

UNDER THE BLACK MOUNTAINS



Explore the secrets under the Black Mountains.
You can sharpen your blade. You can prepare your spells.
But can you survive the dungeon?

HUNTER'S FULL MOON ~ ADVENTURE THREE



UNDER THE BLACK MOUNTAINS



The key to the famous tomb of Queen Freja Swiftsteel has been found at last. According to hearsay, her grave contains an invaluable book and legendary treasures.

But the ancient dwarven tomb, located deep under the Black Mountains, is full of deadly traps, vicious monsters, and undead foes.

*You can sharpen your swords. You can ready your spells.
But can you survive the dungeon?*



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OVERVIEW

ABOUT THIS ADVENTURE

Under the Black Mountains is a Dungeons & Dragons 5th edition adventure designed for a group of three to five 3rd-level characters. The adventure can be played as a stand-alone episode or as part of the *Hunter's Full Moon* trilogy. This adventure can be used in any campaign that features a region with wilderness.

FEATURED CONTENT

- Non-linear dungeon crawl.
- Unique legacy item that increases in power with level: *Dominance*, a magical flail.
- New monster: **Greyscale**.
- Lore & Legend: The rise and fall of the Ironshield Clan.
- Detailed NPCs with background descriptions.
- Original maps and illustrations of high quality.

SYNOPSIS

The characters have arrived to the Black Mountain to explore an ancient dwarven tomb that is said to be cursed. Upon entering the dungeon, the group is attacked by a malicious greyscale (a new undead monster).

The tomb features three different tunnels:

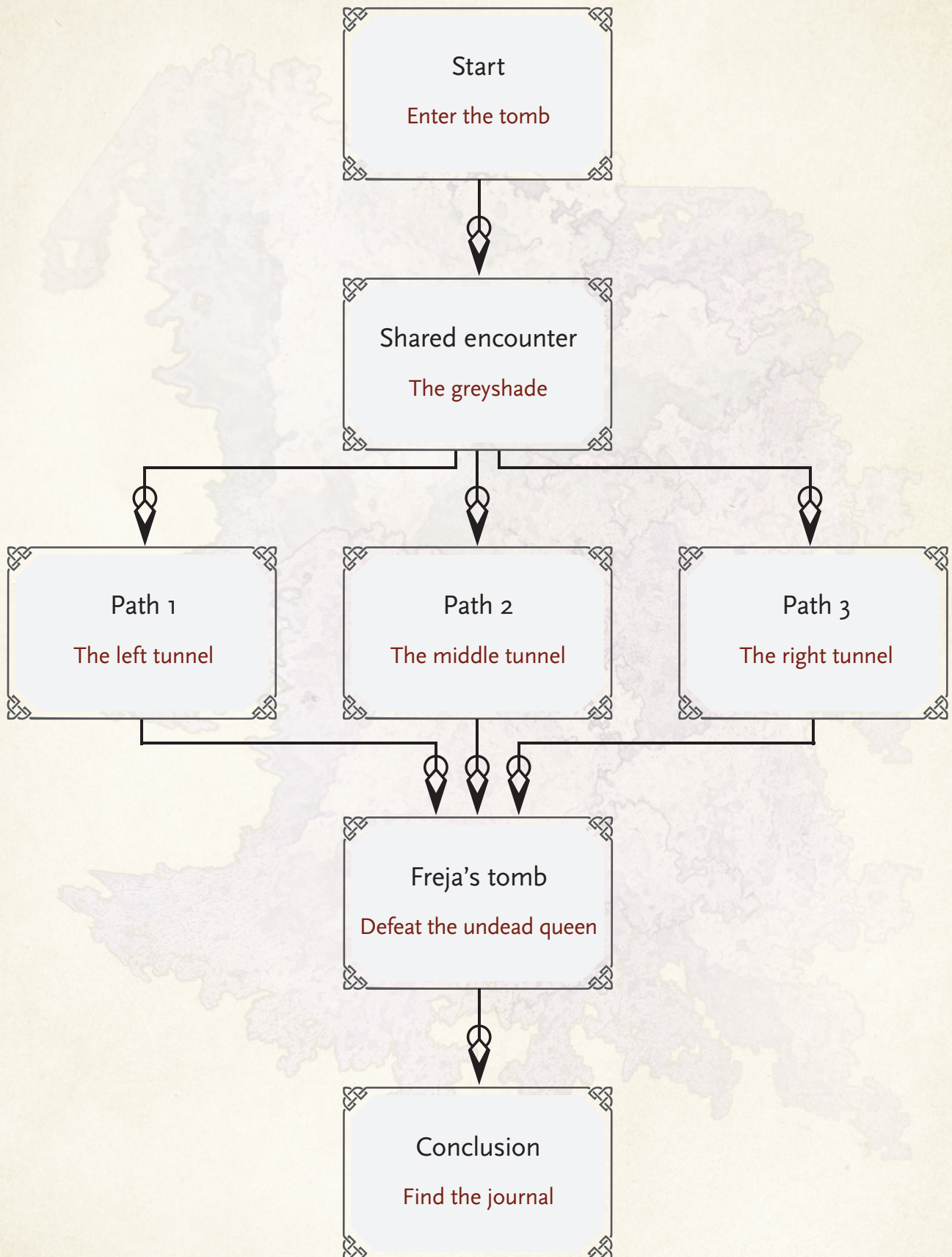
- A nearly collapsed, partly flooded passage, in which the characters must swim through a narrow tunnel and fight a stealthy ochre jelly.
- The main burial hallway, protected by an animated guardian and obstructed by a heavy portcullis.
- The mummification chambers, guarded by magical traps and other undead creatures.

In the heart of the dungeon, the characters meet the merciless ghost of the legendary Queen Freja Swiftsteel and her supernatural wolves.

The characters find a magical flail named *Dominance* (a new magical item that increases in power with level). They also discover a battered book. This journal contains important information and detailed maps of the Underdark, which can help the people in Winterhold with their battle with the dark elves.

Once the characters have explored the dungeon, they return to Buckbridge for a well-deserved celebration with plenty of food and ale at the local inn. Their adventures will continue in the next trilogy *Secrets of the Underdark*.

ADVENTURE FLOWCHART





CHAPTER 1: INTO THE DARK

FOR CHARACTERS WHO ARE PLAYING THE TRILOGY

After overcoming the not-so-friendly warlock at the Tower of Agatho, the characters have followed Bjorn Amberclan's map and found their way to the entrance of Queen Freja Swiftsteel's tomb in the Black Mountains. The characters are here because Bjorn promised them a reward for finding the queen's personal journal, which might be hidden in the tomb. Bjorn believes this journal contains information of huge importance to his hometown of Winterhold and its ongoing conflict with nearby drow outposts.

You have left the tower behind and travelled uphill through a stretch of unusually harsh terrain. The wilderness grows increasingly challenging, with dense brushwood and low branches barring the way, and steep slopes hidden under fern. A layer of mist covers much of the ground and hides treacherous roots. The forest is almost completely quiet.

Just as the sun begins to set, you discover a small clearing in a secluded basin. In the middle of the clearing stands a tall rock of dark, uneven granite surrounded by mist. According to the map, this is where Queen Freja Swiftsteel is buried.

The rock is about twice the height of an average person and circa 10 feet in diameter at its base, tapering off slightly towards the top. At a distance, it looks perfectly natural, but a closer inspection reveals a rune the size of a palm carved in the top. There is also a weak aura of transmutation magic radiating from the rock. A more thorough search reveals a small crack in the rock's surface that looks suspiciously like a keyhole.

When the ancient key (found in the second adventure in the Hunter's Full Moon trilogy) is inserted into the keyhole, a tremor runs through the ground beneath the characters' feet. A

moment later, an expertly concealed door in the stone swings open with a grating rasp. Behind the door, a staircase carved out of the mountain leads down into darkness. The air is cold and smells heavily of damp stone. Mist drifts in through the opening and disappears below, like water flowing over the edge of a cliff.



FOR CHARACTERS WHO ARE NEW TO BUCKWILD

The characters met each other on the road while travelling through the vast forests of Buckwild, and decided to travel together in order to better defend themselves against eventual dangers. The adventure starts when the characters arrive at the inn at Buckbridge.

Late one evening, they arrive to Buckbridge, a small isolated village in the middle of the region. The scents of roasted potatoes and grilled meat pull them to The Grey Hare, the village's only inn, where they encounter a dwarven researcher by the name of Bjorn Amberclan.

An experienced archaeologist, Bjorn has travelled from the dwarven stronghold of Winterhold to Buckbridge in hopes of learning more about the past of the village and its surroundings. He is especially interested in the Ironshield Clan, a famed dwarven army that once ruled the area. Most of the time, Bjorn can be found in the inn's common room, where he spends his evenings at a corner table hidden beneath piles of old books.

A few days ago, a band of adventurers hired by Bjorn retrieved a magical key from a tower far north-east of Buckbridge. This key is believed to provide access to the tomb of Queen Freja Swiftsteel, the last monarch of the Ironshield Clan before they fell into sudden ruin. The Ironshield Clan were noted for their high military skill, and their mounted warriors who rode on huge wolves, but the clan's stronghold was destroyed and the clan decimated. Those who survived buried Queen Freja under the Black Mountains. See chapter 10 for more information about the rise and fall of the Ironshield Clan.

Most thought the location of Queen Freja's tomb had been lost forever. However, Bjorn has obtained an ancient map, which appears to reveal where the catacombs are situated. Given that he also has the key, Bjorn possesses everything he needs to enter the tomb and search for a journal of great importance to Winterhold, his hometown. But Bjorn's adventuring days are behind him, so he keeps an eye out for a group of adventurers who might be interested in taking on the challenge.

A GRAVE MISSION

When the characters arrive at The Grey Hare, the inn is almost full. Most patrons are hunters, wearing patched leather armour and equipped with long sturdy bows as they share news and rumours over hot meals. There are also over a dozen farmers and other tradespeople present. A brawny woman with braided ginger hair walks past, the bowl she carries leaving behind scents of herbs and roasted potatoes. Next to the bar, a young half-elven woman and an elven man in hunter's clothes are having dinner.

