

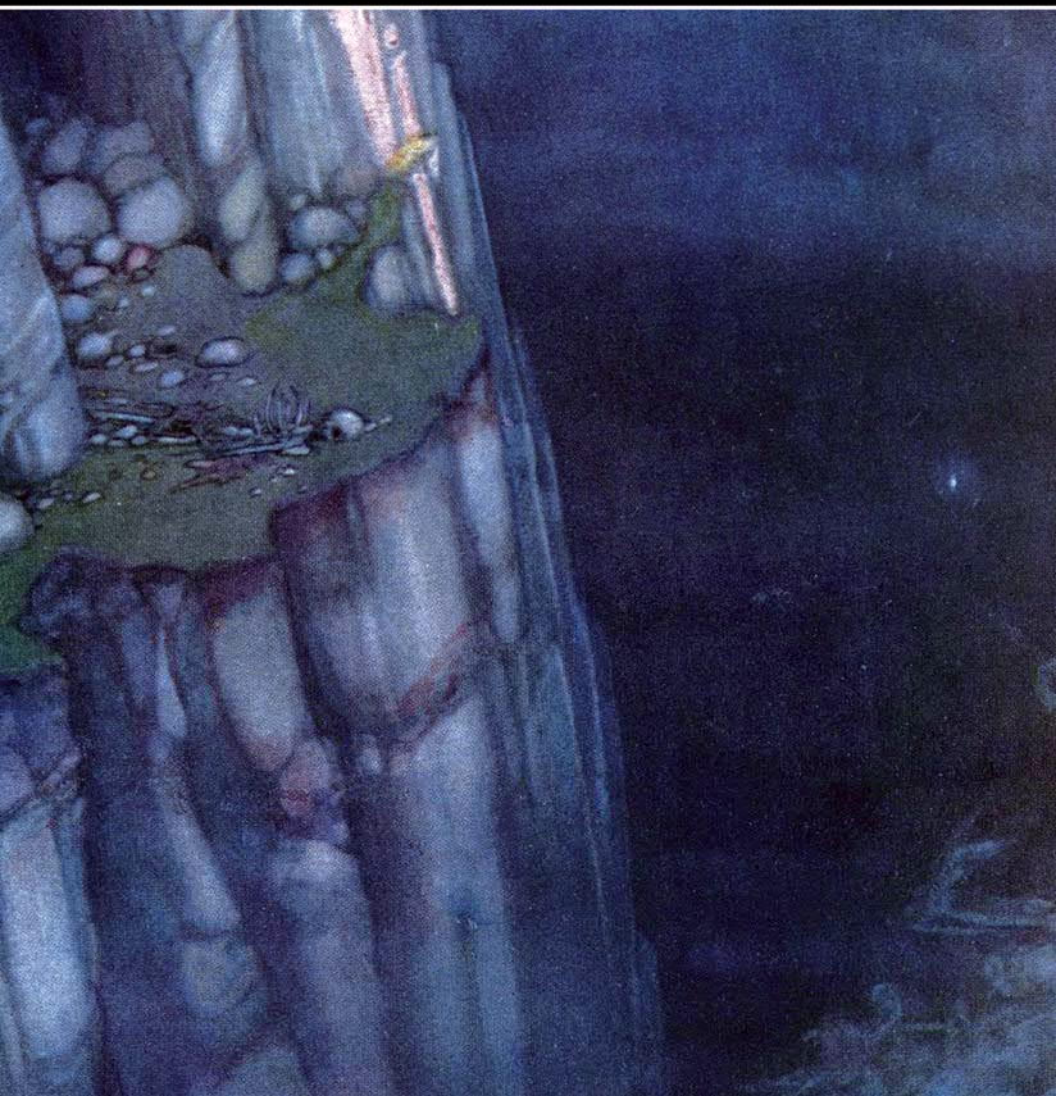
RK 1

a short adventure module for
Dungeon World and Labyrinth Lord



Knives in the Dark

Johnstone Metzger





Two centuries ago, the dreaded secret society of assassins were buried in their mountain fortress. But now a group of miners have uncovered this ancient stronghold, unleashing the evil held within. The shadows of the assassins have been waiting patiently for their freedom to come, and now it has. With their fingers like knives and their hearts calling out for vengeance, they emerge once more into the world. *Knives in the Dark* is a short adventure module, compatible with both *Dungeon World* and *Labyrinth Lord*.

Red Box Vancouver



Module RK 1

Knives in the Dark

an adventure set on the River Knife
for the Dungeon World and Labyrinth Lord
fantasy role-playing games

by
Johnstone Metzger



2013
Vancouver
Canada

Knives in the Dark

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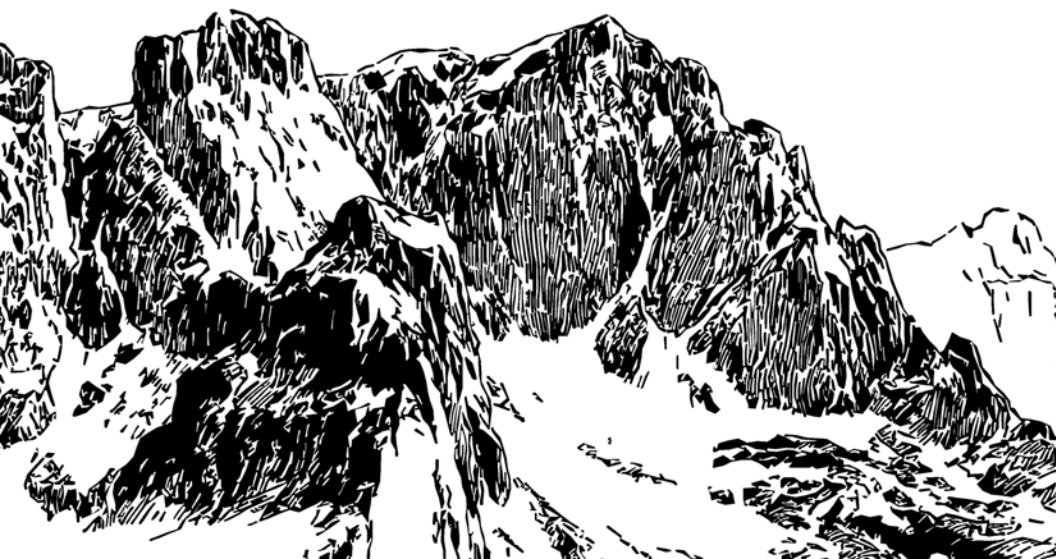
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Contents

Introduction	7
Rules and Rulings	8
Murderous Shadows	10
Getting Started	14
Death Mountain	21
Stronghold of Death	22
Maps	30
Shadows on the Mountainside	34
In the Shadows	37
The Camp	39
The Count	42
The Town	48
Dungeon World Rules	53
Assassins	54
Shadow Dragon	55
Shadow Snakes	56
NPCs	57
Labyrinth Lord Rules	59
Assassins	60
Shadow Dragon	61
Shadow Snakes	62
NPCs	63

Introduction

High up in the eastern mountains of the Black Peaks, where the River Knife runs fast and narrow, a terrible secret has been uncovered. Just north of the town of Affeldeen, close to the river's source, is a camp of men digging tin out of these mountains. But the tin no longer flows—the miners have gone on strike! Viceroyal Governor Milo Stauffenbach is beside himself. He has quotas to meet, but the miners will not go back underground. What he needs right now is a group of adventurers brave enough to venture into the mine and find out what went wrong—and fix it, if they can.



Rules and Rulings

The River Knife series of modules are designed to be used with both Dungeon World and Labyrinth Lord (and by extension any other old school fantasy role-playing game). When the text references rules from one game in particular, they are noted by the game’s initials: (DW) for Dungeon World and (LL) for Labyrinth Lord. There are also some new rules that should be used in both games, namely the custom moves and the grim portents and dooms.

Custom Moves

Moves are optional mini-rules taken from Dungeon World. They help you figure out what happens in particular situations, and always follow a similar format. When a PC makes a move and the adventure asks them to roll, they roll 2d6 plus a modifier, usually based on one of their ability scores. These modifiers are the same as the standard Labyrinth Lord ability score modifiers.

Ability modifiers are abbreviated in the text as follows: Charisma (CHA), Constitution (CON), Dexterity (DEX), Intelligence (INT), Strength (STR), Wisdom (WIS).

Once a roll is made for a move, a final result of 7 or higher is called a “hit,” and means something good happens. A final result of 6 or less is called a “miss,” and means something bad happens. Miss results are not further differentiated (how bad the results are is up to you and should follow from the situation at hand), but hit results can differ based on how high the roll is: a 10+ result is usually better than a 7-9 result.

Not all custom moves call for a roll. Sometimes the effects of magical items and other circumstances are written in the form of moves. These function exactly as written.

Score	Modifier
3 or less	-3
4-5	-2
6-8	-1
9-12	0
13-15	+1
16-17	+2
18 or more	+3

Grim Portents and Dooms

Because most of the antagonists in this adventure are intelligent beings, there are no wandering monster tables. Instead, the assassins and the other threats each have a plan of action that they begin to execute when the dungeon opens up to the world.

This plan is detailed in the lists of grim portents on pages 11-12. As the adventure progresses, it is up to you to decide how fast the antagonists complete these steps. Each time they advance their plan, you should reveal the consequences—or some of them—to the PCs. Unless they deliberately choose to ignore them, they should be aware of these ongoing threats.

If the PCs fail to stop the assassins from completing their plan, the world changes irrevocably, and their impending doom comes to pass. This is also true for the other dangers in this adventure—Milo Stauffenbach and the shadow dragon, should it be summoned. If they complete their grim portents without being stopped, whatever consequences are listed under their impending dooms come true and reversing them should require even more effort.

Other Terminology

Money is referred to only as “coins” and should be read as the standard type of currency in your game, or whichever one is used to calculate experience point gains (1 coin = 1 xp).

Murderous Shadows

Two centuries ago, this mountain housed the stronghold of a secret society of assassins. Their poisoned knives struck fear into the hearts of nobles in lands both near and far, until Count Varto Zann brought them to an end. While the stronghold's front door was known to many of the assassins' clients, it was not until a traitor revealed the location of the secret entrance that Count Varto was able to act decisively against them. With the help of Dwarven sappers he nailed the front doors shut and covered them in tons of rock. At the same time, he buried the secret entrance in more rock and executed the traitor just outside, to seal this doorway with a magical curse. The remaining assassins, stuck inside, never emerged again.

