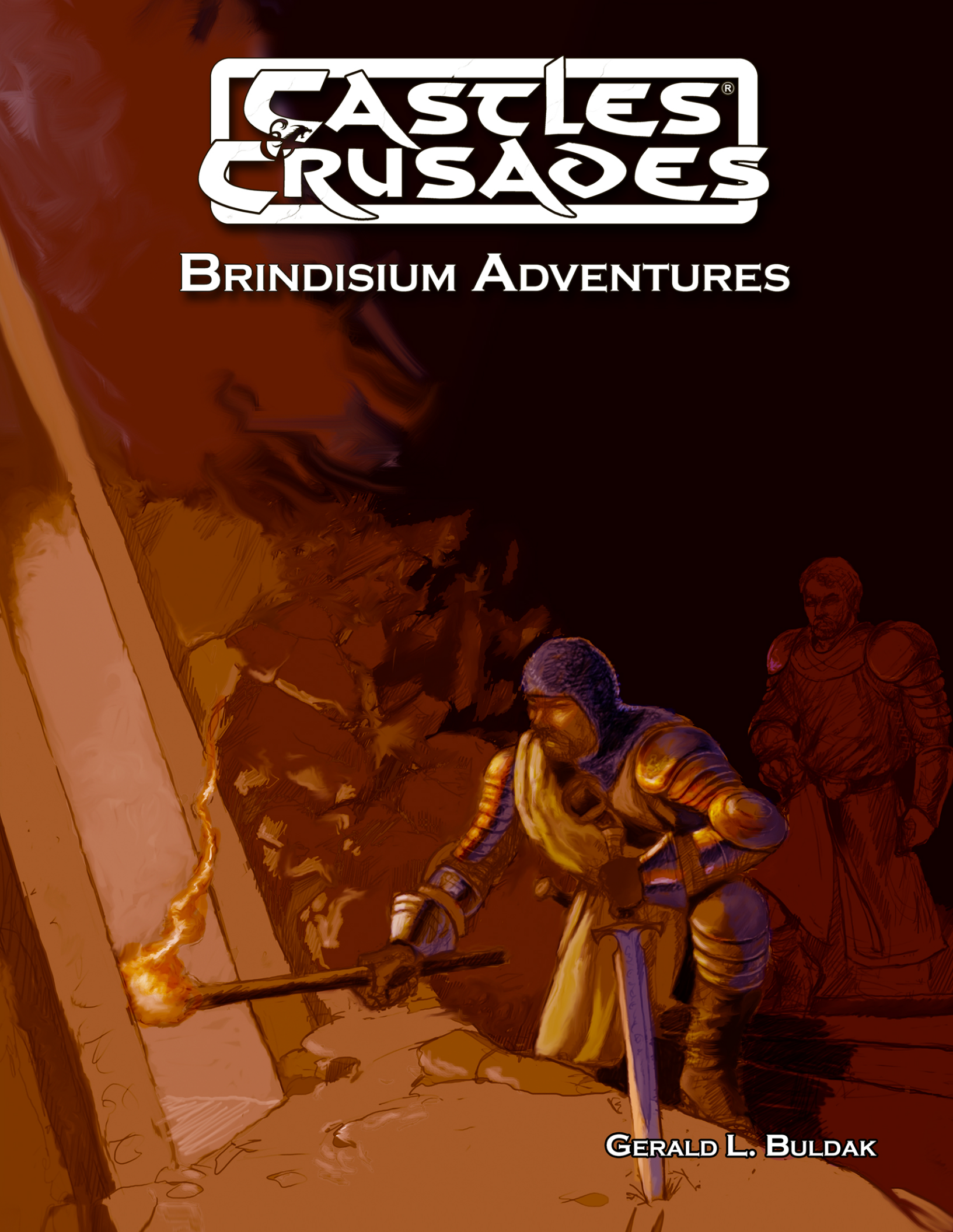


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BRINDISIUM ADVENTURES



GERALD L. BULDAK



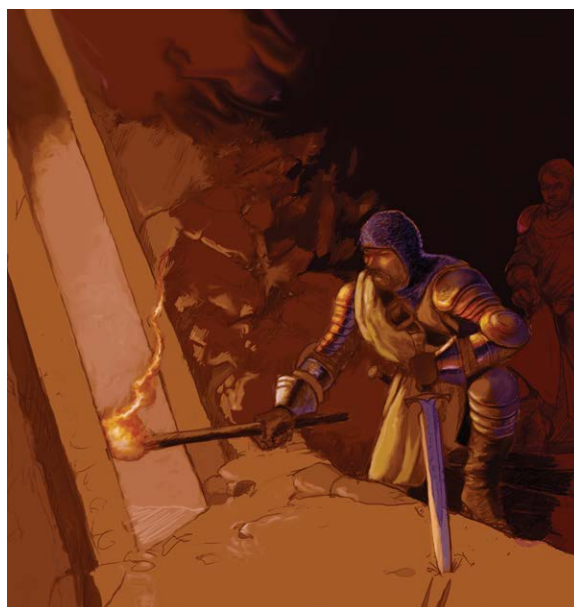
BRINDISIUM ADVENTURES

by

GERALD L. BULDAK

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY JOHN APPEL AND JOHN WRIGHT

COVER ART, INTERIOR ART, AND MAPS BY PETER "20 DOLLAR" BRADLEY



For Christina, Stephanie, and Alexander-my inspiration. May your lives be full of adventure.

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Well met, intrepid explorer!

Within this tome lie two adventures for high-level parties, that are set in the Brindisium region of the Aihilde map. The adventures, which are intended as one-off sessions, can be dropped into any campaign that is occurring anywhere near Brindisium. They are not meant to be run in a chronological manner, although if you wish to do so, by all means, there's nothing stopping you.

Endless thanks to Steve Chenault for the opportunities he's provided that have made this work possible. With many thanks, as well, to John Appel and John Wright for their assistance in writing and running sessions of *The Prophecy of Balak'zir* for and at GaryCon VI; thanks to Eric Helgeson, Andy Frielink, Todd Kath, Tim Wadzinski, Jeff Dean, Dave Johnson, Kevin Morton, Tim Morton, Sean Tragesser, and all who have played at my tables over the years, and those whose tables at which I played, for enduring my warped ideas, and your contributions to molding my writing and game mastering over the years, along with these adventures. Also, thanks to Luke Gygax, Ernie Gygax, and the rest of the Gygax family for providing such a wonderful forum through which I could cut my writing and convention-game-mastering teeth. Trollzah!

These adventures were originally written as C&C Society/Knights of the Crusade one-round tournaments at the GaryCon game convention in Lake Geneva. As I started the process of writing for the convention, I found myself trying to work in various TLG volumes, in an attempt to make things more interesting. The elements included from *Of Gods & Monsters*, as well as the other works cited, aren't essential to the adventures, but they definitely add different variables to the sessions than without. I've personally found the works referenced to be most useful in creating the kind of atmosphere I incorporate into my games (or at least try to). Hopefully, you'll find them equally useful, if you haven't already.

You might find yourself wondering, "Why Brindisium?!" Most importantly was the fact that it hadn't been highly fleshed out in other TLG publications, leaving plenty of room for imagination to run wild! It had numerous aspects that, when combined, made devising adventure hooks and plots very easy. The first element is a political one, given the control of the region by the Senate. While I have tried to avoid involving the party in political machinations, there is plenty of room for such themed adventures in the capital city. Secondly, is the importance of the economic components of the region, two very different elements that make for considerable variability in adventure design: the dependence on wine country to the north, and stone mine country to the west, for economic stability, make for interesting adventure hooks, some of which I've tried to highlight in the adventures you're about to read.

It is mentioned within that balanced parties work best. There are instances, particularly in the *Mine! Mine! MINE!!!* adventure, that specify certain classes. If you've been looking for a way to incorporate the Rune Mark class into your game, look no further. Obviously, if you plan to do so, a copy of *Rune Lore* is necessary. Beyond this, however, the classes presented in the *Players Handbook* will be sufficient to run the adventures.

Since they were originally intended to be convention events, you should be able to get through an entire adventure during the course of a 4-hour gaming session. There's something for every class in each adventure, so hopefully, if they make good decisions, everybody at the table will get the chance to have their shining moment during the game. If they don't make good decisions...well, anyway...

So now, it's time for you to embark on your journey! Feel free to adapt what you will to your own needs, but at the very least, you have the framework for two adventures that promise, if nothing else, to keep your adventuring party on its toes (and, hopefully, out of the grave). Adventure lies within!

Gerald L. Buldak

May 2016

THE PROPHECY OF BALAK'ZIR

INTRODUCTION

The Prophecy of Balak'Zir is a scenario for 6 level 8-10 PCs. The adventure should be completed within 4 hours of the players sitting down at the table and the end of the final encounter. This adventure will be highly challenging, and it should not surprise the CK at all to have a relatively high body count within the party of PCs. A TPK is certainly feasible. There is something for everyone, as it were, and the more balanced the party, the greater the possibility of the party surviving to, and possibly even through, the final encounter. Parties that are heavier on spellcasters than front-line muscle will likely be at a disadvantage, and will be much more susceptible to the TPK than a balanced party or, even, one composed primarily of fighter-types.

CK'S INTRODUCTION

Drought has plagued wine country in northern Brindisium for far too long. Growers in the region have reached the point of desperation, as they approach the eve of a new growing season. With the disappointment set from last season, their hopes were buoyed by the arrival of a quartet of priests of Mordius, who offered to establish a temple in the hopes of changing their fortunes. The growers eagerly accepted the seemingly generous offer...perhaps too eagerly.

Since the establishment of the temple, life in wine country has gone from worse to catastrophic. It started with the mysterious disappearance of vintners after they'd tithed their family valuables to the temple. Now, stories of the rise of Balak'zir, a doomsday prophecy long thought to be fraudulent by the most respected of theologians and scholars, may be coming true in the region; perhaps it was not so preposterous after all.

Given the importance of Brindisian wine to the nation's economic health, panic grips the senate. Citizens in the capital clamor for the razing of wine country, in an effort to stave off the end of the world. The senate and the consulate refuse to concede the fiscal resources, but recognize their precarious position between gold and rioting citizens. In an effort to quell a full-blown revolt, a cabal of influential senators has organized a band of adventurers to investigate the happenings in wine country. As with other such endeavors, the senate has offered up generous compensation to any so brave as to voluntarily face the terrors that await. Are you up to the challenge?

The Prophecy of Balak'zir remains as fallacious as usual. Long accepted as a tale of a bogeyman, existing for little more than convincing misbehaving children to change their ways, from time to time, the prophecy has occasionally resurfaced, only to be disproven by scholars and erstwhile adventurers. So it shall be here, as well. Through the ages, special means have been required by hucksters seeking to profit from it. In many cases, as here, magic can have powerful effects on simple minds.

PLAYERS' INTRODUCTION

Read the following text to the players:

You know it's bad when the wine dries up. If it's available at all, only the wealthiest can afford the stuff. At first, it was little more than an inconvenience. Your fellow citizens in Brindisium were willing to stoop to the occasional lager or even spirits. For a while, the novelty reigned. After a few months, however, the novelty wore off and people began to crave their beloved wine. By this point, not only had the wine prices continued to skyrocket, but demand for the other beverages led to their prices rising as well. A visit to the pub was all but guaranteed to end with a brawl. Instead of drink flowing from the pubs, now only blood flows. Tempers flare on a daily basis, and with supplies of libation dwindling and their prices skyrocketing, the people have had enough. Some are even so bold as to call for the razing of wine country.

The bounty boards around the city have been filled with their usual jobs...find this, kill that.... Maybe once upon a time, such would have intrigued you to the point to take the jobs, but lately, there has been nothing worthy of skills the likes of yours.

That said, it isn't every day that Senators themselves post a job. No less than figuring out what's led to the crisis in wine country. Rumors abound...conspiracy by the vintners to raise their prices, strife between the guilds...some are even so bold as to link the drought to prophecies of cataclysm. The posting by the Senators (why didn't the whole Senate sponsor the job, for that matter?) smacks of desperation. The job seems easy enough; deliver a summons to appear before the Senate to the vintners, to ascertain the nature of the problem. The younger and more brash adventurers don't seem to trust the ruling class. Or they just lack the courage needed for the job. Either way, this looks like the perfect opportunity for you to get out of town for a while. This place is getting stale, and besides, the potential for as much wine as you can drink is certainly appealing. Who knows...maybe you'll get into the good graces of one of these Senators. That can't be a bad thing, can it?

ENCOUNTER 1: A STIFF IN THE VINES AND A SCREAM IN THE WOODS!

For this encounter, refer to map 1. Either set up the battlemat, or set up tiles. The party begins play on the road on the southwestern-most part of the map. The marching order should be established by the players before the session begins.

SETTING THE MOOD:

The PCs have been moving quickly, in high heat and humidity. Their travels have kicked up a significant amount of dust, which covers them in grime. They've been moving nonstop for the last several hours, so they're tired, thirsty and in need of a rest. The first vineyard they come upon is separated from the road

by a stout timber fence. Where the PCs stop, allow them the opportunity to look around and see the sights; the key points are the well-manicured vines in the vineyard, along with what appears to be fairly dense tree growth to the north, just beyond the vineyard, as well as some to the east, as well. The distance from the road, through the vines, to the woods is approximately 500 feet. A large tree, providing copious amounts of shade, stands on the south side of the road, and looks very inviting.

THE HOOK

As the PCs look around, they spot what looks like a body, lying face down, across the fence from where they're resting. The likeliest choices that the party has are to either investigate the body, or to continue on with their task of tracking down the vineyard owners, to ascertain the severity of the situation.

If the party chooses to investigate, they find the remains of a human male. The body is clothed in the simple attire of a farmer. There are no valuables on the body. Turning the body over reveals slash marks across the chest and throat. The slashes resemble claw marks. An astute outdoors-based archetype (ranger/druid/barbarian) will note that the spacing of the slashes does not resemble a large animal; they look like they may be humanoid in origin.

If the party chooses to move on without investigating the body, they travel another hundred feet or so, before coming to the access road leading to the vineyard, branching off from the main road. The sign on the post marks this as the Canteril Brothers' Winery.

Once this point has been reached, the PCs hear a female scream. Regardless of the course of action, each member of the party is allowed a wisdom check (without levels, unless race or class ability allows it) to ascertain the location of the scream. If the party chose to investigate the body, they make their check at CL 0; if they chose to move on, the check is made at CL 6. If standing between the vine rows while investigating the body, they spot a commotion between two individuals at the far end of the row they currently occupy. If they have moved along, and now stand at the entrance to the winery, and make their check, they spot the flash of blades at the far end of the field, but several rows of vines obscure their view of anything else.

If the PCs can directly see the two combatants, they can tell that one is clearly a human-looking female, and the other appears to be dressed like the body just discovered in the field.

Investigating path: If the party responds and sprints toward the fight, they can cross the field in 3 rounds. The woman holds her own throughout the fight. As the party comes within range of the rakshasa's *detect thoughts* ability, it turns and braces to meet the onslaught coming at it. It manages to remain engaged in combat with the woman, however.

Summons-delivery path: If the party stands at the winery entrance and begins making their way toward the fight, they will require additional time to get to the scene of the fight. The robed figure strikes the deathblow, the woman screams, and the party, if they failed their wisdom checks previously, is afforded

a second wisdom check, this time at CL 1 (as above, no levels unless race/class abilities allow this). As they make their way toward the scene of the fight, just as they clear the grape vines and can see what's happening, they observe the robed figure on its knees, inspecting what looks like a body. The figure then stands up to attempt a *coup de grace*. If this happens, skip forward to 2b.

