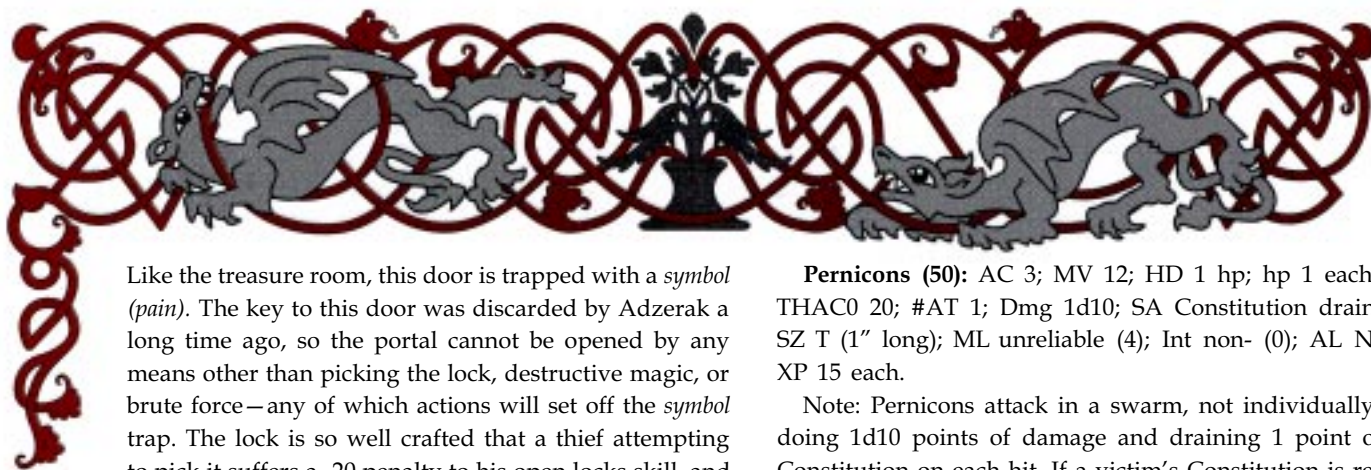
Imp lives up to its name well. If it takes over its wielder, it will compel the owner to destroy any other weapons he owns. The sword will also mouth off to any beings of obvious lawful alignment, good or evil; pal-

adins of Tyr and priests of Cyric are good examples. If Imp controls its wielder, the sword considers itself the dominant partner in the relationship and, to prove its power, will command the wielder to do embarrassing pet tricks. The sword is opinionated, and will sound off even if sheathed, unless the wielder is in control and bids the weapon to remain silent.

Any clever PC who thinks to question Imp about Adzerak will be told that Adzerak found the sword three centuries ago. However, it will also say that Adzerak is long gone, slain by his students when they turned evil. If the PCs eventually confront Imp with the truth, the sword will snarl, "Look, if 'tis honesty ye want, then find ye a Holy Avenger!"

The final item in the chest is the dagger *Deathsend*.

11. Library. The door to this room is solid iron with huge brass rivets along the edges. A formidable-looking lock is built into the door. The most striking feature, however, is the snarling mantichore head carved into the door at eye level. Whenever you look at it, a feeling of uneasiness begins at the base of your spine and races up your back, setting your hair on edge.



Like the treasure room, this door is trapped with a *symbol* (*pain*). The key to this door was discarded by Adzerak a long time ago, so the portal cannot be opened by any means other than picking the lock, destructive magic, or brute force—any of which actions will set off the *symbol* trap. The lock is so well crafted that a thief attempting to pick it suffers a -20 penalty to his open locks skill, and any failure breaks the tool the character used in the attempt.

If the PCs make it inside, read the following:

Huge wooden bookcases stretch from floor to ceiling, each one completely empty. There is no furniture in here; just shelves devoid of books.

This is Adzerak's true treasure room—his library. Unfortunately, he removed all the books centuries ago and brought them to his hidden sanctum.

12. Ruined corridor. *The narrow hallway turns to the south and widens considerably, but passage through the area still takes time because of extensive heaps of rubble scattered here and there. Obviously, not every part of this structure has held up over centuries of neglect.*

The refuse scattered throughout this corridor is partly due to the deterioration of the walls and ceiling and partly the result of efforts by the wights to seal Adzerak inside his sanctum. It is a combination of organic and inorganic matter—a fertile breeding ground for many types of insects, including two especially dangerous ones. If PCs search through or handle any of the rubbish (which eventually becomes unavoidable if they proceed to the southern end of this area), there is a cumulative 10% chance per turn that a small group of rot grubs or a nest of pernicons will be discovered (50% chance of each type for each separate encounter).

Rot Grubs (10): AC 9; MV 1, Br 0; HD 1 hp; hp 1 each; THAC0 n/a; #AT n/a; Dmg n/a; SA burrow into exposed flesh; SW fire, cure disease; SZ T (1" long); ML unsteady (5); Int non- (0); AL N; XP 15 each.

Note: A rot grub burrows into exposed flesh on a percentage chance equal to the target's base AC. Fire kills 2d10 grubs if applied before 1d6 rounds of burrowing have occurred, and cure disease kills all grubs outright. If not stopped, grubs reach the heart and kill the victim in 1d3 turns.

Pernicons (50): AC 3; MV 12; HD 1 hp; hp 1 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10; SA Constitution drain; SZ T (1" long); ML unreliable (4); Int non- (0); AL N; XP 15 each.

Note: Pernicons attack in a swarm, not individually, doing 1d10 points of damage and draining 1 point of Constitution on each hit. If a victim's Constitution is reduced to 2, he falls unconscious, and he is killed if his Constitution reaches 0. Lost Constitution points are regained at the rate of 1 per day.

The entryway to the southeast corridor is entirely sealed up with debris. It takes a total of 12 turns (two hours) to clear a passage through the mess. The corridor running east is wide enough for two people to work in it at one time, thereby cutting the clearing time in half.

13. Narrow corridor. *The air in this corridor is musty and thick with the dust of the ages. The walls are painted with fading frescoes depicting robed men and women battling undead, dragons, elementals, and the like. Not a single warrior type is to be seen in any of the illustrations. Each of the four pieces of art has a title engraved in a small metal plaque set into the wall beneath the illustration. A single door is near the end of the corridor, set into the north wall.*

Anyone who attempts to read one of the titles on the plaques will set off *explosive runes* that were woven into the engraved words, causing 6d4+6 points of damage to the reader and any others within 10 feet (although on-lookers take only half damage if they make successful saving throws vs. spell).

The door in the north wall is made of stout oak with bronze banding and a stout iron lock. It is sealed by a wizard lock cast at the 18th level of ability.

14. Adzerak. *This square room is brightly lit with two magical lanterns. The air smells of ancient leather, old paper, and bodily decay. A simple wooden table stands in the center of the room, and an ornate, cushioned chair is next to it on the side of the table opposite the door. An odd figure in tattered, rotting robes of purple sits in the chair, cradling a large book to its breast and rocking back and forth, muttering, "... books ... my books ... all mine ..." as if reciting some litany. The figure's face is partially rotted, and only a few strands of greenish-gray hair cling to the head. It has one eyeball in its head, and this eye stares, unblinking, off into space.*

Books are everywhere throughout the room, placed in numerous disarrayed stacks that tower to the ceiling.



The figure takes a few seconds to register your presence. "One of my eyes fell out," it croaks in a voice that crackles like burning paper. A wave of unnatural cold touches you. "Now I can only read books half as fast as I could when . . . when . . ." The figure halts in mid-sentence, as if it cannot remember what it was going to say. Suddenly its rotting features harden; its jaw clenches, and its teeth grind together. "Thieves! You are here to steal my books, eh?" Through all of this, the figure still has not let go of the book.

This is Adzerak the lich. Even though his transformation into lichdom was generally successful, problems did occur, such as the energy blast that turned his apprentices into wights. Two significant side effects on Adzerak himself were the fact that his eyes remained in their sockets (until a few years ago, when one of them dropped out) and his brain became severely addled. He now sits in this room, surrounded by his precious books.

The room contains 2,000 volumes of varying sizes, each one weighing 1d4 pounds. They represent all facets of literature, from books of knowledge to insipid fiction collections. Mixed among them is a smattering of magical tomes, which cannot be easily located even with the

use of *detect magic* because of the vast number of books in the area. Also in here, close to where he is sitting, are the lich's spell books. Adzerak will fight to the "death" to prevent any books from being taken from this room without his permission.

Actually, Adzerak is harmless. Although he has all the powers of a lich at his beck and call, he will only initiate violence if he is attacked.

If the PCs attempt to parley with him, Adzerak mutters, ". . . books . . . needed to save my books . . . who would see to them when I died? Had to not die . . . had to prolong life . . . must keep my books safe . . ."

Adzerak is more to be pitied than feared. So intent was he on saving his precious books that he risked his own soul to become a lich, to gain immortality so he could perpetually protect his books.

However, there is a way out for him. If at least one PC makes a Wisdom ability check, or if any PC has the religion nonweapon proficiency, the idea will come to mind that perhaps Adzerak could offer his books into the safe-keeping of Deneir. Although he was a devout worshiper of Deneir in life, Adzerak had all memory of the deity obscured by his descent into lichdom.



If the idea is suggested to Adzerak, his face takes on an amazed expression as a hidden niche in his memory opens up. He remembers that he was a worshiper of Deneir, and he recalls all the details of where he is and what is in his home, including the fact that he has a room devoted to that deity. He will then implore the PCs to help him carry all the books to the shrine, a procedure that will take a good two hours to accomplish. Along the way, Adzerak will help the PCs deal with any perils that remain inside the complex (wights, the nabassu, untriggered traps, etc.), but he will not grant the characters access to the treasure room (#10), his laboratory (#5), or his bedroom (6).

Of course, if the PCs decide to just hack away at him, Adzerak is perfectly capable of not only defending himself, but also causing grievous bodily harm to everyone.

Adzerak the lich: AC 0; MV 6; HD 16; hp 108; THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10; SA paralyzing touch, fear aura; SD hit only by +1 or better magical weapons, immune to sleep, charm, enfeeblement, polymorph, cold, electricity, insanity, or death spells; SW can be turned; SZ M; ML fanatic (18); Int supra-genius (20); AL NE; XP 15,000.

Note: Adzerak's fear aura only affects creatures of 5 HD or fewer, and thus will be ineffective against the PCs' party unless it includes one or more NPCs of 5th level or lower.

Personality: befuddled, obsessed, absent-minded

Spells (5/5/5/5/3/3/2/1): 1st — magic missile (x5); 2nd — Melf's acid arrow (x5); 3rd — dispel magic (x5); 4th — bestow curse (x3), minor globe of invulnerability, vacancy; 5th — cloudkill (x5); 6th — fish to stone (x3); 7th — finger of death (x3); 8th — Bigby's clenched fist, prismatic wall; 9th — Bigby's crushing hand. Note: This lethal but not very versatile mix of spells is Adzerak's way of protecting his books (primarily by doing harm to anyone who tries to steal them or damage them). At your option, he may have other spells in memory in place of some of these.

A Soul Laid To Rest

If the PCs bring the books into the shrine, read the following:

As the last few books are set in place inside the shrine, a slow breeze springs up from nowhere. It ruffles pages in many of the books, then increases in strength until it becomes a

whirling vortex. Rays of pure golden light erupt from different places within the vortex, and Adzerak stands there, a look of rapt attention on his face.

Suddenly, letters and symbols fly off the pages of the books, and join in a dance within the vortex. Adzerak is now clearly viewing something else in that whirlwind that the rest of you cannot. Clearly, whatever he sees is filling him with sheer joy.

The whirlwind, now blackened with millions upon millions of letters, symbols, and glyphs, begins working on Adzerak. Bit by bit, like a windstorm buffeting a child's sand castle, the rotting corpse of the undead mage is eroded away, though it is clear that Adzerak feels no pain.

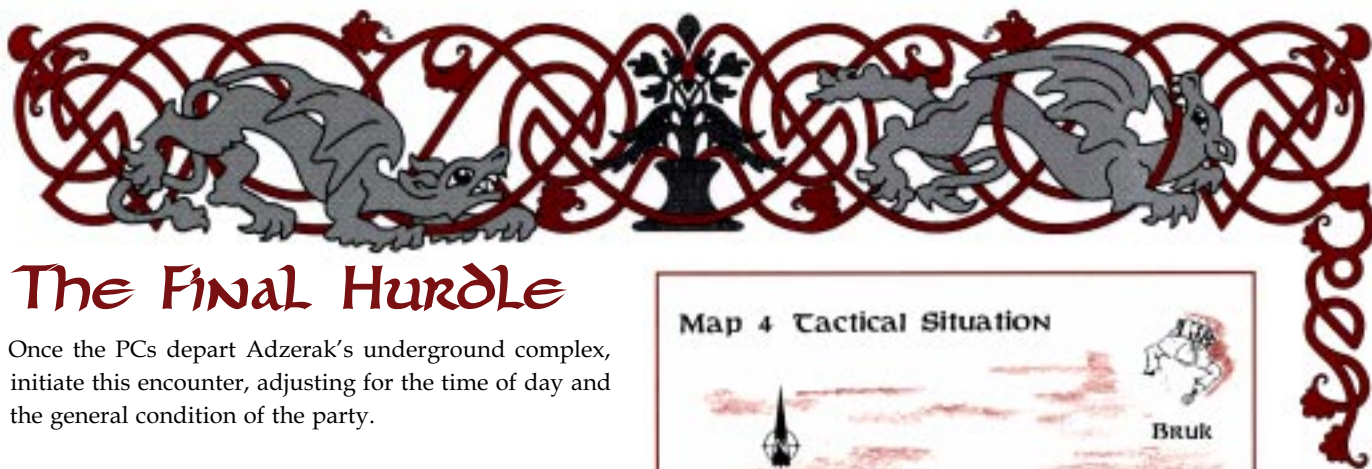
When the last vestige of the lich is gone, the ghostly image of a handsome, dignified old wizard turns to you, a look of peace on his face. "You have my gratitude for what you have done," he says above the tumult of the whirlwind. "You have shown me the path to redemption, freed me from my own selfish foolishness, and found the best place for my books and me to dwell: in the bosom of Lord Deneir. I leave you with these words: Melkereich will be looking for this place, and all who entered it. Be so warned."

Having said this, the spirit of Adzerak looks up into the whirlwind and allows himself to be taken up into it. The winds abruptly increase in strength and volume, but they have no effect on the area where you are standing.

A bright flash of light blinds you for a moment, and a thunderclap makes your ears ring at the same time. When your vision clears, the wind is gone, and all but a handful of Adzerak's books have vanished. Two facts are apparent: Adzerak has finally found peace, and the books that remain are your reward.

Lord Deneir has taken Adzerak and his books on to a pleasant afterlife. Any PC worshiper of Deneir will see a faint image of the god in the whirlwind.

After all they have been through, the PCs deserve a reward, and the books are certainly good compensation. The volumes are a book of exulted deeds, a libram of gainful conjuration, a manual of puissant skill at arms, and a manual of stealthy pilfering. If most of the PCs have three or more attribute scores of 15 or higher, then there's no more treasure. However, if this is not the case, you should throw in one copy of each of the five books that increase attributes: a manual of bodily health, a manual of gainful exercise, a manual of quickness of action, a tome of clear thought, a tome of understanding, and a tome of leadership and influence.



The Final Hurdle

Once the PCs depart Adzerak's underground complex, initiate this encounter, adjusting for the time of day and the general condition of the party.

You ascend the stairs of Adzerak's sanctum, and the fresh, sweet air of the outdoors fills your lungs and ruffles your hair. You have survived a serious challenge, freed a doomed soul, and have been rewarded well. There is little that could ruin your mood now.

An arrow suddenly ricochets off the stone a few feet in front of you. Raucous laughter erupts from several remote locations, and then, about 100 yards away, four figures emerge from behind cover. They are set up in an arc formation, one directly to your left, one directly to your right, one directly ahead of you, and the other one halfway between the center figure and the left-hand assailant. All of them begin moving slowly in your direction.

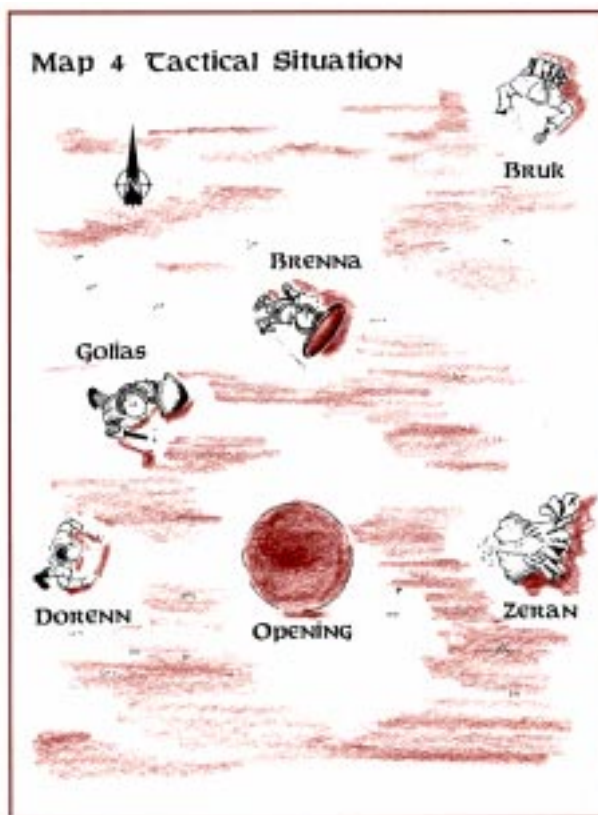
The figure directly to your left is an older man, and as he comes close enough for you to make out his face, you realize that he is the murder victim you saw back in Arabel. He notices your surprised expressions and cackles merrily.

Everyone in the company except for the armored woman standing directly ahead of you bursts into laughter, pointing at your group and wagging their heads in a taunting gesture. "Innocent fools, so easily manipulated," purrs the figure to your right, a woman of partial elven extraction, as she fingers a black disk around her neck. "Our thanks to you for taking the risks for us." Everyone laughs again.

"Enough foolishness!" barks the center woman. She puts away her bow and draws forth a glowing long sword. "These fools did the sowing and planting for us . . . all that is left for us is to collect the harvest." She looks directly at you, her steel eyes showing no compassion or room for negotiation. "Kindly place the wealth you found in the ruins on the ground at your feet. Keep your hands away from your weapons, and do not try to use any sort of magic. We just want the treasures of Adzerak. Leave them here, and leave this place, and I promise you won't be harmed."

The other figure, a male dwarf in armor, holds his hammer in a ready position. All four continue to advance slowly toward you.

Consult Map 4, on this page, for the tactical situation. The adventuring company known as the Puppetmasters followed the PCs here and simply waited for them to come out, if ever. The Puppetmasters would have given the PCs three days inside the complex, then would have ventured in to ascertain their fate.

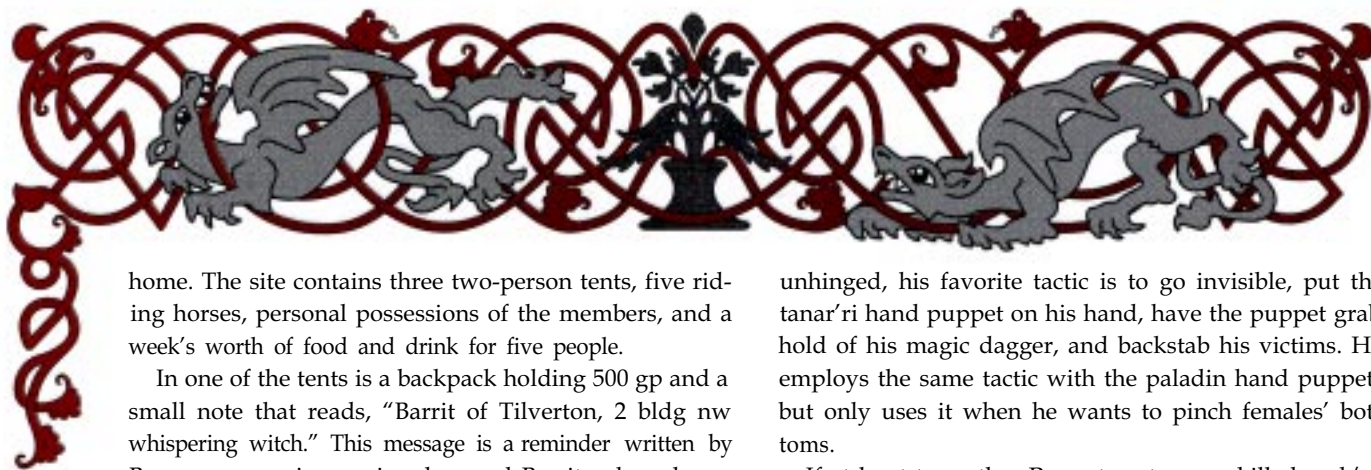


As can be seen by the tactical map, the fifth member of the company is lurking away from the rest of the Puppetmasters. This is Bruk, the group's wizard, with some of Dorenn's *dust of disappearance* sprinkled on him. Like the others, he has been moving slowly but steadily toward the PCs. By the time Brenna finishes making her promise that the heroes will not be harmed, the four visible members of the Puppetmasters are about 100 feet away from the PCs and Bruk is 200 feet distant.

If the PCs do not comply immediately with the Puppetmasters' demands, Brenna gives a curt nod, and Bruk detonates a *fireball* in the PCs' midst. This is the signal for an all-out attack by the Puppetmasters.

The assailants will do their best to knock out the obvious spellcasters first. If they are forced to retreat, the Puppetmasters will scatter, each taking a different escape route to make it difficult for the PCs to locate their campsite. Zeran is the only one who will head directly for the campsite; any PCs who pursue her (at a distance, so she does not realize she is being followed) or follow her tracks will find the group's hideout easily.

The Puppetmasters' small campsite is in a small grove of trees about half a mile east of the entry to Adzerak's



home. The site contains three two-person tents, five riding horses, personal possessions of the members, and a week's worth of food and drink for five people.

In one of the tents is a backpack holding 500 gp and a small note that reads, "Barrit of Tilverton, 2 bldg nw whispering witch." This message is a reminder written by Brenna concerning a wizard named Barrit, whose home is located two buildings northwest of the Whispering Witch Inn in Tilverton.

The Puppetmasters

So named because most of the company got their start as an entertainment troupe, they became adventurers when they realized that they did not want make a living entertaining spoiled children and bored nobles.

Their company name is still apropos, however, since the group is fond of manipulating others into doing most of their work for them.

The Puppetmasters are a chartered company in Cormyr, but have already been fined once for late fee payments and are in dire financial straits at the moment.

Brenna, hf F7: AC 2 (*ring of protection* +2, chain armor, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 58; THAC0 14 (13 w/Str, 12 w/sword of sharpness); #AT 2; Dmg 1d8+2 (*sword of sharpness* +1); SA specialist with long sword; SZ M; ML fearless (19); AL N; XP 3,000.

S 17, D 15, Co 16, I 12, W 16, C 11

Personality: humorless, fearless, pragmatic

Special Equipment: +2 *ring of protection* +2, *sword of sharpness* +1 (*long sword*), *short bow* +2, 24 *sheaf arrows* +2, chain armor, company's charter in backpack.

Brenna is the leader of the Puppetmasters. She has little tolerance for people who she deems weak, nor for failure.

Dorenn, hm T6: AC 2 (*leather armor* +2, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 24; THAC0 18 (16 w/short sword +2); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+2 (*short sword* +2) or 1d4+2 (*dagger* +2); SA backstab, +4 to hit, triple damage; SZ M; ML steady (11); AL CN; XP 975.
S 12, D 18, Co 14, I 12, W 17, C 9

Personality: taunting, eccentric, lecherous

Special Equipment: *short sword* +2, *dust of disappearance* (6 doses), *leather armor* +2, *dagger* +2, *thieves' tools*, *paladin hand puppet*, *tanar'ri hand puppet*.

Thief abilities: PP 55; OL 50; F/RT 45; MS 50; HS 40; DN 20; CW 90; RL 30.

Dorenn is an old man in his mid 60's, the one company member who was in fact a real puppeteer. Slightly

unhinged, his favorite tactic is to go invisible, put the *tanar'ri* hand puppet on his hand, have the puppet grab hold of his magic dagger, and backstab his victims. He employs the same tactic with the *paladin* hand puppet, but only uses it when he wants to pinch females' bottoms.

If at least two other Puppetmasters are killed and/or he suffers damage of over half his hit points, he will go invisible if he hasn't already done so, and will then flee the battle.

Golias, dm F6: AC 0 (*chain* +4, shield); MV 6; hp 60; THAC0 15 (12 w/Str, 9 w/*dwarven thrower*); #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d4+10 (*dwarven thrower* +3 when wielded) or 2d4+11 (*dwarven thrower* +3 when thrown); SA specialist with thrown hammer; SD +5 bonus on saves vs. magic and poison; SZ S; ML fearless (19); AL N; XP 3,000.

S 18/00, D 10, Co 18, I 9, W 12, C 8

Personality: stubborn, fearless, loyal

Special Equipment: *dwarven thrower* +3, *chain* +4.

Golias is a grim, tough dwarf who is fanatically loyal to Brenna, and just as brave as she is. Like her, he has an attitude of "no retreat, no surrender."

Zeran, hef P5 (Leira): AC 5 (*cloak of displacement*, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 28; THAC0 18 (17 w/mace +1); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (*horseman's mace* +1); SA *impenetrable falsehood* 1/day, *phantasmal force* or *audible glamor* 1/day, *misdirection* 1/day; SD +2 bonus to saves vs. illusion/phantasm magic; SZ M; ML elite (13); AL CN; XP 1,400.

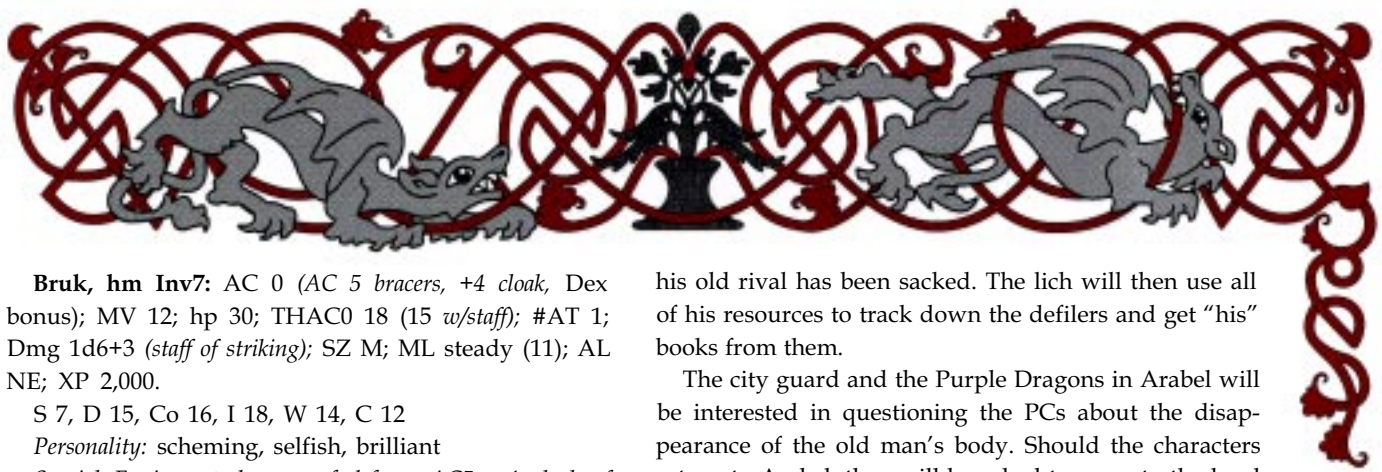
S 14, D 17, Co 15, I 12, W 18, C 15

Personality: mysterious, sneering, contemptuous

Special Equipment: *footman's mace* +1, *potion of healing* (2 doses), chain armor, holy symbol of Leira.

Spells (5/5/2): 1st — *bless*, *cause fear*, *command*, *cure light wounds*, *ventriloquism*; 2nd — *augury*, *heat metal*, *hold person*, *hypnotic pattern*, *silence* 15' radius; 3rd — *dispel magic*, *feign death*.

Zeran is a specialty priest of Leira, the goddess of deception and illusion. Among other special powers, she is able to pray for and use wizard spells of the illusion/phantasm school, casting them as if she were a 2nd-level mage. (See pages 93-96 of *Faiths & Avatars* for details on the worship of Leira.) If two or more of her comrades are killed, she will use her illusion powers to try to effect an escape.



Bruk, hm Inv7: AC 0 (AC 5 bracers, +4 cloak, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 30; THAC0 18 (15 w/staff); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+3 (staff of striking); SZ M; ML steady (11); AL NE; XP 2,000.

S 7, D 15, Co 16, I 18, W 14, C 12

Personality: scheming, selfish, brilliant

Special Equipment: bracers of defense AC5, +4 cloak of protection, staff of striking (10 charges), wand of fire (22 charges), ring of mind shielding.

Spellbook (5/4/3/2): 1st — burning hands*, color spray*, hold portal, light, magic missile**, shield, Tenser's floating disc, wall of fog*; 2nd — flaming sphere*, know alignment, magic mouth, pyrotechnics*, web*, wizard lock*; 3rd — dispel magic, feign death, fireball*, lightning bolt*, wind wall*; 4th — ice storm*, polymorph other*, shout.

Bruk is a wizard hailing from Zhentil Keep, who fled the place when it was razed a short while ago. As a result of his Zhentish heritage, he looks down on everyone, including his companions. If Bruk gets injured *at all*, he retreats from battle.

Epilogue

Even though the PCs have probably triumphed over all of the obstacles presented in this adventure, they are still liable to feel the effects of it for quite some time.

First, if at least one Puppetmaster escapes, the PCs will have made enemies for life, and the Puppetmasters, bolstered with new members, will be out for blood.

PCs with good memories will recall that the name "Barrit" was mentioned in the letter that the characters found on the "victim" in Arabel. In fact, that part of the letter was true: It was Barrit who provided the Puppetmasters with information on the supposed location of Adzerak's home. Player characters may decide that Barrit of Tilverton needs to be dealt with, lest he cause more mischief. But this will be difficult, since Barrit has done a good job of ingratiating himself into Tilverton society, and is friends with House Rowanmantle.

And speaking of that letter, there is no person named Lyryn in the village of Thunderstone. PCs who try to follow up on this lead, perhaps during the adventure titled "Bad Neighbor Policy," will eventually get the idea that they are on a wild-goose chase.

Melkereich, the name that the spirit of Adzerak uttered, was a mage rival of Adzerak's. He too has become a lich, but unlike old Adzerak, there is nothing befuddled about him. Through the divinations he occasionally casts, Melkereich will discover that the sanctuary of

his old rival has been sacked. The lich will then use all of his resources to track down the defilers and get "his" books from them.

The city guard and the Purple Dragons in Arabel will be interested in questioning the PCs about the disappearance of the old man's body. Should the characters return to Arabel, they will be asked to come to the local constabulary "just to answer a few questions."

Linking This Adventure

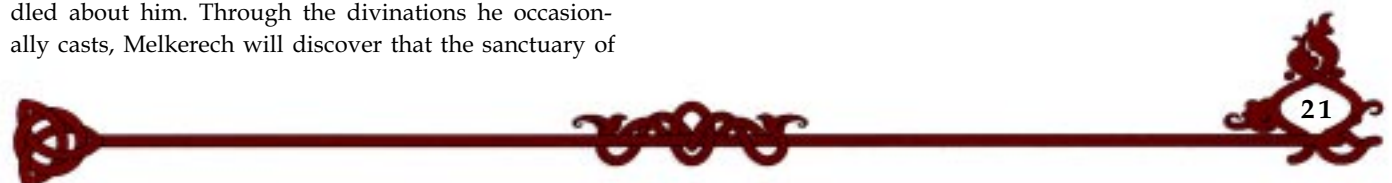
To connect this scenario with the one titled "Redemption," make Bruk an agent of Lord Aris (the main villain in that adventure). A clue could be found among Bruk's personal possessions that Lord Aris has charged him with the task of finding the magical dagger known as *Deathsend*.

Optionally, run this adventure after "Murder Most Magical," allowing the PCs to first encounter the Puppetmasters (except for Dorenn, whose identity must be kept secret from them) at the ceremony honoring Azoun's birthday.

Experience Point Bonuses

Each of these bonuses should be distributed evenly among all party members who participated in or agreed with taking the described action.

Showing the letter and the map to the guards in Arabel:	1,500
Taking no offensive action against Adzerak:	2,000
For each member of the Puppetmasters captured and turned over to the authorities in Arabel:	2,000





Murder Most Magical

Unlike the previous adventure, "Murder Most Magical" is a murder mystery and NPC interaction/socialization adventure. The parties responsible for the murder are intelligent, and are aware that many magical ways of finding out the truth are available, so they have planned for what they hope is every possible contingency.

Welcome To Suzail!

It is the birthday of King Azoun, and the entire capital city of Suzail is abuzz with excitement. You are fortunate to be in the city at such a time, since there are so few chances to actually interact with royalty and nobility in the manner that this celebration promises.

It is customary on Azoun's birthday for representatives from all the adventuring companies in the kingdom to present themselves to the king in a gesture of fealty. As a rule, Cormyrean society considers adventurers a dubious proposition in the first place. Lord Partic Thistle, the Registrant General, was the one who came up with the idea of this ceremony in order to try to improve the image of adventuring companies and adventurers in general. This is hardly surprising, since the Registrant General is the noble who is the ultimate overseer in the granting of charters. Each adventuring charter is personally signed and sealed by Lord Thistle.

The festivities in Suzail run all day and into the night. Never have you seen such pageantry, such enthusiasm . . . such food. Even though you are not mingling with the upper upper crust, you still get your shares of parties and the occasional brush with someone influential, someone who can perhaps be a valuable contact in the future days.

The evening celebration at Lord Thistle's manor-keep Thistleflame is the event you have been waiting all day for. Aside from Lord Partic Thistle himself, also in attendance are King Azoun IV; Queen Filfaeril; their daughters Tanalasta the advisor and Alusair the adventuress; Vangerdahast, the Royal Magician; the Sage Most Learned, Alaphondar; the Lord High Marshal, Duke Bhereu, and his brother Baron Thomdor, third cousins of the king; Sthavar, the Lord Magistrate of Suzail; the leading members of the noble families of Bleth, Cormaeril, Crownsilver, Dauntinghorn, Emmarsk, Hawklin, Huntcrown, Huntsilver, Illance, Marliir, Rowanmantle, Silversword, Truesilver, and Wyvernspur; the heads of the four most powerful trading costers in the land (The Dragoneye Dealing Coster, the Seven Suns Trading Coster, the Six Coffers Trading Coster, and the Trueshield Trading Triakos); dozens of other nobles; and of course a host of adventuring companies, of which you are one.

You have heard speculation that a few Harpers are here as well, although none of the revelers seem to be of that inclination. There are rumors that a couple of Knights of Myth Drannor are present, and perhaps even Elminster himself.

The celebration begins with a period of mingling, conversation, and beverages in the ballroom of Partic's manor.





The Festivities

All members of adventuring companies are forbidden to wear armor during the celebration; this is a time for finery and polish. The PCs need not have expensive garments and accessories, but they should certainly be clean and well groomed. The only weapon any guest is allowed to wear is a sword whose length does not exceed that of a long sword, worn on a belt in a hip scabbard, and given a wireseal.

A wireseal is a peace-bond with teeth—a strong piece of metal wire that ties the sword handle to the scabbard itself. Undoing a wireseal takes an entire round. Anyone with a sword that does not have a wireseal is arrested on the spot. The king is the only person who can command a guest to unseal his weapon.

During the mingling in the ballroom, the PCs will have plenty of opportunities to indulge in conversation with NPCs. Purple Dragons and a few War Wizards are stationed near the door to the ballroom and in the hallway. The War Wizards are not recognizable as such; they appear dressed as normal partygoers.

Azoun, his queen, and Vangerdahast are standing apart from the rest of the crowd, in the ballroom's north-eastern corner. A small band of the most elite of the Purple Dragons (9th-level fighters) stand behind the king, at ease yet ever vigilant.

If the PCs attempt to engage the king in conversation, they will be immediately intercepted by the Purple Dragons. Vangerdahast will subtly use a *wand of enemy detection* on them, and if they indeed pose no threat, will allow them to bow to the king and exchange no more than a half-dozen sentences with him per individual. This limit is in place because a great many people would love to have a portion of the king's attention tonight.

Azoun will limit his remarks to polite comments, nothing profound or personal. Anyone who tries to ask a boon of the king will be unceremoniously hauled out of the king's presence for exhibiting such boorish behavior as begging for favors during a party.

Servants carrying silver trays thread their way through the crowd, serving hors d'oeuvres and crystal glasses of light wine. Anyone seen drinking excessively will be asked to cease. If this warning is not heeded, the offender will be ejected from the ballroom and sobered up in the courtyard's fountain.

The party schedule is as follows:

6:00: *Mingling in the Ballroom.*

7:00: *Dinner in the Grand Hall*

9:00: *Presentation of the companies*

10:30: *Entertainment*

Midnight: *Everyone turns in*

Mingling In The Ballroom

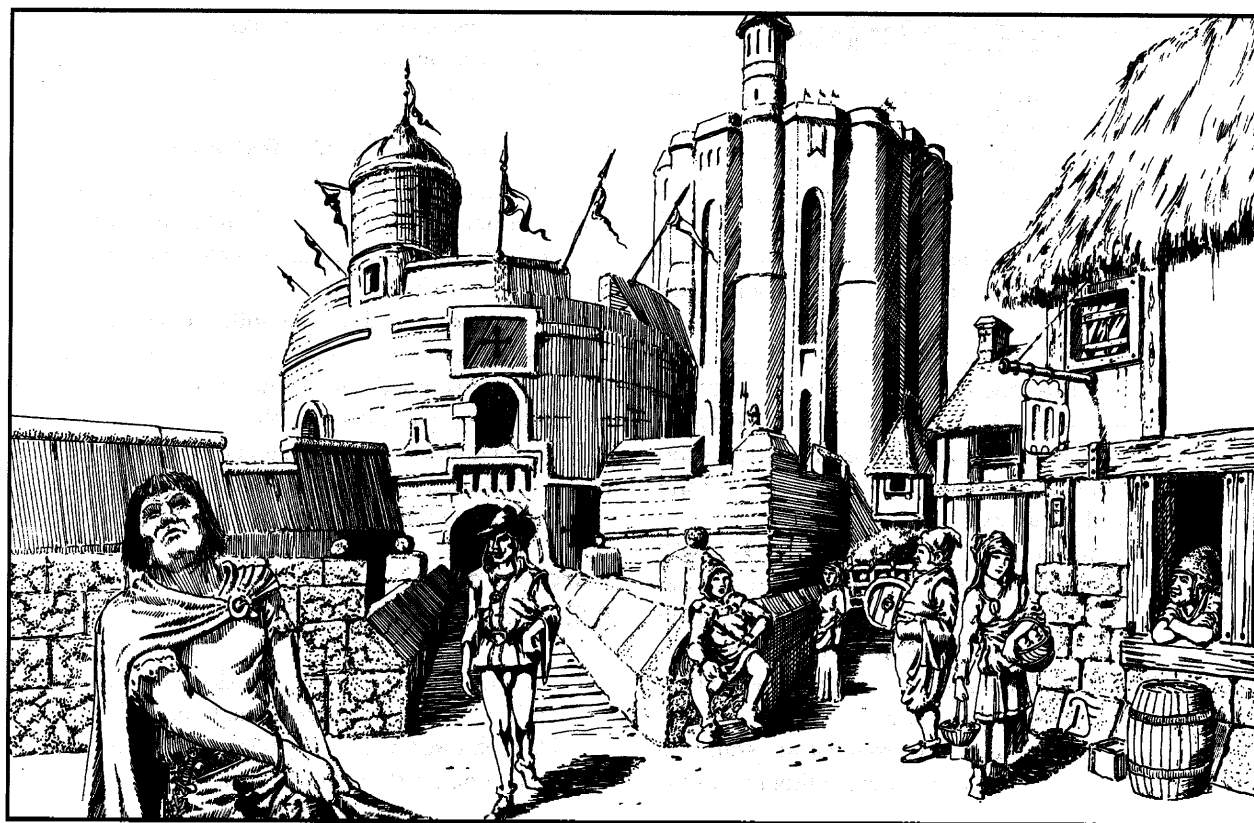
Every time a PC talks to an NPC and says something beyond an innocuous statement such as "Hello, my name is . . ." or "Nice party," an etiquette proficiency check may be called for. If the character does not have this proficiency, substitute a Charisma ability check with a +4 modifier to the die roll. Failing the check means the PC has made a faux pas. A roll of a natural 20 means the PC has inadvertently insulted the NPC.

Every 15 minutes during the social hour, each PC may make a Charisma ability check. Success nets the PC one of the following tidbits of conversational rumor.

Party Rumors

Roll d20 and consult the list below.

1. Do you know that Lord Thistle has a fascination with his dead ancestors, buried under the manor? He is obsessed with family histories and such. (True)
2. I have heard that Azoun wishes to marry off his headstrong daughter to the right young man of pure heart, great courage, and the ability to tame the little firebrand. (False)
3. This is so exciting! Elminster of Shadowdale is here in disguise! (False; he's not here at all)
4. Lord Krell Huntcrown, head of that noble family, is strongly opposed to chartered adventuring companies. He feels that Thistle's efforts at legitimizing such bands is part of a Cormaeril-funded plot. (True)
5. Lord Partic Thistle is actually of the noble family Cormaeril, on his mother's side. Everyone knows that. (True)
6. Did you not hear? Lord Orgauth of Zhentil Keep made it clear through many hints that he wished an invitation to this party, but King Azoun gave that fellow a masterful snub. (False)
7. No offense, but we Cormyreans in general tend to distrust adventuring companies. There are some that are rather unscrupulous, and even rumored to indulge in acts of evil. And how are we to tell which are baneful and which are beneficial? (True)
8. This whole ceremony of company presentation is Lord Thistle's idea, his way of trying to legitimize adventuring companies, improve their image. (True)



9. Oh, Thistle is a decent enough fellow; honest, hard-working, and all. He's not married, but he's been known to tip a few at the Bubbling Bulwark and keep company with a redheaded barmaid called Annalise. How scandalous! (True)
10. Azoun is worried about his line of succession. He and the queen are actually trying to have another child at their age, hoping for a son. (False)
11. Be careful of Lord Mournsoul. He's a whining, artistic dandy who dresses all in black and vomits forth what he considers artistic love poetry. He's always pining over some woman. (True)
12. Did you know the entertainer for tonight is someone who performs regularly at the Bubbling Bulwark? Really now . . . don't you think that's just a tad pedestrian for such an event? A common tavern singer? Thistle should have hired some of those famous harp players . . . what are they called? Oh, yes, the Harpers! (True)
13. Everyone knows Vangerdahast opposes the whole idea of granting charters to adventuring companies. (False)
14. Azoun does well to keep many guards about. There are still some small pockets of people who are sympathetic to Gondegal's crusade. (False)
15. We have a potential for an interesting love triangle here, you know. Lord Thistle has been keeping company with a sultry redheaded barmaid at the Bubbling Bulwark. However, a young man named Garit Strongarm, a hot-blooded cavalier from Sembia, also fancies her, and is insanely jealous. Is that not positively delicious? And to make matters more interesting, young Garit is part of an adventuring company called the Gold Coins, and is here tonight! (True)
16. The king and his retinue will retire to the royal castle after this party, but the noble family heads and the adventuring company heads are invited to sleep here in the manor as Thistle's guests. (True)
17. Thistle is aware of the unpopularity of adventuring companies, and has compiled a list of companies whose charters are to be revoked due to uncivilized behavior on their parts. The list will be read tomorrow morning. About time, I say; they



should disband the whole lot of them. Er . . . no offense intended, present company excepted of course. Ahem. (False)

18. Thistle may be an efficient loyal member of Azoun's court, but he's also a full-blown eccentric. Naturally, you did not hear it from me . . . who am I to judge, right? (Half true; Thistle is eccentric, but only in some small ways)
19. I'm worried, friend. Word has it that House Hunt-crown is hatching some sort of plot. Far be it for me to judge, but that family is a blight on the face of Cormyr's nobility. (True; they are conspiring something, but it has nothing to do with the events that will occur in the next few hours)
20. Thistle has an eidetic memory. This means that whatever he reads, he can commit to memory with no effort at all. (True)

A Brewing Evil

A crime is in the making, and here is how it has come to pass. The Emerald Swords, an adventuring company with sympathies to Zhentil Keep, wishes to get a full account of all of the adventuring companies registered in Cormyr. Bringing this information back to Zhentil Keep will enable the Keep's leader, Lord Orgauth, to recruit some of the more shady companies, and keep track of the more noble-acting ones, lest the latter interfere with his future plans.

In order to get this information, the Emerald Swords plan to kidnap Thistle, replace him with a doppelganger, and take him to Zhentil Keep, where he will be forced to divulge, all of the information about the chartered companies that he has memorized.

Unfortunately, there is no way the kidnappers can spirit him out of the manor right away; Thistle is too well known, and every exit from the place is guarded tonight. Therefore, the Swords take Thistle into the catcombs of his own manor, intending to hold him there until the next morning.

However, the doppelganger, posing as Thistle, begins to enjoy his new role and shows no intention of either leaving it or following the rest of the plan. The kidnappers decide to improvise and murder "Thistle" in his bedchamber. This actually works out better, since now no one will be looking for a living Thistle, and it should be easier to smuggle him out.

The murder is done in such a way as to implicate one or more of the other adventuring companies.

Thistleflame Keep

Thistleflame Keep (see Map 5, on page 26) is enclosed within a 15-foot-tall rectangular stone wall with 25-foot towers at all four corners and, one more tower at the midpoint of the western wall, overlooking the stables. Thistleflame Manor proper is a four-story stone house that towers over everything else in the keep, standing an impressive 60 feet tall. The keep's environs are patrolled by a force of 40 Purple Dragons who wear a small badge showing a burning thistle. (If it is necessary or desirable to place the keep at a specific location within Suzail, one appropriate site would be southeast of Wyvernspur House near the bridge that spans the eastern channel of Lake Azoun.)

A. Main Gate. The main gate is made of wrought iron, sculpted into the likeness of thistle bushes. Two guards are stationed here at all times.

B. Family Fountain. Powered by a *decanter of endless water*, this fountain shows an elegantly robed woman holding aloft a thistle branch. Water streams from her navel and falls into a basin, then is carried into the manor by a series of underground pipes and used to give the residence a constant supply of fresh water. It is generally recognized as the Ugliest Fountain in Cormyr.

C. Stables. This huge stable and loft holds three dozen horses, including a pair of medium warhorses, a mare and a stallion that are Partic's favorites. Two ten-year-old twin brothers, Mac and Zac, serve as the stable boys.

D. Barracks. This squat, two-story stone building always has 10 guards present, most of them sleeping, and five other guards who are off duty. The barracks also has its own small kitchen, armory, and storeroom.

The keep's Purple Dragon contingent is commanded by Aleka Ravenheart, a Purple Dragon officer.

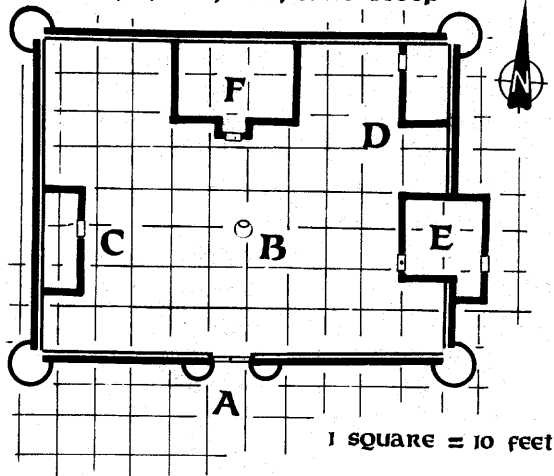
Aleka Ravenheart, **hf F7**: AC 4 (chain armor, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 59; THAC0 14 (13 w/Str); #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d8+1 (long sword, Str bonus); SZ M; ML elite (14); AL LG; XP 650.

S 17, D 15, Co 17, I 14, W 9, C 14

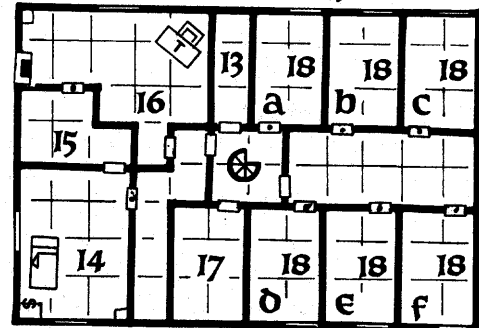
Personality: dependable, foolhardy



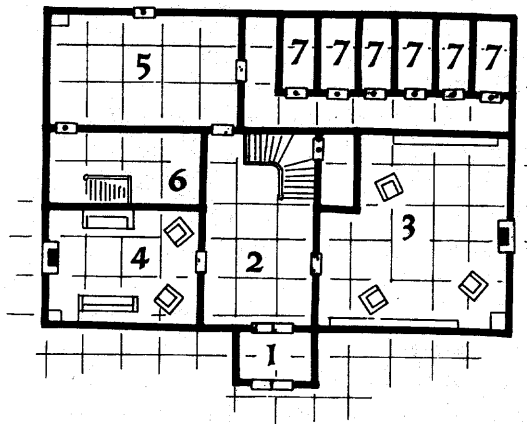
Map 5 Thistleflame Keep



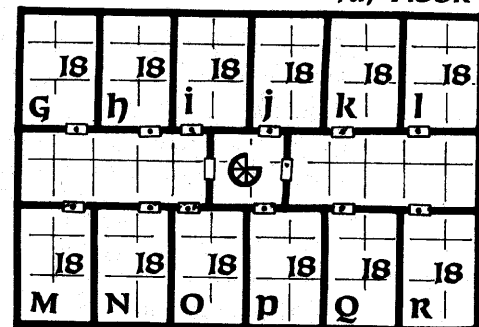
3rd Floor



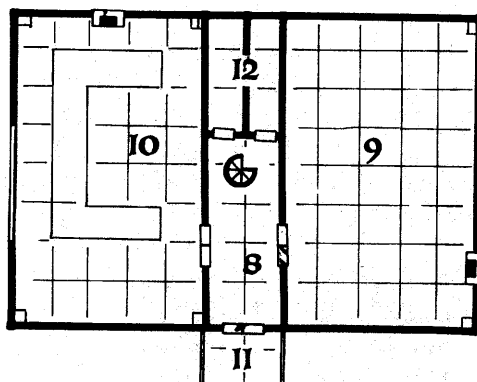
Thistleflame Manor 1st Floor



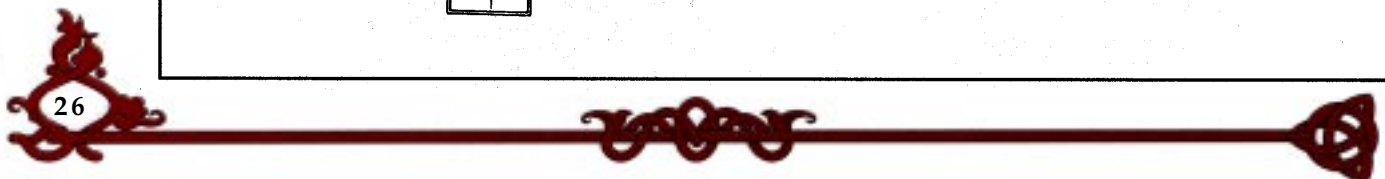
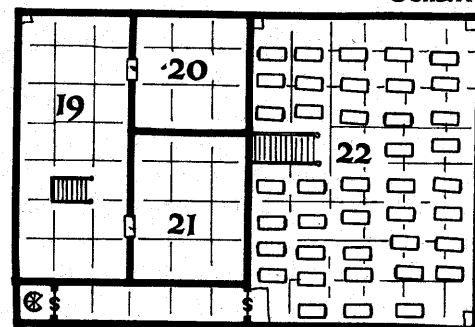
4th Floor

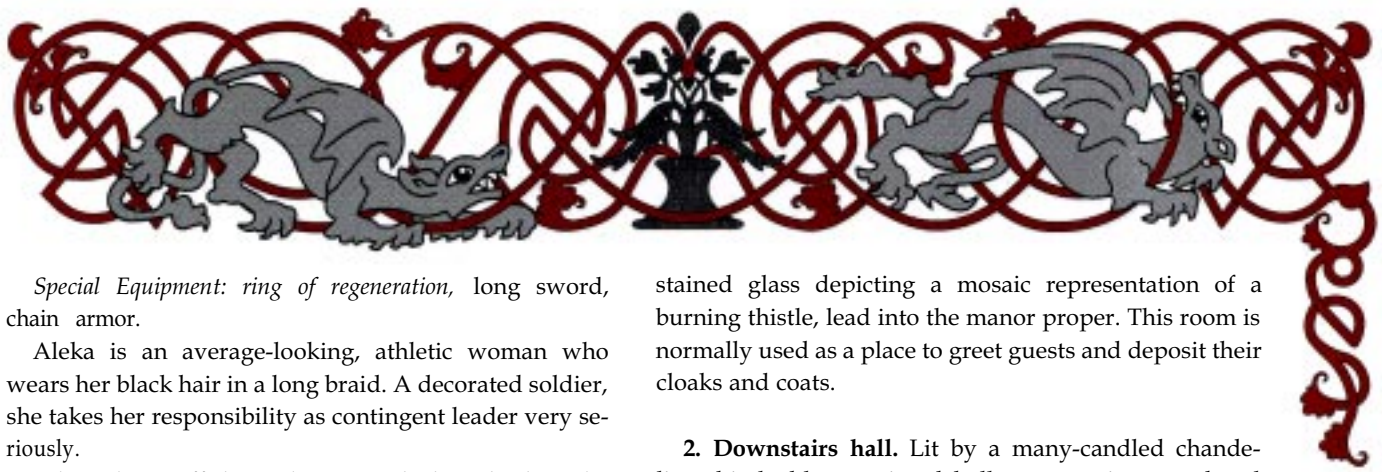


2ND Floor



Cellar





Special Equipment: ring of regeneration, long sword, chain armor.

Aleka is an average-looking, athletic woman who wears her black hair in a long braid. A decorated soldier, she takes her responsibility as contingent leader very seriously.

When she is off duty, she enjoys kicking back at the Bubbling Bulwark and swapping stories with the innkeeper Haverish Hallefon, who used to be in her regiment.

E. The Bubbling Bulwark. This pleasant, active tavern and inn is built into the keep's wall, hence the name. The inn can be entered from the courtyard of the keep, but this door is usually locked so that it can only be opened from the inside. Adjacent to the courtyard entrance is a stairway that leads down to a wooden door. Beyond this door is a cellar that is used for storage of nonperishable foodstuffs.

The main entrance to the Bulwark is on the outside wall and is open to the public, but whoever uses it must pass under the scrutiny of Dwak (CG ogre male F5), a reformed ogre who serves as one of the inn's two bouncers. The other bouncer, stationed just inside the courtyard entrance, is Louella Bonecracker (LG df F7), a female dwarf who is as strong as Dwak.

The inn is run by Haverish Hallefon (CG hm F2), a former Purple Dragon who served one term of service before purchasing this place. He regales customers with his tales of being in the army, and other Purple Dragons enjoy frequenting a place that is owned by "one of us."

The Bulwark employs six barmaids named Sara, Crystyn, Heather, Caryn, Raewyn, and Annalise (the young woman who has become involved with Thistle) and a strapping young handyman named Gram, who is popular with the female patrons.

Rooms for rent are located on the second and third floors of the inn. The rooms are comfortable and can hold four people each (two cots and sufficient floor space for two more bodies).

F. Thistleflame Manor. This beautiful old manor is covered with ornate stonework on its exterior, including carved gargoyles and sylphs, an odd contrast of images.

Ground Floor

1. Foyer. A massive pair of oak double doors, each set with the family crest, leads into a foyer decorated with old shields. Another set of double doors, these set with

stained glass depicting a mosaic representation of a burning thistle, lead into the manor proper. This room is normally used as a place to greet guests and deposit their cloaks and coats.

2. Downstairs hall. Lit by a many-candled chandelier, this lushly appointed hallway contains a pedestal upon which rests an open guest book for visitors to sign, a magnificent spiral staircase leading to the upper floors, and doors leading to the library, the sitting room, and the kitchen. A padlocked iron door in the northeast corner (under the staircase) leads down to the crypt. Thistle keeps the only key to this lock hidden in his private chambers on the third floor.

3. Library. A room holding about 200 books on common subjects, this is used mostly as a casual meeting place. The place includes a fireplace, a desk, and a few chairs, but nothing unusual.

4. Sitting room. Decorated with portraits of Thistle's ancestors, and dotted with couches and chairs, this room is where visitors are invited to wait for Thistle if he is indisposed. A sideboard with a decanter of brandy and a carafe of fine wine make the wait a pleasant one. A roaring fire in the fireplace keeps this room warm at all times.

5. Kitchen. Staffed by four people and filled with all sorts of cooking equipment and utensils, this is a crowded and busy place. A back door leads into a small alley between the manor and the keep's wall, but it is never left unlocked.

6. Larder. The manor's nonperishable foodstuffs are kept here. The door leading from the kitchen is normally locked. Stairs lead down to the cellar.

7. Servants' quarters. All of these rooms are modest quarters, each having accommodations for two or three people except for the room in the northeast corner, which Moorefield the butler has all to himself. The staff includes three cooks, two maids, a baker, a steward, a personal messenger, a groundskeeper, and a handyman.

Second Floor

8. Second floor hallway. The spiral staircase goes up to the third floor and back down to the first. A set of elegantly wrought brass doors leads to a balcony that over-



looks the courtyard of the keep. Magnificent double doors on the east and west walls lead to the ballroom and Grand Hall respectively.

9. Ballroom. This huge room contains a polished white marble floor, beautiful gilded windows to the east, and a grand old fireplace with numerous valuable heirlooms such as busts, music boxes, and crystal eggs on the mantel.

10. Grand Hall. A huge stained-glass window dominates the west wall. The room contains many tapestries showing scenes from Thistle family history. A massive, old three-sided dining room table, easily able to seat about 80 people, fills most of the space in the room. A huge fireplace on the north wall provides warmth. Over the fireplace hangs a pair of crossed long swords that belonged to warriors who were vanquished by two of Partic Thistle's ancestors. Although they look alike, one is a *flame tongue* +1, the other a *vorpal blade* +3.

11. Southern balcony. Enclosed by a three-foot-high black wrought-iron railing with miniature gargoyle

sculptures on the posts, this balcony offers a view of the entire keep. It is a 15-foot drop to the ground below.

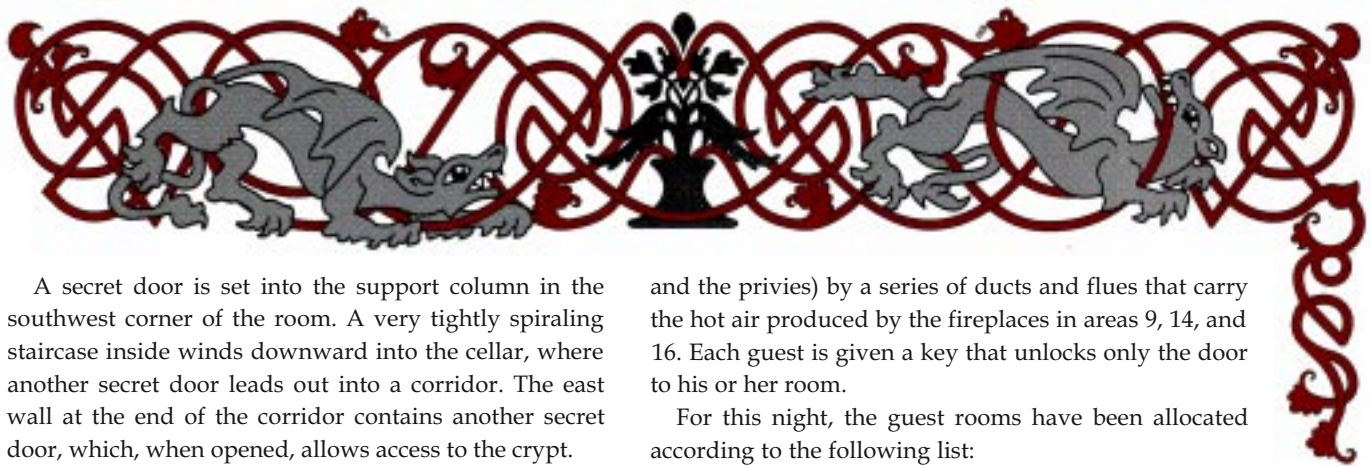
12. Privies. These comfortable, well-constructed privies (five compartments in each room) have doors that are lockable from the inside, and a plumbing system (using water from the fountain, location B) that flushes all waste into a cistern buried outside the north wall.

Third and Fourth Floors

13. Master closet. This chamber contains extra linens, pillows, blankets, and such.

14. Partic's bedroom. This room is luxurious, as befitting one of Thistle's rank and status. Two large windows provide views to the west and south. Heat is provided by a fireplace along the west wall. The door in the north wall leads to Partic's personal bathroom.

A huge canopy bed takes up much of the room. Also in here are a wardrobe, a mirror, and a display stand that holds a suit of *full plate armor* +2, which Partic wore in his younger days as an adventurer. Partic's broad sword, a +4 *defender*, hangs over his bed.



A secret door is set into the support column in the southwest corner of the room. A very tightly spiraling staircase inside winds downward into the cellar, where another secret door leads out into a corridor. The east wall at the end of the corridor contains another secret door, which, when opened, allows access to the crypt.

15. Master bathroom. Decorated in elegant white and silver tiles, the bathroom contains a sink and tub with gold plumbing fixtures. Water is provided through a branch of the same plumbing system that serves areas 12 and 17.

There is a door on the north wall that is kept locked.

16. Private library. A large fireplace, an extremely soft carpet, and an impressive array of bookshelves are this room's main features. A large, polished mahogany desk stands in the northeast corner.

The books stored in here deal with the history and politics of Cormyr, as well as numerous accounts of adventuring companies. A huge book called "The History of the Thistles" stands on a pedestal. By flipping through this book, a reader can confirm that Partic Thistle has Cormaeril blood in his veins, from his maternal grandmother. Behind a small secret door in the base of this pedestal is the key that fits the lock on the door in room 2.

