

Ruins of Velstar Keep

A One-Round Living Greyhawk D&D Adventure

by Michael Trezevant Smith

There is a haunted ruin outside Hookhill that some adventurers are being invited to investigate. An adventure for characters levels 1-6.

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This is a RPGA Network adventure game. A four-hour time block has been allocated for playing the game (or this round of the game), but the actual playing time will be about three hours.

It is a good idea to ask each player to put a name tag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for the players to keep track of who is playing which character.

Scoring the game for RPGA points: The RPGA has three ways to score this game. Consult your convention coordinator to determine which method to use:

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

When using Voting, rank the players in order of your voting choice while they are completing their forms, so that you are not influenced by their comments on your abilities.

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

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

LIVING GREYHAWK Tier Structure

To determine the tier, add the character levels of all the characters. In addition, add the levels of any henchmen or animals according to the values on their certificates. Compare the total to the chart below to find the tier.

	<u>4 players</u>	<u>5 players</u>	<u>6 players</u>	<u>7 players</u>	<u>Lvl Cap</u>
T1:	4-12	5-13	6-14	7-15	4 nd
T2:	13-22	14-24	15-26	16-28	6 th
T3:	23-32	25-35	27-38	29-41	8 th

The level cap indicated the highest level of character allowed to play this adventure. Characters of levels higher than the highest level shown for the highest tier cannot be played.

Lifestyle

At the beginning of every scenario, each PC is required to pay upkeep costs matching the level of lifestyle they wish to maintain. The cost of each lifestyle will be indicated at the beginning of the **scenario**. The lifestyles, and the effects that each has on play, are:

Destitute	You have no living space, and must carry all your gear everywhere. You eat poor quality food. You wear a peasant outfit, your only change of clothes.
Poor	You sleep in poor accommodations, and eat poor quality food. You wear a peasant outfit, and have two sets of clothing.
Common	You have common lodgings, and eat common quality food. You have normal clothing for your profession (adventuring); nothing fancy. You probably have two or three sets of clothing.
High	You stay in good quality lodgings, and eat good quality food. You wear anything in value up to courtier's outfits, and generally buy a new set of clothing every two weeks.
Luxury	You have luxurious accommodations (twice the cost of good accommodations), and you eat excellent foods. You can throw a banquet for your friends every day, and frequently do. You wear clothing up to the value of noble's outfit, and buy a new set of clothes every week.

Lifestyles come with bonuses or penalties to Diplomacy, Intimidate, Disguise, and Bluff skill checks. These penalties, shown below, should be applied at the DM's discretion, and can sometimes backfire—for example, a PC with a poor lifestyle would not have a penalty when talking to a beggar, but would when talking to a city official. A PC with a high lifestyle should have a penalty when dealing with a group of street thugs, where a PC with a destitute lifestyle might not.

DMs are encouraged to role-play these reactions whenever possible.

Lifestyle Cost	Skill Modifier	
Destitute	14 sp	-2
Poor 43 sp	-1	
Common	12 gp	0
High	250 gp	+1

Adventure Summary and Background

Heading north from Hookhill, there is a certain overgrown collection of stones that mark the ruins of Velstar Keep. All but forgotten is the Velstar family and this once proud citadel. Three centuries ago, when Elector Agilmir Velstar ruled this area, the Velstars were feared and spoken of only in whispers. The Velstars had always been a minor house of nobility in Keoland, and their homeland took little notice of their departing for the lesser land of Gran March. The truth is that the Velstars had developed a nasty family secret. Agilmir's father, Elector Darmanthis Velstar, delved in the forbidden arts of magic. Keoland's have deadly penalties for nobility that cross that line so moving the family to the Gran March was only prudent. Though Darmanthis was a capable conjuror and dedicated to his pursuit of arcane lore, his son, Agilmir, grew into a fanatical lover of the forbidden. Agilmir's mother had died when he was eight and his father only had one love, magic. His father had little time for him, except when Agilmir showed his promise as a mage. Over time, Agilmir resented his father more and more. His anger fueled his ambition and he redoubled his efforts. By the time he was twenty, he had surpassed his father in ability.

This was a difficult time in this country of Gran March. Humanoid raiders were wreaking havoc throughout Elector Darmanthis' lands. Eager to show his power, Agilmir suggested to his father that they summon a creature capable of eliminating the bothersome orcs. At first, Darmanthis refused, knowing that Agilmir was not wise enough to control that which he summoned. Then, after much arguing and threats, he relented, seeing that his only hope of controlling his son lay in cooperation. Unfortunately, Agilmir had other plans. Having summoned and conversed with many demons in secret, Agilmir had already fallen into the clutches of the minor Demon Lord Vilprixicur. Though not a major factor in the Abyss, Vilprixicur understood clearly the uses of such as Agilmir. They made a pact. Agilmir would sacrifice his father to Vilprixicur and the demon would handle the orcs. Darmanthis never anticipated this and Agilmir's fate was sealed. Vilprixicur had complete control of his soul. The orcs disappeared and the years passed.

Maintaining his place in the Abyss took most of Vilprixicur's effort, but he would occasionally throw his pet, Agilmir, a bone. After several years of careful prodding, Agilmir was about ready to take the next step of releasing Vilprixicur and company on Oerth. During this time, Vilprixicur also made sure that Agilmir had children. In fact, they were illegitimate twin daughters, from a serving woman who died in childbirth. The twin daughters were allowed to grow into maidenhood before Vilprixicur told Agilmir his plan. The gate-opening ceremony would require the sacrificing of the twins!

