

THE HOLDENSHIRE CHRONICLES

ACT TWO



JOURNEY TO
SKULL MOUNTAIN

INTRODUCTION

The Holdenshire Chronicles takes EN Publishing's classic adventure *To Slay a Dragon* and revamps it for a new generation of gamers. Using fifth edition rules, we hearken back to the 1980s and embark on an adventure which is sure to remind you of RPG modules and boxed sets long past!

This trilogy of adventures leads an adventuring party from the town of Hengistbury on a journey across the land to challenge a red dragon who dwells in a volcano lair known as Skull Mountain.

In this act, after leaving the bosom of their hometown, the party will embark upon a journey across the wilderness, seeking the other treasures that will help them destroy the red dragon—a dwarven hammer, a magic quiver, a secret map, and the dragon's true name itself.

Like the previous act, this adventure's structure is very open-ended. The PCs are free to explore in any direction they desire to find these artifacts, and then to go toward the Desolation and the final confrontation.

Similar to the previous act, quests here arise out of rumors and encounters with NPCs, rather than being imposed on the PCs from above. The party will have to uncover the nature of the treasures and where they lie and how to get them themselves.

Fortunately for them, legends regarding how to kill the dragon *Cirothe* have been around for many generations, and retellings of them are not especially rare. To get good, accurate information, though, the PCs must dig deep.

GATHERING THE TOOLS

There are a few basic ways that the PCs can gain information on the location of the dragonslaying artifacts:

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A DRAGON KICKSTARTER BACKERS

- ▶ Very accurate information is considered treasure, and will appear when you gain treasure for certain quests. This information could come in the form of words from a grateful survivor, or notes on a scrap of paper, or even out of the mouths of some cowering enemy.
- ▶ General information from neutral or friendly NPCs can be gained by talking with them. With the red dragon active in the area, most are reluctant to talk out loud about ways to destroy her, but a little persuasion, deception, or intimidation might make them reveal more. Generally, this information will direct the PCs to the quests that can give them the most accurate information.

- False information is spread throughout the NPCs as well, and many might not even realize it's false. This can lead the party astray from their main goal, giving the dragon more time to attack.

The main risk in this act is that Cirothe attacks the party. She is distant, slow to act, and generally not afraid, but time is a concern: the longer it takes to kill her, the more likely she is to notice what the PCs are doing and come after them. The party may well “lose” this act by dying at her hands if they don’t acquire the artifacts in time.



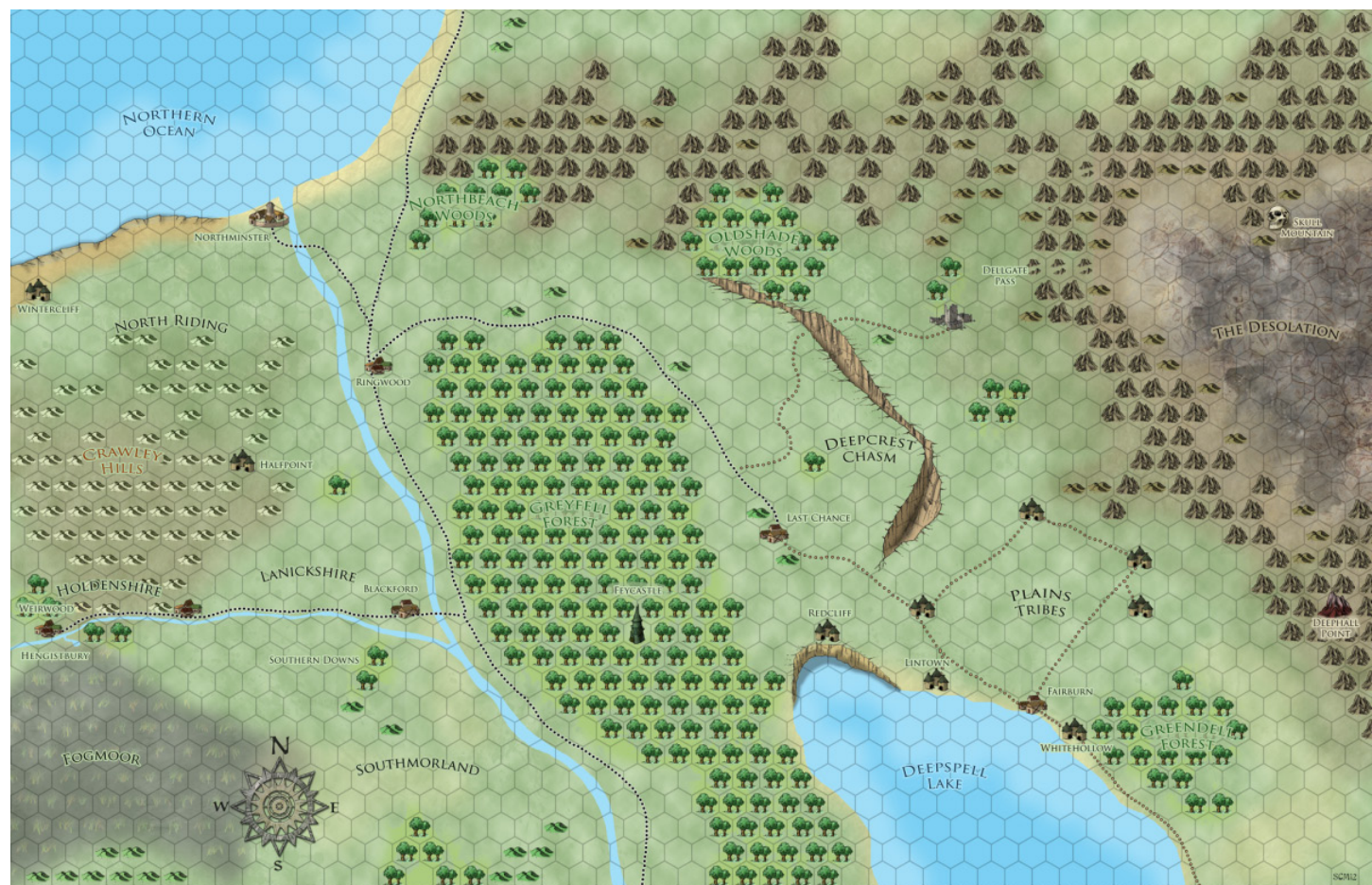
Get the Previous Parts! The “Holdenshire Primer” document is at <https://www.patreon.com/posts/4123536>, and “Holdenshire Act One” is at <https://www.patreon.com/posts/4422056>.

ACT STRUCTURE

The PCs’ progress on the adventure is measured in terms of stars. These stars help measure how close the party is to one of the four items required to slay Cirothe once and for all: the *Coward’s Map*, the *Hammer of Vengeance*, the *Quiver of the Dragon’s Bane*, and *Cirothe’s True Name*. The party gains stars by completing story-relevant tasks (beginning with the bandit camp on the Southern Downs), and each task relevant to one side of the story awards the players one star toward that goal. You can even use the number of stars the PCs have earned to keep track of their level, rather than keep track of XP, if you prefer; simply award the PCs one level for every four stars they earn (a total of 3 levels over the course of this act).

The story-relevant adventures are as follows, and are marked with the level the party ought to be before undertaking the adventure:

THE LANDS AROUND HOLDENSHIRE



THE COWARD'S MAP

This legendary map is said to lay with the Cowards, the dwarves in Last Chance who fled from Cirothe's onslaught while their brethren stood to fight. It is said to belong to the Fedap clan, who lead the cowards in their flight. The last living heir of the Fedap clan is a smuggler named Vyswava, who is rarely in town, and especially active sneaking illegal pipeweed from the halflings of Halfpoint into Last Chance.

PART ONE: THE BANDITS OF BLACKFORD (LEVEL 4)

The bandits have been menacing Lanickshire for too long—exterminate them. They have been working with orcs from the North Riding, who seem to be having a bit of trouble in Halfpoint.

PART TWO: HALFPINTS IN HALFPOINT (LEVEL 4)

Halflings in the town of Halfpoint are under siege from a tribe of orcs. They might get wiped off the map if the party doesn't help them out. They are led by a courageous (if reckless) halfling knight.

Captive with the orcs is a dwarven smuggler named Vyswava Fidap, who is pursuing a

vendetta against an ogre who has taken a job here. The ogre is from near Last Chance, and Vyswava has followed him here to demand back her family's ancestral mace. It turns out that he doesn't have it anymore, having given it to another group of ogres in Deepcrest Chasm.

PART THREE: DOWN THE HATCH (LEVELS 4-5)

Vyswava wants to end the ogres, and get back "what's hers"—the item that lead her to smuggling in the first place, an ancestral mace important to her family, that the ogres took. She's part of the Cowards, the dwarves in Last Chance who fled the onslaught of Cirothe. If the party helps retrieve her family's mace from the ogres, she's got the means to pay for its retrieval.

When retrieved, the mace turns out to be hollow—a receptacle for a map that shows the secret exit many of the cowards took when fleeing Cirothe (through Deephall Point). She gives it to the party, believing Cirothe is the cause of her family's bad reputation to begin with, and that if she plays a role in helping slay that dragon, the Fidap name may be redeemed.

THE HAMMER OF VENGEANCE

When Cirothe attacked the dwarven fortress of Deephall Point, it is said she did not kill all of them, but rather abandoned the great city to giants, who then enslaved the remaining population to make arms and armor for them. Rumors say that the reason she didn't simply exterminate them had to do with a divine weapon that the dwarves managed to construct—before falling to the giants. If the population still remains alive, they may know of this weapon. Unfortunately, no dwarves have been seen out of Deephall Point for generations...unless some rumors in Last Chance about a strange one-eyed dwarf are to be believed.

PART ONE: TROLLWOOD (LEVEL 5)

A dwarf refugee named Theobod in Last Chance has an unusual story to tell to those seeking Cirothe's downfall, but he wants a display of trust, first. If the party can slay the elder troll of the Oldshade Woods and bring him its head, he'll talk.

In the Trollwood, it's clear that the trolls are amassing an army, under a giant's leadership. When the party returns to Theobod, he reveals his last name: Troyeh, one of the last living descendants of the dwarves still dwelling in slavery in Deephall Point.

PART TWO: OF THE BIG AND THE SMALL (LEVEL 5)

Theobod Troyeh can help any party that knows how to get into Deephall Point (or any party bold enough to try the direct route!) to get access to the Sanctum, where his ancestors placed their greatest work: a hammer designed as a secret weapon to crush the source of Cirothe's power.

In Deephall Point, the party notices the demonic overlords of the giants who dwell there, and can smash their power there. The true source of the power is also revealed by the liberated dwarves: a demon named Azaziz who lives in Deepcrest Chasm.

PART THREE: DIG DEEP (LEVEL 6)

Theobod Troyeh wants to shatter the demon that serves as the conduit for Cirothe's divine magic, Azaziz. If coated in the demon's blood, the hammer can be used to suppress Cirothe's spells. To do that, the party must assault the rift in the center of Deepcrest Chasm, where Azaziz is located. They also have the capability to close the rift, if they so choose.

After the onslaught, Theobod entrusts the hammer to the party, telling them to wield it wisely, in honor of the dwarves of Deephall.

THE QUIVER OF THE DRAGON'S BANE

The elves of Greendell Forest seek Cirothe's end, too, and are reportedly developing a powerful weapon to use against her, but have been repeatedly unsuccessful: every warrior who has wielded an elven weapon against Cirothe has failed. Their newest weapon is said to have more promise, due to the influence of the sage Sonina. Unfortunately, while visiting Northbeach to research possible solutions to the problem of failed weapons with the gnomes, she was lost—all communication from the forest was suddenly cut off, and rumors of a goblin war and a dead unicorn king have kept potential rescuers at bay.

PART ONE: THE BANDITS OF BLACKFORD (LEVEL 4)

The bandits have been menacing Lanickshire for too long—exterminate them. It turns out they have a captive gnome from the Northbeach Woods, who claims his home is overrun by goblins.

PART TWO: THE GOBLIN WAR (LEVEL 4)

Goblins have taken over Northbeach Woods, using wolves and spiders from their nearby home—Oldshade. It is clear that the spiders are in charge, here. Help the gnomes here rescue their patron and king, the unicorn Lorand.

There is a guest of the unicorn present—an elf from Greendell named Sonina. She wants to be returned home, but before then, she wants to get what she came here for in the first place: the fangs of the ancient spider queen Sheeltielle, said to produce the only poison in the world that dragons fear.

PART THREE: A GREAT POISON (LEVELS 6–7)

Of the great spiders of Oldshade Forest, the oldest and strongest is Sheeltielle, the Spider Queen. She produces a venom strong enough to slay a dragon—a venom the elves of Greendell want to create a magical quiver of arrows capable of hurting Cirothe.

Upon returning with Sheeltielle's venom to Sonina, the party can leave for Greendell Forest, where the elves will craft the *Quiver of the Dragon's Bane*.

CIROTHE'S TRUE NAME

It is said that the Mad Fairy Queen of Greyfell Forest was one of Cirothe's most powerful foes, but shortly before Cirothe's rise, she went mad. It is possible she knows secrets related to the destruction of the dragon, but Greyfell Forest is famously impassible for those who were not born there. The elder elves of Greendell may still be able to walk its wooded pathways, but none have set foot under those trees for aeons, fearful of invoking the Fairy Queen's wrath. Rumor has it that one old man is willing to challenge this tradition, in the twilight of his life: he wishes to see his home at least one last time, and, if he leads, the party may be able to find the Mad Fairy Queen and wrest some knowledge from her.

PART ONE: QUICKWOOD (LEVEL 6)

In Greendell Forest, the party can encounter an elf woodsman named Rajod who is working on crafting the Quiver of the Dragon's Bane (or who has potentially already crafted it). He's concerned because a companion of his, Arotha, went missing when they were harvesting wood in the Greyfell. If the PCs could find a sign of him, Rajod would be very appreciative.

They find Arotha (and several other elves) captive by treants at the edge of Greyfell—treants lead by a force of drow. These drow seem to be manipulating the normally-benevolent treants with some sort of vile spellcraft, and Arotha (and the elves of Greendell when he is returned) note that this is similar to how the behavior of the Fey Queen changed—evidence that the drow are behind her corruption. Either way, the elves cannot tolerate drow in their ancestral lands.

PART TWO: THE MAD QUEEN'S ARMY (LEVEL 6-7)

The party is asked by the elves of Greendell to sneak into Greyfell and destroy the drow there. They can do this via the tunnels beneath the forest, infiltrating from the shore near Deepspell Lake. They find that the drow are actually protected by twisted fey creatures from the Fairy Queen.

In infiltrating here, they find that none of these creatures are truly in control of their own actions—even the drow seem to be possessed by something otherworldly, capable of overriding their consciousness. The origins of this foul spellcraft seem to be the idols the drow and the fey creatures all possess—idols of a bat-winged woman. Some drow seem to snap out of the spell before they die, and speak the name of "The Devil Shebnem."

PART THREE: UNNATURE (LEVEL 7)

The party must infiltrate the Feycastle to discover the origin of the illness that afflicts the Fairy Queen. The direct route may be suicide, but once within the walls of the Feycastle, the party sees a palace crawling with devils from the Nine Hells. It turns out that the Fairy Queen has been controlled by a devil named Shebnem, who serves as her right-hand advisor. Shebnem herself is an Erinyes, seeking to create a hellscape in the Greyfell Forest using the Fairy Queen as her vessel.

In the aftermath of the confrontation, the Fairy Queen dies from her long corruption, but not before sharing *Cirothe's True Name* with the party.



COMPLETING THE ACT

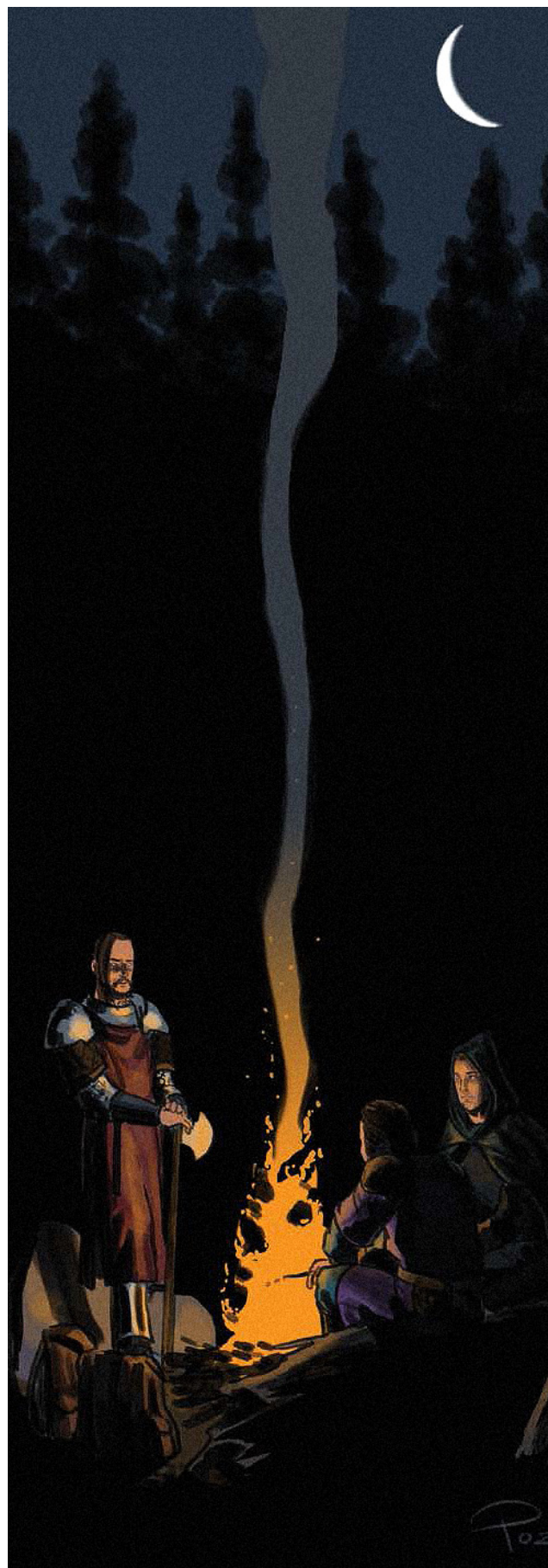
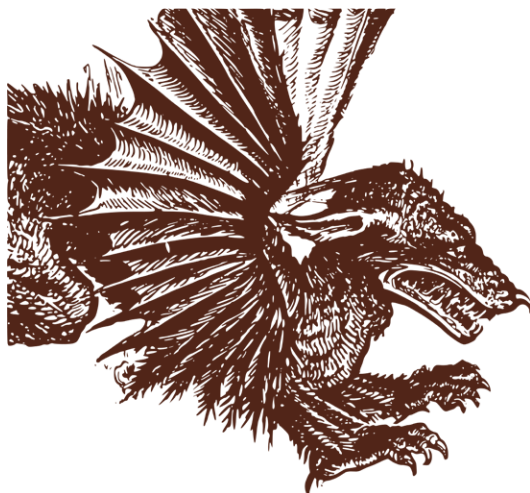
So, you've slain devils and demons, overcome giants and bandits, dealt with plants and trolls, and you've assembled all that you need to slay Cirothe?

Perhaps.

The function of this act is to allow the party to gain the necessary minor artifacts for having a fighting chance against Cirothe. At any point, the party can simply go to Skull Mountain and challenge her (see the third act for those details), even lacking these useful tools. However, they are likely to be handily obliterated—Cirothe is not a “level-appropriate” challenge, and the tools the party may acquire here will help even the odds.

Of course, a party that is hasty, or that thinks itself especially tough, can challenge Cirothe early, even without a full complement of artifacts, and it is possible (though unlikely) for even an ill-equipped party to win.

Essentially, the end of this act is in the party's hands. When they wish to go confront Cirothe, be that on Day 1 out of the farm, or after a meticulous resolution of the plot threads of this act, you're encouraged to allow them. Of course, a party who confronts Cirothe and finds her too tough might wish to revisit this adventure, or the parts they missed, and gather more strength. Your players should be entirely aware that Cirothe is actually a higher-level threat than the party is likely able to handle—surprising them with a swift death is hardly sporting, but if they walk into that death with their eyes wide open, don't be afraid to hand it to them.



CIROTHE’S ATTACKS

Cirothe isn’t just sitting on her hoard waiting to die while the party goes about collecting the items required to slay her. Though she is quite removed from most events, she does have a network of kobold cultists that are involved in some minor way in every story-relevant encounter (and in some random encounters), and she knows, in a broad way, the activities that go on in the lands just outside the Desolation.

As a way of harassing the PC party, Cirothe launches from her redoubt every few days to terrorize the populace. As the stakes rise and the party gathers more items (and gets more total stars), her attacks become more brutal, eventually wiping entire towns off the map completely in an effort to stamp out the runts who dare give those cowering mortals hope.

