

WKO

Fantasy Renaissance Adventure Module

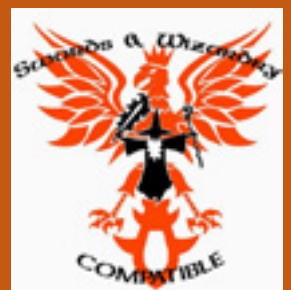
NIGHT OF THE MAD KOBOLD

Written by "Weird Dave" Olson

An Adventure for 1st-Level Characters



WRATH OF THE KOBOLDS #0





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**Fantasy Renaissance Adventure Module WK0
For use with Swords & Wizardry**

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A quiet night in a town turns into a race against time! One insane kobold holds the key to stopping an explosive disaster but tracking him down is going to take brains and brawn. Can you find out the truth before the end of the ... ***NIGHT OF THE MAD KOBOLD?***

**A FANTASY RENAISSANCE ADVENTURE MODULE BROUGHT TO YOU BY YOUR FRIENDS
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Fantasy Renaissance Adventure Module WK0

NIGHT OF THE MAD KOBOLD

WRATH OF THE KOBOLDS #0

For use with the Swords & Wizardry game

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NIGHT OF THE MAD KOBOLD

The town of Cresthill enjoys a favorable location along the winding Graywand River. Trade is good, and the prominent gnomes of House Kolver run most of the businesses to the prosperity of the people. Now, however, a dangerous lunatic—a kobold from the nearby Talon Hills—has decided the gnomes of House Kolver need to be taught a fiery lesson, and only a band of heroes can stop his plot.

WKO Night of the Mad Kobold is a short adventure designed for a group of six 1st-level characters. It stands alone but can also serve as an introduction to the **WRATH OF THE KOBOLDS** module trilogy from Cut to the Chase Games.

WEIRD DAVE'S NOTEBOOK: KOBOLDS!

KOBOLDS HAVE BEEN A PEST AND THREAT FOR LOW-LEVEL CHARACTERS IN FANTASY ROLEPLAYING GAMES SINCE THE BEGINNING. OVER THE YEARS, HOWEVER, THEY HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO A MORE DRACONIC CREATURE, STILL LOWLY BUT PERHAPS A BIT MORE ON THE THREATENING SIDE. THIS MODULE PRESENTS THE BROWN KOBOLD, A GENETIC VARIANT THAT SPLIT FROM THE MAIN RACE LONG AGO. THEY'RE A MASH-UP BETWEEN DOG-LIKE CANIDS AND REPTILIAN DRACONIC DESCENDANTS, BUT HOW THEY APPEAR IN YOUR GAME IS ENTIRELY UP TO YOU—DESCRIBE THEM AS YOU SEE FIT, BUT REMEMBER THE YIPPING!

Appendix Contents

The combat statistics for monsters and NPCs listed in **bold** in the text can be found in **Appendix A** along with reprinted profiles of important NPCs.

Adventure Background

In the Talon Hills, a great leader has risen from the ranks of the kobolds. Styling herself the Kobold Queen, she has managed to increase the size of her tribe threefold in a single generation through guile, treachery, and covert warfare—the building blocks of any kobold tribe.

As befitting one of her status, the Kobold Queen had many litters of kobold pups. Two of her sons stood out above the rest. One of them, the larger and more powerful brother Rigaan, drank in the kobold legends of long ago and vowed to reclaim the kobold legacy. He eventually left the caves of the Talon Hills and found the tomb of a great kobold hero. (Rigaan's story arc is found in the **WRATH OF THE KOBOLDS** module trilogy.) His brother, the smaller and more intelligent Rinklo, thrived on the teachings of the tribe alchemist.

Rinklo quickly learned the secrets of constructing smoke bombs, glue bombs, fire bombs, and a host of other alchemical devices. He did not share in the Kobold Queen's devotion to the God of Destruction,

and as he grew, Rinklo became dissatisfied with life in the Talon Hills. The hated foe of the kobolds, gnomes, lived far away, and he yearned to bring down gnome civilization from the inside. Thus he set out with his mother's blessing to work chaos upon the world of gnomes.

A single kobold with determination can go far in the world, and Rinklo survived by avoiding the elements of civilization dangerous to a lone kobold. He grew to despise cities as he traveled in secret, seeing them as festering holes of gnomish corruption. In Rinklo's eyes, every city represented the injustices of fate. What cruel joke would put the noble and cunning race of kobolds in the wilderness, fighting for scraps, while gnomes and men and others built walls and lived in palaces, fat and happy? He knew that he needed a clever method of bringing them down so that he could survive and continue on his quest to bring down all civilizations. Word reached his pointed ears of a city run by a wealthy family of gnomes—Cresthill.

The gnomes of House Kolver had managed the affairs of Cresthill for many generations, and the stout walls that protected the northern part of the settlement were testament to their dedication. Cresthill lay upon the banks of the Graywand River and prospered from river trade with the towns and settlements up and down its length.

After arriving in Cresthill under a disguise, Rinklo began to work on his plan. He wanted to destabilize the power structure of House Kolver and bring it crashing down in a fiery inferno. To that end, he developed a special bomb using alchemy, flour, and a drugged fire beetle. But he needed help to plant his bombs across the city, someone familiar with Cresthill and sympathetic to his anti-gnome agenda.

Rinklo found a perfect accomplice at a disreputable establishment called the Drowned Rat Tavern in Cresthill's south side. Bren Kapesch was a member of Cresthill's town guard, mainly because of his love of violence. Rinklo found him drunk at the Drowned Rat Tavern complaining about the gnomes of House Kolver and managed to lure him to an alley. There the kobold alchemist's words of revolution and destruction of the gnomes caught Bren's attention, and he soon became an undercover operative for Rinklo. Over the course of a month, Rinklo and Bren placed their flour bombs in locations across Cresthill. The bombs lacked the key ingredient—the drugged fire beetle—which would be placed in the flour bombs the night of their “revolution.”

