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# DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

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## CITADEL OF THE CORRUPTOR

BY ADRIAN POMMIER  
AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVEL 7-9





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**BY ADRIAN POMMIER**

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## INTRODUCTION

Remember the golden days of role-playing, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Well, those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics feature bloody combat and intriguing dungeons. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you fear, and the secret doors you know must be there somewhere.

*Citadel of the Corruptor* is designed for five characters of 7th to 8th level. While the characters can be of any basic class, a party able to cast area-of-effect spells and knowing the Endure Elements ritual has the best odds of surviving. See the “Scaling Information” section for ways to tailor this adventure to your group’s unique style of play.

### ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The heroes, seeking shelter from a storm, arrive at an isolated fort to find it sacked and its defenders slain. Those responsible — dwarven agents of the villainous Mountain King — are still in the area with captives and a terrible weapon they’re ready to unleash on the cities of the North... unless the heroes stop them!

## GAMEMASTER’S SECTION

### ENCOUNTER TABLE

To help the GM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance. Loc — the location number keyed to the map for the encounter. Pg — the module page number that the encounter can be found on. Type — this indicates if the encounter is a trap (T), puzzle (P), hazard (H), skill challenge (S), or combat (C). Encounter — the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the encounter. Names in italics are noteworthy NPCs. EL — the encounter level.

### SCALING INFORMATION

*Citadel of the Corruptor* is designed for 5 characters of 7–9th level. The module, however, can be easily modified for parties of different sizes or levels. When adjusting the module to suit your game, consider the following suggestions:

**Weaker parties (6th level lower):** For area 1–2, remove five Groot laborers, three Blooded, two White Slayers, and subtract –1 level from the totem beast. For area 1–4, subtract –1 level from the Fangbrothers and dire wolves. For area 1–5, subtract –1 level from the knightly ghosts. For area 1–7b, remove one Blooded and subtract –1 level from Naal.

For area 2–1, subtract –1 level from all creatures. In area 2–2, subtract –1 from the Perception and Thievery DCs for the trap; also subtract –1 from its attack and damage. For area 2–3, remove one bugbear. For area 2–6, remove two ogre menials. For area 2–9, subtract –1 level from Lord Ablair.

Adjust the treasure accordingly.

**Stronger parties (9th level or higher):** For area 1–2, add one Groot laborer and one White Slayer, and add +1 level to each White Slayer and the totem beast. For area 1–4, add +2 to the Perception DC regarding the water tower and increase its damage by +1; double the number of Fangbrothers, and add +1 level to the dire wolves. For area 1–5, add +1 level to the knightly ghosts, and add one knightly ghost; add +2 levels to the grief wraiths. For area 1–7b, add three Blooded to the area (have them come from the Kitchen with Naal), and add +1 level to Naal.

For area 2–1, add +1 level to the trained boars and +3 levels to the dwarves. In area 2–2, add +1 to the Perception and Thievery DCs for the trap; also add +1 to its attack and damage. For areas 2–3, add +1 level to the draft boar, the bugbears, and the nighthound whelp, then add an additional nighthound whelp. For area 2–9, add +2 levels to Lord Ablair and add in another Throneguard.

Adjust the treasure accordingly.

### GETTING THE PLAYERS INVOLVED

The adventure begins with the characters arriving at Fort Frostbite. The adventure presumes the party is there to deliver supplies, but the GM can devise an alternate plot hook or adapt one of the following:

- The party is stationed at Fort Frostbite, and has just returned from an extended patrol to find it sacked! With their friends dead, the PCs set off on a mission of vengeance.
- The garrison at Fort Frostbite could use a few good men. Earn high pay amid the natural beauty of Mount Runhode! Come work at the top of the world! Only the hardy need apply!
- The party is on Mt. Runhode on their own business, and seeks out Fort Frostbite for shelter from the impending leysahrid.
- The party has been hired by Lord Macreed to deliver supplies to Fort Frostbite. They would be well paid for traveling through such hazardous territory.
- News of the ruin being investigated by Antiquary Bennins has reached the ears of the adventurers. Perhaps they want to loot it for relics and lost wealth, or perhaps they have nobler intentions and want to assist the learned man.

## BACKGROUND STORY

Five years ago, one of the city lords of Ul-Balhar, Lord Macreed, grew worried about a large orc tribe in the Ul-Dominor mountains, the Groot. His scouts found an empty keep on Mount Runhode that had been built and abandoned by a fallen dwarven clan, the Tannheim (see *DCC #54: Forges of the Mountain King*). Lord Macreed claimed the keep, and had it refitted to become Fortification XXXI.

A human knight, Sir Gars Ree, and his small company claimed the honor of this harsh vigil, and jokingly refer to their keep as “Fort Frostbite.”



### FOUR MONTHS AGO...

... during the warmest summer in memory, a small ruin was uncovered by melting snow. Word of this find drew the attention of the renowned antiquary Norr Bennins, who moved his staff, including his daughter Childa and his assistant Fuyuks Coppersmith, to Fort Frostbite. He confirmed that the structure dated back to the reign of Skelya the White, a dragon tyrantess of times before (see *DCC #57: Mount Wyvern*).

### TWO MONTHS AGO...

... Norr Bennins made a horrific discovery while examining the ruins northwest of Fort Frostbite. A creature had frozen solid in the mountaintop frost not far from the ruin, but the unseasonable summer heat had thawed it out. This creature was a hatinid, a shape-changing, slime-like aberrant beast that had lain dormant for centuries. It attacked, consumed, and replicated Norr Bennins, becoming Norr-Hatinid. It has lived at Fort Frostbite, impersonating Norr and waiting for a chance to open the portal at the ruin.

The winter that soon came, however, was exceptionally and unexpectedly harsh, depleting the garrison's reserves, preventing further exploration, and agitating the Groot. The knights expected supplies and mercenary reinforcements to arrive, but trouble found them first.

### TWO DAYS AGO...

... Lord Ablair the Corruptor came to Mount Runhode to field-test a demonic poison called "mindfilth" for his liege, the Mountain King.

Bereg Lorothe, the Mountain King's nephew, joined the expedition to learn the secret of the mysterious ruin, which he believed to be a portal to a legendary weapon, Skelya's Reprisal.

Disguised as traders, they entered Fort Frostbite. Bereg captured Norr-Hatinid, but not before it slew and replaced his assistant, Fuyuks, who hid in a secret compartment. The dwarves also snatched Childa, thinking she could be held over Norr.

As the dwarves left, Lord Ablair detonated two kegs of mindfilth.

The gas plunged the garrison into demon-inspired madness. The fortunate died at the hands of their possessed former comrades. Some were lucky enough to succumb to the poisonous fumes. The rest tore themselves apart with their bare hands and teeth, compelled to unreasoning destruction.

The test a success, Bereg assumed command and ordered the expedition northwest, and established an arcane base camp near the ruin.

Location	Pg	Type	Encounter	EL
1-2	7	C	Twelve Groot orc laborers Seven Groot orc Blooded Four Groot orc White Slayers Groot totem beast	10
1-4	11	C/H	Two Groot orc Fangbrothers Two famished dire wolves Collapsing water tower hazard	5
1-5	14	C	Two grief wraiths Four knightly ghosts	7
1-6	15	C	<i>Fuyuks-Hatinid</i>	<1
1-7b	17	C	<i>Naal</i> , Groot orc frostborn Seven Groot orc Blooded	5
1-9	19	S	Save the trapped chamberlain!	5
2-1	21	C	Three trained boars Dwarven heavy cavalry Two dwarven mounted infantry	7
2-2	24	T	Glyph of warding trap	5
2-3	25	C	Draft boar Two bugbear beast wranglers Throneguard Nighthound whelp	7
2-6	28	C/H	Two misfiring reclaimed traps Four ogre menials	8
2-9	29	C	<i>Lord Ablair the Corruptor</i> Throneguard	9

## EIGHT HOURS AGO...

... the Groot orcs, who had heard the screams of Fort Frostbite as it died, came to investigate. Finding the fortification abandoned but intact, they resolved to move in, and frostborn shamaness Naal decreed that the totem beast should come to bless their new home. In the meantime, a wholesale ransacking of Fortification XXXI commenced.

When the party arrives, it is still in progress.

## SKILL NOTATIONS

Some skills have parenthetical notations behind them. These refer to the particular function of that skill to be employed. For example, it is handy to know that scaling a cliff requires Athletics (climb) because a climbing kit adds +2 to the check.

Perception (search) refers to the function of Perception that requires 1 minute to perform and searches all adjacent squares; when this notation appears, other uses of Perception are inadequate to learn/explore/discover the relevant material.

Similarly, the text often distinguishes between information learned with a passive or active Perception check.

Magic items are followed with the notation (Arcana DC X, none) or (Arcana DC X, arcane). This relates to the “sense the presence of magic” function of the Arcana skill.

## MAKING IT YOUR OWN

Several names used throughout this adventure refer to places and people found in other DCC modules, most notably *DCC #35: Gazetteer of the Known Realms*.

For example, Oro Lorothe, the Mountain King, is a wicked dwarf who rules a significant portion of the modern-day Ul Dominor mountains. Bordering his domain is the goodly dwarven stronghold of Ul-Balhar. As the GM, you can substitute any appropriate villainous ruler for Lorothe or any mountaintop city for Ul-Balhar.

Similarly, the orcs in this module speak Orc. If you want them to speak Giant, Urzhoko, Spanish, or any other language, do so. Ultimately, the game is yours to run as you see fit.

## REPLACING THE DEAD

Normally, when a hero dies mid-game, the party can go back to town or otherwise stumble across that player's new character. Adventuring at a remote, mountaintop location, however, means there's no town to go back to.

The best locations for replacement heroes to be found are areas 1–10 or 2–5.

## INTERROGATION

The paragraphs below relate the information held by various foes. Named and/or elite NPCs will not speak under interrogation unless otherwise noted.

- **Groot orcs:** Two days ago there was a big fire at the human castle. When we showed up, they were dead but nothing was taken, so Naal Frostborn decided it would become our new home.
- **Dwarven and bugbear troops:** Lord Ablair, a diabolist, came to Fortification XXXI to test a poison made from demonic essence. Afterward, Bereg Lorothe, the Mountain King's nephew, asserted command. He captured the human father and daughter and ordered the expedition to establish a base camp instead of returning home.

## WEATHERING THE STORM

As the module opens, a leysahrid approaches Fort Frostbite. Several area descriptions reference the wind to drive home the point that the party is in imminent danger from the elements. The moment of the storm's arrival is left to the GM; it should occur at a dramatically appropriate point, and last only as long as necessary.

The heroes can shelter in the following locations: the tunnels beneath the lower bailey, the scholars' bunkhouse, or the main complex (containing the mess hall). Anywhere else, and they are susceptible to the cold of the storm (see Appendix B) and attacks by ekkjavetr. At the GM's discretion, the frost hags enter buildings to attack the heroes.

## SPURRING EXPLORATION

The purpose of the storm is to delay the party at the fort long enough that they uncover some of what happened. The GM can use other tricks to spur exploration; some are detailed below.

If the heroes are in the tunnels, maybe Palmo calls out for help. If they're in the bunkhouse, maybe Fuyuks-Hatinid emerges or makes noise. If they're in the main complex, maybe move the *Logbook of Fortification XXXI* to the treasure pile in 1–7b.

## RUNHODE IN WINTER

It is relentlessly cold on Mt. Runhode. Anyone not protected by the Endure Elements ritual, next to a roaring fire, or inside Bereg's base camp must make a DC 26 Endurance check every 8 hours. If a PC fails, he or she loses a healing surge or (if the PC has no surges left) takes damage equal to his or her level.

## PLAYER BEGINNING

The adventure begins with the heroes arriving at the sacked Fort Frostbite. Start the adventure by reading the following, paraphrasing as necessary to match the plot hook used:

*The trek up Mt. Runhode to Fort Frostbite has been grueling. This winter is harsh, stirring the savage Groot tribe of orcs and drawing out ekkjavetr, terrible frost hags, from their rime-crusted caves. The cackles and screeches of the crones echo through the lonely mountain peaks, triggering avalanches and frightening away game.*

*As you approached the fort, your situation grew even more dire. Miles to the south, back along your trail, a twisting column of air with a black heart has formed... a leysahrid, or tearing storm. The supernatural storm will be upon you in three hours, maybe less... already the wind stirs, and even at this distance, you can hear the howls of the ekkjavetr as they ride the tearing storm.*

### ENCOUNTER AREA 1 FORT FROSTBITE

Fort Frostbite is on Mt. Runhode, the second-highest peak in the Ul Dominor range. The heroes, traveling on foot, are assumed to be acclimated to the high altitude, and are not required to make Endurance checks.

The fort is nestled in a natural hollow, with a half-scallop stone ceiling arching overhead like an amphitheater shell. The Tannheim dwarves sculpted the ceiling to depict various industrious activities, but the artwork has been worn away by the brutal wind and winter, and few have had the skill to restore them.

One feature remaining is a great inverted stone spire that depends from the scallop-shell ceiling. It is designed to direct snowmelt and rain runoff to a water tower placed beneath it.

The Groot orcs are aware that the leysahrid is coming, and they intend to shelter at their new “home,” Fort Frostbite. Note that the Groot in Fort Frostbite are only a small fragment of the whole tribe, and the totem beast is not their only — or largest — such creature.

### AREAS OF THE MAP

Unless otherwise noted, there are no light sources burning or active in Fort Frostbite. It is assumed to be broad daylight as the adventure begins, but that changes as the leysahrid draws close.

Unless otherwise noted, all interiors have 7-foot-tall ceilings.

It requires a DC 25 Athletics (climb) to scale all exposed, worked surfaces of Fort Frostbite, which have a thin layer of ice, or DC 20 for the interior surfaces. Scaling the cliff beneath the fort requires a DC 20 Athletics (climb) check. As noted on the map, it is a 125-foot drop from the cliff.

#### Area I-I Outside the Main Gate

As the party approaches this area, read or paraphrase the following:

*Moving ahead of the coming storm, you travel a mountain trail. To your left is the sheer face of Mt. Runhode, and to the right a 125-foot drop... fortunately the path is more than 70 feet wide.*

*Rounding a bend, you find yourselves at the southern entrance of Fort Frostbite. At last!*

*Two squat towers stand athwart the gatehouse. One blends into the living face of Runhode and the other stands at the very edge of the precipice. Each tower has a single ring of arrow slits about ten feet off the ground. The walls shimmer slightly under a thin patina of ice, and the growing wind whips the tower-and-snowflake banner of Fortification XXXI.*

## THAT GUY

There is always That Guy who says, “Wow, looks dangerous and everyone’s dead. I’m outta here.” Later on, after the party has liberated Fort Frostbite, That Guy might say, “Hey, whatever took this fort is tough and I want no part of it. I’m outta here.”

Hopefully your party doesn’t have *That Guy*, but if it does, and he wants to leave, there are a few things you can do:

- Point out that there’s no going for help; the party is it. Anyone in need of help will be long dead by the time they return with it.
- Remind him of the approaching storm. The party needs shelter, and a Commune with Nature ritual confirms there is no shelter other than Fort Frostbite in the area. Don’t be afraid to hit the party with the storm; it’s included in this module for that reason.
- Fleeing Fort Frostbite leaves the dead unavenged. The spirit of Sir Ree could haunt the party until they slay Lord Ablair. This haunting could take the form of denying the heroes extended rest due to nightmare-tossed sleep or a ghastly apparition that condemns them as cowards (at the worst time possible).
- Although they don’t realize it, the party not acting now allows Lord Ablair to deliver the tested mindfilth poison to the Mountain King, who begins using it in a campaign of conquest. When the authorities realize the party was also in the area and came back alive, the party’s honor, courage, and true loyalties may be called into question.

# MAJOR QUEST

## Avenge Fort Frostbite (Level 6, XP 1,250)

While the party may be motivated by curiosity, pious outrage, or concern for Childa rather than vengeance, the outcome and methods are the same. To accomplish this quest, they must:

- either use *Speak with Dead* (area 1–2), read the *Logbook* (area 1–7C) and/or the *Statement* (area 1–9), or somehow otherwise learn the backstory
- at least attempt to rescue Palmo Kelark (area 1–9)
- save Childa Bennins (area 2–5)
- kill or capture Lord Ablair (area 2–9)

If the heroes accomplish this goal and explain what happened to the authorities, they can expect a reward (the details of which are left for the GM, but could include money, magic items, or some kind of promised aid).

*Something is amiss... the front gates are open slightly, and no guards challenge your approach.*

*A thick, smoky smell lingers in the air (although you spy no grayish plumes snaking over the twenty-five-foot walls). There is no sign the gate was forced or the battlements assaulted.*

Near the door with a DC 17 Perception (listen) check:

(passive) *You hear a shuffling sound, like something walking, and then a grunt... maybe a word, maybe an animal noise.*

(active) *You hear a footstep, then some creature speaks aloud (Orc: "Nothing here, either.")*

**Development:** Give the party Handout A. When the party can see into area 1–2, paraphrase the read-aloud text, revealing only what they actually have line-of-sight to.

Note that the *levitate* spell only allows a creature to move 4 squares (or 20 feet) off the ground, not enough to see over the walls.

The portcullis indicated on the map is lowered. The lever that raises or lowers it is in the square marked "X" in area 1–3 (as is the other lever that operates the portcullis in Gatehouse B). The portcullis provides cover. Heroes can hack it down, lift it, or attempt to squeeze through it; only one hero can use aid another to help a hero lift the portcullis.

**Portcullis:** 120 hp; AC 4; Fort 12, Ref 4; Lift (Strength) DC 26; Squeeze (Small creature only) Acrobatics (escape) DC 18.

Lifting or hacking it down draws the attention of the orcs in area 1–2, but those orcs are distracted by searching, so it's possible to sneak into the lower bailey.

## Area 1–2

## Lower Bailey (EL 10, XP 2,428)

As the party approaches this area, read or paraphrase the following:

*The triangular lower bailey of Fort Frostbite is nearly 100 feet long by 60 feet wide; at the far end, you see the northern gatehouse. Its doors seem to be missing and the portcullis is down. Five towers reinforce the walls ringing the courtyard; four are identical to the two you saw outside, but the last is 50 feet tall. You know from your discussion with Lord Macreed's men that the large tower, which is topped by a frost-covered crane, connects the upper courtyard to the lower.*

*The back half of the fort, beyond the main tower, is actually inside a huge cave. An artificial stalactite hangs from the carved ceiling of this cave... a snowmelt collection point.*

*Near the far gatehouse is a depression of some kind, about 15 feet long, like a shallow trench. South of the depression is a jumble of boxes, smashed chests, emptied drawers, and much of the material once kept in these containers. It looks like at least part of the fort has been ransacked, which would explain the pile of smoking, charred bodies just inside the gatehouse. You can't be sure, but the remains of a dozen corpses, possibly human, maybe some elves, are in there.*

*Several scrawny orcs in crude rags sift through the bodies, loot, and trench as if looking for something. A burly warrior-orc, his face marked by bright red warpaint, lounges in hide armor against the wall of the northeast tower.*

Read or paraphrase the following as reinforcements appear:

*A war whoop goes up from the orcs, and it is answered in kind from all around you. You hear the thumping of heavy feet as more burst from the central tower and from beyond the other guardhouse. Most wear nothing but rags, but some are warpainted like the warrior, and a few are marked with white pigment on their faces and hands... these wield greatclubs.*

Read or paraphrase the following as the totem beast appears:

*Suddenly the roar of a massive beast echoes in the courtyard, "Grooooooooot!" The surviving orcs cheer, and the northern gatehouse goes dark as a giant creature tries to squeeze into the courtyard. It is a titanic, bear-like monstrosity with the head of a snow owl. Frost lingers on its fur, and its exhaled breath is a flurry of snow.*

A DC 19 Perception (listen) check (add +2 during combat) within 5 feet of the "depression" hears:

(passive) *For an instant, you think you hear a faint cry, but you're not sure from what direction.*

(active) *At the edge of your hearing, you hear a voice calling out for help. It sounds like it comes from beneath your feet.*

**Development:** The lower bailey is all most visitors see of Fort Frostbite. Access to the upper bailey is normally gained through the main tower (areas 1–3) or using the crane lift.

