

URC3-01

Brotherhood of the Oath

A One-Round D&D[®] LIVING GREYHAWK[®]
County of Urnst Regional Adventure

Version 1.0

by Amit Sarkar

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A series of mysterious murders in the ominous village of Hardwyn embroil the heroes in a wicked assassination plot. Bound by a peculiar event in their collective past, the victims are more than they seem. The heroes must discover the sinister secret of the Brotherhood of the Oath and bring the killer to justice! An adventure for APLs 4 to 12.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying. That

said, you as the DM can bar the use of even core rulebooks during certain times of play. For example, the players are not free to consult the *Dungeon Master's Guide* when confronted with a trap or hazard, or the *Monster Manual* when confronted with a monster.

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

Scoring

After the players have completed the scenario or the time allotted to run the scenario has run out, the players and DM score the game. The RPGA has three ways to score its games. Consult your convention coordinator to determine which method to use for this scenario:

1. No-vote scoring: The players write their names and RPGA numbers on the scoring packet grid. You fill in the top of the grid. That is all. No one is rated. This method is used for people who are just playing for fun.
2. Partial scoring: The players rate the game master and the scenario on their player voting sheet, and provide personal information, but don't vote for other players. The game master rates the scenario and completes personal and event information, but does not rate the players as a team or vote for players. This method is used when there is no competition, but the event coordinator wants information on how the game masters are performing, or the game master wants feedback on his or her own performance.
3. Voting: Players and game masters complete the entire packet, including voting for best player. If this method is used, be sure to allow about 15-20 minutes for the players to briefly describe their characters to the other players, and about 5-10 minutes for voting. This method is used when the players want to know who played the "best" amongst the group, or when the adventure is run in tournament format with winners and prizes.

When using voting, rank the players in order of your voting choice while they are completing their forms, so that you are not influenced by their comments on your abilities. It's a good idea to have the players vote while you determine treasure and experience awards for the scenario.

After voting, give the Scoring Packet to your event coordinator.

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

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

Living Greyhawk Levels of Play

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Time Units and Upkeep

This is a standard one-round Regional adventure set in the County of Urnst. All characters pay one Time Unit to participate in the adventure. Adventures' Standard Upkeep costs 12 gp. Rich Upkeep costs 50 gp, and Luxury Upkeep costs 100 gp.

Using This Module

For DM's ease, the suggested run-time for each encounter (in minutes) has been provided after the name of the encounter. This allows you to gauge whether a particular encounter is running too long or too short and adjust the pace of the adventure appropriately.

Note that this adventure module has been determined to run a bit on the long side, and will likely fill the entire play session. It is important that you, the DM, not let your players waste time unnecessarily. The players should stay on task and progress diligently through the adventure in order to finish on time.

This adventure includes a new method of making ability and skill checks. In order to challenge each APL appropriately, checks are not made at a predetermined DC value. Instead, the DC for each check is variable, based on the APL of the party. Each check DC contains a fixed factor, and a variable factor. The fixed factor is the base of the DC, while the variable factor is equal to the APL of the party. The variable factor is added to the fixed factor to determine the final DC value. *For example, if a PC is called upon to make a Climb skill check at DC: 10+APL, the total DC of the climb action would be DC: 14 at APL 4, DC: 16 at APL 6, DC: 18 at APL 8, etc. The higher the APL of the party, the more difficult all actions in the adventure are.*

Combat encounters are explicitly noted as they happen. The stats for each opponent can be found in **Appendix I: Encounters**, and cover the range of APLs from 4 to 12. The description of each encounter will provide a chart that can be used to determine which opponent(s), and how many, are encountered for the appropriate APL. Be sure to pay careful attention to which opponents are of the standard variety, and which ones have been advanced to properly suit the APL.

For each combat encounter, two separate strategies for the opponents are given: a *standard strategy* and a *challenging strategy*. The standard strategy is moderately difficult and any party who is paying attention should be able defeat the opponent at hand without too many casualties. The challenging strategies are advanced tactics used by opponents to take advantage of their respective abilities, or simply to exercise a more effective combat stratagem. If the PCs are not at the top of their game, chances are one or more of them will perish in the fight. It is up to you, the DM, to decide which strategy you employ, but be forewarned that using challenging strategies against the PCs on a regular basis increases the difficulty of the adventure considerably.

Pre-Adventure Setup

Before this adventure begins, there are many play aids (provided in the appendices) that are designed to enhance the experience of the players. With a little preparation, another dimension of gaming can be added to this adventure.

Appendix I contains the stats for all of the combat encounters in this adventure. When an encounter occurs in the body of the adventure, you will be referred to Appendix I for stat information on the opponents. The encounters vary widely for APLs 4 through 12, and become more difficult as the APL rises. This increase in difficulty takes the form of opponents with stronger stats, or simply a greater number of opponents. The text of the adventure explains how many and which stat block is used (if varied). You may find making a separate copy of this section helpful, as it allows you to view the encounter description in the appropriate chapter and the stats for the encounter simultaneously.

Appendix II offers statistical data and background information for the village of Hardwyn. PCs can learn this information by speaking at length with any of the village residents (have them make a few Information Gathering skill checks), or by discussing the history of the village with Mayor Geldar Duncombe.

Appendix III provides the maps for the locales in this adventure. All of the player maps are rendered in ½-inch scale, so that if enlarged by a magnitude of 2x, they will produce 1-inch scale maps suitable for miniatures and/or cardboard counters. Many copy stores have blueprint copiers that are appropriate for making large document copies, and can even render them in color.

Appendix IV supplies the handouts necessary for the adventure. These can be copied and given to the players at the appropriate moments. Suggestions for making the handouts look more real (such as printing on parchment-style paper, burning the edges, etc.) are provided in Appendix III as well.

Appendix V contains paper constructions that can be cut out, folded, and glued together to create 3-D map objects that can be used in conjunction with enlarged battle maps. Designed to 1" scale, using the constructions with the maps produces a dioramic play arena for the adventure. Instructions for the various cut-outs are included with each one.

Adventure Summary and Background

Brotherhood of the Oath is a LIVING GREYHAWK adventure intended for player character parties of APL 4 to 12. Parties below APL 4 will likely die in the attempt, and parties above APL 12 will not find this adventure challenging or worth the experience. It is assumed that all adventuring groups playing this module conform to APLs of 4-12. This adventure has intentionally discounted APL 2 parties because it is assumed that such parties are simply not ready for such a complex adventure, as it requires certain skills and abilities that are beyond a beginning adventuring party. APL 2 characters are advised to play an easier, beginning module to accustom themselves to the LIVING GREYHAWK world before attempting a challenging module such as this one.

Regional Plotline Background

Legend of the Amulet, Stones of Urnst, and the Hilt of the Urnstian.

Prior to the migrations of the Suloise to the regions of what is now the County of Urnst, the Flannish people here were prosperous but not numerous. The Flan were warned of the oncoming Suloise invaders by a group of opportunistic and evil Flannish wizards known as the Ur-Flannae. The Ur-Flannae delved into the dark magics and were interested in using the Suloise invasion warning to coerce the Flan people into building them powerful magical items made of northern dweornite. The items created were the Five Standing Stones and the Amulet of the Stones. The five monoliths were placed around the lands east of the Nyr Dyv and the Flan people were promised that the items would protect them from all invaders. What happened after the activation of the stones is unclear, but the Suloise migrating to this area found the lands nearly devoid of the Flan. It's always been thought that the strength of the Suel made for the ease of conquering this area.

Recently, an earthquake at Crystal Springs unearthed one of the monoliths and it was discovered and studied by an intrepid adventurer hailing from Trigol. The inscriptions on the monolith speak of a great power and protection for these lands that is channeled from a glowing gem into the area of five great stones. Other monoliths have been found near Stonebattle, Bampton, Muddich, and under Ventnor.

The gem of the Amulet of the Stones was cleaved long ago. Part of the gem remains on the chain, while the other half has been placed into the pommel of a sword

hilt. Many blades have been placed into the hilt with the gem and all became magical, but all were eventually destroyed. Both the Amulet Gem and Hilt-Gem have been lost for centuries, but have recently surfaced, along with the monoliths.

The Amulet Gem was found in the scenario, "Over Hill and Dale" and is being studied by top wizards from the County of Urnst. The Hilt-Gem is found in this scenario.

Introduction

The PCs find themselves in the town of Hardwyn for various reasons (as provided in the Adventure Hook Cards). They arrive about the same time, late in the evening. As they explore the foreboding village (whether together or separately), they hear the sounds of a scuffle in the village square...

Encounter 1: The Shadows Strike

In the gloom of the village square of Hardwyn, a group of cloaked figures assaults an aging half-elven woman on the street. The PCs must defeat the shrouded thugs, who prove to be undead **shadows** instead of men, and vaporize when defeated. Though the shadows are defeated, the PCs fail to save the old woman's life.

Encounter 2: The Townsfolk Enraged

The inhabitants of the town creep out of their homes to investigate the ruckus. As they marvel at the dark deeds afoot this night, a heated argument erupts between the residents and the young town mayor over his failure to stop the rash of strange recent murders that seems to target the elderly. The mayor desperately implores the PCs to help put an end to the murders in Hardwyn.

Encounter 3: Runic Tattoos

The murder victims are relatively unremarkable, except for odd runes tattooed onto the soles of their feet. The PCs can determine that the runes are of magical script representing "brotherhood" and "oath".

Encounter 4: Cryptic Clues

As the PCs search the victims' homes for clues, they find that each abode has hidden a parchment containing a list of names, many of which are crossed out, as well as other clues that reveal the complex pact made by these adventurers long ago. Only two names on the lists remain unmarked: that of a wealthy half-orc landowner and an old Baklunish wizard-hermit living on the edge of town.

Encounter 5: An Unliving End

Thar Grimmaw, a half-orc barbarian who made a tidy fortune adventuring for many years, lives in a large estate in northern Hardwyn. When approached by the PCs, Thar is not very concerned for his life, confident in his many armored golem guards. He turns the PCs out, without much aid.

Encounter 6: Element-ary Deductions

Shalazar Morgrave, a half-Baklunish wizard, resides in a modest tower south of Hardwyn. She gives the PCs a cold reception, uninterested in the lives or trials of the villagers. She provides little information to help the investigation, and sends the PCs away.

Encounter 7: Automated Assassins

While trying to decide on the next stage of the investigation back in Hardwyn, the PCs notice smoke coming from the direction of Shalazar's tower. When the party arrives at her battle-worn tower, they are too late to save her life, but appear just in time to catch her assassins. If not careful, the PCs are ambushed by **nimblewrights**, cunning combatants with formidable melee and magical prowess.

Encounter 8: The Oath

A journal found in Shalazar's abode tells the tale of an adventuring troupe comprised of the bolder residents of the village. One of their many expeditions ended in the acquisition of a very powerful gem that radiated a great power. The jewel was as dark as a starless night, and each desired the gem for him/her self. Endless argument about who would own the gem finally led the party to encase the gemstone in a protected chest and bury in a secret location. A powerful conditional geas was cast on each of the party members, a forced tan teen that only the last living member could own or use the gem. The party members agreed to this and went on with their own lives in the village of Hardwyn, though they came together once each year to see that the gem had not been disturbed.

The journal also alludes to the location of the gem, buried beneath the town square's fountain for over 30 years. When the fountain is removed and the ground searched, however, the gem is nowhere to be found.

Encounter 9: Armored Defenders

Shalazar's journal lists the names of the Brotherhood of the Oath, and refers to suspicions that Thar Grimmaw has used his wealth and influence to somehow eliminate the other members of the Brotherhood in order to possess the gem.

When encountered again, Thar is open and frank about his plot to assassinate the other members of the Brotherhood. Thar has long desired the powerful dweornite gem his adventuring party discovered long ago. Over the years, his greed has eaten away at his virtue, finally enticing him to eliminate his former comrades, freeing him from the geas. The half-orc explains his dark deeds candidly, as he has little to fear, since he plans to kill the PCs. Thar orders his **dread guard** minions to slay the party while he escapes to his inner sanctum through a secret door.

Encounter 10: Curse of the Hilt-Gem

Thar can be found in his inner sanctum, located beneath the manor house. Here he awaits the PCs for the final battle.

Thar has already taken possession of the dweornite gem, and has even constructed a dais to augment the power of the stone. The energy, however, is too great, and as the half-orc attempts to unleash the gem's power, the tendrils of magic writhe out of control. The energy consumes him, transforming him into a deadly **gibbering moulder**, an amorphous, nightmarish monstrosity. The PCs must defeat the Thar-monster to avenge his victims and to ensure justice for his grisly actions.

Conclusion

When the grim details of the party's investigation are relayed to the mayor of Hardwyn, he is shocked and amazed, but cheerfully gives the PCs a reward for their courageous deed in solving the strange murders in Hardwyn.

Introduction

Time: 5 minutes

Distribute **Handout 1: Adventure Hook Cards** to each player before the scenario begins. If you like, you can cut these cards out before the game session and glue them to rigid cardstock for added effect (cereal boxes, comic book backings, manila folders, etc. all work great if you have some around the house that you are willing to butcher). If you want to go a step further, a sheet of card "backs" have been provided if you desire to copy and attach them to the other sides of the Adventure Hook cards (for a *true* card look). Each Adventure Hook provides its respective PC with a possible motivation for coming to the village of Hardwyn. The cards are based on class; if there are multiple PCs of the same class, they will share adventure hooks, and should role-play this

aspect appropriately. Multi-classed characters may choose from any of their classes' hooks (you can ask them which class is more prevalent or even let them choose cards if you wish). Likewise, if any PC already has a personal motivation for coming to Hardwyn, he/she may ignore the Adventure Hook card altogether.

For reasons of their own, each of the PCs has come to the village of Hardwyn, nestled dangerously close to the treacherous Bandit Kingdoms. It is just after dusk, and the PCs find themselves strolling the charming avenues of the ominous village.

Encounter 1: The Shadows Strike

Time: 15 minutes

The night is grim and foreboding. The wind howls like a pack of dire wolves, and dark clouds cover the moon, casting a shrouded light upon the village of Hardwyn. Though the high palisade walls surrounding the settlement provide relative safety against marauding monsters and men from the infamous Bandit Kingdoms just to the north, the village is still unnerving, nestled so close to the disputed holdings of Iuz.

The red cobblestone streets of Hardwyn glisten from recent rains, reflecting the grim glow of the covered lanterns that adorn the village's lanes and avenues. The charming homes and shops constructed with famous Urnstian architecture speak of a better age, when war did not loom so close. Though a small farming community, the village of Hardwyn makes good trade by its proximity to the Artonsamay River, and can afford to maintain its structures well. Its high wooden walls and standing militia are testament to its lucrative commerce along the river.

With the sun set and the first sign of the night's cold coming on, a warm inn seems more and more inviting, but your thoughts of comfort are abruptly interrupted by a sharp shriek that pierces the night air. It seems to be coming from just down the street.

Any PCs who investigate may encounter this incident individually, but should all arrive upon the scene at the same time, possibly from different sides of the encounter map.

In the town square, near a fountain statue of the village's founder, obscured figures scuffle in the darkness. Their forms and faces are hidden by gloom, but you can definitely discern the tell-tale sounds of conflict. As you near the square, you can see the

details of the fracas: an old half-elf woman is being assaulted by the darkness itself! Black, incorporeal figures seem to leap from the shadows surrounding her, striking at her mercilessly, even as she pleads for her life.

The assailants are not natural creatures, but are, in fact, undead *shadows*, whose stats can be found on page 161 of the *Monster Manual*. The shadows are here to kill Uriel Moonson, the old woman, and were not prepared for a fight with a group of adventurers. Still, they will defend themselves to the death. The number of shadows encountered is as follows:

ENCOUNTER 1: SHADOWS

<u>APL</u>	<u>EL</u>	<u># of Shadows</u>
4	3	1
6	3	1
8	5	2
10	6	3
12	7	4

Standard Strategy: The shadow(s) will attack the PC party equally, striking the closest foe (or roll randomly). It/they will attempt to use strength damage attacks to drop the target and create more shadow spawn to aid in the fight.

Challenging Strategy: The shadow(s) will attack the clerics and paladins first to disable any divine magic the party may have, and to eliminate any chance of being turned. Once the clerics/paladins are defeated, or if none are present in the party, the shadow(s) will attack any other spell-casters next, and then focus on the fighter-types last. The creature(s) will use strength damage attacks to create other shadow spawn to help fight. If there are multiple shadows, the creatures will focus all of their attacks on a single foe to try and down him quickly. Once down, they will move to the next opponent, trying to drop him swiftly and create more shadow spawn.

If defeated, the shadows will each disappear in a mist of dark vapor, leaving no trace that they were ever there.

