

BDK4-02

Trouble at Centaur Mesa

A One-Round D&D LIVING GREYHAWK[®]
Bandit Kingdoms Regional Adventure

Version 1.0

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A clan of the Rift Barren's Nomads has awakened something that should stay sleeping. Can you determine what it is and keep the disaster from spreading? An Adventure for characters level 1-8 who are not outlawed by the Rift Barren's Nomads, with special significance to members of the Initiates of the Tangles Meta-organization

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®] rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison.

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Introduction

This is an RPGA® Network scenario for the Dungeons & Dragons® game. A four-hour time block has been allocated for each round of this scenario. The rest of the time is spent in preparation before game play, and scoring after the game. The following guidelines are here to help you with both the preparation and voting segment of the game. Read this page carefully so that you know and can communicate to your players the special aspects of playing an RPGA scenario.

Preparation

First you should print this scenario. This scenario was created to support double-sided printing, but printing it single sided will work as well. There is enough room along the inside margin to bind the adventure, if you desire.

Read this entire adventure at least once before you run your game. Be sure to familiarize yourself with any special rules, spells, or equipment presented in the adventure. It may help to highlight particularly important passages.

When you run an RPGA D&D adventure we assume that you have access to the following books: the *Player's Handbook*, the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*. We also assume that you have a set of dice (at least one d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, and d20), some scrap paper, a pencil, an RPGA scoring packet, and your sense of fun. It is also a good idea to have a way to track movement during combat. This can be as simple as a pad of graph paper and a pencil, as handy as a vinyl grid map and chits, or as elaborate as resin dungeon walls and miniatures.

Instruct the players either to prepare their characters now, or wait until you read the introduction, depending on the requirements of the scenario as described in the introduction.

Keep in mind that you must have at least three players (not counting the DM), for the game session to be a sanctioned RPGA event. As well, you cannot have more than six players participating in the game.

Once you are ready to play, it is handy to instruct each player to place a nametag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for the players (and the DM) to keep track of who is playing which character.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying. That said, you as the DM can bar the use of even core rulebooks during certain times of play. For example, the players are not free to consult the *Dungeon Master's Guide* when confronted with a trap or hazard, or the *Monster Manual* when confronted with a monster.

Some of the text in this scenario is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is

for your eyes only. Text for the players will be in gray boxes. It's strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text instead of reading it aloud. Some of this text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters.

Scoring

After the players have completed the scenario or the time allotted to run the scenario has run out, the players and DM score the game. Complete the RPGA scoring grid with names and RPGA numbers only, and the event information at the top. RPGA no longer uses voting for any reported results. Give the Scoring Packet to your event coordinator.

This is a LIVING GREYHAWK Adventure. As a LIVING adventure it is expected that players bring their own characters with them. If players do not have a LIVING GREYHAWK character generated, get a copy of the current LIVING GREYHAWK character generation guidelines, and a character sheet from your convention coordinator or the RPGA Web site, and then have any players without a character create one. Once all players have a LIVING GREYHAWK character, play can begin.

Along with the other materials that you are assumed to have in order to run a D&D game, it is also recommended that you have a copy of the LIVING GREYHAWK *Gazetteer*.

Living Greyhawk Levels of Play

Because players bring their own characters to LIVING GREYHAWK games, this adventure's challenges are proportioned to the average character level of the PCs participating in the adventure. To determine the Average Party Level (APL):

1. Determine the character level for each of the PCs participating in the adventure.
2. If PCs bring animals that have been trained for combat (most likely being war horses, dogs trained for war), other than those brought by virtue of a class ability (i.e. animal companions, familiars, paladin's mounts, etc) use the sidebar chart to determine the number of levels you add to the sum above. Add each character's animals separately. A single PC may only bring four or fewer animals of this type, and animals with different CRs are added separately.

	Mundane Animals Effect on APL	# of Animals			
		1	2	3	4
CR of Animal	1/4 & 1/6	0	0	0	1
	1/3 & 1/2	0	0	1	1
	1	1	1	2	3
	2	2	3	4	5
	3	3	4	5	6
	4	4	6	7	8
	5	5	7	8	9
	6	6	8	9	10
	7	7	9	10	11

3. Sum the results of 1 and 2, and divide by the number of characters playing in the adventure. Round to the nearest whole number.

4. If you are running a table of six PCs, add one to that average.

By following these four steps, you will have determined the APL. Throughout this adventure, APLs categorize the level of challenge the PCs will face. APLs are given in even-numbered increments. If the APL of your group falls on an odd number, ask them before the adventure begins whether they would like to play a harder or easier adventure. Based on their choice, use either the higher or the lower adjacent APL.

APL also affects the amount of experience you may gain at the end of the adventure. If your character is three character levels or more either higher or lower than the APL this adventure is being played at, that character will receive only half of the experience points awarded for the adventure. This simulates the fact that either your character was not as challenged as normal, or relied on help by higher-level characters to reach the objectives.

Note: LIVING GREYHAWK adventures are designed for APL 2 and higher. Three or four, or sometimes even five 1st-level characters may find difficulty with the challenges in a LIVING GREYHAWK adventure. If your group is APL 1 there are two things that you can do to help even the score.

1. Attempt to create a table of six 1st-level characters, or try to enlist higher-level characters to play at that table.
2. Advise characters to buy riding dogs to help protect them, and fight for them. All riding dogs are considered trained to attack. PCs who want their dogs to attack must succeed at a Handle Animal or Charisma check (DC 10). Failure indicates that the animal will not attack that round. This is a free action (spoken command) that may be attempted each round. If an animal loses half or more hp in a single round it flees, unless another check is successful.

Time Units and Upkeep

This is a standard one-round Regional adventure, set in the Bandit Kingdoms. Characters native to the Bandit Kingdoms pay one Time Unit per round, all others pay two Time Units per round. Adventurer's Standard Upkeep costs 12gp per Time Unit. Rich Upkeep costs 50gp per Time Unit. Luxury Upkeep costs 100gp per Time Unit.

Adventure Background

The Story begins so long ago that none other than the oldest of the fey might remember...

Once, long ago, when the great northern forest stretched unbroken from the Vesve to the Cold Lands north of Ratik, a great evil boiled out of the rift canyon and threatened to overrun the forest. The forces of good and evil fought a great battle at the lip of the canyon, and in the end, the evil was defeated.

During the combat, a group of centaur cavalry broke through the lines and attacked the evil commander's group. There they came in close combat with a fiend named Tzumvaltum. As the centaurs fought him, his staff was broken, releasing a blight which started to sicken and destroy the great forest. By the time that the centaurs realized that they had carried off only half of the staff from the combat, almost all of the forests were sickening and most of the tree based life was dead in a widening area around the rift.

The centaurs were guided by their deity, Skerrit, to a pool of cleansing holy water under what was rapidly becoming the Rift Barrens. Completing a ritual, they were able to heal the staff and stop the blight, but not before the forest was sickened and killed for miles around the source of the evil. The remaining centaurs left to find some unblemished forest, leaving only one as a guardian to protect the staff and keep some misguided or evil person from taking it from its safe hiding place under the pool, which the centaurs named the Tears of Skerrit.

Several hundred years passed, and the ancestors of those who would one day be the Sparrowhawk clan of the Rift Barrens Nomads came upon the mesa that contained the Tears of Skerrit. A misunderstanding with the last of the centaur guardians coupled with greed caused the nomads to kill the guardian. As the guardian died, he cursed them and called for his deity's help in guarding the pool. Whether through the intervention of Skerrit, or by coincidence, this call was heard by a Zelekhut from the plane of Mechanus, who has taken it upon itself to guard the pool against defilement. Before the arrival of the Zelekhut (which took months), the nomads set up camp on the mesa and searched it until they found the Tears of Skerrit and the staff of Tzumvaltum. The leader of the nomads made the mistake of taking the staff out of the pool. This caused him to eventually turn to evil, and there was a great deal of internal strife within the band. So great, that in an assassination attempt against the leader, the staff was cracked (but not broken) and the first hints of the returning blight resurfaced.

In the Tangles, this first hint of blight was felt by one of the few beings that remembered it from the first time: a treant named Eldest. She and an Elven

companion journeyed to Centaur Mesa, where they came upon the last of the nomadic band being killed by Tzumvaltum himself, returned from the Abyssal plains of Xumavortax. Eldest and the druid were able to once again defeat and banish Tzumvaltum back to the Abyss, but did not know the details of the ritual or the true location of the Tears of Skerrit. They mistakenly thought that the pool on the surface was the Tears and so all their attempts to recreate the ritual were unsuccessful. It became clear that there was some virtue in the water on the surface, as they saw that as long as Eldest stayed in it, she did not succumb to the blight that was invariably lethal to her kind. The druid went back to get help while Eldest kept the staff safe in the pool. As the days passed into months, it became obvious that the druid was not returning and Eldest weakened. When all seemed lost, Eldest thrust the staff into her own body to use her life force to contain the blight. In desperation, she sunk down roots deep into the Oerth. Whether by chance or by some divine guidance, she managed to touch the Tears of Skerrit with a lone root. These have sustained her and kept her alive all these years. She is now, however, trapped and stationary.

After the disastrous attack upon the Rift Barren's nomadic conclave detailed in BDK3-03 Trouble at Baco Canyon, the clans of the nomads met and censured the Sparrowhawk clan, who they felt responsible for this outrage. Unable to stomach this humiliation, the clan severed its ancient ties with the conclave and set out on its own to live independently of the rest of the clans. They found this impossible, and have resorted to attacking caravans and travelers on the edge of the Rift Barrens. This has attracted the attention of the leaders of the military forces of Iuz, who have started sending worg rider patrols into the barrens to find and punish the nomads. Not only has this harmed the Sparrowhawk, but all the clans are feeling the attention of the worg riders.

Within the last month, the Sparrowhawk were cornered in one area of the barrens near the rift canyon. With no alternative except certain annihilation, they opted to flee to the forbidden, cursed Centaur Mesa. Neither they, nor the worgriders that followed them onto the mesa have been heard from since.

Shining Rock, the new head druid of the clans, has sent out several riders looking for the heroes who helped her last year at the Conclave. During the time that these riders are looking for the heroes, an old leader of the Sparrowhawk clan, Ovek, returned to the barrens and offered to fetch the Sparrowhawk back from the mesa. Shining Rock trusted him to be able to turn the Sparrowhawk from evil and sent him to the mesa. He left about a week previous to the start of this adventure and has not been heard from since he started up the slopes of the mesa. Because of the history of the curse

and the loss of both the Sparrowhawk and Ovek, no nomad will venture on the mesa.

Adventure Summary

Encounter 1: The characters meet in Ankheg Springs and might find out that there is someone looking for people like themselves.

Encounter 2: The heroes come upon Hvirta Brighteagle being chased by goblin worgriders. After saving him, they have an opportunity to accompany him back into the barrens to help the nomads.

Encounter 3: After meeting with the Brightedgle clan and Shining Rock, head druid of the clans, they are asked to travel to Centaur Mesa to find out what has happened to the Sparrowhawk clan, who has disappeared. The heroes might get a hint that there is much residual hatred for the Sparrowhawk.

Encounter 4: The heroes encounter the Redfox clan and learn information about Ovek Sparrowhawk, the person that Shining Rock sent to rescue the clan earlier. They get an offer from the Redfox to let the Sparrowhawk die.

Encounter 5: The heroes come across the Sparrowhawk clan, overcome by some horrible curse and blight that has dropped them into a coma. They will also come upon a demon tormenting a nearly dead treant in the middle of a pond in the center of the mesa. The might find that the Sparrowhawk have broken the staff impaled inside the treant to get at the valuable looking headpiece.

Encounter 6: The heroes may find out from Eldest how to get to the Tears of Skerrit. There they will find Ovek with the other half of the staff. Standing over him is the Zelekhut of Mechanus, who is standing eternal vigilance against defilement. They might also find a notebook left by one of the last centaur guardians with valuable clues. They can also learn some things about Ovek from searching him.

Encounter 7: The heroes must choose who must die, Eldest or Ovek. Only one may survive, as removing the staff from the one without the other half of the staff being close by will kill the holder.

Encounter 8: The heroes may complete the ritual to hear the staff. The Zelekhut will see this as defilement and so will attack. If they defeat the Zelekhut and complete the ritual, they have an opportunity to bring down the cavern and seal the staff under the Tears of Skerrit forever.

Regional Warning for New Players

It is important to realize at all times that the Bandit Kingdoms are under the control of Iuz, a chaotic, evil deity who revels in torture, depravity and trickery. Government officials tend to imitate many of the attributes of their dread lord. Things that you might take for granted in other regions, such as freedom of worship and the rule of law, are not valued by the rulers in the Combination of Free Lords. You may be able to strike at Iuz, but seldom can you strike at him overtly. Be warned, life is short for those who openly defy Old Wicked.

Before the module begins, find out:

- If any of the characters have played either BDK2-02 Trouble at Ankheg Springs or BDK3-03 Trouble at Baco Canyon.
- If any of the characters participated in purchasing the amulet from Morginstaler the dragon in BDK3-3 Trouble at Baco Canyon.
- If any of the characters are outlawed by the Rift Barrens nomads (from BDK 3-03). If so, encourage them to play this module with another character, as playing this character might lead to their character's execution early in the adventure. Should they insist, ask if they are in disguise and find out their disguise skill check. They are not allowed to take 20 on the roll. Give each nomad that they encounter a spot check at +3 to notice the character until someone does. At that point, the nomads will attempt to capture the character. Should he be captured, he will be publicly executed for desecration of a holy site, his gear being sold to pay wergild for those killed by the forces of Iuz in the attack on the camp related in Trouble at Baco Canyon (BDK3-03).
- If any of the characters have the favor of Ilyena Michelson. If so, then you can tell them that they spent the night in Ankheg Springs at the Ranch house instead of at the Rusty Nail in town. Even a "spent" favor is still good enough for this. If they have played Trouble at Baco Canyon, then you can tell them that the twins are fine.
- If any of the characters are riding the Stallion of the Rift. If so, they will have a +4 bonus on all diplomacy and gather information checks with the Rift Barrens nomads for the duration of this adventure (as the nomads are all horsemen and will recognize the stallion as one of Silverhoof's offspring).

Find out what kinds of characters are sitting at the table. Give each character the appropriate handout.

- **Handout 1A** is for characters who are druids or rangers, or who seem to have a close affiliation with nature. (note also handout 1F)
- **Handout 1B** is for characters who are wanted for questioning or hunted by temple grimacing.
- **Handout 1C** is for characters who are motivated by money or who are the type who would not find it averse to caravan work.
- **Handout 1D** is for city based characters with no wilderness skills.
- **Handout 1E** is for members of the Red Planks or for Rhenee characters with a connection to the Artonsamay.
- **Handout 1F** is for members of the Initiates of the Tangles meta-org.
- **Handout 1G** is a default handout for any character who does not fit in any of the above categories.

If at all possible, try to make sure that someone gets Handout 1A. If that person does not communicate their fears to the party, there is an opportunity for an NPC to do this in encounter 1.

Introduction

The name of this little hamlet in the middle of the Rift Barrens seems to be Ankheg Springs. The main feature of the hamlet is that there is water here, unlike anywhere else that you have seen in the Barrens. The locals are an insular lot, not given to small talk with strangers and you find yourself sharing a table at the only tavern in town with an unusual collection of adventurers. Some of them look rather out of place in this rustic setting in the middle of the wilderness.

While the locals are reticent about their own affairs, they are not hesitant about giving advice. "Don't you boys go wandering down the road without a heap of company with you, now." Says one old geezer sipping a beer. "There's a powerful lot of jebli all over the place. It don't set well to be alone if you run into them!"

Jebli is the Flan word for goblin. Let the characters introduce themselves during dinner, as they have all been placed at the same table, with locals at all the other tables. The food is good (cook has a +14 on her Profession (cook) roll if anyone notices good food) and there is even a little bit of music from a pretty poor bard in the corner (Perform skill +3). PC's who wish to take over the entertainment are granted a free meal and

drinks if they make a Perform DC of at least 15 (a DC 20 check will earn free room as well).