The male combatant, that has changed its shape to resemble the body in the field, is actually a rakshasa that, through wounds, has been significantly drained of HP.

RAKSHASA *This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 7d8, HP currently 10 (maximum 44), AC 21, and MV 40'. Its primary attributes are mental. It attacks with 2 claws for 1d3 and a bite for 1d4 points of damage, or by weapon. It has the following special abilities: Detect Thoughts (100' radius), Spells, Change Shape, Darkvision 60 ft., SR 16, Immunity to Magic, and Blessed Vulnerability. It casts spells as a 5th level wizard and a 1st level cleric, and has the following spells memorized: Wizard 0- Light, Message, Open/Close, Mending, Ghost Sound 1st- Charm Person, Sleep, Shield, Magic Missile Wiz 2nd- Rope Trick, Web Wiz 3rd- Stinking Cloud Cleric 0- Detect Magic, Purify Food and Drink, Create Water Clr 1st- Bane*

The rakshasa is armed with a +2 *longsword of puncturing* that does 1d8+2 damage + 1d6 constitution damage 3x/day. None of the hits that the rakshasa has scored against the human female have triggered this ability.

The rakshasa will detect the party descending upon it. Knowing the extent of its wounds, the rakshasa seeks to avoid combat with a large party, if at all possible. A recommended tactic would be to first have the rakshasa cast *web*, in an attempt to entangle the opponents before making its own escape. If successful, the rakshasa flees up the main road the PCs travelled. If one or more of the party is not entangled, the rakshasa will then cast *stinking cloud* on the remaining attackers. If they are successfully caught up inside the cloud, the rakshasa will then flee on foot. As a last resort, it will cast *rope trick*, in an effort to at least hide (it has 5 hours of time during which it can hide) and nurse its wounds.

If the rakshasa is defeated, it is found to be carrying coin equal to 1,000 gp, 8 gems (2x bloodstone-50gp each, violet-blue sapphire-50gp, amethyst-250gp, blue sapphire-1,000 gp, pearl-25 gp, 2x common opal-100gp each), 9 extraordinary items (7 China place settings worth 70 gp each, an expert light flail worth 50 gp, an expert hand crossbow worth 200 gp, 2 jade with silver buttons worth 1,250 gp each, a tabard worth 14 gp, a gown worth 8 gp, a wood with silver inlay holy symbol of Mordius worth 100 gp, a wood mirror with gold inlays worth 250 gp, and a gold with gemstones holy symbol of Narrheit worth 7,500 gp), as well as the above-named magic sword and a *cloak of arachnida*. The cloak is worn under what appear to be religious vestments. A CL2 intelligence check by a divine spellcaster will reveal the symbols on the vestments to be those of Mordius, the Lady of the Lake; the spellcaster, if successful in his/her check, will note that the vestments aren't right. They are far too opulent for a nature deity, especially Mordius. If

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the human druid is being played, it will instantly note that the vestments are fraudulent.

If the human female dies, go to encounter 2b. Searching the human female's body, she carries a +3 *bane longsword* (vs. spellcasting creatures), a mail hauberk and a breastplate. If, however, she survives, she introduces herself as Agwyn.

AGWYN (*She is a neutral human female 7th level fighter. Her vital stats are HP 49 and AC 22. Her primary attributes are strength, dexterity and constitution. Her attributes are strength 17 (+2), intelligence 7 (-1), wisdom 15 (+1), dexterity 16 (+2), constitution 16 (+2), charisma 14 (+1). She wears a mail hauberk and breastplate, with an AC of 22. She carries a +3 bane longsword (+1 normally, +3 vs.spell-casters).*)

ENCOUNTER 2: A WARM MEAL, A SOFT BED, AND A TWIST OF FATE

How Encounter 2 plays out will greatly depend on how Encounter 1 was resolved. If Agwyn survives, the PCs will have the option of encounters 2A and/or 2B. If Agwyn was killed by the rakshasa, then the only possibility the PCs have is encounter 2B.

2A: Should Agwyn survive, she will invite the PCs back to the farmhouse she shared with her husband, Gilennan, whom the PCs already observed laying dead in the field. Should the PCs accept Agwyn's invitation to come back to the farmhouse, they are invited to spend the night in the vineyard guesthouse, to allow the party the opportunity to rest, and spellcasters the ability to regain spells. They're also offered dinner the night of the encounter, and breakfast the following morning. Beyond her sheer hospitality, Agwyn shares several important pieces of information with the party. She informs them that she and her husband are the owners and proprietors of Canteril Brothers Winery; if there is a bard in the party, allow that character a Legend Lore check (CL 0). Success indicates that the character recalls that the winery was once known as Appleknoll Vineyard, which was particularly famous for its apple brandy. There may be bottles of Appleknoll Brandy that remain intact, and would be highly valuable, still present in and around the vineyard. A bottle of the stuff is easily worth 500gp on the market, but an astute PC could get more.

She also informs the party that last fall, priests of Mordius arrived, offering to establish a temple to help remedy the disastrous drought and restore the vineyards to their previous glory. As residents of the world of Aihirde, all PCs know that Mordius is The Lady of the Lake, one of the gods of the nature pantheon.

Should the party choose, they may reinspect the body of the dead rakshasa. Closer inspection of the body reveals a bipedal tiger wearing robes that are adorned with the symbols of Mordius, but the spellcasters are allowed an intelligence check (CL 2 for clerics, CL 4 for arcane spellcasters). Success on the check allows the PC to determine that the robes don't seem right; they're either too ornate for The Lady of the Lake, or they are the wrong color etc. Either way, something's wrong. If

any of the players is playing a human druid, they will make this determination without any kind of check.

Agwyn also informs the party that she saw her husband killed by the rakshasa in the field and, picked up her adventuring gear and the deed to the vineyard, to go get help. The rakshasa, after having killed Gilennan, made its way toward the farmhouse and intercepted Agwyn in her flight.

She also shares that Canteril Brothers is one of only two remaining wineries that has yet to suffer the disappearance of its proprietors. The other, Fairwyn Family Vineyard, is a half day's walk to the east.

Agwyn also reveals that she is a former adventurer who retired from adventuring after she met her husband; their children left the vineyard a month ago to travel to Brindisium to ask for help; the party isn't familiar with them. Agwyn's background explains her armor and ability with the sword. From her adventuring days, she possesses a small library of ancient tomes that she keeps in one of her barns; arcane spellcasters and bards may (CL 4 intelligence check for spellcasters, CL2 Legend Lore check for bards) find what they are looking for, as it pertains to the problem at hand. All other classes will not be able to use the books for anything more than kindling.

This is a good opportunity for the CK to throw out a red herring. Some suggested red herrings could be:

A map that appears to be about 100 years old that clearly marks Appleknoll Vineyard, with the lair of a suspected vampire lord shown within the vineyard; an old coffin is found nearby that now contains books.

A satchel full of communiques that a thief/assassin PC would recognize, describing some thieves' guild operation that the thief can't/won't identify that involves this region.

Evidence of some natural terror (plant or animal) in the woods nearby; maybe fronds or pelts or some such.

Whatever else can be devised to throw the party off track.

Agwyn also provides them with a map that shows them the path to the temple of Mordius. She has no desire of accompanying the PCs to the temple, simply out of fear of what will happen to her if she does. She, instead, indicates her desire to return to Brindisium personally, with the intention of addressing the Senate. While she cannot be talked into going to the temple, she can be talked into waiting around the vineyard while the party investigates the goings on.

Should the PCs opt to go to the temple, Agwyn informs them that there is a service there in the morning. The temple is about a day's walk from Canteril Brothers. She offers them use of a guesthouse behind the main house that has amenities that would be considered luxury lodging in the city. There are beds for each member of the party; the combination of the food and lodging accommodations results in characters regenerating HP at twice the normal rate, should they not magically heal. Should the characters choose to investigate the temple, it is covered in encounter 4.

2B: INVESTIGATING THE SECOND BODY...

As the PCs arrive at the scene, the woman is struck by a savage blow and falls. At the point at which she falls, she has -4 HP (can go to -constitution = -14 before she dies). The assailant (the rakshasa from encounter 1) is observed by the party just as it is positioning itself to deliver its *coup de grace*. The assailant automatically detects the party coming, even if they attempt to sneak into position for a back/sneak attack. At this point, the assailant will drop its weapon and, before the party is in position to attack, will cast *web* at the advancing party. Regardless of the spell's success, the assailant turns and runs through the rows of grapes toward the road, where it turns left (the direction toward which the PCs were headed originally). At this point, the CK needs to begin keeping track of rounds, due to the condition of the woman.

If the party has a cleric, paladin, or assassin character, these characters must make a wisdom check to ascertain whether or not the female is dead. Their check is made at CL -2 (add levels to the roll). Similarly, any character whose race allows for improved senses, ESP, hearing, etc. makes their check at CL -2. Other classes can also check, but their checks will be more difficult, at CL 2.

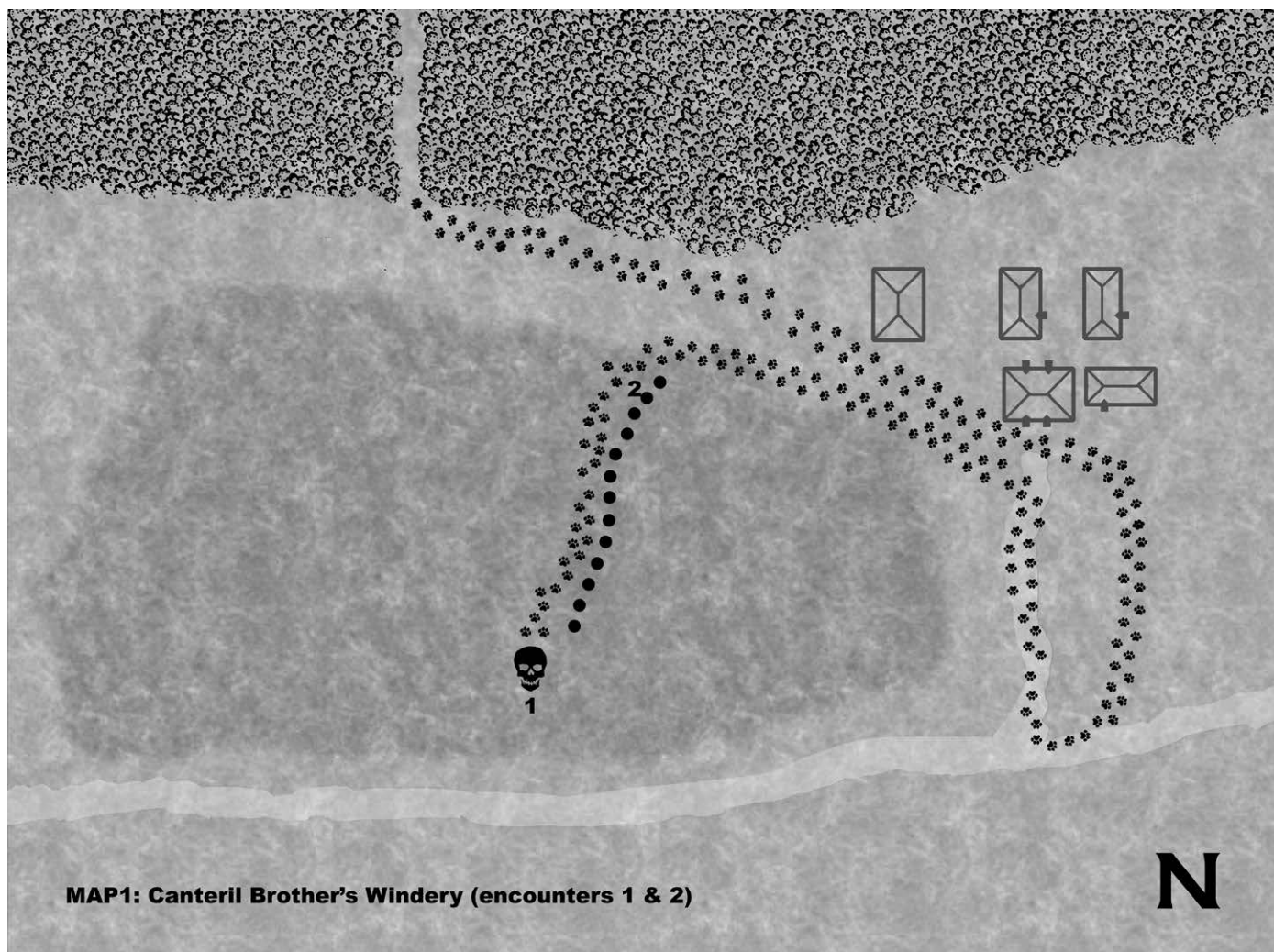
If one or more members of the party realize that the female remains alive, any member of the party may attempt to bind her

wounds or otherwise stabilize her condition. Either a *potion of healing*, or a healing spell, must be cast on the female in order to prevent her from dying. If they do prevent her from dying by binding her wounds, but not necessarily using healing spells/potions, they can take her to the nearby farmhouse. There, they will find beds and what they would need to help make her comfortable.

If the party expends one or more of its healing spells/potions to revive the woman, the character who does so should be noted on the encounter score sheet. Similarly, any party member who attempts to bind the wounds of the woman, thus keeping her alive, should also be noted in the appropriate location on the score sheet.

If the woman dies, the only way they would find the map she would normally have offered them is by ransacking her home. Should the PCs stay in her home, they will not find conditions as inviting as the guest house, and will only recover HP at the normal rate.

The party also has the choice to pursue the rakshasa as it flees. If they do, it will make all haste possible for the passage through the trees in encounter 3A. If this happens, the party will face the rakshasa, as well as the four flesh golems it controls. It will also *shapechange* once it gets into the woods, assuming the form



of either a party member it struck down in combat, or it will take the form of Agwyn.

ENCOUNTER 3: A WALK IN THE WOODS, OR “I DON’T LIKE THIS VINEYARD; LET’S TRY ANOTHER ONE.”

Following Encounter 2, there are two possible ways that the PCs can choose to continue the adventure. They can either choose to follow the tracks that were left by the rakshasa to Canteril Brothers’ winery, or they can continue their quest by using the road to deliver the Senate’s summons to the next winery.

3A: “WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?”

The rakshasa that killed Gilennan and, possibly Agwyn, was not particularly careful about concealing its tracks. There are two sets of discernible tracks, as marked by the dotted lines on Map 1 below. The shorter, darker line indicates the path that the rakshasa took from Gilennan after slaying him, and are easily traceable by an outdoorsman. A ranger can detect this set of tracks with a CL1 track check (wisdom). A decidedly different set of relatively fresh tracks (the longer path marked by paw prints) can also be seen, that clearly doesn’t belong to either Gilennan or the rakshasa that took his form.

The two sets of tracks do not match. While the first trail is clearly boot or shoe imprints, the other set is decidedly animalistic in its nature. Even if there is a ranger in the party, they will not be able to determine what made the tracks. Allow a roll, but the roll will fail, even on a natural 20. The second trail leads to a narrow passage through the dense tree line that separates Canteril Brothers from a neighboring vineyard.

The rakshasa has left a formidable guard in the passage. A pair of flesh golems lie in wait in the thicket, concealed in a manner that any character attempting to search for them must succeed at a wisdom check, CL 10. Two more are in the clearing on the other side of the trees. They attack immediately; once they attack and the party is fully engaged, the other two come out of the woods, to attack the party from behind.

