

HRUESAN K.
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ESTANG FOREST
BLACKTOOTH RIDGE
STONE RIDGE
ARATOCH MOUNTAIN

CASLES & CRUSADES

ASSAULT ON BLACKTOOTH RIDGE

A1



BY DAVIS CHENAULT



HEIMSTADT

ESPERDI

ASCALON

ASSAULT ON BLACKTOOTH RIDGE

BY DAVIS CHENAULT WITH STEVE CHENAULT

EDITORS: Cory M. Caserta, Nicole Chenault, Christian Harris, Tami Key, James Mishler, & Tim Burns; final editing Christina Stiles

FRONT COVER: Peter Bradley

INTERIOR ART: Peter Bradley, Daniele Bigliardo, Jason Walton, Erik Wilson,

CARTOGRAPHY: Peter Bradley, Davis Chenault, Jason Walton



1818 North Taylor, #143,
Little Rock, AR 72207
email: troll@trolllord.com
website: www.trolllord.com or
www.castlesandcrusades.com

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OGL

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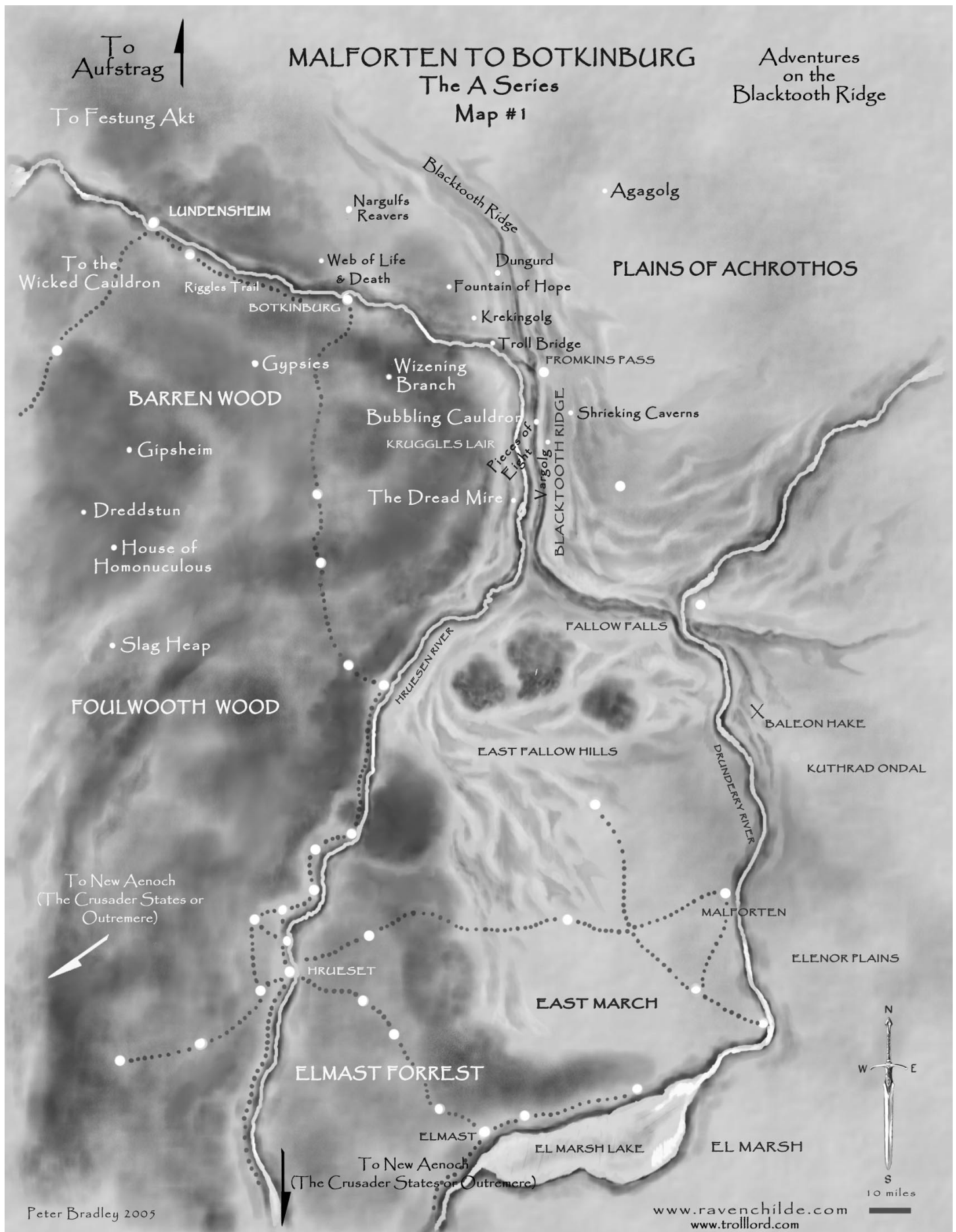
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A1: ASSAULT ON BLACKTOOTH RIDGE

This module is designed primarily for adventurers who have just recently begun on their path to glory, wealth, and fame. In all, it should allow characters a safe place from which to begin exploring a dangerous region, accumulate some wealth, some enemies, and even some friends. If properly executed and attention given to small details, it will allow for the development of plots and themes of numerous types and natures, which should engage the characters for several gaming sessions, if not more.

There is an underlying plot and theme for *Assault on Blacktooth Ridge* which allows for an initial adventuring focus and continuation in the next module, *The Slag Heap*. However, this is by no means the only plot or theme in the module. There are numerous monsters, creatures, and non-player characters who have little or no relation to the plot underpinning the adventure. They act of their own accord, usually at odds with others in the setting and tangentially to those related to the plot. Those many persons in Botkinburg and the encounters in the surrounding forest and along the Blacktooth Ridge offer adventures unto themselves; adventures that can lead to further encounters, quests and activities wholly unrelated to the one at hand. Allow the players time to explore these tangents if they desire and develop them as necessary. It matters little if the players stray from the central theme as long as they are having fun. The plots and themes in the adventure should unfold with time and exploration rather than be foisted upon the players. Allow them to discover and explore rather than follow some arbitrary scenario, as this is their tale to weave.

The first part of this module contains a brief history of the region, the underlying plot, and a description of the town of Botkinburg. The second part of the module contains encounters along the Blacktooth Ridge and the dungeon of Vargolg, where a band of goblins have taken up residence. For ease of reference, maps of the region Botkinburg and the dungeons are located on pages 50-51.

This adventure is designed for 3–5 characters of 1st–2nd level, but, should a larger number of characters be participating in the adventure or their average level be much higher than 2nd, the number of creatures encountered in the adventure needs to be increased to better challenge the characters. Encounters can also be augmented by increasing the hit points of various creatures, increasing their armor class, or giving them weapons which do more damage. In general, the challenge level for most attribute checks should be 0 or 1, unless otherwise noted. The challenge level can be increased to 3 if there are a large number of players or higher level characters are being used.

INTRODUCTION

The town of Botkinburg lies far from the settled lands of the south and the fabled Kingdom of Outremere. It sits upon a bend in the Hruesen River in the shadows of the slopes of the rugged hills of the Blacktooth Ridge, in a land known as the Barren Wood. However, it was not always referred to in such dour tones. In happier days this land was a wild, forested country named the Hruesen. The forest was of an exceedingly large expanse and filled with many beasts as well as settlements of man, halfling, and elf. The great ridge offered



hunting aplenty and was called by men the Highlands and by the elves the Avishean Ridge. There was peace in the country and little troubled the folk who lived there. But the world's ages turned, and so with them the fortunes of those in that wondrous wood.

Long ago, beyond the memory of most in the Barren Wood, a power arose in the north and the whole part of the world fell under the rueful eye of a great and evil lord, The Horned One, as he was named. In those days, the Horned One's shadow hung over all the world and he ruled from the great fortress of Aufstrag. When the Horned One first conquered these lands many aeons ago, it was as restless and troublesome as its inhabitants fey of many type and stalwart men of noble bearing did not easily bend to his will. So it was, after many a rebellion and uprising, the Horned One turned his armies loose upon the lands of the Hruesen. A great many orc and goblin issued forth from the foul pits of Aufstrag and laid waste to the lands of the Hruesen, driving the inhabitants south into the sea, enslaving them, or scattering wide the free peoples that had been living there. His evil emptied the forest of its inhabitants and razed all the region's cities and towns.

For centuries after, the woods and vales of the Hruesen lay abandoned and empty. The ridge now stood forth from the wasteland as a great black scar, as the orcs occupied it and made it a fortress of sorts. They tunneled beneath it and built squat towers

upon it. They carted folk to the Ridge as slaves, and there they became lost to memory. The ridge was named anew, the Blacktooth Ridge, as it devoured all that entered it, and the lands about were renamed the Barren Wood, for little remained of that once great forest.

The fortunes of those lands changed only with the passing of that malicious monarch and the dissolution of his kingdom. Aufstrag was made a shell of its former self, if not wholly destroyed, and the evil hosts of the Horned One scattered to the winds. For many years, the lands knew peace, though they never flourished again. The evil which had resided here passed into memory or vanished into the deep recesses of those hills. Thus the world stood for many years.

In time elves, in search of ancient homelands and shrines, and men, in search of fertile and peaceful lands to farm, returned and settled in the Barren Wood; quickly forgetting, or choosing to forget, that each new age fosters new challenges and past evils often haunt the hopes of the future. As the elves and humans returned, so too arrived remnants of the Horned One's armies; for the Blacktooth Ridge lies in the shadow of Aufstrag and the fell pits of that horrid place are a never-ending source of foul creatures hungry for the easy pickings of the world of man and elf. Now many creatures long away from this land find its fresh fields and peaceful inhabitants easy filling for their gluttonous desires.

As for Botkinburg, it was one of many new towns and thorpes that were settled after the fall of the Horned One. Several fishermen, hunters, traders, and foresters, along with their families, founded the village, building near where an ancient stone bridge crossed over the Hruesen River. In those early days, the village consisted of little more than makeshift houses and hovels huddled together along the banks of the river. The settlement became permanent as the clean and meandering Hruesen River proved an abundant source of fish and the pastures about very fertile. Few creatures or maleficent beasts roamed those parts as the town took shape. They named the town Stoneway, and it quickly prospered, attracting more settlers, and later, folk wishing to escape the meaningless wars and petty uprisings in the south and west of the world.

So arrived Clement Botkin, the third in line of a large noble family of Outremere. Clement Botkin chose to make his own way in the world, and after many travails and adventures, arrived in Stoneway, where he decided to retire and claim this place as his own. He brought with him several knights and some soldiery and built a tower in the town. As time passed, the dangers increased, and Clement built a stone wall around his tower and enclosed a wide bailey to protect the villagers in times of war. For two generations, his family provided protection for the village that eventually bore his name. Through his wisdom and strength, Clement kept the town and its folk safe for many years, until time robbed him of both his wits and his son, who died at the hands of orcs while exploring the Blacktooth Ridge.

Clement's grandson, Volkmar Botkin, has now taken the charge in his father's stead as Clement has grown too feeble of mind and body to do more than moan in pain and eat soup. Volkmar, however, has neither the wisdom nor intelligence of his grandfather or father, and so (despite the advice from his loyal servants) has failed to notice and act upon the recent events along the Blacktooth Ridge, events that presage significant trouble for



the people of Botkinburg and the whole of the Barren Wood.

FOR THE CASTLE KEEPER

Ludensheim, a town near Botkinburg, has a new ruler, Ritter Diethold Heimer. He likens himself a baron and seeks to acquire an oath of fealty from Volkmar Botkin and to control Botkinburg. Heimer has too few resources to manage this on his own, though, and so has decided to seek help from another source.

Dietbold has concocted a plan to force Volkmar Botkin to come to him for aid. He has offered a notorious band of goblin raiders, the Red Caps (or Rottenkips), gold and a free hand in raiding along the Hruesen River if they focus their raids on Botkinburg. After a time, Dietbold expects Volkmar to come seeking aid to defeat the goblin raiders. In compensation, Dietbold will demand fealty of Volkmar, and once given, end the raiding by paying off the Red Caps. In the meantime, Dietbold, through his agents, is supplying the Red Caps with the information they need to raid and making certain that they do not betray him.

The Red Caps, recognizable by the red skullcaps they all wear, are a large band of goblins who have been raiding wealthier towns and trade routes far to the south of the Blacktooth Ridge for a decade or more. They have a frightful reputation, and their very name strikes fear into the hearts of normal men. They are led by the horrid Grallkrug, or "The Rottenkip," as he is more commonly referred to. Lucky for the inhabitants of Botkinburg, Grallkrug

and the vast majority of his band are not in the vicinity; only his lieutenant Marglerod roams these parts. The Red Caps generally do not raid this far north since they use the Blacktooth Ridge and its many abandoned fortresses and caves as hideouts. For his part, Marglerod has decided Dietbold's offer is too good to pass up and, acting without the permission of Grallkrug, carries out the few raids as "agreed" upon with Dietbold. Of course, Marglerod has his own plan and it does not mesh well with Dietbold's. Marglerod plans on following through with the first part of his deal with Dietbold, but intends to continue raiding to extort more gold from him than had previously been agreed upon. To ensure that Dietbold understands this, Marglerod kidnapped Dietbold's emissary and several of Botkinburg's inhabitants and now holds them for ransom.

Marglerod is aware that his plans are dangerous. He only has a small contingent of raiders with him, and they would not be able to withstand a concerted attack on their dungeon-outpost, so fears retribution by either Dietbold or Volkmar. Further, he has been ordered by Grallkrug to guard their outpost, protect their supplies and treasures, and do nothing to attract the locals' attention. If Marglerod's plans fail, he will be in great danger, but success may elevate Grallkrug's estimation of him.

Further, Marglerod's raiding has encouraged many of the other denizens of the Blacktooth Ridge and beyond to come out of their forts, dungeons, and other hiding places to begin raiding also. Dietbold has, in fact, unleashed through his machinations a horde of problems for the Hruesen River region, and no amount of gold or ransom is going to solve it.

INVOLVING THE CHARACTERS

True adventurers and heroes need little encouragement to travel to unknown lands. The prospect for adventure, glory, or treasure is often more than enough. Blacktooth Ridge offers that and to spare. Rumors and tales of easily acquired treasures buried in abandoned forts and treasure houses along the ridge, as well as monsters and beasts lurking in the vicinity of the ridge causing no end of trial and tribulation for the region's inhabitants, should be invitation enough.

However, this may not be enough to attract the more demanding player. There are several reasons, suggested below, for the adventurers to go to Botkinburg. However, what truly brings an adventurer to this place can only be found in the heart of that player's character and not in the place itself.

- 1: Relatives or friends who live in Botkinburg; perhaps one has died recently.
- 2: The group is traveling to locate a famed soothsayer and learn what fate has in store for them.
- 3: The group has been asked to come to Botkinburg by the town leaders to help in fending off attacks by goblin raiders.

BOTKINBURG

(SEE AREA MAP BELOW)

Botkinburg is located deep in the Barren Wood on a rise overlooking a bend in the Hruesen River. Much of the land surrounding the town has been cleared of trees and now serves as pasture and farmland for row crops. A road leads to Botkinburg from the south, and another less-traveled road heads off to the north. The town consists of small wooden and stone houses with thatched and shingled roofs. These are clumped together around a large stone keep located on the highest point of the rise. Botkinburg is mostly inhabited by humans but has a sizable halfling population who live close to one another around several large hills on the west side of the village. They interact freely with the rest of Botkinburg's population, though they are viewed with caution and circumspection by some of the human members of the community.

Botkinburg is not a wealthy community. Its inhabitants are mostly farmers or fishermen, with a few skilled tradesmen amongst them. It is self sufficient, though trades with other communities for rare foodstuffs or manufactured goods in exchange for salted fish, lumber, and dairy products. Every month during the summer an open market is held at the Oak Grove, a sacred place near the town's square. This usually attracts several outsiders pawning their wares. Other than this, most commerce and trade is conducted between families and individuals and is generally in the form of barter rather than with coin. The closest Botkinburg has to a store is the Bent Hook, a local tavern. The proprietor stocks a small amount of items imported from the wealthier communities to the south and north which the locals may find useful.

The days of most in Botkinburg are spent in the pastures, on the river, or in gardens with the crops. The pastures have a mixture of sheep and dairy cattle grazing in them during the day. These are brought in every evening and taken out every morning to the cacophonous sound of cow and sheep bells, bleating sheep, mewing cows, barking herd dogs, and the calls of herdsman. Crops are plentiful and cheaply purchased, as most have full larders.

Most in the community worship at the Chancel, a temple devoted to the many deities who watch over the lands of man and halfling, fertility, herding, or harvest, and the Hruesen River in particular. Rituals and devotionals to the deities are held on numerous occasions and are often accompanied by large communal gatherings during which beer and food are plentiful and served freely. On other occasions, fasting and abstinence are called for. Most of the farmers and fishermen, as well as the halflings, also worship at the Oak Grove, a shrine serving the deities of the sun and moon, plentitude and harvest, and the fairy queen. There are many rituals the people of Botkinburg follow on a daily basis to keep the evil spirits away and to mollify the various fey that still reside in the surrounding forests.

There are roughly 300 people living in Botkinburg, with an additional 50 halflings. Unless noted otherwise, all the human inhabitants of Botkinburg are treated as humans. In times of conflict, a militia can be called up. It consists of nearly 30 adult humans.

HUMANS (*These neutral creature's vital stats are HD1d4, HP 4, AC 10. Their primary attributes are physical. They carry clothing and if carrying a weapon they have a knife or handaxe and 1d6cp. Children and young adults have 1–2 hp.*)

HALFLINGS (*These neutral good creature's vital stats are HD 1d4, HP 4, AC 11. Their primary attributes are physical. They carry clothing and if carrying a weapon they have a staff, knife or handaxe.*)

The following are descriptions of the more notable places and people in Botkinburg. This is followed by a rumor table that mixes both truth and fiction.

AREA 1 THE BENT HOOK OR ORTOLF'S HOUSE OF SLUDGE

The Bent Hook, locally known as Ortolf's House of Sludge, is the only tavern in Botkinburg. It is owned (but not operated) by Ortolf Heimpel. His sons and daughters, their spouses, and their children manage the establishment while Ortolf whiles away his few remaining years consuming vast quantities of ale and mutton at a table in the center of the common room. Besides serving large platters of food and dark brews and offering rooms to weary travelers, the Bent Hook serves as the community's gathering place, and, when necessary, Town Hall. It is a popular establishment frequented by most every member of the community, at one time or another, during the week. The Bent Hook is especially crowded when inclement weather makes work in the fields difficult, during festivals, or times of community concern.

The main building is a large, square, two-story establishment with a stone facing on the lower floor and wooden planked facing for the upper floor. The roof is made of red slate, steeply pitched to accommodate heavy snows during winter, and has a cluster of chimneys and heating pipes poking out of it. The rear of the Bent Hook has a single-floored, wood-planked rear attachment that houses the kitchen and storerooms. Behind the tavern is a large yard enclosed by a stout stone wall and fence, with a barn and stables at one end and the Heimpel's house at the other.

The door to the common room is almost always open and, other than in the late hours of the night, one of the many Heimpels are around cleaning, fixing, cooking, sleeping, drinking, or eating, but are always willing to serve a customer. The room is spacious, though the paneling of the interior is so darkly stained from years of collected smoke and grime that it is dark and, without the glow of friendly fires, lanterns, or candles, can be brooding and oppressive. There are many tables and chairs of all shapes and sizes haphazardly scattered about the room and two large stone-faced fireplaces at either end of the room. A staircase leads up to the second floor of the establishment, while two large oaken doors open on to the brewery and the kitchen beyond.

The second floor is a series of rooms for let. The largest is a common room where several coppers gives one a place to sleep on the floor for the evening. During festivals or markets, this room is often full. There are six other rooms for let at 1sp a night, each essentially the same. These rooms contain four large oak beds that nearly fill up the entire space, a single table, and one trunk.

The Bent Hook is also known as Ortolf's House of Sludge due to its dark brown, near-black brew. "Officially," the Heimpels call

the brew Kaiseren Bock or the King's Brew. However, it is of such a dark and viscous nature that it eventually became known as River Sludge, or just Sludge. Other than the "the Sludge," the Bent Hook serves a decent, though local fare. The food consists mostly of take from the river and is served fried, boiled, broiled, stewed, grilled, and even raw. Other meats like beef and poultry are also available, though tend to be more expensive. Locally grown vegetables such as potatoes, carrots, spinach, cabbage and legumes such as pinto beans, lima beans and red beans augment most meals. Supplies of food are plentiful overall and prices cheap. A full meal can cost as little as 1sp, but soups and breads are cheaper, while elaborate meals can cost as much as 1gp. The beer is cheap, costing 5cp a tankard.

The common room is often full and talk is plentiful though mundane. However, of late, there have been several raids by goblins and other more "horrid" creatures who take cattle and burn food stores. These stories are related with much exaggeration and occasional outright fabrication. Talk has just recently been dominated by the disappearance of the Molkin twins, who tend cattle out in the pastures. They have disappeared without a trace, and many claim an evil magic is afoot and the "Wood Witch," an old hag who lives deep in the Barren Wood, has returned.

There are several guests staying at the Bent Hook.

UTHER SHODER (*He is a 3rd level lawful good human knight. His vital stats are HP 15, AC 15. His primes are strength, intelligence, charisma. His attributes are strength 13, dexterity 10, constitution 10, intelligence 10, wisdom 14, charisma 13. He has a riding horse with all the accouterments. He carries a chain coat, shield, helmet, longsword, longsword, halberd, lance, dagger, 125gp, 77sp, and 14pp.*)

Uthar is from a barony to the south and, after having been rebuffed by Volkmar Botkin, is attempting to gather some stalwart men in order to wrest away his inheritance and lands from an uncle whom he claims has illegally taken it. He has two loyal retainers traveling with him. All share one room.

Farank and Helda: These are members of the tinkers, caravan located near the Oak Grove. They just married and are spending their nuptial nights in the Inn. They have a single room.

MALINAMOUS (*He is a 3rd level neutral good human wizard. His vital stats are: HP 8, AC 10. His prime attributes are dexterity, intelligence, wisdom. His attributes are strength 10, dexterity 10, constitution 10, intelligence 17, wisdom 14, charisma 14. He is carrying a spellbook, clothing, 5 daggers, a pouch with spell components, a wand of fire balls with 6 charges. His daily spells are – Zero: dancing lights, detect magic, detect poison, message, 1st: comprehend languages, hold portal, jump, spider climb, 2nd: acid arrow, enhance attribute.*)

This young wizard has traveled here from the west in search of employment or adventure. Having arrived and found the region too dangerous for a lone man to travel in, has decided to bide his time and await more interesting happenings or if traveling companions can be found. He is willing, though reluctant, to head out into the wilderness. He is staying in the common room.

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GURDIN (*He is a 3rd level neutral evil dwarf assassin. His vital stats are HP 14, AC14. His prime attributes are Dex, Intelligence. His attributes are Str 10, Dex 17, Con 10, Intelligence 10, Wis 10, Chr 10. He carries 2 daggers, light crossbow, short sword, leather armor, mason equipment, and 50gp.*)

Gurdin is an agent of Dietbold. This dour old dwarf claims to be here looking for a job as a mason at the fortress. He has tried on several occasions to get work there, but has not been hired on yet. He needs to use the job to gather information on what Volkmar is doing. Once a month he travels to Ludensheim to visit relatives, as he says, but in reality he reports to his superiors there. He would be very interested in what the characters are doing along the Blacktooth Ridge and might be willing to travel with them if they appear to be close to acquiring some information he would rather they did not. He is staying in the common room.

AREA 2 THE KEEP

The Keep is an impressive large square tower with a bartizan at each corner of the roof. The tower is made entirely of stone and has three floors and a cellar beneath it. It is about 50 feet tall at the roof's peak. The Botkin family banner, purple over red with eagle claws, tops the keep and is visible for miles around. There is one entry to the Keep on its west side and facing the river. The large oaken doors to the Keep have a smaller inset door that is usually open and guarded by several men-at-arms.

The Keep houses the Botkin family and all their retainers. Volkmar Botkin and his grandfather Clement are both here. Clement has aged poorly and is little more than a tottering old man on his death bed. Volkmar, young and in the prime of his life, appears eager and willing to engage with the world around him. However, this is an appearance only, for Volkmar is not terribly intelligent, is a poor judge of character, and is more concerned with his pomp and position than with actually performing the duties as the protector of Botkinburg. He is willing to entertain visitors of some renown and listen to stories and tales of evil doings and evil creatures along the Blacktooth Ridge, but considers them to be no more than "the fears of old wives and tales of peasants." He traditionally chooses one day a month where the locals can come to him to settle disputes, an act which he takes great pleasure in.

