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THE HORROR OUT OF HAGSJAW

By Levi Combs



5TH EDITION
COMPATIBLE

THE HORROR OUT OF HAGSJAW

AUTHOR: Levi Combs

PROJECT MANAGER: Casey Christofferson

EDITOR: Jeff Harkness

FIFTH EDITION COORDINATOR: Edwin Nagy

ART DIRECTOR: Casey Christofferson

COVER DESIGN: Casey Christofferson, Charles Wright

FRONT COVER ART: Quentin Soubrouillard

INTERIOR ART: Casey Christofferson, Quentin Soubrouillard

LAYOUT: Suzy Moseby

CARTOGRAPHY: Robert Altbaur

PLAYTESTERS: Andrew Combs, Drew Flocks, Nick Flocks, Matt Joyner,
Tim Marshall, Nathan Pendergraft, Brandon Wood, Patricia LaPrade Wood

DEDICATED TO THE LOVING MEMORY OF JILL COMBS

NECROMANCER GAMES IS:

Bill Webb, Matthew J. Finch, Zach Glazar, Charles A. Wright,
Edwin Nagy, Mike Badolato and John Barnhouse



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THE HORROR OUT OF HAGSJAW

BY LEVI COMBS

A 5E ADVENTURE FOR 4-6 TIER 2 CHARACTERS

The adventure begins in the dilapidated town of Hagsjaw, an old town far off the beaten path that has seen better days. All but forgotten by caravan masters and travelers, Hagsjaw seems to die out more and more as each generation passes. The farms at the edge of town are empty of cattle and crop, the town's buildings are crumbling and rotting, and even the sagging roofs of the twin-steepled church don't look like they'll hold up much longer. A trickle of smoke comes from a few rundown houses and storefronts, all that's left to suggest that the town hasn't withered away completely. The decaying town's presence is altogether unwholesome, unwelcome, and unhealthy.

For many years, Hagsjaw labored in this sad state of decline, but as of late, things seem to be suddenly on the rise. The old lumber mill has fired back up, hunters and trappers have tentatively returned to the nearby forest, and the promise of renewed industry is a whisper on everyone's lips. Despite this new tide of sudden good luck, there's something in the air around town — a sense of waiting, hanging uneasiness that can't be explained outright but is nevertheless hard to shake. This nameless dread is punctuated only by the quiet whispers of old legends that surround Hagsjaw. Can the characters uncover what lies beneath the surface and, if so, will they survive it?

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Known as Hogsjaw Hollow in the old days, Hagsjaw has a well-earned reputation among other frontier settlements for witchery and enmity toward outsiders. These misgivings are much deserved, dating back almost a hundred years to a year-long reign of terror by a coven of witches known locally as “the Karnley Hags.”

The Karnley Hags worshipped an ancient, near-forgotten power of the deep forest known as Shub-Niggurath — the “Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young” — and they routinely abducted townsfolk to sacrifice to their dark god. Thoroughly evil and altogether decadent, they held Hagsjaw in a grip of fear for more than year as they terrorized its citizenry, stole away children, and viscously murdered anyone who dared oppose them.

In time, the townspeople, led by the prominent (for Hagsjaw anyways) Tatterly family, hunted down and brought these bloodthirsty witches to justice. The gallows where they were hung still stand in the town square. When the hags were finally killed, their remains were scattered about in different locations (local tradition when dealing with witches), and their old religion seemingly disappeared from the region with their deaths.

Before they died however, the witches remained defiant, cursing the town and vowing that they would one day “return to bleed all ye folk dry,” promising nothing less than misery and doom for the folk of Hagsjaw.

While these prophecies of doom were initially brushed aside as nothing more than venom from the gallows, even the most skeptical townsfolk have come to agree, in the years since, that the curse is indeed real. Only a few years after the hags were executed, a local baron called most of the town's men to a short but bloody war from which only a handful returned. This hit the industry of Hagsjaw hard, leaving few able-bodied men to work the fields, log the forests, or take advantage of the abundant trapping to be had in the forest nearby. Next, a sudden monstrous incursion killed many of the trappers and loggers working in the woods, making it unsafe to do the weeks-on-end work required to sustain a livelihood. As generations passed, the baron who had called on so many to help fight turned his back on the town, and the young folk all drifted away to find work. Only a small

fraction of the town's inhabitants remain now, and those are mostly from old, established families. The oldest and most prominent of these are the Tatterly family, the same bloodline that led the bold charge against the Karnley Hags so many years past.

Recently, one of the descendants of the Tatterly men was out trapping in the nearby forest and fell down an old sinkhole into an underground grotto where one of the skulls of the Karnley Hags had been hidden away. Upon touching the horrid thing, its restless, malevolent spirit immediately possessed him and bid him to secretly carry it away to the town. The hag's spirit began using him as a vessel to spread its evil and to locate the other two Karnley Hag skulls in an effort to gain revenge for their murders and to once again plunge the area into evil.

To this end, the possessed Tatterly man silenced his elders and called for a renewed return to industry, bolstering these efforts with a cache of gold that has lain hidden since the time of the Karnley Hags' reign of terror. Through him, the hag's spirit has secretly been using her powers to easily lure animals into traps and to keep monstrous depredations at bay. As a result, many men in the town have begun to return to the forest and their work, thinking the town's curse has finally ended. Sometimes these men disappear, but those disappearances are being covered up in the short term by the Tatterly family (now *charmed* or intimidated into compliance) and those loyal to them who claim that the men have gone even deeper into the forest for paid work. The blood of these poor souls feed the sacrificial totems of Shub-Niggurath, whose altar is locked away inside the town's dilapidated church.

The hag's spirit has also made contact with the old spirits of the forest, calling upon an evil satyr named **Bramble Jeem** (found in **Appendix One: New Monsters**) who longs for a return to the days when men of the region were hunted instead of celebrated. She has promised this satyr and his minions a return to the old ways and the life of every being in the town should they lend her their aid and find the third Karnley Hag skull. Luckily for the town, they have yet to succeed.

Her short term goal is to find the third Karnley Hag skull so that the three spirits may be reunited in their new host bodies as a coven, where their powers can grow triple-fold. If this happens, they will reignite the worship of Shub-Niggurath and return to the bloody, dark days. There will be no end to their diabolical witchery!

As the adventure begins, the second Karnley Hag skull has been discovered and its spirit has possessed another member of the Tatterly family. It's up to the characters to uncover the mystery going on in Hagsjaw and then to either wipe out the cult or track down the last skull before it can be reunited with its sisters ... or both!

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The characters arrive in the town of Hagsjaw. They catch the eye of Ole Jeb, a local who tells them about the town's evil history and recent developments. As they press the issue and begin to explore, cultists from the Tatterly family attack. They ultimately discover the bloodstained totem and gelatinous horror in the old church. They may also find themselves going to the woods looking for the third skull, where they run afoul of Bramble Jeem and his minions. Finally, they find themselves at the hidden cave of Belknap's Plummet and must navigate its dangers to recover (or destroy) the third Karnley Hag skull before it falls into the wrong hands.

INVOLVING THE CHARACTERS

Characters may find themselves on the road to Hagsjaw in a variety of ways:

“Storm’s a comin’... we better get on off’n the road.” The characters hired on as caravan guards and stop in Hagsjaw — *“that place don’t nobody e’er go”* — for the night to re-provision or because foul weather forces them off the road.

“There is a dark cloud over that place, my son ...” The cleric in the party is sent to investigate what happened in the old, twin-steepled church and asks his companions to join him. No cleric in the party? A cleric friendly to the characters kindly asks them, and he’ll pay them for their time.

“Hey, What’s that ... there, over the ridge?” The characters wander into Hagsjaw through sheer dumb luck as they are traveling overland. Hagsjaw may have even been removed from the latest maps

“I haven’t seen Strang in more than two moons. ... I fear the worst.” A personal friend of one or more of the characters (most likely a ranger, druid, caravanner, or woodsman) has gone missing in the area, and the party wants answers.

“This missive from Hagsjaw is ... troubling.” A letter, sent by someone from inside the town (a personal friend, relative, or old colleague of one of the characters, perhaps) hints at some serious trouble and that they are clearly afraid for their life.

PART ONE:

HELL COMES TO HAGSJAW!

As the characters ride into Hagsjaw, it’s openly apparent that it’s one of the old frontier settlements that once aspired to reach the heights of a viable industry but just never quite made it. A cluster of old, sagging buildings — all of which are universally in bad repair — dominate the center of town. A few homes, an abandoned stable, the local inn and an old, twin-steepled church round out a collection of crumbling structures in town, while an ill-kept, muddy road carves its way right down the center. The largest building is the sawmill on the western edge of town, which also seems to be the place with the most activity as the locals bustle about cutting and processing fresh timber.

