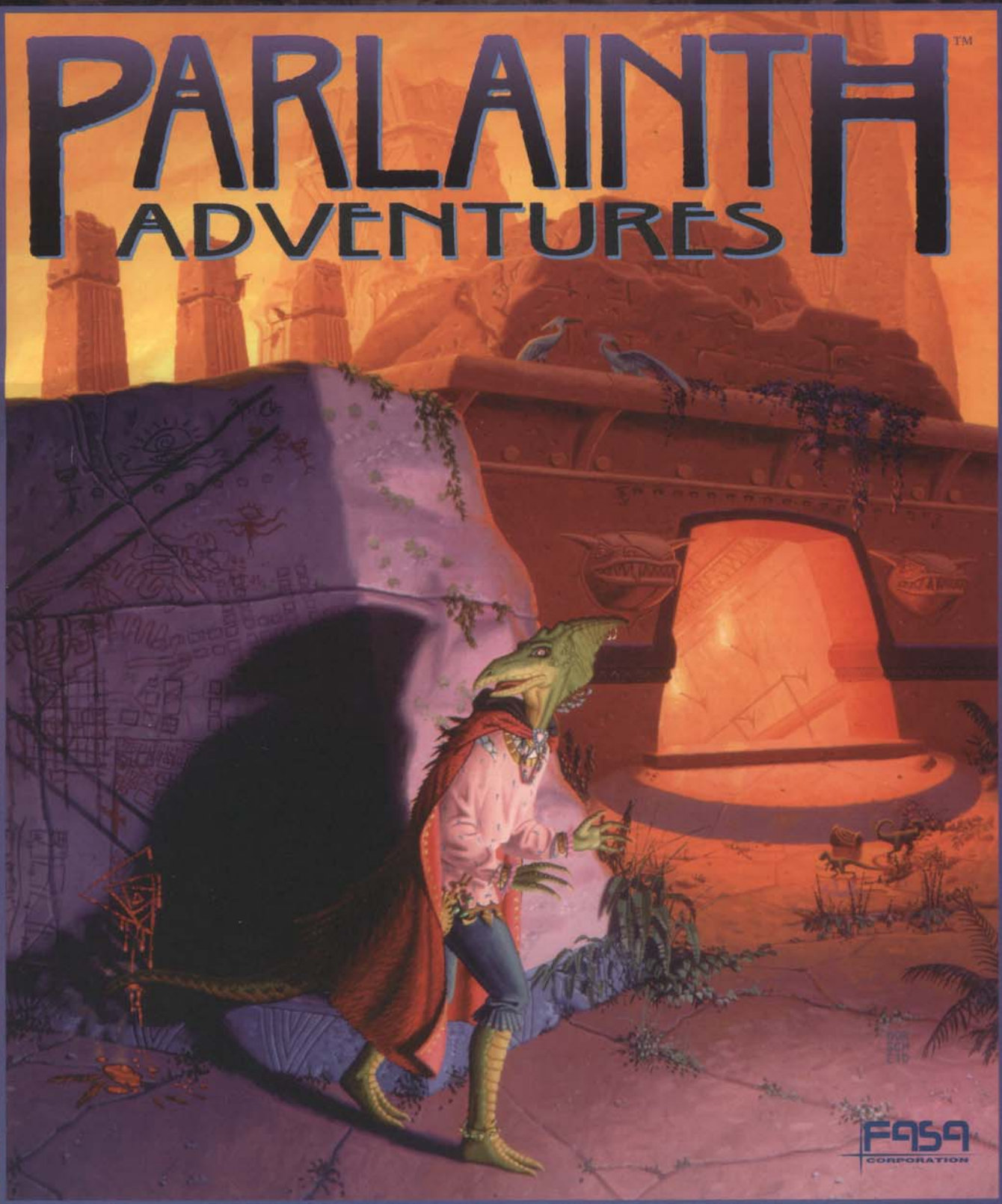


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PARLAINTH™ ADVENTURES



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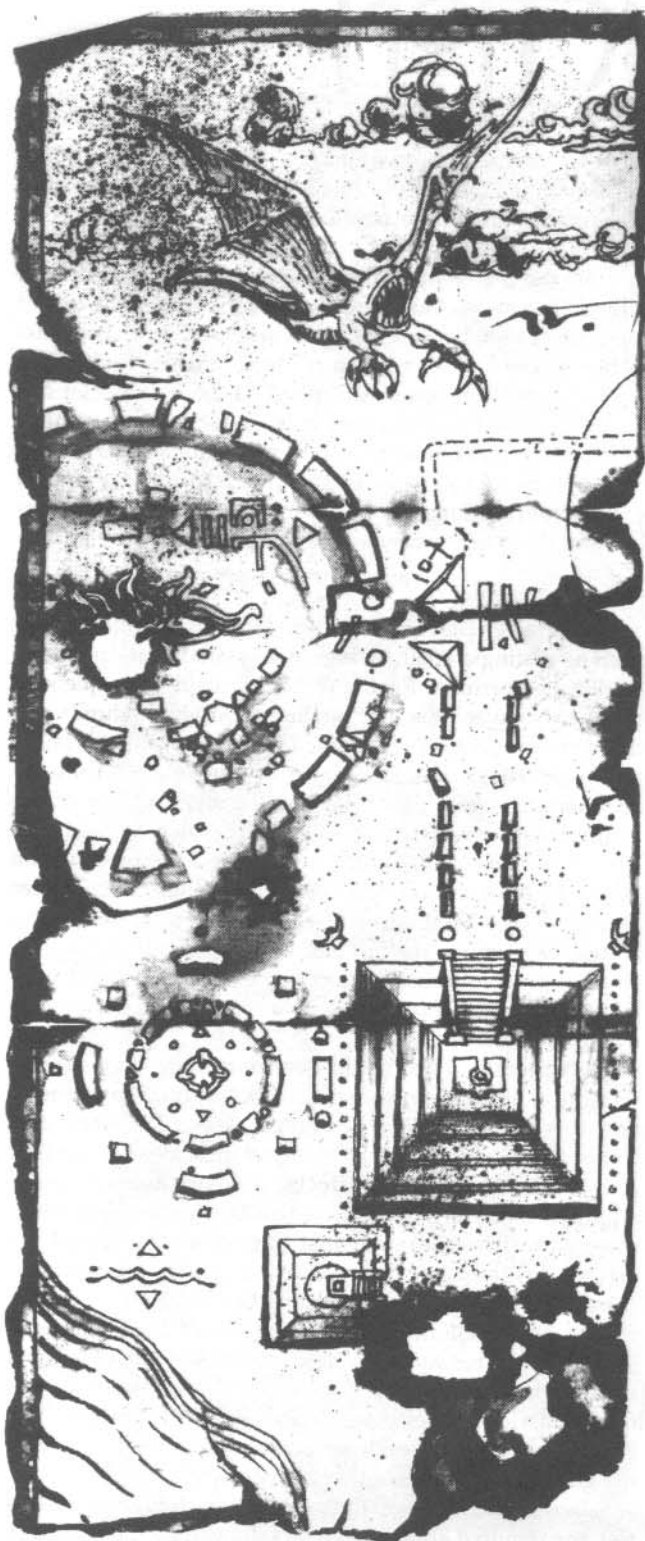
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PARLAINTH ADVENTURES

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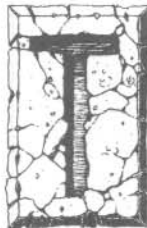
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INTRODUCTION



THOUSANDS OF YEARS ago there existed an age of magic and high adventure, the age of **Earthdawn**. The power of magic flowed freely through the world, and people could draw on magic to perform both wondrous feats and everyday tasks. But the dawn of magic also brought Horrors to earth, creatures from the depths of astral space that devoured all life in their path. For four centuries, the people of earth hid from the Horrors that devastated their land during the time that came to be called the Scourge. Now, the people of Barsaive have re-emerged from their sealed kaers and citadels to reclaim their world from the remaining Horrors and the oppressive Theran Empire. From all across Barsaive, bold heroes arise to explore the world, search for magical treasure, and slay the Horrors that still exist. Magicians spin the magical energies of the universe into powerful spells, and adepts use the magic to enhance their natural talents. Through magic, courage, skill, and daring, Barsaive's heroes strive to heal the world of the scars left by the Scourge and to build their own legends into the history of their land.

Parlainth Adventures is a collection of four short role-playing adventures set in the world of **Earthdawn**. Each of the adventures takes place in or near the ruins of the Forgotten City of Parlainth and the nearby town of Haven. **Blood Pact** takes the characters into the Twists, a portion of Parlainth's ruins where they must confront a Horror that can attack those who touch its blood. In **Dead Man's Hand**, the characters travel into the Eastern Catacombs, the region of Parlainth's undercity where the sinister Queen Twiceborn holds court over Parlainth's cadaver men. The characters must attempt to keep a friend from joining Twiceborn's kingdom of the animated dead. **Desire Box** is a lighthearted adventure set in Haven, in which the characters run across an ancient Theran magical item that brings them face to face with Chorrolis, Passion of Wealth. The final adventure, **Threads**, leads the characters into the magically active passageways of the Western Catacombs, where experiments performed centuries ago by Parlainth's magicians created a powerful Horror known as the Abomination.

GAMEMASTERING NOTES

The adventures in **Parlainth Adventures** are linear—each follows a specific sequence. However, feel free to modify the adventures to suit your particular group of players. Though the encounters of each adventure progress logically, the gamemaster need not follow the adventure precisely as written to run a successful game. To run any of

these adventures, the gamemaster needs a thorough familiarity with the contents of this book, and both players and gamemaster should be familiar with the **Earthdawn** rulebook (ED).

All these adventures include clearly marked sections intended to be read aloud to the players. Adjust the text of these sections when necessary to accurately reflect events as they occur in your adventure; depending on the choices made by different groups of players, the assumptions in the existing text may not always be correct. All adventures in **Parlainth Adventures** are best suited for player characters of varying Circles; a brief introductory paragraph in each adventure suggests an appropriate number of characters and their recommended Circles.

MAKING TESTS

Whenever player characters attempt to take actions such as casting a spell, swinging a sword at an opponent, tracking a Horror, or flirting with a barmaid, the gamemaster or the player rolls dice against a Difficulty Number to determine the action's outcome. These dice rolls are called tests. To make a test, the player or gamemaster rolls the appropriate Action dice based on the step number of the ability being used (see the **Step/Action Dice Table**, p. 36, ED). If the dice roll result is equal to or greater than the Difficulty Number, the test is successful and the character accomplishes his action. If the result is less than the Difficulty Number, the test is unsuccessful and the character fails to accomplish his action. In tests that deal with magic, the dice roll result often determines the duration of a magical effect as well.

Frequently, a test result determines not only success or failure, but the level of success. A test may have one of five success levels: Poor, Average, Good, Excellent, and Extraordinary. A Poor success level indicates failure that causes unpleasant side effects. An Average success—equal to or barely exceeding the Difficulty Number—means that the character just barely accomplished his action. A somewhat better dice roll yields a Good success, and a result close to double the Difficulty Number means an Excellent success. To achieve Extraordinary success requires an even better roll. Any success level greater than Average may give the character some gain for his actions or else valuable extra information. The amount of gain for each success level is determined by the gamemaster unless otherwise noted.

In many cases when the player characters must make a test, the required ability is noted, followed by the Difficulty Number of the task in parentheses. For example, a Perception (13) Test means that a player character must use his Perception ability against a Difficulty Number of 13.







HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Aside from the **Earthdawn (ED)** rulebook, this book contains everything required to run **Parlainth Adventures**. However, the **Parlainth: The Forgotten City** boxed set will greatly enhance the adventures. The boxed set provides much more detailed descriptions of the Forgotten City, its inhabitants, and its history. Gamemasters may also find the **Barsaive Campaign Set**, the **Earthdawn Gamemaster Pack**, and the **Earthdawn Companion** useful. Read the adventures carefully to familiarize yourself with the backgrounds of each before beginning the game. The gamemaster should be familiar with the basic outline of the plot of each adventure as well and know precisely which plot developments trigger later events. As always, be prepared to deal with the unexpected.

Each adventure begins with a prologue story and a brief introduction, followed by a **Plot Synopsis** that summarizes the story background and the most probable course of the adventure. Some adventures include a **Preparing the Adventure** section, which provides any special directions needed for setting up the game. The following chapters, called encounters, describe the situations and events the characters must deal with during the course of the adventure. Each encounter contains five sections: **Overview**, **Setting the Stage**, **Themes and Images**, **Behind the Scenes**, and **Troubleshooting**.

The **Overview** briefly summarizes the action that occurs during the encounter and describes the encounter's main conflict. The next section, **Setting the Stage**, contains a narrative description that the gamemaster reads aloud to the players. The narrative describes the player characters' location and what is happening to them as if the characters were actually there. Any special instructions for the gamemaster here are printed in **boldface** type.

Themes and Images helps the gamemaster set the mood and pacing for a particular encounter. It includes hints about imagery to use in the scene, emotions to convey, sounds, sensations, and so on. The information provided varies in form and content from scene to scene, ranging from general themes to specific sensory impressions.

Behind the Scenes explains what is really going on in each encounter. This section provides the gamemaster with all the information he needs to run the encounter, such as specialized descriptions of locations and events and statistics for gamemaster characters they may meet or creatures they may fight. If the players or gamemaster need a map to play an encounter, it appears here. As with **Setting the Stage**, any special instructions for the gamemaster here are printed in **boldface** type.

The final section of each encounter, **Troubleshooting**, offers suggestions to help the gamemaster get the adventure back on track should things go awry. For example, the characters may miss an important clue or lose a fight that they need to win. Most gamemasters will not want the player characters to get discouraged or killed off too easily.

This section offers the gamemaster options for keeping the game going over trouble spots. Of course, the gamemaster may ignore these hints and invent his own solutions or simply let the chips fall where they may.

Following the encounters, the section entitled **Loose Ends** sums up the consequences of the adventure and suggests ways the gamemaster might use the adventure's gamemaster characters and settings in future adventures. This section also includes **Awarding Legend Points**, guidelines for awarding the adventure's **Legend Points** to the player characters. In **Earthdawn** adventures of standard length, the gamemaster awards Legend Points after each gaming session as well as at the end of the adventure. Because the adventures in this book are designed to fit into a single gaming session, the gamemaster need only give his players an **Adventure Legend Award** (see **Awarding Legend Points**, following). **Cast of Characters** provides game statistics and descriptions for significant gamemaster characters in each adventure, including creatures and/or Horrors. One adventure contains a **Rumors and Research** section, which provides all the information the player characters can obtain from outside sources in the adventure: rumors, tales and legends, library research, and so on. If he wishes, the gamemaster can adapt much of the information in this section to future adventures.

AWARDING LEGEND POINTS

The **Loose Ends** section of each adventure includes guidelines for awarding Legend Points for that adventure. These guidelines for Legend Awards indicate the points the gamemaster awards for each task accomplished or goal reached during the adventures. The **Adventure Legend Award** represents the Legend Points awarded for completing the adventure successfully. For more information on completing adventure goals and earning Adventure Legend Awards, see p. 242, **ED**. In addition, player characters may receive Legend Awards for creative roleplaying and/or heroics, defeating creatures and/or opponents, and finding or acquiring treasure.

For **creative roleplaying and/or heroics**, characters may receive a number of Legend Points for taking certain types of actions listed in each adventure. A single character may only receive one such award during a given adventure. Unlike other Legend Awards, the Legend Points listed for various acts of creative roleplaying or heroics are not divided among the characters.

The **Creature Legend Award** appears in the Creature/Opponent Award Table provided in each adventure. These tables list the available Legend Points for defeating the adventure's creatures and/or opponents, arranged by the type and number of each creature and opponent fought as well as by the number of player characters. The Legend Points listed for each creature represent the total number of points for each type, not the number of Legend Points per creature; for example, the Creature





Legend Award for the ghouls that the characters battle in **Threads**, (pp. 62–77) is 180 Legend Points for both ghouls, not 180 for each one. Divide the total Creature Legend Award equally among the player characters (see p. 242, ED). Round points per character down to the nearest multiple of 10; for example, 500 Legend Points divided by 6 characters equals 83.3 points per character, rounded down to 80 points per character.

Entries marked with an asterisk indicate creatures or opponents that the characters may choose not to fight. If they battle these opponents, add the indicated Legend Points to the total Creature Legend Award and divide that total by the number of player characters.

Characters earn **Treasure Legend Points** by finding or acquiring specific treasures in each adventure. As with points for defeating creatures, divide the Legend Points for each treasure equally among the player characters. If they choose, the player characters may sell certain items for a number of silver pieces equal to the Legend Points that the item is worth.

TOTAL LEGEND POINT AWARD

The Total Legend Point Award serves as a guideline for the gamemaster. He may award more or fewer Legend Points depending on the circumstances of his game, but the total should not vary drastically from the average provided in each adventure.

PREPARING ADVENTURES

It is impossible to create a published adventure that provides the appropriate opposition level for every diverse group of player characters. Some groups are inherently more powerful than others.

Therefore, gamemasters must adjust the game statistics and capabilities of an adventure's opposition to provide an appropriate level of difficulty for his or her group. If an adventure does not suit the player characters' strengths and weaknesses, use it as a blueprint to develop an adventure of your own. Or if it works well except for a glitch here and there, modify the plot or events to make the adventure a better one.

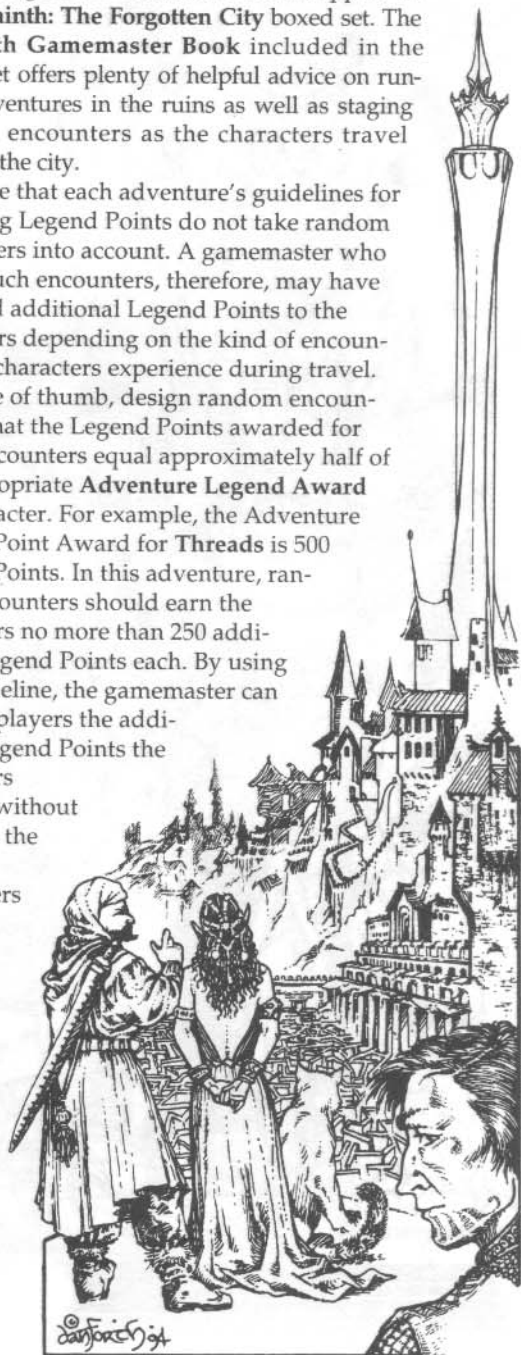
Keep in mind that you, the gamemaster, have a unique responsibility to make the adventure exciting, keep the players involved, and hold the story on track. In describing the world of **Earthdawn**, try to answer all the players' questions about what the characters see, hear, touch, smell, and taste. Feel free to go beyond the descriptions provided in this book when evoking places and moods. To keep the players connected to the action, ask "What do you do?" each time you describe a new scene. By having to describe what they want their characters to do, the players help to tell the story and add to their own enjoyment. If the players wander from the storyline, nudge them back in the right direction. If the players make choices that interrupt the story or make them miss a vital clue, drop hints to encourage them to do what the adventure requires.

Remember, however, to keep it subtle. A good gamemaster guides the players; he does not tell them what to do.

TRAVELING THROUGH PARLAINTH

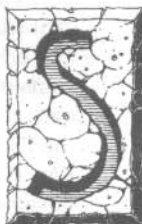
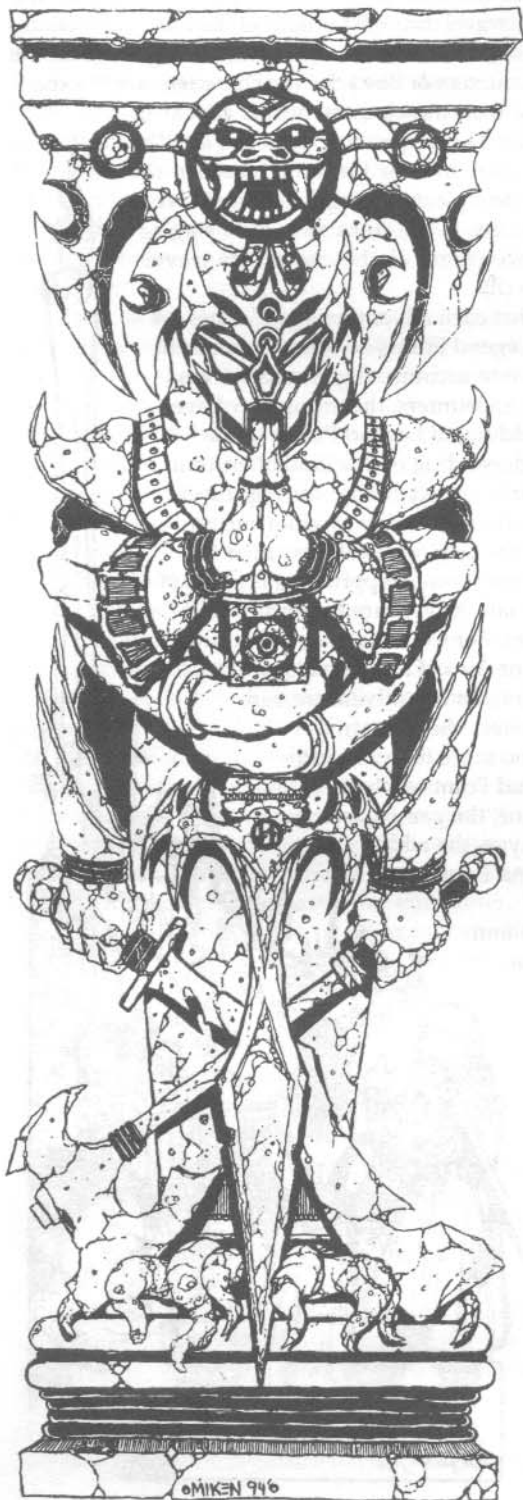
Three of the four adventures in this book require the characters to travel through portions of the ruins of Parlainth. The adventures themselves include little background on the ruins or encounters or obstacles the characters might experience during such travel; those details appear in the **Parlainth: The Forgotten City** boxed set. The **Parlainth Gamemaster Book** included in the boxed set offers plenty of helpful advice on running adventures in the ruins as well as staging random encounters as the characters travel through the city.

Note that each adventure's guidelines for awarding Legend Points do not take random encounters into account. A gamemaster who stages such encounters, therefore, may have to award additional Legend Points to the characters depending on the kind of encounters the characters experience during travel. As a rule of thumb, design random encounters so that the Legend Points awarded for those encounters equal approximately half of the appropriate **Adventure Legend Award** per character. For example, the Adventure Legend Point Award for **Threads** is 500 Legend Points. In this adventure, random encounters should earn the characters no more than 250 additional Legend Points each. By using this guideline, the gamemaster can give his players the additional Legend Points the characters deserve without allowing the random encounters to make up too large a portion of the total Legend Points the characters earn for an adventure.





MESSENGER



SEKRA SKIDDED TO a halt in the gray street, thumping her tail hard against the large, cracked paving-stones to keep her balance. The smells of stale ale, rich food, and unwashed trolls drifted toward her from the inn across the way.

The feathers of Sekra's once-fine cloak stuck out at odd angles from her broad body, giving her a bedraggled look she would never have tolerated before last night, before the carnival and the clown. Sekra ripped a few of the larger feathers from her cloak and searched frantically for the thick leather pouch she had carried away from the carnival. If she had lost it, the clown would know. He would take her back to the music and the pain.

With a fluttering gasp of relief, Sekra pulled the pouch forward from its place behind her now-empty scabbard. Her sword, Browbeater, had fallen—she no longer cared where. Somewhere near the clown, she thought. The clown, just like the clown who had come to her village years ago and hit her and hit her when she wouldn't laugh at his antics. Now she laughed! Oh, how she laughed!

Giggling softly, Sekra opened the pouch and stabbed the handful of feathers into it. As she reached upward toward a bare spot on the wall looming in front of her, Sekra's claw-tipped fingers shook so hard that she almost dropped the feathers. Giggling harder, Sekra pecked at herself furiously with the tip of her snout, praying that the pain would force her to greater awareness. She must hurry before the clown found her. He could be anywhere, anywhere at all.

Sekra alternated giggles and sobs as she sketched rapidly with the feather on the map that covered the wall. Her noises made an odd counterpoint to the sounds of friendly conversation and occasional laughter that floated toward her on the early morning air. Deep inside Sekra's mind, a small portion of herself gazed critically at her frenzied handiwork. Before last night, she would not have drawn such a map. It lacked flair, panache; she could not bring herself to draw the swirls and elaborate symbols that would have marked the drawing as her creation. A raw sketch drawn with a few wilted feathers ... ah, how far had her art fallen!

Sekra's final flourish sent her stumbling backwards as she threw her makeshift brush aside. Her work gleamed malevolently at her, its dark lines shimmering in a sliver of sunlight. Still giggling and sobbing, Sekra ran wildly down the road. She disappeared in the distance, the echoes of her mad laughter drowned out by the noise of yet another brawl at the Restless Troll.







BLOOD PACT



BLOOD PACT TAKES place in the adventurers' town of Haven and the ancient, ruined city of Parlainth. The adventure is best suited for a group of six to eight players using Second or Third Circle adept characters. Though linear in structure, **Blood Pact** allows the characters to reach their goal by several different routes. The

gamemaster should familiarize himself with the entire adventure before beginning the game, paying particular attention to the Horror known as the Mindtrap.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

For the past several years, a Horror known as the Mindtrap has crept through the ruins of Parlainth toward the town of Haven. It currently resides near the center of the section of Parlainth known as the Twists. Two days before the adventure begins, a small band of explorers stumbled across the Mindtrap. Though they fought it bravely, all save one of their number perished. The Mindtrap drove the survivor, a t'skrang troubadour named Sekra, half mad before letting her go with a bag of its blood. It also planted in her mind the irresistible suggestion that she must somehow dispose of the blood in such a way that the residents of Haven would come into contact with it. The Mindtrap can ensnare the psyches of those whom its blood touches, and through Sekra it hopes to mentally enslave Haven's citizens.

Unknown to the Horror, Sekra retained just enough of her courage and sanity to slightly alter the creature's orders. Using the tainted blood, Sekra sketched on Haven's famous Map Wall a rough

drawing of the Mindtrap's lair and its approximate location in the Twists. Hoping that her act would keep the Horror from tormenting her while not endangering the people of Haven too greatly, Sekra flees home and hides.

The characters come into the adventure as they leave (or pass by) the Restless Troll one morning and happen to notice two small children playing near the Map Wall. Just after passing the children, the characters hear one of them cry out. Rushing to the children's aid, the characters discover that the younger child has passed out after touching a strange-looking, glistening paint. The adventurers take the child home and leave him in his mother's care, then proceed to find out everything they can about what caused his plight.

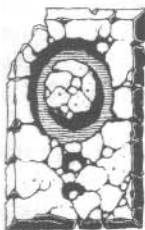
By questioning the elder child and employees at the Restless Troll and by examining the Map Wall, the adventurers learn that a t'skrang troubadour named Sekra painted an addition to the wall just that morning. The characters go to Sekra's house and confront her. Though they find her difficult to understand in her half-mad state, the characters find out that the child's collapse was caused by the blood of a Horror. The characters decide to spend the night in Haven and hunt the Horror in the morning, taking Sekra with them to help locate the Horror's lair.

Just as the adventurers are about to set off the next morning, a questor of Garlen tells them that the children's mother has succumbed to the same mysterious affliction. The characters journey into the Twists and confront the Horror. After defeating it in a fierce battle, the characters return to Haven to find the boy and his mother miraculously restored to health.





FROM THE MOUTHS OF BABES



VIEW

IN THIS ENCOUNTER, the characters must aid an innocent child endangered by the terrible effects of a powerful Horror's blood. The encounter takes place at the Map Wall in Haven, near the Restless Troll inn, and provides the first clue to the existence of the Horror known as the Mindtrap.

SETTING THE STAGE

Your bellies filled with a luscious, hot breakfast, you stroll out of the Restless Troll. The bright morning sun makes you squint; you definitely had one too many ales last night. As you wander down the sunwashed street, the aromas of spicy food and fresh air mingle delightfully. What a morning for adventure! A perfect day to explore yet another part of the great city of Parlainth ...

As you settle your packs around your shoulders, your gaze falls on the Map Wall opposite the Restless Troll. Various adventurers—some successful, others mere survivors—have painted a rough map of Parlainth on the wall. Old hands in Haven have told you that the map has a color and symbol scheme for easy reading, but that's about as true as the promise of snow in Urupa. As far as you can tell, every explorer who ever lived to tell his tale had his own ideas about which symbols and colors represent what. In some places on the map the sketches, corrections, and additions blend into an incoherent mass. Other stretches of wall are eerily empty.

Two small human children, both clad in pants and shirts a bit too big for them, are playing by the wall. They seem to have just finished a game of "Horror Hunt"; the smaller child has dropped his "magic wand" and the older one is putting down her wooden sword. The sight of them brings back memories that make you smile briefly. Turning away from the children, you take a few steps down the dusty road. Time for childhood memories some other day; today you have exploring to do, heroic deeds to perform, great treasures to find (if you're lucky ...)

A piercing scream breaks your reverie.

Whirling around, you see the little boy collapsed at the foot of the Map Wall. The girl is shaking her playmate's shoulders and crying out for help. She looks up from her companion, her frightened eyes meeting yours as she cries, "Please, oh please help my brother!"

When the characters go to the children, read the following:

The little girl cradles the boy's unconscious body close, shaking with terrified sobs. As you approach, she

gazes pleadingly at you and wails, "Please make my brother better! I told him he'd get in trouble if he touched it, but he never listens to me! I'm the oldest and I have to take care of him, but I can't make him wake up!"

THEMES AND IMAGES

The theme of this encounter is the vulnerability of youth and the responsibility of the strong to protect the weak. Emphasize how small the children look crouched beside the huge Map Wall, with the empty street stretching to either side of their tiny, huddled bodies. Make the adventurers feel compelled to aid these helpless innocents.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The boy, Jasom, is a fragile-looking six-year-old. He touched the Mindtrap's blood, which the maddened t'strang Sekra used to draw on the wall just minutes earlier. The Mindtrap can pull the psyche of anyone who touches its blood into its foul mind, and now Jasom's mind is lost within the Horror's vast miasma. Unless released from the Horror's grasp, Jasom slowly withers away and dies within a month. Only the Mindtrap's demise releases the Horror's innocent victim.

Jasom's sister, Jezra, is eight years old. She is trying hard to be brave, but she desperately needs help for her brother and his sudden collapse has shaken her badly. Though she tries to answer any questions the adventurers may ask, she wants more than anything to get Jasom home to the children's mother. If the adventurers ask too many questions or take too long searching the immediate area, Jezra begins to cry very hard and screams, "I want my mother! Take us home! Why won't you help my brother?" and the like.

Jezra provides the following information if asked, though she can only answer two or three questions before fear and shock get the better of her. Once home, Jezra calms down enough to answer any remaining questions the adventurers wish to ask.

