

RAGING SWAN PRESS

GM'S MISCELLANY: MONSTROUS DELVES



SYSTEM
NEUTRAL

RAGING SWAN PRESS

OUR QUEST

WE BELIEVE games set in a richly detailed, immersive world are better than games that are not. **WE PUBLISH** richly detailed, easy-to-use material designed to help you, the busy GM, prepare quicker and prepare better. **WE HELP** you have more fun with your friends.

VOCAB FOR YOUR GAME

01 Fluttermouse: a bat	11 Picaroon: a vagabond
02 Eidolon: a phantom; an apparition; an image of an ideal	12 Quag: a boggy place
03 Churl: a rude or boorish person	13 Demesne: manorial land of a feudal lord
04 Insouciant: blithe, nonchalant; indifferent; heedless	14 Coruscating: to emit sparkles of light; to sparkle
05 Nubile: ready for marriage; sexually mature and attractive	15 Swerked: to become troubled or gloomy
06 Turgid: swollen or distended; bloated or distended	16 Sward: a stretch of grass or turf
07 Coterie: a select small group of people who meet frequently	17 Arras: a wall hanging; particularly a tapestry
08 Flagellate: to whip or flog; to punish severely	18 Cornucopia: a large number of different things
09 Ilk: type or kind	19 Waif: a homeless person; a forsaken or orphaned child
10 Mendacious: lying; untruthful	20 Augur: to foretell or predict the future

NOTABLE DUNGEON LOCALES FOR YOUR GAME

01 The Forbidding Stair: This near vertical stair is hacked into the vertiginous deep chasm. Foul things lurk on the rambling stair; many adventurers have fallen to their doom here.	07 Passageway of Wondrous Delusion: Terrible, beguiling hallucinations of the most vivid and compelling sort assail those daring this corridor.
02 Altar of the Rent Heart: On this blood-drenched altar a foul sect rips the hearts from their living sacrifices before sending their animate corpses forth to slay.	08 Archway of Brooding Horror: No sound passes through this arch. Those daring to creep under its sagging stones report a cloying feeling of cosmic horror seeping into their soul.
03 Charnel House of Nightmarish Horrors: Herein, a mad scholar, the one-legged dwarf Fenor Glam, works feverishly to craft the perfect body from the flesh of his many victims.	09 Oubliette of Drowned Souls: After heavy rain, this deep oubliette floods. Countless prisoners have drowned here, and their mindless, terror-filled souls haunt the place.
04 Anguth's Library of Forbidden Knowledge: The warlock Anguth Fiendtalker keeps a repository of terrible knowledge here. Bound demons ward the library's precincts.	10 Questron's Pool of Profane Depths: Legend has it that this pool is so deep it is fed from the Sunless Sea. Sometimes, odd ripples disturb the pool's black, placid waters.
05 Portal of the Cracked Moonstone: Eldritch enchantments protect this ancient doorway of cracked white stones. The blasted bones of explorers lie about the door.	11 Trackless Labyrinth of the Silent Killers: A half-dozen gelatinous cubes silently glide through this torturous labyrinth. A few of the beasts have gained a measure of sentience.
06 Mine of the Slavering Maw: Something terrible, something eternally hungry lurks in the bowels of this abandoned, part-flooded mine.	12 The Thundering Chasm: A waterfall tumbles into this deep chasm, filling the air with spray and the roar of falling water. Precipitous, slick stairs lead to various hidden passageways.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR GAME

WE LOVE hearing about your games and how you use our books to have more fun with your friends. **WE WANT** to hear from you at whatho@ragingswan.com.

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GM'S MISCELLANY: MONSTROUS DELVES I

So often in our games, the tribes of evil humanoids the characters encounter are reduced to nothing more than flavourless and bland, faceless foes destined to fall before the heroes' might. This compilation changes that by presenting eight richly detailed tribes along with their lair designed to be easily integrated into your campaign with the minimum of effort and fuss. All you need to do is add the monsters' stats and their treasure!



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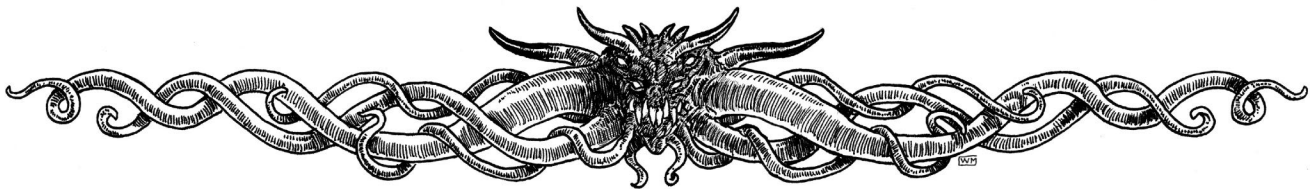
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Philippa Broadhurst, Paul Daly, William McAusland, Matt Morrow, Dean Spencer and Seth White. Some artwork copyright William McAusland, used with permission. Some artwork copyright Paul Daly, used with permission.

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FOREWORD

I like flavour and depth in my games, and I like bringing the world to life in my players' eyes and watching them explore. I want my players to feel my world and their adventures therein. Over the years, though, I've concluded that waffling on about my "genius creations" doesn't always work—my players want action and adventure, not endless info dumps of "fascinating" background details. They want to interact and explore, not take copious notes. I suspect your players are of similar ilk.

That's why this book (and many others of our resources) exists!

Who wants boring, bland, and forgettable enemies when you can have memorable, flavourful, richly detailed foes? Don't have boring orcs and bland goblins in your game—have the Orcs of the Flayed Skull and the Goblins of the Death Rune!

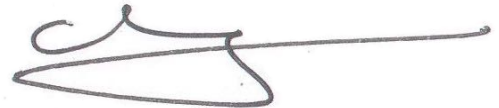
This book presents eight fleshed-out humanoid tribes (and their lairs) ready for your campaign. The book is system-neutral, so you can tailor the tribes to your own game and world. I hope you can find a place in your campaign for some of the tribes herein, and I hope your characters enjoy encountering (and defeating) them!

JOIN US!

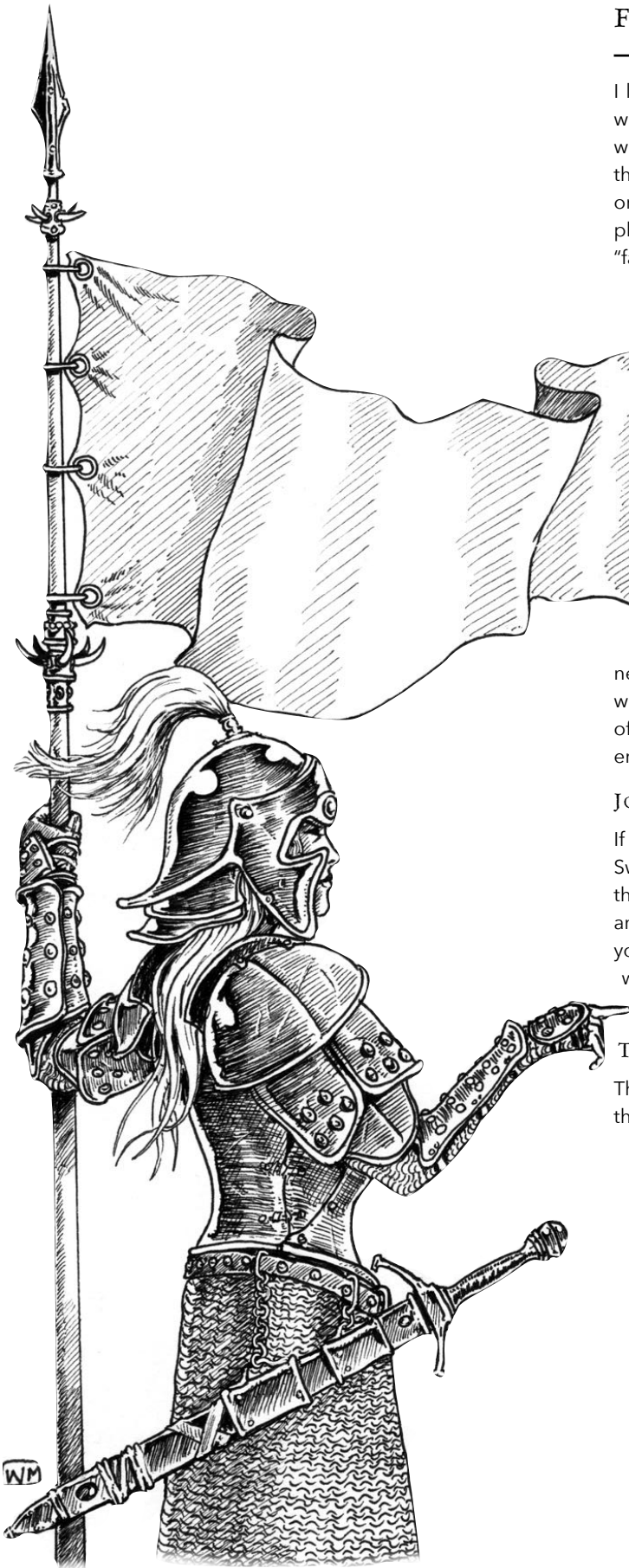
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THANK YOU

Thank you, as always, for using our books at your table. I hope they help you have fun with your friends,



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Torquay, UK



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WHAT IS A MONSTROUS DELVE?

A Monstrous Delve is not a “proper” adventure. Rather, it is a starting point for your creativity. We provide a flavoursome overview of the delve and the monsters therein. You provide their stats, their treasure, and the adventure hook for the characters to explore the place.

Monstrous Delves are designed so that you can add them into your campaign world with the minimum of fuss and effort. Have the characters got lost (deliberately or accidentally)? Have they decided to explore an area of wilderness you have yet to detail? Do you need a side trek or diversion? Simply drop a Monstrous Delve in their path!

Monstrous Delves are system-neutral; however, it is impossible to avoid all game references. A few generic terms such as elf, orc, fighter and cleric appear in the text. Modify these as necessary to suit your game and campaign world.

CUSTOMISING A MONSTROUS DELVE

“Here are the bones of the adventure. You must breathe life into the framework after you flesh it out.”

—Gary Gygax

Tweak and modify this Monstrous Delve to make it your own.

- **Campaign Setting:** This Monstrous Delve is designed for use in any snowy range of hills or mountains.
- **Location Descriptions:** The pages of this Monstrous Delve describing the delve itself include space specifically designed for you to make notes—adding game mechanics, denizens, treasures, and so on.



- **Denizens:** Monstrous foes lurk in the delve. Customise the numbers and powers of the denizens to provide an appropriate challenge for your characters. Remember that organised denizens will likely have a defensive plan for their home.
- **Treasure:** The text only details minor treasures the characters could discover in the delve. Most such trinkets are of little value but serve to underline the flavour of the delve and its denizens. Remember to add campaign and level-appropriate treasure (mundane and magical) when customising the delve.

IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

The tribes presented in this book are richly detailed, but they have been designed to be easy to insert into your own campaign setting. The notes below present brief details of where best each tribe

Bugbears of the Frozen Tears: The Bugbears of the Frozen Tears dwell in a snowy range of hills or mountains.

Gnolls of the Bleached Skull: The Gnolls of the Bleached Skull dwell in the Tangled Wood, which covers much of the Lonely Coast mini-campaign setting. However, the gnolls could dwell in the depths of any trackless forest.

Goblins of the Death Rune: The Goblins of the Death Rune dwell in the old, partly flooded gnomish minehold of Glimmerstone. Glimmerstone can be placed in virtually any isolated locale, but it works particularly well in a hill or mountain range.

Hobgoblins of the Mailed Fist: The Hobgoblins of the Mailed Fist dwell in three heavily fortified hill forts hidden deep in an inaccessible range of hills.

Lizardfolk of the Coiled Serpent: The Lizardfolk of the Coiled Serpent dwell amid the noisome depths of the Salt Mire in the Duchy of Ashlar mini-campaign setting. However, they could easily dwell in any swamp, marsh or mire.

Orcs of the Flayed Skull: The orcs of the Flayed Skull dwell in the cave fortress of Rakorzar. Extensive and heavily fortified, Rakorzar lies behind and beneath an old, long-since abandoned ruin of unknown provenance amid a range of rugged, tree-choked hills. This tribe are designed for use with the Duchy of Ashlar mini-campaign setting but could be easily placed in any borderland range of forested hills.

Orcs of the Severed Hand: The Orcs of the Severed Hand dwell in Armytr's Vault amid the Southern Woods, forming the Duchy of Ashlar's southern border. However, they could easily dwell in any forested borderland locale.

Troglodytes of the Ebon Lake: The Troglodytes of the Ebon Lake dwell in and under the Orestone—an island in the Lonely Coast mini-campaign setting. However, they could easily be placed on any rugged, storm-lashed island.

BUGBEARS OF THE FROZEN TEARS

The mangled clifftops of the White Cliffs shelter a terrible menace, for when the night air fills with the sound of invidious croaking, the Frozen Tears bugbears are on the hunt. These sadistic bugbears stalk the snow-choked passes on their bloated ice toad steeds, seeking those foolish enough to venture out after dark. Chasing their prey, the Frozen Tears seek to prolong their quarry's fear as long as possible. At the climax of their hunt, they strike, taking their victim's head as a trophy, the moment of fear forever frozen in ice by vile magic. It is these horrific expressions that earn the bugbears their standing in the tribe and the favour of their horrendous and profane witch-mother.



DELVE BACKGROUND

In ages past, strange and inhuman civilisations raised queer towers and temples to the sky and venerated alien powers of unknown, primordial origin. There, upon indescribably stained altars, they practised blasphemous and abhorrent bloody rites and sacrificed countless victims to venerate and placate their otherworldly patrons.

But as with all things mortal, such civilisations eventually fell, and their cities and monuments crumbled into ruin and decay. Eventually, mighty glaciers crept down from the north and swallowed whole the remnants of one such civilisation—the pre-human kingdom of Karath. Until recently, nothing dwelled amid the frigid and frozen remnants of Karath. But now, as the glaciers finally begin their slow, inexorable retreat, a few fragments of their once-proud kingdom are emerging into the modern world.

THE WHITE CLIFFS

The White Cliffs, a twisted formation of snow-capped, jagged rock towering hundreds of feet in the air, looms over the hills and lowlands sprawling to the south. Here, among the wild and desolate high hills, the air itself hangs heavy with menace. If the hills were not rich in natural resources such as iron and rare gems, even the hardiest folk would avoid it.

Winter brings frequent blizzards, choking many of the passes and making travel or industry impossible. However, during the brief summer months, the lower passes are free of snow, and some mining is possible. Rumours abound of the region being haunted. Travellers tell stories of headless corpses shuffling along rocky paths, drawn to flame like a moth. Those braving the dizzying heights are advised not to travel alone and to not venture from the trail.

The White Cliffs is not without its beauty, albeit a dangerous one. Known as the Frozen Tears, a series of waterfalls cascade from the top of the White Cliffs down to a hidden pool at its bottom. Many of the waterfalls fall 30 to 50 ft. in length, yet a few drop 100 ft. or more. The waterfalls, especially at the higher elevations, spend most of the year in a semi-frozen state, the long icicles like teardrops giving the feature its name. Yet, the wise know to gaze at their beauty from afar, for a tribe of bugbears who take the Frozen Tears as their name lair in the hidden caves behind the falls.

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

The characters can stumble on the Frigid Halls of the Inhuman Ones by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the place:

- **Adventurous Sage:** Kustaa Nousia (old male human wizard) is fascinated by ancient history and elder cultures. He believes that humanity is only the last in a long line of intelligent creatures to hold dominion over the land. He

wants to explore the ruins and hires the characters to accompany him. Depending on your setup, he might have a more nefarious goal—perhaps he has discovered certain ancient secrets may lie in the ruin, and he must know them.

- **Missing Explorer:** The explorer Katriina Montaja was recently in the local villages asking about the mysterious ruins that have appeared below the White Cliffs. She repeatedly said she would investigate the ruins—they fascinated her for some reason—and set off to the area two weeks ago. She has not been seen since. Katriina has a wealthy husband, Mauno, and he hires the characters to track down his wife.
- **Missing Miners:** Several mines near the White Cliffs are inaccessible during the winter but can be reached relatively easily during the brief summer months. A group of miners is long overdue, and the characters are asked to see if anything has befallen them. When they reach the mine, they discover it abandoned. Indistinct tracks in the snow lead the characters to the Frigid Halls of the Inhuman Ones.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A character might know rumours about the Bugbears of the Frozen Tears tribe. Perhaps the character is steeped in local lore or they heard a rumour in the last settlement they visited while drinking in a tavern or overheard two locals gossiping while browsing a marketplace. Use this list to determine what the character knows:

1. The Frozen Tears bugbears hunt in small packs. Fond of using magic to hide their numbers and sow fear during a chase, they collect the heads of their victims.
2. The Frozen Tears are not demons but bugbears who ride glacier toads and claim the White Cliffs as their hunting ground. They terrorise local miners and travellers passing through the area.
3. Sometimes, odd ruins emerge from the ice in the vicinity of the White Cliffs. The Bugbears of the Frozen Tears can sometimes be found nearby.
4. The White Cliffs will soon collapse—signs of its decay such as great cracks in its face are evident. The whole area is unstable—no one should go there.
5. The Frozen Tears is a series of waterfalls that cascade down the White Cliffs. The falls are part-frozen for much of the year.
6. Yem, the White Mother, serves as both an unofficial leader of the Frozen Tears and an object of reverence. Male bugbears compete with one another for a chance to mate with her and sire strong offspring.

Determine which rumours are true and false based on your campaign setup.

THE FROZEN TEARS TRIBE

Taking their name from the waterfalls plunging over the White Cliffs (whose half-frozen facade resembles streaming tears), the bugbears of the Frozen Tears are believed by many to be demons. Astride their glacier toads, they prowl the frigid passes of the White Cliffs, hunting for unwary travellers. Tormenting their quarry, they strike when the victim's fear is ripe, claiming their heads as grisly trophies.

SOCIETY & ORGANISATION

Much of a Frozen Tears bugbear's life revolves around night hunts. The bugbears take sadistic glee in the terror they cause as they chase their victims, playing with them to induce as much fear as possible. When the bugbears finally kill their victims, they take the heads, using magic to permanently freeze their prey's horrified expression.

The level of terror a bugbear inflicts determines their standing in the tribe. The more distressed their victims' visages, the greater the bugbear's status. This macabre contest determines mate selection and clan leadership. For males, they strive to hunt trophies that will make them worthy of mating with Yem, the White Mother.

All clans revere Yem, the White Mother, seeing her as the tribe's leader. This ancient, shrivelled female bugbear dwells in a cave behind a nearly frozen waterfall near the top of the White Cliffs. Still fecund, long ago she made a pact with a demon to increase her longevity and fecundity. The offspring sired from her womb, whether male or female, are stronger and wilier than other bugbears. Known as the Sons and Daughters of Yem, these bugbears often become clan chieftains. Having a Son or Daughter of Yem as part of a family is a great honour and privilege. Within her lair, a cadre of her daughters (the Daughters of Yem), her current consorts (Frozen Tears warriors) and numerous bugbear children attend her. The children spend the first few years of their lives with the White Mother before going back to their fathers. During this time, Yem instills in them a sense of superiority and arrogance towards those weaker than them.

PERSONALITIES

Most of the Frozen Tears tribe comprises terrifying bugbear warriors. A few members of the tribe, however, are exceptional for one reason or another.

- **Yem:** No one creature truly rules the Frozen Tears bugbears, but Yem, the hideous Witch Mother, acts as their spiritual leader and living goddess. Revered with equal parts love and fear, few bugbears dare to disobey her orders, and nearly all seek her blessing. A shapeshifter, the bugbear clans never know if she is watching them under the guise of wolf or bird, listening for any word of rebellion. Yem has lived far longer than any bugbear should, and no one in the tribe can remember a time when she was young.

- **Zega:** A stunted, twisted bugbear, Zega's appearance belies her inner strength, determination and utter lack of empathy with others. Wily, cunning and utterly vicious, she is the most feared and reviled bugbear female next to her mother, Yem.

ECOLOGY & LAIR

The Frozen Tears bugbears dwell in natural, hidden caves high atop the frozen peaks of the White Cliffs. Loosely organised by clans comprising a few small families, each group lairs in a network of interconnected caves and tunnels. There, they breed and train the glacier toads native to the region. The Frozen Tears ride these beasts when they hunt, giving rise to stories of fell demons, bearlike creatures that croak, haunting the valleys and passes of the White Cliffs.

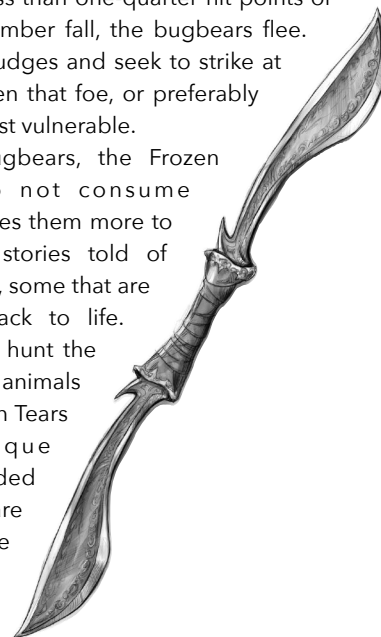
COMBAT & TACTICS

The Frozen Tears hunt in small packs mounted on glacier toads. Each pack usually contains a priest or sorcerer. The bugbears prefer to target lone travellers or small groups.

When hunting, they use illusionary magic to mimic the croaking of their glacier toads to hide their numbers and positions while they stealthily encircle their prey. Once in position around their suitably alarmed quarry, the warriors attack. The bugbears seek not to kill with this attack but instead to set their prey running. Then, the real hunt begins with the warriors darting around their sport. Priests or sorcerers support the warriors by casting fear-inducing spells. The bugbears keenly watch their victim's face, searching for that perfect moment of terror in their eyes and facial expressions. Only then do they go for the kill.

When faced with a powerful foe that stands their ground, the bugbears use their glacier toads' swallow ability to break their opponents. Like most sadists and bullies, the Frozen Tears have no stomach for pain or for seeing their own blood. If reduced to less than one-quarter hit points or more than half their number fall, the bugbears flee. However, they nurse grudges and seek to strike at those besting them when that foe, or preferably their loved ones, are most vulnerable.

Surprisingly for bugbears, the Frozen Tears bugbears do not consume humanoid flesh. It pleases them more to hear the nightmarish stories told of headless frozen corpses, some that are rumoured to come back to life. Instead, young warriors hunt the prolific deer and other animals in the region. The Frozen Tears warriors use a unique weapon—a double-bladed throwing kukri. They are fond of leaving one behind on a corpse to mark their kills.



THE DELVE

The Frigid Halls of the Inhuman Ones is a remnant of the ancient, pre-human kingdom of Karath. Buried for time uncountable, its remains are beginning to emerge from the ice and snow that have cloaked it for so long. The ruin has not gone unnoticed by the Bugbears of the Frozen Tears, and a small clan of several families has claimed it as their own.

THE IMMEDIATE SURROUNDS

The Frigid Halls of the Inhuman Ones lie at the base of the towering White Cliffs. Wind-blown snow covers the surrounds and for much of the day the ruins squat in the chill shadow cast by the cliffs.

Temperature: The air in the White Cliff's environs is freezing. Explorers can see their breath in the air, and without suitable protections—either magical or mundane—they will soon start to suffer the effects of extreme cold. At night, the temperature plunges well below zero.

Heaped Snow: Heaps of soft snow are difficult terrain and hinder movement. Particularly deep drifts could hide lurking bugbear sentries.

Icy Trails: A faint network of icy trails crisscross the area. Most lead (eventually) to the bugbears' home.



Tracks: Tracks throughout the locality hint at the creatures dwelling in the frigid ruin. These tracks are effaced with every fresh snowfall and thus may be obvious or difficult to spot as you choose.

DELVE LORE

A character might know something about the Frigid Halls of the Inhuman Ones. Perhaps they are steeped in local lore or have heard about the ruin from another adventurer or some other reputable source.

- An ancient ruin of unknown origin has begun to emerge from the ice and snow near the base of the Frozen Tears. It must have been buried for an age or more. Those who have seen the place from a distance describe it as “odd”.
- Some folk say that the ruins are the leavings of a pre-human civilisation that held sway here an uncountable number of centuries ago.
- Devils and demons haunt the White Cliffs and the ruins at their base. Their incessant inhuman howls and croaks can be heard when the moon hangs low in the sky.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

The delve has several notable locations:

1. **Frozen Colonnade:** This once-sheltered colonnade has long since been open to the sky. Here, the bugbears display some of their macabre frozen trophies.
2. **Garth of the Ancients:** A **Frozen Tears warrior** on sentry duty likely lurks here amid the heaped snow and ice.
3. **Empty Ruined Chamber:** This small chamber is open to the elements; sometimes, **bugbear younglings** come here to play.
4. **Lair of the Ice Toads:** Herein dwell the tribe's terrible **glacier toad** steeds. Unless the toads sleep, they are likely audible for some distance.
5. **Sleeping Chamber:** A bugbear family—a **Frozen Tears warrior**, his mate and a youngling dwell here.
6. **Prison Corridor:** This short, dark corridor is the warmest place in the whole ruin. In the vanishingly unlikely event the bugbears have taken a prisoner, they languish here.
7. **Family Chamber:** Here dwells a **Frozen Tears warrior** and his mate. The pair have no young.
8. **Family Chamber:** Here dwells a **Frozen Tears warrior** and his mate. The pair have two young.
9. **Gorr's Chamber:** Here dwells **Gorr**—the strongest of the warriors in this group—and his family. He is a Son of Yem and leads the group.

GENERIC DELVE FEATURES

Many of the delve's locations share certain features:

Illumination: The illumination levels vary throughout much of the complex based on the time of day. Where light does penetrate the ruin, except on very cloudy days, the light levels are good—the sun's rays reflecting off the heaped snow and ice.

Temperature: It is freezing throughout the ruin.

Ceilings: The ceilings are 12 feet high, rising to a slight arch over the centre of corridors and chambers. In some places, the ceiling sags noticeably.

Walls: The walls are of dressed stone but the extreme temperature and the elements have taken their toll. The mortar is crumbling and many stones are noticeably loose.

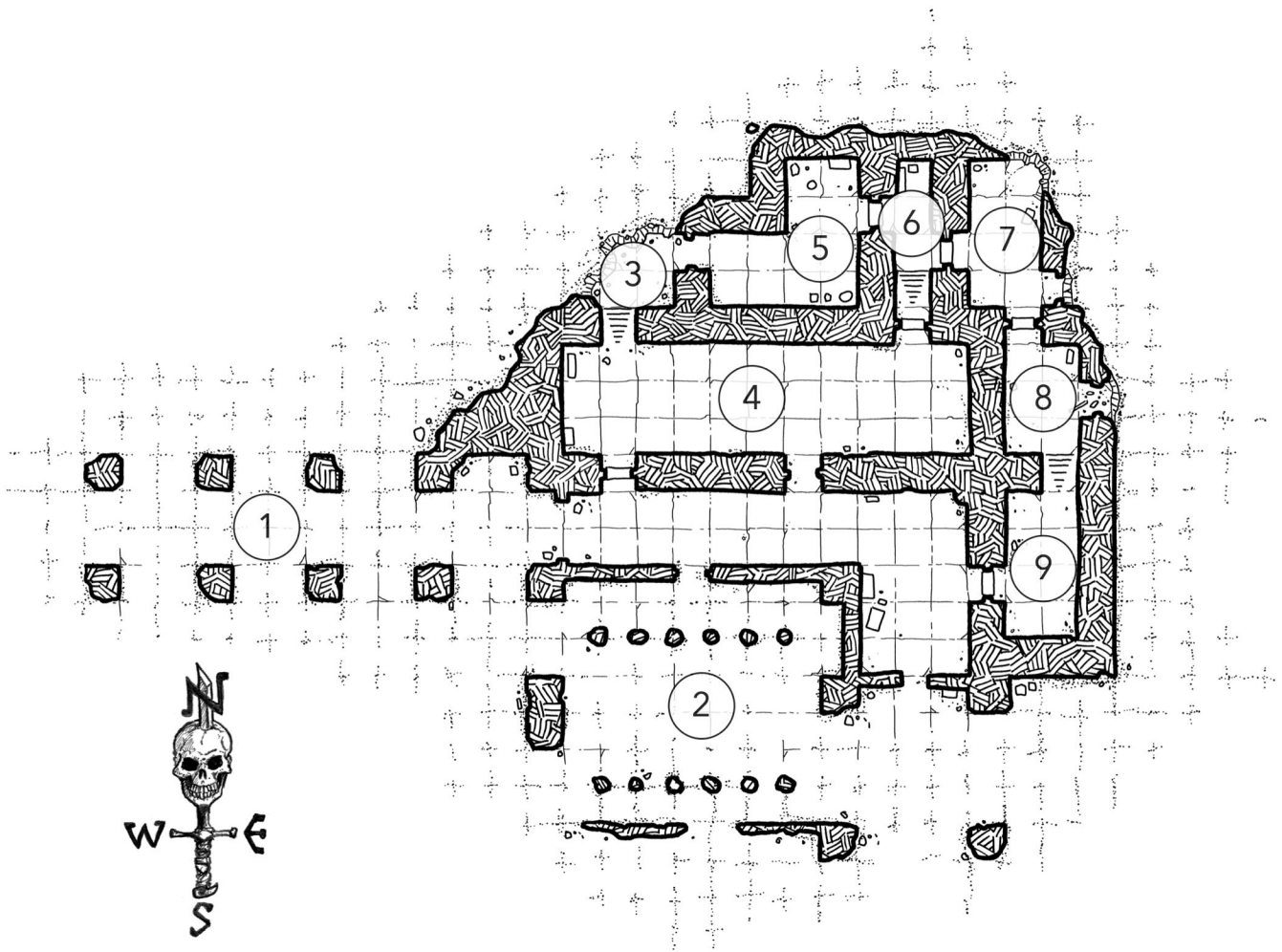
Floors: The flagged floors are worn and buckled. In most places, this is a mere annoyance; in a few spots, however, the floor counts as difficult terrain.

Slick Stairs: The stone stairs throughout the complex are slick with ice and are difficult terrain. The stair's risers are about one and a half feet high—too high for humans to use comfortably; this hints that the ancient builders of this complex were not human.

Doors: Stone doors open into the rooms they ward. The doors' clever stone mechanism has aged poorly, and now it is difficult to open any given door. Consequently, the bugbears leave most of the doors open.

Treasure, Trinkets & Trash: Use the Treasures, Trinkets & Trash sidebars to determine what the characters find if they search an area (or perhaps a fallen foe's body).

Dungeon Dressing: Use the Dungeon Dressing sidebars to breathe life and detail into the delve.



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GM NOTES

Sentries: The bugbears will likely keep a watch over the surrounds. Sentries may lurk in locations 1 and 2.

Frozen Heads: These frozen heads are those of the miners from the nearby mine.

Tracks: Tracks crisscross the area around the ruin. The wind and the ever-shifting snow erase most of these tracks on a daily basis. The tracks in the more sheltered garth (location 2) endure, however.

1: FROZEN COLONADE

This once-sheltered colonnade has long since been open to the sky. Here, the bugbears display some of their macabre frozen trophies.