Rinklo, however, doesn't just want to destroy the gnomes of House Kolver. He wants to taunt them, and so he sent Bren out to place the first flour bomb near the popular Curious Cod Inn. Bren suggested his

immediate supervisor, Captain Errick Kelter, as their target.). Rinklo wrote a taunting letter to the gnome captain and had it delivered the day of a special event in Cresthill—the 50th birthday of the youngest son of House Kelter, an event marked by a night of quiet solitude before a morning of fireworks. The perfect night for the kobold bomber to strike.

Module Synopsis

The characters are enjoying an evening at the Curious Cod Tavern in Cresthill along with a handful of other patrons when a hysteric gnome woman bursts inside. Just as she runs to the side of a gnome guard captain enjoying his evening break a roaring boom and flash of yellow light from outside tear through the quiet evening. The characters see that a building across the street from the Curious Cod has exploded!

After the commotion, the gnomes approach the characters and beg for their assistance. The guard captain is Errick Kelter and the panicked woman is his wife Isoza. They need help. Earlier in the day Errick received a threatening note indicating that the gnomes of House Kelter would suffer for past transgressions. It was the youngest son of House Kelter's 50th birthday, an event marked by a night of solitude before a morning of fireworks. Most of the city guards in Cresthill were attending to the well-fortified manor of House Kelter for the night. Errick tried to get more guards but his request was denied, and then the explosion confirmed the note's promises.

Errick wants the characters to investigate the explosion and stop any further bloodshed. The building that exploded was an abandoned warehouse, so no one was harmed. The explosion was caused by a giant fire beetle awakening in a barrel of flour, which ignited with terrible results.

As night descends the characters can follow up on a number of leads that take them around Cresthill and to the slums outside the city walls on the southern bank of the Graywand River. The mad kobold bomber Rinklo is working with a corrupt city guard named Bren Kapesch, who sent the note—he hates the gnomes of House Kelter too but doesn't want to hurt anyone else.

Searching for Bren takes the characters to the Drowned Rat, a dingy bar in the southern slum of Cresthill. There they can confront the drunken guard, who gives up Rinklo the moment his life is threatened. The mad kobold bomber is running around Cresthill setting the flour bombs to explode. Having set up the first four bombs himself, Bren knows their locations and surrenders the information.

The characters must now race to defuse the flour bombs and stop the mad kobold Rinklo. The race through the Cresthill streets is driven largely by the characters' actions, and if they do not move quickly enough, more buildings will explode before the night is over! The final confrontation with the kobold bomber is largely up to the actions of the characters, but the final target—a fireworks shop—makes for a likely location.

Future Modules

Rinklo, the mad kobold bomber, is the son of the Kobold Queen, whose devotion to the God of Destruction brings the characters into her lair in **WK1 Caves of the Kobold Queen**. If the characters capture and interrogate Rinklo they can learn that he has a powerful mother, and the arrival of leaflets from the town of Ormkirk regarding kidnapped men can provide a nice link between **WKO** and **WK1**.

Also, Rinklo is the brother of Rigaan, who sets the events of the **WRATH OF THE KOBOLDS** trilogy in motion. Though the characters do not face the powerful kobold warrior until **WK3 Revenge of the Over-Kobold**, his deeds mark him as a powerful adversary.

Involving the Characters

The easiest way to get the characters involved in the module is start with them lodging at the Curious Cod Inn in Cresthill. The events of the module play out from there. Perhaps the characters arrived together and are sitting at one of the tables talking amongst themselves to begin with, or perhaps they are separate travelers who simply find themselves around the same common table when the commotion starts.

Ability Checks in Swords & Wizardry

At several points during the module the characters are asked to make ability checks (Strength check, Dexterity check, etc.). You are free to use whatever method you find the most convenient for your group, but if you're stuck for something you can use this simple mechanic. A character making an ability check rolls 1d20 and compares the result to the ability in question; if the result is equal to or less than the ability the check is successful. Any modifiers listed in the module text are modifiers to the ability score (a +4 bonus to a Strength check would increase the character's Strength by 4 for the purpose of the ability check, for example).

Adapting the Module

The town of Cresthill fits very easily into most campaign settings that have gnomes as a playable race. The gnomes of House Kelder are not evil or abhorrent in any way, but have simply done very well for themselves as merchants and captains of industry. Cresthill is located along a river used for trade and can be in any temperate climate.

The entire module takes place within the town of Cresthill, so changing anything about where it is physically located should not have any bearing on the presented events. Rinklo's obsession with gnomes plays upon a theme common amongst most settings (kobolds hate gnomes).

Time Track

Once the characters get into **PART TWO** of the scenario, tracking time becomes important. At that point the characters are going to be racing against the kobold bomber Rinklo, who is setting up fuses across Cresthill. The module represents this abstraction of time by using **time segments** on a **time track**.

The time segments on the **time track** keep track of where the parties are located relative to each other. The characters are the drivers behind this abstraction—when they move across Cresthill the **time track** advances and Rinklo is now somewhere



else. You may find it helpful to print out the **Time Track** in the Appendix for easy reference.

The **time track** should also help with parties that decide to split up, especially when they first learn the location of the first four flour bombs from Bren Kapesch (he doesn't know the fifth's location). While abstract, each time segment represents roughly 10 minutes.

PART ONE: A DANGEROUS NIGHT IN CRESTHILL

The module begins with the characters in the common room of the Curious Cod Inn in the city of Cresthill. The evening meal has just been cleaned up by the staff when a distraught female gnome enters and talks with her husband, close enough for the characters to hear. The conversation is interrupted by a fiery explosion outside!