Note that Uriel was already dead when the PCs began the battle (Heal skill check of DC: 10+APL to determine this). Since she was slain by unnatural means, even magical healing cannot prevent her from dying. Normally, living beings slain by shadows become shadows themselves, but Thar Grimmaw's intention is to kill the victims, since merely transforming them into undead would not break the conditional geas spell that prevents him from possessing the dweornite gem. To this end, Thar has paid a necromancer to create special

shadows also capable of *slaying* living beings through STR damage, rather than transforming the victims into shadows.

DM's Note: Other necromancers or neutral clerics capable of rebuking undead could potentially gain control of the shadow(s) in this encounter. Thar has prepared for this contingency, and in order to avoid being discovered by any cleric capable of controlling his shadow minion(s) ("Take me to your leader!"), he has had never interacted directly with the shadows. He used an intermediary whom he killed after the shadows were set on their task. Even if the shadows could take the party back to their master, it would be a dead end.

Encounter 2: The Townsfolk Enraged

Time: 10 minutes

Upon hearing the ruckus, the villagers exit their homes and approach the town square. Carefully, they move towards you, unsure of what to make of the dark deeds afoot this night. Among their number are members of the village militia, weapons at the ready.

"Eeeeeek!" shrieks one of the inhabitants. "Those adventurers! They killed Uriel! L-look!"

"No they didn't, you old bat!" remarks another villager. "There were some other figures there, in the darkness. I think those adventurers tried to save her!"

"Oh really?! Where are the other bodies, then? This all looks very fishy!"

The crowd erupts in a heated argument amongst themselves. Some argue that you are heroes who have come to save the hamlet from some dire fate. Others argue that you are demons sent to enslave the town for the Old One's pleasure. The more the villagers argue, the more irate they all become.

"People, people..." interjects a dark-haired middle-aged man from the crowd, waving his hands in the air in a gesture to calm the villagers. "We should not jump to conclusions. Is that not how the big-city-folk speak of us? That we are all rubes and primitives?" The man steps onto the edge of the town fountain to raise his stature above the crowd as he addresses them again. "They say we fornicate with our relatives and believe that the Oerth is round instead of flat, like every school-child knows. Let us

prove that we are not bumpkins, but a people of reason, and hear what these strangers to our village have to say."

"Yes, Geldar! Do your job as mayor! Find out what they want here!"

"Yes, do your job!"

Shaking his head in aggravation, the mayor turns to you. "State your business here, strangers. And be sure to include the part that explains why you are standing over the body of one of our own..."

The PCs must explain themselves. After the explanation is given, have the party's "leader" make a Diplomacy skill check at DC: 10+APL. If diplomacy fails, the villagers grow more irate when they think the PCs are trying to manipulate them. If diplomacy is successful, the villagers nod their heads and agree with the PCs' explanation, repeating what they say in mimic fashion ("Oh, they just happened by! Alright then!", "They are just as confused as we are! That is understandable!", etc.)

If the PCs fail to calm the villagers down, Geldar will help them by diffusing the crowd with reason that appeals to their vanities ("These adventurers wouldn't try to mislead you smart people.", "We should take the higher road and not snap to judgment.", etc.). He will be sure to mention that the murders in Hardwyn began before the PCs ever arrived.

The villagers do not seem to calm down much after your explanation. In fact, they seem to become more incensed, but now address their anger at Geldar, the town mayor.

"These murders have been going on for weeks, Geldar!" yells one of the villagers.

"Aye! Every week one of our elderly dies, it seems!" shouts another. "Our families are not safe in Hardwyn anymore!"

"What are you doing about this, Geldar?!"

"Aye, what are you doing about this?!"

"Aye!"

"Gentle Hardwynians," implores Geldar. "Hysteria will not help us. Please, please, be calm. I promise you, an investigation is already underway, and we are nearing a solution to this problem. You see, Phyton has sent these brave adventurers here to

aid our fair town. Already they have defeated Uriel's attackers, though they were not swift enough to save her life (may Phyton protect her). The murderers have been slain! There is nothing for you to fear. Now, please, go back to your homes!"

The villagers grumble beneath their breaths. Many appear dissatisfied with this response. Reluctantly, however, the inhabitants do slowly return to their homes, though the militia present stays near Geldar, their weapons still drawn. The mayor then turns and addresses you.

"A lynching was narrowly avoided here this night, my friends. You see, the people of Hardwyn are deathly afraid, for murder most foul has come to our once-peaceful village. It began just under a moon ago, when we found the first elderly inhabitant of our town slain (may Phyton protect him). Since then we have found another, one each week, and each slain by different methods. Uriel was the fourth (may Phyton protect her). One was found drained of life, like Uriel here. Another was found stabbed through the heart. Yet another was beaten to death. We have not been able to determine the motive, method, or party responsible for the deaths. We only know that another Hardwynian turns up dead each week. The pace is steady, but little else about these murders seems to be consistent. It is most baffling, to be sure.

"To make matters worse, the people are panicked to hysteria, as you can see. They are ready to leave the village if the murderer is not captured. That puts me in a very difficult position...very difficult. I must solve these murders to save my village, but I am no detective. Our hamlet is a simple farming community. We have no means of addressing such a dire problem. But Phyton is kind, for he has sent you to aid us. You must help me solve these grisly murders! Please, I beseech you!"

The PCs are free to decide if they wish to aid the mayor and the town in their time of need. If they choose not to, Mayor Geldar will (diplomatically) threaten to charge the party with the crime, and allude to imprisonment for them until this mess can be sorted out. The evidence of them standing over a dead Hardwynian is particularly damning.

If they still refuse to help, the mayor will keep his word and command the militia (many in number) to arrest the PCs to hold them over for trial. The PCs are then free to decide what they would like to do, but combat with village militia is highly discouraged.

If the players resist arrest and engage in combat with the village militia (criminal, though not necessarily evil), they will be subject to the following laws of the County's criminal code:

CONVICTION

- **2nd degree murder** (unclear murder or manslaughter, but still an evil act)
- **Attempted murder**
- **Arson resulting in death or permanent deformity**
- **Rioting or fomenting unrest**
- **Sedition** (disloyalty in direct contrast to the County of Urnst), this includes loyalty to luz

SENTENCE

- **Long Prison Terms** (40 TU's - 520 TU's; mandatory character removal if deemed an evil act)
- **Killing a Hardwyn militia member** (60 TU prison term)

If the PC's cooperate after being arrested, Brother Orville, the cleric of Phyton, can cast *zone of truth* to clear the PC's. This takes 2 days, and then the adventure can continue.

Hopefully, players who want to have an adventure will agree to help the village of Hardwyn, and the scenario can continue. The mayor is happy to provide any information he can to help the PCs in the inquest, and also offers them stay at the inn of their choice in the village (the Inn of the Headless Hydra is popular). Tomorrow they begin the investigation.

Encounter 3: Runic Tattoos

Time: 10 minutes

The PCs are awoken early the next morning by Mayor Geldar. They are free to ask him any questions about the investigation over breakfast at the inn, though he has little more to reveal than the information already prepared (provide the PCs with **Handout 2: Official Writ**). Hopefully, it will provide the PCs with leads. They are also provided keys to the abodes of Cornath Barnabus and Uriel Moonsong, since they lived alone.

The corpses of the murder victims are kept in the village morgue. They have been left unburied until the murder investigation is complete, and a *gentle repose* spell has been cast on each to prevent decomposition. With writ in hand, the PCs may investigate the bodies.

For the most part, the cadavers are unremarkable. Efreem Brumblehill and Uriel Moonson's corpses appear to be drained of life, and the PCs should know what killed them based on their experience the night before. Cornath Barnabus's body is bruised from head to toe by large fist marks. A successful Craft: Armor skill check at DC: 10+APL will determine that it was likely done with armored gauntlets. Andemon Tamaranth's corpse has many slash marks, as well as a large impaling wound through his heart. A successful Craft: Weapons skill check at DC: 10+APL will reveal that a rapier likely caused the wounds.

If a careful examination is done (taking 20 to inspect the corpses), the PCs will discover that all of the murder victims each have a miniscule tattoo etched into the soles of their feet (which foot varies for each corpse). The tattoo is colorless, but has left a barely visible impression in the skin. Any PC who makes a Read Magic or a Decipher Script skill check at DC: 15+APL can make out the tattoo to be two ancient magical runes, the characters for "brotherhood" and "oath". A *read magic* spell will automatically disclose the two runes. A *detect magic* spell reveals that each of the tattoos exudes a faint magical aura (enchantment school), equally strong. If the words "brotherhood" and "oath" are spoken aloud in the language of magic, the runes will glow visibly with a pale blue light.

Part of the modified geas spell that binds the members of the Brotherhood includes protection against divination spells like *speak with dead*. If such a spell is cast on any of the victims, it will simply fail. No amount of Spellcraft can determine why, at this early stage in the investigation.

Encounter 4: Cryptic Clues

Time: 60 minutes

The abodes of each of the victims are marked on the PCs' map. A visit to each of them to gather clues should be in order by the group. The party may travel to each of them in whatever order they like, but the order provided here is recent to older slayings.

As the PCs search the homes for clues, there is a possibility that they may not search well enough, no matter how long they take. In each location, allow the PCs to each make Search checks of the area (or items found in it) once when they begin searching, and once again if they take 20 to **really** search. If none of these

rolls exceed the required DC, the party has no luck finding any clues in that location.

Any PC who specifically states that he/she is searching the location of a clue will receive a +10 bonus to discover the clue. *For example, any PC who specifically states that he/she is searching the inside of the lur in Uriel's workshop receives a +10 bonus to discover the rolled parchments hidden inside.*

4a. URIEL'S WORKSHOP

Uriel Moonson lived above her workshop. She made her musical instruments in the back room and sold them in the shop to the front. Above the workshop were moderate living quarters in which the old woman resided until her tragic end last night. Uriel took her elven gift for music and adventured with the Brotherhood as their bard. Though she began her life amongst elves, she grew enough of an affinity for humans to retire to Hardwyn after her adventures. A lifelong lover of music, Uriel has a large collection of mundane and exotic musical instruments.

Uriel Moonson's abode is located south of the village marketplace. A modest, two-story wooden structure, it mostly consists of a workshop and a small storefront to display finished instruments. Uriel's living quarters sit atop the workshop, with large windows looking out from all sides. A wooden sign hanging near the front door displays a picture of a lute with the words "Moonson Melodies" are painted beneath it.

Once inside, read the following.

Inside, the workshop and storefront are almost the same room, separated only by a counter that prevents customers from inadvertently wandering into the craft area. It is apparent that Uriel sold most of her instruments made-to-order, as only a few of the smaller instruments can reasonably be displayed in the minute shop area provided. The place is tastefully decorated, however, with paintings on the walls and a few sturdy stone sculptures set on the various work desks about the room. A variety of instruments, large and small, simple and exotic, adorn the workshop, many in various stages of construction.

Uriel's home is magically warded against various kinds of intruders (after the murders of her comrades began, she took many precautions). The wards on her home include protections from evil, chaos, undead, summoned creatures, all outsiders, and spells, forcing the shadows that attacked her to catch her on the street at night. A *detect magic* spell on or within the building will

scream magical auras of varying strengths, all of the abjuration school.

A Search roll of DC: 5+APL or better of Uriel's workshop reveals an unusual instrument: a **lur**.

This large horn is 8 feet long and weighs about 50 lbs. It is curved like a mammoth's tusk and culminates in a flat, bronze disk about 3 feet in diameter at the horn end. The engraving of a fierce, snarling manticore's face is etched into the disk, making this instrument a grand and unusual piece.

A successful Perform or Craft: Musical Instruments skill check at DC: 15+APL will tell a PC that this instrument is used primarily by giants. Most humanoid musicians would not even be able to carry it for very long, much less play it for any length of time. Most races smaller than giants would find the lung capacity required strenuous.

A Search check at DC: 15+APL of the lur will reveal two scrolls rolled up inside, hugging its frame. At this time, you may provide the players with **Handout 3: Uriel's List** and **Handout 4: Uriel's Ballad**. Of course, the list should appear suspicious. It contains the names of all of the members of the Brotherhood, with Cornath, Andemon, and Efrem's names crossed off. The ballad is interesting, to say the least. It refers to a band of adventurers called the Brotherhood of the Oath. The fact that a bard would hide a song in such a manner is reason enough to inspect it.

Other than the list and the song, there is little of interest to the case in Uriel's home.

4b. EFREM'S SHOP

Efrem Brumblehill was the rogue of the Brotherhood. After he retired from adventuring, he sold a modest collection of spices (some legal, some not) for a hefty profit. He soon opened a spice shop and manned its counter with his children as they grew, until they eventually flew the nest to make their own ways in life. Efrem runs a humble business now, and most of his product is on the level. Until his untimely death, he and his wife enjoyed a life of modest wealth and ease.

True to his roguish nature, Efrem used his wealth to guard his home against any who might try to enter unannounced. Many traps protect the building, but the shadows that killed him passed through his material devices with ease. The home is a single story structure, with a spice shop out front and halfling-sized living quarters in the back. Between the two is a special "receiving room" for customers

with "particular" tastes. The spice shop is closed now, but the windows from the house in the back glow with light, and the PCs can speak with Efrem's wife, Scilla, by knocking on the rear door.

Efrem Brumblehill's home is located west of the village marketplace, in a residential area just beyond the myriad of stores and vendors. This small, single story wooden building is nondescript, and few would even recognize the place as a shop, but for the enormous, 6-foot tall wooden sign that juts out from the wall by the front door. A picture of a mortar and pestle are emblazoned upon the sign, while the words "The Spice is Nice" are written vertically down the sign's facing on both sides.

If the party knocks or otherwise attracts the attention of those inside, read the following.

A panel in the door, about 3' of the way up, slides open to reveal a pair of squinting, darting eyes. "What you want?" inquires an old, crotchety voice from behind the door.

The PCs will be let inside if they announce themselves and display their writ (medium-sized or larger PCs must stoop or squat). Scilla Brumblehill is an old halfling widow. She is hospitable enough, but not overjoyed to revisit the details of her husband's murder. Scilla is grief-stricken, but will agree to talk to the PCs, if they ask politely. She is still in shock over her husband's death, and will interject her information with widowly wailing for her dear, departed husband ("Oh, Efrem, why didja hafta leaves me so soon?!", "We never even gots ta take that trip to the Mithril Falls like we planned! Oh, woe!", etc.)

Scilla has little to say about why Efrem died as he did. Though old, he was a healthy man, agile and virile for his age. Scilla will reveal that he was a rogue long ago, and could have many enemies, but they have been bothered by none of these for decades. Efrem retired from the roguish trade long ago, so why he was murdered is baffling to her. She just woke up one morning and couldn't get him to wake up. The couple was old, indeed, even for halflings, but they were not near death. When Scilla looked closer, she noticed that he looked as if the life had been drained right out of him. It seemed disturbing to her, and she called the authorities of Hardwyn about it.

If the PCs ask to search the home for clues, Scilla will inform them that she has already collected her husband's belongings from the house and has discovered nothing

unusual, but they are free to search the shop, where he spent most of his days manning the counter (Efrem was a very enterprising man, like most halflings). If any clues are to be found, they will likely be found in the shop.

The Spice is Nice is a good-sized shop with many shelves displaying the fine spices that Efrem Brumblehill sold. Spices of all kinds, in bottles and wrapped in paper, both exotic and local, are here for purchase. A four-sided counter is set into the middle of the room, and houses such items as paperwork, spice accessories, and apparatus to prepare the spices for sale. There is little else in the room, speaking to a halfling's general sense of pragmatism.

A successful Search check of DC: 20+APL will reveal a small, wooden box beneath a loose board in the floor, behind the counter. It is locked (DC: 15+APL to pick), and contains a flask of grey powder. This substance is *powdered myconid jelly* (a moderate narcotic), which allows anyone who consumes it to resist pain for 4 hours (remain standing until -10 hp instead of falling unconscious, though death still occurs at -10 hp). The bottom of this box has a false bottom, which can only be discovered by making an additional Search check of 20+APL. Beneath the false bottom are two folded pieces of parchment (at this time, you may provide the players with **Handout 5: Efrem's List & Handout 6: Efrem's Research**). The list is similar to Uriel's list, but has fewer names crossed off. The accompanying parchment page is torn from a book about gems, and discusses a rare type of jewel called *dweornite*.

Of course, both the list and page should seem suspicious. If Scilla is asked about them, she honestly knows nothing. Efrem never mentioned either to her in all the long years they were married. Scilla is also unaware that he owned powdered myconid jelly, but she will allude to his *iron joint syndrome*, claiming that he must have used it for *medicinal* purposes. She encourages the PCs to keep the clues if it will help with the investigation of finding her husband's killer.

4c. ANDEMON'S SANCTUM

Andemon Tamaranth resided on the holy grounds of the church of Phyton in Hardwyn. After his adventuring days as a cleric with the Brotherhood ended, he retired to the quiet life of a priest of Phyton. The most revered of the village's gods, Phyton's church is the largest, and Brother Andemon enjoyed a relatively comfortable stay there until his passing.