Until this point, Agilmir had been a willing and even thankful, servant of Vilprixicur. Under this demonic tutelage, he had become a powerful mage and his lands had been unmolested. True, his people did not love or trust him, but such was the cost of power. Now he had a spark of misgiving. Perhaps some distant memory of his mother's love came to him at that fateful moment, but he changed the *gate* to something else. Vilprixicur was too confident of his control of Agilmir and did not maintain rigid discipline. Such has been the fall of many a creature of chaos. Vilprixicur had been removed by the spell's backlash, but he would return. Frantically, Agilmir surrounded the keep with wards and protections, but Vilprixicur had already taken back control. He twisted Agilmir's mind to trap him in the very protections he was creating. Without knowing it, Agilmir had trapped himself and his two daughters in the keep alone. His few remaining servants had fled from his magic when they heard the demon's earlier howl of anger and frustration.

Enraged, Vilprixicur now set his orc army in motion. The same army he had removed from the Velstar lands, he had taken over. He excited them to a fever pitch, but was careful to reserve the killing of the three captives for himself. During the years since Earl Darmanthis' death, Vilprixicur had also been grooming an orc shaman-king, Dregrak the Cruel, to assist him in his dominion of Oerth. Unfortunately, too many valuable resources had been wasted in the attempt foiled by Agilmir. All that was left was revenge, and Vilprixicur was meticulous in exacting it. Not only did he have the orcs completely destroy the keep, but they also chased the captives to underground chambers. Held powerless by Vilprixicur's will, Agilmir could only watch as his daughters were held in preparation for a horrendous binding spell. Carefully, and with gleeful hands, Dregrak followed Vilprixicur's instructions. The final result of which was the death of Agilmir and his daughters, the containing of Agilmir's soul, and the eternal undead servitude of his daughters to Vilprixicur. Over the two plus centuries since, Vilprixicur has visited Agilmir's restless spirit many times to torment him.

Recently in Gran March, the Herdmaster's Guild has petitioned the Commandant for the use of the lands around the ruins of Velstar keep. The Velstar name is not remembered, but rumors abound that the ruins are still haunted. The Commandant agrees to charter (589 CY) the land to them with the proviso that they must rebuild the old keep there within ten years, or another guild will be offered the land. Just last year (590 CY), the Herdmasters also received a nicely sized piece of land for grazing cattle. Not surprisingly, the farmers of that area were displeased to have this land removed from their possible control. So angry was one prosperous and respected farmer of that region, Tarlina Faile, that she rallied the local farmers and petitioned the Commandant to reconsider. They were refused. It didn't take the capable Tarlina long to realize she would need a guild of her own to get the influence she needed. She traveled from Barony to Barony for almost a year until she had enough support to establish the Farmer's Grange (591 CY). Tarlina bears quite a grudge toward the Herdmasters and has been in contact

with various groups to try to slow down the rebuilding of the ruined keep, so that she can petition the Commandant for the land when the Herdmasters fail. Unknown to Tarlina, her efforts actually cause agents of the Cult of Hextor to come into her service in stopping the Herdmasters (see Encounter Two: Ambush!).

Naturally, the delays are starting to mount up, and the Herdmasters are starting to worry. Reports from the labor camp are of a ghost haunting the old ruins and disrupting the attempt to build there. The Guildmaster, Dolcenda Stenfire, has instructed one of her Wardens, Vasilnera Cowherd, to get someone to investigate this ghost and take care of this problem. Vasilnera has contacted a sage, Ulstra Starsifter, to discover why the keep might be haunted. Ulstra has been deep in the government archives all day, and has recovered several interesting pieces of knowledge. Unfortunately, some of the old deeds and paperwork were enchanted to notify the demon Vilprixicur of their handling. Though it has been close to three hundred years, Vilprixicur does not want his old secrets discovered so easily. He is sending a minion to handle the weak sage woman, while he focuses on more important things.

Introduction: The PCs come across the sage, Ulstra Starsifter, as she is being attacked by a quasit. If they come to her aid, she encourages them to seek adventure for the benefit of the Herdmasters Guild.

Encounter One: The PCs head toward the ruins and are met by an elderly woman, Olia Hefnauben, who can give the PCs some useful information.

Encounter Two: The PCs are ambushed by the Cult of Hextor.

Encounter Three: The PCs reach the work camp and gain more information from the camp foreperson, Ironia Stonemark.

Encounter Four: At the ruins, they find a parting shot from the Cult of Hextor in the form of a *cursed* note. After this rude greeting, they are left mostly to their own devices to discover that the well shaft has an opening to an underground area.

Encounter Five: The spirit of Agilmir Velstar resides in the underground chamber. He will relate his story and predicament. The PCs will then have to choose whether to help him or not.

Encounter Six: If they choose to help, they face the perils of freeing his soul in the next chamber. If Vilprixicur's vengeful skeletons do not kill the party, he will just have to wait for another day and another place to find satisfaction.

Introduction

You find yourself traveling through Hookhill, the capital of Gran March, on a brisk, sunny day. It is now twilight, and you are heading for an inn. Suddenly, you hear a woman scream from a nearby alleyway, as though her life depended on it.

Allow the PCs to state actions. Assuming that some investigate, read the following.

Coming to the entrance of the alleyway, you see a middle-aged woman lying on the ground, shielding herself with a book, as a tiny humanoid creature with spiky horns and batwings attacks her. It has wicked claws on the ends of its elongated hands and its skin is pustulent and green.