The chance that this happens is represented by the Dragon Die, which should be a single d20. This d20 is rolled every day, and on a result of 20 or greater, Cirothe flies out from Skull Mountain and wreaks some havoc in the world. As the party gathers stars, the group should add the total number of stars the party has to the result of the d20 roll (from +1 with one star, to +12 if they have all the stars).

When Cirothe destroys a location, it is reduced to ruins and filled with kobolds. Refugees flood into neighboring towns (if they’re intact), though

some stay and try to rebuild (and fight against the kobolds who move in). Cirothe destroys about half the people in a given town, so if the GM would like to determine if a specific NPC is alive, simply roll 1d20, and on an 11 or better, they are. The GM can also pick and choose certain NPCs to live or die, depending on their needs for the rest of the adventure.

CIROTHE’S RAMPAGE

1d20	Rampage
20	Cirothe appears overhead. The next day, in addition to any other encounters the party has, the party also has one Kobold Cultists encounter.
21	Cirothe destroys Lintown
22	Cirothe destroys Wintercliff
23	Cirothe destroys Redcliff
24	Cirothe destroys Northminster
25	Cirothe destroys Whitehollow
26	Cirothe destroys Ringwood
27	Cirothe destroys Fairburn
28	Cirothe destroys Halfpoint
29	Cirothe destroys Blackford
30	Cirothe destroys Greendell Forest
31	Cirothe destroys Last Chance
32	Cirothe destroys Hengistbury and Thornbury

If you roll a location that Cirothe has already destroyed, then Cirothe instead sends kobold cultists to destroy the party (as if a 20 was rolled).



OVERLAND TRAVEL

This adventure includes optional rules for each day of overland travel. Follow these steps:

1. At the beginning of the day, the GM makes a check to see if the party gets lost and makes a check to see if Cirothe attacks.
2. After this check, the party enters the next hex in the direction they are traveling. If the party is lost, the actual hex will be random (roll 1d6, moving clockwise from the northwest face of the hex). If they are slowed or moving through difficult terrain, they will not reach the next hex until the next day. If the party is along the road, or mounted, they may enter a second hex. Moving faster than usual and slower than usual cancel each other out, enabling the party to move the usual one hex.
3. In each hex, the GM describes what the PCs notice in general terms (including any major features, such as terrain types, roads, rivers, settlements, etc.).
4. The GM also rolls each day, as the party gets underway, for a random encounter. If a random encounter is indicated, the GM runs that. After the encounter, the rest of the day or night continues normally.
5. When the party rests for the night, each character must consume one supply pouch (see "Supplies") or is considered to have gone the day without food or water. A character can go without food for a number of days equal to 3 + his or her Constitution modifier (minimum 1), but needs one gallon of water per day (1 supply pouch's worth). A character who drinks only half that much water must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or suffer one level of exhaustion at the end of the day. A character with access to even less water automatically suffers one level of exhaustion at the end of the day.
6. When the party rests for the night, they must possess a tool pack to gain the benefits of a long rest.
7. The day ends, and the procedure returns to step 1 at the beginning of the following day.

GETTING LOST

Each morning, the GM rolls a secret DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check to see if the party becomes lost. The GM makes one check for each PC proficient in the Survival skill. In difficult terrain, such as mountains or forest the DC increases to 15. The GM should not reveal the result of the check. On a failure, the party becomes lost.

The party members may make a passive Wisdom (Survival) check instead of rolling, but this halves their speed for the day.

BEING LOST

If the party is lost, they travel in a random direction. If they move onto another hex, roll 1d6 to randomly determine the hex they enter. The next day, make the standard roll to avoid getting lost, but decrease the DC by 1 for each day they've been lost. On a success, the party is no longer lost, but on a failure, they remain lost for another day.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

As the party travels during the day, they may have a random encounter. Random encounters serve to lead the party along one of the major quest lines, giving them possible hints as to where to go next and helping them gain knowledge, treasure, and allies in their mission.

TIMING OF THE ENCOUNTER

Roll 1d4 to determine if the encounter happens during the day, or while the party is at rest (1–3 during the day, 4 at night). Roll 1d12 to determine at what point during the day or night the encounter happens (1 representing dawn or dusk, 6 representing noon or midnight, and 12 representing dusk or dawn).

FRIENDS, FOES, EVENTS, OR SITES

Once you determine where and when the encounter happens, roll on the Random Encounters chart near the end of this document to determine what kind of encounter it is. The encounters are all described following the table.

Additionally, some encounters have “Story Links.” These links can be included in an encounter to direct the PCs to some bit of the adventure.

REWARDS

When the party does something to earn an award from a random encounter, they receive a minor reward. This comes in the form of consumable objects, small amounts of coin, a minor boon, or common knowledge—not incredibly valuable, but a small distinguishing element that can make it worthwhile for the PCs to engage these encounters.

Other than these rewards, the characters gain little material benefit from random encounters. If you are using milestone experience (see below), do not award them XP from these encounters. A party that gathers loot from the dead in random encounters should generally not find much of use: used weapons and armor, bits of meat and skin and bone, or other harvested items should only net them about 2d8 gp, total, for each encounter: possibly enough to cover the day’s supplies, but generally that’s it. Of course, they can also get one of the random rewards, assuming there’s someone to give it to them. Treasure for main adventures is summarized at the end of each part.

Milestone Experience. Character advancement in this act is not balanced around an XP budget; characters instead gain a level every time they gain 4 stars (the party can gain 12 stars, growing from 4th level at the beginning of this act to 7th level by its completion). You can award standard XP for defeated monsters instead, but the party may not be appropriately leveled for the encounter with Cirothe in the next act.

ILLNESS & INJURY

Some encounters run the risk of causing lasting injury to a character, a disability that simple curative magic cannot remove. A character who gains an illness or an injury suffers a loss of maximum hit points and risks continuing to lose

maximum hit points as the disease or wound worsens, possibly leading to death. The only surefire way to completely heal illnesses and injuries is to find a proper house of healing (found in any town) and spend 7 downtime days there, with no arduous task undertaken during the healing process. Much like how one needs a forge to create weapons, or a kitchen to make food, one needs a house of healing to truly recover from these dire wounds.

A character can be exposed to illness or injury as a feature of an encounter, or as a feature of an area, or even (as an optional rule) by being wounded. For example, a character reduced to 0 hit points may be dealt an injury, while a character eating wild food may be exposed to an illness.

ILLNESS

When you are exposed to an illness, you suffer the following effects:

- ▶ Your maximum hit points are reduced by 1d10;
- ▶ Your daily travel speed is halved (your combat speed is unaffected);
- ▶ You consume double the normal amount of supplies; and
- ▶ You are subjected to a specific problem relative to the illness (roll 2d6 and consult the Common Illnesses table).

RECOVERY AND DEATH

At the end of each day in which you are ill, make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw. If you fail this saving throw, your maximum hit points are reduced by another 1d10. If you succeed on this saving throw, you begin to recover. After three successful saves, you recover entirely. Another character can substitute a Wisdom (Medicine) check for this saving throw, as long as that character performs no other actions for the night aside from rest.

If your maximum hit points are reduced to 0, you die, unable to regain consciousness.

COMMON ILLNESSES

2d6 Illness

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|----|---|
| 2 | Madness: Gain a form of Long-Term Madness that lasts until the illness is cured |
| 3 | Dehydration: Gain a level of exhaustion at the beginning of each day until cured unless you spend an extra supply kit or are near a body of fresh water |
| 4 | Dizziness: Disadvantage on Dexterity-based skill checks and attack rolls made with ranged or finesse weapons |
| 5 | Aches: Disadvantage on Strength saving throws |
| 6 | Chills: Disadvantage on Dexterity saving throws |
| 7 | Fever: Disadvantage on Wisdom saving throws |
| 8 | Nausea: Disadvantage on Constitution saving throws |
| 9 | Spasms: Creatures have advantage on saving throws made against your spells |
| 10 | Weakness: Disadvantage on Strength-based skill checks and melee weapon attack rolls |
| 11 | Boils: Disadvantage on Charisma checks and saving throws |
| 12 | Pain: Reduce maximum hit points by an additional 1d8 |

COMMON INJURIES

2d6 Injury

- | | |
|----|--|
| 2 | Head Wound: Disadvantage on Intelligence checks and saving throws |
| 3 | Facial Lacerations: Disadvantage on Charisma checks and saving throws |
| 4 | Fractured Rib: Disadvantage on Constitution saving throws |
| 5 | Shattered Shoulder: You do not add your Strength modifier to damage rolls |
| 6 | Broken Arm: Disadvantage on melee and ranged weapon attack rolls |
| 7 | Infected Wound: Roll again on the injuries table. You also gain an illness (see the Common Illnesses table) |
| 8 | Broken Leg: Disadvantage on Dexterity saving throws |
| 9 | Shattered Hip: Creatures have advantage on melee weapon attacks against you |
| 10 | Spinal Injury: Disadvantage on Dexterity-based skill checks and attack rolls made with ranged or finesse weapons |
| 11 | Numbness: Disadvantage on Wisdom checks and saving throws |
| 12 | Organ Injury: Maximum HP is reduced by an additional 1d8 |

INJURY

When you are dealt an injury, you suffer the following effects:

- Your maximum hit points are reduced by 1d10;
- Your daily travel speed is halved;
- Your combat speed is halved; and
- You are subjected to a specific problem relative to the injury (roll 2d6 and consult the Common Injuries table).

RECOVERY AND DEATH

At the end of each day in which you are wounded, make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw. If you fail this saving throw, your maximum hit points are reduced by another 1d10. If you succeed on this saving throw, you begin to recover. After

three successful saves, you recover entirely.

Another character can substitute a Wisdom (Medicine) check for this Constitution check, as long as that character performs no other actions for the night aside from rest.

If your maximum hit points are reduced to 0, you die, unable to regain consciousness.

SUPPLIES

While you can record encumbrance by items and weight if you'd like, this adventure introduces a simplified system for keeping track of supplies that makes accounting slightly easier. This adventure includes references to these rules, but if you're not using these special rules, you can feel free to ignore the specific references or handle them with a GM judgment call.

SUPPLY CAPACITY

Each creature has a default supply capacity equal to 1, plus their Strength bonus, modified thus:

- ▶ If the creature is quadrupedal or otherwise exceptionally sturdy (like dwarves), add 2 to the creature's supply capacity.
- ▶ If the creature is Small, decrease their supply capacity by 1.
- ▶ If the creature is Large, increase their supply capacity by 1.

The final result cannot be less than 1. Using this method, a human with a Strength score of 16 (+3) has a carrying capacity of 4. A **warhorse** has a carrying capacity of 8 (1, +2 for quadrupedal, +1 for being Large, +4 for Strength). A halfling with a Strength of 8 has a carrying capacity of 1 (1, -1 for Small, no modification for Strength penalty).

Each supply pouch (see below) takes up one capacity "slot." So the warhorse can carry 8 supply pouches, the human could carry 4, and the halfling could carry 1.

Vehicles also have a supply capacity based solely on their size. For every unoccupied 5-foot square in a vehicle, it has a supply capacity of 2. Thus a 10×10-foot cart has a supply capacity of 8; if it's carrying an elf, it has a capacity of only 6.

Supply capacity measures only your capacity to hold supply pouches. Heavy armor, big weapons, extra backpacks, etc., are not taken into account, and you can default to your normal encumbrance rules for those, be they the standard rules or more of a rule-of-thumb, or whatever you're comfortable with.

Off-Roading. Wheeled vehicles like carts and wagons are designed to run on roads, and cannot travel through hexes that do not contain a road. They can carry large amounts, but they are very limited in where they can go. Pack animals are slightly more versatile, but do introduce extra creatures that may be targeted in battle, exposed to the elements, or otherwise harassed by the dangers of adventuring life, which means dozens of days' worth of supplies might be at risk every time the animals cross a river or the party faces off against a group of bandits.

SUPPLY POUCH

Each supply pouch costs 10 gp and can be purchased in any major town. A supply pouch contains everything that you will consume on a daily trip, including food, water, torches, tinder, lamp oil, and even common repair tools like yarn, thread, needles, etc. While you are assumed to be eating and drinking and repairing your equipment while on the road, a supply pouch is only consumed at the end of the day. Once you've used a supply pouch, it is gone—the yarn used up, the food eaten, the water drank. If you do not have a supply pouch to consume at the end of the day, you begin suffering from hunger and thirst as per the normal rules.

Each supply pouch takes up one slot of supply capacity (see above). So for long journeys into trackless wilderness or along country roads, pack animals, vehicles, and high-Strength individuals may be necessary.

TOOL PACK

A tool pack costs 40 gp and contains various implements and resources for getting along in the wild. This can include saws, shovels, hatchets, crowbars, tents, sleeping bags, changes of clothing, rope, whetstones, etc. As long as you have a tool pack, you can benefit from resting, even in the wilds: you can easily make camp and build a fire and clear the ground and dry out your boots. A tool pack doesn't get used up: as long as you have it, you can make camp. If you lose it or it becomes damaged, you may have to resort to "roughing it" a little bit more.

A tool pack doesn't take up your supply capacity, but you can't wear any other packs or bags with a tool pack, so getting pack animals, porters, and vehicles to carry yours might sound like a better idea, if you want to hold much treasure yourself. This exclusion applies to those methods of conveyance, too, however: a wagon with a tool pack still has room for supplies, but not room for anything else. A horse with a tool pack can't also have saddlebags or carry other encumbering items.

THE BANDITS OF BLACKFORD

The Coward's Map 1

The Quiver of the Dragon's Bane 1

The bandits of the Southern Downs own the town of Blackford. While the town has a nominal mayor and town guard, everyone is truly under the thumb of the bandits, who seek to expand their little empire to include neighboring towns, if possible. In pursuit of that goal, the bandits have reached out to the orcs who live in the Crawley Hills, and have begun terrorizing the Halfling village of Halfpoint. They've also received overtures from the goblins in Oldshade, who have been working on destroying the gnomes of Northbeach.

All this alliance-making is about to pay off for the bandits, who are finalizing some of their deals from an abandoned fortress they've taken shelter within on the Southern Downs in Southmorland.

GOAL: DESTROY THE ALLIANCE

The party's main mission is to crush that alliance. This weakens the orc assault on Halfpoint, and the goblin assault on the Northbeach Woods, offering the NPCs currently confined there an opportunity to leave.

How they crush the alliance is largely up to them, with your judgment determining what is likely to work, but three strategies are presented as possible default options.

PLAN: KILL THE LEADERS

If the party can execute the leaders of the bandits, the alliance will crumble as the bandits begin to crumble from within. The leaders spend much of their time in Camp Rotelle, giving orders to their underlings. They aren't overly reckless, but they are comfortable and confident in their power and authority over the entire Blackford region—they are minor celebrities, and they are in control of an entire town, so they don't fear guards coming to capture them. They also don't fear each other—times are good, and in such a time of plenty, it's easy to overlook interpersonal problems.

The leaders are Vaclav, Ceres, Bartl, and Yahret. They bandits are robust enough to survive if even one of these characters remains alive, so killing them all is the main approach.

That is made difficult because Camp Rotelle is quite well-defended, just in terms of numbers. The party may have to rely on stealth, subterfuge, bluffing, and skullduggery if they wish to infiltrate the camp without alerting the dozens of bandits that are garrisoned there. One solid approach might be to pose as potential new hires; the bandits are looking to make alliances, and hearing that the party might be able to help destabilize Holdenshire (the only region of organized, lawful resistance nearby) could be appealing. The party may have to do some work for the bandits, such as killing guards, putting down a rebellion, etc. but if they can stomach or cheat their way out of that, the bandits are certainly eager to have powerful allies. You can roll on the table below for ideas, and once the party has accomplished 3 deeds, the bandits will generally trust them, and welcome them into the band in a big festival. This might allow them to get close to the leaders.

NEFARIOUS DEEDS

1d6	Deed
1	Kill a troop of guards (use the Guard Patrol random encounter)
2	Murder an innkeeper who has failed to pay (use the Roadside Inn random encounter)
3	Rob a merchant caravan (use the Merchant Caravan random encounter) and turn in the spoils
4	Burn down an orphanage run by priests and priestesses who resist the bandits (use the Roadside Inn random encounter)
5	Bring a group of orcs some filthy lucre as an offering (use the Orc Band random encounter—a Guard Patrol attacks to prevent it)
6	Help a group of goblins sacrifice a toddler they've kidnapped (use the Goblin Band random encounter—a Guard Patrol attacks to prevent it)

Spreading Rumors in Blackford

It's not exactly hard to plant a lie in the minds of the bandit rank-and-file, once the party has earned their trust. If a PC simply makes a Charisma (Deception) check against a given member of the bandit camp's Wisdom (Insight) check, they can get that bandit to believe any fairly credible falsehood. The rumor spreads through the camp fairly quickly—10% of the bandits begin to believe the story, each day, as long as nothing has contradicted it. After 5 days, the rumor is forgotten unless something actively happens to confirm it. If the rumor is contradicted, none of the bandits believe it after 1 day, but during that 1 day, the rumor can be salvaged by making another Charisma (Deception) check against another bandit, this time with disadvantage. If any evidence confirms the rumor before its expiration, an additional 10% of the bandits believe the story on that day. Evidence also stops the rumor from being forgotten for another 5 days, convincing 10% of the force each day.

For instance, if the party bard makes a Charisma (Deception) check against a standard bandit, beginning the rumor that the guards are gearing up for a big attack in 3 days, and the bandit fails their Wisdom (Insight) check, the bandit will begin to spread the rumor. Camp Rotelle has 71 rank-and-file bandits, so each day, 7 bandits begin to talk about the rumor. After 3 days, 21 bandits believe they are going to be imminently attacked...but if no guards show up, the rumor disappears after 1 day, since they have contradictory evidence. Likewise, the rumor might disappear after 1 day if a guard captain is brought in as a prisoner and claims no knowledge of it. The party bard might make another Charisma (Deception) check with disadvantage to another bandit to argue that "the guards have just put it off," or "he's obviously lying to save his own hide," and if successful, the rumor is not quashed. However, if, on day 3, some guards show up (either by chance, or because the party has dressed up as guards and pretended to be the front line of an assault force, or whatever), they have confirming

evidence, and the next day an additional 20% of the bandit force (total of 35) will believe that the attack is imminent. After 5 days, the rumor has run its normal course, and will be forgotten unless the party can confirm it again. If they do (such as arranging for some soldiers to attack a supply chain), the rumor persists for another 5 days.

For every 25% of the rank-and-file that believe the rumor, one of the leaders may be convinced. First, the leaders require one piece of supporting evidence each to convince. Once the supporting evidence exists, the creator of the rumor can make a Charisma (Deception) check against the leaders' Wisdom (Insight) check "by proxy," and if they succeed, the leader becomes convinced. One leader can be convinced on each day that 25% of the rank-and-file hold to the belief.

For instance, if the belief that the goblins are planning a betrayal can be spread to 25% of the rank-and-file bandits by the party illusionist, and the next day Ceres hears of a band of bandits being attacked by goblins on worgback (actually orchestrated by the party), the party illusionist can make a Charisma (Deception) check against Ceres's Wisdom (Insight) check. If successful, Ceres believes the goblins are planning a betrayal.

Bartl has advantage on Wisdom (Insight) checks against anything impugning the orcs, and Yahret has advantage on Wisdom (Insight) checks against anything impugning the goblins. Vaclav has both of these bonuses as long as Bartl and Yahret remain unconvinced as well. If Bartl is made to believe something about the orcs, or Yahret is made to believe something about the goblins, the next Charisma (Deception) check made to persuade a leader of the same thing is made with advantage.

Once all the leaders believe the rumor, they act on it. Before all of them believe it, individual leaders may act erratically, but the alliance will remain intact until all the leaders believe it—Vaclav wants an alliance, and is suspect of any attempts to disrupt it.

Of course, more direct violence is always an option, but it is difficult to raid all of Camp Rotelle in one sitting—and once the party begins the assault, like a bee’s nest, the camp will search for them and show no mercy in destroying them. The party may find themselves on the run after that. A war of attrition may work, or at least lure out the leaders, but the bandits do not fight fair, and are not above using the innocents in Blackford as bargaining chips.

PLAN: SPREAD MISTRUST

If the party can sabotage any possible alliance between the orcs, goblins, and bandits, this has the potential to create enough chaos within the bandits that they will have difficulty regrouping, creating in-fighting and other difficulties.

The alliance hinges on the spellcasting leaders of the bandits, Bartl and Yahret. Bartl has formed a close friendship with many orcs and has adopted their gods, while Yahret is learning magic from the goblins. As long as these two characters have the ear of Vaclav, the alliance is solid, so the only way to disrupt the alliance is to take out Bartl and Yahret in some way.

Violence is the obvious way, but that has many of the difficulties of killing the leaders (see above).

Another way would be to infiltrate and spread rumors. That does require gaining the bandits trust (see above), and then successfully misleading the bandits (see “Spreading Rumors,” below). If the bandits become suspicious of the orcs or the goblins, they will kill the representatives of these people in Camp Rotelle, which will begin a protracted period of violence between the three factions, negating the alliance.