Encounter 1: A Chance Meeting?

As you are finishing your meal, the barkeep takes a vacant chair next to you and says "Ain't my business to pry into other folks doins, but I cain't help but notice that some of you look like you know one end of a weapon from the other."

Allow the players to respond.

"Reason I ask is 'cause I just had a person come through here yesterday who was looking for a group like you to help him out. Now normally, I don't take no heed to that kind of crazy talk, 'cause it usually means a feud or somewhat, but seeing as how he is related to Missus Ilyena over at the ranch, I figured I'd pass that on to you."

A Diplomacy check (DC 10) will get the bartender to tell you all he knows about the situation.

- Ilyena is a widow with two small children who owns the local ranch that owns the valley. She is well liked, despite having married a nomad. (This is the Ilyena Michelson from BDK2-02 Trouble at Ankheg Springs and BDK3-03 Trouble at Baco Canyon).
- He didn't know the man who requested aid from the bartender, but he recognized the Brighteagle clan colors and knew that that made him related to Ilyena's dead husband.
- The nomad didn't say why he wanted help, just that it was important to his people. It was unusual, because the nomads normally don't ask help from outsiders.
- The nomad left town taking a track deep into the barrens.
- No one is home at the Michelson Ranch just now except for the gardener and an old stable hand who know nothing. Everyone else is out with the cattle drive.

The characters are welcome to explore the town and even go out to the ranch, but don't take too much time on it. Nothing is happening in Ankheg Springs or its surroundings. Hopefully, someone at the table got handout 1A and knows that something is going on, but in any case, the adventure is down the track into the barrens.

Should any of the characters not have a mount, you might mention to them that traveling the barrens on foot is slow, dry and dangerous. They can purchase mounts in Ankheg Springs from the livery stable next door to the Rusty Nail.

If the characters refuse the hook, have a local the next morning come to them and relate the same thing that is in handout 1A. If pressed about the direction of the unease, he will point in the direction that the track leaves town. Should they decide to go some other way, thank them and hand out AR's for the scenario.

When the characters are traveling down the little track into the barrens, read the following:

The barrens stretch before you, a vast plain of dusty heat filled with sagebrush, snakes and prairie dogs. For the last four hours, your only companion has been a mangy brown spotted dog that has slunk along behind you. It is obvious why this road isn't well traveled, as carts would have a terribly difficult time trying to negotiate the gullies that crisscross the terrain. Even though the land is as flat as a table, it is a table that some God has scored with a giant knife, as there are many ravines that would probably fill quickly with water, if only it would rain. Rain, however, is something that never seems to fall in the Rift Barrens. For the last half of a mile the track has paralleled one of the largest of these ravines you have seen yet.

If any of the party try to approach the dog, it shies away unless a successful Handle Animal check (DC 25) is made. Characters with the Wild Empathy class ability may try to befriend the dog. The dog is a normal dog (per p.271 of the MM).

Encounter 2: Remembrance of Things Past

Suddenly, from across the ravine that you have been following, you see a horse and rider appear, galloping as if all the demons of the Abyss are following them. Then you see why—a patrol of worgriders are chasing them! The rider seems to see your group, as he wheels toward you. At the last second he realizes that he is blocked by the ravine and swerves to miss the edge and gallops within inches of the edge. One of the worgriders who can't make the turn as suddenly, skids off the ridge and tumbles to his death on the rocks at the bottom of the ravine.

See DM Map I. Hvirta, the nomad rider, is following the edge of the ravine paralleling the PCs. He is driving his horse, but the horse is exhausted and losing ground to the worgriders. About a half mile away, the ravine ends and the PCs can easily get to the worgriders and Hvirta, but make sure that the PCs know that it doesn't look like the horse will be able to stay ahead of the worgriders that long.

The idea here is to get into a running archery battle with the worgriders, a la the old western chase scenes with the bandits and the stagecoach.

The worgs will not fight, as they have no ranged combat and are exhausted anyway. If the worg's rider is unseated, the worg will scurry off into a ravine and disappear from the combat.

☛ **Hvirta Brighteagle:** male human Ftr4/Rgr2; hp 31 (currently 28); see Appendix I.

APL 2 [EL 4]:

- ☛ **Goblin Worgriders (4):** hp 6; see Appendix II.
- ☛ **Worgs (4):** hp 30; see MM p. 256.

APL 4 [EL 6]:

- ☛ **Veteran Worgriders (4):** hp 11; see Appendix III.
- ☛ **Elite Worgriders (2):** hp 17; see Appendix III.
- ☛ **Worgs (6):** hp 30; see MM p. 256.

APL 6 [EL 8]:

- ☛ **Elite Worgriders (6):** hp 17; see Appendix IV.
- ☛ **Goblin Lieutenant:** hp 28; see Appendix IV.
- ☛ **Worgs (7):** hp 30; see MM p. 256.

APL 8 [EL 10]:

- ☛ **Elite Worgriders (6):** hp 17; see Appendix V.
- ☛ **Goblin Captain:** hp 46, see Appendix V.
- ☛ **Goblin Chaplain:** hp 39; see Appendix V.
- ☛ **Worgs (8):** hp 30; see MM p. 256.

Distance across ravine: 30 ft

Depth of ravine: 40 ft gradually declining to 10 ft.

Distance to end of ravine: 2400 ft (12 rounds of full movement for Hvirta and his horse)

Initial distance behind Hvirta 160 ft (and catching up 20 ft/round)

Given Hvirta's mount condition, the worgriders will catch him in 8 rounds.

Tactics: The worgriders are quite aware of the power of area effect spells on cavalry and so will spread out to make sure that they are about 30 feet apart from one another after the first spell is cast.

The worgriders are not interested in closing for hand to hand combat, but will stay off and use their mounted archery to try to take down the heroes. They will target Hvirta with their archery until the heroes make some threatening move, then will target any obvious spell casters who are keeping pace with them on the other side of the ravine.

Should the PC's find a way to engage in melee combat with the worgriders, they will first attempt to flee to ranged combat. If that is not possible, their morale will break and they will simply flee into the barrens.

They are at a gallop and so take a -4 to their ranged combat (due to their mounted archery feat). Remember that any PCs trying to keep up with them are also on galloping horses. Recall that longbows cannot be used from horseback.

Veteran and Elite worgriders are trained units and will pick the most threatening target and call out to one another to coordinate fire.

Should the unit lose more than half their number (or if their leaders die at higher apl), they will ride off. The worgs are noncombatants given the tactics of the worgriders.

When the worgriders are driven off, continue with the following text, using version A or B depending upon the party composition:

Version A: Read this if any of the party have the Favor of Ilyena Michelson (even if used), or the Favor of the Elves of the Fellreev from BDK3-03 Trouble at Baco Canyon, then when the party has taken care of the worgriders, Hvirta will say to them:

As my Uncle Tovar would say, Dushtimba lavensta hai! Not many would dare to help me against the evil ones and their riders. For that, I thank you. From all the way from the Castle of Shadows have they chased me, hoping to feast on my bones, but Mother Oerth must have more use for me, as to you I come to before Blestum gives out. He pats his horse's heaving sides affectionately. For your help, I, Hvirta of the Brighteagle, thank you. You may not recognize I, but to remember you I do from when you help my clan in the past. I to be on a mission to you to help our clan with a great dismay. Shining Rock has telling me to be returned by two days ago, but no longer must I search. Will you come with me to help?"

If anyone speaks flin, Hvirta's saying translates roughly as "The lightning just missed me." The Castle of Shadows is the nomad name for Wraithkeep, a fortification on the Stoink-Riftcrag road. The players might notice that Hvirta's description of the enemies focuses on the worgs rather than the goblins. This is just another indication of

how horse crazy the nomads are. Spare no opportunity as a DM to have the nomads comment on their horses.

Version B: If none of the party have the Favor of Ilyena Michelson (even if used), or the Favor of the Elves of the Fellreev from BDK3-03 Trouble at Baco Canyon, then when the party has taken care of the worgriders, Hvirta will say to them:

As my Uncle Tovar would say, Dushtimba lavensta hai! Not many would dare to help me against the evil ones and their riders. For that, I thank you. From all the way from the Castle of Shadows have they chased me, hoping to feast on my bones, but Mother Oerth must have more use for me, as to you I come to before Blestum gives out. He pats his horse's heaving sides affectionately. For your help, I, Hvirta of the Brighteagle, thank you. I must ask if you know of the warrior Gumsk of the Bosht, rider of Darkesh Nar Silverhoof?

If they answer in the affirmative, he will ask if they know where he is. When they answer that they don't or if they give an answer that is far away (how could they know where he is?), he will look discouraged then brighten and say

"But you are knowing him, so that is good enough. I to be on a mission to find heroes to help out our clan with a great dismay. Shining Rock has telling me to be returned by two days ago, and no longer can I search. Will friends of Gumsk come with me?"

If they answer negatively, he will look discouraged, then brighten and say:

"I to be on a mission to find heroes to help our clan with a great dismay. Shining Rock has telling me to be returned by two days ago, and no longer can I search. You to be bravest I have seen these many suns. Will you come with me to help?"

If the party asks for money, Hvirta will say:

"You to be welcome to all I have." He then goes to his saddlebags and pulls out a beaded pouch and empties it into his hand. It looks to be less than 30 silver pieces, mostly in copper.

He then gives it to the PC who insisted on payment. Should they demand more, he will state simply that he "has given all he has, and that must be enough, for no one can give more than they have." He will attempt to convince them to come to the camp to talk to his leader,

Shining Rock, but he cannot pay them more than he has already and so if they refuse, he will sadly depart. The adventure is over, score the round and hand out adventure records.

Encounter 3: The Troubled Feast

Note on Nomadic Society: This society is fairly conservative, and the shock of having a female head druid has not been overcome yet. This is a society that values horsemanship above all else, and the only women prized in the clans are those that can ride with the men. Spell casters tend to be divine in nature, with rangers and druids predominate.

The distant bump on the horizon eventually resolves itself into a small collection of tents and a small herd of horses and cattle. From the top of one tent flies a green and silver ribbon. From the top of another tent is a ribbon in the same color scheme as Hvirta's scarf.

Players who played BDK3-03 Trouble at Baco Canyon will recognize the green and silver ribbon as that of the Silverhoof clan, only used by the head druid of the clans. Other PC's may make a Knowledge (Local – Iuz's Border States) (DC 15), Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) (DC 15) or Bardic Knowledge check (DC 12) to recognize this.

As you approach, a small group of horsemen ride out to you. Their leader is a grizzled man of late middle age who greets you.

This is Tovar of the Brighteagle, de facto head of the clan while Ilyena's children are still minors.

☛ **Tovar of the Brighteagle:** male human Rgr6; hp 27; see Appendix I.

There are three possibilities here:

If Tovar knows them (from Trouble at Baco Canyon), then he says:

Ah Friends, I greet you! Once again you come to help us. Shining Rock waits for you in the tent of the Silverhoof.

If anyone has the Stallion of the Rift, he will then address the next to the horse.

"Long have we waited to see you again", he says, making a quick dismount and walking over to the

Stallion. "Many are the mares who are waiting for you, my friend. Bushnesta varhana ilmustiventre var."

Those who speak flin will translate this as "We welcome and honor you in our fields."

If Tovar does not know any of the party, then he will look at Hvirta and ask him in flin:

"Yu silm va dusgang Gumsk natvar Silverhoof da vor. Wastu Hai?" Hvirta then responds in common. "These people are of good heart and I was late to return, so to be coming back I did with them. They have come to help us, more than that I could not ask. Allow Shining Rock the final saying on this, I ask."

Once again, the translation "You were sent after Gumsk, rider of the descendent of Silverhoof. What happened?" Tovar looks you over and then smiles:

"Well met, friends. I greet you and welcome you to the tents of the Brighteagle clan. We will a feast tonight to be having. You to prepare selves for feasting in tent?"

Finally, if anyone is outlawed by the Rift Barrens Nomads (from *BDK3-03 Trouble at Baco Canyon*) and didn't get the hint when it said in the blurb to not play that character:

Allow Tovar a Spot check versus the Disguise skill of the character. Remember that the character has been traveling with Hvirta for the last couple of days, so no "taking 20" on the Disguise check (which would take 400 minutes a day). Additionally, there are consequences to failure, so taking 20 is not an option. Tovar has a +12 on his Spot check. Should he see through it, he will be highly offended and call for the character's capture. Depending upon how the other PC's act at this point, the module may be over. If the outlaw has some way to escape, then he is welcome to try. His pursuers are riding light warhorses and use short composite bows with the mounted archery feat.

☛ **Brighteagle Clansmen (30):** human Rgr3; hp 13; see Appendix I.

If he can outrun them, then he escapes. If not, he is either captured or kills all the nomads in the encampment. If any nomads are killed, then the module is over unless the rest of the party help to capture the outlaw and can make a Diplomacy check DC 25 to appease the nomads. Even then, they are responsible for bringing this person to the camp along with Hvirta, and

are expected to pay wergild for the crime. Hvirta, as the person who brought them there, is held in camp to be judged. All references to Hvirta from now on in the module should be replaced by Tugorsh. Use the stats for a Brighteagle clansman in this case. Tugorsh is distrustful and will not under any circumstances help the PCs (and will not go onto the mesa no matter what). The wergild is 100xAPL gp per person killed, 50xAPL gp per person wounded. If the outlaw is captured, then he is executed and his possessions split amongst the relatives of those who died in the raid on the conclave last year (detailed in Trouble at Baco Canyon). In this case skip the whole feast part and start with the boxed text where Shining Rock is explaining the problem.

Should a character who is outlawed by the Nomads successfully disguise him / herself and then complete this adventure, there will be an opportunity in Encounter 9 to resolve this.

Tovar leads you to a large tent with a divider down the middle. A formidable looking clanswoman stands in the entrance to the left side with her arms crossed and a distrustful expression on her face "This side to be for the womens." Shaking her finger at any men in the party. "The right side is for the mens. You will not to be peeking or getting a fist in the nose you will."

 **Angry Wolverine:** female human Exp3, hp 11 (description: think stern Wagnerian soprano). Important Skills: Knowledge (Local - Iuz border states) +6.

She will then stay in the left side to make sure that there is no peeking and also to help dress the women. She has a chatty, friendly attitude with the women, and will commiserate with them on the tragedy of having to travel with those men on the other side of the tent. She will make disparaging comments about men in general and the men in the party in a voice loud enough to be heard on the other side. Have fun with it.

Angry Wolverine will get a spot check against the disguise check of any female heroines who are in disguise. Her Spot check is a +14 (after circumstance modifiers for close contact to the disguise). If she sees through it, give her a Knowledge (Local – Iuz's Border States) check (DC 15) to see if she recognizes the character as an outlaw. If so, she will attempt to call for help. Otherwise, she will chat with the character about why they are disguised and give beauty tips, which will give the outlaw a +2 on all subsequent disguise checks.

If any female heroines question Angry Wolverine, she will tell them that all this started when a Sparrowhawk showed up at the camp. She seems

disgusted by the name Sparrowhawk, and will gladly expound for hours on the failures of that clan and the terrible things they have done (most are detailed in Trouble at Baco Canyon). Should a male try to get information out of her, she absolutely refuses to talk to them. The men in the area of the tent are also reluctant to talk to the heroes, directing them to Shining Rock. If they press, then with a Diplomacy check (DC 25 with circumstance modifiers of +/-2 based upon their role-play), the clansmen will reveal that it has to do with the Sparrowhawk clan and their troubles last year with the forces of Old Wicked.

When they are ready to go to the feasting tent, read the following:

The feast is a long and happy one. Many dishes completely unfamiliar to you have passed down your throat, and, on the whole, have been quite tasty. The white beverage the nomads drink with their meals carries quite a kick, and by the time the dessert (something made from the fruit from a cactus, you are told), comes around, the conversation has gotten louder and more boisterous as the nomads become drunker. The guests are all Brighteagle clansmen from their dress. All, that is, except for the young woman in green and silver with a silver horseshoe embroidered on her left sleeve.