If the characters ask Jezra what her brother touched or what he was doing, she says, "We were playing Heroes and pretending to go to the places on the map where real heroes fight monsters and Horrors and get treasure and everything. Jasom was the wizard and I was the sword-master. He was tracing the map with his fingers when we saw the new paint. I told him not to touch it or we'd get in trouble, but he touched it anyway. Now he's going to die and we'll never get to be heroes!" As she finishes speaking, the girl bursts into tears.

If the adventurers ask whether Jezra saw the painter, she says, "I don't know. We saw a t'skrang running down





the road when we were walking up to the wall ... the t'skrang kept laughing, but it almost sounded like she was crying, too." If the characters ask which direction the t'skrang went, Jezra points down the road in the opposite direction from where the characters had been heading.

If the adventurers ask whether Jasom has ever collapsed before, Jezra answers, "No—Jasom's tough, like me. Even when he was playing swordmaster with mommy's knife and cut himself, he didn't faint. He didn't cry much when daddy didn't come back, neither."

If the characters ask Jezra about her family and home, she answers, "We live real close to here—on the other side of the Restless Troll. Please help me get my brother home. I'll help you carry him, even!"

If the characters ask Jezra any other questions about her family or what happened, she merely shakes her head dazedly and asks again for help.

If the characters examine Jasom, read the following aloud:

The little boy is unconscious. His breathing is shallow but steady, and his eyes have rolled back into his head. He does not respond to his sister's cries or your attempts to revive him. His face, arms, and clothes are smudged with dirt, and he is covered by an assortment of small scrapes and bruises common to any child his age. He also has a small smudge of fresh paint, or perhaps fresh blood, on one finger.

The "paint" is the Mindtrap's blood, which rubbed off on Jasom's finger when he touched the Map Wall. Because it has already trapped Jasom, it is no longer active and so can be wiped off without harm to the adventurers, but removing the blood has no effect on Jasom. He remains unconscious as long as the Mindtrap is alive and in Barsaive.

If the characters investigate the Map Wall, read them the following:

At first the Map Wall looks no different today than on any other day ... until you spot a hastily-drawn sketch of a building. The sketch covers some notes about the section of Parlainth called the Twists. The building appears either half-burned or only partly built, and a large "X" has been painted just beneath it. The dark, red-black lines gleam darkly up at you, as if the paint is still wet.

If the characters examine the paint closely, they notice that it resembles blood. If the characters attempt to wipe off the blood, they find that only a small layer of the substance rubs off. Nothing can remove the blood entirely until the Mindtrap is destroyed or flees this plane of existence.

Touching the blood still on the wall poses a risk for the adventurers. Unlike the blood spot on Jasom's finger, the blood on the Map Wall remains active and therefore hazardous. If one of the characters touches the Mindtrap's blood, make a Spellcasting Test for the Mindtrap against

the character's Spell Defense. If the test is successful, the character feels nauseated. Bright lights flash in his head and he gets the distinct impression of a place of infinite horror. Normally, the unlucky character would be trapped in the Horror's mind; however, the adventuring group should not be split up at this point in the adventure. For now, simply allow the character to feel the Horror's power without succumbing to it. For more information on the Mindtrap and its abilities, see **Cast of Characters**, p. 22.

If the characters examine the road or attempt to track down Sekra, read them the following:

A few small drops of blood-paint and feathers make a zig-zagging trail away from the wall. Unfortunately, the trail disappears after a dozen yards or so. You gaze down the road, but see no sign of a fleeing t'strang. The road is surprisingly empty of people today, and the t'strang the children saw left no clue to indicate where it might have gone.

If a character uses the Tracking talent to find Sekra's trail, he or she must make a Tracking Test against a Difficulty Number of 9 (Sekra's Spell Defense). If the test is successful, the characters can follow the path Sekra took from the Map Wall to her home. If and when the characters visit Sekra, go to **It's a Mad, Mad World** (p. 15).

CHECKING FOR RUMORS

If the characters question anyone about the t'skrang, they may be able to discover some important information. By questioning the patrons and employees at the Restless Troll, the characters discover that one of the employees, an ork waitress named Grezza, saw a t'skrang troubadour named Sekra painting on the wall early that morning. Sekra is a regular customer at the Restless Troll and Grezza lives only a few blocks from her.

TROUBLESHOOTING

The only possible problem in this encounter occurs if the characters refuse to help Jasom and Jezra. Presumably the characters are heroes by temperament and will therefore rush to the children's aid. Should they react indifferently to the children's plight, have an old woman pass by and beg the adventurers to aid the children. If they still refuse, the woman scolds them, calling them a shame to all adventurers and to Barsaive. If neither the desperation of the children nor the words of the woman can sway the characters, resort to tougher measures.

Over the next few days, have the adventurers hear that Jasom's mother and Jezra have both lapsed into mysterious comas. If these events do not make them investigate what happened, the adventure is over. A week later, the characters hear tales of a brave band of heroes who entered Parlainth and battled a fierce Horror, saving the lives of Jasom's entire family and earning the everlasting respect of the residents of Haven.





HEARTH AND HOME



VIEW

IN THIS ENCOUNTER, the player characters go to Jezra and Jasom's home, where they meet and question the children's mother, Audra. Jezra may also give them a little more information about her brother's condition.

SETTING THE STAGE

Jasom's body feels light in your arms, so light that you almost can't believe you are carrying a little boy. The thought that something evil may have touched this little innocent turns your stomach. As you stride through the streets of Haven, the people you pass stare at Jasom in concern. Jezra runs ahead, beckoning you to follow.

Within a few short minutes, you arrive at a small house with a bright green door and shutters. The house is one of many similar homes in this part of Haven—ages ago, they housed the citizens of Parlainth. Jezra steps up to the door and glances back briefly at her brother, then knocks on the door and calls out to her mother. You mentally brace yourselves for the difficult task of breaking the awful news of the child's collapse. Seconds later a dark-haired woman in her early thirties opens the door with the first phrases of an oft-repeated scolding already on her lips. The harsh words fade to silence as the woman sees you and your companions. As her eyes settle on the small bundle in your arms, she gasps and snatches the boy from you. "Jasom!" she cries, then shoots you a glare tinged with fear. "What have you done to my son?"

THEMES AND IMAGES

Audra's house is a tidy, warm, loving abode. Its tranquillity should contrast with and heighten the pain, shock, and fear in this encounter. No matter how hardened the adventurers may be, they should feel for this small family. For evil to strike the lives of innocent people who live quietly and do harm to no one should strike them as monstrously unfair.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Audra is Jasom and Jezra's mother. Though clearly very worried about her young son's condition, Audra stays reasonably calm. She is a strong and

intelligent woman who has managed to make a decent living in a hard town, and her behavior reflects this tough-mindedness.

Once Jezra and the adventurers explain to Audra what happened, Audra becomes almost unnervingly calm and says, "We'll just have to find some way to get Jasom back. I will not lose anyone else I love to this horrible city." If asked what she means by that comment, Audra briefly tells the story of her husband Albren's death at the hands of cadaver men somewhere in the ruins a little over a year ago.

Audra does her best to answer any questions the characters have, though she can tell them very little. She also holds Jezra while the little girl cries for awhile. After that, Jezra becomes calm enough to answer any questions she couldn't answer before. Jezra is certain that the t'skrang she and Jasom saw was writing on the wall just before she fled.





If the characters ask whether fits or spells of unconsciousness run in the family, Audra says that she has never heard of such a thing, but admits she doesn't know much about her late husband's background.

If the characters do not immediately offer to aid Jasom, Audra says quietly, "Please find a way to help my son. I can give you little beyond supper and a place to unroll your pallet, but I can promise you a strange item that belonged to my husband. I know nothing whatever about it, but he told me it was magical." The item is a butterspider box. (For a complete description and statistics for this treasure, see **Treasure**, p. 25.)

After settling her son into bed, Audra asks a neighbor to find a questor of Garlen. The questor, an elf woman named Bethany, arrives within half an hour but cannot help Jasom. She views Jasom's condition with grave concern, certain that it is the work of a Horror or other vile creature. The most Bethany can do is comfort the family and keep Jasom's body functioning.

TROUBLESHOOTING

This encounter should provide few problems for the characters. As long as the adventurers do not act haughty

or indifferent to Jasom's condition, Audra and Jezra both cooperate as fully as they can. The characters may decide not to continue aiding the family, but Audra is a very persuasive woman and the children only strengthen her position. If necessary, have Audra offer the characters all the family's silver (32 pieces) in a final attempt to enlist their aid. If no plea or offer of payment works, the adventure is over. The characters hear what happens to the family later as described in **Troubleshooting**, p. 12 of **From the Mouths of Babes**.

The characters should have a few ideas about how to begin their search for whatever Horror or creature is tormenting Jasom. If they have not thoroughly examined the area around the Map Wall, they may return there. Alternatively, they may question workers and patrons at the Restless Troll inn (see **From the Mouths of Babes**). If the characters have already questioned these people, they may already know where Sekra lives. If they decide to seek out the t'skrang, go to **It's a Mad, Mad World**, p. 15. The adventurers may also decide to head toward the section of the Twists represented by Sekra's map, where the Horror may have its lair. Such an action is probably premature, but the characters may still win the day if they are clever and lucky. In this case go to **Twists of Fate**, p. 19.





IT'S A MAD, MAD WORLD



INTERVIEW

THE CHARACTERS FIND Sekra and question her about the blood she used to paint on the Map Wall. They may gain some valuable information about the Mindtrap also. If they treat Sekra well, she may volunteer to guide them through the Twists to the Horror's lair.

SETTING THE STAGE

Hurrying along Haven's streets, you pass buildings that existed long before the coming of the Horrors and others built just last week. Haven's cheek-by-jowl combination of ancient permanence and newborn vitality impresses you as always, though today you have no time to stop and savor it.

As you turn one last corner, you spot the house Greeza described to you. A large handpainted flag depicting a t'skrang symbol of song and a collection of birds' nests cover the gently sloping roof of the house, making it stand out even in the jumbled buildings of Haven. The house looks quiet; you can't tell whether the t'skrang troubadour named Sekra is inside.

THEMES AND IMAGES

Though a Horror has caressed Sekra's mind and left considerable damage in the wake of its touch, the t'skrang has managed to cling to a shred of her former self. Emphasize the sense of bravery in the face of madness and also the feeling of "there but for the grace of God go I." In Sekra, the characters meet an adventurer no different than they—save that she has faced the creature they are seeking. The striking difference between the talented troubadour of a few days ago and the pathetic t'skrang now struggling for sanity should give the characters pause.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Sekra has already begun to feel horribly guilty about painting the Mindtrap's blood on the Map Wall, for she knows exactly what kind of death awaits those sucked into the Horror's foul mind. She is still fighting off the madness the Horror inflicted on her, and when the characters approach Sekra's home she is sorting and re-sorting her collection of counting stones. These stones, used by merchants of most races to keep track of the value of their merchandise, come in a variety of colors and carved shapes. Sekra, however, cares nothing for their beauty at the moment. By counting them over and over, she is attempting to keep her mind off the events of the last few days.

She believes she can do nothing to avenge her slain friends or save anyone else from the Mindtrap.

If the characters knock or otherwise advertise their presence, they hear a sudden crash and a hissing sound from inside the house. Any sudden noise or movement startles Sekra, and she reacts accordingly. If the group continues to knock, Sekra calls out frantically, "I won't take down the nests. I must protect my birds from what I have seen!" If the adventurers try the door, they find it unlocked. Eventually Sekra will open the door and exclaim, "Don't stand out there like that. The clown might see you!"

MEETING SEKRA

When the player characters enter Sekra's house, read the following to them:

Inside, the tiny house looks as cluttered as the nest-covered roof. Shelves line the walls from ceiling to floor, stuffed with a remarkable profusion of materials. Scrolls and tomes of all kinds cover one entire wall; other shelves hold various curiosities from across Barsaive, including a collection of dwarf-made drinking mugs, several rolled-up t'skrang river banners, various small slabs of carved stone, a few statuettes, and countless other odds and ends your overwhelmed eyes can't even begin to identify. A stone drum sits on the floor beside several elven flutes, a windling fiddle, and several odd t'skrang instruments called *k'lingra*, which resemble wings of hammered metal.

Standing near the center of this room is a female t'skrang wearing a ratty cloak of multicolored feathers that must once have been exquisitely beautiful. Now its ruined finery is merely depressing. The t'skrang somehow reminds you of her cloak; bedraggled and pitiful, but possessing the last shreds of an inquisitive wit and noble spirit. This t'skrang must be the one the children described. You watch her almost pityingly as she moves stones from pile to pile, her movements rapid and jerky.

If the characters attack Sekra, read the players the following:

As you approach the unknown t'skrang with your weapons drawn, she sinks to the floor with a hissing groan. Hugging herself, the t'skrang repeats over and over again, "Don't let the clown eat me! Don't let the clown eat me!" This pathetic, mad painter may not be as dangerous as you first surmised ...

If the characters attempt to talk to Sekra, read the players the following:

The t'skrang sinks down onto a pile of pillows, a small cloud of feathers fluttering around her and then drifting to





the littered floor. Her bright green head crest seems to sag as she dispiritedly pushes the small stones from pile to pile. Sighing, she says, "I suppose you've come from the clown? Well, you can tell that bloat-ball of a Horror that Sekra fixed his wagon!" Sekra glares up at you, gripped by a brief spark of defiance.

Questioning Sekra

If the characters ask Sekra about her past adventures and/or her dead companions, devise whatever information works best for your campaign. Consider making one of Sekra's dead companions someone the characters have met and liked during a previous adventure; such a coincidence adds to the continuity of the campaign and also further motivates the characters to seek out and destroy the Mindtrap.

Sekra rambles a bit throughout her conversation, tossing out odd bits of information that seem to have nothing to do with the subject at hand. Her experiences with the Horror and the loss of her friends have virtually shattered her, and she is barely holding onto her sanity. Despite her trauma, Sekra volunteers to show the characters the Horror's lair if they treat her well, saying, "The terrible song of that place is too close to my heart to ever let me forget. I could find it with my eyes closed." Sekra is afraid of the Mindtrap, but she is also furious at what the Horror took from her and will take any chance to avenge her loss.

If the characters ask Sekra about the Map Wall, read the players the following:

"I had to paint it because the clown told me to take his paint and paint it on everyone—but I didn't take my first dip in the river yesterday, you know! I painted all over where that ooze-pus lives, that's what! I painted over him, I did. Now I'm counting everything with my counting stones. Aren't they pretty?"

If the characters ask Sekra about the clown, read the players the following:

Sekra grows suddenly still, only the top of her head crest quivering slightly. Breathing softly, she leans close to you and whispers, "He'll eat me right up if he finds out what I painted on the wall, he will. He'll suck me right out of my head and he won't spit me out again, no he won't. He's so round and slow ... we didn't think it would be so hard. None of us did. And now I'm all alone except for my nests and birds and coins and ... it doesn't matter. Nothing matters. It killed my friends, but not me. I have to stop it!"

If the characters ask Sekra the clown's Name, read the players the following:

"Hah! You don't think I'm smart enough to get the clown-blob's Name out of him. I can tell by how you look at me. Wrong! Wrong! Wrong! Mindtrap is his Name ... Mindtrap the clown. I'm a troubadour ... I always find out the Names of the great enemies I fight, so that I can add a

proper flourish to the tales I tell. At least ... I did once ... I'm not sure anymore."

If the characters mention Jasom's condition to Sekra, read the players the following:

The t'skrang stares at you, then suddenly begins to cry softly. "Poor little thing. Shouldn't have touched the blood-paint, poor little mite. Just like Ella and Jo'aradin and the rest. Poor lad, he must be so frightened. I hope he finds a blanket to cover himself before the clown finds him and chews him up for good."

If the characters ask what Sekra did with the blood, read the following:

"I buried that blood-paint somewhere east of here. Or maybe west. Or north ... well, I buried it, anyway. You don't want it. It doesn't belong in anyone's collection of anything."

If the characters suggest fighting the Mindtrap, read the following:

Sekra's crest shakes as she grabs a small handful of her counting stones and holds them out to you with a fierce grin. "Inside or out, you can bring something special to bear. I left Browbeater behind—but if you have something that's bound to you and you to it, well, you can bring it inside with you when the clown swallows you. I wielded Browbeater until the clown snuck up on me. He was covered in Jo'aradin's blood. I don't remember very much after that except its mouths and slicers and the blood, blood everywhere ..."

TROUBLESHOOTING

If the characters insist on attacking Sekra, have the troubadour snatch up a chair and try to block the adventurers' blows. All the time, she keeps asking why they are attacking her and if the clown sent them. They should swiftly realize that the poor woman is not in her right mind and poses no threat. If the characters continue to attack, Sekra attempts to escape. Under no circumstances does she attack the characters; she fears they may come from the clown and she does not wish to touch their blood for fear of falling back into the Horror's mind. Sekra is very confused and does not realize that such fears are groundless.

If the characters give any hint of their intent to search for the Horror, Sekra volunteers to accompany them at least as far as the outside of the ruined house where the Mindtrap lives. She does not insist on going if the characters are reluctant to take her. They will find their task easier if they accept Sekra's offer, but they can find the house without her help. Sekra also offers to draw another map for the characters, but they will not find it much more helpful than her scrawls on the Map Wall. Go to **Sleeping Sickness**, p. 17.





SLEEPING SICKNESS



OVERVIEW

IN THIS ENCOUNTER, the characters discover that Audra has slipped into a coma similar to Jasom, but that she does not appear to have touched any strange blood. Bethany, the questor of Garlen, tells the adventurers the Horror may be using the ties of blood to feed on Audra.

Completing all the encounters up to this point will take the adventurers into the late afternoon, and so they may want to stay in Haven overnight before venturing into the ruins. Unless the characters stay somewhere entirely

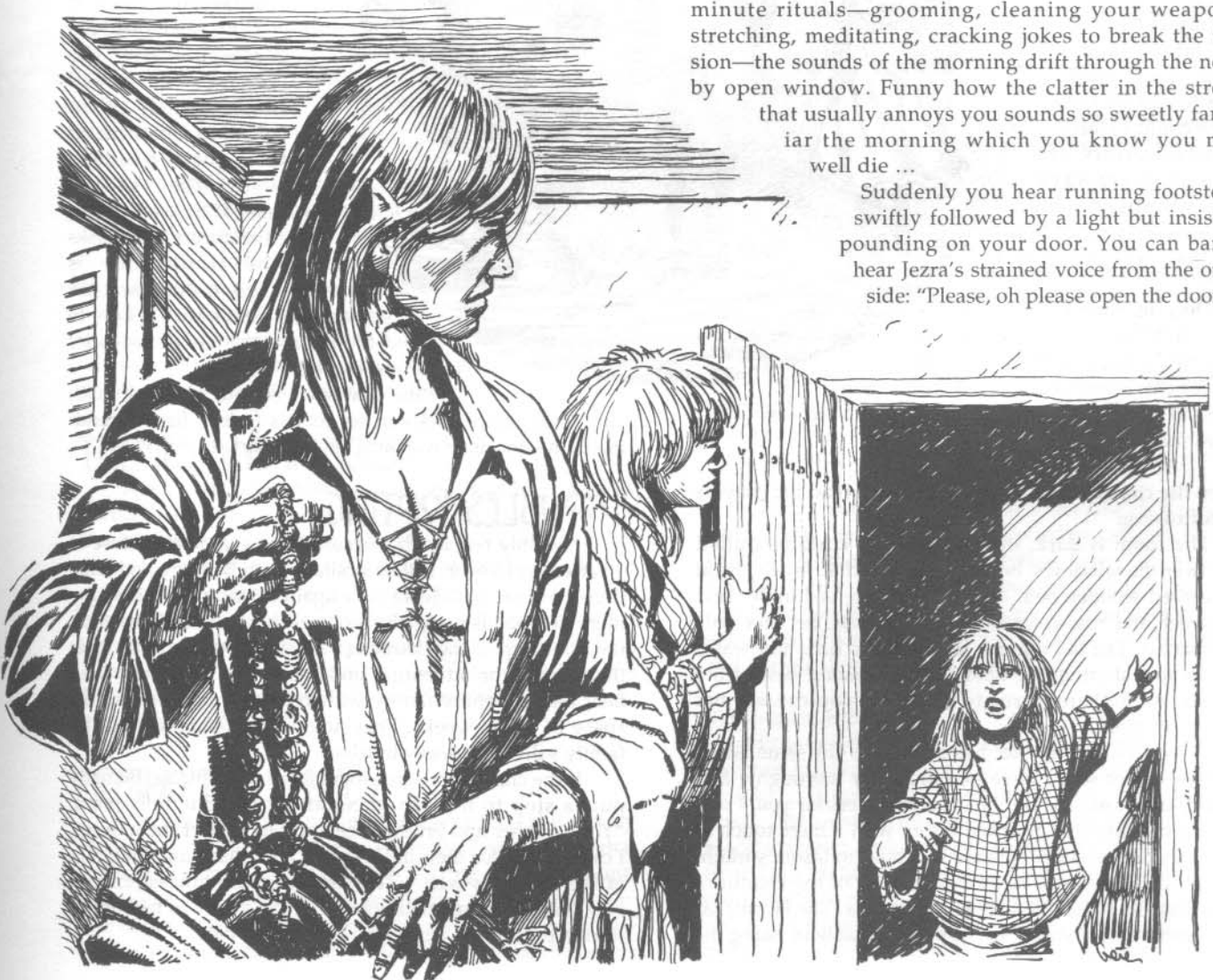
unknown to Jezra, such as Sekra's house, they find the little girl at their door (or by their beds if they decided to spend the night at Audra's house). Otherwise, Jezra runs into the characters on a street near her house as they set out on their mission.

If the characters have already chosen to track down and destroy the Mindtrap, the gamemaster may skip this encounter.

SETTING THE STAGE

The waiting is almost over; there's nothing left to do but make your final preparations for your expedition into Parlainth. As you begin your own personal last-minute rituals—grooming, cleaning your weapons, stretching, meditating, cracking jokes to break the tension—the sounds of the morning drift through the nearby open window. Funny how the clatter in the streets that usually annoys you sounds so sweetly familiar the morning which you know you may well die ...

Suddenly you hear running footsteps, swiftly followed by a light but insistent pounding on your door. You can barely hear Jezra's strained voice from the other side: "Please, oh please open the door!"





BEHIND THE SCENES

When the characters open the door they find Jezra standing outside. She is breathing hard, her face pale. She grabs the nearest adventurer's hand and tries to pull him (or her) along with her, saying, "Bethany—the questor—sent me for you. You've got to come quick. She said it was very important. Please hurry!"

Jezra will not take no for an answer. If questioned, she says only that Bethany stayed with Jasom last night and that in the morning she went to talk to Jezra's mother. A minute or so later Bethany came out of Audra's bedroom and told Jezra to run as fast as she could to fetch the adventurers. If pressed, Jezra says she glimpsed her mother still lying in bed and that Bethany looked upset.

Once Jezra and the characters reach her house, she leads them inside and calls Bethany. Bethany tells the characters to come to Audra's room in the back of the house, but orders Jezra to stay where she is.

When the characters enter Audra's room, read the players the following:

The room is dark, the rose-colored curtains pulled shut over the windows. Bethany sits in a chair by the head of a carved wooden bed. Audra lies on the bed under several green and rose-colored woven blankets, her face pale and relaxed. The tall questor immediately rises and walks over to you, shutting the door to block Jezra's view of her mother. As Bethany turns to face you, you can see her news is not good.

"I fear Jasom's mother has fallen into the same sleeping state as her son. I have examined her thoroughly and asked Garlen's advice, but I have no answers for you. I suspect the creature that attacked Jasom with a mere touch of its blood has somehow extended its hold to Jasom's mother. I am certain Audra has touched none of the creature's blood, yet she has all of Jasom's symptoms. The Horror, as this creature must surely be, appears capable of using the

ties of blood-kin to entrap more victims ... and there is no reason to assume it will stop with Audra." Bethany pauses and glances at the door, behind which Jezra waits.

"You must stop this Horror," she continues. "I would go with you if I could, but my place is here. Go with Garlen's blessings—I wish you success."



The characters may examine Audra briefly if they wish, but find no evidence of foul play or blood of any kind. She appears to be sleeping.

When the characters leave Audra's room, Jezra takes one look at their faces and says, "My mother's going to die too, isn't she?" in a small, quavering voice. If the adventurers reassure her, she shakes her head uncertainly, then offers to join them on their quest. Needless to say, they should refuse. If Sekra is with the adventurers, Jezra asks why the troubadour is allowed to go. If the characters explain that Sekra knows how to find the Horror, this answer satisfies Jezra (just barely).

As the characters set out for the Twists, any who glance back can see Jezra's forlorn figure standing in the doorway watching them depart.

TROUBLESHOOTING

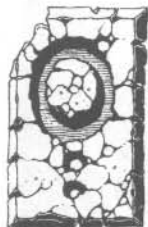
The only real trouble occurs if the characters refuse to go after the Horror. If they hesitate, both Bethany and Jezra urge them on, with Jezra once again offering to accompany them. If Sekra is there, she too urges them to find and fight the Mindtrap. If the characters absolutely refuse to go after the Horror, the adventure ends here. The characters later hear that the entire family withered away and died in the space of a few weeks. True adventurers should find the family's deaths a heavy burden.

If the characters agree to let Jezra come along, Bethany puts a stop to it in no uncertain terms. She tells Jezra, "Your mother and brother need you to protect them, Jezra. I cannot care for their inner spirits and guard and take care of the house as well." This argument convinces Jezra to stay put; she wants nothing more than a way to feel useful during this family crisis. Go to **Twists of Fate**.





TWISTS OF FATE



VIEW

HERE THE CHARACTERS confront the Mindtrap after a winding, dangerous journey through part of the Twists. If the characters succeed in destroying the Horror, they save Audra, Jasom, and Jezra (who will be the next struck down if they fail).

They will also win undying respect from the hard-bitten citizens of Haven.

SETTING THE STAGE

Truly, the Twists are aptly named. Rows and rows of buildings rise up on either side of you as you travel down the narrow streets; the lanes wind and loop and circle back on themselves unexpectedly until you no longer know which direction you are facing. You gaze at every structure you pass, seeking one that bears a resemblance to the house Sekra painted on the Map Wall. So far, all the buildings look intact.

Then again, you might be seeing the same buildings over and over again. The constant curves make you dizzy, and you cannot tell where you are in relation to anything else. As you wander onward, the air seems to grow chilly, as if in dread expectation of the approaching battle with the Horror. Assuming, of course, that you can find your way through this tangled maze of buildings and alleyways without falling prey to the ghouls and other foul creatures rumored to live in this part of Parlainth ...

THEMES AND IMAGES

The Twists are a maze of curving, winding, narrow streets lined with blocks and blocks of identical buildings. The silence and deadness of the place, the confusion produced by the sameness of the streets, the constant chill, and the occasional strange noise should heighten the players characters' feelings of terror. They are searching for a lethal Horror and death could come at any time. Who wants to meet his end in a godforsaken place like this? (See the **Parlaint: The Forgotten City** boxed set for further background on the Twists.)

BEHIND THE SCENES

If Sekra has accompanied the characters, she is very talkative until the adventurers enter the Twists. After that point the t'skrang grows pensive, playing with her counting stones and occasionally mumbling about the clown. She hesitates often as she leads the characters through the Twists, even reversing course a few times. If the characters

ask Sekra whether she really knows where she is going, she insists that she does. Though the characters may believe themselves hopelessly lost, Sekra remembers where to find the Mindtrap's lair and leads the characters to it in only two hours.

If the characters did not bring Sekra along, they have a harder time finding the Mindtrap's lair. Characters with the Tracking talent or skill may be able to retrace Sekra's original path out of the Twists by making a successful Tracking Test against Sekra's Spell Defense (9), with a +10 modifier added to that Difficulty Number to reflect the sheer difficulty of tracking anything in a bewildering environment like the Twists.

If the adventurers cannot retrace Sekra's steps, they must wander through the Twists in a hit-or-miss search for the half-built or burned building Sekra drew. In this case, have each character make a Perception Test against the Mindtrap's Physical Defense (13), with a +5 modifier to reflect the confusing surroundings. If any of the characters' tests are successful, the adventurers find the Horror's lair in 2D10 hours.

FACING THE HORROR

When the characters enter the Mindtrap's lair, read the players the following:

The old house looks completely empty, neat and pristine. Somehow you had expected a pile of rubble, or bricks left behind by its long-dead builders. But the house holds nothing but shadows ... and skittering out of those shadows toward you is the bloated form of a creature, eight or nine feet long, its rippling skin the texture of a rotten melon.

Gaping maws all over what looks like its head open and close as the Horror comes toward you on four spidery, knotted legs that end in sharp spikes. Open cuts and sores dot the Horror's body, and its mouths bubble with bloody drool. As you draw your weapons, the monstrosity draws one of its spikes along its side, opening another wound and coating the spike with fresh blood.

Battling the Horror

However the characters enter the Mindtrap's lair, the creature is lying in wait for them. The Mindtrap fights as craftily as it can, using every ability and spell at its disposal. The creature tries hardest to hit characters with its blood-covered spikes; such a strike allows it to use its Soul Trap ability to drag the adventurers' minds into its own. If this happens, the gamemaster must run the external and internal combat simultaneously. One way of doing this is to remind both groups of players—those bat-





ting inside the Horror's mind and those fighting its body—that they do not know what the other characters are doing. Alternatively, the gamemaster may place players whose characters are inside the Mindtrap in one room and players whose characters are fighting outside in a second. This strategy can be very dramatic because the players in one room have no idea what is happening to the players in the other. However, two-room play can be difficult to balance. Only attempt it if you feel comfortable running fast-moving battles in two different rooms. Keep split-room play to a minimum to avoid player frustration and gamemaster burnout.

Before running this battle, find out the characters' (not necessarily the players') deepest fears. Whenever the Mindtrap sucks a character's mind into itself, the Horror takes the form of the creature or person it senses will most horrify its victim. It often toys with its victims for weeks at a time, but the characters are too dangerous to play with (particularly if any of them have magic weapons); the essences of such weapons wielded within its mind can do the Horror as much harm as a physical attack.

No matter how many psyches are trapped by the Horror, none of them ever sees the others. Each individual faces his own fear and each must battle a different demon, though all damage done to the Mindtrap is cumulative.

Except for its spike attacks, which only work against external opponents, the Mindtrap can use all of its abilities against any opponent, inside or out. For the Mindtrap's game statistics and descriptions of its abilities, see *Cast of Characters*, p. 22.

The Mindtrap has surprisingly little treasure, only a finely wrought, rune-covered frost pouch (p. 274, ED) containing 358 silver pieces.

TROUBLESHOOTING

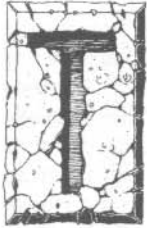
The biggest problem in this encounter occurs if the Mindtrap defeats the characters. If the characters appear to be in trouble, the gamemaster can have Sekra charge into the fray; she has found her magic sword, Browbeater, in the trash near the house and swings it at the Horror with furious abandon. If the characters left Sekra behind, she can still save them; she has followed them to see the Mindtrap destroyed. Though crazed, she remains a competent fighter and has the advantage of having fought the Mindtrap before. Screaming out florid t'skrang battle cries, Sekra attempts to chop off the creature's spikes.

If the characters have few or no magic weapons or other means of attacking the Mindtrap from the inside, the gamemaster may allow normal unarmed attacks to work against the Horror.





LOOSE ENDS



THE INFORMATION IN this section wraps up the adventure's loose ends, suggests ways to use story elements and characters from **Blood Pact** in future **Earthdawn** adventures and campaigns, and provides game statistics for the Mindtrap and Sekra.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

If the characters succeed in destroying the Mindtrap, a joyous celebration greets them upon their return to Haven. Both Jasom and Audra have recovered, and Bethany gives them a clean bill of health. Jezra, grinning from ear to ear, hugs each and every member of the party and swears to become a great hero just like them. Jasom also appreciates the adventurers' heroism, though he remembers little of his ordeal inside the Mindtrap. As a token of her gratitude, Audra insists that the characters take the magical butterspider box that belonged to her husband (which she may already have offered as payment in **Hearth and Home**, p. 13). Audra also tells the characters they are always welcome in her home. If Sekra is still alive, she begins to retreat out of her madness and shows every sign of eventually recovering fully.