Whether the characters take up the investigation on their own or not, the gnome captain of the guard asks for their assistance in stopping whatever mad man caused the explosion. The captain received a note earlier indicating there would be more bombings.

Goings On at the Curious Cod

The Curious Cod is a well-regarded inn and tavern in the town of Cresthill. Read the following to begin the module.

The setting sun bathes the town of Cresthill in brilliant hues of orange and crimson as evening descends. The winding Graywand River cuts through Cresthill, creating a natural divide between the wealthy district on the north side and the make-shift hovels and tents of the poorer district on the south side. The gnomes of House Kelder took over management of the town several generations ago and have turned it into a hub of river shipping. You have booked rooms at the Curious Cod Inn, a quality establishment on the banks of the Graywand River in the northern portion of the town. A fair crowd has gathered around the common room this evening.

Allow the characters enough time to get their bearings within the Curious Cod. You can show them **Player Handout 1** so that they get an idea of Cresthill's layout as well. The inn is three stories tall with a kitchen, common room, and several private rooms occupying the main floor.

Cresthill Rumors

Characters who may have been asking around Cresthill may learn one or more of the rumors below.

You can give them out to each player so that they each have something to share or have a single charismatic character pick them up.

- The gnomes of House Kelder are gathered together at Kelder Manor in honor of the townmaster's youngest son's 50th birthday. Tradition dictates the son spend the night in solitude before fireworks in the morning!
- All the gnomes in Cresthill are connected through blood or marriage to House Kelder. It's practically incestuous!
- Townmaster Hurrid Kelder has five sons and three daughters, an unusually large family for a gnome. His eldest child is a son known for his wild behavior who hasn't been seen for a number of years. Some say he went off in search of adventure!
- River trade keeps the merchants of Cresthill rich and the dock workers well-fed. The people who live in the slum district on the southern banks of the Graywand River are lazy shiftless thieves!
- Most of the leaders in the town's guard are gnomes from House Kelder. Some say their loyalty lies first to their family and second to the city, which is why the guards are stationed around Kelder Manor this night.
- Fireworks are big business in Cresthill. The best fireworks come from Fromm Flinhandle's Finest Fires, owned by a dwarf alchemist in town. He has much competition from smaller shops, though.

Gnome Alone

Anyone looking around for someone out of place can spot a gnome soldier drinking ale at a nearby table. He seems to keep to himself, but isn't unfriendly if bothered. He introduces himself as Captain Errick Kelder and anyone can tell that he seems preoccupied with something. Captain Errick does not make much conversation, but if coerced by a sympathetic enough ear, he begins to relate some of his troubles.

Distraught Wife

After the characters have had a chance to share any rumors they found, a gnome woman bursts into the Curious Cod. She is dressed plainly and carries a handkerchief with the logo of House Kelder on it. Stepping inside the inn, she looks around before finding Captain Errick and rushes over to him.

The gnome woman is Captain Errick's wife, Isoza. She is clearly upset and the two begin to talk in low voices. Any character who shows a visible interest is brushed aside by Captain Errick with a brusque "this is a personal matter, no concern of yours" before he attends to his wife. The two talk for moments in whispers in the Gnomish language, punctuated by Isoza's muffled sobs, but all that a nearby character can catch are the words "children" and "danger."

NPC Profile: Errick Kelder, Gnome Captain of the Guard

A captain in the Cresthill guard, Errick Kelder is a third cousin to the gnomes of House Kelder. Being tied to the merchant family that operates Cresthill has proven a boon for Errick, but his natural leadership skills and down-to-earth attitude has done more to help him ascend the ranks of the town guard. He is second only to Master Ronwyn Kelder, an overly fat and lazy gnome who has managed through guile and trickery to attain ownership of the city's defenses.

Errick despises Ronwyn (they're fourth cousins once removed) but doesn't let his feelings interfere with his duty. He is an honorable gnome with a good family—his wife Isoza and three children come first in his life. He takes his responsibility to the town of Cresthill very seriously and has earned a reputation amongst the rank-and-file guards as a stern but efficient captain. Errick is deeply troubled by the threatening note he received but feels quite powerless to do anything about it.

Shattered Night

The evening's reveries are broken by an explosion outside the Curious Cod. Read or paraphrase the following.

The firelight from the Curious Cod's hearth begins to cast dancing shadows as the last light of the sun fades outside. BLAM! Suddenly a loud explosion outside shatters the low murmurs of conversation inside the common room. The sounds of falling debris and roaring fire are coming from across the street. Inside the Curious Cod, the people look around in shock, confusion, and terror.

Captain Errick Kelder leaps to his feet and rushes outside along with any characters interested in investigating. The scene across the street is one of devastation. The building that was there has been reduced to a smoldering pile, with fires still burning in the small crater that was its foundation. Pieces of flaming debris litter the street and smoke billows into the air from the site. A few people stagger to their feet in a daze, though no one is seriously wounded.

Captain Errick Kelder's wife rushes outside and clutches her husband's arm. "I told you they weren't kidding around!" she shrieks hysterically. The gnome captain's face is grim as a crowd of people gather around the door to the Curious Cod.

Invitation to Investigation

After a moment to let the scene sink in Captain Errick Kelter approaches the characters. Unless a relationship has been previously established, he doesn't know them personally, but he feels backed into a corner and needs all the help he can get.

Captain Errick asks for the characters' help in saving lives in Cresthill. He doesn't have much to pay the characters and time is of the essence, but he promises a reward from the coffers of House Kelter to get them to assist. In a faltering voice he relates the following points.

- This morning he and his wife found a letter on their doorstep. The letter, **Player Handout 2** which Errick hands to the characters, threatens the lives of all gnomes in Cresthill for "past transgressions of a cowardly nature."
- Captain Errick brought the note to the attention of his superior, Master Ronwyn Kelter, but was dismissed because of the high security employed for the 50th birthday celebration tonight. There are only a handful of guards stationed around Cresthill and not enough to launch a full investigation.