Aside from the activity at the sawmill, only a handful of townsfolk can be seen on the streets. Upon closer examination, almost all the windows in town are shuttered or boarded up, and there are no wagons, carriages, or horses on the road. Almost every building is in a state of steady, inevitable decay, with yards full of weeds and thorn bushes. When the characters do happen to meet the eyes of the local townsfolk, their gazes are cast downward or quickly averted. No one seems to be going out of their way to meet, greet, or have anything to do with these newly-arrived travelers. The lone exception seems to be a shabbily-dressed man with a bushy beard and glassy eyes who wears a wide-brimmed hat and cradles a bottle in the crook of one arm.

This man is Jeb Addington (N male human **commoner**), known simply as “Ole Jeb” these days. He is a local woodcutter who is last in line of a once-prosperous family that has been in Hagsjaw for more than 10 generations. In happier times, the Addington family owned a thriving logging business and dealt with the local sawmill, but in the dark days that followed the rise of the Karnley Hags, their numbers slowly dwindled until Ole Jeb was the last one left. These days, he’s a shameless drunk, barely sober long enough to scrounge up his next bottle of rotgut whiskey.

If the characters fail to speak with Ole Jeb or just decide to ignore him, proceed to **Part Two: Hagsjaw** for a more detailed description of the town. If he is approached, however, Ole Jeb is initially skittish and indifferent to the characters but can quickly be won over with either an offer of whiskey or a successful DC 11 Charisma (Intimidation or

Persuasion) check. Once he has a few drinks in him, he reveals himself to be something of a local character, as he rants semi-coherently and his eyes shift about. He becomes quite the chatterbox the more he drinks, telling the characters all about Hagsjaw and its locals, within his limits of knowledge.

If asked about Hagsjaw’s history:

“Heh heh! This used to be a fine place to live, ye see ... if’n y’all can believe it. It hasn’t always been called Hagsjaw, ye know ... and why is that ye wonder? Heh! It was the witches ... theys the ones who changed everything. Came in and crawled inside everyone’s heads. Heh! The Turleys ... the Hamptons ... even the Blackwoods ... all gone! Swallowed up by them woods and theys ain’t never comin’ back! T’ain’t no use tending a herd neither ... theys just go missin’ ... and you can bet them witches had a taste for even sweeter meats! Heh!”

If asked about recent happenings in Hagsjaw:

“That ole Tatterly feller done come back from the woods and told ever’body it was safe agin’ ... and they believe him! Ye got all them boys up in the woods now, sawin’ and cuttin’, and theys bringin’ the timber on up to the ole mill ... but why is that exactly? Why ain’t nobody talkin’ about them fellers went missin’ out on the river last week? What about the Digby boy that just up and dis’peared? Heh! Why ain’t nobody talkin’ about that? ... Tell me that! Heh!”

If asked about the Tatterly family:

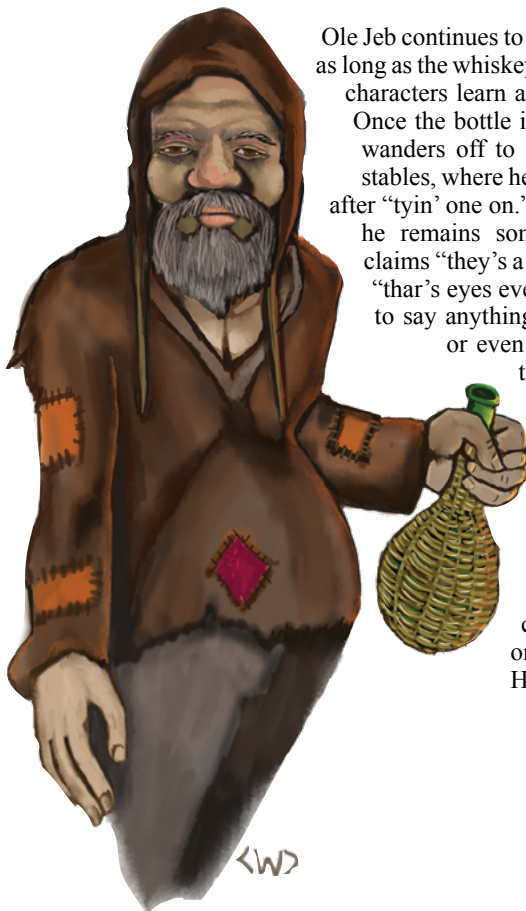
“Them ole boys used to be somethin’ back in the old days, but to tell ye the truth, I ain’t never thought much of ’em. Theys livin’ on old glories if ye ask me. Sure, theys an old family, and they had money and all ... but I ain’t never met one of them fellers I’d trust further then I could throw ’em! Heh! Now Barnabas done gone and said it’s fine to go back in the woods and start cuttin’ agin’ ... but how’s he know that? Huh? What did he see out there ... and why is ever’one so convinced it’s a good idea? Jus’ don’t make no sense, you ask me! Heh heh! To tell ye the truth, I’ve seen’t some queer thangs on out in them woods, and it was enough for me to give up the trade and keep my distance ... and now this town ain’t safe no more neither ... what with all them folks gatherin’ up at the church on some nights ... and who’s with the whole mess of em? Barnabas and the rest of that Tatterly trash ... heh heh!”

If asked about the old church:

“That old place used to be alright, full of good and honest folks, but ye couldn’t get me to go near it now fer all the gold in the world. Heh! Sure, it’s seen’t better days and it looks empty, but don’t let that fool ye ... there’s somethin’ a happenin’ over there. I was half asleep over in the stables ... can’t quite ’member why I woke up there ... and I seen’t Barnabas and the rest of them folks going in there the other night. There was a buncha hollerin’ and yellin’ and whatnot and then I seen’t red light comin’ from between the boards on them wind’rs ... and then a terrible bleatin’ — like a goat, ya know? — ’cept this weren’t no goat, ye foller? Heard that same sound out in the woods years back, and I ain’t been out there since! Heh!”

If asked about the woods:

“Them’s old woods out there ... older than any man, and they got secrets, if’n ye follow me. They’s things out there that don’t care for men, and they ’member the old days when we weren’t nothin’ but food crawlin’ around on all fours ... a yippin’ and yellin’ like we was supper. That’s how they liked it, ye foller? They’s a reason why no one went out there for so long ... and it was a good ’un ... heh! Somehow that damn Tatterly feller got everyone convinced to start loggin’ again, and it jus’ don’t make no damn sense. Why now? Well, they can get to it, but I ain’t never steppin’ in them woods agin’ ... not after everything I done seen.”



Ole Jeb continues to ramble and mutter for as long as the whiskey holds out or until the characters learn all they can from him. Once the bottle is dry, he literally just wanders off to get a nap behind the stables, where he habitually passes out after “tyin’ one on.” If approached again, he remains somewhat friendly, but claims “they’s a watchin’ us now” and “thar’s eyes ever’where” and refuses to say anything else about the town or even to be seen talking to the characters.

After talking to Ole Jeb, the characters should have enough scraps of information to set them on the right path. They can now choose to explore one or more locations in Hagsjaw.

PART TWO: HAGSJAW

“A nice little town and a great place to raise a family.”

— *said no one ever*

As mentioned earlier, Hagsjaw is a small frontier town whose best days are obviously far behind it. Surrounded by old, deep forest and uncut hollows, it was once a literal treasure trove for loggers, woodsmen, and trappers who grew wealthy from its seemingly endless bounty. The town itself is dominated by a handful of ramshackle buildings and dilapidated homes, all of which have seen better days. The road that cuts straight through is not well-maintained and contains numerous ruts and holes that would give any caravan master or even the savviest rider fits. Aside from the renewed activity at the sawmill, not many folks are seen on the streets of Hagsjaw, and the best one can hope for are nervous, unfriendly glances from filthy windows before the shutters are slammed shut.

THE CRAVEN CROW

Hagsjaw’s lone inn and public eatery, the Craven Crow has gone to seed much like the rest of the town. The tables are wobbly, the ale is weak, and the food is entirely unimpressive, being dry and unseasoned on its best days. The owner — a balding, rail-thin man named Willoughby (LE male human **commoner**) — is entirely unfriendly to travelers. He refuses to say much and scowls as he slides cracked mugs of ale across a dirty bar toward guests. There are six rooms — two downstairs and four upstairs — that are available to customers, and they sleep as many as four each. The price is 2 sp for each person.

The characters won’t find much of interest if they investigate the Craven Crow. There are few, if any, patrons, and those who might be having a drink are not interested in conversing with strangers, especially “fancy city fellers.” Even if forced, *charmed*, or similarly coerced, they don’t know much about the strange happenings in town other than Barnabas Tatterly’s claims that the woods are safe again and that several families have sent their men into the woods to log, hunt, and trap. Willoughby isn’t much better and, honestly, doesn’t know much either. (See **Appendix One: New Monsters** for more on Barnabas Tatterly.)