If the characters fail in their quest, they have either died or been forced to flee the Horror. If all the characters get killed, the gamemaster may want to re-examine the level of adventure his players and their characters are ready to handle. If the Mindtrap beat back the characters but left them alive, the Mindtrap flees deeper into Parlainth. The characters may still be able to track the Horror, but there is no guarantee that a second attempt to kill the Mindtrap will succeed. If the adventurers give up on destroying the Mindtrap, Jasom, Audra, and Jezra live on for weeks in a state of constant mental torture before their weary minds collapse and they finally die. The characters should find their failure a hard burden to bear; they may want to find a way to atone for this disgrace, perhaps performing a mission for Garlen or some similar escapade.

AWARDING LEGEND POINTS

As stated in the **Introduction**, **Blood Pact** is a short adventure meant to take place in one game session and so awarding Legend Points is a simple process. The Adventure Award for **Blood Pact** is 250 Legend Points. Award Legend Points for the actions listed below. For more information on completing adventure goals and earning Adventure Legend Awards, see pp. 6-7 of the **Introduction** and p. 242, ED.

Creative Roleplaying and Heroics

Each of the characters should receive Legend Points if they take the following actions:

Helping the children	100
Not harming Sekra	30

Defeating Creatures

The Mindtrap is the only creature the characters face in this adventure. Destroying the Mindtrap earns the adventurers 4,725 Legend Points, which should be distributed evenly among all the players.

Treasure

The characters should each receive 125 Legend Points for obtaining the frost pouch and the same amount for the butterspider box.

TOTAL LEGEND AWARD

Based on the figures listed above for each Legend Point Award, a single character who completes **Blood Pact** receives an average of 1,100 Legend Points. This average assumes 7 players in a group and does not include points earned for battling optional opponents or finding extra treasure placed by the gamemaster.

CAMPAIGN IDEAS

The following characters and story elements from **Blood Pact** can be modified easily for use in further adventures. Feel free to use the information in whatever way you see fit in your **Earthdawn** campaign.

First and foremost, the characters may have gained two new treasures—the butterspider box and the Mindtrap's frost pouch. They may want to learn about these wondrous items; their pursuit of this knowledge opens up a host of opportunities for interesting and exciting storylines.

If Sekra survives and recovers, she becomes a fast friend of the characters. A well-trained troubadour adept, Sekra knows a great deal about the legends of almost all the peoples of Barsaive and so can become a source of many adventures. For example, she may ask the adventurers to help her acquire a certain artifact, a task that may entail many perils. Alternatively, Sekra might disappear while performing such a dangerous errand alone, prompting her new friends to search for her.

Jezra and Jasom both wish to become adventurers, and if a campaign lasts long enough, Jezra may apprentice herself to one of her personal heroes. Also, Audra is an attractive and interesting woman who might become a love interest for a character.





Finally, if the Mindtrap escapes the characters they may soon hear of another family struck down by the Horror's dreadful powers. If the characters refuse to face the monster, they should never be able to truly feel themselves heroes.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

This section provides information and game statistics for the Mindtrap and Sekra. If necessary or appropriate, the gamemaster may change some of these statistics to suit the abilities of the player characters in his game. The gamemaster characters are presented in order of general importance to the story.

MINDTRAP

The Mindtrap is a large, melon-shaped creature the color of spoiled cream. Its body is covered with open wounds and sores, which the Horror has inflicted on itself so that any who attack it risk coming into contact with its dangerous blood. The Horror has many eyes and several mouths placed at random around its body; it can see in all directions and can speak through any one of its bleeding maws, though the blood that bubbles and froths on its lips makes the Mindtrap's words a bit hard to understand. The Horror uses its four powerful arms to propel itself. Each arm ends in a large spike, which the Horror uses both to move and to attack. Before making a spike attack, the Mindtrap coats the spikes in its own blood. If a bloodied spike hits a character, the Horror can use its Soul Trap power to engulf the victim's mind (see *Soul Trap*, p. 24). In addition, the Mindtrap can use a few Wizard spells.

The Mindtrap nesting in Parlainth was trapped within that city for the duration of Parlainth's retreat from the world. Ever since Parlainth's magical

return to Barsaive, the Mindtrap has been slowly creeping closer to Haven, anticipating a glorious feast on the great number of minds ripe for the harvesting that it senses in the town. It has fed on many adventurers in the past ten years or so, but it constantly desires more minds to toy with and destroy.

The Mindtrap's latest ploy, to which the unfortunate Sekra fell victim, has been to Horror-mark and torture any adventurer unfortunate enough to stumble on the Horror's lair. In Sekra's case, the Mindtrap "spit out" her partially intact mind and sent her back to Haven with a bag of its blood to spread everywhere she could. The Mindtrap hoped others would touch the blood, enabling the Horror to harvest victims without having to lure them directly to its lair. Unfortunately for the Mindtrap, Sekra carried out its wishes almost too well, drawing a map of its nesting place on Haven's Map Wall.

Attributes

DEX: 4 STR: 14 TOU: 18
PER: 15 WIL: 20 CHA: 12

Initiative: 6

Number of Attacks: 4

Attack: 10

Damage: 16

Number of Spells: 3

Spellcasting: 18

Effect: See below

Death Rating: 72

Wound Threshold: 15

Unconsciousness Rating: 65

Karma Points: 19

Physical Defense: 13

Spell Defense: 10

Social Defense: 12

Armor: 12

Mystic Armor: 7

Knockdown: 28

Recovery Tests/Day: 6

Combat Movement: 25

Full Movement: 50

Karma Step: 16

Powers: Corrupt Karma 18, Damage Shift 20, Horror Mark 15, Soul Trap 18, Spells: see below

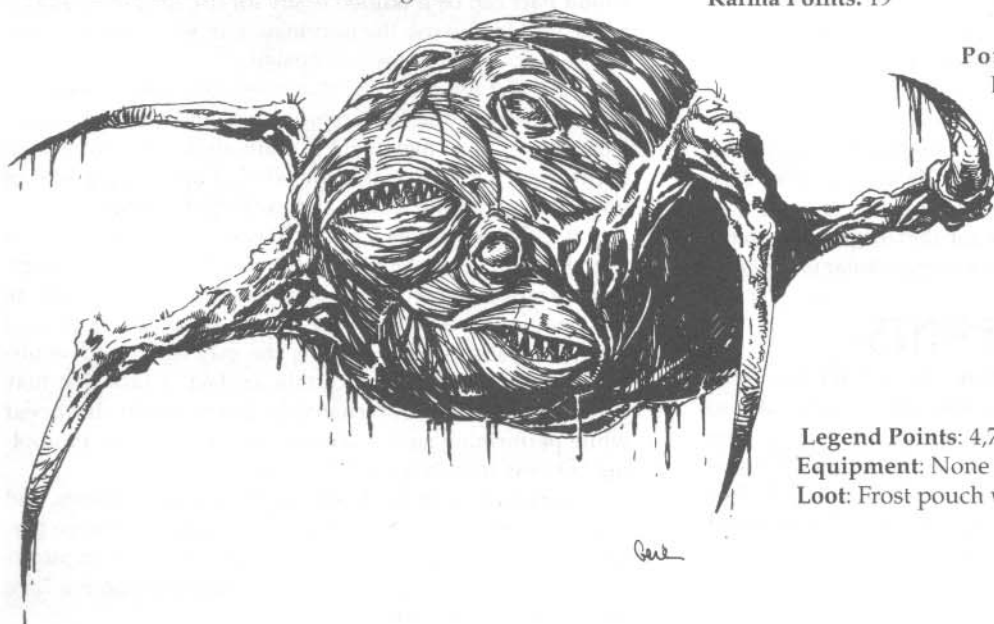
Spells

Blood Boil
Crushing Will
Razor Orb
Seeking Sight
Thorny Retreat
Vines

Legend Points: 4,725

Equipment: None

Loot: Frost pouch with 358 silver pieces







Soul Trap

In order for the Horror to use this power, the Horror's victim must first come into contact with a spoon-sized drop or larger of the Horror's blood. Once the blood touches the victim, the Horror makes a Spellcasting Test against the target character's Spell Defense. If the Spellcasting Test is successful, the Horror may trap the victim's spiritual and intellectual essence within its own mind. When this occurs, the victim's body falls into a coma and the Horror can begin feeding off the trapped mind in its grasp. The Horror feeds by sending various mind-creatures from the victim's past, usually from his or her childhood, to attack the victim. These mental phantoms do no actual physical damage to the victim, but can cause his physical self to die by shattering his mind. As extensions of the Horror's mind, the mind-creatures have the same attack abilities as the Horror's physical form.

All damage done to a victim in the Horror's mind disappears if the Horror is killed before the victim's soul dies. If the victim receives enough mental damage to kill him, however, his inmost self dies of terror. On occasion the bodies live on for up to a month, but the victim remains catatonic even if the Horror is killed before the victim's body dies. The essence of the victim's mind is ripped into pieces, and no known methods of healing can cure such wounds.

SEKRA

A female t'skrang troubadour, Sekra spent most of her adventuring career in and around Haven. Hearing of the fabled city of Parlainth as a young girl, Sekra dreamed of carving her own place in the legends of Barsaive by setting out on wondrous adventures and making great discoveries. During the past nine months, Sekra appeared to be achieving her goal until her small group of adventuring companions stumbled on the lair of the Horror known as the Mindtrap. Sekra's companions all met horrible deaths at the ends of the Mindtrap's spikes, but the Horror spared Sekra so that she might carry some of its tainted blood back to Haven. Fighting the Horror-induced madness, Sekra maintained just enough of her natural intelligence and bravery to paint a picture showing the Horror's location in the hope that some other adventurers might find and kill it.

Sekra is a Third Circle troubadour. However, she is currently in no shape to use any of her natural abilities and hard-won skills. Though her grip on sanity has slipped severely, her mind may heal with time and care.

Attributes

Dexterity (16): 7/D12
Strength (14): 6/D10
Toughness (13): 6/D10
Perception (17): 7/D12
Willpower (14): 6/D10
Charisma (18): 7/D12

Talents

Disguise (2): 9/D8 + D6
Emotion Song (1): 8/2D6
First Impression (3): 10/D10 + D6
Item History (1): 8/2D6
Karma Ritual (3)
Melee Weapons (2): 9/D8 + D6
Mimic Voice (2): 9/D8 + D6



Movement

Full: 70
Combat: 35

Skills

Artisan/Storytelling (2): 9/D8 + D6
Knowledge/T'skrang Lore (1): 8/2D6
Acrobatics (1): 8/2D6

Initiative

Dice: D8

Karma

Dice: D8
Points: 15

Combat

Physical Defense: 8
Spell Defense: 9
Social Defense: 11
Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 0

Damage

Death Rating: 35
Wound Threshold: 9
Unconsciousness Rating: 27
Recovery Tests/Day: 2
Recovery Dice: D8

Equipment

Adventurer's kit
Broadsword Browbeater, currently lost
Counting stones
2 Daggers
Pan pipes
3 days' trail rations





TREASURE

The characters may obtain two magical items during the course of **Blood Pact**—a butterspider box and a frost pouch. A description of a butterspider box follows. For a description of frost pouches and guidelines for using magical treasures in a campaign, see **Magical Treasure**, p. 268, and **Workings of Magic**, p. 136, in the **ED** rulebook.



BUTTERSPIDER BOX

Maximum Threads: 1

Spell Defense: 12

This treasure consists of two parts: a rusted tin box and the healing butterspider inside. The butterspider is a fist-sized piece of lard (not butter, as its common name indicates) sculpted into the shape of a wolf spider with a remarkable degree of fine detail. Though the butterspider can heal, the magic allowing it to do so actually comes from the rusted tin box.

When first discovered, the tin box contains an intact butterspider. Player characters can use this butterspider to speed the healing of an injury. When the spider is touched to the injury, the victim gets a free Recovery Test. Each such use partially melts the butterspider, and it may not be used again unless replaced within the tin box, where it reforms. The healing magic does not work unless the user of the item has at least one thread attached to the box.

Thread Ranks

Rank 1 Cost: 200

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the box and must know to attach the thread to the decrepit box rather than the lard sculpture.

Effect: The butterspider gives a free Recovery Test to any victim whose injury it touches. This power can only be used once per day per person. Also, if a character with a thread woven to the empty box puts a fistful of lard in it, a new spider forms if that character sacrifices a Recovery Test.

Rank 2 Cost: 300

Effect: The butterspider adds 3 steps to the free Recovery Test it gives to any victim whose injury it touches. This effect may be combined with the effects of other magics, but may only be used once per day per person.

Rank 3 Cost: 500

Key Knowledge: The user must compose and memorize a short verse explaining why the spider is a symbol of life and healing. The poem must be recited without error when sacrificing a Recovery Test to re-form the butterspider; an error in the recitation means that the butterspider produces only the Rank 2 effect. The user must recite the poem each time he or she re-forms the butterspider.

Effect: The butterspider adds 6 steps to the free Recovery Test it gives to any victim whose injury it touches. The butterspider also adds the same number of steps to any effort to dispel lingering negative magic, including Horror powers. This power can only be used once per day per person.

Rank 4 Cost: 800

Effect: Same as Rank 3, but the spider adds 9 steps to the free Recovery Test and Dispel Magic Test, if applicable. This power can only be used once per day per person.

Rank 5 Cost: 1,300

Deed: The user must vow to never knowingly harm a spider, even in self-defense. If the character breaks this vow, the tin box and butterspider vanish, reappearing in a random location in Barsaive. Though the user may not know it, the vow does not include jehuthra because they are not spiders (despite their strong resemblance to arachnids). This Deed is worth 500 Legend Points.

Effect: Same as Rank 3, but the spider adds 10 steps to the free Recovery Test and Dispel Magic Test, if applicable. The user may attempt to regenerate a destroyed or severed appendage or organ, such as a limb withered by the *Wither Limb* spell (p. 180, **ED**), no matter how long it has been damaged. This power can only be used once per day per person.

Rank 6 Cost: 2,100

Effect: Same as Rank 5, but the spider adds 11 steps to the free Recovery Test and Dispel Magic Test, if applicable. This power can only be used once per day per person.

Rank 7 Cost: 3,400

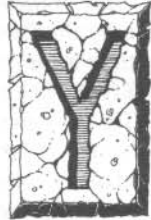
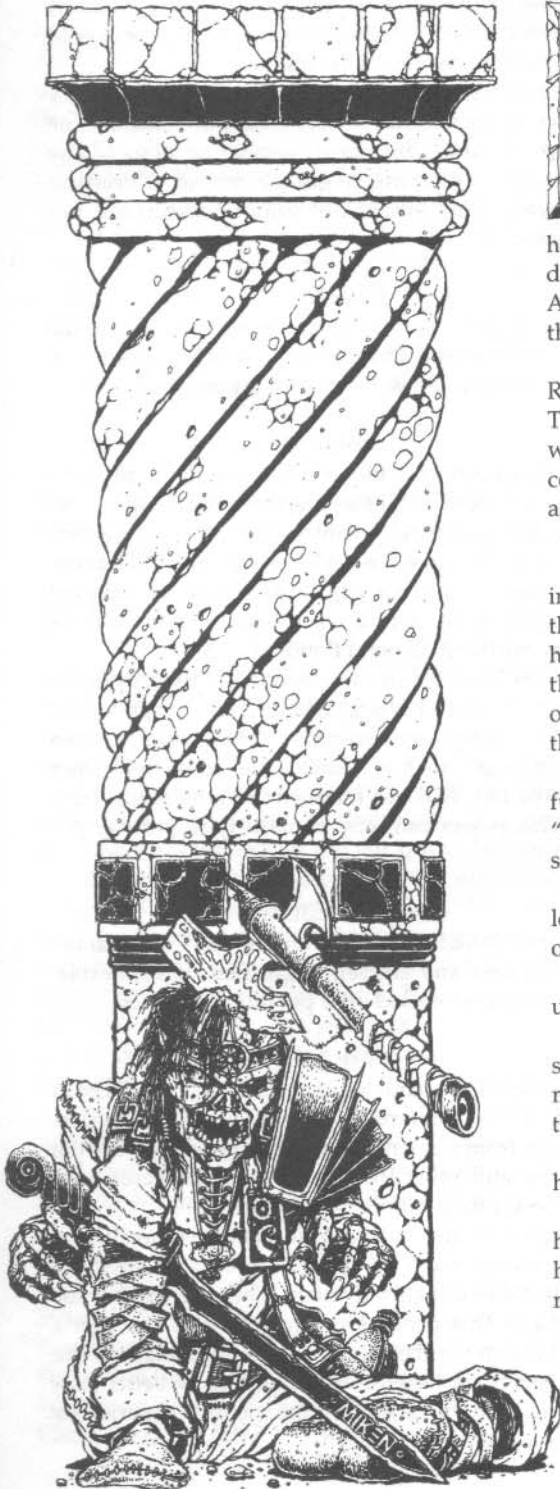
Key Knowledge: The character must learn that the Passion Garlen created the butterspider, and must hear the butterspider's Name from Garlen's own lips. In exchange for the name, Garlen will most likely send the character on a quest, exact vows from him or her, or both.

Effect: A touch of the butterspider may restore life to undead creatures such as cadaver men and spectral dancers or to those unnaturally alive. The step number for the test used in this process is equivalent to the user's Recovery Test step number plus 11 steps, made against the undead being's Spell Defense. An Excellent or better success cures the insanity caused by the victim's experiences as an undead monster.





THE UNGRATEFUL DEAD



YOU SPEAK LIKE a frightened old woman, Redshears. Can you not see? We have a kingdom to gain and nothing at all to lose."

"You speak of *we*, but even with the slowed wits of a cadaver man I can see that you only think of your own power and prestige," Redshears told the tall figure standing next to him. Some others had already declared their allegiance to this Lenethriel, Redshears thought to himself, but the newcomer had not yet convinced him. After all, the elf had only joined the ranks of the dead only some months ago, and already he spoke of changing the old ways. And if Queen Twiceborn discovered the plot, well, Redshears cared not to think what might happen.

"I came to you because I know that you are not like all the others, Redshears," the elven cadaver man said. "I am the first to admit that Twiceborn has ruled the Kingdom of the Dead justly, the first to recognize what she has done for the undead. But her time has passed. She has grown too complacent, like too many others. Why should we settle for this?" Lenethriel asked, gesturing toward the dark surroundings.

"Twiceborn has a plan, even now ..." Redshears started.

"Yes, I know of Twiceborn's plan, but do you see any results?" Lenethriel interrupted. "The Queen gains a new subject here or there, a mere handful in the course of a year if she's lucky. I will raise an army of cadaver men that will have those pitiful Havenites quaking in fear. I, er, *we* have the power, we have the ability to do this *now*. The only thing that holds us back is Twiceborn's own fear and shortsightedness. Surely you are an intelligent being and can see this."

"I do not know, Lenethriel," the second cadaver man said, as he glanced furtively about for any who might overhear the treasonous conversation. "Some of your words ring true, but the Queen has many followers, and if she should learn ..."

"Damn the Queen," Lenethriel whispered fiercely. "Suppose she does learn of the growing sentiment against her. Suppose the old fish-face learns of our plans. What is the worst she can do? *Kill* us? We're already half dead!"

"Really, I must be going, Lenethriel," Redshears said as he spied two figures approaching. "But I will think on your words."

"Yes, do that, my friend. Think about them and I am sure that you will see the wisdom of what I say and join the cause. And remember, we will be meeting during the carnival. It will provide an opportunity for you to meet the others who have already pledged their support to our great endeavor."

"Yes, of course. Until then, Lenethriel," the second cadaver man said as he walked away.

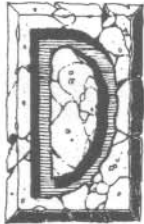
He is frightened like the others, Lenethriel thought to himself. But when he sees that others have already joined the cause, it will give him the courage he now lacks. And as our numbers increase, others too will overcome their mindless fears, and I will take my rightful place as ruler of the dead.







DEAD MAN'S HAND



DEAD MAN'S HAND takes the characters into the realm of Twiceborn, Queen of the Cadaver Kingdom in the Eastern Catacombs of Parlainth. The adventure is best suited for a group of six to eight Second or Third Circle characters of any Disciplines.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

During the first months of Haven's existence, town founder Torgak the troll and his people were extremely vulnerable to attack from the denizens of Parlainth's ruins—particularly from the cadaver men who lived in the Eastern Catacombs. To safeguard his fledgling town, Torgak made a deal with Twiceborn, the Cadaver Queen. In exchange for her agreement to stop raiding Haven, Torgak agreed to allow Twiceborn's people to enter Haven unmolested on one night each year, as long as they harmed no one. On the 13th day before the winter solstice, cadaver men could walk the streets of Haven from dusk to dawn under the protection of Torgak's men. The cadaver men initially exercised this right, but Twiceborn called a halt to the practice more than ten years ago. A few cadaver men have shown up every other year or so since then, but most Havenites have forgotten all about Torgak's deal.

The cadaver men give the Havenites a vivid reminder of the pact a few days after the player characters arrive in town; hordes of cadaver men come up to the surface and stage a carnival for the living. During the carnival, a close friend of the player characters makes a fool's wager at a gaming tent run by cadaver men. He loses at a card game, only to find out that the forfeit is his life; the loser of the game must become a cadaver man!

The player characters must rescue their comrade by entering the kingdom of the cadaver men and dealing with Twiceborn. Assuming they are smart enough to try to solve the problem diplomatically, the player characters should be on hand just in time to quell a revolt against Twiceborn. If they prove themselves her friends by helping put down the revolt, Twiceborn calls off the ceremony to slay their fellow adventurer and resurrect him as a cadaver man. Instead, she lets all of them go free with a reward of the gamemaster's choosing—possibly a bit of information that leads the player characters into another adventure of the gamemaster's devising.

PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

To allow gamemasters to easily integrate this adventure into an ongoing Parlainth campaign, we have left the identity of the Havenite who bets his way into Twiceborn's realm up to the gamemaster. The gamemaster may use Sendric (see *Cast of Characters*, p. 42), or a character of his or her own creation. The player characters should have an attachment to the unlucky gambler before this adventure begins—the character should be someone they want to rescue. Gamemasters using Sendric should introduce him a few sessions ahead of time. Have him do a big favor for the player characters, such as providing them with information, interceding with someone on their behalf, perhaps even saving their lives.

The adventure as written assumes that gamemasters are using Sendric. Those using other gamemaster characters should simply modify the text as needed.





INVITATION FROM THE GRAVE



INTERVIEW

IN THIS ENCOUNTER, the characters learn of the upcoming cadaver carnival and encounter their friend Sendric (or another character of the gamemaster's creation), who is eagerly anticipating the festivities. This meeting foreshadows Sendric's loss of a wager with the cadaver men and his obligation to become one of Twiceborn's subjects. The adventurers may also learn about Torgak's arrangement with Twiceborn regarding the Night of the Dead.

SETTING THE STAGE

It's a chilly day in Haven, the sky overcast and distant thunder rumbling overhead. Pulling your cloaks tight around you against the first spatters of rain, you head toward the Restless Troll to quench your thirst and to hear the latest tales from your fellow explorers. You hope the place will be bustling with the latest rumor of a fabulous treasure map or forgotten relic; there's no better way to pass a rainy afternoon than swapping fantastic stories.

To your astonishment, you find Haven's most dedicated ale-tasters standing outside the inn, gathered around something in the muddy roadway. The air buzzes with whispers and questions. You push your way through the mob to see what caused this uproar. Before you stands a board displaying a message in thin, spidery Throalic script. The words have a musty formality to them, like ancient documents found in kaers.

THEMES AND IMAGES

This prelude to the adventure allows the player characters to learn about Torgak's deal with the cadaver men and about Twiceborn's kingdom in general. Contrast the dread and disgust displayed by most Havenites with the mild interest of the old-timers who know about the deal and are simply curious to see the carnival.

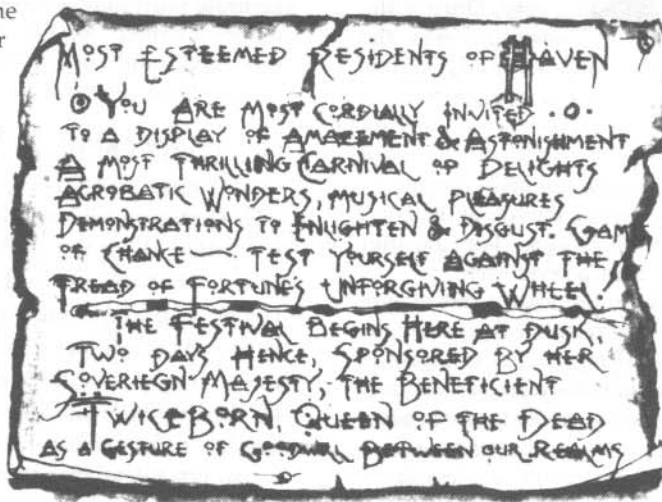
BEHIND THE SCENES

Twiceborn has planned this carnival partly to satisfy her desire for respect as a legitimate leader, and partly to recruit new cadavers. Aside from adding a few more subjects to her kingdom, she has no great sinister plan in the works. However, the residents of Haven might not see it that way. The player characters have the next two days to gather information on Twiceborn and try to figure out what is going on. If the player characters ask how the announcement got there, tell them a pair of cadaver men evaded Torgak's patrols and snuck into town late at night to put up the sign.

WILD RUMORS

The citizens of Haven gathered around the announcement board have little useful information for the player characters. None of them is an experienced adventurer, and none has ever visited Twiceborn's realm. They know who Twiceborn is and that the Eastern Catacombs are infested with undead, but they know little else. Panicked and misinformed, they can pass along any of the following bits of misleading information:

- Twiceborn is a terrible demiwraith, sixteen feet tall, with red-hot coals for eyes. She feasts on newborn babies and can slay all who approach with a mere wave of her palm.
- Torgak is already mounting a defense against the cadaver men. An all-out war is coming, and Haven may be overwhelmed.
- The town is probably already infested with disguised cadaver men! No one can be trusted!



TORGAK'S RESPONSE

If the adventurers approach someone in authority, they get more reliable information. Torgak or any of his long-term associates knows and willingly tells the real story. Credible sources include Torgak's deputies: Sealak, Hookhoof, Ireeka Shagmane, or Dishara Eyes-of-Straw. Liniarg Blindingshout, chief of the Loyal Order of Delvers, and Tylia, proprietor of the Restless Troll inn, can also tell the characters what's what. (For descriptions of Torgak and





his deputies, see **Cast of Characters**, p. 43, in this adventure. Profiles of Liniarg Blindingshout and Tylia appear in **Desire Box**, p. 58. More extensive profiles of these gamemaster characters appear in the **Parlath: The Forgotten City** boxed set.) Any of the gamemaster characters will tell the following tale in their own words.

In 1491 TH, soon after the official founding of Haven, Torgak and his followers saw a delegation of cadaver men heading toward the town. They quickly mounted a stout defense and drove the cadaver men off, slaying many of them. Soon after-



ward, a force of cadaver men ten times the size of the original delegation swarmed over Haven in the night, slaying many people and destroying considerable property. During the ensuing weeks, the undead bands continued their nightmarish assaults on the settlement.

One night Torgak awoke to find his home full of cadaver men who had slipped quietly into his bedroom. At spearpoint, they ordered him to follow them into the bowels of the Eastern Catacombs. There Torgak met Twiceborn, self-styled Queen of the Cadaver Men.

To Torgak's surprise, Twiceborn proposed a cessation of hostilities. She claimed to have been deeply offended by the unprovoked attack on her original delegation, whom she had dispatched to open diplomatic relations between her kingdom and Haven. She said that in keeping with her innate benevolence, she was willing to spare Haven a final punishing blow provided that Torgak recognized her realm as a legitimate kingdom and granted its right to exist and do business in Haven. To cement this agreement, Torgak had to agree to guarantee the safety of any of Twiceborn's subjects who chose to venture into Haven on a single night each year: the thirteenth day before the winter solstice, from dusk to dawn. Convinced that Twiceborn could destroy his fragile settlement if she chose to, Torgak reluctantly agreed to her terms.

From 1492 to 1495, sad and curious cadaver men filled the streets of Haven for a single night each year. Despite their own fears of the walking dead, Torgak's deputies protected them from attack by fearful Havenites. Then the visitations stopped for no apparent reason. Ever since then, few cadaver men have come to Haven on the Night of the Dead. On a couple of occasions a few cadaver men appeared, did a few inscrutable things, and left as inexplicably as they had come.

The announcement of the carnival marks an abrupt change in Twiceborn's behavior, and Torgak suspects that

she might have something sinister up her sleeve. But Torgak gave his word that cadaver men could walk the streets of Haven unmolested on this night, and he aims to keep his promise unless Twiceborn's subjects break their part of the bargain. Torgak's deputies will restrain anyone who attempts to harm the cadaver men. Those who resist get run out of town for good. (For a description of Twiceborn, see **Cast of Characters**, p. 41, in this adventure.)

OTHER INFORMATION SOURCES

Several veteran explorers in Haven have ventured into the Eastern Catacombs. If the player characters interview some of them, they will get a variety of responses. Some of these old hands treated the cadaver men as mindless monsters and tried to gain entry to the catacombs by force. These explorers describe the cadaver men as vicious and dangerous foes. Others negotiated with them and describe the cadaver men as strange, tragic, and deserving of sympathy despite the dangers they can pose.

If the gamemaster has the **Parlath: The Forgotten City** boxed set, the players may visit Vardeghul for information. Haven's most prominent information broker, Vardeghul sells a document that provides a reasonably accurate portrait of Twiceborn and her kingdom. The document is called "An Encounter With Twiceborn, Queen of the Dead" and costs 100 silver pieces (see **Vardeghul's Trove of Lore** in the boxed set).

MEETING THE GAMBLER

At some point during the following day and a half, the adventurers encounter their old acquaintance Sendric. He is thrilled about the upcoming carnival. He chatters on about what strange and wondrous lives the people of Haven lead and comments on how exciting it will be to have someone to bet with other than Pagmor Gilt-Throat, the troll who takes bets on the progress of the falsemen battles in the War Zone. If the player characters warn Sendric to be careful, he dismisses their concern, asking, "How can a dead man be a better gambler than I?"

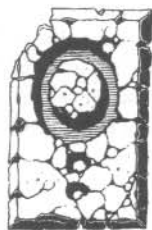
TROUBLESHOOTING

The only trouble that may arise at this point is if the characters take no notice of the upcoming carnival and intend to leave Haven before the Night of the Dead. Encourage the characters to remain in Haven until the carnival; if they leave, the adventure cannot take place. If they appear intent on leaving, have Torgak hire them as additional deputies. Though his standing forces are more than enough to handle Haven's normal, day-to-day activities, Torgak feels that he may need additional help for this one night. He agrees to pay each character 75 to 100 silver pieces for this service.





FESTIVAL NIGHT



INTERVIEW

ON THE NIGHT of the cadaver carnival, the player characters watch their friend Sendric lose a wager with the cadavermen. To pay his debt, Sendric must become one of Twiceborn's subjects. The player characters may also learn of Lenethriel, the elf cadaver man who intends to replace Twiceborn as leader of the cadaver men kingdom. Lenethriel is plotting Twiceborn's overthrow.

SETTING THE STAGE

When dusk arrives on carnival eve, read the following:

A haunting sound drifts toward you from the ruins, steadily growing louder. As it comes closer, you distinguish the music of pipes and drums. A mournful melody sounds over a frenetic rhythm, giving the music a strange combination of exuberance and sorrow.