PLAN: LIBERATE BLACKFORD

The town of Blackford, owned and operated by the bandits, is their center of power and control in the region. While Camp Rotelle is where they live, Blackford is where they earn much of their profit and where their hold is on something more valuable than their own land. It is also why the orcs and goblins are interested in an alliance—they each have towns they’re trying to take over. Thus, if the party can give Blackford the power to overthrow the bandits, the alliance will fall apart.

The people of Blackford are hypothetically already on board with any liberation plan, but they are well-subjugated, and see release from their fate as nigh-impossible. The powerful people in Blackford are all in bed with the bandits, from the ineffectual mayor Larcenor to the head of the town guard (and Ceres’s loyal goon) Nessi, and most of the members of the local militia. Ceres sees Blackford as vital to the ambitions of the bandits, so she is an occasional and active presence in the town as well, and sort of the power behind the throne. She is likely to respond personally to any attempt to cause havoc in the town.

In order to liberate Blackford, the party is going to have to build the town’s optimism, take out Ceres and Nessi, either take out or convince Larcenor and the rest of the town guard to surrender, and find someone else to take charge. They will have to accomplish all three tasks to secure Blackford’s liberation: skipping any of them will cause Blackford to slide back into chaos within one week, erasing all the progress.

BRIGHTENING BLACKFORD

To improve the mood of the town, the party will have to tackle several of the problems facing them. Roll 1d6 and consult the table below to find a problem the townsfolk need solved. After solving 4 problems, the town begins to show signs of improvement, as the people believe there may be a life after the bandits.

Problems in Blackford

1d8 Problem

- 1 A group of bandits has been living in the town inn—treating the staff like servants, and never paying. They need to be run out. (Use the Bandit Attack random encounter.)
- 2 A church has had its houses of healing destroyed—burned to the ground—by bandits demanding that they stop advocating for the gods, and start worshipping the orcs. The party needs to protect the central church in town from a group of bandits. (Use the Bandit Attack random encounter.)
- 3 A merchant hasn't had a delivery from a caravan in a good long time. The party needs to get to Ringwood, and protect a caravan going from there to Blackford. (Use normal random encounters for the journey.)
- 4 A lair of kobolds has sprung up on the banks of the river nearby. People want them exterminated. (Use the Kobold Cultists encounter.)
- 5 A group of orcs has taken over a nearby farm, forcing farmers to feed them, but eating too much. The party can kick them out. (Use the Orc Band encounter.)
- 6 A group of goblins has started kidnapping children from people in the town, and nothing can be done to stop them. They announce their raids in advance to heighten the sense of hopelessness, but the party can stop them. (Use the Goblin Band encounter.)

FINDING A LEADER

There are precious few people willing to stand up and fight the bandits, but the party can help select a possible champion for them. Once the spirits of the town are brightened, this leader will lead some of the disaffected militia toward restoring law and order and trust in authority, and is important if Blackford isn't just going to get conquered all over again next week.

The party may have an NPC in mind they wish to nominate, or you may have a particular NPC that you think would be a good fit. If there is no

obvious candidate, you can have the party can find possible candidates for leadership by making Intelligence checks, with the following results:

- **DC 8:** The current mayor, Larcenor, is probably the only person in town with the knowledge required for the position of leadership. He's a spineless coward, though, and responds mostly to threats on his life or property, so the only way to ensure his half-competent leadership is to ensure he's well-protected. In order to do that, the party must travel to Holdenshire to convince the soldiers there to ally with Larcenor. Such a thing is difficult—it requires three successful DC 15 Diplomacy checks (one each from three separate characters) to break down the Captain of Holdenshire's resistance. A character who fails this check cannot make another attempt.
- **DC 13:** A wealthy merchant, Hayato, is interested in leading the town. He's got the best interests of the town at heart, but can be a bit ignorant. He has little patience for politics, and is certainly no warrior, either. To install Hayato is going to require the party to set things up nicely for him in the mayor's office, arranging everything so that he can hit the ground running. This requires the party, after expelling Larcenor, to make three successful DC 10 Intelligence (History) checks (one each from three separate characters) to assemble and organize the place properly. A character who fails this check cannot make another attempt.
- **DC 18:** The local church has protected a youth named Ismail, who is a paladin interested in "cleaning up Blackford." A smart, sociable individual, Ismail is well-suited to leadership. However, he is a bit of a firebrand, and so his presence and rhetoric of change provokes a group of bandits to attack—the party must fight off an attempted assassination by a group of bandits while Ismail is looking at his farmlands (use the Bandit Attack encounter).

EXPELLING THE OLD GUARD

The party must get rid of the corrupt leaders of the town before the revolution is complete, even if the spirits are bright and a good leader is in place. Doing this is going to require some dirty work, and at least a little bit of person-stabbing. Each member of the old guard must be “expelled” in order to truly liberate the town.

Larcenor, the town’s cowardly, petty mayor, has spent much of his time cloistered in his manor. He does what is required of him by the town, but he’s abdicated much of his responsibility to Nessi, who terrifies him. He’s not strong, but he can call on 10 loyal **guards** to protect him. He’s also not hard to convince to the PCs’ side—he is interested in self-preservation above all, and is actually fairly knowledgeable about how to run a city. The party needs only to make a DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check to get him to trust them over Nessi and the bandits.

Nessi. The town’s violent and corrupt captain, Nessi has benefitted from having mostly the run of the town. She spends much of her time in the garrison near the center of town, and uses her network of 10 town **guards** and 10 **bandits** to keep her informed and to keep the proper order in place. She usually hangs around with a **bandit** and a **guard** herself, and will likely be avenged by all her soldiers if slain. She is a very competent fighter on her own, and is not hesitant about taking down any who threaten her.

Ceres. One of the leaders of the Bandits of Blackford, Ceres has taken the reigns in running Blackford, and what happens there is of great interest to her. While she spends most of her time in Camp Rotelle, any threat to Nessi is reported to her as well (assuming at least one observer manages to escape), and 4 days after such an event, she arrives in Blackford looking for blood (especially if anything has happened to her friend). As long as Ceres remains, she is able to reinstate a new corrupt captain (likely one of her many bandits) on a regular basis.

The Town Guard. Even without their leaders, the well-bribed guards remain fairly corrupt. Once Nessi and Ceres are out of the picture, the 20 total town **guards** and 20 total **bandits** that infest the city must be either converted or disposed of. Finding them is mostly a matter of investigation: a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check turns up 1d4 of the bandits or town guard, who can then be dealt with. Town guards are open to negotiation (and bribery), responding well to promises of power and authority, requiring a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check, but the bandits hold out a bit to such an offer, instead requiring a DC 14 check. The camps are both less open to threats—they’re used to being in power, and they will fight to remain so, until about half their number (10 each) is dead. The rest will then be more willing to negotiate at that point, requiring a DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation) check.

IF BLACKFORD IS DESTROYED

It is unusual, but possible, for the town of Blackford to be destroyed by Citrothe before the party gets a chance to solve the problems there. If Blackford is destroyed, the party cannot use the “Liberate Blackford” option to complete this quest. The alliance will still be active, however, so they party can still use the other two options or create their own plan.

REWARDS

If the party successfully undermines the alliance, they gain the rewards for the adventure. They gain two stars for this adventure—one each for the *Quiver of the Dragon’s Bane* and the *Coward’s Map*—and treasure. The treasure may take the form of loot from the bandits, or gifts from a grateful Blackford township.

- **Coins:** 505 gp
- **Gems:** a smoky quartz worth 50 gp
- **Magic Items:** *oil of slipperiness*, *spell scrolls of speak with animals* and *zone of truth*

THE NEXT ADVENTURE

After completing this quest, the alliance between orcs, goblins, and bandits is weakened, enabling the party to actually destroy the orc alliance or the goblin network, which are now isolated enclaves rather than great alliances of evil. This can lead to the next adventure in the Coward's Map series, "Half-Pints of Halfpoint," and can also lead to the next adventure in the Quiver of the Dragon's Bane series, "The Goblin War."

LOCATION: BLACKFORD

The town of Blackford is a hub, between the towns of Ringwood, Halfpoint, Hengistbury, and the lands to the south. While it was once a bustling merchant city, it has fallen on dark times since the Bandits of Blackford took over. Now a den of iniquity and a place of ill-repute, few merchants or traders from outside have stopped by. The town is a haven for black market goods, smugglers, and less-than-ethical products, such as drugs, slaves, necromancy, and prostitution.

The Leaders of Blackford

- ▶ Larcenor, Mayor of Blackford (**noble**)
- ▶ Nessi, Captain of the Guard (**knight**)
- ▶ 10 town **guards**

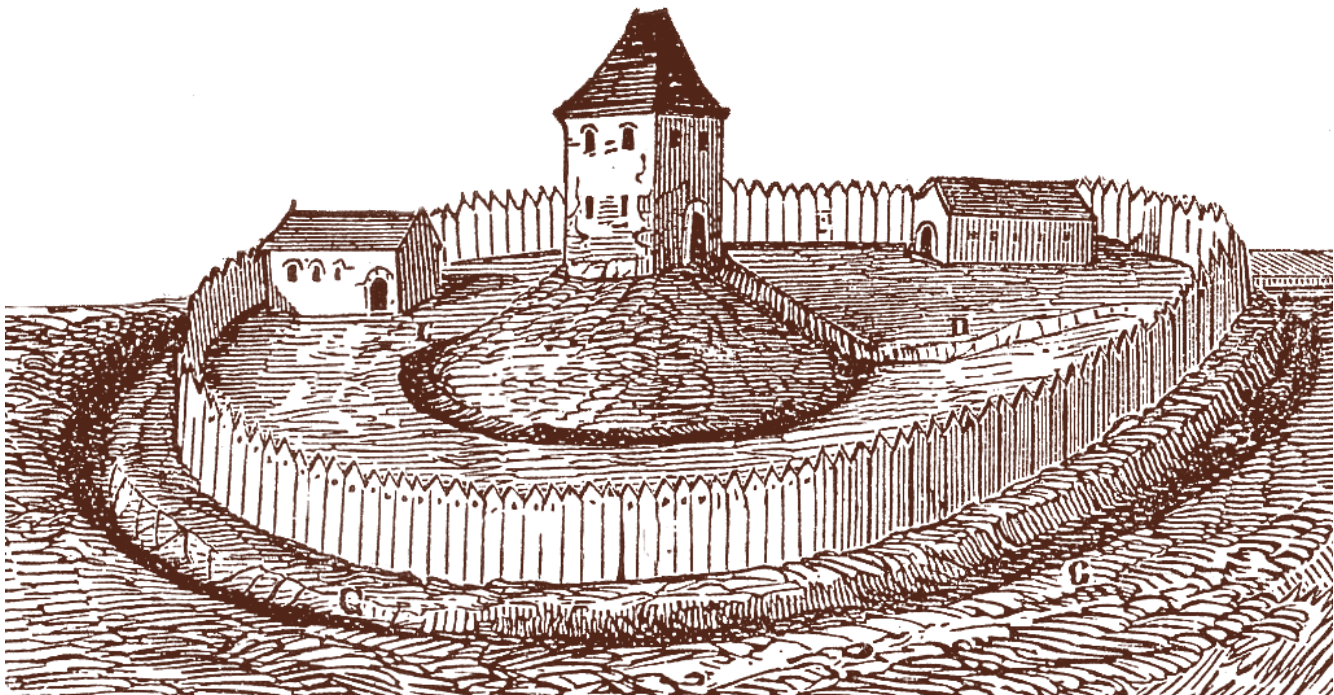
LOCATION: CAMP ROTELLE

Located somewhere in the Southern Downs, Camp Rotelle is the staging ground for the Bandits of Blackford. It is a well-defended wooden fortress that makes use of ditches, bristling spikes, and thick wooden walls to deter any assault, but it has not seen a true assault in some time.

Residents of Camp Rotelle

- ▶ Vaclav (**gladiator**)
- ▶ Ceres the Cruel (**bandit captain** with AC 18 (plate))

Ceres grew up in the Blackford region, and was a promising member of the town guard, until she tried to put down a young Vaclav with a group of town guard, after he was caught for murder. She betrayed the guards she was with, helping Vaclav to slay them and escape, and escaped with him. She was lured by the promise of power and authority over the town, which she wanted to rule. She has gained this—Blackford's mayor now cowers in fear of her and her close ally, Nessi. Her minions have the run of the town, which is exactly what she wanted—to be in control. As second-in-command of the bandits, she is methodical and dispassionate in pursuing her need for utter domination.



- ▶ Bartl the Bloody (**bandit captain** with spellcasting as an **acolyte**; this change does not affect his Challenge Rating)
- ▶ Goblinspeaker Yahret (**cult fanatic** with wizard spells prepared and Intelligence 13 (+1); this change does not affect his Challenge Rating)
 - ▶ Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, message, prestidigitation*
 - ▶ 1st level (4 slots): *burning hands, mage armor, shield*
 - ▶ 2nd level (3 slots): *misty step, scorching ray*

Yahret is being trained in arcane magic by the goblins. He was a fake healer—a simple con artist—in Blackford until the bandits needed a healer, and he eagerly joined them as a safe place to practice real magic away from the prying suspicious eyes of the common folk in Blackford. His spellbook was a gift from a goblin worg-rider who looted it in turn from a caravan of apprentice mages she was involved in killing, and certain elite goblins have continued to educate him on the finer points of wizardly spellcasting, and have relied on him to break gnomish and elven codes on various magical items. He is quite paranoid, and uses magic mostly to protect himself from harm. He generally wants to use his arts for his own research, but knows that the goblin alliance is important to the bandits who have protected him, and so earns his keep by keeping contact with them.

- ▶ 40 **bandits**
- ▶ 10 **thugs**
- ▶ 6 **orc** bodyguards
- ▶ Olegka, **orc** emissary
- ▶ Gelik, **goblin** diplomat

HALF-PINTS OF HALFPOINT

The Coward's Map 2

The orcs in the Crawley Hills have mostly lived a life of inter-tribal violence and intermittent raids on the towns on the outskirts of their territory. However, things have been changing in the last five years or so. A champion has arisen among the orcs, a great one-eyed warrior that the other orcs follow willingly into battle, rather than trying to fight. The great orc, called “Basyak,” has lead several disparate tribes in assault after assault on small towns, leveling them and leaving few people alive in their wake. She is said to be a force of nature, a wrath like a winter storm, or an earthquake. Her attention turned, a few months ago, to the town of Halfpoint, a bustling halfling trade village famous for its great fertility.

As spring warmed the earth, halfling blood was spattered on the soil, and instead of sowing seeds, the people in Halfpoint have been digging graves. They have put up a stout defense, and have maintained their borders, but many in Halfpoint believe it is only a matter of time before Basyak and her great orcish horde will destroy them. Many are leaving, as fast as they can, but a few stay, to help defend the town, as the orcs themselves seek an alliance with the Bandits of Blackford, which would choke off Halfpoint’s resources, enabling them to succumb to the axe.

GOAL: BREAK THE HOARD

The party’s main mission here is to destroy the orc horde. In order to accomplish this, they must first have broken the Bandits of Blackford, and, if so, the orc horde is vulnerable. As long as Basyak lives and has the approval of the orc leaders, the horde is going to continue. As long as the horde continues, Vyswava remains imprisoned, and her target Junog remains at large.

Try to entertain any reasonable plan the party comes up with to break the horde. Three options are presented here: kill Basyak, turn the sub-chiefs and shamans against her, or gather reinforcements for Flip and his brigade.



There is a time limit on this. Flip, a halfling in Halfpoint who is leading a “final charge,” is waiting for reinforcements from Wintercliff. From when the party first visits Halfpoint, they have 2 months (60 days) until Flip attacks. If he does so without reinforcements, the orcs finally crush Flip and his allies, and then go on to destroy the town once and for all.

PREREQUISITE: THE BANDITS OF BLACKFORD

If the Bandits of Blackford are still forging their alliance, the orcs are in a position of great strength, and cannot be broken: they believe the alliance will help them over this first difficulty in Halfpoint, and lead to their domination of the West. There are thousands upon thousands of orcs living in these hills, and even a raid on Keldur Fortress (the headquarters of the orc militia) won’t stop them from replenishing those lost to the PCs within a day or two.

Once the alliance has been crushed and the bandits beaten back, the orcs in the Crawley Hills become much more nervous—it is a sign of weakness in Basyak’s leadership, and certain of the orc sub-chiefs will be ready and willing to try and take her position, or to abandon the rallying cry at this point.

PLAN: KILL BASYAK

This is probably the most straightforward plan, and it has a good chance to work. If the orcs see Basyak killed on the field of battle, they will begin a slow process of in-fighting and rivalry, succumbing to their rage like they had for the last few years.

Basyak isn’t a pushover, however. She lives in Keldur Fortress, and rarely ventures out for simple attacks. What can lure her out is a significant threat, especially one which harms her pride or leads to questions of her power. Flip, the paladin of Halfpoint, is probably the most able bait, and if the party

waits (or encourages them to attack early), he will provide a great lure—Basyak herself will emerge to try and kill him. She will probably be successful, though certainly if the party takes the opportunity to challenge her she may be vulnerable. If Flip goes to fight, however, this serves as a trigger to the destruction of Halfpoint, regardless of the status of Basyak's life: the orcs know that Flip is waiting for reinforcements, and will strike when Halfpoint is undefended, crushing the city once and for all, regardless of the outcome of Flip vs. Basyak. Still, if Basyak meets her fate, their victory will be a short-lived one, and they will dissolve into warring factions as below.

Basyak may also be lured out to fight the PCs, if the party becomes a thorn in her side. In order to lure her out, the party must do three things:

- ▶ Have assaulted Keldur Fortress itself at least once.
- ▶ Have improved the morale of Halfpoint. This can be accomplished with one DC 15 Charisma (Deception or Performance) check from at least three different characters (failures cannot be re-tried), representing trying to convince the halflings that there is a chance to win.
- ▶ Have killed at least one Sub-Chief or Shaman, or at least 5 other orcs.

Under those circumstances, Basyak will emerge to fight the PCs, seeing them as a threat that has replaced Flip in her mind. Here, the party may be able to kill her, and before the orcs raid Halfpoint, saving the village as well.

Basyak could be killed by subterfuge and skullduggery, though this is a bit more difficult to pull off: the assassin must penetrate the fortress and bypass Basyak's 5 personal bodyguards, perhaps as others engage in a distraction.

In any case, once she is killed, the orcs begin in-fighting and fracturing. While they remain dangerous for 7 days as they fight and try to re-structure, after 7 days, the orcs entirely abandon Keldur Fortress, and move back into the hills, fighting each other again instead of trying to assault Halfpoint.

PLAN: CAUSE CIVIL WAR

Though Basyak is a great leader, the orcs of the Crawley Hills have a long and rich tradition of hating each other with an incandescent apoplexy. The alliance of tribes is a powder-keg, and the PCs can be the spark that ignites it.

The plan to cause civil war amongst the orcs hinges on Basyak's eagerness to destroy Halfpoint as the clan's first assault. The halflings have been surprisingly doughty in their resistance, and several of the shamans and sub-chiefs think that a better target would be the villages of Hengistbury, Thornbury, Ringwood, Northminster, or Wintercliff. The PCs, with some adept rumor-spreading, can perhaps turn the orcs against each other.

While Basyak wants to eliminate Halfpoint, the rest of the leaders of the orcs have their own favorites:

- ▶ Makmig would like to eliminate Wintercliff—he's convinced the lightly-armored Wintercliff rangers wouldn't be able to pierce the orc's steely defenses.
- ▶ Dakam would like to destroy Northminster, as he believes the town will be weak from repelling goblin attacks from the Northbeach Woods.
- ▶ Koreva would like to attack Ringwood, based on rumors that suggest drow are beneath the city—she'd like to take it before the drow can.
- ▶ Ritva would love to strike Hengistbury off the map. She believes the people there are weak and ripe for slaughter.
- ▶ Kweneg would like to destroy Thornbury, as a man from there once dared to attack one of her husbands.

In order to cause chaos in the orc camp, all of the orc leaders except Basyak need to agree on one course of action. This can be difficult, as it involves sustaining four rumors, or disqualifying the towns in other ways:

- ▶ If Makmig is presented with evidence of the power of Wintercliff's rangers (for instance, if they slaughter an orc band), he may re-

think his position. He is likely to side with whatever Ritva wants.

- ▶ If Dakam receives word that Northminster is fine or that the goblins are weak (for instance, a dead goblin band observed by the orcs), he may re-think his position. He is likely to be cowed by whatever Koreva wants.
- ▶ If Koreva is convinced Ringwood is intact (for instance, if dead drow begin appearing near the town), she may doubt her position. She's likely to side with Makmig.
- ▶ If Ritva is given an easier target than Hengistbury, she'll call off her call for attack. She's likely to appreciate Kweneg's position.
- ▶ If Kweneg is given evidence that the man from Thornbury has been dealt with, she won't be as out for blood. She's likely to agree to Dakam's position.