GOLEM, FLESH (*These creatures’ vital stats are HD 7d10, AC 18, HP 51, 38, 34, 39, and MV 30’. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack opponents with two fists for 2d8 points of damage each. It can be struck only by magical weapons with a +2 bonus or better. It is immune to nearly all magic; see Monsters & Treasure for specific details*)

The golems all have the ability to go berserk, which they will if the party kills the rakshasa. They also possess immunity to magic, ignoring all spell effects, except all spells that inflict fire or cold damage to any degree act as a *slow* spell for 2d6 rounds; spells that inflict electrical damage will instead heal the golem, to the extent that each die of damage allows the golem to heal 1 HP.

If the party defeats the golems, several things can be learned by investigating the scene of the fight. If the party goes back to the vineyard to warn Agwyn, assuming she survived, she will come to investigate and identify the parts of the golems as from the vintners in the area who have disappeared. They will also

discover that the golems collectively have coin amounting to 400 gp total value. As magic items are concerned, they will find one magic scroll with *passwall* (wizard 5) and *hold portal* (wizard 1), and a bastard sword +2.

If the PCs also face the rakshasa, it will have taken the form of Agwyn as it waits for the PCs in the clearing, just on the other side of the wooded passage. It is important to note that the rakshasa will take Agwyn’s form, regardless of whether or not she was killed in the earlier encounter. If she happens to be with the party at this point, the CK is encouraged to play up the chaos of this. There should be an immediate and urgent sense of confusion that overtakes the party, regarding the identity of the true Agwyn, or even worse, if both forms they observe are disguised and shapechanged rakshasas. Whatever offensive spells it still possesses, the rakshasa will not hesitate to use them. If the encounter gets to this point, the rakshasa will produce a scroll from its pack that is inscribed with a *fireball* spell, and it will lead by casting this spell, knowing full well that it won’t affect any of the golems.

3B. HEADING OUT TO THE HIGHWAY...TO THE NEXT VINEYARD

The party may be insistent on continuing with their official task, and if not, the CK should remind them of that quest. The road to the next vineyard winds through a mile-long stretch of woods. Roughly halfway through the woods, the party is ambushed by a pack of thorn throwers that are hiding in the woods. The ambush is well hidden; outdoor PC classes must make a wisdom check at CL 8 to detect a tripwire that stretches across the road. The tripwire is very well hidden. If the tripwire is triggered, two dead tree trunks come crashing down on the road, boxing the PCs into a stretch of road that is roughly 60 feet long, with thick brush along either side of the road, going into the woods. Once the trees crash, allow the outdoor PCs a CL2 wisdom check to notice brush rustling immediately prior to the attack to avoid surprise; non-outdoor classes have no chance at detecting the attack. Six of the thorn throwers are positioned on either side of the road. They have the following properties:

THORN THROWERS (*These medium neutral plant creatures’ vital stats are HD 3d10, AC 14, HP 19, and MV 30’. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with 1-8 thorns for 1d3 points of damage each. They are susceptible to offensive wizard spells, taking double normal damage from such spells; plant-affecting spells deal triple damage, and flame-based spells deal 2.5x normal damage.*)

It should be noted, however, that if fire-based attacks are used, the woods will be set on fire, thus making the escape of the party more...difficult?

Once the thorn throwers attack, a CL3 wisdom check is granted to the entire party (only outdoor classes add levels) to spot the attackers. Rangers make the check at CL2, adding levels. The point of the encounter is to drain spellcasters of their spells, and potentially also missile weapons. The brush getting into the woods is so thick, that movement is reduced to ½ normal, so if any PC attempts to go into the brush to go after the thorn throwers, they will have a very difficult time maneuvering, and

will very likely be cut off from the rest of the party. If the party is divided, it should be very easy to cut them apart piecemeal.

ENCOUNTER 4: WHAT, WERE YOU RAISED IN A BARN?!

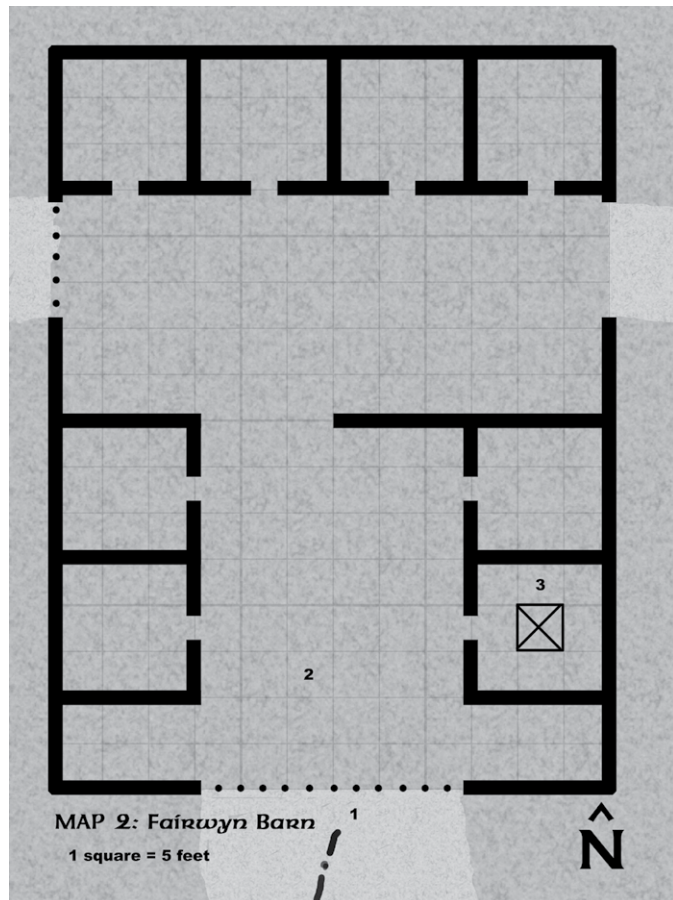
At this point, the two adventure paths converge on a barn at the Fairwyn Family Vineyard. How the party gains access to the barn may very well determine how they fare once they enter it. The barn can be found on Map 2.

4A. WE REALLY ARE CIVILIZED COMPANY

If the party chooses to take the road heading east from Canteril Brothers, they will find Fairwyn Family Winery, just as promised, about a half-day's march. If they did not trigger the encounter with the thorn throwers, the party will be in fairly good shape. If, on the other hand, they did have to face the thorn throwers, the party will likely be run down, both physically and in terms of spells.

However the party fared in terms of the woods encounter, they will find the buildings of the winery in disrepair, and will also notice that the vines are in poor condition, as if they haven't been tended in some time.

While the somewhat dilapidated state of the buildings can be seen from the road, a perfectly-groomed rosebush stands out at the front gate of the winery. The party should be allowed a wisdom check (CL3) to notice a glint of light coming from the bush. Located within the bush is the *Rose Staff of Mordius*. The staff has the following properties:



8 CASTLES & CRUSADES

Undead cannot come within 20' of the staff.

The staff heals 100 points of any type of damage per day.

The wielder gains +2 to his/her wisdom and constitution attributes.

The wielder is driven to take up the quest to rid the land of its problems.

When the danger has been defeated, the staff reverts to a +1 staff of healing.

If they make their way to the residence, the inhabitants will be haggard, and looking obviously sleep deprived, and above all, wary of any visitors. The party should roll charisma checks (CL 4, don't add levels) to determine whether or not they will be received or not. Magic can also be employed, as well, hoping to charm the inhabitants.

If the party is successful in reassuring the inhabitants that they mean no harm, the family will warn the PCs of something in the main barn that has killed all the livestock, and thrown their carcasses out into the access ways in between the buildings. The barn has been "occupied" for the better part of a month, and the family has been huddled in the home in terror. Several important pieces of information will be shared with the party.

First, they will learn that they have, in fact, found Fairwyn Family Winery. The current inhabitants are Mordred and Silena Fairwyn, along with their children. Since the unpleasantness began, the children have been sent to stay with relatives in the capital, in the hopes of sending help. The family will inquire as to whether or not the party knows anything about the children; they don't. They will also learn that the east gate to the barn was smashed out when the remains of one of the vintner's oxen were apparently thrown through it. The carcasses of the livestock remain. The western and southern gates are closed.

In addition, Mordred thought he saw someone around the south door of the barn two nights ago. He hasn't seen anyone since. He investigated the doors, and found that his lock to the south door had been removed and was missing; the lock was replaced with one that wasn't his own. The Fairwyns know nothing about the staff or the rose bush.

The vintner and his wife have little to offer the party in terms of material goods or foodstuffs, however, there are beds in the house, should the party need to rest. The elderly couple will press the party for whatever information they can get. The party should be pushed to the point of revealing their commission from the senator, as well as any information about the temple that the party learns. They should also be pressed to reveal what went on at Canteril Brothers.

If the party reveals anything about the rakshasa (which they may or may not know what it is), the vintner brings to their attention the tracks outside the south door to the barn. If the party chooses to investigate, they will find that the tracks are identical to those of the animalistic trail on Map 1. Looking to the south, the party will see the treeline and, through it, the back side of Canteril Brothers winery. The vintner will also excuse

himself and return with a book from one of his adventuring ancestors, that describes the strengths and weaknesses of, among other things, rakshasas.

At this point, the vintner turns his inquiry to choices. He has coin to offer, but doesn't know which possibility would be better. He and his wife can't decide if it would be better to leave the vineyard until the rakshasa plague is lifted, or to have the party clear whatever is in the barn. At this point, the decision-making process should be turned over to the party. If Agwyn survived, given her warrior past, she may have a crossbow and bolts in her arsenal. This, of course, is up to the CK's discretion.

Should the party choose to investigate the barn, and enters via the "open" door, they will find livestock carcasses, seemingly drained of all fluids. Entry via this route allows them to find the Maegle dragon in 4B asleep. The party can take a surprise attack. Otherwise, attempts to use either of the intact doors results in the dragon being awakened. If this occurs, play through encounter 4B (obviously, the party does realize that this is Fairwyn Family Winery). Otherwise, the stats for the dragon are in the 4B stat block.

4B. WHO NEEDS CIVILIZED? THIS CALLS FOR BRUTE FORCE!

Should the party survive the encounter with the flesh golems and, possibly, the rakshasa, they will follow the tracks that match those of the animalistic trail to the south entrance to a barn. *It is important to note that they do not realize that this is Fairwyn Family Winery.* There is a lock on the door.

The lock is trapped requiring a successful CL5 traps check by a rogue/assassin PC to discover. If the rogue/assassin detects the trap, they can attempt to disable the trap (CL7). If the disable check fails, or if they attempt to pick the lock without looking for a trap, it will trigger a needle trap. The needle is poisoned with the blood of a basilisk; the PC is allowed a constitution save (CL6). If they fail the constitution save, they are instantly turned to stone.

Any attempt to manipulate the lock will alert what waits behind the door. A mature (Age 4), 18' long Maegle Dragon sits just behind the door, waiting for anything but its master to come through. The dragon will unleash its breath attack as soon as the door opens. The dragon has the following characteristics:

MAEGLE DRAGON (*This chaotic evil dragon's vital stats are: HD 20d10, AC 23, HP 131, MV 30'. Its primary attributes are mental. It attacks with 2 claw (1d4 each) and 1 bite (1d8), with a DB of 4. The dragon adds 10 to its attack rolls. If a party member is bitten, it is subject to the dragon's crush attack, taking 1d10 points of damage per round, and the victim will be subject to disease. Anyone caught in the dragon's bite can attempt a strength check (CL 20) to attempt to escape. The dragon also possesses a breath weapon that is a 20' cone that consists of gas and acid that has the same disease effects as the dragon's bite.*)

The Maegle dragon is the protector of a secret, underground passage that leads from the barn to the living quarters underneath the temple. This passage is covered in encounter 5A. Should the party choose to avoid the barn, their only option to follow up on the rakshasa will be by going to the temple.

Taking the underground passage to the rakshasa lair is covered in encounter 5A; the temple visit is covered in 5B.

The dotted lines indicate the closed doors on the south and west sides of the barn. The dashed line indicates the path of the rakshasa. Map marker 1 represents the position of the trapped lock on the south door; marker 2 represents the location of the Maegle dragon, and marker 3 shows the position of the trap door. The door is partially obscured by straw, however, a clear path can be spotted by a ranger or rogue from the south door to the trap door.

The dragon has accumulated considerable treasure, just in the relatively short time it has been guarding the entrance to the underground passage. Treasure includes: 11,600 gp worth of coin, 14 gems worth 1,540 gp, Potion of *nondetection*, Sword (Falchion, Broad) +2, *Nine Lives Stealer*.

ENCOUNTER 5: THE GRAND FINALE!

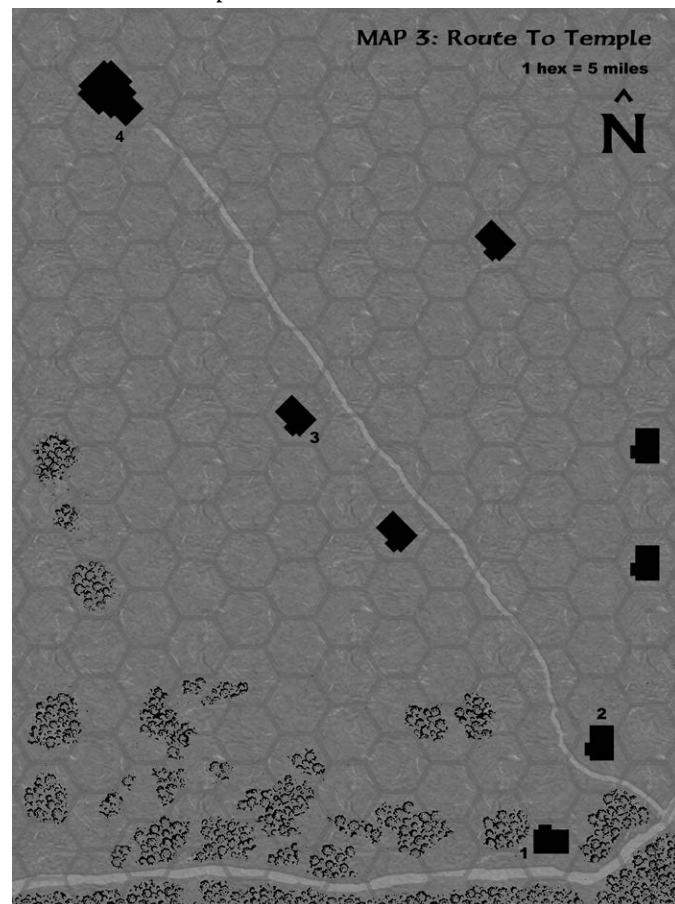
Depending on how the PCs completed encounter 4, the way this final encounter plays out can be radically different. The grand scheme of this encounter is summed up on Map 3. General features of Map 3 are as follows:

Item 1 is Canteril Brothers Vineyard.

Item 2 is Fairwyn Family Winery.

Item 3 (the line) is the underground tunnel that spans from the Fairwyn barn to the rakshasa lair under the temple.

Item 4 is the temple



If the party chooses to follow the map that Agwyn provided them to the temple, they will take the road back to the west until they spot a felled, dead tree that looks like it's been there for some time. While there isn't a formal road, there has been enough foot traffic in recent weeks to have tramped out an obvious trail that heads to the north. Most of what the party goes through will be tall-grass prairie, with occasional wooded thickets thrown in for good measure. If the party encountered the thorn throwers in encounter 3B, the woods should give the party pause. Nothing nasty lurks there, but the party should be edgy at this point if they've gone through that encounter.