But they did not die, not all of them. Through black magic, the assassins turned themselves into living shadows. Unable to leave their stronghold, they have remained there for two hundred years, waiting to be discovered. And now the miners have dug their way into the lower depths of the stronghold. A way out exists—it only remains for the assassins to emerge and establish themselves once again in the world of men. They have waited these many years for freedom to come to them, and now it has.

Once these shadows get free, their plan is described in the grim portents list, below. If they summon the shadow dragon, it has its own agenda as well, and Governor Stauffenbach can become an implacable foe of the PCs if they do not protect and expand his financial assets.

Will the assassins have their revenge on Count Varto's descendant? Will they destroy the mining industry in and around the town of Affeldeen, bankrupting the governor? Will they once again spread terror across the land, offering to bring death in exchange for nothing more than money?

Yes, they will. Unless they are stopped.

Custom Moves

If you sleep inside a sarcophagus of sustenance... (page 29).

If you sleep or meditate with a stoneheart amulet around your neck... (page 26).

When you make a sacrifice and coat the wooden head in blood... (page 26).

When you pour a cup of fresh blood onto the mirror and recite the words etched into its frame... (page 28).

Dangers

The Assassins

Each assassin who committed ritual suicide in the stronghold was transformed into a faceless, anonymous living shadow. How many there are is up to you—one per PC for a low-level adventure, up to double that for a high-level adventure—but the PCs should be able to count the bodies in the training room in order to know how many living shadows they have to contend with.

The assassins are an arcane cabal whose goals are to hoard wealth, maintain their privacy, and make regular offerings to the many gods of death they worship.

GRIM PORTENTS

- The assassins emerge and kill a few people.
- The wooden head from Kuna-Lii is removed from the stronghold (by the assassins or others, it makes no difference).
- The assassins possess some people close to the wooden head.
- The wooden head is used to summon the shadow dragon.
- The assassins murder Count Tristavelian Zann.
- The assassins locate and seize a new headquarters.

Impending Doom: The assassins impoverish the land and its peoples with their reign of terror, always retreating into their secret base when threatened.

Milo Stauffenbach

If the PCs get on the governor's bad side, he can cause a lot of problems for them. Metropolitrix Colcea should be able to protect them to some degree, but freebooters and scoundrels have little recourse. Milo's main goal is to make as much money as he possibly can, in whatever way he can, but he is a businessman first and foremost. He does not care about the PCs at all, or anyone else in this area, and will try to swindle them all.

GRIM PORTENTS

- Milo blames the PCs for problems in the mining camp and disturbances in town.
- Milo tries to get the PCs to pay for the financial losses he claims to have suffered.
- Milo tries to get the PCs to help him swindle Count Tristavelian out of the rest of his lands.

Impending Doom: The PCs are branded as criminals and warrants for their arrest are sent to the four corners of the kingdom.

The Shadow Dragon

Once the shadow dragon is summoned, it has its own agenda—to raise an army of slaves and conquer the surrounding provinces. This is the easiest way to obtain all the treasures this area has to offer, in its own opinion.

GRIM PORTENTS

- The shadow dragon finds a castle, tower, or other tall residence to roost inside of.
- The shadow dragon kidnaps people from the surrounding area to obtain food and slaves.
- The shadow dragon attacks local authorities directly.
- The dragon's slaves become an army that marches across the land.

Impending Doom: The shadow dragon gains control of this area and surrounding provinces, sending its slave army against its neighbours on a regular basis.



Getting Started

What are adventurers doing here? A town like Affeldeen, in such a remote part of the mountains, does not often see visitors. Are they perhaps guests of the count? Were they sent by the church? Or are they treasure-seeking scoundrels, wandering from prospect to prospect across this dungeon-haunted land? This section gives you three options for introducing PCs to the mining camp and the mountain stronghold the miners have uncovered:

- Hired by Governor Stauffenbach to enter the stronghold.
- Sent by the church to investigate.
- Wandering troublemakers.

Each of these options comes with a selection of questions for you to ask the players, in order to help you flesh out the world and their characters' lives, if you're using new PCs. When they tell you something interesting, make a note and reincorporate it during the adventure. Bring back the people mentioned in their answers and make sure that decisions the PCs made in getting to this point have consequences.

The Church

If the PCs have been sent here by the church, because Metropolitrix Colcea has had visions of a great evil stirring beneath this mountain, ask them some or all of the following questions:

- Do you think Metropolitrix Colcea's visions are legitimate? Or is she employing unlawful or chaotic sorcery in an attempt to increase her temporal power?
- What did you do when the innkeeper refused to give you rooms for free, even though you work for the church?
- Who agreed to meet you in Affeldeen and then didn't show up? Are you worried?
- Who let you see the old church records about the town of Affeldeen? Did you find anything interesting? (If the answer is "yes," tell them an interesting piece of information from the list on page 19.)



Then ask each one in turn the following questions:

Do you trust the church in this matter?

If you do, roll 2d6+CHA. •On a 10+, they have sent you on this mission with a holy relic in your possession. •On a 7-9, they have sent you with a purse of 50 coins to pay for your expenses. •On a miss, you had better trust the church—you're in so much debt that they're going to repossess your family's home if you don't complete this mission!

If you don't trust the church, did you check with a wizard to get a second opinion on the metropolitrix's visions?

Do NOT read what follows out loud to the players:

If you did, roll 2d6+INT. •On a 10+, the wizard gave you a lantern that glows brighter because of the special glass inside it, and told you to beware of shadows. •On a 7-9, the wizard told you to beware of magical artifacts: "Take the money and run, this place is doomed," you were told. •On a miss, the wizard told you that Metropolitrix Colcea was possessed by demonic spirits that originate in the Black Peaks.

If you don't trust the church and you didn't check with a wizard, what the hell is wrong with you?!

Whatever answer they tell you, make it clear that they have no money—replace any coins on their character sheet with a cheap religious artifact instead—and that the church has made prior arrangements with the innkeeper in Affeldeed. If they don't want to complete this assignment, they'll pretty much be broke and homeless.

The Greed

If the PCs are here because they're just looking for trouble or they heard about the strike at the mining camp, ask them some or all of the following questions:

- How did you manage to pay your way up to this end of the River Knife?
- What happened to Governor Stauffenbach's predecessor and were you involved in any way?
- When did you find out about the strike at the mining camp?
- Which of the miners told you there might be treasure in the mine?
- Who told you about Stauffenbach's shady past?
- Who told you there was money to be made up in these mountains and why did you believe them?

Then ask each one in turn the following questions:

Have you been gambling in the town of Affeldeem?

If you have, roll 2d6+WIS. •On a 10+, you've managed to win 3d6 coins and either the admiration of an NPC or an interesting piece of information. Tell us who they are. •On a 7-9, you've managed to win 2d6 coins and the enmity of an NPC. Tell us who they are. •On a miss, you have racked up large debts to unsavoury characters in Affeldeem.

If you haven't been gambling, have you consulted the official records in the town hall?

If you have, roll 2d6+INT. •On a 10+, the GM will tell you two pieces of interesting information. •On a 7-9, the GM will tell you one. •On a miss, the mayor thinks you have pilfered some of those records and has issued a warrant for your arrest.

If you haven't been gambling or looking up records, what have you been doing?

Tell the players what has happened based on which of the following best matches their answers:

- **Fishing in the lake:** You caught a big fish! As long as your arm, it is worth 2 rations (DW) or 10 meals (LL).
- **Just drinking:** Your bar tab is more than you can pay, and you've been cut off.
- **Pursuing romance:** You've made a few people resent you, and one is determined to embarrass you in public.
- **Stealing things:** Someone has accused you of being a thief.
- **Talking about magic:** The townsfolk of Affeldeenshun you like the plague.
- **Anything else:** The only thing going on around here is this miners' strike.

The Law

If the PC's have been hired by the viceroys governor, Milo Stauffenbach, to investigate the mine and put an end to this strike, tell them who hired them, perhaps one or more of the following personalities:

- **Florian:** Stauffenbach's seneschal, he carries a royal writ in his employer's name and is very interested in elves and other strange creatures.
- **Maddox:** A large man, he carries around a purse full of Stauffenbach's money for him.
- **Paulo:** A miner sent into town by Stauffenbach to find a solution to the problem in the mine.

Then ask them the following question:

Do you normally work for the law?

If the answer is "no," treat them just like greedy trouble-seekers, above. If the answer is "yes," ask them some or all of the following questions:

- How long have you worked for the law?
- Is this a typical assignment for you? And if not, what is?

- What were you doing before that you would accept a job like this?
- Who was your last boss?

Whatever answers they give you, tell them that two hundred years ago, Count Varto Zann became famous for destroying a secret society of assassins who had a stronghold up in these mountains, but that this probably doesn't have anything to do with the miners' strike.