## SPEAK WITH DEAD

The Speak with Dead ritual could learn some of what happened. If the heroes attempt this, assume the first corpse is that of a guardsman from the towers.

Guardsman corpses know the following facts:

- Two days ago, four dwarf merchants were let into the fort.
- A few hours later, some barrels in the dwarves' wagon exploded, releasing a purple gas that burned the lungs. The gas formed hands that would open shutters and break windows. The corpse remembers a deep, indescribable fury before blacking out, during which time he died.
- Some time later, a dwarf appeared and dragged him to the lower bailey, where several bodies were burned.
- About eight hours ago, some of the Groot started digging through the bodies, looking for valuables.

If the PCs try again, it is a knight's corpse, who can add that the dwarves kidnapped Norr and Childa Bennins just before the barrels exploded. If the party tries six more times, they get the corpse of Sir Gars Ree, who can add what is summarized in the *Logbook of Fortification XXXI*.

Anyone inspecting the 5x15 "depression" can make a DC 10 Dungeoneering check to realize it's actually a collapsed tunnel, or a DC 10 Nature check to realize it's not a sinkhole or otherwise natural. The chamberlain can't be saved from here; the heroes have to attempt it from the tunnel below.

Orcish activity destroyed the trail left by Lord Ablair's forces.

**Orc Locations:** At the start of the encounter, two laborers each examine the corpses and the crates while the bored Blooded dozes on the slope near the base of Tower D.

The totem beast rests outside Gatehouse B, tended by four laborers, two White Slayers, and three Blooded. The remaining four laborers, three Blooded, and two White Slayers rest in the elevations of the main tower (area 1–3). The exact location of these orcs is left to the GM to determine; their location is abstracted (see Reinforcements).

**Reinforcements:** Any time after round 1 of combat, an orc can spend a minor action to bellow a battlecry, raising the alarm.

The first round afterward, four laborers, four Blooded, and two White Slayers rush into the lower bailey, half coming from outside Gatehouse B, and the rest from the main tower.

The second round afterward, four laborers, two Blooded, and two White Slayers show up to fight, half coming from the Gatehouse and half from the tower.

Finally, the third round afterward, the totem beast roars (see descriptive text above) and tries to enter the fight.

**The Crane Lift:** A hero may think to look at the crane. If he does, a DC 19 Perception (spot) check notices that a stout rope attaches the lift to the crane's arm. A well-placed shot could sever it, dropping the lift 50 feet to the lower bailey.

**Lift Rope:** AC/Reflex 14, Fort 5; hp 8; destroying a rope creates a Falling Lift attack. *Falling Lift:* +10 vs. Reflex, targets all in shaded squares on map, 5d10 damage.

**Terrain:** The "depression" and the elevation marks near the towers are difficult terrain. The two squares of smashed crates between towers B and D, as well as the nine squares of burned bodies, are also difficult terrain, but you can claim cover behind or inside those squares.

**Tactics:** Laborers attack out of desperation to prove themselves worthy. They throw themselves on any invaders they detect, as many as possible, ganging up on one hero. If a laborer drops a PC, he or the next in initiative grabs a token from the fallen hero (any easily-grabbed item) and race adjacent to the nearest Blooded or White Slayer, shouting in glee. From that point on, that laborer has a +1 morale bonus to attacks.

Laborers aren't allowed weapons, so they use rocks (improvised weapons).

The Blooded charges into melee as soon as possible, and seeks individual combat. If all heroes have laborers on them, he orders them to leave a hero alone so they can fight.

Reinforcement Blooded try to attack the largest, best-armed heroes they can find, although not in single combat. Reinforcement Blooded who can't get into melee throw javelins at laborers in the way.

The White Slayers fight with low cunning. They let the heroes exhaust themselves fighting their lesser fellows, increasing the chances they get a kill. They only engage in melee when a hero has cleared the Blooded or laborers around them, and then the White Slayers are careful to flank. Otherwise, they hurl javelins at the heroes. If the White Slayers run out of javelins, they take more from fallen Blooded. Remember that allies don't give enemies cover.

The Groot totem beast either enters through the gatehouse (by squeezing) or climbs the wall to get inside. If forced to climb the wall (because the portcullis was lowered), it gains a +5 bonus to this check for its height and claws.

Once inside, it prefers heroes not in melee. If it has to, it tramples a laborer (move over its space, killing it) to get to a hero. If a hero flees the totem beast, it tries to catch that hero with *frost wall*. The totem beast pursues fleeing heroes and fights to its death.

As long as the totem beast is alive, all orcs fight to the death and pursue fleeing heroes. The first round after it falls, the laborers flee, followed a round later by the Blooded, followed a round later by the Slayers. Fleeing orcs try to head to Gatehouse B, but failing that, they make for Gatehouse A or the main tower, whichever is closer.

## Groot Orc Laborer (12)

**Level 4 Minion**

**Medium natural humanoid** **XP 44**

**Initiative** +0 **Senses** Perception +0  
low-light vision

**HP** 1; missed attack never damages a minion

**AC** 13; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 12

**Speed** 6 (8 while charging)

⚔ **Rock** (standard; at-will) **Weapon**  
+7 vs.AC; 2 damage.

↘ **Thrown Rock** (standard; at-will)  
Ranged 5/10; +4 vs.AC; 2 damage.

**Alignment** Chaotic evil

**Languages** Common, Orc

**Str** 16 (+3) **Dex** 10 (+0) **Wis** 10 (+0)  
**Con** 14 (+2) **Int** 8 (-1) **Cha** 9 (-1)

**Possessions** rock

## Groot Orc Blooded (7)

**Level 9 Minion**

**Medium natural humanoid** **XP 100**

**Initiative** +3 **Senses** Perception +3  
low-light vision

**HP** 1; missed attack never damages a minion

**AC** 20; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 16

**Speed** 6 (8 while charging)

⬇ **Club** (standard; at-will) **Weapon**  
+14 vs.AC; 7 damage.

↘ **Javelin** (standard; at-will) **Weapon**  
Ranged 10/20; +11 vs.AC; 4 damage.

**Alignment** Chaotic evil

**Languages** Common, Orc

**Str** 17 (+6) **Dex** 11 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+3)  
**Con** 15 (+5) **Int** 8 (+2) **Cha** 9 (+2)

**Possessions** hide armor, club, two javelins

## Groot Orc White Slayer (4)

**Level 4 Skirmisher**

**Medium natural humanoid** **XP 175**

**Initiative** +6 **Senses** Perception +2  
low-light vision

**HP** 54; **Bloodied** 27

**AC** 19; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13

**Speed** 6 (8 while charging)

⬇ **Greatclub** (standard; at-will) **Weapon**  
+9 vs.AC; 2d4+3 damage.

↘ **Javelin** (standard; at-will) **Weapon**  
Ranged 10/20; +9 vs.AC; 1d6+3 damage.

⚔ **Warrior's Surge** (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) **Healing, Weapon** The White slayer makes a melee basic attack and regains 13 hp.

**Killer's Eye**

When making a ranged attack, the White Slayer ignores less than total cover or concealment if the target is within 5 squares of it.

**Alignment** Chaotic evil

**Languages** Common, Orc

**Skills** Endurance +9, Intimidate +6

**Str** 17 (+4) **Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+1)  
**Con** 14 (+3) **Int** 8 (+0) **Cha** 9 (+0)

**Possessions** hide armor, greatclub, four javelins

## Groot Totem Beast

**Level 10 Controller**

**Huge fey beast** **XP 500**

**Initiative** +7 **Senses** Perception +13  
low-light vision

**HP** 108; **Bloodied** 54

**AC** 24; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 19

**Speed** 7 (ice walk)

⬇ **Winterclaw** (standard; at-will) **Cold**

Reach 3; +15 vs.AC; 1d10+7 damage plus 1d6 cold damage, and target is slowed (save ends)

↔ **Frost Wall** (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ♦ **Cold**

Close burst 3; +12 vs. Fort; 1d8+5 cold damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends)

**Alignment** Unaligned

**Languages** –

**Str** 24 (+12) **Dex** 14 (+7) **Wis** 16 (+8)  
**Con** 20 (+10) **Int** 2 (+1) **Cha** 12 (+6)

## OPENING FIGHT

This battle is intended to start the adventure off with a big ol' bang. It is supposed to be tough, so the party burns through daily powers and resources, leading them to consider weathering the coming storm inside Fort Frostbite.

It's possible the heroes won't want to use daily powers so early in the adventure. The GM should feel free to use extra descriptive text — like shouted communication between orcs — to emphasize that this is an all-or-nothing battle against most of the Groot tribe.

Merciful GMs could have the orcs attack each other in their battle lust (more so than is already noted) to prevent a TPK.

On the other hand, if the party starts winning too easily, the GM should feel free to throw extra waves of Groot at them (either emerging through the northern gatehouse or descending from the main tower).

**Area 1-3****Main Tower**

As the party enters this area, read or paraphrase the following:

*The orcs who were resting here made a true hovel out of this stone tower. Half a salted ham hock lies against the wall underneath two levers, and a small mound of vomit defiles a downward-leading staircase. The stairs up are littered with broken wine kegs. Crude orcish graffiti defaces the walls, scrawled in the red dye they use as warpaint.*

**Development:** In the square marked “X” are two levers that operate the portcullises. The eastern one is for the southern gatehouse, and the western one is for the northern gatehouse. When a lever is up, so is its portcullis; at the start of the adventure, the eastern one is down and the western one is up.

Sample graffiti, in Orc, reads: “Strength to Groot-beast!”, “Praise Groot-beast for new home!”, “New home good!”, or “Crying room is spooky!”

Most of the graffiti is just orcs praising their totem beast, but the last bit appears near the top of the stairs. It is a reference to the chamber beneath area 1-5.

A hero who can read the graffiti could make a DC 13 Insight check:

(passive) *Something seems odd about what the orcs wrote.*

(active) *The orcs aren't praising their courage or mocking their foes. They always do that after they win a fight.*

**Tower Layout:** The main tower is the heart of Fort Frostbite. It connects to the basement level (areas 1-8 through 1-10), links the lower courtyard (area 1-2) with the upper courtyard (area 1-4), and houses the crane that lifts large goods to the upper bailey (the controls are in area 1-5).

The arrow slits at +10 feet cover the lower bailey.

The arrow slits at +20 feet can be used to fire *into* the tower from the upper bailey ramparts (a typically dwarven defensive measure). There is no internal staircase that connects to the upper floors; would-be invaders have to exit to the upper courtyard and take the stairs there to the door at +30 feet.

The arrow slits at +30 feet cover both baileys and the rampart walls. There is also a hidden trapdoor in the ceiling that leads to area 1-5. It requires a DC 25 Perception (spot) check to notice the trapdoor, but a DC 20 Perception (listen) check hears the grief wraiths in area 1-5:

(passive) *The wind whistles through the arrow slits, but you thought you just heard a wail.*

(active) *You hear a distinct sob, like a woman's voice. It sounded pretty close.*

A hero who has actively heard the crying gains +2 bonus to find the trapdoor.

Finding the trapdoor doesn't help the heroes get to it.

They'll need a ladder (from area 1-4a) or they'll have to somehow climb up there. The rope ladder that normally hangs here is in area 1-5, with the ghosts.

**Terrain:** All staircases are difficult terrain, and all arrow slits provide superior cover. Note that the arrow slits at the +20 feet elevation are designed to fire into the tower; in this case, creatures on the inner wall have superior cover from creatures in the tower.

### Area 1-4 Upper Bailey (EL 5, XP 1,000)

The text assumes the party took the main tower up. If they arrive here by other means, paraphrase as necessary. As the party enters this area, read the following:

*The upper bailey of Fort Frostbite is a large expanse, perhaps 55 feet wide and over 100 feet long. Immediately north of the door is a sharply-angled, stone staircase leading back into the same tower you just exited, and south is a narrow stone column, about twenty feet tall, crowned with a series of complex blocks and tackles. A complex web of frost-encrusted rope connects the summit of the main tower to the column and thence to a nearby capstan. The ropes whip as they are caught by the rising wind.*

*Small staircases north and south lead to the wall ramparts. Another staircase to the southwest leads to a narrow balcony, about ten feet above the upper bailey. Two alcoves are set along the balcony walk.*

*A squat, round wooden tower with a large spigot at the bottom stands just ahead and to the south. It is sheathed in a network of scaffolding.*

*Across from your position is a gated, raised platform with a door set directly into the worked face of Mt. Runhode. Similar, but larger, doors are due north and south, as well as northwest. Those north and south appear to lead to stables, and the southern stalls are open. You see the corpse of a sizeable wolf blocking the entryway. The doorway northwest yawns widely, its door torn from the hinges.*

When combat breaks out, read or paraphrase the following:

*A low growl in either direction warns of the presence of two more, very alive wolves. The size of horses, their gaunt sides heave in excitement, and they slobber in apparent hunger. Each wolf is marked with red warpaint like the orcs below, and they have rib-bones piercing their ears. A pair of morningstar-wielding orcs festooned with necklaces of teeth accompanies the wolves. By their grotesque scars, they have probably done so a long time.*

From the tower doorway, a DC 14 Perception (listen) check hears:

(passive) *You hear muted breathing... or panting?... coming from somewhere in the courtyard.*

(active) *Your ears prick at the panting of two large beasts, somewhere to either side of the doorway. Just under that you pick up the huffing of at least one other creature.*

**Development:** The upper bailey of Fort Frostbite is mostly used as workspace and an exercise yard in better weather. The capstan is turned by zubur bison, which provide the motive force behind the crane.

The mindfilth drove the bison to attack each other, with poison claiming the victor. When the Groot showed up, a wolf feasted on one, sealing its own fate.

**The Water Tower:** The artificial stalactite directs snowmelt and rain runoff into the water tower. It was damaged in leysahrid a few weeks ago, and has been undergoing repair (evidenced by the scaffolding). During the orcish looting, the scaffolding was weakened, and another sharp blow collapses it.

## Collapsing Water Tower

**Level 5 Lurker**

**Hazard**

**XP 200**

**Perception**

DC 14: The hero notices that the water tower is damaged.

DC 19: The hero realizes that a sharp blow will bring most of it down.

**Trigger:** Any attack directly against the scaffolding, any movement (forced or otherwise) into the scaffolding, or any burst or blast that encompasses the scaffolding's supports.

**Attack**

**Immediate Reaction**

**Melee**

**Targets:** Creatures in shaded squares

**Attack:** +8 vs. Reflex

**Hit:** 3d8+4 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

**Miss:** Half damage.

**Aftereffect:** All shaded squares become difficult terrain.

### COUNTERMEASURES

- A hero can trigger the scaffolding from far away by attacking it (AC 15, other defenses 12).
- A hero who is aware that the scaffolding may collapse, may make a DC 19 Dungeoneering roll to know which squares will be affected by its collapse.

**Investigation:** A DC 14 Heal check on either bison determines that both had been gored and torn with dull teeth. The wounds were fatal to the non-eaten zubur.

A DC 19 Heal check on the half-eaten zubur or the dire wolf determines it died of poisoning (evidenced by dried blood around the eyes and a dried, alkaline-smelling black vomit around the mouth). A DC 24 Heal check on the uneaten bison determines it was also poisoned (reduce the DC by 5 if the hero is aware the other animals were poisoned).

Finally, a DC 14 Perception check made near the capstan notices a stray crossbow bolt stuck in it. The bolt is well made, and it's impossible to tell how long it's been there.



Neither the garrison nor the orcs use crossbows; the dwarves left this.

Anyone trained in Nature can tell that the zuburs have been dead for two days, and the wolf for several hours.

**Terrain:** The capstan and water tower are obstacles and provide cover. A creature can occupy the same square as the thin stone column; it provides that creature cover. All staircases are difficult terrain.

**Tactics:** Fighting in the lower bailey alerted the Fangbrothers, but they chose to stay away from the other orcs for fear of losing control of their wolves. Instead, they set up a crude ambush. A wolf and orc hides behind the stone staircase just north of the tower exit, and another such pair hides on the rampart wall south of the exit.

They remain hidden until the first hero enters their field of vision, then attack. If the party did not detect them after exiting the tower, the heroes are surprised. The orcs are not, having heard them climb and exit the tower.

Each pair works as a team on a single hero, ensuring that the wolf gains combat advantage for as long as possible.

If a hero falls, the nearest wolf breaks off fighting to spend a standard action feasting on that hero's body; consider this a coup-de-grace. The wolves won't eat fallen Fangbrothers (whom they consider part of their "pack"), but they eat any other orc.

All creatures fight to the death and pursue fleeing heroes, possibly squeezing (in the case of the wolves) if the heroes retreat to the tower.

The orcs do not ride the wolves, preferring to run alongside them; note that they can keep up.

### Famished Dire Wolf (2)

**Level 5 Skirmisher**

**Large natural beast (mount) XP 200**

**Initiative +7 Senses Perception +9**  
low-light vision

**HP 67; Bloodied 33**

**AC 19; Fortitude 18, Reflex 17, Will 16**

**Speed 8**

⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will)  
+10 vs.AC; 1d8+4 damage, or 2d8+4 damage against a prone foe.

#### Combat Advantage

A famished dire wolf gains combat advantage against a target that has one or more of its allies adjacent to it. If the wolf has combat advantage against the target, it is knocked prone on a hit.

**Alignment** Unaligned

**Languages** —

<b>Str</b> 19 (+6)	<b>Dex</b> 16 (+5)	<b>Wis</b> 14 (+4)
<b>Con</b> 19 (+6)	<b>Int</b> 5 (–1)	<b>Cha</b> 11 (+2)

### Groot Orc Fangbrother (2)

**Level 5 Brute**

**Medium natural humanoid XP 200**

**Initiative +4 Senses Perception +2**  
low-light vision

**HP 76; Bloodied 38**

**AC 17; Fortitude 19, Reflex 15, Will 13**

**Speed 8**

⊕ **Morningstar** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**  
+8 vs.AC; 1d10+5 damage.

⊕ **Warrior's Surge** (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter) ♦ **Healing, Weapon**  
The Groot fangbrother makes a melee basic attack and regains 19 hp.

**Alignment** Chaotic evil

**Languages** Common, Orc

**Skills** Endurance +9, Nature +6

**Str** 20 (+7) **Dex** 14 (+4) **Wis** 10 (+2)

**Con** 16 (+5) **Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 8 (+1)

**Possessions** hide armor, morningstar

#### Area 1–4a

#### Workrooms

As the party enters the first area, read or paraphrase the following:

*The doorway to this workshop was torn from its hinges, allowing swirls of snow and sheets of paper to dance across the floor. Worktables have been overturned and craftsman's tools – awls, hammers, handsaws, and the like – lie scattered across the floor. A broken ladder, snapped into two ten-foot long halves, rests against a rack of half-finished leather armor, and an entire shelf of clay jars of paint was destroyed by a thrown iron pot, leaving a rainbow splash of violence on the wall.*

*To the northwest you see an open archway leading to another, similarly ransacked room, this with a smashed potter's wheel and kiln.*

When the party sees the statues north of area 1–4b, read or paraphrase the following:

*Two statues set into recessed alcoves flank the hallway, facing each other. They are perhaps twins, or maybe two depictions of the same dwarf. The one to the left is caparisoned in ornate armor and hefts a warhammer; the one to the right wears a simple leather apron and wields a smith's hammer. Each statue, regardless of attire, wears a carved circlet with a conspicuous empty socket in the middle.*

*The statues look quite old, and were in good condition, but now they are marred with recent chisel marks, particularly around the face and brow. The offending implements, a hammer and stone chisel, lie discarded on the floor.*

**Development:** The workshops were ignored by Lord Ablair's men, and searched for goods by the Groot orcs. The broken ladder could be used to reach area 1–5.