Two rows of stone columns about 20 feet high lead toward a ruined building that emerges from the snow.

Snow & Ice: Low heaps of snow over compacted ice cover the ground in and around the Frozen Colonnade.

Stone Columns: These thick stone columns were once richly decorated. Centuries of grinding ice have effaced all such designs.

Frozen Heads: A frozen head—a miner who fell prey to the bugbear's depredations—sits at the base of each stone column. Each frozen head gazes at its opposite mate, and each is fixed in an expression of abject terror and pain.

2: GARTH OF THE ANCIENTS

A **Frozen Tears warrior** on sentry duty likely lurks here amid the heaped snow and ice.

Heaps of snow cover the ground between a dozen or so horribly eroded stone statues. Deeper snow lies heaped against the walls to the north. Odd tracks mar the snow.

Snow & Ice: Low heaps of snow over compacted ice cover the ground throughout the Garth of the Ancients.

- **Tracks:** Tracks in the snow show where the bugbears and their monstrous ice toads have been.

Hideous Statues: These hideous statues were once beautiful works of art depicting heroes of ancient Karath. Now eroded by endless winters, they are but decayed shadows of their former selves. The folk of ancient Karath were powerfully built, shaggy-haired ape creatures, and the remaining detail on these statues provide tantalising hints as to their origin.

Frozen Heads: A frozen head—a miner who fell prey to the bugbear's depredations—sits at the base of each statue. Each is fixed in an expression of abject terror and pain.

Snowy Floor: Powdery snow has blown into the chamber from outside and covers the floor. A smattering of snow also covers the corridor leading to location 5.

TREASURE, TRINKETS & TRASH

1. A golden loop glimmers in the wan light—it is a hoop earring worth 5 gp. Bright red frozen blood covers the earring's needle.
2. A dropped double-bladed throwing kukri lies part-buried in the snow. It has not been here long and its owner may come looking for it.
3. A frozen bloody rag is part-buried by snow.
4. A pouch holds a small chunk of glittering silver ore.

3: EMPTY RUINED CHAMBER

This small chamber is open to the elements; sometimes, **bugbear younglings** come here to play.

The northern wall of this small chamber has collapsed outward. Wind-blown snow covers the floor.

Frozen Rubble: A “skirt” of frozen rubble—the remains of a wall—has fallen outwards. Although the rubble is dusted with snow it is easy to climb—unless a climber is fleeing from or rushing toward combat.

Tracks: The snow covering the floor here is light and easily takes footprints. If young bugbears have recently played here, their tracks will be clearly visible. The tracks lead toward location 5.

4: LAIR OF THE ICE TOADS

Herein dwell the tribe’s terrible **glacier toad** steeds. Unless the toads sleep, they are likely audible for some distance.

A terrible smell fills the frozen air, and several large toads lie about the floor.

Glacier Toads: The **glacier toads** may or may not be aware of the characters’ approach. Once combat is joined, however, they croak loudly and often to alert the nearby bugbears to the presence of intruders.

Toad Dung: A smattering of toad dung likely covers the floor. The bugbears gather the dung for fuel for their fires.

5: SLEEPING CHAMBER

A bugbear family—a **Frozen Tears warrior**, his mate and a youngling dwell here.

A triple-wide bedroll fills the north part of the chamber. A smattering of camping gear covers the nearby floor.

Camping Gear: The bugbears sleep in the northern part of the chamber out of the wind that sometimes blows into the chamber from location 3. Their possessions mainly comprise equipment stolen from slain miners, explorers and the like. It is uniformly of good, sturdy make but now suffused with bugbear stench and filth.

GM NOTES

Giant Toads: *Decide how many glacier toads lair herein; ideally there would be one toad for every Frozen Tears warrior.*

Development: *If the alarm has been raised, the warrior is elsewhere but his mate vigorously defends the youngling.*

DUNGEON DRESSING

1. Thick ice covers the floor. The ice glimmers evil in the light but lurks in the darkness to slip the unwary.
2. The ancient mortar around a stone in the wall has entirely disintegrated. The stone sits slightly proud and can be easily removed; treasure may lurk behind it.
3. Large pats of ice toad dung—not yet gathered for a fire—dot the floor.
4. A suspicious patch of yellow ice mars the floor.

GM NOTES

Prisoners: Any prisoners held by the bugbears will be in location 6. Perhaps the bugbears fancy some sport and have taken a prisoner for their young to terrorise.

Silver Dagger: This could be a magic item or merely a valuable weapon suitable for a noble or similar individual. It is valuable.

6: PRISON CORRIDOR

This short, dark corridor is the warmest place in the whole ruin. In the vanishingly unlikely event the bugbears have taken a prisoner, they languish here.

Three doors pierce the walls of this narrow, dark passage. A stone box stands at the north end of the passage.

Illumination: it is dark in this corridor.

Temperature: Protected from the wind and somewhat insulated by the surrounding chambers, this is the warmest place in the ruin.

7: FAMILY CHAMBER

Here dwells a **Frozen Tears warrior** and his mate. The pair have no young.

Two rents in this chamber's walls are part-blocked with crude breastworks of piled rubble. The mundanities of life—bed furs, a scattering of possessions and so on lie about the chamber.

Jumbled Windbreak: Piles of frosted rubble partly block both holes in the wall. This isn't a defensive feature—rather, its function is to block the worst of the wind entering the room.

Frozen Rubble: There is a "skirt" of frozen rubble—the remains of one of this room's walls have fallen outwards. The rubble below the northern hole is easy to climb even though it is dusted with snow. The rubble below the smaller hole in the wall to the south is steeper and unstable.

Snowy Floor: Powdery snow has blown into the chamber and covers the floor.

Camping Gear: The bugbears' possessions comprise equipment stolen from slain miners, explorers and the like. It is uniformly of good, sturdy make but now suffused with bugbear stench and filth. A character searching the chamber finds a hidden treasure:

- **Hidden Treasure:** This beautiful silver dagger has a red ruby set in its pommel. When held to the light, a strange glimmering is noticeable in the ruby's depths.

TREASURE, TRINKETS & TRASH

1. A scattering of silver and gold coins lie encased in the ice coating the floor. The characters can retrieve the coins by chipping them out of the ice.
2. A frozen, empty sack hangs from a stone projecting from a wall.
3. A frozen head wears gold stud earrings (worth 10 gp).
4. This luscious white fur (worth 50 gp) was taken from a gigantic white wolf. It is luxuriously warm and soft.

8: FAMILY CHAMBER

Here dwells a **Frozen Tears warrior** and his mate. The pair have two young.

This chamber is a riot of disorganisation. A rent in the east wall is mostly filled with rubble.

Frozen Rubble: A "skirt" of frozen rubble—the remains of one of this room's walls—has fallen outwards. Although the rubble is dusted with snow it is easy to climb—unless a climber is fleeing from or rushing toward combat.

Snowy Floor: Powdery snow has blown into the chamber and covers a five-foot section of floor directly in front of the hole in the wall.

Camping Gear: The bugbears' possessions comprise equipment stolen from slain miners, explorers and the like. It covers the floor in a disorganised mess, and the whole chamber counts as difficult terrain. A character searching the chamber finds a hidden treasure:

- **Hidden Treasure:** A pouch hidden in an old sack filled with furs serves as a pillow. The pouch contains some gold and silver coins.

9: GROR'S CHAMBER

Here dwells **Gror**—the strongest of the warriors in this group—and his family. He is a Son of Yem and leads the group.

The smell of sweat and fur hangs heavily in this dark chamber. A mass of possessions—furs, bedrolls and the like—covers much of the floor. Frozen heads arrayed around the walls gaze into the centre of the chamber.

Stone Door: The door leading to location 1 is closed. It is difficult to open—and this cannot be done quietly.

Frozen Heads: Almost a score of frozen heads—mainly human, along with a few dwarves, decorate this room. All looked terrified at the moment of their death.

Camping Gear: Gror, his mate and their three younglings sleep in the southern part of the chamber. Their possessions mainly comprise equipment stolen from slain miners, explorers and the like. It is uniformly of good, sturdy make but now suffused with bugbear stench. Gror has accumulated some choicer treasures than his brethren.

GM NOTES

Choicest Treasures: *Gror has the choicest treasures among the bugbears lurking in the ruin. The characters will find these treasure here—probably in toad saddlebags.*

DUNGEON DRESSING

1. A frozen head—of a terrified bearded man—sits atop a narrow pillar of pile rubble. Judging by the man's expression, he died in abject terror.
2. Long, blue/white icicles hang from the ceiling like stalactites. They glitter in the light.
3. The air in this area is particularly chill. Icicles hang from the ceiling and the floor is slick with ice.
4. Crimson splatters of frozen blood decorate the floor.

AFTERMATH

Once the characters have explored the Frigid Halls of the Inhuman Ones and dealt with its denizens, resolve the adventure hook that brought them to the place. If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

- **Adventurous Sage:** Assuming Kustaa Nousia survives the adventure, he pays the characters the agreed fee. That could be the end of his association with the characters. However, if you decide to use "Other Ruins" detailed below, he could engage the party to accompany him on a longer, more perilous expedition.
- **Missing Explorer and Missing Miners:** The folk for whom the characters seek are likely dead before the adventure starts, and their heads decorate the bugbears' frigid home. If this is the case, the characters can recover their remains and return them to civilisation.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

Once the characters move on, the delve might simply fade from your campaign—never to be revisited. Alternatively, it could feature in future adventures and events:

- **Other Ruins:** The shifting snow could reveal more ancient ruins—or perhaps even cave entrances—in the locality. Such features could reveal more of the ancient kingdom of Karath and form the basis for a series of linked adventures. Frozen Tear bugbears likely lurk within.
- **Missing Explorer:** Katriina Montaja (see "Missing Explorer") might still be alive if she is not in the bugbears' clutches. Rather, she could have been carried away by some other ferocious monster—perhaps a raiding frost giant. The characters happen upon signs of a battle and, amid its leavings, uncover evidence—perhaps a journal or monogrammed possession—that proves she was there. Tracks lead away to the monster's lair. The characters can still rescue her!
- **Missing Miners:** If you decide the miners (see "Missing Miners") are still alive, they are likely not in the bugbears' clutches. Rather, the mine could have suffered a cave-in or some other marauding monsters could have trapped them therein. The characters can still rescue them!



GNOLLS OF THE BLEACHED SKULL

The depraved gnoll shaman Grirr Duskclaw lurks in the lightless dungeon below the Hill of the Sunken Skull. There in the endless dark, he toils over the blasphemous, blood-soaked creation of a legion of bloodspawn treants he plans to unleash on the nearby human settlements. A chance discovery leads to the characters learning of the Hill of the Sunken Skull, but not the horrors lurking beneath, and sets them on the path to bloody confrontation and death.

Designed for The Lonely Coast but easily adapted for virtually any other setting.



DELVE BACKGROUND

The gnoll shaman, Grirr Duskclaw, hungers to make more bloodspawn treants and to elevate his standing in the Bleached Skull tribe. To that end, Grirr has spent years stalking the deepest parts of the Tangled Wood, looking for trees old and large enough to suit his purposes.

During one of his hunts, he discovered an overgrown clearing ringed with ancient elms, oaks and yews. A strange, low hill squatted at the centre of the clearing. This was an ancient Tuath place—the Hill of the Sunken Skull. Grirr cared nothing for the origin of the place, its history or its significance to a long-dead people. Grirr only cared for how the hill and the small dungeon beneath could serve him.

After exploring the place and carrying out certain investigations upon the olden trees growing about the hill, Grirr gathered his followers, mates and children and brought them to the hill. Since then, Grirr has dwelt below the hill, siring younglings upon his many mates and plotting how he might create bloodspawn treants to serve him and his plans.

Ultimately, Grirr dreams of leading the Bleached Skull gnolls, but he has told no one of his scheme, not even his mates. For now, he is content to send out small parties of his followers to prey upon lone hunters, travellers, hermits and the like—for his trees must feed...

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

The characters can stumble on the Hill of the Sunken Skull by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the place:



- **Follow the Rumour:** The characters overhear two peasants talking about something a hunter found in the forest. The hunter, following a wounded deer, stumbled into a clearing. At the centre of the clearing, an olden monument of some sort rose from a low hill. A sense of nameless dread hung over the place, and the hunter dared not investigate. The peasants do not know the hunter's name—the story is doing the rounds in the village—but they know where the strange place is said to lie.
- **Follow the Old Map:** The characters found an old map carved into the wall of a looted Tuath tomb. It showed the location of (and named) the Hill of the Sunken Skull. Having researched the location and finding no information about it, the characters have realised they may have stumbled upon the location of a hitherto unknown Tuath tomb, monument or temple that may yet be unlooted. With this in mind, they decide to investigate the place.
- **Missing Folk:** The characters are investigating rumours of missing travellers. The party could have been hired to search for a specific someone, or they may have been hired to stop the ongoing disappearances (perhaps by the local authorities.) They stumble upon the Hill of the Sunken Skull while following a promising set of tracks.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A character might know rumours about the Gnolls of the Bleached Skull. Perhaps the character is steeped in local lore, or they heard a rumour in the last settlement they visited while drinking in a tavern or overheard two locals gossiping while browsing a marketplace. Use this list to determine what the character knows:

1. The Bleached Skull gnolls are vicious killers. They dwell in small groups deep in the forest and sometimes creep forth to capture sacrifices for their blasphemous gods.
2. The Bleached Skull gnolls festoon trees near their lairs with the skulls. When the winds blow hard through the trees, the skulls clack together. Some say the skulls sing a song of fell praise to the tribe's foul patrons.
3. The shaman of the Bleached Skull tribe can talk to certain ancient trees in the forest and command them to do their bidding. Such trees make fearsome enemies.
4. Human feet have never trod the innermost reaches of the Tangled Wood. It is a gloomy, primal place claimed and fought over by gnolls, goblins and other terrible things.
5. The Bleached Skull gnolls worship a demon of the elder world. They are utterly without mercy. They live only to slay and breed.
6. The gnolls of the Bleached Skull are atavistic sadists. The words of their shaman carry great weight in the tribe.

Determine which rumours are true and false based on your campaign setup.

THE BLEACHED SKULL TRIBE

Feral denizens of the deepest, wildest reaches of the Tangled Forest, the Bleached Skull gnolls are creatures of atavistic desires and sadistic lusts. Ferocious warriors and terrible foes, they worship the primal, blood-soaked spirits of the woodlands and war with their neighbours for booty and sacrifices to bury alive beneath their sacred trees.

Atypically for gnolls, the Bleached Skull tribe dwells deep in enclaves scattered throughout the thick, twisted depths of the primal forest. Driven here from their normal hunting ranges by some long-forgotten inter-tribal warfare, the gnolls found sanctuary among the ancient trees of the forest and eventually cast aside their old demonic gods to worship the woodland spirits of their new home.

The primal spirit of the woodlands touches a few of the gnolls. Within their veins courses the savage, primal vitality of the wild. Such creatures hold positions of power and influence within the tribe through dint of their exceptional strength and boundless bloodlust.

SOCIETY & ORGANISATION

The Bleached Skull's society is a turbulent, violent place. Shifting personal alliances and interminable blood feuds govern life, and while a strong subchieftain or shaman can control the warriors, their base instincts ever lurk just below the surface.

The strongest hold positions of power within the tribe, and hereditary rule is unknown. Personal might and the chieftain's will govern day-to-day life.

Religion: The Bleached Skulls believe they venerate the nameless, primal spirits of the woodlands. While this may be true in your campaign, it is also possible that another entity—perhaps a powerful demon or death god—grants the shaman their abilities. The truth of the matter is likely unimportant in many encounters featuring the Bleached Skull gnolls.

Bloodspawn Treants: Bloodspawn treants are the twisted result of the Bleached Skull shamans' sacrificial practises. The tribe's depraved shamans open the veins of their sacrifices before burying them alive under the forest's ancient trees. The trees' roots greedily feed upon the sacrifices' vital fluids while the final doom-laden screams of the damned infuse the trees with an atavistic bloodlust driven by a malevolent, primal sentence.

PERSONALITIES

Most of the Bleached Skull tribe comprises warriors intent on little but battle-glory, mating and their personal standing. A few members of the tribe, however, are exceptional for one reason or another.

- **Ryrr Silverfur** (CE middle-aged male gnoll) leads the tribe but rarely now emerges from his forest lair. Ryrr is content to sire many young and accept the tributes of his

followers. This huge, much-scarred gnoll is a terror in battle and fond of decapitating those who challenge him.

- **Brexak Bloodfinger** (CE female gnoll) thirsts for power and dreams of creating an unstoppable legion of bloodspawn treants to sweep all other tribes and races from the Lonely Coast and the Tangled Wood. Brexak is a supremely dangerous psychopath.

ECOLOGY & LAIR

The severed heads of slain enemies mark the approaches to a Bleached Skull camp. Set upon wooden stakes driven deeply into the forest floor or set high up in the boughs of the surrounding trees, these battle trophies mark the lair as macabre, pitiless places.

Normally protected by thick walls of gorse and bramble or dense stands of ancient trees, Bleached Skull gnolls prefer deep valleys, hidden coombes and steep-sided gorges for their lairs. Chieftains build great wooden halls deep in these valleys; within, the warriors feast and indulge their orgiastic desires for blood sports. Normal gnolls dwell in rude wattle and daub huts surrounding the chieftain's hall. Huts closest to the hall belong to the tribe's subchieftains, champions and other favoured folk.

Male gnolls live with several mates—constant raiding and warfare keep the numbers of males low—and between 2 – 6 infants. Infant mortality is high; accidents, fights, punishments and predators all take their toll on the tribe's young. A few family groups also contain older gnolls, but this is rare as life in the Bleached Skull is typically short and brutal.

A Bleached Skull encampment has few, if any, slaves. Enemies taken on the battlefield are only spared to become living sacrifices for the tribe's sacred trees (see "Religion" for more details). The young, non-combatants and a few elderly, crippled warriors carry out menial tasks, and all except the youngest child stand ready to repel interlopers.

Appearance: Tall and muscular, Bleached Skull gnolls are dirty creatures; their thick, mottled brown fur is often splattered with mud and blood. They have hyena-like heads upon which most wear skull-topped pot helmets.

COMBAT & TACTICS

Bleached Skull gnolls overwhelm their enemies through weight of numbers and their terrible, primal savagery. In battle, they strike from ambush, hurling volleys of javelins into their enemies' flanks before bursting from cover in a screaming wave of flesh, steel and violence.

The gnolls' battle tactics are unsubtle and brutal. They mob opponents, surrounding and cutting down enemies. Chieftains and champions lead from the front and vie for glory by slaying the most dangerous enemies.

Bleached Skull gnolls ask for and grant no mercy in battle. They take prisoners only when their shaman demand sacrifices for their sacred trees or when a chieftain desires entertainment. Those unlucky enough to fall into the tribe's hands can expect nothing but a painful, drawn-out death.

THE DELVE

The Hill of the Sunken Skull was once a place sacred to the Tuath—a race of ancient humans who lived in the Lonely Coast’s trackless forest centuries before the Lochers claimed the place as their own. Eventually, the Tuath’s enemies—the numberless goblins of the interior—annihilated the humans at the climax of a protracted struggle that lasted decades.

With the Tuath’s destruction, their holy places and settlements fell into ruin, and gradually, the forest reclaimed them. The goblins and other forest dwellers despoil many such places, but a few have escaped their attentions. Periodically, adventurers discover an unopened Tuath tomb or some foul denizen of the deep forests claims such a locale as their home.

So it was with the Hill of the Sunken Skull. The gnoll shaman, Grirr Duskclaw, of the Bleached Skull gnolls, found the place while searching for elder oaks suitable for being transformed into bloodspawn treants and made it his home.

DELVE LORE

A character might know something about the Hill of the Sunken Skull. Perhaps they are steeped in local lore or have heard about the Tuath and their fall from another adventurer or some other reputable source of information.

- Many old sites—raised by the Tuath centuries ago—are scattered throughout the Tangled Wood. This hill and its stones could be one such place.
- The Tuath built primitive temples in which to worship the spirits of earth and water they believed dwelled in the forest. Most such places were despoiled long ago or swallowed by the forest.
- Every now and then, adventurers emerge from the Tangled Wood with news of a newly discovered Tuath site. Some such places are temples, while others are the tomb or monument to a fallen hero-king. Many have ancient loot within.



NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

The delve has several notable locations:

1. **Atop the Sunken Skull:** Two low tunnels hacked into the hill provide access to the dungeon within.
2. **Hall of the Six:** In ages past, the Tuath gathered here to venerate their patrons and plan their ongoing battles against the numberless goblins of the Tangled Wood.
3. **Church of the Olden Ones:** Here, the Tuath venerated the spirits of the earth and water they believed dwelled in the Tangled Wood.
4. **Cavern of the Reliquary:** The Tuath stored the remains of one of their powerful shaman in this sacred cavern.
5. **Chamber of the Warriors:** Grirr’s mates dwell herein. These **gnoll females** are ferocious warriors and vigorously defend themselves and their offspring (who dwell in location 6).
6. **The Nursery:** Grirr’s offspring—**young gnolls** of various ages—dwell herein. The young likely pose little threat to the characters.
7. **Cavern of the Befouled Pool:** Disease lurks in this once-clean pool of freshwater.
8. **The Font:** A font filled with fresh pure water juts from the north wall; Grirr has not yet despoiled it.
9. **Grirr’s Lair:** The gnoll shaman, **Grirr Duskclaw**, dwells in this cavern.

GENERIC DELVE FEATURES

Many of the delve’s locations share certain features:

Illumination: Darkness.

Ceilings: In the cavern portion of the dungeon, the ceiling height varies between five and 14 feet high. In worked parts of the dungeon, the ceiling is 12 ft high.

Walls: The delve’s walls mostly comprise tightly fitted, unmortared stone blocks of various sizes. Over the long years, some of the blocks have shifted and moved. In some such spots, the walls bulge outward, and water oozes from between the stones.

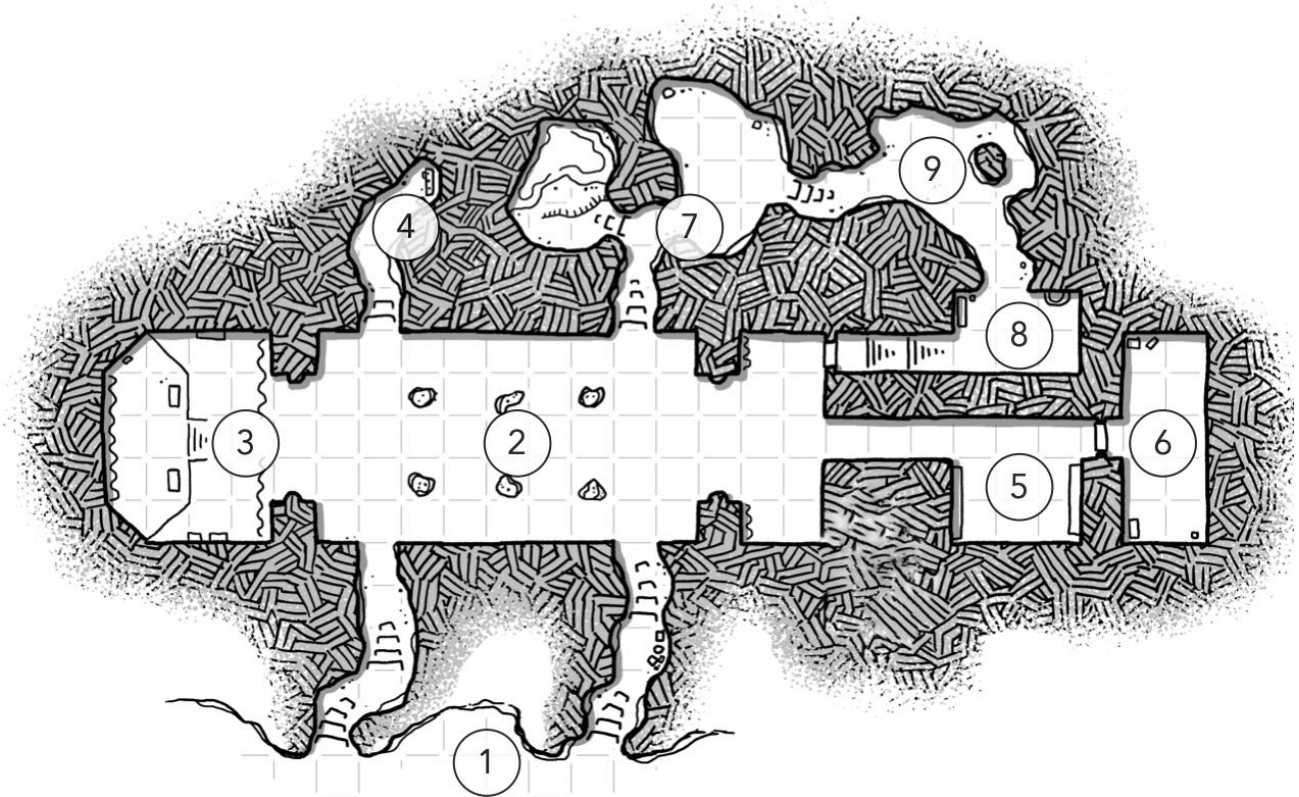
Floors: The floor is of hewn stone. In most places, the floor is essentially flat and does not impede movement.

Doors: The delve’s doors are in uniformly poor condition. Warped by moisture in the air, they are hard to open and harder to shut.

Rough Hewn Stairs: Most of the dungeon’s stairs are rough-hewn and irregular and follow the contours of the rock; squares containing rough-hewn stairs are difficult terrain.

Treasure, Trinkets & Trash: Use the Treasures, Trinkets & Trash sidebars to determine what the characters find if they search an area (or perhaps a fallen foe’s body).

Dungeon Dressing: Use the Dungeon Dressing sidebars to breathe life and detail into the delve.



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GM NOTES

The Clearing: *Few humanoid feet have trod the earth of this clearing. It is wild, overgrown and has a primal feel. Skilled trackers finding tracks through the undergrowth may gain useful clues as to what lurks in the delve.*

The Six: *These six statues will not animate, although the characters may think they will. If they were animate guardians they would have attacked Grirr when he first arrived here.*

I: ATOP THE SUNKEN SKULL

Two low tunnels hacked into the hill provide access to the dungeon within.

A low hill rises out of a part-overgrown clearing. Two small holes pierce the hill at its base, and a mass of old standing stones crown the low hill. The whole looks a bit like a gigantic skull part-sunken into the ground.

The Hill and its Surrounds: The hill stands at the centre of an overgrown clearing. Ancient trees and thick stands of brambles and bushes make reaching the clearing difficult. A character skilled in tracking finds the circuitous route through the undergrowth used by the delve's denizens.

The Stones: Old standing stones crown the hill in a semblance of a great nest of horns rising from the sunken skull. The stones are worn and pitted through uncountable years of weathering.

The Eyes: Two low tunnels cut into the hill provide access to Grirr's lair below. Over the first flight of stairs, the ceiling is only three feet high. At the first landing, it rises to roughly six feet high. The stairs are difficult terrain.

2: HALL OF THE SIX

In ages past, the Tuath gathered here to venerate their patrons and plan their ongoing battles against the numberless goblins of the Tangled Wood.

Six standing stones roughly six feet high stand in two files at the rough centre of this large chamber. Stone fragments lie about each stone.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 20 feet high.

The Six: Six standing stones akin to the stones rising from the hilltop above stand in two rows in this chamber. They were all carved in the vague likeness of noble human warriors, but each has been vindictively disfigured.

Bits of stone fill the squares adjacent to each statue, which are difficult terrain. Characters in a square adjacent to a stone gain partial cover.

Martial Carvings: Old carvings cover these walls and depict noble human warriors battling against foul, craven goblins. The humans are always depicted as victorious.

TREASURE, TRINKETS & TRASH

1. Intricate carvings of birds of prey are just visible on this old, rusting spear tip. The work is beautiful.
2. A dusty urn fills a cobweb-obscured niche. The urn holds fine grey dust.
3. The iron boss of a shield lies amid a smattering of rotted wood fragments. The etching of a clenched fist decorates the boss.
4. A stone statuette of a wolf fills a tiny wall niche.

3: CHURCH OF THE OLDEN ONES

Here, the Tuath venerated the spirits of the earth and water they believed dwelled in the Tangled Wood.

Huge, brittle tapestries frozen into immobility hang from the ceiling and part-block the view of a raised dais and two altars. Another faded tapestry hangs behind the two altars.

Huge Tapestries: These ancient, brittle and faded tapestries are held together by dust, inertia, and cobwebs. The tapestries once depicted bucolic woodland scenes but only the vaguest of detail remains visible.

Stone Dais: A five-foot-high stone dais fills the western part of the chamber. Characters must use the stairs or climb the dais's sides to reach the altars.

Steps: The well-cut steep stairs lead up the altar. They are difficult terrain.

Altars: These stone blocks are altars dedicated to the primal earth and water spirits worshipped by the Tuath. The northern altar is dedicated to the water spirits and features carvings of tranquil woodland pools. The southern pool is dedicated to the spirits of the earth and features carvings of caves under the woodlands.

4: CAVERN OF THE RELIQUARY

The Tuath stored the remains of one of their powerful shaman in this sacred cavern.

A set of rough-hewn stone steps descend to a small dead-end cavern. A heavy stone box about the same as a sarcophagus lies at the end of the cavern.

The Reliquary: This heavy stone box is the same size as a sarcophagus. Thus far, it has resisted Grirr's casual attempts to open it. He lusts after the treasures no doubt lurking within but dares not ask any of his brethren for assistance for fear of having to share whatever is inside.

- **Bones:** Mouldering bones—the remains of a powerful Tuath spellcaster—along with scraps and fragments of cloth and the like fill the reliquary.

DUNGEON DRESSING

1. A trickle of water oozes from between two stones, one of which has shifted slightly outward from the wall.
2. Muddy footprints of a large, bipedal humanoid lead across the floor. They lead away from location 7.
3. A whining sound fills the air; this is the wind lashing the hill and the stones above.
4. Part of the ceiling is wet and dangerously sagging; a small pile of moist grit lies beneath the affected patch.

GM NOTES

An Ancient Trap? *An ancient Tuath magic trap designed to go off when the reliquary is opened could yet lurk inside or on the reliquary.*

An Ancient Spirit: *The spirit of the ancient Tuath spellcaster could lurk within. Opening the box awakens the ghost. The ghost will likely not slay other humans or obvious good-aligned folk unless given cause but rather quizzes them about its people, the goblins and general happenings since its death. This is an opportunity for characters who enjoy roleplaying to shine.*

An Ancient Treasure: *Only metal, stone or magic could have survived the long centuries since the box was closed. Such an item would be of ancient Tuath artifice and an excellent opportunity to showcase some of the history of your world.*

GM NOTES

This chamber's inhabitants present a moral quandary. Most pose no threat to the characters, although they may snarl and attempt ineffective attacks. Killing them is easy, but this could trouble the conscience of good-aligned characters. There is no right way to resolve this encounter; it is an opportunity for role-play and character development.

5: CHAMBER OF THE WARRIOR GNOLLS

Grirr's mates dwell herein. These **gnoll females** are ferocious warriors and vigorously defend themselves and their offspring (who dwell in location 6).

Sleeping pallets are scattered about this room. The smell of sweat and other unidentifiable odours hang in the air.