Captain Errick Kelter requests the characters' aid in tracking down whomever sent the letter and stopping whatever plans they have for the night. The gnome captain plans on rushing to Kelter Manor but doesn't feel like he'll get much help, considering that most of the guards have been stationed around the mansion for the protection of the nobles.

Whatever the madman is planning, Captain Errick finds it unlikely that Kelter Manor is a target, given the added security. But the rest of Cresthill is left vulnerable to attack, and that frightens him greatly.

The Explosion Site

Some clues can be picked up by investigating the building that used to sit across the street from the Curious Cod. Captain Errick confirms that the building was a fishmonger shop but it closed down a month ago and has been abandoned since then.

Characters checking out the rubble can make Intelligence checks to learn the first clue in the list below. Additional clues can be found for every every success a character rolls. Explanations of the clues, not to be revealed to the players, are in [brackets].

- The blast pattern indicates the explosion happened from inside the building in the basement. [The barrel containing the drugged fire beetle was placed in the basement by Rinklo's accomplice Bren Kapesh earlier that day.]
- A fine white powder is found on the ground near the center of the explosion site. Closer examination

shows it to be flour. [Rinklo's explosion is created by a drugged fire beetle awakening in the center of a large barrel of flour. See the sidebar "Flour Bomb of the Mad Kobold" for exact details.]

- Two legs of a large insect are found amidst the wreckage. Characters proficient in Nature can identify them as from some sort of giant beetle but there's not enough to narrow it further. [This is what remains of the giant fire beetle that was the catalyst for the flour bomb.]

There is no immediate danger in the rubble, though small fires continue to burn from the explosion.

Start with Questions

Questioning people in the Curious Cod is the best way to start, specifically the bartender Cecilia Staves. She is a human who has lived in Cresthill all her life. As a good bartender, she keeps her eyes open for any troublemakers. Cecilia is quite shaken over the explosion just across the street. If questioned about anything odd lately, she recalls seeing a tall lanky man enter the building about two weeks ago. It's been a month since the fishmonger closed shop so she thought it was odd and assumed it was a vagrant worker seeking a new home.

Other people can corroborate this information with a successful Charisma check. Succeeding on the check with an 8 or lower finds someone who remembers seeing the lanky man in the past week going into the abandoned building, dressed like a city guard. Characters can learn this information through talking to the people in and around the Curious Cod without a check if necessary, but it takes more time (increase the **time track** by **1 time segment** if the characters need to take the time to ask more questions). Allow each character to try and make the check if they wish.

Given the description and the location, Captain Errick Kelter identifies the man as Bren Kapesh, a guard under his supervision. Bren hasn't reported to duty in two days, and with the ceremony, Errick hasn't had the time to confront him. Bren is a troublemaker who never had anything good to say about the gnomes of House Kelter, but would usually show up for his assigned posts. Errick says the best place to find him is at the Drowned Rat, a dive tavern on the south side of Cresthill across the Graywand River.

Travel and the Time Track

In the course of this module the characters are going to be traveling across the length and breadth of Cresthill, and they'll eventually figure out that moving

quickly is going to be the only way to go. The DM's map of Cresthill shows the primary locations around the town with lines between them to mark the paths. Movement along the lines between individual locations takes **1 time segment**, and if the characters are deliberately moving quicker (running, jogging, using a faster mount, or other means) they can reduce the total time required by **1 time segment** for that journey segment. If the distance is reduced to 0, the characters arrive at the next time segment.

For example, moving from the Curious Cod to the Drowned Rat would normally require 3 time segments (1 to move to Kelter Manor, 1 to move to High Bridge, and 1 to move to the Drowned Rat). If the characters hurry, it would take them 2 rather than 3. To move then from the Drowned Rat to the Kelter Warehouse location would take 2 time segments or 1 if they hurry.

The downside of running is that the characters do not have a chance to run into Rinklo, even if he and they are moving between the same locations. The kobold alchemist moves slowly and quietly, trying not to draw attention to his location, but he does notice the characters. What Rinklo does with this information is up to the DM, but it's possible he suspects someone is on to him if the first explosion hasn't gone off already.

Flour Bombs of the Mad Kobold

Rinklo's expertise in alchemy and insect anatomy has given him the perfect tool to create very dangerous explosions under the right conditions. To enact his revenge from the safest distance possible, he needed to find a combustible item with a timed trigger. The kobold knew that flour is incredibly combustible when airborne, so much so that the smallest spark can create a tremendous explosion.

With this material in mind he needed the right trigger. Giant fire beetles are a common insect in cavernous areas, about two feet wide and not particularly dangerous. They get their name from glands on their back, which shed a bright light when the beetle is agitated. Rinklo discovered sacs in the beetle's backside that inflate when the creature is dormant and deflate when it is roused as a sort of vent to keep the beetle from overheating. The deflation of the air sac was perfect - by burying a dormant giant fire beetle in dry flour, when it awoke it would send flour flying in a large area.

To create a timed trigger, Rinklo created a special elixir that would incapacitate a giant fire beetle, and after experimenting, he found the right mix of ingredients to be able to control when the insect would awaken, up to a maximum of about eight hours. The kobold alchemist had his timed trigger, but needed some way to ignite the airborne flour. Despite their name,

giant fire beetles do not actually produce fire.

Rinklo again turned to alchemy and insect anatomy. He discovered a particular mix of reagents that, when combined with the stomach juice of a giant fire beetle, burned the creature from the inside and created a flash. This flash was enough to ignite the flour Rinklo discovered while experimenting in caves north along the Graywand River. To complete the bomb, a fragile glass vial of the reagents would be placed inside the stomach of the drugged fire beetle, so when it awoke the glass would shatter, flour would be thrown in a large area, and the beetle would burn, creating the desired explosion.