The Church of Phyton is located near the village square along with other, smaller churches scattered about the area. The church is the largest of its kind

and the grounds are kept well-maintained by the clerics who live there. The Church of Phyton is comprised of three wood and stone buildings: the Giving Hall for worshippers and ceremonies, the Living Hall for the priests to reside in, and the Chamber of Transformation, which prepares the dead to be reintroduced to the earth upon passing of the spirit. A low, wooden fence surrounds the church grounds, though it is obvious it was never meant to keep people out. A wooden sign with the symbol of Phyton (a scimitar in front of an oak tree) decorates each of the front doors of the buildings, as well as the gate.

You are met at the front gate by a portly, elderly cleric, slightly balding on the top of his head with grey to white hair otherwise. He is dressed in the robes of a simple priest: typically brown, but thick and durable. "Good day to you," the man gleams. "I am Brother Orville. I welcome you to the Church of Phyton!"

The PCs are received by Brother Orville, now the senior cleric at the church. He greets the group warmly and seems eager to help with the investigation. Brother Orville invites the PCs into the atrium of the church and asks one of the junior clerics to serve the adventurers some tea. He will then answer any questions posed to him with focused intent.

Brother Orville knows of no one who would want to kill Brother Andemon, as he was a benevolent servant of Phyton almost his entire life. Andemon was known for his many good works and was beloved by the entire village. He used his divine magic to aid the farmers and the village for decades. Orville will occasionally interject fiery grief at Andemon's passing ("Phyton protect him, he will be missed!", "The likes of him shall never be seen on this Oerth again!", etc.). Brother Andemon was simply found dead early one morning in the temple gardens. Brother Orville discovered him, stabbed through the heart, his robes slashed almost to pieces.

The PCs are free to search the murder scene, which has been roped off in a rectangular area. The garden has been left untouched by order of the militia. The scene looks like any other garden, but a large humanoid imprint is left in the dirt where Andemon fell as he was killed. A successful Tracking skill check (DC: 10+APL) will discover armored, humanoid footprints on the ground near the body. The footprints lead back over the wall just north of the garden, at which point they disappear on the cobblestone streets surrounding the church grounds.

With writ in hand, the PCs may search the Andemon's quarters, but not the entire church, as it is a holy place. They may take any clues they find, but are warned not to damage or pilfer anything.

Brother Andemon's chamber is spacious, but modest. The only furniture in the room is a large bed against the far wall, a chest at its foot, and a wooden armoire by the right wall. Tapestries of scenes from Phytonion lore hang on the walls of this room, pressed against them by wooden tables. On the tables are various books, scrolls, and religious items such as censers, altar cases, and the like. The chamber seems spartan and roomy by the few material items that Brother Andemon possessed.

A successful Search skill check (DC: 10+APL) discovers a golden idol that is too light for its mass inside an altar case.

The golden idol is a carved statuette of a tall, slender, youthful-looking Suel man. The man is dressed in the simple clothes of a farmer, but carries a curved scimitar in one hand. The idol's face has a worn, but peaceful visage, with a comforting, bountiful smile on its lips. You guess that this must represent the physical manifestation of the farming god, Phyton.

The idol is hollow, and a successful Search skill check (DC: 15+APL) will reveal that pressing the belt buckle of the idol activates a mechanism. The statue ejects two small pieces of parchment rolled together from its base (you may provide the players with **Handout 7: Andemon's List** and **Handout 8: Andemon's Quest Spell**). Andemon's list is similar to the other lists, and the spell scroll appears to be half of a custom spell, though the other half has been torn off. It is the first half of the custom *geas/quest* spell that Andemon and Shalazar developed decades ago to bind the Brotherhood to the Oath. A successful Spellcraft skill check (DC: 10+APL) will reveal that the spell is unusual, being both divine *and* arcane in nature. Of course, the PCs should begin to see a pattern emerging. The rest of Andemon's few possessions are unremarkable.

DM's Note: Any PC who is injured may be healed here, for a nominal fee of 5 gp (half-price) for a *cure light wounds* spell. If any PC has suffered STR damage from the shadow encounter, he/she may receive treatment to restore lost STR here, also for a flat nominal fee of 50 gp. Brother Orville can also cast *raise dead* spells on any PC who dies during this adventure, but will charge the standard fee to raise him/her. You may assume that with the number of priests residing at the church, there are enough healing and restoration spells to take care of any needs the party has.

The clerics of the Church of Phyton are happy to help with the investigation to find Andemon's killer(s) in any way they can.

4d. CORNATH'S FORGE

Cornath Barnabus lived alone in a home behind his forge/shop. After his life as a mercenary fighter, he retired to Hardwyn and put his love of warfare to a creative purpose: making weapons. He could be seen every day in his forge, hammering arms of superb design.

Cornath Barnabus' abode is located in the northern sector of the village, near the docks. A sturdy stone structure, the forge has large grated windows that can likely be opened on hot days when the forge is active. A sign in front of the shop sports a picture of a hammer pounding on an anvil. The words "The Furious Forge" accompany the icon.

Once inside, read the following.

Inside, the forge and the shop are the same. Three separate stone forge ovens, one large and two smaller ones, are placed evenly about the room. Each is hooded, and has an iron pipe that leads up to the ceiling to vent hot air. Nearby each of the ovens is an anvil, all scratched from years of usage. The rear wall sports a rack that holds various ironworking tools from clamps to hammers. The other walls are decorated with completed weapons on display. Though mundane, each weapon is superb, crafted by a master smith, and worthy of any warrior without the need or funds for magical weaponry.

Very little trash or metal shavings litter the workshop. You sense that it would normally be very tidy, but right now the room is in disarray, from what seems to be a burglary. Weapons and tools have been tossed from the wall and now lie on the floor. Benches and tables are overturned, as parts of the incomplete weapons that once rested upon them now litter on the ground nearby. Traces of blood stain the ground in front of the main forge where Cornath's body was likely found.

A successful Search check of DC: 15+APL reveals a small, ornate mithril box deep inside the larger forge, among the coals and ashes.

The small mithril box is about 3" wide, 4" long, 2" tall, and ornately designed. Reliefs of war scenes are delicately pressed into its four sides. The scenes depict brave human warriors trading blows with savage orcs. The lid of the box rattles slightly, but is

held into place by a built-in lock mechanism. Only a large keyhole provides access to the contents inside the strange, little box.

The lock mechanism is difficult to pick (DC: 20+APL), but the hinges are loose, and can be broken off (DEX check at DC: 15 to do so). The box is magically protected from damage by elemental energy (fire, cold, sonic, etc.), and any attempt to manipulate it using any of these energies. Inside the box are two folded pieces of parchment (you may now provide the PCs with **Handout 9: Cornath's List** and **Handout 10: Cornath's Research**). Cornath's list is very similar to those of his fellows, but none of the names are crossed off (since he was the first to die). The other page discusses an ancient artifact sword of great power. The rest of his workshop, home, and possessions are unremarkable.

4e. THE REMAINING NAMES

The final two names on the lists are Thar Grimmaw and Shalazar Morgrave. Both residents of Hardwyn are well-known by the village, and anyone the PCs stop and ask should be able to direct them to the homes of both individuals (Gather Information skill roll of DC: 10+APL). If the PCs wish to talk to Geldar Duncombe about them, he can be found in the town hall at the center of the village performing his usual daily duties as mayor (he will provide the information without requiring a skill roll). The Mayor will also reveal any generally known information about any of the names on the list(s):

Thar Grimmaw

"Thar Grimmaw is a particularly ugly half-orc (by human and orcish standards, apparently). He has always been welcome in Hardwyn, but he is not especially accepted by the villagers due to the ever-looming threat of recent orc and goblin raids from the north. Even though Thar is approaching his twilight years, he has never quite mastered civilized human behavior, often forgetting his manners in public.

"Still, fortune has been kind to him. He is a wealthy landowner and lives in a large estate near the river. In the sunset of his life, he has taken to socializing with the people of Hardwyn less and less. Not truly being accepted in either human or orcish society, he generally stays within the confines of his manor amongst his construct guards and servants, fashioned for him by paid wizards. Though reclusive, he is not beyond caring for his community. He does, from time to time, donate gold to the churches or the village's coffers."

Shalazar Morgrave

"Shalazar Morgrave is a hermetic wizard who lives 3 miles south of the village proper in a tower (frankly, I cannot fathom why wizards always seem to reside in towers). She is half Baklunish, and half another race of human, though she has never clearly divulged which one. Her manners and lifestyle are heavily Baklunish, however; and she looks and dresses the part.

"Little is known about Shalazar, other than that she prefers to be left alone. She comes into Hardwyn occasionally to buy food and supplies, though just as often she sends her grotesque homunculus familiar on a flying carpet with a sack of gold in his hands. When called on to help the village, she has come through for us, however, performing minor magical services at no cost. All she has asked for in exchange is that we villagers respect her privacy and continue to allow her to purchase goods from us. Of course, we have no qualms with that."

"I suggest you visit Thar Grimmaw first, as his estate lies here in town. He will likely be more receptive to your visit, as well. Be careful of his iron golem guards. They are very powerful and immune to magic. What awaits you at Shalazar's tower is beyond me, as very few of the villagers have ever been there. When we require her services, she somehow knows to contact us (I think she uses some kind of magic to spy on us, personally, which I can tell you I do not like one bit)."

DM's Note: When running the encounters with Thar Grimmaw and Shalazar Morgrave, remember that the PCs are not militia, and have limited powers of authority within and outside Hardwyn. Without hard evidence, the party may not apprehend either person, and attacking Thar or Shalazar in their respective homes based on frivolous accusations would be considered an evil act (not to mention that both have guards protecting them that would likely slaughter the PC party).

Also remember that the conditional geas spell that binds Thar and Shalazar prevents them from talking about the dweornite gem, the Brotherhood, and the lists; anything that relates to the oath they took long ago. In addition, each has an ulterior motive for keeping the pact secret, hoping to finally acquire the gem for himself/herself once this nasty murder business is resolved.

Encounter 5: An Unliving End

Time: 15 minutes

Thar was the youngest member of the Brotherhood, and when the group separated, Thar continued adventuring for many years. Being a barbarian, he had little use for material possessions, and the treasure he collected throughout the years accumulated into a small fortune. After his retirement, he purchased many plots of land on the outskirts of the village of Hardwyn. As the town grew, Thar developed the land or sold it back to the village for a tidy profit. His real estate investments made him very wealthy, and he is now one of Hardwyn's most affluent residents.

Thar Grimmaw is about 55 years old and lives in a large estate with his many construct guards. The estate is well-secluded from intruders, and high stone walls surround the entire manor.

Thar Grimmaw's manor is located near the northern area of the village, in an affluent riverfront residential area. Few of the other houses in the area match his, however. The estate is surrounded by a high stonewall (about 15 feet) all around, with sharp metal spikes atop its small battlements.

The two gates, one front and one rear, break up the wall on opposite sides. The gates are made of metal, and reinforced with addition iron bands. You espy two large humanoid guards at both gates, each almost twice the size of a normal man, clad in what appears to be plate armor and carrying large swords.

The PCs are met by two iron golems that guard each gate (stats for *iron golems* can be found on *pages 108-111* of the *Monster Manual*). If the group asks for entrance into the estate, one of the guards (without speaking) points to a table with an accompanying sign that says "REMOVE WEAPONS". The party will not be allowed entrance until they comply. If they agree, the guards will motion the group in.

If the PCs cause any trouble, the gate guards will attack them, joined by two more iron golems who roam the grounds) 1d6 rounds later, and another two (rear guard) 1d6 rounds after that. This encounter is not meant to end in combat, but there is always the possibility with aggressive parties. Regardless of the APL, six iron golems should decimate the PCs, so combat with the gate guards is *highly* discouraged.

Thar's manor is lavish. It is carefully designed to display his wealth, with finely cut grass, ponds, and

hedge statues scattered about. The path up to the house is paved in the same red cobblestone that paves the streets of the village. The manor house itself is built from stone with redwood trim around the windows and doors. The front door is made of thick redwood with reinforced iron. A golden knocker ring hangs from the mouth of a sculptured gold dragonne's head at chest level.

If the PCs knock or call out, read the following.

Immediately, the door opens to reveal a floating candelabra, hovering at head level and holding the door. A small mouth on the object drones in a monotone voice, "Please follow this way." It slowly floats in a steady gate down the hall, repeating its autonomous direction, "Please follow this way."

The large wooden doors at the end of the hall open into a large chamber, 100' x 60', with a 20'-tall ceiling. The stone room is decorated with large hanging tapestries displaying battle scenes, as well as all manner of weapons, hunting head trophies, and the like. Arranged near the walls in decorative fashion are suits of armor, holding long swords, atop small pedestals.

A large table at the far end of the room is covered with battle maps and strategic unit miniatures. In a large, plush chair behind the desk sits an older half-orc, as large and ugly a half-orc as you have ever seen. He has grey, stringy hair that sticks up from his head in occasional patches, and many scars about his face. The half-orc is dressed in well-to-do attire, however, complete with frilly cuffs and collars. He coughs to clear his voice as you enter, and then utters in throaty, inarticulate Common, "What you do here? How can Thar helps you?"

Thar is deceptively intelligent, but he prefers to play the role of the dullard to keep those he meets off-guard, in case it comes in handy later. He speaks Common with noticeably poor, guttural grammar, similar to the *Incredible Hulk* from the old cartoon serials ("Me am not concerned about assassins, for me have guards to protects me.", "Me am civilized now, not stupid barbarian me was.", etc.) The half-orc plays the role of a barbarian playing the role of a civilized man.

Thar will treat the PCs with courtesy (even offering them cheese and crackers served by the candelabra), but has little interest in their story. He feels he is well-protected by his golem guards, and scoffs at any possible attempts on his life the PCs may mention.

If shown the lists, Thar feigns ignorance, claiming not to know what these lists are, or what they could possibly mean, though he does express discomfort at the idea of being on someone's list. Thar is a practiced liar, but a Sense Motive skill roll of DC: 25+APL will detect that he is not telling the truth. To divert suspicion from himself, he will tell the PCs that Shalazar Morgrave is a dubious wizard who lives outside of Hardwyn. He will suggest hints that make her sound like an insidious recluse whose activities are wicked and mysterious ("How she live all alone outside village with orc raiders about? Even Thar not get along with orc raiders.", "Why she hardly come into town? Why she not want to be part of village community?", etc.)

If accused of the murders, Thar becomes outraged, citing his long-time residence in the village, and also his many good works throughout the years (giving money to the village militia, helping to fund churches, schools, etc.) He expresses offense at being accused, claiming the PCs are bigots like the rest of the village ("No matter what me does to helps them, villagers always hates Thar.", "If me was human, you not accuse me.", etc.) After his ranting, Thar demands that the party produce some proof of their claims or leave, stating that bigots are not welcome in his home.

In the end, Thar is little help to the PCs. He seems unconcerned about the murders, claiming that they are random killings that do not involve him. Even if his life were in danger, he feels he is safe in his estate, and encourages the PCs not to worry about him.

DM's Note: Of course, Thar Grimshaw is the murderer, but it is important to note that Thar is not evil (*detect evil* will not ring positive on him); he is *chaotic neutral*. He was once a self-serving, but benevolent, adventurer, and later a village patron. Thar is a barbarian at heart, and a lifetime of being ostracized by Hardwynians has led him to resent the village. Festering along with his long-growing desire for the power of the dweornite gem, Thar has been driven to murder. He has, however, not killed anyone unnecessarily. He perceives what he has done as necessary casualties for the dominion he will build with the power of the hilt-gem.

Encounter 6: Element-ary Deductions

Time: 15 minutes

Shalazar Morgrave is about 65 years old and lives in her wizard's tower 3 miles south of Hardwyn. Segregated from

the superstitious villagers, she performs her arcane research and plies her magical trade as she fancies.

Shalazar Morgrave's tower lies 3 miles south of Hardwyn in a small forest clearing. The grounds are meager, but the round tower is five stories tall and made of tightly-fitted hematite stone. Windows of stained glass adorn the upper four floors at quartered distance around the building. A tall wrought iron fence surrounds the perimeter of the tower grounds, topped with sharp iron spikes all around. To either side of the front (and only) gates are metal statues some 15 feet tall, one of a fire elemental and the other of a water elemental. As you approach the gates, a magic mouth on the fire elemental statue announces your presence in a gritty, crackling voice, "A warm welcome to you, strangers!" The gates open inward by themselves. As you pass through them, the water elemental statue chimes in a gurgling intonation, "Behave yourselves, and keep a cool head!"

The courtyard of the tower grounds is covered in thick grass that does not appear to see much maintenance. The wild grasses of the woods grow here, kept trim only by the forest's natural balance. A stone fountain lies just off the trampled path to the front door. As you pass by, the water inside the fountain churns and takes shape into numerous standing, crested waves of water with smaller waves for arms, appearing somewhat humanoid. Each water creature stares at you with a pair of deep green orbs, warning you away from thoughts of making trouble.