Those residents of Haven who have not barricaded themselves inside their homes gather at the gates of the town. You join them, pushing through the crowd to get a clear view. In the distance, you see the carnival approaching: a procession of a hundred or so cadaver men bearing faded banners and torches, and pulling a painted wagon. Bringing up the rear is an elaborately decorated palanquin of bones and skulls, borne by a quartet of solemn cadaver men.

Before the astonished eyes of onlookers, this grim parade enters the town. With silent determination, the corpses set up their fair, erecting tents of musty canvas and booths of rotting wood. When the undead have finished their strange labor, a slightly decomposed elf leaps nimbly from the palanquin. Raising a parchment cone to his mouth, he speaks through it. "Welcome, friends! Welcome to Twiceborn's Carnival! A gift from the realm of the dead to the realm of the living! Enjoy our delights!"

A nearby explorer whispers in shock, "By Thystonium, it's Lenethriel. They got Lenethriel!"

THEMES AND IMAGES

Contrast the classical carnival atmosphere of fun and celebration with the eerie aspect of those providing the festivities. Much of the material in this encounter is scripted to create a vivid picture of the goings-on for the gamemaster's benefit. Except for snippets of dialogue, however, paraphrase this material rather than simply reading it aloud.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The cadaver men want to conduct their carnival in peace and perhaps trick a few unwary Havenites into joining their eternal unrest. If the adventurers take part in events instead of passively observing them, they can learn facts that will help them later on.

If the characters are working for Torgak, he orders them to circulate around the carnival to ensure that no trouble breaks out between the cadaver men and the Havenites.

CARNIVAL EVENTS

The player characters may watch or take part in any of the following events at the carnival. If your players like to interact with gamemaster characters and soak up the atmosphere, devise additional carnival encounters. If your players prefer to cut to the chase, feel free to gloss over the carnival in a few minutes of description.

Acrobats

A troupe of cadaver men caper about, leaping and somersaulting and forming inhuman pyramids. A few of them do this well, but most are pathetically clumsy. Occasionally, a particularly inept acrobat falls, and a piece of him breaks off, most often a finger or hand but sometimes an arm or part of a leg.

Brithan Trainer

A cadaver dwarf encourages a small, sluggish brithan to do tricks for her. When gently prodded with the femur the dead dwarf is using as a pointer, the animal reluctantly balances a ball on its nose and rears up on its hind legs on command. As the player characters look on, the dwarf attempts to get the brithan to wear a paper hat. The brithan bares its teeth and swats at the cadaver dwarf, who jumps back. If one of the players seems to be hankering for an action scene at this point, have the brithan escape and go on a rampage, eventually allowing the player character to subdue it. If this happens, the cadaver dwarf protests to Torgak that the adventurer has stolen its pet and makes a big scene. To avoid further problems, Torgak attempts to persuade the adventurer to return the brithan to the cadaver.

Fortune Teller

A female cadaver elf waits in a small tent. A sign outside the tent reads "Oracles For All Who Seek Them." Outside the tent stands an armored cadaver ork, admitting one customer at a time. If asked politely to





allow a group to enter, he will do so. The cadaver elf has no powers as a seer, but is very perceptive. If player characters ask for a reading, she makes a few shrewd guesses about their pasts and gives each of them a vague prediction about the future. These predictions sound intriguing, but mean nothing. Examples include the following:

"You will think there is no time, but then you will find a jar full of time."

"You will make a long journey and wisely refuse an offer of money."

"A mountain will split in two, and you will own a canyon."

Gaming Tables

The cadaver men have set up a row of booths for games of chance popular in Barsaive, including various card, dice, and spinning-wheel games. Bets start at 10 silver pieces per game. The cadaver men urge the Havenites to play for double or nothing each time. To play a round of a game, a character rolls his or her Perception dice. On every result of 5 or more, the character wins.

Jugglers

A pair of jugglers exchange metal balls, batons, flaming torches, and finally knives. As the player characters look on, one of the jugglers catches a knife by its blade and slices off a finger. Instead of blood, tomb dust leaks out of the wound.

Knife Thrower

A cadaver man throws daggers at a fellow cadaver tied to a large wagon wheel, spun by a third cadaver. Fortunately, the thrower has good aim and nothing awful happens.

SENDRIC'S TEASER

At some point early on in their wandering around the carnival, the player characters bump into their friend Sendric. He tells them that he has some potentially valuable information for them that he will explain to them tomorrow; at the moment, he is on his way to the gaming tables. If the adventurers warn him that he might be getting into trouble, he again dismisses their concerns.

ASKING ABOUT LENETHRIEL

At some point, the characters may wish to follow up on a hint dropped in **Setting the Stage**; some of the local adventurers recognize the cadaverous master of ceremonies as a former colleague. If the adventurers talk to some of the onlookers who recognized Lenethriel, they can learn the following information:

- Lenethriel died in the Twists four months ago, felled by a sniper's arrow as part of an ambush by a bandit gang. His companions fled, leaving the dead Lenethriel behind.

- When among the living, Lenethriel was a weapon-smith and an ambitious fellow. He turned to adventure to raise money, which he planned to use to found an order of mercenaries. When he got enough drink in him, he used to talk of using the mercenary band to create a new kingdom, made up of all of Barsaive's Name-giver races, to oppose both Throal and Thera.

TALKING TO LENETHRIEL

The master of ceremonies is friendly, but reveals little. If asked why Twiceborn is mounting this spectacle, he says that she wishes to create goodwill between the realms of the living and the dead. If the adventurers ask him any further questions, he urges them to take part in the delightful festivities and forget all serious matters.

LENETHRIEL'S PLOT

Lenethriel volunteered to act as the carnival's master of ceremonies as a cover for a plotting session. He has convinced a few of his fellow recent arrivals to the realm of the undead to support him in a coup attempt against Twiceborn. Unlike the older undead, Lenethriel and his followers have no interest in ancient Thera etiquette and they resent the fact that their ignorance keeps them from attaining positions of influence in the kingdom. Lenethriel has also adapted his plans for political power to fit his new situation—rather than founding a living kingdom, he now wants to rule an empire of the dead. Once in power, he intends to embark on a campaign of rapid expansion, attacking Haven and outlying villages and converting their inhabitants into cadaver men.

Twiceborn is content to expand her realm slowly, one corpse at a time. She knows that any dramatic moves would bring too many foes down on her kingdom at once. Dead for centuries, she has learned to be patient. Lenethriel has not; he wants Twiceborn out of the way. To bolster his power, he intends to force her to reveal the secret of her relationship with the *gharmhek*—minor Horrors she has allied herself with—before disposing of her once and for all. (Details of the *gharmhek* appear on pp. 139–140 of **The Ruins of Parlainth** book in the **Parlaint: The Forgotten City** boxed set.)

Intrigue Overheard

Once the player characters have begun to exhaust the encounter possibilities of the festival, pretend to roll Perception Tests for them and tell them they have noticed a small knot of seven cadaver men gathered in the shadow of the Map Wall, away from the events of the carnival. The





player character with the highest Perception Attribute notices the slightest movement from the corner of his eye, giving the location away. Adventurers who approach the cadaver men can gain any of the following useful clues in the following ways:

- The characters may simply walk nonchalantly past the cadaver men. After all, Haven is their town. When they approach, the cadaver men act startled; they look up and around and then stride off. The characters recognize Lenethriel as one of the participants. Have the characters witnessing this make a Perception Test against a Difficulty Number of 7. Those whose tests are successful think the cadaver men are acting suspiciously.

- A character with Silent Walk may creep up to the cadavers and overhear the tail end of their conversation. It goes something like the following:

"So are you with us or not?"

"The others will never—"

"To Dis with the others! We need only a few brave fighters."

"But Twiceborn—"

"Did your courage die with the rest of you, Redshears?"

"No, Lenethriel. I stand with you."

"Then we shall act. Let us go before we are missed."

- If the players come up with another good way to get close to the cadaver men without attracting their attention, let them hear the above snippet of dialogue as well.

If the characters decide to confront Lenethriel and his six cohorts, Lenethriel haughtily commands them to mind their own business. He assures them he means no threat to Haven (which is true, at least for now).

If attacked, Lenethriel and his forces defend themselves. As soon as the clash of sword against sword rings out, the player characters hear the angry voices of Torgak's deputies, who order them to cease hostilities. If the adventurers refuse to do so, the deputies join the fight within 2 Combat Rounds and the cadaver men withdraw. The adventurers should know by now that they are asking for major trouble if they seriously harm a deputy. If they stop fighting, Torgak strides over and angrily demands that the adventurers apologize to Lenethriel and the other undead. He has guaranteed the safety of Twiceborn's people, and by the Passions he is going to make sure everyone in Haven keeps the peace.

Game statistics for the cadaver men appear on pp. 288, ED, and on the Cadaver Men card in the **Parlaint** boxed set. Statistics for Lenethriel appear in **Cast of Characters**, p. 41 of this adventure.

A POOL'S WAGER

As the dim, predawn light slowly washes away the stars, a regular at the Restless Troll rushes up to the



adventurers and breathlessly informs them that their friend Sendric is getting in over his head at the gaming tables. When they arrive at the gambling booths, they see Sendric pacing and rubbing his hands together, sweat pouring from his face. He mumbles that his luck just *has* to turn around. Another onlooker whispers to the player characters that Sendric has so far lost by 20,000 silvers, playing double or nothing and losing every game in sight. The adventurers know that Sendric does not possess anything close to 20,000 silvers. Haven's gambling laws are harsh toward those who welsh on a debt—the cadaver men will be within their rights to thrash Sendric within an inch of his life, or worse.

The corpse running the gaming tables offers Sendric one last bet at even odds. Sendric can draw a single card from the cadaver's deck. The deck has four suits: crowns, hearts, daggers, and skulls. If Sendric draws crowns or hearts, he can claim 20,000 silvers from Twiceborn's treasury. If he draws daggers or skulls, he must join the service of Twiceborn.

If the adventurers try to advise their friend, the cadaver holds out a bony hand and forbids them to speak. Sendric alone may make this decision. Sendric thinks out loud, saying that Floranus loves him and won't let him down. He draws the five of daggers, losing the bet.

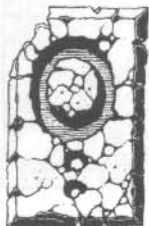
TROUBLESHOOTING

In this section, the adventurers must see Sendric lose the final bet and should also have had a chance to notice that Lenethriel is up to something fishy. Other than that, feel free to let the festival scenes go in any direction the group finds entertaining. Lenethriel must survive until later in the adventure; if the player characters attack him, make sure that Torgak's deputies intervene in time to prevent them from delivering a lethal blow. Alternatively, have someone tip off the characters to Sendric's troubles before they can strike a blow against Lenethriel.





CROSSING THE THRESHOLD



VIEW

IN THIS ENCOUNTER, the characters enter the cadaver kingdom in hopes of freeing Sendric from his obligation to become one of Twiceborn's subjects. As they near Twiceborn's throne room, they confront Lenethriel on the verge of staging his coup against the Cadaver Queen.

SETTING THE STAGE

His face pale and his forehead gleaming with cold sweat, Sendric asks how long he must serve Twiceborn.

The cadaverous gaming master grins at him, revealing the yellowing stumps of teeth poking up from the blackened, rotting gums. "Forever," he says, his voice rattling like dry bones in his desiccated throat. "All who serve Twiceborn must be of our kind. You have agreed to cross the threshold. You shall be ritually slain and joined to the dry bosom of our realm."

As the cadaver men pack up their carnival, dragging their wagons and gear off into the dying night, the gaming master begins placing leg and ankle shackles on Sendric. As the cadaver man claps his bony fingers around Sendric's shoulders, Sendric begins to scream. "No! Please! Someone help me!" He sees you and struggles wildly in the gaming master's grip. "Rescue me! Please—save me! I'll reward you well! My friends, I beg you—save me!"

You start toward the cadaver man, but Torgak forestalls you. His face grim, he forbids everyone to lift a hand against the cadaver men within the limits of the Haven. Sendric lost the bet, he says, and must pay the price.

Have Torgak's deputies nearby, in case the player characters try to interfere anyway.

THEMES AND IMAGES

This encounter takes the player characters from the relative security of Haven to the dangers of the Eastern Catacombs. Emphasize the dangers of traveling into the ruins and of entering Twiceborn's domain. Also play up Sendric's heart-rending pleas and the horrible fate that awaits him unless his friends take action.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The adventurers have limited opportunities to reach Sendric as the cadaverous procession retreats into the ruins. An entrance to Twiceborn's realm exists close to the outskirts of Haven, and the cadaver men toss Sendric

down into it as soon as they reach the place. Fifty or so cadaver men defend this position, armed with slings and light crossbows. None of the other explorers who witnessed Sendric's losing bet are willing to risk their necks to save him, so the adventurers can expect no help.

Torgak insists that no one attempt to interfere with the cadaver men as long as they remain within the town limits. Such interference would violate his agreement with Twiceborn, which he refuses to do despite his sympathy for Sendric's plight.

GOING UNDERGROUND

What happens after Sendric is dragged away is largely up to the players. They must decide on the best way to gain entrance to the Eastern Catacombs, and their options are limited only by their imaginations. This section describes a few possibilities; if your group comes up with a clever approach not described here, let them use it (and keep things tense by throwing in a few unexpected surprises along the way).

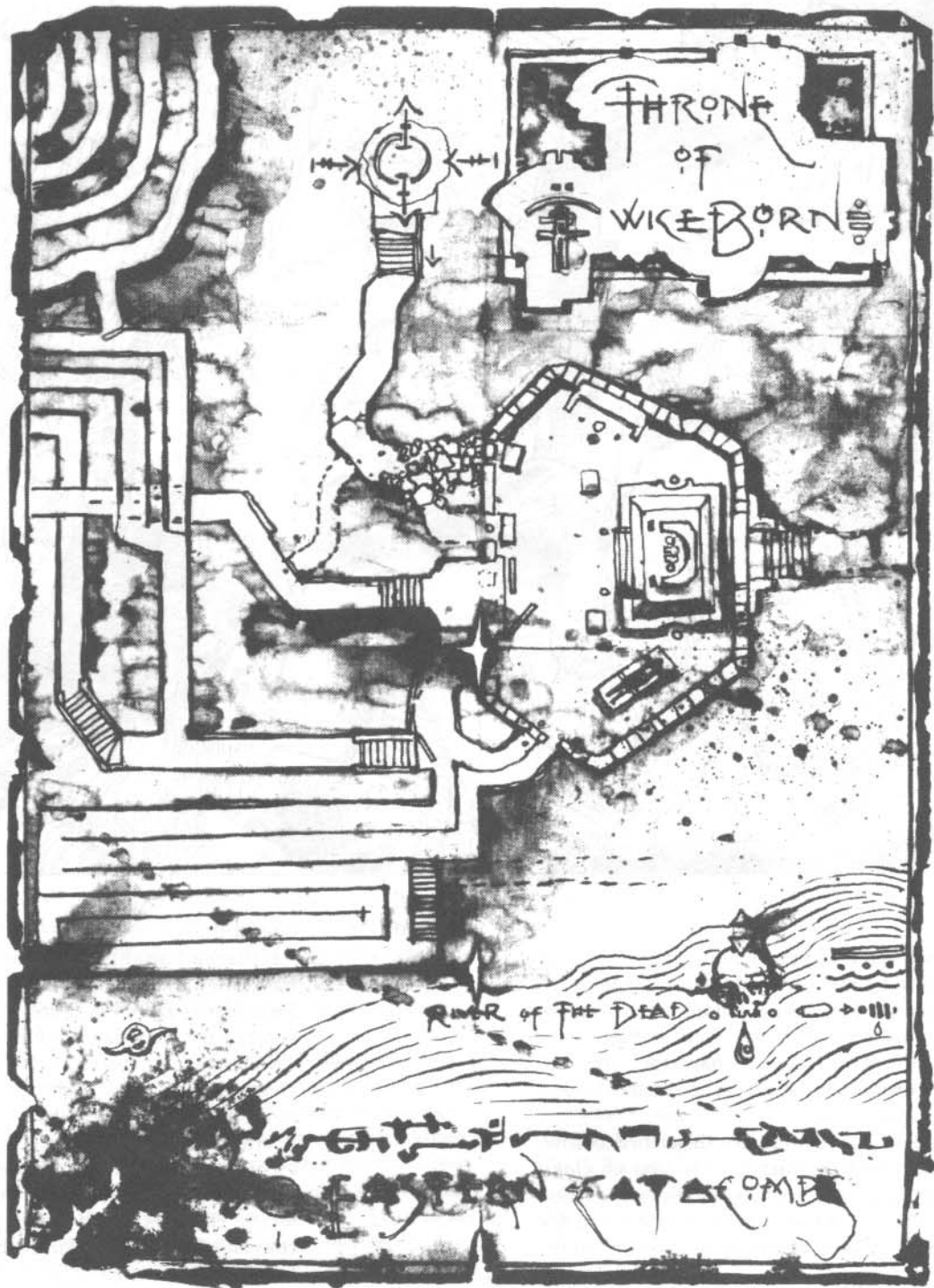
Frontal Assault

Many players will immediately think of fighting their way in, but in this adventure they ultimately stand to gain more from diplomacy than force. Therefore, make this option extremely difficult to pull off. Any regularly used entrance to the Eastern Catacombs is guarded by at least six cadaver men. When a guard sounds the alarm, an additional D6 cadaver men arrive in every Combat Round until literally hundreds of cadaver men stand ready to repel invaders. Though any individual cadaver man poses little threat to the average adventurer, the sheer mass of bodies ought to prevent the group from entering the catacombs.

Experienced explorers may think they have a tactical advantage; they know that the catacombs are made up of winding, narrow passageways in which only a few cadaver men can fight at once, and even then only against adventurers on point position. The cadaver men also know this, however, and will lob flasks of burning oil over the heads of the point men to drive the adventurers into open areas where the cadaver men can descend on them en masse. Because the passages are so narrow, even flasks that scatter are likely to hit a wall and bounce back into the adventurers' midst. If the player characters withdraw from the catacombs to escape the burning oil, squads of cadaver men chase them, harrying them with slings and light crossbows. If they move forward, the cadaver men herd them into a large room and attack.

Adventurers who try a frontal assault and fail will find it almost impossible to negotiate their way into the catacombs afterward. Their descriptions are given to all guards, who swiftly sound the alarm at the sight of them.







Knock, Knock

The adventurers can try to negotiate an audience with Twiceborn, but must first persuade the guards at an entrance to let them in. This means talking to the guards long enough to figure out what they want in return for passage. In your portrayal of these characters, provide enough information to allow the player characters to discover each cadaver man's price.

Various guard squad leaders are described below. Each is accompanied by five other guards who go along with whatever their leader decides. When the adventurers first arrive at an entrance to the catacombs, roll D4 to see which guard leader is on duty at that spot according to the list below.

Die Roll

1

Guard

Arethar, a haughty squad leader who has been working hard to curry Twiceborn's favor. She allows the adventurers in if they can convince her that Twiceborn will reward her for doing so.

2

Demallion retains a worldly desire for money (as do the members of his squad). If bribed for 500 silver pieces each, they escort the adventurers to Twiceborn.

3

Evlo is a coward who fears Twiceborn's wrath. He takes the adventurers to her if convinced that he is taking a big risk by turning them away.

4

Cissiela is a stickler for etiquette. She can be swayed with flattery and elaborate court manners, especially ancient Theran manners.





Impostors at the Threshold

Adventurers with a taste for deception may try to slip into Twiceborn's kingdom by disguising themselves as newly risen cadaver men. If they ask around at the Restless Troll to find out how other explorers have sneaked into the Eastern Catacombs in the past, someone eventually points them toward an aging ork named Bojmort who struck it rich a decade ago and has been happily warming a bar stool ever since. Bojmort tells them he stole a magic treasure from Twiceborn's own belt, getting close enough to do so by disguising himself as a cadaver man. He offers to use his Disguise Skill to make the adventurers look like undead, but warns them that they must be great actors to fool real cadaver men.

Bojmort has Disguise 10 (D10 + D6). Roll a secret Skill Test for each adventurer Bojmort disguises. The results of these tests become the Difficulty Numbers for Perception Tests made by cadaver men the adventurers meet. If the cadaver men fail their tests, they believe that the adventurer in question is indeed undead. To give the adventurers the appearance of arrested decomposition, Bojmort uses greasepaint mixed with various pigments, depending on the race of the adventurer. He also damages their clothing with acids to make it look partially rotted. Adventurers who possess the Disguise talents or skill or any related abilities have no need for Bojmort's services.

Once disguised, the characters can head to the catacomb entrance where Sendric disappeared or to any other known entrance.

The adventurers may also combine their disguises with infiltration; in this case, see **Down in the Hole**, following.

DOWN IN THE HOLE

Several of the main entrances to the Eastern Catacombs are well known in Haven. If the adventurers have been exploring Parlainth for a while, they may well already know of these entrances. Adventurers wishing to quietly enter the catacombs might decide to check around town to see if anyone knows a back way into Twiceborn's lair. Such inquiries eventually point them toward someone who has the knowledge they seek—the Theran merchant, Omag Bastabus.

Bastabus gladly gives the adventurers directions to an entrance unknown even to the cadaver men, though he declines to explain how this information came into his possession. (He got it in a report from Theran agents combing the Smalls for an army deserter.) In exchange for the directions, Bastabus wants the adventurers to do an unspecified service for him in the future, a favor that he may call in at any time. He promises that the service will not expose the adventurers to certain death or force them to harm their own friends or allies. Bastabus demands that each adventurer provide a drop of blood to seal the pact, dripping it on a sponge inside a tiny silver box that Bastabus refers to as a "rigorous guarantor." Though he does his best to por-

tray the box as a magical treasure that can prevent the adventurers from going back on their word, it has no real powers at all. Bastabus is simply trying to get by on guile to compensate for his limited resources.

Use the agreement with Bastabus as a plot hook for an adventure of your own devising later on. Ideally, Bastabus should set the player characters a task that makes them bend—but not break—their usual codes of behavior, as they find themselves in the uncomfortable position of aiding the Theran swine. If the adventurers are sympathetic to the Therans, replace Bastabus with someone else who makes them morally queasy.

Bastabus describes the entranceway as "twelve buildings down and fourteen buildings in" in the Smalls. The adventurers should have considerable trouble finding a specific building in this area of identically arranged, ancient structures.

Bandit Attack

Once the adventurers have found the right row of buildings and are heading deeper into the Smalls, a cadre of windling bandits attacks them. These scoundrels make a living by divebombing explorers in hopes that they will drop something valuable, which the windlings can then trade to their allies, the Unforgivables. Usually they get only the odd sword or pack of rations, but once they netted a magical helm that kept them in grub for more than a year.

The windlings have no interest in a fight to the death. If the adventurers stand their ground against them and any of the windlings take damage that puts them within 5 points of unconsciousness, the whole gang flies off.

Winding Bandits (5)

Attributes

DEX: 8 STR: 4 TOU: 4
PER: 6 WIL: 4 CHA: 5

Initiative: 8

Number of Attacks: 1

Attack: 12

Damage: 7

Number of Spells: NA

Spellcasting: NA

Effect: NA

Physical Defense: 11

Spell Defense: 8

Social Defense: 7

Armor: 3

Mystic Armor: 2

Knockdown: 4

Recovery Tests: 1

Death Rating: 30

Wound Threshold: 7

Unconsciousness Rating: 21

Combat Movement: 55

Full Movement: 110

Legend Points: 110

Equipment: Leather armor, windling bows, windling daggers

Loot: Pouches of small gems worth 25 silver pieces per bandit





The winding bandits may harry adventurers choosing other paths in the catacombs as well. If the adventurers scatter in the face of attack, they may well get lost in the Smalls and have to return to Haven to reorient themselves.

Once the group finally arrives at the building Bastabus mentioned, they see a huge crack in its floor, about three feet wide. This crack is marked on the Eastern Catacombs and Twiceborn's Throne Room map, p. 35. If the adventurers scramble down the crack, they find themselves in a little-used passageway of the Eastern Catacombs. The drop from the crevice to the floor of the passageway is twenty feet, and so they must come up with some way to get down safely in order to avoid injury.

The passageway is a dead end to the north. To the south it is blocked by a pile of debris—mostly old, rotting doors—that the adventurers must clear away to reach the passage that leads to Twiceborn's throne room. Unfortunately, the noise of clearing away the blockage attracts the attention of nearby cadaver men.

MOVING THROUGH THE CATACOMBS

If the characters do not use Bastabus' entrance, they must find some other way to Twiceborn's throne room. Inexperienced adventurers can get lost in the winding maze of the Eastern Catacombs easily, but the characters should find it relatively easy to locate the Throne Room. Arrange things so that the characters either spot Sendric being led to Twiceborn or overhear (and presumably follow) a group of cadaver men heading toward the Throne Room.

If the characters roam around for too long, they will most likely bump into patrols of cadaver men. These patrols, usually consisting of five to six cadavers, first attempt to capture the characters rather than kill them. If the cadaver men capture the characters, they bring them before Twiceborn to answer for the crime of trespassing. This sequence of events can have a fortunate side effect; the characters arrive before Twiceborn just prior to the ritual slaying of Sendric and the attempted coup by Lenethriel and his followers (see *Treacherous Whispers*, following).

TREACHEROUS WHISPERS

No matter how the adventurers get into the catacombs, they should run across another clue to the upcom-

ing revolt before meeting Twiceborn. How they come across this clue depends on how they have chosen to enter Twiceborn's kingdom.

If they made a successful frontal assault, they find themselves in one of a thousand winding passageways. Voices sound from up ahead; if the adventurers listen, they hear Lenethriel delivering a final pep talk to his co-conspirators. Keep the speech fairly oblique; he tells them to be brave and stick to the plan without recapping what the plan actually is, and reminds them of the rewards of success without spelling those rewards out.

If the adventurers talked their way in or slipped in disguised as cadavers, the guard squad takes them to the threshold of Twiceborn's audience hall. All but two of the guards head inside to announce the adventurers' arrival to the queen. The adventurers are left with two lackeys who are members of Lenethriel's gang. These two start to warn the adventurers that something is going to happen in which they had best not get involved, if they value their hides. Before they can say much more or the player characters can ask questions, the other guards return to usher the adventurers inside and the traitors clam up.

If the adventurers come in via Bastabus' back way, they hear Lenethriel's pep talk from the other side of the pile of debris.



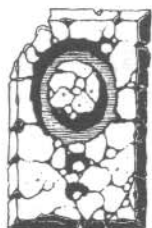
TROUBLESHOOTING

Because the player characters can make so many choices in this encounter, the gamemaster must be ready to react to unexpected actions. Not all choices are equally good ones. If the adventurers embark on a course of action that should reasonably fail, let it fail. Parlainth offers no guarantee of success. If the player characters gum things up badly enough, they never meet Twiceborn. The queen puts down Lenethriel's coup without the adventurers' aid and Sendric becomes a cadaver man. You might consider letting the player characters get into the Eastern Catacombs later on and see their friend in this state. Alternatively, have Twiceborn stage another carnival the following year, at which Sendric appears as an assistant at the gaming tables.





MONARCH OF THE SLAIN



VIEW

IN THIS ENCOUNTER, the characters arrive in Twiceborn's throne room just before their friend Sendric is to be ritually slain and turned into a cadaver man. As the adventurers argue for their friend's freedom, Lenethriel makes his move against Twiceborn.

SETTING THE STAGE

When the adventurers reach Twiceborn's throne room, read the following:

You stand on the threshold of an immense cavern of raw earth. Ancient light crystals, many of them cracked and dim, have been jammed willy-nilly into the earthen walls. In the center of the room you see a huge, marble funerary table partially sunk into the earth. Your friend lies strapped to it with leather thongs. Behind the table, looming over it, is a huge throne of what looks like granite. As your eyes adjust to the faint light, you realize that the immense chair is made not of rock, but of the dried corpses of obsidimen, festooned with bones and skulls of other Name-givers.

A large female t'skrang sits in the throne, her withered flesh drawn tight across her bones. An honor guard of living corpses surrounds her, each decked in gaudy, rotting silks. One of them speaks, its voice as dry as tomb dust. "Kneel, uncouth dog. Kneel before the Queen of the Dead, Her Majesty the serene and regal Twiceborn."

THEMES AND IMAGES

Emphasize the decay of Twiceborn's court. Everything in it is slowly decomposing. Play Twiceborn as slow but canny, Lenethriel as bold but foolish.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The adventurers should plead with Twiceborn to spare Sendric's life and allow him to return to Haven. Though their entreaties are (at this point) doomed to failure, Twiceborn enjoys the chance to act like a mighty ruler and debates their request at length with them. She treats them with considerably more disdain if they entered her realm without permission than if they were escorted in. If they posed as cadaver men, she smiles alarmingly and says, "You wish to join our kind? That wish can be easily accommodated." If offered money to pay off Sendric's debt, Twiceborn refuses, saying that a new member of her kingdom is worth more to her than any amount of dead

and lifeless metal. If the adventurers argue that Sendric was a victim of his uncontrollable compulsion to gamble, she says that in the realm of the dead he will be free of such petty weaknesses. If they beg her for mercy on his behalf, Twiceborn responds that there is no greater mercy than to be welcomed into the Kingdom of the Dead. If they threaten to take Sendric by force, Twiceborn simply laughs.

LENETHRIEL SHOWS HIS HAND

Lenethriel and his rebels are among the attendants in the queen's throne room when the player characters enter. If a player thinks to ask about Lenethriel, he or she learns that the elf looks out of sorts. Just as he was planning to make his move, the unexpected arrival of the adventurers has confused his scheme. If the adventurers blow the whistle on him, he acts immediately. Otherwise, he waits until Twiceborn is in mid-speech and then launches his coup attempt by leaping onto the throne and drawing his sword. In a loud voice, Lenethriel announces that he is taking over. His forces and Twiceborn's loyal courtiers square off against one another, and for a moment the two cadaverous factions are at a stalemate. In the sudden stillness, Lenethriel offers the adventurers Sendric's life if they help him. Twiceborn quickly counters, making the identical offer if the characters help her.

At this point, the characters can win Twiceborn's favor by fighting on her side. In addition to Lenethriel, the rebels consist of three cadaver men for every two player characters. If they help defeat Lenethriel and his forces, Twiceborn frees Sendric as a token of her gratitude.

If the characters stand by and do nothing, Twiceborn's forces fight back against Lenethriel's. Statistics for all cadaver men are listed in **Cast of Characters**, p. 41. Lenethriel expected most of Twiceborn's courtiers to desert her; when he discovers his error, he attempts to flee, running past the characters. If they stop him, they earn Twiceborn's favor and Sendric's freedom.

If the characters attack Twiceborn, six gcharmhek crawl out of burrows in the earthen wall and attack them. All the gcharmhek have the maximum Karma Points and use them to the fullest. If Twiceborn is slain, the gcharmhek simply use their Animate Dead power on her, restoring her to prime condition. Game stats for the gcharmhek appear in **Cast of Characters**, p. 42.

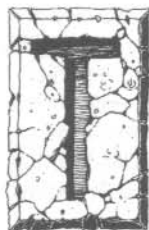
TROUBLESHOOTING

The key to success in this encounter is to pick the right side to aid. If the characters do not side with Twiceborn, they find themselves in deep trouble. Make their attempt to escape as difficult as possible. The Eastern Catacombs are a confusing maze, and cadaver men will swarm over the player characters.





LOOSE ENDS



THE INFORMATION IN this section allows the gamemaster to tie up loose ends and suggests ways to use story elements and characters from **Dead Man's Hand** in future **Earthdawn** adventures and campaigns.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

Dead Man's Hand has several possible outcomes. The most likely ones are described below.

If the characters aid Twiceborn in resisting Lenethriel's takeover attempt, Twiceborn offers the characters Sendric's life in return. The characters' grateful friend offers them any reward the gamemaster thinks suitable, and Twiceborn may also tell them some secret that might lead them to further adventures.

