



5TH EDITION

ADVENTURE

A LION IN THE ROPES

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A LION IN THE ROPES

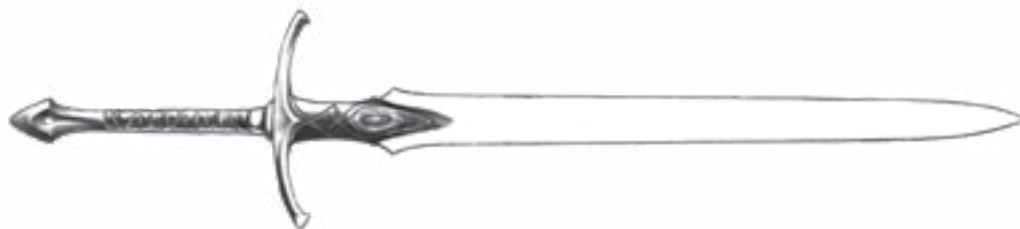
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A KNIGHT UPON THE GREEN

"So this is Capendu? 'Tis as quiet a place as any I've seen. The tower yon needs some repair I see, but it will serve as quiet home for this tired old soldier. It shall be an honor to display the lion banner here. You have been too good to me, my King."

"Tis not my land, noble Galveston, others lay some claim to it, he suggested we give it to you. But I dare say, you'll be as good a neighbor as any can wish." The paladin laughed quietly. "So do not thank me until the land here serves you well."

Galveston looked out over the rolling green hills of Capendu, he could hear the sea in the distance. He sat quietly for awhile, musing on the peace which stood in marked contrast to the horror of the great battles recently fought upon the Totten Fields, far to the east. There he stood as a peer in the ranks of the righteous. He fought alongside Kings and Dukes. He slew a giant at the feet of the Arch-Magi, and saw the horror of battle without mercy. It had, though he did not know it, ruined him for war forever more. "I'm tired My Lord, and look forward to days of peace."

"And you will have it my friend, you will have it."

So did Lord Galveston, Knight of Renown, friend of Kings, and soldier settle and make his home in Capendu. The villages of Capendu, Arlet, Tres, Contru and Mortsa welcomed him for the protection he brought and swore allegiance to him. He ordered the old tower upon the banks of the river Rolth, restored. He called to the Bishop to the north to send clerics and architects. From his own stores of money, he built a large cathedral in Capendu, "Four Saints," and installed the acolytes of Ore-Tsar there. And the lands knew peace and prosperity.

At least for a time.

A WARNING TO THE CURIOUS

Aye, stop with the prying! Stop the reading of this tome forthwith! Stop, unless of course, you are crafty enough to spin the tale of this bold adventure, to mesmerize the players at your own council, and to carry its several threads to their proper conclusions.

USING THIS MODULE

A Lion in the Ropes is a mystery. The module is designed for 4-8 characters of 2nd to 4th level. A cleric would be extremely helpful, as would a ranger or some character with rudimentary tracking skills.

The adventure occurs in the lands of Lord Galveston, largely within the village of Capendu, and specifically in and around Four Saints Church. It requires some overland travel however, between the other villages and the tower of the aged Lord Galveston. Because the adventure involves several discordant threads designed to challenge the players and to mislead them, the Castle Keeper should thoroughly read the module and familiarize themselves with the mystery.

USING IN AIRRDE

A Lion in the Ropes adventure is placed upon the southern shores of the Inner sea, south of the town of Capidistria.

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THE ADVENTURE

Lord Galveston's lands are plagued by murders. For the past several months people have been disappearing. Some bodies have turned up, their half-mutilated corpses found along the banks of the river.

Strange tracks of a cat-like creature have been found around the villages, and rumors abound that a *charon fiend*, a dreaded beast of chaos, has come from the nearby wood and settled in the area. The latest victim is the Deacon of the Four Saints Church in Capendu. His body, found torn and mangled in the river, sent the alarmed villagers to the aged Lord Galveston for aid.

Galveston is 101 years old and grown feeble. He can offer little aid outside of hiring mercenaries. This he does, but in the meanwhile, he orders that no one may leave their houses after dark and that all doors and shutters must be locked.

The source of the murders actually resides in Four Saints Church. The engineers who built Four Saints placed her foundations on the already existing ruins of an older building in Capendu, a prison of old. Many poor souls lost their lives in suffering and pain in the pits of the prison's dungeon. So great the suffering in the pits that some stayed, even beyond death, in tortured agony, searching for peace. These orinsu (an ancient word meaning "Lost Souls"), have recently manifested themselves, haunting the Church and the surrounding villages. Every seven to ten days the Orinsu rise from the crypts, animate the bodies of the churches' gargoyles, or sometimes, even the saints rendered in stain glass, and come forth into the darkness to kidnap and slay whomsoever they find.

The tracks around the village have nothing to do with the orinsu however; the cat-like beast stalking the villages is actually a **lion**, recently escaped from a traveling circus. He still wears a large wooden collar, dragging the twin ropes that bound him. The tracks of the ropes led the villagers to mistake it for the dreaded charon fiend, an actual creature with the body of a lion and a mane of coiled serpents. Any character that succeeds on a DC 18 Nature check will notice something unusual about the tracks but be unable to describe it at the moment.

To complicate the situation a bandit group has moved into the region. Under the notorious half-ungern, Garrick Orange-Hair, they seek plunder and booty.

When the Players enter the picture, the villagers and/or Galveston attempt to enlist them to fight what they believe is a charon fiend. The Players must first unravel the mystery of the lion in the ropes, find the bodies of the six orinsu in the dungeon underneath the Church, and then destroy them. To do so, they must overcome Orange-Hair's bandits and the animated gargoyles.

ADVICE FROM A TIRED CASTLE KEEPER

As its not much in my disposition to guide people (in the game or out of it), I'm reluctant to include this section. But, I do think a few words might help you brother Castle Keepers out there. Read 'em if you want, ignore 'em where you will.

This mystery revolves around three separate actors: the orinsu, the escaped lion, and the bandit, Orange-Hair. To track the movements of all three, the Castle Keeper should create a time line where each of the three is and what they are doing for the next 10 days; once established, allow the characters to weave in and out of it in a chaotic, albeit, realistic manner.

To maintain the mystery of the adventure, you should have the party spot the escaped lion in the shadows at some point. By stressing the tendril like ropes coiled around the beast's neck you could add more fuel to the fire of the beastly charon fiend. Moreover, the lion's tracks, ropes/tendrils included, should be spotted occasionally so as to entice the characters into thinking that the lion, and not the orinsu, is in fact the source of the murders.

The orinsu are men whose souls were never given proper burial. The characters can end their terror by either destroying them or by giving them a proper burial (see **In Dungeons, Dark Things Sleep, room 10 below**). The second method will not be easy for the players to envision, so help them out. Make certain the party is aware of the importance of burying the dead. Mention the cemetery in the village and while the party is in **room 9, The Catacombs**, make reference to the importance of burying the dead held by the worshipers of Ore-Tsar.

BACKGROUND FOR THE CASTLE KEEPER

A Lion in the Ropes was originally set in the world of Aihrde as found in the **Codex of Aihrde** (published separately). There are several events and dates mentioned below that are included

for flavor text and context. However, if you are not using the world of Aihrde, simply ignore specific dates and events such as the Winter Dark Wars, and replace them as needed or desired. Or the CK can simply ignore them and continue play without specific mention of them to the players as none of the dates are critical to the adventure.

CASTLE KAPUND

Many years ago, when fell Aufstrag dominated the sprawling snowy wastes of Aihrde, the village of Capendu served as a border post upon the East-West Imperial Road. The legionaries built a squat border keep along the road, not far from the Greenwood, to serve as both garrison and prison. They called it Castle Kapund, after its first commander. Beneath its stone walls the legionaries constructed a dungeon, wherein they kept all manner of "criminals," both innocent and guilty. Many goodly folk found their last resting place in the dungeons of Castle Kapund.

Eventually, merchants set up shop near Kapund to sell their wares to the legionaries. Taverns, brothels and gambling houses sprang up as well, and eventually, skilled craftsmen, armorers, weavers and others settled in the area. In time, the small village of Kapund-Ua grew up around the castle.

During the Winter Dark Wars, however, the legionaries neglected the castle and abandoned it. They fled north and eventually across the straits of Ursal to disappear forever into the east. The villagers stayed however and they tore down the castle, using its stone for houses and walls. Upon discovering the dungeon, they filled the entrance with dirt and timber and promptly forgot about it. In doing so, they inadvertently created the orinsu which now haunt the whole area. The village changed over time, grew and expanded, the name too changed with time and dialects so that it is citizens called it Capendu. Small satellite villages sprang up in the area and all lived in relative peace.

Within the dungeon, however, buried in circular pits, were six men condemned to die. Forgotten by the legionaries and never found by the villagers, the dead failed to find the peace that comes with burial or cremation. So their souls, racked with the uncertainty of their own deaths, became lost, doomed to haunt the regions underneath the ground and above it.

LORD GALVESTON AND CAPENDU

Lord Galveston settled in Capendu in 1045md. His vast stores of money, earned on campaign in the east during the Winter Dark Wars, went far in building the local economy, improving the roads, fortifying his tower, and constructing Four Saints. In the immediate aftermath of the Winter Dark War, traffic followed the Klagenfurt road through Capendu and to the coast. Galveston and the five villages managed quite nicely. The only ale house in the area, Marlowe's Tavern, expanded from a dirt-floored building into a respectable two-story establishment with rooms to let. The Church, Marlowe's and a few of the more respectable land-holders, managed to shingle their roofs in the famous green ceramic tiles manufactured in Klagenfurt.

Galveston's land and people knew peace and prosperity, and his lion banner hung with pride over his tower.

This prosperity did not last, trade patterns changed after the wars and within a few short decades of the Empire's fall, the commercial sea routes expanded to other ports and locales. As others benefitted, Lord Galveston's lands suffered. The trade route shifted a hundred miles and the Klagenfurt road through the village of Capendu saw less and less traffic.