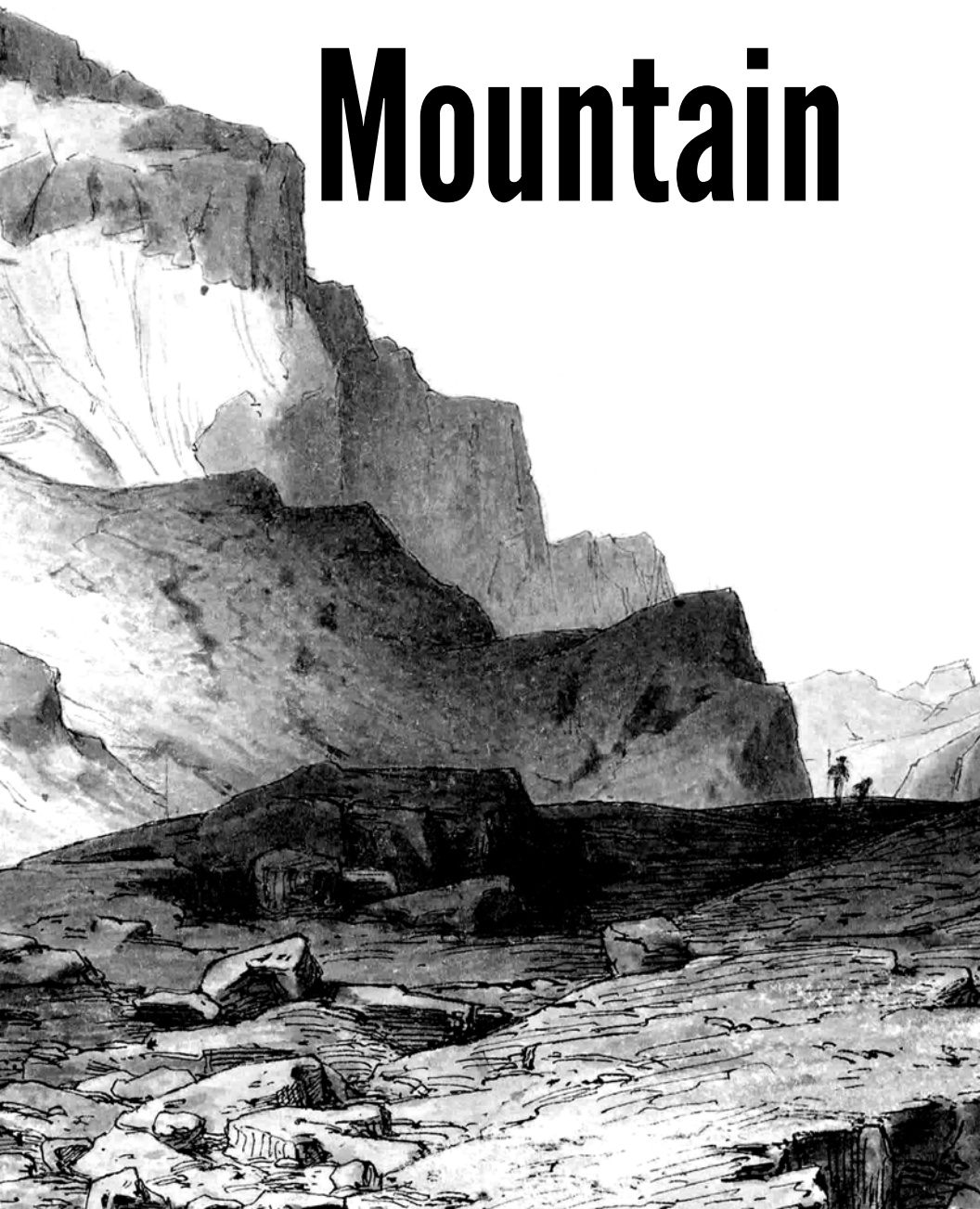
Pieces of Information

If a PC has discovered a piece of interesting information, tell them one of the following:

- Count Tristavelian Zann has lost a considerable amount of land in the last decade or so. Most of it seems to have been bought up by Governor Stauffenbach, and fairly recently, too.
- In a week's time, the people of Affeldeen will hold a festival where they stampede pigs and cattle through the streets of the city. Every year, visitors are injured because they weren't warned beforehand.
- More than two centuries ago, a rich duke was robbed while in Affeldeen. The town was fined almost to the point of oblivion, but one item was never recovered—a magical statuette from a distant tropical island.
- Several years ago, at a prestigious auction house in a large Southern city, the count and the governor competed vigorously to obtain several works of art from the estate of the leader of a witch cult that had recently been broken up. These witches were all burned at the stake.
- Stauffenbach's tin mine is actually operating in debt, its expenses being higher than the revenue it collects from tin.
- The secret society of assassins that once had a stronghold inside this mountain was only destroyed by the count after a traitor revealed its secret entrance.
- These assassins were known to purchase and hoard rubies—the larger, the better!



Death Mountain





Stronghold of Death

This stronghold was built almost a thousand years ago, long before the assassins moved into it. The walls are covered in dark grey stonework of excellent quality but parts of the stronghold have suffered under the weight of the mountain—the well has gone dry and other rooms have flooded.

The stronghold is laid out in the shape of a cross, with the main entrance to the east, the well and secret entrance to the north, and the charnel pit that the miners have accidentally found to the south.

1. MINERS' PASSAGEWAY

Inside the mine, the miners have dug out a **narrow passageway**, following a vein of tin. From the entrance, **two miners** can be seen lying face down on the ground, seemingly dead. By the open hand of one of them glitter several large rubies.

If examined, the miners are stuck to the ground by their own dried blood. They appear to have been repeatedly slashed and stabbed to death by knives. There are **three large but roughly-cut rubies**, worth 200 coins each.

2. CHARNEL PIT

This room is round and domed, with a **large pit** at its centre, into which the assassins dumped corpses and trash of all kinds, from victims they disappeared to the bones of animals whose flesh they consumed. The top of this refuse pile is about 10 feet below the lip of the pit. It is hard to determine how deep the refuse goes—perhaps another 50 feet, or even more, below the surface. **One of the shadow snakes** has taken up residence here. If disturbed, it attacks.

There is also a set of **large double doors** here, decorated in gold leaf and rough-cut **rubies** meant to resemble drops of blood. Some of them have already been pried off, but six still remain, each worth 200 coins. More than three have been removed, however. Perhaps they fell in the charnel pit, or there are miners out in the camp with rubies that no one else knows about.

3. FEAST HALL

Past the jewelled door is a **long stairway** leading up. To the right are two doorways that lead to one room, a **feast hall** where the assassins took their meals. Some supplies of nuts, grains, and cured meat remain still intact, but dry as sand and hard as stone.

In the middle of the room is a **long sand pit**, where coals were used to heat food. Underneath the sand is a magical tile laid in the floor. Anyone who disturbs the sand without laying one hand on the edge of it is struck by a glass snake—a spear of sand turned to glass by lightning—for 1d8 damage. If the tile is damaged or removed, it loses all its power.

4. TOILETS

A semi-circle of privy holes ring this room. They have dried up since they were last used, though perhaps there is still a lingering smell.

5. WASHING ROOM

At either end of the hallway leading from the stairs to this room there is a **gong**. The ceiling is covered with strange designs, grooves, and holes. If someone walks through the hallway without sounding one of the gongs, they hear the sound of rusted gears turning and the crunching of glass. An acidic gas is released from glass vials hidden in the ceiling and seeps down into the hallway, dealing 1d10 damage to anyone caught in the middle of it and 1d6 damage to anyone on the edges. It can also ruin clothes and other fragile equipment.

Inside the washing room there is a thin drain pipe, some buckets, and a few pairs of wooden sandals. The room is circular, domed, and unadorned. There is old soap in one of the buckets.

6. MAIN HALLWAY AND DEMONIC FACES

The main hallway that connects all four sections of the stronghold is about five feet wide and made of dark stone, with a vaulted ceiling. At its very centre, there are **two large, demonic faces**, one on either wall. Inside their gaping mouths are fireplaces and secret doors, both of which lead to hallways and stairs leading down. The stairs past the southern mouth lead down to the charnel pit and those past the northern mouth lead down to the well.

In the hallway past the southern mouth there is a **large boulder** set into the ceiling. The door that leads between the hallway and the mouth is obvious from the hallway side, but looks like a plain wall from outside of the mouth. If more than two people pass through this door without shutting it, the boulder detaches from the ceiling and rolls all the way down the stairs, coming to rest at the jewelled doors, sealing them shut. It deals 1d6+2 damage to anyone it rolls over.

7. GRAND ENTRANCE HALL

In this large room, the ceiling is twelve feet high and pillars separate the centre of the room from an arcade along both sides. Tapestries once hung from the pillars, covering the arcades, but they have rotted away. The room is decorated with **riches and luxuries**, but all are fake. The gems and jewels are all made of glass, the gilding is all fool's gold or paint. The fabrics may have once been real silk and cotton, but they are rotting and worthless now.

Describe as many expensive-looking objects as you like. The assassins used to meet with clients in this room, and these fakeries were there to impress them.

8. FOYER

This is a plain, square room, carved from the living rock itself. To the west is a **small wooden door** that leads to the grand entrance hall. To the east is a set of **large double-doors** that once led to a cavern and from there to the surface. But this cavern has been completely filled with rocks, and these doors no longer open.

In one corner of the foyer there are plain wooden benches and some coat racks.

9. TRAINING ROOM

This large room is similar to the grand entrance hall but with confessionals along the walls instead of arcades. The floor is tiled and worn and there are no decorations or fancy things here—only the **corpses** of several snakes and the assassins who committed ritual suicide. At the far end is a **small altar** decorated with several items: iron incense braziers, flowers made of iron, four stoneheart amulets, and a black, wooden head. The wall behind the altar was once decorated with thin tapestries, but these have turned to dust.

Stoneheart Amulet

These **four amulets** are small stones attached to thin silver chains. They do not look particularly valuable, but they do look odd.

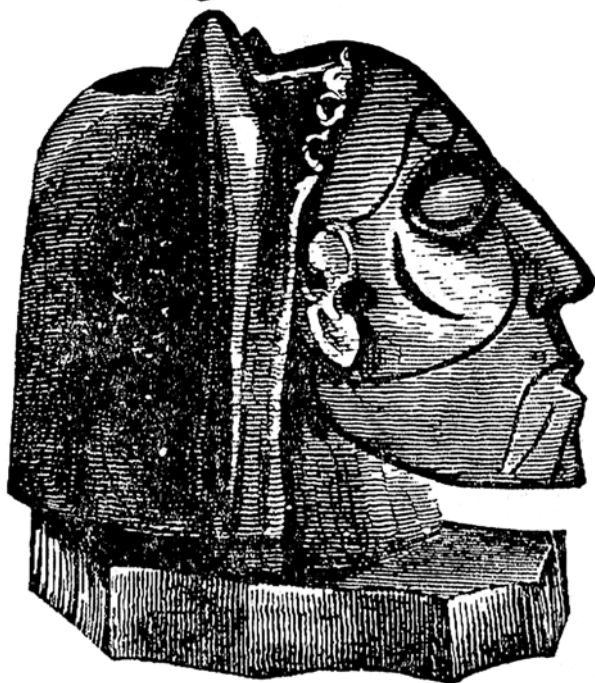
If you sleep or meditate with a stoneheart amulet around your neck, some of your emotions become deadened for one full cycle of the moon. The assassins know how to pick what is deadened, and used them regularly, but if you do not know how to do this, you must roll **1d6** to determine which emotions are deadened:

1 Anger and hate.	4 Fear and terror.
2 Anxiety and fear.	5 Pride and joy.
3 Envy and jealousy.	6 Romantic and sexual desire.