Bjorn notices the characters immediately and approaches them.

A dwarf makes his way through the crowd to your group.

"Good evening to you all!" The dwarf bows and smiles. "The name's Bjorn Amberclan. By the look of it, you have just arrived. Perhaps you are looking for a task that might land you some coin? I am looking for experienced adventurers. There's a certain place I would like them to visit, and bring back to me a small item in which I am very interested. It might be an easy assignment. But there may be hidden dangers."

Bjorn asks the characters to travel to the tomb of Queen Freja Swiftsteel, located deep inside the Black Mountains. They are to enter the burial complex, search for a journal that contains notes and maps, and bring it back to him. Bjorn suspects this book is of huge importance to his hometown of Winterhold, located far north-west of Buckbridge, which currently is having problems with raiding drow. Bjorn is also keen to learn about the tomb's layout, features, and secrets.

The characters are free to keep any other items they discover as long as they respect the sanctitude of the tomb and don't cause unnecessary damage. If the characters are successful in this, Bjorn promises to reward them with 50 gp each.

The journey to the Black Mountains is smooth, and the entrance to the tomb can be introduced by the DM as explained on the previous page.



CHAPTER 2: ENTERING THE DUNGEON

Descending the stairs takes the characters the better part of half an hour. At the end of the stairs is a pair of double doors that open to a large square chamber, with walls made of smooth grey granite. The domed ceiling, supported by four stone columns, is 30 feet at its highest point, and the floor appears to be marble.

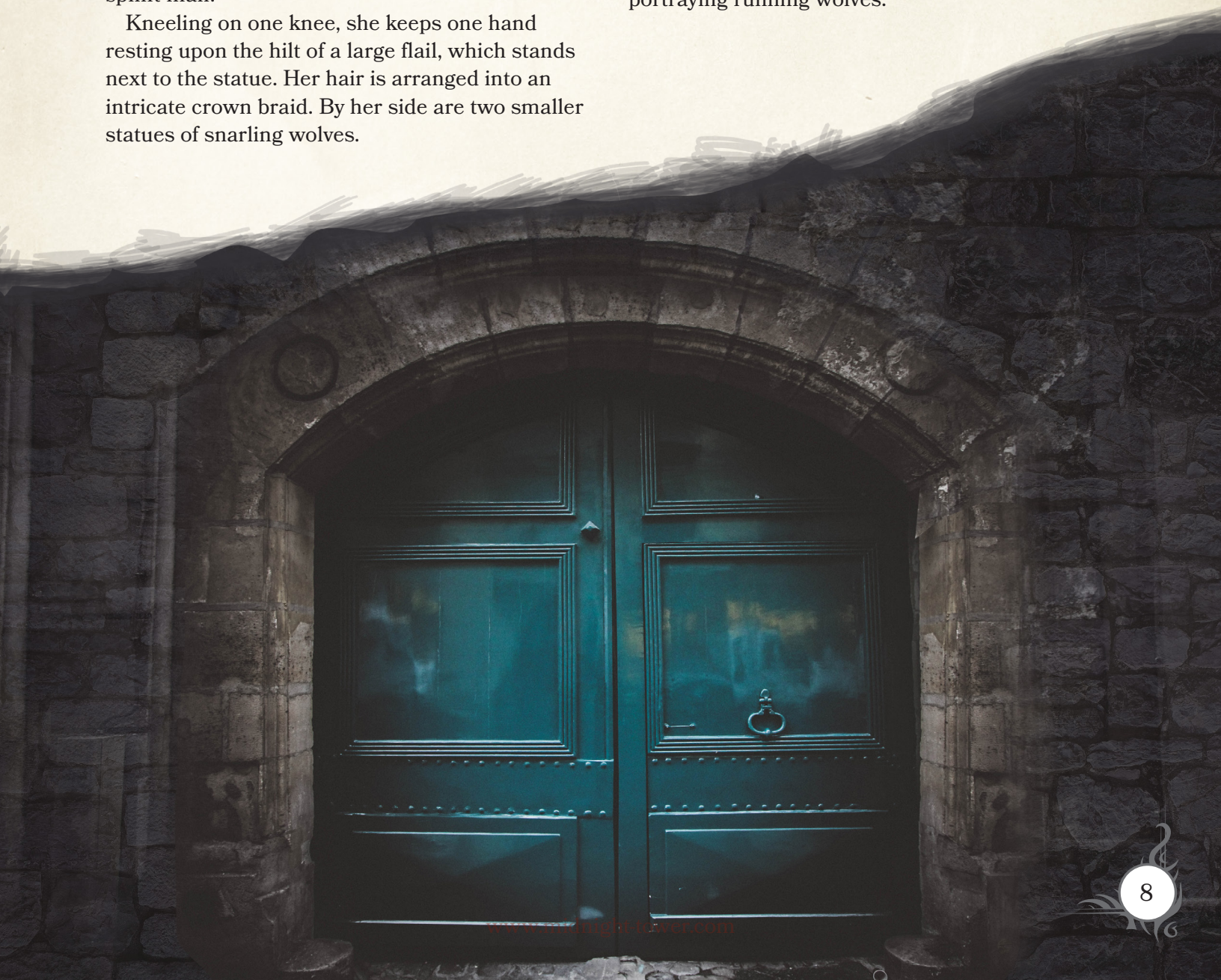
In the centre of the room is a round pond with water so still it could be mistaken for polished steel. Standing on a small circular platform in the middle of the pool is a life-sized statue carved from pale, delicate alabaster stone. The statue portrays a dwarven woman clad in elaborate splint mail.

Kneeling on one knee, she keeps one hand resting upon the hilt of a large flail, which stands next to the statue. Her hair is arranged into an intricate crown braid. By her side are two smaller statues of snarling wolves.

The statue depicts Queen Freja and her pet wolves at the height of her power. The water in the pool is icy to the touch, but otherwise harmless and drinkable.

THE ENTRANCES

Three tall double doors are found in the room, one set to the left, one in the middle, and one to the right. The doors are made of smooth, featureless granite. In the middle of each door is a large metal hoop, which can be used to pull it open. Above each double door are stone plaques with archaic runes. The doors in the middle have additional decoration in the form of reliefs portraying running wolves.



A COLD WELCOME

One round after the first character enters the chamber, a dwarf-sized skeletal shape rises out of the floor. Its ashen robes billow in an unearthly wind, and an icy darkness fills its eyesockets.

The shape raises its clawlike hands and addresses the adventurers:

“Foolish mortals,” the ghostly creature hisses. “How dare you enter my prison? I am cursed, condemned to stay here because of what I have done, even though I only tried to save my queen. Now you too are doomed!”

The creature then attacks the nearest character.

The undead entity is a **greyscale** (see chapter 9 for detailed information and stats about this new undead monster). In life, the greyscale was a dwarf called Balman Flintbrand who served as one of Queen Freja’s closest advisors, but his doubt in the queen’s plans made him take misguided actions. This was the spark of the destruction of the Ironshield Clan. (See chapter 10 for more information about this event.)

The greyscale fights until it is destroyed, its enemies are dead, or the characters leave the tomb. It does not follow the characters into the stairwell.

THE SEARCH BEGINS

After defeating the greyscale, the characters are free to explore the tomb. There are three tunnels that lead to their goal: the left tunnel (chapter 3), the middle tunnel (chapter 4), or the right tunnel (chapter 5). All doors are unlocked and can be opened easily thanks to expertly crafted hinges and counterweights hidden inside the stone walls.

The tunnels provide the shortest routes to the main burial chamber, but characters can always explore the whole tomb as they please.

All rooms are old but well-crafted with great care and skill. Unless otherwise noted, the ceiling in the dungeon is 15 feet. On many walls throughout the tomb are mosaics featuring scenes of battle and triumph, but centuries of dripping damp have covered many of these artworks with mould in various colours.



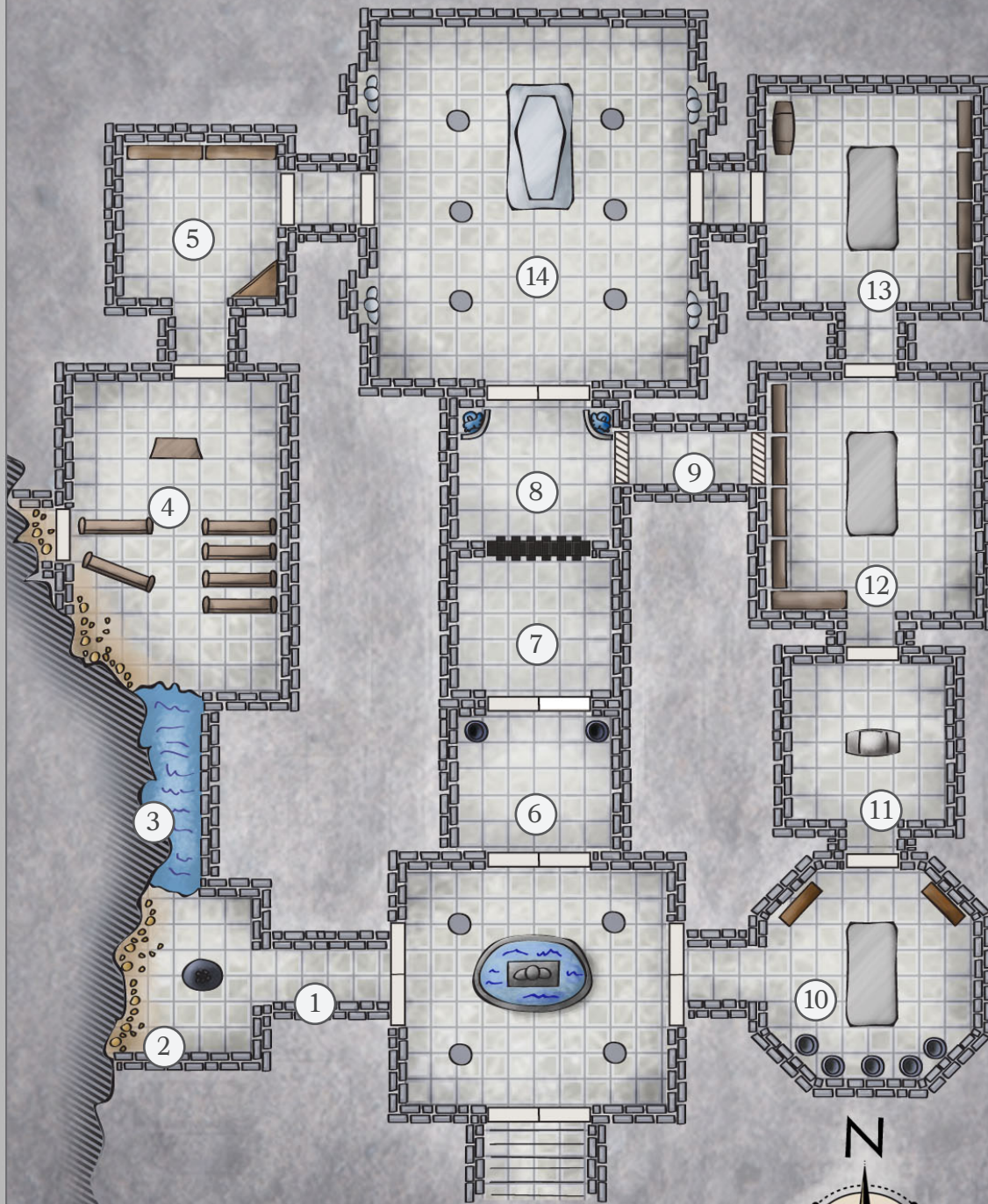
RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Whenever the characters take a short or long rest, roll 1d6 and check the result below.