Lacking their main source of income, the villages began to dwindle in size, and Lord Galveston grew in years. Young sons and daughters left in search of work, south-east to Klagenfurt or to far off Avignon. The elders passed on, their bodies laid to rest in the cemetery of Four Saints, the wealth of days gone by a distant memory. The smaller villages of Contru and Morsa vanished almost without a trace. The timber of their houses was pulled down and used in the other villages, or fell into ruins and slowly rotted away. Only the mound, upon which sat the Great Hall of Morsa, remains of that fateful village. Only the very old can point out its location.

Lord Galveston has reached the almost unheard of age of 101. He is old and tired. His back is so bent that he almost faces the ground. He cannot walk without the assistance of his four men-at-arms, his only company. He lives in the tower and rarely ventures forth. Occasionally, some of the elder villagers, those who remember the days of prosperity, travel to Tower Galveston to sing to the elderly knight the songs of his youth, or deliver him personal gifts. His once great wealth has slowly withered away.

THE MYSTERY OF FOUR SAINTS CHURCH

When Galveston arrived in Capendu he ordered a stone Church built upon the mound of earth where the old castle sat. Upon discovering the dungeon the architects dug out the entrance way and first few rooms, walled off the back rooms and added its foremost sections to the designs of the Church, using the rooms for storage and other mundane purposes.

Eventually, however, an acolyte tore loose some of the stones of the dungeon wall, discovering the forgotten rooms. The Curate decided that the new rooms could serve as a burial catacomb for fallen clergy. (In 1051 md the Conclave of Bishops in Avignon ruled that all clergy must be buried, not in the common cemetery, but rather within the walls of the religious house wherein they served). This act of consecrating the burial chamber created the orinsu. Left to die in the deep cold pits, unburied and forgotten, the souls of the men hovered in a purgatory between life and death. The spells of the clergy laying their own to rest wrenched the souls back to the world of the living. Lost and in the pain of terror, the unknowing orinsu began to haunt the church and villages, hunting for something, though they knew not what.

For awhile they haunted the dungeon and the Church, their poltergeists turning over chairs or snuffing out candles. Soon they came to posses things, animating them. The roof-top gargoyles and the stain-glass castings proved the perfect hosts for the raving-mad Orinsu. They immediately began their silent reign of terror, coming out about once every week or so (or at



the CK's discretion) to fly or crawl through the villages, hunting the living in order to visit out the horror of their suffering.

The murders began several months before the party arrives in Capendu. Every five to seven days a person has been killed. Fourteen people have died, and only seven bodies have been found. Those corpses found have been horribly mutilated and dumped into the river, so that presumably, some of the missing drifted downstream with the current. Any adventurers who attempt an investigation near the river may attempt a DC 13 Investigation check; success will allow a character to determine the strength of the river flow is sufficient to carry off any adult body or smaller. The villagers, simple farmers and craftsmen, are terrified and unsure of what to do.

Obviously, Galveston's age hinders him from intervening in the villager's affairs. He is aware of the murders, but has little resources to aid his charges. His one effort involved hiring several rangers to track the beast down. Because this was before the lion entered the area, the rangers found nothing. They refused the marks of gold and left the region for adventure elsewhere.

PLACING THIS ADVENTURE

A Lion in the Ropes is highly portable. Little is required to place it other than an area where there is a road and some habitation.

In Aihilde: Originally set near the Twilight Wood this official release moves it north to the Hanse City States near the town

of Klagenfurt. This is largely to generalize it but also to establish the adventure as a kick off point for adventures into the north, particularly those put forth in **Rune Lore**. Divorced from any other ongoing concept **A Lion in Ropes** ports to any locale in Aihilde with ease.

A LION IN THE ROPES

Two weeks after the rangers left, a lion escaped from a traveling circus which had passed through Capendu some months previous and wandered into the region. Villagers in Tres spotted the large beast moving along the banks of the river. They fled when one of their number mistook the remnants of the lion's rope leash for moving tendrils on the creature's neck, thus started the rumor of the dreaded charon fiend.

The poor lion is a little tame and very hungry, and is prowling about looking for stray dogs, chickens, or the occasional goat. If the characters attack the lion it will defend itself. Otherwise, it avoids human contact. For more on the lion see below.

OF GHOSTS AND DEACONS

Adelton, the deacon of Four Saints, sent to his masters in Klagenfurt for aid. None was forthcoming. Not believing that a charon fiend was responsible, Adelton took it upon himself to unravel the mysteries of the murders. The gargoyle/orinsu slew him, carried his body to the top the church, tore at it for several days, and at last deposited it on the banks of the Rolth River. The unfortunate incident left six young acolytes to deal with the terror of the monster and the fear of the villagers.

A LION IN THE ROPES

Several days prior to arriving in the village of Arlet the party encounters and is entertained by Johannes Fever's traveling Circus.

Johannes Fever owns and manages a traveling circus. He passes through almost all the villages south of Avignon and around Klagenfurt. He's very famous as his traveling troop of gypsies and troubadours entertain locals with their wild animals and outlandish freaks, including the famous Bearded Elf, Gelion, Pugh the orc-skinned dwarf (he wears orc skins for clothes), and Hawk the mad jailer, who talks for hours without stopping. Fever's Circus also peddles milk tonics to cure any disease, **clinchier batons** that return to the thrower (similar to a boomerang), and other various items of mischance and happenstance.

Clincher Baton: The clincher baton's origin is unknown, but the spinning weapon is often seen used by bird hunters to bring down distant game before it returns to the thrower. Any adventurer wishing to learn to use the proper use of the clincher baton must spend a minimum of two weeks training with it. With untrained usage, any characters using a clincher baton must make a DC 12 Dexterity or take 1d8 bludgeoning damage. Success allows the clincher baton to be properly caught. Once trained, no Dexterity check is required and a successful hit with the baton deals 1d6 bludgeoning damage and 1d4 slashing damage.

Once they are settled in the circus folk set them up with camp stools around the central fire and offer food and drink. They welcome travelers and seek for a story or two. In turn they offer up tales of their own, the most recent of which is the tale of Lord Galveston's troubles.

Hawk the mad Jailer will regale them with the tale of the dreaded Charon Fiend that haunts the lands of Lord Galveston, the lion beast from the Twilight Wood which sports serpents for a mane! The Party will be given directions to the villages of Lord Galveston, where they may find safe haven, warm food, and a warm reception on the road to Klagenfurt.

If the party inquires about the state of the business Johannes tells them that times have become a little harder. Several years of bad harvests have left the locals on their route with less money than they would normally spend and the bandits have come out in ever greater force. He can impart one or all of the below pieces of information:

- 1) The circus' prize lion escaped about 2 weeks ago. More wandered off than escaped as it is rather tame. They tried to track it but to no avail. He is afraid the beast will starve without human aid. He is offering a 50gp award for return of the creature, or at least information that leads to its return.
- 2) The bandit chief, Orange Hair has ranged out from the Twilight Wood. His band of miscreants numbers close on to a dozen rogues and they are hunting these parts.
- 3) He's heard that there are ancient mounds throughout these lands where the dead of the original kings of these lands were buried.
- 4) There is a young priest in the village, but his master's are all dead and the Church leaders in the north don't believe anything is going on in Galveston's lands.
- 5) Lord Galveston is very old and in need of aid. He has no heirs but tis said some of his wealth remains. He's kindly as well.
- 6) There are strange catacombs beneath the church in Capendu for it was built upon the foundations of an old imperial castle whose dungeons saw the demise of many innocents.

Johannes offers them food and drink and a safe place to sleep. In the morning they are packing up before sunrise and on the road, in the opposite direction of the characters.

WOLF-RIDING SCOUTS

Within a few hours of leaving the Circus the party spies a lone wolf-rider, a **goblin**. The creature is part of Orange Hair's gang and is scouting potential targets. If the character try to follow him he retreats. He always keeps a huge distance between the party and himself. He follows them until they arrive in Capendu at which point he vanishes.

THREE VILLAGES: TRES, ARLET AND CAPENDU

The party has been followed and harassed all day by the bandits waiting for nightfall. As the party arrives in Galveston's lands it begins to rain. The party approaches Galveston's lands along the heights of Flytrap Ridge. Spying a village in the distance, they cross the small river at the ridge's foot and head for the safety of town's stone walls. Just after evening-fall the party enters the tiny village of Arlet.

Boots wet from crossing the small river, you tramp up onto the remnants of an old road. A small village lies before you. Its mostly wooden cottages stand arrayed in neat order along either side of the road. The dinner hour is only just passed and the town is muted and dark. Shutters and doors are tightly closed, and the gentle clanking of your armor and equipment echoes in the still quiet. No dogs bark. There is no sound but the ragged breaths of your tired band.

Attempts to rouse the villagers will yield no results. The murders, particularly that of the deacon, have terrified the people, and they have embraced wholeheartedly the commandments of their Lord Galveston. Eventually, enough banging on doors or windows will yield the following response:

"Look milords, we don't want no troubles from yer! You can find safe lodging but a few miles down the road in Capendu. There be a Church there. Four Saints, it's called, and the acolytes will take you in and give you a warm, safe place to stay. But hurry now, 'fore the evening grows too late and the road too dangerous."

No amount of cajoling will bring out the villagers. If need be, they use the name of Lord Galveston in hope that it will drive off the unwanted visitors.

Reluctantly, you cease trying to convince someone to give you lodging and you start off north along the road. An eerie silence engulfs the village as you leave. In the distance, to your left, a mile or so off the road, a fire burns atop a tower, which looks to be on the far side of the river. Rain begins to fall as you turn north-east toward the village of Capendu. The fire's light is soon lost in the dark as the rain picks up. Following the road for several miles you spy the dark silhouettes of scattered buildings surrounding what, even in the dark and rain, you can tell is a large Church. No doubt you have arrived in Capendu.

