

PAL5-06

# My Brother's Keeper

## A One-Round D&D LIVING GREYHAWK® Theocracy of the Pale Regional Adventure

Version 1.0

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Gold has been discovered in the mountains of Landrigard Prelacy, and every able-bodied man is rushing to stake a claim. Never mind that the peaks are haunted and miners are disappearing – there are fortunes to be made! Recommended for adventurers of APLs 2-8 who love the natural world in all its forms.

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, but the actual playing time will be closer to three and a half hours. 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

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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.

Keep in mind that you must have at least four 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.

### Playing the Game

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

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 ***bold italics***. 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.

### Tracking

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After the players have completed the scenario or the time allotted to run the scenario has run out, the players and DM fill out the RPGA Tracking Sheet. The DM should complete the top of the form and list his name and RPGA number. The players should each list their name and RPGA number. After the form is filled out it should be given to the Event Coordinator.

### Living Greyhawk

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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 discussed in the Preparation section above 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

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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. Nevertheless, if a character has the Mounted Combat feat, he may bring a single warhorse, light or

heavy, with him in the adventure and it will not count toward the APL calculation.

- Sum the results of 1 and 2, and divide by the number of characters playing in the adventure. Round to the nearest whole number.
- 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 and gold a PC may gain at the end of the adventure. If a player character is three character levels or more either higher or lower than the APL at which this adventure is being played, that character will receive only one-half of the experience points for the adventure. Further, if the PC is three character levels or more lower than the APL at which this adventure is being played, that PC will receive one-half gold for the adventure as well. This simulates the fact that either the PC was not challenged as much as normal or relied on help by higher-level characters to reach the objectives.

Further, a PC who is four or more levels higher than the highest APL supported by the adventure may not play the scenario unless the highest APL supported by the adventure is APL 12.

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

- Attempt to create a table of six 1st-level characters, or try to enlist higher-level characters to play at that table.
- 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 Theocracy of the Pale. Characters native to the Theocracy of the Pale 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.

## Pale Holy Day

Some player characters may wish to give or attend services in-game on Pholtan holy days. For adventures set in the Theocracy of the Pale, a member of the Church of the One True Path may ask the judge at the beginning of an Adventure to determine how many days it is until the next Pholtan Holy day. This is accomplished by rolling a d8, rerolling if the result is 8. If a 7 is rolled, the first day of the adventure is a Pholtan Holy Day. Otherwise, the die result indicates the number of days until the next Pholtan Holy Day. Due to the special nature of the Theocracy of the Pale, on Holy Days, Judges are encouraged (but not required) to work-in a brief scene involving Pholtan worship, possibly including a brief 1-2 minute sermon by a PC if his or her level is at least fifth level and the judge believes that there is time available.

|              | Mundane<br>Animals Effect on<br>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 |

## Special Rules for the Pale

It is illegal for adventurers to display a human holy symbol other than that of Pholtus in the Pale as of September 1, 2005.

PCs displaying the holy symbol of any human deity other than that of Pholtus should be fined 200 gp and their holy symbol should be confiscated for destruction by the Palish authorities. This action should take place as soon as any Palish authorities notice the holy symbol. This may leave a non-Pholtan cleric without his holy symbol for the adventure, as non-Pholtan holy symbols may not be purchased in the Pale without a Gather Information check DC 25 to locate a merchant who can sell him one.

Non-human PCs are exempt from this law when displaying their racial deities' holy symbol(s). Non-

humans are heathens beyond redemption and do not matter in the greater scheme of Pholtus. If they can be brought to the light of Pholtus, this is good and perhaps they can be redeemed, but if they do not, it is of no consequence. Non-humans wearing the holy symbols of a human deity are treated the same as a human wearing a non-Pholtan holy symbol.

## Adventure Background

A thousand and more years ago, a cult of Demogorgon, Demon Prince of the Abyss, arose in the northern lands of what would become the Great Kingdom. Even during the centuries of Aerdy rule it has survived, albeit in hiding. Lately, someone has engaged several agents of the demon lord to scour these lands, which they still regard as their own, for a lost artifact of terrible power. One group of cultists, degenerate descendants of the original Flan tribes of the Northern provinces, is based deep within the Troll Fens. At their shrine they perform loathsome breeding experiments with trolls and other swamp denizens, creating truly bizarre forms of life to further glorify their patron. From this pit of evil, several servants have been plucked to search the Pale for the missing item.

Aodhan, a necromantic priest of the Fens cult, was assigned to search the central Rakers. Seeking help from one who knew the region well, he seduced an aspirant druid named Bran Mac Colm (son of Colm) with promises of power and revenge, playing on the man's jealousy and low self-image. The young druid, serving a venerable and cranky Keeper of the Flan named Eiolon (first seen in the Pale interactive *Unnatural Law*), tended a swath of mountains dotted by a few disparate settlements and the homesteads of hardy Flan settlers. Bran dreaded his critical and capricious master and was extremely jealous of his handsome and successful older brother, Taran, a squire for the well-loved Sir Andros of Tobinsford. The young man bitterly chose to undergo the suicidal Ritual of Crucimigration and trade life for undeath. The two unhappy creatures immediately began plotting their search; Bran was particularly drawn to an area of the mountains that had long been shunned as a haunted place of fell spirits.

Around the same time, a lucky miner discovered gold in those same mountains. Over the next several weeks, hundreds of fortune seekers descended upon the tiny riverside village of Tobinsford in the extreme eastern end of the Landrigard Prelacy. The bolder among them quickly struck out into the mountains to stake individual claims.

This was a lucky break for the cultists. Their lord Demogorgon is especially fond of souls sacrificed to his glory and often rewards the practitioners of such rites with demonic favors. The priest Aodhan was quick to realize that lone miners make wonderful sacrifices and, afterward, even better undead servitors. He and Bran

began to kidnap, murder, and offer to their lord soul after unlucky soul.

Into this downward spiral of murder and betrayal rode Bran's brother, Taran Mac Colm, making a holiday visit to his father's homestead in the mountains above Tobinsford. Bran and Aodhan lay in wait for the squire and captured him, but they decided to save his sacrifice until a moment when their lord's favor was especially required. Taran's pride and defiance enraged Bran, though, and the druid began hatching a plan to pay back their father for a lifetime of insults and disappointment.

Just yesterday, word reached Clive Orbison at his Tobinsford office that his partner, one Darrow Ennis, was missing from their shared gold claim. Orbison had pulled himself together after the disastrous events of *Unnatural Law* and joined forces with the veteran miner to get a mine up and running, with Ennis overseeing the onsite operations (i.e. panning) and Orbison providing the financing, greasing palms, and buying up surrounding claims. Ennis's disappearance threatens Orbison's return to wealth and power; he can't have that, so this morning he is out looking for adventurers who might have come to town to go up to his claim, figure out what happened to his partner, and deal with any "monster trouble".

## Cast of Characters

NPCs with whom the PCs will not interact directly in this scenario yet whose behind-the-scenes actions affect the story are listed below. Most other NPCs appear in the body of the scenario.

☛ **Sir Andros of Tobinsford:** LG male human paladin of Pholtus and Lord of the Gloaming.

Sir Andros is a well-loved champion of Pholtus and secretly a long-time member of the Lords of the Gloaming. He hails from an old, well-regarded family in the Tobinsford district of the Prelacy of Landrigard. As a Captain of the Pholtan Knights Valorous, Order of Luna, he led a detachment of knights westward to Furyondy in the Great Crusade against Iuz, returning home years later to a hero's welcome. Soon after, he was secretly approached by the Lords, who sought a member with access to the secrets of the Order of Luna. After a journey to Matinsmore (the Lords' secret fortress) and several nights of prayer and meditation, Andros accepted their offer and took up a new war, scouring the northeastern Flanaess of fiends and their dark cults. He has squired several young men from better families across the Pale, though only a few did he deem worthy of trust and the occasional visit to Matinsmore. Now at forty-five years, Andros is considering retirement, marriage, and rearing sons and horses, but he has not yet found a suitable Knight of Luna to replace him as the Lords' eyes and ears.

*Personality:* Quick to laughter and slow to anger is how many have described Sir Andros. His natural ebullience wins him friends wherever he goes. He is a man of hearty appetites where food, wine and women are

concerned. These passions extend as well to his life's work: the fulfillment of the Seven Oaths of the Pholtan Knights Valorous, and the protection of his people against the depredations of evil.

*Description:* Ruddy-faced and thickly built, Andros is a "man's man." He looks like he could bench-press a cow. He wears his prematurely white hair cut low on his neck and is surprisingly vain about his drooping moustaches. His purple-enameled breastplate engraved with the Order of Luna silver moon is the envy of many rivals.

### **Organization: The Lords of the Gloaming**

[The Lords of the Gloaming were mentioned in an article by Gary Holian in *Dungeon/Polyhedron* 104, November 2003.]

This secretive order of Pholtan knights and priests fights an unending war against incursions from the Lower Planes. The Lords' headquarters is known as Matinsmore, "a mountaintop stronghold thought to be located somewhere in the peaks of the Rakers or the Griff Mountains."

The Lords are not directly affiliated with the Pale; although their most famous member, St. Ceril the Relentless, helped found the nation, the order prefers to remain detached from the Pale's political and theological conservatism, and their members hail from a wide variety of regions. Still, it is rumored that the Lords invisibly guided and aided the Church of the One True Path (and through it, many Palish adventurers) in dealing with the fiends that escaped from the gates called the Scars of Nerull, and eventually in resealing them.

While the existence of the Lords is known to scholars and many within the Church hierarchy (indeed, the Council of Nine have formal relations with the order), the general public is not aware of them. Knowledge (religion or history) checks (DC 25) are necessary for PCs and most NPCs to have access to the above information.

☛ **Darrow Ennis:** CG male human miner (deceased).

Darrow was an experienced miner, having worked in the Theocrat's diamond mines farther south in the Rakers. After being sacked and remanded to a New Dawn Camp for minor theft, he wandered north and settled into a life of unrepentant alcoholism in Landrigard, supported only by the charity of the Prelate's poorhouses. Several months ago, his path crossed Clive Orbison's in a poker game at a dirty tavern in the poorest district of the city, and the two fell in as a dynamic duo of petty crime and general ineptitude. They were some of the first to hear the rumors of gold and immediately hatched a plan to revive their respective fortunes. Ennis didn't expect to meet his end at the blade of an insane undead cultist of Demogorgon.

*Personality:* Slimy and unctuous, Darrow was not a marquee example of humanity. His primary talent was

making people sorry for him. He thought he was extremely clever, but it usually turned out that someone was using him. Not a bad guy, just foolish and very impressionable.

*Description:* Slight, of obscure heritage, with bug eyes and a greasy comb-over, yet with a hardy constitution that helped him survive illness, crowded mines, and unbelievable alcohol abuse. Typically clad in dirty overalls and fully stained shirt, he is now merely a pile of remains (minus a few organs) several miles away from his mine.

☛ **Eiolon:** N male human druid of the Old Faith and Keeper of the Flan.

This middle-aged Tenha man was in the prime of life when the Fists of Stonehold poured through Rockegg Pass at the start of what would become the Greyhawk Wars. An heir to the Old Faith traditions of the Tenhas, he fought the good fight and was one of the last to escape the homeland. While many of his order scattered south to Nyronnd, the Urnst states, the Phostwood, and the Gamboge, he and a few others crossed the Pale to lick their wounds and hide away from civilization, high among the Rakers.

A mountain man by nature, originally hailing from the Griffs, Eiolon was pleased to find small communities of hardy Old Faith frontier folk in the lower reaches of the Rakers. He never settled in one place but constantly roamed, from the valleys east of Landrigard to the high ramparts. His territory bordered that of Grumbtheen [a wood elf druid, introduced in early Pale scenarios, now dead], and the two men were on speaking terms, though neither would have characterized it as a friendship. During this time Eiolon chanced to encounter a powerful mountain-spirit, which claimed to guard a secret, entrusted to him by Oerth-Mother Beory herself. Eiolon spread the story that the range where the spirit dwells was haunted, knowing the superstitious frontiersmen would believe him and stay away.

As he aged, Eiolon felt the need to pass on his knowledge to a successor. Unfortunately, the only person even remotely interested was young Bran Mac Colm, who proved to be an obedient yet spiritless apprentice. The boy's attitude began to suit the older man after a while, though, as Bran showed no interest in leaving the mountains (and his people) behind.

When word finally reached Eiolon of the return of Duke Ehyeh to Redspan, he immediately abandoned all of his works, turning them over to Bran. Eiolon informed the young man he was no longer an apprentice, but, rather, a full-fledged Keeper in his own right, possessed of the old lore and tasked to watch over his people and the mountains. Eiolon then headed west, back to his homeland, and has not returned since.

The PCs can also meet Taran Mac Colm—alive or not.

🦄 **Taran Mac Colm:** LG male human squire of the Gloaming.

Oldest child of the settler Colm, this eager young man had from an early age all of the interest in large-scale society that his father lacked. He constantly begged to see a real town until his father relented and allowed Taran to venture to Tobinsford and on to Landrigard with a neighboring trapper. The trip happened to coincide with the procession of Knights Valorous from Landrigard to Wintershiven to observe the yearly obeisance to the Theocrat; and the boy's fate was sealed. He eventually ran away from home and made his way to Tobinsford, where he used his natural charm to befriend Sir Andros and eventually worm his way into the knight's service as a squire. Though he is in his mid-twenties and would normally already be a full knight, Taran got a late start and still has a lot to learn. Still, old Sir Andros is impressed with him and is quite fond of what he believes will be his last squire. Taran occasionally visits his father, who still does not approve but is too proud (and chair-ridden) to do anything about it.

*Personality:* Inquisitive, eager, and not at all shy, he's had a tumble or three in the hay with half the girls in Tobinsford, a pastime of which Sir Andros heartily approves. Taran loves his entire family, including all of his siblings, his father's wives, and even his brother Bran. He recognizes Bran's sullenness but doesn't appreciate the real extent of his brother's problems. He hasn't been home in a few months and doesn't know about Bran's recent disappearance (when he went to the Troll Fens for the Ritual of Crucimigration).

*Description:* Taran doesn't take after his father in the slightest way; he is tall, lean, and muscular, smooth shaven, with long flowing locks - a regular Prince Charming. Naïveté is written all over his face. It is clear he has yet to be seriously damaged by life and, while Sir Andros tells some good yarns about fiends, Taran has never faced true evil before. That's all about to change.

Additionally, here are the descriptions for the villains Bran and Aodhan. The PCs will meet them, but their descriptions would add to an already crowded final combat.

🦄 **Bran Mac Colm:** NE male undead druid of Demogorgon.

One of Colm's many sons, this young man has nursed bitterness toward all others since an early age. He is overcome with jealousy for his successful older brother Taran, belittled by the authority figures in his life (Colm and Eiolon), and generally lacks any self-esteem. When the older druid left him to oversee the area, removing any sort of balancing influence, Bran began to act out some of his darker fantasies, using his abilities to torture and destroy rather than nurture and build. This behavior attracted Aodhan like a fly to dung, and it was easy for the

cultist to tempt him with promises of power, retribution, and revenge.

*Personality:* Bran enjoys ensnaring beasts much smaller than him, beating or burning them to death, and otherwise using the powers taught to him by the elder Eiolon to frustrate, discomfort, or outright harm his father, brothers, mothers, neighbors, and animals. Eiolon, being more of a results-oriented master, didn't keep a close eye on him, so Bran did not have a difficult time concealing his sadism. He had not graduated to murder until Aodhan came along and hung him from a cross, but now he delights in murdering innocent miners and burning or consuming their organs in sacrifice to dark powers.

*Description:* Once a short, glowering, dark-complexioned Flan man with a long ponytail, Bran emerged from the Ritual of Crucimigration as literally a pale version of his old self. His skin is dry, withered, and powdery, his limbs gnarled and twisted. His most striking features are his eyes: so blue they are almost white, as if drained of color and life. No longer feeling the cold of the mountains he roams, he barely notices the crudely cured leathers and tattered fur cloak that have covered him since he descended from the cross.

🦄 **Aodhan:** CE male half-troll cleric of Demogorgon.

[Note: Current Living Greyhawk rules prohibit demon lords granting powers directly to clerics. As a half-troll, Aodhan is considered to obtain his powers from Vaparak, the chaotic evil god of trolls.]

This truly wicked soul is a product of foul breeding pits deep within the Troll Fens. There the cult of Demogorgon creates servitors and practices sacrifice in return for the tiniest tastes of his demonic power. Aodhan performed the rite that granted Bran the "gift" of undeath and has brought him along on his search for the lost artifact, utilizing Bran's druidic knowledge of the area to supplement his undead guard-slaves.

*Personality:* Aodhan loves nothing more than inflicting torture upon living things. To perform a living sacrifice to his Abyssal lord is the pinnacle of existence. Often he lingers over his ministrations simply to enjoy the whimpers of a slowly flensed being whom he then raises into undeath.

*Description:* Truly a fearsome specimen, Aodhan's bronze skin and black hair betray his Flan swamp-folk heritage, but the skin is covered in large patches of rough and knobby green growths, and his greasy hair clumps into long fuzzy locks. He towers over most humans, and his elongated and extremely muscled limbs tipped with long, filthy claws give him the appearance of a feral beast. He is armored in thick leather and swathed in furs, and wears heavy boots.

## Adventure Summary

**Introduction:** The PCs have been attracted to the hamlet of Tobinsford in the far eastern end of the Landrigard Prelacy by rumors of the discovery of gold in the mountains. They find a once-sleepy riverside village booming with treasure hunters.

**Encounter 1:** The PCs are hired by Clive Orbison to find his missing partner, Darrow Ennis. They gain basic information about the gold rush here as well. They may also gather information around town, thus finding out about other missing miners, the reputation of the so-called haunted mountains, and Colm, a tough old frontiersman with a homestead near the claims, who is certain to have more information on what is happening. Exceptionally successful PCs may learn that Colm is more amiable to guests that bring a gift or two. A tracker named Dack is available for hire.

**Encounter 2:** The PCs journey to Colm's homestead. Here they can become educated in the happenings of the mountains. Diplomacy (possibly aided by gifts), intimidation, or magic may loosen the old man's tongue, revealing that Colm's sons Taran and Bran (and several goats) are missing, that the old druid Eiolon warned against travel in the haunted valleys to the north and east (where foolish prospectors are now staking claims), and that Eiolon headed west almost a year ago, leaving Bran to take over his watch in the central Rakers.