A large wooden locked filing cabinet contains bound packets of papers, each packet giving a general description of one particular adventuring company. (Although Thistle carries all this information in his head, he also keeps physical records for the sake of others who might need access to the facts.)

A door on the east wall leads out to the inner corridor, which is adjacent to the main staircase. This library door is usually left unlocked.

17. Guest bathroom. This bathroom is done up in blue and gold tiles, and contains a large tub and a sink, with gold fixtures.

18. Guest rooms. Lord Partic Thistle is the consummate host, and he insists on having many of tonight's guests stay in the numerous small apartments on the third and fourth floors of his manor.

Each guest room is more or less the same, furnished with a large bed flanked on both sides by nightstands with lanterns, a dresser with a mirror and washbasin, a desk and chair, and a comfortable relaxing chair. Heat is provided to each of these rooms (and to the bathrooms

and the privies) by a series of ducts and flues that carry the hot air produced by the fireplaces in areas 9, 14, and 16. Each guest is given a key that unlocks only the door to his or her room.

For this night, the guest rooms have been allocated according to the following list:

- a. Lord Mournsoul and Mendryll Belarod
- b. Garit Strongarm and Kerit Darkrider
- c. Two members of the PCs' company
- d. Two members of the Magebanes
- e. The Bleths
- f. The Cormaerils
- g. Two members of the Golden Gauntlet
- h. The Dauntinghorns
- i. The Emmarasks
- j. Two members of the Company of Night
- k. The Huntcrowns
- l. Two members of the Emerald Swords
- m. Two members of the Warhawks (or the Puppetmasters, if the first adventure hasn't been played yet)
- n. The Marliirs
- o. The Rowanmantles
- p. Two members of the Grand Fist
- q. Two members of the She-Wolves
- r. The Wyvernspurs

The other noble families in attendance at the ceremony chose to return to their own mansions, while the remaining adventuring companies politely declined the invitation, choosing instead to go to the Bubbling Bulwark or some other inn in Suzail.

Note that each of the above-listed adventuring companies are only able to put up two of their members in the manor. The other members of these companies are housed, courtesy of Lord Thistle, at the Bubbling Bulwark.

Cellar

19. Supplies. This portion of the cellar is very cold. Slabs of salted meat, hams, dressed fowl, and strings of sausages hang here. Large wheels of cheese are stacked up in one corner, and crates of other victuals are kept here as well.

The stairway leads to the kitchen. Both doors along the east wall are made of steel and always kept locked.

20. Wine cellar. Racks and racks filled with wine bottles are found here. Some of the vintages go back decades or centuries, although most of what is here are





common vintages meant for everyday consumption. The total value of the wines in this cellar is around 150,000 gold pieces.

21. Storage room. This room contains nonconsumables such as lamp oil, coal, several dozen long swords and daggers, a score of shields, six short bows, and ten dozen arrows. Also stored here are parchment, quills, lanterns, candles, soap, and chamber pots.

22. Family crypt. This vast, chilly room with a vaulted ceiling and magnificent support columns is the final resting place of at least 20 generations of Thistles.

The room contains two dozen sarcophagi, many of them with lifelike effigies carved on the lids with painstaking care. The vast majority of the dead, however, are buried in shelves and recesses in the walls.

The crypt's support columns are carved in the likenesses of many Thistle ancestors. Most of the statues look rather grim, as if the people's expressions were captured at the split second before they died.

The treasures in the crypts of Thistle's ancestors are plentiful indeed. Each of the sarcophagi houses not only a dead body (sometimes two, a man and wife), but also 3d6 x 1,000 gp worth of rings and family jewelry.

Each Thistle was also buried with his beloved weapon and armor, if applicable. One sarcophagus has a *holy avenger* +5 bastard sword, a suit of *plate mail* +4, and a *shield* +3.

Naturally, anyone who was discovered down here without Thistle would be roughly seized, dragged up the stairs, and given a warning not to go down here again. Any fool who dared loot the dead would be summarily slain without waiting for an explanation, and the Crown would not pursue the matter in any way.

The crypt is where Thistle's kidnappers will take him once they discover the existence of the secret doors (information that is pulled out of Thistle's mind by *ESP* during the abduction). They will lay low near one particularly large sarcophagus in the northeast corner of the room—the one that happens to hold the remains of the paladin ancestor buried with his *holy avenger* and magic armor.

Guard Positions

With the royal family and so many other dignitaries present, security has been beefed up throughout the keep and on the first two floors of the manor. There are pairs of Purple Dragons stationed right outside the front door, in area #1 (foyer), area #2 (downstairs hall), area #5

(kitchen), area #8 (second floor hall), area #9 (ballroom), just inside the doors in area #10 (Grand Hall), and area #11 (the balcony). Areas 2, 8, and 10 are additionally reinforced by a War Wizard.

In addition, two squads of five Purple Dragons and one very clearly designated War Wizard are on duty outside the manor, one patrolling the keep's courtyard and another one walking a beat along the walls.

Despite all this security, blind spots exist immediately to the west and east of the manor house. Even though these areas do get some surveillance, it is not constant.

Purple Dragons, hm F4 (26): AC 5 (chain armor); MV 12; hp 22 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword) or 1d6 (flight arrows); SZ M; ML steady (12); Int average (11); AL any good; XP 175 each.

Special Equipment: chain armor, long sword, short bow with 20 flight arrows.

War Wizards, hm M6 (5): AC 3 (*bracers* AC 5, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 15 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (quarterstaff); SZ M; ML steady (12); AL CG; XP 975 each.

S 9, D 16, Co 15, I 18, W 15, C 15

Personality: watchful, inconspicuous

Special Equipment: *bracers of defense* AC 5, *war wizard cloak* (see "Magical Items," page 126), quarterstaff.

Spellbook (4/2/2): 1st — *alarm*, *charm person**, *comprehend languages*, *detect magic**, *light*, *message**, *shield*, *sleep**; 2nd — *detect evil**, *detect invisibility**, *ESP*, *web*; 3rd — *dispel magic*, *hold person**, *spectral force*, *suggestion**.

The NPCs of Thistleflame

Following are descriptions of NPCs who dwell and work in Thistleflame Keep and other significant characters, such as party guests. Famous Cormyreans (Azoun, Vangerdahast, etc.) are not mentioned here because there is no reason in the context of this adventure for PCs to interact with any of them except on an incidental basis.

Residents of The Manor

Lord Partic Thistle, hm F12: AC 0 (*bracers* AC 2, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 58; THAC0 9; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6+1 (rapier); SZ M; ML champion (15); AL NG; XP 975.



S 15, D 16, Co 15, I 16, W 14, C 14

Personality: eccentric, efficient, hospitable

Special Equipment: bracers of defense AC 2, peacebonded rapier, signet ring.

Lord Partic Thistle is the Registrant General of Cormyr, personally overseeing the entire adventuring company charter program. He believes in adventuring companies, and does not share many of his countrymen's belief that adventurers have no place in Cormyr. He is in his mid-40's, single, and dedicated to his king, country, and office, in that order.

A kind and generous man, he has been keeping company with a barmaid name Annalise at the Bubbling Bulwark. He is contemplating marrying her, but must still get over his apprehension at being the target of contempt from his peers for marrying someone of such low station.

Thistle is obsessed with the past, particularly his ancestors, and his eccentricity is in this subject. He enjoys sneaking down to the crypts and spending time wandering among the tombs of his forebears.

Moorefield the butler, hm F1: AC 5 (*bracers*); MV 12; hp 8; THAC0 20 (16 *w/baton* +4); #AT 1; Dmg 1d3+4 (*baton* +4); SZ M; ML elite (14); AL LG; XP 120.

S 12, D 14, Co 15, I 15, W 17, C 12

Personality: efficient, polite, snooty

Special Equipment: bracers of defense AC 5, silver baton +4, keychain of domestic propriety (see "Magical Items," page 126), white gloves, key ring.

Moorefield is a very tall, thin man in his late 50's, with a pointy nose and thinning black hair. Dressed in black and white finery, he is Thistle's trusted butler and confidante. He has keys to every lockable door in the manor, but will normally only surrender one of them to another employee and then only for good reason.

Moorefield dislikes adventurers, considering them rude and ill-mannered. He himself is the paragon of etiquette and domestic excellence. He truly loves his master, however, and never contradicts Thistle on this (or any other) subject, and is not prone to gossip. If Thistle is in danger, he may open up to someone who seems polite and concerned.

Dora, Nora, and Malda, NG 0-level hf: These three women are the manor's cooks. Dora and Nora are sisters, and both excellent cooks, although they tend to gossip too much. Malda does a lot of preparatory work in the kitchen but little of the actual cooking; her idea of haute



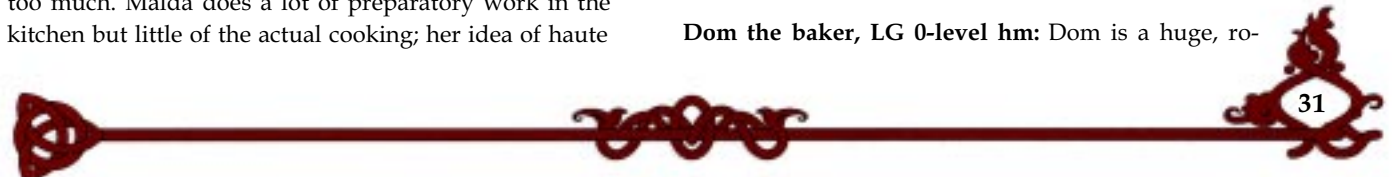
cuisine is to boil something until it barely resembles its original form. Partic appreciates her energy and her reliability and keeps her on. Dora and Nora assign her to the cooking of food that she cannot ruin by boiling (tea water, eggs, potatoes, and so forth).

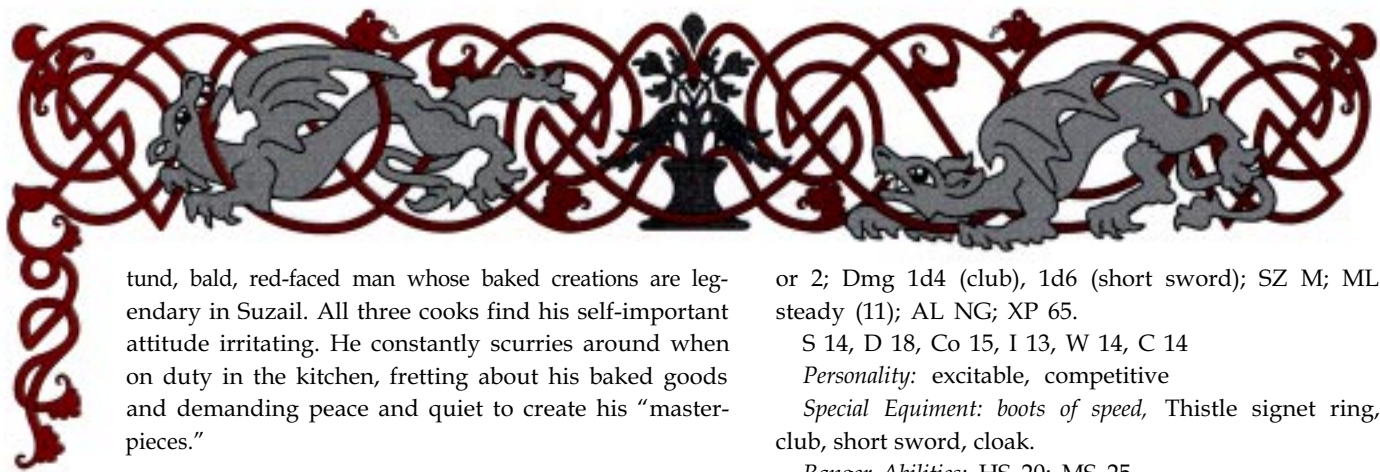
Tami and Larwyn, CG 0-level hf: These are the manor's maids, with Tami responsible for the lower two floors and Larwyn in charge of cleaning the upper two floors.

Tami is in her early 20's, curvaceous, raven-haired, giggling, and dressed in an almost provocative manner. She is resentful that Thistle pays no attention to her, focusing instead on the person she refers to as "that ale-slitting trollop."

Larwyn is in her late 30's and is the voice of reason and propriety. She is by far the more reliable of the two maids, and knows where everything is stored (or supposed to be stored) in the manor. She and Moorefield are engaged in a sort of rivalry, competing to be seen as Thistle's most efficient servant.

Dom the baker, LG 0-level hm: Dom is a huge, ro-





tund, bald, red-faced man whose baked creations are legendary in Suzail. All three cooks find his self-important attitude irritating. He constantly scurries around when on duty in the kitchen, fretting about his baked goods and demanding peace and quiet to create his "masterpieces."

Berke Glorata, hm R2: AC 6 (Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 18; THAC0 19; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg 1d6 (short sword), 1d4 (dagger); SZ M; ML elite (14); AL CG; XP 120.

S 15, D 18, Co 16, I 15, W 17, C 14

Personality: robust, nature-loving, hearty

Special Equipment: *potion of plant control*, short sword, dagger, *Harper pin*.

Ranger Abilities: HS 25; MS 31.

Berke is a handsome, square-jawed fellow in his early 20's who serves as Thistle's gardener. What no one knows, including Thistle himself, is that Berke is also a ranger, and a Harper as well.

A favorite of the ladies, Berke inspires jealousy from the other young male employees. Many of them like to cast aspersions on his character, hoping to make him look bad.

The Harpers have placed Berke in this position because they are convinced that Thistle's post of keeping track of adventuring companies is a crucial one. They want to make sure that no government overly interferes with adventuring companies, especially those with Harpers in them.

Travis Ormaster, hm M2: AC 10; MV 12; hp 6; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); SZ M; ML average (8); AL CG; XP 120.

S 8, D 9, Co 12, I 18, W 17, C 10

Personality: brusque, quick-witted, competent

Special Equipment: writing materials, dagger, spell components, Thistle signet ring.

Spellbook (2): 1st — *cantrip*, *comprehend languages*, *erase*, *light*, *identify*, *mending*, *message**, *read magic*, *Tenser's floating disc**.

Travis is Thistle's steward. A plain-looking young man in his mid-20's, he oversees the manor's finances, monitors the manor's supply levels, mediates disputes, and keeps track of Thistle's busy schedule.

A brisk, efficient man with a cutting wit, he is jealous of Berke's good looks. Travis is friends with Kaleb.

Kaleb Fleetwing, hem R1: AC 4 (*boots of speed*, Dex bonus); MV 12 (24 *w/boots*); hp 11; THAC0 20; #AT 1

or 2; Dmg 1d4 (club), 1d6 (short sword); SZ M; ML steady (11); AL NG; XP 65.

S 14, D 18, Co 15, I 13, W 14, C 14

Personality: excitable, competitive

Special Equipment: *boots of speed*, Thistle signet ring, club, short sword, cloak.

Ranger Abilities: HS 20; MS 25.

Kaleb is a wiry half-elven ranger with a perpetual smirk and rakish good looks. He is Thistle's official messenger, and can often be seen dashing to and fro with dispatches and the like. He is the one whom people will first encounter when Thistle wishes to summon them.

Borin Woodbracer, dm F3: AC 8 (leather); MV 6; hp 22; THAC0 18 (17 *w/Str*, 16 *w/hammer +1*); #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+3 (*hammer +1*); SZ S; ML fearless (19); AL LG; XP 120.

S 17, D 10, Co 16, I 10, W 13, C 8

Personality: gruff, quiet, creative

Special Equipment: *hammer +1*, toolbox.

Although many dwarves would be aghast at the idea of working for a human as a handyman, Borin took one look at the exquisite stonework on the manor's exterior and signed on immediately, completely in love. He lives the happy existence of a retired adventurer, even though he's only 53 years old, content with keeping everything in splendid repair.

Borin is perhaps Berke's only true male friend at the manor, since the other men resent Berke for his popularity with women and good looks. Since Borin has no designs on any women in Thistleflame, he sees beyond the youth's appearance and accepts him as a friend.

Borin's only real flaw is his tendency to drink too much in the Bubbling Bulwark and go on an inebriated rampage in the common room. This results, more often than not, in Thistle paying for damages and/or Borin doing the repair work himself.

Borin gave the half-elf Kaleb a black eye recently, when the messenger made disparaging remarks about Berke behind his back. This action was inspired in part by Borin's loyalty to Berke, and in part by his distrust of elves, something he gladly extends to half-elves as well.

Guests

Mendryll Belarod, hem B8: AC 0 (*bracers*, *ring +3*, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 33; THAC0 17 (16 *w/long sword +1 flame tongue*); #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+1 (*long sword +1 flame tongue*); SZ M; ML champion (15); AL NG; XP 1,400.



S 15, D 17, Co 15, I 15, W 15, C 17

Personality: cocky, flirtatious, charming

Special Equipment: bracers of defense AC 6, ring of protection +3, long sword +1 flame tongue, harp of charming, Bucknard's everfull purse, normal harp, riding horse.

Spells (3/3/1): 1st — charm person, glitterdust, ventriloquism; 2nd — ESP, knock, locate object; 3rd — hold person.

Bard Abilities: CW 50; DN 45; PP 75; RL 55.

Mendryll is a young half-elf bard with long blond hair, green eyes, and a perpetual smirk. Even though he claims indifference to everything except singing, chasing women, and acquiring a fortune, he has a strong instinctual desire to do good.

Lord Rhyn Mournsoul, hm F6: AC 4 (*leather jerkin* +4); MV 12; hp 36; THAC0 15 (12 w/*rapier* +3); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+4 (*rapier* +3), 1d4 (*dagger*); SZ M; ML average (9); AL CG; XP 420.

S 14, D 9, Co 9, I 12, W 9, C 14

Personality: moody, artistic, angst-ridden

Special Equipment: leather jerkin +4, rapier +3, black rose, book of bad romantic poetry, black outfit.

Lord Mournsoul is a thin, moody man in his late 20's, who dresses in black and wanders around Cormyr, seemingly in a state of perpetual depression. Some say he has a death wish. Rhyn has a suffering artist's soul, a streak of angst a mile wide, and a noble bloodline, the latter being the only reason he is ever invited to significant social events.

The Golden Gauntlets

Ruben Armand St. James II, hm Pal 8: AC -5 (field plate, *shield* +2, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 64; THAC0 13 (11 w/Str, 6 w/*holy avenger*); #AT 3/2; Dmg 2d4+8 (*holy avenger* +5, Str bonus); SZ M; ML champion (15); AL LG; XP 2,000.

S 18/64, D 17, Co 13, I 10, W 13, C 17

Personality: brave, formal, commanding

Special Equipment: shield +2, +5 *holy avenger* bastard sword, ring of spell turning, talisman of know alignment (24 charges), field plate, Pegasus mount.

Ruben, a paladin of Tyr, is one of the leaders of the adventuring company called the Golden Gauntlets, based in the Moonsea area. He originally hails from Cormyr. In battle, Ruben charges without hesitation, bellowing "Tyr!" as loud as possible. Even in social situations, Ruben never relaxes and is always vigilant.

Norrin Blackgrove, hem B7: AC 3 (*bracers*, Dex

bonus); MV 12; hp 36; THAC0 17 (14 w/*sickle* +3); #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+4 (*sickle* +3), 1d4 (*daggers*); SZ M; ML elite (14); AL NG; XP 975.

S 13, D 18, Co 13, I 14, W 9, C 17

Personality: grim, driven, unemotional

Special Equipment: bracers of defense AC 7, sickle +3, ring of blinking, dagger +2, six daggers in various sheaths, black clothes, bag of strong coffee.

Spells (3/2/1): 1st — burning hands, phantasmal force, spook; 2nd — invisibility, mirror image; 3rd — fireball.

Norrin is a special type of bard called a Blade. (See *The Complete Bard's Handbook*, page 18.) He hails from Thentia in the Moonsea, and is one of the leaders of the Golden Gauntlets. A grim, humorless man, he specializes in reading dire poetry. Norrin claims to be the sole worshiper of Chronos, a forgotten deity of time.

The Emerald Swords

Gandegar Armstrong, dm F5: AC 4 (*chain* +1); MV 6; hp 51; THAC0 16 (15 w/Str, 13 w/*hammer* +2); #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+4 (*hammer* +2, Str bonus); SD +5 bonus on saving throws vs. magic and poison; SZ S; ML champion (16); AL CN; XP 420.

S 17, D 12, Co 18, I 9, W 15, C 10

Personality: humorless, mean, tough

Special Equipment: chain +1, hammer +2.

Gandegar is one of the two leaders of the Emerald Swords. He can be nice enough when he has to be.

Angar the Battlelover, hm P7 (Tempus): AC 0 (plate armor, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 52; THAC0 16 (15 w/Str, 13 w/*long sword* +2, 12 w/*chosen weapon*); #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d8+5 (*long sword* +2, Str bonus, chosen weapon); SA berserker rage; SZ M; ML fearless (19); AL CN; XP 1,400.

S 17, D 16, Co 16, I 8, W 16, C 12

Spell-like Abilities: create food & water once per day, prayer once per day (casting time 1).

Personality: short-tempered, demanding, aggressive

Special Equipment: long sword +2 (chosen weapon), rod of resurrection (14 charges), phylactery of long years, holy symbol of Tempus, 3 vials of holy water.

Preferred Spells (5/5/2/1): 1st — cure light wounds, detect magic, detect snares & pits, endure cold/endure heat, sanctuary; 2nd — chant, produce flame, silence 15' radius, speak with animals, spiritual hammer; 3rd — continual light, dispel magic; 4th — cure serious wounds.

Angar is a specialty priest of Tempus (see *Faiths & Avatars*, page 160), and co-leader of the Emerald



Swords. He is used to having his orders followed without question, immediately. He has slain comrades for not obeying fast enough.

Haridyn Storm, hf T7: AC -2 (cloak +4, ring +3, leather jerkin, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 36; THAC0 17 (13 w/sword +4); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+4 (short sword +4); SA +4 surprise backstab, triple damage; SZ M; ML elite (14); AL NE; XP 2,000.

S 9, D 17, Co 15, I 9, W 14, C 15

Personality: calculating, efficient, mean

Special Equipment: cloak of protection +4, ring of protection +3, short sword +4, dust of disappearance (4 doses), amulet of nondetection, two daggers of venom +3, thieves' tools.

Thief Abilities: PP 50; OL 80; F/RT 30; MS 75; HS 40; DN 30; CW 80; RL 0.

Haridyn is a cruel young woman who delights in skull-duggery. She is a member of the Emerald Swords.

Kalris, hm M7: AC 4 (robe of the archmagi, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 21; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); MR 5%; SZ M; ML average (9); AL NE; XP 2,000.

S 7, D 15, Co 15, I 17, W 10, C 11

Personality: opportunistic, sneaky

Special Equipment: robe of archmagi, ring of mind shielding, wand of magic missiles, ring of form retention.

Spells (4/3/2/1): 1st — change self, charm person, color spray, message; 2nd — alter self, forget, knock; 3rd — invisibility 10' radius, nondetection; 4th — improved invisibility.

Kalris is the Emerald Swords' chief wizard. He is a middle-aged man with long red hair.

Shanna of the Ride, hf F6: AC 4 (leather, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 60; THAC0 15 (12 w/gauntlets, 8 w/sword +4); #AT 1; Dmg 2d4+10 (bastard sword +4); SZ M; ML fearless (19); AL CN; XP 1,400.

S 14(18/00 w/gauntlets), D 18, Co 17, I 8, W 10, C 17

Personality: ill-mannered, quick-tempered

Special Equipment: bastard sword +4, gauntlets of ogre power, longbow w/24 flight arrows, fast horse.

Shanna is the best horseman in the Emerald Swords. She is 6'3" tall with long brown hair and tanned skin, and a nasty attitude.

Mad Berfy, gm I5: AC 8 (Dex bonus); MV 6; hp 15; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); SZ S; ML fearless (20); AL CN; XP 650.

S 8, D 16, Co 15, I 17, W 8, C 8

Personality: eccentric, quirky, reckless

Special Equipment: cloak of displacement, wand of illusion.

Spells (5/3/2): 1st — audible glamor, change self, color spray, phantasmal force, spook; 2nd — hypnotic pattern, improved phantasmal force, mirror image; 3rd — spectral force, wraithform.

Berfy is a perpetually giggling gnome with a blue mohawk haircut. He annoys his companions to no end.

Clever Jake, hm F5: AC 3 (chain armor, helm of brilliance); MV 12; hp 45; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (horseman's mace); SZ M; ML average (9); AL N; XP 270.

S 15, D 12, Co 18, I 7, W 8, C 13

Personality: self-confident, clueless

Special Equipment: helm of brilliance.

Clever Jake is a fellow who thinks he's smarter than he really is. The other Emerald Swords tolerate him because of his wondrous helm.

The Stag Runners

Alanis Flamehair, hf P7 (Sune): AC 1 (chain mail, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 49; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (club); SZ M; ML average (9); AL CG; XP 975.

S 13, D 18, Co 15, I 12, W 15, C 18

Spell-like Abilities: love bite once per day (see *Faiths & Avatars*, page 151); charm person once per day; flame strike once per day.

Personality: vain, seductive, squeamish

Special Equipment: staff of curing, ring of regeneration, holy symbol of Sune, 4 vials holy water.

Preferred Spells (5/4/2/1): 1st — bless, command, cure light wounds, light, sanctuary; 2nd — chant, flame blade, silence 15' radius, slow poison; 3rd — dispel magic, protection from fire; 4th — cure serious wounds.

Alanis is a specialty priest of Sune (see *Faiths & Avatars*, page 149). She is a statuesque redhead who hates getting hurt.

Donzo Shadowkisser, ham T6: AC 1 (leather +3, Dex bonus); MV 6; hp 30; THAC0 18 (16 w/dagger +2); #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+2 (dagger +2); SA triple damage backstab at +4 to hit; SZ S; ML average (9); AL CN; XP 650.

S 11, D 19, Co 15, I 13, W 16, C 14

Personality: cheating, sneaky, hypocritical

Special Equipment: leather armor +3, dagger +2, bag of tricks, small bag of holding, thieves' tools.



Thief Abilities: PP 70; OL 50; F/RT 50; MS 50; HS 50; DN 35; CW 70; RL 30.

Donzo is a sneaky halfling who enjoys lying and backstabbing.

Gamara the Great, hf M7: AC 0 (headband, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 22; THAC0 18 (16 with staff +2); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+2 (staff +2); SZ M; ML average (10); AL NE; XP 975.

S 10, D 16, Co 15, I 16, W 9, C 12

Personality: cocky, physical

Special Equipment: headband of protection (AC 2 and +2 to saving throws), staff +2, ring of wizardry (3rd-level spells), wand of fire.

Spells (4/3/4/1): 1st — enlarge, identify, sleep, unseen, servant; 2nd — detect invisibility, fog cloud, stinking cloud; 3rd — fly, invisibility 10' radius, lightning bolt, suggestion; 4th — Evard's black tentacles.

Gamara is the Stag Runners' wizard, A matronly woman in her early 40's, she has a much higher opinion of herself than she ought to have.

Walpur the Bonebreaker, hm F6: AC 4 (splint mail); MV 12; hp 64; THAC0 15 (14 w/Str, 11 w/hammer +3); #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+5 (hammer +3); SZ L; ML fanatic (18); AL CN; XP 420.

S 17, D 9, Co 18, I 8, W 8, C 6

Personality: brutish, dense, unprincipled

Special Equipment: hammer +3.

Walpur used to be an underworld enforcer. A huge man over 7 feet tall, he is a bully who delights in breaking people's arms and legs. The Stag Runners use him as their intimidation muscle.

Becket and Tram, hm F4: AC 5 (chain mail); MV 12; hp 15 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword); SZ M; ML average (9); Int average (9); AL N; XP 120 each.

Personality: dull, unimaginative, violence-prone

Becket and Tram are twin brothers who act as extra muscle for the Stag Runners. Otherwise, they are uninspired boobs who like to hack and slash, then collect treasure.

Feasting Time

The mingling in the ballroom comes to an end when Moorefield the butler rings a small silver bell and announces, in his most dignified voice, "Dinner is served." The king and his

small entourage depart first, with the mingling crowds parting to make a smooth path for the monarch. Once the king clears the room, everyone else begins to file out.

You cross the hallway, under the courteous but watchful eyes of the Purple Dragons stationed here for security, into the Grand Hall. Whereas the ballroom has a sleek, smooth, almost austere feel to it, with its cold polished marble floors, minimal decorations, and stunning brightness, the Grand Hall is a warm, comfortably cluttered place.

The U-shaped dining table is a huge setup, with the central portion featuring two large carved wooden chairs in the precise center, no doubt for the king and queen. Lord Partic is seated at the king's right hand. The total seating capacity is fourscore people.

Even so, the grand table is scarcely enough for the crowd. Two other tables have been set up, one near the south wall and one near the east wall. Even so, it becomes apparent that not all of the adventuring companies that will be participating in the ceremony later on managed to get invitations to the feast beforehand. You count yourselves blessed by Tymora that not only did you get invited to the dinner, but that you are seated at the main table, on the south wing.

Set in the west wall is a large stained-glass window showing a mosaic design of a burning thistle. The room contains many tapestries of scenes from the host's family history, most involving the slaying of fantastic beasts.

The room smells of burning pine logs, roast boar, wax from the candles, and the sweet aroma of apples. This promises to be a fine feast. People can mutter all they want about Cormyr's snobbish attitudes and claims to civilization; you are experiencing Cormyrean culture at its finest, and it sits quite well with you!

You are seated with representatives from other adventuring groups, and a few luminaries. You hear from various folks that the adventuring groups not present for the dinner will still be here for the presentation. Not only that, but some of the adventuring groups that are here at the banquet do not have their full complements in attendance. Word has it that the Bubbling Bulwark, the inn built into the keep's wall, is serving food and drink to several dozen adventurers.

The sheer scope of this whole evening does not fail to amaze you. The local clack is that there are about 30 adventuring groups present within the keep's walls tonight. The smallest ones are a handful of fellowships with four members apiece. The largest one has a dozen members. Most, however, seem to have between six to eight members. Still, that means that Lord Thistle is entertaining about 180 adventurers, in addition to the royal family, the heads of the many noble houses, and other distinguished personages.



Speaking of the noble houses, you notice that each family is represented by its respective heads. There are about a dozen regal-looking couples at the table, and you correctly identify them as the noble families.

Dinner begins with an appetizer of baked mushrooms stuffed with liver paté. This is followed by a generous salad nicknamed “Chauntea’s plate” with a spicy vinegar dressing. The main course consists of roast boar stuffed with strips of roast partridge, roasted parsleyed potatoes, green beans with almonds, and freshly made applesauce spiced with cinnamon. Throughout the meal, baskets of warm, freshly baked bread are kept full, as are the glasses of Aglarond Blood Wine and mugs of Purple Dragon Ale.

Dessert is a whipped mousse made from chocolate imported from Maztica, laced with almond liqueur and topped with hand-whipped cream.

Pink claret is served as an aperitif, followed by cups of strong black coffee obtained from distant Durpar.

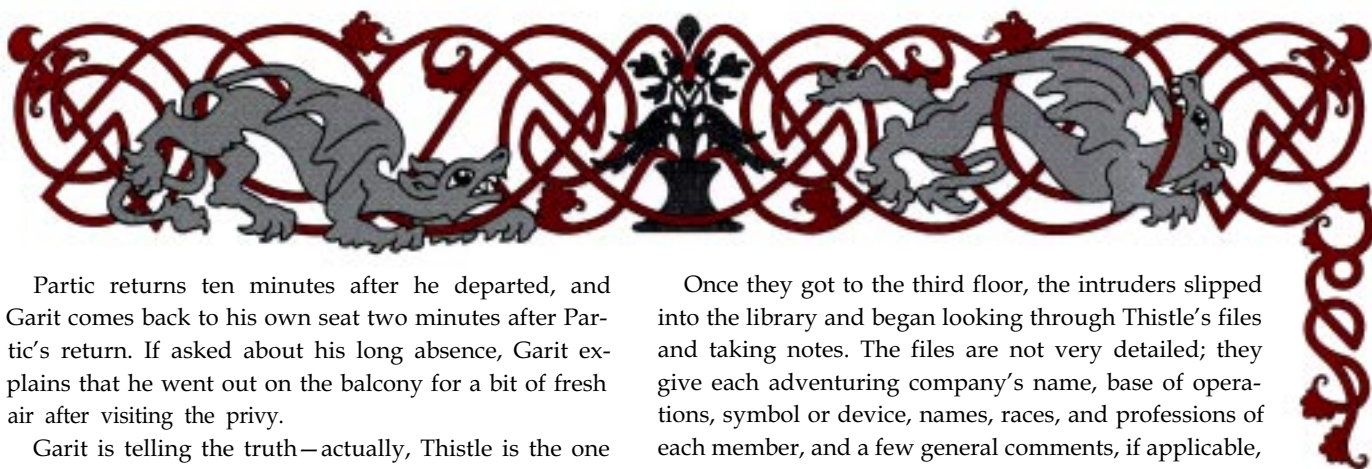
The sheer luxury and scope of the dinner should be emphasized. This is something the PCs rarely experience: dining with nobility.

Give each of the PCs chances to speak to people at their table. They are seated within conversation range of Mendryll Belarod; Lord Mournsoul; Sthavar’s herald, Xorn Hackhand; Garit Strongarm and Kerit Darkrider of the Gold Coins; Ruben Armand and Norrin Blackgrove of the Golden Gauntlets; and Brianna Tarvison and Pahelhe Firecaster of the She-Wolves.

EVENTS DURING DINNER

Thistle’s messenger comes in during the appetizer and gives a small note to his master. Thistle reads it, frowns, and whispers something to the messenger, who then leaves. After about three rounds, Thistle’s disposition turns sunny again. (The note is from Annalise at the Bubbling Bulwark, telling Thistle that she fears the insanely jealous Garit Strongarm may commit an act of violence against him. Thistle’s verbal reply, which the messenger will dutifully deliver, is “Thank you, my dear, but I am well able to fend for myself.”)

During the main course, Garit excuses himself and leaves the hall “to take care of some private business,” he says with a knowing wink. Five minutes later, Lord Thistle excuses himself and leaves the hall.



Partic returns ten minutes after he departed, and Garit comes back to his own seat two minutes after Partic's return. If asked about his long absence, Garit explains that he went out on the balcony for a bit of fresh air after visiting the privy.

Garit is telling the truth—actually, Thistle is the one whose situation is not what it appears to be. He was waylaid on the way to his personal privy by three members of the Emerald Swords. After grabbing and gagging him, they rushed him into his room. One of the Emerald Swords, who happens to be a doppelganger, took Partic's form, read his mind using *ESP*, and found out about the secret passage to the crypt. After discovering this fact, the Emerald Swords figured that the crypt would be a perfect place to hole up with the real Thistle. The doppelganger, posing as Thistle, rejoined the festivities, while the other kidnappers hustled the real Lord Thistle down into the crypt.

Any PC who makes a point of studying Thistle immediately after his return is entitled to make a Wisdom ability check. A successful result informs the character that Thistle appears a little unsure of himself, or awkward. However, this awkwardness disappears after about one turn.

During dessert, Lord Krell Huntcrown excuses himself for a few minutes. In actuality, he is going outside to meet an agent. This agent is a hired spy in the Huntcrowns' employ whose mission is to do a little digging and come up with a scandal involving Thistle. Even though the Huntcrowns are plotting something, their scheme most definitely does not involve murder.

The Plot

Like all of the other adventuring companies, the Emerald Swords had an invitation to come to the manor. The group's sympathies toward Zhentil Keep have not yet come to light. The Swords have a total of eight members, including the seven people described earlier plus a doppelganger named Xixis.

While the two leaders, Gandegar and Angar, were mingling at the reception and three others were cooling their heels in the common room of the Bubbling Bulwark, the remaining three (including Xixis) entered the manor with Xixis posing as a Purple Dragon, his thief comrade Haridyn using a *ring of improved invisibility*, and the mage Kalris passing himself off as a War Wizard. (Kalris managed to glean a legitimate password from an unsuspecting War Wizard by having Xixis focus his *ESP* on the Cormyrean mage.)

Once they got to the third floor, the intruders slipped into the library and began looking through Thistle's files and taking notes. The files are not very detailed; they give each adventuring company's name, base of operations, symbol or device, names, races, and professions of each member, and a few general comments, if applicable, about the overall nature of the group. More detailed information is kept in Thistle's head, and in the Registry Offices located in the Royal Court.

The fact that Thistle keeps all of the more sensitive information in his head is the reason the Emerald Swords wish to kidnap him; taking Lord Partic Thistle from his home during a feast is infinitely easier than attempting to break into the Royal Court.

To prevent anyone else from finding out information about their group, the intruders tossed all the documents concerning the Emerald Swords into the fireplace and burned them. They did the same with the records of two other groups, the Stag Runners and the Gold Coins, to divert suspicion away from themselves just in case someone later discovers that some of Thistle's files are missing.

When dinner was served, Haridyn picked the lock on the door leading from the library to Thistle's privy and the group made their way to the bedroom, where they hid and waited for Thistle to come upstairs and use the facilities. The original plan was to keep him bound and gagged in the bedroom after he was abducted, but the discovery of the secret door leading to the crypt changed all that. It took only a few moments for Xixis to assume Thistle's appearance and use his *ESP* power to probe his victim's mind, after which the doppelganger took Thistle's place at the banquet.

To help ensure that the deception would remain undetected, Kalris loaned Xixis his *ring of form retention*. This is a special magical item that allows its wearer to remain in any magically altered form that he or she adopted before putting on the ring, even if the user does not concentrate on maintaining that form. The Emerald Swords are aware that even the most accomplished doppelganger cannot duplicate another person's appearance perfectly, and there is always a chance of someone noticing that the impersonator is not who he seems to be. They hope the *ring* will reduce the chance of Xixis being discovered. (Kalris also suspects that the *ring* will prevent Xixis from reverting back to his true form even if he loses consciousness, which would keep the Emerald Swords' plan intact even if "Thistle" was somehow knocked out or incapacitated.)



The two representatives of the Emerald Swords attending the feast in the Grand Hall know that the switch has been made, since the doppelganger will give a subtle hand signal. The next part of the plan is for "Lord Thistle" to retire early, claiming fatigue, and letting the guests enjoy the entertainment. (The reasoning is that the less time Xixis spends among other people, the less likely it is that his deception will be discovered.)

However, as will be seen later on, the scheme will develop a serious complication.

The Presentation

Once dinner is done, a small army of hired servants dash in and rearrange the furniture so that the king's and queen's chairs are set up against the west wall, under the stained-glass window. Partic's chair is still at Azoun's right hand, although pushed away a little so that there is no confusion as to who the royalty is and who the "mere" nobles are.

The adventuring companies gather in their respective bands at the eastern end of the Grand Hall, even spilling out into the corridor if need be. The rest of the guests are situated along the north and south walls, either seated in chairs or standing.

A herald reads aloud the name of the first group. Each group has the same responsibility. With their one or two ranking members leading the way, the members of the company walk slowly up to the royal couple. In unison, they drop to one knee and bow their heads, reciting the following oath:

"We, members of the [company name], duly chartered and recognized by the grace and magnanimity of King Azoun the Fourth, do so pledge our loyalty to the sovereign ruler of Cormyr. By this pledge, we vow to obey Cormyr's laws when within the kingdom's borders, to neither plot nor aid an action against the kingdom's well-being, to come to her aid when summoned against a threat to the kingdom, and to faithfully renew our charter within the prescribed time allowed. This we pledge in the name of each of the gods that we follow."

It is generally understood that this oath is ceremonial and not necessarily binding; after all, there are many deities in the Realms who could care less whether their followers broke a promise. Several years ago, a suggestion was made that the pledge be altered to making the oath in the name of Torm, the god of duty. But the idea never gained favor; critics claimed that doing this would

be tantamount to forcing people to be accountable to a god that they may not even recognize as valid, let alone worship. The only oath-speakers who would likely be in serious jeopardy if they violated the pledge are those who worship Tyr, Torm, Helm, Ilmater, Azuth, or Moradin.

Any company that refuses to recite the oath is immediately escorted out of the keep and is told that the group has until noon tomorrow to leave Suzail, then another three days to get out of Cormyr altogether. The group's charter is revoked and cannot be reinstated for one year.

As you await your turn in line, you look all around you at the numerous adventuring companies waiting to take the oath. Your practiced eyes and ears spot the distinctive clothing styles and speech patterns of adventurers from all over the continent of Faerûn: people from the Western Heartlands, Waterdeep, the Moonshaes, Ravens Bluff, Sembia, the Dalelands, the Moonsea, and even unexpected places such as Anauroch, Turmish, and Aglarond. Although the group is mostly made up of humans, you can still see many half-elves and dwarves, and a few elves, gnomes, and halflings.

And it is not only a vast array of nations, cities, and regions represented. There is also great diversity in the type of people colloquially called "adventurers" to be found here. There are rangers who betray their profession by their demonstrated discomfort at being cooped up in a city for so long. Paladins, both humble and proud ones, speak each word of the oath as if it were a divine pronouncement.

Simple warriors, who recognize the value of a man's word, offer theirs. There are mysterious druids, most of who seem to utter their words with a casual indifference. Bards are the easy ones to spot, since they practically sing their oaths, anxious to turn any and every public speaking engagement into a performance. Wizards of all sorts utter their oaths with a deliberate intellectual precision, while the assembled priests, who altogether represent almost every good or neutral deity in the Realms, speak their oaths with careful trepidation. The priests know all too well the consequences of giving an oath in the name of a god.

You know that there are rogues in these companies, and although they do not have a certain "look" that gives them away, most seem to squirm as they utter the oath, while others emphasize certain parts of the oath, as if searching for loopholes even as they speak the pledge.

Sometimes King Azoun bids the leader of a company to unsheath his weapon and hold it in front of him, pommel pointing upward, while reciting the oath, followed by kissing



the sword's blade once the oath is uttered. The king and the queen seem to give their full attention to each oath-giver, no matter how humble or low in station.

Lord Partic Thistle, the driving force behind the attempt at making adventuring companies more palatable to the average Cormyrean, simply looks on expressionlessly, no doubt quietly proud of the results of his labors, yet hawing the dignity not to let it show.

The only aspect of the ceremony that disappoints you is that you have not seen anyone famous, anyone whose deeds are spoken of from one end of the Realms to the other. Certainly, there is no Elminster here, nor any of the Seven Sisters, nor Volothamp the traveler, nor Drizzt Do'Urden, nor any of countless other luminaries.

As these things pass through your mind, you are pulled from your reverie when the herald calls your adventuring company to come forward.

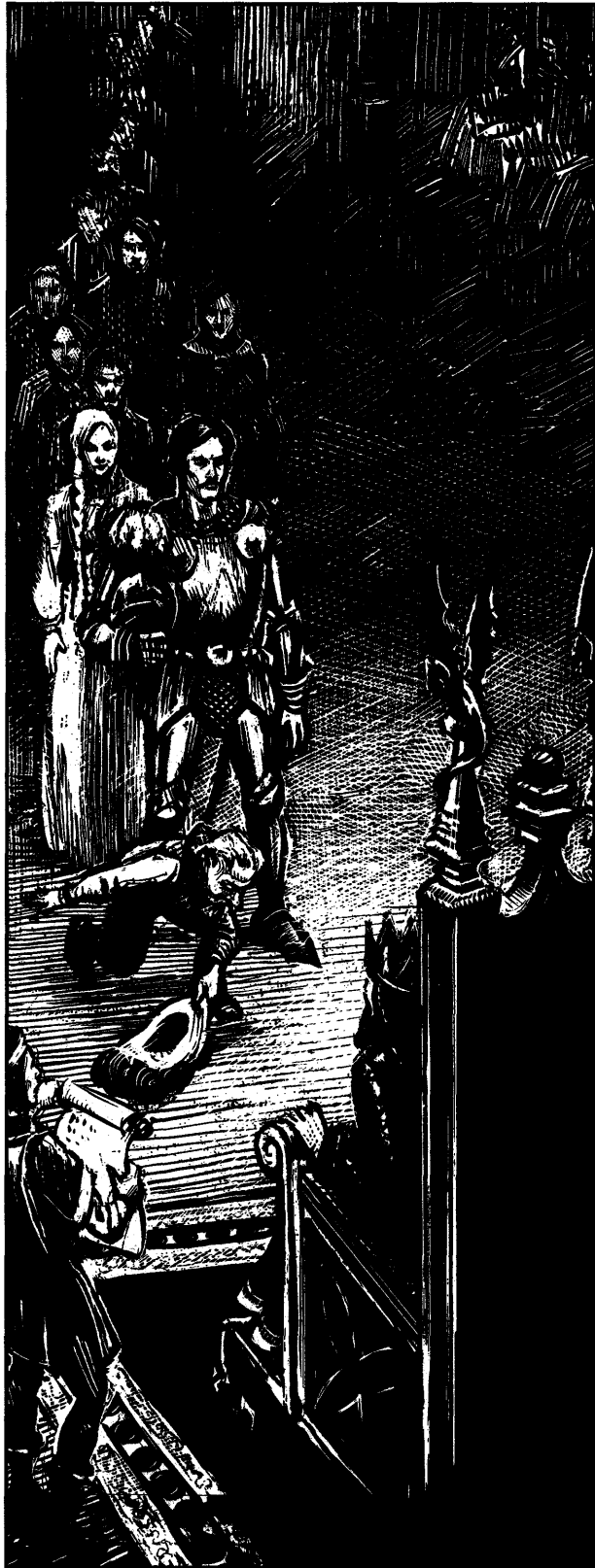
To convey the full flavor of the ceremony, encourage players to recite the oath one by one; or better yet, make copies of the oath and pass them out so that everyone can speak the oath in unison.

Split Decision

It may be that some PCs elect to take the oath, while others choose not to. Legally chartered companies that have non-oath-takers in their rolls are called "split companies." The ones who take the oath are responsible for the behavior of the ones who do not take it. This means that the non-oath-taking members of a split company must always be accompanied by at least one legal company member.

The holdouts are considered "invisible" by the authorities, who will not answer their questions, grant them any favors, or acknowledge them in conversation. The names of all the naysayers in a split company are put on a list and circulated to all Purple Dragon patrol commanders. If a naysayer is caught alone, not accompanied by a comrade who took the pledge, he will be detained, interrogated, and generally inconvenienced.

As soon as the last PC in the company takes his oath, the character with the highest Wisdom score in the group notices that Lord Partic Thistle has a slight grin, and he seems to be looking at someone or something behind the company while very subtly shaking his head. Despite any efforts to see who or what Thistle was looking at, no obvious target can be identified.





Music and Merriment

Once the last group has given its oath, a lusty “huzzah!” echoes throughout the hall. The hired servants rush back in and set up couches, comfortable chairs, and floor cushions in the Grand Hall. King Azoun and his queen sit on matched wooden thrones that seem quite comfortable. Many of the ladies sit or recline on the couches, while many of the noble men make use of the chairs. The adventurers fight each other good-naturedly for a good place on the floor, as well as for the possession of the plushiest floor cushions.

A blond-haired half-elf with a perpetual smirk and cradling a harp ambles to a spot where he can be seen by everyone. He gives a long, sweeping bow and says:

“Hail and well met, your majesties, assembled nobles, esteemed guests . . . oh, and adventurers too, I suppose. . . .” This last bit draws a chorus of guffaws from many, although the king and queen merely incline their heads and smile slightly when they are referred to by the bard.

“ . . . As I was saying, hail and well met, all. I am the bard Mendryll Belarod, and I shall be your entertainment for the evening, since our host could not find enough barmaids for everyone!” This remark elicits gasps from the well-heeled noble ladies, a few dropped jaws from the male nobility, and hoots and laughter from the assembled adventurers. A couple of nobles immediately shoot curious, concerned looks at Lord Thistle, as if worried that he may take personal offense for some reason, but your esteemed host seems not to be perturbed, or, if he is, is certainly doing a fine job of not showing it.

“For your entertainment,” Mendryll continues, “I shall play a selection of songs that will make you laugh, cry, cheer, and tremble in your seats. Naturally, accomplished bard that I am, I also take requests.”

Lord Mournsoul stops studying a black rose that he has been staring at for a while and raises his whining voice to the bard. “Can ye play the ballad called ‘Courtly Love’s Sweet Agonies’?” he asks, eyes filled with pitiful artistic angst.

Mendryll locks eyes with the fashionably depressed noble. “You hum a few bars,” he declares in an even voice, “and I’ll smash your face in.” At this, laughter and applause erupt from various places in the room.

The bard looks pleased that everyone enjoyed the jest. He holds up his hands in a polite appeal for silence. “In all seriousness, I have come to entertain. I may not be as erudite as Elminster, or as verbose as Volothamp, or as loud as Llewellyn the Loquacious, or as stunning as Storm Silver-

hand” — some of the bawdier adventurers let loose with whoops and whistles while a few people raise their eyebrows at this, and Mendryll now knows who in the crowd is a Harper — “but nevertheless, this humble bard shall do his best to sing and spin tales for your enjoyment.”

“Humble bard?” a slightly inebriated adventurer bellows, to the delight of many in the crowd. “I thought you were going to be singing, Mendryll!”

“Aye!” a dwarf calls out. “Let us hear you belch the Cormyrean Royal Anthem like ye did last night at the Bulwark!”

“Do yer impersynation o’ Elminster!” a grizzled old warrior calls out.

“Nay! Do Piergeiron The Thickskull!” a robed gnome calls out in a nasal voice. Almost all of the assembled adventurers erupt in hysterical laughter, while most of the assembled nobility look shocked, although if you look long enough, you do find a few bluebloods who snicker into their scented handkerchiefs or hide their grins behind the act of sipping from their wineglasses.

Mendryll’s mouth twists into something between a grimace and a grin, and his eyes dart to King Azoun, who gives a very subtle gesture meaning “No.” Blushing a deep crimson and giving a barely perceptible nod, Mendryll begins playing the harp and launches into his first song.

Mendryll’s first song is a ballad about the “Lost King” Gondegal. (See the *Cormyr* accessory for details.) Naturally, it is told in such a way that it honors King Azoun, Vangerdahast, and most of the nobility, whether they helped put down the usurper or not. Mendryll may be a smug bard, but he knows which side of his bread is buttered.

In between his songs, Mendryll offers entertaining tales and gossip. (Feel free to dispense to the PCs any interesting “current clack” from anywhere on Faerûn.) Mendryll is widely traveled and does a good job of collecting interesting tales.

As he plays, Mendryll gauges the crowd and tailors his songs to reflect their tastes. When his confidence swells up to its normal ego-fueled hugeness, he launches into a shockingly bawdy song about a pair of Sembian merchants, a dryad, and a harpy. The song brings horrified, embarrassed expressions to the faces of the noblewomen, and draws forth hysterical laughter from all the males, noble and adventurer alike, as well as from the majority of the female adventurers.

However, a group of four adventurers—whom the PCs recognize as members of the Stag Runners, a Sembian



adventuring group—get up, hurl their wineglasses to the floor, and storm out of the hall. The king and queen notice the disturbance, but Azoun is careful not to react openly. Some of the assembled nobles look concerned, not wishing to see something so trivial as a satirical song escalate into a diplomatic incident.

The offended Sembians will exit the manor and head for the Bubbling Bulwark to meet their fellows. There, they will hatch a plot to ambush Mendryll and thrash him soundly.

Any PCs who try to study Lord Partic Thistle after the resumption of Mendryll's performance must make a Wisdom ability check at a -3 penalty. If any character's check is successful, he notices that Thistle once again seems to be looking at someone or something, and again very subtly shaking his head, although this time he has a grim, determined expression on his face. Anyone attempting to see who or what he is looking at must make another Wisdom ability check, this time at a -9 penalty. Any character who succeeds at this check notices that Partic is communicating with the two members of the Emerald Swords. This episode occurs a few minutes after the Sembian walkout.

About a quarter of an hour before Mendryll's performance is scheduled to end, the two Emerald Swords head for the door. Any PC who pays close attention during their departure notices that they look disgusted.

What's Going On?

Each time the doppelganger playing Lord Thistle has gotten the sign from the Emerald Swords leaders to retire for the night, the "lord" has refused. The doppelganger began seriously enjoying the role he is playing when he sat near King Azoun and watched all of the adventurers approach him and bow down. That, plus the food, the wine, and the wonderful music, has made Xixis change his plans. He likes being Thistle, and has decided that he wants to keep the masquerade going for a little while longer.

Xixis also knows that he is in charge now. The other Emerald Swords cannot stop him without revealing their own role in the plot. Eventually, in his own good time, he will return to following the plan. However, the fun he is having now, plus the prospect of perhaps getting the lovely barmaid Annalise to visit his chambers this night, are too much to give up just yet.



The Emerald Swords leaders become enraged and devise an alternate plan. This plot involves killing Xixis and trying to make it look like “Thistle” was murdered by an adventuring company, or possibly by some noble who hired an adventuring company to do the dirty work.

The Party's Over

The applause and cheers after the latest song seem a bit weaker, and you get the idea that the celebrants are getting tired, something that does not go unnoticed by Mendryll. Putting on his best smile, he addresses the crowd.

“I can see by the lateness of the hour and the sea of tired faces before me that ‘tis time to take my leave. A most splendid audience I have not played for in such a time, and I thank you all kindly. Onward now to your beds, while I slake my thirst at the Bubbling Bulwark!”

Almost as if on cue, everyone hears the watch call out the midnight hour. It is indeed late, and weariness is etched on many faces. As one of the members of the She-Wolves adventuring company passes your group, she leans toward you and whispers, “ ‘Twas a good party, and that’s the gods’ own truth. But the real revelries are still to happen at the Bulwark! No huffy-puffy manners there, I can tell ya.”

The king and queen stand and applaud Mendryll, who gives them his deepest and most gracious bow. Regardless of their fatigue, everyone else joins in the applause, and the bard, eating it up, bows to all before giving his cloak a dramatic sweep and striding from the hall.

The king and queen give a nod to everyone and walk out of the Grand Hall, arm in arm. Contingents of Purple Dragons take up escort positions as they descend the stairs.

Meanwhile, the guests who are staying in the manor are already being approached by the maids and the butler, and given room keys and directions. In the midst of this activity, a smiling dwarf pushes his way through a knot of people and exchanges words briefly with Lord Thistle as the rest of the guests begin moving toward the main staircase.

Lord Thistle bows to the dwarf and shakes his hand, ending their conversation. Then he announces to the crowd that the celebration is officially done, but overnight guests can feel free to continue their merrymaking at the Bubbling Bulwark. He informs everyone that the entrance to the manor will be unlocked all night, and guards will remain on duty inside the house and at the entrance to the keep, but the patrols in the courtyard will go off duty momentarily, as soon as the royal family and the other noble visitors have left the premises. With that, he bids you all good-night and heads for the staircase leading up to his private chambers.

If any player asks for more information about the dwarf who spoke to Thistle, that player’s character recognizes the dwarf from the oathtaking ceremony. He is Gande-gar Armstrong, a leader of the adventuring company known as the Emerald Swords. None of the PCs is close enough to Thistle and Gande-gar to overhear what they said to each other, but from appearances it was merely a harmless exchange of pleasantries.

Music Critics

Use this encounter if and when the PCs amble over to the Bubbling Bulwark after Lord Thistle’s party.

As you begin to walk away from the manor, you catch sight of a gleam of light out of the corner of your left eye, coming from around the manor’s southeast corner. Just when you are sure it is nothing significant, you see it again, followed by what looks like the red glow of flames.

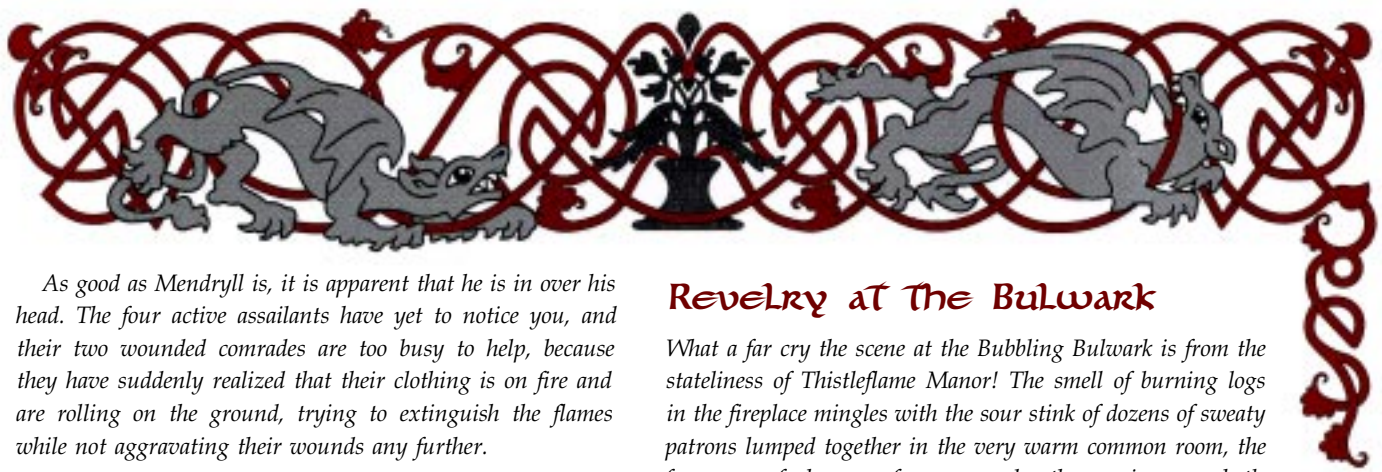
Rushing over to investigate, you see Mendryll Belarod, his entertainer’s smirk gone and replaced by a steely expression of determination. He clutches a flaming long sword in both hands, waiting for the next enemy.

And there are quite a few to choose from. Two grimacing men in chain armor kneel on the ground, cradling their burned and bleeding hands, their swords lying in the snow beside them. So intent are they on their pain that both men fail to realize that the edges of their cloaks are on fire.

Three figures are still standing, and you recognize them as the people who stormed out of the Great Hall during Mendryll’s performance. A woman in robes brandishes a staff at the bard, while another woman, a most lovely one with long red hair, menaces the bard with a club. A tall, armored warrior holds a hammer with a massive, highly polished head.

Suddenly, you realize that a fourth figure, as short as a child, is creeping up behind the bard. Mendryll stares at the hammer of the warrior, and gracefully spins about just in time to deflect an attack from behind. You realize that the bard saw the reflection of the would-be backstabber in the shiny surface of the warrior’s weapon. Apparently, Mendryll can fight as well as he can sing.

There is something odd about this fight, and when Mendryll deflects the halfling’s blade and slams the pommel of his sword into the diminutive thief’s forehead, it suddenly dawns on you: The entire battle is utterly silent—not a single grunt or oath audible, not even the clang of steel on steel.



As good as Mendryll is, it is apparent that he is in over his head. The four active assailants have yet to notice you, and their two wounded comrades are too busy to help, because they have suddenly realized that their clothing is on fire and are rolling on the ground, trying to extinguish the flames while not aggravating their wounds any further.

If the PCs attack, they get a free round of initiative. Mendryll, a look of pleased relief on his face, tries to speak, though no sound reaches the ears of the PCs. If any player character has the reading lips proficiency, a successful check reveals that Mendryll is saying, "Do NOT kill them! Disarm and subdue!"

If the PCs sound a call for the guards instead of entering into melee themselves, a full patrol plus a War Wizard will arrive from their post at the front gate of the courtyard in 1d3 rounds.

The Stag Runners decided to beat up on the bard because of his unflattering remarks about Sembia during his entertainment at the feast. The adventuring company began by declaring, "We'll reach you to make fun of Sembians!" When Mendryll replied that they needn't bother because he already knew how to do that, they decided to do more than just bear him up. Alanis the priest cast her *silence 15' radius* spell on the bard, preventing the sounds of battle from being overheard by passersby—but she didn't know Mendryll had a *flame tongue* sword that would attract attention anyway.

The Runners will live up to their name if half their number are disarmed or lose more than half of their hit points. They will dash back to the Bubbling Bulwark to lick their wounds. Thus far, only the group's two "grunt" warriors, Becket and Tram, fulfill these conditions.

If the Purple Dragons arrest the Sembians, the PCs probably will be taken in for questioning as well, especially if they had their weapons out of their bonds. Questioning takes place at the guard barracks (location D). Mendryll will speak on the PCs' behalf, and the rime they spend being detained by the Purple Dragons will be minimal.

To show his gratitude, Mendryll will buy the PCs an initial round of refreshment at the Bubbling Bulwark. From this point on, Mendryll's abilities to identify items or answer questions about histories and legends will be made available to the PCs for no charge, and at their convenience. Note, however, that even a bard's gratitude has its limits.

Revelry at The Bulwark

What a far cry the scene at the Bubbling Bulwark is from the stateliness of Thistleflame Manor! The smell of burning logs in the fireplace mingles with the sour stink of dozens of sweaty patrons lumped together in the very warm common room, the fragrance of cheap perfume worn by the serving wenches, the not so subtle aroma of the inn's own home brew, and the strong, greasy smell of cheap mutton roasting on the fire.

The air is filled with the sounds of shouting, belching, off-key and off-color singing, giggling women, cursing, and the occasional splintering of a wooden chair. Now this is what an adventurer is used to!

And indeed, the place is jammed to the rafters with members of many and sundry adventuring companies. Words and accents from all over the Realms can be heard here, as well as smatterings of conversations in the major racial languages.

You manage to find some space to stand against a wall. A lovely barmaid with extremely long blonde hair and carrying a large tray pushes her way to you. With a smile, she hands you each a big tankard of ale. "It's all we got to drink," she says over the roar of the crowd. "And if it's food ya want, I can bring over some mutton an' bread. It's all we got to eat! We're keepin' things simple tonight because of all these people!"

A group of red-nosed, gassy dwarves yell at the barmaid for more ale, and she acknowledges their order and steadfastly wades through the crowd toward the bar to refill the dwarves' mugs, leaving you alone in the crowd.

The Bubbling Bulwark is the perfect locale for the PCs to relax and get some more news. If Mendryll is with the party, he instinctively gauges when a group of patrons is ready to vacate a table, and he grabs it for himself and the PCs. At some point soon after they enter the tavern, the PCs overhear a barmaid complaining to a patron about the fact that Annalise left work early tonight (before midnight).