The party passed Tower Galveston, where the men-at-arms were lighting watch-fires. In the dark, they also marched past the village of Tres, which sits on the far side of a hill a half-mile from the road. They have arrived at the outskirts of Capendu.

CAPENDU AND THE CHURCH OF FOUR SAINTS

Much like the previous village, Capendu lies dark and quiet. Being later in the evening, no lights burn from under doors or windows. Where Arlet's cottages were made of wood and arrayed one or two deep on either side of the road, Capendu's

homes are mostly stone and seem to tumble out and away from the road in a haphazard fashion. Some of these rather stout looking houses have tile roofs, something unheard of in most farming communities.

Marlowe's Tavern, the Church of Four Saints, and the town fountain stand at the northern end of the town on the square. Marlowe's is closed. No one answers if the party knocks.

The rain continues, pattering down on cloaks and packs, soaking through to your clothes and down to the skin. As you turn up the street and head for the Church, you pass a fountain, the worn visage of a lion stands in the pool of stone. The church looms out of the darkness before you, dwarfing the buildings across the square.

The decorative stone walls stand as testament to both the skill and wealth of the Church builders. The front facade consists of large double doors set within a deep nave. The arched doorway, shaped to represent two rearing horses, is crowned by stone renditions of four knights wearing the accouterments of war. They, in turn, look heavenward towards a greater statue of Ore-Tsar, who looks down with a benevolent smile. The Church's bell tower reaches into the darkness, easily 140 feet high. Grim faced gargoyles perch upon the roof, looking over the village of Capendu.

Refer to the earlier section titled The Adventure for details on Four Saints Church. Read the following as the party approaches.

Here, at last, the characters see the warmth of a light. Hanging on a small post, just outside the arched doorway, they see a small lantern, its flickering flame casting strange shadows upon the faces of the saints and the god.

The cold, pattering rain has long since soaked through your cloaks, wetting your gear and clothes underneath. Wet, sore, and generally miserable, you climb the steps to the doorway where you are greeted by a large iron knocker with a devilish face. Knocking on the iron portal you hear a muffled shout and something heavy striking the floor. A moment later a small panel slides back, exposing a wary eye. "Who goes and what may we do for you?"

Benjamin, the acolyte, is on night watch. He bolted the inner door for fear of what lies beyond. Benjamin, like his other five brethren, is young and inexperienced. He questions the travelers, and any character of Good alignment who succeeds on a DC 10 Persuasion check will convince Benjamin that the party means no harm and he will unbolt the inner door and let the party enter the church, locking it behind them.

It is the custom of the Churches, monasteries and hospitals of the followers of Ore-Tsar to welcome strangers (who are not harmful), and travelers in particular, and give them refuge from the weather, bandits, or whatever ails them. Though they do not charge for the service, plates sit near the door to collect donations. Often, these plates are in the hands of a statue of Saint Vivian, a Queen of Kayomar, who devoted her life to rescuing the poor and downtrodden. Any humans in the party

would be well aware of this custom and should be encouraged to use this knowledge when dealing with the acolyte.

The cold wind and rain give way to the dry warmth of solid stone and vaulted ceilings. Within the outer vestibule, closed off from the main Church by a second set of doors, the acolyte has placed a chair, table and a candle. A red, leather-bound book lies open upon the floor. Smiling and inviting all in, he explains that the dormitory is closed.

"You are more than welcome to stay here, but one of my brethren has fallen very ill and you will have to make do in the central nave, where you can sleep on the pews. I ask only that you take off your wet clothes before passing into the inner vestibule and the nave beyond. I will fetch some dry blankets and bread from the priory kitchen."

Bowing, he opens the doors to the main nave. He crosses into the dark, pausing twice to light two lanterns which serve to break the wall of dark.

The vanishing acolyte draws attention to the central nave. Thick marble pillars stretch into the blackness above and unfold into carefully crafted arches, all supporting the vaulted ceiling, barely visible in the inky darkness above. The characters catch a glimpse of a huge altar-stone in the Transept at the far end of the Nave.

Passing through the doors and into the inner vestibule, the beauty of the Church strikes you. Stone floors, marble pillars, and beautifully carved wooden pews reveal the piety of the villagers and the clergy. Many-colored stained glass dominates the arched windows. The glass figures seem to move, in the flickering torch light, twisting, turning in one direction, then another. Four wonderfully carved statues line the central aisle.

Any adventurer who makes a successful DC 18 History check or any cleric that makes a successful DC 13 Religion check will be able to identify the statues, as all are famous figures from the history of the church of Ore-Tsar. Each statue is also adorned with a plaque. There is:

- 1) Saint William, first King of Anglamay, who converted the whole of his realm to the worship of Ore-Tsar.
- 2) Saint Albrecht the River King who founded the Knights of Haven and made war on the Dark in the east.
- 3) Saint Sixtus, the martyr and first Bishop of Avignon, who gave his life trying to convince Kain the Warlord to spare his beloved city.
- 4) Saint Diago, who lost his life to the north-men in Trondheim.

Each of the white marble statues cast noble postures. They bear stern gazes that seem to follow the viewer. Each overlooks the central aisle and holds a weapon of cold steel.

A closer examination of the statues (a successful DC 14 Investigation check) will reveal that the weapons are separate from the stone and can be pulled out of the statue's grip with

relative ease. The blades are as follows: Saint William's is a +1 long sword, Saint Albrecht's is a +2 greatsword, Saint Sixtus' is a +1 maul and Saint Diago's is a +1 mace. The characters should be discouraged from taking the weapons. Explain that the acolyte will throw them out, alert the village, or send for the Constable, Lord Galveston unless, however, they find the weapons useful in combating the orinsu (see below). In that case the acolytes invite them to use the weapons.

In any case removing them is difficult. Only a worshipper of Ore-Tsar can do so without a struggle; anyone else attempting to wrest a weapon from a must succeed on a DC 15 Strength check. A failed check results in 1d4 of lightning damage.

TALKING WITH BENJAMIN

After a few minutes, the acolyte returns. He brings fresh blankets, a few flagons of warm ale, and three loaves of bread. He bids the characters eat and make themselves at home in the south aisle. He asks polite questions as to why they are journeying on the road at such a late hour, where they are headed, and the like.

Should the characters respond to him with complaints about their treatment in the villages, he nods in agreement. He imparts the following, Castle Keepers should read or paraphrase the below speech.

"Twas not always so here in my Lord Galveston's land. Not long ago people were friendly and welcomed travelers into their homes for food and drink. Marlowe's tavern stayed open late into the evening and the locals enjoyed good mead and quiet talk. But, my worthies," Benjamin shakes his head in sadness, "that was before the murders."

He pauses, gazing at the characters, a hint of fear crosses his youthful face. *"They started several months ago. 'Twas farmer Nessman first I think, he disappeared while walking the road south to Arlet, the village you passed through earlier this evening. Vanished without a trace he did. A fine fellow, with a proud family, he even owned his own allodes, 3 hectares of land. So no one could believe that he'd run off, no one, no sir. But he was gone nonetheless."* The young acolyte makes the sign of Ore-Tsar and mutters a prayer. *"They found him a week or so after, lying face down in the mud by the Rolth River. Torn and mangled, we barely had anything to bury."*



“They couldn’t find any sign of what had done that to him. Nothing at all. So we buried him and made prayers for him. Then a week later, another fellow, young Giles, vanishes, never to be seen again. Folks started to get nervous. Two of our own, gone and dead, and no one knew how or why.”

Benjamin pauses for awhile, looking at the floor. “Then a traveler, a soldier, who was encamped on the outside of town, was killed. More after him, 13 of our folk, good honest people, one and all, are gone. Only 7 have been found. Tracks were found too, those of a great cat. And only a few weeks ago a fellow from the village of Tres saw a strange cat like beast, 15 hands at the shoulder, with serpents coiled around its neck. They say it was a charon fiend, come from the Twilight Wood.”

If the players did not interact with the Circus above, allow one of the players to be familiar with the charon fiend.

“His lordship, Galveston, issued an order to one and all that no one was to leave their homes after dark, and that all are must bolt their doors and shutter their windows, and let no strangers in. You see, his lordship is old, just celebrated his 101st birthday, and he’s too feeble to do much anymore. So we’ve been left alone, to help ourselves.

“And that is when the unthinkable happened.” His chin visibly quivers and he turns away. “The Deacon, Master Adelton, he sends for aid to Klagenfurt. Nothing comes of course; Capendu is far from the city and his Imminence the Bishop. So, Master Adelton sets out himself, from these very doors,” he looks askance at the large, iron bound doors leading to the outer vestibule. “I was up with him that night. When he left. When we last saw him. He passed through and into the streets, telling me to close these doors and open only when he returns.

“He never did, though I swear that I heard him shout once in fear before he vanished.” Tears well up in the young boy’s eyes; his head slumps to his chest. “Twas a goodly master, and kind man. You’d have liked him, everyone did. We found him on the bank of the river.

“That t’were only a week and a day gone. We buried him in the crypt below this very hall.”

The acolyte falls silent for awhile. He suddenly rises, brushing aside questions with promises that Brother Tarlek will see to your needs. He bids all good night and returns to his post in the outer vestibule. A moment later, his muted sobs carry through the hollow spaces of the Church, hanging ominously in the surrounding dark like tangible things.

The characters should be allowed to settle down and plot what plan of action, if any, they are going to take. In any respect, their dreams are troubled with nightmares of dark evenings, strange beasts and terrible shadows.

BY THE LIGHT OF DAWN

The following morning, the party is roused from their sleep by Brother Tarlek, another young acolyte, thickly built with a large beard. Tarlek doesn’t bother the travelers with questions, but rather invites them to break bread with him in the Church kitchen where the acolytes are preparing the morning meal.

TARLEK (This chaotic good human cleric has vital statistics HP 4 (1d8), AC 10, Spd 30ft. His abilities are Str 12(+1), Dex 8(-1), Con 10(0), Int 14(+2), Wis 16(+3), Cha 12(+1). His Base Perception is 13. His skills are History +3 and Religion +3 - Attacks: staff (1d8+1 bludgeoning, attack +1). Tarlek can cast Cure Wounds two times per day.