Volkmar's attitude has angered Clement Botkin's longtime ally and friend, Aldadius Mastinfelderin, a wizard of some repute. However, out of loyalty to the dying Clement, Aldadius keeps his thoughts and advice to himself, only awaiting Clement's death to assert his power in the Keep. He also maintains his distance from the inhabitants of Botkinburg, considering them little more than subjects. He is willing to take on any apprentice if he appears well disciplined and highly motivated to learn and work.

The Botkins' extended family also lives within the Keep. Volkmar's wife Inelda, unhappy to be in so desolate a region, is desperate to leave. Volkmar's uncle Frekin, who lost an arm long ago in battle with an orc, is now in charge of the Keep's soldiery. Young Thadius Seedmayer, Volkmar's first cousin, and an honorable knight, believes his talents and calling are for fields greater than Botkinburg. There are 10 well armed men-at-arms and a sergeant-at-arms who live here as well. There are others, each with their own particular and

peculiar habits and desires. Many get along well with the locals, but several chafe at such a rustic lifestyle and pine for the lands of the south where royalty is well treated and shown greater respect.

Within the bowels of the cellar there is a secret chamber housing Clement Botkin's vast treasures. Neither Volkmar Botkin nor any of the family know of its location, as Clement only departed that to Aldadius. Aldadius is not revealing the location of the treasury, as he fears it will be squandered. The treasury contains 400gp, 1600gp, 4000sp, and 7000cp. Additionally, there are gems valued at 4000gp and jewelry valued at 2000gp. There are 10 arcane scrolls (random spells), 15 divine scrolls (random spells), a wand of magic missiles [30 charges], a set of +3 chain, a +2 halberd, and a +3 short bow with 15 +1 arrows.

VOLKMAR (*He is a 4th level chaotic neutral human fighter. His vital stats are HP 27, AC 15. His primes are strength, dexterity, constitution. His attributes are strength 7, dexterity 5, constitution 10, intelligence 8, wisdom 9, charisma 10. He is carrying banded mail, large shield, long bow, +2 battle axe and a ring of fire resistance.*)

THADIUS (*He is a 5th level lawful neutral human knight. His vital stats are HP 36, AC 19. His primes are strength, wisdom, charisma. His attributes are strength 16, dexterity 10, constitution 14, intelligence 10, wisdom 10, charisma 10. He carries +2 splint mail, large shield, +1 longsword, helm of arrow deflection giving him a +2 vs missile weapons, lance, light war horse named Hammerhoof, and a +2 ring of magic resistance vs arcane magical effects.* **WARHORSE, HAMMERHOOF**, HD 3d10, HP 17, AC 13. Her prime attribute is physical. She attacks with two hoofs 1d4+2 and a bite 1d4.)

FREKIN (*He is a 6th level chaotic neutral fighter. His vital stats are: HP 43, AC 18. His primes are strength, dexterity, constitution. His attributes are strength 15, dexterity 13, constitution 10, intelligence 10, wisdom 14, charisma 11. He has a riding horse with all the accouterments. He carries a chain coat, shield of blows which confers a +2 to armor class and absorbs one point of damage each round, helmet, longsword, spear, dagger. All Frekin's dexterity attribute checks are made at -2.*)

ALDADIUS (*He is an 8th level lawful neutral wizard. His vital stats are HP 22, AC 16. His primes are constitution, intelligence, wisdom. His attributes are strength 14, dexterity 10, constitution 13, intelligence 16, wisdom 10, charisma 10. He carries a ring of protection +3, padded armor, cloak of displacement, 3 +1 daggers, wand of fireballs with 16 charges. His daily spells are: Zero – endure elements, ghost sound, light, mage hand, message; 1st – alter size, charm person, change self, shield, shocking grasp; 2nd – detect thoughts, fog cloud, levitate, scare; 3rd – blink, dispel magic, stinking cloud; 4th – detect scrying, wall of fire.*)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS (*He is a 3rd level chaotic neutral human fighter. His vital stats are: HP 21, AC 18. His primes are strength, dexterity, constitution. His attributes are strength 14, dexterity 10, constitution 13, Intelligence 10, wisdom 10, charisma 10. He carries banded mail, large shield, long bow, battle axe and has 14 gp.*)

10 MEN-AT-ARMS (*Their vital stats are HD 1d6, AC 14, neutral good. Their primary attributes are physical. They are carrying studded leather, large shield, short bow, battle axe.*)

AREA 3 THE CHANCEL

This is a temple where the many gods, whom the locals worship, are paid homage to. It is a large wooden structure with several floors and two tall, thin towers rising from its center. Most of the inhabitants have helped construct one portion or another of this temple, and the town considers it, collectively, their own. The Chancel is overseen by Hermannus Tersteeg and his followers.

Hermannus is middle aged and getting plump. After having studied in the great Chancels of the south, Hermannus plunged into the northlands to locate a good place to build a new temple. After many adventures and escapades for which he is locally famous, Hermannus decided to settle in Botkinburg and offer his services to the community. He is well liked and much more respected than Volkmar Botkin. He keeps his personal affairs to himself but is very kind and giving to the locals. After settling in, Hermannus became quite comfortable with his position and the Chancel itself. He put on some weight, grew a beard, and relaxed in his new-found and peaceful life. However, troubling portents have, of late, caused him much consternation. Hermannus is tense and spends a great deal of time at the altar trying to divine the future of Botkinburg or disavow what is stirring in the lands about. All to no avail.

Hermannus does not travel outside of Botkinburg to help the characters unless they happen to be on the route to one of the three neighboring villages which he visits once a month or so. He has, after settling in, become somewhat cowardly and fearful for his life. As such, he chooses not to spend it frivolously and rationalizes this decision by claiming the town depends on him too much for his life to be spent cheaply.

There are three other priests living in the Chancel. Two arrived in the past year, Dionijs and Bertis. Both came in search of Hermannus, whose fame in the south has only grown with his absence. The other, Maik Felder, is the son of a local farmer, Steffan Felder.

Dionijs sincerely likes Hermannus and admires him. The same is true of Maik. Both are often seen with Hermannus, though rarely with one another as Dionijs finds Maik too rustic, while Maik finds Dionijs too sleek and civilized to be trusted. Bertis seems to get on well with both of them.

However, Bertis finds Hermannus to have grown weak and chafes at his manners. And, though seemingly friendly with Dionijs and Maik, he believes neither are worthy enough to wear the vestments of the Chancel. The lack of fulfillment at the Chancel in Botkinburg has led Bertis to seek wisdom elsewhere. For some time, Bertis has been making trips to Ludensheim to visit the Chancel there. He has fallen under the influence of Imgard Pifnor, the High Priest at Ludensheim to whom he tells of the happenings at the Chancel.

The treasury for the Chancel is in the basement behind a secret door in Hermannus' room. It contains numerous gold objects and vestments worth 1000gp. There is also a chest with years' worth of collections in it. There are 250gp, 500sp, and 1000cp locked in it. This is also where Hermannus keeps his valuables and accouterments of war – +2 banded mail, shield, +2 footman's flail, battle tabard and helmet, nine scrolls: 3x cure light wounds, 2x delay poison, remove paralysis, prayer, continual flame, and aid, a ring of protection from evil and his personal holdings of 150gp, 200sp, 400cp.

HERMANNUS TERSTEEG (He is a 6th level neutral good human cleric. His vital stats are HP 35, AC 20. His primes are strength, constitution, wisdom. His attributes are strength 10, dexterity 13, constitution 10, intelligence 10, wisdom 16, charisma 10. He carries clothing and vestments. His daily spells are – Zero: create water, detect magic, detect poison, first Aid x 2, purify food and drink; 1st: bless water, command, cure light wounds x 2; 2nd: augury, delay poison, hold person, lesser restoration; 3rd: create food and water, remove disease.)

DIONIJS (He is a 2nd level neutral human cleric. His vital stats are HP 10, AC 15. His primes are dexterity, wisdom, charisma. His attributes are strength 10, dexterity 10, constitution 13, intelligence 13, wisdom 10, charisma 10. He carries scale shirt, shield, mace, spear, 1 cure light wounds scroll, 14gp, 28sp and 40cp. His daily spells are – Zero: create water, detect poison, first aid, light; 1st: command, sanctuary.)

BERTIS (He is a 1st level chaotic neutral human cleric. His vital stats are HP 6, AC 12. His primes are strength, wisdom, charisma. His attributes are strength 15, dexterity 10, constitution 10, intelligence 10, wisdom 15, charisma 10. He carries padded armor, shield, mace, 10gp, 46sp and 92cp. His daily spells are – Zero: detect law, detect poison, purify food and drink; 1st: cure light wounds, protection from law.)

MAIK FELDER (He is a 3rd level chaotic neutral human cleric. His vital stats are HP 14, AC 16. His primes are intelligence, wisdom, charisma. His attributes are strength 14, dexterity 10, constitution 10, intelligence 10, wisdom 16, charisma 13. He carries ringmail, large shield, footman's flail, 6gp, 13sp and 24cp. His daily spells are – Zero: detect magic, endure elements, first aid, light; 1st: bless, bless water, shield of faith; 2nd: aid, augury.)

AREA 4 THE OAK GROVE AND SHRINE

Off the town square is a wide and shallow sloping hill upon the top of which is a tremendous oak. The ground about the base of the hill is well worn and dusty from many years of use during festivals and markets. The upper portion of the hill is covered in thick and verdant green grass and flowers, all year round, despite any weather. The oak is likewise festooned with bright green leaves year round.

The Great Oak is a holy place where many come to offer worship to the deities of the sun, moon, and harvest. There is no cleric or druid who watches over the tree, but many travel to Botkinburg to worship here. The Great Oak is covered in many glyphs that have been seared into its bark. They were placed there by the servants of Mordius, the Lady of the Forests, many centuries ago when the tree acted as a receptacle for the deity's will.

The tree itself is sentient and capable of movement and action, though it has not moved in well over two centuries. No one in Botkinburg is aware of this, but the fey who live in the surrounding wood are, and when occasion permits, come to the tree and lay offerings at its roots. The tree does not react, or come to life, unless attacked.

TREANT (This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 9d10, AC 20. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with tendril-like branches, grappling for 2d8 points of damage. It can conduct four such attacks per round. This treant has a permanent protection from evil spell cast on it and can regenerate 3 hp a round.)

8 CASTLES & CRUSADES

AREA 5 TINKERS' CARAVAN

The area at the base of the hill on the Oak Grove is used as the town market or gathering place for festivals. There are three wagons drawn up and several families of tinkers here now. They travel far and wide through the region and collect and sell all manner of items. For any item requested which costs less than 25gp, there is a 50% chance it is in their supplies. There is approximately 1000gp worth of material in the wagons. For items over 25gp, there is a 10% chance they will have it.

There are three women, five men and four children in this group including the two recently married who are staying in the Bent Hook. The tinkers are led by the wily Garfeld, an experienced tradesman with a good eye for a deal and a steal.

GARFELD (He is a 4th level chaotic neutral human rogue. His vital stats are: HP 15, AC 14. His primes are dexterity, intelligence, charisma. His attributes are strength 10, dexterity 16, constitution 10, intelligence 10, wisdom 10, charisma 14. He carries +2 leather armor and a +1 short sword.)

AREA 6 HOUSE OF D'AMTER

This is the home of Lars and Gisela Haffner, devotees to the deity of healing and curing. They live in a large single-story, wood-framed house with an attached barn. Above the front door is a lintel with a carving of an owl and an inscription on it, "With my hands, I bring life." A small smokehouse is located in their backyard, along with several milk cows. Their dog, a large white mastiff, lingers in front of the house and barks loudly when anyone approaches.

Lars is an older man, stooped and bent, with a long white beard and skin wrinkled and cracked with age. He is a cleric but has devoted his entire life to healing and has never laid a hand on anyone in violence, and does not intend to do so. His wife, Gisela, is an accomplished herbalist and knows much about curing the ill and wounded, and helps Lars in his duties. Their services are ostensibly free. Yet, there is an understanding between those in the community and the Haffners. They are "paid" in service or offered 'gifts' of food. Further, whenever the Haffners need something, generally all they have to do is ask for it and they receive it. Though not greedy, Lars and Gisela do expect some compensation and from more powerful individuals, they expect service of some kind. He is not afraid to mention his need for rare herbs, animal parts, or similar items. One object of particular interest to him is the feather of an oslen owl, a rare species of fowl who lived in the Barren Wood ages ago. Upon acquiring this feather, Lars gains one point of wisdom as a gift from the deity of healing.

The Haffners have acquired some wealth through the years. In a jar in their attic they have 12pp, 67gp, 156 sp; and in their bedroom they have 13sp and 211cp. Also, in their basement they have numerous herbs and some medical equipment that healers and rangers might find useful. They are willing to sell or trade them.

LARS HAFNER (He is a 2nd level lawful good human cleric. His vital stats are HP 7, AC 11. His primes are intelligence, wisdom, charisma. His abilities are strength 10, dexterity 10, constitution 10, intelligence 10, wisdom 10, charisma 16. He carries padded armor, a war hammer, 2pp and 4gp. His daily spells are – Zero: create water, detect poison, first aid x 2; 1st: cure light wounds x 2.)

AREA 7 BUTCHER SHODFOOT

Tirten Shodfoot is the only dwarf of permanent residence in Botkinburg. Long ostracized from his kin in the Aneer'rafe Hills for theft, he came to Botkinburg to avoid contact with other dwarves. In this, he has been fairly successful. He took up butchery. He is of very ill temperament, treating other dwarves especially poorly, but performs his tasks dutifully and with great professionalism yet with grumbles and complaints all the while.

Tirten seeks to redeem himself at this point in his life but sees little opportunity to do so in this remote and "honorless" land. The arrival of the characters is viewed as a potential boon to Tirten, as they may offer an opportunity for him to travel and face down many a foe. If the party appears to be honorable rather than greedy, he may offer his service to them.

TIRTEN (He is a 3rd level chaotic neutral dwarf barbarian. His vital stats are HP 20, AC 17. His primes are strength and constitution. His abilities are strength 15, dexterity 10, constitution 10, intelligence 10, wisdom 10, charisma 10. He carries a breast plate, shield, +1 battle axe, gloves of ogre strength that confers 18 strength when they are worn, 120gp and 300sp.)

AREA 8 SCHULER'S TWO STORY FARMHOUSE

This is the home of the Schulers. Fritz and his wife Lisa live here with their six children, all of whom are under the age of 15. Fritz has a large two-story, wood-framed house and barn. The family lives on the upper floor, with the lower floor acting as a barn. Fritz is an affable person, but his wife is more like a shrew, constantly complaining about Fritz's laziness.

She is, to some degree, accurate in her assessment of Fritz. He works as little as possible, bartering away a great deal of beef every year to the Bent Hook in exchange for beer, which he drinks to excess. Lisa has long grown tired of her husband's indolent ways and has begun to think of doing away with him. To this effect, she visits the Witch of the Wood (see below) on occasion in an effort to purchase small amounts of poison, with which she can slowly kill her husband. Lisa has secreted away several coins over the years, and hides them in a clay jug in the rafters of the lower floor of the house (48 cp, 22 el, 12 sp, 2gp).

AREA 9 MEEKAL'S FARM HOUSE

A dairy farmer lives here. He and his only son spend much time hunting for food, while the wife spends most of her time tending to the few cows they have. Eggar and Meekal know the woods west of Botkinburg fairly well and are somewhat familiar with the Blacktooth Ridge, though they rarely go that direction as "there are more than just animals along that ridge; there are evil things a'flittin' about now." The family has secreted away a little gold for hard times. They have 22gp, 72sp, and 124cp in a sack beneath a loose plank in their house.

Meekal is bored with his life as a farmer and hunter and can easily be convinced to adventure along the Blacktooth Ridge. However, once he has had a taste of battle, he is likely to decide farming is the life for him unless convinced otherwise.

MEEKAL, HUMAN (His vital stats are HD 1d4, AC 13, neutral good. His prime attribute is mental. He carries a hide jerkin, longbow and a dagger. Meekal can track as a 2nd level ranger.)

AREA 10 OLD MAN NESTER'S

Nester is one of the few remaining inhabitants of Botkinburg who can remember when the town was first being settled. He is in his late 90s and usually sits on the front porch of his house, whittling away at a stick. He is still spry enough to tend his chickens and gather some food, but mostly his neighbors care for him, ensuring he is well fed and has enough firewood during the winter. If Nester is not on his front porch or in his house, he is likely at the Chancel praying, resting, or chatting with Hermannus; or at the Bent Hook drinking sludge.

Nester is an endless source of information about the region and its history. Though he often elaborates and creates tales, they are sprinkled with enough fact to make sitting with him worth any curious character's time. He can explain who the Horned One was and what he did; he knows of the Blacktooth Ridge and correctly points out that new arrivals are coming into the region. He is aware that fey live nearby, and he always, without fail, leaves a little something on his stoop once a week for them. He warns others to do the same, lest they attract the ire of the wee folk.

AREA 11 SHERIFF AARON VON BEDERING

This is the office of the sheriff and jail. It is a small wooden structure with several cells along its backside. The current sheriff, Aaron von Bedering, spends most of the day here but lives on the outskirts of the town. Should he ever need help in catching or watching wrongdoers, two of the militiamen, Weslin and Erhardt, accompany him. He is empowered to get more from militia members if need requires it.

The Botkins appoint a sheriff for Botkinburg who acts as their representative and has the authority to arrest and execute people he considers to have committed a crime. Traditionally, the sheriff sits on the council with the head of the Chancel and a member of the Botkin family in order to determine someone's innocence or guilt. However, of late, Hermannus has been sending Bertis to act in his stead. It is rare that anything happens in the village of much import. Occasionally, someone steals something or a fight breaks out, but this is usually handled by those involved. Mostly the sheriff spends his time at the Bent Hook.

Erhardt, one of Aaron's helpers, is a member of a secretive order of woodsmen of holy lineage, the Guardians of the Tree. This group is devoted to hunting down and locating any remnants of the Horned One's agents. Erhardt is here because of persistent rumors of an ancient and rising evil along the Blacktooth Ridge. When occasion permits, he travels to the Blacktooth Ridge region, trying to discover the nature of the threat now rising. He would be very interested in any information the characters may have on Blacktooth Ridge.

AARON VON BEDERING (*He is a 2nd level chaotic neutral human fighter. His vital stats are HP 12, AC 14. His primes are strength, constitution, intelligence. His abilities are strength 10, dexterity 10, constitution 10, intelligence 10, wisdom 10, charisma 10. He carries a chain shirt, club, battle axe, small pouch with 4gp and 32sp.*)

ERHARDT (*He is a 5th level neutral good human ranger. His vital stats are HP 29, AC 18. His primes are strength, dexterity, wisdom. His abilities are strength 10, dexterity 16, constitution 10, intelligence 10, wisdom 10, charisma 10. He carries +3 studded leather, shortsword of slicing which gives the wielder a +2 to damage, clothing, 34gp, 67sp.*)

AREA 12 FARRIER GREDEN MERKMEN

Greden Merkmén hunts the entire range of the Hruesen River, looking for beaver, fox, or other animals whose hides bring a fair value in Ludensheim or Botkinburg. He is a quiet man and keeps to himself and as such, has earned the distrust of his neighbors and fellow townspeople. Greden shares some of his knowledge of the river and the Blacktooth Ridge if pressed or if the characters manage to befriend him.

Greden is the only member of a society of River Wardens who have returned to the region in the past several decades. Sent here in search of the remnants of the Horned One's minions, they remain incognito to protect themselves, as they are weak at the moment. Greden follows the characters once or twice into the forests near Botkinburg to determine what they are up to, but will not intercede on their behalf should they get in trouble. If the characters appear to be of good alignment and concerned about the depredations of evil creatures, he might help them out by supplying them with information. Should a ranger of good alignment be amongst the characters, Greden offers to train him or her.

GREDEN (*His is a 6th level chaotic good human ranger. His vital stats are HP 39, AC 17. His primes are strength, dexterity, constitution. His abilities are strength 14, dexterity 16, constitution 10, intelligence 10, wisdom 10, charisma 10. He carries a +2 longsword, +2 leather, 2 potions of healing, shield, longbow, pack, hunting gear, 25gp, and has 15 gems worth 10–16gp each buried in his yard.*)

AREA 13 BLACKSMITH VELDENMAN

Darmek Veldenman is a general-purpose blacksmith and not highly trained in weapons making or armor repair. He has several longswords he made, but they are of such poor quality that they have a –1 damage modifier. He can do general repairs and maintenance on weapons and armor, and only charges 10% the value of the item. He is capable of making all manner of other goods commonly found in farming communities, though.

AREA 14 THE WOODSMEN KRIEGER

This rambling house and series of sheds belong to six brothers who are carpenters and woodsmen. They are a jovial lot who drink too much and work too little. None of them farm and only exchange firewood, cut wood, and services for food or other needs. They are often found at Ortolf's House of Sludge drinking long into the evening.

The Krieger brothers have on occasion gone deep into the woods east of the river in search of hidden temples, abandoned forts, or anything else that may contain lost treasures, hoping to make a life's living in one fell swoop. Having failed, all of the brothers are eager to hire on for ventures along the Blacktooth Ridge or elsewhere, though they agree to do so only if all six can go. They also require a significant share of the loot, should any be acquired.

THE BROTHERS, HUMAN (*Their vital stats are HD 1d4, HP 2, 3, 3, 3, 4, 5, AC 12, neutral good. Their prime attributes are physical. They carry leather hauberk, woodsman axe and dagger.*)

AREA 15 FARMER VON STOCK

This family spends most of their time working the garden in the rear of their house and tending several milk cows. They have been

here for several generations. The father is not fond of strangers and tries not to have dealings with them. His son and daughter both work in the Keep as cooks part of each day.

The head of the household, Mertin von Stock, had a rather nefarious past as a highwayman. In his youth, he robbed innumerable travelers and accumulated a hefty amount of loot before giving up that rather dangerous career. He settled in Botkinburg and married about 15 years ago and has managed to keep his identity a secret. His wife died after the birth of their second child. He is getting on in years and has only recently begun to hint as to his adventures as a youth. He would consider taking on and departing his skills to someone who shows the right amount of respect and interest in his abilities. Mertin keeps his remaining treasure buried under an old barrel in his barn (280 gp, 320sp) and his most valuable personal possessions locked in a chest at the foot of his bed.

MERTIN VON STOCK (*He is a 5th level chaotic neutral human rogue. His vital stats are HP 28, AC 13. His primes are dexterity, constitution, intelligence. His abilities are strength 10, dexterity 14, constitution 10, intelligence 10, wis 10, charisma 10. He carries leather armor, light crossbow, daggers, shortsword +2, ring of silent movement that imparts +2 to all move silent checks.*)

AREA 16 FARMER KELLER

This narrow two-story building is home to a friendly and affable family of 10. Well fed, the Kellers have several dozen dairy cows. Much of their time is spent milking the cows and preparing cheeses, which they sell locally and send to markets in larger cities once every three months. Lately, the roads have become unsafe and journeys often postponed or abandoned. They have accumulated a small sum of coin kept in a jar on a rafter in the father's bedroom (22 gp, 76 sp, 321cp). They usually hire several people to travel with them to Ludensheim during the winter when the roads are rarely traveled, poorly guarded, or intermittently patrolled.

AREA 17 FISHERMAN & DAUGHTERS

This fisherman lives with his two surviving daughters. He rarely fishes and spends most of his time at the bar drinking away his daughters' catch. The daughters, Gisella and Nina, are very familiar with the river and truly dislike their father. Gisella has decided to leave and go to live with the witch in the woods, with whom she is familiar. Nina is somewhat of a troublemaker in town and pilfers occasionally, is usually from travelers and visitors who drink too much at the House of Sludge. They have gathered a little sum of booty over the years and have hidden it in a clay jar in the outhouse (2pp, 31gp, 41sp, 67cp, brooch (30gp), 2x rings (20gp and 30 gp)).

GISELLA (*She is a 1st level chaotic neutral human cleric. Her vital stats are: HP 5, AC 11. Her primes are strength, wisdom, Charisma. Her abilities are strength 10, dexterity 15, constitution 10, intelligence 10, wisdom 10, charisma 14. She carries a wooden holy symbol and a cudgel. Her daily spells are – Zero: detect poison, endure elements, light; 1st: command.*)

NINA (*She is a 2nd level neutral evil human rogue. Her vital stats are: HP 6, AC 16. Her primes are dexterity, intelligence, charisma. Her abilities are strength 7, dexterity 16, constitution 8, intelligence 10, wisdom 10, charisma 16. She carries a dagger and leather armor.*)

AREA 18 FISHERMAN HORFANE

The house of Grunald Horfane hangs halfway into the water. He has a boat attached to his windowsill and spends most of his time on his front porch, the only part still out of the water. The house was built some time ago on the side of a steep hill on the banks of the Hruesen River. Over time it has slowly slid halfway into the water. Oblivious to the eventual collapse of his house, Grunald continues living here, often fishing from atop his roof.