- 1-3. Nothing happens.
4. **Eerie music.** Uncanny song and dissonant piano chords echo briefly from the depths of the tomb, then fade away.
5. **Creeping crawling.** A crawling claw drops down from the ceiling on the head of one random character and attacks until it is destroyed. The claw was once a hand that belonged to a grave robber, who broke into the tomb centuries ago and died here. It was animated by the strong residual magic in the tomb and detached itself from its owner.
6. **Passing ghost.** A phantasm in the shape of a bloodied and severely injured dwarven warrior flashes past the doorway in an adjacent room. The characters must succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or become Frightened for 1d6 minutes. If the characters attack the ghost, it disappears like smoke in the wind.

The characters may attempt to rest again once the encounter is over.

FREYA'S TOMB



One square = 5 feet

The burial place of Queen Freja Swiftsteel

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CHAPTER 3: THE LEFT TUNNEL

Many years ago, two grave robbers found their way into the tomb but were soon killed by one of its vicious traps. Since then, other animals and creatures have used the grave robbers' old tunnels to enter the tomb. Plenty of rainwater has also trickled down and pooled in places.

As soon as the characters pull the door open, they are greeted by the pungent smells of damp soil, wet stone, and a strong earthy scent.

ROOM 1: EMPTY CORRIDOR

The stone walls in this short corridor are smooth and covered by mosaics that portray vast landscapes, forts in stone and timber, and large dwarven armies clashing with hordes of orcs. The grey marble floor is covered with dirt and dust. At the far end is a doorway filled with a faint purple glow.

Any character that succeeds on a DC 12 Wis (Perception) check notices large, weird tracks on the dirty floor. A successful DC 15 Int (Nature) check suggests that the tracks were made by an ooze.

ROOM 2: THERE'S NO FUN IN FUNGUS

This room's walls and floor are fitted with large tiles of dark grey marble. In the middle of the floor stands a large empty brazier in cast iron. A doorway on the right-hand wall opens into a dark space. One of the walls has completely caved in, leaving much of the floor covered with rubble and small rocks.

Patches of thick lichen grow on most surfaces. In some places, bright purple mushrooms the size of apples grow out of the lichen. The mushrooms give off an unnatural radiance that provides dim light throughout the room. These mushrooms smell strongly of a sweet, unearthly odour and have a glazed, appetizing sheen to them, like sugar.

The mushrooms are poisonous and emit mildly hallucinogenic spores. A character who spends more than two rounds here must pass a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or suffer a -2 penalty on attack rolls and skill checks for 1 hour due to double vision and distracting imaginary sounds.

Those who succeed on a DC 15 Int (Nature) or Wis (Survival) check realise that the mushrooms

are toxic. Those who fail the check by 5 or more believe the mushrooms are nutritious. Any character who eats a mushroom must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or be Poisoned for 1 hour.

ROOM 3: BLOCKED PASSAGE

Inside the doorway is a set of steep stairs that lead down to a fully flooded corridor. At the end of this corridor is another set of stairs, which leads up to a doorway in an unflooded room. To cross to the other end, characters must swim underwater. See the core rulebooks for rules on suffocation (drowning).

One of the walls has partially collapsed and left the tunnel obstructed by large blocks of rock. In order to swim through, a character must succeed on a DC 14 Str (Athletics) check or end up stuck between two blocks. A character who is stuck can be freed by an adjacent character who succeeds on a DC 12 Str (Athletics) check.

ROOM 4: ONE SLIMY SETBACK

This room has walls made from speckled, lustrous marble. One of the walls has collapsed in places into rubble and broken blocks of granite. In the corner of the ceiling there is a vertical shaft about 5 feet in diameter, made by the long-gone gravediggers. This shaft has also collapsed and is blocked after a few feet.

The domed ceiling rises from 15 feet to 25 feet at its highest point. A heavily rusted candelabra covered in cobwebs hangs from the centre of the ceiling. There are two doorways in the room. One opens to a corridor in which the ceiling has fallen down, while the other opens to a dark corridor.

The room contains several long wooden benches, so rotted they crumble if touched, arranged in front of a podium in deteriorating sandstone. The walls are covered with detailed mosaics that portray bookshelves filled with tomes. On the backs of the mosaic tomes are titles written in the same archaic runes seen on the ivy-covered signposts in crumbling stone (called Akhoral by Buckbridge villagers) in Dead Man's Moor. Characters who can read Dwarvish can

make out a few words and sentences that relate to wisdom and sages. One such legible passage reads for our praised scholars, who show us what will come by shining a light on what has passed.

The mosaics in this room were created in honour of the learned among the Ironshield Clan. None of its books can be removed.

DEATH FROM ABOVE

An **ochre jelly** hides in the domed ceiling behind the rusted candelabra and drops down on any edible creatures that pass below it. The patterns in the marble ceiling provide the ochre jelly with excellent camouflage, which gives it advantage on Initiative check.

ROOM 5: STORAGE

As soon as the door to this corridor is opened, a spectral figure in the shape of a grizzled male human in leather armour appears in the doorway. His face is haggard and his armour partially torn to shreds. The ghostlike figure raises a warning hand and says in a faint, rustling voice:

“Do not enter here. We came in search of riches, but found nothing but darkness and death. Run back while there is still air in your lungs and blood in your veins. Run back to sunlight and shelter. Run!”

The figure then fades away and disappears.

In this room are several huge decomposing oaken wardrobes, which contain mould and fragments of decaying textiles. A corner cabinet is filled with delicate glass bottles, all empty or filled with dust. The plain stone walls hold wooden shelves, on which are stacked rows of dirty wooden goblets in various sizes and shapes. There is another door on the right-hand wall farther down the room.

Lying on the floor immediately inside the entrance are two skeletons clad in rags and withered leather armour. One of the skeletons is missing a hand. Around the skeletons are remnants of various objects rusted or rotted to near-nothingness, except for a leather pouch that contains 14 gp, 11 sp, 23 cp, and a silver ring shaped like a snake with purple amethyst eyes (worth 15 gp).

The skeletons are yellowed with age and have clearly been here for a very long time. Those succeeding on a DC 12 Int (Investigation) check see that the armour on one of the skeletons matches that worn by the ghostlike being who appeared in the doorway.

TRAP

A character who walks more than 5 feet into the room triggers a magical sensor in the floor, which fires nine arrows from concealed holes in the opposite wall. All characters who stand in the line of fire must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or suffer 2d10 piercing damage. Even up close (5 feet or less), the holes from which the arrows are fired can be noticed only by a successful DC 18 Int (Investigation) check.

Special: a character who wears the Hunter's medallion (which can be obtained in the first adventure in the Hunter's Full Moon trilogy) is protected by its inherent magic and does not trigger the trap. If another character triggers the trap, the medallion offers no protection against the arrows.

The skeletons are the remains of grave robbers who broke into the tomb more than a century ago. The steel arrows fired by the trap were designed by one of the Ironshield Clan's best alchemists and disintegrate into fine metal powder after doing damage. All priests who worked here wore Hunter's medallions and could therefore walk down the corridor unharmed.

Behind the door on the right is a short corridor that leads up to a tall, majestic unlocked door adorned with silver inlays in the shape of the Ironshield Clan's insignia. The door opens to the dark, huge and high-ceilinged space of the main burial chamber where Queen Freja's sarcophagus is found.

CHAPTER 4: THE MIDDLE TUNNEL

The middle tunnels were used for funeral processions. Rusted torch holders line walls decorated with huge mosaics showing scenes from various battles. Many doors have hinges shaped like shields or traditional dwarven weapons. Most floors are made of carefully cut slabs of expensive marble. In many places, the ceiling is carved and sculpted to resemble a castle hallway.

When the characters open the double doors, they are met by the sharp scents of grease, oil, and rusted iron.

ROOM 6: THE GUARDIAN

The walls and floor in this room appear to be made of burnished steel. Engraved in the floor just inside the doorway is the symbol of the Ironshield Clan. Set in the left-hand wall at the far end of the room is a doorway framed by two tall stone urns filled with dried flowers.

In the middle of the room stands a bronze statue in the shape of a dwarf, twice the size of a normal dwarf and clad in full plate armour. The statue wields two warhammers. As soon as the door swings open, a small brazier on top of the statue's helmet flares to life. Its flame burns with a bright reddish glare that provides daylight within 15 feet and dim light within another 15 feet.

The statue is a magical construct similar to an **animated armour**, but its creator has enhanced the construct's properties and reinforced its defences. It has 45 HP, its attacks have +6 to hit, and its attacks deal 1d8 + 3 bludgeoning damage.