If the party can choose one of the alternate positions, and begins to present evidence to each of the orc leaders in turn, it's possible to change the opinion of all the leaders. For instance, if the party thinks the target should be Ringwood (Koreva's position), they can persuade Dakam, then Kweneg, then Ritva, then Makmig. Once all the orcs are in opposition to Basyak, the process of splintering begins and, about 7 days later, the alliance falls to pieces. The new target is in no danger—the splintering is too violent to actually persuade the orcs to fight anyone other than themselves.

This process is complicated by the fact that the orcs will not trust a character who is not a full-blooded orc. In order to spread this rumor, they're going to have to find an orc willing to work for them. Such an orc might be found as a hostage or turncoat from any of the Orc Band random encounters, or can be found with a DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check in the region. The turncoat-orc isn't exactly reliable, and has a 50% chance to fail to spread the rumor, possibly requiring the party to assemble multiple co-conspirators.

Once the co-conspirator is secured, a rumor can

be started (see "Rumors," above), and once it is believed by each of the leaders, they act on it. To persuade each of the leaders though will require as many as four different rumors, all pointing in one direction (chosen by the party). That one direction becomes strong enough to cause internal strife in the orc camp and delegitimize Basyak's rule, causing the collapse of the orc alliance within 7 days from the day that the last leader is converted.

PLAN: GIVE FLIP A HAND

Flip is an idealistic young halfling paladin who stands almost no chance of actually realizing his ideal of liberating Halfpoint. Many of the people in Halfpoint have already realized this, leading to a great exodus, but some stay behind, unwilling or unable to leave, and prepared to accept whatever the results of Flip's Crusade is going to be. The party can give Flip's crusade slightly better odds of survival, but they need to work fast, given the time limit.

That time limit is created because Flip is expecting a regiment of rangers from Wintercliff to arrive, and, if they do or not, he is taking the fight to the orcs. They are not due to arrive—their remnants have been captured by an orc band near Wintercliff, but the party can shore up Flip's resources by saving them, or by visiting at least one town and getting reinforcements.

Getting reinforcements from any of the nearby towns is going to require some quick leg-work on behalf of the PCs. Each town is going to need the party to pass a Charisma (Persuasion) check, and to accomplish some task from the Securing Allies table before they send reinforcements.

Successfully completing any of the above will grant the PCs a group of troopers (use the Town Guard random encounter) who will then trek toward Halfpoint on their own.

To successfully complete this requirement means that the party gets no fewer than two groups of allies to Halfpoint by the time Flip's ill-considered crusade begins. If that happens, the NPCs will effectively complete the "Kill Basyak"

portion of the quest on their own, without any assistance from the party, resolving this quest without the PCs' direct involvement.

SECURING ALLIES

City	Requirements to Help Halfpoint
Wintercliff	Charisma (Persuasion) DC 11; Rescue the rangers held captive by the orcs (use the Orc Band random encounter)
Northminster	Charisma (Persuasion) DC 14; Help the town guard root some goblins from the sewers (use the Goblin Band random encounter)
Ringwood	Charisma (Persuasion) DC 16; Help the party investigate some assassinations in the village (3 successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) checks from at least 3 different characters, characters who fail cannot try again).
Hengistbury	Charisma (Persuasion) DC 11; stop the kobolds from returning (use the Kobold Cultists random encounter)
Thornbury	Charisma (Persuasion) DC 13; help the town guard drive off some of the remnants of the bandits (use the Bandit Attack random encounter)

IF HALFPOINT OR ITS ALLIES ARE DESTROYED

It is unusual, but possible, for the town of Halfpoint (or any/all of the cities that might help it out) to be destroyed by Cirothe before the party gets a chance to solve the problems there. If Halfpoint itself is destroyed, the orcs remain powerful and will lay siege to another city near the hills (you can determine this randomly, or select from amongst Halfpoint's remaining allies for the next target). Vyswava remains imprisoned with them, so the party must still break the horde, but there is no more Flip to help out.

Other potential allies being destroyed simply indicate that the party cannot use them to secure allies for Flip. If fewer than two potential allies remain, helping out Flip via recruiting NPC allies

is no longer a viable course of action, and that plan will not work.

REWARDS

If the party successfully undoes the horde, they gain the rewards for the adventure. They gain a second star towards the *Coward's Map*, and treasure from the list below. The treasure can come from booty from the orcs' camp, or lavish gifts from thankful halflings:

- **Coins:** 830 gp
- **Gems:** a violet garnet worth 200 gp
- **Mundane Items:** plate armor, alchemist's fire (3 flasks), acid (3 vials), magnifying glass (worth 100 gp)
- **Magic Items:** *potion of enhance ability (cat's grace)*

THE NEXT ADVENTURE

Vyswava Fidap is one of the captives in Keldur Fortress. A dwarven mercenary originally from Last Chance, she came here seeking revenge on the ogre Junog, who "took something that doesn't belong to him." It turns out that in a deal gone sour, Junog and some cronies double-crossed Vyswava and her crew, taking a lot of loot, and especially a mace that belonged to the Vyswava's father and her grandmother, a legacy of their time before the coming of Cirothe. She is unwilling to leave without getting it back from Junog, and will follow the ogre to the ends of the earth to reclaim it. She claims that she doesn't want to be known as the kind of person who runs away from things.

Junog, it turns out, does not have the mace anymore—he lost it to some ogres who double-crossed *him*, including an ogre with horns and bright red skin. If Vyswava is able to confront Junog about it here, she'll beat a hasty path toward Deepcrest Chasm, where those ogres fled to. If Junog can flee without confronting Vyswava, that is what he'll do, mostly to lick his wounds and report what happened to the orc alliance.

If the PCs chase the mace or the ogre to Deepcrest Chasm, it'll lead to the next adventure in the *Coward's Map* series, "Down the Hatch."

LOCATION: KELDUR FORTRESS

A massive fortified orc town in the heart of the Crawley Hills, Keldur is a bulwark of stone and wood, surrounded by camps of brave orc warriors and presided over by tall watchtowers that see for miles around. Not only is Keldur occupied by the forces below, but if the alliance with the Bandits of Blackford is still active, they will have an additional contingent of 40 standard bandits.

Residents of Keldur Fortress

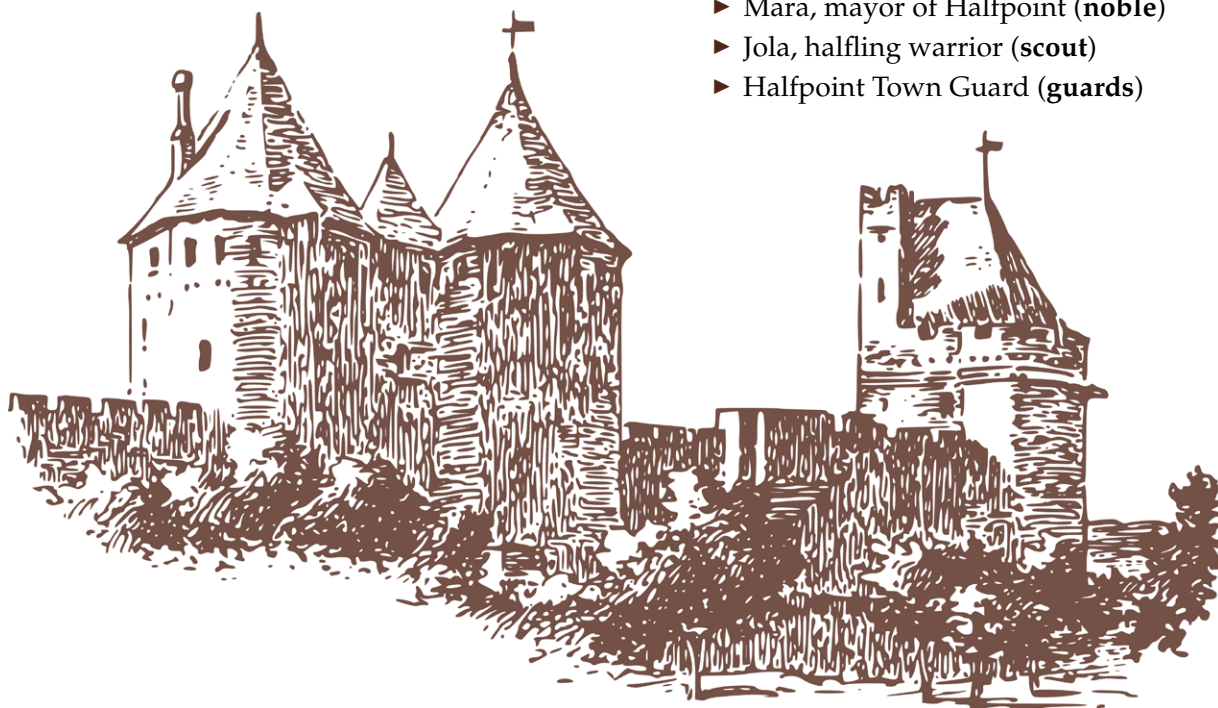
- ▶ Chief Basyak (**orc warchief** with AC 18 (plate) and 119 hit points; this change increases her Challenge Rating to 5 (1,800 XP))
- ▶ 2 orc subchiefs (**berserkers**)
 - ▶ Makmig the Undying
 - ▶ Dakam the Inevitable
- ▶ 3 orc shamans (**druids**)
 - ▶ Koreva, Shaman of Strength
 - ▶ Ritva, Shaman of Slaughter
 - ▶ Kwenneg, Shaman of Vengeance
- ▶ 10 **orogs**
- ▶ 50 **orcs**
- ▶ 4 **ogre** mercenaries
- ▶ Junog, **ogre**
- ▶ Vyswava, dwarf **guard**

LOCATION: HALFPOINT

The town of Halfpoint was used by halflings as a central market for their assorted farms and gardens. As such, it represented a valuable target for the orcs of the Crawley Hills. For many generations, the orcs largely fought each other; their occasional excursions to nearby towns were easily repelled. However, now that Basyak has whipped the orcs into an organized frenzy, Halfpoint has been targeted—and it hasn't fared well. Guards from Holdenshire and the North Riding have been helpful, but Halfpoint is slowly losing the war and getting increasingly desperate. The current plan for liberation involves a daring dawn raid led by a halfling paladin named Flip, who wants to take the last of the halfling guard force into the main orc camp. This is destined to fail, if they try it alone.

Notable Residents of Halfpoint

- ▶ Flip, halfling paladin (**knight** with AC 19 (+1 plate) and 7th-level paladin features, including a **mastiff** steed named Roger, and the following spells.)
 - ▶ 1st level (4 slots): *compelled duel*, *cure wounds*, *searing smite*
 - ▶ 2nd level (3 slots): *branding smite*, *find steed*
- ▶ Mara, mayor of Halfpoint (**noble**)
- ▶ Jola, halfling warrior (**scout**)
- ▶ Halfpoint Town Guard (**guards**)



THE GOBLIN WAR

The Quiver of the Dragon's Bane 2

The Northbeach Woods was once a place of peace and tranquility, with benevolent fey creatures standing watch over a place of astonishing natural beauty. The source of this idyllic peace was said to be the unicorn that presided over Northbeach, a wise and fatherly creature named Lorand, who nurtured the joy in his abode, and defended it nobly from outsiders. He was served most ably by a robust community of gnomes, able tenders of the fragile forest.

However, a dark shadow has fallen across the Northbeach Woods in recent years. Lorand has gone missing, and from the East come monsters: wolves, spiders, and goblins invading from the Oldshade Woods, twisting the forest, and destroying the communities of the gnomes.

GOAL: RESCUE THE UNICORN KING

As any gnome will tell any who listen, Lorand's absence is what is causing the forest to turn from gleeful paradise to warped hellscape. The goblins, the spiders, the wolves—these factions aren't allied, and are quite disparate. There is no unified front. However, with Lorand missing, the protective magic of the forest has lost its power, calling to these creatures, beckoning them like the stench of a corpse beckons to flies.

The cause of the missing unicorn lies with a visitor to the Northbeach Woods: an elf fletcher named Sonina. She has come to the Northbeach Woods to seek aid in a quest to harvest the venom of the Spider Queen Sheeltielle, and was seeking what knowledge the well-learned gnomes may have on her when goblin spies overheard, and abducted the Unicorn King, and then began a slow invasion of the forest itself.

Sonina seeks to mend what she has done wrong before she proceeds with her plan—and she does still plan on proceeding. She believes that if she can find the Unicorn King and restore him to his crown, that she can then pursue her own goals freely. She currently lives in the gnomish town

of Friedswyld, located in a random hex in the Northbeach Woods.

For their part, the goblins have not slain Lorand because of his value as a bargaining chip with the spiders. The plan is for a contingent of spiders to retrieve Lorand, and take him as an offering to Queen Sheeltielle. The spiders, however, have been slow to respond, so the goblins are largely in a fragile holding pattern at the moment, with a valuable sacrifice that is not entirely secured.

You are encouraged to allow any reasonable plan some chance of success, but there are three options provided as default: performing a daring raid on the prison, sneaking Lorand out, or negotiating his release.

PREREQUISITE: THE BANDITS OF BLACKFORD

If the Bandits of Blackford are still forging their alliance, the goblins who have abducted Lorand are in a position of great strength. Their alliance with the bandits is helping them destroy the legacy of the Unicorn King faster than they ever thought possible, giving them muscle and cleverness that they otherwise lack when attacking fey settlements and gnome villages. Without isolating the goblins, it'll be impossible to actually rescue Lorand—if the party raids one of his suspected locations, he'll simply be moved to another.

Without the bandit allies, the goblins are much less coordinated and effective, meaning Lorand can be located and rescued.

PREREQUISITE: FINDING LORAND'S PRISON

Lorand's prison is in no set location. It lies somewhere within the Northbeach Woods. As the GM, you can either select a hex in those woods for its location, or determine its location randomly: for each hex the party explores in the Northbeach Woods, there is a cumulative 10% chance that the hex contains Lorand's prison.

Once the party is in the hex of Lorand's prison, they must still find the specific location of the prison within the hex, and it is well-hidden,

requiring three successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) checks from three different characters. A failure of one of these checks means that the character cannot try again. If the party fails to find the prison, leaving the hex and re-entering it will enable them to make another check, though they must start the process of Wisdom (Perception) checks over again. If you wish to make things especially difficult, the prison could move after each failed attempt, requiring the party to begin the process of searching each hex all over again as above.

PLAN: BREAKING LORAND OUT

The prison is fairly well-defended, but certainly not as robust as the orc or bandit camps that the party is familiar with thus far. Given that the party need only fight their way to the prison and free Lorand, this may be a viable course of action for them. See below to account for the creatures present in Lorand's Prison. If you have a suitable map, you can run this simply as a series of fights on a map. If not, you can be more abstract in the liberation: to find Lorand's cell, the party must succeed on two DC 12 Intelligence checks. Failure on one of those checks means that the party is attacked by a group of the goblins that defend the prison, and failure on both of those checks means the prison is alerted to the party's presence, requiring them to retreat at least for one day while the heat dies down.

If the party is successful in finding the prison, they can free Lorand with a successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check—failing the check again draws attention.

Once the unicorn is freed from the webbing binding him, Lorand will assist the party in his own escape. He has one level of exhaustion from the outset, however, due to his treatment at the hands of the goblins.

PLAN: SNEAKING LORAND OUT

If the party is more the "subterfuge and trickery" type, they can infiltrate the goblin prison either unseen, or posing as potential allies (bugbears,

hobgoblins, fellow goblins, or even possibly drow representatives from the great spider Sheeltielle), using the appropriate skills. One a goblin's Wisdom (Insight or Perception) is beat, you can assume that goblin is deceived by that character until it takes a full night's sleep, or until the player does something to violate that deception (e.g., a sneaking character steps out into broad daylight in front of the goblins). Similar to the above plan, you can either use a map, or roll Intelligence checks to find and navigate Lorand's prison, and then Dexterity checks to free him. Once free, Lorand is a much better fighter than he is a sneaker, but a clever PCs may be able to disguise him sufficiently.

PLAN: NEGOTIATING LORAND'S RELEASE

The Unicorn King is quite the prize for the goblins, but they can be persuaded to give him up for a greater prize...or under greater threat. They are in a position of power and authority now, and won't be easily talked into a deal without being persuaded. They can be persuaded by persuading the jailer that their life is at stake, and by offering them a better option than staying and dying to protect their cargo.

Convincing them that their lives are at stake involves whittling away the defenses of Lorand's Prison, and perhaps some subtle deception by the party. As long as at least 50% of the force of the prison is alive and present, the Jailer will not entertain other options. The Jailer also will not consider options as long as any of the spiders in the prison remain alive. Once these requirements are met, the Jailer will begin to fear for his hide and the success of defending their prisoner, and is willing to make a deal. He will be willing to part with Lorand for 5,000 gp (or the equivalent value in items). If the prison population is reduced to 25%, he'll reduce that demand to 2,500 gp (or the equivalent value in items). The prison is abandoned the day after he receives his payment, except for Lorand, who is still in a cage within the prison.

It's important to note that despite the fact

that Sonina is the cause of Lorand's capture, the goblins don't particularly want to capture her. The creatures have used her venom-gathering as an excuse, but were truly just looking for a reason to grab Lorand and offer him to their spider-lords.

REWARDS

If the party successfully rescues Lorand, they gain a second star towards the Quiver of the Dragon's Bane and treasure according to the list below. The treasure can come from booty from Lorand's prison, or lavish gifts from thankful gnomes:

- ▶ **Coins:** 679 gp
- ▶ **Gems:** a lapis lazuli worth 9 gp
- ▶ **Magic Items:** +1 *greatclub*, spell scrolls of *remove fear*, *enhance ability (bull's strength)*, and *scorching ray*

THE NEXT ADVENTURE

Once Lorand is free and in power again, Sonina feels safe enough to embark on her own journey to the Oldshade Woods to finally harvest Sheeltielle's venom. She offers to pay the PCs to accompany her, and to help her secure it. If she can, she believes that even the spiders will be safe—Cirothe's dominance cannot be trusted. If the PCs accompany her, move on to the next adventure in the Quiver of the Dragon's Bane series, "A Great Poison."

LOCATION: LORAND'S PRISON

Lorand's prison is a structure of wood built into a cave in the forest. It is well-protected and well-guarded, with several goblins, bugbears, and hobgoblins joining forces with wolves and spiders to ensure that the Unicorn King cannot escape while the spiders assemble for transport.

Residents of Lorand's Prison

- ▶ 3 hobgoblin mercenaries
- ▶ 6 bugbear mercenaries
- ▶ 1 goblin jailer (goblin boss)
- ▶ 30 goblins
- ▶ 5 goblins with worgs
- ▶ 5 giant wolf spiders

DOWN THE HATCH

The Coward's Map 3

Vyswava Fidap has been a smuggler for many years now, dealing in less-savory goods from less-savory characters, including the ogres that live in and around Deepcrest Chasm. Like many who work with criminals, Vyswava fell prey to a double-cross when the ogre mercenary Junog proposed an alliance—then promptly killed most of her crew and robbed her blind.

Vyswava lost an item very important to her—a mace she carried that was passed down to her from her father and her grandmother, a mace said to have protected the dwarves as they fled from the mountains that Citrothe assaulted. Vyswava is part of a group of dwarves known as the Cowards, who now live in Last Chance, and who fled before the onslaught of Citrothe while others stayed and fought. Her clan besmirched, her people poverty-stricken, she has lived life taking what she can from who she can, with little regard to charity toward people who would give her none.

Of course, as the events of "Halfpints in Halfpoint" should make clear, Junog himself lost the mace to other, meaner ogres out of Deepcrest Chasm. Vyswava is not willing to abandon the mace, and so her only choice is to try and wrest it from their grasp—possibly with the PCs' help.

GOAL: RETRIEVE VYSWAVA'S MACE

The ogres that Junog lost his mace to live in Deepcrest Chasm and are rumored to be the spawn of demons. The party must accompany Vyswava as she locates and retrieves it.

While the GM is encouraged to allow any solid plan a chance at working in retrieving the mace, there are three main scenarios presented as default options: by force, by stealth, and by diplomacy.

PREREQUISITE: FREE VYSWAVA AND TALK TO JUNOG

Without knowing the story of Vyswava, the mace, and Junog, the party isn't likely to just stumble into this mission. During the previous adventure,

the party has an opportunity to talk to both of them—Vyswava assuming Junog still has her mace, and Junog ready to admit that he doesn't if it'll save his hide. If the party has managed to destroy the orcs and yet hasn't talked to Vyswava and Junog, they can still be contacted by Vyswava independently when they are in Last Chance, where she will appear and ask them, as the people who destroyed the orc alliance, to help her recover her mace.

PREREQUISITE: FIND OUT WHO HAS THE MACE (AND WHERE THEY ARE)

Once the party is on the hunt for the mace and the ogre that Junog lost it to. Junog is able to provide some hints, and will readily do so if threatened—the mace was taken along with much of the rest of his booty by a red-skinned, curly-horned ogre and his buddies.