Tarlek wears a simple cloak and robe and a holy symbol on a leather strap around his neck. He walks with a staff that can also serve as a means of defense if he is provoked. He carries 5 gp in a small pouch beneath his robe. Tarlek will defend (with his life, if necessary) any townsfolk who need assistance.

The party has several options. They should be encouraged to take up the challenge of solving the murders, and if necessary, tracking down the dreaded charon fiend. Any hint that they will do so brings promises of the Church’s eternal blessings and benevolence for one and all. Tarlek will try to recruit the party to save the three villages from the terror without any reward other than that which comes from the strong helping the weak. He recommends that the party meet with Galveston, and promises to take them as soon as they are ready. If necessary, Tarlek assures the party that Lord Galveston will pay the party for their services; how much, he cannot say.

Tarlek, is a strong willed young man with complete confidence in the Church’s ability to keep him and his from harm. The party should not be allowed to push him around and cajole him into risking himself or sacrificing any of the Church’s wealth for the party’s own good (unless of course it aids the villages as well).

If the party decides to present themselves to the Lord Galveston, go to **Red Herrings and Tea** below. If they decide to pursue other leads, such as searching along the river bank, skip ahead to **Visitations from Beyond** further below.

RED HERRINGS AND TEA

AGE BECOMES YOU

Tarlek dons a light cloak, takes a pack from the wall, and leads you through Capendu. The village is alive with activity. Small groups of locals head for the fields, a burly fellow heaves a great axe, splitting logs of wood next to the tavern, and a group of young girls are gathered around the well, pulling water and gossiping with giggles and titters. A thinly muscled woman in a chainmail shirt sitting with her back to the Inn wall, smoking a pipe, watches you pass. Tarlek leads you down the road with an air of contented happiness. He bows and nods to his fellow townsmen. “Good morning, Andrew, my dear Innkeep,” he remarks to the man splitting logs, “I trust the day finds you well.” To which the Innkeep only nods, smiles a little, and goes back to work. Others watch as you pass, some bow their heads, not knowing whether you are simple travelers or lords from Klagenfurt. A few moments of this and you pass from the village into the open country, journeying back down the road you tread the night before.

The morning is warm and the sun burns off the fog within an hour. Tarlek sets a brisk pace, and after 30 minutes, he turns off the main road onto a trail that leads to the tower on the river bank.

This journey provides an ideal time for the party to find the tracks of the lion crossing the road. On a successful DC 10 Nature or Investigation check, allow the party to follow the tracks for a short while and then lose the trail in the grass. Where the ground is soft, the ropes score marks that look like tendrils.

To your right sits another small village, nestled under the eaves of the forested river bank. You can see a few farmers headed for the fields or working in and around the small wooden cottages. But Tarlek guides you along the track and up a gentle rise, where you behold, jutting from the trees, a small hilltop tower and keep.

Tarlek bids the party wait while he calls on Lord Galveston to announce their presence. He promises to return within the hour.

Tower Galveston (**refer to map below**) overlooks a bend in the river between the villages of Tres and Arlet (currently, the center of Galveston's holdings). The keep consists of a fortified building with a tower built into it. To approach Tower Galveston it is necessary to climb the steep, zig-zagging trail up the hill, in single file.

There, one must cross a natural causeway to a small landing jutting out over the cliff face and looking over the river valley below. This landing is where Galveston meets people he does not know, or trust.

Beyond that, the trail narrows and snakes underneath the keep's walls until it ends at its base. The only entrance (aside from the secret way, **refer to map 2**), are large, iron-bound double doors built into the rock of the hill and the mortar of the keep's walls.

The morning wanes. You relax in the clearing at the base of the tower hill. The warmth dries the remaining damp from your clothes. A gentle breeze picks up. Yesterday's hard miles and the evening's grisly tale melt away as you sink further and further into the glade's comfort. An hour or so passes before Tarlek returns. You pick up the trek reluctantly, exchanging the warm sun and soft grass for a hard tramp through the still damp woods and up the winding, snaky path to the hill-top keep above.

As mentioned previously, Lord Galveston is an extremely old man. He has four men-at-arms (use the *Monster Manual 5e* Guard, page 347) in his employ, all are fiercely loyal, but all a little old for their job. If the party made a favorable impression on Tarlek, Galveston will greet the party on the small landing mentioned above. Otherwise, Galveston, greets the party from the roof of the gate house.

Lord Galveston greets the party wearing a chain shirt and leaning heavily on a great two-handed claymore, the unusually sharp blade glistening green in the morning sun. He is very old

and stoops over his own shadow like a weathered tree. His head frequently bobs to the left and right as he looks the party. His face is a mass of wrinkles, and he peers through almost lifeless, pale blue eyes.

Regardless of where he meets the party, Galveston treats with them in a forthright manner, being kind and respectful, if a bit fatherly. He expects the same. If not shown due respect, he becomes very short and offers little aid, and even less reward. Assuming all goes well, he imparts words of advice, and promises to reward the party with gold and jewels.

Read or paraphrase the following if needed:

"I too was young once, much like yourselves, just beginning on my life's road. Those were good days, the fire of youth burnt in my heart with an avenger's fury! I fought at the Great Tree, at the very side of St. Luther don't you know." He pauses, his head bobbing a little on his thin neck. "Nay, you wouldn't want to hear tales of those days. But hear this my youthful friends, often things seem what they are not, and they are what you don't think they could be. Our world was built upon the ruins of another, and the stones of our halls cover a deeper dark. The very houses of our gods rest upon the broken tombs of this other world, and it is to these tombs that our paths lead. Track this beast that haunts my land, whatever it is, but always look at the world around you for the truth."

Galveston retires with promises of a reward, but refuses to state any figures until the task is done. If the party balks, one of the men-at-arms repeats that their efforts will be well worth their time.

A TALL DRINK AT MARLOWE'S

Tarlek takes the party back to Capendu, to Marlowe's Tavern. Marlowe's is owned by Andrew Travis, it sports a large front room and kitchen and a low outbuilding where there are five rooms to rent. All the rooms are small, and supplied with a cot, side table and a metal wash bowl. Travis is a young friendly man who welcomes the party and tries to make them feel at home. His beer is good and the food always fresh. His wife, Lysra, and daughter, Terry, help him run the place.

A small group of townsfolk have gathered at Marlowe's for lunch. Once settled, Tarlek offers the party sanctuary in the church, or they can stay in the back rooms at Marlowe's. He also offers them what little aid he and the other acolytes can give. Although the apprentice clerics have no spells, the church has a library that the party may access. If the party desires to research the region and the monster, they should be allowed to learn of the history of Lord Galveston, the villages, tower, and the church; also, an exhaustive search of the church records reveals the history of Castle Kapund (**see notes above**). Castle Keepers should be careful to avoid mentioning the prisoners who were left behind as this knowledge would not have made it into the church records.

When the townsfolk learn that the party is going to hunt and slay the beast, they offer free room and board, and the smith and

leather worker will offer them assistance in maintaining their gear. The CK should not allow the party to take advantage of these offerings of good will. If they do so, the villagers will cut them off and eventually drive them from the territory.

BAILEY QUARTERS

If the party needs an NPC to help track the monster, or to buttress its strength there is a female ranger, Bailey Quarters, staying in Marlowe's Tavern. She was the female leaning against the tavern, smoking as mentioned above. Bailey is young, passing through Capendu on her way north. She has recently left the city of Klagenfurt to adventure on her own. She is stout and resolute and will take up the quest and aid the party with little objection. She is a competent ranger and tracker.

BAILEY QUARTERS (*This chaotic good human ranger has vital statistics HP 18 (HD 2d10 + 6), AC 13, Spd 30ft. Her abilities are Str 13(+2), Dex 13(+2), Con 16(+3), Int 10(0), Wis 13(+2), Cha 9(-1). Her Base Perception is 12. Her skills are Survival +2, Athletics +2 and Investigation +1- Attacks: shortsword (1d6+2 piercing, attack +2) and shortbow (1d6+2 piercing, attack +2). She has two 1st level spell slots and can cast Animal Friendship and Cure Wounds .)*

Bailey Quarters is an accomplished ranger who feels more comfortable in the wilderness than in a town or city. She wears leather armor and carries a shortsword and shortbow. Hidden inside her quiver is a small pouch containing five gems worth 5 gp each.

Note: If the party explores the church and discovers the dungeon, skip to **In Dungeons Deep**. The party should be allowed to explore the dungeon but not to discover the secret door which leads to the pits and the final resting place of the undead. This should occur after the section marked **Where the Innocent Lie**.

A TIGER BY HIS TAIL, OR A LION BY HIS ROPE

Back in Capendu, Tarlek informs the party that it is nigh time for the dreaded charon fiend to strike again. The village will be locked up tight, only the Church remains open, its doors unlocked, but closed.

The party should quickly realize that the only way they are going to catch the beast is to stake out the village streets and keep watch, waiting for the creature's arrival. Follow the timeline below but adjust it as needed for circumstances.

Promptly at dark, the villagers retire to their homes, and lock their doors and windows. Andrew Travis will be the last to close, locking up Marlowe's tavern an hour after dark. With a heartfelt wish of good luck, he bolts his windows and bars his doors, allowing no one entry afterwards. The party must fend for itself. The Castle Keeper should make note of the character's positions.

The Orinsu have indeed risen from the crypts. The presence of the party, however, confuses them and they have become very wary. They manifest within the gargoyles on the roof hovering

in the shadows of the church spires. An elf or any party member with unusually sharp hearing may hear them moving about on a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. Otherwise, the gargoyles keep a safe distance, flying about just beyond sight. They follow the party to the edge of town.

If, by chance, one of the party members should be on the roof they have a small chance of spotting an animated gargoyle, with a DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check

The lion is holed up in an embankment on the Rolth River. It is hungry, tired, and unable to fend for itself. It is settling in. If the party attempts to track the lion, they will find no leads, only a few tracks in Capendu itself. They must stake out the village and wait for the lion to come to them.