This is an appropriate rime to feed the PCs any other facts they might later need in order to piece together what is going to happen (and also to supply them with intentionally misleading information), whether they learn these facts by overhearing some other conversation or engaging someone in dialogue. By the time they retire for the night, the PCs should know at least that (a) Garit Strongarm is jealous of Thistle's relationship with Annalise; (b) representatives of every adventuring group except the Emerald Swords have been seen in the common room of the inn at some point during this



evening; (c) there is a crypt in the cellar of the manor house, but only Thistle and the butler Moorefield have keys to the door that leads there; and (d) Thistle has a library that contains a storehouse of information about chartered adventuring groups—but amazingly enough, Thistle himself is an even greater storehouse because he has memorized facts about the groups that do not appear in his written records.

Patrons stop coming into the common room about an hour after midnight. Everyone else in the keep's environs is already in bed. From this point on, people leave in pairs or small groups every few minutes, until the common room becomes vacant at about two o'clock.

Optionally, if the Stag Runners were not arrested, they can be found in the inn's common room, and would be ready to have a brawl with Mendryll and the PCs who intervened in the attack.

Murder in The Night

Only two PCs—the pair who are recognized as the company's senior members and/or leaders—can sleep in Thistleflame Manor. The remaining members have two rooms to divide among themselves in the Bubbling Bulwark.

An hour after the PCs turn in, events at Thistleflame Manor take an abrupt twist. Read the following passage to the two players whose characters are staying in the manor:

Your sleep is interrupted by a rough, insistent shove. As you open your eyes, you see three Purple Dragons, a War Wizard, and a grim-faced Aleka Ravenheart in your room. The door to your bedroom is open, and from outside you can hear doors being opened, the sound of many booted feet quick-timing down the halls, harsh calls to awaken, and shouts of outrage from sleepy guests.

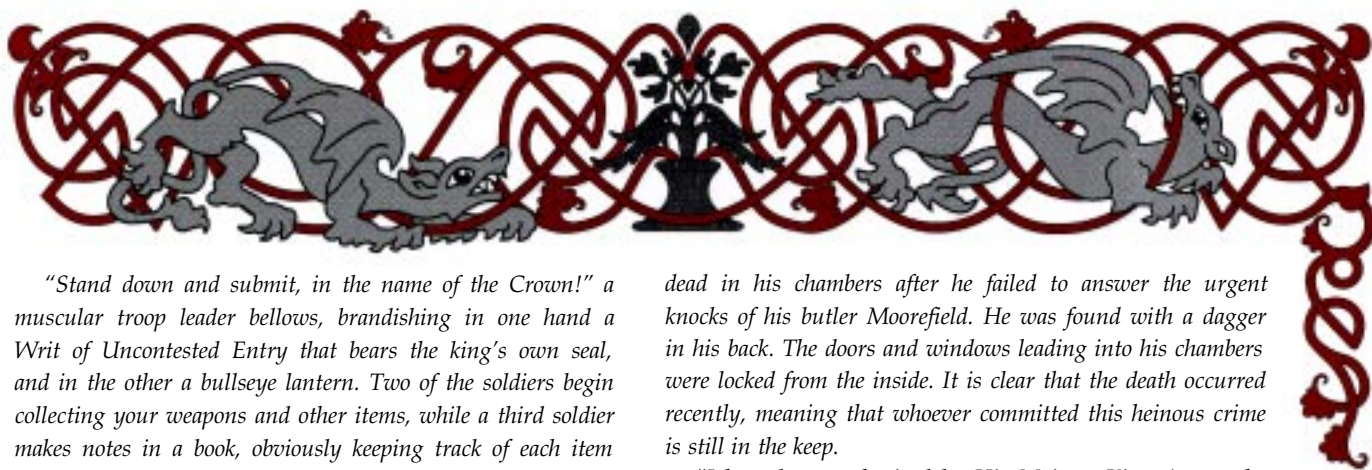
You have been awakened by one of the Purple Dragons, who holds a lantern aloft and stares down at you in contempt. The second soldier has his hands full with all of your weapons and gear. The third soldier holds his sword in one hand and a torch in the other. The wizard stares at you speculatively, absently tapping a wand in his hand over and over.

Aleka looks you both up and down and frowns. "The Lord Partic Thistle has been murdered," she says in a flat, emotionless voice. "Everyone is suspect. Make yourselves presentable and gather in the ballroom. Wear anything that looks like armor or a protection device, or anything that even remotely resembles a weapon, and you shall be slain outright."

The guards and the wizard file out of the room, taking up positions at the door, waiting for the two of you. Aleka leaves, but stops and looks over her shoulder. "Any attempt to leave the keep will be construed as an escape, and considered a confession of guilt, with a penalty of summary execution. Consider yourselves warned."

The following narration is for the PCs who are sleeping in the Bubbling Bulwark:

Shortly after you drift off to sleep, you awaken to the sound of the door to your room being slammed open. Four Purple Dragons and a pair of War Wizards storm into your room, barely controlled rage on their faces. In the background you hear the sound of many marching feet, doors being pushed open, and a chorus of yells and shouts.



"Stand down and submit, in the name of the Crown!" a muscular troop leader bellows, brandishing in one hand a Writ of Uncontested Entry that bears the king's own seal, and in the other a bullseye lantern. Two of the soldiers begin collecting your weapons and other items, while a third soldier makes notes in a book, obviously keeping track of each item and where it was obtained. The fourth soldier holds a sword in one hand and a burning torch in the other. One of the robed wizards holds out a wand, ready to wave it at the slightest sign of trouble, while the other wizard seems poised to cast a spell, his eyes sweeping your group.

"The Lord Partic Thistle has been murdered," the troop leader snarls. "And all of the guests are suspect. Put on yer clothes and meet in the ballroom . . . NOW! Wear anything that looks like armor, a weapon, or anything which even hints of magic, and ye'll be gutted without so much as a how-dee-do. And if ya any try to leave the keep, it only means yer guilty, and we'll all let loose with all our weapons and magic on ya."

If any of the PCs in either location offer resistance or do so much as verbally protest, a shrill whistle is sounded by one of the guards, and four more Purple Dragons and two more War Wizards storm into their sleeping quarters one round later. The characters will be bound and dragged to the ballroom if necessary.

Everyone is expected to gather in the ballroom in no more than ten minutes. The time is approximately three hours after midnight.

The Three O'Clock Gathering

Minutes after your abrupt awakening, your group stands on the cold marble floor of the ballroom. At least someone had the consideration of starting a fire in the fireplace to drive off the predawn chill. A vast assembly of manor staff, nobles, and adventuring groups, including everyone who remained on the premises of Thistleflame Keep, is gathered here.

Six Purple Dragons and three War Wizards guard the only exit. All of them look as if they are dying to see someone try to make a break for it.

You look in the faces of your fellow "suspects," and see bleary eyes, stifled yawns, and irritation. An atmosphere of suspicion pervades the assembly, and the tension is almost tangible.

The guards open the doors, letting in Aleka Ravenheart and Sthavar, the Lord Magistrate of Suzail. Sthavar nods gravely to Aleka and she, standing ramrod straight, hands behind her back, addresses the group:

"About half an hour ago, Lord Partic Thistle was found

dead in his chambers after he failed to answer the urgent knocks of his butler Moorefield. He was found with a dagger in his back. The doors and windows leading into his chambers were locked from the inside. It is clear that the death occurred recently, meaning that whoever committed this heinous crime is still in the keep.

"I have been authorized by His Majesty King Azoun the Fourth to conduct a full investigation into the murder of Lord Partic Thistle, with legal authority to detain suspects and make arrests."

Aleka clears her throat and continues. "Consider yourselves under detention within the confines of the keep until the truth can be ascertained. Anyone who attempts to leave will be assumed guilty and dealt with accordingly. Return to your rooms, but know that you may be summoned for questioning at any time."

This is the time when PCs should start to take matters into their own hands. If they do not approach Aleka Ravenheart voluntarily and offer their help in solving the murder, it will be necessary for her to initiate contact with them. It could be that Mendryll the bard points out the PCs to Aleka and identifies them as the adventurers who helped him out in the fight against the Stag Runners. (Mendryll himself is not a suspect: because—unknownst to anyone else—after leaving the Bubbling Bulwark he was in the company of Aleka until the murder was discovered.) However it happens, the PCs end up being deputized by Aleka, provided with credentials to prove their status, and given authority to assist in the conducting of the investigation. They do not have the right to leave the keep or to make arrests, but may interrogate anyone they choose to speak to. Aleka assigns a young Purple Dragon named Laraby to "escort" the group throughout their investigations. If the PCs split up, Laraby will accompany any characters who wish to visit the scene of the crime.

Laraby, hm F2: AC 5 (chain armor); MV 12; hp 11; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword) or 1d6 (flight arrows); SZ M; ML steady (12); Int average (11); AL LG; XP 65.

Personality: helpful, loyal, enthusiastic

Special Equipment: chain armor, long sword, short bow with 20 flight arrows.

Laraby is a 19-year-old with curly red hair and freckles. He is still not so battle-hardened and indoctrinated in Purple Dragon discipline that he cannot sympathize with people who wish to adventure. He himself harbors



no prejudice toward adventurers, and although he will be helpful, Laraby will not under any circumstances bend the law even a fraction.

How The Deed Was Done

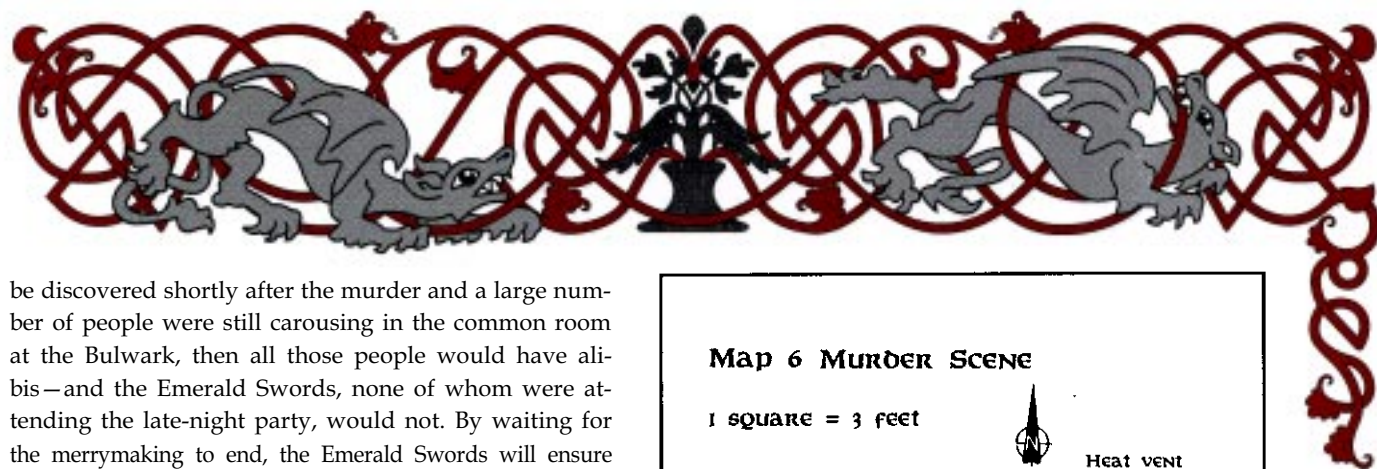
When it came rime for the adventuring companies to pledge their loyalty, the Emerald Swords gathered in the Grand Hall along with all the other adventurers. Haridyn and Kalris came up from the crypt using the secret passage to retrace their steps, reentered Thistle's chambers, then sneaked downstairs and joined Gandegar, Angar, and their other comrades. Because the Emerald Swords have concealed the fact that the doppelganger is also a member of their group, no one was aware that Xixis was not present. (Thistle is the only person in the manor at this point in rime who knows that the Emerald Swords have eight members instead of just seven, and he is in no position to make an issue of this fact.)

After the pledges were done, Gandegar, Angar, Haridyn, and Kalris remained for the entertainment. The other Emerald Swords, on Gandegar's orders, went directly to the Bubbling Bulwark and up to the room reserved for them. (Gandegar did not want to risk their spending time in the common room, having too much to drink, and letting something slip about what the group was doing.)

Once it became apparent that Xixis was obsessed with continuing to play the role of Thistle, the leaders of the Emerald Swords realized that they had to get rid of the rebellious doppelganger.

Gandegar whispered orders to Kalris and Haridyn, instructing them that unless Xixis changed his ways, they were to devise a method of killing the doppelganger. The two of them left the Grand Hall, sneaked back into the crypt, and then came up with an obvious idea almost immediately. While Kalris remained in the crypt, Haridyn used her *dust of disappearance* to make her way unseen up to the fourth floor, where she lurked outside the door to the room reserved for the Emerald Swords. When Gandegar and Angar came up to the room—just after Gandegar made one last attempt to get through to the doppelganger—she revealed her presence to them and asked for her final instructions.

The leaders told her that the murder must be carried out, but only after she waited a couple of hours for most of the overnight guests to retire to their rooms in the manor or in the Bubbling Bulwark. (If the body were to



be discovered shortly after the murder and a large number of people were still carousing in the common room at the Bulwark, then all those people would have alibis—and the Emerald Swords, none of whom were attending the late-night party, would not. By waiting for the merrymaking to end, the Emerald Swords will ensure that practically everyone who is staying the night will be under suspicion.) So, at approximately two hours after midnight, the thief sneaked back into Thistle's bedroom by way of the library, being careful to lock the library door behind her. Xixis was still awake and happily puttering about the bedroom, quite pleased with himself and enjoying his newfound "nobility." All of that came to an end when Haridyn moved up behind him and plunged one of her *daggers of venom* between his shoulder blades, killing the doppleganger instantly. She retreated into the crypt, leaving a murder scene that shows no signs of entry and no signs of a struggle.

The Investigation

The following section contains the description of the crime scene, different locales in the keep where the PCs can visit and talk with the people who happen to be there, and listings for NPCs who are not tied down to one particular location. It will be up to the PCs to put together the clues and solve the crime.

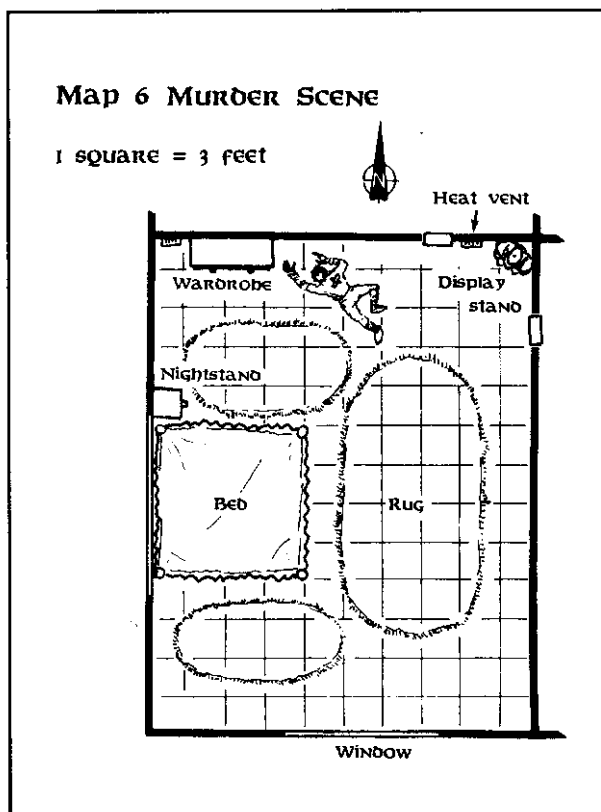
Aleka has commandeered the ground-floor library (room #3) and is using it as a command post. Besides her, six Purple Dragons and two War Wizards are on guard. Anyone who comes in with a drawn weapon will be beaten into submission, disarmed, then asked what business they have here.

Aleka sits behind the desk, coordinating search patrols, interviewing suspects, collating the information she has gathered, and grabbing small catnaps.

The PCs, after being deputized and receiving their instructions, can commence their investigation by half past three in the morning.

The Murder Scene

Six Purple Dragons and one War Wizard are stationed at the top of the stairs on the third floor, preventing anyone from getting into Partic's chambers. The PCs will be allowed to pass, since Laraby is with them and they can produce papers that prove they have been deputized by Aleka. Before they enter, they are instructed not to touch the body, although they can examine it at their leisure.



"Lord Thistle" is lying face down on the floor near the north wall of Partic's bedroom, a dagger still stuck in his back. (See Map 6, on this page, for details of the scene.) Congealed around the wound is a black fluid, which the authorities suspect is poison from the dagger.

Aside from wearing his ring of office on his left hand, "Thistle" also has a simple silver band on his right little finger. This is the *ring of form retention* that was given to Xixis for him to wear. Not only did it seemingly help to prevent Xixis from being found out, it has indeed worked as well as Kalris hoped it would—the dead body still looks exactly like Lord Thistle. Of course, if the *ring* is removed, that act will certainly alter the course of the investigation.

Checking the doors and windows of the room shows that all means of access were locked from the inside. None of the dust on the window ledges has been disturbed in any way. It is apparent that "Lord Thistle" died without a struggle. Checking the dagger shows no marks or prints on the handle; it is smooth and clean.

In Thistle's library, everything looks normal at first glance, except that the door to the cabinet containing the information on all the adventuring groups is wide



open. A quick look inside shows that the papers appear as though they have been handled and not put away in a completely orderly fashion. A detailed examination of these files (one person spending at least fifteen minutes going through them) will reveal the fact that no information exists on three groups: the Gold Coins, the Stag Runners, and the Emerald Swords. Remnants of burned paper can be seen in the fireplace by anyone who examines it at close range. The door to the library from the inner hallway is not locked, but this is normal. The door from the library to the bathroom, however, is locked from the bathroom side.

Clue Sites

Following is a list of places within the keep that could have some bearing on the case.

A. The Main Gate. Guards questioned at the main gate vouch for the fact that no people came through the main gate after ten o'clock. The only departures occurred between midnight and one o'clock. The departing people were King Azoun and his family, Vangerdahast, the Sage Alaphondar, Duke Bhereu and Baron Thomdor, the leaders of the four trading costers, Sthavar, and the representatives of the families Crownsilver, Hawklin, Huntsilver, Illance, Silversword, and Truesilver families.

C. The Stables. Mac and Zac saw something interesting at about one in the morning. If paid a gold piece, they will spill the following story: "A very pretty red-haired woman in a long cloak was talking to this guy who was about her age, wearing armor and shouting a lot. He was saying things about nor wanting her to see anyone else, and she was saying that she might be marrying the lord himself. This made him real mad, but he wasn't able to say anything more, because some guards were coming. The lady took that time to break away from the guy and run to the inn. The guy said something about 'nor being able to marry someone if that someone is dead,' then walked off toward the manor."

After witnessing that exchange, the boys turned in, afraid to speak up to anyone.

E. The Bubbling Bulwark. The inn has lots of information, if the PCs know how and where to get it. A few gold pieces in the palms of the information sources will ease the strain of interrogation.

Haverish Hallefon: He knows that Annalise has often

been entertained by Thistle, and on occasion he has visited the tavern while she was working and made no special effort to hide his feelings for her. If Haverish is asked specifically about other suitors, he knows that Garit Strongarm of the Gold Coins has strong feelings for Annalise, and has often picked fights with other customers who he thought were trying to flirt with her. He describes Garit as "a very jealous young hothead."

Annalise left work shortly before midnight, claiming that she had "an appointment." Haverish did not see Garit in the common room all night long.

The other barmaids: They can confirm Haverish's assertions about the relationship between Annalise and Thistle, as well as Garit's jealousy. They also know that Annalise was irritated with Garit's possessiveness.

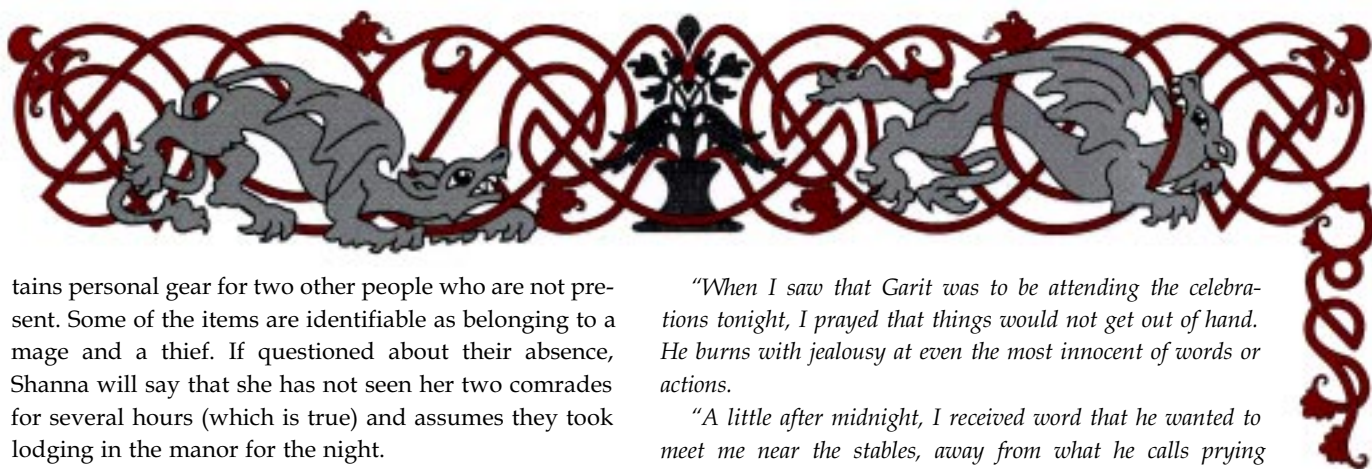
One of the barmaids, Crystyn, is Annalise's best friend, and shares a room with her on the ground floor of the inn. She said that Annalise told her that she would not be working late tonight because she "had to get something done once and for all."

If Crystyn is paid five additional gold pieces, she will allow the PCs to search the room that she and Annalise share. In the room, the PCs find a stack of love letters from Thistle, bound up with string and placed in a metal box under her bed. The letters imply that he wishes to marry her, but is waiting for "the rime to be right."

Dwak and Louella: The two bouncers have nothing but good things to say about Annalise. They dislike Garit to no end; both of them have had to break up fights that the brash adventurer repeatedly ignites. Dwak once heard Garit say to Annalise: "I'll kill any man who dares try to rake liberties with you!"

Guest rooms: Twenty different adventuring groups have representatives staying at the inn. Haverish and all the barmaids have access to a list that tells which groups are staying in which rooms. The list includes every company that was also given lodging in the manor (the Gold Coins, the Magebanes, the Golden Gauntlet, the Company of Night, the Emerald Swords, the Warhawks, the Grand Fist, the She-Wolves, and the PCs' party), plus the Stag Runners and ten other groups. The vast majority of guests will have nothing of importance to say and will do nothing to cast suspicion on themselves, answering all questions truthfully and complying with any reasonable request the PCs might make. As for the others . . .

The Emerald Swords were allotted two adjacent rooms for a total of six members, but only three people are staying in them: Shanna in one room, and Mad Berfy and Clever Jake in the other one. Shanna's room con-



tains personal gear for two other people who are not present. Some of the items are identifiable as belonging to a mage and a thief. If questioned about their absence, Shanna will say that she has not seen her two comrades for several hours (which is true) and assumes they took lodging in the manor for the night.

Among Clever Jake's personal items in the other room is a copy of the group's charter, which was renewed two weeks ago and clearly says that the Emerald Swords have eight members. If any of the three are asked about the discrepancy in number of members, the response will be that their comrade was killed in action a month ago. (Observant players will realize this cannot be true, since the charter is only two weeks old. If anyone is confronted concerning this "inaccuracy," it will be nervously passed off as a simple mistake—they should have said "killed a week ago" instead of "a month ago.") When questioned about their whereabouts, all three will say (truthfully) that they have been in their rooms since well before midnight.

The rooms set aside for the Stag Runners and the Company of Night contain evidence that these adventurers are from Sembia, but that in itself is certainly not a crime. Members of these groups claim that they returned here after the pledging ceremony, stayed in the common room for a while, and then went to bed. The PCs can get verification of these facts from the barmaids if they ask specifically about these groups. (Of course, if the Stag Runners were arrested by guards after the incident involving Mendryll, they will not be present—but neither will they be suspects in the murder.)

The Stag Runners (if present) will be surly toward the PCs, accusing them of discrimination against Sembians, but will not be outwardly uncooperative. The Company of Night, occupying the rooms directly across the hall from where the Emerald Swords are staying, will tell the PCs that a few minutes ago they overheard an unusual exchange of remarks coming from the room where Mad Berfy and Clever Jake are lodged: "The old man's dead, and now we're sunk!" followed by someone else saying, "It's not the old man, it's *our* man!" (This was a portion of an argument between the two Emerald Swords, who aren't exactly sure what has happened. If they are asked about the statements, they will claim that the Sembians were making it up to incriminate them.)

The cellar: Hiding in a corner of this dank, unlighted room, red-faced from crying and huddled in a long cloak, is Annalise. If she is found and interrogated, this is the story she tells:

"When I saw that Garit was to be attending the celebrations tonight, I prayed that things would not get out of hand. He burns with jealousy at even the most innocent of words or actions.

"A little after midnight, I received word that he wanted to meet me near the stables, away from what he calls prying eyes and ears. When I got there, he was waiting for me. He demanded that I tell him who I had been keeping company with, and said that I had better stop seeing them . . . he thought I was seeing many men!

"In truth, it is only Lord Thistle whom I have affection for, and he has promised to marry me. When I told this to Garit, he went mad with rage. Luckily, a patrol of guards came by, and I took advantage of the distraction and fled. Now, I fear that Garit may try to do something to dear Partic.

"I have reached a decision: I am no longer going to give Garit the time of day, let alone my affections. Although he is more handsome than Lord Thistle, and younger and stronger, he is a cruel man. I just want him to leave me alone, and that is why I am hiding down here."

When she is told that Partic is dead, Annalise launches into hysterical sobs and hugs the nearest female PC for comfort. She then pulls away, her eyes a mixture of blazing anger and profound sadness, and hisses:

" 'Twas Garit! Find him and arrest him, but do not kill him until I have been called, so I can watch him die!"

F. The Manor. Any investigators checking for tracks around the southeast corner of the mansion's outer walls will find the scene of the struggle where Mendryll defended himself against the Sembian company.

2. *Downstairs Hall.* The only significant fact to be obtained here is that the door in the northeast corner of the room is padlocked shut, as it always is unless Thistle has decided to take the stairs down to the crypt. He sometimes shows the place off to visitors, but has not done so for the last several days, and it is apparent that neither the door nor the lock has been handled or manipulated.

7. *Servants' Quarters.* All the servants are in their rooms, trying to snatch some sleep from the remainder of the night while also bracing themselves for the inevitable questions from those who are investigating the murder.

Moorefield: The butler despises gossip, but for the sake of seeing his master's killer(s) apprehended he will talk freely to any investigators.



He says that Lord Thistle turned in abruptly, without first checking with him on matters of the guests' accommodations and plans for the morning—something that Thistle always did whenever he entertained overnight guests.

Moorefield assumed that Thistle would attend to these matters before retiring, but after more than two hours had passed with no word from his master, the butler went upstairs and knocked on the bedroom door. When there was no answer to his repeated knocks, Moorefield used his key to gain entry and found his master dead on the floor.

Moorefield has been in Thistle's service for the past 20 years. He knows that Partic and Annalise were seeing one another. The butler is aware of no one who would want his master dead. He knows about the secret passageway leading from Thistle's bedroom to the crypt, and he knows that the key to the door under the stairs in room #2 is hidden in Thistle's library, but he does not know exactly where it is.

If Moorefield's quarters are searched, the PCs will find some family heirlooms that indicate the butler hailed from Zhentil Keep. He left the place when he was a

young adult, and has papers to prove (if necessary) that he has been a resident and citizen of Cormyr for the last 40 years. He is not proud of his heritage and does not broadcast it, but he will point out to investigators that his familiarity with Zhentish mannerisms and speech patterns has sometimes been a valuable aid to his master. If someone thinks to ask him whether any of the adventuring companies have ties to Zhentil Keep, he pauses for a moment, then remarks that the Emerald Swords do display some characteristics that suggest a Zhentish influence.

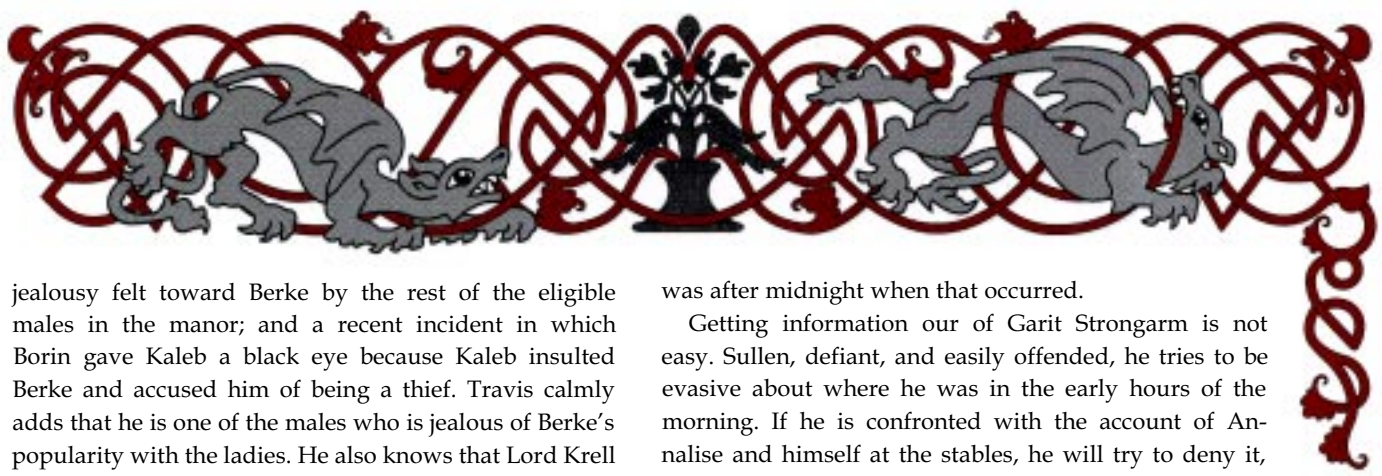
The cooks: Aside from the fact that the three female cooks dislike Dom the baker, they have nothing to say.

Tami and Larwyn: Moorefield and Larwyn are good friends; she will affirm that she is utterly loyal to Thistle, and claims (truthfully) that the butler will vouch for her if he is asked. Tami knows nothing about the murder, volunteering only the information that most of the other young men are jealous of Berke the gardener. Tami spends most of the interrogation flirting with the PCs.

Dom the baker: Dom is anxious for his interrogation to be over so he can begin preparing baked goods for the guests' breakfast. He does not seem overly concerned about Thistle's death, but this is only because he is so obsessive about his work. The only information he offers is that he believes Larwyn and Moorefield are lovers.

Berke the gardener: Berke seems deeply troubled by the murder, more than a mere gardener should be. It is easy to see that he is definitely hiding something. He will insist that he was in his room all night (which is true), but can't prove it. The reason Berke is upset has to do with his status as a Harper; Thistle's death is a cause of great sadness for him, because he supported and respected Partic's efforts to raise the level of public acceptance of adventuring companies. He is concerned that adventurers—including Harpers—will be blamed for bringing about Thistle's demise, even if one of the groups present in the keep was not directly responsible for the deed. Berke will say nothing about any of this unless it becomes apparent that he is going to be arrested, whereupon he will reveal the reason for his distress and produce his *Harper pin* to prove that he is telling the truth.

Travis the steward: Travis, who shares a room with Kaleb, knows more than anyone else about everything that goes on in the manor. He knows about Thistle's desire to marry Annalise; Tami the maid resenting Annalise and being irritated that Lord Thistle doesn't notice her; the three cooks' dislike of Dom and his baking histrionics; the friendship of Larwyn and Moorefield; the



jealousy felt toward Berke by the rest of the eligible males in the manor; and a recent incident in which Borin gave Kaleb a black eye because Kaleb insulted Berke and accused him of being a thief. Travis calmly adds that he is one of the males who is jealous of Berke's popularity with the ladies. He also knows that Lord Krell Huntcrown is opposed to Thistle's ideas of legitimatizing adventuring companies, and that the Huntcrowns are a family of intriguers; one does not turn his back on them.

Kaleb the messenger: Kaleb accuses Berke of being some sort of sneak thief or spy; he has personally witnessed him sneaking about the grounds, quiet as a mouse and lurking in the shadows. That is all he knows. He confirms that Borin punched him, but he was not surprised by that, since he knows that Berke and the dwarf are friends.

Borin the handyman: The dwarf seems impatient, and unwilling to give answers easily. He claims that, as idiotic as much of the staff is, none of them would do any harm to Lord Thistle. In his opinion, it was either "one of those namby-pamby nobles, playing politics," or a "crazed, irresponsible group of adventurers." He is Berke's roommate, but cannot vouch for the young man's assertion that he was in the room; Borin himself was in the Bubbling Bulwark until well after midnight, and has dozens of witnesses to that fact.

18. *Guest rooms.* Nothing incriminating is to be found in any of these rooms; no criminal would be stupid enough to leave evidence where it could be easily traced to him or her.

Following is a list of the rooms, and what their occupants have to say if questioned.

a. Lord Mournsoul says he went to his room after the party and worked on his poetry before turning in. Mendryll Belarod can vouch for him in part, because the bard came back to the room briefly after visiting the Bubbling Bulwark and found Mournsoul hard at work, moaning and groaning over his latest piece of gloomy romantic verse. Mendryll, if asked about his whereabouts after he returned from the Bulwark, will privately tell the PCs that he was with Aleka Ravenheart during the time the murder was committed and will pledge them to secrecy. (Although he is telling the truth, Aleka will deny that she was with Mendryll if she is confronted, in order to keep from sullyng her reputation.)

b. Kerit Darkrider simply says he went right to bed after the festivities. He remembers that he was awakened when Garit came in, but cannot honestly say how long it

was after midnight when that occurred.

Getting information out of Garit Strongarm is not easy. Sullen, defiant, and easily offended, he tries to be evasive about where he was in the early hours of the morning. If he is confronted with the account of Annalise and himself at the stables, he will try to deny it, but if pressed will admit it. He claims that after the exchange of words between them, Annalise fled toward the inn and he came to his room. He does not deny having made threats against Lord Thistle, but he steadfastly insists he was not involved in the murder.

d. Densil Wizardfoe and Floryn Spellshatter, two brawny warriors from the company known as the Magebanes, have a strong dislike and distrust of most spells and magical objects. That is the only thing they are guilty of. Since it is apparent that magic was involved in the death of "Thistle" (the venomous dagger was likely also enchanted), these two are not suspects.

e. Lord Gruen and Lady Amarsa Bleth are gentle people with no possible motive or means to commit the murder. They have nothing to add to the investigation.

f. Lord Barrit and Lady Alise Cormaeril identify themselves as relatives of Lord Thistle and have no knowledge of how he died, although they suspect the Huntcrowns of being "up to no good."

g. Ruben Armand and Norrin Blackgrove of the Golden Gauntlets turned in immediately after the party, and each can verify the other's story. Add to this the fact that Ruben is a paladin of Tyr, and that is that.

h. Lord Alexi and Lady Tremayne Dauntinghorn are distantly related to the Truesilvers and are members of one of the more militarily inclined noble families, but neither of those facts has any bearing on the investigation.

i. Lord Waylan and Lady Zara Emmarask have a sterling reputation. They will haughtily remind the PCs that the Sage Alaphondar comes from this distinguished family. They have nothing else to say.

j. Iona Waukeenservant and Idalia Golddust are two Sembian women who lead the Company of Night. Their group is in competition with the Stag Runners, another band of Sembian adventurers. Aside from being aware of the Stag Runners' attempt at beating up Mendryll, they know nothing interesting.

k. Lord Krell and Lady Ohrmatha Huntcrown show outrage at being awakened and questioned "like common criminals." The PCs have now made an enemy, and the Huntcrowns will do everything they can to make the PCs' lives miserable. If asked to explain why he left the



Grand Hall during dinner, Lord Krell loses his temper, says that he went outside for a breath of air, and defies the PCs to prove otherwise.

1. Gandegar Armstrong and Angar the Battlelover of the Emerald Swords vow their innocence, stating that they came right to bed after the party, and actually that is just what they did. In fact, these two will do quite a smooth job of denying any wrongdoing. Gandegar volunteers the information that he has nothing but good feelings toward Thistle, and in fact he went up to Partic at the end of the evening's festivities and personally thanked him for his hospitality.

The only way the PCs are going to get any useful information out of these two is to search their room, something both of them will vigorously protest. They will complain loudly about being harassed and discriminated against, but will not offer physical resistance (because they know that doing so would bring the full force of the keep's guards down on them).

Among Gandegar's belongings is a document listing eight names—Gandegar, Angar, Haridyn, Kalris, Shanna, Berfy, Jake, and Xixis—with a set of numbers and phrases following each name. Gandegar will grudgingly identify this as a record of the income and treasures that have recently been earned by each group member. The entries following three of the names contain interesting notations: Opposite Haridyn's name is the phrase "vanishing powder," after Kalris's name is "small silver ring," and next to the name Xixis are the words "dwarf," "thief," and "wizard," with the first two of those words crossed out.

In Angar's pack are several gold coins with strange markings; any member of the Purple Dragons or the War Wizards will recognize them as currency from Zhentil Keep.

Any PC who makes a successful Wisdom ability check will recall that when the Emerald Swords recited their pledge of loyalty, only seven members were present. If either of the leaders is asked about the absent member, he will explain that their former comrade left the group just a week ago after a disagreement over the division of treasure. (This, of course, is not the same story that will be offered by the group members who are staying in the Bulwark.) If the investigators attempt to assemble the entire group, only five people will be found (because Haridyn and Kalris are in the crypt with Thistle).

m. Bartek Alforael and Kassandre Malari of the Warhawks have no information other than their observation that when they attended the same celebration

last year, Lord Thistle seemed friendlier and more animated.

n. Lord Raynaar and Lady Terese Marliir seem a bit concerned about how all these questions may sully their house's reputation, but otherwise they have nothing to contribute.

o. Lady Regent Alaslyn and Damaris Rowanmantle are polite, but genuinely do not understand why they are even being questioned. This distinguished family is above reproach, and they have no information that will aid the investigation.

p. Jacer Wind-dancer and Brandy Fumblebuckle of the Grand Fist are genial and sincerely wish they could be of assistance, but it quickly becomes apparent that they are inconsequential bumbler who would have difficulty killing time, let alone murdering a noble.

q. Brianna Tarvison and Pahelhe Firecaster of the She-Wolves have nothing to say other than that they retired to their room immediately after the party.

r. Lord Frefford and Lady Gaylyn Wyvernsbur say that they went to their room immediately after midnight, and they have no information to offer.

21. *Wine cellar.* If the PCs want to take another look at the body later in their investigation, they will learn that it has been wrapped in a sheet and taken to the wine cellar so that it will remain fairly well preserved until funeral and burial arrangements can be made.

22. *Crypt.* This is the place where the two Emerald Swords are holed up with their captive. The kidnappers will do their best not to be discovered, hiding behind one of the large sarcophagi near the northeast corner of the room. Lord Thistle is securely bound and gagged, and hidden inside a sarcophagus along the southern wall. The kidnappers will use all the means at their disposal to stay unseen. If they are forced to fight, they will fight to the death.

Solving The Crime

As the PCs gather information from a variety of sources, they may become able to piece together the proper course that the investigation should take—in other words, sooner or later they ought to realize that there is something suspicious about the Emerald Swords. Laraby, Moorefield, and perhaps other employees of the keep can be used as sources of suggestions to get the PCs headed in the right direction—but when they do start to



accumulate some worthwhile clues, let them do the deductive work by themselves.

The use of magic may be marginally helpful in determining what is happening, but divination or enchantment/charm spells should not be allowed to serve as a quick and easy solution.

A *speak with dead* spell cast on the body, if it works at all, will not be very enlightening; “Thistle” does not know how he died, or by whose hand, but he will say the name “Gandegar” in response to a question such as, “Who was the last person you spoke to before you died?”

A *detect lie* spell cast on either Gandegar or Angar will fail—assume that they automatically make successful saving throws—but has a normal chance of working on anyone else, including the three Emerald Swords who are staying in the Bubbling Bulwark. However, those three have been in their rooms throughout the night and don’t know the details of how “Thistle” was killed.


Stone tell cast on the wall of Thistle’s bedroom will yield some meaningful information in the form of short, crude sentences: “Man alone in room. Man fall down and not get up.” (This is a clue that the death blow was delivered by someone who was invisible.) “Door in cor-

ner come open, go shut.” (The secret door was used by the invisible killer to escape from the room.)

Catching The Criminals

If it becomes apparent to the Emerald Swords that people are on to them, they will do their best to escape by any means possible—but except for Kalris and Haridyn (the two in the crypt), they will not fight to the death. If Kalris or Haridyn is captured, they will implicate the other members of their group in the plot to kidnap Thistle and rake him to Zhentil Keep. If the three group members staying at the Bulwark are apprehended, they will reveal nothing (they don’t know very much in any event) but they will give the names of the other four members in return for clemency.

If Angar and Gandegar are cornered and it genuinely looks to them as though they stand no chance of getting away, they will attempt to strike a deal: since no Cormyrean noble was murdered, the charge involving Thistle is “only” kidnapping. They will offer to confess if their sentence is reduced to exile from Cormyr. Aleka has the authority to agree to this, so long as Thistle is rescued unharmed



Following is the statement that Angar or Gandegar will give:

"We were hired by Lord Orgauth of Zhentil Keep to steal as much information as possible about the Cormyrean adventuring companies. We knew that Lord Thistle's offices in the Royal Court would be too heavily guarded, so we decided to try to abduct him during this convenient celebration.

"It is rumored that Thistle has an extremely good memory; once he sees a page, he commits it to memory effortlessly. We knew that if we kidnapped him and replaced him with a double, we could eventually spirit him out of the keep and interrogate him at our leisure. Depending on how much he knew about us, we would either let him go where Cormyr borders the wild country, or just kill him outright.

"The being who replaced Thistle was Xixis, our doppelganger ally. We ambushed him when he came upstairs to use his privy. Whilst scanning his mind, Xixis caught wind of the secret door leading to the crypt from Thistle's room, and lo, our hiding place was provided for!

"Alas, Xixis enjoyed the role of Thistle far too much, curse his soulless carcass! We tried giving him hints that he should retire early from the festivities, but he kept defying us. We hoped that if 'Lord Thistle' turned in early, other guests would follow his lead and they, along with all the guards, would leave. And the sooner everyone was gone, the sooner we could make our escape.

"Because he was not cooperating, we had to kill Xixis. It was simple for our thief, using vanishing powder, to creep into the lord's bedroom and plunge an enchanted poisoned dagger into the doppelganger's back. The deed would have gone undiscovered long enough for us to get away, except for the blasted butler trying to talk to his master in the middle of the night!"

Aftermath

Once Thistle is rescued (hopefully), he, Aleka, and Moorefield meet with the PCs in his private library.

Moorefield has lit a fire in the fireplace, and you are all sitting comfortably with something hot in your hands to warm and refresh you. Lord Thistle, looking haggard after his ordeal but unhurt, smiles at you. Aleka also looks at you, not smiling, yet a subtle look of approval is evident.

"My thanks for your extraordinary work," Thistle says. "The king himself shall hear of your ingenuity in bringing the miscreants to justice."

Thistle gets up and paces by the fire for, a few moments,

then looks at you. "I have been wondering just how to reward you," he says at last. "And I know that any reward I give will probably be poor compensation for all that you have done. But here. . . at least let me try. Your company shall be excused from fees for the next year, and in addition, I shall pay each of you 2,000 golden lions. I also have this to give you." He smiles and hands you a medallion of bronze. Carved upon it is the seal of the royal family. "This is called the Seal of Iron," he explains, "and its name has nothing to do with its composition. He who wears it shall be fearless. Even mighty dragons shall not shake he who wears the seal."

Lord Thistle smiles a sly smile. "Those are all the tangible things I can give you. But do bear in mind that you now have the gratitude of the person responsible for overseeing every registered adventuring company. I can certainly send one or two interesting bits of employment your way, when the occasion arises. I shall not soon forget you, my friends, and that is a promise. I never forget a face."

Thistle yawns and stretches. "But for now, I am off to bed. This whole experience has been most taxing on my constitution, yes indeed." The Lord ambles out of the room, followed by Moorefield, who turns around long enough to give you a look of grateful approval. Aleka also rises, and nods to you. "Nice work," she concedes. "I have duties to attend to. You did well. Till swords part."

You are left alone in the study, knowing that it is time to move on. Your dose of Cormyrean society was most illuminating, an experience you will carry with you for quite some time.

Loose Ends

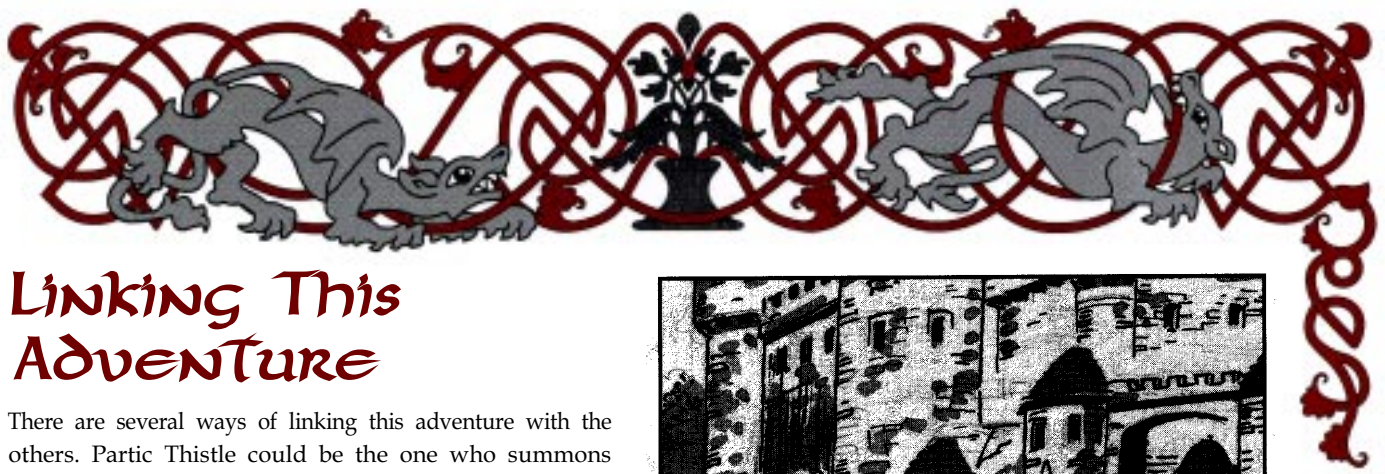
More problems could remain to be tackled after the mystery is solved. First and foremost, if any of the Emerald Swords managed to escape, they need to be hunted down and captured.

The question of what Lord Orgauth of Zhentil Keep wanted with the information about adventurers remains unanswered.

What about the Thistle-Annalise-Garit situation? Will the hotheaded Garit plan something nasty, requiring Annalise to beg the PCs for help?

One of the rumors at the party was that the Hunt-crowns were definitely "up to something." What is it that they are "up to," and will it affect Cormyr's adventuring companies?

Finally, it's quite possible that the Stag Runners will come out of this adventure bearing a serious grudge against the PCs. Sembian vengeance may be in store for the heroes at some future time.



Linking This Adventure

There are several ways of linking this adventure with the others. Partic Thistle could be the one who summons the PCs to take the mission in "Bad Neighbor Policy." Partic may also be a good source of information about events in "Redemption."

Lord Vorik Aris of "Redemption" could be the one who hired the Emerald Swords to do the dirty work, because he has ties with Zhentil Keep. And he could be using the Emerald Swords to further his own agenda as well as that of his Zhentish allies. Aris could be looking for adventuring companies who would support him if he attempted to seize the throne.

The Sembian company that the PCs run into in "Bad Neighbor Policy" could very well be the Stag Runners or the Company of Night.

Either this adventure or "The Bibliophile" would be an ideal launch point for a campaign consisting of all four adventures linked in some chronological order.

Experience Point Bonuses

Each of these bonuses should be distributed evenly among all party members who participated in or agreed with taking the described action.

Rescuing Thistle without solving the mystery (i.e., learning how Xixis was killed):	5,000
Rescuing Thistle <i>and</i> solving the mystery:	8,000
Rescuing Mendryll without killing any of the Stag Runners:	2,000
For each member of the Emerald Swords captured and turned over to the authorities:	2,000
For every innocent person interrogated but <i>not</i> arrested:	1,000





Bad Neighbor Policy

Unlike “Murder Most Magical,” “Bad Neighbor Policy” is a straightforward hack-and-slash adventure taking place on Cormyr’s frontier. If the PCs already went through “Murder Most Magical,” then they can be commissioned to go on this expedition by Lord Partic Thistle personally; otherwise, substitute some faceless bureaucrat for Thistle. The following introduction below is written for PCs who have already met Thistle. In either case, the adventure begins in Suzail.

Taking The King’s Shilling

Responding to an offer of employment, you enter a richly appointed foyer in the Royal Court, which leads to an expansive series of interconnecting buildings and towers. From here, all the various departments run the different aspects of the kingdom of Cormyr. There are Purple Dragons and War Wizards everywhere, mixing in with scores of busy-looking bureaucrats, and occasional confused-looking adventurer-types wandering the halls looking for the department that handles charters.

Your shelter from the hustle and bustle comes in the form of a large anteroom, your destination. As you help yourselves to seats in the well-furnished chamber, your eyes sweep over the lavish decor. The one feature of the room that truly gets your attention is the plaques on the wall, each featuring a different heraldic device and many lines of text. To pass the time waiting for your appointment, you read some of them.

One contains the words “Dedicated to the Order of the Hammer, died in service to the Crown CR 1334, 5 Alturiak. May ye find peace in Torm’s realm.” Another reads “Sacred to the memory of the Company of the Red Raven, burned alive by the Great Red Wyrn Uryiax, CR 1330, 12 Ches. Your sacrifice was not in vain.” Still another reads “In Memory of the Falken: The Order of the Silent Sisters, lost in the Vast Swamp CR 1338, Uktar. The gods only know where thy bodies now lie, though thy souls are with them in paradise.” There are dozens of such plaques . . . and space for many more on the walls of this room.

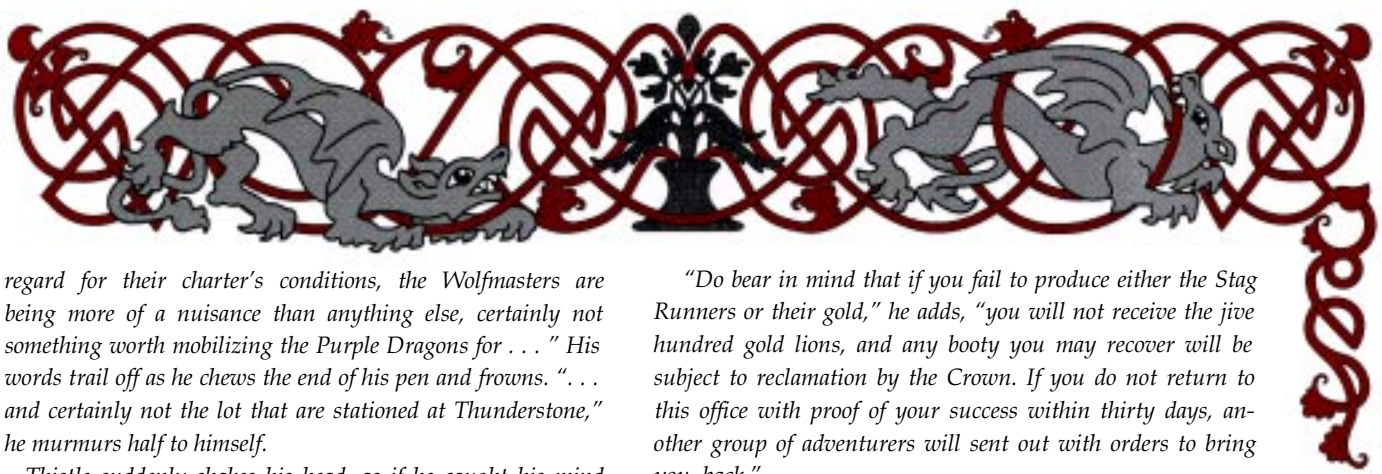
Before you can give too much thought to what might be engraved on your plaque some day, a door opens and Lord Partic Thistle, the Registrant General of Adventuring Companies, comes out to greet you, holding a large rolled-up document and two smaller pieces of folded paper. His face lights up in delighted recognition. “Ahh, you’ve come! Splendid! Splendid! Do come in!”

You enter his large office and sit down, whereupon a servant enters the room and serves everyone tea and biscuits. “So nice of you to come,” Thistle gushes. “And punctual, too! Very punctual. Very good, very good.”

Taking a bracing sip of tea, Thistle unrolls a map that you recognize as Cormyr’s northeastern frontier. “An adventuring company known as the Wolfmasters, of Sembian citizenship, is delinquent in their charter dues. Now, we have been known to be lenient with the due date on occasion, especially if a group happens to be indisposed. However, this is the second extension we have given them, and they were spotted as recently as a week ago near the village of Thunderstone.”

Thistle looks at each of you and continues. “The area around Thunderstone is quite a wild place . . . just the sort of thing suited for adventurers such as yourselves. With their flagrant dis-





regard for their charter's conditions, the Wolfmasters are being more of a nuisance than anything else, certainly not something worth mobilizing the Purple Dragons for . . ." His words trail off as he chews the end of his pen and frowns. ". . . and certainly not the lot that are stationed at Thunderstone," he murmurs half to himself.

Thistle suddenly shakes his head, as if he caught his mind at wandering. "In any event," he continues in a more focused, clear voice, "I, representing the Crown, wish to hire you to go to Thunderstone and either collect the outstanding dues, or bring in the Wolfmasters, alive and with a minimal of bloodshed and/or injury and property damage. They owe us 1,000 gold pieces and are now, for all intents and purposes, stripped of their charter. We want not only the money, but also a signed apology from the group's leader."

Thistle hands the folded document to the leader of your group. "This certificate enables you to openly bear arms within a fifty-mile radius of Thunderstone for twenty days, beginning five days from tomorrow morning," he says. "Show it if any royal authority questions your weaponry. Go to the village of Thunderstone, find out what you can about the Wolfmasters' whereabouts, and track them down. Also, please bear in mind that since you are going about the Crown's business, you are to comport yourselves in a manner that reflects it. Nobility is treated with deference, average citizens are to be treated with respect. Laws are to be obeyed."

Thistle sips more tea, then dips his biscuit in the hot liquid and eats it. "Your payment shall be a total of fine hundred gold lions," he announces, then holds up his hands and smiles. "Yes, yes, I know, that does not sound like much. However" — he leans a little closer and smiles at you in a conspiratorial manner — "another adventuring company has told me that a ruin of significant size lies in the Vast Swamp, twenty-five miles due southeast of Thunderstone. This particular company was chased away from there by a rather temperamental black dragon.

"Now, while five hundred gold coins is scarcely great compensation for such an experienced group," he continues, "it would make no sense for us to pay you more than the Wolfmasters owe us, yes? What would be the point? Why bother spending several thousand just to recover one thousand? However, you are receiving permission to be openly armed for twenty days, plus knowledge of the location of what is possibly a treasure-filled hoard. I daresay that for any group of truly dedicated adventurers, these opportunities would be more than adequate compensation. . . ."

Thistle lets his words trail off and sits back with a thin smile. Now you know why this man has this job. He is good — very good — at getting other people to do what he wants.

"Do bear in mind that if you fail to produce either the Stag Runners or their gold," he adds, "you will not receive the five hundred gold lions, and any booty you may recover will be subject to reclamation by the Crown. If you do not return to this office with proof of your success within thirty days, another group of adventurers will sent out with orders to bring you back."

Assuming the PCs agree to take the assignment, Thistle hands over the other folded-up document. It is a list of names and descriptions of the members of the Wolfmasters plus a sketch of their symbol, a wolf's head trans-fixed with a long sword.

The interview with Thistle ends at midday. The PCs are expected to set out the next morning after taking some time to gather provisions and information.

Rumors

While the PCs make preparations in Suzail for their trip, each character may pick up 1d3 rumors. Roll a d20 and consult the list below.

1. The Wolfmasters? Bah. A pack of easily offended Sembians with a mean streak. They never were one for law and order . . . or brains. Too reckless. (True)
2. Because they're so far away from central Cormyr, out of royal scrutiny, the Purple Dragons in Thunderstone are a wee bit less pleasant and reasonable. (True)
3. The Wyvernwater is haunted. Why, I heard that in the last tenday, six vessels have been attacked by undead things rising from the water and swarming the decks. (False)
4. A big red dragon has set up its lair in Hooknose Crag. Even though it is rumored to have a fabulous fortune, folk with good sense avoid it. (False)
5. There's been disturbin' talk of hobgoblins and ogres migratin' into the Hullack Forest. That isn't going to make the effort to clean out the forest any easier. (True)
6. Hullack Forest? Home to a wild band of violent centaurs that will have nothing good to do with humankind. (Half true; centaurs dwell in the wood, but are not violent)
7. I hear that several of them adventuring companies that came from Sembia are banding together and doing tasks for the Sembian rulers. Most of those tasks are in Cormyr, and that doesn't sit well with Azoun and his advisors. (True)



8. Ahhh, the Vast Swamp? Don't you mean "Dwelling place of beholders, black dragons, and will o' wisps"? (True)
9. Many adventuring bands are hired by the merchant companies to clear the Hullack Forest of beasties. (True)
10. Wheloon is run by Sarp Redbeard, who does his best to keep the town out of kingdom politics as much as possible. He is fomenting rebellion against the kingdom. (First sentence true, second sentence false)
11. People in Hultail feel more kinship to the Dalesmen than they do to Cormyr. (False)
12. Hilp's chief export is boredom. It also happens to be Juniril's as well. (True)
13. Faril Laheralson, the leader of the 100 Purple Dragon troops in Thunderstone, has the king's favor, and lets his men be undisciplined bullies. (True)
14. The Purple Dragon garrison in Thunderstone have a reputation for causing disturbances, especially against strangers who enter the town. Unfortunately, they are the law in Thunderstone! (True)
15. A nest of Zhentish spies lurk in Juniril. I am not sure where, exactly, but I believe they lie within some ruins of an old temple. (False)
16. The Thunder Peaks are lethal. Giants and dragons call this place home. Avoid it at all costs, even the foothills. (True)
17. Gondegal still has followers, and they can be found in the region around Thunderstone. Tread carefully. (Half true; they are not located here. See the adventure "Redemption.")
18. Sembia and Cormyr share the Vast Swamp as a common border. If someone did something nasty against another in that swamp, who would be around to witness it? Not many, I'd say. That place is death. (True)
19. Sembia has sponsored raiders along the Way of the Manticore. Consider them the equivalent of land-bound privateers. (False)
20. Goin' to Thunderstone, are ye? I'll tell ye that marchin' through the open country is risky. Stayin' on the road is the best way to avoid trouble. (True)

Traveling To Thunderstone

By moving at a steady pace, the party should be able to cover between 30 and 40 miles a day and make the 150-mile journey to Thunderstone in five days. This assumes they are taking the most direct overland route that follows roads from Suzail to Thunderstone. If the PCs decide to travel offroad, throw in enough random encounters (of a nonlethal nature) to convince them that the road is the safest and quickest path. As long as they stay on the road, they will have no significant random encounters, and game time will pass without incident until they reach a spot roughly ten miles south of Hultail near sunset on the fourth day out.

Inn of The Undead

The weather has turned miserable—bad enough to force the PCs to take shelter. Modify the description below to fit the season in which this adventure is taking place.

The wind howls around you, hurling a mixture of sleet, freezing rain, and snow into your faces. As the freezing water beads off your cloaks, and small icicles form on your hoods, finding a place to stay inside for the night starts to seem like a good idea. Despite your cloaks, robes, and coats, the wind has done a good job of soaking you thoroughly.

From out of the howling elements emerges a horde of bodies—loping, jabbering forms, being urged on by a pair of emaciated figures holding whips. A veritable sea of glowing red eyes confronts you as a strong smell of open graves tells you that there are some creatures who would venture out in this weather: those who have no care for such unpleasantness as wetness and cold.

The PCs are about to tackle a horde of ghouls, and the two wights that drive them. This pack was summoned by the necromancer in the Journey's Rest Inn, for the express purpose of waylaying small groups of isolated travelers and making them hole up in the inn.

Ghouls (24): AC 6; MV 9; HD 2; hp 9 each; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d6 (claw/claw/bite); SA paralyzation; SD immune to *sleep* and *charm.* spells; SW turning, holy water, *protection from evil*; SZ M; ML steady (12); Int low (6); AL CE; XP 175 each.

Note: Touch causes paralysis for 1d6+2 rounds unless victim makes a saving throw vs. paralyzation. Elves are





immune to this attack. Holy water does 1d6+1 points of damage. *Protection from evil* prevents ghouls from attacking anyone in the protected area.

Wights (2): AC 5; MV 12; HD 4+3; hp 21 each; THAC0 15 (13 *w/whip*); #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+2 (*whip* +2) or 1d4 (claws); SA level drain; SD hit only by silver or +1 or better weapon, immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, cold-based spells, poison, paralyzing attacks; SW turning, holy water, *raise dead* spell; SZ M; ML elite (14); Int average (10); AL LE; XP 1,400 each.

Special Equipment: whip +2.

Note: Successful claw attack drains one level from victim. Holy water does 1d6+1 points of damage. *Raise dead* destroys a wight instantly.

It is the job of these undead to weaken any travelers they encounter, making it necessary for those travelers to seek refuge at the Journey's Rest. Once the PCs have (hopefully) defeated or driven off the undead, continue with the description.

At last, the attack is over, and you're alive to see it. But now

you need rest even more than you did before. You trudge onward in the darkness for a short distance and then notice, off the trail about a hundred yards away, a fiery glow of light. NOTE: Continue only if the PCs proceed toward the light. Closing in, you see that it is an inn. A wooden signboard, dancing in the wind, identifies the place as the Journey's Rest. The light you saw comes from a large lantern suspended beneath an overhanging roof that shelters the entrance.

You give the door a push and enter. (The interior of this place is depicted in Map 7, on page 62.) Four people are seated in the common room, which is very dimly lit by only an occasional candle. The first customer you see is a gaunt man in a voluminous robe of dark green. The man is pale, with thinning black hair and a receding hairline. Long, bony fingers, decorated with numerous flashy rings, are steepled together as the man regards you thoughtfully.

As thin as the first man is, the second is stout. The red face, rich clothing, and soft hands betray him as a merchant, and the style of his clothing is Sembian.