Explosion Results

If a bomb is not defused and goes off, the resulting explosion levels the building and sends plumes of smoke and fire into the air. Any characters in the immediate vicinity of the bomb take 20d6 fire damage (no save); those near the building take 10d6 fire damage, save for half damage.

Defusing

The best way to defuse the flour bomb is to get the flour wet before the beetle awakens and shoots the dry flour into the air. It would take about three gallons of water to sufficiently defuse the bomb before it goes off, with each gallon reducing the effective damage of the bomb by half (20d6 to 10d6, 10d6 to 5d6, 5d6 to 2d6). Removing the beetle before it awakens would work as well, though players must be careful—Rinklo's serum provides a modified version of the *sleep* spell so that too much jostling can awaken the beetle. Removing the beetle without awakening requires a Dexterity check at -2 penalty.

PART TWO: THE KOBOLD BOMBER'S TRAIL

With a destroyed building and a mad man on the loose, the characters don't have much time to rest before heading out into Cresthill. Captain Errick Kelter heads straight to Kelter Manor but doesn't receive any help there—the vast majority of the guards are occupied with the birthday ceremony throughout the night. The best lead the characters have at this point is Bren Kapesch, the guard Captain Errick pointed out that fit the description of the person lurking around the abandoned fishmonger store that exploded.

Unbeknownst to the characters, Rinklo is already moving across Cresthill to set up his bombs to ignite. The characters are racing against a clock they may not realize yet!

Showdown at the Drowned Rat

The Drowned Rat Tavern is easy to locate once the characters decide to find it. Read the following once they arrive at the Drowned Rat.

Across the High Bridge on the southern banks of the Graywand River, Cresthill becomes a different place. The safety of the town's walls and cleanliness of its streets are replaced by a muddy, filthy neighborhood filled with lean-tos and shelters in makeshift shantytowns between the few standing buildings. Drunks and ruffians of all sorts stagger around, carousing without a care in the world. The Drowned Rat Tavern, marked by a sign containing a crude drawing of its namesake, stands as the most solid building in the whole neighborhood. It's still a two-story wooden mess, however.

Inside the Drowned Rat lives up to its outer appearance as a dingy bar that serves watered-down ale and cheap wine to poor dock workers and travelers low on coin. The bartender is a stout dwarf woman named Mama Stone, late in years with a wicked scar running down her left cheek. She is uncouth and speaks her mind, with no love of fancy-clothes wearing folk. There are about two dozen ruffians inside the Drowned Rat when the characters arrive.

If asked about Bren Kapes, Mama Stone can direct the characters to a back table where a lanky man in scuffed leather armor nurses a mug of ale. His three-day stubble is getting thick but does little to hide the bags under his eyes. Bren is clearly nervous, twitching and jumping at every shadow, but the drink has dulled his perception what's going on around him.

Confronting Bren

Despite his appearance Bren still has some fight in him, and if confronted about his involvement in the explosion his eyes grow wild and he leaps to his feet, drawing his short sword. He cries out in a drunken slur that the characters are "cursh in the shervice of the greedy Kelversh!" which prompts a few of his fellows to come to his aid. In total there are **5 human thugs** confronting the characters (Bren counts as a thug with no special statistics). The thugs can be browbeaten back with a Charisma check at -2 penalty or with a suitable display of martial prowess. If combat breaks out the thugs only fight until 3 of them are down; the remaining 2 throw down their weapons and surrender. Bren shouts that "thish night bringsh down the foul shcum of Housh Kelver!" during the fight. As soon as he gets below half HP (or surrenders after his fellows go down), however, he collapses and gives up.

What Bren Knows

Bren Kapes gives up what he knows to any strong voice (or a pretty face) if there is not a gnome in the party. If there is, it takes a Charisma check to get him



NPC Profile: Bren Kapes, Human Racist Slime and Traitor Guard

Bren has not had a good life. He grew up with five brothers and two sisters further up the Graywand River, living off what scraps his father and mother could put together from fighting for work in the crowded river docks. His father was a disgraced merchant, drunk most of the time now, who once held a proud position in Cresthill. His own greed and stupidity took his good fortunes away, but he placed the blame squarely on the gnomes of House Kelver.

Bren and his siblings were raised to hate the Kelvers, and Bren took it to mean that all gnomes were villainous tricksters out for nothing more than an honest man's gold. Times got tough at home and he was forced to leave, and his short taste of the wilderness left him afraid of the dangerous world. He slunk to Cresthill and worked the docks for a short time, cursing the gnomes across the river every day. Thanks to Bren's natural tendency towards violence and his skill with a blade, he was selected for a position with the town guard.

As a guard Bren tried his best to avoid the gnomes, and took every opportunity to exert his position over them. His actions did not go unnoticed and he was transferred to the command of Captain Erick Kelver, who was known for turning around unruly guards. Bren hated Erick with a burning passion, which caught the attention of Rinklo.

to talk, or enough threats and promises to eat up **1 time segment**.

Bren relates the following information.

- Bren has been working with a kobold named Rinklo. Rinklo is a genius at alchemy and hates all gnomes everywhere.
- Rinklo came up with a plan to blow up buildings in Cresthill that were important to the gnomes of House Kolver, which would destabilize their power and allow some other merchant family to come in and seize control.
- The bombs were created by some sort of mixture of flour and a giant fire beetle that Rinklo would fill with some sort of alchemical liquid. The beetle would then go dormant for a period of time known only to Rinklo, and when it awoke—kaboom!
- Bren placed large barrels of very dry flour in four places around Cresthill. The first one was the building across the street from the Curious Cod, which was “just the beginning.”
- The other three locations Bren can point out on a map. They are a warehouse used by House Kolver, a series of tenements occupied by gnome workers owned by House Kolver, and a forge run by the human smith Tomas Skallgrimm, who forged steel for Kolver Manor. Bren provides descriptions of how to get into these locations and what the barrels look like (they’re marked with a stylized R).
- Bren knows that Rinklo had a fifth location but he wasn’t involved in setting it up.
- After hearing the explosion at the Curious Cod, Rinklo left the Drowned Rat to ignite the other bombs. Tonight is the night Cresthill will go up in flames!