CK Note: The action here is more suspense than combat. The characters should, wherever they hole up, hear strange sounds mingled in the blowing wind; the noises might be a popping sound, shutters, owl's hoot, thunder in the distance etc. Investigating the noises should yield no results, though many attribute checks will engage them.

FIRST EVENING

As the last lights go out in the village, the dark grey evening descends upon you. After awhile, it begins to rain. At first, the clouds spit and sputter, but by midnight, the water descends in a steady drizzle, once more soaking through your cloaks, dampening armor, gear and clothes. Little disturbs the quiet of the evening. An occasional owl sounds in the dark, and somewhere to the south, a dog bays and barks. Several more hours pass as you wait, soaked and tired, seeing nothing but the faint light of dawn in the east. Slowly, the clouds turn from black to grey in the morning's light. The rain continues. The little light illuminates a dreary world of mud and grey hopelessness. Your night's watch was fruitless.

The party is wet and tired from their night's vigil. Tarlek and the other acolytes prepare warm soup and bread for them and allow them to rest that day in the sanctuary of the church. He promises that the creature, staying true to form, will strike again in the next day or so.

If the party leaves the village to search for the creature, a successful DC 15 Nature or Investigation check will result in the party finding tracks along the riverbank leading toward Tres. Otherwise, they find only tell-tale signs of the creature's tracks, crossing the road, or in freshly tilled lands. If they track the lion to its lair skip ahead to the section marked, **The Lion**.

SECOND EVENING

The village remains largely quiet during the day. Few come out to Marlowe's to eat or drink and Andrew entertains the party wit mead and talk. He's a fair bard and can sing a piece when asked. Otherwise nothing occurs during the day.

The second night is much the same, though without rain.

Upon your second evening's vigil, it is cool but without rain. The mud of the street clings to your boots and stains your cloaks. Hour after hour drifts by, until around midnight when a great commotion arises just outside of town. A roaring and growling, the like's of which you have never heard, carries through the night. An unearthly quiet settles around you. You count your heartbeats as the minutes tick by, then, a shadow, moving upon the roof of Marlowe's tavern. It moves through the dark with ease, slinking slowly along without a sound. It pauses, cold pale eyes lock on your still frame. Shadows of tendrils move about its neck. The dreaded charon fiend has found you.

The creature is obviously the lion, the shadows of the night playing tricks on the character's minds. Upon the slightest movement of anyone in the party, the lion will leap off the roof and vanish into the dark, heading immediately for its lair by the river (see map 1).

Tracking the beast will be near impossible at night (DC 20 Nature or Investigation check). The party may be able to follow him out of town, but the dark will inhibit any further attempts to locate the creature.

All the while, the orinsu watch through gargoyle eyes and wait, yet to overcome their fear of the strong and intent party. They creep around in the shadows (see gargoyle below), trying to observe the party. In their grief torn madness and undeadly state, their minds are unable to focus on the world around them. The characters bold stance has confused them.

Note: The Castle Keeper can easily build suspense by using the orinsu. They can make sounds, make the party feel as though they are being watched, and move through the shadows on the edge of a party members vision.

With the arrival of dawn, the party will be able to track the lion (DC 10 Nature or Investigation check). The creature's footprints are easily discerned by even the most inexperienced tracker. It is only a few hours walk to the lair. A determined party could be there by noon, where they find the creature under a river embankment. The lion is cornered.

It is holed up under a huge tree root, the hole only a dozen or so feet deep.

As word spreads that the beast is cornered, the villagers gather to watch the outcome of the fight. The mayor of Tres, Arthur Carlson (use *Monster Manual 5e*, Scout, page 349) a large man with balding pate, offers the party any needed equipment, but shies away from allowing those in his charge to fight the beast. If need be, he and his sons (use *Monster Manual 5e*, Bandit, page 343) take up weapons and enter the fray.

THE LION

At last you've tracked the creature to its lair. The den lies beneath an embankment on the river. Tree roots, washed clear of dirt and mud shield the opening of the relatively shallow, dark hole. Its entrance is half



submerged in the river. Peering within, you see mud and roots. The water trickling around your feet gurgles in the quiet. A low ominous growl breaks the silence of the scene.

The Castle Keeper should attempt to maintain the secret of the lion's identity as long as possible. Visibility is poor and conditions wet and muddy. The ropes around the lion's neck can still be mistaken for tendrils, even in these close quarters. Regardless of the party's actions, they should at some point discern that the embattled creature is a lion.

The lion defends itself if attacked (use *Monster Manual 5e*, Lion, page 331). If enticed with food, it emerges and eats from the party's hands. Any magical communication with the beast will reveal its tame nature. The character that first spots the lion may remember that the circus people mentioned an escaped lion on a successful DC 10 Intelligence check.

Once the beast is subdued or slain the villagers are overjoyed. Whether the party believes the lion to be the source of the murders or not, the villagers, particularly in Tres, are exceedingly grateful and offer the party food and drink. As word spreads through the valley, the party's reputation grows and they are welcomed as the champions of the hour. Travis offers free drink and food to the party. Old Galveston sends his thanks and promises a reward to be delivered up the next day of worship (the Castle Keeper should set this within the next few days).

VISITATIONS FROM BEYOND

ORANGE, THE COLOR OF FEAR

While the characters are enjoying the spoils of their victory at Marlowe's, Garrick Orange-Hair, the half ungern bounty hunter turned bandit has a group of 15 ungern, 11 rogue goblins, two of which ride wolves (use *Monster Manual 5e*, Wolf, page 341) and 12 wild dogs (use *Monster Manual 5e*, Mastiff, page 332). While the party returns to Capendu, Garrick descends Flytrap Ridge and crosses the Rolth River near the village of Tres. He is set on

destroying the village and looting it in order to impress upon the other villages that he should be paid "protection" money.

His plan goes afoul from the beginning. The mayor of Tres, Arthur Carlson, still excited over the battle with the lion, organizes a fierce defense along the river bank. Though two of his men are slain, he manages to get word to Galveston, who, mounted on a great war horse, leads a sortie with his men-at-arms. One of Galveston's men is horribly wounded and they fall back to the tower in defeat. Orange-Hair pursues them and lays siege to the tower. He manages to invest the forest where the trail is, but his attack on the tower is repulsed. He loses three ungern upon the causeway.

GARRICK ORANGE HAIR (*This lawful evil Ungern fighter has vital statistics HP 28 (HD 4d10 + 4), AC 17 (chain shirt, shield), Spd 30ft. His abilities are Str 17(+3), Dex 14(+2), Con 12(+1), Int 8(-1), Wis 9(-1), Cha 12(+1). His Base Perception is 9. His skills are Intimidation +2, Survival +1 and Animal Handling +1 and he speaks Common and Goblin - Multiattacks: two with battleaxe (1d8+3 slashing, attack +5). He carries two Potions of Healing.*)

UNGERN (*This lawful evil creature has vital statistics HP 16 (2d8 + 6), AC 15, Spd 30ft. Its abilities are Str 18(+4), Dex 11(0), Con 16(+3), Int 10(0), Wis 14(-+2), Cha 9(-1). Its Base Perception is 12. Its Proficiencies are Stealth +8 and it speaks Goblin and Common - Multiattack: one claw attack (1d4+4 slashing, attack +6), one sword (1d6+4 piercing, attack +6) and one gore (1d8+4 piercing, attack +6). Its special abilities include advantage on attacks if within 5' of an ally.*)

Garrick Orange-Hair is a 4th level fighter with excellent tracking and dog handling skills. The ex-bounty hunter now leads a small group of goblins who seek to extort money from nearby towns and then flee into the woods to hide. Orange-Hair possesses 25 gp worth of mixed coins and four gems worth a total of 75 gp. He also keeps two Potions of Healing (Common) strapped to his chest that he will only use on himself.

The wild dogs serve as the bandit leader's eyes and ears and will never attack, if shot at or harassed in any way, they flee and regroup later.

Orange-Hair's determination to terrorize the valley has been terribly shaken. He did not expect the villagers to defend themselves, nor the tower guards to launch a sortie. If the party attacks, he becomes thoroughly confused. Unless the party is utterly inept, he immediately retreats across the river. Though a tough fighter, Orange-Hair has no desire to die. At no time will he stand and fight at the risk of his own life. If 1/4 of his band falls, he flees with the survivors, leaving the wounded behind.

WHERE THE INNOCENT LIE

But meanwhile, the orinsu have at last overcome their fears, deciding to visit their rage upon the villages once more. Still wary of the party, they await an opportune moment to strike. When the party is away from the church, battling Orange-Hair, celebrating their recent victory, or visiting Lord Galveston at

his tower, they attack the apprentice cleric on duty, none other than young Tarlek.

Much relieved by the party's apparent victory, Tarlek opened the doors to the church to let in the cool spring air. He is last seen by his brother and sister acolytes lighting the lantern outside the church.

The orinsu rise from the deep, animate the gargoyles, and strike the hapless Tarlek. They carry his body to the church's roof, treating it in an evil manner. All that remains by morning is a trail of blood that has trickled down the slanted roof, into the gutters, and fallen to the ground below. The larger part of the body is dropped into the river early that morning, though some remains are left on the roof (see below).

When the party returns to the church, they find the doors wide open, several of the lamps burned cold and Tarlek's flagon of wine untouched. The young acolyte is missing. Rousing the acolytes yields nothing further.

A search of the grounds, however reveals a small gold taper in the grass at the bottom of the front steps (Tarlek dropped it when the gargoyles swept down upon him), a sandal to the church's left, and blood on the ground near the rear of the building. Small stains can be found on the church walls, some older than the others. Any adventurer who succeeds on a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check will spot one these signs; two or more adventurers who succeed will discover all the clues, assuming that they look in the proper location.