Feel free to improvise some clansmen asking them about themselves, being impressed by their adventures.

If anyone asks their hosts about the drink, they call it kvarista, and tell you that it is made by fermenting mare's milk (same as kumiss, the Mongolian alcoholic beverage). Characters who played Trouble at Baco Canyon will recognize the young woman as Shining Rock. Others may make a Knowledge (Local-Iuz's Border States) (DC 20) or Bardic Knowledge (DC 15) to recognize the green and silver as that of the Silverhoof clan.

When the meal is over, Shining Rock turns to your group and speaks. "As we have shared bread and salt, so shall we share our words. I have need of heroes to do a great service for the clans. Can I ask you to help me?"

Assuming that the characters agree to at least listen to her, she will continue.

"One of our clans has left our brotherhood in disgrace. They have fallen upon hard times and have been seen raiding the roads at the edge of the barrens. This has brought the worgriders down upon all our heads. Chased by the riders, they have ridden to a

forbidden place and have now disappeared. Worst of all, there is now some sickness creeping down the hill from where they were last seen. I need you to go to this place, bring them back and stop this sickness if you can."

Answers to some possible questions.

Why don't you send some of your own people to look for them?

"None of my people will risk having the curse fall upon them, especially for a clan as disliked as the Sparrowhawk."

What did this clan do to get disgraced? (detailed in BDK3-03 Trouble at Baco Canyon)

"Their clan shaman betrayed the location of the last year's conclave to the forces of the master of the worgriders. Many died because of his betrayal. The conclave met after the attack and levied a punishing fine in horses and cattle upon them. The new leader of the Sparrowhawk, Sindar, felt this shame most keenly and declared the Sparrowhawk no longer part of the conclave."

What is this Forbidden place?

"Centaur Mesa." As she says that, you notice that many of the clansmen in the tent blanch as if with fear.

Why is it forbidden?

"Because of the curse of the centaur."

Tell me of this curse.

"The first of the clans to arrive in this area were the Sparrowhawk and the Redfox clans. A group of the Sparrowhawk came upon a grove of trees on this mesa with a small pond in the center. When the horses drank of the pond water, they became smarter, quicker and stronger. One of those horses was Silverhoof, father of the herds of the nomads. A Centaur who lived there demanded that they leave his sacred grove. The stories say that the Redfox obeyed the guardian's command, but the Sparrowhawk insisted on bringing all their animals to this pond. This the Centaur refused, claiming it was a holy place to him and his kind. Somehow, a fight began and, to our great shame, the Centaur was killed. With his dying breath, he cursed them with the curse that any nomad setting foot on this mesa would be hated by all horses. The curse came true for those nomads, for Yovek Sparrowhawk was forever more hated by the great Silverhoof and so sold it to Tulosh, our greatest clan leader. Because of the possibility of

this curse falling upon them, no one of my people will risk going to the mesa."

This curse sounds pretty nasty. I don't want it either!

"I do not believe that it will effect those who are not of our people."

Are you sure?

"No."

What have you done to try to find out what is going on?

"I have sent riders to the base of the mesa to call up to them, but the Sparrowhawk do not reply. I even sent Ovek Sparrowhawk with my authority to them to try to bring them home, but still we have no word."

Who is this Ovek?

"Ovek is the Uncle of Hirdan Sparrowhawk, the man who betrayed our conclave to Iuz last year. Last month, Ovek Sparrowhawk returned to our homeland after many years in the South and the West. With Hirdan dead, he has a claim to the clan leadership. He has convinced me of his honorable intentions and I have accepted that when he returns the clan to our fellowship then I will confirm him chief."

What of this sickness?

"The last messenger reported that there is some new deviltry on the mesa, as there is some sickness that is spreading down the mesa. I fear that the Sparrowhawk have awakened something and I fear for all of us if it gets loose. Find what evil they have awakened and put it back to sleep if you can."

☛ **Shining Rock:** female half elf Drd4; hp 23; see Appendix I.

Characters can make a Spot check (DC 15) to notice that many of the people at the feast seem to hold the Sparrowhawk in distaste.

Other information that Shining Rock has.

- ☛ Any medium creature who doesn't have a mount will be lent a light warhorse by Tovar and Shining Rock.
- ☛ Ovek disappeared from the barrens for almost 20 years. Rumors had him in the Shield Lands and in the Bluff Hills, but no reliable word since he left. He left after losing a power struggle with his brother (Hirdan's father) for leadership of the Sparrowhawk clan.

When she has given all the information that is requested of her, a Brighteagle clansman will bow to her respectfully and then say to both her and the heroes.

"Honorable Shining Rock, I respect your belief, but I would urge you to remember the evil that the Sparrowhawk have done to our people. Your own uncles were slain by their plots within the last year. All here at this table have suffered from their actions.

You trust this Ovek, who returns after many years of absence, but within days of going to Centaur Mesa, a mysterious blight starts to spread into the plains. How can you be so merciful to those who have treated us so poorly?"

Shining Rock replies: "This is not a conversation that we will repeat in front of strangers. Know only that I act from a certain belief that the clans divided are clans defeated. I, at least, trust Ovek and I do not believe him to wish to harm the Brighteagle or any of the clans."

Assuming the heroes agree to help her, she will give them directions to Centaur Mesa (about 3 days away) and will detail Hvirta as a guide to go with them as far as the base of the mesa.

Encounter 4: Conversations with the Redfox

The next two days' travel are hot dry and dusty: typical summer days in the barrens. Towards evening of the second day, you can see that Hvirta is looking for something. Finally, he brightens at the sight of a stunted piñon tree. As you get closer, you see several diagonal slashes in the trunk. Hvirta turns to you and smiles broadly "We have found a camp of the Redfox clan! We will enjoy their company tonight."

Hvirta will lead them into a ravine, where they will see a collection of tents similar to those of the Brighteagle clan, but with a different red and black color pattern in the banners. Further down the ravine, they can see a herd of horses and cattle rounded up for the night.

After a filling meal of stew and corn bread, the clan gathers around to hear of the events of the world.

Any PC who wants to is welcome to make a Perform check here to either tell them the news or just entertain them. Allow the players to role-play this if time allows. The nomads are quite content with any check over 10, with DC 20 or above getting rave reviews and applause. Any person getting over 25 has completely "wowed" them and has a high probability that they might have companionship of the opposite sex that night. Feel free

to role-play this or not depending upon the table composition. When you feel it appropriate, have one of the Redfox clan ask the party why they are visiting them (assuming that the performer hasn't already told them). If they don't immediately volunteer the information, then Hvirta will blurt out why they are there.

The mood of the crowd changes dramatically after hearing why you have come to their camp. The idea that you have come to bring the Sparrowhawk back from exile and are going to Centaur Mesa does not seem to sit well with the Redfox clans people. Several clansmen spit on the ground at the name of the Sparrowhawk, and a woman in the crowd gives a startled scream at the mention of Centaur Mesa. The leader of the clan, Furthan Redfox, looks at your group and says: "You are strangers and may not know this, but the Sparrowhawk have always been arrogant and evil. Many of our men died because of their arrogance. We would not see them brought back. We wish you no harm, as we have shared bread and salt, but take no offense if I tell you that many hope that you fail in what you attempt."

Feel free to ad lib some crowd reaction. They don't like the Sparrowhawk and make it quite clear to all exactly what they think. With that, the party breaks up and the heroes are shown to their tent. Make it clear to them that they are guests of the Redfox and should feel safe, as any attack on them at night would be an affront to the clan and its leadership.

When the heroes are settling in, a nomad comes to the tent and asks for Hvirta, telling him that his Aunt Grey Thrush wishes to speak to him. After a couple of minutes, there is a scratching at the tent flap and a quiet voice asks to come in. At the entrance is Furthan Redfox himself, accompanied by a middle aged woman who looks fearfully back into camp. When they come into the tent, read the following:

The woman throws off her hood as she stands up in the tent. In the light of the lamp you can see that she is of perhaps late middle age and has the mark of the condemned of Iuz branded into her cheek. She looks at you defiantly and then says, "You who are about to go save the Sparrowhawk need to know these things that I will tell you, if you will listen to an old woman."

If they assent, she continues.

"My brother tells me that Ovek has returned and has been promised the leadership of the clan of the Sparrowhawk. Is this true?"

If they admit that it is, she will get a look of dismay on her face and continue.

"I was but a girl when I saw Ovek for the first time, long before the wars of Greyhawk. Foolishly, I fell for his handsome talk and we became lovers. At the next conclave we were to ask Ovek's father for permission to marry. During that year, Ovek's father died and Hirdan was voted leader of the clan. Ovek was not one to allow himself to be second chief. I offered to go into exile with him. He refused to allow me to go and left me alone and pregnant with our daughter, Willowbark.

Several years later, I was captured by the worgriders and taken to the lands of their master. Since I knew horses, I was forced to work as a stable slave in a small garrison on the Ritensa river. One day while I was working in the stable, I saw Ovek riding in with the leader of the garrison. I know that he saw me, but he turned away. Later I approached him and asked him what he was doing here, but acted as if he knew me not and slapped me for talking to him (we slaves were not allowed to talk to the masters). He did not even ask about our child.

Eventually, I escaped and made my way back to the Redfox. While I was gone, Willowbark had met a trader and married him and gone with him to the Land of the Shields in the south. Last year I received from her a letter that I think you need to see." And with that she pulls out a well worn letter and hands it to you.

Give them Player Handout #2.

She is quite willing to talk to the heroes by answering their questions. Things that she knows:

- Her son in law is a leather merchant in the Shield Lands.
- She thinks that her old lover is coming back to the clans to betray them to the Old One.
- She is the older sister of Furthan Redfox.

🦋 **Sandpiper:** female human Exp4; hp 15.

While she definitely has issues with Ovek for his behavior of her, she has no ulterior motive to this discussion, so any Sense Motive checks will reveal that she is telling the truth as she sees it.

When they are finished questioning her, Furthan thanks her and she leaves the tent. Furthan then says

"You must know that the Sparrowhawk have done great evil for many years. What they did last year was only one of many evil deeds that they have done

going all the way back to their actions at Centaur Mesa so long ago. Their betrayal last year caused the death of my brothers. There is no one in this camp who did not leave a relative dead in the conclave burial ground. Since they left the conclave, they have raided the wagons on the roads and have brought the worgriders down upon us as they have not been for ten years. Now we hear that they have ridden to the forbidden ground and awakened the ancient curse. More of their evil ways, I say." He stops and collects himself. "I wish to ask you to do something for the good of the clans. If you find that the curse has hit the Sparrowhawk, do not save them from themselves, but let them perish." He looks as if he is fighting back tears. "My brother had no chance as his throat was cut at Baco Canyon last year, why should you save them from their own evil and folly?" He reaches into his tunic and pulls out a bridle gaudily ornamented in nomadic style. "This is traditionally worn by the horse of the chief of the clan Redfox. It is said to protect the mount from evil magics. If you can bring me back certain word that Ovek Sparrowhawk, the defiler of my sister, is no more, then I will gift this to you with my thanks and the thanks of all the angry Redfox spirits murdered by the Sparrowhawk." He puts the bridle back in his tunic and strides to the door. "I do not ask you to murder, I only ask for justice." And with that he leaves.

🦋 **Furthan Redfox:** male human Rgr4, hp 32.

Encounter 5: Blight in the Barrens

Traveling the next day gets the heroes to Centaur Mesa.

Another long, dusty day in the saddle has seen nothing except a brown spotted dog in the distance behind you. About noon, Hvirta mentions that you are almost at the Rift Canyon itself. Late in the afternoon, you see something that you haven't seen for almost a week: a flat topped hill. Hvirta confirms that you are looking at Centaur Mesa. As you get closer, the ground rises a little and you can see that behind the mesa is the vast chasm that is the Rift Canyon.

Allow the characters to make a Spot check (DC 15) to notice that there is something wrong with the vegetation on the sides of the mesa. Characters with Knowledge (Nature) or Survival (DC 15) can determine that there is some sort of blight on the vegetation about half way down the sides of the mesa. If asked, Hvirta will mention

that it seems further down than when he was here a couple of weeks ago. Hvirta will go no further.

As the players approach the mesa, they will notice that there seems to be a zone of blight that extends down about 100 feet from the top of the mesa.

Notes on the blight:

- Anyone entering the zone of the blight must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + apl) or be sickened and suffer a -2 penalty to all attack rolls and skill checks while in the blight.
- Anyone making the save must make another save each two hours in the blight or suffer the above penalties.
- Anyone who has failed the first save must make another save two hours later or fall comatose, if still within the blight. The Fortitude save is DC 14 for the first two hours and then rises by 2 every two hours.
- Any creature that has the plant subtype suffers an immediate -2 constitution modifier in addition to the Fortitude save mentioned above. This will apply to any PC who polymorphs or wild shapes into a plant subtype.
- Druids must make a Concentration check (DC 15 + spell level) to be able to cast any spell while in the blight due to the distress caused by the sickness around them.
- Creatures who are healed by negative energy gain an immediate +2 constitution modifier. They also gain a +2 modifier to all attack, damage and skill checks while in the blight.
- The blight is a supernatural ability.
- Creatures that are immune to poison are not effected by the blight.
- A Spell craft check (DC 30) will allow the character to understand unique effects (as per the PHB).

When the heroes arrive at the top of the mesa, read the following:

The top of the mesa has a slight depression that causes the center of the mesa to be about 20 feet lower than the edges. In the center of the mesa there is a small grove of stunted trees, mostly dead or dying from the blight. At the edge of the trees, there are the distinctive tents of the nomads, but in the green and black pattern of the Sparrowhawk clan. There is no movement from the encampment.

The Mesa is detailed in DM's Map II.

When the characters arrive at the encampment, they will find Sparrowhawk clansmen lying in a coma in the tents

of the clan. Behind the encampment is a corral with a small herd of horses that are all unconscious and also in a coma. In the tents the characters can find about 75 men, women and children. Of those, it appears that about 70 are still alive, although many look only barely alive and many are suffering from malnutrition. No magical healing seems to have any effect upon them, while in the blight. If taken out of the blight, they can then be healed normally with either *remove curse* (against a 12th level caster), *neutralize poison* or the *heal* spell.

If the characters manage to wake up one of the Sparrowhawk, the person will be disoriented and will recount a tale of how they ran from the worgriders. They were trapped by two groups and their leader, Sindar, led them up the mesa. They ambushed the worgriders and killed them all, then made camp. People started becoming ill. They remember nothing after that.

Give the characters a Listen check (DC 15) while they are in the camp or the corral. Heroes that make this, will hear talking, almost singing coming from the direction of the grove of trees at the center of the mesa.

As the characters advance into the copse of dead trees, they can hear the sounds of talking going on from ahead. One voice, extremely nasty and evil sounding, seems to be mocking someone or thing.

As you get to where you can see out of the trees, you see an amazing sight. About 50 feet away is a small pond, and in the center of this pond is a tree with a black staff jammed all the way through it. Rot radiates from the point of impact of the staff. Dancing around the edge of the pond is some evil looking demonic creature which seems to be taunting the tree. "Ha, you fool! Look at the agony you have put yourself to, and for what? So that you can die horribly, your soul lost forever? How pathetic. I tell you that your "friend" has forgotten you and will not return. My master Tzumvaltum wishes to know every detail of your agonies to consol him in his exile on the lava plains of Xumavortax."

APL 2 [EL 4]

• Advanced Quasit: hp 38; see Appendix II.

APL 4 [EL 6]

• Babau: hp 66; see MM p 40.

APL 6 [EL 8]

• Advanced Babau: hp 106; see Appendix IV.

APL 8 [EL 10]

• Advanced Vrock: hp 127; see Appendix V.

Tactics: Distance to the pond is 50 feet. Distance to the demon is 150 feet (who is on the other side of the pond). Distance to the party for the demon is 200 feet as he will have to skirt the pond. Have both parties make a Spot check for surprise. The demon will not move over or through the pond because of the treant in the center (although only a druid might recognize it as such at this point).