Grunald has a secret. A neryad lives in the waters beneath his sinking house. She comes up through a hole in the floor and, on dark nights, spends time talking with Grunald. He has, of course, become enamored of this being and waits eagerly for her arrival every night. If the characters befriend Grunald, in time, he may reveal the presence of the neryad, and she may also find the party agreeable. If so, she can fairly well ensure the characters' safe travel up and down the Hruesen River.

GRUNALD, HUMAN (*His vital stats are HD 1d4, HP 4, chaotic neutral. His prime attribute is physical. He carries fishing spear and a ring of water breathing. He has 10gp in a jar in the water.*)

NERYAD (*Her vital stats are HD 3d8, HP 19, AC 15, neutral. She is able to control the weather in her immediate environment, not more than 40' by 40'. She can, for instance keep the morning's mist from dissipating until late in the day. She possesses an uncanny beauty, and there are hidden melodies in her voice that allows her to charm as per the charm spell three times per day. If threatened she lures her charmed victim into the water and throttles him.*)

AREA 19 BOAT RAMP

This was once a wooden bridge; its remnants jut out into the river about 15 feet. Many of the fishermen gather here in the morning and afternoon before and after fishing. They discuss the day's catch, mend nets, and sell fish.

BAFLER HILL, THE HALFLING QUARTER

The halfling quarter of town, the "Burrows," as the humans call it, is located on the north side of Botkinburg on the slope of a hill overlooking the Hruesen River. Halflings began moving into town several decades ago as rumor of its peaceful nature and distance from warring lords in the south made it sound ideal for comfortable and calm lives. They are successful farmers and sheep herders, and have supplied Botkinburg with much needed skills in the few years they have been here.

The halflings are very diligent and work hard most of the time. They are very successful farmers and craftspeople, actually outproducing most of the human farmers and craftsmen in both quantity and quality. Although the halflings get along well with most members of the community, some humans are envious of the wealth the halflings brought with them and have accumulated, and heap scorn on them for their work habits. Some even say they use magic or are in cahoots with the fey in the region.

Though the halflings adhere to age-old traditions of offering foods, wines, and trinkets to the fey every week, few are in contact with any of the fairies that live in the Barren Wood. "A pie on the

porch is better than a sty in the eye," they are want to say. But their wealth comes not from magic, but rather from hard work.

The halfling community, through its extensive contacts with relatives from all over the region, is also much better informed about events outside of Botkinburg than are most others. They willingly share this information, and are not averse to using it to their advantage when trading and selling items of value.

The halflings usually worship at the Great Oak but occasionally the Chancel as well. They are not typically involved with town affairs, though a good 10 members of the militia are halflings, and in times of stress, energetically offer their services to the Baron.

AREA 20 THE SWILLING SWAN

The Swilling Swan is a small brew house and bar built into the side of Bafler Hill. It is almost exclusively frequented by the halflings in Botkinburg, as it is built only to accommodate people of their size. However, some of the humans do gather outside at several tables to partake of the good halfling wines the brew master concocts.

This is usually a jovial place as the owner, Megarin Paracook, does this for fun rather than for a living. Having some experience at a winery, when Megarin arrived, he immediately started gathering local berries and set about making wines. All his wines are seasonal, and he often runs short, as he does not collect enough ingredients to make enough wine to last the season. When he does have the wine, though, he sells it very cheaply and offers it for parties, gatherings, and other social occasions.

Megarin lives nearby with a large family of nine. They spend much of the year tending their crops and raising sheep. Two of Megarin's children, Namel and Mose, are adventurous sorts and have traveled far and wide in the Barren Wood. They have been to Fromkin's Pass. Being curious sorts, these two brothers have also struck up a friendship with several pixies who wander the Barren Wood and who, they meet occasionally to enjoy Megarin's wine or even help the pixies plan pranks and enact devilish, though never harmful, deeds upon Botkinburg's inhabitants.

NAMEL (He is a 2nd level neutral halfling ranger. His vital stats are HP 14, AC 14. His primes are strength, dexterity. His abilities are strength 10, dexterity 16, constitution 14, intelligence 10, wisdom 10, charisma 16. He carries a short sword, sling and leather armor.)

MOSE (He is a 3rd level neutral halfling rogue. His vital stats are:HP 12, AC 14. His primes are dexterity, constitution. His abilities are strength 10, dexterity 16, constitution 10, intelligence 13, wisdom 10, charisma 10. He carries thieves tools, 2 daggers, shortbow, leather armor.)

AREA 21 CARPENTER NEEDLEMIRE

This is the home of the halfling Befren Needlemire, a carpenter by trade and farmer by necessity. Having come here several years ago expecting to set up shop and earn a living doing carpentry in what appeared to be a growing community, Befren quickly realized that his skills were not in great demand. He makes a passable living, but only by supplementing his income by farming. He and his two older sons are familiar with the construction of traditional halfling

homes and quite eagerly look forward to building a new structure on Bafler Hill. His wife and four daughters mostly work around the house with the animals and in the fields.

Befren's youngest son, Millipen, is a curious sort who is desirous of travel though reluctant to actually manage it himself. He is well versed in the tales and traditions of the region as his father has seen to his education. He has become quite a decent speaker and storyteller, bedazzling those at both the Swilling Swan and the House of Sludge. If properly enticed, Millipen may be willing to go along on a "grand adventure."

MILLIPEN (He is a 1st level neutral good halfling bard. His vital stats are HP 7, AC 13. His primes are dexterity, charisma. His abilities are strength 10, dexterity 16, constitution 10, intelligence 13, wisdom 10, charisma 15. He carries a dagger, shortbow and padded armor.)

AREA 22 FARMER HALE

Edward Hale raises a few cattle but mostly tends to a large variety of crops in an expansive garden. He has a family of eight and lives in a two-story, wood-framed farmhouse. Part of the first floor is reserved for a barn.

One of his sons, Jared "the Spleen" Hale, has become a near professional hunter and brings in game quite often to supplement his family's resources. He sells the excess at the Bent Hook and the Swilling Swan and during the summer at the Oak Grove. He knows the surrounding area fairly well and has stumbled upon a secluded well-head that he claims was guarded by a magical dryad. He named it the Fount of Hope, saying that waters could heal. He stumbled upon it many years ago, but has not been able to retrace his steps to it.

AREA 23 FISHERMAN ELDEN'S WIFE

This halfling family lives in a small burrow located on top of the hill. Their home is warm and cozy, filled with old furniture and many rugs and carpets. Mrs. Mar Elden, "Mrs. Elden if you please," runs the household. Her husband drowned in the river some years ago, a happenstance she talks about constantly, particularly at the Swilling Swan, where she spends a good deal of time tipping back mugs of brew. The whole family is a fairly gregarious bunch and eagerly gather for family feasts in which friends or new acquaintances are invited. They enjoy tales of high adventures and exciting escapades. The older of the children looks forward to some traveling and a life of adventure.

AREA 24 FARMER FRIZZYFOOT

The Frizzyfoots, another of the halfling farm families in town, are an exception to the general industriousness of that community. This man, Barstow Frizzyfoot, has many children and a large wife whom he calls "B.T." The name has taken over the years so that few but herself know her real name, and most everybody, including her children, call her "BT, or sometimes Betty." Barstow has never revealed what the initials stand for, though he is often found in the Swilling Swan drinking brew and laughing to himself, all the while muttering "B.T." over and again. They constantly bicker and fight about what a poor job one another does in raising the children,

and their screaming can be heard far down the banks of the river. For their part, the children run about the fields half dressed and poorly fed, rarely attended to. They are frequently in trouble with the town Elders for petty crimes such as theft and vandalism.

AREA 25 FARMER SHIPP

This family of halfling woodsmen, the Shipp, live in a one story building near the other burrows. They spend much of their time in the woods, cutting and hauling wood. They also have a sawmill near their house where they cut and prepare wood for sale and make barrels and boxes as well as furniture and other objects. Recently, one of the sons, Buckeye Shipp, spotted some strange signs in the woods. "The Trees were bent back at the tops, as if something were looking through the high spots all about!" he'll exclaim. He fervently believes a giant or something is about.

RUMORS

The following is a list of rumors and unusual events that the inhabitants of Botkinburg may know about. These should be used to spur the characters on to action or raise questions the answers to which involve intrigue or exploration of the surrounding area. Talk is currently dominated by the disappearance of the Molkin twins and the recent raids by goblins on farmers and travelers. The Molkin twins were abducted a fortnight prior in the fields while tending cattle. Their mother is beside herself with grief.

- 1: "Dose Ludensheimens want a war? We'll give 'em a war if'n they want one!"
- 2: "Daemons is out at nights; watch you feed 'em well!"
- 3: "Thase a witch in the woods and her familiars are here."
- 4: "Eatin' them halfflang foods 'eel get ya killed."
- 5: "The Baron is goin' crazy and his son has poisoned him."
- 6: "Them pixies and nixies need their food, so don't forget to feed 'em!"
- 7: "Someone here is giving the Redcaps some information. As my tooth is yellow its true."
- 8: "Them tinkers is thieves and scoundrels, I tell yeh!"
- 9: "The Blacktooth place, it be the home to evil sorcerers and the living dead."
- 10: "There's more gold there than in all the south kingdoms."
- 11: "I fear there is more afoot than simple garden variety thieving, ancient evil I says."
- 12: "I know one thing only, the Witch King is back."

WILDERNESS AREAS

The region around Botkinburg is fraught with dangers and evil creatures, as well as a few benign and even helpful ones. The following section contains a brief description of the Blacktooth Ridge, the Barren Woods, and the Hruesen River Valley. Three random encounter charts are supplied for encounters in those regions. Following this are descriptions of various places along the ridge or in the woods which the characters are likely to come across. Castle Keepers should give particular attention to "Beneath the Moon" in which the fey who live around Botkinburg are described.

Those listed are by no means the limit of monsters or creatures inhabiting the region of the Blacktooth Ridge. The Castle Keeper is encouraged to expand upon the encounters as necessary and even add more encounters which might better fit the mood of their adventure or interests of the adventuring party.

THE BARREN WOODS: This is an oak and birch forest extending from the Hruesen River in the east to the massive Ingeld Lake in the west. Its deeps have only recently been encroached upon with those settlements developing along the upper Hruesen River and far to the north of Botkinburg. Many creatures of ancient origin roam the deep woods, as it was once a land belonging to the elves and fey and the Horned One never truly conquered the region. Other monsters, spawn of the Horned One, occasionally crawl forth from the holes where they have been hiding these many long years to take the lives of all they can. Of late, their numbers have increased, and the danger of travel here has become great indeed.

THE HRUESEN RIVER VALLEY: This river spills out of the Great Morass or Blasted Heath far to the east and lazily makes its way through plains and forests until it abuts the Blacktooth Ridge. It has many feeder streams along its width and breadth. Its course narrows and becomes tumultuous some 50 miles north of Botkinburg as it enters the rougher hilly lands of the region. After passing through this region, it tumbles on south until it spills into Lake Elweth.

The river is plentiful with fish and offers a wealth of food to settlers, bears, and others who depend upon fish for food. But this also attracts fell creatures of all sorts, and makes travel along the river perilous in those lower reaches far away from the settlements of man. Many a strange and ancient creature can be seen in its blue waters.

THE BLACKTOOTH RIDGE: This ridge line stretches from the Plains of Atrothos in the east before breaking up in the rocky flats of the Elenor Plains in the south. The Blacktooth Ridge is a rocky outcrop dotted with innumerable fracture caverns and deep natural caves on the western edge of the Plains of Atrothos. The escarpment above and to the east of the Blacktooth Ridge is forested with scruboak and evergreens, and is littered with huge boulders-detritus of glacial contraction.

For ages beyond count, the caverns of the Blacktooth Ridge have long attracted orcs, ogres, goblins, giants, and other even more evil and malignant creatures who prefer the dark depths to the open sun. After the coming of the Horned One, the Blacktooth Ridge became a significant source of creatures with which to people his armies. Eventually, guard posts, fortresses, treasuries, and barracks were built in the caverns beneath the ridges and huge hosts of troops were housed here under the command of

powerful lieutenants and captains. After his fall, many of these were abandoned and left uninhabited for many years. Now it boasts many renegade elements of that ancient and most foul evil as the ridge offers safe hiding and deep holes-easy defense from those who seek to kill them.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

There are three wandering monster charts for use when the party ventures outside of Botkinburg. These encounters are not the only ones which can occur while the characters are traveling through the region. The Castle Keeper should feel free to develop other encounters, or augment the encounters below to develop story arcs that are integral aspects of the adventure.

BOTKINBURG

This chart details encounters that occur within 20 miles of Botkinburg. Check for encounters once during the day and twice at night. Roll a d10; a 1 indicates an encounter. Then roll a d20 to determine the type.

d20	ENCOUNTER
1-3	Villagers (2 - 5)/herding animals, collecting wood, etc.
4-7	Stray animal (1 - 3)/sheep, cow, horse, or other
8	Remnants of a goblin or orc encampment
9	Mountain Lion (1)/tracking party, may attack
10	Wolves (4 - 12)/eating, tracking party, moving
11-15	Herd Animals/deer, elk, oxen, boar, or other
16-17	Fey (2 - 8)/traveling, see "Beneath the Moon" below
18	Goblins (7 - 12)/spying, raiding, stealing cattle
19	Travelers/merchants, party, knights, soldiers, clerics
20	Bandit (2 - 8)/ambush, after a raid, encamped

THE BARREN WOOD

This chart details encounters that occur while traveling in the Barren Wood. Check for encounters twice during the day and twice at night. Roll a d10; a 1 indicates an encounter. Then roll a d20 to determine the type.

d20	ENCOUNTER
1-2	Bandits (2 - 8)/ambush, after a raid, encamped
3-4	Goblins (7 - 12)/spying, raiding, stealing cattle
5	Lost traveler (1 - 3)/villager scared, hiding, fleeing
6	Mountain Lion (1)/tracking party, may attack
7-10	Herd Animals/deer, elk, oxen, boar, or other
11-12	Wolves (4 - 12)/eating, tracking party, moving
13	Giant Spiders (2 - 8)/nest area, with prey, moving
14	Brown Bear (1)/hunting food 1 in 10 with cubs
15-16	Fey (2 - 8)/traveling, see "Beneath the Moon" below
17-18	Orcs (2 - 8)/raiding, scouting, lost, encamped, after fight
19-20	Ogre (1)/traveling, searching for home, raiding



BLACKTOOTH RIDGE

This chart details encounters that occur along the region of the Blacktooth Ridge. Check for encounters twice during the day and three times at night. Roll a d10; a 1 indicates an encounter. Then roll a d20 to determine the type.

d20	ENCOUNTER
1-2	Goblins (7 - 18)/spying, raiding, stealing cattle
3-5	Orcs (3 - 12)/raiding, scouting, lost, encamped
6	Bandits (3 - 12)/ambush, after a raid, encamped
7	Hyenas (4 - 16)/hunting, around carcass, sunning
8-9	Wild Boar (2 - 6)/rooting around, relaxing at mud hole
10-12	Stirges (1 - 3)/hunting, with prey, flying overhead
13-14	Ogre (1 - 2)/hunting, traveling, looking for a home
15	Wolves (3 - 18)/eating, tracking party, moving
16	Bear, large (1)/aggressive male or female with cub
17-20	Herd Animals/deer, elk, oxen, boar, or other

BENEATH THE MOON

Numerous groups of fey live in the vicinity of Botkinburg. There are nixies, pixies, and sprites of all makes and sizes. They have lived in the region since before the arrival of the Horned One, and they remained throughout his reign, avoiding contact with any and all as fortune permitted. The recent arrival of humans and

even elves has encouraged them to once again involve themselves in the affairs of the forest and with those of men.

For the most part, they are harmless and do not bother the inhabitants of Botkinburg. However, as they consider this area their ancestral land, they do expect some tiny compensation for allowing the humans and halflings use of it. It is “understood” that every household “give” some offering of food, coin, clothing, or other goods at least once a month. This is usually placed outside the house of the family making the offering so that it can be retrieved easily. These offerings are usually placed on stoops, window sills, at the Great Oak, or at one of the various shrines located on the outskirts of town. If a family or individuals do not participate on a fairly regular basis, then some slight ill may befall their property—a sick cow, burned crops, a leaky roof, spoiled food, dulled hoes or weapons, etc.

The fey are generally not violent nor predisposed towards scaring away the majority of the people in Botkinburg, though a few of the inhabitants are looked upon with a disdain bordering on dislike. Most of the fey tend to stay out of sight, only rarely making appearances before others, and then only to those they are well disposed toward. The only exception is when people travel far into the Barren Wood or up the Hruesen River. In this case, they are generally seeking to discover the whys and wherefores of the interlopers traveling into what they consider their home.

The fey are nomadic and rarely stay in one place or abode more than a month. They usually move into the boles of trees in the winter and live up in the branches during the summer. Finding their temporary abodes is an exceedingly difficult task that might take years of searching and involve much travel, and no one has ever heard of it happening. It is rumored that they do have a communal gathering place deep in the Barren Wood and it is there the Faerie Queen lives.

2–16 PIXIES/SPRITES (*Their vital stats are HD 1d6, AC 16, chaotic neutral. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack by weapon doing 1d2 points of damage. Once per day they can become invisible. They can also cast command twice a day and ghost sound three times a day. They carry a dagger or 2–5 darts and 2–20gp.*)

2–16 NIXIES (*Their vital stats are HD 1d6, AC 16, chaotic neutral. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack by weapon doing 1d2 points of damage. Twice per day they can become invisible. They can also cast, as the spell, faerie fire 2 times daily, and goodberry 3 times daily. They carry a dagger or spear and 2–20gp.*)

FROMKIN'S PASS

Here, the Hruesen River bends slightly away from the base of the ridge and spreads out in rocky shallows. A large stone bridge arches over the entire length of the Hruesen River, and was so solidly built in ages past that it has withstood the ravages of man, nature and time.

Fromkin's Pass is the location of the only remaining bridge that crosses the Hruesen River to the escarpment above the Blacktooth Ridge. It is a blocky utilitarian bridge, broad enough for two wagons to pass abreast. Along both sides are low stone rails. The stone is worn smooth from uncountable thousands of footsteps and wagon wheel groves, from years of wear, scar the center of the

bridge. Statues once adorned each corner of the bridge. All but one have long since been destroyed. At the east end of the bridge is a broken and cracked statue of a large predatory bird perched atop a helmet. The giant beak and malicious eyes are stretched to the heavens, as if looking for direction.

The bridge connects with a timeworn, paved path on the ridge line side. This is Fromkin's Pass. The path is broad and wide and created in such a manner as to allow wagon traffic, and so angles up the ridge in several switchbacks. At each turn in the path is a small, stone, one-roomed building which once housed soldiers of the Horned One. As the path nears the summit of the ridge, the top of a large crumbling tower can be seen—Fromkin's Aerie as it is locally known.

This ruined tower once had a wall and several buildings surrounding it, though all have fallen into rubble now. The tower itself has only a little of the internal and external structure left. It is entirely hollow, and one section of it is completely collapsed, revealing gutted and burned insides. Except for the upper floor of the tower, only a few old and rotted beams remain. Nearly half of the uppermost floor remains, while a portion of the staircase clings precariously to the wall of the tower. The ground about the tower is littered with small carcasses, and bones, and the decayed remains of animals.

Nothing lives in or around the tower except some stirges. The stirges sometimes bring back small game for the young to suck on, and the bones drop from the nest above to collect at the base of the tower. The stirges nest in the decayed walls and rubble of the upper reaches of the tower. There are 15 stirges nesting in the tower, though at any given time 3–12 of them are gone. All of the nests are located on the wall, while the remaining floor is used as a feeding area. There are several animal carcasses here as well as a kobold carcass. Unless really hungry, the stirges do not attack prey as large as a human. However, should a halfling, gnome or dwarf make themselves easy targets or stand out alone, the stirges may consider them prey. Should anyone attempt to climb the tower or threaten the stirges nesting area, they do attack.

If much weight is placed on the upper floor, there is a chance it will collapse. Roll a d20. For every 10 lbs above 100 lbs of weight on the upper floor, add 1 to the die roll (120 lbs is +2, etc.). If the result is 20 or higher, the floor collapses. It is a 30-foot fall to ground. Damage from the fall is 6d6. A successful dexterity saving throw halves the damage. If the saving throw succeeds by more than 10, no damage is taken, as the character has grabbed a beam and not fallen. Though that character now hangs in midair above the ground while the stirges gather.

Much like crows, stirges collect small baubles that are shiny. There are several pieces of treasure in the nests, and should the time be spent searching, 13gp, 43sp, a brooch (10gp), ring (5gp), and an ivory statuette of Wenafar, Goddess of the Fey (50gp) are found. The statuette is valuable to many fey and should it be returned to them, no matter his alignment, the giver receives a single favor, within reason and capability.

12 STIRGES (*Their vital stats are HD 1d10, AC 14, neutral. Their primary attributes are physical. They have bite attacks that inflict 1–3 points of damage. If they successfully bite an opponent they can drain blood for an extra 1d4 points of damage a round.*)

KRUGGLE'S LAIR

(SEE MAP PAGE 51)

Kruggle's lair is nothing more than an ancient guard post once used for keeping watch on traffic moving up and down the Hruesen River. It is located on the east cliff face overlooking the Hruesen River and on the Blacktooth Ridge. It is only accessible through a secret tunnel above it, or by climbing to it from the river's edge. Even when occupied by troops of the Horned One, it consisted of little more than a few rooms for quartering troops, storerooms, a mess, and a "watch ring" (described below). Currently, the only resident is an aged and crotchety ogre, Kruggle, who has managed to survive the length and width of several centuries through luck, some wit, and a strong right arm.

Kruggle occasionally raids farms in Botkinburg and other nearby communities in order to gather food when stores run low or when little game can be found. He eats rabbit and deer for the most part but prefers pig. This preference brings him into close contact with Botkinburg's inhabitants. Though not itching for a fight and more than willing to bargain his way out of a confrontation when faced by superior numbers, if he feels threatened or believes he can beat the party in a fight, he attacks and fights aggressively. His only other habit is an irrepressible desire to capture goblins and threaten to cook them and eat them. Being of small mind and not too keen on details, he often mistakes halflings and gnomes for fatter plumper goblins, and under no circumstances would actually eat them (the goblins) as they are too stringy. But fat hobbits???

AREA 1 ENTRANCE

On top of the ridge, amongst the bramble and massive cottage-sized boulders is one boulder with an illusory portal in it. There is a trail leading near it that is easily discernable to anyone familiar with the forest. A successful tracking check allows the trail to be followed to the rock, where the trail abruptly ends at the foot of what appears to be a cottage sized boulder.

The boulder's face is, in fact, an illusion disguising the entrance and stairs that lead down into Kruggle's lair. A successful wisdom check (at +4) reveals vague inconsistencies in the face of the boulder. However, disbelieving in the illusion does not remove the illusion. A successful tracking check can reveal the ogre's footprints; otherwise, it takes between 1–10 hours of searching before anyone has the chance of noting the illusory portal (elves, dwarves, and others with detect secret doors or similar abilities can attempt to detect it with a +4 to the check). All this is negated, of course, if someone leans on the boulder, and fall right through.

If discovered, one can simply walk through the portal and enter a corridor several paces long and wide with an old wooden door at the far end of it. The door is barred from the other side and must be broken through to get beyond (the door has an armor class equivalent of 10 and 30 hit points). The racket created when breaking through the door has a chance of alerting Kruggle. If entered during the day, Kruggle is asleep, and there is only a 3 in 10 chance he awakens with the breaking of the door. If entry occurs between dusk or dawn (or the party is in the lair at that time), Kruggle is awake and is alerted on a 7 in 10 chance. If alerted, Kruggle arms his trap and starts looking for the intruders.

16 CASTLES & CRUSADES

AREA 2 STAIRCASE

A broad, winding, stone staircase covered in twigs, leaves, rat droppings, and other refuse descends into a darkness rank with the smell of overcooked meats, excrement, and the pungent, eye-tearing aroma of a slaughterhouse in summer. The stairs are slippery, worn smooth, and covered in moss and the drippings of recently killed animals or other creatures. Each person descending the steps must make a dexterity check or slip and fall. No damage is taken, though the noise of the fall has a 4 in 10 chance of alerting Kruggle if not already aware of the interlopers. Items carried may also be dropped (dexterity check at –2).

AREA 3 HALLWAY

This broad, dank hallway is littered with debris and detritus. The south end of the hallway is particularly rank. Here, heavy silken bags like moth cocoon, are woven to the walls and ceiling and hang from the rafters. Literally, thousands of beetles, spiders, roaches, and other vermin are crawling around. The corpse wyrms (Area 9) drag their food here to store it by binding it in the silken residue and cocoons.