If a character passes the statue or in any way interferes with it, the statue springs to life, raises its warhammers in a threatening manner, and demands a password.

“Halt your step.” The statue's grating voice sounds like metal scraping against metal.
“Passing through here is only for those who have the right to enter the tomb. Speak the password, or leave these halls.”

This magical guard was created as a first line of defence against intruders. The password was known only to a handful of the remaining members of the Ironshield Clan and has long since been lost to time. The statue defends itself if attacked and tries to prevent any living creature who doesn't speak the password from passing through the corridor.

TREASURE

The animated armour's warhammers are of great quality and are worth 15 gp each.

ROOM 7: THE PATH IS SHUT

The next room has large rectangular stone slabs for its floor, and its walls are covered with elaborately designed mosaics that represent the interior of a castle. At the end of the room is a huge portcullis with thick bars made of cast iron. Another room can be seen through the latticed grille of the portcullis.

The decorations and the portcullis in this room celebrate the Ironshield Clan's masterful fortifications. Unfortunately, none of the clan's defences could save them from doom.

A successful DC 16 Str (Athletics) check is required to pull up the portcullis from the ground. It can be raised 5 feet until it grinds to a stop. Unless someone (or something) holds up the portcullis, it will slam down again, and therefore characters must take turns holding it up if they wish to crawl under it. A new check is required every time a different character attempts to hold the portcullis open. At the DM's discretion, it may be possible to prop up the portcullis with a sturdy item, such as a metal crowbar.

ROOM 8: TRAUMATIC TOLLING

The room beyond the portcullis is decorated with mosaic murals that portray rows of armoured dwarves in solemn prayer. On the opposite wall of the room there is a pair of tall, majestic double doors that resemble castle gates. The doors are adorned with silver inlays in the shape of the Ironshield Clan's insignia. Two narrow waterfalls



stream down the walls on each side of the door with a burbling sound into rounded stone basins in the corners.

In the middle of the room, a gigantic iron bell hangs suspended from the ceiling. To anyone able to detect magic, the bell radiates both transmutation and evocation magic.

TRAP

Etched into the floor in this room are magical symbols so delicate characters must succeed on a DC 17 Wis (Perception) or Int (Investigation) check to spot them. If a character steps on or passes over one of the symbols, the bell suspended from the ceiling emits an ear-splitting ring. All characters within 45 feet of the bell must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or take 2d10 thunder damage and become deafened for 1d4 rounds. On a successful saving throw, they take half damage and aren't deafened.

The trap can be disabled by carefully erasing the symbols with a sharp tool such as a knife, an arrowhead, or the blade of a weapon. This requires a successful DC 10 Dexterity check. Alternatively, a successful DC 10 Int (Arcana) check allows a character to disable the trap by using a sharp tool to modify the symbols so they lose their magical properties.

Special: a character wearing the Hunter's medallion (which can be obtained in the first adventure in the Hunter's Full Moon trilogy) is protected by its inherent magic and does not

trigger the trap when walking over the symbols. Instead, they cause the bell to emit a deep, solemn and harmless ring that reverberates throughout the tomb. However, anyone wearing the medallion is unprotected if another character triggers the trap.

This room was constructed to work as part of a funeral procession. As all priests who worked here wore Hunter's medallions, the bell rang while they marched past during funeral ceremonies.

The ornamented double doors open to the dark, huge and high-ceilinged space of the main burial chamber where Queen Freja's sarcophagus is found.

HIDDEN DOOR

Near the waterfall on the right-hand side is a concealed door, which requires a successful DC 10 Wis (Perception) check to spot. The door is unlocked and leads to room 9.

ROOM 9: SECRET CORRIDOR

Large sheets of cobwebs hang from the ceiling in this passage, and thick layers of mould cover much of the floor. Rows of long shelves along the walls hold boxes and chests, which are stocked with heavily deteriorated candles, torches, flints and steels, picks, brooms, lengths of rope, and masonry tools. Centuries of damp have rendered all items unusable and worthless.

The secret corridor has two doors that exit to room 12 (behind a bookshelf) and 8 (behind a waterfall).

CHAPTER 5: THE RIGHT TUNNEL

The right tunnel was used by priests for the preparation of deceased members of the Ironshield Clan's rulers. The work of the priests has left behind so much necrotic energy that anyone who dies in this corridor rises the next round as a ghost controlled by the DM.

ROOM 10: PREPARATION CHAMBER

In this octagonal chamber, the dark grey marble walls are covered with floor-to-ceiling reliefs of dwarves with solemn faces. In the middle of the room is a large white marble table, which rests on curved granite legs. A pair of long stone shelves hold dozens of bottles and several small metal boxes, all filled with dust. Five waist-tall urns in black, glossy stone are arranged along one wall. At the opposite side of the room is another door.

A successful DC 14 Int (Religion) check suggests that this is a room where deceased were undressed and prepared for mummification, and that the urns were used for storing skeletal remains.

When the first character enters the room, the urns shatter in a rain of ceramic shards. Charging out of the dust and debris are five armed and armoured skeletons, which immediately attack the characters.

The skeletons were created by one of the Ironshield Clan's priests who was skilled in Necromancy, and were left here as a safeguard against intruders. The bottles and boxes on the shelves once contained the substances used for embalming dead bodies before they were placed in sarcophaguses.

ROOM 11: THE FORGOTTEN DEITY

The walls, floor and ceiling in the next room are made from coarse stone and engraved with thousands of archaic runes. In the middle of the floor stands a white marble statue, which portrays a robed elderly dwarf, with a grinning skull for a face and a broad belt heavy with large keys (which are part of the statue).

Just in front of the statue is a prayer kneeler in solid iron. On the opposite wall is a locked door without a keyhole. To characters able to detect

magic, the statue and the door on the opposite wall radiate transmutation magic.

While most runes on the walls are too ancient to be understandable, characters who succeed on a DC 10 Int (Arcana) or Int (Religion) check can comprehend some of the runes that are used frequently in the writing. These recurring runes mean *revere*, *mystery*, *praying*, *death*, and *passage*.

GAINING PASSAGE

To unlock the door, a character must kneel on the prayer kneeler in front of the statue in a display of respect. This causes one of the keys on the statue's belt to glow weakly while the door gently swings open. The door stays open until shut.

Characters can also attempt to open the door by manipulating its hinges. This is difficult, as the hinges are of quality craftsmanship, and requires a successful DC 18 Dex (Thieves' tools) check. The door has 100 HP and is immune to nonmagical damage.

This room was designed to represent the secrets of the afterlife and how they are known only to the dead. The runes on the walls are an epic poem about the mystery of death. The statue portrays a long-forgotten dwarven goddess of mortality, whose worshippers all have passed away.

ROOM 12: MUMMIFICATION CHAMBER

On the floor in the middle of this rectangular chamber is a huge table of dark granite, similar to the table in room 10. Four bookcases on the left-hand side hold rows of approximately one hundred clay, glass, and porcelain jars in different sizes, all of which are empty or contain the remains of foul-smelling but harmless dust. In a corner there are the collapsed and partly rotted remnants of a writing desk.

HIDDEN DOOR

Behind one of the bookshelves on the left-hand side is a concealed door. It requires a successful DC 10 Wis (Perception) check to spot. The door is unlocked and leads to room 9.

TREASURE

Some of the glass bottles on the shelves are beautifully crafted. If thoroughly washed, they are worth 30 sp each. Roll 1d20 to determine how many bottles are intact.

ROOM 13: DRESSING CHAMBER

This room features a massive stone table, similar to those found in rooms 12 and 10. Leaning against one wall is an open wooden sarcophagus. The other wall is occupied by four huge wardrobes in dark oak, all of which contain mould and disintegrating fragments of textiles. To the left is a door in plain stone, fitted with an iron hoop. Both the sarcophagus and the wardrobes are completely decayed and fall apart at the slightest touch.

TRAP

The door is protected by a weak version of the spell *Glyph of Warding* (see p.245 in the *Player's Handbook*). A character must succeed on a DC 10 Int (Investigation) check to notice the small arcane glyph engraved in the door's handle. It can also be noticed by characters who can detect magic. Because the glyph is only partially completed, it is weaker than a standard glyph.

If triggered, the glyph blasts all within a 20 foot radius sphere (centred on the handle) with a burst of searing flames. All affected creatures take 2d8 fire damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a successful one.

This glyph can be carefully erased and thereby disabled by a character who succeeds on a DC 10 Int (Arcana) check. Alternatively, the door can be wrenched open by a character who is equipped with a crowbar or a similar tool and succeeds on a DC 15 Strength check. If an object not designed for wrenching is used, e.g., a sword or a dagger, there is a 5% possibility that the object breaks in half.

Special: a character wearing the Hunter's medallion (which can be obtained in the first adventure in the Hunter's Full Moon trilogy) is protected by its inherent magic and does not trigger the trap.

This room was used by priests for dressing mummified bodies in fine clothes before the deceased were placed in sarcophaguses. As all priests who worked here wore Hunter's medallions,

the trap was designed not to harm them.

Behind the trapped door is a short corridor that leads to a tall, majestic unlocked door adorned with silver inlays in the shape of the Ironshield Clan's insignia. The door opens to the vast space of the main burial chamber where Queen Freja's final resting place is found.



CHAPTER 6: QUEEN FREJA'S TOMB

While the other rooms in the catacomb have been cold, this space is freezing: on the floor are patches of frost, and the characters' breathing forms clouds of steam. The shadows are darker than they should be, and any sounds produce echoes that last unexpectedly long.

The walls in this huge, spacious chamber are crafted from dark stone. The domed 40 feet ceiling consists of dark marble inlaid with small nonmagical gems that give off a faint indigo radiance. Six freestanding stone columns, carved to resemble dwarven warriors in heavy armour, support the ceiling. In the walls are four alcoves, three of which are occupied by statues portraying Tempus, Torm, and Helm, deities worshipped by many members of the Ironshield Clan. In the fourth alcove are the remnants of a crumbled statue.

In the middle of the room is a large sarcophagus in unblemished white marble and fitted with hinges and clasps in pure mithral. The sarcophagus rests on top of a 2 feet high platform of plain stone. On top of the sarcophagus are the petrified remains of a funeral wreath. Along the wall behind the sarcophagus there are dozens of small doors in brushed stone, which open to compartments for other sarcophaguses.