If the party has defeated the Maegle dragon and discovered the trap door in the barn, they have the option of descending into the passage. The passage will lead them to a large room built underneath the temple to Mordius. If they haven't tripped too many of the traps, they may gain surprise and have the ability to take a ranged sneak attack with the blessed crossbow bolts to slay the rakshasa outright. If they fail at this, however, the encounter will likely get bloody.

5A. UNDERGROUND

If the PCs defeat the Maegle dragon, they can inspect the area surrounding the dragon in the barn. Doing so will lead them to discover a set of tracks that are identical to those that led to the south door of the barn. The tracks lead into the southeast-most stall, where some loosely piled straw can be kicked aside to reveal a trap door in the floor. Bodies, ruined weapons and mangled armor litter the floor of the barn. The trap door appears to be propped open slightly, and so will not require any search check to find. All the party needs to do is move the straw on the floor around to find the hinges, and they will be able to lift the door the rest of the way open. There are no traps on the door.

Looking into the trap door, the PCs will find it dark and unlit. Any ambient light that illuminates the pit from either daylight, or any light source the PCs possess, reveal the passage to be approximately 30' deep, and 15' wide. A stout wooden ladder descends from the floor of the barn, to the bottom of the tunnel. The walls of the tunnel are well braced, and a dwarf or gnome character will note the high degree of structural soundness of the tunnel. Whoever dug this tunnel, most definitely knew their business.

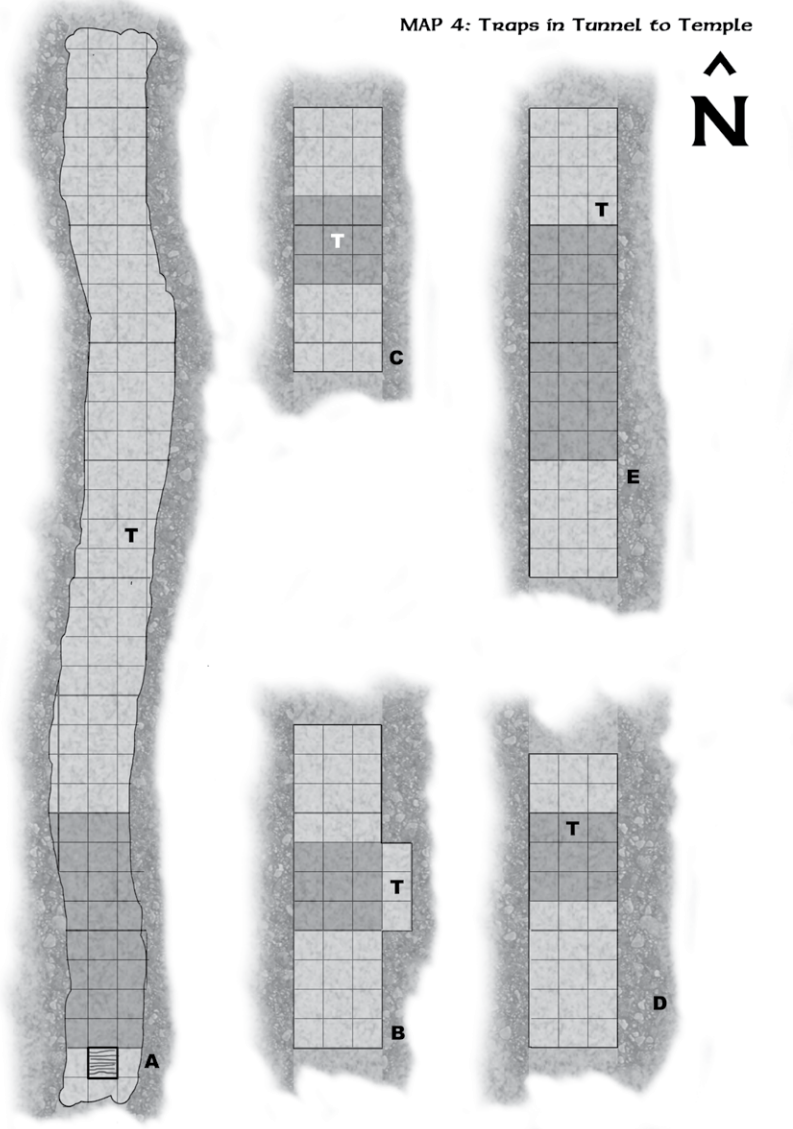
The tunnel leads to a very large room underneath the "temple" to Mordius. The tunnel stretches for approximately 10 miles from point-to-point. The following should be considered during this time. If the party moves at normal speed, it would normally take them a half day to traverse the distance. If the party is checking for traps, the time to get to the rakshasa lair increases to a day; the party can be allowed to rest at any time. If the party continuously moves, and is checking for traps, mental fatigue

will set in gradually. Concerning traps, there are 5 traps in the tunnel that the party can detect. The traps should be relatively evenly spaced.

Once the first trap is either discovered or tripped, it will be roughly 5 hours of searching before they encounter the second. If the party has not stopped to rest before the second trap is discovered, the party should make a constitution check at CL1; success means that the party retains its mental and physical sharpness, while failure indicates a -2 penalty to the check to detect trap #2.

In addition, the CL of the constitution checks and penalties for failure prior to each trap increase by 2, *i.e.* if the party has not stopped to rest, trap 3 will first require a CL3 constitution check to be made; if it's failed, the penalty to detect/disable the trap is -4 to the d20 roll

The traps are shown on map 4. Panel A corresponds to trap 1, B depicts trap 2, *etc.* The cross-hatched areas in the map segments illustrate the area of effect of the traps. The descriptions of the traps are provided below:



Map 4A: Trap 1

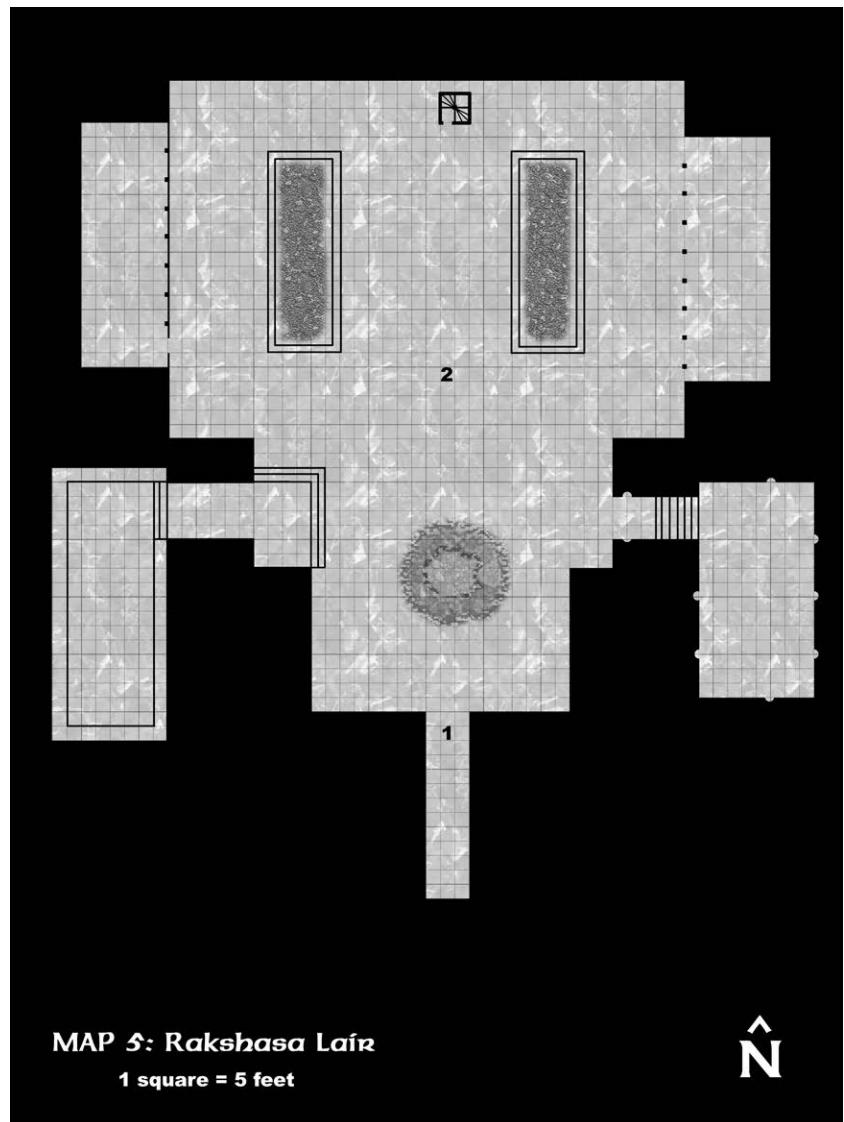
This is a tripwire trap that is moderately difficult to detect for most, but for rogues, it should be relatively easy at 10th level. The trap does no damage to the party if triggered, but should hopefully get their attention. Approximately 100' into the tunnel, the party is asked to check for traps, CL4 to detect, CL8 to disarm. The party can simply step over the tripwire without setting it off. If the trap is triggered, a 35' segment of the passage, 40' behind the position of the tripwire, collapses; the party is cut off from the barn, and the only way they can now go is to the rakshasa lair. Roll d%; on a roll of 10 or lower, the rakshasa are alerted by the noise in the passage, rendering it impossible to gain any kind of surprise.

Map 4B: Trap 2

This is a pressure-sensitive trap. A candle-lit altar (the first light source in the tunnel) is placed in a recessed part of the tunnel; resting on the altar is a gold statue that weighs 20 pounds. If the statue is left alone, the trap will not be triggered. If the party takes the statue, the trap will be triggered; if they quickly replace the statue with an additional 20 lb. weight, there is a 50% chance that the trap will be triggered. The PCs do not know how much the statue weighs. If the trap is triggered, the floor sinks beneath the feet of the PCs, resulting in them being dropped into a 65' pit; allow the players a CL4 dexterity check to determine whether or not they avoid being dropped into the pit. Allow PCs with hearing bonuses (elves, half-elves) a CL8 wisdom check; success results in the characters hearing a faint ticking sound, seemingly coming from within the walls. The PCs have 5 rounds to exit from the pit, before the spring beneath the floor is triggered. After 5 rounds, the spring is released, rapidly propelling the floor back up to the ceiling of the tunnel; a CL10 dexterity check is permitted to any PCs, failure at the check results in 10d6 crushing damage, as the floor slams into the ceiling. Success at the check results in half-damage. If triggered, there is a 20% chance that the noise of the trap being triggered will alert the rakshasa to the presence of the party.

Map 4C: Trap 3

Trap 3 is a pressure plate in the floor. The pressure plate covers the entire width of the floor, in the cross-hatched area of the map. Detection of the trap is at CL7; disarming of the trap is also CL7. If the trap is triggered, the cross-hatched area is affected by a *polymorph* (wizard 4) spell. Any PC in that area is instantly polymorphed into a stirge. PCs are allowed a wisdom save, CL7; success results in negation of the spell effect. PCs that fail the save immediately attack one of the party members, just as a stirge would. The effects of the spell can be dispelled by *dispel magic*.



Map 4D: Trap 4

The tunnel comes to an apparent end, with a 5'-wide door in the middle. The trap trigger is in the lock mechanism of the door, CL6 to detect, as well as to disarm. If tripped, a 15' section of the eastern wall of the passage, that is on a spring, is released; PCs are allowed a CL6 dexterity check to avoid the wall. PCs that fail the check take 5d6 damage; PCs that make the check take half damage. There is a 30% chance that the rakshasa in their lair will hear the noise of the moving wall. The trap resets after 3 rounds.

Map 4E: Trap 5

Trap 5 is a glyph in the floor, CL8 to detect, only removed by *dispel magic*. Merely passing over the glyph is sufficient to trigger the trap, resulting in a 40' section of the passageway being filled with fire. Characters caught in the crosshatched area of the map are allowed a dexterity save, CL8, to avoid the trap. PCs who fail the save take 5d6 points of damage per round that they are in the affected area; PCs who make the save take half damage for 1 round. The trap has a 30% chance of alerting the rakshasa to the presence of the intruders.

If the PCs successfully navigate without triggering any of the traps, they will find themselves in a space, entering at 1 above that affords them a clear shot at the 2 rakshasa (standing at 2) in their lair, outside of the range of their *detect thoughts* ability. The shot (120') is a medium-range shot for a light crossbow (-2 penalty on to hit roll). Once the PCs get to this point, and regardless of the decision they make, go to encounter 5B, area 2, Sanctuary. They will emerge at a point from below the altar.

5B. VISITING THE TEMPLE

Map area 1: Narthex

If the party chooses to visit the temple, upon entering, any divine spellcasters should be allowed an intelligence check (CL2, add levels). Success at the check allows them to recognize that, even though the holy symbols and the like are correct for Mordius, a degree of opulence that is completely inappropriate for a nature deity is obvious. This is, clearly, no temple of Mordius. The double doors leading to the sanctuary are closed.

Map area 2: Sanctuary

As the party enters the main sanctuary of the temple, they notice a handful of people seated on benches, along with two humans wearing vestments on the altar that, if the divine spellcasters succeeded at their check(s), will again note are all wrong. If the party killed the first rakshasa in encounter 1, no check is needed for this. The vestments on the priests match those of the rakshasa. One of the priests is preaching about the Prophecy of Balak'zir, while the other plays a harp. The people are denoted in Map 6 by black asterisks.

Each of the congregants has been affected, without their knowledge, by the spell, *Rise as the Dead* from **The Black Libram of Nartarus**. If any of the people are killed, they will rise the following round as ghouls.

CONGREGANTS (These neutral humans' vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 12 and HP 4. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack unarmed for 1d3 points of damage.)

GHOULS (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d8, HP 7 each, AC 14, and MV 30'. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with 2 Claws for 1d3 points of damage, and a Bite for 1d6 points of damage. If one of their attacks hits, the target must make a strength save or be paralyzed for 1d4+1 turns, unless a remove curse or remove paralysis spell is cast on them before the duration elapses. Elves are immune to ghoulish paralysis. They have Darkvision 60', no intelligence, and are considered Undead (Common).)

The "A" denotes the position of the second rakshasa, whom the party has yet to encounter; the rakshasa is in the form of a human, dressed similarly to the rest of the worshipers.

RAKSHASA These lawful evil creatures' vital stats are HD 7d8, HP 44, 36, AC 21 and MV 40'. Theirs primary attributes are mental. They attack with 2 claws for 1d3 and a bite for 1d4 points of damage, or by weapon. They the following special abilities: *Detect Thoughts* (100' radius), *Spells*, *Change Shape*,

Darkvision 60 ft., SR 16, *Immunity to Magic*, and *Blessed Vulnerability*. They cast spells as a 5th level wizard and 1st level cleric. The spell selection for the second rakshasa is as follows: wizard 0- *Light*, *Dancing Lights*, *Ghost Sound*, *Mage Hand*, *Detect Magic*; 1st- *Hold Portal*, *Unseen Servant*, *Charm Person*, *Sleep*; 2nd *Claws from the Grave*, *Nartarus's Touch*; 3rd *Suggestion*; Cleric 0- *First Aid*, *Create Water*, *Light*; 1st- *Command*)

The second rakshasa is armed with the *Ebon Staff of Death* (**Black Libram of Nartarus**) that has 50 charges. The following text is taken from that volume:

The staff is five feet long and tipped with a platinum skull, its eyes embedded with glittering black diamonds. The shaft of the staff is inscribed with runes detailing its dark purpose. In the hands of a necromancer or cleric it crackles with unholy energy, unleashing its full eldritch powers. The staff acts as a +1 weapon and deals 1d6+1 points of damage when used as a weapon.