As the demon wails a final defiant scream and dissolves into a pool of sulfurous goo, you see the tree in the center of the pond move slightly, though there is no wind. A sound of rustling leaves resolves itself into a voice which says: "I thank you for releasing me from that one's torment. It is better to die with one's own thoughts rather than the foul musings of the abyss. If you have come to stop the sickness, then I fear you are too late, as the other has not returned."

☛ **Eldest:** "female" treant; hp 25; see Appendix I.

Play the treant in a whispery, pained voice, pausing every once in awhile as if to gather itself for another sentence. Note that the treant is quite wounded and near death from the effects of long term exposure to the staff, aggravated by the removal of the headpiece of the staff in the last month.

Because of the staff, the Treant detects as evil. Do not let the players know that it is the staff that is the source of the evil, as they must make a decision in the next encounter.

Sample questions and answers:

What other are you talking about?

"The human that took the headpiece so that he might try to stop the sickness. He has not returned, so I fear him dead." The description of this other matches that of Ovek Sparrowhawk.

Who are you?

"My name is longer than your folk can stand still for, but in the language of the elves I was called Eldest. I lived in the forest that your people call "Tangles" for years without number, protecting my herds from axe wielders, until I sensed the evil here. My companion and I were the only ones who would leave our groves to protect the forest."

Who was your companion?

"A druid of the elvish folk. Names have power, but we called her Hnmmnniuminanaiumenenien...." This name continues for another three minutes. Her own folk had another name for her, I believe it was Iliisa Moonsight."

What has happened to you?

"When the druid did not return, something had to be done to stop the blight. The only thing I could think of was to take the sickness onto myself and spare the land. For the last 120 cycles I have endured this cancer in my bark. I feel that my time is ending."

What is this staff?

"Long ago, when the great forest was still unbroken from the bottomless lake to the Northern Hills, we first felt its evil presence. It was broken during the great battle against the darkness when the Hazel groves of Luminoria were destroyed. The people of the centaur took it upon themselves to quiet its evil, but at great cost to themselves and not before it sickened all the land around the great canyon."

How did you get involved in all this?

About 120 years ago my friend the druid and I felt the staff's evil presence stir again even in our home in Tangles. When we arrived here, we found that some human horse riders had somehow gained the staff. We showed up just as the evil one returned from the abyss to reclaim his talisman. We slew him and foiled his plot, but his staff was cracked and the blight began again. Only by drinking of the tears of the centaurs have I survived as long as I have, as this blight is always deadly to my kind. My companion left to get help from her superiors, but never returned."

Why the sudden crisis? This has been going on for years.

"The staff that you see is only the shaft. Until last month, it had a large fire opal as a headpiece. Then, a group of humans on horseback arrived on the mesa. One of them came to the pond and talked to me about the staff. One night, while I was suffering a strong agony from the staff, he silently came to me and broke off the head of the staff. I slew him for his evil foolishness, but what he has done has increased the power of the blight and I cannot hold it off much longer, even with the help of the pond."

Pond? How does this pond help you?

"Not this pond, but the pool of blessed water that is below in the cavern of the hoofed ones."

How do we get to this cavern?

"It is behind that boulder over there."

Is there a guardian to the holy site?

"The original guardian is dead, slain by the humans. About a month after he died, while I was waiting here"

in the pool, a mechanical centaur arrived and went into the cavern. Later it came back up and asked if that was my root in the pool. It said that since my root did not seem to be defiling the pool, I might continue to drink of it. He then went back behind the boulder and I have not seen him since."

What language did it speak to you?

"It first spoke in the language of the humans of long ago who called themselves Sool. I do not speak that well, so most of our conversation was in the language of the blessed realms."

Where is the body of the one who broke the staff?

"It is at my feet here in the pond. You are welcome to it." It does not meet the description of Ovek Sparrowhawk, but matches the description of the Sparrowhawk leader, Sindar.

Where is the headpiece?

"A week ago, another human came to me. He wished to know how to stop the blight and save his people, who he had found unconscious over there." She points to the area of the Sparrowhawk camp. "I told him where the headpiece was in the pond and told him how to get to the sacred pool. I thought that if he could submerge the gem into the pond it might be able to stop the blight. He has not returned, so I assume that he is also dead and it did not work." The description of the man matches that of Ovek.

Can we remove the staff?

"When the headpiece went with the human, I felt the power of the staff dig deep into my soul. I fear that the same happened to the human. Only the power of the pool keeps me alive, and that only barely. I do not believe that I would survive the removal of the staff."

How can we help?

"Under this mesa is a cavern that contains the holy pond of the hoofed ones. I have only been able to survive this sickness because if I stand here I can just reach the water. I believe that the healing properties of the pool will keep the staff from radiating this sickness. If you can finish the job that the other human started and get the headpiece into the pool, then perhaps it will stop the sickness. I fear that if I cannot stop it that my children and my trees in the forest have not long to live."

Why haven't you done this yourself?

"If I were to lose contact with the pool under the mesa for even an instant, I would die and then nothing could stop the sickness."

What is in it for us?

"Besides saving the forests? What more is needed? However, you hasty folk have a love of stones and metal. At my feet are the remains of the fiend that I slew so many years ago. While his body has dissolved, several of his possessions are still by my feet. Save the forest and you are welcome to all of that."

Eldest will point them towards a boulder that is actually a secret door to a passageway down into the mesa.

Encounter 6: The Shrine of the Centaurs.

When the last centaur guardian was slain by the ancestors of the nomads, she prayed for justice and this plea was heard by a Zelekhut from the plane of Mechanus. This Zelekhut has taken its mission to safeguard the holy pool from those who would defile it. Zelekhut will not attack innocents, and does not view approaching or even drinking from the pool as defiling it.

Only placing both pieces of the staff in the pool would be considered threatening, although the Zelekhut doesn't know that until the staff is in the pool. Being a construct (albeit intelligent), it doesn't understand that this "defilement" is really to save the land. At that moment, it will target the person with the staff as its target and hunt them down to the end of time and the oerth. It does not have contact with its home plane, so there are not hordes of other Zelekhuts waiting to replace this one if it is defeated.

You descend the sloping passageway into the spacious cavern below, maybe 50 feet below the surface of the mesa. Depictions of centaurs frolicking around lakes, fighting evil winged beasts, talking with fey of all types decorate the walls. The inside of the cavern is truly spectacular. Richly carved, it must be over 200 feet on each side. The roof looks to be almost 40 feet above you. At one end of the cavern is a shrine with a carved holy symbol of an oak growing from an acorn. In front of the shrine is a small pool.

A Knowledge (Religion) check (DC 20) or Bardic Knowledge (DC 15) recognizes the holy symbol of that of Skerrit, NG lesser deity of centaurs, community and natural balance.

The pool has several interesting features:

- It has a middle aged human in the Sparrowhawk clan colors lying half in and half out of it.
- There is small root that has pierced the ceiling and stretches to the pool.
- There is a clockwork centaur wearing golden armor over alabaster skin but carrying no weapons or other equipment that stands next to the human, one foot on the human's arm.

The cavern is detailed in DM's Map III.

Assuming that the heroes do not immediately attack the centaur creature, they will notice as they move into the room that it watches the party carefully, but makes no move towards them.

To recognize the centaur construct as a Zelekhut will require a DC 25 Knowledge (The Planes) check. For every five over that base value give the PC one additional piece of information about Zelekhuts.

As you get closer to the pool, you can see Ovek's unconscious form is lying at the water's edge. One arm is submerged in the water and the centaur's hoof rests gently upon it. He is still breathing but it looks as though he has succumbed to the same sickness that is effecting the nomads on the surface. You see a fire opal headpiece still clutched in his hand under the water of the pool. Carved into the edge of the pool are six magnificent carvings.

Searching Ovek: A Heal check (DC 15) shows that he has suffered constitution loss, level drain and is in a coma, near death.

Ovek does not detect as evil or as good. He cannot be awakened while the staff is in pieces.

A search of his body will find three holy symbols: Iuz, Rao and Fharlanghen. In addition they will find papers allowing him free access across the Shield Land border and signed by a noble of Critwall. Another paper, signed by Graf Tadorinal, gives him permission to travel down the road of skulls. A final paper, in his pocket instead of a pouch is player Handout #3.

The Pool

As they approach the pool, they will be able to see that the edge has been ornately carved into six panels.

Panel one depicts a massive battle happening in a forest next to a large canyon. Centaurs, fey, treants and elves seem to be fighting against some numerous dark enemy. Fearsome magical effects are carved on this scene. In Sylvan it says "The battle against the darkness cost us dearly."

Panel two shows the centaurs returning from the battle. They are scarred, but hold trophies on the ends of their lances. Many of the centaurs appear to be weeping and in the background you can see that the forest around the canyon has been leveled and destroyed. In Sylvan it says "Our battle was won, but the forest paid a terrible price."

In panel three, the forest is dying all around the centaurs as they kneel in prayer to a shrine of an oak growing from an acorn. One figure glows with a silvery radiance. In Sylvan it says "As our people sickened, we asked Our Lord for aid, and he responded."

In panel four, the silvery figure directs a large number of strange three armed creatures, who are digging a tunnel into a mesa. In Sylvan it says, "Our Lord directs us to call on the Earth Brothers to dig for the sacred water under Viluntasha."

Knowledge (The Planes) (DC 15) recognizes the three armed beings as Xorns.

Panel five depicts the chamber that you are in. It shows a small group of centaurs, all looking diseased and wearing holy symbols of the oak and acorn with joined hands around the pool. In the center of the pool, a centaur holds the two pieces of the staff under the water. The top of the carving depicts the land above ground, which is now filled only with rotten stumps and desolation. In Sylvan it says "The sickness spreads fast and the herds die as the ritual begins."

The sixth panel shows the centaur in the pool making motions as if casting, and a glowing radiance spreading from his hands to the pool. In the pool, the staff is now whole. Blackness is spreading from the staff, but a glowing radiance is still shining from the pool. At the top of the carving, a small grove of trees on the mesa is budding out as if for spring. You see the silver radiance shining through a shutting door in the stars. In Sylvan it says "The evil is contained, but at a terrible cost. We cannot touch our Lord, though Spring returns."

Should none of the party speak sylvan, you might give them an intelligence check to remember that Treants ARE sylvan.

If the heroes attempt to take the headpiece, the centaur will speak in Celestial, saying "Ladominia retensa voyadema." If the heroes understand celestial, they will hear "Removing that from his hand will kill him." If they do not understand, he will repeat this in Abyssal, Infernal and finally Ancient Suloise. He will not interfere if the characters then wish to pry the headpiece from his grasp (which he has in a death grip). If they ask the centaur to move his foot, he will say "Yavo retensa ladominia angelus aguavar." which translates as "Removing his hand from the water will kill him". Should they remove the headpiece anyway, see the effects in Encounter 6.

Searching the Cavern: Allow them to search the cavern as they wish, but remember that they need to make saves every 2 hours that they are within the blight unless they drink out of the pool almost continuously.

The Altar: A successful Search check (DC 18) will reveal a panel in the back of the altar that contains a notebook with a single page inserted from another book. Give the players Handouts #4 and #5.

Behind the Holy Symbol on the Wall: A successful Search check (DC 24, the DC is only 15 if they have read the notebook and know that the lever is there) behind the altar will reveal a large lever cunningly hidden behind the oak tree of the holy symbol on the wall. Written on the lever in Sylvan is the word "Desperation". The lever activates a device in the wall that will cast a modified Earthquake spell, centered on the pool. A Disable Device check of DC 33 will disable the device. The lever detects as moderate conjuration.

If they pull on the lever: A gradually increasing rumbling will continue for 10 rounds. At the end of that time, a large crevice will appear in the pool, which will drain the water and with it the staff (if it is in the pool). The cavern will start collapsing. Each round, any PC in the cavern must make a reflex save (DC 15) or be thrown to the ground and take 6d6 bludgeoning damage from falling rock. After 10 rounds, the entire cavern will collapse and anyone in the cavern will be buried under the mesa.

Through all this the centaur seems indifferent, only following them with its eyes, but making no other move. Attempts to engage it in conversation are pointless.

The water of the pool: The water of the pool acts as a potion of *neutralize poison* if drunk directly out of the pool. If the drinker is equine or centaurian, it additionally acts as a potion of restoration. Note that this might be useful against the demonic poison at certain APL's.

Encounter 7: Difficult Choices

The heroes must make a choice here, as it is very unlikely that the PC's will figure out a way to have more than one of the holders of the staff pieces survive. They can remove the staff head from Ovek's grasp, killing him and bring the staff head back up to Eldest. If they do this, they can remove the staff and she will not immediately die. If they take the staff out of Eldest, she will die but then they are able to take the staff head away from Ovek without killing him. Remember that the water loses its potency when removed from the pool, so carrying water to Eldest or placing Ovek's hand in a bucket of water isn't going to work.

If they opt to take the staff from Eldest, read the following:

As you come out of the entrance to the cavern, you can see Eldest standing in the center of the pond, her eyes mirroring the pain that you know she feels. She looks at you and says in her pained, whispery voice, "I see that you were not able to stop the blight either. I thank you for trying. You should leave this area before you are damaged beyond repair as I am."

If the characters explain what they intend, she will sigh and then agree with them.

"I can see that you believe this to be the only way to stop the sickness. I have no better plan and it will be a relief to visit the forests in the next life after the pain of this one. Before you remove the staff, I have a request of you, if you will."

If the heroes agree.

"On this branch" she points to a branch at the top of her body, "is the last of my seedlings that has so far not been tainted by the sickness. It cannot grow in this soil. I would ask you to take this to my friends the druids in the forest you call Tangles. They will know where to plant it so that it might thrive. Tell them what happened to me that the story might strengthen the resolve of those still fighting the evil in the world. I will not have my death on your conscience." With that she reaches down and with a convulsive shudder pulls out the staff and holds it out to you. With a dismaying crack, her trunk splits in twain and she falls into the pond, dead.

The heroes are easily able to collect the seedling and the staff, as well as the possessions of the fiend that the Eldest slew decades ago, which lay at the bottom of the pond.

Picking up the Staff or the Headpiece

Once a character has picked up the staff or headpiece, it cannot be dropped unless *remove curse* is cast upon the character or the character is in the Tears of Skerrit.

If the person picking up the staff or headpiece is a divine spell caster (ranger (above 4th level), druid, paladin or cleric), then this person must immediately make a Fortitude save (DC 20) or suffer 1 point of temporary constitution damage. See below if the divine caster channels negative energy. Every 10 rounds, this is repeated until the staff is within 10 feet of the headpiece. At that point, the checks are only made once every 8

hours. If the character is in the Tears of Skerrit, then the check is only made once every week. Characters holding the staff or headpiece has no access to positive planar energy outside the Tears of Skerrit.

If the person is not a divine caster, they must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) every round or suffer 1 point of temporary constitution damage until death.

If the person channels negative energy (for example, certain neutral clerics), they feel the channels open wider. They must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) immediately and every hour after or suffer 1 point of temporary constitution loss, but while holding the staff or headpiece, they are at an effective +5 levels casting inflict spells. Additionally, will save DCs made against inflict spells cast by this person have a +2 modifier. This continues until the staff is within 10 feet of the headpiece.

Should someone forcibly take the staff or headpiece from the possessor, or should the possessor of the staff piece ever get more than 100 feet from it, the possessor of the staff or headpiece must make Fortitude save (DC 20) against death magic or die. If they make that, they must make a Will save (DC 20) or suffer 1d6 permanent Intelligence loss due to the mental damage for having the staff or headpiece taken from them after it has attuned itself to them.

If they opt to take the headpiece from Ovek:

As you reach for the headpiece, the centaur says to you "Romensi valunia onstaria duvo retensa."