The third figure is a Cormyrean noble, no doubt about that. Clad in the finest black clothing money can buy, he is a young man with hollow cheeks and sad eyes. He would be considered handsome if he did not look so depressed. He sniffs



what appears to be a black rose, and stares off into space with a mournful look on his face. (If the PCs have already been through "Murder Most Magical," they will recognize this individual as Lord Mournsoul.)

The last figure is a somber woman with long, jet-black hair and gray eyes. She wears a billowy white blouse, black leather bodice, and black leggings. The woman strums a black harp tentatively, as if looking for a particular tune.

All this would be a depressing scene if not for the smell of good, hearty food, and the two cheerful women who are your hostesses.

One of them is a voluptuous blonde with crystal blue eyes, a merry laugh, and a wholesome, healthy glow about her. She moves between the customers' tables with ease, deftly scooping up dirty dishes, or placing a bowl of hot spiced wine in front of a client without spilling a drop.

Behind the bar is a tall, attractive woman with a luxurious, tousled mane of fiery red hair, wicked green eyes, and a laugh just as infectious as the first woman's. She is the one who looks at your group and says, "Well met! Enter, sit, and enjoy our fine fare! I only hope that you are in better spirits than these other four sorry souls! I am Ryanna your barkeep and cook, and that blonde dervish is my best friend Moria. Sit, sit, and be welcome!"

Both women notice that your band shows signs of having been in a fight. Their merry looks turn to concern. "You are injured? Oh, please, sit then, quickly! We have no healing here, but a nice bath and lots of food may speed your recovery!"

The two "women" are vampires who have entered into a tentative alliance with the robed man, a necromancer. The inn was an old, abandoned place that had fallen into disuse. The two vampires slew a young couple who had decided to claim and rebuild the old inn. Once they were through with the newlyweds and the two handymen hired to effect repairs, the undead females decided to take over the inn and use it as a source of victims.

Their first customer and would-be victim was the necromancer, who came here two weeks ago. Unfortunately for the women, they did not know that he was a mage, let alone one who specialized in death magic. They crept into his room while he was sleeping, anxious to make a kill.

As he was about to turn the tables and slay them, they begged for mercy and frantically offered to make a deal. Intrigued and very chaotic by nature, the wizard listened.

The "women" offered the mage a safe haven for a while, plus access to the remains of their victims. In re-

turn, he would give whatever aid and support they needed in order to perpetuate their little scam. The wizard agreed, and the bargain was made.

The two women have no intention of attacking every guest, only the ones on lonely nights like this one. The opportunities and timing must be right.

The women charge five gold pieces for supper, bath, bed, and breakfast, plus lodging for horses in the small stable located behind the inn.

After dinner, the Sembian merchant, named Portis Alvermantle, pays his tab and tells the women that he is leaving this very night, regardless of the storm. He says that he is already overdue back home, and needs to be on his way. A successful Wisdom ability check indicates that the man is definitely nervous about something.

Portis goes to his room to gather his belongings and winds up missing out on an impromptu performance by Alanis Dirgesong, the depressed-looking harpist. She performs a song, the lyrics of which follow:

*Our lives, which fall like leaves in Uktar,
blown off life's tree by death's cold wind,
flutter to the ground, spent and lifeless,
then buried in snow that Auril sends.*

And that song is one of her happier ones. For the next half-hour, everyone in the common room is treated to a repertoire of the most depressing songs they have ever heard, most of them dealing with doomed lovers, infants dying in their cribs, unlucky people on the verge of success only to be killed in a freak accident, and adventuring parties that die alone and unmourned.

The robed wizard winces and frowns all during the performance, and the two beautiful owners pay little attention. Only Lord Mournsoul listens with rapt admiration, repeatedly nodding and murmuring, "So true, oh so true."

Cast of Characters

Ryanna and Moria, vampires: AC 1; MV 12, FI 18 (C); HD 8+3; hp 40 each; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+4 or 1d8 (long sword); SA *charm*, energy drain; SD hit only by +1 or better magical weapons; immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold* spells, poison, paralyzing attacks; half damage from cold or electricity; SW sunlight, running water; SZ M; ML champion (16); Int exceptional (15); AL CE; XP 8,000 each.

Personality: accommodating, helpful, flirtatious (when posing as humans)



Special Equipment: long swords.

Ryanna and Moria, who were fighters before they became vampires, are thoroughly evil and vicious but also selective about whom they take as their victims. They do not want to raise unwanted attention by slaying all or most of the people who stop at the inn. Generally they will only attack wanderers (such as adventurers) who are not likely to be missed by family or friends. They use their energy-draining attack to weaken their victims and then slay them with their swords, to prevent the victims from becoming vampires themselves (they don't want the competition).

Ratakos, hm Nec 12: AC 2 (*robe of archmagi*, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 33; THAC0 17 (14 *w/dagger* +3); #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+3 (*dagger* +3); SZ M; ML elite (14); AL CN; XP 8,000.

S 8, D 17, Co 15, I 18, W 18, C 6

Personality: unpredictable, amoral, stem

Special Equipment: grey robe of the archmagi, dagger +3, amulet versus undead (7th level), ring of undead command (see "Magical Items," page 126), ring of regeneration, Potion of wight control (2 doses left), scroll of protection from magic.

Spellbook (5/5/5/5/5/2): 1st — burning hands, chill touch*, corpselight*†, detect undead*, magic missile*, shocking grasp, wall of fog*, wizard mark; 2nd — cloak undead*†, darkness 15' radius*, ESP*, knock, protection from cantrips, spectral hand*, stinking cloud, undead mount*†, wizard lock; 3rd — feign death, hold undead*, mummy touch*†, paralyze*†, phantom steed, revenance†, skull watch†, vampiric touch*, wraithform*; 4th — Beltyn's burning blood*†, contagion, enervation*, mask of death*†, Evard's black tentacles, polymorph other*, ice storm*; 5th — animate dead*, avoidance*, cloudkill*, cone of Cold*, disguise undead†, summon shadow*; 6th — Bloodstone's spectral steed*†, death fog, death spell*, lich touch†, teleport dead†.

Like many of his fellow necromancers, Ratakos is a grim, humorless man who only comes alive, ironically, when dealing with the dead (or undead). A pragmatist by nature, he works with the forces of evil or good as his whim and needs dictate.

Alanis Dirgesong, hf B5: AC 3 (*leather* +5); MV 12; hp 30; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (*short sword*); SZ M; ML unsteady (7); AL N; XP 270.

S 12, D 14, Co 14, I 13, W 14, C 14

Personality: gloomy, artistic, pessimistic

Special Equipment: leather armor +5, ring of free action, onyx dog, black harp, quills, parchment, sheet music, black clothes, pony.

Spellbook (3/1): 1st — cantrip, charm person, comprehend languages*, friends, glitterdust*, ventriloquism*; 2nd — invisibility, pyrotechnics*.

Bard Abilities: CW 60; DN 40; PP 30; RL 35.

Alanis is a depressing bard who travels the Realms singing songs of gloom and doom. Amazingly, she does have a following. Alanis excels at self-pity and changing any sentence into a statement of woe. Even her spell selection reflects this. Here is what she thinks of some of her spells: Invisibility: "I don't really need a spell for this . . . people ignore me already." Friends: "I can't attract friends normally; I need to use magic to do so." *Comprehend languages*: "Why bother? No one wants to talk to me anyway."

Lord Rhyn Mournsoul, hm F6: AC 4 (*leather jerkin* +4); MV 12; hp 36; THAC0 15 (12 *w/rapier* +3); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+4 (*rapier* +3), 1d4 (*dagger*); SZ M; ML average (9); AL CG; XP 420.

S 14, D 9, Co 9, I 12, W 9, C 14

Personality: moody, artistic, angst-ridden

Special Equipment: leather jerkin +4, rapier +3, black rose, book of bad romantic poetry, black outfit.

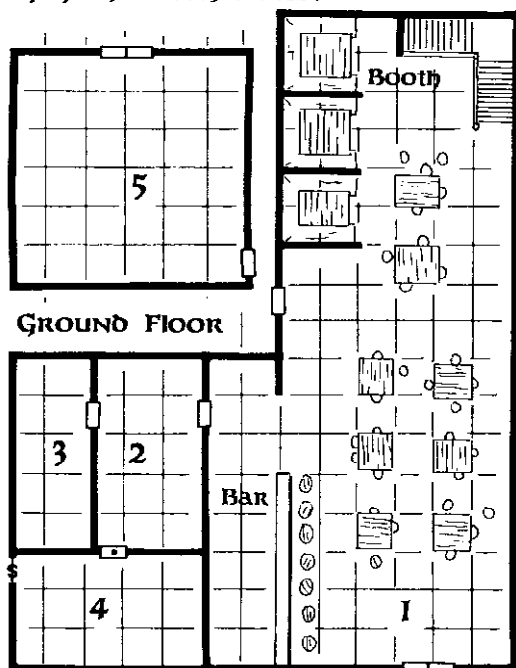
Lord Mournsoul is a thin, moody man in his late 20's, who dresses in black and wanders around Cormyr, seemingly in a state of perpetual depression. Some say he has a death wish, but this is not accurate. Rhyn has a suffering artist's soul, a streak of angst a mile wide, and a noble bloodline.

Portis Alvermantle, LN hm: Portis is a Sembian merchant from Yhaunn, a 0-level human. He currently does not have any wares with him. His gold pouch contains 40 gp, 22 pp, and four small gems worth 100 gp each. A leather wallet stored in an inner pocket of his cloak contains extensive notes on the Dragoneye Dealing Coster and the Seven Suns Trading Coster. Portis is on an economic espionage mission for the merchant leaders in Yhaunn. A nervous man, he is anxious to return to his homeland.

The Journey's Rest

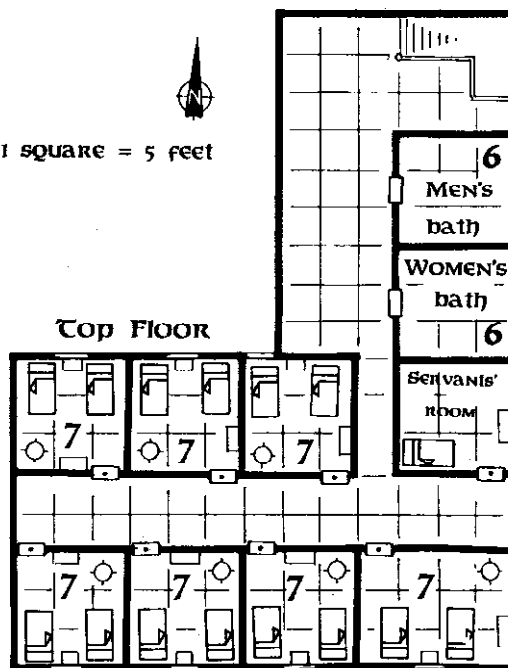
1. Common Room. The bar lies to the left, and a stairway heading upstairs is in the northeast corner. To the northwest is a door that leads out back, giving easy access to the stables. The common room has variable

Map 7 JOURNEY'S REST



1 square = 5 feet

Top Floor



hours—sometimes shutting down at midnight, sometimes staying open until an hour before sunrise—depending on the inclination of Ryanna and Moria, who may or may not choose to spend the wee hours of the morning engaging in vampiric activities. During the day, the common room is tended by Maris and Cora, two 0-level human females who live in the second-floor guest room adjacent to the ladies' bath.

2. Kitchen. The usual equipment, tools, and tableware are stored here.

3. Storage. This is where the foodstuffs are kept. Nothing remarkable.

4. Bedroom. Beyond the locked door is the vampires' lair. No one is ever allowed in here. The room contains two coffins plus the clothing and other accoutrements the vampires use to pass themselves off as normal humans. A small strongbox next to the westernmost coffin holds the inn's proceeds so far: 87 cp, 54 sp, 22 ep, 17 gp, and 6 pp. A secret door on the west wall gives the vampires a way of escaping quickly if necessary.

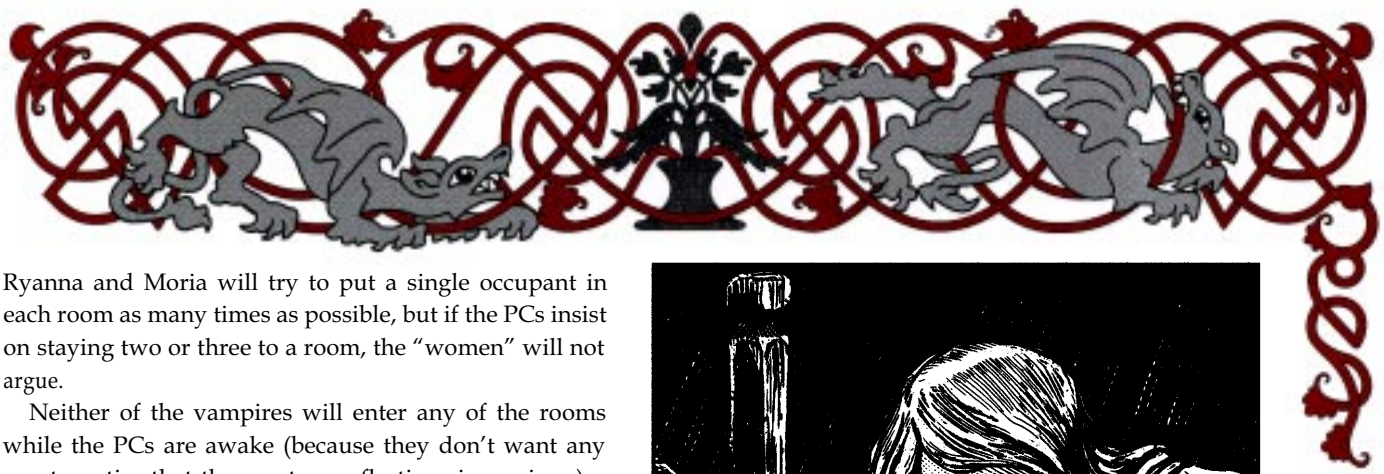
5. Stables. This old two-story barn serves as the lodging area for customers' horses. At the beginning of the encounter, only Alanis's pony and Mournsoul's and Portis's horses are here.

Anyone who digs up the dirt floor will find four shallow graves holding four recently dead bodies, one of them female. These are the remains of the newlywed couple and the two handymen who were killed by the vampires two weeks ago.

6. Bathing rooms. Two large copper tubs, separated by a curtain, are these rooms' main features. There are also towels, soap, and a large kettle set on a small iron stove.

7. Guest rooms. Each of these rooms is furnished alike, with two single beds, a dresser and mirror, a nightstand with a lantern, and a brazier for heat. Note that the lock on each room's door appears strong and functional, but in fact does not work; any door can be opened from either side at any time, with or without a key.

The four rooms along the south side of the building are vacant, and these are where the PCs will be put up.



Ryanna and Moria will try to put a single occupant in each room as many times as possible, but if the PCs insist on staying two or three to a room, the “women” will not argue.

Neither of the vampires will enter any of the rooms while the PCs are awake (because they don’t want any one to notice that they cast no reflections in a mirror).

Fangs in The Night

If the PCs take simple precautions, such as posting one of their number on guard outside their rooms or pushing furniture up against the door to a room to prevent it from being opened noiselessly, the vampires will leave them alone. But if any or all of them leave themselves open to attack, Ryanna and Moria will not let the opportunity pass.

The vampires will first enter any room where only one PC is staying. If that character is asleep and does not somehow awaken, either Ryanna or Moria gets one free attack with a +4 bonus to the attack roll. The vampire who does not attack will lurk just inside the doorway, waiting for other characters who might hear the commotion of a struggle. If either of the “women” is reduced to less than half of her hit points, both of them will assume *gaseous form* and disappear, returning to corporeal form only after the PCs have vacated the premises.

Even if they hear the sounds of a struggle, the other tenants of the inn will take no part in any conflict. The door to Ratakos’s room is *wizard locked*, and he will not come out under any circumstances. Lord Mournsoul is beside himself with fear, cowering under his bed, but the vampires will not bother him because they don’t want other members of his family to come looking for him. Alanis Dirgesong is resigned to her fate, morosely composing a song that will serve as her epitaph, but she also does not have to worry—the bard has a reputation among a group of people who actually appreciate her “talent,” and Ryanna and Moria don’t want to risk arousing anyone’s curiosity about why Alanis doesn’t show up at her next singing engagement.

Back on The Road

If they are wise, the PCs will not try to leave the inn, or do anything else other than hole up in their rooms, until after sunrise, by which time the vampires will no longer pose a threat. If they confront the two servants, Maris and Cora, about what happened, the women will profess ignorance (truthfully). Forcibly entering the vampires’ sleeping quarters (room #4) will reveal nothing; Ryanna



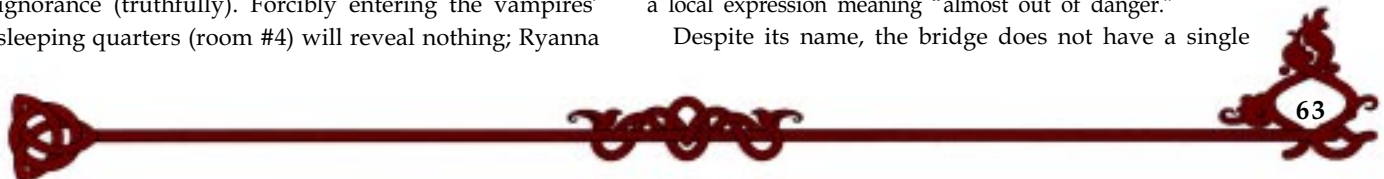
and Moria are not there, but have taken refuge in another hiding place.

In any event, the PCs’ main objective should be to complete their journey to Thunderstone. Assuming they spend this day traveling and not vampire-hunting, by late afternoon they arrive at the western edge of the area described in Map 8 (see the inside back cover).

Thunderstone

1. The Stag Skull Bridge. This grand old stone bridge arches over the Thunder River. It has achieved a level of notoriety, since many adventurers come running out of the nearby Hullack Forest with monsters in hot pursuit. The adventurers scramble up to the bridge, where the Purple Dragon garrison inevitably lets the adventurers pass and engages the monsters on the bridge itself. In fact, a lighted lantern is placed on each side of the north end of the bridge from dusk to dawn, so that adventurers and foresters know where to run and can tell they are close to safety. The phrase “between the Stag’s lights” has become a local expression meaning “almost out of danger.”

Despite its name, the bridge does not have a single





stag's skull on it. The railing posts are decorated with the heads of monsters that dared set foot on the bridge.

Eight Purple Dragons are on guard at the bridge at all times.

2. The Thunder Stone. A rock of unusual composition measuring three feet in diameter, this object is the literal and figurative center of town. According to local legend, this stone was magically transported from the tallest mountain in the Thunder Peaks and placed here when this land was nothing but wilderness. The village of Thunderstone later grew up around this central location. A superstition has arisen among adventuring groups that kissing the Thunder Stone before going on a mission means more treasure will be found and fewer comrades will die.

The rock is made of a type of stone that is not found for miles around this spot. It is not magical and has no special properties. Its presence here is unaccounted for. (In this respect, think of it as the Realmsian equivalent of the Easter Island statues.) There may be something to the superstition, in the sense that adventurers who think they are destined to succeed are generally more successful than those who think otherwise.

3. The Sign of Thunder. The largest inn in the village, this place lives up to its name by being host to numerous adventuring companies who use the place as a base of operation. Things get extremely rowdy every night, but it is also a good place to pick up information about the best spots to explore, as well as the places to avoid. Rooms are 5 gp per night, dinner and ale is 2 gp, a semi-warm bath is 2 sp. The inn is run by Boris Elberwelter (CG hm F1) and his overly flirtatious wife Tasha (CG hf 0-level).

4. The Bear's Den. As the name suggests, this is a big, cozy, comfortable inn where noise is not tolerated. Rooms are 7 gp per night, dinner and drink is 3 gp, a bath is 5 sp, and stabling a horse is 1 gp per night. The inn is owned by Derdek Deepingdell (LG dm F4), a short, wide dwarf with a very bushy beard that makes him look like a small bear.

5. The Furniture's Fate. An odd name, but an appropriate one for this tavern. The signboard over the door shows a chair being broken over someone's head. Like the Sign of Thunder, it is favored by adventurers (who, yes, inevitably destroy most of the furniture) and is a prime place for hearing adventurers' tales.

The Fate is owned by Boffo Arglebargle Cosgrove Bullwubble II (CG gm F2), an eccentric prankster who more often than not winds up involved in fights himself. Usually he gets his bouncer Stig (NG hm F7, Str 18) to pick him up and throw him into the fray. When the revelers hear a reedy voice shout, "Hurl me, boy!" they know that a flying gnome is not far behind.

6. The Dragons' Den. This tavern is a Purple Dragon hangout and caters exclusively to the soldiers, although that was not the original intent of the owner. Anyone who enters the place unescorted by a Purple Dragon (and civilians are allowed in only very rarely, even when escorted) is liable to become the target of a hail of chairs and tankards. The stubborn fool who stays despite this treatment gets beaten up and tossed out. The Dragons' Den is run by Oleg One-Ear (LN hm 0-level), a practical man who minds his own business. With all the soldiers who frequent the place during business hours, he has no need to hire a bouncer.

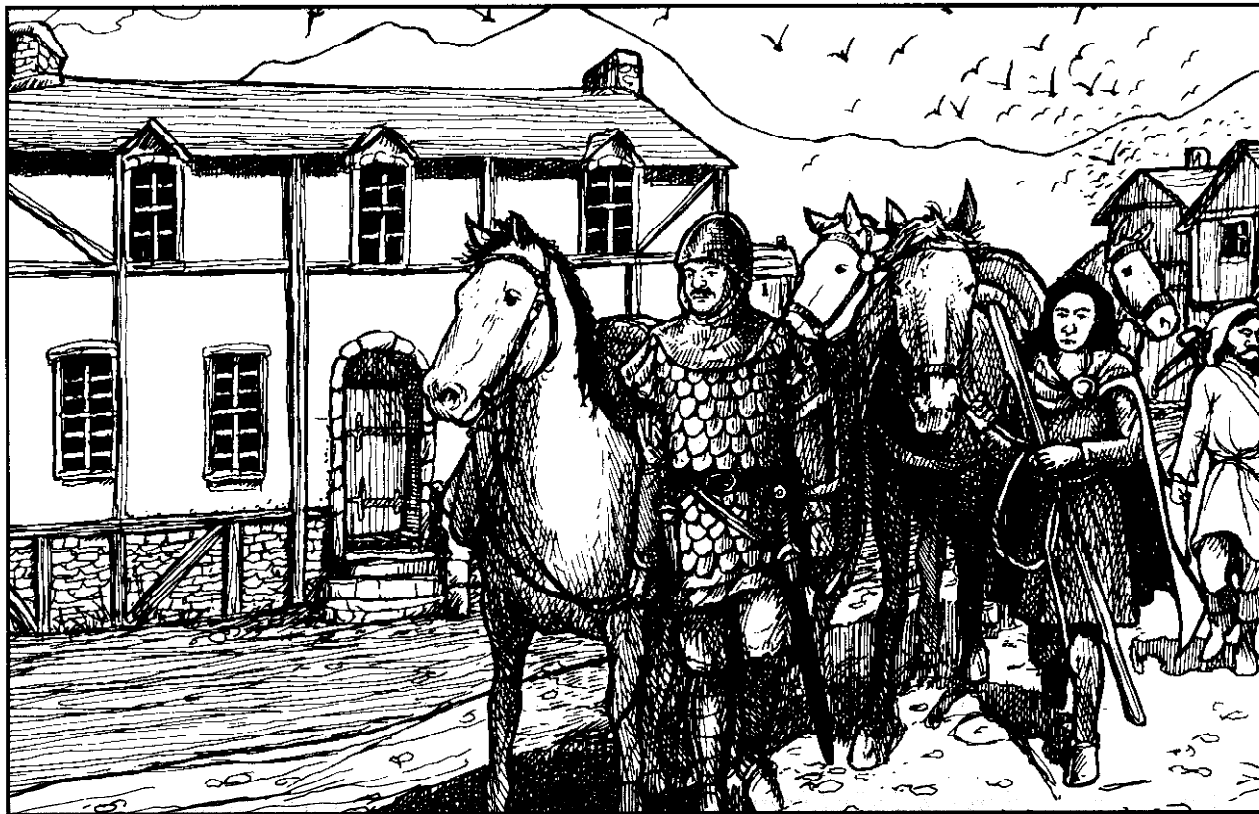
7. The Office of the Crown. This small building is where the business of the crown is handled. It is a clean place, in good repair. The rear area of the building is a comfortable residence where the crown clerk, Hurm Thiodor (LG hm F2), lives.

Thiodor is a slender man in his early 30's whose main strength is his record-keeping ability. He is responsible for collecting reports from adventurers who are returning from forays into the Hullack Forest and the Vast Swamp. Other than that, he has little to do, and occasionally accompanies a band of adventurers into the forest to add a little spice to his life.

8. Purple Dragon Barracks. This two-story building provides lodging for the 100-man Purple Dragon garrison stationed in Thunderstone. The detachment includes no War Wizards, just a lot of slightly undisciplined, spirited soldiers who love a good brawl as much as a good slaughtering of monsters.

9. Oversword Faril Laheralson's House. Located close to the barracks, this is the home of the leader of the Purple Dragon garrison. The house is a mess, looking like a typical bachelor's residence.

Faril Laheralson, hm F5: AC 0 (*chain* +2 and *shield* +2); MV 12; hp 42; THAC0 16 (12 *w/long sword* +4); #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+5 (*long sword* +4, Str bonus); SZ M;



ML champion (16); AL CN; XP 650.

S 16, D 9, Co 16, I 12, W 12, C 12

Personality: boisterous, coarse, domineering

Special Equipment: chain armor +2, shield +2, long sword +4, healing potion, Purple Dragon ring.

Faril and his troops constitute the law (such as it is) in this rough and ready town. He treats everyone who gets "out of line" the same way: they are roughed up and warned not to cause trouble. Repeat offenders are bodily thrown out of town. Faril cares greatly for his men, and always makes sure their morale is high.

Faril gives lip service to the Crown. He does respect Azoun, but thinks that the rest of the representatives are just soft bureaucrats not worth the time of day.

10. Shrine of Tempus. This stone building is decorated with skulls, cloven helms, ruined shields, bloodied armor, and shattered swords. Tending the shrine is Battle Chaplain Saerlia Ashley (CN hf C7), a scarred woman whose sermons speak of blood and fire. Her fiery words of battle are an inspiration to all the adventurers and Purple Dragons who attend her services. Saerlia will only heal damage on those who were wounded in combat,

and she will check out a victim's story before performing any healing.

11. One-Armed Magurk's. This establishment holds a jumbled collection of art objects, weapons, armor, gems, jewelry, books, and used equipment. Magurk (N hm F6), a former Purple Dragon, opened up this place after he lost an arm in combat.

Magurk purchases loot found in the many ruins and dungeons "out there" beyond Thunderstone, no questions asked. He is shrewd, and will not be taken advantage of.

Special items for sale in the shop vary widely from time to time. To determine Magurk's inventory when the PCs are in town, generate a supply of gems, art objects, and magical items as per treasure types B, D, and F (see Table 84 in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*). When determining magical items randomly (using Table 88 in the *DMG*), disregard and reroll any results that yield items from Table 91, 100, 104, or 107.

Not only do the Purple Dragons keep a close eye on their friend, Magurk also has a short sword *vorpal blade* +3 under the counter.



12. Wangle's Livery. Wangle Towerstruck is a towering hulk of a man with a simple, childlike demeanor, yet a good eye for horses. He sells livestock of all kinds, including some of the best horses ever seen. For 2 gp per night, a person's mount will be well fed, cleaned, and groomed, and will receive medical treatment and be reshod if needed.

The Purple Dragons treat Wangle well but in a condescending manner, as if he were a mascot or a mentally slow little brother.

The joke's on everyone else. Wangle is a ranger who works for the crown, keeping an eye on things for the King; his slowness is merely an act. Grievances against Purple Dragon misbehavior may not be rectified anytime soon, but Wangle watches and listens, and if things get too out of hand, there will be a reckoning, authorized by Azoun himself.

Even better, though, unknown to the crown, Wangle is also a Harper, keeping an eye on *everything* for that secretive organization.

Wangle Towerstruck, Harper agent, hm R9: AC 1 (*bracers AC 5, Dex bonus*); MV 12; hp 100; THAC0 12 (9 w/Str, 7 w/*short sword*); #AT 2; Dmg 1d4+6 (*dagger, Str bonus*), 1d6+8 (*short sword of quickness +2; Str bonus*); SA +4 on attack rolls vs. hobgoblins; SZ M; ML fearless (19); AL CG; XP 3,000.

S 18/00, D 18, Co 17, I 15, W 16, C 8

Personality: conscientious, clever, noble

Special Equipment: *bracers of defense AC5, short sword of quickness +2, boots of varied tracks, Harper pin, dagger, short bow, 24 arrows, hammer.*

Ranger Abilities: HS 66; MS 80.

Spells (2): *locate animals or plants, pass without trace.*

An accomplished actor and a devoted Harper, Wangle is also a loyal Cormyrean subject. He will not give away his disguise unless it is absolutely necessary, and only if the people to whom he reveals himself swear an oath never to divulge his secret.

13. Kelemvor's Garden. Formerly called simply the Thunderstone Cemetery, this place was renamed several years ago when its present caretaker took over. The person in charge of the cemetery is a cleric of Kelemvor named Lorelei Gravesower (LN hef C3), who lives in a small house on the grounds. It is her duty to maintain the graveyard and provide advice and counsel to mourners.

Kelemvor's Garden is where the bulk of Thunderstone's dead are buried. Purple Dragons and people of ex-

ceptional heroism are buried in a special corner called The Honor Field. Adventurers who bring back their dead comrades can have them buried in the cemetery. A new euphemism for being dead, "working in the Garden," has sprung up among adventurers who frequent this area.

14. The Six Coffers Trading Coster. The Six Coffers is the predominant mercantile company in Thunderstone, possessing a virtual monopoly in trade. This branch office is run by Adris Colebriar (CG hm F1), a shrewd businessman. From here, customers can purchase any (nonmagical) item of standard equipment, weapons, and armor—usually at inflated prices.

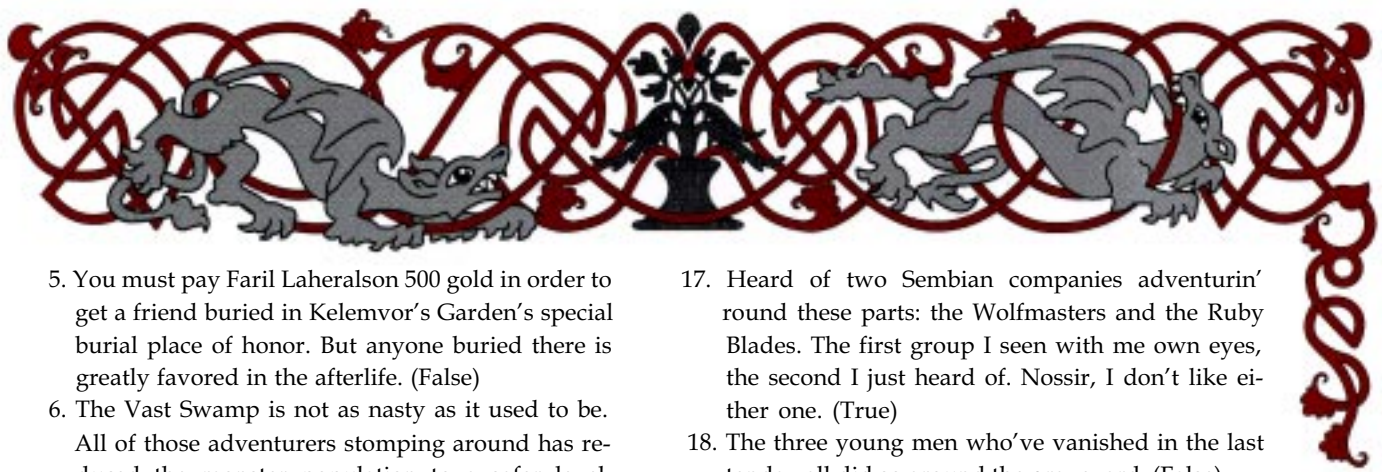
15. The Assembly. This cavernous, barnlike structure is the site of various private, civic, and religious assemblies. In bad weather, it is used as an indoor "town square" or plaza, with vendors setting up booths with food, drink, and trinkets for sale. Every once in a while, public exhibitions of fighting prowess are held here, with people quietly betting on the outcome.

Numerous notices and "help wanted" messages are tacked up on the inside walls. Even in good weather, the Assembly attracts many people, especially adventurers looking for news, gossip, work, or companionship.

Current Clack In Thunderstone

During the party's brief stay in Thunderstone, each PC picks up 1d3 rumors from the list below (roll 1d20 for each item).

1. There sure has been a lot of Sembians around here. If not their merchants, then their adventurers. Just as long as they pay in good coin and cause no trouble, they're welcome . . . barely. (True)
2. Over the last tenday, three young men have disappeared from town. Informed folk say they fled from their oaths to marry their betrothed. Of course, the women say differently, but that's expected, eh? (True)
3. There is a 10,000 gold piece bounty on red dragons of any age. Bag something older than a normal adult, and ye'll get a land grant as well! (False)
4. Wangle's a simple man, very childlike, but he has a natural gift for judging horseflesh. No one bothers him, though. The Purple Dragons have adopted him, kinda. (True, but see Wangle's description above)



5. You must pay Faril Laheralson 500 gold in order to get a friend buried in Kelemvor's Garden's special burial place of honor. But anyone buried there is greatly favored in the afterlife. (False)
6. The Vast Swamp is not as nasty as it used to be. All of those adventurers stomping around has reduced the monster population to a safer level. (False)
7. My cousin's brother's best friend knows of an adventurer who swears that there's a huge red gem in the Vast Swamp, worth a king's ransom! (True)
8. Thunderstone is so far removed from Suzail . . . things are a bit wilder here, the Purple Dragons not as disciplined. Still, as long as the town is still loyal, the crown allows things to continue as they do. (True)
9. There's this woman who lives in a hut beside the cemetery. I hear that she'll keep company with a man whose gold is good. (False)
10. Ever hear of the Wolfmasters? Sembian adventuring band, but their paperwork is all in order. They went out to the Vast Swamp six days ago, never returned. They musta run afoul of ol' Slageye. Ol' Slageye? Hee, hee. Biggest beholder you'd ever see!" (Partly true: the Wolfmasters did go into the swamp. However, there is no beholder called Ol' Slageye)
11. There be a group o' centaurs and satyrs, along with some of them comely woodswomen, running about in the Hullack Forest. Word has it that they aren't so happy about the Crown encroachin' on their lands. (True, but their concern is only mild at worst)
12. Thunderstone is more than just a frontier town, Yessir, it's a regular hotbed o' intrigue. Why, there's all manner of spies: Zhentarim, Harpers, Sembians, druids watching how the Hullack Forest is being treated, oh, many many others. (False, or at least a very big exaggeration)
13. The Thunder Stone is a local famous site. Kiss it for good luck afore ye go traipsin' off inta danger! (True)
14. The Crown's presence in town is a jest, and a poor one at that. The one clerk representing Azoun is so delicate, a strong wind could knock him over. (True)
15. The town's bein' watched, and that be truth. Who watches us? One word: paladins. (False)
16. Unless ye are a Purple Dragon, stay outta the Dragons' Den. (True)

17. Heard of two Sembian companies adventurin' round these parts: the Wolfmasters and the Ruby Blades. The first group I seen with me own eyes, the second I just heard of. Nossir, I don't like either one. (True)
18. The three young men who've vanished in the last tenday all did so around the graveyard. (False)
19. I hear that hobgoblins have been spotted migrating from the Thunder Peaks to the Hullack Forest. Ought to make life interesting. (True)
20. At this very moment, the Knights of Myth Drannor and Elminster the Sage are exploring Hullack Forest! (False)

Other NPCs

Thunderstone can be sprinkled with interesting NPCs from a number of sources, including many other FORGOTTEN, REALMS game products. The following characters are here too, each with his or her own agenda.

Paramyr Bladerunner, Zhentish agent, hm F6: AC 0 (*chain* +2, *shield*, *Dex* bonus); MV 12; hp 66; THAC0 15 (14 w/*Str*, 11 w/*long sword* +2); #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d8+5 (*long sword* +2, *specialization*, *Str* bonus); SZ M; ML elite (14); AL LE; XP 975.

S 17, D 16, Co 18, I 9, W 9, C 14

Personality: arrogant, disciplined, dedicated

Special Equipment: *chain armor* +2, *long sword* +2, *ring of spell turning*, *ivory goat figurine*, holy symbol of Tempus, light warhorse.

Paramyr is the leader of a Zhentish contingent currently quartered in Thunderstone, but he does his best to conceal the affiliation of himself and his associates. A handsome, square-jawed man in his early 30's, Paramyr is a soldier, disciplined, and loyal to the Zhentish cause.

Zhentish lackeys, hm F3 (6): AC 5 (*chain armor*); MV 12; hp 15 each; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (*long sword*), 1d8 (*sheaf arrows*), 1d8 (*spear*); SZ M; ML elite (13); Int average (9); AL LE; XP 120 each.

Special Equipment: *potion of healing*, *chain armor*, *long sword*, *long bow*, 36 *sheaf arrows*, *light warhorse*.

Stelwyn Russlewood, hf P7 (Iyachtu Xvim): AC -5 (*bracers* AC 3, *ring* +3, *cloak* +2, *Dex* bonus); MV 12; hp 40; THAC0 16 (13 w/*footman's mace* +3, 10 w/*girdle*); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+11 (*footman's mace* +3, *Str* bonus); SA turn or command undead; SD immune to *fear* spells, re-



generates 14 hp per day; SZ M; ML fanatic (17); AL LE; XP 2,000.

S 12 (19 w/girdle), D 17, Co 15, I 9, W 16, C 13

Personality: destructive, outspoken, cruel

Special Equipment: bracers of defense AC 3, ring of protection +3, cloak of protection +2, footman's mace +3, girdle of hill giant strength, ring of free action, 6 vials of unholy water, holy symbol of Xvim, light warhorse.

Spells (5/5/2/1): 1st — curse, darkness, detect good, detect magic, detect snares & pits; 2nd — chant, find traps, flame blade, silence 15' radius, spiritual hammer; 3rd — animate dead, glyph of warding; 4th — cause serious wounds.

Granted Powers: aura of fear 10' radius once per day, protection from good 10' radius once per day. (See *Faiths & Avatars*, page 82.)

Stelwyn is a young woman with hair and eyes as dark as midnight. A cruel woman, she bullies those less powerful than herself. Although she has no qualms about announcing which god she follows, she keeps her affiliation with Zhentil Keep a secret.

Adrienne Stillwater, hef R5/C5 (Mielikki): AC 3 (+2 leather, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 40; THAC0 16 (15

w/flame tongue); #AT 2; Dmg 1d8+1 (flame tongue long sword), 1d4+2 (dagger +2); SA +4 on attack rolls vs. ogres; SZ M; ML champion (15); AL NG; XP 1,400.

S 14, D 17, Co 15, I 14, W 14, C 16

Personality: nature-loving, impartial, restrained

Special Equipment: leather armor +2, flame tongue long sword +1, dagger +2, short bow and 20 flight arrows.

Ranger Abilities: HS 31; MS 45.

Spells (4/4/1): 1st — bless, cure light wounds, faerie fire, pass without trace; 2nd — charm person or mammal, hold person, messenger, warp wood; 3rd — summon insects.

Adrienne roams this area of Cormyr, occasionally making Thunderstone her base of operations, to help ensure that the Hullack Forest is not irreparably damaged by the incursions of adventurers and Cormyrean forces. She is concerned that these so-called "civilized" groups will ruin the woodland environment in their zeal to rid it of evil monsters.

Tiztor the Great, hm M10: AC 0 (AC 5 magic belt, ring +2, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 35; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (staff of the magi); SD +2 to all saving throws vs. spell (from staff of the magi); SZ M; ML fanatic (18); AL NE; XP 5,000.

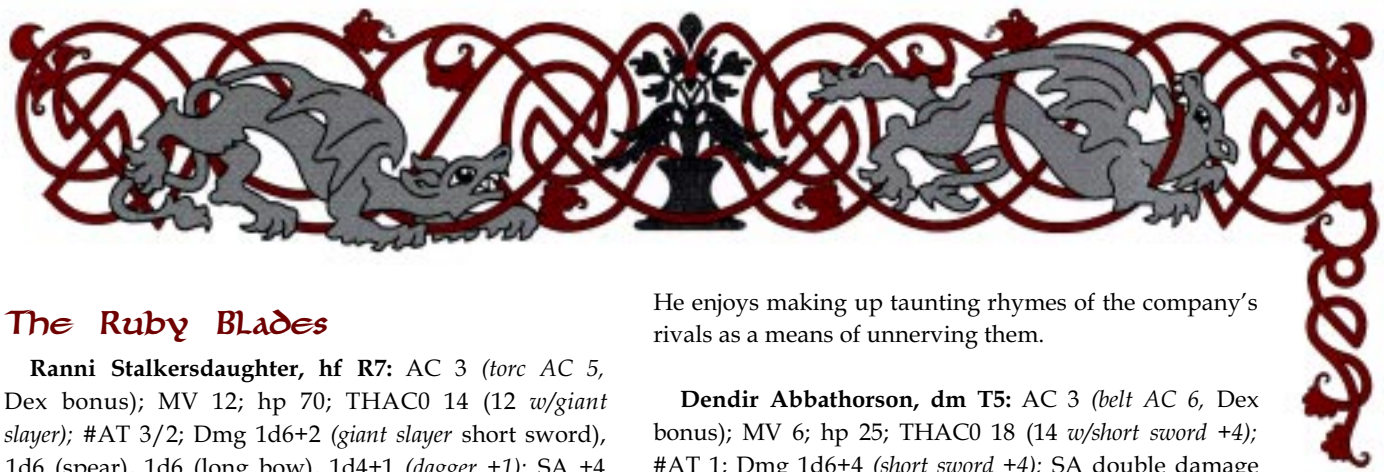
S 7, D 17, Co 15, I 18, W 18, C 13

Personality: power-hungry, scholarly, obsessive

Special Equipment: magic belt of AC 5 protection, staff of the magi (17 charges), ring of protection +2, ring of blinking, wand of wonder (64 charges), gem of seeing, riding horse.

Spellbook (4/4/3/2/2): 1st — cantrip, color spray*, comprehend languages, detect magic*, feather fall, identify*, phantasmal force, read magic*, wizard mark; 2nd — continual light, detect invisibility, ESP*, forget*, invisibility*, web*; 3rd — clairaudience, clairvoyance*, dispel magic*, hold person*, Melf's minute meteors; 4th — confusion*, magic mirror*, rainbow pattern; 5th — chaos, feeblemind*, teleport*.

Tiztor is a mage from Mulmaster who is obsessed with finding out the full truth about the Thunder Stone. He is convinced that the rock is magical (even though detection spells indicate otherwise) and that its power, whatever that may be, will be activated when the correct command word is spoken. Unfortunately, Tiztor doesn't know what that word is. He is here on a brief visit to test a few theories, after which he will teleport back to his tower in Mulmaster. He is more of a scholar than a fighter.



The Ruby Blades

Ranni Stalkersdaughter, hf R7: AC 3 (*torc* AC 5, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 70; THAC0 14 (12 *w/giant slayer*); #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d6+2 (*giant slayer* short sword), 1d6 (spear), 1d6 (long bow), 1d4+1 (*dagger* +1); SA +4 on attack rolls vs. hill giants; SZ M; ML champion (15); AL CG; XP 975.

S 15, D 16, Co 18, I 14, W 14, C 15

Personality: nature-loving, serious, responsible

Special Equipment: *torc* of AC 5 protection, *giant slayer* short sword +2, *dagger* +1, *Keoghtom's ointment*.

Ranger Abilities: HS 43; MS 55.

Ranni is a handsome young woman with steel grey eyes, and brown hair worn in a long braid down her back. She is a co-leader of the Ruby Blades. Ranni is always alert and serious-minded, and is more at home outdoors than in cities and towns.

Pyrra Flamedancer, hf M7: AC 2 (*bracers* AC 5, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 30; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (*dagger*); SZ M; ML average (9); AL NG; XP 1,400.

S 9, D 17, Co 16, I 17, W 14, C 8

Personality: pyromaniac, shy, self-conscious

Special Equipment: *bracers* of defense AC5, *ring* of fire resistance, *wand* of fire, *necklace* of missiles.

Spells (4/3/2/1): 1st — *affect normal fires*, *burning hands*, *phantasmal force*, *taunt*; 2nd — *flaming sphere*, *improved phantasmal force*, *pyrotechnics*; 3rd — *fireball*, *flame arrow*; 4th — *fire shield*.

Pyrra is a plain-looking woman who serves as the Ruby Blades' main spellcaster. She and Ranni are best friends and co-leaders of the group. Pyrra is obsessed with fire and fire-based spells.

Arpeggi Trill, hem B6: AC 5 (*leather*, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 30; THAC0 18 (16 *w/broad sword* +2); #AT 1; Dmg 2d4+2 (*broad sword* +2); SZ M; ML average (9); AL CN; XP 975,

S 14, D 17, Co 15, I 14, W 14, C 16

Personality: clever, taunting

Special Equipment: *broad sword* +2, *harp* of charming, *brooch* of shielding, *lute*.

Spellbook (3/2): 1st — *comprehend languages**, *magic missile**, *metamorphose liquids†*, *scatterspray‡*, *sleep*, *taunt**; 2nd — *insatiable thirst††*, *locate object**, *Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter**.

Bard abilities: CW 65; DN 30; PP 40; RL 50.

Arpeggi (not his real name) is the Ruby Blades' bard.

He enjoys making up taunting rhymes of the company's rivals as a means of unnerving them.

Dendir Abbathorson, dm T5: AC 3 (*belt* AC 6, Dex bonus); MV 6; hp 25; THAC0 18 (14 *w/short sword* +4); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+4 (*short sword* +4); SA double damage backstab +4 on attack rolls; SD +4 on saving throws vs. magic and poison); SZ S; ML fanatic (17); AL CN; XP 420.

S 14, D 17, Co 17, I 10, W 14, C 8

Personality: greedy, nasty, grouchy

Special Equipment: *leather belt* of defense AC 6, *short sword* +4, *large bag* of holding, *thieves' tools*.

Thief abilities: PP 20; OL 80; F/RT 85; MS 20; HS 25; DN 30; CW 60; RL 15.

Dendir is a foul-tempered, bitter dwarf who openly worships Abbathor, the dwarven god of greed. He is fascinated with locks and traps.

Zurk the Looney, hm F5: AC 4 (*leather*, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 50; THAC0 16 (13 *w/Str*); #AT 2; Dmg 1d6+6 (*club*, *Str* bonus); SZ M; ML fearless (20); AL CN; XP 420.

S 18/00, D 18, Co 18, I 8, W 6, C 8

Personality: crazy, foolhardy

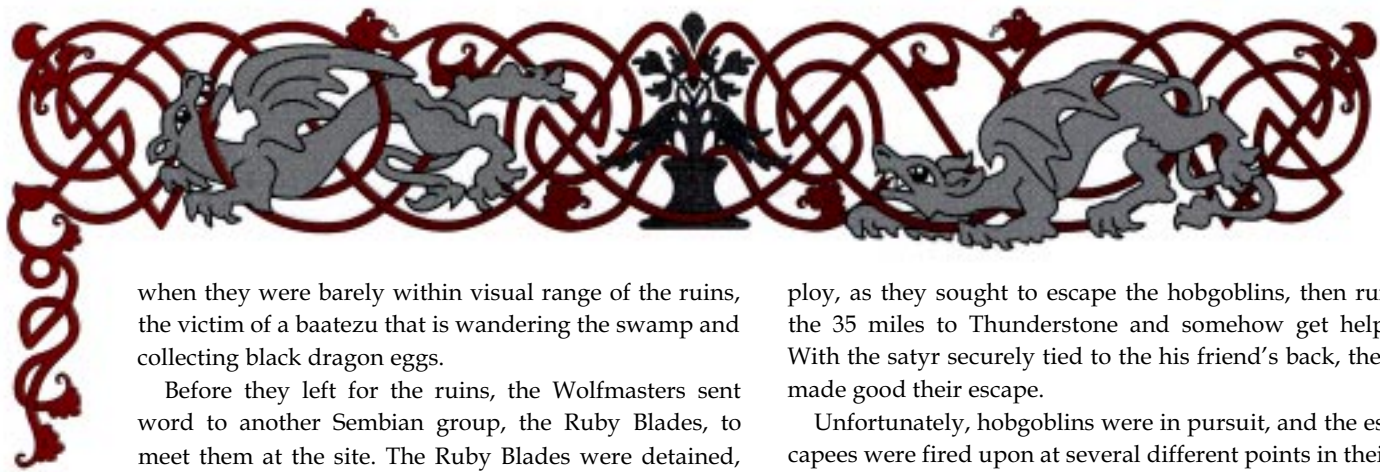
Special Equipment: *club*, *stuffed hedgehog*.

Zurk used to be Zircon Gemfacet, a respected Sembian gem dealer who moonlighted as an adventurer. Years ago he ran afoul of a scarab of insanity, the effect of which never wore off. He has become permanently insane, but the malady also left him with remarkable strength and fortitude and turned him into a fierce fighter with unshakable morale. Sometimes he appears clear-minded and rational, talking in an articulate fashion. Most of the time, however, he behaves as though he is stark raving mad: chatting with his stuffed hedgehog, charging into battle heedless of danger, and so forth.

The Ruby Blades keep Zurk around because they are short of muscle at the present time, and also because Zurk is excellent at flushing out enemies and triggering traps.

The Background

As attested to by some of the rumors in the list above (#1, #10, and #17), the Wolfmasters were indeed in Thunderstone. They were heading to the same ruins that Thistle told the PCs about during their briefing. However, the Wolfmasters were slaughtered to a man



when they were barely within visual range of the ruins, the victim of a baatezu that is wandering the swamp and collecting black dragon eggs.

Before they left for the ruins, the Wolfmasters sent word to another Sembian group, the Ruby Blades, to meet them at the site. The Ruby Blades were detained, however, and are late for the rendezvous.

The disappearing townsfolk (rumors #2 and #18) are being kidnapped by a tribe of hobgoblins (rumor #19) that have moved into the Hullack Forest, due northeast of Thunderstone. The hobgoblins are being led by a fire giant that is obsessed with mining copper.

The hobgoblins have captured and enslaved a small tribe of centaurs and another group of satyrs. In fact, the satyrs are the ones usually sent out to the borders of Thunderstone to capture healthy young men. (If a satyr fails to bring back a slave, the satyr loses a member of his family.)

Determining the location of the Wolfmasters is the main reason the PCs are here. They should keep in mind their mission, but also will hopefully allocate time to look into these disappearances.

A Not-So-Subtle Lead

If the PCs decide to investigate the disappearances of the young men of Thunderstone, use the following encounter.

As you walk through the town of Thunderstone, you notice a huge commotion at the Stag Skull Bridge. A small crowd of people and Purple Dragons are huddled at the south end of the bridge.

You jostle and elbow your way through, and see a centaur, numerous wicked black arrows piercing its smooth grey flanks. Besides the arrow wounds, it looks like he has been beaten repeatedly, all over his body. Blood trickles from his nose and mouth, his chest is heaving from exertion, his hazel eyes are wide with fear. Tied to the centaur's back is a young satyr, sprouting a dozen of the same cruel-looking black arrows out of his back. The satyr is pale, stiff, and cold.

As the people point and stare, and the Purple Dragons bellow for the priestess of Tempus, the centaur suddenly seems more lucid and raises his head, saying in a ragged voice: "... free at last, but not so the others ..." He slumps back into the dust and breathes his last, blood-filled tears trickling slowly down his bruised cheeks.

The centaur and his satyr friend, their families already slain, decided to make a run for it. It was a desperate

ploy, as they sought to escape the hobgoblins, then run the 35 miles to Thunderstone and somehow get help. With the satyr securely tied to the his friend's back, they made good their escape.

Unfortunately, hobgoblins were in pursuit, and the escapees were fired upon at several different points in their exodus. The satyr died during the first attack.

Anyone who closely examines the arrows and is either a ranger or someone with the proficiency of bowyer/fletcher, hunting, or survival (woods or mountains) knows that the arrows are of hobgoblin manufacture.

Ironically, the centaur and the satyr will have succeeded in not only getting help if the PCs decide to follow up on this, but also in telling the PCs where the hobgoblins are. Any ranger or a character with tracking proficiency, regardless of the level of his skill, can follow the tracks of a weighted-down centaur running at full gallop.

The Purple Dragons and the crown's representative plan to do nothing about this incident. As the Purple Dragons' commander puts it: "We have only a hundred men here, and we need every one o' them. I'll be hanged if I'm going to send out forays into the forest, looking for a small mangy buncha hobgoblins who use centaurs and satyrs for target practice!" As far as the Cormyrean officials are concerned, if the PCs want to follow up on this, they are free to do so. Wangle cannot do anything without giving away who he is, and the ranger/cleric Adrienne is otherwise indisposed, about to head off into the forest herself on a different mission.

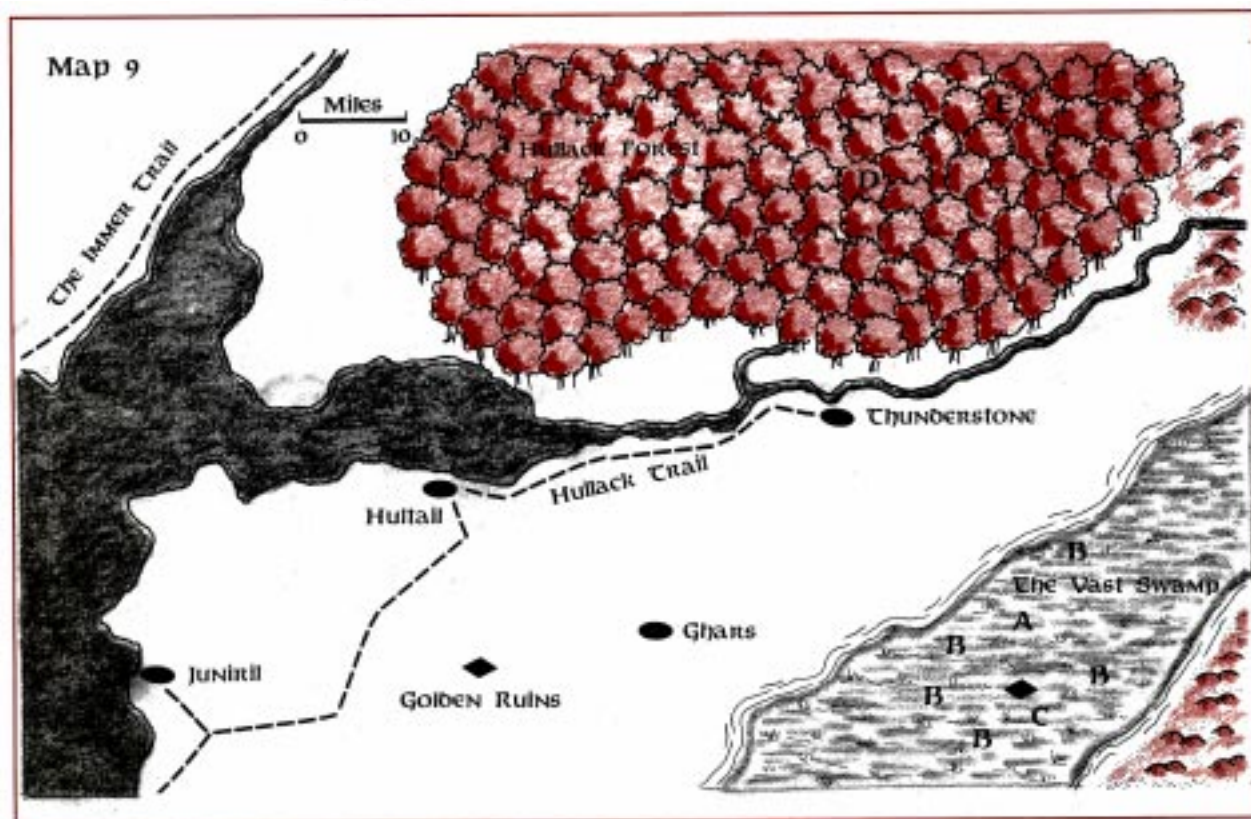
Finding The Wolfmasters

If they ask around, the PCs will get some bits of information that will keep them headed in the right direction on their quest for the Wolfmasters.

Adrienne talked with that group when they were in town, and knows that the Sembian company was heading due southeast into the Vast Swamp. They left about a week ago and have not returned.

Boris, the innkeeper at the Sign of Thunder, overheard the Wolfmasters talking about newly unearthed rumors about a great ruin in the Vast Swamp, due southeast of here.

One-Armed Magurk dealt with the Wolfmasters. Seems that they wanted potions to control black



dragons, which Magurk does not have. Magurk disliked the Sembians, because their haggling was obnoxious and excessive. He knows that they were heading southeast of town a week ago, and hopes they all die slow, painful deaths.

After the PCs have made their final preparations to leave for the swamp, including stocking up on provisions and arranging for their horses to be cared for until they return, read the following passage.

Anxious to be on your way, you troop through Thunderstone, heading resolutely in a southeasterly direction as Lord Thistle hinted.

The morning is chilly and damp, with a fine mist rolling along the wet grass. You smell the many morning fires being lit, breakfasts cooking, and the herds of livestock being driven to pasture.

A band of Purple Dragons watch you as you leave the town limits and set off to the southeast toward the Vast Swamp, the final resting place of many adventurers. One of them shakes his head sadly at you. A second says something to the first and holds out some gold coins. The first one nods, pulls out a similar fistful of coins, and murmurs, "You're

on." A third soldier eagerly holds out some gold as well, and you can barely hear him say, ". . . want a part of this too!" You cannot help wondering what the odds being quoted are.

Thunderstone retreats over your right shoulders as you head out across the flat countryside. Sometimes the land is meadow, sometimes just barren flatlands. At least this terrain makes travel easy.

Into The Vast Swamp

The edge of the swamp is a little more than 15 miles southeast of Thunderstone, a distance that the PCs should be able to cover in a few hours of steady marching. (Map 9, on this page, shows the general area and identifies the locations of several set encounters.) When they get to the fringe of the Vast Swamp, describe the scene to the players:

Your trek across dry land is at an end. The terrain has become wet and spongy, and healthy vegetation is replaced by twisted old trees, dark scraggly weeds, and an unhealthy-



looking, bloated, damp underbrush. Clouds of mist . . . or is it swamp gas? . . . roll across the soggy terrain. The mist clings to your clothes and enters your mouth and nose, carrying with it the sickly odor of rotting plants, sulfur, decomposing flesh, and several unidentifiable, unsettling odors.

Clammy moisture settles on everything, condensing beads of water on the edges of your swords, or trickling down the fronts of your shields.

The thick air is usually dead and silent, punctuated only by an occasional shriek, the snapping of twigs, and ominous gurglings in the water.

As your eyes adjust to the dim illumination of this place, you sometimes catch a small patch of something glowing, hovering in the distance. It's either burning balls of the ever-present swamp gas, or will o' wisps. Staying alert, you trudge onward.

Rangers should forget about trying to track the missing adventurers in this muck. The ground cannot hold the shape of a footprint for more than an hour, and the Wolfmasters came this way a week ago.

If desired, roll for random encounters during this part of the journey (using the Temperate Marsh or Swamp table on page 127). The following special encounter should take place at some point between the PCs' entry into the swamp and their discovery of the dead party. (The letter "A" is placed on Map 9 as a reminder and a suggested location.)

A. The Improvised Beholder

You have heard stories about this swamp. Nothing, however, has prepared you for actually experiencing what this place is like. Treacherous footing, leeches, mosquitos, the ever-present clamminess – all of it combines to make this a thoroughly miserable trek.

Suddenly, the roiling mists part and a large spherical thing floats silently toward you, hovering a yard off the ground. Numerous eyestalks writhe, then focus on your group. The six-foot-wide sphere halts about ten yards from you and regards you with its middle eye.

"More dry-skins," it says in a hushed whisper. "More dry-skins where they do not belong. A toll you must pay to cross my territory, else I unleash upon you one of my many ways of killing fools."

At the thing's last word, the mists part two feet to your right, and you see the skull of a large dragon lying in the mud, its skullcap missing. Bright twinkling objects inside the skull catch your attention. You realize that a dagger is glowing in

the skull, and numerous coins as well as a few gems catch its soft green light and reflect it.

The beholder growls in its hushed whisper, "Enough gawking. Place something of value in the skull, or die where you Stand."

The PCs are being scammed. A pair of imps found a beholder corpse and hollowed most of it out. They then got the skull of an old black dragon and removed the top. One imp is inside the beholder, the other is behind it, and they are using their flight ability to keep the thing aloft. Both imps are using invisibility. It is the imps' intention to bilk foolish explorers out of some of their valuables. They will accept the equivalent of 500 gp per person, any miscellaneous magic item small enough to fit in the skull, or any size S weapon with at least a +2 enchantment. They do not want potions, scrolls, armor, shields, or any weapon that is larger than size S.

The skull contains 2,000 gp, 500 pp, 38 gems worth a total of 5,000 gp, a *dagger +2*, a *ring of protection +1*, a *talisman of Zagy*, a *scarab of death*, a *Murlynd's spoon*, and a pink and green *ioun stone*.

Imps (2): AC 2; MV 6, Fl 18 (A); HD 2+2; hp 12 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SA poison tail; SD immune to cold, fire, electricity; resists other spells as a 7 HD creature; hit only by silver or +1 or better weapons; regenerates 1 hp per round; MR 25%; SZ T; ML average (10); Int average (10); AL LE; XP 1,400 each.

It is rare to see two imps working together, yet these two do so out of a strong love of mischief and treasure acquisition. If their deception is discovered, the imps will attempt to snatch up their treasure and flee. However, they may circle back and tail the PCs, waiting to malevolently annoy them during a dangerous melee.

B. Unstable Places

While traveling through a swamp is not a fun prospect in the best of conditions, these particular spots are downright lethal. The ground is extremely wet and loose, and the footing is treacherous.

Whenever the PCs tread on one of the spots labeled "B" on Map 9, secretly select 1d3 party members at random. Each of the victims must make a Dexterity ability check at a -2 penalty. Those who fail the check have stepped into quicksand.