If the characters join forces with Lenethriel, he and his followers are killed outright and the characters are captured, to be ritually slain later on. The characters may have a slight chance of escaping their imprisonment, but they must obtain weapons and armor if they hope to escape the Eastern Catacombs alive. If they succeed in such an escape, they should leave Haven immediately—Twiceborn is not one to forgive easily. If the characters cannot escape, they join Sendric in the cadaver kingdom. This grisly end to their adventuring careers makes for a stark object lesson of the folly of poor choices.

AWARDING LEGEND POINTS

Award the characters Legend Points for this adventure as described in the **Introduction**, p. 6. The specific awards to be granted are described below. The Adventure Award for **Dead Man's Hand** is 250 Legend Points.

Creative Roleplaying and Heroics

Award characters Legend Points for taking any of the following actions:

Participating in events at the carnival	25
Entering the catacombs disguised as cadaver men	75
Negotiating with the guards	75
Dealing with Omag Bastabus	50
Saving Sendric	100
Failing to save Sendric	25-65 (depending on what they did)
Helping Twiceborn	50

Defeating Creatures

Award Legend Points for defeating creatures/opponents in this adventure as shown on the table below.

Treasure

The characters gain no treasure in this adventure.

TOTAL LEGEND AWARD

Based on the figures listed above, a single character who completes **Dead Man's Hand** receives an average of 675 Legend Points. This average assumes 7 players in a group, and does not include points earned for battling additional opponents or for finding treasure created by the gamemaster.

CAMPAIGN IDEAS

Several different adventures can spring from the events in **Dead Man's Hand**. If the characters free Sendric, he fulfills his promise to share a bit of profitable information with them. This choice bit of information can lead into another adventure, preferably with a juicy reward at the end of it. If the adventurers obtained directions to the cata-

CREATURE/OPPONENT AWARD TABLE

Creature/Opponent	6 Players	7 Players	8 Players
Lenethriel's Men (up to 10)	1,100	1,100	1,100
Winding Bandits (6)*	660*	660*	660*
Lenethriel	110	110	110
Total (w/out winding bandits)	1,210	1,210	1,210
Award Per Character	200	175	150





combs' secret entrance from Omag Bastabus, the promise they made to him might lead them to a tricky bit of intrigue with political overtones, preferably at an inopportune time for them.

If the characters joined Lenethriel against Twiceborn, they will most likely be captured. If captured, they will have a slim chance to escape, provided they can steal back their confiscated weapons and armor from Twiceborn's armory. A difficult escape from the cadaver kingdom can provide the basis for an exciting adventure where the characters must face almost impossible odds to succeed.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Major gamemaster characters are listed below in order of their general importance to the story. More detailed descriptions of Twiceborn, Torgak and his deputies, the garmhek, and cadaver men appear in the **Parlath: The Forgotten City** boxed set.

TWICEBORN

Twiceborn has survived and prospered for more than four centuries by being a shrewd, calculating ruler who realizes that her best interests coincide with those of her people. She desires only greater security for the Kingdom of the Dead, and adventurers dealing with Twiceborn should suspect her actions when she seems to act from any other motivation. Twiceborn does not allow desire for revenge or any other emotion to interfere with her decisions, nor does she carelessly risk the not-lives of her followers. Difficult to fool, Twiceborn is adept at deceiving others and her name inspires both shudders and grudging admiration among the adventurers of Haven.

Attributes

DEX: 8 STR: 6 TOU: 10
PER: 6 WIL: 8 CHA: 8

Initiative: 9 Physical Defense: 10
Number of Attacks: 1 Spell Defense: 7
Attack: 10 Social Defense: 10
Damage: 12 Armor: 6
Mystic Armor: 4

Death Rating: 58 Knockdown: 6
Wound Threshold: 17 Recovery Tests: 0
Unconsciousness Rating: 51

Combat Movement: 25
Full Movement: 50

Legend Points: 3,000

Equipment: Living crystal armor, Troll sword (adds +6 steps to Strength step)

Loot: Twiceborn's heavily guarded treasure vault practically bursts with coins and other valuables, as well as magical treasures of the gamemaster's choice. It holds much more loot than any adventuring group could possibly take away

all at once. To steal from Twiceborn, adventurers must get in and out of the vault unmolested by guards while avoiding the many traps installed inside the treasure chamber. Aside from the magical treasures, the cash value of Twiceborn's hoard is roughly 100,000 silver pieces.

If some group succeeds in breaching the vault and slaying its defenders, creatures from all over the ruins would descend on it as soon as they learned of the catastrophe.

CADAVER MEN

The cadaver men in this adventure are slightly better equipped and slightly healthier than the average cadaver men described in the **Earthdawn** rulebook. Note that the statistics given below also apply to Lenethriel.

Attributes

DEX: 5 STR: 6 TOU: 8
PER: 3 WIL: 6 CHA: 4

Initiative: 5 Physical Defense: 7
Number of Attacks: 1 (4)* Spell Defense: 6
Attack: 8 Social Defense: 11
Damage: 11 Armor: 4
Number of Spells: NA Mystic Armor: 0
Spellcasting: NA Knockdown: 7
Effect: NA Recovery Tests: 2

Death Rating: 38 Combat Movement: 25
Wound Threshold: 10 Full Movement: 50
Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Legend Points: 130

Equipment

Broadsword (Damage 11/D10 + D8)
Buckler
15 Crossbow bolts
Leather armor
Light crossbow (Damage 10/D10 + D6)
Sling (Damage 8/2D6)

Loot: None

*Cadaver men go into a berserker rage when wounded. A wounded cadaver man may make 4 attacks per round until the character who wounded it is dead or 10 rounds have passed, whichever comes first.

LENETHRIEL

Lenethriel, leader of the coup attempt against Twiceborn, is a recent recruit to the ranks of the dead. An unusually hard-driving elf while alive, he has transferred his ambition to winning Twiceborn's throne now that he is dead. Though he has won over only a small cadre of supporters, this achievement is impressive, given the notorious resistance of cadaver men to social blandishments. Lenethriel does not like being undead, but he finds it infinitely preferable to being just plain dead. If his plot is exposed, he attempts to escape rather than fight to the





death. If the adventurers ruin his plans, he might channel his restless energy into taking revenge on them. In addition to the statistics given above for cadaver men, Lenethriel carries a forged (+3) broadsword (Damage: 14/D20 + D4). He still wears Absorb Blow and Desperate Blow blood magic charms, but neither of these work because he can no longer power them with blood magic.



GHARMHEK

The gharmhek resemble bizarre reptiles, with frills of heavy bone behind their armored heads and sharp, fearsome-looking beaks for mouths. Their tiny, dark eyes burn with cruel intelligence. Their flabby, snakelike bodies extend roughly three feet behind their heads and are encrusted with scabs and sores that often leak a milky, greenish fluid.

Attributes

DEX: 4 STR: 4 TOU: 11
PER: 20 WIL: 20 CHA: 4

Initiative: 4

Number of Attacks: 1
Attack: 9

Damage: 11

Number of Spells: 1

Spellcasting: See below

Effect: See below

Death Rating: 58

Wound Threshold: 17

Unconsciousness Rating: 51

Karma Points: 15

Physical Defense: 4

Spell Defense: 10

Social Defense: 4

Armor: 10 (head)/0 (body)

Mystic Armor: 10

Knockdown: See below

Recovery Tests: 5

Combat Movement: 8

Full Movement: 16

Karma Step: 12

Powers: Animate Dead 15*, Damage Shift 10, Horror Mark 10, Terror 10

Legend Points: 400

Equipment: None

Loot: None

*Unlike most other Horrors, the gharmhek can use their Animate Dead power within 100 feet of the victim, and need not touch the victim.

SENDRIC

A Second Circle human troubadour, Sendric is a classic type of Havenite: the fringe-dweller. He earns his keep performing services for other explorers, including dispensing the latest rumors and gossip. Although he is an adept, Sendric lacks ambition. He has built his pattern in a lackadaisical way, using his Versatility talent to cherry-pick interesting abilities instead of advancing steadily in his chosen Discipline. He prefers to enjoy life and take it easy rather than risking his health in the ruins, but he is equally averse to the stable, workaday life of the average Name-giver. Sendric wants to live in an exciting place without getting dangerously close to that excitement.

A likable, ingratiating fellow, Sendric may have already given the player characters valuable tips about lucrative sites in the ruins. He may also have volunteered to use his Forge Blade talent on their weapons at a cut rate in order to curry their favor.

Attributes

Dexterity (17): 7/D12
Strength (10): 5/D8
Toughness (11): 5/D8
Perception (15): 6/D10
Willpower (10): 5/D8
Charisma (14): 6/D10

Movement

Full: 80
Combat: 40

Initiative

Dice: D4

Karma

Dice: D8
Points: 10

Damage

Death Rating: 44
Wound Threshold: 8
Unconsciousness Rating: 34
Recovery Tests/Day: 2
Recovery Dice: D8

Equipment

Broadsword (Forged +2) (Damage: 12/2D10)
Buckler
Padded leather armor

Talents

Air Dance (2): 9/D8 + D6
Disguise (2): 8/2D6
Durability (Troubadour) (2)
Emotion Song (2): 8/2D6
Evidence Analysis (1): 7/D12
Fireblood (3): 8/2D6
First Impression (2): 8/2D6
Forge Blade (2): 8/2D6
Karma Ritual (2)
Melee Weapons (2): 9/D8 + D6
Versatility (5)
Weapon History (2): 8/2D6

Skills

Knowledge/Treasure Lore (1): 7/D12
Knowledge/Storytelling (1): 7/D12

Combat

Physical Defense: 9
Spell Defense: 8
Social Defense: 8
Armor: 5
Mystic Armor: 0





TORGAK

This broad-shouldered bear of an troll walks with a rolling, swaggering gait. He's gruff and canny, similar to the grizzled old sheriff portrayed in countless old Westerns. He does not waste words, and cares little for idle chat. As the leader of Haven and the town's most successful businessman, his priorities are to keep Haven safe, to squeeze more profit from his store, and to nap when he feels like it. Torgak is an Eighth Circle troll warrior.

Attributes

Dexterity (13): 6/D10
Strength (21): 8/2D6
Toughness (17): 7/D12
Perception (16): 7/D12
Willpower (12): 5/D8
Charisma (16): 7/D12

Talents

Acrobatic Strike (8): 14/D20 + D4
Air Dance (8): 14/D20 + D4
Avoid Blow (8): 14/D20 + D4
Down Strike (8): 16/D20 + D6 + D4
Durability (Warrior) (10)
Gliding Stride (8): 14/D20 + D4
Karma Ritual (8)
Life Check (8): 15/D20 + D6
Melee Weapon (10): 16/D20 + D8
Second Attack (8): 14/D20 + D4
Wood Skin (8): 15/D20 + D6

Karma

Dice: D4
Points: 38

Skills

Artisan/Wood Carving (1): 8/2D6
Haggle (6): 13/D12 + D10
Knowledge/Accounting (6): 13/D12 + D10
Speak Language (8): 13/D12 + D10 (All major languages)

Damage

Death Rating: 130
Wound Threshold: 11
Unconsciousness Rating: 102
Recovery Tests per Day: 3
Recovery Dice: D12

Combat

Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 9
Social Defense: 9
Armor: 9
Mystic Armor: 1

Racial Ability: Heat Sight

Equipment

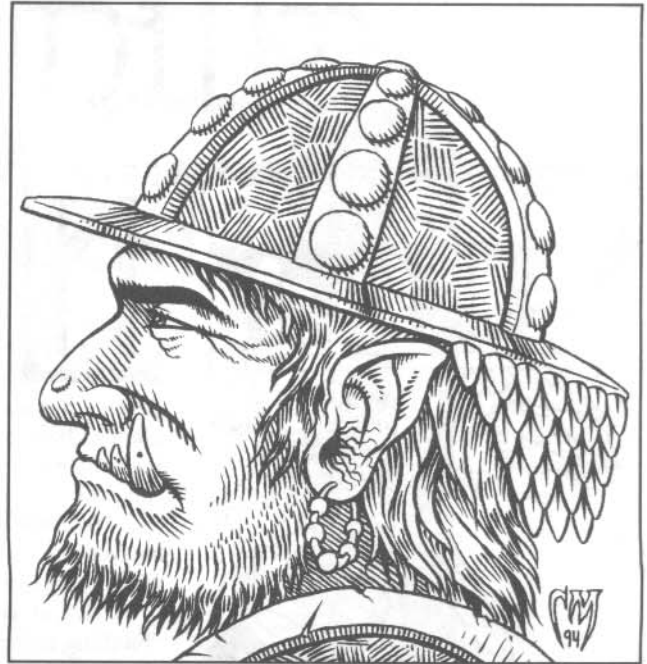
Footman's shield
Padded leather armor (worn when he expects trouble)
Warhammer (15/D20 + D6 damage)

Loot

Torgak has amassed a fortune in excess of 30,000 silver pieces. Most people believe he keeps his stash in vaults beneath his shop, protected by vicious traps, but no one who knows the truth is telling. Make Torgak's treasure difficult to steal. He is attached to his money, and will avenge a major theft by killing the thieves.

TORGAK'S DEPUTIES

Torgak's full-time deputies respond to the sorts of trouble unruly player characters might cause. All possess



the conservative mentality of followers, and lead comfortable lives that they consider their just reward for helping to build Haven. They protect their town jealously, and are more interested in peace and order than in justice. The gamemaster determines the Circles of the full-time deputies. In general, make the deputies a few Circles higher than the player characters when they first arrive in Haven.

Sealak

Troll Sky Raider

DEX: 6 STR: 8 TOU: 7
PER: 5 WIL: 6 CHA: 6

Hookhoof

Ork Cavalryman

DEX: 7 STR: 7 TOU: 6
PER: 5 WIL: 5 CHA: 6

Ireeka Shagmane

Ork Weaponsmith

DEX: 5 STR: 8 TOU: 5
PER: 7 WIL: 6 CHA: 5

Dishara Eyes-of-Straw

Ork Wizard

DEX: 5 STR: 5 TOU: 4
PER: 7 WIL: 7 CHA: 6





COLLECTING A DEBT



NEEDREN LANNEN WISWELL fingered the hem of his brightly colored robe nervously. As he stood waiting for the ork, he gazed about the room, noting the mage standing off in one corner. He recognized the figure and realized to his dismay that he had carried the sack of tin pieces for naught—his Disguise Metal spell would be useless here. Archiana would undoubtedly confer with the mage if Wiswell tried to pass off the sack's contents as silver, and undoubtedly she would become quite angry at his attempt to deceive her a second time. He would just have to find some way to pay up. He glanced back and forth at the two orks who stood at his sides. Both ignored his nervous grin. Wiswell resisted an unexplainable impulse to ask them who did their fur.

"So, Wiswell, you thought you could avoid me did you?" the ork said as she entered the room. As Archiana pronounced his name, the ork twisted her mouth as if she had swallowed some foul tasting insect.

"Not at all, O beneficent and forgiving tusked one," the human began. "Nothing compares with the experience of basking in your robust effluvium, as I always point out to all my friends. I intended to see Your Immenseness as soon as I had a chance to, ah, rest, so that I might spare your eyes the sight of my bedraggled, worthless self. And may I add that your new robe is quite becoming. Did you perchance tailor it yourself ..."

"Save your fancy words for the tavern, Wiswell," Archiana snarled, making a mental note to ask her advisor what *effluvium* meant. She hated it when people used big words she did not know. "Where are my 600 silver pieces?"

"Silver pieces?" Wiswell asked. "Uh, what silver pieces would you be referring to?"

"Don't play stupid with me, Wiswell," the ork said, baring her tusks. "The silver pieces I advanced you before you left on your little *escapade* in the ruins."

"Oooohhhh, those silver pieces," Wiswell said. "Well, I ..."

"You don't have them, do you?" Archiana said. The ork gave a quick nod with her head and suddenly one of the guards standing next to Wiswell grabbed him. The other relieved him of the two sacks he was carrying and handed them over to Archiana. She untied the first one, turned it over, and tin coins spilled to the floor.

"What's this, Wiswell?" she asked. "You weren't planning a little trickery, were you?"

"Why of course not, I simply ..."

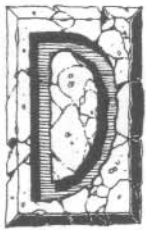
"Shut up," the ork snarled, as she took the second sack in her hands. "There'd better be something valuable in here or you're going to be very sorry," Archiana said as she opened the bag and removed a small, hardwood box ...







DESIRE BOX



DESIRE BOX IS a lighthearted adventure set in Haven. It assumes the player characters are already familiar with the town and its residents. The adventure works well for any number of characters of any Circle of any Discipline. The gamemaster should familiarize himself with the adventure before starting, as it may take a bit more work than usual to pull off.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

In the year 602 TE (1045 TH), the wizard Omid Cicero Batrachian conducted magical research aimed at finding a way to remove the city of Parlainth from the minds of Barsaive's Name-givers. His particular research involved attempts at magically invoking the Passions. To this end he created a magical treasure, a small wooden box that could show the bearer the culmination of his fondest wish. The Theran wizard believed that such a sight would provoke strong emotions in the viewer and thereby attract the appropriate Passion.

The experiment failed in practice, however, because those who saw the box felt an all-consuming desire to own the box. The only Passion who ever appeared in response to that desire was Chorrolis, the incarnation of Desire itself. Chorrolis manifested and purchased the box for a huge fee from Omid's easily bribable assistant, but found to his disgust that the box was utterly useless without a Name-giver's energizing emotion. The exasperated Passion hid the box deep in Parlainth's lower levels and forgot about it. As for Omid, he died during the Scourge without ever successfully invoking a Passion.

Four and a half centuries or so later, a party of adventurers discovered Omid's box in the ruins of Parlainth. Soon afterward, all but one of the adventurers died in an encounter with a minor Horror. The sole survivor, a Fourth Circle illusionist named Needren Lannen Wiswell, carried the box back to Haven and gave it to Archiana Smoothskin, ork leader of the Association of Unaffiliated Explorers, in payment of various debts.

Soon after acquiring the box, Archiana saw her fondest desire: to become the mayor of Haven. The magical properties of the box heightened her own natural persuasive powers, and after a series of public speeches she began to gain signifi-

cant support in her bid to unseat Torgak. At this point, the player characters return to Haven from their latest adventuring exploit only to find the town on the verge of revolt.

In the adventure's first encounter, the player characters find the citizens of Haven laying siege to Torgak's Supplies and Goods. These otherwise law-abiding citizens have become devoted adherents of Archiana Smoothskin and seek to capture Torgak and "try him for his crimes." As the player characters soon learn, Archiana Smoothskin's sudden popularity has brought her close to her long-held goal, the office of mayor. Torgak, grasping at straws to put down this sudden revolt against him, hires the adventurers to sabotage Archiana's public image.

The adventurers attend Archiana's tent meeting, in which they first see the magical box and its effect on the people of Haven. While at the meeting, the player characters are approached by Needren Lannen Wiswell, who asks their aid in guarding and protecting Archiana.

At this point in the adventure, the player characters may choose to support Torgak or Archiana, or they may attempt to obtain the desire box themselves. Because the box's magic causes those who see it to covet it, several people often possess it in rapid succession. As the box changes hands, the citizens of Haven shift their loyalties toward the new owner.

Ultimately, the intensifying struggles over the ownership of the box bring the Passion Chorrolis onto the scene, attracted by the increased desires triggered by the player characters' actions. Chorrolis takes back his box and vanishes, leaving the adventurers to sort out the loose ends.

PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

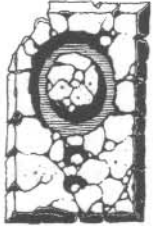
Before running **Desire Box**, review the rules for Interaction Tests (pp. 237-40, ED, and the **Haven** section of the **Parlainth** boxed set if possible). Ask each player to name his or her character's greatest desire; this information may become important near the climax of the adventure.

This adventure works well within the scope of a wider plot. The story begins as the player characters come back to Haven after an absence of at least a week, during which they may have made a lengthy expedition into the ruins of Parlainth or had another adventure elsewhere. The adventurers might logically return to Haven to seek help or information, such as a document sold at Vardeghul's Lore Exchange, but they might also simply be there for a little rest and relaxation.





RETURN TO HAVEN



VIEW

IN THIS ENCOUNTER, the characters return to Haven after a week or so away. They find a large, angry crowd of Havenites gathered around Torgak's Supplies and Goods, calling for the blood of Torgak and his cronies.

SETTING THE STAGE

It's funny how much you miss Haven whenever you leave it—and how much you wonder why whenever you return. Haven never changes—the same patched-together buildings, the same narrow, dirty streets under a cloudy sky heavy with unshed rain. The same people, too—everyone in Haven has a scheme to get rich overnight and a long list of things to buy with the money. You can almost smell the greed in the air. (Thankfully, that's all you smell. The crematorium is fortunately idle just now.) Strange as it seems, though, you're glad to be back. Haven may not be elegant or even decently clean, but it's the liveliest town in all Barsaive. Whether you're buying supplies, seeking information, or looking for a tankard of good strong ale, Haven is the place to get it.

As you travel through the narrow streets, you notice throngs of people running past you. Every single one of them wears a brass pin in the shape of a shortsword. You've never seen these pins before, but no one will stop long enough to tell you about them. Bemused, you follow the crowd; everyone is running toward Torgak's store, in front of which a mob has gathered. As you draw closer, you see several people brandishing weapons. A harsh voice shouts, "Haul him out! Bring the ugly cuss to trial!"

THEMES AND IMAGES

Stress the shocking contrast between the stirred-up Havenite mob and the peaceful residents the player characters know from past visits. The atmosphere should feel eerily off-kilter; everything familiar has suddenly become strange and frightening. The adventurers know many people in this mob and should find their behavior bizarre. If the player characters regard the Association of Unaffiliated Explorers as a second-rate laughingstock, they will find the sudden prestige of its founder all the more remarkable.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Archiana Smoothskin, leader of the Association of Unaffiliated Explorers, received the magical desire box a few days ago and has unknowingly worked its magic over Haven to serve her cause. She does not know the nature of

the box's magic; she only knows that holding the box gives her confidence that she can become mayor of Haven. That others instantly support her does not appear magical to her, merely logical.

ABOUT THE CROWD

Archiana is not present in this crowd; the player characters do not see her until the following encounter, **Revival Meeting**. The crowd is a ragtag mob of explorers, adventurers, and a few dozen lower-Circle adepts. Higher-Circle adepts have resisted the box's magic and vacated Haven until the trouble passes. Almost everyone left behind has become a firm supporter of Archiana and so they loathe Torgak and various other powerful friends and associates of Haven's founder. These individuals have barricaded themselves in Torgak's well-defended store.

The brass pins signify membership in Archiana's Association of Unaffiliated Explorers. One of Archiana's earliest followers created the pins so that Archiana's supporters could recognize one another. He picked the sword symbol to represent Archiana's swordmaster Discipline.

Crowd members carry quite a few real swords, as well as many other weapons. The adventurers can feel a lynch-mob fervor growing. They must watch their words carefully, lest they end up having to escape the mob themselves. Careful talk to the crowd can defuse their belligerent mood; a player character might say something like, "Why lynch Torgak now, friends? Let him live awhile in terror of justice, so our revenge may taste all the sweeter."

Fighting the mob is a poor solution. The player characters know these people well; in other circumstances, they would drink with them at the local tavern or help them out of a scrape in Parlainth's ruined passages. They will find it almost impossible to do battle with their friends.

BRUSPRI TELLS ALL

In the crowd, the adventurers see a familiar face: Bruspri, a regular source of gossip and information. Bruspri is a pale young human with thinning blonde hair, a mustache that almost works, and a less successful attempt at a beard. (For game statistics on Bruspri, see **Cast of Characters**, p. 58.) If the adventurers can pull Bruspri away from the mob to find out what has happened in Haven, he says, "I'm with Archiana!" in his usual breathless fashion. "Never knew she could inspire folk, no I didn't, but now she's stirrin' us all up. We're going to pry that lout Torgak out of his castle, which he bought with the money he extorted from the likes of you and me. We'll give away his ill-gotten fortune to everyone in Haven! Archiana will be mayor, and we'll all get rich when she leads the big expedition into the ruins." Say all this as fast as possible; Bruspri should sound incoherent, almost crazed.





Bruspri follows his rapid-fire speech with a suggestion that the characters attend Archiana's meeting, scheduled to occur shortly. There, he tells them, they can find a healer, supplier, buyer, or whoever they seek. Bruspri also hopes that Archiana's speech at the meeting will persuade the characters to throw their support behind her.

INSIDE TORGAK'S STORE

Encourage the characters to visit the besieged Torgak by placing supplies or informants vital to them inside the store. Given the emporium's vast selection, this should prove a simple task.

Unfortunately, characters who try to enter Torgak's emporium face the same opposition that foils the crowd. Torgak has guarded his bolt-hole with half a dozen high-Circle henchmen wielding the finest weapons and the strongest protective spells Torgak's considerable fortune can afford. The store's three ground-floor entrances and the roof trapdoor are all chained shut from the inside (Physical Armor Rating 12, Damage Rating 45; see p. 209, ED) and enchanted with the Impossible Lock illusionist spell. Each such lock has a Death Rating of 14. The windows are barred (Physical Armor Rating 14, Damage Rating 35) and are so narrow that only one human-sized character at a time can pass through each window.

If the gamemaster decides that Torgak's emporium has a basement where Torgak keeps his treasure vault, the vault is protected by a Pass Ward (Circle 5 nethermancer spell) that will last four more years from the time of this adventure. At the gamemaster's discretion, the basement may boast a secret tunnel leading to a deserted shelter several houses away.

The adventurers cannot hope to get in by using brute force; instead, reward cleverness or smooth talk. Before Torgak agrees to let the characters in, the old troll insists they set aside or peace-bond their weapons. If they attack Torgak or anyone else once inside, Torgak and his henchmen subdue them and tie them up until they learn polite behavior.

As a last resort, the characters may wait two or three hours until the crowd disperses. Once most of the crowd leaves, the characters should find it somewhat easier to get into Torgak's store.

Inside the darkened store, amid walls lined with polearms and crates of candy, dried fish and other goods, the besieged troll and his friends are in a surprisingly con-

vivial mood. Torgak sits on a cask of horseshoe nails, making imaginary casts with a birchwood fishing rod. His deputies, as well as Liniarg Blindingshout, Tylia, and Vardeghul are reliving old times, telling whoppers, and taking a few minutes now and then to curse Archiana. (For game stats of Archiana, Liniarg Blindingshout, and Tylia, see *Cast of Characters*, p. 56. Stats for Torgak and his deputies appear in *Dead Man's Hand*, p. 43.)

"Upstart young pipsqueak," says Liniarg, dabbing kohl over her bulging eyelids. "Mud-ruffle! Goat-udder! She waltzes into Haven and takes over like she owns the place, when everyone knows Torgak owns the place."

"Shush!" says one of Torgak's deputies, a moody ork named Ireeka Shagmane. "Talk like that probably turned the crowd against us to begin with."

"Nobody turned the crowd against us but Archiana," says Torgak mildly. He tells the player characters, "Got popular all of a sudden, she did. We're safe for now, but Haven may have a new mayor soon. I'm willing to guess what Archiana's first official act will be, too. Don't think I'll care for it much. You folks interested in a job?"

If the adventurers say yes to this question, Torgak hires them to investigate the source of Archiana's popularity. He adds, "If you happen to uncover something that might make her look bad, don't let me stop you from talking about it." He offers the characters 500 silver pieces each and may up the pay as high as 800 each, agreeing to pay half in advance.

If the characters do not agree to help Torgak, he curtly dismisses them and his deputies encourage them to leave. For all its violence and threats, the mob cannot flush the old troll out of his store, and so things remain at an impasse until Archiana's speech at the meeting.

TROUBLESHOOTING

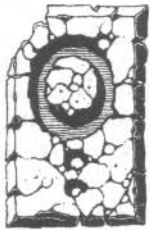
If the player characters help the mob break into the emporium and seize Torgak, Archiana's supporters have him thrown in jail, ostensibly to await trial and punishment. When Archiana's support has vanished at the end of the adventure, the contrite crowd releases Torgak.

If the characters show no interest in investigating the reasons behind the mob's bizarre actions, make sure that whatever the adventurers are seeking in Haven is inside Torgak's store. This strategy should lure the player characters inside, where Torgak can hire them to investigate Archiana or offer to exchange whatever they need for their help.





REVIVAL MEETING



VIEW

HERE THE CHARACTERS attend Archiana's meeting and see both the desire box and its effect on the people of Haven. While at the meeting, the characters are asked to follow and protect Archiana; some of her followers fear she may be the target of an attack.

SETTING THE STAGE

You join the crowd in the alleyway between two broken, empty buildings. A light rain is falling, but you hear none of the usual carping about the weather. People are jammed in the alleyway, staring eagerly down at the far end where a big canvas tarp stretches across the gap. Two huge trolls guard a man-sized hole in one corner. You sense eager anticipation in the crowd, unleavened by even a scrap of the usual Haven cynicism.

A stranger in a magician's robes stands not far away from you. This small, thin man is just beginning to hunch with age; he has a large nose and thin white hair that looks like it needs a good combing and cutting. He stares at you, his pale-blue, bloodshot eyes wide. After a moment, he waves delicately at you.

THEMES AND IMAGES

Emphasize the sense of anticipation and restrained impatience that arises from the Havenites' unanimous (and unusual) commitment to a single goal. The crowd's energy resembles a kind of magic, and the player characters should initially get caught up in it. With the arrival of Archiana, the stark contrast between the powerful mood and the unimpressive ork who inspires it should make the characters suspect a magical explanation.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The crowd includes most of the major figures in Haven whom the adventurers did not meet in Torgak's store. Pagmor Gilt-Throat, Omag Bastabus, and various Throalic agents have become unlikely allies as fellow supporters of Archiana. Have the player characters meet and banter with these gamemaster characters as appropriate to get across the mood and any exposition the characters might have missed in the adventure's first encounter.

The two troll guards, Dogan Manywarts and Bulg the Smelly, are not adepts. They have strict orders not to let anyone bother Archiana before she begins the meeting. Though the characters would have little trouble getting

past the trolls, the rest of the crowd would certainly take violent offense at this breach of etiquette.

The magician observing the characters is the illusionist, Needren Lannen Wiswell, who found the desire box and gave it to Archiana. A would-be adventurer from Bartertown with a good heart marred by a cowardly streak, Needren made a catastrophe of his first expedition into Parlainth. He made a blunder that led to the deaths of every one of his companions, leaving him to escape with the magical box. Soon after reaching safety in Haven, he gave Archiana the box in payment of a debt of 600 silver pieces that he incurred buying provisions from her shortly before his ill-fated expedition. Once Archiana had the box, Needren fell under Archiana's influence. Needren has since become one of the ork's most ardent supporters and wants to hire the adventurers as guards to prevent an assault that he fears may befall his heroine.

Needren uses a Send Message spell (see *Cast of Characters*, p. 57) to pass a message to the player characters, making it appear as a wrinkled ball of paper in one adventurer's hand.

Read the following message aloud to the players:

Friends of Archiana wish to hire you to prevent possible upcoming assault. See me after meeting.

—Needren Lannen Wiswell

If the characters decide to talk to Wiswell about his missive immediately, they must struggle through the crowd to get to him. If they succeed, Wiswell introduces himself and says, "I suspect an attack on our leader any day now. You must help me to prevent anyone interfering with her glorious goals." Before he can explain further, Archiana enters.

ARCHIANA'S SPEECH

Short and thin for an ork, Archiana Smoothskin has piercing dark eyes, polished tusks, and strikingly clear gray skin. She wears newer and more stylish clothing than the adventurers have ever seen on her and carries a bread-loaf-sized wooden box. For a detailed description of the box, see *Loose Ends*, p. 59.

When Archiana enters the tent, read the following aloud:

A reverent silence falls as Archiana strides forward. People in the audience, even hardened adventurers who have faced down crakbills and jehuthras without breaking a sweat, gasp as Archiana's gaze lights briefly on them. Before beginning her speech, the ork sets the box at her feet. She begins to speak in a nasal monotone, hardly a





voice to inspire a crowd. "I, uh, I want to thank everyone for being here. I mean, it's not much of a place, huh? I asked for a nice room, but I guess certain folk didn't want to see me in a nice room, but never mind. Glad you all showed up anyway, really. Uhhh ... I said that already, huh?"