If the party still needs to discover who has the mace, they can try to persuade other ogres to talk to them—a DC 17 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check will get any particular ogre to confess that an ogre named Yoog fits Junog's description. The party can also attempt a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check in Last Chance to learn this info.

Yoog's house can be in any hex that overlaps with Deepcrest Chasm (you can either decide, or roll randomly). The party can find it if they are directed to it, or if they succeed in a DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check in the hex where it is located.

PLAN: BEAT THEM UP AND TAKE IT

The ogre band is less numerous (though more powerful) than the orc and bandit bands the party has encountered thus far. It shouldn't be entirely beyond their capabilities to whittle the inhabitants of Yoog's House down via violence, though they may have to be careful not to bring down the entire ogre band on them at once. Once the ogre band is eliminated, they're free to take the treasure from the basement of Yoog's house, including the mace.

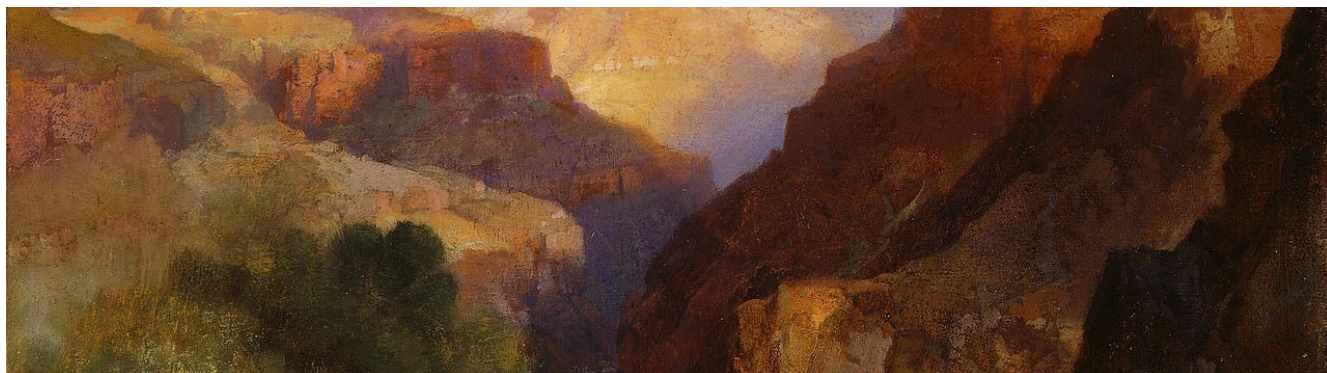
PLAN: SNEAK IN AND GRAB IT

Ogres are not necessarily known for their keen senses, and it is entirely possible to sneak into Yoog's house and grab the mace without anyone being the wiser. A character might sneak in directly making Dexterity (Stealth) checks opposed by the ogres' passive Wisdom (Perception), or they may try to use trickery, deceit, and disguise to infiltrate the house using Charisma (Deception) checks opposed by the ogres' Wisdom (Insight). Regardless, once a check is successful against a given inhabitant, there's no need to check that particular inhabitant again during that day, unless the deception is revealed or the burglar is found.

PLAN: TRADE FOR IT

Ogres are also not necessarily known for being savvy customers or equitable traders, but it is possible to give Yoog something he values far more than yet another rusty old mace. Specifically, he had given some demons a powerful giantkin sword that he regrets giving to them, and would gladly exchange the mace for that blade. The party must face three different Demon Band encounters, but once the blade is wrested from their control and given to Yoog, he'll gladly give up the old mace in exchange for his greater ability to wreak havoc on travelers near Deepcrest (including the party if they stay too long). He can also be persuaded to part with it for up to 6,000 gp (or the equivalent in items), or half that (3,000 gp) if the party manages to kill off at least half of the residents of Yoog's House before opening negotiations.





REWARDS

Once the party has reunited Vyswava with her family's mace, they gain the third star towards the Coward's Map, and treasure according to the list below. The treasure can come from booty from Yoog's house, or as a gift from Vyswava's private stash of goods:

- ▶ **Coins:** 901 gp
- ▶ **Gems:** an iolite worth 30 gp, amber worth 100 gp, moss agate worth 8 gp, and a violet garnet worth 400 gp
- ▶ **Mundane Items:** hand-crafted silver bells (100 gp for the set), fine lock (150 gp, requires a DC 20 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check to pick), bullseye lantern,
- ▶ **Magic Items:** +1 longbow, arrow-catching shield, bag of holding filled with 500 gp worth of small emeralds

In addition to the treasure, Vyswava takes the mace when it is returned to her, and inspects it to ensure that it's the real thing. In the inspection, she manages to flip a catch she hadn't noticed before on the base of the thing, opening the bottom of the mace on steel hinges, and revealing an old map inside. Vyswava is shocked, but knows what this must be: this was the map that her family used to lead the Cowards out of the Desolation when Cirothe attacked, and shows a secret path through Deephall Point into the Desolation. She gives the map to the party as a token of her appreciation, and in the hopes that they can smash Cirothe once and for all. She hopes that aiding in the dragon's downfall will help her family and the rest of the Cowards be redeemed for their initial display of cowardice.

THE NEXT ADVENTURE

This adventure does not lead directly into another, but the party may be in a good place to start earning stars toward another key item. They should already have one star toward the *Quiver of the Dragon's Bane*, so they may wish to see what happened to the gnomes of Northbeach. They're also located near Last Chance, and familiar with the Cowards, so they may be able to find Theobod and start working toward the *Hammer of Vengeance*.

LOCATION: YOOG'S HOUSE

Yoog, the ogre that has come to possess the mace, is a powerful half-demon ogre who lives in a set of ruins just on the edge of Deepcrest Chasm. The ruins are actually the ruins of a temple dedicated to the demon that is Yoog's mother, but she has long since been destroyed and forgotten about, leaving only Yoog and his band of ogres.

Residents of Yoog's House

- ▶ 10 ogres
- ▶ Aavarg, friendly troll
- ▶ Yoog, half-demon ogre (the ogre gains resistance to fire damage and bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks, as well as a breath weapon he can use as an action.
 - ▶ **Fire Breath.** The ogre exhales fire in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

A GREAT POISON

The Quiver of the Dragon's Bane 3

The spiders of the Oldshade Woods have long lived on the fringes of society, and have not suffered an incursion by civilization, or by Cirothe, in all their existence. Intelligent workers of dark magic, the spiders have remained secure in their holdings, led by their queen Sheeltielle.

In seeking a weapon that can kill Cirothe, the elves of Greendell have discovered why Cirothe has never bothered to attack the Oldshade. It seems that Sheeltielle's poison could kill even Cirothe, if it could be injected into her blood. Always cautious, Cirothe had decided not to dominate the Oldshade Woods quite at this point.

The elf fletcher Sonina has come seeking allies in her attempt to harvest Sheeltielle's venom. After failing to recruit the gnomes in Northbeach, she has found the PCs, and has asked for their help, for the sake of all the people of the land.

GOAL: GET SHEELTIELLE'S VENOM

To complete the weapon that may help bring down Cirothe, Sonina needs the raw ingredient, accept no substitutes: the Spider Queen's venom.

While the GM is advised to give any reasonable plan a decent shot at working, three strategies that might result in the party getting their hands on the venom are detailed herein: slaying Sheeltielle, getting her to bite something that can preserve her venom, or getting her to give up her venom willingly to the elves.

PREREQUISITE: ENABLE SONINA TO HELP

Without Sonina, the party won't be able to put the venom into the eventual weapon. She has trained her life for this, much as the party has trained to kill goblins and bandits. Her methods of preservation and skill with enchanting are going to be key, and without recovering her from her encamped locale in Northbeach, there's going to be no way to preserve or use the venom that the party may harvest here.

PREREQUISITE: FINDING THE SPIDER'S LAIR

In order to get Sheeltielle's Venom, the party must first locate her lair. It may exist in any hex that includes or is adjacent to both forest and mountains. You can determine which one it is, or roll randomly to determine it.

When the party is in the hex with the Spider's Lair, at least two different characters must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check to uncover the entrance to the web-covered woodlands. A character can only retry this check by leaving the hex and re-entering it.

PLAN: SLAYING SHEELTIELLE

Sheeltielle is clever, but she is also old and brittle; perhaps at this point her bark is worse than her bite. She can be slain, though to do so may mean cutting a bloody swath through most of her court, surely requiring some handy defenses against poisons at the least.

If Sheeltielle can be slain, the venom can be harvested easily by Sonina during a night's rest spent with the corpse.

PLAN: BAIT FOR THE BITE

Sheeltielle doesn't need to be slain in order to harvest her venom. Indeed, she hands it out fairly generously to prey animals and those who challenge her on a fairly regular basis. In order to get enough of her venom for Sonina, the party is going to need to take a creature she has killed that is size Large or larger. She hunts once a week (you can roll randomly for the day), and during her hunt, she kills two Large creatures, and brings them back to her lair for later eating. She usually keeps multiple living Large creatures bound in her lair to eat at some later date as well. The party may be able to grab one of her previous victims' corpses from the web, though doing so will surely alert several of the black widows, if not Sheeltielle herself—doing so stealthily will require at least three different characters to succeed in a DC 16 Dexterity (Stealth) check—no character can retry a failed check for this purpose—and hefting the Large creature requires at least two different



characters to succeed on a DC 13 Strength check (again, no retries).

Once the party makes it out of immediate danger with the creatures' corpse, Sonina can

extract the poison from it during a long rest.

As a side-note, though it is grisly, Sonina can make use of a living creature who is actively poisoned as well. As the venom thus remains

more pure, a Medium-sized creature is sufficient, but the creature must be under the effects of a *feign death* or *protection from poison* spell or a similar effect for the **entire duration** of the trip, lest the poison kill them and its potency be spent. If the spell can be kept up indefinitely or consistently recast until the party comes to Greendell, it is a valid approach.

PLAN: ENEMY OF MY ENEMY

Sheeltielle is not an irrational being, and she well knows the danger that Cirothe poses to her own family and her own people. While she is primarily self-interested and quite cruel and hungry, her goals are not necessarily divergent from the goals of the elves on this matter, and a diplomatic approach can bear fruit.

In order to convince Sheeltielle to donate some venom, the party must first get an audience with her, and that will require subduing (but not killing) at least one member of her Court, and getting that spider to deliver a message. This requires a DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation) check followed by a DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check once the spider stops trying to kill the party.

In the audience with Sheeltielle, three different characters must succeed on a total of three DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) checks to convince her of the offer. If the party fails here, Sheeltielle and her entire court will likely attack the party at once. If the party succeeds, she kills a Large animal with her venom, and give it to the party, demanding that they remember her generosity when she comes to devour their children as they lie in their beds.

REWARDS

Once the party has given Sonina what she needs, and has accompanied her back to the Greendell, they complete the quest. They gain the third star towards the *Quiver of the Dragon's Bane*, and treasure according to the list below. The treasure can come from booty from Sheeltielle's lair, or as a gift from the elves of Greendell for finally enabling a weapon to be built:

- **Coins:** 303 gp
- **Mundane Items:** 3 flasks of alchemist's fire, a suit of plate armor, and 10 days worth of rations
- **Magic Items:** 10 +1 arrows (or +1 bolts), and a *periapt of proof against poison*

In addition to the treasure, the elves become convinced that the PCs' party is the land's best hope against the assault of Cirothe, and offer them the *Quiver of the Dragon's Bane*, as representatives of the elves' hope.

THE NEXT ADVENTURE

This adventure does not lead directly into another, but the party may be in a good place to start earning stars toward another key item. They should already have at least one star toward the Coward's Map, so they may wish to see what happened to the halflings of Halfpoint. They're also located near Greendell Forest, and familiar with the elves of Greendell, giving them cause to take up the mission to learn *Cirothe's True Name*.

LOCATION: THE SPIDER'S LAIR

This area of Oldshade is not readily accessible from most areas, given to thickly wooded hillsides that are draped in webbing. It is the location of Sheeltielle, the Spider Queen, and she keeps it well-hidden. She lives there with her court of giant black widow spiders that serve her as their royal queen.

Residents of the Spider's Lair

- 8 awakened **giant wolf spiders**
- 2 awakened black widow **giant spiders**
- 2 awakened black widow priests (give the **giant spider** spellcasting as a **priest**)
- Sheeltielle, awakened black widow sorcerer (give the **giant spider** the spellcasting abilities of a **mage**, using Charisma as her spellcasting ability. Increase her Charisma score to 17 (+3). This increases her Challenge Rating to 7 (2,900 XP))

TROLLWOOD

The Hammer of Vengeance 1

The trolls in Oldshade have lived there as long as the goblins and the spiders, and have been considered among the most dangerous residents there. They are savage brutes, and mostly keep to themselves, hunting nearly as wild animals in the tangled thickness. Rumors have circulated in Last Chance about a new force in the Oldshade Forest, organizing the trolls into an elite fighting unit, outfitting them with high-quality weapons and armor, and the people of Last Chance are scared of what may come thundering out of the woods.

One dwarf among the Cowards in Last Chance is especially concerned about the trolls and their recent activities. He enjoys an unusual level of respect in the town—the other dwarf refugees speak of his name in hushed tones, and keep him quite secret from the non-dwarves in Last Chance. His name is Theobod, and rumor has it he knows some secret about the slaying of Citrothe that he'd be willing to share...with the right heroes.

The PCs may be those right heroes, but they must prove themselves to him. Theobod is willing to tell them his secrets, if they can earn his trust...by killing the troll elder in Oldshade, and returning with his head.

GOAL: GET THE TROLL ELDER'S HEAD

The goal here is clear and explicit, and involves at least one direct murder—which the rest of the trolls and their allies are not going to like.

The GM is encouraged to permit most any reasonable plan a chance at working, but there are at least three ways of getting the head: killing the troll elder, getting the troll elder killed by the rest of the camp, or somehow fabricating a false head and presenting that to Theobod.

PREREQUISITE: GET THEOBOD TO CONSIDER A MEETING

The party must get Theobod to propose to them this mission before it has any meaning—without having him specifically request the troll elder's

head, there's no value in acquiring it. This requires that the party have acquired at least three stars from storyline-related quests. Once the party is known fairly widely, Theobod begins to believe they may have a chance to challenge Citrothe—his people will seek them out, and will inform the party of the deal.

PREREQUISITE: FIND CAMP ZESU

Camp Zesu can be located in any hex in the Oldshade Woods. You can choose a hex, or roll randomly. Once the characters find the hex it is located in, Camp Zesu is not difficult to find—the snarls and roars from the trolls and giants are easily audible.

PLAN: KILL THE TROLL ELDER

Camp Zesu is a formidable challenge for a small party, given the savagery of the creatures that live there, but a canny party can whittle the force down over many days with guerilla assaults. The troll elder is rarely found without the company of the two troll fighters that are his choice students, and at least one of the cave giants, but it is possible to isolate him and end him quickly. The party will need a few extra minutes to sever the head, but once that is done, the party may retreat without having to engage more than the bare minimum number of adversaries.

PLAN: TURN THE CAMP ON ITSELF

The trolls in Camp Zesu don't take kindly to being bossed around, even by the elder, and they seem to understand that their leader is being cowed by a hill giant. If the giant can be taken out, the camp will naturally fall apart, but that won't give the party the head they need. To ensure that the party's dirty work is done by the other trolls, they need to actually persuade these hungry, savage beasts that their elder is weak. The first step would be to weaken the leader: If the PCs can kill the cave trolls, and challenge the elder and then escape, this gives the rest of the trolls some evidence as to their leader's vulnerability. If the party wants the head of the elder, they must invite

the other trolls to participate, which requires a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check against each troll. Getting to a circumstance where one can make a Charisma check against a troll is an interesting challenge in and of itself, and may include taking a hostage, or even talking to the trolls while battling them. Once the party has convinced 4 of them to participate in the rebellion, the others will fall into line fairly readily. The party can either arrange for the delivery of the head by offering the trolls a bribe (a few thousand “flat shinies” should do it!), or they can retrieve the head themselves. In order to do that, they’re going to have to fight one of the trolls for it: they want to claim it as their own prize.

PLAN: TRICK THEOBOD

Theobod is smart and cautious, but if the PCs are especially crafty or duplicitous, they may be able to get the better of him. They can manufacture a fake head in many ways (including possibly illusion magic), and in order to pass it off they just need to beat three opposed Wisdom (Insight or Perception) checks against their Charisma (Deception) from the dwarves that examine the item. They can also attempt to bluff their way into success by lying to Theobod in the same way. For his part, Theobod and the rest of the dwarves are eager to find someone who can give them hope, and are inclined to believe the party after some initial prodding. It’s even hypothetically possible to admit that they could not grab the head and use Charisma (Persuasion) checks to convince Theobod to help the party anyway, though in that case the dwarf may not be quite so generous or friendly after this adventure.

REWARDS

Once the party has given Theobod an item he accepts, they complete the quest. They gain the first star towards the *Hammer of Vengeance* and treasure according to the list below. The treasure can come from booty from the troll camp, or as a gift from the dwarves of Last Chance, given in the hopes it can be put to good use:

- **Coins:** 481 gp
- **Gems:** golden pearl (60 gp), azurite (15 gp)
- **Magic Items:** spell scroll of *hypnotic pattern*, *potion of jump*, *potion of shield of faith*

THE NEXT ADVENTURE

This adventure leads directly to the next adventure in the Hammer of Vengeance line, Of the Big and the Small. Theobod, having begun to trust the PCs, speaks of how he is an escapee from Deephall Point, where many of his people still live in slavery. The reason the dwarves of Last Chance have been so respectful is due to his lineage as a Troyeh—one of the priest families of the old dwarven kingdom. He knows of the last weapon developed by the dwarves, but never employed: the *Hammer of Vengeance*, which sits in the Shrine of the Forge-God in Deephall Point, a place that has never been invaded by the giants that have otherwise taken it over and turned into a weapon-production facility using dwarf slave labor.

LOCATION: CAMP ZESU

A training camp for trolls run by the troll elder and supervised by a hill giant from Deephall Point, Camp Zesu is dedicated to transforming wild, savage trolls into an organized fighting force. The camp consists mostly of a cleared area of trees, scored deeply by claws, and a few makeshift branch huts. The ground is stained red-black with the ichor of trolls for several dozen feet around the camp.

Residents of Camp Zesu

- 4 trolls
- 6 **puny trolls** (grown from recently-severed limbs and still weak; use the **troll** stat block, but reduce its hp to 45 and remove its Multiattack action; this decreases its Challenge Rating to 3 (700 XP))
- 1 troll elder (a **troll** with four arms, allowing it to make five attacks with its Multiattack action; this increases its Challenge Rating to 6 (2,300 XP))
- 1 **hill giant** supervisor

OF THE BIG AND THE SMALL

The Hammer of Vengeance 2

In the wake of Cirothe's ravaging of the area now known as the Desolation, the dwarven communities in the mountains began a long, protracted war against her. The war was hard-fought by the dwarves, but slowly, over many months, with heavy attrition, the dwarves lost. They could hold up in their towns for many months against Cirothe's external assaults, but Cirothe made an early alliance that the dwarves had more trouble defending against: the hill giants, which cut them off from escape, and from outside help.

The final dwarven town to fall was also the most magnificent. Deephall Point stood as a bastion for the dwarves and a temple to their god, the Forge Lord, but as Cirothe watched from the outside, the hill giants invaded from the tunnels in the mountains below. Deephall's fall came as a whimper amidst the raging war of Cirothe's arrival, the final sign that her rule would not be easily contested. When it fell, there was no great earthquake, no tremendous magic. The people of the plains merely heard from the dwarves one week, and the next week...silence. And silence for every week thereafter.

Until a dwarf arose amongst the Cowards of Last Chance, a dwarf bearing the last name of the priests of old: Troyeh. He came as an escapee, fleeing Deephall Point, and telling of what had happened since the end of the war.

Now, Deephall Point is ruled by hill giants who have yoked the dwarves there into making weapons and armor for them. The hill giants marshal their forces for an assault on the lowlands, empowered by a demonic advisor who has the chief's ear.

The Troyeh also speaks of a magic that would have saved Deephall, but that had never been used: a hammer said to be able to destroy Cirothe's source of power, called the *Hammer of*

Vengeance. He says that it lies within Deephall Point still, in a cloistered region where the hill giants could never go. And the party may be just the kind of people to help the priest recover it, and finally liberate the dwarves that remained in Deephall.

GOAL: RETRIEVE THE HAMMER OF VENGEANCE

The stories that Theobod Troyeh tells about the fate of Deephall Point are true, and there is a weapon there built to destroy Cirothe that has never been used. Cirothe knew about it, and struck before the dwarves could use it against her. She knew that the source of her spellcasting power, a demon named Azaziz, would be very vulnerable to attack and that, if he were slain, she would become significantly disempowered. She destroyed Deephall Point with the help of some demons in Azaziz's employ, who in turn employed a great amount of cave giants in the endeavor.