A companion can pull a victim out of the muck by making a successful bend bars/lift gates roll, and up to two other PCs can help. Each helper effectively in-



creases the first PC's Strength by 1 point. Only one attempt can be made by any rescuer or group of rescuers in one round.

Any victim who is not pulled out will sink beneath the surface in $1d4+2$ rounds. Also, if a victim's Dexterity check was a natural 20, the character plunged right into the mire as if swallowed up by the earth. A submerged companion can still be grabbed and pulled out, but a victim will drown if he is not rescued before he loses the ability to hold his breath (see "Holding Your Breath" in Chapter 14 of the *Player's Handbook*).

The Swamp Ruins

After trudging for longer than you would have liked through the muck and mire, you come into view of a structure that must be the site Thistle mentioned. Protruding from the swamp are slabs of ancient stone, most of it covered in slimy greenish-brown plants. You judge that the structure used to be a walled keep of some sort, since remains of a perimeter wall and a front gate are evident.

However, the architecture is not normal in one major respect. The northwest corner of the keep is actually raised out of the muck, while the southeast corner and most of the east-

ern side is sunken into the mire. A single black tower sticks out of the swamp, where you calculate the northeast corner lies.

Heaps of hacked vegetation lay piled all around the keep's perimeter. You guess that this is plant life that was cleared away by whoever discovered this place.

The terrain around the keep is flat, and looks deceptively stable. You would be able to see for miles if not for the obscuring mists.

Several trees are in the vicinity, as well as an abundance of vegetation. Despite the presence of many varieties of swamp wildlife—insects, maggots, spiders, snakes—the air is very quiet, almost as if the mist is smothering any signs of life. The air is cold, damp, and oppressively suffocating. Dark clouds roil overhead, promising rain.

A glint of something catches your eye and diverts your attention to a spot west of the ruined keep. Something just shined there, ever so briefly. As you strain your eyes to see better, you can tell that there are several leafless, twisted trees at the location in question. Some ominous shapes are hanging from two of the trees' lower branches.

Flocks of scavenger birds circle the area, occasionally alighting on the things hanging on the trees.



C. The Wolfmasters

You arrive near the small group of trees where you saw the glint of light, but what is there makes you stop in your tracks. Hanging from one tree are two bodies, both human females, quite dead. Slumped one behind the other are two armored warriors, pinned to another tree by what seems to be a sharp, narrow slab of rock about three feet long. Someone, or something, used the rock as a spear.

A small body lies on the ground near the trees, pulverized beyond recognition. However, the hairy feet are intact, and you conclude these are the remains of a halfling.

The final body is that of a male human warrior, eyes wide with terror, his mouth permanently opened in a silent scream of agony. Parts of his armor—with his body still inside!—have been pounded impossibly flat, while others are wrenched into odd angles. You wonder what sort of an opponent could or would do such a thing.

Scavenger birds have already started in on the bodies, and each corpse is also host to a sickening variety of swamp bugs. Each body has obviously been dead for several days.

As one of the hanged bodies swings a little, the belt buckle on the robed woman shines. There is your glint of light.

However, the belt seems to be the only bit of equipment left intact. The ground is littered with broken staves, shattered swords, crushed rings and other small items, and even shields that appear to have been punched through by a fist of great strength. The idea that there could be nothing salvageable on these bodies is one that you may embrace with a sense of relief. After all, would you really want to search through these bodies?

One final detail comes to light. Emblazoned on the clothing of some of the dead, etched on some ruined equipment trod underfoot, is the sign of a wolf's head combined with a long sword. Looks like you have found the missing adventuring group, but it hardly seems like they are in a position to pay any overdue fees.

The damage done to the Wolfmasters was delivered by a greater baatezu known as a cornugon. The cornugon is wandering the swamp, looking for black dragon eggs for its masters.

If the bodies are examined closely, it will be apparent that each one had been struck by a large, barbed whip. The two dead men transfixed to the tree both have wounds where poison was introduced.

The battle happened three days ago. There are no tracks on this wet, ever-shifting ground.

Taking down the bodies and burying them will take an hour and a half. Whether or not the PCs do this will have an effect on how the following encounter plays out.

Enter The Ruby Blades

This encounter should not be introduced until after the PCs have begun their initial exploration of the keep's aboveground areas. Perhaps a sharp-eyed character happens to look through a hole in the outer wall and see the interlopers at a distance, approaching the ruins. Once the PCs are taking a good look at the strangers, read the following:

From your vantage point, you can make out five figures on horseback riding toward the ruins. Judging by the way they ride with determination and purpose, it is clear that they have either been here before or are not surprised to find these ruins here. They are about 200 yards away.

If the PCs did not take care of the bodies of the Wolfmasters, then the Ruby Blades will find the bodies before they enter the ruins and will immediately put themselves into a high state of alertness, becoming more inclined to attack first and ask questions later.

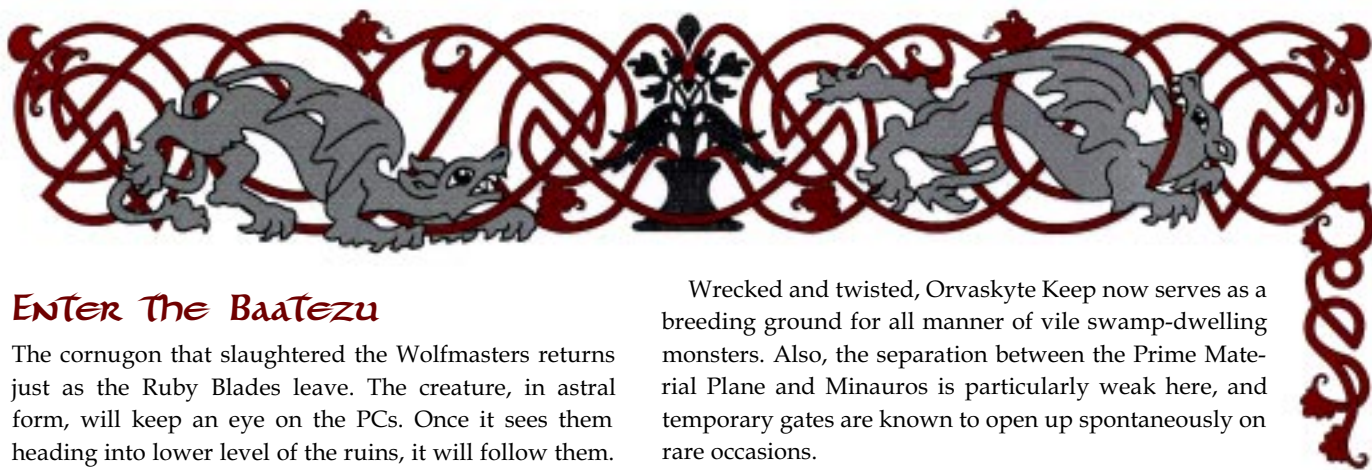
If the Ruby Blades arrive after the PCs have removed all significant traces of the Wolfmasters, then the newcomers will ride right up to the ruins through the "front gate" and begin searching for their friends. Unless the PCs have announced their presence before this point, the Ruby Blades will see them as soon as the riders enter the courtyard.

The Ruby Blade have ridden here from Daerlun in response to their allies' plea. Naturally, finding the PCs and not their friends makes them rather edgy and demanding. For all they know, the PCs are responsible for the Wolfmasters not being here.

This encounter is very open-ended. Diplomatic skills will be needed to prevent open bloodshed. The Sembians are in a portion of the swamp claimed by Cormyr, and are here with official sanction from the Sembian government. However, the Ruby Blades claim that the ruins are in Sembian territory, and demand that the PCs leave immediately.

The encounter need not be a violent one. The Ruby Blades will not start a fight, but will defend themselves if attacked. The PCs must convince the Ruby Blades to let them explore, even if for a short time.

Regardless of the outcome of this dialogue, the Ruby Blades will refuse to aid the PCs. They will mount up and head due east, ostensibly heading back toward the heartland of Sembia. (Unbeknownst to the PCs, they are merely withdrawing to plan their next move. They will be back.)



Enter The Baatezu

The cornugon that slaughtered the Wolfmasters returns just as the Ruby Blades leave. The creature, in astral form, will keep an eye on the PCs. Once it sees them heading into lower level of the ruins, it will follow them. The creature will attack the PCs when they are at a serious disadvantage, either during or immediately after an especially tough battle.

The Orvaskyte Ruins

For the purpose of playing out this adventure, the reason behind the existence of this ruined keep is not important. Nevertheless, the following background information—one possible explanation, but not necessarily the true one—may prove useful to DMs who want to integrate this place fully into a campaign:

Two millennia ago, Cormyr did not exist. Most of the area now known as Cormyr was forest, plain, and swampland under the nominal control of a small, long-forgotten nation named Orva. That nation's capital, lost forever, is sunken beneath what is now the Vast Swamp's southernmost edge.

This place, Orvaskyte Keep, served as an outpost that marked the northernmost boundary of the nation and also a place where magical experimentation was undertaken. Orva's final king, a petty, power-hungry tyrant with delusions of empire, ordered his archmage advisors who resided in the keep to devise a means of expanding Orva's borders with minimal effort.

Unfortunately, in their haste to please their king and also to avoid the fatal consequences of failure, they manufactured a gate that erupted the fabric of the Prime Material Plane. The gate opened to the plane of Baator—specifically Minauros, the layer of greed, the layer of swamps and mire.

The first result of the opening was a massive explosion that killed most of the archmages. Next came a great sucking wind that pulled the surviving archmages and the newly arrived priests into Minauros.

Then a rebound effect spewed a massive torrent of vile swamp from Minauros into Orva, carrying with it a horde of vile abominations, curses, and diseases. In a single, horrifying night of blood and slime, the tiny kingdom of Orva was annihilated and the Vast Swamp became doubled in size, to more or less its present dimensions.

Wrecked and twisted, Orvaskyte Keep now serves as a breeding ground for all manner of vile swamp-dwelling monsters. Also, the separation between the Prime Material Plane and Minauros is particularly weak here, and temporary gates are known to open up spontaneously on rare occasions.

When the Obarskyr family carved out the fledgling state of Cormyr in DR 26, the kingdom of Orva was long gone and forgotten. All that remains now of the little kingdom with big ambitions is this keep, a rotting, festering source of corruption and monsters. The place is depicted in Map 10, on page 76.

1. Front Gate. *Large bugs buzz over the surfaces of the pools of stagnant water that dot the entry to the keep. A pair of statues stand silent watch a short distance past the gate. Blocks of rubble, half-sunken in the mire, give evidence that the main gate was originally a more elaborate construction than what remains.*

2. Flanking Statues. *A pair of statues seven feet tall stand near the entrance to the keep's debris-strewn courtyard. Although time and travails have caused the statues to wear down differently, you can tell that they were originally mirror images of each other. And what an image.*

Each statue shows a male human clawing away the skin from his chest and exposing his heart and rib cage. Each face is contorted in wild-eyed terror, each mouth open in a silent scream of horror.

A fat gray spider emerges from the mouth of the right-hand statue and skitters down the body, only to be gobbled up by a mottled snake curled around the statue's feet.

And that is when you notice the feet, or lack of them. Instead of feet, you see that each statue's legs below the knees have been replaced with a stone carving of a writhing mass of tentacles.

There is nothing special about the statues. They are just ominous-looking, and are mentioned here to heighten the unsettling feeling that should be going through the minds of the characters (and their players).

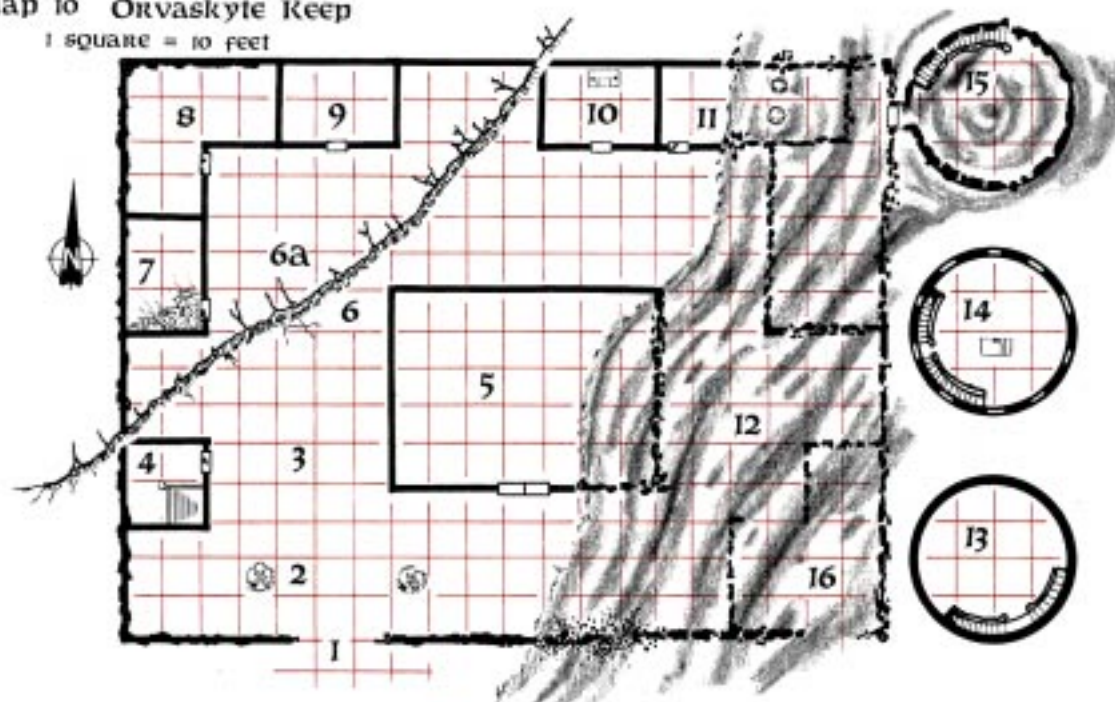
3. Dry Courtyard. *The courtyard was entirely paved with flat stones at one time, judging by the frequency with which you find them sticking out of the ground. However, most of the surface is wet mud, rubble, puddles of fetid water, and unhealthy-looking plants and vines.*

A mostly leveled building lies directly in the middle of the courtyard. Some of the walls along the perimeter of the keep

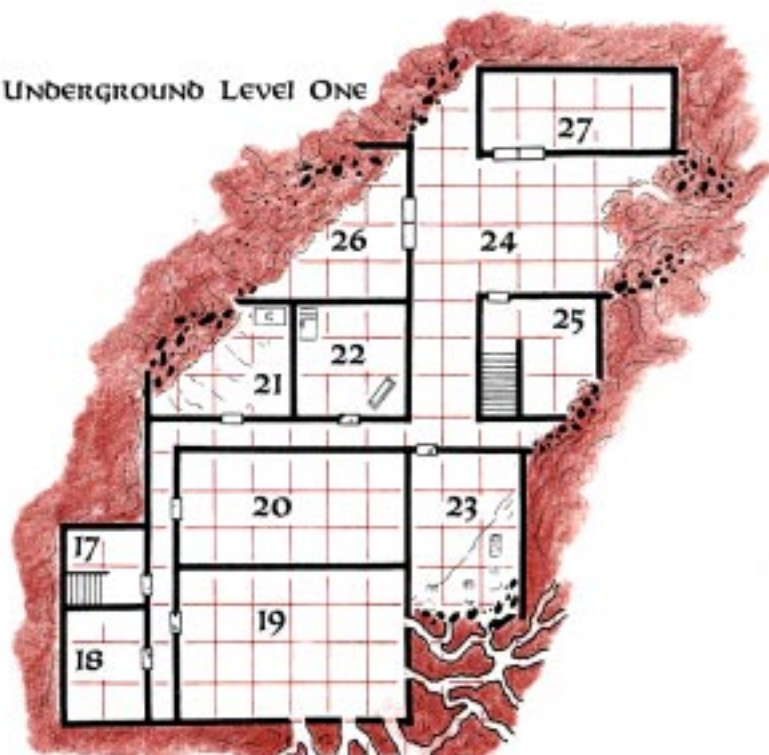


Map 10 Orvaskyte Keep

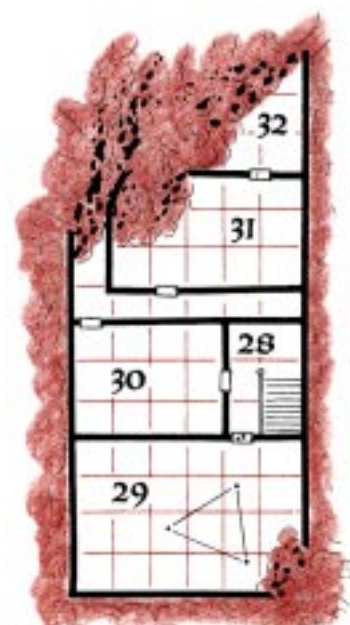
1 square = 10 feet



Underground Level One



Underground Level Two





are still standing, as are some small buildings adjacent to the walls.

Swamp water covers the eastern side of the keep, ranging from a depth of several inches in the northeast corner to several feet in the southeast corner. It is apparent that this section of the keep has sunk beneath the surface of the swamp. In sharp contrast, the northwest corner of the keep is elevated, as though it has been actually blasted up from beneath. A long fissure cuts diagonally from the west wall to the north wall, separating the elevated portion from the part of the courtyard that remains at normal ground level. Farther to the east, the submerged section of the courtyard is separated from the rest of it by a large crack that cuts through from the north wall to the south wall.

The air is clammy and still, punctuated only by odd, random sucking sounds that do not seem to come from any one direction.

As long as the PCs do not walk into the sunken areas, they will have no problem traversing the courtyard.

4. Blockhouse. This small building looks relatively intact. The wooden door is hanging open, barely on its hinges.

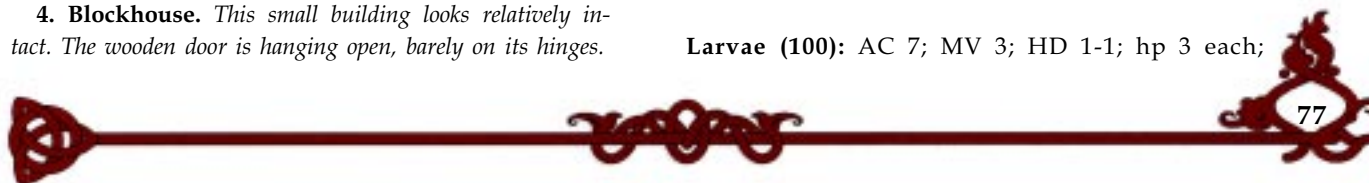
The interior is all one room, smelling of rotted wood. A set of stone stairs descends into the darkness.

This is one of the more intact rooms, and was used as a simple guardhouse. It contains the stairs that lead to the subterranean rooms of the keep.

5. Wrecked Center Building. Judging by the distance between the ruined corners, this was a very large building. Two disturbing facts about these ruins are obvious: First, the walls were blown outward, indicating that a horrendous explosion originated from within the building. Second, the shapes and surfaces of most of the remaining stones remind you of blocks of wax that are heated for a brief time, then re-cooled.

This building was the center complex where the ancient archmages cast their binding spells of power. As the PCs approach the area, a horde of 100 squirming, mewling larvae erupt from under the stones, a legacy of the exploding gate from Baator.

Larvae (100): AC 7; MV 3; HD 1-1; hp 3 each;





THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1; SA wounding, disease; SZ M; ML unreliable (2); Int semi- (2); AL LE; XP 35 each.

6. Fault Line. *The floor to the east of this fissure is three feet lower than the floor to the west. Within the crack are numerous small holes leading deep into the miry earth.*

The fault line was created when the upheaval lifted the entire northwest corner of the keep into the air. Dwarves and gnomes who check for unsafe stonework will discover that both surfaces are safe to walk on; the floor is not going to shift any more than it has already. The up-raised fragment of the keep has been in this position for centuries and is stuck this way forever.

6a. Raised Floor. This portion of the floor is raised at a 25-degree angle, a result of the gate explosion centuries ago, and portions of the keep sinking into the newly created mire. Every round spent walking on this section requires a Dexterity ability check. Failing the check sends the PC rolling down toward the fault line, inflicting 1d4 hit points of damage and requiring another Dexterity check. Failing this second check causes the PC to lose his grip on any hand-held items, which then fall into the crack and slip through the holes in the ground, lost forever.

7. Minor Blockhouse. *The door to this small building opens inward, but it does not seem to want to budge.*

When the floor uprooted, all of the debris tumbled into the southeast corner of the room, effectively jamming the door shut. The door simply cannot be opened, no matter how strong the opener is. It is a matter of physics.

If a creative way is found of getting into the room, continue reading the description.

The room is filled with debris that has sealed the door shut. The stack of rubbish includes dozens of rotted and dented shields, rusted swords, and suits of armor of an archaic design, a type not seen for more than a thousand years.

Sifting through the debris for two rounds uncovers a small shield +2 and a jar of oil of impact.

8. Corner Bulwark. *The door to this large corner building hangs open. Inside, tables, chairs, and benches have slid down and collected along the southern wall. It makes the going tough, but not impossible.*

The ceiling is full of ragged holes, from which daylight streams into the room. You hear a rustling of many wings and a malevolent hiss coming from the northeastern part of the room. As you look around the corner, six pairs of red, glowing eyes return your gaze. A half-dozen leering gargoyles lunge out hungrily.

Gargoyles (6): AC 5; MV 9, Fl 15(C); HD 4+4; hp 32 each; THAC0 15; #AT 4; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d6/1d4; SD only hit by +1 or better magical weapon; SZ M; ML steady (11); Int low (5); AL CE; XP 975 each.

The gargoyles will fight until four of their number are slain, after which the survivors will attempt to flee through the holes in the ceiling.

The gargoyles have stuffed some loot behind a loose brick in the southeast corner of the room. Their treasure includes 453 gp, 223 pp, an emerald worth 1,000 gp, a scarab of enraging enemies, a necklace of strangulation, a set of golden lion figurines of wondrous power, and a brooch of shielding.

Note that the floor is at an extreme angle, and footing is very uncertain. Unless the PCs have taken some measures that neutralize this disadvantage, all of their attack and damage rolls are made with a -2 penalty, and no Dexterity adjustments are figured into Armor Class.

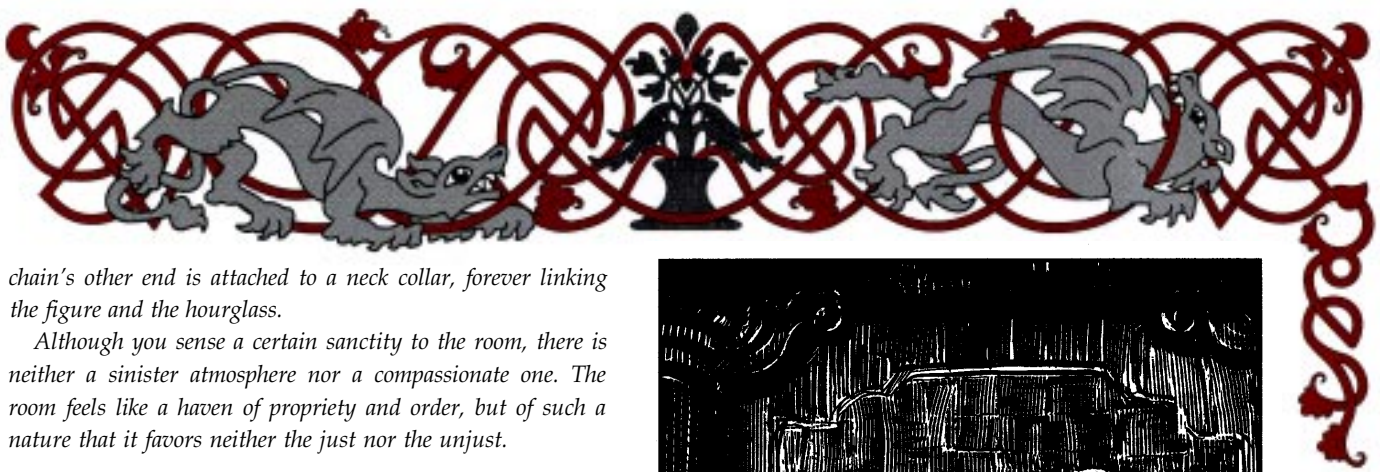
9. Chamber of the Dead. *The door sticks, but you manage to pull it open. Suddenly, a horde of skeletal bodies spills out, flailing at you, doing their best to overwhelm you.*

This room, which used to be a barracks, is filled with the skeletons of soldiers who were killed during the gate's detonation. These skeletons are not undead, they are simply spilling out because of the angle of the floor. However, let the players think initially that three dozen skeletons are attacking their characters.

Each PC who was in front of the door within 10 feet when it was opened must make a Dexterity ability check. The sheer tide of bodies spilling out will sweep those who fail the check into the fault line (area 6), with consequences as described above in the description of area 6a.

The room contains nothing of value.

10. Shrine. *The door to this room comes open easily. Inside is a sparse room with a stone block two feet on a side, and a statue looming behind it. The statue is a representation of a winged, robed man clutching an hourglass in one arm and a scythe in the other. The hourglass is on a chain, and the*



chain's other end is attached to a neck collar, forever linking the figure and the hourglass.

Although you sense a certain sanctity to the room, there is neither a sinister atmosphere nor a compassionate one. The room feels like a haven of propriety and order, but of such a nature that it favors neither the just nor the unjust.

The PCs have stumbled into a shrine to a god that is long forgotten in the Realms. The deity answers to the names Chronos, Kronus, and Karonis, and he is the god of time. Any PC with proficiency in religion and ancient history will be able to identify the statue and the purpose of the room.

An offering that is placed on the simple altar will age rapidly and turn to dust within one round. The supplicant then receives a vision, subject to your choice. It can be a scene showing how the keep became a ruin, a glimpse of something in the future (such as an image from one of the adventures in this product that has not been played yet), or, if the character has a riddle or mystery that he cannot solve, a hint based on a recent event in the PC's past.

However, no matter how many people place offerings on the altar, only one such manifestation will occur in a 24-hour period. (As an amusing option, each PC who puts out an offering after the first one will hear a solemn voice in his head that recites the exact time.)

The only passive benefit this shrine has is that it keeps out all undead.

11. Partially Sunken Room. *A blast of humid, rancid air welcomes you as you open the door. As your eyes adjust to the darkness, you realize that the eastern half of the room has collapsed into the swampy mire. A couple of small, slime-covered boulders are poking out of the ooze.*

The dry portion of the room has piles of old, warped wooden bowls, a fire pit with ancient ashes, and some extremely rusted tools that you guess are cooking utensils.

The only thing of interest in this former mess hall are the two slime-covered boulders, which are in fact a pair of ropers.

Ropers (2): AC 0; MV 3; HD 10; hp 50 each; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 5d4 (bite); SA hit by strand drains Strength; SD immune to lightning, half damage from cold; SW save at -4 vs. fire; MR 80%; SZ L; ML champion (15); Int exceptional (16); AL CE; XP 10,000 each.





Each roper has six strands and can shoot forth one strand per round. The only treasure they have is 18 pp in the gizzard of each creature.

12. Sunken Area. *A large area of the keep's eastern and southeastern floor has collapsed and sunken into the swamp's ooze. No portions of walls and no chambers are visible. The only evidence of anything worth exploring is the tower rising out of the muck in what would be the northeast corner of the keep, if it was still intact.*

The swampy mire is inaccessible to the PCs unless they have magical means that can somehow overcome the obstacle. The shaded area of Map 10 represents the portion of the keep that is underwater.

The depth of the mire is only six to twelve inches in the narrow, irregular area, but after a character moves five to ten feet to the east, he will discover that the floor suddenly drops to 15 feet beneath the surface of the swamp.

13. Dragon's Lair. *This ruined level of the tower has only the barest remnant of a ceiling, most of it having collapsed to the floor, making walking a hazard. A set of stairs lead down to the next level of the old tower, getting you that much closer to the surface of the slimy swamp. The room's walls are still intact, and these plus a small remaining overhang of ceiling offer the room's occupant a modicum of shelter.*

The resident of this chamber is a dragon with glossy black scales and tiny horns. The whole dragon is but twenty feet long from snout to tip of tail. Why, it's barely grown out of its hatchling stage! The black dragon cocks its head at you curiously and lets out a "Yarp!" followed by a "Growf!"

Then it breathes on you.

Very young black dragon: AC 3; MV 12, FI 30 (C), Sw 12; HD 6; hp 45; THAC0 11; #AT 3; Dmg 1d6+2/1d6+2/3d6+2 (claw/claw/bite); SA acid breath 4d4+2; SD water breathing, immune to acid; SZ L; ML unsteady (7); Int average (8); AL CE; XP 5,000.

This young dragon (age category 2) cannot speak Common and has no treasure. It is simply a young, ignorant, petulant child that can spit acid. It is the offspring of the much larger black dragon that drove off the party that initially found this ruin, as well as the same dragon that the Ruby Blades are now hunting.

The young dragon has staked out this territory as its own. The nearby gargoyles and other abominations steer

clear of it, because even the stupidest, most violent of the predators that have a claim here are aware that the child has a mother who is much, much, larger. Thus, as long as the youngster leaves the other abominations alone, they leave it alone. From all appearances, the dragonling feels the same way.

If the dragon is driven off, it will fly to its mother's lair and bring her back here, and she will be one very angry parent. If the dragonling is slain and the body left exposed, its mother will go berserk with rage when she comes to the keep.

The mother *will* come to the keep, one way or another. The most probable means will be at the instigation of the Ruby Blades. When they find the black dragon, they soon realize that they are outclassed and make a run for it. The closest place they know of is the keep, and they are hoping that the PCs will help them fight the creature. Of course, the black dragon, a creature of rage, will doggedly pursue the Ruby Blades back to the keep.

For more details, see the encounter "Look Who's Coming to Dinner."

14. Mid-Tower. *A strong acid smell drifts down from above, while the sound and smells of sloshing muck come from downstairs. The stairway leading up and down is intact.*

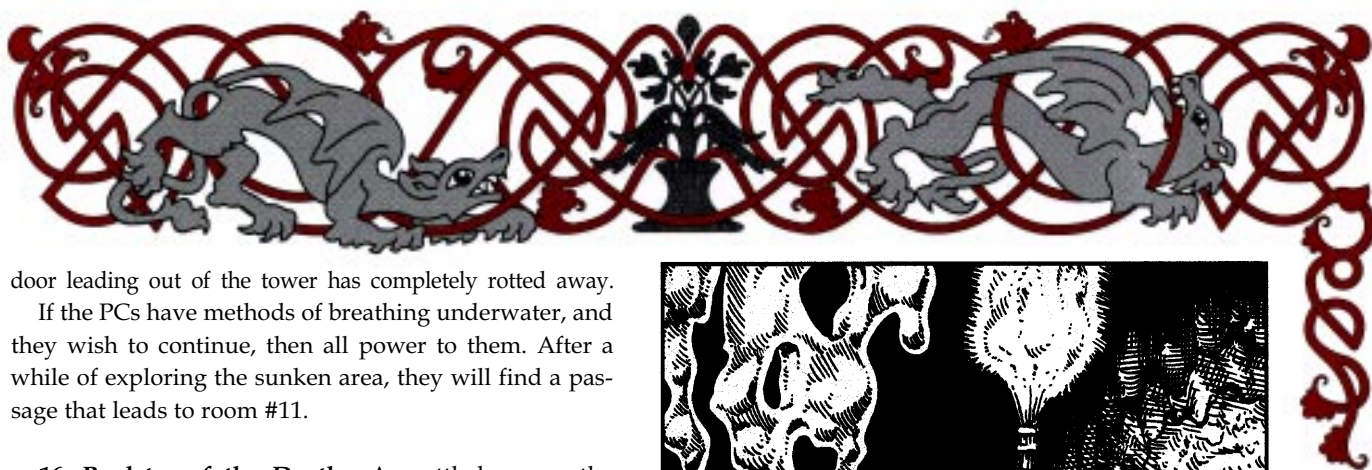
The room has several windows that a human in bulky armor can just manage to squeeze into or out of. The most prominent feature is the huge collapsed canopy bed in the center of the room. Unfortunately, it is crawling with a carget of vermin that at first looks like a big blanket squirming and undulating of its own accord.

The remains of tapestries on the walls show magical symbols and charts, offering a clue as to the nature of the occupant.

The room has nothing of major interest. A character with proficiency in spellcraft who makes a successful check will know that the symbols on the tapestries are arcane symbols associated with abjuration magic.

15. Submerged Tower Level. *Swamp water fills this 20-foot-high room to within five feet of its ceiling. There is no clue to what this room was used for, since the mire has ruined or covered everything.*

Nothing in this room is worth salvaging. It is the ground floor of the tower, almost completely submerged. The



door leading out of the tower has completely rotted away.

If the PCs have methods of breathing underwater, and they wish to continue, then all power to them. After a while of exploring the sunken area, they will find a passage that leads to room #11.

16. Predator of the Depths. A mottled worm, the aquatic counterpart to a purple worm, has wandered into the sunken shell of this chamber.

Mottled worm: AC 6; MV Sw 12; HD 15; hp 80; THAC0 5; #AT 2; Dmg 2d12 (maw), 2d4 (tail stinger); SZ G (25' long); ML steady (12); Int non- (0); AL N; XP 13,000.

The worm has no treasure, because it has swallowed all of its prey whole, and its digestive juices have dissolved all inorganic matter.

Underground Level Rules

Due to the tremendous amount of structural damage the keep suffered as a result of the ancient explosion, there is not as much left of the lower levels as most structures this size would normally have.

When the Vast Swamp expanded due to the massive influx of matter from Baator, the terrain around and under the keep became swampland, which not only helped undermine the keep's lower levels, but also corrupted the atmosphere in the sections that remained intact. Therefore, the following rules apply to any expeditions in the lower levels.

- Due to the excessive moisture in the air, all fire-based light sources last for only two turns before sputtering out, wet and useless. In addition, all targets of fire-based attacks, magical or mundane, receive a +2 bonus to their saving throws, and all such attacks are made with a -2 penalty to each die of damage.

- The moist air is a breeding ground for infection. A character with major wounds (50% or greater loss of hit points) has a 25% chance of suffering an infection from the injuries, requiring magical curative measures—either a *cure wounds* spell that restores enough hit points to cut the loss to less than 50%, or *cure disease* or similar magic to turn back the infection without necessarily restoring hit points. After 1d4+2 hours of being infected, a victim's Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution scores drop by two points each. If 24 hours pass without the infection being treated, the victim begins losing one point per hour from one of those three ability scores (chosen at random), and if any ability score falls to zero, the victim dies.



- After every three hours a character spends in the underground levels, he must make a Constitution ability check. Failure means the PC has picked up an acute respiratory ailment, which will manifest itself in 1d4 hours. The character will develop an uncontrollable cough (making it impossible to maintain silence for more than one round at a time), and will immediately lose one point of Constitution. For each day the ailment remains untreated (by means of *cure disease* or similar magic), the victim must make another Constitution check. Failing this check turns the ailment into a chronic condition, causing the loss of two more Constitution points. Further Constitution checks are required every 1d4 days if the chronic condition remains untreated. Another failed check means the illness has become terminal, and the victim will die in 4d10 hours.

Underground Level One

As you descend the stairs, the stench seems to become thicker and more repulsive with almost every step. The flames on your torches and lanterns flicker and sputter as though they are struggling to stay lit in this moisture and pestilence-laden air. All around you is a variety of odd and ominous sounds:



creaking, scraping, low rumbling, wet sucking noises, muffled gurgles—and a crunching sound immediately under your feet. You look down at the ancient stone stairs and see that they are covered with blind white beetles, each as thick as a spear shaft and as long as a man's index finger.

17. Stairway room. The stairway you have descended was about 20 feet long. You are standing in a perfectly square room, with a single wide-open wooden door leading out. The northern wall of the room is wet with condensation.

The northern wall abuts the massive amount of sludge and swamp that rushed in and flooded that section of the underground level when the upper level was tom up and angled upward.

18. Document Room. The air in here smells slightly different from the rest of what you have explored already—just as offensive, but mingled with the odor of old, rotting scrolls and paper.

The room contains sagging wooden shelves, many of them filled with rolled-up scrolls. A single wooden stool, a small table, and a lantern are the only other objects in here.

This was the records room for the lord of the castle. All of the documents are written in Thorass, and can only be understood by a character with proficiency in reading that ancient language.

If the scrolls are read, they will identify this place as Orvaskyte Keep, the northernmost point in the Kingdom of Orva. The documents have their own dating system, but references are made to corresponding dates on the Mulhorandi Calendar. The last entry has a Mulhorandi date of 1434 MC, which puts the keep's destruction about 726 years before the founding of Cormyr.

The only other data the PCs can glean from the scrolls is that the keep had a force of about 500 soldiers, several archmages and high priests, and a few alchemists and other scholars. There is talk of a gate experiment being done at the request of the king, but no details are given.

Any scroll that is unrolled and read cannot be rolled back up again, and will collapse into soggy fragments of parchment immediately after it is read.

19. Barracks. Despite the wide-open space of this room, the air is still stifling and gloomy. In addition to the omnipresent putrescence, the room stinks of the dead. Holes in the south and east walls remind you of tunnels or warrens.

The skeletons and body parts of many odd creatures are strewn all over the floor. The creatures responsible for this filth let out a piercing shriek of what sounds like pure malevolent joy.

You have seen ghouls with hunger on their faces, but never to such a degree as the horde that are tripping over broken furniture and themselves in order to get to you. Many of them wear the tattered remains of uniforms, and they all look as if they have not feasted on the likes of you for a long time.

This horde is a group of soldiers that were trapped down here in this level and degenerated into ghouls. By the time enough rubble shifted to allow them to move about, the transformation was complete and the undead creatures had lost all memory of their past lives. They have no treasure.

The holes in the walls are indeed tunnels—a maze of twisting, unmappable passages four feet in diameter, dug by the ghouls so they could hunt subterranean animals for food. The tunnels will yield no treasure or items of interest if they are explored.



Ghouls (36): AC 6; MV 9; HD 2; hp 10 each; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d6; SA paralyzation; SD immune to *sleep*, *charm*; SW *protection from evil*; SZ M; ML steady (12); Int low (6); AL CE; XP 175 each.

20. Arsenal. Numerous stands and racks hold scores of weapons, shields, and outfits of armor. All the equipment is useless—the metal has rusted, the wood has warped, and the leather has rotted. There was enough gear in this armory to equip a small army.

The room holds nothing useful, regardless of how long the PCs search through the rubbish. If they stay here for longer than two rounds and have not yet encountered the residents of room #19, the ghouls will pour into the room and attack.

21. Ruined Room. Pulling the door open releases a small avalanche of rancid mud that goes up as high as your knees. As you get your bearings, you realize that this room was right in the path of the northwestern fault line. The swamp no doubt rushed in and ruined it. Still, there does seem to be a chest thrown up against the room's northeast corner.

The western half of this room is ruined, buried under caked mud and slime. When the PCs go toward the chest, some things that were lurking in the mud lunge out, anxious to feed.

A mated pair of umber hulks, traveling through the muddy soil, stumbled upon this room just moments before the PCs entered.

Umbur hulks (2): AC 2; MV 6, Br 1-6; HD 8+8; hp 48 each; THAC0 11; #AT 3; Dmg 3d4/3d4/1d10 (claw/claw/bite); SA *confusion*; SZ L; ML elite (13); Int average (8); AL CE; XP 4,000 each.

If either of the umber hulks is reduced to 10 hit points or less without being killed, both of them will attempt to flee back into the muck from which they came. The monsters have no treasure. The chest in the room is empty.

22. Decent Room. This chamber looks like it might have been the bedroom of someone important. It contains a wall-to-wall carpet thickly coated with mildew, a four-poster bed and a couch that seem solid enough, and a chest at the foot of the bed.

This room was the bedchamber of one of the keep's archmages. The chest is locked, but the mechanism is so old that as soon as a thief attempts to pick the lock, the metal gives way and the lock is rendered useless, allowing access to the contents of the chest.

The chest contains four matched sapphires worth 250 gp each, plus a wand of magic missiles and a ring of feather falling.

23. Crypt. The smell of death welcomes you as you open this door. This room must have been huge once, but now the larger portion of it is swallowed up by the encroaching swamp.

You have found a crypt, that much is certain. Grisly remains bob up and down in the foul water, wooden coffins float by, and sarcophagi with heavy stone lids poke out of the water like macabre rectangular islands.

From out of the water, a dozen humanoids explode, claws extended, reaching for you. Lids on many of the coffins in the water fly open, and the skeletal figures within sit bolt upright. These figures gaze at you with empty eye sockets, then begin to climb out of their resting places and move toward you.

The bodies that erupt from the water are wights that are trying to surprise the PCs. The coffins contain skeletons, but it will take them one full round to close range.

Wights (12): AC 5; MV 12; HD 4+3; hp 24 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SA level drain; SD hit only by silver or +1 or better weapon, immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, cold-based spells, poison, and paralyzing attacks; SW holy water, *raise dead* spell; SZ M; ML elite (14); Int average (10); AL LE; XP 1,400 each.

Skeletons (18): AC 7; MV 12; HD 1; hp 8 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (sword); SD immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, cold-based spells, poison, and paralyzing attacks; half damage from edged weapons; SW holy water; SZ M; ML fearless (20); Int non- (0); AL N; XP 120 each.

Any PC who wishes to search for treasure in this room can wade chest deep in the putrid muck and mire for 2d10 minutes before stumbling upon one of the following items, which were buried long ago with their owners: a small metal case containing the gem *Fireblood*; a necklace made of small diamonds and rubies worth 2,000 gp; a *helm of comprehending languages and reading*



magic (which would enable a wearer to understand the scrolls in room #18); a *broad sword* +1, and a *staff of striking*. Each searcher will find one of these items, up to the maximum of five, in the order in which they are listed here.

24. Open Passageway. *The corridor leading north expands to a 20-foot width, then opens into an even wider alcove extending to the east. A sloping wall of rubble fills the eastern end of this area. On the wall to the west is a set of carved stone double doors that at one time were quite attractive, and to the north is a pair of wooden double doors that are wide open and hanging loosely on their hinges.*

Nothing of importance is to be found in this area or in the rubble. Attempting to dig through the rubble is pointless and potentially self-destructive; if the PCs somehow manage to clear a passage that extends 30 feet or more, the swamp water will rush in and eventually inundate everything in the subterranean portion of the keep, drowning all the occupants who cannot save themselves and making further exploration of the place all but impossible.

25. Stairs. *The only thing present here is a set of descending stairs. The odd noises and putrid smells that have been your companions thus far seem to also promise their presence if you descend the stairs.*

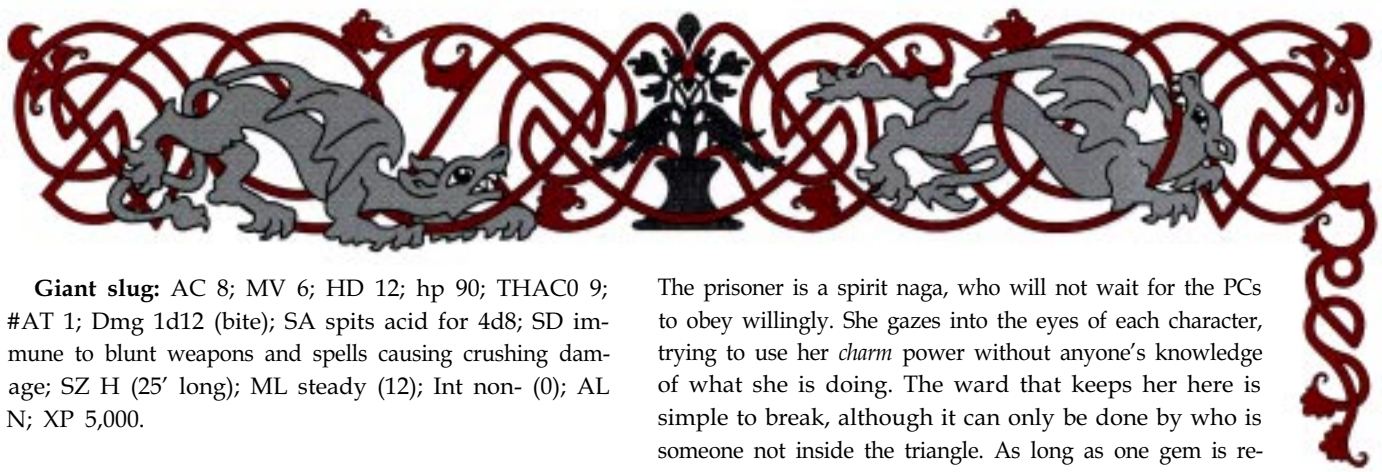
Note that the door to this room works fine, as if it has been in recent use.

26. Ruined Chamber. *The slime and mire that have claimed this room's western half cannot conceal the fact that the floor of this room was once beautifully polished marble. Since it is underground, it is unlikely that it was a throne room or ball room.*

As you ponder the empty room, you catch a whiff of what seems like stomach acid.

The muck makes a loud, bubbling, razzing noise and a giant slug pushes itself out of the mire, coming straight for you.

Attracted by the light and noise of the PCs, the giant slug will waste no time in spitting on them and closing in for eating. It will chase the PCs if necessary, straight out of the room and into the corridors, stopping only if confronted by stairs. It is *hungry*.



Giant slug: AC 8; MV 6; HD 12; hp 90; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 1d12 (bite); SA spits acid for 4d8; SD immune to blunt weapons and spells causing crushing damage; SZ H (25' long); ML steady (12); Int non- (0); AL N; XP 5,000.

27. Lurking in Wait. *The wide-open doors offer no clue about what might be inside this room. As you pass through the doorway, you see a number of pieces of rotted furniture, and you can tell that the floor in the eastern end of the Chamber is wet. The room does not appear to contain anything of interest.*

If any PCs advance farther than 10 feet into this room, a pair of small lurkers that are attached to the ceiling will drop onto the two characters in the lead (or any two PCs selected randomly, if they are clustered closely together). The creatures will continue attacking until they are killed, or until their prey has been suffocated, whereupon they will attempt to escape by flying away.

Lurkers (2): AC 6; MV 1, Fl 9 (B); HD 6; hp 30 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (constriction); SA captured victim suffocates in 1d4+1 rounds; SZ L (10' diam.); ML steady (11); Int non- (0); AL N; XP 420 each.

The lurkers have no treasure, and the room contains nothing but junk.

Underground Level Two

28. Stairway. *At the bottom of this staircase is an alcove with doors leading to the west and south. The west one is slightly ajar. The south door has a rune carved upon it. Light trickles out from under the door. It is locked.*

If the PC with the lowest Intelligence score makes a successful Intelligence ability check, the rune will be identified. It is nonmagical, simply a warning not to proceed beyond this point.

29. Containment Room. *The light in this room comes from a one-foot-diameter glowing globe set in the ceiling. Near the floor, three red gems hover three feet off the ground, a thin line of flame connecting them in a triangular pattern.*

Set in the middle of the triangle is a black-and-crimson-banded snake body, with the head of a woman. She turns her deep brown eyes on you and says, in heavily accented Common, "Please! Release me from this prison!"

The prisoner is a spirit naga, who will not wait for the PCs to obey willingly. She gazes into the eyes of each character, trying to use her *charm* power without anyone's knowledge of what she is doing. The ward that keeps her here is simple to break, although it can only be done by who is someone not inside the triangle. As long as one gem is removed, the entire ward collapses. The naga, part of one of the magical experiments conducted by the keep's wizards, has been imprisoned here ever since the keep was wrecked.

Each PC can avoid her charm gaze by making a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation. If the naga gets one person under her control, she again says, "Release me! Simply pluck one of the gems out of the air! Quickly!" The *charmed* individual will do so unless restrained by his comrades. If the naga is freed, she will use her spell abilities against the party.

The globe on the ceiling has continual light cast upon it. It can be removed and carried away by anyone who can reach it (the ceiling is 15 feet high) and pry it loose. The gems that form the ward are worth 100 gp each. The room contains no other items of value.

Spirit naga: AC 4; MV 12; HD 10; hp 50; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 1d3 (bite); SA poison bite, charm gaze, spell use; SZ H (15' long); ML elite (14); Int high (13); AL CE; XP 5,000.

Wizard Spells (4/2/1): 1st — *audible glamor, color spray, spook, taunt*; 2nd — *improved phantasmal force, web*; 3rd — *fireball*.

Priest Spells (3/2): 1st — *command, cause fear, cause light wounds*; 2nd — *enthrall, hold person*.

30. Mural Chamber. *Although the years have not been good to the wall paintings in this room, you are still treated to a panoramic view. The walls are covered with murals showing a beautiful keep with a single tower in one corner. Armies of smartly dressed troops march in the foreground, as a quartet of robed mage-types and a trio of clergymen in vestments hover in the air just above the keep. Over their heads, a winged hourglass shines golden light down on the whole scene.*

This room was apparently the site of another magical experiment, this one involving illusions. Each character who views the wall paintings must make an Intelligence ability check. Those who succeed at the check notice that, in one distant corner of the mural, a figure in royal robes and a crown is hunched over a pile of what seems to be gold and people. The king is running his fingers through this pile, a look of evil and greed on his face. Be-



hind him stands a portal that glows red, and storm clouds build overhead.

The painted portal has a hypnotic quality to it. Anyone who studies this part of the painting must make another Intelligence check. Those who fail this check will see a new image form in this location, as though the portal has become transparent. This image shows the bodies of the PCs' party, each of them mutilated and dead. A viewer who sees this image must make a successful saving throw vs. spell or suffer the effects of a fear spell.

31. Dungeon. *The door to this room is solid iron, with a small sliding door set into it that is rusted permanently shut. After managing to get the door open, you gaze upon twelve skeletons manacled and shackled to the walls. A supernaturally cold wind cuts through you, and a dozen vaguely humanoid shapes, each with a pair of glowing green eyes, take form and advance, their spectral mouths open in a tortured howl.*

These skeletons were formerly the bodies of powerful, influential people who opposed the king. When the keep was wrecked, the prisoners were forgotten and left to starve to death. They live on as wraiths, and cannot leave the dungeon until someone opens the door. Each wraith will attempt to drain two levels of life energy before fleeing out the door.

Wraiths (12): AC 4; MV 12, Fl 24 (B); HD 5+3; hp 42 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SA level drain; SD hit only by silver (half damage) or +1 or better weapons; immune to sleep, charm, hold, death, cold-based spells, poison, and paralyzing attacks; SW holy water, raise dead, continual light; SZ M; ML champion (15); Int very (12); AL LE; XP 3,000 each.

If the PCs have a *continual light* source (such as the globe from room #29) or some means of producing that level of illumination, the wraiths will suffer -2 penalties to their attack rolls, and they will not come within 10 feet of the light source itself. The only treasure in here is a valuable signet ring on one of the skeletons, worth 3,000 gp.

32. Torture Chamber. *Another door of solid iron stands before you, but this one has no sliding panel. Once you have worked it open, you see a triangular room, all that remains intact of what was once a larger chamber. Set around the room at different stations are what seem to be torture devices, all of them orange with rust. A couple of the devices have skeletal remains in their grim metallic embrace.*

The room is haunted by the two victims' spirits, now poltergeists. Although the torture devices no longer work, their sharp points and edges ruined by age and rust, the poltergeists will bump and rattle the mechanisms in an attempt to unnerve the PCs. They will pick up smaller devices and hurl them at the characters, trying to induce fear in them.

Poltergeists (2): AC 10; MV 6; HD 1/2; hp 4 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg nil; SA *fear*; SD *invisibility*, hit only by silver or +1 or better weapon; SW holy water; SZ M; ML average (10); Int low (5); AL LE; XP 120 each.

These spirits have no treasure. They are only interested in frightening the PCs to death.

The Baatezu Attacks

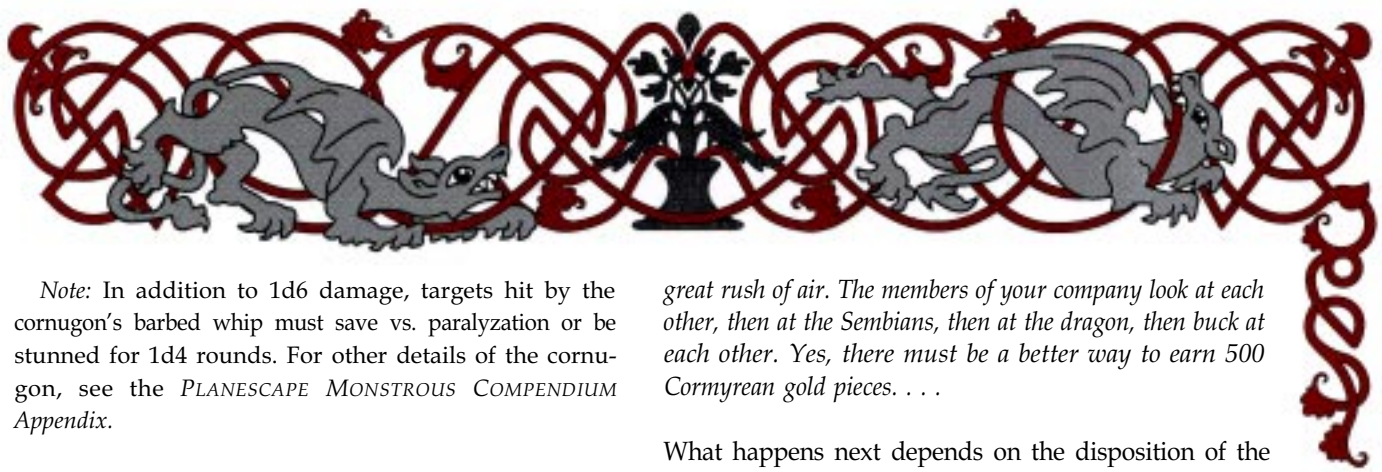
At some point in the adventure, probably when the PCs are locked in melee in the lowest level, the cornugon baatezu will launch its attack. If the PCs have been having a rough time of it, let the attack come after they have defeated a foe, but before they can gather their wits and heal themselves. If the adventure has thus far been a breeze, then bring in the baatezu right in the middle of a nasty melee. Read the following to the players:

All at once, a vaguely gargoyle-like figure appears before you. Standing over eight feet tall, it grips a gruesome-looking barbed whip and coldly regards you with hateful yellow eyes that have no pupils. Slung across its shoulder is a large pouch.

The intruder seems to send out palpable waves of evil, as a smell of sulfur, brimstone, and burning slime envelops you. Disregarding anything else in the area, it closes in on your group. "More of you!" it roars with an echoing bellow. "And me without any more trees!"

Baatezu, Greater—Cornugon: AC -2; MV 9, Fl 18 (C); HD 10; hp 50; THAC0 11; #AT 4 or 1 + weapon; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d4+1/1d3 (claw/claw/bite/tail) or 1d3/1d6+6 (tail/barbed whip); SA *fear*, wounding, stun, spell use; SD regenerate 2 hp per round, only hit by +2 or better weapon; MR 50%; SZ L; ML elite (14); Int exceptional (15); AL LE; XP 10,000.

Spell-like abilities: advanced illusion, animate dead, charm person, detect magic, ESP, infravision, know alignment (always active), lightning bolt (3 per day), produce flame, pyrotechnics, suggestion, teleport without error, wall of fire (1 per day), gate (1 per day).



Note: In addition to 1d6 damage, targets hit by the cornugon's barbed whip must save vs. paralyzation or be stunned for 1d4 rounds. For other details of the cornugon, see the *PLANESCAPE MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix*.

The cornugon has four black dragon eggs in its sack. It will attack the PCs in the most brutal fashion possible. If the PCs are in melee, and their enemy attacks the cornugon as well, the outer plane horror will briefly turn its attention to the interfering creature(s) and destroy them, then go back to slowing murdering the PCs.

If the cornugon is down to one-third of its hit points, it will strategically withdraw:

Guess Who's Coming To Dinner

At long last, you stagger out of the infernal keep, covered head to toe in wet slime, and stinking as if a whole row of privies had exploded under you.

As you clear the perimeter of the keep, you hear screams and shouts off to the east. Turning in that direction and narrowing your eyes, you see five figures running toward you, hands in the air, screaming. As they get closer, you recognize them as the arrogant Sembian company, the Ruby Blades.

As they see you, many of them give a cry of relief as they sprint harder, desperate to close the remaining distance. When they finally get close enough to talk to, they slow down, chests heaving. Most of them have bleeding wounds or acid burns. One member is clutching a set of reins, but there is no animal to be seen.

"Thank Tymora we found you! It . . . it's after us!" says one member. "What a fiasco!" another wails. "I told you it was too much for us to take on!" a third one scolds. "It . . . it dissolved my horse and ate it!" the man holding the empty reins says, shaking them in your face. "It ate all our horses!" the first member says. "And now it's after us."

Suddenly, a huge shape blots out the sun (or moon, if at night). You look up and see a huge dragon, black as night.

One of the Ruby Blades bursts into tears. Another starts chanting, "Tymora, please prepare to receive thy servant!" over and over. Still another appears to have lost control of his body. Another of the Sembians seizes one of you by the shoulders and looks at you with pleading eyes. "It was too much for us!" he wails. "Just . . . just kill it, drive it off, whatever . . . just make it go away! We'll give you a third share of its hoard! No! Make that half a share!"

You look up again at the graceful but terribly huge beast, as it spirals downward. You could swear you heard it inhale a

great rush of air. The members of your company look at each other, then at the Sembians, then at the dragon, then back at each other. Yes, there must be a better way to earn 500 Cormyrean gold pieces. . . .

What happens next depends on the disposition of the dragon. If the PCs injured her child (see room #13) and the child made it back to its parent, or if the PCs killed the dragonling and disposed of the body, the mother is furious and attacks both the PCs and the Ruby Blades. If the PCs killed the child and left the body atop the tower (where it could be easily seen by its mother), it goes into a rage and attacks only the PCs. If none of the above conditions are present, the dragon goes after the Ruby Blades, but attacks the PCs if they intervene.

However, regardless of all those conditions, there is one way to avoid bloodshed. If the PCs managed to snatch the black dragon eggs from the baatezu, it can negotiate with the creature. The dragon will accept the eggs and fly away without attacking any of the adventurers.

Mature adult female black dragon: AC -2; MV 12, Fl 30 (C), Sw 12; HD 15; hp 110; THAC0 6; #AT 3; Dmg 1d6+7/1d6+7/3d6+7 (claw/claw/bite); SA acid breath 14d4+7, kick 1d6+7, wing buffet 1d6+7, tail slap 2d6+14, fear aura; SD immune to acid; MR 20%; SZ G (50' body, 50' tail); ML fanatic (16); Int average (9); AL CE; XP 14,000.

Spell-like abilities: water breathing, darkness 70' radius (3 per day), corrupt water.

Spells (4): color spray, feather fall, magic missile, phantasmal force.

In combat against the dragon, the Ruby Blades will make a tremendous show of helping out, although they will refuse to get within melee range of the beast . . . they will just look like they are helping. They will contribute nothing to the death and/or defeat of the dragon.

If the dragon is reduced to less than 50 hit points, or if it become obvious to her that she isn't going to have an easy time of beating the PCs, she will escape and fly back to her lair.

Dragon Aftermath

Now that the threat of the dragon has been removed, the Ruby Blades look at you, then talk among themselves. They finally turn back to you.

"We thank you for your timely aid in our cause," one says, summoning together as much dignity as he can. "As



promised, you will get half the dragon's hoard . . . when we all go there."

You notice a large body of men off in the distance, riding in from the east. The person who is addressing you sees them as well, then turns back to you, a wide grin on her face. "Ah, our reinforcements have arrived at last," she says, delighted. "Now they and we are going to explore these ruins, which are Sembian territory. You go back to Thunderstone in Cormyr and await us. We shall be there in a few days, bringing your share of the spoils from the dragon's cave."

The company looks at you expectantly, as the mounted force of two dozen Sembians rides up. "You may leave now," the Ruby Blades leader says with a smile.

The Sembians want the opportunity to explore the ruins on their own. This is one point on which the Sembians will not back down or negotiate; as far as they are concerned, they have the upper hand. They will not tell where the black dragon lair is, no matter what. The Sembians will only attack if they are attacked.

The conclusion to this encounter is very open-ended. It depends on how the PCs react and what they do to the Sembians. All the Ruby Blades want is for the PCs to go away.

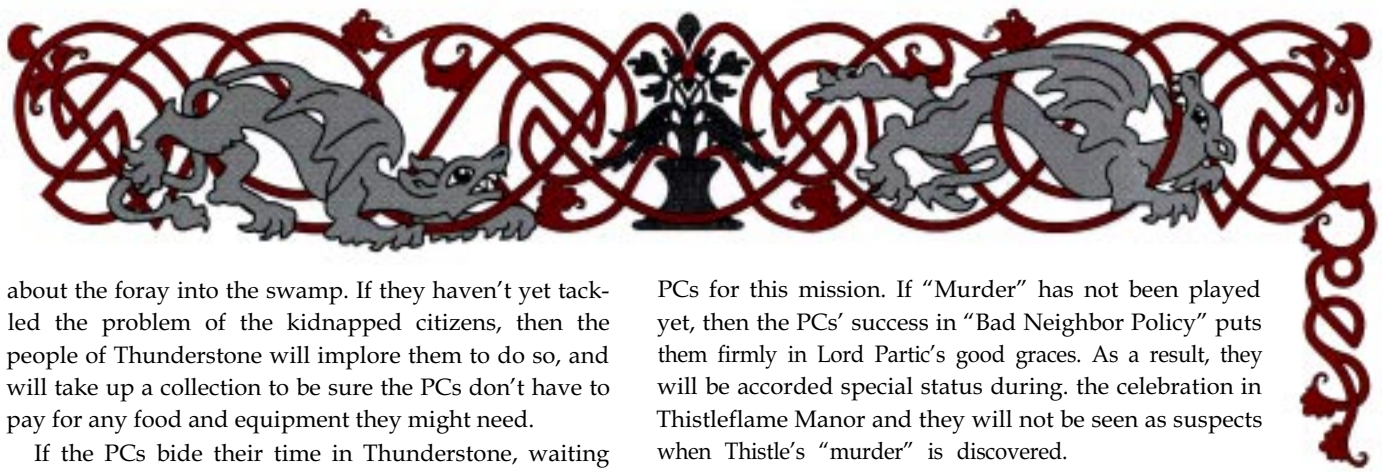
Sembian mercenaries, F4 (24): AC 5 (chain armor); MV 12; hp 30 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword), 1d4+1 (heavy crossbow); SZ M; ML elite (14); Int average (9); AL LN; XP 270 each.