**Encounter 3:** During the PCs' interview with Colm, Bran angrily sends a tough denizen of the hills against the homestead. If the PCs defend Colm's home successfully, they gain the old man's hospitality and favor, although damage to his property earns his disfavor and dismissal from the premises. If the PCs chose to bypass Colm's homestead, the creature catches up to them during the night after destroying the settlement and murdering the inhabitants. In either event, Bran observes from a distance and returns to his minions with some knowledge about the PCs' abilities.

**Encounter 4:** The PCs pursue Ennis's path through the mountains; along the way they encounter Old Spooner, a drunkard from Tobinsford who seeks their aid and informs them that several cloaked figures attacked a prospector farther up the trail. The PCs soon arrive at Orbison's claim site to find that it is abandoned. There is clear evidence of a one-man panning operation, but a careful Search of the area yields more ominous results: a ransacked campsite with gold nuggets left in plain sight and, nearby, remains from a human sacrifice. The PCs should now understand what has happened to the miners.

**Encounter 5:** The PCs follow the mysterious tracks higher into the rugged mountain country. The lush valley soon becomes a festering bog before rising steeply into the peaks to the east. The tracks become haphazard, but the PCs must march hard all day just to gain a little ground on their quarry. Eventually the trail leads to a

deep gorge riddled with caves. Inside one of the caves they come across the remains of a fresh sacrifice. Beyond, a tunnel extends into the mountain. Though they may not even know whom they are following at this point, Bran's trail is still fresh, and it leads down.

**Encounter 6:** The tunnel winds deeper beneath the peaks, eventually opening onto a high ledge overlooking a river of magma in a deep chasm. Markings on the wall indicate that the ledge has been used as a highway by denizens of the Underdark. Bran's trail continues along the ledge, away from what is probably a city of derro. In doing so, they discover a fiery lake (the source of the magma) and also intrude upon some of the area's skirmishing inhabitants.

**Encounter 7:** The PCs follow the tunnel from the fiery lake for a few more hours before it abruptly falls away before another large cavern. The unique rock formations identify the location as a shrine to the cave-goddess Beltar. Two huge portals on the far side of the chamber are covered with powerful wards to prevent passage or even divination. An unusual rock formation provides a bridge over a field of sharp stalagmites to the promontory where Bran, Aodhan, and their zombie servants prepare to sacrifice Taran to gain the power they believe will allow them to bypass the wards and penetrate beyond the doors. The PC who deals the killing blow to Bran is afflicted by a powerful curse called down with his dying breath.

**Encounter 8:** The PCs investigate the cavern, finding a pool of Oerthblood (a potent elemental substance). Those who drink from the pool have a vision in which they communicate with an elder spirit of the land, the protector of the lost artifact that Aodhan and Bran sought. The spirit can clue them in to some of the activities of the cult of Demogorgon, but it will probably also leave them with many more unanswered questions.

**Conclusion:** The PCs return to Tobinsford and collect their reward from Clive Orbison, if applicable. If they rescued Taran from sacrifice, they receive the favor of Sir Andros and others around town. Finally, one of the PCs has most likely gained a very frustrating curse, which he or she will certainly want to find out how to lift.

## Preparation for Play

Successful tracking plays a paramount role in this scenario; DMs are encouraged to emphasize the rugged, unexplored wilderness outside Tobinsford as often as possible in Encounter One and also to not let players overestimate their own resources, especially if no Rangers are in the party. You should also ask players to preroll 2 or 3 Listen and Spot checks before play. Finally, light sources will be an important issue during Encounter Seven, so you should keep track of who is holding them and how much light they provide.

A suggested timeline to fit the scenario into a four-hour time slot is as follows:

- Intro/Gathering info in Tobinsford: 45 minutes
- Interaction/Combat at Colm's: 45 minutes
- Split Rock Valley: 30 minutes
- Underdark/Magma Lake: 45 minutes
- Combat with Bran/finding Taran: 45 minutes
- Fuilmere: 15 minutes
- Conclusion/ARs: 15 minutes

## Introduction

*Nearly a year has passed since the Pale's reclamation of Tenh; during these months the Theocracy has achieved equilibrium unseen since the onset of the Greyhawk Wars. In such relative serenity, one might expect news of any kind to spread quickly across the land, but even echoes from the land of dust are few and infrequent; the tranquility seemed to be a lasting one. However, as with the former Duchy, the land cannot hold its breath forever. The silence is soon broken as you and many others are attracted to the hamlet of Tobinsford in the far eastern end of the Prelacy of Landrigard—attracted by rumors of the discovery of gold in the mountains.*

*Tobinsford embodies the very essence of a frontier town; here there are no paved streets, no teeming marketplace, no monster-filled sewers, no dark alleys where assassins might lurk, and certainly no awe-inspiring cathedrals dedicated to Pholtus. Indeed, the village's chief feature is rustic simplicity. With a population of perhaps 100, the needs of its residents are more clearly defined here than in the Pale's large metropolises. Despite its size, the presence of wealth in Tobinsford is evidenced by an intricately carved stone bridge over the swift Velk River east of the village; a carved plaque on the bridge indicates it was built less than a year ago. Among the mostly wood and thatched roof dwellings can be seen a general store, a two-storied wooden structure (obviously an inn or tavern), and a new building under construction just across the road from the inn. Additionally, an impressive tower stands on a hill in the near distance that also looks newly built and quite sturdy. The town, founded by a trapper shortly after the founding of the Pale itself, is situated far enough from Landrigard to enjoy considerable freedom, yet far enough from the Rakers and the wild that its inhabitants still feel safe. People walk the streets securely despite the absence of soldiers or city guards. Pigs, chickens, and goats feed lazily in the summer sun—late to come this year and probably short to stay, but blessedly welcome for the*

*moment. Grubby Flan children tumble among the small blue and yellow flowers coming into bloom amid the green grasses. For some people, Tobinsford may well represent that last stop on a journey across the Pale, even a place to settle down; for others, though, the journey has just begun.*

*This once-sleepy outpost has become a veritable hive of activity, as professional prospectors, other adventurers, and self-described treasure hunters have turned the riverside village into a hub for forays into the Rakers and to riches untold. A new visitor can scarcely avoid the nearby Rakers peering down ominously and the nagging suspicion that perhaps the mountains themselves are still holding their breath with one more secret left to divulge.*

Entering Tobinsford around noon, the PCs quickly realize that this tiny hamlet has been nearly overrun by an influx of miners, both professional and otherwise. If the rumors of gold in the hills are true, this could be the calm before the storm. In such a small town, the most obvious place to go for information is typically the local tavern, and Tobinsford proves no exception to the rule. PCs identify the local inn, the Bounding Stag, with little effort.

## Local Tensions

As PCs move toward the center of town, read or paraphrase the following:

*Mules and ponies, laden with mining equipment, provisions, and colored and numbered wooden stakes, surround the small inn. The animals are attended to (or perhaps unnerved) with chaotic abandon by a dozen ruggedly dressed men and one woman, who are securing bundles with rope, consulting wrinkled maps, and otherwise boasting to one another as to who will unearth the biggest lode. Their frenzy either gives credence to the rumors of gold or suggests an amusing and elaborate hoax.*

*As you take in the scene, harsh voices erupt from just beyond the inn; soon, four men appear. Three of them—dressed like the others outside the inn—are arguing with the fourth, a Flan male wearing weathered leather armor and small furs and bearing two swords at his waist. He carries a pair of broken wooden markers and is followed by a small gray-and-black badger.*

This scene unfolds at whatever distance necessary to prevent the PCs from interrupting.

*A spokesman for the three hustles to catch up with the Flan man and calls to him as they reach the partially constructed building, "Hey! Listen to me! You can't go interferin' with our claim like that! We got rights!!"*

*The Flan man stops in mid-stride and whirls on his heel, his voice a raspy growl: "Rights?!? You blasted adventurers and your precious gold!! You trample over my snares, scare off whatever game is nearby, leave your campfire unattended—twice—stake your claim on the only patch of belladonna around for miles and then have the gall to whine about 'rights'? You have no respect for the land! Just stay off the mountain!!" With that he turns and continues moving away.*

*With a nervous tremor in his voice, the spokesman for the three continues, "H-hey...you can't do this...we got a claim note from the Church of the One True P-," but before he can finish his sentence the Flan man spins back once more, lets the wooden stakes clatter to the street, and reaches for his swords. He does not need to draw them, however, as the three men are quickly cowed by a frothy snarl from the badger. They retreat into the safety of the inn. The Flan male squats, coos in the badger's ear, picks up the stakes, and continues toward the south side of town with a grim expression on his face. The badger scuttles along behind.*

The Flan man is named Dack Splintheel; if the PCs wish to talk with him, his starting attitude is Unfriendly, as he wants nothing to do with anyone who looks remotely like an adventurer. A -2 circumstance penalty is applied to a Diplomacy check for each obviously Pholtan PC (holy symbols, etc), as Dack has strong feelings against the Church of the One True Path. PCs managing to sway his attitude to Friendly can get him to agree to speak with them shortly as he has an errand to run first. He can meet them at the inn in 30 minutes. He introduces himself (anyone in town can confirm his name) and quickly continues on his errand.

If PCs don't fare so well in their Diplomacy and only manage to make him Indifferent, he ignores them and continues on his way; if they fail miserably and he remains Hostile, allow each PC a Knowledge (local - Nyrond and her environs) or Wisdom check (DC 10) to recall that public brawling and fighting in the streets are punishable offenses in any Pale city.

🦊 **Dack Splintheel:** male human (Flan) Rgr4; Craft (alchemy) +5, Diplomacy -2, Heal +5, Intimidate +6, Profession (trapper) +8, Spot +7, Survival +9.

Once PCs have reached the inn, read or paraphrase the following:

*A wooden post stuck into the ground at the construction site across from the inn has nailed to it an official request to erect an establishment offering "unique entertainments" including gambling and female companionship.*

While the PCs read this sign, the townsfolk scowl and grumble to each other about the place as they walk by. The owner and/or proprietor of the new establishment,

begrudgingly identified by locals as one A. Fynch, apparently has yet to arrive in town.

## Encounter One: Fools Rush In

As the PCs watch Dack stride away, they are greeted from behind by a male voice. Turning, they see a very lean, middle-aged, mostly Flan male of medium height with wide eyes that seem to appraise the PCs rather than welcome them to Tobinsford. He is dressed in fashionable clothes, marking him as an outsider in this tiny hamlet, and sports a ridiculous ranching hat that looks as out-of-place with his clothes as he does in Tobinsford. Behind his back, two prospectors begin to prance and cavort in mockery.

The man introduces himself as Clive Orbison, a "businessman from Eltison" and the senior partner in a new mining claim. (PCs may have encountered him previously in PAL4S-02 *Unnatural Law*.) He notes the PCs' (probable) absence of mining gear and asks with a supercilious air if they are in fact adventurers. He has something of a problem, he says, and has tried recruiting adventurers all morning with no success. Everyone else seems to be interested in finding gold, while he is offering to pay gold if they can find a person: his missing mining partner. If the PCs would hear more, he invites them to lunch—on him, of course.

🦊 **Clive Orbison:** NE male human entrepreneur.

Orbison is a wealthy merchant and ex-rancher who recently lost his home and family (thanks to the harsh but just druid Eiolon, in fact: see PAL4S-02 *Unnatural Law*). The man is nothing if not resilient, though, and he has bounced back with a new get-rich scheme: gold mining. Of course, he has never done an honest day's work in his life, so he has partnered with Darrow Ennis, a more experienced miner. Orbison provides the finances and "handles the business end", while Ennis oversees the operation of the mine. That was the plan anyway, until Ennis went missing. Now Orbison wants to fix any "monster problems" there might be up at his claim, and find a new partner he can make do the dirty work.

**Personality:** Orbison is one of the greediest, shallowest, and most venal men the PCs will ever meet. He is also incredibly well connected in the eastern Pale, with many black market contacts and even some high-placed friends in the Church and the civil service, whose favor he curries with gifts and flattery. Orbison's selfishness and condescension know no bounds. To his peers, the man is known as a cheating swindler, but most of them continue to do business with him, as he seems to have an incredible ability to make money for himself and everybody around him—when he's not stabbing them in the back.

**Description:** Orbison is a very lean man of mostly Flan stock, of medium height, with a slightly receding hairline and staring, even captivating eyes. Although he dresses

fashionably in quality clothes, his buffoonish affectation is a “stylish” ranching hat (which generates mocking remarks behind his back).

## **The Bounding Stag**

Read or paraphrase the following once PCs enter the inn:

*The interior of the two-storied tavern is warm and cozy. Most of what might constitute a lunchtime crowd in this small village was likely the collection of prospectors seen outside moments ago; the tavern is now nearly devoid of patrons. There are seven tables and 12 more stools at the L-shaped bar. Behind the bar stands a brawny man of perhaps forty winters with mixed Oeridian features. Moving from table to table clearing dishes is a young raven-haired girl not much past twenty. The three men seen arguing with the Flan man earlier occupy one table, three teenage girls lazily eating stew occupy another table, and a third table seats four men resembling the frenzied people loading their mules outside. These four men are shoveling food into their mouths as if in a hurry to get somewhere. The other four tables and all seats at the bar are open.*

The Oeridian girl, Lorna, soon approaches and takes everyone's order. She smiles at the PCs but raises her eyebrow at Orbison as he removes his hat, exposing a receding hairline, and continues with his explanation:

- He and his erstwhile partner, one Darrow Ennis, staked a claim one week ago. Orbison describes himself as the “executive director” of the claim, while Ennis is its “operational director”. Several times in the past two weeks, a man or a team of men went into the hills without leaving a representative in town to manage affairs, and disputes over the validity of claims were the typical result. Orbison's plan was to remain here and monitor claims from newcomers while Ennis personally secured their own.
- Ennis was supposed to stake the claim and report back to Tobinsford two days ago, so they could validate the registration. No one has seen Ennis since he left town. (He took two days getting to the claim via Colm's place, spent the third day staking and partially working the claim, and was supposed to travel back that night; however, he struck gold and spent the third and fourth day working the claim; he was then attacked on the fifth day, which is today; PCs will learn more about his disappearance during Encounter Four.)
- Orbison does not know what happened to Ennis. Indeed, he does not even know where the claim is, having trusted Ennis to such “minor details”. He knows Ennis was headed up toward “Colm's place” in the hills. He suggests PCs ask some of these other “dirt merchants” if they know anything about where

the claims are. He wants to hire the PCs to investigate Ennis's disappearance, find him (or his remains), report on the condition of the claim, secure it from any claim-jumpers, and “deal with” any “monster trouble” that may threaten it. Orbison is vague on this last point, presuming that “you adventuring types” have “your own monster-lingo” for such situations.

- Finally, Orbison explains in a condescending tone that “time is money,” and that if the PCs accept his offer, he would like them to get started immediately rather than waiting for a fresh start in the morning.

He offers to pay in gold, of course (see “Treasure” at the end of this encounter for his maximum offer). If the PCs accept, he thanks them with an obsequious flourish, urges them to finish lunch, and invites them to meet him at his office, the Circle K, in an hour. He will prepare the claim documentation for them in that hour. He provides directions, then rises to depart, actually leaving PCs to pay the tab.

Orbison does radiate faint evil, which may influence the PCs' dealings with him if they detect it. Remember that radiating evil is not a crime; the PCs may be justifiably suspicious but have no grounds to arrest or fight Orbison.

**Development:** Time is important, in theory, since Aodhan and Bran are planning to sacrifice Taran and the PCs should try to stop it as early as they can. But since the PCs don't know about that part of the plot yet, you should allow the timeline to be flexible. Let the PCs can spend as much time in Tobinsford as the players want.

## **Inhabitants of the Bounding Stag**

PCs may now finish lunch and try to Gather Information on their situation; the current occupants of the inn and what they know is summarized below:

- **Greddis:** male human (Oeridian) Exp4 (Cook); Diplomacy +8, Profession (cook) +10.
- **Description and Personality:** A 44-year-old veteran of the Greyhawk Wars who relocated to the Pale from Nyronnd to raise his daughter after the death of his wife. He is a stout, barrel-chested man with a deep, hearty laugh who prides himself on feeding guests until they are full. He is a skilled cook and more skilled drinker, who keeps an impressive collection of alcohol in his cellar in case the PCs ask for something exotic.
- **What He Knows:** A lucky miner discovered gold in the Rakers a month ago. Since then, dozens of fortune seekers have descended on tiny Tobinsford. Most of these men have formed teams and struck out into the mountains to stake their claims. A few diehards even ventured off alone. Tobinsford's parish priest, a Pholtan acolyte named Eamon (“AY-mohn”), has been tasked by the Church to oversee all

claims. He usually comes in for lunch but hasn't been in today. The town constable is Marlin Spurlock, a member of the Pale Patrol who comes through about once a month. Greddis describes both men for the PCs and provides directions to their offices if asked. Spurlock is a dead end.

With a successful Gather Information check, Greddis reveals the following. (**Note:** if PCs explicitly ask questions about a listed topic, no die roll is required.)

- DC 5: There was a report of two orcs sighted in the foothills just over a week ago but no one in town has taken it seriously, as it was reported by Old Spooner, Tobinsford's eldest resident and its most infamous drunkard.
- DC 10: An old frontiersman named Colm lives up in the hills about 20 miles southeast of Tobinsford. He might know something about the disappearances, as his place lies in the same direction that the miners have been heading. Greddis can give PCs directions to Colm's property if asked; if the PCs left now, they could probably reach Colm's place by sundown, but they could also rest along the way or wait until morning to leave.
- DC 12: Clive Orbison arrived from Landrigard about three weeks ago. He spends most of his time shuffling between his seedy office and Eamon's cottage. He has been in and out of here all morning bothering prospectors and other adventurers.
- DC 14: Most of the claims are, he believes, located near a long valley, well up into the mountains. He recalls that one area of the surrounding hills is reputed to be haunted; this story, vague as it is, has persisted for as long as he can remember.
- DC 16: There are rumors of miners disappearing in the mountains; he isn't sure how many. The miners, a superstitious lot, refuse to talk about it. Greddis asks PCs not to tell his daughter Lorna (the dark-haired serving-girl) about the disappearances, as he does not want to frighten her unduly.
- DC 18: Those hills beyond Colm's place are pretty rugged; he suggests the PCs make sure they can Track. If not, he reluctantly recommends a local trapper, Dack Splintheel, who is as charismatic as a dungheap but talented nonetheless. Dack often comes down to Tobinsford to sell pelts and pick up supplies. (Dack was the surly man outside with the badger companion.)
- DC 20: He recalls tales about an old druid who lived up in the hills. Greddis does not know if this is truth or rumor, or if there is still a druid up there, especially after "those trials two years ago". (The Church put several druids on trial for concealing the evil Scars of Nerull.)