Clues exist inside the church as well. Five of the malignant orinsu chose to animate the gargoyles upon the rooftop, but the sixth chose to animate one of the stained glass pictures. As mentioned, the glass depicts many scenes from the Winter Dark Wars, between the Council of Light and the dark lords of Aufstrag. The orinsu chose one of the devil shaped panes to animate. This particular pane, at the left rear of the church, has blood upon its claws. A long line of blood has flowed across the bottom of the window, onto the ledge, and down at last to the floor, where it has congealed in a small pool, still sticky to the touch. Any search of the area reveals this on a successful DC 12 Investigation check.

If the party fails to find any signs, a monk discovers the blood while cleaning the windows.

If the characters wish to search the church's roof, they can access it through an old stairwell attached to the rear of the building that rises on narrow steps to the roof 80 feet above. As the party or party members clamber onto the roof, a horrid sight greets them. The mystery of the missing monk is solved.

At first you are greeted by an odd smell, heavy with the stench of blood. Climbing through the small portal onto the roof's top you are greeted by a grisly scene. The two slanted sides of the roof rise to meet a walkway which stretches the length of building, designed for those who must work on the roof for repairs, but it is also where one might easily hide from view and watch the town below. But where the portal opens, the walkway

has been expanded into a small landing, and it is upon this landing where the grisly remains of Tarlek lie. The innocent monk's bloody smock and habit lie amidst the ruins of blood and splintered bone. Little is found of his actual body.

An ill feeling creeps over you. A murder occurred upon your watch, under your very noses. The sky, dark and overcast, does little to assuage your growing fears. A dreadful howling ascends from below, building in intensity until at last it washes over you and vanishes into angry clouds above.

The rooftop search summons the orinsu from below. With howling curses they crawl up the walls and onto the roof. They animate the gargoyles and attack the party. Only 2-4 of the orinsu join in the attack.

There are 16 small statues on the roof. The orinsu begin to possess them. If one is destroyed, the orinsu move to the next until there are no statues left. The orinsu can leave one host and move to another with amazing speed, one round to break free of their host and another round to enter another one. The Castle Keeper should take note of this. When one gargoyle statue is shattered the orinsu can move to another, until there are no more statues. (see **Orinsu** below). There are 16 gargoyle statues on top of the roof.

If the characters successfully turn the orinsu animated gargoyles it destroys the orinsu permanently.

ORINSU SMALL GARGOYLE (*This lawful evil creature has vital statistics HP 9 (HD 2d6 + 2), AC 13, Spd 30ft/50ft (fly). Its abilities are Str 14(+2), Dex 14(+2), Con 12(+1), Int 10(0), Wis 8(-1), Cha 4(-3). Its Base Perception is 9 and it has Darvision 60 ft. Multiattacks: two claw attacks (1d4+2 slashing, attack +2) followed by either one bite (1d4+2 piercing, attack +2) or one gore (2d4 +2 piercing, attack +2). Its special abilities include a poison attack that does 1d4 HP damage each round that the victim fails on a DC 15 Constitution check.*)

The orinsu are restless spirits that can inhabit creations that have a life-like appearance. This includes statues, stained glass figures, and figures from murals. Their preferred choice is the stone gargoyle commonly found on the tops of many buildings.

As the party drives the last of the creatures off, howling shouts of the damned erupt from below, taper off, and grow quiet. The orinsu have returned to their tombs and the party must follow them into the depths of the dungeon.

IN DUNGEONS, DARK THINGS SLEEP

Any acolytes remaining at this point show the party to the entrance of the catacombs and storerooms. As the party prepares to descend into the dungeon the Castle Keeper may wish to remind them of the swords placed in the hands of the four statues of the saints or the first adventurer to enter the catacombs may make a DC 12 Intelligence check. On success, the adventurer may request the use of the magical weapons held by the statues.

An iron rail and locked gate block access to the steps which lead into the dark below. Brother Orn opens the gate and offers a prayer for your safe return. "Below are the bodies of our Brethren, but seems that some foul creature has taken up abode in our catacombs. May Ore-Tsar guide you, keep you safe and bring you back to us in health." With that he walks quietly away and leaves you to the task at hand.

The stone steps, relatively new in construction, give way to a hallway which bears the imprint of work done long ago. Old grey stones, long worn smooth by the passage of time, beckon you into the dark beyond.

ROOM 1: STORAGE ROOM.

The door is new and unlocked. Within are a 10 large barrels and 5 crates containing foodstuffs, wine and beer. There are also piles of cookware, dishes and silverware, all unused; they are roughly 50gp value.

ROOM 2: STORAGE ROOM.

The door is new and unlocked. Within are two barrels of torches, four small barrels of cooking and lamp oil, a shelf with several hundred small packages of candles of varying size, and six sturdy lamps. There are also 14 empty barrels which obviously contained oil at one time.

ROOM 3: VESTMENT ROOM.

The door is new and a padlock has been added for extra security. The room is used frequently, for it is clean and dust free. Within are clothing racks, shelves, a large armoire, and four trunks. Picking the lock requires a successful DC 13 Dexterity check (with proficiency using thieves' tools). Breaking the lock can be done with a successful DC 15 Strength check and any weapon that deals bludgeoning damage.

The racks hold four white habits with gold trim, each worth 10gp. The shelves have two miters, with gems mounted upon them and ten white and silver hats with gold and silver trim. The miters are worth 25gp apiece, the hats 5gp. Within the armoire are a dozen finely tailored smocks, each worth 2gp. In the trunks, wrapped in velvet, are religious staffs and wands (10 total, each worth 50gp). It should be obvious to the party that this is the vestment room, used by the clerics of the church above. They should be strongly discouraged from looting its contents.

ROOM 4: BARRED DOOR.

The hallway extends for 50 feet beyond the turn and ends in a large iron-bound, brass door. The door is locked (successful DC 12 Dexterity check to pick with thieves' tools) and shows no signs of recent tampering. It is doubtful whether any of the monks have been down here in months, if not years.

The door has been sealed shut and locked for over 5 years. The monks, though they know that it leads to more rooms have been forbidden to go beyond it. If a lockpick attempt fails, the

mortar around the hinges is greatly weakened and a determined effort (successful DC 16 Strength check) will batter down the door after an hour's work.

ROOM 5: STORAGE.

The old wooden door gives way with a loud creak, and small whirlwinds of dust spin around as the door opens. Within is a room long disused. Old tools, their wooden hafts long since rotted away, are piled haphazardly about.

Lying amidst the debris is a trunk, tightly sealed. Within are a dozen bundles of yellowed paper. The top bundle consists of 6 warrant sheets. Each one has the heading *Wanted for Treason*, a name following with a list of charges. Many of the charges are vague, such as: Insulting Gestures, and Calling on the Council. After the charges are listed, there is a trial date, the seal of the Empire, and an execution date. Each one of the six reads: *Consigned to the pits*.

These are the warrant sheets for the six doomed men, the orinsu, located in room 10. Their names are listed and still readable. The names of the men can be used against their restless orinsu (see below, room 10).

There are two iron crowbars amongst the rubbish and a pickaxe blade.

ROOM 6: ARMORY.

The thick, wooden, iron-bound door is unlocked, but jammed. It opens slowly with great effort. Beyond you see a tightly organized room with racks of armor. Twelve suits of mail hang on the main rack. Twelve shields hang on the walls, six on the east wall and six on the west. Twelve high spiked helms rest upon a long shelf over the armor rack. The breast plates, with chain sleeves and skirts, are obviously of Imperial Aufstrag design, as are the spiked helms. The Crescent moon emblazons the shields. Clearly, an armory from the days long gone.

The equipment is in surprisingly good shape. The shields need new straps, as do the helms, but are otherwise valuable. The armor has suffered a little more. The leather straps for the breast plate, and the straps attaching the leggings and sleeves are seriously degenerated and will more than likely break if worn. The armor acts as half-plate.

ROOM 7: RUINS.

This room served as some manner of storage room. It is empty but for the metal remains of old casks and barrels.

There is actually a small cavity beneath a flagstone under the debris. Finding it requires moving the debris and a successful DC 12 Investigation check. Inside is a metal chest about 2' x 2' and 18" high. Upon the top are magic runes which read: *Initiate of the Winter Runes*. The box is locked and trapped. If the lock is tampered with before the trap is disarmed (requires a successful DC 15 Dexterity check) an unklar's breath spills into the room from the key hole and attacks the party.

UNKLAR'S BREATH (This neutral undead has vital statistics HP 3(1d4 + 1), AC 17, Spd 40ft. Its abilities are Str 4(-3), Dex 16(+3), Con 12(+1), Int 10(0), Wis 1(-5), Cha 1(-5). Its Base Perception is 10. Attacks: Mental blast (1d4+3 psychic, attack +3). Its special ability allows it to paralyze a victim after a successful Mental blast attack that fails a DC 13 Constitution save. The target may attempt the Constitution save at the beginning of a turn; failure results in the victim taking 1d4 points poison damage. The creature is also immune to piercing and slashing damage.)

The Unklar's Breath is vaporous creature that attacks a target's lungs. A mental attack paralyzes the victim but allows the target to continue to breathe in the poison. The creature is immune to slashing and piercing attacks, but large weapons or objects that deal bludgeoning damage can be used to damage and disperse the creature.

Within, the chest is lined in purple velvet cloth, still in good shape. Lying on the cloth, neatly rolled and sealed with the seal of the Wizard Guild, The Paths of Umbra, is a magical scroll, with the 1st level wizard spell, *somnambulate* (see Spells) inscribed upon it. Beneath the scroll is a magical rune stone, with the same spell etched into its surface.

The rune stone (see **Magic Items**) is actually one of the first spells necessary for the Winter Runes incantation, a plane traveling spell. Wizards, illusionists, clerics and druids may use the scroll as a normal spell. The rune stone acts as a magic item.