AREAS 4–8 BARRACKS

These rooms once housed soldiers in the army of the Horned One. They are now completely empty except for some bits of debris like armor remnants, broken weapons, a few pieces of wood, and other detritus. Kruggle does not use the rooms. None of the doors are locked, and all stand slightly ajar.

AREA 9 BARRACK

This is the nesting area for the corpse wyrms. These foul looking wyrms are much like centipedes in appearance, with many legs on their segmented bodies and two hand-like claws. They have gathered here and built a huge gelatinous hive where they have placed hundreds of larvae. The corpse wyrms are almost always in here and only await Kruggle's offerings in the hallway to come out. The door is open and a putrid, rank smell spills out of the room like heat from a forge. The corpse wyrms attack as soon as anyone enters the room.

There are a few interesting items in the nest if the characters look. Bones and wood from around the lair were used for support in building the nest. With 1–3 hours of searching, in addition to a lot of worthless junk, the following items of value are located: large belt with little slot pouches containing 20pp, 3 rings (10gp, 40gp, 45 gp), 15 crossbow bolts (deliver +1 damage, non-magical just well made with barbs), small helmet with diadem atop (120gp).

6 CORPSE WYRMS (*Their vital stats are HD 2d8, AC 13, neutral. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two grasping claws located near the head of their many-legged and segmented body. A successful attack can cause paralysis. The victim must make a save or be paralyzed for 3d10 rounds. Corpse Wyrms are able to bind their motionless prey in a cocoon of thin gossamer silk. Once bound a victim cannot break free unless they make a successful strength attribute check.*)

AREA 10 PORTAL

If Kruggle is alerted to the interlopers' presence, he sets a trap on this door; otherwise, it is as a normal door. He traps the door

by removing the beam beneath the lintel. This beam currently prevents the stone above the door from collapsing. Kruggle shuts the door halfway, such that the weight of the stone rests on the door. If the door is opened any further, the lintel collapses onto those within five feet of the door (dexterity check, challenge level +1, damage 1d6, save for half damage).

AREA 11 WATCH RING

This is a very large room, the watch ring for the troops of the Horned One. Light spills into the room from six narrow windows located along the west wall (unless it is night). The room has a large open pit in its middle where many a large fire has been lit. The room is otherwise piled with debris: large pieces of wood, piles of hides, a huge pile of bones picked clean, and the equipment of the numerous kobolds, goblins, humans, and halflings Kruggle has snatched over the years. There are caps, robes, pants, belts, boots, helmets, leather jerkins, shields, small swords, knives and other junk in abundance. Most are in a very poor state of repair.

If he has been alerted, Kruggle is in here; otherwise, he is in Area 13, still asleep or just rousing. Kruggle sizes up the party before deciding whether or not to attack. If he thinks he can overtake the group, he attacks by throwing several small boulders, and then rushes in with his broad-bladed, double-bitted axe. If he believes the party to be more powerful than he, he may try talking to them, asking them, "Wut be it uh, wyy yuze sturbin me rest?" He does this in order to avoid a confrontation, give himself time to escape, or to catch the party unawares and then attack. If Kruggle believes he is going to be killed or overtaken he makes a break for it and charges down one of the hallways, and runs up the stairs and out into the wilderness.

AREA 12 PRISON

The door to this room has three large cut stones stacked in front of it, each weighing over 100 pounds. Kruggle has blocked the door, keeping it shut, making a prison of the room. Kruggle has taken several prisoners over the past few months. Two kobolds and one halfling are all that remain. Kruggle makes no distinction amongst his prisoners. He threatens to cook them all the time, keeping them in a state of terror. Needless to say, the prisoners are a bit on edge.

The room they are kept in is large, dank, and nasty. There is little in it but for the three hapless prisoners and the rotting corpses of their one time cell mates. Each prisoner has one hand in a manacle that is hooked to the wall. The manacles are locked but not through the use of any key; rather ingeniously for an ogre (ogres can be ingenious when put to the task of binding their prey), Kruggle has twisted large iron nails into the manacle's links, binding them as well as any lock, thus preventing any locks from being picked.

The halfling, Waddo Brikker, is from Ludensheim and was on his way to Botkinburg with a group of traders when they were set upon by a band of unger and orcs. He escaped into the woods, only to be picked up by Kruggle. His family owns an Inn in Ludensheim, and will be grateful for his return. If the party does return Waddo, they are awarded 100gp and many free night's room and board (if they keep their manners about them).

AREA 13 BED AND BREAKFAST

This is Kruggle's lair. It is a simple room once used by the captain of the watch. This is where Kruggle keeps all his finery. There are piles of furs and cloth that he enjoys sleeping on, a large bronze platter he eats off of (likening himself to a lord), a brazier which is usually lit, some special bones (femurs from large bovine, used when hunting), and a gigantic round shield (this belonged to a cloud giant before Kruggle made off with it. The giant's name is carved on the front of the shield, Sarvas Barzikos Noblis Adaliusian Fortudnous Appalateon. It is a family heirloom, so the giant would be grateful for its return). Kruggle's prized procession, a chest of treasures. The chest is locked with an old padlock that is rusted and difficult to pick. The chest can be broken open easily or unlocked (challenge level +2). Inside are 500 large copper coins (about one inch to a side), square in shape and each equivalent to 3 copper coins currently (these are old imperial coins), 100 silver pieces (a dozen of modern make and the rest imperial), 20 gold coins (of modern mint) in a small box, three statuettes of gods, all made of silver (120gp, 60gp, and 20gp), a jeweled scabbard for a longsword (100gp), and about a dozen sheaves of paper. One of the sheaves of paper is actually a map of the region. It shows the location of various forts and one or another points of interest. Botkinburg is not on the map but the Vargolg is (below).

AREA 14 ESCAPE ROUTE

The far wall of this chamber has a secret door Kruggle has never located. It opens onto a small corridor with steps leading down. These steps end on a dark landing with another secret door beyond which can be heard rushing water. It opens onto a bank of the Hruesen River which is densely packed with shrubs and thorny bushes.

KRUGGLE, OGRE (*This neutral evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d10, HP 31, AC 15. He attacks by weapon doing 2d6 points of damage. With a successful hit he gets an overbear attack.*)

THE BUBBLING CAULDRON

This is an ancient area of the Barren Wood crowded by aged and gnarled oaks with twisting roots and heavy boughs that have never felt the bite of an axe nor the gnawing of saws. The trees stretch tall and spread at their tops, forming a dark and leafy canopy in spring and summer and an airy and tangled web of branches in winter. The lower reaches of the wood are covered in thorny undergrowth, with the brown husks of long-dead trees covering the ground.

Snaking amongst the undergrowth is a trail that is difficult to locate. The trail is mostly used by deer, boar, and small-horned bovine, but is also used by the occasional traveler seeking knowledge, aid, or divination from the witch who lives at its end. This trail can be found by a person well versed in woodland lore. A tracking check can be made at a -3 to discern its unique nature. If successful, faint human and boot tracks are noted.

Following the trail is a six day trek through the wood to the hovel in which the witch lives. Each day a tracking check must be made (no modifiers), and if successful, the trail is located and is easily followed. A failure on the tracking check indicates the characters are lost and must begin searching for the trail again. One check is made each

day at an extra –1 penalty (cumulative) until the trail is located (for example, after losing the trail twice, a –5 tracking check is made). This continues until the characters find the hovel or give up trying.

In a dark patch of the Barren Wood, beneath a tangle of massive branches and amongst entwining roots, is a hovel made of thorn brush and dried bramble piled and tied together. In front of the hovel, on a bare patch of earth, is a large black iron cauldron sitting over a fire of blue flame. Large belching green bubbles froth and steam at its surface emitting a pungent odor like a charnel house.

Neegle the Witch lives here. Though called a witch by the locals, she's much more. Neegle is an ancient creature, a Fraonoth, or what the dwarves call the Taonu Gorth, those who came before the beginning. They are ancient creatures who stole into the world from the Void. Some of the Fraonoth are powerful creatures, and Neegle is one of them. Neegle's particular gifts are that of divination and immortality. She can see into "a" future - not necessarily the one that will unfold, but one that may unfold. She has lived here for ages beyond count and hid herself away with the coming of the Horned One. Few know of her presence, and those who do either consider her an evil that needs exterminating or an oracle deserving reverence. Neegle is wary of strangers and often hides when others approach. If the visitors do not appear to want to harm her, Neegle makes herself known to them and agrees to divine their future should anyone want to know it (see casting the bones below).

Neegle lives with Gunald, a stunted dwarf of ancient lineage. Gunald is malformed with a giant tumor on his back and a clubfoot. Neegle took the dwarf in aeons ago after he was tortured in the dungeons of the Horned One, escaping during the Trench Wars. He has lived here ever since and is a loyal servant of Neegle's. The dwarf usually approaches strangers before Neegle ever comes out. Occasionally, there are sprites in the vicinity of the witch's lair. These sprites are Neegle's friends, and they too will aid her in a fight if one proves necessary.

Neegle, being of that age before the coming of man and elf, carries with her the taint of the world's founding. Though she is immortal, should she ever kill any of the children of the All Father, she will lose her immortality and powers. As such, Neegle makes every effort to avoid harming others or fighting and willingly abandons her hovel to do so, teleporting Gunald away with her.

Neegle also makes potions and herb pouches that many may find useful, and she is willing to trade them for goods or services, though never gold, gems, or mundane treasures which will never do her any good. She can create healing potions or salves, gathers herbs to counteract poisons and help with diseases and other common ailments. The vast majority of her spells are utilitarian in nature or have to do with augury. Her special ability is "casting the bones."

With this ability, in which she literally casts bones from a pouch onto the ground, she can augur "a" future for the recipient once a day. The auguring process is automatic. The prediction is vague with (the Castle Keeper never knowing what a player may do) descriptions such as, "You will find yourself in a dark place with many enemies surrounding you intent upon your death," should suffice. The prediction can be used to point the players in a particular direction or give them a piece of information they would

otherwise not be able to acquire. Finally, should the characters convince her to cast the bones, the player for whom she augurs a future should be allowed to add a +5 to any check, attack or saving throw which might be appropriate. Such an instance may be in which the Neegle informs a character that a great axe will fall upon their head. Then when in battle with Kruggle or some orcs, that character should have a déjà vu moment and receive a bonus in combat or a saving throw.

Also, if the characters evince an interest in the Vargolg, Neegle perks up, as she is also concerned with the Vargolg. Though she does not know its location, she will offer a divining stone to the party in exchange for "bringing me the eye of serpent." Something for which she offers no more explanation. The stone is a black rock that just grows hotter until the character divining it locates the door to the Vargolg, at which point it turns cold.

NEEGLE, FRAONOTH (*This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 10d8, HP 50, AC 22. Her primary attributes are mental. She has innate spell ability and can cast the following spells three times a day: all cleric and druid of 1st – 5th level and 3 spells of each 6th – 9th. She can become invisible at will and teleport once per day at will. She carries a magical bag of bones and a staff.*)

GUNALD (*He is a 4th level chaotic neutral dwarf rogue. His vital stats are HP 16, AC 19. His primary attributes are constitution and dexterity. His abilities are strength 10, dexterity 17, constitution 10, intelligence 10, wisdom 10, charisma 10. He carries +4 leather armor, +1 ring of protection, +3 short sword and a cloak of elvenkind.*)

Sprites 4–12 (*Their vital stats are HP 1d6; AC 16; prime mental; atk 1; dmg 1d2; special: invisibility x1 day, command x2 day, ghost sound x3 day; eqp: dagger, 2–20gp.*)

Bag of Bones: This is a bag of small bones from a long dead owl who once was a pet to the deity of foresight. Using the *bag of bones* to tell the future requires a cleric of at least 5th level. Simply throwing the bones on the ground and intoning the name of the deity allows for the augury. However, the bones must be read, and learning to read them can take a lifetime. To do so, the character must find a 10th level cleric devoted to the deity of foresight and study under that cleric for at least a year to learn the script carved on the bones. The augury works as described above, with each five years of study conferring a +1 to the appropriate dice roll to a maximum of +3. The bones can be sold, but some would just as well kill to get the bones as pay for them.

FOUNTAIN OF HOPE

In this glade is a large fountain carved from the bole of an ancient tree. Water bubbles from the bole and slowly spills onto the ground. The area is soggy and moss ridden, with many large ferns and leafy plants growing in great abundance all around it. A dryad, Nymania, lives nearby in an ancient oak that stretches 80 feet into the sky. She keeps an eye on the fountain and ensures, to the best of her ability, that no harm comes to it. Nymania has an aid in this endeavor, Fertermen Gidner, a druid who was long ago ensnared by the dryad's charms.

Fertermen tends to the tree and the fountain. He is a wary fellow and immediately distrustful of any arrivals. He approaches anyone who does not appear outwardly hostile and asks their business. Of course, Fertermen is not concerned in the least about anyone's business but simply makes small talk before trying to usher anyone away. If the characters seem benign, Fertermen allows them to drink of the fountain but warns them: those ill at heart or even those too pure at heart may suffer dire consequences.

For those of lawful good alignment, the fountain offers refreshment and nourishes the body to a point well beyond satiation. It is as if they have just eaten three days' worth of food and are rendered immobile for 24 hours. For those of chaotic evil alignment, drinking from the fountain fills them with a ravenous hunger, forcing them to eat three days' worth of food in one day or be unable to perform any tasks, being severely famished. If they eat three days' worth of food, they are rendered immobile for 24 hours. For characters of any other alignment, drinking from the fountain heals 1d4 hit points and fulfills thirst and food needs for three days.

The dryad has tired of the druid and seeks to rid herself of his company. If any of the characters have a charisma score of 17 or 18, she attempts to charm them, releasing the druid from his charm.

DRYAD (*Her vital stats are HD 2d8, HP 14, AC 17, neutral. Her primary attribute is mental. The dryad is a powerful fey with a beauty such that it creates a magical dweamor around her that makes her appealing to almost every living creature. She is able to take advantage of this and charm a victim once per day. She carries a gown of radiance that increases her charisma score by two points, a ring of shields with 10 charges that when activated places a magical shield around her giving her a bonus +3 AC for 4 rounds.*)

FERTERME GIDNER (*He is a 3rd level chaotic neutral human druid whose vital stats are HP 17, AC 13. His primary attributes are strength, constitution, wisdom. His abilities are strength 15, dexterity 10, constitution 10, intelligence 10, wisdom 10, charisma 9. He carries a +1 sickle, +1 leather armor, +1 ring of spell resistance and 50gp brooch. He has no spells.*)

TROLL BRIDGE

Among the bramble and shrub of the Hruesen River is an old stone wharf once used as a staging post for troops of the Horned One. The wharf has collapsed, worn away with time, and very little of it is recognizable or even visible at this point. Beneath the wharf is a small series of rooms built by a gnarly river troll.

The area around the wharf is dense with undergrowth and bramble making the wharf itself difficult to see unless one is traveling along the river's bank or along the ridge line above it. An observant character might notice that the banks of the river have no tracks on them. This is very unusual since wild game often come to the river for refreshment. But, since the troll has a tendency to eat everything it can, the animals tend to stay away.

Though the troll usually eats his prey in the tunnels beneath the wharf, he occasionally sits upon a high rock nearby and devours whatever he has caught, tossing the remains into the river. The river is shallow near this rock, and even a brief glance into it



reveals a pile of bones and shreds of armor, along with a few weapons in the sandy river bottom. Most of these remains are of animals, though a few human, dwarf, and other remains can be located. In the sand are a few baubles and coins that the troll never noticed: 18gp, 42sp, 71cp, necklace (40gp), 3x rings (15gp, 20gp and 25gp), gold buckle (10gp), and a silver holy symbol (50gp). The weapons and other accouterments have rusted so much so that they are not useful.

The troll lives in some tunnels it has built beneath the wharf. They are accessible through an entry in the river beside one of the footings. One must swim several dozen feet under the wharf before coming up in a corridor 10 feet in height with four feet of water in it. Much of the rest of the complex is similarly flooded. There are four crudely hewn rooms dripping in mud and grime which stretch, one after another, deeper into the side of the bank. Each room is approximately 10 feet in diameter and piled high with the bones of prey.

The final room in the complex is above water level and is moderately dry, meaning there are only puddles on the floor. This is where the troll sleeps and keeps the goods he has pilfered over the years. Several swords, some armor, and a few helmets as well as the tattered remains of clothing are piled up as a nest. The metal objects are rusted and useless, except one short sword

giving off a faint bluish glow. It is magical, delivers +2 damage to all evil creatures as well as emanates a five-foot radius bluish glow in the dark. There are 80pp, 234gp, 450sp, and 490cp in various places around the room; two silver brooches (20gp each); one ring (10gp); as well as a blessed holy symbol that confers a +1 to hit bonus on all creatures in a 20-foot radius if held by a cleric whose deity is a god of war (even the enemies of the one holding it).

The troll either spots the characters aboveground or learns of their presence as soon as they enter his complex. The troll only fights if it believes it can win. Otherwise, it follows the party at night and tries to steal away the smallest member and bring him back to its lair, where he will be promptly eaten.

TROLL (*This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 6d10, HP 45, AC 16. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with 2 claws for a 1d4+4 points of damage each and a bite for 2d6 points of damage. If he strikes with both claws he can rend for an extra 2d6 points of damage. Trolls can regenerate 4 hp per round.*)

BENEATH THE BLACKTOOTH RIDGE

The Blacktooth Ridge is located far from Botkinburg and is home to several deep dungeons, ancient temples, vast barracks complexes, and twisting caverns which offer much for adventurers and explorers. Locating these dungeons is often a difficult task, as many are well hidden from normal view and they must be searched for. Others are more easily located and visible to most. Travel along the banks of the Hruesen River and careful observation of tracks often reveal the location of hidden or concealed dungeons.

The innumerable dungeons and temples along this ridgeline are not described in this small sheaf of papers. Only one such place is described, the Vargolg, as it pertains most closely to the adventure at hand. The Castle Keeper is encouraged to create other dungeons and complexes for the characters to explore, as this alone is unlikely to slake their thirst for adventure, fame, and gold.

The Vargolg is located on the eastern banks of the Hruesen river up a narrow defile. Locating the Vargolg might take the players some time since it is so great a distance from Botkinburg and so few know of its location. However, many villagers have heard rumors of such caves and old forts along the Blacktooth Ridge so the players should be able to surmise that the lair of the Red Caps is located someplace along its length. Locating the exact one may prove a challenge.

There are several ways the characters can locate the dungeon: they can track a raiding party back to the Vargolg; they can travel down the Hruesen, investigating all hidden caves and fortresses; they can look at the map provided in Kruggle's lair, negotiate with Neele or ask her for a divination. Each manner has its own hazards and difficulties as well as rewards.

TRACKING

Locating the Vargolg by back-tracking the Red Caps is possible though difficult since the goblins are careful to cover their tracks. Any ranger tracking the goblins makes his checks at -1 with an additional -1, for each 24-hour period that passes between the start of tracking and locating the Vargolg or losing the trail.

KRUGGLE'S MAP

The map from Kruggle's Lair neglects to show the exact location of the Vargolg, offering only a vague idea of direction and that it lies along the base of the ridge. The most revealing clue given on the map is that the Vargolg is located up a defile and is held by a great double door.

H RUESEN RIVER EXPLORATION

If the characters explore the Hruesen River, they are likely to find the Vargolg eventually. However, the nature of these explorations is such that missing the Vargolg is entirely possible. The characters are likely to spend a significant amount of time undertaking this and encounter a host of other problems and dungeons along the way.

DIVINING STONE

The witch offers the characters a divining stone. Should they chose to take this item, the characters can use it to divine the location of the Vargolg.

THE VARGOLG

SEE MAP, PAGE 51

The Vargolg is an ancient underground complex once used as a secret storehouse and barracks for one of Aufstrag's regiments. The complex was abandoned long before Unklar's demise and, except for an occasional wandering ogre and other maleficent creatures, sat unused for many ages. Recently, Rottenkip's band of goblins located the dungeon and decided to use it as one of their many hideaways. Rottenkip and the majority of his troops rarely spend any time here, as they are usually off on raids to the south or in one of their many other hideouts. However, he has left a trusted lieutenant, Marglerod, and some of his band to guard the treasures stored here and to keep the place ready for Rottenkip's return.

This complex is located in an area where the Hruesen River abuts the Blacktooth Ridge and is entirely underground. The entry is fairly difficult to locate, as it was designed to be kept secret. The dungeon is divided into distinct upper and lower sections, though the lower section is not really beneath the upper, just deeper in the ridge line.

The upper section functioned as a barracks for troops and contained armories, a smithy, storerooms, barracks, meeting halls, cooking halls, and the like. Currently, the goblins and other members of Rottenkip's band reside here. The agent from Ludensheim is also located in the upper section of the dungeon. He is being held here against his will while negotiations for his release are underway. The Molkin twins are also here.

The lower section is recessed in a deeper part of the complex. It is accessible from only one corridor. This section was never completely transformed into a functioning part of the upper complex, as it was never seen as necessary. However, it was used for burials, secret rituals, and a treasury. There remain many strange things in the lower section. So strange and frightening that Marglerod and his retinue rarely make trips down into it. It is abandoned except for the ghost naga that resides there as a guardian to the treasures. Entering the lower portion awakens the ghost naga, who proceeds to hunt for the interlopers.

UPPER SECTION

AREA 1 ENTRY

The main entry to the Vargolg is located on the north side of the Hruesen River, down and inside a long and narrow cleft, in the ridge face. A great deal of brush and shrub grow in this cleft making it difficult to observe. However, any successful tracker easily locates tracks on the south side of the bank and might note that the Hruesen is very broad and shallow at this point. The river actually has a bunch of large cobbles built up down stream to spread the flow of the Hruesen, making it about one foot in depth at this point. On the north side of the Hruesen, near the entry to the cleft are many easily discernable tracks.

Across the river and down the cleft is a narrow path hemmed in by shrubs and small trees. The cleft ranges from 10' to 20' in breadth while the path is only several feet wide. At the end of the path is a large stone portal with a tightly shut wooden door barring the way in. To the side of this door is a pile of rubble and stone that was once a door. Above the door, on the lintel is a series of timeworn runes and glyphs. Only someone versed in ancient tongues can recognize these runes. They are territorial markings and ownership glyphs. Uncommon in these days, in times of old, glyphs were used to designate ownership and name current leaders for territories. This one is particularly ominous since it states that what lies beyond belongs to the Lord of Ice and Snow and that the last ruler was named Gethgord, Servant of Mell. This door is not guarded. The door is broad, about 5' wide, swings inward and is open a little.

Should the rubble of the original doorway be examined, more ancient script can be discovered. After several hours, placing the pieces back together reveals the following to those who read the ancient script.

Pass these portals, with empty grace

Make solvent a pact, to that with no trace

Or lay your life low, in this lonely place

The poem is a riddle and warning to all who enter. This place was once guarded by greater and lesser devils who were instructed to attack all who entered. Those who fought back were killed, but those who did not fight, but stood passively by while the demons attacked them, were spared and allowed to enter the dungeon. The demons were forbidden to attack those who refused to defend themselves as these were often the troops or servants of the Horned One. Only one demon remains in the lower halls and still abides by this stricture.

Once the characters have entered and then left the Vargolg, there will be a guard positioned outside the doorway.

AREA 2 GUARD ROOM

The door is easily opened but the hinges creek loudly as it does so. Beyond is a large room with a low-slung ceiling. A table with several chairs around it is in the middle of the room. Leather tankards and meat scraps are piled on the table. A large open barrel sits nearby. On the floor is a fire ring with red coals in it, and in another corner is a large brass brazier with a small fire burning in it. Across the room is another wide double door that is open. Noise comes from down the hall. There are large guffaws of laughter and yelling.

Several goblins are usually here guarding the entrance. However, they have moved down the hall to their sleeping quarters to gamble and drink. A small group of raiders has just returned from the south with some loot for entertainment and it is with these that the guards are gambling. If someone listens, he can hear the guttural language of the goblins, followed by laughter and the clackclacking of something small and light on the stone floor. If care is taken and someone speaks goblinoid, he can hear the goblins placing bets. The clacking noise is the dice being rolled and coin falling to the floor.

Every 5 rounds, there is a 1 in 6 chance that a goblin comes into this room from Area 3 to fill up a tankard of ale. If he arrives and has time, the goblin sounds the alarm and races back to Area 3, while others charge out to confront the intruders. If, for some reason the goblin is incapacitated, another comes to look for him in 1d12 rounds.

The second time the dungeon is entered, 3–5 (d3+2) guards will always be in this room.