In the end, there is a room where the demons fear to tread, and where the giants have not bothered to explore (being largely happy with accumulating wealth and power), and that room holds the weapon that was going to be used against Azaziz: a magical hammer capable of silencing his patronage and severing Cirothe's ties with magic, if it slays him. This room is long forgotten, even by the dwarf slaves—Theobod only learned of it amongst the Cowards in Last Chance. He hopes that by returning with some mercenaries, he'll be able to reclaim it.

Theobod knows a route into Deephall Point through the mountains. It is dangerous and risky, but it will lead back to Deephall, where the party can reclaim the Hammer. Once at Deephall, the GM is encouraged to let any reasonable plan work to retrieve the Hammer. There are three likely-to-work plans presented here: taking it by force, taking it by stealth, or taking it by manipulating the cave giants.

PREREQUISITE: GET THEOBOD ON BOARD

Without Theobod, the party cannot open the door to the room where the *Hammer of Vengeance* lies—he alone knows the old prayer that will open it, passed down in song from his mother and grandmother. Without him, there is no hope of retrieving the hammer, even if the party makes it into Deephall Point.

PREREQUISITE: GETTING TO DEEPHALL POINT AND FINDING THE FORGOTTEN SHRINE

The party can go to Deephall via any of their available routes (which may, at this point, include the directions in the Coward's Map). If they follow Theobod, he directs them to pass through the mountains south of Deephall Point to gain entrance to the place.

Once the party is in the Deephall Point hex, they can go about exploring Deephall Point itself. For each day the party spends exploring Deephall Point, itself, they can roll a Wisdom (Perception), Intelligence (Religion), or Wisdom (Survival) check to find the location of the forgotten shrine where the *Hammer of Vengeance* lies.

PLAN: TAKE IT BY FORCE

The cave giants will put up a reasonable defense of their home, along with their monitor lizards, but the real dangers in taking it by force are the **shadow demon** and the 3 **specters**, none of which are easily noticed before the assault. If the party can manage to dispel the specters and destroy the shadow demon, the hill giants won't be especially interested in sticking around, and the party can access the Forgotten Shrine itself, as long as they have Theobod with them.

PLAN: SNEAK IT OUT

The specters and the shadow demon are the major obstacles to sneaking the *Hammer* out. The hill giants aren't the cleverest, and their guard isn't robust, but the unseen threats that lie before the Forgotten Shrine are eternally watchful, and are much more likely to notice characters trying to

sneak in. Once one enemy is successfully avoided with by making a Dexterity (Stealth) against their passive Wisdom (Perception), no extra checks need to take place on that same day unless the characters do something to negate their stealth.

Still, it is possible. The biggest hiccup in this plan is opening the Forgotten Shrine, which requires that Theobod sing. Once the shrine is opened, the party can run in and grab the *Hammer of Vengeance*—thus empowered, they may be able to fight their way out.

PLAN: GET IT DELIVERED

The party can manipulate the hill giants into getting the item for them, but this will require some elaborate lies and some persuasive words. The giants are potentially interested in wealth and authority, but they are effectively cowed by the shadow demon and terrified of the wailing dwarven specters. They are willing to sing a song in front of the door to open it, and they don't really need to understand the context—a DC 15 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check will convince a single giant to perform the deed for about 2,000 gp.

It's important to note that the giants will not deal with dwarves—they see all dwarves as possible candidates for slavery, and refuse to look at them as potentially persuasive individuals. Thus, Theobod will also need to be convinced to teach a non-dwarf PCs the song, so that they can teach the giants in turn. Theobod is reluctant himself—two DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) checks from different characters are required to convince him—viewing his mother's lullaby as something very sacred to him that he would rather not entrust to the giants who have enslaved his people.

Getting a giant to open the door is only half the battle, of course. Once the door is open, the enemy party is going to be interested in what lies beyond, and isn't likely to give up something as pretty and interesting as the *Hammer*—especially once the shadow demon lays eyes on it, as the demon knows the nature of the thing.

The specters attack any creature that opens the door, including the giants and the shadow demon, perhaps enabling the party to make off with the *Hammer* in the ensuing melee, or to take out the surviving party more efficiently after all is said and done. The party might even be able to get its initial investment back, if the cave giant they persuaded to sing is destroyed.

REWARDS

Once the party has escaped Deephall Point with the *Hammer of Vengeance*, the adventure is complete. They gain the second star towards the Hammer of Vengeance, and treasure according to the list below. The treasure can come from booty from the giant lair, or as a gift from Theobod when the party gets back to Last Chance, in appreciation for their help:

- ▶ **Coins:** 407 gp
- ▶ **Gems:** an amethyst worth 90 gp, a black star sapphire worth 400 gp, a chrysoprase worth 40 gp, a citrine worth 30 gp, an emerald worth 1,100 gp, an obsidian gem worth 8 gp, and one rich purple corundum worth 900 gp
- ▶ **Magic Items:** spell scroll of *arcane lock*



THE NEXT ADVENTURE

This adventure leads directly to the next adventure in the Hammer of Vengeance line, Dig Deep. With the recovery of the *Hammer of Vengeance*, Theobod knows precisely how to use it: the source of Cirothe's divine magic, a rift deep within Deepcrest Chasm linked to a particular item known as the Rift Crystal. The *Hammer* was made specifically to destroy that crystal, and seal Cirothe's divine magic forever. Theobod is eager to go himself, but will also trust the party with the deed.

LOCATION: THE FORGOTTEN SHRINE

This place has been largely overlooked by the hill giants who have taken over Deephall Point, but a group of them—lead by a demon who knows that something is hiding within the shrine—dwells around the entrance. Undead spirits also dwell around the shrine. The demon keeps an eye on the area, and keeps the giants penned in to serve as the first line of defense.

Residents of the Forgotten Shrine

- ▶ 9 hill giants
- ▶ 4 giant lizards
- ▶ 1 shadow demon
- ▶ 3 specters

DIG DEEP

The Hammer of Vengeance 3

When Cirothe was a mewling little dragonling, hundreds of years ago, she was involved in an incident in the area that is now known as Deepcrest Chasm: the very creation of that chasm by opening a dark portal far beneath the earth. The forces involved in that creation rent the ground asunder, and opened a portal into another universe, rife with demons. As a thanks for bringing them into this world, the demons imparted great power onto Cirothe, gifting her with demonic magic harvested from the seed of the demons' presence in this world: a crystal sphere known as the Rift Crystal.

In Cirothe's ascent to power, the dwarves she fought against learned of this source of power and built a weapon specifically to destroy it: the *Hammer of Vengeance*. They never got to use the hammer, however—Cirothe crushed the great stronghold of Deephall Point before they got a chance to do so. The creators of the hammer became slaves to the giants that followed in Cirothe's wake, and so the hammer was lost to the ages...until an ancestor of those dwarves managed to escape and get outside help.

Now, the party has the *Hammer of Vengeance*, and they can use it for its intended purpose: to crush the source of Cirothe's evil magic, in the heart of Deepcrest Chasm.

GOAL: DESTROY THE RIFT CRYSTAL

Theobod knows of the origins of Cirothe's power. It is whispered in the lyrics of the song his mother passed down to him: in the depths of the earth, a cracked crystal lies in the hands of a demonic assassin named Azaziz, who dwells at the spot where that pact was made all those years ago: in the remains of the cave where Cirothe laired as a young dragon.

Once the party finds and gets into the cave, they will meet Azaziz and his minions, all of whom are quite invested in keeping Cirothe at full power. As usual, the GM is encouraged to allow

any reasonable plan a chance at effectiveness, and we present here three possible approaches to destroying that crystal: direct assault, sneaking in, or fostering rebellion in Azaziz's troops.

PREREQUISITE: GETTING THE HAMMER OF VENGEANCE

Only the hammer from Deephall Point can destroy the Rift Crystal. Though it can be found, and Azaziz dealt with, Cirothe cannot be stripped of spells until the crystal is shattered with the hammer.

PREREQUISITE: FINDING THE CAVE OF THE RIFT

Azaziz's home is known to the shadow demon of Deephall Point, who, being a demon, has few loyalties to Azaziz, and would be more than willing to tell the party where he lives in exchange for clemency. Without this knowledge, the party will be searching: there is a 20% chance that any given hex within or adjacent to Deepcrest Chasm contains the entrance to the Cave of the Rift. If the party is in that hex, a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals the entrance to the cave.

PLAN: SNEAKING IN

Stealth is less effective here, due to the protections Azaziz has in place—he has had several traps and wards prepared to prevent himself from being caught unaware by his rivals. He is a demon after all, and is quite comfortable in the darkness and shadow.

Any character attempting the stealthy route must not only succeed on Dexterity (Stealth) checks against the passive Wisdom (Perception) of each demon in the cave, but must also succeed in a secret DC 19 Wisdom (Perception) check, rolled privately by the GM, or blunder into a trap. You can use the table below to determine what kind of trap the party member who fails this check blunders into.

If a character blunders into a trap, or is noticed by one of the demons, 4 **dretches** attack the intruder, each hoping to be the one to kill them.

DEADLY TRAPS

1d6 Trap

- 1 The cave entrance closes and the room slowly fills with poisonous gas. Characters have time to escape as long as they hold their breath (a number of minutes equal to 1 + their Constitution modifier, minimum 30 seconds). In order to escape, at least three characters must succeed on a DC 17 ability check to escape. Examples include using Strength to force open the cave, Dexterity to try and disable the trap, or Intelligence (Investigation) to find an alternate route out. Once the party achieves success, the trap is no longer harmful.
- 2 A cave-in is triggered in the region. The party has 1 round to move at least 40 feet to escape the cave-in before the rocks crush them. Each PC must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, that PC takes 2d10 damage from the falling rocks and sustains one random injury (see “Injury” in the introduction).
- 3 A spiked pit opens up beneath the party. Each character must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or fall 20 feet to the bottom, taking 2d6 damage and sustaining one random injury (see “Injury” in the introduction). To climb out, a PC must make a DC 17 Strength (Athletics) check; failing this check causes the PC to suffer another 1d6 damage and another injury.
- 4 A large, spike-filled rack falls from the ceiling. Each party member can make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw to avoid the spikes. On a failure, they take 2d10 damage and sustain one random injury.
- 5 A solid log swings down and crashes into the character who failed the check. That character can make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw to avoid it. If they fail, they take 2d8 damage and sustain one random injury.
- 6 Jets of flame shoot at the character who failed the check. That character can make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to avoid the jet of flame. On a failure, they take 2d6 damage and their equipment catches fire, destroying 1d4 of their equipped supply days.

PLAN: THE DIRECT ASSAULT

This plan is fairly viable. Azaziz has a few lackeys and sympathizers, but demons are loners at heart, and Azaziz is no different. A well-armed party could take him out, smash the crystal, and get home fairly easily.

PLAN: FORMING REVOLTS

Demons are not exactly known for their cooperation skills; the group here is no different. The 2 **barlgura** and 16 **dretches** under Azaziz’s leadership are duplicitous and untrustworthy, especially when he isn’t directly present. In order to convince one to turn on Azaziz, it takes about 2,000 gp (or items worth that much) and a DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

The barlgura aren’t exactly interested in incurring Cirothe’s wrath or in allowing the Rift Crystal to be obliterated, either, however. They will take up defense of the items if need be. They also are not reliable even once bought: one barlgura will not revolt alone, but if both can be persuaded—or a single barlgura and at least half the dretches are convinced—they gang up on Azaziz and kill him. The PCs may wish to descend and wipe up the remains of the demon’s own strife afterwards.

REWARDS

Once the party destroyed the Rift Crystal in Azaziz’s possession with the *Hammer of Vengeance*, the adventure is complete. They gain the third star towards the *Hammer of Vengeance*, and treasure according to the list below. The treasure can come from booty from the demon lair, or as a gift from Theobod when the party gets back to Last Chance, in appreciation for their help:

- **Coins:** 31 pp, 265 gp
- **Art Objects:** a bronze flagon with warrior images worth 50 gp, a silver brazier with religious markings worth 130 gp, elaborate copper wind chimes worth 50 gp, a gold and ivory decanter worth 400 gp, a gold mask of a dwarf worth 450 gp, an ivory drinking horn with copper ends worth 60 gp,

a painted paper fan with silver slats worth 20 gp, a set of six silver dice worth 75 gp, a silver comb with an ornate handle worth 75 gp, a silver holy symbol worth 25 gp, a silver statue of Cirothe worth 500 gp, a silver flagon with religious markings worth 80 gp

- **Magic Items:** *belt of dwarvenkind*, *gauntlets of ogre strength*

THE NEXT ADVENTURE

After this adventure, the party has gained the ability to use the *Hammer of Vengeance* to destroy Cirothe's ability to cast spells. She still has this capacity once the Rift Crystal is smashed, but the Hammer, after closing the rift, has the ability to then blunt her magic as well. That will require a direct confrontation.

The party may have a few more adventures started that they can finish up before that confrontation. If they haven't followed up on the goblins that were allying with the bandits, for instance, they may wish to follow up on that now.

LOCATION: THE CAVE OF THE RIFT

The Cave of the Rift is Cirothe's original home, the place she grew up in. Originally on a chain of mountains, the cave was warm and smelled of brimstone, which is part of why Cirothe's mother chose it as the place to hide an egg. Cirothe's mother met her end at the hands of some dragon-

slayers soon after laying the egg, leaving it to hatch alone, warmed by the unearthly heat from deep within the mountains. As Cirothe grew up eating roaches and spiders in the cave, her curiosity lead her to explore the source of the heat, and she found Azaziz, long-buried in the wars against the gods long ago.

Azaziz persuaded Cirothe to open the Rift to the Abyss in exchange for protection and magical power...and for a promise, never to leave her alone. Azaziz and Cirothe have remained on fairly friendly terms, and she has trusted him with the defense of what he gave her, as he tended his rising demon army in the remains of those mountains.

After the creation of the gate, Azaziz's lack of planning and general laziness was not conducive to forming that demon army that he initially intended. The gate is also weak, unable to bear much of a load. Yet Azaziz struggles to build his forces still, in the cave that once birthed Cirothe, and where the Crystal of the Rift exists: the remains of her eggshell, crystalized from the transformation into a nexus of the planes.

Inhabitants of the Cave of the Rift

- Azaziz, *chasme*
- 2 *barlgura*
- 4 *dretches*



QUICKWOOD

Cirothe's True Name 1

In the time in which Cirothe was rising to power, the elves of Greyfell Forest believed that they should assist the dwarves, and put an end to her rise before she became too dangerous for them to handle. However, they never got the chance—just as they were preparing to send a contingent of soldiers to Deephall Point, Greyfell Forest grew dark. Overnight, trees went from majestic and beautiful to twisted and dark. Friendly pixies disappeared and biting bramble-sprites manifested. Where there were once unicorns and nymphs, now hags and nightmares roamed. The elven cities came under attack, and the Fairy Queen, leader of the elves and all the fey in the region, locked herself away in her ivory tower, the Feycastle.

The attacks came quickly—the elven cities were assaulted by the dark fey, and fell quickly, overtaken with woodland in a matter of days. The drow, dark elves, were known to be the leaders of the assault, and they overwhelmed the elves of Greyfell. Without their queen, and with their forest dark, they undertook a great journey to the nearby Greendell forest, under cover of sunlight, with the fires of their homes burning behind them.

Of course, they could not afford in that chaos to help the dwarves. The dwarves have been carrying a grudge about that for some time. Today in Greendell, the elves have moved on from their home. Concentrating their attentions on Cirothe, they have begun to develop a weapon that can kill her. However, there are elven elders who cling to the old war, and who are unwilling to entirely let it go.

Rajod is such an elf. Assured that the wood of the Greyfell is far superior to the wood of Greendell, and thus essential for any capable bow or arrow, he has sent his assistant, Arotha, into the Greyfell to harvest some wood. However, Arotha has not returned, and Rajod has begun to feel deeply guilty, fearing he has cosigned the young wood-worker to an early death in that tangled

place of forgotten nightmares. He'd be much appreciative if someone would be willing to go into Greyfell and recover the young elf, or at least a sign of his death.

GOAL: RECOVER OR CONFIRM THE DEATH OF AROTHA

Arotha is being held captive by some plant-creatures deep within the forest, waiting for the arrival of a drow priestess: one is called whenever an elf is caught, to ritually perform the sacrifice that will ensure that the forest continues its slow decline into darkness. Once the party begins the search, they have 7 days before Arotha is killed by the priestess. Arotha is being held in a location called the Bloodgrove, and once the PCs find it, they must get Arotha back, or at least a token of his presence. Arotha wears a leather necklace with a brown-and-white owl feather that will serve as evidence (other items may as well).

Once the party finds where Arotha is being held, getting him or this token back from the plant-creatures is open-ended: the GM is encouraged to allow any reasonable approach some chance of success. Plans described below include fighting the plant creatures for him, negotiating with them for a return of his token, or sneaking him out under the cover of darkness.

PREREQUISITE: FINDING THE BLOODGROVE

When the party is in Greyfell Forest, they can actively search for the location of Arotha by making DC 17 Wisdom (Survival) checks. At least three characters must succeed on this check, and only one check can be made during the day's travel.

Once the successes are met, the characters stumble on the Grove of Gloom in the hex they currently occupy.

PLAN: FIGHT THE FOREST

The inhabitants of the Bloodgrove want to hold Arotha for sacrifice, and he's valuable for that purpose—his blood as an elf descended from Greyfell elves will help hasten the process of

corruption the forest is going through. In order to save his life, the PCs will have to attack, and they will be facing the forest itself in this fight. It is difficult to win this battle by simple attrition: the **scythe trees** (see below) and **awakened shrubs** aren't particularly interested in leaving the grove, and are more than content to protect their live sacrifice, which means that luring the creatures away from each other is difficult. The party may do well by making regular raids, whittling down the defenses gradually, but each day that passes is another day closer to Arotha's untimely demise.

PLAN: STEALING THE CAPTIVE

It is difficult to sneak the captive out. For one, the party may not be aware of all the creatures here in the grove: the plants have remarkable stealth modifiers in the forest, and so even knowing which tree is a scythe tree and which tree is a harmless oak can be difficult. If the party does manage to use stealth to avoid detection, they must also contend with the fact that the **lightning treant** (see below) itself serves as the holding place for Arotha—and it will be impossible to sneak past it while climbing on its own body. Once the party is aware that the tree Arotha is in is alive (and hostile), it may become easier: the party can use the other trees nearby to scuttle through the canopy and down onto the branch where Arotha is held, but they still run the risk of scurrying over trees that are actively alive.

To model this abstractly, you can have any party member attempting to sneak in make a DC 18 Intelligence (Nature) check—failure indicates they awaken one of the trees by sneaking upon it. Once a tree has been awakened, the party doesn't risk awakening it again on a second day: they know which ones to stay away from. Still, a process of trial-and-error might take longer than Arotha has.

PLAN: RETURN THE PROOF

While the creatures in the grove have no desire to turn Arotha over alive, it is possible to convince them to return the proof of Arotha's presence (which will at least give Rajod confirmation of his

worst fears). The drow priestess who appears on Day 7 is the one with the authority to do this, and she is willing to "give the old elf something to dry his tears over," and will return the personal effects of Arotha, for a 3,000 gp bribe. The party must also vow never to return to Greyfell Forest: if they do, the drow will look at Greendell possible expansion territory.

OPTION: BUYING TIME

The sacrifice cannot be conducted in the absence of a drow priestess. To buy time, all the party needs to do is kill the drow priestess (or make sure she doesn't show up). After the initial priestess arrives, another one will be sent every 3 days, with an increasing contingent of 2 extra drow each time a new one is sent (the first one will be sent in three days with 2 drow; the second one will be sent in six days with 4 drow, etc.).

REWARDS

Once the party gets Arotha (or evidence of his death) back to Rajod, the adventure is complete. If the party is able to return him intact, there will be a great festival the next day; otherwise, Rajod will host a funeral for him. Either way, the party gains the first star towards *Cirothe's True Name*, and treasure according to the list below. The treasure can come from booty from the grove, or as a gift from Rajod when the party gets back to the Greendell Woods, in appreciation for their help:

- **Coins:** 35 pp, 210 gp
- **Gems:** an aquamarine worth 1,000 gp), a citrine worth 100 gp, five onyx stones each worth 50 gp, a peridot worth 40 gp, a sardonyx worth 50 gp, a tourmaline worth 100 gp
- **Magic Items:** four *potions of greater healing*, *potion of protection from evil and good*

THE NEXT ADVENTURE

During the celebration (or funeral), Rajod gets a little drunk, and begins to talk about his time as one of the Fairy Queen's guards, back in his "reckless youth." He claims that as long as she

watched over the elves, they would have nothing to fear—the Fairy Queen knew Citrothe's true name, and the dragon would not dare attack her or her people lest it become well known. He hopes that someday, the drow control over her and the forest could be stopped, and he claims to know of a way into the palace, a secret way known only to the Guards...a way beneath the forest that emerges near Deepspell Lake.