The front doors of the tower are made of reinforced metal. An alcove 6 feet wide, 3 feet tall, and 3 feet deep is set into the stone at about waist height beside the right door. Above it another magic mouth in the wall provides simple instruction in a stern, monotone voice, "Please remove your weapons."

The PCs must remove their weapons before they will be allowed entrance into the tower. If they refuse, the doors will not open. If the party tries to make trouble, the water elementals will attack them (stats for all elementals can be found on pages 81-85 of the *Monster Manual*). If the PCs agree to remove their weapons, however, they may place them in the enclave, where they will be safe. The door will then open, answered by a grotesque homunculus.

The doors open and a diminutive humanoid creature receives you. It is 18 inches tall and hovers in the air flapping small, leathery wings 2 feet long in wingspan. Its skin is rough and warty, with a sickly

pale greenish color. The grotesque creature's face is vaguely humanoid, squat and wide, with a round, lumpy nose and two beady, inhuman eyes. Its mouth is filled with sharp, needle-like teeth, which smile at you slyly. The small, flying creature turns into the room and motions you inside. It flies slowly across the chamber to the other side, where stairs leading up await.

The foyer of the tower covers the entire first floor. On either side of the purple carpet stretching from the front door to the stairs are a series of large, bronze braziers that stand only a couple of feet off the ground. Inside each is a raging fire, and as you pass by, the fires stand to form tall sheets of flame with arm-like appendages on each side. The arms seem to flicker in and out of the creatures' flaming bodies, and each has two large patches of brilliant blue flame for eyes. They glare at you in deterrence of any trouble.

The misshapen, warty creature pauses for a second to ensure that you still follow, and then flies for the stairs leading up. At the top of the stairs is a library that covers the span of the second floor. Several wooden shelves align the walls, filled with thick tomes and piles of scroll cases. A soft, bright light pervades the room, and seems to come from glowing, off-white orbs that hover about the room in a lazy, random manner.

A large, cedar table sits in the center of the room, with books, scrolls, parchments, and scraps of paper strewn all over its surface. A tall woman with dark skin sits at the table, pouring over an oversized manuscript. She is human, and appears to be in her twilight years. The woman's hair is long, black, and tied in a bun, with streaks of grey running the length. Dressed in a black satin robe adorned with curled bands of red and yellow, she occasionally adjusts her spectacles as she moves to different areas of the tome's pages.

Without looking up from her book, the woman lifts her hand in your direction and motions you over. "Ello. Let us skip the pleasantries," she says, "for azz you can plainly see, I am immersed in a purrsuit of great concentration. State your purrpose, villagers. If it does not tarree me too long from my task, I may consider listening to it."

Shalazar greets the PCs with a stony façade and a noticeable Baklunish accent, speaking in sharp, alliterated Common (similar to *Natasha* the Russian spy from the old *Rocky and Bullwinkle* cartoons). She prefers her privacy, but will receive visitors from Hardwyn to preserve her

beneficial relationship with the village. Shalazar is polite, but offers no pleasantries and makes no small talk. She gets straight to the point and requests to know what the party wants, citing that she is a busy person and cannot be bothered by trivial things. The wizard looks up from her book only to impress her discontent to anything the PCs might say that displeases her. Otherwise, she continues her research even as she converses with them.

If told about the murders in Hardwyn, Shalazar explains that she knows all about them, but they do not concern her. She lived in the village for many years in her youth, but is no longer a villager, and it is none of her business. If the PCs have come to ask her for help, their pleas fall on deaf ears. Shalazar does not mind performing the occasional magic trick to help the Hardwynians, but solving their problems is their own responsibility.

If told about or shown the lists, Shalazar feigns ignorance of their meaning (a Sense Motive skill check of DC: 25+APL or better will reveal that she is lying). She claims not to know what this list could possibly mean, or why she would be on it. She does, however, throw out hints that Thar Grimmaw could be the culprit ("That half-orc is not as dumb as he seems. He is a crafty one, he is.", "He has a wicked streak. There is something sinister about the way he consorts only with his mechanical minions.", etc.)

If accused of the murders, Shalazar becomes angry, but restrains herself. She glares at the PCs and fumes about their nerve, coming into her residence and charging her with such a crime, and without hard evidence, even ("How dare you come into my home and point your ignorant finger at me!", "You backwater villagers have no idea how lucky you are to have me living so close to you!", etc.) She then demands that the party leave at once, never to return. Ultimately, Shalazar is little help. She has no interest in the workings of the village, and offers no aid.

DM's Note: Shalazar knows, of course, the reason why the other members of the Brotherhood have been murdered, and she even suspects Thar Grimmaw as the culprit (especially now that they are the only two Brotherhood members left). In fact, she plans to slay Thar before he can slay her, and towards that end she has feverishly been researching and developing a *summon rust monster* spell to defeat Thar's iron golem guards. Like Thar, Shalazar is not evil herself, but forced into a dire situation. Not able to rely on the "incompetent" village militia, she is forced to kill her murderer before he murders her.

Encounter 7: Automated Assassins

Time: 30 minutes

***DM's Note:** This encounter should take place at a fixed point in the game session, regardless of how far the PCs have progressed in finding the clues they need. At exactly **2 hours** into the adventure, fast forward to this encounter. Otherwise, there will be insufficient time to complete the scenario. If the PCs have not collected all of the clues, they will simply be more in the dark than they normally would as the mystery unravels. **Encounter 8: The Oath** ultimately explains the plot and provides the group with the answers they seek, so foregoing some of the investigation will not harm or hinder the PCs greatly.*

By this time, it is near or past sunset. The PCs will likely be baffled as to how to approach the case next. Mayor Geldar has little to offer, since he was not very successful with the investigation before the party arrived.

Unfortunately, the case takes a tragic turn, but provides the party with the clues they need. The PCs see a grim sight in the distance: a plume of smoke rising into the air in about the location of Shalazar's tower. If party has just visited Shalazar's tower, they will see the smoke as they are riding away, and can double back to its location. If the group is still in the village, they spot the smoke from inside Hardwyn, and must ride out to the tower (the village will provide horses for fast travel if necessary). The journey takes about an hour on foot, and about 10 minutes on horseback. Once the PCs reach Shalazar's tower, they see the following...

As you approach Shalazar's tower, the plume of smoke looms larger in the distance. Nearing the grounds, you notice that the front is unguarded. The gates have been removed from the fence that surrounds the courtyard. Though still intact, they lie on the ground between the two elemental statues. The statues themselves have been beheaded, and no warm welcome greets you this visit.

After the PC enter the courtyard, read the following.

The courtyard scene is one of devastation. The fountain lies broken in pieces, its pool of elemental defenders scattered here and there into large, unmoving puddles of water. Among the soaked patches of grass are broken machine parts: gears, pulleys, plates of armor, and finely-wrought rapiers. Signs of battle can be seen here, as the earth is

uprooted and the remains of the courtyard guardians and some machine lie scattered about.

The tower looks ragged since the last time you were here. The second floor's windows are blown out and scorch marks scar their edges. Steady fumes of smoke trickle out of the windows, and it appears that a fire may be smoldering inside. The front doors lie on the ground in the doorway, sliced off their hinges in an impressively precise manner.

If the PCs decide to enter the tower, read the following

The foyer is worse than the courtyard. Uprturned braziers litter the room, their contents spilled on the stone floor. Scorch marks score the carpet and the floor all the way down the gauntlet, and again you find machine parts, armor, and broken rapiers about. The fiery protectors of this chamber are no more, but like their watery kin, they took their casualties with them. Someone or thing has attacked this stronghold, and looks to have succeeded in bypassing its elemental defenders.

Unfortunately, Shalazar Morgrave is slain, but her assassins still lurk upstairs. They are a group of *nimblewrights*, stealthy constructs useful for spying and assassination. Stats for a nimblewright can be found on pages 162-163 of the *Monster Manual II*, but are also included in *Appendix I: Combat Encounters*.

The scene awaiting the PCs upstairs depends on whether they can gain surprise or not.

The library is in ruins; fire from Shalazar's desperate spells burn in portions of the room. Bookshelves are overturned, scorch marks & ice frost scar the room, and flames dance about, leaping from one shelf to another. Books rest on the floor, and the large table once in the center lies in splintered pieces.

The party can make any preparations they like or just burst into the library. The windows of the other levels of the tower are too small for a medium-sized creature, but a small one may fit through them. The tower's roof has a small stone hatch that allows access to the fourth level (casting chamber). The lock must be picked (DC: 15+APL) or the door bashed in (DC: 20) to gain entry. The only other route to the library is via the stairs from the foyer.

If the PCs move silently into the library room, they may surprise the assassins upstairs. Compare the lowest PC's Move Silently skill roll against the nimblewrights' Listen skill roll (as a group, at +3 bonus). If the PCs fail to

move silently or just clamor into the library, the assassins wait in ambush, prepared with augmentation (*cat's grace*, *haste*, *entropic shield*, etc.) and the element of surprise. They will hide Shalazar Morgrave's body behind one of the bookshelves and replace it with one of their own, using *alter self* to appear as Shalazar herself (DC: 20+APL to see through the illusion). If there is only 1 nimblewright (APL 4) in the room, it will lurk in wait as the bait, waiting to surprise any unsuspecting PC who rushes to investigate the body. If there are more nimblewrights, they will hide behind still upturned bookshelves using *alter self* to blend into their surroundings (DC: 20+APL to Spot).

If the PCs succeed in surprising the nimblewrights, they gain a free round of actions as the assassins stand over their kill in the center of the room. The augmentations from their previous battle have worn off, but the assassins will attempt to raise them again with their spell-like abilities once combat begins.

DM's Note: A clue to the players on how to more easily defeat the nimblewright assassins is provided in the previous descriptive text, if they are paying proper attention. Fire and cold spells have additional detrimental effects of nimblewrights (see descriptions in Appendix I: Combat Encounters). Also, as with all metal/armored creatures, lightning attacks are especially effective, as well.

The composition of the group of assassins is as follows:

ENCOUNTER 7: NIMBLEWRIGHTS		
APL	EL	# of Nimblewrights
4	7	1
6	9	2
8	11	4
10	13	8
12	15	8 advanced

Standard Strategy: The nimblewrights will split up and attempt to disarm as many of the warrior-types (fighters, barbarians, paladins, monks, rangers) as possible, then use their tripping thrust attacks to knock them down and impale them while immobilized. They will repeat the process on the hybrid fighters in the party (clerics, druids, rogues, bards), then focus on pure spell-casters (sorcerers, wizards) last, since magic is not much of a threat to them.

Challenging Strategy: If aware that the PCs are coming, the nimblewrights will destroy all but *one* of the light orbs in the room. Once the ambush begins, one of them will destroy the remaining light orb to give themselves an advantage in combat (via their inherent 60' darkvision). The nimblewrights will not split their attacks, but instead concentrate their strikes on the most heavily armored PC(s) in the party, tripping and stabbing until dead

(they will not bother with disarming the target(s)). They will repeat this process on the fighter-types first, then hybrid fighters, then pure spell-casters, trying to trip/slay the target as quickly as possible and move on to the next. During this process, the nimblewrights will rely on their high AC, dodge, and mobility feats to protect them against attacks from the rest of the party. The assassins may also use their expertise feats to avoid blows from the PC party, depending on how easily they are able to hit their chosen target. Other attacks will not deter them from their focus; they will continue to attack the same target, unless another PC proves himself/herself to be a more dangerous adversary. In this case they will switch targets, but will continue to concentrate their attacks on a single opponent.

DM's Note: Keep in mind that when *hasted*, the nimblewrights gain a partial action, and may use it to make **one** additional attack each round. The assassins' attacks do not double while *hasted*.

The nimblewrights are construct servants, and carry no treasure. The rapiers they use in combat are part of their frames and could not be wielded as a rapier by a PC in combat. The weapons are larger than the standard rapier, and are designed only for use by the nimblewrights themselves.

Encounter 8: The Oath

Time: 10 minutes

Assuming the PCs defeat the nimblewright assassins, they are free to search Shalazar's tower. Luckily, the tower is made of stone, and the fire has not blazed out of control yet. If they work diligently, the party can douse the fire with water, cloaks, etc. before it consumes the entire tower.

The table in the center of Shalazar's library contains the compiled research that the wizard was involved in before her untimely death. Most of the documents are obscure tomes and scraps of parchment with notes and magical symbols scribbled on them. One of the scrolls, however, contains what appears to be a newly completed spell. In fact, the ink is still wet. At this time, you may provide the players with **Handout 12: Summon Rust Monster Spell**.

Any PC able to cast 2nd level arcane spells or better may cast the *summon rust monster* spell using the scroll. The spell has a flaw, however. Some of the page is burnt, and happens to be the segment of the spell that commands the rust monster once conjured, as well as the section that stipulates the material component and arcane focus. Enough of the spell's instructions remain to summon the

creature, but it will be of its own free will. The rust monster does not necessarily follow the commands of the summoner; it simply looks for the largest metal object and attempts to consume it. A Spellcraft check of DC: 10+APL or better is required to realize this flaw upon reading the scroll. Also, because the material component and arcane focus portions of the scroll have been damaged, the spell may not be cast successfully once scribed to a spellbook for later use (it is a one-shot spell, usable only from the scroll itself).

A Search skill check of DC: 15+APL or better reveals that one of the thick books on the shelves, although labeled “Basic Cantrips” on the cover, is actually Shalazar’s journal, hidden in plain sight. A loose piece of parchment folded inside the book, contains half of a very old spell. At this time, you may provide the players with **Handout 13: Shalazar’s Journal** and **Handout 14: Shalazar’s Geas Spell**. The journal is written inconsistently, but covers a span of many decades. Every day is not chronicled in the journal, but rather important events in Shalazar’s life. The loose parchment contains the second half of the custom *geas/quest* spell that she and Andemon developed long ago to bind the Brotherhood to the Oath.

The other two levels of Shalazar’s tower are comprised of her living quarters (third floor) and her casting chamber (fourth floor), from which she cast complex spells requiring a controlled environment. Her living quarters contain little of value or interest, since the wizard was wise enough to stow away all of her valuables in a *Mordenkainen’s magnificent mansion* spell, to which only Shalazar had access via complex command words and rituals that opened the gate. The casting chamber is spartan to begin with, having only equipment and components necessary for spell casting and little else.

Shalazar’s journal reveals the events leading to and from the oath that the Brotherhood took long ago. It should clear up many questions that the PCs have concerning the mysterious events surrounding this odd group of people who seem to be linked together by something stronger than the passing of years. The more recent entries in the journal also describe Shalazar’s suspicions of Thar Grimmaw, and her plans to finish him before he can finish her. If the PCs pay close attention to the journal entries, they can decipher the location of the dweornite gem, hidden beneath Hardwyn’s founder’s statue in the village square.

If the PCs return to Hardwyn and request permission from Geldar Duncombe to unearth the gem, he will be more than willing, as he feels the party has made great strides in catching the killer. It will take four laborers two hours to move the statue, break the cobblestone beneath it, and dig

up the chest buried there (more than four laborers will find insufficient room to work). As it turns out, only a fraction of that time is spent in the undertaking, for when the statue is moved, the task becomes moot...

As the founder statue is removed, a large, gaping hole can be seen beneath. Inside the hole is a small, iron chest covered with magical runes. As you discuss the best method for handling the chest, one of the village laborers inexplicably opens the lid in curiosity. You reel in expectation of some sort of trap, an acid cloud or lightning bolt, but none are forthcoming. Instead, the chest merely sits there in its hole, open and empty. If the dweornite gem was in here once, it is no longer. Someone has removed it before you could arrive.

Encounter 9: Armored Defenders

Time: 30 minutes

Though he cannot pull all of the village’s militia from their posts, Mayor Geldar agrees to aid the party by providing them with a contingent of soldiers. They will assist in penetrating Thar’s defenses so the PCs might confront the sinister half-orc. The mayor even agrees to accompany the party to help coordinate the attack on the estate’s gates, though he makes it clear that he is no warrior, and that it is up to the PCs to face Thar once the iron golems are defeated.

If the PCs desire to rest before assaulting Thar’s estate, they may do so without fear of losing their opportunity to capture the sinister half-orc. Thar is relatively unaware that the party is on to him. Though he is baffled that his nimblewrights have not returned from their assassination of Shalazar, he assumes that they perished in their battle with the powerful wizard. Regardless, Thar knows that they must have succeeded, since he has been freed from his *geas*. Drunk with power and overjoyed to finally possess the dweornite gem, the half-orc resides in his manor, planning the kingdom he will carve with the gem’s power, unconcerned about the PCs or the village authorities.