Wooden Head from Kuna-Lii

This **small head** carved from black wood that is hard as stone comes from the ancient Kuna-Lii, a ruined city that lies in the South Seas, on Baker’s Island. It has the power to transform people and animals into living shadows, and to summon the shadow dragons that dwell on the other side of reality. If the PCs do not take it, the assassins will remove it later themselves.

When you make a sacrifice and coat the wooden head in blood, it calls the shadow dragon into the world. Roll **2d6+WIS**. •On a hit, the dragon will perform one favour for you, and on a **10+**, it will also leave again after. •On a miss, it arrives when it wants, where it wants, completely uncontrolled, and the head no longer works.



10. INNER SANCTUM

Behind curtains and a small door lies the inner sanctum of the assassins' leaders—including the **murdered corpse** of one of them, now nothing but bones. This was a comfortable room once, but time has ruined it. The cushions, mattresses, tapestries, carpets, wooden boxes and containers are all worthless now, the vases and all the jars are cracked and dried out. The only things of any value here are the following:

- Four golden incense braziers worth 2d6 coins each.
- A golden pitcher worth 3d6 coins.
- Half a dozen golden cups worth 2d6 coins each.
- A magical mirror, round with a golden frame.
- Three strange sarcophagi.

Bloody Mirror

Slightly more than two feet in diameter, this round **mirror** has a golden frame that is etched with words in an archaic script. “Spill the blood,” it reads, “and know the machinations of thine enemy.” More magical phrases complete the etchings.

When you pour a cup of fresh blood onto the mirror and recite the words etched into its frame, roll 2d6+INT. •On a 10+, it will show you exactly what your stated enemy is doing, for as long as you care to watch. •On a 7-9, it will show you something that one of your enemies is doing, for an hour at most. •On a miss, it shows you an ugly truth—some secret that you might rather not have known. Perhaps your spouse has been unfaithful, your friends have made drunken japes at your expense, or your squire has been embezzling all your coins to give to harlots and third-rate poets.

Sarcophagus of Sustenance

In the inner sanctum, there are **three coffins**, made of a strange, dark wood, their lids carved into the visages of demons. A person can fit inside if they are thin and shorter than six feet tall. Each weighs more than a hundred pounds and are awkward to carry.

If you sleep inside a sarcophagus of sustenance, you have no need to take food or produce waste during the next day. It does not stop you from aging, however.

11. LIVING CELLS

Past the demonic face on the northern side of the main hallway, there is another staircase leading down. On one side are passageways that connect to a long, winding room full of **ascetic cells**, once used as bedrooms by most of the assassins. They had few possessions and almost no luxuries. Even though these cells are at a higher elevation than the well, they are **flooded** with about two feet of dark, murky water. Two decapitated corpses, barely held together in wrapping cloth, and the occasional rotten blanket, float on the surface, and several **shadow snakes** lurk beneath it.

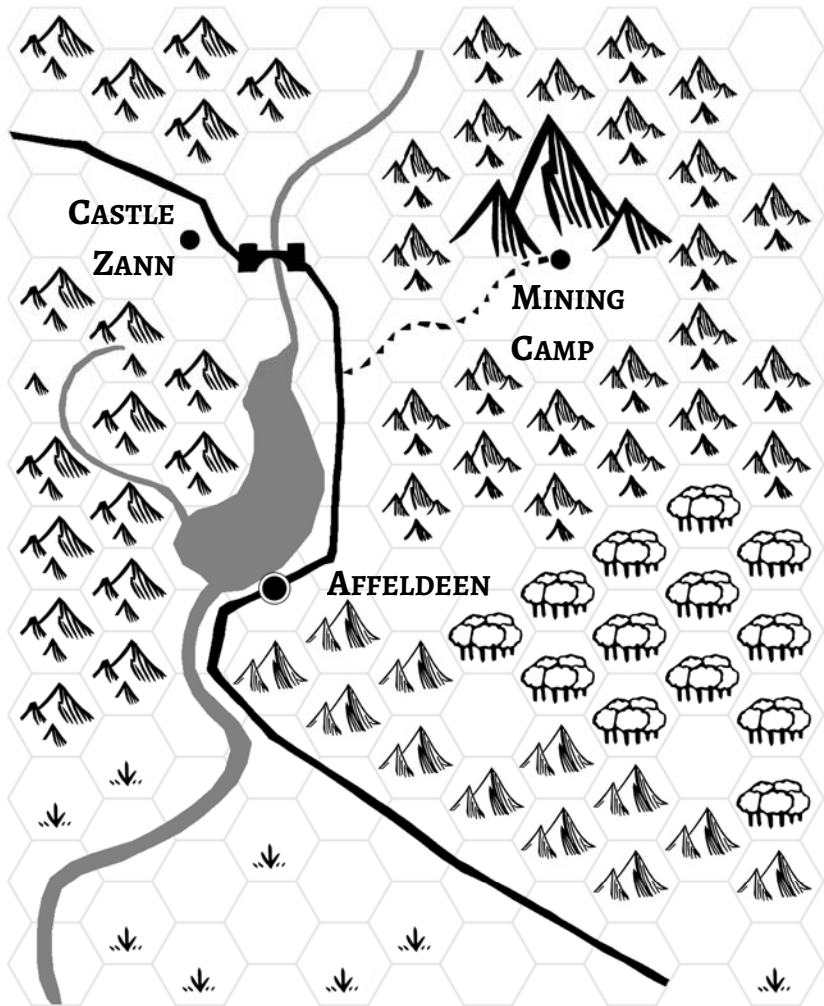
12. WELL ROOM

At the northern end of the staircase is a circular, domed room. The walls are carved into the shapes of **heathen idols**, blasphemous demons, and other foreign gods of blood and murder. In the middle of the room is a **well**. Even though this room lies below the flooded cells, the floor is dry and so is the bottom of the well. It is clogged with silt and no water has flowed through here for many years.








Inside the well there is also a **passageway**, that leads to a narrow ledge along the side of a cliff, high up the mountain. The way is blocked by rocks and dirt, but this can be dug through with only a few hours' work. On the other side, the bones of the traitor who revealed this entrance to Count Varto lie upon the ground, exposed to the elements. If they are removed, the shadows of the assassins will be able to once again use this passage. As long as they remain here, no shadow creature may enter the well.

Map of the Region

1 hex = 2 miles.