THE OLD TATTERLY SAWMILL

Located on the edge of town and seemingly the only busy place in town, the sawmill has seen renewed activity thanks to Barnabas Tatterly and his recent mobilization of the locals to return to the forests. Freshly cut timber has slowly begun to roll in, and several dozen hands have been hired to cut and process it. Four large saws are powered by giant waterwheels, all of which are fed by nearby Bitter Creek. Several smaller, covered shanties and shacks where supplies and inventory are kept surround the mill. Of all the buildings in Hagsjaw, the mill is the one in the best repair.

Typically, 6d4 workers (N male and female human **commoners**, but armed with axes) are found here, all locals with experience in woodcutting and logging but little else. In addition, several members of the Tatterly family are on hand to oversee operations, including the saw-boss, Leland Tatterly (LE male human **scout**). Like most folks in Hagsjaw, Leland is not overly friendly, and he does not suffer fools at all. He is quick to raise his voice, but any serious show of force makes him back down, especially if even the slightest instance of magic is on display. He’s not interested in answering any questions or having his time wasted, but if the characters are obviously inquisitive, he definitely reports back to his cousin Barnabas Tatterly as soon as the characters leave the mill.

Aside from a small cache of coins (4d4 gp, 2d10 sp, 6d6 cp) for buying and selling timber, there is little of real value at the mill.

ABANDONED STABLES

These stables are solidly built, but the ravages of time have had their way with them, peeling back the roof in numerous spots and letting the interior become overgrown with weeds, thorn bushes, and wild grass. The stable doors still operate, but they refuse to stay closed unless tied or blocked shut. There are 12 stalls and a roomy loft, but no hay or supplies. There doesn't seem to be anyone here, although Ole Jeb occasionally passes out in the loft when he gets too drunk to make it home.

If characters decide not to stay at the Craven Crow, they could shack up here. The stables provide ample (if drafty) conditions where they can stay dry from a storm or bad weather.

WEBLEY'S DRY GOODS AND GENERAL STORE

Once the nicest establishment in Hagsjaw, Webley's has fallen on hard times and no longer has the extensive inventory it once carried. These days, only the most basic of provisions are available, along with a few things brought in over the years that could be useful for logging or on a farm. Unless they're interested in hard tack, farming, clearing timber, or repairing a wagon, there's not too much of interest here for adventurers.

Webley's is owned and operated by Samford Webley (LN male human **commoner**), a mustachioed, small but fairly well put together fellow who (even in his tattered shirt and waistcoat) is probably the best dressed and neatest man in all of Hagsjaw. Aside from Ole Jeb, Samford is also the only other person in town who could be considered friendly. He is happy to make small talk or to describe basic details or features about the town and surrounding region. Should talk turn to anything concerning Hagsjaw's dark history or recent rumors in the town (especially about the church or the lurking evil in the woods), his conversational nature shuts down like a steel trap as he begins to make excuses about needing to close up shop. Samford doesn't really have any new information to provide, but he is aware of the missing townsfolk and is extremely wary of the Tatterly family, fearing them above any show of force that the characters might reasonably show.

THE TOWN SQUARE

No one comes here to congregate or trade anymore. No horses or livestock are tied here, and little more than weeds and overgrown thickets grow here. A heap of decaying wooden planks is all that remains of the old gallows where the Karnley Hags were put to death.

THE RUINED CHURCH

This old, gambrel-roofed church is of the typical type found in small towns: one story with a single main room that is typically filled with rows of pews, a small altar, and a pulpit from which a priest would typically deliver sermons. A handful of smaller rooms branch off of the main worship area. A single church bell remains in one of the steeples. The church is covered in peeling whitewash and is flanked on one side by an old graveyard that contains sunken, overgrown graves that go back as far as 200 years.

The church holds a terrible secret, which is described fully in **Part Four: The Horror in the Ruined Church**. If characters decide to investigate the church beyond just a cursory examination of the outside, consult that section for more details.

BLACK BLOOD ROCK

Black Blood Rock gets its name from the curious dark stains that mar the surface in a disturbing pattern. Its reputation is not helped by Hagsjaw's dark history or its notoriety for ancient witchery. Some locals even claim to have seen "winged devils a'lightin' up on them rocks" but the truth to those matters is likely more fiction than truth. Many folks foolishly traveling too near the forest have been lured off of its height in the middle of the night by **will-o'-wisps** masquerading as lanterns or torches. Bitter Creek runs nearby, before it disappears into the woods.

THE OLD WILLOUGHBY FARM

This old farm sits on the edge of town at the opposite end of the sawmill, and is a source of local legend as the Willoughby Farm was the location where the final confrontation with the Karnley Hags originally took place. Most locals see the farm as a cursed place, and their fears are often supported by the fact that nothing healthy ever seems to grow here. So despite its great location and close vicinity to town, the populace shuns it. To make matters worse, the farm seems to be favored by the local population of whippoorwills that have been seen here in large numbers. The call of the whippoorwill is seen as an extremely bad omen among Hagsjaw's rustic folk, who view their eerie cries as a method to "catch" the souls of the dying. It should come as no surprise that there were hundreds of whippoorwills calling out in the woods the night the Karnley Hags were finally put down.

The farm has a straightforward, simple layout, and everything is in severe disrepair. Sagging roofs, collapsed rooms, overgrown fields, and ruined fences are the normal state of affairs. No real physical danger is here, and no monstrous incursion exists to challenge the characters. The only danger here is an insidious one, and it resides in the cellar of the farmhouse: a colony of **brown mold** (see **Appendix One: New Monsters**) that has lain dormant and undisturbed for many years. If the characters decide to explore the old farm, they find little of interest unless they start poking around down in the cellar, which seems unnaturally cool, even for an underground chamber.

BITTER CREEK

Bigger than an actual creek but smaller than a river, this waterway nonetheless carries the name Bitter Creek. It runs adjacent to most of the town before it cuts closer at the old sawmill to fuel its saws through large wheels directly on the water.

Bitter Creek winds around the western end of town before disappearing into the nearby woods near Black Blood Rock. It is the main source of water for Hagsjaw.



HAGSJAW RESIDENTS

1d8 Curious, Creepy, and Capricious Citizens

- 1 **Neddidiah Upton:** A brooding, withdrawn individual who is not known for his conversational skills or friendliness, Neddidiah is nonetheless a good, if simple, man. A local farmer by trade, his family was once quite prominent but suffered greatly at the hands of the Karnley Hags and their curse. He has an unusual fixation and fascination with the whippoorwills out at the Old Willoughby Farm.
- 2 **Zadok Huxley:** Broad-shouldered and hawk-nosed, this gruff man works as a furrier and trapper, and occasionally as a wilderness guide to those willing to pay through the nose for his services. Zadok is incredibly wary and distrustful of the creatures living in the forest, especially after losing his brother to the depredations of a will-o'-wisp that lured him off a cliff and onto Black Blood Rock. He is unusually strong for a man of his size and seems to always be chewing on some sort of tobacco, which he spits out onto the floor constantly, oblivious to any social graces.
- 3 **Magda Benthams:** A robust, gray-haired woman who wears the hardships of her life in the lines of her face, she is known for her herbal cures, homemade moonshine, and no-nonsense reputation. She serves as a midwife and physician to the generally uneducated folk of Hagsjaw. She suffers no fools and has several "pet" crows that can be found perched about her home, both inside and out.
- 4 **Geb Harlowe:** An aging, narrow-faced man who became stranded in Hagsjaw many years ago after his gambling addiction forced him to flee debtors. When a caravan master inadvertently discovered his identity (and that he had gambled away the second half of his payment for traveling with the caravan), he was dumped off on the streets of town to fend for himself. In the time since, he has made his living as a farmhand and lives in the ruins of a collapsing, abandoned farmhouse on the edge of town. If approached, he is willing to trade information about the town, its inhabitants, and its history for safe passage out of Hagsjaw. He may even make up some stuff! Geb seems to always be compulsively licking his lips.
- 5 **Zelah Nibley:** The only daughter of a once-prominent family that has fallen on hard times, Zelah's husband died from whooping cough five winters back, leaving her and her seven sons to tend their family farm. Unbeknownst to most of her fellow townsfolk, Zelah survived demonic possession some 40 years ago when she was just a little girl. While the demon is long gone, driven away by a traveling cleric, she suffered significant emotional scars and sometimes breaks down crying for no apparent reason. She can become irrational and irritable at the drop of a hat. When this occurs, her sons are quick to rise to her defense and don't take kindly to "anybody a'botherin' our momma."
- 6 **Nehum Ramsay:** Known for his somber demeanor, penchant for drinking too much of Magda Benthams' moonshine, and his large salt-and-pepper muttonchops, Nehum is known locally as a man who can fix anything. He always seems dirty, even after bathing. Nehum watched satyrs abduct his mother when he was a child and hates them as a result.
- 7 **Dorthea Sutherton:** The only person to ever come back to Hagsjaw after moving away in her youth, Dorthea is incredibly prim and proper, holding manners and decorum to a high standard. Most folk of the town seem to continually infuriate her with their simple ways, but she secretly relishes all these minor conflicts in her life. A widow, she is rumored to have buried her husband's money somewhere on the 40 acres she lives on. In truth, she is near broke but would never let anyone know it and would be horrified if anybody found out.
- 8 **Jervas Digby:** An elderly, veteran soldier with a gravelly voice and a deep scar over his left eye, Jervas has been retired for many years and was one of the few men who returned to Hagsjaw after being called out to war by a local baron many, many winters ago. He mostly keeps to himself, feeding his chickens and living in an old house in the countryside with more than three dozen dogs of all shapes and sizes. If deep in his cups, he claims to have seen things in the woods that "no man ought to e'er have ta see."

