

THE BONE HARVESTER

Every day at nightfall the villagers of Oakbrook dig up their dead.

An unholy force compels them to desecrate the graves of their loved ones. When the adventurers arrive, will they defeat the evil that has enslaved the village? Or will they fall victim to it as well?

The Bone Harvester is a *Lordling* adventure for characters of levels 1-3. It is a simple matter to convert this scenario for play using the *Labyrinth Lord* rules.

LORDLING

The Bone Harvester

Module 1

For Character Levels 1-3



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Goblinoid Games

LORDLING

Module 1

THE BONE HARVESTER

Introduction

This adventure is meant for characters of levels 1-3. It can take place in any game world, and the village can be replaced by one of your own creation if you desire. Although the adventure is written with *Lordling* in mind, it can also be run with characters of similar level using the *Labyrinth Lord* rules. In this case, replace game statistics for monsters with the appropriate versions from *Labyrinth Lord*. The referee can use the game statistics for a wight in place of the skeletal knight in this adventure, but without the ability to drain life energy. The bear skeleton could use the zombie statistics from *Labyrinth Lord*.

Referee Background

The people of Oakbrook have been living a nightmare for the last several days. Normally a safe and quiet village, located out of the way and blissfully ignorant of the horrors of the world, the community is now trapped in a horrific cycle that threatens to destroy everyone.

The villagers were tucked safely in their beds one night when a harsh, whisper-like voice woke everyone from their slumbers. The sound of piping then wafted

through their windows, and they felt compelled to walk to the village Main Street, legs moving of their own volition. Standing at edge of the village was a skeletal knight, with blood red light glowing from his eye sockets. Six skeletons stood around him, playing bagpipes.

"For now on you will do my bidding," the specter's rasping voice hissed. "You will provide the bones of your ancestors to start my army of the dead. Anyone who resists will become one of my undead servants. If you seek outside help, I will destroy you all."

With that, the skeletal horror turned on his heel and strode off into the darkness. The skeleton pipers ceased playing and followed him. Left in their wake were sobbing villagers and screeching children. But the nightmare was only just beginning. The bag-pipe-playing skeletons returned the next night, and again the villagers were compelled against their wills. They gathered any digging tools available and marched to the town graveyard. Then they commenced digging up the bodies of their loved ones. The bones of generations who had lived and died in the village were now being desecrated.

At the end of the night, the villagers heaped the bones in a cart. A skeletal horse arrived and pulled the cart out of the village. At that point the villagers took command of their own bodies, and emotionally broken, went back to the village. Every night since then it has been the same routine. As soon as the sun

sets, the villagers' actions are taken over by the undead pipers, and the sinister force compels them to go back to the graveyard and exhume bodies. The people get as much sleep as they can during the day, but still must struggle to tend their crops and livestock. The villagers are falling apart, unable to keep up with the routine. Crops are beginning to fail and the animals aren't getting fed. If the situation keeps up any longer, everyone may soon join their ancestors as bones for the army of the dead.

The skeletal knight is an undead creature called a bone harvester. It is a fallen soldier who committed atrocities in his life and is now cursed to undead status. His objective is to raise a skeletal army and destroy the living. He is unable to animate skeletons unless the bones have been first interred in consecrated ground. This is the reason he needs the villagers to exhume bones. He is unable to enter consecrated ground himself, though he has sent newly animated skeletons to oversee the labor in the graveyard each night after the first. Once the graveyard has been fully exhumed, he plans to turn the skeletons under his command against the village to destroy them all. Then he will move on to a new community and start the cycle again. If left unchecked, his skeletal army will grow until it is capable of destroying larger communities.

Running the Scenario

This adventure is dark. Therefore, accommodations should be made depending on the age of the children playing the game. If the kids are older, the adventure could be kept completely bleak. In this case, each night when the villages go to the graveyard, the skeletons present to oversee their work will be more intimidating. They may occasionally whip villagers for no good reason and otherwise torment them.