The PCs may attack the iron golem guards directly if they are so bold, though it would likely spell suicide for the party. Alternatively, they can use Shalazar’s *summon rust monster* spell to defeat the golems (and make short work of the gates). Any PC capable of casting at least 2nd level arcane spells should be able to successfully perform the casting. If the party has no members capable of such an action, Geldar will offer to cast the spell himself. He is somewhat proficient in the arcane arts, though it is just a hobby to him,

and he freely admits that he is no great mage. Either way, the spell summons 1 rust monster (the stats for a standard *rust monster* are listed on page 157 of the *Monster Manual*). If the spell is cast away from either gate of Thar's estate, the rust monster will attack the militia and any armored PCs for lack of any better metal food (Mayor Geldar will strongly advise against this). The PCs should (if they are smart) cast the spell near one of the estate's gates.

As the Summon Rust Monster spell is cast, the militia soldiers (dressed in metal armor) step back in hesitation of what is to come. A churning magical cloud of chromatic vapor appears in the air. It rolls and seethes for a few seconds, then disappears into the ether from which it came. Standing in its place is a quadrupedal creature, about 5 feet long and 3 feet tall, covered in thick, lumpy, rust-colored hide plates. The tail is covered by armor plates and ends in bony projections that look like double-ended paddles. The creature sports two prehensile antennae on its head, one beneath each eye, which squirm and wiggle as they sense the air about them. This must be the notorious rust monster the spell scroll speaks of.

The rust monster seeks sustenance and jerks forward in a clumsy, lumbering movement towards the militia guard, who prop their shields in front of them even as they break formation and scatter a few feet in various directions. Suddenly, the rust monster begins to sniff the air again, and after a few seconds, turns toward the gates of the estate and darts in their direction with surprising speed. As it touches the iron gates, they instantly turn to a reddish powder and drop to piles on the ground, which the rust monster begins to consume like soup. Prompted by the destruction of the gates, the iron golems approach the assailant of the gate, only to have the creature turn on them!

The iron golems are unprepared for the carnage that awaits them. They mindlessly watch as the rust monster scampers over to them. When it is clear that the creature does not intend to stop, the golems raise their swords in defense, but to no avail. As the rust monster leaps at a golems without missing a stride, the automaton swings their ungainly swords at the creature. Though they strike home, the blades turn to rust the moment they hit the monster, leaving the golems unarmed. The rust monster clamps onto the golems with insectoid legs, rubbing wiggling antennae all over the constructs. Within seconds, the golems are reduced to piles of rust, and the rust monster drops to the ground to begin the consumption of a joyful feast. Without minds to

experience fear, the sophisticated iron golems cannot even scream as they are devoured by this basic, primal creature.

Mayor Geldar stands in awe of the event that has just taken place. "Never in a thousand lifetimes did I dream that I would ever see such a spectacle! Surely this scene warrants a page in the annals of the strange and peculiar! But never you mind, we have more pressing matters to attend to. The other golems will arrive soon to determine the nature of the commotion here. My guards and I will delay them as the rust monster performs its gruesome duty. You should make haste to the manor house and bring the fiend Thar to justice! Phyton be with you, my brave brethren!"

The manor house has two doors, one front and one rear. The lock for either can be disabled with a successful Open Lock skill check of DC: 20+APL or better. Alternately, a door can be bashed open at DC: 15+APL. The animated candelabra will once again answer the door, but it will flee at the first sign of violence. Essentially, the PCs are free to make their way to Thar's receiving room, where he awaits them for the final confrontation...

The receiving room is much as you remember it. The master of the manor, Thar Grimmaw, awaits you as you enter. "So," he spits, in perfect common, "you meddlesome adventurers have invaded my home with hopes to thwart my plans! Ha! I am prepared for you, and you shall find that "simple" Thar Grimmaw is not so easily defeated! Destroy them, my dread guard! Slice their flesh for your master!"

To your dismay, some of the armored suits that adorn this room begin to move with a slow, steady gate. Stepping off their bases, they lumber towards you, shields set before them and swords raised in malice. As they near, you can see inhuman, glowing red eyes piercing the shadows of their helmets. "Slay them, my mechanical minions!" commands Thar. "Let them gasp their dying breaths knowing that they were outmatched by the dim-witted Thar Grimmaw! Ha ha ha!"

If the PCs require a description of Thar's receiving room, re-read the description from **Encounter 5: An Unliving End**. Nothing has changed.

The PCs must now face a contingent of *dread guard*, whose stats can be found on pages 87-88 of the *Monster Manual II*, and are also included in *Appendix I: Combat Encounters*. These defenders are mindless constructs and

have only one goal in mind, to destroy the PC party! The group of dread guard number in the following:

ENCOUNTER 9: DREAD GUARD

<u>APL</u>	<u>EL</u>	<u># of Dread Guard</u>
4	3	2
6	4	3
8	4	3
10	5	2 advanced
12	6	2 advanced

Standard Strategy: Each of the dread guard will attack the PC closest to it, slashing him/her with its longsword. It will continue to attack its intended target regardless of what the other PCs do. Once down, the dread guard will turn on the next closest target. Keep in mind that although the primary purpose of the dread guard is to destroy the PCs, their secondary purpose is to protect Thar, and they will try to maintain a solid, protective barrier between him and the PC party.

Challenging Strategy: Thar Grimmaw will command his dread guard to attack and then douse the light source in the room, giving his mechanical minions an advantage in combat (via their 60' darkvision). Other than this change, the dread guard will fight exactly the same as in the *standard strategy*, each attacking the PC closest to it, mindlessly slashing at him/her until it or the target goes down. The dread guard will, however possible, try to maintain a protective position between Thar and the PC party.

The dread guard are little more than well-animated suits of armor, and carry no treasure. A PC could, however, use any of the mundane long swords or buckler shields the automatons wielded.

Thar Grimmaw will stand by and watch his dread guard battle the PCs, doing nothing to aid them. Once it appears that his minions may fail to destroy the party, Thar will press a switch in his chair's arm (Spot check of DC: 20+APL to notice this action), activating one of the inanimate suits of armor behind him. The armor moves aside, revealing a hidden passage in the wall to its rear. As the PCs are busy contending with his dread guard, Thar will escape through this passage, commanding his construct followers to form a barrier to guard his escape if the PCs attempt to follow. It does not take Thar long to escape through his passage (which, you, as the DM, should endeavor to facilitate, so the final and dramatic combat encounter may take place), and the suit of armor will slide back into place once he is inside. Once Thar is gone, the PCs may mop up the mindless dread guard.

Encounter 10: Curse of the Hilt-Gem

Time: 30 minutes

Thar Grimmaw awaits the PCs in his inner sanctum, hidden beneath his estate. The PCs may search the manor before they follow Thar, but time is short, and there is little of value as the villain has hidden what valuables he has left (after his expensive assassination venture) downstairs.

The secret passage behind the armor reveals a hidden flight of stairs. They lead down to Thar's inner sanctum, a massive room of gargantuan proportions. Thar awaits the PCs here for the final battle.

***DM's Note:** The dais in the center of Thar's throne room is protected from all forms of missile attacks by a field of magical energy, similar in effect to an entropic shield spell. The magic force field deflects all missile attacks requiring an attack roll, including arrows, rays, and spells. Any such attack has an inherent 50% chance of missing. The force field does not protect against any ranged attack that simply works at a distance, such as dragon breath, lightning bolts, or the like. The magic field can be dispelled (roll against a spell cast by a 12th level caster), but is constantly emitted by the dais, and will simply reappear in the following round.*

The room at the base of the stairs is immense in size, measuring 100' x 100'. The ceiling is 30' tall, adding to the spaciousness of the chamber. The floors and walls are made of fine new marble. In the center of the room is a raised dais 20' x 20' wide, with 20' tall marble pillars adorning its corners. The pillars are covered in strange runes from top to bottom. The walls are bare except for various tapestries depicting battle scenes of gory detail, hung about the room. Atop the pedestal is a bronze throne, in which sits Thar Grimmaw, brandishing in his left hand a black jewel as large as his fist.

"So you defeated my dread guard!" he exclaims. "No matter. In my hand I hold the Hilt-Gem of the Urnstians, one of the most powerful artifacts to grace this mundane world! Now I have power extreme, power I dreamt of my entire life, even as I languished beneath the bigoted thumb of these ignorant humans! For years they believed dim-witted Thar Grimmaw to be a simple barbarian, even as I aided the Brotherhood time and again with my deeds of courage! Never did they allow me to lead! Never!"

"Instead they chose Cornath, cursed Cornath, to be their leader! He was not even a challenge! I killed him first myself! I beat him with my armored fists even as he begged for his miserable life! My shadows and nimblewrights took care of the others. Now they see who was fit to lead! Now they see that Thar was strongest! I will carve a kingdom with this gem! It was always meant to be mine! From the first moment I held it so many years ago, it spoke to me! It told me it wanted to be mine! It wanted me! I deserve it! You will also see! You will see!"

Thar stands up, then speaks a series of cryptic command words in an ancient and forgotten tongue. The gem glows with a sinister light, as tendrils of crackling arcane energy leap from one facet on its surface to another. The runes on the pillars also begin to glow slightly. "They thought me a primitive, but I learned their ways. I learned to read, and I read much. It took many, many years to discover the command words to the gem. I had to translate it from very ancient lore. I even learned how to fashion this throne room as the seat of my power. The pillars are designed to amplify the power of the gem. Already I can feel its power! You will feel its power, too!"

Another series of command words from Thar's lips makes the dark gem glow intensely. Leaping tendrils of ebony energy dart about the gem, weaving in and out and around Thar's clenched hand. The runes on the pillars also begin to glow brightly, pulsating with strange arcane power. The demented half-orc begins to laugh maniacally, but his laughter turns to gasps of fear as a sudden realization is made. "No, no, the power...too intense! The pain! The Pain!"

The ebony energy grows, crawling up Thar's arm, and then spreading to his torso. "I cannot...I cannot...control it!" Large tendrils of ebony energy consume Thar's body and impale him again and again as they leap in and out of his bulky form. The old barbarian drops to his knees, battered and weary from his ordeal. "No," he wheezes. "The power was to be mine! The powerrrr..." The gem's energy surrounds Thar in a haze of arcane smoke and particles. Even as the half-orc screams his dying breath, a massive explosion from his position sends a shockwave to every corner of the room [Reflex save (DC: 15+APL) to remain standing]. The room rumbles ominously, and the pillars topple to the ground with a deafening crash.

The haze of smoke and magic clears from the dais, revealing in its place a horrid creature,

seemingly drawn from a lunatic's nightmares. Its amorphous body has the grayish color of orc-human flesh, but writhes with a churning motion. Countless eyes and toothy mouths constantly form and retreat back into the creature's mass. Appendage-like pseudopods of protoplasmic flesh shoot out of the creature, ending in eyes and maws dripping with gluttonous saliva. Disoriented, the monster gurgles and wiggles on the dais for a moment, but spots you soon enough, and begins to slither slowly in your direction. Eager at the thought of food, the vile creature begins to emit a loud, wailing gibbering noise from its mass of mouths simultaneously [Will saves to keep from being confused]. The clamor echoes off the walls of the chamber and is deafening, like the chorus of a thousand tortured madmen screaming in unison. Every so often, you can hear some of the mouths moan, "The powerrrr...the powerrrr!"

This nightmarish creature is a *gibbering mouter*. It was once Thar Grimmaw, but has been irreparably transformed into this formless monster by the power of the dweornite gem. Stats for the gibbering mouter, at each APL, can be found in *Appendix I: Encounters*. At each APL, the CR of the monster is as follows:

ENCOUNTER 10: GIBBERING MOUTHER		
<u>APL</u>	<u>EL</u>	<u>CR of Gibbering Mouter</u>
4	5	5
6	8	8
8	10	10
10	12	12
12	14	14

Standard Strategy: Though inhuman, the gibbering mouter still has intelligence of a sort, but of a primal and instinctive nature. The creature will gibber and spit into the air each round. It will move to the greatest concentration of PCs and attempt to bite them, sending out 1d6 pseudopods each round in the attempt. If more than one PC is within reach, the mouter will divide its attacks randomly among them, hoping to grab at least one. If a successful grab is made, the monster will *drain blood* and *engulf* the poor victim, focusing its 1d6 pseudopods on the grappled PC. The gibbering mouter will repeat this process, trying to engulf the entire party for both hunger and defense. The monster will not resort to using its *ground manipulation* ability unless surrounded or badly injured (25% hp or less). Anyone it mires it will attempt to grab and consume.

Challenging Strategy: The gibbering mouter is a capable of common intelligence, and sizes up the party before it attacks. Each round it continues to gibber and spit in the air to blind the PCs. The aberration will stay on the

dais, taking advantage of the force field that protects the area from ranged attacks. If the PCs still do not close with the beast to engage it in melee combat, it will leave the dais and try to close with the party as quickly as possible. The gibbering moulder will attempt to grab mages (and similarly unarmored adventurers) first, taking advantage of their commonly low AC, STR, and CON to grab and hold on for the *blood draining* and the *engulfing*. The creature will always send out 6 pseudopods each round and focus them all on a single target to maximize its grabbing, holding, draining, and engulfing of a victim. Once it has drained and engulfed the target, it will move onto the next-armored opponent and attempt the same. If flanked or surrounded, the moulder will split its attacks in the hopes of grabbing more than one attacker. It will simultaneously use its *ground manipulation ability* to mire the PCs, then grab & consume them.

DM's Note: *Although the gibbering moulder has 6 (or more, depending on APL) attacks per round, remember that any creature who moves into melee may only employ one of its attacks, even if it has multiple strikes. If the creature charges a PC, it may only attack once that round, and may not utilize its full complement of attacks.*

Keep in mind that the dweornite gem is active, crackling with power, and any PC who touches it directly (even with gloves on) must make a Will save (DC: 20+APL) or sprout a strange arm, eye, or mouth somewhere on his/her body. The additional body part has no effect other than to encourage the PC to drop the gem. Each round the PC stays in contact with the gem he/she must make another Will save or sprout another body part. Every round the PC is no longer in contact with the gem, a single body part disappears.

If the party is successful in defeating the Thar-monster, it dissolves into a pool of disgusting, bubbling goo. The PCs are then free to search the chamber. A successful Search skill check (DC: 15+APL) reveals a small, wooden chest hidden in the base of the throne. It can be accessed via a secret panel in the rear of the chair, and it appears as though its trap has already been sprung by the explosion that transformed Thar Grimmaw into a creature of nightmare. The chest is, of course, locked (DC: 20+APL to pick or break into), and the treasure contained in the chest is explained in the next (and final) chapter.

The village militia arrive too late to aid you in the final battle, but offer healing to any wounded. Mayor Geldar surveys the scene and commands his guard to secure the manor, instructing one of them to place the dangerous dweornite gem back in the chest it came from. He then turns to the group of you. "It looks like a gruesome scene here. This must have been a titan of a battle! I do not mind telling you, I am almost glad I missed it, though my men and I had

our hands full with Thar's golem defenders! Good work, brave ones! You have done a great service to our humble hamlet! You may keep whatever you have looted from your adversaries, and I think that a reward is in order from the village as well! We shall discuss it over a feast in the village square tomorrow, eh? Ha ha, we will celebrate an end to the blight of Hardwyn! My men will secure this manor. Come, let us leave this horrid place!"

Conclusion

The following day there is a grand feast in the village square. The inhabitants come out to honor the brave adventurers who solved the mystery of the murders in Hardwyn. Tables adorned with all manner of food and drink is served. Music and dancing is widespread, and everyone is generally full of merriment. The PCs may use this festive occasion to wrap up their adventure here in Hardwyn.

During the feast, Mayor Geldar discusses his promise of a reward with the party. He offers each PC gold for his/her aid. The gold is in addition to the treasure found in Thar Grimmaw's throne room. Mayor Geldar will also make another offer to the party. While securing Thar Grimmaw's estate, the militia found high quality and magical weapons stolen from Cornath's forge. The village has more use for gold in its coffers than it does for such weapons, so the mayor is willing to let the PCs *purchase* a weapon from Cornath's workshop. The inventory is quite large, and many of the weapons are of excellent quality.

Any PC may, at this time, buy a weapon they like from the *Adventure Record*.

Beyond that, the villagers of Hardwyn drink and dance well into the night, and honor the PCs however they can. Happy to be rid of the fear of murder in their simple village, they listen intently to the party's tales and shower the group with praise and admiration. All are joyful, and the coming of night brings a close to another grand adventure in the County of Urnst.

THE END

Experience Point Summary

APL 12

1575 XP

To award experience for this adventure, add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Then assign the experience award. Award the total value to each character.

Encounter 1

Defeating the Shadows:

APL 4	90 XP
APL 6	90 XP
APL 8	150 XP
APL 10	180 XP
APL 12	210 XP

Encounter 7

Defeating the Nimblewrights:

APL 4	210 XP
APL 6	270 XP
APL 8	330 XP
APL 10	390 XP
APL 12	450 XP

Encounter 9

Defeating the Dread Guard:

APL 4	90 XP
APL 6	120 XP
APL 8	120 XP
APL 10	150 XP
APL 12	180 XP

Encounter 10

Defeating the Gibbering Mouther:

APL 4	150 XP
APL 6	240 XP
APL 8	300 XP
APL 10	360 XP
APL 12	420 XP

Role-Playing Bonus

Interacting with Mayor Geldar & other inhabitants of Hardwyn:

APL 4	135 XP
APL 6	180 XP
APL 8	225 XP
APL 10	270 XP
APL 12	315 XP

Total Possible Experience

APL 4	675 XP
APL 6	900 XP
APL 8	1125 XP
APL 10	1350 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 treasurer.