ROOM 8: PREPARATION ROOM

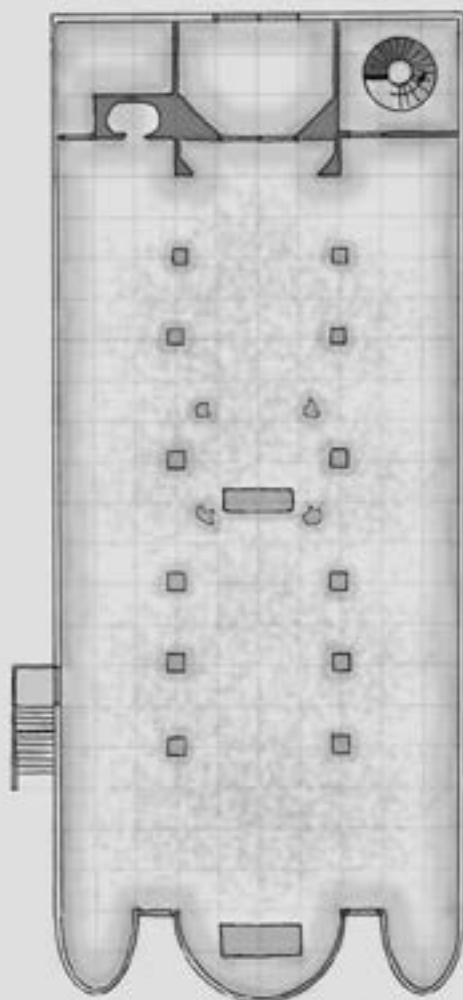
The door to this room has been torn away. Several counters line the walls, and shelves stand above each counter. A long table dominates the center of the room. The table is blood stained, though the stains are several weeks old. Upon the shelves and counters are various cutting instruments, fresh rolls of bandages, and jars of a thick yellow fluid. Several new dark habits with hoods hang upon the wall beside the open door.

This is the preparation room for the acolytes. Their fallen comrade's bodies are cleaned, bandaged and placed in a fresh habit with shroud. The yellow fluid is embalming fluid. This process keeps the body from decaying and reduces the smell over the long term. There is little of value here.

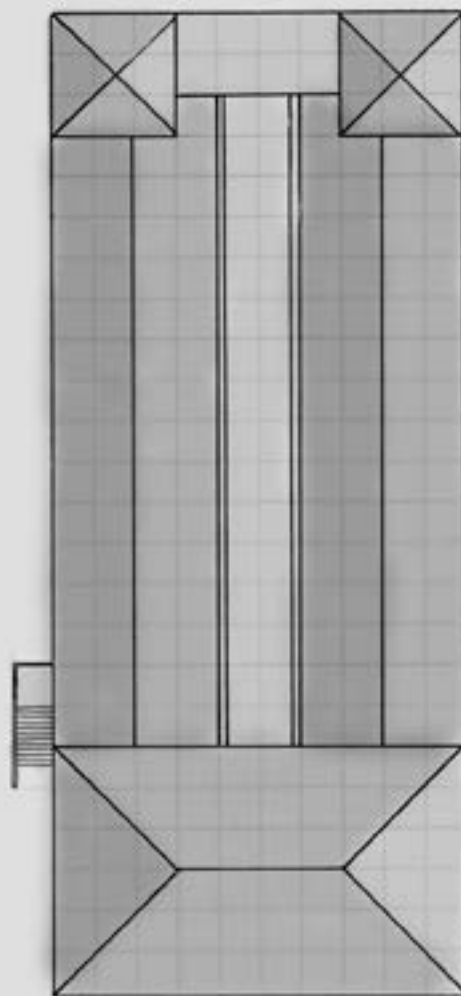
ROOM 9: THE CATACOMBS

This room greets you with a musty odor, a smell of ancient decay. A large brass candelabra stands in the room's center, next to it is a large metal cask, filled with fresh dirt. A finely carved podium sits in front of the candelabra. Upon the east wall are four small iron doors, fitted into the wall. They are latched, though unlocked. Upon each is a brass plaque bearing an inscription in the Vulgate tongue. Upon the west wall are two excavated alcoves. Small and square, they are obviously burial tombs.

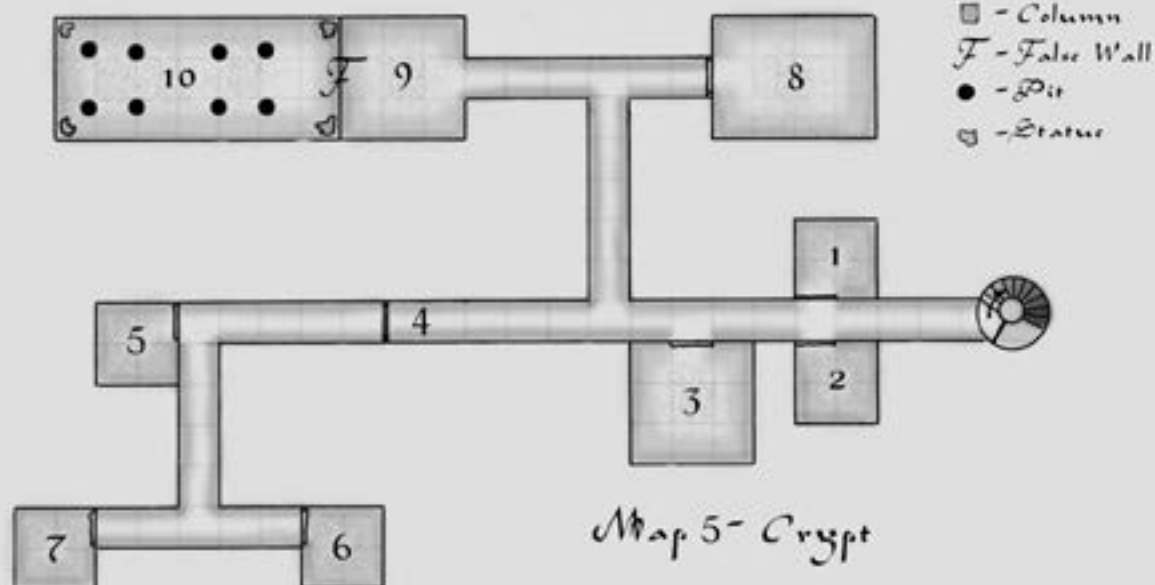
A plaque, firmly attached to the podium reads:



Map 3 - Four Saints Church



Map 4 - Roof



Map 5 - Crypt

*"A Prayer for the Dead.
In death know peace,
The quiet of earth's decay,
Rest now sorrowful ghost,
With holy word, entombed, stay.*

That even the dead should rest we offer them their names and sanctified dirt upon their chest and we cast holy incantations upon them to give them peace. For we know that the restless dead are damned and with us they stay."

The inscriptions on the east wall read as follows: *Top Left: Our Beloved Deacon, Master Hugh Adelton, Too Soon Lost, 1097. Top Right: Brother Delain, 1096. Bottom Left: Sister Adelia, 1095. Brother Ulros, 1095.*

Within the tombs are the bodies of the above mentioned monks. Deacon Adelton's is relatively fresh, though it has been covered in the embalming fluid and bandaged. The smell of the tomb if opened is strong though not over-powering. All four bodies have dirt sprinkled upon them from chin to toe. The two alcoves are empty, awaiting occupants.

The dirt is soil taken from Capendu's cemetery and is used to sprinkle the dead with consecrated ground. It may be used in the final encounter with the orinsu, **see room 10**.

If the party conducts a detailed search of the room, the false wall will be revealed upon a successful DC 10 Investigation check.

ROOM 10: THE CRYPT

With only a little effort you pull down a large section of the false wall. A heavy musty odor engulfs you; the stench of old decay pervades the darkened room beyond. Your light flickers in the dust, causing shadows to twist and turn. Peering in, you see rack-lined walls, and tables covered in long unused implements of torture: pliers, spiked chains and cleaving blades. On the far wall of

the room, a pair of manacles hang from the ceiling, the remnants of a skeletal arm dangling from one chain. Eight perfectly symmetrical pits dominate the center of the room, each about 3 feet in diameter. Four ancient statues, are in the room, each a giant gargoyle. The winged monsters, grafted into the room's corners, seem to stare at you, their dark stone eyes follow you as you cross the room.

The room has not been used since the imperial forces left it many years ago. Castle Kapund's last captain constructed the false wall in order to hide the dungeon from enraged townsfolk or avenging lords of the Council of Light. The room has sat undisturbed for many years.

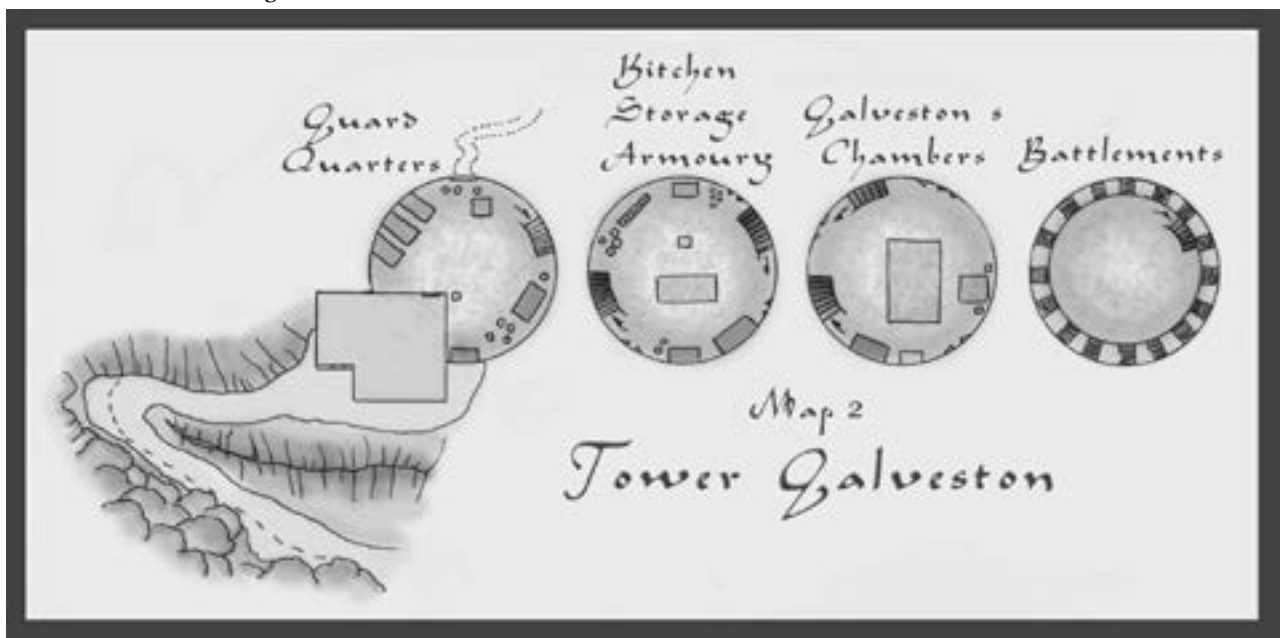
Here is where the six died. Their long decayed bodies each lie in a separate pit. When observed, the bodies appear as twisted zombies (use *Monster Manual 5e*, Zombie, page 316) with rags on their bones. The pits are narrow and about 12 feet deep.