She clears her throat, then begins to speak of Torgak. Her words gain intensity and coherence. "At last you folk of Haven have overthrown the tyrant who has oppressed you! Exploited you! Milked you for every silver he and his thugs could extort! We need a new mayor, my friends. *You* need a new mayor. Will you let me fill that place?"

The roar is deafening, the crowd's consent unanimous. If the player characters voice dissent or derision, half a dozen angry, nearby crowd members of all races converge on them, striking them with fists or anything handy until the player characters either succumb or leave. After the crowd has acclaimed Archiana their new mayor, she announces her next goal while holding up the box.

Read the following aloud:

"This box holds a treasure called ... umm ... ah ... oh, blood monkeys ... wait, I've got it! Delento's Sterilizer! That's it—a powerful treasure! It, uh, purifies the pollution of astral space so Horrors can't live there any more. You know ... astral space is dirty and this treasure, well, cleans it. Like soap. Well, maybe not like soap, but ... oh, blood monkeys. Anyway, it works. So ... uh, the Sterilizer was lost a long time ago, but now it has returned. And I have it. So I thought I'd ... umm ... well, lead everybody into Parlainth, that is, if you want, and we'll drive out the Horrors, and then, well, find treasure. And money. Probably lots of money,



silver and copper and such, you know ... or treasure ... wait a minute, I said treasure already. Aw, blood monkeys ... what was I going to say? Something about money ... getting rich. That's it—we'll get rich!"

The crowd cheers madly, as if they just heard the most stirring speech they have ever heard in their lives. The player characters should sense something terribly amiss; after that pathetic, rambling performance, Archiana should not be getting such an enthusiastic response. By rights everyone should have gone home in disgust; instead the crowd is cheering as if Archiana has just single-handedly won the Theran War. Hopefully, the characters will begin to suspect magical influence at work.

THE MAGIC OF THE BOX

Despite Archiana's claim, the box does not hold "Delento's Sterilizer." In fact, Delento's Sterilizer does not exist. The magical box holds nothing, though no one can open it to prove this. Instead, the box's magic inspires the bearer with a plan to bring his or her fondest desire in reach. In some cases, as with Archiana, the box's influence causes the bearer to imagine a fictitious magical treasure with a detailed history and a description of its effects.

The magic of the box makes the idea of Delento's Sterilizer convincing not only to Archiana but also to those around her. To find out if the magic fools the player characters, make a Deceit (18) Test for each character and compare the result to his or her Social Defense (see **Interaction Tests**, pp. 237–238, ED). If this test is successful, the character believes in the Sterilizer. He or she recalls having heard about it for years and becomes convinced that Archiana can use it. He also believes that the ork will achieve





her goal. Encourage these players to roleplay their characters' newfound faith.

Those characters whose Deceit Tests fail resist the box's magic for the moment. As they watch the babbling Archiana sway the crowd (and perhaps their fellow adventurers), mention to them that the box Archiana is holding has changed color to a slightly lighter brown and seems to glow. If none of the adventurers resist the box's magic (if all the Deceit Tests are successful), have them make Perception Tests to notice the change in color.

AFTER THE MEETING

Archiana concludes her speech, saying, "Well, good. So, um, everyone show up by the Map Wall tomorrow. About noon, maybe? Is noon good for everyone? Noon. Oh, and, um, bring provisions for ... well, I'd guess several days at least. Oh, and weapons, too. Then ... uh ... I guess we'll go in."

After another ovation from the jubilant crowd, Archiana leaves through the hole in the tent's back wall. A horde of well-wishers follows her, crowding around, asking for favors and so on. After a bit of byplay with the crowd and the overprotective troll guards, allow the player characters to speak with her if they wish. If they talk to Archiana, the characters discover that she believes her sudden popularity comes from Delento's Sterilizer; Archiana believes the treasure was destined to fall to her, and that in Parlainth she will find a way to open the box and use the Sterilizer. If asked how she knows the box holds the Sterilizer, she replies, "The runes on the box say so." In fact, Archiana simply believes they do. She is convinced that she will get her hands on the wealth of Parlainth, and intends to use it to expand her authority over the entire surrounding region of Barsaive. However, she is reluctant to admit this last ambition.

During this conversation with Archiana, the characters should notice that despite her roaring success with the crowd, she appears more nervous than ever before. In her eyes they see a new and unsettling hunger.

The presence of the crowd should discourage the characters from assaulting Archiana or stealing the box. If they do steal it, go to **The Box Changes Hands**, p. 52.

MEETING WISWELL

After the meeting, the characters can meet Needren Lannen Wiswell easily. The unassuming illusionist tells them his worries that someone—perhaps Torgak's hirelings—will attack Archiana, "for fear her just cause will drive their profitable crime and duplicity from Haven." Wiswell offers the adventurers 500 silver pieces each to follow and protect Archiana until her venture into Parlainth the following day. If the player characters negotiate, they can double the fee. However, Wiswell can pay them only 50 silver pieces each in advance. He swears to pay the balance from his share of Parlainth's treasure on the following

evening and may also teach the interested player characters the Send Message spell in lieu of cash payment.

If Wiswell's offer does not tempt the adventurers, they may use him as a source of clues. If asked about his narrow escape from a Horror in Parlainth, he recounts the following tale: "In the Twists, I had a feeling of utter confidence in my abilities. We had found a treasure trove in a walled brick recess marked with the sign of a fishhook, and my path to success seemed gloriously clear. Then a Horror we had never seen before attacked us. I alone felt as if the Horror's mind magic had no power over me. It killed all my companions—I alone escaped. When I reached Haven, I paid off my debts and made ready to return to Bartertown from whence I had come, but then Archiana's great vision drew me to her cause."

Wiswell has not recognized the box's significance and so he does not think to mention that he paid his debt to Archiana with it. He no longer feels like a great hero, but he does not know why. If the characters ask Wiswell about the treasure trove, he tells them that the only thing he was able to grab was a small wooden box that he used to pay Archiana. After the box influenced Archiana to develop her story of Delento's Sterilizer, Wiswell came to believe in the mythical treasure's existence. He and everyone else under the box's enchantment can recount legends about the Sterilizer, but the legends do not dovetail with each other. Wiswell feels honored to have delivered the treasure to the ork, who was obviously destined to bear it to greatness.

The characters recognize the reference to the fishhook symbol; the fishhook is an ancient Theran emblem for the Passion Chorrolis. Wiswell found the desire box in one of the city's many treasure caches.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If the characters attack Archiana at the meeting, her many supporters beat them senseless or drive them out of Haven. Try not to let them kill Archiana. If they wound her, have a questor of Garlen conveniently appear and heal the ork on the spot.

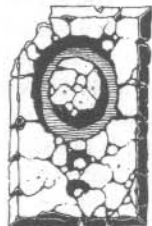
If the characters meet Archiana and talk to her before the meeting, she gives them the same information contained in her speech. Any attack on her draws her troll guards, who sound the alarm and bring in the crowd.

If all the characters succumb to the box's enchantment, they become convinced that Archiana can drive the Horrors from Parlainth. However, they do not necessarily become her diehard loyalists. They may still suspect the box's magical effect and report it to Torgak. If so, he hires them to steal the box. This goal does not conflict with the character's firm belief in Archiana's great destiny; in fact, the contrast between supporting her and working for Torgak might make for interesting roleplaying.





THE BOX CHANGES HANDS



INTERVIEW

IN THIS ENCOUNTER, the box passes from Archiana to several others in Haven. Since Archiana acquired it, the box's magic has grown stronger; the simultaneously dangerous and ridiculous effects of its powers become evident as the people's support and adulation shifts with every change in the box's ownership.

Precisely when and how this encounter comes into play depends on the gamemaster. Ideally, it should occur just before or precisely at noon near the Map Wall, where Archiana and her followers are gathering to prepare to enter Parlainth. But this encounter can take place almost anywhere, and so the **Setting the Stage** section has been omitted. **Behind the Scenes** provides guidelines for describing the situation in Haven as the box changes hands.

THEMES AND IMAGES

As the box passes from hand to hand, escalate the ambitions of each new bearer or each desire fulfilled. The change of owners might become comic, particularly if the box reveals desires so secret that the bearer did not recognize them. Imagine, for example, a windling who gets the box and suddenly believes she will find a way to become an obsidian man ...

For a comic effect of another kind, play up the drawbacks of extreme popularity. If the player characters get the box, legions of newfound fans besiege them, chase them for autographs, beg money from them, tear their clothing for souvenirs, and never give them a moment's rest. Ridiculously inappropriate suitors attempt to seduce them, women claim that male characters fathered their children, and so on.

BEHIND THE SCENES

As the magic of the desire box grows, it causes those under its sway to desire it intensely. Many different people in Haven desperately want to acquire the box, and will go to extreme lengths to get it.

In pacing the adventure and this encounter, assume that Archiana Smoothskin benefits from the box's magic long enough to demonstrate the absurdity of her escalating ambition. Then have the box pass quickly through various hands, revealing several different deeply held desires. At every stage the crowd's fickle devotion intensifies. If possible, allow one or more player characters to roleplay their own fondest desires before the adventure ends.

SHIFTING BEARERS

Suggested ways to shift the box from bearer to bearer are given below. Ideally, the shifts come in response to the characters' actions. These transitions may be humorous, but try to avoid outright slapstick unless the players get into the comic spirit of things.

- Archiana goes to Torgak's store in another attempt to roust out the incumbent mayor. Unknown to her, the player characters have told Torgak their suspicions about the box or he has learned about it from other witnesses. When Archiana appears, Torgak casts his birchwood fishing rod from an upper window. The silken line, covered with a strong adhesive, snags the box from Archiana's grasp. Torgak gets the box, or the line breaks and it falls into someone else's grasp.

- Adoring crowds sweep up the new box-bearer and carry him or her toward the Restless Troll inn to celebrate in style. Passing under a low archway, the bearer strikes his head, collapses and drops the box into someone else's hands.

- A hostile Havenite shouts, "If you're to be Emperor of Barsaive [substitute bearer's name here], I won't live in such a world!" He then tries to cut his own throat with his sword. A well-meaning person nearby grabs him to prevent this, and both fall against the box's bearer. All wind up on the ground in a tangle of limbs, and the box goes flying.

Details of how the box's effects switch from bearer to bearer are left intentionally vague to allow the gamemaster to tailor them to the needs of his adventuring group. In general, the box's magic takes effect on a new bearer the instant that bearer touches it. However, the gamemaster may adjust the changeover time to best suit his adventure. If the player characters gain the box, an immediate effect speeds the action along and a delayed effect gives their opponents a chance to take back the box. Both approaches have merit.

The gamemaster need not aim for consistency in handling the box's magic. After all, ancient Theran enchantments are powerful, mysterious, and often fickle. If you wish, have the box's power vary from scene to scene during this encounter.

Read the following to the players the first time the box changes hands:

A cloud seems to lift from your eyes, and you see Archiana Smoothskin as though for the first time. She looks like the same unlikable, unnerving ork you used to know. The idea that anyone would follow her into Parlainth is ludicrous—or it would be if everyone hadn't





come so close to doing just that. And what was all that stable-rot about Delento's Sterilizer? For a minute or two you thought you remembered a legend about it, but the memory is fading away like a dream. No, you've definitely never heard of Delento's Sterilizer before.

False leaders, imaginary treasures ... what nonsense! It's a good thing Haven has real leaders with authentic greatness, like [new bearer's name] over there.

The above text assumes that the player characters are under the box's influence. If not, adapt the text accordingly.

FONDEST WISHES

Under the box's influence, the bearer feels an intense wave of confidence that he or she can achieve his or her most cherished goal in life. A plan rapidly develops in the bearer's mind to achieve the goal, and he experiences a vision of the plan fulfilled and the desire consummated. Others around him become aware of this plan, whether or not the bearer voices it. Those around the bearer do not necessarily endorse this plan; they only believe it will happen. Archiana aroused such vast enthusiasm because her desire to oust Torgak and get rich happened to coincide with desires of many Havenites. If Torgak gets the box, everyone comes to believe that the mob will lynch Archiana, but individual members of the crowd may not feel that desire.

The fondest desires of some prominent Havenites, as well as a few generic desires suitable for any character, are described below.

Torgak: The troll founder of Haven wants riches, genuine affection and admiration from all Haven's citizens, and Archiana's head on a pole on the roof of Torgak's Supplies and Goods.

Liniarg Blindingshout: Blindingshout desires acclaim for her beauty, a string of broken-hearted suitors, and Archiana's head on a pole in front of the entrance to Torgak's Supplies and Goods.

Vardeghul: This hardworking ork wants to become the Passion of Information.

Omag Bastabus, Cleotha Splayfoot, and members of Justice for All: Each of these wants to see Haven brought under the control of their respective governments and themselves as Parlainth's territorial governor.

Hotbolt and members of the Grim Legion: The mad Legionnaires' desires shift by the moment. One minute one of them wants a huge pile of gold; a moment later, the same one or another might desire a nice cold mug of ale, a

procession of desirable bed partners, fame as the slayer of the Horror Verjigorm, and so on.

Pagmor Gilt-Throat: Pagmor dreams of marrying a beautiful female troll (perhaps a player character), founding a merchant house, turning Haven into a major trading center, and fathering many descendants who will revere his memory throughout the generations.

Tylia: The proprietress of the Restless Troll inn longs for a heroic career slaughtering Horrors in Parlainth and a staff of several dozen trusted employees to handle all the petty details of running her business.

Bruspri: This weaselly gossipmonger secretly wants to be a Great Dragon.

Generic Desires: Any player or gamemaster character may wish to become Emperor of Barsaive, master all the magic of the Theran Empire, liberate slaves throughout Barsaive, travel everywhere in the world and to the Moon, become a member of a different Name-giver race, sing and dance splendidly for adoring audiences, eat anything without growing fat, and so on.

In describing a player character's vision of fulfilled desires, come up with a condensed, "fast forward" description that casually yet plausibly disposes of such obstacles as enemies, natural afflictions, and psychological inability to pull off the desired outcome. Enlist the players' cooperation to play out their characters' small, deferential parts as supporters of the box-bearer's glorious destiny. After the vision ends, resume regular narration at the point where the bearer received the box.

Every time the box converts a new believer or goes to a new bearer, its color grows slightly brighter. At the climax of the struggles for possession of the box, the box glows like a miniature, colored sun. At that point, go to **Enter Chorrolis**, p. 54.

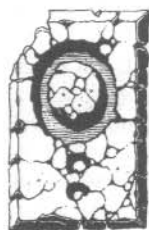
TROUBLESHOOTING

In line with the potentially comic tone of this adventure, try to keep events from turning bloody. A certain amount of swordplay lends excitement, but try to contrive reasons why a deadly blow might fail to land. For example, other combatants might stumble into the attacker and cause the blow to go wild. Alternatively, a character who misses an Attack Test by a wide margin might accidentally throw his weapon far across the battlefield, where it luckily parries a potentially lethal blow. The comedic atmosphere permits as many absurd developments as the gamemaster can dream up.





ENTER CHORROLIS



VIEW

IN THIS ENCOUNTER, the Passion Chorrolis appears and takes back his treasure. The timing and setting of this closing encounter depend on the player characters' actions and the box's movements. Stage this encounter when the struggles over the box reach a climax, perhaps when

blood is about to spill. Torgak's henchmen and Archiana's remaining followers may be ready to fight, with the player characters caught in the middle; or the characters have the box and the previous owners are about to take it back by force; or the characters themselves have come to blows over who gets the box.

Alternatively, Chorrolis may appear when the box's various bearers have escalated their ambitions to ludicrous levels: ruling the whole world, transforming all Name-givers into windlings, and so on.

For convenience, the following description assumes the player characters and the box are in Torgak's store.

They may chase Torgak inside his emporium after he steals the box, or a mob of adoring fans may chase them inside, or they may enter in search of a device to neutralize the box's magic, or any other reason the gamemaster can think up. Wherever the climax occurs, adapt the following text to reflect the actual setting.

SETTING THE STAGE

In the dim light of Torgak's Supplies and Goods, the box glows more and more brightly, like fire seen through a diamond. Gazing breathlessly at its beauty, you want the box even more. As that thought strikes you, the light begins to pulse like a beacon. Rays of light shoot from the box, striking along the walls. Waves of golden light ripple across the crammed, jumbled shelves. Whatever the light strikes looks infinitely desirable. The wood of the spice barrels looks polished and new, and the scent of pine fills the room. Spearheads and axe-blades gleam brightly; ordinary glassware looks like fine crystal.

Then the building begins to shake, and a few pieces of merchandise float gently into the air. You smell a delicate perfume you've never smelled before, and the hair on your forearms stands on end. A swirl of color coalesces in the air before you, as though you're staring into a pool of water from which something is about to surface.

THEMES AND IMAGES

Invoke images of the Passion's power and magic. Strange phenomena occur all around Chorrolis: the characters suddenly remember toys they cherished as children, rings and jewelry jump between characters at random, the characters' thumbs start to itch, and so on.

The gamemaster may wish to emphasize Chorrolis' darker side as well, including his desperate drive to own things. This drive leaves the Passion eternally unsatisfied and, in a way, suffering. As an example, everyone may feel sudden, maddening urges to possess random objects near them.





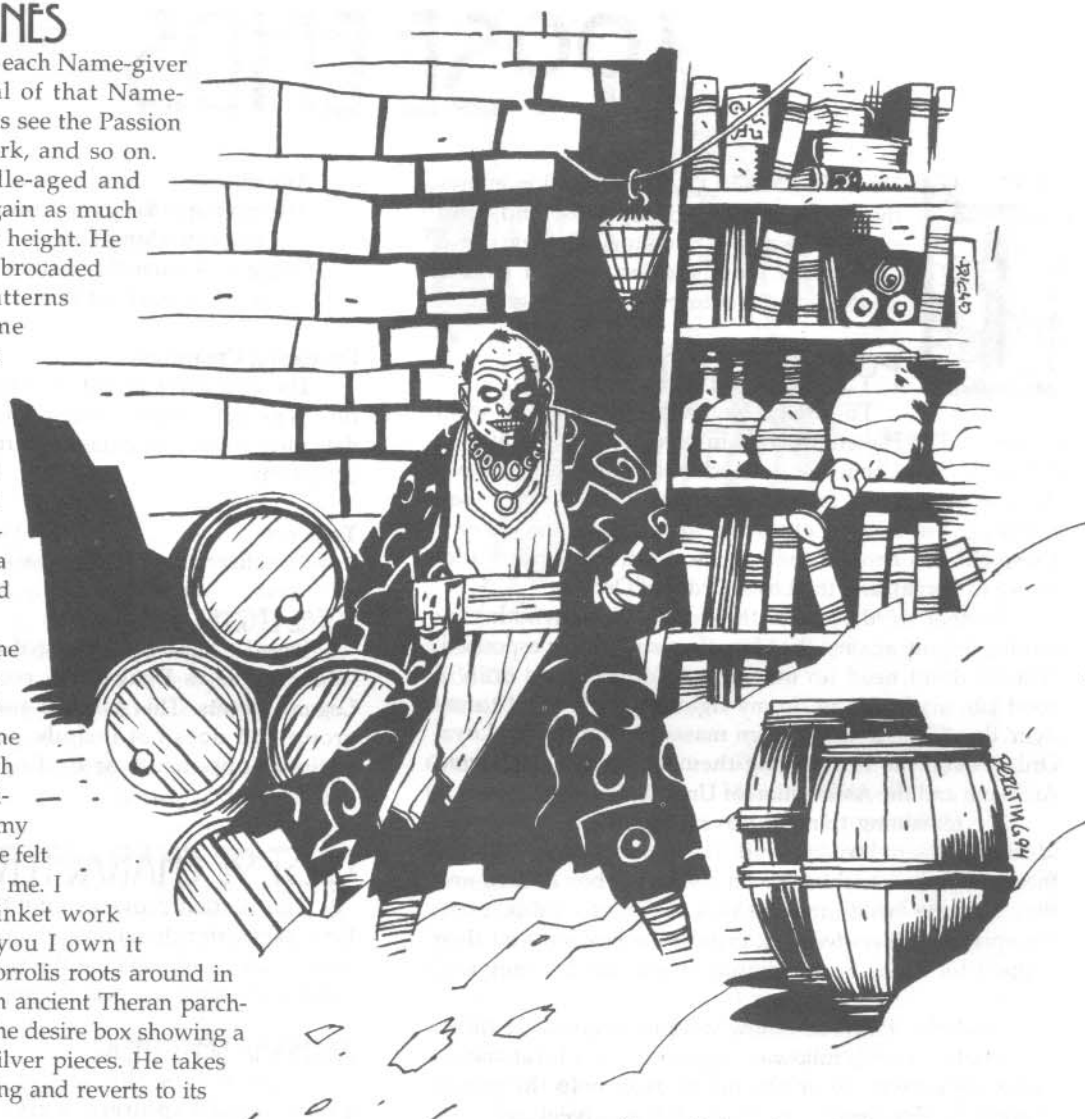
BEHIND THE SCENES

Chorrolis appears to each Name-giver present as an individual of that Name-giver's own race. Humans see the Passion as human, orks see an ork, and so on. The Passion looks middle-aged and appears to weigh half again as much as he should for his short height. He wears a black satin tunic brocaded with gold threads in patterns that never look the same twice, maroon leggings lined with gold piping, a black sash, and black boots. His ears, neck, wrists, and fingers all bear rich-looking gold jewelry set with moonstones. At his waist is a small, maroon-colored moleskin pouch.

When Chorrolis sees the box, he laughs briefly and bitterly. "I nearly forgot this bauble," he says. "The nosy dabblers of Parlainth created this tiny monstrosity some years ago to lure my kin to them. They may have felt annoyed that it lured only me. I never could make the trinket work properly—but I assure you I own it legally, in fee simple." Chorrolis roots around in his pouch and pulls out an ancient Theran parchment, a lawful receipt for the desire box showing a purchase price of 20,000 silver pieces. He takes the box, and it stops glowing and reverts to its earlier, drab appearance.

The characters may talk to Chorrolis briefly, but he does not haggle with them over the box. Once he buys something like this, Chorrolis never parts with it even though its magic does not work for him. However, at some time after this adventure a disguised questor of Chorrolis may visit the adventurers to purchase whatever other items of theirs that the Passion noticed and desired on this visit.

In their conversation with Chorrolis, the characters should notice his driven nature, incessant greed, and deep unhappiness. His endless quest for possessions makes him bitter and shortsighted, but he speaks to them politely. "I thank you," he tells the characters when the conversation draws to a close. "Had you not played your part in increasing your fellow Name-givers' desire for this box, their blood would never have run so hot as to draw my attention. I cannot let such helpful friends go away empty-handed; please, take a copper piece. I insist."



Chorrolis hands each character one copper piece, a Throalic coin of recent date. His expression shows pain as he parts with the money.

Even if Chorrolis spots a desirable item belonging to a player character, Chorrolis does not stay around to negotiate personally for it. With an ingratiating wave of his fingers, he vanishes in a swirl of color. The effect that made Torgak's merchandise appear so desirable vanishes with him.

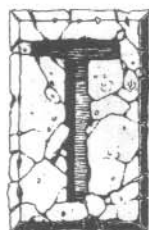
TROUBLESHOOTING

Once the Passion arrives, the gamemaster can easily keep the adventure on track. Attacks on the Passion obviously fail, as do attempts to extort rewards by taking hostages or in other illegal ways. With a wave of his pudgy hand, Chorrolis either paralyzes such headstrong characters or removes from them all desire to behave in such a way.





LOOSE ENDS



THE INFORMATION IN this section allows the gamemaster to tie up loose ends and suggests ways to use story elements and characters from **Desire Box** in future **Earthdawn** adventures and campaigns.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

The box's enchantments vanish with Chorrolis. The Havenites react in several ways. A third of them deny ever believing in Archiana or any of the box's other bearers: "I was just playing along. Didn't want to say anything, but I knew everyone had gone stone crazy." These citizens resume their old ways and previous allegiance to Torgak and the Loyal Order of Delvers.

Another third react to the magical hoodwinking by turning angrily against the ideas they so recently espoused. "Haven don't need no mayor but Torgak! He's doin' a good job, mark me, an' in my right mind I'll say it to my dyin' day." These folk turn en masse to support the Loyal Order, even the few among them who once supported Archiana and the Association of Unaffiliated Explorers.

The remaining third of Haven's residents cling to the ideas the desire box induced them to embrace. Some of these supported Archiana even before the box arrived and they view the "wild time," as they call it, as a giddy, exciting episode. Others feel that even if the box induced their support for Archiana, continuing to support her may well be right.

Similarly, if anyone followed a player character (however briefly), such a follower might become a loyal anonymous supporter. He or she might even help the player characters solve a problem in some future adventure.

In the end, the memberships of the Delvers and the Unaffiliated Explorers remain at the same levels and life continues largely unchanged in Haven, save for the fact that the player characters may have a few new friends and enemies.

AWARDING LEGEND POINTS

Award the characters Legend Points for this adventure as described in the **Introduction**, p. 6. The specific award to be granted is described below.

The Adventure Award for **Desire Box** is 450 Legend Points.

Creative Roleplaying and Heroics

Award characters Legend Points for taking any of the following actions:

Agreeing to work for Torgak	100
Attempting to keep the crowd from attacking Torgak	100
Going to Archiana's meeting	50
Agreeing to work for Wiswell	100

Defeating Creatures

The characters defeat no creatures during this adventure. The gamemaster determines the award (if any) for defeating various opponents during the struggles over the desire box.

Treasure

The characters gain no treasure in this adventure.

TOTAL LEGEND AWARD

Based on the figures listed above, a single character who completes **Desire Box** receives an average of 800 Legend Points. This average assumes seven players in a group and does not include points earned for battling optional opponents or finding treasure placed by the gamemaster.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

This section provides information and game statistics for gamemaster characters who play a major role in **Desire Box**. If necessary, change the stats or create characters to better suit your players and campaign.

ARCHIANA SMOOTHSKIN

Archiana is the leader of the Association of Unaffiliated Explorers, a rival of the Loyal Order of Delvers. Angered by Torgak's setup as town mayor and major merchant of Haven, Archiana started her group soon after arriving in town. She spends most of her time rabble-rousing and sees the Association of Unaffiliated Explorers as one means of breaking Torgak's power.

Archiana has no sense of humor, and never learned to respect her enemies. She especially despises Torgak as a greedy, corrupt autocrat, and Torgak's friend Liniarg Blindingshout as a scatterbrained old bat. Archiana is a Third Circle ork swordmaster.

Attributes

Dexterity (18): 7/D12
Strength (11): 5/D8
Toughness (11): 5/D8
Perception (10): 5/D8
Willpower (6): 3/D4
Charisma (17): 7/D12

Talents

Avoid Blow (3): 10/D10 + D6
Durability (Swordmaster) (4)
Karma Ritual (3)
Maneuver (3): 10/D10 + D6
Melee Weapons (5): 12/2D10
Taunt (3): 10/D10 + D6





Karma
 Dice: D8
 Points: 21

Skills
 Acting (1): 8/2D6
 Knowledge/Political History (2): 8/2D6

Damage
 Death Rating: 60
 Wound Threshold: 8
 Unconsciousness Rating: 48
 Recovery Tests/Day: 3
 Recovery Dice: D10

Combat
 Physical Defense: 10
 Spell Defense: 6
 Social Defense: 9
 Armor: 9
 Mystic Armor: 0

Racial Ability: Low-Light Vision

Equipment
 Broadsword (Damage 10/D10 + D6)
 Footman's shield
 Padded leather armor

NEEDREN LANNEN WISWELL

A Fourth Circle illusionist and a native of Bartertown, the human Wiswell studied illusion in the caverns of Throal. He is 58 years old, stands just under average height, has hunched shoulders and weighs about 140 pounds. He has a large nose, watery blue eyes, and thin white hair. His manner is diffident and excessively courteous, his robes meticulously well-kept.

After a few years of adventuring as a youth, Wiswell's studies of magic drew him into deepening quandaries on the nature of truth and reality, an occupational hazard among illusionists. His questioning led to a crisis of conscience and courage, and he retired from adventuring. Wiswell recently came to Haven to prove his courage by going into Parlainth, only to have disaster strike. After this adventure, he may attach himself to the adventurers if sufficiently impressed by them, or become a perpetual onlooker from the side tables of the Restless Troll.

Attributes
 Dexterity (12): 5/D8
 Strength (11): 5/D8
 Toughness (13): 6/D10
 Perception (18): 7/D12
 Willpower (15): 6/D10
 Charisma (11): 5/D8

Talents
 Disguise Self (4): 11/D10 + D8
 Durability (4)
 Illusion (4): 11/D10 + D8
 Karma Ritual (4)
 Read and Write Language (4): 11/D10 + D8
 Read and Write Magic (4): 11/D10 + D8
 Speak Language (4): 11/D10 + D8
 Spellcasting (4): 11/D10 + D8
 Spell Matrix (4)

Movement
 Full: 90
 Combat: 45

Initiative
 Dice: D6

Skills
 Artisan/Embroidery (4): 11/D10 + D8
 Knowledge/Magical Lore (4): 11/D10 + D8
 Knowledge/Throalic Poetry (1): 8/2D6
 Research (2): 9/D8 + D6



Karma
 Dice: D8
 Points: 30

Combat
 Physical Defense: 7
 Spell Defense: 10
 Social Defense: 7
 Armor: 3
 Mystic Armor: 2

Equipment
 Adventurer's kit
 Boots
 Diary
 Embroidered robe
 Embroidery kit
 Grimoire
 Leather armor
 Quarterstaff
 Throwing dagger
 60 silver pieces

Send Message Spell
 Threads: 1
 Range: Sight
 Effect: Passes a paper message to a chosen target
 Casting Difficulty: 2

Damage
 Death Rating: 35
 Wound Threshold: 9
 Unconsciousness Rating: 27
 Recovery Tests/Day: 2
 Recovery Dice: D10

Spells
 Circle of Well Being
 Disguise Metal
 Ephemeral Bolt
 Impossible Lock
 Innocent Activity
 Light
 Rope Guide
 Send Message (see below)
 True Ephemeral Bolt
 Unseen Voices
 Weather Cloak

Weaving Difficulty: 6/14
Duration: Rank rounds

Send Message is a new Second Circle illusionist spell. If the user's Spellcasting Test is successful, this spell conjures an illusory paper message in the target's hand, pocket, pouch, or elsewhere on the target's body (according to the sender's choice). The illusionist must be able to see the target





and must make tiny, rapid gestures in the air to represent writing the note's text. The note may contain no more than a few short sentences, with a maximum number of words equal to ten times the illusionist's rank in Spellcasting. If the target disbelieves the illusion, it vanishes instantly.

LINIARG BLINDINGSHOUT

Liniarg Blindingshout founded and runs the Loyal Order of Delvers, an explorer's society. Like her comrade Torgak, Liniarg finds herself getting on in years, but refuses to accept old age as gracefully as her old friend. Once a beauty who could break an ork's heart, she still tries to act the part of a seductive heroine. Those who allow her to maintain this delusion find her cheerful and pleasant, if boisterous. Those who remind her of her declining years suffer her explosive wrath.

Liniarg wants to strengthen the Loyal Order of Delvers as well. This means keeping down the upstart ork Archiana Smoothskin and her Association of Unaffiliated Explorers. Even the thought of the younger, aggressive Archiana sends Liniarg into a shaking rage.

Liniarg is a Sixth Circle ork swordmaster.