If the party is interested in obliterating Citrothe once and for all, that true name will be invaluable, and Rajod's secret entrance certainly will be useful for getting to the queen....

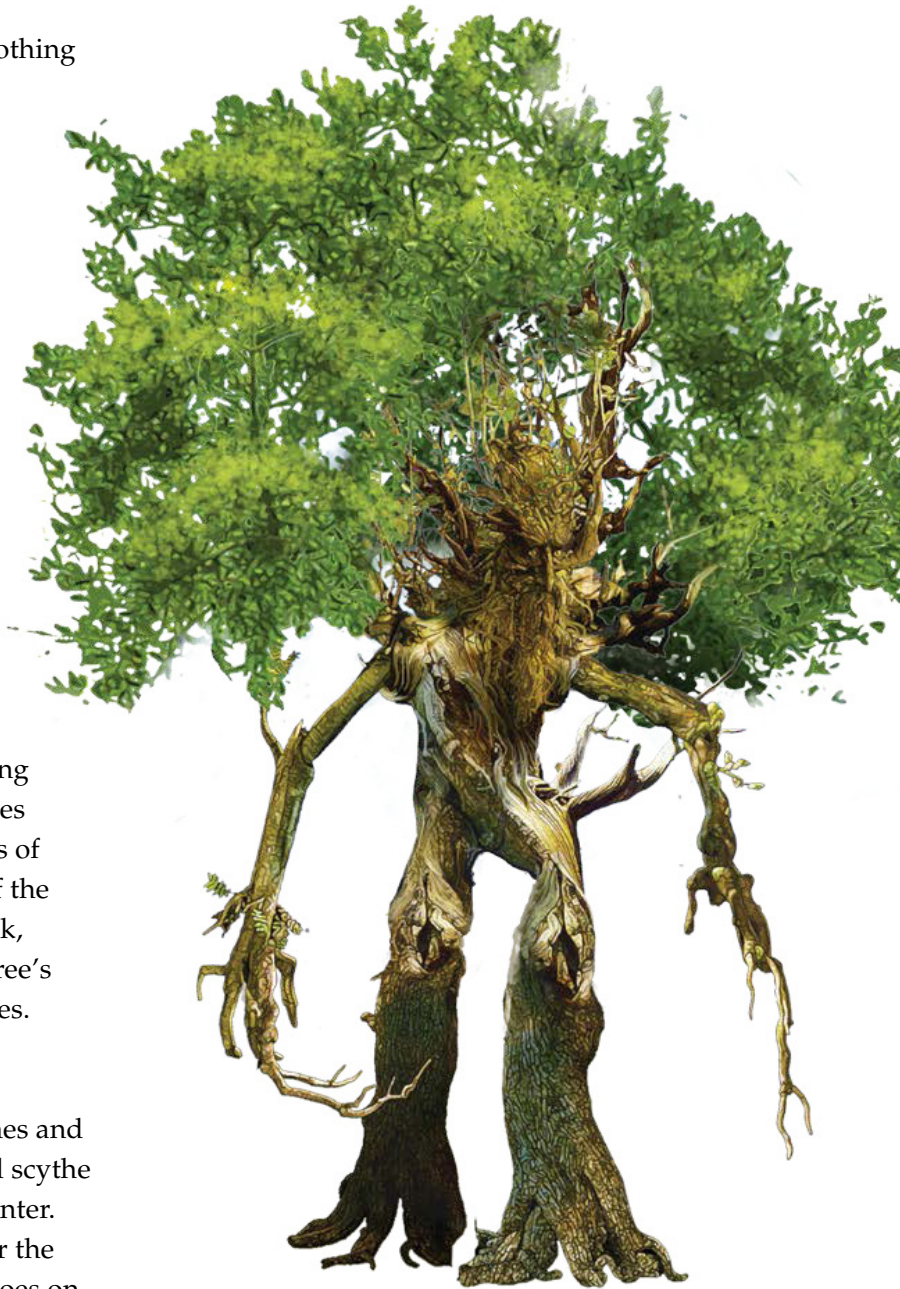
LOCATION: THE BLOODGROVE

This region of the forest is eerily quiet, without the buzzing of insects or the chirping of birds. A tangle of vines and roots entwines the tall, almost leafless trees here, in a chaos of twisting, serpentine shapes. In the center of the grove sits a large barren tree with black bark, covered in moss. Arotha is draped in that tree's branches, unconscious and wrapped in vines.

Inhabitants of the Bloodgrove

Awakened shrubs dwell in the tangle of vines and roots. The grove itself is made up of several scythe trees, and a lightning treant occupies the center. There are also a handful of drow present for the ceremony, and more fill the grove as time goes on.

- ▶ 1 **lightning treant** (a **treant** that is healed by lightning damage instead of hurt by it)
- ▶ 5 **scythe trees** (an **awakened tree** whose slam attacks deal slashing damage)
- ▶ 20 **awakened shrubs**
- ▶ 2 **drow**
- ▶ Add 2 **drow** for each day spent searching for the Bloodgrove
- ▶ Add 1 **drow priestess** on day 7; this character is a **mage** with a Wisdom score of 17 (+3) and its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following cleric spells prepared:



- ▶ Cantrips (at will): *guidance, poison spray, resistance, spare the dying, thaumaturgy*
- ▶ 1st level (4 slots): *animal friendship, cure wounds, detect poison and disease, ray of sickness*
- ▶ 2nd level (3 slots): *lesser restoration, protection from poison, web*
- ▶ 3rd level (3 slots): *conjure animals* (2 **giant spiders**), *dispel magic*
- ▶ 4th level (3 slots): *divination, freedom of movement*
- ▶ 5th level (1 slot): *insect plague*

THE MAD QUEEN'S ARMY

Cirothe's True Name 2

The Fairy Queen once protected the elves against Cirothe's wrath—she knew a secret about the dragon that made it reluctant to attack the elves. However, it has been nearly an elvish generation since she could protect them, corrupted by the drow into a creature dark and terrifying. Some of the elders who remember her reign still speak of a way to enter the castle, a way now undoubtedly filled with drow, but possible to negotiate. A system of tunnels, stretching from Deepspell Lake to just beneath the Feycastle itself, provides access, and a brave party may be able to use it to get to the heart of Greyfell, without having to cut down every tree therein.

Only a person who knows of the entrance knows where to find it, and Rajod, an elf from Greendell, knows where it lies.

GOAL: FIND THE SECRET ENTRANCE TO THE FEYCASTLE

This goal is largely achievable simply by moving. All the party must do is reach the end of the network of tunnels beneath the Greyfell. Of course, down there they will meet many possible monsters and hazards: the tunnels have their own encounter chart, and also contain the headquarters of the drow in the region, the Drowhold.

Exploring the tunnels is done similarly to exploring the world above, and is also done with hexes, using the same hexes as the Greyfell Forest (the party is under the Greyfell Forest, though, not in it). The Wisdom (Survival) check to avoid getting lost is DC 18 while the party is in the tunnels, however, and whenever the party enters a hex, roll 1d6 to randomly determine which sides of the hex they can leave as they wander in the caverns.

Additionally, the party may come across the Drowhold at any point: there is a 1-in-6 chance that when entering any particular hex the

party encounters the Drowhold. The Drowhold contains the secret entrance to the Feycastle. Once the party finds the Drowhold, they must find the entrance to the Feycastle, which can be done in a multitude of ways: the ultimate location is behind the altar to Shebnem in the center of the Hold. To gain access, the party must employ one of the drow—the Drow Rebel from the random encounters would suffice, but any drow speaking the keyword (“submission,” in Undercommon) in front of the statue will open the secret passageway. The party can convince other members of the Drowhold to trigger the opening, with three DC 18 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) checks from at least three different characters. A single DC 18 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check on any spiderguard or the priestess will reveal the method to opening the passage.

When moving through the tunnels, use the Greyfell Caverns Encounters table to determine what the party encounters.

GREYFELL CAVERNS ENCOUNTERS

1d12+1d8	Encounter Type
2	Lurking Shadows
3	Sudden Flood
4	Barbazu Squad
5	Kyton's Chamber
6	Drow Warband
7	Echoing Chants
8	Caged Deva
9	Devil's Altar
10	Predatory Forlarren
11	No Encounter
12	Curious Beetle
13	Distant Screams
14	Drow Guard Station
15	Sudden Cliff
16	Enslaved Svirfneblin
17	Cave Collapse
18	Rodent of Unusual Hunger
19	Damp Tunnel
20	Rebellious Drow

Kyton's Chamber

An **chain devil** runs this torture chamber. The corpses of a dozen prisoners—wood elves, drow, sfirvneblin, and others—are littered about him. The prisoner revolt has weakened the devil, reducing his current hit points to 40.

Lurking Shadows

A group of $1d6 + 3$ **shadows** try to ambush the party slide along the walls, following the party until they reach an appropriate location for an ambush. They have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made in the darkness.

Barbazu Squad

A group of 4 **bearded devils** are feasting on the remains of a fey creature, and are not happy to be interrupted. A DC 18 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals the creature was once a nymph.

Caged Deva

A **deva** is caged in a cell that radiates with intense evil magic. It slumps against the wall, almost unconscious, and horrible burns can be seen up and down its arms. It doesn't seem entirely aware of its surroundings. If the deva can be healed with a DC 17 Wisdom (Medicine) check, and the cage can be dis-empowered with a DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check, the deva can be freed. Once freed, the deva will accompany the party until their next battle, or until their next rest, helping in any way it can.

Cave Collapse

As the party is moving through the tunnels, the cave above them begins to collapse. Each party member must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or suffer a random injury.

Curious Beetle

A **giant fire beetle** investigates the party. It isn't hostile, but it is quite bold, feeling out characters with mandibles and antennae. If given something sugary, it departs with it.

Damp Tunnel

The party passes through a tunnel dripping with moisture, with pools of mud and slime along the way. Each party member must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or contract a random illness.

Devil's Altar

This tunnel contains an infrequently-active altar to Shebnem, depicting the devil as a beautiful woman emerging from the wall and looming over the sacrificial table, which is stained with blood. It is currently abandoned, and radiates powerful evil. If the party takes a long rest here, they are haunted by dreams of sacrifices made here in the past, and cannot recover hit points or spells.

Distant Screams

The party hears distant cries of terror and pain echoing through the caves. A DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check allows a party member to follow the sound to a small torture chamber, where one dryad is tied to a rack. The chamber is otherwise empty of creatures. If the party can free the dryad with a DC 18 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check, mend her wounds with a DC 20 Wisdom (Medicine) check, and escort her to the surface with a DC 20 Wisdom (Survival) check, she will bestow on them food equal to one day's supplies that, when eaten, also removes diseases the character is suffering from. She then fades back into the forest.

Drow Guard Station

This cavern contains $4d6$ **drow** and $1d3$ black widow **giant spiders**.

Drow Warband

A group of $3d4$ **drow** wander through the region, patrolling the tunnels.

Echoing Chants

The party hears distant, echoing chanting reverberating through the tunnels. A DC 15 Intelligence check identifies the language as

Infernal. A character who knows Infernal can notice it as a prayer to “The Queen Behind the Throne,” an exaltation of her corruption, and a hope that one day the whole land shall be remade in her image.

Enslaved Svirfneblin

A gang of 4 **deep gnomes**, chained to the floor with cold iron, work mining the walls in this tunnel. Friendly, but skittish, the gnomes can provide guidance in the tunnels, giving the party one extra side from the hex that they may leave from. One drow **veteran** supervises them.

Rodent of Unusual Hunger

A single, emaciated **giant rat** appears, and attempts to flee from the party, frightened and alone. If made friendly, the creature will stay with the party as long as they remain in the same hex.

Predatory Forlarren

A **forlarren** lives in this tunnel, seeking to lure victims to their doom. She lives here with a gang of 5 **lemures** that help her murder her victims.

A forlarren uses **succubus** statistics with the following changes; these changes reduce its Challenge Rating to 2 (450 XP):

- ▶ Its hit points are reduced to 50.
- ▶ Its Armor Class is reduced to 13.
- ▶ It gains the following trait: **Remorse**.
Whenever the forlarren kills a living creature, it must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw to avoid becoming overwhelmed with remorse. On a failure, the forlarren has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks for 1d6 rounds.

A nymph’s charm and beauty are such that she attracts the gaze of creature who looks upon her—and often, unfortunately, creatures she would rather not consort with. When a demon or devil takes advantage of a nymph, the resulting offspring is born as twisted and perverse as the rape that created it. It is a forlarren—a tragic fiend that possesses its own unusual abilities and qualities.

The forlarren attacks with its clawed hands, typically focusing on a single opponent at a time and attacking until it or its opponent is slain. Yet curiously, when a forlarren succeeds in killing an opponent, the kindly traits of its fey mother sometimes surface, and it shows profound remorse for its cruelty. With such a pendulum of erratic behavior, it is no wonder that forlarrens are all but incapable of forming lasting friendships—even with others of their own kind. The majority of forlarrens inherit little in the way of the magical abilities possessed by their fey mothers, but they do gain a Small measure of the powers of their fiendish fathers.

A forlarren stands 6 feet tall and weighs about 160 pounds. In theory, these creatures can live for hundreds of years, but most perish through violence before they turn 10.

Rebellious Drow

The party encounters one drow **veteran**, hungry, scared, and stripped of its equipment. If the party speaks Undercommon, a DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces the creature to talk with the party, perhaps offering directions (giving the party advantage to the next day’s roll to avoid becoming lost), or even offering to join while the party is down below, if she can be equipped.

Sudden Cliff

The party’s path is halted by a sudden drop-off, with no other end in sight. They must leave this hex back through the hex they entered it from.

Sudden Flood

The cavern the party walks through is suddenly flooded with water. Each party member must make a DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check to swim across or sustain a random injury.

REWARDS

The adventure is complete when the party goes through the passageway beneath the Drowhold toward the secret entrance of the Feycastle. At this point, the party gains the second star towards



Cirothe's True Name, and treasure according to the list below. The most appropriate place for the reward is as treasure stored in the secret passageway:

- ▶ **Coins:** 84 pp, 757 gp
- ▶ **Gems:** a rhodochrosite worth 10 gp, a sardonyx worth 60 gp, a fossilized shell worth 8 gp, an amethyst worth 80 gp, an aquamarine worth 500 gp
- ▶ **Magic Items:** *mace of terror*, *potion of heroism*, *potion of fire resistance*

THE NEXT ADVENTURE

Once the party is through the Drowhold, and beneath the Feycastle, the final attempt to free the Fairy Queen from her devils' enslavement can begin. The party should have learned from their encounters already that there are forces other than the drow at work, and their exploration of the Feycastle should confirm that.

LOCATION: THE DROWHOLD

This expansive cavern is something of a small town, with homes carved out of the cave rocks. Luminous blue-green lichen grows rampantly and sheds a cold light on the surroundings. The drowhold is, as its name implies, filled with drow and spiders, with a handful of devils along for the ride. The secret entrance to the Feycastle is found beneath a statue of a woman with raven's wings that sits in the center of the cavern.

Inhabitants of the Drowhold

- ▶ 25 **drow**
- ▶ 5 black widow **giant spiders**
- ▶ 5 drow **veterans**
- ▶ 1 **drow priestess** (see the inhabitants list of "Quickwood," the first *Cirothe's True Name* adventure)



UNNATURE

Cirothe's True Name 3

In her reckless youth, the future Fairy Queen of Greyfell once made a promise over the dead and broken body of a demon that had invaded from Deepcrest Chasm: if the demons could be driven back to the chasm, and could never again come forth, she would pay any price.

Her wish, empowered by the blood on her blades, was overheard deep in Hell, and an erinyes named Shebnem approached the Queen with an offer: they could cripple the demonic forces menacing the Greyfell, in exchange for only one small trade: that the erinyes became consulted on any future military action. The Queen did not need to listen to the devil, but she must at least hear the devil's advice. The Queen, seeing little risk in a consultant she never expected to listen to, acquiesced, and in exchange, learned the true names of many of the demon leaders...and of *Cirothe* herself.

In the years since the demon wars triggered by *Cirothe*, the Greyfell Forest flourished. The Fairy Queen consulted the erinyes, who lay in a secret chamber, on any military action, and the erinyes reliably advised her. Sometimes, this advice was disregarded. Sometimes, this advice was the same—or better than—the advice from her own generals. Slowly, over the course of many years, the Shebnem bent the military might of Greyfell to look away from the underground tunnels where their ancient enemies, the drow, had been banished. There were demons and goblins and orcs and humans to deal with...the drow were not urgent, the drow were not attacking. So the drow were ignored.

This played into Shebnem's plan. Working with her agents in the deep caverns, she encouraged the drow to marshal their forces, and launch a tremendous attack on the Feycastle itself. The royal family was caught off guard, and the princess, the Fairy Queen's daughter, was kidnapped. In a panic, the Fairy Queen marshaled her response, and, once again, consulted with

Shebnem, who told her simply: do nothing. If you attack, your daughter will die.

The Fairy Queen listened to Shebnem, unable to bear the thought of killing her own daughter in military action. This was the beginning of the end: the drow remained in the tunnels, the military might of Greyfell was never marshaled against them, and the queen, over time, grew selfish, petty, and paranoid. The forest began to reflect her madness, as the drow began capturing and tormenting fey spirits, warping them into twisted reflections of their previous selves.

To this day, even as the elven downs of Greyfell have been abandoned, and her daughter long since deceased in captivity, the Fairy Queen is already broken and mad, and she still takes advice from the erinyes, living like a puppet at the erinyes's command.

As the party enters the castle, their job is to learn the name Shebnem taught to the Fairy Queen, in an effort to weaken *Cirothe* themselves. In order to do that, they must break Shebnem's hold on the queen, and on the forest, and help the queen to see a moment of clarity.

GOAL: FREE THE FAIRY QUEEN

In order to wrest *Cirothe's True Name* from the Fairy Queen, the party needs to break Shebnem's hold on her. There are two basic ways to do this: to kill Shebnem (a task almost as difficult as killing *Cirothe* herself!), or to convince the Mad Queen to finally abandon her pact with the devil.

Once the party has located the queen, restoring her sanity requires a total of five DC 20 ability checks, no more than two coming from any one character. The GM is encouraged to give any reasonable skill at least a chance of success, but useful skills in restoring the Queen to her old self may include:

- Intelligence (History) to recall legends of undoing diabolic contracts.
- Charisma (Persuasion) to convince the Queen that she's better off without the devil.
- Wisdom (Insight) to pierce the Queen's anxieties, fears, and paranoidias, putting her in

touch with reality again.

- Charisma (Deception) to convince the Queen that Shebnem has no real hold on her.
- Charisma (Intimidation) to cow the Queen into obeying the party instead of Shebnem.

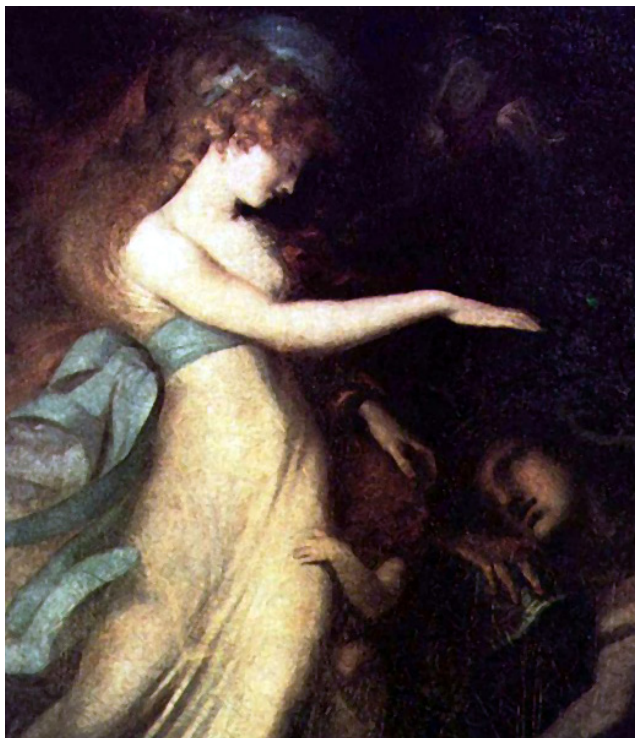
If any party member fails a check, that party member cannot contribute to successes anymore that day. If the party cannot win her over in one day, they are subject to another encounter the next day, and can try again.

PREREQUISITE: GET TO THE QUEEN

The Feycastle can, in the absence of a map, be treated like an abstract exploration. The party has $1d4 + 2$ encounters with the residents of the Feycastle on their way through. In each encounter, the party can attempt to avoid it (using ability checks or spells to circumvent the event), or simply engage it (normally, cutting a bloody swath through the enemy, but also using Charisma checks or spells to end it early). In general, for the party to avoid an encounter, at least three different characters must make a successful check of some sort against the enemy—for instance, a successful Dexterity (Stealth) check to avoid detection—and if any character fails, that character at least is drawn into the encounter. When there is no obvious opposed check to make, the GM is encouraged to use a DC 20 check.