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 minute 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 (that is, 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 piece 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 treasures from each encounter add it up and that is number of gold pieces a characters total and coin value increase at the end of the adventure. Write the total in the GP Gained field of the adventure certificate.

Treasure Key:

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

Conclusion:**C: Village reward**

APL 4: L: 0 gp; C: 100 gp; M: 0 gp
APL 6: L: 0 gp; C: 200 gp; M: 0 gp
APL 8: L: 0 gp; C: 300 gp; M: 0 gp
APL 10: L: 0 gp; C: 400 gp; M: 0 gp
APL 12: L: 0 gp; C: 500 gp; M: 0 gp

C: Thar's treasure

APL 4: L: 0 gp; C: 500 gp; M: 0 gp
APL 6: L: 0 gp; C: 600 gp; M: 0 gp
APL 8: L: 0 gp; C: 950 gp; M: 0 gp
APL 10: L: 0 gp; C: 1700 gp; M: 0 gp
APL 12: L: 0 gp; C: 2500 gp; M: 0 gp

Total Possible Treasure

APL 4: 600 gp per character
APL 6: 800 gp per character
APL 8: 1250 gp per character
APL 10: 2100 gp per character
APL 12: 3000 gp per character

Appendix I: Combat Encounters

This section contains statistics for all the opponents the PCs will face in the adventure. Many of the stats for the creatures encountered can be derived directly from the *Monster Manual*. Those that cannot are listed here for ease of reference. Combat encounter 1, shadows, uses only standard shadow statistics, increasing only the amount of shadows in the encounter; all can be referenced from the *Monster Manual*. In some cases (as in most APL 12 combat encounters) the creatures are tougher than the average specimen, and have been advanced. These advanced stats are listed below as well, along with the updated CR and the APL the creature is appropriate for.

ENCOUNTER 7

APLs 4-10 use standard nimblewright statistics for this encounter:

Nimblewright; CR 7;(Medium Construct); HD 10d10; hp 55; Init +7; Spd 40 ft.; AC 24(+7 Dex, +7 natural) touch 17 flat-footed 17; Atk 2 rapier-hands +11 melee (2d6+4/12-20); SA Spell-Like abilities (Sp), Tripping Thrust(Ex); SQ Augmented Critical(Ex), Construct Traits, SR27; vulnerabilities; AL CN; SV Fort +3, Ref +10, Will +6; Str 19, Dex 24, Con -, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 19; Skills and Feats: ; Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Disarm, Mobility, Spring Attack

APL 12, however, contains advanced nimblewrights with the following stats:

Advanced Nimblewright; CR 9; (Large Construct); HD 20d10; hp 110; Init +6; Spd 40 ft.; AC 25(+6 Dex, +10 natural, -1 size) touch 16 flat-footed 19; Atk 2 rapier-hands +22 melee (2d6+7/12-20); SA Spell-Like abilities (Sp), Tripping Thrust(Ex); SQ Augmented Critical(Ex), Construct Traits, SR27; vulnerabilities; AL CN; SV Fort +6, Ref +12, Will +9; Str 27, Dex 22, Con -, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 19; Skills and Feats: ; Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Disarm, Mobility, Spring Attack

Spell-Like Abilities: At will *–alter self, cat's grace, entropic shield, feather fall, haste*. Caster level 10, save DC14 + spell level

Tripping Thrust (Ex): A nimblewright's rapier-hand attacks are powerful enough to push over creatures its own size or smaller. An opponent who is the target of a successful critical hit from a nimblewright must Make a Reflex save(DC 19) or be knocked prone as if tripped.

Augmented Critical (Ex): A nimblewright threatens a critical on a natural attack roll of a 12-20. On a successful critical hit, its foe is subject to a tripping thrust attack.

Construct Traits: A nimblewright is immune to mind-affecting effects, poison, *sleep*, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, necromantic effects, and any effect that requires a Fortitude save unless it also works on objects. The creature is not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability drain, energy drain, or death from massive damage. It cannot heal itself but it can be healed through repair. It cannot be raised or resurrected. A nimblewright has darkvision (60 foot range)

Vulnerabilities: A cold effect slows the nimblewright for 3 rounds, and a fire effect stuns it for 1 round.

Nimblewrights are rapier-wielding constructs that disguise themselves as living humanoids. They often serve as hired bodyguards, but many are employed to infiltrate organizations and secret societies or spy on individuals. Unlike most constructs, a nimblewright is created with intelligence and a distinct personality that allows for intuitive thinking and responsiveness. Like a golem, a nimblewright is a powerful creation that combines awesome magic with elemental forces. Its animating force is a spirit from the Elemental Plane of Water. The process of creating a nimblewright binds the unwilling spirit to the artificial body and subjects it to the will of the creator.

An undisguised nimblewright appears as a nondescript, steel-colored, mechanical human. When disguised, it wears clothes and uses spells to hide its true nature. In this way it can appear as almost any Medium-sized humanoid it wishes to become.

Nimblewrights speak Common, Elven, and Dwarven.

ENCOUNTER 9

APLs 4, 6, & 8 use standard dread guard statistics for this encounter:

Dread Guard; CR 2 (Medium-Size Construct) HD 5d10; hp 27; Init +0; Spd 20 ft (can't run) AC 17 (+6 masterwork banded mail, +1 masterwork small steel shield) touch 10, flat-footed 17; Atk longsword +6 melee (1d8+3/19-20); SQ Construct Traits, cold resistance 10, fire resistance 10; AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 17, Dex 11, Con -, Int 6, Wis 13, Cha 2

APLs 10 & 12 contain advanced dread guard with the following stats:

Advanced Dread Guard; CR 4 (Large-Size Construct) HD 11d10; hp 60; Init +0; Spd 30 ft (can't run) AC 18 (+8 masterwork plate mail, +2 masterwork large steel shield, -1 size, -1dex) touch 8, flat-footed 17; Atk greatsword +15 melee (2d6+7/19-20); 5x5/10; SQ Construct Traits, cold resistance 10, fire resistance 10; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +5; Str 25, Dex 9, Con -, Int 6, Wis 13, Cha 2

A dread guard appears to be an armored undead, still bearing the weapons and shield it carried in life. In fact, it is an animated suit of armor, little different from a golem. Those who create dread guards usually do so to obtain guardians for their strongholds - guardians that can never be bribed and rarely fooled.

A dread guard obeys simple commands from its creator, but these are limited to one or two rudimentary concepts. Typical orders include "Stay in this room and attack anyone but me who enters," and "Kill each person who opens this chest until I tell you otherwise."

A dread guard never speaks, but it understands commands in its creator's language.

COMBAT

Dread guards attack mindlessly with their weapons. They are unsubtle and straightforward in combat.

Construct Traits: A dread guard is immune to mind-affecting effects, poison, *sleep*, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, necromantic effects, and any effect that requires a Fortitude save unless it also works on objects. The creature is not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability drain, energy drain, or death from massive damage. It cannot heal itself but it can be healed through repair. It cannot be

raised or resurrected. A dread guard has darkvision (60 foot range).

ENCOUNTER 10

This encounter contains only 1 gibbering mouther, but its statistics differ for each APL, becoming more powerful as the APL rises. In APL 4, a standard gibbering mouther is used (take stats directly from the *Monster Manual*, page 104). For APLs 6-12, advanced gibbering mouters are required, and the stats for each creature are provided below:

Gibbering mouters attack by shooting out strings of protoplasmic flesh, each ending in one or more eyes and a mouth that bites at the enemy. A mouther can send out a total of six such members in any round.

APL 6:

Gibbering Mouther, CR 8; Large Aberration; HD 12d8+40 (Aberration); hp 66; Init +0; Spd 20, Swim 30; AC 19 (+1 Dex, +8 Natural); Atk +10 melee (1d3 [x6], Bite); 5x5/10; SA: Gibbering (Su), Spittle (Ex), Improved grab (Ex), Blood drain (Ex), Engulf (Ex), Ground manipulation (Su); SQ: Amorphous (Ex); AL N; SV Fort +11, Ref +5, Will +9; STR 10, DEX 12, CON 16, INT 4, WIS 13, CHA 13.

Skills: Listen +4, Spot +10.

Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite), Ability Focus (Gibbering), Ability Focus (Spittle)

Gibbering (Su): As soon as a mouther spots something edible, it begins a constant gibbering as a free action. All creatures (other than mouters) within a 60-foot spread must succeed at a Will save (DC 15) or be affected as though by a confusion spell for 1d2 rounds. This is a sonic, mind-affecting compulsion effect. Opponents who successfully save cannot be affected by the same gibbering mouther's gibbering for one day.

Spittle (Ex): At the start of every combat, and every 2 rounds thereafter, a gibbering mouther looses a stream of spittle. This ignites on contact with the air, creating a blinding flash of light. All sighted creatures within 60 feet must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be blinded for 1d3 rounds.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the gibbering mouther must hit with a bite attack.

Blood Drain (Ex): On a second successful grapple check after grabbing, that mouth attaches to the opponent. It automatically deals bite damage and drains blood, dealing 1 point of temporary Constitution damage each round. A mouth can be ripped off (dealing 1 point of damage) with a successful Strength check (DC 12) or severed by a normal attack that deals at least 2 points of damage (AC 18). A severed mouth continues to bite and drain blood for 1d4 rounds after such an attack. A creature whose Constitution is reduced to 0 is killed and absorbed

by the mouther, which gains 1 hit point and adds another mouth and pair of eyes to its body.

Engulf (Ex): A gibbering mouther can try to engulf a Medium-size or smaller opponent grabbed by three or more mouths. The opponent must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 14) or fall and be engulfed. On the next round, the mouther makes twelve bite attacks instead of six (each with a +4 attack bonus). An engulfed creature cannot attack the mouther from within. The previously attached mouths are now free to attack others.

Ground Manipulation (Su): At will, as a standard action, a gibbering mouther can cause stone and earth within 5 feet of it to become a morass akin to quicksand. Softening earth, sand, or the like takes 1 round, while stone takes 2 rounds. Anyone other than the mouther in that area must take a move equivalent action to avoid becoming mired (treat as being pinned).

Amorphous (Ex): A gibbering mouther is not subject to critical hits. It has no clear front or back, so it cannot be flanked.

Skills: Thanks to their multiple eyes, gibbering mouters receive a +4 racial bonus to Spot checks.

APL 8:

Fiendish Gibbering Mouter, CR 10; Large Aberration; HD 10d8+30 (Aberration); hp 100; Init +0; Spd 30, Swim 30; AC 18 (+1 Dex, -1 Size, +8 Natural); Atk +12 melee (1d3 [x8], Bite); 5x5/10; SA: Gibbering (Su), Spittle (Ex), Improved grab (Ex), Blood drain (Ex), Engulf (Ex), Ground manipulation (Su), Snatch (Ex); Smite Good (Su); SQ: Amorphous (Ex), Darkvision 60'; Cold Resistance 15; Fire Resistance 15; DR 5/+2; SR 20; AL N; SV Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +8; STR 16, DEX 12, CON 16, INT 4, WIS 13, CHA 13.

Skills: Listen +6, Spot +10.

Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite), Ability Focus (Gibbering), Ability Focus (Spittle)

Smite Good (Su): Once per day the creature can make a normal attack to deal +10 additional damage to a good foe.

Gibbering (Su): As soon as a mouter spots something edible, it begins a constant gibbering as a free action. All creatures (other than mouters) within a 60-foot spread must succeed at a Will save (DC 15) or be affected as though by a confusion spell for 1d2 rounds. This is a sonic, mind-affecting compulsion effect. Opponents who successfully save cannot be affected by the same gibbering mouter's gibbering for one day.

Spittle (Ex): At the start of every combat, and every 2 rounds thereafter, a gibbering mouter looses a stream of spittle. This ignites on contact with the air, creating a blinding flash of light. All sighted creatures within 60 feet must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be blinded for 1d3 rounds.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the gibbering mouter must hit with a bite attack.

Blood Drain (Ex): On a second successful grapple check after grabbing, that mouth attaches to the opponent. It automatically deals bite damage and drains blood, dealing 1 point of temporary Constitution damage each round. A mouth can be ripped off (dealing 1 point of damage) with a successful Strength check (DC 12) or severed by a normal attack that deals at least 2 points of damage (AC 18). A severed mouth continues to bite and drain blood for 1d4 rounds after such an attack. A creature whose Constitution is reduced to 0 is killed and absorbed by the mouter, which gains 1 hit point and adds another mouth and pair of eyes to its body.

Engulf (Ex): A gibbering mouter can try to engulf a Medium-size or smaller opponent grabbed by three or more mouths. The opponent must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 14) or fall and be engulfed. On the next round, the mouter makes twelve bite attacks instead of six (each with a +4 attack bonus). An engulfed creature cannot attack the mouter from within. The previously attached mouths are now free to attack others.

Ground Manipulation (Su): At will, as a standard action, a gibbering mouter can cause stone and earth within 5 feet of it to become a morass akin to quicksand. Softening earth, sand, or the like takes 1 round, while stone takes 2 rounds. Anyone other than the mouter in that area must take a move equivalent action to avoid becoming mired (treat as being pinned).

Amorphous (Ex): A gibbering mouter is not subject to critical hits. It has no clear front or back, so it cannot be flanked.

Skills: Thanks to their multiple eyes, gibbering mouters receive a +4 racial bonus to Spot checks.

APL 10:

Fiendish Gibbering Mouther, CR 12; Large Aberration; HD 20d8+60 (Aberration); hp 165; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30, Swim 30; AC 18 (+1 Dex, -1 Size, +8 Natural); Atk +18 (1d3, 6 Bite); 5x5/10; SA: Gibbering (Su), Spittle (Ex), Improved grab (Ex), Blood drain (Ex), Engulf (Ex), Ground manipulation (Su), Snatch (Ex); Smite Good (Su); SQ: Amorphous (Ex), Darkvision 60'; Cold Resistance 20; Fire Resistance 20; DR 10/+3; SR 25; AL N; SV Fort +15, Ref +7, Will +13; STR 14, DEX 12, CON 16, INT 4, WIS 13, CHA 13.

Skills: Listen +8, Spot +10.

Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite), Ability Focus (Gibbering), Ability Focus (Spittle)

Gibbering (Su): As soon as a mouther spots something edible, it begins a constant gibbering as a free action. All creatures (other than mouters) within a 60-foot spread must succeed at a Will save (DC 19) or be affected as though by a confusion spell for 1d2 rounds. This is a sonic, mind-affecting compulsion effect. Opponents who successfully save cannot be affected by the same gibbering mouther's gibbering for one day.

Spittle (Ex): At the start of every combat, and every 2 rounds thereafter, a gibbering mouther looses a stream of spittle. This ignites on contact with the air, creating a blinding flash of light. All sighted creatures within 60 feet must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 19) or be blinded for 1d3 rounds.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the gibbering mouther must hit with a bite attack.

Blood Drain (Ex): On a second successful grapple check after grabbing, that mouth attaches to the opponent. It automatically deals bite damage and drains blood, dealing 1 point of temporary Constitution damage each round. A mouth can be ripped off (dealing 1 point of damage) with a successful Strength check (DC 12) or severed by a normal attack that deals at least 2 points of damage (AC 18). A severed mouth continues to bite and drain blood for 1d4 rounds after such an attack. A creature whose Constitution is reduced to 0 is killed and absorbed by the mouther, which gains 1 hit point and adds another mouth and pair of eyes to its body.

Engulf (Ex): A gibbering mouther can try to engulf a Medium-size or smaller opponent grabbed by three or more mouths. The opponent must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 14) or fall and be engulfed. On the next round, the mouther makes twelve bite attacks instead of six (each with a +4 attack bonus). An engulfed creature cannot attack the mouther from within. The previously attached mouths are now free to attack others.

Ground Manipulation (Su): At will, as a standard action, a gibbering mouther can cause stone and earth within 5 feet of it to become a morass akin to quicksand. Softening earth, sand, or the like takes 1 round, while

stone takes 2 rounds. Anyone other than the mouther in that area must take a move equivalent action to avoid becoming mired (treat as being pinned).

Amorphous (Ex): A gibbering mouther is not subject to critical hits. It has no clear front or back, so it cannot be flanked.

Skills: Thanks to their multiple eyes, gibbering mouters receive a +4 racial bonus to Spot checks.

Smite Good (Su): Once per day the creature can make a normal attack to deal +20 additional damage to a good foe.