FACING THE QUEEN

As soon as one or more characters move more than 5 feet into the room, an icy wind sweeps around the space and quickly gathers speed. All characters in the room must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity check or be pushed off balance and fall prone. The door (or doors, in case more than one has been opened) slowly swings shut, but stays unlocked.

After three rounds, the circling wind reaches a frenzied crescendo around the sarcophagus, which cracks apart into dozens of pieces. Out of the fragments rises the corpse of a dwarven woman clad in finely crafted splint mail. The pale, parchment-like skin on the corpse's face is stretched taut over its skull, and its eye sockets

glow intensely blue. It wields a tall flail with a shaft in dark oak, and carries a shield adorned with the emblem of the Ironshield Clan. What remains of its hair is braided into an elegant crown.

When the corpse speaks, its commanding voice seems to originate from a point inside the characters' heads.

"I am Queen Freja Swiftsteel," the being says. "Long ago, I conquered vast lands and swept aside vast armies that thought themselves invincible. Now this tomb is all that remains of my clan. But I will protect its sanctitude. You are trespassing, and you will pay for this intrusion with your lives!"

With that, the undead queen charges at the characters.

Queen Freja Swiftsteel's spirit has taken the form of a **wight**. It fights as a normal wight, with the following changes:

- It makes only one attack per round at +5 to hit.
- Instead of a longsword, the wight uses a +1 flail for 1d8 + 1 bludgeoning damage.
- While its flail is magical (see below), the weapon exhibits none of its special properties in the hands of this undead creature.
- Its armour and shield grant the wight AC 16 instead of AC 14.

ESCALATING EERINESS

When the wight has lost more than half of its HP, two ghostlike wolves emerge from behind the queen and attack the characters.

These unearthly wolves were the queen's most cherished pets when she was alive. They have the statistics of **specters**, but with the following changes:



- Their *Life Drain* ability does 2d6 damage and doesn't affect the target's HP maximum.
- Their flying speed is 60 feet (hover).
- They have 12 HP each.

If the characters defeat the wight and the wolves, the queen says the following upon reaching 0 HP.

“A curse on you all,” the wight growls. “You have defeated me. But your victory is in vain. We will meet again, in the afterlife.”

The undead queen falls down, and her body immediately crumbles into ash.

TREASURE

If the characters investigate the remains of the fallen wight, they find the following items:

- Mithral splint armour (worth 250 gp).
- The queen's mithral shield, adorned with the Ironshield Clan's insignia in gold. This shield weighs 3 lb. and is worth 50 gp.
- A long, exceptionally well-crafted magical flail, with silver-tipped spikes and a handle made from black oak inlaid with silver runes. This flail is called *Dominance*. See chapter 8 for more information about this weapon.

Among the remains of the sarcophagus on the floor, the characters also find a thick battered journal bound in coarse, dark grey leather. If examined, its pages contain indecipherable runes and small hastily scribbled maps. This is clearly the book Bjorn Amberclan seeks.

If the characters search the compartments in the wall behind the queen's sarcophagus, they find a Potion of resistance (Necrotic) and a Scroll of feign death.

CHAPTER 7: THE END

IF THE CHARACTERS ARE PLAYING THIS ADVENTURE AS A STAND-ALONE QUEST

The characters' journey back to Buckbridge is uneventful, and they receive a reward of 50 gp each when they report their discoveries to Bjorn Amberclan and give him the book found in Queen Freja's sarcophagus.

IF THE CHARACTERS ARE PLAYING THE FULL TRILOGY

Upon returning to The Grey Hare in Buckbridge, Bjorn is enormously delighted and grateful.

“What a remarkable feat!” Bjorn exclaims. “You have pulled off what most people thought was impossible! And you have done my hometown a great service, too. I cannot thank you enough.”

Bjorn proceeds to treat the characters to a large dinner, complete with numerous desserts and a barrel of excellent mead from his private stash. As word of the characters' achievement travels quickly around the village, hunters and other locals come by the table to congratulate the characters. A passing halfling bard by the name of Lily Lightfoot asks for details in order to compose a song about the adventure.

The characters receive the reward of 50 gp each as promised.

TO BE CONTINUED...

If the characters will continue with the next adventure, *Trouble in Winterhold*, the first adventure in the *Secrets of the Underdark* trilogy, Bjorn asks the characters if they are willing to accompany him to the city of Winterhold as his bodyguards. He explains that he needs to meet with Master Librarian there urgently, as the book contains important information about the drow that threaten the city. This lead will take the characters to the next adventure in the series.

A WORTHWHILE EXPERIENCE

Surviving the traps and hostile denizens of Queen Freja's tomb awards the group of characters 9,000 XP. Alternatively, this point can be considered a milestone, and the characters gain one level.



CHAPTER 8: NEW MAGIC ITEMS

DOMINANCE (ANCIENT RELIC)

Weapon (flail), rare (requires attunement)

Dominance is a long, expertly crafted flail. It has the following properties:

- Characters gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.
- Because of its long handle, Dominance is versatile: it can be used as a two-handed weapon, in which case it causes 1d10 bludgeoning damage.
- The tips of the spikes on its ball are silvered. See p.148 in the *Player's Handbook* for more information.
- It weighs 4 lb. (twice as much as a regular flail).

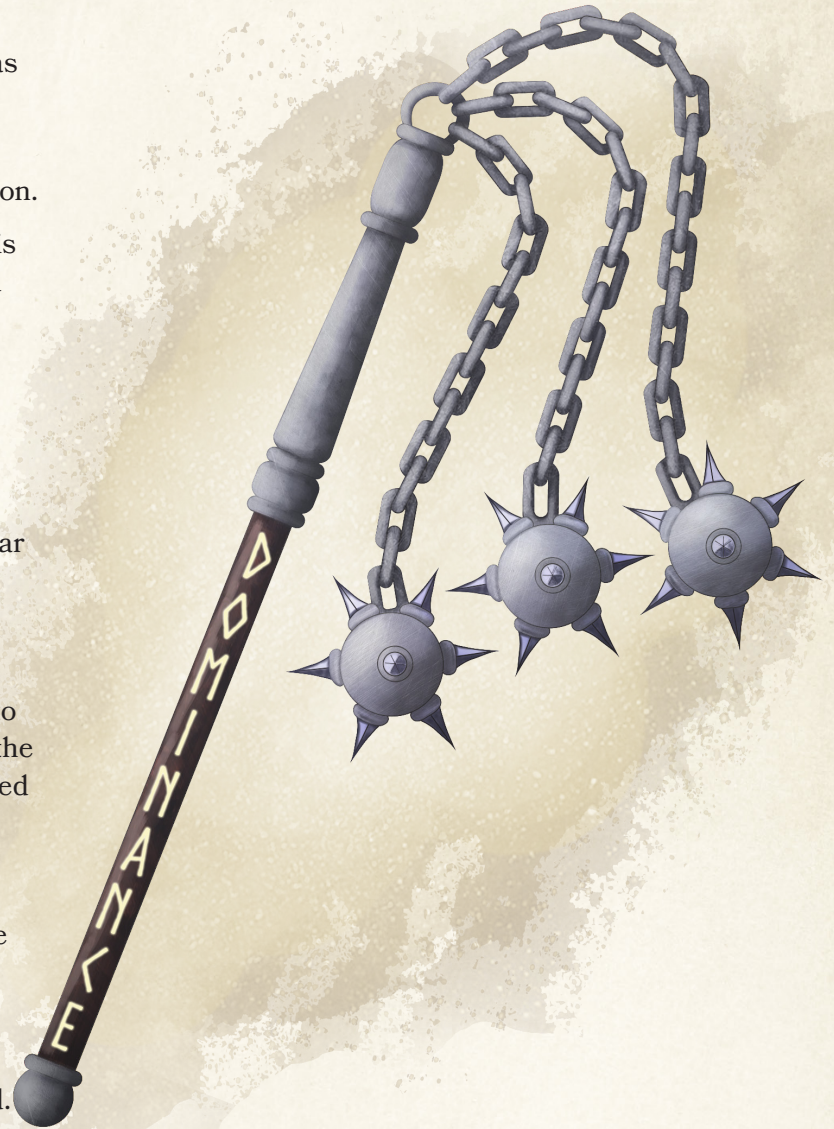
Dominance also features additional magical powers, which increase as its wielder becomes more experienced. When a humanoid attunes to the weapon for the first time, the flail bestows the user with its first tier power. If remaining attuned continuously to the same character, the flail's second tier power is unlocked after two levels are gained by the character. Its third and final tier power is unlocked after two more levels are gained by the character.

For example:

- If a 1st level character attunes to the weapon, its first tier power is discovered.
- When the character reaches level 3, the weapon's second tier power is unlocked.
- Finally, when the character reaches level 5, the weapon's third tier power is unlocked.

More examples:

- If a 4th level character attunes to the weapon for the first time, the weapon exhibits its first tier power.
- When the character reaches level 6, the weapon's second tier power is unlocked.
- When the character becomes level 8, the weapon's third tier power is revealed.



If a different character attunes to the weapon, its second and third tier powers are locked once again, even if they have been unlocked by a previous owner.

All currently exhibited powers remain active whenever a new power is revealed. The powers stack with those provided by other sources, such as spells, potions, and other magical items. The wearer immediately becomes aware intuitively of a power when it is unlocked.

All bonuses, powers, feats and other boons bestowed by this item are permanently lost if the attunement ends.

POWERS

First tier

- An invisible aura of dedication surrounds the weapon. The wielder and all friendly creatures within 15 feet gain a +1 bonus on checks against Fear and Charm effects.
- When a character attuned to Dominance speaks the word light in Dwarvish, the wielder can make the flail glow with a bright radiance similar to the evocation cantrip Light. This power has a duration of 1 hour and can be used once per day (recharges at dawn).

Second tier

- The flail enables a powerful strike that impacts more than one opponent. This strike has an effect similar to the Battle Master's Sweeping Attack. See p.74 in the *Player's Handbook* for more information about this maneuver. This type of attack can be attempted three times per day (recharges at dawn).
- The wielder gains a +2 bonus to Intimidation checks. The character also becomes proficient in this skill if they aren't.