Attributes

Dexterity (16): 7/D12
Strength (15): 6/D10
Toughness (14): 6/D10
Perception (14): 6/D10
Willpower (11): 5/D8
Charisma (16): 7/D12

Talents

Durability (Swordmaster) (8)
Heartening Laugh (6): 13/D12 + D10
Karma Ritual (6)
Maneuver (6): 13/D12 + D10
Melee Weapons (7): 14/D20 + D4
Riposte (6): 16/D20 + D8
Taunt (8): 15/D20 + D6
Trap Initiative (6): 13/D12 + D10
Winning Smile (6): 13/D12 + D10
Wound Balance (6): 12 /2D10

Karma

Dice: D8
Points: 40

Skills

Battle Shout (6): 13/D12 + D10
Conversation (2): 8/2D6
Creature Analysis (4): 10/D10 + D6
Engaging Banter (3): 9/D8 + D6
Flirting (6): 13/D12 + D10
Read and Write Language (2): 11/D10 + D8
(Ork, Throalic)
Seduction (2): 8/2D6

Damage

Death Rating: 90
Wound Threshold: 10
Unconsciousness Rating: 76
Recovery Tests/Day: 3
Recovery Dice: D10

Combat

Physical Defense: 9
Spell Defense: 8
Social Defense: 9
Armor: 9
Mystic Armor: 1

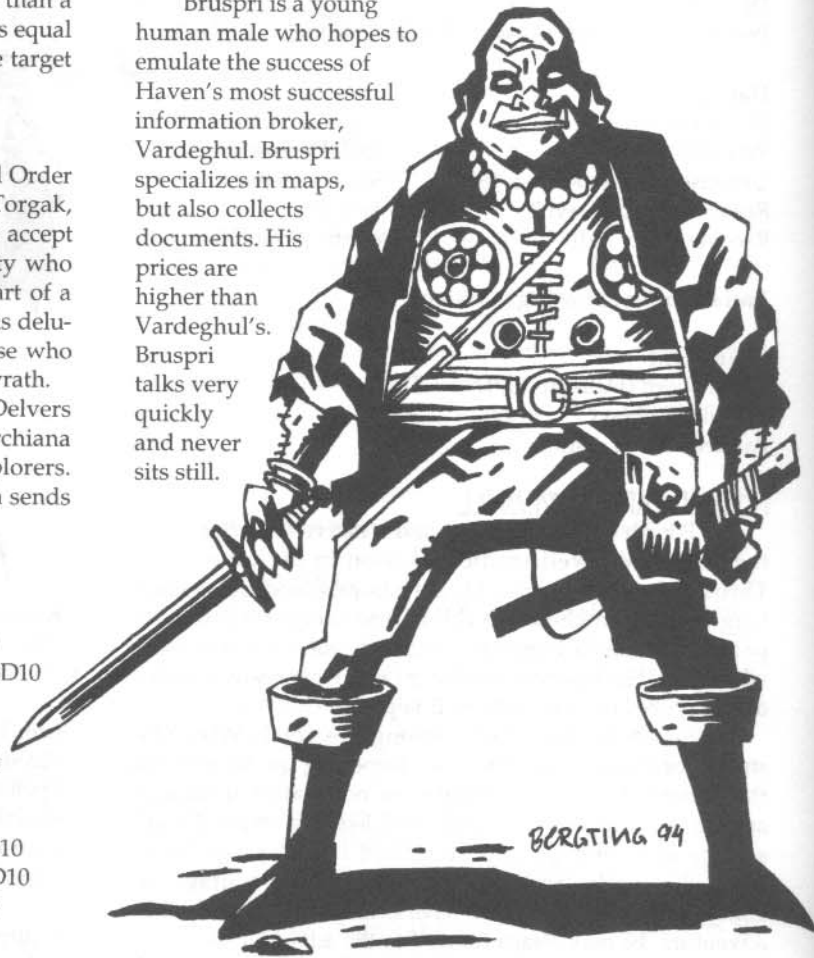
Racial Ability: Low-Light Vision

Equipment

Broadsword (Damage 11/D10 + D8)
Footman's shield
Padded leather armor

BRUSPRI

Bruspri is a young human male who hopes to emulate the success of Haven's most successful information broker, Vardeghul. Bruspri specializes in maps, but also collects documents. His prices are higher than Vardeghul's. Bruspri talks very quickly and never sits still.



Attributes

DEX: 6 STR: 4 TOU: 5
PER: 7 WIL: 7 CHA: 7

TYLIA

Tylia is a friend of Torgak and runs the Restless Troll inn. Despite her advancing age, she is a bundle of restless energy. She still thinks of herself as an adventurer and always has vague plans to gather companions for an expedition into one area of the ruins or another. She says that she will embark on these missions "after I get everything squared away." Things never seem to get squared away to Tylia's satisfaction, however, so the inn continues to take up all of her time.

Tylia is a Seventh Circle troll wizard.

Attributes

DEX: 14 STR: 10 TOU: 13
PER: 16 WIL: 15 CHA: 14





TREASURE

THE DESIRE BOX

This Theran treasure is a new-looking, rectangular box of brown hardwood, about the size of a loaf of bread. It weighs four pounds and has no lid or other visible opening. Tiny Theran runes line both sides of each edge, and on one face are carved ancient Theran words that mean THIS BOX IS EMPTY.

The box automatically links with any bearer's mind and uncovers his or her deepest desire, then inspires the bearer and others with the conviction that the bearer can achieve this desire. To rationalize their conviction, targets of the enchantment usually develop strategies for achieving it, which may or may not be plausible.

In game terms, the box increases the bearer's Charisma Step for the purpose of making Interaction Tests (see pp. 237-240, ED). When a previously unaffected target sees the box or its bearer, make a Deceit Test as if the bearer were attempting a Fabrication, using Step 18 dice or the bearer's Charisma Step plus 6, whichever is higher.

A successful test means the target believes implicitly that the bearer can accomplish his or her most grandiose desire. Note that the target does not automatically become better disposed toward the bearer. Indeed, a hostile target may decide to attack the bearer. However, the box's magic also convinces the target that no obstacle or assassination attempt can possibly interrupt the bearer's inevitable path to success.

If the Deceit Test fails, the target remains unaffected by the box's magic. For every 24 hours after the first test

that the target remains within the magic's sphere of influence, make another Deceit Test, reducing the target's Spell Defense by 1. These reductions are cumulative, and so a target in the box's presence for any length of time inevitably falls under its spell. If the target leaves the area for a day or more before the gamemaster has made a successful Deceit Test, he should stop making the tests.

Upon the target's return, resume the tests using the Spell Defense of the most recent Deceit Test against that target.

The box has a non-magical side effect based on Name-giver psychology. As a person comes to believe in the imminent fulfillment of his or her desire, a new desire inevitably arises to replace it. For example, one who believes she will shortly own a powerful merchant house may soon think of holding political office, marrying into a noble family, or making a stunningly successful expedition to foreign lands. The box does not provoke these desires, but it makes them as convincing as were their predecessors.

Neither the passage of time nor distance from the bearer lessen the box's effect. When the bearer dies or the box passes to a new bearer, the effect disappears briefly from all targets, who may guess that they have been under magical influence.

Immunity to the Desire Box

At the gamemaster's discretion, certain spiritually advanced characters may prove immune to the box's effects. Such characters are detached from selfish desire, free from the endless cycle of want. They may be questors of high Circles or sages. Note that freedom from desire does not require magical ability.





WAKE-UP CALL



•MIKEN 94•



LD DAHLYA, THE wife of Old Gron-ha the windling weaponsmith, awoke with a smile on her face. In a day's time, her son and his wife would be arriving to visit, and she would be seeing her grandchild for the first time! The thought warmed her heart, just as the morning sun streaming through the hut's small window warmed her old bones, and she turned excitedly to rouse her husband, only to find herself alone in the large bed.

That crazy old fool, she thought to herself. Again he's risen before the sun and undoubtedly is already working. I've told him a thousand times that he should retire for good and stop fooling at that forge. There's no need for it. We have more than enough saved to live out the rest of our lives, and he deserves a rest after all those years.

In her heart, the old windling knew arguing the point with her husband was pointless. He did not continue his work for the money, after all. He truly loved banging away at his forge, and most of all he liked visiting with his many customers. Over the years, Old Gron-ha had developed a well-earned reputation as Haven's finest windling weaponsmith, and windling adventurers passing through the town invariably sought out his services. Old Gron-ha would repair their blades and axes or fashion new ones to order, eager to hear the tales of their adventures. And his customers, in turn, enjoyed doing business with the old windling. His friendly disposition made him well-liked by all, and many of his fellow Havenites would visit his shop just to sit and speak with Gron-ha. Yes, the work kept her husband happy, which in turn kept Dahlya happy.

Still, the grandchild would be arriving soon, and several chores remained, Dahlya mused as she lit a cooking fire. "Gron-ha! Groooooon-ha!" she called out the window toward the workshop behind the hut. "Gron-ha, I know you're out there!" It was no use, she thought to herself, the old windling is going deaf. Dahlya hung a pot of water over the fire, wrapped an old robe over her nightgown and started out the door.

As she walked down the well-worn path that led to her husband's workshop, her thoughts returned to the upcoming visit of her grandchild, and so she didn't notice that the workshop was strangely silent this morning. No sounds or conversation, no clanging sounds of metal striking metal broke the stillness. But as she approached the small hut that enclosed the forge, the overpowering stench of rotten meat interrupted her reverie and suddenly Dahlya grew very frightened.

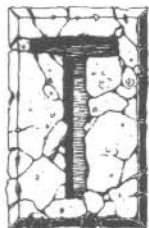
"Gron-ha? Gron-ha?!"







THREADS



THREADS TAKES THE characters into the magic-soaked tunnels of Parlainth's Western Catacombs. In this adventure, the characters must deal with the awakening of a new Horror and its insidious effects on the people of Haven. **Threads** is best suited for a group of six to eight Fourth or Fifth Circle characters of any Discipline.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

During Parlainth's doomed struggle against the Horrors centuries ago, the city's wizards conducted a bold and dangerous experiment that they hoped would aid them in defending Parlainth. In an attempt to better understand the Horrors and their magic, Parlainth's mages captured one of the entities and subjected it to a variety of magical experiments. Unfortunately, these experiments failed and weakened the astral "cage" the wizards used to hold the Horror. In a desperate attempt to protect Parlainth from the terrible consequences of their ill-advised experiments, the wizards chose to merge one of their number with the captured Horror in hopes that the wizard's mind could prevent the Horror's escape into Parlainth. They referred to this merged entity as the Abomination.

A number of wards and magics protected the chosen wizard, but the safeguards came to naught. Rather than subjugating the Horror by becoming one with it, the wizard became locked in a magical struggle with the Horror in astral space. Throughout the centuries following Parlainth's fall to other Horrors, the wizard and the captured Horror continued their magical duel.

A few months before this adventure begins, the Horror defeated the wizard and began to wake to the physical world. It used the wizard's magical talents to augment its own natural abilities and explore the world around it, casting forth specialized threads to seek out intelligent life and infect it. Those infected with the threads, a variant form of the Horror's Thought Worm ability, became the Abomination's unwitting spies. The threads relayed everything the infected people experienced back to the Horror, which used the information to plan its conquest of every mind it could reach.

A few weeks ago, the Abomination discovered that it could issue telepathic suggestions to those infected by its potent threads. By this means it could begin a reign of terror in Haven, a campaign of violence that would culminate with the town's destruction and generate plenty of suffering on which the newly awakened Horror could feed.

In the past few weeks, the number of those infected with the Thought Worm threads has increased. The

Abomination has used its control over these individuals to form the Cult of Pain, whose members dedicate their lives to committing senseless acts of violence. The members of the cult have begun to commit an alarming number of savage acts, striking at unsuspecting targets from the shadows. The number of murders in Haven has increased dramatically in the past two weeks, rousing Torgak's concern. Because the Abomination has infected so many people with its pernicious threads, the cultists' spies tell them precisely when Torgak's deputies will arrive at the scene of a crime.

Torgak asks the player characters to investigate Haven's troubles. He knows that the characters are powerful and believes them to be free of corruption. Satisfied that he can trust them, he explains that he believes some kind of foul magic is behind the recent rash of murders.

The characters begin by investigating the most recent murder. Upon examining the body, they discover several unattached, magical threads floating in astral space nearby. They observe one of these threads connect to a person, who suddenly takes off for the western quarter of the ruins of Parlainth. Though the characters do not yet know it, they have just witnessed the Abomination creating another member of the Cult of Pain.

The adventurers easily track the newly infected cultist, who meets a large group of fellow cultists. The group becomes aware of the player characters. One of them speaks to the adventurers of the Great Dark Master and then, in a dramatically different voice, reveals the Abomination's plot to destroy Haven. Having said their say, the cultists stroll away into Parlainth, practically inviting the characters to follow them.

The cultists descend into the catacombs; when the characters attempt to follow, a band of cadaver men attacks them. After a savage fight, the characters once more pick up the cultists' trail. In their wanderings through the catacombs, the adventurers meet one of the Abomination's victims, who fights off the Horror's influence long enough to tell the adventurers about a secret passage by which they can reach the Horror's lair and launch a surprise attack against the Horror and its minions. Ultimately, the characters confront the Abomination and defeat it after a titanic battle, saving the town of Haven from certain doom.

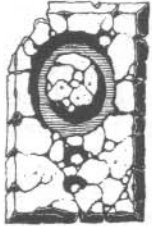
PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

Threads requires little preparation to run. If the gamemaster wishes, he or she may foreshadow this adventure by demonstrating to the player characters the increasing level of violence in Haven. Ideally, any such foreshadowing will add to the adventure's sense of urgency by making the characters sharply aware of how close Haven stands to destruction.





A CALL FROM TORGAK



INTERVIEW

IN THIS ENCOUNTER, Torgak gets in touch with the heroes and asks them to investigate the rising tide of violence in Haven.

SETTING THE STAGE

Despite the huge crowd in the Restless Troll, the tavern is quieter than usual tonight. The din of overlapping conversations, usually boisterous enough to wake the earth's bones, has dropped to a low murmur like the buzz of an uneasy bee. People are keeping their voices down, and no wonder. What with all the violence in Haven lately, no one wants to attract attention. Folk are speaking in whispers, as if raising a voice above the subdued murmur of the crowd might invite some unknown murderer to silence them with a well-placed dagger thrust. And the stabbing deaths are the least of it, from what you hear. Old Gron-ha, a windling who was one of Haven's better-known cut-rate weaponsmiths, had his throat slit and pieces of his dismembered body hung from the eaves of his forge. Those who saw what was left of him say that someone (or something) had sucked all the blood from his body before cutting him up ...

The low buzz of voices rises for a moment, then drops back. You look up from your ale to see what caused the stir and see Torgak pushing through the crowded tables toward you. He looks nervous, an odd state of mind for him. You swallow hard, suddenly wanting to drown your fears in several tankards of strong liquor. If Torgak is frightened, the trouble in Haven must be terrifyingly serious.

Torgak pauses by your table. You start to offer him a seat, then realize that he seems to be paying you no attention. Swiftly, furtively, he drops a folded note on the edge of the table, then strides off. Slowly and carefully, so as not to attract attention, you open the note and read it. It requests you to meet with Torgak in an hour, in the warehouse closest to Torgak's Supplies and Goods.

You arrive at the warehouse to find a visibly tense Torgak pacing up and down in the center of the vast, shelf-and-box-filled floor. He beckons you over to him, thanks you for coming, and then falls silent as he collects his thoughts. After a few more moments of agitated pacing, he speaks.

"I hate this. I built this town—I own it, in a way—and I've helped keep it safe from the very beginning. I don't know if I can do that anymore. People are getting killed in the streets, attacked outside their own homes. And my people can't touch the black-hearted, rotten-souled fiends responsible. They disappear before we show up, as if they already know every move my deputies make.

"So I'm coming to you. I hear you're a tough bunch, and you seem like whatever's turning Haven crazy hasn't

got you in its claws yet. I also hear you're good with magic. I want you to take a look around, because I think there's magic at work here. Dark magic.

"I'd ask my own people to sniff it out, but I don't know whom I can trust. For all I know, one of them's involved and that's how the murderers keep slipping from our grasp. See what you can find out and do whatever you can. If you find something, try to fix it. I'll pay you five hundred silvers each.

"One more thing—I'm afraid I can't be much help to you. Don't come to me unless you have no choice; I think someone's watching me and I don't want to hinder your investigations."

THEMES AND IMAGES

Use this encounter to build a sense of urgency. The characters should start their investigations right away; it's early in the evening, so they have plenty of time to nose around.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Torgak is seriously worried about Haven's troubles and does not know how to combat them. He believes that some of his people may be affected by whatever force he suspects is causing the violence in the town, and so he wants the player characters to keep away from him. If any of his people are in on the murders, the characters' presence around Torgak will just tip the killers off that the characters are on to them.

If the characters want to negotiate for more money, one of them must make a Haggle Test against Torgak's Social Defense of 9. At the same time, make a Haggle Test for Torgak against the Social Defense of the negotiating character. Compare the success levels of the two tests and then subtract the lesser number of success levels from the greater. (Each success level above Average counts as 1.) Each net success level adjusts the fee paid to the characters by 25 silver pieces. If Torgak achieved the higher success level, each net success level subtracts 25 silver pieces from the fee; if the player character achieved the higher success level, each net success level adds 25 silver pieces.

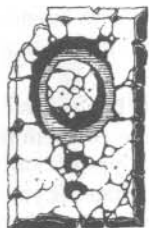
TROUBLESHOOTING

The only problem in this encounter occurs if the characters refuse Torgak's offer. Without their acceptance, the adventure is over. If they seem reluctant to take the job, point out the danger to Haven if the characters do not act and spell out the benefits of getting on Torgak's good side. The troll has connections throughout Haven, and doing him a favor might prove beneficial in the long run.





INVESTIGATIONS



VIEW

HERE, THE CHARACTERS search the town for clues about the bizarre goings-on. On learning of the most recent murder, they examine the crime scene and observe a strange, magical thread attaching itself to one of the onlookers.

SETTING THE STAGE

The morning after your meeting with Torgak, you linger over your breakfast as you wonder how to start your investigation. Just as you finish eating, a young boy runs into the inn and shouts, "There's been another murder."

THEMES AND IMAGES

This encounter gives the characters the first clue as to the cause of the murders. Emphasize the feelings of mystery, suspense, and vulnerability. Make the manner of death uniquely horrible, something that makes the players flinch. When the characters see the Horror's thread attach itself to the luckless onlooker, they should realize that they face a magical dilemma completely beyond their experience. Make them nervous; keep them wondering if they'll be next.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The most recent murder victim died a few blocks from Torgak's Supplies and Goods, in an alley between two small buildings. Despite its isolated location, the murder scene has attracted a fair crowd of gawkers. Torgak is present when the characters arrive, and he beckons subtly for them to approach the body so they can search for clues to the murderer.

Unfortunately, the body provides few useful leads. A character who examines the body astrally must make an appropriate test against a Difficulty Number 15 (the victim's Spell Defense of 8 plus a +7 modifier to reflect the time elapsed since the victim died). Abilities a character can use for this test include the Astral Sense spell, the Astral Sight talent or the equivalent windling racial ability, the Evidence Analysis talent, or even the Thread Weaving talent. Using the latter talent requires at least a Good success level.

If the test is successful, the character sees the fading remnants of the victim's pattern entangled with swirling wisps of smokelike gray tendrils. None of the characters have ever seen such a magical phenomena before. As they watch, the tendrils loosen their hold on the fading pattern

of the victim and swirl off into astral space. At this point, have each character make a Perception (8) Test. If this test is successful, the characters see an inordinate number of threads in the air. Any character who achieves a Good success on this test notices that these threads are intertwined with the same gray, smokelike tendrils.

Every couple of minutes, one of these threads moves around the crowd and the player characters, snuffling around in the air as if looking for someone. As the characters watch, one of the threads dips down and sinks into the forehead of a woman onlooker. For a moment the woman acts startled, then smiles wickedly and strides away in the direction of Parlainth's ruins. Though no one knows it yet, the thread controlling the woman's actions is one of the Abomination's specialized Thought Worms. In accordance with the Horror's commands, the luckless woman is on her way to join several members of the Cult of Pain residing in the western quarter of the ruins of Parlainth.

Hopefully, the characters follow the woman on the chance that she may lead them to the cause of the murders.

MYSTERIOUS BYSTANDER

While some of the characters are examining the victim's body, allow those who lack magical detection abilities to make a Perception (13) Test. If successful, these characters notice a gray-cloaked individual observing the murder scene. As soon as the characters spot the watcher, the figure ducks behind a building. Unknown to the adventurers, the watcher is a member of the Cult of Pain. He swiftly leaves Haven to join the other members of the cult in Parlainth.

TROUBLESHOOTING

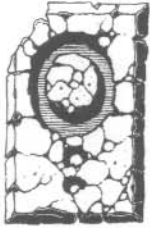
If the characters do not use their magical sensing abilities to look for clues, they will not see the threads and their effect on the woman. The simplest way to make sure they get this clue is to suggest that the characters look around in astral space. Even a cursory search immediately reveals the presence of the threads and allows the characters to witness what happens to the woman. If the characters either miss the threads or do not follow the woman, repeat the scene with other gawkers until the adventurers realize that these threads are important. Note that the people affected by the threads are effectively Horror marked; because only other Horrors can detect a Horror Mark, the characters cannot simply take an astral look at someone to see if he or she is affected by the threads. Keep in mind that the characters must follow their quarry to Parlainth to discover what is going on; do not allow them to prevent the woman from leaving Haven.







THE CULT OF PAIN



VIEW

IN THIS ENCOUNTER, the characters follow the infected woman to the western quarter of Parlainth, where they witness a meeting of the Cult of Pain.

SETTING THE STAGE

The woman walks out of Haven and heads west toward the ruins of the Forgotten City. Her steps are slow but steady, and she seems not to notice you following her. You hear her mumbling to herself, but you cannot make out her words.

She enters the ruins of Parlainth near the laneway that separates the southern and western quarters of the ruins, the areas known as the Twists and the War Zone. The night seems oddly still, your path strangely free of obstructions and dangers. Your silent journey is so easy, it seems almost as if someone or something had cleared a trail for the woman ...

After traveling through the War Zone for a few minutes, the woman stops near one of the few buildings left standing. Several cloaked figures step out of the shadows, as if to greet her. You watch them help her out of her clothes and into a gray cloak similar to those they are wearing. They converse in hushed tones, then suddenly they turn toward you as one. Before you can react, one of the figures speaks to you in a cold monotone. "We are the Cult of Pain. We serve the Great Dark Master. Through him we shall bring down those who dare make their homes in his land. Parlainth belongs to our Master. We will return it to him by sword and flame. No one can stand in our—"

The man's voice cracks as he breaks off in mid-sentence. A moment later, a second voice comes from his contorted lips. This voice grates on your ears like stones cracking; it drips with contempt and hatred.

"You see before you my servitors. Are you afraid, little insects? You should be. These are but a handful of my faithful. Many more in the town you call Haven serve me, and countless others will join their ranks before the dawn breaks. The dawn will herald the cries of the dying and the sounds of battle. Haven will fall to me before night comes again. You are powerless to stop me, little insects. Follow my humble servants to your doom."





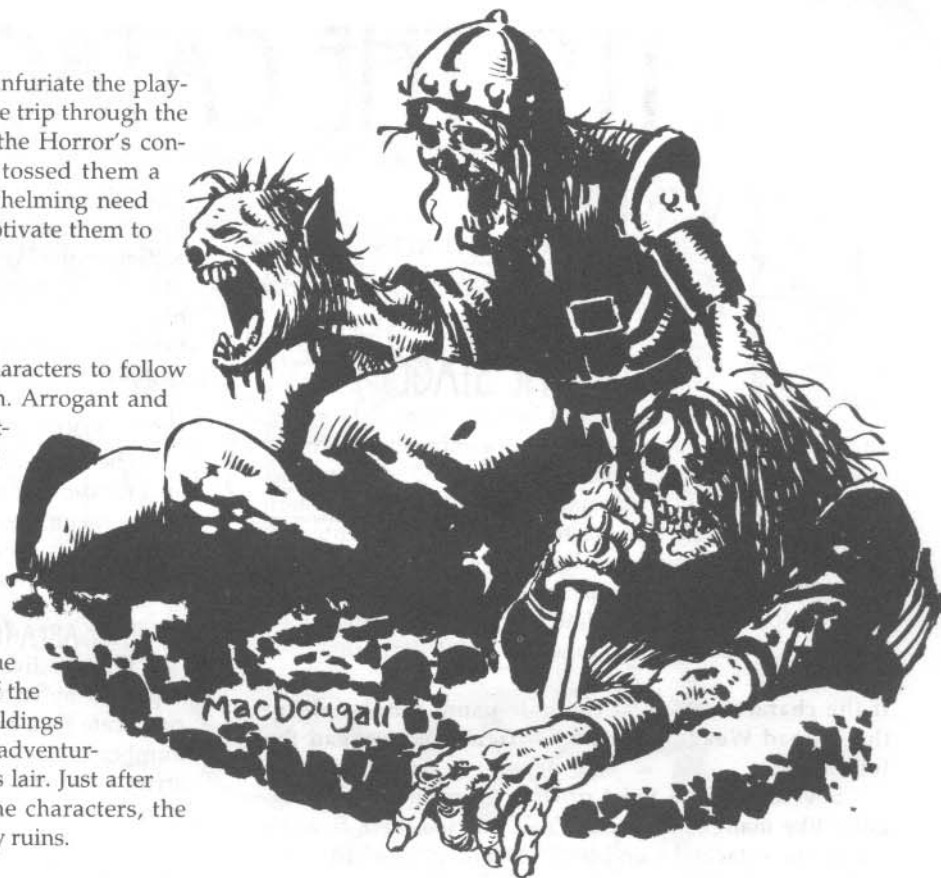
THEMES AND IMAGES

This encounter should frighten and infuriate the player characters. Play up the creepiness of the trip through the ruins, as well as any anger they feel at the Horror's contempt for them. The Abomination has tossed them a gauntlet; their own anger and the overwhelming need to remove the threat to Haven should motivate them to take up the Horror's challenge.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The Abomination has allowed the characters to follow its new servant and find the Cult of Pain. Arrogant and fearless, it truly believes it cannot be defeated, and it takes great delight in luring the characters to their doom. If the Abomination can lure the player characters to it, it can inflict pain on them and get a firsthand meal of anguish, rather than the secondhand helping its servants have been providing.

The cultists meet the characters at the southernmost end of the War Zone, one of the few areas in that quarter where some buildings remain standing. The cultists confront the adventurers near the entrance to the Abomination's lair. Just after the Abomination finishes speaking to the characters, the cultists start to move deeper into the nearby ruins.



If the characters follow the cultists, read the following aloud:

The cultists walk single file, moving deeper into the western quarter. They pay no attention to you as you follow them. After a few minutes they slow down, then disappear one by one into the earth. It seems their master lies somewhere beneath the ruins.

At this time, make a Perception Test for each of the characters against a Difficulty Number of 12. If any of the tests is successful, read the following aloud:

As you watch the cultists descend beneath the ruins, you see a shadow cast by the wan moonlight from the corner of your eye. Then you see another, and another. Cadaver men are moving toward you, slowly surrounding you. Your keen eye seems to have foiled their ambush, but you've still got a fight on your hands. You prepare to do battle as the circle of walking corpses closes around you.

Note that the characters are not surprised by the ambush and so may attack and defend as normal.

If all the characters fail their Perception Tests, read the following aloud:

Suddenly you hear the sound of running footsteps and countless cadaver men explode from the darkness. You fum-

ble frantically for your weapons, praying that you can draw them before the undead finish their murderous charge ...

Note that the characters are surprised and so suffer all appropriate penalties (see p. 202–203, ED).

The ambush represents the Abomination's first attempt to remove the characters from the picture. Two cadaver men for each character charge into combat, intent on destroying the heroes. The characters should have little trouble winning the battle; the cultists, however, will be long gone by the time the fight is over. For the cadaver men's statistics, see p. 288, ED.

TROUBLESHOOTING

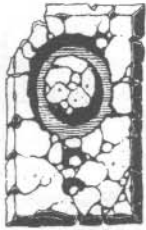
This encounter should pose few problems. The characters have a clear goal and an enemy to fight. If they try to go back to Haven for help instead of following the cultists, remind them that Torgak wants them to stay away from him for fear of traitors. Alternatively (or in addition), stress the shortness of the time Haven appears to have left. The enemy seems to think it has won the battle already; unless the characters move quickly, they will not have time to save Haven from destruction.

If the characters look like they will lose the fight, fudge the cadaver men's dice rolls so that the characters emerge victorious.





INTO THE CATACOMBS



OVERVIEW

HERE, THE ADVENTURERS enter the Western Catacombs and begin searching for the Abomination.

SETTING THE STAGE

The torn and broken remnants of the undead litter the ground around the opening in the ground of the War Zone. The cultists have long since disappeared from sight down this hole, returning through the Western Catacombs to their vile master. The catacomb entrance would be easy to miss; it is little more than a hole in the ground with a knotted rope ladder descending into its depths. Moonlight streams into the hole, revealing a tiled floor, a small pile of torches, and several pieces of flint.

If the characters look at the hole using astral sight or the Thread Weaving talent (Difficulty of 8), read the following:

Several threads twist upward from the hole, wriggling like malignant worms. You can see them floating out of the catacombs and back toward Haven, a plague of dark magic. The source of these evil threads can only lie below. You begin your descent, careful to avoid touching them.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The section of the Western Catacombs where the adventurers have descended is separated from adjacent sections by two cave-ins, at the points marked **A** and **M** on the Catacombs map. The Abomination has made its home here, securing the area with cadaver man guards and magical and mundane traps. Characters must take extreme care to avoid falling prey to the numerous traps and ambushes in this area.

This section of the catacombs has an intricately designed floor in which tiles of various colors form abstract mosaics. Most of these, however, are covered with dust. The walls are decorated with strange murals depicting *magas* and *Horrors in battle*, with the *Horrors* predominant. The roof arches gently about nine feet overhead. Note that all secret doors marked on the following map have a Detection Difficulty of 25.

If a character makes a successful Thread Weaving or Astral Sight Test against a Difficulty Number of 8, he or she can see a few threads floating overhead from time to time. These threads are intent on reaching Haven, and display little interest in the player characters.

CAVE-IN (A)

This area collapsed years ago, helping to isolate this section of the Western Catacombs from the rest of the tunnels. If you wish, allow characters to dig through the rubble into other portions of the catacombs for future adventures. For the purposes of this adventure, however, consider this cave-in impassable.

EMPTY ROOM (B)

The Abomination intends to use this room as a storage area for cadaver men as soon as it creates more of them. At the moment, the adventurers may use it as a sort of "safe zone," a place to fall back to in case they are overwhelmed by attackers or suffer serious injury.

STORAGE AREA (C)

When individuals come to join the Abomination or are captured by its minions, the Horror orders its dupes to confiscate their goods and store them in this chamber. The number of each item in the room when the adventurers arrive is listed below; feel free to change these to suit your adventure.

Two ghouls guard the supplies in this room in exchange for bodies given to them by the Abomination's servants. The ghouls attack the characters as soon as they realize that the adventurers are not cadaver men. For the ghouls' statistics, see p. 295, ED.