Harm: (1 charge) Target touched with the staff is drained of all but 4 hit points unless a successful Charisma save is made vs. CL 7

Death: (5 charges) Target touched with the staff must make a Charisma save vs. CL 7 or be struck dead! Creatures immune to death attacks are likewise immune to the effects of this staff.

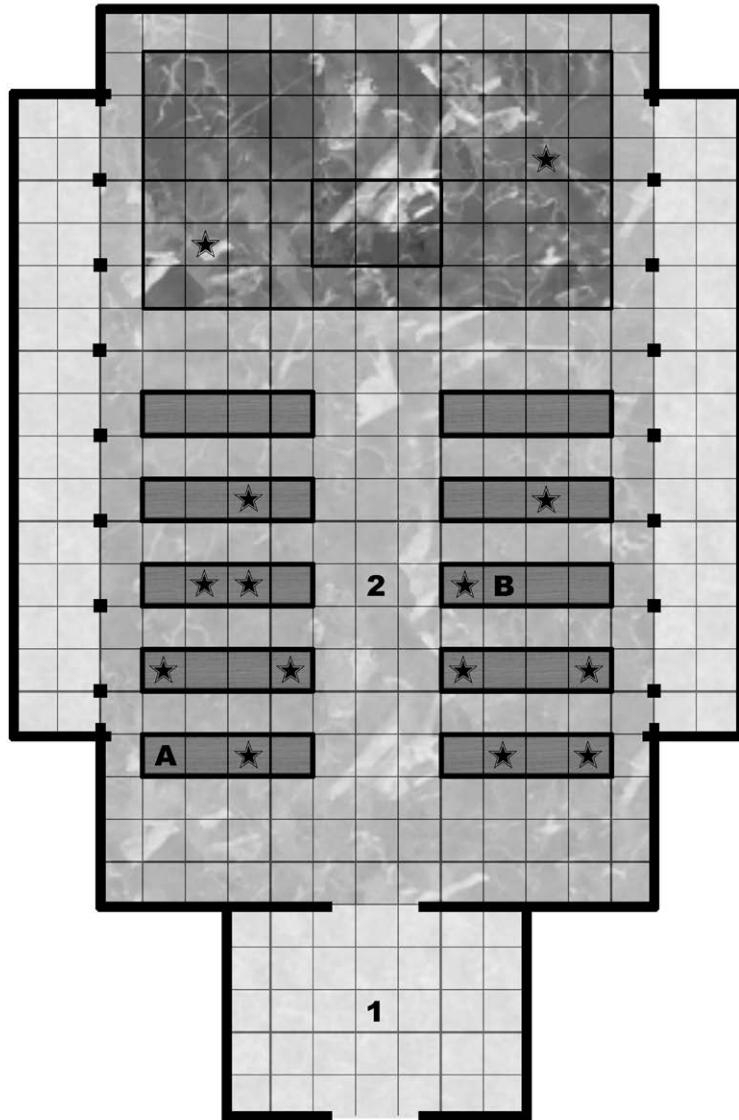
The "B" denotes the position of the original rakshasa, if the PCs didn't kill it; its statistics (it is back to maximum HP) and spells are listed in encounter 1; if the PCs managed to kill it, then the individual in that position on the map is a normal human.

The likeliest assumption that the PCs should make is that the two priests at the front of the temple are, in fact, the rakshasa. At this point, the PCs have no idea that two of the four priests who have wrought all the havoc in the region are, in fact, human. The human priests have no idea as to the nature of their "peers." If luck is on their side, they are only going to be facing one of the two rakshasas.

If a dwarf cleric is being played, or one of the other spellcasting PCs has *detect magic* active prior to entering the sanctuary, the black aura surrounding each of the worshipers, as well as the two celebrants on the altar and the harp, will be collectively so intense as to be potentially debilitating. The PC should be directed to make a constitution save, CL 10. If the save is failed, then the PC is effectively stunned for 1d4+1 turns. If a paladin is being played, or if another PC has the *detect evil* ability active, the only individuals who have an evil aura are the priests on the altar and the rakshasa(s). Any attempt to point out the identity of any of the evil individuals will result in the rakshasa(s) attacking the parishioners with sneak attacks. The rakshasa with the *Ebon Staff* will immediately use one of the *Death* attacks on the nearest worshiper, thus turning him/her into a ghoulish (assuming failure of the save). The ghoulish will then attack the next nearest worshiper. Its next action will be to cast *claws from the grave*, to begin inflicting potentially lethal

12 CASTLES & CRUSADES

MAP 6: MORDIUS TEMPLE
1 square = 5 ft



damage on as many of the worshipers as possible, thus turning them to ghouls.

One of the priests is playing a *Harp of Charming*. Once the PCs have entered the sanctuary, the priest playing will work a *suggestion* into the song, directing the worshipers to welcome the outsiders. The worshipers are all the equivalent of 0-level humans, and will all fall under the effects of the effect. The party should roll an intelligence save, CL10, to resist the effects of the harp. While the party is being distracted, or more appropriately, virtually mobbed by the overzealous worshipers, the rakshasa denoted by the “A” will cast *darkness* on the altar.

At this point, the two priests on the altar become panicked. The one preaching will scream that the prophecy has come true, while the harpist will attempt to flee to the back of the temple. The worshipers will panic as well, and friendly greetings will turn to blaming of the party for bringing down the curse of the prophecy on them. The time has come for initiative.

SEQUENCE OF COMBAT

Each of the worshipers gets an opportunity to act; there is a 50% chance that they will each either flee or fight the party. The first to flee, the rakshasa (while still disguised as a human) will use its *command* spell to order the individual to fight. The party should be tempted to fight the worshipers; they are, however, unarmed, and good-aligned characters should (hopefully) take note of this.

The worshipers are, in fact, under the effects of the *suggestion*, and the spellcasters in the party should be given an intelligence check, CL3, to make the determination.

The rakshasa is content in the early rounds (first 5, max) to stand back and let the worshipers occupy the party; if the party begins to gain the advantage, in terms of getting the worshipers out, it will strike. The rakshasa will first go after the physically weakest member of the party with its *wand of withering*. In subsequent rounds, it may go after the party members, or it may go after the worshipers. The worshipers can sustain up to two strikes from the staff (assuming that the *Death* ability isn’t being used) each before they are killed; healing the worshipers with the *Rose Staff* after they’ve been hit once adds an additional strike that the worshipers can sustain before being killed.

The rakshasa will constantly move around, such that if any of the PCs attempt to use a crossbow to bring it down with a blessed bolt, the rakshasa will constantly have ½ cover (+4 AC) vs. missile attacks. The original rakshasa, if it survived encounter 1, will act in a similar manner, with its magic sword. If the party succeeds in either getting the worshipers out, or the rakshasa kills enough of them that it no longer has enough to use for cover, it will then cast *web*, and attempt to finish off the PCs when they’re trapped in the web.

If the PCs manage to kill the rakshasa, and they search the temple, they will find that the altar is, in fact, a secret door that slides out of the way, revealing the staircase shown at the north end of Map 5 in the rakshasa lair. The loot that is found within the lair is what the rakshasa have connived out of the vintners in the region.

MINE! MINE! MINE!!!

INTRODUCTION

Mine! Mine! Mine!!! was a scenario originally written for 6 5th-level PCs. Given the relative difficulty of the first encounter alone the CK may wish to instead increase the level, closer to 8th-10th. The adventure should be completed within 4 hours of when the session begins. This adventure will be highly challenging, and it should not surprise the CK at all to have a relatively high body count within the party of PCs. A TPK is certainly feasible. There is something for everyone, as it were, and the more balanced the party, the greater the possibility of the party surviving to, and possibly even through, the final encounter. Parties that are heavier on spellcasters than front-line muscle will likely be at a disadvantage, and will be much more susceptible to the TPK than a balanced party or, even, one composed primarily of fighter-types.

CK'S INTRODUCTION

The senators representing the mining region of western Brindisium are becoming increasingly aware of a new presence that threatens to disrupt an extremely lucrative stone trade. A mysterious buyer recently secured the required licenses to go into business with a mine of his own. Intriguingly, that mine was abandoned centuries ago. Rumors abound throughout the territory as to just exactly why the mine closed so abruptly. Since the mine reopened, its owner has been implicated in attempts to strong-arm the neighboring owners out of the area. A senator, friendly to the mine owners, has dispatched a party of adventurers to investigate the disturbances in mine country, and to eliminate whatever threats may exist.

A mysterious businessman named Marax recently applied for licenses in Brindisium that would allow him to purchase Virenar mine. Initially, no one gave it any thought, until an adviser to the senate reminded them that Virenar has been abandoned for over 400 years. Rumors still circulate through mine country, as to just exactly why Virenar was sealed. Some said it was a vile creature that had been awakened in the darkness; others claimed dark magic. Others still say that the owners simply ran out of funds to keep the operation running. Whatever the reason, Virenar has remained abandoned until a few weeks ago.

Not long after Marax purchased Virenar, other mine owners in the area began to complain about increased activity of humanoids. Orcs, goblins, and even the occasional troll harassed the owners. Within the last 3 weeks, reports of Hlobane orcs harassing the mine owners have drawn particular interest from the senate. If the stone trading activity in the west slowed, or

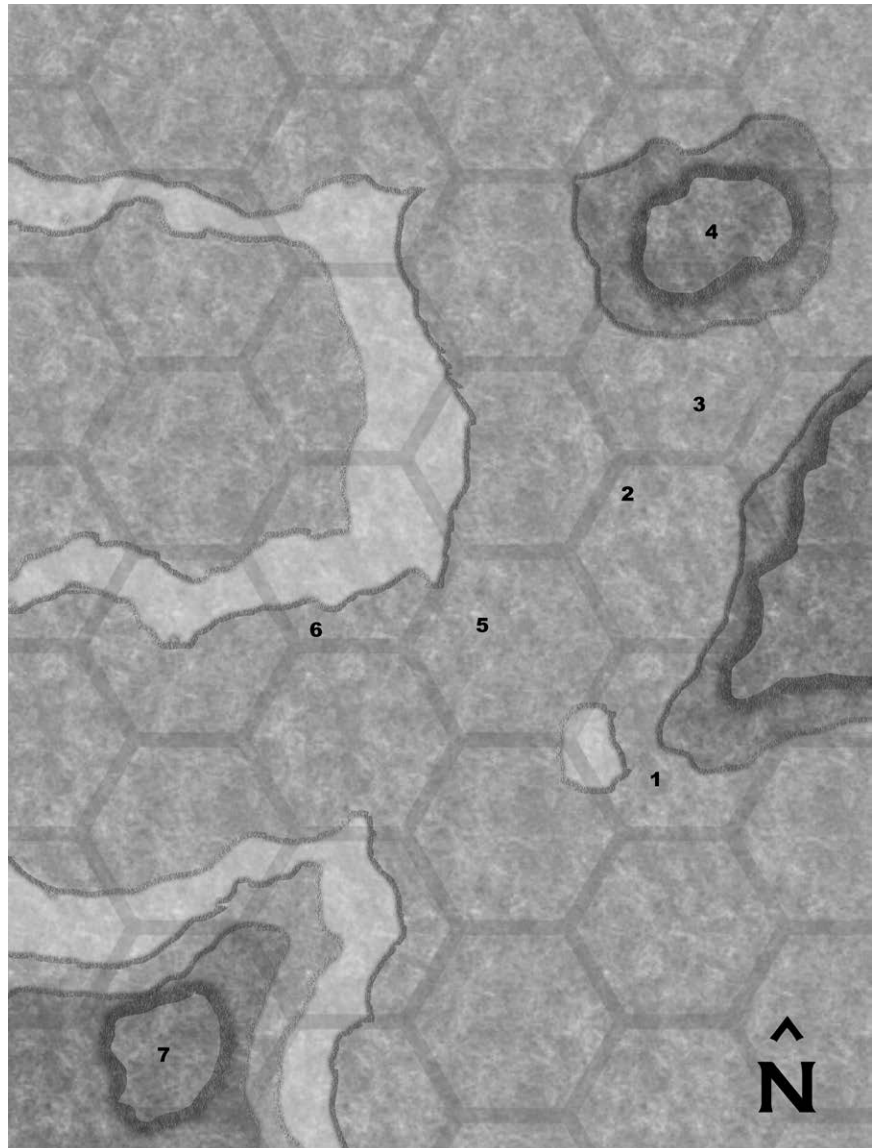
worse, stopped altogether, the consequences for the economy would be dire.

Senator Rynell, who has long been friendly to the cause of the mine owners, finally decided to take matters into his hands, and dispatch a group of adventurers to investigate the goings on in mine country and, if needed, eliminate any threats to the region. If possible, the party should also investigate to determine if any connection exists between the humanoid raids and Marax.

PLAYERS' INTRODUCTION

Read the following text to the players.

At first, you were leery about working for some high-strung senator. After all, there were plenty of interesting looking jobs that could be gotten far more easily than through him. The other jobs sounded easy enough, but none of them paid. This Rynell character is more than generous. Only a politician, with plenty to lose at that, would offer up half the coin for the job in advance, like Rynell does. This latest summons to the senate didn't seem any different than the others.



Then came the first half of the bounty for the job. When Rynell said to be discrete, and offered up a bag of coin that was at least twice the size of all the prior jobs put together, you knew this one was different. When he said that he didn't expect us to come back alive, even in spite of the bounty he offered, the conversation took a predictable turn. Still, gold is gold, and the prospect of having more than you've ever seen before is tempting. Everybody has to die sometime, and if it's in glorious battle, then so much the better.

ENCOUNTER 1: AGAINST OVERWHELMING ODDS...

Read the following text to the party:

Your journey across the country, to get to mine country, has been, surprisingly, uneventful. The weather has been mild, making camping out almost enjoyable. To say that you've been on the road for as many days as you have, you feel largely refreshed, and not nearly as fatigued as you expected to be. The road winds around earth mounds that you know to be mines. In the distance, you hear a commotion, the first real noise outside of normal nature sounds that you've heard since you left town. The road comes to an end at the entrance to the Falgar Mine. As you look across the mine chasm, a large war party of what appears to be some kind of orcs, driving hill giants as well as various beasts, is at the opposite edge of the pit, harassing the miners below. Looking into the mine, you can spot individuals lying prone on the road descending into the mine, as well as at the bottom of the mine.

The distance across the mine is roughly $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. The mine is approximately 1,000 feet deep, with the road winding down adding considerable distance to that. The party enters the area of the mine at map marker 1; the war band is at marker 2. The individuals lying prone are at map marker 3, and given the distance around the descent, are approximately 4 miles walking distance. If the party manages to get above position 3, they can also rappel down the path, but will be vulnerable to attack by the war band. The distance between markers 1 and 2 exceeds the range of boulder throwing by the hill giants, as well as the distance of any spells that the party might try to cast.