The default of most of the creatures here is hostility—the party is invading, and the devils wish to expel them. Unlike with the more chaotic forces, it is difficult to turn the devils against each other, but the devils do have another weakness: if the most powerful devil in the encounter is dealt with somehow, the rest become disposed to peaceful negotiation.

The devils follow their leaders devotedly, but without a leader, they become much more open to interpretation. In addition, if the leader is convinced of something, the other devils can be made to agree, so opposed ability checks only have to beat the most powerful devil's opposed check. If the other devils become aware of a deception or a sneak, they may raise the alert, but



they won't act without direction (the leader may direct them to attack if there's no reason *not* to attack, however). A DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals this particular information.

Examples of ways the party may bypass the encounter are below, but the GM is encouraged to give any half-decent idea a chance work, at least once.

- ▶ Wisdom (Survival) to take a path that bypasses an encounter.
- ▶ Intelligence (Religion) to move through a region when the devils there are sleeping, worshipping, or otherwise distracted.
- ▶ Strength (Athletics) to climb the vines on the outside walls of the Feycastle, bypassing an encounter by moving past the room.
- ▶ Dexterity (Stealth) to sneak past the devils.
- ▶ Charisma (Intimidation) to cow the lead devil into letting the party pass.
- ▶ Charisma (Deception) to convince the lead devil that they're new mercenaries that Shebnem hired.
- ▶ Charisma (Persuasion) to get the devils to agree that it is in their best interest for the party to destroy Shebnem and free them to pursue other goals.

OPTIONAL GOAL: FIND SHEBNEM

While the party needs to get to the queen to learn *Cirothe's True Name*, this part of the adventure can be won without ever actually finding the erinyes. Still, a party looking to destroy her will need to find her. This can be done much like finding the queen, above, but there is an additional 1d3 encounters that the party must go through to also find Shebnem (the party finds the queen after 1d4 + 2 encounters, and finds Shebnem's lair after an additional 1d3). Additionally, after these encounters, at least one party member must succeed at a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check to find the secret entrance to her lair. If the party finds and slays Shebnem and returns to the Queen, they discover that the Queen's madness was instantly broken after the erinyes' death.

REWARDS

Once the Queen is brought to her senses, she will thank the party, tell them *Cirothe's True Name*, and die at last, happily. If Shebnem is still around, the Greyfell in general is still at risk of never recovering, but at least *Cirothe* can be slain. At this point, the party gains the third and final star towards *Cirothe's True Name*, and treasure according to the list below. The most appropriate place for the reward is as treasure in the Feycastle's vault:

- ▶ **Coins:** 46 pp, 458 gp
- ▶ **Mundane Items:** access to the Feycastle's armory, containing one of every martial weapon.
- ▶ **Magic Items:** *potions of diminution, fire resistance, heroism; wand of magic missile*

THE NEXT ADVENTURE

Once the party is in possession of *Cirothe's True Name*, this particular chain of adventures is finished. The party may still have other adventures to undertake, from the threat to the halflings of Halfpoint to issues with the dwarves in Last Chance, and should be encouraged to follow up on one of those quests.

LOCATION: THE FEYCASTLE

The Feycastle, unlike other sites, is divided into encounters, given the way the party may explore it. If you wish for a higher-level view of the inhabitants, you can simply assume that there are enough creatures in the Feycastle for the maximum number of encounters to occur (9). Each time the party has an encounter, roll 1d100 and use the relevant group.

INHABITANTS OF THE FEYCASTLE

1d100 Inhabitants

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 01–10 | Spiders!: The party encounters 2d4 black widow giant spiders with 1 drow veteran . |
| 11–20 | Drow!: The party encounters 1d4 drow , led by 1 drow priestess . |
| 21–45 | Diabolic Troopers: The party encounters 1d2 bearded devils . |
| 46–65 | Diabolic Tormentors: The party encounters 1d2 bearded devils and 2d4 lemures . |
| 66–80 | Diabolic Sychophants: The party encounters 2d4 drow , 1d2 bearded devils , and 1 forlarren . |
| 81–00 | Diabolic Revel: The party encounters 2d4 drow , 1d2 bearded devils , 1d6 lemures , and 1 drow priestess . |



THE FOUR ARTIFACTS

The following section describes the four artifacts the acquisition of which is the main focus of Act II. Combined with the sword *Dragonbane* (and its scabbard) acquired in Act I, these four items maximize the party's chances of surviving the final confrontation with the dragon Cirothe that (hopefully) takes place in Act III.

THE COWARD'S MAP

Wondrous item, artifact

The *Coward's Map* is the map used by the dwarves of Deephall Point to flee Cirothe's assault on their homeland. The map is not simply a drawing of a secret route (though it is that, too), it is a powerful artifact that helps any fleeing danger to find their refuge.

The map works as follows. A potential user gazes at the map and envisions a place they want to go. The map then lays out a path that is as free of danger as possible to that goal. The terrain, features, and path all appear as if some unseen hand is drawing it as the user looks on.

Functionally, what this means is that someone using the *Coward's Map* cannot become lost. Additionally, the user skips the next random hostile creature encounter rolled (treat the random roll as if it had rolled "no encounter.")

The *Coward's Map* has a special use against Cirothe: the party using it will never encounter Cirothe or her minions unless they choose to (treat any random encounter with them as if it was a "no encounter" roll).

Destruction

The *Coward's Map* can only be destroyed by a red dragon's fire breath. If the wielder of the map is caught in the area of a red dragon's breath attack, they automatically fail their saving throw, and the map is destroyed. After the map is destroyed, the character can save normally.

THE QUIVER OF THE DRAGON'S BANE

Wondrous item, artifact

This quiver, made by the elves of Greenfell, containing the poison of the spider queen Sheeltiel, turns any arrow placed into it into a special *dragonvenom arrow* until that arrow is taken out. After about 1 minute, the properties of the quiver fade on the arrow, making it essential to use the arrow quickly after being removed.

A dragonvenom arrow that hits a dragon automatically scores a critical hit. The dragon must also make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, all attacks made against the dragon have advantage until the start of its next turn.

Destruction

The *Quiver of the Dragon's Bane* is susceptible to a red dragon's fire breath. If the wielder of the quiver is caught in the area of a red dragon's breath attack, they automatically fail their saving throw, and the quiver is destroyed. After the quiver is destroyed, the character can save normally.

THE HAMMER OF VENGEANCE

Weapon (warhammer), artifact

This ancient stone hammer, encrusted with dwarven runes and veined with glittering blue metal, is capable of crippling a dragon that it hits. Made by the dwarves of Deephall Point as a weapon against Cirothe, it simply awaited being bathed in a particular demon's blood to activate. Unfortunately, Cirothe managed to destroy the dwarves before the dwarves were able to finish the project.

The *Hammer of Vengeance* is a normal warhammer until it is bathed in the blood of the demon Azaziz, and used to crush the Rift Crystal. Once that event occurs, the hammer is fully engaged.

If the fully-awakened *Hammer of Vengeance* hits a dragon, the dragon immediately loses 1d8 spell levels, as if it had cast those spells. The dragon additionally has any active spells on it immediately dispelled, loses concentration, and cannot cast spells. At the end of each of its turns, Cirothe can make a DC 22 Wisdom saving throw to regain the ability to cast spells.

Destruction

The *Hammer of Vengeance* can be destroyed by a dwarf that attempts to sunder it. The sundering is automatically successful, and the hammer is destroyed. In the third act of this adventure, during the party's attempt to enter Skull Mountain, they will encounter a dwarf who has been tasked specifically to eliminate this threat to the dragon.

CIROTHE'S TRUE NAME

Word of power, artifact

Rather than a physical item, this artifact is a word, the magic of which is activated when the word itself is spoken aloud (requiring no action). When activated against Cirothe, the name controls her: for the next round, the speaker of the name can dictate the actions she takes.

After being used, the name fades from the memory of the speaker, forever. A creature that speaks *Cirothe's True Name* can never relearn it.



RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

While questing about for the four artifacts in the lands around Holdenshire, it's quite likely that the PCs will run across a few random encounters. These encounters are referenced throughout Act II.

Holdenshire Encounters

1d12+1d8	Encounter Type
2	Bandit Attack
3	Bridge Out
4	Bandit Attack
5	Rain
6	Roadside Inn
7	Merchant Caravan
8	Cattle Herder
9	Halfling Refugees
10	No Encounter
11	No Encounter
12	No Encounter
13	Gnomish Refugees
14	Bandit Victims
15	Merchant Caravan
16	Guard Patrol
17	Guard Fortress
18	Bandit Attack
19	Storm
20	Bandit Attack

Bandit Attack

The party is confronted by a band of 2d4 **warhorse-mounted bandits** and their leader, a **bandit captain**. The bandits want gold, and will be happy to part if given 50 gp each. If not given this ransom, they attack, but they flee if the leader is killed.

Link—The Bandits of Blackford: Any bandits who flee are reporting to Vaclav, the Boss of Blackford.

Bandit Victims

2d4 **commoners** are found shortly after being mugged by bandits. Bruised and damaged, they are all still a live, though their mounts, their packs, their supplies, and their gold is gone.

Link—The Bandits of Blackford: One of them saw which way the bandits were running: toward the town of Blackford.

Bridge Out

The party is about to ford a broad brook, but the bridge over it is out. The party cannot exit the hex in this direction unless at least 3 party members succeed in a DC 15 ability check to get to the other side. This check may be a Strength (Athletics) check to leap the gap, an Intelligence check to direct the repairs, a Wisdom (Animal Handling) check to spur a horse over it, or any other check the GM deems appropriate. Once those 3 characters succeed in their checks, the rest of the party can be brought over without difficulty.

Cattle Herder

A herd of cattle, along with the herder (**commoner**) and her **mastiff**, cross the path of the party. The herder carries news of the lands nearby and can offer some common knowledge.

Gnomish Refugees

A band of 2d3 gnome **commoners** and their 1d6–2 kids are coming to the region from the Northbeach Woods, hoping to take refuge in Hengistbury or Thornbury.

Link—The Goblin War: The gnomes are fleeing the carnage caused by the goblins in Northbeach, and bemoaning the loss of Lorand the Unicorn.

Guard Fortress

A small fort staffed by 3d4 **guards** and 1 **knight**, set back a little ways from the path. The party is welcome to buy and sell items there, and to gather what knowledge they desire.

Link—The Bandits of Blackford: This particular guard fortress has had a problem with some bandits. 2d4 bandits live in a camp only a few miles away, and if the PCs could drive them off, the guards would be much obliged. The bandits are driven off when half of their number have been reduced to 0 hit points, and the guards give the PCs a reward.

Guard Patrol

A patrol of the queen's guards, consisting of 1d4 **guards**, and one **veteran**, each mounted on a **warhorse**. The guards can carry news of recent attacks on others, and may offer the party some Common knowledge.

Link—The Bandits of Blackford: The guards are spread thin trying to defend people from the bandits, so they're not very able to defend the roads these days.

Halfling Refugees

A band of 2d3 halfling **commoners** and their 1d6–2 kids are coming to the region from Halfpoint, hoping to take refuge in Hengistbury or Thornbury.

Link—Halfpints in Halfpoint: The halflings are less-than-confident that the crusade in Halfpoint lead by the hero Shaila against the orcs and bandits can be successful.

Merchant Caravan

Each caravan consists of 1d4 carts. Each merchant's cart contains one merchant (**commoner**), one drover (**commoner**), 1 **riding horse**, and 5 **guards**. Each cart carries 1d4×100 gp, and can buy and sell items with a gp limit equal to the gp carried in the cart.

Link—The Bandits of Blackford: This merchant caravan has a dwarf merchant who is very concerned about the Bandits of Blackford and the rumor that they're working with orcs.

No Encounter

The day passes uneventfully.

Link—The Bandits of Blackford: The cattle herder is nervous that the bandits will take over the region, and has heard of rumors of orc attacks to the north.

Rain

Rain impedes the party's progress. Mud and muck mire the party, halving their speed if they travel over the period. In addition, each creature carrying supplies must make a DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check at the end of the day or have 1d4 of their supply days ruined by the rain.

Roadside Inn

An inn staffed by 2d4 **commoners** (maids, cooks, etc.) and 1 mercenary **thug**, lies beside the road.

The party can stay here overnight by spending 10 gp, rather than consuming their own supplies.

Link—The Bandits of Blackford: This particular inn also hosts 1d4 **bandits**, who don't hesitate to cause a scene if given any hassle. The mercenaries stay out of their way, and the staff bends to their boorish whim. The bandits don't stay long if challenged—once one of them is reduced to half his or her maximum hp, the lot of them run off. If the party drives them off, they can stay at the inn for free, and they get a reward.

Storm

The party confronts a hazardous squall. In addition to mud and muck, the party must deal with violent winds, lightning, and other hazards. At the end of the day, each creature must make a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check or have their tool pack and 2d4 of their supply days ruined by the rain, making them unusable.

REWARD TABLES

Roll for treasure on the following tables when the party earns some reward for a random encounter. This treasure is in small quantities, is common items, and is common knowledge.

RANDOM ENCOUNTER REWARDS

1d12+1d8	Reward Type	Details
2	Wishes of Peace	The NPC hopes the party has peace, and their next day is free of any hostile random encounters (re-roll if a hostile encounter is indicated).
3	Visiting Gift	The NPC offers a true treasure, if they can but return home to get it. If the party winds up in the same town as the NPC, they can gain one random wondrous item that functions once before breaking.
4	Rare Rumor	An NPC shares a rare rumor with the party. Roll on the table below.
5	Mount	An NPC offers their mount or vehicle to the party for the party's use.
6	Special Trinket	The NPC gives the party a special trinket. This trinket contains a spell that any character can cast with a DC 11 Charisma check and by expending the trinket and taking a standard action. Failure on this check results in a backfire. See the table below for spells.
7	Discount	An NPC offers to put in a good word for the party at the next town. The next time they visit that town, they get a 10% discount on their purchases.
8	Special Scroll	An NPC gives the party a special scroll. This scroll contains a spell that any character can cast with a DC 11 Intelligence check and by taking 10 minutes and expending the scroll. Failure on this check results in a scroll mishap. See the table below for spells.
9	Common Rumors	An NPC shares a common rumor with the party. Roll on the table below.
10	Help	An NPC offers their aid on a skill they are trained in. The next check the player makes with that skill has advantage.
11	Hospitality	An NPC offers to provide food and shelter for the party at their home for as long as they need.
12	Free Item	NPCs related to the encounter each offer one PC an item in their possession.
13	Coin	NPCs related to the encounter each offer one PC 2d8 gp.
14	Special Potion	An NPC gives the party a special potion. The potion grants the effects of a spell, and any character can drink it (as a swift action). The potion has a 5-in-20 (5 or less on 1d20) chance to have a curse. See the table below for potions.
15	Uncommon Rumor	An NPC shares an uncommon rumor with the party. Roll on the table below.
16	Special Salve	The NPC gives the party a special salve. This salve contains a spell that takes effect on whatever the party member rubs it on (as a swift action with touch range). The salve has a 25% chance to be volatile. See the table below for spells.
17	Assistance	The NPC offers to travel with the party for the next day, helping out where they can.
18	Blessing of the Gods	The NPC prays for the PC party. Each character gains Inspiration.
19	Very Rare Rumor	The NPC shares a very rare rumor with the party. Roll on the table below.
20	Wishes of Wealth	The NPC hopes the party has great success. The next time the party gains a coinage award, increase it by 10%.

COMMON RUMORS

1d6 Rumor

- 1 “The merfolk of the Northern Ocean are said to know the secret of extinguishing Cirothe’s fire.” (False)
- 2 “The Necromancer of the North lives in the ruins near Dellgate Pass. Though a close ally of Cirothe, he has recently had a falling-out with her, as she has not destroyed as much as he wants.” (False)
- 3 “The Bandits of Blackford may be working with some goblins—eerie howls can be heard from the towns they have taken.” (True)
- 4 “When Cirothe was creating the Desolation, she warred with the dwarves and elves, smashing them and scattering them to the winds. They say that artifacts from that war still lay in some areas of the world.” (True)
- 5 “It looks like the Bandits of Blackford are making a fort in the Southern Downs.” (True)
- 6 “The Bandits of Blackford have been rumored to have orcs amongst their number—savage brutes with a hatred for humanity.” (True)

UNCOMMON RUMORS

1d6 Rumor

- 1 “Hobgoblin slavers are kidnapping folk from near the Oldshade Woods and taking them to Cirothe.” (False)
- 2 “A strange star has fallen near Deepspell Lake, and some say it contains an ore not of this world.” (False)
- 3 “The orcs of the Crawley Hills have been seen with ogres from the northern mountains in their ranks.” (True)
- 4 “The spiders of the Oldshade woods are more than they seem— some say they’ve heard them speak.” (True)
- 5 “The elves of the Greendale Forest are the remnants of a group that once dwelled in the Greyfell Forest.” (True)
- 6 “There is a small community of dwarves in Last Chance, known as the Cowards, who fled from Cirothe’s assault.” (True)

RARE RUMORS

1d6 Rumor

- 1 “At the bottom of Deepspell lake lays a sword made of magical wood.” (False, but... who knows?)
- 2 “The dwarves of Deephall Point were said to have a vast underground transit network.” (False)
- 3 “The savage trolls in Oldshade have been wielding dwarf-made items of giant size!” (True)
- 4 “The ancient trees of the Greyfell Forest have been twisted by fey magic into horrid, knotted things.” (True)
- 5 “The fey queen in Greyfell Forest has become insane and worships a dark god.” (True)
- 6 “The dwarves in exile in Redcliff worship a forge-god in secret, as the main shrine is within Cirothe’s lands.” (True)

VERY RARE RUMORS

1d6 Rumor

- 1 “The plains tribes know an ancient secret related to Cirothe’s true weakness.” (False)
- 2 “Sleeping beneath Fogmoor is a dragon that once contested Cirothe’s rule.” (False)
- 3 “Giants now rule what was once the ancient dwarven lair of Deephall Point.”
- 4 “The drow are reportedly involved somehow in the madness of the Fey Queen.” (True)
- 5 “The true name of the dragon is held in the mind of the mad Fey Queen.” (True)
- 6 “The dwarves had an item that would shatter Cirothe’s power, but lost it when they lost their homeland.” (True)

SPECIAL SCROLLS

1d6 Spell

- 1 *Identify* (**Mishap:** the item you are identifying fails to work for 24 hours)
- 2 *Find steed* (**Mishap:** you can speak only in horse noises for the duration of the spell)
- 3 *Alarm* (**Mishap:** the spell's area is filled with a loud siren for the duration of the spell)
- 4 *Comprehend languages* (**Mishap:** you cannot understand spoken or written words of any language for the duration of the spell)
- 5 *Shield* (**Mishap:** you take 2d6 damage.)
- 6 *Magic weapon* (**Mishap:** you take 2d6 damage and also suffer disadvantage on attack rolls for the duration of the spell)

SPECIAL POTIONS

1d6 Spell

- 1 *Feather fall* (**Curse:** you rise 20 feet straight up, and then fall down)
- 2 *Divine favor* (**Curse:** your weapon attacks instead deal 1d4 less damage during the spell's duration)
- 3 *Mage armor* (**Curse:** your Armor Class is set to 10 for the duration)
- 4 *True strike* (**Curse:** you have disadvantage on all weapon attack rolls until you hit)
- 5 *Enlarge person* (**Curse:** you takes 2d6 damage and your movement is halved for the duration of the spell)
- 6 *Blur* (**Curse:** creatures have advantage on attack rolls against you for the duration)

SPECIAL TRINKETS

1d6 Spell

- 1 *Burning hands* (**Backfire:** you take 1d6 fire damage each round until you use your action to make a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw, ending the effect on a success)
- 2 *Sleep* (**Backfire:** only you are affected by this spell)
- 3 *Magic missile* (**Backfire:** you fly 10 feet backwards and take 1d6 force damage)
- 4 *Shocking grasp* (**Backfire:** the spell affects a creature adjacent to the target, rather than the target)
- 5 *Color spray* (**Backfire:** only you are affected by the spell)
- 6 *Chill touch* (**Backfire:** you gain one level of exhaustion)

SPECIAL SALVES

1d6 Spell

- 1 *Cure wounds* (**Volatile:** the target takes 2d8 damage)
- 2 *Lesser restoration* (**Volatile:** the target's condition strengthens, and cannot be cured until the target completes a long rest)
- 3 *Bless* (**Volatile:** as *bane* instead)
- 4 *Protection from energy* (**Volatile:** causes the user's clothing and armor to dissolve)
- 5 *Magic stone* (**Volatile:** the stones explode, dealing 2d6 damage to the user and dazzling them for the duration of the spell)
- 6 *Heroism* (**Volatile:** the target becomes frightened of the user)