On the other hand, if playing with younger players, it may be wise to make the skeletons somewhat comical. As the villagers dig graves, skeletons may be playing a silly tune on flutes and dancing around, their bones rattling. The skeletons might trip over themselves, bumbling around the graveyard and tripping on gravestones.



At the end of the night, the skeletal horse pulls a wooden cart away and the skeletons follow. The players may interfere with this situation at any point, assuming they are not under the effects of the curse. They will not be able to prevent villagers from going to the graveyard unless they restrain them somehow. If the villagers are restrained and unable to go to the graveyard, the skeletal pipers will return to the skeleton knight, who will come to the village personally along with the pipers and six more skeletons. He will try to force the villagers to comply, untying them if bound. If the skeleton pipers are destroyed and unable to report back, the skeletal knight will not know what has happened until the cart of bones doesn't show up at the end of the night. The following night he will come to the village himself with six more pipers and another six skeletons for good measure.

The players may also choose to follow the cart to its destination at the end of a night of digging. In this case, the skeletons will not interfere with them and less attacked and they will be able to follow the cart all the way to the skeleton knight's lair.

Encounter 1: The Farmer

The characters are following a rocky, pitted dirt road toward the village of Oakbrook. Sunset is only an hour away as they approach the village. The players see a farmer following a plow pulled by a team of horses. He's plowing a field on the outskirts of the village. The

horses are nearly skeletal. The farmer stumbles, grasping at the plow to catch himself, but misses as he falls in a heap into the dirt. The farmer screams out in pain.

Ask the players at this point what they choose to do. If they decide to help the farmer, carry on with the rest of this encounter. Otherwise, skip to Encounter 2.

When the players approach the farmer, they can see that he has dark circles under his eyes and is very thin. His lips are chapped and cracked, and he is shaking. He cries out and grasps his wrist. His eyes lack focus at first, but then he notices the characters and speaks.

"Please help me," he croaks from a dry mouth. "My wrist is broken. Can you take me to the church? I don't think I can walk anymore. Oh please help me! I don't want to become bones for that skeletal devil!"

The farmer then passes out. The characters will have to either carry the farmer or sling them over the back of one of the horses to take him to town.

Encounter 2: The Church

Church bells start ringing as the players enter the village. The church is at the end of Main Street. On their way, the players see that villagers are convening at the church. All of them walk in a slumped, staggering manner. Whenever villagers notice the adventurers, sleepy eyes widen with a look of panic. Entering the church, the players see that all of the seating has been moved to the sides to make way for

villagers lying about on the floor, attended to by a priest. The priest notices as the players enter. His face lengthens and eyes widen in something of a mix of fear and hope.

Approaching the players, the priest says, "Thank you for bringing Oren." The priest reaches out to ease the farmer to the floor. "I knew he was too weak to be tending the fields."

At this point the players are likely to have questions. Through conversation, the players will find out that the church is used as a refuge for villagers who are near complete exhaustion. The priest will explain that every night most of the villagers are compelled to go to the graveyard to dig up bones. The horrific experience makes it difficult to sleep during the day, in addition to managing to get all of their chores done before night falls again. The village is falling apart. Crops are not being tended properly, and there is a growing food shortage. For reasons not understood, the priest is unaffected by the curse that makes people go to the graveyard. Sometimes some of the villagers are unaffected, but it is not consistent.

By the time the conversation is over, darkness will be setting in. That's when the sound of piping begins.

Encounter 3: The Graveyard

The sound of bagpipes grows ever louder. Soon most of the villagers inside the church get painfully to their feet, slouching, and placing one foot in front of the



other against their wills. All characters must succeed in a saving throw versus magic. Any who fail are affected by the curse and will join the villagers on their march to the graveyard. A new saving throw is allowed only daily when the music is first heard again.