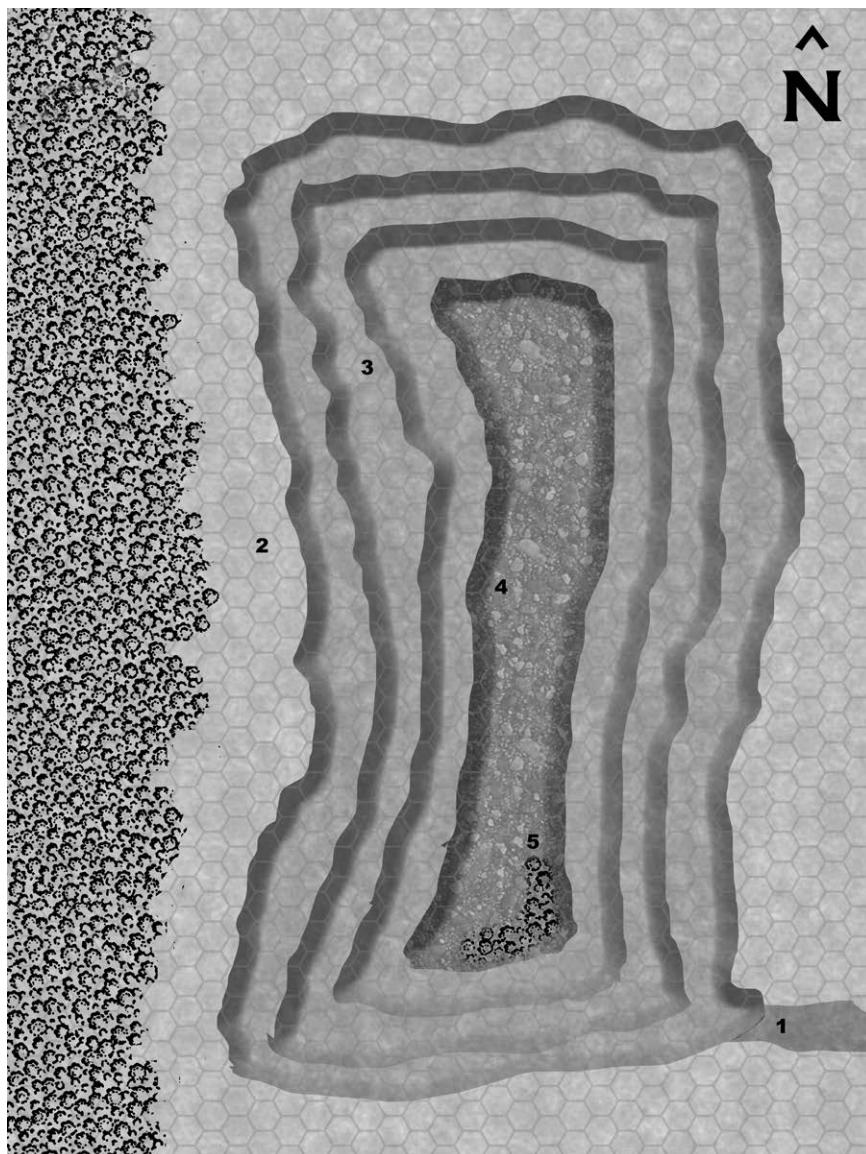
At this point, the party has a choice to make. They can either go after the war party first, or they can attempt to descend into the mine to help those trapped within. If they choose to attack the war band, go to **Encounter 1A**; if they choose to help the trapped miners, go to **Encounter 1B**.

ENCOUNTER 1A: FULL-FRONTAL DEATH

If the party chooses to attack the war band, they first need to find a way around the mine. They cannot do this unnoticed. As they choose to undertake this path, read the following to the players:

A massive horde of creatures stands on the opposite side of the mine from your perspective. The horde appears to be some kind of orcs, but from here, it's hard to tell for sure. In addition to the orcs, four hill giants that appear to be under the control of the orcs, are hurling boulders into the mine. Even though the giants can't throw the boulders far enough to reach the bottom of the mine, they have created several craters in the mine road heading down, to render the roads unserviceable until they can be repaired. The orcs are throwing javelins or spears into the mine as well, creating a rain of death that has claimed at least one victim halfway down the descent.

The war party consists of 250 hlobane orcs, 25 hlobane pit orcs, 12 hlobane overseers, 4 hlobane overlords, 1 hlobane bone crusher, 1 hlobane keeper of the bone crusher, and 4 hill giants.



Statistics for the war band are as follows:

ORCS, HLOBANE (These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d10, AC 16, HP 14. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with weapon (spear 1d8 or bearded axe 3d4) with a +1 to hit or damage. They have darkvision 60', immunity to poison, light sensitivity. They are very organized and never act independently, always working to support the troop with which they go to battle. Each carries 9gp.)

HLOBANE PIT ORCS (These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d10+2, AC 16, HP 20. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bearded axe for 3d4 points of damage with a +1 to hit or damage. They have darkvision 60', immunity to poison, light sensitivity. They are very organized and never act independently, always working to support the troop with which they go to battle. Each carries 15gp.)

OVERSEERS (These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d10, AC 17, HP 34. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bearded axe for 3d4 points of damage with a +1 to hit or damage. They have darkvision 60', immunity to poison, light sensitivity. They are very organized and never act independently, always working to support the troop with which they go to battle. Each carries 25gp.)

OVERLORDS (These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 9d10, AC 19, HP 67. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bearded axe for 3d4 points of damage with a +1 to hit or damage. They have darkvision 60', immunity to poison, light sensitivity. They are very organized and never act independently, always working to support the troop with which they go to battle. Each carries 50gp, and a +2 magical bearded axe.)

BONE CRUSHER (These large lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 8d8, AC 19, HP 56. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a ball and chain for 2d6 points of damage, or 2 claws for 1d4 with a +1 to hit or damage. They have darkvision 60', immunity to poison, light sensitivity. They are very organized and never act independently, always working to support the troop with which they go to battle.)

KEEPER OF THE BONE CRUSHER (These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d8, AC 16, HP 18. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a glaive for 1d8 points of damage with a +1 to hit or damage. They have darkvision 60', immunity to poison, light sensitivity. They are very organized and never act independently, always working to support the troop with which they go to battle. Each carries 9gp.)

GIANT, HILL (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 9d8, AC 17, HP 48, and MV 40'. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with 2 fists for 1d8 points of damage or a giant club for 2d8 points of damage. They are able to throw rocks up to 330 feet for 2d8 points of damage. Each carries 500 gp, one has a +2 long sword.)

Once the party commits to this course of action, the CK should immediately ask for the party's marching order. This will be

important, as they come within range of both missile and melee weapons.

When the party arrives within range, approximately 350 feet, the orcs will initially direct the hill giants to turn their attention from the mine, and focus it on the party. Each giant will hurl a boulder each round, until the party is within melee range. As the party approaches melee range, the Keeper will release the Bone Crusher, who will immediately charge at the party, swinging its ball & chain.

As the Bone Crusher attacks, it will be followed by the Pit Orcs, the giants, and wave upon wave of 25 orcs apiece. Each wave will be accompanied by an Overseer, while the Overlords will remain behind with the Keeper of the Bone Crusher. If the party eliminates 50% of the orcs and giants, roll a morale check for the Overlords. Make the check by rolling 1d10; if the result of the roll is 6-10, the overlords will break, and the rest of the warband will break with them. Further engagement with the rest of the party will only happen if the party initiates further hostilities.

ENCOUNTER 1B: INTO THE PIT WE GO!

Should the party decide to avoid direct confrontation with the invaders, and instead opt to go into the mine pit, so as to render whatever assistance they can, they will have further decisions to make:

Take the mine road down, so as to help the downed miner.

Attempt to rappel down the mine.

Other.

Simply attempting to walk down via the road will provoke further acts of violence against the party, on the part of the giants, in particular. The mine has gotten deep enough over the years, that if they choose to take the road all the way to the bottom (forgetting about the problems that will arise when they come into range of the hill giants' thrown stones), the road runs about 9 miles total, from top-to-bottom in the mine.

On the first level of road descending into the mine, immediately under where the orcs and giants are massed, lies a body, in a pool of blood. The body was human, and is dead, likely hit by one of the hill giant's boulders. The boulders that are thrown have the possibility of hitting either the first or second tiers of the road that descends into the mine. There is a 50% chance that a thrown boulder will land on either section of road. If the characters are subject to boulder attacks, during the giants' turns, the CK should roll 1d20; on a roll of 1-10, the boulder will strike the first tier of the mine road, while 11-20 indicates the second level. Those boulders that fall on either level will have, in addition to the strength of the giant throwing the boulder, gravity adding to the lethality of the throw. Boulders landing on the first level will deal an extra 1d8 damage (3d8 total), while those landing on the second tier will deal an extra 2d8 damage (4d8 total).

If the party chooses to rappel down the side of the mine, the sides are approximately 350-400 feet down, to each next level of

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road. The road is approximately 15-feet wide all the way down. The walls of the mine are steep, but not sheer. Any character with the ability to climb or scale as a natural class ability (ranger, rogue, or assassin) is allowed to make one check to climb down each stage of the mine; the check these characters make is at CL2.

The remaining characters must each make two strength checks per each stage of the descent. For these characters, the checks are made at CL 4. If either check is failed, the player should roll an additional dexterity check. If the first climb check is failed, then the dexterity check is made at CL4. If the second strength check is the one failed, the dexterity check is made at CL2. Success means that the character is able to slide down the steep face to the target level with minimal injuries, sustaining only 1d2 HP damage. PCs who fail a strength check, but make their dexterity check, take 1d6 damage from sliding down the slope. Those who fail both strength and dexterity take 2d8 damage.

If the PCs decide to use rope/pitons and other climbing gear and techniques, the characters who lack climbing as a class ability only have to make one single strength check at CL3 to be able to successfully traverse the distance.

Regardless of whether or not the PCs make the entire distance down without incident, it will take them the better part of 100 minutes to successfully arrive at the base of the quarry. Once the orcs see that the PCs have committed to this course of action, they become enraged. As a result, they will begin to make their way toward the road descending into the mine. The war party reaches the road and begins making their way down by the time the PCs are approximately halfway to the bottom of the mine. When the party reaches the bottom of the mine, the orcs and company arrive at where the road accesses the entry to the mine. The orcs and giants are being driven, so their move will be double normal, until they reach the entrance proper for the mine.

If the PCs choose to rappel into the mine, in an attempt to avoid the fight, the orc overseers become enraged that someone could be trying to aid those they were sent to drive out or eliminate. Once the characters begin rappelling down the walls of the mine, the orc overseers and overlords will begin to push their horde toward the road leading into the mine.

Those characters who successfully navigate their way to the bottom of the mine find the remains of a foreman's hut, along with a handful of seriously shaken miners. Initially, the miners will suspect the PCs of wanting to loot the mine, just the same as the orcs and giants above. There are 19 miners at the bottom of the mine, in total. The 20th member of the team lies in a pool of blood on the road above. The miners are initially hesitant at interacting with the party, as they consider them a part of the raiders who have them under siege. The miners are all humans, and are all of good alignment, though under the stress to which they've been subjected of late, tend to drift toward chaos over law. The miners all look emaciated and filthy; initial attempts to interact with them should be made with a charisma check, CL2. Failure of the charisma check indicates that the miners attack; success indicates willingness to talk.

MINERS x19 (*These humans' vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 12, and HP 5. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with pickaxes for 1d6 or daggers for 1d4 points of damage.*)

Any character(s) who offer(s) something to eat/and/or drink automatically gain the trust of the miners, leaving the PCs free to chat with the mine owner and the foreman. Successful interaction with the miners reveals that food rations ran out 4 days ago, while the last drops of water were finished yesterday. Additionally, the owner is Kalik, and the foreman is Blix; they are both eminently concerned with the safety of their employees, at this point, more than anything else. Beyond all of the above, shortly after the siege began, one of the miners went to negotiate; he found no willingness to negotiate, and was killed by a giant's boulder

Shortly before the siege began, the miners discovered a mine shaft. Without torches or any other source of light, however, they have been unable to delve too deeply into the mine

At this point, the miners simply want out of their predicament; they are willing to accompany the party wherever they go, so long as the party does them no harm, and gives them no reason to fear their competence or sense of mercy

In order for the party to get the full story on the attacks, they **MUST** talk to the miners at the bottom of the pit. Befriending them also results in a key piece of information being provided; this attack is atypical in that it's coming from an unusual direction. Normally, the harassment of the mine has come from attackers coming in from the main road, from the west, in the direction of Virenar Mine. In this case, however, the attackers came out of the north, and assembled along the western face of the mine. The attackers also appear to be of a different tribe, as the orcs presumably from Virenar are normal orcs, and not Hlobane. It is also unusual in that the attackers did not enter into the mine during the siege, which the Virenar orcs frequently do.

ENCOUNTER 2: ONWARD!

The next part of the session requires the PCs to ultimately get the miners out of their predicament. There are two ways out that the party will have to decide upon; they will either leave via the road out of the mine, leaving them susceptible to any orcs/giants descending into the mine that they didn't clear in encounter 1, or via an ancient shaft that was created by dwarves and recently uncovered by normal mining operations. Each way will be fraught with hazards that could, very well, bring about the demise of one or more members of the party.

ENCOUNTER 2A: UP AND OUT (AFTER MEETING A FEW OLD FRIENDS)

Should the players have opted to rappel down the sides of the mine during encounter 1, instead of first dealing with the orcs, they will have to contend with the war band as they try exiting the mine via the main road. The most prominent difference between dealing with the orcs in Encounter 1 versus here is one of geography; while the orcs have the higher ground, compared

with the party, the ground they hold is, generally, only 15 feet wide. Should the party attempt to rappel out of the mine, they will be met by the war band, either above them, or below them, as they try to climb up the walls. Read the following to the players:

While it crossed your mind as you descended into the mine that the war band was beginning to move as you rappelled down, only now do you see the consequences of your choice to climb. The overlords have managed to move the warband to the road entrance to the mine, and they are descending toward you on the mine road. They are moving fast, as the overlords are clearly angered by your attempts to assist the miners below.

In this case, the giants lead the charge into the mine. Their first tactic will involve hurling rocks at the party at range. Once the party has closed to within melee range, the giants will switch to their giant clubs, in the hopes of knocking the party deeper into the mine. Any successful hits with the club will result in the player needing to make a dexterity check at CL5. Failure on the saving throw results in the character being knocked down the edge, to slide down the side of the road complex, to the next level down, taking 3d8 damage from the slide down. Any remaining giants not engaged in melee will attempt to throw rocks at any party members below. As in Encounter 1, any boulder that hits a party member causes the normal 2d8 damage from the rock, along with an additional 1d8 damage from the effects of gravity.

If the giants are all dispatched, the party will next face the Bone Crusher. Assuming that any party members still survive, the Pit Orcs will attack next, in a column that puts them 3 abreast. As one is killed, the overseers will simply push another forward into its place on the line. **AN IMPORTANT NOTE HERE IS TO MAKE SURE THAT THE LINE CONTINUOUSLY PUSHES FORWARD; DON'T GIVE THE PARTY THE OPPORTUNITY TO HUNKER DOWN INTO DEFENSIVE POSITIONS!** Such action will continue until either side is either dead or has fled. Should the party kill at least 50% of the war band, roll a single morale check for the remaining orcs. On a check of 1-6 on 1d10, the party keeps up the fight. A result of 7-10 indicates that the party will break, and begin running toward the mine entrance.

ENCOUNTER 2B: DEALING WITH THE SCAVENGERS

If the party successfully eliminated the orc horde before descending into the mine to investigate, they encounter a pod of 6 musk dragons, feeding on the remains left behind, and attempting to scavenge whatever treasure they can take from the dead. The dragons are all age category 2, and are 5 feet long.