Third tier

- The flail becomes a +2 weapon.
- The wielder gains one additional feat. Choose one of the following:
 - Mounted Combatant
 - Shield Master
 - War caster
 - Inspirational leader

If the character already has all these feats, they may choose any other feat.

All bonuses, powers, feats and other boons bestowed by this item are permanently lost if the attunement ends.

HISTORY

For generations, Dominance was handed down to the firstborn son or daughter of the rulers of the Ironshield Clan. Its spikes are silver-tipped, and its handle is made out of black oak and inlaid with silver runes.

Queen Freja Swiftsteel was the last monarch of the Ironshield Clan to wield Dominance. After she fell in combat, the few survivors of the battle buried it along with the body of their queen.

CHAPTER 9: NEW MONSTERS

GREYSHADE

These undead beings are caught halfway between the world of the living and the domain of the dead. As a result, they are part corporeal and part ethereal.

Greyshades often appear as the skeletal remains of a humanoid's upper body wrapped in grey tattered robes, while its lower body consists of ashen vapours trailing behind it as it moves.

Eternally Distraught. A greyshade is created when a mortal creature is filled with such despair that it wastes away like a wilting flower, leaving behind a raging sadness so vehement it takes spectral form. The greyshade often makes its abode in an item or location symbolically important to the individual when they were alive.

Sorrowful Aura. An area inhabited by a greyshade is often saturated by subtle visual or auditory phenomena caused by the undead creature's immense grief. Dull heartbeats may echo softly from a seemingly empty chamber, or occasional tears may fall from the face of a gargoyle on a grave in which a greyshade hides.

Undead Nature. A greyshade doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

GREYSHADE

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 28 (3d10 + 6)

Speed Fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	13 (+1)	10 (0)	10 (0)	10 (0)	5 (+2)

Damage resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage immunities cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses Darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Any languages known in life

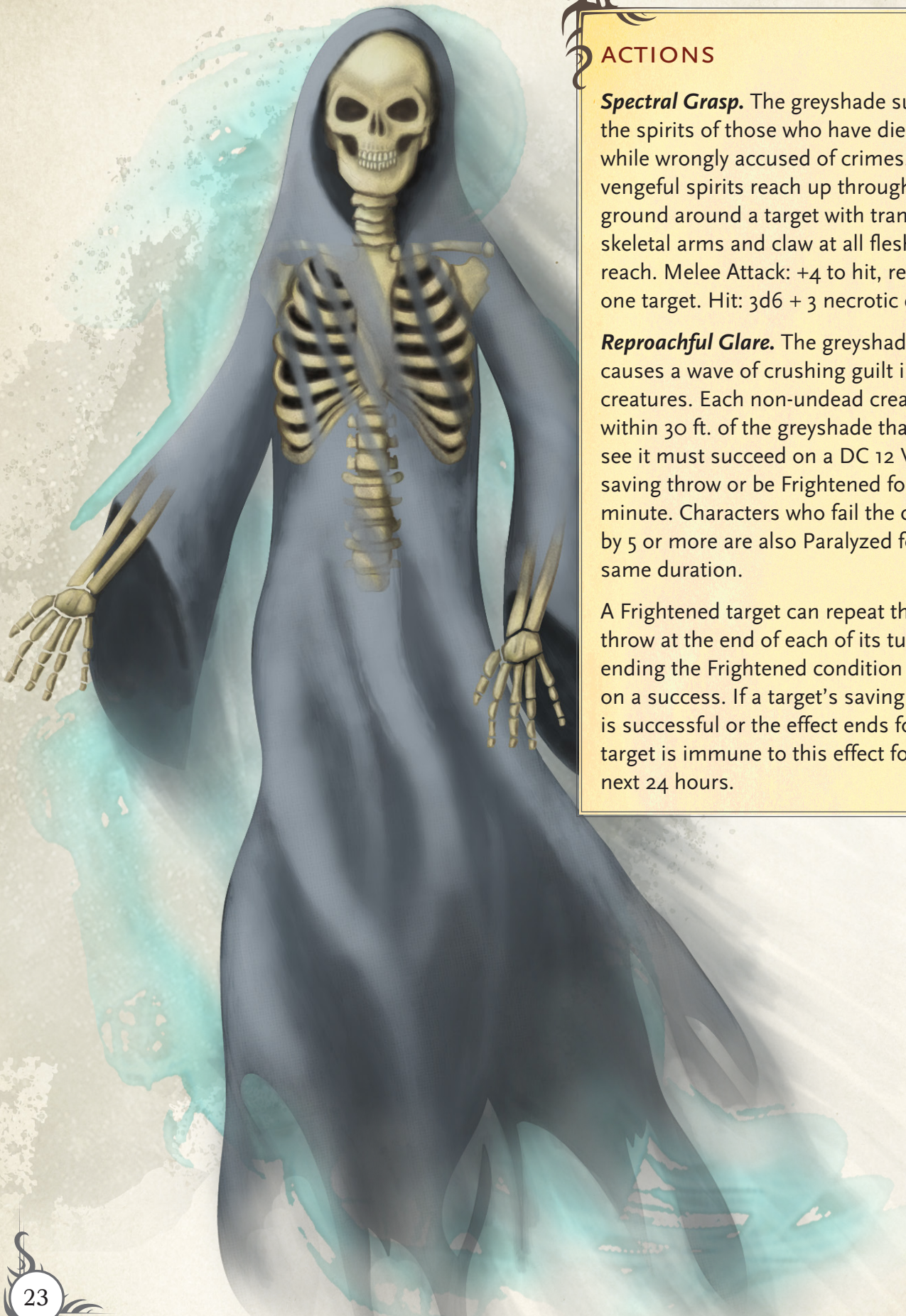
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Ethereal Sight. A greyshade can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

Incorporeal Movement. Greyshades can move through other creatures and objects as if these were difficult terrain. They take 5 (1d10) force damage if they end their turn inside an object.

Sunlight Hypersensitivity. The greyshade takes 5 radiant damage when it starts its turn in sunlight. While in sunlight, the greyshade has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.





ACTIONS

Spectral Grasp. The greyshade summons the spirits of those who have died while wrongly accused of crimes. These vengeful spirits reach up through the ground around a target with translucent skeletal arms and claw at all flesh within reach. Melee Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 3d6 + 3 necrotic damage.

Reproachful Glare. The greyshade's gaze causes a wave of crushing guilt in mortal creatures. Each non-undead creature within 30 ft. of the greyshade that can see it must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or be Frightened for 1 minute. Characters who fail the check by 5 or more are also Paralyzed for the same duration.

A Frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the Frightened condition on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to this effect for the next 24 hours.

CHAPTER 10: LEGEND & LORE

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE IRONSHIELD CLAN AND THE KINGDOM OF IRONSHIELD

Even the Ironshield Clan's own scholars were unsure when their clan was founded, but the earliest records describe a group of Highland dwarves who arrived to this part of the world in ships from their distant homelands. Like many other Highland dwarves, they had departed their homestead to build a nation of their own, and were united around ideals of valour and military might.

The settlers named their newly founded clan Ironshield and began to conquer more land to add to their growing kingdom. This was often done by force after the clan had defeated bands of orcs, giants, or bugbears. Other times, new regions were won through diplomatic negotiation, or annexed to the Ironshield Clan's nation through intimidating displays of might. What became of the old realm of Highland dwarves beyond the sea is unknown.

The clan's focus on strategy and their ability to adapt led to many successful campaigns. Continuing the traditional ways of Highland dwarves, the Ironshield Clan lived in the open rather than in underground strongholds, and constructed numerous fortified outposts. Likewise, instead of depending on slow-moving infantry, they tamed huge winter wolves found in the area and used these as mounts.

TIMES OF TRIUMPH

The clan grew from a fledgling community to a large powerful kingdom, which claimed rulership of large parts of Buckwild. Wherever the clan seized new land, they built small castles or holdfasts as rallying points for further expansion. Those who dwelled in these conquered areas were free to carry on with their lives as usual, although they were required to pay levies for the maintenance of the clan's soldiers.

When the Ironshield Clan had conquered Buckwild, the clan's eyes turned to the

neighbouring provinces of Craigtop and Winterhold, located in the mountainous regions to the north and north-west. Both these areas were ruled by large dwarven communities. This presented the clan with a challenge: as Highland dwarves, they excelled at defeating opponents on open battlefields, but the dwarves at Craigtop and Winterhold dwelled in robust, well-defended strongholds partly underground.

Direct attacks on the heavily fortified strongholds would be equally wasted: swift riders on winter wolves were perfect for routing orcs, but had little effect on reinforced stonework. The Ironshield Clan tried to devise a diplomatic solution; however, that too failed. Yet the two regions were considered too strategically important to ignore, and the Ironshield Clan's power was based on the continuous expansion of land.

At this point, the clan was ruled by Queen Freja Swiftsteel. As an only child and sole heir to the throne, great pressure had been put on Freja throughout her upbringing to become a superior leader, and she had every intent to fulfil expectations. Indeed, her skill as a strategist had led to quick expansion and important victories. That the clan's growth would stall under her rule was unthinkable to the queen. Ultimately, she approached the only ones who could provide the Ironshield Clan with a tactical advantage: the drow.

A DANGEROUS DEAL

It was known to Ironshield Clan scholars that some houses among the drow were at war with the dwarves in Craigtop and Winterhold. But the dark elves were interested only in territory below ground, while the Ironshield Clan were vying for control of the surface. Hence, the clan and the drow had a common goal and enemy, but they weren't competing for the same lands.

At great risk, Freja travelled in secret to meet with the drow high priestess Jhaelryn Danaar of house Druu'zel, whose forces were at war with Winterhold. Queen Freja's closest advisor, Balman



Flintbrand, objected to the plan and warned Freja that the drow cannot be trusted. Nevertheless, an arrangement was reached. The dark elves agreed to help Freja overthrow the dwarves in Winterhold. In return, the Ironshield Clan promised to leave the subterranean regions below Winterhold to the drow to use as they wish.