WEAPONS

Clubs (15)
Daggers (4)
Hand-axe (1)
Hawk Hatchet (1)
Knives (7)
Light Crossbow (1)
Nets (2)
Pole-axe (1)
Short Bows (2)
Short Swords (3)
Troll Sling (1)
Warhammer (1)
Whip (1)

ARMOR

Chain Mail (1)
Hide Armor (1)
Padded Cloth (3)
Padded Leather (1)

EQUIPMENT

Healing Kit (1)
Lanterns (5)
Oil Flasks (8)

SHIELDS

Bucklers (4)
Footman's Shields (2)

AMMUNITION

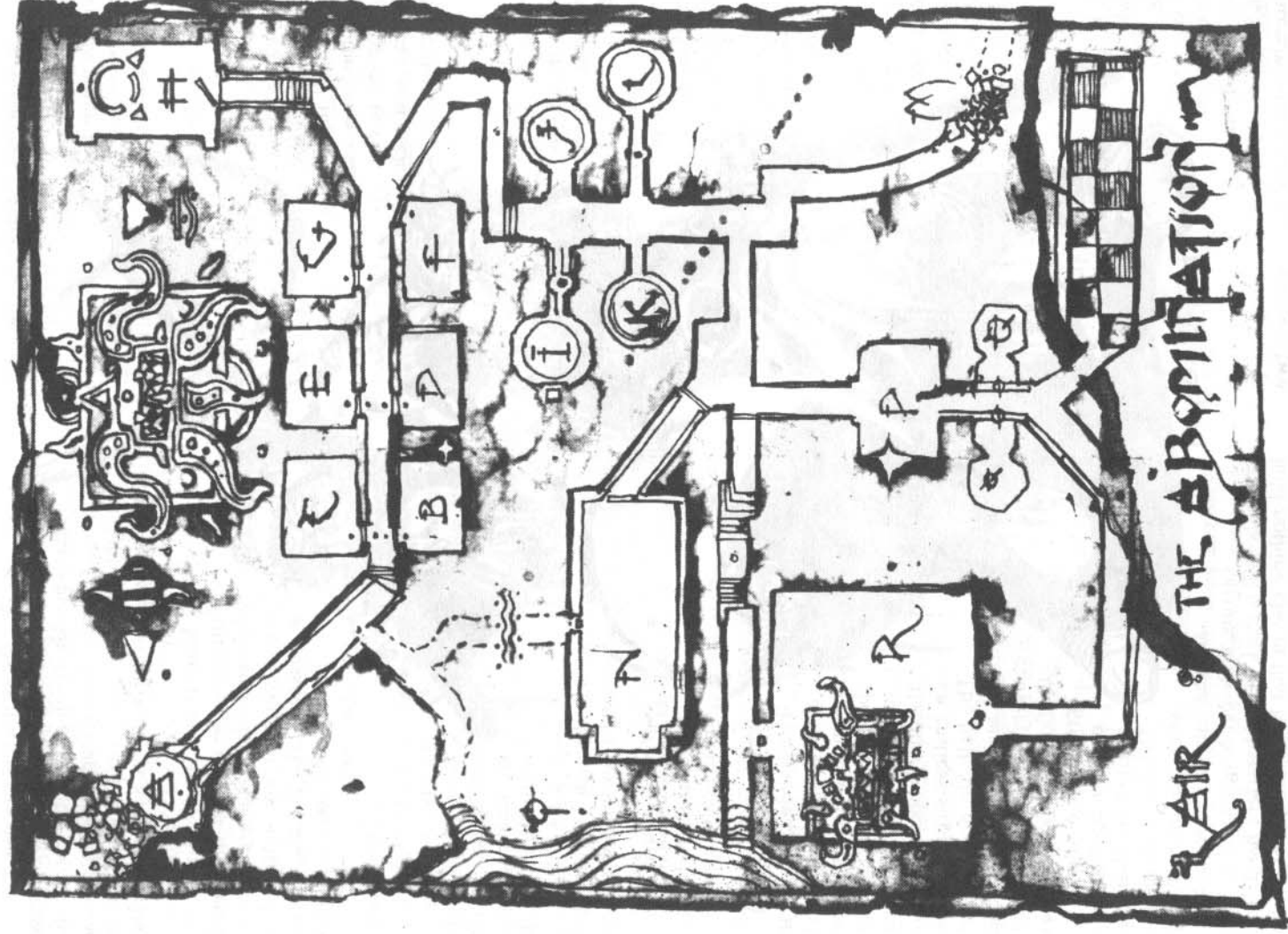
Arrows (27)
Crossbow Bolts (25)
Sling Stones (78)

POTIONS

Healing Potions (3)
Last Chance Salves (2)

See the **Earthdawn** rulebook for equipment statistics.







ROOM OF SHIMMERING MIST (D)

A bizarre, sparkling mist fills this room, left over from the heyday of magical research in Parlainth. Filled with flecks of red and gold light, the mist expands into the corridor at the rate of 10 feet per round if the door is opened. The mist disappears within a few seconds when the door is closed, regardless of how much space it may have filled up to that point.

If the mist fully engulfs any character, the gamemaster makes a Spellcasting (14) Test for it against the character's Spell Defense. If the test is successful, the character is healed of all injuries, including Wounds. If the test is unsuccessful, nothing happens to the character. The mist can heal each character only once per day.

PRISON (E)

Captured characters are held prisoner in this room. The three other prisoners inside are all suffering from malnutrition, abuse and varying stages of dehydration. None of these prisoners are adepts, and none of them are in any shape to do anything but shamble along behind the characters if freed.

Rulung is a windling, snared when he entered the ruins in search of his vanished older brother. Cadaver men under the Abomination's control captured Rulung a week ago and brought him here. Not an adventurer by trade, he has no information of use to the characters and wants only to escape.

Juk, a dwarf, is the only prisoner who knows anything of value. She can tell of a secret passage within the catacombs that leads into the back of the Abomination's lair. She discovered the secret passage while exploring the catacombs with a band of adventurers two weeks ago. Unfortunately, the rest of her group died at the hands of the Abomination's cadaver men as they battled

their way back toward the surface, and the cadaver men tossed Juk into this makeshift prison. She tells the characters that the passage is located near the Sunken Sea (Area O), and that the characters can use it to bypass the hordes of cadaver men that guard the creature and attack the Abomination from the rear. If the characters get this information from Juk, they can more easily find the secret door near Area O and so must only overcome a Detection Difficulty of 8 instead of the normal Detection Difficulty of 25.

Mordakas is an obsidiman messenger captured by the cadaver men ten days ago while searching for a group of adventurers to whom he was supposed to deliver a message. Like Rulung, Mordakas can tell the characters nothing of immediate value.

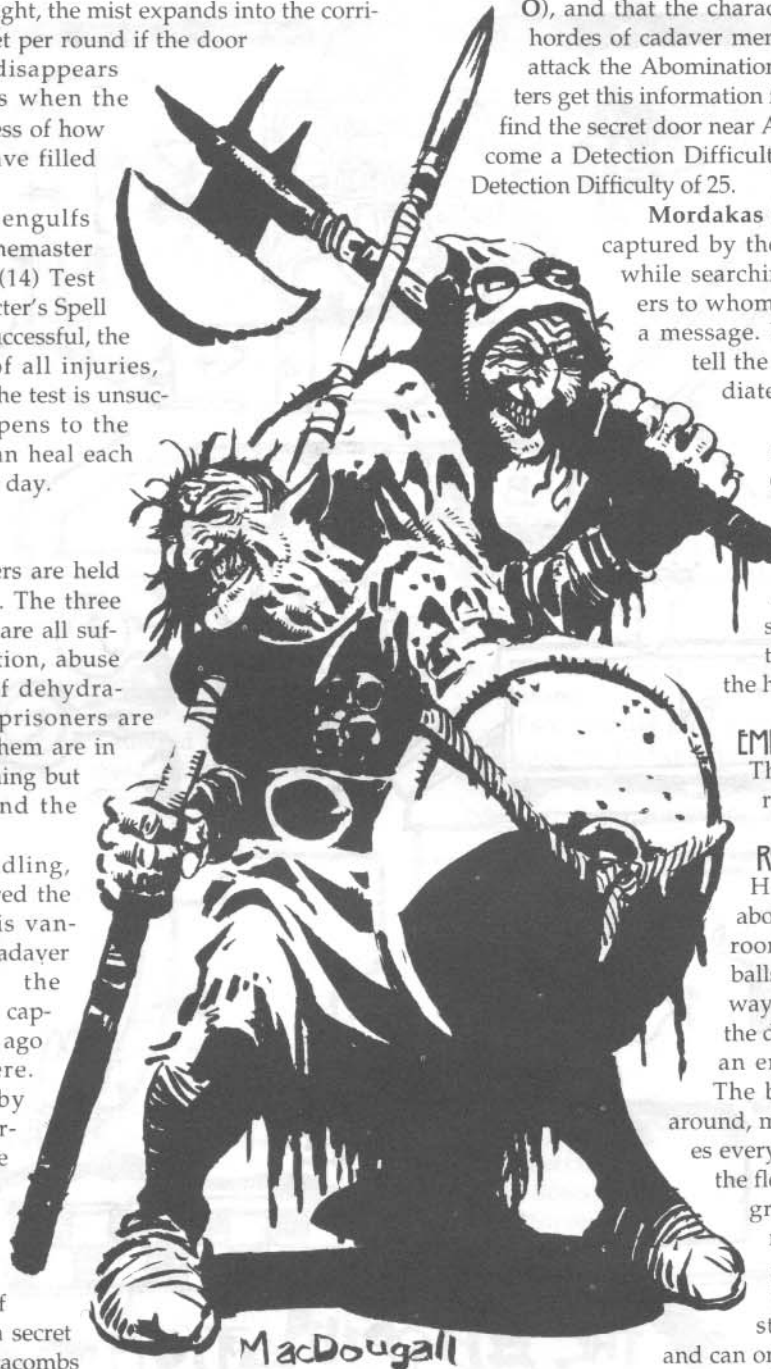
All the prisoners have other tales to tell, which describe the terrible tortures the Abomination has inflicted on them. They are not sure what to call the Abomination, but characters should be able to recognize the behavior of a Horror from the harrowing descriptions.

EMPTY CHAMBER (F)

The characters might use this room as a safe area.

ROOM OF BALLS (G)

Hundreds of bouncing balls, about 1 inch in diameter, fill this room. If the door is opened, the balls begin bouncing into the hallway at a rate of 10 for every round the door is open. There seems to be an endless supply of the things. The balls do nothing but bounce around, making annoying "boing" noises every time they collide with a wall, the floor or the ceiling. If a character grabs one of the balls, the ball makes a Spellcasting (12) Test against the character's Spell Defense. If successful, the ball sticks to the character's hand, and can only be removed by successfully casting a Dispel Magic spell (Difficulty 14). While the ball is stuck to the character's hand, he or she can hold nothing else in that hand. Note that catching a ball requires no Success Test because the balls bounce slowly and predictably.





The original purpose of this room and of the balls remains a mystery, but most likely resulted from some bizarre magical experiment.

MORTAKA'S TESTAMENT CHAMBER (H)

The wizard Malgim Mortaka's final testament rests in this room. Malgim Mortaka is the wizard chosen to merge with the Abomination to control it. When the characters enter this room, their presence triggers the recitation of this testament in Malgim's own voice.

Read the following aloud to the players:

"My name is Malgim Mortaka, and I go now to what may be my doom. Our experiments have not provided us with the breakthroughs we had hoped for, and so we must resort to more extreme methods.

"Trazeme designed the spell, and Ruital and Erika agree that it may work. The short straw fell to me when we drew lots, and so I am to be the one to face the Horror alone. My colleagues refused to send me into battle undefended, and for this I am grateful. The Elemental Fountains will shield me, though even those great sources of power may not prevent my death or subjugation to the Horror's awful will.

"I go now, passing through the Fountains of Earth, Fire, Air, and Water before I face the Horror. May the Passions aid us! I only hope my merging with this dreadful creature will give me the strength I need to save Parlainth. If not, I will have become one with a Horror for naught."

There is nothing else of interest in this room. Every time the characters enter, the message repeats.

ELEMENTAL FOUNTAINS (I-L)

In the center of each of these rooms stands a huge, fifteen-foot fountain from which a different element flows. The fountains are built so that the appropriate element flows over a suspended platform and forms a thin sheet as it moves from the fountain's spout into its basin. **Room I** contains the Fountain of Earth; **Room J** contains the Fountain of Water; **Room K** contains the Fountain of Air; and **Room L** contains the Fountain of Fire.

If the characters pass through the flowing sheets of the elements in the proper order—Earth, then Fire, then Air, then Water—they gain added protection against the Abomination, represented by a +3 increase in Physical, Spell, and Social Defenses and a +3 increase to Armor and Mystic Armor. These bonuses are effective only against attacks or spells launched by the Abomination; they provide no protection from the Horror's minions and servants. Passing through each of the sheets causes damage to the character as his body is exposed to each true element. The Fountain of Earth causes Step 4 damage, of Fire Step 10 damage, of Air Step 2 damage, and of Water Step 3 damage.

If the characters pass through the elemental sheets in any order other than that listed above, the elements provide them no protection from the Horror.

CAVE-IN (M)

This area is identical to the cave-in described at A.

GREAT HALL (N)

The walls in the hall are covered with murals depicting the sacrifice of Malgim Mortaka in his battle against the Abomination. The eastern wall depicts the initial meeting of the bearded wizard with the Abomination. In this mural, the creature's tentacles are drawing the wizard into it. The northern wall shows a bearded wizard in loose robes, bathed in the energies of the elements. A corona flares around his head, stones hover around his chest and legs, fire courses down his right arm, and water pours from his left arm. He stands in front of the vast, bloated form of the Abomination, which is reaching for him with its fleshy tentacles. The western wall shows the bearded wizard inside the massive Horror. The two are obviously locked in mystical combat, and neither seems to have the upper hand. Engraved in the floor in eight-foot letters are the words "Malgim's Fate."

Malgim's peers built this room as a sign of respect for the sacrifices he made. Aside from the murals, the hall is empty.

SUNKEN SEA (O)

This area is the result of magical experimentation gone awry. Malgim's peers often conducted research into extraplanar portals, searching for a way to escape the ravages of the Horrors. In one such experiment, they opened a rift to a vast, purple sea. They could not close the rift, but this fact did not trouble them because the sea seemed to present no danger. It is a breathtaking sight, as well as a portal to another world.

The purple sea spreads as far as the eye can see, with a huge green sun floating overhead. There seems to be no life in the sea or the air above it, and no land is visible. The gamemaster may use this sea as a gateway to adventures in another land, or as a portal through which all manner of evil beasts might arrive to plague the adventurers.

MUD R?M (P)

Approximately three feet of mud covers the floor of this room, and its low walls keep the mud from flowing out. Though the mud appears featureless and of a uniform consistency, it actually contains 10 bog gobs almost completely submerged in the mud along the room's edges. These creatures wandered into the Western Catacombs like so many others of their kind and fell under the sway of the Abomination. They now serve as an early alarm system, reporting via Thought Worm threads the approach of anyone who passes through this room. The bog gobs do not





attack the characters when they enter this room, but will come to the aid of the Abomination if called. If the Abomination is destroyed, the newly independent bog gobs may well attack the characters on their way back through this chamber.

Statistics for the bog gobs appear on p. 287, ED.

CADAVER MEN STORAGE ROOMS (Q)

Each room marked Q holds 5 cadaver men. The Detection Difficulty for finding the secret doors to these rooms is 25. The cadaver men attack the characters from the rear in concert with the bog gobs described above if the Abomination needs protection. If a character discovers the secret doors to either of these rooms, the cadaver men rush forward to attack.

Statistics for the cadaver men appear on p. 288, ED.

ABOMINATION'S LAIR (R)

When the characters enter this room, go to the next encounter, **Final Conflict** (p. 73).

HALL OF SILVER AND FLAME (S)

Stones of two different colors cover the floor of this long, wide hallway. The red stones appear shaded on the map; the remaining stones are silver. At the end of the hallway is a large pile of gold coins (illusory, but no one can tell that simply by looking). The Abomination designed this hallway as an experiment to test the puzzle-solving ability of various Name-giver races but it has not yet had any subjects to test.

A little deductive logic should allow the player characters to figure out the key to the puzzle; they must walk down the hallway, stepping on stones of alternating



color as they go. For example, a character who steps first on a red stone must next step on a silver stone, then a red stone, then a silver stone, and so on until he or she reaches the pile of gold. A character who first steps on a silver stone inverts this order: silver, then red, then silver, and so on. For every stone in the correct order that the characters step on after the first stone, a sack of 20 silver coins appears at the characters' feet. Only one sack appears for each correct stone no matter how many different characters step on it.

If a character turns back after he or she has started down the corridor, every stone the character steps on will trigger the Stone Trap described below. Characters may only turn around and come back after they have reached the far end of the hallway. They must also retrace their exact steps; stepping on any other stone on the way back will trigger the Stone Trap.

Stone Trap

Detection Difficulty: 20

Spell Defense: 20

Disarm Difficulty: 20

Trigger Condition: Stepping on the wrong stone as described above

Trap Initiative: 35

Trap Effect: Fireball spell, Spellcasting Step 20, Damage Step 20

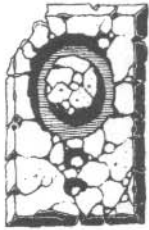
TROUBLESHOOTING

The biggest potential problem in this encounter is the possibility that the characters will get killed on their way to fight the Horror. Do your best to prevent this from happening, either by reducing damage from creature attacks or by reducing the actual number of creatures the adventurers meet in the catacombs.





FINAL CONFLICT



VERVIEW

HERE THE CHARACTERS enter the Abomination's lair and confront the Horror that threatens to destroy Haven.

SETTING THE STAGE

When the characters enter the Abomination's lair, read the following aloud:

Before you is a sturdy stone door, its surface inlaid with all manner of protective wards and sigils. Strange designs cover every inch of the marble, the door frame, and the floor just in front of it, inscribing incredibly powerful spells like none you have ever seen. You recognize a few of the wards as belonging to magics of containment and imprisonment; the rest are utterly strange to you. The door stands slightly ajar, and so you know that the wards have either decayed with age or else do not require a physically sealed door to work.

As you open the door wide enough to slip through, an ancient odor oozes into your nostrils. The floor of the huge room you've entered is littered with bones. Cadaver men pace restlessly to and fro, anxiously awaiting orders from someone—or something. The cultists you encountered earlier are also here, standing guard near a monstrosity that can only be a Horror. You have found the evil entity behind the terrible troubles in Haven.

Huge and bloated, the thing sits atop a marble slab six feet high. It seems to be made of clear jelly, studded with faceted red eyes. Tentacles extend from the jelly-like mass, drooping lazily off the edge of the slab. Within the shapeless mass of the thing's body you see something that looks like a human body, writhing as if in silent agony.

If the characters enter the room through the secret door, read the following:

The secret door opens silently, revealing a monster to your horrified gaze. The creature sits atop a marble slab six

feet high, looking like a bloated lump of clear jelly studded with countless red eyes. Long tentacles extend from the creature's body and hang off the slab. Within the shapeless, jellylike mass you can just make out something that looks like a human body, writhing as if in silent agony. The Horror seems unaware of you. Summoning up your courage, you brace yourselves to launch a surprise attack.

THEMES AND IMAGES

This encounter is the final showdown between the characters and the Horror that has caused the disturbances in Haven. Play up the drama of this scene, moving through the combat as quickly as possible until the characters battle toe to toe with the Abomination. At that point you can slow down the pace and describe every moment of the combat in detail, thereby giving the characters a chance to think up more options for fighting this terrible foe.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The Abomination has pulled most of its troops back to guard itself. Throughout the previous encounters, the Abomination knew the adventurers would find their way to its lair and so it wants to have plenty of defenses. In this encounter, the characters have a tough fight on their hands.

The fifteen cadaver men and ten cultists all do their best to keep the characters from reaching the Abomination. While the characters battle these grunts, the Horror uses its magical abilities to harass and injure them. If things go badly for the Abomination, it calls up its reserves (in rooms P and Q on the Catacomb Map, p. 69). These extra defenders rush into the room, attacking the characters from behind if possible. Statistics for the cadaver men appear on p. 288, ED. Statistics for the cultists appear below. Ideally, the characters should come up with a way to get the cultists out of the fight without killing them. If necessary, remind them that the cultists are controlled by the Abomination and so cannot be held accountable for their actions.





CULTISTS (10)

DEX: 4 STR: 4 TOU: 4
PER: 8 WIL: 4 CHA: 4

Initiative: 4
Number of Attacks: 1 (4)
Attack: 4
 Damage: 6
Number of Spells: NA
Spellcasting: NA
 Effect: NA

Physical Defense: 5
Spell Defense: 10
Social Defense: 15
Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 0
Knockdown: NA
Recovery Tests: 2

Death Rating: 27
Wound Threshold: 6
Unconsciousness Rating: 17

Combat Movement: 16
Full Movement: 32

Legend Points: 60
Equipment: Dagger
Loot: None

The Horror uses all the spells at its disposal against its attackers and tries to use its threads on at least one character. If this happens, the fight can take a dramatic turn for the worse as the characters suddenly have to fight one of their own turned against them. This situation can make for some dramatic roleplaying and provide some unique challenges. The characters do not want to kill their friend, but they must somehow disable him or risk losing the battle to the Horror. Keep things moving quickly and force the characters to make decisions rapidly during the fight. Speed adds to the sense of confusion common to battles and also increases dramatic tension.

Game statistics for the Abomination appear in *Cast of Characters*, p. 77.

ENTERING THROUGH THE SECRET DOOR

If the characters have met Juk, they should know about the secret door the dwarf mentioned. Entering the lair through this back way enables them to get the jump on the Abomination rather than charging into a huge melee. The Horror is so certain that the characters will attack it from the front that it has prepared no defenses against an attack from the rear. (Luckily for the adventurers, Juk did not reveal the door's location to the Abomination when it interrogated her following the death of her companions.)

If the characters can get up on the slab next to the Abomination, they should be able to hold their own in the fight. If some of them keep the cadaver men and cultists

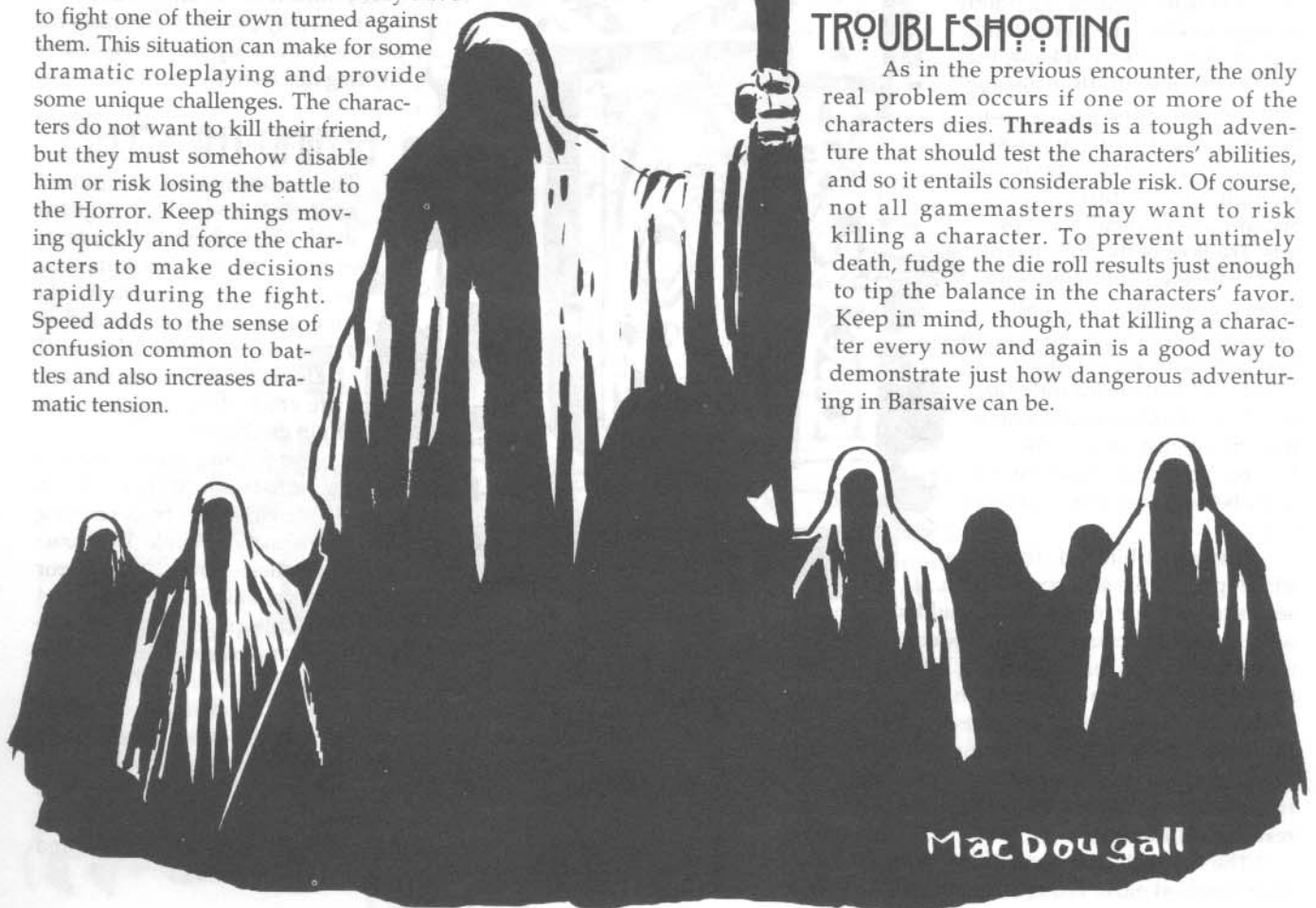
from climbing up onto the slab, the rest can

concentrate on fighting the

Horror. Their closeness to the creature makes the use of area effect spells dangerous, but the risks are well worth the advantages.

TROUBLESHOOTING

As in the previous encounter, the only real problem occurs if one or more of the characters dies. **Threads** is a tough adventure that should test the characters' abilities, and so it entails considerable risk. Of course, not all gamemasters may want to risk killing a character. To prevent untimely death, fudge the die roll results just enough to tip the balance in the characters' favor. Keep in mind, though, that killing a character every now and again is a good way to demonstrate just how dangerous adventuring in Barsaive can be.



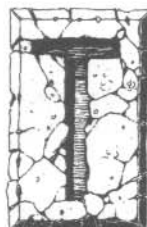
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LOOSE ENDS



THE INFORMATION IN this section provides guidelines for tying up loose ends and suggests ways to use story elements and characters from **Threads** in future **Earthdawn** adventures and campaigns.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

If the characters kill the Horror, they have accomplished something truly heroic. Charliss, the affected woman they initially followed, lies unconscious in a corner of the room after the fight; she is now free of the Horror's Thought Worm threads. Haven's other victimized residents are free from the Horror's perversion of their minds, though the memories of what they did while infected will haunt them for some time to come. Years may pass before Haven truly returns to normal.

If the characters fail to kill the Horror but manage to stay alive, they are probably panicking. Until the Horror is killed, Haven remains in terrible danger. The Abomination will corrupt more and more people in Haven; given enough time, it will take over the whole town. Clearly, the heroes should either get some help and go back for a second crack at the Horror or else get out of Haven and stay out. Horrors do not forgive their enemies, and the characters will become the Abomination's first targets if they return to Haven.

In claiming that it would destroy Haven within a day when the characters encountered the Cult of Pain (see **The Cult of Pain**, p. 66), the Abomination exaggerated slightly. In fact, the process should take a few months with an additional 3 to 5 people joining the cult every day.

Devious gamemasters may come up with a continuing storyline even if the characters defeat the Horror. One interesting possibility is that the Abomination transferred its intelligence to one of its followers just before it died. This avatar continues to add members to the Cult of Pain and preach the hateful message of its dreadful master. The Cult may even go underground, becoming a force intent on bringing Haven to its knees.

AWARDING LEGEND POINTS

Award the characters Legend Points for this adventure as described in the **Introduction**, p. 6. Specific awards are described below. The Adventure Award is 500 Legend Points per character.

Creative Roleplaying and Heroics

Award Legend Points for creative roleplaying and heroics if the characters take any of the actions described below. Unless otherwise noted, only the first character to accomplish one of these goals earns the Legend Points listed.

Discovering the threads in Investigations	250
Deciding to follow the affected woman in Investigations	50
Figuring out the sequence of the Elemental Fountains	300
Bathing in the Elemental Fountains	100
Solving the puzzle of the Hall of Silver and Flame	400

CREATURE/OPPONENT AWARD TABLE

Creature/Opponent	6 Players	7 Players	8 Players
Cadaver men/ Cult of Pain (2 per character)	1,320	1,540	1,760
Ghouls (2)	180	180	180
Cadaver men/ Into the Catacombs (10)	1,100	1,100	1,100
Cadaver men/ Final Conflict (15)	1,650	1,650	1,650
Bog Gobs*	1,000	1,000	1,000
Abomination	20,730	20,730	20,730
Total (w/out bog gobs)	24,980	25,200	25,420
Award Per Character	4,165	3,600	3,175

*These creatures appear only if the Abomination calls them to aid it. Use them as equalizers if the characters appear to be breezing through the final encounter.





Defeating Creatures

Award Legend Points for defeating creatures/opponents in this adventure as shown on the table on page 76.

Treasure

The characters gain no treasure in this adventure.

TOTAL LEGEND AWARD

Based on the figures listed on p. 76, a single character who completes **Threads** receives an average of 4,400 Legend Points. This average assumes seven players in a group and does not include points earned for battling additional opponents or finding treasure placed by the gamemaster.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

This section provides information and game statistics for the gamemaster characters who play a major role in **Threads**. If necessary, alter the characters to better suit your players and campaign.

THE ABOMINATION

Attributes

DEX: 15 STR: 14 TOU: 16
 PER: 17 WIL: 18 CHA: 20

Initiative: 18 Physical Defense: 15
 Number of Attacks: (3) Spell Defense: 18
 Attack: 18 Social Defense: 15
 Damage: 12 Armor: 20
 Number of Spells: 2 Mystic Armor: 20
 Spellcasting: 20 Knockdown: 35
 Effect: See below Recovery Tests: 5

Death Rating: 100 Combat Movement: None
 Wound Threshold: 20 Full Movement: None
 Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Karma Points: 30 Karma Step: 12

Powers: Horror Mark 12, Thought Worm 18 (see below),
 Spells: (Circle 8 wizard spells), Unnatural Life 15

Legend Points: 20,730

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

The Abomination was captured by the mages of Parlainth and used in an experiment they believed would give them at least some of the knowledge they needed to effectively battle the Horrors threatening their city. Unfortunately, the experiment's failure weakened the bonds that held the Horror captive. To prevent the captured Horror from escaping into Parlainth, the wizards cre-



ated a spell to merge one of their number—a wizard named Malgim Mortaka—with the Horror. They believed that if the merging wizard had sufficient magical protection, he could prevent the Horror's entrance into the world and perhaps even overcome and destroy it. Unfortunately, the Horror took over the wizard. The two of them remained locked in a dreaming combat for hundreds of years until the Horror finally won. It then awakened and began to take control of the people of Haven. The mage has remained within the Horror, tortured by the creature.

Ironically, the wizard is one of the Horror's weak points. If anyone calls out the wizard's full name, Mortaka can distract the Horror for 3 rounds by disrupting the Horror's ability to use its spells or powers. This little breathing space may be enough to give the characters a decisive edge.

Unlike most Horrors, the Abomination possesses a unique Thought Worm power. It need not see a target to infect it with a Thought Worm. Thought Worms from the Abomination appear in the form of semi-sentient, magical threads with a Full Movement of 40. The threads seek out and attach themselves to targets. Once this happens, the Abomination makes a Spellcasting Test as for a standard Thought Worm. If the test is successful, the target is infected by the Thought Worm. All standard Thought Worm abilities apply as well (see p. 299, ED). The Abomination can create and send up to 5 of these Thought Worm threads per day.





• FIN •



FORGOTTEN BY TIME!

From the famed ruins of Parlainth and the explorer's mecca of Haven come four tales to chill you to the bone, four adventures to challenge even the bravest, most cunning heroes!

The tainted blood of a Horror traps the soul of a child inside its monstrous, twisted psyche...

The undead denizens of Parlainth's Cadaver Kingdom stage a macabre carnival in Haven, luring unsuspecting victims into their underground realm...

An ancient Theran treasure threatens to throw Haven into chaos...

A slumbering Horror awakens to malevolent life and turns Haven into a seething cauldron of violence and suspicion...

Anything and everything can happen in Parlainth. Fame and fortune await the hero brave enough to gamble with Death and lucky enough to win!

Parlainth Adventures is a collection of four *Earthdawn* adventures set in the ruins of the Forgotten City of Parlainth and the nearby town of Haven. For characters of First to Fourth Circles.

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