Sleeping Pallets: Crude sleeping pallets—surrounded by scattered mundane personal possessions—dot the room. Squares containing sleeping pallets are difficult terrain.

Characters searching this chamber may find something of note. Roll on this list to determine what they find:

1. A bone comb decorated with geometric carvings.
2. Six tarnished silver coins hidden in a ripped shirt.
3. A sharp dagger in a plain leather sheath.
4. A pouch holding a tinderbox and several strips of oil-soaked cloth.
5. Three red-hued acorns (taken from a bloodspawn treat).
6. A small black stone (an onyx worth 10 gp) in an old sock.

6: THE NURSERY

Grirr's offspring—**young gnolls** of various ages—dwell herein. The young likely pose little threat to the characters.

This bed chamber is a riot of disorganisation. The smell of sweat, wet fur and other unidentifiable odours hang in the air.

Sleeping Pallets: Crude sleeping pallets—surrounded by mess—are scattered about the room. Squares containing sleeping pallets are difficult terrain.

Characters searching this chamber may find something of note. Roll on this list to determine what they find:

1. The handle and the stump of a shattered dagger.
2. A dirty pouch holding bits of string and shards of wood.
3. A ripped, filthy shirt sized for a child; it is the kind of garment a peasant's child would wear.
4. A filthy human doll missing one of its legs.
5. Dirty, soiled clothes.
6. A badly carved, chewed wooden statuette of a goblin.

TREASURE, TRINKETS & TRASH

1. A dusty, old pouch holds a few sharp shards of black stone—these are shards of obsidian worth 25 gp.
2. Two javelins of gnoll artifice lean against a wall. Although crudely made they are well-balanced and in excellent condition.
3. The ruin of a small coffer lies about the floor. It was once inlaid with silver but it has all been pried loose.
4. A dirty gold coin lies in a mud-filled indent in the floor.

7: CAVERN OF THE BEFOULED POOL

Disease lurks in this once-clean pool of freshwater.

The faint pitter-patter of water falling into a pool fills the air. To the west, a rough-hewn set of stairs descends to a small pool. Unidentifiable things float on the surface of the pool.

Befouled Pool: Foul things float on the surface of this pool, which once held clean, potable water; however, Grirr's bathing and foul ablutions have fouled the water. Disease lurks within.

Cracked Ceiling: Cracks riddle the ceiling above the pool; water drips from these cracks into the pool.

Floor: A two-foot-high escarpment cuts across the natural stone floor. The floor is difficult terrain.

Rubble: All the rubble in this cavern has been pushed against the walls into several piles. Squares containing rubble count as difficult terrain.

8: THE FONT

A font filled with fresh pure water juts from the north wall. Grirr has not yet despoiled it.

A small stone basin holding clear, fresh water juts from this chamber's north wall. An empty stone box lies against the western wall.

Stairs: These well-crafted, uniform stairs are difficult terrain.

Font: Fresh drinking water that wells up from somewhere below fills this font.

Stone Box: This plain stone box could have once been a trough; it does not have a lid.

9: GRIRR'S LAIR

The gnoll shaman, **Grirr Duskclaw**, dwells in this cavern.

A heap of furs lies against the north wall of this sunken cave.

Floor: The uneven, natural stone floor is difficult terrain.

Sleeping Pallet: Grirr's fur-heaped sleeping pallet lies against the north wall.

Natural Stone Column: This stone column gives partial cover to characters in an adjacent square.

Hidden Storage Niche: A smooth boulder the size of a human's head hides a secret storage niche cut into the chamber's floor.

GM NOTES

Perhaps Grirr has simply not yet tainted this font with his foul presence or perhaps it has some special property which has enabled it to remain pure.

Grirr is normally encountered in his chamber; however, if he is aware of intruders he may be elsewhere leading the dungeon's defence.

The characters should find most of Grirr's treasure here.

DUNGEON DRESSING

1. A faint smell—akin to wet fur—hangs in the air. The smell grows stronger if the party moves toward location 7.
2. Cobwebs hang from the ceiling in a great dusty clump.
3. Dirty footprints—a gnoll's—mar the stone floor.
4. A deep, shadowily niche pierces the wall low down near the floor. Roll on "Treasure, Trinkets & Trash".

AFTERMATH

Once the characters have explored the Hill of the Sunken Skull and dealt with its denizens, resolve the adventure hook that brought them to the place. If you used any of the hooks presented in “The Adventure Begins”, use these notes to resolve the adventure’s aftermath:

- **Follow the Rumour:** Once the characters have found the Hill of the Sunken Skull and cleared it of the gnoll infestation, they have nothing more to do and can move on to their next adventure. However, if any gnolls survive the party’s assault, eventually, the wider Bleached Skull tribe hears of the characters and their exploits. The gnolls swear revenge.
- **Follow the Old Map:** Once the characters have found the Hill of the Sunken Skull and cleared it of the gnoll infestation, they have nothing more to do and can move on to their next adventure. However, the map may show other locations or have awoken a broader interest in a character about the Tuath and their ancient civilisation. If the characters consult sages or others wise in Tuath lore, further wilderness adventures could result.
- **Missing Folk:** If the characters rescue anyone from the gnolls’ clutches, they’ll need to be escorted back to civilisation; likely, any surviving Grirr’s tender mercies will be traumatised, dehydrated and starved. Character escorting survivors back to their home settlements receive a heroes’ welcome.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

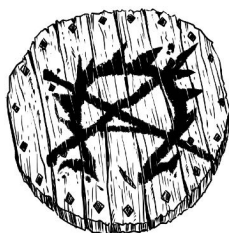
Once the characters move on, the Hill of the Sunken Skull might simply fade from your campaign—never to be revisited. Alternatively, it could feature in future adventures and events:

- **Other Tuath Sites:** Other Tuath sites dot the surrounding woodlands. Most have been found and pillaged long ago, but others may yet lurk, waiting for adventurers lucky enough to find them.
- **New Denizens:** The dungeon beneath the Hill of the Sunken Skull is unlikely to stay unoccupied forever; other monsters—or more gnolls—could claim the place and need cleaning out.
- **Revenge of the Bleached Skull:** Perhaps a survivor can describe the characters, or a tribal shaman uses powerful necromantic magic to speak with the dead. However, they learn the characters’ identities, the tribe vows revenge and sets out to hunt them down.



GOBLINS OF THE DEATH RUNE

The deranged Goblins of the Death Rune dwell in the old, flooded gnomish minehold of Glimmerstone. Obsessed with magic, the goblins hunt wizards, sorcerers and warlocks and force their doomed captives to add their knowledge to the tribe's store of eldritch power. But dark things dwell in Glimmerstone's flooded depths, and the goblins' depredations may yet hold the seeds of their own destruction...



DELVE BACKGROUND

Two centuries ago, the gnomish Turran clan discovered a cave whose floor had collapsed into a massive sinkhole. At the bottom of the sinkhole, they found deposits of gold and silver. Excited by this find—and the possibility of greater finds to come—the gnomes established the minehold of Glimmerstone. A decade later, the gnomes delved too deep and accidentally tunnelled into a subterranean lake of massive extent. The lake's water flooded the mine and killed most of the gnomes. The few survivors fled the disaster and scattered across the world.

Thus, was Glimmerstone abandoned. Only the settlement's uppermost level resisted the flooding, and its cramped tunnels deterred most visitors from staying long. That is until the Goblins of the Death Rune discovered the place. The small tunnels suited the diminutive goblins well, and the lake seemed well-stocked with fish and eels. Sometimes lone goblins disappeared from the lake, but the lives of goblins are normally short, unpleasant and violent, and the disappearances went unremarked upon.



THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

The characters can stumble on Glimmerstone by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the place:

- **Following an Old Map:** During a previous adventure, the characters found an old map showing the location of Glimmerstone. Having researched Glimmerstone and its history, the characters have decided to visit the place to see if adventure yet lurks within.
- **Legacy of Glimmerstone:** The gnome sage Fonkin Turran hires the characters to explore Glimmerstone. He wants to investigate what doom befell his ancestors and to see if it might be possible to recover their remains or any surviving records detailing Glimmerstone and its folk.
- **Missing Travellers:** The characters are investigating rumours of travellers going missing. They could have been hired to search for a specific someone or to put a stop to the ongoing disappearances (perhaps by the local authorities.) In any event, they stumble upon Glimmerstone in the course of their investigations.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A character might know rumours about the Goblins of the Death Rune. Perhaps the character is steeped in local lore, or they heard a rumour in the last settlement they visited while drinking in a tavern or overheard two locals gossiping while browsing a marketplace. Use this list to determine what the character knows:

1. The Death Rune Goblins have laired in the flooded gnomish minehold of Glimmerstone for years.
2. The Goblins of the Death Rune are obsessed with magic and arcane power. They number a surprising amount of spellcasters among their ranks.
3. The Death Rune Goblins are not a numerous tribe. They make up for what they lack in numbers with base cunning and magical might.
4. Elite members of the Death Rune tribe—warriors and spellcasters alike—ride into battle on tame wolves.
5. Wizards and the like captured by the tribe get slightly better treatment than their companions (who are normally tortured and killed immediately). Such folk are drained of all magical knowledge—providing them the chance to escape or bargain for their release.
6. Much of Glimmerstone is taken up by a subterranean lake of unknown depth. Dark, ancient things lurk within.

Determine which rumours are true and false based on your campaign setup.

THE DEATH RUNE TRIBE

The Goblins of the Death Rune are a small tribe of unusual goblins. The tribe counts a surprising number of spellcasters among its ranks. The tribe was founded by the legendary goblin hero Iglex Fril, who survived an archmage's *symbol of death*, which slew all his companions. Iglex was intelligent (for a goblin) and became obsessed with the wizard and the arcane symbol that could bring death to so many. He desired to harness such awesome power for himself—with it, he could subjugate all other goblins and become a mighty king!

Iglex died before he could realise his (unrealistic) dream, but by then, his obsession had taken root in the tribe.

SOCIETY & ORGANISATION

The Death Rune tribe is not numerous; it counts only 80 warriors, 48 noncombatants and only 62 young in its ranks. If it were not for the tribe's numerous spellcasters, it would have been wiped out long ago.

The tribe also keeps almost a dozen wolves as pets, guards and mounts and has secured the services of a small number of bugbear mercenaries. These powerful allies serve as the tribe's shock troops.

Over the decades the tribe has collected a goodly number of spellbooks, scrolls and the like. Most such items are held by the chief, Shik Zekka, who allows the tribe's spellcasters to study them. She controls access to the tribe's arcane treasury and uses it as a reward for good behaviour or a punishment for bad behaviour. Some books and items are beyond the goblins' abilities; such items are kept hidden and safe against the time their mysteries can be unlocked.

PERSONALITIES

Most of the tribe are nothing more than magic-obsessed goblins intent on gaining as much personal power and comfort as possible. A few members of the tribe, however, are exceptional for one reason or another.

- **Shik Zekka** (female goblin) rules the tribe by dint of her impressive intelligence and magical power. She enjoys lording it over her followers and loves showing off her arcane mastery. She has few morals and dreams of mastering the Death Rune; woe betide any nearby settlements if she should ever do so.
- **Firk Diz** (male goblin) dwells with his "lady" on Shik's Isle. Wholly obsessed with his own standing, he does not love Shik—in fact, he barely tolerates her. Firk is, however, an excellent actor and plays his role well. He suspects Shik keeps several spellbooks for herself; once he has found them Shik's days will be numbered.
- **Merf Gra** (male goblin) knows that something dwells in the lake. He has seen friends disappear—suddenly pulled under the water with no chance of escape. He blames Shik; she is a mighty wizard and should slay the beast. He

harbours some minor magic power and is ready—even eager—to betray his chieftain.

ECOLOGY & LAIR

The Goblins of the Death Rune dwell amid the ruin of the gnomish minehold of Glimmerstone. The goblins are at home in the gnomes' cramped passages and the remains of their delving. They fish Blackglimmer's dark, cold waters and hunt in the surrounding forest. When the mood takes them, small raiding parties sneak forth to ambush vulnerable travellers or to fall upon isolated homesteads and the like.

Most of the tribe dwells upon Blackglimmer's banks. The lake provides a useful source of food and somewhere to dump waste. The Death Rune's chieftain, Shik Zekka, claims an island of sorts set at the rear of the lake and holds court there away from the stink and noise of her followers.

The goblins are adept at sculling across the lake on crude but serviceable rafts crafted from wood taken from the surrounding woodlands.

COMBAT & TACTICS

Goblins, by nature, are vicious, evil creatures who delight in the pain and suffering of their foes and victims. The Death Run goblins are no exception to this, but the tribe's warriors rarely engage in hand-to-hand combat. They much prefer ranged combat—particularly from ambush. Archers and slingers soften up approaching foes while the tribe's spellcasters deal with enemy wizards and the like.

Elite warriors and powerful spellcasters ride wolves into battle—or at least around the fringes of a battle hurling missiles and spells at particularly troublesome foes—while the tribe's bugbear mercenaries wade into melee.

Unless fighting to defend their home, the tribe's warriors have no compunction fleeing a battle lost.



THE DELVE

Glimmerstone was once a gnome minehold but is now the home of the Goblin Death Rune tribe. Most of the gnomes' decorations have been vandalised and destroyed, but here and there, vestiges of their inhabitation survive.

The goblins claim only Glimmerstone's upper level—the rest was thought to have flooded decades ago when gnomish miners broke through into a subterranean lake. Glimmerstone's lower levels thus remain a mystery to the goblins. Some small portions of the mine could have survived the flooding, trapping a small band of gnomish survivors therein. Such gnomes—if they still live—have likely regressed to a more primitive, feral state and could present a serious danger to exploring adventurers.

Without powerful magic allowing water breathing, most characters will never explore the minehold's flooded depths.

DELVE LORE

A character might know something about Glimmerstone. Perhaps they are steeped in local lore or have heard about the place and its sorry history from another adventurer or some other reputable source of information.

- Two centuries ago, the gnomish Turran clan founded the minehold of Glimmerstone. Disaster struck when the place suddenly flooded, killing most of the gnomes. The few survivors fled the place, never to return. The deadly floodwaters have never subsided, and thus, the mine remains abandoned—at least by civilised folk.
- Strange, predatory things live in the lake that now lies at Glimmerstone's heart. Old stories tell of explorers' rafts and rowboats suddenly sinking—or perhaps being pulled beneath the chill, black water.
- Decades ago, a tribe of goblins—the Death Rune tribe—claimed the isolated and abandoned gnomish minehold of Glimmerstone. They've dwelled there ever since.



NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

The delve has several notable locations:

1. **The Glimmerdoor:** Once beautifully decorated with carvings chased with silver and gold depicting delving gnome miners, this heavy stone door has been extensively vandalised.
2. **Grand Processional:** This wide corridor is visible to the **wolves** lairing to the east. A fight here brings forth the **bugbear mercenaries** in location 6 to investigate.
3. **The Stonefather's Hall:** Dedicated to Anto the Stonefather, the goblins have defiled this temple.
4. **The Howling Kennels:** The goblins keep their **wolf** pets in this noisome chamber. The wolves do not approach Blackglimmer—they sense foul things lurk within.
5. **Wolf-Keepers' Chamber:** **Goblin wolf riders** lair in these chambers so they can be close to their mounts.
6. **Chamber of the Hairy Ones:** **Bugbear mercenaries** dwell herein. They are loyal to one another and gold.
7. **The Commons:** Here dwell the bulk of the **goblin** tribe on a raised area overlooking Blackglimmer.
8. **Common Cave:** Some **goblins** have grown afraid of what might lurk in Blackglimmer and live here instead.
9. **Blackglimmer:** The unknowably deep and deceptively calm waters of Blackglimmer fill this large cavern. Aberrant, hungry things dwell in its lightless depths.
10. **Shik's Isle:** Here dwells the Death Rune's chieftain, **Shik Zekka**, along with her paramour and her apprentice.
11. **Chamber of the Doomed:** The goblins keep their (doomed) prisoners in this cramped, isolated chamber.

GENERIC DELVE FEATURES

Many of the delve's locations share certain features:

Illumination: Darkness fills Glimmerstone's precincts.

Ceilings: The ceilings are seven feet high throughout the worked portions of the dungeon.

Walls: Throughout Glimmerstone's worked portions, the walls are of cut and dressed stone. Here and there, water oozes through cracks between the stones.

Floors: Throughout Glimmerstone's worked portions, the floors are of well-crafted flagstones. In most places, the floor is flat and unimpeded.

Doors: Old wooden doors in a bad state of repair ward many of Glimmerstone's chambers.

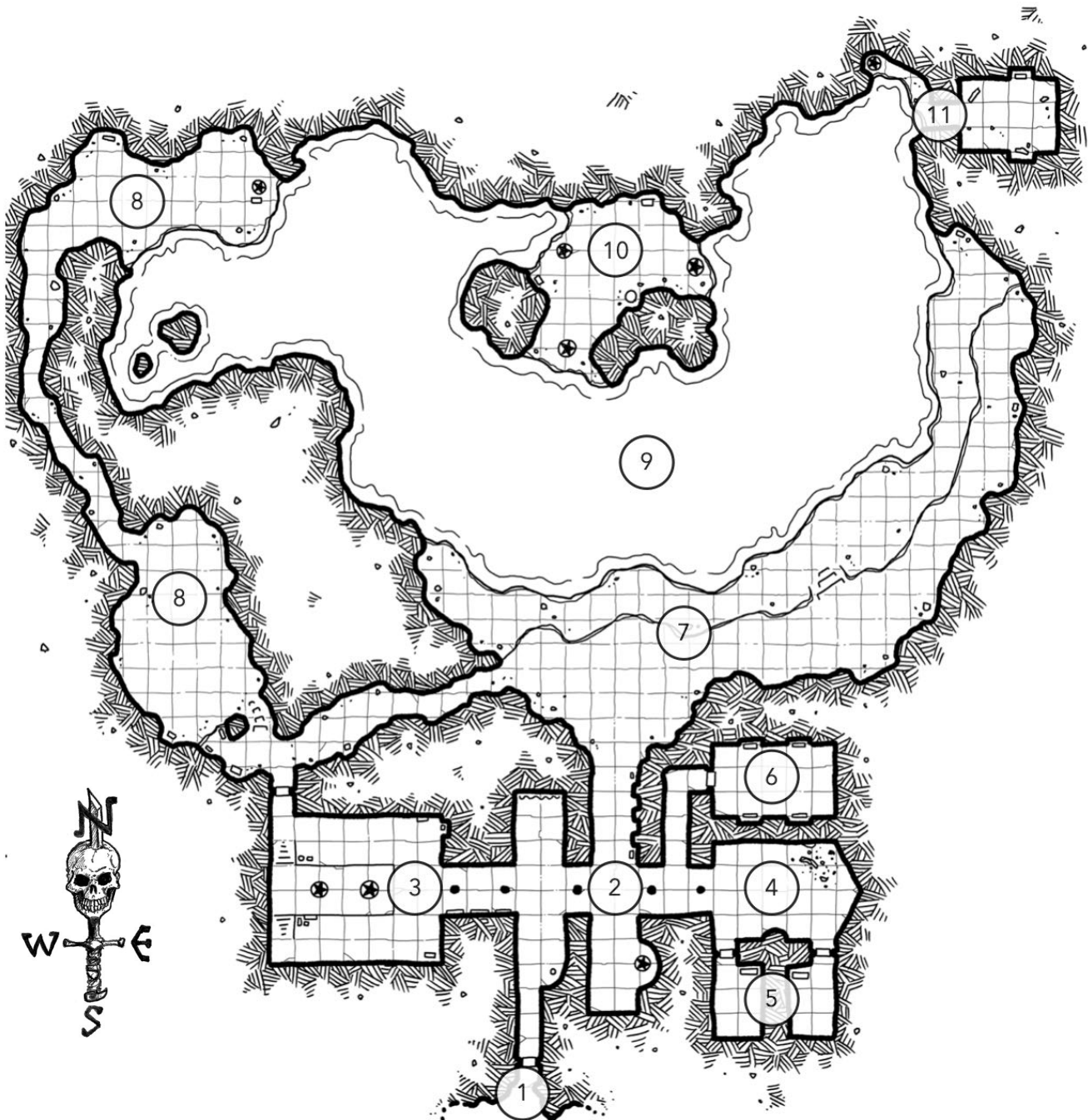
Smell: Glimmerstone's outer reaches are cramped, and with the Glimmerdoor closed, air does not circulate well within. The smell of goblin sweat, wet dogs, excrement and mould is omnipresent.

Cave Floor: While rough and uneven, most of the caves' floors do not impede movement.

Cave Walls: The natural cave walls offer climbers many hand- and foot-holds.

Treasure, Trinkets & Trash: Use the Treasures, Trinkets & Trash sidebars to determine what the characters find if they search an area (or perhaps a fallen foe's body).

Dungeon Dressing: Use the Dungeon Dressing sidebars to breathe life and detail into the delve.



Tagged and untagged copies of this map can be downloaded at ragingswanpress.com

GM NOTES

The goblins' **wolves** (location 4) have keen senses and may detect the characters as they explore location 2. If they do so, they loudly howl—which alerts their **wolf riders** (location 5) and the **bugbears** in location 6—before rushing forth to kill and eat the intruders.

1: THE GLIMMERDOOR

Once beautifully decorated with carvings chased with silver and gold depicting delving gnome miners, this heavy stone door has been extensively vandalised.

A heavily vandalised stone door pierces the side of this cliff.

Heavy Stone Door: The goblins keep this door shut and locked as the original gnomish mechanism remains operable. The door has a well-hidden lock which operates a stone catch on its rear.

A character investigating the door can make out the fragmentary remains of the door's decorative carvings.

2: GRAND PROCESSIONAL

This wide corridor is visible to the **wolves** lairing to the east. A fight here brings forth the **bugbear mercenaries** in location 6 to investigate.

Slender stone pillars hold aloft the ceiling of this wide, high passageway. Numerous passageways pierce the walls.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 15 feet high.

Slender Pillars: Slender stone pillars support the processional's high ceiling. Characters in adjacent squares may gain some cover from attacks.

Northern Tapestry: This old, faded and badly damaged tapestry shows a side view of Glimmerstone's layout during its heyday. It shows the relative depth of the sinkhole that became Blackglimmer and a general plan of the mine's layout and workings.

Smell: The faint smell of wet fur lingers in the air. The further east the characters go, the stronger the smell gets.

Statue: This statue has been smashed and battered into almost unrecognisable chunks of stone. It may have once depicted a gnome.

TREASURE, TRINKETS & TRASH

1. A filthy pouch lies on the floor. Covered in grime and dried excrement it is not an attractive object. However, a single gold coin lies forgotten in its noisome folds.
2. This leather thong necklace is threaded with a half-dozen wolf teeth.
3. Dried twigs, moss and a worn set of flint and steel fill this discoloured, ragged pouch.
4. This ragged piece of fabric has crude writing on it that looks a bit like a spell's incantation. The incantation is fragmentary and incomplete; it does nothing.

3: THE STONEFATHER'S HALL

Dedicated to Anto the Stonefather, this temple has been defiled by the goblins.

Two statues standing on a high stone plinth running down the centre of this chamber dominate the room. Badly damaged carvings decorate the walls.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 20 feet high.

Statues: Now defaced and graffitied these two stone statues once depicted Anto the Stonefather (lesser gnomish god of earth, magic and nature).

Wall Carvings: Beautiful carvings of gnomes engaging in mining and tending subterranean gardens decorated the walls here. Predictably, the goblins have comprehensively defaced them.

Plinth and Steps: The stone plinth in the centre of the room is about five feet high. The steps leading up to it are difficult terrain.

4: THE HOWLING KENNELS

The goblins keep their **wolf** pets in this noisome chamber. The wolves do not approach Blackglimmer—they sense foul things lurk within.

The smell of wet fur and other terrible things fills the air. A confused jumble of gnawed bones, half-chewed upon corpses and so on cover the floor.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 15 feet high.

Smell: The smell of wet fur and the like fills the air.

Chewed Corpses: A mass of bones and chewed-upon corpses cover the floor, creating an area of difficult terrain.

5: WOLF-KEEPERS' CHAMBER

Goblin wolf riders lair in these chambers so they can be close to their mounts.

This small chamber holds sleeping cots, and a great mass of disorganised equipment and gear covers the floor.

Sleeping Cots: Elite **goblin wolf riders** dwell in each of the chambers. Sometimes, a wolf or two also sleeps herein.

Jumbled Equipment: Jumbled equipment lies scattered about the floor. Squares containing piles of equipment are difficult terrain.

DUNGEON DRESSING

1. Rough scratches on the wall depict a goblin with something—perhaps flames or lightning—bursting from its fingers.
2. Water drips from the ceiling to puddle on the ground.
3. A pile of sticks has been heaped in the middle of the floor—for no apparent purpose.
4. A tree branch, stripped of its leaves, lies against a wall.

GM NOTES

GM NOTES

Mercenaries: *The bugbears are mercenaries; therefore, the characters may be able to bribe them to go away or even to switch sides.*

To the Rafts: *If the characters launch a frontal assault on the Commons, the noncombatant goblins flee to the rafts and the possible safety of the Blackglimmer's waters.*

6: CHAMBER OF THE HAIRY ONES

Bugbear mercenaries dwell herein. They are loyal to one another and gold.

Several lumpy mattresses surrounded by equipment stand about this chamber's walls. A large chest stands against the end wall.

Crude Mattresses: Mattresses stuffed with old clothes, sacks and the like lie against the walls. They are much bigger than a goblin would need. Individual bugbears may have hidden treasure in their beds. A smattering of personal mundane equipment—scraps of armour, spare weapons and the like—are scattered by each.

Chest: The bugbears keep their pay and other treasures in this large, locked chest. The bugbear leader carries the key on a thong around its neck.

7: THE COMMONS

Here dwell the bulk of the goblin tribe on a raised area overlooking the Blackglimmer. Many **goblins**—including warriors and noncombatants—dwell here.

A two-tiered shelf of rock encircles the black, still waters of a wide lake. Rafts are drawn up on the lake's foreshore, and crude goblin tents and the like cluster on the upper level.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 10 feet high above the upper tier of the cave and between 20 and 30 above the lower tier.

Two-Tiered Cave: The cavern's floor is a split-level affair. The lower level slopes down to the Blackglimmer while the upper level is about ten feet above it. A sheer drop separates the two levels.

Stone Steps: A steep set of stone steps links the two levels of the cavern. The steps are difficult terrain.

Rafts: Comprising the lashed-together trunks of small trees and the like, almost a dozen crude rafts lie on the lake's foreshore. Most will hold only one or two human-sized passengers. None are particularly well made, and heavy characters—such as those wearing metal armour—may cause the rafts to break up.

Goblin Tents: A swath of ragged tents, drunken lean-tos and the like stands atop the cavern's upper level. None are hardy, and all can be easily collapsed. The goblins' pathetic possessions and treasures fill their homes.

TREASURE, TRINKETS & TRASH

1. A plain silver bangle earring hangs from a goblin's left ear. It is filthy and its mechanism is jammed. It must be ripped free.
2. A tattered piece of fabric holds four gold coins.
3. This old dagger—in good repair—is of gnomish craft.
4. A small skull—a gnome's—has been stuffed with an old rag wrapped around a rat's skeletal remains.

8: COMMON CAVE

Some **goblins** have grown afraid of what might lurk in Blackglimmer and live here instead.

Ragged tents, a crude shack or two and even several drystone walls subdivide this cavern into a variety of living spaces.

Ceiling: The ceiling is roughly 15 feet high in the two caves comprising this area but between five and ten feet high in the passageway linking the caves.

Goblin Tents: A swath of ragged tents, drunken lean-tos and the like stands atop the cavern's upper level. None are hardy, and all can be easily collapsed. The goblins' pathetic possessions and treasures fill their homes.

9: BLACKGLIMMER

The unknowably deep and deceptively calm waters of Blackglimmer fill this large cavern. Aberrant, hungry things dwell in its lightless depths.

The dark, still waters of a lake extend away from the shore. Above, shadows wreath the cavern's high ceiling.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 30 feet high above Blackglimmer.

The Blackglimmer: The Blackglimmer fills a sinkhole at least 100 feet deep and gradually tapers as it descends. Multiple galleries and passageways—the gnomes' workings pierce the sinkhole's flanks; all are flooded.

Water: The cold water is still and dark. Little light penetrates below the surface. In places, rubbish hurled from the shore floats on the surface. If the characters cross Blackglimmer, determine what floating items they bump into:

1. This ragged shirt has a large rip on its back.
2. Excrement bobs on the surface of the water.
3. A small, gnarled tree branch yet has some leaves and twigs attached.
4. A goblin corpse floats facedown in the water; the goblin's throat has been cut.
5. An old wineskin bobs just below the surface of the water; only its neck is visible above the water.
6. What looks like a slick patch of oil floats on the water...

DUNGEON DRESSING

1. A pile of precariously-piled smooth stones stands guard next to the nearest exit.
2. Scorch marks on a wall and the floor show where supernatural hot fire—perhaps magical fire—once raged.
3. An odd stain—or perhaps shadow—on the wall is vaguely suggestive of a crouching goblin.
4. Cracks cut through a wall near the floor. Investigation reveals some of the nearby stones are loose and can be removed. Roll on "Treasures, Trinkets & Trash" to see what lies within.

GM NOTES

Exploring Blackglimmer: *If the characters have access to water-breathing magic Blackglimmer's depths could host their next adventure—particularly if they have already fought some of its denizens.*

What Dwells in the Depths? *Something lives in Blackglimmer's depths—or at least occasionally visits the area; perhaps it dwells in the lake the gnomish miners accidentally "discovered". The thing—whatever it is—is large, powerful and predatory.*

Dry Passages: *If you decide that some of the passages leading away from the Blackglimmer yet remain dry you must account for this in some way. Perhaps a rockfall blocked the water or a particularly deep sump shielded the passageways beyond.*

GM NOTES

If the characters are looking for missing travellers, they will find them here—if they yet live.

10: SHIK'S ISLE

Here dwells the Death Rune's chieftain, **Shik Zekka**, along with her paramour, **Firk Diz**, and her apprentice.

Three battered statues that may have once depicted gnomes watch over this island. Pieces of furniture, furs, heaps of clothes and other assorted odds and ends cover much of the floor. A simple throne stands against the far wall.

Scattered Mess: Bits of furniture, furs, clothes and other rubbish cover much of the floor. Such areas are difficult terrain. A relatively clear area in front of the throne gives goblins somewhere to grovel and scrape.

Throne: This wooden high-backed chair is decades old. Many chiefs have sat upon it and idly scratched sigils and glyphs into it. The result is a confused mishmash of overlapping carvings that seem to be the product of a deranged mind. None have any magical power—probably.

Chests: Several iron-banded wooden chests stand amid the mess. They contain the tribe's choicest treasures. Shik has their keys. One of the chests has a hidden secret compartment in its base, and it is here Shik keeps certain choice spellbooks and scrolls.

11: CHAMBER OF THE DOOMED

The goblins keep their (doomed) prisoners in this cramped, isolated chamber.

Scratch marks cover the walls of this small, doorless room.

Graffiti-Covered Walls: Graffiti scratched into the stone covers the walls of this small chamber. Most of the writings comprise dates and names—the details of the goblins' many doomed prisoners.