The statues date back to when the Tannheim dwarves built Fort Frostbite. When it was eventually taken over by the Duke's men, the men recognized they could use Daentharr's endurance to survive Mount Runhode.

Bereg dropped the sheet of paper when he kidnapped "Norr." It is Handout B, a map to the ruin.

**The Statues:** A DC 10 Religion check would recognize the statues as two representations of Daentharr, an industrious god of the hearth and forge often worshipped by dwarves.

A DC 20 Religion check would know that the gems likely kept in those circlets were rubies, symbolizing the flame of the forge and the blood of battle.

If the both rubies in area 1–7b are placed in each statue's circlet, read or paraphrase the following:

*You hear a clear ring, as a well-struck hammer on willing steel, and feel a blessing of resoluteness settle over your souls.*

Once both rubies are in place, the heroes gain 5 temporary hit points after each extended rest. These temporary hit points do not accumulate. This blessing disappears permanently (and cannot be regained) if the rubies are removed, even if the three days aren't up yet.

If both niches are filled with something other than the proper ruby, read or paraphrase the following:

*You hear a harsh clang, like a missed stroke of the hammer on pig iron. The sound unsettles you slightly.*

The heroes suffer a –1 penalty to Fortitude defense. The penalty goes away as soon as both improper materials are removed. The GM need not inform the heroes of this penalty.

The statues are so damaged that either the diamonds or the rubies from area 1–7b could possibly fit in the niches in the circlets.

Both the blessing and the curse are permanent unless as stated above.



## CITADEL OF THE CORRUPTOR

**Area 1-4b****Smithy**

As the party enters this area, read or paraphrase the following:

*The short hallway terminates in a looted smithy. Shattered quenching tubs spill their contents over the floor, mingling with scrap iron from an overturned bin. Multihued handprints decorate the forge and mantle above it, where two fist-sized stones rest. A half-eaten, raw potato was left on the anvil, and another two are impaled on pokers, as if in preparation to roast.*

**Development:** If anyone thinks to ask, a DC 15 Religion check would know that placing two stones above a forge is not associated with the worship of Daentharr.

**Treasure:** The orcs, in their greed, only looked for obvious treasure, missing the stones set above the forge. These are a pair of *sending stones* (DC 25 Arcana; none) left behind from when the Tannheim dwarves originally held the fort; they lack the characteristic mark common to other such pairs. The humans who resettled here thought they had religious significance.

**TONING IT DOWN**

Lady Ree's infanticide is meant to portray that something went very wrong here; after the party learns about Lord Ablair and mindfilth, it is hoped they are motivated to avenge the evil he wrought.

If you don't think your group would make this connection, or otherwise not appreciate the imagery, feel free to alter this area. Maybe the children were slain by the poison instead, or perhaps they aren't present at all. Lady Ree could just as easily question after her husband.

**Area 1-5****Crane Operations  
(EL 7, XP 1,500)**

As the party nears the trapdoor in the floor of this area, read or paraphrase the following:

*You hear a faint sobbing sound, then it stops, as if silently hushed.*

When the heroes can see into this area, read or paraphrase the following:

*Sunlight enters this cramped room through narrow windows that look to have shattered inward. The wind whistles loudly through them as the storm draws closer.*

*The blood of eight corpses stains the floor of this chamber. Two knights apparently transfixed each other's hearts with their longswords. A third knight sprawls, his temple sprouting the dagger of a serving woman collapsed atop him, her head crushed by a length of wood. A fourth knight has crumpled*

*behind her, his face choked black and eyes agog. Finally, a greatsword pins a lady in fine dress and fur cloak to the floor, each of her hands wrapped around the throat of an infant in swaddling clothes.*

*You hear the sobbing sound again, coming from everywhere at once, and then, "My babies... what has haaaaaappened to my babiessss..."*

*Suddenly, as if from behind a corner you couldn't see, ghostly apparitions step forward, spectral twins of the six adults who lie murdered.*

*One of the knights, the one with a dagger in his forebrain, speaks in a hollow, echoing voice, "Fear not, Lady Ree."*

**Development:** During the attack on Fort Frostbite, Lady Ree and her lady-in-waiting — escorted by four knights — fled here to climb above the poison along with Her Ladyship's newborn twins. Unfortunately, the gas broke the windows of this chamber, and they killed each other.

Sadly, their tale is not over. The two women have returned as grief wraiths, endlessly recounting their tragedy with their *regretful whispers* power. Additionally, the knights — having failed their duty — returned as ghostly defenders. They don't let any harm come to the grief wraiths, whom they still consider their charges.

This chamber also contains various wheels and levers used to control the crane. A simple DC 10 Arcana check learns how to operate the crane and lift (assuming it's still intact), which can carry up to 2 tons.

**Investigation:** Anyone making a DC 24 Heal check on the corpses determines these unfortunates were poisoned.

**Treasure:** Hidden in the rich clothing of Lady Ree is a small silver candelabrum with ruby flakes set into the candle sconces (250 gp) (DC 8 Perception (search), or automatic if the party moves the bodies). The body of the knight that speaks has a belt pouch with 50 gp.

**Tactics:** All undead here make use of their phasing ability to move through walls and floor as they maneuver.

The wraiths are content to hang back and let *regretful whispers* afflict the party. If both wraiths can get a hero alone, they team up on that target. The lady-in-waiting uses *touch of misery* while Lady Ree prefers *touch of grief*.

Each knight goes out of his way to mark a different foe, then they do their best to interpose themselves between the party and the wraiths. In battle they shout encouragement to each other, and beg "her ladyship" to remain out of the fray... they act like noble (but very confused) knights.

The grief wraiths pursue fleeing heroes, demanding to know what happened to their children but insensate to any answers. As long as the wraiths exist, the knightly ghosts try to defend them; if both are destroyed, the knightly ghosts chivalrously salute the heroes and then disappear.

## Knightly Ghost (4)

Level 6 Soldier

Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP 250

Initiative +6 Senses Perception +10  
darkvision

HP 68; Bloodied 34

AC 22; Fortitude 18, Reflex 16, Will 18

Immune disease, poison; Resist insubstantial

Speed 6, fly 6 (hover); phasing

⊕ **Ghostly Sword** (standard; at-will) **Necrotic**  
+13 vs. Reflex; 1d8+2 necrotic damage, and the target is  
marked until the end of the knightly ghost's next turn.

### Knightly Tactics

A knightly ghost has combat advantage against any  
target marked by any ghostly sword power.

Alignment Unaligned

Languages Common

Str 14 (+5)	Dex 12 (+4)	Cha 14 (+5)
Con 12 (+4)	Int 10 (+3)	Wis 11 (+3)

## Grief Wraith (4)

Level 6 Controller

Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP 250

Initiative +8 Senses Perception +6; darkvision  
**Regretful Whispers (Psychic)**  
aura 1; any enemy that enters or  
starts its turn in the aura takes  
5 psychic damage and cannot shift  
until the start of its next turn.  
If the grief wraith takes radiant  
damage, the aura is negated until  
the end of its next turn.

HP 68; Bloodied 34

AC 20; Fortitude 15, Reflex 19, Will 18

Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotic,  
insubstantial; Vulnerable 5 radiant

Speed fly 6 (hover); phasing

⊖ **Touch of Misery** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Psychic**  
+10 vs. Reflex; 1d6+5 psychic damage, and the target  
takes -2 penalty to Will defense (save ends).

⊖ **Touch of Grief** (standard, recharge 5, 6)

**Psychic**

+10 vs. Reflex; 2d6+4 psychic damage, and target is  
weakened (save ends).

### Spawn Wraith

Any humanoid killed by a grief wraith rises as a free-  
willed wraith (use these stats, but without the regretful  
whispers power) at the start of its creator's next  
turn, appearing in the space where it died (or nearest  
unoccupied space). Raising the slain creature with the  
Raise Dead ritual does not destroy the spawned wraith.

Alignment Chaotic evil

Languages Common

Str 6 (+1)	Dex 20 (+8)	Wis 6 (+1)
Con 12 (+4)	Int 11 (+3)	Cha 19 (+7)

## Area 1-6

Scholar's Bunk  
(EL <1, XP 250)

As the party enters this area, read or paraphrase the  
following:

*This was apparently a bunkhouse for two scholars. A wealth  
of books are scattered on the nearby teak table, two beds have  
been torn apart, and a large trunk was been smashed open.*

*You spy a hallway near the northwest corner, half-obscured  
by a torn curtain.*

When the party looks beyond the curtain, read or  
paraphrase the following:

*This was another, smaller bedchamber. Long, warm dresses  
have been tossed into a corner, and other accoutrements of  
femininity are smashed and smeared on the walls.*

When the party finds Fuyuks-Hatinid, read or paraphrase  
the following:

*Opening the secret door, you find a small room, almost a  
closet. Melted candlewax covers the floor along with empty  
bottles of wine and a large book.*

*Across from the door is a bearded human male dressed in  
torn sleeping robes.*

*"Please! Don't hurt me! By the gods, just take what you  
want!"*

*The man has pale skin and hands uncalloused by labor. Red  
hair recedes from his brow, and his soft eyes have a sleepy  
quality, even in his obvious terror.*

**Development:** This is where Norr and Childa Bennins,  
and Norr's assistant Fuyuks Coppersmith, lived while at  
Fort Frostbite.

Mindfilth did not penetrate this far into Fort Frostbite, so  
Fuyuks-Hatinid was spared.

**The Imposter:** Fuyuks-Hatinid is desperate to travel  
through the ruin's portal (area 3-1). It manipulates the  
party in that direction and insists on accompanying them,  
asking to be included in any rituals the party uses to shield  
themselves from the cold.

If asked about the ruin, it claims that only Norr knows the  
whole story, but it dates back to the reign of Skelya the Ice  
Queen. If the party doesn't have Handout B, Fuyuks can  
show them the way to the ruin.

If asked why it knows *magic missile*, it explains that "he"  
used to want to be a mage, but only mastered that one  
spell.

About the attack, it only speaks from Fuyuks' perspective,  
leaving out the attack by Norr-Hatinid (paraphrase as  
necessary):

*"This party of dwarf merchants with a draft boar showed  
up at the fort looking to sell us supplies. They seemed really  
interested in Norr's... that is, Antiquary Bennins' research,*

but who couldn't be? That night there was this loud 'boom,' and Norr pushed me into this secret closet, saying he was going for Childa... that is, Assistant Bennins.

"I hear the door burst open, a quick conversation, then Childa screamed, then nothing. They never came back. I... didn't know what to do, so I stayed here. Then, some hours ago, I heard guttural shouting, different than before, and it sounded like someone was searching the room roughly. They sniffed at the wall, but didn't find the way in. When you opened the door... I... thought you were they."

The creature impersonates Fuyuks perfectly, appearing to be a retiring, fearful scholar with an unquenchable thirst for discovery but a timid personality. When excited, it speaks in a whisper, and is always deferential. In other words, it's a good NPC.

When Fuyuks-Hatinid is eventually forced to reveal itself, read or paraphrase the following:

*Fuyuks spasms violently. It gives a low, warbling groan as its flesh, hair, and eyes grow pale, then snow-white. Its features blur like a melting wax effigy as the figure collapses into a shapeless pool of pale filth. The slime-like thing that called itself Fuyuks gathers itself, and a film of iridescent scum slides across its surface.*

**Treasure:** Most of the books are scholarly works about the history of the UI-Dominor mountains, and only of interest to researchers. As Norr was seized, the dwarves gathered most of his actual notes, but an unopened letter was missed. A DC 10 Perception (search) check on the table discovers Handout C.

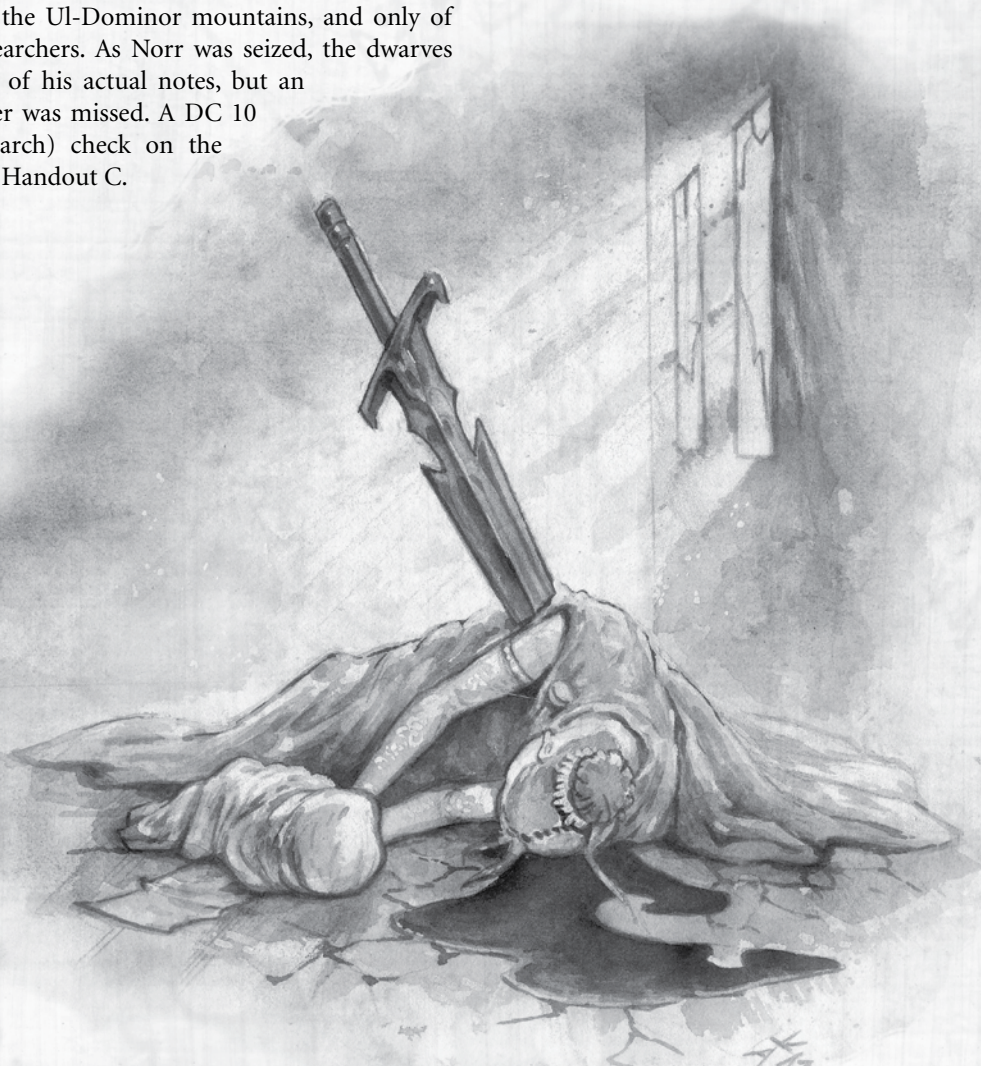
Handout C makes several references, namely to Bithriarch, Skelya the Ice Queen, and Skelya's Reprisal. The heroes can understand these references with History checks:

- DC 10: Skelya the Ice Queen was a dragon tyrant who ruled the UI Dominor mountains ages ago.
- DC 20: Skelya's Reprisal was supposed to have been a weapon the dragon possessed. It was so horrible that Skelya was said to be afraid to use it, yet never had to because the others placated her rather than face it.
- DC 25: Bithriarch was a vassal of Skelya, an architect who designed several ancient wonders. Most infamous of these was Bithriarch's Vault, where Skelya's Reprisal was said to have been kept.

**Tactics:** Fuyuks-Hatinid fights alongside the party and aids them in order to gain their trust, but it is by no means suicidal. In a fight as "Fuyuks," the creature hangs back and casts *magic missile*. If attacked with poison, it attempts to flee.

Fuyuks-Hatinid only assumes the Fuyuks-form and its normal form.

If forced into its natural form, Fuyuks-Hatinid flees.



## Fuyuks-Hatinid (Fuyuks Form)

Level 6 Artillery

Medium aberrant humanoid (shapechanger)

XP 250

Initiative +5 Senses Perception +6

HP 54; Bloodied 27

AC 18; Fortitude 14, Reflex 18, Will 17

Vulnerable 10 poison

Speed 6

⚔ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**  
+9 vs.AC; 1d4 damage.

☞ **Magic Missile** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Force**  
Ranged 20; +11 vs.AC; 2d4+4 force damage.

**Fading** (immediate reaction, when first bloodied; at-will)

Fuyuks-Hatinid regresses to its natural form (see below).

**Alignment** Unaligned

**Languages** Common, Draconic

**Skills** Arcana +12, Bluff +9, History +12

**Str** 10 (+3) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 17 (+6)

**Con** 12 (+4) **Int** 18 (+7) **Cha** 12 (+4)

**Possessions** winter clothing, wand

## Fuyuks-Hatinid (Natural Form)

Level 6 Lurker

Medium aberrant beast (blind, shapechanger)

XP 250

Initiative +9 Senses Perception +12  
blindsight 10, tremorsense 10

HP 59; Bloodied 29

AC 20; Fortitude 18, Reflex 18, Will 18

Vulnerable 10 poison

Speed 6, climb 6 (spider climb); swim 6

⚡ **Slam** (standard; at-will)  
+11 vs.AC; 1d10+4 damage.

**Lethargy**

Any time a hatinid takes cold damage, it is slowed (save ends). If the effect that caused the cold damage also causes the target to become slowed, ignore this ability.

**Alignment** Unaligned

**Languages** telepathy 15

**Skills** Bluff +6, Stealth +10

**Str** 10 (+3) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 18 (+7)

**Con** 17 (+6) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 6 (+1)

## Area 1-7 Keep

These areas are where Sir Gars and his knights lived. Areas 1-7a, 1-7b, and 1-7c all have their own entries, and non-important areas are described below.

**Storeroom:** *This doorway has been chopped down. Little more than a closet with broken shelves, this area has been looted, although it seemed to have once contained basic supplies.*

The useful contents of the storeroom are in area 1-7b.

**Kitchen:** *You have found what seems to be a basic kitchen, designed for utility over luxury. The pantry, stacked firewood, and utensils have all been ransacked. You're not sure, but you'd suspect the bread oven and wood-burning stove have also been searched.*

Indeed, anything of value has been piled in area 1-7b.

## Area 1-7a Knight Barracks

When the party enters this area, read or paraphrase the following:

*Just inside the door you find a cold fire-hearth set into an alcove. Soot and ash cover the floor, and you see several sets of booted and bare footprints moving in and out of this area.*

*Beyond the alcove is a squarish room, the barracks of the knight garrison. Six sets of sturdy, wooden bunk beds line the walls; all have been partially torn apart.*

A DC 12 Perception (listen) check hears the following:

(passive) *You hear a rough voice speaking, but you can't make out what was said or where it came from.*

(active) *You catch part of a conversation coming from somewhere near the end of the room. (Orc 1: "... rubies, but Naal should take the diamonds." Orc 2: "Yes, good for Groot-beast.")*

**Development:** Of the twelve knights that served under Sir Gars Ree, the remains of all but four are in the lower bailey. Those missing four bodies are in area 1-5.

This area has been thoroughly searched, and nothing of interest is left.