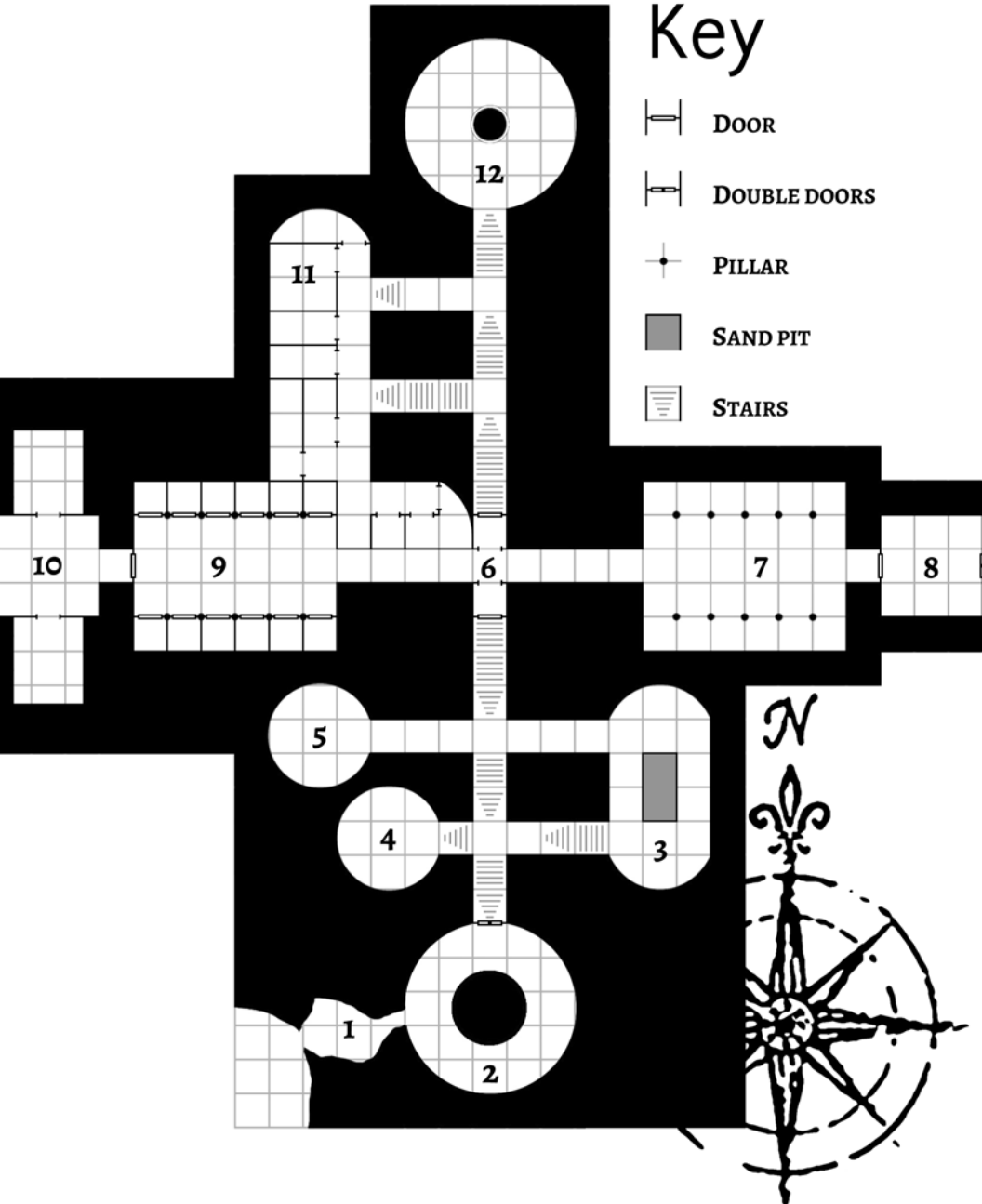


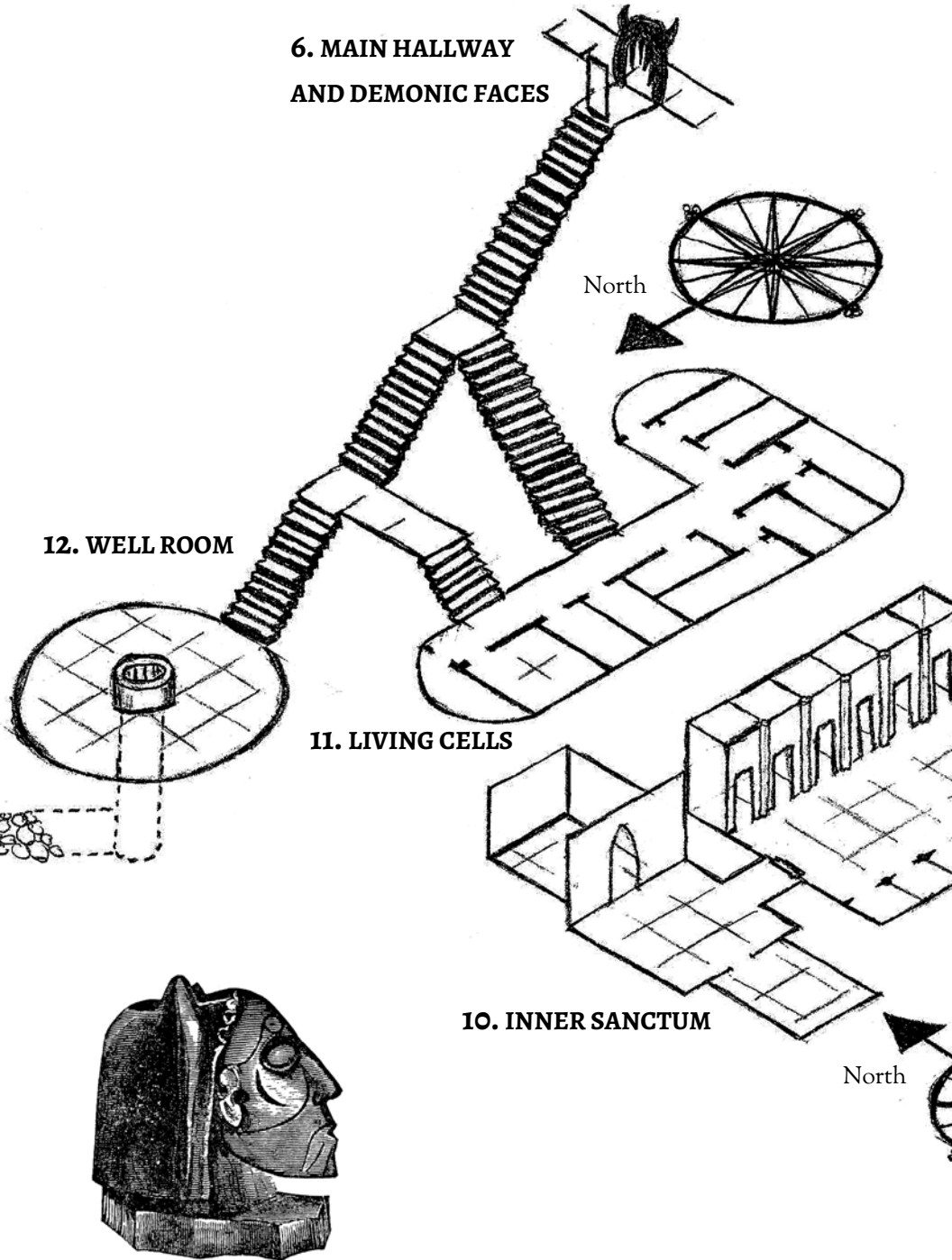
Key

	BRIDGE		HOLLOW MOUNTAINS
	FOREST		SERPENTINE MOUNTAINS
			SWORDRIDGE MOUNTAINS
	GRASS		

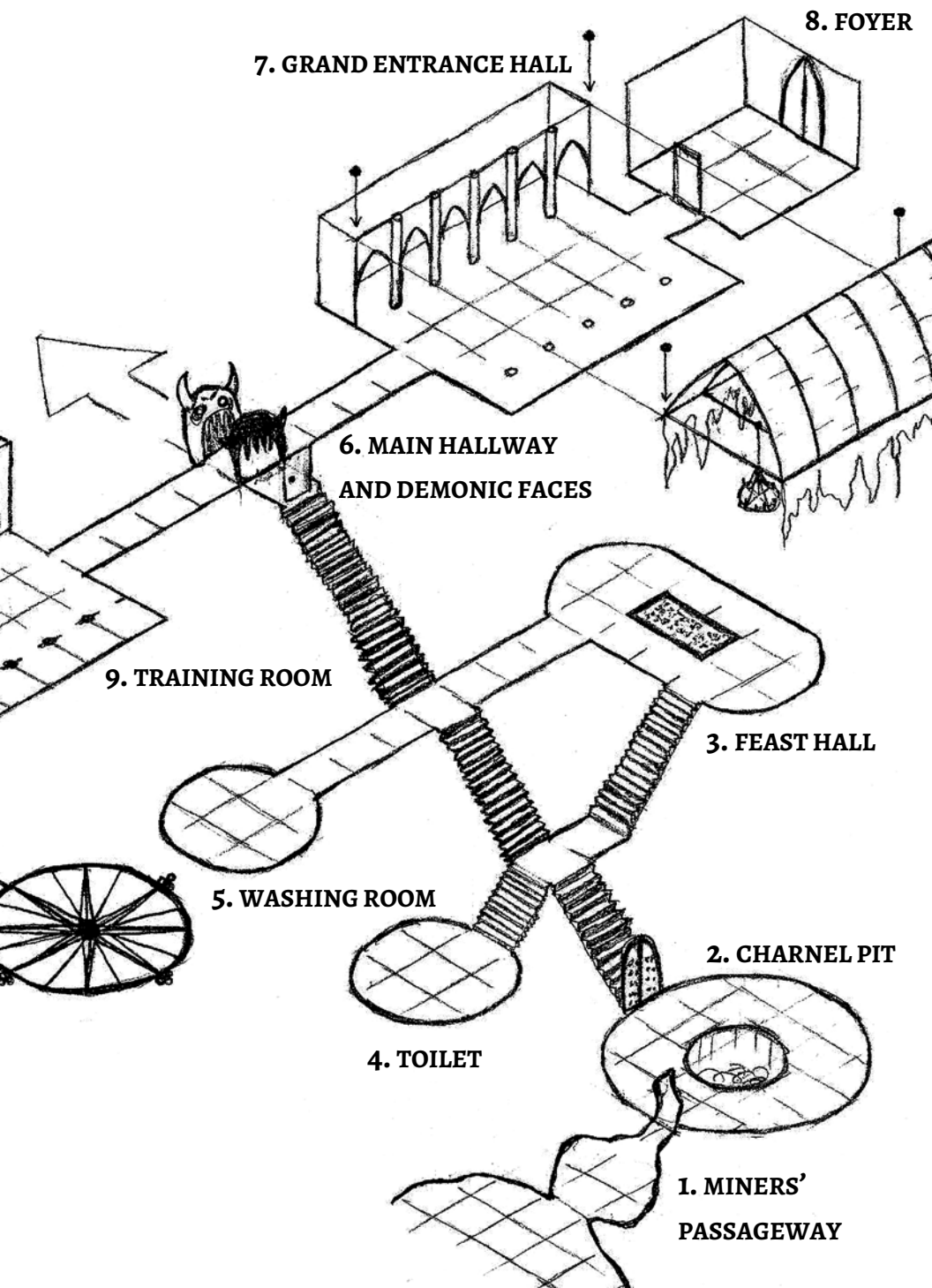
Map of the Stronghold

1 square = 5 feet.





Isometric Views of the Assassins' Stronghold



Shadows on the Mountainside

Once they are free, the shadows of the assassins have a plan they intend to set in motion. These plans include the following:

Murders

The assassins worship ravenous gods of death, so they cannot help but to leave a few lifeless victim wherever they go. Amongst the mining camp, in the town of Affeldeen, or anywhere else they go, they should be leaving a few corpses covered in what look like knife wounds, even when they have not been paid to do so.

The Wooden Head

This artifact is the source of the assassin's shadow magic. If the PCs remove it from the mountain stronghold, the assassins come after them. If someone else removes it, or the PCs leave it with someone, the assassins come after them. Or the assassins can remove it themselves, and hide it away in a cellar in Affeldeen.

Possession

The assassins have the power to force their shadow forms into the bodies and minds of weak-willed humans, effectively possessing them. They can only do this with the weakest and most feeble-minded of people, however. Because the bodies of children are weak, they primarily target village idiots or people in sanatoriums. Once they have bodies, they can move about in daylight and they have a shell that must be killed before their shadow bodies are even hurt.

This possession does not physically hurt the victim, though it can be quite unsettling and mentally traumatizing. Victims may become afraid of darkness, they may feel disgust when touched by other, and they may feel alienated from their own bodies.

Murdering the Count

The assassins still want revenge upon the count that imprisoned them inside their mountain, and Tristavelian, as his descendant and heir, is the closest they can come. The assassins will attempt to infiltrate his castle and murder him, along with his family, most likely possessing his handicapped son in the process.

The assassins, if they have reason to be confident, may decide that Tristavelian is the most auspicious sacrifice to make in order to summon the shadow dragon. In this case, they hold off on the summoning until they can commit this heinous murder in the count's own castle. But if they have suffered significant setbacks, they will summon the dragon as soon as they can.

The Shadow Dragon

Once the dragon is summoned, it has its own agenda and its own grim portents to follow. As it is more powerful than the assassins, they curb their own plans to support the dragon's. Most likely, they move into the dragon's roost and become generals of its slave army.

Rebuilding their Numbers

Once the assassins have found a new headquarters, whether that is Count Tristavelian's castle, some hovel in the forest, or whatever tower the shadow dragon decides to live in, they can start recruiting again. They will slowly build up their numbers over the course of years. If they are allowed to reach their impending doom without being stopped, they might begin their reign of terror right away, or they might vanish and reappear years later, with renewed strength—whichever is more appropriate for your campaign.



In the Shadows





The Camp

The camp outside Affeldeem is home to approximately four dozen miners, most of them from other parts of the world. They have come here to mine tin out of the Black Peaks, but now they have found more than they bargained for.

The camp itself is usually a grim and dour place now. Milo Stauffenbach has tried to get the miners to work other parts of the mine, or perform other work—anything at all, really—but the two sides have arrived at an impasse. No work is conducted by the camp except what can be performed inside the camp itself. This includes sorting and packing ore for transportation, but this work is almost complete and the miners are getting restless.