Battered Statue: This statue once depicted a gnome wizard, and thus, it has survived in better condition than the others. Some of the goblins believe this statue to be a petrified gnome. Sometimes, a goblin or two comes here to try to transform the statue back into a gnome because the statue carries a spellbook—and the goblins want the book.

Prisoners: When the characters first enter Glimmerstone, the goblins have two prisoners:

- **Cyanae Fidfelond** (female half-elf) wears a ragged robe. She is slender and dark-haired. Her pale skin highlights several large bruises. She is a minor wizard—the only survivor of an adventuring party caught by the goblins a month ago. She knows she is doomed if not rescued and is delighted to see the characters. All her friends are dead; she wants her spellbook back and would love to make some new adventuring friends.
- **Eetu Panu** (male human) pretends to be a warlock capable of summoning up demons. He is a thief whose quick-thinking saved his life when the tribe caught him a week ago. Thus far, he has convinced the goblins his magic works best at the dark of the moon. When a new moon rises in the sky, he's going to be in serious trouble.



AFTERMATH

Once the characters have explored Glimmerstone and dealt with its denizens, resolve the adventure hook that brought them to the place. If you used any of the hooks presented in “The Adventure Begins”, use these notes to resolve the adventure’s aftermath:

- **Following an Old Map:** Once the characters have found Glimmerstone, there is nothing more to be done with this map. However, a sage or other interested party may be interested in buying the map from the characters.
- **Legacy off Glimmerstone:** Fonkin Turran is delighted to receive anything the characters recover from Glimmerstone along with their detailed—oh so detailed—observations of the place. If you want to feature Glimmerstone more in your campaign, he could ask the characters to escort him to the place so he can visit it himself. Refer to “Sunken Treasures” below for one way you could prolong Glimmerstone’s involvement in your campaign.
- **Missing Travellers:** If the characters are searching for missing travellers, they will likely find any surviving folk in location 11. Such prisoners will be overjoyed to be rescued and beg to be safely escorted back to civilisation—leaving such folk alone in the wilderness is not the act of a hero.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

Once the characters move on, Glimmerstone might simply fade from your campaign—never to be revisited. Alternatively, it could feature in future adventures and events:

- **Earthquake:** An earthquake strikes the area sometime after the characters leave. The earthquake opens a great fissure in the rock, and the Blackglimmer drains away. The characters somehow hear of this and decide to return to continue their exploration of Glimmerstone.
- **Home Base:** Once the goblins have been cleared out of Glimmerstone, the characters could claim the place for their own—at least temporarily—while they explore the surrounding area. If a gnomish character is among the party, they may decide their long-term goal is to claim the place as their own and establish their own clan.
- **Sunken Treasures:** If the characters learn, from captured goblins, that something lurks in Blackglimmer’s waters, they may decide to explore the cold, uninviting waters. Perhaps they want to slay whatever lurks within, or they dream of recovering lost

gnomish treasures. In any event, for characters with water-breathing *magic*, Glimmerstone’s flooded depths could offer much potential for adventure—particularly if you decide that pockets of regressed feral gnomes lurk in cut-off parts of the mine.



HOBGOBLINS OF THE MAILED FIST

The crumbled ruin of the Watchtower of Auku Vaino has long kept a lonely watch over the wild borderland. Now, reports of heavily armed warriors camped at the site and sightings of something huge flying across the night sky have terrified the local peasants. Has bloody war come to the borderlands? Will all soon be in ruin? Who will shield the borderland folk?



DELVE BACKGROUND

Auku Vaino was the disgraced son of a minor noble. Cast out by his family, he sought to restore his good name by protecting the common folk dwelling in the wilderlands. Thus, he built a simple watchtower at the centre of an old time-worn hill fort. There, he gathered to his banner a motley collection of adventurers, warriors and peasants blinded by their lust for glory and gold.

Like many who lived by the sword, Auku Vaino died by the sword—decapitated by a savage orc champion of the Flayed Skull tribe. With their lord slain, Auku's surviving followers fled, and the orcs sacked his tower—carrying away his meagre treasures and his head to add to the skull-hoard hidden deep in the orcs' fortress of Rakorzar.

Thus did Auku Vaino's watchtower and its attendant outbuildings fall into ruin, and his memory fade from the land. Only a few now remember Auku and his doomed quest for glory and reputation. However, his ruined tower still serves as a handy landmark, shelter and meeting spot for travellers.

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

The characters can stumble on the Watchtower of Auku Vaino by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the place:

- **Marauding Warriors:** The characters hear rumours that a marauding band of heavily-armoured warriors have been seen camping at the ruined Watchtower of Auku Vaino. A traveller—hurrying away from the area—could warn the heroes away from the tower, or they could hear the news in a nearby travellers' inn.
- **Something Flies by Night:** Several peasants in a nearby village have seen something large and black flying across the night sky; the thing is so large, according to the wild rumours flying about, that it even blocks out the stars!

ORCS OF THE FLAYED SKULL

This savage tribe of fearless, bloodthirsty and—above all—fecund orcs dwells deep in the deep woods, far from the easy reach of humanity's retribution.

Led by their mighty chieftain, Thak Shuna, the Elf-Scourge, Slayer of Helkas Thraten and Destroyer of the Arched Tower, the tribe periodically send forth war bands from their fortress-home of Rakorzar to despoil the surrounds. Such bands move quickly in the hunt for treasure, slaves and heads. And leave devastated homesteads, sacked villages and worse in their wake.

To learn more about this tribe check out *Monstrous Delve: Orcs of the Flayed Skull*.

The large creature was seen flying off in the direction of the ruined Watchtower of Auku Vaino. The peasants beg the characters to investigate and slay the beast.

- **At Their Patron's Behest:** The characters have been engaged by a minor lordling who has a serious problem. The lord rules a small borderland fief, and the ruined Watchtower of Auku Vaino lies just within its borders. The lord has just received reports that a band of heavily armed warriors are camping at the ruin. He engages the characters to travel to the watchtower and find out the warriors' intentions.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A character might know rumours about the Hobgoblins of the Mailed Fist. Perhaps the character is steeped in local lore or they heard a rumour in the last settlement they visited while drinking in a tavern or overheard two locals gossiping while browsing a marketplace. Use this list to determine what the character knows:

1. The Hobgoblins of the Mailed Fist are mercenaries for hire. They serve anyone who will pay them. Some of their champions ride gigantic bats into battle.
2. Although they are as evil as their normal brethren, the Hobgoblins of the Mailed Fist are highly lawful and always honour the terms of their contract—assuming their employer does likewise.
3. Borderland nobles of several kingdoms are said to have a loose alliance with the Hobgoblins of the Mailed Fist. The nobles pay the hobgoblins handsomely to raid other nearby tribes of evil humanoids.
4. The Hobgoblins of the Mailed Fist use giant bats as mounts. The tribe feeds yet-living captives to the bats!
5. The Hobgoblins of the Mailed Fist are atypical hobgoblins; the tribe has many users of arcane magic among its ranks.
6. Dwelling in a distant land, the Hobgoblins of the Mailed Fist have gained some fame as seasoned and dependable mercenaries. However, many potential employers will not engage them due to their race.



Determine which rumours are true and false based on your campaign setup.

THE MAILED FIST TRIBE

Equally renowned for their battle skills and mercenary hearts, the warriors of the Mailed Fist serve anyone with sufficient coin. Heavily armoured, disciplined and well-trained, those who stand below the Mailed Fist's banner are formidable fighters capable of great slaughter. High above, their winged cavalry—elite warriors and battlecasters astride gigantic black bats—hurl missiles and spells down upon their hapless foes.

The Mailed Fist dwells in three heavily fortified ancient hill forts (Eir-Andra, Eir-Darrh and Eir-Othim) deep in a range of bare, sombre, crag-studded hills. From these redoubts, the tribe operates six battles (warbands 500 strong). The tribe's most feared weapons—even more dreaded than their disciplined, mail-clad warbands—are the huge black bats upon which ride their most puissant warriors and spellcasters.

The tribe does not trouble nearby kingdoms instead raiding nearby humanoid tribes for plunder and slaves. Thus, most of its civilised neighbours do not view them as an active threat. Indeed, several kingdoms pay the Mailed Fist a yearly tribute to attack the other humanoid tribes infesting the surrounding hills, thus binding them together in a mutually beneficial alliance.

SOCIETY & ORGANISATION

The Mailed Fist is a tightly regimented, organised society. Every adult tribe member has served or still serves in a battle, and many specialise in useful, martial trades as well. Consequently, the tribe counts many armourers, engineers, animal trainers, siege specialists, weaponsmiths, and so on among its strength.

Relatively peaceful contact with so many nearby kingdoms and other powerful employers has somewhat mellowed the tribe's natural proclivity toward evil. While the tribe as a whole is still lawful and evil in outlook, the incidence of non-evil individuals is far higher than in other goblinoid tribes. Additionally, being highly lawful in outlook, the tribe has garnered a reputation for always honouring a contract.

The tribe's society thrives on equality, with tribal members making no distinction between the sexes. All adults serve in one of their fort's battles for a minimum of five years, and both males and females can rise to become a battle marshal.

The tribe numbers about 6,500 individuals of which 3,000 are warriors. Each hill fort maintains two battles. It is for the services of these units that potential patrons dare the long journey to the Mailed Fist's gates. Normally, one battle garrisons each fort while the other is on campaign.

Arcane Magic: Members of the Mailed Fist are the rarest of hobgoblins because they use "elf magic" to wage war. This is a new development for the tribe, only beginning after the tribe settled their hill fort homes. The tribe's sorcerers theorise that some forgotten echo of whoever or whatever built the hill forts yet lingers in these desolate places and that its unseen influence unlocks the arcane potential lurking in a select few of the tribe.

PERSONALITIES

Most of the Mailed Fist tribe comprises disciplined warriors intent on serving their tribe and earning battle-glory. A few members of the tribe, however, are exceptional for one reason or another.

- **Ceral** (male hobgoblin) tends toward neutrality rather than evil—a legacy of his many deployments serving human masters. A thin, skinny hobgoblin, he is a veteran of countless border skirmishes and orc hunts.
- **Battle Marshal Felyex** (male hobgoblin) leads one of the tribe's battles. A strict disciplinarian, he is a stern, fair commander. A veteran of almost 20 years of warfare, he has seen much in his time and is not easily impressed.

ECOLOGY & LAIR

The Mailed Fist dwells in three heavily fortified hill forts (Eir-Andra, Eir-Darrh and Eir-Othim) hidden deep within an inaccessible range of hills. The hill forts sprawl across the highest and least accessible summits and are visible from a great distance. All have excellent views of the surrounding area. Surprising the Mailed Fist in strength is difficult, if not impossible, without magical aid.

The tribe keeps the land around each hill fort clear, cutting back encroaching vegetation and maintaining their defensive works. Steep-sided ditches, hidden pits and fields of caltrops litter the surrounding bleak, wasted hillsides.

The Mailed Fist has augmented and expanded the hill forts—themselves the progeny of an unknown elder race—and have constructed their own stone redoubts as a final refugee in the face of overwhelming force. Caves and caverns pockmark the hills upon which the forts stand. Within these lightless realms, the tribe's bat masters train the great beasts for which the tribe is feared and famed. These beasts, a surviving remnant of an elder age, have served the Mailed Fist for generations.

COMBAT & TACTICS

Trusting to their heavy armour and superior training, units of the Mailed Fist often prevail against far more numerous foes by forming nigh-impenetrable shield walls. Their training, discipline and lawful nature enables them to keep fighting long after other more disorganised rabbles have spent themselves against the Mailed Fist's defences. Well protected by their heavy armour, warriors often fight defensively to limit casualties while pinning their opponents in place for their archers to annihilate.

Utilising their ability to see in the dark, the tribe is equally able to fight during the day and night—an advantage they ruthlessly exploit. Battle clerics serve alongside the warriors—healing them, using defensive magics to protect them and exhorting them onwards to ever more heroic acts.

THE WATCHTOWER OF AUKU VAINO

Since its lord's fall, the Watchtower of Auku Vaino has stood unoccupied and unclaimed. Badly damaged by the Orcs of the Flayed Skull when they sacked the place, the tower has no real value as a fortification. Still, travellers use the ruin as a meeting place, campsite and landmark.

A week ago, a warband of the Mail Fist reached the place. This small war band, led by the champion Tarl Grax, is here to meet a servant of a potential employer. For obvious reasons, it was decided that marching a band of heavily armed hobgoblins to the noble's fief without a "friendly" escort was a terrible idea. Thus, the war band tarry at the tower.

Of course, their presence has not gone unnoticed or unremarked upon. The local peasants know the land well, and the hobgoblins have made no attempt to hide—they know they have little to fear from a peasant militia. Tarl has also been exercising his mount—one of the tribe's famed giant bats—and several terrified peasants have seen something gigantic passing across the night sky.

Thus stands the situation until a band of wandering heroes approaches the ruined watchtower...

DELVE LORE

A character might know something about the Watchtower of Auku Vaino. Perhaps they are steeped in local lore or have heard about the wizard and his tower from another adventurer or some other reputable source of information.

- Auku Vaino was the disgraced son of a minor noble. Cast out by his family, he sought to restore his name and reputation by protecting the common folk dwelling in the wilderlands.
- Auku Vaino built a simple watchtower at the centre of an old time-worn hill fort. There, he gathered about his banner a motley collection of adventurers, warriors and peasants blinded by the lust for glory and gold.
- Like many who lived by the sword, Auku Vaino died by the sword—decapitated by a savage orc champion of the Flayed Skull tribe. With their lord slain, Auku's surviving followers fled, and his borderland watchtower fell into ruin.

OUTSIDE THE TOWER

Weeds grow thickly about and over the ruins of Auku Vaino's watchtower and its attendant outbuildings. Little more than piles of rubble arrayed in the rough layout in which the buildings once stood, they are nothing but a forlorn shadow of what once stood here.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

The watchtower has several notable locations:

1. **Crumbled Court:** Here, Auku Vaino planned his campaigns. Now, all is in ruin.
2. **Ruined Processional:** Carven pillars depicting Auku Vaino in various heroic poses hold aloft the roof.
3. **Old Barracks:** Auku Vaino's trusted retainers dwelled here; rubbish now fills the chamber.
4. **Barracks of the Mailed First:** The majority of the warband's rank and file—a dozen or so **hobgoblin warriors**—rest here during the day.
5. **Champion's Rest:** The warband's leader, **Tarl Grax**, has claimed this chamber as his own. He is accompanied by his young daughter, **Brix**, who serves as his servant. This is her first "campaign".
6. **Chamber of Shadows:** Herein slumbers Tarl Grax's **giant bat** mount. It only emerges during daylight hours at its master's summons.
7. **Crumbling Eerie:** Here, Auku Vaino once held court. A disciplined **hobgoblin warrior** keeps watch from this lofty vantage point—even during the light of day. The Hobgoblins of the Mailed Fist are hard to surprise.

GENERIC DELVE FEATURES

Many of the watchtower's locations share certain features:

Illumination: The illumination levels in the ruined tower depend on the time of day.

Tower Walls: The watchtower's walls are of dressed stone approximately five feet thick; between the blocks, the mortar is crumbling, providing many hands- and footholds for those wishing to climb.

Floors: Floors are of level flagstones. In places, rubble covers the floor; such areas are difficult terrain.

Ceilings: The ceilings are about 13 feet high.

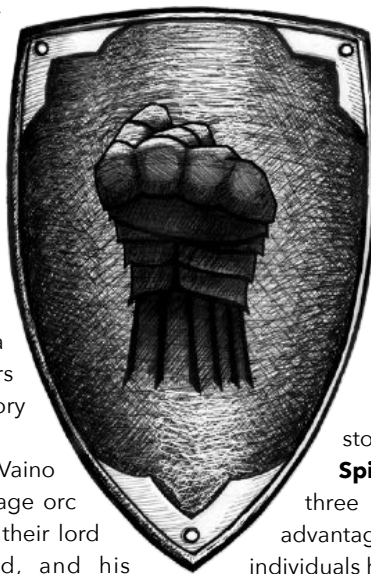
Stairs: The stairs in the tower are of dressed stone blocks. They are steep and difficult terrain.

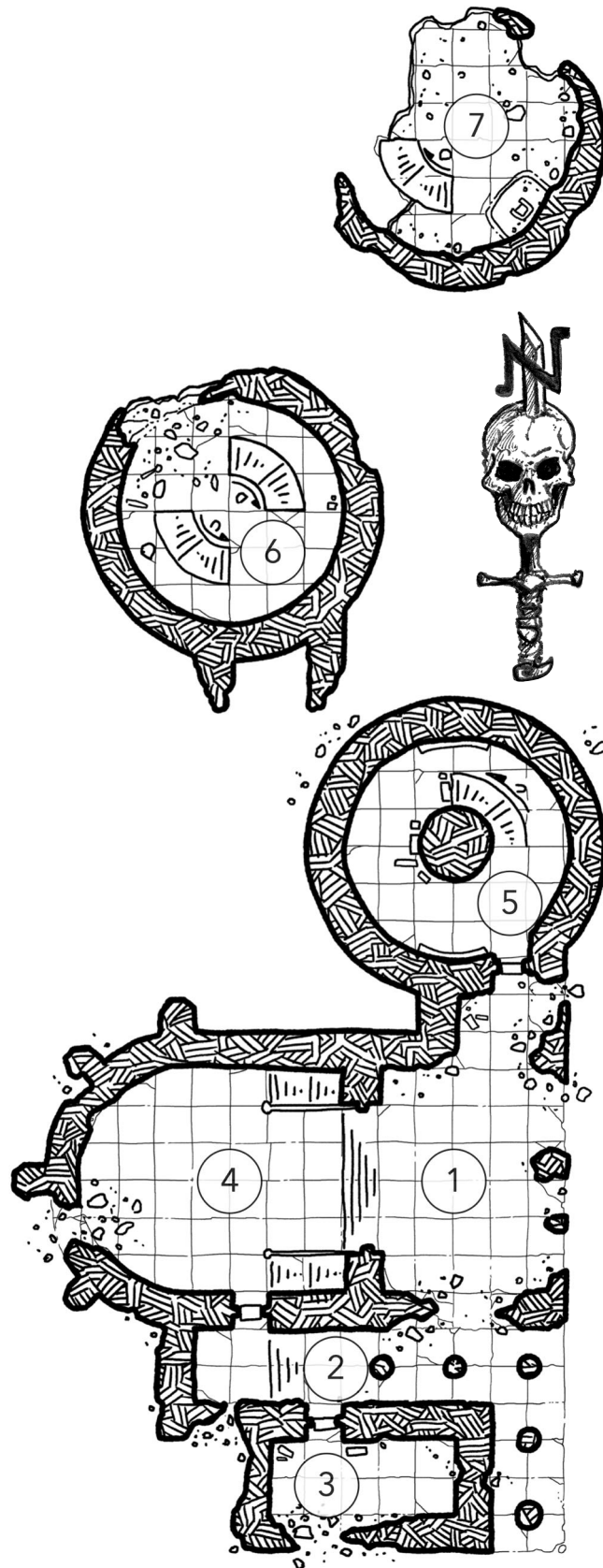
Spiral Staircase: A spiral staircase connects all three tower levels and circles upwards, giving an advantage to defenders on the floor above. Such individuals have cover against attacks coming from below.

Interior Doors: Interior doors are of oak boards. Once of good quality, the years have not been kind to the doors. Some are swollen into place and are difficult to open.

Treasure, Trinkets & Trash: Use the Treasures, Trinkets & Trash sidebars to determine what the characters find if they search an area (or perhaps a fallen foe's body).

Dungeon Dressing: Use the Dungeon Dressing sidebars to breathe life and detail into the delve.





Tagged and untagged copies of this map can be downloaded at ragingswanpress.com

GM NOTES

The Hobgoblins of the Mailed Fist are not typical hobgoblins here to slay and loot. The challenge of this adventure is of roleplaying and negotiation.

This is primarily a roleplaying encounter. If the negotiations go particularly well perhaps the hobgoblins invite the characters to share their campfire. This could present yet more interesting opportunities for roleplaying as the characters share a meal with those they "should" be fighting.

If combat ensues the hobgoblins are merciless in battle; they are skilled warriors and they defend themselves. If they hold off the party until nightfall they retreat from the tower.

TREATING WITH THE MAILED FIST

The warriors of the Mailed Fist resting in the ruined Watchtower of Auku Vaino are not here to fight, raid or otherwise despoil the surrounds. Rather, they are here to answer a local noble's summons who explores the possibility of engaging one of the tribe's battles in service. Characters assuming the hobgoblins are evil raiders and thus must be slain could be making a terrible mistake. While they may slay the hobgoblins, such an act could have repercussions:

- The lord, thinking of hiring the hobgoblins, assumes one of his enemies moves against him and attempts to divine the characters' identities to learn more about his enemy's plot. He despatched various agents to do his bidding.
- The Hobgoblins of the Mailed Fist eventually learn of their brethren's slaughter and seek revenge. They could seek revenge against the lord—which may bring bloody war to his domain (and the domains lying between the two warring parties)—or they might learn the characters' identities and hunt the party down.

APPROACHING THE WATCHTOWER

Unless the characters cloak their approach with magic or guile, the sentry atop the watchtower (location 7) likely spots them and warns the rest of the band. The warriors take sensible precautions in this event; those unarmed and unarmored prepare for battle while a lone warrior emerges from the tower to ascertain the characters' intentions; combat or negotiations ensue:

- **Combat:** If the characters attack, the hobgoblins vigorously defend themselves but do not emerge from the tower, instead taking full advantage of its remaining defensive properties.
- **Negotiation:** If the characters seem willing to talk **Tarl Grax** emerges to speak with them. He explains in vague details why the hobgoblins are at the tower. He declines to name their potential employer but confirms he harbours no ill intent toward the nearby communities.

TREASURE, TRINKETS & TRASH

1. A soggy, mouldy pouch holds 13 sp and a dented plain gold ring (worth 5 gp).
2. A rusting javelin tip lies on the floor under a pile of wind-blown leaves and other detritus.
3. The shards of a cloven wooden shield are discarded in a corner. The faint emblem of a rearing white horse remains visible on the shield's splintered boards.
4. A golden stud earring (worth 2 gp) fills a shallow niche.

1: CRUMBLED COURT

Here, Auku Vaino planned his campaigns. Now, all is in ruin.

Shadows fill this large crumbling chamber. Wan light seeps into the area from holes in the east wall.

Rubble: Much of the rubble has been cleared away from this area to facilitate the hobgoblins' easy movement. Only a few large pieces remain; such squares are difficult terrain.

Stairs: Rubble-free steps rise towards the Barracks of the Mailed Fist (location 4). The stairs are difficult terrain.

2: RUINED PROCESSIONAL

Carven pillars depicting Auku Vaino in various heroic poses hold aloft the roof.

Carven slender pillars depicting a heroic warrior hold the crumbling ceiling aloft

Carven Pillars: Slender stone pillars hold aloft this corridor's crumbling ceiling. A character in a square adjacent to a pillar gains partial cover against attacks. Each of the carven pillars depicts Auku Vaino in various heroic poses; all have been vandalised over the long years since his death.

Stairs: Steps rise up towards the Barracks of the Mailed Fist (location 4). The hobgoblins have cleared the stairs of rubble, but they are still difficult terrain.

3: OLD BARRACKS

Auku Vaino's trusted retainers dwelled here; rubbish now fills the chamber.

A jumble of rubble and rubbish has been piled up against this ruined chamber's walls. A rent in the south wall admits light and a gentle breeze.

Rubble: Rubble cleared from the Ruined Processional (location 2) has been dumped here. Squares containing rubble are difficult terrain.

Rubbish: The hobgoblins are disciplined and keep their camp tidy; they have dumped their trash and rubbish here. Characters searching the rubbish can find broken equipment, empty food containers, and so on. Squares containing rubbish are difficult terrain.

DUNGEON DRESSING

1. Dull gouges on the wall show where someone struck it with a heavy weapon.
2. Wind-blown leaves and other detritus cover the floor.
3. Water drips from a hole in the ceiling into a small puddle on the floor.
4. A loose flagstone lurks near a wall. Chip marks on one side show where someone has previously levered it up. Roll on "Treasure, Trinkets & Trash".

GM NOTES

GM NOTES

At any time, half the warriors are fully armed and armoured while the others rest easily. If intruders are spotted by the sentry atop the tower (location 7) the unarmored warriors hastily prepare for battle while their armed fellows stand to.

4: BARRACKS OF THE MAILED FIST

The majority of the warband's rank and file—a dozen or so **hobgoblin warriors**—rest here during the day.

About a dozen bedrolls and attendant equipment are neatly laid out about this chamber.

Campaign Gear: Each hobgoblin possesses a bulging pack full of necessities. Contents include trail rations, whetstones, spare clothes, a waterskin and so on. Each also has a bedroll.

SAMPLE HOBGOBLIN WARRIORS

Use these notes to depict any hobgoblins warriors the characters speak with:

- **Brogo:** Muscular, scarred face; has a gravelly voice.
- **Lig:** Muscular woman; coarse sense of humour.
- **Vilg:** Thoughtful, cautious warrior who measures his words carefully.

5: CHAMPION'S REST

The warband's leader, **Tarl Grax**, has claimed this chamber as his own. He is accompanied by his young daughter, **Brix**, who serves as his servant. This is her first "campaign".

Darkness fills the base of the tower. A spiral staircase leads upwards. Two sets of campaign gear—backpacks, bedrolls and so forth—are neatly arrayed around the chamber.

Campaign Gear: Tarl and his daughter both own the same campaign gear used by the common soldiers. Thus, two packs—including the necessities listed above—and two bedrolls lie about the chamber.

TARL GRAX, CHAMPION OF THE MAILED FIST

Tall, muscled and clad in much-dented plate armour, this hobgoblin warrior cuts an imposing figure.

Tarl is a grizzled, experienced warrior. Although surpassingly brave, he only fights when he must. He sees no gain in risking his soldiers' lives unnecessarily. He is an honourable in his own way and holds to the terms of any agreement he strikes.

TREASURE, TRINKETS & TRASH

1. This broad leather belt is worn with much use but is in excellent condition. It has a small but empty hidden compartment large enough to hold three coins.
2. A dull, black stone—an onyx—fills this otherwise plain longsword's pommel.
3. A beautiful parchment map drawn in a plain, sparse style shows the Mailed Fist's homeland.
4. These knee-high black leather boots are waterproof and supremely comfortable.

6: CHAMBER OF SHADOWS

Herein slumbers Tarl Grax's **giant bat** mount. It only emerges during daylight hours at its master's summons.

Although wan light pierces this chamber through a rent in the outer wall, deep shadows fill the far part of this chamber.

Illumination: Dim light filters into the chamber from the rent in the wall. Behind the spiral staircase, darkness fills the room.

Crumbled Wall: Part of this chamber's outer wall has collapsed. The hole in the wall is just wide enough for Tarl's giant bat mount to squeeze through.

Bat Droppings: A smattering of bat guano covers the floor of this chamber. The individual pieces of guano are surprisingly large.

7: CRUMBLING EERIE

Here, Auku Vaino once held court. A disciplined **hobgoblin warrior** keeps watch from this lofty vantage point—even during the light of day. The Hobgoblins of the Mailed Fist are hard to surprise.

Much of this level has crumbled away. Lichen and mould grow over the jagged walls, and an ornate, weather-worn stone throne stands on a small plinth to the southeast.

Crumbling Walls: Lichen and moss grow rampantly over the walls. Exposed to the elements, the stonework is in poor repair. Stones can be easily removed from the wall.

Crumbling Floor: Much of the floor remains sturdy. However, the floor is unstable within a few feet of the crumbling western section. Heavy characters stamping about could cause a five-foot section to collapse. The sentry knows this and stays away from the crumbling section.

Stone Throne: Auku Vaino was a vane man and caused for himself an ornate throne to be wrought. Lichen and mould now grow over the throne, which is weatherworn and a pale shadow of its former glory.

- A cleverly hidden secret compartment lurks in the throne's seat. A perceptive character examining the throne discovers the secret compartment by noticing a faint, curious, straight indentation running through the mould and lichen.

DUNGEON DRESSING

1. Here the stonework is in bad condition and a drift of grit lies against the base of the wall.
2. Faint scratches on the wall could be a graffiti, but they are illegible.
3. Peeling yellowed whitewash on a wall holds the suggestion of other colours—perhaps a painting once graced this section of wall.
4. A dribble of water pools on a slightly sunken flagstone.

GM NOTES

If the characters have not yet encountered the giant bat this provides an unsettling clue as to what might dwell herein.

The sentry spends a minute or two looking in each direction. If they spot approaching travellers they bang their weapon against their shield to alert the warriors below.

If the characters attack the tower, the sentry hurls chunks of masonry wrested from the wall down upon their heads.

This is an excellent spot to place forgotten treasures. Perhaps Auku kept a healing potion or a store of gems within. Maybe the niche also holds his most signet ring—an unscrupulous character could use it to claim noble descent.

AFTERMATH

Once the characters have dealt with the hobgoblins lurking in the Watchtower of Auku Vaino, resolve the adventure hook that brought them to the place. If you used any of the hooks presented in “The Adventure Begins”, use these notes to resolve the adventure’s aftermath:

- **Marauding Warriors & Something Flies By Night:** If the characters deal with the hobgoblins and their bat ally in the usual way and defeat them in battle, the local peasants treat them as heroes. If the character discover the truth of the matter and do not slay the hobgoblins, the peasants might assume they are cowards, and rumours of the heroes’ characters begin to circulate. Alternatively, the villagers may ask the characters to remain in the area until the hobgoblins have marched away—trust between humans and hobgoblins has never been easy to find.
- **At Their Patron’s Behest:** The characters’ actions somewhat dictate their patron’s response. A peaceful resolution to the hobgoblins’ presence enables the lord to effectively ignore the situation, although he may dispatch a small group of soldiers to the locality. If the characters fought the hobgoblins his problems could become much worse. Eventually, the Mailed Fist will hear of the skirmish and dispatch a larger force to regain the tribe’s honour. Bloody war could engulf the fief.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

Once the characters move on, the delve might simply fade from your campaign—never to be revisited. Alternatively, it could feature in future adventures and events:

- **Encountering the Mailed Fist:** The characters could easily encounter warriors of the Mailed Fist again. Perhaps they encounter the same band as it returns to the tribe’s hilltop fortresses. Alternatively, the group could end up fighting with or against the disciplined mercenaries in a future adventure. This could provide yet another interesting roleplaying encounter.
- **Exploring the Watchtower:** If the characters dealt peacefully with the Mailed Fist warband the hobgoblins eventually move on. Once the warriors have left, the characters are free to explore the Watchtower of Auku Vaino without facing any opposition.
- **Bloody War:** If the characters slew the hobgoblins, the tribe eventually uncovers their fate. They assume that the lord of the area was responsible for the warband’s destruction and wreak revenge accordingly. If the characters are in the vicinity, they are drafted to help repeal the hobgoblins. If they are not and hear of the fief’s devastation at a later date, they may feel compelled to return to the area to assist the survivors. Depending on how your campaign progresses, this could be the seed that propels them toward claiming their own fief.