PART THREE: A LATE NIGHT ATTACK!

Evil runs in the family.

By the time night begins to fall in Hagsjaw on the characters' first night there, they have already garnered plenty of attention by simply being there, by asking questions, by snooping around the old church, or by talking to Ole Jeb. They have sealed their fate with the locals. This goes doubly so for the Tatterly family, who have secrets of their own that they would prefer stay hidden for the time being.

To this end, Barnabas Tatterly sends a group of 2d4+6 *charmed* armed locals (mixed genders human **commoners**, armed with farm implements) in the dead of night to attack the characters. All of these people are similarly under the sway of the same evil hag-spirit that has taken control of Barnabas. These thugs are meant to either capture or outright slay the characters, and if they fail to do so, they allow the hag possessing Barnabas to better gauge their capabilities. If the characters are captured, they are taken to the Old Church described in **Part Four: The Horror in the Ruined Church** to be sacrificed to the gelatinous horror inside. The mob attacks the characters no matter where they take shelter for the night, be it in the Craven Crow, in the old stables, or elsewhere, literally bum-rushing them in a single wave.

If the characters manage to actually capture any of the thugs without slaying them, they are stubbornly reticent to talk, even under threat of violence, as they are *charmed*. If the *charm* is *dispelled*, however, they immediately break down sobbing and shaking, unsure of what devilish magic compelled them to do and act the way they did. Afterward, they are incredibly grateful to the characters and tell them what they know.

If asked who sent them:

"It were Barnabas ... and Keziah, too! We was up at the old mill, and he looked in my eyes ... started a'talkin' in a right queer voice. He made us do things ... things ain't no man should have ta' do ... and I saw that damned thing in the church! I saw it. I saw what it t'was a'eatin' on!"

If asked what's in the church:

"I don't rightly know how ter' tell it, but it ain't like nothin' I ever seen't. Kinda runny and slimy and what not, full of eyes and mouths and teeth and I can't speak ta' what else ... droolin' and bubblin' and whisperin' and mutterin' ... I wish 'ter god I never did see it!"

If asked what he thinks is going on in Hagsjaw:

"They's somethin' wrong with Barnabas ... I know'n't him since we was knee high ter' a grasshopper, and he ain't himself. The things he's a doin' ... and havin' all us do ... I can't get it out of my damn head. Keziah, too. Ever since't they brung back them skulls from out yonder, they just been a'whisperin' and cacklin' at each other. Then they fed poor ole Nehum to that thing in the church ... I just can't live with it ..."

PART FOUR: THE HORROR IN THE RUINED CHURCH

Forgive me father for I am sin.

As briefly described in **Part Two: Hagsjaw**, the ruined church is one of the central structures around which the town of Hagsjaw is built and, like the rest of the town, it has fallen into serious disrepair. The church was once a place of worship for Sefagreth (and the church technically still owns the plot of land upon which the church sits), though it has been many years since there was any kind of devoted flock here. Church officials have all but written it off and have not staffed it in a long time. Outwardly, the ruined church seems rundown and neglected, but it hides a hideous secret inside.

ENTRANCE

A cobblestone courtyard and stone steps lead up to a double door that has been closed shut with a sturdy length of iron chains wrapped around the double-handles. In addition, the two windows that flank the doors are nailed shut with numerous boards that obscure the interior. It is quite evident that someone doesn't want anyone getting inside, but a successful DC 13 Dexterity check with thieves' tools allows the characters to enter the church through the front door. The characters can also break in through the boarded-up windows with a successful DC 11 Strength (Athletics) check. The entrance leads directly into the foyer.

SUNKEN GRAVEYARD

This old and extremely neglected graveyard is home to at least three dozen sunken graves, most of which are marked with chipped, cracked, and broken headstones that are barely legible. The grave markers date back up to 200 years and carry names like Scarbrough, Horvath, Cromwell, Soames, and Digby. Weeds cover the graveyard, and it's obvious no one has looked after this area in a long, long time.

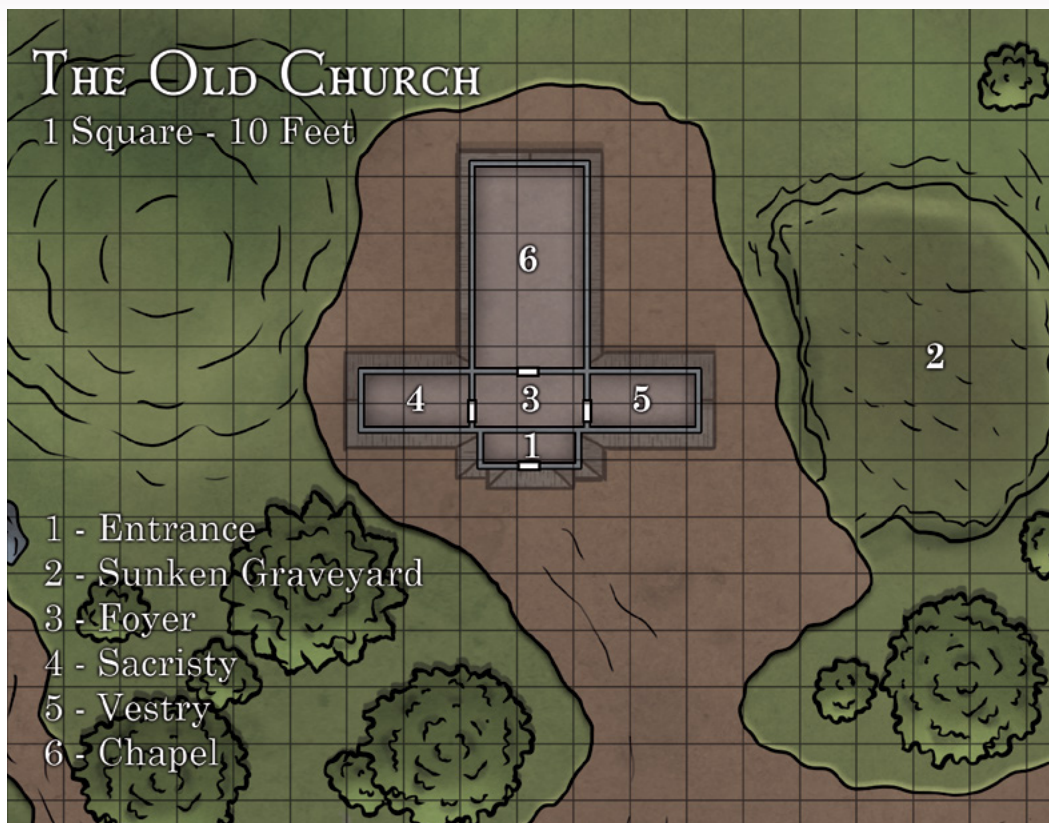
FOYER

This area is a small vestibule that leads directly to another set of double doors that open into the main chapel. The doors here are physically unlocked, but a possessed Barnabas Tatterly enspelled them with a *glyph of warding* (*explosive runes*). The *glyph* is nearly invisible and requires a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check to notice. The *glyph* is triggered when the door is opened without saying the proper prayer.

SACRISTY

This small chamber was once used to hold all of the religious garments and accoutrements used during daily service. Four wall hooks hold simple-looking white robes covered in a noticeable layer of dust that indicate that they have not been worn for some time. Several shelves and a small table contain church records and everyday prayer items such as candles, a small stack of prayer books and hymnals, anointing oils, incense, and a small brass censer. They also appear to have been untouched for many years.