This translates as "Removing the gem from his hand will slay him". No matter what rationale they give, the centaur just looks at them and does not give any indication that their arguments are having an effect. Should they attempt to communicate, it will repeat its statement in all the languages it knows (see Appendix I). The centaur will not keep them from taking it. If they take the headpiece, read the following:

As you take the headpiece from his grip and bring it out of the water, the old man gives a gasp and his back arches as if suffering an electric shock. His eyes open wide and he yells out "Johydee, save your servant!" His arm convulsively reaches toward the ceiling of the dome and he screams "Come for me, my Lord!" His eyes bulge and then with a sickening sound, his head collapses as if boneless and he lies dead at your feet.

See above for the effects of having one piece of the staff without the other in hand.

When they then take the headpiece back to the surface.

As you come out of the entrance to the cavern, you can see Eldest standing in the center of the pond, her eyes mirroring the pain that you know she feels. She looks at you and says in her pained, whispery voice, "I see that you were not able to stop the blight either. I thank you for trying. You should leave this area before you are damaged beyond repair as I am."

If they explain what they are doing, she says:

I do not know if what you are going to try is going to work, but I feel that I am on my last strength and cannot fight this evil much longer. Before you remove the staff, I have a request of you, if you will."

If the heroes agree, she continues.

"On this branch" she points to a branch at the top of her body, "is the last of my seedlings that has so far not been tainted by the sickness. It cannot grow in this soil. I would ask you to take this to my friends the druids in the forest you call Tangles. They will know where to plant it so that it might thrive. Tell them what happened to me that the story might strengthen the resolve of those still fighting the evil in the world. I will not have my death on your conscience." With that she reaches down and with a convulsive shudder pulls out the staff and holds it out to you. She sways slightly, as if going to fall, then takes the seed and hands it to you, saying "Hurry please! I feel the sickness in my heartwood. I doubt that I will live to see the end of this hour, but please save my child. He cannot last long in this cursed place."

The heroes are easily able to collect the seedling and the staff, as well as the possessions of the fiend that the Eldest slew decades ago, which lay at the bottom of the pond.

Encounter 8: Into the Tears of Skerrit

At this point the characters need to put the two halves of the staff together. If they have gathered the necessary clues, either from the book or the carvings, then they can complete the ritual and cure the blight.

Note on this encounter: Be sure and familiarize yourself with the effects of the staff upon the holder. If more than 20 rounds pass, then Eldest will die (if she is

the one still alive). They will see the root that extends into the pool shrivel and blacken.

What to do if no one in the party can cast divine spells. Should the party not have anyone who can cast divine magic, then they can appeal to Hvirta at the base of the mesa. In this case, if they can make a Diplomacy check (DC 15 with modifiers for good role-play) he will consent to brave the curse and help. As a ranger, he can activate the pool if told what to do. Hvirta will only agree to this if the party does not have a divine caster (he will not come up if they just want to avoid the mark of justice) unless the party makes a successful Bluff check versus his Sense Motive (give him a +10 modifier for improbability on his check). Should they trick him into coming up to the mesa when they could have done it themselves, then Hvirta and not the adventurers will be considered the hero and the party will not obtain the favor of Shining Rock or Ovek.

As you approach the pool with the staff and headpiece, the centaur figure suddenly comes to life and steps in front of you. It speaks.

If the characters have already determined that they can speak one of Infernal, Abyssal, Celestial or Ancient Suloise, then it says in that language: "What you are attempting may defile the pool. You may not pass."

If they do not understand those four languages, then the centaur says to them in Celestial: "La Romina Vela uldakia aquina. Da Vero nalanavo."

Attempting Negotiation with the Zelekhut

Lying (Bluff check):

Negotiation results in the repetition of the above statement at appropriate places in the conversation, but it will require a Bluff check versus its Sense Motive to lie to it and convince it that it will not defile the pool. The Zelekhut gets a +5 modifier to this check as it is extremely literal in its mission and considers it improbable that it could be wrong.

Negotiation (Diplomacy check):

Diplomacy will only work if the Zelekhut has not seen them kill Ovek by taking the headpiece from him.

If the characters attempt diplomacy with the Zelekhut, then remember that the construct is a creature of neutrality and is not interested in the fight of good and evil. It is only interested in justice, and appeals to justice are the only ones that will have any effect. Any appeal that the character makes that is not based upon justice gets a -20 circumstance modifier to the Diplomacy check.

The construct has taken as its mission to stop the injustice of this holy site being defiled. To convince it of the greater injustice will require a Diplomacy check of

DC 25. The construct will not argue with them, it just will repeat that the action is forbidden.

Should the characters succeed on their diplomacy check, then the Zelekhut will admit that it is possible that the greater justice might be served by the character actions. It will insist that the character entering the pool consent to having a spell cast upon him/her if it does in fact defile the Tears of Skerrit. This spell is:

Mark of Justice. The mark will trigger if the character at any time in the future defiles a shrine, altar or holy site (see the AR).

If the characters successfully convince the Zelekhut that there might be a greater injustice, then after it becomes obvious that the regeneration of the staff will defile the pool, it will cast the mark of justice as promised, but get more and more twitchy. It will then get that confused look that androids always had when talking to humans on sci-fi shows and say "I must have an error in my programming. The pool has been defiled. Error. Error. Return for reprogramming." It will then start to gallop out of the cavern and plane shift just as it gets to the door.

If they do not (or cannot) negotiate successfully with the Zelekhut:

Where the encounter goes from here is based upon their actions in encounter 7.

If they took the headpiece from Ovek and killed him in the sight of the centaur, then any attempt to defile the pool (read: get the staff and headpiece close to the pool) will result in it attacking the staff holder(s). It will not attack any other heroes unless they attack it first.

If they took the staff from Eldest, then the centaur has not seen them kill anyone. In that case, its first action will be to use its spell like ability to hold person on the staff wielder. Should that fail, it will then use ride by attack to attack to subdue unless the party uses deadly force. It will not attack anyone in the party except the staff wielder unless that person attacks the centaur first. Should the party be defeated, and the defiler is still alive, then it will place a mark of Justice upon the defeated staff wielder that will be triggered if the PC ever attempts to defile a shrine or altar again.

APL 2 [EL 5]

☛ **Least Zelekhut:** hp 22; see Appendix II.

APL 4 [EL 7]

☛ **Lesser Zelekhut:** hp 60; see Appendix III.

APL 6 [EL 9]

☛ **Zelekhut:** hp 74; see MM p. 160.

APL 8 [EL 11]

➤ **Advanced Zelekhut:** hp 118; see Appendix V.

When the Zelekhut is defeated, the heroes are free to start the ritual.

As the character with the staff pieces gets into the water with the staff, read the following only to the person with the staff:

If the person is of neutral alignment on the Good/Evil axis (CN, LN, N):

As you walk into the water, a voice seems to call to you, as if from far away. "When the staff is healed, take it for your own. With it, you can have power beyond imagining. You can avenge those who wrong you. You can help those who beseech you. Only take the staff with you when you leave the pool."

If the person is of good alignment (LG, NG, CG):

As you walk into the water, a voice seems to call to you, as if from far away. "When the staff is healed, do not leave it here. It is a force that can be used to defeat the forces of evil if you let it. With it, you can smite your foes. You can use it to advance the cause of righteousness if only you take the staff with you when you leave the pool."

The ritual: The character doing the ritual must hold both halves of the staff under water while in the pool, place them under the tears and channel positive energy into the tears. This positive energy can be from a casting, a spontaneous casting, or from an item (such as a wand or scroll). Over the next 10 rounds, the two halves of the staff will bind together and the tears will soak out the sickness and take it into the water. After the second round of healing, the staff may be released and left in the pool (A Spellcraft, or Craft (Woodworking) check DC 15 to realize this).

Should the PCs do the ritual correctly (place the staff underwater, then channel energy into the pool while holding the staff parts together), then read the following:

As you finish the channeling of energy into the pool, the water starts to ripple in the area of the staff. The water seems to glow with a silvery internal radiance. As you watch, the cracks in the staff visibly heal. When the last crack has healed over and the staff is mended, the silvery radiance seems to be drawn into the staff, and seeping out of the staff is an inky black substance that doesn't look healthy. Then, with a sudden splash, the water sloshes violently, and then quiets. The staff rests on the bottom of the pool,

healed. The water is now dark and murky, but the staff rests on the bottom of the pool, healed of its break.

Ovek at this point starts to wake from his coma if still alive.

If the staff is left in the water, then all is fine. If the staff is taken out of the water, then the person holding it becomes bound to it and it may not be removed except by a remove curse spell cast by a 12th level caster.

If the heroes leave the staff there, then all that is left to do is find out whether they collapse the cavern or not. If they understood the instructions left in the journal, they know about the collapsing lever behind the carving of the oak tree behind the shrine. Go to the conclusion.

If one of the PCs decides to lift the staff out of the tears of Skerrit, then the curse of Tzumvaltum falls upon him. Read the following:

If the character channels negative energy:

As you pull the staff out of the water, you feel the channels of energy widen for you, and with a joyous shout you hold the staff over your head as you feel the power course through you. No one can defeat you now!

If the character channels positive energy:

As you pull the staff out of the water, you feel the connection with your God almost close, as if a door has shut in your face. With an appalled glance at the staff, you realize just what an evil thing this is that you are holding. Even now, you feel tentacles of energy probing in your soul, looking for weaknesses and calling up long repressed thoughts of power, greed and lust. You try to thrust the staff back into the pool, but it won't leave your hand. You have been betrayed!

The character can only remove the item by casting *atonement* (before leaving the pool) or having *remove curse* cast by a 12th level caster.

If the character taking it cannot channel divine energy:

The character will feel its life-force being sucked into the staff. The character will have to make a Fortitude save (DC 22) versus death magic or die each round that the staff is in its possession outside the Tears of Skerrit. The staff does not bind to this person and they can freely drop it into the pool if still alive.

Encounter 9: Atonement

Run this optional encounter only if:

- The character specifically requests to approach the clans to have the outlawry removed.
- The character successfully hid his/her identity from the clans earlier in the adventure.
- Ovek Sparrowhawk is alive at the end of the adventure and the characters have gained the favor of Ovek. Only in this case will Shining Rock be in a strong enough political situation to even countenance forgiveness.

The character in question must call in two favors of Ovek Sparrowhawk to have him intercede with Shining Rock to get her to even countenance holding a mini conclave to judge the character. This means that he must convince one other person at the table to spend their favor. Mark this off the AR for the characters in question. Even so, this will carry political risks for Shining Rock. To account for this, the character is given an private audience with Shining Rock.

The offender must make a plea to Shining Rock for mercy and forgiveness for defiling the tomb of Tulosh Silverhoof. Either the outlaw or the character who is acting as the offender's second (the person who donated the other favor of Ovek) may assist in this Diplomacy check (DC 20). You may add circumstance modifiers of +/-2 depending upon the quality of role-play here.

If either the offender or the second character acting as helper purchased the amulet from Morginstaler (as detailed in BDK3-03) then Shining Rock will grant your request without resorting to a Diplomacy roll.

Should the offender make a persuasive argument (makes the Diplomacy check), then Shining Rock is willing to present the case to the conclave. She warns the character, however, that she will be bound by the verdict of the conclave and that it is possible that the character will be summarily executed for sacrilege. Should the character back out at this point, she will allow the PC to leave.

Should the character fail at the Diplomacy check, she will give the PC an hour's head start and then will inform the clans of this character's identity. This should allow the character to escape if he/she is mounted. If caught, the PC will be executed.

Note: The offender must present his own case before the clans, with the second providing the assist at the trial held in Shining Rock's tent. Should the character decide to back out at this point, allow them. Read the following:

The tent of the head shaman is filled to capacity with nomads from many clans, called here by Shining Rock to judge whether the accused should stand convicted of defiling the most holy of all the nomadic

burial grounds. You hear one of the Bluecrane near you say quietly to the person next to them "Why do we not simply execute the defiler now? What could it serve to hold another trial?" It looks as though the sentiment of the clans is not in your favor. It is equally obvious just how much of a political risk Shining Rock is taking even giving you this chance.

The faces looking at you are grim as the Law Speaker, Furthan Redfox, details your crimes, the looting of the tomb and the attack on the conclave. When the law speaker finishes, Shining Rock turns to you and says "These accusations are serious, but perhaps you wish to speak of more recent events that may speak in your favor?"

Allow the character to present his/her defense. Based upon this and the following, determine the verdict.

Game mechanic details:

- Base diplomacy roll necessary: 50
- Using a third favor of Ovek Sparrowhawk to get him to speak on your behalf at the conclave: -10
- Sealing the staff forever in the tears of Skerrit, collapsing the cavern: -15
- The staff is healed in the tears of Skerrit, but the cavern was not collapsed: -10
- The character has the favor of Ilyena Michelson (from BDK2-02): -5
- The character purchased the amulet of the Head Shaman from Morginstaler (from BDK3-03): -10
- The staff is in the possession of one of the player characters: +10
- An assist from the character acting as the PC's second (DC 10): -2
- Role-play modifier: +2

Results:

Failure by >10: The character is executed for outlawry. His goods are given to the kin of those killed in last year's attack on the conclave. The nomads will give his corpse to the character acting as the PC's second for burial.

Failure by 6 – 9: The character is sentenced to 26 TU of service to the clans in reparation for his/her crimes. The character spends this time drying dung for fires, digging latrines and other menial chores. At the end of this time, he is no longer considered outlawed. If the character refuses this sentence, consider the PC to have failed by >10 (see above).

Failure by 1-5: The character has convinced a substantial minority of the clans that his/her actions were only misguided and not malicious. Shining Rock decrees wergild of 2000 gp. If the character, or a combination of characters at the table, agrees to pay this

amount, the character is freed from outlawry. If not, then consider the character to have failed by 6-9 and sentenced to 26 TU of menial labor (see above).

Success: The character is found not guilty of outlawry by reason of their arguments. The clans recognize the mitigating circumstances and release the character from the ban.

Conclusion

Conclusion A (if Ovek is alive):

The Sparrowhawk make their slow way down from the mesa with Ovek in the lead. These people look overwhelmed by their experiences of the last month or so. As you pass down the line, Ovek motions for you to come over to him. "I wish to thank you for what you have done for my people. I and they will never forget this. "I know that you have urgent business with the druids in the tangles, so I will not hold you back, but know that you are welcome to share my tent. I will teach you all that I know of the secret ways to enter the lands of the Old One without his knowledge. You look as types who would not quail to take on the Evil One in his own home!"

If Ovek is alive at the end of the adventure, Shining Rock will use her influence to obtain for this character access to any of the items marked as regional in the items found section of the AR. Cross off the *+I bane (outsiders (evil) weapon* from the AR.

Conclusion B (if Eldest survived)

The Sparrowhawk make their slow way down from the mesa with seemingly lost and with no leader. These people look overwhelmed by their experiences of the last month or so. Eldest, who stands at the top of the mesa looking at them depart with you, sighs and says "Those humans have the look of ones who do not know whether to turn to evil or good. I wish that the old man had lived, for he seemed to want the best for them." She gives a sickly cough and then continues, "Come with me and I will take you to the druids of my forest. I feel that my time in this life is short. Let us hurry to the forest that I may die with my groves. I expect that they may still remember me!" And with that, she strides off across the barrens. As you pass the group of bewildered nomads, you hear an anonymous voice from the line of Sparrowhawk stragglers say in a whiny voice, "I hear it is the tree's fault that we almost died." Perhaps Furthan Redfox was correct after all...

The Eldest will grant permission to the Druids of the Fellreev to extract her heartwood upon her death and

fashion it into a *+I bane (outsiders (evil) weapon*. Cross off all items on the AR with regional access.

Conclusion C: Failure

The meeting of the conclave is held hurriedly at the behest of Furthan Redfox. Those of you still alive are required to testify about the events of the last week. A brave warrior returns from the mesa to report that the Sparrowhawk are all dead, but that the blight has stopped moving. She also reports that there was a dead tree in the center of the pond that had carved upon it in infernal "The staff returns to its master. Soon the master will return to revenge himself upon all."

After long and angry discussion, Shining Rock is removed as head druid and the nephew of Furthan Redfox is placed in his stead. The Brighteagle are disgraced and the remnants of their clan head off into the barrens to hide their faces from the shame of Shining Rock's impeachment.