The woman is being attacked by a quasit. The quasit has been sent by Vilprixicur to kill the sage, and then destroy the ancient parchments the sage has just looked at in the archives (these pages are still in the archives). If the PCs attack it, the quasit will turn invisible and fly away to a safe distance. If not driven off or killed, it will hover and listen to the sage and PCs talk.

Quasit (1): CR 3; tiny outsider (2 ft. tall); HD 3d8; hp 13; Init +3 (+3 Dex); Spd 20 ft., fly 50 ft. (perfect); AC 18 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural); Atks +8 melee (1d3-1 and poison [x2], claws), +3 melee (1d4-1, bite); Face/Reach 2.5 ft. x 2.5 ft./0 ft.; SA spell-like abilities, poison; SQ damage reduction 5/silver, poison immunity, fire resistance 20, polymorph, regeneration 1; SR 5; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +4.

Str 8, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Hide +15, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Search +4, Spellcraft +4, Spot +6. **Feats:** Weapon finesse (bite, claw).

SA: Spell-like abilities—At will *detect good*, *detect magic*, *invisibility* (self only); once a day *fear* (as the spell, except that its area of effect is a 30-ft. radius from the quasit). These abilities are as the spells cast by a 6th level sorcerer (save DCs, where applicable, are 10+spell level). Once a week, a quasit can use *commune* to ask six questions (this is otherwise as the spell cast by a 12th-level cleric). **Poison**—Claw, Fortitude save (DC 13); initial damage 1d4 temporary Dex, secondary damage 2d4 temporary Dex.

SQ: Alternate form—A quasit can assume other forms at will as a standard action. This ability functions as a *polymorph self* cast by a 12th level sorcerer, except he can only assume the form of a one or two creatures no larger than Medium-size (bat only for this quasit). **Regeneration**—Takes normal damage from acid and from holy and blessed weapons (all other damage is subdual, which is healed at 1 hp per round).

The sage is Ulstra Starsifter. She has been hit by the quasit for 2 hp of damage and has lost 1 Dex point. She is clearly shaken by this experience, but is very thankful.

Naturally, the PCs will have questions. Here is the rest of what Ulstra knows.

- Ulstra has no idea why the quasit attacked. She does know what a quasit is and where they come from (The Abyss).
- Today she was continuing some research on the Velstar family for her friends at the Herdmasters Guild. It seems that the nearby ruins of Velstar Keep are haunted. The Herdmasters are building a new keep there, and many of the workers have already been scared off.
- The Velstars apparently came from Keoland three hundred years ago and settled just northwest of Hookhill. She's not completely sure, but she thinks they may have been magic users. Reports of the demise of the House point to unnatural activities, but the references are very scant.
- Perhaps brave adventurers such as the party members should investigate the site of the ruins and determine the cause of the haunting and the quasit attack.
- If asked about compensation, Ulstra will assure the PCs they may keep any non-building materials they find in their investigation. The Herdmasters said that she could keep anything she found, and she is confident that would extend to the PCs. Also, the Herdmasters should be very happy to be past this problem. **"When you get back, stop by here and report. I'll see what I can do."**
- The work site is about 8 miles northwest. The PCs should arrive at the work camp before nightfall.
- The foreman at the site is Master Stonemason Ironia Stonemark. She should be easy to find. She gives the PCs a letter of introduction (no handout necessary).
- Ulstra lives quietly here in Hookhill and will not adventure to the ruins under any circumstances. Due to the attack, she will stay with her brother, Sergeant Niffiol Starsifter for the next several days. She gives the PCs directions to his nearby house.
- No one else in town knows anything about the history of the Velstar Ruins (except high-ranking government officials who could relate the recent acquisition by the Herdmasters as being the ruins of Velstar Keep. Velstar being the name of some old family. This is included because the PCs may have, and decide to use, a point of influence with the government in Hookhill. However, government officials do not normally have time for discussions with regular citizens).
- No one else has investigated the ruins, and Ulstra has never heard of anybody going over there. As a matter of fact, she did not know anything about it until contacted by the Herdmasters.

The PCs should be interested in the going to the ruins, and Ulstra definitely will encourage them to seek adventure there.

Ulstra Starsifter (female human Expert3) Ulstra is a well-known and respected sage in the city of Hookhill. She is

45 years old, has a slight build, average looks, black hair peppered with gray and blue/green eyes.

Encounter One: Old Woman by the Road

Little beams of sunlight break through the mostly cloud-filled sky. A very light breeze brushes the cool air into your faces as you move out. The road heading northwest from Hookhill is not well traveled, but the people are friendly. Almost everyone you pass waves a greeting, though none stop in the middle of another busy day.

Allow the PCs to interrupt and ask questions. The players will probably want to roleplay with each other at this point. After the proper amount of time read or paraphrase the following.

As you get farther away from Hookhill, you notice that the road you are on has become a lonely place. The only other traveler you see is an old woman hobbling down the road toward you.

After pausing to allow the players to state any possible actions, continue.

As you get closer, she stops and motions for you to come to her side.

Assuming the PCs will come over, she converses with them.

Upon closer inspection, the woman appears very aged, but clean and well kept. She says, "Good afternoon young ones. Where do you travel at such a gait?"

The woman is a harmless old lady from a nearby farm who likes to come out and talk to travelers and gossip on her afternoon walk. Her name is Olia Hefnauben, and she is a spry 68 years old. She is very sentimental about her family and will talk about them any chance she gets, but if she thinks the PCs know something about the ruins, she wants to know. Her husband died five years ago and her three daughters and their families work the farm. This is what Olia will share if asked.