- DC 22: He has heard that "visiting" with old Colm is more difficult than it sounds, and the PCs might consider bringing him a gift as a show of respect. Greddis has not seen the old man in years but remembers that he used to like Dawnwood Ale. He has two small kegs of the ale in the cellar if the PCs wish to purchase one or both of them (20 gp each).

 **Lorna:** female human (Oeridian) Com2; Diplomacy +7.

- **Description and Personality:** The daughter of Greddis, she is 22 years old with curly black locks and an angular face. She inherited the charm of her father's laugh and has adapted well to the increase in patrons over the last few weeks.
- **What She Knows:** Lorna knows the basic information offered by her father, but he has not told her of the disappearances so as not to frighten her. If PCs mention Brother Eamon, she starts, suddenly remembering that he came over earlier and asked for his lunch to be delivered to his office, but she forgot to do it. She looks worriedly at the patrons still eating lunch and implores the PCs to deliver Brother Eamon's lunch for her. If the PCs agree, she wraps up his lunch of hot stew and thanks them profusely.

**The three teenage girls** range in age from 16-19 and are all daughters of local farmers. All they can talk about is someone called Taran, but they do so by way of not-too-secretive glances and loud comparisons toward all male PCs: which PCs looks most like Taran, which has his build, hair, eyes, etc. If any male PC is clearly a paladin by virtue of heavy armor and a Pholtan holy symbol, the girls warm to him and readily discuss the following:

- That man the PCs were having lunch with (Orbison) is "nasty", "bald", and "gross". They hope the PCs aren't his friends.
- Taran, over whom they gush effusively, is a squire to Sir Andros; a DC 10 Knowledge (nobility and royalty) or DC 15 Knowledge (local - Nyrond and her environs) check confirms Andros's standing in the community.
- Taran is being groomed for something special.
- Taran passed through here just yesterday; he said he was on his way to visit his father for the first time in two years.
- "Taran is so cute when he talks in his sleep."

The girl who utters this last comment provokes the surprised wrath of the other two. The three immediately erupt into a scathing catfight that is broken up by

Greddis, who hauls them outside in a bundle and fetches their parents.

### Visiting Brother Eamon

If the PCs have agreed to deliver lunch to Brother Eamon, Lorna directs them to a small cottage down the road a bit. (Greddis can provide the same directions.) A knock at the door or verbal solicitation is met with a shout of “Come in!” Once PCs enter, read or paraphrase the following:

*The tiny cottage is strewn with stacks of paperwork: on the floor, on the windowsill, on chairs and on the small oaken desk, behind which sits a young man in the robes of the Pholtan clergy. His desk is completely covered by paperwork at precarious angles, as if one more page or a small breeze would send the pile tumbling to the floor. Stacked in the corner behind him are small bundles of wooden stakes and five jars of paint. A huge ledger is opened on his lap.*

He does not rise to greet the PCs, but thanks them profusely for bringing his lunch (if they did), which he asks them to set on the corner of his desk after clearing away a very small area of it.

☛ **Parish Priest Eamon (“AY-mohn”):** male human Clr3 (Pholtus)

- **Description and Personality:** He is young for his position, scarcely 20. He didn’t expect to wrestle with this much paperwork, but he is working hard and sleeping little. Of mostly Oeridian ancestry, he has unkempt, light brown hair and bags under his eyes. His fingers are almost completely black with ink and paint. When he speaks, it is with the jittery quickness of sleep deprivation. He is genuinely thankful for the PCs bringing his lunch, but once they start asking questions, he shifts his mountain of paperwork to help the PCs and promptly misplaces his lunch.
- **What He Knows:** There is indeed gold in the hills. Over thirty claims have been registered thus far, with over half of those coming in the past six days. Most have yielded a measurable amount of gold in nugget and flake form. He is overwhelmed by the paperwork. Eamon hasn’t been able to report to his superior in Landrigard, as he has scarcely slept in the last 48 hours, much less been able to prepare spells or send word to Landrigard. He swears it is Lorna who is keeping him alive, and she alone should get all of the gold from the Rakers. He laments the insensitivity and avarice (very non-Pholtan attributes) of the miners and prospectors. Miners have been waking him at all hours demanding to register a claim, and interrupting his meals, his prayers, his sanity. He wishes he had an assistant. If asked about the missing miners, he cannot confirm

that anyone is missing, but his very efficient ledger indicates that 14 claims are unverified. Specifically, he refers to the process: a claim is registered, colored and numbered wooden stakes are given to mark the claimant’s area, the claim is marked, then the registering parties report back (under a *zone of truth*) to verify that they marked it. Thus, those 14 parties have yet to report back for whatever reason. He cynically speculates that the miners have been attacking one another for their claims. He resists the idea that “monsters” are involved or that the hills are haunted. Finally, though he does not know where any specific claim is located until it is reported back to him, he will confirm for PCs succeeding on a DC 10 Diplomacy check that the stakes belonging to the Orbison/Ennis claim are painted blue.

### Sealing the Deal and Stocking Up

Once PCs finish with Eamon, they may go to Orbison’s office to collect the necessary claim paperwork; he gives PCs a physical description of Ennis at this time and pays them half of their agreed-upon fee. There is also a well-stocked general store in town if PCs need supplies. Prices are marked up 10% more of book value. The PCs may depart at any time.

### Hiring Dack to Track

A final meeting here may take place with Dack. If the PCs require his services, he is willing to Track for a fee (10gp per day, the first day payable immediately, the rest upon returning to Tobinsford) as well as an equal share of any loot and a percentage of the claim. He will not participate in combat with anything other than normal beasts, and then only to save his own life. The PCs are hiring a tracker, not a martyr.

If Dack is hired, his starting attitude is Indifferent. Along the way to Colm’s place, he walks about 15 feet ahead of the party with his badger and does not speak unless spoken to. If questioned as to his favored enemy as a ranger, his curt response is “employers who break promises and do not pay”. PCs may note his curious habit of stopping to examine and collect small samples of a variety of flora on the trail, but about this he offers no explanation. PCs utilizing Diplomacy to improve his foul attitude may learn the following:

- **Friendly:** His badger’s name is Weasley. Dack advises PCs to let him know immediately if they somehow manage to get poisoned, as he has some skill in its remedies. He reminds PCs that he can’t get paid if they die. There used to be a human druid who guarded this part of the mountains, but he left for parts unknown about a year ago—Dack actually seems pleased about this.
- **Helpful:** Dack’s parents were brutally slain by the alien plant-creatures, the Rex Aartuk. He blames the Church of the One True Path for failing to anticipate

and stop the creatures, so Dack is bitter toward both the Church and plants in general. The druid (mentioned under "Friendly" above) briefly entertained an apprentice, also human, but Dack has not seen him in months. He presumes the apprentice to be either dead or gone, as he doubts any nature priest would tolerate the influx of careless miners to the area.

**Treasure:**

Advance payment from Clive Orbison.

APL 2: L: 0 gp; C: 50 gp; M: 0 gp

APL 4: L: 0 gp; C: 75 gp; M: 0 gp

APL 6: L: 0 gp; C: 100 gp; M: 0 gp

APL 8: L: 0 gp; C: 156 gp; M: 0 gp

## Encounter Two: A Vigorous Ascent

*No roads lead east from Tobinsford, but a well-worn path winds its way toward the rugged mountains that squat in front of the horizon. Hawks circle in the sky, occasionally diving suddenly for prey attempting to hide in the tall grasses. Bushes rustle in the wind and with the movements of smaller animals.*

*The rough path climbs, twists, and dips repeatedly for a score of miles or more, each hill higher than the last, finally approaching the first few true peaks. It guides you up a steep slope and between two crags into a secluded canyon dominated by a long, thin lake stretching far to the northwest and southeast, fog clinging low to its shores. Streams flow into the lake from ravines in the lower western ridge and tumble out of hanging valleys atop the high eastern cliffs. Where the lake bends out of sight to the north, a few buildings cluster above its far shore; a trail of smoke rising from the chimney of the largest indicates the valley is inhabited. Above the eastern end of the valley, massive angular peaks thrust into the sky, their misty, tree-covered slopes threatening to disgorge hordes of orcs, gnolls, or worse.*

*At this latitude, the Rakers form a mighty rampart hundreds of miles wide, and no human or dwarf known in the Pale or Ratik has ever found passage all the way through. For those seeking refuge from the long arm of the Church, this is about as remote as it gets. Anyone living this far from the regular patrol routes must certainly be able to take care of himself.*

Halfway to Colm's place, Dack (if present) pauses to note something curious on the trail (this should otherwise be a DC 20 Spot check): a heavy boot print in the dirt. The print clearly indicates someone or something wearing

mail boots and/or carrying a heavy load (this was the squire Taran, on his way to his father's place shortly before being attacked).

The valley is 2,500 feet above sea level; the crests directly east of it rise to 6,000 feet. Even higher peaks are visible beyond. In early autumn, the weather in the valley is generally mild, with cool daytime temperatures dropping to near freezing at night. The winter snows should not arrive for another couple of months, but rainfall is frequent and mists tend to settle in the valley beginning in the late afternoon.

Colm's homestead includes a main building, a high barn, a covered forge, an outhouse, and a storage shed, all made of logs with sod roofs and dirt floors. Small fields and a vegetable garden lie behind the main house. The area around the buildings is extremely muddy. Hogs and chickens, rather than being penned, have the run of the place. The homestead is built near the lake, above the seasonal high-water level. (PCs with relevant Knowledge skills know that the level of the lake rises several feet each spring due to runoff from the surrounding mountains.) A canoe is tied up at a small dock; the boys take it out on the lake and up the navigable streams to fish.

The main house sports a huge stone fireplace and chimney halfway down one side, in which a generous blaze is maintained at all times, causing smoke to hang throughout the poorly ventilated interior. The roof slopes from the higher western wall down to the east. There are no interior walls, although a log ramp along the wall opposite the fireplace runs up to a loft where Colm and his chosen bedmate for the evening sleep in huge piles of animal furs. The dirt floor is strewn with pine needles and bed materials for the rest of the family; a filthy canvas pegged to the wall on either side of the single entrance is the only shelter from the elements. There is no door.

During the day, Colm's sons (four of them, ranging in age from six to 16) are fishing from the dock and tending the fields, while his daughters and wives (15 altogether!) work in the garden, spin and weave inside the house, and take care of other chores. Colm himself sits on a great wooden chair at the back of the house with a wooden tankard of home brew. He never leaves his chair during the day except to stagger to the outhouse or grab and paw the nearest wife.

At night most of the household sleeps (Colm and a wife or two in the loft, the rest on bundles of straw on the floor), though there is almost always at least one person awake tending the fire or otherwise active.

**Creatures:** Aside from a half-dozen dogs and some livestock, Colm and his family are the only inhabitants of the homestead.

## All APLs

🦁 **Colm:** male Flan human Rgr3; AL CN, Craft (blacksmithing) +6, Sense Motive +7, Profession (trapper) +6, Survival +7.

🦁 **Colm's Family Members:** Com1 and Exp1 (all basic homesteading skills represented).

🦁 **Colm:** CN male human Rgr3 frontier settler.

Fed up with the myriad restrictions of life in the Pale, Colm long ago established a homestead in the wild mountains above Tobinsford where he believes himself to be outside the Theocrat's jurisdiction. (Untrue; charges of tax evasion were filed against Colm a few years ago, but the understaffed Pale Patrol simply has not followed up.) This solitary lodging over the years became the social center for a far-flung group of individuals and families who shared his desire to live outside the law. Colm now has eight wives of varying ages, four sons and more daughters, and a sizable number of goats and chickens and as many pigs as wives. He is the undisputed headman of the mountain folk, although he gives proper deference to Eiolon and is secretly proud of Bran for showing an interest in the druid's craft (though he knows nothing of Bran's unsavory appetites). Colm is much less pleased at the chosen profession of his eldest son Taran and does not (yet) respect the young man's growing prowess and nobility.

**Personality:** This bear of a man is grouchy, inhospitable, and uncaring of the plight of anybody in the world outside of the couple dozen folk who live within ten miles of his homestead. If people offer him enough gifts and butter him up for a while, though, and maybe do him a favor or two, he lets them sleep on his dry dirt floor overnight before chucking them out at daybreak. Colm is difficult to befriend, but once someone has done so, he will forever be at his or her side.

**Description:** Colm's signature item is his shaggy unkempt hair and beard. He is never seen without several layers of animal hides and furs and heavy boots. These days he rarely stirs from the great wooden chair at the head of his hall, depending on his children and wives to care for the animals, gardens, and household, and his bloated belly shows it.

**Development:** If Dack is with the party, he excuses himself before they reach Colm's place, citing philosophical differences with the old man. Dack tells PCs that he is going to forage in the woods for supper and check some traps and will be back before dawn. "Don't get yourselves killed before I return."

If PCs approach the homestead during the day without concealing themselves, they are quickly spotted and Colm warned of approaching strangers. The boys' reactions range from excited to curious to irritated, while the girls and women stay quiet and try to avoid notice, having often been disciplined by Colm for interfering in men's business. In general, all family members begin

with Indifferent attitudes, but Colm's starting attitude is Unfriendly. He dislikes strangers.

If the PCs sneak up on the homestead or otherwise don't let the inhabitants know of their approach well in advance, all attitudes are shifted one rank toward Hostile.

PCs will have to stand at the entrance to the house and use social skills, magic, or other appropriate means to make Colm friendly enough to invite them inside for conversation. If Colm notices anyone that he associates with "the law" (A PC visibly affiliated with the Church of the One True Path, the Prelatal Army, etc.), they suffer a -4 circumstance penalty to Diplomacy and Intimidate checks as he assumes they are here to hassle him. If PCs offer a gift of some sort, they receive a +4 circumstance bonus to the same checks. (As the DM, you also have liberty to apply other circumstance modifiers as you wish.) **DM note:** Roleplay with Colm and this accompanying Diplomacy check should not come down to a simple die roll. The PCs have the chance here to interact with someone living on the fringes of the Pale who has strong opinions on freedom and The Law. If PCs are belligerent and territorial, then certainly let the die roll decide their fate; but if PCs genuinely try to roleplay with Colm, feel free to feed them at least some of the below information, grudgingly, even if poor rolling might otherwise dictate a swift kick in the rear.

Colm knows the following, though his concept of time and numbers is often blurry:

- About a dozen men of varying dispositions have come through the valley in the past few weeks, singularly or in pairs, on their way to stake gold claims. Some have been friendly, while others have ignored the homestead altogether.
- Almost all of the prospectors headed south, but one of them, a fellow named Ennis, went north to Split Rock Valley.
- Ennis was a likeable enough fellow. He brought a case of whiskey as a gift for Colm, showing the proper respect that has eluded some of the others.
- Colm advised Ennis against prospecting in the haunted valley to the north, but the man was determined to work in an area that had not yet attracted fortune seekers.
- Split Rock Valley is known to be haunted. Eiolon, the old druid who befriended Colm when he first settled here, warned him often enough about the ravenous nature spirits up there that love nothing more than to suck on human bones. Colm remembers the druid mentioning something about unseelie, but he doesn't know what that means. ["Unseelie" describes vicious or unfriendly fey.]

- Eiolon apparently exerted some sort of influence to keep the spirits from entering Colm's valley. Colm doesn't know what bargain Eiolon had to strike, but he was grateful enough to offer one of his sons (Bran) as an apprentice to the druid when he began to talk about looking for a successor. Bran is about twenty years old.
- Since beginning his apprenticeship, Bran spends a lot of time away from the homestead. On those rare occasions where he does visit home, he seems withdrawn and close-lipped. Colm expects that carrying the burden of knowledge of the Old Lore does that to you. Eiolon also seemed distant and very sad the last time he was here.
- A year or so ago, Eiolon visited the homestead to tell Colm he was going away to the west and Bran would be taking over his watch on the central Rakers. Colm asked why he was leaving, but the druid just said, "dust returns to dust".
- Colm's eldest son, Taran, ran away about two years ago. He apparently did not appreciate the freedom the family has by staying outside the reach of the law. In fact, the fool boy went and weaseled his way into the service of some high-falutin' knight down in Tobinsford. Taran is three years older than Bran.
- Taran sometimes hires one of the trappers around Tobinsford to take a message up to Colm. The last one arrived a few weeks ago, saying that Taran was planning to come home to "have a talk" with his father. About what, Colm doesn't know.
- Colm expected the boy to show up by now. He expects Taran probably had to follow his knight around "stealing taxes from honest regular folks". (A DC 15 Sense Motive check reveals that Colm is actually quite disappointed that his son hasn't yet arrived, despite his sarcasm.)

Once the PCs have obtained the available information, move on to Encounter Three A.

### A Second Chance: Colm's Son

If the PCs are unable to make Colm friendly, they may still be able to convince one of the boys working outside the house to talk to them. Randal is the oldest of Colm's remaining sons, at sixteen years. If the PCs make him Friendly, he can provide all of the above information, although his recounting shows his hero worship of his older brother Taran. If they can make him Helpful, and if they ask specific questions about Bran, Randal can also recount a story of coming upon Bran some months ago in the woods at the other end of the lake. Bran had come upon an injured doe and, rather than

healing her, was throwing stones at her that exploded in fire when they hit her. This terrified Randal, who hid and then ran off without being noticed. He never mentioned the incident to anybody, and Bran never confronted him, so he is pretty sure nobody else knows about it.

**Development:** In the event Colm invites PCs into his home, the next encounter is Three A. Use Encounter Three B instead if the PCs have to question Randal, or if they avoid the homestead altogether.