APL 12:

Gibbering Mouther/BBN 6, CR 14; Large Aberration; HD 12d8+36, 6d12+18 (Aberration); hp 167; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30, Swim 30; AC 18 (+1 Dex, -1 Size, +8 Natural); Atk +15 base melee, +11 base ranged; +20 (1d3+6, 6 Bite); 5x5/10; SA: Gibbering (Su), Spittle (Ex), Improved grab (Ex), Blood drain (Ex), Engulf (Ex), Ground manipulation (Su); SQ: Amorphous (Ex), Rage (Ex), Fast Movement (Ex), Uncanny Dodge (Ex); AL N; SV Fort +16, Ref +7, Will +11; STR 18, DEX 12, CON 16, INT 4, WIS 13, CHA 13.

Skills: Listen +4, Spot +16.

Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite), Ability Focus (Gibbering), Ability Focus (Spittle), Combat Reflexes

Gibbering (Su): As soon as a mouther spots something edible, it begins a constant gibbering as a free action. All creatures (other than mouters) within a 60-foot spread must succeed at a Will save (DC 21) or be affected as though by a confusion spell for 1d2 rounds. This is a sonic, mind-affecting compulsion effect. Opponents who successfully save cannot be affected by the same gibbering mouther's gibbering for one day.

Spittle (Ex): At the start of every combat, and every 2 rounds thereafter, a gibbering mouther looses a stream of spittle. This ignites on contact with the air, creating a blinding flash of light. All sighted creatures within 60 feet must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 21) or be blinded for 1d3 rounds.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the gibbering mouther must hit with a bite attack.

Blood Drain (Ex): On a second successful grapple check after grabbing, that mouth attaches to the opponent. It automatically deals bite damage and drains blood, dealing 1 point of temporary Constitution damage each round. A mouth can be ripped off (dealing 1 point of damage) with a successful Strength check (DC 12) or severed by a normal attack that deals at least 2 points of damage (AC 18). A severed mouth continues to bite and drain blood for 1d4 rounds after such an attack. A creature whose Constitution is reduced to 0 is killed and absorbed by the mouther, which gains 1 hit point and adds another mouth and pair of eyes to its body.

Engulf (Ex): A gibbering mouther can try to engulf a Medium-size or smaller opponent grabbed by three or more mouths. The opponent must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 14) or fall and be engulfed. On the next round, the mouther makes twelve bite attacks instead of six (each with a +4 attack bonus). An engulfed creature cannot attack the mouther from within. The previously attached mouths are now free to attack others.

Ground Manipulation (Su): At will, as a standard action, a gibbering mouther can cause stone and earth within 5 feet of it to become a morass akin to quicksand. Softening earth, sand, or the like takes 1 round, while

stone takes 2 rounds. Anyone other than the mouther in that area must take a move equivalent action to avoid becoming mired (treat as being pinned).

Amorphous (Ex): A gibbering mouther is not subject to critical hits. It has no clear front or back, so it cannot be flanked.

Skills: Thanks to their multiple eyes, gibbering mouters receive a +4 racial bonus to Spot checks.

Appendix II: Statistical Details of Hardwyn

Hardwyn: very *Small Town*; *Power Structure Type: Feudal*: Field Baron, Dewic Torquann and 'elected' Mayor Geldar; *AL: N(g); GP Limit 800 gp; Assets 792,000gp; Population 1,100; Demographic category (Human 77%, Half-orc 9%, Dwarf 4%, Elf/Half-elf 3%, Gnome 3%, Halfling 2%, Other 2%).*

Regional Breakdown: Hardwyn is part of the **Archbarony of Vinewind**, which is further broken down into the **Field Barony of Hardwyn**. The Field Baron is Baron Dewic Torquann (local governor). The Baron is Lord Vitner, and Archbaron Deremett Torquann oversees them. The town's elected mayor is Geldar Duncombe. He is appointed by the Baron to help administrate the town after being 'elected' by the people.

Authority Figures: Field Baron Dewic Torquann (Baron of this town and region)

History: The village of Hardwyn originally began as a small trading outpost along the southern edge of the Artonsamay River, circa 336 CY. It was founded by a group of caravan merchants who found themselves trapped in the area one particularly harrowing winter, on their way to Dominion from Ventnor. Forced to make an extended stop due to weather, the caravan broke down its supplies and set up camp to ride out the blistering snows. As winter passed, the merchants began once again to set passage for Dominion, but were delayed by other travelers who implored the caravan to provide them with much-needed provisions for their own journeys. After three weeks of supplying goods to travelers along the Artonsamay, the merchants were no closer to their destination, but came to the realization that their unfortunate adversity had become a blessing in disguise. Instead of taking the entire caravan to Dominion, they sent only one ship, with the directive to bring back more wagons laden with enough goods to establish an outpost in the location they had chosen.

In those peaceful days, trade along the Artonsamay River was plentiful, and the trading outpost (then called "Hard Luck Station"), enjoyed heavy patronage by those who stopped there. The outpost was well-received by merchants and travelers alike, who welcomed an additional respite along the lengthy trip between Dominion and Ventnor. As years passed, Hard Luck Station quickly gained renown, and soon became a standard stop for those journeying along this particular stretch of the Artonsamay. Within three short decades, Hard Luck Station grew

beyond a simple trading outpost, as Urnstian residents flocked to the burgeoning settlement to make their fortunes in barter and trade.

As Hard Luck Station became a proper township, the name of the settlement was changed to "Hardwyn", and the village attracted residents beyond merchants and traders. Like any other town, the community produced shopkeepers, craftsmen, healers, politicians, and diverse professionals from all walks of life (including thieves and ruffians). As the population began to outstrip trade, farming the surrounding countryside became a necessity in order to both feed the inhabitants of the village, and also to provide increased trade goods to the hamlet's stores. The further increase in trade profits allowed the budding township to build its structures with the highest quality materials, using the best architecture that the County of Urnst had to offer. Hardwyn was, and still is, famed for its vivid red cobblestone streets and beautiful stone-wooden buildings.

Hardwyn maintained its status as a lucrative commercial center (even being twinned with the town of Sarresh in those days) until the Greyhawk Wars decimated the Old Kingdom. For some time before the wars, it appeared as though the village might continue its growth and even rise to the position of a true town, perhaps one day even a city proper, rivaling its neighbors, Dominion and Ventnor. Unfortunately, that was not to be. Once war came to the Flanaess, Hardwyn's close proximity to the treacherous Bandit Kingdoms halted its growth, and even incited some of its residents to move further south in the County to avoid the oncoming forces of Iuz. The golden age of Hardwyn had ended, leaving a lonely village nestled dangerously close to the Old One's dark territories.

The most recent event in Hardwyn's history comes in the form of its high, wooden palisade walls. Recurrent orc and goblin raids from the Bandit Kingdoms (within the last 5 years) have forced the community to erect the wall around the village proper about 3 years ago. Unfortunately, the fields lie unprotected, though the farmers still tend their crops, escorted and watched over by small contingents of the village militia. All farmers of Hardwyn are trained in some military arts, using their simple farming implements to defend their lives and fields, if need be. Luckily, raids from the north, though persistent, are infrequent, due to the width and depths of the Artonsamay River, making it a natural defense against those who would travel south to harass the village.

Through it all, Hardwyn survives, still engaging in trade along the Artonsamay whenever possible, though frequent raids of merchant ships on the river have dwindled commerce to a fraction of what it once was. For the most part, farming has become the staple industry that keeps the village alive, and though the people of the community miss the status and gold that came with their previous good fortune, they are a hardy folk, accustomed to life's adversities, and thank Phyton each day for the simple pleasures they are privileged to enjoy. Though the humble roots of the small trading outpost that grew into a proud community are long gone, the spirit of Hard Luck Station still lives on in its people.

Appendix IV: Handouts

The following pages are handouts, intended for distribution to players at the appropriate times. The adventure text will inform you when to hand out a specific document, but they are all contained here.

Enhancing Handouts

In addition to merely printing the handouts, various enhancements can be added to increase their aesthetic quality. These make the handouts look more authentic and provide the players with a sense of “being there”. If you decide to prepare the handouts in this manner, you should do it the day before.

Ye Olde Parchment Paper: The simplest way to make a handout appear authentic is to print it on textured paper. Many kinds of paper with the look of old parchment can be purchased for only slightly more than normal paper at copy stores. The handouts provided in this particular scenario already have the look of being printed on parchment, so this is not really necessary, but this technique can be used with other scenarios that do not go to such efforts to make their handouts look real.

Crumpling: Crumpling a printed handout either a little or a lot makes it look worn. Depending on the age and use of the handout (as described below), you can crumple the handout with your own hands in order to achieve the level of tattered-ness you desire.

Coffee Marinade: Amazingly enough, soaking a piece of paper in regular black coffee gives it a nice, dirty, old taint. If you do this, be sure to start with strong paper stock (as the paper fibers will lose some of their cohesion after being soaked in liquid.) Brew some coffee as you normally would, and then fill the bottom of a baking sheet or casserole dish with a layer of coffee about an inch thick. Soak the handouts in the coffee marinade for an hour or so, and they will come out yellowish and aged in appearance. If you would like it more aged, soak it for another hour. Repeat until you get the desired look. Check the handout's color often, and remove it when you like the hue it has achieved. Let it air-dry overnight and it is ready.

If you combine this technique with *crumpling*, and crumple it beforehand, the creases of the crumpling will be very pronounced after soaking in coffee. If you crumple it afterwards, the creases of the crumpling will be less sharp due to the already soft paper. Try also

crumpling after you let the paper dry overnight. This effect is markedly different as well.

A combination of the above methods, craftily done, can make even the simplest handout can look spectacular. Your players will be impressed with and enjoy the adventure that much more. If you enjoy preparing handouts in this manner, experiment with combining these techniques and others. Your time is only wasted if you learn nothing from it.

Fighter Adventure Hook

It has been long since you challenged your fighting skills in the arena of true combat! Unsettled by thoughts of complacency, you have agreed to help guard a merchant caravan on its way to Hardwyn for trade. Reports of increased monster activity near the Bandit Kingdoms have given all travelers cause to exercise greater caution. The trade caravan is comprised of members of the Trade Guild in Hardwyn, and they are overjoyed to have your protection. Since you were thinking of seeking adventure near the Bandit Kingdoms anyway, this seems like a good way to get there!

Monk Adventure Hook

It has been long since you challenged your fighting skills in the arena of true combat! Unsettled by thoughts of complacency, you have agreed to help guard a group of pilgrims on their way to Hardwyn for reasons of their own. Reports of increased monster activity near the Bandit Kingdoms have given all travelers cause to exercise greater caution. The pilgrims have arranged passage for themselves and you on a trade caravan returning to Hardwyn from trade.

Cleric Adventure Hook

Word of dark deeds comes from the Bandit Kingdoms to the north! Your religious order is troubled over the increase of monster activity in the County near that region. You have been sent to Hardwyn, near the border, to investigate rumors of unholy activities. If necessary, you are ordered to smite out any evil you encounter with the power of [insert deity here]! Your superiors have given you provisions for the trip. By the benevolence of [insert deity here], you have agreed to accompany a trade caravan on its way to Hardwyn from Radigast City, and to aid them should they encounter any monsters or bandits.

Paladin Adventure Hook

Word of dark deeds comes from the Bandit Kingdoms to the north! Your religious order is troubled over the increase of monster activity in the County near that region. You have been sent to Hardwyn, near the border, to investigate rumors of unholy activities. If necessary, you are ordered to smite out any evil you encounter with the power of [insert deity here]! Your superiors have given you provisions for the trip. By the will of [insert deity here], you have agreed to accompany a trade caravan on its way to Hardwyn from Radigast, and to aid them should they encounter any monsters or bandits.

Barbarian Adventure Hook

The wild creatures in the north of the County stir with fear of un-natural forces emanating from the Bandit Kingdoms! Bored with life in the wild, you have decided to seek out these forces, and some adventure as well. As fortune would have it, a trade caravan traveling from Radigast City to Hardwyn has invited you to travel with them in exchange for your protection. If you prefer barter, they agree to provide you with provisions from the caravan. Once in Hardwyn, perhaps you can discover the source of this unnatural discord and crush any enemies that challenge your savage might!

Bard Adventure Hook

Sinister tales of danger and intrigue abound from the Bandit Kingdoms! Speculative songs and stories spinning supposition have made their way throughout the land. Not to be undone, you have decided to visit the northern region of the County and discover for yourself what remarkable events are taking place there. By favor and fortune, you have charmed your way onto a trade caravan traveling from Radigast City to the town of Hardwyn. Through your various talents, you have kept the merchants in the caravan well-entertained, and have earned enough for provisions and travel. Once you reach Hardwyn, you hope to encounter adventure there worthy of a splendid story or song!

Ranger Adventure Hook

The wild creatures in the north of the County stir with fear of un-natural forces emanating from the Bandit Kingdoms! Bored with life in the wild, you have decided to seek out these forces and aid in the situation, if possible. As fortune would have it, you encounter, one morning, a trade caravan traveling from Radigast City to Hardwyn. They invite you to travel with them if you like, in exchange for protection against monsters or bandits along the way. If you prefer barter, they agree to provide you with provisions from the caravan. Once in Hardwyn, perhaps you can discover what has the woodland creatures roused so!

Druid Adventure Hook

The wild creatures in the north of the County stir with fear of un-natural forces emanating from the Bandit Kingdoms! Bored with life in the wild, you have decided to seek out these forces and aid in the situation, if possible. As fortune would have it, you encounter, one morning, a trade caravan traveling from Dominion to Hardwyn. They invite you to travel with them if you like, in exchange for protection if they should encounter any monsters or bandits along the way. If you prefer barter, they agree to provide you with provisions from the caravan. Once in Hardwyn, perhaps you can discover what has the woodland creatures roused so!

Rogue Adventure Hook

Increasing lawlessness near the Bandit Kingdoms has spread rumors of roguish opportunity abound! Some of your colleagues have migrated north in the County and word has reached your ears of profitable deeds for a rogue of your illustrious talents. Through deception, you have arranged for free transport with a trade caravan on route to Hardwyn from Radigast City. You have already begun to apply your trade, and have actually been able to “procure” enough gold to pay for provisions from various “activities” (pilfering, gambling, etc.) with the caravan during the trip!

Wizard Adventure Hook

Word within arcane circles has spoken of a great magical disturbance to the north, near the Bandit Kingdoms! Though only vague rumors, your curiosity has led you to seek the source of these tales. In exchange for protection, you have arranged for transport on a trade caravan traveling from Radigast City to Hardwyn. Increased monstrous humanoid activity in the region, as of late, has made travel outside of large groups dangerous. You are pleased to have some traveling companions, and once you reach Hardwyn, perhaps you can unravel the rumors you have heard.

Sorcerer Adventure Hook

Your dreams as of late have been troubled. Malevolent forces stir to the north and evil magic has awoken! Plagued by these vexing dreams night after night, you have decided to investigate the cause. Fortune favors you, and you have encountered a merchant caravan en route to Hardwyn from Radigast City. Increased monster activity in the region, as of late, has made travel outside of large groups dangerous. Thus the caravan has invited you to travel with them if you like, in exchange for protection if they should encounter any monsters or bandits along the way. Already, fate is spinning its thread in your mysterious destiny!

Adventure Hook Card

Adventure Hook
Card

Adventure Hook
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Adventure Hook
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Adventure Hook
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Adventure Hook
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Adventure Hook
Card

Official Writ

for bold adventurers to investigate recent
murders in our fair village of Hardwyn

My brave friends, this official writ authorizes you to take whatever legal steps you require to investigate the source behind the recent deaths in Hardwyn. You are hereby authorized also to capture said perpetrator if opportunity arises.

I have prepared some information that I believe will aid you in your inquiry. I have included it herein with the writ. I have also provided you with a map of Hardwyn to facilitate speedy travel about our fair hamlet.

May Phyton protect and guide you.

Mayor Geldar Duncombe

P.S. Please do not loot any of the victims' possessions from their homes. Around these parts, we call that burglary.



All of the victims were elderly. They were long-time residents of our village, as far back as I can remember, in fact.

The first victim was Cornath Barnabus, an Oeridian weaponsmith. Four weeks ago, he was found dead in his forge at age 64 by a supplier he was to meet with that day. The place appeared to be ruffed up as if by burglary. Cornath had bruises all over his body, and appears to have been beaten to death. Cornath's home/shop is marked on the map I gave you. He was survived by a daughter, Josia, who lives in Brotton.

The second victim was Andemon Tamaranth, an Suloise priest of Phylton at our village church. Three weeks ago, he was discovered dead at age 72, in his garden early one morning. His robes were slashed to shreds, and he appears to have been stabbed through the heart. Andemon was the eldest of the clerics at the church, which I have marked on your map. He was known for his righteous, benevolent works, and is survived by no family.