LIZARDFOLK OF THE COILED SERPENT

Atavistic warriors dwelling in the inner reaches of Ashlar's Salt Mire, the lizardfolk of the Coiled Serpent tribe worship Yig—Father of Serpents—who they believe will one day consume the world. The lizardfolk are indifferent to humans and their allies as long as they are left alone in their dank, dismal lair. Woe betide any who disturb them.



DELVE BACKGROUND

Centuries ago—before Arndul Nenonen waded ashore to claim the lands that would become the Duchy of Ashlar as his own—scattered enclaves of strange and inhuman civilisations lurked amid the brooding gloom of the Forest of Gray Spires. One such group—the surviving remnant of an elder, now lost civilisation—were a small tribe of cyclops.

Although individually mighty and possessed of their race's uncanny ability of foresight, the cyclops were far outnumbered by the Gray Forest's other denizens. To escape the predations of their enemies, who ever pressed upon the tribe's holdings, two of the cyclops fled to seek an isolated home where they could live in peace. They found what they sought deep in the Salt Mire and built themselves a final home, hewing a small dungeon from a lonely hill jutting from the sodden mire.

However, the arrival of two such creatures did not go unnoticed. Common folk hold many misconceptions about many things, but their belief that cyclops could see the future was rooted in truth. Thus, a steady trickle of humans dwelling on the swamp's fringes began to dare the foul surroundings of the Salt Mire to seek the oracles' wisdom.

The two cyclops are long dead, but folklore and legend, now much embellished and riddled with untruths, still remember them. Although the cyclops are no more, their home has rarely been unoccupied—permanent, relatively dry homes in the Salt Mire being something of a rarity.

The so-called Dank Hall of the One-Eyed Oracles pierces the flank of one of the Salt Mire's few hills and such a place is much valued. Currently, the Lizardfolk of the Coiled Serpent claims the place as their own as they have for many years. The tribe is insular, and they do not welcome visitors...

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

The characters can stumble on the Dank Hall of the One-Eyed Oracles by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the place:

- **Treasures of the One-Eyed Oracles:** The characters have heard tavern stories about a dank hall buried in the side of a dismal hill deep inside the Salt Mire. Old rumours tell of the inhabitants' uncanny ability to foretell the future and of the great wealth they amassed from supplicants coming to beg for his services. When the oracles died long ago, people stopped going to the dismal hall. Perhaps the treasure they accumulated so long ago lies amid the mire, just waiting to be found.
- **Missing Travellers:** The characters are investigating a spate of missing travellers, hunters and fisherfolk in the Salt Mire. Some of the lizardfolk tribes in the Salt Mire are violent toward their human neighbours, while others coexist in relative peace—and even sometimes trade with

the humans. The Lizardfolk of the Coiled Serpent are normally relatively peaceful, but the characters are investigating whether the tribe is responsible for the missing folk or not.

- **Rumours of Disease:** Rumours are spreading among the human settlements in and around the Salt Mire of a strange disease besetting the lizardfolk of the interior. The disease either sends the infected lizardfolk into a deep lethargy or into a homicidal rage. Several farmsteads on the swamp's fringes have been attacked. The Lizardfolk of the Coiled Serpent are normally relatively peaceful, but the characters are investigating whether the tribe has become infected with the disease.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A character might know rumours about the Lizardfolk of the Coiled Serpent. Perhaps the character is steeped in local lore or they heard a rumour in the last settlement they visited while drinking in a tavern or overheard two locals gossiping while browsing a marketplace. Use this list to determine what the character knows:

1. The Lizardfolk of the Coiled Serpent are normally ambivalent toward humans. They dwell somewhere in the Salt Mire in the vicinity of Willow Hill.
2. The Lizardfolk of the Coiled Serpent have strange and alien religious beliefs. They worship a nearly forgotten power—Yig, Father of Serpents—said to be so large it will someday consume the entire world.
3. Snakes great and small dwell in the Salt Mire. The Lizardfolk of the Coiled Serpent worship a huge snake and share their fetid lair with many serpents.
4. An odd illness or plague is making its way through the lizardfolk tribes dwelling in the Salt Mire. The Lizardfolk of the Coiled Serpent could already be infected. Some infected lizardfolk loiter about, unable to muster any energy whatsoever, while others are driven into short bursts of berserk frenzy. Thus far, humans seem to be immune to the strange illness.
5. The Lizardfolk of the Coiled Serpent is a small tribe of about 70 individuals. They dwell in and around an isolated, noisome hill—Willow Hill—in the Salt Mire.
6. All the lizardfolk of the Salt Mire are uncivilised savages, and the Coiled Serpent tribe are no exception. Many of the tribes have gotten a taste for human flesh; woe betide anyone falling into their clawed clutches.

Determine which rumours are true and false based on your campaign setup.

THE COILED SERPENT TRIBE

Atavistic warriors dwelling in the inner reaches of Ashlar's Salt Mire, the Coiled Serpent tribe worship Yig—Father of Serpents—who they believe will one day consume the world. The Coiled Serpent tribe numbers about 100 or so individuals and they are an insular folk happiest when ignored by their human neighbours.

SOCIETY & ORGANISATION

An acolyte of Yig has always led the Lizardfolk of the Coiled Serpent, but the position is not hereditary. A complex series of rules and traditions guide and facilitate everyday life. Generally, tribal members work for the common good as life in the dank and dismal Salt Mire necessitates cooperation.

The tribe lives a simple life in harmony with the seasons and the Salt Mire. Toward humans and their ilk, they are indifferent; as long as the humans leave them alone, the tribe leaves the humans alone.

The tribe is not, and has never been, large. Its folk dwell in small groups of up to a dozen individuals scattered throughout their territory; elders are treated well and respected and tend the young while the adults hunt and forage in the marsh.

The tribe has no tradition of writing, and in any event, books and the like do not last long in the swamp's damp environment. Thus, Lorekeepers—most acolytes of Yig—protect and pass down the tribe's hereditary knowledge. The tribe has few such individuals, and they are protected and respected by their fellows.

Carven wooden statues of a gigantic coiled serpent mark the tribe's territory. Such carvings are intricate and sometimes painted with yellow and red ochre. The carvings rarely last more than a score of years amid the fetid Salt Mire, and thus, the tribe are always working on replacements. Intruders ignoring the carvings who invade the tribe's territory are told to leave. If the intruders ignore the tribe's warnings, violence inevitably ensues.

PERSONALITIES

Most of the Coiled Serpent tribe comprises atavistic, simple lizardfolk. A few members of the tribe, however, are exceptional for one reason or another.

- **Sithes** (female lizardfolk chieftain and priest): Leading the tribe as her father once did, Sithes is more thoughtful and considered than many of her brethren. She is a skilled priest of Yig and has a pet constrictor snake who is never far from her side. Sithes follows her father's policy of non-aggression toward humans wherever possible; however, she possesses a strong temper, which sometimes gets the better of her.
- **Cil** (male lizardfolk lorekeeper): Bent with great age and now partly blind, Cil is the oldest and wisest of the tribe's lorekeepers. Always accompanied by two attentive

helpers, the lore keeper is rarely abroad but is consulted on all decisions of import. Although Sithes leads the tribe, Cil's opinion carries great weight among the tribe's rank and file.

- **Skara** (male lizardfolk champion): Strongest and bravest of all the tribe's warriors, Skara is the most aggressive of the tribe's warriors. Skara dreams of uniting all the surrounding tribes and forcing the humans—peacefully, if possible—from the Salt Mire; only then will the lizardfolk be able to dwell in peace. In this, he is somewhat naive.

ECOLOGY & LAIR

The tribe dwells mostly in and around Willow Hill in the depths of the Salt Mire. The hill is a lonely place, surrounded by miles of dank, sucking mire and thin streams that wend their way through the murk.

The tribe's main home is a dungeon—the Dank Hall of the One-Eyed Oracles—below the hill; it is a small place of ancient origin and here dwells their chieftain, Sithes. The lizardfolk live communally—either under Willow Hill or in part-sunken longhouses hidden amid the fetid surroundings. The lizardfolk, unsurprisingly, share their homes with snakes of many kinds.

In the Salt Mire, the lizardfolk are at home, and they live in harmony with their surroundings. The lizardfolk are well-skilled at fishing and foraging amid the murk.

COMBAT & TACTICS

The Coiled Serpent's warriors prefer to strike from ambush and are skilled at using their home's fetid terrain to good advantage. Never numerous, the tribe's warriors eschew hand-to-hand fighting wherever possible and prefer to strike and retreat, all the while drawing their foes deeper and deeper into the swamp. Therein they hope the sucking bogs and ferocious swamp denizens will doom their foes to a terrible death.

Most of the Coiled Serpent's warriors care little for battle glory or honours, and thus, except when defending their home, their young or their mates, they take few unnecessary risks in battle.

YIG

Devil god of serpents

Epithets: The World Serpent, Father of Serpents

Symbol: A coiled snake

Worshippers: lizardfolk, snakefolk

Rarely malicious but capable of indescribable cruelty if his followers or people are harmed, Yig is a little-known power rarely worshipped by humans except deranged cultists, poisoners and the like.

THE DELVE

The Dank Hall of the One-Eyed Oracles is cut into the flank of a low, sodden hill emerging from the fetid and flooded surrounds of the Salt Mire. The dungeon is sized for giants—thus, everything is on a large scale.

DELVE LORE

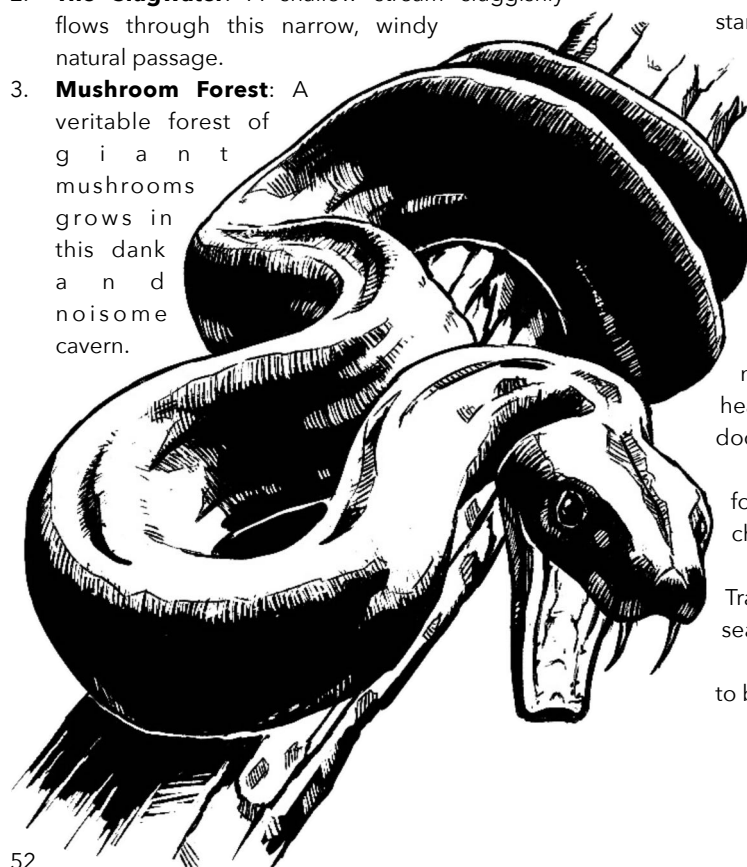
A character might know something about the Dank Hall of the One-Eyed Oracle. Perhaps they are steeped in local lore or have heard about the dungeon and its history from another adventurer or some other reputable source of information.

- Willow Hill juts from the sodden surrounds of the Salt Mire. Two caves pierce its southern flank; lizardfolk are often encountered in the surroundings.
- A dungeon lies under Willow Hill's dank exterior. Old tales describe the place as relatively small but on a gigantic scale—everything is sized for a giant.
- In times gone by, one-eyed giants renowned for their powers of prophecy dwelled in the dungeon, but they are long dead.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

The delve has several notable locations:

1. **Main Entrance:** Two five-foot-high escarpments of crumbling stone here deter casual explorers.
2. **The Slugwater:** A shallow stream sluggishly flows through this narrow, windy natural passage.
3. **Mushroom Forest:** A veritable forest of giant mushrooms grows in this dank and noisome cavern.



4. **The Commons:** Here are to be found most of the Lizardfolk of the Coiled Serpent living in the Dank Hall. Other lizardfolk live in the surrounding locality.
5. **Hall of the Giant's Throne:** Herein, centuries ago, the oracles met those who sought their wisdom. Now, the tribe's chieftain, **Sithes**, holds court here.
6. **Sithes's Chamber:** Herein dwells the tribe's chieftain, **Sithes** and her mate, **Tloth**, along with their viper companion.
7. **Skara's Chamber:** The tribal champion **Skara** dwells herein with his mate, **Thet**.
8. **Small Chamber:** The tribe uses this small chamber to hold any captives that fall into their possession or to house an honoured guest.

GENERIC DELVE FEATURES

Many of the delve's locations share certain features:

Illumination: Darkness fills the dungeon.

Damp: The dungeon is damp. In many places, water drips through the ceiling or oozes through cracks in the floor.

Smell: The air moves sluggishly in the dungeon, and nefarious smells predominate throughout.

Ceilings: The ceilings throughout the dungeon are of worked stone and are about 20 feet high. Tool marks—blurred with age—are still visible.

Walls: The walls are of worked stone. Tool marks—blurred with age—are still visible in places. The walls are difficult to climb. In places, water oozes through cracks in the stone.

Wall Carvings: Carvings deep incised into the walls throughout the dungeon, but now blurred with age, depict a startling range of vista—great jagged stone pillars rising up through a thick forest; this is the Forest of Gray Spires.

Careful examination of the carvings shows a scattering of interesting things—giant figures between the trees, large apes amid the trees and other indistinct figures on the forest floor.

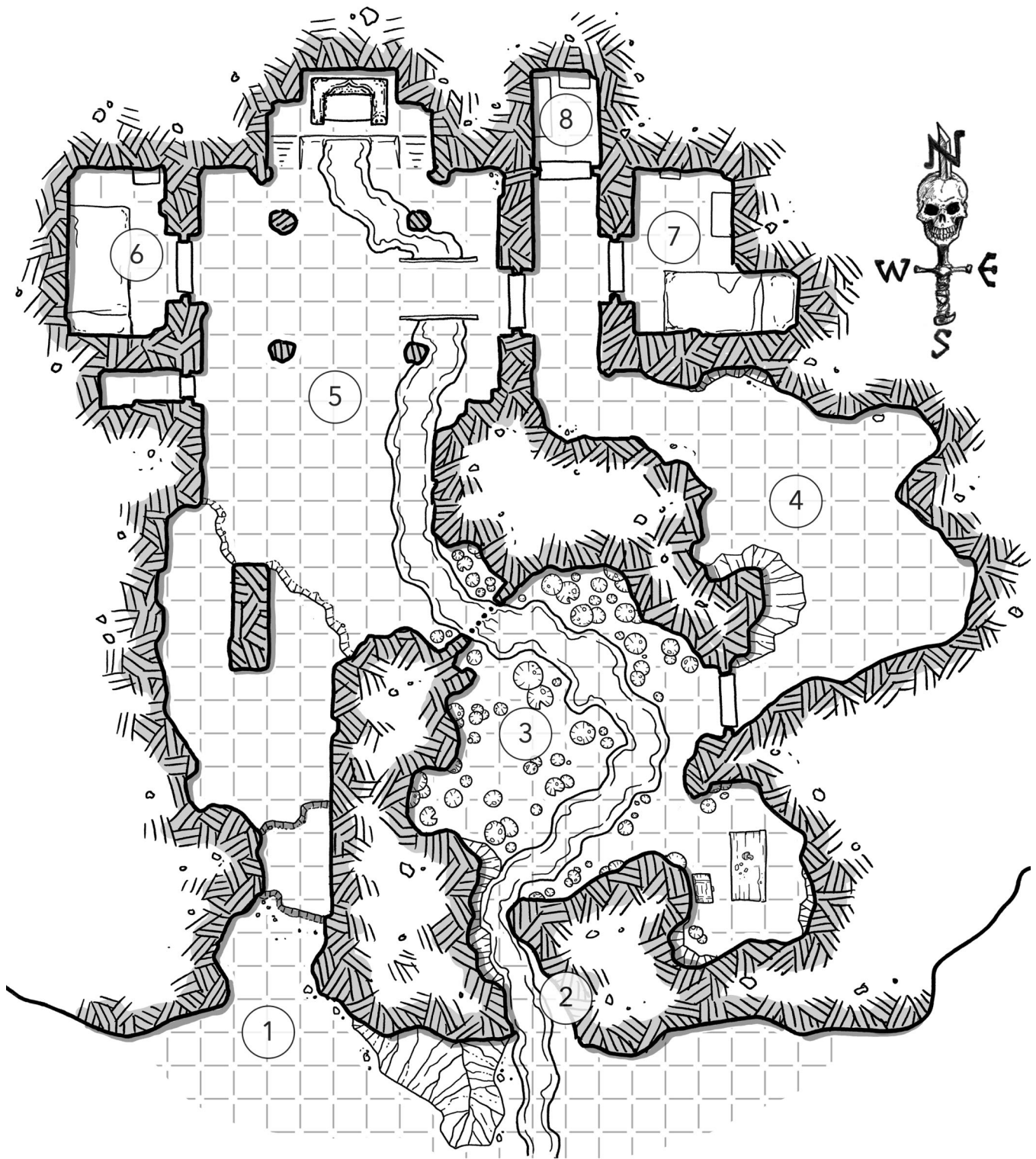
Floors: The floor is of worked stone—hacked and smoothed long ago. Tool marks—blurred with age—are still visible in little-trod areas. In general, the floor is flat and does not impede movement.

Doors: Stone doors, cunningly hung on hidden mechanisms, ward the dungeon's rooms. The doors are heavy but still in good condition. Unless otherwise noted, doors are left open.

Stone Steps: The dungeon's stone steps—obviously sized for a giant—are difficult terrain for human-sized or smaller characters. Their risers are about two feet high.

Treasure, Trinkets & Trash: Use the Treasures, Trinkets & Trash sidebars to determine what the characters find if they search an area (or perhaps a fallen foe's body).

Dungeon Dressing: Use the Dungeon Dressing sidebars to breathe life and detail into the delve.



Tagged and untagged copies of this map can be downloaded at ragingswanpress.com

GM NOTES

Friends or Foes? Before running this adventure, decide if the Lizardfolk of the Coiled Serpent are (ideally) to be friend or foe to the characters. If you have a group keen on roleplaying and problem solving consider setting up the adventure so that the characters need the lizardfolk's help.

Thus, instead of an adventure heavy in combat and violence, the characters must win the lizardfolk's trust in some way. Perhaps a ferocious alligator or other large predator is preying on them; if the characters hunt it down and kill it the lizardfolk will help them.

Guards: The lizardfolk may place watchers in both location 1 and 2.

1: MAIN ENTRANCE

Two five-foot-high escarpments of crumbling stone here deter casual explorers.

Two five-foot-high escarpments of rocky stone cut across this wide passageway.

Clawed Tracks: A few clawed tracks mar the ground outside the cave entrance. A tracker can determine the tracks were made by bipedal, clawed humanoids. Some of the tracks are very recent. Most of the lizardfolk, however, use the Slugwater tunnel (location 2).

Escarpments: Two rough escarpments, each about five feet high, cut through the passageway leading north, providing a barrier to casual exploration. If explorers are not rushing or in combat, the escarpments can be easily scaled.

Walls: Portions of this area's walls are of natural stone, but much of the inner walls are worked.

Carven Sigil: The tribe's sigil—a coiled serpent—is crudely carved into the western wall near the entrance. Lichen and moss grow over the carving, making it slightly difficult to spot.

2: THE SLUGWATER

A shallow stream sluggishly flows through this narrow, winding natural passage.

A shallow, muddy stream issues sluggishly through this narrow cave mouth. Beyond, the passageway twists out of sight.

Shallow Stream: The muddy stream flowing through this area fills much of the passage. It is difficult to explore here without getting wet. The stream is but two feet deep, though, and it flows slowly, making exploration relatively simple. Squares containing the stream are difficult terrain.

Clawed Tracks: Numerous clawed tracks and the sinuous tracks of many serpents cover the banks of the stream where it flows from the tunnel and into the surrounding mire. A tracker can determine the tracks were made by bipedal clawed humanoids and lots of snakes.

Carven Sigil: The tribe's sigil—a large coiled serpent—is crudely carved into the east wall. Lichen and moss grow over the carving, making it slightly difficult to spot.

TREASURE, TRINKETS & TRASH

1. A dirty pouch, crudely made of oddly-coloured leather lies on the floor. It holds a small amount of crushed, rotting herbs.
2. A spear leans against a wall—feathers and small bones are tied around the shaft with a leather thong just below the weapon's metal point.
3. Shards of wood—a broken bucket—lie on the floor.
4. Shards of broken bone fill a niche in a wall.

3: MUSHROOM FOREST

A veritable forest of giant mushrooms grows in this dank and noisome cavern.

A forest of gigantic mushrooms—some easily as tall as the tallest human—fills this large cavern. A sluggish stream flows through the mushrooms. Two passageways lead off to the east.

Musty Smell: A musty smell of damp earth hangs in the air.

Cave Walls: The chamber's walls are of rough and uneven natural stone. Lichens and mosses grow on much of the wall.

Cave Ceiling: The ceiling in this cave is around 20 feet high. A small colony of bats nests on the ceiling. Their guano fertilises the mushrooms, and the lizardfolk generally leave them alone. Loud noises or bright lights disturb the bats.

Mushroom Forest: Dense stands of mushrooms grow from the cavern's earthy floor. Some of the mushrooms stand over six feet tall. Most of the mushrooms are of drab colours, although a few of the largest specimens have bright red caps.

- **Snakes:** Many snakes dwell amid the mushroom forest. The snakes are used to the presence of humanoids; they slither away if attacked.

If a character searches the mushroom forest, use this list to determine what they find:

1. The mouldering remains of a small snake are part-buried by bat guano and soft soil.
2. A crude bone and feather fetish on a leather thong hangs around one of the larger mushrooms.
3. This lop-sided mushroom looks diseased.
4. A woven reed basket filled with small harvested mushrooms lies next to a rusty knife.

Stream and Weir: The stream flows over a five-foot-high weir to fall into this chamber before meandering south. Squares containing the stream are difficult terrain.

Rusty Iron Bars: A wall of floor-to-ceiling rusty iron bars divides this chamber from Hall of the Giant's Throne (location 5) to the north. The lower portions of the bars are much rustier and easier to break than the upper portions. Bits of wood and other detritus are caught against the bars.

GM NOTES

Bats: *If you want to give the characters a different challenge before they meet the lizardfolk consider placing one or more swarms of bats in this location. Combat here almost certainly alerts the lizardfolk to the east.*

Snakes: *Small snakes dwell amid the mushroom forest. These snakes can be harmless or dangerous as you determine. Killing the snakes angers the lizardfolk.*

DUNGEON DRESSING

1. Water oozes from a crack in the wall; moist, glistening yellowish lichen grows across the damp stone.
2. Muddy, clawed footprints cover the floor.
3. A pungent, musty and dank smell—the smell of serpents—hangs heavily in the still air.
4. A small, yellow and red viper slithers silently along the floor near a wall. (The snake is harmless and flees if approached or attacked).

GM NOTES

Noncombatants: Remember that not all the tribe will be capable of fighting the characters. Children, the infirm and the injured will all seek to escape. The presence of so many noncombatants may give good-aligned characters pause if they are considering the use of large, area of affect spells and the like.

Meeting Sithes: If the characters come in peace they likely meet Sithes here, watched by many of the curious tribe. If the characters come to fight, the tribe make their last stand around the throne and their chieftain.

4: THE COMMONS

Here are found most of the Lizardfolk of the Coiled Serpent living in the Dank Hall. Other lizardfolk live in the surrounding locality.

The stench in this cavern is indescribable. Primitive possessions and much rubbish cover the floor. Many lizardfolk dwell herein.

Fetid Smell: The stench of lizards, sweat and other unplaceable things hangs in the air here.

Cave Walls: This chamber's walls are of uneven, natural stone. Many niches and cracks pierce the walls; the lizardfolk use some of the larger ones for storage.

Rubbish & Possessions: The lizardfolks' leavings and primitive possessions are scattered about the floor. Most are of no interest to the characters, but a character searching the chamber may find something of interest; roll on "Treasures, Trinkets & Trash".

5: HALL OF THE GIANT'S THRONE

Herein, centuries ago, the oracles met those who sought their wisdom. Now, the tribe's chieftain, **Sithes**, holds court here.

A huge throne-sized for a giant—stands against the far wall of this gigantic room. A stream flows out through the base of the throne and wends its way south.

Escarpments: A rough escarpment, about five feet high, forms the southwestern border of this chamber. If explorers are not rushing or in combat, it can be easily scaled.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 30 feet high.

Stream: This five-foot wide stream flows south out of the plinth upon which stands the oracles' throne. The stream is about five feet deep, but its narrow channel is ten feet deep. Thus, there is a five-foot drop into the stream.

Stone Bridge: This flat stone bridge crosses the stream. The bridge is stout and in good repair.

Large Stone Pillars: Thick stone pillars hacked from the living stone hold the ceiling aloft and provide cover.

Stone Throne: This stone throne is sized for a giant; a crude wooden step stands in front of it to aid **Sithe** in taking her place.

TREASURE, TRINKETS & TRASH

1. A large basket woven of reeds about the size of a barrel stands against a wall. It has a similarly woven lid.
2. This stone figurine shows a humanoid who has a single eye set in the middle of their forehead.
3. Shimmering snake scales of red and yellow form this primitive but beautiful necklace
4. The shed skin of a snake easily six-foot-long is intertwine amid the lizardfolks' mundane possessions.

6: NAME'S CHAMBER

Herein dwells the tribe's chieftain, **Sithes**, and her mate, **Tloth**, along with their viper companion.

A large stone bed dominates this chamber. Fresh bracken and heaps of clothes cover the bed. Five woven baskets stand along one wall.

Stone Bed: The large stone bed herein is hewn from, and is part of, the floor. Fresh bracken, heaps of clothes and blankets cover the bed.

Woven Baskets: Each roughly the size of a small barrel, these baskets hold the tribe's treasures along with Sithes's and Tloth's possessions.

Carven Snake: Carved from a cross-section of an oak bole, this beautifully detailed statuette depicts a coiled snake.

7: NAME'S CHAMBER

The tribal champion **Skara** dwells herein with his mate, **Thet**.

A large stone bed dominates this chamber. Fresh bracken and heaps of clothes cover the bed. Two woven baskets stand along one wall. Rubbish covers the floor.

Stone Bed: The large stone bed herein is hewn from, and is part of, the floor. Fresh bracken, heaps of clothes and blankets cover the bed.

Woven Baskets: Each roughly the size of a small barrel, these baskets hold **Skara's** and **Thet's** possessions.

8: SMALL CHAMBER

The tribe uses this small chamber to hold any captives that fall into their possession or to house an honoured guest.

A gigantic stone bed fills the bulk of this small chamber.

Stone Door: The large stone door warding this chamber is firmly closed if the room holds prisoners.

Stone Bed: The large stone bed herein is hewn from, and is part of, the floor. A smattering of rotting bracken and suchlike cover the bed.

GM NOTES

Tribal Treasures: Sithes likely possesses the most valuable and interesting treasures to be found in the dungeon. Some of these—a smattering of coins and items that have resisted the damp conditions—may have come from humans and their allies. Other items may be of lizardfolk artifice—tribal relics and suchlike—or may even be the leavings of the cyclops oracles that dwelt here long ago; such items are likely of stone or wreathed in magic.

Treasure: Skara possesses weapons and armour suitable for a great champion. While he doesn't wear armour he might use a spear or battleaxe—perhaps an oversized weapon of cyclops origin.

Prisoners: If the characters are searching for travellers taken by the tribe, they are likely to be found here.

DUNGEON DRESSING

1. A large, primitive carving on a wall depicts a gigantic coiled serpent. The carving is crude, but beautiful in its simplicity. Lichen grows on the wall around it.
2. A confused trail of muddy, clawed footprints cover the floor. They lead all over the place.
3. The heavy stench of lizard hangs heavily in the air.
4. The faint smell of snake hangs in the air; only the shortest characters smells it.

AFTERMATH

Once the characters have explored the Dank Hall of the One-Eyed Oracles and dealt with its denizens, resolve the adventure hook that brought them to the place. If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

- **Peaceful Contact:** If the characters have dealt honourably and peacefully with the tribe, it is likely they will have to plunge further into the Salt Mire to discover who is behind the missing travellers and attacked farmstead (or whatever the quest you have designed for them). Perhaps the Lizardfolk of the Coiled Serpent provide a guide or two to help the party.
- **Violent Contact:** If the characters have dealt violently with the tribe, they may have resolved whatever reason they had for coming to the Salt Mire. Perhaps they have rescued the traveller(s) they sought or have looted the olden treasures of the One-Eyed Oracles. If their quest is completed, the party will no doubt return to more civilised lands.



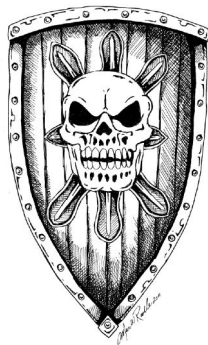
FURTHER ADVENTURES

Once the characters move on, the delve might simply fade from your campaign—never to be revisited. Alternatively, it could feature in future adventures and events:

- **Champions of the Coiled Serpent:** If the characters establish peaceful relations with the Coiled Serpent tribe they may be allowed to stay with the tribe while they continue their doings in the Salt Mire. Eventually, they may even come to look upon some of the lizardfolk as friends. When hunters, other adventurers or even bandits enter the locality, the characters may end up championing the lizardfolks' right to live under Willow Hill. They may even help defend the tribe and its home from rival tribes, adventurers intent on slaughter and loot or other unprincipled explorers intent on harming or exterminating the tribe.
- **Into the Mire:** Once the characters have concluded their doings with the Lizardfolk of the Coiled Serpent, they might return to civilisation and think no more of the Salt Mire. However, further opportunities for adventure lie in the swamp—some of the other tribes are violent toward strangers and covens of harpies lurk along the coast. Here and there, old ruins, such as the Decaying Citadel of the Fated Warlock, the Forbidden Isle and Bittermire Keep, yet lurk in the mire. All are ripe for adventure.

ORCS OF THE FLAYED SKULL

The crumbling tower of the long-dead wizard Elias Leminen has long stood amid the numberless boughs of the southern forest. Now, savage orcs from the Flayed Skull tribe have claimed the tower and use it as a base from which to launch devastating raids on the surrounding area. Will the characters dare to assault the ruin and end the threat? Will they dare to pursue the surviving orcs back to their fortress-home of Rakorzar?



DELVE BACKGROUND

Centuries ago, a wizard—Elias Leminen—desiring peace and quiet to conduct his research and—uninterested in dealing with the rantings and whisperings of superstitious peasants—built a small tower beyond civilisation’s bounds. There, he planned to carry out certain experiments of an esoteric nature that the “uneducated and unenlightened” masses might find distasteful and repugnant.

Eventually, after two decades, he disappeared, and the tower fell into ruin and disarray. Inevitably, local superstitions and rumours built up around the tower, and the place languished abandoned and unvisited.