Underneath the table, a small wooden chest lies turned on its side. It appears to have been recently opened, as the dust that once covered it has been disturbed. The simple lock on the front has been broken, and the chest is empty, its contents flung and scattered near the grisly altar in the main chapel.



- 1 - Entrance
- 2 - Sunken Graveyard
- 3 - Foyer
- 4 - Sacristy
- 5 - Vestry
- 6 - Chapel

VESTRY

This small room was a meeting area for the religious faithful and contains only a table and a few chairs. It appears to have remained unused for some time. A dusty portrait once hung on the wall, but it has been torn out, leaving behind only a frame and a few shreds of canvas.

THE NAMELESS THING IN THE CHAPEL

At one time, this area served as a chapel and was much like every other small town church, holding uniform rows of wooden pews, a pulpit for preaching the doctrine, and a small altar ... but those days are long gone.

When characters enter from the foyer, they are greeted by a gore-soaked horror show, as the back half of the chapel floor has been utterly destroyed, burst through from beneath by massive, veined roots and creeping vegetation that weep a disgusting slurry of black ichor. The roots are covered in bloated polyps that are like nothing of this earth, having been conjured forth from some other, awful place by the spirits of the Karnley Hags. The roots and vines combine to form a mock altar of sorts, upon which a ragged, blood-slicked black goat's head rests, flanked by two filthy, yellowed humanoid skulls — the skulls of two of the infamous Karnley Hags. A delicate-looking glass decanter filled with a black liquid sits next to the skull on the left. Littered about the vines and the splintered church floor are the remains of numerous sacrificial victims. If more than a day has passed since the characters spoke with Ole Jeb, he is here as well — seemingly torn to pieces by some abominable terror. To the right of this grisly altar, an indecipherable prayer of sorts has been scrawled in blood on the wall. The massive tangle of roots and vines coming from beneath the floor descend all the way into the ruins of the church's old cellar, which has all but collapsed in on itself now.

In the ruins of the cellar, beneath the base of this unholy altar, waits a gelatinous bubbling horror of nameless dread — a **gibbering moulder**. After characters enter the room, this unspeakable abomination bursts forth from the splintered floor in 1d4 rounds and attacks until it is

slain. It does not retreat. It cannot be reasoned with, and exists only to absorb and destroy what is tossed to it in the pit at the whim of the Karnley Hags, who have plans to eventually sacrifice the entire town here.

A *comprehend languages* spell or similar magic reveals that the words written on the wall read "Their blood feeds the earth, and from there ... Shub-Niggurath! Ia! Ia! The Black Goat of the Wood with a Thousand Young! Ia! Ia!" They are otherwise impossible to read, having been scrawled in some awful dead language known only to the scattered few worshippers of this foul god.

The fat, weeping polyps that hang from the roots are black and purple, resembling swollen eggplants that drip with some sort of abhorrent slime. The evil spirit possessing Barnabas Tatterly uses these nauseous tumors to fashion the *black brew of irem* (see **Appendix Two: New Magical Items**), which is used in ceremonies for Shub-Niggurath's worship to commune with any number of nameless, squamous terrors from beyond. If a living creature ingests one of these unprocessed, pulpy cysts, they must succeed at a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or gain both the poisoned and prone conditions for 1d3 hours. Even if they make the saving throw, they still gain the poisoned condition for 1d3 hours. They have no other effect or property in this state other than being exceedingly vile.

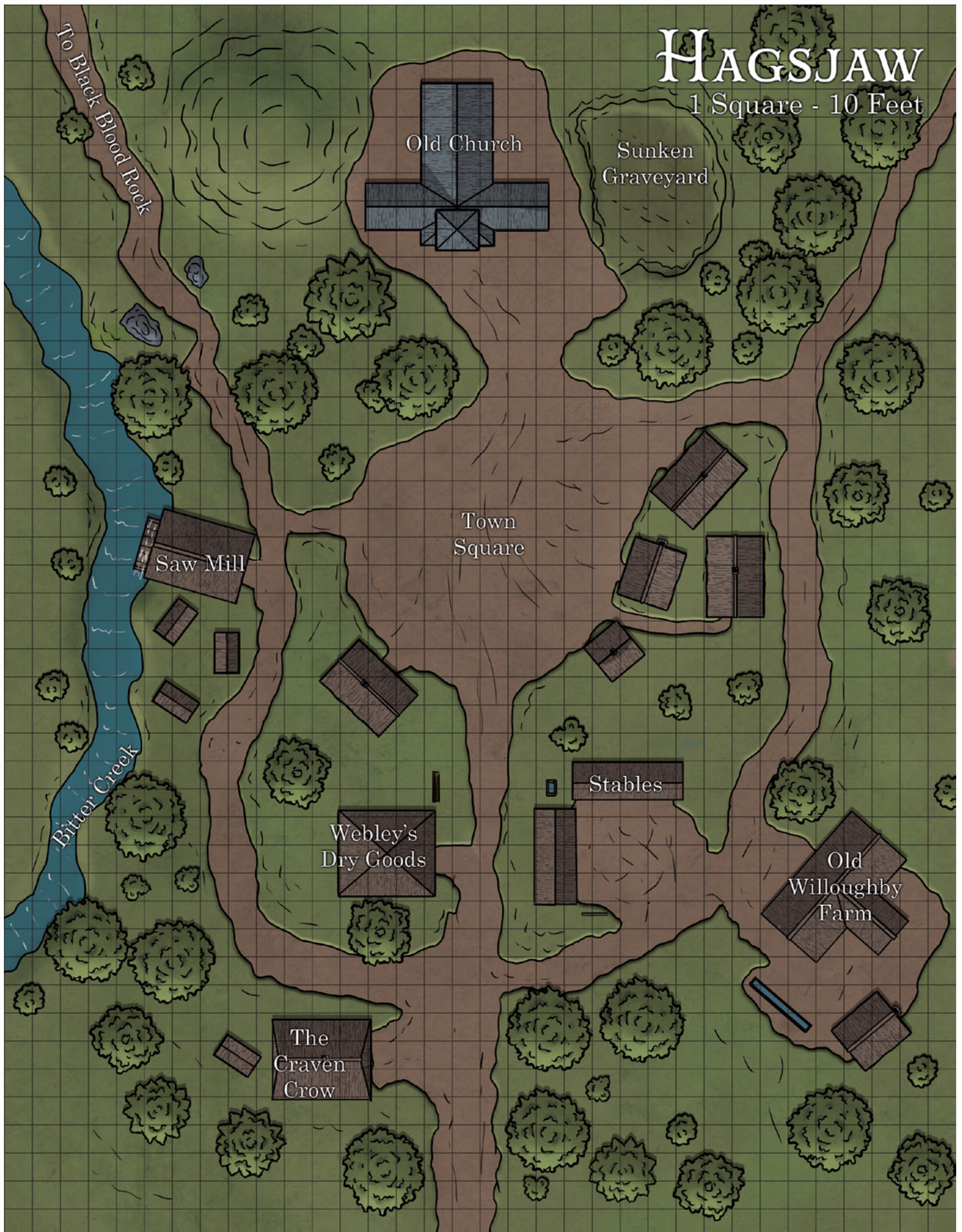
The two skulls belonged to the first two Karnley Hags, and their spirits have passed on into the bodies of Barnabas Tatterly and his wife Keziah. The skulls are essentially harmless and touching them at this point doesn't illicit any negative effect other than a queasy feeling associated by a heavy concentration of evil. They are easily destroyed should the characters decide to do so, which keeps the spirits of the hags from fleeing here should either of the Tatterlys be slain.

The delicate-looking glass decanter contains 4 doses of the *black brew of irem* (found in **Appendix Two: New Magical Items**).

Scattered among the blood-soaked roots and wreckage of the room is the wealth of the previous church, which is of little use to the Karnley Hags in their pursuit of revenge against the citizens of Hagsjaw. The loose treasure contains 241 gp, 65 sp, 77 cp, a gold chalice inset with small jewels worth 225 gp, 3 gold bars stamped with the symbol of Sefagreth worth 75 gp each, and a finely-carved bone statuette of a satyr worth 55 gp.

HAGSJAW

1 Square - 10 Feet



ALTAR OF SHUB-NIGGURATH

1 Square - 10 Feet



BELKNAP'S PLUMMET

Hag Skull

1 Square - 10 Feet

5

18' Drop

Rockslide

3

Waterfall

2

40' Drop

Sinkhole

1



INTERACTING WITH THE KARNLEY HAG SKULLS

When the Karnley witches were hung from the gallows in the town square, they cursed the town of Hagsjaw and vowed that they would one day return. They were summarily beheaded, their bodies burned, and then their skulls were separated and hidden to prevent their spirits from ever finding each other in the afterlife. The hags' hatred lingered, eventually coalescing in the mortal world as malevolent spirits attached to what was left of their mortal remains: the skulls. For years, these evil spirits lay dormant in their torment, until they were eventually discovered and set off the current dire happenings in Hagsjaw.