- Her husband's name was Krillian Hefnauben, and their daughters are Bilonia, Fern and Vaulyn. They had a son, Krillian, Jr., who died in the wars. Both father and son served in the same local unit during their lives, but the father retired and died of old age on the farm. Feel free to embellish the in-laws and grandchildren, as necessary.
- The ruins are about three miles on down the road. There are some folks from Hookhill building a keep there. She doesn't know whom, but she'll try and get any info the PCs have.

- Her father, Dolaf Regmulan, told her that those old ruins were haunted. She is sure that was probably a fib, to keep the children away from it. Even so, their farm is the closest to it, and the crops don't grow so well on that side...
- Those folks working there sure have been acting strange lately. For the first few months they just hauled stones and such up from the quarry, but once the stonecutters showed up, they not only worked during the day, but moved around a lot at night. Then, many of them left last week. She doesn't know much about keep building, but it seems strange to her.
- She doesn't know who owned the keep. Probably, some noble family long forgotten. Nobody has ever lived there or within six miles of the other side. Of course, there was a great battle fought in the fields on the north side. Her daddy fought there. But even then, the ruins were old. Her father got land rights to farm here, because he fought so well in that battle. He was originally from just outside Shiboeth. As a matter of fact, she still has a few relations there...

Naturally, if the PCs are well mannered, Olia will ask them to visit the farm. She will talk, as long as the PCs are willing to visit.

Olia Hefnauben (female human Com1)

Encounter Two: Ambush!

The battle, referred to by Olia, happened seventy-five years ago when a large army of humanoids from the northern Lortmil Mountains came down in an attempt to destroy Hookhill. Thankfully, a dwarven messenger warned Hookhill in time to meet them on that field. The battle, while not forgotten, has been downplayed because the demi-humans of the Lortmils have all but eliminated the humanoid population since then. Moreover, the recent wars have given bards and scholars much more to ponder. In any event, the Cult of Hextor has moved into this battle site, and they have no wish for the Herdmasters or anyone else to build on the old ruins. They have been behind the group that is harassing the builders of the new keep. When they heard about the Herdmasters looking for someone to take care of their haunting problem (through their spies in Hookhill), they planned an ambush for this unsuspecting group.

As the group gets about a mile from their encounter with Olia, they will stumble across this ambush. Lack of planning and no really helpful terrain features has made the Cult's plan simple. They have divided their forces equally to each side of the road and will come out of hiding as the PCs pass by a pre-arranged spot. Quick and brutal is their outlook. Naturally, if the PCs are clever, give them a chance to spoil the ambush. Otherwise, determine surprise and begin combat.

Tier One (EL4)

Female human Rog1 (2): CR1; Medium Humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 1d6+3; hp 9; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 leather armor, +2 Dex); Atks +1 melee (1d4+1 [crit 19–20], dagger); SA Rog sneak attack +1d6; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +0.

Str 12, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills: Hide +6, Listen +2, Move Silently +6, Spot +2, Tumble +6. *Feats:* Improved Initiative, Toughness.

Equipment: leather armor, dagger.

Male human Ftr2: CR2; Medium Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 2d10+4; hp 19; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 leather armor, +2 Dex); Atks +5 melee (1d8+3 [crit 19–20], longsword); SA Power Attack; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +0.

Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Hide +3, Listen +1, Move Silently +3, Spot +2. *Feats:* Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (longsword), Power Attack.

SA: *Power Attack*—may take up to +2 off attack roll and instead apply it to damage.

Equipment: leather armor, longsword.

Tier Two (EL6)

Female human Rog1 (4): CR1; Medium Humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 1d6+3; hp 9; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 leather armor, +2 Dex); Atks +1 melee (1d4+1 [crit 19–20], dagger); SA Rog sneak attack +1d6; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +0.

Str 12, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills: Hide +6, Listen +2, Move Silently +6, Spot +2, Tumble +6. *Feats:* Improved Initiative, Toughness.

Equipment: leather armor, dagger.

Male human Ftr2 (2): CR2; Medium Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 2d10+4; hp 19; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 leather armor, +2 Dex); Atks +5 melee (1d8+3 [crit 19–20], longsword); SA Power Attack; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +0.

Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Hide +3, Listen +1, Move Silently +3, Spot +2. *Feats:* Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (longsword), Power Attack.

SA: *Power Attack*—may take up to +2 off attack roll and instead apply it to damage.

Equipment: leather armor, longsword.

Tier Three (EL8)

Female human Rog2 (6): CR2; Medium Humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 2d6+3; hp 12; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 leather armor, +2 Dex); Atks +2 melee (1d4+1 [crit 19–20], dagger); SA Rog sneak attack +1d6; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +0.

Str 12, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills: Hide +7, Listen +2, Move Silently +7, Spot +2, Tumble +7. *Feats:* Improved Initiative, Toughness.

SQ: *Rog evasion*—when spell allows Ref save for ½ dmg, takes no dmg on successful save and full dmg on failed save.

Equipment: leather armor, dagger.

Male human Ftr2 (2): CR2; Medium Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 2d10+4; hp 19; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 leather armor, +2 Dex); Atks +5 melee (1d8+3 [crit 19–20], longsword); SA Power Attack; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +0.

Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Hide +3, Listen +1, Move Silently +3, Spot +2.
Feats: Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (longsword), Power Attack.

SA: *Power Attack*—may take up to +2 off attack roll and instead apply it to damage.

Equipment: leather armor, longsword.

Because the Cult members are fanatical, they will fight to the death. If somehow captured, these cult members will not reveal the location of their shrine or who their leader is. In the end, they will preserve the secrecy of their shrine at all costs.