Freja was aware of the malevolent nature of the drow and knew the deal was volatile. As a precaution and after listening to her advisor, she had a team of engineers dam Swiftriver in secret so that the nearby drow's underground home could be instantly flooded. She also secretly mapped the drow's domains in detail every time she visited them, in case she needed to send in soldiers. For this reason, Freja visited the drow frequently.

Freja's advisor Balman Flintbrand was unaware of the queen's secret schemes, but grew increasingly nervous about his queen's actions. Over and over, he suggested that the clan should pull out of the arrangement, but Freja ignored his arguments and told him all was well. Frustrated and suspicious, the advisor decided to shadow Freja as she visited the drow, in order to learn exactly what was going on.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

The advisor's decision had dire consequences for the clan, for the drow are masters of stealth and watch their borders closely. Several drow scouts quickly spotted the advisor's clumsy attempt to sneak through their territory. Naturally distrustful, the dark elves believed the advisor was sent by Queen Freja to spy on them, and took precautions of their own by undermining the Ironshield Clan's stronghold.

As the joint attack on Winterhold was drawing close, Freja and Balman Flintbrand quarrelled more and more often. During one heated exchange, Balman shouted in frustration: "The drow cannot be trusted!" However, his comment was overheard by a drow spy. The spy only caught part of Freja's response, which to the spy sounded like the queen agreed. This was reported by the spy back to the drow high priestess and Matron Mother, who immediately thought that the drow were being betrayed and promptly ordered the clan's destruction.

The drow had hollowed out and weakened the rock beneath every major hall in the Ironshield Clan's stronghold, and only a number of support beams propped up the largest halls. On Jhaelryn

Danaar's command, the beams were pulled down with devastating effect: in a thunderous crash, almost the entire Ironshield Clan's stronghold was demolished, and many of the highland dwarves were killed.

Freja was one of the survivors. In retribution, she unleashed the dammed river, which flooded the drow's tunnels and killed most of the dark elves, except the few who survived by retreating deep into the mountain.

The Ironshield Clan's position was severely weakened after the majority of its members perished when the stronghold collapsed. Many of the clan's other opponents seized the moment to reclaim their conquered lands again.

The Ironshield Clan lost their vast kingdom until they controlled only a small corner of Buckwild. During a last battle to defend what remained of the clan's domain, Freja Swiftsteel was injured and fell in combat. With no heirs to the throne, and its army and people greatly decimated, the Ironshield Clan vanished and its name was largely forgotten.

THE CURSE OF THE IRONSHIELD TOMB

For centuries, the story about the Ironshield Clan's demise was often recounted as a warning against striving too hard to reach a goal. It was also rumoured that the queen's tomb was cursed.

This legend began when the archaeologist Lillian Longdelver claimed she'd found a map to the tomb, set out to explore it, and never was seen again. Over the centuries, many similar tales sprang up in taverns and inns.

In truth, Lillian indeed had a map but was killed by highwaymen. The robbers later found the tomb but were slain by one of its traps (see room 5).

HIGHLAND DWARVES (A DWARVEN SUBRACE)

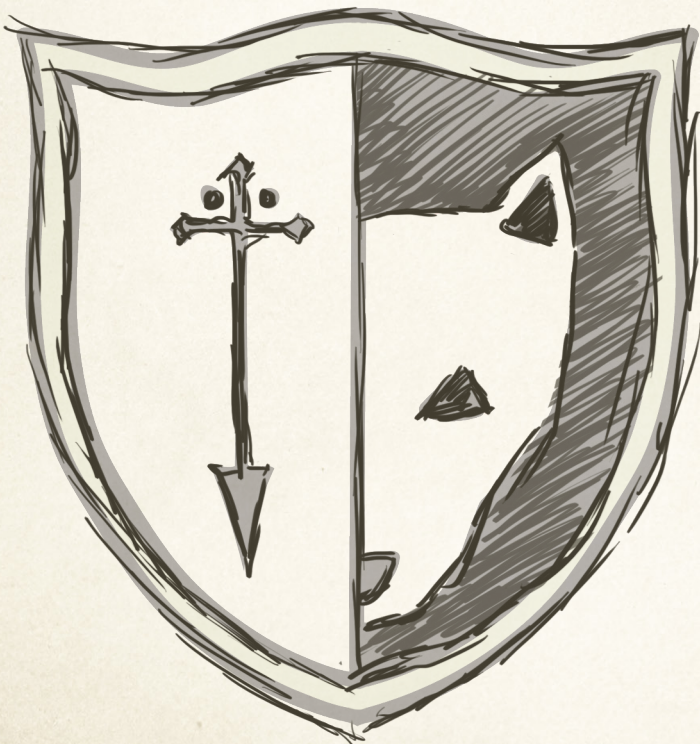
While the Ironshield Clan has vanished, a few remaining descendants are scattered around Buckwild and the nearby area. These dwarves, known as Highland Dwarves, often keep to themselves and have carried on with the clan's ancient customs.

Highland dwarves are typically slightly more noble and charismatic than other members of their kin. They are slightly taller than average dwarves, tend to have blond, sandy, or brown hair, and usually have blue, green, or hazel eyes. Their skin is usually pale, but this can vary.

CHARACTERISTICS

Highland dwarves use the same basic characteristics as normal dwarves (see p.18 in the *Player's Handbook*), with the following changes:

- **Ability Score Increase.** In addition to the general +2 in Constitution, your Charisma score increases by +1, and your Intelligence increases by +1.
- **Restricted vision.** Due to having lived above ground for an extensive time, your Darkvision is restricted to 30 feet.
- **Resilient to enchantments.** You have advantage on saving throws against being Charmed and being put to sleep magically.
- **Longevity.** You tend to be more long-lived than average dwarves and can live to be about 450 years old.
- **Highland Combat Training.** You are proficient with all simple and martial melee weapons.



CHAPTER 11: APPENDIX

BUCKBRIDGE AND BUCKWILD

HISTORY

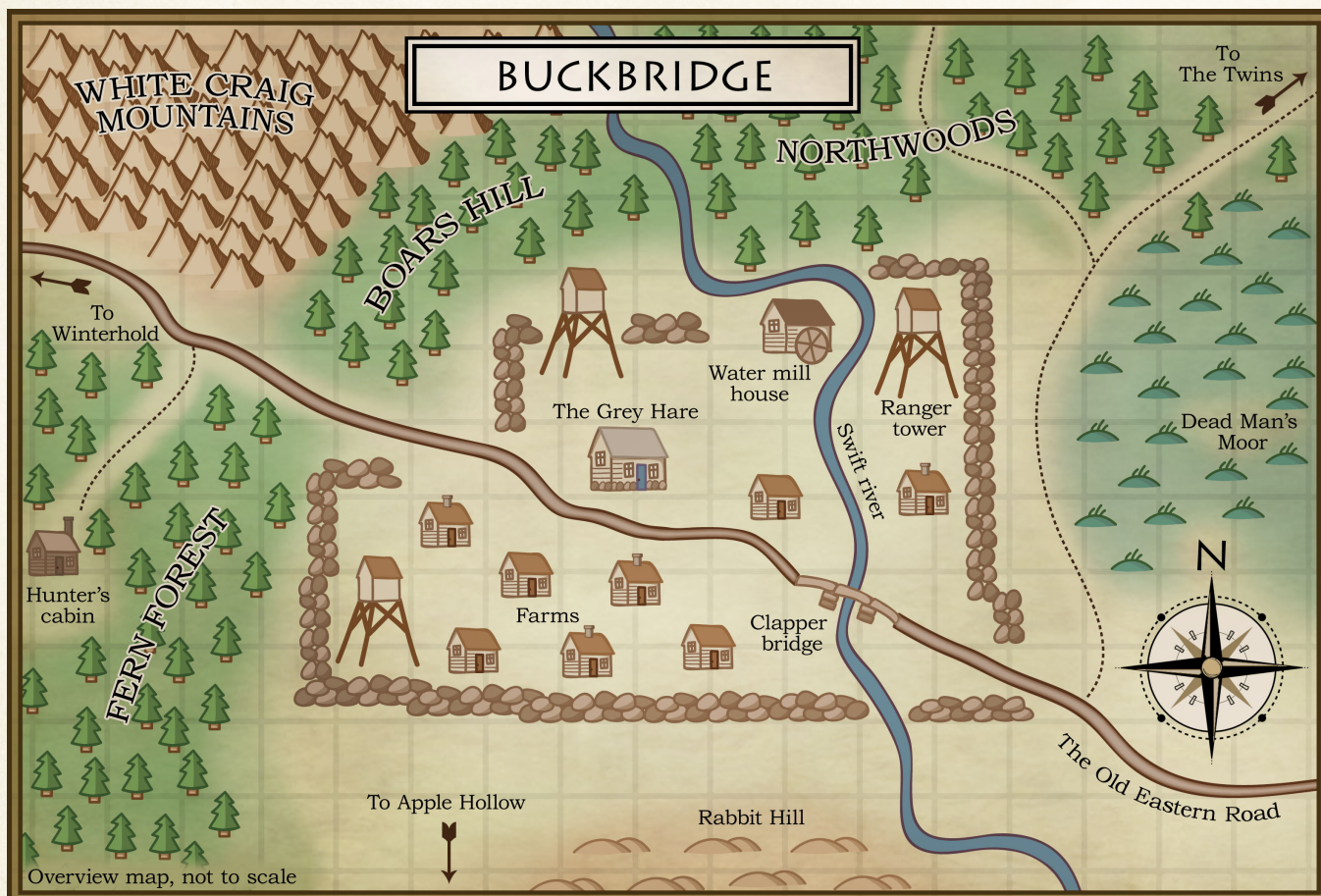
Long ago, this area was part of a dwarven kingdom ruled by the Ironshield Clan. The clan was led by Freja Swiftsteel, daughter of Ulf and Torun Swiftsteel, a young queen of legendary military skill.

Her reign ended when she entered a precarious arrangement with the drow, who turned on the queen and destroyed the clan. The stronghold collapsed, and the Ironshield Clan and kingdom faded into obscurity. Today only a few signs of the clan's presence in the area remain, such as the ancient granite foundation of the village's inn, weathered clapper bridges, and scattered stone signs on the moor and nearby area.