AREA 3 ENTRY HALL

Peering through the doors reveals a large, broad hallway with four doors opening on to it. All the doors are open, and light spills out of two of them. The hallway ends in a brightly lit chamber several lengths away from which is coming the noise of bleating sheep. Combined with the laughter of the goblins in Area 7, a cacophony of noise echoes through the hallway.

AREA 4 & 5 REFUSE ROOMS

The doors to these rooms are closed though not locked. They are filled with the trash and detritus the goblins have created over the past decade, including broken crates and barrels, pilfered goods, rotted foodstuffs, and the leavings of innumerable goblins. The rooms stink and are crowded with beetles, roaches, rats, and small spiders.

There are also roach worms who live in this mess. These are large roaches the size of small dogs but slender, round, and bluish. They burrow deep in the mess and rest there until disturbed or hungry. They are aggressive and attack if the characters disturb the garbage.

8 ROACH WORMS *(These neutral creature's vital stats are HD 1d4, AC 12. Their primary attributes are physical. Their bite attack does 1d2 points of damage. A successful hit delivers a foul virus that requires a constitution save at +4 or the victim suffers all constitution saves at –2 until cured or after 1–2 weeks of bed rest.)*

AREA 6 FRONT BARRACKS

Originally used for housing a large contingent of guards, this room has now been converted into a loot-sorting room. As such, it is piled with a mish-mash of broken sundries and discarded junk from various caravans and houses that have been raided over the past few months. There are piles of clothing, a few broken crates of foodstuffs, one of nails, another of metal ingots as well as several lanterns, some pitchforks, and hoes. Most of the valuable or useful material has been moved down the hall to Area 8.

AREA 7 BARRACKS

Another barracks room, though this one is in use. The door to the room is open and light spills out of it. A group of goblins has just returned

from successful raids to the south and are enjoying some of the loot. There are a dozen goblins in the room playing dice and drinking.

The room contains several dozen bedrolls where the goblins sleep. There is a large cooking pit in the middle of room high with flames licking a roach worm cooking on a spit. Two goblins are standing by the fire with long spears poking at the large worm and laughing all the while. A large open cask sits on the ground by the fire and pile of wooden cups beside pools of spilled wine and an empty overturned cask. All the other goblins are gathered at the far end of the room, throwing dice, drinking, and eating.

Only four of the goblins in the room have armor on; the others are only wearing tunics. None are anticipating any trouble so are startled at the arrival of the characters. There are weapons lying all about the room, and it only takes the goblins 1–2 rounds to gather them up if attacked. As the goblins are not completely unused to having human visitors in the Vargolg, they do not respond aggressively to humans at first. On the other hand, should any elves or dwarves be present, a fight is to be had. A fight will alert the gnolls in Area 8, who will come to inspect.

8 GOBLINS (*These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d6, AC 14. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by weapon. They carry boiled leather armor, short spear, 2d4 gp, 2d6 sp and 3d10cp.*)

AREA 8 THE LONG HALL

At one time this large hall accommodated wagons and other carts for unloading as well as the mustering of troops. Currently, the goblins use this room to store some of the loot they intend to keep or larger items for which they have no use. Usually, the material in here is utilitarian while treasures and valuables are taken further into the dungeon.

The room is crowded with mundane loot. Currently there are three wagons in here, several donkeys, a half dozen sheep, crates and barrels, and piles of ill-gotten gains from numerous raids on caravans and other places to the south. There are also two wagons half torn apart, as they offer an easy source of firewood. Several large fires are burning in pits at either end of the room. Three broad passageways lead off from this room.

A massive gnoll is standing on one of the wagons, rifling through a crate and casually tossing aside the stuff he finds. Another gnoll sits on the end of the wagon, focusing upon a small object in his hands (a small metal sundial). Both are wearing their armor and weapons, but their shields and spears are located near the entry. Upon seeing the party, they give off a war cry and charge them, regardless of the odds. If they go investigate a battle in Area 7, they pick up their shields and two spears each on the way.

The metal sundial has a large "A" stamped on the back. It was part of a shipment of goods belonging to Aldadius in Botkinburg. He will be very pleased at its return and favorably disposed towards the characters from that point forward. The rest of his goods are located in the priest's chambers in **Area 22**.

2 GNOLLS (*These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d8, HP 12, AC 17. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by weapon. They carry shield, scalemail, helmet, mace or battle axe, 4d6gp & 5d8sp.*)

AREA 9 KITCHEN

This room was once used as the kitchen for the troops that lived here, as high as six companies of orcs at one time. The kitchen is a large room with several storage areas attached to it. Although the number of Red Caps in here now does not approach the original garrison, the kitchen is still used to prepare meals, butcher pigs and goats, and store food.

The room stretches a good spear throw across and is half that wide; it is brightly lit with the flames from a grill. There are four large round raised brick grilling areas in the center of the floor and stretching down the room. Metal rods are placed on either side of the grills and used as spits, one of which has a massive boar on it roasting over a bright flame. A goblin is slowly turning the spit and keeping a close eye on the boar. Nearby four more goblins are hefting a large black pot and trying to angle it onto the rods over another grill; they are planning on making a stew.

Along the north wall are various tables and shelves piled and scattered with pots and pans of all sizes and makes, plates, cups, dishes, bowls, and flatware. One goblin is wandering along the tables and randomly kicking pieces off while quaffing brew from a tankard.

There are two lowered storerooms attached to the kitchen. Both are used for piling foodstuff in and butchering animals, or other creatures, for food. There is ample food in the larders, including everything from potatoes to apples and salted fish to freshly butchered pig. The goblin chef is standing at the top of the steps to one of the storerooms and barking orders to three goblins below. He is carrying a huge butcher knife in one hand and large ladle in the other. He is telling the goblins what vegetables to get for the stew. The goblins are scurrying about and making a big pile of stew ingredients in the center of the storeroom.

None of the goblins in here are armed or armored except the chef. None are really willing to fight over food either and try to escape unless pressed, in which case they gather up pots and pans and fight back or beg for mercy. There is little of value in the room other than the food found in the larders.

8 GOBLINS (*These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d6, AC 14. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by weapon. They carry boiled leather armor, short spear, 2d4 gp, 2d6 sp and 3d10cp.*)

GOBLIN CHEF (*This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d8, HP 7, AC 14. His primary attributes are physical. He carries a leather smock that acts as leather armor, a cleaver, and a butcher knife. He can fight two handed without penalty.*)

AREA 10 MAJOR BARRACKS

Both hallways leading into this room are slanted downward somewhat, dropping about four feet from the the hallway leading into this area. This was once the major billeting area for the contingent of troops living here. The room is very large, with a vaulted ceiling and support columns running down its middle. It is currently the billeting area for the Red Caps. Luckily, there are only a few in residence. Before even approaching this room, loud raucous noise can be heard in the hallway. There is singing, yelling and all manner of racket coming from down the hallway.

The remains of the bunks can be seen around the room. Small metal cots hang from chains attached to the ceiling. Several of these are still intact and hold up to six cots, like bunk beds. Also, a metal throw ladder is attached to each cot system, allowing one to climb to the top bunk. In all, there are dozens of intact cots hanging from the ceiling and hundreds of ruined ones piled on the floor. Several large fire pits burn throughout the room. There are also dozens of goblins in here lounging around, sleeping, singing, and gambling.

A group (10 goblins) is gathered around a large fire in the northeast area of the room. They are swilling brew and singing some foul song so discordant as to give one a headache. Another group (six goblins including the sub-Chief) in the southwest corner of the room are gambling with dice. Others (eight) are wondering about, sleeping, or just lounging. No guard is kept, and other than daggers, the goblins are unprepared for any type of combat. If attacked, it could take a couple of rounds for them to gather weapons and fight back. There is little of any value in this room. The loot generally goes to the stronger of the tribe, and these most assuredly are not them.

22 GOBLINS (see above Area 7.)

GOBLIN SUB – CHIEF (This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d8, HP 8, AC 15. His primary attributes are physical. He carries clothes, dagger, short bow, short sword, shield and a +1 battle axe. The axe is cursed so that anyone who picks it up cannot drop it unless a remove curse is cast from a 10th level or higher cleric.)

AREA 11 WELL

This was once the well for the troops billeted here. The goblins use it for water, but they also use it as a refuse pit. Drinking from this well is ill conceived and will cause an illness in all humans and demi-humans, leaving them sick for one week.

AREA 12 STOREROOMS

These rooms were once used as storerooms for weapons, tools, and various other types of equipment needed by the troops stationed here. They have been searched and cleaned out of any useful material.

AREA 13 WORKROOM

At one time this was a workroom for making weapons, wagons or any other paraphernalia needed in the dungeon or for war. Several gnolls have taken up residence here. Though members of Red Caps, they do not like goblins and have become members more out of convenience rather than desire.

There are three gnolls in the room. They have recently returned from a raiding venture and are currently repairing their equipment. One is sitting by a fire slowly sharpening its sword. Another is trying on a chainmail shirt he stole and has refitted. The final one is snoring loudly, tucked up in his bedroll. Other than three bedrolls, the fire pit, and a large trunk, the room is nearly empty (gnolls being of rather Spartan and militaristic nature detest goblin clutter). If attacked, they fight back ferociously, grabbing weapons and shields from nearby.

The trunk contains some of the gnolls' loot. It is locked but easily picked (+2 to check). Inside are two silver candle sticks and a



snuffer, three silver plates and silverware (20gp total), five rings (1–10gp each), a badly chipped black statuette of the Horned One (100gp to collector), and a small gold mouthpiece to a musical instrument (powerful magic emanates from this, see **Appendix C New Magic Items p. 174**). There are also coins of various makes. There are 48gp, 135sp and 220cp.

2 GNOLLS (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d8, HP 12, AC 17. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by weapon. They carry shield, scalemail, helmet, mace or battle axe, 4d6gp & 5d8sp.)

AREA 14 SMITHY

This was once the smithy. It is occupied by three very large ogres. They happen to be away to the south with the Red Caps at the moment. They work well with the gnolls, who make sure no one messes with the room while they are away.

There is a large fire pit and furnace in the center of the room, obviously the remains of a smith's forge. It is piled with ash and recently burned wood-though all is cold. There is a large table against the wall with the month old remains of a half-eaten sheep on it and utensils and several daggers stuck into the wood. The floor is littered with the bones of many animals. Three large piles of hay and cloth are situated around the room. Against the wall are a large shield; a five-foot-long, 40 lbs club; a spear the size of a lance; and an axe nearly as third again as large as normal. These are all ogre weapons.

There is a false stone underneath one of the piles of hay. It can be located as if it were a secret door. Within it are several sacks with some of the ogres' loot. There are 45gp, 120sp and 410cp, some

dice made of bone, a gold chalice (30gp), and a mirror. There is also a dead snake in here. The ogres put it here to attack anyone who got in the hole, but it died of starvation.

AREA 15 ENTRY CHAMBER

This chamber is the entry for the throne room. Currently, this room is used for guards, but none are present at the moment. There is a table with a pile of rotting food on it, some chairs, and a spittoon. A large board hangs from the wall at one end of the room with targets drawn on it and daggers sticking in it. A large set of double doors are at the far end of the room and two smaller doors are at the other ends.

AREA 16 THRONE ROOM

This was once the throne room for the ruler of the Vargolg. The door appears plain, but upon opening, two great glowing snakes with human heads appear on the door. It opens into a broad, narrow chamber that stretches back to a large throne made of slate, with a plush red piece of cloth draped over it. The floor is made of multicolored blue and red tiles, with a narrow strip of black slate running down the middle and up the front of the throne. Upon each of the hundred or so red and blue tiles covering the floor is a single rune, each unique in character. There are six concealed doors in the room each of which can be opened by pulling on each the six sconces in the room.

The room radiates evil, as it was once used by the High Priest of the Horned One for all manner of evil acts. The tiles are, however, the only thing in the room that still retains any of the powers of the evil that once resided here. A creature of any alignment can walk down the black tiles. There is only enough room to do so in single file. The blue and red tiles are placed in a checkerboard pattern and have deleterious effects upon anyone not of the correct alignment who walks upon them. The blue tiles are safe for chaotic evil creatures, and the red tiles are safe for lawful evil creatures. All tiles are safe for pure neutral aligned characters.

Should anyone walk on one of the tiles that is not safe for his alignment, one of the following effects occurs if the appropriate save is not made. Roll a d10 to determine which effect occurs. Effects are cumulative if applicable.

- 1: Paralysis for 3d10 rounds
- 2: Loss of all memorized arcane spells – int save
- 3: Loss of all memorized divine spells – wis save
- 4: Lose 1d4 hp – con save
- 5: Lose 1d2 points of charisma for 24 hours – cha save
- 6: Lose 1d2 points of wisdom for 24 hours – wis save
- 7: Lose 1d2 points of intelligence for 24 hours – int save
- 8: Lose 1d2 points of strength for 24 hours – str save
- 9: Lose 1d2 points of dexterity for 24 hours – dex save
- 10: Lose 1d2 points of constitution for 24 hours – con save

Few creatures enter the throne room at this time. However, the goblin priest Grakmuk and his acolytes do come in on occasion in

an effort to commune with the Horned One. For every 10 minutes the characters are in the room, there is a 1 in 10 chance one of the acolytes enters the room, gives warning and calls d6+2 guards.

Five of the concealed doors open onto small apertures where guards were once placed and who could come out at a moment's notice. The concealed door closest to the throne and to the west leads to the royal chambers.

22 GOBLINS (see above Area 7.)

17 GUARD STATION

Two large bugbear guards in red capes and chainmail are standing here. They are very attentive, as they are here to ensure that the harem room is not entered except by those deserving. This is usually only the captain or lieutenants of the Vargolg.

2 BUGBEARS (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 3d8, AC 17. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by weapon. They carry chain, shield, heavy flail, dagger and the stronger of the two has eight gold clasps worth 5gp each in a small pouch, where he also keeps his prized collection of scalps from his victims.)

AREA 18 HAREM

This chamber was once used as an elite guards barracks. Currently, it houses the harem for the Rottenkips. This is a fairly large room and it is crowded with female and young goblins. There are 30 or so bedding areas for the females, while the younger goblins sleep together in the center of the room. There are sconces that burn brightly with torches and a large cooking pot at the end of the room.

There are 22 females in the room. All are under the watchful eye of the harem leader, Grikkeka. If any of the party is spotted in the room, warning is given, and all the goblins panic except Grikkeka. She calls upon the harem guards and attacks while the others race from the room in search of safety. If the guards do not respond, she also runs away.

There are few items of value in the room except amongst Grikkeka's belongings. These items are in a locked and trapped trunk near her sleeping area at the far end of the room. There is a deadly needle trap in the lock, and when picked or opened without releasing the mechanism, a poisoned needle springs out. Disarm trap attempts are made at –2, while find trap checks are made at +2. The poison causes d8 damage (1 point per round) unless a save is successful, in which case, the damage is halved. The trunk contains 15 pieces of jewelry valued between 11–20gp each, 100sp, and a holy symbol of the Dark One with no value.

GRIKKEKA, FEMALE GOBLIN (This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d4, HP 6, AC 15. She carries a dagger, 2 throwing knives, and leather armor. She has spell-like abilities and can cast cause light wounds, curse, and bless once a day. Grikkeka has a high dexterity giving her a +1 to her armor class and all dex save/checks.)

21 FEMALE GOBLINS (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d4, AC 12. Their primary attributes are physical. They wear rags. They have no weapons but attack with 2 claw attacks for 1 point each.)

24 CASTLES & CRUSADES

YOUNG GOBLINS (*These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d2, AC 12. They have no primary attributes. They carry ragged clothing. They have no weapons and cannot attack but are skilled at getting in the way.*)

AREA 19 MARGLEROD'S ROOM

This room once housed the High Priest of the Vargolg, but now houses Marglerod. The room now contains a large bed with old sheets and blankets on it, a chest, a table, and an arms rack. Marglerod is not here; he is with the priests at the moment. The rack contains several spears and polearms as well as a short bow and some arrows. The trunk is locked and contains odds and ends of personal use such as clothes, 20gp, 120sp, and 10 pieces of jewelry valued at between 1–10gp.

If the trunk is moved and a successful detect secret doors check made, a loose stone in the floor can be located. Removing this reveals Marglerod's real collection of treasures. In here are 10pp, 50gp, a gold crown (a single gold band with a jewel in front) worth 120gp, and three gold brooches each worth 50 gp.

AREA 20 LIEUTENANTS' ROOM

This room once housed the High Priest's lieutenants. Currently, it is the room used by the bugbear guards. It is bare, except for a large fire pit in the center of the room used for the occasional cooking they do, and three piles of hay and cloth where the bugbears bed down. The third bugbear is with Marglerod. The bugbears have little particular loyalty to Marglerod or the goblins. They do, however, have loyalty to Grallkrug, so they remain here. Bear in mind, in any fights the bugbears have with the characters, they are unwilling to lay their lives down if they know it is a hopeless fight, so will try to escape being killed. They have some treasure here. Each pile has 2d10gp and 3d12sp hidden in it. There are several shields and polearms in here as well.

AREA 21 ACOLYTES' CHAMBER

This room houses two goblin priests who are now traveling with the Rottenkips. Currently, the room is occupied by several lesser acolytes who have begun assuming the roles of their superior, Gakmuk. This has irritated Gakmuk, who is leading a battle of wills against them and perhaps even more. The two goblins, Chekak and Glimglud, try to assume the leadership of the goblins should any of the current leaders die. Should this occur, a power struggle occurs as other lieutenants and war leaders vie for power. In any respect, the goblins become more concerned with killing one another rather than with killing intruders, and the entire complex becomes a battle ground, as various factions battle one another for control.

There is a small shrine located along one wall of this room. It consists of a series of candles spread across a wooden shelf (all alight), a large statue of the Horned One on a wooden platform and some incense burning in a large metal bowl. Two beds are arranged at the other end of the room as well as a large trunk. The trunk contains, incense, candles, and strings of prayer beads.

2 GOBLIN ACOLYTES (*These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d6, AC 14. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by weapon. They carry ring mail, mace, and 1d6cp. They cast spells*

as 1st level clerics. Their daily spells are – Zero: create water, first aid, light; 1st: command.)

AREA 22 GAKMUK'S ROOM

This was once a small shrine of the Horned One. It now houses Gakmuk. Currently, Gakmuk, Marglerod, Marglerod's bugbear bodyguard, and two goblins are here discussing what to do with the prisoners. He attempts to make this room as lavish as possible and has taken most of the good stuff he finds. There are several stuffed chairs and sofa, a large oak table, and several cabinets here.

One-half the room is a shrine devoted to the Horned One. It consists of a massive basalt shelf with dozens of small niches bore in it. In each niche is a little ivory statue of a demon or captain serving the Horned One. Above this is a giant statue of a demon with two giant horns on it. The statues are like millstones. Should any be taken, they cannot be dispensed with and must be carried around by the character who took them until a *remove curse* is cast upon the character. If encumbrance rules are being used, they have a 5 encumbrance value. If encumbrance is not used, for every two carried, the character's movement rate is reduced by one.

Gakmuk's treasure is in a locked, but not trapped, trunk. It contains 100gp, 250sp, 140cp, a set of silver plates (10gp each), silverware (10gp value), a bolt of red silk (30gp), an eyeglass, a scroll of *bleed* and two *potions of cure light wounds* (this mixture smells wretched, looks like oil and tastes like rotten meat).

Marglerod and Gakmuk are arguing about what to do about the situation with Dietbold Heimer. Gakmuk does not want to ask for more gold but Marglerod does. Between the two sits a small box of freshly minted platinum coins from Ludensheim. There are 25 coins in the box.

MARGLEROD (*This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d6, HP 18, AC 19. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks by weapon. He carries chainmail, +1 shield, 3 throwing daggers, and a short sword. Due to his skill with the daggers, he receives a +1 to hit when throwing these.*)

Marglerod is debating with Gakmuk over what to do with the prisoners.

GAKMUK (*This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d6, HP 5, AC 14. His primary attribute are physical. He attacks by weapon. He carries ring mail and a mace. He can cast spells as a 2nd level cleric. His daily spells are – Zero: detect magic, first aid x 2, light, 1st: cure light wounds, cause fear.*)

Gakmuk is grotesque both in size and appearance, even for a goblin. He casts spells before entering into combat.

BUGBEAR (*see above Area 17.*)

2 GOBLINS (*see above Area 13.*)

AREA 23 PRISONER ROOM

This once housed priest's vestments and other material needed for worship and rituals. It is currently used to hold the prisoners the goblins have caught. The room is now bare, except for manacles which have been nailed into the wall. There are three people in here now.

BARLDUS MIKENFIRD (*He is a 3rd level chaotic neutral human rogue. His vital stats are HP 13, AC 11. His primary dexterity, intelligence, charisma. His attributes are strength 10, dexterity 13, constitution 10, intelligence 10, wisdom 10, charisma 10. He has no equipment.*)

Barldus is an agent of Deitbold Heimer. He was sent to negotiate for a cessation of raiding in this area, but has been rebuffed. Marglerod wants more gold and is threatening to kill the Malkin twins and others from Botkinburg if he does not receive it. Barldus will attempt to escape as soon as possible if released. He then heads for Ludensheim. He claims to have been captured outside of Ludensheim while on a trip to Botkinburg.

MALKIN TWINS (*These neutral good humans vital stats are HD 1d4, AC 10. Their primary attributes are physical. They have no equipment.*)

The Malkin Twins will be relieved to be returned to Botkingburg and offer undying friendship and service to the characters. This latter does not mean they will become their servants.

AREA 24 SHRIEKING HALLWAY

This broad hallway is covered in a rich green vegetation much like moss. Many small and large mushrooms (up to two feet in height) festoon the floor and cling to the walls. It is obvious many have been cut at the stalk, and there are several straw baskets on the floor with mushroom heads and stems in them. A large wooden stand sits by the entry to this corridor with several cut mushrooms on it as well as a sickle and incense burner.

Most are for eating, and the goblins pick them whenever they can. The more insidious type of mushroom here is the screecher. There are only three of these in the hallway, and they are located at the north end. In many respects they look similar to the other mushrooms, but they are, in fact, small fey with thick torsos and short stumpy legs. When anything not carrying the incense burner with incense from Gakmuk's chamber moves within 20 feet of the screechers, they begin to wail, possibly alerting other creatures within a 100-foot radius.

Locating the screechers amongst all the mushrooms can take up to d4 rounds. A successful wisdom check halves the amount of time it takes to locate the screechers. If all the shriekers are killed within two rounds, there is only a 5 in 10 chance of anyone being alerted. For each additional round, that chance increases by one. If anyone is alerted, they will come to investigate. The latter does not include the wandering goblins, who do come to investigate.

3 SCREECHERS (*These neutral creature's vital stats are HD 3d8, HP 12, 16, 18, AC 13. Their primary attributes are none. They have no attack ability they simply screech.*)

AREA 25 EMPTY ROOMS

These rooms are being used as storerooms and have several casks of beer, food, and other supplies in them. The food consists of dried fruits and meats, enough to supply 30 goblins for a month or so.

THE DEEPS OF THE VARGOLG

This lower level of the dungeon is rarely used, but was cleaned out somewhat after the abandonment. A few goblins are camped down here as guards against the creatures who live beyond the lake room. Here, the rooms are rough hewn with only a few places where brick and mortar have been used. Other than the goblin guards mentioned below, only the ghost naga dwells in the Deeps.

AREA 26 GUARD ROOM

This hallway leads down a twisted passage to the lower level. The way is blocked by a metal door. The door is rusted but easily opened. It grates loudly when this happens, and warns those on the inside that something is coming. Inside the room is a large goblin and several smaller goblins. At first, they are not shocked but once they get sight of the characters, they immediately spring into action, knowing that humans mean no good for them.

The room has two large tables in it and a cot. A large pot of boiling soup is sitting over a fire. The room is half full of acridic smoke making it difficult to see and breathe. Upon one of the tables is a large corpse wyrm pie.

4 GOBLINS (*see above Area 7.*)

GOBLINS CHIEF (*This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d8, HP 6, AC 14. His primary attributes are physical. He carries boiled leather armor, shield, short spear, 2d4 gp, 2d6 sp, 3d10cp.*)

AREA 27 LAKE ROOM

This is a broad room that is part of a natural fracture cavern. A small fissure in the west end of the room leads to the Hruesen River. It is all underground and is the source of the water in the room. During the dry season, this room is nearly empty of water while during the wet season, the room is always full.

Crossing the room is difficult, as the water is about 20 feet deep and the ground is blocky and uneven. If the characters look closely in the water, they can see a small skiff hanging on a rock shelf about five feet down beneath the water. They can attempt to retrieve the boat to cross the water, swim across it, or alternately, they can build a raft to cross the water. Although no creature resides in the water, as soon as any character enters it or even touches the water in this room, a low howling noise erupts from the cavern entries on the other side of the room. Likewise, the water begins to ripple and thrash a little.