Encounter Three: Work Camp

After their brush with death, the PCs will come to the work camp. It should be about nightfall at this point, so read or paraphrase the following.

As the twilight fades from the sky, you see the tents and fires of the work camp. As you approach, you notice that many of the tents are empty and most of the workers are near the central fire. You see a dwarven woman addressing the workers. As you get closer, she finishes her speech and heads to a nearby tent.

The workers here are talking quietly among themselves. There are only twelve of them, all of which are humans. If the PCs are non-threatening, the workers will only give them wary looks. If asked any questions, one of them will point to the tent the dwarf went into.

The dwarf is Ironia Stonemark, Master Stonemason and foreperson of this work camp. As the PCs enter her tent, she says in a gruff voice, ***“There you are. Took you long enough. This ghost business has us way behind schedule. Half a mind to take care of it myself, but the guild said someone would be sent. Well, what are you gawking at?”*** Pointing with a jerked thumb, she adds, ***“The ruins are that way at the top of the hill.”***

Ironia is expecting help from the Herdmaster guild, but the Herdmasters have not sent anyone yet. Ironia is actually glad to see the PCs, but she guards her feelings with a gruff exterior. Unless the PCs are downright mean or threatening, she will handle their questions with impatience and sarcasm. Otherwise, she will tell them she has nothing to say and they can get out of her camp. Here is what Ironia knows about the situation.

- For weeks, various small items have been moved around the work site. Lately, stones have been toppled and moved.

- For the past three weeks, there have been a lot of wailing sounds coming from the site at night. Some of the men went to investigate last week, and they came back all pale and gibbering, talking about a ghost. Many of them left that night. More left the next day, but the wailing stopped.
- The few men she has left were not part of that group, but she still has to pay them wage-and-a-half to get them to work in the middle of the day.
- Though she will be very reluctant to mention it, she is trying hard to get a large bonus for completing the keep on time. She has never been late nor had her skills brought into question. She does not want to start now.
- The ‘spirit’ has hurt no one.
- There are no known openings to an underground area. They cleared away most of the old stone. Some of foundation has been reworked, but most of the old rubble has been tossed aside.
- The PCs can question the men, but she doesn’t know what good that would do. Just let her know when you’ve handled the problem.
- No workers will be allowed at the site until the party finishes, so hurry! If the PCs seem inclined to rest for the night and start in the morning, she will remind them that the ghost is active at night, not during the day.
- Ironia does have a small amount of magical salve (Keoghtum’s ointment) that will revive any unconscious PCs (to one hit point) and cure any poisons. She has only the minimum necessary to revive those currently out of play. Otherwise, the ointment does not exist. This is to allow PCs who were incapacitated in the last encounter to rejoin play. The justification is that she acquired the ointment from the adventurer Braegar Battleforge for the purpose of healing any seriously injured workers. Working with stone is dangerous, after all.

Here is what has actually transpired. The Cult of Hextor has been sending people to scare the workers away until last week. At that time, the real spirit made an appearance and scared everyone away. The Cult does not have enough manpower locally to try anything else major for the remainder of this scenario, since the PCs took care of them in the previous encounter. Regardless, the Cult feels that its main objectives have been met for the time being. If they had only killed the PCs, then no one would want to be up here. At least, that is their thinking. Even so, they left a little surprise in the next encounter for the PCs, just for spite.

Also, if there are any dwarves in the party, Ironia will ask if they know Braegar Battleforge. She wants to know the whereabouts of this dwarven warrior. She won’t admit it, but Braegar dumped her ten years ago, and she still holds a grudge. Male dwarves in the party who have good charisma and honest intentions might get Ironia to be a little less gruff.

The workers are very reluctant to talk, because they are superstitious and do not feel they really know all that

much. They are clearly worried about the ghost problem. If the PCs resort to reasonable offers of money or romantic interest (there are male and female human workers), one of the proposition workers will let slip, ***"Maybe you should check out the well. Murt kept muttering about the well as he packed his stuff and left that night."*** This is the only useful piece of information, though they might spread any type of rumor for a payoff.

Ironia Stonemark (female dwarf Com5; Profession (stonemason) +7)

Encounter Four: The Ruins

Using the map of the building site and underground area (DM Aid #1) as a guide, have the PCs determine their marching order. This will set the right mood of impending confrontation. Ask the players what sources of light they are using, if any. It is still very cloudy, so there is not much starlight and the half-moon is concealed. Then read the following.

As you crest the hill to the work site, you immediately notice something small on the ground glowing dimly in the center of the courtyard area.

This item is a little folded piece of paper with a faint red glow. Whoever opens and reads the paper must make a Will save or be *cursed* (suffering a -4 enhancement penalty on all acts committed during times of combat, including attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, and skill checks). The page crumbles to dust after being read. The head priest at the local shrine to Hextor left this parting shot after his forces were defeated in Encounter Two. At the end of the session, hand the afflicted PC the certificate for the Curse of Hextor.

It is hard to say what the PCs will do at this point. Give them plenty of opportunity to look around. They will not be able to follow any trail of the person who left the note. Here are descriptions of some features of the work site.

- Debris pile: This pile of old stones has been set aside for later possible use. There is nothing of interest here.
- North wall: The only wall over three feet high is the north wall. It is composed mostly of older stones, though there is some new work.
- East wall: Not really a wall. A trench has been dug and the foundation has been reworked.
- Southwest tower: The base of this tower looks to be intact. It makes a nice circle two feet high.
- All the other walls and towers are from ground level to about two feet high, and have not been worked with new stone.
- Pile of new stone: This is a large stack of cut stone. Beside this are stacks of other necessary building supplies, including two knotted ropes for climbing (30 ft each).