## Encounter Three A: Attack On The Homestead

The PCs might get advance warning about this attack, so adjust the description of the approaching monster(s) as needed.

Use this text for APLs 2 and 4.

*Your parley comes to an abrupt halt as the tarp covering the entrance to Colm's home is ripped aside. Snarling and slavering, an immense black-furred wolf as big as a horse charges into the building, knocking over a brazier and sending coals flying in all directions. Jaws snap and eyes flash as the beast sizes up its prey. Colm's wives scream and run for his loft as the old man rises from his chair, croaking, "Old Rendfang! Eiolon said he'd convinced him not to hunt in my valley! Boys, light up torches and grab my axe!"*

At APL 4, Old Rendfang's mate (only slightly smaller) is right on his heels.

Use this text for APLs 6 and 8:

*Your parley comes to an abrupt halt as the front wall of Colm's home explodes in a shower of splinters. Ropy arms flail about a looming mass of leaves and vines oozing with a disgustingly dark and viscous sap. The nightmarish creature drags itself into the building on stumpy legs as thick and wooden as tree trunks. Colm's wives scream and run for his loft as the old man rises from his chair, croaking, "Old Man Gloombog! Eiolon said he'd never leave the fens! Boys, light up torches and grab my axe!"*

Eiolon had negotiated a truce on behalf of Colm with this fearsome creature from Split Rock Valley/Wolf Lake, with each agreeing never to enter the other's territory. Bran has now gone and disturbed that peace. Angered at his brother's defiance, the fallen druid used his abilities to convince the wolf (or shambling mound) that the prospectors invading his valley/hunting grounds were there because of Colm. Whipped into frenzy, the creature(s) made its way to the homestead. Bran either lurks nearby using a combination of his Druidic Woodland Stride ability and *pass without trace/obscuring mist* which resembles lake fog (at APLs 2 and 4) or circles over the homestead in hawk form (APLs 6 and 8), anticipating the coming carnage with wicked glee.

**Creatures:** At APL 2, the beast in question is Old Rendfang, terror of wolf packs for leagues around. At APL 4, his mate joins him for the killing spree. At APLs 6 and 8, Bran goes for the big-time player instead, coaxing Old Man Gloombog out of the slough in the hills where he normally dwells.

#### APL 2 (EL 3)

🐾 **Old Rendfang:** dire wolf; hp 45; see *Monster Manual* page 65.

#### APL 4 (EL 5)

🐾 **Old Rendfang and mate:** dire wolf (2); hp 54, 45; see *Monster Manual* page 65.

#### APL 6 (EL 7)

🐾 **Old Man Gloombog:** shambling mound; hp 72; see *Monster Manual* page 222.

#### APL 8 (EL 9)

🐾 **Old Man Gloombog:** advanced shambling mound; hp 156; see *Combat Appendix* – APL 8.

#### Tactics:

At APL 2-4, the wolves try to move to the house unheard, bursting in to catch the humans within unawares. The PCs may make Listen checks to hear the sound outside just before the tarp is torn away; these checks are opposed by the wolves' Move Silently checks (+4). Once the wolves are engaged, they are unsubtle combatants, choosing the nearest opponent (or the first that rushes them). If both wolves are present, they team up on a foe, flanking when possible (even provoking attacks of opportunity to get the flank). The wolves do not continue savaging an opponent once it stops fighting back; they recognize that there are many foes in the area, and they are attempting to drive away rivals, not hunt. Add Colm, Randal, and a few other NPCs to the battlefield, so the PCs are not the only targets. A wolf will flee when it is reduced to 10 or fewer hit points.

At APL 6-8, the shambler also attempts to approach the house unheard. PCs again may make Listen checks opposed by the shambler's Move Silently check (+8 or +10) to avoid being surprised. It chooses its opponents exactly as the wolves above. If the shambler gets its Improved Grab, it will use its full Grapple bonus until it is wounded by another opponent, at which time it will begin taking –20 on its Grapple checks so it can attack the other opponent with its second slam. If its Improved Grab ever fails to establish a hold, the next attack on that opponent will be an Awesome Blow. It uses Power Attack only on PCs without visible armor. It is canny enough to know it can't outrun its enemies, so it fights to the death.

Colm's boys run to the hearth to light brands, and one fetches a battleaxe from the far corner of the building for his father. They then stay back from the fight, hoping that their feeble fires will keep the monsters away from

them, or at least that their bloated old sire can lift his axe. Colm will not intervene in the fight until all of the PCs are down. However, he will offer comments on the PCs' abilities during the fight, only grudgingly complimenting the most stupendous feats.

**Development:** If the PCs successfully defend Colm's home, the frontiersman's opinion of them improves dramatically. His attitude changes to Friendly, and he offers the PCs his hospitality for the night – this means a bowl of rabbit stew and a place to sleep on the floor. (Normally the boys fight over positions near the fire, but tonight he shoos them away in favor of his guests.) Randal looks for an opportunity to catch a PC away from the family in order to tell his story about Bran, but does not press the issue if there isn't a good time for it.

However, should any PC cause damage to Colm's property or harm to one of his family members in the course of the fight, Colm becomes/remains Unfriendly when it is over, refusing to converse further and ordering them out of the homestead immediately. Colm has no time for ruffians who do not respect his property. Even if only one PC offended him, all must go.

If the attackers manage to drop all of the PCs, Colm and his boys eventually drive them away and stabilize any PCs who cling to life, at the cost of one son's life (Randal, whom the monsters were specifically told to kill). Colm will be devastated at the loss of kin but still offers his hospitality to those who fought on his behalf and answers questions to the extent of his knowledge as described in the previous encounter.

After observing the fight, Bran lingers briefly to get a sense of these people who spoiled his revenge. He then flies/walks northeast to rejoin his gang. The PCs might discover that one of the hawks circling in the sky (a common sight in the mountains) is actually a wild-shaped undead druid—involving a difficult Spot check and a Knowledge (nature) check, at your discretion—or, at lower APLs, make the DC 21 Spellcraft check to notice the *obscuring mist* and realize that they are being observed. If the PCs notice Bran, they might try to force a fight; don't let it happen, as killing Bran here will ruin the narrative of this scenario, and it will also deprive them of two important favors in the Conclusion.

If Dack accompanied the party, he returns roughly one hour after the fight and is immediately furious that he did not get to help dispatch the monster(s) (especially the shambler, since Dack hates plants).

## Encounter Three B: Wandering Monster?

This encounter is only used when the PCs did not successfully engage Colm.

- If PCs spoke with Randal instead of Colm, then Bran spotted them and waited until they left

before sending his beast. They kill Colm, Randal, and a few others before the other humans flee. Bran then releases the monster to travel back to its lair, and flies north to rejoin his comrades.

- If the PCs avoid the homestead altogether, the homestead is destroyed as above, but Bran does not become aware of their presence in the valley.

In either case, the PCs encounter the creatures from Encounter Three A at some point during their exploration in Split Rock Valley. The general tactics are the same. The creatures may have bloody muzzles/limbs, after the carnage at Colm's place.

## Encounter Four: Grim Prospects

The entrance to Split Rock Valley is a few miles north of Colm's homestead, branching off the thin game trail that leads up to Wolf Lake. A moderate Track check (DC 15) locates this trail and its branch even if the party has not befriended Colm and his family. If they have, however, his oldest boys inform the PCs that they tend to walk the extra distance to the lake in order to hunt, not wanting to tempt any spirits out of Split Rock Valley. Even if Dack is not with the party, they will still be able to follow the path left by Darrow Ennis once it branches off the main trail, as the ground is soft but his prints are five days old.

**Development:** As mentioned in Encounter One, Tracking is important, since Bran and his minions have abducted Taran and plan to sacrifice him (in Encounter Seven). It is up to the PCs to save Taran. Rather than requiring you to record how many hours the PCs spend tracking or moving, simply describe the passage of time or distance with more or less urgency.

### Old Spooner

After leaving the trail toward Split Rock Valley, the party travels east for roughly four miles through the thinning high forest before something happens. If Dack is here, he stops mid-stride, eyes the ground, and then quickly draws his swords. The badger Weasley growls and charges into the underbrush. A high-pitched yelp is soon heard as Weasley chases a grubby old man out of the trees. If Dack is not present, the PCs are hailed by a cry of "Help!" from the underbrush.

🦄 **Old Spooner:** male human (retired rogue).

The man that emerges is a decrepit old coot with long, scraggly gray hair, and wide brown eyes. He keeps smacking his lips as he speaks. He is dressed in torn and dirty commoner's clothes and identifies himself as Old Spooner ("I don't know why people call me that, though"). He is afraid of Dack and tries to hide (unsuccessfully) if the ranger is present. Old Spooner is in trouble; he got gold fever and came up by himself to

prospect. Knowing he would have to pass by Colm's place, he brought along a jug of cheap wine to appease the frontiersman but Spooner's alcoholism got the best of him; he drank the offering before he reached Colm. In desperation, he filled the empty bottle with stream water and hoped Colm would not notice. Bad idea. Colm leapt to his feet and chased Spooner into the woods. Spooner was so scared and disoriented that he quickly became lost. He spent the last 36 hours up here and is freezing cold at this altitude; he lost most of his prospecting gear and has been eating berries since yesterday. He still has a small flask of rotgut hidden on his person, though, which he sips from before going to sleep. He wants to go home but understands if the PCs don't want to waste any time escorting him.

He gratefully accepts any rations PCs are willing to donate. He begs to just travel in safety with them for a while and possibly spend the night by their campfire; then he'll be on his way back to town, if they could just show him the way.

If PCs agree, Old Spooner tells them about something very strange he saw yesterday afternoon about a mile up the trail:

- He was napping in a pile of leaves when he heard loud voices. Looking up from hiding, he saw a group of...well, he doesn't rightly know what they were, but they were man-sized, dressed in rags and hooded cloaks, and wrestling another prospector to the ground, groaning all the while in some gibberish. There were half a dozen of them and two of them were also dragging a motionless, well-dressed young man behind them. The overwhelmed prospector soon stopped moving. Old Spooner was terrified. He held his breath and waited for them to go away, but the one who seemed to be directing it all suddenly looked right at him! This person had pale skin under what looked like ratty homespun clothes and leathers and a tattered fur cloak, but the most striking feature was his eyes, so blue they looked almost white, as if drained of all color and life. Spooner thought he was done for, but the figure abruptly turned away and helped drag the motionless prospector up the trail. Since then, Spooner has been trying to move in the opposite direction, wherever it leads. He is just very distraught, lost, and most of all "thirsty".

### Orbison's Claim Site

After following the trail east for one more mile, the PCs come upon Ennis and Orbison's claim site. Read or paraphrase the following:

*The faint path has climbed steadily since leaving Colm's homestead and branching off the main trail. Dense trees have thinned and given way to outcroppings of rock dotted with pale green, star-shaped lichen. After cresting a small rise in the hill,*

*the path spills into a large vale winding ever eastward, farther away from the relative safety of the Pale's borders along the feet of peaks that rise progressively higher in the summer sky. Less than two hundred yards in the distance is an immense boulder, at least 30 feet high and half as wide, neatly hewn in two as if from the axe of a giant. This is unquestionably Split Rock Valley. However, there is no sign of Darrow Ennis or any campsite hereabouts; the entire area is conspicuously quiet.*

If the party descends into the valley, read or paraphrase the following:

*Beyond the boulder, the sound of rushing liquid can be heard in the distance, amplified by the sheer peaks on either side of the valley. The grassy, rubble-strewn floor stretches away for several miles. Just up ahead the source of the sound is revealed: a stream bisects the valley almost perfectly. It is from this valley and its adjacent peaks that the Velk River must descend into Tobinsford. Along the edge of the stream's muddy banks is a clear set of footprints leading deeper into the valley.*

PCs can easily follow the footprints east as they parallel the stream deeper into the valley. Once PCs have traveled roughly 2 miles, read or paraphrase the following:

*The footprints end at what looks like a makeshift panning operation. Scattered about the bank of the stream are mining pans, a sieve, two small trowels, and a waterskin. This part of the valley is situated in a very narrow gully where the rock walls are steep and sheer and tower overhead on either side. If this is indeed Darrow Ennis's intended claim, its treasures might yet remain untouched.*

A successful Survival check here (DC 15) accurately calculates the party's elevation at 3,000 feet. Allow them to Search the area if they wish. If Old Spooner is here, he cowers near the pans, drinks from the stream, and lets PCs go about their business. If Dack is here, he quickly moves ahead about 100 yards and scouts the area, searching for a better vantage point. Successful Search checks yield the following (Dack will not aid PCs here, asserting that he is "keeping his paycheck alive"):

- DC 15: Evidence of mining activity on both sides of the gully: the rock walls have been worked with a high-quality pick.
- DC 20: The remains of a campsite, including a collapsed tent, a fire pit (now cold), a half-eaten rabbit on the ground, eight blue numbered wooden stakes set out around the clearing (all knocked flat), a crude map of this area with the staked area delineated, more mining pans, a bloody boot, a light pick, a rumpled miner's hat and, most curious of all, a rusty bucket containing a handful of gold nuggets. Several barefooted, Medium-sized, humanoid footprints are also visible here. PCs may correctly

deduce that whoever was here (Ennis) fled and was attacked back down the trail, as witnessed by Old Spooner.

- DC 25: About 120 yards farther east (not far from where Dack would be searching) from the campsite, the PCs find a gruesome cache: a pile of entrails, plus six rotting noses, swarming with flies. (Be less explicit about this if there are children at the table or the players object.) A successful Heal check here (DC 15) determines not only that the entrails are human, but that specific organs are missing, most notably the heart and spleen. A Knowledge (arcana) or (religion) check (both at DC 20) identifies the missing organs, the entrails present and especially their arrangement on the rocks here as indicative of unspecified sacrificial rites.

**Development:** PCs may "take 20" on the above Search checks if they roll poorly on their first try, but you should reinforce a sense of urgency as time burns away.

PCs should be able to deduce a theory on what has happened to the miners, or at least to one of them. PCs should be reminded that Colm said only Ennis was set on exploring Split Rock Valley despite its legend as a haunted area; PCs will have to decide for themselves whether or not miners heading in the opposite direction from Colm's place could be falling victim to similar activity. Dack swears he has never seen anything like this in these hills before, but also admits that he has never been this far into Split Rock Valley.

When Dack scouts around (or the PCs succeed on a DC 16 Track check: firm ground and the tracks are one day old), he eventually finds three sets of bare footprints like those found near the gold nuggets leading further into the valley. He reminds PCs of the specifics of their deal; if these are the remains of Ennis, they may want to consider renegotiating his contract, as human sacrifice was not part of the bargain. In any event, since they have no idea how far they need to travel, he recommends camping at some point, if only to rest up and dispatch Old Spooner in the morning.

Once the PCs do rest (they may rest here or further along), the night passes uneventfully.

If the session is getting too intense and needs some comic relief, you can show the players how Old Spooner got his name: one random PC wakes up with the old man lying cozily and drunkenly at her/his back. For some reason, Old Spooner sleepwalks into other people's beds, has no idea that he does it, and certainly does not mean any harm or amorous intent toward anyone.

**Development:** Although they have found out what happened to Ennis and may want to return to Tobinsford for payment, the PCs should remember that Clive Orbison also hired them to deal with "monster trouble". If they continue now (by following the tracks or by blindly pushing on up the valley), proceed to Encounter

Five. Even if they return to Tobinsford and Orbison has to browbeat them into getting back up into the mountains to secure his claim, proceed to Encounter Five, but Taran will certainly be dead when the PCs reach Encounter Seven. If the PCs truly want to stop, then go to the Conclusion.

## Encounter Five: Where Angels Fear to Tread

The read-aloud text below presumes that PCs found the tracks at the campsite and continued east into the valley; if they did not find the tracks and chose to continue anyway, paraphrase the following with a careful omission of any “footprint-related” descriptions.

Additionally, the PCs are following a natural ley line—a directed flow of Oerthly energy—which will lead them to their ultimate destination. At some point during this encounter, allow PCs to make Spellcraft check (DC 20), or Knowledge (nature) at the same DC for geomancers and members of the Natural Order or a similar metagame organization, to sense the elemental energy surging beneath their feet. Members of the Natural Order who succeed on the check can identify this ley line as the Path of Grievous Ascension, which runs northeast/southwest and intersects deeper in the mountains with the Path of the Earth’s Spine (both ley lines were named and mapped by the Natural Order and are taught as part of the Order’s lore). Once the PCs discover the ley line, they can use Spellcraft (or Knowledge (nature)) instead of Survival to find the path through the wilderness.

*The footprints leading away from the gully become progressively—and inexplicably—easier to follow, as they meander in what seems to be a haphazard manner east through Split Rock Valley. After a mile the stream ceases to be a landmark. Its source can be seen snaking its way down from the higher peaks before pooling in this shallower part of the valley where the stream begins. The valley and the tracks continue to the east.*

*After another mile, the lush valley gives way to boggier terrain, low vegetation, and large, gnarled trees laden with eerie, greenish-brown moss that hangs to the ground. Movement through this area is cut in half; the humid air feels like molasses, the soft ground is dotted with long-fingered grass and pools of mud and standing water. The muck occasionally belches foul-smelling gasses and pierces the silence with its ignominious cant, as if warning the mountains of your approach.*

*The disorganized progress of the tracks belies the methodical violence of the entrails back at the gully. There is evidence of feet being dragged and leaving long, easily followed furrows in the mud, of reckless passage through low, broken tree branches,*

*and of bizarre movement among boulders followed by awkward doubling back.*

*The third mile mirrors the second, but with a marked increase in elevation as the valley begins to slope steeply upward. Movement is slow again, as if nature itself were testing human and demihuman resolve. The mountains beyond, which signal the extreme eastern end of Split Rock Valley, appear forbidding, gloomy and impenetrable. As if to underscore this point, the peaks beyond them to the north and east are still capped with snow even in high summer.*

Allow the PCs a Track check (DC 15)—or Spot if Dack is tracking—to note a new type of footprint among the ones they are following. This new set of tracks indicates a larger humanoid, definitely heavier than most men, and wearing metal-soled boots. (These belong to the half-troll Aodhan, who has come down to meet Bran and his gang; if a clever PC casts *Speak with Plants* they can learn that the tracks belong to a “big, green two-leg thing”.) These tracks continue on for one final mile.