Six skeletons have descended into the village. Each plays a bagpipe from which unearthly cursed music flows. As the villagers congregate in the street, the skeletons turn and march up the road toward the cemetery. If any of the players are unaffected by the music, they may attack the skeletons. Any skeletons attacked will stop playing the bagpipes and fight back, but if the players attack a skeleton the other skeletons will not stop playing to join in the melee and less



attacked themselves. At least one skeleton must maintain playing bagpipes for the villagers to be affected by the curse.

Skeletons (6) [Level 1, Move 8, To Hit Adj. 0, Wounds 1, Attacks 1]

If the players destroy all of the skeletons, the villagers cheer and are happy at first, but it is short-lived. They all fear the skeleton knight and what he will do in retribution. Through conversation the villagers will reveal that at the end of each night the skeletons take a cart pulled by a skeletal horse carrying the bones of their loved ones toward the north. Then the horror is repeated every night. The players may decide to go in that direction to determine where the bones are being

taken. Otherwise, the next day the skeleton knight will come back to town at dusk with six more skeletons playing bagpipes. The knight will oversee the operation that night and if it goes as planned, he will not attend the following night.

The bag pipes lose their enchantment once separated from the skeletons.

Skeleton Knight (1) [Level 3, Move 10, To Hit Adj. 0, Wounds 1, Attacks 1]

The skeleton knight wields an unholy sword that grants +1 to hit. The knight may be turned as a 3rd level undead creature.

If all of the players are under the effects of the curse, then they accompany the villagers to the graveyard and dig up bones all night while the skeletons ceaselessly play the bagpipes. Bones are placed in a wooden cart that is hitched to a skeleton horse. The horse remains completely motionless all night. At the end of the night, everyone is completely exhausted. As dawn approaches, the skeletons cease playing the bagpipes. They will lead the skeletal horse along a rough trail leading toward the north. The villagers (and players, if affected) collapse to the ground for some time before mustering the energy to walk back to the village.

The players can choose to follow the skeletons and the cart, but if they engage in any combat or any other actions they will suffer a -3 penalty due to exhaustion.



Alternatively, they can choose to rest until mid day and be refreshed enough to no longer suffer penalties.

If the players destroy the skeletons before they get to their destination with the cart, they will be able to easily follow a trail leading to rocky hills to the north where the cart has been taken previous nights. The trail leads to a cave.

The Cave

The skeleton knight has taken his lair in a natural cavern complex to the northwest of the cemetery. Passages are approximately 10' wide and 10' high.

The caverns vary in height, which will be noted in their descriptions. Natural light does not penetrate deeper than about 20' into the entrance of the cave system.

Area 1: This cavern is 30' high. It reeks of feces, the cavern floor being covered with droppings. Nesting in crevices in the ceiling are 1d6 stirges. They swoop down to attack as soon as characters enter.

Stirges (1d6) [Level 1, Move 10, To Hit Adj. 0, Wounds 1, Attacks 1, latch on and suck blood, deal 1 wound every other round]

Area 2: The ceiling of this room is approximately 10' high. It contains bones from various animals, scattered across the cavern floor. At the back of the room is the skeleton of a large bear. The skeleton knight has animated it, and if the character's approach within 10' of the ursine hulk it rises to attack. Lodged between its ribs is a mummified lower human arm and hand. The hand wears a *ring of spider climbing*.

Skeletal bear (1) [Level 2, Move 8, To Hit Adj. 0, Attacks 3 (2 claws and bite)]

Area 3: The floor, walls, and ceiling of this cave are encrusted with white mineral crystals. The characters' feet make echoing crunch noises as they walk across the brittle minerals. The caked-on minerals periodically break loose from the 40' high ceiling and fall to the floor. There is a 1-2 on 2d6 chance that a chunk breaks loose and lands on one of the characters. It deals 1 wound level of damage.