As soon as any character crosses the midpoint of the water, the demon (ghost naga) that guards the rear portion of the dungeon is alerted to the presence of a fresh soul. Its howling can be heard all over the lower portion of the dungeon. From this point forward, an encounter check should be made every two turns (20 minutes) to see if the ghost naga locates the characters. A 1 on a d10 indicates the monster has located the party. See Ghost Naga at the end of the dungeon description (page 49).

AREA 28 COLLAPSING CEILING

The ceiling in these sections of the dungeon is in danger of collapsing. All rooms and corridors within a 30 foot area are loose.

26 CASTLES & CRUSADES

Any loud noises (combat, yelling) or any spells that cause jarring may cause the ceiling to collapse (1–3 on a d10). If enough noise or vibration occurs to cause this, a 30 foot diameter section of ceiling may fall near the center or origin of the noise. Roll a d20 and this is the number of feet away from the center that the collapse occurs. If anyone is caught in the collapsing portion, he must make a dexterity check to avoid damage for every 10' section he has to move through to get out of the way. A successful check indicates he moves through that 10 feet without taking damage. A failed check indicates d6 damage. Two failed checks in a row indicates the character is stuck beneath a large boulder and receives another d6 of damage.

The ceiling can collapse, even if the characters are not under it or close by. If the characters make a lot of noise in nearby sections of the dungeon, the ceiling may collapse and block this passage.

AREA 29 SACRIFICIAL ROOM

To satiate the lusts of the beasts that once roamed the hallways in the deeps of the Vargolg, a sacrificial room was erected. At one time, elaborate sacrificial rites were followed before any sacrifice was made but they ceased to be used once the greater demons left the Vargolg or were killed. However, knowing that something resides in the depths of the dungeon, the goblins still make sacrifices, though very irregularly and with much fear.

In the center of the room is a large stone dais with manacles and chains still attached to it. The base of the dais is etched and embossed in elaborate glyphs and carvings of various creatures. Upon closer inspection, the carved images of demons and lords of the abyss loom from the dais. The floor is a reddish marble while the walls are made black slate.

A large opening is on the far side of the room with fresh, cool, moist air coming out of it in a soft breeze. The room, however, is filled with rotted and decayed corpses of animals, goblins, humans, and others. Piles of skeletal material are heaped along the walls, and the rancid stretch is acidic to the nostrils.

AREA 30 TREASURY

This room is one of the lesser treasure rooms and has remained untouched for ages. It is the room the ghost naga is guarding. The door to the room is iron and has a series of three interlocking locks on it. They must be opened in the correct order to actually work. The middle lock must be picked first, followed by the first lock, and then the third or bottom lock. All pick lock checks are made at a +2 due to the age of the locks and the broken mechanisms.

If the incorrect order is chosen, a trap springs and a scything blade swings from the ceiling. Should this trap be searched for, it is difficult to

locate, but a success indicates the searcher has noted the slit in the ceiling above the door. The only manner of disabling the trap is to block the slit from which the blade will drop. If the trap is sprung, a large double-bladed axe swings down in an arc across the front of the door. Because of the age of the mechanism, those in the path receive a +2 dexterity check to avoid being hit, since it clicks and clangs and sticks for a moment before swinging down. A failed dexterity check indicates 2d4 damage. Should the blade not hit anyone, the force of the pendulum swing allows it continue its arc back up into the slit, and the trap is reset. Should the blade strike anyone, the force of the pendulum is reduced, and the blade cannot swing up to reset.

Beyond the doorway is a small room with many shelves running its length. The shelves are full of scrolls, piles of vellum, and many large and small boxes. Reading through the scrolls and looking over the vellum, reveals list upon list upon list of items that have passed through the treasuries in the Vargolg. Literally tens of thousands of pieces of gold, silver, copper and even platinum. There are also lists of troop movements and allocation of resources indicating troop numbers in the thousands stretching over hundreds of years.

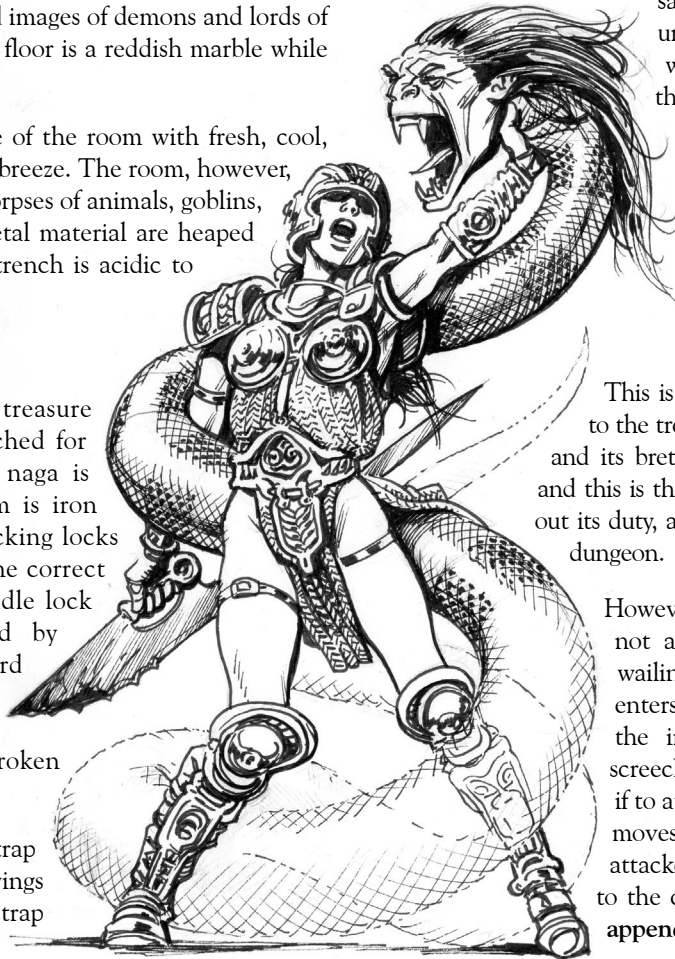
None of the boxes are locked. There are about 186 of them. Each contains small stone tablets with single glyphs in them and a ring. These are name glyphs and signet rings belonging to each of the rulers of Vargolg. The rings are silver and have a single small black stone in them, all with two glyphs: one unique and the other the same. Each ring is only worth 2d10sp unless an antiquarian can be located who values such ancient artifacts. In this case, the lump of the rings is worth nearly 1000gp, or 10gp each if sold individually.

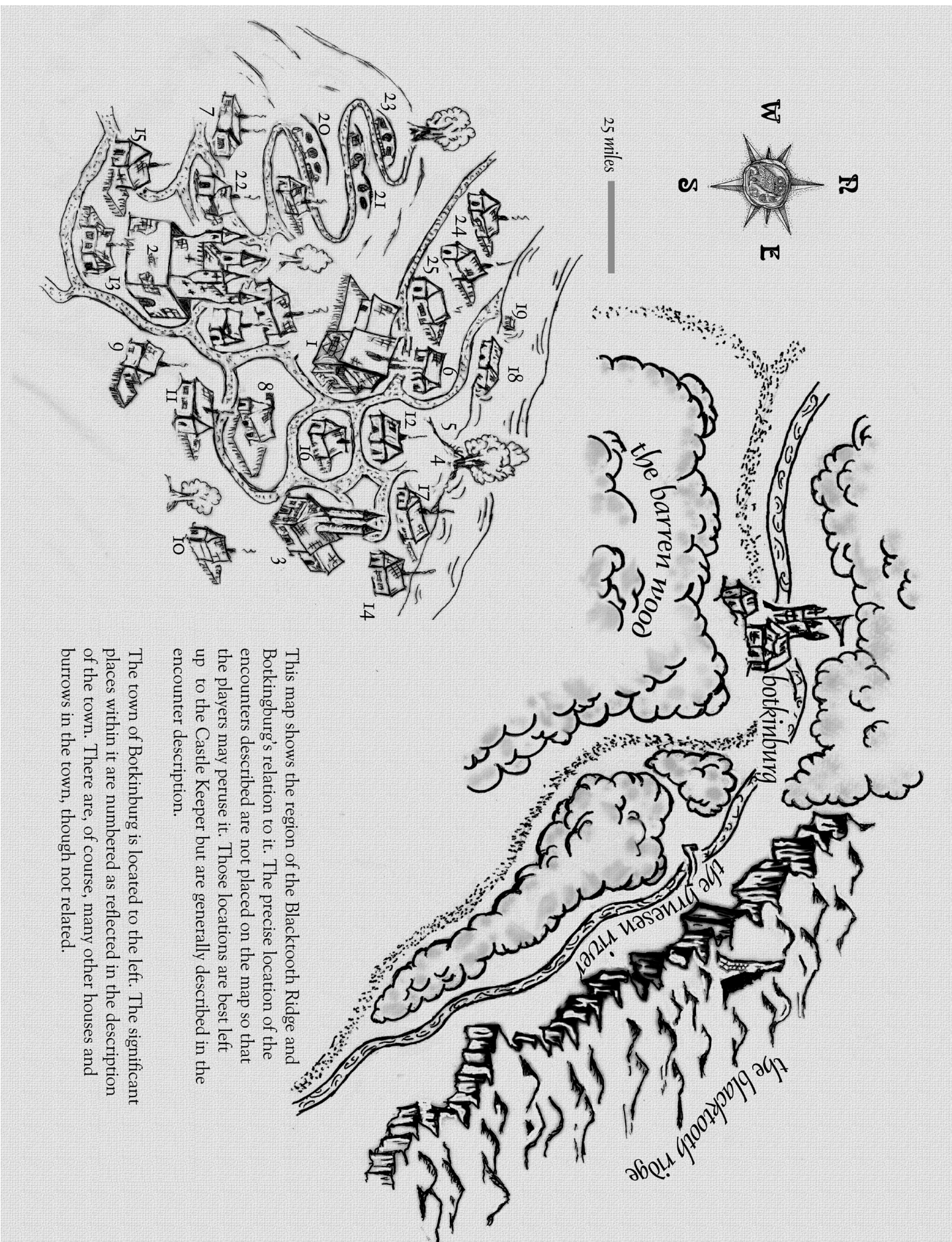
If the ghost naga has not been encountered by this time, it will show up as soon as the first box is opened.

THE GHOST NAGA

This is a lesser guardian of a door that leads to the treasure room above. The elder guardian and its bretheren were all killed some time ago, and this is the only one that remains. It still carries out its duty, attacking all who enter this area of the dungeon.

However, it does not attack those who do not attack it. The ghost naga will begin wailing and screeching as soon as anyone enters the water in Area 27 and move to the interlopers. Upon spotting them, it screeches to cause fear, begins ghost move as if to attack the interloper. As the ghost naga moves through the character, it will either be attacked or not. If not, it no longer pays heed to the characters. If so, the battle is on (see appendix for her stats.)



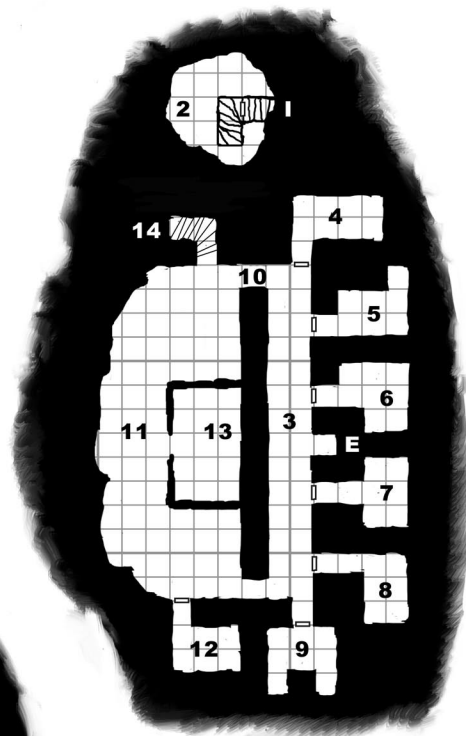


This map shows the region of the Blacktooth Ridge and Botkinburg's relation to it. The precise location of the encounters described are not placed on the map so that the players may peruse it. Those locations are best left up to the Castle Keeper but are generally described in the encounter description.

The town of Botkinburg is located to the left. The significant places within it are numbered as reflected in the description of the town. There are, of course, many other houses and burrows in the town, though not related.



KRUGGLE'S LAIR



□ = 10 FEET

C- CONCEALED DOOR

S- SECRET DOOR

BACK TO BLACKTOOTH RIDGE

INTRODUCTION

BACK TO BLACKTOOTH RIDGE is a short adventure that takes place in a cavern with an old crypt at its bottom. The crypt was well hidden down a defile and inside a natural cavern, called the Dungurd, along the Blacktooth Ridge. Only the bottommost portion of the cavern was carved into funeral chambers, blessed, hidden, and guards set within. The remainder of the cavern was left as is. For many years only wild animals took up residence in the cavern as the magics hiding and guarding it were strong. With the demise of the Horned One, those magics have weakened.

Recently, a small band of kobolds has taken residence inside the Dungurd cavern. These kobolds are aware of the crypt, but avoid that area as much as possible. They otherwise live the normal miserable kobold existence, scraping a living from the lands about while avoiding orcs, goblins, giants, ungern, elves, wild beasts, humans, and any others that may do them damage.

There are 60 kobold males in this cavern, making it an exceedingly dangerous place. There are also eight females (their prized possessions) and 22 pups and 42 eggs. The kobolds are lead by Seeztak, formerly a sub-chief of the Sawtooth clan. He is a vicious and nasty leader of great intelligence. Each of these traits contributed to his downfall within the Sawtooth clan and eventually to he and his family being expelled. This is their last refuge, and they will guard it and their females to the last.

FOR THE CASTLE KEEPER

This adventure is designed for 4–6 characters of 3rd–5th level. This adventure can be very deadly for an ill-prepared group of adventurers, but a fun and exciting challenge for a well-prepared party. The adventure is best approached as an aside to other adventures, as it begins and ends here. To best accomplish this, the characters should be informed of the general location of Dungurd and the “crypt” by some captured orc or ungern who is pleading for his life and offers the crypt’s location as a bargaining chip. Or perhaps the characters find a map to the location, or even hear about it from the wizard or other important personage at Botkinburg (see *Assault on Blacktooth Ridge*).

A note on kobold arrows and javelins. These are stone-tipped and made locally from materials the kobolds can easily gather. Being stone-tipped makes them much more difficult to penetrate armors than their steel-tipped counterparts. They receive a –1 penalty to hit.

DUNGURD

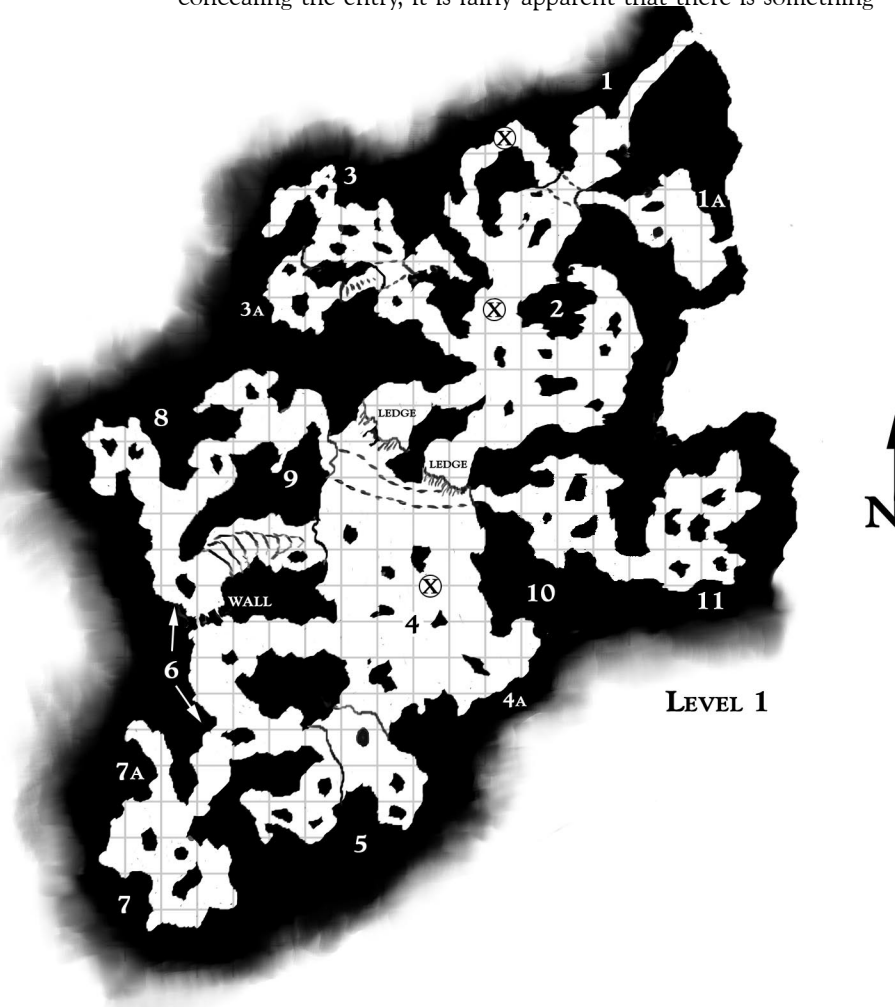
ENTRIES: The entries to this cavern are well-hidden in a deep and narrow defile off a small bank along the Blacktooth Ridge. The defile’s entry is covered in bramble and thorny bushes, making it difficult to locate. If informed of the general location of the crypt (known to a few orcs, trolls, and ungern), a

ranger must make a successful tracking check (challenge level 5) to locate the trail leading to the defile. For each day spent searching for the trail, the ranger adds +1 to the tracking check. If the characters are simply traveling through the area, spying the defile is nearly impossible, as its natural position and location make it look as if the ridge line simply continues without break. A wisdom check (CL 10) is necessary to observe the defile.

Once observed, the kobold trail has slight impressions of clawed feet that might be confused with several of the wild animals in the woods were it not for the telltale signs of weapons dragging the ground, clipped branches, as well as a few tiny scraps of cloth and leather. The trail leads to the edge of the river, where it abruptly ends, at a broad and shallow part of the river. Across the way is a small bank upon which the defile is apparent.

The defile is merely 6 feet wide and stretches nearly 200 feet into the ridge line, becoming progressively narrower towards its end. It is thick with bramble, thorny bushes, and vines. Moving down the defile is a noisy affair for most people, as the bushes have to be cleared along the way. Unless crawling, only a small person, about 3 ½ feet in height or less, can move down the trail without causing much of a disturbance and then only if he moves very slowly. All move silent checks receive a –3 penalty, except for those crawling or who are under 3 ½ feet in height.

About 50 feet down the defile there is a small opening concealed with a frame wicker door laced with vines. Despite the attempts at concealing the entry, it is fairly apparent that there is something



unusual here. It is easily removed. Continuing down the defile another 60 feet or so another opening, just as the previous, can be located. Both entries are about seven feet tall and three feet wide. The one furthest down the defile has obviously been modified from its original size. Both the entries are guarded (See Area 1 and 1a below), and the any characters moving down the trail are likely to be heard or smelled once they get within 30 feet of an entry.

AREA 1 AND 1A

This room is littered with twigs, leaves, branches, and other debris. There are also several piles of cooked and uncooked meat and some sleeping blankets tossed about.

There are four kobold guards and five large rats in each of the rooms at all times. The guards are fairly attentive, but do jabber amongst themselves, depending upon the large rats to smell or hear anything coming down the defile. The rat packs in each room get one check to detect if anyone is coming down the defile. If the characters are simply moving through the defile with no attempt to be quiet or cannot be quiet, the rats make a detection check (mental) at +12. If the characters are attempting to be quiet but are over 3 ½ feet tall, the rats receive a +6 to their check. If smaller characters are sneaking down the path, the rats get a normal check if the characters' move silent checks were successful. If the characters' move silent checks were not successful, the rats receive a +6 to their check.

Should the rats note the presence of something moving down the defile, they begin twittering and making noise. A single kobold sneaks out of the door to investigate. If the kobold sees anything, it attempts to give warning to the others and escape back inside to prepare for a fight. One of those kobold guards gives warning to the rest of the tribe. If need be, the kobolds retreat back to Area 4 with the rest of the tribe to set a trap. While doing so, they encourage the large rats to attack the characters and stall their approach. In setting traps and planning attacks on the characters, the kobolds use the two entries to move around and behind the characters if possible.

The tunnel leading from Area 1a to Area 2 dips beneath the tunnel leading from Area 1 to Area 2.

There is a trap in the tunnel leading from Area 1 to Area 2. Midway down the tunnel and old animal trap has been placed beneath some leaves and twigs. There is a 1 in 6 chance that any character passing over it sets the trap off, triggering it to snap on a leg, causing 1–3 points of damage and reducing the victim's movement by 10 feet a round until healed. A successful dexterity check reduces the damage by 1 and mitigates and movement penalty.

KOBOLD x8 (These chaotic evil creatures vital stats are HD 1d4, AC 12, HP 2 each. Their primary attributes are physical. They carry leather armor, small bows, 5 arrows and short sword.)

RATS, LARGE x10 (These neutral creatures vital stats are HD 1d4, AC 13 and HP 2 each. Their primary attributes are physical. A bite can cause disease.)

AREA 2

This is large cavern. Loose rocks, debris, stalactites, and stalagmites make it hazardous to move through. A fire burns brightly in the southwest corner, casting shadows all about. Two dimly lit corridors exit to the south. Noises can easily be heard down these corridors. Elsewhere about the room are piles of blankets, scattered utensils, and slivers of meat hanging from twine tied to rocks and stalagmites.

This is where the guards sleep. There are 10 kobolds and a war leader here at the moment. These are the first to react to any warning from the guards, arming themselves and waiting to attack any unwanted guests. If the guards from 1 and 1a retreat, they gather here.

Most of the kobolds hide amongst the stalagmites and stalactites in the northeast section of the cavern. Any checks to spot the hidden kobolds are made at a –3 penalty due to the shadows cast by the fire. Four kobolds wait in the tunnel leading to Area 4. These four race down the tunnel as soon as the characters appear, hoping to draw them into the complex a little further. Once the characters have moved down the tunnel, the kobolds hidden in the northeast corner of the room attack, first with arrows and javelins, and then they charge into the melee.

Movement through this room is difficult, and unless the characters slow to half movement or less, they must make a dexterity check or risk slipping and falling. While engaged in combat, the characters must make a check each round or risk falling. Casting spells or using ranged weapons does not require this check.

KOBOLD x10 (These chaotic evil creatures vital stats are HD 1d4, AC 13, HP 3 each. Their primary attributes are physical. They carry leather armor, shield, 3 small javelins and short sword.)

KOBOLD WAR LEADER (This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 15, and HP 6. His primary attributes are physical. He carries leather armor with metal plates, a shield, 2 small javelins, short sword, and wears a necklace with a gold medallion worth 130gp.)

AREA 3

This area reeks of urine, feces, and wet, rotten rags. The corridor is piled with tiny bones and scraps of dead vermin.

This is the rat den. Two-dozen large rats and the kobold rat keeper nest down in this corridor. The keeper sleeps on a pile of rags and hay in the nook in the west end of the room. The rats generally gather in 3a. The kobold owns a magical pipe, allowing him to control the rats (described below). Once the kobold hears the sounds of combat, the kobold gets his pipe and calls the rats in the corridor to action and attacks in 2–6 rounds. If his situation gets desperate, he releases the wererats in Area 3b.

RATS, LARGE x12 (These neutral creatures vital stats are HD 1d4, AC 13 and HP 2 each. Their primary attributes are physical. A bite can cause disease.)

KOBOLD RAT KEEPER (This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d6, AC 12, and HP 4. His primary attributes are physical. He carries leather armor, short sword, and carries pipes of rat control.)



PIPES OF RAT CONTROL: This is a simple instrument with two flutes tied together and two holes in each flute. It is made of rat bone and tied together with rat tendon. It takes a month at least to learn to play this instrument and then in the presence of rats to ensure that one is learning the correct notes. Once mastered, this instrument allows the one playing it to telepathically control any rats within 50 feet of the pipe that could normally hear it.

AREA 3A

This is the area where the large rats usually gather.

AREA 3B

This tunnel runs down and underneath that leading to Area 3. It is filthy and smells even more wretched than the rest of the caverns in this rat infested area. Chained along the north wall are two hideous creatures, caricatures of rat and man, a nasty hybrid of both. Both froth at the mouth, hissing foul and nasty words at all who get near.

These are wererats. Two humans were caught several years ago and subjected to a bite. These wererats obey only the rat keeper (who keeps them well-fed). If released, they assume human form (male and female) and attempt to beguile any party member by seeking aid and rescue. Once the party is vulnerable, the wererats will assume their wereform and attack. Just prior to this, though, they will summon a rat swarm.