*The ground grows firm once again as Split Rock Valley recedes below; only the hardest of travelers could still be gaining ground after such an arduous trek. The pebble-stubbed, low grasses of the valley’s eastern slope merge seamlessly with the rocky path ahead that disappears around the side of a peak.*

If the PCs left Colm’s at dawn then they have likely traveled for the better part of the day, after a brief exploration of the gully and abandoned campsite. If Dack is here, he suggests (in an uncharacteristic display of humility) that this would be an acceptable place to camp. If the PCs wish to press on, he will not argue—they might find a cave ahead in which to shelter themselves—but he insists that Old Spooner be given some food and a sense of direction and sent back to Tobinsford. He argues that Old Spooner will likely become a liability to the party. An empty cave is easily found with a DC 15 Survival check.

After the PCs camp or continue on, read or paraphrase the following:

*The rocky trail climbs resolutely around the peak ahead, then over the shoulder of another, and then another. Are you even making progress? Is your quarry any closer? After three to four hours of penetration into the peaks on narrow ledges and windswept outcroppings, at this altitude the view back toward the plains of Landrigard Prelacy is completely blocked; even Split Rock Valley is little more than a green swatch far below and behind. The air feels much thinner up here and breathing is more difficult.*

A successful Survival check here (DC 15) correctly estimates the altitude at 6,000 feet. A second check (DC 20) allows the PC making it to confidently speculate that a further day of travel like this one could push the party

into the next elevation band and very close to the tree line. This might heighten tensions in the party and make them question whom or what they are pursuing. Dak uses sarcasm to lighten the mood by grumbling quips like, "I've always wanted to go to Ratik." When the PCs continue, read or paraphrase the following:

***After several more hours of climbing, into air ever thinner and cooler, the trail finally empties into a deep gorge several hundred yards long and riddled with dozens of caves of various sizes. The entire area is conspicuously devoid of any vegetation. Even the ubiquitous weedy vines clinging to rock faces along the last day of travel have apparently shied away from this place, as if nature had completely forsaken it.***

The gorge itself is little more than a jagged slash between two high peaks, most likely formed by ancient glacial activity; a Knowledge (nature) check (DC 20) confirms this. Rocks are embedded in the cliff faces. A further Track check is required here in order to pinpoint which cave their quarry accessed (DC 20, hard ground). Eventually either Dak or the party's tracker comes across another pile of warm entrails outside one of the larger cave mouths at the far end of the gorge. This one is fresher than the last one, maybe only a few hours old, suggesting that perhaps there may be other victims still alive. If PCs enter the cave, read or paraphrase the following:

***The interior of the cave is warm and humid; there is no evidence of any immediate occupant but a cursory examination of its roughly 50-foot interior reveals a tunnel leading deeper into the mountain.***

If Dak is still with the PCs, his Track check indicates that the group they are pursuing indeed went down this tunnel; however, as he divulges this he appears to catch something on the ground out of the corner of his eye. After squatting down to examine it (by torchlight or whatever light the PCs have), he stands and his expression is ashen. No amount of Diplomacy will get him to say anything further; he picks up Weasley and tucks him in his backpack then urges the party forward. If PCs have the ability to use *detect thoughts* and Dak fails his Will save (+3), they learn that Dak has discovered illithid tracks; his mind holds a clear picture of a slimy, tentacle-mouthed horror.

A Spot check (DC20, or the best in the party if all are below 20) allows a PC to notice crude chalk markings on the wall at the rear of the cave where the tunnel begins. These markings take the form of jagged vertical lines, like several letter v's strung together and pointing down. No Knowledge roll will be able to confirm this but the PCs may be able to reason that the marks indicate the direction of descent. They were made by Aodhan and refer to his destination: a natural shrine known in the Underdark as Beltar's Maw (see Encounter Eight).

A Track check (DC 20) reveals the passage of several types of footprints along this passage: some Medium-sized like the ones they've been following but some much larger and clearly not human. No other nearby caves contain these markings, which should be a convincing clue for the PCs.

The tunnel makes a hairpin turn at a slight downgrade and descends abruptly, into the dark depths. If PCs continue, proceed to Encounter Six. In the unlikely event that they have not already done so since leaving Encounter Three, DMs should remind or encourage PCs to camp/rest for the night before proceeding. The depths of the earth are not for the tired.

## Encounter Six: The Lost Tomb of Dugnaumanthur

***The tunnel winds downward into the subterranean darkness of the mountains for several hundred yards before opening onto a ledge overlooking a deep chasm. At the bottom of the chasm, hundreds of feet below and illuminating the depths with its fiery stain, slowly flows a river of magma. The ledge itself is easily wide enough for two men to pass abreast. Upon the wall where it intersects the tunnel are words carved into the rock in a strange and beautiful language, using the Elven script. Many small dots are also carved beneath the words on each face of the wall. The ledge extends to the left and right as far as the eye can see.***

If any PC can read a language that uses Elven characters, reveal the following:

***On the south face of the ledge is carved "Che'el Garsegzuul," while the northeast face reads "Jejik d'lil Elg'caress."***

Although Bran and his minions passed through here mere hours ago, the hard surface of the ledge, the sheer volume of prints, and the intense heat wafting up from below make tracking extremely difficult for all but the most experienced rangers and spelunkers (Track DC 25). Instead, encourage PCs to look around by describing the scene. The ledge runs south-by-northeast and is wide enough for them to stand on without danger of falling over the edge. Even those with darkvision cannot see the far side of the chasm, as the magma glow does not extend up this high. The cliff face directly below them is sheer, with no handholds. PCs may of course utilize flight, *spider climb*, and other methods of travel and/or illumination, but what they should be doing is looking for clues in a form other than tracks. The carvings are the best place to start.

The carvings are written in Undercommon. If the PCs speak it or employ magic to do so, they learn that the carvings are a kind of road sign, indicating this ledge to be a highway (current or former) through the Underdark.

Once the carvings have been successfully read, PCs may go about deciphering their meaning.

“Che’el” translates as “city.” A DC 20 Knowledge (history) or bardic knowledge check (DC 20), or a DC 25 Knowledge (local – Nyrond and her environs) check (dwarves get a +4 bonus), identifies Garseguul as the site of a war fought centuries ago between a dwarven clan and a tribe of derro, newly arrived from the West. If it’s true that the winners write the history books (or the highway signs), then the derro must have won.

“Jejik d’lil Elg’caress” translates literally as “maw of the Hag”—not the lair of an annis or a literal hag, but Hag with a capital H: the Suliose goddess Beltar (Knowledge (religion) check, DC 20). The directional indicator may then be correctly translated as “Beltar’s Maw”. Who or what this is can only be determined by following that branch of the highway.

A successful DC 10 Intelligence check determines that the small dots are distance markers; what measure of distance is unknown but there are about four times as many dots associated with the city of Garseguul than with Beltar’s Maw. Going to Garseguul would be a tremendous waste of time for the PCs and is not in the scope of this scenario.

PCs succeeding on a Spot check of DC 15 (or DC 10 if they noticed the markings back in the cave) note crude chalk markings on the wall roughly 20 feet down the northeastern fork, toward the Beltar’s Maw. These markings mirror those in the cave: a series of letter v’s strung together, saying that Bran and his minions went this way.

Once the PCs have elected to follow it to the northeast toward Beltar’s Maw, read or paraphrase the following. Dwarven PCs will detect a slight downgrade in the highway, though it is against the flow of the magma river:

*The highway follows the winding path of the magma upriver for several miles, but no new chalk markings or carvings are evident along the way. After many miles of travel, the temperature increases dramatically, as does the intensity of the red-orange glow that has been lighting the way. The highway has descended roughly half the height of the chasm. The highway now opens into a huge cavern, easily half a mile in diameter with a stalactite-laced ceiling high overhead. Dominating this chamber, however, is a breathtaking lake of magma in the distance, the obvious source of the river, from whose burning depths now sporadically spew jets of molten earth. The heat is intense and the air is thick with the stinging stench of sulfur and steam issuing from natural vents on the cavern’s floor roughly 100 feet below.*

*A carved flight of stairs descends from the road to the bottom of the cavern. The ground there seems solid and stable and affords passage around the*

*south side of the lake, perhaps 200 yards away. Even at this distance, a series of fiery flashes can be seen at the lake’s southern edge, accompanied by the sound of frenzied laughter.*

The PCs have just entered the antechamber of an ancient Dwarven tomb. Fifteen hundred years ago, the Deep Dwarves of Clan Embermaul in Garseguul sought to construct a tomb to inter, honor, and protect their fallen patriarch, Dugnaumanthur. The dwarves were skilled enough to construct a tomb that offered both magical protection and the threat of insidiously designed traps for natural denizens and potential graverobbers, but this chamber and its lake of magma offered a further benefit. While the Rakers are not a volcanic range, magma has bubbled up beneath its peaks for millennia due to a weak boundary (deep below the lake) between this cavern and the Elemental Plane of Fire. Through this boundary come airflows that shriek through the cavern’s nooks and crannies to create a wailing cacophony. The tomb itself was built deep within the rocky ceiling and is not a part of this scenario.

The latest generation of derro has infiltrated the cavern for reasons of their own. Though the dwarves are long gone, other elemental denizens have surfaced as obstacles to the derro plunderers. It is into such a confrontation that the PCs have stumbled. Once they descend the stairs and move toward the flashes on the south side of the lake, read or paraphrase the following:

*Several small, winged creatures—some wreathed in flame, some made of glowing stone that drip lava, one with pale skin who exudes wisps of steam, and all eerily illuminated by the infernal orange glow from the lake—are viciously badgering a mass of lava that has somehow separated itself from the lake. Suddenly, fiery white-orange pseudopods lash out from the patch of lava, striking one of the creatures wreathed in flame and sending it spiraling lifelessly into the lake! The patch of lava—easily 10 feet across—then surges forward, leaving a glassy trail behind it and flailing at the flying creatures, all of which cackle maniacally and fly out of range. The pale, wispy one begins shrieking at the others before flying in to belch a cloud of steam on the patch of lava. Beyond these combatants can be seen several small, smoldering humanoid husks. Scattered near them on the ground are many small, shiny objects. As you absorb the scene, the pale winged creature swings around for another pass at the patch of lava and notices your party; it immediately halts its progress, shrieks something to its allies and charges forward.*

**Creatures:** A gang of mephits, visitors from the Plane of Fire, cavorts on the steamy bank of the magma lake roughly 100 feet away. At APLs 2 and 4 they are picking through the remains of a blasted lava ooze. At APLs 6 and 8 the ooze is wounded but still alive, and the mephits

bounce and flit around it, teasing it as it lashes out with fiery pseudopods.

A DC 13 Knowledge (the Planes) check correctly identifies the flying creatures as mephits—fire, magma, and steam (respectively); a DC 18 Knowledge (dungeoneering) check is needed to identify the lava ooze. The humanoid husks are the remains of derro, who came trying to unlock the dwarven tomb but the lava ooze killed them quickly. Before the ooze could finish feeding on their armor and gems, the gang of mephits in turn attacked it. The mephits are having just as much fun taunting the ooze as attacking it, but the steam mephit who leads them recognizes the PCs as the more serious threat, both to his gang's survival and their acquisition of the derro gemstones.

The steam mephit is the greedy, paranoid boss of this little gang (at lower APLs some or all of the gang are somewhere out of earshot and do not enter combat). Upon detecting the PCs he charges into combat screeching "Thieves!" in Ignan, then "Go away!" in Common if the PCs don't appear to understand him. He hopes for the rest of the gang to hear him and come to his rescue, with varying success by APL.

At APLs 6 and 8, the ooze also attacks immediately, sensing new, nutrient-rich prey that might not be able to fly out of its reach.

#### APL 2 (EL 3)

☛ **Ssassimon:** steam mephit; hp 18; see *Monster Manual* page 185

#### APL 4 (EL 5)

☛ **Ssassimon:** steam mephit; hp 18; see *Monster Manual* page 185

☛ **Magma mephit:** hp 18; see *Monster Manual* page 182

#### APL 6 (EL 7)

☛ **Ssassimon:** steam mephit; hp 18; see *Monster Manual* page 185

☛ **Magma mephit:** hp 18; see *Monster Manual* page 182

☛ **Lava ooze:** hp 107; see New rules Appendix

#### APL 8 (EL 9)

☛ **Ssassimon:** steam mephit; hp 18; see *Monster Manual* page 185

☛ **Magma mephit (2):** hp 18 each; see *Monster Manual* page 182

☛ **Fire mephit:** hp 18; see *Monster Manual* page 182

☛ **Lava ooze, advanced:** hp 195; see New rules Appendix

**Tactics/Negotiation:** The steam mephit, while impetuous, is not foolish and may be persuaded that the PCs are not here to steal "his" gems. PCs electing to exercise Diplomacy and who succeed at making him Indifferent (he is initially Hostile) can get him to stop fighting and order his friends to do the same. They will be wary, however, and attack again at the first insult or suspicious move. They will not help against the ooze, allowing PCs to prove their intentions, but the steam mephit will admire the PC who fights best against the ooze. A bribe of gems and/or precious metals (50 gp per APL, minimum) is enough to then make them Friendly.

If Friendly, the steam mephit orders the gang to turn their attacks on the ooze and, when the fight is over, relaxes and chats animatedly with the PCs. The mephits observed Bran's party pass just a couple hours before but did not engage them, as they were numerous and well armed (and there was no loot lying on the floor to defend at that time). They have but a vague impression of Beltar's Maw, having only briefly scouted this area after entering the cavern through a planar fissure. If the PCs bring it up, the mephits agree to split the ooze's loot with them.

If the steam mephit becomes Helpful, he acts as above and can be convinced that helping the party scout Beltar's Maw would be a fun adventure. When they get a view of Bran's full force, however, and sense the strength of the evil power being invoked (see Encounter Seven below), the mephits think the better of their adventure and return to safer environs.

If the steam mephit's attitude cannot be changed from Hostile, he uses his limited cunning to tactical advantage, directing his minions to try and corner the PCs between the lake, the ooze and them. If at least one mephit is killed before suitable negotiations can be completed, the remaining mephits' attitudes cannot be changed from Hostile.

**Development:** Once PCs deal with the mephits and the ooze, they may explore the cavern. Only one other tunnel leads out of the cavern and is located in the extreme southeastern corner of the cavern. The wall there is marked with chalk, similar to those seen earlier describing Beltar's Maw. PCs will note with a Spot check (DC 20 or just the highest in the party) that there are far fewer distance-marking dots than there were when they first entered the Underdark, indicating that they should be close to their mysterious destination.

#### Treasure:

Gems from the cavern.

APL 2: L: 0 gp; C: 120 gp; M: 0 gp

APL 4: L: 0 gp; C: 180 gp; M: 0 gp

APL 6: L: 0 gp; C: 240 gp; M: 0 gp

APL 8: L: 0 gp; C: 375 gp; M: 0 gp

## Encounter Seven: Master and Servant

*The tunnel leading from the magma lake continues at a slight descent for just over a mile before arriving at a fork complete with the now-familiar directional markers carved in the walls. The “Maw of the Hag” follows the left fork; to the right at a steep descent and roughly ten times farther is something called “niar’haanin d’nau yutsu”.*

PCs should follow the left passage, where Bran and his minions have gone. The tunnel to the right (“River of No Return” in Undercommon) leads to a honeycomb of dead-end passages with but one way out: a half-mile drop over a vast and ancient underground lake upon whose southern shores are found the headwaters to the fabled River Svartjet. Exceptional Knowledge (geography) or bardic knowledge checks would reveal this.

Once the PCs are ready to proceed into the left passage toward Beltar’s Maw, read or paraphrase the following:

*The tunnel steadily descends over the next few miles before opening into a large cavern. A narrow bridge, scarcely wide enough for one person to stand on, slopes gently down beyond the limit of vision. A low, guttural chant can be heard in the distance.*

If the PCs have taken an unusually long time to get here (your call), Aodhan has already completed his ritual and Taran has become a zombie (see below).

**Setup/Map:** The bridge is 90 feet long, crossing a field of jagged stalagmites. It is 5 feet wide for most of its length, but widens at either end to 10 and then 15 feet where it touches solid rock. It takes more than normal darkvision or light sources to see the end of the bridge 90 feet away, but any light immediately alerts Bran.

The far end of the bridge is a flat area 80 feet long and 160 feet wide. Aodhan is chanting at the back of this area, 80 feet away. The zombies are in front of him and Bran is to one side, as described below.

A pool (a 10-foot square) and two big stalagmites (5 feet across at their base and 12 feet high) are 50 feet away from where the bridge ends.

There are no exits from this chamber.

Once the PCs can see 100 feet from where they started, continue with the following:

*The bridge gently descends from the tunnel opening to a bare, open area roughly 80 feet across by 160 feet wide. A swarm of stalactites hangs over the bare area as if to ensure reverence. Near the center of the bare area are two grand stalagmites, each twice a man’s height; chained between them, six feet off the ground, is a young man, gagged and struggling against his bonds. Hanging above him from the ceiling, sixty feet overhead, are two even larger stalactites, like fangs, from whose keen tips drips a dark, mysterious ichor that collects in a large pool below the man. Surely this is the phenomenon known as Beltar’s Maw.*

*Between you and this helpless man is a group of ragged humanoids moving toward you; their lifeless, pale skin is adorned with vicious scars and runes that pulsate with an eerie blue-black glow.*

*Off to the side of the chamber is another humanoid with pale skin and fiery white eyes watching the ceremony with frenzied intent as he finishes casting a spell.*

The PCs probably cannot see the source of the chanting yet, but that is Aodhan, the half-troll cleric of Demogorgon. He is four rounds from finishing a ritual to sacrifice Taran (the man chained to the stalagmites) to his Abyssal Lord. He stands at the rear of the chamber, beyond the pool and stalagmites; from the moment the PCs step onto the bridge, the clock will be ticking on Taran.

Once any PCs cross the bridge and reach the bare area, the zombies attack to kill. They are under orders not to attack until someone sets foot on the promontory.

**APL 2 (EL 5)**

👤 **Human Miner Zombie (4):**

hp 16 each; see *Monster Manual* page 266.

👤 **Bran Mac Colm:** male necropolitan human Drd2; hp 16; see *Combat Appendix*.

**APL 4 (EL 7)**

👤 **Human Miner Hunter Zombie (4):** hp 16 each; see *Combat Appendix*.