Cross off all items on the AR with regional access, as well as the *+I bane (outsiders (evil) weapon*.

The End

Experience Point Summary

To award experience for this adventure, add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Then assign the experience award. Award the total value (objectives plus role-playing) to each character.

Encounter One

Defeat the Worg riders

APL2 120 xp; APL4 180 xp; APL6 240 xp;
APL8 300 xp.

Encounter Four

Defeat the Demon

APL2 120 xp; APL4 180 xp; APL6 240 xp;
APL8 300 xp.

Encounter Seven

Defeat the Zelekhut

or

Submit to the Mark of Justice

APL2 150 xp; APL4 210 xp; APL6 270 xp;
APL8 330 xp.

Story Award

Heal the staff and stop the blight:

APL2 50 xp; APL4 50 xp; APL6 50 xp;

APL8 50 xp.

Discretionary role-playing award

APL2 25 xp; APL4 55 xp; APL6 100 xp;

APL8 145 xp.

Total possible experience:

APL2 450 xp; APL4 675 xp; APL6 900 xp;

APL8 1125 xp.

Treasure Summary

During an adventure, characters encounter treasure, usually finding it in the possession of their foes. Every encounter that features treasure has a “treasure” section within the encounter description, giving information about the loot, coins, and magic items that make up the encounter’s treasure.

The loot total is the number of gold pieces each character gains if the foes are plundered of all their earthly possessions. Looting the bodies takes at least 10 minutes per every 5 enemies, and if the characters cannot take the time to loot the bodies, they do not gain this gold. If you feel it is reasonable that characters can go back to loot the bodies, and those bodies are there (i.e., not carted off by dungeon scavengers, removed from the scene by the local watch, and so on), characters may return to retrieve loot. If the characters do not loot the body, the gold piece value for the loot is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

The coin total is the number of gold pieces each character gains if they take the coin available. A normal adventuring party can usually gather this wealth in a round or so. If for some reason, they pass up this treasure, the coin total is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

Next, the magic items are listed. Magic item treasure is the hardest to adjudicate, because they are varied and because characters may want to use them during the adventure. Many times characters must cast *identify*, *analyze dweomer* or similar spell to determine what the item does and how to activate it. Other times they may attempt to use the item blindly. If the magic item is consumable (a potion, scroll, magic bolts, etc.) and the item is used before the end of the adventure, its total is subtracted from the adventure totals below.

Once you have subtracted the value for unclaimed treasure from each encounter add it up and that is the number of gold pieces a characters total and coin value increase at the end of the adventure. Write the total in the GP Gained field of the adventure certificate. Because this is a Regional scenario, characters may spend additional Time Units to practice professions or create items immediately

after the adventure so this total may be modified by other circumstances.

L = Looted gear from enemy; C = Coin, Gems, Jewelry, and other valuables; M = Magic Items.

Encounter Two:

APL 2: L: 36 gp; C: 2 gp; M: 0 gp.

APL 4: L: 152 gp; C: 20 gp; M: 0 gp.

APL 6: L: 153 gp; C: 36 gp; M: +1 *chain shirt* (92 gp).

APL 8: L: 207 gp; C: 78 gp; M: +1 *chain shirt* (92 gp).

Encounter Seven:

APL 2: L: 125 gp; C: 0 gp; M: mithral shirt (91 gp), *ring of sustenance* (208 gp).

APL 4: L: 125 gp; C: 0 gp; M: *wand of inflict moderate wounds* (405 gp).

APL 6: L: 150 gp; C: 0 gp; M: *potion of barkskin* +4 (75 gp), +1 *leather armor of silent moves* (409 gp).

APL 8: L: 175 gp; C: 0 gp; M: *potion of good hope* (87 gp), *amulet of natural armor* +2 (666 gp).

Total Possible Treasure

APL 2: 450 gp

APL 4: 650 gp

APL 6: 900 gp

APL 8: 1300 gp

Special

Only given to the character who heals the staff in the tears, and only if the Zelekhut defeats the party or the offender willingly submits to judgment by the Zelekhut.

☛ **Mark of Justice:** The Zelekhut of Mechanus has placed this on you for desecrating the Holy Tears of Skerrit. This mark will activate if this character desecrates a shrine or altar. Clerics of lawful aligned religions will not remove this mark.

Furthan Redfox will give the party the bridle only if Ovek is dead at the end of the module:

🐾 **Bridle of Resistance +X:** This ornate bridle decorated with the clan symbols of the Redfox clan grants a resistance bonus on all saving throws. The bridle may only be worn by an equine (horse, mule, pegasus, etc.). Additionally, when worn by a creature of above animal intelligence (3+), the equine may act as if it bears a rider with the Trample feat.

Faint abjuration; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, Trample, *resistance*, creator’s caster level must be at least three times the bridle’s resistance bonus; Price 7,000gp (+1), 10,000 gp (+2).

This is only given to characters in parties who saved the life of Ovek Sparrowhawk and who elect to spend the four time units at the end of the module.

☛ **Sitting at the Feet of the Master:** Following 4 TU of study with Ovek at the end of this adventure, you can learn enough to gain access to the Spymaster prestige class.

Given to all parties who return Eldest's seedling to the Tangles.

☛ **Favor of the Initiates of the Tangles:** In gratitude for the return of Eldest's last seedling, the druids will upgrade an *amulet of natural armor* to the next bonus up to +4 (for example, from +2 to +3) for the difference in cost.

This cursed item is only given to the character who took it out of the Tears of Skerrit after it was healed by the ritual detailed in Encounter 7.

☛ **Staff of Tzumvaltum:** This ornately carved staff with a fire opal headpiece radiates evil and was once in the possession of the fiend Tzumvaltum. It grants the holder +5 effective levels for casting spells with *inflict* in the title. Additionally all Will save DC against inflict spells are raised by 2. Characters in possession of this staff may not channel positive energy. The evil radiating from this staff will corrupt the individual over time. For each 5 scenarios that this character possesses this staff, their alignment shifts one step towards chaotic. Once the holder is chaotic, the alignment will start to shift towards evil. Mark below the number of the AR that this character will have to retire if this item is not removed from their possession: AR ____

Should the character ever get more than 100 feet from the staff, the character will start to suffer as though they were disobeying a *Geas*. This item may be safely taken from a character only after a *remove curse* spell cast by a 12th level caster.

Item Access

APL 2:

bridle of resistance +1 (Adventure, see above)

mithral shirt (Adventure, DMG)

ring of sustenance (Adventure, DMG)

Staff of Tzumvaltum (Cursed, see above)

potion of barkskin +3 (Regional, CL 6th, DMG)

+1 *bane (outsider (evil)) weapon* – wood only (Any, DMG)

APL 4: (All of APL 2 plus the following)

wand of inflict moderate wounds (Adventure, CL 3rd, DMG)

brooch of shielding (Regional, DMG)

APL 6: (All of APL 2-4 plus the following)

+1 *leather armor of silent moves* (Adventure, DMG)

potion of barkskin +4 (Adventure, CL 9th, DMG)

bridle of resistance +2 (Adventure, see above)

amulet of mighty fists +1 (Regional, DMG)

APL 8: (All of APL 2-6 plus the following)

amulet of natural armor +2 (Adventure, DMG)

potion of good hope (Adventure, CL 7th, DMG)

lesser bracers of archery (Regional, DMG)

Appendix I: NPC's

Encounter Two:

☛ **Hvirta Brighteagle:** male human Ftr4/Rgr2; CR 6; Medium Humanoid (human); HD 4d10+2d8; hp 31; Spd 30 ft.; Init +3; AC 17 (touch 13, flat-footed 14)[[+3 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 natural]]; BA/G: +6/+7; Atk +7 melee [1d8+1 [19-20/x2], longsword]; Full Atk +7/+2 melee [1d8+1 [19-20/x2], longsword] or +10/+5 ranged [1d8+1 [x3], composite longbow]; SA favored enemy (orcs +2); SQ wild empathy; AL NG; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +9, Hide +8, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Ride +12, Spot +11; Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Ride-by Attack, Spirited Charge, Track, Weapon Focus (longbow).

Possessions: Composite longbow (+1), 20 arrows, *amulet of natural armor* +1, studded leather, longsword, dagger, 100 gp.

Encounter Three:

☛ **Tovar Brighteagle:** male human Rgr6; CR 6; Medium Humanoid (human); HD 6d8; hp 27; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (touch 14, flat-footed 12) [+3 Dex, +2 leather]; BA/G: +6/+8; Atk +8 melee [1d8+2 [19-20/x2], longsword]; Full Atk +8/+3 melee [1d8+2 [19-20/x2], longsword] or +9/+4 ranged [1d8+2 [x3], composite longbow]; SA Favored Enemy (orcs +4; animals +2); SQ Animal Companion (heavy horse), wild empathy; AL NG; SV Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +10, Hide +8, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Ride +12, Spot +10; Endurance, Manyshot, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Track.

Possessions: Composite longbow (+2), 20 arrows, *ring of mind shielding*, studded leather, longsword, dagger, 120 gp.

☛ **Brighteagle Clansmen:** male human Rgr3; CR 3; Medium Humanoid (human); HD 3d8; hp 13; Spd 30 ft.; Init +1; AC 14 (touch 11, flat-footed 13) [+1 Dex, +3 Studded Leather]; BA/G: +3/+4; Atk +4 melee (1d8+1 [19-20/x2], longsword); Full Atk +4 melee (1d8+1 [19-20/x2], longsword) or +4 ranged (1d8+1 [x3], composite longbow); SA favored enemy (orcs +2); SQ wild empathy; AL NG; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +6, Hide +8, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Ride +10, Spot +8;

Endurance, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Track.

Possessions: Composite longbow (+1), 20 arrows, *amulet of natural armor* +1, studded leather, longsword, dagger, 1 gp.

☛ **Shining Rock, Head Shaman of the Clans:** female half elf Drd4; CR 4; Medium Humanoid (human, elf); HD 4d8, hp 23; Spd 30 ft.; Init +1; AC 13 (touch 12, flat-footed 11) [+1 Dex, +2 Leather]; Atk +3 melee [d6, short spear] or +4 ranged [d4, sling]; SQ Animal Companion (light horse), nature sense, wild empathy; AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +9, Hide +4, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Ride +11, Spot +1, Survival +7; Mounted Combat, Skill Focus (Ride).

Spells Prepared (5/4/3; base DC = 13 + spell level:
0 – [*create water, cure minor wounds, cure minor wounds, detect magic, detect poison*]; 1st – [*calm animals, cure light wounds, endure elements, magic fang*]; 2nd – [*delay poison, hold animal, summon swarm*].

Possessions: short spear, sling, 20 bullets, dagger, *ring of mind shielding*, *amulet of proof against detection and location*, 112 gp.

Encounter Five:

☛ **Eldest:** “female” treant; CR 12; Gargantuan Plant; HD 21d8+150; hp 254*; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 23 (touch 6, flat-footed 23) [[-1 Dex, -3 size, +17 natural]]; BA/G: +15/+40; Atk +24 melee (3d6+13 [19-20/x2], slam); Atk +24 melee (3d6+13 [19-20/x2], 2 slams); Space / Reach 20 ft. / 20 ft.; SA Animate trees, double damage against objects, trample 3d6+19; SQ Damage reduction 10/slashing, low-light vision, plant traits, vulnerability to fire; AL NG; SV Fort +21*, Ref +6, Will +13; Str 37, Dex 8, Con 25*, Int 14, Wis 18, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Speak Languages (Abyssal, Common, Elven, Flan, Giant, Goblin, Orc, Sylvan, Treant), Diplomacy +5, Hide -13, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (History) +10, Knowledge (Nature) +8, Listen +15, Sense Motive +20, Spot +15, Survival +10 (+12 aboveground); Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (slam), Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Power Attack, Toughness, Track.

Animate Trees (Sp): A treant can animate trees within 180 feet at will, controlling up to two trees at a time. It takes 1 full round for a normal tree to uproot itself. Thereafter it moves at a speed of 10 feet and fights as a treant in all respects. Animated trees lose

their ability to move if the treant that animated them is incapacitated or moves out of range. The ability is otherwise similar to liveoak (caster level 12th). Animated trees have the same vulnerability to fire that a treant has.

Double Damage against Objects (Ex): A treant or animated tree that makes a full attack against an object or structure deals double damage.

Trample (Ex): Reflex DC 33 half. The save DC is Strength-based.

Skills: Treants have a +16 racial bonus on Hide checks made in forested areas.

Possessions: Half of the staff of Tzumvaltum

Note: Due to the effects of the staff, Eldest currently possesses the following stats: hp 14, Fort +10, Con 2. She detects as evil and any action other than careful movements or speech threatens to sever the root that allows her to live.

Appendix II: APL2 Encounters

Encounter Two:

🐉 **Goblin Worgrider (4):** male goblin Ftr1; CR 1; Small Humanoid (Goblinoid); HD 1d10; hp 6; Spd 30 ft.; Init +3; AC 15 (touch 13, flat-footed 13)[[+1 size, +2 Dex, +2 leather]]; BA/G: +1/-3; Atk +2 melee [1d6, morningstar]; Full Atk +2 melee [1d6, morningstar] or +4 ranged [1d4 [x3], composite shortbow]; SQ Darkvision 60 ft; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Speak Languages (Goblin), Handle Animal +1, Hide +6, Move Silently +6, Ride +7; Mounted Combat, Mounted Archery.

Possessions: Composite shortbow, 20 arrows, small morningstar, dagger, leather armor, 4 gp.

Worgs (4): hp 30; see MM p. 256.

Encounter Five:

🐉 **Advanced Quasit:** CR 4; Tiny Outsider (Chaotic, Extraplanar, Evil); HD 6d8; hp 27; Init +8; Spd 20 ft., fly 50 ft. (perfect); AC 19 (touch 16, flat-footed 15)[[+2 size, +4 Dex, +3 natural]]; BA/G: +6/-3; Atk +12 melee (1d4-1 plus poison, claw); Full Atk +12 melee (1d4-1 plus poison, 2 claws), +7 melee (1d4-1, bite); SA Poison, Spell-like abilities; SQ alternate form, damage reduction 5/cold iron or good, darkvision 60 ft, fast healing 2, immunity to poison, resistance to fire 10; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +9, Will +6; Str 8, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Speak Languages (Common, Abyssal), Bluff +9, Diplomacy +2, Disguise +0 (+2 acting), Hide +21, Intimidate +2, Knowledge (The Planes) +9, Listen +10, Move Silently +13, Search +9, Spell craft +9, Spot +9; Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (claws), Weapon Finesse.

Poison (Ex): Injury. Fortitude DC 15, initial damage 1d4 Dex, secondary damage 2d4 Dex.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will *detect good*, *detect magic*, *invisibility* (self only); 1/day - *cause fear* (as the spell, except that its area is a 30-foot radius from the quasit, save DC 11).

Alternate Form (Su): A quasit can assume other forms at will as a standard action. This ability functions as a *polymorph* spell cast on itself (caster level 12), except that the quasit does not regain hit points for changing form and may only assume the form of a wolf or a medium monstrous centipede. A quasit in alternate form loses its poison attack.

Encounter Seven:

🐉 **Least Zelekhut:** CR 5; Medium Construct (Extraplanar, Lawful); HD 2d10+10; hp 22; Init +0; Spd 50 ft.; AC 19 (touch 11, flat-footed 18)[[+1 Dex, +8 natural]]; BA/G: +3/+4; Atk +4 melee (2d4+1, spiked chain); Full Atk +4 melee (2d4+1, 2 spiked chains); SA Spell-like abilities; SQ Construct traits, Damage reduction 5/chaotic, darkvision 60 ft, low-light vision; SR 16; AL LN; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 13, Dex 13, Con -, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Speak Languages (Abyssal, Ancient Suloise, Celestial, Infernal), Diplomacy +4, Listen +6, Search +6, Sense Motive +9, Spot +6, Survival +5; Great Fortitude, Ride by Attack.