DRAGON, MUSK x6 *(These chaotic evil dragons vital stats are HD 4d10, AC 12, HP 27, and MV 60'. They are age category 2. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with 2 claws for 1d4, a bite for 1d6, a tail for 1d4 and wings for 1d2 points of damage. Special properties include a breath weapon, camouflage, poisonous bite, and spell-like abilities. Once per day, each dragon may breathe a 20' cloud of flammable gas that, causes 1d4 damage/round that each character is in the cloud,*

and an additional 1d10 points of damage if the gas becomes ignited. Successful constitution saves (CL4) reduce damage by half. The dragons also possess a poisonous bite that causes any bitten victim that fails a constitution save (CL4) to contract a fast-acting bacterial infection that results in septic poisoning. One hour after being bitten, the victim will begin losing physical control, and unless cured, will lose 1 HP/round (incurable) and suffers a -2 penalty to all actions and checks. The disease can be delayed by means of delay poison; remove disease, neutralize poison, cure critical wounds, or a more powerful curative spell will remove the disease entirely, but any damage suffered as a result of infection can only be recovered by restoration.)

ENCOUNTER 2C: FROM A PIT, INTO A SHAFT

If the party elects to investigate the recently discovered shaft, regardless of whether or not they eliminated the orc horde, they will not be bothered any further by the orcs. The orcs will not enter the shaft.

Upon entering, if any of the PCs are dwarven or gnomish, they will, via their racial abilities, be able to determine several aspects of the shaft in very short order. The shaft is of dwarven origin and, thus, very well made. The shaft is old; how old cannot be determined.

The grade in the shaft is a steep one, 33%; while the characters can still maintain balance, the descent will be a slow one. The party's movement should be reduced by 1/2, to prevent any member from needlessly falling; movement any faster, and each party member should make dexterity checks (CL1) each round, to avoid tripping and falling. By the end, the above-named races will be able to determine that the passage was 1,500 feet long, and that they are about 500 feet below the level of the entrance.

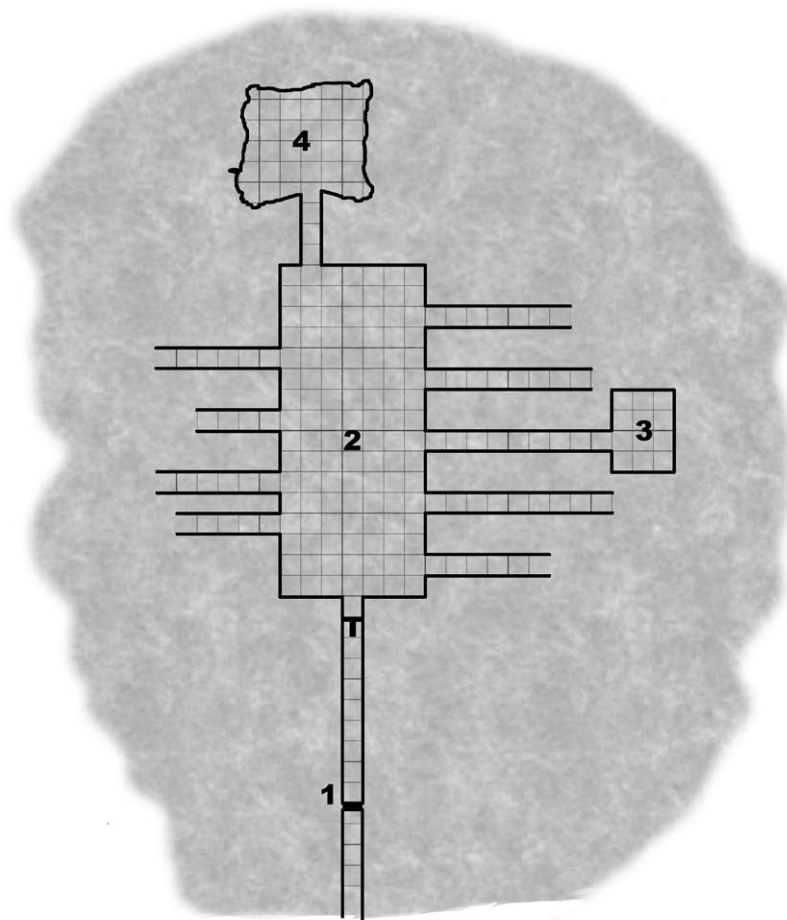
Read the following text to the party:

The shaft is very steep, making walking treacherous. Small stones, and other debris that have accumulated over the centuries, have made it easy to trip and fall. The deeper into the shaft you go, the less you feel any kind of air current at all, until there is none. As the current disappears, you become aware of a foul smell in the air.

As the party reaches the bottom of the shaft, give elves and any other races or classes that have the ability to detect secret doors/passages the opportunity to detect a trap door in the floor. The door can be detected with a successful wisdom check, CL3. Successful detection results in the character(s) being able to warn the party. Its trigger is a tripwire that spans the hallway, halfway across the length of the trap door. If the trap is triggered, any PCs on a 10' square region of the floor must roll a traps save (dexterity) CL4. Failure results in the character dropping 30' into the pit, sustaining 5d6 damage upon impact. Successfully saving results in no damage. The tripwire can be avoided if discovered, without further incident.

Once the party reaches the bottom of the shaft, if they have successfully navigated past the pit trap, read the following text:

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1 square = 10 feet

This massive chamber looks to be the one from which mining operations were coordinated. Several shafts appear to start from this point. The wood framework on which the operations from this chamber was performed has long since rotted away, however, the reinforcements in the walls and ceiling remain fully intact.

Dwarven or gnome characters will be able to immediately determine that the mine is sound, and their safety from any kind of collapse is as great as it can be, given the setting. The floor in this room has leveled off, compared to the shaft that brought the party down into the mine. The main chamber has the remains of wood planks around the outer edge of the room, as well as what looks to have been a house that would have been the foreman's. The wood in all of these structures is, for the most part, gone. Nothing of consequence can be found in this room, aside from the shafts originating in the room. The shafts drop off at various grades, anywhere between 7 and 12% (1d6+6), from the level main chamber. Each shaft ends abruptly, however, there are two that empty into what appears to be smaller rooms.

The first of the two rooms (Room 3) that will be encountered is in the set of shafts descending from the main room. Should the party investigate this corridor, read the following text:

This room, though smaller than the main chamber, is still fairly large. At the far end of the room, you see a

mirror. The mirror looks to be in very good condition, as if it has been well maintained over time.

The mirror at the far end of the room is, in fact, the product of the "Mirrors" rune. The rune remains scrawled on the ground, however, none of the characters can read the rune, unless one happens to be a Rune Mark. *Detect magic*, cast upon the mirror, causes both the mirror and the rune to emanate strong magic. Beyond this, non-Rune Mark characters cannot tell anything more about the magical signals than that. The trigger for the mirror is shrouded in mystery.

The next room entered (Room 4) is much larger than the mirror room. Leading up to the room, the party will become aware of a foul stench that is irritating from a distance, but could become much worse if the source is approached. As the party reaches the entrance to the room, read the following:

This room is a large one, and the stench is enough to make your eyes water. A faint glimmer of light permeates the room, bathing everything within in an eerie, green tint. Near the far end of the room, you can see two large shapes on the floor that, as your eyes adjust to the light, you think resemble the forms of toads. While neither form appears to be moving, they appear to be breathing as if sleeping, and you can hear what sounds like quiet snoring from that end of the room.

The toad-like forms are, in fact, a pair of Irs Wyrms.

DRAGON, IRS WYRM x2 (These large, 25' long, lawful evil dragons' vital stats are HD 13d10, AC 18, HP 98, and MV 20'. They are age category 4. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with tail for 1d8+3 and a bite for 1d10+3 points of damage. Special abilities are fear aura, creatures approaching within 100' experience feelings of dread/hopelessness, and potentially lose all interest in carrying on, and paralyzing stench, coming within 20' of the wyrm requires a strength save (CL7) or become immobilized. The immobilization is permanent unless magically dispelled or the wyrm is killed. Regardless of whether or not save is made, characters take 1d4 cold damage. They have 5000 gp worth in mixed coin.)

ENCOUNTER 3: FOLLOWING FOOTSTEPS

This part of the adventure sees the party, or what's left of it, either picking up the trail of the war band, in an effort to determine where they came from, and hopefully suppress the threat altogether, or following the main road, as per the miners' explanation, to eventually determine the true threat against the mine. Following the footsteps of the orcs and, ultimately, the giants, will lead to a choice that the party must make, that may take them to certain death at the snout of a blue dragon that resides in the hills. The important encounter here is a buried

temple that the party has the choice to explore, or pass up in favor of tracking down the threat to the mines. If they opt for checking the temple, there are ample opportunities for a TPK, including two clay golems; in spite of the risk, the reward is a magic sword that is nothing short of a divine artifact, to assist them in the remainder of their quest. Encounter 3A will lay out the temple, while encounter 3B will see the party following the footsteps of the war band, eventually arriving at the dragon's lair.

ENCOUNTER 3A: INTO THE DARKNESS WE PLUNGE...

Read the following to the players:

The remains of the top of a tower protrude above the surface of the ground. What's left of stone battlements crumble with age. Across the top of the 20-foot-wide tower, timbers that once supported a long-since disintegrated floor at the top of the tower are all that remain of any kind of floor. To the extent that you can see into the tower, the walls along the side appear to be crumbling themselves, with the occasional root poking through the stonework. You cannot see the bottom of the hole from the surface.

The only way to get down into the hole is by lashing ropes onto either the timbers which, upon closer examination, will support the weight of one adventurer for the descent. The players can also tie up to the battlements, however, this will use a considerable amount of rope. Investigation of the sides

of the tower walls to ascertain their structural stability reveals that any attempts to drive pitons into the walls will result in crumbling of the wall to the extent that they will realize that they cannot use the side walls to support their weight.

The pit is 60 feet deep. If the characters drop anything down the pit, to determine its depth, allow characters a wisdom check (CL1) to hear the object splash upon impact. At the bottom of the pit is a Black Ooze that spans the entire 20' diameter of the opening.

Once a character enters the ooze, it will make a slam attack that, if successful, require the target to make a dexterity save (CL5). If the save attempt fails, the target is then subject to constriction. Each round, the PC must make another dexterity save to escape; after the first round, when the character's armor and gear dissolve in the acid (or two rounds, if the character has heavy armor), the character will take 3d6 acid damage per round. The character is completely engulfed within 4 rounds, if it fails to make any of its dexterity saves.

OOZE, BLACK (This large non-intelligent ooze's vital stats are HD 10d10, AC 3, HP 50 and MV 10'. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with acid for 3d6 points of damage. Its special abilities are constrict and spell immunity, full, vs. cold and electricity.)

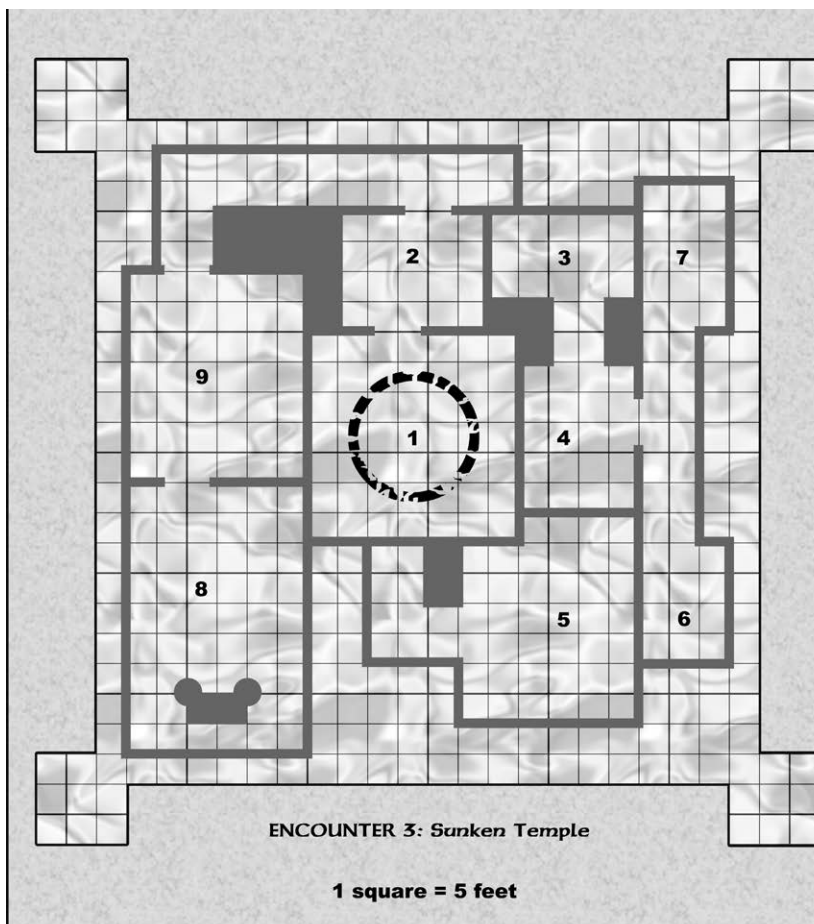
Rooms labeled 2, 4, 5, 6, and 9, are all empty, and devoid of any signs of recent life or traffic. They are just as the ages have left them; the wood and fabric components have largely rotted away, leaving behind very little in the way of useful clues.

Room 7 is completely blanketed by a large colony of Yellow Mold. Read the following to the players:

The smell leading into this room grows more and more dank. The mildewy smell becomes overpowering as you look reach the entrance. Looking inside the room, you see a thick, orange-yellowish carpet of fungus that has grown over the entire area of the room.

YELLOW MOLD COLONY (This non-intelligent ooze's vital stats are HD 0, HP 0, AC 10, and MV 0'. Its primary attributes are none. It attacks with a surface infection for 1d8 points of damage. If struck or impacted by a fall, colony may release a spray of spores (20% +5% per point of damage dealt); creatures within the 10' radius must make a CL5 constitution save or die. Colony may also attack one intelligent creature with a psionic blast, intelligence save CL5, to incapacitate target. Heal or wish negates effect.)

Room 8 is the primary objective room of the temple. Read the following text to the players:



While the rest of the tower suggests that these ruins are ancient, the altar at the end of the room seems mysteriously pristine. White marble, crafted in a manner that hasn't been seen in centuries, looks as clean as the day it was consecrated. Two roughly humanoid-looking statues stand on either side of the altar, facing one another. Unlike the altar, the statues show their age, as it appears that the features have eroded away. Resting on the altar is a finely-crafted sword, with a pommel that resembles a bird with its outstretched wings forming the hand-guard.

This chamber reveals the nature of the ancient ruin; it was once a temple to the goddess, Danu. The party's cleric, druid, and paladin classes, if there are any, are all allowed intelligence checks (CL2) to identify the sword as the *Raven Sword of Danu*, an artifact granted by the deity to adventurers with a battle in their near future that likely includes giants.

RAVEN SWORD OF DANU: Adamantine longsword, Chaos Slayer (+2, +4 vs chaos and double damage), turns wielder invisible between individual combats during the course of battle.

In addition to the sword, any clerics are also entitled to a wisdom check (CL0), to identify the statues as clay golems. The golems will not attack until someone attempts to pick up the sword.

CLAY GOLEMS x2 (These large constructs' vital stats are HD 9d10, AC 22, HP 60 and MV 20'. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a slam attack for 3d10 points of damage. Their special abilities are berserk (+2 to hit) and immunity to magic. They ignore all spell effects except as follows: move earth inflicts 3d12 points of damage, disintegrate affects as slow and inflicts 1d12 points of damage (save negates), earthquake cast directly on golem immobilizes and inflicts 5d6 points of damage.)