## Area 1-7b Mess Hall (EL 7, XP 1,500)

As the party approaches this area, read or paraphrase the following:

*A large pine table fills the center of this hall, and chairs have been thrown against a door in the northeast corner.*

*Seven orcs are in conversation at the far end of the table, probably discussing the pile of coins, gems, and baubles sitting on the table. Each orc bears fierce red warpaint, hide armor, and a club made from animal bone.*

When Naal appears, read or paraphrase the following:

*Lurking around a hallway corner is a female orc. Her face is painted bone-white with blue streaks, and she wears a thick fur cloak over her hide armor. She roars and gestures with her spear, and you feel the temperature drop dramatically.*

**Development:** It is possible the orcs hear the party if they spent too much time in the knight barracks or Sir Ree's quarters. If so, paraphrase the read-aloud text appropriately.

**Treasure:** The orcs have scrounged a fair bit of wealth: 900 gp, a pair of small diamonds (250 gp each), a pair of rubies (250 gp each), and ten gold-with-pearl-inlay buttons (20 gp each).

The statue circlets in area 1–4a are so damaged that both the diamonds and rubies could fit them.

Also among the treasure is a small iron key that unlocks the chest in area 1–10.

**Terrain:** If line of sight for a ranged attack crosses the table's squares, the target has cover. Creatures can climb over it or crawl under it, and creatures can occupy the same "space" if the table is between them.

The stacked chairs in the northeast corner are difficult terrain. Two standard actions (which could be taken by two creatures) clear the chairs, scattering them out of the way.

**Tactics:** If the orcs heard the party, they are ready to jump the heroes as they enter, possibly gaining surprise. If neither side detected the other, roll initiative as normal.

All the orcs are standing around the table in the southeast corner of the mess hall. Naal is in the kitchen, but as soon as a fight breaks out, she emerges.

The Blooded swarm around the table to engage the party in melee. If the party presents a defensible bottleneck, two race outside (clearing the chairs if necessary) and dash around the balcony walk in area 1–4 to come in from behind the party. Any Blooded unable to get into melee and not racing around the back tosses javelins at the heroes (remember the table).

Naal is careful to not get adjacent to her ally orcs lest they take damage from her *soul of frost*. She uses *orc avalanche* as soon as she joins the fight, and then again when she might catch a bloodied hero. Note that this power can affect her as well. She saves *cryoclasm* for when she can catch two or more heroes and no orcs.

None of the orcs think to jump on or crawl under the table. All orcs fight to their death and pursue fleeing heroes.

### Groot Orc Blooded (7)

**Level 9 Minion**  
**Medium natural humanoid** **XP 100**

**Initiative** +3      **Senses** Perception +3;  
 low-light vision

**HP** 1; missed attack never damages a minion  
**AC** 20; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 16  
**Speed** 6 (8 while charging)

⊕ **Club** (standard; at-will) **Weapon**  
 +14 vs.AC; 7 damage.

✂ **Javelin** (standard; at-will) **Weapon**  
 Ranged 10/20; +11 vs.AC; 4 damage.

**Alignment** Chaotic evil  
**Languages** Common, Orc

**Str** 17 (+6)      **Dex** 11 (+3)      **Wis** 10 (+3)  
**Con** 15 (+5)      **Int** 8 (+2)      **Cha** 9 (+2)

**Possessions** hide armor, club, two javelins

### Naal, Groot Orc Frostborn

**Level 9 Elite Controller**  
**Medium natural humanoid (cold)** **XP 800**

**Initiative** +6      **Senses** Perception +5  
 low-light vision  
**Soul of Frost (Cold)** aura 1;  
 enemies that enter or start their  
 turns in the aura take 5 cold  
 damage.

**HP** 192; **Bloodied** 96  
**AC** 25; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 23  
**Resist** 5 cold

**Saving Throws** +2  
**Speed** 6 (8 while charging)

**Action Points** 1  
 ⊕ **Spear** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**  
 +14 vs.AC; 1d8+5 damage.

‡ **Warrior's Surge** (standard, usable only while  
 bloodied; encounter) **Healing, Weapon**  
 Naal makes a melee basic attack and regains 48 hp.

‡ **Death Strike** (when reduced to 0 hp)  
 Naal makes a melee basic attack.

✂ **Orc Avalanche** (standard; recharge 5,6)  
 Ranged 5; one orc within range makes a melee basic  
 attack (as a free action). If that orc has another orc  
 adjacent to it, that other orc may also make a melee  
 basic attack (as a free action).

❄ **Cryoclasm** (standard; encounter) **Cold**  
 Area burst 1 within 10; +11 vs. Reflex; 1d10+3 cold  
 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends). Miss: Half  
 damage, and the target is not slowed.

**Body of Ice**  
 Any creature that hits Naal with a melee attack is  
 slowed until the end of its next turn.

**Alignment** Chaotic evil  
**Languages** Common, Orc

**Skills** Endurance +11, Intimidate +12, Nature +9  
**Str** 17 (+7)      **Dex** 14 (+6)      **Wis** 12 (+5)  
**Con** 16 (+7)      **Int** 11 (+4)      **Cha** 17 (+7)

**Possessions** hide armor, fur cloak, spear

### Area 1–7c Commander's Quarters

When the party enters this area, read or paraphrase the following:

*An overturned double-cradle blocks the doorway to modest quarters quite comfortable by the standards of Fort Frostbite.*

*The dresser and desk have been trashed and thrown open, with books and papers scattered all over the floor. A smashed chair lies beneath a shattered, full-length mirror. In a small alcove across from another door stands a small statue of an armored man grasping a ranseur. The man's eyes are wide and lack pupils, and his features are carved to be stern.*

If the orcs in area 1–7b are still alive, a DC 15 Perception (listen) check hears the following:

(passive) *You hear a rough voice speaking, but you can't make out what was said or where it came from.*

(active) *You catch part of a conversation coming from somewhere near the end of the room.* (Orc 1: "... rubies, but Naal should take the diamonds." Orc 2: "Yes, good for Groot-beast.")

**Development:** A DC 10 Religion check identifies the statue as a common representation of Thormyr, a god of vigilance and duty often worshipped by soldiers.

A DC 10 Perception (search) check discovers a book underneath the broken chair titled *Logbook of Fortification XXXI, Sir Gars Ree, Castellan.*

It would take an hour to read through the logbook. Most of it contains dry details about the maintenance and operation of the fort; the salient points are summarized below:

- **Beginning:** Fortification XXXI was established five years ago by Lord Macreed of Ul-Balhar to monitor the growing threat of the Groot orc tribe.
- Four months ago, during the warmest summer on record, an avalanche caused by snowmelt revealed an unknown ruin five miles northwest of Fort Frostbite. Sir Ree reported this to Lord Macreed, who notified an antiquary and scholar, Norr Bennins.
- Three months ago, Norr Bennins, his daughter Childa, and his personal assistant Fuyuks Coppersmith arrived and began excavating the site with help from off-duty guardsmen. Progress was slowed considerably when the ruin was discovered to be heavily trapped.
- Two months ago, some beast attacked Norr Bennins; he barely survived.
- The current winter has been exceptionally harsh and supplies are dangerously low, but morale is high, especially since Lady Ree gave birth to healthy twins last month. The Groot have been more agitated lately; apparently the winter has hit them very hard.
- **Last Page:** Two days ago, two dwarven merchants and their draft boar arrived at Fort Frostbite, offering to trade goods at fair price. This is a common occurrence, and they were let inside.
- **Last Entry, two days ago:** Evening Watch Report: All posts declare no activity. Pre-emptive expedition against Groot planned. We leave in four day's time if the mercenaries arrive with the promised supplies. If not, may Thormyr protect us.

Anyone reading from at least three months ago can make a DC 14 Insight check:

(passive) *Sir Ree didn't seem to care for Norr Bennins very much.*

(active) *Sir Ree's attitude toward Norr changed two months ago. He becomes more aloof, as if the man offended him.*

Two months ago was when Norr was slain and replaced with Norr-Hatinid.

### Area 1-8 Tower Barracks

As the party approaches any of these areas, read or paraphrase the following:

*This chamber is a small barracks. Four large beds with built-in drawers beneath the mattress are arranged around a central ladder that leads up.*

*Great violence was done here... the walls, floor, and beds are covered in dried blood and a sharp-smelling, black fluid.*

**Development:** Each of these four areas (labeled A-D) is functionally identical, containing four beds, and a ladder to each tower's arrow hall.

During the gas attack, the guards on duty in the arrow halls killed each other, with the survivor rushing down the ladder to slay his comrades. Eventually all their bodies were burned by the dwarves.

**Arrow Halls:** These defensive areas are nothing more than round rooms with arrow loops overlooking the inner bailey and the gatehouses. Each has a rack with 1d4+1 cases of 20 crossbow bolts. They are set at +10 feet elevation. Aside from the exact layout of arrow loops, all four arrow halls are identical. All arrow halls are similarly covered in blood and vomit.

### Area 1-9 Collapsed Tunnel (EL 5, XP 1,000)

As the party approaches this area, read or paraphrase the following:

*The tunnel has collapsed here, corresponding to the depression in the courtyard above. Suddenly, you hear a faint cry for help... someone is trapped under all that rubble!*

**Development:** The trapdoor in the floor requires a DC 26 Perception check to locate. It opens by pulling out and flipping open.

Palmo Kelark was the chamberlain to Sir Gars Ree. When the dwarves attacked, he hid in area 1-10. When the Groot arrived, he investigated, but the weight of the totem beast collapsed the tunnel supports.

Palmo has clung to life for hours by the time the party arrives, and won't last much longer. Saving him is a skill test (see below). Palmo's exact location in the rubble is abstracted.



**Skill Test (Save the Chamberlain!):** Level 5 (1,000 XP); 12 successes before 3 failures; Dungeoneering, Endurance, Perception.

It will require backbreaking labor (Endurance) to excavate the tunnel. Additionally, your efforts may endanger the trapped man, so you have to be careful (Dungeoneering, Perception). This won't be easy.

The rubble is considered blocking terrain, so healing powers won't work on the chamberlain.

**Diplomacy (DC 19):** A hero may use Diplomacy to talk to Palmo, offering encouragement ("Hang in there! We're almost to you!"). Success removes one failure from the count, to a minimum of 1. After the first failure this skill cannot be tried again, but failure does not count against the skill test.

**Dungeoneering (DC 14):** A hero may make a Dungeoneering check to direct the excavation effort, representing knowledge of cave-ins and experience with collapsed structures. Success counts as a success, and failure is a failure.

**Endurance (DC 14):** All heroes physically excavating the tunnel must make Endurance checks. Success counts as a success, and failure counts as a failure, and the hero loses one healing surge.

**Heal (DC 8):** A hero may use Heal to gauge Palmo's physical status. Success learns that he is barely clinging to life (very wounded and has no healing surges left), failure does not count. This skill is only useful once.

**Insight (DC 8):** A hero may use Insight to gauge Palmo's mental status. Success learns that he's scared and about to give up; Diplomacy would potentially be helpful, but Intimidate would definitely not. Failure does not count as a failure. This skill is only useful once.

**Intimidate:** Any use of Intimidate counts as a failure.

**Perception (DC 14):** A hero may attempt to use Perception to better direct the excavation toward the trapped chamberlain. Success counts as a success, and failure counts as a failure.

**Failure:** The rubble collapses despite their efforts, and Palmo is slain.

**Special:** This skill test cannot be won unless at least two Endurance checks are successful.

**Gratitude:** If Palmo is saved, he shows the party area 1-10. He can also add to Handout D, thusly:

*"From my hiding place I overheard those dwarves say they wanted no 'warning' left behind for Ul-Balhar. Then I heard one voice I recognized as being that of a fake merchant order 'the prisoners' taken north.*

*"I know I should have confronted them and at least died like a man, but I was too afraid. I hid until they left.*

*"When I heard activity again, I thought help had arrived at last. But when I saw the orcs, I made haste for the refuge. Halfway there I heard a terrible cry, 'grooooot,' and the tunnel collapsed. One of their totem beasts was loose in the bailey. Thank you for saving me!"*

## Area 1-10

## Secret Refuge

As the party enters this area, read or paraphrase the following:

*Sliding aside the panel, you find a staircase that leads to a small, square chamber faintly lit by a dying lantern. Preserved and dried food crowds a set of shelves on one wall, while stacked against another is a series of small kegs clearly marked "water," "wine," or "oil." Three simple cots are stacked on the floor. A fourth is unfolded and looks to have been recently used. The lantern is on the floor next to it, along with a locked iron chest. On the cot is a folded cloak bearing the ducal crest and a small book.*

*A thick tapestry covers the far wall.*

**Development:** This refuge is intended for VIPs, women, and children; only the knights and the chamberlain know of it. The Captain of the Watch escorted Chamberlain Kelark here during the attack, left his cloak for the older man, and went to find the women.

Behind the tapestry is a very small window (only 3x4 inches) that overlooks the chasm beneath Fort Frostbite. The book is an unremarkable collection of poetry; folded inside is Handout D, the chamberlain's last statement.

Palmo is no adventurer; he doesn't accompany the heroes outside the fort unless they are leaving, and he flees all combat (he goes slightly mad if he sees the wraith of Lady Ree). He recognizes "Fuyuks;" although happy to see a friendly face, he was never friendly with the man (even before *he* became an *it*).

**Investigation:** A DC 8 Perception (search) check behind the tapestry discovers two chalk "hash" marks on the wall and a small stick of chalk on a barrel; the chamberlain has been tracking days.

**New Heroes:** This location is a logical place to introduce characters replacing deceased heroes or the characters of new players. They could be other guardsmen from Fort Frostbite, merchants who were passing through, or adventurers stranded there. In any case, they probably assumed Palmo was dead.

**Treasure:** The iron chest is locked (Thievery (open lock) DC 20; the key is on the table in area 1-7b) but not trapped. It contains 400 gp and two *potions of healing* (Arcana DC 20, none). The cloak is a *cloak of survival* +2 (Arcana DC 24; none). The tapestry is well made (250 gp), and prominently features the tower-and-snowflake sigil of Fortification XXXI.

As chamberlain, Palmo offers the treasure to the party (up front) to avenge Fort Frostbite.

## ENCOUNTER AREA 2 BEREG'S BASE CAMP

Lord Ablair the Corruptor assembled a small unit of dwarves, bugbears, and ogres for his expedition. When Bereg Loroth invited himself, he brought along three Throneguard, elite Loroth household bodyguards, and Dedoro Scofflaw, a tiefling master thief.

After usurping command of the expedition, Bereg established his enchanted base camp 300 yards from the ruin.

### GETTING THERE

Five miles of mountainous, frozen terrain separate Fort Frostbite and the ruin site. This module assumes the party follows Handout B's recommendation and takes Daenthar's Ramp, just beyond the Groot Cairns.

The path through the Groot Cairns, although frequently over difficult terrain, is the swiftest way to travel. Assuming a party speed of 5, it should take 3.5 hours to get to Bereg's base camp.

If the party takes another course, the GM should feel free to call for group skill checks: Acrobatics (if they cross the ice lake), Athletics (scaling cliffs), Endurance (for the hardship), and Dungeoneering (if they try to use the old mines). The DCs for these checks should range from DC 14 to DC 19. The penalties for failure should include increased travel time, random encounters, and loss of healing surges.

Possible random encounters:

- EL 5: Five Groot Blooded and three Groot White Slayers.
- EL 6: A herd of 6 zubur bison, with a 5th level bull leading.
- EL 7: An ekkjavetr.

Unless otherwise noted, there are no light sources outside. The interior of the base camp is well-lit by several everburning torches.

Weather is left for the GM to decide, but in keeping with the module's setting, it should frequently be snowing (creating lightly obscured terrain), windy (imposing a -2 penalty to ranged attacks and Perception (listen) checks), and very cold. Note that Fuyuks-Hatinid is only subject to lethargy in his natural form.

All walls, floors, and ceilings in Bereg's base camp are uniformly 5 feet thick. The building appears to be worked stone, and all doors appear to be iron. Although actually made of opaque sheets of magical energy, these substances have the properties of what they appear to be.

None of the doors are locked, not even the jail cell. In fact, since they aren't real doors, they can't be locked.

**Faux Worked Stone Wall** (5 feet thick): 200 hp; AC 3, Fort 15, Ref 3; Athletics (climb) DC 20 (+2 for ice; total 22); Break DC 43.

**Faux Iron Door:** 60 hp; AC 5, Fort 10, Ref 5; Break DC 25.

Finally, the interior of the base camp building is set to 74-degrees, something immediately apparent to anyone coming in from outside.

### Area 2-1 **Groot Cairns** (EL 7, XP 1,500)

As the party approaches this area, read or paraphrase the following:

*The path from Fort Frostbite to the ruins is hardly easy, yet far less difficult than your ascent. You trek along a broad shelf, keeping a precipitous fall to your right and the bulk of Mount Runhode to your left or rear. In the distance you can make out the profile of Mount Rethis.*

*The scenery is breathtakingly majestic, but stark.*

*After some hours you come to signs of habitation: five burial cairns lay half-buried in snow. They are loosely arranged around a crude statue of the Groot totem beast, an example of which you fought recently.*

*Just north of them is an iced-over waterfall, frozen in the act of cascading down a hill and across your path before plummeting into a chasm.*

When the party sees the dwarven patrol, read or paraphrase the following:

*Large shapes come into view over the rise to the northeast. Three boars, their flanks caked with frost, trudge up the slope as steam billows under their tusks. Dwarf riders, one in heavy armor and two carrying crossbows, scan the cairns and frozen river from saddleback. The sign of the Mountain King, a horned skull, is emblazoned on their thick cloaks.*

When the GM is ready for the patrol to appear, a DC 14 Perception (listen) check hears:

(passive) *Your ears catch a sudden, bestial noise — like a snort or growl — but the wind makes it impossible to locate.*

(active) *You distinctly hear a loud, snorting sound. It came from the direction of the hill.*

**Development:** This burial ground is holy to the Groot. The orcs that normally guard this area, however, were part of Naal's looting party.

The dwarven patrol appears whenever the GM pleases. Good timing would be when the party engages in some activity, like crossing the river, searching the cairns, or scaling the cliffs. Distracted heroes suffer a -2 penalty to their Perception (listen) checks.

If the dwarves find nothing, they carefully descend the hill and head back to base camp; the GM can re-use them as a random encounter





If the party is being stealthy, have the dwarves make Perception checks as normal. This may make the encounter occur at much closer proximity than as written.

**Cairns:** These cairns shelter the remains of Groot heroes. A DC 20 Religion check knows that proximity to the statue denotes prestige. Searching a cairn requires a DC 10 Perception (search) check and 10 minutes of work (instead of 1 minute).

**Treasure:** The cairn marked X is that of the shaman buried with a helmet made from the beak of a young totem beast. The straps and padding of this helm have long since crumbled; at present it's worth 100 gp, but refurbished (a 5 gp expense) it would be worth 250 gp.

The three Mountain King cloaks fit Medium creatures, and could be used to bypass the Eyes of Alarm in areas 2-2 and 2-4.

**Terrain:** The frozen river is challenging terrain; it requires a DC 14 Acrobatics (balance) check to enter squares of the river, and while on the river creatures are considered to be balancing. Creatures with more than two legs (like the boars) get a +4 bonus to this check.

Rock piles and cairns are difficult terrain that provides cover; cairns average two feet high.

The statue is an obstacle that provides cover.

Crossing each elevation mark (even the dotted line marks that cross the river) requires a DC 8 Athletics (climb)

check (or DC 13 on the river). Treat a "fall" result as simple failure unless the hero is climbing the frozen river; in this case the hero slides 4 squares west along the river. If a creature (like a boar) has at least one square of its space off the river, it uses the lower DC.