WERERATS x2 (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 3d8, AC 17 and HP 16. Their primary attributes are physical. A bite can cause disease and possibly lycanthropy.)

AREA 4

This large cavern is dominated by two large fires in its center. Dozens of sleeping mats and piles of hay are scattered around the room. Several deer carcasses, with large chunks of meat pulled from them, are hanging from the ceiling.

There are, of course, many kobolds in the room as well. However, the Castle Keeper should describe their location and activities,

as much of their locations depend upon the characters' actions. This chamber is used as the main hall for the kobolds, with fire pits being focal points for activities. There is little of value in here. These kobolds' tools are makeshift and made of stone and rock. The nook along the east wall is where the stone-tipped arrows and javelins are made. There are three small bows here also.

By the time the characters reach this room, the kobolds should be aware of their presence. If not, the two-and-a-half dozen kobolds in here should notice them quickly. All these kobolds arm and get ready for a fight. There are three war leaders in this room. They do not lead in attacks, rather command from the rear. If the chief (Area 7) and shaman (Area 8) are not here already, they will be shortly to help out.

The kobolds attempt to draw the characters off of the ledge and to the south end of the main chamber. To do this, the kobolds scatter, forming up into several groups and hiding behind the various piles of debris and in the nooks and crannies of the room. The chief, shaman, and two of the sub-chiefs stay around the entry to **Area 6**.

If the kobolds are successful in drawing the characters into the center of the room, the characters are pelted with ranged weapons and the shaman casts hold person or other helpful spells. The chief will have called out his rust monster pet at this point but does not send it into combat unless it appears that the combat is near over. He keeps it for a last stand in the rooms below. Should 20 or more kobolds die in here, the remainder retreat to Areas 15–17 for a last stand.

KOBOLD x30 (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d4, AC 13, HP 3 each. Their primary attributes are physical. They carry leather armor, shield, 3 small javelins and short sword.)

KOBOLD WAR LEADERS x3 (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 15, and HP 6 each. Their primary attributes are physical. They carry leather armor with metal plates, a shield, 2 small javelins, short sword and each wears jewelry worth 30–180 gp.)

AREA 5

These two chambers each have a small shrine in them. Upon rock piles are small, crudely carved stone statues of kobolds holding spears. Beneath the rock piles are remnants of food and small fires.

These are statues to the kobold deity Ahrshsl (kobolds only have a few vowels to use and don't waste them).

AREA 6

This hallway ascends steeply to both the north and south. A large pile of rock, like a wall, crosses the far southern end of this hallway.

The kobolds have built small rock wall across the southern corridor. They hide behind this and fire at anyone moving this direction in hopes of delaying or deterring any further penetration. The corridor to the east descends steeply and leads to Areas 13–25.

AREA 7

This thoroughly dirty chamber has piles of furs spread all around, scraps of meat and bone heaped here and anon, and smells of old dog and a refuse heaps. In the middle of this is a chair of sorts as it is built of tree limbs and bones and no more than one foot off the ground. A pile of javelins sits in one corner and several small kegs rest in the other.

This is Secztak's room. Two guards sleep here and stay with the chief at all times. His servants bring him all the food he needs, and he rarely leaves this place anymore. When he leaves, he takes the rust monster with him as well as his guards.

KOBOLD BODYGUARD x2 (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 15, and HP 8 each. Their primary attributes are physical. They carry leather armor with metal plates, a shield, 2 small javelins, short sword, and each wears jewelry worth 30–180 gp.)

KOBOLD CHIEF, SEEZTAK (This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d8, AC 17, and HP 14. His primary attributes are physical. He carries chain armor with metal plates, a shield, small bow, short sword, and wears jewelry worth 250 gp. He also wears a parapet of partial protection. This gives the wearer a +4 to armor class against one swing a round-the wearer's choice.)

AREA 7A

This cavern has a large piles of refuse in it and a large wooden trunk in its center. The trunk is unusual in that there does not appear to be any metal fixtures on it and the top is covered in small quills.

This is the treasure room. The rust monster is usually here, though by the time the characters get here, will likely have already been called into combat. All the treasure the chief has collected is in the chest.

The chest is odd in that there are no metal fixtures on it and the top is covered in small sharp quills. A druid or ranger immediately recognizes them as porcupine quills. The lid is trapped, though so rudimentarily that bypassing it should not present a problem (the easiest being to smash the trunk). Once the lid is lifted, a string attached to a springboard releases the quills, which fly about the room. The trap can be disabled by hooking the string prior to fully opening the lid and holding it taught or cutting it. Most fall harmlessly to the floor, but several have a chance of hitting a character in the face or hands. A successful dexterity check avoids all quills. A failed check indicates a character was struck by 1–2 quills, which cause no discernable damage but are poisoned. A constitution check (challenge level 3) is required to avoid the effects of the poison. The poison causes paralysis in 3–18 turns and lasts for 1–6 hours.

The chest contains 200cp, 120sp, 55gp, six gems worth 25gp each, and jewelry worth 300gp. In this jewelry is a necklace with a long glass pendant on it. The pendant is actually a vial with a single draught of liquid in it that cures serious wounds.

RUST MONSTER (This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 5d8, AC 18, HP 24. Its primary attributes are physical. It can cause any metal item to rust with a successful hit.)

AREA 8

This chamber has a small cot and a shelf made of sticks and limbs in it. The shelf has many small candles, clay statuettes, pebbles, rocks and bones.

This is the kobold shaman's room. Most of the items on the shelf are small religious items of no particular value. The only exception being a gold pendant with a symbol of the underworld upon it. This is a pendant of zombie repelling, causing all zombies (who can see it) to back away from the wearer for 1–12 rounds unless a saving throw is made. Then they back away for 1–6 rounds. The shaman is probably not in here but joined any fight occurring elsewhere.

KOBOLD SHAMAN (This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 12, HP 6. Its primary attributes are mental. It carries leather armor and a stone club. It can cast the following spells once per day; 0 – create water, endure elements, first aid, detect poison; 1 – protection from good, sanctuary, bless; 2 – aid, hold person; 3 – glyph of warding.)

AREA 9

This cavern is foul and littered with the detritus of rat's nests. Several large rats sit on rock, twittering madly at all who enter.

The six large rats will attack.

RATS, LARGE x6 (These creatures vital stats are HD 1d4, AC 13, HP 3 each. Their primary attributes are physical. A bite can cause disease.)

AREA 10

This cavern reeks of decayed and rotting flesh. Within lie four flayed bodies of kobolds.

This kobolds here have been turned into zombies by the shaman. They guard the pups in Area 11 and come to life whenever anyone crosses the threshold and into this room.

ZOMBIE KOBOLDS x4 (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 12, HP 8, 7, 6 and 4. Their primary attributes are physical.)

Area 11

This chamber has a few piles of fur and bone, a pile of small leather pouches, a hammer, chisel, knife and small lock box and a pile of tusks in the corner.

This is the shaman's treasure room. There is 45sp in the lock box. The tusks are about 2 feet long, thick and curved. They are worth about 50gp each.

LEVEL TWO

AREA 12

This small chamber is piled with the carcasses of small rats, tiny bones and other refuse. The walls of the chamber have dozens of small holes bored into them. In a few of the holes, yellow eyes peer out.

The holes are about one foot wide and two feet deep. There are about 40 of them. These nooks are where the kobold pups curl up and sleep. This cavern is used to house 22 kobold pups. All these kobolds are defenseless and scatter if attacked. Should the kobolds from above have retreated this far, they will gather as many pups as they can and take them deeper into the cave for protection. In any case, there will still be a few in this room.

KOBOLD PUPS x22 (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d1, AC 10, and HP1 each. They do not attack.)

AREA 13

Two large manacles hang from the wall in here. Refuse is piled along both sides of the area.

These two wererats will be released by the kobolds as they retreat down the corridor. They move up and attack any interlopers.

WERERATS x2 (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 3d8, AC 17, HP 16. Their primary attributes are physical. A bite can cause disease and possibly lycanthropy.)

AREA 14

This cavern is heaped with piles of hay and grass. In some of the piles are large oval green eggs.

During their retreat, the kobolds gather as many of these eggs as possible. These eggs are worth perhaps 100gp each to an apothecary if delivered whole.

AREA 15

This chamber has a pool in it, a pile of buckets, and small cups.

The kobolds get their water from this pool. A few kobolds attempt to hide in here and attack the characters from the rear should they make it further.

AREA 16

This corridor slopes down at a steep angle.

If the kobold chief has managed to make it this far, he grabs two small barrels of oil hidden in the corridor and busts them open, dumping them in the hallway. The oil is not flammable, but can cause any creature moving over it to slip. Any character moving across the oil must make a dexterity check (challenge level 3) or slip and fall, sliding 1–10 feet down the corridor. He is considered prone for all combat purposes.

AREA 17

This narrow and long chamber is lined with piles of furs and blankets and several raccoon carcasses hang from the ceiling. A pool of water is located towards its end.

The females get the best and most fresh food as well as the nicest furs. However, even considering this, the items are barely palatable and have no value. The females look much like males, except they are fat with large engorged teats. The female kobolds do fight.

KOBOLD FEMALES x8 (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d4, AC 10, HP 2 each. Their primary attributes are physical. They carry daggers, and each wears 1d10gp worth of jewelry.)

AREA 18

This corridor ends in a pile of rocks, bones, skulls, and the detritus from above. It is heaped and piled, covering the corridor from floor to ceiling.

To go further, the characters must dig through this pile of material. It will take several hours; it is loosely packed so should present no problem.

AREA 19

This broad, long hallway descends down into the earth at a slight angle. The walls are plastered and painted blue with frescoes of black hounds leaping after unicorns. The floor is tiled in alternating red and black marble squares. Several kobold skeletons lie on the floor.

The hallway descends into the charnal house of the crypt. It is guarded by shadow mastiffs. These creatures were summoned many ages ago to prevent anyone from going further into the crypt. The shadow mastiffs are actually blended into the wall, and only after the characters pass midway down the hallway, do they begin to emerge from the wall to attack. However, with a successful intelligence check, an observant character may note that several of the eyes of the hounds are looking at and following the characters as they walk down the hall.

SHADOW MASTIFFS x3 (These neutral evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d8, AC 14, HP 17, 16, 15. Their primary attributes are physical. Their special abilities are bay, trip and blend.)

AREA 20

This room's walls are plastered and painted blue. There are depictions of armies at war painted on the walls. In the center of the room is a 8-foot-tall statue of a minotaur with a spear stabbing into the heart of a human knight.

The spear in the statue's hand is the one which belonged to the general buried here. It can be removed by breaking off the hand of the statue and chiseling the fingers away from the haft. It is a +2 wolf spear.

AREA 21

Two rotting doors open into a room with bare walls. A table is pushed up against the southwest wall and some votive candles and small statuettes are placed in nooks along the northeast wall.

There are seven statuettes of Unklar in the nooks along the wall. To a collector each is worth 100–400gp.

AREA 22

Within this room is plain and solid stone table with one large carving on its center. The room has many shelves and nooks carved into the walls which, in turn, are filled with jars and vessels of various sizes.

This chamber was used to prepare the body of the entombed. The carving on the stone table is that of Unklar. The vessels and containers in the shelves contain the internal organs of the general entombed herein.

AREA 23

The walls of this small room have been plastered and painted a pale blue. The floor has black and white tiles. A large statue of alabaster marble is placed against the northwest wall. It depicts a corpulent horned beast sitting cross-legged and staring straight up. In one hand is a golden bowl and the other a golden sickle. At the foot of the statue is a brass plate with an inscription etched upon it.

The statue is that of Klot, the deity of wounding and pain. A secret door is located in the statue. The inscription on the brass plate is in an ancient and foul tongue. It says, "I am the defiler, the scourge and pestilence. Two lives need I. From one who would sooth the lie and from one who for evil does cry." The inscription refers to blood from any lawful or good character. If any lawful or good character places two drops of blood in the bowl held by the statue, the secret door swings open. Otherwise, the door will not open, and the walls must be dug through in order to go further. The door is difficult to locate (challenge level 4). Digging through the walls or statue to reach the corridor or rooms beyond takes 1–6 hours with the appropriate tools. Once the bowl and sickle have been removed from the statue, the secret door will never again open. The bowl and sickle are worth 2000gp each.

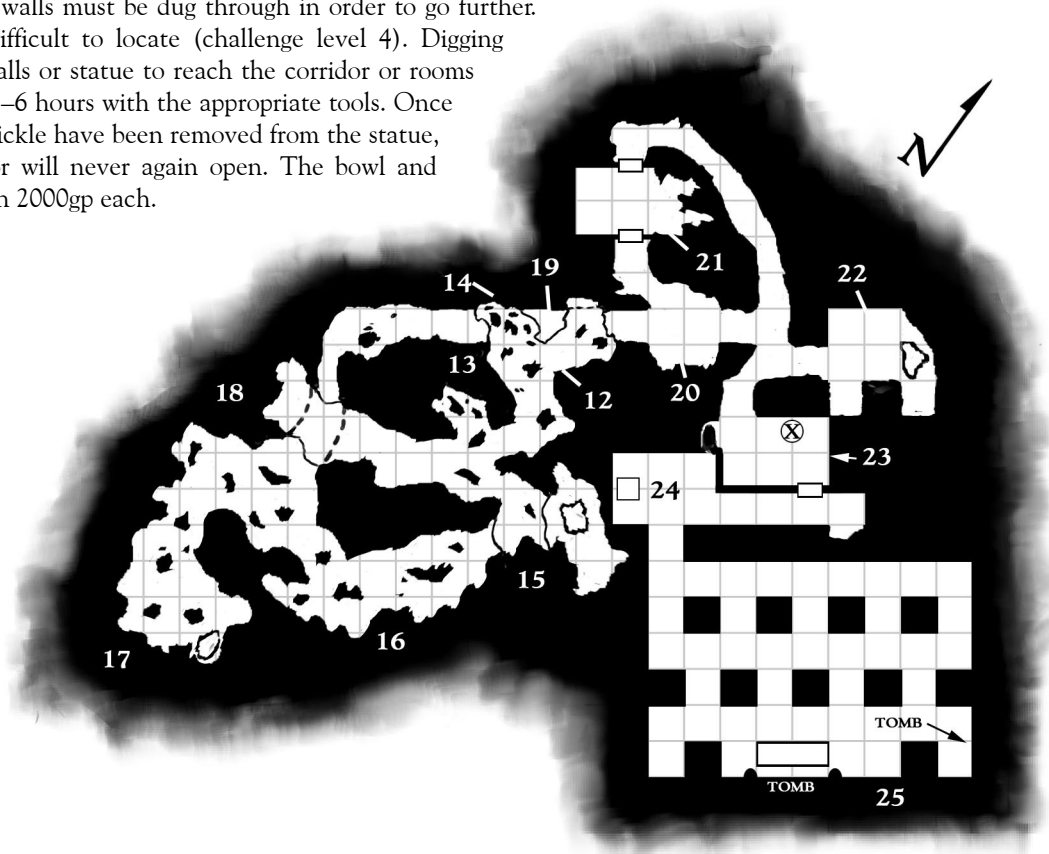
AREA 24

The walls in this room are painted blue and the floor has blue and white tiles on it. There are no paintings on the wall. At the southwest end of the room is a large stone sarcophagi. Atop it is a carving of armored figure with fanged teeth and clawed hands. An emblem of a minotaur is upon it.

This is a false tomb and the room contains a guardian spirit. When the sarcophagi is opened, a shadow emerges momentarily before slipping back in. This is a shadow that guards this place. It comes out, slides beneath the sarcophagi, and then comes up though the floor to attack a member of the party. The shadow cannot move more than 100 feet from the sarcophagi. The sarcophagi is empty.

The secret door is no door at all. The doorway here has actually been bricked up and plastered over so it looks like the rest of the room. The only way through to the other side is to knock down the wall. If a check for secret doors is successful, the character only hears a hollow rapping. A dwarf will likely be able to determine that the wall here is different than the other sections.

SHADOW (This neutral evil creature's vital stats are HD 3d12, AC 13, HP 27. Its primary attributes are mental. Its special abilities are strength drain, create spawn, and blend. It can also move through solid objects.)



LEVEL 2

THE UMBRAGE SAGA 35

This massive chamber stretches far in every direction. Large stone columns, five feet in diameter, are spaced evenly across the room. The floor has black, blue, red, and white tiles interspaced across it. The walls are plastered and painted blue with depictions of warring armies depicted on them. The columns are painted red and have stylized geometric patterns painted upon them. The room is crowded with plush furnishings: couches, chairs, tables, nightstands, and other items of similar nature. There are shelves with books and dozens of personal items upon them.

Many of the items in this room are valuable, but not greatly so. Most items have a value of 1–10gp, with a few having values of up to 50gp. Many of these items are very bulky (chairs, tables, etc.), but some are small. Careful searching reveals 13 items (combs, pendants, etc.) worth 1–10gp each.

After being in the room for a few moments, the characters hear the sound of frogs croaking. Loud, deep croaks as if from large frogs. And after a few more moments the “bullfrogs” become visible. Several can be seen jumping about the room and croaking. These are not really bullfrogs, rather they are quasits disguising themselves as bullfrogs. There are 12 of them, and they have been tasked with protecting the spirit of the long-dead general which now resides here.

The long-dead general is actually a wraith that haunts this room. It cannot leave the room. Once the characters enter the room, the wraith awakens and begins moaning. When it moves, it does so through the columns in order to do so safely. The wraith watches the characters for a while, groaning and making a little noise all the while. Once the characters get within a few feet of the sarcophagi, it begins its attack, as do the quasits.

The quasits stay out of melee until they have cast all their spells; at which point, they change to their natural form and attack as a group, usually trying to swarm one character—preferably a spellcaster. The wraith moves between the columns, trying to avoid being hit while sneaking up behind a character to strike.

Inside the tomb area lies the corpse of an ancient human. It has decayed little with time and looks like an exceedingly old man with a narrow head and fanged mouth. It is wearing +2 scalemail armor, a black surcoat with a stylized minotaur sewn into it (30gp value), holds a golden scepter (250gp value), has a jeweled crown on its head (7500gp value), a jade signet ring (250gp) on its hand, and a small trunk rests at its feet. The trunk contains 500gp in coin, 5 moonstones worth 25gp, 4 fire opals worth 500gp, a set of ivory troll knuckles worth 3000gp, and a scroll with five spells on it: *command*, *bless*, *magic circle*, *restoration*, and *discern lies*.

WRAITH (*This lawful evil creature’s vital stats are HD 5d12, AC 15, HP 50. Its primary attributes are mental. Its special abilities are energy drain, create spawn and it can only be struck by magical weapons.*)

QUASITS x12 (*These creatures’ vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 14, HP 4 each. Their primary attributes are physical. They can polymorph three times per day and cast the following spells once per day as a third-level caster: protection from good, darkness, and pyrotechnics.*)

BLACKTOOTH UNCOVERED

The level ranges on the encounters are between 1 and 3. Simple adjustments in the number of creatures encountered, hit dice, hit points, and armor class should suffice to make these encounters more or less challenging.

NARGULF’S REAVERS

This is a band of vicious, cruel goblins and orcs who are led by a particularly beastly hobgoblin named Nargulf. They journeyed from the far north, across the Grausamland, on a scouting and assassination mission for their master to seek out none other than the leader of the Red Caps. Nargulf’s plan was to locate the lair of this renegade goblin, bring him to tow, and force him to serve their master, or kill the goblin if he did not obey. After some searching, they located one of the Red Cap’s bands and discovered that the number of goblins in the band was far too great for them to assault.

Nargulf has decided attacking the Red Caps would be suicidal, so has chosen to hide and ponder his next move. He is aware that returning to his homeland and to his lord empty handed would result in a rather brutal ending to his short life. Remaining in the region has its own dangers, with the Red Caps and human soldiers wandering about. Nargulf is considering several options. He could join the Red Caps, but he would then have to serve under their leader. He could cross the Hruesan River, find and join Seroneous, the Lord of the Witch Queen’s servants in the Barren Wood, or he could leave the country altogether and move east to where the Hlobane Kingdoms of orcs lie. He is truly at a loss, lingering in this perilous state of indecision. The one thing he is certain of is the loyalty of his crew.

The members of his band are a desperate lot, even for their race. Most of them were branded criminal or worse in Aufstrag, and given over to Nargulf because it seemed a good way to get them killed. They have been unable to achieve their mission, and for that reason are unable to return home. They are “in between the horns” as the folk of Aufstrag are wont to say whenever they find themselves in impossible situations. The one thing they do have going for them is their master, Nargulf. He has proved a brutal captain, and for this reason alone, they have warmed to him. He has saved them from several potential fatal scrapes, so they have faith in him to bring them out of this latest one.

Nargulf’s Reavers are a dangerous encounter for any venturing onto the Blacktooth Ridge. Nargulf is under tremendous stress and must contend with his own unruly band, the Red Caps, wandering knights and mercenaries, and other such riffraff. He suspects the Red Caps know he is about. Nargulf is aware the local human population will chase him down and slaughter him if discovered. He has become very protective of “his pretties,” as he calls his roguish band; therefore, he does not want to be discovered and will do anything to prevent it. As such, he tries to avoid contact with anything or anyone, if possible, and seeks to save the strength of his band for the important battles looming in his future.

THE STONE HOUSE

Nargulf and his band are currently encamped in an old stone building. This once imposing stone fort was an ancient way post, but

is now little more than a jumble of stones where the walls and donjon once stood. Nargulf's band have made the best of this encampment and built a makeshift wooden beam roof over a portion of the ruins. Here, they cook, eat, divide their meager spoils, and sleep. All their cooking gear, blankets, and other odds and ends are here. They also have a store of some armor and weapons they have acquired along the way. There are three suits of leather armor, 14 shields, 12 spears, one broadsword, four battle axes, two short bows, and 100 arrows. It is all in fair condition and usable. It can only be sold at half value.

At any given time there is a 50% that 1–4 orcs and 1–6 goblins are out hunting.

Nargulf is an intelligent leader and has two lookouts constantly posted. They are positioned on either side of the stone fort, about 20 yards out on the south side facing the Hrueson River, and on the east side facing the wilderness where the Red Caps are located. They use a series of bird calls to warn Nargulf of approaching danger. They also use hand gestures, learned from the ungrn soldiers of Aufstrag, to silently communicate.

Nargulf is very intelligent and he does not spend his life nor the lives of his troops needlessly nor foolishly. He has managed to organize and discipline his followers so that they actually obey his commands. If he is able to gather his order of battle, he places the goblins in the center and the orc foot soldiers on the flanks. The orcs help keep the goblins from running. His two archers he keeps in the rear on each flank and uses them to constantly pepper the enemy with arrows. Nargulf will order the Reavers to retreat a good distance in order to marshal his band and place them in a fighting position. They do not fight to the death. If pressed too hard, they scatter and will rally several days later, north along the Blacktooth Ridge.

If the area around the old guard tower is searched carefully and rubble removed from the central portion of the encampment (one day of work for four people), an iron trapdoor is located. It opens into the donjon and a series of six large rooms containing old and rotted foodstuffs, beds, and other accouterments that are usually stored in these places. This was a place of last refuge for several of the fort's inhabitants during its final siege. The wall collapsed over the door, and the few remaining who were trapped here, died here. There are a dozen or more skeletons in the place, as well as some old rusted and pitted weapons and armor. In the farthest room, behind a locked door, is a treasure chest. It was the last tax collection for this region before the fort was destroyed in a battle.

TREASURE (The chest contains 125gp, 670sp, and 1240cp, all of ancient make.)

Note: The area beneath the tower ruins can be expanded as desired, perhaps haunted by the undead spirits of those lost in the battle.

NARGULF, HOBGOBLIN (This chaotic evil hobgoblin's vital stats are HD 3d8, hp 21, AC 16. His primary attributes are physical. In battle he wields a morningstar for 2d4+1 points of damage and a wickedly curved tulwar for 1d6+1 points of damage. Nargulf receives a +1 to AC, "to hit" bonus, and damage due to his combat experience. He carries a medium shield, scalemail, morningstar, tulwar, and 25sp. He has a small pouch on his belt with a ulep charm in it. He is constantly rubbing this charm between his finger and thumb.)



GOGREN, ORC (This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d8, HP 12, AC 14. His primary attributes are physical. He wields a scimitar in battle that does 1d8 points of damage. Gogren can track like a 4th level ranger and has a ranger's survival ability. He carries studded leather armor, scimitar, short bow, dagger, and 5sp.)

ORCS x 10 (These lawful evil creatures' vital stats are HD 1d8, HP 5 each, AC 14. Their primary attributes are physical. They wield scimitars in battle that do 1d8 points of damage. They carry studded leather armor, shield, scimitar, dagger and 1–6sp.)