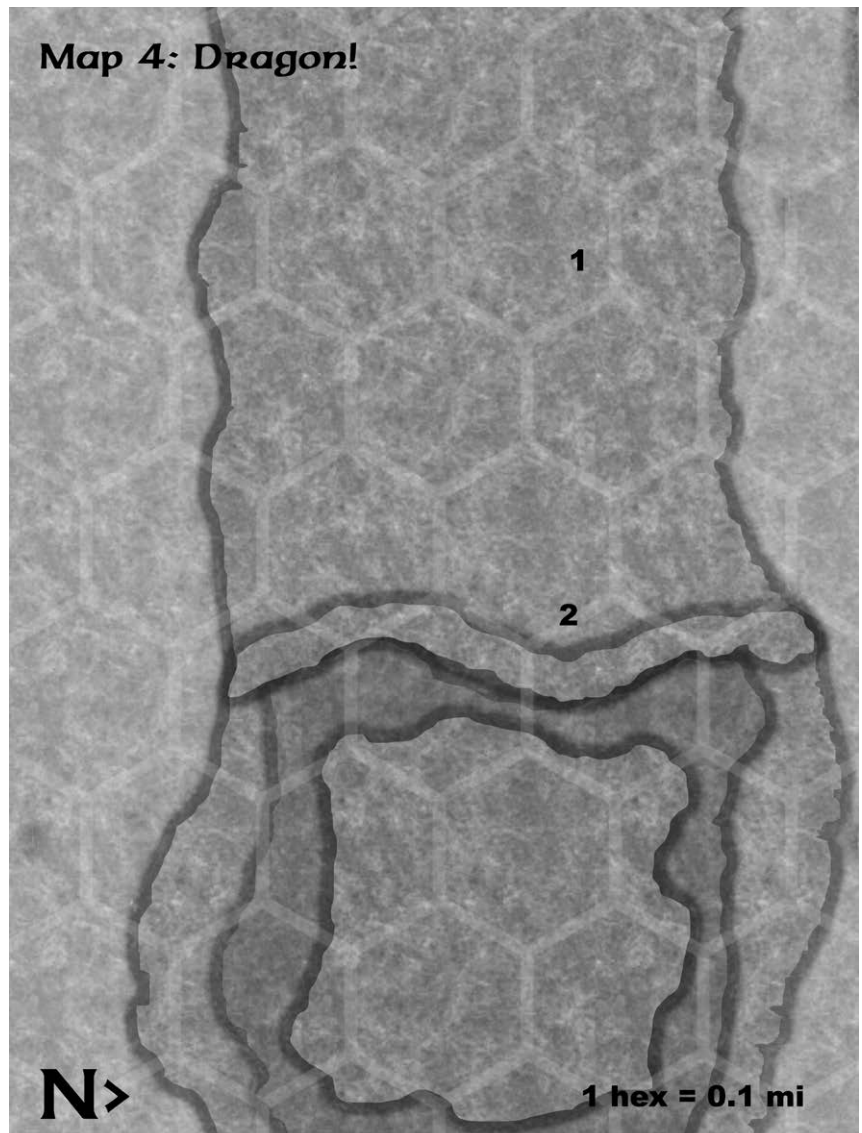
ENCOUNTER 3B: INTO THE JAWS OF DEATH...A VERY BLUE DEATH

The only way the party should play this encounter is if they did not talk to the miners in encounter 1. This is an encounter that should eat up the bulk of the remainder of the session. If the party goes down this route, there is no way they can get to the final encounter. For this encounter, consult map 4. As evidenced by the map, this encounter involves a tall hill, with a trail that runs up and across it. The trail is 15 feet wide, and was formed as travelers wore down the scrub vegetation to the stone beneath. There are two relevant areas on the map: the first near the bottom of the hill, while the second is on the trail, roughly halfway across the ½-mile wide hill. Even though the hill is only a half-mile wide, it rises approximately ¾ mile at the highest point, roughly halfway across. The distance from the trail down to the hill giant standing is approximately 500 feet.

The remains of what appears to have been a giant standing lay below the path. The road is bordered by cliffs on the east and west sides, with the eastern cliff dropping roughly 500 feet from the edge of the road, while the western cliff rises approximately 100 feet. Both surfaces are, for all intents and purposes, vertical or nearly enough to vertical that descending or ascending would be highly difficult. The difficulty for a climb check in either direction, up or down, is evident in the CL8 ability check. The bodies of dead giants litter the terrain below. While it is difficult to make out specific details from this distance, the bodies nearest your vantage point look to have been ripped apart.

As the party reaches the highest part of the climb, read the following to the group:

As the road climbs the hill, the road begins to hug a cliff face, while the cliff drops off sharply on the other side. As you make your way around a bend, you look down into the valley from your vantage point, and notice humanoid forms lying on the ground. For as high as you are, the forms seem large, to the extent that you shouldn't normally be able to see individual limbs. The forms aren't moving. As you continue to make your way



up the trail, the remains of a settlement come into view. Everything is quite large.

It is obvious that this was once a hill giant stading. It has been taken over by a blue dragon. The area is littered with the bodies of dead hill giants; while the party can clearly see that the motionless forms must be some kind of giants, it's not possible to tell which.

BLUE DRAGON (This 20' long lawful evil dragon's vital stats are HD 14d12, AC 21, HP 89, and MV 40' walking, 150' flying, 20' burrowing. It is age category 4. Its primary attributes are mental and physical. It attacks with 2 claws for 1d6+1, wing for 1d8+2, tail for 1d8+4, and bite for 4d6+4 points of damage. Its breath weapon is lightning, either in a 40' line or a 20' cone and causes 7d10 points of damage. Special abilities are all abilities common to dragons, create/destroy water 3/day (potions and liquids save vs 1st level), and sound imitation (wisdom save to detect ruse)).

The dragon attacks from above, diving from high in the air, and allowing its wings to make a thunderous sound as it descends. It then stops at the level of the party, 10 feet away from the edge of the road, and unleashes a cone of lightning as it breathes on the party. At this point, have the party roll a charisma save. Failure means the character has been affected by the dragon's frightful presence, and suffers -2 to all attribute checks, to hit, damage, and save rolls. It will then attempt to use its wings to create a gust of air in the next round, requiring all characters to make a dexterity check to keep their balance. Successive rounds will see it make its normal claw/bite/tail/wing attacks.

ENCOUNTER 4: MMMM...JUDGING BY THE SMELL... ORC!!

The beginning of the end of the adventure happens at a crossroads. After moving 3 1/2 miles from Falgar, they approach a crossroad. Turning south will take them to Virenar. Read the following to the party:

Before you even make the turn to head for Virenar Mine, you hear noise to the south and west, and then you get a whiff of the smell. Whatever awaits in the distance neither sounds nor smells like anything you care to tangle with. As you make the turn to head for Virenar Mine, you see in the distance, a coarsely walled complex looms ahead. From here, it appears that the walls are made of brush and other materials foraged from the land, but the presence of carved obstacles in front of the wall leaves no doubt that this is a military compound.

As the party approaches the encampment, they should get an opportunity to listen to determine the language. If there are any PCs who speak orcish, they will automatically recognize orcish being spoken in the distance. In addition to the talking that can be made out, the sounds of arguments are frequent, as is the chopping of wood and what can only be the grinding of metal weapons.

The encampment is close enough to the road that the sentries patrolling the wall will notice any approach from the road. There

is a wooded patch immediately to the west of the fort. The PCs can attempt to move in this direction around the west side of the fort, and if they do so during the day, the attempt is made as a series of 3 dexterity checks per PC. The checks are made at CL0 during the day. If they opt to wait to get around the fort at night, the CL goes to 6. If there are stealth-focused PCs in the party (thieves/assassins/rangers), the party only needs to make 2 dexterity checks.

If the party successfully maneuvers around the west side of the encampment, they have the option of skipping the fight and, thus, catching the occupants of Virenar Mine by surprise.

Orc encampment just south of the southwest corner of the crossing. Occupants of encampment are:

ORCS (These lawful evil humanoids vital stats are HD 1d8, AC varies, see below, HP varies, see below, and MV 30'. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with weapons, see below for type and damage. Their special abilities are darkvision 60' and light sensitivity.)

19 with AC 13, HP 5, axes (1d6+1) and 2 javelins (1d6), leather coat + shield

4 with AC 11, HP 4, maces (1d6) and shortbows with 20 arrows (1d6), no armor

5 with AC 14, HP 5, axes (1d6+1), leather armor and shield

6 with AC 14, HP 6, broadswords (2d4), leather armor and shield

ORC LIEUTENANTS x2 (These lawful evil humanoids vital stats are HD 2d6, AC 16, HP 9 and MV 30'. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with heavy maces for 1d8 points of damage. They carry scale mail and shields. Their special abilities are darkvision 60' and light sensitivity.)

ORC SERGEANTS x2 (These lawful evil humanoids vital stats are HD 2d6, AC 17, HP 11 and MV 30'. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with battle axes for 1d8+1 points of damage. They carry breastplates and shields. Their special abilities are darkvision 60' and light sensitivity.)

ORC PERSONAL GUARD (These lawful evil humanoids vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 15, HP 6,6,6,6,6,7, and MV 30'. Their primary attributes are physical. Five attack with winged spears, see below, one with a bastard sword for 1d10 points of damage. They wear scale armor. Their special abilities are darkvision 60' and light sensitivity.)

**Winged Spears are used to dismount mounted opponents, or dislodge the shield from an opponent wielding one. The orc must declare this action when it attacks. If this attack is declared, the opponent's AC is 10 + dexterity bonus ONLY. If the attack hits, opponent must make a successful dexterity check, or be dismounted/stripped of its shield.*

ORC SHAMAN (This lawful evil humanoid's vital stats are HD 3d6, AC 12, HP 14, and MV 30'. His primary attributes are

mental. He attacks with a light mace for 1d6 points of damage. He casts spells as 4th level, selecting from the following: 4 x 0- detect good, darkness, purify food & water; 3 x 1st -bless, cure light wounds, protection from good, sanctuary, shield of faith, obscuring mist; 2 x 2nd -aid, darkness, speed poison, spiritual weapon, produce flame. He carries 6 silver holy symbols worth 20gp each.)

Decisive Victory: No casualties (reduced to 0 HP) within the party, and no valuable expendables (i.e. combat spells) used.

Marginal Victory: No casualties within the party, however, at least one combat spell cast.

Marginal Defeat: At least one casualty within the party and/or at least 3 combat spells cast.

Decisive Defeat: At least one casualty within the party, spellcasters tapped out in terms of spell slots/day.

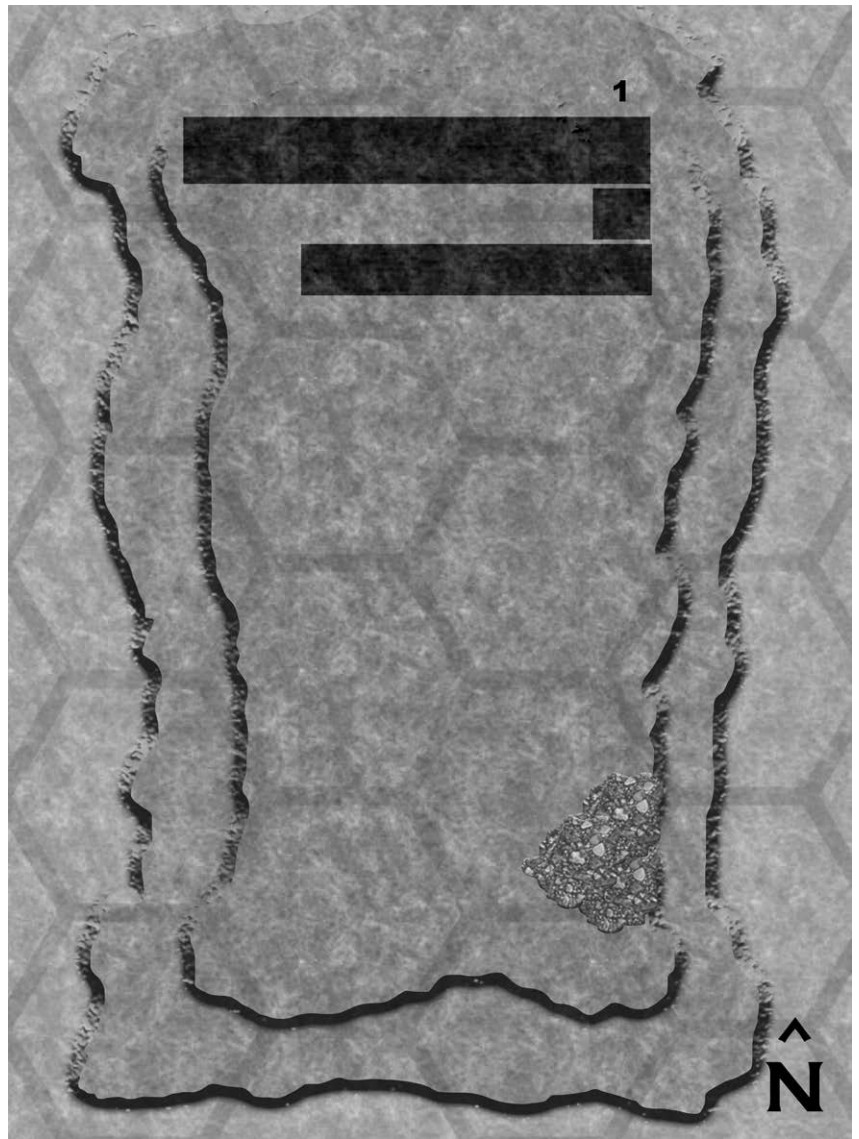
ENCOUNTER 5: ANSWERS...

However the party arrives, they finally reach Virenar Mine. It isn't but half as deep as Falgar was, but is a bit longer and wider. As opposed to the winding road through Falgar, a single descent road into the pit exists. Read the following to the party:

This doesn't seem like the kind of place that would see people, living and dead, attempt to discourage one from finding what their looking for. The mine is far more unassuming than Falgar was; A single, 15'-wide wooden plank road, only about half as deep, but certainly no less defended.

As the party arrives at the entrance to the pit, the inhabitants are either going about their business, as if nothing ever happened (i.e. the party avoided combat in Encounter 4), or are at the entrance of the mine in defensive positions, waiting for the party to arrive. The group consists of a human wizard with 12 ogres that appear to be obedient to the wizard. If the party avoided combat in encounter 4, they will have the opportunity to catch the group here by surprise. If they chose to fight, however, they will be greeted by a group that is ready to strike, and will hit first. The group is comprised as follows:

The rune mark, once combat is entered, will open by placing *bend light* on himself. He will then follow with *darkness* on the party, and will put *shielding* on himself. He will then start using *drain heat* on the party. When half of the ogres are killed, he will once again cast *bend light* on himself, as he attempts to make his exit. If the party is successful in eliminating all threats, and the rune mark is killed instead of escaping, they find the equivalent in 5,000 gp in assorted gems. He does not have anything in the way of magic items, and only simple, non-magical weapons (2 daggers, a long sword, and a short bow with 12 arrows).



OGRES x12 (These large chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d8, AC 16, HP 22 and MV 30'. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a weapon for 1d10+3 points of damage or their powerful fists for 1d10 points of damage (one attack, one damage). They have dark and twilight vision.)

MARAX (This 9th level human rune mark's vital stats are HD 9d6, AC 12, Hp 26, and MV 30'. His primary attributes are charisma, dexterity, and constitution. His significant attributes are intelligence 14 and charisma 16. He attacks using runes. He can cast 12 runes/day taken from the following list: arrest motion, bend light, breath, darkness, drain heat, light, opening, redirect, shielding, bridging, and fire.)

Upon clearing the occupants, inspection of the mine reveals that the Rune Mark was, in fact, the owner of the mine, Marax. Taking this information back to Rynell will result in the party earning another 5,000gp in reward/bounty coin.

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