Special Equipment: chain armor, long sword, heavy crossbow, 24 quarrels, light warhorse.

Conclusion

If this adventure has gone as expected, the PCs are worn out—well enough to travel but in no shape either physically or psychologically to fight the Sembians. Their goal now, having fulfilled the requirements of their assignment and also having explored the ruined keep, should be (a) to get back to Thunderstone and recuperate and (b) to return to Suzail and report to Thistle about the fate of the Wolfmasters.

Upon their arrival in Thunderstone, the PCs will be hailed as heroes once the details of their adventure are known—they went into the swamp and survived to tell about it! If they had previously undertaken the mission to rescue the missing citizens, then they will be greeted joyously on sight, even before the townsfolk find out



about the foray into the swamp. If they haven't yet tackled the problem of the kidnapped citizens, then the people of Thunderstone will implore them to do so, and will take up a collection to be sure the PCs don't have to pay for any food and equipment they might need.

If the PCs bide their time in Thunderstone, waiting for the Ruby Blades to show up, they will be disappointed. For whatever reason—they never intended to keep their promise, they didn't make it out of the ruins, they met up with the dragon again and this time didn't live to tell about it—the Sembians do not arrive.

Loose Ends

The dragon's lair to the east of the Orvaskyte ruins is out there to be found. But an unpleasant surprise awaits any one who manages to find it: the female black dragon's mate is very healthy and very angry, and will fight to the death (probably not his) in an attempt to avenge what happened to his mate and their child.

The Sembians' territorial claims could develop into a political problem . . . or worse. Do the assertions by such groups as the Ruby Blades have the consent and support of the Sembian government, or are these interlopers simply acting in their own best interest? Perhaps the PCs will be commissioned by Cormyr to investigate this activity, with instructions to use force to remove any resisters who do not leave the kingdom peacefully.

Tiztor the Great and his obsession with the Thunder Stone may prove interesting or troublesome. He may try to hire the PCs for some sort of information-gathering mission—an endeavor that the Purple Dragons in Thunderstone would not take kindly to; the last thing they want is having their job made more difficult by a bunch of adventuring types hanging around town asking questions and possibly antagonizing people.

The PCs may attract the attention of the secret Zhentarim element in town. The Zhentarim may be curious about why the PCs are spending so much time in and around Thunderstone, and if these evil people get wind of the existence of the ruins, a new set of intrigues could emerge. For instance, if the PCs failed to retrieve the gem *Fireblood* but the Zhentarim succeed in doing so, a trip to Zhentil Keep may be in order.

Linking This Adventure

Lord Thistle can provide a link from this adventure to "Murder Most Magical," regardless of the order in which these two adventures are played. If "Murder" was first, then a grateful Thistle was the one who hand-picked the

PCs for this mission. If "Murder" has not been played yet, then the PCs' success in "Bad Neighbor Policy" puts them firmly in Lord Partic's good graces. As a result, they will be accorded special status during the celebration in Thistleflame Manor and they will not be seen as suspects when Thistle's "murder" is discovered.

A clue to the location of Orvaskyte Keep and the kingdom of Orva can be placed in one of the books in the library of Adzerak ("The Bibliophile").

Lord Vorik Aris, the old supporter of Gondegal, may have spies in Thunderstone who are marking the PCs as sympathizers to the crown and possibly very dangerous to Aris's cause. That way, when the PCs meet more of Aris's forces in "Redemption," their reputation will precede them—much to their detriment.

The Lost

This is the side adventure dealing with the rescue of the missing young men of Thunderstone. The locations described below are found on Map 9, on page 71, which details the region surrounding Thunderstone. If desired, check for random encounters along the way, using the "Temperate Plain" and "Temperate Forest" *encounter tables on page 127.

D. Hobgoblin signs. *You have been following the trail of the dead centaur into the Hullack Forest. The woods are dense here, bearing no sign of the encroachment of civilization. All around you are the signs of a wholesome old forest, teeming with life.*

The tracks lead back through a small, natural clearing. Remains of broken black arrows are scattered all over the grass.

A successful tracking proficiency check reveals not only the centaur tracks heading southwest, but also the tracks of more than a dozen hobgoblins.

As the PCs are checking for tracks, read the following:

A high-pitched giggle comes from in front of you, and a lithe female emerges from the woods. She looks almost elven, but not quite, perhaps of mixed blood. Her eyes twinkle with mischief as she looks at you. She wears a simple belted tunic, with a knife in a sheath.

"Silly strangers, looking for hobgobs? Deena knows where there are more tracks of smelly ol' hobgobs near here, but only one of you can come and see them. (She picks a



human or half-elf male with a charisma of 16 or more.)
You can come with Deena, find hobgob tracks, and come back to tell friends."

Deena is a dryad, and what she wants right now is a man to be her amorous slave for a few years. If the PCs agree to let her take one of their number away, she will lead that character into the forest and then attempt to charm him, and if she succeeds, neither the dryad nor the character will be heard from again.

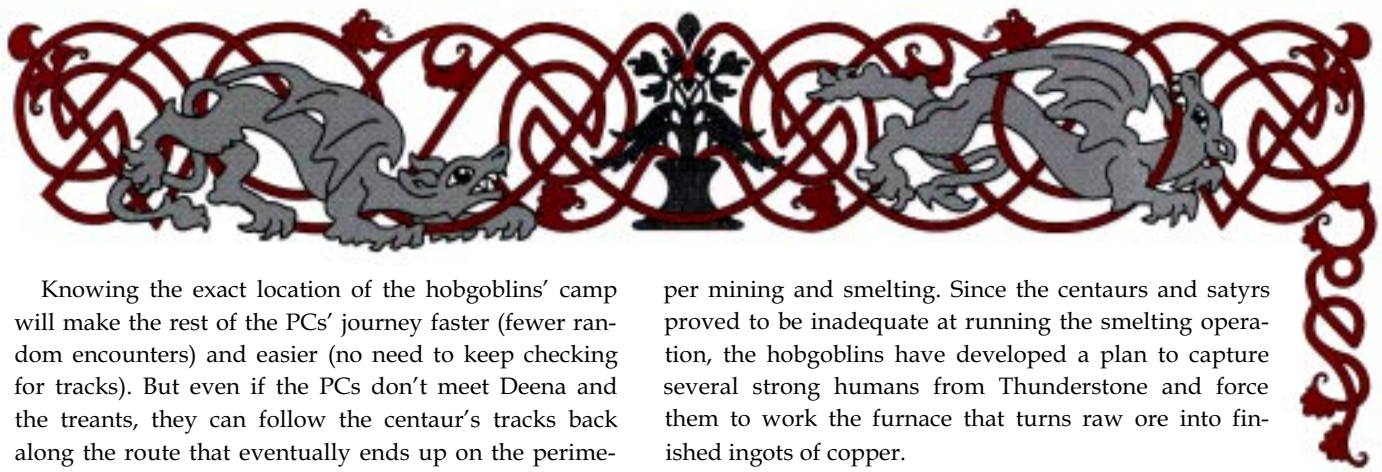
If the charm attempt fails, or if the PCs do not agree to let her leave with one of them, Deena (not one to hold a grudge) will tell the PCs exactly how to get to the hobgoblin camp and will volunteer the information that the hobgoblins are engaged in a mining operation—or, as she puts it, "cutting down the trees and breaking up the ground that feeds the trees." She has not seen any centaurs or satyrs in this area.

If Deena is seized, or if the PCs display any sort of aggressive or belligerent behavior toward her, she will scream for her "big brothers" to save her. This brings four treants, one emerging into the clearing from each of the four cardinal directions, in 1d3 rounds.

Deena the dryad: AC 9; MV 12; HD 2; hp 11; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (knife); SA *charm*; MR 50%; SZ M; ML steady (12); Int high (14); AL N; XP 975.

Treants (4): AC 0; MV 12; HD 12; hp 90 each; THAC0 9; #AT 2; Dmg 4d6/4d6; SA *animate two trees*; SD never surprised; SW fire; SZ H (18' tall); ML champion (16); Int very (12); AL CG; XP 7,000 each.

The treants will only attack the PCs if they have wounded Deena. Otherwise, being familiar with Deena and her trickery, they will be willing to listen to an explanation of why the PCs are here. If any character uses the word "hobgoblin" in the treants' presence, one of the tree-creatures will call a halt to all other activity (combat, conversation, etc.) and will supply the PCs with the following information: the exact location of the hobgoblins' camp, the fact that the hobgoblins are using slaves to do underground mining, and the fact that they are using fire—which the treants hate—as part of the operation.



Knowing the exact location of the hobgoblins' camp will make the rest of the PCs' journey faster (fewer random encounters) and easier (no need to keep checking for tracks). But even if the PCs don't meet Deena and the treants, they can follow the centaur's tracks back along the route that eventually ends up on the perimeter of the hobgoblin encampment.

E. The hobgoblin camp. *You come upon a relatively recently made dirt road about ten feet wide. The centaur's tracks continue along this path, and also obvious are several sets of large human-shaped footprints—no doubt made by hobgoblins. As you follow the road to the north, you begin to hear the sounds of cracking whips, rattling chains, coarse guttural shouts, and falling trees.*

After you find a good vantage point, where you can see but not be seen, the view fills you with outrage. Before you is a large cleared space dotted with the stumps of freshly cut trees, obviously made in the last month or so. A series of log buildings are scattered about, as well as three wooden pens. One pen contains male and female centaurs, most of them wearing chains and collars. The second pen holds satyrs, most of them also shackled. The final pen has more centaurs similarly chained, but they are all young foals.

The guards of this despicable scene are hobgoblins—lots of them. Taking a few minutes to count, you confirm at least two dozen walking in and out of buildings, guarding the various sites, or beating the prisoners with clubs and whips.

Two roads lead out of this camp clearing. The one heading south, the one you initially found, is a short distance from your hiding place. The other road leads north away from the opposite edge of the clearing. Every so often you see hobgoblins coming and going, leading slaves who carry lumber or bars of shiny, orange-brown metal.

Beyond the trees to the north, black smoke billows into the air from a source you cannot identify. The residents of this camp, guards and prisoners alike, do not seem concerned about the smoke.

Any character with proficiency in blacksmithing or mining can tell that the smoke is coming from a copper smelting facility.

This facility is run by a small tribe of hobgoblins, which in turn is being led by a fire giant and her four ogre companions. The entire group moved into this area three months ago, enslaved the local centaurs and satyrs, then commenced a lumber operation.

When some nearby hills turned out to be rich in copper, the evil horde expanded their operation into cop-

per mining and smelting. Since the centaurs and satyrs proved to be inadequate at running the smelting operation, the hobgoblins have developed a plan to capture several strong humans from Thunderstone and force them to work the furnace that turns raw ore into finished ingots of copper.

Map 11, on page 92, describes specific locations in the hobgoblins' camp.

Hobgoblins (60): AC 5; MV 9; HD 1+1; hp 6 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (short bow), 1d6 (short sword), 1d4 (club); SZ M; ML steady (12); Int average (9); AL LE; XP 35 each.

The hobgoblins will attempt to use their clubs to strike PCs to subdue them. However, if this proves impractical, they will simply try to kill them with swords.

Hobgoblin sub-chiefs (4): AC 3; MV 9; HD 3; hp 16 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (short bow), 1d8+2 (long sword, Str bonus), 1d6+2 (spear, Str bonus); SZ M; ML elite (14); Int average (9); AL LE; XP 65 each.

Gugak Thul, hobgoblin chief: AC 2; MV 9; HD 4; hp 22; THAC0 17 (15 w/long sword +2); #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+5 (long sword +2, Str bonus), 1d6+3 (spear, Str bonus); SZ M; ML champion (16); Int average (10); AL LE; XP 175.

Special equipment: long sword +2, potion of healing.

The chief's tribe used to be much larger, but many perils in the forest have whittled down their numbers. This has made Gugak rather short-tempered and surly. The female fire giant who has taken over has promised that the tribe will flourish under her direction. Gugak seeks wisdom from his shaman-advisor, Hakaakatar the Wise.

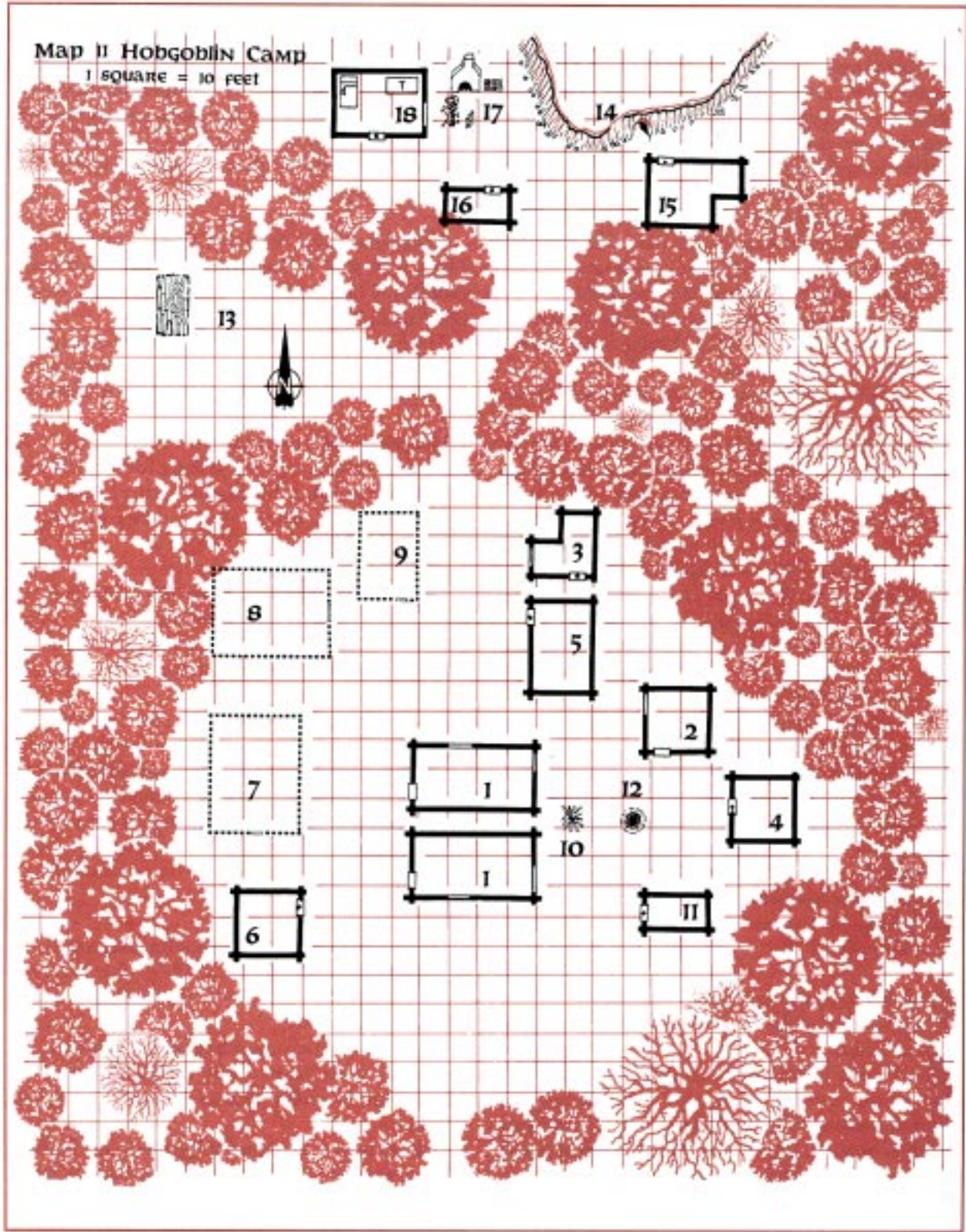
Hakaakatar the Wise, hobgoblin shaman: AC 3; MV 9; HD 5; hp 20; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (club), 1d4 (knife); SZ M; ML elite (14); Int average (10); AL LE; XP 420.

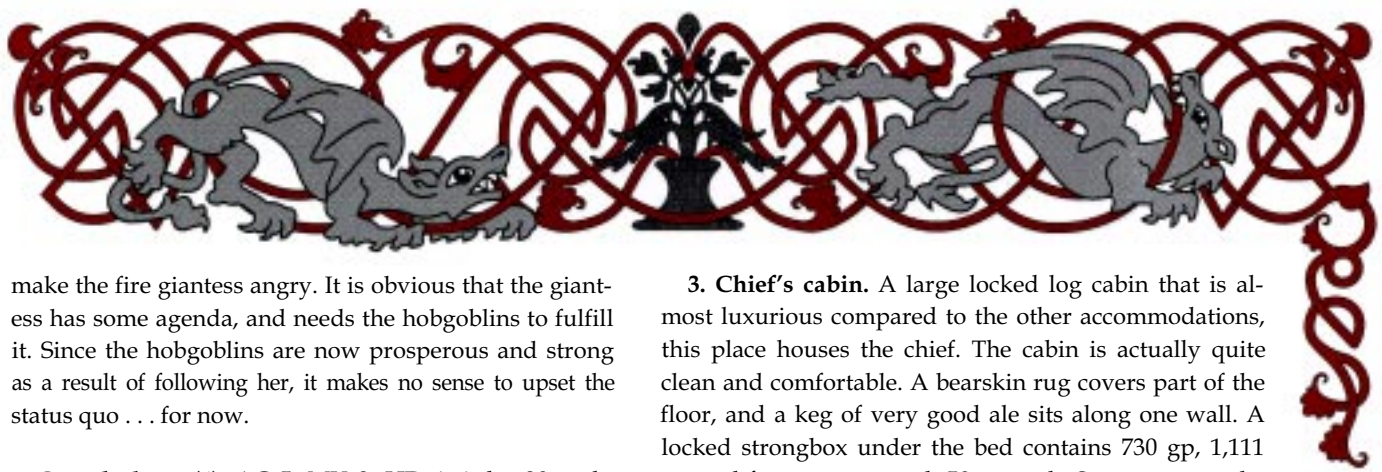
Spells (5/3/1): 1st — cause light wounds, darkness, detect magic, detect snares & pits, shillelagh; 2nd — flame blade, silence 15' radius, spiritual hammer; 3rd — glyph of warding.

Hakaakatar is a worshiper of Iyachtu Xvim. He has a Wisdom score of 14, exceptional for a hobgoblin, which gives him a large complement of spells. Hakaakatar is Gugak's advisor, and is currently encouraging him not to



Map II Hobgoblin Camp
1 square = 10 feet





make the fire giantess angry. It is obvious that the giantess has some agenda, and needs the hobgoblins to fulfill it. Since the hobgoblins are now prosperous and strong as a result of following her, it makes no sense to upset the status quo . . . for now.

Ogre lackeys (4): AC 5; MV 9; HD 4+1; hp 30 each; THAC0 17 (15 w/weapon); #AT 1; Dmg 1d10 (fists) or 1d8+6 (huge club, Str bonus); SZ L; ML steady (12); Int low (7); AL CE; XP 420 each.

Special Equipment: huge clubs.

These four ogres are the giantess's main lackeys. They usually watch over the mining operations.

Oghalis, female fire giant: AC -1 (5 when unarmed); MV 12; HD 15; hp 75; THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 2d10+10 (huge sword); SA hurling rocks (2d10); SD resistant to fire; SZ H (18' tall); ML champion (16); Int average (10); AL LE; XP 8,000.

Special Equipment: banded mail, huge two-handed sword.

Oghalis is a fire giantess who has come from the Thunder Peaks and set herself up as leader of this small tribe of hobgoblins. She seems obsessed with clearing out as much forest as possible, stockpiling finished lumber and copper bars from the nearby mine that she started up.

Oghalis will not tell her underlings why she is so obsessed with her task. She is a harsh leader who tolerates no questions or dissension. The giantess has forbidden any female hobgoblins or young in the camp until the initial work has been completed. These creatures, a group of 75 hobgoblins, are waiting in the foothills near the Thunder Gap.

Map Locations

1. Barracks. These two long, low buildings are made of sturdy logs. Each one houses 30 hobgoblins, and smells like old sweat and garbage. At any given time, 10 hobgoblins will be found in here, eight sleeping and two lounging about in some sort of casual guard duty.

2. Sub-chiefs' cabin. This large log cabin is home to all four sub-chiefs. One is always present, most of the time (75%) sleeping. Aside from some hardtack and a small keg of watery wine, the room contains nothing of interest. The cabin is only slightly cleaner than the barracks.

3. Chief's cabin. A large locked log cabin that is almost luxurious compared to the other accommodations, this place houses the chief. The cabin is actually quite clean and comfortable. A bearskin rug covers part of the floor, and a keg of very good ale sits along one wall. A locked strongbox under the bed contains 730 gp, 1,111 sp, and four agates worth 50 gp each. Strewn across the top of a small table are numerous scribbings on dirty paper, giving the total number of hobgoblins, the number of slaves, and production figures.

4. Shaman's cabin. Windowless and always kept locked, this place is where Hakaakatar the shaman sleeps and worships. It is devoid of furniture except for a sleeping mat. On the north wall is a crude drawing of a clenched mail fist with glowing green eyes. Skulls of centaurs and satyrs hang from the ceiling like grim mobiles.

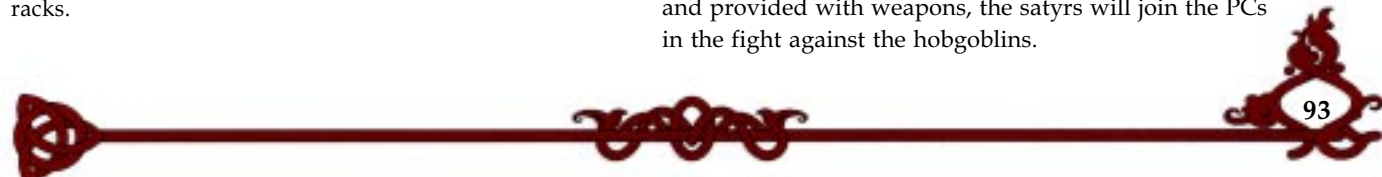
5. Copper storage. Padlocked and always under guard, this building contains 300 copper trade bars, each worth 25 gp.

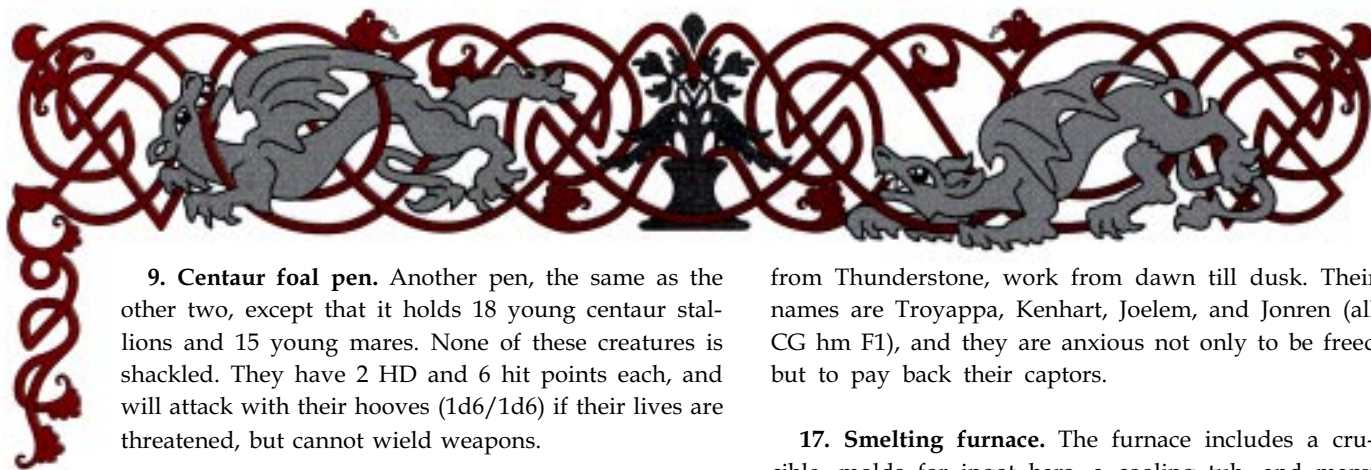
6. Camp storage. This locked and guarded storage room holds 240 arrows, six short bows, 24 short swords, 12 long swords, 48 daggers, 24 spears, 24 sleeping mats, 24 blankets, 12 picks, 12 shovels, six saws, six metal-working hammers, two tongs, eight 50-foot coils of rope, 200 pounds of coal, three braziers, 100 gallons of lamp oil, and two tinderboxes.

7. Adult centaur pen. A five-foot-high, solidly built wooden fence reinforced with iron keeps 20 male and 14 female centaurs at bay. The more rebellious ones are hobbled by shackles on their front legs. There is hardly any room to move, so a flying leap over the fence would be difficult. Imbedded along the top of the fence are sharp, twisted chunks of rusted metal, to discourage escape.

It is possible to turn these defeated, imprisoned centaurs into a fighting force—if the following conditions are met: (1) no hobgoblins are in sight, (2) the foals in area #9 are freed, (3) the centaurs' pen and chains are unlocked and/or destroyed, (4) weapons with which to fight are provided, and (5) a PC with a Charisma score of at least 12 makes a stirring appeal to the centaurs.

8. Satyr pen. A similar setup to the centaur pen, except that 33 satyrs are imprisoned here. If they are freed and provided with weapons, the satyrs will join the PCs in the fight against the hobgoblins.





9. Centaur foal pen. Another pen, the same as the other two, except that it holds 18 young centaur stallions and 15 young mares. None of these creatures is shackled. They have 2 HD and 6 hit points each, and will attack with their hooves (1d6/1d6) if their lives are threatened, but cannot wield weapons.

10. Central campfire. This is a three-foot-wide fire pit with logs set around it as seats. It is used as a central meeting point, as well as a place where the night shift of guards congregate. A huge cauldron is here as well, since this is where the camp meals are cooked.

11. Larder. This small, locked building has cooking supplies and ingredients. Most of the consumables consist of roots and tubers, and meat from small animals such as squirrels, rabbits, and beavers.

12. Well. A primitive well has been dug in this spot. A bucket tied to a rope and two iron ladles are on the ground next to the well.

13. Lumber camp. Accessible to the rest of the camp by a dirt trail, this is where most of the logging is presently happening. Trees are cut down, stripped of bark and leaves, and cut into lumber. The area contains numerous large axes (treat as battle axes if used as weapons), plus a makeshift sawmill under a crude shelter.

14. Copper mine. This hole in the side of a small hill is the access point for the small copper mine. The mine consists of a single shaft descending at a very gentle slope, with several small branches located at the discovered veins of copper.

The miners carry out the crude ore in baskets on their backs and take it to the smelting furnace.

15. Ogre cabin. Located within easy sight of the mine entrance, this foul, messy cabin houses all four ogres. At any given time, one ogre will be in here, snoring loudly. Each ogre has two copper trading bars under his heap of bug-infested animal skin beds; this is their pay for services rendered thus far.

16. Human prisoner cabin. Since the captured humans have more practical skills than the centaurs or satyrs, they rate slightly better treatment. The door to this small but clean barracks is kept locked at all times, with a guard posted outside whenever the building is occupied. The four humans who live here, young men

from Thunderstone, work from dawn till dusk. Their names are Troyappa, Kenhart, Joelem, and Jonren (all CG hm F1), and they are anxious not only to be freed but to pay back their captors.

17. Smelting furnace. The furnace includes a crucible, molds for ingot bars, a cooling tub, and many tools. This is where the humans work, kept under watch by a contingent of guards.

18. Oghalis's cabin. The giantess's residence is unusual in that it is made from blocks of stone and has a very secure door with a strong lock.

Besides a bed, table, and chair, the room contains a locked strongbox with a poison needle trap (Type E). The strongbox holds 12 matched fire opals worth 1,000 gp each, a *longevity* potion, an *onyx dog figurine*, a *hammer* +2, a *hand axe* +3, and a *ring of warmth*.

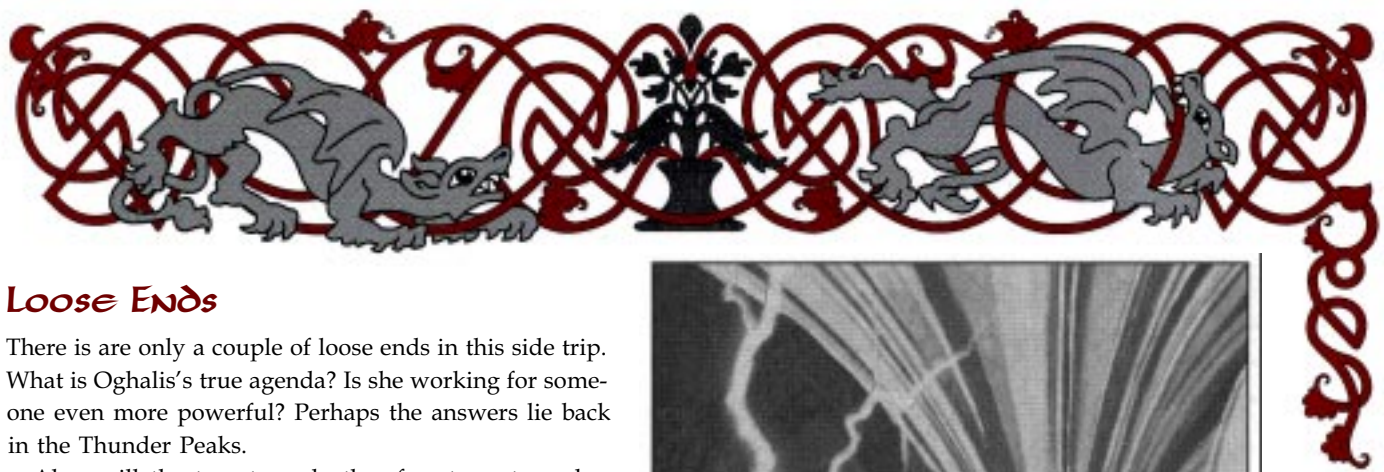
Oghalis will be found here late at night. Although she may initially fight with great enthusiasm, if it becomes clear to her that most of her followers are dead, she will do her best to run away.

Conclusion

The expected result in this scenario is for the PCs to free the prisoners, killing or routing as many of the evil creatures as necessary. (To give the characters something to think about, it would be good if Oghalis escapes so that she can resurface as a threat at a later date.)

All the prisoners can give the PCs as a reward is their gratitude. They are worn out, flat broke, and need to recover emotionally from their ordeal. It would be appropriate and honorable for the PCs to give the satyrs and centaurs the copper ingots—after all, they paid for them with their own blood. However, the PCs should not be prompted to do this.

With tired but grateful smiles, the centaurs and satyrs begin disappearing into the pristine forest. One older centaur, the settlement's leader, turns around and looks at the PCs, then says, "We shall not forget," and joins his people in melting into the woods. What that remark means is up for debate: Will the centaurs be eternally grateful to the PCs for rescuing them, or will they be on their guard for the presence of any "foreigners" encroaching into the woods where they do not belong?



Loose Ends

There are only a couple of loose ends in this side trip. What is Oghalis's true agenda? Is she working for someone even more powerful? Perhaps the answers lie back in the Thunder Peaks.

Also, will the treants and other forest creatures become even more sensitive to the incursions of outsiders into the Hullack Forest? And if so, where do the PCs stand on this matter?

Epilogue

Finally, back in Suzail, you feel as though you can relax. Once Lord Thistle hears of what happened to the Wolfmasters, he looks pensive, then says "Oh . . . that would explain why their payments were overdue." He makes a notation in a huge book titled "The Roll of the Dead."

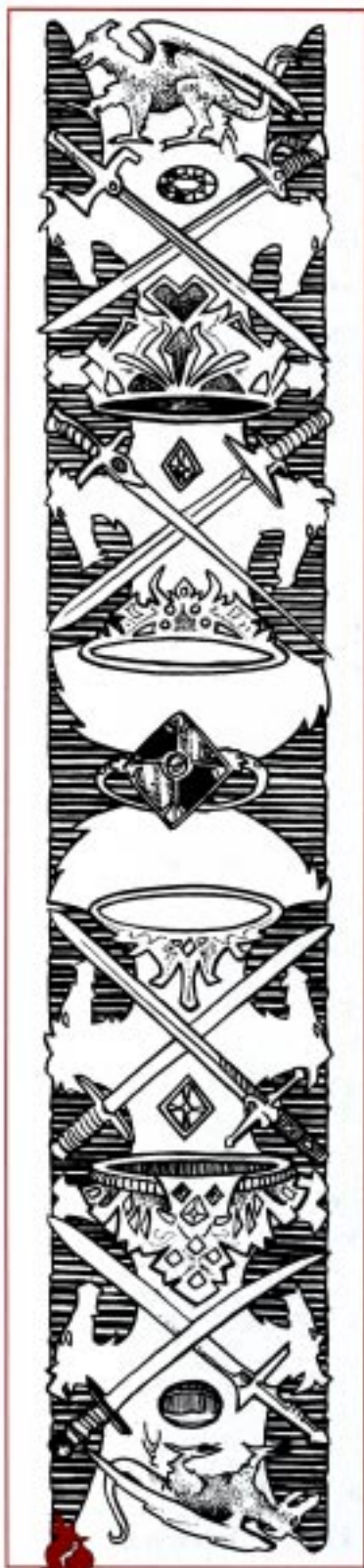
Finishing his entry, he smiles at you and rings a small silver bell. In a few minutes, a page comes in with a small box, which contains the 500 gold coins Thistle had promised to pay. "My thanks for your help," he says. "You were most efficient. Good day." You leave his office, wondering what sort of challenge this strange kingdom will offer you next.

Experience Point Bonuses

Each of these bonuses should be distributed evenly among all party members who participated in or agreed with taking the described action.

Recovering Fireblood and getting out of Orvaskyte Keep alive:	5,000
Avoiding combat with the adult black dragon:	2,000
Avoiding combat with the Sembians:	2,000
Freeing all of the hobgoblins' prisoners:	2,000
Giving the copper ingots to the prisoners:	2,000
Bringing back evidence of the Wolfmasters' demise to Lord Thistle:	1,000





Redemption

In this adventure, the PCs must contend with one of the remaining legacies of Gondegal the Lost King. Ideally, it should be the last adventure played in the series of four. This is the one where all the stops are pulled out, building up to a climactic finish and putting the PCs in the middle of a major battle between good and evil.

Background

In the year 1352 DR, a man named Gondegal tried to overthrow the throne of Cormyr. Using Arabel as his base, he raised an army of mercenaries and launched many raids within the kingdom. He even managed to be crowned “king” for eight days. The Purple Dragons and the combined forces of neighboring kingdoms got the better of him. Gondegal fled, and his forces scattered.

During the war, a group of three dozen Purple Dragons called the Starburst Swords had the option of marching either where there was known danger from the Twilight Brigade, a unit of Gondegal’s troops, or marching along a route that seemed to offer no opposition. They took the easier route, rationalizing that because they wouldn’t be slowed by combat, they would arrive at a strategic location more quickly. Unquestionably, the Starburst Swords could have defeated the Twilight Brigade. But as a result of their lazy (some would say cowardly) choice, Gondegal’s force came down upon a small village, sacked it, and burned it to the ground.

Ironically (some would say deservedly), the Starburst Swords were slaughtered to a man by a wandering pack of trolls that happened to cross their path. Now the Starburst Swords’ spirits are chained to the site of their last battle—because Torm, the god of duty, has refused them entry into the afterlife.

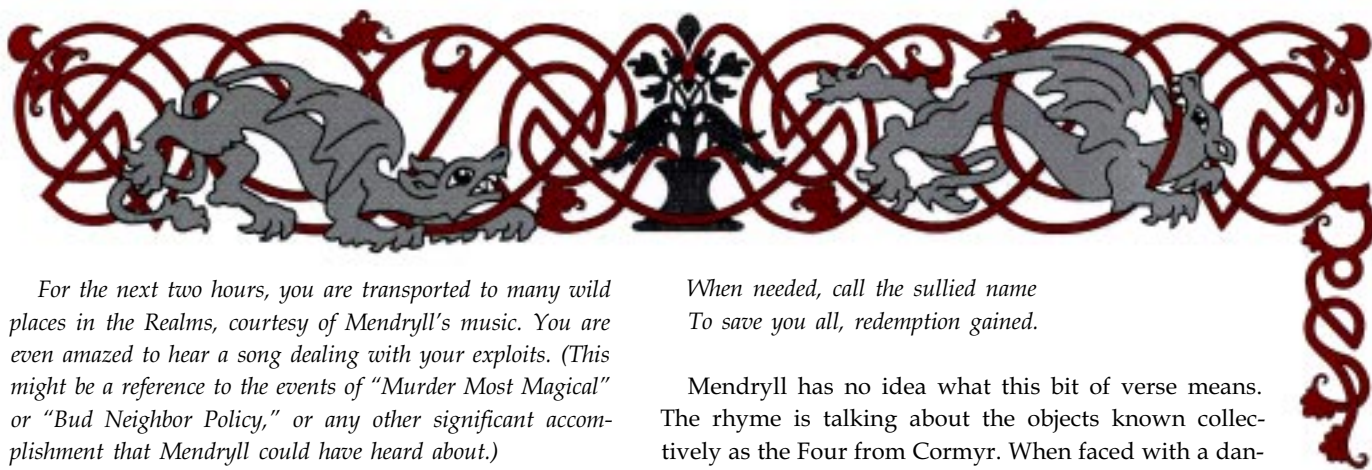
In the present day, an obscure nobleman named Lord Vorik Aris, a covert supporter of Gondegal, has decided that the time is right to try another rebellion. He is confident, however, that he can avoid Gondegal’s mistakes. Lord Aris has recruited a large force of human and humanoid troops, allied himself with a powerful necromancer, and sent parties into the Stonelands looking for ruins and pillaging them for funds and magic.

The PCs are lured into this adventure by rumors of treasure to be found in the Stonelands and the suggestion that they might unearth some clues in Tilverton. Once they are drawn in, they find themselves involved in much more than a treasure-finding expedition.

Whispering in The Witch

The town of Tilverton seems to be crawling with adventurers, opportunists, traders, and such. Your group is sitting in the cozy common room of the Whispering Witch, a fine inn located in Tilverton’s Old Town. The dinner plates have been cleared away, and it is just about time for the evening’s entertainment to begin.

Some people are banging their mugs on the tables, chanting for the bard to make his appearance. A tavern wench, sitting on a man’s lap and obviously kissing him rather passionately, finally gets up and skips away with a wicked smile. With the woman gone, you can see the man’s face, and you do a double-take. It is none other than Mendryll Belarod, the wandering bard and raconteur. With a flourish, he stands up, walks over to a place next to the fireplace, and tunes his lute.



For the next two hours, you are transported to many wild places in the Realms, courtesy of Mendryll's music. You are even amazed to hear a song dealing with your exploits. (This might be a reference to the events of "Murder Most Magical" or "Bud Neighbor Policy," or any other significant accomplishment that Mendryll could have heard about.)

When that song is finished, Mendryll collects the coins that revelers have thrown at him and saunters over to your table, helping himself to a seat. Grinning from ear to ear, he looks at your group, his hands clasped in front of him. "So," he says in a low voice, leaning over the table so that you can hear him better. "I hope the song was close enough to the truth, although I scarcely let a little something like truth stand in the way of a rollicking good story."

He leans back in his chair, takes a pull of ale, wipes the foam from his upper lip with the back of his hand, and awaits your comments about his song. (This is an opportunity for the PCs to tell Mendryll what they think of his work. Whether they are complimentary, insulting, or noncommittal makes no difference.)

At last, he holds his hand up. "Enough, enough. Such lavish praise will make me blush if you continue any longer." Leaning forward over the table again, he continues talking, but in such a low whisper that you have to strain to catch every word. "Now . . . how would you like the opportunity to have another song written about you? And while you're at it, the chance to be filthy, stinking rich?"

Mendryll has recently unearthed evidence of the existence of "a crumbling old tower," as he puts it, that was leveled some time during Gondegal's rebellion. Word has it that it was not destroyed by soldiers from either side, but rather by intelligent monsters who were seeking to take advantage of the war's chaos by causing a little chaos of their own.

The bard gives the PCs a rough description of the ruined tower's whereabouts. In return, he extracts a promise from the PCs that he will get one share of any monetary treasure found, plus his choice of one magical item, preferably a musical instrument.

He also provides the PCs with a small piece of paper containing the words of an old rhyme, which seems to have originated from the area near the tower around the time of the war. It goes:

*Four from Cormyr, now us one
Raised up to the dying sun.
But one needs to be in the proper place,
The site of shame and sad disgrace.*

*When needed, call the sullied name
To save you all, redemption gained.*

Mendryll has no idea what this bit of verse means. The rhyme is talking about the objects known collectively as the Four from Cormyr. When faced with a dangerous enemy, the wielder must assemble all of the items into one unit and hold the completed object overhead at sunset in the ruins of the old village. The wielder must then call out the name of the Starburst Swords. The spirits of those soldiers will appear, ready to fight whatever enemy is threatening the wielder and his allies. Hopefully, this act will be enough to earn the shades their final rest.

The bard will decline any invitation to join the party, citing "songs to sing, gossip to spread, and women to chase." He advises the PCs that they may want to stop off in Halfhap, which is the settlement closest to the ruined site. Perhaps the residents of that place will have some more information, particularly an old sage by the name of Nodric who lives there. Mendryll recommends the brand-new inn that has opened, the Blacknee's Halfhappenstance, featuring luxury baths and a dining room to die for.

Tilverton Area Sites

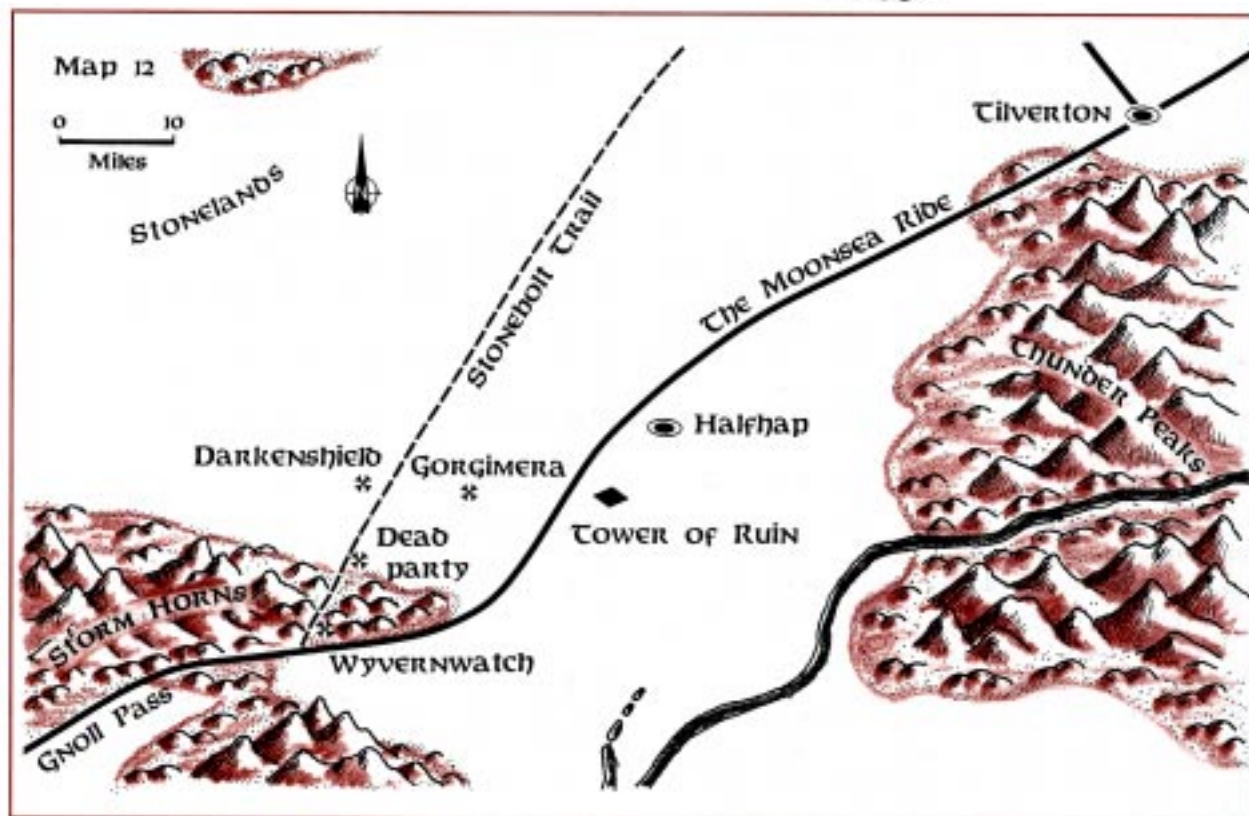
Map 12, on page 98, shows all the relevant locations of "Redemption." The action is centered around the area of the Stonebolt Trail, featuring Halfhap, the ruined village of Darkenshield, the site of the Starburst Swords' fall (which is the place Mendryll's directions point to), a small tower that serves as Lord Aris's outpost, and a few set encounters in the middle of it all.

Halfhap

Hippogriffs bearing purple-clad riders can be seen in the sky to the south, and from this you know that you are approaching the walled town of Halfnap. Small keeps lie at the eastern and western ends of the town, and you approach from the east.

As you ride up to the gate of the keep on the east side of the village, you see numerous Purple Dragons patrolling the walls, casting an occasional look down at you. One of the ballistae mounted on the tower of the keep swings slowly until it is lined up with your location.

A Purple Dragon sergeant takes your papers and looks them over, then with a nod hands them back. "Adventurers, eh? We get a lot of 'em here. Durn fools go traipsing after



monsters like it was some kind of sport . . . a game. Well, let me tell you," he growls, sticking his face into yours, "it ain't. Over half o' this town is Purple Dragons, and you know why? Monsters. Lotsa 'em, and Zhentish raiders!" At the words "Zhentish raiders," all the Purple Dragons in earshot simultaneously spit on the ground with military precision.

The sergeant notices his men's disciplined response, and nods with approval before turning back to you. "So take me advice, buckos. If yer here to spend coin, and rest a bit, then ye'll find yerselves welcome. If ye come here to cause trouble, we'll skewer ya all on a huge ballista bolt and shoot ya into the Stonelands." This lust sentence elicits some laughter from the nearby soldiers. Content on having said his piece, he waves you on through.

A younger Purple Dragon manages to get close enough to whisper, "Blacknee's Halfhappenstance is the best place to go; it's new, and suited for the likes of you, no offense." Before you can thank him, he is already falling in with his comrades in a quick-time march.

The sergeant was not exaggerating. Everywhere you go, you see Purple Dragons marching, drilling, repairing fortifications, or just taking some leave time. You also notice a healthy number of out-of-towners, probably adventurers like

yourselves. Even though they seem to be enjoying themselves, you can sense that they are doing their best to be on good behavior.

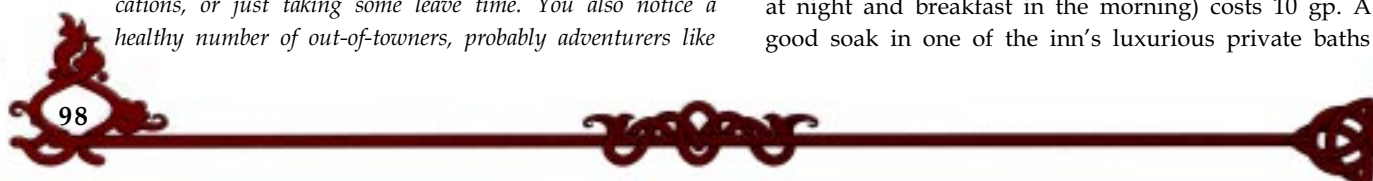
Locations in Halfhap

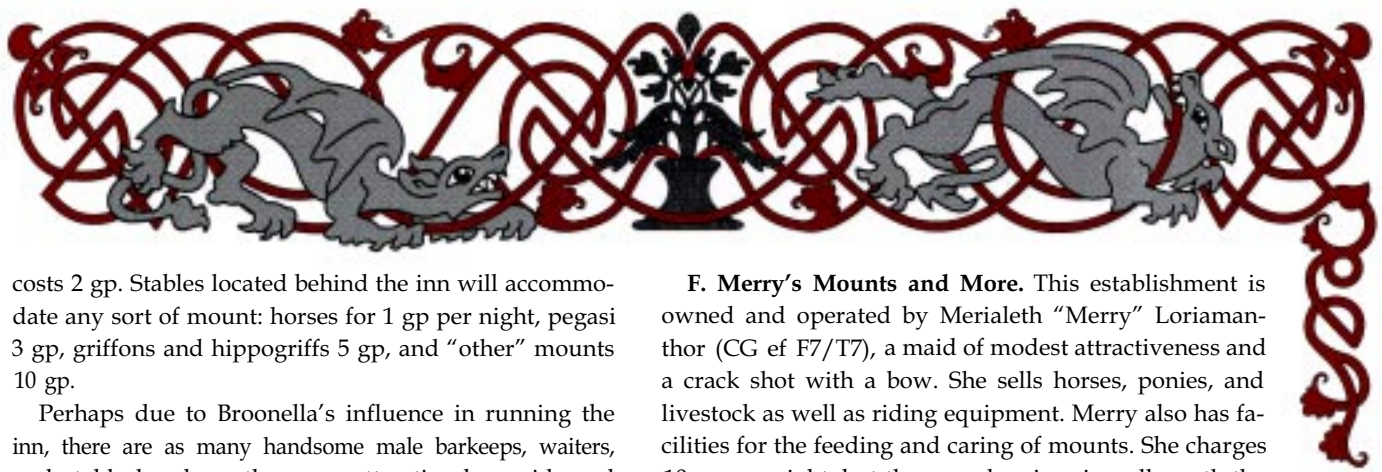
Map 13, on page 100, shows the layout of the major thoroughfares in Halfhap and the locations of the structures described below. The town has a population of something more than 2,000, and roughly half of the residents are Purple Dragon soldiers.

A. Blacknee's Halfhappenstance. This three-story structure is the newest building in town. The signboard outside shows a halfling in the process of finding a gold piece on the ground.

The inn is run by the middle-aged Buzzrip Blacknee (CG ham F1), his wife Broonella (CG haf F1), and their three young adult children, the charismatic Brenea (CG haf T2), the responsible eldest son Billyup (CG ham F3), and the shiftless Boldric (NG ham F1/T1).

A room for one night and two meals (usually dinner at night and breakfast in the morning) costs 10 gp. A good soak in one of the inn's luxurious private baths





costs 2 gp. Stables located behind the inn will accommodate any sort of mount: horses for 1 gp per night, pegasi 3 gp, griffons and hippogriffs 5 gp, and "other" mounts 10 gp.

Perhaps due to Broonella's influence in running the inn, there are as many handsome male barkeepers, waiters, and stable hands as there are attractive barmaids and wenches. The clientele is composed mostly of adventurers and merchants. (Feel free, if desired, to sprinkle in a few NPCs from other parts of this product.)

B. The Marching Myrmidon. Halfhap's other inn is owned and run by Jerit Gondason (CG hm F5), a retired Purple Dragon. Like its owner, the inn is neat, well ordered and spartan. A room for one night and two meals costs 7 gp.

C. Eversheld's Embers Tavern. Run by Angryn Eversheld, a former citizen of Hillsfar, the tavern's most prominent feature is the huge fireplace from which the place gets its name. The mantel is decorated with trophies of interesting kills, a display that changes continually as new items are brought in. All in all, this is a straightforward tavern with reasonable prices.

D. The Doffed Cloak. Halfhap's only festhall contains a dance area with an adjoining bar, and the rest of the building is taken up by small, comfortable private rooms.

Given the soldiers' reputation for off-duty carousing, one would think a steady stream of Purple Dragons would be entering and leaving the hall. Not so. Perrin Clovenshield, Captain of the Garrison and de facto mayor of Halfhap, has given strict orders against "overindulging" in the Doffed Cloak. Hence, most of the clientele of this establishment are adventurers, merchants, or other civilians.

E. Short and Tall Supplies. The odd name of this place derives from the fact that it is owned and operated by Dangus Barrowfold (LG dm F5), a short squat dwarf, and a gangly, 7-foot-tall man named Elvin Elminster (CG hm F1). Elvin always ends the speaking of his name with the words "no relation." He has taken much ribbing over his surname.

Short and Tall has an extensive inventory (any normal, standard equipment that adventurers might need) and sells all of it at reasonable prices.

F. Merry's Mounts and More. This establishment is owned and operated by Merialeth "Merry" Loriananthor (CG ef F7/T7), a maid of modest attractiveness and a crack shot with a bow. She sells horses, ponies, and livestock as well as riding equipment. Merry also has facilities for the feeding and caring of mounts. She charges 10 gp per night, but the care she gives is well worth the price.

A boorish man once encountered Merry while she was having dinner at the Marching Myrmidon and made rude jokes about the name of her business, hinting that some of Merry's services were less than reputable. She ignored his remarks and began walking back to her place. The man followed at a distance, not bothering to disguise his intentions. When she got home Merry calmly picked up her bow, turned, and put an arrow through his right eye at 100 paces. She was not arrested.

On rare occasions (3% likelihood per month) Merry has a young hippogriff for sale, with an asking price of 10,000 gp. She will make sure the buyer is of good character.

And speaking of good character, it is widely known that Merry is interested in finding a mate, although she certainly is not actively seeking one. Merry is looking for an elf, half-elf, or human (in that order of preference) with similar ethical beliefs to hers, and an abiding respect and care for animals. No druids need apply, though.

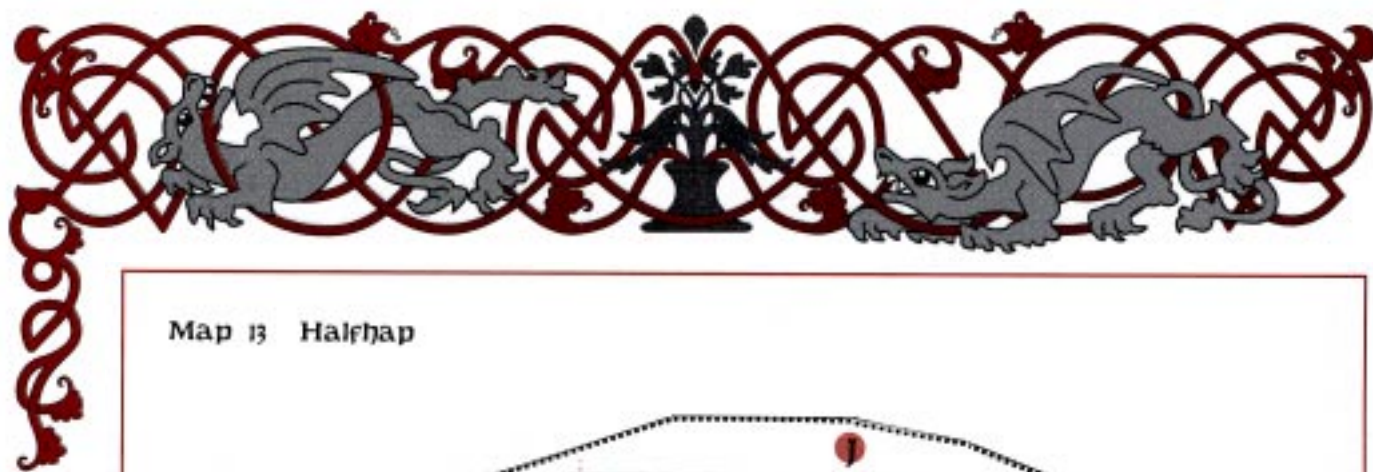
G. Gloryhall. This low, bunkerlike building is the local shrine to Tempus. It is presided over by Battlelord Boneblaster (N hm P14), a bombastic blood-and-thunder (with the emphasis on blood) priest of Tempus. He cares not about worshipers' alignments, only that supplicants live and die by the sword—and use it often.

H. Lodge of Luck. Ostentatiously built of white marble, this is a shrine to Tymora, run by Salbaril Fortunato (CG hm P9), a handsome, smirking young man who seems to have the most incredible luck. Boneblaster utterly despises him, which amuses Salbaril to no end.

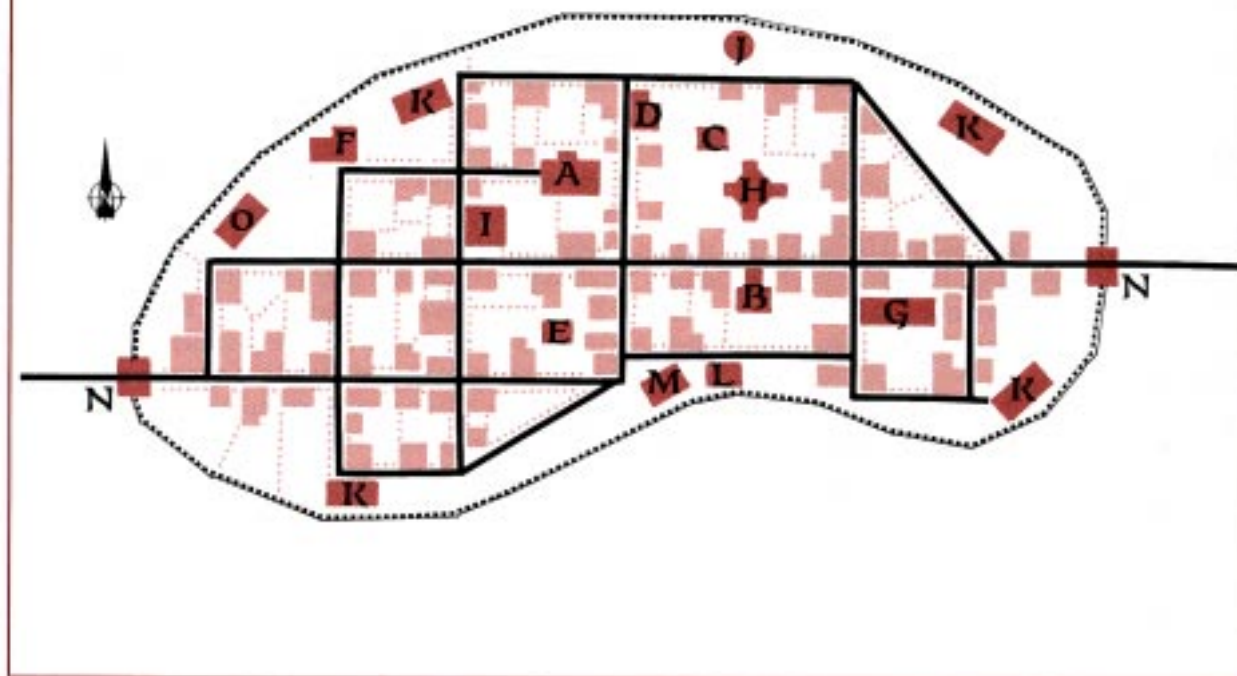
I. House of Duty. A solemn gray building with little adornment except an iron gauntlet over the doors, this is a shrine to Torm, the god of duty. It is run by Azreena Ironoath (LN hf P16), a woman of advancing years but still of strong body and sharp mind.

No one ever questions Azreena's judgment, and every one respects her tremendously, even Salbaril. Any





Map 13 Halfhap



stranger seen mouthing off to Azreena will be shunned by the entire town. No one will talk or wait on them, period.

Recently Azreena participated in the defense of Halfhap against a midnight raid by ogres. Clad in a cloth nightgown and *gauntlets of ogre power* and wielding a *hammer +3*, she single-handedly defended a portion of the town wall from waves of ogres for four straight hours, until the Purple Dragons finally neutralized their own opponents and were free to help her. Ironically, she almost died of pneumonia as a result of extended exposure to the cold night air. Azreena refused any honors, rewards, or praise, claiming that she was just “doing my duty.” Even though not all townsfolk subscribe to her views or worship Torm, she is the most loved, most respected person in Halfhap.

J. Nodric’s Home. This short tower is the home of Nodric the sage (CG hm M5). Nodric has a 25% chance of being able to answer any question about history, myth, legend, or religion, and charges 20 gp per answer. If he cannot answer a question, he will offer to research it for a price of 50 gp. After he researches a question, his chance of being able to answer it increases to 75%.

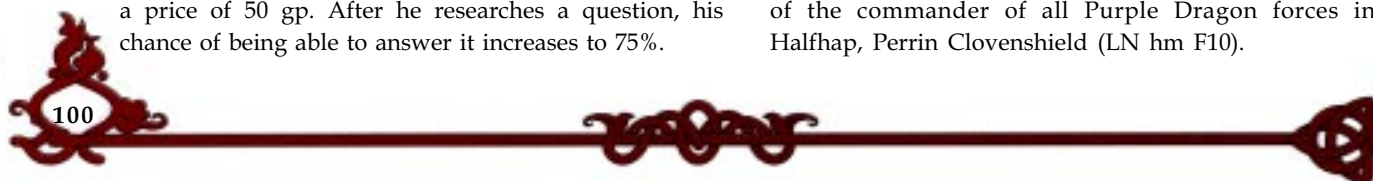
The PCs can find out from Nodric that the place mentioned by Mendryll is actually a small, insignificant tower, long dismissed as unimportant and forgotten. Its only claim to fame is that it is near a place where a group of Purple Dragons disappeared during the “civil war” of Gondegal. This group of Purple Dragons was called the Starburst Swords, and they were not supposed to be in the area where they went missing.

If Nodric is asked where the Starbursts *were* supposed to be, research will reveal that they were expected to follow a route through Darkenshield, a small village that was wiped out by Gondegal’s looting troops. The precise location of the village is not known, but Nodric recalls that it was somewhere close to the Stonebolt Trail.

Nodric can of course give the PCs the full details of Gondegal’s war.

K. Purple Dragon Barracks. Each of these four large buildings has a capacity of 300 troops.

L. Perrin Clovenshield’s House. This is the dwelling of the commander of all Purple Dragon forces in Halfhap, Perrin Clovenshield (LN hm F10).





M. Constabulary. This squat stone tower and adjoining building contains the office of Commander Clovenshield, the command center for town watches, the office of the Crown representative, and enough dungeon cells to hold about 300 offenders.

N. Entry Keeps. Located on the eastern and western ends of the town wall, these four-towered structures can hold 100 men each. They are constructed in such a way that anyone entering or leaving town must pass under a keep's arch. Besides the inner and outer gates, each keep has arrow slits, murder holes, burning oil dispensers, and ballistae.

O. Extraordinary Stable. This long, large building is used for the feeding, care, and storage of the Purple Dragons' hippogriff mounts.