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

The characters can stumble on Elias’s ruined tower by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the place:

- **Lone Survivor:** The characters encounter Tiera Mielo, the lone survivor of the borderland hamlet of Bywater. Tiera staggers toward them, shouting for help. Streaked with soot and sporting a head wound, he has clearly recently been in a fight for this life. He explains he hails from the hamlet of Bywater. Last night, the hamlet was set upon by orc raiders. He was injured in the fight and knocked out; when he came round, everyone was either dead or had vanished; he fears the orcs took them.
- **Recover Elias’ Legacy:** The sage Konrad Ampuja (middle-aged male human) contacts the characters and asks them to explore Elias Leminen’s fallen tower. He believes the wizard made certain discoveries about planar travel and is keen to own any remaining books, scrolls and the like detailing Elias’s discoveries.
- **Sacked Hamlet:** While travelling through a borderland area, the characters come across a destroyed hamlet. Wisps of smoke yet rise from the shattered settlement, and headless bodies lie where they fell. Clearly, the violence wrought here did not happen too long ago. A cursory search of the area uncovers no survivors but does reveal the tracks of a score or so attackers—and perhaps a few captives—leading into the surrounding forest.

TRIBAL LORE

A character might know something about the Orcs of the Flayed Skull. Perhaps the character is steeped in local lore or has heard about the tribe from another adventurer or some other reputable source of information.

- Orcs of the Flayed Skull display a skull sigil on their armour and shields.

- The tribe gets its name from the gruesome practice of decapitating their slain enemies and using their skulls as decoration for their cave-fortress, Rakorzar.
- The tribe dwells in Rakorzar, which is said to lie somewhere amid a range of rugged, tree-choked hills under an ancient ruin of unknown origin.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A character might know rumours about the Orcs of the Flayed Skull. Perhaps they heard a rumour about the tribe while drinking in a tavern or overheard two locals gossiping. Alternatively, they may have personal experience of the tribe or know someone who has suffered their depredations. Use this list to determine what the character knows:

1. The mighty Thak Shuna, the Elf-Scourge, Slayer of Helkas Thraten and Destroyer of the Arched Tower, leads the orcs of the Flayed Skull.
2. The tribe’s home—Rakorzar—is said to be an immense cavern complex hidden far from civilised eyes in the wooded hills. The deeper caves are choked with thousands upon thousands of skulls—the victims of generations of savage orc warriors.
3. The Orcs of the Flayed Skull are violent and savage—even by their race’s standards. To them, personal might is the only thing that matters.
4. Sometimes, the Orcs of the Flayed Skull send forth small war bands to raid nearby human settlements for loot, slaves and skulls. Few small borderland settlements withstand their devastating assault.
5. The Orcs of the Flayed Skull are fecund even by their race’s standards and number many half-orcs in their ranks; such half-orcs live or die by their ability to be a “productive” member of the tribe. Many are even more savage than their orc brethren—constantly forced to justify and protect their position among the tribe’s ranks.
6. Some of the tribe’s ear bands are led by savage warriors skilled in whipping their fellows into a bloody frenzy.

(Not all the rumours above may be true; decide their veracity based on your customisation of this Monstrous Delve.)

HAMLET OF BYWATER

Numbering a half-dozen homes, this tiny hunter’s hamlet sits in a small clearing amid the woods. A wooden stockade surrounds the buildings.

If the characters visit Bywater, they discover it has been comprehensively sacked and partially burned. Headless bodies lie scattered about.

A character skilled in tracking can easily discover the tracks left by the orcs—they have made no attempt to hide them. The tracker can also determine that at least four survivors were dragged away.

THE FLAYED SKULL TRIBE

This savage tribe of fearless, bloodthirsty and—above all—fecund orcs dwells deep in the southern woods, far from the easy reach of humanity's retribution.

Led by their mighty chieftain, Thak Shuna, the Elf-Scourge, Slayer of Helkas Thraten and Destroyer of the Arched Tower, the tribe periodically send forth war bands from their fortress-home of Rakorzar to despoil the surrounds. Such bands are normally small, perhaps a score strong, and led by a champion or maiwyn—a warrior bard steeped in battle lore and skilled with orc war drums. They move quickly in the hunt for treasure, slaves and heads. Such raids leave devastated homesteads, sacked villages and worse in their wake.

SOCIETY & ORGANISATION

In the Flayed Skull tribe, personal might is all. Champions rise from among the common warriors, and the chief is always the largest, most ferocious and dangerous member of the tribe. Status is determined by bravery and battle-deeds. The Flayed Skull tribe has no time for learning, writing, farming or any other civilised skill or pastime that does not directly relate to war and conquest.

When a warrior returns a head to Rakorzar the flesh is boiled away—the tribe eats well after a successful raid—before the skull is added to the tribe's Skull Trove. To signify their deeds, warriors receive a skull tattoo for each head they return to Rakorzar. The more heads a warrior has gathered, and, thus, the more skull tattoos they display, the greater their standing. Warriors festoon their faces, necks and arms first so that all may see the evidence of their bravery. When not arrayed for war, champions and the like often go about virtually naked so that all may gaze upon their tattoo-decorated torso and back.

In some ways, the Flayed Skulls society is an egalitarian one—an orc's personal circumstances, birth station and so on are irrelevant; all that matters is an individual's strength and bravery. However, this is a "fair" society steeped in death built on casual violence and indescribable cruelty meted out on anyone not of the tribe.

Half-orcs in the tribe either match their full-blood brethren's strength and ferocity and are accepted as full members of the tribe, or they do not survive. Weaklings either die—likely killed as a result of some petty argument or disagreement—or are consigned to Rakorzar's slave pits.

PERSONALITIES

Most of the Flayed Skull tribe comprises warriors intent on little but battle-glory and their personal standing. A few members of the tribe, however, are exceptional for one reason or another.

- **Thak Shuna** (giant middle-aged male orc) the Elf-Scourge, Slayer of Helkas Thraten and Destroyer of the Arched Tower, leads the tribe. Heavily scarred and

covered in tattoos, he is a mighty warrior and allows no threat to his leadership to endure. He enjoys decapitating captives in front of an audience. He is utterly merciless and wholly without redeeming features. He has sired at least a dozen warriors—all of whom take after him in regard to physical strength and lack of compassion.

- **Bagra Grimfang** (female half-orc) possesses exceptional cunning and intelligence for an orc. Slight of build for an orc and able to pass as a (hideous) human, she sometimes poses as a traveller and visits isolated settlements to get the lie of the land before an attack. She dreams of leading the tribe.

ECOLOGY & LAIR

The Flayed Skull tribe dwells in the cave fortress of Rakorzar. Extensive and heavily fortified, Rakorzar lies behind and beneath an old, long-since abandoned ruin of unknown provenance amid a range of rugged, tree-choked hills. The orcs claim the surrounding hills and forest as their own and suffer no interlopers.

Unsurprisingly, given the tribe's proclivities, skulls are used throughout Rakorzar as decoration. Some of Rakorzar's deeper caverns and mines are filled with vast piles of skulls—deposited there by numberless generations of savage warriors. The orcs have also found many practical uses for the skulls they harvest, using them as drinking vessels, cressets, and decorations. Some orcs even use skulls in battle as weapons or as decoration for their helmets.

COMBAT & TACTICS

Savage and merciless in battle, Flayed Skull orcs take what they want and kill anyone trying to stop them. Warriors gather the heads of those they have slain to carry back in glory and triumph to Rakorzar.

In battle, the tribe's warriors favour large-bladed weapons such as axes, greatswords, halberds, bardiches and the like well suited for decapitating their foes. Most such weapons are crude, functional and inventively serrated. Some orcs use shields, while others trust their ferocity, vitality and skill at arms to see them through the battle. All proudly display the tribe's sigil—a grinning skull—on their armour.

The tribe's few archers are the weak, the young or the old, and even these orcs carry serrated swords designed for sawing and cutting. These skirmishers also use skulls in battle—filling them with highly flammable, explosive oil and hurling them at their foes.

Often, the orcs fight against their traditional foes, the Erdukr dwarves. The Erdukr are a dwindling folk, and shortly, doughty warriors though they are, will likely fall before the Flayed Skull's continued raids and assaults. (For more about the Erdukr dwarves, check out *Dungeon Backdrop: Blasted Donjon of the Erdukr Dwarves*.)

ELIAS'S TOWER

Led by the champion, Sogug Black-Eye, a war band of the Flayed Skull has taken control of an abandoned wizard's tower. The wizard's tower stands on a rocky bluff overlooking a forest; it lies a half day's travel from the nearest settlement of note. However, several small hamlets and isolated farmsteads lie within easy striking range of the orcs.

TOWER & WIZARD LORE

A character might know something about the tower and Elias Leminen. Perhaps they are steeped in local lore or have heard about the wizard and his tower from another adventurer or some other reputable source of information.

- Almost 200 years ago, the wizard Elias Leminen built a tower for himself away from the hubbub of urban life.
- Some kind of unspecified doom befell Elias. His tower has been repeatedly looted over the years; for hunters and the like, it is a well-known landmark.
- Elias is said to have excavated several levels of dungeons below the tower.

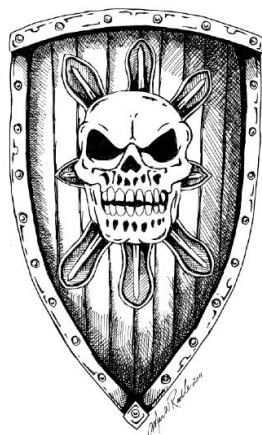
NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

The delve has several notable locations:

- **Ground Floor:** The keep's strong iron-banded oak door is kept shut. The door is missing its ring handle and cannot be locked.
- **First Floor:** **Orc sentries** keep watch here but do so poorly during the bright of the day.
- **Roof:** The orcs only come to the ruined roof at night.
- **Cellar:** Rubbish and detritus cover the floor here.

The orcs mainly dwell in the tower's small two-level dungeon:

1. **Guard Room:** Two **orc warriors** keep watch here while their companions rest to the east. The orcs are bored, distracted and half-drunk.



2. **Common Room:** Most of the **orc warriors** rest in these fetid chambers. The characters likely hear the orcs as they approach this room.
3. **Sogug's Chamber:** This was once Elias Leminen's laboratory; now, the **orc champion** Sogug Black-Eye claims it as his lair.
4. **Lower Gate:** This area provides access to the tower's cellars. A bored **orc warrior** dozes beyond.
5. **Guard Post:** **Orc warriors** lurk here; ostensibly, they are watching over the prisoners but are shirking their duty.
6. **Dungeon of Sorrow:** The orcs use this chamber for its original purpose—holding prisoners.
7. **Rubbish Dump:** The orcs use this chamber as a dumping ground. Heaps of rotting furniture brought here from above and other rubbish cover the floor. **Rats** dwell here.
8. **Orc "Treasury":** Here, the orcs store the bulky, mundane items they have wrested from the settlements they have recently assaulted and looted.
9. **Hidden Treasures** The orcs do not know about this chamber; their brutish senses have not discovered the cleverly hidden secret door. Herein yet lie some of Elias Leminen's treasures.

GENERIC TOWER FEATURES

Many of the tower's locations share certain features:

Illumination: In the above-ground ruin, the illumination levels depend on the time of day.

Tower Walls: The tower's walls are of dressed stone; between the blocks, the mortar is crumbling, providing many hand- and footholds for those wishing to climb.

Floors: Floors are of level flagstones.

Ceilings: The ceilings are about 13 feet high.

Spiral Staircase: A spiral staircase connects all three tower levels and circles upwards, giving an advantage to defenders on the floor above. Such individuals have cover against attacks coming from below.

GENERIC DELVE FEATURES

Many of the delve's locations share certain features:

Illumination: Below, ground darkness fills the dungeon.

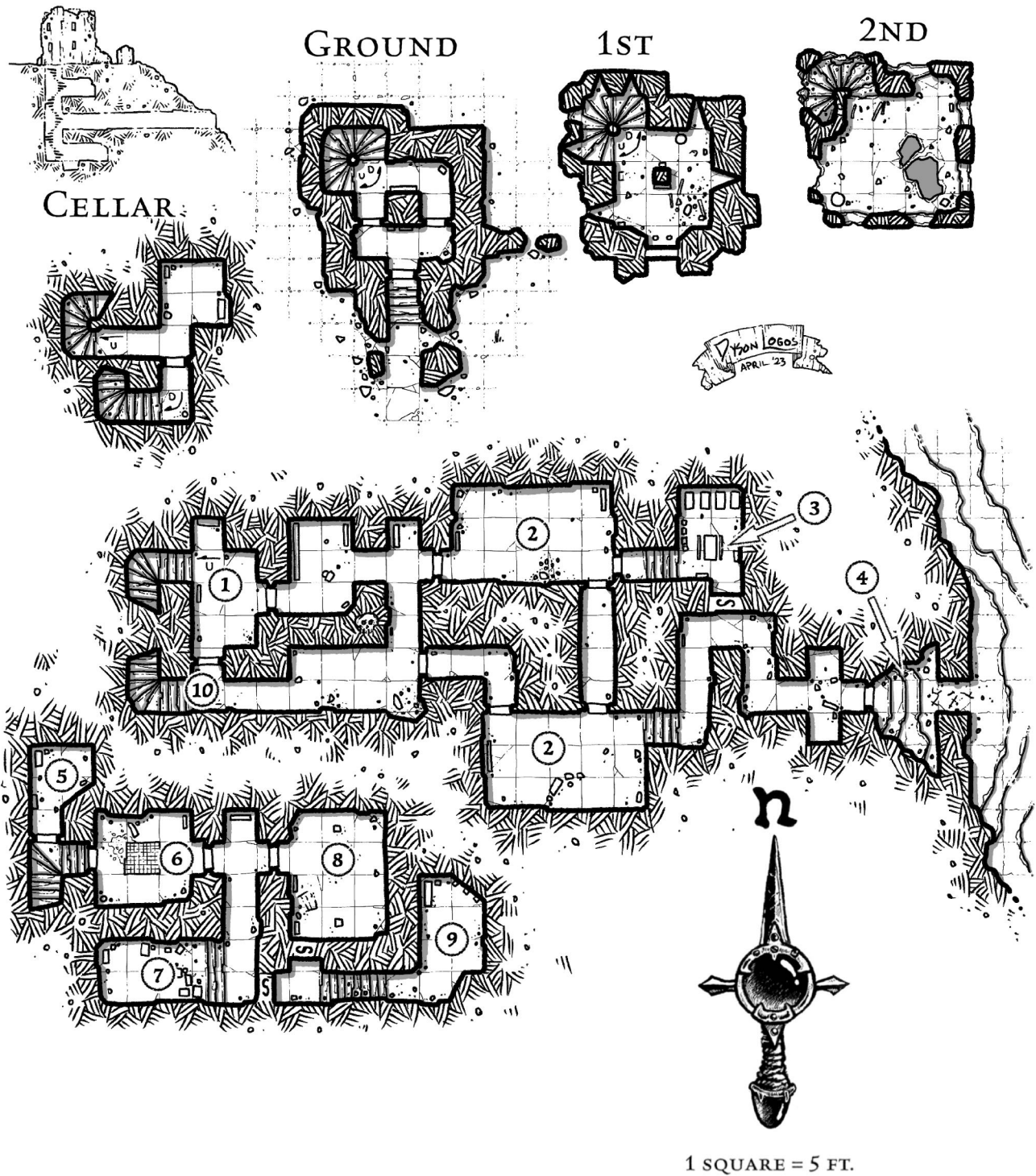
Ceilings: The ceilings are about ten feet high and of smoothed stone. They are plain and unadorned. Dusty cobwebs feature throughout the dungeon.

Floors: Floors are of dusty and grimy flagstones.

Dungeon Walls: The dungeon walls are of stone blocks faced onto the bedrock of the hill. They are in better condition than the walls above, but in a few places, water oozes through gaps between the blocks.

Torch Sconces: Torches sconces stud the walls and are generally placed about 15 feet apart.

Interior Doors: Interior doors are of wood. Once of good quality, the years have not been kind to many of the doors. Some are swollen into place, while others are slowly rotting away and have lichen and mould growing on them.



Tagged and untagged copies of this map can be downloaded at ragingswanpress.com

GM NOTES

Orcs do not like bright light, and the upper level should be sparsely populated during the day.

GROUND FLOOR

The keep's yet strong iron-banded oak door is kept shut. The door is missing its ring handle and cannot be locked.

A heavy oak, iron-banded door stands atop a short flight of stone steps.

Iron-Banded Oak Door: This door has no lock or handle, and so the orcs have wedged it shut with chunks of rubble.

FIRST FLOOR

Two **orc warriors** keep watch here but do so poorly during the bright of the day.

An ornate pillar decorated with intricate carvings of intertwining dragons holds up the remains of the ceiling. Several arrow slits and a single window pierce the walls.

Stone Pillar: Intricate carvings of intertwined dragons decorate the stone pillar. The orcs have tried to deface these carvings—with little success.

Hole in the Ceiling: A jagged hole in the ceiling lets in light and rain.

Rubble: A heap of slippery rubble covers the floor below the hole in the ceiling. Moss and lichen grow over the pile.

Arrow Slits: These arrow slits provide excellent cover for archers and the like. A small or thin character may be able to squeeze through them.

ROOF

The orcs only come to the ruined roof at night.

Ragged, crumbling battlements ring the tower's roof; about a quarter of the floor has collapsed into the level below.

Hole in the Floor: A jagged hole in the floor admits light and rain to the first floor.

Battlements: Ragged battlements ring the tower's roof. They provide cover against attacks originating from below. Loose stones abound here—and could be dropped on attackers assailing the tower.

TREASURE, TRINKETS & TRASH

Use this list to determine what the characters find if they search an area (or perhaps an orc's body):

1. This tiny, translucent, bright green gemstone is a malachite. It is cracked and fragile.
2. Dented and tarnished, this pewter tankard has an etching of a leaping stag on its base.
3. This broken wand has a transparent black tip; the tip is a small shaped piece of onyx.
4. Forged in the shape of a curved battleaxe, this simple amulet has splatters of dry blood on it.

CELLAR

Rubbish and detritus cover the cellar floor.

Rubbish covers this small room's floor.

If the orcs in location 1 are unaware of the characters, their guttural conversation and laughter are audible here.

1: GUARD ROOM

Two bored, distracted and half-drunk **orc warriors** keep watch here while their companions rest to the east.

A battered table and two benches fill this small chamber.

Bettered Furniture: A couple of half-empty wineskins lie on the battered and stained table. Two benches flank the table.

2: COMMON ROOM

Most of the **orc warriors** rest in these chambers. The characters likely hear the orcs as they approach.

The fetid smell of sweat and unwashed bodies emanates from this room. A half-dozen or so orcs sit about the room.

Orc warriors loll about this room. A fight in one of these rooms draws the orcs from the other room in 1d4 rounds.

Door: This chamber's doors are open.

Bedrolls & Rubbish: Bedrolls, spare equipment and the fetid detritus of an orc war band cover much of the floor.

3: SOGUG'S CHAMBER

This was once Elias Leminen's laboratory; now, the **orc champion** Sogug Black-Eye claims it as his lair.

Cluttered and dusty workbenches stand about this room. A bedroll and orc war gear fill a niche in the south wall.

Laboratory Equipment: Odds and ends of broken, mouldering or rusting laboratory gear cover the various workbenches and tables arrayed about this room.

Bedroll and War Gear: Sogug's bedroll is filthy, but his spare war gear is serviceable and well-maintained.

Secret Door: The orcs have not found this secret door. It is operated by pushing in a stone in the wall set roughly at a man's shoulder height.

GM NOTES

If the characters deal with the orcs in location 1 quietly, the orcs here may be oblivious to the presence of intruders.

This is a good place to place some portable, high-value treasures which Sogug has claimed as his own.

DUNGEON DRESSING

Use this list to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

1. Crude scratches on the wall show where a bored orc has attempted to write its name.
2. Drops of dried scarlet blood dot the floor—showing up in stark relief to the surrounding grey stone.
3. Dust and grime coat the walls and the spiderweb-dusted ceiling.
4. A torch sconce hangs drunkenly from the wall.

GM NOTES

If the orcs have taken any prisoners, they likely languish in the oubliette.

4: LOWER GATE

This area provides access to the tower's cellars. A bored **orc warrior** dozes beyond.

An iron-banded oak door pierces the wall at the top of a short flight of crumbling stone steps at the back of a small cave.

Rough Hewn Stone Steps: Rubble-littered stone steps hewn from the hill's bedrock lead up to the Lower Gate. The steps follow the land's contours and are irregular.

Iron-Banded Oak Door: This door has no lock or handle, and so the orcs have wedged it shut with chunks of rubble to slow down intruders.

Cave Walls: The natural cave walls offer climbers many hand- and foot-holds.

Ceiling: The cave ceiling is uneven but roughly 20 feet high. A few bats roost on the ceiling.

5: GUARD POST

Orc warriors lurk here; ostensibly, they are watching over the prisoners but are shirking their duty.

The stench of unwashed bodies and stale wine fills this small chamber. Rubbish and detritus cover the floor.

The **orc warriors** slump against the walls, sharing a jack or two of bad wine. The characters likely hear their conversation as they approach.

Rubbish: The orc warriors here are slovenly and have scattered their leavings all over the floor.

6: DUNGEON OF SORROW

The orcs use this chamber for its original purpose—holding their prisoners.

A heavy iron grill covers a hole cut into the centre of this room's floor. An old wooden ladder lies nearby.

Oubliette: Covered by an iron grill, this 15-foot-deep hole carved through solid rock holds the orcs' prisoners—if any are still alive. A rickety wooden ladder lies on the floor near the iron grill.

TREASURE, TRINKETS & TRASH

Use this list to determine what the characters find if they search an area (or perhaps an orc's body):

1. An old, oversized gold coin bears deeply incised arcane symbols on both sides.
2. A flaccid pouch holds 17 cp and 9 sp.
3. This cracked oil flask is half empty.
4. A crude drawing of the surrounding area fills an old scroll tube. The map shows the locations of several caves—each marked with an interesting name, such as the Cave of the Unknown, Petr's Doom and so on.

7: RUBBISH DUMP

The orcs use this chamber as a dumping ground. Heaps of rotting furniture brought here from above and other rubbish cover the floor.

Rubbish—broken pieces of furniture, ripped sacks, and other unidentifiable things—litter the rear of this chamber. A set of shallow steps lead upwards to the mass of rubbish.

Steps: Shallow steps lead up to the back of this small room.

Rubbish: The leavings of the previous owner of the tower, along with rubbish dumped here by the orcs, partly fill this chamber. **Rats** live amid the rubbish.

8: ORC “TREASURY”

Here, the orcs store the bulky items they have wrested from the settlements they have recently assaulted and looted.

Several spears, a longbow and two axes lean against the walls here among a great jumble of other mundane items such as pots, pans, tools and so on.

Treasure: The characters find little true treasure here amid the great jumble of finished but mundane items necessary for life on the borderland.

9: HIDDEN TREASURES

The orcs do not know about this chamber; their brutish senses have not discovered the cleverly hidden secret door. Herein yet lie some of Elias Leminen’s treasures.

The air here is stale, and deep dust shrouds the floor of this small chamber. A chest and several small boxes stand about this cobweb-strewn chamber.

Secret Door: These cleverly hidden secret doors have not been opened for decades. Each is operated by pulling down on a nearby torch sconce. Pulling down opens the secret door, and pushing up closes it.

Iron Bound Chest: This chest is locked, and the key is long lost.

GM NOTES

The majority of these items are less than valuable to adventurers but are vital for life on the frontier. A smattering of simple weapons along with ironwork such as cauldrons and the like should predominate.

Here, the characters may find some wizardly treasures such as a spellbook, valuable or rare material components and so on. If they have been hired to recover something from the tower (perhaps a valuable and rare spell component or spellbook), it is likely to be found here.

A yet active magic trap could yet ward the chest. If the chest contains magic items, it could be lined with lead to defeat, detect magic spells, and the like.

DUNGEON DRESSING

Use this list to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

1. Water oozes through a crack in the wall and puddles on the floor. Yellowish mould grows around the puddle’s glistening fringes.
2. A thick, irregularly-shaped ball of spiderwebs fills a corner of the ceiling. Black shapes scuttle within.
3. The smashed remnant of a chair lies on the floor, creating a minor obstacle.
4. Shards of sharp glass—the remains of several wine bottles—cover a swath of the floor. Stains on the floor suggest the bottles have not lain here long.

AFTERMATH

Once the characters have explored Elias Leminen's crumbled tower and dealt with its orc denizens resolve the adventure hook that brought them to the place. If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

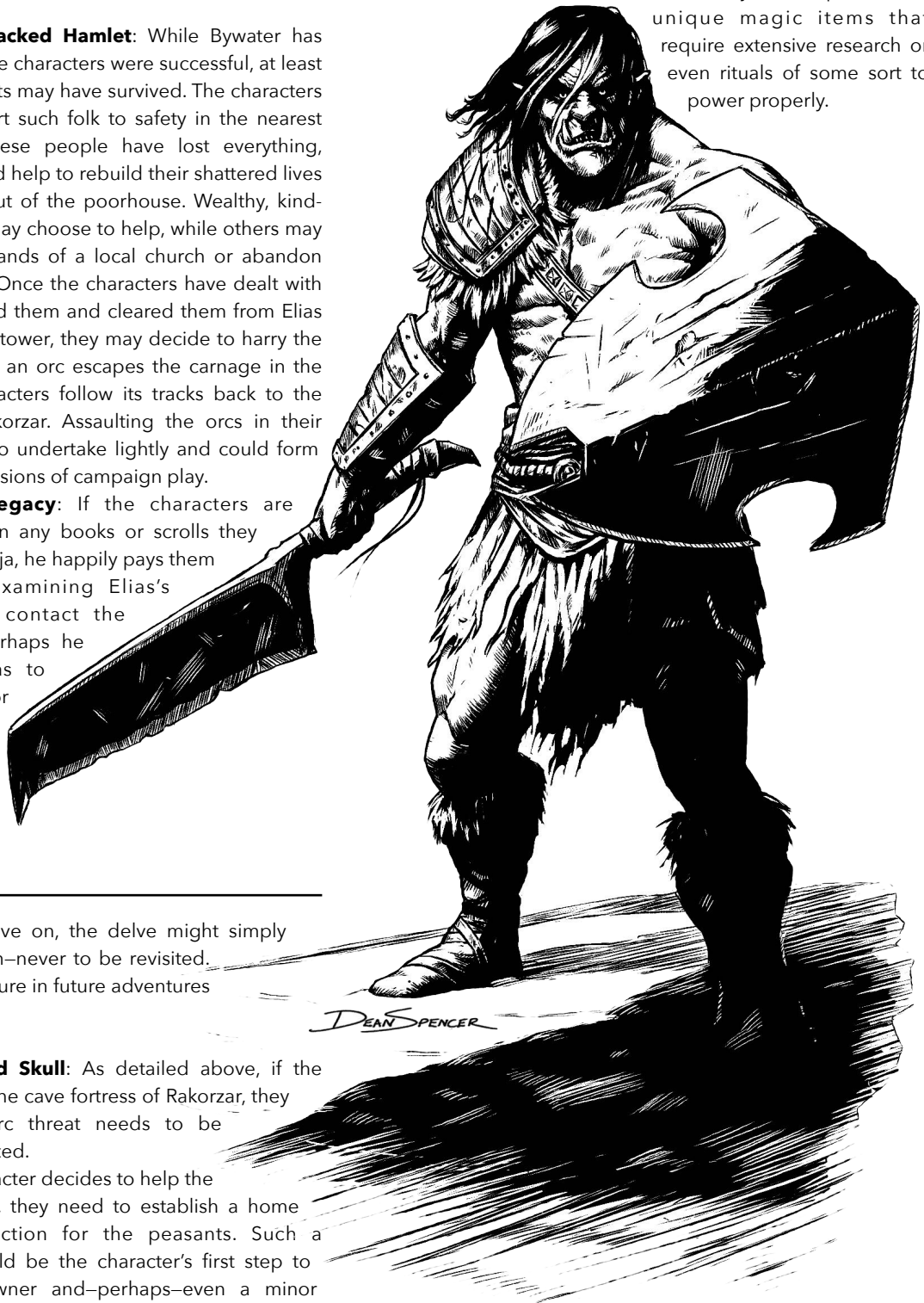
- **Lone Survivor & Sacked Hamlet:** While Bywater has been destroyed, if the characters were successful, at least a few of its inhabitants may have survived. The characters should at least escort such folk to safety in the nearest town or village. These people have lost everything, though, and will need help to rebuild their shattered lives if they are to stay out of the poorhouse. Wealthy, kind-hearted characters may choose to help, while others may leave them in the hands of a local church or abandon them to the streets. Once the characters have dealt with the orcs that attacked them and cleared them from Elias Leminen's crumbled tower, they may decide to harry the orcs further. Perhaps an orc escapes the carnage in the tower, and the characters follow its tracks back to the cave fortress of Rakorzar. Assaulting the orcs in their home is not a task to undertake lightly and could form the basis of many sessions of campaign play.
- **Recover Eljas's Legacy:** If the characters are successful and return any books or scrolls they find to Konrad Ampuja, he happily pays them their fee. After examining Elias's research he may contact the characters again—perhaps he discovers a clue as to where Elias went (or his fate) and wants the characters to investigate further.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

Once the characters move on, the delve might simply fade from your campaign—never to be revisited. Alternatively, it could feature in future adventures and events:

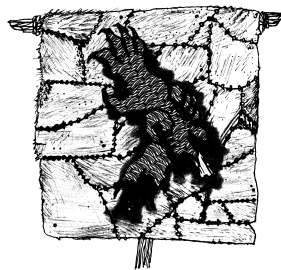
- **Fighting the Flayed Skull:** As detailed above, if the characters discover the cave fortress of Rakorzar, they may decide the orc threat needs to be permanently eradicated.
- **Follow Me:** If a character decides to help the survivors of Bywater, they need to establish a home and provide protection for the peasants. Such a kindhearted act could be the character's first step to becoming a landowner and—perhaps—even a minor noble

- **Elias Legacy:** If the characters uncover Elias' secret treasury (location 9), their discoveries therein could propel them into another adventure. Perhaps they find a diary that hints at awesome discoveries or of Elias's decision to travel across the planes or to another legendary location. The characters—curious as to his fate—may decide to follow in his footsteps. Alternatively, the wizard may have possessed unique magic items that require extensive research or even rituals of some sort to power properly.



ORCS OF THE SEVERED HAND

The Orcs of the Severed Hand are a shadow of their former greatness but, like a wounded animal at bay, are yet dangerous foes. Laid low by the long-dead adventurer-lord Valentin Ironwolf and the perfidious goblins of the Blood Moon, the tribe's remnant claims the hidden vault of the mad, doom-obsessed adventurer Armytr Byranthyra as their home. Therein, their savage and racist chieftain dreams of reforging his tribe and eclipsing his father's glory but can do little but raid outlying farmsteads—for now.



DELVE BACKGROUND

A century ago, the adventurer Armytr Byranthya became convinced that a great doom was gathering about the Duchy of Ashlar and its people. Armytr had long fought evil's minions and knew well the depth of their depravity and the futility of the struggle. He came to believe that evil must surely triumph, and he believed that Ashlar would soon fall.

Determined to survive the fire and blood that would inevitably consume Ashlar, Armytr spent his wealth constructing a hidden redoubt buried deep in the southern woods. When it was completed, he retired to his new home with a few trusted (and gullible) companions to wait out the inevitable destruction—a destruction that never came.