Merely touching one of the Karnley Hag skulls disturbs the spirit inside of it, which lashes out and attempts to possess the one who touched it. Any intelligent living creature that touches one of the skulls must make a DC 13 Charisma saving throw or be immediately possessed by the evil spirit of the hag that persists within. Once this occurs, the target becomes incapacitated and loses control of its body. The spirit of the hag now controls the body but doesn't deprive it of awareness. The spirit of the hag can't be targeted by any attack, spell, or other effect, except ones that specifically turn undead, and it retains its alignment, intelligence, wisdom, charisma, supernatural abilities, spellcasting, and immunity to being charmed and frightened. It otherwise uses the possessed target's statistics, but doesn't gain access to the target's knowledge, class features, or proficiencies. Once a target body is occupied, the hag's spirit cannot voluntarily leave the body and must be forced out, as described below. Gloves or gauntlets are not sufficient to protect a creature if they touch one of the skulls.

The possession lasts until the body drops to 0 hit points, or until the spirit is turned or forced out by an effect like dispel evil and good. While in the body, the hag can animate it even if it should be dead. If reduced to 0 HP, the hag can expend a spell slot to extend its control over the body for a number of rounds equal to the level of the spell slot expended. The hag can continue to keep the body animated for as long as it can expend spell slots to do so. If forced to leave its inhabited host, the hag's spirit immediately attempts to travel back to the skull to which it is attached. If that skull has been destroyed, the spirit of the hag has nowhere to go and leaves the mortal realm screaming in anguish, forever destroyed.

The target is immune to this spirit's possession for 24 hours after succeeding on the saving throw or after the possession ends.

Each of the hag's spirits has all of its supernatural abilities and innate spellcasting.



PART FIVE: THE WHISPERER IN THE WOODS

Some places are just born bad.

As the characters continue to investigate the curious happenings at Hagsjaw, they may decide to check out the nearby woods. This is the same forest that the locals were so hesitant to enter until recently. The first thing they realize as they make their way through the woods is that there is definitely something different here, as the forest just doesn't quite feel right. Not only is it an old woodland full of ancient trees and uncut hollows, but there seems to be a lingering presence in the woods that is altogether unwelcome. In the old days, before the coming of civilization, the roots of these trees drank deeply from the blood of men, and the worship of Shub-Niggurath was at its primal height. When the Karnley Hags were slain and men became bolder, that worship all but died out ... but the forest remembered.

An old and insufferably hateful satyr named Bramble Jeem longs for the return of these days, where the forest runs wild again and humans are little more than hunting stock. To this end, he struck a deal with the Karnley Hags and pledged his aid in their search of the forest for the resting place of the third Karnley Hag skull. In return, they promised to return the region to the old ways. Until the third skull is found, the humans of Hagsjaw have been allowed to enter the forest to begin their work anew. In the satyr's eyes, it is a small price to pay for the coming bloodshed and a return to the ancient traditions that are soon to follow.

The forest is still a dangerous place, though the temporary agreement between the Karnley Hags and Bramble Jeem keep the worst of the forest's inhabitants from snatching up wayward travelers. Roll on the following table to determine if an encounter occurs in the woods.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN THE WOODS

d20	Encounter
01–12	No encounter ... but something seems to watch from just beyond the shadows, waiting ...
13	1 Awakened Tree
14	1d3+1 Satyrs
15	2d3 Giant Spiders
16	2d4 Corrupted Trees
17	1d4+1 Dire Wolves
18	1d2 Will-O'-Wisp
19	1d2 Archer Bush
20	1d3 Prehistoric Beavers

A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) ability check divines sufficient information after 1d3 hours in the forest to allow characters to pick up a trail leading to the altar of Shub-Niggurath.

Failures on this check result in the characters becoming lost in the sinister woods.

SHUB-NIGGURATH

The Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young

Chaotic Evil

Shub-Niggurath is a grotesque and utterly horrific being, an ancient god worshipped by the darker creatures of the forest from when men were still scrambling about on all fours and were nothing more than food to be hunted. She appears as a billowing, noxious vapor from which countless clutching limbs, staring eyes, weeping teats, and gnashing mouths form and then are subsequently reabsorbed. Her appearance is always preceded by a terribly fecund odor and accompanied by a horrific, unearthly bleating. Simply gazing upon her raw, primal form has been known to drive lesser beings to utter madness.

On certain occasions, when the stars are right and grim sacrifices have been made, she has been known to briefly manifest at the behest of her worshippers, sometimes vomiting forth some unearthly terror. The gibbering, unwholesome creature in the ruined church is one such abomination she spontaneously birthed.

Her cult has been all but forgotten, but a few insane, ardent worshippers still cling to their beliefs. They are dedicated to keeping this old religion alive. They can be found in the most desolate or primal of forests, roaming ancient woods and deep hollows that no axe has ever cut.

A GNOME NAMED RUFUS

Despite all their rage, I'm still just a gnome in a cage.

The gnome, whose name is Rufus (LG male gnome **commoner**), is friendly to anyone who frees, heals, or feeds him. If asked, he explains that the satyrs captured him more than a week ago and have been torturing him ever since. They started out asking him questions about “some old skull” but eventually just gave up and have been enjoying tormenting and starving him ever since. If the characters ask if he knows about the skull or if he has any information on the Karnley Hags, he keenly regards them through narrow eyes before deciding to trust them. He reveals that he does indeed know where the last Karnley Hag skull is hidden away.

Rufus reveals the following:

“You know, when they were tormenting me in that cage, I knew that’s what they wanted. It’s a secret too important to give up to the likes of them. It couldn’t have led to anything good. I remember when those folk from Hogsjaw Hollow rode out here ... and I remember the Karnley sisters as well. Evil creatures. Those were dark days. Now you folk, well, you’ve been kind to ole Rufus ... freed ole Rufus ... even gave ole Rufus some of that salted beef and dry biscuit. If what you’re saying is true, then how could ole Rufus not help you? The place you’re looking for is an old cave, no more than a half a day from here. Ole Rufus will take you.”

THE ALTAR OF SHUB-NIGGURATH

In a clearing deep within the woods, between two moss-covered boulders and beneath an old oak tree, lies the primal shrine of Shub-Niggurath. In essence, the shrine is quite simple: a huge bramble and deadwood pile soaked in generations of blood from sentient creatures who have dared draw too close to the satyrs’ territory. The severed head of a human male, upon which a crown of deer antlers has been placed, sits atop the brambles, in obvious contrast to the black goat’s head sitting atop the altar in the ruined church in **Part Four: The Horror in the Ruined Church**. Scattered about the base of the altar are the bones of humanoid creatures — mostly humans — that fell prey to the satyrs. Nearby, a small wooden cage is suspended from the branch of a tall tree and holds what appears to be a severely starved and beaten gnome in tattered clothing.

When the altar of Shub-Niggurath is discovered, Bramble Jeem is here with a small band of 2d4+2 **satyrs** that all share his grisly views on humanity and worship Shub-Niggurath. They have been beating and questioning the gnome in the cage. The satyrs fight at range with shortbows until they close for melee. Bramble Jeem throws his *javelin of lightning* at any obvious spellcaster first, choosing a heavily armored fighter second.

If captured alive, Bramble Jeem is an absolute font of utter hatred for any civilized character. If approached by a druid or ranger, he spits words of contempt through gritted teeth, referring to them as “traitors.” He tells the characters nothing, choosing death over parley, and utters curses and prayers to Shub-Niggurath the entire time. He does not know the location of the third Karnley Hag skull.

The satyrs hid some treasure in the hollow of a nearby oak tree should they need to bribe or trade. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the hollow for what it truly is. The hollow of the tree contains a wooden box with a hinged lid that contains 529 gp, 105 sp, 88 cp, and a small velvet bag containing 8 small sapphires worth 50 gp each. In addition, a jeweled decanter is worth 235 gp.



If, for whatever reason, the characters decide not to free Rufus or even kill him, they’ll need potent magical assistance to find the location of the third skull. It has lain hidden for a hundred years and there’s not another intelligent, sentient creature living in the forest that could tell them its location.

PART SIX: THE THIRD SKULL

The bad news is the hags have returned. The good news is ... well, there is no good news.