Visitors in Halfhap

The following are people who may wind up getting involved with the PCs, either during their stay in Halfhap or after they depart to continue their mission.

Oznod Brekker, hm F6: AC 5 (chain armor); MV 12; hp 40; THAC0 15 (14 *w/long sword* +1); #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+2 (*long sword* +1, Str bonus); SZ M; ML elite (14); AL LE; XP 650.

S 16, D 14, Co 17, I 11, W 12 C 12

Personality: clever, observant

Special Equipment: *long sword* +1, *healing* potion, light warhorse.

Oznod is a loyal follower of Lord Aris, and the head of a six-member reconnaissance party that has stopped over in Halfhap for a few days. He is especially on the lookout for treasure hunters who make it known that they are heading out to explore ruins and get rich. Oznod will head out after them with his team and attempt to disable or kill them at the first opportunity, to prevent them from stumbling upon Aris's base of operations. Oznod hates Winaneh (see below) for not returning his attempts at affection, but is forced to work with her.

Winaneh Marlowson, hf M8: AC 0 (*bracers* AC 4, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 30; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); SZ M; ML average (10); AL LE; XP 3,000.

S 7, D 18, Co 15, I 18, W 17, C 11

Personality: analytical, efficient

Special Equipment: *bracers of defense* AC 4, *wand of*

lightning (34 charges), small *carpet of flying*, *brooch of shielding*, light warhorse.

Spellbook (4/3/3/2): 1st — *alarm*, *burning hands**, *comprehend languages**, *detect magic*, *erase*, *feather fall**, *hold portal*, *message**, *sleep*, *spider climb*; 2nd — *alter self**, *fog cloud**, *forget**, *scare*, *whispering wind*; 3rd — *dispel magic*, *hold person**, *nondetection**, *phantom steed*, *wraithform**; 4th — *fumble*, *phantasmal killer*, *polymorph other**, *wall of fire**.

Winaneh is a sorceress who has spurned Oznod's clumsy passes, intent on doing the work Lord Aris has assigned them. She firmly believes in Lord Aris's cause.

Aris's flunkies, hm F4 (4): AC 5 (chain armor); MV 12; hp 24 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword), 1d4 (dagger), or 1d6 (flight arrow); SZ M; ML average (10); Int average (9); AL LE; XP 270 each.

Mirande Palemedes, Zhentish spy, hef F6/C6 (Loviatar): AC 1 (ceremonial scale mail and breastplate, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 50; THAC0 15 (9 *w/girdle*, 5 *w/morning star* +4); #AT 1; Dmg 2d4+16 (*morning star* +4, Str bonus *w/girdle*); SZ M; ML fanatic (18); AL LE; XP 2,000.

S 12 (24 *w/girdle*), Co 15, D 16, I 12, W 18, C 15

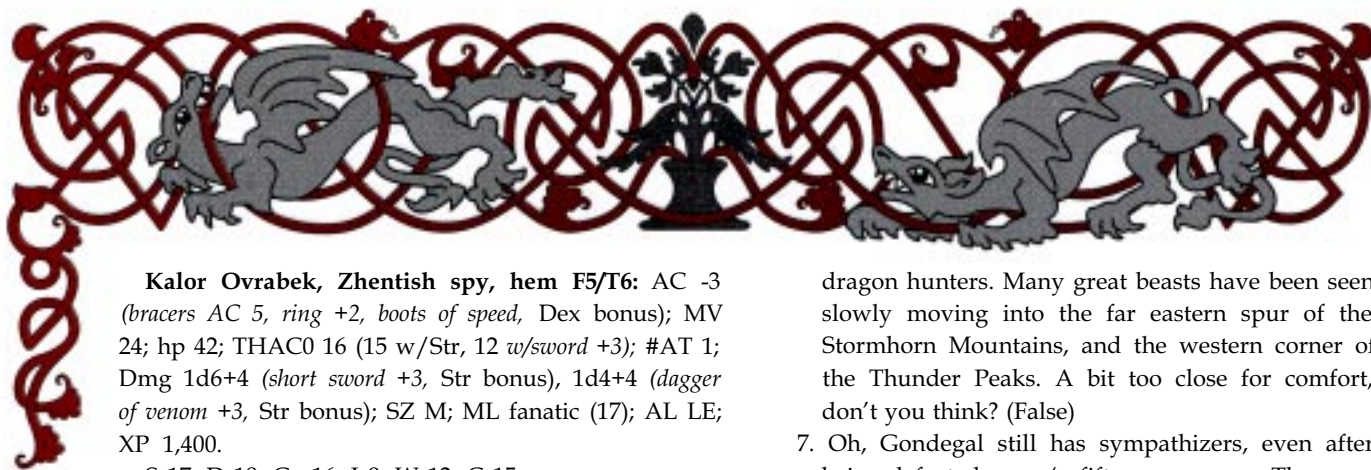
Personality: intense, deceitful, pious

Special Equipment: ceremonial scale mail and breastplate, *morning star* +4, *girdle of storm giant strength*, *candle of invocation* (lawful evil), *shroud of resurrection* (20 charges), 4 vials unholy water, holy symbol of Loviatar, light riding horse.

Spells (5/5/3): 1st — *cause fear*, *cause light wounds* (x2), *darkness*, *invisibility to undead*; 2nd — *chant*, *know alignment*, *produce flame*, *silence* 15' radius, *spiritual hammer*; 3rd — *tall lightning*, *cause disease*, *prayer*.

Note: For more information on the clergy of Loviatar, see page 100 of *Faiths & Avatars*.

Mirande is a petite woman who conceals her status as a cleric of Loviatar when she is in unsympathetic territory (e.g., anywhere in Cormyr). Her combat tactics are simple but effective: she lets enemies get into melee range, then smacks them into the afterlife with her magically enhanced strength. Mirande leads a five-member team of spies from Zhentil Keep who are gathering information on Cormyrean defenses. On several occasions they have assaulted adventuring groups in isolated locales, looting them for the glory of Zhentil Keep. She and Kalor (see below) pass themselves off as husband and wife.



Kalor Ovrabek, Zhentish spy, hm F5/T6: AC -3 (*bracers AC 5, ring +2, boots of speed, Dex bonus*); MV 24; hp 42; THAC0 16 (15 w/Str, 12 w/sword +3); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+4 (*short sword +3, Str bonus*), 1d4+4 (*dagger of venom +3, Str bonus*); SZ M; ML fanatic (17); AL LE; XP 1,400.

S 17, D 18, Co 16, I 9, W 12, C 15

Personality: loyal, alert, inquisitive

Special Equipment: boots of speed, bracers of defense AC 5, ring of protection +2, short sword +3, dagger of venom +3, wand of secret door and trap location (44 charges), light riding horse, thieves' tools.

Thief Abilities: PP 50; OL 50; F/RT 60; MS 60; HS 55; DN 40; CW 80; RL 0.

Kalor is a rakishly handsome man and a loyal Zhentilar. He is impressed with Lord Orgauth's work in rebuilding the Keep. Kalor loves magic items, and stocks himself with many of them. He and Mirande pass themselves off as married, a charade they love playing to the hilt even when no one is watching.

Zhentish flunkies, hm F4 (3): AC 3 (plate armor); MV 12; hp 25 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword), 1d8 (sheaf arrow), 1d6 (spear), 1d6 (hand axe); SZ M; ML steady (12); Int average (10); AL LE; XP 270 each.

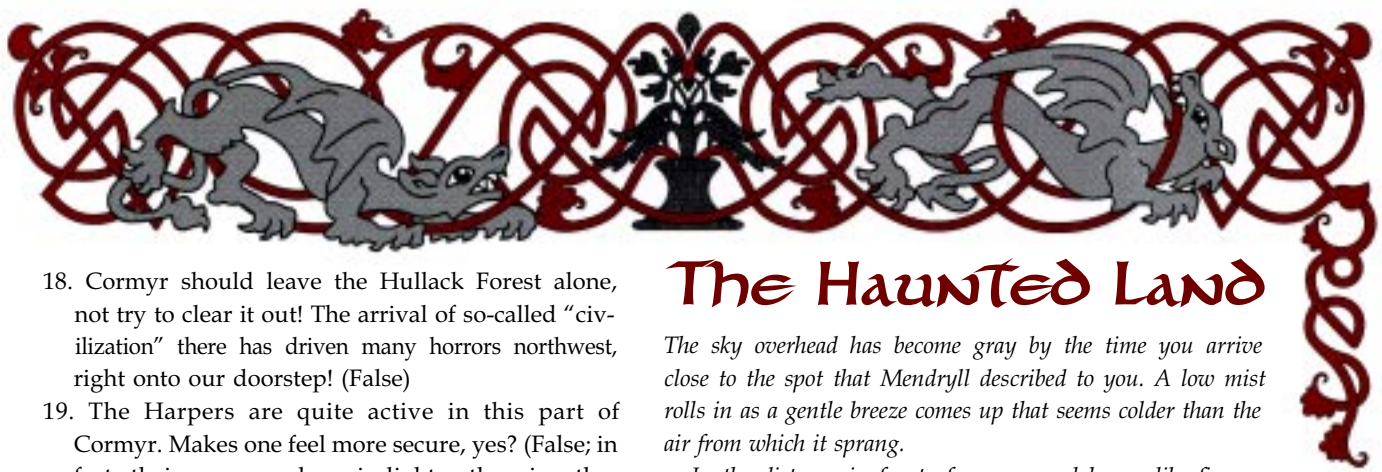
Rumors In Halfhap

Each PC can pick up 1d4 rumors during his stay in Halfhap. Roll a d20 to determine which ones are heard.

1. Something odd's going on in the Gnoll Pass. Someone swears he saw wyverns lurkin' in there! (True)
2. Some folk in Tilverton don't much appreciate Cormyrean rule, and are taking to harassing Cormyrean caravans and such, along the Moonsea Ride. (False)
3. There's a village, or what's left of one, somewhere along the Stonebolt Trail. They say it was ruined during Gondegal's rebellion. (True)
4. Someone's been hirin' an awful lotta adventurin' companies, combing the Stonelands for treasure. My cousin's friend swears that many of 'em have a symbol, three lightning bolts and a skull or something. (True)
5. Parts o' the Moonsea Ride are haunted, I tell ye! Fog comin' outta nowhere, towers with candles lit in the windows, where in the daylight there ain't no tower! Haunted, I tell ye! Haunted! (True)
6. Now's a good time for all stout men who say they're

dragon hunters. Many great beasts have been seen slowly moving into the far eastern spur of the Stormhorn Mountains, and the western corner of the Thunder Peaks. A bit too close for comfort, don't you think? (False)

7. Oh, Gondegal still has sympathizers, even after being defeated more 'n fifteen years ago. There are some who say that a few powerful local lords dream of doing what Gondegal did, only not making his mistakes. (True)
8. If during your travels you see a phantom army, run! If they howl at you, you will die in the next tenday! (False)
9. Everywhere I turn, I see Zhentish! I declare, they're infesting the area! (False; it only seems that way to some folk)
10. The Stonelands are getting more lethal, I think. Seems that everywhere you turn, you run into more and more monsters, and some of them look like you and me, if you catch my drift. Stay out of the Stonelands if you know what's good for you! (True)
11. King Azoun hisself has offered a bounty of a thousand gold for the remains of every spectre slain! (False)
12. Beholders, liches, and drow. That's all we see nowadays, especially in the Stonelands, Storm Horns, and Thunder Peaks. Beholders, liches, and drow. (False)
13. The Red Wizards of Thay are making an alliance with some local isolated lords and barons. This whole matter stinks! (False)
14. All of our grief of late can be blamed on the Cult of the Dragon. Those blasted crazy-folk are stirring up trouble all over Cormyr! They have a worship site around here, I know it! (False)
15. There is a castle in the mountains near the Gnoll Pass, from which orcs and undead issue forth and ravage the countryside. (Mostly true)
16. Things are different 'round these parts for the last fifteen years. One would swear that some of the good gods, probably Tyr mostly, are testing unwary passersby, looking for someone or something. (Mostly true)
17. The place where the Stonebolt Trail splits off from the Moonsea Ride is especially nasty these days. Seems like everyone who rides through there lately winds up swinging swords and spells more often than not. (False; Aris is choosy about who he attacks, and where)



18. Cormyr should leave the Hullack Forest alone, not try to clear it out! The arrival of so-called “civilization” there has driven many horrors northwest, right onto our doorstep! (False)
19. The Harpers are quite active in this part of Cormyr. Makes one feel more secure, yes? (False; in fact, their presence here is lighter than in other places)
20. Don’t trust any riddles or rhymes that you hear ’round these parts! Especially any that mention “screaming fish.” (False)

Evil Eyes and Ears

With Zhentish spies and the agents of Lord Aris in town, the PCs may find themselves in the midst of trouble if they are indiscreet. Each inn and tavern in Halfhap is liable to have some of either faction’s ordinary soldiers lurking about. If they catch wind of interesting people making ambitious plans, one of their number quietly slips out and informs his superiors.

Lord Aris’s people are primarily interested in keeping their master informed on possible threats from Cormyrean-sponsored adventuring companies. The Zhents are more interested in waylaying victims, robbing them blind, and taking a few to Zhentil Keep as prisoners or slaves.

In either case, the PCs will not be engaged in direct confrontation until they are isolated from any help—perhaps in a remote corner of town where patrols don’t go late at night or, more likely, a site outside town.

Setting Out

When the PCs are ready to depart Halfhap (presumably in the early part of the day, after resting and equipping themselves), the day promises to be a good one for travel—clear skies and seasonal temperatures. They are expected to set out on a southerly route along the Moonsea Ride, heading for the place Mendryll has told them about (the spot on Map 12 marked “Haunted Tower”).

If desired, roll periodically for random encounters, using the “Temperate Plain” table on page 127. If either Aris’s reconnaissance force or the Zhentish spies are trailing the PCs, they will follow at a considerable distance, staying at least an hour behind them.

The Haunted Land

The sky overhead has become gray by the time you arrive close to the spot that Mendryll described to you. A low mist rolls in as a gentle breeze comes up that seems colder than the air from which it sprang.

In the distance in front of you, several humanlike figures move through the mist, closing in. Other groups advance silently from the right and the left, and all the figures spread out to form a ring around you, stopping when they are about ten paces away.

Each of the three dozen ghostly, misty men is clad in battered chainmail with a tattered tabard showing a purple dragon, and a badge depicting an upraised sword with a starburst behind it. Each man’s eyes glow an unhealthy green, and a wave of supernaturally cold air wafts over you.

The men make no further move toward you; they simply stand staring at you and pointing down at the mist-covered ground.

These are the spirits of the Starburst Swords, haunting the place where they fell. They cannot be attacked or turned, and magic spells that allow communication with the dead do not work on them.

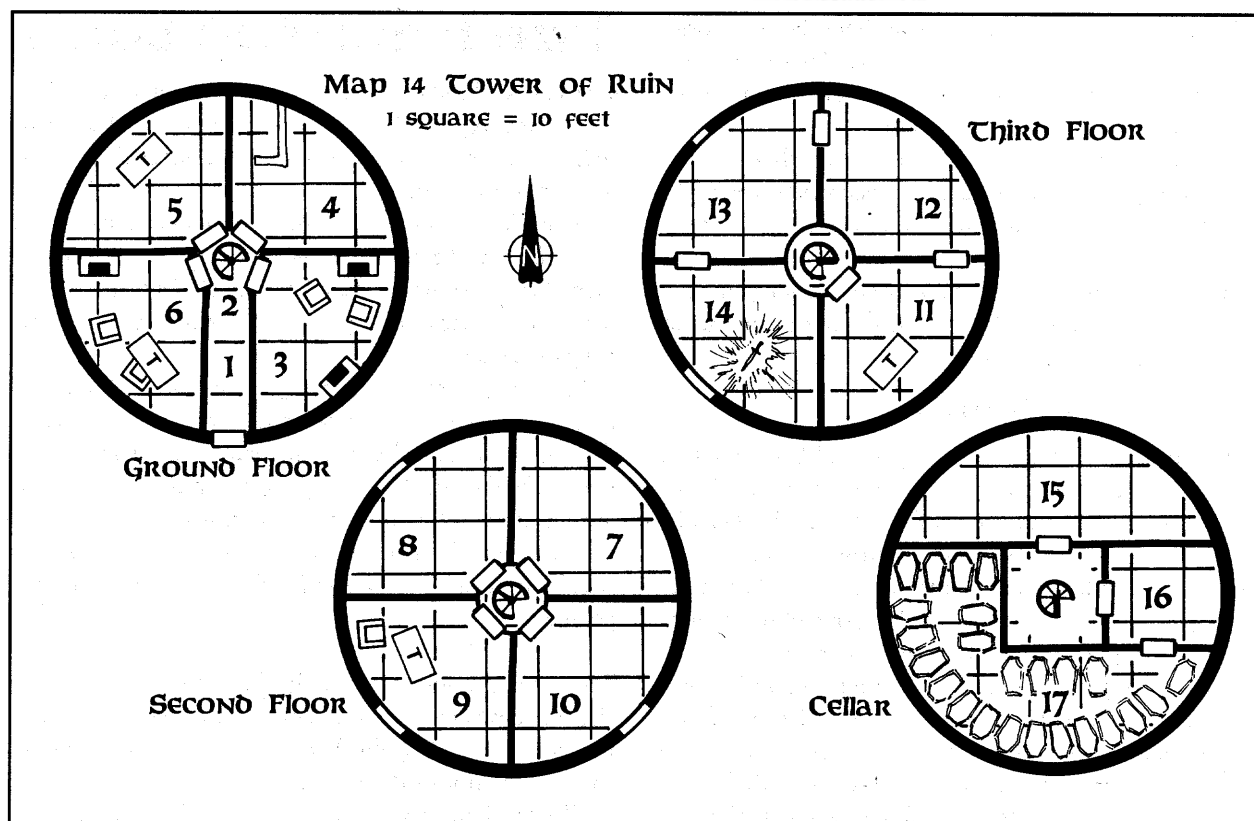
The Starburst Swords are trying to tell the PCs to dig into the ground. If they do so, they will find only a few inches beneath the surface many remnants of a battle: rusted and battered helmets, broken swords, fragments of chain mail, human bones, and other humanoid bone fragments that are scorched and blackened. Anyone who makes a successful Intelligence ability check can identify the burnt bones as those of trolls.

If the PCs vocally identify the Starburst Swords (using the name provided to them by Nodric the sage), the spirits howl in what sounds like anguished relief and disappear. As the last echo of their tortured screams dies, the mist parts to form a path heading east.

After following the path for only a couple of minutes, the PCs see a tall structure atop a hill. (If they are traveling at night, the first thing they see is a light in the distance. As they get closer, they realize that the light is coming from a window on the top floor of a three-story tower.)

Map 14 Tower of Ruin

1 square = 10 feet



Tower of Ruin

As you move close enough to precisely identify this structure, you can see a squat, cylindrical stone tower half as tall as it is wide with a ground-floor entrance on the south wall. The structure is three stories tall and appears to be in splendid condition, as if it has just been built.

Each PC should make a Wisdom ability check using half of his or her Wisdom score (round up). Anyone who succeeds will recall Mendryll's description of "a crumbling old tower" and will realize that, according to what they have been told, this tower should not be in such good repair.

In fact, this tower—depicted in Map 14—is the resting place of the sword *Silveredge*, one of the magical items known as the Four from Cormyr. Torm the True, the god of duty and the entity who cursed the Starburst Swords for shirking their responsibility, protects the sword from falling into undeserving hands by keeping the tower under a special enchantment. The structure is only seen in its pristine shape, and can only be entered, by those who have encountered the spirits of the Star-

burst Swords at the old battlefield site. Otherwise, all that would-be explorers see is an insignificant heap of rubble atop a caved-in series of underchambers.

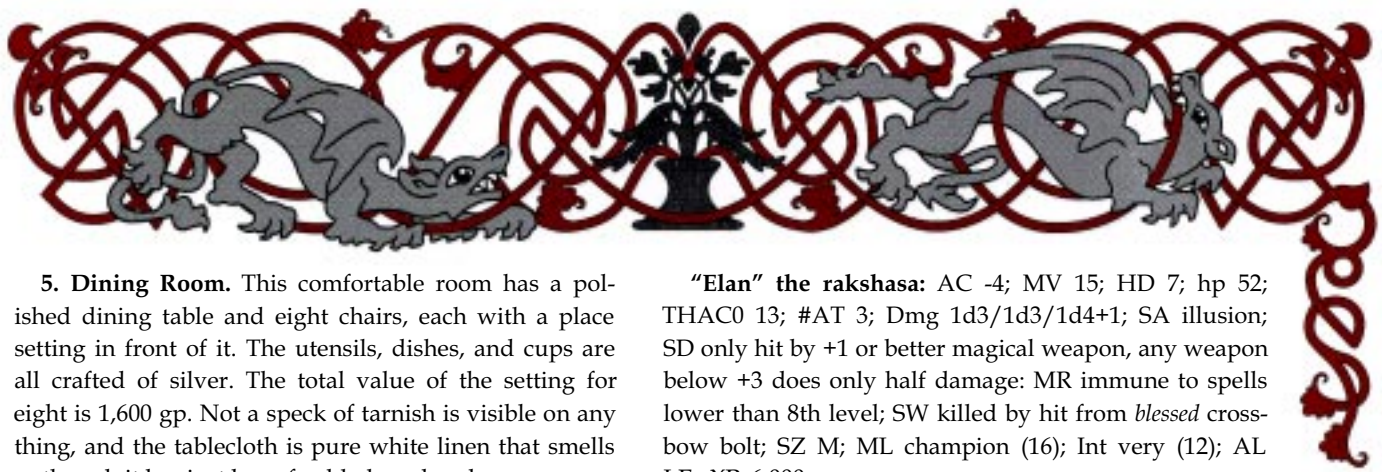
Ground Floor

1. Entry. The exterior door is made of oak reinforced with iron. It is not locked. Beyond the door is a hallway that leads north toward a circular stairway.

2. Stairway. This cast iron stairway shows not a single speck of rust or wear. The stairs wind down as well as up. By looking straight up, PCs can see a beautiful stained-glass skylight set in the tower roof.

3. Reception Room. This is a conventional room containing several cozy chairs and couches and a fireplace. Over the fireplace hangs a portrait of King Azoun IV in which he looks about fifteen or twenty years younger than he is now.

4. Kitchen. What will strike the PCs odd about this otherwise ordinary kitchen is that the larder is filled with fresh ingredients, ready to be cooked.



5. Dining Room. This comfortable room has a polished dining table and eight chairs, each with a place setting in front of it. The utensils, dishes, and cups are all crafted of silver. The total value of the setting for eight is 1,600 gp. Not a speck of tarnish is visible on any thing, and the tablecloth is pure white linen that smells as though it has just been freshly laundered.

6. Study. The study has a blazing fire in the fireplace, and the room is filled with tapestries, a desk, comfortable chairs, and bookcases stocked with a multitude of books. A mirror hangs over the fireplace.

Sitting at the desk is a woman poring over a book. A tray of freshly cooked food sits next to her on the desk-top.

The woman will introduce herself as Elan, a warrior of Torm, the god of duty and honor. She says she is the tower's guardian, stationed here by her deity to protect the place when Torm cursed it. She warns everyone that, although the ground level of the tower is in pristine condition, the upper levels are infested with foul and terrible creatures that also wound up imprisoned here when the curse was brought down upon the place.

If she is asked to explain the curse, the swordswoman says that many years ago, the tower's four occupants witnessed a group of Purple Dragons being assailed by a pack of trolls in the valley below them. One of the Purple Dragons managed to escape from the battle and make it to the tower, with two trolls in pursuit. He pounded on the door, but those within did not lift a finger to help him.

Elan goes on to explain that the attack by the trolls was Torm's way of punishing the Purple Dragons for some breach of faith, but by allowing one of them to escape he was also testing the tower occupants. They failed that test by refusing to aid the soldier, and a horde of monsters descended a year later and laid the tower to ruin. However, Torm tied the eternal fate of the Purple Dragons' souls to the ruined tower.

Elan's words are filled with half-truths. "She" is actually a rakshasa, who had come to the tower in order to lure those within to their doom. The curse struck ten years ago, and the rakshasa found itself trapped within the tower, along with the monsters that had helped raze the tower in the first place.

The rakshasa will offer to cook for the PCs, will put them up in separate rooms if they want temporary lodging, and then will attempt to kill them off one by one.

"Elan" the rakshasa: AC -4; MV 15; HD 7; hp 52; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d4+1; SA illusion; SD only hit by +1 or better magical weapon, any weapon below +3 does only half damage; MR immune to spells lower than 8th level; SW killed by hit from *blessed* crossbow bolt; SZ M; ML champion (16); Int very (12); AL LE; XP 6,000.

Personality: crafty, cunning

Special Equipment: amulet of proof against detection and location, jeweled necklace worth 4,000 gp.

Wizard Spells (4/3/2): 1st — *charm person, hypnotism, phantasmal force, shocking grasp*; 2nd — *invisibility, mirror image, ray of enfeeblement*; 3rd — *hold person, spectral force*.

Priest Spells (3): 1st — *command, light, protection from good*.

Note: All of the rakshasa's spells are cast at the 7th level of ability.

Elan, whose real name is Royappa, cannot leave this tower and cannot access the tower's top level. (The latter restriction was placed upon the rakshasa as part of Torm's curse to prevent the beast from getting its hands on *Silveredge*.)

Second Floor

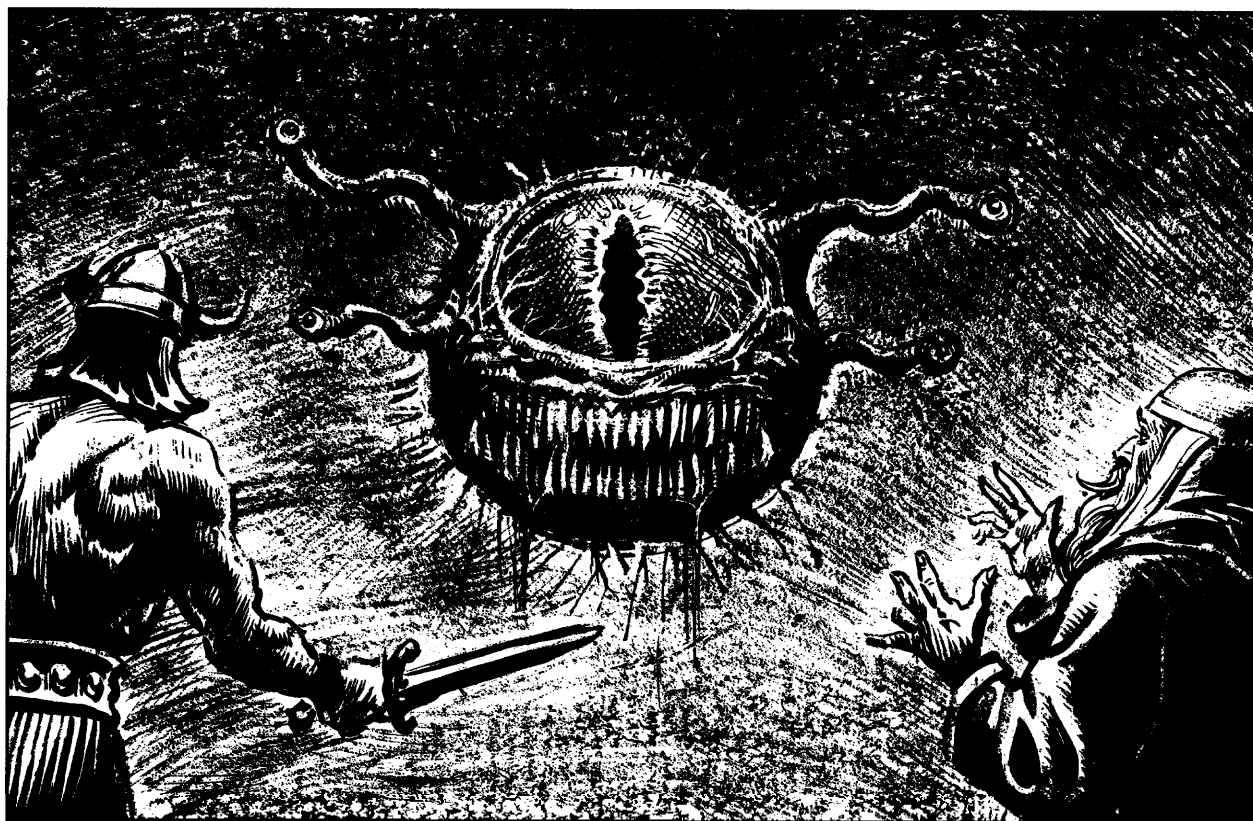
7. Wrecked bedroom. A pair of beds are dashed against a wall, curtains and tapestries torn to shreds, and fine clothing trampled underfoot. There is an open window as well. Six minotaurs, looking even wilder and more desperate than one would expect, look first at the PCs, then at the open door, then launch themselves at the PCs, bellowing ferociously.

Minotaurs (6): AC 6; MV 12; HD 6+3; hp 30 each; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 1d4 (bite), 1d8+2 (huge battle axe); SZ L; ML champion (16); Int low (5); AL CE; XP 1,400 each.

Special Equipment: large battle axes.

The minotaurs cannot leave this level of the tower. Once a minotaur dies, its body rapidly decomposes as ten years of being held in stasis catches up with it. Each minotaur has a silver necklace with a black diamond, identifying it as a member of this clan. Each necklace is worth 500 gp.

If they look out the window of this chamber, the PCs can see the ghostly warriors from the battlefield, seemingly surrounding the tower and looking right up at them.



8. Bedroom. This is another bedroom, also ruined and basically identical with room #7, except that it is infested with giant spiders.

Giant spiders (6): AC 4; MV 3, Wb 12; HD 4+4; hp 22 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; SA poison type F; SZ L; ML elite (13); Int low (7); AL CE; XP 650 each.

The only treasure to be found here is a small coffer with 500 shiny Cormyrean gold coins, none of them with a mint date later than ten years ago.

This room also has a window, offering the same view as from room #7.

9. Empty room. Aside from a window through which the surrounding warrior spirits can be viewed (see room #7), this area has nothing of interest. A single wooden chair stands next to a simple wooden table on which is placed a hooded lantern.

10. The damned. Yet another bedroom containing smashed furniture and a window, but this time, the tower's four occupants are here to welcome the PCs. The

occupants are four human men, their eyes wide with madness, wearing ragged clothing and old chain mail and wielding nasty swords.

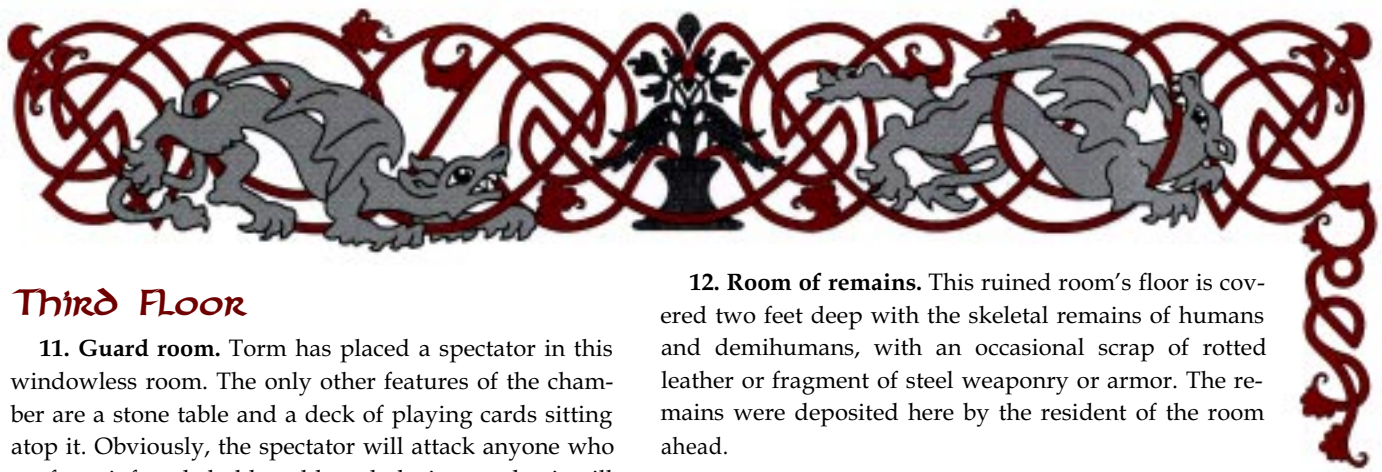
Many years ago these four warriors decided to retire to this tower. Their failure to open the door to the dying Purple Dragon soldier brought Torm's curse down upon them. Like all other residents of this place, they need no food or water. The men are alive, but are suspended in time.

When the PCs enter, they charge insanelly, babbling phrases such as "We didn't open the door," "Cursed are we," "Time stands still," and "Can't leave . . ."

Maddened old warriors, hm F7 (4): AC 3 (chain mail and Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 25 each; THAC0 14; #AT 3/2; Dmg 2d4+1 (bastard sword and Str bonus); SZ M; ML fearless (20); Int low (6); AL N; XP 650 each.

Special Equipment: chain mail, bastard swords.

If these men are killed, the warrior spirits outside howl for four rounds, one round for each of the dead, then all goes quiet.



Third Floor

11. Guard room. Torm has placed a spectator in this windowless room. The only other features of the chamber are a stone table and a deck of playing cards sitting atop it. Obviously, the spectator will attack anyone who confuses it for a beholder, although during combat it will say, in a very calm, matter-of-fact voice, "You do realize that I am not a beholder, don't you?"

Spectator: AC body 4, eyes 7; MV Fl 9 (B); HD 4+4; hp 36 plus 1 hp per eyestalk; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1; SA magic from eyestalks; SD central eye reflects spells; MR 5%; SZ M; ML fearless (20); Int high (14); AL LN; XP 5,000.

Personality: analytical, dutiful

The spectator does not say why it is here, and it has no treasure. Its purpose is to guard the door leading to the other rooms on this floor.

In order to gain passage through the door, the PCs must pass the following test, posed by the spectator:

"Before you go off adventuring, you swear that each of you will never forsake the others, that you shall all be united as one forever, and nothing shall break the bond that makes you all one. Your fortunes and lives are forever intertwined."

"You go off adventuring, and run afoul of a very powerful group of foes. One of your members is struck down, and is dying on the floor, and it is quite clear that he is not long for this world. He tells the rest of you 'Forget about me – save yourselves! I am dead anyway!'"

"What do you do? 1. Run away as he requested; 2. Do your best to get him out of there and save him, while holding the enemy at bay; 3. Avenge him by doing your utmost to destroy the foes, despite overwhelming odds."

The PCs can choose to answer individually, or as a group. The only response the spectator will accept is #2. Anyone who gives a different response must either remain in this room or go back downstairs.

There is an out, however. If those who failed the test object to staying behind because they pledged their comrades that they would fight by their side always (or something along those lines), the spectator will give a wide, toothy smile and say:

"Well spoken! Perhaps you are learning after all! Pass, then, even if it means falling with your friends! Should you make it all the way, remember that the spoken name of duty and loyalty can give you much."

12. Room of remains. This ruined room's floor is covered two feet deep with the skeletal remains of humans and demihumans, with an occasional scrap of rotted leather or fragment of steel weaponry or armor. The remains were deposited here by the resident of the room ahead.

13. Shadowdeath. Perhaps the biggest time-trapped surprise in the tower is the shadow dragon in this chamber. If this creature had to be stuck in this room in "real time" it would most certainly have gone insane. Of course, being a smaller specimen of its kind and having its wings clipped may help explain its ability to exist in this chamber. A small window lets in a feeble amount of light.

Shadowdeath, juvenile shadow dragon: AC -4; MV 18; HD 12; hp 54; THAC0 9; #AT 3; Dmg 1d6+4/1d6+4/3d6+4 (claw/claw/bite); SA breath weapon (life energy loss for 2d4+2 turns); SD immune to energy drain; MR 20%; SZ H (body 15' long); ML fearless (20); Int genius (18); AL CE; XP 10,000.

Personality: cunning, brooding, intellectual

Wizard Spells (2): 1st – *magic missile*, *phantasmal force*.

Spell Ability: mirror image (3/day).

Special Ability: HS 55.

Shadowdeath will do his best to incapacitate as many PCs as possible, while killing a minimum amount. Before trying to attack, however, he questions the PCs about "the outside world," what interesting news and gossip there is, and if they happen to know of any way that he may be freed from this cursed tower. Once he has had all of his questions answered, then he will attempt to kill them all.

Shadowdeath's treasure hoard contains 4,655 sp, 3,901 ep, 26 black diamonds worth 500 gp each, 34 black opals worth 250 gp each, and 54 pieces of obsidian worth 25 gp each. In addition, the dragon has a *holy avenger* +5 long sword, a *flame tongue* +1 short sword, a *mace of disruption*, a +2 *shield*, a set of *splint mail* +1 that is actually armor of *blending*, a set of *chain mail* +2, a set of *leather armor* +1, a *staff of thunder and lightning*, a *wand of wonder*, a *Bucknard's everfull purse*, a *large bag of holding*, a *talisman of Zagy*, and the following potions: *healing*, *extra-healing*, *speed*, *longevity*, *fire resistance*, and *plant control*.

14. Sword room. This chamber contains nothing but bare stone walls, floor, and ceiling—except for a bril-



liantly glowing sword hovering in the air in the center of the room. This is the sword *Silveredge*, part of the set of magical items known as Four From Cormyr. (It was the light from *Silveredge* that the PCs saw off in the distance as they were approaching the tower.)

Any worshiper of Torm may safely grasp *Silveredge* and take it away. Otherwise, a character must utter the god's name before grabbing it; failure to do so results in an electric shock doing 6d6 hit points of damage, with no saving throw allowed. This shock only affects a single character once, but if the sword changes hands to someone who has not previously touched it, that character also takes the damage.

Cellar

15. Garbage room. This room is filled with trash and ashes, the latter coming into the room through brick shafts that are connected to the two fireplaces on the ground floor.

16. Guard room. This room radiates pure white light from its very walls. In the center of the chamber is a block of granite with an embroidered white linen cloth on it; atop the cloth are two silver bowls, one filled with holy water, one filled with blood.

Any PC who closely examines the embroidery on the cloth is entitled to make an Intelligence ability check. If the check succeeds, he can see two sentences woven into the embroidered patterns: "Holy drops to the source of courage, spilled life on that which tells of courage" and "To defile the sleeping dead is to join them."

Any characters who wish to pass into room #17 must put a dab of holy water on their heart and a dab of blood on their lips. Anyone who gets the order wrong, but at least tries, will find that the door is impossible to open. Those who try to open the door but do not attempt to follow the instructions on the embroidery will receive a shock for 8d8 hit points of damage (no saving throw) every time they try to open the door.

The door simply cannot be opened by anyone who does not perform the ritual correctly.

17. Crypts. If the four madmen (room #10) are not dead, all that is seen in this chamber are two dozen sarcophagi, half of them with sculptured effigies of armored warriors carved on the lids. Each of these sculptures has 2,000 gp worth of gold and gems in decoration. Anyone who attempts to remove any part of the decorations must make a saving throw vs. spell at -6. Failing the sav-

ing throw causes the defiler turn to stone and become affixed to one of the undecorated sarcophagus lids. A successful saving throw spares the PC from this fate, but even then, it is impossible to take any valuables away from this crypt area.

To rescue a trapped PC, his companions must cast the following spells on him in this order: *remove curse*, *stone to flesh*, and *raise dead*.

If the four madmen have been killed, their spirits will be found in this chamber, wearing calm expressions, and they will address the PCs:

"Even though Torm was punishing them for their taking the easy road, we did not know that when it happened. We were capable men; we should have opened the door and lent aid. Torm gave us what we deserved. Now, go to where the Starbursts should have gone, and make things right. Only then will they, and we, have peace."

After saying this, the spirits fade away.

Leaving The Tower

Regardless of how they have fared against the denizens of the tower, the PCs will not be able to leave this place until they have removed *Silveredge* from its resting place and are carrying it with them. When all of them have vacated the tower with the sword in someone's possession, read the following:

It is the dead of night, with a brilliant canopy of stars overhead. You feel a little lightheaded for a few moments—and then, when you snap out of your stupor and look behind you, the tower site is nothing but a pathetic heap of rubble that appears to have been undisturbed for several years.

The mist is gone, but the three dozen phantoms still prevail. They stare at you briefly; then, as one, they turn and face directly west, pointing with their right hands. Suddenly the air is filled with an unearthly howl, and they vanish.

Westward Ho

Your route, heading due west, takes you through the southern edge of the Stonelands, a desolate, cheerless place. Every once in a while, the terrain is broken up by an odd, solitary hillock, or a clump of gnarled trees.

In the distance, you see a small column of smoke. As you get nearer, you see several figures standing motionless, while a few heaps of some unidentifiable substances are burning.

Closing in, your eyes take in a scene of carnage. Three human-sized figures and four horses are burning fiercely. Four statues—a human female warrior, a human male in a



robe, a horse, and an armored dwarf female with a hummer raised over her head—stand amid the flaming heaps, which are now beginning to burn themselves out.

Scattered between this grisly scene and the edge of a ridge about 100 feet to the northeast are the dead bodies of two more people. A few bits of broken weapons and shattered armor lie around haphazardly.

If they check the bodies (either the burned ones or the petrified ones, or both), the PCs find that most of them have a medallion or badge showing three lightning bolts radiating from a human skull, set against a black background. (This is the symbol of Lord Aris.)

This group is one of Lord Aris's teams that are scouring the Stonelands, looking for treasure for their master and waylaying other adventuring groups that have stumbled upon such things.

A backpack lying near one of the dead bodies contains a map of the Stonelands that shows the location of the small tower Lord Aris has established as his nerve center for activities in this area. It is located just a mile northeast of where the Stonebolt Trail branches off from Gnoll Pass.

A ranger or some other character with proficiency in tracking can discern that this carnage happened less than half an hour ago. Aside from the footprints of humans and dwarves, other obvious tracks are those of a large cat and those of a bull or bull-like creature.

While the PCs are engrossed in examining this scene, the gorgimera that makes its lair on the other side of the ridge to the northeast flies out and engages them.

Gorgimera: AC 5 (front)/2 (rear); MV 12, Fl 15 (E); HD 10; hp 75; THAC0 11; #AT 5; Dmg 1d3/1d3/2d4/2d6/3d4 (claw/claw/lion bite/head butt/dragon bite); SA breath weapons; SZ L; ML elite (14); Int semi- (4); AL N; XP 7,000.

Beyond the crest of the ridge is a steep 170-foot drop to the terrain below. The gorgimera's lair is in a niche 70 feet down the side of the ridge face. It uses its flight ability to come over the top of the ridge quickly just before attacking its victims.

The lair contains 1,574 gp, 230 pp, a *wand of frost*, a *phylactery of long years*, a *cloak of arachnida*, a *chime of opening*, a *hat of stupidity*, and *six darts of homing*.



Darkenshield

After a few hours of leisurely and careful travel, you arrive at the ruins of a small village located a short distance west of the Stonebolt Trail. The area contains an abundance of heaps of wood and stone, each of which apparently was once a cottage. Every so often, you see the remains of fireplaces and chimneys, towering ten or twelve feet over the ruins.

Six buildings are still intact, although in this case "intact" is taken at its very broadest possible definition. If it has two walls and part of a roof still standing, it is considered intact. The tallest building is a tower that extends up three stories, raised up as if shaking a fist at the heavens in protest of the village's fate. An entire side of the tower has collapsed, laying the interior bare to the elements.

You cannot help but shake your head at the devastation you see here, evidently caused many years ago.

Any player who remembers the information provided by Nodric the sage, back in Halfhap, will realize that this is the village of Darkenshield, the place that was destroyed by Gondegal's raiders fifteen years ago. During this first encounter with the place, Darkenshield is simply a ruin for the PCs to explore. The second time, however, it serves as a battleground against Lord Aris's forces, which will mobilize and march to this place. Lord Aris thinks it fitting to use these ruins as a staging area for attacks on Halfhap, Tilverton, and any caravans in the vicinity. After all, this is a site of victory for Gondegal's forces. Conveniently left out of Aris's reasoning is the fact that there were no loyal Cormyrean troops here to offer resistance. To anyone with honor and decency, this was not the site of a victory; it was the site of a massacre.

The Ruins

Map 15, on page 111, depicts what little is left of the devastated village of Darkenshield. The piles of rubble shown on the map, each one representing a destroyed building, are large enough to serve as cover. A few locations, described below, are wholly or partially intact.

1. Desecrated shrine. This shattered building contains bloodstained walls, knocked-over altars, and befouled holy water fonts. A large, partially ruined hammer-and-scales symbol leaning up against what is left of one of the exterior walls identifies this place as a former shrine to Tyr. In one corner are four skeletons, some still clutching hammers and all wearing holy symbols of Tyr around their necks, interposed between three halfling

skeletons. It becomes apparent that the four larger people were trying to defend a trio of helpless halflings, but alas, all of them fell to the raiders.

If the skeletons are given a decent burial, the PCs sense the air suddenly feeling odd, but in a pleasant way. Suddenly, any PCs suffering from wounds, diseases, curses, or other detrimental effects short of death, level draining, or lost limbs, find themselves restored to good health.

2. Ruined inn. A weathered signboard, hanging by only one chain, ironically identifies this place as the "Safe Haven." Only the first floor of the inn and its adjoining barn to the north remain intact. The large amount of debris on the "roof," is the remains of what used to be the inn's second floor.

The stable contains the skeleton of a twelve-year-old boy—the stable boy, who was killed as he tried to prevent the raiders from stealing the inn's mounts.

Most of the interior walls of the first floor of the inn have been smashed flat. This bit of unwelcome interior decorating was done by the inn's new occupants,, a pack of ogres that have set up temporary quarters here.

The fireplace has fresh ashes in it, and dirty bowls, dishes and cups are scattered all over the floor and on the one intact trestle table.

Ogres (8): AC 5; MV 9; HD 4+1; hp 20 each; THAC0 17 (15 w/weapon); #AT 1; Dmg 1d10 (fists) or 1d8+6 (huge club, Str bonus); SZ L; ML steady (12); Int low (8); AL CE; XP 270 each.

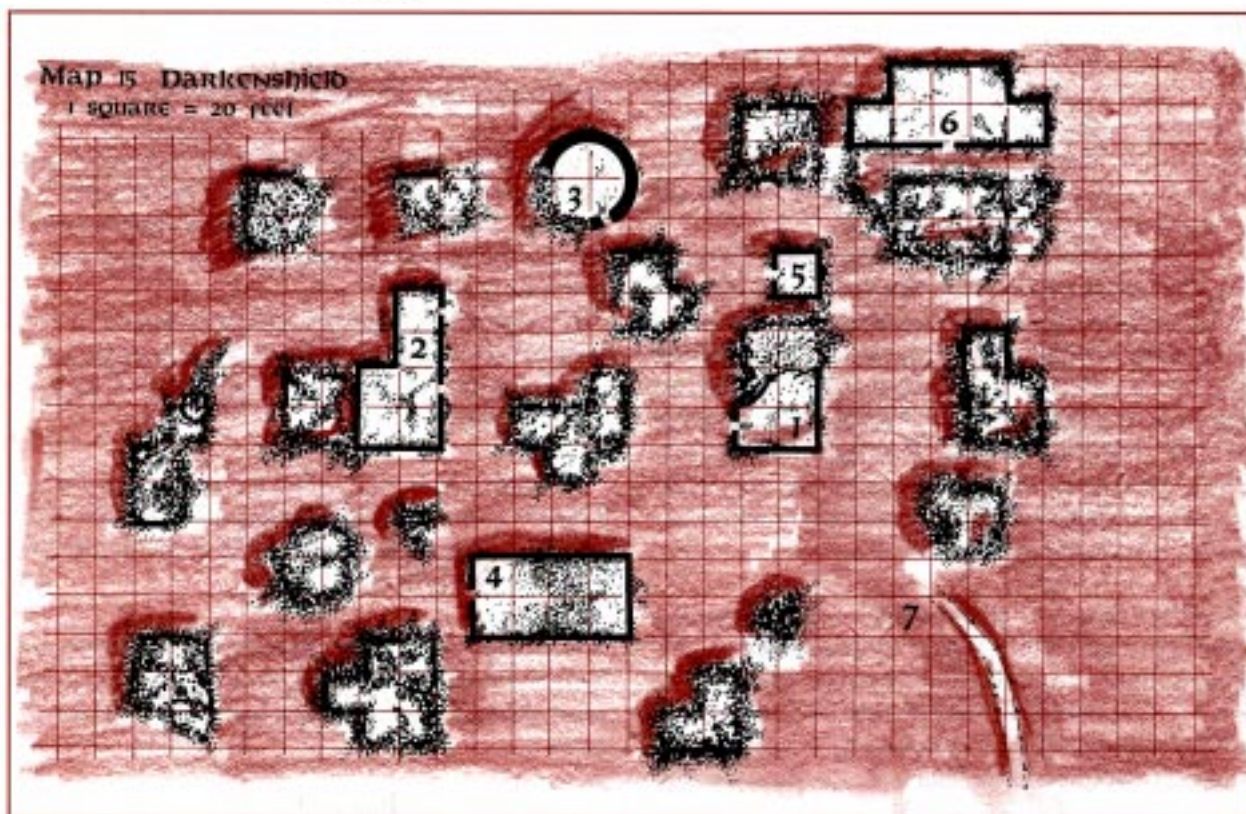
Special Equipment: huge clubs, pouches containing dirty wax.

If one or more of the ogres is subdued and questioned, the PCs will learn that the ogres have seen a few humans "creepin' about, lookin' like they's lookin' fer sumpin'," and the ogres even managed to kill one of them. The man they killed (and ate) was a scout for Lord Aris, and his brooch has found its way into the ogres' treasure hoard.

Their treasure is stashed in the kitchen's larder, and includes 567 gp, 1,104 sp, a 50-gp gold brooch decorated with Lord Aris's symbol, a *ring of water walking* (actually a *ring of elemental command* (water); in order to activate it, the wearer must slay or help to slay three water weards), a *Murlynd's spoon*, a *periapt of health*, and a *Quaal's feather token* (swan).

The ogres use the dirty wax to plug their ears when the harpies (see below) are out and about.





3. Ruined tower. The tallest structure still standing, this three-story tower was the village's sole defensible building.

The entire southwest face has collapsed, offering a cutaway view of the tower's interior. From what can be seen at a distance, the building holds nothing useful, all of the contents having been ruined after fifteen years of exposure to the elements. The walls and floors are covered in old black feathers and streaks of ordure.

A group of harpies have taken roost in the tower ruins. They will attack any creatures that attempt to enter their residence.

Harpies (6): AC 7; MV 6, Fl 15(C); HD 7; hp 42 each; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d6 (claw/claw/bite); SA singing and charm; SZ M; ML elite (14); Int low (5); AL CE; XP 1,400 each.

The harpies have managed to get some treasure from their victims. It is located in a tangled mess of feathers, mud, and droppings, jammed up into a space where the wall and the ceiling of the third floor come together.

The treasure includes a small, greasy sack with 204 gp

and a pearl worth 500 gp, plus a pair of *boots of elvenkind*, a *ring of truth*, and a *rod of smiting* all wrapped up together in a filthy garment that is actually a *robe of stars*.

4. Village meeting hall. This large, barnlike structure is where the villagers held their meetings. Scattered all over the floor are 34 adult skeletons and 11 smaller skeletons—the remains of the villagers who tried to make a last stand here. The remains of a podium and a gavel lie against the wall farthest from the door. Hanging on the wall above the podium is a banner (still intact because it was fashioned from the enchanted cloth of a *cloak of protection* +1) showing a black shield with a single white star in the upper left hand corner, set against a field of sky blue. (This was Darkenshield's village standard.)

If they search through the skeletons, the PCs will discover beneath one of them an old leather-bound journal. The writing on most of the pages has been ruined by the elements and the passage of time, but portions of the final entry remain legible:

. . . *The raiders struck swiftly, before our feeble militia could even be mustered. We know them as Gondegal's men.*





How can he dare try to claim kingship of Cormyr, yet allow his forces to treat us so?

. . . taken refuge in the Village Meet. We hear the screams of the dying outside. Now the raiders are trying to break in. Where are the Purple Dragons? Where is our relief? We may be on the frontier, but we are still of Cormyr. Where is our protection? Curse them for their slowness!

. . . They are on the verge of breaking through the doors. All of us, including this old fool, must now take up our hoes, shovels, and winnowing forks to use as weapons even though we know the outcome. Olin has distributed a sweet-tasting potion to the very old and very young. They fell asleep and slipped into the afterlife in peace. The rest of us, grieved at such steps, now prepare to meet them on the other side, ushered in with violence, alas. Tyr, we come to you soon. Make our ends merciful, and bring justice to bear against these raiders, even if it takes years to . . .

5. Olin's shop. The only business to survive relatively intact was that of Olin Foolsgold, the alchemist. Although the floor is covered with debris and rubbish, many shelves still stand, some of them holding alchemical ingredients and spell components. If a spellcaster searches through the shelves for one turn, there is a 15% chance of his finding the material component for one of his spells. This search can be attempted repeatedly, but only once for each spell the character is currently carrying in memory; any subsequent attempts to find something useful will automatically fail.

Each PC who sifts through the debris on the floor can make a one-time ability check using half his Intelligence score. The first one to succeed on this check finds a scroll that reads:

Formula For Vengeance:

- 1 bone of a victim*
- 2 symbol of the site of death*
- 2 feathers of any sort*
- 1 handful of hearth ashes*

Place the materials in a container. In the presence of the offenders, hold the container over thy head, stand on holy ground and utter the name of the one who made it holy.

The ingredients are fairly easy to come by: a single bone from one of the villagers, the banner from the meeting hall, a couple of feathers from one of the harpies, and ashes from the hearth of the inn. The ruined shrine is the place to hold the container overhead and utter the name

of Tyr—but nothing will happen unless this is done after Lord Aris's force arrives. (See the section titled "The Final Battle" near the end of this adventure.)

6. Mayor's house. Nothing in this two-story stone structure can be salvaged; it has been picked clean over the years. However, it was the sturdiest dwelling in the village, and managed to stay up. Its only good purpose now is for shelter.

It is currently occupied by a pack of kobolds who have stopped here on the way to try to get hired by Lord Aris, whom the kobolds have heard "is gettin' ready to do somethin' big!"

Kobolds (40): AC 7; MV 6; HD 1/2; hp 4 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (short sword), 2d6 (flaming oil), or 1d4 (light crossbow); SZ S; ML average (9); Int average (9); AL LE; XP 7 each.

The kobolds enjoy taking sniper shots from upstairs windows and raining flaming oil on those who try to enter the building. They will do their best to attack from a distance.

7. An incriminating trail. If the PCs have acquired the map from the encounter with the gorgimera, they should not need any hints in order to realize that their next route of travel should be south from Darkenshield toward the location of Aris's outpost. Whether or not they have the map, make sure (by relocating these tracks if necessary) that they come across this trail while they are investigating the ruined village.

Any PC with proficiency in tracking who investigates this site of jumbled footprints and hoofprints can tell that a group of six humans and two orcish humanoids mounted up on horses and rode south toward the Stonebolt Trail. A successful tracking proficiency check enables the character to ascertain that the tracks are less than a day old.

Death, Undead, and Revenge

The tracks lead directly south to the Stonebolt Trail, and then follow the trail in a southwesterly direction toward the foothills of the Storm Horns. When the PCs come within visual range of the location on Map 12 labeled "Dead Party," read the following:



In the distance you see a pack of loping, hunched over, humanlike things, leaning down, scooping up matter of some sort, and eating it. Meanwhile, a flock of six vultures circles overhead, patiently waiting.

As you approach closer, exercising caution and stealth, you are sickened to see that you are witnessing a pack of ten ghouls feeding on seven prone figures, all dead. . . . No, wait! One of them still moves slightly! So intent are the ghouls on their meal that they do not notice you.

If the PCs attack the ghouls, they do so with automatic surprise against them. If all goes well, this should be a one-sided battle, with the PCs routing the disgusting, engorged undead.

Ghouls (10): AC 6; MV 9; HD 2; hp 15 each; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d6 (claw/claw/bite); SA paralyzation; SD immune to sleep and charm spells; SW turning, holy water, protection from evil; SZ M; ML steady (12); Int low (6); AL CE; XP 270 each.

Note: Touch causes paralysis for 1d6+2 rounds unless victim makes a saving throw vs. paralyzation. Elves are immune to this attack. Holy water does 1d6+1 points of damage. Protection from evil prevents ghouls from attacking anyone in the protected area.

There is no treasure to be found here. The ghouls have none of their own, and anything on the bodies was already looted by those who murdered them. Once the battle ends, continue reading to the PCs:

With the threat of the ghouls ended, you turn your attention to the dead. Your stomachs churn as you take in the ghouls' handiwork on the corpses. Giving a disappointed croak, the vultures stop circling and fly off to the north.

When you reach the person who was still alive, you can tell it is already too late for her. She looks up at you and holds up a feeble hand, shaking her head. "Ambushed. Warriors, a few big orcs. Never stood a chance. Managed to rip this off one of them." The woman holds out a large patch showing three lightning bolts radiating from a skull.

The woman closes her eyes and takes a painful breath, then reaches down inside her tunic and pulls out a white medallion depicting a black hand holding a coin that shows two faces looking in opposite directions, the backs of the heads merged with each other. She places the medallion in (select one PC)'s hand.

"Swear," she croaks. "Swear by Hoar that you will avenge us!"

This unfortunate adventuring company fell victim to one of Lord Aris's squads of soldiers. The killers went back to Wyvernwatch, Lord Aris's tower keep. If you want to turn this errand into a really meaningful one, make the dying company a group of NPC adventurers that the PCs befriended earlier, such as may have happened in the earlier adventure "Murder Most Magical."

If the PCs swear to avenge the fallen adventurers, continue reading.

As soon as you swear your oath of revenge, the medallion gets slightly warm in the holder's hand. Three faint rumbles sound in the distance—perhaps thunder, perhaps something else, but you cannot spend more time thinking about this, since the dying woman interrupts your thoughts with a series of hacking coughs.

Blood trickles out of the side of her mouth, but her face has a look of satisfaction. "You swore . . . that is good," she says, managing to smile. "The culprits rode due south, into the rough land . . . off the path," she says. With a final shuddering breath, she sinks into Kelemvor's embrace, her eyes rolling up into her head.

Suddenly, the adventuring life doesn't seem as carefree and exciting as it did a few heartbeats ago. You look down and see the dead, and realize that this, more often than not, is the fate of those who choose your vocation.

Something occurs to you. You have sworn vengeance on behalf of these poor souls. Deep inside you, you get this odd feeling that two different powers are now bearing down on you with two separate obligations.

Following a route due south from this site will soon lead the PCs to Wyvernwatch Castle, located in the rough terrain between the Stonebolt Trail and the Moonsea Ride.

Lord Aris's Outpost

This relatively small structure is where Lord Aris and his most important minions hatch their plans and stage their attacks on the neighboring area. Lord Aris's primary residence is a large castle located 20 miles northwest of the town of Eagle Peak, near the western foothills of the Storm Horns. Instantaneous travel from one building to the other is possible by means of a pair of dimensional gates.



In this adventure, Aris starts off at the outpost, which he has named Wyvernwatch due to the presence of several wyverns in the vicinity.

The Wyvern Nest

The area around Wyvernwatch is rough, mountainous terrain. A small trail, wide enough that it can accommodate three marchers side by side, winds up into the mountains and to the castle.

Any travelers who use the trail to approach the castle will pass along the edge of a short, steep-sided butte. Atop the plateau, 30 feet above the trail and 100 feet in from the edge of the butte, the mountainous terrain slopes sharply upward once again. Where the plateau meets the base of the mountain is a large cave that is home to a family of wyverns, a mated pair and two full-grown offspring.

Wyverns (4): AC 3; MV 6, Fl 24 (E); HD 7+7; hp 50 each; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 2d8/1d6 (bite/tail stinger); SA dive and snatch, poison type F; SZ G; ML elite (14); Int low (6); AL NE; XP 2,000 each.

Over time, Lord Aris has managed to domesticate the wyverns, to the extent that they will not attack any individual or group that displays Aris's symbol. If the PCs have acquired such an item (such as the patch that was shown to them by the dying woman) and have it in plain sight, one or more of the wyverns will swoop down for a closer look but will not initiate combat.

Otherwise, if the wyverns do not recognize the PCs as "friends," and if the PCs pass beneath the lair when the time is within two hours of sunrise or sunset, all four of the creatures will attack simultaneously. At any other time of day or night the chance of an attack is 50%, and 1d3 of the creatures will take part in the initial attack, with the others joining the fray two rounds later.

The wyverns' cave has a load of treasure scattered about in a haphazard manner. There are 2,746 gp, 1,444 ep, two emeralds worth 500 gp each, a black pearl worth 1,000 gp, *gauntlets of swimming and climbing*, a *rope of climbing*, a *military pick* +2, *slippers of spider climbing*, a *cloak of protection* +1, and a *ring of feather fall*.

Wyvernwatch Castle

Located a half hour's march farther up into the mountains beyond the wyvern nest, this building is somewhat misnamed. In reality, it is more of a large tower than a small castle. The five-story tower is 75 feet high with a

low building attached to the base. A stone wall surrounds the complex, and the courtyard is accessed through a double-wide gate made of iron. All of the walls in the place are made of the same flat black stone. All windows have iron shutters that are normally closed and locked from the inside. Map 16, on page 115, shows the layout of the place.

Ground Floor

1. Outer walls. The castle's 18-foot-tall perimeter walls are crowned by a walkway to enable the defenders to scan the surroundings from a high vantage point.

Three patrols of four soldiers walk the walls at all times. At a leisurely pace, each group makes a full circuit of the perimeter in twenty minutes. The patrols are spaced and scheduled so that any particular wall (north, south, east, or west) has no patrol walking upon it for five minutes out of every twenty.

2. Gateway. The 20-foot-tall wrought iron double doors leading into the keep's grounds are covered in a repeating design of three lightning bolts emanating from a central skull.

The gateway is manned by six of Aris's men at all times, with three of them stationed in each of the small guardhouses that flank the entranceway. The gate guards cannot open and close the portal by themselves, because the mechanism for opening the doors—a sophisticated series of pulleys and chains that run underground through the courtyard—is located within the tower. The captain of the guard holds two flags, a red and a green one. When the gate needs to be manipulated, he sends a signal to a sentry on duty inside the tower (in room #3). Waving the red flag up and down twice is the signal to open the gate, while waving the green flag side to side three times closes the gate.