Possible encounters in or around the mining camp:

- A fight breaks out. Someone tries to murder Fang Chuhlang.
- A group of miners arrive in town and wreak havoc.
- The assassins make an attempt on Zedar's life.
- The PCs catch Tiqásip burying rubies during a trip into town.
- The PCs encounter Haffsidi and Zedar as they flee the camp.

Haffsidi and Zedar

Zedar was one of the miners who entered the charnel pit room and escaped with his life. The other miners think he is incredibly lucky, and so does he—because he escaped with a small handful of rubies! He keeps them hidden in a pouch tied to a string around his neck, so the others will not rob him. Only his fellow Haffsidi knows about them, and Haffsidi has sworn to protect Zedar from the people of this strange land.

Zedar is a strong miner, but no fighter. Haffsidi carries a large knife in his sash and knows how to use it. They are looking for an opportunity to sneak away from the camp and go downriver without anyone else following them and stealing their rubies. Haffsidi is convinced they can sell the rubies and retire to a life of luxury, but Zedar doubts that the nobles of this land will let them.



Fang Chuhlang

The overseer of the mining camp is a stern taskmaster on a good day, but in this matter, he has given the governor very little help. In truth, he has no wish to venture back into the cursed mountain himself, even with others doing the work. What he really wants is the rubies, so that he can take them for himself—and while he tries to figure out who has them, he has no interest in pushing the camp back to work.

Tiqásip

Only Zedar and Mikaalis brought rubies out of the mine, but Mikaalis is dead, seemingly murdered in the night. This has set the miners even more on edge, but Tiqásip has an even greater concern—he has Mikaalis' rubies. He intends to slip away from the camp and bury these cursed gems in the woods, so that no one will ever find them. *If* he can slip away, that is.



Viceroyal Governor Milo Stauffenbach

Although the numerous duelling scars on his face attest to a wild and reckless youth, Milo Stauffenbach has only one concern in his middle age: his own wealth. He has grown fat on rich food and fine wines, but a heart of stone is what brought him this far and time has not made it any softer. Stauffenbach is typically accompanied by a few men-at-arms, who also keep people away from him, as he is not well-liked in Affeldeen, and he has nothing but contempt for Count Tristavelian. He is happy to entertain business propositions or socialize with other travellers of the upper classes. He is a legitimate connoisseur of heretical religious artifacts, and likes to show off his knowledge and collections.



The Count

Count Tristavelian Zann

The seventy-ninth count of the House of Zann bears little resemblance to his famous forbearer. Where paintings of Count Varto show him to be a short, wide, brawler of a man, Tristavelian is tall and lean and attentive to his appearance. This sensitivity to fashion is, in part, due to the unease his eye patch causes him. While campaigning for the king in his youth, Tristavelian lost an eye, and has been wary of combat ever since. Instead of heeding the call to war, he has paid quite extravagant war taxes, and this has caused him to sell off large tracts of his house's lands.

The count is an enthusiastic collector of strange and exotic art objects, a habit well-known amongst the nobility though not generally of interest to commoners. He has several rooms set aside to display what he has managed to obtain over the years—the more foreign it is, the more far-flung its point of origin, the better. Tristavelian is not particularly concerned with the authenticity or value of his pieces. He cares about the otherness of them and the stories that are attached to them. He has even kept forgeries to display simply because he can tell outlandish tales about their histories. He has competed, on several occasions in the past, with Milo Stauffenbach to obtain art objects of religious significance, and the governor has made offers for a few items in his collection. So far, Tristavelian has preferred to sell his land, since his collection is not worth as much as it might seem to the average observer.

In spite of the low prospects his house has for the future, Count Tristavelian tries to maintain an optimistic outlook. He still enjoys the arts, indulging his wife in her every whim, and watching his children grow, but the black cloud that hovers over him becomes more and more noticeable each year.

His Collection

Some notable pieces from Count Tristavelian Zann's collection:

- A cabinet dedicated to Count Varto that includes a tapestry depicting his victory over the assassins, a dagger with a bone hilt (made from the traitor's bones), Varto's beast-faced steel helmet, and his ruby-pommel long-sword.
- A collection of foreign-bound books that Tristavelian enjoys reading in bed, by candlelight (a practice that greatly annoys his wife, who sleeps in her own chambers to avoid it).
- A large wooden icon showing the Tustirian war god defeating the angelic patrons of foreign tribes.
- A painting from the so-called "Mad City," smuggled out on the eve of its destruction, done in the Cubistic style.
- A forgery of the sculpture *Erotic Writhing with Tentacles*, which is said to have come from another plane of existence entirely.
- The tribal medicine mask of a Wastiqi shaman.
- Two shrunk and lacquered heads from the malarial islands.



His Countess

Esmerelda Sloane has grown bored with life in these remote mountains. Now that her husband is done with warring, he does not have quite so much money to take her travelling, and she misses the company of other cultured ladies. Tristavelian is making deals with Governor Stauffenbach in order to appease her, though she does not realize how much he is selling.

She amuses herself by playing practical jokes on her servants, finding new ways to humiliate them, and even riding them around as if they were horses. Inspired by the writings of Professor von Sacher, she has thought of taking a handsome young man as a lover, but none of the locals fit her romantic ideal. She is convinced this would annoy her husband's knights more than him.





Their Son

His parents have always shown him love, but there is no question that young **Bartolemy** is a disappointment to the House of Zann. Now a man grown, he has the mental capacity of a child, and no ability to lead a noble household at all. The people of Affeldeem call him “the count’s Crazy Christos,” after their own village idiot.

Even though he has a kind heart and has never been violent in the least, his weak mind makes him acutely vulnerable to possession by the assassins. If a shadow slips into Bartolemy, the count can be murdered with ease and the blame will fall on his son.

Their Daughter

Aurora is the spitting image of a proper young noblewoman, pure and devout. She would like nothing so much as to join the church in order to feed the poor, heal the sick, and provide a better life for her older brother, but she also knows it falls to her, as the proper heir of the House of Zann, to pass on her family’s holdings to a noble husband.

Her innocent exterior often causes others to underestimate her, but Aurora is a disciplined student, skilled in history, medicine, and natural philosophy (but since she has not surpassed the canonical body of knowledge available in these lands, this is not quite the prodigious feat it may seem). She also trains messenger birds, and has struck up several anonymous correspondences with other nobles throughout the kingdom. Observant as she is, Aurora is the first to notice something amiss in Castle Zann.



Castle Zann

The count and his family live in a castle not far from Affeldeem, but further up the mountains, on a hilltop of its own. Tristavelian is attended by 25 knights and their squires. These are usually divided into four squads with a sergeant each, all led by a single captain. These men are loyal and comfortable in their position—those that preferred fighting left the count's service a long time ago. The captain, Sir Griswald, fought a wizard once, in the same war that took the count's eye out, and he has no love of arcane magic.

The castle is staffed by about forty servants in various capacities, from chamberlains and accountants to a blacksmith, a cobbler, and three tailors, as well as two string quartets, a marching band, and the usual washers and labourers. None of them have any experience with magic or the supernatural.

Empty Halls

Castle Zann is used to housing rather more people than it does currently—but the count's falling fortunes has caused him to shut down certain portions of it. He does not have enough soldiers to guard the entire castle wall, and he does not have enough servants to keep every wing of the grounds occupied with work, so these days there are many empty halls, collecting dust behind locked doors. It would be so easy for a thief—or a murderer!—to come and go as they pleased...





The Town

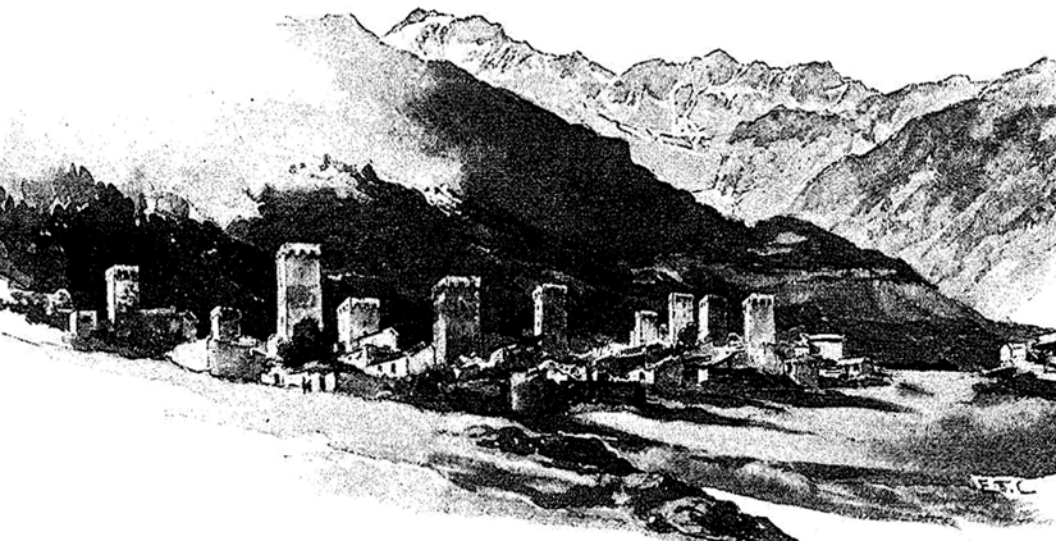
The small town of Affeldeem is built next to Apple Lake, which feeds the River Knife. It is dominated by a dozen tall, square towers—these are the homes of the elite families, everyone else lives in smaller buildings close to the ground. The town has a short wall for defence, but it would be mostly ineffective in a real siege.

Affeldeem is surrounded by mountain peaks on all sides, and there are two roads leading out, one to the north, and one to the south.

The people of Affeldeem tend to be stubborn and combative, and are deeply suspicious of magic and other things they do not understand. But they are equally hospitable to merchants and traders, as well as having a deep love for the traditional music of the region.

THE TOWN OF AFFELDEEM

- Poor prosperity, steady population, and a militia and short walls for defence.
- Divine: Mountain shrine, Need: Salt, Resource: Lake fish, Trade: Springvale.



Notable People in Affeldeem

Brenna: The mountains gods are still revered in this area, so that they might drive away the demons that live on top of the Black Peaks, and Brenna is their shaman. She can usually be found foraging, gardening, healing, or performing rituals.

Crazy Christos: He is the village idiot, and the townsfolk treat him like a child, even though he is now in his forties. Mostly he does labouring for whoever feels sorry for him.