ORCS, ARCHERS x 2 (These lawful evil creatures' vital stats are HD 1d8, HP 4 each, AC 14. Their primary attributes are physical. They wield scimitars in battle that do 1d8 points of damage. They also use heavy crossbows that shoot for 1d10 points of damage. They carry studded leather armor, shield, scimitar, short bows, 10 arrows, dagger and 1–6sp.)

GOBLINS x 14 (These chaotic evil goblins' vital stats are HD 1d6, HP 3 each, AC 13. Their primary attributes are physical. They wield shortswords and do 1d6 points of damage in battle. They carry light crossbow, shortsword, studded leather armor and 1–10sp.)

Ulep charms are made from the bones of dead dwarves, gnomes, halfling or elves. They are carved from the knee caps of the fallen demi-humans and made very smooth. They are often attached to a chain or bracelet. These charms, fashioned by the orc shamans of Hlobane from Aufstrag and the south are highly prized by folk of that ilk, as they impart a sense of calm and reason to the bearer. Those with ulep charms cannot be demoralized or affected by fear spells.

THE WIZENING BRANCH

Tales of the Wizing Branch abound in the lands south of the Hrueson River, especially in the Barony of Botkinburg. Folk tell all manner of tales about that ancient tree and the meadow that surrounds it. Old Man Nester (*Assault on Blacktooth Ridge*, page 32, Area 10) seems to be the very source of much of this material.

"It is a dangerous place. I know. I've ne'er been there meself, but I've known many a folk that went seeking that old sliver of bark, and they aint ever come back . . . and if they did they wouldn't of talked about it no how. The Wizing Branch. The Wizing Branch. Aye, somes tell you that it don't exist, that 'tis an 'oldout from the ancient times, long gone to dust with the power in the north. But that ain't the truth of it. That old tree is evil, and its roots are evil and the birds that nest in its branches are evil, and anything to do with it is evil to boot. Avoid it I say; don't seek her out, or it'll gobble yers up, heart and soul. But mind ye, them fey folk of the Barren Wood, they hid up their treasure at the feet of that old tree and there be mounds of it!"

Nester doesn't know where the tree is, only that it lies south of the Hruesen River. If pushed about who or what he knows, he'll spin a yarn or two about people he knew in the old days who have long since died.

The tree itself is very old, having rooted upon the Blacktooth Ridge for many hundreds of years. In the deeps of the Winter Dark, Meltowg, the lord of the Vale Knights, planted its seed upon this ridge in a hidden meadow. He named the tree Ineng, which means "beacon" in the elvish tongue of those days. He made the meadow a rallying place for his soldiers in their war upon the dark with the cry of "be with Ineng," so that they knew in their haste where to meet. Time and again they gathered beneath the young tree and made what merriment they could in that long, dark season. But with the passing of the years, the Vale Knights came to the tree less and less. Their wars carried them into the west, and there they withered away. Many died at the hands of the Horned God's minions; others faded in the sorrow of their loss. Meltowg fell as well, slain by his own kin in the Castle of Spires.

But the tree lived on. In time its lonely vigil came to an end. An owl had come to roost in its higher branches. No ordinary owl, this creature was one of an ancient species that thrived in the Days before Days. They were always friends to the sentient trees, men, and elves. In time, the tree and owl grew inseparable, and they lived their lives out together, their fates becoming intertwined, one with the other.

Lonely upon the ridge, nestled in the comfort of the hidden meadow, Ineng and the owl stood thus for hundreds of years.

But the absence of the elves did not go unnoticed. As is common knowledge, the whole of the Hreusen River Valley and the accompanying Blacktooth Ridge and Barren Wood have long been the homes to the fey. These creatures, who come in a variety of shapes and forms, have ranged here since time immemorial. One particularly evil fey has taken a keen interest in the tree because of the owl. Mallow's Bone is a fowl creature; small, spindly and bent with his crooked ways, this fey knows of the owl's nature; that it comes from the great Void beyond and that it came to Aihride in the days of its creation. He longs to slay it and devour

its feathers for the wisdom that they will bring. But the owl is safe in the old tree and beyond the reach of Mallow Bones.

So he has gathered a small army of pixies and the like, and they have set out to kill the tree. They are doing this by digging tunnels deep beneath its stem, chewing up its roots with the ultimate hope of finding the heart of the tree and suffocating it. When the tree falls, the owl will have no home.

Mallow Bones and his crew of fey have been secretly digging beneath the tree for several years. Time has no meaning for the fey, so there is no "hurry" in the traditional sense, but Mallow Bones does guard the meadow from all comers, trapping and slaying the good and evil alike, and keeping them from the tree and its great prize.

THE OLD MAN OF THE FOREST

The tangled game trail gives way to a wide meadow, and before you, in a clearing, is a tree of massive size and ancient lineage. The tree is nearly dead, with only a few branches still bearing leaves and piles of deadfall at its base. The tree stands a staggering 200 feet high and the bole is a good 20 feet wide at the base. Gnarled bark and stumped limbs bedeck this old man of the forest, and it leans a little as if longing to fall to the earth from which it came. Roosting in the top of the tree is a huge owl, nearly the size of a stout Grundliche dwarf.

The Ineng tree is dying and with it the owl. The owl has a symbiotic relationship to the tree, and as it dies, so too does the owl. Currently, the owl is not capable of flight because its feathers are falling out. The tree is dying because Mallow Bones has so viciously attacked its roots. The owl is aware of this, but unable to do anything to stop it. He watches anyone's approach with keen interest. He has seen others come, even talked to a few, but they have failed to root out the horrible fey that inhabit his home.

The owl notes any approaching people that are goodly aligned or have an elf with them. If he deems they can aid him and the tree, he hops to the lower branches and relates his plight and that of the tree to them. For those who manage to engage the owl in conversation, he asks for help and hopes the party will enter under the roots of the tree and engage whatever it is that is down there and kill it. This, the owl believes, will allow the tree and himself to become healthy again.

If the party agrees to do this, the owl begins hooting and after a time the bole of the tree splits open until a wide portal of twisted and raw wood is open to the party. It descends down beneath the bole of the tree. The opening extends down to a narrow corridor cut through the ground.

Beneath the tree, the party will find Marrow Bones and his crew of miscreants.

The tunnels beneath the tree are narrow, cramped and slick with mud and debris, making them very difficult to walk through. They spill into rooms of many sizes, obviously denoting where Marrow and his band were looking for the Heart.

Heavily armored characters simply cannot manage to move through them, as the tunnels are only 2–3 feet wide in some

places. Combat in the tunnels is difficult. For anyone other than small creatures, large weapons are used at a -4 to hit, and even small weapons receive a -2 to hit. Movement is halved for everyone. Using lanterns and torches produces enough smoke to fill local areas with noxious fumes relatively quickly. Within 20 minutes, any given 20-foot space, not in a corridor, will be so full of smoke and lack oxygen that anyone in there will have to leave or make a constitution check every minute to stay conscious.

The tunnels twist, turn, bend and fall back in on themselves. There really is no rhyme nor reason to this series of tunnels as they follow root lines, loose dirt, and the rather incoherent thought patterns of some nasty but determined fey. The one thing the tunnels do have in common, however, is going down deeper into the earth.

NOTE: No map has been supplied for this encounter due to the nature of the tunnels. The Castle Keeper should feel free to sketch the tunnels out. Caution should be taken, however, to not make the tunnels so vast that the party becomes fatigued with their exploration.

Encounters should be rolled once for every hour of time in the tunnels. A roll of 1 on a d8 means an encounter of 1d6 fey will occur. The fey will generally try to flee and may or may not warn Marrow Bones (for more on the dark fey, see the notes below).

The fey leave by their exit located some 200 yards to the west of the tree, just outside the meadow, when they feel the desire to be beneath the sun or moon. The owl will note this fact for the characters, and they may set up an ambush for those fey who come out. In any instance, the ambush will not be easy to manage as a harpy, sister to those found at the Shrine of Water in the Barren Wood (see *The Slag Heap*, page 78, Area 1), keeps watch over the entrance. She isn't expecting any company, however, and anyone who attempts to sneak up on her gains a +4 to their relevant checks. However, the ambush will not kill all the faerie. Marrow Bones and a handful of other fey should always be in the tunnels.

HARPY (This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 3d8, HP 18, AC 13. Her primary attributes are physical. She attacks from the air with two claws for 1d3 points of damage each, or with darts for 1d3 points of damage. Her special abilities are captivating song.)

DARK FAERIE x 8 (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d6, HP 3 each, AC 15. Their primary attributes are mental and physical. They attack with darts for 1d3 points of damage or by using small swords and axes that do 1d6 points of damage. They are able to polymorph twice per day and possess all first-level rogue abilities. They are also able to cast obscuring mist, entangle, pass without trace, light, and silence image once per day.)

Within the tunnels are always 3d4 fey and Marrow Bones. They do not suffer any negative effects of fighting in narrow confines. Marrow Bones is presently in the room described below along with 50% of the fey remaining in the lair.

HEART OF THE TREE

The narrow, dirty tunnel spills into a large chamber about 40 feet by 40 feet. The whole room is entangled with ancient, twisted roots, rocks, and other debris. The floor is covered in thick loamy mud. Over it all hangs one huge, gnarled root with a massive knotty protrusion jutting from its length. Within this protrusion is a tangle of root about 2 feet thick. The whole hangs about five feet above the floor. This large green, gem-like mass of green wood is the heart of the tree. A thin, small leather-skinned creature stands beneath the tree holding a flickering torch with the obvious intent of burning the tree's roots. All about him are a dozen or so other fey, evil and wicked-looking.

Marrow Bones has just found the heart of the tree. He is attempting to set fire to it while the other fey are planning to dig it out of the root, which is wrapped around it.

MARROW BONES (He is a chaotic evil creature whose vital stats are HD 2d8, HP 16, AC 15. His primary attributes are mental and physical. He attacks with magical +1 darts for 1d3+1 points of damage. He is able to enchant sticks so that any stick he picks up and breathes on turns into one of these darts. It remains magical until broken, dispelled, or it wounds someone. He also uses a magical whip, a pine branch with which he slashes and whips his victims. The whip acts as a +1 weapon in Marrow's hands and does 1d6+1 points of damage. He is able to polymorph twice per day and possesses all the first-level rogue abilities. He is also able to cast obscuring mist, entangle, pass without trace, light, and silence image once per day.)

For the other fey, refer to the stat block above.

THE DRY GULCH

This gulch is about 100 yards beyond the fey entrance, hidden in a thick part of the wood. Here is where the fey drag their victims and toss their bodies, the same place they will throw the characters if they should fall in the attempt to rescue the tree. They do not steal anything for themselves, so whatever valuables the unfortunates were carrying are lying with them still in the gulch.

TREASURE (There is one set of good chain mail, two shields, and a variety of good weapons and helms. There is also a spellbook, clutched in the hands of Aaron the Prestidigitator. In it are the first-level spells comprehend language, feather fall, magic missile and one second level spell protection from arrows. He also has a +1 dagger. There is some scattered jewelry worth no more than 125gp and a total 55gp, 123sp, and a gem worth 25gp.)

GARDENS OF MISERY

Upon the hill, the Ineng Tree creaks in the wind, its great trunk bending only a little, but its old bark groaning from the effort. Faintly, in the dim recesses of its mind, voices echoed. The sounds of it awakened something in the old tree that brought memories to the fore.

Much of what happened to Ineng was lost to him, buried in the thick recesses of time that wrapped him like the bark of the old tree that he was. The many events of his life overflowed with as many

tragedies as triumphs, with as much suffering as comfort. Memories of the sun upon his skin came to him first, when he realized such things and thought upon them. He was young then, without a shape of his own, before the All Father established the order of things. The memories of the warmth of the sun hung with him, banishing thoughts of the gathering snow on his gnarled branches.

He remembered then a great sea of grass. Empty of all things but the sky and the waving green of the deep grasses, the plain seemed to roll on for leagues without count. Filled with the promise of silence, the country was open, inviting him to dwell there without molestation. He drank of the earth deep in those days and feasted upon the silence of the grasses. Why he left he could not remember, but thoughts of the land being befouled came to him, and he wondered what deeds of his may have brought this about.

His mind turned dark then and images of wars and battles came to him. This was in the later years, for there were many of the little all fathers armored and armed with axes and hammers. They waged war over all the lands. Wherever the troll went, he could not stay for long for the armies of these creatures would soon be around him. Though they did not always fight him, more often themselves, they did attack him when they could. So he waged a war upon them whenever he could. He destroyed their houses and emptied their barns of livestock, tore down walls, and plundered their lands when he could. Many died beneath his grinding trunk like feet, and even more did he crush and slay with his sword. They named him a Troll.

This war did not end when the goblins came, but they bound Ineng in spells and used him as a weapon against the little All Fathers. These years were long and filled with deeds of blood and iron. The memories were only shades of red, black, and an overriding darkness from which he could not escape. Of all the tumult, his mind settled on a set of great doors, bound and sealed in bronze workings. His masters compelled him to bash the doors in, and he set to the task with a relish, for he took great joy in the destruction of things. But the doors would not yield, and the rage of frustration that overtook him allowed him to break the bonds of sorcery that held him and he slaughtered the goblins in droves and ground their bones to pulp and dust. He pulled the roof of the cave down and buried himself and the ancient doors beneath mountains of rocks. There, he pondered the doors and sought to shape the earth, and he did so, but the doors would not open nor yield. Eventually, he tired of the pointless endeavor and left for the light of the sun again.

He came forth from the mountains into a deep forest, the Ethvold, or so it was called by the All Fathers. He dwelt there for awhile until he wandered east again.

A kingdom was his for a while, where he lorded over lesser trolls and orcs and other untidy creatures that had crawled from the morass of time. He enslaved men and dwarves and others and built cities and temples in worship of the sun god. This kingdom ended in fire and ash, and Ineng left it in ruins to wander into the south and west where he hunted for many years.

At last, his limbs grew tired, and he crawled atop a high ridge to look over the land and ponder his next course of action and to discover where his next journeys would take him. Cool water greeted him, bubbling up from the earth, spilling around his toes.

He remembered this first sensation and thought upon how nice it was, how good the water felt. He drank of it and settled in for a spell to see the world unfold. He had grown accustomed to sitting for long spells on his travels, rousing himself when the need or desire struck him.

Ineng groaned, for no memories came after that. Deep thoughts of the forest to the south and what vitality it promised, but these faded into silence. He tried to move, but only a little, giving the effort scant attention. His feet were so rooted to the ground that he could not move any longer, his torso was as stiff as any trunk, and his arms had long since ceased moving. He could not remember what came after the cool waters and his slated thirst.

After a moment, the thoughts escaped the old troll. He settled back into the wind, and his mind drifted out to wide plains of grass and warm sunlight upon his back. But those memories were little more than forgotten moments. Ineng was a troll no longer, but a now a tree, rooted to the ground upon a small patch of cold, rocky ground. His lonely perch looked over a bleak landscape of frozen, dead trees. In the distance, a torpid river crowded with floating ice meandered through an otherwise empty world. The snows of Winter's Dark fell about him, piling slowly upon his branches, covering his roots, and catching in little pockets where the bark of his skin was jagged enough to allow the icy purchase. Gray clouds hung overhead, a crown to his lonely, forgotten misery.

THE INENG TREE

The Ineng Tree is the single oldest creature living upon the Blacktooth Ridge; in fact, it might be the oldest creature in the whole region. Ineng was born into the order of Sentients, trees who mastered the Languages of Creation, those first creations of the All Father. But Ineng, like many of his kind, grew mistrustful of the All Father and his kindred and sought to follow his own path. He took a new shape, one that mimicked that of the All Father, but imperfectly, to become what later men called a Troll. It traveled the world as a troll for countless eons, but as with all old trolls, Ineng eventually stopped traveling. And eventually he rooted to the ground, bound to the earth by the weight of his life's evil deeds.

He rooted upon a high, barren ridge, overlooking the Hreusen River, what later men called the Blacktooth Ridge. He overlooks a bend in the river, watching with his sightless eyes the ever-moving flow below him.

In a wide bend of the Hreusen River, where the Blacktooth Ridge tumbles off to the north stands an ancient tree, gnarled and weathered. This ancient thing seems as much a part of the landscape as the stone. It is huge, 15 odd feet in diameter, but not so tall, only 40 feet. Once its branches stretched further, but now it stands largely dead to the world, a short squat thing reminiscent of the days of old, with only a few branches here and there. There is a vertical split in the tree, barely discernable, as if the tree had some old wound that closed in folds its bark.

The ground around it is rocky, covered in light vegetation and small scrub oaks. Some fields of grasses grow along the rocky edges, and hosts of wild flowers grow everywhere. A single trail crosses in front of the tree, following the ridge.

At the foot of the tree, where the split enters the ground, water bubbles up. It is magical water that many others have learned possesses healing qualities. There were flowers too, small violet flowers that grow here, mostly in the late spring and early summer. They push up through the snow and spread their petals, soaking in the sunlight.

The water is magical. If someone drinks the water they first realize how cool and reviving it is. They feel refreshed, but also a little sleepy. They must make a successful intelligence (CL 5) save or fall under the effects of a powerful *sleep* spell. Regardless of whether they fall asleep they heal 1d8 hit points of damage. Every drink of the water heals 1d8, but brings the danger of falling asleep. Each drink adds 2 to the challenge level, so the 2nd drink is CL 7; the third drink is CL 9, and so forth.

Anyone who falls asleep cannot be woken short of a *remove curse* spell and they stay asleep for double as many hours as hit points they healed. For example if they heal 4 hit points and fall asleep, they sleep for 8 hours. Anyone who sleeps at the foot of the Ineng Tree, dreams the dreams of its memory. Use the story above or consult the expanded one in the *Crusader Issue* 8–12, or invent your own. Remember to note that the Ineng tree was a troll and is tens of thousands of years old.

OTTER TALK

Upon the banks of the Hruesen River there dwells an ancient and benevolent creature. It is a fey who long ago took the form of a giant otter. He dwelt in the lands of the Hruesen, hunting its bountiful currents, even before the coming of the Dark. In those days, the elves and other fey of the Avishean Ridge paid him homage and called upon him when they needed intimate knowledge of the river. The elves named him Beuren, but the dwarves and gnomes called him Tarouth; men called him simply Boris. It is that name he favored above all else, for Boris saw men as the most noble of the creatures of the world, for though their flaws were many, they never ceased striving to overcome them.

Boris the otter lives where Wizing Creek spills into the Hruesen River. There, he

has long had his residence, a series of tunnels and rooms. Some are much as one would expect of a giant otter, wet and muddy, but others he fashioned for visitors, plushy and comfortable. There are innumerable entrances to his home. He has hidden them well and designed them so that no one can easily surprise the otter; and if they do, he can escape.

Boris is a major problem for Red Cap, Kruggle and all the evil denizens of the river basin. He routinely interrupts their raids, by capsizing their boats and drowning the raiders. They despise him and have for a long while attempted to capture or kill him.

Unbeknownst to Red Cap, Boris has landed himself in a great deal of trouble.

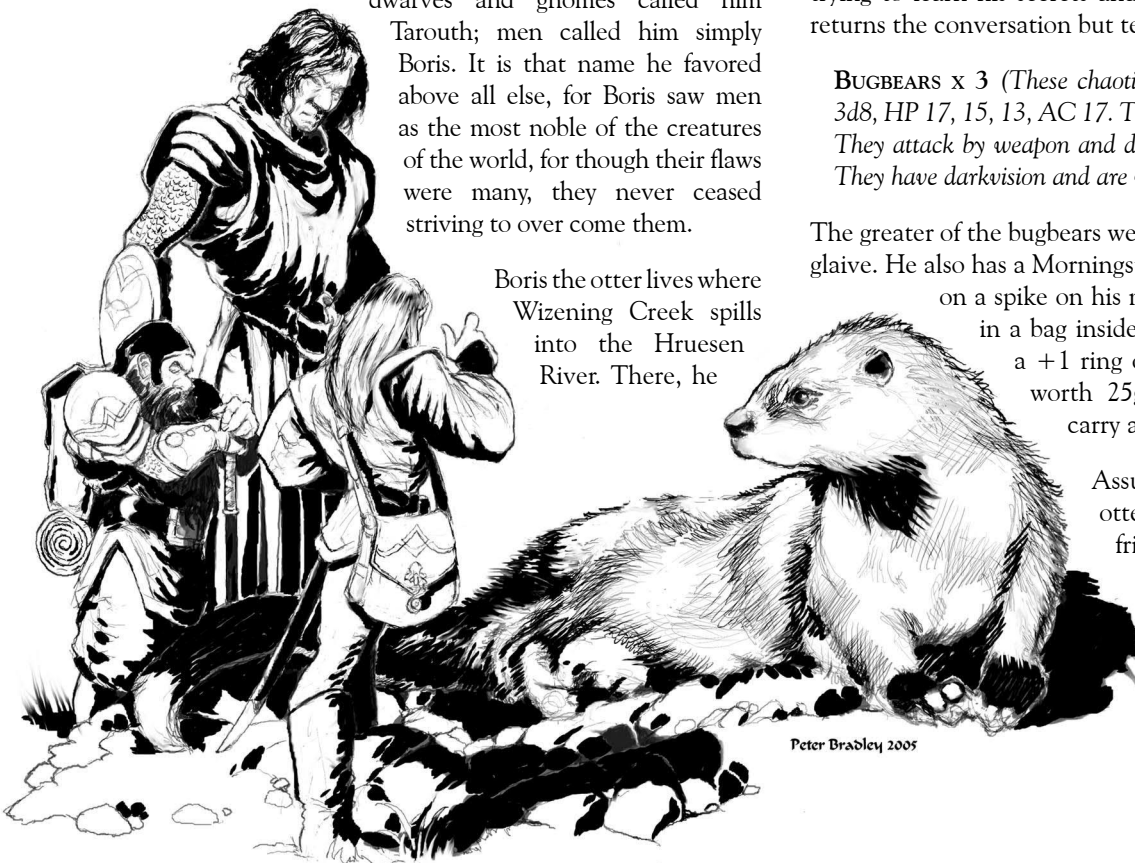
Not long ago a small band of bugbears entered the area. Bugbears are not normally native to these regions, but upon hearing of the bounty of food and wealth that is available, they took the long journey from the eastern steppes, crossed the Arratok Mountains, and arrived in the river's valley. They have hunted for a few days, but recently stumbled upon Boris' track. Bugbears are clever hunters and they laid a trap for the otter, thinking only that he would provide enough food for a few days. They managed to snare Boris. Only then did they discover that he was more than an otter. They now have him pinned, debating what to do with him.

The bugbears are camped on the southern bank of the river (Castle Keeper's should feel free to move the encampment anywhere convenient on the river in order to allow the characters to stumble upon them). They have made little attempt to conceal themselves. A camp fire burns freely, sending black smoke up into the air and the area stinks of wet animal. The bugbears are filthy beasts. They are keeping the otter tied and blindfolded, hanging from a tree. The lead bugbear is constantly talking to the creature, trying to learn his secrets and if he has any treasure. The otter returns the conversation but tells him very little.

BUGBEARS X 3 (These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 3d8, HP 17, 15, 13, AC 17. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by weapon and do the appropriate weapon damage. They have darkvision and are very able hunters and trackers.)

The greater of the bugbears wears a breast plate and carries a long glaive. He also has a Morningstar that he generally keeps hanging on a spike on his mail. He keeps the group's treasure in a bag inside his mail. The treasure consists of a +1 ring of protection, 65gp and a bracelet worth 25gp. The two remaining bugbears carry axes.

Assuming the characters rescue the otter they have made a very good friend. He will help them whenever he can. He knows all the water ways quite well and offers them a safe abode in his home. For stat purposes, Boris has the spell-like abilities of a pixie.



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The Blacktooth Ridge, fabled for its string of long abandoned fortresses, treasure houses, temples, and underground mansions lies far to the north and east of the civilized lands. Dangerous journeys and the promise of treasure invite many an adventurer to the wilds along the Ridge. There they seek fame and fortune. But it is an altogether dangerous place, tainted with the evil of the Horned God; there in hidden caves and darkened temples some linger still who call him their master. Of late these creatures have issued forth to plague the few people along who call the ridge home, the town of Botkinburg most of all.

Now, raids and plundering confound the settlements near the Blacktooth Ridge. Rumors of Rottenkip the Goblin King and his fearless warriors taking up residence in the Blacktooth Ridge are circulating. Ogres and Trolls are raiding villages and looting caravans. Few are coming to the aid of those beset by these depredations and the evil denizens of the Blacktooth Ridge continue to spill out ever further across the lands.

The call has gone out, the mustering of militias is at hand, and the Blacktooth Ridge beckons to any and all willing to come to their aid and discover what is calling forth these foul creatures.



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