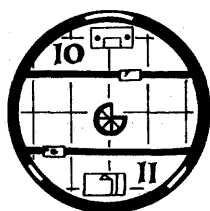
3. Tower entry and gate control. A stout iron door, which has a complex built-in lock as well as an iron bar that can be lowered on the inside, provides access to the tower. A window to the east of the door provides a clear view of the gate. Four soldiers are always on duty in this room, one of them responsible for watching the gate and looking for a flag signal.

The room contains a wooden table, four chairs, some dice, a deck of cards, a lantern, and the winch control for the outer gate. A bell hanging from the ceiling serves as an alarm to warn the rest of the complex about intruders.

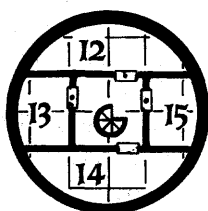


Map 16 Wyvernwatch

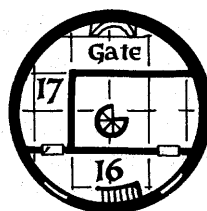
1 SQUARE = 15 FEET



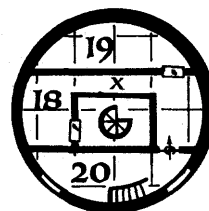
SECOND FLOOR



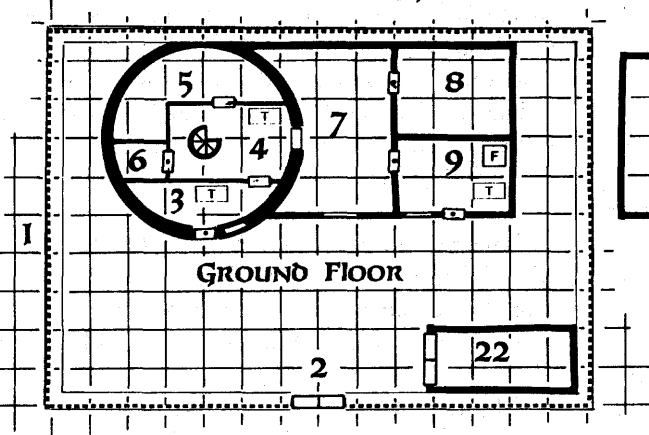
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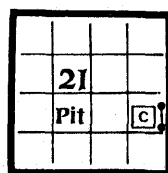
FOURTH FLOOR



FIFTH FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



4. Stairway chamber. This brightly lit room has four doors, one leading in each direction, and a stone that provides access to the upper floors of the tower. A pair of guards is always on duty here, and a simple wooden table and two chairs are provided for them.

5. Orog barracks. This foul-smelling, crowded chamber holds Lord Aris's orog contingent, a force of 60 creatures shoved into numerous bunk beds. The banner of this company of orogs, who call themselves the Eye Killers, depicts a disembodied eye with a black dagger plunged through it.

Orogs (60): AC 4 (splint mail); MV 6; HD 3; hp 12 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+3 (scimitar), 1d6 (short bow, flight arrows); SZ M; ML elite (13); Int high (10); AL LE; XP 65 each.

6. Orog leaders. This locked room is the quarters for three orog leaders. In addition to three crude beds, the chamber holds a locked wooden chest (trapped with a needle, Type D poison, 12 doses total). The chest contains 153 pp and four potions: *hill giant strength*, *extra-*

healing, *speed*, and *sweet water*.

At least one leader is always here, unless all of Lord Aris's troops have been mobilized.

Orog leaders (3): AC 3 (plate mail); MV 6; HD 4; hp 20 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+3 (scimitar), 1d6 (short bow, flight arrows); SZ M; ML elite (14); Int high (11); AL LE; XP 175 each.

Special equipment: plate mail armor, scimitar, short bow with 12 sheaf arrows, wooden alarm whistle.

7. Barracks. Lord Aris's human troops are housed here, in a crowded barracks filled with triple bunk beds. Aris has a total of 100 human soldiers. Unless all of the troops have been mobilized, this room will contain 25 soldiers at any time, 20 of them asleep.

Lord Aris's soldiers, F3 (100): AC 5 (chain mail); MV 12; hp 15 each; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword), 1d6 (short bow, flight arrows), 1d4 (dagger); SZ M; ML steady (11); Int average (9); AL LE or NE; XP 120 each.

Special equipment: chain mail, long sword, short bow, 24 flight arrows, dagger, wooden alarm whistle.



8. Lieutenants' room. Aris's four human lieutenants sleep in this large but modestly furnished room. The chamber contains two bunk beds, a table with four chairs, a couch, and a community locker with a locked steel box inside it. The box contains 15 small trade bars of platinum (each worth 100 gp), three small sapphires worth 100 gp each, a jar of *Keoghtom's ointment*, and a scrap of paper that reads, "For this tenday—Open: red up and down twice. Close: green side to side thrice."

One lieutenant is always here, sleeping during his off-duty hours, and an additional 1d3 may be present (50% chance) at any given time, either relaxing or preparing for a shift change.

Lord Aris's lieutenants, F5 (4): AC 3 (plate mail); MV 12; hp 32 each; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword), 1d6 (hand axe); SZ M; ML elite (14); Int average (10); AL LE; XP 270 each.

Special equipment: plate mail, long sword, hand axe, keys to all exterior doors, distress horns.

9. Secondary entry. This room can be accessed either through the barracks (room #7) or from the courtyard by means of a stout iron door that has a complex lock and an iron bar that can be lowered on the inside. On the floor in the northeast corner is an iron trap door fastened shut with a deadbolt. This door grants access to area #21.

A metal bell hanging from the ceiling serves as an intruder alarm.

Four of Aris's soldiers are always stationed here. The room contains four chairs and a table, upon which rest a deck of cards, four mugs with a small keg of mead, and a lantern. The window gives a good view of the gate and much of the courtyard.

Second Floor

10. Shrine to Talos. This room's most eye-catching feature is a stained-glass window showing three different-colored lightning bolts radiating from a central point against a red background. A black altar, stained with red-brown splotches, stands under the window, flanked by two black iron candlesticks with yellow candles set in them.

The room radiates a queasy feeling of evil. It has a continuous *protection from good* radiating all over its dimensions. There is a 25% chance that Tanatha (see below) will be found here.

11. Priest's room. Tanatha, a stormlord (specialty priest of Talos) who acts as Aris's chief "spiritual advisor," lives in this room. She is a cruel, unpredictable woman whose dark beauty is hidden in an ornate suit of black plate mail and a wicked-looking black helm.

Tanatha maintains the shrine and also counsels Lord Aris. She is 25% likely to be found here during any given hour.

Aside from a banner with the holy symbol of Talos upon it, and a set of chains and manacles on one wall, this looks like a normal bedroom, with a four-poster bed, a nightstand, a lockable wardrobe, and a desk with chair. The wardrobe contains elegant clothes, most in shades of black, red, and yellow, plus a small wooden box that holds 10 vials of unholy water and six black diamonds worth 500 gp each.

Tanatha, hf P8 (Talos): AC -4 (plate +3, shield +3); MV 12; hp 64; THAC0 16 (13 w/mace +3); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+4 (footman's mace +3); SD immune to electrical damage and nonmagical heat or cold; SZ M; ML fanatic (18); AL CE; XP 5,000.

S 14, D 14, Co 17, I 15, W 15, C 18

Personality: cruel, random, sadistic

Special Equipment: plate armor +3, shield +3, footman's mace +3, helm of comprehending languages and reading magic, ring of regeneration, 4 vials of unholy water, holy symbol of Talos.

Spells (5/4/3/2): 1st — cause light wounds, darkness, detect good, protection from good, shillelagh; 2nd — detect charm, fire trap, know alignment, silence 15' radius; 3rd — animate dead, bestow curse, cause disease; 4th — cause serious wounds, poison.

Spell-like Abilities: shocking grasp 1/day, call lightning 1/day, water walk at will, control winds 1/day, lightning bolt 1/day.

Tanatha is a specialty priest of Talos (see *Faiths & Avatars*, page 157), and is fanatically devoted to her deity above all else. She has hooked up with Lord Aris because his actions promise to bring chaos to Cormyr. She will have no compunctions about leaving him if things begin to go badly for the would-be king.

Third Floor

12. Necromancer's room. Lord Aris has required the services of a necromancer to keep his undead troops in line. This wizard is none other than Ratakos, the necromancer whom the PCs may have encountered at the



Journey's Rest inn during the earlier adventure "Bad Neighbor Policy."

Ratakos, hm Nec 12: AC 2 (*robe of archmagi*, Dex bonus); MV12; hp 33; THAC0 17 (14 w/dagger +3); #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+3 (*dagger* +3); SZ M; ML elite (14); AL CN; XP 8,000.

S 8, D 17, Co 15, I 18, W 18, C 6

Personality: unpredictable, amoral, stern

Special Equipment: grey robe of the archmagi dagger +3, amulet versus undead (7th level), ring of undead command (see "Magical Items," page 126), ring of regeneration, potion of wight control (2 doses left), scroll of protection from magic.

Spellbook (5/5/5/5/2): 1st — *burning hands*, *chill touch**, *corpselight**†, *detect undead**, *magic missile**, *shocking grasp*, *wall of fog**, *wizard mark*; 2nd — *cloak undead**†, *darkness* 15' radius*, *ESP**, *knock*, *protection from cantrips*, *spectral hand**, *stinking cloud*, *undead mount**†, *wizard lock*; 3rd — *feign death*, *hold undead**, *mummy touch**†, *paralyze**†, *phantom steed*, *revenge**†, *skull watch**†, *vampiric touch**, *wraithform**; 4th — *Beltyn's burning blood**†, *contagion*, *enervation**, *mask of death**†,

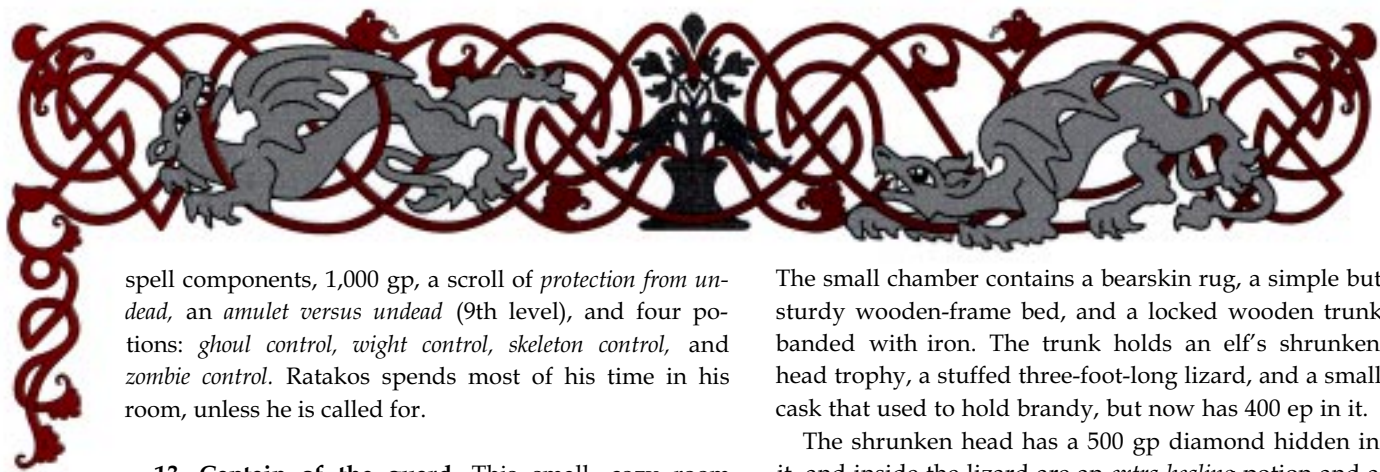
Evard's black tentacles, *polymorph other**, *ice storm**; 5th — *animate dead**, *avoidance**, *cloudkill**, *cone of cold**, *disguise undead*†, *summon shadow**; 6th — *Bloodstone's spectral steed**†, *death fog*, *death spell**, *lich touch*†, *teleport dead*†.

If Ratakos has already met the PCs, he will be less inclined to simply attack outright unless the PCs were after his head the last time they saw one another. He will ask pointed questions about why the PCs are here, and if they "are following me or something, eh?"

Ratakos has now joined forces with Lord Aris because he has been presented with the opportunity to work with plenty of undead. He cares not for politics, king, or country. If Aris's fortunes begin to reverse, Ratakos will use whatever means he has to effect an escape.

The room looks more like a funeral parlor than a bedroom. It contains a bed shaped like a coffin, and a locked trunk that looks like a sarcophagus. Black bunting and wreaths of black roses hang everywhere, amid burning black candles in lampstands of bone and painted skulls displayed on shelves.

The sarcophagus trunk contains Ratakos's spellbooks,



spell components, 1,000 gp, a scroll of *protection from undead*, an *amulet versus undead* (9th level), and four potions: *ghoul control*, *wight control*, *skeleton control*, and *zombie control*. Ratakos spends most of his time in his room, unless he is called for.

13. Captain of the guard. This small, cozy room houses the captain of Lord Aris's army. The room has a simple but comfortable bed, a dresser and mirror, and a locked footlocker under the bed. The footlocker contains 432 gp, 645 sp, an old tattered flag showing the coat of arms of Darkenshield, a *potion of healing*, and a *gem of brightness*.

Captain Tobias Querl, hm F7: AC 0 (*chain* +3, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 66; THAC0 14 (12 *w/sabre* +2); #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d6+3 (*sabre* +2), 1d4 (*dagger*); SZ M; ML champion (15); AL LE; XP 1,400.

S 15, D 16, Co 15, I 10, W 12, C 13

Personality: disciplined, harsh, experienced

Special Equipment: *chain armor* +3, *sabre* +2, *ring of free action*, holy symbol of Tempus.

Tobias can fight with both weapons, as he is proficient in two weapon fighting. A hardened veteran with a scarred face, squinty eyes, square jaw, and salt-and-pepper hair, Tobias took part in the attack on the village of Darkenshield fifteen years ago. He later eagerly hooked up with Lord Aris, anxious to "continue the good work started by Gondegal." Tobias is a strict disciplinarian and a professional soldier with his own interestingly warped code of honor. If Aris goes down, Tobias goes down with him. And yet, Tobias sees nothing dishonorable about sacrificing innocent villagers.

Captain Querl is not the only veteran of the destruction of Darkenshield. Twenty of the older human soldiers in Aris's employ also participated in that raid fifteen years ago. This fact takes on special significance when "The Final Battle" (see the text section near the end of this adventure) occurs.

There is a 30% chance per hour of finding Tobias in his quarters.

14. Guest room. This chamber, presently unoccupied, has furniture and sleeping accommodations sufficient for as many as five guests.

15. Orog chief's room. This room, reeking of sweat and old food, houses Gribbergrash, the orog chieftain.

The small chamber contains a bearskin rug, a simple but sturdy wooden-frame bed, and a locked wooden trunk banded with iron. The trunk holds an elf's shrunken head trophy, a stuffed three-foot-long lizard, and a small cask that used to hold brandy, but now has 400 ep in it.

The shrunken head has a 500 gp diamond hidden in it, and inside the lizard are an *extra-healing* potion and a *dagger* +3. There is a 20% chance per hour that Gribbergrash will be here.

Gribbergrash, orog chief: AC 3 (*plate mail*); MV 6; HD 5; hp 40; THAC0 15 (13 *w/battle axe* +2); #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+5 (*battleaxe* +2, Str bonus); SZ M; ML champion (16); Int high (12); AL LE; XP 420.

Personality: messy, loud, bullying

Special Equipment: *battle axe* +2, alarm horn.

Fourth Floor

16. Study/meeting room. This spacious room contains a large table with eight chairs, a desk, well-filled bookcases, banners on the walls, a map of Cormyr, and a map of the local area from Tilverton to Gnoll Pass. A narrow stairway leads up to Lord Aris's bedroom, and a door on the west wall leads to the gate that connects this place with Lord Aris's main keep on the western edge of Cormyr.

This is the room where Lord Aris holds meetings with his trusted allies and plots strategies and hatches plots.

The books on the shelves of the bookcases deal with Cormyrean history and geography, the nature of the undead, necromancy, the evil deities of Faerûn, military tactics, and philosophical treatises on the nature of evil and law as opposed to evil and chaos.

The desk has no important papers. (Such items would be transported back to Aris's main castle.) The only significant facts that can be gleaned from the papers here are the precise numbers of troops, officers, and aides stationed in Wyvernwatch, and the exact identities of Aris's agents in Halfhap.

The map of Cormyr has black pins stuck in Tilverton, Halfhap, Hillmarch, Arabel, Bospir, Thunderstone, Hultail, and Immersea. These pins mark the locations of Aris's spies.

The local map shows the location of the remains of Darkenshield. A dozen red pins are stuck in the map, marking the last known locations of treasure-hunting parties in Aris's employ. Several black pins are stuck in Halfhap and Tilverton, noting the number of Aris's spies who are based in each location.



17. Gate room. This room is always kept locked, and Lord Aris has the only key. The room is unusually cold, and an odd wind flows in random directions. Small, scattered arcs of energy dance along the floor and walls.

Against the north wall is a portal set in an arch. Pure white light streams from the open passageway, and an unearthly low howling, like a great wind, is trapped beyond the portal. Anyone who steps through the portal is immediately teleported to Lord Aris's main castle, located 20 miles from Eagle Peak in western Cormyr.

Although the archway on this side of the gate is unremarkable, the one at the main castle is set with three red gems, one at the keystone and one on each side where the arch meets the floor. Pulling out one gem shuts down the gate until the gem is replaced. Pulling all three gems out destroys the gate in a blast of energy that affects all characters or creatures in the rooms at both ends of the gate. Each unfortunate being takes 1d8x10 hit points of damage, or half of that if a successful saving throw vs. spell is made.

Fifth Floor

18. Guard foyer. Two orogs and three human soldiers are always stationed here, and the door connecting this room with the spiral staircase is usually kept unlocked. The room contains a table with six chairs, a deck of cards, a lantern, a large barrel of beer and six mugs, a large ham, and a hook on the wall with a key ring that holds two ornate cast-iron keys. One key has a "Y" symbol etched into it, and the other one bears a "Z" symbol.

The Y key unlocks the door to the prison (room #19). The Z key fits into the lock on the door that separates this room from the spiral staircase, and is used to engage or disengage a security system. If this door is unlocked when any one steps on the place marked X, a portcullis drops down on the west side of the narrow corridor. If the Z key is used to lock this door, the portcullis will not be activated. (This device prevents anyone who manages to escape from room #19 from quickly getting to the spiral staircase.

19. Prison. A dank, windowless hovel with a locked iron door, this is where Lord Aris keeps his prisoners. There is filthy straw on the floor, but no other furniture whatsoever. A dozen sets of manacles are securely fastened to the outer wall.

If the prison is occupied (DM's discretion), no one inside should be of great importance. Perhaps some people from Tilverton and/or Halfhapp are here, one of them a merchant willing to pay a reward of 3d6 x 100 gp for safe return to his home.

20. Lord Aris's room. Even though this is the bedroom of only a temporary residence, that fact does not stop Lord Aris from surrounding himself in luxury. The chamber contains an ornate, almost criminally plush, four-poster bed, a dresser and mirror, a wardrobe, a nightstand, and an overstuffed chair with ottoman. A small table beside the overstuffed chair has a crystal snifter and a large crystal decanter of brandy (1,000 gp for the decanter, 100 gp for the snifter, 200 gp for the rare, expensive brandy in the decanter). A spicy-smelling sachet hangs over the bed. An iron trap door can be slammed down and dead-bolted over the opening at the top of the stairs that come from room #16. A one-way secret door in the northeast wall provides an escape route to the staircase leading down, in the event that the stairway along the exterior wall is blocked or unusable.

No suit of clothing in the wardrobe is worth less than 250 gp, and there are 20 different ensembles of wildly varied fashion. In the pocket of one cape is a hidden *ring of invisibility*. The night-black cloak that is part of a different ensemble is a *cloak of feather falling*.

The nightstand has an expensive colored-glass lamp atop it, and a *dagger* +2 in the drawer.

Over the fireplace are a pair of crossed rapiers. One is a *rapier* +2, and the other is a *rapier* +3 that is also enchanted to ignore any armor's defense bonus. This enchantment is useless against shields, dexterity bonuses, or the magical protection of rings, cloaks, bracers, and other non-armor magic items.

There is a 10% chance in any given hour of finding Lord Aris in this room. If things are going bad for him and a clear path to the gate is denied to him, Lord Aris will go *invisible* with the ring, put on the *feather falling* cloak, arm himself with the magic dagger and the stronger of the two rapiers, and leap out the window.

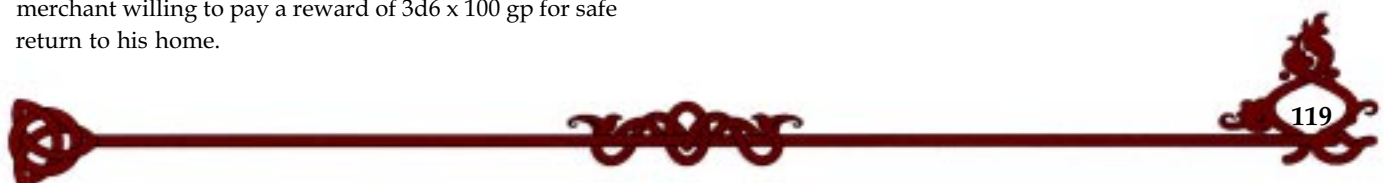
No huge hoard of treasure is to be found here. All the wealth found by the hired parties is transported through the gate to Aris's primary residence.

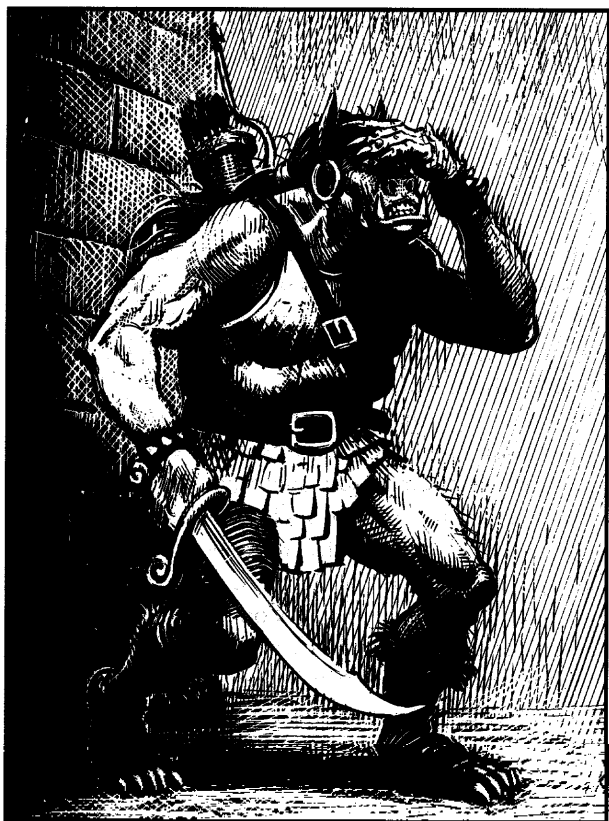
Lord Vorik Aris, hm F9: AC -6 (*full plate* +2, *shield* +2, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 100; THAC0 12 (9 w/*vorpall blade*); #AT 2; Dmg 1d8+6 (*vorpall blade* +3 long sword); SZ M; ML fearless (19); AL LE; XP 5,000.

S 16, D 16, Co 18, I 15, W 17, C 16

Personality: cunning, arrogant, ambitious

Special Equipment: *full plate* +2, *shield* +2, *vorpall blade* +3, *ring of human influence*, full helm, heavy warhorse.





Lord Aris is a handsome, wise human male in his early 50's, a local lord with great ambitions. He secretly supported Gongdegal's rebellion 15 years ago, and is now determined to succeed where the latter failed. Aris specializes in long sword.

21. Chamber of horrors. The trap door giving access to this filthy pit is always kept locked. Inside, standing shoulder to shoulder and packed in so that there is barely room to move, are 75 skeletons and 75 zombies. These are Lord Aris's shock troops, controlled by the necromancer and the priest of Talos.

When the services of this force are needed, the trap door is opened and the forces of the undead are released, climbing up a ladder that leads to the surface and then marching in whatever direction the necromancer bids them to go.

22. Stables. This vast, low building holds 120 horses, including Lord Aris's personal heavy warhorse, a white stallion named Perdition. The stables are kept locked when not in use, and two guards are always stationed at the doors.

The Hue and Cry

If intruders are detected near or inside the complex, the alarm goes up. All human guards and orogs are mobilized. All sleepers are awakened and put on alert. The captains and lieutenants gather, using room #3 as a command post. Tanatha, Ratakos, and Aris gather in room #16. If additional forces are needed, Ratakos calls up a dozen skeletons and a dozen zombies from room #21 to supplement the patrols.

A dozen human troops and a dozen orogs gather in front of the gate, while another dozen guards watch the stables. Patrols swarm back and forth along the walls, looking for the intruders.

A pair of soldiers and a pair of orogs are then stationed in each room, with the exception of rooms #19, #20, #21, and #22. Intruders who are found are brought down with maximum force, with the consideration of keeping someone alive for questioning lingering as a distant afterthought. "Hack first, ask questions later" is the rule.

The heightened state of alert will persist for at least an hour, longer if any intruders are captured or killed.

Proceeding from Here

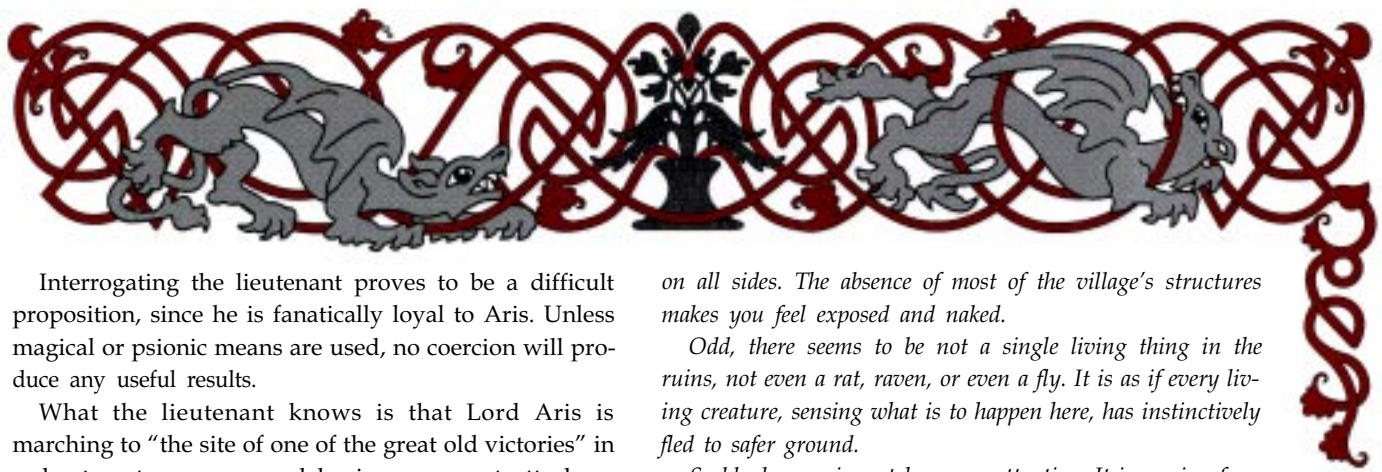
It is possible that the PCs may wind up making more than one visit to this place. The first visit may be a simple reconnaissance of the castle, seeing what there is to see. The second may be a visit after Lord Aris has unleashed his troops and begun the march toward the ruins of Darkenshield.

If necessary, remind the PCs who promised to avenge the dead adventuring company that there is no urgent time limit to fulfilling the obligation, and that there is a difference between avenging murders and flinging oneself against overwhelming odds and hoping for the best.

When the PCs arrive at Wyvernwatch Castle for the first time, you should begin a countdown. Exactly 24 hours after the PCs' arrival, Aris's forces will mobilize and begin their march to Darkenshield, where they will set up camp and begin to coordinate strikes on Tilverton and Halfhap. If the PCs lay low and wait until the armies leave before exploring Wyvernwatch, then see the next section.

When the Cat's Away

When Aris leaves with the bulk of his troops, 15 human soldiers and 10 orogs are kept behind to watch the castle. They are supervised by one of the human lieutenants.



Interrogating the lieutenant proves to be a difficult proposition, since he is fanatically loyal to Aris. Unless magical or psionic means are used, no coercion will produce any useful results.

What the lieutenant knows is that Lord Aris is marching to “the site of one of the great old victories” in order to set up camp and begin an earnest attack on Cormyrean frontier towns and villages. He suspects that Aris has something important that he needs to do in the ruins, perhaps completing some sort of ritual.

The lackeys know that Zhentil Keep has been sending some aid to Lord Aris, but the lieutenant is not sure to what extent this aid is actually making a difference.

One way or another, the PCs must head back to the ruins of Darkenshield. If they try to overtake the armies of Lord Aris, bear in mind that the force is moving rather slowly, less than two miles an hour, because of the undead. It will take Lord Aris’s troops at least five hours of marching to arrive at the ruins of Darkenshield.

Riding to Halfhap for help is out of the question. By the time the PCs get to Halfhap, Aris’s forces will have organized themselves at the ruins of Darkenshield and will already be launching their raids.

Even if the people of Halfhap believe the PCs (which is not a certainty, especially if the former have never heard of the latter, or have had a bad experience in dealing with them), many will feel that the best strategy is not a preemptive strike, but rather to hunker down behind the town walls and wait it out. At best, the Halfhap garrison will send messengers north to Tilverton and south to Arabel, warning of what is happening. The messengers will be intercepted and killed by lurking minions of Aris, covering the roads.

It should become quite clear to them that the PCs’ duty is to do their best to avenge the village and the dead adventuring company, and slow down Aris as much as possible. If the PCs have all the items collectively known as the Four From Cormyr, the bearer(s) of the items will feel a compulsion tugging him (them) toward the remains of Darkenshield.

Waiting for Fate

If the PCs arrive at the ruins of Darkenshield before Lord Aris’s forces, read the following:

Once again, the sad desolation of Darkenshield welcomes you. A low, chill wind whistles through the remains of the buildings and chimneys. You scan the horizon in every direction and are faced with the barren flatness of the Stonelands

on all sides. The absence of most of the village’s structures makes you feel exposed and naked.

Odd, there seems to be not a single living thing in the ruins, not even a rat, raven, or even a fly. It is as if every living creature, sensing what is to happen here, has instinctively fled to safer ground.

Suddenly, a noise catches your attention. It is coming from a large pile of rubble to the east. A familiar voice says “Blast it. I told you to keep quiet.” A familiar face pops into view from behind the rubble. “Hail and well met. Please don’t kill us.”

It is Mendryll Belarod, the bard. With him is a foppish-looking warrior with a depressed look on his face, absently staring at the horizon as he rubs a black rose across his cheek.

If the PCs have met Lord Mournsoul, they will recognize that he is the second figure. Once the PCs finish reacting and plying Mendryll with a barrage of questions, continue reading.

Mendryll holds up his hands for silence, and grins a wide smile. “Steady, now, let me speak,” he admonishes good-naturedly. “After I gave you that information about a vast fortune waiting to be taken, I found out some more facts about the place, and discovered that it was quite a lethal spot. Now, I’m not much for guilt, but I felt a little bud about sending you there, so I decided to come out after you.”

The bard looks at you smugly. “It was easy to find you. A bard is better at locating people than rangers, you know. After putting together all the clues, I decided to meet you here, and see if I could help you.”

Mendryll jerks a thumb at the foppish man. “Lord Mournsoul here has been having a bad time of it. Yet another woman has rejected him and his idea of courtly love, so he wanted to kill himself.” The bard smirks, then shrugs. “I told him that I was probably headed into certain death, and that he was welcome to come along and take an arrow in the head. Having failed to find a shop that sold poison that killed its victim painlessly, he decided to come along.”

Mendryll folds his arms and stares at your group. “So,” he sighs. “What sort of mess have you gotten yourselves into?”

After the PCs explain the situation, of which Mendryll makes them repeat certain interesting parts, he and Mournsoul agree to stand side by side with the PCs. “After all,” Mendryll will shrug, “’twill make one rip-roaring good story.”

Mendryll and Mournsoul have no good ideas on how to best prepare for Lord Aris’s arrival. The bard sings about battles, he doesn’t lead them. As for Mournsoul,



he is more interested in angst and self-pity than tactics, and is essentially useless for planning. Basically, both NPCs will act in as much of a supporting role as they can. Ominously, Mendryll asks each PC for their birthdate, place of birth, and location of next of kin.

The Final Battle

At last, a dust cloud forms on the southern horizon, moving closer to you. From your vantage point, you take in the full sight of what approaches and even now closes in.

A man in full plate armor rides a magnificent white warhorse. This must be Lord Aris. Flanking him, left and right, are two figures. The one on the left is a man in black robes, riding a horse's skeleton; the one on the right is a forbidding figure in black plate armor and a massive black helm, riding a gray warhorse, and waving a huge, glowing mace.

Behind them are four humans and four massive orcs, all riding warhorses and clad in fine armor. One of the orcs holds aloft a banner showing a dagger impaling an eyeball. One of the men holds a black banner with three yellow lightning bolts radiating from a skull.

Following behind the five riders are scores of human soldiers in chain mail, and dozens of huge orcs with scimitars and bows.

Flanking these armies on either side are rows of zombies with melee weapons and dozens of skeletons with swords.

Finally, behind this entire dark host, come pack animals, no doubt carrying tents and other supplies for setting up Lord Aris's bivouac in the ruins.

The setting sun paints the massive force with red light, making it resemble a blood-soaked legion from Baator. Behold your enemy.

No matter what time the PCs left Wyvernwatch, Aris's forces do not arrive at the Darkenshield ruins until sundown.

The Four from Cormyr Ritual

If the PCs have all four items, and they heft them at the setting sun and call for "the Starburst Swords," read the following.

A battle cry rises from the approaching army, which now has you in plain sight. However, before they can react further, a roiling fog seeps out of the ground surrounding you. Within the space of several heartbeats, the three dozen ghost warriors you encountered at the haunted tower are now among you, staring at the invading army. Noiselessly, their eyes blazing red with fury, they move toward the army. Even though the

human troops and many of the orogs hesitate and stare aghast, the black-robed man shrugs and gives a contemptuous nod. The undead break ranks and charge at the spectral Purple Dragons. The battle is joined..

The Darkenshield Ritual

If the ritual found in the Darkenshield ruins is invoked, read the following:

As the echo of your lust word fades away, you suddenly become aware that you are not alone. From the remains of buildings, from the piles of ruins, phantoms of men, women, and children emerge, their faces grim. They point at the human troops, and an unseen force pushes most of them aside, isolating a pocket of 32 men, older veterans by the looks of them. Each of the isolated men bears a look of terrified recognition, their knees shaking, hands trembling.

One of the five important-looking human soldiers on horse back has also been separated from his four compatriots. "No! You're dead!" he screams. "You're all dead! You were all necessary casualties! It was war!" The spirits, howling, launch themselves at the 32 men.

A huge melee apparently is erupting among them, but it is hard to see through the vast cloud of dust.

Suddenly you hear the voice of Mendryll calling out in song:

"Onward, comrades, into the fray!

Swing sword, cast spell, and win the day!

For if ye hesitate for much too long,

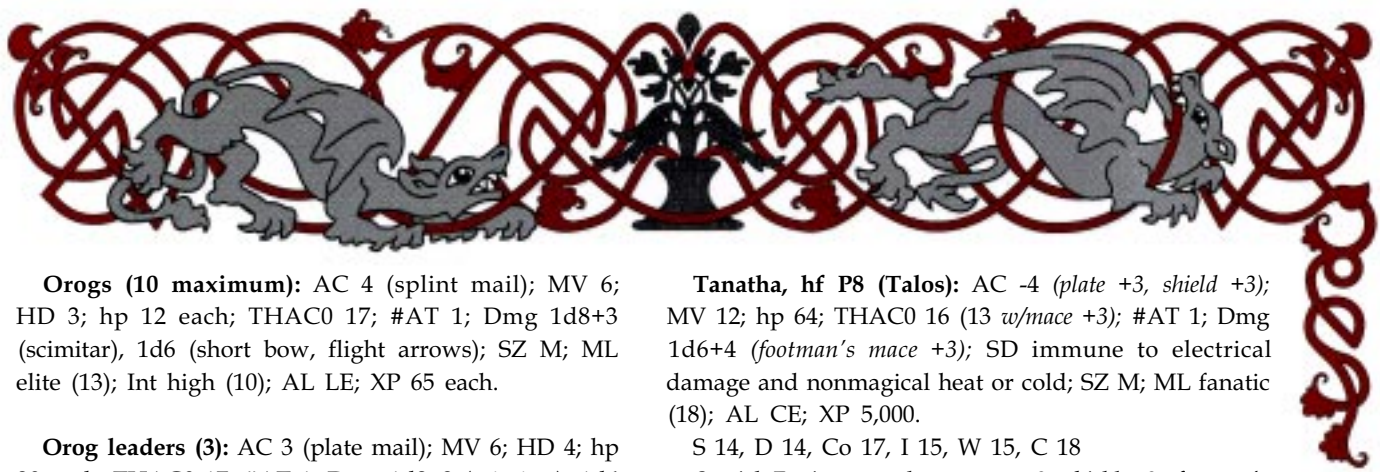
We won't be alive to hear this song!"

The bard is right. Now comes the time for action.

If the Purple Dragon ghosts were summoned, they will easily handle the undead, then begin on the orogs and soldiers. If Darkenshield's dead were summoned, they will attack and dispose of several soldiers and the captain, then work on the orogs. Mendryll will sing and fight, engaging two lieutenants. Everyone on the PCs' side gains a +1 to hit for the next eight rounds. Lord Mournsoul will engage the third lieutenant, all the while moaning about how unfair life is.

The PCs will have to deal with Lord Aris, Ratakos the necromancer, Tanatha the stormlord of Talos, Gribbergrash the orog chief, the three orog leaders, and a handful of regular orogs and soldiers. (Statistics for these adversaries are repeated here for convenience.)

If any PC asks Hoar to single out the murderers of the adventuring company, a blood-red aura of light covers six soldiers and two orogs.



Orogs (10 maximum): AC 4 (splint mail); MV 6; HD 3; hp 12 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+3 (scimitar), 1d6 (short bow, flight arrows); SZ M; ML elite (13); Int high (10); AL LE; XP 65 each.

Orog leaders (3): AC 3 (plate mail); MV 6; HD 4; hp 20 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+3 (scimitar), 1d6 (short bow, flight arrows); SZ M; ML elite (14); Int high (11); AL LE; XP 175 each.

Lord Aris's soldiers, F3 (20 maximum): AC 5 (chain mail); MV 12; hp 15 each; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword), 1d6 (short bow, flight arrows), 1d4 (dagger); SZ M; ML steady (11); Int average (9); AL LE or NE; XP 120 each.

Lord Vorik Aris, hm F9: AC -6 (full plate +2, shield +2, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 100; THAC0 12 (9 w/vorpal blade); #AT 2; Dmg 1d8+6 (vorpal blade +3 long sword); SZ M; ML fearless (19); AL LE; XP 5,000.

S 16, D 16, Co 18, I 15, W 17, C 16

Special Equipment: full plate +2, shield +2, vorpal blade +3, ring of human influence, full helm, heavy warhorse.

Ratakos, hm Nec 12: AC 2 (robe of archmagi, Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 33; THAC0 17 (14 w/dagger +3); #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+3 (dagger +3); SZ M; ML elite (14); AL CN; XP 8,000.

S 8, D 17, Co 15, I 18, W 18, C 6

Special Equipment: grey robe of the archmagi, dagger +3, amulet versus undead (7th level), ring of undead command (see "Magical Items," page 126), ring of regeneration, potion of wight control (2 doses left), scroll of protection from magic.

Spellbook (5/5/5/5/2): 1st — burning hands, chill touch*, corouselight*†, detect undead*, magic missile*, shocking grasp, wall of fog*, wizard mark; 2nd — cloak undead*†, darkness 15' radius*, ESP*, knock, protection from cantrips, spectral hand*, stinking cloud, undead mount*†, wizard lock; 3rd — feign death, hold undead*, mummy touch*†, paralyze*†, phantom steed, revenance†, skull watch†, vampiric touch*, wraithform*; 4th — Belryn's burning blood*†, contagion, enervation*, mask of death*†, Evard's black tentacles, polymorph other*, ice storm*; 5th — animate dead*, avoidance*, cloudkill*, cone of cold*, disguise undead†, summon shadow*; 6th — Bloodstone's spectral steed*†, death fog, death spell*, lich touch†, teleport dead†.

Tanatha, hf P8 (Talos): AC -4 (plate +3, shield +3); MV 12; hp 64; THAC0 16 (13 w/mace +3); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+4 (footman's mace +3); SD immune to electrical damage and nonmagical heat or cold; SZ M; ML fanatic (18); AL CE; XP 5,000.

S 14, D 14, Co 17, I 15, W 15, C 18

Special Equipment: plate armor +3, shield +3, footman's mace +3, helm of comprehending languages and reading magic, ring of regeneration, 4 vials of unholy water, holy symbol of Talos.

Spells (5/4/3/2): 1st — cause light wounds, darkness, detect good, protection from good, shillelagh; 2nd — detect charm, fire trap, know alignment, silence 15' radius; 3rd — animate dead, bestow curse, cause disease; 4th — cause serious wounds, poison.

Spell-like Abilities: shocking grasp 1/day, call lightning 1/day, water walk at will, control winds 1/day, lightning bolt 1/day.

Gribbergrash, orog chief: AC 3 (plate mail); MV 6; HD 5; hp 40; THAC0 15 (13 w/battle axe +2); #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+5 (battle axe +2, Str bonus); SZ M; ML champion (16); Int high (12); AL LE; XP 420.

Ill Be Back!

Lord Aris, Ratakos, and Tanatha will do their best to escape if at least two-thirds of their force is wiped out. The order to retreat will be sounded, which causes all of the forces to run away in a disorganized, every-man-for-himself fashion.

Aris will return to his primary castle and begin hatching two plans: one to take over Cormyr, the other to humiliate and then destroy the PCs.

The Aftermath

At last, silence descends over the battlefield. The final few buildings of Darkenshield are now toppled, thanks to the massive battles that erupted everywhere.

The countenances of the villagers turn from expressions of harsh, bloodthirsty vengeance to the soft, beaming expressions of peace. The spirits look at each other as if it was the first time they have seen each other since they perished fifteen years ago. You see the joyous meetings of dead families, reunited at last in peaceful death, all memories of the pain and sadness they experienced now erased completely.

The area fills with a dazzling white light, and the sky opens up, revealing a great crystal tower. Villagers and dead Purple Dragons alike look up in awe-filled hope. One by one, the vil-



lagers are taken up into the opening, and you are sure they go to a better place than this life. The ghosts of two small children, clutching the hands of their ghostly parents, take the time to look back at you, and smile a simple thanks.

The opening fades, and despite the warm afterglow you feel, you realize that something is wrong. The three dozen Purple Dragons are still among you. None were taken up. Many hang their heads in sorrow or shame, realizing that perhaps what they did in this battle was not enough to atone for what they did earlier. Several of the shades fall to their knees, weeping in deep bitterness.

A golden light abruptly fires on the eastern horizon, and a portal opens up. From the portal marches two columns of warriors, male and female. Each column contains humans, elves, dwarves, and members of other demihuman races. They line up on either side of the portal. A giant gauntleted hand manifests itself in the opening and beckons to the Purple Dragons. A rumble of thunder sounds much like the words "Come home, soldiers of honor. Come and rest."

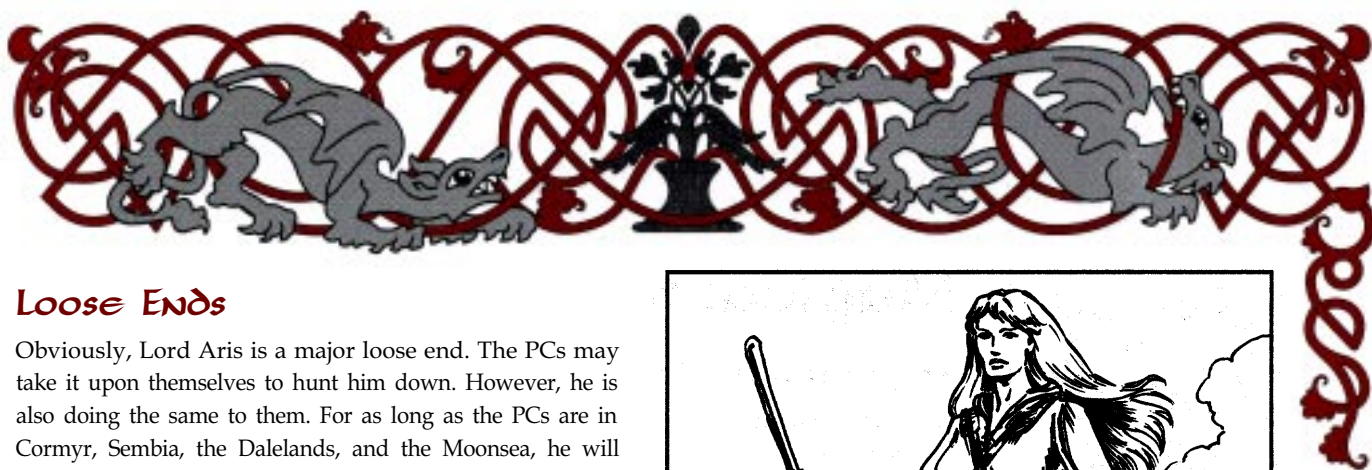
The shades, their faces a mixture of relief, joy, and discipline, stand at attention. Their captain leads the march with a ghostly yet nevertheless lusty "Forwarrrd, march!"

As the ghosts march toward the door, the captain yells

"Eyes . . . RIGHT!" As one, the marching Purple Dragons turn their heads to the right, staring right at you. Thirty six hands snap up in a salute, directed at you. You can see that many of the spirit-soldiers are smiling. More than a few have ghostly tears running down their faces.

At last the entire procession enters the gateway, and the two columns of dead warriors file in as well. The final warrior turns and looks at you. You see an old woman in armor, gripping a hammer. She touches her heart in salute, and you realize that it is Azreena Ironoath of Halfnap! Obviously, she must have passed away since you last saw her. The look on her face is one of approval, though, and you could swear you see her mouth the words "Well done." Then, she turns and steps into the portal, which vanishes, leaving you alone on a quiet battlefield.

Mendryll and Mournsoul are alive, neither of them having suffered more than a scratch. They offer to escort the PCs back to Tilverton.



Loose Ends

Obviously, Lord Aris is a major loose end. The PCs may take it upon themselves to hunt him down. However, he is also doing the same to them. For as long as the PCs are in Cormyr, Sembia, the Dalelands, and the Moonsea, he will seek them out and send teams of assassins to slay them.

If Wyvernwatch was not fully explored, now is a good time to do so. Perhaps a more powerful evil entity has moved in, and brought in some nasty creatures as well.

It is assumed that the killers of the adventuring party were slain in the battle, but what if they weren't? If at least one PC swore to Hoar that he would find the killers, then this bit of business remains to be resolved.

Linking This Adventure

Obviously, there is room for some of the adventuring groups encountered in "Murder Most Magical" to make an appearance here. One may even be the group that gets killed by Aris's forces, which then the PCs must avenge.

Zhentish enemies from "Bad Neighbor Policy" may be inserted in this adventure, and could even march with Aris's armies in the last battle.

If Ratakos the necromancer died in "Bad Neighbor Policy," the DM should create a comparably powered substitute, perhaps Ratakos's favored pupil.

Epilogue

When the ruling family in Tilverton, the Rowanmantles, hears about the PCs' deeds, they throw the adventurers a lavish party. It is decided that each PC earns a 1,000 gp reward for their efforts, plus a complete waiver on all taxes against found loot. All that is asked is that the items collectively known as the Four from Cormyr be turned over to the Rowanmantles for safe keeping. For the next tenday, the PCs are hailed as heroes, getting free food and lodging during that time.

So ends your adventures in Cormyr, at least these four. There are still many wrongs to right, many loose ends to tie up, and, quite possibly, many people seeking your collective heads mounted on pikes. Still, your reputation has grown, and you can depart Cormyr with the knowledge that you not only met every challenge, you prevailed as true heroes should. Well done!



Experience Point Bonuses

Each of these bonuses should be distributed evenly among all party members who participated in or agreed with taking the described action.

Recovering <i>Silveredge</i> and invoking the	
Four from Cormyr ritual:	10,000
Invoking the Darkenshield ritual:	5,000
Singling out the murderers of the	
adventuring company and taking	
them back for trial:	5,000
Handing over the Four from	
Cormyr in Tilverton:	5,000



Magical Items

Keychain of Domestic Propriety

A Cormyrean mage got the inspiration for this device during a visit to Calimshan. Usually fashioned from silver, gold, or electrum, this keychain has six charms on it: a small broom, a cloth, a feather duster, a scrub brush, a rose, and a spring. Each charm can be invoked (by reciting a command word or sound) only once per turn, and no charm can be invoked twice in consecutive turns. The effect of a charm lasts for one round unless otherwise specified.

Keys can be stored normally on this chain. The keychain comes in a second form, that of a charm bracelet, favored by maids.

small broom: Uttering a “whoosh” sound while possessing this charm creates a magical broom and dustpan, which can sweep up a mess with a total weight of no more than two pounds. When the dustpan disappears, so do its contents.

cloth: Saying the word “gleam” conjures up a cloth that can be made to rub against anything the user desires, making its surface shine.

feather duster: The word “dust” creates a magical feather duster that can whisk away dust or light soil from a surface of as much as 16 square feet.

scrub brush: Saying “run-a-dub” brings into being a wet, soapy brush that will clean away any stain or heavy soil that can be cleaned by normal means.

rose: Touching this charm and uttering the command word “pew” fills a 30’ x 30’ area with a subtle rose scent, magically masking even a stronger, disgusting odor. This effect lasts for one turn.

spring: This charm appears to be a small metal spring. When the possessor tugs on it and speaks the command word “smooth,” magic is invoked that has the power to remove wrinkles from clothing, straighten a crooked picture, or get rid of a lump in a carpet.

Ring of Undead Command

This ring of bone allows the wearer to control up to 30 Hit Dice of undead once per day, as if the creatures had been affected by the 5th-level wizard spell domination (saving throw applies):

War Wizard Cloak

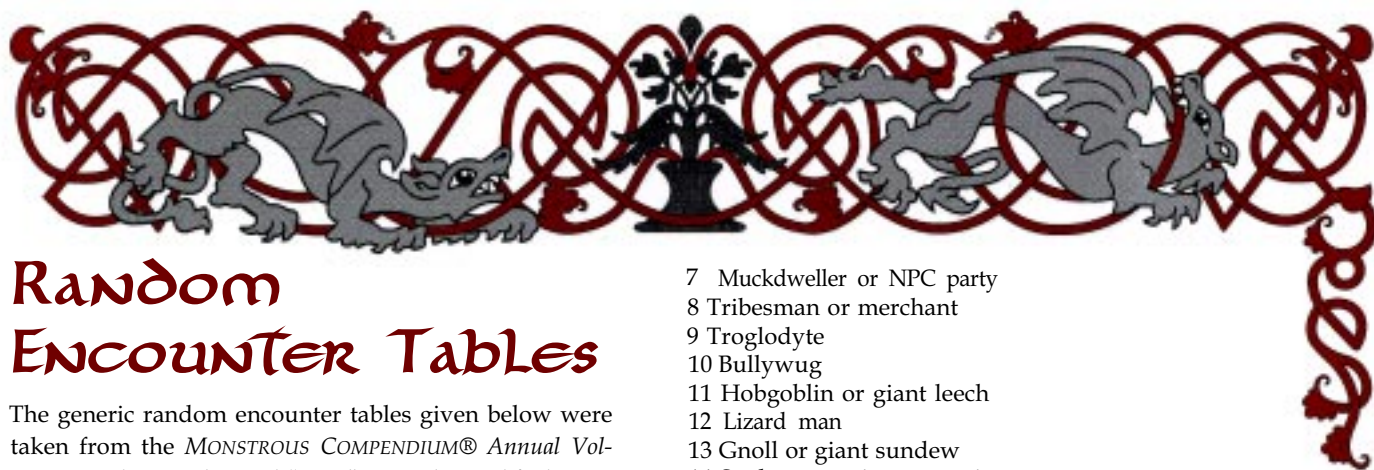
A *war wizard cloak* has all the powers of a *ring of warmth*. It also confers *infravision* on the wearer, plus the automatic protection of *feather fall*, *ironguard*, and *protection from normal missiles* spells. Once per day, the wearer can call on the cloak to power a *sending* (as the 5th-level wizard spell) and a *dimension door* (as the 4th-level wizard spell) *Dimension door* trips of up to 1,200 yards are possible.

For more information on this item, see page 237 of *Volo’s Guide to Cormyr*.

Necklace of Memory Enhancement

The wearer of this necklace is immune to all memory loss from both natural and magical causes (such as a *forget* spell). The necklace has no effect on a wizard’s spell memorization.

Also, the wearer can recall with absolute clarity any sight or conversation he experienced or any book he read within the previous seven days. Memories prior to seven days ago are recalled with only normal clarity. The necklace affects only events that occurred while the necklace was worn by the user.



Random Encounter Tables

The generic random encounter tables given below were taken from the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Annual Volume Two*. They can be used “as is,” or can be modified using the rules in Chapter 11 of the *DUNGEON MASTER Guide*.

When to check for random encounters—or, indeed, whether to use these tables at all—is strictly up to you as the DM. If you don’t want to interrupt the main story lines of these adventures, or if the PCs are already having enough trouble dealing with the set encounters in each of these missions, then you are free to decide that overland travel from one place to another is accomplished uneventfully (i.e., with no random encounters).

Keep in mind that “random encounter” does not always mean “combat,” and in fact some of the characters and creatures the PCs might come across could turn out to be valuable allies or sources of information. If things aren’t going well for the heroes in “Redemption,” for instance, they just might happen to bump into a group of like-minded NPC adventurers as they travel back to Darkenshield for the ultimate confrontation with Lord Aris’s army.

Temperate Plain

- 2 Elf, grey
- 3 Wyvern (gold dragon 10%)
- 4 Bear, brown
- 5 Spider, large
- 6 Jackal (jackalwere 10%)
- 7 Boar, wild
- 8 Dog, wild or worg
- 9 Wolf
- 10 Herd animal
- 11 Nomad (merchant 10%)
- 12 Nomad or NPC party
- 13 Horse, wild
- 14 Orc
- 15 Hobgoblin
- 16 Ogre
- 17 Snake, poisonous or giant, hill
- 18 Pegasus or troll
- 19 DM special
- 20 DM special

Temperate Marsh or Swamp

- 2 Dragon, black
- 3 Behir
- 4 Toad or frog, poisonous
- 5 Toad or frog, giant
- 6 Lizard, giant

- 7 Muckdweller or NPC party
- 8 Tribesman or merchant
- 9 Troglodyte
- 10 Bullywug
- 11 Hobgoblin or giant leech
- 12 Lizard man
- 13 Gnoll or giant sundew
- 14 Snake, constrictor or poisonous
- 15 Ghoul or ghast
- 16 Troll or shambling mound
- 17 Will o’ wisp
- 18 Hydra or yellow musk creeper
- 19 DM special
- 20 DM special

Temperate Forest

- 2 Elf, wood (gnome 10%)
- 3 Wyvern or green dragon
- 4 Lycanthrope, tiger, or criosphinx
- 5 Badger, giant, or giant weasel
- 6 Worg or giant skunk
- 7 Owl, giant, or stirge
- 8 Wolf or brown bear
- 9 Tribesman (NPC party 10%)
- 10 Choke creeper or hangman tree
- 11 Mammal, small, or tribesman
- 12 Kobold
- 13 Orc
- 14 Bugbear or ogre
- 15 Ettin or treant
- 16 Spider, giant (ettercap 10%)
- 17 Beetle, stag or bombardier
- 18 Owlbear or ghoul
- 19 DM special
- 20 DM special

Temperate Mountain

- 2 Dragon, copper or red
- 3 Bear, cave, or hydra
- 4 Gnome or mountain dwarf
- 5 Bear, brown, or werebear
- 6 Bugbear
- 7 Aerial encounter
- 8 Wolf or worg
- 9 Tribesman (NPC party 10%)
- 10 Badger, giant, or giant eagle
- 11 Giant, hill
- 12 Giant, stone or fomorian
- 13 Ogre or troll
- 14 Hobgoblin or orc
- 15 Ghoul or wight
- 16 Verbeeg or galeb duhr
- 17 Will o’ wisp (sylph 10%)
- 18 Giant, frost or fire
- 19 DM special
- 20 DM special

Through me you pass

into the city of woe:

Through me you pass

into eternal pain:

Through me among

the people lost for aye...

Before me things

create were none, save things

Eternal, and eternal I endure.

All hope abandon, ye who enter here.

—Dante Alighieri,
The Divine Comedy

Ravenloft

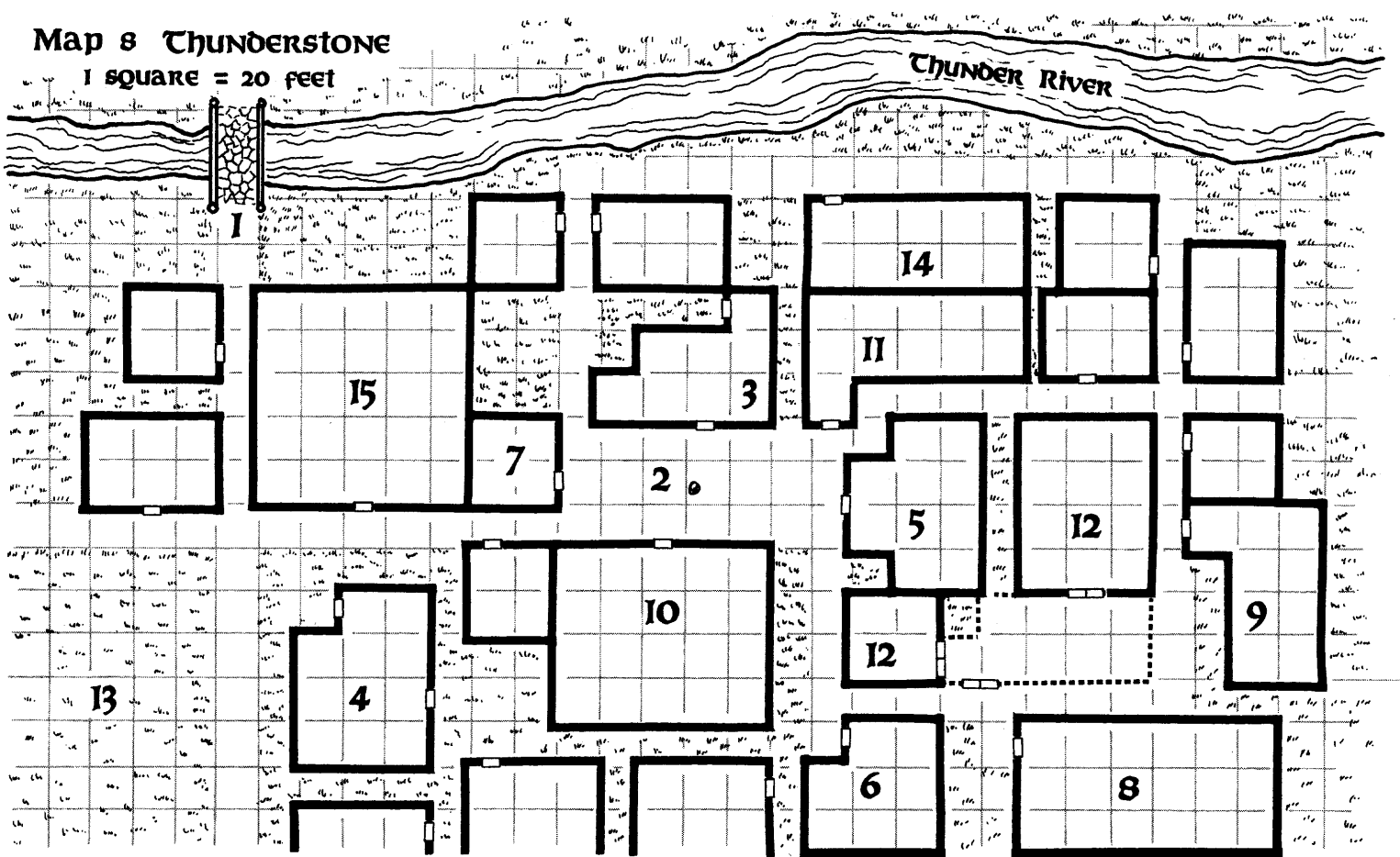
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Map 8 Thunderstone

1 square = 20 feet



LAWS OF CORMYR

- 1. All persons entering Cormyr must register with the officials of a border garrison.**
- 2. Foreign currency can only be used in certain locations. Please exchange your coins for Cormyrean golden lions at your first opportunity.**
- 3. Adventurers must acquire a charter before undertaking any operation as a group.**
- 4. All weapons must be peace-bonded. The only persons exempt from this law are members of chartered adventuring groups and members of mercenary groups that can offer proof of employment.**
- 5. Harming cats is forbidden.**
- 6. Bow your head to royalty and the local nobility.**
- 7. Purple Dragons have the right to search you upon request.**
- 8. Hunting on private land is forbidden.**



Four From Cormyr

by John Terra

The kingdom of Cormyr is a land of law and order, a country populated by citizens who live good lives and treat their neighbors well. If you think these characteristics make Cormyr an unexciting and uninviting place . . . think again.

Despite the ever-present Purple Dragon soldiers and War Wizards who are charged with keeping the kingdom safe from treachery and greed, Cormyr is a place where evil lurks in countless nooks and crannies, where opportunities for heroic adventurers to do good for themselves and for all of Cormyr are as abundant as the dents on a dwarf's helmet.

Four from Cormyr is a quartet of adventures that can be played individually or as a series. By the time they have experienced all that lies within this 128-page book, ranging from a grand solree at the home of a noble to a chilling expedition into the Vast Swamp, player characters will know more about this challenging land than they ever thought they would need to know—and even if they succeed in countering all the threats they will face, they'll find that the conclusion to each adventure opens a new vista of possibilities for continuing danger and intrigue.

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