Famous Fintan: Though he resides in Affeldeem for seven months out of the year, for the other five Fintan travels the region, singing songs and playing his harps and fiddles.

Father Willem: He is the only priest of the Church of Law in the region, since Count Tristavelian does not keep one in his castle. Willem has a bit of a feud going with Brenna.

Grismelinda: Called the grizzly bear because she is so large and muscular, Grismelinda manages one of the only two taverns in Affeldeem. She has no rooms to rent but there are stables and the beer flows freely.

Hamish: A local carpenter, Hamish is usually tasked with making cabinets, clogs, and furniture, but occasionally finds the time to create interesting pieces of art from his wood. He is perhaps overly fond of ghost stories.

Hazel: A skinny orphan girl, Hazel makes a living selling wild flowers, mushrooms, and the pelts of foxes and weasels that she catches with her sling.

Landellan: The matriarch of the wealthiest of the elite families, she rules her many children—and their children—with an iron fist. Some have resigned themselves, others chafe or rebel.

Martem: The innkeeper is a very pious man. He allows no cohabitation in his rooms, and refuses to serve more than two alcoholic drinks to one patron in a single night. When he serves water, though, it is not always safe to drink.

Mayor Tomash: Universally regarded as the neediest show-off amongst the elite families, Tomash has been elected mayor in order to cater to his ego and to keep him from making even more trouble.

Sacksen: Of those who fish in the lake, none is as dedicated as Sacksen. he takes his rowboat and lines out each and every day, no matter the weather, and pulls up beautiful fresh fish to sell in the afternoon.

Silarta: The most experienced seamstress in town is an older woman with a sharp tongue and no patience for empty purses—her rates are low, but she doesn't work for free. If hired to mend clothes and armour ruined by violence, she doesn't ask any questions.

Sumael Bracken: The newest of the elite families are the Brackens, having displaced the Wenders less than a decade ago. Sumael owes his wealth to his banking enterprise, which is necessarily small, considering this part of the world doesn't see that much in the way of trade. He believes he can weather the vicissitudes of the moneylending business and keep his family in the top ranks of the townsfolk—others think he is much too reckless to hold on to his tower for long.

Todor: A relative newcomer to town, Todor lives in the inn and does occasional work when it is offered. No one knows that he is really a thief and a thug-for-hire from the South, hiding out because of some murders he committed.

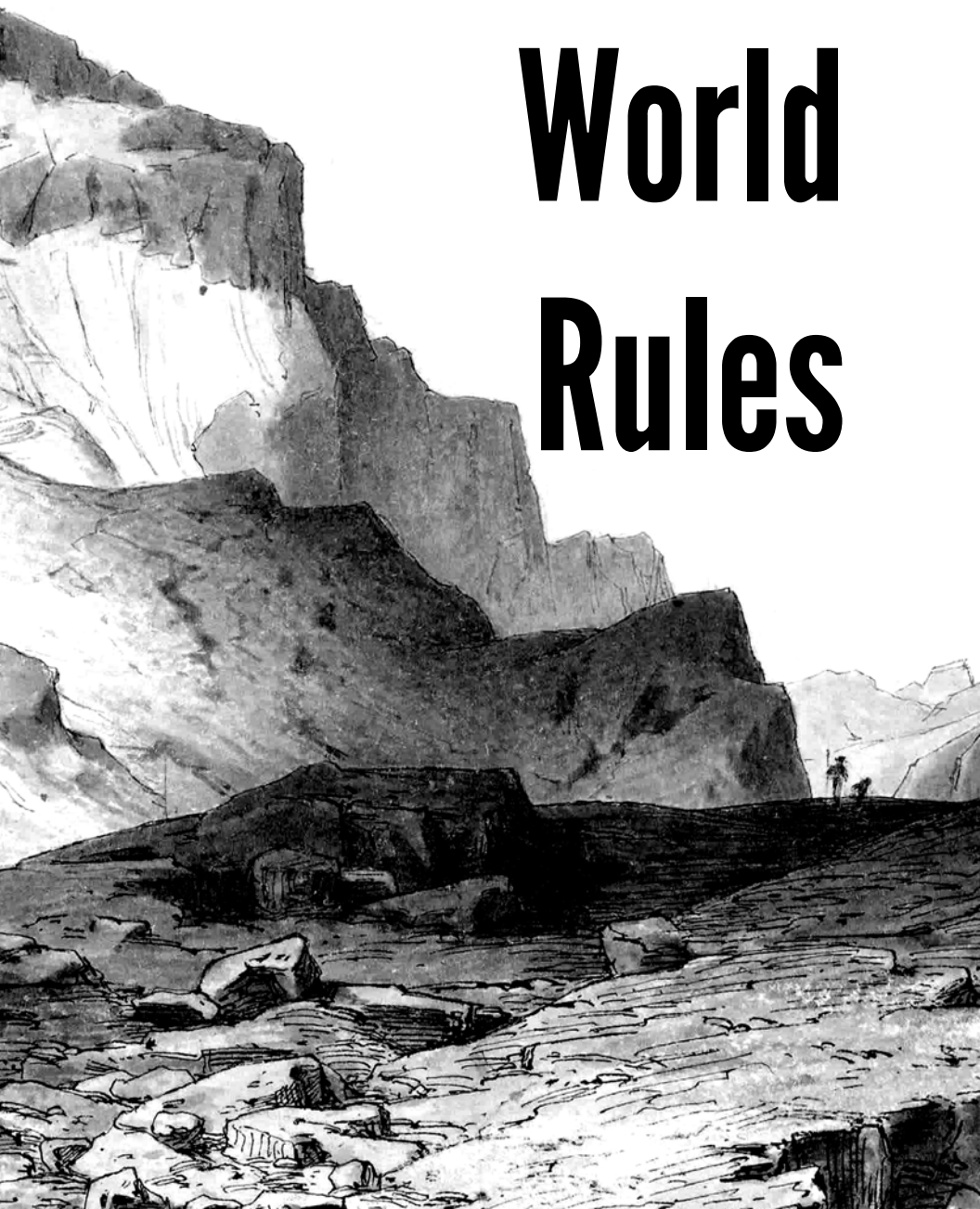
Random Events

Roll **1d8** if you need something to happen in town:

- 1 A **deacon from the church**, sent by Metropolitrix Colcea, arrives and is immediately at odds with both Brenna and Father Willem.
- 2 A **fight** breaks out between two neighbouring towers. Archers and trebuchets send missiles back and forth, striking innocent townsfolk below when they miss. If this keeps up, mobs form and lay siege to the towers, to get them to stop or to get revenge.
- 3 A **funeral procession** winds its way through the streets. It is accompanied by musicians, a cacophony of wailing and a great deal of heavy drinking. Men with whips clear the streets in front of it.
- 4 A group of **shepherds** arrives from the nearby hills. They are hard men, but have grown tired of fending off wolves day in and day out. They are looking for work as mercenaries, because fighting men is easier.
- 5 **Crazy Christos** is running through the streets, yelling and knocking people over. What could be the trouble? A house is on fire!
- 6 **Merchants** from Springvale have brought precious salts and water to trade, but because the last winter was so harsh, there is great demand in Affeldeen. If the PCs attempt to purchase anything, they are met with hostility and even violence.
- 7 The town has an annual **festival** that involves running pigs and cattle through the streets. They always forget to warn outsiders when this festival happens.
- 8 Wherever the PCs are, **Brenna** comes and kicks them out. She has a religious ceremony to perform here, and they must leave.



Dungeon World Rules



Assassins

There are as many assassins as you decide there are, although one per PC level is a moderate number. Their bodies are located in the training room, obviously having committed suicide together.

LIVING SHADOW ASSASSINS

*Amorphous, Group, Intelligent,
Magical, Stealthy, Terrifying.*

Fingers (b[2d8] damage, 1 piercing)

13 HP 1 Armour

Close

Special Qualities: Immortal, Made of darkness, Possession.

The assassins have found many advantages to being living shadows, and are quite fond of their new situation. Their only regret is having to spend two hundred years imprisoned in their stronghold, and this has driven them slightly mad.

Assassins hate direct sunlight and only go outside during the day if they have possessed someone. If their host is killed, the possessing assassin is free to leave the body unharmed, but they suffer real harm from direct sunlight and will die if exposed for more than a quarter of an hour.

Instinct: To pay homage to the gods of death with corpses and rubies.

- Drain a bleeding foe's life force.
- Pose as a normal shadow.
- Slash with fingers sharp as knives.
- Slip through cracks and narrow spaces.

During the day: Hide away in darkened places.

During the night: Hunt for victims.

When attacking: Strike quickly, then fade away.

Once a shadow assassin has struck a foe, it can then drain that person's life force:

If a living shadow drains your life force, you lose 1d6 points of Strength. **When you rest,** you recover 1d6 lost points of Strength. **If your Strength is reduced to zero,** you become a ghost, condemned to haunt the shadows of this land where you died.

Shadow Dragon

There is only one shadow dragon, and it only arrives if the wooden head is used to summon it.

SHADOW DRAGON

Devious, Hoarder, Intelligent, Large, Magical, Planar, Stealthy, Terrifying.

Breath (1d6 damage plus drain, ignores armour) 20 HP 4 Armour
Near, Forceful

Claws (1d12+5 damage, 3 piercing)

Close, Reach, Forceful, Messy

Special Qualities: Immortal, Made of solid darkness, Wings.

The shadow dragon is made of a substance that is much more solid than the assassins are—sunlight merely annoys it, but does not cause it permanent harm. Nevertheless, it is still a creature made of liquid darkness, and will only emerge during the day to mock or threaten.

The shadow dragon's breath drains its target's Strength just like the assassins' special attack does. It feels like a wave of cold, but is entirely psychological, and does not cause water to condense or frost to form.

Instinct: To hoard gold and jewels and slaves.

- Breath darkness upon a foe.
- Cackle with glee at someone else's failure.
- Command slaves.
- Kidnap someone.
- Mock a foe with displays of physical and tactical superiority.
- Rip and tear with savage claws.
- Strike from the sky.

When it holds the high ground: Mock the enemy, show them how powerless they are.

When it sees something valuable: Take it and hoard it.

Shadow Snakes

When the assassins committed suicide to become living shadows, they brought some of their pet snakes over to the other side with them. These shadow snakes still lurk within the stronghold, and are much more likely to attack intruders.