A zelekhut's natural weapons, as well as any weapons it wields are treated as lawful-aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Spell like Abilities (Sp): 2/day—*mark of justice*. Caster level 4th.

Appendix III: APL4 Encounters

Encounter Two:

🐉 **Veteran Goblin Worgrider (4):** male goblin Ftr2; CR 2; Small Humanoid (Goblinoid); HD 2d10, hp 11; Spd 30 ft.; Init +3; AC 16 (touch 13, flat-footed 14)[[+1 size, +2 Dex, +3 studded leather]]; BA/G: +2/-2; Atk +3 melee [1d6, morningstar]; Full Atk +3 melee [1d6, morningstar] or +5 ranged [1d4 [x3], composite shortbow]; SQ Darkvision 60 ft; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats. Speak Languages (Goblin), Handle Animal +2, Hide +6, Move Silently +6, Ride +7; Mounted Combat, Mounted Archery, Point Blank Shot.

Possessions. Composite short bow, 20 arrows, small morningstar, dagger, studded leather, 12 gp.

🐉 **Elite Goblin Worgrider (2):** male goblin Ftr3; CR 3; Small Humanoid (goblinoid); HD 3d10; hp 17; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (touch 13, flat-footed 15)[[+1 size, +2 Dex, +4 chain shirt]]; BA/G: +3/+0; Atk +5 melee [1d6+1, morningstar]; Full Atk +5 melee [1d6+1, morningstar] or +6 ranged [1d4+1, composite shortbow]; SQ Darkvision 60 ft; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats. Speak Languages (Goblin), Handle Animal +3, Hide +6, Move Silently +6, Ride +9; Mounted Combat, Mounted Archery, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot.

Possessions. Composite shortbow (+1), 40 arrows, small morningstar, dagger, chain shirt, 20 gp.

🐉 **Worgs (6):** hp 30; see MM p. 256.

Encounter Five:

🐉 **Babau:** hp 66; see MM p 40.

Encounter Seven:

🐉 **Lesser Zelekhut:** CR 7; Medium Construct (Extraplanar, Lawful); HD 6d10+20; hp 53; Init +0; Spd 35 ft.; AC 24 (touch 11, flat-footed 23)[[+1 Dex, +5 breastplate barding, +8 natural]]; BA/G: +4/+7; Atk +7 melee (2d4+3 plus 1d4 electricity, spiked chain); Full Atk +8 melee (2d4+4 plus 1d4 electricity, 2 spiked chains); SA Spell-like abilities; SQ Construct traits, damage reduction 5/chaotic, darkvision 60 ft, fast healing 3, low-light vision; SR 18; AL LN; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 17, Dex 13, Con -, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats. Speak Languages (Abyssal, Ancient Suloise, Celestial, Infernal), Diplomacy +4,

Listen +7, Search +7, Sense Motive +10, Spot +7, Survival +5; Great Fortitude, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge.

A zelekhut's natural weapons, as well as any weapons it wields are treated as lawful-aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp): At will - *clairvoyance/clairaudience, dispel magic, hold person* (DC 15); 3/day - *mark of justice*. Caster level 6th. The save DC's are Charisma-based.

Appendix IV: APL6 Encounters

Encounter Two:

🐉 **Elite Goblin Worgrider (6):** male goblin Ftr3; CR 3; Small Humanoid (goblinoid); HD 3d10; hp 17; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (touch 13, flat-footed 15)[[+1 size, +2 Dex, +4 chain shirt]]; BA/G: +3/+0; Atk +5 melee [1d6+1, morningstar]; Full Atk +5 melee [1d6+1, morningstar] or +6 ranged [1d4+1, composite shortbow]; SQ Darkvision 60 ft; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats. Speak Languages (Goblin), Handle Animal +3, Hide +6, Move Silently +6, Ride +9; Mounted Combat, Mounted Archery, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot.

Possessions. Composite shortbow (+1), 40 arrows, small morningstar, dagger, chain shirt, 20 gp.

🐉 **Worgrider Lieutenant:** male goblin Ftr5; CR 5; Small Humanoid (goblinoid); HD 5d10; hp 28; Spd 30 ft.; Init +3; AC 19 (touch 14, flat-footed 16)[[+1 size, +3 Dex, +5 chain shirt]]; BA/G: +5/+2; Atk +7 melee [1d6+1, morningstar]; Full Atk +7 melee [1d6+1, morningstar] or +10 ranged [1d4+1, composite shortbow]; SQ Darkvision 60 ft; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats. Speak Languages (Goblin), Handle Animal +3, Hide +7, Move Silently +7, Ride +11; Mounted Combat, Mounted Archery, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (shortbow).

Possessions. Composite shortbow (+1), 20 arrows, +1 small chain shirt, small morningstar, dagger, 100 gp.

🐉 **Worgs (7):** hp 30; see MM p. 256.

Encounter Five:

🐉 **Advanced Babau:** CR 8; Large Outsider (Chaotic, Extraplanar, Evil, Tanar'ri); HD 9d8+63; hp 104; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (touch 10, flat-footed 20)[[+10 natural]]; BA/G: +9/+23; Atk +17 melee (2d6+10, claws); Full Atk +17 melee (2d6+10, 2 claws), +15 melee (1d8+5, bite); Space / Reach: 10 ft. / 10 ft.; SA Sneak attack +2d6, spell-like abilities, *summon tanar'ri*, SQ Damage reduction 10/cold iron or good, darkvision 60 ft, immunity to electricity and poison, protective slime, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, and fire 10, telepathy 100 feet; SR 15; AL CE; SV Fort +13, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 30, Dex 10, Con 24, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats. Speak Languages (Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Draconic); Climb +20, Disable Device +12, Disguise +13, Escape Artist +10, Hide +15, Listen +19, Move Silently +18, Open Lock +10, Search

+20, Slight of Hand +10, Spell craft +5, Survival +1 (+3 following tracks), Use Rope +1 (+3 with bindings); Cleave, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Multiattack, Power Attack.

Sneak Attack (Ex): A babau can make a sneak attack like a rogue, dealing an extra 2d6 points of damage whenever a foe is denied his or her Dexterity bonus, or when the babau is flanking.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will - *darkness*, *dispel magic*, see *invisibility*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only). Caster level 9th.

Protective Slime (Su): A slimy red jelly coats the babau's skin. Any weapon that touches it takes 1d8 points of acid damage from the corrosive goo, and the weapon's hardness does not reduce this damage. A magic weapon may attempt a DC 21 Reflex save to avoid taking this damage. A creature who strikes the babau with an unarmed attack, unarmed strike, touch spell or natural weapon takes this damage as well but can negate the damage with a DC 21 Reflex save. The save DCs are Constitution-based.

Summon Tanar'ri (Sp): Once per day a babau can attempt to summon 1 babau with a 40% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 3rd-level spell.

Skills: Babaus have a +8 racial bonus on Hide, Listen, Move Silently, and Search checks.

Encounter Seven:

🐉 **Zelekhut:** hp 74; see MM p. 160.

Appendix V: APL8 Encounters

Encounter Two:

🐉 **Elite Goblin Worgrider (6):** male goblin Ftr3; CR 3; Small Humanoid (goblinoid); HD 3d10; hp 17; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (touch 13, flat-footed 15)[+1 size, +2 Dex, +4 chain shirt]; BA/G: +3/+0; Atk +5 melee [1d6+1, morningstar]; Full Atk +5 melee [1d6+1, morningstar] or +6 ranged [1d4+1, composite shortbow]; SQ Darkvision 60 ft; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats. Speak Languages (Goblin), Handle Animal +3, Hide +6, Move Silently +6, Ride +9; Mounted Combat, Mounted Archery, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot.

Possessions. Composite shortbow (+1), 40 arrows, small morningstar, dagger, chain shirt, 20 gp.

🐉 **Worgrider Captain:** male goblin Ftr7; CR 8; Small Humanoid (Goblinoid); HD 7d10+7, hp 46; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (touch 14, flat-footed 16) [+1 size, +4 Dex, +5 Chain shirt]; BA/G: +7/+4; Atk +9 melee [1d6+1, morningstar]; Full Atk +9/+4 melee [1d6+1, morningstar] or +13/+8 ranged [1d4+3 x3], composite shortbow]; SQ Darkvision 60 ft; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats. Speak Languages (Goblin), Handle Animal +5, Hide +7, Listen +2, Move Silently +7, Ride +19, Spot +2; Iron Will, Mounted Combat, Mounted Archery, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (shortbow), Weapon Specialization (shortbow).

Possessions. Composite shortbow, 20 arrows, small morningstar, +1 small chain shirt, dagger, 200 gp.

🐉 **Worgrider Chaplain:** male goblin Clr6 of Khurgorbaeyag; CR 7; Small Humanoid (goblinoid); HD 6d8+12, hp 39; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19 (touch 11, flat-footed 18) [+1 size, +8 full plate]; BA/G: +4/+0; Atk +5 melee [1d6, morningstar]; Full Atk +5 melee [1d6, morningstar] or +5 ranged [1d3, sling]; SA Spells, spontaneous casting (inflict), rebuke / command undead; SQ Darkvision 60 ft; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats. Speak Languages (Goblin), Concentration +10, Hide +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +4, Ride +8; Mounted Combat, Combat Casting, Spell Focus (Necromancy).

Spells Prepared (5/5/5/4; base DC = 13 + spell level, necromancy DC = 14 + spell level): 0 – [*create water, cure minor wounds cure minor wounds, detect*

magic, detect poison]; 1st – [*bane, bless, disguise self**, *doom, entropic shield*]; 2nd – [*bear's endurance, cure moderate wounds, hold person, invisibility**, *spiritual weapon*]; 3rd – [*blindness, invisibility purge, magic circle against law**, *protection from energy*].

*Domain spell. Domains: Chaos (casts Chaos spells at +1 level); Domain Trickery (Bluff, Disguise and Hide are class skills).

Possessions. Sling, 20 bullets, small morningstar, dagger, full plate, holy symbol of Khurgorbaeyag, 112 gp.

🐉 **Worgs (8):** hp 30; see MM p. 256.

Encounter Five:

🐉 **Advanced Vrock:** CR 10; Large Outsider (Chaotic, Extraplanar, Evil, Tanar'ri); HD 12d8+96; hp 150; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft (average); AC 22 (touch 11, flatfooted 20)[-1 size, +2 Dex, +11 natural]; BA/G: +12/+22; Atk +17 melee (2d6+6, claw); Full Att +17 melee (2d6+6, 2 claws) and +15 melee (1d8+3, bite) and +15 melee (1d6+3, 2 talons); Space / Reach: 10 ft. / 10 ft.; SA Dance of ruin, spell-like abilities, spores, stunning screech, *summon tanar'ri*, SQ Darkvision 60 ft., immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, and fire 10, telepathy 100 ft., DR 10/good; SR 18; AL CE; SV Fort +16, Ref +10, Will +11; Str 23, Dex 15, Con 26, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats. Speak Languages (Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Draconic), Concentration +23, Diplomacy +5, Hide +15, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (Local – Iuz's Border States) +15, Knowledge (Planar) +6; Listen +25, Move Silently +15, Search +15, Sense Motive +16, Spell craft +17, Spot +25, Survival +5 (+7 following tracks); Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Multiattack, Power Attack.

A vrock's natural weapons, as well as any weapons it wields, are treated as chaotic-aligned and evil-aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Dance of Ruin (Su): To use this ability, a group of at least three vocks must join hands in a circle, dancing wildly and chanting.

At the end of 3 rounds of dancing, a wave of crackling energy flashes outward in a 100-foot radius. All creatures except for demons within the radius take 20d6 points of damage (Reflex DC 19 half). Stunning, paralyzing, or slaying one of the vocks stops the dance. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*mirror image, telekinesis* (DC 19), *greater teleport* (self plus 50

pounds of objects only); 1/day—*heroism*. Caster level 12th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Spores (Ex): A vrook can release masses of spores from its body once every 3 rounds as a free action. The spores automatically deal 1d8 points of damage to all creatures adjacent to the vrook. They then penetrate the skin and grow, dealing an additional 1d4 points of damage each round for 10 rounds. At the end of this time, the victim is covered with a tangle of viny growths. (The vines are harmless and wither away in 1d4 days.) A delay poison spell stops the spores' growth for its duration. Bless, neutralize poison, or remove disease kills the spores, as does sprinkling the victim with a vial of holy water.

Stunning Screech (Su): Once per hour a vrook can emit a piercing screech. All creatures except for demons within a 30-foot radius must succeed on a DC 24 Fortitude save or be stunned for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Summon Tanar'ri (Sp): Once per day a vrook can attempt to summon 2d10 dretches or another vrook with a 35% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 3rd-level spell.

Skills: Vrooks have a +8 racial bonus on Listen and Spot checks.

Encounter Seven:

✦ **Advanced Zelekhut:** CR 11; Large Construct (Extraplanar, Lawful); HD 16d10+30; hp 118; Init +0; Spd 35 ft., 40 ft. fly (average); AC 27 (touch 9, flat-footed 27)[[-1 size, +8 plate barding, +10 natural]]; BA/G: +12/+22; Atk +18 melee (2d6+6 plus 1d6 electricity [19-20/x2], spiked chain); Full Atk +18 melee (2d6+6 plus 1d6 electricity [19-20/x2], 2 spiked chains); SA Spell-like abilities; SQ Construct traits, Damage reduction 10/chaotic, darkvision 60 ft, fast healing 5, low-light vision; SR 22; AL LN; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 22, Dex 11, Con –, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 15.

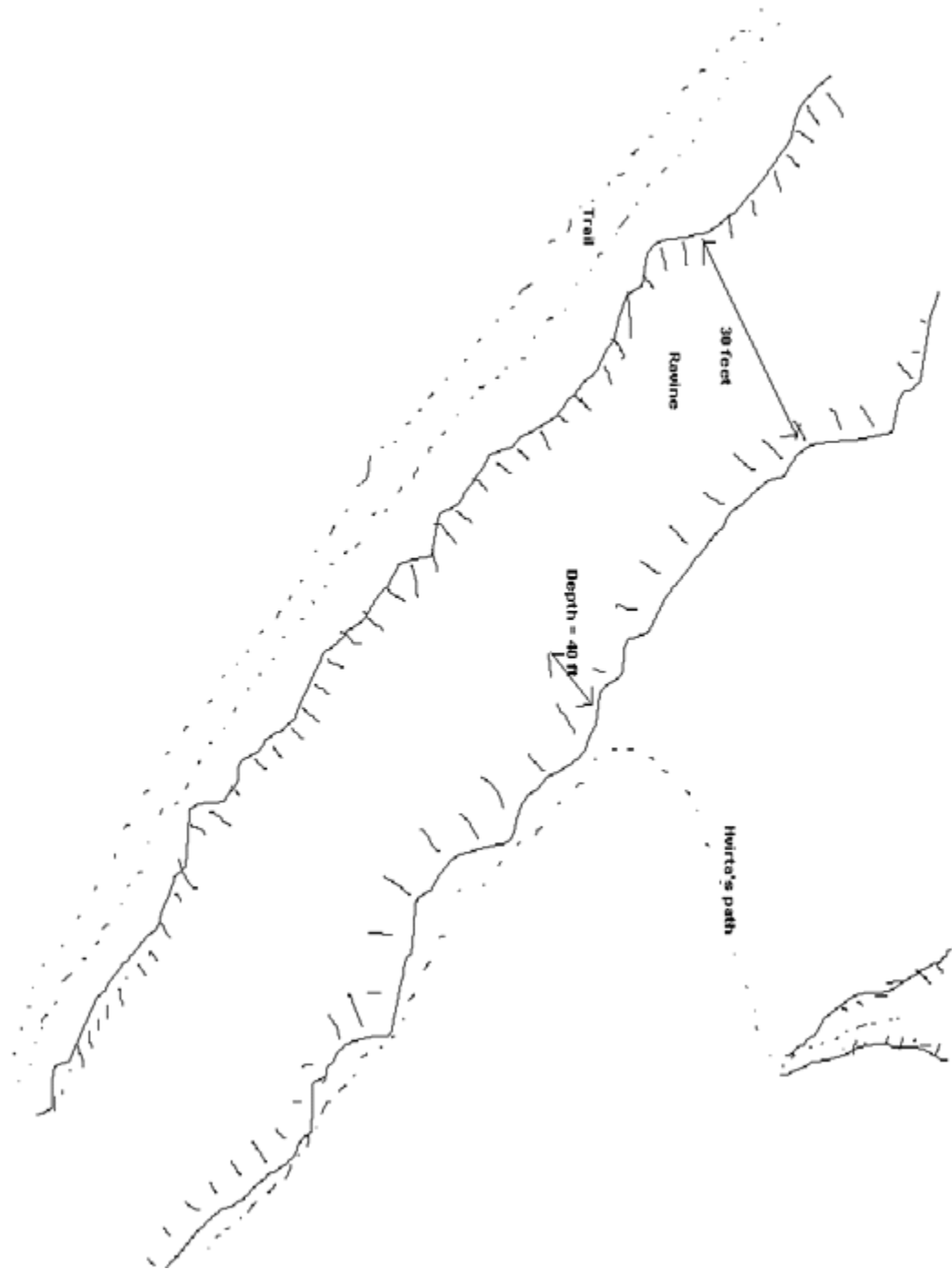
Skills and Feats: Speak Languages (Abyssal, Ancient Suloise, Celestial, Infernal), Diplomacy +5, Listen +16, Search +10, Sense Motive +15, Spot +15, Survival +5 (+7 following tracks); Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (spiked chain), Power Attack, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Weapon Focus (spiked chain).