### The Bridge and Beltar’s Teeth

PCs moving at half speed across the bridge are in no danger; but PCs moving faster must succeed at a DC 15 Balance check or risk falling 8 feet onto a field of small, jagged stalagmites below. The stalagmites are a naturally occurring phenomenon, which function similar to the *spike stones* spell:

**Beltar’s Teeth:** CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; DC 15 Balance check avoids; 8 ft. deep (no damage from fall); multiple targets (all); stalagmites (Atk +8 melee, 2d4 stalagmites per target for 1d4+1 each); Search DC 25; Disable Device n/a.

PCs who fall onto Beltar’s Teeth and take any damage are restricted to half movement due to injury until all of the stalagmite damage is healed. Climbing back onto the bridge is a move action. Alternatively, PCs may continue moving at one-quarter speed (very difficult terrain) through the Teeth until they reach the bare area.

✚ **Bran Mac Colm:** male necropolitan human Drd4; hp 26; see *Combat Appendix*

#### APL 6 (EL 9)

✚ **Human Miner Fast Zombie (4):** hp 16 each; see *Combat Appendix*.

✚ **Minotaur Zombie:** hp 81; see *Monster Manual* page 267.

✚ **Bran Mac Colm:** male necropolitan human Drd7; hp 45; see *Combat Appendix*.

#### APL 8 (EL 11)

✚ **Human Miner Zombie (4):** hp 20 each; see *Monster Manual* page 266.

✚ **Human Miner Hunter Zombie (2):** hp 20 each; see *Combat Appendix*.

✚ **Human Miner Fast Zombie (2):** hp 20 each; see *Combat Appendix*.

✚ **Gray Render Fast Hunting Zombie:** hp 173; see *Combat Appendix*.

✚ **Bran Mac Colm:** male necropolitan human Drd9; hp 58; see *Combat Appendix*.

And, if the PCs failed to rescue Taran, he is already a zombie:

#### All APLs:

✚ **Taran Mac Colm:** human ex-paladin zombie; hp 20; see *Combat Appendix*.

#### Tactics: Aodhan and Taran

Once PCs spot Aodhan, read or paraphrase the following:

*Leading the ritual is a massive and repulsive humanoid. He towers over most humans and has bronze skin covered with unsightly patches of mottled green, knobby growths. Stringy black hair hangs to his neck, around which is a bizarre amulet depicting two clawed tentacles. He slouches forward in a trance, chanting and then raising and lowering his muscled limbs in a kind of ritualistic gesticulation. He wears greasy, gore-smeared, black leather armor and patchy furs.*

A DC 16 Knowledge (nature) check correctly identifies Aodhan as a half-troll, half-human (Flan). In order to save Taran, the PCs will need to interrupt the ritual within four rounds. At the end of the fourth round, Aodhan steps forward and slays Taran. Any of the following options will successfully disrupt the ritual (the PCs must figure these things out for themselves):

- Doing any damage to Aodhan (AC 25).

- Engaging Bran in melee combat; since Aodhan “created” him, they share a fragile bond that affects Aodhan’s Concentration.
- Freeing Taran from his bonds (this is the most difficult and takes a full round).

At all APLs, Aodhan is an untiered NPC (CR 12 or so, no stats provided) but not a combatant unless the PCs choose to get in his way. (Assume enough hit points to absorb whatever the PCs throw at him before the quasit arrives to extricate him.) He remains in the background attempting to complete the sacrifice on Taran and callously abandons Bran when his demonic master arrives.

Aodhan wants to stick around as long as possible to strengthen his minions by his presence, but he should not stay long enough to become a combatant.

**Aodhan Departs:** Another servant of Demogorgon—a powerful quasit cleric—will arrive to whisk Aodhan away at an opportune time. Use your discretion; suggested quasit-triggers are if a PC engages Aodhan in melee or targets him with a save-or-die spell, if Bran is killed or turned, or if 75% of the zombie minions are either turned or destroyed. If a PC or PCs manage to get next to Aodhan or if the ritual is interrupted (or finished, and Taran freshly slain), Aodhan moves to engage the PCs but makes no attacks. Immediately after this happens, the quasit-priest appears. It is identifiable as a quasit on a DC 13 Knowledge (the Planes) check, but it is a high-level cleric, sent to retrieve Aodhan and punish him for spending too much time with his creation (Bran) and neglecting his search for “the item”. The quasit cleric says this to Aodhan in Abyssal, which the PCs can overhear. The sight of the quasit should clue the PCs in to two pertinent facts: something larger is going on here, and it must be very large if tiny outsiders are admonishing a giant half-troll. The quasit immediately plane shifts away with a penitent Aodhan.

**Taran Already Undead:** As mentioned above, if the PCs took unreasonably long to get here, then Taran is already (un)dead. If this is the case, DMs should allow the four-round “ritual counter” to keep ticking. The “young man” struggling at his bonds on the stalagmites is still there, but this is a zombie-Taran. Once the four rounds expire, Taran the zombie manages to tear himself from the stalagmites by ripping one arm out of its socket (again, spare the gore if there are children playing or if the players don’t want to hear it). He then lowers himself to the ground and attacks the party. The aforementioned quasit arrival occurs immediately after Taran attacks.

#### Tactics: The Intended Fight

At all APLs, the zombies benefit from Aodhan’s Necromantic Presence feat and gain +4 to their turn resistance when within 60 feet of him. They stand 40 feet back from the bridge (and thus 35-40 feet from Aodhan) and have been instructed to attack any living creature

stepping off the bridge toward Taran and the pool. At all APLs, the human zombies are the missing miners and are dressed as such.

At APL2, Bran casts *shillelagh* on his club after spotting the PCs; he will also cast *produce flame* and lob one or two shots before closing for melee.

At APL4, Aodhan's undead minions are Hunting Zombie variants. Bran's first action is to cast *summon swarm* (bats, since this area is sacred to Beltar) and deposit it in the middle of the party, preferably while any PCs are still on the bridge. He uses the zombies as cover in order to summon other creatures or to cast *flaming sphere* or *gust of wind* (to extinguish torches or lanterns). Before closing for melee, he casts *shillelagh*.

At APL6, the zombies are more powerful because of Aodhan's necromantic feats. At this APL, Bran again begins by summoning a bat swarm, then follows it with a spontaneous *summon nature's ally* III to call forth an augmented thoquua. If any PCs fly over the bridge and Beltar's Teeth, he casts *dispel magic* on one (or in the area) to inflict falling damage as well as damage from the Teeth. Finally, he attempts to Wild Shape (undead brown bear or tiger) when most advantageous, hoping to strike terror into the party when they see an undead druid.

At APL8, all of Aodhan's minions benefit from his necromantic feats. Bran begins by summoning a thoquua, then casts *freedom of movement* and *stoneskin* on himself. Finally, he attempts to Wild Shape when most advantageous, hoping to strike terror into the party when they see an undead druid. Bran's scrolls—*warp wood*, useful against bows or poelarms, and *flaming sphere*—have low save DCs, so he does not count on them. Unlike APLs 2-6, he will use his *meld into stone* in an attempt to escape (if pressed) and track Aodhan in order to dispense vengeance on his “mentor”.

### **Bran's Dying Curse**

Note that the PC who deals the killing blow to Bran (be it by spell or weapon) is afflicted by a powerful curse called down with his dying breath, the Mark of Demogorgon.

***“One lash for every pulse of your accursed heart! Your successes will become blood in your mouth, leaving you awash ... in misery...”***

This curse imposes an invisible mark and terribly bad luck on the victim. In future planned scenarios, it will lead the PCs to the Troll Fens in search of a cure. See the Conclusion for details.

#### **Treasure:**

Note that Bran's armor, amulet, and cloak are so foul and tainted with evil as to be worthless in the markets of the Pale or its neighbors. They do not add to the value of treasure gained.

APL 2: L: 150 gp; C: 30 gp; M: 0 gp    APL 4: L: 246 gp; C: 24 gp; M: 0 gp

APL 6: L: 271 gp; C: 39 gp; M: 50 gp—*potion of inflict light wounds* (2) (4 gp each)

APL 8: L: 312 gp; C: 50 gp; M: 200 gp—*potion of inflict light wounds* (2) (4 gp each), *divine scroll of flaming sphere* (CL 3<sup>rd</sup>) (12 gp each), *divine scroll of warp wood* (CL 3<sup>rd</sup>) (12 gp each)

## **Encounter Eight: Fuilmere**

After the dust settles and the PCs have freed Taran (if he is still alive), they will likely be curious about the strange pool before them. It is roughly 10 feet in diameter and very dark. The pool is actually a vent to a massive underground lake. The water is suffused with the Oerth's power – it is the physical manifestation of an earth node (see the New Rules Appendix for more information on earth nodes). The lake, Fuilmere (pr. *fwill-meer*), lies at the nexus of two ley lines: the Path of Grievous Ascension, which Bran and the PCs have followed from the plains below, and the Path of the Earth's Spine, which generally follows the north/south axis of the Rakers.

The lake is a Class 7 earth node with a DC of 40. It is ancient and extremely potent, although only those with specialized knowledge (one with the Node Spellcasting feat from *Underdark*—i.e. no character in Living Greyhawk) may harness the greater part of its power. The node is composed of layers, the outermost of which is a Class 1 node in its own right, with each layer increasing in class and decreasing in size, to the innermost Class 7 node in the center/bottom of the lake that is approximately 25 feet in diameter.

Within Fuilmere dwells a powerful spirit as old as the land whose awareness stretches through every part of these mountains. This spirit (which calls itself by no name) has observed and taken an interest in the progress of both Bran's group and the PCs along the Path of Grievous Ascension. The PCs and Aodhan are the first living visitors to the pool, as the nearby derro fear and mistakenly venerate the spirit as an avatar of Beltar (hence their name for the place). Indeed, the existence of the spirit is part of the secret lore of the Natural Order; several of the Oerth Mother's servants (including Eiolon) have sought her wisdom through her bond with the land but not even Eiolon has dared to venture to this place. The spirit is restless, based upon sensing Aodhan's impure intentions, and it wishes to communicate.

PCs approaching within 10 feet of the pool may make a DC 20 Intelligence check to realize that it is a source of earth power. Geomancers and members of the Natural Order or a similar nature or earth-focused meta-organization may make a DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check to the same end.

**Creatures:** The spirit that dwells within Fuilmere is an avatar of Beory, channeling a fragment of her consciousness on the Material Plane. It is an invisible and

intangible force of great power (CR 23+) that would overwhelm all but the most puissant of Oerth's personages. For that reason, its stats are not included in this scenario. See *Monster Manual II* for more information on spirits of the land.

### **Interacting with the Pool**

The surface of the pool is opaque and completely still. The liquid appears to be slightly more viscous than water. Those who touch the water feel a gentle ongoing buzz. Submerged creatures find that the water is crystal clear beneath the surface, though they will be disoriented and lose all sense of direction.

Those who taste the water experience a sudden rush of blood to the head and become extremely dizzy. The water is like liquid fire burning its way through every blood vessel, causing every limb and muscle to feel as if it has burst into flame. These characters will smell ozone for weeks. They have just been purified by the Oerthblood and gain access to the corresponding entry on the Adventure Record. PCs who try to take a sample of the liquid (in a waterskin, for example) may do so without harm, but the substance burns through leather in minutes and is rendered utterly inert once it is removed from this chamber.

### **Vision - for the Drinker**

For its own reasons, the earth spirit chooses to communicate only when a person drinks the Oerthblood, and then only to the first such brave soul. It does so by telepathically projecting images and sensations into the PC's mind. The images, created by a fey consciousness, are fuzzy and slightly caricatured. This may cause players to believe the character is hallucinating. The judge should neither confirm nor deny this hypothesis. Only with appropriate investigation (i.e. *detect thoughts* cast within 60' of the center/bottom of the pool, *commune* or *divination*, etc.) should PCs realize that a living being is present here.

Read the following for the first character who drinks the Oerthblood:

*For long moments your only experience is burning, but eventually your head clears enough that you begin to perceive the world around you once again. You seem to float in the air, although your body is nowhere to be seen. Moss dangles around your nonexistent head from the gnarled branches of stooped trees whose roots are hidden beneath the stinking stagnant muck of a forgotten swamp. A slightly orange glow between the trees is the only hint of daylight. Ahead, on a muddy mound rising out of the mire, a muttering mob of hooded, black-robed figures shuffles around another, who hangs upon a wooden pole smeared with blood and filth. The voices of trolls, lizardfolk, and humans resolve into a deep meandering chant. As the victim's head wearily rises to stare directly into your eyes, you*

*recognize the face of Bran Mac Colm. His dying breath rattles in your ears, and an almost human figure wearing a writhing, snakelike headdress steps forward out of the crowd. Invoking the Prince of Demons, the Lord of All That Swims in Darkness, it raises two arms in supplication while two others impale the druid with a spear. All is silent for a moment. Then Bran's head once again rises from his chest. His face has withered and cracked, and his open eyes are drained of all color. His lips pull back into a deadly grin, and the world explodes around you. Thrown to the ground, you slowly regain consciousness on the shore of the strange pool where you destroyed the creature whose birth you just witnessed.*

The player who witnessed this vision gains the item "Vision of the Oerth Mother" on the Adventure Record.

PCs may make a Knowledge (the Planes) check (DC 15) to identify the invoked being as Demogorgon. Knowledge (religion) does not suffice. They may also make a Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 24) to recognize the ritual as the Ritual of Crucimigration, a method by which mortals call upon divine beings to harness negative energy to transform a mortal into an undead being.

### **Vision - for All**

Even if no PC is curious enough to taste the Oerthblood, the spirit is serving a purpose here by guarding the lost artifact and wishes to make the PCs aware of this, so they know they are in a place where good is dominant over evil. To this end, the spirit projects an image on the still surface of the liquid. As the dark ichor slowly drips from the "fangs" into the pool, the PCs discern the image of an armored man standing by this very pool. His face cannot be discerned clearly, but he wears a white and gold tabard, and the shield on his back shows the two-moon symbol of Pholtus, albeit in a style from about 300 years ago. As the man in the image steps forward, the still surface of the pool begins to ripple. He draws forth a majestic-looking sword and begins lowering it into the pool. Before he does so, though, the rippling surface of the pool churns violently and then the sword dissolves into thin air. Once this happens, the turbulence ceases, the image fades, and the surface of the pool becomes calm and still once more. The Spirit leaves the PCs in silence.

On a successful Knowledge (history) or bardic knowledge check (DC 25), a PC may correctly conclude that the man in the vision was St. Ceril the Relentless, first Theocrat of the Pale.

## **Conclusion**

The journey home will be mostly uneventful.

The PCs should return to Tobinsford with Taran (or his remains) as well as Bran's remains as evidence for

Colm and Sir Andros, whom they will meet upon their return. If Taran and Colm are both still alive, a joyous reunion occurs, as Colm's disgust with the Pale is overwhelmed by his pride in seeing his son alive and well.

The PCs should report to Clive Orbison at once; he pays them their balance if conclusive proof of Ennis's death is provided. Clive actually has the power to see the mark on the face of the PC that killed Bran; he will make special note of this PC (without revealing what he noticed). Regardless, if the PCs were successful, they are entitled to Clive's favor on the Adventure Record.

Finally, if the PCs did rescue Taran, then Sir Andros invites them to dinner and personally thanks them for solving the disappearances and thwarting the cultists by extending them his favor. If a PC has been cursed and shares this fact with Sir Andros, he promises to write to his Church contacts to see what can be done (unfortunately nothing, for the scope of this scenario). As heroes of Tobinsford, the PCs are allowed to stake their own gold claim.

If the PCs killed Bran but failed to save Taran, then the mood in Tobinsford is grim. Sir Andros still thanks the PCs for solving the disappearances and he invites them to dinner to hear their stories, but they do not gain his favor.

#### **Treasure:**

Second half of payment from Clive Orbison.

APL 2: L: 0 gp; C: 50 gp; M: 0 gp

APL 4: L: 0 gp; C: 75 gp; M: 0 gp

APL 6: L: 0 gp; C: 100 gp; M: 0 gp

APL 8: L: 0 gp; C: 156 gp; M: 0 gp

## **The End**

## **Critical Events Summary**

Answers to the following questions will provide valuable insight to the authors; DMs, please take a moment to send the answers to [eteignoir@yahoo.com](mailto:eteignoir@yahoo.com).

1. Did Bran get away?
2. Did Aodhan get away?
3. Did PCs befriend the mephits?
4. Did any PCs descend into the Underdark Lake?
5. Did Taran survive?
6. Was a PC *plane shifted* by Aodhan's masters?
7. Did a PC drink of the Oerthblood?

8. Did a PC receive the Mark of Demogorgon and did Clive Orbison note it?

## **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 roleplaying) to each character.

### **Encounter Three**

Defeat the homestead predators

APL2 90 xp

APL4 150 xp

APL6 210 xp

APL8 270 xp

### **Encounter Six**

Defeat/befriend the mephits and/or destroy the lava ooze

APL2 90 xp

APL4 150 xp

APL6 210 xp

APL8 270 xp

### **Encounter Seven**

Negotiate Beltar's Teeth

All APLs 30 xp

### **Encounter Seven**

Defeat Bran and the zombie minions:

APL2 150 xp

APL4 210 xp

APL6 270 xp

APL8 330 xp

### **Encounter Eight**

Successfully communing with the Oerth Spirit

APL2 30 xp

APL4 45 xp

APL6 60 xp

APL8 75 xp

### **Conclusion**

Returning miner corpses to town for burial

APL2 30 xp

APL4 45 xp

APL6 60 xp

APL8 75 xp

### Discretionary roleplaying award

APL2 30 xp

APL4 45 xp

APL6 60 xp

APL8 75 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 character’s 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 One: Advance from Orbison

APL 2: L: 0 gp; C: 50 gp; M: 0 gp

APL 4: L: 0 gp; C: 75 gp; M: 0 gp

APL 6: L: 0 gp; C: 100 gp; M: 0 gp

APL 8: L: 0 gp; C: 156 gp; M: 0 gp

### Encounter Six: The Lost Tomb of...

APL 2: L: 0 gp; C: 120 gp; M: 0 gp

APL 4: L: 0 gp; C: 180 gp; M: 0 gp

APL 6: L: 0 gp; C: 240 gp; M: 0 gp

APL 8: L: 0 gp; C: 375 gp; M: 0 gp

### Encounter Seven: Master and Servant

APL 2: L: 150 gp; C: 30 gp; M: gp

APL 4: L: 246 gp; C: 24 gp; M: gp

APL 6: L: 271 gp; C: 39 gp; M: 50 gp – *potion of inflict light wounds* (2) (4 gp each per potion)

APL 8: L: 312 gp; C: 50 gp; M: 200 gp – *potion of inflict light wounds* (2) (4 gp each), *divine scroll of flaming sphere* (CL 3rd) (12 gp each), *divine scroll of warp wood* (CL 3rd) (12 gp each).