SHADOW SNAKE

Magical, Solitary, Stealthy.

Bite (1d8 damage)

10 HP 1 Armour

Close

Special Qualities: Immortal, Made of solid darkness.

A shadow snake lurks in corners or under water before it coils around a victim and bares its fangs. These snakes have been doing nothing for two centuries and may be slow to return to their natural instincts, when intruders begin to appear in their stronghold.

Like the shadow dragon, shadow snakes are still solid creatures, not forms that can slink across the walls like real shadows do.

Instinct: To defend its territory.

- Coil around a foe.
- Flee into darkness.
- Strike from the shadows.

NPCs

What follows is a list of certain NPCs, along with their combat statistics and moves they might make. Not all of them are interested in fighting, of course, but some are.

AURORA ZANN *Cautious, Educated, Intelligent, Organized.*

Instinct: To help those less fortunate.

- Discover a secret.
- Reveal odd news from far away.

FANG CHUHLANG *Cautious, Intelligent, Organized.*

Whip (1d6 damage) 6 HP ○ Armour

Reach

Instinct: To find those rubies.

- Grab a foe's limb with his whip.

HAFFSIDI *Cautious, Intelligent, Organized.*

Dagger (1d8 damage) 8 HP ○ Armour

Hand

Instinct: To protect Zedar and escape with the rubies.

MILO STAUFFENBACH *Cautious, Intelligent, Organized, Wealthy.*

Sword (1d6 damage) 10 HP 1 Armour

Close

Instinct: To become richer.

- Command men-at-arms.

TIQÁSIP *Cautious, Intelligent, Organized.*

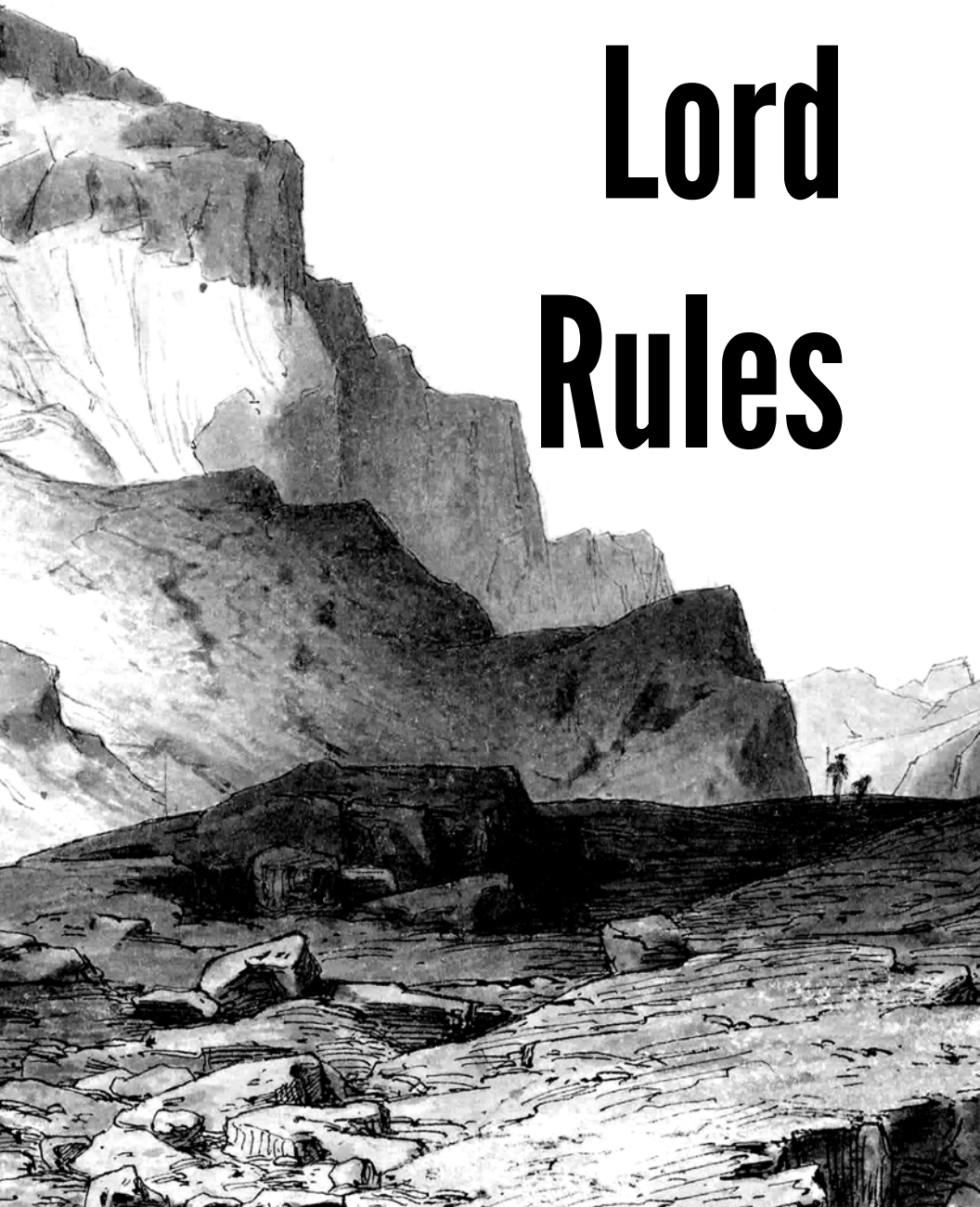
Club (1d6 damage) 10 HP ○ Armour

Close

Instinct: To bury these accursed rubies.



Labyrinth Lord Rules



Assassins

There are as many assassins as you decide there are, although one per PC level is a moderate number. Their bodies are located in the training room, obviously having committed suicide together.

Living Shadow Assassins

No. Enc.:	1d3 (1d6)
Alignment:	Chaotic
Movement:	120' (40')
Armour Class:	Chainmail
Hit Dice:	3+1
Attacks:	2 (claws) or 1 (drain)
Damage:	1d8+1 or special
Save:	F10
Morale:	12
Hoard Class:	X / M (only once they have a new headquarters)
Special:	+1 or better weapon to hit
XP:	125xp each

In their new forms, the assassins appear to be very dark shadows, sliding across walls and furniture. They can also move through empty space like normal people, but this makes them much more noticeable. Once an assassin has struck a character once with its claws, it can make drain attacks. If a drain attack hits, the victim loses 1d6 points of Strength. If they are reduced to zero Strength, they become a ghost and are condemned to haunt the earth where they died. Lost points of Strength are recovered at a rate of 1d6 points per day.

The assassins do not go out during the day unless they have possessed a living person. If they have possessed someone, they use their host's Armour Class, Hit Points, and Movement rate, and their own ratings for all other statistics. Their host can be hurt and killed as normal, but when they die, the assassin is released unharmed. They suffer 1 HP of damage for each minute they are exposed to direct sunlight, however. This includes spells that summon something similar to direct sunlight.

Shadow Dragon

There is only one shadow dragon, and it only arrives if the wooden head is used to summon it.

Shadow Dragon

No. Enc.:	1
Alignment:	Chaotic
Movement:	90' (30')
Flying:	240' (80')
Armour Class:	Plate and shield
Hit Dice:	8
Attacks:	3 or 1 (2 claws and 1 bite or 1 breath)
Damage:	1d6 / 1d10 / 1d8 plus drain
Save:	F10
Morale:	10
Hoard Class:	XV / H
Spells:	3 first-level spells, 2 second-level spells
Special:	Magical weapon to hit
XP:	1750xp

The shadow dragon is made of a substance that is much more solid than the assassins are—sunlight merely annoys it, but does not cause it permanent harm. Nevertheless, it is still a creature made of liquid darkness, and will only emerge during the day to mock or threaten.

The shadow dragon's breath, 30' long and 20' wide, drains its target's Strength just like the assassins' special attack does. It feels like a wave of cold, but is entirely psychological, and does not cause water to condense or frost to form. It can breath darkness up to 3 times per day.

The shadow dragon's greatest joy is to hoard valuables. When it tires of revelling in its wealth, it also hoards slaves, tormenting them and watching them die, as well as commanding them to increase its hoard. When it must fight enemies, it enjoys taunting them as well, any way it can. This can make it careless, and it has a tendency to underestimate foes that are not obviously dangerous.

Shadow Snakes

When the assassins committed suicide to become living shadows, they brought some of their pet snakes over to the other side with them. These shadow snakes still lurk within the stronghold, and are much more likely to attack intruders.

Shadow Snake

No. Enc.:	1d4
Alignment:	Neutral
Movement:	90' (30')
Armour Class:	Chainmail
Hit Dice:	2+1
Attacks:	1 bite or 1 coil
Damage:	1d8 / special
Save:	F ₃
Morale:	9
Hoard Class:	None
XP:	25xp each

A shadow snake lurks in corners or under water before it coils around a victim and bares its fangs. These snakes have been doing nothing for two centuries and may be slow to return to their natural instincts, when intruders begin to appear in their stronghold.

Like the shadow dragon, shadow snakes are still solid creatures, not forms that can slink across the walls like real shadows do. They prefer to strike from the shadows, or lurk underwater. If possible they coil around a foe in order to immobilize them. If a character is wrapped up in a shadow snake's coils, they must save vs. paralysis to escape.

NPCs

Some of the NPCs have levels in adventuring classes, or the equivalent in skills:

- **Aurora Zann** is a 2nd-level cleric with 9 HP.
- **Brenna** is a 2nd-level cleric with 4 HP.
- **Fang Chuhlang** is a 2nd-level fighter with 8 HP, a club, and a whip.
- **Father Willem** is a 1st-level cleric with 6 HP.
- **Haffsidi** is a 2nd-level fighter with 15 HP and a dagger.
- **Milo Stauffenbach** is a 2nd-level fighter with 9 HP and whatever equipment he wants to carry. He is usually accompanied by 2d4 1st-level fighters.
- **Tiqásip** is a 2nd-level fighter with 11 HP with a club and a knife.
- **Tristavelian Zann** is a 3rd-level fighter with 16 HP who refuses to fight.

The knights in Count Tristavelian's service are 1st-level fighters, except for the four sergeants, who are 2nd-level fighters, and the captain, who is a 3rd-level fighter.

Everyone else is level 0, including Bartolemy, Esmerelda, Zedar, the other miners and the other townspeople, and the servants at Castle Zann.

The End.