WEIRD DAVE’S NOTEBOOK: WHAT IF BREN DIES? HOPEFULLY THE CHARACTERS DON’T GET CARRIED AWAY AND KILL THE ONLY LEAD THEY HAVE IN THEIR INVESTIGATION, BUT IF THEY DO ALL IS NOT LOST FOR THE TOWN OF CRESTHILL. YOU COULD WORK IN THAT BREN LIKED TO BRAG ABOUT HIS WORK, AND SINCE HE WAS THE ONE WHO SET UP THE FLOUR BOMBS OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS HE MADE SURE EVERYONE KNEW HE WAS GOING TO GET EVEN WITH THE CURSED GNOMES. TRACKING DOWN THE LOCATION OF THE THREE FLOUR BOMBS BECOMES AN EXERCISE IN HUNTING DOWN THE RIGHT WITNESSES, WHICH SHOULD TAKE 1 OR 2 TIME SEGMENTS DEPENDING ON HOW THE CHARACTERS PROCEED. TICK TOCK!

Time Track Advances

The showdown at the Drowned Rat should take **1 time segment** to complete unless the characters spend an unusually long time (such as if they render Bren unconscious and have no magical means to rouse him).

The Kobold Chase

Armed with the knowledge that the kobold alchemist Rinklo is running around Cresthill setting up bombs to explode, the characters should be ready to move out to try and stop them. Where they are on the **time track** at this point is going to make a large difference, whether they know it or not.

Much of the action in his section is going to be dictated by how the characters go about finding and defusing the flour bombs, while trying to catch up to Rinklo to locate the last bomb. Splitting up, while normally a bad idea for adventuring parties, can prove to be an effective strategy here, and may result in catching Rinklo in the act if they’re really lucky.

WEIRD DAVE’S NOTEBOOK: THE GNOME WILDCARD IF THE CHARACTERS GET STUCK OR FIND THEMSELVES IN DESPERATE NEED OF SOME OFFICIAL PRESENCE, YOU CAN USE CAPTAIN ERRICK KOLVER AS A SPUR OF THE MOMENT WILDCARD. WHILE HE WASN’T ABLE TO CONVINCE HIS SUPERIOR TO COMMIT MUCH SUPPORT, THE TENACIOUS GNOME CAPTAIN DID MANAGE TO GET FOUR GUARDS TO COME AND ASSIST. USE THEM AS YOU SEE FIT TO HELP (OR HINDER!) THE CHARACTERS AS THEY RUN AROUND CRESTHILL.

If the characters reach a location in the same time segment that it is set to explode, they still have a chance to reach the flour bomb in time to try and defuse it if at least one character runs to the barrel site without delay.

For a dramatic effect that puts a lot of reliance on randomness, have involved characters roll initiative. Roll a d20 for the bomb—this is the initiative count that the beetle awakens in during the 2nd round, sending flour into the air. In the 3rd round on the same initiative count the reagents inside the giant fire beetle ignite and spark the bomb, creating a tremendous explosion (see **Flour Bombs of the Mad Kobold**). This should give the characters one or two rounds to try something. Players are clever and can come up with a wide variety of solutions, but the easiest would be to get the flour wet—anything else is likely to simply throw flour in the air, which ignites after the fire beetle awakes. Killing the beetle once it is awake isn’t enough either, as the reagents inside still ignite (unless the beetle can be disintegrated or otherwise have all its bodily functions instantly stopped).

Kolver Warehouse

This is the closest and likely the most difficult to stop for the characters, depending on how they’ve managed the **time track** (likely without realizing it!). Despite the late hour there are still a number of dock workers unloading a nearby ship and loading its goods into the warehouse. The flour bomb is located in the middle of the main room between large boxes.

There are a total of fifteen workers, all of whom die in the explosion unless the bomb is defused.

Characters can try to convince a group of workers to stay away from the warehouse with a Charisma check, made with +4 if the characters mention the explosion at the Curious Cod (which the workers heard). Each group of five workers requires a separate check (three separate checks).

Kelver Tenements

This location is a series of three-story apartment buildings owned by House Kelver and rented out to workers in good standing. They are in good shape but wooden, and contain about fifteen families (roughly one hundred people). There are two flour bombs located in the basement of the tenement, which can be accessed from the rear of the building. About half of them die in the explosion if the bomb is not defused, and a quarter of the survivors die of their burn wounds the next day.

Evacuation of everyone in the building is near impossible because of the late night hour, though Captain Erick and his small contingent of guards can lend credence to any attempt.

Tomas' Smithy

Tomas Skallgrimm is a human smith from the northern reaches of the world. He has worked closely with the gnomes of House Kelver for many years and now does exclusive contract work for them in his forge. He and his five apprentices all live in an attached wooden building next to the forge. The flour bomb is located in the root cellar of the wooden residential building (the smithy itself is made of stone). Tomas and his apprentices do not survive the explosion if the bomb is not defused.

Waking the people in the wooden building up requires a Charisma check with no advantage for mentioning the Curious Cod explosion; Tomas and his apprentices were sleeping soundly after a hard day at the forge. Tomas is a burly northern man with long blonde hair and iron-corded muscles who greets any stranger with a huge maul in his hands, ready for a fight.

Final Confrontation

Bren was not aware that Rinklo had planted a final flour bomb at Flomm Flinthandle's Fireworks for the "grand finale" of his night, so the characters would need to either figure it out through rumor sifting at the beginning of the module or by confronting Rinklo before he reaches the fireworks place.