The spirits can only be destroyed in one of the following ways:

If the zombies are turned, the orinsu are consigned to oblivion. The zombies will animate only if someone crawls down into the pits physically threatening them and only if the orinsu has not occupied another host. The zombies can only be permanently destroyed by a cleric through turning. If the zombie itself is chopped down, burnt or otherwise destroyed the corpse will no longer be able to defend itself, but the orinsu will still be able to animate another host.

The only other way to destroy the orinsu is to lay them to rest. The corpses must be named, consecrated earth thrown upon them, and a burial spell cast over them. Any number of spells will serve this purpose, including Bless, Healing Word, Sanctuary, Lesser Restoration, and Prayer of Healing. If the characters succeed in laying the orinsu to rest, award each surviving adventurer 350 XP.

If any move is made to attack the zombies, the orinsu invade and animate the giant gargoyle statues in the corner. It takes





three Orinsu to animate one of the stone monstrosities, once done they will fight ferociously to defend the zombies.

ORINSU GIANT GARGOYLE (*This chaotic evil creature has vital statistics HP 19 (3d10 + 1), AC 15, Spd 30ft/50ft (fly). Its abilities are Str 16(+3), Dex 14(+2), Con 12(+1), Int 10(0), Wis 8(-1), Cha 4(-3). Its Base Perception is 9. Multiattack: two claw attacks (1d4+3 slashing, attack +3) and one bite (1d4+3 piercing, attack +3).*)

The jeweled eyes of the four orinsu giant gargoyles are large opals, worth 100 gp (total 800 gp). There is a *ring of protection +1* with one of the zombies and a *+1 mace* lies beneath one of the other zombies.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

With the Orinsu destroyed, the party and villagers realize that the true source of the murders has been overcome. Galveston acknowledges the party's efforts and success in a public ceremony on the following god's day. He rewards them each 250gp and a patent of land ownership within the valley. Each party member receives 10 acres of land to be held as an allod (they owe no dues or service for the land). They are also granted, upon Galveston's death, Tower Galveston and all the feudal holdings of the villages of Capendu, Tres and Arlet. The villagers welcome their new lords and ladies with shouts of appreciation and welcome!

The Castle Keeper may wish to modify these treasures for his/her own adventure. If so, exchange the tower and land for equal money, 1000 gp per party member for a total of 1250 gp.

For those who wish to continue the adventure in Rune Lore, impress upon the characters the mysterious nature of the rune store found in Room 7 above. If queried about it Galveston explains that these stones were used by the wizard Nulak-Kiz-Din to travel through the planes, that is all he knows, and no more. However, he has a good friend, a Sage in Capidistria that may know more. He offers the characters a writ of passage, explaining to the characters to give the Sage, Mendlethrone, the writ and he will help them without cost. An overland journey to Capidistria lands the characters in that town and at the door step of the adventure Harbors Foul.

APPENDIX A: NEW MONSTER

ORINSU GIANT GARGOYLE

LARGE ELEMENTAL, CHAOTIC EVIL

AC: 15 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS: 19 (3d10 + 1)

SPEED: 30 ft., fly 50ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (0)	8 (-1)	4 (-3)

DAMAGE RESISTANCES: cold, bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES: poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES: petrified, poisoned

SENSES: darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

LANGUAGES: Common

CHALLENGE 1/4 (50 XP)

ACTIONS:

MULTIATTACK: The Orinsu Giant Gargoyle makes two claw attacks and a bite.

CLAWS: Melee Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d4 + 3) slashing damage.

BITE: Melee Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

The orinsu are restless spirits that can inhabit creations that have a life-like appearance. This includes statues, stained glass figures, and figures from murals. Their preferred choice is the stone gargoyle commonly found on the tops of many buildings.

COMBAT: In combat the orinsu animate the nearest, most threatening object and attack. They gain all of the combat abilities of the host they animate. Once the host is destroyed, or near destruction, the orinsu flees it and searches for another host to animate. If none exist, it returns to its earthly remains.

ANIMATE: Orinsu remain near the remains of their former bodies, but they manifest in a number of ways. They may appear as simple poltergeists, moving candle sticks and books in the late of night, or they may walk the earth, haunting the living. When desiring to affect the living world, orinsu manifest themselves by animating objects. The bodiless spirits worm their ways inside a statue, a figure in a painting, or their former bodies (treat as zombie, lesser zombie, or skeleton). The more powerful orinsu may even animate a fallen character. The animation process takes one round, both to enter and to leave a host. Orinsu animates may never venture more than 1 mile from their earthly remains that once housed their uncorrupted spirit.

DEFEATING AN ORINSU: If the orinsu animates the earthly remains of its former host, it is treated as undead. The undead host can only be permanently destroyed by a cleric through turning. A successful turning check, regardless of turning damage inflicted, consigns the orinsu to oblivion and destroys it. If the undead host is physically defeated, burnt, or otherwise destroyed, the orinsu will seek out another host to animate. If

no host is available, the orinsu remains bound to the area as an ethereal spirit.

As each of the orinsu is turned or buried, the soul, freed from its undead state, flies from the room, up through the church, and into the night sky, howling and moaning as it goes. The sound fades as the creature passes on to the halls of the dead.

The jeweled eyes of the four orinsu giant gargoyles are large opals, worth 100 gp (total 800 gp). There is a ring of protection +1 with one of the zombies and a +1 mace lies beneath one of the other zombies.

IN AIHRDE

The orinsu are common creatures in Aihilde as the long and bitter Winter Dark and the brutal 20 year Winter Dark War left countless dead, whose bodies were never properly laid to rest. And though these all are not subject to becoming the orinsu, enough of them were cursed or placed under some banishment to keep their souls bound to the world where their fallen bodies lay in rot.

The followers of the Red Duke often build their temples where they know some orinsu haunts. They bind these spirits to them and use their unbridled chaos to keep intruders at bay.

APPENDIX B: NEW MAGIC ITEMS

ARTHUL RUNE STONE

The rune stones are magical stones. Each carries the power of an eldritch sorcery, inscribed into the stone itself through a rune. The runes consist of spells layered one on top of the other, the rune spells, powerful magics difficult to understand and dangerous to tamper with. The runes serve as host to these dangerous corners of sorcery; in the rune the magic finds a coherent design. In that design they offer a shield of sorts to the practitioner. For the magic is captured and combined in the ebb and flow of the glyph. Understanding the glyph unlocks the power of the rune stone upon which it is cast. Carefully designed, impregnated with power, the runes themselves are transferable to those who understand them. To those who do not, mastery of the stone's magic is difficult but not impossible.

The *arthul rune stone* acts as the spell *somnambulate*, placing the user into a state of semi-hibernation. By activating the rune the recipient enters a trance-like state, removing their body's need for sustenance. Once under the influence of the rune the heart rate and breathing slows, eyelids close, and all tension is removed as the recipient of the spell settles into a state of hibernation. The spell reduces the body's need for nourishment, including water and even air. The recipient can survive without food or water for 4 days per level of the caster. They must have air, however, they can survive with 10% of the normal amount required, meaning that they can survive at very high altitudes.

Activating the stone requires the user to set it upon the ground in front of them, place their finger upon it and make a successful DC 12 Constitution check. If they succeed the rune dissolves

into a puff of smoke, rising up. As soon as the wielder breathes the magical smoke they slip into the trance. When the spell ends the smoke turns to stone and falls to the ground.

The recipient is not wholly asleep and is aware of what goes on around them as if they were in a deep echo chamber. Sounds, sights, and smells all seem to be at a great distance. Once under the influence of the spell they cannot act upon these stimuli unless they make a successful DC 12 wisdom save at which point they break from the spell.

They can be violently knocked out of the somnambulance if they are stricken or otherwise attacked. In such cases they are automatically wrenched from the spell's influence and suffer 1d6 points of psychic damage.

The rune stone can hold up to 20 charges and must be recharged with other spells to keep its magic whole.

APPENDIX C: RUNE SPELLS

Rune spells are specially crafted spells and cannot be written into a spell book, nor added to a cleric or druids repertoire of spells. The rune can be inscribed upon a totem and memorized from that totem as a normal spell, or prayed for by the cleric and druid.

SOMNAMBULATE

3rd-level conjuration (ritual)

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: Self (20-foot-radius)

Components: V,S,M (a pinch of sand in addition to the rune stone)

Duration 1 week per level of caster (or until target chooses to leave trance or is attacked)

The spell sends the recipient into a restful sleep-like state. The heart rate and breathing slows, eyelids close, and all tension is removed as the recipient of the spell settles into a state of hibernation. The spell reduces the body's need for nourishment, including water and even air. The recipient can survive without food or water for 1 week per level of the caster. They must have air, however, they can survive with 10% of the normal amount required, meaning that they can survive at very high altitudes.

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