BUCKBRIDGE

Situated deep in the wilds, Buckbridge is an isolated community of just over 250 people. A few buildings, including The Grey Hare, are built upon foundations of long-gone dwarven constructions. An old clapper bridge provides crossing of the aptly named Swiftriver, which runs through the village. Trade is done primarily with the dwarven stronghold Winterhold to the north-west, travelling merchants, and a few elven settlements.

The majority of the inhabitants are hunters. Most who don't hunt for a living are tanners, furriers, artisans, or work in other practical trades. A few families are farmers. Typical clothes are simple, durable garments in leather, fur, or wool in brown, green, and grey. Most people are human or half-elven, but there are some elves, dwarves, gnomes and halflings, and a couple of tieflings and half-orcs. Dragonborn are seldom seen in Buckbridge.



An overview of Buckbridge and adjacent areas (not to scale)

WATERMILL

The watermill powers the bellows of the village's smithy. It is managed by **Gorm Amberclan**, blacksmith and vendor of weapons.

If a customer asks for a specific simple or martial weapon, roll 1d10. On a result of 1 to 3, Gorm has it in stock. He also sells imported elven arrows fitted with light hollow metal tips, which increase the range of bows by 30 feet and cost 2 sp each. Everything he sells is of the highest quality.

CHAPEL

Buckbridge's chapel is a small building in stone, with narrow leaded windows in blue and red. The local priest, **Father Lomas**, is a lean, weathered human who is happy to help anyone in need of aid. He sells healer's kits and healing potions at the prices listed on p.150 in the *Player's Handbook*, and may offer to heal injured adventurers.

Except for the stable hand at the inn, no one in the village suspects that Father Lomas secretly worships Malar, an evil deity who promotes remorseless hunting. He has a secret shrine dedicated to Malar, carefully hidden in the Fern Forest. Lomas maintains a benevolent front, but his true scheme is to convert suitable candidates to followers of Malar.

If a character or an NPC dies, Lomas may offer a way to bring them back to life. Close to his secret shrine in Fern Forest is an ancient stone table with peculiar and sinister powers. If a deceased humanoid, who has been dead no longer than 3 days, is placed on this table, roll 1d6. On a result of 1 to 3, the individual returns to life with 1 HP and must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom check or change alignment to evil.

Lomas is unaware that the table's powers come from being a prehistorical executioner's block, so ancient it predates even the long-vanished kingdom of the Ironshield Clan, and so permeated with blood it has become magical, sentient, and profoundly malicious.

THE GREY HARE

This spacious two-storey blockhouse is located at the heart of Buckbridge. Huge slabs of weathered granite make up most of the foundation, while the walls are made of thick pine logs. Its small

windows are tinted smoky by age, and its stables house a dozen horses. A battered wooden sign, featuring the inn's name, a running hare, and two crossed arrows, creaks in the wind where it hangs above the entrance. The inn is managed by **Rosie Tanner**.

A large chamber with a private veranda costs 9 sp per night. There are five small single rooms, each of which costs 6 sp per night. Visitors short on coin or ill at ease among too many people are welcome to sleep in the stables at no charge.

In the common room, hunters meet after long trips into the woods to share news and rumours over large servings of hot food. Farmers, tradespeople and visitors exchange stories by the large fireplace or at the bar. At times, travelling bards provide entertainment.

When you enter the inn, you are welcomed by the wonderful scents of roasted meat and good mead. Around fifteen people sit around sturdy, round tables or in front of the fireplace.

The walls are filled with stuffed heads of bears, elks, and wolves mounted on wooden plaques. A long bar runs along the opposite wall. Some of the patrons look up at you curiously when you enter, then turn back to their conversations.

SURROUNDING AREAS

North of the village are two large forests: Boars Hill and Northwoods. To the west are the huge woodlands of Fern Forest. Located far north-west, beyond the woods, are the White Craig Mountains, home to gnolls, giants and other deadly beings. Farther away is Winterhold, a larger trading town. To the north-east is a wetland known as Dead Man's Moor. Located in the middle of the moor are The Twins, a pair of ancient stone monoliths surrounded by old cairns.



NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS IN BUCKBRIDGE

BJORN AMBERCLAN

Bjorn Amberclan is a middle-aged male mountain dwarf **commoner** (LG). He is short for a dwarf and has copper-coloured hair around a bald patch. Specialized in archaeology, he is currently in Buckbridge to research the long-gone Ironshield Clan, especially their ancient language.

Trait: Fieldwork is all good and well, but the best kind of research is the type that can be done surrounded by books in a comfy inn.

Ideal: I am deeply passionate about archaeology and my special research area is ancient runes.

Bond: I search for information about the Ironshield Clan that can help protect my hometown of Winterhold.

Flaw: Relaxed. I am comfortable to a fault and try hard to avoid both dangers and unnecessary adventures (I loathe outdoor camping).

FINEL AUTUMNLEAF

Finel Autumnleaf is a male wood elf **ranger** (level 4, LG). He is tall, soft-spoken, keeps his long flaxen hair in multiple thin braids, and wears a green tunic with a leather belt. Finel lives in Buckbridge with his adopted daughter, Jillian Autumnleaf. His wife died from scarlet fever over twenty years ago, and he has never remarried.

Trait: In the wilderness anything could happen. I must carefully plan my every move.

Ideal: I always try to help others in Buckbridge and gladly share the game I have caught.

Bond: Although my beloved wife has passed away, I still have my memories of her, and will do anything to protect our daughter Jillian.

Flaw: Inflexible. I tend to follow instructions even when I feel they are problematic.

RIVER AMRUN

River is a young half-elf **commoner** (NG) of indeterminable gender with silver-coloured hair. River manage the horses of guests at the inn in Buckbridge, and they are best friends with Jillian Autumnleaf.

Trait: Even in chaotic moments, I stay calm. Nothing makes me raise my voice or lose my temper.

Ideal: There's good in everyone, even if it can be hard to see.

Bond: I always take care of animals; regardless of how small and furry something is, it has a place in this world.

Flaw: Wary. I know that the priest in Buckbridge worships an evil deity, but I can't share this secret with anyone else.

ROSIE TANNER

Rosie Tanner is a middle-aged female human **ranger** (level 4, CG), with a stocky build and braided ginger hair. Rosie manages the inn The Grey Hare in Buckbridge with her husband, Dave. Her animal companion is an old fox with grey whiskers called Luna, who likes to sleep in front of the fireplace.

Trait: A guest should always feel welcome and treated like family. Everything always feels better with hot food, an open fire, and good ale.

Ideal: I hope my children and grandchildren will live in Buckbridge and see it grow and prosper.

Bond: The inn is my home, and I am prepared to die defending it.

Flaw: Determined. I can work harder than most and sometimes don't notice when the staff (mainly my adult children) are flagging. I can also be bossy at times.

GORM AMBERCLAN

Gorm Amberclan is a middle-aged male mountain dwarf **commoner** (LN). He is bald, heavysset, and has a long copper-coloured beard streaked with grey. Gorm is originally from Winterhold and runs the local smithy in Buckbridge. He is related (second cousin twice removed) to Bjorn Amberclan.

Trait: I am proud of my work as a blacksmith, and I would never sell anything that I am not satisfied with. People's lives depend on my skill and the quality of my goods.

Ideal: Buckbridge faces many threats that only good, solid steel can stop. I do my best to provide it.

Bond: I hate gnolls with a passion after they attacked my parents when I was a child and lived



outside Winterhold.

Flaw: Recluse. Being in crowds (that is, more than three people) makes me long for my forge.

FATHER LOMAS

Father Lomas is an elderly male human **priest** (NE). He is lean, weathered, and wears a grey robe. In charge of the small chapel in Buckbridge, he offers healing to anyone who needs it. In secret, Father Lomas worships the evil deity Malar at a shrine deep in Fern Forest.

Trait: I listen to the problems of others without judging them. This way, I win people's confidence, which makes them easier to convert to my religion if they are in mortal danger.

Ideal: Only my god Malar understands the true cruelty of the world. My mission in life is to make others understand this.

Bond: Long ago, I was injured by a frost wolf and nearly died. At that moment, I learned the supremacy of mercilessness.

Flaw: Disdainful. Deep down, I think I am a little better than everyone else.

JILLIAN AUTUMNLEAF

Jillian Autumnleaf is a young female half-elf (drow) **scout** (CN). She is a skilled hunter and strong-willed, with dusky skin and blonde hair so pale it borders on white. Jillian lives in Buckbridge together with Finel Autumnleaf, her adoptive father. As an infant, she was left in the woods by her biological mother, but was found by Finel, who raised her as his own daughter.

Trait: Action is always better than caution.

Ideal: Being valued by the local community matters more than anything to me, and I strive to

become the best hunter in history.

Bond: My drow legacy hangs over me like an everlasting shadow, but I have decided that none should be chained to their past.

Flaw: Reckless. I can't resist a chance to prove myself, even if the risks are substantial.

LILY LIGHTFOOT

Lily is a female halfling **bard** (level 3, Neutral). She is quick to laugh and tends to fidget. Her hair is jet black and her eyes are bright blue. Lily has travelled all over the country and makes her living as a bard and also by running entertaining games.

Trait: I take great pains to look my best and follow the latest fashions when I am in larger towns.

Ideal: The world is mine to roam. No one can tell me to stay in one place.

Bond: I am constantly on the move to escape some people who might be chasing me. One day, I must confront them.

Flaw: Vain. My pride will get me in trouble one day.

MALTIMAR ASHBEARD

Maltimar "Malte" Ashbeard is a male mountain dwarf **ranger** (level 4, CG). He is brawny and grizzled, with matted black hair and a short, grey beard. He travels widely to sell his various ales.

Trait: People everywhere feel better with a good beverage in the hand (or belly).

Ideal: Once I have found enough treasure, I will build a brewery in a remote mountain.

Bond: A monster once ran amok in my stronghold. Since then, I hate monstrosities.

Flaw: Foolhardy. If I think I have found the place to which my map points, no danger in the world can keep me away.

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