**Tactics:** The dwarven mounted infantry immediately dismount (a move action) and start firing on the heroes. They rely on *pinning fire* to keep the party from advancing on their position. Remember that they ignore less than total concealment and less than superior cover. If the party stays out of sight (by climbing down a cliff, for example), the dwarves wait them out rather than repositioning. Dwarves are patient. If they redeploy, they do so mounted.

The riderless boars remain near the dismounted crossbowmen. They won't move more than 4 squares away from their rider as long as the dwarf lives, and ready actions to attack (by charging, if possible) any non-dwarf humanoid that climbs the hill.

If the party puts up a successful ranged counter-offense, the heavy cavalryman rides forth. He fights from boar-back and targets any threats to the crossbowmen first. If the party is hunkered down, he uses his mount's *furios charge* to push them out of cover.

If the party gets by or flees the patrol, they mount up and give chase. They only pursue heroes to within sight of Fort Frostbite... they're not about to ride into an ambush.

## Trained Boar (3)

### Level 6 Brute

Large natural beast (mount) **XP 250**

**Initiative** +3 **Senses** Perception +2

**HP** 85; **Bloodied** 42; see also *death strike*

**AC** 17; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16

**Resist** 5 cold

**Speed** 8

⊕ **Gore** (standard; at-will)

+9 vs.AC; 1d10+4 damage, or 1d10+9 against a prone foe.

‡ **Death Strike** (when reduced to 0 hp)

The trained boar makes a gore attack.

‡ **Rapid Charger** (while mounted by dwarven mounted troop; at-will) ♦ **Mount**

When it charges, the trained boar makes a gore attack in addition to its rider's charge attack

**Furious Charge**

When a trained boar charges, its gore deals an extra 5 damage, pushes the target 2 squares, and knocks the target prone on a hit.

**Alignment** Unaligned

**Languages** —

**Str** 19 (+7) **Dex** 10 (+3) **Wis** 9 (+2);

**Con** 15 (+5) **Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 8 (+2)

**Possessions** saddle and tack

## Dwarven Heavy Cavalry

### Level 6 Soldier

Medium natural humanoid **XP 250**

**Initiative** +5 **Senses** Perception +5;  
low-light vision

**HP** 72; **Bloodied** 36

**AC** 24; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 17

**Saving Throws** +5 against poison effects

**Speed** 5

[B] **Battleaxe** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

+13 vs.AC; 1d10+4 damage.

‡ **Flashing Arc** (immediate interrupt, when a foe attacks dwarf's mount or shifts; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

The dwarven heavy cavalry makes a melee basic attack against that foe.

‡ **Throwing Axe** (standard; at-will) **Weapon**

Ranged 5/10; +11 vs.AC; 1d6+4 damage.

**Saddle Training**

A dwarven heavy cavalry is considered to have the Mounted Combat feat.

**Stand Your Ground**

When a push, pull, or slide forces a dwarf to move, it moves 1 less square than the effect specifies. When an attack would knock a dwarf prone, it can roll a save to avoid falling prone. For dwarven heavy cavalry, this ability applies to their mounts while mounted.

### Swing Low

When mounted and attacking a creature of Medium size or smaller, a dwarven heavy cavalry gain +2 bonus to attack rolls and deal an additional 1d6 damage with its melee attacks.

**Alignment** Evil

**Languages** Common, Dwarven

**Skills** Endurance +9, Dungeoneering +5, Nature +8

**Str** 17 (+6) **Dex** 10 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+5);

**Con** 16 (+6) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 12 (+4)

**Possessions** plate armor, heavy shield, battleaxe, 3 throwing axes

## Dwarven Mounted Infantry (2)

### Level 6 Artillery

Medium natural humanoid **XP 250**

**Initiative** +6 **Senses** Perception +9;  
low-light vision

**HP** 58; **Bloodied** 29

**AC** 18; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 16

**Saving Throws** +5 against poison effects

**Speed** 5

⊕ **Flail** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

+10 vs.AC; 1d10+4 damage.

⊗ **Crossbow** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

Ranged 15/30; +13 vs.AC; 1d8+3 damage.

‡ **Pinning Fire** (standard; at-will) **Fear, Weapon**

Requires crossbow; ranged 15/30; +13 vs.AC; 1d8+3 damage, and the dwarven mounted infantry makes secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack*: +11 vs.Will; target is immobilized save ends.

**Saddle Training**

A dwarven mounted infantry is considered to have the Mounted Combat feat. It can dismount its mount as a move action.

**Stand Your Ground**

When a push, pull, or slide forces a dwarf to move, it moves 1 less square than the effect specifies. When an attack would knock a dwarf prone, it can roll a save to avoid falling prone.

**Steady Aim**

A dwarven mounted infantry ignores less than total cover and concealment when making ranged attacks. It can fire its crossbow in melee without provoking opportunity attacks.

**Alignment** Evil

**Languages** Common, Dwarven

**Skills** Endurance +13, Dungeoneering +5, Nature +8

**Str** 14 (+5) **Dex** 16 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+4)

**Con** 16 (+5) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+3)

**Possessions** leather armor, flail, crossbow with 40 bolts

## Area 2–2

Snowtrap Valley  
(EL 5, XP 1,000)

The read-aloud text assumes the party followed the instructions in Handout B. As the party approaches this area, read or paraphrase accordingly:

*After descending Daentharr's Ramp, you enter Snowtrap Valley. The steep bluffs surrounding the valley allow heavy snowfall to accumulate here, masking the presence of natural crevasses. One wrong step and you may plummet into Mount Runhode's icy grasp.*

*The terrain is flat, and with each step you sink into a foot or more of snow.*

When the party can see Bereg's base camp, read or paraphrase the following:

*In the distance, you make out an odd building... it is flat-roofed, a single story, and shaped like an "h." It looks like recent construction... you've certainly not heard any reference to such a building out this far.*

When the party gets closer, continue:

*The strange building gets stranger the closer you approach. Although it appears to be made from grey stone, it is flat and featureless. There are no joins, nor cracks or imperfections of any kind. If this is stonework, it is without equal.*

If the party detects an Eye of Alarm, read or paraphrase the following:

*An immense, ghostly eye, about the size of a grown man's fist, hovers about four feet in the air.*

**Development:** If Fuyuks-Hatinid is with the party, he confirms (truthfully) that this building was not present two months ago.



A DC 24 Arcana (sense magic) check determines the building is “some sort of ritual.” A DC 19 Arcana (identify conjuration or zone) check identifies it as “a conjuration.” Since Bereg Lorothe invented and is the sole user of the base camp ritual, any further information lies outside the body of Arcana knowledge.

A *dispel magic* spell (vs. Will DC 25) brings down the entire base camp, but the party would face all its occupants at once... not a good proposition.

**Sensors and Wards:** Owing to the harsh weather, Bereg does not post exterior guards at the base camp; he relies on various rituals and spells to defend his lair.

Referring to the map, the three “eye” marks are sensors for an Eye of Alarm ritual. Two are outside the stable doors and one is inside the main corridor (area 2–4). Each has the following characteristics:

- Requires a DC 28 Perception (spot) or DC 21 Arcana (sense magic) check to locate; finding one doesn't grant any special advantage to find the others. Using Arcana identifies the ritual. Be sure to penalize Perception for distance and visibility.
- Perception +9 and darkvision; if they see something unusual, they make active Perception checks. They cannot hear.
- Cannot be physically harmed.
- Sounds an alarm (iron horns, a “blat” sound) if they detect a humanoid not wearing garments with the symbol of the Mountain King (see area 2–1) within 10 squares of their positions (assuming they can see that far). This alarm can be heard with a DC 0 Perception check, plus penalties for distance, doors, and walls.
- Their line of sight, especially in Snowtrap Valley, is effectively unlimited (aside from the base camp itself) unless the GM includes obscuring weather, like fog or heavy snowfall.

Bereg also ensorcelled a runeward onto the northeastern door.

## Runeward

Level 10 Elite Warder

Trap XP 1,000

Perception/DC 24: The hero notices the faint rune.

**Additional Skill:** Arcana/DC 22: The hero notices the rune (arcane source) and provides a +2 bonus to Thievery checks to disable the trap.

**Trigger:** When a non-dwarf tries to open the northeast entrance.

**Attack**

**Immediate Reaction Close** burst 5

**Targets:** Creatures in the burst

**Attack:** +13 vs. Reflex

**Hit:** 4d8+5 force damage.

**Aftereffect:** 4d8+5 force damage.

## COUNTERMEASURES

- An adjacent hero can disable the trap with a DC 26 Thievery (disable) check.

### Area 2–3

### Boar Pens (EL 7, XP 1,550)

As the party enters this area, read or paraphrase as appropriate:

*Some places smell bad because of violence done there, others because of poor sanitation. This place smells bad because it's a pen for giant boars, like the one dozing in a nearby stall.*

*A pair of particularly burly bugbears sweeps out the other three unoccupied stalls. Their hide armor is covered in hooded cloaks bearing the horned skull sigil of the dreaded Mountain King... a design repeated on the tabard of a bored-looking dwarf watching them. His full plate armor creaks slightly as he leans on his halberd.*

When the nighthound whelp appears, read or paraphrase the following:

*With a crash, a muscular black dog bounds into the room. As it runs, it leaves a shadowy afterimage trailing behind it, as if it isn't really quite here.*

**Development:** If the party triggers the eye sensor in area 2–4, the inhabitants of this room rush there to defend the base camp. See that area for details.

The boar here is trained as a draft animal, and refuses riders.

This Throneguard was assigned to protect Dedoro, but the tiefling ordered him to remain behind.

**On Alert:** If the heroes trigger an exterior eye sensor, the bugbears hide in empty stalls across from each other, the boar's gate is unlatched, and the Throneguard stands in the middle of the room. Adjust the read-aloud text appropriately. They don't investigate further because sometimes the Groot set off the eyes.

**Treasure:** Laying on a barrel in the square marked "X" is a small ruby with silver chasings; it resembles an eye (100 gp). This is the focus for the Eye of Warding ritual protecting the base camp (areas 2–2 and 2–4).

The nighthound whelp wears a silver collar (150 gp).

**Tactics:** At first opportunity, one of the bugbears moves adjacent to the stall with the draft boar and opens the gate (as a minor action).

The boar fights without subtlety; it picks a hero it can charge and does so, drawing opportunity attacks if necessary. It does this every round; if there are no chargeable targets, it gores the closest hero. If both bugbears are dead, it may also attack the Throneguard or nighthound (randomize among all possible targets).

The bugbears wrangle dire boars; they're confident they can manhandle invading adventurers. Once the boar is loose, they gang up on a hero with their morningstars. As

soon as they flank a foe, whichever of them is least damaged *wrestles* the flanked target. The bugbear maintains the hold for two rounds before using *wrangle*. They repeat these tactics until one is slain. The remaining bugbear tries to fight alongside either the Throneguard or the boar.

The Throneguard supports the bugbears. He uses *back off* and marks foes to keep the goblinoids from being flanked, and relies on *threatening reach* to pick at any mobile melee attackers. The Throneguard uses his action point for *resolute*.

This fight is big for the confined space. Skirting the edge of that space is the nighthound whelp. Whenever there is a free square it can teleport to and harass the party, it does. The hound bays whenever it can catch at least one hero but not a bugbear or dwarf (it is not trained to be mindful of the boar).

All creatures here fight to the death, and chase fleeing heroes as long as they don't go outside. Any survivors then report to Lord Ablair, putting area 2–9 on alert.

## Draft Boar

**Level 6 Brute**

**Large natural beast**

**XP 250**

**Initiative +3**

**Senses Perception +2**

**HP 85; Bloodied 42; see also death strike**

**AC 17; Fortitude 21, Reflex 17, Will 16**

**Resist 5 cold**

**Speed 8**

⊕ **Gore** (standard; at-will)

+9 vs.AC; 1d10+4 damage, or 1d10+9 against a prone foe.

⊕ **Death Strike** (when reduced to 0 hp)

The draft boar makes a gore attack.

**Furious Charge**

When a draft boar charges, its gore deals an extra 5 damage, pushes the target 2 squares, and knocks the target prone on a hit.

**Alignment** Unaligned

**Languages** —

**Str** 19 (+7)

**Dex** 10 (+3)

**Wis** 9 (+2)

**Con** 15 (+5)

**Int** 2 (–1)

**Cha** 8 (+2)

## PITS OR NO PITS?

The thrust of this adventure has more to do with the heroes bringing justice to Lord Ablair and saving Childa Bennins than the perils of exploration. For this reason, the author decided to not include natural hazards, like snow-covered crevasses, into the adventure.

If the GM is interested in adding such elements to the story, however, this is a choice area to do so.

## Bugbear Beast Wrangler (2)

**Level 7 Brute**

**Medium natural humanoid** **XP 300**

**Initiative** +7 **Senses** Perception +5;  
low-light vision

**HP** 96; **Bloodied** 48

**AC** 19; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17

**Speed** 7

⊕ **Morningstar** (standard; at-will) **Weapon**  
+10 vs.AC; 1d12+4 damage.

‡ **Wrestle** (standard; sustain standard; at-will)  
Requires combat advantage; +8 vs. Reflex; 1d10+4  
damage, and the target is grabbed (until escape).  
Checks made to escape the grab suffer a -4 penalty.

‡ **Wrangle** (standard, at-will)  
Grabbed target only; +8 vs. Fort; the target takes 1d8+4  
damage, and the target is knocked prone and stunned  
until the end of the bugbear beast wrangler's next  
turn. *Miss*: The target not stunned. *Special*: This attack  
releases grabbed target.

**Predatory Eye** (minor; encounter)

The bugbear beast wrangler deals an extra 1d6 damage  
on the next attack it makes with combat advantage. It  
must apply this bonus before the end of its next turn.

**Alignment** Evil

**Languages** Common, Goblin

**Skills** Intimidate +5, Nature +8, Stealth +12

**Str** 19 (+7) **Dex** 18 (+7) **Wis** 14 (+5)

**Con** 16 (+6) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+3)

**Possessions** hide armor, morningstar, length of rope

## Dwarven Throneguard

**Level 6 Elite Soldier**

**Medium natural humanoid** **XP 500**

**Initiative** +5 **Senses** Perception +5;  
low-light vision

**HP** 144; **Bloodied** 72

**AC** 26; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 20

**Saving Throws** +2, +7 against poison effects

**Speed** 5

**Action Points** 1

⊕ **Halberd** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**  
Reach 2; +13 vs.AC; 1d10+3 damage and target is  
marked until the end of the dwarven throneguard's  
next turn.

‡ **Back Off** (standard; recharge 4,5,6) ♦ **Weapon**  
Reach 2; +13 vs.AC; 2d10+4 damage, and the target is  
pushed 1 square.

‡ **Resolute** (standard, usable only when bloodied;  
encounter) **Healing, Weapon**

The throneguard makes a melee basic attack and  
regains 36 hp.

**Stand Your Ground**

When a push, pull, or slide forces a dwarf to move, it  
moves 1 less square than the effect specifies. When an  
attack would knock a dwarf prone, it can roll a save to  
avoid falling prone.

## Threatening Reach

A dwarven throneguard may make opportunity attacks  
against all foes within its reach (1 square).

**Alignment** Evil

**Languages** Common, Dwarven

**Skills** Dungeoneering +5, Endurance +11

**Str** 17 (+6) **Dex** 10 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+5)

**Con** 16 (+6) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 12 (+4)

**Possessions** plate armor, halberd

## Nighthound Whelp

**Level 5 Skirmisher**

**Medium shadow magical beast** **XP 200**

**Initiative** +6 **Senses** Perception +8; darkvision

**HP** 62; **Bloodied** 31

**AC** 19; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 16

**Vulnerable** 5 radiant

**Speed** 7, teleport 7

⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will)  
+10 vs.AC; 1d8+4 damage.

↔ **Baying** (minor; recharge 5, 6) ♦ **Fear**

Close burst 5; deafened creatures are immune; +7 vs.  
Will; the target takes a -2 penalty to all defenses until  
end of the nighthound whelp's next turn.

**Shadow Ambush**

When a nighthound whelp teleports adjacent to an  
enemy, it gains combat advantage and deals an extra  
1d6 damage on the next attack it makes against that  
enemy this turn.

**Alignment** Unaligned

**Languages** —

**Skills** Endurance +9, Stealth +9

**Str** 19 (+6) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 13 (+3)

**Con** 14 (+4) **Int** 6 (+0) **Cha** 16 (+5)

**Possessions** silver collar

## Area 2-4

## Main Corridor

As the party enters this area, read or paraphrase the  
following:

*This bare, 10-foot-wide corridor stretches on for about 80  
feet. Four iron doors are set into the west wall.*

When the party approaches the jail door near area 2-5,  
read or paraphrase the following:

*You're standing before a jail cell door. The bars resemble  
iron, but — like the rest of this strange place — they are too  
perfect.*

**Development:** The nighthound whelp normally dozes  
outside the bars to area 2-5 on guard duty. If the party  
enters through the northeast door, it is distracted for  
purposes of using Stealth... the eye sensor in the corridor,  
however, is ever-vigilant (see area 2-2).

The four rooms to the west are bunks for Lord Ablair's  
troops. All four rooms have no actual furniture, just  
bedrolls, backpacks, a few personal effects, and the  
following:



Room A is for the heavy cavalry, and contains a pouch of 50 gp and a silvered short sword.

Room B is for the two mounted infantry, and contains two pouches of 50 gp and two spare cases of 20 bolts.

Rooms C each house a pair of dwarven trappersmiths. Each contains two pouches of 50 gp and a single set of thieves' tools.

A DC 10 Perception (listen) check made outside the door to area 2–6 hears scuffling of heavy feet and a faint metallic click.

**A Fight:** In case the party is caught by the eye-sensor in this corridor, the fight from area 2–3 is relocated here, albeit in different order. The hound arrives first, followed by the boar, then the bugbears, then the Throneguard. All creatures following similar tactics as described in area 2–3, accounting for the more confined space.

**Area 2–5** **Gaol**

As the party approaches this area, read or paraphrase the following:

*Through these bars you see a small, T-shaped room. The floor is carpeted with pages of notes, sketches, and diagrams... all except for the far wall, where a disheveled-looking human woman of about 22 years sleeps. She has only a saddle blanket for a bed.*

*The woman is handsome rather than beautiful, with freckled, broad features blasted raw by mountain wind. Her unkempt russet hair is greasy, and the clothing is mismatched, as if her outfit was donned in a hurry.*

*She is curled around a wooden staff. Several broken shafts are flung against the south wall.*

**Development:** The door to this jail cell is unlocked. Bereg left the nighthound whelp here to cow his guests, never suspecting that “Norr” didn’t want to escape.

**The Daughter's Tale:** Childa has been aware that there's been a change in her father over the last two months, but these last few days have driven the point home... he's been obsessed and distant.

Since being abducted, Bereg has demanded that "Norr" and his daughter divulge the fruits of their research on the ruin, comparing their knowledge to what he had gathered prior to embarking on this expedition.

Together, the trio learned that the "key" to the ruin's portal is the *Moonstaff of Skelya*, an artifact of the dragoness tyrant. Their next task became to craft a serviceable replica since the location of the original is uncertain (see *DCC #57: Wyvern Mountain*; Bereg commanded the dwarves).

After the replica was complete, Bereg seized her father and went to the ruin with Dedoro, his corps of dwarven trapsmiths, and two of the bodyguards. One bodyguard returned, giving Childa the staff (the one she holds) and Lord Ablair the crescent-shaped headpiece.

Although Childa fears for her father, she is horrified by Lord Ablair's "filthspitter." This wand-like instrument projects clouds of the same demon-poison used to wipe out Fort Frostbite. Childa mentions that her father also seemed abjectly terrified of the device.

Finally, if Fuyuks-Hatinid is with the party, Childa greets him warmly, but "he" remains distant. She believed he was dead and thought she heard him screaming at one point during the attack; he brusquely informs her she must be mistaken.