As the years passed, Armytr grew stranger and more introverted. Slowly, his followers abandoned him until he mouldered alone in the dark of his home. Armytr's eventual doom remains unrecorded—perhaps old age, a mundane accident or one of the many strange and terrible things dwelling in the southern woods ended his long life.

In any event, the Orcs of the Severed Hand now dwell in his ruined vault. The orcs, once numerous, are now a faded people after their war with Valentin Ironwolf (see "The Severed Hand Tribe" opposite for more information). Much of the vault lies abandoned.

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

The characters can stumble on Armytr's Vault by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the place:

- **Armytr's Legacy:** Armytr was a moderately famed champion of good until his strange views presaged his



disappear. Most people assume he died fighting to keep Ashlar safe, but those who accompanied him south and then abandoned him know the truth. The party comes into possession of a diary fragment penned by one such follower. Even better, the fragment includes a crude map showing the vault's rough location. Perhaps treasures in desperate need of new owners languish within!

- **Hunting Orcs:** The characters are hunting orcs in the southern woods. They could have learned about the Orcs of the Severed Hand after exploring Valentin Ironwolf's abandoned home (see the adventure *Shadowed Keep on the Borderlands*), or they are pursuing a small band of orcs who raided one of the tiny borderland hamlet or farmsteads scattered along the wood's bounds. In any event, they discover tracks that lead to Armytr's Vault.
- **Lost in the Woods:** The deep southern woods are wild and trackless. Explorers plumbing their depths are liable to get lost in the dim gloom of the forest floor. The characters are one such group of lost explorers when they stumble upon Armytr's Vault.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A character might know rumours about the Orcs of the Severed Hand. Perhaps the character is steeped in local lore or they heard a rumour in the last settlement they visited while drinking in a tavern or overheard two locals gossiping while browsing a marketplace. Use this list to determine what the character knows:

1. The Orcs of the Severed Hand dwell somewhere in the southern woods. They were once a mighty tribe, but Valentin Ironwolf almost annihilated them decades ago.
2. The Orcs of the Severed Hand are savage fighters—many of their warriors are berserkers. They give no quarter, and no one survives for long in their clutches.
3. The Orcs of the Severed Hand are implacable enemies of the Blood Moon Goblins. The two tribes allied themselves to bring about the destruction of their mutual enemy—the adventurer-lord Valentin Ironwolf—and turned on one another soon after.
4. The Orcs of the Severed Hand accept no mongrels among their ranks—half-orcs are unknown in the tribe. The tribe does not breed with other, lesser races.
5. The Orcs of the Severed Hand dwell in the abandoned vault of the mad adventurer Armytr Byranthya, who disappeared almost a century ago after becoming convinced a great doom would shortly befall Ashlar.
6. The Orcs of the Severed Hand are led by the berserk Colzog the Unyielding. Colzog is a savage and merciless warrior famed for slaying the dwarven hero Bofnar Tharvoor in single combat.

Determine which rumours are true and false based on your campaign setup.

THE SEVERED HAND TRIBE

A shadow of their former greatness, the Orcs of the Severed Hand tribe lurk beneath the numberless boughs of the southern forests. Once a mighty and feared tribe, the Severed Hand has never recovered from its war with the retired adventurer Valentin Ironwolf—long-dead lord of the so-called Shadowed Keep on the Borderlands.

Three decades ago, the tribe—temporarily allied with the Goblins of the Blood Moon—finally slew their enemy and his remaining retainers when they broke into his borderland keep while most of the defenders feasted in the Great Hall. Of course, the orcs and the goblins fell to fighting soon thereafter, and the more numerous (and devious) goblins prevailed. The few orcs who survived the battle retreated into the woods to lick their wounds and plot their revenge.

Although the orcs are boundlessly fecund, their warlike way of life takes its toll, and the tribe's numbers have yet to sufficiently recover for the orcs to have their revenge upon the perfidious Blood Moon goblins.

SOCIETY & ORGANISATION

In the Severed Hand tribe, two things matter—battle prowess and fecundity. The tribe's chief—Colzog the Unyielding, son of Grazzob Ironfang slain by the Blood Moon goblins' treachery—lusts for revenge and for a return to the tribe's glory days when its blood-crazed warriors were feared by all. Colzog is also a racist and believes in the purity of orc blood. Consequently, the Severed Hand numbers no half-orcs or other mongrels among its depleted ranks. With such a means of strengthening the tribe's ranks denied them, the Severed hand continues its slow decline.

No adepts of the orc gods are left to the tribe, and they are completely without magic aid. Such a situation further weakens the tribe, as magical healing is a practical necessity for keeping blood-crazed berserks alive.

Life in the Severed Hand tribe is brutish, short and hard. The tribe yet raid—they cannot help themselves—but they confine their attention to isolated farmsteads, small groups of travellers—hunters, woodcutters and the like—and so on. Unless the tribe enjoys a sudden and rapid change of fortunes, they are doomed to slow extinction.

PERSONALITIES

Most of the Severed Hand tribe comprises berserkers intent on little but battle-glory and their personal standing. A few members of the tribe, however, are exceptional for one reason or another.

- **Colzog the Unyielding** (middle-aged male orc warrior chief) dreams of surpassing his father in glory but lacks the warriors to make a proper accounting of himself. Colzog is huge and brutish but, for an orc, is surprisingly intelligent. He knows that the tribe's orc blood must stay

pure and plots to absorb another tribe into his own; however, he has yet to find a sufficiently weak target.

- **Urna Crazov** (female orc) knows that the tribe must adapt or fail. Her views are far more progressive than her chief's; she would ally with another tribe or even start breeding with (captured) humans if it would secure the tribe's future—with her as its chief, of course.
- **Gorbag Lurzog** (young male orc) tires of life on the edge of disaster. He wants to wander the world and experience comfort and plenty. Gorbag keeps his views to himself, unsurprisingly, but takes any chance he can to start a new life away from the tribe.

ECOLOGY & LAIR

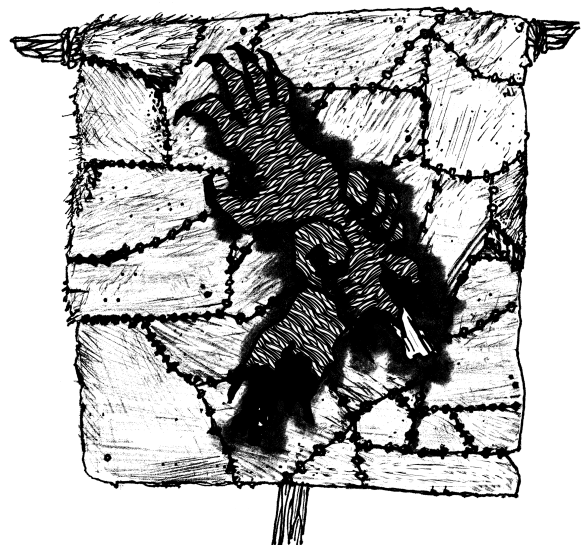
The Severed Hand tribe lurks in a small dungeon complex—Armtyr's Vault—in the woods that comprise the Duchy of Ashlar's ragged and contested southern border. The tribe's home lies roughly two miles south of the reputedly haunted Elle's Mere. Some of the lair is unused now as the tribe's numbers have dwindled.

The orcs' home benefits from an artesian well that has never run dry. The lair is also highly defensible and has only one way in or out, which suits the orcs and their reduced numbers. No outsiders have found the orcs' lair for many years, and thus, they grow lax in their watch.

COMBAT & TACTICS

Individually, the orcs are mighty warriors—many berserks once howled and slew under the tribe's flesh-sown banner. Now, but a handful remain. Still, the remaining orc berserks are wild and savage in battle. They lack coordination, however, and rarely help each other. Their tactics are simple: charge at the nearest foe, cut them down and move on. The Orcs of the Severed Hand are not subtle in battle or in life.

The tribe takes no prisoners—at least for long as it has no need for such—and slays (after ritual mutilation) any who fall into their hands.



THE DELVE

Armytr's Vault was designed as a refuge from the darkness threatening to engulf Ashlar. (See "Delve Background" for a more extensive history of the place.) In that, it was largely successful until Armytr's hirelings and followers drifted away. Eventually, other denizens of the southern forests found the refuge, broke in and looted the place. Finally, the Orcs of the Severed Arm claimed the complex as their own—their dominion over the site erased most of Armytr's legacy, and the dungeon became little more than an orc hole.

DELVE LORE

A character might know something about Armytr's Vault. Perhaps they are steeped in local lore or have heard about the wizard and his tower from another adventurer or some other reputable source of information.

- Growing disillusioned with the constant battle against evil, 100 years ago, the adventurer Armytr Byranthya built a hidden vault; therein, he hoped to evade the doom coming to the Duchy of Ashlar.
- Armytr grew odd and distant in his hidden vault, and slowly, his followers drifted away one by one until he was all alone in the dark.
- Armytr's eventual fate remains unknown. He was known to be wealthy, though, and sometimes adventurers search for his hidden lair.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

The delve has several notable locations:

1. **Entrance:** The orcs despise bright light and do not keep a watch here.
2. **Empty Chamber:** The orcs do not use this dead-end chamber—guards here have no way of warning their brethren of attack or of retreating. The orcs do not know of the secret door.
3. **Artesian Well:** The orcs draw water from the well and have not spoiled it. There is a 3 in 6 chance that **1d3 orcs** are present here when the characters enter the dungeon.
4. **Guard Chamber:** The orcs keep a watch in this chamber; the room's two doors are always kept open.
5. **Common Room:** Often, some of the orcs gather here to eat and socialise. There are normally a few orcs here.
6. **The Forgotten Chamber:** Designed as a final bolt hole, this room has lain undisturbed and undiscovered since Armytr's death.
7. **Armoury:** The orcs store their spare weapons and armour in this room.
8. **Unsafe Room:** The northeastern part of this room is unsafe and may collapse.
9. **Colzog's Chamber:** Here dwells the **orc chieftain** and his **concubines**. When not raiding, Colzog works

tirelessly to sire more children—through them, the tribe can regain its rightful place in the world.

10. **Storage Vault:** The orcs have captured much booty over the years. Some of it is valuable, but much of it is mundane—taken from isolated farmsteads and the like.

GENERIC DELVE FEATURES

Many of the delve's locations share certain features:

Illumination: Darkness fills Armytr's Vault.

Ceilings: The ceilings are 15 feet high. Murals of the open sky, clouds, and the like once decorated most of the ceilings, but most have been badly damaged by water oozing through them or orcs hurling things at them.

Walls: The walls are of well dressed stone. They remain in surprisingly good condition, but here and there, water oozes through cracks.

Floors: Generally, the floors throughout the vault are flat and do not impede movement. However, the orcs are not tidy creatures and rubbish and trash are scattered about. In some places, such piles are difficult terrain.

Doors: Doors throughout the vault are of iron-banded wood. All were once lockable, but the keys have long since been lost, and the locks are broken.

Treasure, Trinkets & Trash: Use the Treasures, Trinkets & Trash sidebars to determine what the characters find if they search an area (or perhaps a fallen foe's body).

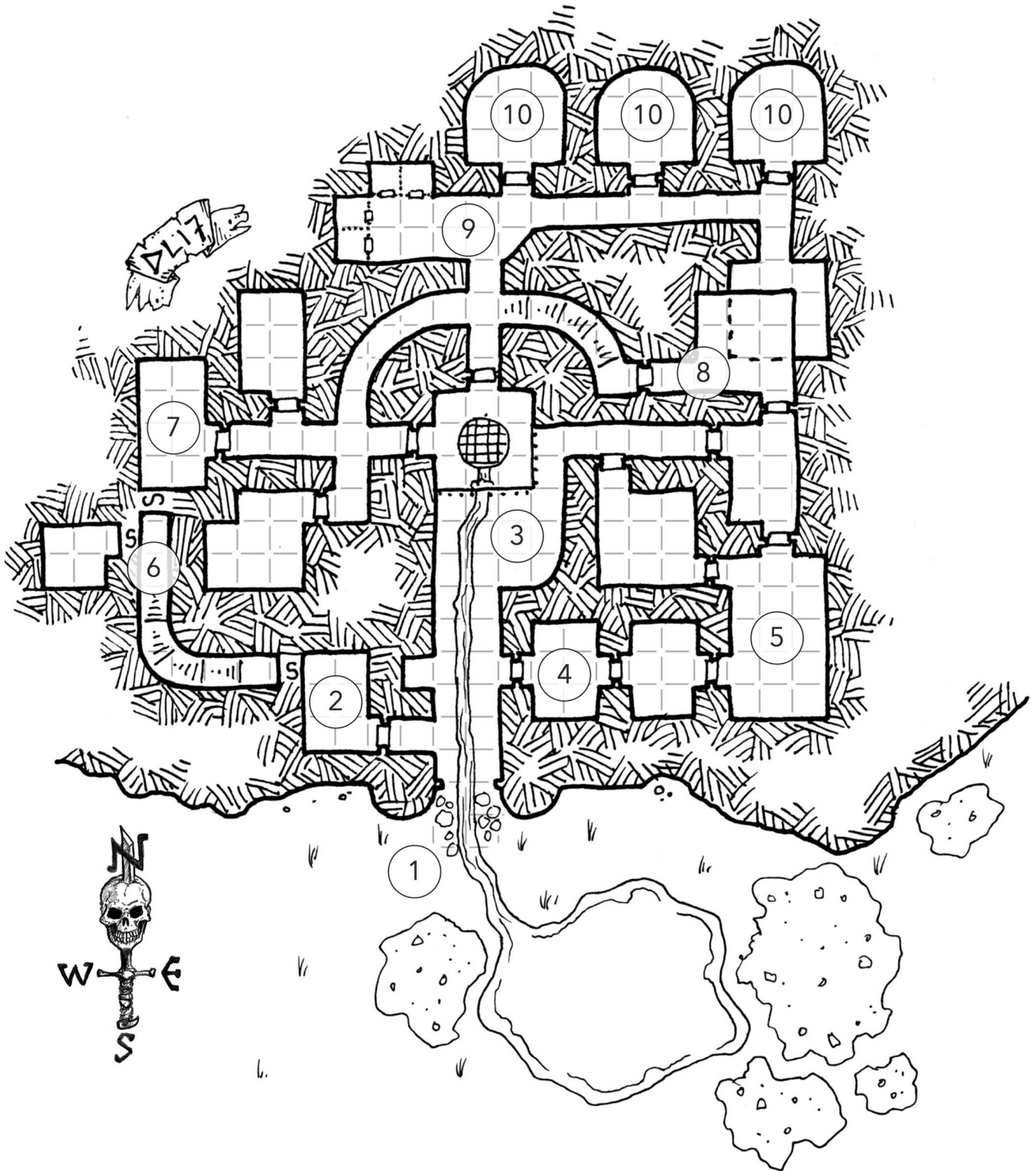
Dungeon Dressing: Use the Dungeon Dressing sidebars to breathe life and detail into the delve.

UNKEYED LOCATIONS

Several unkeyed locations lie throughout the orcs' lair. These can be one of several things as you desire:

- An empty chamber—unused now that the tribe's ranks grow thin. Such a chamber will likely be in a state of disarray with rubbish strewn about. If the chamber is a connecting chamber—such as the one between locations 4 and 5—a clear path through the rubbish runs between the chamber's doors.
- An orc family's sleeping chamber. Such chambers hold the boring mundanities of life—bedrolls, spare clothes, gear and the like. Here are likely encountered the tribe's few younglings. What the characters do with the young orcs could spawn some memorable roleplaying.

Use the details in "Dungeon Dressing" and "Treasure, Trinkets & Trash" to add flavour and detail to these chambers.



Tagged and untagged copies of this map can be downloaded at ragingswanpress.com

GM NOTES

Watchful Orcs: If you place orc guards in the corridor leading away from location 1, you doom the party to certain and almost instant combat at the start of their adventure. If you want to give them a chance to use stealth and the like keep this area empty.

1: ENTRANCE

The orcs despise bright light and do not keep a watch here.

A waist-high breastwork of tumbled stone fills the wide doorway leading into the hill. The remains of huge iron hinges hint at the size of the doors that once stood here. A stream flows out of the doorway through a hole in the breastworks.

Rubble: A waist-high pile of rubble—a primitive breastworks—fills the vault's entrance. Clambering over the rubble is easy—unless the area is actively defended.

Door Remnants: Large rust-covered iron hinges set in the vault's entrance hint at the great size of the doors that once warded the place.

Stream: A two-foot-wide and two-foot-deep stream flows out of the dungeon entrance, filling a specially cut channel. Squares containing the stream are difficult terrain.

Pool: This pool fills a shallow, mud-fringed depression in the forest floor. It is about four feet deep, and deep silt covers its bottom.

Obvious Tracks: The ground around the entrance is churned up and replete with orc tracks. Even a cursory examination of the muddy ground reveals that many man-sized creatures have been in and out of the dungeon over an extended period of time.

2: EMPTY CHAMBER

The orcs do not use this dead-end chamber—guards here have no way of warning their brethren of attack or of retreating.

A field of foul-smelling rubbish covers the floor of this small, dirty chamber.

Iron-Banded Door: This door stands open.

Rubbish: Rubbish (difficult terrain) covers the floor; the rubbish is deeper in the area immediately behind the door.

Secret Door: The orcs do not know of this secret door or the stairs beyond. The grime of long ages covers the door's faint outline in the northwest corner, making it hard to spot. Pushing a slightly proud stone in the northern wall opens the secret door. The mechanism is difficult to operate the first time as it has been unused for decades.

TREASURE, TRINKETS & TRASH

1. A filthy, overlooked leather pouch holds 3 gp and a squashed tinderbox.
2. A heavy two-handed axe leans against a wall. A light covering of rust mars the axe's heavy head but otherwise the crude weapon is in good repair.
3. A tiny and delicate (but empty) glass vial lies on the floor; its stopper is missing.
4. A broken dwarven skull fills a shattered helm.

3: ARTESIAN WELL

The orcs draw water from the well and have not spoiled it. There is a 3 in 6 chance that **1d3 orcs** are present here when the characters enter the dungeon.

A stream gurgles forth from a hole cut into the base of a low wall surrounding the northern portion of the room.

Stream: A two-foot-wide and two-foot-deep stream flows south, filling a specially cut channel in the floor. Squares containing the stream are difficult terrain.

Low Stone Wall: A low stone wall surrounds the metal grill protecting the artesian well, which once provided Armytr with fresh water. The orcs use the wall as cover if a fight breaks out here.

Artesian Well: Fed by water pressure from below, the water in this well rises naturally to the surface. A small hole in the well's wall channels the water into the stream. A sturdy iron grill protects the well from falling objects or characters.

4: GUARD CHAMBER

The **orcs** keep a watch in this chamber; the room's two doors are always kept open.

Two scarred and battered wooden benches flank an old table in this rubbish-strewn room. The smell of sour wine, sweat and orc fills the room.

Rubbish & Furniture: Squares containing furniture or rubbish are difficult terrain. If the characters search the room, roll on "Treasure, Trinkets & Trash."

5: COMMON ROOM

Often, some of the tribe gather here to eat and socialise. There are normally a few **orcs** here.

The smell of orc, along with other unidentifiable aromas, fills the air. Rubbish litters the floor, and odds and ends of furniture—a couple of chairs, a table and so on—stand about the room.

Rubbish & Furniture: Squares containing both furniture and rubbish are difficult terrain. If the characters search the room, roll on "Treasure, Trinkets & Trash."

GM NOTES

Guards: The orcs here may or may not be vigilant. Perhaps they are tired, drinking or engaged in an argument. Once they become aware of intruders most of the guards fight the interlopers while one rushes off to alert the rest of the tribe.

DUNGEON DRESSING

1. The fetid stench of orc hangs heavily in the air.
2. A noxious carpet of rubbish and trash litters the floor. Bones and broken equipment are mixed in with other more unidentifiable things.
3. The ceiling murals are badly damaged, and chunks of thick plaster have fallen to the floor.
4. Rotting rubbish covers the floor. The orcs have hidden sharp pottery shards within to injure unwary intruders.



GM NOTES

Hidden Treasure: *Armytr hid some treasure here; consider designing a small treasure hoard—perhaps some gems and a few minor potions—suitable for your campaign. Keep in mind the characters may not find this chamber when designing the treasure so do not place the bulk of the adventure’s treasure here.*

Weapons & Armour: *Tweak the description of the armoury to include the kind of weapons and armour the orcs use.*

6: THE FORGOTTEN CHAMBER

Designed as a final bolt hole, this room has lain undisturbed and undiscovered since Armytr’s death.

Thick dust covers several chests and barrels set against the west wall. Cobwebs hang from the ceiling, and the air here smells musty.

Dust: A thick layer of undisturbed dust lies thickly about this chamber and the connecting secret corridor. It is evident no one has been here for decades.

Chests & Barrels: These chests and barrels once held provisions, but the food has long since mouldered away, and the barrels’ contents have evaporated. Mould and stains are all that remain.

Hidden Coffers: A small iron-bound coffer is hidden behind one of the barrels. It is locked, but the key was lost long ago.

7: ARMOURY

The orcs store their spare weapons and armour in this room.

An array of crude weapons—axes, morningstars, curved two-handed swords and the like—lean against this chamber’s walls. A pile of armour lies in the centre of the chamber.

Weapon & Armour: Most of the weapons and armour here are much-used; they are likely essentially worthless.

Secret Door: The orcs do not know of this secret door or the passage beyond. The grime of long ages covers the door’s faint outline in the southern wall, making it hard to spot. Pushing a slightly proud stone in the southern wall opens the secret door. The mechanism is difficult to operate the first time as it has been used for decades.

8: UNSAFE ROOM

The northeast part of this room is unsafe and may collapse.

A trail through the dust and grime leads through this chamber.

Dangerous Collapse: The northeastern part of this chamber is prone to collapse. If more than two Medium creatures enter that part of the chamber, the floor collapses, dumping the characters into the room below.

TREASURE, TRINKETS & TRASH

1. A gold coin lies part-hidden amid the dust and grime.
2. A bloody, torn cloak lies on the floor. A perceptive character handling the cloak realises it is heavier than it should be—20 silver coins are sown into its hem.
3. This battered wooden shield has been hacked at with a large weapon. It is useless for anything but firewood.
4. A severed skeletal forearm lies on the floor. Tiny marks on the bones show where rats have feasted.

9: COLZOG'S CHAMBER

Here dwells the **orc chieftain** and his **concubines**. When not raiding, Colzog works tirelessly to sire more children—through them, the tribe can regain its rightful place in the world.

Heaps of furs are scattered about this rank-smelling chamber. Iron-barred walls divide much of this room into four smaller chambers. All of the doors stand open, and all seem in use.

Clutter: Furs—Colzog's bed—and heaps of miscellaneous items are scattered about the chamber. A high-backed chair serves as Colzog's throne.

Hidden Chest: Covered in a pile of furs and the like, this hidden chest contains the tribe's choicest treasure. Colzog carries the only key.

Cells: Four iron barred walls divide part of this chamber into small individual cells. Colzog uses these for various purposes: a personal treasury, a nursery for his ever-growing brood, and so on.

10: STORAGE VAULT

The orcs have captured much booty over the years. Some of it is valuable, but much of it is mundane—taken from isolated farmsteads and the like.

A disorganised pile of boxes, barrels and miscellaneous items reaching almost to the ceiling fills this vaulted chamber.

Disorganised Loot: The tribe's loot is disorganised. Heaps of items lie about the chamber. Much of the loot is mundane—the kind of things the orcs would find in an isolated farmstead. A few things of value lie amid the dross. Roll on this list to see what a careful search of the room uncovers:

1. This fine longbow is missing its string. The bow's wood is beautifully stained.
2. An iron clasp holds this small box closed. The box contains pepper—a fabulously rare spice worth 5 gp.
3. This torn scrap of white silk came from a cleric's vestment. If the bloodstains are cleaned off, the fabric is worth 2 gp.
4. This capacious waterproof backpack is in good condition.
5. This wrought iron cauldron is filthy. It is worth 3 gp.
6. A small pouch contains 17 cp, 15 sp and 3 gp.

DUNGEON DRESSING

1. The ceiling sags in an alarming fashion. A pile of grit and crumbling debris lies beneath the affected area.
2. A faded brown stain—an old bloodstain—covers swaths of the floor and wall. Someone bled here—badly.
3. Crude graffiti covers the wall. The graffiti comprises stick figures engaged in lewd acts.
4. Greenish yellow mould grows over the ceiling. The air feels dank in the immediate environs.

GM NOTES

Choicest Treasures: *Colzog will, of course, keep the best treasure for himself. This is a good area to place most of the notable treasure found in the tribe's home.*

Minor Treasures: *Reward diligent characters with some minor treasures.*

AFTERMATH

Once the characters have explored Armytr's Vault and dealt with its denizens, resolve the adventure hook that brought them to the place. If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

- **Armytr's Legacy:** The diary fragment that brought the characters to Armytr's Vault could also provide clues to other hidden locales nearby. Perhaps Armytr also hid caches of treasure nearby in case of some future unspecified need. Alternatively, the diary fragments could tell of other ruins and places of interest nearby.
- **Hunting Orcs:** If the characters were hunting orcs and have cleared out Armytr's Vault, they have likely completed their mission. They may need to gather evidence of their victory—severed heads, orc prisoners and so on—before they return to civilisation—and transporting that evidence out of the trackless woods could be an adventure in itself!
- **Lost in the Woods:** Once the characters have slain the orcs, they can continue their journey.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

Once the characters move on, the delve might simply fade from your campaign—never to be revisited. Alternatively, it could feature in future adventures and events:

- **Further Explorations:** The characters could claim Armytr's Vault as their own and use it as a base from which to explore the surrounding forest. The vault is quite secure, after all, and located far from civilisation—it makes a good staging post. However, the characters could easily be tracked back to their new lair and be assailed within—particularly if they are fighting other organised bands (such as goblins or bandits) in the locality.
- **Deeper, Hidden Tunnels:** Perhaps deeper tunnels run below and behind Armytr's Vault. Adding another secret door to the dungeon enables you to run a longer subterranean exploration adventure. In this instance, perhaps Armytr did not die in his vault but instead wandered off into the Ebon Realm's trackless depths. Characters finding a hint of that in the vault—perhaps a diary or map—may seek to retrace his footsteps.



TROGLODYTES OF THE EBON LAKE

In the dark, wild places far below the wave-flecked flanks of a forlorn, wave-lashed island lurk the degenerate troglodytes of the Ebon Lake. Dwelling amid the tumbled cyclopean ruins of a forgotten epoch, the troglodytes toil in their labyrinthine, stench-filled caverns at the behest of their bloated, tentacled master. Emerging on fog-shrouded nights when a sullen, gibbous moon hangs low in the sky, the troglodytes raise their croaking voices to the ebon heavens in terrible, half-forgotten rites of veneration to unknown, elder beings.



DELVE BACKGROUND

For uncountable millennia, the Orestone's rocky bulk—slick with spray and ever-forlorn—has jutted from the ocean's wave-flecked waters. But despite its isolation, the Orestone has never been uninhabited. Caves and caverns riddle the wave-battered rock. Some of these caves—infested with troglodytes dwelling amid the ruin of their ancient glory—plunge far below the ocean floor.

Other caves are more accessible, and some have served as hiding places or treasure vaults for the pirates, wreckers and smugglers plying the surrounding waters. Such places are often difficult to reach in all but the gentlest swell. One such sea cave is the Cave of Susurrant Whispers.

A few decades ago, the so-called Pirate Seer Ilmatar Mielenpito, found the Cave of Susurrant Whispers while searching for somewhere to hide her latest haul. The so-called Pirate Seer was famed for being able to predict which ships were worth attacking and which were not. Her legendary powers of perspicacity also saved her from several ambushes and traps. (In truth, she had no occult or otherworldly powers—instead, she employed a vast network of spies and informants whom she paid handsomely for intelligence—but the name stuck.)

In any event, the Cave of Susurrant Whispers seemed perfect for her needs: hard to find, harder to enter and able to sustain a small garrison tasked with protecting her loot. After establishing a small outpost in the cave, she sailed away in search of her next victim. The small garrison in the cave did not last long—troglodytes creeping up from the depths of Orestone soon found and slew them, although they did not find the pirates' treasure. Ilmatar Mielenpito never returned to the Cave of Susurrant Whispers—a great storm blew up and drove her vessel many hundreds of miles west into the trackless expanse of the Bitter Sea. There, her vessel, the *Scarlet Wyvern*, became trapped in a vast patch of seaweed from which it never escaped. Thus has her treasure languished unclaimed and forgotten.



THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

The characters can stumble on the Cave of Susurrant Whispers by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the place:

- **Desperate Merchant:** A ship has floundered on the Orestone, but luckily many of the crew and the ship's master, the merchant Jyrki Leino, reach the mainland. The disaster happened so quickly Jyrki could not bring with him a lockbox he kept hidden in his cabin. He won't say what is in the box but offers the characters a considerable amount of gold to retrieve it.
- **Floundering Ship:** Overnight, a merchant ship struck the Orestone. By dawn's grey light, its deck is awash, and the ship is in danger of sinking before its cargo can be saved (or "salvaged"). A small flotilla of fishing vessels set out to the wreck. Dark rumours and legendary hang over the Orestone, however, and a fisherman asks the characters to accompany him.
- **Odd Lights:** Odd lights are seen atop the Orestone when the gibbous moon hangs low in the sky. Locals mutter about devil worshippers and unholy rites carried out atop the isle's highest point. What devilry is afoot?

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A character might know rumours about the Orestone. Perhaps the character is steeped in local lore or they heard a rumour while drinking in a tavern or overheard two locals gossiping while browsing a marketplace. Use this list to determine what the character knows:

1. Many vessels have come to grief on the Orestone. The surrounding seabed is littered with their wrecks—and the bones of uncountable mariners.
2. Caves, caverns and passages riddle the Orestone; some are so deep that they descend far below the ocean floor.
3. Smugglers, pirates and wreckers haunt the waters surrounding the Orestone. Some stories tell of treasures hidden in hard-to-reach sea caves piercing the Orestone's wave-battered bulk.
4. Sometimes, in the dead of night, lights glimmer atop the Orestone, and when the air is still, strange sounds roll across the water. No one dares go there at night.
5. Some say a wizard's tower once stood atop the Orestone; only old age proved his undoing.
6. Long ago, a pirate hid a great treasure somewhere on the Orestone. It has never been recovered.

Determine which rumours are true and false based on your campaign setup.

THE ORESTONE

The Orestone is a forlorn, windswept and wave-lashed chunk of bare rock jutting out of the sea roughly 500 feet from the Lonely Coast's capital, Wolverton. Cliffs encompass three of its sides, with the fourth comprising a series of spray-drenched rock shelves rising out of the treacherous, wave-flecked waters.

Many vessels have come to grief on the Orestone, littering the surrounding seabed with their wreckage. When a ship strikes the Orestone, every boat-owning peasant descends on the location to assist the unfortunate mariners and recover as much salvage as possible before Lord Locher's agents arrive to claim the wreck.