### Conclusion: Balance from Orbison

APL 2: L: 0 gp; C: 50 gp; M: 0 gp

APL 4: L: 0 gp; C: 75 gp; M: 0 gp

APL 6: L: 0 gp; C: 100 gp; M: 0 gp

APL 8: L: 0 gp; C: 156 gp; M: 0 gp

### Total Possible Treasure

APL 2: L: 150 gp; C: 250 gp; M: 0 gp - Total: 400 gp

APL 4: L: 246 gp; C: 354 gp; M: 0 gp - Total: 600 gp

APL 6: L: 271 gp; C: 479 gp; M: 50 gp - Total: 800 gp

APL D: L: 312 gp; C: 737 gp; M: 200 gp - Total: 1249 gp

# Items for the Adventure Record

## Item Access

No item access is provided. The favors unlock various items.

**Favor of Sir Andros:** This favor is awarded to characters that successfully rescued Taran from sacrifice. Sir Andros offers a reward from his storehouses. All characters gain access (Adventure) to Angel Radiance, Moonblood, Storm Tears, and Incense of Consecration. No limit on quantity. (All items are from the Book of Exalted Deeds.)

Existing members of the Church of the One True Path and others whose patron deity is Pholtus may instead select one of the following after any Pale regional scenario:

- Access to one Ring of Vengeance.
- Upgrade one shield or suit of armor with the Sacred special ability at the standard price.
- Upgrade one weapon with the Banishing, Blessed or Righteous special ability at the standard price.

This favor may also be useful in a future scenario; should it be redeemed here, mark it as used.

**Touched by the Earth Mother:** This PC has drunk deeply from Fuilmere and been cleansed by Oerthblood, gaining a permanent +4 divine bonus to saving throws against disease and death effects as well as telepathic access to a vision of the Earth Spirit who dwells there. In this vision the PC witnesses the death and unholy rebirth of Bran Mac Colm at the hands of the Cult of Demogorgon. The PC feels a tie to both the ritual and the Troll Fens themselves. Further aspects of this insight will be revealed anon.

**Mark of Demogorgon:** This PC dealt the killing blow to the sadistic, undead murderer Bran Mac Colm, but not before Bran called down a powerful and unnatural curse: from this point forward all natural 20s rolled by the PC are treated as 1s. Additionally, the PC is marked with lash-like bruises and scars on his face and neck that are visible only to worshippers of Demogorgon and those with the ability to see invisibility, *true seeing* and similar effects. The marks do not radiate magic, evil, or any other aura. This curse cannot be removed by any known means, other than *wish* or *miracle*.

**Favor of Eamon:** If you spend 2 TUs helping Brother Eamon organize his pile of mining claims, you receive one Favor of Pholtus.

**Favor of Clive Orbison:** This favor is awarded to characters that solve the mystery of Ennis's disappearance. Clive uses his connections to obtain regulated or otherwise hard-to-find items. Characters gain access (Regional) to the following alchemical items

from the A&EG: Acid Bullet, Flame Bullet, Priest's Bullet, Defoliator, Fleetfoot, Ghostoil, Gravebane, Hawk's Ointment, Polar Skin, Sparkstone, Stonebreaker Acid, Verminbane, and Vicious Bleeder. No limit on quantity.

**Staking a Claim:** PCs who successfully rescued Taran and returned with news of Ennis are welcomed back as true heroes and are allowed to stake an official gold claim in the hills. If the PC stakes a claim, the following rules apply: maintaining the claim (an underground mine) costs an additional 1 TU (no extra lifestyle cost) for every Pale regional scenario played. After each Pale regional scenario, roll a d20 and consult the following table:

1: Cave-in: spend 1 more TU to reopen mine or else lose the claim.

2-3: Beltar's Revenge: your recently unearthed vein is devoured by a black pudding that takes a shine to the area. Lose 100 gp hiring "ooze hunters" to kill it or else lose the claim.

4-7: Claim jumpers: some equipment stolen; pay 50gp to replace it or else lose the claim.

8-12: Minor vein: gain 50 gp.

13: Xorns: Some xorns take an interest in your recent lode. They are willing to "negotiate". Roll off with a d20 against the DM (who represents the xorns). If you win, multiply the difference in the die dolls by 30 and gain that amount in gp. If you lose, multiply the difference by 30, but pay this amount in gp to placate the xorns, or else you lose the claim. If a tie, no gain/loss, but get +5 to your next check, as the xorns will help you find "the good stuff".

14-19: Major vein: gain 100 gp.

20+: Mother Lode: gain 300 gp but spend 1 more TU carting gold down the mountain.

## Combat Appendix – APL 2 and all APLs

### Encounter Seven

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**Bran Mac Colm:** male necropolitan human Drd2; CR 2; Medium Undead (Augmented Humanoid); HD 2d12; hp 16; Init +2; Speed 30 ft.; AC 15 (touch 12, flat-footed 13); BAB/Grp: +1/+3; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d6+2, masterwork club [1d6+3 using two hands]); SA spells, undead traits; SQ darkvision 60 ft., nature sense, resist control, turn resistance +2, unnatural resilience, wild empathy +4, woodland stride; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 14, Con -, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 14.

*Skills and Feats:* Concentration +5, Knowledge (nature) +7, Listen +5, Spellcraft +2, Spot +5, Survival +4; Augment Summoning, Spell Focus (Conjuration).

**Resist Control (Ex):** Necropolitans have a +2 profane bonus on their Will saving throws to resist the effect of a *control undead* spell.

**Turn Resistance (Ex):** A Necropolitan has +2 turn resistance.

**Unnatural Resilience:** Necropolitans automatically heal hit point damage and ability damage at the same rate as a living creature. The Heal skill has no effect on Necropolitans; however, negative energy (such as an *inflict* spell) heals them.

*Druid Spells Prepared:* 0—*flare* (DC 12), *guidance* (2), *resistance*; 1st—*longstrider*, *produce flame* (+3 ranged touch), *shillelagh*.

*Possessions:* Masterwork club, dagger, +1 leather armor.

Use the following stat block at all APLs if Taran has been animated as a zombie:

**Taran Mac Colm (as Zombie):** CR ½; Medium Undead; HD 2d12+7; hp 20; Init -1; Speed 30 ft.; AC 11 (touch 9, flat-footed 11); BAB/Grp: +1/+4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d6+3, slam); SA —; SQ DR 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., single actions only, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1.

*Skills and Feats:* Toughness.

Note: Taran's Strength and hit points are increased because of Aodhan's Corpsecrafter feat.

## Combat Appendix – APL 4

### Encounter Seven

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**Human Miner Hunting Zombie:** CR 1; Medium Undead; HD 2d12+3; hp 16; Init -1; Speed 30 ft.; AC 11 (touch 9, flat-footed 11); BAB/Grp: +1/+2; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d6+1/x4, heavy pick) or +2 melee (1d6+1, slam); SA —; SQ Single actions only, DR 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., scent, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 8, Con -, Int -, Wis 14, Cha 1.

*Skills and Feats:* Listen +6, Spot +6; Toughness, Track.

*Power up Suite (within 60 feet of Aodhan):* +2 to attacks and saves, +4 to turn resistance.

*Possessions:* Heavy pick.

**Bran Mac Colm:** male necropolitan human Drd4; CR 4; Medium Undead (Augmented Humanoid); HD 4d12; hp 26; Init +2; Speed 30 ft.; AC 16 (touch 12, flat-footed 14); BAB/Grp: +3/+5; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (1d6+2, masterwork club [1d6+3 using two hands]); SA spells, undead traits; SQ darkvision 60 ft., nature sense, resist control, resist nature's lure, trackless step, turn resistance +2, unnatural resilience, wild empathy +6, woodland stride; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 14, Con -, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 14.

*Skills and Feats:* Concentration +7, Handle Animal +4, Knowledge (nature) +9, Listen +7, Spellcraft +4, Spot +7, Survival +6; Augment Summoning, Spell Focus (Conjuration), Track.

**Resist Control (Ex):** Necropolitans have a +2 profane bonus on their Will saving throws to resist the effect of a *control undead* spell.

**Turn Resistance (Ex):** A Necropolitan has +2 turn resistance.

**Unnatural Resilience:** Necropolitans automatically heal hit point damage and ability damage at the same rate as a living creature. The Heal skill has no effect on Necropolitans; however, negative energy (such as an *inflict* spell) heals them.

*Druid Spells Prepared:* 0—*create water*, *flare* (DC 12), *guidance* (2), *resistance*; 1st—*calm animals*, *longstrider*, *produce flame* (+5 ranged touch), *shillelagh*; 2nd—*flaming sphere* (DC 14), *gust of wind* (DC 14), *summon swarm*.

*Possessions:* Masterwork club, dagger, +1 leather armor, amulet of natural armor +1.

## Combat Appendix – APL 6

### Encounter Six

**Lava Ooze:** CR 5; Large Ooze (Fire); HD 8d10+56; hp 107; Init -5; Speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft.; AC 4 (-1 size, -5 Dex), touch 4, flat-footed 4; BAB/Grp: +6/+14; Atk/Full Atk +9 melee (1d6+6 plus 2d6 fire, slam); Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.; SA burn, constrict 1d6+6 plus 2d6 fire, improved grab; SQ blindsight 60 ft., immunity to fire, ooze traits, vulnerability to cold; AL N; SV Fort +9, Ref -3, Will -3; Str 19, Dex 1, Con 24, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 1.

*Skills and Feats:* Climb +12.

**Burn (Ex):** A lava ooze's body has the temperature and consistency of thick lava. With a successful slam attack, the ooze leaves behind some of its substance and might set flesh and clothing aflame. A struck creature must make a DC 21 Reflex save or catch on fire. The flames burn for 1d4 rounds. See Catching on Fire, page 303 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The save DC is Constitution-based.

**Constrict (Ex):** A lava ooze deals automatic slam and fire damage with a successful grapple check.

**Improved Grab (Ex):** To use this ability, a lava ooze must hit with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict. A creature grappled by the ooze automatically takes fire damage each round, even if it avoids taking slam damage.

**Skills:** A lava ooze receives a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

### Encounter Seven

**Human Miner Fast Zombie:** CR 1; Medium Undead; HD 2d12+7; hp 20; Init -1; Speed 60 ft.; AC 13 (touch 11, flat-footed 13); BAB/Grp: +1/+4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d6+3/x4, heavy pick) or +4 melee (1d6+3, slam); SA —; SQ DR 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., scent, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 8, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1.

*Skills and Feats:* Toughness.

*Possessions:* Heavy pick.

*Power up Suite (within 60 feet of Aodhan):* +2 to attacks and saves, +4 to turn resistance.

*Note:* These zombies' Strength and hit points are increased because of Aodhan's Corpsecrafter feat.

**Bran Mac Colm:** male necropolitan human Drd7; CR 7; Medium Undead (Augmented Humanoid); HD

7d12; hp 45; Init +2; Speed 30 ft.; AC 17 (touch 12, flat-footed 15); BAB/Grp: +5/+7; Atk/Full Atk +7 melee (1d6+2, masterwork club [1d6+3 using two hands]); SA spells, undead traits; SQ darkvision 60 ft., nature sense, resist control, resist nature's lure, trackless step, turn resistance +2, unnatural resilience, wild empathy +11, wild shape 3/day, woodland stride; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +7; Str 14, Dex 14, Con -, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 14.

*Skills and Feats:* Concentration +10, Handle Animal +7, Knowledge (nature) +12, Listen +9, Spellcraft +6, Spot +9, Survival +6; Augment Summoning, Corrupted Wild Shape, Spell Focus (Conjuration), Track.

**Resist Control (Ex):** Necropolitans have a +2 profane bonus on their Will saving throws to resist the effect of a *control undead* spell.

**Turn Resistance (Ex):** A Necropolitan has +2 turn resistance.

**Unnatural Resilience:** Necropolitans automatically heal hit point damage and ability damage at the same rate as a living creature. The Heal skill has no effect on Necropolitans; however, negative energy (such as an *inflict* spell) heals them.

*Druid Spells Prepared:* 0—*create water* (2), *flare* (DC 12), *guidance* (2), *resistance*; 1st—*calm animals*, *longstrider*, *produce flame* (+7 ranged touch) (2), *shillelagh*; 2nd—*barkskin*, *flaming sphere* (DC 14), *gust of wind* (DC 14), *summon swarm*; 3rd—*poison* (+7 touch, DC 15), *protection from energy*; 4th—*dispel magic*.

*Possessions:* Masterwork club, dagger, +2 leather armor, amulet of natural armor +1, tanglefoot bag, potion of inflict light wounds (2).

## Combat Appendix – APL 8

### Encounter Three

**Old Gloombog:** advanced shambling mound; CR 9; Huge Plant; HD 14d8+70; hp 136; Init -1; Speed 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 21 (-2 size, -1 Dex, +14 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 21; BAB/Grp: +10/+27; Atk: +18 melee (3d6+13, slam); Full Atk: +18 melee (3d6+13, 2 slams); Space/Reach 15 ft./15 ft.; SA improved grab, constrict 3d6+13; SQ darkvision 60 ft., immunity to electricity, low-light vision, plant traits, resistance to fire 10; AL N; SV Fort +11, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 29, Dex 8, Con 21, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 9.

**Skills and Feats:** Hide +4\*, Listen +10, Move Silently +9; Awesome Blow, Improved Bull Rush, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (slam).

**Improved Grab (Ex):** To use this ability, Old Gloombog must hit with both slam attacks. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

**Constrict (Ex):** Old Gloombog deals 3d6+13 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

**Immunity to Electricity (Ex):** Old Gloombog takes no damage from electricity. Instead, any electricity attack (such as *shocking grasp* or *lightning bolt*) used against it temporarily grants it 1d4 points of Constitution. The shambler loses these points at the rate of 1 per hour.

**Skills:** Shamblers have a +4 racial bonus on Hide, Listen, and Move Silently checks. \*They have a +12 racial bonus on Hide checks when in a swampy or forested area.

### Encounter Six

**Advanced Lava Ooze:** CR 7; Huge Ooze (fire); HD 14d10+126; hp 195; Init -5; Speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft.; AC 3 (-2 size, -5 Dex), touch 3, flat-footed 3; BAB/Grp: +10/+26; Atk/Full Atk +16 melee (1d8+12 plus 2d6 fire, slam); Space/Reach: 15 ft./10 ft.; SA burn, constrict 1d8+12 plus 2d6 fire, improved grab; SQ blindsight 60 ft., immunity to fire, ooze traits, vulnerability to cold; AL N; SV Fort +13, Ref -1, Will -1; Str 27, Dex 1, Con 28, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1.

**Skills and Feats:** Climb +16.

**Burn (Ex):** A lava ooze's body has the temperature and consistency of thick lava. With a successful slam attack, the ooze leaves behind some of its substance and might set flesh and clothing aflame. A struck creature must make a DC 26 Reflex save or catch on fire. The flames burn for 1d4 rounds. See *Catching on Fire*, page 303 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The save DC is Constitution-based.

**Constrict (Ex):** A lava ooze deals automatic slam and fire damage with a successful grapple check.

**Improved Grab (Ex):** To use this ability, a lava ooze must hit with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict. A creature grappled by the ooze automatically takes fire damage each round, even if it avoids taking slam damage.

**Skills:** A lava ooze receives a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

### Encounter Seven

**Human Miner Zombie:** CR 1; Medium Undead; HD 2d12+7; hp 20; Init -1; Speed 30 ft.; AC 11 (touch 9, flat-footed 11); BAB/Grp: +1/+4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d6+3/x4, heavy pick) or +4 melee (1d6+3, slam); SA —; SQ DR 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1.

**Skills and Feats:** Toughness.

**Possessions:** Heavy pick.

**Power up Suite (within 60 feet of Aodhan):** +2 to attacks and saves, +4 to turn resistance.

**Note:** These zombies' Strength and hit points are increased because of Aodhan's Corpsecrafter feat.

**Human Miner Hunting Zombie:** CR 1; Medium Undead; HD 2d12+7; hp 20; Init -1; Speed 30 ft.; AC 11 (touch 9, flat-footed 11); BAB/Grp: +1/+4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d6+3/x4, heavy pick) or +4 melee (1d6+3, slam); SA —; SQ single actions only, DR 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., scent, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 14, Cha 1.

**Skills and Feats:** Listen +6, Spot +6; Toughness, Track.

**Possessions:** Heavy pick.

**Power up Suite (within 60 feet of Aodhan):** +2 to attacks and saves, +4 to turn resistance.

**Note:** These zombies' Strength and hit points are increased because of Aodhan's Corpsecrafter feat.

**Human Miner Fast Zombie:** CR 1; Medium Undead; HD 2d12+7; hp 20; Init -1; Speed 60 ft.; AC 13 (touch 11, flat-footed 13); BAB/Grp: +1/+4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d6+3/x4, heavy pick) or +4 melee (1d6+3,

slam); SQ DR 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1.

*Skills and Feats:* Toughness.

*Possessions:* Heavy pick.

*Power up Suite (within 60 feet of Aodhan):* +2 to attacks and saves, +4 to turn resistance.

*Note:* These zombies' Strength and hit points are increased because of Aodhan's Corpsecrafter feat.

**Gray Render Fast Hunting Zombie:** CR 7; Large Undead; HD 20d12+43; hp 173; Init -1; Speed 60 ft.; AC 23 (touch 10, flat-footed 23); BAB/Grp: +10/+23; Atk/Full Atk: +18 melee (2d6+9, bite) or +18 melee (1d8+12, slam); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA —; SQ darkvision 60 ft., scent, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +14; Str 29, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 14, Cha 1.