The last of the hags' skulls lies hidden within a deep cave in the nearby foothills known locally as Belknap's Plummet, so named for an enterprising local miner who fell to his death while prospecting inside. The cave has a bad reputation for being unforgiving and unstable, so the locals stay far away from it. No mineral veins or gold were ever found inside and no prospectors have reason to risk investing in it, so it has lain undisturbed for quite a long time. Knowing this reputation, the townsfolk of old placed the last skull here and subtly spread the rumor that the cave was unstable to keep explorers away.

BELKNAP'S PLUMMET

ENTRANCE

The entrance to Belknap's Plummet is in a large sinkhole, so the characters either need to climb or rappel down to the bottom. The sinkhole descends 40 feet into the earth and has a slight curve to it, with plenty of moss-covered hand and footholds. A successful DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check is sufficient to traverse it. The bottom of the sinkhole is covered in loose rubble and jagged rocks that impede movement for Medium-sized creatures to five feet each round until it is completely passed through. If a character should fall, add an extra point of damage for each die rolled due to the jagged rubble at the bottom.

INTERIOR CAVERN

Just inside the bottom of the entrance, the cave immediately levels out and widens. The floor of the cave is littered with hundreds of large loose rocks, and the roof is covered with cracks of all shapes and sizes. There is sufficient light up to 10 feet inside to see, but beyond that the cavern is pitch black and requires an alternate light source. Unfortunately for the characters, the cave is the lair of 2d4 ravenous **stirges** that seek any opportunity to dine on fresh blood. They swarm the characters once they enter the cavern. The stirges are single-minded in their pursuit and attack until slain.

ROCKSLIDE!

The folks who hid the final skull away so many years ago made sure that anyone coming to claim it would not have an easy time doing so. This area denotes an old trap that causes a rockfall in the interior of the tunnel, possibly burying several characters and closing off the entrance to the cave.

Rock Fall Trap

Mechanical Trap

An old wire strung across the floor of the cave triggers the trap. The wire has been here for nearly 100 years (since the rise of the Karnley Hags and their subsequent deaths), so it is quite brittle. If there is sufficient light (a lantern or its equal), characters may notice the trap with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check and a rogue can attempt to deactivate it using thieves' tools with a successful DC 12 Dexterity check.

If the trap is triggered, it activates a rockslide in the tunnel. Characters may make a successful DC 12 Dexterity save to avoid being struck by the rubble. If they are unsuccessful, they take 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage from the falling debris. Characters suffer from the restrained condition while trapped in the rubble but can make a successful DC 13 Strength (Athletics) ability check to pull themselves free or to unbury themselves.

ALAS, POOR BELKNAP ...

An underground stream feeds into the cave system here and spills down into a large pool before disappearing into a low tunnel in the wall. The waterfall is roughly 18 feet high and fills the cavern with a deafening roar. With sufficient light (equal to a torch or better), a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals something glittering in the shallow end of the pool.

If investigated, a calcified corpse lies sprawled haphazardly in the water of the pool, directly to the left of the waterfall — the obvious victim of a fall long ago. If the corpse is moved or disturbed, it falls to pieces fairly quickly, leaving chunks of mineral-encrusted bone behind. In addition, disturbing the remains brings forth a **ghost** — the unquiet spirit of the enterprising miner Belknap who slipped and fell to his death, inadvertently giving the cave its name. He is imprisoned here by his regret and folly, unable to move on to the afterlife. Belknap had no treasure, and his equipment disintegrated long ago. He did however have a large gold nugget on him when he fell, which is why he was in such a hurry to get out of the cave. The unrefined nugget is worth 730 gp and can be found directly underneath his mineral-encrusted remains.

THE KARNLEY SKULL

This small cavern holds the remains of the last Karnley Hag. The superstitious men of Hagsjaw placed it here, where it has lain undisturbed since the three witches were separated and slain. Had these men not been so superstitious, they could have just destroyed the skulls and ended the threat of the hags forever. Old wives tales and local sophistry got the better of them, however, and they squirreled the skulls away.

The chamber is roughly circular in its dimensions and a complete dead-end. The ceiling is about 10 feet high. The skull has been placed on a rock shelf of the north wall of the cave, along with the "cursed gold" that the people of Hagsjaw refused to take. Sitting alongside the skull are loose coins equaling 510 gp, 150 sp, and 96 cp — incidental treasure found in the lair of the Karnley Hags a hundred years ago. It is not cursed, despite what the locals believed, and there is no adverse effect to taking it.

TOUCHING THE SKULL

You mess with the skull, you get the Norns.

The biggest danger here is touching the hag's skull. If a character touches the skull, consult the "Interacting with the Karnley Hag Skulls" sidebar in **Part Four: The Horror in the Ruined Church** to determine what happens. If a character is possessed, the hag immediately uses its powers to attempt to enslave or slay the rest of the party. It picks off any weakened or wounded characters and uses *charm person* on anyone who is heavily armored. It likewise uses any exceptional physical attacks that are suddenly at its disposal.

If the hag's malevolent spirit is unable to successfully possess one of the characters, they may attempt to destroy the skull, which in turn permanently destroys the Karnley Hag. It really is as easy as just smashing the skull and destroying it. The hag's spirit attempts to possess characters until it is either successful or until the skull is destroyed.

PART SEVEN:

RETURN TO HAGSJAW AND THE SHOWDOWN WITH THE TATTERLY CULT

“There’s only one thing wrong with the Karnley Hags. ... They’re alive!”

When the characters return to Hagsjaw from elsewhere (either Belknap’s Plummet or the nearby woods), the town seems deserted. All activity at the mill has ceased. The few shops that remain are closed and empty. Anyone and everyone has bolted themselves indoors or fled the town. If any mounts or hirelings were left behind, they are long gone.

As the characters investigate, the remaining Karnley Hags — who have, of course, possessed the bodies of Barnabas Tatterly and his wife Keziah — confront them on the muddy streets of Hagsjaw. They have been monitoring the characters with spells and by drinking the *black brew of irem*. They also have the rest of the Tatterly family with them, 3d4 **commoners** who have either been coerced by fear and intimidation or *charmed*. A possessed Barnabas is surrounded by his family and thugs, while Keziah lies in wait, hiding on a nearby rooftop so she can rain down ranged spells from a distance.

Half of the family members attempt to engage any obvious spellcasters while the other half attempt to put themselves between Barnabas and the characters. The possessed Barnabas uses spells and the hag’s spell-like abilities to do as much damage to the characters as possible, hoping to end their persistent threat. Keziah continues to use ranged spells on the characters en masse, not caring if they damage anyone as long as Barnabas isn’t in range.

If Keziah and Barnabas are slain, their evil spirits instantaneously travel back to the altar at the ruined church, where they once again attempt to possess anyone who touches their skulls. If those skulls have already been destroyed, the Karnley Hags are annihilated once and for all and the town of Hagsjaw is free from their unholy curse.

CONSEQUENCES AND FURTHER ADVENTURE

Once the threat of the Karnley Hags is eradicated from Hagsjaw, the town attempts to recover but is most likely unsuccessful in doing so. Too much has happened here, from the initial curse of the Karnley Hags and their most recent return, along with the low numbers of folks who remained in the town and the likely deaths of most of the most-prominent members of the Tatterly family. Some places are just bad, and Hagsjaw is one of them. Within two generations, Hagsjaw is little more than overgrown ruins, eventually forgotten by even the most seasoned caravan masters.

Still, the characters did thwart the machinations of a coven of evil hag spirits bent on plunging the entire region into blood-soaked terror, and they were successful in stopping the revival of Shub-Niggurath’s cult. Despite the eventual likely disintegration of Hagsjaw, the remaining folk in the town have them to thank for their lives. They carry the names of these heroes with them as they tell tales around the campfire or trade news with those traveling through. They are not a wealthy folk and have only gratitude to give the characters.

If the characters were unsuccessful and the Karnley Hags won out, these evil witches go on to spread terror throughout the countryside and eventually revive the cult of Shub-Niggurath, which spreads from city to city. Good job, heroes!

APPENDIX ONE: NEW MONSTERS

ARCHER BUSH

This creature looks like a small mound of brownish-green leaves with several thick branches extending from its trunk, each sporting rows of needlelike thorns. Small pale buds of gold and purple sprout from the occasional axil, intermingling with the leaves.

The archer bush is a subterranean, semi-mobile plant often found with one or more desiccated corpses nearby. The carnivorous archer bush fires a cluster of thorns at any creature that comes within 20 feet and later slithers over to consume any that fall. Its primitive mouth — a recessed cavity hidden beneath its trunk — is capable of extreme suction; it uses this mouth to suck the blood from its thorn-pricked victims.

ARCHER BUSH

Small plant, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 78 (12d6 + 36)

Speed 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	2 (–4)	11 (+0)	9 (–1)

Skills Stealth +4

Senses tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The archer bush makes two attacks with its Thorns.