She's not... she heard her "father" attack Fuyuks Coppersmith. After spending about an hour with Fuyuks-Hatanid, she realizes that "Fuyuks" is acting exactly as did father. When/if the party earns her trust, she shares this with them.

After being saved, Childa asks the party to stop Lord Ablair. Bereg may or may not find Skelya's Reprisal in the ruin, but Lord Ablair will definitely deliver mindfilth to the Mountain King unless he's stopped, and more places will die like Fort Frostbite did.

Childa recognizes that she's useless in a fight; she is untrained with weaponry and lacks any attack powers.

**New Heroes:** This location is a logical place to introduce characters replacing deceased heroes or the characters of new players. Likely new heroes could include other captives or even dwarven defectors.

### Area 2-6 **Dedoro's Workshop** (EL 8, XP 1,800)

As the party approaches this area, read or paraphrase the following:

*This large space is a workshop. One collapsible table stands in the middle of the room, and another is against the far wall. Both have numerous crates stacked on them.*

*A quartet of ogres gingerly place ornate-looking metal devices into the crates. The last item to be packed stands on*

*the central table, a three-foot metal cylinder with a pair of silvery spheres at the top, ringed its entire height with copper bands.*

*The ogres go about their business placidly. The ears of each ogre have been cut off, and scar tissue has grown over the holes.*

**Development:** This was Dedoro's workshop and bunk, where he studied the lightning trap reclaimed from the ruin's blue dragon statue in hopes of gaining insight into its design, the better to defeat others later. The ogres are menial servants of Lord Ablair — he deafens them so they can never conspire against him or overhear his plans; as an unforeseen consequence, they've become more introspective and observant.

The giants know how to read lips, which is how Lord Ablair communicates with them.

**Treasure:** In one of the crates are a set of *gauntlets of the ram* (DC 24 Arcana; none) and a set of *gauntlets of ogre power* (DC 22 Arcana; none). Dedoro left them behind by accident.

The misfiring traps are also magical, but will not function again once turned off or disabled.

**Terrain:** Creatures can claim cover from the central table against ranged attacks if the line of effect from the attack passes through a table square.

**Tactics:** It is nearly impossible for the party to fail to get the drop on the ogres unless they stand still in the open doorway.

The ogres try to engage in melee with their mauls. They give no thought for tactics, fixating solely on getting close enough to hurt the intruders.

When the first ogre dies, one of them roars and hits the reclaimed trap, setting it off. The ogres have seen this device function before, and think it will save them.

Instead, it misfires in a set pattern. Referring to the map, one sphere fires at squares 1-6 in ascending order; the other sphere fires at squares 6-1 in descending order. It continues in this way until destroyed.

If heroes flee, an ogre will pick the device up as they give chase. The GM is free to create a new firing pattern if this happens, but the lightning never strikes adjacent to the device.

### Ogre Menial (4)

**Level 9 Minion**

**Large natural humanoid**

**XP 100**

**Initiative +4**

**Senses Perception -4**

**HP 1; missed attack never damages a minion**

**AC 21; Fortitude 23, Reflex 18, Will 18**

**Speed 8**

⊕ **Maul** (standard; at-will) **Weapon**

Reach 2; +12 vs.AC; 7 damage.

### Deaf

The ogre menials are deaf.

**Alignment** Evil    **Languages** Dwarven, Giant  
**Str** 21 (+9)    **Dex** 11 (+4)    **Wis** 14 (+6)  
**Con** 21 (+9)    **Int** 8 (+3)    **Cha** 6 (+2)  
**Possessions** maul

## Misfiring Reclaimed Trap (2)

**Level 8 Elite Blaster**  
**Trap**                      **XP 700**

**Perception**  
DC 0: The trap is obvious.

**Initiative** +5

**Trigger:** Both spheres fire automatically every turn, targeting squares in their firing sequence (see Tactics).

### Attack

**Standard Action**    **Ranged 10**

**Targets:** Creatures in trapped squares.

**Attack:** +11 vs. Reflex

**Hit:** 1d10+5 lightning damage, and the target is stunned until the end of its next turn.

**Miss:** Half damage, and the target is not stunned.

### COUNTERMEASURES

- A hero adjacent to a misfiring trap's space can make a DC 19 Thievery (disable) check to deactivate it.
- A character who sees the hazards fire at least twice can spend a standard action to make a DC 19 Arcana roll to know the next two steps in the firing sequence.
- The misfiring traps can be destroyed (AC 21; other defenses 16; hp 70; immune lightning, half damage from bows, crossbows, light blades, picks, and spears).

## Area 2-7                      Bereg's Quarters

As the party approaches this area, read or paraphrase the following:

*This square chamber contains little more than two bedrolls and a backpack. An empty bottle of wine is placed neatly in one corner.*

**Development:** This is where Bereg and his Throneguard sleep when he's in camp. For what it's worth, that was very, very good wine.

**Treasure:** Bereg left behind a special signet ring in his pack (250 gp). It can be discovered with a DC 15 Perception (search) check.

Made of onyx and gold, the inner band is inscribed, "To Bereg Lorothe, my sister's son. Worth is rewarded." The insignia is the skull symbol of the Mountain King, minus the horns.

All of Oro Lorothe's blood relatives carry these personalized rings. Bereg removed his before he went into Bithriarch's Vault: his success or failure determines his worth to wear that ring.

## Area 2-8                      Lord Ablair's Quarters

As the party approaches this area, read or paraphrase the following:

*This chamber is unadorned with furniture, but two bedrolls lie at opposite ends of the room. Between them, drawn on the floor in green chalk, is a large symbol. It draws the eye unnaturally, its design seeming to fold upon itself endlessly.*

**Development:** Lord Ablair and his Throneguard sleep here.

A DC 24 Arcana check identifies the symbol required for summoning demonic powers, the first of a series, the final component of which requires a sacrifice... Lord Ablair's intention for Childa.

## Area 2-9                      Mindfilth Kegs (EL 9, XP 2,000)

As the party approaches this area, read or paraphrase the following:

*This spacious room has a large, wooden, collapsible table in the middle of the floor. Numerous barrels and small casks are stacked in the northwest and northeast corners; some of those in the northeast have a splash of purple paint.*

*Two dwarves are busy counting the casks. One wears a tabard bearing the horned skull of the Mountain King over full plate armor. This dwarf, his beard bound in honor-rings, hefts a halberd over his shoulder as he speaks to the other. This other wears fine traveling garb over a suit of chainmail. He wears a broad chest-piece medallion made of copper. The horned skull is embossed on its surface. His beard is trimmed short and to a point, and he has stained his black hair green at its tip.*

*He bears a large, metal backpack carved to resemble a hunched demonic figure. A long hose extends from the side to terminate in a wand stylized as a screaming dwarven face.*

When Lord Ablair first fires the filthspitter apparatus, read or paraphrase the following:

*The arrogant dwarf levels his strange metal wand at you, and gestures. You hear a soft pop, then the screaming laughter of the damned bellows forth from the baroque wand, followed by a gush of sparkling purple gas, like a bruise in the air. It washes over you as tiny claws of putrid air try to force open your nostrils and mouth.*

**Development:** This is where the dwarves under Lord Ablair's command meet to break bread, discuss their upcoming duties, and plot the downfall of their enemies.

The eight purple-marked casks contain mindfilth (see Appendix C). If one of those were to burst open, the entire room would immediately be filled.

Lord Ablair and his Throneguard are pleasantly discussing how many casks it would take to wipe out the entire population of Ul-Balhar. They are considered distracted.

If Lord Ablair and the Throneguard have been warned the base camp is under attack, they are looking out for trouble instead of being distracted by dreams of mass-murder.

**The Imposter II:** If Fuyuks-Hatinid is aware that Lord Ablair is armed with a poison-spewing weapon, it won't join the party for this fight. This should be the only fight in the module that it wholly backs away from.

Similarly, if it discovers during the fight about the poison, it flees at best speed, abandoning the party. Later it can claim a paucity of courage.

**The Villain's Rant:** Lord Ablair likes to hear himself talk. As he fights, he rants. The GM can use this malefic monologue to fill in any gaps of the backstory the party is missing, as long as those gaps don't have anything to do with the true nature of Skelya's Reprisal.

Regardless of plot holes, Lord Ablair will reveal a few things:

- He designed the mindfilth using demonic essence... it IS demonic essence.
- Mindfilth was his second attempt at a city-killer weapon. The first was foiled when some adventurers slew loyal Blackhammer Priests in the halls of the Tannheim dwarves.

- The "filthspewer" he wears is a prototype... how does the party like it?
- Bereg has already taken Norr and the trapsmiths through the ruin's portal.

The GM can have Lord Ablair speak how they wish, but in general he's an arrogant, wholly evil bastard who is put off by the entire world.

**Attacking the Filthspewer:** Heroes may think to attack the filthspewer on Lord Ablair's back. Its stats are presented below:

**Filthspewer Apparatus:** AC/Reflex 5, Fort 10; 60 hp; immune lightning, resist 2 all. If destroyed, it detonates. *Detonated Apparatus:* close burst 1, +12 vs. Reflex (Lord Ablair is automatically hit); 4d8+5 damage, and a secondary attack of filthspitter. *Filthspitter:* close burst 4, otherwise as Lord Ablair's attack of the same name.

Alternately, a hero that has grabbed Lord Ablair could use a light blade to cut the hose.



**Filthspitter Hose:** AC/Ref 10, Fort 5; 7 hp; immune lightning, resist 2 all; device is useless.

**Treasure:** In addition to being his symbol of lordship, Lord Ablair's medallion functions as a *helm of heroics* (DC 25 Arcana; none; takes up a neck slot). Although he can't use its daily power, he and the Throneguard enjoy its properties (already factored in).

In a belt pouch, the evil noble also carries a purple quartz crescent moon (250 gp) that fits atop the staff held by Childa (area 2–5).

**Terrain:** The squares with barrels in them are difficult terrain. The table provides cover if a ranged attack (but not an area attack) crosses any of its squares.

Each barrel has the following stats:

**Wooden Barrel:** AC/Ref 8, Fort 8; 15 hp; if destroyed creates a burst 10 of full-strength mindfilth gas (see Appendix C).

**Tactics:** The Throneguard immediately takes up position next to Lord Ablair. He marks any melee heroes, uses *back off* to keep them away from his charge, and hits heroes with his threatening reach at every opportunity. He uses his AP for *resolute*.

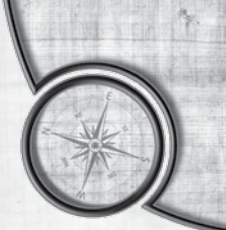
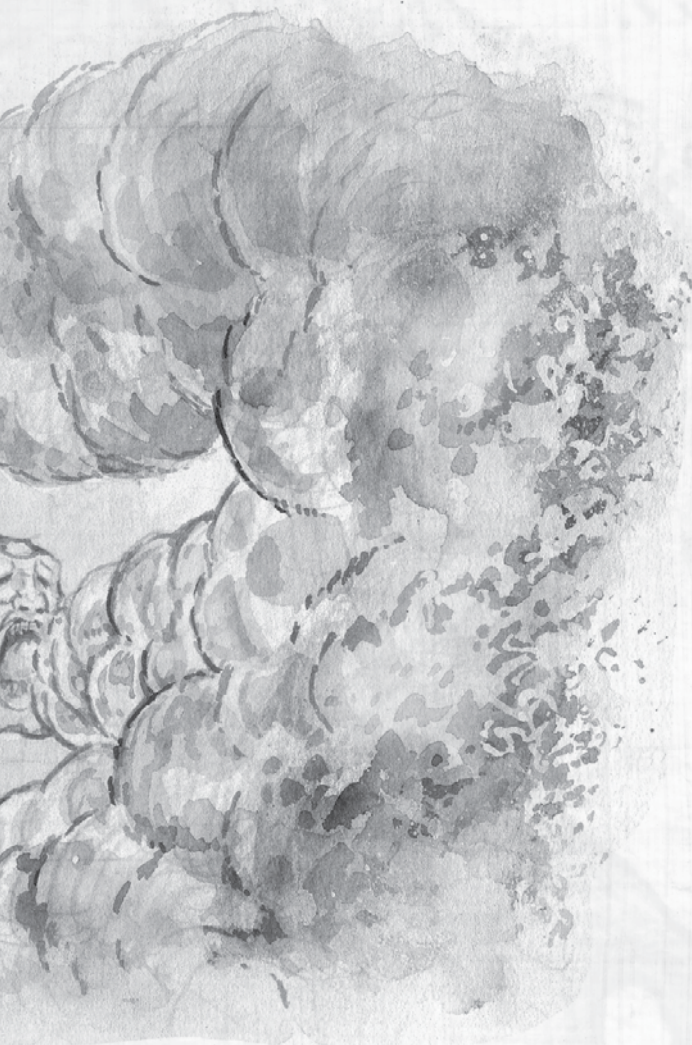
The Throneguard benefits from Lord Ablair's *deathless fanaticism*.

Lord Ablair's unceasing monologue actually masks his *insidious whisper* power. He tries to mark heroes who stay at range.

Lord Ablair uses his filthspewer apparatus to sow confusion among the party. He never uses it if it means hitting his own Throneguard (but he has no problem hitting any other creature). Note that the unnatural gas lingers for a round before it disappears (banished back to the Abyss).

If the party cuts the hose to the filthspewer apparatus, Lord Ablair froths at the mouth, "You don't like my creation? YOU'RE ABOUT TO LIKE IT A LOT LESS!" He then starts attacking one of the barrels loaded with mindfilth (see Terrain, above). After it explodes, assuming he's alive, he attempts to escape. Neither he nor the Throneguard have any special immunity to the poison (but gain their bonuses to saves as normal).

The Throneguard fights to the death, but doesn't pursue fleeing heroes. Lord Ablair fights until he's reduced to 82 hp (one-quarter), then seeks to get away at earliest opportunity using *clever escape*.



## Dwarven Thronguard

Level 6 Elite Soldier

Medium natural humanoid **XP 500**

**Initiative** +5      **Senses** Perception +5  
low-light vision

**HP** 144; **Bloodied** 72

**AC** 26; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 20

**Saving Throws** +2, +4 against fear effects,  
+7 against poison effects

**Speed** 5

**Action Points** 1

⊕ **Halberd** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**  
Reach 2; +13 vs.AC; 1d10+3 damage and target is  
marked until the end of the dwarven thronguard's  
next turn.

‡ **Back Off** (standard; recharge 4,5,6) ♦ **Weapon**  
Reach 2; +13 vs.AC; 2d10+4 damage, and the target is  
pushed 1 square.

‡ **Resolute** (standard, usable only when bloodied;  
encounter) **Healing, Weapon**

The thronguard makes a melee basic attack and  
regains 36 hp.

**Stand Your Ground**

When a push, pull, or slide forces a dwarf to move, it  
moves 1 less square than the effect specifies. When an  
attack would knock a dwarf prone, it can roll a save to  
avoid falling prone.

**Threatening Reach**

A dwarven thronguard may make opportunity attacks  
against all foes within its reach (1 square).

**Alignment** Evil

**Languages** Common, Dwarven

**Skills** Dungeoneering +5, Endurance +11

**Str** 17 (+6)      **Dex** 10 (+3)      **Wis** 14 (+5)

**Con** 16 (+6)      **Int** 11 (+3)      **Cha** 12 (+4)

**Possessions** plate armor, halberd

## WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

Lord Ablair's lament that a party of adventurers  
defeated his Blackhammer Priests in the Tannheim  
halls refers to the events of *DCC # 54: Forges of the  
Mountain King*.

If the party has played that adventure, customize  
his dialog appropriately.

## Lord Ablair the Corruptor

Level 7 Solo Controller

Medium natural humanoid **XP 1,500**

**Initiative** +4      **Senses** Perception +9;  
low-light vision  
**Deathless Fanaticism** aura 5;  
allies of level 6 or lower within  
the aura remain alive when  
reduced to 0 hp. Such a creature's  
die at the end of their next turn if  
still at 0 hp or lower.

**HP** 328; **Bloodied** 164

**AC** 23; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 22;

**Saving Throws** +5, +10 against poison effects,  
+7 against fear effects

**Speed** 5

**Action Points** 2

‡ **Flail** (standard; at-will) **Weapon**  
+12 vs.AC; 1d10+3 damage.

✂ **Insidious Whisper** (minor; at-will)  
Ranged 3; +11 vs.Will; 1d4+3 damage, and the target is  
marked until the end of Lord Ablair's next turn.

↶ **Filthspewer** (standard; recharge 4,5,6) ♦ **Charm,  
Poison, Weapon**

Close blast 3, creates a zone of poisonous gas that  
lasts until the end of Lord Ablair's next turn; +9 vs.  
Fort; 2d4+4 poison damage, and ongoing 5 poison  
damage and the target is dazed (save ends both). *First  
Failed Save:* On its turn, the target attacks the nearest  
creature with a melee basic attack (randomize if there  
are multiple appropriate targets) (save ends).

**Clever Escape** (move; recharge 5–6)

Lord Ablair can move twice his speed, but only in a  
direction that takes him farther from the heroes. This  
movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

**Mob Defense**

Lord Ablair gain +1 to all defenses for each ally adjacent  
to him.

**Stand Your Ground**

When a push, pull, or slide forces a dwarf to move, it  
moves 1 less square than the effect specifies. When an  
attack would knock a dwarf prone, it can roll a save to  
avoid falling prone.

**Strong Mind**

Lord Ablair has +4 to all defenses against charm and  
fear effects.

**Alignment** Evil      **Languages** Common, Dwarven  
**Skills** Arcana +10, Diplomacy +12, Dungeoneering +7,  
Endurance +9

**Str** 14 (+5)      **Dex** 10 (+3)      **Wis** 12 (+4)

**Con** 18 (+7)      **Int** 14 (+5)      **Cha** 18 (+7)

**Possessions** chainmail, flail, filthspitter apparatus,  
headpiece of *Moonstaff of Skelya*, medallion of heroes.

**THUS THE HEROES AVENGE  
CITADEL OF THE CORRUPTOR!**

## WRAPPING UP

### Area 3-1 Portal of the Three Dragons

As noted above, Bereg's base camp is located 300 yards away from the ruins. If the party decides to investigate the ruins, either Childa Bennins or Fuyuks-Hatinid can lead them there. When the party approaches the area, read or paraphrase the following and give them Handout E:

*This bowl-shaped depression has recently been cleared of snowfall, exposing an excavation site. A great disc of dark stone, perhaps twenty feet wide, rests at the bottom of the depression. Flecks of red and gold seem to swim in the mineral's opaque depths.*

*Three statues lean precariously over the disc, seeming to ignore gravity. All three depict dragons of different breeds. The first statue is coral, and clearly represents a blue dragon. The second is granite, and is modeled after a white dragon. The last was made of igneous flowstone; it has been severely damaged, but probably resembled a red dragon. The blue statue similarly has a large chunk missing from its head. All three statues reach with outstretched hands, almost meeting above the center of the disc.*

If the party places the *Moonstaff of Skelya* replica in the outstretched hands of the white dragon, read or paraphrase the following:

*A deep voice rumbles beneath you; the words it forms seem to scythe your ears, so deep is their spite. Without warning, you "fall" into the stone... to... elsewhere...*

In Draconic, the voice says, "Fell times have come indeed, my Queen, if you seek what lies in Bithriarch's Vault."

**Development:** Bereg Lorothe brought his men and his "captive" here and passed through the portal.

There is no physical change to the disc when it activates, it remains active for as long as the *Moonstaff* is in place, and it is a one-way trip.

If Fuyuks-Hatinid is still with the party, he demands they pass through the portal (if able) under the guise of concern for Norr Bennins.