- Floor of old keep: Many of the old floor stones have been removed. There is one solidly sealed opening to an underground area. Approximately four thousand pounds of stone were dumped into this opening to seal it. It should be a tiresome task to even remove some of this.
- The well: There is a 3-ft. diameter well in the courtyard. This is the only realistic opening to the underground area. It is forty feet down to the opening of the grotto. There is an additional 10 feet to the water at the bottom of the well. There is no winch and bucket setup here. Just a low stone wall marks the edge of the well.

At this point, you can use the appearance of Agilmir's spirit as a timing mechanism. If the PCs don't investigate the well in a reasonable amount of time, have Agilmir's spirit cause the well shaft to glow. Agilmir did this last week when the workers came by, but Murt did not share his discovery until he saw the spirit rise out of the well. All the lights carried by the investigating workers drowned out the well illumination so that no one could see it except for Murt, who was checking out that area. Unfortunately, Agilmir's spirit glows too weakly to be seen in good light. In sunlight, he is completely invisible. Murt dropped his lantern in fear before the spirit came out. It was the dropped lantern that caught everyone's attention. Seeing the spirit, they all ran. As the PCs approach the well, you should tell them that their light source is drowning out the glow they saw.

Agilmir has to come over to the well shaft in order for it to glow. He normally stays over at the other end of the grotto, where he is more solid in appearance.

Encounter Five: Well, Well, Well

Negotiating the well is not meant to be overly difficult, but the PCs may plan and fuss in their reluctance to face the ghost. Any reasonable plan will get them down the shaft and into the grotto chamber. It may be necessary to remind the characters that there are two ropes in the construction gear. As the party approaches the well, Agilmir will move away to the other end of the grotto, so the glow in the well shaft will fade. Agilmir has no problem understanding the PCs' conversations and will not try to hinder or scare them. Honestly, he is hoping to convince the PCs to free his soul. He will wait patiently on his chair at the far end of the grotto. When the first character reaches the grotto, read the following.

As you reach the opening at the bottom of the well, you see that a brief passage that opens to the right into a room with a glow.

This small landing area is provided so all the party can come down safely before the confrontation with Agilmir. Only some of the floor and the far wall where Agilmir sits are of worked stone. The water is cool and perfectly safe

to drink. When someone looks around the corner, state the following.

As you peer around the corner, you see that the room opens out into a roughly 40-ft. diameter area with a 15-ft. ceiling. At the far end of the room sits a ghostly image of a human male in flowing robes. Next to where he sits are two doors. One of these is closed, and the other is heavily damaged from an apparent cave-in behind it. The ghostly figure smiles and says, "Welcome to what remains of Velstar Keep. Please, all of you, come and converse with me. I cannot hurt you."

It might be fun to use an old English accent here to illustrate this ghost is three hundred years old. The PCs will most likely have questions at this point. Here is what Agilmir knows.

- Naturally, he knows all of the history of Velstar Keep mentioned in the background of this scenario. Though he will tell his story (see below) when asked, he has no desire to relive his past.
- He cannot enter the room where his soul is trapped (and his voice cannot be heard there either, though he does not know this).
- While he can go above ground, he has no power of speech there, and his appearance becomes much less defined.
- The wailing of the previous weeks was some men who are trying to scare the workers. Agilmir does not know who they are, but their auras were of an evil nature. Agilmir can detect general outlooks of people. He could sense that the workers were basically good people, but he accidentally scared them away. Agilmir was actually concerned the evil men (Cult members) were agents of Vilprixicur. He did not even reveal himself to them.
- At no time will Agilmir mention Vilprixicur's name. He will always refer to him as "the demon."
- Agilmir has no means of hurting the PCs. The PCs may have several means of hurting him. Any attacks that would normally hurt undead will cause him torment, but he can never be banished or laid to rest until his soul is freed. Turning causes Agilmir discomfort, but he has nowhere to run.
- The chair Agilmir sits on is, of course, very old. Any contact will cause it to crumble.
- Agilmir is NG. He was NE changing to Neutral at the time of his death. The intervening years of reflection has brought him to seeing the errors of his life. Even so, he is deeply embarrassed by his past.
- The ruins of a desk in the next room contain some old family papers and such. There might be an old spell scroll or two, he cannot remember.
- He does not understand any more about the magic that holds his soul, other than that the gem must be destroyed. A crushing blow should suffice. Though a rough Appraisal (by sight only) would be on par with a 200,000gp sapphire (brilliant light blue), the gem will turn to worthless glass when shattered. The

magic has altered and weakened it. Agilmir can tell anyone that it would be dangerous to touch before breaking, if they can hear him. The daggers might be evil, as they come from a demon. He does not know of any other traps or concerns.

- Though Agilmir was an accomplished conjuror in his day, he has completely forgotten how to cast spells in the unlife.

He relates his story if asked.

"Hundreds of years ago when my family ruled these lands, I was a conjuror of ample ability. Routinely, I summoned and controlled various beasts and powers. Somewhere along the way, I misjudged my ability and was deceived by a foul demon. Though I continued to believe I was in control, it was actually his elaborate plans unfolding. It all came to a point when he wished me to open a gate to our world from his plane of existence. I judged rightly at that point that he was tricking me into giving him power and opportunity. I changed the spell at the last moment, and he was rebuffed back to his Abyssal home. Wroth was he, and he sent his orc minions to destroy this keep around my ears and trap me. Through his nameless evil, an orc shaman was able to perform the soul trapping ritual in the next room. Until the gem that hangs between the two daggers is crushed, my soul can never be at rest. My only hope in being released to the afterlife is your kind service. Will you help me?"