Thorns. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Bloodsuck. A creature within 5 ft. of the archer bush that has 0 hit points is drained of blood. The creature automatically fails a death saving throw

BEAVER, PREHISTORIC

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52 (7d8 + 21)

Speed 30 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	3 (–4)	11 (+0)	5 (–3)

Skills Survival +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Hold Breath. The prehistoric beaver can hold its breath for up to 20 minutes.

Siege Monster. The prehistoric beaver deals double damage to objects and structures.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 27 (4d10 + 5) piercing damage.

BRAMBLE JEEM

Medium fey, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 14 (leather armor)

Hit Points 117 (18d8 + 36)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	16 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

Skills Perception +4, Performance +6, Stealth +5

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Elven, Sylvan

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Magic Resistance. Bramble Jeem has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Ram. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 9 (2d4 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Huge Curved Horn. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Javelin of Lightning (1/day). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 14 (4d6) lightning damage. Whether or not the attack hits, each creature in a 5 ft. line between but not including Bramble Jeem and the target (up to 120 ft. away) must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) lightning damage on a failed saving throw or half as much on a successful one.

Javelin. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage. This attack is magical. Bramble Jeem cannot use this action if he has thrown and not recovered the javelin of

lightning.

CORRUPTED TREES

These small trees have been corrupted by the hags' power, warping the normal birches and alders into vile monstrosities. Trees are not meant to walk as men, and the corrupted trees screech and howl as they move. Every step tears their bark and woody cores, resulting in an appearance of dripping strips of rotting bark, weeping sores of sap, and a demonic face twisted in pain. As they amble their way through the woods, these trees have nothing left in life but to vent their tortured hatred on any living creature they find.

CORRUPTED TREES

Medium monstrosities (plant), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 26 (4d8 + 8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	8 (–1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	6 (–2)

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Resistances bludgeoning and piercing attacks from non-magical weapons.

Senses darkvision 60 ft.; passive Perception 10

Languages Sylvan, but cannot speak

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

ACTIONS

Branch Smash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Scream of Pain (recharge 5 or 6). The corrupted tree lets loose a mournful wail of pain. All creatures within 30 feet (corrupted trees are immune to the scream of pain) must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. Those who fail suffer 5 (1d6 + 2) psychic damage and are stunned condition until the end of their next turn while those who succeed take half this damage and are not stunned.

MOLD, BROWN

Found in dark caverns and remote subterranean passages, the brown mold waits patiently for victims to pass. Less than an inch thick but spread over a five-foot patch of stone or wood, the tan to dark-brown mold seeks warmth to help it grow. Small bumps along its surface store thousands of spores waiting to be released into the air.

Any living creature that passes within five feet of the mold is attacked by a cloudburst of millions of spores. Anyone caught within the 15-foot cloud may be overcome by the spores and die within moments. The spores grow within their new host and crawl back to the main body of the mold, reattaching and adding needed nutrients. Each new victim adds another five feet to the mold's size.

The brown mold craves warmth and heat; attacking it with fire heals damage and doubles its size. Cold spells kill the brown mold for good.

BROWN MOLD

Small mold, unaligned

Armor Class 5

Hit Points 5 (1d6 + 2)

Speed 0 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (–5)	1 (–5)	15 (+2)	1 (–5)	10 (+0)	1 (–5)

Damage Vulnerabilities cold, bludgeoning

Damage Immunities fire, poison; piercing from nonmagical weapons

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned, stunned

Senses passive Perception 10

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Fire Friend. A brown mold does not take damage from fire.

Instead, it heals that amount. If the available healing is greater than the brown mold's maximum number of hit points, its maximum hit points increases by that amount.

Cold Sensitive. Magical cold damage instantly and automatically kills a brown mold.

ACTIONS

Spore Burst. The brown mold releases spores that burst out in a cloud that fills a 15-foot cube centered on it, and the cloud lingers for 1 minute. Any creature that ends its turn in the cloud must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 36 (8d8) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Additionally, the target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit points to 0.

BARNABAS AND KEZIAH TATTERLY (POSSESSED)

Barnabas is a middle-aged man with a full, graying beard and a bald pate. He has a hawk-like nose and crow's feet around his eyes, which have a sinister look to them now that he has been possessed by the spirit of one of the Karmley Hags. He dresses in normal attire but doesn't seem to have bathed or changed his clothes in some time. He wears a *sash of the forsaken flock* over his clothing.

Keziah is a rail-thin woman with long brown hair that she keeps in a tight bun. She wears a prim and proper blue dress, buttoned all the way to the top, that is stained with mud and frayed at the bottom. The malevolent look in her eyes is even keener than her husband's and doesn't seem to match the rest of her bearing at all. She wears a *ring*

of swarming claws.

BARNABAS AND KEZIAH TATTERLY (POSSESSED)

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

Armor Class 10 (Barnabas has AC 12 from the sash of the forsaken flock)

Hit Points 5 (1d8 + 1)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	11(+0)	12(+1)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)

Skills Arcana +6, Deception +6, Perception +6, Stealth +3

Senses passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Draconic, Sylvan

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The possessing hag's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). She can cast the following spells and requires no material components:

Cantrips (at will): *dancing lights*, *fire bolt*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*, *vicious mockery*

1st Level (4 slots): *charm person*, *expeditious retreat*, *magic missile*, *sleep*

2nd Level (2 slots): *blindness/deafness*, *hold person*, *web*

3rd Level (1 slot): *glyph of warding*, *lightning bolt*

Mimicry. The hag can mimic animal sounds and humanoid voices. Creatures hearing these sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check.

Possessed. This body is possessed by one of the hag's spirits. The original occupant is aware, but unable to act. While in the body, the hag can animate it even if it should be dead. If reduced to 0 HP, the hag can expend a spell slot to extend its control over the body for a number of rounds equal to the level of the spell slot expended. The hag can continue to animate the body for as long as it can expend spell slots to do so.

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 2 (1d4) slashing damage

Illusory Appearance. The hag covers herself and anything she is wearing or carrying with a magical illusion that gives her the appearance of another creature of her general size and shape. The illusion ends if she takes a bonus action to end it or dies. The change wrought with this effect fails to hold up to physical inspection. Otherwise, a creature must succeed at a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check to discern the hag is in a disguise.

Invisible Passage. The hag magically turns invisible until she attacks, casts a spell, or loses her concentration. While invisible, she leaves no physical evidence of her passage, but can be tracked by magic. Any equipment she wears or carries is invisible with her.

Ring of Swarming Claws (once per day, Keziah only).

An intangible, spell-like effect that resembles a swarm of disembodied, clawed hands crawls over one creature within 30 ft. and inflicts 10 (3d6) slashing damage. If this attack results in the target's death, the victim's body is visibly torn to shreds.

APPENDIX TWO: NEW MAGICAL ITEMS

THE BLACK BREW OF IREM

Potion, very rare

When you drink this horrible-smelling black ichor, you gain the effects of the *clairvoyance* spell. Unlike the normal *clairvoyance* spell, you are capable of seeing into the astral and ethereal planes. The potion is watery and black, with a horrid stench to it, but gives its imbiber a slight sense of euphoria. The effect lasts for ten minutes.

RING OF SWARMING CLAWS

Ring, very rare

This silver ring is fashioned to look like monstrous, overlapping claws clutching each other in a circular pattern. Once per day, the wearer can summon forth an intangible, spell-like effect that resembles a swarm of disembodied, clawed hands that crawl over one creature within 30 ft. and inflict 10 (3d6) slashing damage. If this attack results in the target's death, the victim's body is visibly torn to shreds.

SASH OF THE FORSAKEN FLOCK

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

Long and wide, this black sash is made from fine-quality black wool but is otherwise featureless. Any non-good character wearing it gains a +1 to their AC. In the hands of a character with an evil alignment, this bonus increases to +2. A good-aligned character gains no benefit.

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THE HORROR OUT OF HAGSJAW

Travelers have long considered Hagsjaw a place to avoid.

The town is known to outsiders by whispered tales of witches and strange doings in the old days. Once terrorized by a wretched coven of witches known as the Karnley Hags, the town was held in a grip of fear that saw its citizens oppressed and its children stolen. Anyone who dared oppose the hags was viciously murdered. When the witches were eventually overthrown and hanged in the town square, they muttered a unified curse with their last breaths, promising nothing less than misery and doom for all who remained in Hagsjaw.

That was a century ago, and now Hagsjaw is little more than a forgotten watering hole. Time has not treated the decaying town or its folk kindly; it seems to die out more and more as each generation passes. The farms at the edge of town are empty of cattle and crops, the town's buildings are crumbling, and even the sagging roofs of the abandoned, twin steeple church don't look like they'll hold up much longer. There's little left to suggest that the town hadn't withered away completely... until recently.