The third victim was Efrem Brumblehill, a halfling spice merchant. One week ago, he was found dead in his home at age 124. Even though the house (marked on your map) was rigged with numerous traps, none were set off. Efrem was discovered dead by his wife, Scilla, in the morning when she tried to wake him. Foul play would not normally be suspected but that Efrem appeared as if he was drained of all life, not just dead from old age.

The fourth and most recent victim was Uriel Moonson, an half-elfen crafter of musical instruments. She was 146 years old, and lived alone in her shop/home, marked on your map. We now know what killed Efrem.

All of the victims' bodies are being held at the cemetery's morgue until this investigation is complete. Your writ will provide authorization for you to examine the corpses. Good luck, my friends.

Mayor Geldar Duncombe

—Cornath Barnabus—

Char Grimman

—Sfrem Brumblehill—

Shalazar McOrgrave

—Vndemon Camarantk—

Ballad of the Brotherhood

(sung to the tune of "Ballad of the Green Berg")

Adventurers from Hardwyn fair,
came together, from here and there.
Noble souls, both bold and good,
the brave beings of the Brotherhood.

Sword and staff were grasped in hand,
Traveling far across the land.
Evil cringed from where they stood,
trembling before the Brotherhood.

Facing climates, both warm and cold,
always in search of chests of gold.
Slaying beasts, just as they should,
the loyal friends of the Brotherhood.

Sword and staff were grasped in hand,
Traveling far across the land.
Evil cringed from where they stood,
trembling before the Brotherhood.

Then one day, they found, by fate,
An artifact of power great.
Each claimed the thing as his that day,
but none would give the power away.

Quarrel ensued, a clash most dire,
Each relentless in his desire.
All walked away, their hearts abrood,
Greed and vice broke the Brotherhood.

~~Andemon Tamaranth~~

Shalazar Morgrave

~~Cornath Barnabus~~

Thar Grimshaw

Uriel Moonson

DWEOCRNITE

Small clusters of dweocrnite gems, tear-shaped, semi-opaque, blue-white to jet black, are found in totally unpredictable subterranean locations. The gems have diverse magical powers. Those which have been documented include spell gems, gems which yield magical potions when crushed and dissolved, gems with empathic effects, gems with teleport, dimension door or extra-planar travel properties, and gems of a divinatory nature. Of special note are the spell gems, which when crushed in the hands of a mage allows memorized and already cast spells to be regained. These are similar to the dweomer-stones of the Cairn Hills, and some sages suggest a common origin for both these and the reputed ioun stones.

These properties are not, truly, so terribly exciting, but what seems to draw some very powerful creatures to take an interest in them is that some 1% of them have very powerful magical qualities. Both wish and longevity magic are found with such rare gems. This makes informed people ready to take real chances to find dweocrnite. However, very few mages and sages even know of dweocrnite's existence, let alone where it may be found; divinatory spells appear to be spectacularly unsuccessful in this regard. There is an unpleasant problem with dweocrnite, in addition. The gems appear to attract highly magical monsters, beholders in many instances, toward them, though such creatures are often quite unaware of what the source of the attraction is.



Uriel Moonson

Ihar Grimmer

~~Cornath Barnabus~~

Efrem Brumblehill

Shalazar Morgrave

Conditional Geas/Quest

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Language-Dependent/
Mind-Affecting]

Level: Brd 6, Clr 6, Sor/Wiz 6

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 full round

Target: One living creature

Range: Touch

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

Like the standard geas/quest spell, this custom spell can be used to place a magical command on a creature to carry out some service or to refrain from some action or course of activity, as desired by the caster. While the geas/quest cannot compel a creature to kill itself or perform acts

Esrem Brumblehill

Uriel Moonsong

Shalazar Morgrave

Thar Grimmax

Andemon Tamaranth

THE SWORD OF SOVEREIGNTY

This ancient weapon is renowned to be an artifact of great power. Its origins are unknown, but legend claims that it was created by the Flannish back before even the age of the Great Kingdom. The hilt and pommel were made from hardened bronze, and the blade itself was said to be forged from enchanted mithril, making it virtually indestructible in combat.

The sword's true power, however, was not its combat prowess at all, but a quality that came from the magical dwzornite jewel embedded in the sword's hilt. This powerful hilt-gem was reputed to allow the bearer of the weapon to command the hearts and minds of men, essentially making them thralls of the owner. With sword in hand, a person could carve a kingdom with ease.

And many tried. Through treachery and deceit, the Sword of Sovereignty changed hands numerous times over its centuries-long lifespan, eventually being destroyed during a conquest attempt against the dominion of the witch-king Tharsus the Damned. Though Tharsus could not destroy the sword entirely, he separated blade from hilt, essentially nullifying the weapon's power for all time.



Summon Rust Monster

Conjuration (Summoning)

Level: Brd 2, Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S, M, F

Casting Time: 1 full round

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Effect: 1 summoned creature

Duration: 1 minute/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

This spell summons 1 rust monster to aid the caster. Once this spell is cast, the creature appears immediately and acts on your behalf. If you can communicate with the rust monster, you may command it specifically. Otherwise, it determines its own actions.

This spell can be dangerous. Heavily-armored summoners are not encouraged to cast this spell. Any friends or allies of the summoner wearing excessive metal are advised to stand far away while this spell is being cast. Unlike standard summoning spells, the rust monsters conjured by this spell may not be dismissed before the duration of the spell expires. They will, however, disappear when the spell ends.

Rust monsters are notoriously ravenous, and will consume any large metal objects in the area. Since they are not commonly summoned creatures, but already exist naturally on the material plane, they are difficult to control. Before summoning, one must

Though not every day is not has an entry in this journal, the more important events are chronicled here. The more noticeable entries are:

STARDAY the 17th of GOODMONTH, 553 CY

In the three years since I left the magic academy, I have been superbly unsuccessful in making any fortune in the world. It would appear that I alone am not powerful enough to brave the dangers that yield true reward. I have come to the conclusion that I must join an adventuring party; pool my arcane talents with others of like mind. Though I like the secluded lands surrounding the village of Hardwyn, there are few adventurous types here. The people are rugged, but few wish to leave the village to see the greater world. I will search here for a bit, but will likely move on if none answer my call for fortune and adventure.

WATERDAY the 8th of BREWFEST, 553 CY

Boccob smiles up me (if The Uncaring is capable of such), for I have been contacted by others who seek to join an adventuring band. They consist of an Oeridian fighter, a half-orc barbarian (who smells a bit foul), a halfling rogue, a Suel cleric of Phyton, and a half-elf bard. The only one I care much for is the bard. She is the only other female of the bunch, and the only one with any semblance of culture or grace. The warriors are too primitive (especially the half-orc), the cleric too righteous, and the rogue too opportunistic for my tastes. But I need them, so I reserve judgment until I know more about them.

MOONDAY the 23rd of PATCHWALL, 553 CY

The adventuring group I have gathered has engaged in our first true excursion, delving deep into a cavern just on the other side of the Artonsamay, in what is now known as the Bandit Kingdoms. Though a dangerous area to wander in, the experience has been a profitable one. The hobgoblins who made their homes here have amassed a small treasure from their raids of the surrounding lands. After defeating the creatures, our group has "liberated" the treasure for ourselves. The gold will purchase many months' worth of provisions and allow us ample time to plan our next adventure.

GODSDAY the 10th of SUNSEBB, 556 CY

Another successful exploit! At the request of the local township, our adventuring band has made assault upon a stone giant outpost just west of Goldplain, in the Cairn Hills. I admit that I was not overjoyed to undertake such a dangerous mission, but the locals paid handsomely for an end to the banditry the giants and their ogre minions are notorious for. Though their leader was fierce, more powerful than any stone giant I have ever encountered or heard tales of, we defeated him just the same and made haste with the treasure the outlaws have collected over the months. Among the objects in their horde was a magical Great Reaver Axe, which Cornath and Thar fought over for possession. I suggested that they engage in friendly combat for the right to own the axe; I thought it would be entertaining to watch these two brutes battle for sport. I was not wrong; it was highly amusing. In the end, Cornath was the victor, and claimed the axe as his own. Though he said little, I believe Thar not only resented that Cornath beat him, but that we so readily accepted the victory. I know not how the others feel, but I am indifferent to the whole affair. Let the animals beat each others' heads in if they desire.

EARTHDAY the 23rd of RICHFEST, 559 CY

Disaster! Our group was captured by a host of trolls as we explored a seemingly simple dungeon we discovered in the Hool Marshes south of the Dreadwood. They came upon us unaware, and though we should have easily defeated them in combat, their numbers and element of surprise gave them the advantage this day. It appeared as though all was lost, but Thar had a surprise of his own, making an impromptu pact with the creatures. Dullards as they were, the trolls believed that the barbarian would ally with them, promising them wealth and power in exchange for his freedom. At his first opportunity, Thar turned on the trolls, freeing us from our cages. The group then proceeded to decimate the monsters, and the day was ours in the end. Though I am happy with the eventual turn of events, I have decided to keep a watchful eye on the half-orc. He is not nearly the simpleton he lets on to be. And it should be more than obvious that he is a man capable of betrayal. This combination of traits in him I do not like one bit.

FREEDAY the 2nd of NEEDFEST, 563 CY

Deep in the Nurtherwood Forest, our band has found our undoing. It did not come from monsters or traps as one would expect, but from our own greed. Following rumors of powerful magicks reputed to reside here, our intrepid group braved the dangers of desmodu residing in caverns underground. Though challenging, we defeated the strange, bat-like creatures, as well as their master, a formidable beholder that held the colony in its sway. Among the treasures the beholder had amassed was an odd black gem that radiated a great power. Even before I cast an identify spell upon it, we could all feel its potent arcane energy, and each of us knew that it was the type of artifact that only appears to a being once in a lifetime, if fortunate. As we divided the loot, it quickly became apparent that all desired the gem for themselves, and that the rest of the treasure was of little concern. After much debate and even a few blows, Andemon finally calmed the group down, suggesting an alternative method for deciding who would possess the jewel. None would have it until the last of us remained alive. Reluctantly, all agreed, but blood has been spilt over the gem, and I fear our party will not survive this latest altercation.

MOONDAY the 28th of FIRESEEK, 563 CY

Our group has returned to the village of Hardwyn after some 10 years of adventuring, unable to reconcile the ownership of the ebony gem. Though all have agreed to the tan teen established before, none trust the others to uphold this bargain. To that end, Andemon and I have pooled our magical knowledge to develop a conditional geas/quest spell that will bind the lot of us to our agreement. Compelled by this magical pact, none will possess the gem until he/she is the last of us to survive. On this day, the spell was cast on each of the party members, and a solemn oath was sworn. The fools have even dubbed the group of us the "Brotherhood of the Oath", to honor the pact we have made (even though Uriel and I voted against this name vehemently). In any case, we have encased the gem in a sealed, protected chest beneath the statue-fountain in the town square, where it will remain until the last of us rises to claim it. Though I know that this is the best recourse for all concerned, I cannot help but lament for the loss of our band. I still care little for my "comrades", but I respect them, and the loyalty they have shown me over this past decade. Still, I would not hesitate to possess the gem for myself if the opportunity ever arose. I believe I shall remain in Hardwyn to watch over the gem.

WATERDAY the 19th of NEEDFEST, 593 CY

Through my usual scrying efforts on the villagers of Hardwyn, I have discovered that Cornath Barnabus is dead. It appears that he was killed during a burglary of his forge. His body was found beaten to death by a supplier he was to meet with today. Though I have waited nigh upon 30 long years for the deaths of my previous "comrades" in order to possess the ebony gem, I am surprised that Cornath's life ended in this manner. Even in his elderly state, he was a potent man, and still a formidable warrior. I find it unlikely a common thief could subdue him so. I will make it a point to look into this occurrence later, when time permits.

EARTHDAY the 27th of NEEDFEST, 593 CY

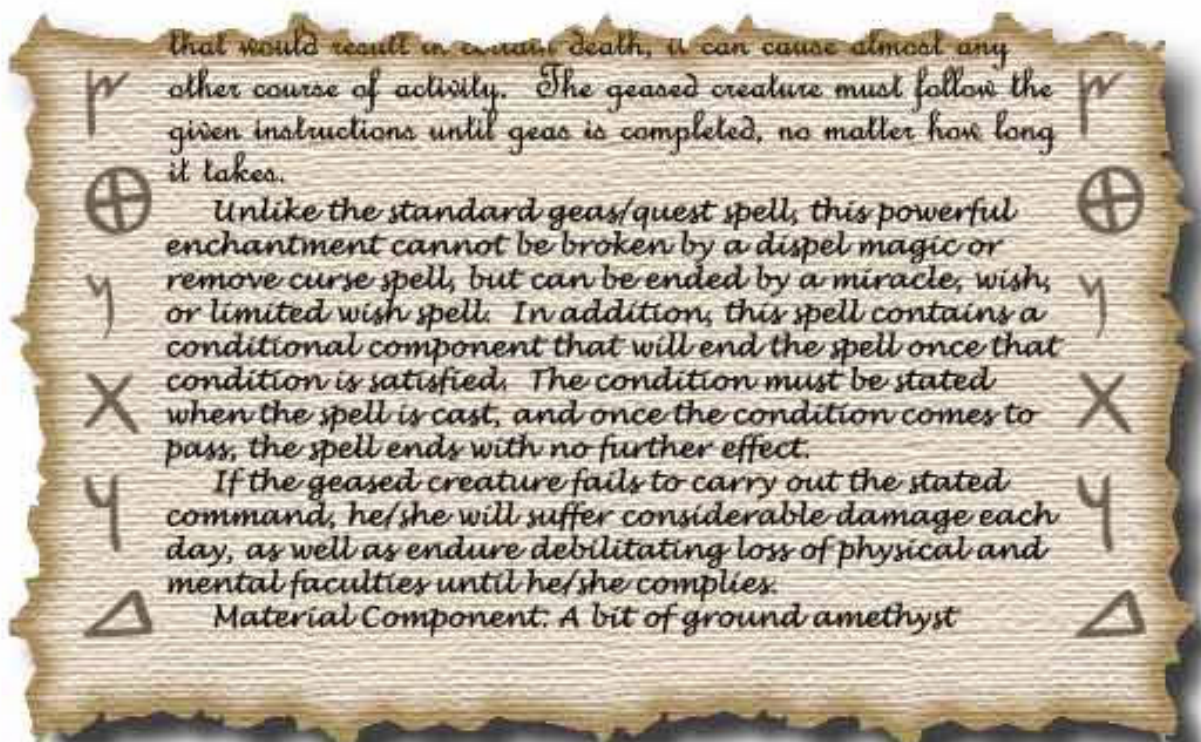
I have learned today that Andemon Tamaranth was found dead in his garden, apparently stabbed through the heart. This disturbing turn of events concerns me. Firstly, Andemon was beloved overall by the villagers, and a powerful cleric as well. What being would or could murder him in such a manner is cause for alarm, particularly so soon after Cornath's death. I will monitor the village's investigation for further information. In the meantime, I will have my elemental minions keep a watchful eye for intruders.

FREEDAY the 7th of FIRESEEK, 593 CY

Something sinister is afoot in Hardwyn; I am now certain of it. Until today, I merely suspected, but Efrem Brumblehill was killed in his sleep by some unseen force. His corpse was found by his wife in their bed this morning, and he appeared as if the very life had been drained from his body. Someone or thing is killing members of the Brotherhood, and it disturbs me, to say the least. I have already moved most of my valuable possessions into my Mordenkainen's Magnificent Mansion, and also summoned more elemental guardians to watch over me. I suspect Thar Grimmaw is behind the slayings, for I do not believe Uriel capable of such betrayal. Already I have begun research into a means of bypassing his iron golem guards, immune to my magic as they are. I have also warned Uriel and advised her to protect her home with various wards. I want the gem, true enough, but I prefer not to see the only person I could call "friend" murdered to get it.

STAR DAY the 15th of FIRESEEK, 593 CY

Woeful tragedy! Uriel was slain this night by shadows, or so believes the mayor. He has implored a group of adventurers to investigate the murders and apprehend the culprit. I cannot wait for them to perform their duty, however (nor do I trust them), for even now, Thar plots my death. I must slay him before he can slay me. My greatest obstacles are his golem guards, but I believe I am very near a solution to incapacitating them. I need but another day to complete my work, and then I am ready to lay siege to his estate. He will rue the day he set his mind to betrayal. I will watch him beg and bleed, I swear by Boccob!



that would result in certain death, it can cause almost any other course of activity. The geased creature must follow the given instructions until geas is completed, no matter how long it takes.

Unlike the standard geas/quest spell, this powerful enchantment cannot be broken by a dispel magic or remove curse spell, but can be ended by a miracle, wish, or limited wish spell. In addition, this spell contains a conditional component that will end the spell once that condition is satisfied. The condition must be stated when the spell is cast, and once the condition comes to pass, the spell ends with no further effect.

If the geased creature fails to carry out the stated command, he/she will suffer considerable damage each day, as well as endure debilitating loss of physical and mental faculties until he/she complies.

Material Component: A bit of ground amethyst