Naturally, this is a minor dilemma for the party. It may not be an easy decision for the PCs to test the demon's magic to resolve this. Allow them plenty of time to work it out, though you can remind them that this is why they came here. Once they decide, move to the next encounter.

Encounter Six: To Free a Soul

As the PCs open the door to the room, describe the following.

You open the door to reveal a 10-ft. corridor opening into a circular chamber about 25 ft. in diameter with a 20-ft. ceiling. In the center of the dust-covered floor, you see a brilliant blue gem hanging on a thin golden chain between two daggers. The hilts of the golden daggers protrude from two crumbling skeletons lying side by side in the center of the floor. Other skeletons, orcish in appearance, lie in a heap at one side of the room. You feel a great deal of unease from what you see, especially the daggers, which seem to radiate vileness.

If any PC touches the gem, chain, or daggers before attacking the gem, have them save versus Will or lose a level (see Energy Drain and negative levels in the DMG) and suffer 2d6 in fire damage. Saving means 2d6 in fire damage as flames course the length of the connection, then the gem will shatter (as below). If a PC attacks the gem by any physical means, it will shatter in a blinding flash. Those who did not cover their eyes will be blinded for 1d3 rounds. Agilmir's spirit will disappear, having

been released to the afterlife. Destroying the gem will also cause the two skeletons in the center to animate, reassemble (if the PCs attacked the skeletons somehow earlier), and ignite. Each will have a dagger in its hand. These daggers are +2 to attack and do additional fire damage. The daggers are the focal points of Vilprixicur's retribution spell for freeing Agilmir's soul. The individual PC most responsible for freeing Agilmir's soul will receive the Mark of the Demon (see certificate). The two skeletons are normal, except they are immune to fire and turn as 4HD undead. When defeated, the skeletons and daggers turn to dust.

Tier One (EL4)

Flaming Skeletons (2): CR 0.5; Medium Undead (5 ft. tall); HD 1d12+2; hp 8; Init +5 (+1 Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural); Atks +2 melee (1d4+1d4 fire [crit 19-20], flaming dagger) or +0 melee 1d4 [x2], claw; SQ Undead, immunities, fire immunity, turned as 4 HD undead; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2.

Str 10, Dex 12, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Feats: Improved Initiative.

SQ: *Undead*—Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to sneak attacks, critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage. *Immunities*—Cold immunity, fire immunity, half damage from piercing and slashing weapons.

Orc Skeletons (4): CR 0.33; Medium Undead (6 ft. tall); HD 1d12; hp 6; Init +5 (+1 Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural); Atks +0 melee 1d4 [x2], claw; SQ Undead, immunities; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2.

Str 10, Dex 12, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Feats: Improved Initiative.

SQ: *Undead*—Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to sneak attacks, critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage. *Immunities*—Cold immunity, half damage from piercing and slashing weapons.

Tier Two (EL6)

Flaming Skeletons (2): CR 1; Medium Undead (5 ft. tall); HD 2d12+2; hp 13; Init +5 (+1 Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft.; AC 13 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural); Atks +4 melee (1d4+1d4 fire [crit 19-20], flaming dagger) or +2 melee 1d4 [x2], claw; SQ Undead, immunities, fire immunity, turned as 4 HD undead; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2.

Str 14, Dex 12, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Feats: Improved Initiative.

SQ: *Undead*—Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to sneak attacks, critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage. *Immunities*—Cold immunity, fire immunity, half damage from piercing and slashing weapons.

Orc Skeletons (4): CR 1; Large Undead (7 ft. tall); HD 2d12; hp 13; Init +5 (+1 Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft.; AC 13 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural); Atks +2 melee 1d4 [x2], claw; SQ Undead, immunities; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2.

Str 14, Dex 12, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Feats: Improved Initiative.

SQ: *Undead*—Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to sneak attacks, critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage. *Immunities*—Cold immunity, half damage from piercing and slashing weapons.

Tier Three (EL8)

Flaming Skeletons (2): CR 1; Medium Undead (5 ft. tall); HD 2d12+2; hp 13; Init +5 (+1 Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft.; AC 13 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural); Atks +4 melee (1d4+1d4 fire [crit 19-20], flaming dagger) or +2 melee 1d4 [x2], claw; SQ Undead, immunities, fire immunity, turned as 4 HD undead; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2.

Str 14, Dex 12, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Feats: Improved Initiative.

SQ: *Undead*—Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to sneak attacks, critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage. *Immunities*—Cold immunity, fire immunity, half damage from piercing and slashing weapons.

Orc Skeletons (10): CR 1; Large Undead (7 ft. tall); HD 2d12; hp 13; Init +5 (+1 Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft.; AC 13 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural); Atks +2 melee 1d4 [x2], claw; SQ Undead, immunities; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2.

Str 14, Dex 12, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Feats: Improved Initiative.

SQ: *Undead*—Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to sneak attacks, critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage. *Immunities*—Cold immunity, half damage from piercing and slashing weapons.

If not somehow destroyed in the combat, the deteriorated remains of a desk lie against the wall. The only useful items that can be salvaged are two spell scrolls (each in a separate tube), a treasure map, a signet ring, and a gold bracelet. These items were in a secret compartment in the desk, which probably explains why the orcs did not take them when they sacked the keep so long ago.