In ancient times, fell creatures lurked within the caverns, creeping forth when a gibbous moon hung in the sky and strong winds whipped the foaming sea into a frenzy to perform terrible, sanity-shattering, half-forgotten rites. Remnants of those folk—degenerate troglodytes—yet linger in the deeper tunnels. There, they faithfully serve their alien master, Irfel-Thoth (an ancient, gigantic aboleth), among the squat, cyclopean, ziggurat-studded ruins of the ancient ruined troglodyte city of Kar-Loth.

THINGS TO FIND

Many ships have died in the waters surrounding the Orestone, and much flotsam and jetsam bobs upon the endless waves pounding the forlorn isle. Use this list to generate items and events of interest to characters approaching the place.

1. Some planks and a spar wrapped in a torn piece of sodden sail bob on the swell.
2. An indistinct dark shape moves below the water. It glides under the characters' boat before heading quickly away.
3. A school of fish fill the water around the boat. After a few minutes, with no warning, they suddenly scatter.
4. A scrap of sail floats in the water; the ragged fragment of sailcloth is burnt.
5. Sea birds—cawing raucously—circle above the boat.
6. Two waves smack together and burst upwards, drenching the characters with spray.
7. Large clumps of dull green and brown seaweed bob aimlessly on the ocean swell.
8. Dark clouds fill the air; as the characters get about halfway to the Orestone, the heavens open, and heavy rain pounds the locality.
9. Three seabirds bob atop the endless swell. Suddenly, all three birds spring into the air, cawing loudly.
10. A large seabird flies overhead and splatters the characters' boat with excrement. An unlucky character could also be hit...



THE EBON LAKE TRIBE

Slaves of their tentacled master, the Troglodytes of the Ebon Lake creep through the eternal darkness of their home searching for both new ways to reach the surface and for discarded remnants of the ancient civilisation that raised their cyclopean home millennia ago.

SOCIETY & ORGANISATION

Primitive, even by troglodyte standards, the Ebon Lake tribe has no memory of their race's elder glories. Squatting in ignorance among the ruins of their forebears, they marvel at the might of a people able to raise such vast, cyclopean structures. Though they have lived here for centuries uncounted, they have explored little of the extensive tunnels under the city; such fetid, claustrophobic places terrify the superstitious troglodytes.

Within the tribe might equals right, but all authority, both spiritual and temporal, flows from the tribe's tentacled master, the elder aboleth Irfel-Thoth. He cares nothing for the petty disputes of individual troglodytes (which are frequent) and does nothing to directly govern the tribe's daily life. He is content to direct their work in the deep tunnels and to act as the figurehead of their depraved, elder religion.

The troglodytes have forgotten the secret of fire and eat their food—mainly fish, mushrooms and fungus—cold and raw. They prize fresh meat (particularly human flesh) above all other foods and regularly consume the bodies of the fallen—their fellows and fallen enemies alike. Discarded bones litter the tumbled ruins of their forefathers and the Ebon Lake's muddled bottom.

Females roughly equal males in number. Hatchlings and eggs are numerous but mostly untended—the young are

expected to fend for themselves and many die while still infants. Those who survive their early years are treated as little better than slaves by their elders—only when they can defend themselves are they deemed adults.

Appearance: The troglodytes have been underground for so long that their rough, leathery scales have faded from dark grey, taking on a mottled light grey pattern. Males are distinguishable from females by their fin-like crest running down over their head, neck and upper back.

PERSONALITIES

Most of the Ebon Lake tribe are troglodytes obsessed with serving their alien, immortal lord. Even notable members of the trainer are nothing but skilled warriors or priests.

- **Irfel-Thoth (elder aboleth):** The malevolent master of the Ebon Lake has lurked in the deep, chill waters surrounding the troglodytes' home for aeons. Unknowably ancient and steeped in lost lore, Irfel-Thoth searches the fallen ruins for objects of ancient power while his minions creep forth at night to capture humans for food and sacrifice.

ECOLOGY & LAIR

Atop a forlorn, windswept and wave-lashed island of bare rock separated from the mainland by turbulent, treacherous waters stands a pile of jumbled, rounded boulders. Worn smooth by the wind and rain, the tumbled stones are the remnants of an ancient outpost of a forgotten, fallen folk.

TRIBAL BODY ART

The troglodytes of the Ebon Lake decorate their bodies with simplistic designs to venerate their tentacled master. Using a thick paste made from mixing naturally occurring minerals with the thick mud dredged from the bottom of the Ebon Lake they liberally daub themselves with ancient symbols. Additionally, they employ several stylised devices to denote their rank within the tribe.

Black Circle: This basic mark daubed on the troglodyte's chest denotes that it is part of the Ebon Lake tribe.

Three Eyes: Added into the black circle and normally done in deep-red or blue this mark denotes the wearer to be steeped in their master's ancient mysteries. (Those bearing this mark are clerics of Amon-Pyr).

Sinuous Tentacles: Black tentacles covering the subject's arms and back identify the individual as a warrior—the more skilled and successful the warrior the more tentacles are displayed.

Jagged Black and Red Stripes: Warriors covered in jagged black and red stripes are the tribe's elite warriors and are their master's fanatical personal bodyguards.

AMON-PYR

Amon-Pyr is an ancient demonic power worshipped by troglodytes since the earliest days of the race's long-fallen empire. A tentacled demon that crawled from the unknown depths of the frigid, slime-coated waters of the Sea of Perpetual Misery, Amon-Pyr is a terrible figure from the world's pre-history. Only a few isolated troglodyte clans yet cling to his worship. Guarding fragments of ancient knowledge, these groups perform rituals the meaning and significance of which they have long since forgotten.

Portfolio: Troglodyte god of darkness, evil, madness and water

Favoured Weapon: Whip

Holy Text: None survive intact, but the acolytes of the Ebon Lake have managed to collect several fragments of the *Amoninomicon*—a foul text so depraved that possession and knowledge of more than a few pages can drive the possessor mad with terror.

Deep within the rubble (and only accessible by a narrow crawl-way), a small sinkhole drops deep into the living rock of the island. Eventually, the slippery, perilous shaft intersects a large, partially flooded tidal cavern. Here, faded alien carvings of sinister and deranged provenance cover much of the walls. The handiwork of innumerable generations of the Ebon Lake troglodytes, the carvings venerate strange, alien beings and depict aberrant ceremonies of shocking, primal bestiality.

Several passages tunnel deeper into the rock; most are little more than dead-ends, inundated by the sea at high tide. One plunges ever deeper over a series of treacherous escarpments. Far below the seabed, the passageway forks; one branch—by far the younger of the two and created by the tireless efforts of the tribe—follows a circuitous route northeast. Eventually, it breaks into a partially flooded ancient mine several miles southeast of Wolverton.

The other passageway—far more ancient than the first—plunges ever deeper, heading away from the mainland. The shuffling tread of countless troglodytes has worn the passageway's floor almost smooth. Eventually, the passageway gives out into a huge cavern. Water drips from the high ceiling, filling the cavern with the thunderous sound of dripping water. A huge lake fills the cavern, and at its centre, set upon a low, rocky island, rears the squat, cyclopean ruins of the ancient troglodyte city of Kar-Loth. Immeasurably old, the ruins seem somehow wrong, as if built by a crazed madman.

COMBAT & TACTICS

Ferocious in battle, the Troglodytes of the Ebon Lake eschew complicated battle tactics in favour of savage, sudden attacks with overwhelming numbers of warriors. Strong and sturdy of constitution the troglodytes protect their home and immortal master with fanatical resolve.

Rank-and-file warriors use their powerful claws and bite to maul opponents; only their chieftain and high priest use weapons in battle. Their adepts—guardians of the Ancient Ways—do not enter battle unless forced to do so or if they hunger for the fresh meat of the fallen. Scouts, skirting the battle wherever possible, attempt to get behind their foes, striking at the more vulnerable enemies and denying them the ability to retreat.

The slain—friend and foe alike—are normally dragged away to be ritualistically consumed or hurled into the Ebon Lake as an offering to Irfel-Thoth.

Interlopers reaching the tribe's cyclopean home find themselves assailed by warriors that hurl themselves at intruders in a frenzy born of bloodlust and desperation. If the intruders penetrate the city, even the females and young join in the slaughter.



THE DELVE

The Cave of Susurrant Whispers pierces the rocky western flank of the Orestone. A portion of the caves are dry, and mariners and pirates have come here in the past—some to hide their treasure and some because the savage local tides brought them here. (See “Delve Background” for more detail.)

A sunken tidal passage links the caves to the deeper network of caverns and passages riddling the Orestone and the surrounding ocean floor. Therein dwell the Troglodytes of the Ebon Lake and their alien master, Irfel-Thoth. The troglodytes have learnt that sometimes humans and the like come of the Cave of Susurrant Whispers and keep a watch upon the place. Fresh meat is hard to come by in the lightless caves beneath the Orestone, and Irfel-Thoth mentally enslaves any living surface dwellers unfortunate enough to fall into its be-tentacled clutches. Servitude, madness, and (eventual) blessed death are such folk’s fate.

DELVE LORE

A character might know something about the Cave of Susurrant Whispers. Perhaps they are steeped in local lore or have heard about the island from another adventurer or some other reputable source of information.

- Several caves pierce the Orestone’s flanks—worn through innumerable centuries by the remorseless waves of the Bitter Sea. The Cave of Susurrant Whispers—named for the sound the waves make inside it—is one such cave.
- Although many pirates and smugglers have used the Orestone’s caves over the years, no one has ever established a permanent lair on the isle. Superstitious peasants dwelling on the mainland blame the ghosts of all those who died when their ships broke up on the Orestone for this. They view the rock as haunted and stay away. Few fisherfolk will land on the isle.
- Pirates and smugglers sometimes use the Orestone’s caves as hideouts, dens or places to store their wealth. A pirate’s treasure is rumoured to be hidden in the Cave of Susurrant Whispers.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

The delve has several notable locations:

1. **The Approaches:** This narrow cleft in the rock belies what lies beyond.
2. **Cavern of Weird Echos:** Odd echoes fill this sea cave.
3. **Flooded Passage:** This narrow, tidal passage connects to the deeper caves and caverns in and under the Orestone.
4. **Ruined Camp:** Shipwrecked mariners camped here before falling prey to Those That Dwell Below.
5. **Shallow Inlet:** Except during storms, the water here is always calm.
6. **Sacrificial Stone:** In times past, shipwrecked mariners were sacrificed here by Those That Dwell Below.

7. **Sunken Treasure:** A watertight sunken chest lies partially buried in the silt and sediment at the bottom of this pool.
8. **Dead End:** This isolated chamber is a dead end.
9. **Pirates’ Den:** The pirates left a small group of their fellows here to watch over the treasure hidden in location 7. They did not long survive the troglodytes’ attentions.
10. **Pirates’ Store:** Here, the pirates stored their supplies. This chamber has been repeatedly searched by treasure hunters and troglodytes.

GENERIC DELVE FEATURES

Many of the delve’s locations share certain features:

Illumination: Darkness.

The Tide: The map depicts the tide at its highest extent. At high tide, the sea laps against the escarpment in location 4 and flushes out the pool in location 7. As the tide recedes, the passageway connecting locations 5 and 7 empties, leaving smooth rock slick with seaweed and barnacles.

The Sea: Inside the Cave of Susurrant Whispers, unless a storm rages outside, the water is calm and swimming is easy. Location descriptions note the depth of the water.

Ceilings: The ceiling is of natural stone. In most places, the ceiling is between 7 and 12 feet high

Walls: The cavern walls are smooth, natural stone below the high tide line, which is obvious in water-filled areas, where the walls are slick with barnacles and the like. Above the tide line or in dry areas, the walls are rough and uneven.

Floors: The cavern floor is of rough, uneven stone in dry areas. The high tide line—denoted by a thin strip of seaweed intermingled with flotsam and jetsam—is evident. This seaweed is wet and slippery; treat squares containing the high tide line as difficult terrain.

Escarpment: Each escarpment line on the map denotes a rise of about five feet. Characters can scale the rocky escarpment with no chance of failure unless they are heavily encumbered or in a high-stress situation (such as combat).

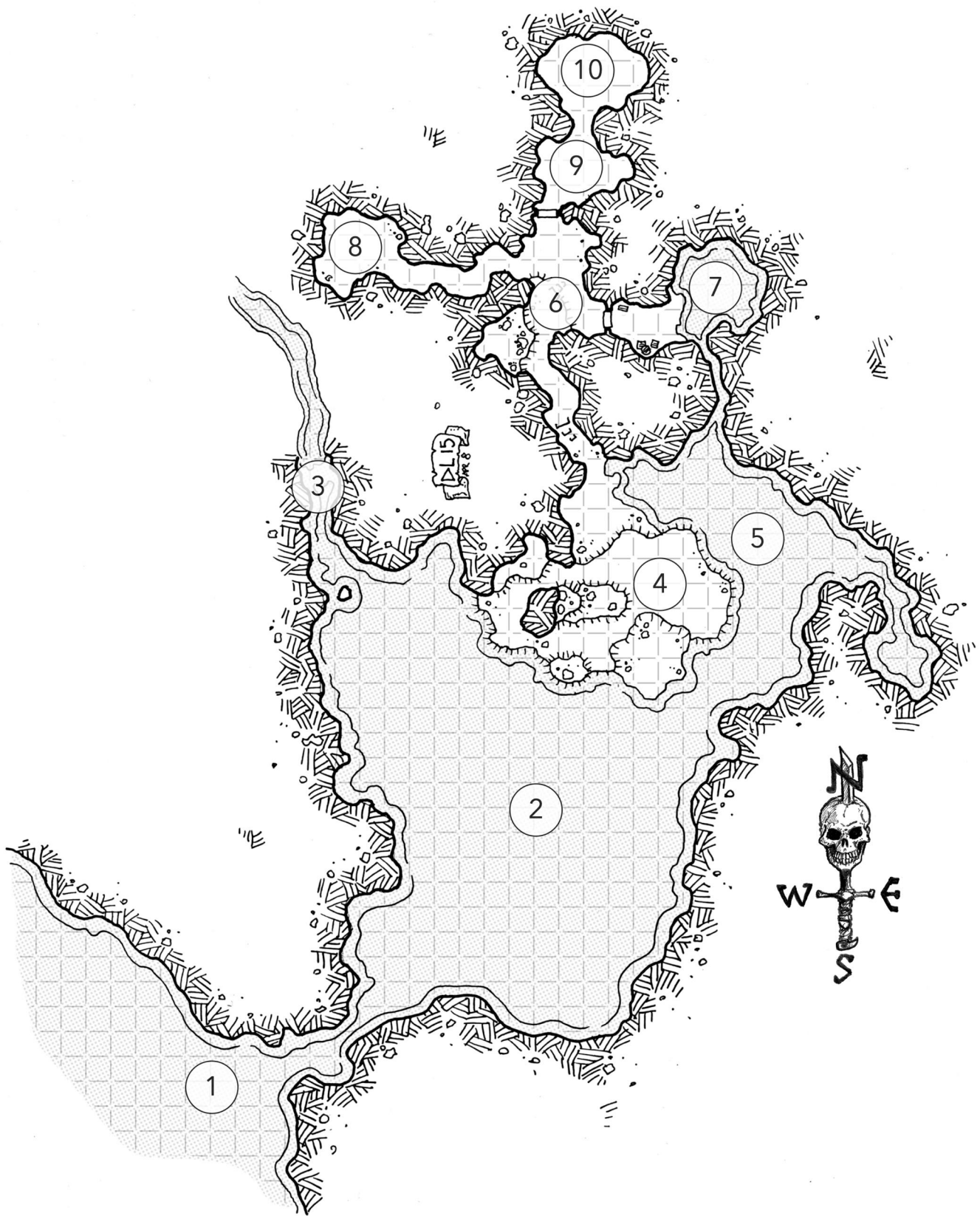
Doors: Crude wooden doors crafted of mismatched driftwood—ship’s planks, spars and the like, ward a few of the complex’s chambers. These doors are easy to open and are just as easy to batter down.

Treasure, Trinkets & Trash: Use the Treasures, Trinkets & Trash sidebars to determine what the characters find if they search an area (or perhaps a fallen foe’s body).

Dungeon Dressing: Use the Dungeon Dressing sidebars to breathe life and detail into the delve.

WHERE ARE THE TROGLODYTES?

Troglodytes rarely linger long in the Cave of Susurrant Whispers. Rather, warriors check the caves for fresh meat every couple of days. Unfortunately for the characters, a group of warriors could arrive shortly after the party discover the cave.



Tagged and untagged copies of this map can be downloaded at ragingswanpress.com

GM NOTES

Sea State: Depending on the sea state the characters may find it easy or hard to enter the cave.

Aquatic Terror: Perhaps an aquatic beast newly arrived in the cave dwells in location 2. If something does dwell here it must be small enough to enter and exit through location 1. Alternatively, perhaps a swarm of jellyfish or innumerable small (ravenous) crabs lurk in the cave.

Flooded Passage: This passage can be as passable or impassable as you would like. However, if you populate the dungeon with deep-dwelling creatures remember they must have a way of reaching the dungeon. If you populate the dungeon with pirates, undead, an aquatic druid or the like this link becomes less important (although the troglodytes still need a way into the caves).

1: THE APPROACHES

This narrow cleft in the rock belies what lies beyond.

A narrow cleft in the seaweed-encrusted rock leads deeper into the Orestone.

The Sea: The water is roughly 20 feet deep at high tide and 15 feet deep at low tide in the immediate environs of the cave mouth. The water can be rough; if the characters approach the cave during a heavy swell, their craft could be dashed to pieces against the Orestone's rocky flank.

Illumination: During the day, dim light fills the narrow passage leading to location 2.

2: CAVERN OF WEIRD ECHOES

Odd echoes fill this sea cave.

Beyond the narrow entrance, the cave widens considerably. Here, the pungent scent of salt hangs heavy in the air, and the waves' susurrations echo weirdly in the darkness.

Ceiling: The ceiling in this cave is surprisingly lofty, reaching a height of 25 feet at roughly its centre.

Tidal Cave: This cave is tidal, and the high tide mark on the walls is obvious. The water is roughly 20 feet deep at high tide and 15 feet deep at low tide. Within ten feet, or location 4, the bottom slopes steeply upwards.

Seaweed-Festooned Walls: Seaweed and barnacles grow thickly over the walls below the high tide line. Only a perceptive character exploring the cave discovers the entrance to the Flooded Passage (location 3).

3: FLOODED PASSAGE

This narrow, tidal passage connects to the deeper caves and caverns in and under the Orestone.

A narrow twisting passage leads roughly north, deeper into the Orestone's stony bowels.

Tidal Cave: This passage is tidal; at high tide, it is completely flooded; only at low tide is it safe to explore without magic.

Deeper Caves: Several hundred feet to the northeast, the passage intersects with another cave, which in turn leads to the deeper network of caves in and under the Orestone.

TREASURE, TRINKETS & TRASH

1. A rusty longsword lies entwined in a great mass of glistening seaweed.
2. A small sodden red velvet pouch holds 3 gp and 17 sp. The pouch bears the monogram M.C.
3. A pile of humanoid bones—many of them gnawed—litter the floor. Amid the remains lie a pair of silver hoop earrings worth 5 gp.
4. Mould covert this shattered stump of oar.

4: RUINED CAMP

Shipwrecked mariners camped here before falling prey to Those That Dwell Below.

A series of rocky escarpments, each about five feet high, rise from the gently roiling waters.

Camp Remains: Musty, mouldy bedrolls surround the remains of a small driftwood fire. Characters searching the area find something. Refer to "Treasure, Trinkets & Trash".

5: SHALLOW INLET

Except during storms, the water here is always calm.

Gently undulating dark water dotted with clumps of floating seaweed fills this narrow inlet.

Tidal Cave: The water is about ten feet deep at high tide and five feet deep at low tide. The high tide mark stains the walls.

Seaweed-Festooned Walls: Seaweed and barnacles grow thickly over the walls below the high tide line.

Narrow Northern Passage: At high tide, this exceptionally narrow passage is flooded to a depth of five feet. At low tide, the waters recede, leaving slippery stones and masses of glistening seaweed.

Small Southern Cave: The silted stone floor drops off precipitously at the entrance to the cave, and the cold, black water is at least 20 feet deep.

6: SACRIFICIAL STONE

In times past, shipwrecked mariners were sacrificed here by Those That Dwell Below.

A five-foot high escarpment cuts across this chamber. Several piles of stones decorate its lip. To the north, the floor drops away down another escarpment.

Natural Stone Steps: These natural stone steps are difficult terrain. Each of the step's "risers" is just over a foot high.

Heaped Stones: Several heaped piles of stones stand atop the escarpment. The northernmost pile looks disturbingly like a crude altar—suspicious brown stains mar its sides and top. The remains of those killed here have been thrown into the pool in location 7.

GM NOTES

Camp Remains: *The folk camping here were either rescued or fell prey to things creeping up from the deep dark below the Orestone. Modify the description of the camp according to your design.*

Aberrant Predator: *A small predator—perhaps some form of vicious, ever-hungry eel—could lurk herein. The bones of its victims cover the seabed.*

DUNGEON DRESSING

1. Crumbling mud daubed on a wall may have once depicted a simple swirling pattern but much of it has fallen off.
2. Part of a gnawed fish lies on the floor amid a smattering of scales. Examination reveals something with large teeth—something roughly man-sized ate here.
3. Scratches in the rock are reminiscent of claw marks.
4. White mould grows around a crack in the rock.

GM NOTES

Pirate Treasure: *This chest could contain anything—gold silver, gems or magic items. The challenge here is for the characters to work out how to retrieve the heavy chest.*

Bones: *These bones are likely of human origin.*

Signs of Flooding: *If you choose, this chamber could periodically flood. If it does so, decide what the last flood left behind.*

7: SUNKEN TREASURE

A watertight sunken chest lies part-buried in the silt and sediment at the bottom of this pool.

A pool fills the eastern part of this chamber. Boxes, barrels and a few rotting wood beams lie against the south wall.

Tidal Pool: This tidal pool is deceptively deep—over 25 feet deep at its centre. Seaweed grows voraciously about the chamber, and many small albino crabs scuttle about here. The tide stirs up the sediment and sand at the bottom of the pool. Only a character carefully studying the pool notices the hint of something rectangular buried in the sediment at the bottom of the pool. Piles of bones surround the chest.

- **Treasure Chest:** This stout (watertight) sea chest is wrapped in a padlocked chain. It is exceptionally heavy.
- **Bones:** These are the remains of those sacrificed in location 6.

Boxes and Barrels: A haphazard pile of old boxes and crates stands against the south wall. They have been broken into and smashed; nothing of value remains within. However, if the characters search, they find something previous explorers have missed. Roll on “Treasures, Trinkets & Trash”.

Rotting Wooden Beams: Three stout wooden beams lie amid the shattered boxes and barrels. These once served as a hoist to raise and lower the chest lying at the bottom of the tidal pool.

8: DEAD END

This isolated chamber is a dead end.

The downward passage terminates in a small natural cavern. Dust and grit cover the floor, and small piles of rubble stand here and there against the walls.

Sloping Passage: The passage slopes gently downward to this dry chamber.

Rubble: Squares containing rubble are difficult terrain. It appears someone deliberately piled up the rubble.

Signs of Flooding: Paranoid characters may think this chamber floods; there is no sign of such on the floors or walls.

TREASURE, TRINKETS & TRASH

1. An old mouldy leather boot lies on its side on the floor. A multitude of small albino insects dwell within.
2. The blade of a rusty cutlass emerges from a small pile of rubble and grit. The weapon's hilt—hidden under the rubble—is forged from pure silver. Although dented it is worth 50 gp.
3. The links of a broken bronze necklace litter the floor.
4. The writing on this ripped book cover is illegible.

9: PIRATES' DEN

The pirates left a small group of their fellows here to watch over the treasure hidden in location 7. They did not long survive the troglodytes' attentions.

Six skeletons lie about the chamber amid the remains of their outpost: ripped bedding, slashed and torn leather armour, rusting weapons and so on all lie about the chamber.

Skeletal Remains: The remains of six humans lie about the chamber. A close inspection reveals many of the bones show obvious signs of gnawing by a human-sized predator. The remains of two of the humans are scattered about as if they were dismembered.

Equipment: A vast array of broken personal equipment—armour, weapons, clothes and so on—is scattered about the chamber. Most are valueless. Characters carefully searching the chamber find:

- A large iron key hidden in a sock-filled boot. This key opens the padlock protecting the chest in location 7.

10: PIRATES' STORE

Here, the pirates stored their supplies. This chamber has been repeatedly searched by treasure hunters and troglodytes.

All is wrack and ruin here. A great mass of broken equipment and stores lies scattered about this chamber.

Mass of Rubbish: A great mass of rubbish lies scattered about this chamber. The floor here is difficult terrain. Characters searching through the trash find 1d3 items:

1. A slashed and torn sail suitable for a rowboat is tangled about an oar. The oar is still useable.
2. The inside of this shattered barrel is stained reddish brown. This barrel once held wine.
3. A small leather flask yet holds several draughts of brandy.
4. A handful of silver and gold coins lie amid the ruin.
5. This still-sharp dagger is as keen and rust-free as it was the day it was forged.
6. A faded map shows the coastline of the Lonely Coast; it notes the locations of several other sea caves.

DUNGEON DRESSING

1. A faded bloody handprint mars a wall. The print is smeared as if whoever made it slipped and almost fell.
2. Cracks riddle the ceiling and the upper portion of one wall. A faint breeze issues from the cracks in the ceiling.
3. Yellowish white mould grows across the floor under a crack with occasionally drips.
4. The short stump of a torch lies amid a smear of black discolouration on the cave floor.

GM NOTES

Lurking troglodytes: For extra “fun”—and to turn the tables on the characters—you could decide that initially this whole complex is empty of troglodytes but that a group of them arrive in location 4 while the characters are exploring these two chambers. With the tables turned, the characters must either fight their way out or to make a stand somewhere in the caves. They might also ponder the mystery of where the troglodytes came from.

AFTERMATH

Once the characters have explored the Cave of Susurrant Whispers and dealt with its denizens, resolve the adventure hook that brought them to the place. If you used any of the hooks presented in “The Adventure Begins”, use these notes to resolve the adventure’s aftermath:

- **Desperate Merchant:** Jyrki Leino, thanks the party if they succeed in recovering his lockbox and pays them the agreed upon sum.
- **Floundering Ship:** The floundering ship’s cargo must still be salvaged or saved. If the characters explore the caves before going to the wreck, they discover the ship’s cargo hold has been picked clean by fisherfolk none of whom are inclined to return their new property.
- **Odd Lights:** By the time the characters reach the top of the Orestone it is deserted. Perceptive characters searching the area find a sinkhole amid the rubble that plunges deep into the island. See “Ecology & Lair” and “Deep Tunnels & Ancient Things” for more about what the characters find if they delve deeper.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

Once the characters move on, the delve might simply fade from your campaign—never to be revisited. Alternatively, it could feature in future adventures and events:

- **Deep Tunnels & Ancient Things:** Deeper tunnels populated by ancient, terrible things and atavistic troglodytes lie within and below the Orestone. If the characters discover a link to these tunnels, an entire subterranean campaign could ensue.
- **Old Map:** During a subsequent adventure, the characters discover an old map. The map shows the cave system they explored in Orestone but also shows a connection to another set of hitherto unknown caves. See “Deep Tunnels & Ancient Things”.
- **Shipwrecked Mariners:** Weeks or months after the characters return from the Orestone, a terrible storm blows up, and a ship is wrecked on the island. Some mariners survive the storm and build a signal fire atop the island. The characters have been to the Orestone before and have experience navigating its treacherous waters; will they help or lead the rescue effort? And what else has noticed the mariners’ presence?



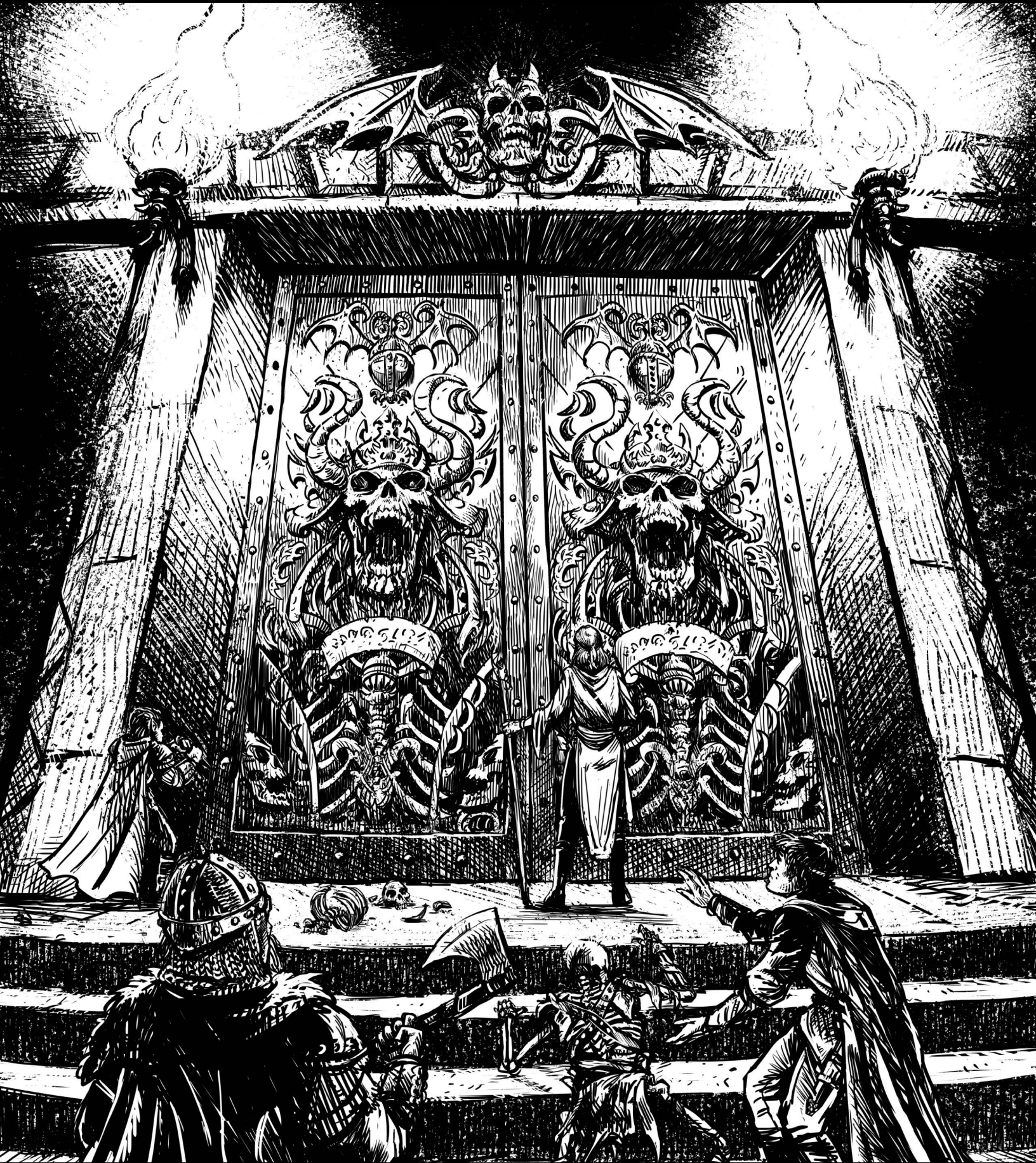
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