A zelekhut's natural weapons, as well as any weapons it wields are treated as lawful-aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Spell-like Abilities (Sp): At will - *clairvoyance/clairaudience, dimensional anchor, dispel magic, fear* (DC 16), *hold person* (DC 15), *locate creature, true seeing*; 3/day - *hold monster* (DC 17),

mark of justice; 1/week - *lesser geas*. Caster level 8th. The save DC's are Charisma-based.

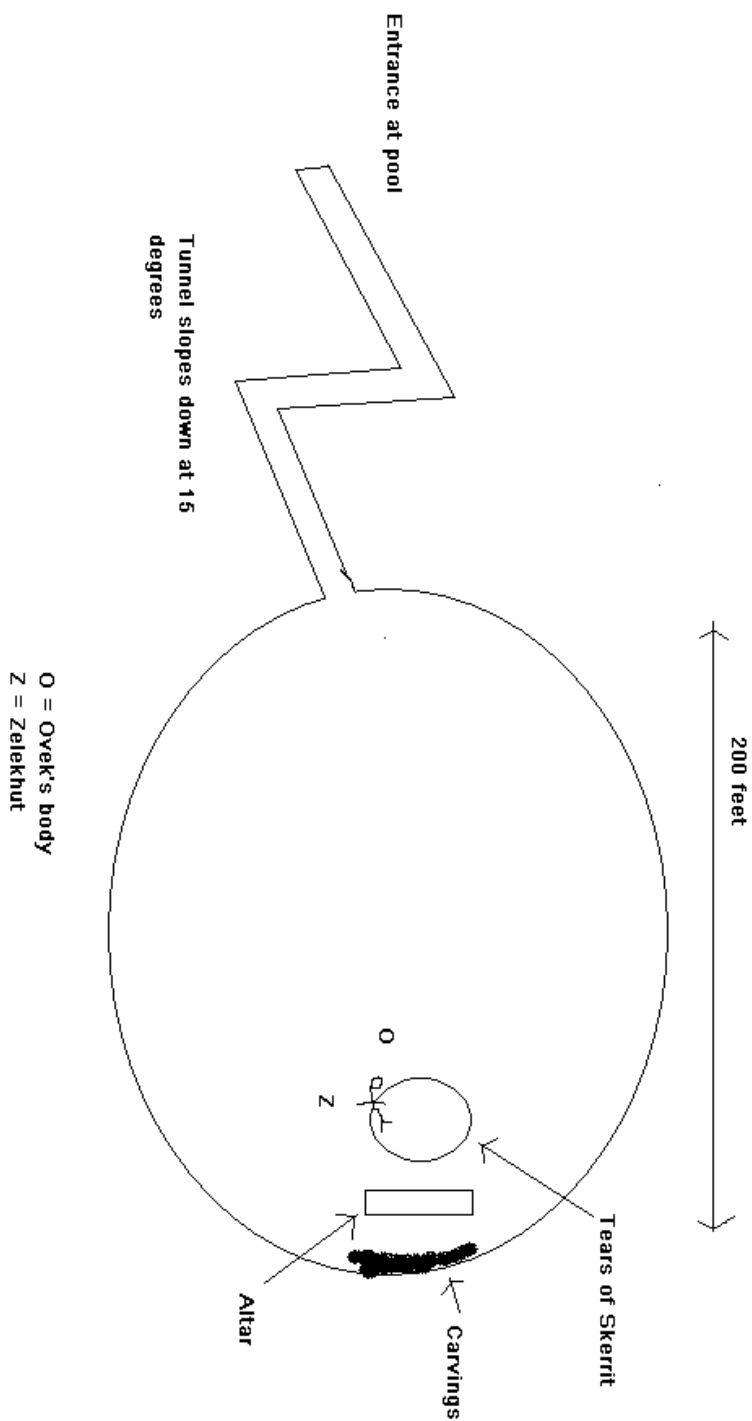
DM Map I: Ravine Chase



DM Map #2: Centaur Mesa



DM Map #3: The Cavern of the Tears



Player's Handout 1A

Recently, you have had a disturbing feeling that the very land is sickening. Something is wrong. It is very faint, but slowly growing. Every indication and feeling seems to point to the Rift Barrens. This has led you to the little town of Ankheg Springs, where you have heard (or may know from previous travels) that there are inhabitants who might be able to get you in contact with the elusive Rift Barrens Nomads.

At the Rusty Nail tavern you hear rumors of increased Iuzite patrols in the area, harassing travelers. When you ask about the Nomads, the locals tell you that it is the Nomad's fault that there are more patrols, as they have done something to stir up the military. It also appears that there are other travelers here (an unusual occurrence in this area).

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Player's Handout 1B

About a week ago, you were staying with a couple of friends at an inn on the Artonsomay when a Rhenee walking past your table whispered a warning that there were assassins in town looking for you. For several tense days, you dodged the assassins and military patrols as you fled from town to town. The second day, they caught Arvila, and the thought of what they did to her body is still haunting your dreams. Finally, it occurred to you that nowhere in the Bandit Kingdoms were the assassins more hated than in the Rift Barrens. If you could just get there, you could be pretty sure that no one would inform on you. It took you four days, but you at last arrived at the little hamlet of Ankheg Springs, a little oasis of civilization surrounded by the safety of the Rift Barrens. Three days and no sightings of assassins...maybe you've lost them (for now).

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Player's Handout 1C

You had just finished a job escorting some kid back to her grandpa on the Artonsamay, when suddenly every Iuzite in the BK seemed to be snooping around looking for someone. It seemed that this would be the perfect time to get a job escorting people away from this mess. You hooked on with a caravan escorting some people towards Riftcrag, so taking the road into the barrens (and around all the military on the Artonsamay). You were on sentry duty that night at the Wraithkeep crossroads, when you heard the caravan master's voice take on an intensely evil tone. Peering around the bush you were sitting behind, you saw the man transform into an incorporeal spectral form with large shadowy bat wings. An unreasoning panic hit you and you cowered under the effect of some hideous spell as you watched the wagon master seemingly reach into the bodies of your coworkers and pull their souls out of their bodies and eat them with great slobbery sounds, punctuated only by the faint screams of souls condemned to the abyss forever. Only when the demon thing looked in your direction were you suddenly free to move. You stumbled off into the wilderness and wandered for many days until, coming over a hill, you saw below you a paradise of green and the little hamlet of Ankheg Springs. There, you found the Rusty Nail tavern and food and drink.

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Player's Handout 1D

Your guide had explained to you how that there was no need to worry, that this was the best road to where you were going. His explanations made sense until you noticed that the terrain was getting more and more desolate. Confronting him about where he was REALLY taking you didn't seem to elicit much in the way of a rational explanation, but the next day you woke up to find the little diseased son of a kobold had abandoned you in this god forsaken wilderness. The road seemed safer than going off into those plains and so you trudged onward. Several times the road forked and you chose one randomly after the other. The terrain got even more desolate and you hadn't seen anyone for almost three days when, coming over a hill, you saw below you a paradise of green and the little hamlet of Ankheg Springs. There, you found some little bit of civilization: the Rusty Nail tavern with good food and people to talk to...

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Player's Handout 1E

You were helping with a negotiation in the harbor district when Listenka came into the room and told you that she just got a message for you. From the tone of her voice you knew it must be important. Looking at the message, you could see that it was from the Veth herself! "I know that you are doing important work, but I need you to go away from the river to investigate the disturbing signs that I am seeing in the waves. There are omens and portents that I cannot share with you that I find unsettling and wish for you to go into the Rift Barrens and see if there is some sickness there that might endanger the river. You will leave immediately, but not mention what you are doing to your fellows, in case it starts a rumor. Look to find others in the barrens who are looking for the same sickness and go with them, for I foresee that without their help, you are destined to fail."

After traveling for several days, you find yourself sitting in the Rusty Nail tavern in the little town of Ankheg Springs. Perhaps those people at the table by the window are those foretold?

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After traveling for several days, you find yourself sitting in the Rusty Nail tavern in the little town of Ankheg Springs. Perhaps those people at the table by the window are those foretold?

Player's Handout 1F

You received a message from the archdruid Yveligniala herself in a dream about a week ago. She stood in the center of a sacred grove looking at you with a worried expression upon her face. "My child," she says to you "I fear some great evil that threatens our forest is stirring in the wastes around the rift. Last night I had a troubling vision in which I saw both Beory and Skerrit holding hands and weeping. Of those of our people that can leave the forest, you are the closest. Find out what is happening and protect our lands if you can. I foresee that you will meet others who may help. Seek them out at the Spring of the Ankheg" With that, you awoke. Travelling swiftly into the barrens, you encountered nothing until you arrived at the little hamlet deep in the barrens. As you are eating dinner, the locals tell you that the name of this village is Ankheg Springs.

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Player's Handout 1G

A strange restlessness has overtaken you for the last couple of weeks. Unusual visions and dreams have kept you from a good night's sleep over and over again. Each morning when you awoke, there was nothing you could remember from the dreams, just a feeling of dissatisfaction. One by one, you made excuses to your friends as they went on their own journeys: journeys that in some part of your mind you are sure would have fascinated you before, but now seem uninteresting. Concerned friends searched for some malevolent influence on you, but there was nothing: nothing but this desire to move onward. Only travel seemed to calm the restlessness. Almost without realizing you are doing it, you have traveled into the rift barrens region of the bandit kingdoms. Two days into the rift barrens you came to a little thorp called Ankheg Springs. Sitting in the only tavern in town, you feel calm, the restlessness gone for the first time in ages. Why here?

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Player Handout #2

Mother,

I hope that this letter finds you, I heard about the attack on the Conclave and Jostig and I were just sick with worry that you were hurt. We heard from Todaĸ Ravensong that you had not been hurt, so my prayers to Rao have not gone unanswered. I thought to write to you, as I am expecting our fourth child this spring and Jostig does not want me to ride into the barrens any more. He is a silly man who does not know one end of a horse from the other, but I love him still.

I have news for you that may hurt you, but I think you should know. I have seen father! He did not recognize me, but he was in a group of nobles riding through town. I know that you said that he was working for the master of the Worgriders, but you must be mistaken, for I know this was him. He did not recognize me, and I could not get close enough to him to make myself known to him.

I asked our constable about father, and he replied that he had been picked up by a patrol coming out of the lands of the Old One, but had somehow gotten into the good graces of the Lord. He did not seem happy about that.

We have had good weather. Has it rained this year yet? I hope to see you at the Conclave with Jostig this year. You can see our newest! All the children send their love.

Willowbark

Player Handout #3

This piece of parchment looks as though it has been scraped many times, as if the author could not determine what to say.

My Dearest Sandpiper,

I don't know how often I started this letter, but could not finish it. Last month, when I saw our daughter in Critwall, it brought back all those memories of the times when life was simple. Every day has been an agony, knowing that you probably hate me after the way I treated you at Fort Umbalshak. You are justified in hating me, but I hope to redeem myself in your eyes with my leadership of the Sparrowhawk. In that time, I had no choice...they suspected me and if I didn't show them that I was like them, they would have enslaved me also. What I was doing was important, but what was wrong was that I didn't tell you after I heard that you had escaped... That it is too late for us I know, but maybe it isn't too late for

The letter breaks off here.

Player Handout #4

This page was inserted into the other notebook.

Chapter XVII: Rituals in times of crisis

The History of the Great Ritual

If you determine that there is no other option than to invoke the power of the Tears of Skerrit, know that this will defile the tears for a long time, perhaps forever. For I tell you that in the time of the great sickness, such a calamity befell us that Our Lord himself manifested to our high priest and told him of the location of the tears. After many trials, the ritual was readied. All that was needed was the source of the sickness. Yelindarinar sent two score of our best warriors and holy men to search for the source at the battle site. By the time that they returned, our forests and our children were dead and the few of us remaining only survived by drinking of the tears of Our Lord, which slowed the sickness. Of the two score who left, only one returned, and he with the two halves of the staff of the fiend Tzumvaltum. He reported that one after another, the holy men who carried the staff sickened and died. Know truly that if one had taken a piece unto himself, that to set it down when more than a centaurlength away from the other piece was to die a death most certain. Know also that no one who does not know the power of the Gods touches it, that person dies immediately.

Many were the great heroes who died on that journey: Alinuminar Deerstalker, Jofranus Demonslayer and Tolmin the White. Even those whose power came from the rocks and trees rather than directly from Our Lord of the Forests were able to carry the staff, at least for a little while, as Aluminar carried the staff for almost a week before he succumbed, never to wield his bow in the joy of the hunt again.

Player Handout #5

The following are details from the notebook of an unnamed priest of Skerrit. Much of the writing has decayed with age and is illegible.

(p.6) Such stories as will be told forever of the battle we fought! Forever will I cherish the memory of charging against the foe in company with Aluminar himself. Our children will forever....

(p. 18)...states that she believes that it is some last foulness of the evil ones. I have volunteered to go with them to find the evil, but Luknar told me that he needed me here to prepare for the return. I am to go to the Earth Brothers to....

(p. 63) ...and only if the holders were bathed in the tears could they survive until the Earth Brothers finish their work. Marinen Silvertongue paid the price for his doubts and left the tears while holding one half and now lies dead. Hynen has taken up the burden of the headpiece and

(p.74) With the death of Tuvien, there is no hope for us to continue here. No longer can we frolic with the dryads in the groves of Ghetzalminar in sight of the great canyon. Our homes are a wasteland of sickness. We can only hope to stop it before it destroys all of the forests. Yesterday brought the sad tale that Birchbark the treant had walked into the sickness and died because he could not stand to live without his groves. Perhaps because they are plantlike, they seem more susceptible to the blight. None of those folk that have been touched by it have ever lived. I hope that some day....

(p. 143) ...and told us to open the way to Our Lord while he held the two halves of the staff under the water. Lo! As the energy of Our Lord moved into the water, the two halves mended themselves and the tears began to wash the sickness away. The tears turned black with the foulness as...

(p.145) The tears are polluted with the sickness of the staff of the evil one. Our Lord has instructed us to leave the staff in the pool and let the tears wash it clean. There is nothing for us here anymore, but one will always stay to guard. The evil one cannot enter the pool or Our Lord, but some foolish slave might remove it if we do not guard it. My master has arranged with the Earth Brothers a way to destroy this place if the guard cannot defend against incursion. Let us hope that he never has to reach behind the tree! We leave for the last of our forest to the north. Master says that I should leave this here so that others of our priesthood will know the true story of what tragedy befell the people. In obedience to his words, I....