Conclusion

Ulstra has contacted the Herdmasters and the Herdmasters are prepared to give favor to any successful party members. Success is measured ultimately by winning the battle with the cultists (who were pretending to be ghosts and disrupting the building) and ensuring

that the Spirit of Agilmir is not seen or heard from again. Ulstra will have the vouchers of favor for the PCs. They will not need to contact the Guild.

If on the other hand, the PCs somehow cause excessive damage to the work site, or were unsuccessful, Ulstra will thank them for their brave help, but the PCs do not receive the Herdmaster's favor.

Also, she will tell any PCs who inquire about the Signet Ring or Treasure Map that Wyrmslayer and Trollbane were two ancient heroes of the Gran March. Their taming of the lands in and around the Rushmoors is legendary. Wyrmslayer is known to have killed at least one black dragon, and Trollbane had a flaming sword that he is reported to have killed over one hundred trolls with. As Ulstra remembers it, Wyrmslayer married Trollbane's sister and they became Electors in the same year, with lands side-by-side. She knows no more about them.

The End

Experience Point Summary

To award experience for this adventure, add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Then assign the discretionary roleplaying experience award. The roleplaying award should be given for consistent character portrayal and contribution to the fun of the game. You can award different roleplaying amounts to different characters.

Award the total value (objectives plus roleplaying) to each character.

Introduction

Saving Ulstra Starsifter	50 xp
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Encounter Two

Defeating the Cultist Ambush	150 xp
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Encounter Six

Freeing Agilmir's soul	150 xp
Defeating skeletons	100 xp

Total experience for objectives	450 xp
Discretionary roleplaying award	0-50 xp

Total possible experience	500 xp
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Treasure Summary

Player characters may keep items from the scenario that are listed on the treasure list below or which meet the following conditions:

1. The item must be non-magical and specifically listed in the text of the adventure (e.g armor on foes). If it is not listed in the text, the characters cannot keep it.

Items of this nature can be sold for 50% of book value, or recorded on a log sheet.

2. Animals, followers, monsters, henchmen, and so forth (any living being, basically) may not be kept from a scenario for any reason unless the treasure summary lists the being specifically. It is okay for the player characters to form relationships with NPCs, but these will not be certified and cannot bring material benefit to the character. Contacts (sources of extra information) must be specifically certified.
3. Theft is against the law, but may be practiced by some player characters. Items which are worth more than [insert campaign value] that are of personal significance to the owner (including family heirlooms), and all magical items, will be discovered in the possession of the character by one means or another. The character must return the item and pay a fine equal to three times the value of the item stolen. In addition, the PC caught receives campaign-decided penalties for being known as a thief, such as Infamy. For other stolen items which meet the criteria in #1 above, use your judgment and the circumstances within the game to determine whether a PC thief gets away with the theft or not.

Any item retained according to these rules, which does not have a certificate, will not ever have a certificate issued for it.

The campaign staff reserves the right to take away any item or gold acquired for things it later finds unreasonable but which were allowed at the time.

Encounter Six

- Scroll (25 gp, negligible weight, parchment): arcane spell *erase* at 1st level
- Scroll (100 gp, negligible weight, parchment): Arcane spell *mage armor* at 4th level

Encounter Seven

- Ancient Treasure Map of Elector Xanthmar Wyrmslayer: This map shows directions to the 'Vastness of wealth and finery I could not immediately take from Wyrmslayer' not far from the Castle of Elector Carthak Embrillian the Trollbane. There is a note at the bottom in the same hand that says, 'As I am now venerable and soon to leave this world, I know that the wealth I hid so long ago has no finer purpose than to enrich the children of my children. I bequeath this map and all that may be found by it to my granddaughter, Elmistra, and her worthy husband Wilmark Velstar of Keoland.' Signed in a shaky hand 'Xanthmar', and sealed with the signet ring matching his coat of arms. There are three coats of arms on the page. The first and largest (Xanthmar's) depicts a Green Dragon rampant impaled by a gold sword on a field of blue. The second is much smaller and has a field of black with three silver crowns. The last at the bottom is equally small and has a field of blue with a star, crescent

moon and hand (palm facing). (50 gp, 1lb, parchment, rare)

- Signet Ring of Xanthmar Wyrmslayer: This signet ring is made of solid platinum. The signet is of a coat of arms with a dragon rampant impaled on a sword. (150 gp, 1 lb, platinum, uncommon)
- Gold Bracelet: This solid gold bracelet of a simple 'torque' design weighs 1/2 lb. and fits a rather large wrist. (100 gp, 1/2 lb, gold, common)
- Minor Curse of Hextor: Your character has been successfully *curse*d by a Priest of Hextor, and suffers a -4 enhancement penalty on all acts committed during times of combat. This includes attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, and skill checks. Your character is not affected if not engaged in combat activities and in excess of 100 feet from the nearest combatants. This *curse* can be removed as per the spell *bestow curse*.

Mark of the Demon: Your character was most responsible for releasing the soul of Agilmir Velstar, whose soul was trapped by a demon. That demon took care to ensure he would be alerted when this particularly hated soul was freed. He was alerted and took note of who you are. While you do not have a physical or magical mark on your body, a certain demon and his agents know who you are, and will be looking for you. Please show this certificate to your DM before play. Any demon or agent thereof who kills or captures you will win favor in the Abyss.

Voucher of Favor with the Herdmaster's Guild – In recognition of service rendered to the Herdmaster's Guild, _____ may use this writ with any member of said guild to receive one-half off the price of their next livestock purchase, discount not to exceed 100 gp.

DM Aid #1 – Map of Ruins