*Skills and Feats:* Listen +6, Spot +6; Toughness, Track.

*Power up Suite (within 60 feet of Aodhan):* +2 to attacks and saves, +4 to turn resistance.

*Note:* This zombie's Strength and hit points are increased because of Aodhan's Corpsecrafter feat.

**Bran Mac Colm:** male necropolitan human Drd9; CR 9; Medium Undead (Augmented Humanoid); HD 9d12; hp 58; Init +2; Speed 30 ft.; AC 17 (touch 12, flat-footed 15); BAB/Grp: +6/+8; Atk +9 melee (1d6+2, masterwork club [1d6+3 using two hands]); Full Atk +9/+4 melee (1d6+2, masterwork club [1d6+3 using two hands]); SA spells, undead traits; SQ darkvision 60 ft., nature sense, resist control, resist nature's lure, trackless step, turn resistance +2, unnatural resilience, venom immunity, wild empathy +13, wild shape 3/day (Large), woodland stride; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +10; Str 14, Dex 14, Con —, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 14.

*Skills and Feats:* Concentration +12, Handle Animal +9, Knowledge (nature) +14, Listen +12, Spellcraft +7, Spot +11, Survival +7; Augment Summoning, Corrupted Wild Shape, Natural Spell, Spell Focus (Conjuration), Track.

**Resist Control (Ex):** Necropolitans have a +2 profane bonus on their Will saving throws to resist the effect of a *control undead* spell.

**Turn Resistance (Ex):** A Necropolitan has +2 turn resistance.

**Unnatural Resilience:** Necropolitans automatically heal hit point damage and ability damage at the same rate as a living creature. The Heal skill has

no effect on Necropolitans; however, negative energy (such as an *inflict* spell) heals them.

*Druid Spells Prepared:* 0—create water (2), flare (DC 13), guidance (2), resistance; 1st—calm animals, longstrider, produce flame (+8 ranged touch), shillelagh; 2nd—barkskin, bull's strength, flaming sphere (DC 15), gust of wind (DC 15), summon swarm; 3rd—call lightning (DC 16), meld into stone, poison (+8 touch, DC 16), protection from energy; 4th—dispel magic, freedom of movement; 5th—stoneskin.

*Possessions:* Masterwork club, dagger, +2 leather armor, amulet of natural armor +1, cloak of resistance +1, potion of inflict light wounds (2), divine scroll of warp wood, divine scroll of flaming sphere, tanglefoot bag (2), 250 gp in diamond dust (component for stoneskin).

## New Rules Appendix

### New Monsters

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#### Lava Ooze

*Sandstorm* p.178

#### Large Ooze (Fire)

**Hit Dice:** 8d10+84 (128 hp)

**Initiative:** -5

**Speed:** 10 ft. (2 squares), climb 10 ft.

**Armor Class:** 4 (-1 size, -5 Dex), touch 4, flat-footed 4

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +6/+14

**Attack:** Slam +9 melee (1d6+6 plus 2d6 fire)

**Full Attack:** Slam +9 melee (1d6+6 plus 2d6 fire)

**Space/Reach:** 10 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Burn, constrict 1d6+6 plus 2d6 fire, improved grab

**Special Qualities:** Blindsight 0 ft., immunity to fire, ooze traits, vulnerability to cold

**Saves:** Fort +9, Ref -3, Will -3

**Abilities:** Str 19, Dex 1, Con 24, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1

**Skills:** Climb +12

**Feats:** -

**Environment:** Underground

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 5

**Treasure:** No coins; 50% goods (gems only); no items

**Alignment:** Always neutral

**Advancement:** 9-12 HD (Large); 13-24 HD (Huge)

**Level Adjustment:** -

*A fiery mass of lava surges forward, pseudopods of white-orange stretching out before it. A flamestorm surrounds it, and its trail is a hot, glassy channel through the sand.*

A lava ooze favors hot underground caves and lava tubes formed over still-hot magma. It consumes stone and metallic items. As it feeds, its body becomes filled with “indigestible” gems.

A typical lava ooze is 5 to 10 feet across and 1 foot thick. It weighs about 2000 pounds.

#### Combat

A lava ooze flows through tunnels, melting and consuming stone and metal that it engulfs. It is able to detect high concentrations of nutritious minerals, and

characters wearing heavy armor are at risk of becoming a meal. (The ooze does not mind ingesting organic material along with the metal.)

**Burn (Ex):** A lava ooze’s body has the temperature and consistency of thick lava. With a successful slam attack, the ooze leaves behind some of its substance and might set flesh and clothing aflame. A struck creature must make a DC 21 Reflex save or catch on fire. The flames burn for 1d4 rounds. See *Catching on Fire*, page 303 of the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Creatures that strike a lava ooze with a natural weapon or an unarmed attack take 2d6 points of fire damage and catch on fire unless they succeed on a Reflex save.

**Constrict (Ex):** A lava ooze deals automatic slam and fire damage with a successful grapple check.

**Improved Grab (Ex):** To use this ability, a lava ooze must hit with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict. A creature grappled by the ooze automatically takes fire damage each round, even if it avoids taking slam damage.

**Skills:** A lava ooze receives a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

[Author’s note: I think there is an error in the monster description, which says HD 8d10+84. With a Con of 24, it should get +7 per HD or 8d10+56. Either the HD or bonus hit points are wrong. When using the lava oozes at APL 6, I chose to correct the bonus hit points and keep the listed HD.]

## **New Feats**

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### **Corpsecrifter [General]**

Undead you raise or create are tougher than normal.

**Benefit:** Each undead you raise or create with any necromancy spell gains a +4 enhancement bonus to Strength and +2 hit points per Hit Die.

*Libris Mortis p.25*

### **Corrupted Wild Shape [Monstrous]**

You have learned to use the necromantic energy that powers your undead form to overcome the inability of undead creatures to wild shape. You can assume the form of an undead, rotten creature with the use of your wild shape ability.

**Prerequisites:** Undead type, wild shape class feature.

**Benefits:** You can use your wild shape ability even though you are undead. The ability functions just as if you were a living creature using the ability, with the following exceptions.

You do not gain a Constitution score in the new form, and you retain all the immunities of the undead type while in your new form. The form you assume looks half-decayed, with missing patches of fur and rotted, worm-eaten flesh. While you are in this form, the rank odor of death hangs around you.

**Normal:** Since it is based on the *polymorph* spell, wild shape works only on living creatures.

*Libris Mortis p.25*

### **Necromantic Might [General]**

Undead you control gain benefits when they are near you.

**Prerequisite:** Necromantic Presence.

**Benefit:** Whenever undead you control are within 60 feet of you, they are physically inspired by your necromantic aura and gain a +2 enhancement bonus on their attack rolls and saving throws.

*Libris Mortis p.28*

### **Necromantic Presence [General]**

Undead you control are harder to turn when they are near you.

**Benefit:** Whenever undead you control are within 60 feet of you, they gain a +4 bonus to their turn resistance.

*Libris Mortis p.28*

## **New Monster Variants**

### **Fast Zombie**

Slow zombies are funny. They're easy to escape on foot and can't run at all. After an encounter with fast zombies, the characters won't be laughing.

**Speed:** Add 30 feet to base land speed, up to a maximum of twice the zombie's normal base land speed. Fast zombies can run normally.

**Armor Class:** The fast zombie gains a +2 dodge bonus to AC.

**Special Qualities:** The fast zombie is not restricted to taking single actions only. However, it still cannot attack more than once per round.

CR Adjustment: +1/2

*Libris Mortis* p. 173

### **Hunting Zombie**

It's pretty easy to hide from a normal zombie, but hunter zombies can follow and find enemies with the power of scent.

**Special Qualities:** Hunter zombies have the scent ability.

**Feats:** Hunter zombies gain Track as a bonus feat.

**Saves:** The hunter zombie's Will save bonus increases by 2 thanks to its improved Wisdom score.

**Abilities:** Hunter zombies have a Wisdom of 14.

**Skills:** Listen +6\*, Spot +6\*. Includes a +4 racial bonus.

CR Adjustment: +1/2

*Libris Mortis* p. 173

## New Monster

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### Necropolitan

Necropolitans are humanoids who renounce life and embrace undeath in a special ritual called the Ritual of Crucimigration (see below).

A necropolitan's skin is dry, withered, and powder. Its eyes are as pale as driven snow, and as lifeless. It continues to dress in the fashion it preferred while living. Necropolitans are considered citizens of the little-known city of Nocturnus, but if their nature is revealed elsewhere, they are feared and hunted like common monsters.

#### Creating A Necropolitan

"Necropolitan" is an acquired template that can be added to any humanoid or monstrous humanoid (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

A necropolitan speaks any languages it knew in life, and it has all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

**Size and Type:** The creature's type changes to undead, and it gains the augmented subtype. Do not recalculate base attack bonus, saves, or skill points. Size is unchanged.

**Hit Dice:** Increase to d12.

**Special Qualities:** A necropolitan retains all the special qualities of the base creature and gains those described below.

**Resist Control (Ex):** Necropolitans have a +2 profane bonus on their Will saving throws to resist the effect of a *control undead* spell.

**Turn Resistance (Ex):** A necropolitan has +2 turn resistance.

**Unnatural Resilience (Ex):** Necropolitans automatically heal hit point damage and ability damage at the same rate as a living creature. The Heal skill has no effect on necropolitans; however, negative energy (such as an *inflict* spell) heals them.

**Abilities:** Same as the base creature, except that as undead creatures, necropolitans have no Constitution score.

**Advancement:** By character class.

**Level Adjustment:** Same as the base creature. (Becoming a necropolitan involves losing a level – see Ritual of Crucimigration below) – so the advantages of the undead type cancel out what would otherwise be a larger adjustment.)

#### Ritual of Crucimigration

Any living humanoid or monstrous humanoid can petition for consideration to undergo the Ritual of

Crucimigration, which (if successful) enables the creature to become a necropolitan. The petition for consideration requires a fee of 3,000 gp and a written plea.

**The Ritual:** The first part of the ritual requires the placement of the petitioner on a standing pole. Cursed nails are used to affix the petitioner, and then the pole is lifted into place. The resultant excruciating pain that shoots like molten metal through the petitioner's fingers and up the arms is not what finally ends the petitioner's mortal life, however, since death usually comes from asphyxiation and heart failure. As petitioners feel death's chill enter their bodies, many have second thoughts, but it is far too late to go back – the cursed nails and chanting of the ritual ensures that the Crucimigration is completed.

The ceremony lasts for 24 hours – the usual time it takes for the petitioner to perish. During this period, two or three zombie servitors keep up a chant initiated by the ritual leader when the petitioner is first placed into position. Upon hearing the petitioner's last breath, the ritual leader calls forth the names of evil powers and gods to forge a link with the Negative Energy Plane, and then impales the petitioner. Dying, the petitioner is reborn as a necropolitan, dead but animate.

**Game Effect:** Immediately upon opening its undead eyes, a new necropolitan loses a level as if the spell *raise dead* had been used on it and it was alive instead of animate. (If the subject has no levels to lose, it is simply destroyed.) It then also loses an additional 1,000 XP. If the loss of this much XP forces the necropolitan to lose another level, then it loses another level. No spell, not even *restoration*, can restore the lost XP. Petitioners may not spend experience points they don't have – if the level loss and the 1,000 XP cost drains a creature to 0 XP or less, it is destroyed, turned to dust, and can never be raised or revived again by using any means. If the ritual is interrupted before it is completed, the petitioner is merely dead.

*Libris Mortis pp.114-15*

## **New Magical Effect**

### **Node Magic**

*Underdark* (Forgotten Realms sourcebook) pp. 49-52

[Although you do not need to know the following information to run the scenario, it is provided for the interest of you and/or the players.]

Node magic taps the natural pools and streams of power that collect and run below the earth. This power is not visible to the unpracticed eye, but those with the appropriate sensitivity know that collection points called earth nodes are awash with power that can increase the effects of spells and produce other magical effects. Earth nodes are rare and cherished points in the Underdark, and their discoverers jealously guard the knowledge of them. However, many earth nodes that possess no natural outlet to the greater tunnel systems of the Underdark remain undiscovered, and others are simply unappreciated by the Underdark creatures that live in or near them.

### **Detecting Earth Nodes**

The boundaries of an earth node are not visible to the naked eye, but they can be detected. Any creature that comes within 30 feet of the outermost layer of an earth node is entitled to a DC 20 Intelligence check, or a DC 20 Spellcraft check if she has the Node Spellcasting feat. A successful check of either sort reveals the source and direction of a concentration of earth power. Characters with the Node Spellcasting feat recognize this power as an earth node, though they cannot determine its extent, shape, or class without physically mapping it.

Earth nodes do not respect tunnel boundaries, mineral deposits, open space, or solid rock. Some lie entirely within cavernous hollows, while others are completely merged with solid earth and stone. One portion of an earth node may lie within a tunnel or cave, while other portions stretch into stone and earth. Some earth nodes extend partially or even fully into the surface world.

### **Earth Node Class and Size**

The strength of an earth node is indicated by its class, a number usually between 1 and 5. The higher the number, the more powerful the earth node. Weak earth nodes are far more common than strong ones; half of all earth nodes are Class 1, one-quarter are class 2, and most of the rest are Class 3 or Class 4.

An earth node of Class 2 or higher actually consists of a nested set of shells, or layers, equal in number to its class. For example, a Class 1 earth node has one layer, while a Class 4 node has four layers. Each

layer of a node has its own class rating. The innermost shell has the highest rating, equal to that of the entire earth node. Each additional layer has a class rating 1 point lower than the layer it encases. For example, in a Class 4 node, the innermost Class 4 layer is encased in a Class 3 shell of larger size, which is in turn surrounded by a Class 2 layer, which is surrounded by a Class 1 layer. See Diagram 4-1 on p. 49 of *Underdark* for an example of a Class 3 earth node.

The size of an earth node is often, but not always, related to its class, as shown on the following table:

| Class | Node DC | Layer Width    | Node Diameter     |
|-------|---------|----------------|-------------------|
| 1     | 10      | 5 to 30 feet   | 10 to 60 feet     |
| 2     | 15      | 10 to 40 feet  | 40 to 160 feet    |
| 3     | 20      | 20 to 80 feet  | 120 to 480 feet   |
| 4     | 25      | 30 to 120 feet | 240 to 960 feet   |
| 5     | 30      | 40 to 160 feet | 400 to 1,600 feet |
| 6+    | 35+     | 50 to 200 feet | 600 to 2,400 feet |

**Table: Earth Nodes**

**Node DC:** This value is the base DC for checks made to harness the node's power (see Earth Node Powers, below).

**Layer Width:** This value describes the thickness of each layer in the node. For example, a typical Class 3 node might consist of 3 layers, each 50 feet wide.

**Node Diameter:** This numerical range represents the overall diameter of the node, from one outermost edge of its Class 1 shell to the exact opposite edge of the same shell. For example, the Class 3 node mentioned above could be 300 feet in diameter.

### **Earth Node Powers**

An earth node's overall class and the class values of its onionlike layers have various implications. Except for the bonus an earth node grants to effective caster level (see below), these powers are available only to a character with the Node Spellcasting feat. A character must be aware of the earth node in order to use any of its powers.

[For the purposes of this scenario, discussion of powers available to characters with the Node Spellcasting feat is simplified, as no characters should have the feat.]

**Bonus to Effective Caster Level:** Any spellcaster can take advantage of this most basic feature of the earth node. A spellcaster standing within an earth node layer can attempt to add its class to the effective caster level of any spell he casts. To succeed, he must make a successful Intelligence check (DC = node's base DC + spell level) while casting the spell. (Making this

attempt does not change the spell's casting time.) If the check fails, there is no ill effect - the spell is simply cast at the character's normal caster level. If the check succeeds, the spellcaster adds the layer's class to his caster level for that spell.

A spellcaster may choose to use less of the node's power than is available in order to lower the DC for the check. For example, a spellcaster might choose to add only 2 levels to his effective caster level in the center of a Class 4 node, thereby lowering the DC from 25 + spell level to 15 + spell level.

A bonus to effective caster level strengthens spells - some more than others. All effects dependent on caster level (such as caster level checks, damage dice, duration, range, and the like) are calculated according to the new caster level. For instance, if a 5th-level wizard successfully uses node magic to enhance a fireball in the center of a Class 3 node, the spell deals 8d6 points of damage because the spellcaster has an effective caster level of 8th (5th-level wizard + Class 3 node). The bonus to effective caster level does not allow spellcasters to exceed stated damage caps or other spell maximums.

A spellcaster using an earth node in this way must make a separate check for each spell so modified.

**Granted Spells:** Earth nodes resonate with certain spells and can make their power available to those who are sensitive to node magic. Each earth node can grant a number of spells equal to its class, with a maximum spell level equal to its class. For instance, a Class 3 earth node can grant three spells of 3rd level or below. A character with the Node Spellcasting feat can access any of a node's granted spells that he is high enough in level to cast normally.

See *Underdark* p. 50 for more details on granted spells.

**Cache:** A character with the Node Spellcasting feat can store items into an earth node so that they are not readily visible, even to those inside the node. A node can accommodate a number of items equal to its earth node class, and no single item may be larger than 10 cubic feet times its earth node class.

Stored items disappear, taken up within the earth energy of the node. While stored in this manner, the objects simply cease to exist. If an earth node has reached its storage limit, no one can store new items there. A character attempting to store an item instantly knows whether the earth node is full, although she does not know what items are stored there if she is not the owner. Living or intelligent creatures can't be stored this way.

A character who has stored items in an earth node can retrieve them from *any* earth node (not just the one she stored them in) by making a Spellcraft check.

A spellcaster other than the stored item's owner may also attempt to retrieve it, but only within the earth node where the item was originally cached. To retrieve an item stored by another character, the salvager must make a Spellcraft check. Success indicates that one of the original owner's items cached there (determined randomly) appears next to the salvager.

See *Underdark* p. 51 for more details on caching items in earth nodes.

### **Mining and other Modifications**

Characters capable of using node magic can modify earth nodes in a variety of ways. For example, such a character could customize a living space, or create a temple to a particular deity (or ideal, or fiend), or open up an earth node that is completely coexistent with solid rock, or make any other physical modification of the node's space.

See *Underdark* p. 51 for more details on modifying earth nodes.