Flomm Flinthandle is away preparing the fireworks for the morning, so there is no one staffing his workshop. No one living, at least. There are **2 animated armors**

NPC Profile: Rinklo, the Mad Kobold

Rinklo's upbringing is detailed under the ADVENTURE BACKGROUND. He is a thin kobold with ruddy brown skin, patchy black fur, thin scales on his back side, and a crooked pair of glasses perched on his dog-like snout. He waxes eloquently when confronted about how his deeds will bring about the downfall of gnome society, one cursed house at a time, and that his work has only just begun.

Rinklo speaks in flaming, rebellious rhetoric against the "tyrannical gnomes who lord over all with their stubby fingers and fat jowls!" Despite his lack of any evidence or personal experience, Rinklo truly believes he is doing the right thing by attacking gnomes and their way of life. He is insane in his methods but brilliant in his practice and his words drip with the caustic spittle of brazen, youthful revolution against a world he willfully doesn't understand.



guarding the workshop where Rinklo managed to smuggle a barrel of flour in with other deliveries earlier in the week. Rinklo encounters and deals with the guardians as noted on the **time track**. If the characters confront Rinklo after he deals with the guardians, he no longer has his *potions of healing* (having used them after the fight to regain his lost HP).

The confrontation with the mad kobold alchemist can thus happen at almost any point in the module.

The Mad Kobold Bomber

Rinklo is a scrappy, tough opponent who has put his plan of revenge into motion with no intention of turning back. He is still a kobold, however, and tries his best to use the alchemical bombs at his disposal to distract and avoid a straight combat with the characters.

EPILOGUE

If the characters are completely successful, no victims fell to the flour bombs of Rinklo, the mad kobold bomber, in Cresthill on this night. The two people responsible, Rinklo and Bren Kapesh, should be either dead or in custody by the night's end as well. Fireworks ignite the sky as morning creeps across the land and the people of Cresthill celebrate the 50th birthday of another gnome in House Kolver.

Few people in the town are truly aware of what happened and the key part the characters played in thwarting the kobold menace. Captain Errick Kolver knows and never forgets—the characters always have a friend in Cresthill for their generous assistance during the night. Captain Errick is less enthused if bombs go off, but as long as Rinklo is brought to justice he respects the work that was done by the characters.

Rewards

Captain Errick provides the characters with a small pouch of precious gems worth 100 gold as a modest way of saying thanks. The characters should earn XP for any combat opponents overcome, along with **50 XP** per bomb that was defused. Award an additional **100 XP** for stopping Rinklo's mad plan.

Next Steps

With a bit of experience under their belts, the characters may find themselves interested in wanted posters arriving in Cresthill from a small town a few days' ride away. Ormkirk is having some of their own troubles with kobolds kidnapping their men and they need some adventurers to help get them back. If the characters are interested they can head over and face the dangers that await them in ...

WK1 Caves of the Kobold Queen!

Appendix A: Monster and NPC Information

NPC Profile: Errick Kelter, Gnome Captain of the Guard

A captain in the Cresthill guard, Errick Kelter is a third cousin to the gnomes of House Kelter. Being tied to the merchant family that operates Cresthill has proven a boon for Errick, but his natural leadership skills and down-to-earth attitude has done more to help him ascend the ranks of the town guard. He is second only to Master Ronwyn Kelter, an overly fat and lazy gnome who has managed through guile and trickery to attain ownership of the city's defenses.

Errick despises Ronwyn (they're fourth cousins once removed) but doesn't let his feelings interfere with his duty. He is an honorable gnome with a good family—his wife Isoza and three children come first in his life. He takes his responsibility to the town of Cresthill very seriously and has earned a reputation amongst the rank-and-file guards as a stern but efficient captain. Errick is deeply troubled by the threatening note he received but feels quite powerless to do anything about it.

Human thug: HD 1; hp 5; AC 7 [12]; Atk 1 long sword (1d8) or 2 short bow (range 50 ft., 1d6); Move 12; Save 17; AL C; CL/XP 1/15

Animated armor: HD 2; hp 10; AC 5 [14]; Atk 1 slam (1d8); Move 12; Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 2/30

NPC Profile: Bren Kapesch, Human Racist Slime and Traitor Guard

Bren has not had a good life. He grew up with five brothers and two sisters further up the Graywand River, living off what scraps his father and mother could put together from fighting for work in the crowded river docks. His father was a disgraced merchant, drunk most of the time now, who once held a proud position in Cresthill. His own greed and stupidity took his good fortunes away, but he placed the blame squarely on the gnomes of House Kelter.

Bren and his siblings were raised to hate the Kelters, and Bren took it to mean that all gnomes were villainous tricksters out for nothing more than an honest man's gold. Times got tough at home and he was forced to leave, and his short taste of the wilderness left him afraid of the dangerous world. He slunk to Cresthill and worked the docks for a short time, cursing the gnomes across the river every day. Thanks to Bren's natural tendency towards violence and his skill with a blade, he was selected for a position with the town guard.

As a guard Bren tried his best to avoid the gnomes, and took every opportunity to exert his position over them. His actions did not go unnoticed and he was transferred to the command of Captain Errick Kelter, who was known for turning around unruly guards. Bren hated Errick with a burning passion, which caught the attention of Rinklo.

NPC Profile: Rinklo, the Mad Kobold

Rinklo's upbringing is detailed under the ADVENTURE BACKGROUND. He is a thin kobold with ruddy brown skin, patchy black fur, thin scales on his back side, and a crooked pair of glasses perched on his dog-like snout. He waxes eloquently when confronted about how his deeds will bring about the downfall of gnome society, one cursed house at a time, and that his work has only just begun.