**The Ungrave:** Thirty feet south of the red dragon statue is a cavity dug from the permafrost, about the size of a grave but several feet deep. A small wooden sign near it reads, "Unusual grave site, slime creature frozen solid. Unearthed and collected to study. Norr Bennins."

It is dated two months ago.

## FURTHER ADVENTURES

This scenario can springboard into other adventures.

- Bereg Lorothe took his captive through the ruin's portal. Although it says it leads to "Bithriarch's Vault," the GM can change that to have it lead anywhere they desire.
- Similarly, perhaps the portal leads elsewhere if an item is placed in the intact blue dragon statue's hand, and again if the red dragon statue were restored.
- Several wilderness-based adventures could springboard from the return trip from Fort Frostbite, especially if the heroes are escorting Childa Bennins and Palo Kelark.
- If Fuyuks-Hatinid survives, it can be a recurring character. Eventually, it matures enough to attack others and spread, possibly creating a legion of shapeshifting slime.

# APPENDIX I: MONSTERS

## EKKJAVETR

The ekkjavetr (ek-ya-VET-er), also known as “winter widows” or frost hags, are fey that live on desolate mountain peaks. Fiercely territorial, they occasionally gather to scheme against each other or their mutual enemies.

Ekkjavetr can see through concealment granted by magical or mundane precipitation, like snow, fog, and rain, including an *unceasing sleet* aura.

### Ekkjavetr (frost hag)

Level 12 Elite Skirmisher

Medium fey humanoid (cold) 1,400 XP

**Initiative** +12      **Senses** Perception +10  
low-light vision  
**Unceasing Sleet** aura 1;  
squares in aura are heavily  
obscured and creatures that  
enter or begin their turns in  
the aura take 1d6 cold damage.

**HP** 246; **Bloodied** 123

**AC** 28; **Fortitude** 26; **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22

**Immune** cold

**Saving Throws** +2

**Speed** 4 (ice walk), fly 10 (hover), overland flight 15

**Action Points** 1

⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)

+17 vs.AC; 2d6+6 damage.

‡ **Fierce Gust** (standard; at-will)

+17 vs.AC; 2d6+6 damage, and the ekkjavetr shifts 2 squares (usually up).

‡ **Snowblind Strike** (immediate reaction, when the ekkjavetr is hit with a melee attack; recharges when first bloodied)

+17 vs.AC; 3d8+5 damage, and the target is blinded (save ends).

‡ **Reaving Wind** (standard; recharges 5, 6)

The ekkjavetr flies up to 10 squares and makes two claw attacks at any point during that movement. It can combine the attacks on one target or attack multiple targets, and does not provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the first target.

**Change Shape** (minor; at-will) ♦ **Polymorph**

An ekkjavetr can alter its physical form to appear as a haggard old she-wolves or a old crone of any Medium humanoid race.

**Alignment** Chaotic evil

**Languages** Common, Giant

**Skills** Intimidate +13, Nature +11, Stealth +15

**Str** 23 (+12)

**Dex** 18 (+10)

**Wis** 18 (+10)

**Con** 19 (+10)

**Int** 11 (+6)

**Cha** 14 (+8)

### EKKJAVETR TACTICS

The “winter widows” prefer to fight land-bound foes by striking from the air and using fierce gust to fade away. If fighting in a group, multiple ekkjavetr hold off on using *reaving wind* until at least two can at once, then they both target the same creature as their first target, and different second targets.

### EKKJAVETR LORE

Heroes know the following about ekkjavetr with a successful Arcana check:

**DC 20:** Frost hags often wander the frozen peaks and barren tundra in the guise of an ancient she-wolf, and walk among the tribes of the north as a white-haired crones. For this reason, many northern people are uncommonly deferential to old women.

**DC 25:** Ekkjavetr tend to be solitary creatures, only gathering during a leysahrid, or “tearing storm.”



## HATINID

Hatinids are sentient, shapechanging exploratory organelles of a legendary creature called the “Murski Yabi.” In their natural form they resemble viscid white slime with an oily, rainbow shimmer. Hatinids, however, are rarely in their natural form.

Although they resemble mindless slime, hatinids are cunning creatures with the ability to reason. They only use their telepathy to communicate with others of their kind.

The only hatinid in this adventure is Fuyuks-Hatinid; his stats are in area 1–6.

## ZUBUR BISON

The zubur bison is loosely based on the real-world wisent, a European cousin to the North American bison (and also endangered).

Zubur are over 9 feet long, stand about 7 feet tall, and can weigh as much as a ton.

These surly beasts are used as draft animals for those traveling through or living in cold locations due to their hardiness, sure-footedness on ice, and pure power when pushing through snow.

### Zubur Bison

#### Level 4 Brute

#### Large natural beast

175 XP

Initiative +4

Senses Perception +3;  
low-light vision

HP 71; Bloodied 35

AC 16; Fortitude 20; Reflex 14, Will 14

Speed 6 (ice walk)

‡ **Gore** (standard; at-will)

+7 vs. AC; 1d10+7 damage.

‡ **Trample** (standard; at-will)

The zubur can move up to its speed and enter a foe's space. This movement provokes opportunity attacks, and the bison must end its move in an unoccupied space. When it enters a foe's space, the bison makes a trample attack; +5 vs. Reflex; 2d8+7 damage, and the target is knocked prone. Against prone creatures, this attack deals an extra 1d6 damage.

Alignment Unaligned

Languages –

Skills Endurance +12

Str 25 (+9)

Dex 14 (+4)

Wis 12 (+3)

Con 21 (+7)

Int 2 (–2)

Cha 8 (+1)

### ZUBUR TACTICS

When encountered singly or in a pair, zubur bison prefer to use their *trample* attack to escape. When encountered in a herd of three or more, they grow spiteful. The lead zubur uses its *trample* action, and then the others follow roughly that same path, making sure to trample any prone targets. Unless their foes flee, they repeat this attack until there are fewer than three zubur left or their foes are dead. A zubur only gores if it has nowhere to run.

## ZUBUR LORE

Heroes know the following about zubur bison with a successful Nature check:

**DC 10:** These fantastically hardy creatures, although not graceful, have no difficulty moving across icy or snowy terrain.

**DC 15:** They are more irritable than normal when around others of their kind, and more likely to attack.

## APPENDIX II: WEATHER

### LEYSAHRID

The leysahrid (lay-SA-hrid), or “tearing storm,” is a massive, magical weather disturbance common to arctic and sub-arctic environments, but can less commonly be encountered atop high peaks. It is characterized by high-velocity wind rotating in a clockwise manner, fantastic cold, and razor-like ice particles whipped by the wind.

The “lifespan” of a leysahrid can be from 10 minutes to several days. They are slow storms, moving only about five miles an hour, and they are known to stop moving as if on a whim.

As a supernatural weather event, a leysahrid bypasses the protection offered by the Endure Elements ritual.

Ekkjavetr gather in hunting covens when a leysahrid forms, following the course of the storm and exulting in the destruction and loss of life it causes. Many believe that the frost hags use hoary rituals to summon the tearing storms, while other fancy that they naturally form when enough ekkjavetr gather in one place.

A “normal” leysahrid attacks and deals damage as a level 5 controller; tearing storms the equivalent of level 13 controllers have been encountered. A normal leysahrid is a total of 3.25 miles across; add a quarter-mile to the width of the core for every 4 levels added to “normal.”

A leysahrid has three components: the core, the inner ring, and the outer ring.

The *core* of the tearing storm is an area of fantastic cold but no precipitation, usually about a quarter-mile wide. Most surfaces are covered with ice. Athletics (climb) DCs increase by +5 (unless they already accounted for being very slick), and creatures in this challenging terrain require a DC 20 Athletics (balance) check to move at more than half-speed. Failure indicates the creature stays in its current square and loses its move action; failure by 5 or more indicates the creature falls prone in its current square.

**Leysahrid Core:** (immediate reaction, any creature that begins its turn in the core is attacked; free); +9 vs. Fort; 1d6+4 cold damage, the target is weakened (save ends) and pushed in the direction of the wind 1d4 squares. Creatures immune to cold are immune to this attack.

The *inner ring* features gale-force winds that drive ice crystals into the flesh of the unprotected; from inside edge to outside, the inner ring's width is twice that of the core. The amount of snow and ice in the air obscures visibility; this is heavily obscured terrain. This wind snuffs nonmagical open flames and may dispel (as *dispel magic*; treat as tertiary attack; +9 vs. Will of creator) magical flame (such as zones, walls, ongoing effects, or the like).

**Leysahrid Inner Ring:** (immediate reaction, any creature that begins its turn in the inner ring is attacked; free); +11 vs. AC; 1d10+4 cold damage; whether this attack hits or misses the inner ring makes a secondary attack. *Secondary Attack:* +9 vs. Fort; target is pushed 1d4+1 squares in direction of the wind and falls prone. Creatures immune to cold are immune to both attacks.

From inside edge to outside, the *outer ring's* width is twice that of the inner ring. In this area, flurries of snow reduce visibility and strong gusts of wind can topple the unprepared. The outer ring is lightly obscured terrain.

**Leysahrid Outer Ring:** (immediate reaction, any creature that begins its turn in the inner ring is attacked; free); +9 vs. Fort; target is pushed 1 square in direction of the wind and falls prone. Creatures immune to cold are immune to this attack.

## APPENDIX III: NEW ITEM

### MINDFILTH GAS

This poison is refined from various distasteful parts of demons, and Lord Ablair figured out how to disperse it as a gas with the intention of using mindfilth to capture cities intact while slaying any defenders.

The gas is weakened when incorporated into a filthspitter apparatus (see area 2–9).

**Mindfilth (Gas):** Level 20 Poison; Attack: +20 vs. Will; target takes 10 ongoing poison damage and uses its standard action each round to make a basic attack against the nearest creature (ally or foe). Mindfilth is semi-sentient, and any amount of mindfilth is able to exert a *mage hand* effect once per round as a minor action. This is typically used to break windows, open shutters, or remove rags from faces. The gas wants to kill.

- First successful save: ongoing damage ends.
- Second successful save: creature is no longer compelled to attack nearest creature.

If the poison damage from mindfilth gas slays a victim, the corpse itself becomes poisonous to ingest. While most heroes don't normally eat corpses, this may be a threat to animals that accompany them.

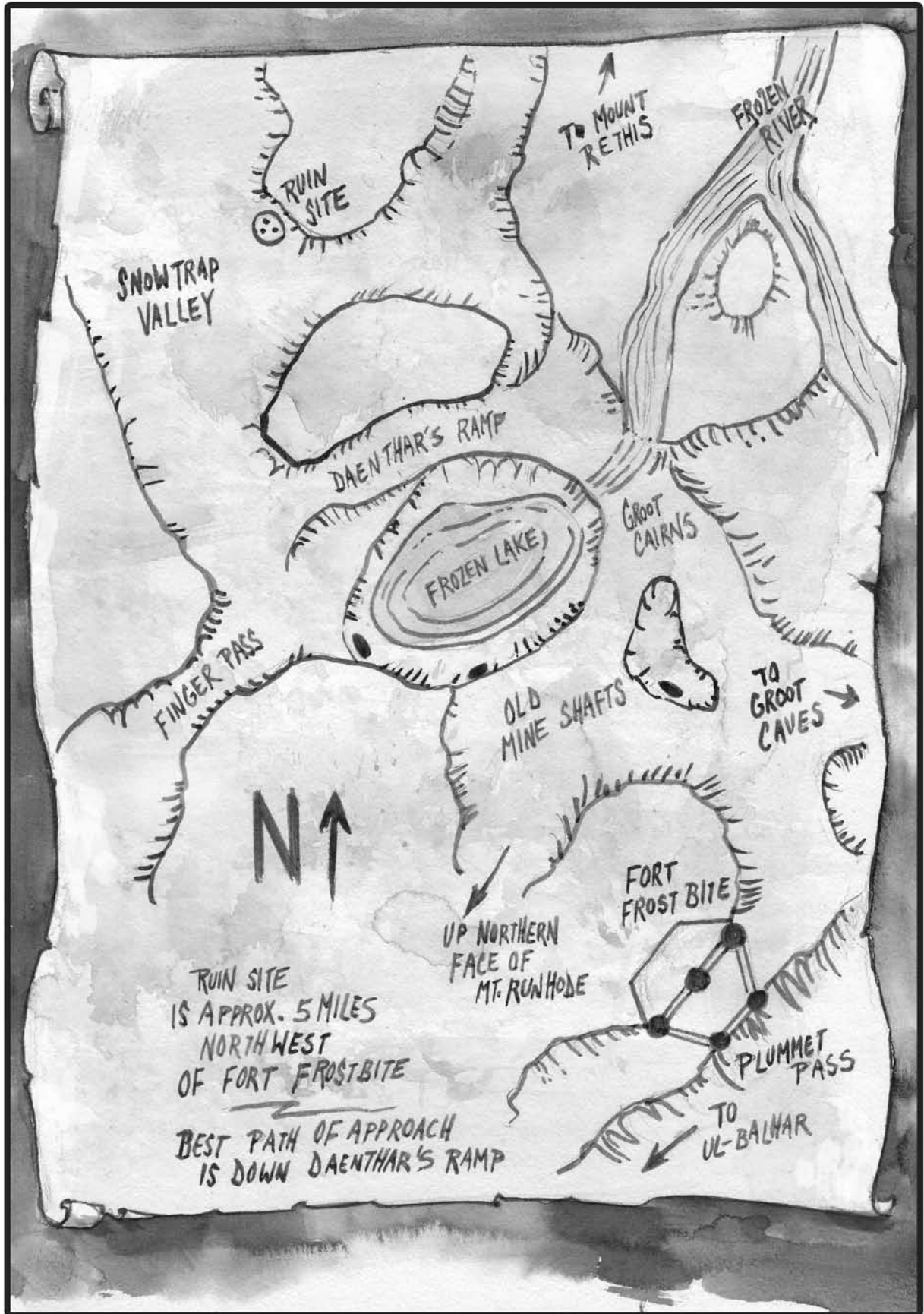
**Mindfilth (Corpse):** Level 10 Poison; Attack: +13 vs. Fort; ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).

- First failed save: target is deaf until end of encounter.



**HANDOUT A**  
**HANDOUT E**





HANDOUT B

My esteemed Antiquarian,

The parcel of charcoal rubbings arrived after much unfortunate delay. As you suggested, they caused an agitation of mind and body among such sagacious council as I need not name that I have scarcely had two moments of respite since revealing them.

One, the well-regarded gentleman from the capital, was so insistent that he bade me copy his words to you in exactitude, thusly:

The rubbings matched precisely the depictions in both the Libro Regina Thelyase Complis and Afterwell's account of his last expedition to Wyvern Mountain. Without a doubt, the ruin was part of the White Queen's domain. It is also quite possibly the architecture of Bithmarch, meaning you've found Bithmarch's Vault. Well-done, sir!

I append my own congratulatory remarks.

Once the weather turns more favourable, I will despatch another company of knights, along with two dozens of Common Labourers to effect a speedy excavation of the site.

I am fair to commence a Grand Effort of unearthing your find. Thelya's Reprial, if truly it exists, would be a boon in our effort to resist the self-crowned Mountain King.

Peace and knowledge,  
Lord Macreed, Bastion of the North

The Statement of Palmo Kelark (Chamberlain)

I attest that this commentary is my final testament, and all that is contained herein is true.

Fortification XXXI has fallen, and so far as I am able to determine I am its only survivor. I enjoy my life thanks to the sacrifice of a knight, who escorted me to the cliff-front secret chamber before returning for Her Ladyship and Lord Ree's twins. He did not return, so I can only assume he was felled in performance of his duty.

Yet I cannot presume to survive this winter on my own, and I know I would not endure the trek to Ul-Balhar, so I must record what transpired here. My sole hope for life rests with the mercenaries tasked to deliver supplies to the fort; in their company I may find salvation.

Yesterday mid-day, a pair of dwarven merchants arrived at the southern gate, asking to be allowed to conduct trade. As supplies have been meager, and this is not an uncommon occurrence, His Lordship granted them entrance, and after due diligence gave them permission to conduct trade.

That night, there were explosions in the upper and lower bailey. Rushing to heed the general alarm, I saw...horror. Sparkling purple clouds drifted in the air.

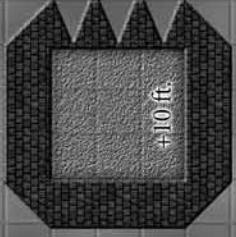
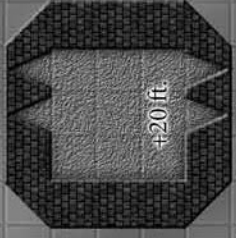
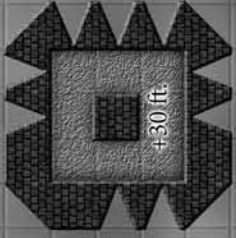
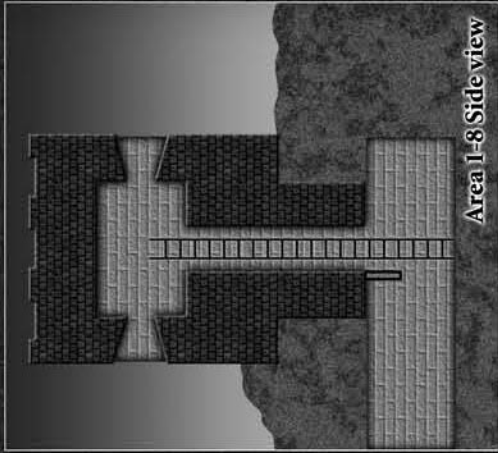
Where-ever they touched one of the garrison, that man did froth at the mouth and commence to slaying his comrades. If none were present, he tore at his own flesh until he lay dead.

The dread gas did not drift with the wind, but occasionally moved against it, seeking its way into arrow slits and striking as a snake at the panicked men.