Area 4: This large cavern is the abode of the skeleton knight. There is a crevice on the floor of the north side of the cavern. It is 20' deep. Any character falling into the crevice will take 1 wound of damage. The skeleton knight has erected a throne constructed of tombstones from the graveyard. A statue of a gargoyle, also taken from the graveyard, is next to the throne. The gargoyle wears a simple thick gold chain necklace worth 50 gold pieces.

When the characters enter the room, the skeleton knight immediately stands up and draws his evil blade.

Skeleton Knight (1) [Level 3, Move 10, To Hit Adj. 0, Wounds 1, Attacks 1]

The knight is turned as 3 level undead creature. The sword attacks with +1 to hit.

If the characters defeat the knight, they discover a pile of treasure taken from the graves of the village's dead on the floor of the south side of the cave. There are several necklaces and rings, worth a total of 300 gold pieces. The people of Oakbrook will be grateful if these grave goods are returned to them. The gold chain around the gargoyle's neck is also a grave good.

If the knight is defeated, the skeleton bear in Area 2 and the skeletons in Area 9 will no longer have a master. They will still attack the characters if given the chance, but only if attacked first.

Area 5: This dead-end is unremarkable at first glance. If the characters inspect the area, they will discover an

open vein of gold. Mining the area for a day will yield 500 gold pieces worth of raw gold nuggets.

Area 6: The short tunnel leading to this area is barricaded loosely with dead tree branches and other debris. Characters can relatively easily break past this. A goblin has taken refuge in this room. He used to live in Area 4, but when the skeleton knight came he managed to hide in this rear part of the cave complex. He is an outcast from his tribe and a recluse. He is cowardly, and will not attack the players unless absolutely backed into a corner. If the players are friendly, he may pretend to be their ally until he is able to steal from them and run away. He is armed with a rusty short sword.

Goblin (1) [Level 1, Move 4, To Hit Adj. 0, Wounds 1, Attacks 1]

Area 7: The fossilized snout of a dragon and its teeth is partially exposed on the east wall. If the fossil is



inspected closely, the characters find a small leather pouch tucked up behind a crack above the inside of one of the canine teeth. The pouch contains two rubies, each worth 500 gold pieces.

Area 8: A fossilized dragon foot is partially exposed at the back of this passageway. It belongs to the same creature that is partly exposed in Areas 7 and 9.

Area 9: The skeleton knight's army resides in this large cavern. There are 10 skeletons in this room, standing orderly in two rows of 5. There is a pile of human bones against the center north wall of the cavern. They will be compiled into skeletons at a later date, since some of the skeletons retrieved from the graveyard are partial in nature. The skeletons are assembled sometimes from the bones of multiple people, and then animated. The large crevice in the cavern is 50' deep. A green slime resides at the bottom of it. It will not crawl out of the crevice, but any skeletons falling into the bottom will be dissolved in 1d6 rounds. Characters falling into the pit will be attacked by the green slime and completely dissolved if killed. On the west side of the wall half of the rib cage of the fossilized dragon is sticking out of the rock.

Green slime (1) [Level 2, Move 1, To Hit Adj. 0, Wounds 1, Attacks 1]

The skeletons stand at the ready and will attack immediately. However, if the skeletal knight has already been destroyed, they will stand at attention

and not attack unless attacked first. In this way the characters may fight one skeleton at a time.

Finishing the Adventure

The villagers will be ecstatic if the players are successful in destroying the skeleton knight. Their horror is finally over. The villagers will return the bones to the graveyard, and are grateful if the players help them but they will not ask for help with this task. They will also be grateful if the players return the grave goods to them. They will not accept any other treasures from the players, asking them to keep anything else they found. The characters will be welcome to stay in the village as long as they like and if they decide to stay for at least one night they will be treated to a party with anything they can eat or drink. Furthermore, the town blacksmith fabricates each of the players a medallion attached to a leather string. The each medallion has the city emblem of an oak tree. All they need to do any time they pass through town is show the amulet to the town mayor, whoever the mayor may be at that time, and the players will be given unending hospitality for the rest of their lives.

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10 feet per bar segment