Rinklo speaks in flaming, rebellious rhetoric against the "tyrannical gnomes who lord over all with their stubby fingers and fat jowls!" Despite his lack of any evidence or personal experience, Rinklo truly believes he is doing the right thing by attacking gnomes and their way of life. He is insane in his methods but brilliant in his practice and his words drip with the caustic spittle of brazen, youthful revolution against a world he willfully doesn't understand.

Rinklo, kobold alchemist: HD 1; hp 6; AC 6 [13]; Atk 1 sling (1d4) or 1 bomb (special); Move 6; Save 18; AL C; CL/XP 2/30

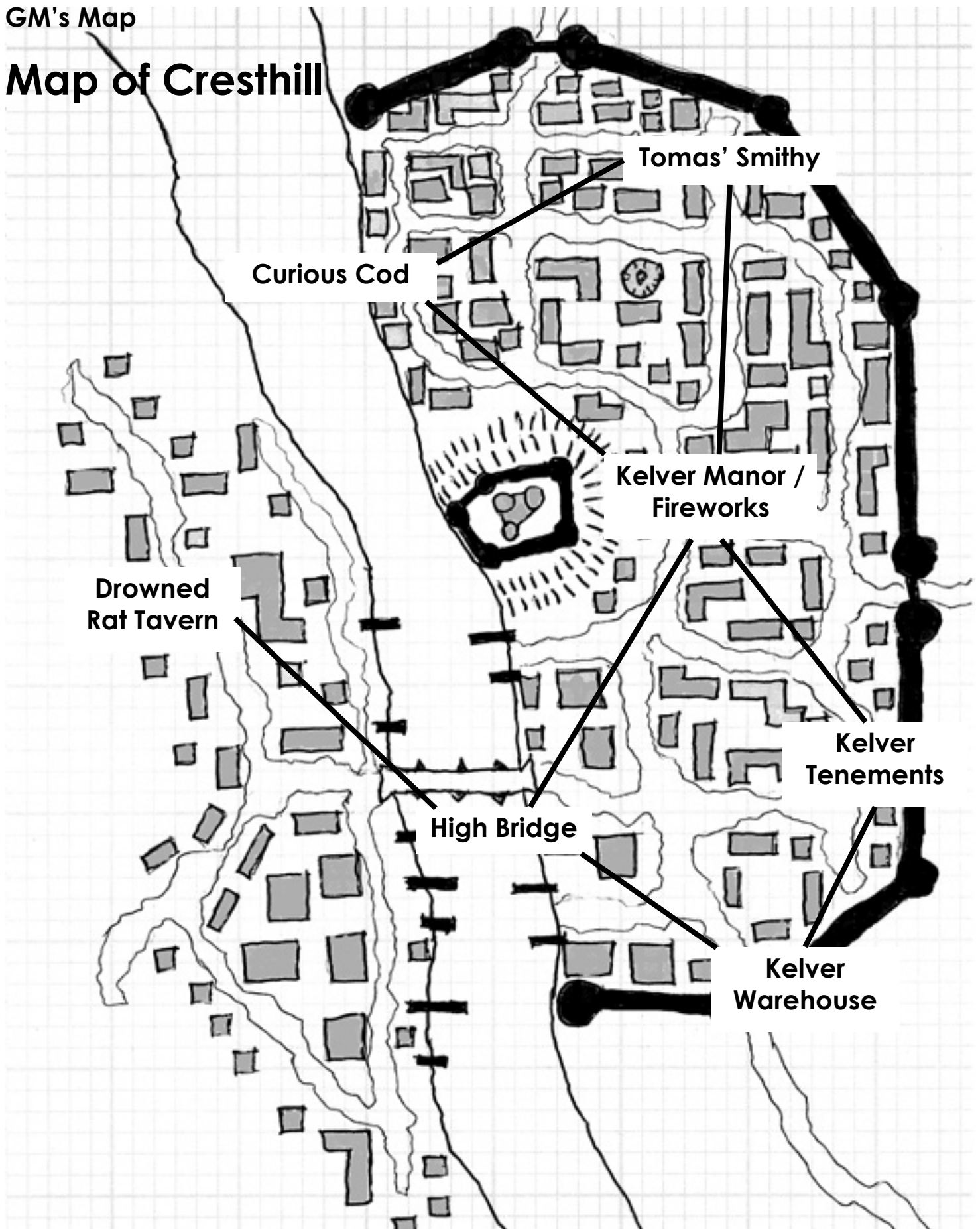
Bombs: Rinklo has a small collection of bombs (4 of them) that he can use to hurl at opponents. The bombs explode upon impact, dealing 1d8 points of fire damage to everyone within 5 ft. of the blast unless they make a saving throw.

Appendix B: Time Track

| Time Segment | Rinklo | Characters |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| START | Start at Drowned Rat | Explosion across the street from the Curious Cod |
| 1 | Move to High Bridge | |
| 2 | Move to House Kever warehouse | |
| 3 | Setup flour bomb at House Kever warehouse | |
| 4 | Move to Kever Tenements | |
| 5 | Setup flour bomb at Kever Tenements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bomb goes off at Kever Warehouse</i> | |
| 6 | Move to Tomas' Smithy | |
| 7 | Setup flour bomb at Tomas' Smithy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bomb goes off at Kever Tenements</i> | |
| 8 | Move to Flomm Flinhandle's Fireworks | |
| 9 | Fight with Flomm Flinhandle's animated armor guardians <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bomb goes off at the Tomas' Smithy</i> | |
| 10 | Setup flour bomb at Flomm Flinhandle's Fireworks | |
| 11 | Move to hiding spot | |
| 12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bomb goes off at Flomm Flinhandle's Fireworks</i> | |

GM's Map

Map of Cresthill



Your night has come.
Blood will run in the
streets of Cresthill and
the cowardly gnomes of
House Kolver will taste
fear and see their joy
turned to ash. Mark my
words!

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