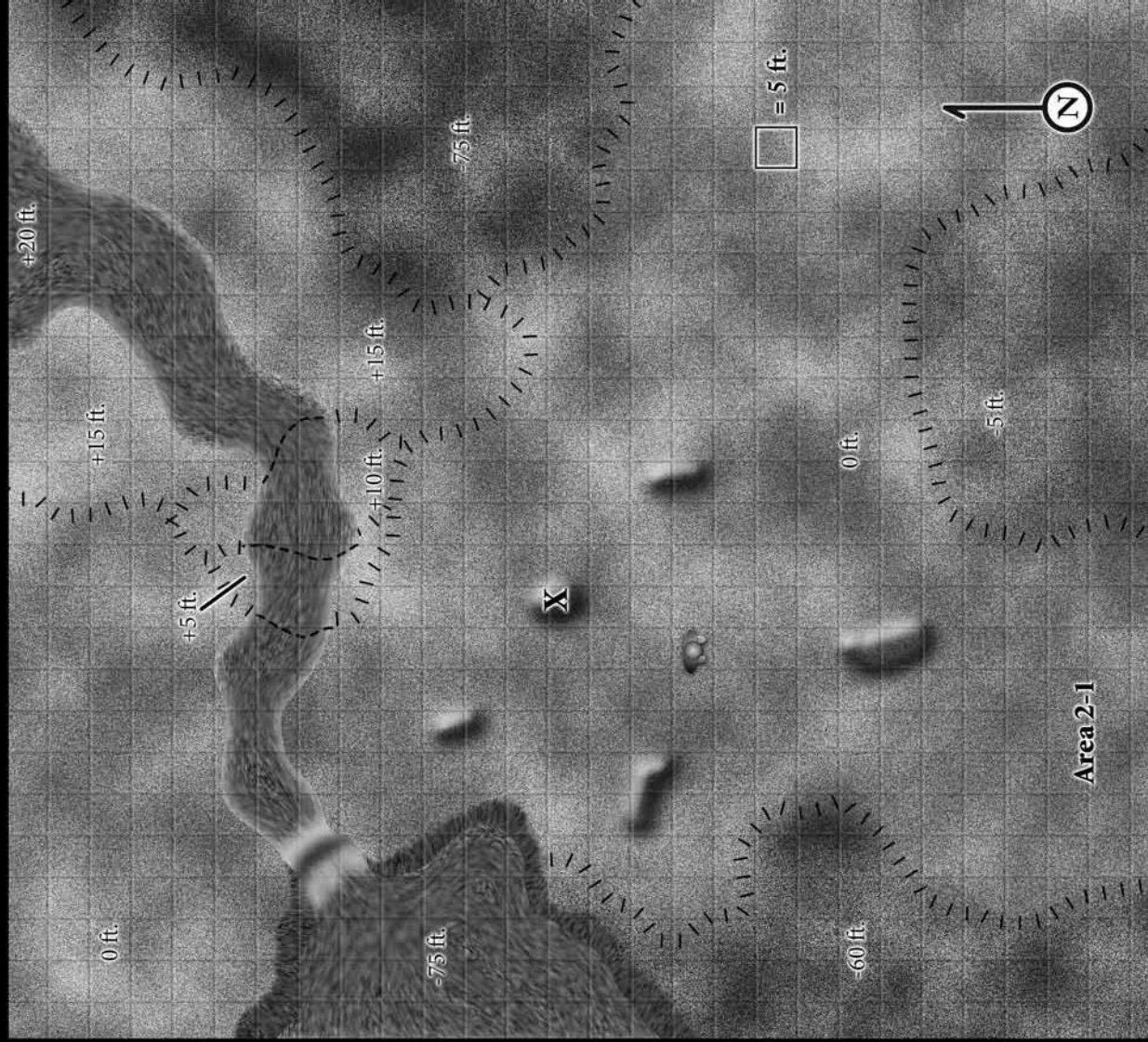
Through this nightmare moved the dwarves, feathering with crossbows any who did not succumb to the purple clouds, themselves somehow unaffected. I prayed to Thormyr to smite them, but they endured. As my savior found me, I saw them enter the apartments of our scholarly boarders, gods protect them.

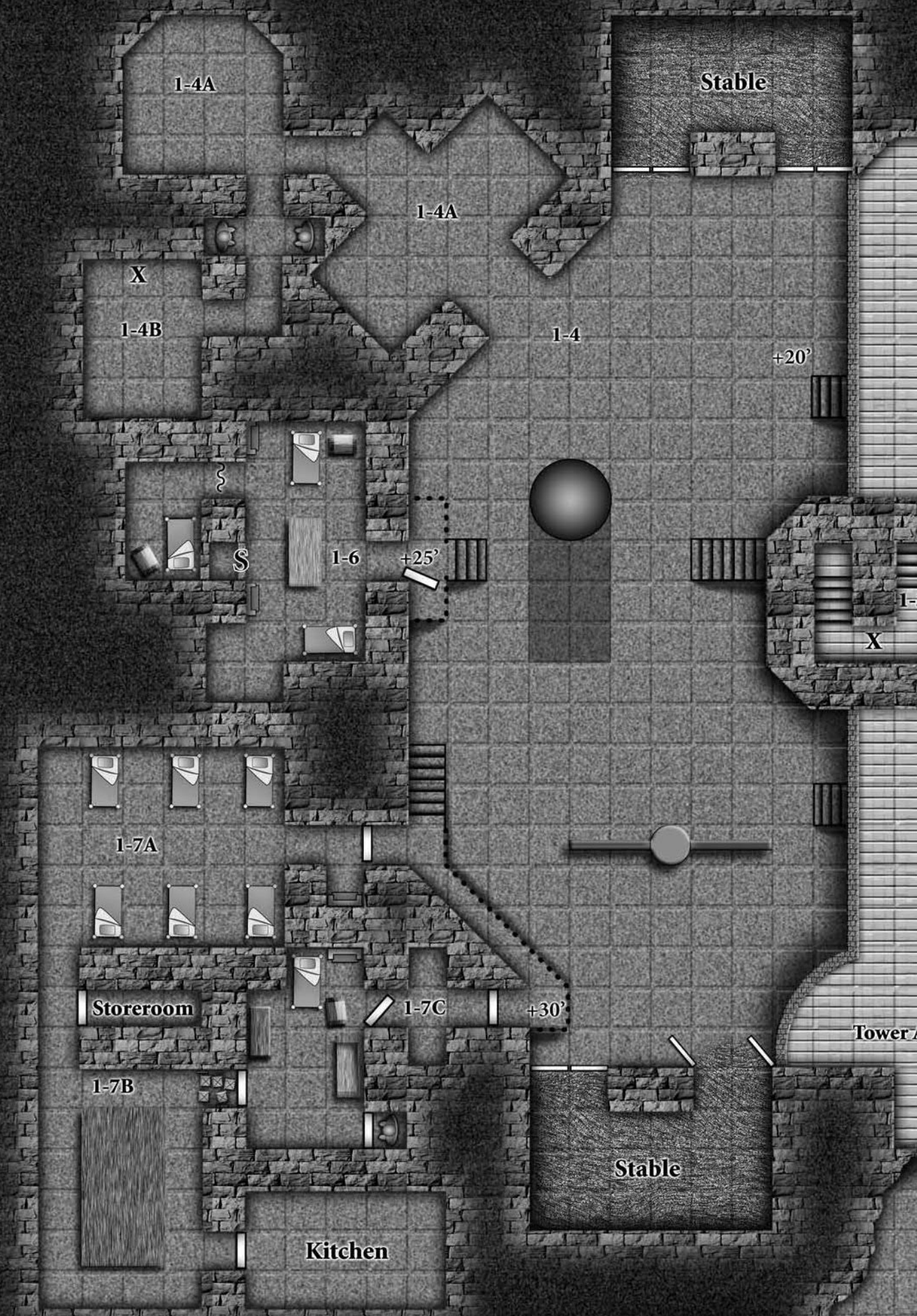
And may they protect me as well.

# Fort Frostbite - Lower Level



## Area 1-3 elevations





1-4A

Stable

1-4A

X

1-4B

1-4

+20'

1-6

+25'

1-

X

1-7A

Storeroom

1-7C

+30'

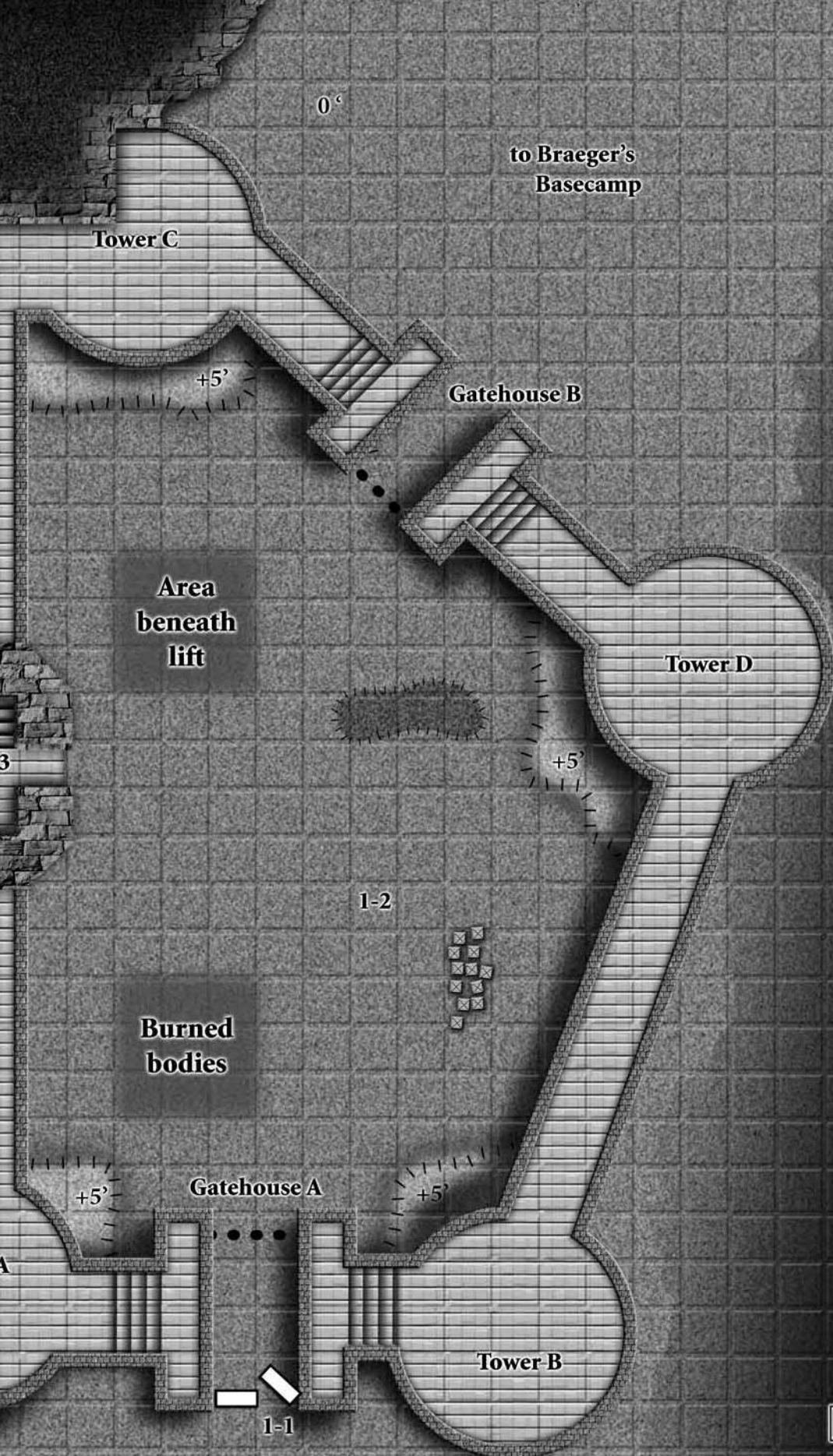
Tower 2

1-7B

Stable

Kitchen

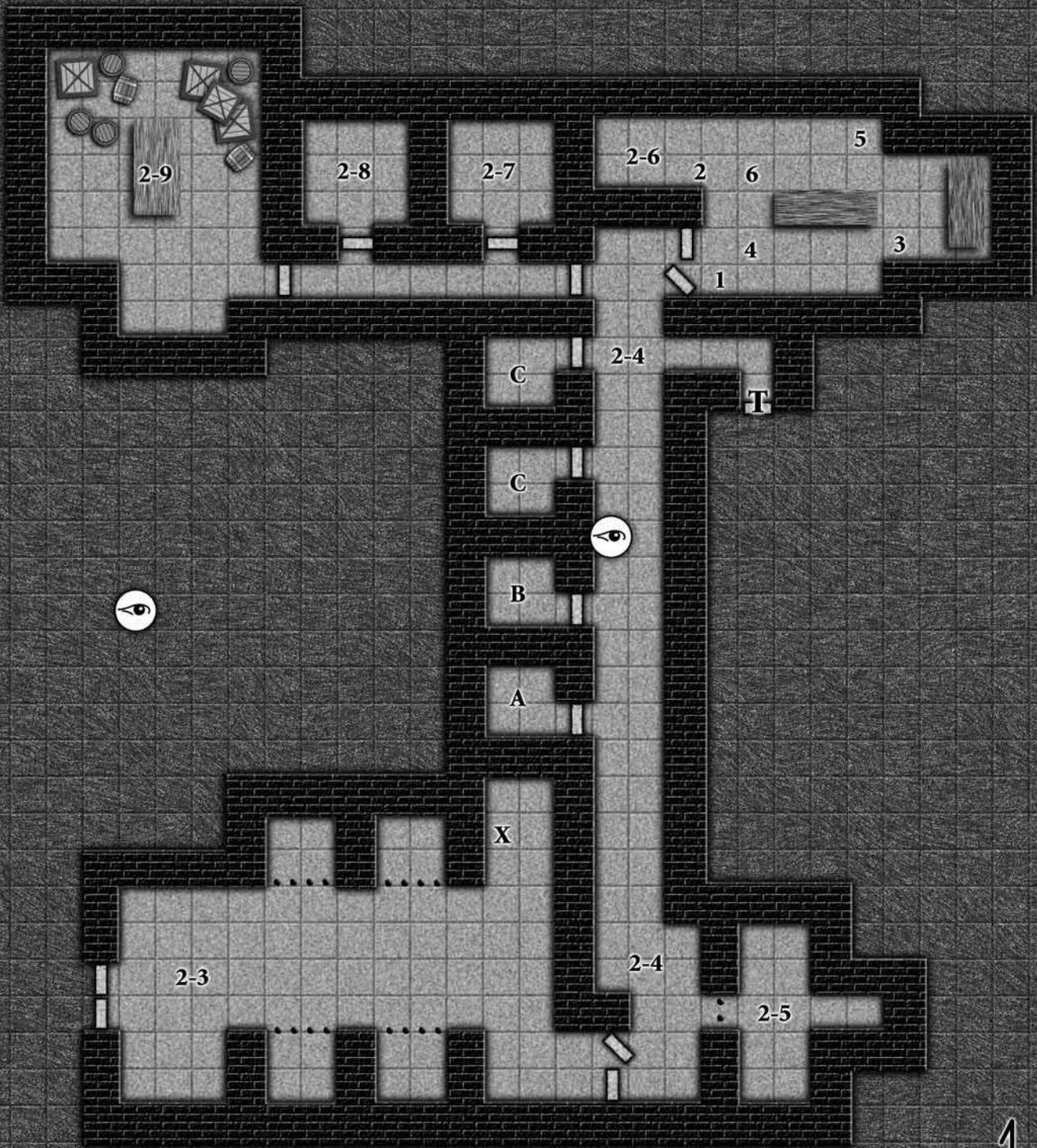
# Fort Frostbite



□ = 10 ft.



# Bereg's Base Camp



□ = 5 ft.



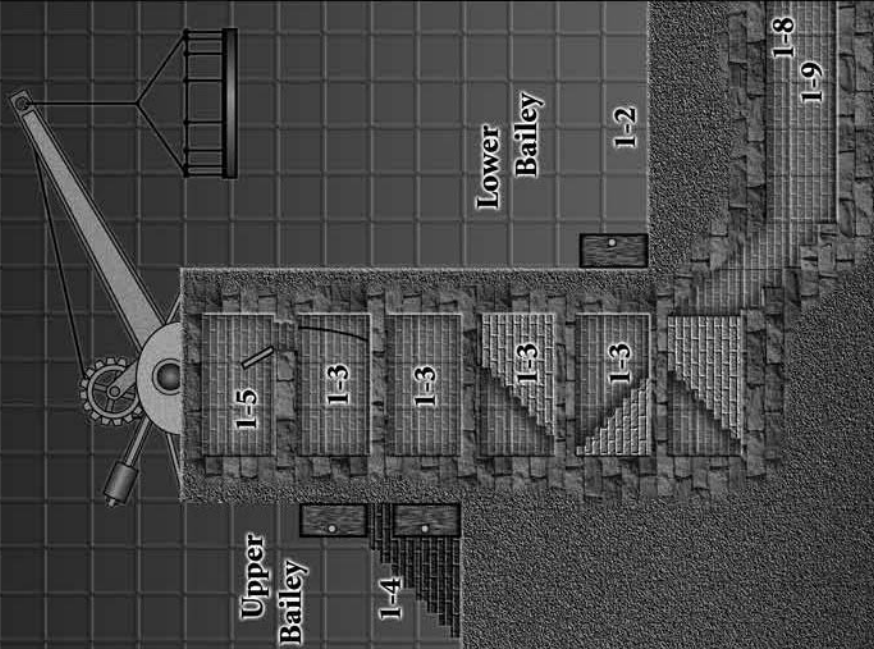
Area 3-1

□ = 5 ft.

white

blue

red



Relative elevations

□ = 5 ft.

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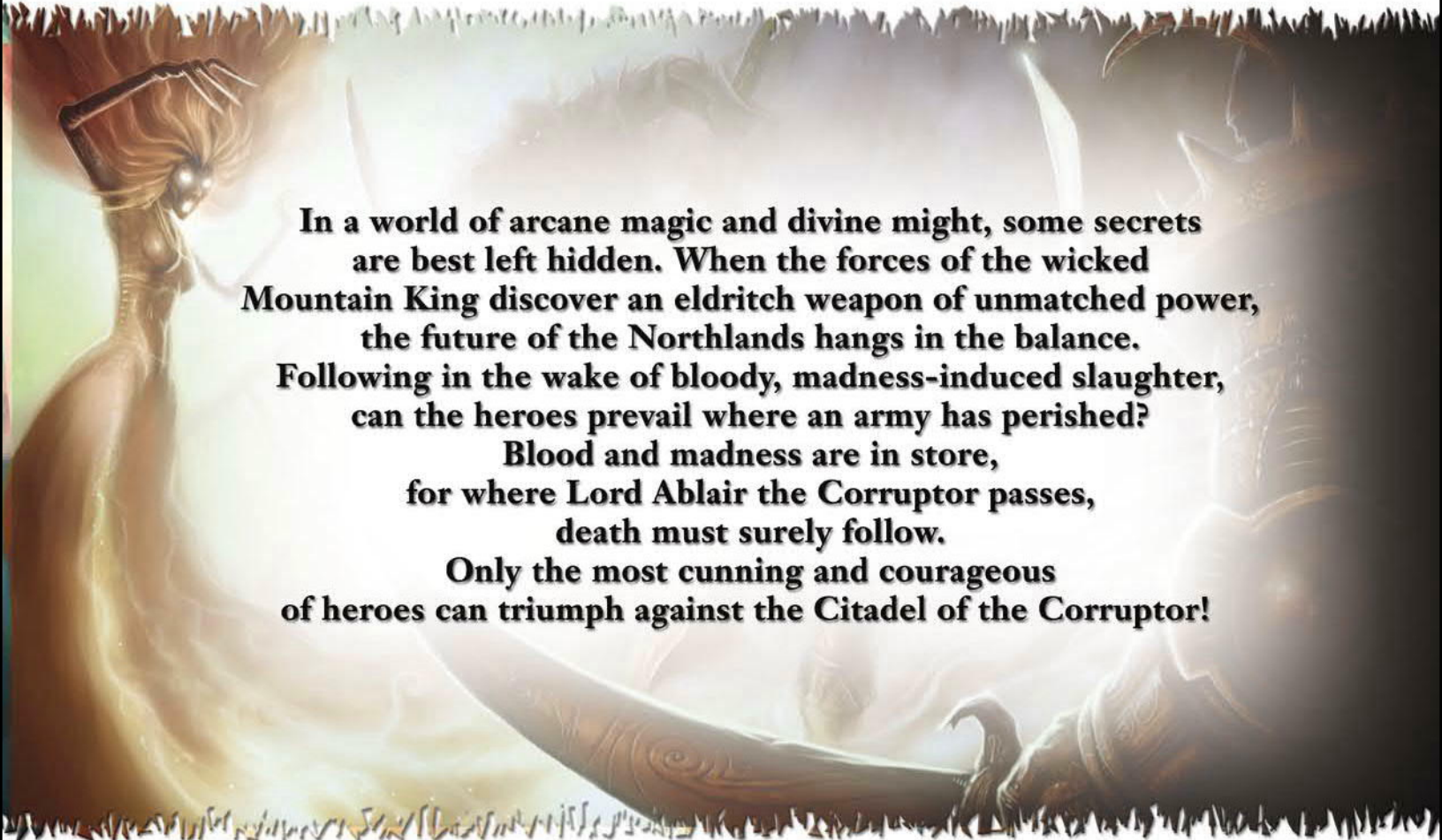
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